



# Sabretache

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## Before there was a Jeep

It was on 11th July 1940 that the Department of War finally formalized its specifications for a quarter ton small four wheel drive vehicle and sent those specifications to no less than 135 US manufacturers.

The fact that there were 135 US manufacturers who the Department of War thought worthy of being sent such an ambitious proposal augured well for America's industrial ability to engage in the war that was looming. This request was urgent however, so urgent that companies were given just 11 days to respond with a bid, 49 days in which to have a prototype ready, and 75 days in which to produce an initial run of 70 vehicles. Of the 135 just 2 submitted proposals, American Bantam and Willys Overland

Eventually over 640,000 Jeeps were built in WW2



## Before there was a Kübelwagen

In January 1938, Hitler's chauffeur/bodyguard turned SS commander Sepp Dietrich gave Porsche the nod to develop a military version of the Volkswagen.

The brief specified that the vehicle should weigh no more than 2090lb (950kg) with four fully kitted-out soldiers onboard, and a maximum of 1210lb (550kg) unladen. Porsche turned to Karosseriefabrik Nikolaus Trutz, a firm well versed in military vehicles, for help with the body design, with prototypes undergoing testing from November 1938.

Despite lacking Hitler's preferred four-wheel-drive set-up, this newest Volkswagen variant – dubbed Type 62 – proved adept off-road thanks in part to its lack of heft and its ZF-made self-locking differential.

Pre-production editions were tested in the field during the invasion of Poland.



## There was the “Yonki”

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**Page 6—Are you an Immigrant to Alberta with Military Service in Your Country of Origin?**

The Military Museum is seeking individuals to share stories relating to non-Canadian military experience.

# The world's first jeep: Kurogan Type 95

If you ask which jeep was the first in the world, most will answer - Willys. Forgotten is the Japanese reconnaissance vehicle, ahead of the American vehicle by several years. But it is the Kurogan Type 95 that is, in fact, the first mass-produced jeep.

*Its nickname is the "Yonki" (よんき) which in Japanese means "all-wheel drive". In the field, soldiers often called it the "daruma" after the Buddhist symbol for good luck.*



The need for a light all-terrain vehicle that can be used for reconnaissance, communications and as a staff vehicle for officers was realized by the Japanese military in the early 1930s, after the hostilities in Manchuria, which ended with the creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo.

The creation of this vehicle was taken up by the company Rikuo Nainenki, which at that time was successfully producing three-wheeled motorcycles with a sidecar for the Ministry of Defense of Japan.

However, the factory production of this new 4 wheel drive vehicle was established at the Tokyo motorcycle company Nippon Nainenki Seiko. *The car body was manufactured by the "Nippon Kohki (currently Nissan Kohki)"*



The vehicle received the military designation Type 95 Kurogane (Kuro-Gan, translated as "Black Steel").

Can you call it the first Jeep? There are several reasons for this.

- First, Kurogan was a custom-built SUV for the army, not a four-wheel drive conversion of a civilian model.
- Secondly, the design of the car - a sturdy frame with a simplified open body, has become classic for jeeps for many years.
- Thirdly, it was a completely Japanese car that did not copy any foreign car.
- Fourthly, the mass production of Kurogan began **six** years earlier than the Willys Jeep.

So whatever one may say, namely Kurogan should be considered the first jeep in the world.

What was the Type 95? The basis of the car was a double spar frame with five cross members.

In front of it was a V- shaped overhead valve two-cylinder air-cooled engine, mounted in a single unit with a 3-speed gearbox and a single-stage transfer case. The continuous rear axle is suspended on semi-elliptical springs, the front axle axles are suspended on wishbones and springs.

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Production began in 1936 and 4700 to 4800 of the Type 95 vehicles were produced for the Japanese Army.







Production of the Type 95 began in 1935. Until 1941, the car was produced with a three-seater two-door body, later replaced by a four-door phaeton. There was also a pickup version with a two-seater closed cab and side body.

Type 95 Kurogan has proven itself well in military service. It was distinguished by enviable cross-country ability, as it had a wheelbase of 80" (200 cm) with a ground clearance of 10" (23 cm)- (thanks to 18-inch wheels). Engine power 33 HP enough to accelerate a fully loaded car (1250 kg) to 70 km / h. In addition, the air-cooled engine was ideal for a vehicle that took part in the hostilities in northern China and Manchuria, with large differences in altitude, temperatures and water shortages

Kurogan's merits were highly appreciated not only by the Japanese, but also by their opponents. Both Soviet and American soldiers actively used the captured Kurogana both for recreational trips and for work in the rear. Captured Yonki's , left over from WW2, continued to be used in hostilities in Indochina and Burma until the mid-1950s. Less than a dozen of these machines have survived to this day.



After Japan's surrender, the release of Kurogan as a commercial or military vehicle was banned by the US military administration.

Russian soldiers having fun with a captured Kurogan "Yonki"

It is believed that a total of 7 of these vehicles exist in the world. Mostly in Russia.



Mr. Kobayashi, a business man who also runs a small museum and heads the NPO "Defense Technology Museum Creation Association" Their aim is to preserve the historical heritage that was the foundation of modern industry and passing it on to future generations, The Creation Association has set up the establishment of the "Defense Technology Museum" to display domestic and foreign vehicles. Some of the vehicles that have been preserved include a "Jeep", "Kubelwagen" and a Type 95 Light tank currently being rebuilt.

**In 2010 Mr. Kobayashi heard the rumour of a Kurogan "Yonki" in the back of a vehicle repair yard. Page 4 & 5**





***In 2013 Mr Kobayashi announced the following (Note this is a Google Translation)***

I'm Kobayashi, the representative of the NPO "Museum of Defense Technology". We are currently working to build Japan's first facility to display land equipment such as jeeps, tanks and artillery in Gotemba City, Shizuoka Prefecture. One day when I was doing such activities, I was offered the first four-wheel drive passenger car "Kurogane Shiki" in Japan. It is a car that was thought to be none in Japan until now. I'm not in a state where I can run very much now. If you can revive it and see how it runs ... The target amount of the project that started with such a feeling is 10 million yen. Supported by everyone's thoughts and passion, we were able to achieve it in 36 days from the start.

**He raised over 13.5 million Yen (\$155,000 Cdn.) in crowd funding to rebuild the donated vehicle.**

I couldn't hide my surprise when I received the information that "Kurogane Shiki" "exists in Japan". When I arrived at the owner based on the information, they understood our activities and provided them under certain conditions. The condition is "to fix, to run". The vehicle provided is believed to be of a model year around 1938-9 (Showa 13-14). It is a vehicle more than 70 years ago. Also, among the "Kurogane Shiki", it is called the early model, which has a particularly high rarity value.

In 1954 the original owner of "Kurogane Shiki" had a connection in with a sales agent of Nippon Internal Machinery Co., Ltd., so this "Kurogane Shiki" was obtained and stored. At the time of acquisition, it was running well, but eventually broke down and became unusable, it could not be thrown away for 40 years and it was sleeping in a corner of the factory all the time.

**What they received**



**After 3 years of intense work that included trips to Russia for parts and advice, “The Result”**



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THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
The SOCIETY

is a non-profit registered society which fosters the study of the military and the police, and the heritage of Canada, the British Empire, and the world as well as the preservation of military artifacts and records. The CMHS meets once every calendar month at:

Petty Officers' Mess HMCS Tecumseh  
1820 - 24th Street SW Calgary AB T2T 0G6

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## Are you an Immigrant to Alberta with Military Service in Your Country of Origin?

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST  
OPEN CALL: DEADLINE APRIL 30



Are you or one of your family members a migrant to Alberta, with military service in your native country or elsewhere? Or do you have any ancestors or friends who settled in Alberta, and served in a military capacity with non-Canadian armed forces?

We are seeking individuals to share stories relating to non-Canadian military experience. Our interest is global in scope, including experiences spanning national armed forces or conscripts, informal militia service, volunteers, guerrilla forces, freedom fighters, child soldiers and medics. The material we compile will be considered for inclusion in an exhibition at the University of Calgary's Founders' Gallery at The Military Museums in Calgary, fall 2021. We are especially interested in learning about artworks, photographs or artefacts relating to individuals' stories, or the places in which they served, and if you are an immigrant artist who knows a military immigrant in Alberta, please get in touch.

The aim of this project is to highlight and better understand the wide range of nationalities that have settled in this province, both historically and more recently. We will provide learning opportunities about conflicts worldwide, many of which may not have involved Canada.

Planning for this exhibition involves extensive outreach to community associations and ex-pat groups in Calgary and beyond. We recognize that some individuals may be sensitive about sharing their stories: if individuals wish for privacy we can offer the use a pseudonym (false name), or anonymity.

If you have a story you would like to share or would like more information on the project, we'd like to hear from you. And if you are a museum or heritage-institute with relevant stories, artwork, or artefacts in your collection and are interested in participating in this project, your support is also welcomed. To find out more or become involved please contact:

Rory Cory, Snr Curator/Director of Collections, mor-curator@telusplanet.net (403) 410-2340 x 2602.  
Dick Aaverns, Curatorial Coordinator, dick.aaverns@ucalgary.ca

For more information on The Military Museums, including our mandate, visitor information, education programs, and events and exhibitions, please visit <https://themilitarymuseums.ca/>

***We look forward to hearing your stories!***

Photos: (L) Hieu Tran, South Vietnamese Navy. (R) Sharon Wildwind, American Army Nurse



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
Founders' Gallery

