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Dear Luke Martin,

I enjoyed seeing your loose leaf book of 103d Division short stories at the 103d reunion in Chicago. I would like to purchase a copy of your book. 103d Division history is a passion of mine.

My father was Bernard Beck, the 3rd C.O. of the 103rd Signal Company. During the past several years I worked with Bill Barclay on his book, REMEMBRANCES, which is a history of the 103rd Signal Company, now out of print. My contributions to Bill's book were letters and photographs. I sifted through over 3000 pages of letters. Most of these were written by my father, to my mother, during the war. I also have several hundred family photos from the time period, some of which pertain to the 103rd Signal Company.

Currently, I am working on the second, expanded edition of the Signal Company book. This second book will use Bill's work as a core and include most of the oral history. It will expand greatly on organization, personal equipment, uniforms, vehicles, communication equipment, training, maneuvers, occupation and demobilization. I expect the book to contain 150-200 photographs. Photos will include personal snapshots as well as official photos of the radios, basic components, vehicles, tools and equipment necessary to run a Signal Company. In other words, the second book won't have quite the charm and personal warmth of Bill's book, but it will thoroughly document exactly what made a World War II Signal Company tick. Even the casual reader will be able to see what the soldiers wore, what equipment they used and how they were housed. In addition, photos and written records will reveal the types of vehicles used and how they were marked as well as all the electronic gear that filled those vehicles. So far, I have about 550 photographs in four volumes!

While growing up in the 50's & 60's I heard many stories of the "Fighting 103rd". My father always spoke about the 103rd with pride and reverence. He seemed to feel that the men of the 103rd were superior to other soldiers. I have missed those stories since my dad died of a smoking-related heart attack on 10 January 1985.

When my mother decided to move out of the house that the family had lived in for 33 years, I made a concerted effort to retrieve and save everything military that the family had stored away. Three generations of military service beginning with my grandfather in 1917 can amount to quite a lot of "stuff"! Today I have two rooms in my house devoted to the family archive and military history.

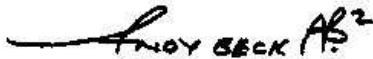
Since doing my father's birthday present, described in the attached article, Like Father, Like Son, I "caught the bug" and have collected three Ford GPW's, which are Ford's version of the World War II army jeep, and an American Bantam jeep trailer as well as dozens of uniforms from the 103rd, American Red Cross and other units. I have saved my dad's trunk which is filled with many of his personal items from World War II as well as his uniforms, papers and other memorabilia. I am always looking for more 103rd stuff. Nary a single antique shop or militaria show goes by without my eyes looking for 103rd paraphernalia.

If you have photos of my father or other 103d Signal Company men, I am interested in them as well. I have all the professional equipment to copy old photos at a tiny fraction of what a professional lab will charge. I will be happy to cover all the costs of insured, traceable shipping, both ways.

In addition, I am trying to track down Robert Sheldon, my father's driver. By any chance do you know his whereabouts? Of course, any 103rd documents are of interest.

I have enclosed a couple of articles about my work restoring 103d Signal Company jeeps. Enjoy! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Andy Beck

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Cover

The Confederate Air Force, that boisterous band of restorers, who prefer rebuilding airplanes rather than automobiles, staged a fly-in to Denver recently, bringing with them their famous B-17G, "Sentimental Journey." The big "Flying Fortress" is one of the few remaining flying examples of its kind and is beautifully restored and authentic, right down to the non-firing machine guns. It is based with the Arizona Wing of the CAF.

Taking advantage of this vintage backdrop, several local military buffs also showed up bringing many of their authentically restored military vehicles of the World War II period. Among them was a group of photographers and video makers who create "Living History" by posing in correct uniforms and equipment, re-creating certain periods and events of "The Big War."

Here we see a re-creation of the 50th mission of the 751st Bombardment Squadron, 457th Bomber Group, 1st Air Division, of the Eight Air Force, stationed in England on May 24, 1944. The target for the day was an industrial complex in Berlin, itself. We watch as the crewmen are delivered to their waiting bomber. Mechanics are still doing a few last minute things and the sky is overcast as it often is in England. The crewmen are looking quite sober and there is a lack of gaiety or horseplay because these young men have done this many times before and they know what awaits them in the gray sky: long cold hours and the very real possibility of death. The only hint of a smile is on the face of a war correspondent, who will go along on this ride, and is allowed the best seat on the Jeep: that next to the driver.

While there are those who may feel such scenes as this are best forgotten, there are many others, either actual participants in the war or those that came later, who bare a sentimental or clinical interest in the events and the machinery that shaped our destiny during those trying times.

On a smaller scale than the B-17, but just as popular (and a whole lot easier and cheaper to restore) is the "Jeep" which also played an important part in the scene of our "Living History." This one is owned and restored by V-8 Club member Andy Beck from Wheatridge, Colorado. It is Ford built and departed the factory in 1943. It is authentic down to the last nut and bolt and is marked to represent a Red Cross Detachment. The Jeep is a First Place Winner in The Military Vehicle Collector's Club, a well known organization of military buffs. Many members of the MVCC also belong to the Early Ford V-8 Club, if their vehicles happen to be Fords, and as Ford Motor Co. built many of the military vehicles in WW-2 it amounts to quite a few.

This cover then, (shot by Lou Mraz) is a tribute to the owners of military vehicles in general, and especially to those who also belong to The Early Ford V-8 Club. Their contributions are appreciated but seldom recognized.

"Fine Point" Corrections

Dear Editor,

Of course I was delighted to find Lou Mraz's fine photo of my GPW on the summer issue of *V-8 Times*. Not unfortunately a few details were mangled in translation by the time they found their way to print on page 8. Let's any GPW aficionados be offended I offer a few "fine point" corrections. The vehicle pictured is my 1945 Ford GPW rather than my '43 and its markings are of the Company Commander of the 103rd Infantry Division Signal Company. At least this is how my dad described his markings for the spring of 1945. My 1943 GPW is marked as an American Red Cross Field Director's jeep but, alas, it was not ready for the air show with the B-17G.

Although I am very proud of my GPW, it has never won an MVCC first place. However, in 1986 it did become the first military vehicle in Colorado history to win a first place in a show while being judged against non-military vehicles. I hope to win that MVCC 1st in 1989 when the international MVCC convention will be held here in Denver. Also, I am compelled to be honest and admit that it is not yet bolt-perfect regarding restoration. In fact there are several Korean War-vintage parts visible in the photo as well as one civilian part. (Oh, dread!)

In addition I should say something about the word "Jeep." My vehicles are all Ford model GPW, not Jeep. When we write Jeep with the capital "J," we refer to the registered trademark of the Jeep Corporation which came out after World War II. Naturally most folks call the venerable old 4 x 4 "jeep," as do I, but legally it is only proper with the lower case "j."

Also, we locals are quick to point out that our city name is Wheat Ridge, two separate words, not one word as you printed. Finally, I must point out that the handsome man behind the steering wheel is none other than your fellow Club member who restores these lovable old Fords. Lou Mraz is always quick to point out that if I park my two GPW's "just right" the two flathead fours sort-of make a "V-8." But then there is always my '65 Country Squire with 335,000 miles on its 289, but that is another story...

Thanks again for the beautiful cover and nice dedication.

Sincerely,

Andy Beck

Wheat Ridge, CO





Capt. Bernie Beck, Saverne, France, Jan. 1945. Son Andy Beck, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, Jan. 1980.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

By ANDY BECK

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Captain Beck was hurrying across the street when a photographer called to him. "Can you hold it right there, Sir?" Click! It was over in an instant and the image of the classic American crusader was engrained on the film forever. He was tired but he was proud; he was saving the world for freedom.

Fade out. Saverne, France, January 1945. Fade in the summer of 1978 in Boulder, Colorado, U.S.A. I am the Captain's son and I'm starting to think about what I can do for his 60th birthday, which is a year away. As far back as I can remember, I have always prided myself on creating unique gifts for people and this one had to be the best. Ever since I was a little boy I have had a framed "8 x 10" copy of that favorite photo on my wall. I looked at it again for the umpteenth-millionth time and an idea began to form in my brain.

This gift was to be the ultimate compliment. I decided to reproduce the famous picture and by reproduce I do not mean make another print, I mean theatrically restage the whole thing with me modeling as my father. When all was said and done, it took almost two years to produce. Many local military vehicle collectors helped supply equipment of all kinds. Wallie Fryer, Jim Herrick and Noel Johnson, all members of the Rocky Mountain Military Vehicle Historical Society, loaned me jeep parts and uniforms. You can't walk into a surplus store and buy a World War II uniform

anymore. A piece or two might be found but most of these old uniforms are long since sold out and now collectors' items. In fact, it took 15 months to find most of what I needed. The rest I just had to make do with whatever I could find.

The really big challenge was finding a World War II jeep. Checking newspaper ads only revealed overpriced wrecks, but on a July 4th tour in southern Colorado, I spied a jeep in a junk yard. It was also overpriced, but in good enough condition to restore. I made lots of phone calls to local collectors for advice and then I headed to the town of Las Mesitas, Colorado, to buy my big toy. After a ten-hour ordeal of towing the 1943 GPW home, the worst case of "buyer's regret" in Military Vehicle Collectors Club history began to subside. "Are you sure buying it was a good idea?" Pity my poor friend who had to listen to that question which was asked a thousand times on the drive home.

My father, Bernie Beck, had his 60th birthday on July 29, 1979. Unfortunately his birthday present was not ready. Too bad it wasn't even half ready. So about a week before his birthday, I called him up and said in my most confident, cocky voice, "Your present isn't ready. You'll get it when it is ready and when you get it you'll know why it took so long and that it is the best present you ever got." I had done a good job concealing the truth about the gift. The closest he ever came while playing the guessing game was

when he asked if I was going to give him the jeep. Sorry, Dad, but that's for me.

I had searched for a location for eighteen months in five states but with no luck. In April of 1979, I purchased a house in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, a suburban community northwest of Denver. The first day I drove to work from my new residence, I saw "the spot" only a mile and one-half from home. It was a small garage used by a commercial auto restorer who specialized in 1955-57 T-birds. Outside was a gas pump very similar to the one in the famous photo. Written on the glass globe on top was the brand name "Skelley" but I knew I could paint the "Esso" I needed. By January 1980 I had collected enough uniform pieces and restored the GPW sufficiently to look accurate in a photo, although a few of the parts were wood or cardboard mockups. I obtained permission from the owner of the T-bird shop and I was ready to go.

The actual photography took three days and over 200 pictures, both black and white as well as color. On the first day the sun angle was wrong and I used an incorrect lens. On day two, I finally put on the right lens but I was still not satisfied. Day three was better choreographed and I was pleased with the result. The location was on a major artery where confusion abounded. I set up the camera on a tripod and framed the photos I wanted. Wallie and Noel watched for cars while another friend, Barbara

Evans, told me where to stand in the photo and then tripped the shutter. In the darkroom sixty prints later, I held the photo I wanted.

The actual gift was two framed 8x10's with the original photo of my father next to the new photo of me. Just five days before his 61st birthday, I sat my dad down in his backyard and gave him his birthday gift. "I expected something larger," he commented as he began to peel off the wrinkled, used wrapping paper. He opened up the frames to see what was inside and for a minute he was a bit puzzled. Certainly he knew the photo of himself, but what was this other one? Then he realized what he was looking at and a big smile crossed his face. The compliment was paid. My father agreed that it was the best present he had ever received and for weeks after he carried it around showing it off to friends, family and business associates until I found a home prominently displayed in my parents' den.

Obviously, I too am very proud of this gift, but I can't resist every time I look at it seeing hundreds of technical mistakes. I start waxing theoretical about going out a fourth day to "do it right" when I realize that it is done and has been delivered. Technical precision was never an objective, as with all gifts, it is only the thought that counts.



Dad Studying His Present

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author, Andy Beck, is a licensed architect with the National Park Service in Denver, Colorado. His father, Bernard Beck, commanded the 103rd Infantry Division Signal Company in World War II and eventually retired from the U.S. Army Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel. Throughout his civilian life he worked in the field of sales promotion advertising. He died at the young age of 65 in January, 1985.



is the ESSO station still in Saverne?

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