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REBELLE RALLY—PART TWO
Interviews with the rest of the Toyota teams from the 2018 Rebelle Rally.

ARCTIC CIRCLE
Camping in the arctic in a Toyota Tacoma and Go Fast Camper.

LAND CRUISERS LOST
The story of Land Cruiser adventures in 1970s South Africa.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Our oldest turned 9 years old this month. He's been exploring with Angie and I since he was about 3 months old (FJ Summit 2010), and both Brenden and his sister Alana (about to turn 6) are developing a true yearn for adventure.

As I pen this, our amazing team has once again just handed me an issue full of inspiration, ideas, and excellent journalism. We're finishing our spring break week, enjoying the epic Colorado snow in th emountains. Brenden & Alana are already asking when the Summit is (we skipped last year, and they noticed).

I mention all of this because as I've written about for over 11 years, I hope that you find your inspiration for adventure and exploring within these pages. This issue, as with the other 40+ that came before, is full of amazing content.

Regardless of your location, your chosen exploration vehicle, your place in life, or plans for 2019. My hope for all of our dedicated readers is that you find what truly makes you happy. I hope that it's outdoors, as it is for our family.

I also invite you to check out our Last Word for this issue. We're working on a new project to compliment what we do with TCT Magazine, but a bit more family focused. We hope you follow our adventures here, and with the Well Rounded Traveler.

Until next time,

Shane

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

By TCT Staff

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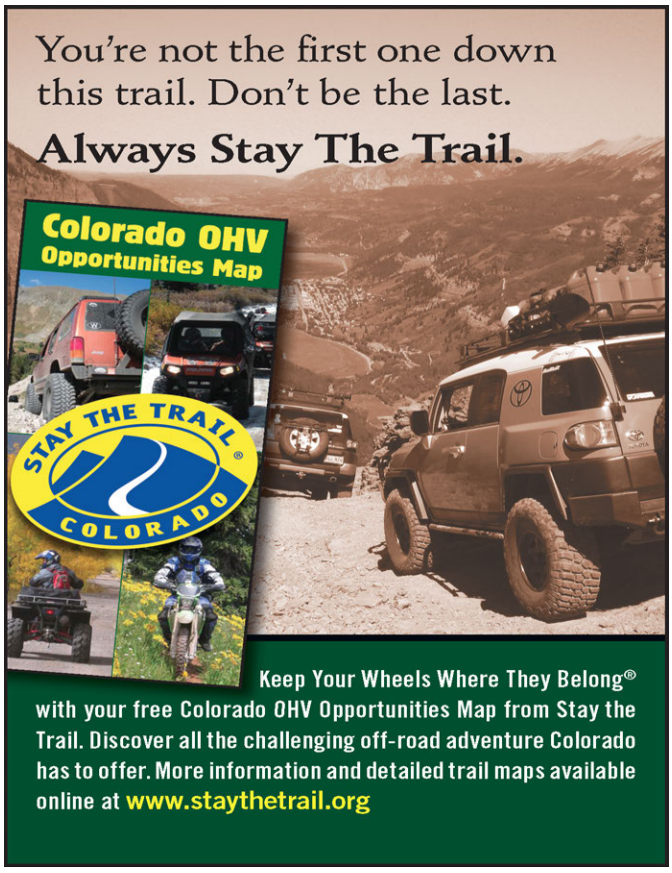

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

By TCT Staff

Pictured is the SL45/Side

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BODY ARMOR

Story by John Gaisford

The Man Who Lost Two Cruisers

A different FJ Land Cruiser and Willys CJ3B on the edge of the Makgadigadi Salt Pans, Botswana. ca. 1976

The Toyota Land Cruiser was first produced in South Africa in 1972, after a few batches had been imported prior to that. This early FJ 45 was a slow donkey of a machine, with a 3.8L motor, three-speed gearbox and a body of heavy steel that made just lifting the hood a challenge. Toyota later gave the Cruiser a bit more zip by adding a four-speed box in 1973 and then a 4.2L 2F engine in 1975. These trucks were strong performers under load, but when the transmission was overworked, the weak link proved to be the transfer case. Fine bits of steel would break off the splines inside, mixing around in the oil. Eventually the housing would crack open, splashing oil on the sand below like an egg being cracked into a bowl of pancake mix. Disgruntled drivers walked many miles for help all across South Africa, their otherwise trusty vehicles left maimed at the mercy of flood, tide, or even fire. Many a sorry soul was grieved with a sad story of loss at the hands of nature, stories which are still told only late in the night by white-bearded men with watery eyes staring into empty whisky mugs.

Boris's Beige camped near Cape Vidal, Zululand Coast 1977

Vehicles like these Land Cruisers proved to be a godsend to a group of wickedly adventurous off-road enthusiasts who thrived in 1970s South Africa. A bunch of beer-sloshing hedonists, their Jeeps, Land Rovers and Cruisers allowed them to get to all those faraway wondrous corners of the region where most souls dared not venture. They drove with the wind in their face and dust in their hair, and slept under the stars without worry of mosquitoes or lions or drizzle. They drank coffee and condensed milk at dawn, box-wine by night and were never really fond of clothing. Their beloved vehicles flew along miles of deserted beaches, crawled down rocky ravines to magical swimming holes, fled from charging elephants in the soft sand of the Kalahari, and allowed their hoods and tailgates to play host to platters of snacks and drinks fit for kings, served at sunset on the edge of salt pans or river estuaries.

Boris's first FJ Land Cruiser which got caught in a bush fire near Ghanzi, Botswana

VEHICLES LIKE THESE LAND CRUISERS PROVED TO BE A GODSEND TO A GROUP OF WICKEDLY ADVENTUROUS OFF-ROAD ENTHUSIASTS WHO THRIVED IN 1970S SOUTH AFRICA.

Amongst this motley bunch of teachers and farmers was a happy-go-lucky avocado pear dealer named

LAND CRUISER

Boris. To transport the rich green fruit, Boris found a brand new 1976 FJ 45 Cruiser with a 4-speed box and 4.2 liter 2F engine, which he proudly christened 'The Beige' due to its drab colour. The power and long pickup bin of The Beige meant that on weekend camping getaways it was usually Boris who carried the firewood, but also Boris who carried the young and pretty new teachers and nurses who had been invited along.

Boris and his Beige, Zululand Coast, 1977

But life hadn't always been good to Boris, that was not his first Cruiser, and had he not always been a farmer. He was in fact a diamond diver from Port Nolloth who had won his first Land Cruiser, an earlier model painted a dark green, on a high stakes game of cards in which he had risked a rather large diamond. Shortly after, he had sold that diamond for a fair sum and left his lonely life and the cold Atlantic Ocean behind him. He took his new Cruiser on an epic journey from the west coast, via Namibia and Botswana, heading for a place called Eshowe on the other side of the continent. A cousin of his had just started a job there as a teacher, and had good things to say about the town and the people. But on a deserted track near Ghanzi in Botswana, Boris's transfer case proverbially spread

The Amatikulu River mouth the morning after being broached, washing Boris's vehicle out to sea

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its black yolk over the wind-blown sands of the Kalahari. Not such a lucky card game after all—the previous owner had obviously subjected the transmission to much pulling of heavy fishing boats. Boris managed to get a ride on a donkey cart back to Ghanzi to send for a new transfer case, but while he was away, a bush fire spread through the area and swallowed up his Cruiser right where it stood. So ended his first Cruiser, and so began his bad luck.

Disheartened but not beaten, he decided to hitch hike the thousand-odd miles to Eshowe to find his cousin. It was here that Boris quickly made himself at home among the crowd of teachers and farmers. An affable and enterprising character, it wasn't long before he was making ends meet by trading avocados in his new Cruiser. He was also at home in a community of like-minded people who spent weekends enjoying their vehicles and the wild countryside.

Boris's FJ Cruiser and a Willys Jeep, Zululand

It was on one of these trips, a few days after full moon on the March equinox, where Boris once again ran into trouble. A convoy of Jeeps, Land Rovers and Boris's shiny new Beige set off from Eshowe one Friday afternoon to camp at Amatikulu beach for the weekend. A river estuary sometimes open to the sea, it was a fantastic place of bird life, exciting fishing, and big shady casuarina trees to camp under without anyone to bother you.

The estuary, closed off to the sea at the time, was calm as can be and made a wonderful mirror for the setting sun as camp was being made. As the moon rose, shrieks of laughter were carried across the estuary alongside the reflections of the fire to whatever crocodiles and birds were trying to sleep on the other side.

THE PARTY WAS IN FULL SWING WHEN A LONE AND FORLORN FIGURE WANDERED INTO THE FIRELIGHT AND INTERRUPTED THINGS. HE WAS A FISHERMAN ON HIS WAY BACK FROM CATCHING GRUNTER ON THE SAND BANKS NEAR PORT DURNFORD, AND HIS LAND ROVER HAD GOT BOGGED DOWN IN THE SOFT WET SAND.

The party was in full swing when a lone and forlorn figure wandered into the firelight and interrupted things. He was a fisherman on his way back from catching grunter on the sand banks near Port Durnford, and his Land Rover had got bogged down in the soft wet sand. Boris, yet to break his Land Rover pulling virginity with his new Cruiser, eagerly volunteered for the task. Loaded with willing hands, shovels and topped up drinks, The Beige set off to find the stuck Land Rover.

They arrived to find the high spring tide quickly encroaching and the vehicle in imminent danger. Digging commenced while Boris drove back and forth in the soft sand in front of the Land Rover to make a compacted runway of sorts. By now the surging tongues of low surf were lapping at the tyres of the Land Rover. A chain was attached and Boris's Beige began to pull while the others pushed, but without much success. The waves were now sloshing against the side of the wheels with more enthusiasm each time, and Boris could see the fisherman was starting to panic a bit. Against his better judgment, he began to reverse and shoot forward, jerking the chain but loosening the vehicle ever slightly each time. One particularly big jerk managed to loosen the Land Rover from its trap and slowly, wheels churning in 4WD low ratio, it was pulled up above the high tide mark and to safety.

The teary-eyed fisherman thanked them profusely and insisted on giving them his biggest grunter and a rather nice bottle of wine. The fisherman headed home, but the wine was opened then and there as the events of the evening were animatedly relived. An hour or so later as they decided to head back to camp, Boris started the Cruiser. But as he put it into 2nd low range and pulled off, the vehicle shuddered suddenly and then stopped, the engine revving but no drive going to the wheels.

OF BORIS'S BEIGE, WHICH HAD STOOD RIGHT THERE JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE, THERE WASN'T A SIGHT OR FRAGMENT, NOT EVEN A PATCH OF OIL-STAINED SAND. HE WAS LEFT A WOUNDED MAN, ONCE AGAIN MOURNING AT THE HANDS OF NATURE. BUT BORIS WAS AS STUBBORN AS HE WAS UNLUCKY, AND A YEAR LATER HE GOT HIMSELF YET ANOTHER FJ LAND CRUISER, WITH THE SAME 2F ENGINE AND THE SAME TRANSFER CASE.

An awful suspicion grew on Boris's mind, and peering under the vehicle he saw for the second time in his life the sight of sand soaked in black transfer case oil. He swore and cursed both the fisherman the moon for his misfortunes. All that jerking to pull the Land Rover out had clearly not been a good idea. But who was he to complain, the full moon would easily guide their walk back to camp and they could pull the Cruiser back to Eshowe tomorrow; it was safe from the tide where it was.

But somewhere in the early hours of the morning, while the campers were ensconced in their snores, exploratory waves sent by the rising equinox tide began to lap into the waters of the estuary. A small opening was made, and the fresh water started spilling out to sea, the flow getting stronger and stronger as the sand was eroded. By the time the campers woke, this channel had swollen exponentially into a roaring highway of deep water fifty meters wide, fuelled by the pent up volume of several months of healthy rainfall.

Of Boris's Beige, which had stood right there just a few hours before, there wasn't a sight or fragment, not even a patch of oil-stained sand. He was left a wounded man, once again mourning at the hands of nature. But Boris was as stubborn as he was unlucky, and a year later he got himself yet another FJ Land Cruiser, with the same 2F engine and the same transfer case.

For Boris and many others, these old lifestyles and affection for old trucks never change - forty years later the same Cruiser is still carrying loads of firewood and extra passengers on weekend adventures, without having cracked much more than a tail light. TCT

Story and photos by Kathy Locke

PART TWO

Rebelle Rally 2018 The Toyota Teams

MAKE SURE TO CHECK OUT ALL THE PHOTOS OF THESE TEAMS ONLINE!

Part Two of the Toyota teams from the 2018 Rebelle Rally is focused on the final four teams—Teams #171, #179, #182, and #184.

Following all the Rebelle Toyota teams was an experience that I still sometimes have trouble describing. I know when I speak about it to others, a big smile forms on my face, from ear-to-ear, and thoughts about the desert, off roading, and watching these incredibly tough and adventurous women navigate their way through the American West brings me so much joy. So much so, that I have now formed my own team, Front Range Rebelles, with my teammate, Stacey May. We plan on competing in this year's Rebelle Rally. After my trip last October, it convinced me that I needed to be a part of this once-in-a-lifetime adventure and that Stacey would be the perfect partner for it.

Make sure to follow the next round of amazing competitors in the Rebelle Rally this October!

TEAM #171

Vehicle: 2013 Toyota Land Cruiser
Driver: Amy Evans, Utah (Rookie year)
Navigator: Erica Merino, Utah (Rookie year)

HOW ARE YOU FEELING AFTER THE REBELLE?

AE: After the Rebelle came to a close, adrenaline and spirits were still high! It was such an inspiring event that I immediately started searching out new locations to venture to, while at the same time devising plans on how to participate again the following year. The Rebelle was challenging in ways I never could have prepared for. Emily Miller and her staff take you to these magical locations and then each morning inspire you to make smart decisions, challenge yourselves, improve upon your skills from the prior day, all while remembering to take in the magnificent beauty around you. I am still perplexed on how each day they brought the skill level up and the "head game" more challenging. It was perfect!

EM: I felt a lot cleaner and much more rested, but I still couldn't believe that Amy and I did it. That we started AND actually finished the rally. I couldn't stop dreaming about all things rally either. All I could see was maps and flags and road signs and car parts. I thought I might be going crazy. I just couldn't get it out of my head. I spent a lot of time reflecting on what we did well, what we didn't do well, conversations we had, people we met, the amazing scenery. It was complete brain overload for a bit, but what an amazing adventure. So amazing that it made my normal life seem kind of boring.

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

AE: The best moment of the Rally for me is hard to pin down. The landscape was breathtaking, the driving and navigating was beyond enjoyable. But at the end of the day it was the time spent with Erica. Each evening after we had scarfed down dinner and settled in for the night, we had no distractions from electronics, internet or television. We would rest, talk and laugh until we could no longer breathe. It took me back to childhood days when you truly immersed yourself in the moment. You had no "to-do" lists, no deadlines to meet, just pure happiness. The Rebelle brought moments beyond what I had hoped for.

EM: The best moment for me was when Amy and I got to the last check point before the finish line. It had been a rough day, but I knew we had to end on a high note. Finding that last check point couldn't have been more satisfying, because we were exhausted, wondering if we even knew what a compass was, and just over it. It completely changed our entire day and gave us a chance to acknowledge and relish in the success of finishing the rally together, as a team, as two girls who got ourselves into and out of so much crap together.

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

AE: The worst moment for me is easy to spot. It was the final day of scoring. We were in what turned out to be my favorite locations to drive, Glamis Sand Dunes. Erica and I had set out to find a flag, and I was convinced I knew exactly how to get there. Erica let me take the lead and I drove, and drove, and drove. I drove circles around trees, back and forth along the same railroad tracks. Ultimately, I took hours of our day and never successfully found the flag. I was devastated. After days of "refining" my navigating skills, I believed I had finally put it all together. I couldn't hold back the tears as I realized I still had loads to learn. Erica, with focus and determination, quietly told me where to drive and within minutes she guided us up and next to the second to last flag of the event. We gathered our time, coordinates and moved on. Drove up to the last flag to see another team celebrating at their success. There I realized, once again, what the event was really about.

EM: Oh wow, there was one night we were so lost. We

had already missed our base camp deadline, and we were stressed that they would have to send someone out to get us if we didn't figure our crap out quick. It was dark, it was cold, we were exhausted. We were about to run out of gas, and best of all, it was all being filmed. What made it so terrible is that I am not a quitter, and not only did I feel like we were going to have to give up, but I felt like I was letting Amy down.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SECTION OF THE RALLY?

AE: My favorite section of the rally will most definitely be shared with others! Emily and her team took us to the lush hidden greenery tucked away within the Mojave Desert, The China Date Farm. It was truly a magical location. As you dropped down in altitude through a curvy, sandy dry canyon, the last thing you would expect for the landscape to open up into was an oasis of date palm trees. It was there where we "self-camped" for the night. The owners had kept their quaint shop open late that night and served us caramelized date shakes while being appreciative for us making their location our home for the night.

EM: This is such a cliché answer, but I can't choose just one section. There were so many sections that just absolutely blew my mind. I loved the trip from Tahoe to Kingston, because I'm the most comfortable in the mountains, and I am a total hippie for wild mustangs and flocks of sheep. The Granite Mountains are amazing. It's difficult to believe that they're real. The date farm is this amazing little hidden treasure, and then, of course, the sand dunes. I mean, how did all of that sand, and it's a lot of sand, get there?!

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT/ADVICE FOR FUTURE REBELLES?

AE: For future Rebelles, I'd tell them to listen to Emily. I would hear her advice, but undoubtably I would not "hear" her advice until the following day. She puts her heart and soul into this event, and it is her wish that each and every Rebelle has the most majestic, mind-blowing experience ever!

EM: Really think about the partner you are signing up with. How you and your partner interact will either make or break this experience. It is so much more than if someone is fun, or nice, or a good driver or a good navigator. Think about how you both handle stress, how you communicate and how you resolve conflict. I couldn't have been luckier to have one of the most amazing human beings to ever exist tolerate me for so many days. She makes me a better person. So, yeah, find that person.

TEAM #179
FREE RANGE DAMES

Vehicle: 2012 Toyota Tacoma
Driver: Mercedes Lilienthal, Oregon (Rookie year)
Navigator: Elise Bent, Montana (Rookie year)

HOW ARE YOU FEELING AFTER THE REBELLE?

ML: It's a whole barrage of feelings. It's still physically very tired. Once I've fallen asleep, I'm dead to the world and I'm not used to that. Trying to catch up on actual sleep is pretty important. I'm very happy. I'm excited. I'm elated at how we did. Elise and my goal was to finish and finish strong, no matter what that meant—even if we were last in line, as long as we hit the finish line together and in one piece. And, we blew that out of the water! But I'm sad—I miss the camaraderie. I miss seeing everybody. I miss being on the road. I can't tell you how badly I want to be on the road still!

EB: I was happy to be home for two days, then I was like, ok, what next? "Empowered" is a word that speaks to me a lot. The whole experience, you know working so hard, and then having that immediate feedback of finding a checkpoint, was super, super cool and really helped me understand how much I could push myself and just how hard I could work at something and see results right away. Then I definitely miss the people, the adventure, and the scenery.

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

ML: There were so many! One of the greatest moments for me, was getting in sync with Elise and getting in sync with the Tacoma, that the rhythm just was there and I could talk back to what Elise was saying so she knew I heard her, and the truck running really well. There were three separate times, especially with the vehicle, that I was so in sync with it and it was so cool to drive, and we were talking well, and she was telling me where to go and how much further we had to go, and it was just gelling. It happened at different times, there's not just one, but all throughout the rally. It was just really cool.

EB: Every single checkpoint we got!

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

ML: I don't know if I would classify it as the "worst" but one of the most challenging was when we were trying to find an "in" to get into a green checkpoint and we had two others after that, and it was midway through the rally, and I just got on a berm and I had to kind of back myself around to go the other direction, and all of a sudden I started hearing this cyclical, rotational, clunking noise—and I thought that was our mechanical issue, and of course, that happened to be right when the photographers were there!

EB: (Speaking about the same day) We were having mechanical issues after realizing we were not in the right place at all. That was pretty exasperating, I thought. That was probably the worst. It was a bit frustrating and worrying.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SECTION OF THE RALLY?

ML: Johnson Valley—the tail end of the day where it was rocky and we had these steep inclines and declines. They pushed me because they were pretty tight and I'm used to off-roading in much smaller vehicles, so having an access cab pickup truck was completely new to me! I had to realize my tail's a lot longer in the Tacoma.

EB: There were different things I liked about each part. Johnson Valley was something so new—the terrain was so incredible and it was so easy to do terrain association and you were still free to do relatively straight lines on a heading. There was a little bit of some rocky, rock crawling in those mining areas. That was probably one of my favorite areas because it was still within our technical skill level to

drive but it was challenging and it was fun. Lots of variety!

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT/ADVICE FOR FUTURE REBELLES?

ML: Don't give up! Try hard, work hard and keep pushing! Don't be afraid to ask others for help. We talked to a lot of different people. I didn't think I was going to do this until I sent Elise a text in April saying, "Guess what, I'm really going to quit my career and I'm going to freelance." We talked to a ton of people. I can't even tell you, I didn't even know what the hell I was doing—I hadn't really off-roaded much before. I had just started.

EB: You know it's interesting, a lot of the ones I have are basically things that Emily Miller says. Stuff like, "In order to learn how to win, you have to learn how to finish." That resonated a lot with me because I don't think we had too much trouble getting across the finish line but there was so much about the process that we learned. We had to learn to improve, so it wasn't just really about crossing the finishing line, it was as a whole how everything worked, the whole experience. The experience of just getting to the start line too, that was a lot of work. You just have to commit and do it and figure it out as you go. You can count on other people to be super helpful and have their eye out for you.

TEAM #182
LOCOS MOCOS REBELLES

Vehicle: 2004 Toyota Tacoma
Driver: Laura Hardesty, California (Rookie year)
Navigator: Caroline Seale-Cole, Louisiana (Rookie year)

HOW WERE YOU FEELING AFTER THE REBELLE?

LB: When we first finished, there was just this huge high. I don't know how else to put it. I was just on this major high of feeling great. We accomplished what we set out to accomplish, and I was pretty proud of the fact that we didn't have any major problems. We didn't ever have a major fallout between the two of us. Didn't have any truck problems. I feel we were pretty good about communicating with each other. All the goals we set, we hit. We met all these really, really amazing people and then, all of a sudden, you're super attached to all these people and it's really sad when everyone has to go.

CC: I was really tired to be perfectly honest! It would make anybody tired. I, of course, felt accomplished. It's good to know that you can go out and get yourself out of your own problems at the end of the day. That you can be dropped off in the middle of nowhere with some maps and a compass and figure your way out of the paper bag. It's good to feel that you're self-sufficient—that you and your teammate can get through all these things together and if you do have a problem, you can fix it. I felt really good about finishing—that was of course our goal.

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

LB: There were times where you were driving these really amazing sections of off-road, or a wash, and we're just having such a great time driving it, and then we would get to that checkpoint, I would always yell out, "Yahtzee!" Like, when we would finally see a flag, I would just yell out, "Yahtzee!" You're having so much fun driving these off-road trails and washes and then you find what you're looking for, you're just so excited.

CC: I was always really happy if I could keep us on track! I had to trust myself so much when I was navigating. You would have to commit your time and your driver's energy into what you believe to be the right thing. I just really just loved when I got a checkpoint right, there was always your teammate there to celebrate.

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

LB: We had a really bad day on Day 2 or Day 3, I don't remember which day it was, and I was really unsure of where we were going to stand; we really thought we were going to lose all of our points for that day. We were still trying to figure everything out and it was like, "Oh my gosh, if we are falling on our faces this early on, what is the rest of this going to be like? Are we going to be able to pick ourselves up and keep going?" Everybody, Rachael (Ridenour) especially, was so supportive and helpful and made us feel like everything was going to be ok, and that those days happen to everybody.

CC: For me, exhaustion was a lot of it—mental exhaustion on top of physical exhaustion on top of uncomfortable environments. I was exhausted in whole new ways during this, and on Day 2, we had kind of a rough day and we were still trying to figure out enduros, and I just had to initially deal with myself at the end of Day 2. Rachael (Ridenour) came up to me and said, "You know, you're still here. Look up here at the stars. It's great to be here. It's ok to have a bad day. Character is forged in darkness, not in light." And that just hit me in a million ways and that was exactly what I was going through that day and that's what carried me through the rest of the competition.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SECTION OF THE RALLY?

LB: For me, for sure, it was the desert (Johnson Valley)! I'll just say that! Going up washes and stuff like that, my truck really excels and it's like the kind of off-roading where I can go a little faster. It's more fun for me. Although, I spent all of Johnson Valley broke out in hives! I was miserable in Johnson Valley because I had hives everywhere! And then, the second we left, it like, disappeared!

CC: We saw a lot of iconic places—places you recognized. Being from Louisiana, I haven't seen these places in person. I've never seen Lake Tahoe up close! We went to see Diana's Punchbowl (also known as Devil's Cauldron). That was really cool. We went to the dunes. We saw where they shot Star Wars. For me, it was all of these recognizable and iconic places. The whole trip was just cool. She (Emily Miller) took us to some really great places to see.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT/ADVICE FOR FUTURE REBELLES?

LB: Do it! Reach out—they (other Rebelles) really are actually that nice and actually want to help you. So, utilize them. The camaraderie is real. It's absolutely a competition but everybody is more interested in their personal best but they are still looking out for each other. I wished we would've reached out more in hindsight, but I really did not buy that everybody was as linked together and supportive as they appeared to be.

CC: Reach out to people who have done it before—they want to help you! I think it's a wonderful thing to get into, but I think you just need to be very aware of what you're doing and why you're doing it and what you need to practice and what you need to know. The past Rebelles can tell you all about that. They don't harbor information, they're not like that. They literally want to help everybody. If you want to do the Rebelle, do it. Call Rebelles. Talk to Rebelles. Reach out on the internet. They want to help.

TEAM #184
SASS-QUATCH REBELLES

Vehicle: 1991 Toyota Land Cruiser
Driver: Amy Hopkins, Washington (3x returning Rebelle)
Navigator: Kendra Miller, Washington (3x returning Rebelle)

HOW ARE YOU FEELING AFTER THE REBELLE?

AH: I actually have not used Facebook yet! I keep seeing all these messages coming through but I want to wait until I have time and I just haven't had a moment to sit down and look at everything. Also, I fall asleep every night at five o'clock, so there's that.
KM: Feeling good. Just trying to reintegrate into society and get used to technology!

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

AH: There are a few things that sort of jump out as moments. Getting done on Day 6, where we knew we did well, and we knew it was a big challenge for everyone else. When we went back to get our scores for that day and we got 95% on that day—it was a pretty awesome moment.
KM: It usually revolves around a black checkpoint I feel like.

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST MOMENT DURING THE RALLY?

AH: "Ooops, I didn't declinate that frickin' compass ring."
KM: (About the declination) I felt really stupid all day, every time we were out, wondering, "How are we still off?", and just thinking it might be equipment failure or maybe we're just rusty!

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SECTION OF THE RALLY?

AH: I really loved Johnson Valley and the dunes. I guess within Johnson Valley there were a few spots that presented us with an opportunity to drive straight up a big hill. Those were my favorite micro spots. There was this one hill in Johnson Valley, it might've been Nevada, I'm not even really sure now, they all had the sand dune in the front and I couldn't climb the sand dune so we went around the back and climbed up it that way. I loved that spot—we were the only ones up there and it got your heart rate going.
KM: I liked Johnson Valley because it's fun to navigate. The dunes are fun to drive around in. But I think the thing that makes the rally really special is the places that Emily takes us every year that are different. She finds these really cool, neat places to camp out in and have our self-camp night—diamond field gulch was a ghost town area that was really special and its places that I don't think, even if I went exploring on my own, I don't know if I would've found it or if I would've ever gone there. It just feels like a little treasure, I guess.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT/ADVICE FOR FUTURE REBELLES?

AH: The decision to do it, that is a life-changing decision

to do it and to commit to doing it because you will not regret it.
You will not regret it.
KM: Other than... just do it? You can do it. Save your money. Do it! You can do it! I always love that Emily, she talks about it being your movie, and it's like, yeah, you've only got one life to live, so you better make it the best one you can. TCT

[DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT ALL THE PHOTOS OF THE TOYOTA REBELLE TEAMS ONLINE!]

21970

EXPLORING ONE OF COLORADO'S MANY GHOST TOWNS IN THE TOYOTA TUNDRA

STORY & PHOTOS BY BAILEY JOHNSON

CABINS
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Lately, I've been very interested in the ghost towns of Colorado. There is something fascinating about a once fully-operational town that has almost vanished leaving decaying buildings and small belongings of those who called it home. On my list of places to check out was St. Elmo, Colorado.

After doing some research I found that St. Elmo has a few residents (three?) and has many privately-owned buildings that have been tastefully restored. On Saturday morning, my dog and I left the Denver area and headed out highway 285 towards Johnson Village.

Along the way we were greeted by a bright sunrise and clear blue sky. The temps were cool and the roads were empty. We were cruising past the ranch lands of Fairplay, Colorado and making good time on Hwy 285.

After enjoying the road for about 2.5 hours we approached the town of St. Elmo, Colorado. Rounding the corner we were greeted by the sight of a white house with an old B-Series International Harvester truck. This was just the beginning of the many buildings that line Main Street.

The Ghost Town Guest House is a bed and breakfast that was built with style of the late 1800's. It's really great to learn that most of the buildings on Main Street are original and well kept. The Miners Exchange is currently a general store for the town, but is operational only during some parts of the year. Historically it was a place where miners could stop in and exchange gold dust

Historically it was a place where miners could stop in and exchange gold dust and nuggets for cash, but today all you'll find are antiques and souvenirs.

It is wonderful to see the local community tastefully restore the buildings and keep the history alive.

and nuggets for cash, but today all you'll find are antiques and souvenirs.

There are several other unique structures further down the road, including an abandoned Post Office and Mercantile Building. The other major street in town, Gunnison Avenue, sits parallel to Main Street. It has a mixture of private residences and businesses, and is the entrance to Tincup Pass.

At one point the town of St. Elmo was home to over 2,000 residents mostly after silver and gold, but today it's a great blend of a ghost town and museum. It is wonderful to see the local community tastefully restore the buildings and

keep the history alive. Not only are the buildings cool, the scenery is beautiful. This part of Colorado is known for its rugged beauty. Forest Roads litter the surrounding areas and offer virtually any type of adventure and I highly recommend visiting when you get a chance.

After leaving town we headed out on one of the local forest roads for some exploration, cruising along in the Tundra on mostly-graded roads. After a couple of minutes exploring, the gorgeous Alpine Lake appeared. It was the perfect gift as we left St. Elmo and headed back towards civilization.

In the evening we were back home and tired after a day of exploring. It felt fantastic to get out for the day and check out some new terrain. Next time you're looking for an easy adventure with lots of history, consider stopping by St. Elmo, CO. TCT

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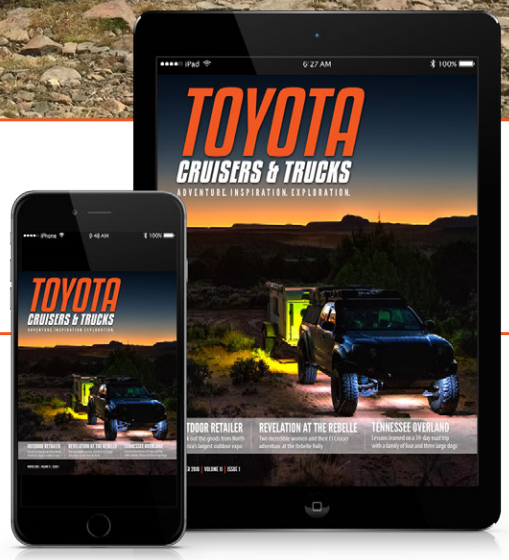

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Introducing Wanderlost Overland

If you've been around the Toyota adventure scene for a few years, you may have heard of Wanderlost. Mark and Merri are avid adventurers, and they cover most of their exploring and vehicle modifications on their YouTube channel **(LINK: http://tctmag.us/wanderlost)**. You'll want to subscribe.

We're excited to announce that Wanderlost will now be contributing to *Toyota Cruisers & Trucks* on a regular basis with everything from how-tos, to trip reports. For today though, we thought a quick introduction to their trucks would be a great place to start.

FROM MARK

Before starting each build, we spent countless hours researching specs, reviews, and customer experiences. We search for parts that are proven to be dependable, from manufacturers with reputations for being stable and possessing exceptional customer service and support.

The builds are nothing too extreme. Our goal is to keep them as dependable as possible, yet capable of getting us into places stock vehicles would have difficulty navigating. You'll notice many similarities between the two rigs. We're sticking with what works!

Although there's always something to entice us, the FJ is pretty much where we want it to be. The 4Runner has more modifications ahead, such as a roof rack, cargo drawers, etc. to make it a more efficient "overland" vehicle. TCT

2007 FJ CRUISER BASE MODEL

- **Suspension** – ToyTec Boss 3" lift
- **Front** – 2.5" diameter shocks with 650# springs, SPC upper control arms
- **Rear** – 2" diameter shocks with SuperflexHD springs and HD SPC lower links
- Extended braided steel brake lines
- Front sway bar sliding disconnects
- **Tires** – 295/70/17 Cooper Discoverer SST with a much needed body mount chop.
- **Wheels** – steel Pro Comp Series 97, 17"x9", Spidertrax 1¼" wheel spacers to clear the front calipers.
- **Armor** – aluminum engine, transmission, and transfer-case skid plates from RCI Off-road. Rear lower link skids from Metal Tech.
- **Sliders** – with treads from Expedition One
- **Front Bumper** – steel Trail Series w/single hoop from ExpeditionOne
- 10K# Warn Zeon winch. Piia off-road lights.
- **Rear Bumper** – steel Trail Series from Expedition One
- LED headlight conversion
- TRD CatBack exhaust
- **On Board Air** – under hood compressor-Viair 400H
- Rear door storage rack with drop-down table from Orange Boxx Fab

2017 4RUNNER TRD OFF ROAD

- **Suspension** – ToyTec Boss 3" Lift
- **Front** – 2.5" diameter shocks with 650# springs, SPC upper control arms
- **Rear** – 2" diameter shocks with remote reservoirs, SuperflexHD springs
- **Tires** – 285/70/17 Nitto Ridge Grapplers
- **Wheels** – factory black, TRD Pro.
- **Armor** – steel engine, transmission, transfer-case skids from RCI Off-road
- **Sliders** – angled w/ kick-out from RSG Off-road
- **Front Bumper** – steel Slimline Hybrid w/ High Clearance Kit from Southern Style Off-road
- 30" Rigid light bar
- 8.5K# Smittybilt winch
- **Rear Bumper** – steel w/ dual swing-outs from CBI Off-road
- HID low beams conversion from HID Kit Pros
- **On-Board Air** – Medium Duty System with 2½ gallon tank from Viair
- Rear window storage panels from Orange Boxx Fab
- Dual battery system from Overland Power Solutions
- Custom fuse/relay panel from Power Trays

[FRAMED]

f/10 160s 16mm

Exploring Alpine Lake and unpaved roads of Colorado.

PHOTO BY BAILEY JOHNSTON

[FRAMED]

f/32 15s 70mm

Camping in a meadow of flowers in Flathead National Forest, Montana

PHOTO BY DUSTIN MILLER

TOYOTA

[FRAMED]

f/11 160s 18mm

Little Bear Canyon, Gallatin Gateway, MT

PHOTO BY AARON THIES

[FRAMED]

f/8 100s 24mm

At the top of the Hailstone Butte in Alberta, Canada. The rainbow appeared just as the weather was clearing after a massive Hail storm.

PHOTO BY VILL VAN DER MERWE

View from the Denali Highway

ARCTIC ADVENTURES IN A VINTAGE LAND CRUISER

PART TWO

Story and photos by Michael Perez

AFTER RETURNING FROM DEADHORSE, WE KNEW WE WOULD HAVE TO START HEADING HOME. The trip home was going to be an adventure. We were planning to travel to Circle, Denali National Park & Denali Highway, Top of the World Highway, Robert Campbell Highway, Cassiar Highway, then onward south to the States.

Just before we hit Fairbanks, we headed to Circle via the Steese Highway. Circle is located 160 miles North of Fairbanks on the Yukon river. It was named by gold miners thinking they were on the Arctic Circle, though actually they were 50 miles south of it. During the pre-Klondike gold rush days, Circle was known as the largest log cabin city in the world, "Paris of the North," with eight dance halls and 28 saloons. The discovery of gold in the Klondike reduced the town in size and importance, then becoming a jumping off point for mining operations along the Yukon river.

Crossing into Canada on the Top of the World Highway

End of the Steese Highway in Circle Alaska on the Yukon River

On the George Black Ferry crossing the Yukon River to Dawson City

The Steese Highway starts off paved, then becomes dirt/gravel. The road plunges into the boreal forest with the pine trees so thick, the trunks seemed like a sold wall. As we drove, we started gaining in elevation and the scenery started to change. The trees gave way to tundra, and the land seemed to be covered in a carpet. We stopped at Eagle Summit, which at 3,600 ft elevation, was the highest point on the highway.

Since it was summer, the land was alive with little flowers. We spent some time reading the information placards that explained the tundra life and the wildlife that live there. We were surprised that grizzly bears inhabit the tundra as well as the forest. Standing on the summit we, were treated with the pure sounds of nature: the wind blowing, the occasional chirp of a bird and the low buzz of insects.

Our solitude was broken with the sound of a of a diesel Super Duty pulling into the summit parking area. Time to move on.

Back on the road, we could see the expanse of the tundra dotted with remains of the winter snow. One could only imagine how brutal the winters are.

Suddenly the radio came alive with Larry's voice exclaiming "Look! At 10 o'clock! A wolf!" We

quickly stopped and brought up our binoculars, scanning the tundra for movement, but we had missed him. Larry explained that he saw some movement, turned his head and saw a wolf with an animal in its mouth shaking it... possibly a Caribou calf.

We dropped back down in the forest and drove past homesteads off the road. No powerlines up here, true living off the grid. The idea of living up here in the wilderness is very appealing, even romantic. That is until you start thinking of hauling water, chopping wood, or driving four hours to buy essentials. A tough life not suited for everyone.

As we neared Circle, there were more residences; some along the river had fish wheels on the bank. We finally made it to Circle and the end of the road. The Yukon River is immense, extremely wide and flowing rapidly. In a way, it reminded me of portions of the Amazon River I have seen. Along the bank were some small boats pulled up to the shore and a small one vehicle ferry.

Looking at the river, I could imagine the steam-powered river boats fighting against the current, carrying thousands of anxious gold miners to the Klondike gold fields; none of them knowing the gold rush of 1898, the year before, was already over.

The municipal camping area was a dirt lot and not very appealing. Also not appealing: the drunken guys milling about and very interested in our presence. We took a couple of pictures and headed a block away to the H.C Company store. General stores like this in the countryside

Mrs. BadlandsExpeditions and I having Cocktails in view of the Gulkana Glacier.

Main street Chicken Alaska

are always stocked with the most unusual items. Lisa found some Brer Rabbit molasses, which, unbeknownst to me, she had been looking for.

The owner was an avid photographer of the aurora borealis and the store had many breathtaking pictures of this beautiful phenomenon. Some of the Inuit believe this is a sign of their spirits playing a game with a walrus skull as the "ball". Anyway, it was too early in the season to be able to view such a gift from Mother Nature.

Time to find a camping site. As we drove south, we stopped at a bar in the small community of Central. We asked about camping and were directed to an area by Bedrock Creek. We were rewarded with a tree covered area next to a creek with rapidly flowing water. No better sound to go to sleep to.

We launched into our familiar routine, and soon Larry had a roaring fire going and the smoke was helping keep the area clear these annoying bloodsuckers. I started on dinner, tonight was chili, in the pressure cooker. The freeze dried sirloin steaks, after rehydrating all afternoon were perfect for this meal. Time for a toast, as always, I splashed a bit of my single malt on the ground for Pachamama (Mother Earth) and we gave thanks for another successful day.

After a quick resupply in Fairbanks, we headed to Denali National Park (DNP). As every other drive in Alaska the scenery was beautiful. We arrived to Denali and were greeted with a chilly rainy dreary day. The town of Denali was a typical tourist trap with cheap t shirt shops to crazy expensive art galleries.

DNP is unique in that one can only drive a small distance into the park. The majority of the park can only be explored by taking a tour bus. This is to minimize the environmental impact on the park by the multitudes of tourists.

We decided on a four-hour tour. Each bus driver is a trained naturalist so we received an informative briefing about the history of the park, ecosystem and varied wildlife. We also made a couple of stops where there were interpretive Rangers who assumed a persona, such as a Ranger in a cabin from the 1930s, to explain the hardships in the park endured by the Rangers. DNP is the only park that still uses sled dog teams to conduct winter patrols, which started in the 1920s.

Like 70% of most DNP visitors we did not see Mt McKinley. After the tour we headed out to the Denali Highway and found a nice spot to camp. Despite the rain, we were nice and dry under the Batwing awning.

We awoke to a sunny day and continued on the highway. It seemed with each curve of the road the scenery was more spectacular than the previous view. We were greeted with glacier views and vistas that went on for miles.

Pedro Dredge in Chicken AK fireweed in bloom.

With daylight lasting almost 24 hours, we almost lost track of time and finally set up camp in the sight of the Gulkana Glacier. As usual I did a walk around looking for bear sign and saw some spoor in the soft ground. There seemed to be no escape from the omnipresence of bears in Alaska. We had air horns, bear spray, and as a last resort: guns.

This was the first time we had to use our head nets, though not against mosquitoes but against flies. Tomorrow we would start driving north to start our trip south back home.

We broke camp early and headed to Delta Junction, which is the terminus of the Alcan Highway. The name makes one think of a town but there is not much there. A couple of motels, an RV park, IGA, NAPA, restaurants and two gas stations. As fate would have it a friend of Lisa's lives in Delta Junction, so we were meeting Debbie for breakfast.

Debbie was waiting at the Alaska Steak House for us and we had a gigantic breakfast. We took advantage of the Wi-Fi to catch up on news and of course social media.

Over breakfast, Debbie filled us in on how it was living in a small Alaskan town and how Alaska attracts people who just want to escape the world and be alone for many different reasons.

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After breakfast we were back on the Alcan headed east. Next stop was Tok, which is the first stop in Alaska on the Alcan Highway. We had to meet up with Brian of Wolfhawk Shipping to arrange to send our handguns back to Montana.

Traveling in Canada with handguns is very difficult. We had heard horror stories from other travelers, especially from Texas, being extensively searched by Canadian Customs while being asked "Where is the handgun? I know you have one, you're from Texas."

Much easier is to stop at one of the Wolfhawk Shipping affiliated FFL dealers in Montana or Washington (other locations as well). That dealer will ship your pistol, holsters, magazines to Wolfhawk in Tok. You pick up your package and you will be appropriately armed while in Alaska. This works as it is not a FFL transfer. A great system.

A quick top off with fuel and we were headed to Chicken, Alaska. As we drove North on the Taylor Highway, we were back in pristine wilderness. The first 60 or so miles are paved, but due to the frost heaves, it can be a roller coaster ride.

We headed to a nice BLM campground, West Fork, for the evening. We had purchased some fresh food at the Three Bears in Tok and were ready to kick back, toast another day on the road and make some spicy sausage skillet—one of my favorite dishes for the Skottle.

The campground was empty, with the exception of some bicyclists and the camp host Hans from Phoenix. Of note was the latrine in this campground; it was spotless and Hans accepted our compliments with a broad smile.

As Lisa and Larry gathered firewood, I prepped dinner and soon the Italian sausage, onions, mushrooms and zucchini were cooking away. With a nice fire in the fire ring and cocktails in hand we consulted the map and planned our next day. Soon dinner was ready and paired with a nice Cabernet Sauvignon we had a five-star meal in the best outdoor restaurant God could offer.

It was day 48 and for some reason we were starting to think that it was time to head home. Home was a good two weeks away.

The road changed to gravel and was smoother. Next up was Chicken, Alaska—an old mining town. The original miners wanted to name the town after an indigenous bird that provided food for them: the ptarmigan. Problem was, none of the miners could spell Ptarmigan, so they went with Chicken. The town and surrounding area still have active gold mining operations.

Chicken has a RV park/ gift shop, post office, bar and burger barn. At the Chicken Gold Camp there is the opportunity to rent gold pans, sluices, dredges and to pan for gold in Chicken Creek. Any gold you find you get to keep.

The Pedro Dredge (on the National Register of Historic Places) is also located at the camp. The dredge operated from 1938 to 1967, first in Pedro Creek, north of Fairbanks. There the 500-ton dredge was disassembled, moved to Chicken and reassembled to work in Chicken Creek. The dredge mined over 55,000 ounces of gold the eight years it worked on Chicken Creek. The sheer size and complexity of this machine is a tribute to the ingenuity of man and his desire to obtain riches.

The road is curvy and gravel. At times it follows creeks and we could see people panning for gold as well as one large mining operation with heavy

equipment. We guessed it must be worthwhile for all the expense of obtaining that expensive equipment and transporting to the middle of nowhere.

We are now driving on the "Top of the World" highway heading for Dawson City, Yukon. We were lucky to have a clear day to enjoy the never-ending views. We were soon running out of Alaska and would be crossing into Canada.

We pulled over by the ruins of an old roadhouse. Time to unload the 45/70 and 12 Ga. and get them safely into cases so as not to scare the Canadians when we cross the border.

Right before the border crossing the gravel/dirt road becomes paved and we rolled up to the port of entry. Crossing back into Canada was easy. I guessed they could see we did not have any handguns on our prior entrances, so we were quickly on our way.

Shortly we would be in famous Dawson City the destination for the thousands of men and women hopeful to strike it rich in the goldfields. But alas, if only they knew the gold rush was over a year before they actually made to Dawson City.

Dawson City is the home of the sour toe cocktail and that where the story takes a turn, a turn to the north. TCT

The author and his wife on the Top of the World Highway driving from Chicken AK to Dawson City, Yukon

TOYOTA
NL
56-BH-KP

Across the vast plains of COLOMBIA, LOS LLANOS

Written by Karin-Marijke Vis
Photography by Coen Wubbels

Where: Los Llanos, Colombia – tropical grasslands and savannah. There are entries east into Los Llanos on the road 'La Via Marginal de la Selva' (Route 65). We drove from Paz de Ariporo via the hamlets of Primavera and la Venturosa to the border town of Puerto Carreño, some 450-500 miles.

When and Why: The dry season is November-March. With little water available the chances of spotting wildlife are best in the dry season. The main rainy season is June/July, which is the best season for hardcore off-roaders.
Whatever the season, you will be in a part of Colombia that is little visited by other travelers.

We were camped in the middle of nowhere, a landscape of sand, shrubbery, dry vegetation and pools drying up. Above us the Milky Way shone brighter than ever since we were so far away from the urbanized world. Twinkling stars against a pitch-black sky faded as a cresting moon began to climb the heavens. Nocturnal creatures had started their nightly concerts and we heard the calling of owls. Only an hour earlier, the cries of hurly monkeys had resonated in the air, announcing it was late afternoon and the sun was about to set. For us this meant hurrying up to find a place to camp for the night.

That, however, had been far from self-evident. Thus far, Los Llanos, praised on the back of a truck in black and red letters for being paradise, had consisted of grasslands fenced in by cattle ranches. We didn't spot any sidetracks and were getting quite frustrated about this. We were further aggravated by the bad road on which we were driving. It cut straight through the Los Llanos plains, which stretch across parts of eastern Colombia and southwestern Venezuela. Instead of asphalting the road (as the locals had been promised for years), the paving had been executed by throwing 4 to 8-inch stones on the surface and hoping that the weight of the oil trucks would make them sink into the earth.

The result was worse than washboard. We were bouncing up and down and the Land Cruiser suffered from the constant vibration and bumps. The question was not if something would break, but what, and when. Screws quickly started falling left and right. The first fell on the windshield wiper. Coen tried to retighten it but to no avail. That whole section of the car is skewed. Since the second necessary bolt had already missing for ages there now was not much left to keep the A-pillar

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in its place. Five minutes after we were back on the road one of the screws above my side of the windowpane fell on the floor mat. We sighed and battled on.

Our speed was further slowed down by an average of three speed bumps for every mile or so. There were warning signs alright. However, their location bore no relation to the actual "policias acostados" (literally 'sleeping police officers', as speed bumps are called here). The noise of driving was horrendous. Coen's window was rattling and the fridge was bouncing up and down. Coen's eyes were focused right in front of the Land Cruiser to find the least damaging course and so I was his eyes for looking into the distance. As talking was impossible because of the racket, I indicated bad spots coming up using my arm. As the day wore on, Coen's already bad mood worsened. It doesn't happen often that he continuously curses everything and everyone. Neither does it often happen that I don't want to be in Coen's company. However, this was one of those moments. The road was so rough that our moods had deteriorated into exhausted, brute irritability.

All around us, vast cattle ranches stretched across the landscape. Fences denoted ownership: white with blue tipped fences, black with red tipped fences. The cows, big and white with a big hump, had no shade to speak of except for an occasional, lonely tree. It had to be scorching hot for the animals. Parts of the fields had been burned to stimulate the growth of fresh grass. Was this the exciting, off-the-beaten-track road we had picked for our ultimate road trip in Colombia? Would we have 500 miles of this?

When we thought it couldn't get any worse than it was, it fortunately didn't. On the contrary, things quickly changed for the better in every possible way.

Enjoying It

After our stunning first-night camp, we continued eastward. Road conditions quickly improved, varying from acceptably rough roads to asphalt and beautifully, meandering dirt roads across the savannah. Birds of prey circled above the grassy fields and falcons sat on wooden fences. Other birds we saw were ibises, Jesus birds, swallows, spoonbills and grey herons.

Next, we spotted bigger animals: capybaras. First, three of them on the left side of the road, later enormous groups with lots of young. It was late February and water was getting scarce now that the dry season was ending. Wildlife was concentrated in and around the few remaining water holes. Caimans shared their territory with small, freshwater turtles. In the distance grazed some small deer. We were elated. This made up for all the hardship.

Meanwhile, side roads were not a given. Late afternoon we came at a crossing with the main road turning south and a smaller one going straight ahead. We took the latter. The surface became smoother and we wondered if this road would lead to the place we needed to go. Time would tell. For now, it was a good option because only ten minutes later we came across a field without a fence. Yes! Part of the vegetation had been bulldozed down, so most likely this was to become an agricultural field, but for this night it was ours. Coen bounced a bit farther down the field, so we were out of sight, standing among tall bushes where we got the occasional company of a deer. Another corner of paradise amidst the wilderness of Colombia's grass plains.

We had another 300 miles to go and were looking forward to it. This road trip has a lot to offer: traveling off-the-beaten-track, the opportunity to watch wildlife and do some amazing rough camping. To any overlander looking for adventure and pushing boundaries, go check it out! TCT

Story and photos by Michael Holland

Land Cruiser Power

Powering Up a LC200 in today's electronic world

While seated around the campfire, my daughter, Lilly, asked: "Can you please plug in my iPhone?"

"Don't forget to grab me a sparkling water." My wife, Louise, added. These are just two examples of the importance electronics and power play in any overland vehicle build. Yes, at times, I wish the world was simpler and comprised of fewer electronics. Trust me. Every time I sit in my Land Cruiser 200 Series and see all the buttons (some of which I have never touched), I wish we could rely less on electronics. But, that's not the case; and electronics are here to stay. It's the present and the future.

This past year, I spent time planning and building a 200 Series Land Cruiser. I called experts Mike Smith of Bump It Offroad ***(see TCT Summer '18 Edition)*** and Kurt Williams of Cruiser Outfitters to assist with the build. My previous Land Cruiser 100 build helped me decide for the 200 Series build what I needed to repeat and what I needed to add. On my previous 100 Series build, I didn't install a dual battery system. For the 200 build, I knew I needed to make that installation. Also, I wanted to repeat the installation of extra USB ports to recharge phones, tablets, etc. Finally, I needed to add a "central

command" station so I could control the vehicle's accessories (i.e. lights, compressors, and differential lockers and eliminate all the extra switches for each accessory inside the vehicle.

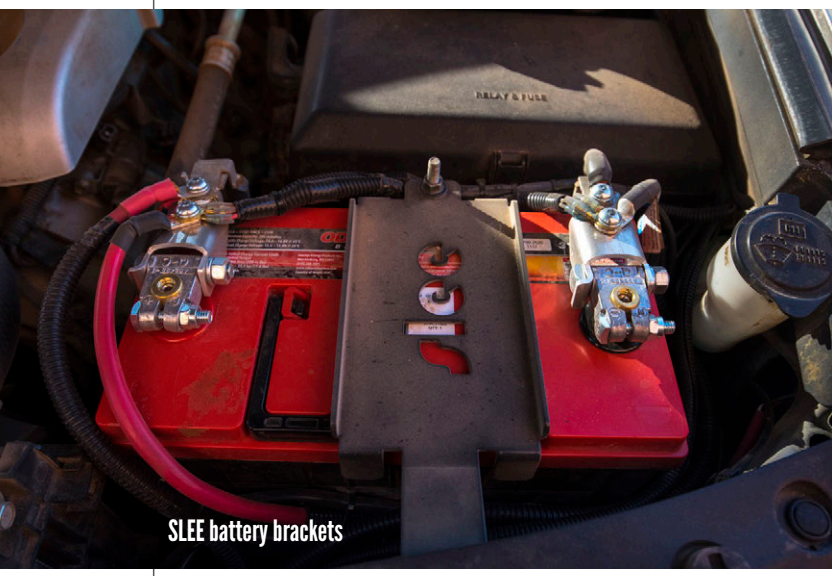
IBS DUAL BATTERY SYSTEM

Dual battery systems have been available for a while and, for many, a necessary upgrade. In my previous 100 Series Land Cruiser, I used a larger battery and a solar panel for charging when necessary. All worked well. But, for this new Land Cruiser 200 build, I desired a dual battery system. Why? I wanted a backup battery for safety when traveling to remote places and a battery dedicated solely to power my refrigerator and extra USB ports. Many systems are available, but I decided upon the Intelligent Battery System (IBS).

The IBS Battery Charger was developed in Switzerland as a total automatic system. Connect it, and forget it. Yes, the complete kit came from Extreme Outback and was installed by Kurt Williams at Cruiser Outfitters. The IBS processor detects each battery's strength and the charging voltage of the alternator. The IBS links both batteries while driving and then automatically isolates them when the ignition is off. I use my auxiliary battery at camp.

The system detects when something is not right with a battery and terminates sending a charge to the "questionable" battery. If need be I can manually link the batteries if need be when high voltage is of concern, such as when using a winch. George, the owner of Extreme Outback, told me that: "For most people, running the IBS System on automatic mode is perfect. But, it's nice to know you can switch to manual mode and link the batteries." Kurt mounted the LED display on the center column; the one touch

IBS dual battery system


SLEE battery brackets

operation allows me to see the strength of each battery. Granted, I never witness the IBS system "working" under the hood; but I count on it to protect and manage the batteries of my Land Cruiser.

Every dual battery system needs, batteries. I chose to use a group 31 battery for the main and a group 35 for the secondary. Both batteries need to withstand constant discharge/charge cycles. Many batteries can't withstand repeated charging cycles and eventually just stop accepting a charge. After researching, I choose the Odyssey AGM Batteries. These batteries have a longer service life and a faster recharge cycle: they are vibration resistant and totally maintenance free. The lead plate construction offers more battery power within it and better overall performance. The 4-year, full replacement warranty showcases that Odyssey "stands behind" what they build--batteries.

ARB LYNX display

In the backcountry, these batteries have performed flawlessly. I can easily touch the monitor to see the status of each battery. The Odyssey Batteries paired with the IBS Dual Battery System is definitely a "sit and forget" overlanding piece of equipment.

SLEE BRACKETS

For years, SLEE Offoad from Golden, Colorado, has made specialty Toyota products. SLEE is a Land Cruiser enthusiast store but also specializes in other Toyota vehicles such as the Tacomas and Tundras. A quick scan of their website reveal that they make and carry a larger main battery tray and secondary, auxiliary battery tray for the 200 Series—sold! The brackets and instructions made my installation a breeze. The Odyssey Batteries secured nicely and fit the brackets perfectly.

ARB LINX SYSTEM

In today's electronic world, controlling electronics is half the battle. Or, should I say knowing how to control them? Many viable solutions are available on the market today. However, a new item that was launched during SEMA 2018, was ARB's LINX system. This system is comprised of a central box into which accessories are wired; the driver

uses a small tablet to control them. I mounted the tablet on the dash and the central box under the glove box inside the cab.

I arranged for Kurt Williams to install the LINX system in my 200 Series. He linked an ARB dual air compressor, two VisionX Adventure Lights, an ARB rear locker, and a battery monitoring system to the LINX control box. All are controlled on the LINX tablet with a touch screen. He mounted the tablet close to the driver's seat for easy accessibility. Kurt and I sat in the front seats and experimented with the LINX system. The system incorporates many features and attributes. We set the LINX tablet to display my battery voltage, directional heading, and speed while driving. A tablet controls my electronic accessories! Yep, electronics play an important role on the overlanding, vehicle world.

For my Land Cruiser 200, I knew that I needed USB ports. In today's world, charging accessories is a necessity. My 2008 did not have one USB port. Kurt installed two in the back of the vehicle and made both live by connecting the ports to my auxiliary battery in order to charge phones and accessories when the vehicle is off.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is some truth about trying to keep vehicles simple and reliable. But, electronics reflect reality. My wife loves having the use of a fridge (so do I), and my daughter wants to charge her iPhone (so do I). A necessary evil? In today's overlanding vehicles, electronics provide great benefits the overlander!

Embrace the electronic enhancements. TCT

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SLEE OFFROAD
sleeoffroad.com
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ARB 4X4 ACCESSORIES
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ARCTIC CIRCLE in a Go Fast Camper

By Dustin Miller

This Tacoma build started with the decision to sell my 2008 4Runner, which I had been building up over the past 10 years. After committing to part ways with it, I began building out the Tacoma in my mind. What I had to work with was already a highly capable truck: 2017 TRD Pro Tacoma – minus the tires since Toyota put some real tires on this truck. I wanted it to be lightweight. In fact that, was the biggest objective with this build. I opted to go with as much aluminum as I could. One reason I chose to go with a Tacoma vs 5th gen 4Runner is I wanted to have more space and just something a little different than the previous build. Another reason is because I wanted a camper setup.

Go Fast Campers out of Montana appealed to me when I first saw their product. Initially, they had only a rendering and a few shots of a prototype. After speaking with them directly, I decided to take a chance on a new company and I put down my deposit. Weighing in at a scant 250 lbs., it is one of the lightest camper systems on the market. It is built to last and 100% made in the USA.

Fortunately for me, I reside in the same town as Slee Off-road. After they had done previous work on the 4Runner, I knew they were the shop I wanted working on the Tacoma. The list of parts formulated, followed by the shopping and waiting. With almost all the parts ordered and the 4Runner sold, it was time to set a date for a dramatic transformation. I really can't say enough about the professionalism and the quality of work that Slee Off-road does. They have as much passion about these trucks and it really shows in the detail of their work.

To me adventure travel means getting out there and exploring areas that are new to you. Specifically, areas that are voids to most of the population and are not found in a travel brochure. For me, this all stems from having a love for the outdoors. I grew up with a desire to always be outside, and luckily had an outlet for that on my grandparents' farm in West Virginia. That's where I learned about wildlife, hunting, fishing, and how to drive. My grandfather used to let me and my brother drive his old trucks in the hayfield. We could barely reach the pedals—how we didn't destroy more than we did is beyond me. By the time I hit high school, I had developed an unwavering connection to the outdoors. This passion was fueled by hunting and fishing trips with my uncle. From Trout fishing in the mountains of West Virginia, to canoe trips into Minnesota BWCA. I couldn't get enough of it. I was constantly reading anything I

LONG HOURS BEHIND THE WHEEL AND HAVING TO MOVE AND CALCULATE EVERYTHING ON YOUR OWN IS A LOT TO TAKE ON.

could about adventures involving the outdoors. Jack London was always and still is a favorite.

I've experienced multiple adventures. My latest was a solo trip up Dempster Highway starting out in Golden, Colorado. Solo trips take on a whole other level of meaning. Inner reflection and the solitude that restores you to your roots. A solo trip of that magnitude was at first a daunting idea. But I wouldn't change it for the world. Is that kind of trip for everyone? Most definitely not. Long hours behind the wheel and having to move and calculate everything on your own is a lot to take on. But it's also very rewarding, dare I say a spiritual experience, and gives you a since of accomplishment. Passing the Arctic Circle is one of those moments that doesn't take time to sink in. You know instantly that is a moment that you'll always remember. Those moments are what I live for.

If I'm not on a trip, I'm often thinking about the next one. That's half the fun. The anticipation of being on the road again. This last trip took me north, into the lands of

DAY THREE, I HIT THE CANADIAN BORDER. GOING THROUGH CUSTOMS ENDED UP BEING A BIT OF A HASSLE.

the midnight sun and Dempster Highway—a rugged gravel road stretching around 458 miles one way through some of the wildest country I've ever seen.

My first night of camping was eight-hours away in Big Horn NF. I got an early start the next morning and headed north towards Montana, eventually finding a campsite in the Flathead NF. It was a picturesque camp site with wild flowers covering the field and the sun setting behind the beautiful Rocky Mountains—it felt like a dream. I could hear wolves howling in the distance.

Day three, I hit the Canadian border. Going through customs ended up being a bit of a hassle. I was carrying a 12-gauge shotgun. I had all the paperwork filled out beforehand, as well as documents for my dog. Once I declared the firearm, I was asked to go inside for more paperwork. They wanted to search my truck since I had Colorado plates. I told them that was not a problem and unlocked everything. They directed me to an area I could let the dog run around. I watched as they went through my gear unpacking items and looking through all the panels. These boys must have thought I was moving some weight in the Taco. After about 30 minutes, I was motioned back over and asked a few questions. Then the conversation turned more

Kinaskan Lake Provincial Park

Ferry crossing

The Arctic Circle

friendly once they realized I was not smuggling drugs into their country. They sent me on my way and even gave me a couple recommendations for camping. The main thing is just to remain calm and be respectful. They are just doing their jobs. I camped in Kootenay National Park that night, staying at one of the established campgrounds.

Over the next few days, I traveled through Banff and Jasper National Parks, and on through Prince George via 16 West, eventually hitting 37 North the Stewart Cassiar Highway. This road in itself was an amazing drive and also dangerous. Portions of the Cassiar have no center line with logging trucks barreling by. That's

Roadside camping

also when the rain began and did not stop for what seemed like days. If you're ever on the Cassiar, I would recommend staying at Kinaskan Lake Provincial Park. Nearly every campsite overlooks the lake.

After a few more hours on the Cassiar the next morning, I hit the Alaska Highway. The rainy weather had me craving some chili. As the cold rainy evening set in I quickly heated up some chili and watched the storm roll by. That night it got cold and I was glad I had packed some colder weather gear. Waking up it was cool and foggy. Not even an hour after breaking camp I noticed a figure in the distant cloud of fog walking across the road. As I got closer I realized it was a wolf and began reaching for my camera in the passenger seat but before I could get it he disappeared into the thick underbrush without so much as a trace. None the less I was on cloud nine that I had even had the opportunity to see one in the wild.

I reached Whitehorse and after the dog took a few laps in the Yukon river, we were onto the Klondike Highway and that's when it started feeling real. I was close to being on Dempster Highway. I was about to start the drive into some of the wildest country I've ever seen.

I drove and just kept driving that night. Everything seemed so perfect: the light was incredible, the wildlife was everywhere, and it was just too good to pass up so I just drove. It would be midnight before I made camp that night. The mosquitos were so bad that I had to cover every part of my body that was exposed. I set up the camper as fast as I could and took refuge in it to get away from the swarms of the little blood suckers.

The next morning I awoke to yet more rain. A mudslide had washed out a section of the road and tore

AS I GOT CLOSER I REALIZED IT WAS A WOLF AND BEGAN REACHING FOR MY CAMERA IN THE PASSENGER SEAT BUT BEFORE I COULD GET IT HE DISAPPEARED INTO THE THICK UNDERBRUSH WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A TRACE.

down everything in its path. Road crews had done a tremendous job on getting it passable. That day I would cross the Arctic Circle, and in that moment I knew this was something special—I would remember this forever. After crossing the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers on the two ferries, it was on to Inuvik. After many days in the rain I opted to stay in a small chalet that night needing a good shower and to clean my camera gear.

On my return home, I put in 15 to 18 hours a day of driving, camping roadside each night. I left Dempster Highway on Sunday and was back in Golden, Colorado on Wednesday. That was a brutal drive back, but worth every mile. I was fortunate enough to see so much wildlife and wild places. That's what this is all about, just getting out there. Inspire and be Inspired! TCT

PARTS LIST

- CBI front aluminum T3 bumper
- CBI rear high clearance bumper w/ dual swing out (steel)
- Slee Off-road sliders
- OME rear leaf springs - heavy duty kit 5 leafs plus 2 overload
- ICON 2.5 remote reservoir extended travel coil-overs
- ICON Omega bypass remote reservoir rear shocks
- ICON Delta joint upper control arms
- Go Fast Campers (GFC) camper
- Switch Pro SP9100
- Rigid Industries 20-inch light bar and Midnight Edition D series Pro Pods
- Slee Off-road dual battery system, IBS DBS with controller, remote boost module kit.
- Warn Zeon Platinum 10k Synthetic line winch
- ARmax snorkel
- ARB differential breathers
- ARB Twin Compressor using Slee mount

By Shane Williams

For the Love of Adventure

As a parent, sometimes you realize that years of trying to teach young children the value of getting out of their comfort zone finally pays off. For Angie and I, that happened about two weeks ago while walking through our kids elementary.

Posted outside Brenden's 3rd grade classroom, we found carefully illustrated assignments answering a simple question: What do you hope to be better at by the end of the school year?

All of the answers were great: math, gratefulness, compassion, reading, etc. However, when we found Brenden's paper, our hearts grew three sizes.

"Adventure"

For the five years my better half and I were married prior to starting a family, travel and adventure was our thing. We managed to get to Scotland and Geneva, enjoyed trips to Mexico, and of course explored all over Colorado and the Rockies. When Brenden was small, we took full advantage of airline 'lap child' policies including taking him to Australia and New Zealand. He had enjoyed over 40 airline flights by the time he was three. While our air travel slowed down a little when Alana was born, we've still continued to find adventure with our children as much as possible. They particularly enjoyed our six days on Hema Map Patrol back in 2016.

Many ask why we bother traveling so much with young children when they may not remember much of these adventures as they get older. Our early hypothesis is starting to be proven correct: While they may not remember exact details, experiencing a wide variety of people, places, and cultures will likely make them more adaptable.

What's interesting is that while our family loves traveling to new and interesting places, the fact that we explore so much also helps us appreciate home. Our kids are just as happy spending the day reading and writing books as they are headed to the mountains, getting on a plane, or leaving on a long road trip.

So Angie and I have recently decided that our family travel and adventure lessons, stories, and tips deserves its own home. Starting in April we're launching *The Well Rounded Traveler*, a new site dedicated to covering our many adventures around the planet. You'll be able to read about past and future trips, learn many of the ways we try to make each adventure easier on the whole family, and of course learn what 'not' to do, as each lesson is learned. We will tell our stories with the hope that others can teach their family to truly love adventure.

We invite you to visit the new project online at WellRoundedTraveler.com, and of course we'll be all over the social networks once we launch. TCT

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