



TACOMA MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2013 : VOLUME 3 : ISSUE 4



SEMA 2013 Is an RTT for You? Monte's Adventure

Inside . . .



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On The Cover:
RTT Night shot at
Ririe Reservoir in
Idaho
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FROM THE EDITOR

Talk about a bitter-sweet December Tacoma Magazine. This is my first address to you the reader and this will be my last. Ever since my first Toyota, a '94 Pickup I had during college, I have been a huge fan of Toyota Trucks for their capability, durability and they look a hell of a lot better than the competition!

I'm not sure about you, but I recently gave a thought about where I would be right now if it wasn't for my Tacoma. At the end of college when I decided I was moving to Colorado, I had narrowed my vehicle choice down to a Subaru WRX STI or my Toyota Tacoma TRD Off-Road. I would not have seen as much as I have over the years of traveling, or met the great people that I have met over the years, or be writing this letter to you if it wasn't for my choice. It wasn't my first Toyota and it definitely won't be my last. Sitting here looking back at my decision and the path it led me down, I do not regret that choice for a minute.

I first became aware of Tacoma Magazine a few years back through Jeff Blackwell, who at the time was the Editor in Chief. The first Tacoma Magazine was the first time I got to see my truck in a magazine, and turns out it wasn't the last. This was also one of my first organized Tacoma meets, Tacos on the Beach at Arapahoe Basin. Since then, I've been to many more events and have been able to see the Magazine grow to what it is today. I've been lucky to work with Jim Akers and Shane Williams in the recent years to develop my position within the Magazine. I look forward to the years to come as we take the Magazine to the next step in its life.

As you may already know, this is Tacoma Magazine's final issue. Tacoma Magazine is partnering with FJC Magazine and Zaxyn Media, launching Toyota Cruisers and Trucks (TCT) Magazine in the coming month. TCT Magazine will allow us to broaden our reach and bring you coverage of not only Tacomas and FJ Cruisers, but we will be expanding to cover all Toyota Trucks, 4Runners, Land Cruisers, Lexus GX/LX along with Overlanding, Outdoor Living and International Toyota coverage.

So make sure you stay tuned into our social media outlets as well as our new and improved website, <http://www.tct-magazine.net>, for all your Toyota Truck needs!

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ALONE AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.

TRD

Introducing



For over half dozen years now, Scott "Scotty" Cunningham and his crew of skillful fabricators have been customizing off-road rigs of all makes and models. Currently based in Fort Collins, CO, Addicted Offroad offers custom fabrication for a variety of their customers' off-road needs.

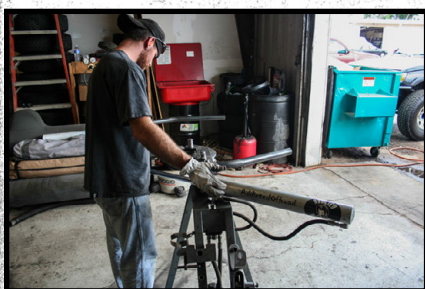
While sitting down with Scotty, I asked, what made you take the leap and start up your own shop? Not surprisingly he responded with the same answer that we all wished that we had the nerve to say, much less follow through on. "I want to do something that I want to do, not what I have to do."

And what product got you started? "It all started with a 1st gen 4-Runner and a front bumper".

What is the personal skill that you can stand on with your fabrication? "My skills started with tube work and knowledge of all off road vehicles. Now, I have more of a form meets function set of design skills."



Addicted Offroad specializes in solid axle conversions, bumpers, sliders, cages, bed racks, and many other custom fabrication projects. Addicted Offroad will even go beyond the "Norm" and build "Turn Key" vehicle. This means, they buy trucks from time to time, build it up,



and sell the finished product. With being specialized in Toyota "Rock Crawlers" and "Custom Fabrication", Addicted Offroad steps up to the plate, in a major way. Although they

deal mainly with Toyotas, they work on all makes and models of off road vehicles.



What sets Addicted Offroad apart from the competition?

According to Scotty, it's their "personal taste, individual service, and all around customer service."

What's in the future for Addicted

Offroad? "We are continually working to expand our product lines. With an emphasis on Crawlers, we aim to use newer and newer models of vehicles to see where our progression takes us. In the meantime we are dreaming and scheming on our very own "Ultra 4" team."

Whether you're looking to convert your truck into a "Take No Prisoners Rock Crawler" or just looking for a solid set of armor for your daily driver, Addicted Offroad's quality will convince you they mean business!

Don't just take our word for it, check out their work at www.addictedoffroad.com or visit them through their Facebook page for up to date product information and new releases.



Our Thanks to Scotty and the crew at Addicted Offroad for spending a little time with us so that we can all get to know them a little better!



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Strong Showing at SEMA 2013

From mild to wild, SEMA Show never lets down when it comes to showcasing the latest and greatest the automotive industry has to offer. This year was no different. We were glad to see such a great turnout of Toyota Trucks this year. Numerous Tacoma, Tundra and even Hilux made the trip to Vegas. Here were some of the Toyota Tacomas that we saw at SEMA 2013 ...

DC Shoes decked out this Tacoma as part of the Toyota Dream Build series.



Volant Cold Air Intakes showing off their Toyota products.

Toyo Tires had this amazing expedition style build displayed at the Toyo Treadpass.



SEMA 2013

Toytec was on hand displaying their new Boss suspension system and other Toyota products along with their decked out 2nd Gen.



Road Armor was there showing off some unique options available on their armor lines.

Snugtop showing off their new toppers.



Body Armor holding their ground in the armor industry.

Even stock Tacomas made it into the show. Pittman Outdoors displaying their Truck AirBedz.





This wild build was on display at Steelcraft's booth showing off their grill guard, side steps and leather Seatskinz while dropping jaws with their Lambo retro-fit doors.

Winbo proudly showcasing a unique tonneau cover.



While Outback Proven had plenty inside to display, we found their built up Tacoma catching some Vegas sun outside.



Expedition Overland proudly displaying their off their work horse in the Vegas sunset.



Opening up allowing everyone to see their "office."



ARE showing off their dual opening tonneau cover.

Along with a nice storage system accessible through the tonneau cover openings.



Want to see more from SEMA Show 2013? We'll have more where these came from in the January 2014 TCT Magazine! Don't miss it! ■

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TACOMA II BUILD RETROSPECTIVE

Part 3: Performance, Parts, & Repairs

By Kurt Williams | CruiserOutfitters

In the previous issue I covered electrical, storage, and communication modifications on my Taco. This time I'll finish up this retrospective with performance mods, parts, and repairs and failures I've dealt with.

Performance/Accessories

Basic Specifications

- TRD Supercharger
- Helton Hot Water Shower System
- Safari Snorkel
- ARB CKMA12 Air compressor
- ARB Freezer-Fridge

Notes

As I mentioned, the supercharger was not a deal breaking accessory I needed or wanted to have when truck shopping; however, in hindsight, I don't know that I would have it any other way. The first generation Tacoma Double-Cab is only available in an automatic transmission package and while the automatic transmissions are fairly bulletproof, they (like all automatics) rob much-needed power—particularly on a

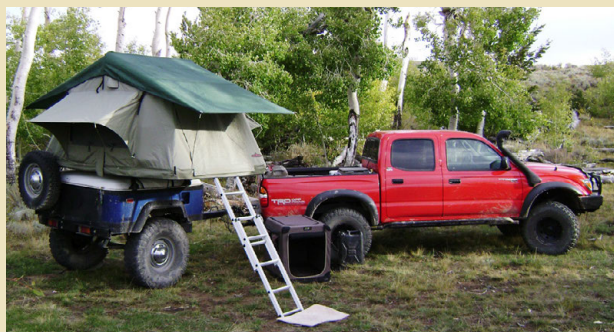


heavily-laden truck spinning large tires. Many choose to re-gear the axles to get the power back but the supercharger more than makes up for the power loss, allowing me to easily maintain speeds even up the steepest grades and headwinds. My ideal package would be a manual truck with the supercharger, but it just wasn't an option and truth be

told I've really come to love the automatic.



Where to start with the snorkel? Either you like them or you don't. For me the priority of additions has less to do with aesthetics and more to do with practicality—sometimes that means planning for things that could happen, even if rare. Snorkels allow for an increased water fording depth but they also allow for cleaner, cooler air to the engine. I wrote a snorkel specific article for Tacoma Magazine, you can read that article [here](#).



The Helton Hot Water Shower system is typically able to heat water to upwards of 150 degrees, which far too hot for a shower. A typical installation utilizes a manual control valve under the hood that limits the amount of coolant entering the heat exchanger. Rather than use the manual control valve, I opted to mount the heat exchanger inline with the stock heater control valve (controlled by the knob on the dash and used to control the heater temperatures in the cab). I am able to adjust my shower output temps using my dash controls with no tangible side effects on the stock heater system. Showers are just “one of those things,” sort of like a 12V fridge or a portable welder. Until you need one or use one, they have little value to you. Well, I've sold more showers by loaning out a bar of soap and some hot water than I have giving my sales spiel to a would-be customer—simply put they sell themselves when in use. My wife was the first one to say “we'll never use that thing,” but after having installed one under the hood of my FJ40, fast forward five years and she is the one hooking it up at the end of a dusty day on the trail. Even a good face wash-down is a godsend.

I've bounced back and forth between CO2 tanks and actual mounted compressors. I came close to mounting a CO2 bottle in the bed of the Tacoma as I had with my older truck. It just doesn't work for the way I often load this truck, taking up precious space in an already limited short-bed truck. Often my tank would stay

packed away in a Pelican case, neither convenient nor space saving. I had convinced myself I would find a better solution. That solution ended up being a different air source altogether, an ARB CKMA12 compressor. I had a fair amount of experience with these through customer installs since they were first introduced a few years back. I'm still running an older ARB RDCKA in my FJ40 so it wasn't something I had personally used a lot. I wired it to a water-proof switch in my fuse block/dual battery solenoid panel under the hood. I can operate it without needing keys in the ignition, and even if left on it's air-tight so it just cycles for a few seconds and turns off. The compressor is completely adequate for airing up tires, but on a recent float trip I realized I'm not quite done with my love of CO2 as the volume available from this ARB compressor was inadequate for filling rafts/tubes. I will leave the compressor mounted under the hood but I'm still considering a CO2 mount as well.



On to the fridge, and where to start? Some might consider this a general accessory, however I consider it an appliance, and it spends enough of its life in the back of the truck to be considered a permanent fixture. You can read more on my fridge thoughts [here](#): 12V Freezer-Fridges—Do they bring the heat?

Parts Acquisition

I'm fortunate to have many of these parts on the shelf at my shop (Cruiser Outfitters) so when it comes time to update or repair something I don't have to look too far. The National Luna and Front Runner products came from my good friend Paul at Equipt Expedition Outfitters, the communication gear came from Communication Products and the stereo audio-video setup came from the king of wires, Ryan at Ratio Electronics.

Repairs & Failures

Steering Rack

I've gone through three now, one of which had horrible play right out of the Toyota box—we didn't even get it installed before we were pulling it back off to swap with another factory re-manufactured unit. When I replaced the first rack I installed the Energy Suspension Poly Bushings and have swapped them to the subsequent racks. I'm adequately satisfied with the OEM new steering racks, but I've been less than satisfied with the quality and longevity of the re-manufactured steering

racks. I should note that on stock height trucks or lifted trucks seldom used off-road, the steering racks seemingly last indefinitely. However, add a taller suspension with increased tie rod angles combined with larger tires and heavy off-road use, and they will likely need replacement every 30–50k miles. Note that they don't fail outright, rather they get sloppy and you'll notice sloppy steering. So while they might get a bit loose, they are not likely to leave you stranded or leave the truck un-drivable.

CV Shafts

My stock shafts started clicking at full lock turns at 90K miles—these were replaced by the dealership with OEM reman's under the 100k factory warranty. The clicking is gone but following the CV replacement I started dealing with leaking at the diff seals. Along with the steering rack issues, CV axle issues are directly proportional to the suspension lift, a necessary evil in most cases. With 90K miles on the truck, and 55K of them with the lift kit installed and used in anger, "clicky" operation is to be expected, and to some extent accepted. While increased CV axle wear is common on lifted vehicles, more common is the CV boot tearing or ripping. Thankfully neither issue is prone to leave

you stranded and will give you plenty of notice before needing attention.

CV/Diff Seals

My issues started when the dealer warrantied the CV shafts. Since this time I've had to replace the passenger side CV/diff seal a couple of times. The dealer warrantied their work the first two times but I decided to address it myself. I actually installed a second seal in the passenger differential tube, so far so good but they usually don't leak for about 25K miles. It's not a common issue and I've yet to run across a customer



having similar issues on identical built Tacoma's. The jury is still out on why I was dealing with so many leaks.

Fan Blower Motor

The unit started squeaking fairly badly and subsequently failed. I took it out and found it was packed with dust. My guess is all those days running in the desert with the windows down finally did it in. I replaced it with an OEM blower. The relatively low-cost repair took only a few minutes, and in hindsight I should have swapped the bearings on the blower but was in a hurry to get



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out on a trip and didn't want to be annoyed by a squeaky blower.

Idler Pulley

I'm not sure if the abrupt angle of the super charger belt caused this to fail but it was howling pretty good and was replaced with a new OEM pulley during the 90K service. It was low-cost and easy to replace.

Clocking Spring

The clocking spring in my steering column failed, which caused the cruise control to be non-operational. This could have been a result of improper alignment when one of the racks was replaced but it failed quite a while after a rack replacement. I replaced it with an OEM unit in minutes. The failure left my cruise control and driver's air bag inoperable. It was annoying and less than safe, but didn't affect the remaining operation of the truck.

Motor Mount/Frame Failures

I was greeted to a nasty grinding noise when trying to climb a rocky hillside one weekend, the sign of a failed motor mount. The rear motor mount wasn't completely failed, but the rubber was cracking away from the mount



so I replaced it with an OEM unit. Things were not quite so easy up front—the rubber and mount looked great on the passenger side however the driver side showed signs of cracking rubber and the frame had cracked where the motor mount attached. By removing the mount and other parts in the area, I was able to remove the broken mount and replaced the ~1/16" steel with a 3/16" mount, fully welded to prevent further issues. I replaced that rubber mount with an OEM and I've considered that issue 100% resolved.

You'll note that all of the failures and repairs I've had to deal with chalk up to "preventative maintenance" with the exception of the frame motor mount. I haven't been easy on this truck and while the frame mount failure was a pain, it was easily resolved and would not have ever left me stranded.

(Insert link to Pangaea article on NA overland vehicles.)

Future Plans?

Good question. With my recent 100 Series Land Cruiser project complete the Tacoma is in a state of limbo. I'll hang onto it until it as long as I have trips to take it on or until I find a good home for it. Until then I'll continue with the routine and preventive maintenance. My plan was to keep this truck for 3–4 years and here I'm rolling up on the 5 year mark so I'm behind schedule. ■

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Leg 2—Just a scratch ... or two ...

By Monte Nickles

Photos by: Monte Nickles, Ben Springli, Mike Digirat

If you missed last month's issue, allow me to fill you in on what's happen. A bunch of Tacomas doing a ton of trails through Wyoming, Montana and Colorado. We just finished the first three trails in Wyoming and Montana and are back in Powell, WY for a shower and fixing our rigs. Mine was in the worst shape with a front differential leaking all of its fluid for unknown reasons.



It didn't take long to get the truck up on the lift and tear the whole thing down. Turns out a CV seal was installed wrong at my own hand. It was a miracle it had lasted as long as it had. Unfortunately by the time everything was tore apart, it was about 11pm.

I awoke at 6 a.m. the next day to get my seal which unfortunately was in the next town over. 45 miles and 3 hours later my truck was back on all fours ready to rock. This put us behind our original schedule.

That didn't stop us from enjoying ourselves with a bit of pre-trip fun. We all weighed our rigs to deem the fattest Taco among us all on the local scale.

From here we hit the road to Lander, WY for our next trails. We had hoped to get there in time to run the first before it got dark. But due to second guessing and being slightly confused and lost, we didn't get to the trail head till about 4 p.m.

The trail we had planned on doing was called Christina Lake. I had run it the year before and didn't remember it being too hard save for a few areas. So I opted to do it regardless of the imminent

darkness approaching. Not everyone was up for that and a smaller group of us hit the trail.



Christina Lake is not an overly hard trail, but man it's fun. It starts with very smooth bumpy sections with



countless creek crossings. You run in and out of



meadow after meadow with the trail gradually getting rockier. Eventually it gets very rocky to the point the speed is down to first gear crawling. Everything was great. The



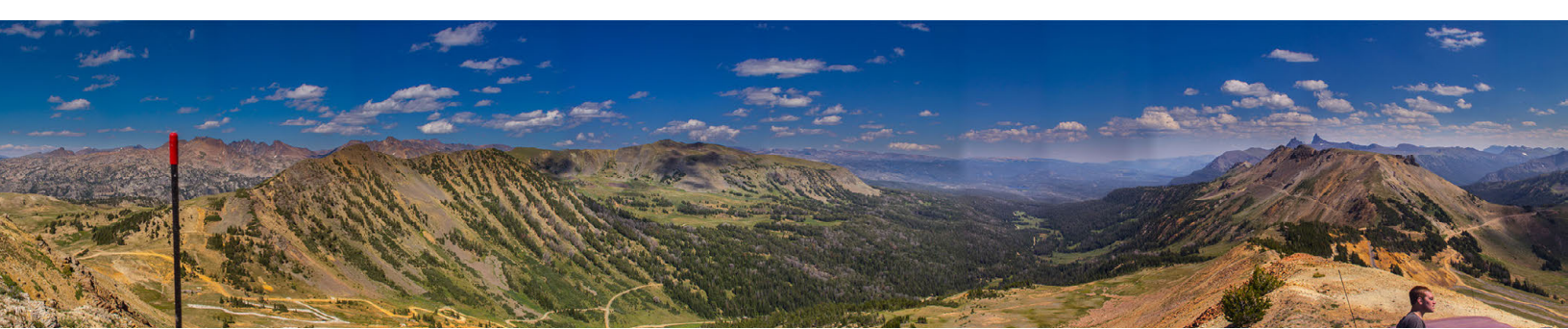
weather was awesome, it appeared we had lots of day light



left, and we were making good time. Then we reach the first harder section.

It really is just a hill with some poorly placed rocks. But as we would

come to find, one of those rocks was very deadly. I went first and having taken the bypass last time I was here, I was anxious to give the harder line a go. My first attempt looked good till a tree stump stalled my truck. I rolled back and gave it another



go with a bit more throttle and a bit different line. After an excessive bump I made it up and could hear the lovely sound of “hisssssssssssss” coming from the front passenger side.

Everyone was in a flurry to get me to stop! I jumped out expecting the worst. It was my front tire. A rock that had a very sharp edge right where the tire drives by had put a small hole in my sidewall.

Thank god for full sized spares.

I changed the tire and we all watched as the rest of the group climbed the hill, grimacing every time they came close to the tire killing rock.

That fiasco cost us some time and light was becoming precious. I was excited to unleash all my lights but others were not looking forward to the darkness.



crossing is very long and bit bumpy but the water level was low and made easy going.



A few from the group had had enough of the dark and bumpy trail and at that point decided to head back to camp. Only three of us continued on to the lake. At this point the trees become an issue making the trail very tight. My Dad's trail limo had some very tight spots through this section especially.

After the maze of tight trees we finally made it to the lake. I would love to paint you a gorgeous picture of the lake and how beautiful it was and so forth. However, at this point everything was a pitch black deep abyss of nothing. We did not linger long as we were all ready for a good meal and some sleep. So we headed back to camp as fast as the rocks and darkness would allow.



Upon our return to the camp, where everyone else was awaiting our return, Marc another local Wyoming member had joined our camp. But sadly we were losing another member, also named Mark, who had to return home for a wedding.

The next morning we awoke among the field of CVT tents. Shoshone Lake trail was on our list and I was very anxious to get there. Shoshone Lake trail is a longer trail and while not overly super technical, it is by far the roughest most unrelenting road I have ever been on. This road makes you kiss flat asphalt when you're done with it. Once again, our kind of trail!



Before we got there though, we stopped off to see a very unique formation. The river out of Sykes Canyon runs under ground for an unknown distance. Water takes around 2 hours to get from the place it goes under to where it surfaces. Where it surfaces is a very large pool. This pool is named the Trout Pool, and aptly so. There are trout in the pool as big as very large salmon! Shame no fishing was allowed.



As we climbed up the mountain to gain 5000 vertical feet to the top of the summit, the weather decided to make things interesting. Clouds had

THE EPIC:



formed and before we knew it ,we had a good drizzle going and the rocks were soaked. Not such a good thing when most of the trail is large granite rocks. Lucky for us nothing major impeded our journey to the top as the rocks were smaller, but rough as hell.



slow. Not everyone had full armor and we took our sweet precious time over the slick rocks. We stopped often to



At the top of the trail, we once again experience one of the best views of the trip. And we couldn't see much. The clouds had covered many of the distant peaks, but some were still visible through the clouds. With the added sound track of thunder it was a very powerful image. The mountains never seemed so mysterious and powerful.

check skid bolts and diffs for any leaks or any other damage. It



took us three hours to get down those two miles. But the calm peaceful lake at the

From here, things got tricky. We had two miles to go and all downhill over the roughest part of the entire trail on slick granite. Awesome! The pace was very



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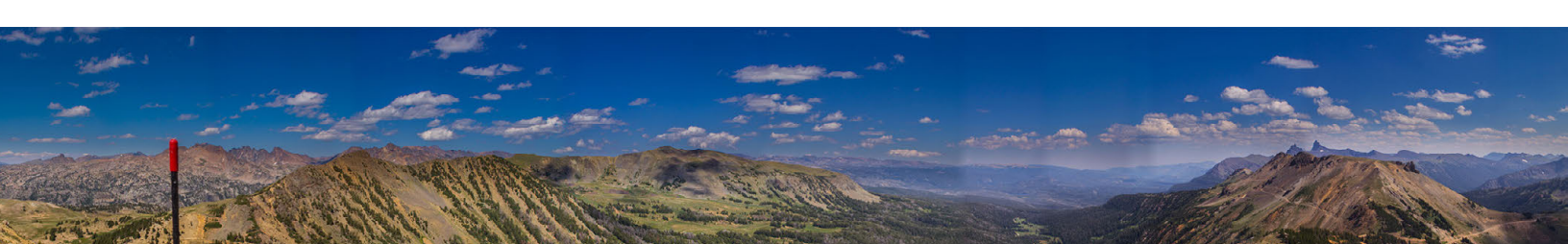
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bottom was a reward



The next morning we set up the trail, which due to the sun coming out and clouds blowing over was much easier going. The weekend traffic had increased greatly though. The locals had come out to fish almost all of them on ATVs. The look on their faces when I told them there were eight trucks that had come up, priceless.



well worth the trip.



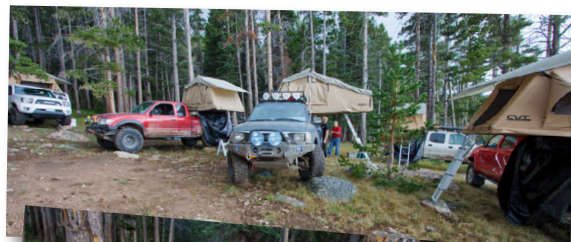
Despite being dry, the obstacles still posed a challenge for some. Ground clearance was an issue and many a diff and skid was scraped and slammed. But the worst was to come. Late around the camp fire we had all talked my Dad into removing the sway bar in the morning. He had disconnected it and had it tied up to the truck. However, his tie offs failed and down came the sway bar onto both of his outer CV boots. Grease for everyone!!



We enjoyed our camp fire time more than ever that night. It was like the many

scars on the underside of our trucks had brought us closer. And what better to celebrate then a little bull whipping and some drinks in great company.

After this catastrophe, we all became a bit more self-conscious going a bit more tenderly. But we made it out with relatively little drama from that point on. And on top, it was so worth it. In the sunlight the Wind Rivers were on full display for us to see. I still think they are some of the most rugged mountains I have ever seen other than the Tetons. And Shoshone Lake trail proved to us that they meant business. It was a very fun trail, but a very exhausting one.

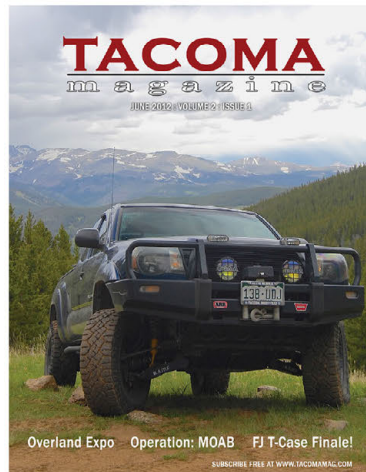
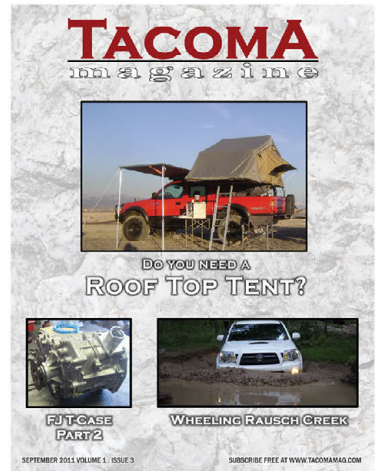
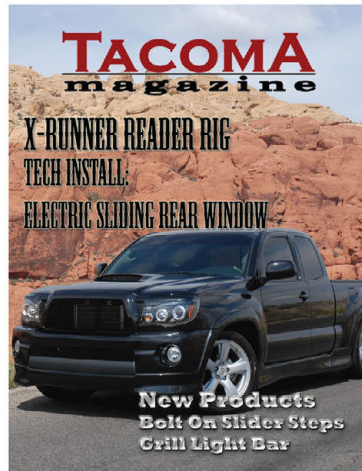
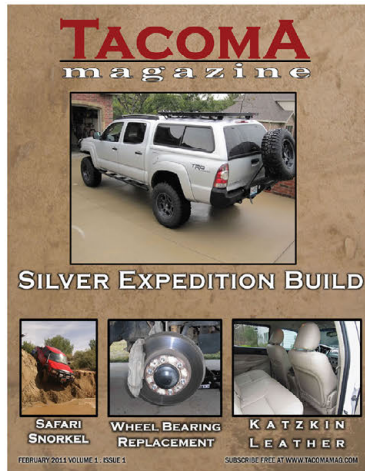


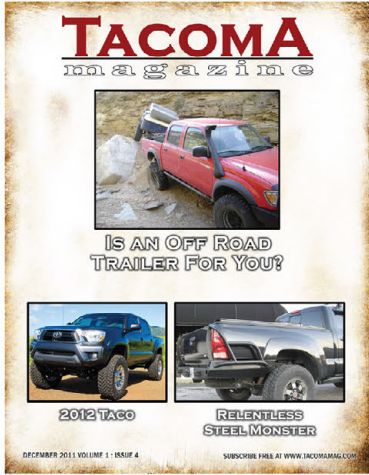
We pulled into the gas station to get our last fuel up and all aired up. Some of us had to say our good-byes here. My Dad, Gage, and Marc were headed back to their homes and their normal lives. As for Mike, Ben, Jason, Mike, Joey, and me, we were headed south to the old Colorado gold mining hills of Ouray to do something we all wanted to cross off the bucket list—wheel at 12,000 feet.



To be continued..

The Epic: Leg 3—Strength in Numbers ■





2011



2012



2013





So you found yourself an RTT ...now what?

BY BOB HOLLIDAY

So you're in the market for a rooftop tent. Have you figured out where you will mount it yet? There is no disputing that rooftop tents, or RTT, have been growing in popularity among off-road enthusiasts. For weekend excursions to international expeditions, wherever your travels may lead you, you can be assured that if your vehicle can make it there, you can set up camp there.



Winter camping at Zion National Park

Over the past year, I have been able to test out two popular RTT mounting locations, utilizing an off-road trailer and mounting on a bed rack. During a recent trip to Ouray, CO for the 2013 FJ Summit, I was able to camp and explore the San Juan Mountains with a Manley ORV (MORV) trailer mounted with a tent by Cascadia Vehicle Tent (CVT). More recently I've taken the CVT on more rugged terrain and over many more miles utilizing a bed rack made custom by Addicted Off-Road out of Ft. Collins, CO. Both options have their benefits and their drawbacks.

In the September issue of Tacoma Magazine, we explored many of the benefits of the Manley ORV and utilizing its features for overlanding purposes. Some of the benefits that we found were the added storage, ease of transferability and the ability to disconnect easily, allowing you to leave camp set up while exploring the area. We also discussed the downfalls relating to the trailer's ability to handle rugged terrain and expensive price tags.



Exploring Paria Canyon

The other popular mounting option is a rooftop or bed rack mounting system. An immediate benefit can be seen when comparing the two setups side by side. Having the RTT attached to the truck reduces the size of your setup making traveling through rough and/or tight terrain more manageable. This eliminates the hassle of backing up on the trail and the need for additional space to setup camp. Through my recent journeys I found this to be a great benefit. Traversing through the heart of the Rockies over mountain passes and up to old mining cities was not hindered by towing a trailer through the rugged terrain. Setting up camp along the narrow ridge line at Gooseneck State Park was a breeze with the compact setup of the CVT on the Addicted Off-Road bed.



Engineer Pass summit, 12,800 feet

As the on and off road benefits of the truck mounted RTT start to overcome the trailer, the downfalls can quickly be seen while at camp. If you have ever been to a multi-day event where a base camp is established, you will see how the trailer RTT will outshine the truck mounts. In general, the RTT allows for a quick setup and tear down. However, the truck mount does not give you the option to leave camp setup while you go out exploring. Every morning you will have to pack up the tent before heading out to the trails while your neighbors with the trailer are sitting down to coffee watching you pack up knowing they can leave their camp setup while they are using their trucks.



Camping along the Gooseneck State Park rim

TOYOTA
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While we're on the topic of trail runs, trail stability and capability will be a battle between the two options. If you are able to leave the trailer at camp while you are out exploring, the trailer can win the battle as the added weight to the top of your truck will cause a much higher center of gravity making those off-camber sections more difficult. However, if you are on a long journey where rugged terrain is being traversed on your way from campsite to campsite, the truck mount will give you better capabilities on the trail. Having the truck mounted RTT will allow you to maintain higher speeds over the washboard roads and allow you to tackle harder obstacles where dragging a trailer would make it impassable.



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Other things to consider when deciding between your different options to mount your new RTT are: Do you have a secure area to store the trailer when not in use? Do you normally park in a garage where running the RTT on the top of your vehicle will limit your access? Something to keep in mind, you may be able to work out sharing costs and splitting the use to make this option more economically feasible. Anyone with a capable hitch can share the system with you which could alleviate your storage limitations. Either way, make sure to have proper storage for the setup as you do not want unwanted users to take advantage of your new addition.









Lunch break at Denver Lake

As you can see, there are many things to consider when looking into a trailer mounting system for your RTT. And remember, research, research, research. Hopefully the setup you choose will suit you well for all of your upcoming adventures, so make sure you are prepared to make the right decision for your needs. ■



"A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles."
— Tim Cahill




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Airflow Snorkel

2013 Year in Review

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Rock Therapy





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Winter Prep



MORV Explore



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White Trash

One man's trash is another man's treasure

By Scotty Cunningham

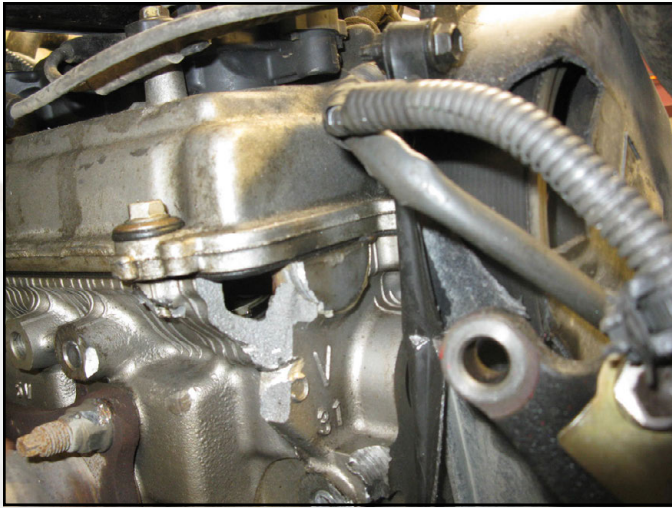
I've been building Toyotas, Jeeps, and Broncos for years. For the last 8yrs, I've specialized in building hard core Toyota rock crawlers though. Toyotas have always had a sweet spot in my heart, since my first car was an 86' standard cab pickup. Now, I've always thought that the double cab Toyotas were one of those cool trucks that we could never get our hands on here in the states. They've been building them in South America, Australia and in European Countries for years, but until 2001 Toyota never offered it in the U.S. market. Needless to say, I've always wanted to build one the right way. But, they hold their value so well that it never made sense to buy one only to rip it apart for a full build up.

So, when a local tow yard owner wandered into my shop and asked if I had any interest in buying one for parts I told him that I did. He wasn't all that sure of what he had other than it was a four door Toyota truck that was involved in a front end collision. So, I told him that I would at least come take a look at it. What I found was what I believed to be a very salvageable vehicle. It was a 2004 Double Cab TRD 4x4 Tacoma. The truck had 204K on it, but was involved in a pretty big impact up front. It rear ended the back of a tow truck that had both of the forks out in back. One of the forks went through the grill of the truck on impact. It proceeded to make contact with

the power steering pump which was sheared off the head of the motor putting a quarter sized hole in the head. It then proceeded back, punching another small hole in the head, and then crashed into the firewall pushing it back about 10" into the cab. Obviously on impact, both airbags deployed. This was a pretty significant impact, and I would guess it occurred at around 40-50mph.

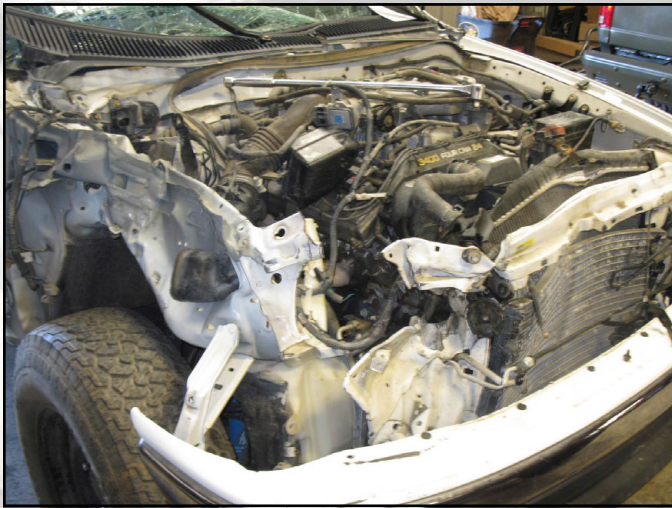


Ready for a new lease on life



Motor damage from the accident

Well, upon inspecting it, I was surprised to see that the damage was isolated to the body only, and not the frame. Even the stock front bumper was untouched by the collision and in very good shape. So, I was willing to risk buying it based on the fact that even if the frame was slightly tweaked, it could easily be fixed. The tow yard owner had the title on the truck as the previous owner had signed it off to him to cover the tow and storage fees. So, I bought the whole truck with the title.



Lots of work ahead

My plan for this truck was simple. I wanted to build an expedition kind of family crawler out of it. Not your typical expedition vehicle that you see with a roof top tent, bed cage, fuel cans, and a snorkel. But, it will be a fully built, solid axle crawler on 37" tall tires that I could drive anywhere in the country, wheel the hardest trails, and drive it home. I've built one of these before, and truly miss it.

My Build Plan

Stage One

Paint and body work

Rebuild the top end of the motor

Get the truck running good and reliable

Stage Two

Solid axle conversion with selectable locker

Dual transfer cases

5.29 gears in the axles

Upgrade the valve body in the trans to handle the power

Supercharger or custom turbo system

Interior roll cage

Front winch bumper

Rear bumper/tire carrier system

Heavy duty rock sliders

So, after getting the truck back to my shop, I immediately tore into it to try to see if it was going to be fixable. After cutting away most of the damaged sheet metal, I decided to have a local body shop come look at it. My biggest concern was pulling the firewall back into shape in hopes of getting a windshield back into it again. So, after removing everything in the way including the dash, interior, motor, tranny, etc, I took it to them to have it worked on. To my amazement, it all pulled back into shape, & they were able to get a windshield into it.

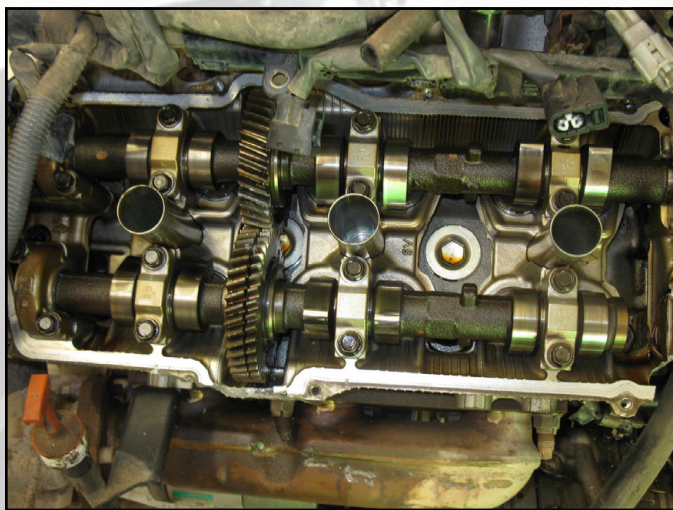


Major body work needed to get things to line up again



Showing potential

Next on the list was to get the motor fixed. When I first looked at the truck, we tried to start it to make sure it would turn over. And, it damn near started. So, I knew it was a good builder at the very least. So, when I tore into the motor I was amazed at how incredibly clean everything was inside it. Not an ounce of sludge anywhere. And, even after 204K on the motor, the block still had cross hatching in the cylinders. So, I replaced the bad head with a new Toyota cylinder head and had all the good parts moved from the damaged head to the new one. Whenever I do head gaskets, I always try to use Cometic head gaskets. They are simply the best IMO, and I made sure to use them in this rebuild. I then buttoned it up with a new complete Aisin timing set with water pump to make sure this motor was going to be as reliable as possible over the next 100K miles.



Great base to work with



Ready for another 100K

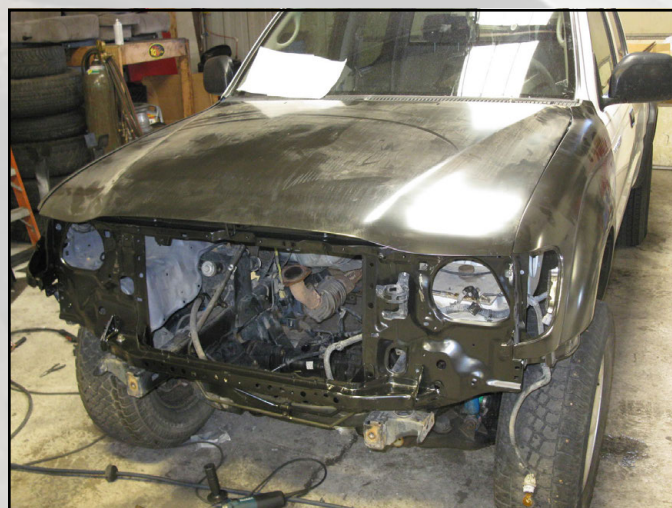
I then turned my attention to body work. I managed to find a complete inner fender in a junk yard that was in perfect shape. So, I cut it out and fabbed it on to the truck. This

requires a lot of patience and measuring, but once in place assures that everything will line up correctly.



Patience pays off here

Since this is somewhat of a budget build, I went ahead and ordered up some Certifit fenders, and a hood out of Denver. I figured that since it's going to be a crawler, that I might as well save some money in this part of the build in case they ever take some body damage from the rocks. And, Napa is a great place who can get you quality color matched paint and mixing supplies for a decent price. Couple that with a Harbor Freight HVLP gun and a 12'x12' easy up and you have a make-shift paint booth in the works.



Beginning to look like a truck again



Make-shift paint booth at its best

At this point, the truck is now back on the road. It runs and drives great. And, I have already started gathering parts for the next stage of the build-up.



Ready for stage two!

In my opinion, I have saved thousands over buying a truck like this at market value. And, now I know this vehicle inside and out. While a project like this may seem daunting to most, it's honestly not as hard as it looks. I have now owned the truck for just under two full months and feel very confident that I picked the right truck. And, I have really only dedicated nights and weekends to rehabbing it. So, for those night and weekend mechanics that want a project, I highly recommend looking for something like this. While you may not be able to do all of it yourself, a majority is doable with things you have around your garage. ■



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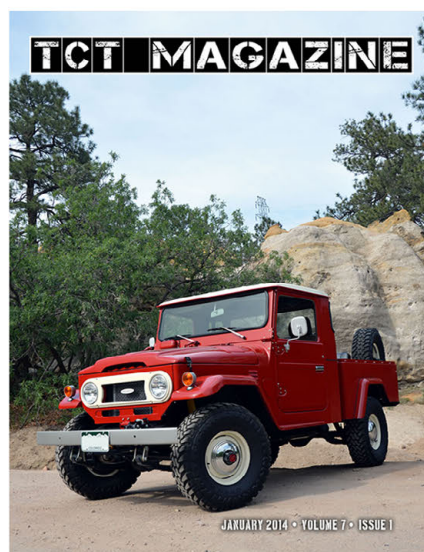


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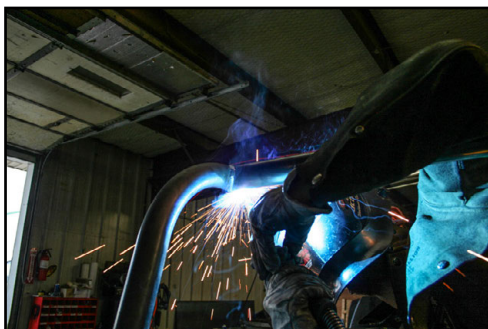
The tale of Tacoma Magazine may be coming to an end, but our contributions will continue on. Check out what's coming up in the January 2014 TCT Magazine from your friends at Tacoma Magazine and Toyota Trucks TCT Magazine:

Install and testing of Bully Dog's new GT T+ on a Toyota Tundra.

Monte's Epic adventure continues south into the Colorado Rockies as the crew visits the San Juan Mountains of Colorado.



More in depth coverage from SEMA 2013.



Addicted Off-Road shows they can meet your custom fabrication needs as they fab up a custom bed rack for Bob's Tacoma.

And we take a trip up to Idaho Falls to visit CBI Off-Road and test out some of their featured products on some local lava rocks.

Plus much more Toyota Cruisers & Trucks coverage from around the country!



GREAT SHOTS



Phil: Twin Cone, CO



David: Michigan UP



Alberto: 1996 Taco in Chile



Thomas: FJ Summit



The Adventure Portal
Sandstone Canyon - Anza Borrego

