

All in the Family

Cruiserheads Welcome a New Addition

At Cruise Moab 2007, the Toyota FJ crowd realized they had a situation on their hands: exactly how to refer to their beloved Land Cruisers. For decades, the designation "FJ" very specifically referred to the original Land Cruisers, which came to America in 1958. The first model was the FJ-25; just a few units were sold. In general, "FJ" indicated the more advanced FJ-40 models introduced in 1961 and coveted since their discontinuation after 1984.

However, the FJ Cruiser changed this shorthand designation since arriving on the scene in 2006. Realizing that the new kid on the block is just as capable as the original, hard-core enthusiasts have had to start distinguishing between vintage FJs and this newcomer that is inspiring so much enthusiasm. No question remains of welcoming it to the family: it's every bit as sturdy and competent, as nimble and tenacious as the original.

Cruise Moab 2007 proved this. The Toyota Land Cruiser Association's national event was hosted by the Rising Sun 4 Wheel Drive Club of Colorado. FJs of every shape and size scrambled over the slickrock, gripping their surfaces with the focused determination of a pit bull. Frenchie's Fin and Ken's Climb were particularly steep and demanding runs, but the FJs met the challenge.

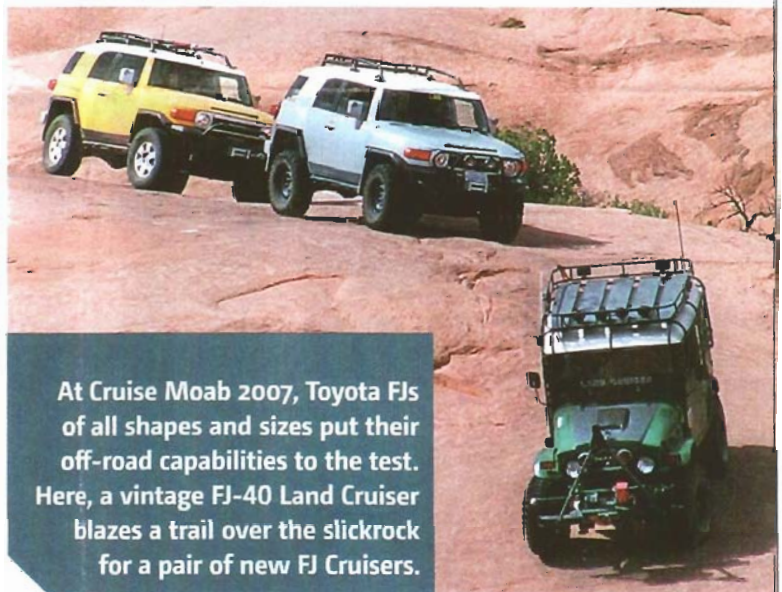
Another popular trail was Hell's Revenge. Such tough obstacles as Rubble Trouble and Tip-Over Challenge proved irresistible to the Cruiserhead crowd. To conquer them, FJ Cruisers relied on their A-Trac system—standard on four-wheel-drive models—for active traction control, their three standard skid plates, and their optional rock rails to protect the rocker panels. And with four-wheel-drive models enjoying almost ten inches of ground clearance, the FJs easily traversed rutted, rock-strewn trails.

One FJ Cruiser sported the decal of an Iowa club, the Tall Corn Cruisers. Its enthusiastic owner, Art Schramm, from Norwalk, Iowa, said only minor modifications were needed for his FJ to do some serious off-roading. He looked at his Cruiser and said, "It's very, very capable."

By night, many of the 200 Cruisers retreated to a campground outside the city of Moab, which made for fun evenings of changing rear-axle ratios and recounting tales of past adventures. Cruisers of every type and vintage made the scene.

"You'll see everything Cruiser from the original FJ-40, to the four-door -55's and -60's, right up to the modern -80 and -100 series, wheeling alongside the FJ Cruiser," says Paul Czaplicki, the Engagement Marketing Manager at Toyota. And he should know—he's been working on Land Cruisers in one capacity or another at Toyota for more than 20 years. "From stock to rock, you'll see Cruisers in wonderful, original condition, others obsessively restored with plated screws and glossy paint, and still others extensively made over with tube frames and link-type rear suspensions," Czaplicki explains.

Then there was the rather rusted 1979 FJ-40 owned by Leif Snapp-Cook, of Littleton, Colorado. Back in 1982, needing something to plow the driveway, Leif's father purchased the FJ-40; Leif was three years old. When he



At Cruise Moab 2007, Toyota FJs of all shapes and sizes put their off-road capabilities to the test. Here, a vintage FJ-40 Land Cruiser blazes a trail over the slickrock for a pair of new FJ Cruisers.

was twelve, he learned to drive in it. Recently, his father was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Before passing away, he admonished Leif, "I want you to keep that Land Cruiser running—keep working on it. I always wished I'd had something like that to remember my father by."

The warm, family welcome being extended to the new FJ Cruisers suggests they'll go on to be as highly cherished as vintage FJ-40s are today.