

On Sunday 8th February 2009, TTORC members experienced the most challenging action on our official monthly event. At 8:30 a.m. briefing and planned program were discussed at UWI South Gate before we proceeded along the Eastern Main Road to Wallerfield. We then crossed over the Demerara Road onto Blanchisseuse Paria Main Road and enjoyed the wonderful countryside with the majestic Northern Range in sight. Upon arriving at the foot of Verdant Vale a decision was made to challenge the trail from the bottom entrance instead of the planned top entrance.

The first river crossing approximately 150' below road level and 1000' from the Verdant Vale's entrance was conquered successfully by David "Diff Lock" in his well-equipped Suzuki. Radio communication was made and the OK to proceed was given. Peter in his awesome "Hercules" Land Rover (Long Based), Raffick in his mighty "Goliath" Toyota Hilux and Gaufl with the spirit of his two grandsons Leandro and Raul in his humble "Team Winning Spirit" Suzuki, followed respectively.

Through the roughest of terrain, crossing five treacherous rivers with moss covered rocks, slush and swampy areas all four vehicles made it to the foot of the mountain. Then each vehicle advanced uphill successfully except Gaufl in his Suzuki, "Team Winning Spirit". After "misfiring" at about 75% up the challenging climb he skillfully descended to the last river crossing and stopped.

Knowing the spirit of the elders and possibly fittest members of TTORC, throwing in the towel was certainly out of the equation. However, even a clutch cable failure at a second attempt could not deter a determined Gaufl. With assistance Peter QT and the mighty "Hercules" went into Tow/Rescue mode taking "Team Winning Spirit" as his prisoner. With the assistance "Team Winning Spirit" was able to winch itself to the top to join the others.

The off-road party progressed up hill to 150' to the 1st "Switch Back" (i.e. a turn to the left or right, drive 10' to 15' out on ledge of the mountain, reversing action ending 4' to 5' above from where you started). N.B. Verdant Vale trail has 25 Switch Backs. After clearing 1st Switch Back "Hercules" took "Team Winning Spirit" a further 30' up hill when it started to rain heavily, making it difficult to gain traction. "Goliath" who was ahead was then summoned to the rescue. Skillfully maneuvering on the mountainside "Goliath" descended down hill and winched "Hercules" and "Team Winning Spirit" to a level portion of the trail where the towrope and winch were disconnected.

"Hercules" went past and joined David "Diff Lock" up front. "Goliath" turned around, "Team Winning Spirit" with Gaufl at its controls started in 1st gear low range and proceeded to drive the trail until "Goliath" ran into a deep rut with both front and rear right side wheels out of sight and his left side wheels did not make any ground contact. "Team Winning Spirit" with no clutch control had to KILL his engine power in order to stop. "Goliath" freed himself by locating a bamboo patch 150' up front and

TTORC ~ Verdant Vale.

When an experienced four wheel driver reads a test report on a four wheel drive vehicle in a normal auto magazine or newspaper it is painfully obvious that most journalists no matter how experienced they are with two wheel drive vehicles have little idea of what a four wheel drive vehicle can do. If you want to know about a particular four wheel drive vehicle read only test reports in specialist four wheel drive magazines and talk to owners of such vehicles, better yet, join TTORC and see different vehicles in action.

installing his tree saver strap around three bamboos at the base; he then winched out of the rut with “*Team Winning Spirit*” hooked up behind using his front winch.

“*Hercules*” who was ahead creating a foothold around a hairpin turn at the side of the mountain barely avoided slipping down a precipice. We then learnt that “*Diff Lock*” had over excitedly ventured up front to scout.

Responsibly, we all decided to go in search of “*Diff Lock*” who with half of the vehicle’s height submerged in red mud, was about to winch himself clear from a hole in the middle of the trail.

“*Diff Lock*” masterminded by the renowned David further ventured up the trail only to find himself in more trouble while attempting to cross a deep wash out. The front right side tyre came off the rim and left him hung up with three-wheel traction. To further add pain to injury he broke his right rear axle. The group agreed to call a S.O.S.

Rescue Team #1 with Sham, Keith and the Awesome Toyota V8 Hilux responded first and informed us that they were descending from the summit’s entrance.

Rescue Team #2 comprised of Frankie, Sheldon, Calvin, Roy and Trevor with Shiva as the family coordinator responded shortly after.

In the wet, slippery and challenging conditions approximately 2500’ up on the Northern Range, Peter and Raffick took the task of meticulously turning “*Hercules*”, “*Goliath*” and “*Team Winning Spirit*” in a descending direction before the arrival of the rescue teams.

Rescue Team #1 arrived and went on to appraise the situation; they then proceeded to winch out and then turn around “*Diff Lock*”. After changing the tyre they hooked “*Diff Lock*” from the back and started driving down the trail with the support from the “*V8 Hilux*”. On reaching “*Team Winning Spirit*” David had to put “*Diff Lock*” through a bamboo patch in order to get past “*Team Winning Spirit*”. He continued down on 3 wheel drive onto a level portion and joined Peter and Raffick.

Rescue Team #2 caught up with them at the most difficult camber of the trail where “*Hercules*” was about to roll over. Team effort with a come-along winch at the back and “*Goliath’s*” front winch saved Peter and his mighty “*Hercules*” from plummeting into the river sideways.

Raffick and David assisted by the mighty “*Hercules*” with Peter and Tony descended to the tarmac at 2:00 a.m. Monday morning. Surely for some, one of the most grueling off road experience.

Rescue Team #2 ascended well equipped on foot caught up with *Rescue Team #1* and “*Team Winning Spirit*” in tow at the 1st river crossing from the mountain. At this point “*V8 Hilux*” after vigorously assuring all were out of major danger zone had shut down for battery power. A little past midnight the team hooked up AUX power and recharged the batteries for 45 minutes. “*V8 Hilux*” restarted but was unable to move

“*Team Winning Spirit*” from the river to an up hill climb in heavy rain which caused excessive slush and mud.

Left with no alternative, our Super Mechanic Frankie, decided to remove the bonnet of “*Team Winning Spirit*” and using a steel bar ¾” x 36” engaged and disengaged the clutch. Gauhf then piloted “*Team Winning Spirit*” to the 2nd river crossing with the outstanding navigational skills of Frankie sitting at the front and skillfully directing the path of “*Team Winning Spirit*” front wheels.

Rescue Team #1 along with the others took a much-needed break on the riverbank, tired, broken up, sleepy and hungry. We all knew the different kisses such as fire, love, life etc. On this Monday morning we realized how important a kiss was in the life of a Trini. *Rescue Team #2* purchased these “Kisses” at a pharmacy on route to the S.O.S call. It is the one and only Kiss Cake baked by the Kiss Baking Company. TTORC salutes the Kiss Baking Company.

After the boost from Kiss cakes, our master super mechanic got the idea to use the front winch and the controls of “*Team Winning Spirit*” to operate the clutch system and drove “*Team Winning Spirit*” through river crossings, mud, slush, rocks, uphill, downhill and over rough terrain where he got into a deep rut and was unable to move forward or backward. Sham, now recuperated a bit, was summoned. He was already crossing the 3rd river crossing. He turned around in the river using much acquired skills gained over the many years of Off Roading. Sham passed “*Team Winning Spirit*” through a balisier patch, lined up and pulled “*Team Winning Spirit*” free.

Defying all the challenges Sham now faced the most tremendous obstacle with a non-responsive transmission. On checking, it was found that the selector cable had parted once again. Frankie and Sham showed their talents by stripping the transmission using only the light from a cell phone. Two members from *Rescue Team #2* returned from the tarmac with emergency lights and mosquito repellent. On this treacherous path Sheldon fell into the river taking about 2-3 minutes to recover himself and the equipment. Using a cargo strap Frankie was able to shift the selector shaft to park, reverse and the drive positions. Sham with his genuine heart and his “*V8 Hilux*” once more went ahead. The party continued along and the “*V8 Hilux*” made it out to the tarmac with no further problems.

At the last river crossing “*Team Winning Spirit*” experienced a carburetor misfiring problem. Our Hero of Operations in one massive burst of Toyota power did a very difficult portion of the trail. Approximately 800’ up a steep climb at the top of a sharp almost 90° right hand turn. We then exited under the old abandoned cocoa house. “*Team Winning Spirit*” made it to one Suzuki length of the tarmac. Calvin with his “*Pride of SVG*” unit took “*Team Winning Spirit*” to the tarmac at 3:30 a.m. Monday morning.

Rescue teams and official event participants took a welcome break. Everyone had coffee by the drops courtesy Raffick. It was a bit cold but coffee never tasted better on this cold Monday morning in February. On the signal to go, it was discovered Calvin had acquired a braking system problem. All the brake fluid had leaked out. Once more Frankie went into overdrive using laser vision and not vision 20/20, found the leak and used a headless nail to plug it.

OK was given to go. The buddy system kicked into high gear with the last person reaching home at 6:00 a.m. Monday morning.

Status Report On All Personnel – Safe And Sound.

President TTORC
Trevor was mentioned as a member of Rescue Team #2 but no where in the report anything was highlighted of his participation. So here it is. When Trevor was called and asked for his rear axle “*You Mad Or What*” was his response. The reason was then given and the response was “*Come for the x*@&% thing*”.

Now tell me who has a bigger and more compassionate heart than Trevor. This is how God wanted us to live amongst each other. **Well done Uncle Trevor!**

From, your nephew Gauh and the other TTORC members.