



A prime example of Cruiser Solution's work, pictured here is a 1983 Toyota Land Cruiser BJ42LX model. This Land Cruiser was sent to Cruiser Solutions via container from Brescia, Italy for a full restoration. Every detail was addressed in the 1½ year restoration of this rare LX model. It sports the highly sought after 4 cylinder 3B Toyota diesel engine as well as many other unique interior components only found on the last model year LX version. CS's website maintained a weekly video update for their customer, Stefano, to watch as his classic Land Cruiser was restored. As with all CS's customer's restorations, a large video library can be viewed via CS's website at [www.cruisersolutions.com](http://www.cruisersolutions.com)



# FJ Heaven

**Cruiser Solutions, located in Hampstead, New Hampshire, restores Land Cruisers to world class quality, bar none. We visit with CS's Tedd Brown, who gives us insight into his passion for the FJ40.** *words and photos by Russ Rocknak*

“**WHEN I ATTENDED** boarding school at Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine, my mentor, Lorenzo Baker, had an old Land Cruiser FJ40 that he had parked outside his house. He drove it around all the time and I would see it everywhere. As time went on I attended Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts. Once there, my Dad advised that I should get my own car, but I didn't want a 'normal' car. I saw Lorenzo on and off through the years; he still had his Land Cruiser parked outside his house, and he didn't use it anymore—it just sat there. I asked him if he would consider selling it, and he said, 'Geez, that's up to you.' So we struck a deal, and my father pitched in and paid half and I paid half and there

was my first 'car.' There were a few issues with the title, as Lorenzo was now in Ohio—it took a while to arrive and so I couldn't drive it right away. I ended up working on it in my father's garage for a month and got it running and driving. It was the first stick I ever drove, and I loved it. It was love at first sight and now it was mine.

“I finished up college, got my degree in psychology and got out and worked in that field for six years. It was good, but I always had in the back of my mind that I wanted to be an entrepreneur of some sort—I wanted to start a company. Initially I thought maybe a photographer, as I loved doing that and I had a lot of experience with it. Also, perhaps

something in fashion, as my sister Wendy has been in the business for a while, so maybe a clothing line. But after that thought process I decided, 'do what you love,' and my Land Cruiser was sitting right there.

“So then back in 1990 I started seeking out people with Land Cruisers and taking photos of them; I recorded a guy locally who was restoring one and provided him with a photo album of the process. Then I decided to start a club, and got all the people together I could who shared the same passion and started a local club—ultimately going with the Toyota Land Cruisers Association in California, as they were having their very first event out east called the Great Smoky Mountain Trail Ride. It took place in Tellico, Tennessee. I drove my Land Cruiser down there with the intention of maybe finding some type business, to see what Land Cruiser owners needed, wanted and were interested in. When I was down there, I was befriended by a gentleman named Gary ('Night Light') Bjork from the magazine *Toyota Trails*. Sadly, Gary, who was editor of this magazine, has since passed away in his fifties from cancer. He literally started the magazine by stapling pieces of paper together and sending them out to like-minded individuals throughout California. He said, 'Hey, Tedd, I have a piece that I am going to do for 4-Wheel

*Drive and Sport Utility*, and I can write it but I am not a good photographer—can you take the pictures for me?' I said, 'Sure!' We did the piece together at the meet; that Friday night a group of us were sitting around the campfire swapping stories, and this guy was flipping around a picture of this aluminum FJ40 body that some guy in British Columbia had built. He was telling the story of how it was really neat, well crafted, etc. I looked at the picture and I thought 'That's it! That's what I came here to find! This guy is crazy sharing this with everybody. You could build a business around this.'

“So when I got back home I looked him up and asked for the contact information for the guy who built the body. And he obliged, directing me to a boat manufacturer from Canada that built this one tub. I called them and introduced myself and asked if they could build another tub. They said, 'Sure, what would you like us to do with it when it is done, are you going to pick it up?' I said, 'No, I would like you to ship it to the United States.' 'Really?' While I was on the phone I asked him if he had ever done a 1980 body before, and he said he had done just one. Well, I ordered both, and when they arrived they were absolutely beautiful. Everything was prefect, tight and precise. These were all handmade at the time. I called him back and asked him if he would like to enter into





(Photo right) left to right: Matthew Knapp, Ashton Harvey, Harold Hutchins, John Giso and Tedd Brown. Not present, Maurice Dussault. This is the team that makes up Cruiser Solutions and generates top notch Land Cruiser restorations.

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an exclusive distributorship contract, make it three years and I would distribute the product here in the United States. I would market it, sell it, take care of all of the brokerage fees and just get the word out in the United States. He and I struck a deal. Then I called my friend Gary and asked him if my new company, Land Cruiser Solutions, Inc., could be part of Toyota Trails and advertise. He said, ‘Sure, I will give you the back coffee table section.’ ‘What’s that?’ I asked. He replied, ‘The back cover!’

“Things progressed slowly for me—I started this in 1992 and by 1996 I could quit my ‘day job’ in the psychiatric field

and start full time with my own company. In this time period I rented a barn and started to do restorations as well. I put together a small staff, and together we did our first restoration for a client from Spencer, Indiana. After completion, we sent it off to its new owner via Intercity Lines, Inc. He received it and loved it. He worked at a health food store and would park it out front during the day; soon this beautiful lady was coming in asking questions about it—who was the owner and if it were for sale. The owner said, ‘Hey, I just waited a year to get this restored and I am not selling it.’ She was quite persis-

tent in her pursuit, but was always denied. Eventually, an employee noticed that when she arrived she wasn’t alone, there was always a man sitting in the car wearing sunglasses, who was none other than John Mellencamp. Well, Mr. Mellencamp was denied his Land Cruiser this time.

“After that story, I knew this business had legs and people liked it. It had the potential to grow beyond just my infatuation, so it just kind of snowballed. Through the years I have landed in a great location and built a great staff, which is the heart and soul of Cruiser Solutions today. A lot of pride goes into our

work here and it shows in the end product. We now have clients worldwide—and the FJ40 usually steals the spotlight, as Toyota simultaneously produced other unique Land Cruiser models, the FJ45 and FJ55. These two models utilize the same famous drive train as the FJ40, but with body styles to meet a variety of needs. The FJ45 was only available in the U.S. from 1963–1967. It was originally offered as a short bed pickup with fixed or removable top and doors, as a long bed pickup with removable top and doors and as a 4-door wagon. However, availability of these models is quite limited.

“We have seen large growth in the interest in restoring these earlier models with modern V8 engines or Toyota diesel engines, five speed or automatic with updated transfer case, disc brakes, power steering, A/C and more. Most maintain the original cosmetic design with all upgrades as subtle as possible.

“The FJ55 was produced from 1968–1979. Immediately popular as utility wagons for the whole family, this model is now in short supply due to the use and abuse endured over the years, the unwillingness of their owners to part with them and their propensity to rust out. Wonderfully versa-

tile when restored to their original glory or with modern mechanicals, FJ55s offer very unique styling as well as a virtually indestructible drive train that is sure to take you where you want to go! Unfortunately, many key parts are no longer available, and a complete restoration is ever more challenging.

“No matter what the client’s desire, it always gives me the greatest pride to deliver exactly what they want and to know we created it. And please know that I am only the conduit, as my staff are the true artisans here; we all make it happen as a team, and in the end our result is that everyone is happy.”

