

# W.E. ROCK OROVILLE, CA MARCH 26-27, 2010

BY SHANNON PEED

Where do I start? Well I guess the question that gets asked most is, "How did you get into rock crawling?" I respond first with, "well... it started over a glass of wine." Bill mentioned he needed someone to drive his buggy this year. As he was pondering, I mentioned I could do it. Why not? Before I had time to really consider what I had just said, he was texting Nick Socha to propose that he be my spotter. I have never questioned my decision from that day. Though it is difficult, challenging, and at times very intimidating, I have no regrets. I'm merely taking advantage of an opportunity to get involved in something I would have never pursued on my own.

Being very new to this sport, I was forced to be open to the challenge and ready to soak it all in. My first question was, "Um...How do I put the seat belt on?" I was able to practice driving only 4 times before the first W.E. Rock event in Oroville, CA on March 26-27. Without radios to communicate while practicing, Nick and I became efficient with sign language. We finally got radios just before our competition and I felt as ready as humanly possible. Nick's many years of experience in this sport made me feel very confident. We had to go through tech on Friday night so they could make sure the car followed certain standards. We passed! Saturday was the big day! We made it to the courses early so Bill, Nick, and I could walk them and make a plan. As competitors were rolling in and scoping out the courses too, I became very nervous. They looked so professional, confident, and relaxed like this was riding a bike to them. Bill tells me that some of them have been doing this for 5-10 years or more! It's not their 5<sup>th</sup> time in the car! It was soon time to start our engines!

The courses were filled with concrete pillars, walls, and tubes of which some were smooth making it difficult to gain any traction. There were trucks, trees, and a large mud puddle that were obstacles too. On both Saturday and Sunday, we were forced to tackle difficult courses with huge vertical climbs. One was called "The Terminator" which I did not manage to terminate instead I rolled the car but was o.k. We got the best score of 17 on another course and held it for most of the day until someone came in with a 7. Nick proved himself as a professional spotter on this course building a bridge using wood, rocks, concrete, etc. which helped us get such a low score even though I almost ran over the judge. On our last course Nick put me in a spot that caused me to drive on two wheels (on my side) but he guided me back to 4 wheels on the ground. Crazy! The crowd loved it. Nick was very patient with me and I think we did well for our first day out as a team. The car did well minus a heavy oil leak due to a crack in the block of the engine. Whoops! Sorry Bill! We did not make it to the shoot out with the top 5, but we did not end up in last place either. Top 10!!!...out of 11. Yeah!!! I would love to improve. Everyone tells me that I need more seat time. Practice, practice, practice!

After the opening W.E. Rock event, I now see how much respect and admiration people have for Torchmate. As the longest employee of Torchmate, my heart and sole is dedicated to the growth and success of the company. To some, rock crawling may seem like a silly way to put the name "Torchmate" out there and bring in business, but after being involved in this event, I

can proudly say everyone knows Torchmate. Since we make the trophies for these events, many people were able to see exactly what our machines can do. I doubt everyone rushed to the phones to get a quote on a machine, but our name is there and I'm confident that people will mention Torchmate to others. Word of mouth is probably the best source for all businesses. Bill was stopped and questioned many times by current customers, potential customers, or supporters of his company and product. He would not have been able to spend quality time talking to these people if he were driving the Torchmate buggy. I have a lot of responsibility taking on this seat but I'm glad to represent Torchmate and take on the many challenges ahead.