

Short interview with Ms. Françoise Graciet Hollender, Euro4x4parts



➡ You come to Croatia on Croatia Trophy (CT) for years, what attracts you most?



First of all, I like racing because it makes me go beyond my comfort zone. Second, I like men's races more than women's races. Third, CT is the most difficult race I've done because of the weather, terrain and lack of comfort conditions

➡ I see you always smiling at the checkpoints and the finish at the every stage regardless of any problems with the vehicle ... Is it in the blood or there are situations when you can get angry? If so, what are these situations eg?

It is in my nature to smile while I'm into something I love to do. And offroad is really something that fullfills me, because we are in middle of the nature, we are challenging nature and we are on our own to overcome obstacles. You can have problems, sure, but in the end, I'm lucky to have the best of the drivers on my side and an excellent car, so why should I worry?



➡ **What are the major differences between CT and other major competitions (if are there)? Should be changed anything on CT?**

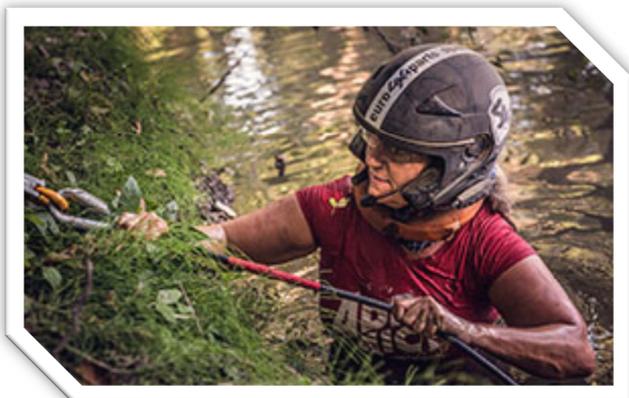


CT is just harder then other competitions, maybe one of the hardest besides Ladoga Trophy. Because of the omni presence of mud mainly. Changes to be changed at CR? Even if Igor does not agree with me, as a woman I would really love to have a shower truck available when we come back from the special stages (like at Breslau races for instance)

➡ **Have you visited other parts of the Croatia or you have not found time yet (Dubrovnik, Split, Plitvice Lakes, Krka Waterfalls, Kopacki Rit etc.)?**



I know that Croatia is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe and I would absolutely love to know more of it. Unfortunately, when we come around to race, it's impossible to take time to tour the country. Nevertheless, we already stopped in Opatija, Umag and Motovun and really enjoyed those moments in your country. Hope we'll have more of this in the future!



➡ **How is it be a woman in racing in various countries? How people experience you as a "woman copilot"?**

I've always liked to switch langages and be able to communicate with as many people as possible; but unfortunately I don't speak Croatian... pomilovanje. Being a woman is an advantage in some ways : for

instance, it seems easier for women to stay concentrated on the roadbook whatever the circumstances. But on the other hand, phisically, you have to be fit and strong enough not to be considered as the weak part of the team. I've

always liked to challenge men in what they do, I guess that's why I love so much off-roading!

➡ **Does Franck always listen you at the race, or he is from those drivers who like to do it for their own way? :)**

Franck is a strong man and is rather impatient by nature, but he always listens to me and we seem to work well together, in life like in the race car



➡ **The differences between the "old" and the new Land Rover for racing?**



The old Land Rover was an excellent car and it enabled us to win Breslau Balkan in 2016, which is not an easy race. However, the car needed some rest after a series of 15 races... we have sold it very easily after the Breslau win to a young team willing to follow us on the same races, Breslau and CT. Then we had to build a new car, because we thought we

are not yet old enough to retire... So Franck and myself put up a spec list of that future car and decided to have it built in Belgium at D&G Tuning. It's a Land Rover too, but with a tubular chassis and in 24V. The rest is pretty much the same as in the old car : same TD5 engine, same Maxxis Trepador 37" tires, same Nissan Patrol Y61 axles, same Profender suspension...



➡ **Why LR? What reason is for this choice (LR)?**

LR is a choice of the heart! It is a very distinctive brand that appeals a lot to us, that seems to fit very well with our personalities : different from the rest of the bunch. The Defender is undoubtedly the world's number 1 4x4

icon, specially now that it has stopped being produced. We have quite a few LR in our garden by the way, including a 1951 Series 1 and 2 Defender pick-ups. We would not do so with another brand, although we love everything 4x4.



➡ **Which are the most common failures on your racing car? Which parts are most frequently changed?**

The new car, as well as the old one after we have made major changes in 2013, have no particular failure. The only thing I must say is that you can't have the perfect car for every race, you have to make choices according to the kind of races you prefer and then accept the fact that your car can't be the

best everywhere. We have built our car to fit the Breslau races because we love the mixture of rapid sections and very demanding special stages that these races are offering. At CT, our car won't be the best, because we have chosen not to put portal axles, for instance; but we sincerely hope that the new car will allow us to have a reasonably good result at CT next time. Besides, the maintenance



job during races is always the same and has to be done everyday, but consists mainly of checking the different parts and change them if they need to.

➡ **Euro4x4parts, the main activity, which parts it have (for which vehicle brands)?**

Euro4x4parts, the company I've co-founded 17 years ago, imports and distributes



50.000 part numbers for all 4x4's that circulate through Europe. We are selling to trade (40%) as well as individuals (60%). 70% of the activity consists in spare parts, parts that you will need to maintain and repair your 4x4; the following 30% are accessories that will upgrade your 4x4, make it stronger, more efficient or more beautiful! We sell to 150 countries in the world, half of it through our

website euro4x4parts.com . The main reasons for our success are : a catalogue unique in Europe, a huge stock and a strong sense of customer service.

➡ **What is your role, or in what situations people can contact you?**



My role in the company nowadays has to do with marketing and communication. This includes sponsorship as I've chosen to give priority to our presence on the 4x4 events and not to advertisements in magazines. Further to selling parts and accessories, we really involve ourselves in

the 4x4 community, sharing our customers' passion. There is a section of our website, the webzine, where you can find a lot of information about 4x4 events throughout the world. People can contact me through our website, but also through social media : besides my personal Facebook page, we have on Facebook a Euro4x4parts page (15200 followers) and also a Euro4x4parts group where every member (they are more than 10200) can share information and ask for help from their peers. I'm always ready to help anyone who needs it.



➡ **Whom can we contact when purchasing?**

We have an international sales department in our company that cares for the customer outside the countries where we have sister companies. Namely Croatia! **Nick Ould**, an Englishman, runs that department with several other people. You can contact Nick using his e-mail address nick@euro4x4parts.com or phoning him (in English) at the following number **+33 559 45 11 44**.



➡ **It's strange to see any bigger competition without the participation of the Euro4x4parts ... You've also included like sponsor for a small club, in a small country, at a race that lasts only 2 days (ORK Schnee) ... I have to admit it was completely unexpected and I'm interested in what has prompted you to participate? How do you assess**

if you can trust someone to do everything you agreed?

We are happy to help develop our brand throughout Europe, provided the help needed does not exceed our means and the value we put to the event. Furthermore, all the events are organised by volunteers that spend their time and energy to promote our common passion, 4wding. Why shouldn't we help? In your particular case, Snjezana, I have been able to check your involvement and your honesty all these years at CT, why shouldn't I trust you when you ask for help?

➡ **Francoise, thank you for a separate time for answers at these questions ... I hope they were not too hard ... ;)**

It has been a pleasure answering your questions, Snjezana!

➡ **The pleasure is mine, Francoise... TY**

Photo by Ms. Françoise Graciet Hollender, Euro4x4parts