



TRAILS & TALES

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GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

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Mary Grimsley

CLUB ADDRESS

P.O. BOX 32

Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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PRESIDENT'S WEEKEND at DUMONT *By: Mary Grimsley*

Welcome to the Hi-Tec world of computers. We are sitting here in camp, the rain has just moved in from the west, so decided to try out Jerry's new laptop.

It was an interesting trip getting here. First off, the whole desert is so green. There are already patches of color on south facing hillsides and along the highway where flowers are blooming. Cronese Lake was full of water, which we have not seen in years. Soda Lake at Baker is soggy, and once we turned north out of Baker, there were water crossings on the road that we either had to slow way down to go through them, or we would go around them. The road into the dunes has billions and billions of potholes filled with water. Crossing the Amargosa River was also an adventure, as they had rain over night and this morning. It is running probably 12-15 inches deep, about 30-40 feet across, and the color of chocolate milk, and was flowing very fast.

So, who is here so far, you ask? Barbara & Larry DeVries, George & Linda Graham, Bill Maddux, and Brett Tanner all came out yesterday, Thursday. When we arrived, we were introduced to Linda's sister Karen, brother-in-law Marshall, and nephew Kelly and his wife Diana.

Some of our campers are sitting just outside under our awning, as we are most protected from the little breeze that is pushing the rain around. The rain came and went, leaving the desert refreshed. We don't mind the rain, as the clouds are beautiful as we watch the rain move from place to place. We enjoy each others company and watching the dogs play, as we await our next arrivals.

Brett's friend, Tony and family are the next to arrive, while it is still light. Just at dusk, Scott & Denise Bart & kids and Scott's sister, Bonnie, roll in with all of their new toys: a new flat bed trailer loaded with Jeep, 2 adult quads and 2 kid quads. You can never have enough toys! It is way after dark when Terry & Cheri Grimsley & kids, and their friends Wynn & Carla Gregory & kids, with Wynn's new Jeep, come in. Camp is now complete.

It's Saturday morning, and Jerry was up early enough to see sunrise. Sky was clear. By the time I got up and fixed breakfast, clouds were moving in from the west. Temperature is nice, just needing a light jacket.

After breakfast, we loaded up and head out on the dunes. Even though they are wet, and were rough yesterday, they seemed smooth as glass today. We slowly worked our way down toward the smaller dunes, transitioning from one to the other, running bowls round and round and round. So much fun. We also found a tiny "personal" bowl that was only big enough for one vehicle, and with our wheels turned hard, the tire edges were scrubbing the springs. Maddog couldn't turn his wheels tight enough to make the tight circle.

After playing follow the leader for a while, we worked our way over to Competition Hill, which Jerry took two tries at; up the right face which was whooped-out at the bottom and we couldn't get our RPM up, so we tried the other side. Both tries were embarrassing. From a distance they don't look nearly as steep as when you are on them. Hmmmmmm!

So we went back to join the others who were sitting and watching the spectacle. There seems to be a lot more high-buck buggies this year than we have

ever seen. There are also a lot more water-pumpers in the buggies. As we're sitting there, George pointed out that there is smoke/steam coming out from under the hood. We discovered a pin-hole leak in the side of the water pump, so headed back to the mall and/or camp searching for Barr's Leak. None at the mall, but George had one in his stash, so with that added to the radiator, the leak was stopped, at least for a while.

It is sprinkling again. You can barely see the mountains nearby to the west. Those without tops are tarped up and the awnings are rolled out, so we can sit and watch the weather in comfort.

After lunch in camp, most of camp went over to watch the hill climbs and/or shop at the mall. Bonnie & I stayed in camp, visiting while I did some bead work. When Jerry returned, I was informed the Jeep's weekend was over, as the Barr's Leak did not hold.

Late afternoon, before dark, we had our heavy hors d'oeuvres pot luck, which has become a tradition. It's a nice way to have "dinner" without having to cook a whole meal, and we get to graze and talk at the same time. The cheese dip that Barbara DeVries made was a big hit, and the recipe will be in next months N/L.

We had a nice evening around the campfire, watching the lights playing out on the dunes and the stars dancing in the skies above our heads.

Sunday morning, it was decided that the group would take a trip over into Death Valley to a little cabin tucked away in the colorful hills south of Saratoga Spring. Instead of going out the dirt road and having to deal with the BLM, the group headed off on the "sand highway" along the low dunes that follow the hills, all the way to the little dunes. Crossing the highway, they took the Harry Wade Road into Death Valley.

When they arrived at the cabin, there were quite a few people camped around the cabin, and we were told that the gentleman that was the owner that we had met a couple of years back, had passed away, and most of these people were his relatives.

The next stop was a visit to Saratoga Springs, where "Yeager" managed to slip, and into the spring he went head first. Only his tail was sticking out. It was an accident on "Yeager's" part, as he is not a swimming dog. George & Bill had to grab his front legs to pull him out, as he couldn't get out by himself.

After returning to camp via the "sand highway", it was off to watch the sand drags for some, playing on the dunes for others, or shopping at the mall.

Before dusk, everyone was back and having dinner. Because Jerry had a commitment on Monday to a helicopter ride out on base with the archeologist, we left after having dinner. Since none of us had been out the graded road, we were not aware of how the water crossing had changed. We crossed the cement crossing, only to plunge through a second water crossing that had been cut from the weekend rains. They had graded the road, so most of the pot holes were gone, which was certainly an improvement. When we got to the highway, I was finally able to get through to my cell phone mailbox, only to find out that the Monday trip was cancelled, due to impending weather, but we were not going to go back. What we found on the way home, was rain headed toward Dumont.

Everyone left early the next morning, to beat the traffic jam that would grow as the morning went on. I think everyone would agree that we had a terrific weekend.

TDS DESERT SAFARI *By: Mary Grimsley*

Wednesday morning, the first group left for the Salton Sea area, site of the infamous TDS Desert Safari. The group included George & Linda Graham; Bill Maddux; Bill & Kathy Martin; and guest Brett Tanner and son Sean. When they arrived, they were able to secure most of our "usual" camp site, at the end of the pavement. George called me with the camp information and GPS coordinates, and the email went out to those who were attending. Because of the impending housing development, camping before the end of pavement was no longer an option.

Thursday saw the arrival of Terry Grimsley and son Brandon; Rick & Carolyn Phillips of the Spinnin' 4's; and Mary Grimsley, w/o Jeep (hood still up in the garage missing a water pump). Thursday night after dark, the first of the Rowland contingent arrived, including Bill & Kate, and son Jeff & Christina and family. Thursday evening, Scott & Denise Bart & girls arrived. Friday, the largest majority of the campers would arrive, in ours as well as everyone else's camp.

Friday morning while most of us were out in the hills on a terrific run, Kevin & Desiree Rowland & kids arrived, along with several other Spinnin' 4's. Mid-afternoon Gary Luckeroth's friend Marty pulled in, followed closely by Gary himself. We had a huge camp, which is getting to be too big of a group. I would say there were over 25 families (Saturday night there were 4 different campfires.). Rowland's had friends pull in, and moved to make their own camp so they could include them in their circle. Terry had a friend come in late Friday night.

Saturday morning, under a somewhat stormy-looking sky, most GG's lined up for the main run. The Spinnin' 4's go out as a group, as well as the Rowlands. There was a certain amount of waiting, but we were entertained by nearby groups hill-climbing and by the terrific show of wild flowers after all of our rain. With such a large vehicle registration, the Saturday run is easier than it used to be back in the '70's & '80's.

Gone are the days of the killer hill climbs, which holds up everyone behind, while those who don't make the hill climbs get 3 tries. But there are still good notches and interesting terrain to keep you entertained enough to stay with the trail. Denise Bart was our official club photographer, and got some great shots of everyone. We never saw any Spinnin' 4's or the Rowland's all day.

The run was over early enough, that some of us who had not had enough, went out looking for more. Bill Martin, however, did not quite understand this mentality, and headed back into camp. We finally made our way back to an area where we had seen a lot of activity with lots of vultures watching, and we became one. Saw one vehicle flop over, and an older Bronco do a pirouette on his front right tire, before finally coming back down on all fours. It was a fine place to watch, with 4 shows going at once at times.

After returning to camp, the Bart's & Grimsley's made a trip into Borrego Springs to do a little shopping (Carolyn had found a terrific petroglyph poster that I felt Jerry needed as an anniversary gift).

With so many in our camp, we had a terrific heavy hors d'oeuvre's pot luck, with lots to choose from. Then some were off to the drawing, where they said there were 1,545 vehicles registered. No one won anything from any of our groups, as far as we know. The rest of us had a wonderful evening around the campfire, while George & Linda cooked us up some Dutch oven dessert.

Sunday morning found the Bart's, Graham's, Grimsley's, Lucky Gary, and Maddog in line for the Sunday Rough Run, while the Martin's went in search of the talc mine. I always enjoy this run the most, as it is usually rougher than the Saturday run, however, you have to keep up as they don't mark it. We had a great time, although we lost Maddog.

We were back in camp for lunch, and soon on the road for home, except for the Graham's & Phillip's, who were able to stay over until Monday.



Gear Grinders on the trail Friday



A beautiful sunrise Saturday AM



Scott's tires going every-which-way

WEST MOJAVE PLAN

Copies of the West Mojave Plan will be delivered to Sacramento, Moreno Valley, Barstow and Ridgecrest on Friday March 18. The copies in Sacramento then go to a mailing contractor, who sends them out to the 950 people on the mailing list. These should arrive at the recipients doors during the week of March 21-25. We don't know when the Federal Register notice will be published, but these are done on Fridays, so it would probably be March 25 or April 1. That date initiates the protest period, which runs for 30 days.

GEAR GRINDERS WEB SITE

Trey Fellows has our web site now at the permanent address of: <http://www.geargrinders.org/>

Don't forget to send Trey your vehicle info and pictures.

There are a lot of you who have not sent pix or info, so won't you do it today. Send to:

webmaster@geargrinders.org with "Trey" or "website" in subject line.



Graham's tiptoeing thru the wildflowers

GEAR GRINDERS
4WD CLUB
P.O. BOX 32
RIDGECREST, CA

PROMOTING PUBLIC LANDS FOR RESPONSIBLE MULTIPLE USE