



TRAILS & TALES

JUNE 2005

GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

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PLEASANT CANYON LOOP

By: Warner Fellows

We gathered at the Richmond Park-n-Ride for our annual trip to the Wikiup. When we left the Park-n-Ride we were 17 strong in a 9 vehicle caravan. We then traveled to Ballarat where we were to meet the Bart family. Much to my surprise I learned that on the way to Ballarat we had been joined by the Grimsleys. That brought our troop strength to 23 Gear Grinders in 11 vehicles. Quite a crowd! Our group consisted of Scott & Denise Bart with Abbey & Jesse; Bill & Samela Dorey; George & Linda Graham; Al & Eva Green; Jerry & Mary Grimsley; Jim & Donna Kenney; Gary Luckeroth; Bill & Kathy Martin; Kevin & Denise Serpa; Reid Wackermann; and yours truly with my wife Pamela and son Warner III (Trey).

Once we were aired down we got underway and headed up Pleasant Canyon. Once we entered the canyon, we found evidence that the road had seen some water run-off. In spite of that, the steepness of the road, and a nice layer of slime on the rocks, traction was good and no one had any trouble climbing up the canyon. With the abundance of water, the brush has grown quite thick and formed a dense canopy. First timer in the canyon, Samela Dorey, said that it was like a jungle safari. From this experience it is easy to see how "Pleasant" Canyon got its name.

Our first stop was at Claire Camp to stretch our legs and to get a closer view of the ruins of the Radcliff Mine. Following a short time to take in the sights and a few pictures, we were back on the road. I must say that the canyon road was in really good shape making for a pretty relaxing drive to our next stop and lunch.

Following lunch it was time for the hike to the Wikiup. The hike was a "bit" longer than I remember; my apologies to the Barts and the girls. We spent some time inspecting the Wikiup and found some damage, which I believe is due more to a hard, wet winter than vandalism. Upon returning from the hike we continued up canyon to Rogers Pass and a spectacular view into Death Valley.



Bill & Samela Dorey coming thru the green willows area.



Bart's Cherokee on Chicken Rock, & Lucky Gary peeking around corner.

GEAR GRINDERS WEB SITE: <http://www.geargrinders.org/>

After pictures, reading the monument to Manly and Rogers, and a brief rest we continued on. Turning south and climbing the ridge we headed for Manly Lookout. If it was even there, I missed the bench someone placed at the summit at the Lookout. Still we continued on. Until we reached the top of what my family has come to call "White Knuckle" Hill. We proceeded over the edge and down the hill, only this time the hill didn't seem as steep and the road not as rough or as loose. Amazing what a little experience can do to really nasty terrain. Still the view into Butte Valley from the top of the hill was breathtaking and worth the "white knuckles".

The road across South Park was much drier than the last trip and also a LOT dustier. This brought us to the head of South Park Canyon and our descent to Panamint Valley. A short distance down the canyon brought us to the infamous "Chicken Rock". But even that didn't seem as "puckery" as times past. Everyone made it over or around the rock with little difficulty and we headed on over to the telephone pole bridge. This was also tackled with no problems.

With a 6 o'clock dinner reservation we didn't have time for a visit at the Briggs and Stone adopt-a-cabins, so we continued on, promising a return trip when we could spend more time in the area.

Winter and all the rain the Panamints received have changed South Park Canyon very little, making for an interesting drive down. Upon exiting the canyon and driving down the alluvial fan we came to a sign that advised us that the road that we had just driven down was closed due to a "Major rockslide". This was news to us as the road was clear and easily driven. Maybe someone fixed the road and forgot to take down the sign. Jerry moved the sign away from the road and put it face down.

A quick drive up Wingate Wash Road brought us back to Ballarat where we aired up and said our goodbyes to those that had to hurry on.

The rest of us hustled back to town for a quick shower and a sumptuous dinner at Casa Corona.

3rd ANNUAL BIG BEAR BASH *By: Terry Grimsley*

For a third consecutive year we find ourselves in Big Bear for a long Memorial Day weekend. Each year more and more people have decided to extend the weekend and arrive early. Camp was once again about a mile north of Fawnskin, and once again George & Linda Graham arrived early to secure our camp site. When the trail boss and his family (Cheri, Megan & Brandon) arrived Thursday evening they were pleasantly surprised by the number of families already in camp: Warner & Pamela Fellows; Bill & Kathy Martin; Randy & Karen Schortzmann; Kevin & Denise Serpa; and Michael & Christine Redmond (guests) had started their weekend early and were enjoying the campfire when we arrived. Yes, this year camp fires were allowed!

As we prepared to depart camp Friday morning Guy & Kay Kendall and Kay's cousin Janice Gavigan arrived and hurriedly unhooked the Jeep, leveled the camper and prepared for the days run. After a short delay we headed west to run the Holcomb Creek Trail (3N93). With its rock gardens, creek crossings and rutted hills, this trail has a little bit of everything. While descending the west side of the rutted hill, Michael misjudged the location of a large rock (or the location of his front differential) and was brought to a halt. A combination of the slope of the hill and limited traction prevented him from backing off the rock. Out came the tow rope and with a little help from George, we were moving again. The middle rock garden was probably as rocky as I have ever seen it, however, because of the lack of dirt and minimal mud, traction

was good and short work was made of this obstacle. We continued west-bound without any difficulties until we reached the final rock garden that stood between us and our lunch stop. This rock garden was also much rockier than usual. At the beginning of the rock garden, Michael didn't take quite the right line and slid off of a sizeable rock and landed on his oil pan. With the aide of a high lift jack, rocks and muscle he was off without much delay. However, Michael does have a custom high clearance oil pan to remind him of the weekend.

After a lunch stop at the creek crossing we proceeded east along 3N16 to 2N06X. This short trail joins 3N93 just east of the middle rock garden. One rock garden and a couple of smaller rock piles are usually the highlights of 2N06X, however, with this years rains came additional challenges. These came in the form of large ruts from rain and snow runoff. The ruts tested the articulation of each rig and provided some nice photo-ops, as many were catching quite a bit of air under their front tires. The largest rut was approximately 100 feet in length with mud in the bottom. The right tires were in this rut and it's depth leaned you up against the bank on the passenger side. There for a minute I thought I would find myself on the end of a rope. With the ruts in our rear view mirrors and 2N06X completed, we rejoined 3N93 and headed east and back to camp without incident. We found Gary Luckeroth in camp when we arrived, and Jerry & Mary Grimsley arrived at camp shortly after we returned. Later in the evening guests

John & Kris Traber pulled in with their kids Tina, Johnny & Ryan. Last to arrive was Wynn & Carla Gregory with their kids Emily & JD. There's nothing like setting up a tent in the dark!

Saturday morning at 9 AM sharp, we headed out for the days trail ride. The destination on this day was the Heartbreak Ridge trail. Unfortunately, as the trail boss pulled out of camp, he discovered his CB wasn't working. A quick test determined that the CB was fine, it just didn't have power to it. Not wanting to cause any more delay, we headed out anyway. As luck would have it, the power situation healed itself a few miles down the road.

It's a bit of a drive to the trail, but the scenery was nice and before we knew it we were starting the ascent up the tough part of the trail. One major obstacle is called "The Squeeze." It's a fairly short, narrow and rocky portion of the trail with a bypass. When the trail boss reached the fork he advised everyone that the left fork (The Squeeze) isn't that rough and encouraged everyone to try it. To my surprise the trail changed quite a bit in the last month and it was much tougher than anticipated. The trail boss got through without any issues but Wynn & Carla (in their almost stock TJ) weren't so lucky. After several attempts to jockey around a couple of large rocks and throwing a few too many stones, we opted for a winch. The trail boss was happy to help out the friends he talked into attempting "The Squeeze." Apparently "the stocker" moved some rocks around for everyone else behind them and most required some effort to clear the challenge. Jerry & Mary were making it look easy until they slid off a large rock and came to a halt. WARN would be happy to know that another one of their winches did it's job and the CJ5 was moving again after a brief delay.

The remainder of the rocky climb was completed in short order and lunch was taken under large shade trees at the top of the mountain. After lunch we backtracked a bit, going down the rocky obstacle we had just climbed. After a few more rock piles and quite a few miles of dirt roads, we crested a saddle on the east end of Baldwin Lake. Arriving back at camp we discovered guests Aaron Fate & Robert Rauchfuss (friends of John's) had made their camp. Later that night Chuck & Cess Cleveland and their boys Marcello & Ryan pulled in without their Jeep (not quite finished with a major overhaul).

On Sunday it was time to run two of the best trails on the mountain. First up was Gold Mountain (3N69). This is a very scenic climb up the mountain on the northeast end of Big Bear Lake. The views of the lakes (Baldwin & Big Bear) were even more beautiful than usual because of the plentiful rainfall this season. As usual there were also enough challenges along the way to get our attention. A few of them required some effort, but nothing a good spotter couldn't overcome. Before long we were over the top and dropping down the north side of the mountain on our way to 3N16.

Now it was time to make our way over to John Bull (3N10), the nastiest trail on the mountain. We were surprised to find the trailhead vacant and decided to take our lunch stop further up the trail. The first 100 yards of the trail was definitely easier this year and most completed this section without any problems. "The stocker" had some ground clearance issues but nothing a few well placed rocks couldn't resolve. The most difficult part of the trail is the climb up the east flank of the mountain. This climb was about as challenging as the two previous years and with the help of good spotters, the group was up it without too much difficulty.

After lunch we continued west bound and slowly dropped down the west side of the mountain. As usual a few spots required a bit of effort, but no tow straps or winches were needed on this day. We regrouped at the end of the trail next to a mud hole that proved all too inviting for a few. After the Serpas, Redmonds and Martins finished dirtying their rigs, we headed down to 3N16 to find a spot large enough for a group photo. After the photo-op it was time to head back to camp, as happy hour couldn't start until we got there. Shortly after returning to camp we were joined by Mike (Terry's cousin) & Victoria Grimsley and their son Aiden.

Monday morning there were two short trips planned. The first group, the trail boss and John, headed for John Bull. This time the trail was run from west to east. With only two Jeeps the trail was completed in less than an hour with very little effort. The second group took a historical tour of Holcomb Valley. Both groups returned to camp well before noon and most started packing up their camping equipment in preparation for the trip home.



Lucky Gary rounding the corner.



Guests Michael & Christine.



Bill & "Bonkers" & their dirty Jeep.

MAY MEETING HILITES

We welcomed back as guests, Kevin & Denise Serpa, and new guests Michael & Christine Redmond.

Warner reported that Diamond Motors is offering a 15% discount to all CA4WDC members. We also need to run our trail to McIver's cabin and check for downed trees after the winter snows. Reid Wackermann will lead a run over the Inyo Crest Trail on July 4th.

The webmaster has listed our website with Google, Yahoo, and MSD search engines.

We voted in as new members, Kevin & Denise Serpa. Welcome.

Reid Wackermann's Dad is going to be visiting and wants to go out 4-wheeling over the weekend of June 10 & 11.

The Latest News on Sherman Pass

I talked with Bob Frenes from the Sequoia National Forest on Thursday morning, and Sherman Pass will NOT be open to the public until after the 4th of July weekend. The road from Kennedy Meadows to Black Rock station was just recently open, but the paved road from Black Rock to Kernville remains closed. The snow pack is still sufficient enough on the north side of Sherman Peak, that vehicles still cannot get through.

MARS

SPECTACULAR!

The Red Planet is about to be spectacular! This month and next, Earth is catching up with Mars in an encounter that will culminate in the closest approach between the two planets in recorded history. The next time Mars may come this close is in 2287. Due to the way Jupiter's gravity tugs on Mars and perturbs its orbit, astronomers can only be certain that Mars has not come this close to Earth in the Last 5,000 years, but it may be as long as 60,000 years before it happens again.

The encounter will culminate on August 27th when Mars comes to within 34,649,589 miles of Earth and will be (next to the moon) the brightest object in the night sky. It will attain a magnitude of -2.9 and will appear 25.11 arc seconds wide. At a modest 75-power magnification Mars will look as large as the full moon to the naked eye. Mars will be easy to spot. At the beginning of August it will rise in the east at 10p.m. and reach its azimuth at about 3 a.m. By the end of August when the two planets are closest, Mars will rise at nightfall and reach its highest point in the sky at 12:30a.m. That's pretty convenient to see something that no human being has seen in recorded history. So, mark your calendar at the beginning of August to see Mars grow progressively brighter and brighter throughout the month.

Share this with your children and grandchildren. **NO ONE ALIVE TODAY WILL EVER SEE THIS AGAIN**

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Press Release

Date: Tue, 14 Jun 2005 21:23:29 -0000

Subject: Adventure Pass No Longer Required in Portions of So Cal National Forests

The Forest Service is reducing the area in Southern California where recreation fees are required. Although 81% of the San Bernardino National Forest will no longer require the Adventure Pass, the pass will still be required in most locations that are popular with visitors. The non-fee areas are more remote, have fewer visitors, and experience fewer impacts from visitor use than fee locations.

More information here:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/passes/rea.shtml>

The maps and a chart are available here:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/passes/rea.shtml>

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