

Having explored the ore bunker site and mine site, we turned our vehicles toward the exit and headed out. Before exiting the canyon we turned up hill for a look at the Golden Lady Mill. Some rock foundations and a small reduction oven are all that remain. From there we continued uphill in an attempt to reach the St. George Mine.

In keeping with the Holiday theme of the run, we chose the St. George mine because it was originally named the Merry Christmas mine, honoring its December discovery. The hill that services the St. George Mine follows a ridge to the top of the Argus Range. This road is quite steep and in places very loose with little traction. At a point about 200 yards from the top we came to a stretch of road that is very steep, uneven, and loose. It was here that we decided to turn around on our pre-run. It was also here that I pulled to the side and allowed those with more skill and intestinal fortitude to attempt the climb. Gary was first, but before he attempted it, he lowered his tire pressure to about 10psi. On his first attempt he managed to advance about 50 yards before losing traction and coming to a halt. His second and third attempts met with the same result so he relinquished the hill to Andy. Andy gave it three goes, meeting with similar results as Gary, before turning it over to Curtis. Curtis chose a slightly different approach than Gary and Andy and made it about twice as far, but still short of the summit.

“Vultures” following Curtis Martin down the hill after he made his try at it.



We stayed at this spot for a while, enjoying the view and the cool crisp air before turning around and heading down. We then turned our Jeeps toward the valley and headed out. On our descent we again met the two burros and a race, it seemed, was soon in progress. They stayed with us for what felt like more than a mile before crossing the road and going on their own way. At the intersection with Panamint Valley Road we stopped to air up the tires and decided to celebrate the day with dinner at John's Pizza. Bring an end to another great trip. I'd like to thank all of the participants for making this a truly fun day.

November Meeting Hilites

V.P. Warner Fellows gave us a run-down trip report for 2005 and of runs already in the planning for 2006. Under Committee Reports he reported for the Webmaster that after the 25,000 blogs, we haven't had any emails.

Trip reports were given, the 50/50 drawing was held, and the sign-up sheet for attending the Christmas dinner was sent around.

Our MOU with Death Valley has expired and we wish to extend it, so Mary will contact DVNM to get that going.

Elections were done by acclamation with the following results: **President:** George Graham; **Vice-President:** Warner Fellows; **Recording Secretary:** Kathy Martin; **Corresponding Secretary:** Mary Grimsley; **Treasurer:** Jim Kenney; **Board of Directors:** Andy Couch & Bill Maddux

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2005

The Christmas party this year was held at the Sizzler in their party room. We had a choice of 3 meals, which were good.

After dinner we rearranged the room by moving tables out of the center, so we could play our usual Gear of Fortune, which was again hosted by our own Bill "Maddog" Maddux in his usual style. As always, it was guys vs. gals, with the guys pulling ahead and edging us out. We'll get our chance at them again in 2006.

Unbeknownst to us, however, we needed to be out of the room by 9:00pm, so we had to kind of hurry through our gift exchange. We did run a little over, but the staff was very gracious.

Because our membership has grown and we are too big to go to someone's home, we need to book a restaurant earlier in the year, to obtain a date more desirable.

DON'T FORGET to check out the club forum under our Members Only page and to add your 2-cents worth.

The GET OUTTA THE HOUSE . . . ONE LAST TRIP . . . KEYSTONE/LOTUS MINES . . . TRAVELING ROADSHOW, *By Jim Kenney*

Gary Luckeroff and I were talking and we decided to do Goler Wash and the Keystone/Lotus mine roads. I sent an email to club members and waited. On Friday Dec 30 at 8:30 I was surprised to see how many showed up: Warner & Nat Fellows in separate vehicles; Gary Luckeroff; Bill Maddux; Bill & Kathy Martin; Mark Pahuta; invited guest Randy Banis, and myself. We stopped at Ballarat to air down and say "Hi" to Rocky, who decided breakfast was more important, so we pressed on.

Driving south on Wingate Road, it was obvious Inyo County had been at work. Entering Goler Canyon, the County had graded and filled all the fun parts and it was an uneventful drive to the Keystone mine turnoff. The base camp was new to some of us so we spent a little time looking around. We discovered a unique loader that had a horizontally articulating bucket no one had seen before.

As we started up the grade to the mine itself, it became quickly obvious the fall rains hadn't been kind to the road. Almost immediately there were several gullies to cross and a deep-water channel paralleling and undercutting the roadway had eroded the trail. After passing the eroded area near the bottom, the remainder up to the Keystone was uneventful.

We spent time exploring this relatively modern un-vandalized equipment and mine that was still in place and in pretty good shape. I'm told this mine is privately owned and was active into the 80's or so. We also had lunch sitting in the warm sun!

After lunch, we continued up to the top. This is an interesting climb that includes an obstruction in the road that leaves barely enough room on the OUTSIDE of the trail for Jeep wide vehicles. We nicknamed this "The Hummer filter"! Continuing over the top we went a short ways and parked at what's been called the Lotus mine. This is obviously a much older mine than the Keystone. The methods of tunneling and the debris are much older. It would appear it was remodeled at some point. The group spent considerable time exploring and photographing the ruins of this old mine. The first of our rollovers occurred when I stumbled on my way back down to my Jeep. It may have looked ugly but I saved the camera!

Since we still wanted to see Barker Ranch, the group headed back down. Near the bottom of the grade at the eroded area, the bank gave way and Mark laid his Rubicon on its side in the 4 ft. deep gully. After extracting Mark and assessing that he was OK we proceeded to carefully recover his Jeep. Using Bill Martin's and my winches plus several straps and D rings and a couple of different HUGE rocks as anchors, Mark's Jeep was back on the road. A broken window, damaged door, hood and right front fender seemed to be the extent of the damage. After pulling the fender off the front tire, we continued on down and after adding a little trans fluid, we moved on to the Barker Ranch.

Barker Ranch has suffered recently as it continues to be a curiosity of the Charlie Manson days. It is becoming more and more vandalized and unkempt and the rodents have moved in, en mass. There seems to be no effort to keep it clean like it was a few years ago. However the view from the hill behind the ranch was outstanding!

It was getting late, and we still wanted to glimpse Meyer's Ranch, as some had heard it was being restored. We drove up the short trail, but the main gate was locked. Randy Banis quickly hiked up and took a couple of pics to show the group. We were all disappointed because it appears the rebuilding isn't historic and is completely replacing the old buildings. The trip out was uneventful and after airing up at the Trona-Wildrose Road, we proceeded home. Except for Mark's mishap, it was a nice trip.



Group photo op.

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