



TRAILS & TALES

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GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

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AFTON CANYON *By: Mary Grimsley*

Since I have no other run reports for this newsletter, I decided to write about our trip to Afton Canyon this past weekend.

While most club members attended Panamint Valley Days and there was plenty of help for the club led runs, Jerry & I decided to join our family and friends, who are all Associate Members of the club, at Afton Canyon. Of course, you have to understand the history here. We all go back a long way, to our former club, and this was our favorite place to go 4-wheeling.

We headed out Thursday just before 2:00 and were able to secure camp before dark. We camped in our favorite site below the rocks and the nearest one in on the long dirt road. Denise & Scott Bart and Abby & Jessie came in about 45 minutes later. We had dinner, started a campfire, and started the long wait for Terry & Cheri Grimsley and Megan & Brandon. When we talked to them about 5:00, they were parked on the 215 freeway where it crosses the 10 and not moving. The evening was nice, just a light jacket being required, so waiting wasn't hard to do. Abby & Jessie had gone to bed by the time Megan & Brandon arrived around 9:00pm.

We woke up to an absolutely beautiful Friday morning. We leisurely had breakfast and got ready for the day. The kids – including Scott & Terry - rode the Bart quads while we got lunches packed and ready to go. We finally headed out for one of our old favorite trails that goes around the mountain, with rocky trails, soft sandy stretches following the old B to V motorcycle race, past a small cabin that is still standing, and on around to eventually join the Mojave Road. We meandered over to the "little dunes" where we played a game of cat & mouse, then on to the larger part of the dunes and "the sand valley". We roared up & down the steep sand faces and climbed up to the rocks at the top, where we all got out to stretch. Terry was first to climb to the top of one dune and stop before going over. This suckered Scott up, where he high-centered, then we came up. We tugged him off.



2 vehicles are "not" high-centered, 1 "is". Any guesses?



Next day, same result.
"Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me."

We eventually made our way back to camp, where a fun afternoon was spent in camp, riding the quads and swapping tall tales. Around 3:00 we headed out to Soggy Dry Lake to the Travelers monument via the sand hill across from camp. We all took our rocks to add to the monument and took pictures. The lake was damp to wet off of the main trail and I'm sure "soggy" in places.

As Scott & Terry headed back to Razor Road and camp via the Mojave Road, the old folks climbed the back side of the sand hill (we couldn't believe they would drive by that temptation), pedal to the metal. It is a long sand hill that requires your foot in it most of the way. In the old days, there was no way Scott's Dad would have driven by that hill. So later the boys had to try it. After dinner, we sat around a big fire while the kids were making all kinds of racket in the Bart RV. They were having the time of their lives and it is so nice to hear happy kids.

Saturday morning arrived and it was overcast, but still warmer than you would expect. Kay & Guy Kendall arrived around 8:30am, bringing with them the skeet thrower I had called for the night before. We finished getting lunches packed then headed for Afton Canyon proper. We followed the Mojave Road part of the way and just made our own way at times. There were several camps down around the Basin Road train crossing. Heaven only knows why they would choose to camp there, as trains go by probably 3-5 an hour. How they get any sleep, I don't know.

First, we went up a side canyon, looking for the route up onto the rim. Being in the narrowest vehicle was a plus, as we made our way up the ever-tightening canyon, until we could go no more. As we came back down the canyon, we found most of the group out of their vehicles, except Terry. He was perched in an uncompromising position, unable to move forward or back without getting into the wall. He was finally able to get the left front wheel up and over a huge boulder, then climb out of his predicament. We found out that he was "sure" his Dad had gone that way, and he was going to too. Cheri tried to tell him that there are no tracks over there, but he wouldn't listen. However, when Jerry got down there, he said, "No, I didn't go that way, it's too narrow." Too bad he tried, because he put a rip in his new see-through shade top.

We went back down into the Canyon proper then went on down the tracks to "Grimsley's Grotto" (there is no official name, but this is how we know it). We had lunch first, and then most of the group climbed up through it, while 4 of us waited down at the mouth. Just as everyone got back, the train went by, giving us a blast of his horn. We went out on the tracks afterwards to find flattened coins for the kids.



**"My Dad went this way, so I'm going to."
"No, there are no tracks," replied Cheri.**

We then loaded up and head for the east end of the canyon and made our way up onto the rim for overlooks of Afton Canyon. The colors and erosion patterns are beautiful. With the sun blocked by dark clouds, the colors were more vivid. We followed some of the old Hemet Jeep Club Travelcade routes before heading back down the way we had come and back to camp. We traveled along side the tracks for several miles, headed for Crucero, when we ran across an old gravesite from 1931. It was a 4-month-old child that had been buried in that lonely locale. We wondered about her story and what her parents were doing out there.

We went back by the little dunes, where Scott again high-centered on the top of the dune. When we got back to camp, we had happy hour in our RV with mainly Kay & Guy, while the Mom's watched their kids on the quads, and the big kids were off quading up the sand hill and wherever else. Cheri finally joined us until the Kendall's left for home right after dark. We had a meat-fry and potluck before settling in around the plank fire. If it wasn't 8 feet long it didn't go in the fire.

Sunday morning was sunny but a cooler breeze was blowing in camp and it was starting to blow dust in places. Terry & Megan and Jerry & I drove out to the old Crucero crossing, just to see if by some miracle the railroad had but the crossing back in, but it is still missing. The area on the other side of the tracks does not appear to be closed either, but since we didn't know for sure, we did not cross the tracks.

Terry & Cheri and Scott & Denise headed for home shortly after lunch as they have quite a ways farther to travel, while we stayed another hour, leisurely packing up. Arrived home just before dark, after having an absolutely terrific weekend. We couldn't have asked for nicer weather.

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

OCTOBER MEETING HILITES

President George Graham was back behind the gavel. The usual points of business were taken care of and mail passed around.

Mary reported on the Inyo County Board of Supervisors meeting that she, Linda Graham, & Gary Luckerth attended. The Board passed the resolution to see RS2477 status for 5 roads within Death Valley National Park. The action was taken as the deadline was fast approaching that would longer allow the county to assert the roads.

Jerry, Randy, & Kathy volunteered to be the nominating committee. They will present their slate for the upcoming year at the next meeting, where a vote will be taken, so please attend.

Motion was made to have Karen buy \$100 worth of prizes for PVD. Curtis & Jim are both leading runs.

ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL FRONT

FURNACE CREEK

The Ridgecrest BLM office has begun a 30-day comment period regarding reopening a road on the East side of our White Mountains. that has been closed for a few years. This is different than the Death Valley Furnace Creek and we need your support to get it opened again.

The reason it was closed is that a well-funded "Green Jihad" organization from Arizona filed suit to close it because of a few creek crossings. Locals all want it open with but a few exceptions.

Please either send a hard copy letter to the name and address at the bottom of the attachment or open the website link for Ridgecrest BLM:

<http://www.blm.gov/ca/ridgecrest/>

At the bottom left corner of their home page is a link to respond electronically to them. Please take the time to share your feelings about public access to public lands.

Title your comments: Furnace Creek Road Reopening.

The Federal Register Notice for Furnace Creek was published on Oct. 30, 2006. The 30-day comment period will end Nov. 29. The notice is available online at:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-18156.htm>

Greg Weirick

AAPL (Advocates for Access to Public lands)

BICKEL CAMP UPDATE

In the last month or so, a new caretaker for Bickel Camp was found.

This is the email I just received from Charlie regarding Bickel Camp:

"Today at Bickel's was a beautiful fall day, clear and crisp, and even a slight breeze.

Jose and I dug and ran about 15 buckets and there was color in the dry washer, which is A-ok.

I heard that the BLM's assigned State archeologist had visited this last week at Schmidt's and Bickel's. Jose thought it went well; one thing noted was that we'd have to clean up the camp of trash, which we knew would have to be done.

Any full-scale cleanup will need the involvement of knowledgeable friends and experts I'd think. Especially when there're items such as Alex's old trailer, which is almost completely collapsed but could also have items within it of value to someone. I'd like to suggest a Bickel Camp Cleanup Day.

I know we seem to meet in Easter at the camp; perhaps 4/07 would be a good time. The Friends of Last Chance Canyon (FLCC) should be on track financially by then, yet we might be asked to do things for the camp earlier by the BLM too.

Thanks for your support everyone! Really. I think we're on track to make 2007 a memorable year for Bickel's and the Tunnel of Burro Schmidt. Soon we'll have a www.tflcc.org site up.

Please stand by...

see ya in the hills

Charlie"

It would be nice if members from the Gear Grinders could help out with the clean up, whenever they sponsor it, so I will keep everyone informed.

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

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PROMOTING PUBLIC LANDS FOR RESPONSIBLE MULTIPLE USE