



# TRAILS & TALES

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GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

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## **NIGHTMARE GULCH** *By: Mary Grimsley*

We had a whole row of Jeeps and one Land Crusher lined up in the theater parking lot on Sunday morning, January 21. The first run of the New Year 2007. In the lineup were Andy & Lisa Couch; Bill Dorey & friend; Warner Fellows; George & Linda Graham; trail boss Jerry & Mary Grimsley; Bill Maddux; Bill & Kathy Martin; Curtis Martin; Randy & Karen Schortzmann; Scott Wood, and guests Matt & Nikki Gardepe. At the trailhead on Hwy 14 we picked up 2 more Jeeps: Scott & Denise Bart and Abbey & Jesse; and Gary Luckerth.

We all aired down and headed in the trail toward Turtle Gate and the infamous Nightmare Gulch. There are always subtle changes, but it was much as it was the last time we passed through. Making your way slowly up the canyon, up, over, or around boulders is the name of the game. Some do it cleanly, some have problems, and some show off what their vehicles are capable of. All in the name of having fun.

Our guest, Matt, is in a '99 Wrangler TJ, with open differentials, had the most trouble. An obstacle stops the group for a few minutes, but soon all are moving, negotiating the narrowly placed rocks or steep climbs.

The lake is now just a mud-bog, which was frozen over when we approached. But not frozen enough, as we broke through down into the goo, totally coating the tire with mud, leaving the rim mostly untouched. What made it nasty looking was the dry sand that was picked up on the tread as we pulled on up and out of the hole. Everyone made it through; everyone was muddy. Even "Beau" managed to break through up to his belly, so he and "Murphy" had to run for a while.

This year the step was gone, but the climb out is nastier than ever. The trail boss has no problem, and most made it without too much trouble. However, there is always the exception: both Andy & Curtis have to make it more interesting by starting with a more difficult approach. Then by taking a slightly different line, even to the extent of getting cross-wise in the middle of the hill. But after all was



The first official picture of Maddog's "new" Land Crusher. Lookin' good.



Randy & Karen crossing through the mud hole.

said & done, they both made it up with Curtis getting the most "entertainment points".

Matt started up the climb, but to keep him from breaking anything, we put a winch on him early. Of course, Jerry was being pulled down the hill as he had no rocks to brake his movement down the hill and Matt was being towed up boulders, so Randy finally pulled around and anchored Jerry for the rest of the winch.

Maddog, in his newly engineered Land Crusher, made it up after a few adjustments in his line. We do believe the one mismatched front tire had something to do with any problems he had. Sounds good anyway.

After everyone made the climb out, we all loaded up and headed for a quarry site for lunch, that somewhat protected us from the very cold wind. Our usual lunch stop up on top was out of the question this day.

We continued on up over the hill, to the white bald hill and on down to Cudahy, then on down Last Chance Canyon. We parted company with Gary & the Bart's at this point, as they headed west to Highway 14 and we headed east on Garlock Road to pick up Goler Wash.

Unfortunately, we got a call on the CB that George was having a fuel pump problem, so he & Linda rode on home with Andy & Lisa, while Curtis and Maddog stayed with the Jeep. The rest of the group went on, cutting back up into the hills by the old Goler cemetery and through the mining camp & on into Goler Gulch.

We made quick work of the gulch, transitioning into yet another gully while working our way toward home. We finally were on the power line road, where we said goodbye to Scott Wood and pointed him toward 395 over Laurel Mountain, as he still had to drive to San Diego.

So as not to have to air up, we went on down to Bowman Road and on home. We met at Nickoletti's for swapping tales and a slide show at the end of a fun day.



Curtis sitting cross-wise on the climb.

## NEW YEARS EVE DAY-TREK

By Mary Grimsley

We got a call from George that there was a group going out into the El Paso's on Dec. 31, 2006, and would we like to go. We had been trying to decide what to do that day, so what a great idea.

We met at TCC for breakfast: Bill & Samela Dorey; George & Linda Graham; Jerry & Mary Grimsley; Bill & Kathy Martin; Randy & Karen Schortzmann; and guest Matt Gardepe.

Since we know the El Paso's like the back of hand, we were elected trail-boss. It was pretty chilly (and we don't have a top), so we decided to drive out to Inyokern and take the Red Rock/Inyokern Road down to Hart's Road. On the way down we decided that we would go run Black Rock Canyon, since most had never done that trail. So hopped on Hwy 14 to the sand dune where we aired down, then took the trail in.

Everyone made it up the black, bald hill with little difficulty and we took a short break where we stood at the top of a dry water fall looking down into a box canyon about 100' below.

Once out of Black Rock, we headed for Cudahy, then hooked around the top end of Last Chance to take a trail up across the hills. We started to climb the hill, which had a gully running



down it, getting about half way up, when something went wrong. Jerry already knew what the problem was, but wasn't sharing the information with me.

All I know is, we were careening down the hill at an alarming speed, ....backwards, and about every 20 feet down the hill we would suddenly start to go sideways. All I knew was that if the front tires dropped into the gully, we were going to roll. So my response to this occurrence every 20 feet was "OH SHIT!!" We did this wild ride for about 75 feet till we came to a halt in a very large, and I might say, welcomed creosote bush.

**NOW** Jerry shares with me what the problem was. He realized, as he started up the hill, that we were not in 4WD (one, yes one, hub did not get turned in during the airing down process), but he thought that if he just gave it a little power, we would just climb right up. Except the hill was much steeper than he thought, so, when he finally came to a stop it just went careening (that is the best word for it) wildly backwards down the hill. It was a hard-packed trail

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

with a layer of sand over it, so it was like ball bearings. Every time he tried to apply the brakes, because we were not in 4WD, the front-end would come around, so .... he would let up and just try to keep it straight on the trail. It was pretty exciting from my seat and from what the rest of the group saw, it was from their perspective also. So, from now on I will go around and inspect the hubs.

We finally got up and over the hills and dropped back down into the north part of Last Chance, then turned off towards Bickel camp. We met the new caretaker, Jose, who likes to tell the history of the old camp. There were quite a few visitors on this nice Dec. day. We had lunch and poked around the place a bit and took a peek inside the old cabin of Walt Bickel, where you can still see how he lived and see his world famous "atomic rolls". If you have to ask, you have to go see for yourself. We collected a donation for Jose to thank him for taking good care of the old "depression era" mining camp, then were on our way.

We headed on by the site of Gerbrac camp then up on top of the El Paso's for a birds-eye view, 350 degrees around, before going down the steep downhill. We passed on by the old site of Holland Camp, then headed toward Sheep Springs, where the Quail Unlimited group has installed 2 new picnic tables. We do hope the public will take care of the tables and not destroy them.

It was on home and the out to dinner at Casa Corona, where we brought in the New Year with England before heading for home.

## NOVEMBER MEETING HILITES

Due to a miscommunication, the meeting at Texas Cattle Company was moved from the meeting room upstairs, which meant, out on the main floor. So we moved, late in the afternoon to John's Pizza, who were very happy to accommodate us at the last minute.

President George Graham brought the meeting to order, with the usual business items taken care of and mail passed around.

Jerry, Randy, & Kathy as the nominating committee presented their slate of officers. They were as follows:

President: George Graham

Vice President: Gary Luckeroth

Recording Secretary: Samela Dorey

Corresponding Secretary: Mary Grimsley

Treasurer: Jim Kenney

No one else was nominated, so the slate was accepted by acclamation.

George suggested to the web-master that a "parts available" list be on the website.

Motion was made for meeting location to be moved to John's Pizza, was seconded, & passed.

Christmas Party is to be December 9<sup>th</sup> at El Charro Avita.

**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**