



TRAILS & TALES

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GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

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Panamint Valley Days 2006

By Curtis Martin

This was year number 5 for the Gear Grinders leading the Pleasant Canyon/South Park Loop run. A few members showed up middle of the week to stake out our usual encampment. As has been in previous years, camp was setup on a knoll just north of the BBQ Pit/kitchen. The Trail Crew consisted of Curtis Martin (Trail Leader); George & Linda Graham; Bill & Kathy Martin; Ron Page & family, and last but not least Randy & Karen Schortzmann. If I forgot anyone, SORRY ☹.

We then proceeded to assemble at the designated spot on Nadeau Road. Quick drivers meeting then off we went. By the time we arrived at Ballarat to air down we had accumulated around 32 vehicles. A small group of vehicles that were not with PVD and got stuck behind us last year made a run for it and got in front of us this time. We caught up to their tail end as one of the Jeeps was overheating. They finally pulled over to let us by, making our way up to Claire Camp. After exploring there for awhile we proceeded on bypassing Rita's and stopping at Roger's Pass for lunch around 11:30ish. We were making good time (no breakdowns or problems). During the lunch stop the clouds started moving in and dropping then a few . . . OK . . . several snow flakes started falling. After everyone had lunch and prepared for possible enclimate weather we headed south to Stripped Butte Lookout.

By the time I reached the far side of Middle Park I heard over the radio that the group doing South Park/Pleasant was having problems between the bridge and the top of South Park canyon. We proceeded on to the lookout overlooking Stripped Butte and Death Valley to give the other group some time to get across the silt beds. We still got to the east side before they were finished, so we held up there. They had a nice crosswind that was carrying the dust away. We finally started across and guess what... that nice breeze stopped! Shortly after entering the canyon I received word that the broken vehicle was being towed up and they were just below the tree tunnel. I went down to see if I could assist but they were in the process of turning it around to head back down the trail so we all continued on.

We proceeded to the Infamous Chicken Corner and Bridge. I got out and spotted about half the group around before Bill Martin took over to make sure everyone got around the corner and that we didn't loose anyone. We stopped at the Briggs cabins for a short rest then proceeded back to camp.

All in all I think everyone had a good time and I'd like to thank the Trail Crew and the rest of the Club members that were there to assist if needed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: My apologies go to Curtis and Jim for not printing these stories in the January issue. I somehow overlooked them when putting the January issue together, so I am very sorry for the lateness.

2006 PVD HISTORIC RUN *By Jim Kenney*

On Friday, I was the tail-gunner for the Big Four run lead by Andy Roach, in a highly modified Rubicon. There were 19 rigs, crawling in and out of the canyon, over and around big boulders and on up $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile past the lower ore chute and cables, all the way to the dry fall. It took us around 3 hours to complete the trip.

Saturday's history run was led by Jim & Donna and had only two sign-ups, one of them being Scott Wood, a member, so technically we had only one. It was cloudy to begin with when we stopped at Ballarat to air down. We followed the trail we did last year, going around the south end of Panamint dry lake, up through Fish Canyon passing by Manly Peak, stopping at the Stockwell mining area, as everyone was interested in the mining. As we came up out of Fish Canyon, the wind picked up tremendously and we feared that Gary would lose his top again. He and Warner almost froze to death with the wind chill. It was blowing so hard it almost blew over the lady taking pictures.

We then dropped on into Searles Valley where we took the old Nadeau Road. We passed by the teamsters stop at the small dry lake, then over the Slate Range Pass, staying on the Nadeau Road and stopping at the old Chinese Camp.

Sunday's run was to the Keystone Mine, which is up and off of the Goler Wash Road. We had 18 vehicles, including 3 crewmembers.

We spent some time at the mine which is on the north facing slope, then crossed up the switch-back road, over the top to the south-facing side of the slope to the old Lotus Mine, originally owned by Carl Mengel. Both mines have a lot of interesting equipment and are fairly in tact – both equipment and the mines. The Keystone Mine was active as late as the 1990's. The Lotus Mine was more like 1960's era, with the much older workings of Carl Mengel's of the 1930's.

Everyone had a great time, with a lot of out-of-the-area people who have never been here before.

Dumont Dunes 2007 *By: Mary Grimsley*

Tuesday morning, the Dorey's + grand daughters Merissa, Dawnya, Shelbea; the Graham's; & Maddog Maddux headed for the Dumont Dunes to establish camp and enjoy the quiet before the noise of the weekend crowd. Jerry & I headed out on Friday to join them and found that the camp also included Linda's sister Karen & husband Marshall, their son, Kelly & daughter Janine, husband Mitch & their kids; Bill Maddux's son Tommy & his son, Hunter, and some friends of Tommy. We also discovered that George had snuck in with a rail buggy.

We set up the RV on the front side of camp, then moved around on the other side of Graham's towards the back. Late afternoon we welcomed past members Jim & Mary Ellen Adams to camp.

We cruised camp looking for friends but weren't having much luck. Not until we spotted Bucky driving toward us, so he took us to his camp, which we never would have found. Bucky would be running the hill climbs on Saturday and they had several "built" Jeeps sitting in their camp. We had a nice evening around the campfire before retiring.

Saturday AM was beautiful and sunny. We were all sitting around visiting when we saw the Mercedes on a trailer go by & commented on it. Later, I got a call from Jerry about the Philblad's looking for camp. Then it dawned on me who was towing the Mercedes. Past members Dave & Lisa Philblad, who now live in Las Vegas, had towed in their 4X4 Mercedes. We got them directed into camp & unloaded.

We then went out to play on the dunes. We ran bowls, pulled high-centered vehicles off the top of dunes, watched people as the Mercedes drove by, and generally covered most of the outlying areas of the dunes. We also sat and watched at the bottom of Comp Hill as the busy little bees raced up and down it, including Jerry. We sure saw a lot more of the high buck buggies this year.



Got Sand??
High-powered Jeep at the hill climbs.



George & Mary sitting in the "new" buggy at the hill climbs.

We had lunch at Hog Heaven then went to see what was happening at the hill climbs, but the big blocks were not running yet. Some stayed in camp while others played in the big dunes. Late in the afternoon we went back to watch the big blocks at the hill climbs. It was getting late and was cocktail hour, so headed back to camp to ready for the potluck. Before dark we gathered, grazed, and talked. Everything was wonderful, as usual.

Sunday was overcast and cooler as we readied ourselves for our annual trip to China Ranch and our yearly date shake. As we went up Amargosa Canyon, the intermittent sun lit up the interesting hills and geology. We pointed out several other good trips out north of the dunes, but China Ranch seems to call louder than exploring. There was the usual crowd there, and we all brought back to camp some kind of date specialty, i.e., bread or cookies. They are all good.

More playing on the dunes and checking out the sand drags, shopping at the mall for last minute desires pretty much finished off the day. Another night around the campfire, but the group was smaller as some had headed for home earlier in the day.

Monday the skies were dark with heavy clouds and occasionally we would get a light mist, but the main rain moved south around us and left us pretty much dry. We decided, even though the wind was pretty cold and stiff, to head over to Saratoga Springs to look for petroglyphs that had escaped our eyes last time we searched for them. Armed with GPS coordinates, Maddog & George followed Jerry & Dorey part way up the trail that they had spotted. Mary stayed in the Jeep and with binoculars guided Jerry & Dorey to the glyphs, while Maddog & George watched from a distance. They soon came back down and watched from the parking area.

Tuesday, we all headed home. The Dorey's stopped at Peggy Sue's in Yermo for breakfast where they proceeded to have RV trouble. Of course the rest of us were moving on down the road and had no idea until they finally came rolling into town. It was a fun weekend.



Carl stuck on the crest of a dune.

*CONGRATULATIONS to
Jerry & Mary Grimsley
on celebrating their 40th
Wedding Anniversary !*



**Dave & Lisa Philblad in
their 4x4 Mercedes.**

FEBRUARY MEETING HILITES

We had several guests, including a returning guest who belongs to a club in Paso Robles, and a returning past member, plus 2 qualifying, and one new.

Jerry reported on his going to a Sierra Club meeting to hear a talk by retired Red Rock State Park Ranger, Mark Faull. NOT one person spoke to him while he was there.

Camp coordinates were given for TDS, as the Grahams and Martins were already there. TDS will be held at the Ocotilla Wells SVRA as the Truckhaven area is closed to any large organized events until the management plan is done, etc., or the CBD will sue.

GEAR GRINDERS NEW WEB ADDRESS: <http://www.geargrinders4wdclub.org/>

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PROMOTING PUBLIC LANDS FOR RESPONSIBLE MULTIPLE USE