



TRAILS & TALES

JUNE 2007

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CLUB ADDRESS

P.O. BOX 32

Ridgecrest, CA 93556

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SHERMAN PASS *By Warner Fellows*

Its that time of year and we're off to Sherman Pass to do some cleaning. Along for the festivities were Matt Gardepe, George Graham with guest Jim Crow, Bill & Kathy Martin, Randy & Karen Schortzmann, and guests Gary Bartlett, Carl Dorey with Michelle & Shelbea, and Glenn & Barbara Odell, friends of the Martins, and yours truly as the Trail Boss.

We left the Theater parking area and headed up the mountain. We regrouped at the General Store in Kennedy Meadows and again at the Black Rock station, then it was on to the trailhead at Bonita Meadow. After airing down we were off on our adventure. The trail, this year, was in surprisingly good shape; we had to move only three trees on the main trail. The lack of trees was a good thing as George had the only "working" saw in our group. I had managed to break mine Saturday evening while getting it ready and Carl's was running about as good as mine did on past runs. We found only patches of snow and we had to stop and let the children (of all ages) play.

While Randy scouted the bypass, the rest of us ascended "Boulder Hill" and pulled into North Meadow for some rest, relaxation, and of course lunch. The Trailblazers, as in years past, did not fare as well on their end of the trail. They had to remove upwards of thirty trees and so they arrived at North Meadow slightly later than we did. As lunch was winding down and pleasantries exchanged with friends from the Trailblazers we discussed a course of action for the remainder of the trail. Ranger Bob Frenes asked us to check the extension trail since it had not been done in a couple of years. This was good for me as I had planned to run out there to place a geocache after we were done with our work.

We found the extension trail as clean as the rest of the trail, with another three trees to remove. We drove only as far as the Hilltop Discovery mine, the road goes on for a short distance more but it ends abruptly and getting turned around at the end is a bit challenging. Once at the mine we stopped to stretch our legs and to take in the beautiful view of the Kern River Canyon. I then placed the geocache in a rock pile at the mine site. For the Geocachers in our club the cache is called Hilltop Discovery and will be published soon.



Some fun in the snow.



Airing down at the trailhead.

From there we retraced our route back to North Meadow and on to Sherman Peak. Again, we only encountered patches of snow in the usual places but less of it, as the summit was reached with ease. We spent a little time at the summit taking in the awesome view and attempting to reach friends and family with our cell phones. Soon we remounted and headed down and on to the Embree Cabin.

For some, it was their first time at the cabin so we gave them plenty of time to look around. We shared a little history and stories of trips past with the first timers. The day was wearing long and we still had to get down from the mountain so we mounted up and headed for the paved road. Once on the pavement we turned uphill to find



Gear Grinders place a Geocache somewhere up in the High Sierra's.

a place to air up. With our tires re-inflated we headed back to town through Black Rock and Kennedy Meadows, another successful trail maintenance trip done.

ATTENTION CLUB MEMBERS

It's that time of year again!

Club & CA4WDC dues are due at or by the Club meeting on June 27. If you cannot make the meeting, please mail \$60.00 to our treasurer: Jim Kenney, 200 E. Radar, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 before June 27.

5th Annual Big Bear Bash

Memorial Weekend 2007 By: Terry Grimsley

It was Memorial Weekend again and for a 5th straight year we found our way to the San Bernardino Mountains to beat the heat and hit some trails. This year Bill & Kathy Martin arrived early to secure our favorite campsite just north of Fawnskin. As with previous years, by the time the trail boss arrived with his family, the campsite was already filling up with members that started their weekend early. Beside the Martin's, Matt Gardepe and his son Mondo, Randy & Karen Schortzmann, and Gary Bartlett had arrived before the trail boss. The next morning Gary Luckeroth pulled in well before it was time for us to hit the trail.

The destination on Friday was a trail south east of Big Bear Lake called Heartbreak Ridge (2N61Y). It's a bit of a drive to get to this trail but the mix of rock gardens, steep climbs and great views from the top makes it all worth while. To change things up a little, the trails to and from the main objective (2N61Y) were run in reverse compared to previous years. The squeeze was a non-event this year as the rocks were either filled in or lying down. The remainder of the trail was its normal, rocky self. We stopped at the top for a lunch break before heading back down.

After dropping off the mountain we opted for the shortest route to the pavement instead of the long, bumpy and dusty dirt road we traveled three years ago. Early in the evening Carl Dorey, Michelle and

a Jeep full of girls (Shelbea, Merissa, & Dawnya) arrived towing a little trailer loaded with gear. A short time later Matt & Ashley Lemons arrived. The last family to arrive that night was Wynn & Carla Gregory and their kids Emily & JD.

Saturday morning we loaded up and headed for the Holcomb Creek Jeep Trail (3N93). Cheri opted for a day of shopping with her step mom while her dad rode shotgun with the trail boss. The east end of this trail is accessed from 3N14, the main dirt road heading north out of Fawnskin. When we arrived at the first water crossing it was very apparent just how little rain and snow there had been this year. We crossed the creek and proceeded west bound on the trail. The first major obstacle is the rutted hill climb, but since most everyone in the group had at least one locker it didn't present much of a challenge. The one and only rig in the group without a locker was driven by Carl, but he used the right combination of momentum and throttle and didn't spin a tire.

The middle rock garden was about as rough as we have ever seen it. With the help of spotters, most everyone chose the right line and was through the obstacle without incident. Of course there were those (Matt Lemons, Randy & Bill) that attempted a bonus line, but each was stopped by the large rocks and lack of traction. As we continued west it was surprising that we hadn't seen any other vehicles on the trail that day. At the west end of the trail we

encountered a large group heading east that had just finished the first rock garden. The final rock garden was much rougher than usual, but almost everyone made it through without any problem. The trail boss managed to tangle with the very last boulder on the trail and was beginning to think he was going to have to drag that thing all the way back to camp.

After regrouping, we proceeded east on 3N16 en route to the Lower Larga Flats Trail (2N06X). This short trail is one of the easier black diamond trails on the mountain. There's one significant rock garden and a few smaller rock piles that give it this rating. When we arrived at the toughest of the obstacles we found a bone stock YJ stuck on the last pile of rocks. A few of us walked up to investigate and with some muscle we had him off the rocks. However, they did have one more rig to get up the rock garden. The guy behind the wheel of the Tacoma drove it like it was rented and smashed and bashed his way up the rock garden. I'm not sure the engine in that truck ever got below 3000 rpm. It was a perfect demonstration of "How Not To Drive!"

With these clowns out of our way, we proceeded up the rock garden. There were a couple of minor "stucks" here and there, but everyone, with the exception of Gary, made it up. Gary had decided to take a bonus line. Things were going well until he slid off and landed on a large boulder with his skid plate. Bill threw a rope on him, but the Rubicon wouldn't budge him. It took two Wranglers to get Gary off his rock. By the time he was extracted, his skid plate had taken a new shape, changing his driveline angle which resulted in the fan hitting the shroud. A couple of zip ties and we were on our way. We eventually rejoined 3N93 and proceeded back to camp. Later that evening we were joined by John & Kris Traber and their boys. As with every year, we ended the day with a nice group buffet.

Sunday morning Guy & Kay Kendall drove up to join us for the day. After visiting with them a short bit, it was time to pack up and head out for the day. Our destination today was Gold Mountain and John Bull, the highlights of the weekend each year. When we reached the trail head Gary Bartlett discovered that a leaf spring had shifted and it was wearing a groove in his left rear tire. With rough trails ahead he decided to head back to camp and take care of the problem. Gold Mountain (3N69) is more scenic than difficult, but it too is rated as a black diamond. The trail starts out next to Baldwin Lake and climbs the south facing slope. This trail is probably the rockiest on the mountain as well as one of the longest, continuous climbs. The rocks aren't big, but there are literally billions of them. As you climb there are small rock gardens along the way to add to the challenge. The prominent feature of this trail is the boulder field that is traversed shortly before reaching the top of

the of mountain. This obstacle usually doesn't present much of a challenge but this year it seemed like many of the rocks were turned up on end. Despite being rougher than usual, the rock garden is flat and there was plenty of traction for everyone as they crossed. After dropping down the north facing slope of Gold Mountain, we headed west on 3N16 until we reached 3N02, where we stopped for a short lunch break.

Even though 3N02 is just a means of getting to John Bull, it has a variety of nice rock gardens that make it fun for everyone. When we reached the beginning of John Bull (3N10), there was a large crowd of vehicles. Fortunately they were running the trail in the easterly direction and had just finished.

The gate keeper was particularly rough this year, with lots of large rocks surrounded by silt that offered little traction. Wynn & Carla had a bit of trouble with the first rock pile and needed to be strapped backwards to get free of the rocks. With a different line they were through the rock pile and starting the climb up the mountain. The climb up the east side of John Bull is one of the toughest trails in the San Bernardino Mountains and is often referred to as "The Little Rubicon." This year was no exception as it was as rough as ever.

Because this trail winds up through trees and tall vegetation it's tough to see what happens more than one or two vehicles back. There's one climbing, off-camber right turn around and between boulders that definitely gets your attention. Wynn's left front tire must have been four feet off the ground when they inched their way around the lower rock. Carl's left front was also getting up pretty high. When he paused to await assistance from the trail boss, Michelle took the opportunity to slide out the door and assume the role of photographer, but not before leaving pucker marks in her seat. For the most part, the climb up was pretty typical of past runs, with hang ups here and there. With the exception of the tow rope needed at the first rock pile, I think everyone made it up without needing a strap. The off-camber obstacle that challenged the Dorey's and Jerry & Mary Grimsley last year has been removed, so there was a little less excitement at this spot on the trail.

Matt Lemons certainly didn't provide much entertainment this year either, as his Blazer seemed to go just about anywhere he pointed it. It was definitely a sharp contrast to the Blazer's first visit to Big Bear three years ago. Randy's YJ was running a little hot and needed to cool off about half way up and Guy tried to rip a fender flair off the Rubicon, but there was no breakage or body damage on this day, just a bunch of rock rashes on the under carriage of most every rig.

After a well earned break up top we continued west on the trail dropping down the mountainside. Even the west end of the trail was much rougher than usual. Many of the rock piles seemed like they had rocks in all the wrong places. This is definitely one of those trails that changes by the hour as the rocks get moved around with each passing vehicle.

After completing the trail we wasted no time getting back to camp so we could clean up and head out for margaritas and dinner at our favorite Mexican restaurant. When we arrived back in camp we found Nikkie had decided to surprise Matt and Mondo by driving down for the night. Once again, we failed to make our sunset run up to Butler's Peak, but this time it wasn't the snow that kept us in camp.

On Monday many were packing up and getting ready for the journey home. The trail boss & Megan, Wynn & Emily, the Dorey clan and the Martins decided to explore the White Mountain Trail (3N17). After the failed attempt last year some probably thought we had lost our marbles. The west end of the trail was reached after a 45 minute drive to the north on 3N14.

The trail got down to business very quickly with a series of steep, rocky climbs up the side of the mountain. Once on top, the trail was pretty easy and we had a continuous view of Lucerne Valley below. This time we could actually stop and enjoy the high over-looks as the weather was spectacular. After stops on top of North & South Peaks, the trail turns to the south east and heads towards 3N16 following the ridge almost the entire way. There were several descents into saddles and subsequent climbs out of them, as we followed the saw-toothed ridges. Many of the climbs presented enough of a challenge to make them interesting. The last hill climb of the day, Frustration Hill, was definitely intimidating looking from the bottom. There's a bypass, but it also

looked rather interesting, as it had a significant rock pile that was slightly off-camber. All four drivers stood looking up the hill wondering who would be the first volunteer (sucker) to give the hill climb a try.

Bill was the brave one of the bunch and he proceeded to show the rest of us how it was done. Bill made it look so easy that the rest of us decided to give it a try. We were all pleasantly surprised by how easy the hill climb ended up being. After topping Frustration Hill we were only a couple hundred yards from the end of the trail at 3N16. Even though the trail boss had run this trail on four prior occasions (two of which were failed attempts), this was the first time it had been run in its entirety. It's definitely a fun trail and since most opted out this year, it will be on the calendar next year. Thanks to Bill for his navigational assistance throughout the day. On our way back to camp, we found an inviting shady spot for lunch.

What a spectacular weekend! We couldn't have ordered up better weather and despite not being able to have a campfire the nights were very pleasant. On two nights we managed to keep our blood pumping from the laughter of a game called "Let's Go Camping." A few victims, who shall remain nameless, provided the rest of us with a good hour of entertainment.

We missed a few of the usual suspects from years past and we were happy to have some new faces join us for the weekend. Hopefully everyone will be able to join us again next year. That's right, mark your calendars because Big Bear #6 is already planned. Drop me an e-mail for an advanced copy of the Big Bear 2008 flyer.

Thank you to everyone that made the long drive down and to the Martins for securing our campsite.



Matt Lemons on the rocks in Holcomb Creek



Matt Gardepe On the infamous John Bull Trail



Carl Dorey puts his right tire forward on the John Bull trail.



Kendall's, Martin's, Gary & Schortzmann's on the Gold Mntn Trail