

TRAILS & TALES

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NORTHERN SIERRAS *By Bill Martin*

24-30 JULY 2007

THE PEOPLE: This was something of a two-club meet. Advance party was the Grahams and Martins with a Tuesday arrival to secure camp. Grimsley's and Phil Osborn, trail boss for Rubicon 4x4 Association and wife Margaret came next day. Friday, father and son Dorey, Jason with carload of family and his friend Eric, also with carload of family came in Friday and three more Rubicon members arrived prior to the main feature.

THE CAMP: It started off so good. Centerville Flat is an undeveloped camping area bounded by two paved roads and the Carson River and one of its tributaries. Flat sites, big trees, lots of shade, quiet and peaceful. And then, when out on a preliminary run, the invasion began. We returned to discover that this was to be the annual meet of E Clampus Vitus, a fraternity of sorts, some 200 strong, dedicated to the grossest, loudest, vile behavior imaginable. Their greeting was F.U. launched at the very top of their lungs, even when inches away. This serenade was to continue practically 24/7 during their stay. For three days they were supplied with unlimited beer and whiskey, with obvious results. Most of us tried to laugh it off, but the two family trucks went searching elsewhere for a more benign campsite. But by Sunday afternoon things returned to normal and we finished out as we began. Great campsite, company notwithstanding.

THE RUNS: Only the Rubicon folks were familiar with the area and we relied on their experience. But for preruns, we undertook an exploration of the Monitor Pass area with a loop through Haypress Flats. Thursday we completed an excellent deep-woods trail called Corral Hollow, with a Forest Service owned and maintained cabin site for our lunch stop.



Vehicles on a 360-degree overlook.



Older 2-story cabin was found in good shape

Then back to the Monitor Pass area for an old trail with a new access, the Barney Riley Trail. Just for old times sake, Phil lead us backwards on the original access for a while, but knowing we were coming to a locked private property gate, we eventually bailed off and that back to our entry trail by escaping over a ridge. The cross-connector looked a lot better on the GPS than in person. I'd swear I saw Mary pushing that Jeep over the top.

THE MAIN EVENT: This was a two-run day starting with the Slickrock Trail and finishing with the Deer Valley Trail. Slickrock was a short, but beautiful trail through granite domes and included some nice 3-wheel slab climbs. But Deer Valley was entirely different, reminding me more of the John Bull. It was all dirt and boulder climb out the entire way. And then we had our first and only serious incident, when Eric's Corvette-powered Cherokee XJ came to a dead halt (this was its maiden voyage.). Several efforts to get the ECU powered up failed and

BEAUDRY & MURPHY SWIMMING.



BILL MARTIN SWIMMING.

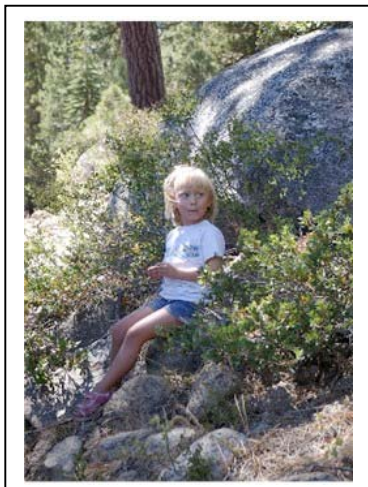
after a couple hours of effort, the group split up, so some could complete the run. But eventually hard work paid off, the problem was located and resolved, so that the tail-enders were able to continue and eventually rejoin the main pack.

Only consequences were frayed nerves for the trip leaders, and the cancellation of the potluck due to the late hour. We hit the local restaurant in Markleeville and the pot luck did get rescheduled for Sunday night it was super... but half the group had left by then. Sunday also saw a short post-run exploring local trails to the top of nearby Silver Hill.

EPILOGUE: All in all, a very enjoyable outing in a new-to-us area. Worthy of a return visit indeed. We'll have to discuss an annual late-summer Northern Sierras group trip, which can revisit this area, but some years Sonora Pass (Niagara Rim), the Tahoe area, maybe even the Mammoth area.



WHILE THE GUYS ALL GIVE MORAL SUPPORT TO ERIC, HIS DAUGHTER WAS SITTING PRETTY BESIDE THE TRAIL.



RANDY, FROM THE RUBICON CLUB, CAME PREPARED FOR DEEP WATER WITH HIS CANOE.



FREEWAY RIDGE & BORDERLINE Trails *By: Warner Fellows*

You couldn't ask for a better August day on Sunday, the 11th; clear, almost cool, cobalt blue sky, and a Four Wheelin' trip staring us straight in the face. It was a big run too, with 16 vehicles and 29 people out for a great time. Our destination: the Freeway Ridge and Borderline trails near Lake Isabella.

Gear Grinders and guests in attendance were: Bill Dorey; Carl Dorey with Dawnya, Merissa, & Shelbea; Matt Gardepe with guest Ryan McDonald; George & Linda Graham; Jim & Donna Kenny; Gary Luckeroth; Jason & Sandra Maddocks with Parker & Alison; Randy & Karen Schortzmann; & up from San Diego with their brand new JK Rubicon were Scott & Lynn Woods. Up for the fun but not quite ready to drive was prospective member Laura Golembesky, she rode with Gary. Additional guests were Jeff Hartkopf, friend of Matt, also driving a fresh out of the wrapper JK Rubicon, and Parrish & Nancy Hampton with their two children. And of course, yours truly as the Trail Boss.

Hey! Wait a minute. That's neither 29 people nor 16 vehicles. Well sit tight sports fans because there's more. Once we left Ridgecrest, we met with some members of the Southern California Land Rover Club out at Freeman Junction. They were: Randy Banis driving his '94 Defender 90; Matthew Norton in his '03 Discovery II; Quentin Kuhl in a '04 Discovery; and driving another '04 Discovery was Vinny Ybiernas with his father. Yep, that rounds it out nicely for a fun day on the trail.

After a brief stop in Lake Isabella, we continued on to the trailhead where we aired down and got acquainted with old and new friends. Many in the group had never been on the Freeway, some had - but not the Borderline; for others it was return trip - but some time had passed so you never know what to expect. One thing we all knew: it was going to be interesting. With that many vehicles, some with rookie drivers and others that had not experienced the "Freeway" before, there was a lot of anticipation in the air.



16 VEHICLES GATHER ON THE "ON RAMP"

So let's get to it. Soon after leaving the trailhead parking, lot we encountered what we like to call "the On-Ramp" (you can't run the Freeway until you've conquered the "On-ramp!"). I led the way and then spotted Scott through without any damage (Bonus!). Next up were George & Linda, no problems there. Then Bill Dorey, with a few extra tries and some expert spotting from George, made it through without damage and he only got a little "tippy". I had to move on up the hill to make room for more vehicles so I didn't get to watch the rest of the fun. We did have to wait there for a few minutes so I imagine it was very interesting.

BILL DOREY GETS A LITTLE "TIPPY" ON THE "ON RAMP"



VEHICLES AT THE TOP OF THE "ON RAMP".

We continued up the trail through several rock formations and some erosion ditches that really got your attention. On a few of the obstacles, there was a bit of radio chatter that let me know that some were having more fun than others. I have to tell you, being up front has its disadvantages: you miss all the fun. In very short order we came to the connector between the Freeway Ridge Trail and the Borderline Trail (32E47). This is my favorite part of the whole trip and this is the section that is being considered for closure. I sure would hate to lose this part, it is so much fun. It is a real challenge, for a rookie like me, but it is not death defying. All but one of the obstacles on this section has bypasses, so those in our group that didn't feel up to it, could go around and continue the trail.

One of the obstacles is a mini notch with large rocks on either side. This is the challenge that I opted to bypass on the pre-run, but not today; we're doing the "full Monty" this time. It's a good thing too, because I heard from a fairly reliable source that Jim, though he didn't get stuck, managed to fall in one way going in, and the other way while backing out! Having nearly put his Jeep on its side twice, Jim decided that he had had enough fun for this part and took the bypass. I also heard that Gary slipped on the same obstacle and got light on the wheels too. With a first timer in his right seat, too. Way to go Gary!

NOW, KISS THE BOULDER!



Another such obstacle that's always a hoot sometimes a holler (!) is on one of the steeper parts of the trail. You have to negotiate a narrow path between trees, roots, rocks and ruts. The exit is the part that gets most drivers. You have to drive directly toward one of the larger rocks right up to the point of "kissing" it with your front bumper (hey, that's what they're for!), then it is a hard right turn around the second biggest boulder and your vehicles leans farther than you thought possible without going over. Before you know it you're out and on top. Too much fun!

After that it was one more short climb to the base of the BIG HILL, where we broke for lunch. We found a nice wide, semi-flat area with plenty of shade for a rest, before continuing on. With such a large group, folks tended to break up into smaller groups, so I made sure to visit each group to see how things were going. Everyone seemed to be having a good time with lots of laughter and good conversation.

As lunch was winding down and we were packing our stuff away, two motorcyclists came down the big hill towards us. They stopped and asked if there was an EMT in our group.

They told us that a rider had gone down hard near Evans Flat Camp Ground and probably needed medical attention. Since Donna was with us, we decide to head over to the campground to see if we (she) could be of assistance. After a short drive

through thick foliage, we arrived at Evans Flat. We asked where the injured rider was and were told that the fire department had already responded and were assessing the situation. We were told that the rider would likely have to be airlifted out by helicopter. That can't be good. Since aid was already being rendered, we decided that we could only get in the way, so we circled the campground and headed back towards the Borderline Trail. As we left the campground we heard a helicopter making its approach, an ominous sign.

Once back on the trail we made our way to the downhill sections of the Borderline trail. The Borderline splits from the Freeway Ridge Trail right at the top of the big hill and starts descending right away. There are three hills each steeper than the last. Then there are short sections of flat or even uphill sections interspersed with rock gardens and thick foliage. This is the part of the trail that beats on your paint a little. The trail follows a narrow ridge that seems like it will take you right into Isabella Lake. But it doesn't, it turns and dumps you down another series of really steep hills. These hills with deep erosion ruts, threaten to swallow your Jeep if just the right line isn't taken. There were a few that nearly lost their vehicles in these ruts: indeed one of the Rovers had to call for a winch when he fell in. Some very narrow escapes to be sure but all survived the middle section without mishap.

The last series of steep down hills was upon us before we could catch our breath from the middle section and soon we were down on Sawmill Road. We turned and headed uphill for a short distance until ample shade could be found for airing up our tires.

Once again, I circulated amongst the group to get a feel for people's reaction to the run. It seemed that everyone had a great time and looked forward to the next one. Vinny's father wanted to come back and do this again... in the mud! I'd call that positive feedback!

JULY MEETING HILITES

Gary Luckerth called the meeting to order & welcomed returning guests & new guests Don & Arlene Sillings.

Due to many members not in attendance, some reports were skipped, while trip reports and upcoming events were given.

Returning old members Jim & Mary Ellen Adams and Gary & Sherri Bartlett were reinstated as members.

Samela Dorey won the 50/50 drawing AGAIN.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40.