

# TRAILS & TALES

November 2019

GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

Volume XXXIII, No. 11

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**CB Channel 1**

## **Panamint Valley Days Pleasant Canyon** *By: George Graham*

Friday's trip up Pleasant Canyon and down South Park led by George Graham with Terry Grimsley as Tail End was attended by five other Jeeps of various sizes and capabilities. We aired down as soon as we left the Trona Wildrose Rd and stopped to regroup after the dusty run to Ballarat. During the Ballarat stop I was approached by a man who wanted us to help him rescue his Toyota Buggy which was stuck in South Park at Coulter Spring. I told him we don't usually rescue Toyotas but we would help him if we could.

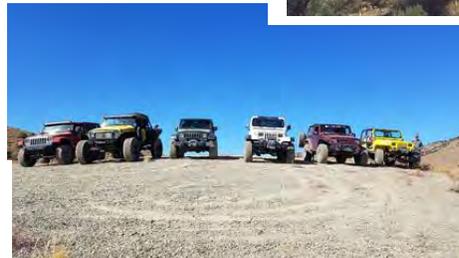
We left Ballarat and proceeded up the canyon brushing the dust of our vehicles with the willows and made the usual stops at Claire Camp, Rita's Cabin and Rogers Pass. The Claire Camp stop was punctuated by a fuel pump failure in Terry's Jeep. I took the run on up to the World Beater Cabin to wait while I went back to help Terry. He got it running again before I could get to him and we were back on the trail. Lunch was enjoyed at Stripped Butte Overlook. As we passed through South Park Valley a herd of burros was sighted through the dust from the silty road.

When we arrived at Coulter Spring, we found the stuck Toyota and the owner waiting for us. It was not only stuck .... it was very stuck. The driver and a friend in a Land Cruiser had gone for a night run around the loop and after losing a bolt from his steering box and ripping a tire on the rocks at the spring he found himself at rest well into the willows on the side of the trail. His efforts to free his buggy only put him deeper in the willows and he smoked his clutch so bad that he had no clutch. His friend in the Land Cruiser tried to pull him out and only succeeded in breaking his front drive shaft.



**Vehicles parked  
at Claire Camp.**

**Vehicles parked  
at the Striped  
Butte overlook.**



**Vehicles coming  
down the hill from  
Striped Butte  
overlook.**

Photos by:  
Terry Grimsley

I tried several times to pull him free with my winch but only stalled the winch. We connected a snatch block and tried a double line pull with the same results. It was a bad situation at best. One of our party had a super Jeep JK 4dr that was really built, Hemi engine, Dana 60 and Dana 80 axles, and 40 inch tires. He got the Toyota Buggy on the end of a strap and jerked him several time with little movement. When the big guy hopped into the side of the trail and ripped one of his 40 inch tires he said he had had enough. What to do? We decided to try pulling him forward through the willows. After cutting all branches we could reach, we were able to get his front wheels turned toward the trail and pull him out with a TJ.

While all the jerking was going on a Toyota 4 Runner that was coming up the trail got himself off the road and had to be winched to safety before he rolled over into the 10-foot ditch beside the trail. All vehicles back on the trail, we pulled the buggy down the trail, around Chicken Corner and left him with his friend to pull back to Ballarat.

The rest of the trip was uneventful.

## JAIL CANYON *By: Bill Dorey*

It was a beautiful **Friday** morning at PVD, the weather was absolutely perfect. We all started lining up at around 8:30am. We had 5 vehicles to start with, myself and Samela as trail bosses, Earl Wicker as tail gunner, and 3 other vehicles. Then just before leaving we were joined by Bill & Kathy Martin and Gary Luckeroth, as their run had cancelled.

We headed out a just a few minutes after 9:00am, we all air-downed just after turning off of Indian Ranch Road at the trail head. It was a pleasant ride to the end of the trail where it stops at the Corona Mine. Right after arriving Bill & Kathy departed as they had another commitment.

After exploring the site and taking pictures for about 2 hours, with several walking up to the mine, we all decided it was time for lunch. After lunch, we all headed back to camp incident free. It was an easy, relaxed run, and we all returned back to camp at around 1:30.

Vehicles in line for Jail Canyon.



Photo by: Bill Dorey

## GOLER TO BARKER RANCH

*By: Jerry Grimsley*

We led the Goler to Barker Ranch run on **Friday** morning, leaving around 8:00am with 10 vehicles and Raul from the Eastern Sierra 4WD Club as our tail-gunner.

Once we turned up the road to Goler Wash, we could see another group ahead of us just entering the narrows. We were not very far into the narrows when we caught up with them. It was a commercial motorcycle tour group. They were riding mostly Honda 250's, street legal, but off-road capable. The same could not be said of the riders who appeared to be complete novices. It took forever for their escorts to get the riders up the first gravel hill in the narrows. After that obstacle, they kindly moved aside and we proceeded on to the Barker Ranch, where Mary and I told the history of the ranch, including our personal experience with the Manson girls still living at the ranch. It was too early for lunch, so the group voted to drive on to Mengle Pass.

Unfortunately, the motorcycle group had passed us while we were at Barker Ranch. We caught up with them again at the rocky climb just short of Mengle Pass. There are multiple routes thru the rocks. Almost every one of them was blocked by crashed motorcycles. It was an incredible sight. After our lunch stop at Mengle Pass, we never saw them again. I don't know how far they had to go before their overnight stop, but they were going to be tired and sore puppies.

After exiting Goler Wash we turned up Coyote Canyon to visit the Gold Spur Mine. About 1/2-mile short of the mine, Mary and I started hearing scraping and squeaking noises that we should not have been hearing. A quick check showed a broken spring mount. The rest of the group continued on to the mine while we slowly made our way out of the canyon. Jeff Buck was kind enough to stay with us until we reached camp, where George Graham did a temporary fix. Thank you, George!

Photo by: Jerry Grimsley



Vehicles are parked at the top of Mengle Pass for lunch.

# UPPER JACKPOT CANYON

By: Bill Wight

We had eight guests on this **Friday** trip, leaving PVD camp at approximately 9 AM. We traveled to Ballarat where we stopped to air down. We then proceeded along the trail to Upper Jackpot Canyon, stopping about halfway there to enjoy the view of the valley. Those addicted to their cell phones were also able to get service at this stop.

Continuing on up the canyon, one Jeep suffered a broken shift cable about ¼ of a mile from the end of the road. A trip participant familiar with this system was able to shift the Jeep into low range and low gear so it could continue on up to the end of the road and get back down to Ballarat.

We had lunch at the end of the road & everyone was able to explore the old mining equipment there.

The trip back down the canyon to Ballarat was uneventful. We aired up at Ballarat and got the Jeep with the broken shift cable into 2WD and a higher gear for the trip back to PVD camp.



Photo by:  
Bill Wight

**Vehicles stopped to repair a broken shift cable ¼ mile from the end of the trail.**

# SATURDAY MORNING ... In CAMP

By: Mary Grimsley

Jerry left the RV really early, like 6:30am, to put out the signs for the various run meeting places. I was in the RV getting ready for the day, when a loud cheer goes up in camp. My thought was "what's going on?" So, I peek out the door and there is Jerry on the end of a tow rope being towed by some stranger. "What the heck is going on?"

It seems that when he was out putting up the Historic run sign, he gets back in the Jeep and it won't start. They tried swapping several relay switches for the fuel pump, to no avail. It was time for our run to leave, so I stayed in camp with Cheri, while Jerry jumped in with Terry as Tail Gunner of the Defense Run.

Cheri and I enjoyed our leisurely time in camp.

# HISTORIC RUN *By: Tom Perkins*

**Friday's** Historic run included 11 guests with Trail Boss Tom Perkins and Tail Gunner Dan Kus. We met up at Nadeau Road and drove to the Slate Range crossing, went down several shelf roads constructed with rock walls and toured the Chinese camp. Following that, we drove over the Nadeau Shotgun Road to reach Anthony Mill Mine and Reilly sites. There was ample parking available within easy walking distance of the site. Our guests enjoyed walking around and taking pictures. All of the dogs jumped out of their vehicles and busied themselves with dog activities.

Our next stop was the site of the old Onyx mine, where we broke for lunch and then explored the mine works. I drove up the road about a mile in the direction of the Kopper King Mine, but found the cinder block had been turned to indicate "Occupied." I didn't want to take 13 vehicles up there; I knew we could fit them in, but it would take too much time to arrange them in the narrow canyon.

From the Onyx Mine, we drove to the Panamint Crater, while discussing its origins on the way. I cautioned everyone that the sinkhole was still sinking, and it was unsafe to enter the crater. We took pictures, picked up a few rocks and returned to Nadeau Road.

We drove to Snow Canyon over the rough Nadeau Shotgun Road, quite a feat for 13 vehicles all spread out for one or two miles. We observed 3 large, healthy burros at the canyon mouth, and they ran off the other way.

Somehow, we managed to squeeze 13 vehicles into the parking area around the St. George Mine, and each one of us drove down the short hill with the admonition to avoid using brakes. We drove up the incline to the parking area near the Golden Lady Mine and looked at the stone structures in the canyon until the sun got low and we realized we had miles to go. We made it to Panamint Valley Road just before sundown. Some returned to camp, Dan returned to Ridgecrest and I went to Panamint Springs for fuel, dinner and lodging.



Photo By: Terry Grimsley

# BACKDOOR TO DARWIN

By: Jim Kenney

Donna and I led the Backdoor to Darwin run for Panamint Valley Days on **Saturday** (11/9/2019). We got up a 5am (ugh), left RC at 6am and made it to PVD at 7:15. It was a beautiful day. We left at 8:30 with 6 vehicles and Karen, Randy, Chase and friend as trail crew. We picked up another vehicle at the Panamint Valley/Hwy 190 intersection and another at the trailhead.

As we progressed, we discovered, Susan one of my regular attendees had hiked up on Zink Mountain and had pictures of the mine WAY up on the NE side (west facing slope) (I will post when I receive them). The Koi were hungry at China Garden Spring, there was real water at Miller Spring and things were going well. As we headed into Darwin for lunch, a voice on the radio said those behind me had stopped on the last uphill into town. Sure enough, a Bronco had stopped. Cranking, it sounded like a fuel problem. Everything was so hot, we towed it on into our lunch stop and let it cool. Cranking it after lunch; it had cooled; it coughed and then started! The nice folks decided to head back towards Olancho and civilization.

Our lunch stop was next to the old Dance Hall and the new owner had left it open for us to see. After lunch we continued on. The cemetery, the dugouts, and the heavily mined area north of town, and then to the newly available road that led across the mountains to the eastern paved road into Darwin. At this point it was getting late, so we ended the tour here and most went back to camp the way we came in.

It was a good day, a good but small (☺) group, and good company. I promised the group a new Backdoor II (the southern mines) next year.



The Koi at China Garden Spring.

# SOUTH PARK TO PLEASANT

By: Bill Wight

We had a full complement of ten vehicles on this trip on **Saturday** and left PVD camp at about 8 AM. We traveled to the South Park Canyon trail turnoff from Wingate Road where we stopped to air down.

We then continued up the canyon to the Briggs cabins where we stopped to let everyone explore the cabins. Continuing on up the trail, we got everyone except the Tail Gunner around Chicken Corner with no serious difficulty. Byron had shut off his jeep while waiting for his turn at Chicken Corner and it refused to start. It not only refused to start, but the engine would not even turn over. Another person and myself went back to help Byron and spent a few minutes checking fuses and swapping relays with no success. We finally tried the ultimate fix and disconnected the battery to reboot the Jeep's computer. After this, it started right up like nothing was ever wrong and performed flawlessly the rest of the weekend.

We then continued up past Colter Spring to South Park and on to the Death Valley overlook where we stopped for lunch. After lunch, we went back down to South Park and over into Middle Park and then over into Pleasant Canyon at Rita's Cabin.

After a short stop to regroup, we continued down Pleasant Canyon to Clair Camp where we stopped so that everyone could explore the area.

We then continued on down the canyon and followed the road out the lower part of the canyon and into Ballarat where some stopped to air up while others went on to the highway to air up. From here everyone found their own way back to camp.



Vehicle approaching Chicken Corner.

Photos by: Bill Wight



The group parked at the Briggs' cabins to explore.

# GOLER TO STRIPED BUTTE

By: Gary Luckeroth

My **Saturday** run headed out to Goler and Striped Butte very early, like 7:45am. We had 15 vehicles airing down at Ballarat before we headed out for Goler Wash, where we regrouped

We then turned east and headed for Mengle Pass, however, before we reached it, about a mile from the pass, Bill Dorey had a flat. After he changed the tire, we drove on over Mengle and out to the Geologist Cabin and had lunch.

After lunch, we only went to the Grand View Cabin (**we skipped going to Russel Camp, as we ran out of time because of the flat!**) then back out and over Mengle Pass. We met a group of 28 vehicles, with about 10 of them pulling trailers. We moved over and let them by, then continued to the Barker Ranch turn-off, where some people split off and went back to camp. The rest of us drove in to the Ranch and explored it, then went back to Ballarat to air up and back to camp. It was a good trip, the only problem was the one flat, but that's pretty good for a group this size.



Photo by: Bill Dorey

The Goler run had 15 vehicles.

## Defense Mine

By: George Graham

**Saturday's** trip was to Defense Mine. Again, Terry and I teamed up to show the way for our five guests. This was a simple get there and get back trip with a lunch stop at Lookout City.

## HISTORIC RUN

By: Tom Perkins

**Saturday's** Historic run included 6 guests with Tom Perkins and Dan Kus crewing again. We repeated Friday's schedule and our guests thoroughly enjoyed themselves. After visiting the Panamint Crater, 3 drivers returned to camp and we traveled on with 3 guests and 2 GG members. We drove over the old Nadeau Shotgun Road, stopping to investigate a possible field smelter located near the road. (We had seen this during the October pre-run and found a small amount of metallic slag, suggesting that the rock pile dated back to the 1870s when the Road was in operation.)

Even with the smaller group, driving was slow, and I stopped the short convoy at the entrance to Snow Canyon to ask each vehicle's occupants if they wanted to go up the canyon or return to the highway. The canyon run would put everyone back in camp around 5:30 PM. In each vehicle, the sentiment was "I have to cook dinner," or "We need to get back for the raffle." We headed to the highway instead, leaving Snow Canyon and its population of burros unseen on the Saturday run.

During each run, we had no vehicle problems, no first aid events and excellent weather.

## PLEASANT CANYON

By: Jerry Grimsley

I was scheduled to lead the **Sunday** Pleasant Canyon trip, but as you have already read, the fuel pump went out on my Jeep, so it sat in camp. Gary Luckeroth volunteered to lead the trip with me as co-driver and Bill Wight as tail-gunner. Terry Grimsley also came along as trail crew.

The trip was uneventful with stops at Clair Camp, Rita's Cabin, Rogers Pass, lunch at the overlook at the upper end of South Park Canyon, and Briggs Cabin. The only casualty of the day was when one of our guests stayed too far to the right trying to avoid the willows at Coulter Spring and a punctured a sidewall. Gary was able to plug it and we were soon on our way. The weather was perfect and everyone seemed to enjoy the trip.

## Jail Canyon

By: George Graham

**Sunday** I led four Jeeps to Jail Canyon with Byron Self as Tail End. It was another in and out with no events to report. The run took 3 hours. We were back by 11:30 am.



Photo by: Jerry Grimsley

Gary plugging the tire.

# MORE PANAMINT VALLEY DAYS PHOTOS



**Terry Grimsley on Defense Run.**

Another casualty of the reeds at Colter Spring.



Jerry Grimsley fixing his spring hanger. Thanks David Hess 4 holding the light.



These 4 healthy Burros posed for pix just above the trail for all who passed by.



Rock buggy stuck in the reeds at Colter Sp.



## MOJAVE ROAD in DECEMBER

Mark Kuttor & Helen Jones and David Lowe are planning a Mojave Road run for December. This is a trip that we have been planning since Helen and I are coming back for the month of December and thought it would be fun to add a side trip on the way home. Would anyone be interested in joining us?

For those who have not been on the Mojave road. It is an amazing area with tons of sights, small hikes, and a bunch of stuff to see. The only downside to running this trip in December is it can get cold. the temperature can drop below freezing at night. So anyone who comes would want to be prepared.

If people are interested, I will put a post up on Face Book with dates and more information. We would be meeting in Needles, Ca and leaving from there. There is a poll on our FB page for you to leave your interest.



## Show & Shine and Pizza Night

Meet at the Pizza Factory,  
on 2nd non-flex Friday this month,  
November 22, at 5:30pm

Order your favorite dinner or pizza!

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be no S&S in December because the 1<sup>st</sup> non-flex is the night before the Christmas Party.



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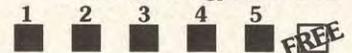
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### CLUB CALENDAR at a GLANCE

- Nov 20 Club meeting, 6:00 PM dinner, 7:00 PM meeting at Casey's Steaks & BBQ, 1337 N. China Lake Blvd., Ridgecrest. This is a week early due to Thanksgiving.
- Nov 22 **Pizza night** - This is the 2nd non-flex Friday this month, as the 1st non-flex fell on PVD weekend.
- Nov 28 **Happy Thanksgiving**
- Dec 7 **Christmas party @ Casey's**
- Dec 12 **Public Lands Round Table meeting.** 6:00pm at the BLM office, 300 S. Richmond Road

### 2020 TRAIL BOSSES NEEDED

- Jan
- Feb
- Mar
- Apr
- May
- Jun
- Jul
- Aug
- Sep
- Oct

### DON'T FORGET TO CONTACT

Vice-President, Earl Wicker,  
to volunteer to lead a run at:  
[ebwicker@gmail.com](mailto:ebwicker@gmail.com) OR: 760-608-7240 – cell  
OR 760-446-2121 - home

### ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL FRONT

National Public Lands News

Get updates & info at: <http://nplnews.com/>

Office located at: 941 E. Ridgecrest Blvd or call @ 760-371-1073

### CLUB WEBSITE

Please check the club Face Book page or our website for the latest information regarding meetings & runs at:

[www.geargrinders4wdclub.org/](http://www.geargrinders4wdclub.org/)

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