

December 2003



Trail Tales

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ARIZONA LO-RANGERS 4WD CLUB

Cover Picture

The cover picture this month is Dan Egge crossing the Verde near Indian Springs. Dan didn't see the path that Mike and I took and he pretty much went through the deepest spot in the river. Sorry about the quality but my photographers work for free. I cropped the picture and zoomed in 400%. Remember if you take a picture of a truck, zoom in a little on the "truck"; it'll make for a much better picture.

November Meeting Minutes

No meeting minutes for November because we have a combination November/December meeting in December. Make sure you attend this meeting so you can participate in the election of new officers.

Calendar of Events

December 13 – Christmas party at Bulldog Wash RSVP to Scott Nixon @602-361-1517

December – 17 – Club Meeting at Round Table Pizza, 7pm NW corner of Rural & Ray

January ?? – Club run

January 28 – Club Meeting at Round Table Pizza, 7pm NW corner of Rural & Ray

Trip Report

Operation Bigger, Uglier

Participants:

Scott Nixon

Charlie Babcock

Sean Murphy

Steve Graham

Several years ago I was in the market for a diesel 4x4. I had my hopes set on a Suburban, but diesel 'burbans are few and far between. Then an ad in the paper for a K3500 crew-cab diesel caught my eye. Pulling up to the owner's driveway, I jumped out and excitedly began crawling under, over, and around it. Climbing back into Lynn's vehicle, she looked at the smile on my face and asked "You're not actually going to buy that big, ugly thing are you?" From then on, it's been known simply as the "Big Ugly".

With a freshly rebuilt tranny and a Detroit locker in the rear, it proved to be a capable wheeler on some fun trails including John Tash's amazing North-Rim expedition, Cottonwood Creek and the fourth cove of Saguaro Lake. The look on the Jeep Rubicon

owners face at the coves was worth the three hours of bumpy riding it took to get back in there. Lately however, the Big Ugly had acquired a taste for rubber. The stock and heavily abused front end was toed out enough I was burning through a front tire almost every other week. A wicked bumpy ride along FR41 was the last straw. I warmed up the Visa card and started calling. Two grand later I had a pile of shiny parts in my garage. Next I rounded up everyone I could think of who was willing to turn wrenches for little more than free soda and pizza.



Gathered together bright and early Saturday at 8AM in the Babcock's driveway, we got started. With four sets of hands and Sean's torquy Ingersall-Rand impact wrench we soon had the severely sagged front springs out. A bit more effort and the front springs were in and bolted on. While Charlie and I worked on front shocks and steering, Steve and Sean tore into the rear suspension.



After a short break for pizza and chips, we pressed on. Drilling into the frame to mount my fancy new dual-shock mounts the bit caught and spun the drill, smashing my hand into the fender and totally shattering the drill bit. A few choice words and a backup drill bit I finished the hole. About this time Steve and Sean had the old rear springs out. Massaging their lower backs they commented the massive 18-leaf packs belonged under a train not a passenger vehicle. Unlike the front bump stops that had been pounded, torn, and knocked loose by the sagging front suspension, the rear stops were factory fresh.

They quickly installed the rear springs and began work on the shocks. That didn't last long though, as the rear mounts had been pounded so badly by rocks they were unusable. Charlie zipped them off with a cut-off wheel. They took off for Mike Tutor's house to grab

some tires and then hunt up a nut to hold my new pitman arm on. Charlie got the tie rod and drag link installed while I tore into the Power steering lines and installed the new steering box.

Once Sean and Steve got back we stopped for dinner and pressed on. While the others played Indy pit crew with my new tires, Charlie and I spent almost an hour just getting the lousy rubber rag joint swapped on the steering box. As the to-do list got shorter it quickly became a three, then two man job. Steve left after borrowing some power steering fluid to compensate for the big puddle the Scout left in front of the neighbor's house. Sean did brake bleeding duty for a bit then left as well. I finally got the last steering hose on. The next couple of hours were spent trying to get the last air bubbles out of my brake lines. Finally, at ten minutes to midnight I gave up and headed home.



Sunday I bled the brakes a few more times. Monday night I drove back down to Charlie's to have the rear shock brackets welded on. After pounding them back into shape they were mounted up higher, hopefully out of the way of rocks. The truck drove much better with rear shocks. Tuesday I got shiny new drive shafts from Dick's; the stock rear was close but wore out, the front wouldn't have been long enough even if it could droop that far. Thursday was alignment day. While they worked on my truck, the owner regaled me with stories of his days doing off-road recovery out of Parker. Most are not suitable for publication in a family newsletter, but the plot included nude sunbathers, Hells Angels, drunken police officers and lots of dead bodies. Ask me sometime around the campfire after the kids are in bed.

Even though we had shortened the new tie rod to try and fix the toe, it was still an inch too long. I think a rock knocked the cheesy, rusty, factory sleeved tie-rod adjuster loose at some point. The truck now handles like a sports car and rides like a Caddy. A quick trip down FR42 last weekend showed how well the new springs worked. The truck rides as nice as my coil sprung Dodge ever did and feels even more stable despite the higher lift. Even with a massive gap between the tires and the fenders it flexed enough I need to lay into it with the sawzall at some point.

I'd like to say I'm done, but is a rig ever done? The hydro booster is leaking; one out of six times the brake pedal drops to the floor. I still need to install my power steering cooler and someday I'm expecting my hydraulic steering cylinder to show up via UPS. That's the big stuff; I've got a long list of little stuff to attend to as well. I guess I should know by now, things will take twice as long and cost three times as much as you think.

Thanks again to the gang for showing up and working so hard. I am in your debt. Hard work is not so hard when you've got good friends to share it with.

Scott Nixon

Trail 42 11/15/2003

1973 K5 – Charlie, Becky, Shelby, Hailey, and Reilly Babcock

1972 K5 – Dan and Jenn Egge

1976 K5 – Sean and Lynette Murphy with Hanna, Emma, Tara and Erin Lyman

1976 Cherokee – Ron Couch and Jordan

1976 CJ7 – Don, Julie, Sammy, and James Munzer

1979 Bronco – Mike Tutor and Gail

1989 K3500 – Scott, Sydney, and Steven Nixon

1994 YJ – Roy and Terri Conner

1994 ZJ – Gary Bennett

We left the house at 6:20am for Krispy Kremes and ice, the temperature was 43°. Once we hit the Loop 101 it was a little chilly in the K5 with no doors but we were dressed for it. We rolled into the meeting spot around 7:40am for the 8am meeting time. Who picks these meeting times anyway? We were the first ones there, but soon everyone else filed in. Ron gets the award for the best “tire spinning turn” to get in line.

We took off for the trail head about 8:20am; it was warming up and looking like a beautiful day to be in the desert. We stopped just after the trail head to air down. Just after we stopped several Jeeps pulled in and we moved to let them by. We finished airing down, took off our coats and headed for the fun. We immediately ran into the Jeeps that had passed us. They had stopped to air down. We would pass and be passed by this group several times during the day. I made my way through the deep grooved dirt path to the first turn. I instead headed down the trail to the lake, lots of boaters and high water. We turned around and headed back up the trail, I missed the turn but luckily a few people recognized the turn and stopped. Of those who missed the turn some of us took a bypass around the Jeep group through a tight spot snapping off dead branches from an overhanging tree. Hailey got a scratch on her forehead and Scott took out a clearance light on the Chevy. We then got turned around and made our way on the trail. I took the next available path to the lake to have a look. Not much room to play, more fishermen so we turned around and made our way. The 3rd path we took, brought us to the infamous Suburban sinking





Again because of the water there wasn't anywhere to play and not a chance to cross. We hung out here for a bit to let the kids (and adults) play. We then wound our way through the moguled hills to the first big play hill. I went down, Scott went down, then I went up, and the rest of the crew went down and some went back up. It's a great suspension flexing hill, not much of a challenge for the group that was there. I went down the bypass which is now a seat puckering off camber drop into a tight wash. The wash isn't a foot wider than my Blazer and a few feet higher. It winds back and forth for a hundred feet ending up at the bottom of the hill. Mike and Ron drove back up the by-pass without a slip of the tire.



It was getting close to lunch so we headed for our favorite lunch spot. On the way we turn out of the wash that leads to boulder beach. It's a sharp left uphill u-turn. My truck doesn't make lefts as well as rights so I gave it some gas to slide the rear around. The rear started to slide then hooked up and the K5 went straight. I ended up off the side of the up hill road with the driver side rear tire a few feet off the ground. Don and friends ran over to give the rear some ballast while I backed out of the-oops. We were off again with the kids (and Becky) screaming with laughter. The lunch spot was taken up by high water and 2 people with ATV's fishing from shore. We turned around again deciding to head for Indian Springs for lunch.

The Indian Springs crossing was deeper then I had seen it in a while, maybe two feet deep.



This is Mike, Dan, and Roy making there way across the Verde River at Indian Springs.

Everyone bailed out for lunch, exploring and some serious rock skipping. Mike got bored so we took our trucks, Don jumping in with me to the next crossing. Mike drove in slow until the water was near the middle of the front grille. He backed out not wanting to drown the Bronco. I pulled in thinking maybe he had entered a hole under the water. I went to the left and the right side of the K5 dipped deep into the water. So I backed out and went far to the right and it looked all right. The water rose just over the top of my tires and a couple inches deep on the floor and we were rising again on the other side. I did a big spinning turn in the sand to watch Mike cross, no problem. We decided against the next crossing which was much further across and probably deeper. After crossing back everyone told me my passenger rear Swamper was flat. I drove slowly back to the lunch spot and Sean, Don and Scott helped me change the tire. It looked like I got gravel in the bead area when I did the Brody causing it to leak.

We finished fixing my truck and everyone was ready to hit the road, so we made our way back across the Verde and up Indian Springs Road. After the tee into 42 the road becomes narrow and winding but it's flat and sandy. This equates to high speed fun, low range high gear wasn't cutting it so I shifted it back into high range. As the brush smacked the truck around every turn I slowed for holes and wash outs. I keep a sharp eye out for on coming traffic on this road when I'm the lead guy. Sure enough I came around the corner and someone thought it would be great to let their 6-7 year old learn to drive a tiny dirt bike on a busy dirt road with blind corners.

We came to the play area just before Bartlett Dam Road and everyone had fun. There's a big moguled out hill on one side and a shorter steeper hill with three paths on the other. Ron drove up the big hill and then Jordan skied/tumbled down on foot. The center path on the short hill this year had a deep hole in the middle that swallowed the passenger side rear tire and left the driver side front tire dangling in the air as the trucks crested the top. Scott in the BU was the only truck to make it up the middle without lifting a tire. As usual my power steering started leaking so I topped that off. Becky and Lynette wanted in on the action so they hopped in the Blazer and cruised up the right side, too easy. Becky drove back around and went up the middle with a tire in the air and some mild wheel hopping they went over the top screaming.

We said our good-byes, aired up tires and headed for home. Thus ended a perfect day of wheeling, no one got stuck or broke anything serious. The weather was beautiful and we had a great group of people. If you didn't go this time try to make the next one, it doesn't get much better then this.





Created by Charlie Babcock

Items of Interest

Remember the club meeting is not the last Wednesday of this month; it's on December 13th, 7:00pm at

Round Table Pizza
9920 S Rural Rd
Tempe, AZ

It's located on the northwest corner of Rural and Ray. If you visit

<http://www.roundtablepizza.com>/you can get discount coupons on pizza to use at the next club meeting. Come early and eat with the gang.

December Club Run

Club Christmas Party at Bulldog Wash on the 13th of December. Meet at 9am at the BLM gate off of Bush Highway just past the Blue Point Bridge. The trail is doable in a minivan (Marty did it last year) but I wouldn't recommend it. There's 4wd stuff to do there and optional routes out of you want to wheel. The club will provide hamburgers, dogs and sodas. Everyone should bring some kind of side dish or dessert to share. You can buy something if you can't cook like me, so no excuses. In the past we've played 4wd games such as:

- Obstacle course with the driver blind folded and the passenger giving directions
- Balloon obstacle course, timed
- Tug of war (with trucks of course)
- Crawl off (who's rig can drive the slowest)
- 2 vehicles go through an obstacle course one forwards one backwards with a rope between the passengers

There are also boulders to ramp your truck on. Or you can come just to eat, talk and watch the fun. Call Scott Nixon @602-361-1517 if you're going so he can buy enough grub.

Land Use Issues

Please send any land use issues that you want included in the next newsletter to the editor at: <mailto:charles.h.babcock@intel.com>.

Editors Corner

I know other people in the club must go wheeling, so take a picture and send it in to me so I don't have to keep putting my own truck on the cover, because I will.

If you're going to go on a club run make sure to call the trip leader. If the meeting time or location is changed or canceled then he can call everyone that's going and let them know. If you don't call then it's your own fault if you miss the run.

If you take any pictures during a club run please email, snail mail, or hand them to me and I'll include them in the newsletter.

Classifieds

If anyone has anything for sale just type it up and email it to me at <mailto:charles.h.babcock@intel.com> and I'll put it in the newsletter.

For Sale - 1995 Dodge Ram, ready for wheelin', for details call Scott Nixon at (602) 482-8973.

Quote

To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk.

Thomas A. Edison

Enthusiastically Created by Charlie Babcock