

October 2006



# Trail Tales

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ARIZONA LO-RANGERS 4WD CLUB

## Cover Picture

Scott's big Chevy just couldn't hold the side hill and slid into this washout. With the truck lying on its side in the ditch he was stuck and needed a tug from someone. Since he was the leader I had to slide past him on the uphill side hoping not to do the same thing he did.

## Meeting Minutes

Ed gave a treasurers report, we have \$3904.51 in our account.

Scott described the upcoming Log Corral trip details.

A general discussion of the upcoming Spook Rally. Attendance is limited, sounds like a fun event. (details elsewhere).

Steve Smith has a web site with some four wheeling pictures on his web side. Discussed putting some pictures on our web site. Scott has agreed to investigate how to do it; Charlie has a large collection of pictures he will sort through and provide to Scott once he is ready. Our club web page was hacked into. Only the calendar function was tampered with. Glenn fixed it for us. If you had a password previously it may no longer work. All requests for accounts now need to be approved. Glenn only had Scott's email address, so approval requests will go through him.

October trip will be our annual cleanup run to Mud Springs. Marty will lead it on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, which is a Sunday. Call Marty for details.

Steve Smith attended a land use forum. The new National Forest management plan will make it our responsibility to determine if we are in legal areas; lack of "area closed" signs will not be an accepted excuse. Maps of open areas will be out in 2009 for review, will be reexamined every couple of years after they are accepted. They are looking for volunteers to provide GPS coordinates of the areas we currently use.

General discussion of land use issues.

Discussion of new four door Jeep Wranglers. Marty went to test drive one, but only found two-wheel drive models???

Discussion of new diesel engines coming out in 2008.

Matt Parkes wants to have another backyard rock crawling party. He has a boulder pile in his yard with a fully equipped shop 50 feet away. Using this as our club Christmas party was suggested.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50.

Respectively submitted by Scott Nixon.

## Calendar of Events

October 22 – Club run to Mud Springs call Marty @ 480-926-3977

October 25 – Meeting at 7pm location La Belle Pizza

November ?? – Club run

November 29 – Meeting at 7pm location La Belle Pizza

### Trip Report

Log Corral Saturday September 30<sup>th</sup> – Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup>

Attendees:

(Trip leader)

Scott Nixon 89 1-ton, with Monique Claudio and Paul Robinson as passengers.

Charlie Babcock 73 1-ton Blazer with Becky, Shelby, Hailey and Reilly as passengers.

Sean Murphy 76 1-ton Blazer with Lynette, Hannah and Emma as passengers.

Steve Smith 2005 Jeep Rubicon Unlimited

When I headed out in the morning I neglected to account for the fact that I had recently moved 30 minutes further west than I used to live. Bent the speedometer needle as far as I dared past the cameras on the 101 and roared into Fountain Hills. Grabbed diesel at the last gas station; sadly they had no eggs or protein bars. Pulled into meeting spot twenty minutes late, chatted with Steve for a few seconds and hit the road. Half hour later or so, I turned off of SR87 just past the Sycamore Creek Bridge. The Babcock's and the Murphy's were relaxing in the shade; they had headed up early to beat the heat.

I aired down as fast as I could and we headed out. Trail is really rutted and torn up from all the rain we had this spring. It was so bad the narrow gate had been relocated due to a washout. Despite the road condition, we made great progress to the waterfall that is the main obstacle on this trail. I walked it and decided it didn't look much worse than two years ago when I ran it with bald 35's. Charlie spotted me, but sadly my new Michelin's don't grab the rocks as well as I had hoped. I slid off the line and got stuck. He yanked me back and we tried again. I made further progress before I got stuck; the high lift helped move the truck some but I now needed pulled more to the side. Sean generously offered to tackle a hard line up and over some optional rocks. His big IROK's had great traction despite running street pressure. While he clawed his way up and over I climbed under the front to assess the situation. A big rock was preventing me from driving backwards. It was about the size of a large microwave, I gave it a good shove and it rolled down the waterfall. About that time Sean was up on the rocks and hooking up the strap. I got in to get ready and put it in reverse; to my surprise it drove right back no problem. I got out laughing; Sean just stood there and shook his head. A little more banging and clanging and I finally popped up and over. Charlie worked a little to get the right line and climbed right up; so did Sean. Steve decided to call it a day; he didn't want to drive back over the waterfall on his own and wasn't going to camp. He headed across SR87 to explore Mud Springs a bit.

Just around the corner is another 14-bolt grabber. Charlie had to spot me again, and noticed I had sheared off my steering ram completely. That explained the hard steering. It was getting late, so we found a shady spot under a huge Cottonwood for lunch. The roots are getting exposed, the climb up and over them is turning into a tricky stair climb with deep ruts between the roots. We pressed on. The spot where I slid off the trail last time is gone for good; the upper portion of the road is almost entirely washed out. The rock I landed on last

time grabbed my rear diff for old time's sake; a quick tug backwards and a spot or two and I was through. Charlie passed his old nemesis without cutting a tire, hooray!

We made good time up through the sandy, rutted portion of the trail. My steering was a bit goofy; the ram was bent and kept getting stuck as it moved in and out bungeed to my front axle. A scary, off camber section got really, really interesting. Trying to skirt the edge, the Michelins lost a fight with gravity and my rear end slid over and in a deep rut. An attempt to drive out of it brought the front down in too, leaving my truck lying almost on its side. Monique landed in my lap laughing, I was too busy clenching the seat with my rear end to enjoy the ride. Paul and her climbed out the windows; I sat and smiled for the paparazzi until they got bored enough to hook up the strap. Charlie's first attempt forward didn't work; my front tire was wedged into the bank too well. Sean drug me backwards a few feet, then we tried again. Charlie dropped the hammer on his 400 cubic inch small block, his rear Boggers threw sand, and the Big Ugly slid up and out of the rut.

The trip down to the shore was fun; I wanted to floor it but my sticky steering made it impossible to keep the truck out of the bushes at anything over a crawl. I hit the shore and couldn't find Charlie. I had to get out and hike over a small rise to find him. I pulled closer and started setting up camp. It was rather hot by now, and I was fairly well cooked by the time the tents were up. We all relaxed in the shade of a tarp strung between the blazers while the kids swam in the lake and built a drift wood teepee. As soon as the sun went down we all enjoyed dinner. The women built a nice little fire, just right for the nighttime air temperature but nowhere near hot enough to melt lead (see last Log Corral trip report J). Lynette made a Dutch oven cherry cobbler, but Monique and I turned in before it was done. I hear it was good!

I slept like a rock, despite some noisy fishermen and a very loud owl that was out about 1:30AM. We didn't rouse up until after 7:30. After a leisurely breakfast and some more relaxing we ate lunch and got packed up. I lost a jerry can and an old tool box with a log chain in it to the bushes on the way up to the pass; a loose door latch kept getting caught and the door popped open while driving. Sean grabbed the jerry can, but the chain is MIA.

It just wasn't worth it to drive back down the trail and hunt for it as it was starting to get hot again. My steering was doing a lot better though, as I had capped off the ram ports on my steering box. Sean had to wait a bit to get his overheated starter to engage after we stopped, but we were soon on our way. Charlie spotted me through the spot where I fell in the ditch; it was really scary feeling but uneventful. Sean got through it no problem, those IROK's stick really well.

I had to work a bit to get through the spot I got stuck last trip; Charlie backed up to tug me but his spotting got me through without the strap. We took another break under the Cottonwood again while the kids climbed a tree. Ok, Paul and I climbed it too. Just as we got to the waterfall two motorcycles pulled up. Rather than enjoy the show, they rather rudely drove through spewing exhaust and dirt in our faces. Once they were gone, Charlie drove through no problem. I fell off the line again; those Michelins are just too hard. A tug from the Blazer didn't work so I high lifted it up and off the front diff. Then I drove out with Charlie dragging the (mostly) limp strap in front of me. Sean and his 39's had no issues.

After that it was all over except for the bouncing. Back at the trailhead we said our good byes. Charlie aired up while Sean debugged a flooding issue. Final damage tally for me: one steering ram, a cracked spring hanger, two bolts sheared off the front axle spring plate (found three days later!), a missing log chain and a broken turn signal lamp. A fun trip as always, but next time we need to head in Friday night. One short afternoon at that cove is

just not enough; it is one of my favorite spots. Thanks again to Charlie and Sean for all their hard work getting the Big Ugly back in one piece. Well, three pieces. But at least it's still drivable!

Scott Nixon



**This rocky canyon portion of the trail is becoming an excellent gate keeper for the trail.**



**Sean catching a bunch of air taking an optional line.**



It's a beautiful canyon with rocks that make 38" tires look small.



The trail was dense with trees and brush.



Shelby took this picture of the camp from across the bay; if you look close you can see the teepee on the right.



Scott couldn't quite stay out of the ditch on the return trip but he was able to drive out of it this time.



Sean cruised through the trail with no problem.

### **Items of Interest**

Remember the club meeting is the last Wednesday of every month, 7:00pm at La Belle Pizza & Pasta, North West corner of Rural and Ray in Tempe.

### **October run**

Marty's leading a trip on Mud Springs trail for our annual clean up. The last couple years it's been pretty clean already so it just ends up being a fun run. Call Marty @ 480-926-3977 to let him know your going.

### **Land Use Issues**

### **Editors Stuff**

### **Things you need but didn't know it**

Free for the taking:

\* Non-tilt steering column from a 1980 J20. It has the ignition key and GM-style wiring. The steering wheel is pretty generic. It doesn't say "Jeep" or AMG so it won't be embarrassing to put in any vehicle.

\* A flywheel for an AMC 360 engine. Weld some legs on it to make a nice little patio or accent table. Just kidding! It's in good shape. Call Steve or Linda Graham @ 480-834-1171

For Sale 800w generator call Steve Graham @ 480-834-1171

**Quote**

In the absence of clearly-defined goals, we become strangely loyal to performing daily trivia until ultimately we become enslaved by it.

Robert Heinlein

**Created by Charlie Babcock**