



October 2003

Conquering the Canyons By: Heather Thomas

From early that morning 'til late that afternoon the sun dappled its golden light through the wide crevices of the high desert mountains, down to where the veiled canyons silently age. The canyon bottoms are peppered with crimson, gray and russet boulders, and the long dry grasses sway in the gentle, warm breeze. The canyon walls are steep and jagged with wide flat ledges, spacious enough for a vehicle to drive down to the soft sand and cumbersome boulders below. The canyon is ancient; a quiet place where sure-footed animals seek refuge from the blistering heat found on the terraces and plains above. The four-wheeling enthusiast will occasionally escape to this timeless land, but it is only the adventurous spirit who dares these ledges and plays in the unforgiving landscape of the canyons below.

The drivers and passengers exit their vehicles and cautiously walk up to the lead Jeep. After a full day of typical four-wheeling, they see the devilish passage which is halting their forward progress and postponing their well-deserved dinner. It's a steep downward slope, strewn with Volkswagen-sized boulders and seemingly impossible to pass. But, some of us have been here before, and we know it is challenging but not impossible. As their leader, she straightens up confidently and thinks

of how she is to explain the difficulties of this impediment and how they can be conquered. Thus far, our group has had an uneventful drive through these canyons; fortunately, a challenge requiring skill and teamwork was now upon us.

Our leader got out of her Jeep for a closer look at our passageway. Her eyes narrow as she scans the boulder-laden crevice below and tries to think of something enticing to say. "This final obstacle is most likely one of the most difficult you will encounter in these canyons. The boulders protruding from the side of the canyon walls are just close enough together to create a v-notch and allow a vehicle, Jeep or larger, enough terrain and traction to reach the bottom."

Most of the drivers don't have a renewed faith in defeating the challenge before them. Nevertheless, a couple of fanatical Jeepers have the look of liberation upon their faces. It's obvious that we won't make it back to our campsite in time for dinner tonight.

Steve, who drives a highly modified and customized TJ, was feverish to begin. As excited as he is, we could tell that he is also pondering something.

Steve stumbled over his words with excitement. "Wow! This is..this is

just a great v-notch! Are we all gonna go down this thing?"

Our leader grinned and rolled her eyes. "I'm going." Then with a serious, yet playful gaze she asks, "Who else wants to take on this challenge?"

Steve, knowing only a few on this trip would have the determination and craving for such a challenge, realized the folly of his question and grinned. He turns to the group of drivers who are staring blank-faced and wide-eyed at the waterfall of boulders below us.

It was apparent that we would have a lot of observers, but there must be someone else who wants to try his skill. She scans the crowd of drivers before her and again asks, "Is there anyone else that wants to try this v-notch?"

A shout resounded from the back of the crowd. Jeff, who also drives a highly customized TJ, made his way to the front of the crowd. His expression was serious and showed much concern, "Since you're already first in line, it makes sense that you'd go first. But, are you sure you want to do this first?"

For the past seven years her husband has primed her in the four-wheeling sport. She's learned how to "read" the boulders and how to

carefully maneuver over them. It was her spotter who taught her how to understand the reaction the tires have to the terrain beneath them – the feel of a slip or the feel of a safe slide, the feel of a firm grip opposed to the feel of waning traction. She's learned how to crawl the Jeep over and through grisly rock gardens, how to intuitively know how far her Jeep can tilt before the thing rolls over. For her, rock crawling is a fine art; however, it's an art that requires teamwork. She knows that focusing on her spotter, watching his facial expressions; his "just a bit more" and "stay right there" stance is of prime importance. We can see that she places 100 percent confidence in the information he relays to her about the trail directly in front of and beneath that Jeep. The relationship between a driver and her spotter is built upon unwavering trust and a reciprocal four-wheeling knowledge between the team. He knows when she is anxious about a certain cliff or climb, and she knows when he is anxious for her, yet determined on calming her nerves.

She turns to her trusted spotter with a questionable and apprehensive look. Once again he assures her with a smile and that omnipresent "go get 'um" expression. Sometimes it seems as though there's an expectation that she will always take on these challenges. Although, most of the time she does "go for it," she's just as tense about a difficult obstacle as the rest of us four-wheelers. She suppresses her doubts and answers Jeff's question, "Yep, I'll go down first."

Pleased with that answer, Jeff smiles and quips "Well, let's get going then because it's going to be dark soon. Me and Steve are gonna be going down this thing in the dead of night."

As she jumps back into the driver seat of her Jeep, she calls out to the others in the group, "There's a bypass that will lead you back up the

canyon and onto the flat plain above. It will then take you right back to our campsite. See ya there."

The group did not disperse and make way for the bypass. Instead everyone found seating upon the ledges and boulders of the mid- and bottom-section of the treacherous passage. There was a separate group of four-wheelers ahead of us that had taken the bypass earlier (due to a dispirited Bronco). They must have heard the commotion and decided to walk back up the trail to witness what they hoped would soon be vehicle carnage.

She isn't inclined to give those Bronco owners any satisfaction. But, the pressure is nerve-racking; she certainly doesn't want to leave white paint on the boulders below, nor does she want to hear the screeching of battered metal and the loud bang of breaking Jeep parts. She takes a deep breath and gathers some will-power from who-knows-where before she starts down the first "prerequisite" waterfall. She feels the scrutiny of the spectators as she passes them. Our leader tries to find her line down this rocky slope, but it is getting dark and it's difficult for her to distinguish gaps from shadows. The attention is transferred from the unfound path to her salvation. Immediately he begins guiding her and shows her the line. It is now up to him to direct her down, but it is up to her to follow his course explicitly.

Her spotter motioned his left hand down. "You're going to come down two feet off the left boulder, feel your way down to the next rock; it's about ten inches down."

He made a change in his hand signal; she knew that she was almost to the next boulder and that she should slow the Jeep's progress as much as possible. "There you go, now line up your right tire; go just a bit more to your right."

He pointed to her right, and

then he motioned his hand downward. The length of the downward movement told her that the rocks on her right were lower than the rocks on her left; the height difference would cause the Jeep to tilt deeply toward the passenger-side front tire. They scanned the left side of the crevice and about another two feet down was a large, protruding boulder. One wrong move here and that pretty Jeep would fall from its precarious position.

Each of the Jeep's 35" tires was now balancing the Jeep on top of four different ledges. For a safe crossing, each tire had to follow the correct line down and over the "rock waterfall." She slowly continued on. Just as interpreted, the driver-side of the Jeep lifted and the passenger-side dropped deep into a cavity between the surrounding rocks. The tire was holding to the solid stone, but the tilt struck her more abruptly than she expected.

It was difficult to see his directions in the enveloping darkness, and we could see she was nervous about that. "How do the back tires look? Can I move forward without the backend falling into the crevice?"

"I don't think so. Back up about two feet and reposition the Jeep to your left a bit. Then try coming down again using the line that's more to your right."

"Back up?" she said loudly with a jolt of surprise. "It's a lot easier coming down than backing up!"

There was a burst of laughter from the crowd. "Can't I just inch over to the right instead?"

Even though his features were barely distinguishable in the darkness, she could see the apprehension he was feeling from tenseness of his jaw and the intensity of his gaze. He knelt down to examine each tire's placement and decided that she should back up three

feet, which meant she had to climb, in reverse, back up the boulder she just descended. "Nope. Go back up and keep your eyes on me. You're gonna be okay, just take it slow."

Well, she didn't really take it slow. He told her how far to turn the wheel and that she should slowly back the Jeep up. She turned the wheel and stepped on the gas just hard enough and just long enough to perfectly clear the boulders behind the Jeep. It is true that she has complete faith in his spotting, but it's also very evident that she knows that Jeep. It looked great and the crowd responded with roars of excitement. She was re-energized from the thrill, too. The apprehension lifted and her confidence bolted through. She was ready to conquer the boulder-laden v-notch.

Our leader repositioned her Jeep as instructed, selected a new line and descended once again. This time the right side didn't drop so far and the left tires stuck to the very edge of the boulders. The next drop in the staircase of boulders was respectfully awaiting the Jeep's arrival. The front tires made their way down the opposing boulders and the rear tires agreeably followed. It was here that she relied heavily on her spotter's expert navigation. As the Jeep's front left tire touched the welcoming sand of the canyon deck, the driver side of the Jeep traversed up and over the last remaining impediment. It was over; she was down that hellish route.

Her concentration was broken by the vastness of the dark canyon and the many people fired up within it. The crowd was ecstatic to see "some woman" drive down such a perilous obstacle. "Yahoo!" and "I can't believe that!" resounded from every direction.

Her proud spotter darted over to the Jeep and embraced her through the open window. He turned to take in the spectacle and bask in

the limelight. "Now, that was awesome! You did a great job!"

She looked up at him and for the first time that evening noticed the brilliant stars that filled the night sky above them. She smiled and watched him as he turned back to the crowd. He was so proud of her. She was his champion that night. What he didn't realize was that she thought this was their accomplishment to share. Without him she wouldn't have dared this feat; he was her champion that night, too.

END

NANCY'S NOTES

This was an actual 911 call.

Dispatcher: Nine-one-one What is the nature of your emergency?

>

> Caller: I'm trying to reach nine eleven but my phone doesn't have an

>eleven

> on it.

>

> Dispatcher: This is nine eleven.

>

> Caller: I thought you just said it was nine-one-one

>

> Dispatcher: Yes, ma'am nine-one-one and nine-eleven are the same thing.

>

> Caller: Honey, I may be old, but I'm not stupid.

EDITORS CONTEST

Can you guess the trail?
AND WIN!!!

Peter knows that this trail boasts of the possible damage a vehicle may sustain but his wife will not be kept very well. Can you guess the name & location? The 1st person to respond with the proper answers will be awarded a gift at the next meeting.

Note: you must respond with the complete name of the trail & its complete location.

See last page of newsletter to respond.



DLEKNVDSLURAYOPRTE
MDIEPATA
(3 Words)

Winner for September
Heather Thomas

October 7, 2003 – Club Meeting

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Lakeview Cafe



Welcome – Quinn

Kurt not here as baby is due any minute.

Visitor – Joyce

- David Seiler – Drives a YJ

Secretary – Cheryl

No comments to minutes for last month. Motion given and seconded to accept minutes. Approved with no nays.

Membership – Joyce

- Chuck and Sharon – Chuck has been coming to meetings since last January. Anza Borrego in January and Calico last weekend. Has a red TJ.
- Sheldon and Nancy – Nissan Patrol. Went to Gold Mountain and Last Chance. Voted in with no nays.

Vice President – Quinn

No report

Treasurer – Colleen

2,311.42

Beginning Balance

242.60

Deposits – Raffle, membership

167.07

Withdrawals – Raffle, donations

2,386.95

Ending Balance

Future commitment – next month's raffle

Adopt-a-Trail

No news. Was unable to run due to fire last month. Fire is now out and not an issue for the trail. Will plan more at the run planning meeting next month.

Cow Bell

A dispute over this. Jesse put the strap on Bill Hammond during Calico. Had the strap tight, but Bill was able to get out by putting the vehicle back into gear. Per Bill, his son Scott was driving. As going up the hill, they heard a "pop". Bill put out a call stating that he "thought" they were stuck. Put the strap on and tightened it. Scott put it back into gear and was able to get up.

Took a vote on whether or not Bill should have the cow bell – the "not have's" won. Per Quinn, however, he deserved it. Dan Hyatt currently has it, is due to Gregg for being winched out of John Bull.

Run Dude - Bill

Past Runs

September 6 – Adopt a Trail

September 13 – PVD Prerun and Disability Prerun (Ocotillo Wells)

September 13 – CPR renewal class

September 20/21 – Last Chance Canyon

Jesse had planned on camping, ended up doing a day run. Sheldon and wife camped. Found a nice v-notch. Jesse was the only one fool enough to try it. Did more body damage. Stopped at rock house for lunch – wooden frame with rocks at the top. Went up to Schmidt's tunnel. Went out through another canyon. Maybe do again next year as there are lots of places to explore.

October 4,5 – Calico

Met at the KOA campground. Went up to Medasa canyon. Everyone made it through with no damage or breakdowns. Finished about 1:30 then went to play in the dunes. Bill ran out of gas in the dry lake bed.

Future Runs

October 11 – PVD Prerun

PVD is in November. Will be camping at the PVD site. Saturday a group will be Isham Canyon. Sunday planning on doing Jackpot. Making sure that the trails are in good shape. There has been some water damage that needs to be repaired.

October 17,18,19 – Operation Desert Fun

At Ocotillo Wells. Cal-4-Wheel Paralyzed Vet run. Entry fee is going to Cal-4-Wheel, raffle going towards Paralyzed Vets.

October 18,19 – Bull Head City

Bill Hammond is run leader. Had planned to run Sleeping Princess trail. This is around Laughlin. Bill has flyer. Ron Weber has a home in the area and has offered to assist. Is rated as a "difficult" run. If decide once everyone goes out that do not want to do this trail, do have a couple of other options. Bill has not run the trail, so could be interesting

November 7, 8, 9 – PVD

Jesse is leading 2 runs on Friday, Jail and Lookout City.

Club normally donates money for raffle prizes, do we want to again. Question of how many usually go, in the past have had about 8. Suggested \$100 for kids raffle. Approved with no nays. Bill will buy the wagon, Colleen will take care of the rest. \$100 approved for the adults, Bill will also take care of the adult raffle.

November 16 – Run Planning Meeting/Garage Sale

At Quinn's house. Don't forget the garage sale. Call Heather and let her know the bigger items that are bringing along so that Heather can make a good ad. Look up runs and decide what you want to do.

Had a couple of new trails this year that may want to do again next year. If anyone has ideas, make sure to bring them up at this time so they can be put onto the calendar.

Sunday, October 26 – Riverside Chrysler Jeep

Barbecue for Jeep owners. Being planned by Jerry Clark who used to work for Don-a-Vee. Jerry is helping the dealership be more "Jeep-friendly". Only about 15 more slots left. Any members that want to come out, can come out and walk around.

November 27 – 30 – (Thanksgiving) Truck Haven

West Coast of the Salten Sea.

December 7 – Toys for Tots

Collect toys for the charity. Meet at the Block in Orange. Decorate the Jeeps.

Cal-4-Wheel

Surprise Canyon – Bakersfield Trail Blazers have bought land and going through the process of getting a key from BLM to get up there. Now have a legal group from Colorado are also assisting as this is considered as an historical road. Others who want to buy land in the area, contact Jesse for more information. BLM has not only refused to give a key to the owners, but are also doing things to make it difficult to get int.

Convention in February in Reno for anyone wanting to go.

Cal-4-Wheel is looking for a new secretary/treasurer for the South District as the current one has quit. Requesting volunteers.

Accessories – Walt

No report

Newsletter – Nancy

Nancy has put a lot of work into the newsletter and has a contest. She hasn't gotten very many comments, so she is wondering how many people are reading it.

Safety – Larry

No report. Larry is working tonight. Jesse had a comment about making sure to wear gloves when moving rocks around.

Bill Smith's tip was to make sure to check your transfer case that it's in the right gear.

Hospitality – Beth

No report. Waiting for the baby. It was due last week, but hasn't come yet.

Web Site– Quinn/Heather

Moved to a new host, which worked out well as the old host was having issues. Everything has now been moved. New reports are now available for Heather to see who is using the site and when – such as during work hours. Have not received very many email requests. If anyone wants one, send it to Heather. Have updated photos and stories. If find a spot where a picture, link or page does not show up, let Quinn and Heather know as there may be a few photos that didn't get transferred properly.

Other Business

Holiday Party

Brad requested putting in December, 1st or 2nd week. Heather noted that there are a lot of things going on during that month. Quinn mentioned that historically when the party was in December it was lower turn out, the attendance doubled when it went to January. Also used to have the party at someone's house when the club when it was smaller, now that it's bigger, have had to move it to a business.

ByLaws

Finished going over the bylaws. Will make the final cosmetic changes and send to the committee for proofreading. Will have the ballot ready for voting next month. Noted that to approve the bylaws, need a 2/3 approval by voting members present at the meeting.

Raffle

Responsibility for next month

Roger

Amount for next month

\$100, approved with no nays

Proceeds from raffle

\$157

Pocket radio

David

Socket set

Darrell

Socket set

Jim Palmer

Safety kit

Joyce

Portable TV

Quinn

Portable TV

Sheldon

Drill

Ron

Angle grinder

Bill Hammond

Recipes Anyone

Submitted by Heather Thomas

Note: Heather assured me that this did not come from Fear Factor!! :o)

Frog Eye Salad

Serves 10-15

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 25-30 minutes

Ingredient List:

16 oz package Acini de pepe pasta (dry)

1 cup white sugar

1 tbsp vegetable oil

2 tbsp all-purpose flour

1 tbsp lemon juice

2 eggs (beaten)

2 ½ tsp salt

2 cans (20 oz) pineapple tidbits in juice not syrup (reserve juice)

1 ¾ cups unsweetened pineapple juice

3 cans (11 oz) canned Mandarin oranges (drain)

1 can (20 oz) crushed pineapple (drain)

2 tubs (8 oz) frozen whipped topping – thawed but very cold (CoolWhip)

1 ½ cups miniature marshmallows

1 cup shredded coconut (optional)

Directions:

1) In a sauce pan, combine the sugar, flour, ½ tsp salt, pineapple juice and beaten eggs. Stir over medium heat until mixture is thickened. Remove from heat and add lemon juice. Let mixture cool to room temperature.

2) Boil 3 quarts of water. Add vegetable oil, remaining salt and acini de pepe pasta. Cook pasta until al dente. Rinse under cold water and drain.

3) In LARGE bowl, combine the drained pasta, egg mixture, Mandarin oranges, pineapple tidbits and crushed pineapple. Mix well. Gently fold in whipped topping. Refrigerate overnight or until well chilled.

4) Just prior to serving, gently fold in marshmallows and, if desired, shredded coconut.

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