

Calico 2011

It was dark and rainy night, well actually it was a dark and rainy early morning but I always wanted to start a story like that. Prior to Saturday the forecast for Calico seemed to change every few minutes, getting worse each time I read it. Everyone seemed willing to try it, so on Sat morning I headed out from Yucca in the rain with a friend of mine being a no-show.

Ten rigs showed up at the meeting place, with a few souls having spent the night at the local motel. In attendance were Bert and his friend Lewis (who had never been wheeling before), Ron, Ben and Donna with friends Jim and Carol, Ray and Bonnie (with lots of cookies), Joe and Debbie, Mike and his friend Ann, Greg and Carole, Mark and Michelle, and Josh and Stacy with children Olivia and Justin.



Saturday's weather turned out to be a little of everything, rain, light rain, snow, rain again, partly sunny, snow again and on and on, with all of this weather occurring about every ten minutes. We even had a spell where it was snowing while the sun was shining brightly.



Everyone wanted to try the more difficult route, which would be going up Doran with it's

usually numerous waterfalls to climb. Unfortunately, recent slow rains had apparently filled in most of the holes so no one had any problems. We actually made it out the top of Doran by about 10:30, a record I believe. Someone



had a low tire as we left the gully so some of us played around in some of the mines in the area while air was applied to the recalcitrant tire.

We crossed over and headed down Odessa which was also pretty uneventful until we reached that part of the trail where the road is cut out of a sheer rock wall and the outside of the trail is slowly falling away narrowing the trail more each year. Ben spotted us through without a problem although it did take our breath away when the right rear tires of a few of the rigs slid part way down the cliff. Bert, being our designated adrenalin junkie, was not satisfied making it across the narrow part of the trail, so he drove around to the gully below the trail and climbed the rock wall back onto the trail, very spectacular.



When we were going through the narrows on Odessa the Suzuki popped a bead on a tire and his pit crew jacked the front up while the Heimlich maneuver was applied to the tire (with a ratchet strap) allowing air to re-seat the bead. (I prefer squirting ether into the tire and throwing a match onto it, but cooler heads prevailed.)

We continued on marveling at the beauty of all of the rock formations, I never get tired of driving this trail. There were a number of waterfalls to drop down off of, but nothing too difficult.



All too soon we ran out of trail and decided to head to the gate keeper of Doran so Bert could try it. Now on a scale of 1 to 5, the gate keeper is about a 10, so I was looking forward to seeing what Bert could do. His TJ looks nearly stock, but like Clark Kent's clothing reveals nothing of Superman, what lurked underneath Bert's Jeep was a pair of superhuman Dana 60s, which even Kryptonite couldn't destroy. Bert walked the path, then started up with Ben spotting. Bert quickly found out how fast the Gate Keeper can swallow your rig when his right tires slipped off of the rock and he dropped into the cut, totally immobilizing him. Not being able to go forward or backward Ray and I provided winch service to eventually pull him back and to the side until he could finally back up.



The temperature was dropping and it started snowing like crazy so we all called it a day and headed over to Peggy Sues for hot coffee and to air up the tires.

Once again a great run, and what actually turned out to be a nice day. No serious damage, except to Bert's fender and his pride, but I'm sure he will try the gate keeper again one day. I know it can be done, I once watched a yellow CJ drive through it like it was flat ground; I just don't know the trick.

Happy Trails,
Gary Blackman

