

Day 1

We had expected 4 rigs to do the trails but circumstances didn't make it happen. Bert Buttinelli couldn't make it because his jeep was still under repair. That left three of us, Mike Deaner, Ben & Donna Yacobozzi, and Carole and I. We met at Hwy. 62 and Indian Canyon. Ben wasn't feeling too good but said he was going hoping to feel better when we got to Vegas. So off we went. Half way up the road near Kelso, Ben had to stop--he was terribly ill and had to turn around. That left Mike and I to continue but a little nervous because Ben is our best spotter and we weren't sure what kind of trails we were getting into. Plus, we weren't sure if Vegas Valley 4 wheelers were going to join us. Not only didn't we know how difficult the trails were, we might also get lost in the hills--great! We got to Vegas and checked in to our hotel, the Lucky Club, which is not a fancy place but



served the purpose since we don't gamble. We had a good night sleep and Sat. morning, with weather being perfect, drove 45 miles north up I-15 to the meeting area hoping to find the Vegas group. Sure enough they arrived with great relief but I'm sure they were expecting more of us. Randy Patterson and Mojo (as he goes by) with his 6 year old son introduced themselves and we all got down to business. Randy had a 5" Nth Degree stretched Rubicon lifted with 35's and many extras. Mojo had a lifted TJ with 35's and extras. They had some very well built rigs and when they saw what I was driving were a little unsure what trails I could do. They asked what trails we'd like to try with Mike and I replying whatever. We decided to start with the Shedder trail then Upper Rock Bottom and maybe

finishing with the most difficult Lower Rock Bottom rated at a class 3+. Off we went with Randy leading and Mojo in the rear. We got to the trailhead and found this area to be very beautiful with many red rock formations. The trail started out to be fairly tame but increased in difficulty as we went. The trails in some way reminded me of Moab because of the red slick rock. It was fun crawling these trails because no matter how difficult it looked the jeep could get great traction on the rock and walk through them without a problem. Shedder trail was the warm up and when Randy saw we had no problems, it was off to Upper Rock Bottom. I must say at this point Randy and Mojo were very good at spotting. Because they lead the Hump n Bump runs, they knew these trail like the back of their hands . They frequently asked if we were comfortable doing certain obstacles and would know exactly what line to follow (Ben, you didn't need Ray with these guys). We did an optional obstacle that did look challenging with Randy making a couple attempts and then finally making the top. Mojo was next, but after several attempts called it quits. Next was Mike, but again he gave up. I watch the lines they took and thought that wheel base might be an advantage so I gave it a go with Carole screaming at me not to do it. The first line I took looked the best but didn't work. I then tried the line Randy recommended and the old Cherokee walked up and over without a problem.



Yes, wheelbase does make a difference. The next obstacle with no go around was the infamous Bronco Falls. Randy said it's more intimidating than hard and when Mike looked at it cried out -- oh crap! Randy and Mojo climbed it with ease with Mike and I following without any problems. Randy told Mike later the line he took could have caused a roll over but Mike told me he didn't feel

off camber at all. The rest of the trail went without a problem so we broke for lunch. It wasn't far to a picnic area with a concrete slab and tables so I was able to get out of the jeep and have lunch. So far it was a beautiful day with a good lunch and good company.

After Randy and Mojo saw what we could do, it was off to Lower Rock Bottom which was the hardest trail of the three. We started up through some water falls with v-notches that did look difficult but with Randy and Mojo spotting they were no problem. We then arrived at an obstacle that looked very, very difficult but did have a by-pass. Mojo, who you could call Darrell #2 or Bert #2, wanted to give it a go. I knew by looking at it the Cherokee would lose. What made this obstacle very difficult was the concaved ledge. One could get the front

wheels up the ledge but the rears couldn't get the bite to get over the ledge. 37" tires might have helped but not sure. Anyway, Mojo kept trying until finally after putting the pedal to the metal he manage to bump over the ledge. I this point I was saying to myself don't break an axle, but it was to late. Sure enough, when he flew over the ledge, he struck a large rock and a nasty popping sound followed. It sheared the collars off the right front axle u-joint. We were then into recovery mode with winches fired up. It was a tough pull to get Mojo out, but after a few pull angle adjustments, we got him to level ground. Fortunately if one breaks an axle at the u-joint, it just a matter of pulling the axle and driving off in 3 wheel drive.

Mojo got it fixed and decided to head for pavement



because he still had to drive back to Henderson where he lives--you chose wisely grasshopper. We got back to pavement and aired up. Randy and Mojo couldn't go out with us Sunday so I asked about doing the Bowl to Matterhorn trail. They said it's rated 2 with some 3's thrown in but said we shouldn't have any problems after seeing what we could do. We traded email addresses and bid our farewells thanking them for doing the run with us. They were great guys and told them if anyone in your group was in our area we would show them around. They were interested in Truckhaven and Calico especially the Gate Keeper. We drove back to Vegas on Hwy. 167 which in itself is a very scenic drive and recommend to anyone who hasn't been in this area. We got back to our hotel dead tired but ready for another day's adventure.

Day 2

Had another good nights sleep and were up to hit the trails again. We drove about 35 miles up the I-15 to the Ute exit. Mike and I both had the trails on GPS but were a little uneasy about the trails especially when the sign at the trail says: Federal designated lands, no trespassing, no OHV'S, no hiking, no camping, etc. Contact Moapa Indian Reservation for Permission to Enter. We thought that it meant to stay on the trail and if pulled over that's our story--and we were sticking with it. We aired down and start up the trail which was paved for the first 5 miles. We felt better when we came across a group of cars, people, and equipment whereas I stopped and asked what was happening. It happened to be a professor and his students placing sensors to study the fault that passes through the area--cool. We pressed on finally hitting dirt and then more people with ATV's where the actual trailhead started. We found the trail marker labeled Bowl Trail and headed on with GPS's tracking. This portion of the trail was well marked and fairly easy. The area is very scenic and thought this would be a good run for people not interested in more technical runs. I kept it in 2 wheel drive for as long as possible but had to use 4 wheel to climb a few steep portions of the trail. After a few miles we came to a split in the trail were the Bowl trail splits from what is labeled Hawkins Trail. We continued up the Bowl trail and arrived at a waterfall with by-pass. It looked doable, but further study showed it could be challenging because of the

concave ledge. I give it a go but high centered on the ledge thus my rears where unable to get the traction needed. Mike piled rocks but still not able to jump the ledge. My approach to waterfalls or any obstacle I encounter is-- if I can't crawl it slowly I can't do it. I didn't want to break stuff by getting on the throttle. Mike tried it next but had the same problem with the ledge. We agreed if we stacked more rocks we could do it but not this time. We took the by-pass and followed the trail into what is called The Bowl. I don't know geology that well but it looks like it was created by faults and erosion. The bowl shape is maybe a mile and a half in width. We followed the trail around the inside of the bowl which we found somewhat difficult because the rains had wash away signs of a trail. The GPS help us keep on it but still found ourselves scratching our heads looking for it. Half way around the bowl we broke for lunch. What a beautiful sight to see. Continued on around the bowl and left by way we came in to the Hawkins Trail. Continuing down the trail we came to another split which was the Matterhorn trailhead. We took a look it and found ourselves getting into a mile and a half of class 3 trail. Since we didn't have a spotter and it was getting toward end of day, we decided to leave this trail for another day. We went back to the Hawkins trail and after about 5 miles of class 2 trail we arrived back at I-15 about a 20 mile loop for the day. What a great trail for the pure beauty of the area. We aired up and headed back to the hotel where we reminisced about our adventures. We would like to do this area gain maybe this fall or next year. According to Randy, there are trails just north of Mesquite off the Virgin River that are incredible. We might be able to make it happen, I know Mike and I are interested. All in all we had a great time with many thanks to Randy, Mojo, and Vegas Valley 4 Wheelers.

Greg Mottino