



The SLO 4-Wheeler



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Inside this issue:

Trip Report — Panamint Springs in Winter	1
2014 SLO4-Wheelers Officers	1
Member Rigs: Eric's YJ Wrangler	2
10 Rules of Trail Etiquette	6
Sponsors	7
Associated Organizations	7
Upcoming Events/ Runs	8

Trip Report — Panamint Spring in Winter

Written by John J. (all photos by the author)

On December 28 it was off to Panamint Springs, in Panamint Valley. We had to go through Olan-cha and 395 because the road from Trona was still washed out from a really freak rain storm the valley had in September or October. I am not sure when

it was but it rained and rained so hard the whole valley was shut down for a few days, and then it rained again.

The days were in the 60s and nights were 30s, so it wasn't that bad camping, we had a trailer so it was very warm and nice. My wife couldn't go but the grandson was packed to go in September, so I decided to just make a grandpa grandson trip. Randy P. and a



friend of ours from Santa Barbara met us there. The first day we decided to act like tourists, and do the Death Valley thing. We started out going to Scotty's Castle and took the inside tour. Wow, what a place, its hard to believe they built all that way out there. The one thing they did have was water, and lots of it. The stream was running very nicely right through the place.

Its worth the stop, very nice wood work and old California furniture.

On to the big crater in the ground, I cant remember the name of it. Randy P. knows the name. Its a huge hole, I mean huge and it came about by cold water meeting up with hot volcanic lave and

(Continued on page 4)

2014 SLO 4-Wheelers Officers

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Pine Mountain Trail. John J.
La Panza CampGround:Kirk R./Dave F

Newsletter submittals

by two weeks before the next issue to George W.

Member Rigs: Eric's YJ Wrangler

by Eric F.

NOTE: All photos of 's rig are from his photos.

Somewhere in time I decided I wanted a either a soft top or removable top 4x4. I miss the no top days of my old 74 Dodge Ramcharger. Many years ago.

I did quite a bit of searching. Lots of Wranglers on the market and everyone wants lots of money. I found one close to my work. I called left a message. Nothing no call returned. I let the idea pass for now. After some more time I decided to look again. The one close to my work was still on Craigslist. I called again and left a message. No call back. **By then I'm thinking ok they sold it and don't know how to delete the ad.**

I found another one in Templeton. Not really the year range I wanted price is right and it is lifted. I made the call and made an appointment to see it. Later in the day I received a call from the owner of the Wrangler near my work. Turns out they were working on

their cabin in the mountains for the last several weeks.

I went and saw the Wrangler. It was exactly what I was looking for. A 1995 Wrangler SE 4.0 stick shift soft top. Only 142k on the odo. Wow! I struck up a deal and we all were happy. It had a black tattered soft top, long shackles 31 inch tires eagle rims. Tube bumper, a hitch and side tubes. Very dirty interior but exactly what I wanted. As I was leaving the persons house they said oh wait we have a brand new brown soft top in a box in the garage that goes with the Jeep. Score!

I took the Jeep to work gutted the interior for a thorough cleaning. Took off the old soft top and smogged it. I threw on a quick body lift and put on a set of 33's. Looked cool. I took the Jeep to the Club meeting with Alison and Natie at Tom B.s house. The flex ramp was set up. I thought how bad **this could be. Well let's just say it was that bad, an embarrassment. Flex, what flex. There was NONE! I made it 3 inches maybe. Ok that's it it's getting**

a lift.

Did some research and decided on a 4 inch lift. **I went with a Rusty's off road 4 inch lift with partial military wrap springs. Also a set of 1/2 boomerang shackle's for more spring flex. The kit also came with the supplied extension brackets. I ordered up a set for front and rear and installed them when they arrived.**

While doing this install I decided I'd better re gear also. 3.07 gears and an open rear end are not going to cut it. I found a good set of front 410's and carrier and rear gears and a limited slip for a good price and of course some parts trading too. In the meantime I've been trying to sell my Cherokee. I had someone come and drive it. They did not like the front locker. Um I thought I'll take the locker from the Cherokee and put it in the Wrangler. It will be better on the street as the Wrangler has front disconnect. So I did the swap and that worked out fine.

When I went to finish the rear end spring and gear swap I found out that





I had a bad axle. Oh great. I found an almost complete housing in Templeton. Price was right and turns out the guy knew me and some of the other SLO 4 wheelers. Go figure. I loaded the axle up took it home and disassembled it and cleaned it.

In the mean time the project was put on hold I had to go the Chrysler school for a week. While down at school I paid a visit to the local junk yards. I found a couple a Grand Cherokee's there. Rear disc brake conversion. I bought all the hard parts I needed and of course I sourced new pads and rotors from a local parts store.

Just some parts better to buy new. I brought all the parts home and started to assemble the rear diff for the swap while I had the rear springs out.

Meanwhile I received my latest JP magazine. They did a 4 inch lift in an 89 Wrangler. When they went and wheeled there Wrangler after lifting it. They broke their stock u-joint's straps which in turn flung the driveshaft which in turn broke the tail housing of the transfer case. Oh no. I ordered up a u bolt yoke for my Dana 35. Assembled the rear axle assembly and installed the rear axle and new left spring and shackles.

I set the Jeep down on the ground and installed the rear drive shaft. I then cycled the suspension. When I got full drop and rear drive shaft fell out of the transfer case. Wow that is some suspension movement.

I made a call and got hold of Matt of Advance Adapters for price of short shaft kit and drive shaft. Matt sold me the short shaft kit and said you can save a couple of hundred bucks. He asked if I had any extra Cherokee front drive shafts. **"Yes I have a couple why?" He said put the short shaft kit in measure your drive line length then take one of your Cherokee drive shafts to Santa Maria driveline and they will cut and balance your driveline for less than \$100 bucks. That's over 200**

buck savings as most new drivelines are at least \$300.00 bucks. Thanks Matt.

I sent my driveline to Santa Maria driveline and had them shorten it. They did nice work to. I installed the shorted driveline and set my pinion angles as necessary. Bled and adjusted the brakes and road tested.

The suspension is rides rougher then the worn out stock springs but is slowly getting softer as I think I don't even have 500 miles on it yet. Hopefully soon I will hit that mileage as Alison and I use one of the same old hills to break it in off road. Note in one of my picture you see I had a helper. It took all her might to try and jack up the Jeep.



(Continued from page 1)

it blew up. The is only about 20 minutes from Scotty's Castle.

Well on to Beaty Nevada. We planned on making a circle in our trip and Beaty was on the way. A interesting town, with a beautiful Casino in the middle of it. The worlds larges candy store is there and yes, its about the size of a K-Mart. Wild burros roamed the streets, I guess they winter in town. They had a 7-11 type gas station with cheap gas, but this is the second town I found in Nevada that doesn't have a Grocery store.

It had a Napa, and RV parks and a really great Army Surplus lot. Yes a lot not a store, everything was in a empty lot, ammo cans, gas cans and Jeep trailers for \$900.00; some were in really good shape. Hey need a Bomb, he had a few! I liked the place, you could eat at the Casino so put the RV in the park and go to the casino. It was interesting no grocery store, Search Light Nevada is the same way, no food store.

Well off to Riolite Ghost town, I was there with my bride 40 years ago, on our honeymoon with the little red 66 cj5. It has changed. Everything was fenced off. The bottle house, yes made of bottles was rebuilt. I wish I could find the old pictures. Off to Titus Canyon.

It was getting later in the day so we pushed to get into Titus before dark. We made it just right. The best way to travel the gravel road is Baha style, 30 mph to 40 mph where you can, man its wash board city.



Titus , was beautiful in the sunset, the canyon walls 200 feet high were really something. Its worth the trip, but remember its one way road, go in from the South East side. On the Stove Pipe wells for a great dinner, its surprising , the food in Death

Valley is good. Its only a few bucks more, but after a long day who cares. The next day we went to the Defense Mine and Lookout City. Well worth the trip. A stock Jeep would have a little trouble but





you can make it. Don't go alone. Randy P and my grandson went into the Defense mine way farther then I wanted to go, but its is carved out of solid rock, I mean solid rock, no shoring in the mine. Randy P went up a 60 foot ladder and came out on the top of the hill. I waited out side.....I m going to use the excuse I didn't have a flash light, and lets leave it at that. Lookout City has some great stone buildings, and a great story on one of them about the town, It was good size at one time. The next day we went to Furnace Creek, and toured the museum, a must on the trip,

the rocks in there are unbelievable. The old train, old wagons and tools are really something. Off to Ecco Canyon, this was a surprise with the "Eye of the Needle" rock on the trail. The trail was a gravel bed but it got a little rougher as we went. We were stopped on the side of the road and some Range Rovers went by us giving us the "stink Eye". We laughed and said we will catch up to them. Well sure as hell they were parked on the side of the road and we went by them. Well in about 200 yards we found out why they were turn-

ing around, there was a mini Rubicon for about 50 yards and they "washed Out". Hey the \$90,000.00 dollar Rovers had to turn around! I was really surprised there were 3 or 4 good wheeling spots on the trail and in the Park Boundary! The Ecco Trail goes into Nevada to the Amargosa Valley. We made it and made a full circle back to Furnace Creek. Dinner was great. and last year we just got there when they were opening and we were the first ones in the steak house. This year the same thing 5 o clock we were through the door, We had great steak dinners with fresh salad from the Salinas Valley salad bar! Back to camp, we were the only guys on the road. A great trip and a great way to start the year.



10 Rules of Trail Etiquette

Despite what some people think, we four wheelers are very considerate when off road. We stay on marked trails, look out for others, obey the rules, and clean up after ourselves. I'm sure you are a responsible driver. Even so, it's good to review trail etiquette from time to time.

Here are my top 10 rules of etiquette for four wheeling and camping. Read this list carefully. Are any of these unfamiliar to you? Do you need to brush up on any principles?

1. Be considerate. That's the overriding principle here, and it deserves special mention. As you encounter others—whether friends or strangers—remain considerate. **Perhaps you don't feel like going out of your way for someone.** At least avoid the temptation to be a four-wheel bully. Lord knows there are enough bullies in this world.

2. Yield right of way to mountain bikes, horses and hikers. They can't compete with a two-ton vehicle. Slow down as you approach them, and give them space. Avoid kicking up unnecessary dust, honking your horn, and such. Want to really make an impression? Offer a bottle of water, some gas, a wrench or a helping hand when needed. **You'll feel better, and you'll help improve our image.**

3. Yield to a vehicle driving uphill. That vehicle may need some momentum to climb. If we force him to stop, he may need to back up to gain that momentum.

4. Keep track of the vehicle behind you. If you come to an intersection or a curve, make sure the vehicle behind you sees **which way you went. Don't assume he did.** He might be in a dust cloud or behind a bush or boulder.

The other vehicle should try to keep up, too. However, that could involve eating a lot of **dust; that's no fun. If you go through something difficult, look back and make sure the other vehicle made it.**

5. Closely observe the vehicle ahead of you. This will help you pick the proper line(s) for negotiating a rough spot. It means keeping the proper distance back. Too close, and you could find yourself in a dust cloud. You also **want to make sure the other vehicle's rear end isn't in your blind spot. Back off until you are at the proper distance.** (The ability to see their rear differential is a good starting point.)

Where there are multiple obstacles, drop back farther to get a better perspective.



Don't lose the vehicle behind — Keep track of the vehicle behind you.

This will also give you more time to think through your strategy.

Scan the trail behind that vehicle for signs of fluid leakage or even fallen parts. You may be able to alert a fellow driver before things get worse!

6. When stopped, pull completely off the trail. You may not be the only person on the trails. Someone could overtake you or come at you from the other direction. When you **pull off, pick a spot that's already been disturbed.** Try not to park on tall, dry grass. Your catalytic converter could start a fire.

7. Don't throw cigarette butts out the window. Not only is that littering, but it can be a fire hazard. Southern California suffers several fires every year caused by discarded **cigarette butts. Don't be a butthead. Dispose of them properly!**

8. Boys left, girls right. Need to stop for a pee call? This little ditty is a reminder of which direction everyone goes.

Have numerous vehicles and no cover? Use a **"dispersed" arrangement. The last vehicle stops. Everyone keeps driving until the 2nd to last vehicle feels it's far enough from the last vehicle.** He stops and notifies the group. The process continues until everyone feels they are far enough away. How spread out you get depends on terrain features.

9. Be mindful of other campers. Don't slam car doors or run the vehicle engine before 7 am.

10. My Special Rule: No music in camp. Yep, no radios, no loud MP3 players, or **other artificial noise makers. Look, you're out in the country to experience nature. You don't—or shouldn't—want to spoil the setting with some music, would you? Besides, we don't all agree on our music choice.**

Now, it's OK if someone brings along a guitar or banjo. What better way to enjoy a campfire than with a sing-along, right? For the most part, though, enjoy the sounds of Mother Nature. They are better than anything man can create.

This list may seem like a lot to digest, but the rules are based on common sense. Re-commit to the principles of off-road driving, and you will become an even better, more responsible four wheeler.

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Tom Severin, President
Badlands Off Road Adventures, Inc.
4-Wheel Drive School
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SLO 4-Wheelers contributes to and/or is a member club in these organizations. Visit and support, -they are working for US!

<http://www.sharetrails.org/>



The United Four Wheel Drive Associations also acts as your voice to keep 4x4 roads and trails open so that we can continue enjoying four wheeling in the great outdoors.

<http://www.ufwda.org/>



A varied group of outdoor recreationists who are extremely active in promoting the positive aspects of vehicular access on public lands and protecting that right.

<http://www.corva.org/>



SLO 4-Wheelers is also a member club in the California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs (CA4WDC) If your not a member, check it out,

<http://www.cal4wheel.com> or ask Suzy



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SLO 4 WHEELERS

PO Box 2271
Atascadero, CA 93423-2271



We're on the web:

<http://www.slo4wheelers.org/>

Upcoming Events / Runs

In addition to this list, keep your eye on the club email list and web site:

<http://www.slo4wheelers.org/>

for last minute events or spur of the moment runs.

March 5th — General Club Meeting 7 PM at the Dog House in Atascadero. Future meeting locations will be discussed at the meeting.

March 8th or 9th — After meeting club run TBD.

April 2nd — General Club Meeting at 7 PM. Location TBD.

April 5th or 6th — After meeting club run TBD.

May 7th — General Club Meeting at 7 PM. Location TBD.

May 10th or 11th — After meeting club run TBD.

June 4th — General Club Meeting at 7 PM. Location TBD.

June 7th or 8th — After meeting club run TBD.

July 2nd — General Club Meeting at 7 PM. Location TBD.

July 5th or 6th — After meeting club run TBD.

August 6th — General Club Meeting at 7 PM. Location TBD.

August 9th or 10th — After meeting club run TBD.

Do you have any ideas for a run? Just about any thing can be a club run from running the trails outside of Pozo to a Sunday drive on or off pavement. The club is reliant on its members to come up with things to

do including the club runs as well as any other activities. Its your club, participate!

If you have any questions or events, local runs, not so local runs you would like to do, coordinate and/or participate in, please contact the SLO-4-Wheelers Events Director.

