



The Dirt Devils Digest
 April 2010

A monthly publication of the Dirt Devils Circulation 123
<http://www.dirtdevils.org/>

President's message

On April 24th Mike Ortega will be leading the first adopta trail day. After this winters heavy snow I have no doubt the trail will need lots of work before the forest service will allow it to open. Check out the calendar section for the meeting place.

The consensus is to continue meeting at: Keno's Restaurant 5750 E. La Palma Anaheim just east of Imperial Blvd and north of the 91 Fwy.

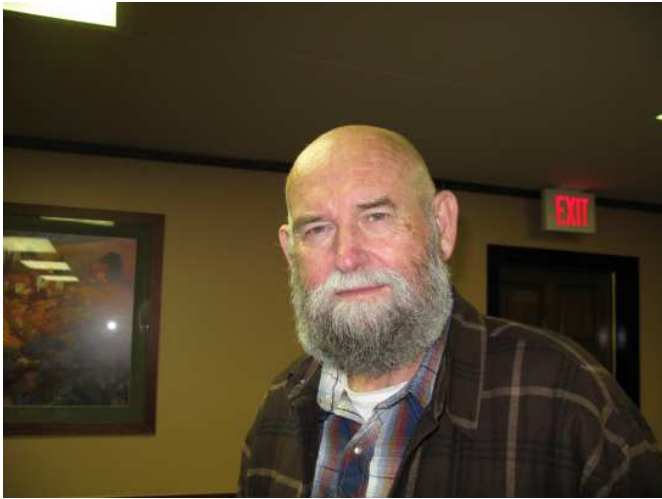
See you on the trail



President Sheldon Neal and First Lady Nancy Neal

GUEST	2
COW BELLS	2
CALENDAR	2
APRIL	2
MAY	2
JUNE	2
JULY	3
AUGUST	3
SEPTEMBER	3
OCTOBER	3
NOVEMBER.....	3
DECEMBER	3
CLUB NEWS	3
CLUB OFFICERS	3
MEETING PLACE	4
THE MOJAVE ROAD STORY	4

Guest



Terry Puckett is busy restoring a '94 grand Cherokee. Terry does not want hard core just something nice to putt around in the desert with. 31" all terrain tires, bumpers, winch and he will pretty well be done.



Kevin Hull
2007 jeep wrangler 4 door, 35" tires, 3" black Diamond lift 5.13 gears.

Cow Bells



Castulo Olivas at Gold Mountain July 09 (the little cow bell)



Jeff Jernigan John Bull July 09



Bill Smith being winched near Calico Oct 09 and in November he broke an axle while wheelin' in Truckhaven.

Calendar

April

10th South District Meeting - Hosted by the High Desert 4-Wheelers Quartz Hill Mobile Home Park (in the recreation hall)
5711 West Ave "M" (also known as Columbia Way) in case you were wondering, Quartz Hill is near Palmdale.

16th - 19th Logan Dale, NV
one hour past Las Vegas Joel Card is leading.

24th adopt a trail Mike Ortega is Leading, meet at the usual place (Bus Stop Café across from Union 76 in Running Springs) at 9:00 a.m.

May

8th Big Bear Pioneer Town Ralph

14th - 16th Mohave Trail this trail takes 3 days and 2 nights to run. Starting near Needles and ending near Barstow.

22nd pre run the dirt devils trail.

29th - 30th HDR High Desert Roundup this is a big CAL 4WD event. The Jesse May will be leading the Blue Moon Run. We need someone else to lead Devils Loop.

June

Adopt a Trail date to be determined
need a leader.

12th Miller Jeep trail Pete Johnson
26th Gold Mountain, White Mountain Mike Ortega
this is an easy run no lockers needed.

July

17th Adopt a Trail need a leader.
 22th - 25th Jeeper Jamboree
 31st John Bull & dishpan Mike Ortega

August

7th - 15th high sierra trip
 12th - 15th jeep Jamboree
 14th Adopt a Trail need a leader.
 19th - 21st Cal 4WD convention
 28th Rattlesnake Canyon Joel Card

September

18th KOPL Kids On Public Lands, this date has not be verified.
 25th Last Chance Cyn John Bell this is an easy run near Randsburg off 395.

October

9th, 10th off road expo, Ontario
 9th Shredder Canyon run Leader Scott Beggins near Adelanto
 23rd Calico run needs a run leader. The KOA campground is nearby in Yermo. The owner Jean Dornon jeandornon@roadrunner.com welcomes off roaders.

November

12th - 14th Panamint Valley Days
 Thanksgiving Truckhaven

December

7th run planning meeting

Club News**Adopt a Trail update**

Roger distributed a map of the new proposed trail system from the last Adopt-a-Trail meeting.
 The next Adopt-a-Trail run is April 24. We will leave at 9:00 a.m. from Running Springs (next to the Union 76 station). Roger cannot lead; Mike Ortega volunteered. The only maintenance that needs to be done is water diversion.

Diane Feinstein

Diane (your representative in Washington DC), is pushing to close our adopt a trail.

First aid kit tracking

Jesse May has one.
 Danny Ward has one.
 Sheldon Neal has one.

Banner

John Strege has it.

Shirts

T's are still available only one sweat shirt left. Bring cash or check to the next meeting.

Short Sleeve is	\$11.00
Long Sleeve is	\$13.50
Sweats are	\$21.50

Stickers

Dirt Devil Stickers are now available for purchase at the regular monthly meetings or contact Mary Jo Delp. Magnets are also available for the stickers at \$5 each.

Club officers

President: Sheldon Neal



Vice President: Bill Smith



Treasurer: MaryJo Delp



Secretary: Nancy Neal

Web Master: Mike Ortega
 Run Coordinator: Dan Hyatt
 Newsletter: Ron Webber webbermail@cox.net
 Hospitality: Emi Webber emiwebber@hotmail.com
 Treasurer: Mary Jo Delp rkoolmom@aol.com 310-542-2436
 Safety Committee: need coordinator

Finance

- Beg Balance \$853.31
- Feb Income \$186.00
- Feb Expense \$0.
- Ending Balance \$1,039.31

Mary Jo cannot be Treasurer next year. She'd like to get membership dues in by April or May before turnover to the new Treasurer. Dirt Devils dues are \$36.00, CA4WD dues are \$45.00 for a total of \$81 for a general membership

Meeting Place

We meet the first Tuesday of each month. 6:30pm for Dinner & 7:30pm for the meeting at Keno's Restaurant 5750 E. La Palma Anaheim just east of Imperial Hwy and north of the 91 Fwy.

The Mojave Road Story



In this article below you will learn about the time set and the purpose of this road across this desert. The different watering holes that were situated about every 15 to 30 miles along the trail quickly became places to stock-up on supplies. There were two in the immediate Barstow area (Grapevine and Fish Ponds). The Mormon's were the main contributor to this idea of supplying the wagons with their needs. This trail was also called the Spanish Trail, Mormon Trail and then later the Mojave Trail.

By Len Wilcox The California Journal

Perhaps the best treasure in eastern California's Mojave National Preserve is a pair of tracks that cross the middle of it. This famous trail is the Mojave Road, one of the early routes that brought American pioneers to California. This trail is unique in that for most of this 138 mile stretch it is in much the same condition as the pioneers would have found it, and a lot of the trail passes through country that is virtually unchanged since prehistoric times. The road bisects the Preserve, wandering from waterhole to waterhole, and is mostly a 4-wheel-drive trail.

The Early Trail

The Mojave Road was a main wagon trail for only a relatively short time, two decades after the civil war, when the railroads came, as the railways created an easier route to the south complete with oases on the bitter-dry deserts. While it was used, the Mojave Road was a route plagued by hostile Indians, a lack of water, long stretches of sand and rough hill climbs. For caravans of travelers and a handful of soldiers, it was a

proving ground that brought out the best and the worst of them.

To those who took the Mojave Road by foot, horse and wagon, and the few men stationed along it to defend it, this uncommonly beautiful country was a peculiar form of hell. Dry and desolate, it was and still is. Especially to those men and women coming from the lush forests of the east and south, the desert land was a barren expanse to be barely tolerated before arriving in the Promised Land of California. It is still a dangerous stretch of road.

In the great westward migration to California, the Mojave Road was not an important player. Most went north across Donner Pass, or south through the Colorado Desert. The road was primarily a supply route, not an immigration trail, used by soldiers and freighters.

The Importance of Water

Water is everything on the desert, and the locations of watering holes determined the route of the trail. Water was found at the end of each day's drive (about every 20 to 30 miles, depending upon the terrain) and it was water that had to be reliable and safe.

These springs were favored ambush sites, so each location had to be defended by a US Army that was hard pressed to do it. So the Army established outposts, military camps of sometimes just 2 or 3 men, who spent their tours of duty protecting gold-seekers and farmers heading for a better life in the golden valleys near the coast. The Army felt it had to be done; by controlling the water, they controlled the road. It was lonely, hard duty, and some of them died doing it. A few deserted. Others became generals. It was a place that brought out the best and the worst in people, as the desert does today.

The Native American Trail

Like most trails and even today's superhighways, the Mojave Road was first an Indian path, used as a trade route. The Mohave Indians, who lived along the Colorado River, would travel to the coast, following the path that guaranteed water. The first European to use the Mojave trail was probably Father Francisco Garces in 1776.

When the Americans began pushing westward, Jedediah Smith, Kit Carson, John Fremont and others came this way to reach the pueblos on the coast. When gold was discovered in '49, most of the 'Niners took the northern route, but thousands followed the southern route and took the Mojave Road. As the population of California grew in the 1850s and 60s, the Mojave Trail became a main southern freight route across California to Arizona. The trail became a mail route, and that was when the military forts were established to keep the lines of communication open. These forts began at Fort Mohave, located on the Colorado River near present-day Bullhead City, and ranged to Camp Cady, just outside Barstow.

Fort Mohave was established to suppress the Mohave Indians, whose warriors had come to resent the intrusions of the Americans traveling through their lands. The Mohaves were agrarians, growing corn and other crops along the Colorado River, and traders who traveled frequently to the coast. They were hostages to their farms, however, and with the establishment of an army fort on their land, their warrior days were over.

While Fort Mohave worked well to keep the Mohave Indians subdued, the Chemehuevis, who were not tied to the land, kept the US Army well occupied along the trail. In the grand tradition of the southwestern US tribes, these were excellent guerrilla fighters who could raid and fade away into desert dust. They traveled in small bands and any livestock along the trail was fair game. While only a few travelers were killed, the Army was forced to deal with the threat by establishing a military presence in the area.

The need for these camps faded, with the subjugation of the Indian threat and the construction of railroads south and north of the Mojave Road. When the railroads were built, travelers found it easier to follow their tracks, as the railroads had water stops every 5 miles or so. The camps along the Mojave Road were eventually abandoned by the military, but civilian station tenders opened some of them as stagecoach stops or primitive roadhouses. Today, a few remains are left of this legendary time, and following the Mojave Road brings us back to this era.

Traveling the Trail Today

Traveling the Mojave Road isn't a picnic. It's a 2- or 3-day excursion, best made in convoy with other 4-wheelers. The trip begins on the shore of the Colorado River, at an elevation of 500 feet; at mile 54.8 you'll be at the head of Cedar Canyon at an elevation of 5,167 feet. During the winter you could hit a snowstorm. In summer it could be 120 degrees, or a summer thunderstorm could bring heavy rain, hail and lightning. Any time of the year, you're a long way from help and city comforts.

The first step in traveling the Mojave Trail is to get a copy of **Dennis Casebier's Mojave Road Guide**. It's indispensable. Casebier spent decades traveling the trail and has an insatiable appetite for history and geology. His book is the culmination of his research and effort to preserve the trail. Mile by mile, he guides us over the passes and through the valleys, 138.8 miles of 4-wheeling over 3 days.

There are few signs, and none on the trail itself. Casebier and his group, the Friends of the Mojave Road, have erected rock cairns at most intersections to show the way. Casebier's book provides a mile-by-mile tour of the road, starting at the Colorado River and traveling the 138 miles westward to Camp Cady.

Rather than cover the entire trail at once -- a 3-day wilderness adventure during which you'll find no services, no stores, no motels nor perhaps a single other person -- portions of the trail can be traveled in shorter excursions. There are areas to avoid, unless you're in it for the challenge; but frankly, crossing the sandy expanse where the Mojave River becomes a floodplain,

or Soda Lake, doesn't appeal. I've been stuck in sand and am not anxious to repeat it.

However, Dennis Casebier, in his Mojave Road Guide, says the floodplain is a beautiful place to visit. According to Casebier, it's best in the spring: "stop your vehicle (on firm ground, of course), shut off the engine, and walk out onto the sand. Fill up your senses with the buzzing of the bees, the flitting of the hummingbirds, and the fragrant bouquet of the desert willows." With a description like that, I know I'll have to go there one of these days.

The winter morning was clear and bright, but a little windy, when I found where the Mojave Road crosses Highway 95 about 24 miles south of Searchlight, a few miles after both roads enter California. A rock cairn was on the right side of the trail, as promised by Casebier; I knew I was on the right trail. The road was a sandy path that led across a wide valley to the Piute Mountains.

This area was the western edge of the territory of the Mojave Indians. They would pass through here on the way to the coast to trade, but from Piute Valley westward we were in the land of the Chemehuevis and Piutes. These tribes were unfriendly to the Mohaves, and didn't take well to the Americans, either. They commenced hostilities on the Americans when the numbers grew from a trickle to a flood, and prospectors started hunting their strange gold rocks on their desert. That's where the 5 military installations come in; they were established to keep the watering holes secure and protect the mail and the travelers. Whoever controls the water controls the desert.



The first stop is Fort Piute. A day's wagon drive from the Colorado River, Piute Springs is located on the eastern slope of the Piute Mountains. It was a long haul -- mostly uphill -- from the River, a full day's work to get there by wagon. But it only took me a half an hour from highway 95, mostly in 4-wheel drive thanks to the sand. The fort was just where Casebier said it would be; around a cinder cone known as Jed Smith hill, and next to a creek that was all of two feet wide but running strong. Stone foundations remain to mark the site of the fort, as well as the remains of a ranch from the 1940s just downstream.

Fort Piute was never really a fort, according to the US Army. It was an outpost, called a 'redoubt', housing 18 enlisted men whose job was to occupy the land around the spring and the creek so the Indians couldn't. Without a supply of water, hostile forces could not operate in the vicinity, and the wagons making their way westward would be safer from attack. The early travelers would continue westward up the canyon from the fort, but due to changes in the land since that time we have to backtrack and go around the mountain and the gorge. Desert storms have washed out the trail here and made it impassable for vehicles. It was on this backtrack that I learned once again that the rules of desert travel should not be ignored. I'd only driven a half-hour from the highway, but it was a fairly good 4-wheeling road; rough and rocky in places, heavy sand in others, but not low-range tough. It was a good 8 miles, which would be a 3-hour walk and heavy work in the deep sand, which is the sort of fact one keeps in mind when heading out in open country. But when the Jeep stalled out on a tough climb out of Piute Creek, I wasn't worried until I realized the front wheels were not engaged. Behind me was deep sand. Even if I could get out of the rocks I was in, I'd probably not be able to pass through the sand without 4-wheel drive. But God looks out for children and fools and salvation was on the trail behind me, in the form of Dave Hughes and his Chevy Suburban.

Dave, a businessman from Hesperia, owns an auto repair shop and has built his Suburban into a fine off-highway trail runner. A lift kit and 35-inch tires gives it a lot of clearance, and the 460 hp engine he put in, with the winch on the front bumper, would let him tow any number of little Jeep Cherokees out of danger. But no 4-wheeler wants to be towed out. Not that I was going to object to a little help, or go looking a gift horse in the mouth. As they say, pride goeth before the fall. Dave walked up and we kicked a few rocks out of the way, and after discussing the problem we backed the Jeep into the sand. I popped open the hood and Dave started following vacuum lines, then crawled underneath my rig and re-attached the line that controls the front wheel drive. I was back in business (and feeling foolish for not checking it myself). The Jeep climbed out of the riverbed easily. Dave, who knew the rules of desert travel as well or better than I do, was heading in the same direction and for the same reasons, so we traveled on together.

To cross the Piute Mountains, we must go around to the Cable Road and take a low pass. The Cable Road was built to maintain the underground telephone line that was buried here during the days of the cold war. This is a beautiful pass, and as the road slowly climbs over the Piutes, splendid vistas appear along the way in every direction. The Cable Road drops us down into the Joshua-covered plain of Lanfair Valley where we rejoin the Mojave Road.

Marks of the past scar Lanfair. During the early 1900s, the desert went through a wet period, and settlers attempted to farm the valley. They ripped out acres and acres of Joshua trees to plant crops that didn't belong here. The dry environment defeated the farmers, but the marks of their efforts remain in the empty fields. These patches won't be

fully reclaimed for hundreds of years as the Joshua grows very slowly. But in the parts of the valley where the scars of man are hidden, the forests are splendid and plentiful and the Mojave Road winds through them.

At times the trail is 2 or 3 feet below the surface of the surrounding land due to erosion of the trail, and the road is powder sand that grabs your wheels and tries to pull you in. Off the sides of the road were random signs of people: an old bus that may have been someone's home at some time in the distant past; a trailer or motor home parked off in the distance; a cabin built of rock; and an Omni navigation station used by aircraft. These things are remarkable only because we had seen almost nothing else to remind us of civilization, and we had traveled a good 30 miles.

We stop to rest and stretch and examine an old piece of mining gear. It's an A-frame with wooden doors attached at the bottom. It probably went over a deep shaft, and the top of the A-frame was used with a block and tackle to lift the rock out of the diggings. It's old, desert-old, but still usable.

A few miles **after crossing the Ivanpah-Lanfair Road**, a nicely maintained and graded dirt road, the trail begins to climb and the terrain gradually changes. We are beginning to see more pinyon and juniper here as the elevation approaches 5,000 feet. We near two important stops on the Mojave Road: Rock Spring and Government Holes. Rock Spring was the next watering station for the wagons, and it is a pleasant little spot in a rock canyon between the mountains. Government Holes is about 2 miles further down the trail.

By the time **we reached Government Holes**, we'd traveled 40 miles on dirt, mostly in 4-wheel drive. Ahead was Marl Springs, but I had about enough trail-riding for one day. After 7 hours of off-highway travel every bone in the body feels shook down. We picked up the Cedar Canyon Road -- a super-highway, after the trail, even if it isn't paved. Dave was heading for the Mid Hills campground for a night in the pinyon high country. I directed the Jeep down the hill and back to the interstate, feeling like I had earned a night in a comfortable motel.

Heading down Cedar Canyon, more breathtaking vistas unfolded. The Mid Hills and the Providence Mountains pointed southward beyond Kelso. The Kelso Dunes lay gloriously at their feet, a white streak that pointed west to the sandy expanse of the Devil's Playground. Ahead were the Beale and Marl Mountains, and to the north of them, the Cima Dome rose curiously to fill the space between the Ivanpahs and the Beales. In the foreground, a railroad track incongruously split the scene, and a long freight train moaned its way up the steep bajada to Cima.

A fitting sight to end the day. The next time I was on the Mojave Road was several weeks later. My desert-dancing trail partner Suz was along. We'd spent a delightful morning at Goffs with Dennis Casebier, then headed northward to Cedar Canyon and the Cima Road. There, we picked up the trail and headed westward. Suz drove; she'd been cooped up in civilization too long and needed the time on the trail.

The trail lay before us, with not a single other mark of man within sight. We were in a magnificent Joshua Tree forest. A

falcon hunted in the sky above, soaring and sailing and keeping a sharp eye on the desert floor for his dinner. The road was rough, very rough, from washouts, and sandy washes kept us in 4-wheel drive as we made our way toward the Beale Mountains. We slowed to one or two miles an hour; jostling easily along, with no sign of the twentieth century around us; we were a wagon heading westward on the interminable trail to the golden land of California.

We moseyed along, watching for dancing Joshuas and wild horses or burros; Casebier said this was a prime area for them. To our right was the unusual Cima Dome, but we were on the side of it and its dome shape was not discernable. The Beale Mountains slowly passed us by and we began the long march to the Marls. This is truly empty country; not another soul was in sight. But now the marks of our time were, as a power line from Boulder dam to Los Angeles came into view as we approached the Marl Mountains.

The Marls were named by Army lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple. He was here on March 7, 1854, with a survey party. He gave the springs the name that later became associated with the mountains, because of the 'marly' soil around the springs; it is a type of clay that, when wet, clings and slips like caliche.

The springs make a beautiful high desert oasis. The lower springs are fenced to hold cattle as needed, but the gate is left open most of the time. A wonderfully clear tank is full to the brim with water that is cold and fresh. This is a gathering place for desert animals for miles around -- wild horses, burros, coyotes, desert foxes-- and so much more take full advantage of the improvements made by the cattlemen to this ancient watering hole.

For a short time -- from October 5, 1867 through May 22, 1868 -- the Army stationed a few soldiers at **Marl Springs**. On October 17, 3 men -- Sgt. Thomas Johnston (who was in charge of the detachment), Pvt. John Ahern and Pvt. Jackson Thompson, all of Company "K," 14th U.S. Infantry -- were building a stone corral at the upper spring when a band of 20 to 30 Indians attacked. All 3 men made it to safety inside their stone headquarters, but the Indians laid siege to the outpost. The battle continued through the night, and in the morning, the soldiers were rescued in classic western storybook style: a column of 150 soldiers came over the hill and the Indians scattered.

While standing at the upper spring, with the crystal-clear view eastward and the Marl Mountains behind, it isn't hard at all to hear the war cries of the attacking Indians. I hear the angry bark of the rifles and pistols, feel the rush of an arrow skimming by and taste the terror of imminent death as we run to the remains of the stone redoubt. We feel the incredible joy of just being alive, and taste the dread as night slowly but inexorably approaches: what will the Indians do? Will they leave as they came, silently and without any hint? Everyone must stay alert as the long night drags on. Feel the relief as the desert night slowly changes to false dawn, and the yellow and reds appear in the eastern sky; then the sun slowly rises, the column of soldiers marches in -- and the hostiles fade into the desert.

The Army occupied these springs for only a few months, but Marl Springs was an important stop along the Mojave Road for all of its lifetime. It is a distant 30 miles from Marl to the **next watering hole westward -- Soda Springs, now called Zzyzx** -- and it was a long, hard journey by wagon. The road passes through the heavy sands of the Devil's Playground, crosses the Mojave River Sink and takes us through Soda Lake before watering up at Soda Springs. And the water at Soda Springs was brackish at best, barely tolerable at worst. So Marl was and is important, as the only water for many miles. During the wagon trail days, several different civilians operated stations here, where they could sell travelers a fresh-cooked meal, some grain for their horses and a place to sleep. Prospectors worked out of here as well; near the upper spring is a well-preserved arrastra, once used to crush rock to get gold ore out of it. The springs have always been a headquarters for the cattle industry. Now, no one lives (or camps) near the springs as that would keep the half-wild cattle and native animals away from the springs. Proceeding westward on the Road, we found ourselves in a uniquely beautiful area. The road reaches a summit, and the expanse of the lower Mojave -- **the Devil's Playground, Cave Mountain and Soda Lake** -- are at our feet. It is breathtaking, one more beautiful view in a land filled with beautiful views. We are indeed on top of the world here, in the heart of the wilderness, and forever stretches all around us. But the winter day was waning; winter nights are bitter cold here, and driving on desert trails in the dark is a particularly difficult venture. It was time to head back to civilization. We made our way to pavement in the glow of sunset, and reluctantly left Dennis Casebier's road behind. We will be back. This trail is too special to be away from it for long.

