

## SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017

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### **Jack's Trail Report**

Connie and me arrived at Oxford Ranch Campground (ORC) on Thursday, just after noon. After getting camp set up, We headed out to Stillwaters Ranch (SWR) in the Juggy to put up 6 or 7 sign we had made, and fix a few others we had notice from the previous run. The afternoon was great, with absolutely perfect weather. We were back to ORC just after 4 PM.

On Friday, me, Barry and Milt headed out to SWR around 9 AM to work on trails and maybe look for a new trail or two. While headed out to the west end of the ranch, we passed thorough the high gate at the bottom of "Tippy Toe". Just past that spot the ranch road curves out of the creek to the left. Instead of taking the left, we stayed in the creek, and with a little work trimming, we have a new easy trail named "Not Much", that runs from that point back to to where the ranch road drops back into the creek,

## SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017

with a small, slightly more difficult section across the ranch road to finish it off. This trail can be run from either direction, giving you an option of taking the trail, or the ranch road. Milt ran into a little trouble about two-thirds the way through, when his right front tire caught a crumbling rock...part of it ended up in the tire bead, causing it to lose air. After messing around for a bit trying to remove the gravel, we swapped on the spare and headed on. From there we headed up Hill 55, where Dave & Debi, and grandson Luke, caught up with us. It was Luke's first time out, and he was having a great time! Next, we headed to "Fenceline" so we could get to "Mouse Trap", which needed to be trimmed. We found a couple of spots on "Mouse Trap" to be a bit challenging, as they were more than a bit muddy! After that, we headed to the Stock Tank for lunch, and then to a spot off of "Graduation" that we had looked at last year. It's an interesting short "turn-around" red trail that runs into a 20 foot high wall at the end. After some clearing, I ran it, having just a bit of difficulty making the first tight turn, around a tree that sits on the left side. Several mandatory "front digs" to the left got me turned around and headed in the right direction. Some interesting adult and 4 year-old conversation prompted me to name this new trail "Luke's U-Turn"... We finished out running "Graduation", fixed the crossroads sign near "Whatever", and made our way back to ORC. Again, a beautiful day ended with a great dinner and campfire with friends!

Saturday's weather didn't start out well, with complete cloud cover threatening to get things wet. However, we made it through registration, and ended up with 21 paying customers...not bad considering the weather forecast. But, most Jeepers would rather be out playing in their Jeeps than sitting around talking about it, so we headed out for the SWR trails around 8:45. Our group (Hard/Extreme) headed to our starting favorite, "I Told You So". Since it's always wet from springs running down it, it can be a challenge. It certainly lived up to it's name, giving all but the buggys a tough time, but we all made it to the top. Sadly, Peter's front locker wasn't wanting to stay engaged, so he headed out looking to hook up with Rafael's group. From there we headed to Colton's Ravine, only this time we decided to run it backwards. We started with "Aussie Loop", which is at the end of Colton's, and ran "Jack's Crack". I tried "Ray's Nemesis", but it was so slick I couldn't even get the front tires up the wall. At that point, Dustin's 4BT Cummins diesel powered rig decided it wouldn't start. Dustin spent about 45 minutes searching for the cause, finally finding a blown fuse well hidden under the dash. Then we headed towards the optional wall. Due to the conditions of the trail, I was the only one dumb enough to do it, as going up it is considerably more difficult than going down! Unfortunately, Dustin had more trouble on the exit hill, and heading back to ORC.

## **SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017**

Somewhere during this time I got a call from fellow Trail Leader Rafael telling me the bad news for Scott & Kelly. Sadly, they broke a front axle u-joint on the first trail, sending them home. Bummer!

We headed across the ranch to "Tippy Toe", and down to "Not Much", and then to "Pigeon Toe", where the statement about being first rang true again for me. I picked a

line that I figured would be extremely difficult, and the Juggy walked right up it, even though it was raining lightly. This left Gerald and Josh, who was driving Glenn's TJ. Both worked and worked, but the muddy rocks kept winning! Once we all got to the top, we decided that running "Pigeon Toe" down was the fastest way to our next trail, "The Gauntlet". The trail proved to be too wet and muddy for us to run the optional lines, so we headed up and over to the newest trail on the ranch, "Luke's U-Turn". After I had difficulty getting around the tree, both Gerald and Glenn decided it wasn't worth it with the weather like it was. We finished "Graduation", and headed over to my favorite, "El Diablo". Since this trail is always wet due to springs running down from the top and sides, I didn't expect too much difficulty for our 3 rigs. Everyone came through fine, with Josh having to take the winch on the first waterfall. Try as he might, he just couldn't find the right line! He drove right up the second waterfall, which can be just as difficult as the first! We then headed back to ORC (a muddy trip for sure!), getting back around 3:45, just in time for Glenn to help Matt with the BBQ...

Saturday night was another great time, with the rain slacking off before dinner time. The sausage and brisket Matt smoked up for us, along with the potato salad, beans, and ORC owner Debbie Honig's bread pudding was FANTASTIC! A few adult beverages sitting around the campfire rounded out the day...WHAT A GREAT CLUB RUN! Thanks to all who made it that way!

Jack

P.S. I know a number of members didn't show because of the weather forecast. A couple called or texted to say they couldn't make it...maybe next time!

JB

### **Donnalee Jones Trail Report**

After a quick drivers meeting, Milton and I climbed into our Jeep "El-Diablo", and headed to line up in Rafael's Medium/Hard Group. 8 Jeeps lined up behind "JOLENE" to head out for a day of adventure on the trails. I am still new to driving off road and we decided to start our day with me driving some. The sky was cloudy and overcast as

## SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017

our group drove out of Oxford Ranch towards SWR Ranch. I did notice a few new SWR signs with helpful arrows pointing the way (Thanks Jack).

1<sup>st</sup> trail was HILL 55, up I drove. (Yeah me!)

2<sup>ND</sup> trail was JAWS, so Milt took over driving the rest of the day.

3<sup>RD</sup> trail was S.A.W.'s OVER & OVER. Here we lost 1 Jeep with a right front broken U-Joint.

Next our group drove down FENCELINE and saw many newly sprouted Blue Bonnet flowers in the middle of the trail. Throughout the day in other areas saw the beginnings of wildflowers blooming – it is gonna be a beautiful Spring in the Hill Country! We started up another climb and realized forgot to put the lockers on.....up and over the rocky hill we went!

From here we all made our way over to MOUSETRAP and on to MIKES FINGER & MIKES THUMB area. Our Trail Guide stopped in a semi-flat area to get the group caught up, and a short part of the song “Jolene”, by Dolly Parton, was transmitted over the CB. Onward!

Rain started as our group all got to THE BOWL Playground - a few decided to conquer THE BOWL. While leaving the area, a few jeeps were stopped by a few cows (3?) as they decided to stop in the road and face Jeep/group line without movement – so after waiting with no avail - we gently JEEP herded the cows out of the way.

Next the group hit the lower part of GRADUATION with a light rain misting on us, and on to CAP'N CRUNCH'D. We saw from a distance where a new trail is being developed and will be named: “LUKES U-TURN. Climbing this area we viewed many Yucca plants dotting the hill sides with their lovely creamy white blooms, and made our way to the pond for lunch. Milt and I enjoyed a very nice light lunch: sliced salami, cheese cubes, crackers, water, and fruit. Our group all ate in a slight rainy mist – NOTE to self: need a slicker to keep in Jeep. While lunching 1 Jeep was added to our group (group total = 9). Welcome!

## **SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017**

After lunch group loaded up and headed to MOUSETRAP which had become very muddy. Next we headed North to - Simple Trail - per trail guide - this was an interesting dry creek bed which we had to maneuver in/out of close knit trees

which will be fun to repeat in future). From here group went to DEEP ENDS where we had deep water/mud holes and then onward to BACK GATE. We all

came to a spot where not all, but most had to use a strap to pull their Jeep up as these rocks were very slick from rains. Someone also lost a brake line in this area. After everyone got up the slick rocks it started raining hard, and was decided it was time to head back to camp. Remember: ALWAYS Close High Gates at SWR.

Thanks to Rafael, our Trail Guide - Milt and I enjoyed ourselves on this Club Run. For those who missed it - Yes, it was raining off/on, but even so we still had a great time on the trails, and enjoyed a wonderful club run camp dinner of BBQ & sides that Glenn, Debra, & Family prepared for the evening meal.

### **Milt's Jone's Trail Report**

There was several great things that happened for me during this great weekend. My SWR weekend was a two day weekend starting with the SWR Offroad work day on Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and ending on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> with the all day run. Rafael Berdecia was our trail guide.

Friday's work day for me was a great time. There was Jack Brinks, Barry Allison, Dave & Deb Schulze, and Luke! We put our loppers to great use. There was several signs that need repairing, and some replaced. We updated the trail 'Not Much', and Jack wanted a new buggie\juggie trail by the base of Graduation. It took an hour or so to trim out this new trail, which I believe is now called 'Lukes U-Turn'. A must see.

Oh, there was a small boo-boo that I should report, my Jeep El Diablo, pushed his tire off his R\Front rim. So Jack, once again, helped me change a tire. Yup, not the first time. Some rock pushed between the tire bead and the rim. Jack made sure I saw where I forced the tire off. I guess it was a training experience. Sure scrapped that rock pretty good! Once we got back to camp Jack busted the bead for me and I cleaned the rock out so I could blow the tire back up. Thanks again Jack!

## SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017

Friday night we saw a little drizzle, not too bad. It was just enough to keep the dust down for our 4 mile trail ride across Oxford Ranch just to get out to SWR.

Saturday run sure had some beautiful flowers, and the yucca cactus was in full bloom. They were all over Hill 55. What a site to behold. Then as we went down Jaws + we saw more and more bluebonnets. Some Indian paint brush and dandelions. I do believe spring time is arriving in our area.

The rain pretty much held off until after lunch on Saturday. Our usual lunch spot was at the pond. It was a little breezy at the pond so it was a little chilly. Not a problem, I just put my SAJE sweatshirt with hoodie on and that fixed that problem.

Oh I forgot, Saturday morning someone broke their R\Front axle U-Joint while climbing the top of Hill 55. Kevin Jackson hooked a tree strap from Major Crunch to the broke Jeep and pulled them the rest of the way up. Unfortunately they were now finished for the day.

***Special Note on U-Joints:*** Always inspect your Jeep's U-Joints. One sure way to tell your Jeep's U-Joints are going bad is if you see rust come from under the U-Joint caps. Change your U-Joints right away, no longer trust them. The front axles U-Joints are especially susceptible.

Our trail guide pretty much took us on every doable Jeep trail. About 1pm is when it started raining a little heavier. To me, this made our off-roading experience even that much more prettier, running through the creek beds with some deep water. Even made climbing over some obstacles even more of a challenge.

By around 2pm it started raining heavier so it was decided to head back to camp. Got cleaned up and ready for the SAJE club wonderful BBQ dinner meal. SAJE's cooks was Glenn and Debra. The meal was superb! Camp fire and a wonderful meal with good friends, life just doesn't get any better than that.

A big THANK YOU goes out to the SAJE club. And a big, big THANK YOU goes out to Glenn, Debra, and their family for all the hard work that went into making our Saturday night meal.

The members of this SAJE club can take the worst day and turn it into something special. I guess that's why SAJE is a very special and unique Jeep club.

# SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017

## Dave Bitterman's Trail Report

It was a dark and stormy day ...", well, it didn't start that way, but the gray skies at the ride brief promised we'd have a soggy day before it ended. To introduce myself, my name is Dave Bitterman, and I've been a member of the club for about 18 months. I have a 2002 TJ that I bought new, and I've been steadily upgrading it (and my abilities) since then. When my daughter went off to college, the Jeep went with her, so to be honest, at this point the Jeep is much better prepared for the trails than the driver. I was solo at SWR, and slowly raised my hand when Jack asked, "Ok, who is with Rafael with the medium-hard group?" Fire forges steel, right?

I was second in line of our group of about ten Jeeps. Once we got onto the ranch, we headed south for the first obstacle, Jaws plus, I believe it was called. Rafael made it look easy, and I followed his line up to the top. We both parked our Jeeps, and ducked through the trees for Jeep #3, who .... lost his right front u-joint. Duuuuuuuuuude, nooooooooooooo!, I thought, short day. His Jeep was strapped up the rest of the trail, and he headed back to ORC. The rest of the group followed Rafael up the trail.

Fenceline, Mike's Finger, Mike's Thumb, the first part of Graduation ... the Bowl, I probably missed a trail or two, but I had a great time following Rafael's line. Highlight was launching my TJ out of the Bowl like one of the Hazzard boys with the General Lee ... lowlight was twice, when I told myself, "I ain't doing THAT" and took a bypass on an obstacle. I had to drive the Jeep home.

After lunch, it started to get soggy. We headed north, hitting Honey Creek (green trail) and laughing when word came over the CB that our club President, Doug, was stuck (he wasn't). Once we got to Colton's Ravine, we headed into the trail backwards. It is always easier going downhill! We continued north until we got to the Rock Wall at the north edge of SWR, and turned around to come back out. Getting out of Colton's Ravine wasn't as easy ... it was pretty slick, and a number of us took the strap of shame ... myself included.

Once we got out, we found out that one of the Jeeps had lost a brake line, but we were headed back, anyway. Doug offered to strap the ailing Jeep from the rear, but the driver did a great job getting back to the trailhead without drama.

## **SAJE Club Run - SWR - March 4, 2017**

Cold beverages were enjoyed by all upon our return. I had a long conversation with our chef (Coastie Matt!) over the smoker, and enjoyed some \_outstanding\_ brisket and sausage, potato salad, beans, and bread pudding. I was told that I had to take two cookies, and I always do what I'm told.

It was a very good day. If you weren't there, you missed out!