

# DESERT EXPLORERS

No. 179 FEB. 2011

4WD SECTION OF THE MOJAVE RIVER VALLEY MUSEUM



## Trip Reports

Maybe next time

## Future Trips

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drink and pack a lunch for each trip.

If you would like to go join us this trip, please RSVP via email to Dan dmess@ctaz.com or Dick dickandmouse@aol.com. Please indicate if you will be camping or doing one or both day trips.

## Piute Mountains Wilderness

**February 19-20**  
**Leader: Mal Roode**  
**CB Channel 13**

All trips require a four wheel drive vehicle and a working CB unless otherwise specified by the trip leader. Non-complying vehicles will not be allowed on trips. Leaders may authorize a variance at their discretion.

Four wheel drive and high clearance are mandatory.

We will meet for our trip in Essex, CA for an 8:30 a.m. departure. We will leave the pavement about 6 miles to the east. We will be exploring right through the middle of the Piute Mountains Wilderness Area. This is a slow-going route. I estimate it to be 32 miles to camp, and it can take a day if we stop a lot.

## Southeastern Nevada

(M.O.E.)

2/11/11 - 2/14/11

**Leaders: Messersmith/Taylor**

Sunday morning we will leave camp at 8:30 a.m. and head north about 2 miles to visit Painted Rock.

This trip has changed to a campground camp out with two day trips on the agenda. We will camp in either Davis Camp or Katherine's Landing RV parks (we are looking in to that now). We will start the day trips at the Riverside Park located just north of the Riverside Casino in Laughlin, NV with everyone expected to be on site by 8:30 a.m. The park has a nice restroom facility for your comfort prior to our departure and grass to walk your K-9 friends. We will depart no later than 8:45 a.m. Bring lots to

We can spend an hour or so exploring this area, then head south about 30 miles to rejoin the pavement at Essex. We should be done about noon on Sunday.

The total distance from when we leave the pavement to when we return will be about 60 miles. There will be a 12 vehicle limit on this trip. Traditional DE potluck will be held on Saturday night. E-mail me if you are interested at mal@roode.com.



Issue Number 179

## Yuma Area Excursion

(M.O.E.)

3/11/11 - 3/14/11

Leaders: Messersmith/Taylor

This is planned to be a four day base camp set up in the long term visitor area just out of town. Campers, trailers, motor homes and tents will work well in this area. To accommodate travelers outside of Kingman, our caravan meeting area will be at the Indian Casino parking lot in Parker, AZ at 10:00 a.m. on Friday the 11th. It may also be easier for some travelers from the California area to meet us at the I-10 & AZ95 junction at Quartzsite at approximately 10:45 a.m.

We plan to visit some of the historic places in and around Yuma as well as make a day trip into Picacho State Recreation Area in California where we will get to see some of the old mining history. We'll also get to visit some Colorado River camp sites generally only accessible by boats as Dick knows some land routes in. Dutch oven cooking and great bull sessions around a campfire are a promise. We hope you can join us for this southern Arizona adventure.

Please let us know if you will join us at Parker or Quartzsite and give us your cell phone number. If you would like to go join us this trip, please RSVP via e-mail to Dan dmess@ctaz.com or Dick dickandmouse@aol.com

## Willow Beach Camp Out and Day Trips

(M.O.E.)

4/8 - 4/11

Leaders: Messersmith/Taylor

The new Willow Beach Campground on the Colorado River south of Hoover Dam should be finished and

ready for our visit. RVs, Truck Campers, and Tents are welcome. We'll verify what services are available as soon as possible and get the word out. We'll plan on day trips on the 9th and 10th. More information to follow.

If you would like to go join us this trip, please RSVP via e-mail to Dan dmess@ctaz.com or Dick dickandmouse@aol.com. Please indicate if you will be camping or doing one or both day trips.

## Utah

May 13-15

Leader: Emmett Harder

CB: 13

Meet on Friday at Best Western in Mesquite Nevada.

Leave early Saturday; form up in Leeds Utah.

Go into the back country and explore the locations of Mountain Meadows and routes used by the participants.

Stay in Enterprise, Utah Saturday night and visit the massacre site Sunday.

## Prescott Area

(M.O.E.)

5/19/11 - 5/23/11

Leaders: Messersmith/Taylor

Base Camp with a Bradshaw Mountains Exploration We plan to camp in the Bradshaw Mountains in an established forest camp ground. RVs, Truck Campers, and Tent camping will work in this area. We will be exploring the back roads to the south and may reach all the way to Lake Pleasant, Lots of neat country to explore and for some it may be the first time in this area.

We will be leaving from the McDonald's on I-40 & Andy Devine in Kingman at 8:30 a.m. Thursday.

If you would like to go join us this trip,

please RSVP via email to Dan dmess@ctaz.com or Dick dickandmouse@aol.com

## Old Fashioned 4th of July Parade in Torrey, UT

(M.O.E.)

6/28/11 - 7/3/11

Leaders: Messersmith/Taylor

This would be our second excursion to Torrey for their 4th of July celebration. Their 4th of July Parade (always held on the Saturday closest to the 4th) is worth the trip all by itself, but the backroads around this part of Utah's "Greatest Earth on Show" is a great reason to go. Our plan at this early date is to travel up on June 28th and camp in our RV's somewhere outside of town that evening. On Wednesday, we would check into an RV park in town for our base-camp. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday we would do day trip excursions in the backcountry around Torrey. On Saturday the 2nd, we will take in the full day of events including the town parade. That evening, if we have the energy, we might take in the town dance. Our return trip home would be on Sunday, July 3th. This is designed to be an RV trip, but those who wish to tent camp or motel camp could do that and join us.

If you would like to go on this trip, please RSVP via e-mail to Dan dmess@ctaz.com or Dick dickandmouse@aol.com

## The Gila Runs Again

Note: The following report was written by Richard Greene who took extensive notes during the trip. Tracy DeVault felt obligated to add a few remarks, and they are shown in parenthesis. (Oregon California

Trails Assn. members)

Tracy called Richard, "There's water in the Gila, and I want to canoe it to Yuma." Richard was astounded. For 10 years the only thing Richard had ever seen in the Gila was sand and bushes and had seen it many times while mapping the Southern Trail. This could have been one of Tracy's gags so Richard had no problem saying "Let's go." Either way Richard would be ahead – he could call Tracy's bluff or what a thrill it would be if there was really enough water to canoe from Painted Rock Dam to the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers.

(I had seen water in the Gila during the great flood of 1993. I had hoped to canoe it then but missed the chance. This might well be the last time the Gila would run in my lifetime, and I was not going to let this opportunity go by.)

Tracy said that we would do a reconnaissance trip to check out bridges, low water crossings and determine where we would put in and pull out each day. It was going to be a 125 mile canoe trip over several days and the logistics were something to ponder.

Darrell Montgomery in Yuma was keeping Tracy posted on the flow of water. Darrell sent one photo showing a trickle. Then came the photo that showed a mighty Gila meeting the Colorado. It was beyond belief. Soon, we got word from Darrell that he had taken a group of Boy Scouts canoeing a short stretch and the Gila was deep – 10 feet in some places – and flowing close to 4 mph. It was a "WOW!" moment.

(After they opened the gates at Painted Rock Dam it took about two weeks for the full flow (at about 2,500 cfs) to reach the Colorado River.)

About three weeks after Tracy's first call to Richard, the reconnaissance trip was taken. Richard drove his truck. Tracy had maps of all the crossings and bridges and the reconnaissance would work from Yuma east (upstream) to Painted Rock Reservoir.

(Actually we took Tracy's high-clearance, all-wheel-drive van on the reconnaissance trip.)

First stop: the abandoned McPhaul suspension bridge. It was an incredible bridge to view. You can park right under it with the Gila flowing nearby and walk

across it if so inclined. To Richard it represented a mini Golden Gate and a forgotten symbol of transporting traffic across the Gila. The bridge was 8.4 miles as the crow flies to the confluence.

(The Gila flows into the Colorado River at Yuma.)

The confluence: There is a small sandy park where you can picnic, swim and walk right up to and – believe it – out into the merging of the waters. It was one of those moments. Of course, the other astounding thing was to see a truck try to cross the Gila, get stuck half way and watch the driver crawl out of the flooded cab. Fortunately, he had plenty of friends around to help. The park is a popular spot.

(We were trying to gauge the flow of the Gila when a fairly new truck with a half-dozen young people in the bed started to cross the Gila. We knew that the Gila was at least three feet deep and there was no way the truck was going to get across. It was no surprise that the truck got stuck less than a third of the way. All the driver's friends that Richard mentioned were of absolutely no help. The truck was still in the river when we left. I expect that the water damage was extensive.)

Tracy used his Google Earth maps to check out all the road crossings as we headed back from the confluence at Yuma. We ended the first day's reconnaissance at Wellton. All the bridges had plenty of clearance and there was no debris to prevent passing under them. Typically, the dirt roads that crossed the Gila did so with low water crossings. These crossings were blocked by dirt mounds with warning signs "Road Closed Flood Waters". The crossings had been bulldozed to clear a deeper channel for the Gila to flow through to avoid "smaller dams" that could cause some flooding before the river destroyed the crossing anyway. It looks like the Arizona highway department has a lot of experience in handling the release of water into the Gila. Tracy took a GPS reading at every bridge and crossing so that we would know the exact location of the crossings when we were canoeing down the Gila. We also used this information to determine the length of each river segment. It looked like there would be no problem putting in, pulling out or camping along the river between Wellton and Yuma.

At Antelope Hill the river was flowing over the road, and we noted "portage". Not sure why, unlike every other low water crossings, the road was not breached – maybe concrete had something to do with it.

The Mohawk Bridge had culverts and would be another portage. The Dateland Bridge had a lot of tamarisk on both sides, but it was passable. We chatted with a USGS worker on the bridge. He and his colleagues were measuring the water flow but didn't have too much more to tell us for our canoe trip. The Aztec Power Line Road proved to be 6 miles of rough going.

Richard had decided to bring his minivan on the actual canoe trip to be able to shuttle the canoe. We realized that the minivan could not make it the whole 6 miles. – just as well we checked it out.

(As we traveled east from Dateland the possible take-out points were fewer and further apart. One of the segments we were concerned about was between the Aqua Caliente Bridge and the Dateland Bridge. This segment is 17 miles long. The only possible pull-out point between these two points was a power line access road that ran north from the freeway off-ramp labeled "Aztec." We decided to check it out. My van made it to the river with no problem, but the road was really rough, and we both agreed that Richard's low-clearance, two-wheel drive minivan would never make it over this road - more on this later.)

The Agua Caliente Bridge was not a problem.

(We both had been to Oatman Flat many times and felt we did not need to check out this crossing.)

Painted Rock Dam: the office was closed, and there was no access. We drove a short ways downstream to the Poco Dinero Road crossing. We saw the familiar warning signs which meant the river was nearby, and it proved to be the perfect put-in point for our trip.

At every bridge and crossing we checked to see if we had cell phone service just in case of an emergency and to call home. We had service all the way.

Our canoe adventure would happen after the spring mapping trip. We would leave on Wednesday, April 28th after mapping was over on the 25th.

The following summary might enhance

the cryptic notes that were made at the end of each hour of paddling and became our trip log.

Summary: Tracy and Richard are still friends after 125 river miles, 6 days of paddling, 5 nights camping out, pulling the canoe over sand bars, the occasional tangle with tamarisks, 2 capsizes, the frustration of fighting gusty winds almost every afternoon and the differences of opinion on the value of shuttling twice a day.

(Shuttling was a big part of the trip and I should describe the process. We took two vehicles, Richard's mini-van and my 4x4 pickup. Both vehicles had roof racks so we could carry the canoe on either vehicle. We would drive both vehicles to a pull-out point where we would leave the vehicle without the canoe. Then we would drive the other vehicle back (upstream) to the put-in point where we would unload the canoe and gear. We would then canoe down river to the pull-out point where we would load the canoe and gear on the vehicle that had been left there. Then we would drive back to the put-in point to pick up the vehicle left there. Finally we would drive downstream to the next pull-out point. This comprises one shuttle cycle, and we repeated the process for every river segment.

Richard suggests that we had differences of opinion on the value of shuttling twice a day. This is not quite accurate. A single shuttle cycle took us between two and three hours to complete. We both agreed that it was far better to do the entire day's river trip in one segment and shuttle only once at the end of the day.

The problem was the wind. It generally started between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. It always blew upstream and, when it was bad, severely impeded our progress. If the wind came up strong, and we were still a long ways from our pull-out point (and vehicle) we were in real trouble. If we planned the day's river travel in two segments (requiring two shuttles), and the wind came up early, we could get off the river after the first segment. The real question was what time would the wind come up during the day, and the answer to this question was unknowable. Our worst day was a day when the weatherman predicted no wind at all. In the end we had four one-segment days and two two-segment days. The two-segment days would have been

better done in one longer segment, and the first one-segment day would have been infinitely better if it had been done in two segments.

#### CANOE TRIP LOG

FIRST DAY : Wednesday, April 28 - Poco Dinero Road to Oatman Flat.

We left Tracy's home at 7:00 a.m. Tracy carried the canoe on his truck. We arrived at Gila Bend at 10:00 a.m. Traveled 150 miles. Gas \$2.99 at Loves. Made decision to canoe 18 miles from Poco Dinero Road to the Agua Caliente Bridge.

(We had originally planned to canoe the first day's segment from Poco Dinero Road to Oatman Flat. This segment is only about eight miles long but, because we were going to be starting late in the day and, as yet had no experience on this river, we thought it prudent to be conservative on this first segment. When we arrived at the road to Agua Caliente, I realized that we could save two shuttle hours by extending our first segment from Oatman Flat to the Agua Caliente Bridge. This would add an additional twelve miles to our first day's outing, but we had arrived at this point an hour earlier than planned. I thought the additional three hours on the river would go a long way to compensating for the additional twelve river miles. I suggested this idea to Richard and he quickly agreed. It was my worst suggestion on the entire trip.)

Drove west on I-8 to Exit 87, Sentinel Road to Agua Caliente. It was 28 miles from Gila Bend to the Agua Caliente Bridge where we left Richard's van at a parking pullout by a pump station. We checked where we would pull the canoe out.

11:15 a.m: We left the Agua Caliente Bridge for Poco Dinero Road. We picked up pieces of a blown tire scattered across the Sentinel Road in case we ran over them in the dark when we would be returning to Tracy's truck at the put-in. We were way ahead of schedule.

Noon: Arrived at Poco Dinero Road.

12:15 p.m: Put in. Sunny and very windy. River flowing good. Incredible to see so much water. We had 8 miles (GPS) to Oatman Flat.

12:45 p.m: Capsized. Got caught in Tamarisk. Have no idea how we went over. Water knee deep but not cold. Tracy

chased after paddle. Richard pulled canoe on to bank. Stuff floating around, some tied down, cushion floated away. Tracy waded across to canoe. Canoe full of water. We floated the canoe to a small island where we turned it over and got ourselves back together.

1:15 p.m: On our way again. We found the floated-away cushion caught in brush as we canoed down the river. Cell towers on hill to south. Tracy said when they were past our shoulders we would be at Oatman Flat. Headwind was bad. It brought us to a standstill or pushed us sideways to the bank. We were really struggling.

3:30 p.m: Gave up. We pulled out close to Oatman Flat Road (power line). We had come 8 miles by the GPS – actually more river miles. No way we could make it to the Agua Caliente Bridge before dark – another 10 miles (GPS). We decided to hike back the 8 miles to Poco Dinero Road and Tracy's truck. (Actually, I wanted to spend the night with the canoe and finish the segment in the morning. Richard thought it would be too cold.)

We thought we could make it for sure. We left the canoe and started our hike. We decided to hike to the top of the bluffs rather than fight our way through the thick Tamarisk flats beside the river. We passed a hay field as we walked up the rocky Billy-Fourr wagon road to the top of the bluff. We followed a game trail and avoided the rocky terrain as much as possible. We found a place to come down the bluff when we could see we were clear of the dense brush in the flats. It was tough finding our way through the rest of the tamarisk flats until we found a sandy wash that led to cultivated fields - which went on forever. It was getting dark when we saw lights. A truck was checking irrigation but never responded to our flashlight signal. We walked to a lighted barn and found 3 guys (2 from Iowa, 1 from Pennsylvania) working on farm equipment.

7:30 p.m: We chatted – they had also canoed from Poco Dinero Road to Oatman Flat. They agreed to give us a ride to Tracy's truck at Poco Dinero Road.

8:00 p.m: Arrived at Poco Dinero Road and Tracy's truck.

(Richard makes the hike back sound problematic. However, that's not the half of it. After dealing with a capsized canoe

and paddling for over three hours against a heavy head wind, we had to hike another four hours across difficult terrain. As dark closed in we realized that we would have to now walk on the ranch roads. However, the ranch roads headed towards the highway, not for my truck. We would eventually get to my truck, but we would walk many miles out of our way to get there. From time to time Richard would ask me to check my GPS and tell him how far it was to the truck. I would give him the same figure I gave him the last time he asked. Richard could not understand how we could walk so many miles without getting any closer to the truck. The answer, of course, was that we weren't walking towards the truck. To top things off, Richard's cell phone had been drowned when the canoe capsized. My cell phone (T-Mobile service) survived the river but would not get a signal even though we could see cell phone towers on the nearby hills. We could see bright lights in the distance and decided to check it out. We were lucky to find people still working and begged a ride back to my truck. Once there we still had an hour-and-a-half's drive to Richard's van.)

9:30 pm: Arrived at the Agua Caliente Bridge and Richard's van. Camped there – exhausted. Went to bed – no dinner or wash up. We had called Judy and Marie on Tracy's phone and assured them we were okay. Richard's phone died in the capsize. We agreed to do Oatman Flat to Agua Caliente Bridge tomorrow and then would decide if the weather would let us canoe further.

Things could only get better. We have 117 actual river miles to go.

Thursday, April 29 – Oatman Flat to Agua Caliente Bridge

5:15 a.m.: Heard car over bridge

6:30 a.m.: Ready to go. We drove both vehicles 9 miles and got on the Oatman Flat Road – a good dirt road until you get to Wild Horse Canyon. The road goes downhill literally and figuratively – a really rough road down to Oatman Flat. Part way down Wild Horse Canyon we found a big tractor blocking the way. The driver said he had a blown fuse, and a truck was bringing him another fuse. The rescue truck came back.

7:33 am: Tractor fixed. Followed tractor. The support truck backed down until it

could turn around. We drove to river and found the canoe where we left it.

7:45 a.m.: Parked – it was 19 road miles from the Agua Caliente Bridge to river at Oatman Flat. It had taken exactly 1.5 hours to cover the 19 miles.

8:05 a.m.: Set up waypoints in GPS – 10.3 miles as crow flies from Oatman Flat to the Agua Caliente bridge. It was cool, light breeze and sunny when we started out.

9:00 a.m.: We have traveled 2.5 miles (GPS). Saguaros, high rocky bluffs, perfect weather. Photo op for Tracy.

(I had hoped to take numerous photos on the trip but it was not possible while the canoe was underway. A couple of times we were in calm water, and we stopped paddling long enough for me to take several photos.)

10:00 a.m.: We have 4.4 miles (GPS) to bridge. Getting windier - still beautiful country - weaving through tamarisk. Once in a while going into bushes with river current just taking us out of the tangle. We noticed a barbed wire fence buried half way across the river with a post and coils of wire hanging on post. Looked carefully so we didn't get neck-tied by wire.

11:00 a.m.: We are 0.84 miles (GPS) from Agua Caliente Bridge. Wind getting stronger. Could see power poles over bridge first, then glint off van, then pump by parking area – felt good to make it. Had to pull canoe across sand bars to deeper water and pull out on bank.

11:30 a.m.: Carried canoe and stuff from bank to road. Got van and drove down road to load up. In trying to turn around I got van stuck on large rock. Tracy jacked up van, and I pulled big rock out. Loaded canoe on top of van. Packed stuff.

12:15 p.m.: Left bridge for Tracy's truck back at Oatman Flat.

1:15 p.m.: Arrived at truck – strong wind. We decided to eat and wash up before heading for the Dateland Bridge to spend the night. Richard got goose bumps washing in wind. Tracy washed in back of his truck. In the morning we will drive van to Agua Caliente Bridge, unload canoe and put in for leg to Dateland Bridge.

3:15 p.m.: Left Oatman Flat for Dateland Bridge. It was 39 road miles. We stopped

at the Dateland Travel Center: gas \$2.99. Called Judy and Marie on Tracy's cell phone. The girls reported cold, snow flurries, windy in Prescott - had to turn house heat on.

4:45 p.m.: Arrived at the Dateland Bridge. Checked pull out. We decided to do the Dateland segment in two stages. First stage, Agua Caliente Road to Aztec Power Line Road then (second stage) the Aztec Power Line Road to Dateland if wind is not a factor. We didn't want another hike.

(My recollection is slightly different. We had come to the Dateland Bridge because that is where we planned to do the next day's pullout. It was too late and too windy to canoe any further today. We spent a leisurely afternoon cleaning up and organizing our gear. Then, just before dark, Richard decided that we needed to break tomorrow's canoeing into two segments. The only place we could pull out between the Agua Caliente Bridge and the Dateland Bridge was the Aztec Power Line access road. (This is the same road we visited on our reconnaissance trip and decided that Richard's van could not get to the river over this road.) At this point in our canoe trip we had learned that the wind was generally calm until about noon with the wind then increasing until evening. This meant it was highly beneficial to get on the water as early as possible in the morning. Our most efficient procedure was to spend the night at the pull-out point, get up early, drive to the put-in point and launch the canoe. If we were going to pull out at the Aztec Power Line Road then we were spending the night at the wrong place and we needed to move our vehicles.)

In order to get an early start in morning we decided to go to the start of the Aztec Road off-ramp, pull off and spend the night there. It was dark when we got to the Aztec off-ramp. Richard wanted to wait until daylight to see how far the van could go because the van could not make it all the way to the river (remember the recon trip). Tracy wanted to press on in the dark.

(Richard's plan was to wait until morning and then see how close he could get his van to the river. He thought he might get as close as two miles to the river. Then Tracy would drive his truck on to the river, leave it there and then hike back to Richard's van. Assuming that

Richard's van would not get stuck driving back to the highway, we would drive on to the Aqua Caliente Bridge. The time spent in the morning getting Richard's van close to the river and Tracy hiking back would delay our early start by one to two hours.)

Shortly after we left the good road, Richard's van got stuck in sand. We were still four miles from the river. There was no way to pull Richard's van through the sandy area so we tried to get Tracy's truck past the van so we could pull the van out backwards. We tried to hack down some bushes with a small shovel, but Tracy's truck could not get around Richard's van without sliding in the sand and possibly into the van. Finally we shoveled the van out.

9:00 p.m.: A disgusted Richard told Tracy he was done for the night and crawled into his van.

(I'm not sure why Richard was disgusted. It was his idea to move the pull-out point from the Dateland Bridge to Aztec Power Line Road crossing, a pull-out point we had ruled out on the reconnaissance trip. Now it was clear that we would have to use the Dateland Bridge as our pull-out point. Even though it was after dark, I wanted to return to the Dateland Bridge. By spending the night on the Aztec Power Line Road we would lose an hour in the morning. This lost hour would be critical if the wind came up early in the day. If we had parked at the Aztec off-ramp and tried to get to the river in the morning, as Richard had wanted, we would have lost two or more hours off our early start.)

Friday, April 30 – Agua Caliente Bridge to Dateland Bridge

5:45 a.m.: Richard was able to turn his van around. It was 1.2 miles to a good road leading to the Frontage Road. We drove back to the Dateland Bridge and left Tracy's truck for the pull out. Then, we headed for the Agua Caliente Bridge. We passed through a Border Patrol check point on the way to the Aqua Caliente Bridge.

7:35 a.m.: Arrived at Agua Caliente Bridge. We drove 0.2 miles down a dirt road to put in. Slid canoe down bank and carried to river. Loaded gear in canoe.

7:45 a.m.: Put in. Cool, no wind - perfect. Under Agua Caliente Bridge with no

problem - concrete beams impressive.

9:00 a.m.: Came 3.5 miles (GPS). Our main problem today is which channel to take? The tamarisk is thicker here and spreads across the river so that the river is divided into several channels. Somehow we get lucky and end up eventually in the main channel instead of being dead-ended. Gorgeous weather – no wind.

9:30 a.m.: Pit stop. We pull over to bank. Breakfast. We are 3.6 miles (GPS) to the Aztec Power Line Road and 8.9 miles (GPS) to the Dateland Bridge. We have been running into shallow water and sand bars.

11:00 a.m.: Aztec Power Line Road. We are 5.26 miles (GPS) to the Dateland Bridge. Plenty of tamarisk and sandbars to work around while trying to find main course.

Noon: We are 2.5 miles (GPS) to Dateland Bridge. Encountered some wind. Cotton ball clouds occasionally hiding sun. We've talked about the just-completed mapping trip. Tracy wants me to help schedule and get group together in fall. He and Rose Ann will still decide where to go and get maps.

12:39 p.m.: We pulled out at the Dateland Bridge. This was an easy trip segment except for the clouds of flies that greeted us at the pull-out point. The wind held off so the trip wasn't too tiring. We could see power poles first so we knew we were close but to make the turn around some tamarisk and actually see the bridge was a thrill.

12:45 p.m.: We had the canoe and gear on Tracy's truck and were pulling out to shuttle to the Agua Caliente Bridge. Don't know what the Border Patrol was thinking when we went through their check point for the second time – same two guys, same canoe, only in a different vehicle.

1:45 p.m.: Picked up my van at the Agua Caliente Bridge. On the way back we stopped at the Dateland Travel Center and cell-phoned Judy and Marie. Gased up \$2.99/gal. Continued on I-8 to exit 54 (52nd and Mohawk Valley) and drove to 50th Ave. E to the river crossing.

4:06 p.m.: Parked by dirt mounds blocking road. Came 49 road miles from the Agua Caliente Bridge.

4:29 p.m.: We transferred the canoe to

Richard's van after deciding that the 50th Ave. E pull-out would be easier for Tracy's truck as my van couldn't get close to the river. Once again, by mid-afternoon the wind would gust on and off. We washed and made plans for tomorrow. It was 15 miles (GPS) from Dateland to 50th Ave. E., and if we got to 50th Ave. E by 1:00 pm then we would do another 10 miles, wind permitting.

Tracy had Subway like sandwiches scheduled for lunch everyday.

(I think this was the night I fixed dinner. I fixed a meal of Uncle Ben's Wild Rice and boned chicken with fruit cups for desert. Richard had some of the rice but avoided the chicken. He is on a strict low-cholesterol diet. Generally he eats only Chef Boyardee Meat Ravioli and Gummy Bears.)

Saturday, May 19 – Two segments, Dateland Bridge to 50th Ave. E and 50th Ave. E. to 43rd Ave. E.

Up by 5:00 a.m. to almost a full moon, a scattering of dark clouds and a breeze.

5:45 a.m.: We leave 50th Ave E. Before leaving, Tracy concealed his truck behind three mounds of dirt blocking the road to the river.

6:15 a.m.: Arrived at the Dateland Bridge - 25 road miles. Parked van. Got canoe and gear ready to go.

6:40 a.m.: Put in at Dateland Bridge. We have 15.6 miles (GPS) to 50th Ave E. Cool, no wind, clouds and sun.

8:00 a.m.: We have 11.5 miles (GPS) to go. Had to pull canoe over shallow sand bar area. Gorgeous weather.

When 10 miles out we saw two other canoers on bank. They had put in at Paint Rock Dam and were "going to Yuma."

9:00 a.m.: We have 8.13 miles (GPS) to go. We could see the Big Horn Mountain in the distance. The river is not spread out much.

10:00 a.m.: We have 4.8 miles (GPS) to go. Bluffs appear on south side of the river. We saw an abandoned concrete house up on the bluff. It had walls but no roof or windows. There was a concrete structure with 3 to 4 foot walls down near river. The Gila is now a single ribbon 80 yards wide and clear of tamarisk. It was like driving on an interstate - endless.

11:00 a.m.: We have 2.06 miles (GPS) to

go. The river still clear of tamarisk. Bluffs gone and we are almost at the Big Horn Mountain. Passed 52nd Ave E.

11:20 a.m: Portage over a seven-culvert bridge with a power line spanning it. It was a 50 yard portage up a sandy slope, across the asphalt road, over the bridge rail and down a sandy slope through tamarisk. The Big Horn Mountain was now over our left shoulder.

11:30 a.m: Put in after portage.

11:48 a.m: We pulled out at 50th Ave. E. We saw Tracy's truck when we were one hundred yards from the pull-out.

Noon: We had to deal with a steep bank to load up gear and canoe on the truck. Today we experienced more sand bar problems than on any other day. Left 50th Ave. E. We went by alfalfa fields and a cell tower to Old Hwy 80 to I-8, Exit 54.

12:35 p.m: We arrived at the Dateland Bridge. Our plan is to do the second leg this afternoon from 50th Ave. E. to 43rd Ave. E. Lunch, Richard had baked beans, Tracy a sandwich. Richard took off his wet boots and socks and put them on the dash to dry while driving.

(Tracy changed into dry shoes and socks.)

12:55 p.m: We leave the Dateland Bridge and take I-8 to exit 42 (40th Ave. E - Tacna). We spoke with Betty Mason working on the side of road. We quickly agreed to come back and visit after the day's canoeing. Took 8th Street by a canal, turned south on 43rd Ave. E. to the river. Parked van.

(Betty Mason is member of the Southern Trails Chapter and a good friend of the Trail Turtles. The trail along

the Gila River runs through Betty's property. The Trail Turtles have stayed at her place before. When we saw her working along side the road, we just had to stop for a visit. We did not have to think twice about her offer to use her showers and join her for dinner.)

2:00 p.m: We leave 43rd Ave. E. in Tracy's truck and drive to 50th Ave. E.

2:36 p.m: Arrive at 50th Ave. E. Got canoe and gear ready.

2:47 p.m: Put in. We have 7.6 miles (GPS) to 43rd Ave E.

4:00 p.m: We have 3.4 miles (GPS) to go. Windy. Hidden sandbars and shallows a problem. Crossed over a road where culvert washed out.

5:00 p.m: We have 0.15 miles (GPS) to go. Just completed a windy stretch.

5:03 p.m: Pullout. Carry canoe 50 yards

## CURRENT DESERT EXPLORERS WITH E-MAIL

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to the van. Loaded canoe and gear.  
 5:20 p.m: Left to get truck at 50th Ave. E.  
 5.49 pm: Got truck at 50th Ave E. and left for Betty Mason's place.  
 6:44 p.m: Arrived at Betty Mason's after calling Marie and Judy. Gas \$2.89 filled up in Tacna. Showered and took Betty to dinner at Basque Etcheria. Later, at Betty's house, she served Richard tasty huckleberries and yogurt. (Betty always liked Richard best.) Discussed Antelope Hill inscriptions and future visit. We got the name of a contact at BLM in Yuma. Both Richard and Tracy are almost falling asleep.  
 9:45 p.m: Dog tired. Parked by garages with toilet and shower. Promised to check with Betty at 5:30 a.m before we left in the morning.  
 Sunday, May 2 – 43rd Ave E. to 24th Ave. E.  
 5:00 a.m: Betty Mason's Place – show-

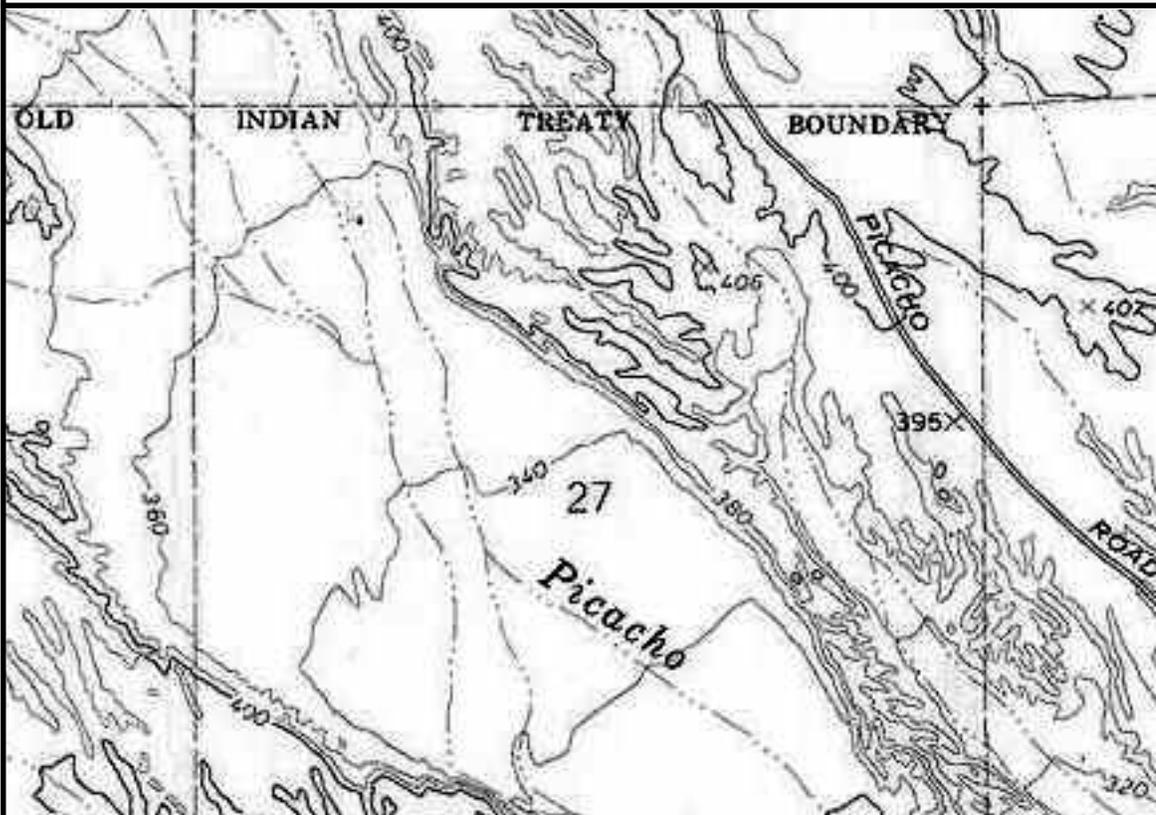
ered. Betty offered us oats and berries, but Richard settled for some coffee. Betty is so gracious.  
 5:50 a.m: Left Betty. She told us to get off I-8 at Dome Valley Exit to get to 24th Ave. E. where we planned the day's pullout. Betty said she would take photos of us going under the 40th Ave. E. Bridge. Sun over the mountain. Got I-8 at Tacna and got off at Exit 21 (Dome Valley). We drove through Ligurta and stopped to check maps regarding best route to the river.  
 6:34 a.m: We decided to use 22nd Ave. E. for our pull-out. It was 27 road miles from Betty's place. An easy pullout. Across the river were cultivated fields and a four-dome peak. Tracy took a GPS reading. Left truck by a tamarisk and big dirt mound blocking road.  
 6:44 a.m: Drove van with canoe to the 43rd Ave. E. river access. Unloaded gear and canoe. Carried canoe 30 yards to

river.  
 7:47 a.m: Put in. We had a 21.5 mile (GPS) trip ahead of us.  
 9:00 a.m: We have 16.9 miles (GPS) to go. Betty in orange shirt at 40th Ave. E. Bridge took a photo us going under. Further on, got caught on sandbar and pulled canoe over it. River is 50 yards wide.  
 10:00 a.m: We have 13.7 miles (GPS) to go. Some windy periods but tolerable. Could see Antelope Hill and quarried side (so white) in distance. Saw railroad black-iron span from 0.25 miles away. The concrete bridge here was destroyed by 1993 flood. Betty traveled to the Antelope Hill crossing to take photo of us getting stuck on asphalt and getting free into high wave which came into canoe. Passed under 38th Ave. E. Bridge covered with barn swallow clay nests. Hope wind doesn't get worse. Pit Stop: ate snacks. Tracy baled water from the high wave with our "pee bottle."  
 Red ants on pit stop beach. This was a 20 minute pit stop.

### Where am I?

Here are the Winners and location for January: Mal Roode, James Proffitt, Beverly and Gene Stoops, Bob Thille, Bob Younger; Leonard Friedman and Allan Schoenherr Locatikon: 10 mi. East of Lebec, CA.

Bob Peltzman is lost again. "Where am I? Bob went right, when everyone else went left, and is completely lost. Send your guess as to where he is to Bob at bopeltzman@aol.com (with the word lost in the subject), and he will send me the names of people who correctly guess the location along with a different lost map to publish in another newsletter. Your answer to Bob should let him know what area he is in such as "The southern part of Death Valley near the Devil's Golf Course".



11:00 a.m: We have 11.9 miles (GPS) to go. Twice Richard had to get out and pull the canoe over sand bars. Wind okay.  
 11.44 a.m: We have 9.5 miles (GPS) to go. Another pit stop on shore. Wind stronger. Sunny and not a cloud. Pleasant, not hot.  
 Noon: A white crane flew at our approach. We have seen an incredible number of birds from the first day, especially egrets, herons and cranes.  
 1:00 p.m: We have 6.46 miles (GPS) to go. The white crane has been stopping and flying from us for the past hour. Crane finally left us. Windy.  
 2:12 p.m: We have 2.97 miles (GPS) to go. Terrible wind, choppy waves. Put to

shore and sat. Richard felt the conditions were not worth the effort. Tracy asked Richard: "Give me one more mile".

2:36 p.m: We now have 1.97 miles (GPS) to go. Richard said "That's one more mile and I'm done." Wind terrible. "What are we pushing it for?"

(Even though it was hard going, we were making better time on the river than we could make by walking. I argued that even at our slow pace we would make the truck in forty-eight minutes if we kept at it. Instead Richard opted for an hour's walk, a drive back to get the canoe and we still had the two miles to do the next day. My analysis of the situation did not convince him. Richard had had enough of the wind, and enough was enough.)

3:00 p.m: Pulled out, left canoe on bank. Took gear with us and walked a couple of miles on dirt road to truck.

4:00 p.m: Arrived at truck. Tracy and Richard reconciled their differences.

4:22 p.m: Drove truck to canoe and loaded on truck. Took GPS waypoint. Left to get van on 43rd Ave. E.

5:10 p.m: Discussed plan for tomorrow. We would do two legs: 11 miles and 9 miles. Left 43rd Ave. E. for McPhaul Bridge.

6:45 p.m: It was a 44 mile drive to McPhaul Bridge. We camped under bridge for the night. Easy pull-out at the bridge at end of first leg tomorrow. It was warm with a little breeze. Where was the gusty wind to keep the mosquitoes away? Closed off vehicles to get rid of last few mosquitoes. Moonlight so bright.

Monday, May 3 – Two segments, 24th Ave E. to McPhaul Bridge and McPhaul Bridge to Confluence

5:00 a.m: Up. Our last day.

5:20 a.m: Left Richard's van at McPhaul Bridge. Tracy drove to 24th Ave. E. Even at this early hour the traffic was heavy on Hwy 95 (2 lane) - probably personnel working at the Army Proving Ground.

6:00 a.m: Arrived at 24th Ave. E. Took off canoe and gear.

6:20 a.m: Put in. We have 12.4 miles (GPS) to go. Sunny, perfectly still, no clouds.

7:00 a.m: We have 10.02 miles (GPS) to McPhaul Bridge. Perfect conditions - paddling with energy. River 120 feet wide with cattails on south bank and tamarisk north.

7:19 a.m: Approaching Dome Valley Bridge.

8:00 a.m: We have 5.26 miles (GPS) to go. We are going good and no wind. Sunny, almost hot on our backs. Can see train in distance. River now a single channel 80 feet wide with cattails on south and tamarisk on north bank.

9:00 a.m: We have 1.89 mi (GPS) to go. Passed through a 1 mile stretch where cattails almost spread across river with small 15 to 20 foot long channels for us to get through. We saw several muskrats in river.

9:12 a.m: We have 1.22 miles (GPS) to go. We could see the McPhaul Bridge suspension towers, Hwy 95's concrete bridge and a white cross on peak. As we neared bridge we slowed down for a Tracy photo op.

9:32 a.m: Pull out. Put canoe and gear on van.

9:45 a.m: We leave for 23rd Ave. E. to pick up Tracy's truck.

10:18 a.m: Arrive 23rd Ave. E. - 22 road miles from bridge. Tracy walked 100 yards to his truck as van couldn't get through sandy bank beside mounds of dirt. Breakfast: both ate yogurt.

10:45 a.m: We left 24th Ave. E. to shuttle truck to confluence. Took I-8 to Yuma

## Directions to the Johns'

**13825 Lytle Grove Lane**

From I-15 exit at Sierra, drive past the Johns' current house about one mile. On the way, you will pass the fire station and the Forest Service Applewhite Campground on the right and then the Forest Service picnic area on the left. Immediately after the picnic area, turn left on Sycamore, cross the little white bridge, continue up the little hill and then straight (all the way!) until you reach a "T". At the "T" turn right on narrow Lytle Grove Lane. Go a short distance to near the end. The new place is on the left. Turn left into driveway at the detached three car garage and park.

and got off at Exit 7, Araby Rd. Made a left on Hwy 95 South then right on Canal Road opposite Sakarta Building. Made a left at big canal, over bridge, across canal and came to BLM sign – "Confluence Park." The park is mainly sand with beaches to Colorado and Gila Rivers.

11:25 a.m: Parked truck. Checked out confluence pull out. An outfitters' group took off in inner tubes to float the Colorado.

11:30 a.m: Left Confluence Park in van and drove back to McPhaul Bridge to put in.

## Next Meeting

**February 12, 2011**

**11:00 a.m. Potluck**

**at**

**The Johns'**

**13825 Lytle Grove Lane**

**Phone: 909-473-1916**

12:06 a.m: Put in. We have 8.41 miles (GPS) to go.

1:00 p.m: We have 5.94 miles (GPS) to go. We passed more bamboo than cattails. Fewer birds now and tamarisk is filling the channel. The channel is only 5 feet wide at one point.

2:00 p.m: We have 2.98 miles (GPS) to go. Beginning to be like the "African Queen" movie. We were caught in cattails. Finding access channels was very difficult. In some places we were literally pulling the canoe through the cattails by hand. We finally made it to a wider channel.

2:45 p.m: Capsized. How did that happen? We are carried swiftly 150 yards downstream. The river here is deep, and our feet do not touch the bottom. We finally come to a spot to pull the canoe up on the bank and empty the water out. Watched 2 cushions, pee and water bottles float away. The paddles were secured.

(The channel here was very narrow and winding. The current was very fast and at each turn the canoe is forced to the outside turn bank. Eventually we hit a large tamarisk that capsized the canoe.)

3:05 p.m: Back in canoe. We have 0.75 miles (GPS) to go. Picked up cushions and bottles downstream.

3:25 p.m: Confluence. Canoeed into Colorado and beached the canoe. Took photos. Three guys in truck pulled up and chatted. Two guys roared up in boat to fish the Colorado, another couple with a dog arrived. It was a busy place as we loaded the gear and canoe on Tracy's truck for the last time.

(Tracy felt like a drowned rat. Photos confirm this condition.)

4:19 p.m: Arrived at McPhaul Bridge. It was 13 road miles to the van. Changed out of wet clothes.

4:45 p.m: Left bridge for home via Hwy 95 to Quartzsite. The great Gila canoe ride was over.

I'm sure it will replay again on PBS in the future, so look for it. I recommend taking the time to watch it. In the meanwhile, here is a YouTube link below

<http://video.mpt.tv/video/1436643442>

## PBS Documentary

From Jim Proffitt

**A** heads up on a recent PBS documentary about the Great Basin area of Nevada called: Living In The Big Empty. Great stories, spectacular scenery, and the basis for possible DE trips. One of the many interesting facts, that the film presented, that I was unaware of, is that Nevada has more mountain ranges than any place on earth!

Visit Desert Explorers on the Web!

See more pictures and in color!  
<http://desertexplorers.org>

### M.O.E. Trip Schedule

Feb. 11-14 Southeastern NV. Messersmith/Taylor  
March 11-14 Yuma Messersmith/Taylor  
April 8-11 Willow Beach Messersmith/Taylor  
May 19-23 Prescott Messersmith/Taylor  
Jun. 28 - July 3 Torrey UT Messersmith/Taylor

### Desert Explorers Trip Schedule

Feb. 19-20	Piute Mts.	Roode
May 14	Museum BBQ	MRVM
May 13-15	Utah	Harder

### Organizational Fine Print and Choice Pieces of Potentially Useful Info

#### General Trip Information

- The Mojave River Valley Museum has two sections (groups) that explore the desert environment (Museum membership required):
  - The Desert Explorers, who use 4WD vehicles and cover the Southwestern states and Mexico/Baja, camping out wherever nightfall catches them. The trips are led by numerous experienced Desert Explorers subscribers. The Desert Explorers newsletter is available for \$20 a year.
  - The Mojave River Explorers, who establish a base camp in the Mojave desert, usually with motorhomes and trailers, and make daily 4WD/2WD sorties, attempting to find seats for those without 4WD vehicles, returning to camp each night. The trips are led by experienced Museum members who, collectively, have spent decades learning the hidden wonders of the Mojave. Their newsletter is available for \$7/year from editor and Field Trip Leaders Richard and Lori Shapel 760-254-3897.
- You **MUST** be a member of the Mojave River Valley Museum to attend a trip. Membership applications are included in every newsletter.
- When you join a trip, you agree to abide by the decisions and directives of the leader throughout the trip or until such time as you inform the leader that you are leaving the group to proceed on your own. The leader may, if his decisions or directives are not followed, inform a participant that his participation in the trip is terminated.
- The Desert Explorers is a family oriented 4WD organization. Spouses and kids are welcome. Friendly dogs are OK as specified below. Trips will meet and depart from somewhere near the trip route, usually not from the Museum.
- To receive the Desert Explorers' Newsletter, send \$20 for a subscription to Marilyn Martin, PO Box 291759, Phelan, CA 92329-1759. Make the check out to Mojave River Valley Museum (MRVM).

Communications: CB is required and is the normal mode of communications between vehicles on a trip. Channel 13 is the Desert Explorers' channel. Its a good idea to monitor it whenever you are driving so that other members can contact you should they spot your vehicle on the road.

Weekend Trips: There is normally one major trip each month. This will be the trip on which you can look around and find old friends, new friends, collect debts, flirt with other wives/husbands and lie about other trips. There may be another trip during the month for people who have time for it or can't make the main trip. The purpose of all this is to generate more coherence as a group and get everybody to know everybody. We stole this idea from the Mojave River Explorers. Don't forget their fixed-camp trips on the first weekend of the month.

Trip Coordinator: Malcolm Roode. Send your trip proposals to Mal. Mal will resolve any time conflicts and maybe bug you if you are late with a promised trip write-up. He will also coordinate private trips for subscribers upon request (see below).

Non Museum sponsored trip Point of Contact: We publish reports of subscribers' non museum

sponsored trips in order to fill the pages, encourage you to get out into The Great American Desert, and to amuse and entertain you. Some trips, because of time or limited number of people, are not suitable for official museum trip status. Our Trip Coordinator is the point of contact for Subscribers having or wanting to go on a non museum sponsored trip.

Potluck: There will be a Potluck on Saturday night of our weekend trips unless otherwise noted by the Leader.

Trip Details: Participants may be required to send a SASE to the trip leader to receive information on trip meeting place and other details. A SASE is a self addressed stamped envelope.

Finances: The cost of preparing and mailing the Desert Explorers newsletter is covered by the annual subscription fee as are extraordinary out-of-pocket expenses by Trip Leaders or members, which are incurred as a result of Desert Explorers activities. These expenses include costs of telephone calls, office supplies and postage but do not include any travel expenses, vehicle damage or personal injuries. Other extraordinary expenses must be authorized by the Executive Committee.

Hot Tips for Leaders:

- The leader is responsible for sending the trip announcement and trip report to the newsletter editor. The write-ups should be detailed enough so the participants will know what to expect and, if possible, have enough information in it so that a SASE is not necessary. (See the ones in this issue for examples.)
- Try not to schedule trips on the first weekend of the month. This weekend is used regularly by the Mojave River Explorers for their outings.
- Try not to use a reservation system or vehicle limits unless absolutely necessary. This will save paperwork for everyone. Request a SASE if necessary for sending out further trip details, meeting place, time, etc.
- Support your other leaders' trips (by attending) or the Trail Gods will get you.
- Maximum loss (vehicles or people) is 10% per trip.
- Leaders, please put your CB channel 13 (or other channel if circumstances prevent using Desert Explorers' channel 13) in your trip write-up.

Dog Policy:

Dogs can become a problem in camp mainly because of the large number of them and the sometimes blind eye of their humans. Therefore, and forevermore we will have a Dog Policy so that shy leaders will not have to make ad hoc policy.

- Bringing a dog on a trip requires the **ADVANCE PERMISSION** of the Leader!
- Dogs will be leashed/confined during happy hour & mealtimes.
- People with dogs will be expected to clean up any poop in the campsite.
- Dogs that fight, harass wildlife, eat small children etc., will be confined and banned from future trips.

# • OUR FEARFUL LEADERS •

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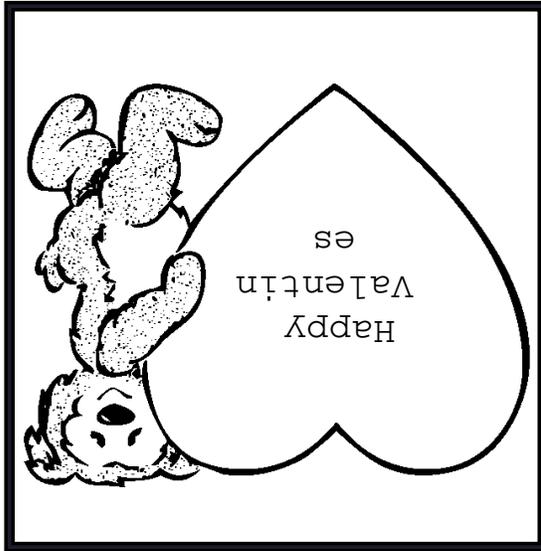
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