

MULE CANYON

Well, we did it. On Sunday afternoon, we took off for Mule Canyon in the Calico Mountains, leaving behind major obligations like poop patrol (it's all still out there), cleaning and vacuuming (don't even look at the rug where the doggies shed foxtails and dried leaves!), and Christmas cards (yes, I'm one of THOSE procrastinator types).

Ah, well, forget all that, we decided, and take a tootle down Scenic Highway 247 toward Barstow. It's not too hard to make that choice, anyway. And Hwy 247 really is scenic, believe it or not.

The day was beautiful and crystal clear, a reason to be glad until we remembered that the Santa Ana winds that create our beautiful days are fanning the flames of those terrible fires all over Southern California. Oh, man! God, please help those poor people!

Because the wind was cold, we all took jackets, and for us rich Americans, it was "Which jacket should I take?", not, "I wish I had a jacket." I feel guilty when I think of that, so let's not think of it. For now.

Several miles out of town, approaching the Lucerne Valley Cut-off, there used to be an old rusted water tank and a stone-walled reservoir next to it, on the north side of the road. Those belonged to former Sheriff Floyd Tidwell, when he was a kid and his dad ranched out here for a time. Then the water tank disappeared, taken by someone dealing in metals, I presume, and sad to those of us who regarded that as an indicator of Lucerne Valley's rich history. This day I saw a new water tank! Oh, yes, that's not a water tank, it's an AT&T cell tower disguised as a water tank. At least they are considerate enough to make their towers blend in with the physical and cultural landscape.

Up over Goat Mountain Pass, a most beautiful spot on this scenic highway, and down the other side into Stoddard Valley we went, past the historic and interesting Slash X Café. A mile or two past the café is a dirt road that intersects 247 on the west side, which leads into

the main camping and off road area of Stoddard Valley. Years ago, in our Daggett days, my folks and I watched as BLM planted a cottonwood tree at that spot, with no source of water, so out of pity for the tree, each Saturday we brought with us a couple of extra 5 gallon water cans to help keep it alive. Needless to say, our measly



10 gallons/week wasn't enough to save that little tree. (You remember my reference to "YI"? It

means "Intellectual Yet Idiot" and applies to the very bureaucrats that decided to plant a cottonwood tree in the dry desert with no water!)

Arriving at Mule Canyon Road, near Calico town itself, we drove a mile or two, to a left turn where we would find Tin Can Alley. Wow. A dump. Of old solder-bottom cans, which Sir William finds most impressive. What are they? I've never been exactly sure, but they seem to be cans that were sealed with solder on a hole in the bottom, a practice abandoned many decades ago, which means that you are seeing a verifiably OLD can. Woo hoo. (Actually, I do kinda like that stuff, too.) But try to leave a dump of cans in the Calico



Stone miner's cabin

Mountains today, and see what "they" would do to you! "But officer, I was just trying to leave evidence of our civilization for future generations to discover..."

After Tin Can Alley, we entered the maze of roads in the Calico Mountains, and I have no idea how we got there or how we got out. Sir William's inner GPS was in control, even as it led us to some steep, rocky canyons, tempting Sir William to push the envelope and tread where no Jeep Cherokee has successfully trod before (as in tire tread, that no longer exists – ha-

haha). We drove up and down and all around, through the wonders of those mountains: mud hills, colorful lava outcroppings complete with bubble holes, conventional desert scenery, cliffs and canyons and rugged dry waterfalls all over.

We descended a STEEP hillside to the upper end of Odessa Canyon, one of the unsung wonders of our Mojave Desert, a red, red, red, steep-walled narrow canyon that winds upward through the Calicos. Up until the 70's it was a paved scenic drive, so narrow that you can touch the canyon walls on both sides of the car. I guess the YI's decided we are too dumb to navigate such a place, so when a big flood washed out most of the pavement, they didn't replace it. Odessa Canyon is truly worth the hike it now requires to see it.

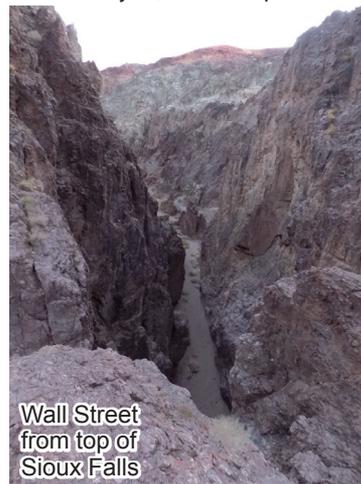
Back on SWGPS (Sir William GPS), we drove up and down some more, looking for a destination that only Sir William knew of. We finally got out of the car to prowl around an area he called "The Apartments", a series of mine tunnels and digs in one location that later were used as living quarters. These mine works are certainly impressive, both in their present dramatic appearance and as a testament to the hard work of



scratching mineral out of the rocks before the age of modern technological advancement.

Sir William had one more destination in mind and so as the sun descended alarmingly quickly in the western sky, he picked his way through rocky washes and steeeeeep hillsides, and as he finally encountered one section of road too rocky to navigate, he exclaimed, "Oh! This is the waterfall!" What waterfall? I guess the one

(of dozens) that indicated another destination he had in mind, Wall Street Canyon, another spectacu-



Wall Street from top of Sioux Falls

lar, steep, narrow gorge that when viewed from the top, gives you butterflies just looking down into it. (I thought he knew where he was going. Silly me!)

Getting to that canyon requires a ½-mile round-trip walk, and the sun was set, so we three Chicken Littles returned to the car, hoping that Sir William would soon follow. He must have, because he came home with us, using the SWGPS to get us through the maze to the highway.

Someday, I hope, God will show us a demo how places such as the Calico Mountains were formed. I truly would love to see His hand at the work of creating such beauty. And maybe by that time, the ugliness and bad stuff we have to experience today will have passed into oblivion and we can just bask in His glorious creation. Nice dream, huh? Maybe someday...

Linda Gammel

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Contributed. From the Web.

* A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other.

* May all your troubles last as long as your New Years resolutions.

* I have only one resolution. To rediscover the difference between wants and needs. May I have all I need and want all I have. Happy New Year!



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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

LVEDA Meeting

(Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association)

TUES. JANUARY 2, 5 PM.
at the Senior Center

- Presentations and power points from our School District Board Chairman, Superintendent and representatives on student achievements, grades, the pending solar project, the newly formed foundation, various programs, etc.
- Update on LVEDA's work on our Lucerne Valley Community Plan.
- Pending Planning Commission and Bd. of Supervisor hearings on the County Renewable Energy Conservation Element (RECE).

St. Mary's Health Van will not be

here January 4. The next time they will be in our parking lot is **January 11**. If patients need to be seen they can call their office, 760-946-4240, and they can accommodate and schedule an appointment in their clinics in Apple Valley, Hesperia or Adelanto.

L.V. School Board Meeting

Thursday, Jan. 11, starts at 5:30PM.
At the Alternative Education Center,
8560 Aliento Rd up Highway 18.

- Lucerne Valley Market
 - "Do it Best" Hardware
 - Wash n Shop • Crossroads Center
- e-mail address: Market.Hardware@lucernevalleymarket.com
website: lucernevalleymarket.com

LIMITS & MULTIPLE PRICING

Please, unless otherwise indicated, ON AD ITEMS NO MORE THAN 6 TOTAL (including all flavors or varieties) OF ANY ITEM, PER FAMILY, DURING THE AD PERIOD, AT THE SALE PRICE, except in produce and meat, which are limited to normal retail quantities, or which carry limits specifically stated. Sorry, we must reserve the right to further limit or refuse sales.

ON MULTIPLE PRICING, when purchasing items in quantities more or less than the multiple stated, the register is built automatically to charge the "each" price times the quantity. (Example: Price of item is 3/\$1. The price of: one = 34¢, two = 68¢, three = \$1, four = \$1.34, five = \$1.68, six = \$2.00).

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