

Men's Club Two

Just like last year, Mitch "Lemur" Lesack and Steve "Red Tail Hawk" Scheetz, being the veteran Furnace Creek 508 racers, put this event together. Dr. Bruce, having done this last year with us, knew what to expect from our trip, but the rest of the guys? We were happy to show Keith, Jay, Rob, Jason, and our driver, George, something new if not completely different!

Mitch, Dr. Bruce, George, and I were catching the same flight out. Mitch stayed over at my place the night before, because it was easier since my dad was going to be driving us to the airport. There are certain things that seem to arrive too soon, in life... 3:30AM seems to be one of those things if one happens to have an alarm set for that time.. Anyway, there we were, loading up the van, when we realized that with all of our stuff set up in the back of the Jeep, there would be no room for both of us to sit, separately, so we did not give it much thought when people looked at us, strangely as Mitch got off of my lap once we arrived at the airport!

Check in went smoothly, TSA also went smoothly, particularly since we arrived at 4:30 in the morning... Our plane was on time; in fact, it was actually parked right there at the gate. George was sitting there waiting, having recently left his midnight bowling league. There was nobody else in the terminal, just Mitch and I walking in when we saw George sitting there. Just in case, while reading this report, one does NOT conclude that George is a great guy, (on the off chance that I am too subtle with my praise,) George is probably the most AWESOME dude any group could ever hope for to drive the support van for an event like this!

We arrived in Las Vegas early, and we had our bags, bike boxes, and we were on the way to the Rental Van location at the time the plane was supposed to land in the first place; how cool is

that? Keith and Jay were arriving on a later flight, so in the mean time, Mitch, Bruce, and I put our bikes together. Once Keith and Jay arrived/assembled their bikes, we started looking for a place to leave as much stuff as we could so that everyone / everything would fit in the 15 passenger van, and Jay became our instant savior in this regard! Well, Jay, his cousin along with her husband. They offered us a spot in their garage where we dumped the two back seats of the van, along with all boxes save mine. (which had the tools in it) Our plan involved arriving back as quickly as possible due to the fact that SOME in our group needed to watch the Super Bowl. However, first things first. We stopped for 30 gallons of water, two bottles of Cabinet Sauvignon, some fruit and other stuff we would NEED for the ride. Jay, Keith, Mitch, and I, not really caring much about football, decided to head out for a ride in the general direction of Hoover Dam. Our goal was to ride around 30-40 miles at a cruising type of pace, and that was what happened, right up until the road we were riding on stopped and turned into rubble. Seeing the road that was heading in the right direction on the far side of the rubble, about half a mile away, I headed into the neighborhood that was adjacent to us. Unfortunately, for my reputation as an awesome navigator, every road that lead to the right one was blocked off by a rock wall or a chain-link fence! I have no clue as to why, but there it is. After riding around suburban hell for a little while, I just decided to head us in the direction of out toward our hotel, forgetting the damn dam in the process. Jason and Rob, who were sitting in the hotel room, were both out riding in Red Rock Canyon, just west of Vegas earlier in the day, so they were more than content to sit and wait for us to return.

Upon returning, the game was in the third quarter, (somewhere near the beginning of the third quarter,) Pittsburgh was up, and some of us were hungry. Given our location, right next to the Hooters casino, and since we were MEN, four of us wandered over. The story, however, was

not the waitresses with the massive boob jobs. The story was in how this extremely annoying group in the corner was making so much noise cheering the cardinals that it was impossible to hear anything else! I decided to make sure that I, someone who does not even FOLLOW football and could really care less what happened, was cheering loudly for Pittsburgh whenever they did NOT drop a pass or whatever else was going on in the Steeler's favor. I know, it was childish, but I could not help myself. In fact, I even had a little pang of satisfaction when one of the loudest, most obnoxious morons, wearing a Cardinals jersey, (with the number of his favorite player, I believe the guy who did all of the running??) walked out, after the game was over, looking like he was about to cry... I mean C'mon! It was a FOOTBALL GAME, not his 401K... Oh wait, what if it was his 401K???? OUCH! That might suck! Anyway, after making our guys nervous about their safety during the last quarter of the game, we left Hooters, sadly, unmolested.

The PLAN, was to leave at 4:30AM, and move as far away from the Vegas Strip as possible, before the traffic started piling up. Moving West on Tropicana Blvd, I noticed that the right two lanes were exiting onto the Interstate. Not wanting any traffic to be confused as to my intention, I took the next available lane over. Pulling alongside of a bus, I figured I would be pretty safe from any cars. According to the guys, I was almost taken out by two taxis in this little maneuver.. Not sure exactly if being in the right place was the right thing to do, but HEY!! What happens in Vegas..... It was a chilly morning as we headed west along the Blvd, and since we were forced to stop here and there for traffic lights, we could not really develop a steady rhythm. The sun would not be out for another hour or more as we turned onto 160 heading toward Pahrump, and this, together with the headwind, kept us pretty cool until we

meandered around a big rock and the sun started shining directly on us. I was taking some shots with my phone as George was taking shots with my camera.

It was still a reasonable time when we arrived at the top of Spring Mountain for our first group photo-op. The climb was not terribly difficult, but it was still pretty slow, at least for Bruce and I. HOWEVER, down the other side was another matter. We headed down the hill, Mitch and Jason tried chasing after me, but I was dropping like a stone cranking the whole way as the grade was not so steep that I could coast faster without pedaling. For the 30 miles from the top, all the way to the town of Pahrump was a downward trending flattish haul, and it was very fast. Once I stopped and everyone came together, we started pace lining, and we made some pretty good progress. It was decided, in advance, that we would find a place to stop, in town. A diner of some sort with actual bathrooms was the preference. We found this in the form of Irene's Diner, Casino. The people were odd, (especially the guy, smaller than the Lemur who was falling off of his stool sample...) but the food was good and the bathrooms WERE clean. From here we engaged the "Steve Steve" system, and I navigated us through town making lefts here, rights there, and would have been flawless had the road actually not turned to dirt around the last corner, but since I only got us off track by a block, a downward trending back track and flat around the block that took us to the road I was looking for, Bell Vista Avenue, all was still right in the world.

It does not look like much on the elevation profile, but there is a bit of a climb out of town heading toward the out, out, WAY OUT. Bruce and I hung together as the other guys took off up the hill. We had 30+ miles to the next turn, and despite my desire to chase everyone down, they were pace lining, and with Bruce not feeling at 100%, I was pretty much working the whole

way, so the chase was not much of a chase, and it took me to within about 5 miles of the turn, to catch up. Occasionally I would see them in the distance, slowly closing the gap, but it was huge! Now let me talk a bit about scenery. Over the top of the mountains at certain elevations, we could see the top of Telescope Peak standing tall over Death Valley about 100 miles away from us, the first time we saw it. Then, as we rode past Shadow Mountain on the way to Death Valley Junction, the scenery was something I had never experienced before, and it was positively awe-inspiring! Once at the Junction, we would make a right and a quick left to complete the trip into Death Valley by way of the familiar route, 190 (not that we ever saw this part of it) but first, we would see the Amargosa Opera House, where, a woman, 80 years old, still put on a show on Saturday nights! (we had to catch a flight the day before, so no Opera for us!)

Group photo-op number two was taken under the sign stating that YES, we were on the right track despite the fact that we got there by a road that did not appear on the regular GPS! From here it was up... by some great bit of divine comedy, one has to ascend before descending into Death Valley... It didn't start badly, we were all mostly in the big chain ring for the first couple of miles... It was obvious, however, that Bruce was not feeling well on this climb, and I hung back a bit. It did happen that I wound up way ahead of him due to the fact that I stopped thinking about him and started looking around and hitting that rhythm as I arrived at the top.

In the desert, there are these dips designed to slow traffic. However, as one looks up the road that disappears in the distance, it can be really disheartening when it appears that one is close to the top, then spies about 3-4 more dips indicating that the top is much further away than it actually looks.

Looking forward now and again, I saw this speck off in the distance with what appeared to be a miniature stick figure on top of it.. It turned out that the speck was our van, and the stick figure was George, shirtless, taking photos of everyone. We all topped our bottles off before we started to trickle down the hill, in ones and twos, into the valley. I saw a police car which had passed us going the other way, turn around and stop, with the lights on at the van. I had no idea why, but there it was.. The debate was short in deciding what to do, but my decision to stay away was actually the right move, because it turned out that the officer rides also, (who knew?) and he was just curious as to what we were doing, and how we managed to put together a good sized group to ride around the area. It is truly amazing as to how LONG this descent is! Mitch Jason and I were together from the beginning, and we started playing just a bit, at least till we saw Keith and Jay on the side of the road. I didn't exactly stop, but I was not going at full force the rest of the way to the turn off to Dante's View where I saw Rob sitting on the side of the road. Collecting our group together, I announced that the way to Dante's view was right across the street from where we were standing. It would involve a rather brutal climb near the top, BUT, the view is spectacular. The consensus was found instantly "SCREW the view!! Let's just get to Furnace Creek!" (sort of reminded me of the debate in the Roman Senate during Mel Brooks's History of the World regarding decent housing for the poor... Sort of...) So away we went, about another 14 miles to the Furnace Creek Ranch, but as we were playing heading down the hill at speed, I saw a spec off in the distance to the left that HAD to be Zabriski's Point. (Despite having never seen it before, it was STILL unmistakable!) Bruce was in front at the time, and a decision had to be made. "Hey Bruce, make a left!" Turning into the parking lot and riding up to the top, I can arrive at only one conclusion regarding Zabriski's Point. "WOW!" I have no idea how the formation was made, but it was as if an artist sanded these mountains and

ridges with loving care so there was not a sharp edge to be found. Michelangelo himself could not have conceived such artwork!

After some photos, we adjourned to Furnace Creek where three of our group, including our van driver, stopped to eat. Our final destination for the evening was going to be The Panamint Springs Resort. (I need to give them a plug here.) Regardless of what anyone expects, when he/she arrives, there is one certainty. The people who took care of us were state of the art! From the service at the restaurant to the cleanliness of the rooms, even the attitude of the people working there, everything was just awesome!

The rest of us forged on to Stove Pipe Wells, and while there were some solid pushes made, the one that was really huge, for me, was made on the seven mile section between the north road turn off and Stove Pipe Wells. I was pushing hard the entire way because I thought we were all going to pack at the gas station before the 17 mile climb up the back side of Towne Pass, so imagine how annoyed I was when I heard, from two of the guys (Mitch and Jay) that they wanted to ride up the pass and then down the other side, in the dark.... I knew the other side was super dangerous to descend in the dark, but the climb was going to be exceptionally brutal since we had 150 miles in our legs at this point and we were going to be riding the next day... Well, two hours and 10 miles later, with lots of swearing, by me, directed toward two of the guys way up ahead of me, (Keith, who was also on the climb ahead of me was just there, sort of feeling like I was at the time) I was above 2000 feet (out of 5,000 feet to the top) when I saw the van stopped on the side of the road about a mile ahead of me. Jay, Mitch, and Keith had packed, and when the van got to me, George asked me how I felt, and when I told him I am done for the evening he told me "Good, the other guys packed too." If I HAD to, I would have climbed to the

top, but since I did not HAVE to, I was perfectly content to ride the rest of the way up! Sitting in the van allowed exhaustion to overtake me where if I had remained on the bike, I would have stayed in that rhythm mode of just turning and turning (albeit very slow)... George was explaining what happened to the brakes on the way down the pass, and how he was not sure any of them were going to make it. (this little side issue had no bearing on anything, (maybe if I was more awake, at the time) but I was too busy sitting in my semi-comatose state until we arrived and headed in for dinner. I could not taste too much of it; I was ready for a shower and bed... It was not very late, something like 8:30 by the time we finished eating and headed to our rooms. This was the only time, on the entire trip, that I felt cold. It was in the mid 30's when we started, I believe it was in the upper 30's when we got out of the van in Panamint Springs... The rooms were arranged with Keith and Jay together, George, Rob, and Jason together, and Bruce Mitch and I together. I believe Bruce Mitch and I were awake by 5:00, and Bruce had brought "Tour of Ireland" coverage, (among others) so we were watching the bike race highlights while I was formulating the plan for the day.

The conclusion was to ride up and over the pass the way the 508 goes, stop at Stove Pipe Wells, pack in the van, and head to Scotty's Castle. Since we would be starting late, after 11AM late, it would take some time to do our riding for the day. Obviously I am faster than most on the downhill and flats, but once the hill starts, all of that comes to a screeching halt! It is, generally, a slog fest for me as I head up the hill. Roughly 15 miles from the hotel to the top, the hill is actually only about 10 miles or so climbing 4,000 feet. Bruce was with me as we climbed watching the other guys going up ahead of us. George did some rock climbing to achieve a really awesome vantage point on which to shoot pictures, but when he shouted "C'mon Guys!" to Bruce and I, I was looking all over for someone.. When all I saw was rock, I was thinking

“God?? Is that YOU??” However, George started shouting to us again, and I saw his head over the rocks and thought to myself “Oh GOOD, you aren’t losing it!” (climbing a 10 mile hill is perfectly normal....)

The top was, of course, a fantastic photo op, right next to the elevation sign. I was just happy to be going down! 17 miles at speed, but it does need to be said that it was work staying at speed on this particular push. I had finished mentioning the possibility of a cross breeze to the guys, and not to over ride the conditions when I heard Jason say something like lead the way... So I did, and I thought I was by myself when I stood up to brake a bit for the first dip, because my recollection was that the last time I hit it at speed, I nearly did not land on the road in time to make the turn that was shortly after. No sooner did this happen than I saw Rob right next to me commenting about almost catching air on that dip! So it was Rob, Jason, and Mitch who managed to grab on when I launched off of the top, and despite the fact that the wind was not helping us in the least little bit, we STILL managed to just hammer down the side of the mountain. I stayed on the front, for them most part, due to the fact that every time someone would get in front of me, the draft caused my speed to increase dramatically. I would pull out into the wind so as to slow down, but there was no slowing, I just kept walking past the guy who started blocking the wind, so I did what I had to do... I started cranking and taking over at the front again.. There was nothing else to do, and there was nowhere else to be! We RIPPED down the side of the mountain, and while it is typically very spiritual, for me, this trip my mind was occupied with the task at hand and working with the other guys. I have no idea how fast we were moving, but Keith, who came in about 5 minutes after us clocked himself at 64MPH... None of us at the front had a computer, but I was thinking in the mid to upper 50’s most of the

trip down. At the bottom, it was Mitch, Jason, Rob, and me as we started waiting for the other guys who were at full bore hurtling down the side of the mountain behind us.

The next thing that needed to happen, once we were all together, was to change, stick our bikes in the van, and head to Scotty's Castle. Having never been up the north road, and given the fact that everyone needed a bit of a break from the day before, we stopped with 32 miles logged for the day. Also needing a break was George, so I drove for a bit. Bear in mind that I was going between 55 and 60 due to the narrowness of the roads, and the fact that the van was fully loaded with bikes that I did not want to see destroyed; so when I say that I was only slightly rattled when I saw the police car, which just passed us going the other way, turn around with his lights on, one can understand why. When the officer pulled up and asked Jason, who was in the passenger seat next to me, why he was not wearing his seatbelt, I was baffled, but after he let us go with a warning, the made to order joke became apparent instantly! The officer OBVIOUSLY just wanted to see his boy, George, again!

Within about 3 miles of Scotty's Castle, which lies just outside of the park, we saw a coyote puppy just standing in the road looking pitiful... Most dogs I know have that look when I happen to have food... The look that says: "PLEASE!!! I haven't eaten in MONTHS!" Despite the fact that they just ate a can of food five minutes before assuming the begging pose... Well, this coyote pup looked well fed, and since he/she really seemed to enjoy striking a pose, the guys all piled out and snapped lots of photos. Meanwhile I am thinking that one of them is going to get mauled and we would spend the rest of the day heading to a hospital somewhere! After this little bit of fun, we drove the rest of the way to the castle, and it really is spectacular! The question on everyone's mind was the question of how, in the world, Albert Johnson managed to

build the huge compound, in 1927, THERE, of all places! It turns out that most of the big mounds around the huge compound were actually the raw material for concrete, once sifted. Somehow, despite the fact that Walter Scott was a con-artist, and actually screwed him out of money, he and Albert Johnson became friends.

Walter Scott, despite his flaws, did manage to pull off some feats during his life, though that is a story for another time.... Leaving the castle, we saw our friend the Coyote... Maybe he was headed to the castle for supper, but the rest of the trip back to Stove Pipe Wells was uneventful. I would have loved hiking into Fall Canyon, but due to the fact that we had a late start, the light was fading too quickly for us to have been able to see anything, so away we went. On a side note, the restaurant at Stove Pipe Wells opened almost right when we arrived, and all of us were ready for dinner. Given the location, this place was pretty decent as far as these places go, and I would definitely recommend stopping there, for dinner, if one is in the area... (as if there were more than 3 places to eat within 100 miles!) Piling into the van, we were checking out the climb up the back side of the Pass. "Oh I stopped here, no you stopped there..." I am thinking that we had mixed emotions about stopping the night before, where and why, etc... My thought was that IF I was in the middle of an event, I would have kept going, but since I was NOT..... I think I speak for all of us when I say "That's my story and I'm STICKIN TO IT!"

No trip like this would be complete without a low key party, So of course, it was mandatory! We hung out in Mitch's Bruce's and my room drinking a nice red while trading stories and watching some more of the Tour of Ireland... In the mean time I was writing some notes about the trip up until this point. In fact, Now that I am AT this point, I will be writing from memory, since it is the last of the notes I have for the trip. The evening did not go very much longer,

because we were all pretty much ready to crash, (as it were.) The next day, we were up early again, though this day we would head to breakfast early. Most of opting for the Sunrise Special which involved Pancakes, Eggs, and bacon or sausage, we ate our fill and then prepared to ride while waiting for George to go for a run. Mitch, Jay, and Keith took off up the ridge to the left, which is basically a climb from the second one turns left out of the driveway of our hotel. I wanted to let my breakfast settle a bit before doing anything like that, so I started a bit later... To state things bluntly, it is not a bad climb. I sometimes say that any climb that I can do in the big chain ring, is not much of a climb, but this one achieves its kudos from the fact that it just goes on and on like the energizer bunny! I passed George as he was on his way down, so I decided not to go further than the 3,000 foot mark, a few miles up the road. I did not take it hard, because I liked my breakfast where it was, digesting comfortably! (Much better there than on the side of the road...)

Arriving back, the ritual of getting ready to ride was in no way lessened, so I waited on the road for the guys to join me. Panamint Valley Road has an interesting bit of terrain on it, particularly for a road bike! It is sometimes smooth, it is sometimes not so smooth, and sometimes it is hard core rough to the point of being close to cyclocross rough! However, in this direction, we went from rough to smooth which made it better for playing the cat and mouse games we were playing along this stretch. At one point some of us were in a pace-line, and the pace kept being eaked up by whoever happened to be on the front... Once it was my turn again I decided to push a bit harder still, and it was at that time that Jason or Rob initiated an attack diving off of the front! We were all gone from the rest of the group, by then, so we paused briefly at the 17 mile point (the stop-sign at the end of Panamint valley road) to collect everyone, we then set out heading southwest toward the Ballarat turnoff. This is where the road turns to

rock/dirt, and we would have to pack the bikes and change into our hiking gear, but despite the straight flatness of the road, it is just flat out amazing to see the road disappear into the distance. I found myself saying something like: "I think Ballarat is by that mist over there yonder..." WHO talks like that???? Well, if anyone remembers the report from last year, he/she may remember us being buzzed by an F-22. Well, we weren't buzzed, but we passed a ground radar station and saw several planes flying around.

Ballarat was a not so interesting town. While I will not go into the history of the town, I will say that we spent some time there, and we DID chat with ALL of the inhabitants of the town... All two of them... After several photos were taken, and after we all piled into the van, we headed for Surprise Canyon. I happened to see that there was this ghost town called Panamint City back up in the hills through the canyon, and I was of the mind that I wanted to check it out.

The Van had an interesting time driving into the canyon, and it managed about a mile or more before George decided to pause. When everyone dumped out of the van, Bruce and I started walking up the road. I was thinking 5 miles? Starting at the entrance of the canyon? This can't be too terribly hard... Well, at least a mile later, the road ended at an abandoned campsite where there had been some toxic chemicals spilled years back. Not sure how FAR back, but it would seem that it was not too bad anymore. Walking through the fence at the end of the road, we saw an information pad where people could sign in and take a paper with information about the canyon. It turns out that the Surprise Falls were half a mile up the trail. I left my water bottle strategically placed so the guys would know that we were up here, and then we proceeded to hike up the trail to the falls. This was sort of a bizarre hike, not because it was difficult finding footing/easy paths up, but because it seemed like the canyon ended shortly after

each bend/turn! Needless to say that I was thoroughly demoralized when I learned that it took us about an hour to go .8 of a mile to the top of the falls! Once there, Bruce and I would have had to wade through some water to continue the hike up, but given the fact that we were an hour out, it was time to head back to see what the guys were interested in doing. 15 minutes later we passed Mitch and Jay as we were heading back to the van which was now at the campsite. They decided to give it a go (heading up the canyon) I was really not interested in doing anymore hiking.. I was more interested in sitting, which is exactly what I did for a little while. We snatched some of those papers describing the canyon that were in the box where I signed in. I had read some of it on the hike up the canyon, especially the part about how far up Panamint City happened to be... We had a brief discussion about that, but nothing much of substance was discussed till Mitch and Jay came back.

A group decision was made that we would ride back to the hotel once we managed to return to the paved road, and while that idea was not 100% appealing, to me, I was really glad it went that way, once I was on the bike. I DID start a bit of horseplay along the road back when I initiated the first "sprint to the signpost" game... It did not exactly go my way at all when Jay jumped off the front sprinting for a signpost that was not there! I was sort of hoping for a little bit of recovery, but I was unceremoniously dropped, and I was really not into chasing down the lead group.... AGAIN....

I was riding for a while with Bruce, and we started a new game.. The nature of that game is reserved for those who have been there and done that. The first rule in Men's Club..... The light was pretty dim once we arrived back at the hotel, and this evening, being the last evening we would be at the Panamint Springs Resort, we partook of their cuisine. While everyone was

sitting at the table, Mitch and I decided to sort of second a tradition that we sort of started last year. There are refrigerator cases with wide selection of beer, and of course the idea was self evident for snagging some of the bizarrely named beers that were in keeping with the nature of the riders... For example, last year we bought one of our riders a "Lobotomy Bach" beer. Want to know who received what??? I'll let that be a mystery to those who were not there....

There WAS a plan for the last day, but it was going to be nearly impossible to make it happen. This being the case, most of us decided to climb Towne Pass AGAIN. I was going to have to pack my bike at the bottom of the pass so that we could fit all of our bikes and all of our gear in the van with all of us so that we could make it back to Vegas in time to do what we needed to do while still being able to relax for a time before flying out the next morning. This went without a hitch, though Jason decided to stay and eat a good breakfast before jumping on his bike to climb after us. He caught Bruce and I with about 2 miles to go to the top (our soon to be Cat 2 racer!) However, something was different this time up. A definite tailwind had developed up near the top of the pass, and four of the guys who hit the top first were already long on their way down by the time I arrived at the top, but I was there with Bruce and Rob as we set out.

It was as if someone had opened a trap door and I fell through... I dropped so fast that nobody could grab onto on my wheel! I picked my head up to slow down in the hopes that I could bring someone with me on this, but nobody was there. Speed increased dramatically as I put my nose to within half an inch of the front of my aerobars, hands on the drops my butt hovering over the saddle so that my legs would be absorbing the shock in order to keep the wheels firmly against the asphalt, and I was tucked in tightly. SWOOOOOSH!!!! It is in those times when one starts

thinking crazy thoughts like "what if my fork fails? What if I have a tire blow out? Oh wait, let me be specific since I already have on THIS descent few years back.. What if I have a FRONT tire blow out???" It is in that time that one realizes that he must get a grip and remind himself. FRESH TIRES, a relatively new fork, YOU put this bike together, so stick your money where your mouth is.. How good ARE YOU?? I mean REALLY, Just how good?? Are you 70+ good? You had better be!

The above sort of conversation with myself lasted half a second? Breathe... Look straight ahead at one of the most spectacular views the valley has to offer.. Just drink it all in, the moment will last forever if one allows it... Hurling down the mountainside with the scenery change being almost imperceptible as the moment stretches, while the majesty of it all was touching my soul in such a profound way... My God! That whole area is my cathedral...

All too soon we were together in Stove Pipe Wells, me with the knowledge that I was packing, literally, right here. The van had to go back to the hotel, but most of the guys elected to ride the rest of the way to Furnace Creek. This actually wound up working pretty well because I had my bike in the box and most everything else packed in around it by the time the van arrived back, and I even had an interested conversation with two couples from Ireland! One of the women asked if I was part of the "daft group of people riding bicycles through the desert?" Yes, that was us, or something like that, and then they asked me what would possess someone to do such a thing? I really don't know why I did not reply with the question regarding what would possess someone to live in Belfast, but I guess that was why I was NOT shot or blown to bits right there in the parking lot! HmMMMM

After a leisurely lunch in Furnace Creek, we packed up the van and headed in the direction of Las Vegas, using the route we bicycled out on. The trip back being pretty uneventful, we managed to accomplish everything we needed to accomplish in a time that was reasonable enough for us to go to the MGM Grand and hit a Buffet! Mitch George and I did precisely that, everyone else sort of did their own thing at that point, but we all made it to the airport on time the next morning, and what more could anyone ask?

I can't say that I learned this as a new thing, but this trip definitely reinforced the concept that plans are, more or less, meaningless without other plans as a backup, and even then.. This trip was a lot of fun, and most of that had to do with the fact that we all rode well together, we all got along, and we all enjoyed each other's company. I doubt if there was anyone who did not hate life at some point or other during the trip, but hey, that is what desert training is all about! George, YOU ARE THE MAN! I speak for everyone when I say that without you, this trip would not have been possible at all... To the staff at the Panamint Springs Resort, you folks are the greatest! Our Waitress in the morning, Carrie always had a smile on her face, and while I cannot remember anyone else's name, (sorry guys and gals,) everyone we had contact with made our trip that much more pleasurable. I also want to thank everyone who came out, you guys made the trip great! Mitch and I had been playing with this idea for the second year now, and we have made some improvements, and look forward to hosting a Men's Club Three (the search for more road!) We will ALSO take a trip up the canyon and make it a goal to reach Panamint City, how cool is that? If you are reading this, you just crossed over 6560 words!