

BEERS, BURGERS AND BOULDERS

For Jim Leach and his mates, the deceptively hard trails in Ottawa, Québec, give a whole new meaning to the expression Birthday Bash



TIME ONCE again to make the pilgrimage north, to Ottawa, Québec, Canada for the annual Ottawa valley Land Rover club's birthday party www.ovlr.org. I've been attending this well organized event for several years now and have yet to determine just whose birthday it is.

The event is held right next to the beautiful Silver Lake Provincial Park, which affords all the comforts of, well, a campground.

My adventure starts on Thursday evening. After a hard day at work on Long Island, New York, I drive two and a half hours north to my home in Connecticut. Here, I meet up with Mike Ladden and his beautifully restored 101 Forward Control. I had pre-packed and fueled-up the previous weekend (as well as made needed repairs to the clutch system – it seems to never end) to avoid delays. To the existing pile of cargo I added my camera gear for a weekend of sun, fun and mud. It never ceases to amaze me the amount of stuff you can cram into a 110.

A few hours later, we arrived at our first night's resting place, the spectacular A-1 motel.

The next day, after what seemed like a leisurely drive, we arrived at the Silver Lake campground for an early afternoon

lunch, remarkably, without a single breakdown. Ducks were hunting for fish in the placid lake as we wolfed down some flash-grilled burgers. But no time to waste. It was off to meet with Ted Mathews and his posse of miscreants for a grand entrance into the event via the trail.

not so easy

We made our scheduled meeting only ten minutes late at the Tim Horton's donut shop. From here we made our way to the trailhead. What a crazy trail. A group of Series vehicles had started on this trail a couple hours earlier. Sold to us as an 'intermediate' trail, we soon found out that this was a bit more than that when we caught up to the Series vehicles that had become mired in the major obstacle of the trail: a 100 yard mud bog. Since they had not moved from this axle-snapping mud hole in several hours and there was a go-around (not to mention cold beer waiting back at camp) we made the executive decision to take the go-around.

Mike Ladden was on point now, leading us through the thick forest with his 101FC. The rest of us made our way along the trail until a particularly nasty obstacle came into view.

Picture this. You feel all good

One way to get out of the mud is have the tires throw the mud out of the way.



about yourself for tackling a rather tricky ascent up a rocky and loose dirt covered hill (just after exiting the woods), complete with a nasty left hand turn to proceed further up hill, and a perfectly placed rock the size (and weight) of a Series engine. Yep, right smack in the center of the trail. Mike had no problem straddling this mere 'distraction' with the 11.00 X 16 Michelins his monster is equipped with, but our lowly vehicles had a hell of a time climbing over and around it.

A recently acquired (and well

driven in spite of this fact) Defender 90 was able to make its way around the dreaded boulder after several tries. Whereas I, in the 110, was unable to drive over it, around it or straddle it.

After what seemed like hours of deliberation, concentration, procrastination, indignation and condemnation the decision was final. We would move the rock. I placed my 110 as close to the edge of the outcropping as I dared; it was, after all, a 50-foot drop to the 100 yard mud hole below, and the Series guys



Someone's got to do it! Ted Mathews wades