

Trip to Bonneville August 2009

It was the best of times, and the worst of times. It was one of the strangest Bonneville trips ever... but then again, they are all kinda strange! The drive up was punctuated with tire failures on the trailer (punctuated – get it?). The first blew like a shotgun blast 7 miles outside of Abilene. We got it changed and located a Goodyear dealer in town. He had four tires and replaced the blown one. We had already decided to buy one extra tire and had him inspect (fondle) the others. He declared that another was about to go, so he changed that one too. So, we had the spare mounted, a new tire mounted, a new one on the rim and a new loose tire. We had a low tire in Clovis, NM so we stopped at the tire place we always seem to stop at and got them to air it up. On we went... The next one went near Dove Creek, Colorado and just about spun the carcass off. Fortunately, we had the end of a passing lane to change it. This was where we developed our excellent technique for changing tires. Now we had one loose tire and one shredded tire on a rim. We rolled into Green River and got up the next morning to get our loose spare mounted on the rim. Number three went away about 20 miles from the salt on the very busy I-80. Technique had us down to about 8 minutes to change the tire. Thank heavens that got us onto the salt where we could park the trailer.

We imposed on Judy who was flying in on Saturday to pick up two more tires for us. One to mount and one to carry around. Bill had called around and located some spares. She braved some dramatic experiences to get the tires and if she cried about it, we never heard; but I think it wasn't high on her list of fun things she did in her life.

To go out of sequence and finish the tire story, we had one more on the way home. On the first day coming back we made it into Gallup, NM. Four states in one day (NV, UT, CO, NM). The next morning we woke to find a trailer tire with less than 4psi. Pit crew time once again. Took it into the tire guy there on Route 66 (Legs – a tall guy. Go figure.), who found some brad nails stuck in it. For a whopping 7 bucks, he patched it up and we again had one mounted spare and one loose tire just itching for its turn (get it? ...turn) on the pavement. Fortunately, no more tire problems for the rest of the trip.

Now for the racing... The record we were running against was 173.408. We had the easiest time in tech inspection ever. They had started tech on Thursday, so by the time we were ready to roll up Saturday around eleven, we were essentially next in line. We were in and out in 45 minutes and the only thing that had to be fixed was to buy new arm restraints. No write ups or comments on the truck at all. I thanked the inspector, Dave Sullivan, for not making me throw up like I usually do in tech. For those that know, imagine my total fear when I saw Ken Walkey up at the inspector's station. Ken seems to hate trucks.

The next day we had secured new arm restraints and were ready to run. We made a pass and I discovered that there was no 2nd gear in the Lenco. Since this transmission just 'adds' the gears, it wasn't the end of the world, but it did mean the overall gear ratio was going to be very wrong. I ended up on the rev limiter at 7900 by the 2 ¼ so I pulled the chute and shut it off. It ran 161 and the plugs showed it was scary lean. The motor ran

great, but the lack of second gear meant there was no way to make up for the wrong rear gear. After much consultation, Bernie prepared and shipped the 2.47 gear from the shop to the salt. There's a lot of side stories and personal sacrifice to this, but let's just say that you can get a gear overnighted from Angleton to Salt Lake City. Bill and Judy got up early to pick it up at UPS in Salt Lake (two hours away).

We put the gear in, set the engine richer and got back in line. The lines were so short it was amazing. Maybe an hour waiting to run... often it is more like 4-6 hours. Skipped second and ran 186.5 in the second mile (between three and four miles) at 7700 RPM. This crazy idea just might work! Went to impound as high as a kite and looked at the plugs. Still lean, but at least all the ground straps were there! Didn't see any damage evidenced on the plugs, but it was still too lean, and we were running out of jets to make it richer. And we sure didn't want to go too rich, or the next morning's backup run would sputter and fail. Been there, done that.

Anyway, the dawn broke on the salt and all us hopeful impoundees headed for the starting line. It was unseasonably chilly. It took a while to get up to the line, but when it was time, everybody did their jobs superbly and away I went. However, the motor didn't seem to want to come with me. It was laying down after the first mile and I flogged it into the second mile trying to keep it above the calculated 165 needed to average out for the record. But it was not to be... either the head gasket went away between 4 & 6 **cylinders**, or the pistons were getting torched from being too lean, but the first mile was 165.851 and the second mile was 159.688. I shut it down and threw the chute and thought it was all over. However, after averaging the two first mile speeds, we were 1.1 mph over the old record, so our new record would stand. The combo should have smashed the old record by almost 20mph, but we'll take what we can get!

This is either the end of the road for the truck, or very near. If we can get it all back together for October, we may make one more shot at either making the C record respectable, or perhaps filling in the AA slot. We'll see.

Jim Webb
jim@luckyfrogfarms.com