

Blazer Bash '02 - Fourwheeling in Moab with a stock K5 Jimmy.

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Hi. Most of you don't know me – I'm a 1985 GMC Jimmy fullsize four wheel drive truck, blue with a white top. My name is Lowrider. I know it's an odd name for a truck made for trailriding; really not very dignified. I used to be called Desertrider, since I spent a lot of time riding the deserts of California and Arizona. Now I live a very sheltered life in Nebraska; I just don't get out much anymore. Both my roommates are way lower than I am, but let's not dwell on that right now.



My owner of 5 years, Michael, is a slightly neurotic academic who recently felt that he must reconnect with some deep hidden inner self by laying his hands on me. So he now turns wrenches to relax, which is usually a bit irritating, but not so bad after all. Just last winter, I received an engine makeover for my 350, with new Vortec heads, aluminum intake, headers, and a better exhaust. For the first time in my life, I can finally breathe.

About a year and a half ago, my owner started to visit an Internet web site called ColoradoK5.com. Apparently, the owners of others of my kind hang out there, post, and chat endlessly about engines, trannys, t'cases, axles, gears, tires, wheels, and the like. Oh yeah, they also talk a lot about four-wheeling. This is a dubious topic, because while it is a lot of fun, a lot of us can - and do - get hurt. Usually not too much though, we K5s are a tough kind, that's why so many of us are still around, but it can become annoying nevertheless.

Anyways, someone on this ColoradoK5.com website had this idea to stage a get-together of the K5 family. They were to hold it in Moab, Utah, a mecca in the four-wheeling world reknown for its slickrock trails, and call it Blazer Bash '02. Michael, my owner, decided he needed a break from work and head out to Utah to attend the Bash. This is my story of what I went through on this adventure.

Armed with new Warn hubs, Bilstein shocks, and Toybox rocksliders, I'm all packed up, when the first sign of trouble appears. Claudia, my owners lovely wife, an excellent driver and spotter, is not coming along. That is not good. Claudia is the voice of reason, and she's always looking out for me so I won't get hurt. With Michael on his own, I really don't know – this could get ugly.



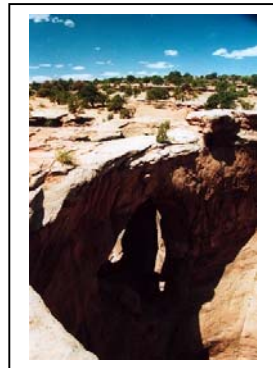
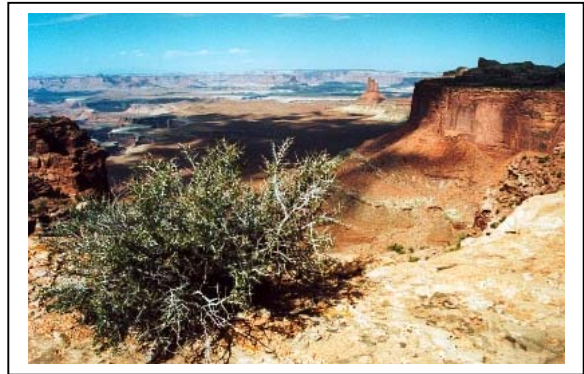
Well, the first day of the journey is uneventful, through the flats of Nebraska and eastern Colorado, past Denver, and into Colorado Springs for the night. My carburetor is running on the rich side, but my owner thinks nothing of it - yet.

Second day, we're going in the Rocky Mountains, up the Arkansas River valley towards Monarch Pass. My owner has a heavy right foot, and I'm not doing so well in this altitude, especially not

with that rich condition that seems to be getting worse. Not that it bothers Michael too much. He claims to watch the temperature gauges all the time. Well, after spewing black smoke so we can't even see the traffic behind us anymore, I finally make it up the pass, in second gear at 30 mph, and turn into the parking lot with power steering fluid spitting from the top of the pump reservoir – that's how hot it was! I'm happy and relieved to finally get a break. The owner takes pictures and buys souvenirs for Claudia. After that, it's down to Montrose, on to Grand Junction, into Utah, where we take the Cisco turnoff from the interstate to reach the Colorado River valley. With a spectacular late afternoon sun, a few picturesque clouds in the sky, and dramatic red rock cliffs around us, we follow the Colorado River to our destination: Moab.

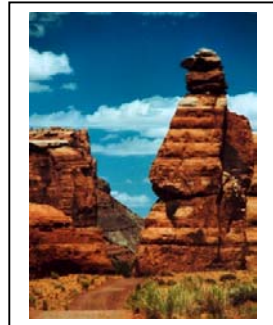


Next day, bright and early, we head for Canyonlands National Park. I'm breathing a little bit easier at this altitude compared to the Rockies, but I'm trying to tell Michael about the persisting rich condition, which I thought was obvious from the black smoke coming from my tailpipe. Michael, however, mumbles something about the historical importance of the geographical mapping of the confluence of the Colorado River and the Green River, a feat accomplished by Mj. Powell about 130 years ago. That area is covered nowadays by Canyonlands



National Park, our destination for today, Blazer Bash won't start until tomorrow. The road to and in the park is a nice, winding blacktop with spectacular vistas on both sides. I hear Michael uttering something about "being back home in the desert again". He enjoys a long lunch at the Grandview overlook, while I enjoy the break and the opportunity to cool down.

Gemini Bridges is next on our way – it's an easy trail, mostly a graded dirt road with a few stretches of slickrock. I finally get to use both ends of my drivetrain as Michael locks the new Warn hubs,



lowers the tire pressure from 40 to 28psi, and puts the t'case in 4WD. We



encounter a slight hitch along the way: on a downhill section, Michael tries to shift into first gear – quite unsuccessfully, I should say. Courtesy to my new exhaust being in the way of my shift linkage – a fact that won't be discovered until the next day. Michael, undeterred, presses on; the scenery at Gemini Bridges is truly spectacular; the fact that we find a plaque bemoaning the passing of a Jeep and his owner only slightly disturbing. I'm pleased that driving between towering red rock formations

puts my owner at ease – we both look forward to tomorrow, when Blazer Bash begins.

Friday morning: the informal start of Blazer Bash '02, and also the infamous beginning of life with my new name. Did I mention that, with my 33 inch tires, I am used to being taller than all the other vehicles, for instance in the parking lot where I wait while my owner is at work?



Michael and a few others from the ColoradoK5.com website had set out to meet in the City Market parking lot in order to get to know each other, go play around with their trucks, and go fourwheeling. So we get to meet others of the great K5 family: there's Fred (FWP), Sid (sidslc), Balou with Billy Ray, Dave Cowley, Moneypit with Toby and family, Ed, Storm Trooper with Dave, Blake in Igk5, and Butch with Tim. Now it dawns on my owner: everyone seems to be about a foot higher than me! Maybe going to Moab with a stock suspension wasn't such a good idea, and the Lowrider tag seems inevitable. Here's

fisher1648, with Eric and Terry; that K5 isn't quite as high as the others, but still taller than me. So, after everyone says hello and checks out the other rides, we all head out to a place called Potato Salad Hill.

Potato Salad Hill is a play spot where people can check out the front suspension of a truck in case they are too lazy to kneel down to look. Well, sidslc is the first one down, looks like he's diving over the edge. Butch, who's driver is Tim from 4x4 Iron (they make terrific bumpers and armor!), is the first one coming up. Butch crawls up the right side and makes it look so easy, took about 30 seconds with hardly a tire chirp. Balou, the big blue truck from Texas, comes up, next is Storm Trooper, FWP has carb trouble at the bottom.



Speaking of carbs, my owner finally decides it would be time - between two rolls of film! - to



check my carb for the source of the rich condition. With the help from Eric and Terry, he's got the airhorn off, float and needle check out o.k., everything back together again, and indeed, things are a bit better. The big green truck of Sid takes a line up the left side and lifts a big tire in the air —see, here's the front suspension in plain view. A little tug from Balou, and everyone moves on to Dump Bump.

With Storm Trooper playing on the bump, my owner discovers that a) the switch for the ARB air locker in the rear axle doesn't work, and b) I still

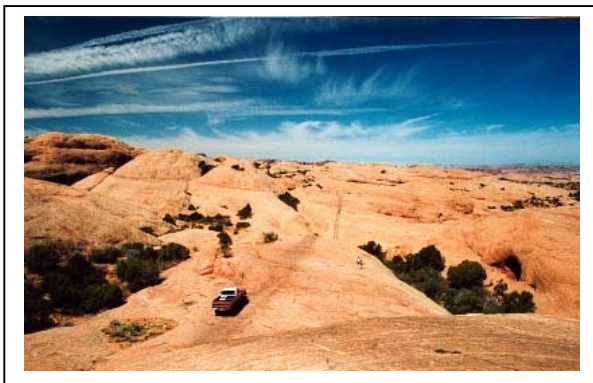


can't switch into first gear. Tim diagnoses the problem: the shift linkage hits my exhaust. Moneypit happens to have an air saw and a CO₂ Powertank aboard, and Tim cuts the offending piece of steel off the linkage – voilá, first gear. Meanwhile, my owner looks on, a bit sheepishly I might add, while others wonder why I'm being cut. Actually, didn't hurt at all. Tim says it's time to move on and do a trail called Hell's Revenge, it's all slickrock, and I can do it, too. That's what they say. I make one try up the side route at the Bump, but Michael is too hard on the throttle – Butch and Igg5 winch me up the hill, and off we go.

Hell's Revenge is like riding the waves of a frozen sea. It's a slickrock roller coaster, with very good traction. The descents are steep, and I feel like we're driving straight into the ground. The inclines appear to go straight into the sky, which incidentally is the only thing my owner can see besides my hood. After a while, a pattern emerges. I hear my owner mumbling "You've got to be kidding" followed by an unprintable every once in a while, then he attempts to augment my brakes (which are thankfully brand spanking new!) by squeezing his own backside. That must be something psychological; of course, it does nothing to slow me down. Uphill, he's at least memorizing the line of the truck in front of us – mostly John in his pickup – before that disappears over the crest.

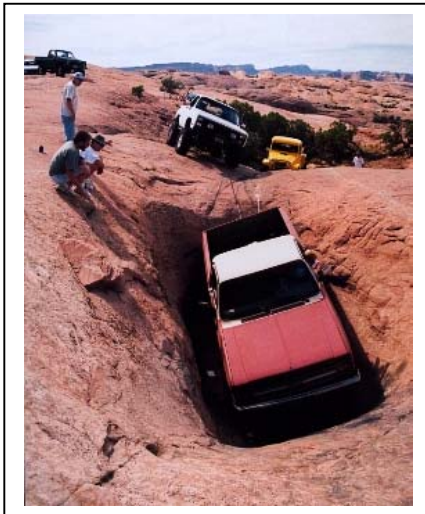


Well, Michael seems to get the hang of it and enjoys the trail tremendously - through the mirror I can see a big grin plastered on his face. We take a break - I'm overheating, my new dual electric fan setup looks good but doesn't quite cut it. Michael opens my hood; that will become standard operating procedure for the next few days. Butch and Moneypit head for the bottom of





a place called Hell's Gate, while the rest of us relax. Michael grabs the camera to watch Butch crawl up the steep cleft - he makes it look so easy, it's as if he were in his driveway at home. Ed provides excellent spotting, also for Moneypit. Just before the top, Moneypit is a little bit too far towards the left. His left rear tire drops, and lifts the right front tire about two or three feet in the air - all of it on a really steep incline. Ed and Dave offer a little extra weight on the front to hold the truck down, and after some correction, Moneypit makes it up unscathed. Michael said Toby's wife must be really brave to watch this and stay calm. Everyone enjoyed the action and entertainment, then it's back to the trail again, on to the Hot Tubs.



Before Michael can even get his camera ready, Butch is quickly in and out of one of the Tubs. The Tub is so deep, it swallows a fullsize truck just fine. John provides the entertainment here. The pickup is hurting - reverse no longer works. Unfortunately, the right front tire gets jammed against a protruding rock, and without reverse gear, there's no way to back up. Even I, at 60 feet away, could hear the chatter of the poor power steering box and the squeal of the pump, all to no avail, winches to the rescue. The yellow Willys of Tony provides a cable to the rear of the pickup - not enough. Moneypit brings a second cable - no good. Then Butch hooks a cable to the front and lifts the truck; now the tires can turn. John drives out with no problems, and everyone considers themselves thoroughly entertained. A few more rollercoasters to go, then it's on to the old city park for the official opening of Blazer Bash'02.

The K5 family is parked in a big lineup as far as one can see. All the pilots get to know each other, and enjoy the opportunity to learn which person stands behind each website username. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Steve Fox - ColoradoK5.com webmaster, UAV pilot, and leader of the K5 world - the raffle is stocked with terrific prizes, and it is really a big success, courtesy to the charming public address skills of Margee Fox. All of the K5 family are grateful for the support of companies such as Offroad Design, 4x4 Iron, West Texas Offroad, Offcamber 4x4, Canback, Specialty Tops, Toybox Offroad, Springer Suspensions, Missouri OffRoad Outfitters, Pull Pal, Auto Custom Carpets,





Ron's Custom Shop, and SunPro that keep us K5s alive and make us better. As the sun slowly sets over the mountains, everyone enjoys a tasty barbecue courtesy of Steve, Margee, and Kim Sprouse, but then we head home in anticipation of the big trail ride tomorrow.

Saturday, bright and early, my owner is up fixing things. My fog lights get cut, the relay used to wire

an override switch so the fans will run at all times; that'll help a bit in the heat. Furthermore, Michael traces the problem with the air locker switch to a loose power connection at the fuse block - an easy fix, now my rear air locker works.

The City Market parking lot is filled with trail-ready K5s, to the extent that some of the regular customers appear to be intimidated. Indeed, it is an impressive sight: 50 K5 trucks driving through town to line up at the trail head. For the hard-core trucks, the trail today is Rusty Nail; for the moderate group, it's Gold Bar Rim - Storm Trooper leads this run. Michael thinks we're ready for Gold Bar Rim, and then it's slow going as 50 trucks thread through the wash. This trail is more technical for me than Hell's Revenge, with a lot of

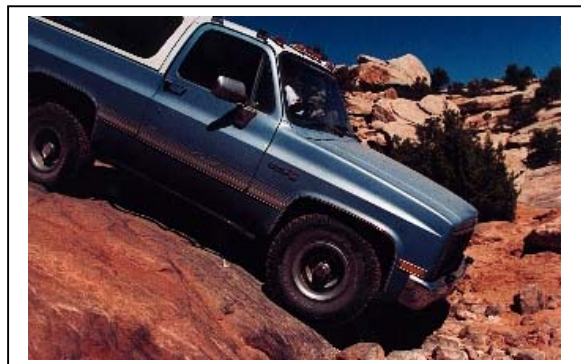


ledges and stair steps where it's important to pick the right line. I have to say it's a bit annoying to scrape along on my undercarriage all day: the front tow hooks are curb feelers here in this terrain; I'm glad they protect my front spring mounts. After that, it's the rocksliders, or the skid plates under the t'case and gas tank. Finally, at the end of each descent, my back bumper tries to leave it's mark on the rocks. Didn't take long to pound the safety loops on my stock receiver hitch completely flat; such are the life and times as a K5 with stock suspension height in Moab.



There's a traffic jam at the first bigger obstacle, a descent in a left hand turn with ruts and rocks: almost everyone lifts a rear tire in the air on the way down. Here's the photographer from Action Shots in Moab to capture the proceedings. Michael is about to chicken out, fisher1648 provides encouragement - and a different line.

Down we go, slowly grinding on the tow hooks at the bottom before my front tires finally make contact again. See, wasn't so bad, with great spotting help from Eric. Now we move on, and Michael seems to have gained some confidence in my abilities. It's now one set of ledges and stair steps after another as we climb up to the rim. The weather is great, and the scenery is

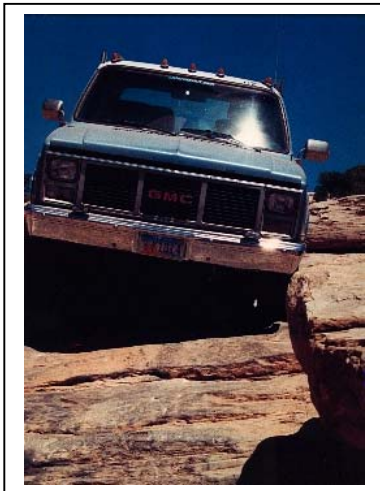




phantastic as we take a break at the top. Michael walks to the edge to take pictures; I enjoy some time to rest with my hood open to help me cool off.

We head down Golden Spike; in the far distance, we can barely see the hardcore group. It doesn't look like they're moving very much. A steep, short dropoff has the photographer waiting again. I enjoy the view from the top, my owner contemplating whether we'll make it up on the way back. At Double Whammy, we take another

break before descending to the Golden Crack. I'm too small (or low - that dreaded lowrider name coming up again!) to try; maybe next year when I'm a bit taller... this time around, watching sure is a lot of fun. Moneypit with his phantastic flex is the first one over; Storm Trooper and Tony in the yellow Willys are not far behind. Coming from the other side, we get to meet the coil-sprung yellow K5 of Steve Frisbie, K5BLT4FUN with Layne, and the Potent Rodent piloted by Shawn. Coil or leaf springs, small or big block - all these K5s make short work of the crack. Entertainment for all, a broken front shackle bushing for Strom Trooper while trying to get his tires in the air, and we're slowly motoring back to Double Whammy for another rest.



Moneypit gives Double Whammy a try, and others do too, when we get an unexpected but highly welcome visitor: the green K5 Über-Jimmy from Offroad Design and Stephen Watson. The green machine looks down on us netherworld K5s from 42 inch tires and custom coil springs. Stephen, whose company motto is "Making the world better, one truck at a time", has probably produced parts for every single K5 participating in the Bash - even for me: I wear a steering box brace, swaybar disconnects, and heavy duty greasable shackles. Stephen then demonstrates the capabilities of the Green One on Double Whammy - he's up and down so quickly that my owner doesn't have time to raise his camera. We all watch in awe with our mouth (ahem, hood) open, and all are thoroughly entertained. Man, I'll

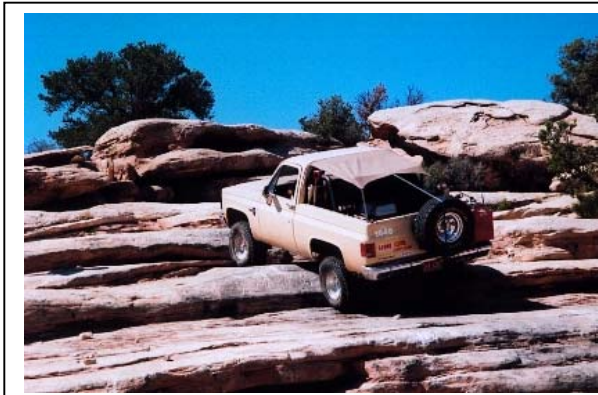
have a long way to go.

The afternoon is winding down, and after Greg fixes a loose spring pad with a welder, we're headed back up to the rim. Michael is fussing with the air pressure in my tires: 28psi on the skinny 33x10.5 BGF AT's worked really well; maybe 24 psi will work even better? At the Moneybump, it does; after that, it doesn't; we're back at that

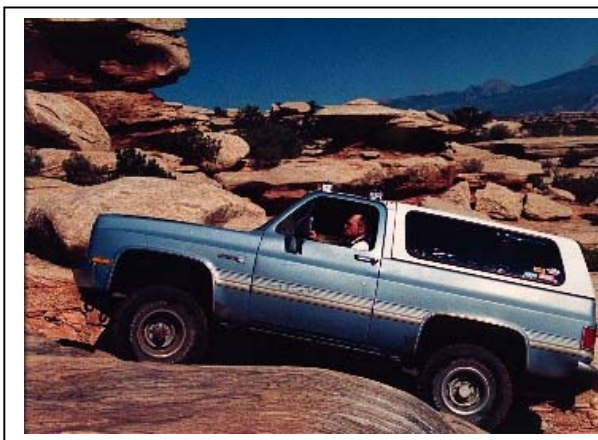




steep drop. Fisher1648 takes a strap to save the body from the big rock on the right side. Michael insists on giving it a shot, but just as the tires seem to hook, a bit too much throttle breaks them loose again, and the big rock leaves an impression above my gas tank filler - ouch! Tony straps me out of my predicament, Michael is humbled, and my hide hurts - oh the sacrifices I make for my owner! Well, at least I got a few kewl stickers out of this!



We're driving out in the last of the afternoon sun. The climb through the first obstacle is no longer a big deal for Michael's confidence. I'm getting used to that tow-hook-curb-feeler thing. Out in the wash, we turn aside; the Willys has a problem with a broken fuel filter; Balou eventually comes to help with a whole roll of fuel line. We're waiting for the hardcore group to make it out. Word has come over the CB radio that there was a rollover. Well, there they are, a green blur at the front of a big dust cloud - the ORD Jimmy leads the pack, stops to chat a bit, and is gone again. Butch blows by, the big Texas flag waving behind him. Then there's Schneggie, the white K5 that suffered the roll. His skin is all wrinkled - that won't buff out easily, I'm afraid. Schneggie is moving well, though. Like I mentioned before, K5s are a tough lot. Luckily, no one inside got hurt. Storm Trooper has the music blaring into the night as we wait for the last ones to make it out. Michael and I seem to fly through the dust cloud from Storm Trooper and BigBlue76.



It's late, but everyone has made it back to town, and from what I've heard, K5s and drivers alike had a blast.



The next morning, a few of us are a bit weary from the long day before. Some K5s are being fixed up in the parking lot of the Motel 6. I get a fresh set of spark plugs from the parts store. After fiddling with my carburetor, changing the

plugs, and adjusting the timing, my engine is doing much better now, thank you very much. Still a bit rich, though. Dave has replaced the front shackle bushing on Storm Trooper, and around noon, a few of us finally head out to Poison Spider Mesa, the moderate run scheduled for Sunday.



It's a bit warmer today, maybe 100°F, and I'm having trouble with the heat. The slickrock climbs are fun, Storm Trooper shows how it's done and more. He and fisher1648 play a bit on a steep incline called the Launch Pad. John guides everyone through a big V. I'm having a bit of trouble; Michael bounced and stalled my engine on a steep play spot, it feels like



something came loose in the carb again and flooded everything. Dave is having fun, Storm Trooper puts a big 38inch tire in the air in front of a spectacular panorama. The sun starts to set; we turn around to drive back to town, and out to John's place. Michael has picked up steaks



while we waited for Storm Trooper to come out of the car wash (!) - I wish I would see such a fancy place more than once a year. My owner thinks that "faded glory" is the theme for my outside looks, nevermind.

John has graciously agreed to let Michael - a halfway decent amateur cook - run the barbecue. As the evening sun sets over the rim, we get treated to a phantastic color display; Dave runs fourwheeling videos; the steaks smell and taste great, and everyone had a great time here in Moab.



Blazer Bash continues on Monday, but we have to head home to Nebraska - Michael's job is calling. Well, we don't get to go early, my engine is not doing well. The carb is completely flooded; Michael dries it out. Another set of spark plugs, the carb put back together, timing adjusted again, and finally, with help from Dave and Eric, my engine is running halfway decent, and we're on our way. As we climb in altitude, things get worse, the rich condition is back, and I have difficulty breathing, not to mention burning all that fuel.

At a fuel stop in Glenwood Springs (did I mention that mileage was between 6 and 7 mpg?), Michael readjusts the timing once more, and we prepare for the climb up to the Eisenhower Tunnel at some 11,600 ft. elevation. The next 80 miles turn out to be the longest 80 miles in my life. Vail Pass is a bear, I'm barely going 25mph in second gear at full throttle. Michael's eyes are glued to the temperature gauges, but supposedly everything is in order. "Please let the tunnel be around this curve" is something I get to hear a number of times; and finally, there it is, what a relief! Downhill into Denver, another fuel stop just outside the city on I-76; timing adjusted again, my converter is glowing red from all that fuel, and we stop for the night in Fort Morgan. Meanwhile, not only my cat, but also my muffler is burned out, and the heat has melted the carpet in the back of the cab, together with Michael's briefcase. I tried to tell him about it but he didn't pay attention, being too focused on making it home.

We do just that the next day, both of us rather tired but excited, grateful for the adventure, and happy. After all, Dave and a few others had mentioned several times that "that freaking truck drives everywhere"; I'll take that as a high compliment, thank you. Aside from a few scratches, I feel great; I'm sure we'll be back, Michael is telling already everyone in earshot, the big grin unremoveable from his face.

P.S. Four weeks later. I'm happy as a clam, my engine's running really good again. It was the power piston retainer in the carb that wasn't seating right, thereby preventing proper fuel metering and causing the permanent rich condition. With a newly rebuilt carb, new leaner jets, new coil, cap, rotor, wires, spark plugs, cat, and exhaust, I really feel good; I can breathe well, and mileage is up at 13mpg. My owner is already plotting the improvements for Blazer Bash '03. I've been begging for a suspension lift, but Claudia, who I thought was on my side, isn't so high on that idea - what's up with that? Well, at least, I've got a new roll bar. We'll be back in Moab next year, there are so many more trails to do. We both enjoy the flow of adrenaline on these trails, and marvel at the phantastic landscape that Moab has to offer. To ride the trails together with the great K5 family was a terrific experience we'll never forget. Now, if they would just call me another name...