

# RIDE RECAPTURE RIM

An Adventure on Wheels in San Juan County  
By Joe F. Lyman

It had been several years since Dwight Laws had moved from Blanding. I was aware that he had been having surgery and other treatments for throat cancer and was no longer singing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. I knew that he was employed by Brigham Young University, because I was regularly receiving notices of opportunities from The Department Of Travel/Study under his signature.

I was very pleased to get a phone call from Dwight in August, 2005, informing me that he had just purchased two new four wheelers and asked if I would be willing to guide him and his wife, Linda, on a maiden journey. I told him, "I never go wheeling unless I get a chance. When will you be here?"

On August 28th, we were on the trail. I decided that Recapture Rim might be a good break in ride, because Dwight was not sure how long or how much challenge his health would permit. The Rim Ride is a short ten mile loop, starting behind the Blanding Visitor Center, at Albert R. Lyman's "Swallow's Nest", a little one room rock building where he did much of his writing during the early days of Blandings settlement. After a mile over private ground on the Pacheco Trail, we access public land and begin winding around and over cedar covered knolls and across historic Lems Draw as it works it's way Eastward toward Recapture Canyon.

Some of the old roads in this area date back to the construction of the canal, built to deliver water to White Mesa prior to 1915. (Within twenty minutes you can be at the first overlook on the west rim of Recapture Canyon, unless you pause along the way to view wild turkeys or deer that may cross your path, or just sit back and soak up the spirit of the environment.) We may have been out an hour when we reached the first canyon overlook. We took out the binoculars and began surveying the canyon, looking for evidence of Anasazi cliff dwellers. We were not disappointed. The small prehistoric cliff dwellings and granaries tucked into cracks and caves under the east rim began to appear as our eyes learned to focus on the most likely spots.

After a delightful pause we proceeded South, accessing many view points on the rim. So many in fact, it took two hours to travel two miles. Even then we had to force ourselves to leave one overlook to move on to the next. At the end of the trail we came a small horseshoe cave, with cliff dwellings and a spring,(or seep.) At this point, Dwight's eyes lit up as he said, " I know where we are now, this is Uncle Frost's bull pasture. When I was a kid I would come here with my cousin, Arvid, during my summers in Blanding ." Then, pointing to the new four wheelers he said, "These things have paid for themselves already!"

At this juncture of the adventure a short trail would take us to Brown's Canyon Road and a quick ride back to Blanding. I suspected that Dwight, because of his health conditions, would be anxious to get back to his truck. However, I drew his attention to a trail that leaves the old bull pasture, drops into the canyon, and then works its way north up the bottom, to eventually come

out on a very steep, technically difficult incline. Almost before I could get the words out of my mouth he said, " Let's do it!" So we did. The bottom route provides an intimate contact with ruins on both sides of the canyon. The trail itself is an exciting adventure. I was especially impressed with Linda's fearless tenacity in tackling the more difficult segments.

Finally, arriving back at the truck, we exchanged pleasantries, sharing smiles much larger than when we began. I did not see much of Dwight after that; maybe just one other time when we met by chance out on the Hole In The Rock Trail.

In March of 2008, The cancer took its toll. I attended the graveside ceremony when Dwight's body was brought back to Blanding to be laid to rest. Before leaving cemetery hill, I looked to the southeast, through a break in the cedar covered hills appeared the east rim of Recapture Canyon.

*It's amazing what a San Juan adventure on wheels can do for the souls of two old friends!*



Dwight and Linda Laws on Recapture Rim