

## **Blazing the Dunes of P-Town**

There is no doubt many stories about Rex Barton's time in the U.S. Coast Guard. I remember a story from back in 1972 that was not related to search and rescue... but close.

Rex had purchased a new 1971 Chevy Blazer (4x4) and was eager to do some off roading. I had a Jeep and spent a good deal of my time driving the sands of Cape Cod, primarily Nauset/North Beach and Provincetown. One day, Rex joined me in Provincetown, so I could share some finer points of driving in the dunes. He enjoyed the day and was looking forward to another sometime soon.



On a chilly evening in January, Rex shows up at my house in Dennisport. I lived with my close friends Paul and David. My friends answered the door and told Rex that I was in bed with the flu. Rex woke me up and said were going to Provincetown to drive the dunes. I told him I wasn't going anywhere. Rex told me I was. We did.

Paul and David were shaking their heads as we departed. They were convinced we were both crazy. They were right. We got on the road driving north to P-town late at night with freezing temperatures. Along the way we saw a sorry soul hitchhiking, so we stopped to pick her up. She was headed to P-Town as well. We seemed to be in P-town in no time and as we dropped our passenger off, she insisted that we come in for a drink before we headed to the dunes. We sat in the kitchen of this old house and drank cognac until the bottle was empty. With plenty of anti-freeze in our body, we headed out to the dunes after midnight.



It was easy to find the trail head at the end of the well-marked parking lot... that was the last easy part of our adventure. Driving in the dunes on a clear moonlit night can be beautiful, this was not one of those nights. Clouds covered any possible light from the sky, the wind was blowing more than 35 mph, and did I mention that it was COLD.

We are now driving into the sandstorm. The further we drove through the dunes the worse it got. The lights of the Blazer just illuminated the sand blowing in front and you could not see beyond that. You had no idea

where you were going, but we kept driving anyway. At one point we got out of the Blazzer to possibly get our bearings. If you stepped away from the vehicle and turned back, you could not even see it with the lights on. We returned to the shelter of the Blazzer. I told Rex we had been on the sand for more than an hour and we should just stop until the sunrises. He agreed. We nestled in our front seats of the Blazzer and dozed off, which was not difficult at this point.

I woke first and the sun was coming up over the horizon, not a cloud in the sky and the wind had dropped off to mere breeze. I nudged Rex to wake up and see what was right in front of us. The ocean was directly in front of the Blazzer with the tide coming in. Needless to say it was good that we stopped when we did. We were driving straight into the ocean.

Rex and I left the dunes, got coffee before he dropped me off and he returned to U.S.C.G. Air Station Cape Cod. We agreed to return to the dunes another DAY.