

BLOODY CORRUGATIONS

Corrugations, ripples, ridges or wash boarding, call them what you like, they would have to be the most despised part of any outback trip. They are probably the most misunderstood as well. Any opinion on how they are caused or how one should travel over them will start an argument that's up there with Cooper tyres v BFGs, Engels v Waecos or dare I say it Toyotas v Nissans. Some say that corrugations on tracks

THE THINGS YOU SEE!

WITH (TRUTHFUL) PHIL BIANCHI



life I raced over the top of corrugations and sustained damage including: destroyed shocks, torn shockie mounts, fractured inner guards, fractured battery mounts, wrecked tyres and hitting surprise ditches at speed; I decided that in my replacement vehicle, a 100 series, I would take a different approach. I now use lower tyre

pressures and have reduced speed to loping along at a comfortable speed like a grandpa (I am one). Since using this technique I haven't damaged any guards, battery cradles or shockie mounts, wrecked any shocks or tyres and have reduced my orthodontist's bill to nil. (No new BMW for him).

While determining where you stand on causes of corros, note the following. At the end of every straight section of the above corrugated tracks, when drivers are forced to slow down because of tight

bends, the corrugations disappear. The vehicle weighs the same; tyre pressures are the same as is the wheel base, tyre size etc, the only difference being speed. Some corrugations I have come across, I reckon are tall enough to have approach and departure angles, even cast shade. Others such as those on the CSR, I reckon are responsible for people running out of fuel because they are so tall they add at least another 200 kms to the journey. When on the CSR I lower tyre pressures to around 20



such as the Canning Stock Route, Gunbarrel or Connie Sue Hwy are caused by hard tyres, overweight vehicles and speed. Others say that speed isn't a factor and that the best way to travel over them is at speed so you skim across the top of them. Another group claim you'll wreck your vehicle doing that and it's best to lower tyre pressure down to as low as 20 psi and travel at a comfortable slower pace. What's the answer? Upon selling my beloved 80 series, which earlier in its

psi and leave them there until coming off the CSR three weeks later. I recall meeting two chaps seeking to crest a dune in a V8 70 series, with dirt rooster tailing and digging tank traps, they struggled despite three tries to get over. Feeling somewhat embarrassed they let us through; we sailed over without a problem. Calling us over the UHF they asked how we did it. Let your tyres down to around 20 psi we replied. When we met later, they said they still had some difficulty getting over 'but letting your tyres down works'. Asking what pressure they used, '35psi, and then we pumped them back up again!' This is old school thinking; softer tyres don't have an increased puncture risk; they allow you to absorb bumps and negotiate rocky terrain and dunes much easier and give you a far better ride and reduce the stress on the vehicle especially suspension components. On the CSR, tracks leading into Well 33 have numerous chicken tracks created by drivers seeking to avoid corrugations. These corrugations would have to be the biggest I've ever come across, it was like driving over 40 or 50 kms of small logs spaced at 300mm intervals. I also suspect that corrugation formation isn't only about vehicle weight, hard tyres and speed;

there are numerous other issues I feel are involved:

- Wheel base of vehicle; some vehicles will have both sets of wheels on top of a corro; others would have one on top of a corro and the other in the bottom.
- Wheel diameter; the larger the wheel the flatter the footprint.
- Soil type i.e. sandy, gravel or gravel and sand and how well or solidly these are mixed.

Looking to the future, maybe we need a university to develop a Phd program offering studies in 'corrugationology'. Logically they should have the course based at Wiluna because the famous CSR and Gunbarrel Hwy will be on its doorstep giving access to any amount of injured vehicles coming off these tracks. Hopefully then we can once and for all settle the question of causes of corrugations. I dream of plodding along a badly corrugated track and being diverted by a lollipop man because of workers, and hopefully spot a lab coated person, head down tail up, with protractors, lasers and every 'ometer' in creation strewn around them while measuring corros. Folks when touring the outback keep an eye out for 'corrugationologists' lying down on the track. Hereabout is a photo of one at work; notice the hi-vis beanie.

