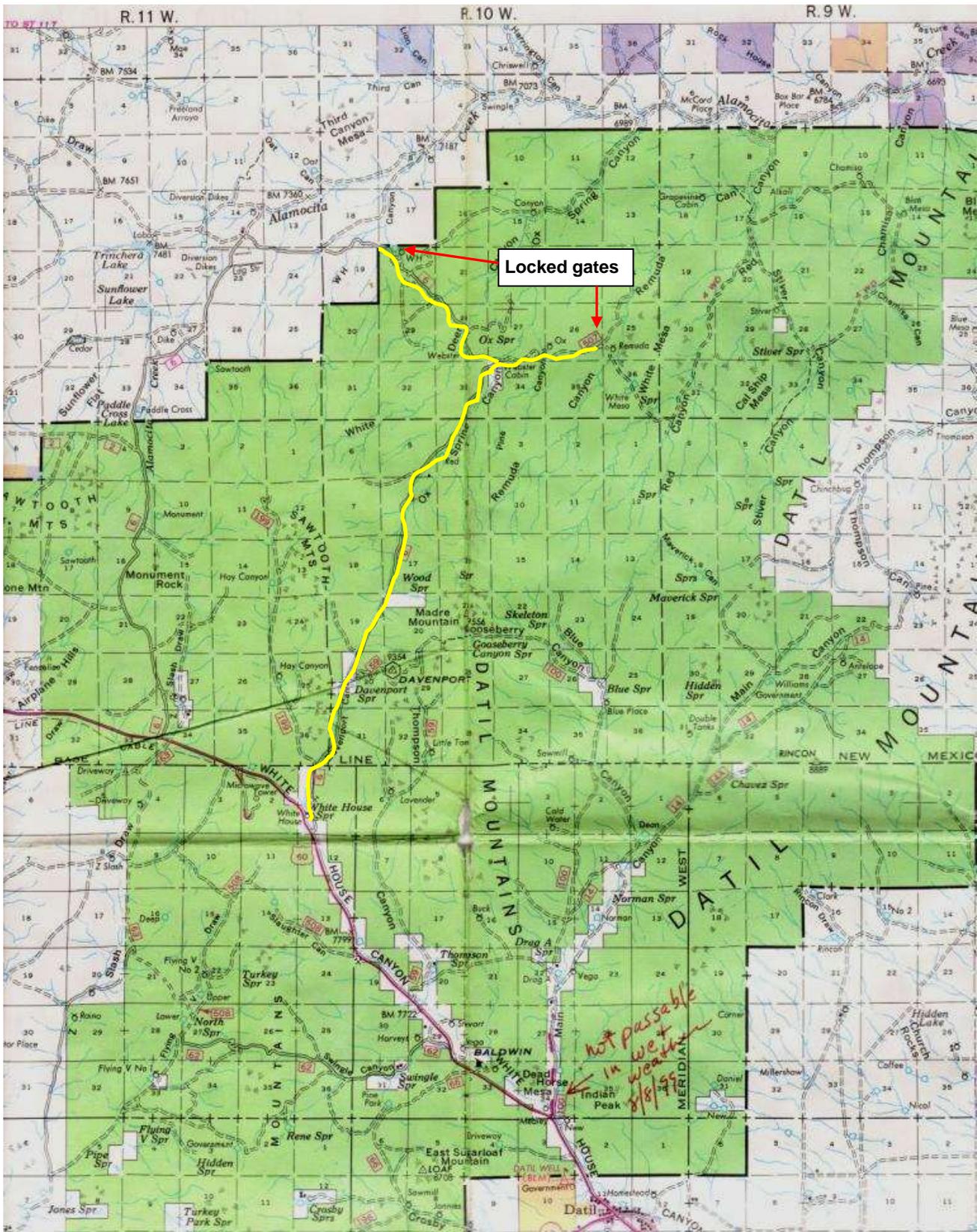


## **FOLLOWING THE WARPATH: A Wild Goose Chase**

Told I was aiming for Red Canyon and Alamocita Creek on the north side of the Datils, the Cibola Forest ranger in Magdalena suggested Forest Road 100, up and over the mountains at Blue Spring – the same route Roland says Nana took in crossing those mountains – but warned that the road has stretches of soft, powdery dirt that turn to deep, slick mud after rain. According to notes on my old Cibola Forest map, my son and I got bogged down on that same road 15 years ago, in August 1999. Instead, I opted for FR6, which on the map appears to be a more substantial road, skirting the western flank of the Datils rather than going up and over the mountains, and then loops back south on the eastern side of the Sawtooths.



But after the first few miles, FR6 deteriorates into a deeply rutted track – the campground host at Datil Well later told me no work had been done on the road in at least two years – and both FR6 and FR507 dead end at locked gates. After two hours of white-knuckle driving, wrestling my truck over rocks and through deep-sand arroyos, I failed to find any route that would take me north to Alamocita Creek and Red Canyon. I had no choice but to turn back (and that required reversing up the “road” for a quarter-mile before I could find a spot wide enough to turn my little truck around) and retrace my route back to US60.



Which brings us to [Datil Well](#), another of my favorite campgrounds in New Mexico.

Less than a mile west of Datil, this BLM site offers comfortable campsites well-spaced in piñon/juniper uplands, three miles of easy to moderately difficult hiking trails, with a classic country general store/restaurant just down the hill – when you stop by check out the giant snakeskin tacked to the wall.

Setting up camp, I had a small taste of the disappointment, weariness and frustration Guilfoyle must have experienced at this point in his long pursuit. My fingers were cramped from gripping the steering wheel, my back and shoulders ached from hours of wrestling my little pickup over ruts and potholes and through deep-sand arroyos, my eyes red and itching from squinting into the dust and sun glare, and my hemorrhoids inflamed from bouncing around on those all-but-nonexistent roads. But what grieved most was that it was all for nothing. I had set out to reach the junction of Alamocita Creek and Red Canyon, only to be thwarted just short of that goal.

As I sat down to a dinner of pork 'n beans and bitter coffee (I was out of sugar), I could picture Guilfoyle, a young gentleman of good Maryland family, sitting by a campfire and gnawing on tough salt pork and stale hardtack, surrounded by a score of illiterate ex-slaves and another two dozen even more uncouth savages. He and scout Frank Bennett were the only white men within two days' ride, chasing a band of renegades who would treasure the opportunity to hang them head downward over a small fire.

It's not hard to imagine how Guilfoyle must have felt after another long day in the saddle, with no end in sight. They had been chasing Nana for three weeks, caught up with him twice – three times if you count Bennett's running fight over the Plains of San Augustin – and seen him slip away all but unharmed each time. And now the old fox had eluded them again.

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