

## Ormand Family Activity

### July 2013: The Apache Trail

The Fourth of July fell on a Thursday this year, and in the great wisdom of the Raytheon machinists union (that negotiates the holidays with the Company), they chose to NOT take the following Friday as a holiday. This means masses of employees took Friday off to make it a four-day weekend! Considering that Charity will be going on a "mission" trip to Ireland this year, leaving later in July, it seems like this is a great opportunity for a weekend adventure. We have purchased some discount coupons on the "Dolly Steamboat" ([www.dollysteamboat.com](http://www.dollysteamboat.com)), so it seems like this is a great time to tour the lakes of the Salt River Project along the Apache Trail northeast of Phoenix.

The plans are complicated mildly by the fact that Faith is working as a volunteer at the Arizona Historical Society ([www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org)) this summer, on Fridays until 4, so we cannot leave earlier than then. The first leg of the weekend adventure involves Friday afternoon:

- Checking into the hotel in Mesa, and dumping the bags,
- Visiting some antique shops in east Mesa, along Main Street - except it turns out that pretty much all the shops close at 5:30 or 6:00, so we can only check out one for about fifteen minutes, barely enough to do more than inspire us for a return visit,
- Going through downtown Mesa (because it's on the way to the 101 freeway) and looking at the massive Mormon temple complex in the midst of an otherwise poor (agriculture, no business to speak of, no visible industry) little town,
- Stopping off in Scottsdale for a drive-through to look at the backside of the Fashion Square Mall, the "waterfront" district (lining the canal), and the iconic Scottsdale fountain on 6th Street,
- Going to the Studio Movie Grill ([www.studiomoviegrill.com](http://www.studiomoviegrill.com)) for dinner while watching the silly *Lone Ranger* movie.



I mean *this* iconic Scottsdale fountain. On 5th Avenue.

As in [5thavenuescottsdale.com](http://5thavenuescottsdale.com)

The next morning, we are up (relatively) early and ready to start the *real* adventure! A short drive around the 202 freeway, get off on State Highway 60, and we go through Apache Junction, a city that apparently consists of little more than mobile home and RV parks. Then we turn off onto State Highway 88 - the Apache Trail.

The first thing that appears is the looming front range of the Superstition Mountains. Out there somewhere, in the shadow of Weaver's Needle peak, is the Lost Dutchman Mine.





The Superstitions and the Needle and the Legend of the Lost Dutchman is the inspiration for one of my favorite juvenile books - *The Mystery of the Haunted Mine*. Of course, when I discovered this book in elementary school in Ohio, other than the linke to Arizona, I was unaware of the legend, or that the book was anything more than a rousing good fiction story!

On the way into the mountains, we pass the Superstition Mountains Museum, the Lost Dutchman State Park, and Goldfield, a "ghost town" that was formerly honestly a rough-and-tumble gold mining camp of several thousand inhabitants, now rescued and turned into a tourist attraction with a steakhouse. All of these are worth a return visit, some other occasion when we aren't trying to get to our cruise on time.

[superstitionmountainmuseum.org](http://superstitionmountainmuseum.org)  
[azstateparks.com/Parks/LODU](http://azstateparks.com/Parks/LODU)  
[goldfieldghosttown.com](http://goldfieldghosttown.com)

The nice paved road starts getting very windy, and we follow vans and pickups towing boat trailers. Soon we arrive at the first of the Salt River Project works - Saguaro Lake. Unsurprising for the holiday weekend, the place is packed with Zonies looking to play in the water.





Quite a ways further, we arrive at our primary objective - Canyon Lake, and the Dolly Steamboat dock. It's a pretty well-run outfit, not only because they have a photo spot, but two lines for reservations (including us) and walk-ons (most of the people present). It's also immediately obvious that the Dolly is not really a steamboat. Slight disappointment

which is soon forgotten in the light of the cruise itself.

We are among the first aboard, and pick a table in the upper cabin near the sliding-glass aft door. It takes about a half-hour for everyone to board, and it doesn't look like there are any unfortunates left at the dock when we leave; even a few empty tables on the sunny upper deck. The cabin downstairs has a snack and memento counter, and soon we are munching on popcorn and sipping lemonade and soda.



A view over the stern confirms the falsity of the "steamboat" motif - a fake paddle wheel that merely turns on its bearings in the water flow.

As at Saguaro Lake, there are a lot of Zonies on motorboats and jet skis. Deeper in, we spot a few kayaks and a couple of houseboats. The marina near the Dolly dock rents pontoon boats.



As with all Arizona lakes, the water fills the river canyon behind the dam, so the "shores" of the lake are actually the higher walls of the canyon, all very rocky and steep, with caves here and there. I expect there are other caves and canyon features underwater, an opportunity for SCUBA-trained people.





It's funny to me to see cactus growing just a few feet from the water. I'm sure this monster saguaro with so many arms was growing up on the canyon wall before the dam was built and the water came almost to its feet. Makes me wonder how many other saguaros are under the surface!

Another consequence of the canyon-reservoir and the steep walls is the opportunity for cliff-jumping. The boat passed one such cliff, about three stories tall, with young people climbing up and jumping off the top. This big rock is on the order of ten stories! You'd want the area under the surface scouted for depth before trying anything like that, of course.



Before we started, we saw a bighorn sheep on the heights on the opposite shore, too far away to see without binoculars (which we brought). While we were cruising past such a canyon height, the skipper-narrator alerted us to a goat on the top of the ridge. Still too far for decent pictures. But they ARE out there! Pretty neat.

In some places, there are little bays in not-so-steep shorelines, where people can pull their boats in and do some primitive camping. We pass this island with a proper dock where boaters can tie up and carry their

picnic lunches to tables under ramadas. Very nice.



The cruise took more than an hour, and was very pleasant - time and money well-spent. On the way back, we get a glimpse of the back side of Canyon Lake Dam. Probably getting a look at the front side involves an

arduous and probably dangerous hike.

Two sisters enjoying the view from the now-deserted aft deck.



When they tire of this and come back inside, Mom and I go out. Jerri's turn at the rail.

And then mine.







The boat ties up at the dock and all the happy, chatty tourists disembark. Here's a better view of the boat, including the fake "smokestacks" riveted on the roof of the upper cabin. But no complaints, it was a fine experience.

Back on the road, we leave Canyon Lake and continue north on Route 88. It's past noon, and I figured it would be more interesting to have lunch at the "town" of Tortilla Flat, than at the (nice looking) marina restaurant at the Lake. On this side of the road is the saloon/cafe and "general store" (tourist shop). On the other side is a campground.





Charity and Faith make a new friend. I think his name is Kalijah, or something like that.

The saloon/cafe is an interesting place. The seats at the bar are old saddles. The walls are completely covered with dollar bills marked with visitors' names and places of origin (not a few Canadian dollars and a few Euro bills, as well). No A/C; instead, odd reciprocating ceiling fans. There wasn't a lot of seating, and it was fairly packed, and it took a while to get service, but the food was pretty good.

Tortilla Flat was an honest-to-goodness stagecoach stop at the start of the Twentieth Century.





It was also an honest-to-goodness town. This shabby building was the first schoolhouse, now a museum. Inside are the stories of celebrities that came through, and the reason for why there's not much of a town left - flash floods roaring down the canyon washed the town away more than once. In fact, unless it was just hidden behind the tourist area, I didn't see any "town" left at all.

Next to the museum and the stagecoach was a snack shop. We got ice-cream (and the Prickly Pear flavour is better than you might have thought!), and went back outside and did our usual outhouse commentary.



Shortly after Tortilla Flat, Route 88 turns into a dirt road. Jerri started remarking how amazed she was that the state would not have improved the road. Really, however, there isn't much traffic on the road, other than tourists and holiday boaters. After a while, we arrived at a summit, Fish Creek Hill, with a rest stop and a walkway with interpretive signs. Such as one explaining how this was a stagecoach route, Hard to believe that any wheeled vehicle could manage the

terrain. The greyish ridge going behind the huge rock in the middle of the photo is the road, and it took the CCC workers a long time to blast and fill and level that roadway in the '20s and '30s. What was there before then? Not much. Fancy a stagecoach ride on those terms?



While we were looking, a car went up the Trail. That's a one-lane dirt "state highway". Treacherous, too; when we left, just down the hill was a light truck that had broken its front end. I can't imagine trying to get a tow down on this road. Much further along, we came across another broken-down van. Must be loads of fun hauling a large

motorboat on a trailer, but there were people doing it.

"Arizona Highways". Literally!

Classic Arizona landscape. Fish Creek Canyon. Breathtaking.



I was pleased to see two young women getting out well past the interpretive trail and exploring. They report a fabulous close-up view of the canyon.





Usually, spring is the time for flowers, but even in July, everywhere, agave plants were blooming.

Mom and Dad are sitting in the car, waiting for the explorers to return. When they do, we leave the rest area and continue cautiously up State Highway 88, around blind corners and over one-lane bridges, dodging large rocks emerging from the dirt road and skirting holes and trying to do the best we can with the washboarding. After some while, we come to the third lake - Apache Lake. We drive along this lake for a long, long while, often right down on the shore. Lots of boat parties.



Finally, we get to the end of the Apache Trail, and emerge on paved road... right in front of the mighty Roosevelt Dam.





Looking back is the sign for the Apache Trail Scenic Byway... and a very dusty Dodge van.

Further up is a turnoff to view the entire front of the front of the dam, with the spillways and the powerhouse. All the Salt River dams are hydroelectric works. Must be pretty spectacular when they have to use the spillways for lake level control.





The above was not a file picture. I was actually there.



The back of the dam. Seems the level is a bit low. Also, I didn't see the intakes, nothing like the huge whirlpool drain objects at Hoover Dam.

Turn away from the back of the dam, and there's this beautiful arch suspended bridge. Turn left and cross the bridge to go to Payson. Turn left to go to Globe. We cross the bridge just to say we did, and then head back towards Globe.





We finally find a place where we can get close enough to the water to put our feet in. Faith did not care that her pants were wet to the knees. I rolled mine up.

Jerri and Charity were equipped. Actually, we had brought the swimsuits - but no towels - but there were no facilities at all, and girls didn't want to try to change in the van. Didn't matter; the delight of feeling the water in Arizona is the same. Well, maybe Faith felt it longer than the rest of us.



At this point, we have achieved our goal of touring the Apache Trail, seeing the Salt River Project lakes, and cruising Canyon Lake on the Dolly "Steamboat". Home we go.

We stop in Globe to get gasoline, and to take a quick look at the old mining town. Still alive and relatively prosperous, it would be nice to take a return visit and actually walk around some. Then we leave Globe and take the turn onto State Highway 77. This is another "scenic byway", but at least it's paved. On the way down to Winkelman, we see this majestic mountain formation. Is this the Pinal Mountains? Or the Mescal Mountains? Hard to say. Still beautiful. Look at that folded sedimentary layer along the top - evidence of the Flood.



Coming up the road toward Globe is a flatbed truck carrying copper ingots! I'm wondering where they are coming from. Then I remember Winkelman has a smelter. Coming out of the mountains, we come to Winkelman, and I decide to turn in and look. Sad, practically deserted. I didn't realize that Hayden was right next to Winkelman, kind of a "siamese twin" thing, and just as abandoned. I saw the smelter smokestack and thought about driving up to it and having a look, but daylight is already fading - it's getting late, too dark for photos, and it's still a long way to Tucson.

Further down the road is Dudleyville. I tease my children about their lost opportunity to be "The Girls From Winkelman" or "The Girls From Dudleyville", snappy human-interest story byline. But I would have had to be in mining for it to be real. Still, growing up away from the large cities, with the Arizona wilderness right outside the door... that's something I would have chosen.

Mammoth/San Manuel is next. Another mining town; the mine has closed, but the town seems to be carrying on.

Then Oracle. Then Catalina. Then Oro Valley, and the pace of civilization is picking up. And finally rolling back into Tucson from the north side.