

Ormand Family Activity

February 2012: Gem Show, Arizona Centennial

I have been looking forward to 14 February 2012 with great anticipation for some time now - *The Arizona Centennial!* A once-in-a-lifetime experience!



I've been reading the events on the various websites (such as www.az100years.org) and the tourist magazines... and being largely unimpressed, holding out hope that the reality will be better than the literature indicates.

February is also the month when the annual TG&M Show is held, and we intend to see at least some of that. So this promises to be a busy month.

Tucson Gem and Mineral Show

Every year, soon after Christmas, we start to see the big tents going up at the hotels west of the freeway, and the really big one in the parking lot on Granada west of the Convention Center. Traffic gets busier, license plates from all over the country are seen all over town, and foreign languages are heard in restaurants and convenience stores. Soon the banners advertising the Show are hung over the footbridge over Broadway, and articles and advertisements appear in the weeklies and newspapers. Now, usually, we just let this go by, since we are not big rockhounds (anymore; I used to be, a bit) - we might check out the Big Show at the Convention Center. But this year, I see tents going up at *Speedway and Main* (never seen that before) and a banner stretched

across Main to the north of the intersection proclaiming "Tucson Mineral and Fossil District". So this year... I think we'll look around.

I do some googling before we go on Saturday morning, and learn that one big show where the public is welcome is at Hotel City Center on Granada just south of St. Mary's. We'll start there.



It is amazingly packed when we arrive; thank goodness for the parking helpers in their orange vests, who help us to a little patch of ground since all the "stalls" in the dirt overflow lot are taken already. Outside the hotel are pavilion style tents and tables of minerals and cut

rocks. Outside one are polished stone picnic tables. Outside another is a large array of river stones from India (think "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom"). Here on this grassy area are some of those enormous geodes from South America.

Beautiful, full of amethyst crystals. Some of the others have large pale calcite crystals among the purple amethyst. Awesomely expensive. Not sure what you'd do with it, at least as a private citizen, unless you had a mansion big enough for large decorative knick-knacks like this. Or a hotel or fancy business or a restaurant wanting to have something beautiful and interesting for the lobby.





Big slab with large fossil trilobites embedded. Of course, at one point this was a large piece of stone dug from a site, and the rockhounds cut a thick slab from it and then painstakingly flaked away the softer stone to reveal the fossils. We saw that sort of thing all over, and even in the ballroom at this hotel,

you could get "kits" of a stone and the tools for flaking away the embedding material from the fossil.

Inside the hotel lobby there were several thick guide books like this one, full of gorgeous advertisements and directions to the other shows around town. One of these guidebooks had directions to "metaphysical" vendors and explanations of the powers of various minerals and crystals - apparently the "New Age" aspect of the Gem Show is a big draw.





The smaller guide was in many ways superior to the larger one. There was an International "EZ-Guide" with descriptions of other big gem and mineral shows all over the world. As we were to discover, the gem, mineral, fossil, lapidary, meteorite, et cetera scene is Really Big - worldwide!

Inside the hotel grounds, Faith is intimidated by an animatronic dinosaur. "Minerals" connects to "Fossils" connects to "Dinosaur" results in very much non-rockhound toys like these. Hey, it's Money!





Every single room in the hotel is occupied by a vendor. Very few of the rooms were still equipped with beds, so the vendors must have been lodged elsewhere. There were vendors from other parts of Arizona, Colorado, even Vermont and Delaware, and as far away as France (several shops), Germany, some African nations, a few South American vendors.

Amazing. We kept suggesting to Faith that she should try out her high-school French on appropriate exhibitors!

The diversity of products as well as nationalities is impressive. Most rooms have mineral specimens. Some have books, some tools, one had a variety of seashells (and Jerri had to get some). Lots of "meteorites"; I'm guessing that was a speciality of this particular show. Here are bins of slabs and cutting rough for the lapidaries. I think I still have some gemstone slabs I got from the show many years ago.



Just to say again what I've said before: My uncle, Clayton Gibson, was one of the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society members who more than fifty years ago initiated the Gem Show, and put it on the map by arranging to have the Smithsonian participate. It has since become one of the world-famous rockhound events, with several big shows in addition to the TG&MS show at the Convention Center. Many of the shows are hosted by the hotels in the downtown area, especially along the frontage road west of the I-10 freeway, and many of the shows are for *wholesalers only*. But my uncle was a dealer; he had a "business" and a tax license, so on the few occasions that he took me along, he got me a wholesaler's badge. In retrospect, that was cool, but it didn't gain much advantage, because the primary aspect of dealing with

wholesalers is, they buy large quantities and lay out a lot of money, and *that* is where the wholesaler discounts come from. Unless you are *really* into collecting or lapidary or jewelry-making, the wholesaler deal gets you nothing, and you might as well enjoy the retail shows. Like this one at Hotel City Center.



After we walk around the hotel rooms (going into only a few of them, because there are a *lot*, and most have the same sort of things), we check out the Ballroom. *Big* fossils.

And a tyrannosaurus rex skull. I don't think we've ever been so close to things like this; far more interesting than looking at museum exhibits. Same millions-of-years evolution byline, though.



That was the end of the visit to the show at Hotel City Center. Looking at the maps in the guide book, it appears there are some bead shows at Alameda and the Freeway. This gives us an opportunity to go further down Main, park the car (always free parking at metered spots on weekends), and walk over to the Pioneer for lunch at Eat-A-Burger (eat-a-burger.com). After that, we attempted to walk down Alameda... and there was nothing there. Not even a place where shows could be set up! So we looked at the map again, and sure enough, while the shows were on the map where we were standing, the address was the

Doubletree Hotel on Alvernon!



As we are leaving the downtown area, we stop in the "Mineral and Fossil District" for a look around. Almost all the tents have the same stuff - fossil trilobites and ammonites, large mineral specimens, vanity sinks and dinner plates cut from fossil-laden stone, tea-candle holders cut from

different kinds of translucent stone. And almost all the tents were run by Arab men.

Typical spread. The vendors would be either standing in groups talking to each other in their own language and watching you, or sitting in groups silently staring at you walking by. Wierd.



Further up Main, near Drachman, there were a few different items, including a colorful local character displaying his outsized welded-steel patio furniture. Not very many show-seers up here.



This black fossil mollusk variety was *everywhere*.

We finally pack it in and go back Speedway toward home. On the way we stop at the Doubletree; sure enough, an amazingly large bead show is here. It is about 6:00 and they are closing down, so we have to come back tomorrow afternoon, at which time Faith and Mommy walk all around the tables buying beads and jewelry findings and chains and what not. Turns out there are classes available for instruction in jewelry making, but we figure that these are for more advanced students, and if Faith wants to take such classes, she probably ought to start locally (and less expensively).

So ends our experience of the 2012 Gem Show. This time, we never manage to go to the Convention Center to see the centerpiece show, but this time, we have seen more of the peripheral activity than we ever did before. Maybe next year we will see the show at the Howard Johnson hotel, or the River Park hotel, or the one down on 22nd Street. We didn't have time this year; next Sunday is February 12, and the following Monday, all the vendors were packing it in and the tents were being taken down.

[Arizona Centennial Celebration in Tucson](#)

It so happens that next Sunday, February 12, was three things:

- The last day of the TG&MS Show at the Convention Center
- 2nd Saturday Downtown (www.2ndsaturdaysdowntown.com)
- The day Tucson celebrated the Centennial

And, because it is Saturday, it is late morning before we get everyone going and leave the house.

The first thing we see as far as Centennial celebration goes, is the Jim

Click auto dealers car show out in front of the Fox Theatre. Well, more than a car show, as the Rodeo Parade Museum (Rodeo is coming up, but we will be going up to Flagstaff that weekend) has got a stagecoach and a buckboard out. Miss Arizona is also outside at a table autographing photos. There's also some Arizona Rangers out front.

The cars were interesting. Here's a period Army G.P., complete with shovels for digging it out of the mud... probably they weren't used much out here.



A big touring car. I think it was a "Franklin", never heard of that model. I tell you, the owners are missing an opportunity to sell fares to people who want to be driven around the streets in these magnificent machines. I know I would!

We contemplate a Cadillac for Faith's use. Can you just picture her behind the wheel?



An old Packard touring car, in just marvelous condition.

Detail of side of Packard, showing the mounting of the spare tire and the serpentine horn and the running boards so wide that they hold storage boxes.



I had to take a picture of the old boy in turn of the century driving outfit, with a dust coat and a cap and goggles... talking on his 21st Century cellphone.

This was cute - a kiddie car of the same model and even the same color as the real car!



As it was after noon, we got our lunch - Mommy got a Subway sandwich, but Faith and I were more adventurous and stepped into the Thai place right there - and ate it outside at a sidewalk cafe table (Enoteca's, which is closed today... as so much of downtown is on Saturday, even 2nd Saturday). Watching the people go by. Including a family with a little boy who was allowed to sit in the kiddie car above and peddle it about the sidewalk. Right in front of us was the end of the car show - a late model Mustang - and we watched as the Jim Click salesman showed it off to passers-by.

After lunch, we headed into the Fox Theatre for the Centennial show. First, the emcee introduced the mayor, who read the City Council's official proclamation for Tucson and the Centennial, and then a Pima County supervisor, who made some official remarks in both English and Spanish, and finally, Miss Arizona (who promptly returned to her table outside after her little part on stage). Then, there was a monologue by an actor playing Tucson pioneer Fred Ronstadt, talking about life in the city before Statehood. Then there were two sets of "interviews" of famous Tucsonans. The first set represented the first fifty years, from 1912 to 1962, and included noteworthy people like the first lady senator, Carlos Jacome (played by an actual descendent of the *real* Carlos Jacome), and Cele Peterson. The second set represented the latest fifty years, from 1962 to the present. I didn't really recognize any names, but it included a black school principle, who made the point that, prior to Statehood, schools and communities in Tucson were naturally integrated, but afterwards, segregation was enforced. Next to him was the "president" of the Tohono O'odam Nation, who talked at length about the struggle for the right to run gambling casinos. Of course, I could not help but note the difference of moral concerns of the

two groups: the first with building and developing and culture and community, versus the second with government policies and civil "rights" and Indian "rights". Very telling, I thought, of where we are as a society today.

The show included a cowboy poet, who first told a funny story (in rhyme) and then sang a special song written by local country/western musicians about Tucson. I'll have to get that song for Charity, who seems to be developing a taste for this kind of music. Then the program ended with some audience participation cheering the state's 100th birthday. So we left feeling pretty good about Tucson's effort to observe the occasion.

Back outside, we walked up Congress to see what was happening for 2nd Saturday. There were tents set up on both sides of the street for vendors and organizations distributing literature. Where there were no tents, there were more old-timey or souped-up automobiles. Here is 5th Avenue, blocked off from traffic and a stage at either end. This view looks north. Note the little yellow racing car on the left side of the street. Also note - there's not that many people out here. Now, from what I've heard, toward evening, more young people start showing up, and the bands play harder music, but I was mildly surprised that there was so little activity.



Unique for 2nd Saturday was a Ferris Wheel outside the Hotel Congress. Jerri and Faith didn't want to ride.

I also couldn't get Faith to go down the super slide.



Most of the vendors under the tents were either selling bead jewelry or artsy stuff like painted ceramic light switch plates. In a vacant lot, some enterprising people had set up some bungee jumping rides. We didn't really stay to listen to any of the bands. All in all, I'm not surprised there weren't more people who came out for this - it's not like the 4th Avenue Street Fair. However, I'll give credit to the 2nd Saturday organizers for trying, and hope that an upward trend continues. Maybe when the trolley gets put through it will pick up a bit. At root, honestly, the 4th Avenue Street Fair succeeds largely due to the efforts of the shopkeepers on 4th Avenue, whereas downtown, there just aren't that many real businesses, and too many of those have the policy of not being open on Saturday. So I'll hope 2nd Saturday picks up and I'll keep my eye on the website for interesting shows (beyond the usual country or rock or latino bands - maybe like some enterprising local Christian or "crossover" bands who want to do more than just play "worship" music in church on Sunday morning!).

Two more things: In honor of the Centennial, the La Placita Village "cinema" ran an outdoor movie this Saturday, but Jerri didn't want to hang around downtown that long or after dark. Also in honor of the Centennial, all the museums were open for free. We stepped into "Science Downtown" in the Rialto Building so Jerri could get some stuff

at the gift shop, but we've already seen the (excellent) Mars exhibit, so we didn't stay. I rather wanted to visit the Arizona Historical Society museum on Stone, for free, but as we were passing by, we saw they were already closed for the day.

Nice try, Tucson. Good show for the Centennial. Best wishes for 2nd Saturday. Maybe next year for the Gem Show (which maybe was were all the people were).

Arizona Centennial Celebration in Phoenix

Two days later, it's *Centennial Day!* I take the day off, and we take Faith out of school on the theory that the experience will be far more educational than another day in class. Besides, it really is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I don't know whether, in the infinite extent of eternity future, we will look back and say, "I observed the Centennial of my native state of Arizona"... but it's got to be better than having to say, "I missed the Centennial because I didn't care and I just kept doing all the other pointless things that I had always done." Need some perspective here. Anyways, "early" that morning, we were on the way.



Within two hours we were in the capital, driving around the west end of the government center looking for a parking place. Amazingly enough, it's easier to find a parking place in downtown Tucson than in downtown Phoenix! Lots of parking places, but all for government employees. But we

finally ditch the car and walk over to the Capitol, where on the east lawn we find a "mall" of tents with organizations were selling items or handing out info. There were some very interesting outfits here, including the Confederate Air Force that flies historic airplanes out of Mesa, a military band recreation group that had some old brass instruments on display (and occasionally played them), the state and federal parks in Arizona, some "castle" (hotel) somewhere in the Phoenix area, voter registration (Faith is eligible after next month),

several historic and library foundations, and so forth. There was a booth selling the official Centennial medallions: \$5 for the copper, \$65 for the silver, and (pre-order only) several thousand for the gold coin. I probably should have picked up some copper coins. Jerri bought an uncirculated Arizona quarter, I got a poster, and we loaded up on free literature (which we will likely never use). Oh, and in the center of the mall, on both sides (seen to the left of the photo) were big tents in which the Postal Service was making available the commemorative Arizona Centennial stamps and envelopes with First Day of Issue cancellation marks.

Now, if we had gotten here a few hours earlier, we could have participated in the recreation of Governor Hunt's (the first state governor) walk to his inauguration at the Capitol. We could have heard Governor Brewer's speech for the occasion. But we didn't. And, if we had been here the preceding weekend, we would have been part of "Best Fest", with a lot of headline music acts and fireworks on Sunday night. So I was told. But we weren't. Here we are now at the State Capitol, where a big stage has been set up between the House and Senate buildings. There were more people here than at the event in Tucson, which is gratifying, but still not as many as I was expecting, and a lot of them looked like the man at the left of the photo, with a suit and tie with a folder under his arm and a Blackberry in his hand. In other words, like a politician or bureaucrat who was going to be down here anyways.



The forecast was for scattered rain showers and breezy, but other than running through decent rainfall coming up through Casa Grande (and again when returning), there's no sign. It's a beautiful day for the event, with just enough breeze to carry the flags. And other things: while I sit in front of the stage, I notice the statue on the copper dome is rotating in small arcs! The statue is moving... to face the breeze! They've rigged the statue on the Capitol dome as a weathervane! Cool! (Okay, geek moment over.)





Not all the headliner acts were over the weekend. Rex Allen, Jr. steps up to sing a special Arizona song - another one I'm going to have to find for Charity.

(Another thing we must do soon - Rex Allen Days in Wilcox!)

In the Fry's Supermarket tent was the Arizona Birthday Cake. It's early enough in the day that they haven't cut the cake, and are still handing out the cupcakes surrounding it.





Here is Jerri and Faith with their 100th Birthday Cupcakes next to Lt. Luke, Arizona's hero of the Lafayette Escadrille of World War I - and namesake of Luke Air Force Base west of Phoenix.

The commemorative stamp thing was a big deal. We were sitting in the audience when they unveiled the big model. We had already bought our First Day envelopes by this time, so it really wasn't news. But if we already missed the other official stuff, this will have to do.





The governor makes some remarks after the stamp presentation. Apparently, Arizona has had more female governors than any other state. I'm not sure why that's significant. Jan Brewer is pretty good, in my book. Not afraid to wag her finger at the President.

Another geek moment: You know those old-fashioned stereoscope things, which hold a card with a pair of pictures in front of an eyepiece so the scene can be viewed in three dimensions? Put an eyepiece... on a tablet computer! Darn clever.





Not the poster I got, but this locomotive steamed through the towns listed at the top, including Tucson. Unfortunately, I missed it.

We've done just about everything in the mall, and some comic is now on the stage, so we go across the street to the big merchandise tent, where we get some official Centennial tee shirts and some dinner glasses and some other stuff (but they're already sold out of some items, so we will have to order on-line,

www.shopaz100.com).

After that, we figure it's time for lunch. The ads said "food trucks", which was all right by me, and I was thinking, "Centennial. Special Event. It will be like the Food Truck Roundup in Tucson, with 15 to 20 vendors". There were five. But the city had set up a nice area for dining, lots of tables with umbrellas (thank goodness it wasn't as windy as it might have been). Faith munches her barbecue sandwich with the bright Phoenix sunshine behind her, along with the television trucks. An Irish singing group (or family, rather, perhaps) is now on the stage - maybe from the Phoenix Irish Cultural Center up on Central Avenue.



I was also expecting to see a lot of school children brought here for the event. I saw only one - a class of Navajo elementary school kids who had their lunch at the same time as we did.



Everyone had a Centennial special. Behold the hot dog truck's Centennial Dog. I don't know what the whipped pink sauce was, but it was pretty tasty.

Wouldn't be complete without Arizona's western horseman flavor. He wasn't official, as near as I could tell, but he must have had permission to ride through the mall area and the merchandise tent across the street.



The last thing to do is take advantage of the free-all-day State Capitol Museum tour. Of which the most interesting aspect is the four-story rotunda. Here's the Great Seal at the bottom (ah, good, the Political Correctness Police have not yet forced the effacement of the state motto: "Ditat Deus" (God Enriches)).

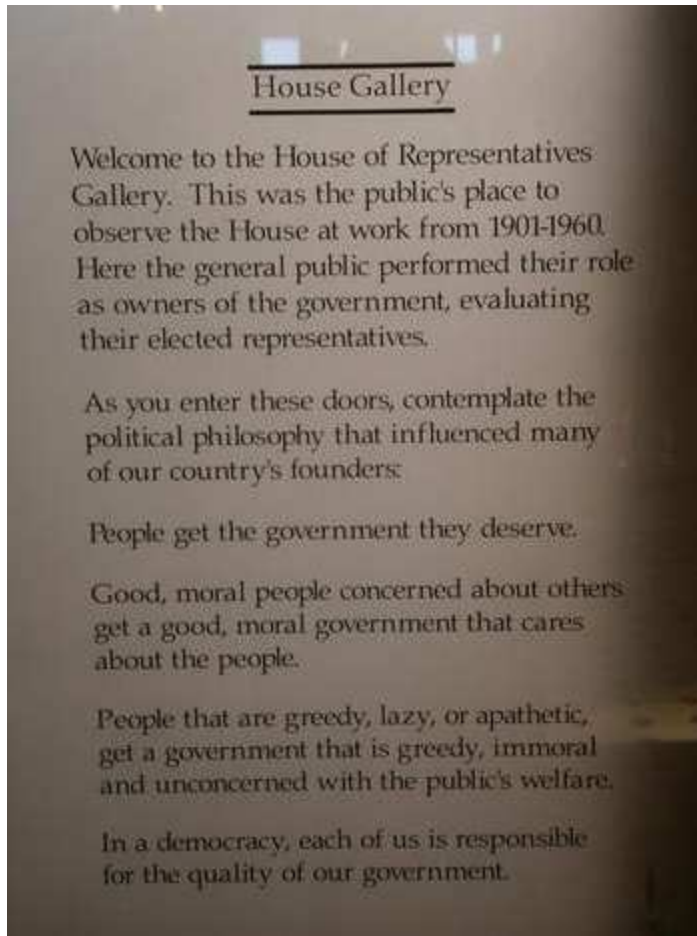
And the view from
the top floor.
Beautiful building.



Another view of the four
levels, with Faith and
Mommy to give perspective.
The bunting is just for the
special day. I note it is
United States red, white, and
blue, rather than Arizona
red, blue, orange, and
copper.

Faith is all alone in the Old House Chamber. Note the cute round windows up in the Gallery. There's also a skylight in the ceiling. I can only imagine what it must have been like for the House in session in 1912, packed with large men in full suits... and no air conditioning, in the summer, in Phoenix!





I love the panel on the Old House Gallery door - "People get the government they deserve". In two weeks, Arizona holds the Primary Election.

Also in the Capitol is the gift shop, where Jerri and Faith make some more purchases, and while they're doing that, I take a quick look around the room across the hall - photos of the various County Courthouses in the state - and around the corner, in the wing dedicated to the memory of the USS Arizona. I learn that there is an organization (www.gunstosalutethefallen.com) that has acquired one of the giant cannon from the USS Arizona *and* from the USS Missouri, and are taking donations to have them moved to Phoenix and set up on the memorial lawn east of the Capitol, where an anchor from the USS Arizona already rests.

Commemorative stamps are a real theme for the occasion. In our bag are some 100-year stamps and First Day of Issue postmarked envelopes. Here is a sheet of 50-year stamps. It occurs to me that Jerri and I were alive (but entirely oblivious) when these stamps were issued. We will not see the "sesquicentennial" (150 years), but our children will, if the world holds out.



And finally - The Original State Constitution. If I understand what the guide was saying, after the state wrote the constitution and applied for admission to the Union, the United States Congress reviewed the document and specified changes required for admission to proceed. The document to the right is the voting by the delegates from the various counties to approve the first amendment making these changes. It was not unanimous!

(I also note that the state constitution, written in 1910, I believe, was not as impressive of course as the hand-written "We The People" United States constitution from the late 18th Century. In the early 20th Century, typewriters were common.)



And so ends our official observance of the Arizona Centennial, in Phoenix the state capital, in the Old Capitol Building (under the rotating windvane statue). There will be more events this year, and perhaps some more impressive than the ones in Tucson and in Phoenix, but this has been a red-letter day in the life of this proud Arizonan.