

July 2007: Phoenix Vacation

Background

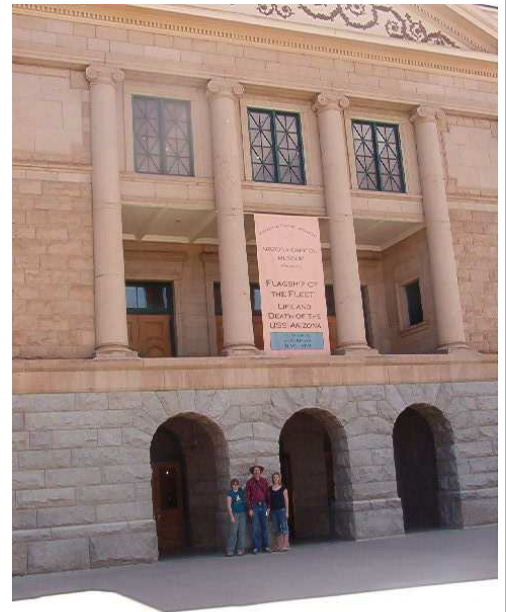
Last year, we were in Phoenix for something (concert? seminar?), so since we had never visited the seat of government in our own state, we dropped by and looked around. We saw the interesting mineral museum and walked around the "mall" in downtown Phoenix, but the Capitol Museum was closed. We resolved to return someday and see it. This weekend was that day.

Additionally, a few times previously, we had brought a vanload of youth to the AZ Southern Baptist youth conference, "Make Waves", where part of the attraction is visiting a big water park. This is now discontinued, so Mommy wanted her little Junior Higher to have the opportunity to visit the park we went to two years back.

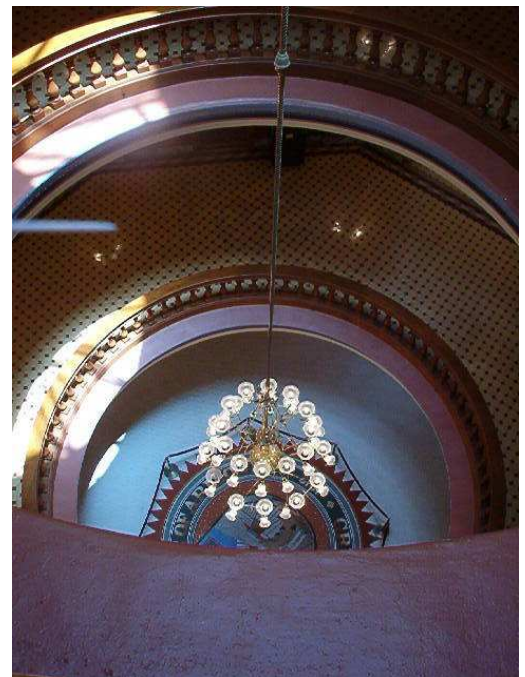
Finally, every time we go through Phoenix (northbound; Prescott or Flagstaff or Sedona), we pass an amusement park on I-17: "Castles and Coasters". Jerri was determined we would DO C & C this time!

Arizona State Capitol

We started our visit Friday morning (late) at the Capitol. Turns out that the state Capitol building is an amalgam of three periods; the original building from before Statehood, a second section added on later when the state government outgrew the original building, and a much larger later section added on to that. The original part is no longer used for official purposes, and is part of the Capitol Museum. This is sad in one sense; it's kinda neat that the old Pima County Courthouse with the blue tile dome is still in use, and I've gone there for County Recorder purposes (register a will and power-of-attorney) and Revenue (tax) purposes, and actually sat on a jury in one of the ornate old courtrooms. Yet the state Capitol serves no such official purpose; the old marble halls do not echo with the sound of legislators and aides. On the other hand, it's good that tourists can explore the old building unencumbered by barriers and metal detectors and "Official Business Only" areas.



The Capitol is a four-story structure; the stories are not tall, nothing like the U.S. Capitol, but there are FOUR levels. Under the dome is a shaft or atrium through all four. Here's a view from the top looking down on the chandelier and the State Seal. The Seal bears our Motto, "Ditat Deus", or "God Enriches", which the atheists are starting to try to remove.





replaced.

At the top level, directly under the Dome. Two of the "Figures of Arizona History" are visible behind the real people, and down the hall are the doors to the Senate Viewing Gallery. To the right is the cast iron cage of what we think was the original elevator, surrounded by a staircase. To the right of *that* is the current elevator - clunky, slow, and venerable, but probably safer than the one it

Down the hall behind me is the House Viewing Gallery. On the glass door is this writing, which I think is remarkably apropos for the citizens of Arizona and of the United States:

People get the government they deserve.

Good, Moral people concerned about others get a good, moral government that cares about the people.

People that are greedy, lazy, or apathetic get a government that is greedy, immoral, and unconcerned with the public's welfare.

In a democracy, each of us is *responsible* for the quality of our government.

House Gallery

Welcome to the House of Representatives Gallery. This was the public's place to observe the House at work from 1901-1960. Here the general public performed their role as owners of the government, evaluating their elected representatives.

- As you enter these doors, contemplate the political philosophy that influenced many of our country's founders:

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View of the House Chamber from the Viewing Gallery.



On the next level down is the House Chamber Floor. This room, or the Senate Chamber (which probably looks a lot like it) was where the Arizona Constitutional Convention sat. On the same level is a room with the story of the Constitutional Convention, and how judicial recall was part of the draft Constitution, and how President Taft refused to admit Arizona until those parts were removed.



Here we are *in* the original House of Legislators! An advantage to having the Capitol *not* an official-use building.



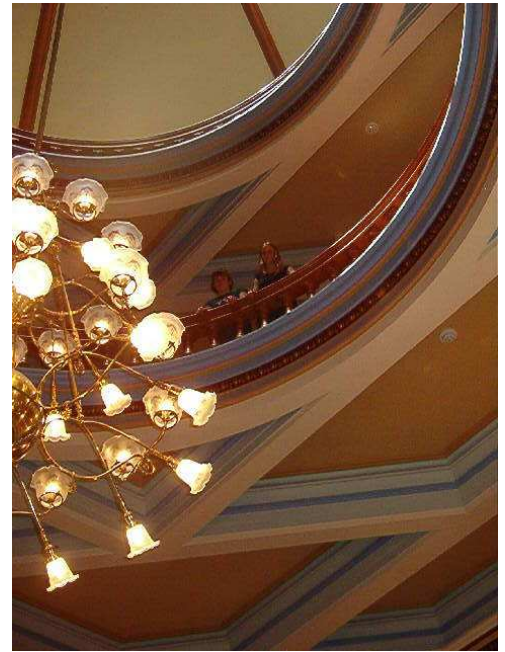
Also on this level is a museum-y exhibit of how the state legislature works in passing bills. All the steps portrayed seem to carry a lot of randomness, which may not be too far from reality. (just kidding) (I think)



Two potential future Arizona legislators trying their hand at the process.



The next level down has the offices for Game and Fish Service, Mine Inspector, Agriculture (cattle industry), Recorder, and other departments of the fledgling state that used to fit in offices in the Capitol but now have buildings of their own along the "mall", as large as the original Capitol building. Such is the advance of bureaucracy. The bottom floor has the office of the Governor, with a startlingly lifelike figure of the first governor, Mr. Hunt (who was also president of the Constitutional Convention, strange how that works), and of course the gift shop.



It really is a grand building. The open balconies of the Rotunda have captured the imaginations of these citizens.



That was the end of our tour of the old Capitol building. We then walked through the later additions to the new Capitol, and descended to the basement for lunch. The Legislature was not in session, so there was less activity than we might have expected, but there was still plenty. After lunch, we went back through the building and left by the door we had entered. The modern House and Senate Chambers are just outside the door, so we checked out the Viewing Galleries of those. The Senate was not too much larger than the chamber in the old building, so today's state Senators could probably meet in the original chamber - except for their roomier desks and all the microphones and computer stuff they seem to need. The House was larger - and occupied! From what we could understand, a Poli-Sci class from ASU was holding a mock legislature to "vote" on amendments to the state budget. It was interesting, educational, and they were tickled to have some citizens in the Gallery watching!



The last addition to the Capitol, looming over the parking lot.

Waterworld

There were two candidates for the Make Waves water park. We went two years, and the first year was better than that last, but we couldn't remember which was which. Jerri chose [Waterworld](#) based on the description, and it appears she picked right.

Waterworld is quite similar to [Breakers](#) in Tucson/Marana, in that it has a big wave pool and several slides. I'd say the "fun" quality is better at Waterworld than at Breakers, and probably the equipment at Waterworld is kept up better. (Of course, my personal preference would be [Wyatt's WaterWorld](#), which is now closed permanently, boo hoo.) Waterworld also has some speed slides ("Kilimanjaro") and a river tubing course, which are obviously on opposite extremes of the excitement spectrum. And/or cognition spectrum. The speed slides are so fast and throw up so much water that you pretty much have your eyes closed the entire time, except for the near, steeper slide, in which you can see yourself falling over the edge for a terrifying moment before the spray starts. The water braking at the end isn't too pleasant (super-wedgies). I could take 'em or leave 'em. Jerri likes the lazy tubing course, but I found I needed two tubes to keep my feet from dragging along the bottom of the 3-foot deep channel.

It was a fine way to end our Friday. It wasn't too crowded, there was plenty of effective cloud cover, and aside from a skinned elbow, we didn't suffer any losses. My only beefs were:

- We got bar-coded wristbands at the gate, but they fell off at first contact with the water. I can't believe the WW staff didn't know about this shortcoming with their wristbands. I don't know what they're for, either, since we used it only to purchase a locker rental.
- I took my camera, but I didn't take an opportunity to unload the Capitol pictures before entering WW, so I don't have any WW pictures. Which is okay, since the only thing picture-worthy was speed-slide riders. And I was the only one who did *that*!
- Girls in bikinis. This is in general why I dislike water parks. I don't need any help in moral stumbling in my thoughts. Fortunately, there weren't all that many younger women, mostly small girls. Many of whom still feel obligated to wear bikini swimsuits.

After three hours, we were pretty much done with WW, and thoroughly raisin-skinned anyways. So we dried off, got dressed,

and careened down the freeway to [Arizona Mills](#) and [Rainforest Cafe](#). Jerri likes it pretty much, I think it is more show than taste, and a tad expensive at that, but we don't (can't) go frequently, so I don't mind too much.

Castles and Coasters

Saturday started off with the free breakfast at the hotel, and a dip in the pool while the Mexican landscape workers blew leaves off the cool-deck. It's funny/annoying that hotels are so litigation risk-averse that they won't allow diving in an 8-foot-deep pool. Then we checked out and drove up I-17 a little ways to [Metro Center](#) and [Castles N Coasters](#). We arrived at about 10:00, and the place looked closed, with a few locals sitting outside. The sign said something about 12:00, so we decided to walk through the mall for a bit. After that, it was lunchtime, so we went to the Souper Salad restaurant there in the mall complex.

Interesting, no? We thought so. Good, cheap food: Salad, soup, pasta. Nachos with watery cheese sauce instead of creamy cheese sauce, not so good.



Jerri had printed off some \$5 coupons, so we all got five-hour unlimited golf and rides passes for \$20 each. Not terrible. Inside the big palace building was the largest collection of video games and pinball machines I've seen! But that wasn't what we came for, so outside to get our clubs and balls and try out #1 of the four available miniature golf courses.

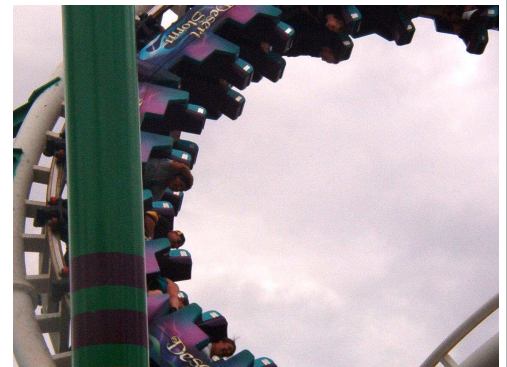


Hole 3, I think, on Course 1. Very elaborate and well-kept, better than Golf 'N' Stuff back home. Not as good as [Magic Carpet](#) (look [here](#) for a taste of some of the holes. Language alert!)

Here's the end. This was classic Phoenix summer weather: dazzling sunshine, 113 degrees, right next to the Arizona Canal and the accompanying humidity. Faith had such a red face I figured we'd better go inside before she fell over.



After narrowly avoiding heat stroke, we figured we should do some rides before tackling another golf game. So we entered the rides area of the park and stood in line for a l-o-n-g time at the bumper boats. But that was the longest wait of the entire visit. The roller coaster was quite good, if somewhat short. The log flume was also good (nothing like [Splash Mountain](#), but why compare Castles 'N' Coasters to Disneyland?). There weren't a *lot* of rides, but it was a nice way to spend a few hours, and knock down an Arizona attraction that we had been aware of for years.



Two loops, which meant Faith and Mommy waited for us on the ground. You can't really see, but Charity and I are inverted at the top of the right-hand picture.

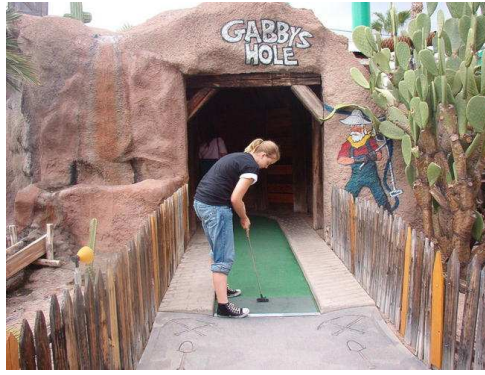


The vertical drop ride was taller than the one at the Pima County Fair, but not as tall as the one at Knott's Berry Farm ([Supreme Scream](#)), but it was pretty intense, all the same. Faith was brave enough for this one.

Faith really liked the Sea Dragon swing ride. I did, too!



Mommy got to bring us onto her favorite whirling ride, and the Carousel, and she was game enough for the smaller roller coaster. The day was wearing on, and our five-hour pass due to expire soon, so we figured we'd better start our last golf game before we left.



Another fun hole. Castles 'N' Coasters appears to be related to [Golf 'N' Stuff](#) back home.

Midway through the course. We got some wonderful cloud cover after we left the bumper boat ride, so the second golf game was quite pleasant. Note the water at this place; it's clear, not opaque green like at Golf 'N' Stuff. Faith enjoyed counting the balls and clubs at the bottom of the lakes



Toward the end of the course, an elaborate model castle, and the players enjoying a cool breeze.

At the end of our game (incidentally, I won both games - Charity can confirm), it was time to leave; almost 7:00, and it's still more than two hours back to Tucson. So we turned in our clubs and waded out through the press of locals entering the park after the heat of the day was passed. We stopped for dinner at Casa Grande, and Jerri talked with her worried dad, who told us about some bad storms around Picacho. We didn't see anything; it was two entirely enjoyable days in Phoenix. When we *did* arrive at home, we discovered that we had gotten a lot of rain. I love the monsoon season!