

## Ormand Family Activity

### December 2009: Taliesin West and Wrigley Mansion

Jerri has a membership with the Best Western Hotel Club, and so we get "points" whenever we stay at a Best Western hotel. She had accumulated enough "points" that she received a "one night free" certificate... but it had to be used before January 17! Where in Arizona during the winter can you go for a one-night stay at a Best Western hotel that is worth the effort? Our first plan is to stay at Cottonwood, and see Jerome the first day and the "Out of Africa" wild animal park at Camp Verde the second day, and we would do this the week after Christmas, when we all have the time off and two days before Faith has her wisdom teeth extracted. However, the forecast calls for winter weather, with snow flurries in Cottonwood, and the idea of facing the narrow, winding road through Jerome (the ghost town built on the side of a steep hill) *in the snow* is not appealing, nor the potential for the wild animals to be doing more than hiding in their shelters, so we change our plan to stay in Phoenix.

The Phoenix area, being the largest metropolitan area in the southwest outside of California, has *so much* to do and see. I spent the better part of a day (holiday, you know) compiling a list of things we could do in two days, and in the end, we narrowed it down to three main activities.



So Tuesday the 29th, we took our two-hour drive to the eastern part of Phoenix, to Scottsdale, and made our way to Taliesin West, the desert masterpiece of renowned architect and designer Frank Lloyd Wright. The entrance to the bookstore is below this fountain, where we buy our (pricey) tour tickets and look at the (pricey) FLW merchandise for about an hour. Faith is obviously filled with anticipation of the tour. And well she should be!

We didn't notice it until we were leaving, but on this wall piece behind the fountain is embedded a claw hammer! The masonry at Taliesin West is part of the Frank Lloyd Wright approach to architecture - use materials at hand to blend into the surroundings. So they picked up big rocks, set them into the forms, and poured concrete around them. This way, the surface of the rocks with their natural colourings and textures would show through. Looks like someone decided to do the same with a hand tool.





The obligatory family picture near a sign. Not many signs around the place, and the kids weren't too cooperative about a picture near the entrance sign way down at the public road.





Frank Lloyd Wright's preferred style was low, ground-hugging structures that fit in with the natural landscape, although he *did* do his share of tall imposing buildings. The part of Taliesin we see from the bookstore area is a mere taste of the exotic sights to come. This is the roof of the subterranean movie theatre.



As we begin our tour, we are introduced to the dominant theme at Taliesin West - the Oriental. These little tableaux were all over the place. In fact, they all look pretty much the same, and we took way too many pictures of them.

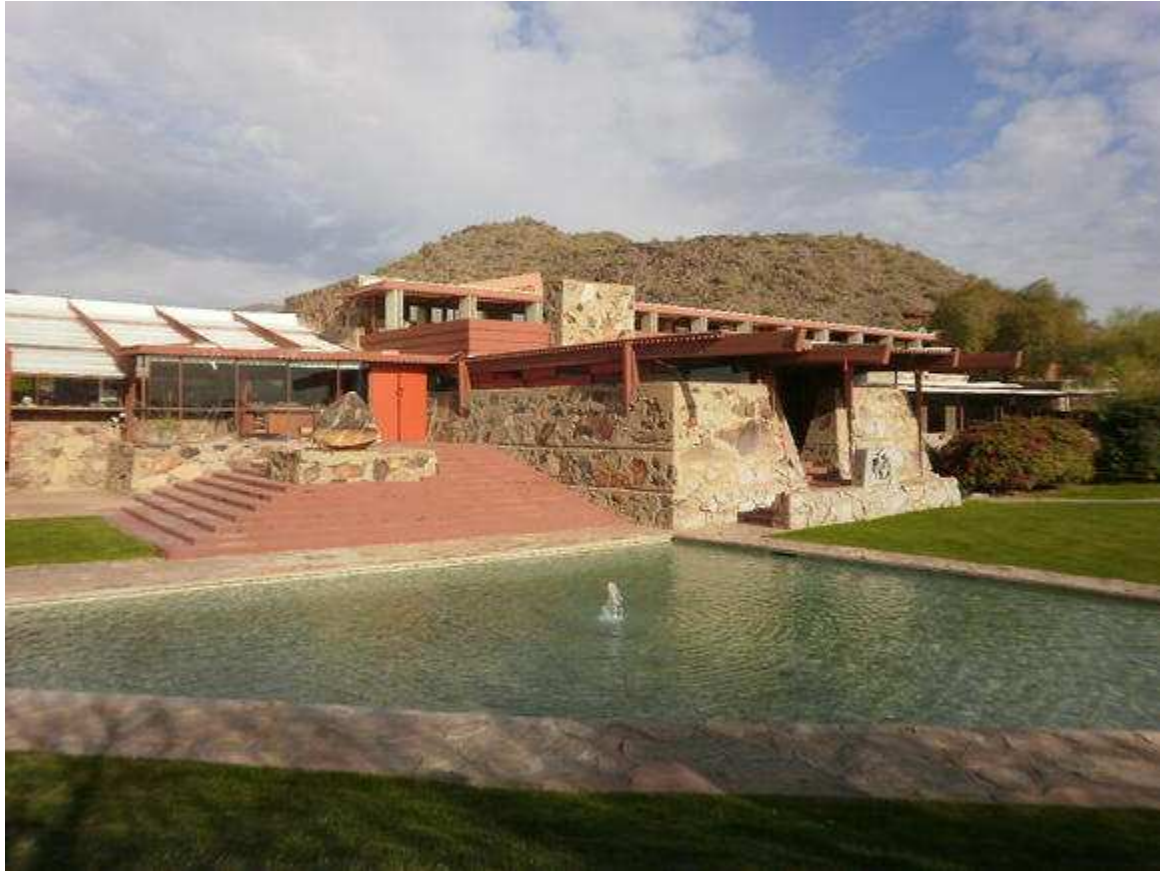


The first indoor part of the tour is Wright's office and working studio. Note the hexagonal door! The hexagon was another major theme of Taliesin West, showing up in furniture and decorative details in every view. The original ceiling was just canvas panels, to diffuse the light,



but this was soon supplemented by glass. We learned that Wright, originally from the Chicago and Wisconsin area, regarded Taliesin West as his "winter *camp*", and spent the rest of the year at the primary Taliesin site in Wisconsin. As such, temperature control was not a big concern.

Turn around, and you would see the big low table where Wright and his clients and "apprentices" would plan their jobs in the soft light and open air.



The exterior of Taliesin West, what evokes the strongest impression of the place and of the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright. The guide told us the guiding principle of Taliesin West: There was no client. Nobody else was calling the shots or paying the bills. Wright was free to experiment and try things and make mistakes.

Wright bought the property (640 acres) cheap in the mid '20s, when it was out in the middle of nowhere (now it is on the edge of Scottsdale, the high-rent part of Phoenix). He brought some "apprentices" (high school grads, college-age young people) with him from Wisconsin, and they lived in tents while they built Taliesin West *by hand* with picks

and shovels using local materials. What started as "apprentices" became students, today.

Turns out that, while Wright was an architect of tremendous skill and won many lucrative contracts, he also went years without any work. So he was never wealthy - his creativity was the focus of his life, not financial "success". Taliesin West is a monument to that focus on creativity.

The part of the building to the right, in the background, is the living quarters. The part with the door and to the left is the studio of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. Through the windows we saw the drafting tables and lamps and jars of pencils and models. And a skateboard...



Walking toward the living area, looking back at the studio.

This sculpture was outside the living area; the guide said it was part of the "oriental theme", but it looks pretty modern to me.



In the corner of the courtyard is an unassuming panel of overlapping wood sections. The guide pulls it open - it's the door to the Wrights' living room. It seems the architect liked to deemphasize his doors.

Since Taliesin West is a private operation, specifically for the School of Architecture, they don't permit photos of the living areas. The living room has a low ceiling, because Wright believed people should be the important things in a living room, and not be dwarfed by a high ceiling. There were seats everywhere, because the Wrights entertained a good deal. Some of the tour members sat in (hexagonal) armchairs designed by Wright; the guide asked what they thought, and some said they were comfortable and some said they were not. The guide informed us that to Wright, comfort wasn't as much a concern as appearance.

Leaving the living room and going outside, we visit Mrs. Ada Wright's bedroom - a small affair, since at that time ('30s), bedrooms were just for sleeping. The wall facing the outside courtyard is all folding panels.



Next door (double glass doors, actually) was Mr. Wright's room. This room included a small bathroom, added afterwards; originally, since it was a winter "camp", there was no electricity or bathroom facilities. Also, no closets - Wright believed that storage should be furniture, not architectural features. Outside the bedrooms is a grassy courtyard, and a little round (hobbit) "moon" door in the outside wall.



We leave the living area through a narrow passage and emerge at this pool (hexagonal again) with a fountain under the "arch". To the left is the "Kiva". While nearly all the rooms here are open to the sky (formerly under canvas panels, now with glass roofs), the Kiva is an entirely stone room, where (among other uses) Wright and his apprentices experimented with lighting techniques, like track lights and corner lights and lights embedded in glass panels in the floor. We also learned that, since Taliesin West was an

architectural "working model", not intended for habitation, it was therefore not subject to construction codes, inspections, and other regulations.

Note the rock in the pool - inscribed with ancient petroglyphs. Unlikely that builders could get away with that nowadays.

Above the guide, against the water storage tower, is this oriental-themed "sprite". These things were also staked out around the place.





Outside the breezeway between the living quarters and the dining hall was this fire-breathing dragon, with a gas jet to entertain evening guests. Another prominent use for Taliesin West is renting the various rooms for use for meetings, parties, and other private gatherings.





Lots of design in this bell tower. The bell is used for announcing classes, we were told.



Outside the theatre was a collection of sculptures by a former "apprentice" who turned out to be better at art than architecture, but was encouraged by the School all the same. Now her sculptures grace the park, like this "Archer", which is a smaller copy of a permanent statue on the grounds. (Probably the "oriental" disk piece above is another of her works.)

These smaller pieces are exhibited here (for sale). This is "Joan of Arc". Who of course was Noah's wife (my kids are still laughing at that one).







As part of Mrs. Wright's role as society liaison and entertainer, she had this theatre designed and built. The audience sat in five rows of chairs across the width of the building - small. The stage area was larger than the audience area. No proscenium arch; instead, curtains on rods pivoted out from the sides.

The stage is now being used as an exhibition by the students. The guide is explaining an aspect of the Frank Lloyd Wright School - "learn by doing". Second-year students are expected to design *and construct* small structures on the grounds *and live in them*. So before, it was "apprentices" living in tents while they built Taliesin West; now, it is students living in their own designs. The School gets around 400 applicants a year - and accepts four of them.

Note the ceiling - formerly just canvas panels. I wonder how weathertight it was. Looked to me that some of the updated panels have not fared too well from weather.





This lovely courtyard before the entrance to the movie theatre. Wright was a tremendous fan of movies, and designed a subterranean theatre - hexagonal, of course, with no right angles or flat surfaces that produce echoes. The guide told us that Wright was a high-school dropout, and failed to finish college, and joined a major Chicago architecture firm as an apprentice, soon becoming their key resource for acoustic design, a skill he would take with him into his independent career.

The theatre had benches, with small (hexagonal) tables for guests to use for their snacks or meals as they enjoyed the films. The round thing next to the door is a gong used to announce the start of the next movie.

A close-up of the fountain in the courtyard. There were glass ball floats inside the dome feature, which would move with the water waves and bump the dome, producing a pleasant noise.



This was the end of our tour of Taliesin West, and we found ourselves back at the bookstore with the cinema roof behind us and the hammer-embedded wall before us. We had learned much of the master architect Frank Lloyd Wright and experienced what this artist created when driven by nothing other than his own interests.

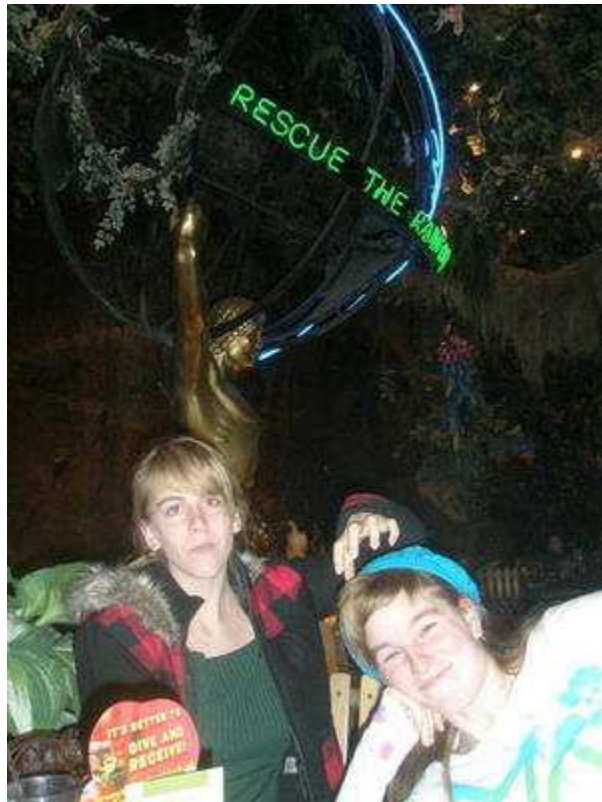
After leaving, it was after 5:00; too late to visit museums or other sights. But we had seen the Ikea store along I10, and heard stories of its wonders, so we decided to go back down south a ways and check it out. Sure enough, it's a Swedish import store with an astounding variety of furniture and decorations and household knick-knacks. There seems to be two grades, the cheaper do-it-yourself mix-and-match and the more expensive showroom stuff. I think. It was bewildering. And enormous.



Faith experiences the Ikea bounty in the kitchen furniture area.

There is a restaurant at Ikea, where you can enjoy... yes, Swedish meatballs. However, we have kind of a tradition of visiting Rainforest Cafe at the Arizona Mills mall, so the vote is to leave the huge import furniture store and go a few miles north to the mall.

Two girls at Rainforest Cafe. Sitting near the waterfall/fountain, I was a bit deaf after the meal.







Three girls at Rainforest Cafe.

That's the end of Day One. We find our free night at the Metrocenter Mall hotel. Next morning, after our complimentary breakfast, we start Day Two with the Wrigley Mansion.



Another Scottsdale affair. The mansion is on a hill, so you park your car in the lots at the bottom (by the canal) and walk up to the front door. Unless you want the valet to park your car. Which we don't. I think before normal hours, the valet isn't really on duty, anyways.



Inside the circular entry hall is the receptionist (who becomes our tour guide) who asks if we have reservations. We don't, and still get in for the 10:00 tour, but apparently reservations are advised. As we left, a different receptionist was answering a phone enquiry about the 3:00 tour, and it was evident that there was no room left.

The entry hall is the connecting point to the rest of the house, with a stair to a wraparound balcony and the upstairs hallways. Decorated for Christmas, and the sun shining through the south-facing exterior upstairs glass door.



The ceiling of the entry hall is an ornate sunburst with 24ct. gilding.

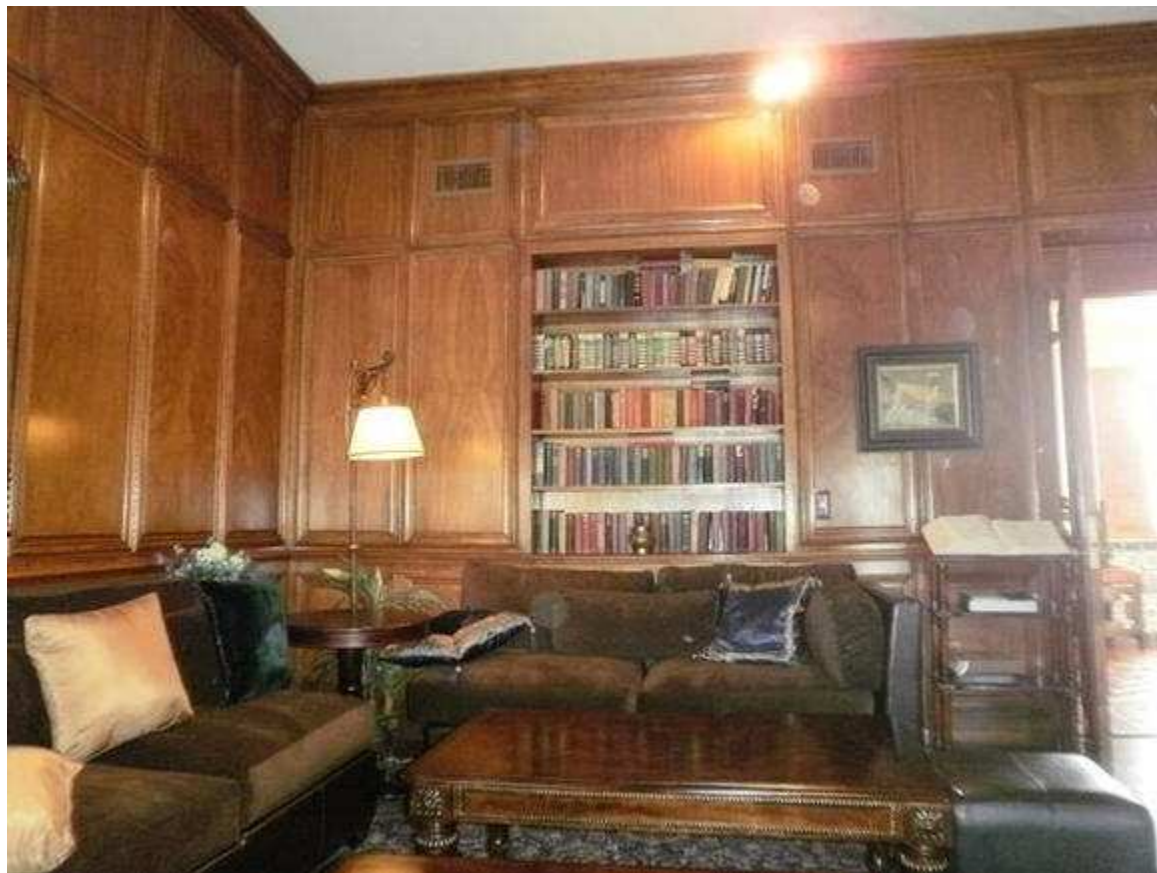


We are directed to wait for the tour in the library, second door down the hall. The first door is the ladies' restroom. Charity discovers the vanity.

One of the lamps in the ladies' room.



Faith is wondering what it might be like to live in a house like this one.



We arrived a bit early (probably how we managed to get in; we were the first ones), so we spend a fair bit of time in the library. There's not a lot of library here, and it turns out it didn't start as a library, but as a billiards room. We will learn that the house was built by Wrigley as an anniversary gift to his wife, and they used it as a winter home (like Taliesin West?), rather than a primary residence. Now, one of the main uses is for wedding receptions, and Charity finds some wedding photo albums in the dictionary stand by the door.





We learn that every room in the house is different, and this is the only one with wood panelling. The windows used to look outside to a porch, which has now been enclosed as a dining area. The mansion operates as a private club - hence only two tours five days a week. Over the fireplace on the other side of the room is a large-screen flat-panel television for use by club members.

Charity enjoys the elegance



Faith is overcome by the "vapours"

As we wait, more and more tour members arrive, and finally the receptionist/guide, who starts with a bit of Wrigley history. The patriarch was born at the turn of the 20th century, and was a high school dropout (like Wright?) who went into the family soap business and discovered a natural bent for salesmanship. The family wouldn't diversify, so he struck out on his own, successfully selling soap, then baking powder, then chewing gum. The chewing gum proved so successful that he eventually bought out the company, introduced some innovations like flavour ("Juicy Fruit" was the first, followed a few months later by "Spearmint"), advertising in magazines, and putting product for sale on stands near the cash register of shops. Later on,

during the War, he managed to sell the government on including Wrigley Chewing Gum in ration kits for the GIs. His fortune was enormous, and the company stayed in the family for three generations before it was sold to Mars Candy just a few years ago. Wrigley had five houses, including ones in Chicago (where he made his fortune) and Pasadena. This house was built as a winter retreat six miles from Phoenix, out in the middle of nowhere (sound familiar?). Eventually, the family sold the house (as Scottsdale grew, property taxes increased too much to justify a little-used house) as a historical landmark with the stipulation that all the original furnishings must remain - no "parting out".

Out in the hallway again, the guide pointed out the tilework, particularly the red tile in the floor, with six-point star shapes. Wrigley wanted this house to be "a star in the desert". He also owned pretty much all of Catalina Island (off the Los Angeles coast) and had a house built there (now an exclusive hotel), and created a business to employ the residents of the island - Catalina Pottery. This company produced all the tiles (including the roof tiles), which was shipped from Catalina to Los



Angeles, carried by train to Phoenix, and packed by mules to the construction site. Ultimately, to preserve Catalina Island from development, the millionaire donated it to an educational institute.





Continuing down the hall, we arrive in the main hall, or parlour, or living room. At one end is this piano, mirror, and Christmas Tree.



At the other end is this cluster of sitting furniture around the fireplace. I learned that this mansion was not heated only by fireplaces, but also by a central heating system (see the vent up on the wall). Taliesin West, as a "camp", had no heating other than fireplaces, and when it was adapted for year-round use by the School, ductwork had to be installed for A/C and heating *afterwards*, with the usual restrictions for Historical Landmarks. Note the small photograph on the wall between the painting and the doorway. To enforce the "no selling furniture" stipulation, photos were taken of the various rooms to document their contents. This of course also serves the purpose of showing what the rooms looked like when they were in domestic use.



The piano is a Steinway, altered at Wrigley's direction as a player piano with a remote control. The guide fired it up to play "Rhapsody in Blue", which George Gershwin, a friend of Wrigley, recorded on the piano just for him. The piano is priceless, more valuable than the mansion and the Scottsdale property, but there's that inconvenient "no selling the furnishings" rule. So when Geordie Hormel, heir to the meat packing fortune

("Spam"), who was a musician in his own right, visited and saw the piano, and learned he couldn't buy just the piano, proceeded to purchase the entire house! Apparently, the Hormel family still owns it, and it was Geordie's idea to operate it as a private club (faced with the homeowner's association restrictions to "private dwelling" or "private club"). Geordie was an artist as well as a musician, and we saw many of his paintings hanging in the club dining areas.

Our guide told us how often, Mr. Hormel would entertain club guests by playing this piano. It seems that Hormel was an unconventional sort (in keeping with his artistic and musician bent), with long hair and tie-dye shirts. On at least one occasion, a guest remarked how kind the club was to let the homeless man play for his supper!



Wrigley wanted to impart an air of royalty to this house, and here's the English lion that speaks of his own ancestry.



His wife Ada's ancestry was actually Scottish, but I guess the Fleur-de-lis was more "regal". The whole ceiling was intricately decorated and gilded with 24ct. gold.



Through the doorway was the west-looking patio, formerly an open air arrangement (with glass windows to keep the wind out), but now enclosed by the operation to serve as a dining/meeting room. Hence the stacked chairs. Downtown Phoenix is visible from here; in its day, there were no tall buildings, nor the city of Scottsdale riding right to the foot of the hill where this mansion stands.



We go back through the Entry Hall to go upstairs. Here's a fuzzy photo showing the wraparound balcony and our tour guide, Carrie. Behind Carrie is the men's restroom, which was originally a coat room, but so long ago that even the original staff couldn't remember it as it was. On the other side of the front door was another little room... lined by Wrigley-the-jokester in tinfoil gum wrapper material!



More regal trimmings - the top ring is a model of the French crown. The lower ring is a model of the English crown. Around the central lamp is a model of the crown of the Prince of Wales - Edward, who was a close member of the family and visited here upon occasion.





The Dining Room opens on the Entry Hall. More ornate decorations and gilding on the roof, which was left unfinished when Wrigley died in this house in the 60s. His wife lived another 20 years after his death, directing activities at this house, and ending up at the Pasadena mansion, intimately involved in the Tournament of Roses Parade, to which purpose that house has now been donated.

The Wrigley Mansion Club has the interesting approach to meals in that you pay what you think it was worth. Not fixed prices. Furthermore, they always keep space open for 10:00 tour visitors for lunch. We have too much to do today, so we pass.



Upstairs, we see the bedrooms, which again are converted for use for meetings and dinners, but fireplaces and wall hangings and such are still present. And the bathrooms. Mrs. Wrigley's bathroom was decorated in green (Catalina) tile. This used to be a bathtub, but a private club has little use for tubs, so it has been covered and converted to a couch. Can't see why a bathroom needs a couch, but whatever.

Charity is impressed by the elegant detail job on the tail of the toilet paper roll.





Again (as at Taliesin), as was common with the upper classes at the time, Mr. and Mrs. had separate bedrooms, for sleeping in. And separate bathrooms. In addition to tubs, each bathroom had a shower/steam bath closet in the wall. The master suites were in this wing; in the other wing were the guest suites, used primarily by visiting family members. The guide told us a story of the children stopping the tub and shower to see how much water the room would contain. At about three feet, the door gave in, flooding the room and much of the floor beyond. Mr. Wrigley just laughed, saying "he couldn't punish them for something he was likely to try when he was young himself"!



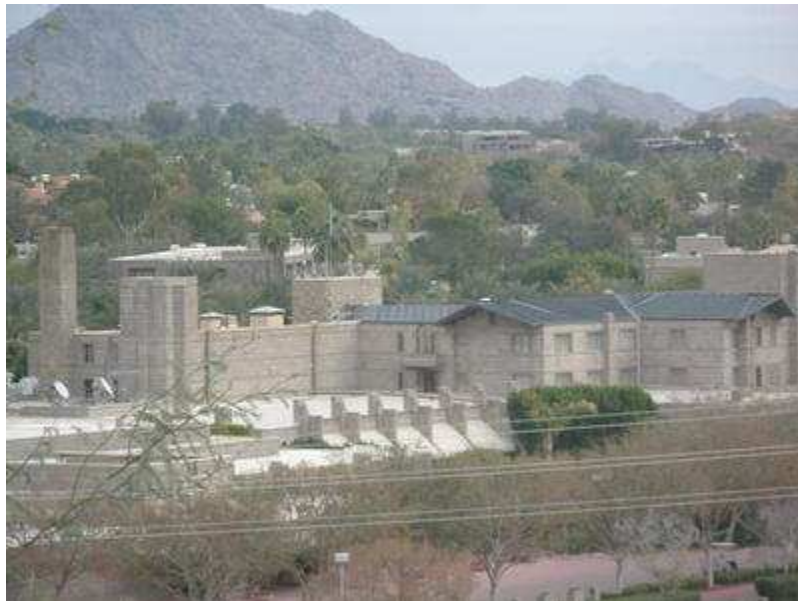
Tiled fireplace in guest bedroom

We see the chauffer's room, now converted for a bride's ready-room. The guide tells us that Wrigley was very considerate of his servants and employees. He instituted a five-day workweek for his domestics, and medical benefits for his employees, including guaranteed return after recuperation, unheard of at the time. He even offered his female employees the benefit of free hair salon and manicures! So much for the greedy capitalist image. In many cases, the private capitalist is more effectively concerned for the common people than the government could ever be.



Outside again, we look at the east wing (with the master suites upstairs, and its balcony with the six-pointed stars) with an appreciation for what is inside. More outside dining area for the club.

The Arizona Biltmore is right next door. It seems that, while other millionaires who had invested heavily were devastated by the '29 crash, Wrigley never trusted the stock market and kept most of his reserves in cash, and was relatively unaffected. This put him in the position of helping (buying out) the Biltmore project when it ran out of money. In return,



he used the Biltmore to house guests.

It seems the architect of the Arizona Biltmore was a Frank Lloyd Wright associate... who thought very poorly of the Wrigley Mansion design. No matter; what it may lack in innovative design, it more than makes up for in tasteful elegance and uniqueness.



Departing, we walk down the hill and get another look at the back patio area. The large garage (with only one door) is up a drive to the left of this picture. Of course, the garage is now converted to yet more dining space. Can't have enough, I guess. I hope the club (and the Hormel family) does well enough to pay expenses and Scottsdale property taxes and continue operating.





A closeup of the terraces above the back patio.

The Wrigley tour was *wonderful*, and our guide Carrie was knowledgeable and clearly enjoyed telling us all the stories. Now it is time to continue our adventures for today, so we get back on 24th, south through Scottsdale to Camelback, and westward to Central Avenue, where we leave the car in a Park & Ride lot, and get our tickets for the METRO Light Rail.

Which is a taste of what Tucson wants to do. The METRO has been running for a few years now, and we've seen it on previous visits but never had occasion to use it. The passes are available at vending machines at the train stations and usable on both train and buses... although we didn't see how the tickets we bought were actually *used*. There were no readers, no turnstiles, and no conductors checking passes; nothing I could see would prevent people from boarding and riding with no ticket. There were a lot of riders, too. Plus places to hang bicycles, several in every car; much better than the two or three that can be put on the front of Tucson Sun Tran buses. The line starts at Christown Mall, just northeast of the metropolis center, and runs all

the way to downtown Mesa. The full trip is just over an hour. Trains run every ten minutes during normal hours, and twenty minutes afterwards, which I take as meaning, they run *all the time*.



Faith and Charity wait on the platform. Note the wires; the train is an electrified system, like the EL in Chicago or the trolleys in Tucson.

Different artists have been given the opportunity to customize each rail station. Some get more opportunity than others. Here, the route bends from Camelback onto Central Avenue, so there's lots of "wasted" space available for large sculptures like this. Where we get off the first time, at Roosevelt, the line splits apart (eastbound from westbound), and there's another large plaza with another large sculpture.







Here it comes. The train blows its "horn" and rings its "bell" (all electronic sounds) as it approaches and departs. Interestingly, the train is produced in Japan. Guess the Americans aren't capable of quality public transit systems.



Boarding is just looking for an open door with hopefully some empty seats. Not a lot of empty seats.



In the METRO "Attractions" guide, it lists a great many sites that can be easily reached from a train station. One that caught our eye (especially celt-freak Charity's) was the Phoenix Irish Cultural Center. I believe it should be a short visit, so we stop at Roosevelt and walk over. The Phoenix Public Library is visible from here, across a bridge over a river bed that has been fixed up as a public park.

The first thing at the Irish Center is this replica of an Irish cottage, authentic except for not having a thatched roof. Inside is a gift shop where we met our animated tour guide. She showed us some peat in the fireplace, and their prize possession - a rare replica of the Book of Kells.



Between the two buildings is a brick area (bricks inscribed with donors' names) with an inscribed map of Ireland. Here, a block bearing a county name.

To the north of the map area is this monument to the potato famine and the Irish emigrants it produced, some of whom ended up here in Arizona. On the other side of the map area is their community hall. Our loquacious tour guide took us inside and showed us their fireplace of stone



imported from an Irish quarry, a copper ingot in memory of Irish copper miners in Arizona, a little Saint Patrick figure, some Irish dance costumes (Celtic dance is taught at the Cultural Center, along with Gaelic language classes), some photos from the days of the Revolution, and a large mural with features of Ireland. She told us how the hall is used by the Irish community in Phoenix for various purposes, including, most recently, a celebration of the Winter Solstice by a druid group.

After almost two hours of a "short" visit to the Irish Cultural Center, we tear ourselves away and get back on the train. The train continues down Central Avenue to Jefferson and turns left/east, proceeding past the tall buildings of downtown Phoenix. We get off at 3rd Avenue by the Sports Center. Apparently there is a Suns vs. Boston game, which explains all the people we see in green Celtics shirts! After a brief walk north past part of the Phoenix Convention Center, we arrive at the Arizona Science Center. It's 2:30, and people are hungry. I knew the offerings at a museum would be slim this late, and so they were, so I wish we had stopped in a cafe on Central Avenue instead. By the time we finished our late lunch, it was nearly 3:00. We went right into the IMAX theatre ("Sharks", produced by Cousteau, in 3D), and then came out and looked around. Big, hands-on, much better than Tucson (of course), not quite as good as San Diego, not even close to Chicago, but quite good... but way, WAY too many little kids in the way. I noticed how even the museum is aware of this "problem", and sets aside an occasional "Adults Only" event at the museum - which just emphasizes that interactive museums are *NOT* just for kids!



The audio exhibit at Tucson is better than Phoenix. Four partially-broken stations are in this barren nook between floors. Still, the sisters enjoy a low-frequency standing-wave exhibit.



The 18-year-old discovers that even adults can enjoy hands-on wind-organ demonstrations.



Unfortunately, between our great Wrigley tour (no complaints) and the overlong Irish Center visit, the day has gotten away from us, and we do no more than get a sample of two hours before closing time. Some things we see:

- Homebuilding - especially plumbing and framing
- A variety of physics and electromagnetics demos - this room was *packed* with excited youngsters!
- Earth Science - rocks, waves, clouds, erosion, featuring a "Mr. Scientist" live demo of combustion and fire extinguishing, and a "Forces of Nature" event: As the video screens presented volcanoes, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and even an Arizona monsoon thunderburst, a battery of heat lamps, misters, fans, and a shaker under the floor would add to the experience. It was great!

- A wind tunnel with a model airplane that you could control, and a "U.S. Airways" airliner section with a video of a pilot taking off and landing.
- A bicycle on a high wire that you could (with additional payment) try out.
- A "Robots" interactive exhibit (with additional payment). We didn't have time for this one.
- A rock-climbing wall (with additional payment)
- A great planetarium (with additional payment). We arrived too late to catch any of the shows.
- A tremendous psychology exhibit. It included something about the experiment where the subjects gave increasingly larger shocks to a "learner", which demonstrates people's capacity for going along with inhuman activities when provoked by "authority" figures. Also a great "brain development" area, with activities (including a tai-chi one, hmmm). And... what looked like a demo of controlling external events (moving a ball) with your mind, through alpha and theta pickups in a headband. I would have liked to have tried that!

There was more in the building, but we just flat ran out of time. As we left, we saw the Phoenix History Museum and Heritage Square, so there's a lot to do right here at the Jefferson/3rd Ave. train stop!



On our way to the stop at Washington and 3rd, we walk by in front of the Phoenix Convention Center, and see these big brass statues. Of course we have to interact. Charity cuddles with a scorpion.

A tired Faith reclines on a millipede.



Here comes our train. I was afraid that the going home crowd would be worse than the mid-day crowd, but it wasn't, really. After a pleasant twenty minute ride back to the Camelback and Central station, we get



back in our car and go to the nearby Bill Johnson's Big Apple, a Texas-style steak and barbeque place peculiar to the Phoenix area. We finish most of our meals (we can take leftovers back this time, unlike at Rainforest last night) and share a deep-dish apple pie. Then it's back to I17, then I10, for a two-hour trip back home, and the end of our last family trip of 2009.