

Ormand Family Activity

July 2017: A Phoenix Summer Adventure

Later on in July, after returning from Colorado, I had an off-Friday, and Faith had the entire weekend off, so I suggested a little visit to Phoenix to see some stuff. My original idea was to stay at one of the many resorts up there which offer incredible discounts during the summer off-season (who but a Zonie would even consider a resort vacation to Phoenix in the summer?). However, my proposition ran into some obstacles: The better resorts had on-grounds water-parks (slides, lazy-rivers, that sort of thing), but if we were going to see stuff, we wouldn't really have much time to play in the water, in addition to the threat of sunburn. I suggested that Faith and her mom could take advantage of the spas that most of the resorts have, but neither Faith nor Jerri are that much into spas. And the one I've been talking about going to for years, the Arizona Biltmore, was undergoing some refurbishment, as was the Phoenician in Scottsdale. None of course had complimentary breakfasts, and the price even discounted was a little higher than a normal hotel. So I let myself be talked out of a resort "staycation" and Jerri booked a Ramada Inn just off Central.

We left on Thursday afternoon after both Faith and I got off work and grabbed a burger on the way up. Found the hotel. Not impressed with the room. The next day is our visit to the old Capitol, so Jerri can get a stamp for her State Capitol Passport book. I figure on Friday, it's going to be hard to find parking in the government district, and we're near the Metro line, so we walk over to the Metro station at Osborne, take the train down to the transit hub, and get on the free Dash bus down to the Capitol. Not a bad trip (other than the bus' air conditioner condensation dripping on me), and we arrive at the old Capitol with the copper dome and the angel wind-vane, and saguaros and Lt. Luke out in front.



And now, Faith and I are out in front, too. Compared to other capitol buildings we've been to (Colorado's, most recently), our old Capitol is not very grand. The dome is too squat to go up into, and it isn't really used for government business anymore - the original building is primarily a museum now. All the same, there's a lot to appreciate for patriotic Arizonans who are conscious of our great state's history.

After visiting the gift shop and getting the stamp (and a few other small

items), we're done with the morning's mission, so we get back on the Dash and go back to the transit center. On the way, we pass the old Carnegie Library. I had a notion of looking inside (per the website, the building has an exhibit which I assumed was accessible to the public), but passing it on the north side on our way out, and on the south side on the way back, the gates are apparently locked.

<https://www.azlibrary.gov/dazl/learners/research-topics/carnegie-library-rehabilitation>

We get back on the train, and on the way up, I suggest we could look at the new main library which is supposed to be of notable architecture. However, as we leave the Roosevelt station and pass the library, we can see it is closed for construction. So then I change my suggestion to looking at the Japanese Friendship Garden and the Irish Cultural Center. We get off at the next station and walk two or three blocks back south to the big park built over the "Tunnel of Fun" where the I-10 freeway goes underneath Central Avenue.

There on the north edge of the park is the house where the Phoenix Historical Society was established. Thinking it might be a museum, we walk round it but there is no indication it is more than an office. But also here outside the house is a museum of the Phoenix Trolley. We can look at some of the old trolley cars and some photos on the tin building, but the museum itself is closed for the summer.



Crossing the park (and there are a few hardy Phoenixians lounging in the grass and playing Frisbee with their dogs and such), we approach the Garden from the northeast side. We observe a lady in Japanese garb going through the staff entrance, but the sign says the public entrance is way over on the west side. So round we go.



And discover the Garden is closed for the summer. Don't know what the lady in the kimono was going to do, but it wasn't to receive walk-in visitors.

A shame; the Garden looks very nice. Have to come back in the fall.



Then it's walk *back* around to where we started, and up the stairs to the Irish center. Yep, closed for the summer. The Roosevelt station is right across the street, so we catch the next train and return to the hotel.

Plenty of time left today; what do we do? I know, let's be good little historical Zonies and visit Governor Hunt's tomb in Papago Park. The park is on Van Buren a few miles east of downtown; it's also where the Phoenix Zoo is located. It takes us a little while and a false start on foot to get to the white pyramid on the hilltop, but it dawns on us that the road *must* go up there since it is already threading around the lakes and the picnic ramadas of the park.



Two great Zonies at the tomb of Arizona's first state governor. Hunt was quite a character, and he held the office numerous times over a lengthy period of time. Most of his family is buried inside the pyramid.

Another two great Zonies.



Papago is a very nice park, with a number of artificial lakes that are stocked with fish (we see a few lonely fishermen on this steamy Friday afternoon) and ramadas of various sizes and trees. This is also where the big red rocks are that locals like to hike, including the Hole in the Rock.



Pretty nice view of the valley from the hilltop.

The Zoo is right next to the tomb. In fact, I first saw this intriguing pyramid at distance from inside the Zoo on a previous visit. It is right behind the pen with the bighorn sheep. Here they are, looking curiously down from their hideout at the silly humans.



We get back to the hotel and relax in the air-conditioned room for a while, and then go for a dip in the hotel's sad swimming pool. Not a water park. Then, after bathing after the swim and preparing for dinner, we notice that it is raining outside. So it's true; monsoon rains fall on Phoenix also! I guess that rules out using our Metro day's passes to go to our dinner place.



Dinner tonight is another thing I've been wanting to do since always - the famous Durant's steakhouse on Central.

(Neither of these are my photos.)

Durant's doesn't have a front door; or if it does, only noobs enter that way. The correct way is through the back door, through the kitchen. Rather like Buca di Beppo. Once inside, we are seated at a table in a dark room with lots of red leather and heavy carpet and waiters in tuxedos. It's a tremendous fancy and tasty meal - and a tremendous bill at the end. Yeah, not a frequent dinner destination.



www.durantsaz.com

Saturday is a Scottsdale day. It starts with a visit to Cosanti, which is oddball architect Paolo Soleri's first experimental community. It is also located in richy-rich Paradise Valley, and I learn that, while Cosanti preceded the development of the Scottsdale suburb and is grandfathered from property taxes and zoning codes, it is also restricted from any additional development. Hence the establishment of Arcosanti way out of town at Cordes Junction.

I'm not sure I'd call what I see "architecture". It's concrete molded on modernistic-art forms. It's live-in modern art. There's more to Soleri's theory of low-impact high-density human communities, but this is what you see when you visit.



The big thing about Cosanti is the sale of bronze bells to fund the continuance of Arcosanti. This is the "Bell Tree" with dozens of different-size bronze bells hanging from the "branches". I discover there are also ceramic bells.

The bells are cast here. There is a casting operation performed for public viewing most weekday mornings, *IF* there is a sufficient public present to justify it. We arrive too late, but by the look of things, it didn't happen this morning, anyways.



There are apparently people who live here. I asked at the gift shop if these were Soleri architecture students (the same way Frank Lloyd Wright architecture students live at Taliesin West) but was told, no; the students live and work at Arcosanti. Makes sense.

There's a pool for the residents.





Interesting skylight in the work area where the ceramic bells are made. There's a naked light bulb at the center, which spoils the aesthetics. As an electrical type, I also note that the conduit is embedded in the concrete, which really limits the potential for modification.

It's a very short tour and "free" (except if you buy the \$10 guidebooklet like we did, they let you go back into the residential part where the pool is). At the end, I urge participation in another Zonie thing of buying some Cosanti bells. So we do. And then leave Paradise Valley for a short trip back down south to Scottsdale and the McCormick-Stillwell Railroad Park.

www.therailroadpark.com/

One of the reasons for coming here is having learned at the Capitol yesterday that the Arizona Gratitude Car is here. At the end of World War I, the French people (or more likely government) set aside 49 railroad cars, decorated them with the arms of the provinces of France, filled them with dolls, wooden shoes, and other French culture artifacts (um, tourist trinkets), and sent them to the United States (all the 48 states at the time plus the territory of Hawaii, which sent soldiers to the Great War) as an expression of gratitude for our coming to their aid against the Germans. The cars were delivered and celebrated - for a while - and then set aside and eventually abandoned. Much later, the railroad club people found the Gratitude Car decaying out in the desert, brought it to the Scottsdale railroad park, and restored it.

Here we are in front of Arizona's Merci Car, being grateful ourselves for the concern and historical sense of our fellow Arizonans.



On a side note, later this month, I travel to Hunstville, Alabama, on business and have the opportunity to do some sightseeing, and in the Veterans Memorial Museum, I discover Alabama's Gratitude Car. Alabama's car ended up on the highway nearby as a billboard for Cathedral Caverns before the history buffs found it, obtained it, and restored it. Now it is in

this museum containing an exhibit on Alabama's contribution to World War I. Talking to the museum guide, I learn there are other people who make it a hobby to travel around the country and visit the surviving Gratitude Cars of the other states. I don't think we will add *that* hobby to visiting national parks, capitol buildings, and lighthouses.

www.memorialmuseum.org

Near the Gratitude Car are two more modern American railroad cars. One appears to be a place for VIP meetings.



The other is a party room for children.

Now, the *other* (or original) reason for coming to this park is for the ride-on miniature railroads. The price for a ride is pretty low, and they run every ten minutes.

Here it comes!



And here is Mom and Dad sitting in the little car after the previous group debarked and the next group were admitted.

The little train runs around the park, past picnic tables and ramadas and kiddie playgrounds and railroad signals like this one. Wherever there are pedestrian pathways that cross the rails there are little crossing gates that drop the bar and flash their lights and ding their bells. Very cute.



It runs through tunnels, too. It's a thoroughly delightful ten-minute train ride. But that's not all there is to the park.

This big locomotive and attached cars are part of a railroad museum. Closed for the summer.



What is open is the model railroad "museum" - a cavernous hall containing three sprawling model railroad setups. There are several little stations at which visitors can press a button and activate an automated display, such as a carnival or a trolley or an open-pit mine railroad. One of the video monitors at the end of the hall are displayed the view of trains passing points on the setup - or the feed from a camera mounted on the locomotive!.





Turns out the three spreads are operated by three separate clubs that specialize in different model railroad gauges. People from one of the clubs (the "O-gauge" club) were here operating their setup; the other two were on automatic.

There are small exhibits along the left-side wall in the view above: miniature houses (such as found at the Mini-Time Machine back home), model sailing ships, and the like. There was also a hint of another railroad club at this park that operates a ride-on train (smaller than the one we used; riders sit *on* the cars rather than *in* them). But... they don't do it in the summer.

www.scottsdalelivesteamers.com

One of Scottsdale's favorite sons is Bill Keene, comic author of "Family Circus". The park has a sculpture in his honor, with his cartoon children.



This art was hanging in the "general store" snack bar, created by the elderly Keene and his middle son, who has followed his father's

footsteps and is a Disney animator.



At this point, we have seen all of the McCormick-Stillwell Railroad Park as we can see (in the summer). The next stop is Downtown Scottsdale. We arrive at the downtown area on Scottsdale Road just south of Indian School Road, and manage to find a parking spot (on the street; turns out there is a public garage near the Museum of Contemporary Art on 2nd Street) and walk a few blocks for lunch at the Sugar Bowl. We've been here before, my parents had brought us kids here; it's a famous go-to lunch and ice cream place in Old Town. After lunch, we head toward the art museum where there is an exhibit I have learned about on the Web that I think will be quite interesting.

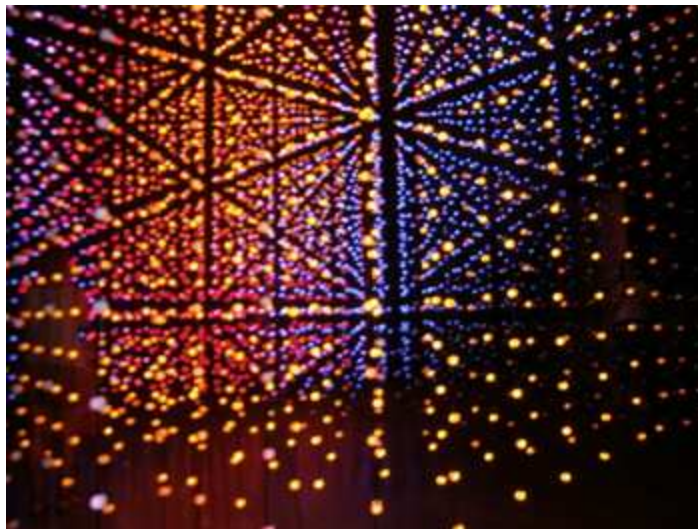


Just east of the downtown area is a park or "mall" bordered by shops and cafes and containing art, like these horsies. There is a *lot* of public art in Scottsdale.

We walk up to a building just past the horse fountain that says "Scottsdale Historical Museum". Well, that sounds very interesting. Too bad it's closed for the summer.

I think it should be called the Scottsdale Contemporary Art Museum (SCAM). Probably the museum people intentionally avoided that potential acronym. The exhibits are better than Tucson's Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) - but not by much. There's a few interesting ones, like live rosebushes being dipped in a water tank by machinery, and something with a geiger counter and some radioactive sample, and an exhibit with an actual part of the Chernobyl nuclear plant. Most of it is silly and pretentious and in some cases actually pornographic. But sometimes the ball gets hit out of the park.

The artist is Squidsoup. The name is "Ocean of Light". It consists of many strings of lights hanging from the ceiling in a matrix. Each light is controllable in color and intensity. The lights are being operated by a system programmed to generate patterns coordinated with synthesized music. It is "interactive" in that visitors can move through the matrix. Apparently the lights also include sensors, because we note that when you stand in one place, the lights near you turn on dimly.



smoca.org/exhibition/ocean-light-submergence-squidsoup-project



Faith enjoying the Ocean of Light. It really was cool. Really decent modern art.

After finishing the art museum (and the gift shop), we are ready to see the shops in Old Town. Faith is really anticipating this!



There are some famous establishments here, like the Rusty Spur Saloon. There's also the old Catholic mission. But mostly it is high-priced fashion and jewelry places. We are satisfied to visit some

tourist-oriented curio shops (which actually is our pattern everywhere we go) and say we have visited Old Town Scottsdale.



View of Main Street. They work to preserve the layout and feel of the original Arizona town. You don't go very far out of Old Town to find the upscale shops, hotels, and residences that Scottsdale is known for.

The monsoon rains start falling intermittently as Jerri finishes her last purchase, and we start back to Phoenix on Indian School. On the way, I stop at a place that caught my eye on the way in - a park with a structure straddling the canal. Turns out the Arizona Canal (carrying water from the Salt River Project reservoirs to the east) has a major elevation drop at this point - falls, on the canal. It is a hydroelectric plant as well as a park and a work of public art.



Really *nice* practical water-based public art.



Jerri and Faith look down at the lower canal.



Faith in front of one of many decorative waterfalls. Note the blocks upon which people can sit and read their books while the noise of the falls echo around them. Or they might except it's summer.



Dinner on Saturday night is at the Old Spaghetti Factory Factory. We want Faith to see the Spaghetti Tree. Faith is not impressed.

Returning to the hotel after dinner, we find all the parking taken and mobs of people churning around the adjacent Wyndham Hotel. It appears there is a big wedding party with lots of guests. I have to park at the top of the parking structure down the road. All in all, I feel that staying at a resort hotel would have been more satisfactory than the Ramada we stayed at, even if we never used the water park or the spa. Maybe next time.

Sunday is our last day; we will return to Tucson this evening. Today is a Tempe day, starting at the Hall of Flame firefighting museum. I've heard of this numerous times and always thought, "it's a firefighting museum; how long could it take? Surely not that long".

Wrong.

There are four large rooms:

- Historic non-motorized fire equipment
- More recent motorized fire equipment
- Forest and Wildfires ("Hot Shots")
- A Phoenix FD dispatch station and special collections

hallofflame.org



The historic section starts off with really early fire equipment like this Newsham Fire Pump from the 1700s.

A later fire pump wagon, after the practice of dressing up emergency equipment came into vogue. The intake hose was dropped in a nearby creek or canal and the firefighters madly pumped the handles. The pump can also be fed via bucket brigade.

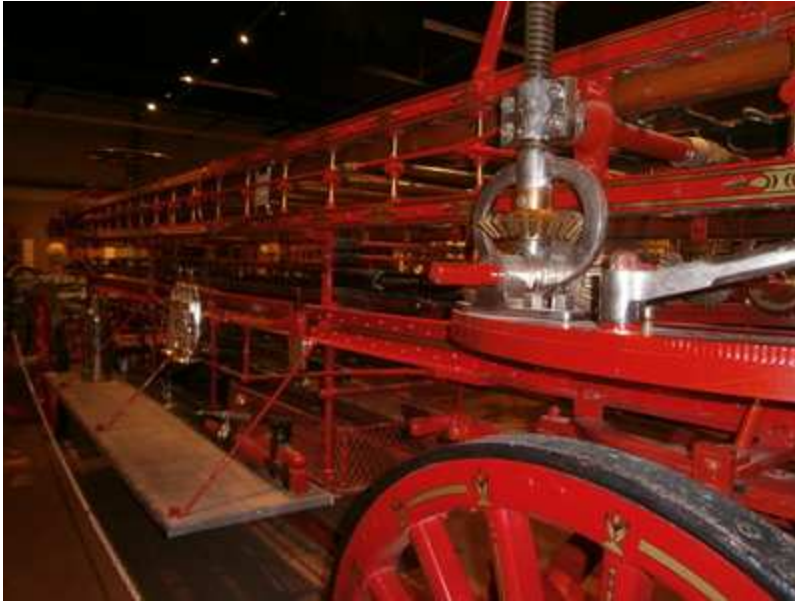




Firefighters had always been heroic and appreciated and organized. The people of an Austrian town hand-embroidered this fire company banner in the early 1800s.

Hoses started off as riveted leather tubes; very expensive to make. Hoses were stored in carts like this one. But not really like this one, because this one is an ornamental hose cart commissioned by a volunteer fire company for parades. Magnificent!





Originally, fire wagons were pulled by the fire company men themselves, as response time was of primary importance and harnessing horses cut into that response time. As equipment became larger and heavier, horse power became necessary. This is a wagon ladder with a crank-driven elevator - and an articulated rear axle with a seat

for a rear driver.

Combination fire wagons became popular. This truck had ladders *and* chemical tanks - essentially big fire extinguishers, the product of accelerating firefighting technology.





The apex of the non-mechanized fire engine is the horse-drawn steamer, like this Metropolitan. We didn't get a chance to do this, but we could have called the museum guide over to plug in a motor and we could see the machinery in action.

In snowy places like Wisconsin, fire wagons didn't always have wheels.



Dalmations in a Phoenix FD wagon. We learn some interesting stuff here; Why are dalmations associated with firefighters? Because Dalmations are for whatever reason genetically dispositioned to horses, and can calm them. They were popular before horse-drawn fire equipment as *coach dogs*. When horses started being used in fire companies, coach dogs naturally came with them.

This old fire truck from Miami, Arizona was set up for visitors to sit behind the wheel. Thus, mom can imagine a hair-raising ride with Faith driving.



In the mechanized room, this 1920s truck has a rescue net, just like in the cartoons. They weren't used very long, because they were not very effective - injured firemen and dead jumpers.

Company banner from New London!
I've been there...



These inventive Americans. As cities grew and technology allowed multi-story buildings, it was harder to spray water on the flames from the ground, so the "water tower" came about, which was basically a pipe and nozzle on an erectable mast.

There is a children's area, which includes this coin-op ride on an old-fashioned steamer.



There are unusual things in the special collections area. It seems the English are particularly conservative. Instead of a ladder truck, the English fire equipment Merryweather produced an extension ladder mounted on a pair of cart wheels. Much later, instead of having motorized fire trucks with ladders, English companies merely strapped a Merryweather rig onto the back of their modern

truck.

The commemorative fire truck dedicated to the memory of the Prescott Hot Shots.





This fire truck responded to the World Trade Center disaster of 9/11, and was crushed by falling rubble. Some rich person (yes, we need those) acquired the truck and restored it, and now it is parked in the Hall of Flame.

The museum has a printout booklet with a description of all the exhibits. If they could put photos of the exhibit next to the description, it would be a beautiful book I would buy. I was surprised by how extensive the collection is, and it is well after noon when we leave. It is late for lunch - but I want to see something before we dine. Van Buren and Papago Park and the Hall of Flame are just across the Salt River from Tempe, and at this point, the river has been allowed to fill to form a lake - Tempe Town Lake.

The river is crossed into Tempe at Mill Avenue. Mill Avenue is named after the historic Hayden Flour Mill (which survives as the family milling business in Queen Creek), seen from Tempe Town Lake Park.



haydenflourmills.com



I suggest to Faith that we could take a three-seat paddleboat out on the lake, but she wasn't sure that was a good idea. There were a few groups out on the water, but I'll bet they were roasting. This would be a lot more tempting in the fall or spring.

Road bridges in Texas are marked all over with the Lone Star. Interesting to see an Arizona bridge with the Copper Star.



Many years ago, when there was no water in the river and no park and no buildings around other than the abandoned mill, Jerri was at a Hallmark convention meeting in Tempe and I had two small children and time on our hands. We walked down the road and past (and around and above on the sides of the butte) the mill, and out on this bridge. I remember the little shade stations

along the pedestrian walkway on the bridge. We stopped at two of these

on our way out to look down at the dry river.

It's a pretty nice park, but between the raw temperature in Phoenix and the humidity of the lake, it was as stifling as Havasu City.



Now we're done and it's time for lunch. We cruise down Mill Avenue looking for an interesting and unique place, but there's really no place to park (probably is, but I didn't check first). Until we get to University Drive and there are some (unused on the weekend) ASU lots, and a Firehouse Subs place across the street. I think it would be fun to have lunch at a Firehouse Subs place after spending the morning at the Hall of Flame.



The restaurant has a mural on the wall, of two Tempe FD firemen carrying the Victory Bell into Sun Devil Stadium as a paramedic wheels an injured person off the scene.

Of course, a closer look at the mural reveals that the Tempe paramedic is actually Sparky, and the injured player is Wilbur the Wildcat. Ha ha! This funny rivalry between ASU and UofA!



That pretty much concludes our Phoenix weekend (except for the last-gasp visit to a Mesa antique mall). Considering how many attractions were closed and how relatively unpleasant it was to be walking around outside in the Phoenix summer, I think if we were to try it again we would stick with the original "staycation" plan of booking a resort hotel and just *staying* there - playing in the pools, dining at the fancy restaurants, and just relaxing in the lounges and the much nicer room.