

Greetings from **Sahuarita, Arizona**.

Well, where the heck is Sahuarita you might ask. It is south of Tucson on Highway 19 a few miles before you get to Green Valley, Arizona. But let's back up a little. One of the joys of our travels is to hook up with old friends around the country. While we were in Casa Grande, one of Donna's old high school pals, **Annette**, came from Phoenix to visit us. What a treat.

We left our Western Horizons park in Casa Grande and drove to **Mesa**, Arizona. We spent a week in Mesa in order to look into the business of becoming estate planners. Mesa was not our cup of tea. There is housing construction, business construction, and road construction everywhere. Crowds, crowds, and more crowds. But, we did have a good time with some new Canadian RV friends, **Randy and Ali**.

We left Mesa and got on scenic Highway 79 heading for **Tucson**. Loved the drive. Desolate desert, but very scenic. We cruised through Tucson and went south to an Indian casino called Casino del Sol. Very, very nice. We had a lovely dinner with our old Tucson friend, **Leslie**.

The next morning, we drove to another Western Horizons park in the tiny little town of **Saint David**, Arizona. We loved Saint David. Very rural with very few people and no traffic. The extreme opposite of Mesa. Saint David is 7 miles south of **Benson**, Arizona, and 16 miles from **Tombstone**. Now we're talking. We stayed in Saint David for two weeks and used it as a home base for Donna to crank out tax returns and as an excellent launching point to see the area.



One of the two lakes at the St. David RV Resort.

One night our new Canadian friends, **Randy and Ali**, drove over from Tucson to have dinner with us and spent the night in a lovely casita at our park. The casitas are very nice and have a kitchen, bathroom, living room, and one or two bedrooms.



A casita at Saint David RV Resort.

If we were to get a home and settle down, Saint David would be a place we would consider. It is about 3,700 feet elevation and so the days are lovely and the nights are cool. Strangely enough, Saint David has good water from artesian wells. The RV resort had two lovely small lakes and many of the local homes had ponds. Arizona has been in an extreme drought and hasn't seen any rain in over 4 months, yet Saint David is green and has lots of water with flourishing cottonwood trees. The San Pedro River starts in Mexico and flows north through Saint David. After 4 months of drought, it looks like the river is little more than a puddle, but in fact, it has gone underground. The locals told us that the underground aquifer in that area has as much water as the Mississippi River.

We took a Sunday off and rode the motorcycle to Tombstone, Arizona. If you've ever read anything about the Old West, then you know about Tombstone. Yeah, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, the Clantons, Morgan and Virgil Earp, the gunfight at the OK Corral, the Boothill Graveyard, etc., etc., Tombstone was and is called, "the town too tough to die." You can view Tombstone as a tourist trap or you could see it as a town of living history. The truth is somewhere in between. The locals work hard at re-enacting the history of the town with shootouts and costumes of the period. If you really want to know about Tombstone and its history, then the place to go is to the office of the newspaper, the Tombstone Epitaph. This is a very old newspaper and was published during the early days and is still being published today.



Main drag in Tombstone.

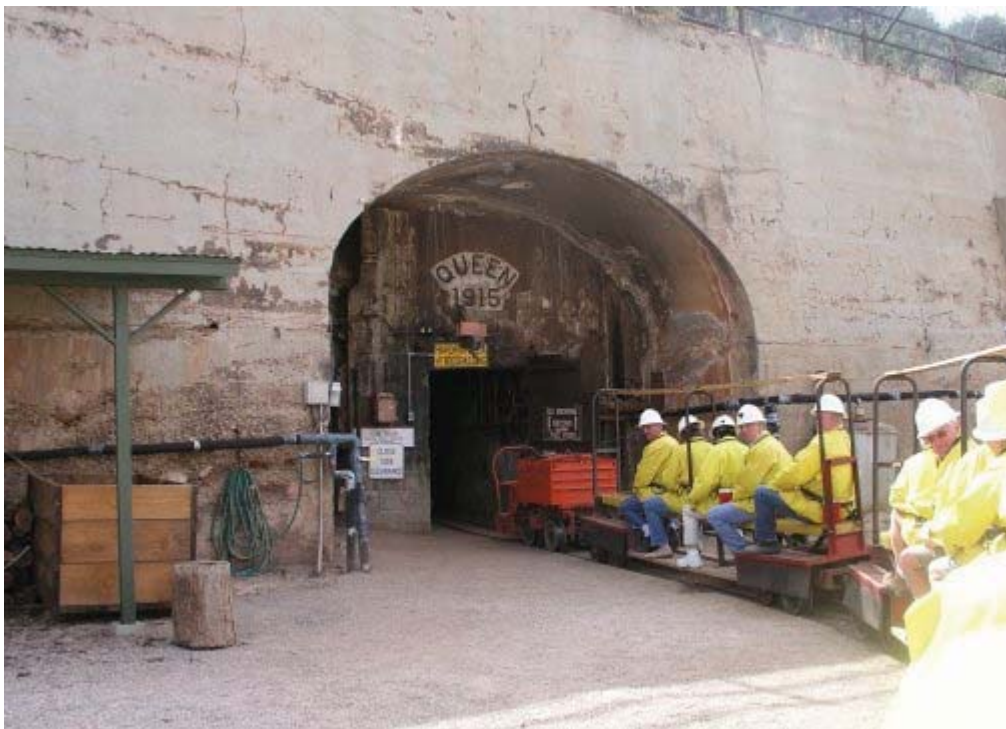
Well, okay, the mining is what brought the miners, the merchants, the gunslingers, and the prostitutes. Prostitution was legal in the early days of Arizona, but we bet you didn't read much about it in your history books. That's a darn shame as the "soiled doves" are a major part of Tombstone history.



Josephine Sarah Marcus.

Did you know that the 19 year old braless beauty above was the prostitute wife of Wyatt Earp? We didn't think so. Your high school text books may have left her out, and probably didn't mention Big Nose Kate, Blonde Marie, Madame Moustache, Crazy Horse Lil, Irish Mag, Dutch Annie, Big Minnie, Eleanora Dumont, and many more. Sure, you've heard of Calamity Jane, who normally dressed in men's clothes and was quite famous for fighting, shooting, and swearing. But, oh my golly, Calamity Jane was also a prostitute from time to time. Now you know there's more to the story of the town that's too tough to die.

Another day our friends, **Gary and Kay**, drove over from Green Valley, Arizona, and took us to **Bisbee** for the day. Bisbee is another fascinating town from yesteryear. Copper mining was the draw in Bisbee. The beautiful and elegant historic Copper Queen Hotel is still there, as is the hard rock Queen Mine, and the two huge open pit mines. The four of us got suited up with slickers, hard hats, and miners lamps and rode 2,000 feet into the mountain on an authentic electric train. Our guide had worked 31 years in the mine as did his father and grandfather. This was an extremely interesting 90 minute tour and we definitely recommend it unless you are claustrophobic. The miners worked 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, and made pretty good money, \$3.50 a day. It was extremely hard work and extremely dangerous. On the other hand, the prostitutes of the time made 10 times as much money as the miners. Well, okay, their work was hard and dangerous also.



Entering the Queen Mine on the electric train.



Looking down 950 feet into the Lavender open pit mine.

The mines of Bisbee play a critical role in Chuck's family history. His grandfather and grandmother on his mother's side came to Bisbee from Sweden. Granddad was a mining engineer and so, for him, this was the place to be. Before they returned to Sweden, Chuck's mother was born and thus, had automatic U.S. citizenship. Chuck's mom was the oldest of many brothers and sisters. None of the kids liked their father and the family historian, **Cousin Paul**, sums up Granddad as a real SOB. At any rate, when Chuck's mom was a teenager, she left Sweden and came to America by herself. She was a very gutsy girl with almost no money and did not speak English. Ultimately, she met and married Chuck's father and began bringing her siblings to America. Well, the long and the short of it, is this:

Without the mines of Bisbee, there would be no Chuck. Visiting the mines had a powerful emotional impact on Chuck. It connected him with his family and to such a long ago era that he couldn't quite comprehend it.

Well, why did Chuck's grandparents return to Sweden? Now that's an interesting story. Granddad was winning big in a poker game in Bisbee, but was afraid he would be killed for the money. He left some of the money on the table and said he had to go out back to the outhouse. Sure enough, a man with a gun was waiting for him, but Granddad shot first. He immediately took his family, changed his name to **Hilgren**, and headed back to Sweden. Although Mom hated her dad, she did inherit his love of mines. As soon as she married Chuck's dad and got her brother to America, she followed her dream and bought a gold mine in Kelsey, California. They never hit it big, but Mom had "gold fever" until the day she died.

Another major attraction near Saint David is **Kartchner Caverns**. This is a newly discovered major cavern system. We have caving friends who claim that this cave system may, in fact, extend all the way to Carlsbad Caverns. We didn't find time to visit Kartchner Caverns, but we hope to next year.

Annika enjoyed Saint David a lot. She especially enjoyed going to the duck pond and looking for feathers. She also enjoyed motorcycle riding with her new "Doggles." Her Doggles have a headband and a chin strap so they stay in place nicely. They are also foam lined so that the wind doesn't enter. If you have a dog that needs eye protection, Doggles come in many sizes and many colors. Annika give them a paws up.



Annika ready to ride. She stops traffic whenever she's noticed.

Unfortunately, she started to slow down and didn't seem to have much stamina. So it was off to the vet in Benson. She's now missing three abscessed teeth and we're short over \$500. Win a few, lose a few.

From Saint David, we came to Desert Diamond Casino in Sahuarita, Arizona. Once again, our friends, **Gary and Kay**, drove over from Green Valley and picked us up. We visited Green Valley which is another spectacular, mountainous, high desert town. It is a very beautiful area and should be considered by anyone contemplating retirement. They drove us down to the Mexican town of **Nogales** where we prowled around and had the finest Mexican lunch we have ever eaten. It was elegant, beautiful, and tasty. Unfortunately, it was also expensive, but worth it.

Tomorrow morning, March 11, we hit the road again. So until next time:

Home is where you park it.

Chuck & Donna