

Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring



Reborn as a Writer

Have you ever said, “**I’ve always wanted to do that,**” about some activity or other? Well I did and I was talking about writing for fun.

I spent my first 25 years preparing to be an engineer and then the next 35 years working as one – a most challenging and satisfying career. However, during most of that time the only things I wrote were dry technical reports, proposals for new business, or presentations to explain what I had done.

So when I retired in 2000, I did two smart things. First and foremost, after 10 years being a widower, I met Pat and began the wonderful relationship that you observe today. The second thing was to do something about “writing for fun.”

My brother Al (also then recently retired) and I were soon busy researching (him) and writing (me) about the story behind some old family photographs. We began sharing our family-related borderland mining stories in papers at the annual Arizona History Convention. Soon we were writing a bi-monthly newspaper column for the *Green Valley News & Sun*.

Three and a half years later (2007), we had written two books – one, the complete history of Ruby, Arizona, an old borderland mining camp, now a ghost town; the other, the touching memoir of Ines Fraser, based on personal letters between tragic characters in the Ruby story.

For our third history-type book, my brother and I, along with my youngest son Steven, edited and published (2008) our great grandfather Eugene Ring’s diary of his almost unbelievable adventures during the California Gold Rush in 1848 to 1850.

While this “serious” writing was going on, I was looking for an outlet for a completely different aspect of my “always wanted to” ambitions – humor and human interest writing. With encouragement from Pat, in the fall of 2006, I approached our own Shelley Whitlatch about writing a regular feature for the Fit Center Newsletter. So with the November 2006 issue, the “Gym Rat Rantings” began.

Two years later, my writing having snowballed into true-passion status, I contacted the editor of the Foothills regional section of the *Arizona Daily Star* about doing a light-hearted monthly column. Thus it came to pass that with the October 23, 2008 issue, my regular column, “Loose in the Foothills,” started in the *Foothills Star*.

Last summer, seeing that I had no new history books in work toward publication, Pat suggested that I put together a collection of all my non-engineering and non-history writing – a legacy for the family along the lines of Eugene Ring’s Gold Rush diary. Now here was a challenge!

What resulted was three-ring-binder-bound “Collected Other Papers,” including papers from sixth grade, high school, college (both English class and articles for the *Purdue Engineer* magazine), a handful of miscellaneous papers during my engineering career, a few non-history columns from the *Green Valley News & Sun*, the Gym Rat articles, and the *Foothills Star* columns. I assembled the “book” into these eight chapters, with an introduction and look-back self-assessment of each period of my writing. What fun!

Best of all, Pat and I did this as a joint project – with Pat taking advantage of recent classes in one of her “always wanted to” activities: art. Pat drew a frontispiece picture (of me) for the book and did drawings for each chapter that captured the theme of the specific subject matter.

“Collected Other Papers” made a great Christmas 2008 gift to our kids and my brother. I guess we’ll need to provide updates this year.

So, what new passion, do you want to be reborn with?