



Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring

Remember Mount Lemmon

I first heard of Mount Lemmon more than 60 years ago. Living in Louisville, Kentucky, I remember my Dad, who attended the U of A in the 1930s, talking about building a bread and breakfast on Mount Lemmon after he retired.

That never happened, but my folks did retire in Tucson in 1976 and I remember fondly – when visiting from San Diego - many trips up the Catalina highway with my kids for picnics that gave my Dad an excuse to show off “his” Mountain to his grandsons. We have some family photos from the 1970s, taken in front of the Iron Door Restaurant across from the Ski Lift, showing my three boys with big black cowboy hats that Grandpa had given them.

Many years later, Pat and I continued our family tradition of picnics on the Mountain. We’d drive up, stop along the way at all the viewpoints to gawk at the sites and take photos, continue to a favorite picnic spot at Inspiration Rock, and perhaps stop at the Mount Lemmon Cafe in Summerhaven for pie.

On one trip we decided to return home on the control road - the curvy, dirt and rocky road from near Summerhaven, down the north side of the Mountain to Oracle. What an adventure! The very next day, my car battery died and we counted our lucky stars that it hadn’t happened while we were stopped to admire the scenery and ruins of past mining operations on the back side of the Mountain.

Pat and I were picnicking on Mount Lemmon just a week before the big Aspen fire in 2003. How sad to see the flames and smoke on the Mountain from our home in the Foothills. And sadder still to return to the Mountain months after the fire and see all the damage – both to the beautiful forest and the town of Summerhaven.

Our last trip to Mount Lemmon was this past July, and Pat and I can report that the forests are coming back – but it’s going to take years I’m afraid. The rebuilding of Summerhaven is coming along too; thank goodness for strong-minded, industrious people. You can have a pleasant outing on Mount Lemmon again!

If you’re interested in reading about the history of Mount Lemmon and Summerhaven, I recommend these two books:

1. Paradise Found: The Settlement of the Santa Catalinas, by Kathy Alexander
2. Road to Summerhaven, by Mary Ellen Barnes