

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

A Diamond for Mother's Day

I hope that you enjoyed my five-part series on the History of the Catalina Foothills and the Tanque Verde Valley. Don't forget, I'd like to hear from you about what you think our area will look like in the year 2050.

Onward to current events. I want to tell you about the diamond that I gave Pat for Mother's Day last month. Not the sparkly, expensive kind, but the travel kind – a bus trip on the Diamond Express to the Diamondbacks baseball game in Phoenix.

Sure sounds romantic doesn't it? Well, give me a chance to explain.

Since the baseball team came into existence in 1998, the Diamondbacks have provided bus transportation from Tucson to weekend home games. For \$18 per seat on the bus (\$15 for children), you leave Foothills Mall two-and-a-half hours before game time and are back at the Mall about two-and-a-half hours after the game ends.

The comfortable, air-conditioned bus drops you off about 100 feet from Gate J at Chase Field, parks nearby during the game, and is ready to leave 30 minutes after the final out.

Over the years we've tried many driving and parking options to attend Diamondbacks' games. Typically, we'd drive our own car up, park in a close-by lot for at least \$10, or sometimes get lucky, if early enough, and find a street parking slot. Not always so lucky tho, because I once had my spare tire stolen right out from under the car during the game.

So when we considered the cost of gas to drive ourselves, park somewhere close and safe, plus the total time and traffic hassle involved, the handy bus trip option appeared very attractive to us. We "discovered the bus" three summers ago and now use it at least once every season. You do the math for your situation.

We've learned that it's a good idea to buy your game tickets ahead of time and have them with you on the bus - it's a long way to the Ticket Office or Will Call from Gate J.

We've got these outings down to a routine. We bring a picnic cooler aboard the bus (alcoholic drinks are permitted), eat half our food on the way up, leave the cooler on the bus, and finish our food on the way back.

We started this onboard eating to avoid the high-priced stadium food, but I'm happy to report that on this trip we saw some much lower-priced food and drink choices (like a 14-oz draft beer for \$4) at the concession stands.

By the way, I can also report that the new stadium scoreboard is spectacular – huge, with clear images, and lots of baseball-world stats displayed.

On Mother's Day, we had 35 people on the bus. Tom was our driver – a regular assignment for him. The trip was hosted by Chuck, a Diamondback organization volunteer for the past five years, who indoctrinated first-timers and answered all our questions. Chuck also conducted a ticket drawing for prizes that included two Diamondbacks T-shirts, a water bottle, a tote bag, a license plate holder, and a rally towel.

During the almost two-hour bus trip (each way), I read a book and Pat knitted (what else?). There's a restroom on the bus, but in several trips, we haven't needed to use it.

The best part of this trip was that the Diamondbacks won the game, an 11 to 9 nail-biter over the Washington Nationals! Not the stiffest of competition, but these days we'll take any win we can.

So it was a very enjoyable, relaxing Mother's Day. How can you beat a good baseball game and two picnics on the same day? And, as a mother, Pat received a Diamondbacks' give-away tote bag at the gate – to put the diamond in, of course.

Visit the Diamondbacks' website or call 520-434-1367 for information on future bus trips.



The Diamond Express bus from Tucson drops-off passengers right outside Gate J at Chase Field in Phoenix.