

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

A Rose is a Rose ... is a Parade

I've secretly wanted to be a travel writer, or sports writer, or movie reviewer ... So this month you can think of me as your Foothills travel reporter.

Pat and I attended the Rose Parade in Pasadena, California this month. The trip was on our "bucket" list of adventures that we wanted to do before we died. For years we watched all those beautiful floats on television, before settling down to umpteen straight hours of football. There was a Rose Bowl game this year too, but our team, the University of Michigan, had blown their chance early on.

We found an organized tour with all sorts of choices of activities, including seeing the **floats in final preparation** on New Year's Eve morning, **the parade** on New Year's Day, viewing the floats afterward, and attending the Rose Bowl game.

We signed up for the **bolded** items and took off in Pat's Honda CRV on December 30th. We arrived at our hotel near LAX in mid afternoon, missing the evening commute on the freeways, but not missing heavy traffic, and several bumper-to-bumper stoppages.

On New Year's Eve morning, we were up early, leaving by bus for Pasadena at 6:00 am. The idea was to be first in line when the float preparation viewing started at 7:00 am. The sun was just rising when we pulled into the Rose Bowl parking lot, near the float preparation area!

We got to see about 15 floats in various stages of completion – some still in pieces, not yet assembled, others assembled, but not yet covered with flowers. Colorful flowers were everywhere – gathered in their containers by type and blazing hues. What wonderful sights and smells! We were impressed with the super-organized process, but couldn't believe that in less than 24 hours, these floats would be moving through Pasadena in the parade.

Our favorite float – the People's Choice Award Winner - was the Cal Poly entry. Pat discovered that we could buy a Cal Poly float post card for a small fee, address it to whomever – the post card would then be carried on the float (under the driver's seat) during the parade and later mailed, after having been stamped with the message, "This card rode in the Cal Poly Float January 1, 2009." We thought this was a neat idea to raise a little money to support Cal Poly's year-long float design and preparation program. Each year since 1949 Cal Poly has built a Rose parade float – entirely with student volunteers. We bought and addressed four post cards for our children and one for ourselves.

The next morning we were back in Pasadena again – for the parade. This was where going on an organized tour really paid off. There were cars and buses lined up everywhere – all trying to get to parking places before the parade started. Our bus got off the freeway at a "secret" exit and took back roads to a place near the parade route, where we able to park within a block of our viewing site. We had reserved seats in the sixth row of bleachers near the start of the parade. The sun rose behind us in a clear blue sky, providing perfect lighting conditions for photography from our outstanding seats.

The parade was large: 48 floats, 24 marching bands, and 20 equestrian units, and lasted almost two hours. Our pre-trip expectations and hopes were exceeded; the parade was wonderfully colorful and entertaining! We cheered as the Cal Poly float passed. A poignant sight was a drum player in one of the bands, being pushed along in a wheel chair in perfect formation.

We watched football games the rest of the day back at the hotel and drove back to Tucson the next day. Truly a memorable trip!

Postscript: Two days after returning to Tucson we received our special post card. On the third day, Pat's car went haywire, bringing her to a halt on Sunrise with an ignition system problem. Bucket List Moral: Do it today, before your **car** dies.

For specific information about the Rose Parade tour and/or company we used, please contact me by email.



Cal Poly's "Seaside Amusement" 2009 Rose Parade float included a boardwalk, rollercoaster, parachute drop, and Ferris wheel.



This is our special post card from the Rose Parade.