



IMS Arizona Marathon at Surprise Trip Notes February 14 – 18, 2014

This is a marathon that's especially good to do if you like and need sun. Not being a sun person my main reason for liking this marathon is that many of my friends were here. Primarily for that reason it was a winner.



Terri, Diana, Judy, Marv, Maryanne, Jerry and Leslie

Some miscellaneous observations on the marathon

- Rental car from Phoenix is required as it is a distance of about 45 minutes to the finish line (Glendale) and the start line (Surprise) has very little reason for being there.
- Expo was small but it is in conjunction with a farmers market which gives plenty of entertainment and things to purchase. It is about 15 minutes from the finish line in Peoria.
- T-shirt is very well designed and comes in both men and women sizing. The quality is high and the sizing runs a little bit big causing Judy to have to beg for a size smaller which took a bit of doing but she kept at it and finally the race director accommodated her.
- Busing to the start at Surprise Arizona is required. They say there is NO parking at the start line but there is. Also, I saw a Residence Inn near the start area. The start is in a new complex with a large modern baseball stadium probably with toilet access too.
- Much of the course runs along the edge of major roadways where there are traffic cones set up. Runners are advised they must stay within the cones or face disqualification.
- Temperatures might start in the 50s and end in the 90s and there is no shade. I found very few pictures to take as there are few scenic areas except the far distant mountains.
- Toilets at the start are plentiful with no lines. Along the course are single toilets with much too long lines. Forget finding a bush as I believe there may have only been one along the entire course.
- Food was non-existent on the course and then at the end I was disappointed to see only a bowl of pretzels and a bowl of plain cookies but later found Muscle Milk so they were partly redeemed.



- Finish line is in a large shopping and hotel (Westgate) where it is said that there are at least 15 restaurants. The complex is new, near to both the U. of Phoenix Stadium and the Jobs Stadium, and is quite well done and convenient off 101. The huge fountain at the finish line is a nice touch.
- Spectators are practically nonexistent. There are hugely more policemen and course marshals than spectators which made me think this must be an expensive marathon. Oddly there were only 2500 participants and that included the 5K fun run, marathon, relay and half.
- EMS bicyclists are plentiful on the course.
- The medal is well designed and generous enough in quality.

Accommodations

The Renaissance by Marriott was the closest with the Hampton being not much farther. Both were similar priced but the Renaissance gave me concierge floor and lots of food as a result of my frequent stay status. After the marathon we indulged in my free buffet breakfast for two and sat from 10:30 to 1:15 in the outdoor café. Parking was \$10 for the Renaissance but the shopping center parking lot was free and as close.

Close by were over 15 restaurants and a huge outlet mall. I had food out the kazoo at my hotel and I don't shop, but Judy did the shopping.

Results

This shouldn't be a subject any longer but there is a story: I was totally ready to take the full four hours allowed. I'd brought my old shoes and I mean old like from 2006. But Marv was in a mood to redeem himself for having dropped from the full to the half and he wanted under three hours. I thought, well, I want the company so I'll try to keep up with him for a while. But the "while" just keep hanging on and a while later we finished at 2:47 and 2:48 at a pace of something like 12:54.

The other result should be no surprise -- I had some stiff joints the next day. I hadn't run more than about a mile for a very long time having reverted to weight lifting and hiking.



It's all about the friends

This trip happened because Marv and Maryanne from Tulsa had moved to Sun City a couple years ago. We met up early November in Las Cruces, then too for a half. Judy was there, and here, and she'll join up in Kings Mountain early March. Marv and Maryanne fed us a couple times – such special folks for a lot of reasons. I met them in Mobile in '09, and Judy in Albuquerque the same year and we've all met up many times in between.



Why live in the sun?

To those of us who grew up in the valley where we didn't see sun for 9 months of the year, we don't seek out sun. Sun and the desert are for the cactus, sand and wind. Yet most of the world worships the sun.

Thus so many new towns of Arizona remind me how we all seek different ways of living. Development complexes for seniors are very common with so much new and clean and neat that historical areas seem much less common. All the seniors and newness was a little disconcerting and reminded me how much I do like New Jersey despite our many storms this year. To include one I left and one I'm going home too.

Then we have the zillion year old nature of the Grand Canyon!

The garden with Dale Chihuly

One day Judy and I took a driving trip into Phoenix and outdoor garden museum. I've seen a number of Chihuly exhibits and this one, like his others, was customized to fit into the cactus garden.





These pieces were priced in the \$6,000 to \$10,000 range and offered in the gift shop. I should have had the \$299 scarf but just couldn't



That's a boat which is a style of glass work Chihuly has a lot of in Oklahoma City where his largest collection resides.

Friday – Notes on the way to Phoenix

Some trips make you wonder if they are just not meant to be. This one did not lead up to anything hopeful but here I am. Being careful not to count my chickens before they're hatched.

There have been some 10,000 flights canceled in the last couple of days. Newark airport looks it. There are lines of stranded travelers and there are people sleeping with their luggage all over the place. But me, I am cautiously optimistic. I am sitting in the airline lounge with my plane still listed as on schedule at 10am and yet the flight before me is delayed until late day.

My last trip to Huntington Beach, I found I was lucky beyond reason and beyond hope. I had a flight on time on a plane that was over-sold and I even felt guilty taking up the seat. Flights before me were still delayed and the flight after was totally canceled. Yet I knew that I wasn't going to get any sympathy from any east coasters for being stuck in warm Huntington Beach.

Back to today: On the eve of departure I was out in the driveway heaping wet heavy deep snow. It had to go because before morning another 3 inches was to fall on top of the already deep snow and the worry was the street plows blocking the end of our driveway. We had one week with three snowstorms and two of them dropped 10 to 15 inches each.

We haven't seen such single-digit cold for so long for many years. The Koi pond continues to steam with what I call dollar bills floating up in the air. But they are warm and comfy and Tom can continue to feed them. Too bad all the hose lines are frozen and he can't clean the filters because they continue to do what big fat Koi do after being fed. I have referred to it as a big wet cow pasture.

We arranged a car service with the thought that Tom would help me out to the end of the driveway and carry my boots back in the house. I mean after all I'm leaving temperatures in the teens and going to temperatures in the high 80s so I didn't exactly need my snow boots where I was going. As it turned out the 2 to 3 inches was possible for the driver to stamp out a pathway with his boots so that my little bitty flats could walk across it. The local streets were in some cases unplowed but fortunately some sand been dropped on the hills.

The adventure of travel

Some people say they hate air travel. Some people ask me how I can do so much and still say I enjoy it. The truth of the matter is it is not 100% enjoyable - just mostly so.

I give myself most all advantages one can to make travel easy and convenient. I can by-pass the economy lines. I can go through TSA Pre check and not have to take off shoes or take off the belt or

remove jacket or for that matter even remove my computer or liquids from my bag. I have Global Entry for international travel and thus can avoid lines. I never check a bag. I can get into most airline lounges. I have 1K Platinum status with United Airlines and lifetime gold status with all Star Alliance airlines. I earn a number of free upgrade coupons plus double miles. I bring all daily newspapers and a couple of fat books in case of delay. Mostly, I drink.

Yet with all this there are some frustrations that I can't buy my way out of or the airlines can't fix for me. This trip was a good example and gave me a few moments of wondering if I was just done with travel. TSA gave me a random check; that didn't seem fair. The two families that sat in my area insisted on talking over me, and passed food and Kindles and magazines back-and-forth and continually discussed their trip. There was the seatmate who couldn't decide what food he wanted to buy and acted like he was investing \$1 million with all his questions; I didn't care he choked on it. Yet the passenger with the giant box of smelly pizza was worse. The terminal hallways are terribly congested with all the fat-asses who can't manage to walk and have to take the little trolleys. (It's a known fact that if ten wheelchair passengers board, the likely number who need assistance deplaning might only be about three.) There are passengers who dump their luggage in first or economy plus then proceed to the back of the bus. Then my lovely and classy hotel couldn't control all the little teenybopper cheerleaders who were staying there who chose to eat their McDonald's spread out in the hallways and in the lobby as though it were a picnic campground.

I guess the bottom line is that you just can't teach people manners and airline travel now equates to older days in bus terminals.

From USA Today "Is Common Sense Dead?"

Common sense has always been a precious commodity in travel. You don't need stories about tourists plunging off cliffs in their cars or YouTube videos of national park visitors nearly being mauled by wild animals they were trying to pet to be reminded of that uncomfortable fact.

But is common sense as we know it dead? Talk to other travelers and to survival experts, and the troubling answer is: maybe. The severity of the problem became clear to me when a regular reader of this column, Robert Welch, e-mailed me a photo he took of a hotel door left ajar. Welch, who works in the security department of a large chain hotel in New Orleans, says every night, guests leave 25 to 30 doors ajar, presumably so they can run down the hall or out to dinner without having to remember their key cards. That's about 6% of all rooms. "It's the No. 1 reason why a theft occurred whenever I've investigated it," he says.

Michael Frost, a corporate director for a non-profit organization in Long Island, N.Y., marvels at the number of pricey electronics that guests leave at a resort pool. They'll think they're fine, he says, "Because I'm on vacation and not thinking as clearly as I would at home. It'll be there when I return. Wait a minute, where is my iPad, Kindle, Galaxy or Nook? It was right here. Right on my chair! Call hotel security! What do you mean the resort isn't responsible for it?"

Heather Heenan, who works for a major airline, says she could "fill a book" with the lack of common sense passengers demonstrate once they enter the airport. "They suddenly don't know left from right," she says. "They can't read a simple sign. They claim they are unable to use a kiosk, even as they hold their iPhone, which is infinitely more complicated." Among her favorite passenger questions: Which are the window seats on a diagram of the aircraft? And: Are flatirons and hair driers allowed through security? After all, other hair products, such as gel and hairspray, aren't.

Richard Lilley, an adventure guide from Charleston, W.Va., keeps a list of common-sense lapses that's "staggering." It includes visitors "trying to touch the lethal snakes and plants, standing on the crumbling edge of cliffs, wandering into the jungle and actually trying to feed crocodiles by hand."

As an advocate for travelers, I'm constantly amazed by the number of people who seem to be completely out of touch with reality. They want a refund for a non-refundable ticket (what part of "non-refundable" don't you understand?). They want me to retrieve their expired frequent-flier miles (they've expired — look it up in the dictionary). Or they want travel insurance to pay a claim for something that isn't covered by the policy (if it's not in the policy, it's not covered).

Experts say common sense is on the verge of extinction among travelers. Creek Stewart, a survival expert and author of *Build the Perfect Bug-Out Bag*, says it's not abstract, as in the movie *127 Hours*, which is based on Aron Ralston's story of surviving an accident in Utah, in which he had to amputate his forearm to save his life. "Unexpected survival scenarios can happen with little to no warning," he says. "Even on pleasure vacation cruises."

Several factors have led to the demise of common sense. It's partly technology, like GPS cellphones and Internet search engines, that allows travelers to go anywhere without knowing anything. But it's also a lack of adversity, which either gave our ancestors generous helpings of common sense or killed them. To some extent, says survival instructor Cody Lundin, it's also the latest survival TV shows, most of which are hosted by "adventure actors" instead of true experts. "Worse," says Lundin, who runs the Aboriginal Living Skills School in Prescott, Ariz., "we're in denial about it." Could it really be that common sense is dead? Whenever I hear about a tourist killed or injured while doing something stupid, I have to wonder. Given how unprepared the traveling public has become, it makes visitors walking targets for scam offers, predatory prices and junk fees. But it also means that even a little common sense can take you a long way when you're on the road.

Don't forget to pack your smarts

Itinerary

Fri Feb 14

10:06am Depart Newark EWR via UA#231
1:10pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

2:08pm Depart Houston IAH via UA#1607
4:06pm Arrive Phoenix PHX – Note that Terminal 4 has a USO

Rental car Thrifty - About 40 minutes from Phoenix airport to hotel

Hotel – Diana

Renaissance Phoenix Glendale Hotel & Spa – 4 nights
9495 W. Coyotes Blvd, Glendale, AZ 85305 Tele 623 937 3700
.1 mile from finish line at McFadden's Restaurant, 9425 W. Coyote Blvd.

Hotel – Judy

Hampton Inn & Suites – 4 nights
6630 North 95th Avenue, Glendale, AZ 85305 Tele 623 271 7771
.27 mile from finish line

Sat Feb 15

10:00am Expo and Packet Pick-up to 5pm at PARK WEST, 9744 W. Northern Avenue, Peoria

Sun Feb 16

7:30am Start of half marathon with course closing at 11:30 am
At Surprise Recreation Campus: 15960 N. Bullard Avenue, Surprise, Arizona

Whether it is your first half marathon or your first place effort, come walk, run or jog with us in the Half Marathon. The uniqueness of the West Valley will continue to inspire participants as the half marathon joins the marathon in Glendale, home of The Phoenix Coyotes and Arizona Cardinals. The half marathon starts at the Surprise Recreation Complex. The course progresses on to El Mirage, Youngtown, and Glendale. Runners will focus on the University of Phoenix Stadium, home of the Arizona Cardinals, Super Bowl XLII, and the Phoenix Coyotes, as they approach the final mile they'll meet up with the full marathon group. The finish line will be a picture perfect finish with the Bellagio style water feature guiding the runners to the finish line at Westgate Entertainment District. Finish at Westgate Entertainment District includes beer garden

<http://www.thearizonamarathon.com> – 6th Annual

Note that there is a bus from Westgate to the start line of the FULL marathon. Inquire for discount hotels at 800-608-1140. We later learned there was a bus to the HALF also.

Maryanne and Marv offer ride by BIL from Sun City to start and then walk to hotel from finish
Finish in Westgate Entertainment District, Coyote Blvd., Westgate, Glendale, AZ 85305

Eve Dinner at Marv and Maryanne Winter's home
10532 West White Mountain Road, Sun City AZ 85351
With friends Terri (doing ½) and Leslie from Merrill Lynch days

Tue Feb 18

12:19pm Depart Phoenix PHX via UA#1265
7:06pm Arrive Newark EWR

Participants:

Marv and Maryanne

Diana and Judy

Terri and Leslie