

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

My Other Life as a Gym Rat

OK, I haven't been totally forthcoming with you ... This is not the only column I write. In my other life I write for the FitCenter's monthly newsletter, in a regular feature called "Gym Rat Rantings."

This has been going on since November 2006 and I just can't seem to break the habit. It started the same way this newspaper column started, i.e., I volunteered.

You may very well be wondering why I can't find something else to do with my time. But you need to understand that nine years ago when I retired from Raytheon after a fulfilling career in aerospace engineering, I was reborn with a passion to write for fun, and I've been following that star ever since.

After co-writing three history books related to Ring-family mining exploits, I went looking for a forum to write lighter stuff – humor, human interest, and the like.

Pat had joined the FitCenter at 5555 East Fifth Street in August 2004, attending a Building Bones class as part of her program for breast cancer recovery. The FitCenter caters to people over 50 years of age and/or people with medical needs who desire a full service health club.

Pat was very enthusiastic about her gym class and convinced me to try it in the summer of 2006. My bones were fine, but I was interested in core muscle exercise, and besides, I was practically the only guy in the class, sort of a male island in a sea of women.

In fact my first Gym Rat Rantings column in November 2006 was titled "No Man is an Island," and went on to describe my experiences as the only man in the Building Bones class. I ended that initial Ranting with the words, "Even as the lone man in the class, I feel connected. And I'm sure that some day I'll stop cringing when Lynne [the instructor] barks, "OK, now everyone grab your balls."

The first year of articles for the FitCenter newsletter was mostly about the facility, the classes, the people, and the happenings around the gym. Much of the time the tone was humorous or satirical, I made fun of everyone and everything.

Then I got into life experiences, including health issues. I wrote about my frozen shoulder and the weeks of physical therapy (with two "terror"-pists) to "unfreeze" it, while constantly under the threat of having my arm and shoulder "twisted" into free motion while asleep in a hospital. I wrote about a near heart attack (turned out to be significant artery blockages) and suddenly finding myself with three new stents in arteries around my heart.

I recovered from shoulder and heart problems to write about pet peeves, diets, road-rage, and being rear-ended in my "most-prized-material-possession" sports car at the intersection of

North Sabino Canyon and East River Road. In a column that drew a lot of positive response, I wrote about how difficult it was to open a container with 42-days worth of Prilosec pills – the task requiring both Pat and me (with five college degrees between us) and a sharp pair of scissors. I even gave Pat a chance to write about her middle-of-the-night scorpion bite - in our own home, in our own bed.

As you know from almost a year's worth of *Foothills Star* columns, I like to write about family stuff, particularly travel and my better-half, Pat. So FitCenter newsletter readers saw articles about fulfilling one of Pat's son's bucket-list objectives (before age 40) - attending a University of Michigan football game at the Big House in Ann Arbor, Michigan; our trek to Denver, Colorado to attend my Aunt Elizabeth's 100th birthday and 75th wedding anniversary party (with my 100-year-old Uncle); and a recent road trip to spectacular scenic sites in Utah and Colorado.

There have been at least three Gym Rat articles devoted to Pat. One recounted the Bob-and-Pat story, including how we - both having lost our spouses to fatal disease - met on the internet almost nine years ago and our wonderful life together since. Another was a "surprise" 60th birthday card to Pat – which turned out to be sort of an ode to Pat without the poetry, but with some real feeling. The most recent was my description of life with Pat as a super-knitter, a tread-carefully tale to be sure.

The final category of Gym Rat articles has been family history and genealogy. I wrote a story about the importance of saving old family photographs and papers as "treasures," that indeed enabled me and my brother to research and document family history, leading directly to three books. And just recently I wrote about how after 25 years preparing to be an engineer and then 35 years of working as one, I got into the very satisfying retirement pastime of writing for fun.

So all in all, I've written 30 stories in my other life as a Gym Rat. If you'd like to read any of them, you can do so on my website at <http://ringbrothershistory.com>, under "Bob's Projects."

You can find out more about the FitCenter by telephone at 520-571-7000 or online at <http://www.azfitcenter.com>.

Next time in this column, I'd like to review the last year of my "Loose in the Foothills" articles and share some of your responses.



*FitCenter instructor Lynne O'Brien leads columnist Bob Ring's Building Bones class in a "pull-down" exercise.
(Photo courtesy of Bob Ring)*