

Ring's Reflections

by Bob Ring

On the Road to Silver City, New Mexico

Three years ago, when we talked about making “bucket lists,” the things we wanted to do before we die, Pat’s 34-year-old son David volunteered his list of things he wanted to do before he reached age 40. Pat and I offered to help him work off one of his top five items by taking him on a birthday trip to a football game in the “Big House” at our alma mater, the University of Michigan.

That started a family tradition. Since then we have taken David on birthday trips to Bisbee / southern Arizona and to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. We just got back from this year’s birthday trip to Silver City, New Mexico.

Silver City, founded in 1870, has a rich silver and copper mining history. Silver mining pretty much ended in the 1890s with the government devaluation of silver, but copper mining still continues in two of the largest open-pit mines in the world – Santa Rita and Tyrone.

Today Silver City is acknowledged as one of the best small towns in America, with a steady population of about 10,000. Besides copper mining, the area has become a destination for retirement and tourism, and continues to develop its art gallery credentials, much like Bisbee has done.

Silver City is 200 easy road miles from Tucson, east on Interstate 10 to Lordsburg, New Mexico and then northeast on state road 90. The trip took us about four hours, including a short stop for food.

We were looking for a nice place to stay for a relaxing weekend. On this trip, David was bringing his girlfriend Krista, who also was celebrating a birthday that week. A friend of Pat’s, Linda Yost, who along with Pat volunteers at Arizona Oncology, recommended that we try Georgetown Cabins, located 18 miles northeast of Silver City. So we rented two cabins there for three days and had a wonderful time.

Georgetown Cabins takes its name from the silver mining town of Georgetown, founded in the early 1870s, growing to a population of 1,200 people, and active until the late 1890s. The Cabins are nestled on the side of a forested mountain at 6,300 feet elevation and overlook the old town site – with virtually nothing of the mining camp visible today.

These are not your typical cabins; forget the rough-hewn log enclosures you may have experienced elsewhere. The six Georgetown Cabins are more like upscale wilderness condos, designed for couples, offering full kitchens, exceptional comfort, gas fireplaces, satellite TV, wireless internet, private deck/patios, gas cookout grills, and a brand new community spa.

The cabins are widely separated, invisible to each other, contributing to privacy and an almost unbelievable quietness. The forever views and tranquil beauty are spellbinding.

Cabins owner/proprietors Jon and Susie Eickhoff are not your typical inn keepers either. Jon has a Mechanical Engineering degree and Susie has a PhD in industrial organizational psychology. They owned a fast-track computer engineering service company in Michigan that was once featured in *Fortune* magazine, but because of health problems Jon suffered, they sold the business and moved to Silver City in 2001.

In 2007 the Eickhoffs purchased the ten acres for Georgetown Cabins from descendants of the original mining camp settlers, after doing a lot of research on the history of the area to establish land rights and titles. They entertained their first guests at their romantic hideaway on Valentines Day 2009.

The couple put a lot of effort into developing their remote mountain retreat. They used their technical backgrounds to design the cabins and provide eco-friendly resources: solar power, propane gas, and well water.

Jon and Susie are eager to share their knowledge of Georgetown history. Each of the six cabins is named after a well-known character of the Georgetown mining camp and displays a sizable collection of local history books, papers, and photo albums.

Pat and David came up with a great plan for our vacation meals. Each couple brought food; David cooked on Friday night, we snacked on Saturday night after a big mid-day meal in town, and Pat cooked on Sunday night. Krista and I were limited to kibitzing while the chefs worked, and then were responsible for opening and pouring the wine.

We took it easy on activities during the day. We toured the art galleries in Silver City, visited a newly-opened Mimbres archeological site, and stopped to stare into the enormous Santa Rita open-pit copper mine. All four of us being involved in a football pool, we devoted significant time to watching football on TV – when we weren’t watching the baseball playoffs.

Realizing my special interest in mining history, Jon and Susie gave me a private tour of the Georgetown mining camp site and showed me evidence of the old diggings such as traces of building foundations and open tunnels.

Pat and I are really enthusiastic about returning to Georgetown Cabins. We have many activities yet to explore there, really appreciate the restful scene, and as Jon said to another of his guests, “Where else can you get your place cleaned by a PhD?”

Georgetown Cabins are available year-round. Rates are reasonable with discounts for extended stays. For more information, check out their Web site at www.georgetowncabins.com or call (575) 534-4529.



*This is the Georgetown mining camp around 1880.
(Courtesy of John and Susie Eickhoff)*



*From Georgetown Cabins, you can see that there is virtually nothing
of Georgetown visible today. (Courtesy of Bob Ring)*



Pat and I stayed in the Lindauer Cabin, named after the man who ran the general store in Georgetown. (Courtesy of Pat Wood)