

From Ashes to Phoenix



Choir Practice

November 2, 2017

Delta Airlines flight 805

Calgary to Salt Lake City, Utah

Bear and I got split up on the airplane on the first leg of our journey to Phoenix, so we are spending some time with strangers.

I am seated next to a traveler whose religion teaches her that the person in seat 23C, across the aisle from us, is descended from the lost tribes of Israel. She is a Mormon; he is Native American.

I assume she also believes that the *Book of Mormon*, which she is reading, was transcribed from golden plates by Joseph Smith - who was told of their existence by an angel named Moroni, in Manchester NY, in 1830. She has undoubtedly been taught that her "made in America" God lives on a throne, near the planet Kolob.

She may or may not know that the Prophet of her religion had more than 30 wives, some as young as 14, or that he owned two rocks named *Urim* and *Thummin*. Smith put the rocks in his hat, covered it with his face, and received messages from God.

My traveling companion may not have been told that Smith died of gunshot wounds delivered by an angry mob, while in prison for fraud.

While her prophet and her religion have *charlatan* written all over them, she is an earnest young woman – all giddy about going on a Mission on behalf of her church.

As we leveled out at 36,000' she steered the conversation toward a discussion about my beliefs. Wanting to avoid an altercation (at this altitude, or any), I deflected to learning more about her religion. Apparently every 19-year-old Mormon girl (18 for boys), goes on an 18-month mission (24-months for boys), starting at the LDS Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah. She will learn to speak Spanish



Joseph Smith, listening to the word of God, through "seer" rocks in his stovepipe hat.

and work with the poor and disadvantaged, wherever the church sends her. Her enthusiasm for her mission is palpable.

As we chatted, my traveling companion was keeping a close eye on a handsome young Believer a few rows ahead. I saw them together after we landed, and it didn't appear to me that polygamy was on her mind where he was concerned. Perhaps her beliefs are less traditional than it seems.

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I continue to marvel at religion, in all its complex forms. I almost wish our stopover in Salt Lake City was longer – maybe we could have attended a Mormon Tabernacle Choir practice.



Mandatory "Magic" Mormon Underwear

In the Valley of the Sun

November 2, 2017

Old Town Scottsdale, Arizona

Alberta is getting its first major snowfall while we are sitting on a patio in Old Town Scottsdale, in 75-degree heat, watching some ducks float by in the river.

I'll let Buddy Stewart describe the sensation, while you read on.....

Click
Here

<https://youtu.be/kwk21sAuJkA>



Phoenix

November 3, 2017

Maricopa County, Arizona

The last time we came to Arizona we flew down on a private jet. One of my customers, who was literally flying high at the time, invited us down to close a deal on a commercial property he was buying, and I was mortgaging. It was a Tony affair, champagne flight, five-star Hotel, a drive through the desert in a black sports car.....

Well, that was then, and this is now.

My customer's fortunes went into a spiral dive with oil prices, the jet got sold and I am now the happy owner of a commercial building in Phoenix.

Which is immeasurably prophetic. For me, Phoenix isn't a place, it isn't a mythical bird, it's what I do.

I have spent the past 40 years helping struggling and emerging businesses find financing. Some prosper - others don't, so I needed to create a mechanism to deal with the casualties.



I took inspiration from the mythical creature that rises from the ashes of a dead bird and created a "Phoenix" division within my company. Phoenix is where we turn casualties into productive assets.

So, here I am in Phoenix, taming a Phoenix.

It could be worse; this is the view Marshall sent me from Phoenix department's window this morning.

The National Guard

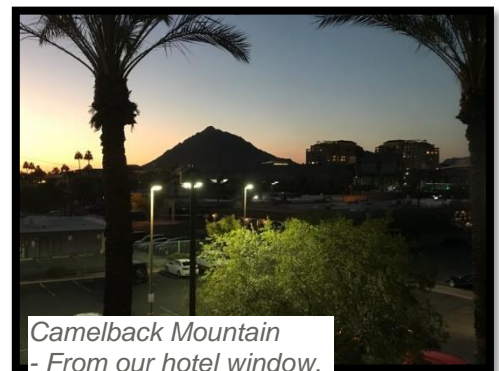
November 3, 2017
Scottsdale, AZ

Phoenix was a surprise. We have been here before but never really explored it. There isn't much grass, but it is greener than expected. The cacti are majestic, the hills provide a diversion to the otherwise flat landscape and the sky is unobstructed blue. We found some exceptional restaurants and a few shops worth loitering in. The weather was great - our hotel was convenient and comfy.

We were more than a little reluctant to return home, to -15 and snow.

On the way back to the airport, I plugged in "National Car Rental Return" into the GPS but somehow got "The National Guard". It wasn't far from the airport but there was no shuttle bus waiting when we arrived at the National Guard Recruiting Centre.

Bear and I agreed that the world would be a safer place if we joined up; but then we decided that unless they have trendy restaurants, king size-beds, and palm-tree vacations, we might not be cut out for it.



*Camelback Mountain
- From our hotel window.*



The commercial property we came to see exceeds expectations. It has a reliable tenant, a great location, and commercial viability. It won't be a long trip, ...

... from ashes to Phoenix.