

# Getting to Young .....and back

by Annemarie Eveland

“You can get old going to Young,” my friend warned me before my recent road trip around the backside of Roosevelt Lake to Young, Arizona.

Well, it *was* true about the time it takes to drive around those back, washboard roads.... starting out at 11 a.m., I didn't arrive in Young until 4 p.m.! But those country roads slow down the travel speed so you can experience the beauty of the desert scenery, the varying shapes of mountains and streams; even in winter, you can spot an occasional bird. Roosevelt Lake looks very different from the other side.

I took my 4WD Jeep on this trip...took Hwy. 87 south to Hwy. 188 and then turned off on the dirt road heading toward A-Cross Ranch.

Surprise #1 -- The road was flooded at the crossing with an official sign that read “Road Closed.” Should we turn back? While trying to decide, I was encouraged by a driver in a pickup truck who swam across pretty effortlessly. So, we forded the gushing waters and, safely on the other side, continued on the back roads around the Lake. The roads aren't clearly marked but, if you head towards A-Cross Ranch, you will be okay.

You will be rewarded with beautiful, changing, magnificent scenery. The recent rains had sprouted short, spring green grasses which carpeted the desert landscape floor. The drive will reveal several breathtaking mountain peaks. The landscape around the Lake displays unusual formations. The water runoffs keep little streams gushing merrily along and the old ranches you pass remind one of days of western yore.

At the Bar Eleven Ranch, I stopped and took pictures of the old farm equipment sitting in front of the gate. A worthwhile pause in my trip and a chance to stretch my legs. The next sign you pass says “Young” – and an arrow points straight ahead...but, then you will come to a stop sign and the “T” in the road goes left or right with no indication of which way to turn. Go LEFT and you will get to Young.

At the edge of Young's town, another photo stop for the old windmill and the irresistible signs shown here. *These folks have a sense of humor*, I thought.

A short distance further, you will see Antlers Café and Bar. But, this is not the ordinary small town café. Besides the unusual décor inside the café and the bar, there is the creative menu. Who makes those items in this tiny town plopped in ranch outer lands? Owners, Chef Scott and wife Pam, serve their tasty meals here.

There are a few ranches around Young, some dating back in history to the well-known Pleasant Valley incident. But today, Young and surrounding areas are pleasantly quiet and “peaceable” as the old timers would say.

I had a chance recently to talk with Woody Kline, Gila County Supervisor. He is one of Young's approximately 600 permanent residents. Woody's family has lived in Young since the Twenties. His Mother home-schooled him and he worked on ranches south of Young. After high school, he worked for the Forest Service on the hot shot crews. As a youth, he joined the Young Adult Conservation Crew (YACC), building fences, doing range projects and fire projects but all these jobs kept him away from his family. He finally secured a full-time job with the government in fire management. In 1912, his wife's great grandfather homesteaded the small ranch they presently live on. Currently, he and a partner own two ranches and about 120 head of cows. He is ardently hoping to have the YACC viable again as it teaches young people many skills and responsibility.

**Young** is an unincorporated town, like many towns in Arizona's Rim Country. However, Young is a choice for many people wishing to live in a rural small community where there is no main road into town.

Supervisor Woody says, "Those here want to be off the main drag. They usually are looking for independence...tired of the city, rat race traffic and hectic city demands. There is now a push for retired folks and pre-retirees to find a place in Young. What changed was that now it's easier to get to Payson."

**"So, what else is the attraction to Young?" I asked.**

Woody replied, "We have a nice historical society and museum now, old historical places to visit and Haigler Creek which is great for fishing and camping. Chef Scott and wife Pam do a nice job, serve good food and lots of it at the Antlers. 4WDrive clubs come through to the outer terrain to explore the great outdoors, and hunters -- a lot of them -- and nature lovers come to see parts of our great outdoor Arizona not seen from the main highways. These have been economic boons. One thing about Young is that we don't have a lot and that kinda keeps it down."

**"Any challenges for the little town today?" I queried.**

Woody chuckled and responded, "Well, when people move in from different parts of the country, they want to bring what they left behind. So, lots of rules and regulations and that could mean the town will change from this quiet little town. The main change is that now it's easy to get to Payson. What holds that down is there's not a main road in Young."

As far as jobs, Woody said that the school (kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) employs a few people, the county and the state yard do as well. They used to have the district office here but it closed. There are some people who are entrepreneurs and handymen. He wants to revive the YACC which included training in fire, recreational, timber and range work.

I asked Woody what his pastimes are. He chuckled, “I have two bags; one computer; one file, a phone and you may find me hunting, being in the woods, fiddling with cows, riding, working on the ranch.”

**“And what advice can you give young people today?”**

He was very clear on that one: “Get a trade. Young adults, they go to school but don’t know if they will use their degree. I tell young folks --find a skill that you like and learn it well and then do what you want and you will always have something to rely back on.”

I enjoyed my five-hour journey on the back roads around Roosevelt Lake to Young. I enjoyed seeing small ranches, the changing mountain formations, the landscape and the gurgling streams. But *you* can take the Hwy. 260 road out of Payson and turn south on Forest Road 512 -the Young road. It’s much faster and cuts the time to about one hour and 30 minutes! Enjoy your outing!



Woody Kline  
Gila County  
Supervisor