

OPINIONS

As Tempeans know, all roads lead somewhere

A few months ago on a Sunday afternoon, I got a panic cell phone call from a woman of my acquaintance. It seems she was driving on the Loop 202 and needed to know how to get to Phoenix.

I started with some basics.

"What direction are you going?" I asked.

"Um, I'm not sure," she said.

"How can you be not sure?"

"I just know I'm on the 202. Now are you going to help or not?"

"OK. What's the last exit you noticed?"

"Scottsdale Road."

"All right, tell me when you see another exit."

"I see, um, Priest."

"Excellent. You are heading west. Just keep going and you'll hit Phoenix. You can't miss it."

"But I need to get to a particular place."

I proceeded to explain the logistics of following the 202 to Interstate 10, getting off at Seventh Street and so on. It was all quite a revelation to her.

It turns out that despite having lived in the Valley for almost four years, she doesn't like to go outside Scottsdale.

She explained, "After all, I'm a single female, and I have to watch out for myself."

There should be a special map for single females from Scottsdale listing all the hazards of foreign lands west of 65th Street and south of McKellips: "Here be dragons."

I didn't think much of the incident at the time. Then, a couple of weeks ago, I suggested to another friend that we rendezvous at a certain volleyball/sports bar in Peoria.

"That's on the west side, isn't it?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I don't get over there much."

"How not much?"

"Well, not at all, actually."

"Why?"

"Everything I need is in Scottsdale, I guess."

"What about Tempe?"

"That's south of here, right?"

OK, I made up that last part, but it



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Special for The Republic

isn't too far off what I'm sure she was thinking. And it got me thinking that, despite the best efforts of ADOT, you just can't make someone drive where they don't want to go.

Now, Tempeans are different. They go anywhere. They see themselves as the center of the Valley universe. Plus, they take a few steps in any direction and they're practically out of town anyway.

They play with Phoenix and Mesa very nicely. Just look at the street names. You can start out in west Phoenix on West Broadway, continue on to East Broadway, cross the border to West Broadway in Tempe, cross Mill Avenue to East Broadway, enter Mesa and be transmigrated back to West Broadway and eventually end up on East Broadway.

This makes for a great prank to play on newcomers, by the way. Just tell your friend from Chicago that the store he needs is, say, 1825 E. Broadway.

Remember to tell him, "The streets are really very well marked around here." Then sit back and imagine the snorts of delight your friend is having when he realizes how he's been had.

But try crossing from Tempe to Scottsdale. Rural Road becomes Scottsdale Road. McClintock becomes Hayden. Mill becomes, well, it just sort of careens off into Phoenix, unable, apparently, to pay the toll.

Recently, however, the highway department did enact a toll for passing through Tempe latitudinally.

It's called the Superstition Freeway.

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