

## **“WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CORI BRETT?”**

July 2010

### **“TALKING STICK RESORT”**

Heads are swiveling from left to right as drivers navigate the Loop 101 near Indian Bend in Scottsdale. The Salt River Reservation is booming in all directions. To the east the new Talking Stick Resort stretches an impressive 15 stories, dominating the skyline. You can't miss it. On the west side, light posts already surround the \$100 million baseball complex under construction for the Diamondbacks and Colorado Rockies.

The North and South courses at Talking Stick have always been among my favorites. My husband keeps his handicap at Talking Stick. So what's going on? Talking Stick has exploded into an exciting destination, and its centerpiece is the newest Casino Arizona.

In addition to state-of-the-art gaming, the Resort contains 497 guest rooms and suites, eight restaurants, ten entertainment lounges, and a 750-seat showroom featuring live concerts and events. A luxury spa and outdoor pools are almost completed. “Salt River Fields at Talking Stick,” will be ready for Cactus League spring training in 2011 with an 11,000 square foot stadium and 12 practice fields.

It's amazing that even with all the excitement next door, you can still feel the stillness of the desert out on the golf courses. Low trees allow vistas of distant mountains. Birds, prairie dogs, and the occasional coyote frequent the fairways and adjoining reservation land, thankfully free of homes. Contours were added to the relatively flat land to create interesting holes. I was surprised to see that Talking Stick rates the forward (Jade) tees for both men and women.

The South Course is shorter (5,331 to 6,833 yards), and I like the variety of holes. Water comes into play on six holes of the back nine. The pretty but deadly little creek in front of the 16<sup>th</sup> green has reeds just high enough to capture approach shots. Over-club and you may find the lake behind the green. One of my biggest challenges is avoiding the broad waste bunker that runs the length of the par-5 14<sup>th</sup>. The South Course has more trees and shady spots.



Talking Stick South Course Hole #12

The North Course plays 5,532 yards to 7,133 yards, with some pretty long par-4's. It hosts most of the tournaments. Fairways are wide open and straightforward. Hole No. 12 offers a choice: tee off over the large fairway bunker to the narrow left side or play the much wider right side, with a carry over a ravine on the approach shot.



Talking Stick North Course Hole #7 & #10

Insiders know that the clubhouse at Talking Stick serves great food. Non-golfers from the area come over just for lunch. The comfortable clubhouse is a warm reddish color with simple lines, patio seating around an outdoor fireplace and rustic décor. Troon Golf manages Talking Stick with its usual high standards of service and course conditioning. [www.talkingstickgolfclub.com](http://www.talkingstickgolfclub.com)

If romantic dining is your thing, check out Orange Sky. The panoramic view from atop the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the Resort is the best in the Valley and the menu is first-class. Orange Sky is named for flaming desert sunsets, all the more gorgeous when seen from the sexy private booths along the west side of the restaurant. Reserve ahead.



Orange Sky Restaurant on the 15<sup>th</sup> Floor at Talking Stick Resort

The gaming floor at Talking Stick totals 240,000 square feet, including blackjack tables and more than 800 slot machines, plus the largest poker room in the state. It's the sister casino to Casino Arizona at 101 and McKellips. Talking Stick is a self-contained entertainment complex, with everything a vacationer would want under one roof, except - oddly enough - shopping. I saw only one sundries shop in the lobby. Hopefully more retail outlets will open.

Talking Stick is owned and operated by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, a sovereign tribe with nearly 9,000 members. Displays of tribal artifacts throughout the Resort illustrate interesting facets of tribal history. Yet the overall impression is sleek, modern, urban, sophisticated – it wouldn't be out of place in Las Vegas. The new game in town promises to be serious competition for dining and entertainment venues in Scottsdale. [www.talkingstick.com](http://www.talkingstick.com).

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