



Turpitude

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Jerry and I (photo above) had quite a great time on Prince Edward Island. You'll remember from the last mailing that we planned to fly to PEI, rent a whole house full of amateur radio gear, and talk to the world. Surprisingly, it came off pretty well, with only a few minor failures and one major disaster.

The adventure began on November 15th. I had been packed for days so there wasn't much for me to do that early morning but to toss the suitcase into the car and grab my briefcase. I had done all that, kissed Sue, said Goodbye ~ and the telephone rang. I kept walking toward the car, ignoring it, but Sue answered. It turned out to be Matthew. I planned to leave my car at his house for the ten days; he'd offered to give me a ride to the airport. He had called to ask me to bring up the '73 Ford pickup instead of my car so he could haul some stuff to the dump. A reasonable request ~ but the uncertainty of driving the old wreck threw me into a tizzy. I was leaving for Portland early so there would be time to go to Powell's Bookstore and the main Goodwill. With the pickup, though, there was no way I was going to drive downtown in all that traffic. I said, Sure, I'd bring the pickup, no problem!

I transferred stuff from car to pickup and took off, slowly, though, as the truck doesn't have a choke and doesn't run well for the first fifteen minutes. I will give it credit: once warmed up it runs fine. There is something wrong with the steering, but I don't know what. This causes some terror driving.

In spite of my fears, I got to Matthew's with no problems. He and Lia (his squeeze) greeted me, we pounded each other on the back, saying Gee it's good to see you and what'll we do now? I mentioned Powell's and they thought that was a fine idea. We climbed in Matthew's Sterling and off we went. We spent about an hour in the bookstore. (I found the very elusive volume eight of Page Smith's *History of the United States*; something I've been after for six or seven years! Now I have the complete set!) We had lunch and went back to Matthew's house to put up an high-frequency radio antenna.

Matthew is a ham operator, too. I think he got his license just to please me, which it did. We put up a G5RV antenna which seemed to work well. Matthew did most of the work, climbing up on the second story roof. I flailed around with the antenna

leadin and arms. This was a great way to start an amateur radio vacation!

My flight was to leave at 6:30 pm, so I wanted to be at the airport by 4:00. Matthew got me there spot on time. Thoughtful son that he is, he didn't just drop me off at the Departure Area, he parked the car and walked in with me to help this old codger out. I was very pleased that he did. It is somewhat confusing to get tickets for an all Air Canada trip from the United window. And they do such funny stuff with suitcases nowadays. Matthew was a big help ~ he flies a lot and knows just which conveyor belt should get my bag. I had my prescriptions and some important stuff in my briefcase, which I clung to!

Matthew walked with me down to the security area, gave me a hug, and wished me well. Shoes off, belt off, and stuff out of my pockets. Hmmmm, I had a new box knife with me; duh. Oh, well; lost it. Once through the security I headed down to the gate and found Jerry hanging around. He'd been there since 2:00!

Our flights were from Portland to Vancouver, BC, then to Toronto, and finally to Charlottetown, PEI. We had quite a bit of lay-over time. The planes were a tight squeeze for me, small seats. The flight left Portland at 6:30 pm and got to Charlottetown at 1:00 pm the next day, so most of the time spent in the air was during darkness. That was disappointing, as I really like to look out the windows and see something!

Figuring that we'd be tired after the trip, we did not plan much for that afternoon: rent a car, find a bed & breakfast, and go to the three bookstores classified as "used and rare" in the telephone book. Car rental was a snap. A nice little old lady in the Hertz space had a car ready for us; I think we were the only rental that day. In signing the documents, she told us to have them put gas in when we brought the car back as their rates for gasoline were the best around. I didn't really believe her, but Jerry did ~ turned out that she wasn't kidding. Most gas was \$1 a litre and Hertz' was only 90 cents/litre. I'll be darned.

I booked the B&B and downloaded a google map of

it's location, but we still had a fairly difficult time finding it. Jerry proclaimed me as "Primary Station Navigator" so I was given the map and spouted out instructions with an "I think" or a "maybe this way" fore and aft. We did find the B&B pretty quickly as it was quite near the airport. We pulled up in front of it and Jerry asked, Are you sure that this is a bed and breakfast? He asked because it was just a plain, modern house in a plain, modern neighborhood. I had seen the house on an internet photo so was sure we were right. I went up to the door, knocked, and was met by a prim, Miss Marple. She welcomed us in, and showed us to a room full of doillies. Not the kind of a room two he-men amateur radio adventurers would be comfortable in. But there were no other people staying with her at the time, so we got to treat the shared bathroom as if it were all our own. After a bath and a shave, we were off to see Charlottetown and find the bookstores!

Jerry wanted to find some Canadian history books; I was in my usual quest mode for Orientals. The first bookstore was small, untidy, with inadequate labels on the shelves. We didn't buy anything. The second one was small, untidy, with no labels on the shelves. We didn't buy anything. The third one was, you guessed it, small and untidy. Your heroes managed to get through three "used and rare" bookshops with NO purchases at all. We did find a large bookstore by the University where Jerry bought four or five neat histories, new.

Dinner was supposed to be seafood. We went into a seafood-looking pub and found that we were an hour too early to purchase a dinner. After our day and a half of being up, we decided to make due with a lunch, then head back to the B&B for some rest. Lunch was good, expensive, and served by a delightful waitress. I even left a tip.

The next day was planned for tourist activities. Jerry took us to the old downtown and we looked for museums. We found Province House. This was the place where the notion of a country that would become Canada was first promulgated. This very building. November is not at the peak of their tourist season, so we got a Park Service lady all to ourselves; she showed us around and told delightful tales of the provinces.



This is the front of Province House, showing the memorial to the soldiers of The Great War.

We went into another building that we thought was a museum. It turned out to be a “modern” cassette-guided walk through Canada’s very early history. It took about a half-hour and was quite informative. We never did find a “real” museum where a fellow could look at pieces of old plates and stuff.

We headed off to Summerside, 71 km away, for lunch, a look-see, and another B&B. This got us a little more than half-way to the PEI DX Lodge and our amateur radio adventure!

We drove around, catching all the glories of Summerside. Stopped at an antique store to compare prices with American shops. Besides, your humble navigator needed a little advice on finding the night’s lodging. Luckily for us, our B&B was adjacent to the PEI Bagpipe and Piping Institute. Easy to find, rather.

We were the only guests at this B&B also. We spent a couple hours visiting with the owners that night, then enjoyed a room with quilts and turn of the century memorabilia. As you can see from the photo below, the sign was worn out, but the room was



excellent! The next morning our trip really began as that was the day we could check into the radio house.

We headed out early, following Highway 2. The DX Lodge was supposed to be about an hour’s drive from Summerside. Jerry and I were both a little concerned as the directions said to follow Highway 2 until we saw the antennas. It is easy to miss antennas.

We had just passed St. Anthony, when we topped one of the little ridges that they call mountains (!). To our amazement, there ahead of us was a huge array of antennas! You couldn’t miss them, from even a couple clicks away. Our conversation buzzed around us in the car, Are those our antennas? They look too commercial to be hams’. They are huge (expletive deleted)!

We got to the turn, took it, and sure enough, those were our antennas.



The front of the house from the road. The towers are much taller and more impressive in person!

We timidly drove up, parked, and got out to look for the key. I didn’t find the key until later, but it didn’t matter as the front door had been left unlocked and the security system was not activated. We walked into the best boys’ club I have ever seen.

The first thing we did was go into the operating room. Beautiful equipment, all kinds of stuff. Jerry and I both felt more than a little in awe. We looked around the room a bit more, saw all the rotor guides for the antennas, the four radios, the amplifiers, one whole wall filled with certificates that Ken had won from this location. We decided that we better unload the car, find our rooms, and try to bring our hearts back under control.

About a half hour later, we went back into the operating room. Jerry liked the Icom 7800, so he took that station; I liked the Elecraft K-3, so I took that one. Following Ken's appreciated but very incomplete instructions, we got the power turned on to the units, figured out how to get which antenna hooked to which radio. It took us some little time before our heads were capped with earphones and signals were coming in.

This was still early in the day, and twenty meters (a ham band) was hot. I could hear England, Slovakia, Italy, it seemed like all of Europe came thundering through! On forty meters with the beam pointed south, we could hear a zillion American hams. It took me a while to figure out how to use the console microphone and to "discover" the PTT foot switch. Figuring out how to use the equipment was not really very hard, but we had so much adrenalin pumping through our systems that everything seemed a new, unconquerable challenge!

The last thing I did was load my logging program onto Ken's computer. Ken had a complex logging program that would partially operate the radios as well as provide logging. The manual was 280 pages long. I just did not feel up to assimilating all that, so I brought my own ~ and with the program installed, I was ready to operate!

I called station after station, received responses to my first calls and was given very good signal reports. Wow. The only thing that stopped me was it became lunchtime. We hadn't bought groceries yet.

We'd been told that there was a small grocery two clicks down Highway 2, and a large one in O'Leary, ten clicks away. We opted for the large one. Going into O'Leary we came upon the G&E Cafe, with a

for sale sign in the front window. Jerry said, Want to try there for lunch? Sure, says I, and in we went.

There were two other folks all ready inside, besides the cook and waitress. It was a large cafe, would seat about sixty I guess. Jerry and I both picked something off the specials list. Jerry had warned me that Eastern Canadians usually ate their french fries with gravy, so I wasn't surprised when the waitress asked if I wanted mine that way. Wanting to feel like a comfortable local, I said, Sure. My sandwich arrived with a mountain of french fries and a LOT of gravy! Frankly, it was very good. We ate there three or four times more during our stay.

O'Leary is a one street town. We drove through it, looking for the large grocery store. Couldn't find it. Jerry did a turnaround at the far end of town and we came back through it. I spotted a small sign that said Farmer's Market, behind the Farmer's Co-Op. We pulled in there and went inside.

We got the makings of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, a few cups-of-soup, dry cereal for breakfast, and fixings for spaghetti. We did not plan our eating very well. Turns out that besides the G&E, there was the Minh Tang Chinese Restaurant, back on Highway 2. We mostly ate out.



A typical view of the flat island

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I couldn't have the surgery to remove the two tumors because when I went in, they found out I have atrial fibrillation and sent me to the emergency room. Now I'm on cumadan. Then I fell on the ice and hurt my leg badly ~ landed on cement steps. Spent four days off my feet then tried to go to the basement. Fell down the basement steps.