



Turpitude

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Mike Horvat

By this time, we were settled in the DX Lodge on Prince Edward Island, stocked with some food, much glamour, and a whole room full of radios. I snapped a great photo of Jerry when we first arrived and he stood for the first time in the radio room. With his mouth open. I was no more subtle than he was: my eyes rotated in my head like slot-machine digits, the world suddenly took on new proportions.

There are two basic ways to operate in a radio contest. One is the Search and Pounce method, where the operator tunes over a frequency range looking for another station that is calling "CQ Contest". [CQ is amateur radio abbreviation for I-see-you, ie I am looking for a radio contact.] The other way is to be the station that sits on one frequency and calls CQ, waiting for others to call. Think about it for a minute: what method do you think you would try?

All of the winners of radio contests use the CQ technique. It is possible to talk to many more stations if you just sit on the one frequency and let the masses come to you. A typical station will work sixty others in an hour. Or more. I chose the Search and Pounce system for some pretty good reasons.

For one thing, not only does the CQ station have to talk to as many stations as possible, he has to maintain a log with the stations' calls and other contest stuff that verifies that the contact was made. I can't do this; it is too stressful for this old PTSD guy. I go with the S&P, call a station, work him, then take as long as I want to make a log entry, search out another CQ station, and start again. I can average (on a good day) twenty contacts per hour. As you can see, this does not compare very favourably with the CQer's sixty or seventy.

It is evident that I did not get in this contest to win, but rather to have fun. Jerry felt pretty much the same way.

The contest that we entered was called the 2009 Sweepstakes. It involved only stations in the United States and Canada. The two countries are divided up into eighty sections. Your score is the number of contacts made multiplied by the number of sections worked. A major effort of testers is to work all eighty sections; you don't win anything but it's something "anyone" can do ~~ with lots of luck and a good deal of perseverance.

I came out with a score of 25,000 points. The winning station will have about 6,000,000 points. I have to tell you that Ken, the owner of the station, placed second last year. This station had the capability of being a winner had it only had better contestors at the helm. But we had a good time.

There were two separate sets available to us, perfect, one for me, one for Jerry. Each set was composed of two transceivers (transmitter/receiver combinations) and two amplifiers. Even S&P operators were expected to run two radios at a time, searching for the next station to work simultaneously with working the current station. Phooey; I no can do. I read an article about how to operate with two radios...it explained how you could be tuning at the same time the other station was talking ~ at the same time you were typing his log information into the computer. I just can't do it. It was one radio at a time for me. I made about 205 contacts and had fun.

But you know, the contest wasn't everything. In fact, as it turned out the peak of the adventure took place in the three days we had to prepare for the contest, to get to know the radios, and to work some DX [distant] stations.

By noon on Wednesday, our first day at the Lodge, I had got a station working. I had to read the amplifier manual to give me confidence to use it. Ha; the manual said to just start talking, the amplifier was micro-controlled and would tune itself to the right band and the right frequency. Wow, hard to believe. My old amplifier at home has to be tenderly coaxed to perform!

I sat down at the operator's table, turned on the radio and amplifier, aimed the antenna along the great circle line to Europe and Africa, and called CQ. There was no answer on my first call, but on the second one a fellow in Wales called me. He gave me a *strong* signal report and we exchanged names and locations and chatted a bit. After about ten minutes we signed [finished our contact]. E'gad! There were twenty stations calling me! I was instantly giddy as I recognized calls from France, the Netherlands, Scotland, etc. I replied to one, we talked a minute, then he said that it looked like I was generating a pile up and he would turn me loose to work some more fel-

lows. I sat there for forty minutes, talking to one station after another, each one giving me tremendous signal reports.

Believe me, after forty minutes of this I was done in ~ but more and more hams kept calling me. I got on the air and said, Sorry fellows, but I am an old man and can't keep up a pace like this; I'll be back later. This said, I turned the volume down on the radio, pushed the chair back, and let out a loud Hurrah! Now, this was real radio operating! It was outstanding what could be done with a fine antenna system and maximum legal power!

The band conditions on 20 meters (14.2-14.35 MHz) were such that this kind of international communication was possible from 8am to about 3:30pm. Every time I got on the air then for the three days, I found myself at the heart of a pileup. What a thrill!

There was plenty to do the rest of the days. Other frequency bands were open to all parts of the USA and Canada ~ even a short haul to Greenland. Anytime we wanted to talk, we could. Funny thing, though: Jerry and I both talked ourselves out. Come dinner and after, we found it more practical to sit in front of the television and watch Mike Shayne movies from the '40s! Then to bed early, poor tired happy wretches that we were!

I mentioned earlier that we had one major disaster. The radio Jerry was using developed a no-transmit fault early on. Sometimes it would work, sometimes it would not. To keep things going, we had to share the remaining station. This, of course, meant only being able to operate "half time." Our poor scores for the contest reflect this.

Tuesday morning finally came around. We got up at three am, did final clean up, and were off on the hour and a half drive back to Charlottetown and the airport. Expedia and Air Canada said that we should allow four hours prep for international flights. Our flight left at six am, so I was going to be to the airport at two am. Ken told me that an hour was plenty of time, the airport was small. So, we got there at about 4:30. We were the only ones at the airport! At five a lady arrived and unlocked most of the doors. At 5:40 the other passengers arrived and we all made

it through security in plenty of time for the flight.

There is something marvelously charming about an airport without the big moving ramps to load planes. We got to walk out to the runway area, walk up a rolling stairway, and into the plane. Very 1950ish.

The trip home was anticlimactic. I tried to keep my adrenaline flowing, but all I really wanted was to get home. I got home about 1:30 pm and took a nap.

The trip to Prince Edward Island was quite an adventure. The countryside and the people were like a little piece of a world lost to others. The hamming experience was great, too. All in all, it was grand!

I'm still hobbling around with a cane. We had ice around here about three weeks ago. I managed to slip down a concrete step; my mother-in-law came over to help me and lost her footing, fell right on top of me; then my sister-in-law came over to help her mother and...well, they caught her before she landed on us. My leg was pretty sore ~ it took four days before I could walk again, and that was only with much effort and with a cane.

I was quickly bored with lying down. The doctor said to keep my leg higher than my heart (!) to reduce the swelling. They would have drained the leg but for my recent exposures to coumadin. Eventually I worked myself down the stairs to my basement world. However, later on when I was going back upstairs, I lost my balance and fell backward down eleven steps to the concrete floor. This set my recovery back quite a bit and gave me a fresh set of bruises to show off. It is impressive how easily one gets gigantic bruises when one is taking coumadin!

I went into the hospital just before the ice storm, to get the two tumors removed. During the pre-op testing, they noticed that my heart was acting badly, and they cancelled the surgery and sent me to the emergency room at the hospital. I spent the day there, leaving finally with a banner that said, "Atrial Fibrillation."

I've had lots of monitoring since then and yesterday's appointment with the main cardiac doctor at Kaiser told me that I have a fairly serious case of AF, but

that there is not much to do for it at this stage except wait until it gets worse. He did say that I'd be on coumadin probably for the rest of my life. Ugh.

Now to get the tumor surgery re-scheduled.

Matthew won't be contributing to this mailing of SLANapa. He did ask me, though, to pass along his regards to you fen. I was supposed to say something else for him, but I have forgotten what it was.

Cultural literacy constitutes the only sure avenue of opportunity for disadvantaged children, the only reliable way of combating the social determinants that now condemn them to remain in the same social and educational condition as their parents.

E. D. Hirsch



And this concludes this month's *Turpitude*. I apologize for not having any mailing comments for the last couple of issues; I have made a new year's resolution to do better in SLANapa this year ~ although I did submit zines ten out of the twelve months in 2009 (probably a record for me).

Tomorrow is my 64th birthday. I am getting old, but I swear that I will strive to always have one more adventure coming up!

Mike