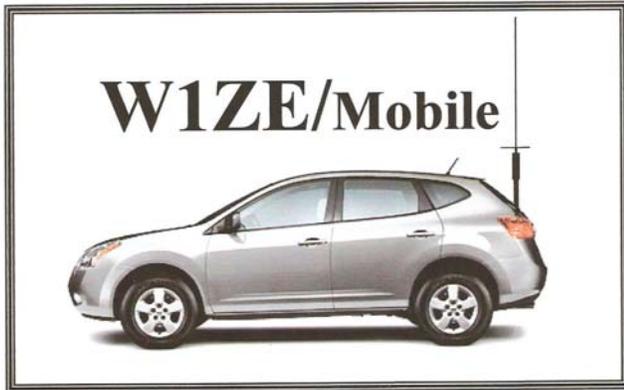




# Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for November 2010



A trip report by Bruce Randall, W1ZE

*“Lucy, I’m home,”* as Dezi Arnez would say.

As many of you know, in late September and early October I made a three week long cross-country road trip. This is how it went:

Back in early June an old childhood friend that is almost family invited me to come out to Napa, California to attend the wedding of they’re daughter. I was also invited to fly out to Los Angeles and drive up to Napa with another good friend (XYL Jean’s best friend) and her husband.

I pondered the invitation a bit but I started thinking that maybe I could turn this event into a “take it as it goes” road trip. That would allow me to see some of the country I had not seen before and have time to visit old friends scattered across this great country. I asked my two daughters if they thought I should do it considering the sad events earlier in the year. They both said, “go for it dad, it will do you good, we’ll watch the pets for you.”

In the following months I contacted many of my old friends and all of them said, come, visit and stay.” I started making loose plans which way I should go and came up with a travel plan that seemed doable.

In the early morning of Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> I headed out in W1ZE/m. I guess it was anticipation because it was 1:00am when my eyes popped open and I could not get back to sleep. So I put on my loose fitting traveling clothes, killed the power to the ham station

Locked up and pulled out of the driveway. I thought if I could get through Hartford, CT before the morning rush that would make the first day travels easy and I was correct. I got to Hartford about 4:40am and no one was on the freeway at that hour. About Waterbury I stopped for breakfast and filled up the gas tank in my Nissan Rogue.

The sun came up as I approached the Hudson River and I had my first QSO of the trip. It was on 29.66 FM (repeater) that was connected to a link system that had coverage into Pennsylvania. When I got to Scranton, PA I tuned the IC-706 to 7.255 E.Cars Net and checked in. I asked if Ernie, W1RXH in Bowdoin had checked in but net control said, “not yet” but would let him know I was on frequency if he did. Later that morning I did have a short chat with Ernie somewhere west of State College, PA. In the late afternoon of the first day I found a motel with WiFi in Amherst, Ohio, just west of Cleveland. Unfortunately as I was finding this motel and checking in I missed my first 20/40 meter schedule with the folks back in Maine, Bummer.

The next morning I got on the E.Cars net and was the first and only check in that early morning. Net control WY3T and I had a nice 4 to 5 minute QSO before other stations started to check in.

I had good luck getting past Hartford the first day but not so lucky on day two. I hit the Chicago area during the morning commute. It took the better part of an hour and a half to get around Chicago and northbound on I-90 through it’s many toll plazas. After crossing into Wisconsin and traffic became light again so I got back on the air and managed to work several stations in Europe on 20 and 17 meters. Just on the western side of Madison I had my first 2 meter 146.52 simplex QSO. That station, KB0GOX, also mobile was commuting to a town

in western Wisconsin. We chatted back and forth for the better part of a half-hour.

That evening I got a motel in Rochester, MN across the road from the Mayo Clinic. The motel did not have Internet access but next door was a Micky-Ds and they did. A ranch salad, cup of coffee and free WiFi, a successful evening. I was able to get my progress reports sent to the family and friends.



The next afternoon I pulled into the Bad Lands National Park and set up a tent in the nice camping area there. Being a senior I get into the National parks for free and a tent campsite was \$7.00, within my budget.



While driving across South Dakota and while camping I made a dozen plus 40 and 20 meter QSOs thanks to the Texas QSO party that was going on. They all seemed pleased to get South Dakota in their logs. I also made several late evening CW QSOs on 40 meters into Europe and South and Central America.

At O-dark thirty the next morning I was back on I-90 heading west to Rapid City, SD and the Black Hills. At 7:15 am I was in Rapid City and heading up to Mount Rushmore. When I pulled into the parking garage at the monument I was the only one care there and had the whole

monument to myself. Needless to say I was very impressed with the massive rock sculptures.



After taking a bunch of snapshots I headed down the road about twenty miles to the Crazy Horse monument that is still under construction. I toured the monument and went through the North American Indian History Museum.

After that pleasant stop I headed south through



the Black Hills and worked my way across the high planes to Cheyenne, Wyoming. I went across a hundred miles of rolling prairie with the occasional steer off in the distance but viewed hundreds of pronghorn elk. I again made several Texas QSO party contacts. About 75 miles north of Cheyenne I hooked up with Mel, W6FDR in southern California on 14.200 MHz. Mel and I have been working each other on the HF bands for years. He was still running his Henry 2K. He was in QSO with a chap in Swindon, England when I called him. The G3 was about S-6 but Mel was 20 over nine. Back in the 80s, Mel and I would work mobile to mobile on 7.237 MHz every afternoon on our commute home from work. He was in the LA area and I was in the

Fan Francisco bay area. That QSO lasted the better part of 45 minutes.

That evening I spent with old childhood and high school friends that retired to Cheyenne. It was great to see them again after 30 plus years and to catch up on old friends we all knew.

The next evening I spent in Salt Lake City, Utah. I even made a few repeater contacts there on their .88 repeater. The following morning I made an early start to not get caught up in the morning traffic. I zipped across the great salt flats. The sun was just starting to come up when I got to the west side of the flats and the Nevada border.



**Sunup on the salt flats, Utah. NV border**

As I crossed into Nevada there was a big collection of casinos and one Micky-Ds where I got a coffee and a breakfast borreto. As I climbed up into the first set of mountains of Nevada it was getting time to see if I could complete a pre arranged 20-meter schedule with Tom, W1QU in Ellsworth, ME. I could just hear Tom calling but he was in the noise level. I gave him several calls but just could not make the connection. Later tom said he thought he heard me call him but was not sure who it was.

The next morning I went over Sierra Nevada's and into California. As I got into the Vaccaville area on I-80 I attempted to access the old 147.21 link system I use to hang out on. I was able to get into the system and low and behold if Chuck Bullett, W1AEK (a founding member of the MARA) came right back and said, "Good morning Bruster, so you made it back to California after all." We talked for some time as I approached Fairfield and he was stuck in traffic going across the Oakland Bay Bridge.

The following several days were wrapped up in wedding activities in the Napa Valley and

visiting with old friends. Not much ham radio until I started heading south to southern California and Orange County via old route 99. During that drive I did manage to get into several 440 link systems and have a few short QSOs.

As I arrived in the LA basin I found that I could access the 147.21 repeater which I think is on the San Gabriel Mountains. I was quick to learn that it was connected to the worldwide IRLP system. I had a chat with a chap in Petaluma, California (north of SF) and then a chap mobile in Little Rock, AR. The Ham in Little Rock then started chatting with a ham in London England. The system is so smooth you would think all the stations were talking directly to the 147.21 repeater in LA.



**W1ZE/m in Anaheim Hills, CA**

The next several days were spent in the Anaheim Hills and Huntington Beach area of Orange County visiting old friends and classmates.

Before I wore out my welcome I headed off to Phoenix, Arizona to see my best friend in high school and the best man at my wedding 48 years ago. After a great visit and a couple great Mexican dinners I headed back out on the road in the direction of Show Low, Arizona and New Mexico. The trip from Phoenix to Show Low was very pretty but mountain driving. To keep control of W1ZE/M and both hands on the wheel I did not even turn on the HF transceiver. I put in a few CDs to add to the pretty scenery.

After a short stop in Show Low to gas up and get lunch I headed due east across the new Mexico ranch and desert country on I-10. About a third of the way across New Mexico I came to the famous Deep Space Very Large Antenna (VLA) that many of you have seen on the

History Channel, TLC and in movies. It is an impressive sight.



**Aerial view of VLA in New Mexico**

I pulled to the side of the road and got out my binoculars to check out this massive array. I thought to myself, what a great EME or even an Earth-Mars-Earth antenna system that would be. Bill Messier, eat your hart out.

The next day took me to Tulsa, Oklahoma and on the road I could hear the folks on 7255 kHz E-Cars but I was not able to check into the net. I visited old family friends in Tulsa and went out for another Mexican dinner. I do love those beans.

The next day I traveled to Jackson, Mississippi on my way to New Orleans. I drove past the Nissan plant in Mississippi where W1ZE/m was made (a Nissan Rogue crossover SUV).



**Al/W3ZD, John/W5ZE & Walt/ N5VN in New Orleans**

The next morning I arrived at the winter QTH of Al (W3ZD) and Pat Corderman in New Orleans. Upon arriving Al said, “we are going to lunch with some local Hams,” so we scooted over to a

nice café on Magazine Street where we met up with John Uhl, W5ZE (I like that call) and Walt Cockerhan, N5VN. We had a nice lunch filled with ham related conversation. They checked out my mobile HF installation in W1ZE/M. Walt would really like to do some mobile HF.

### **Jackson Square, French Quarter, New Orleans**



Al and Pat were great hosts and showed me a very good time in New Orleans. We ate very well, Listened to great music and I got to tour a good portion of the city. Al took me to the W.W.II. Museum in downtown and it was a wonderful experience, a must see.

After three weeks of travel it was time to go home and do the laundry. I must admit I had one heck of a good time. Got to see a large portion of this country and visited with some dear friends along the way. Ham Radio was a great traveling companion and was a real plus on this trip. I’m not up to doing this kind of trip right away, but something like it may happen again.

***Have a Happy Thanksgiving & 73,  
Bruce W1ZE***

