

Summer "High Times" on the Highways

High summer means "high times" on the highways, and this year is no exception. With a little breather from those high gas prices of spring and with a touch of wanderlust, there's still some time to enjoy mobiling across the vast expanses of North America.

I just returned from a wonderful trip to the east coast of the U.S., which always provides a bit of culture shock to my California mindset. Combining family reunion fun with sightseeing, some baseball games, and some great dining, I returned to Los Angeles with some terrific memories and a rental car company wondering how I put 2000 miles on its vehicle in just eight days. My "sticker shock" came from the tollways that adorn eastern roadscapes. At least I got to meet (and support) a lot of nice toll booth attendants!

I won't bore you with too many non-radio details, but landing in New York, we took in the Big Apple for a few days, drove up through Connecticut and Massachusetts to Maine, dipped into the Canadian province of New Brunswick (be sure to take your passport), saw the beautiful Bay of Fundy and more, drove down to Philadelphia, visited Fort Sumter in Maryland, and then went on to a few days at the nation's capitol. In addition to some radio fun, my family members and I completed our "bucket list" quest to see a game in every Major League Baseball city (all 30 venues), and we fin-

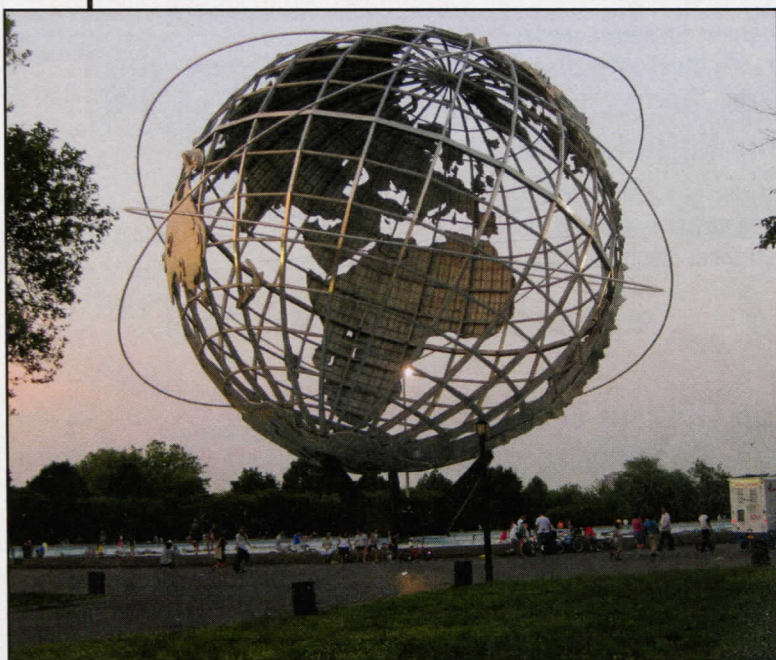
ished visits to the "four corners" of the continental USA, stopping at the easternmost point and visiting the lighthouse at West Quoddy Head, Maine; it's a bit off the beaten track, but it's a lovely place. (see photo).

Our stop in New York included a visit to Flushing Meadows, site of the 1964-65 NY World's Fair. Not much remains of that special time beyond the grounds themselves, but a stunning memento is the Unisphere, a symbol of that event, which remains a magnificent sight. Now open as parkland, it's worth a side trip. Of course a well-attended attraction at that fair was the ham radio station. I wonder if anyone ever tried to load up the stainless-steel Unisphere? Could be an interesting antenna!

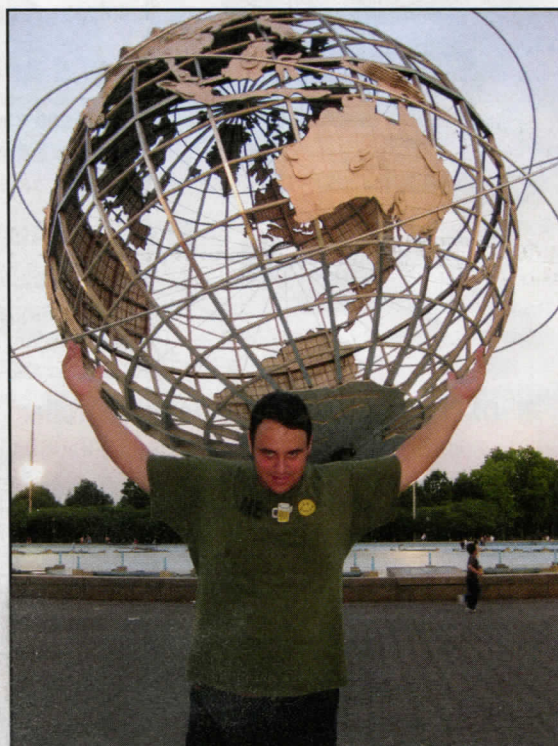
Hats Off to Larry

While driving through Massachusetts, I was reminded that state has some of the best looking ham radio license plates, complete with an ersatz lightning bolt that sets ham operator's tags apart from the ordinary state-issued car ID. While on my travels, I received a nice note from Larry Banks, W1DYJ, who offered to share the nifty installation he did on his 2009 Audi A4. While my busy travel itinerary did not permit a visit with Larry (and I wish it had), his installation is first-rate and worth shar-

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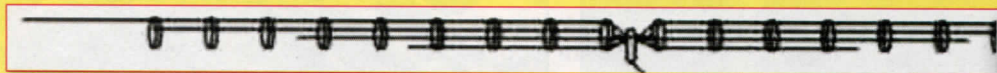
The Unisphere in Queens, NY, still stunning as it pushes age 50. (KD6ARA photo)



Steven Reinhardt, K6SJR, auditions to replace Atlas. (AA6JR photo)

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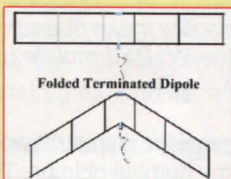
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To the ends of the Earth? Well at least the easternmost end of the continental USA. It's a fun trip to find the picturesque lighthouse at West Quoddy Head, Maine. (AA6JR photo)

ing. To see more details on Larry's rig, see his web page at <<http://www.qsl.net/w1dj/mobile.htm>>.

Notably, Larry did his homework and took advantage of the features of his Yaesu FT-8800R, separating the

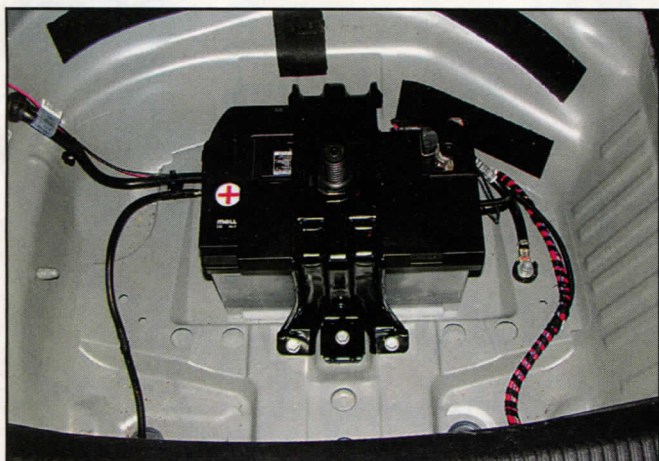
radio's control head from the main transceiver unit. Like many other modern cars, Audi cleverly places the battery in the trunk, in this case in the well shared with the spare tire below the actual storage area. Larry took advan-

tage of this feature, making a short run from the battery with power leads to the transceiver, which is concealed in a side panel, out of sight and securely away from the comings and goings of cargo. Next, he routed a cable to the control head, conveniently located at the fingertips of the driver or passenger, and one of the best features is Larry's having located the speaker on the knee bolster to the right of the steering wheel.

As you can see from the photos, this well thought-out deployment is clever, functional, unobtrusive, clear of all the car's safety gear, including air bags, and it's always ready to use. The "icing on the cake" is the tasteful antenna mounted on the trunk lid and is low enough to avoid overhead obstacles. Larry made the commitment to "drill the hole," and it paid off in an attractive fashion with a well-grounded skyhook. Oh yeah, he has one of those cool Massachusetts ham plates attached to his Audi, too. Some guys have all the luck.

Your Mobile Can Help Your Mobiling

The current crop of smart phones offers an ever-expanding menu of "apps" that complement the ham radio operator.



The battery is buried below the spare tire in W1DYJ's Audi. Routing power to the transceiver doesn't get much easier! (W1DYJ photo)



Fingertip control and an easily read display make operations easy for the driver or passenger in the W1DYJ mobile unit. (W1DYJ photo)

There's a dizzying array of material out there, and it seems to grow daily. One app another ham steered me toward costs a few bucks but in my opinion is well worth the investment. It works on my iPhone; I don't know if it's available for other "smart phone" platforms, but it's called iHAM Locate. The program seems to have a pretty complete listing of repeaters on just about every band, along with the pertinent information needed for the mobile or hand-held operator. You get frequency, offset, CTCSS tone, callsign, location, and more. By interacting with the phone's geolocation programming, it can tell you how far you are from the repeater. You can sort by state, city, call, and proximity, and search for repeater by band, from 10 meters through 900 MHz. It's a great tool to take along when you hit the road and after all, you're taking your phone along anyway, right? In the interest of full disclosure, I have no idea who wrote the program, and I actually paid to buy it, so there's no interest here other than the great utility the program seems to offer.

My Rig's in the Hospital

One of my favorite mobile radios, after many years of hard use, has just been shipped off for repairs. I think the Kenwood TM-742A triband is one of the nicest rigs ever made. If it had

computer programming and an alphanumeric display, it would have been the perfect transceiver, in my humble opinion. That aside, my faithful companion, like so many other L.A. denizens, is off to "rehab." It was happy news to find the rig is still supported by the manufacturer's authorized service facility. Here's hoping they can breathe new life into the old beast so we both can enjoy many more miles on the highways.

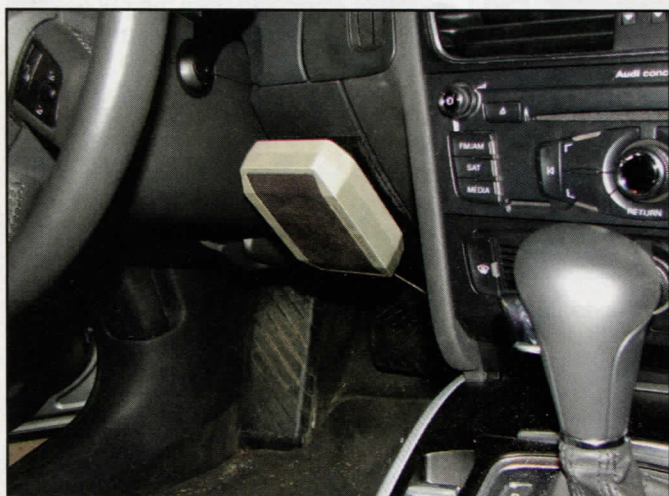
Share Your Installation

Here's another invitation to share your installation and that hard-earned experience with CQ's readership: Just send me your story along with some photos of your mobile installation to the e-mail address shown at the beginning of this column. It's in the best tradition of "hams helping hams," especially with the ever-growing variety of cars and trucks on the road today.

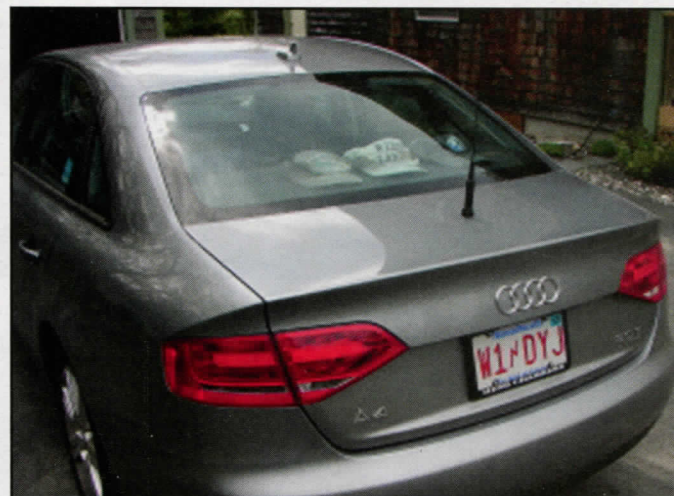
Summary

As we started this column, I wish you a continued happy summer season of easy travels and enjoyable moments as you mobile on down the nation's highways. I have a blast every time I hit the road, and if you look, there's a new friend and a new adventure around every corner. Happy Mobiling!

73, Jeff AA6JR



This speaker location is easily heard, yet away from other vehicle controls and some distance removed from the airbag deployment zone. (W1DYJ photo)



An unobtrusive antenna finishes off this classy installation with a ham plate that adds a nice finishing touch. (W1DYJ photo)