

Greetings from **Quartzsite, Arizona.**

After returning from San Felipe and Golfo de Santa Clara, we went back to Winterhaven, California, near Yuma, Arizona, and spent almost two weeks at Pilot Knob RV Resort. Pilot Knob is part of our Western Horizons membership and so we could stay there for free. This gave us the opportunity to visit the **Yuma Territorial Prison** and walk across the border and visit **Los Algodones**, Mexico. We have friends, **Fred and Cheryl**, who live in Yuma and were kind enough to show us all around Algodones. We ended up making two all day trips there. The second day we were guides for our RV friends, **Jerry and Judy**. Algodones is a border town unlike any other. It is probably one of the reasons why so many old RV couples spend so much time in Yuma. **Algodones is the home of fast and cheap medical care.** Drugstores, dentists, optometrists, and doctors are everywhere by the hundreds. American drugs are way cheaper than in the U.S. Need glasses? Walk in with no appointment, have your eyes examined, and walk out with new glasses in about two hours total. We got our teeth cleaned with no appointment and no waiting for the bargain price of \$15 each. Chuck went to see a dermatologist with no appointment. The black lump behind his ear turned out to be a simple mole that needed no treatment. Chuck was in and out and on his way for \$20 cash! It doesn't matter whether you want tooth implants or a boob job, it will happen right then and there. Donna was so inspired by all the savings that she got brave enough to get a haircut and color from one of the many salons. She had to point to a picture of the color since not much English was spoken, but she got a good cut and a nice color for only \$25 total! Hey, even in our old town of Weaverville that was a \$55 job. Chuck could have gotten his hair cut for only \$3. Oh yeah, there are bargains in Algodones!

We are currently dry camped in Quartzsite to see the big RV show which runs from January 21 through January 29, 2006. Quartzsite is unquestionably the winter home of the old, retired but adventurous, RV couple. There are so many RVs parked in the desert that it is absolutely mind blowing. If you're a rock hound, Quartzsite is Mecca. You can buy any kind of rock, in any quantity, from anywhere in the world. The entire area might also be described as a giant flea market. Every block of every street has tables and tents set up to sell anything you can imagine. You might see the RV show in one or two full days of walking, but it would take at least a week to see all the flea market vendors.

Quartzsite is 125 miles west of Phoenix at the junction of Interstate 10 and U.S. 95, near the Colorado River. Quartzsite is located within La Paz County. The community has a Mohave Desert setting and is only 879 feet above sea level. The nearby Kofa, New Water and Plomosa Mountains provide topographic relief while the Colorado River lies only 17 miles to the west.

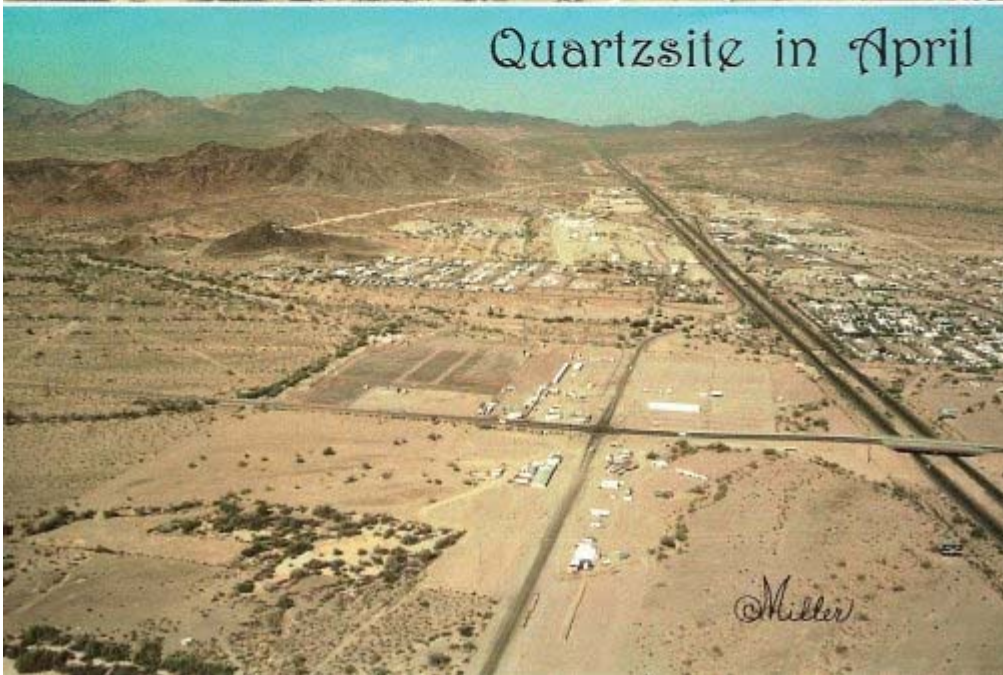
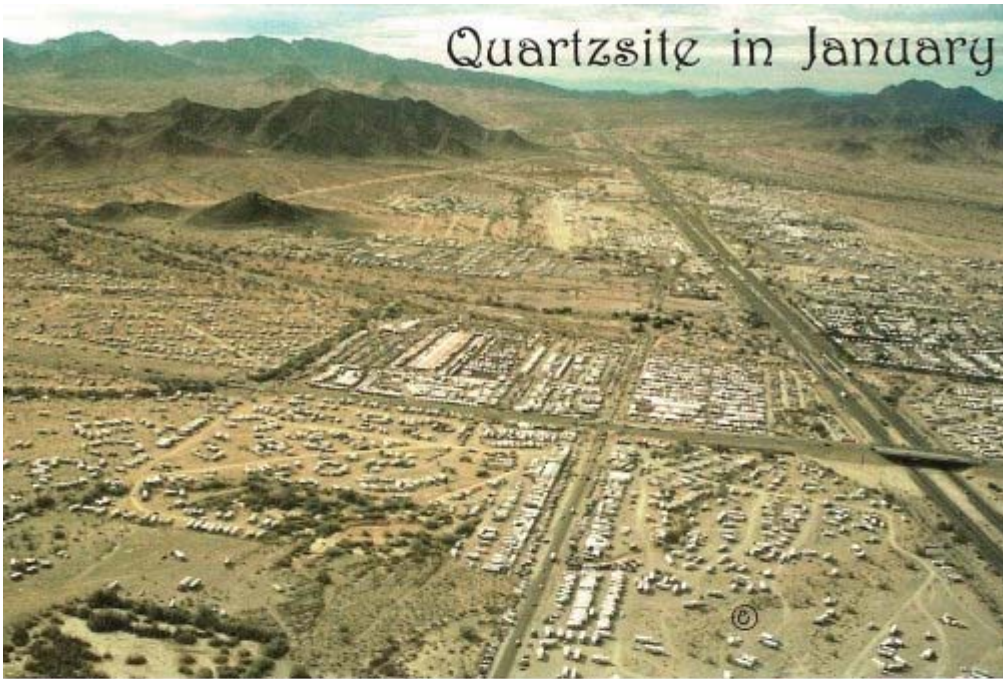
The town of Quartzsite is quite small and has fewer than 4,000 permanent residents. But in the winter there are at least 150,000 RVs parked in the desert! The rock shows, RV shows, art and craft shows, car shows and other events draw huge crowds. The Bureau of Land Management and law enforcement agencies estimate more than 1.5 million people attend these events. This little town is pretty much overwhelmed. Traffic

is difficult and there are lines for everything.



Quartzsite show area during the annual RV show

But the faithful come back every year and stay for months. Why? It's cheap. You can park free on unimproved BLM land for 14 days. Then, if you move 25 miles you can do it again. There is also so called improved BLM land which has dumpsters available for garbage, a water faucet somewhere, and a dump station. \$30 will cover you for 14 days, but **the real desert folk pay \$140 and stay 6 months**. If you're retired, your RV is your home, and you have limited income, the BLM land is the bargain of all time. The weather is very nice, you have the camaraderie of others like yourself, and the price is right. It's nice, but not perfect. When the wind blows, it's dusty and that is a frequent occurrence.



All in all, Quartzsite has been an interesting and worthwhile adventure. You can learn so much about the latest RV gadgets that you can't live without. Everybody who visits the shows spends too much money on things they probably didn't need. The vendors are good. They are very skilled at emphasizing a product's benefits and hiding its flaws. Everybody is looking for a bargain, but the fact is, there aren't many. The town of Quartzsite survives by tacking 2.5% onto the sales tax to give Quartzsite a very high 9.1% total sales tax. Education, however, is plentiful. You can learn from the shows, but most of all, you learn from a group of very experienced RVers who are extremely generous about helping newbies.

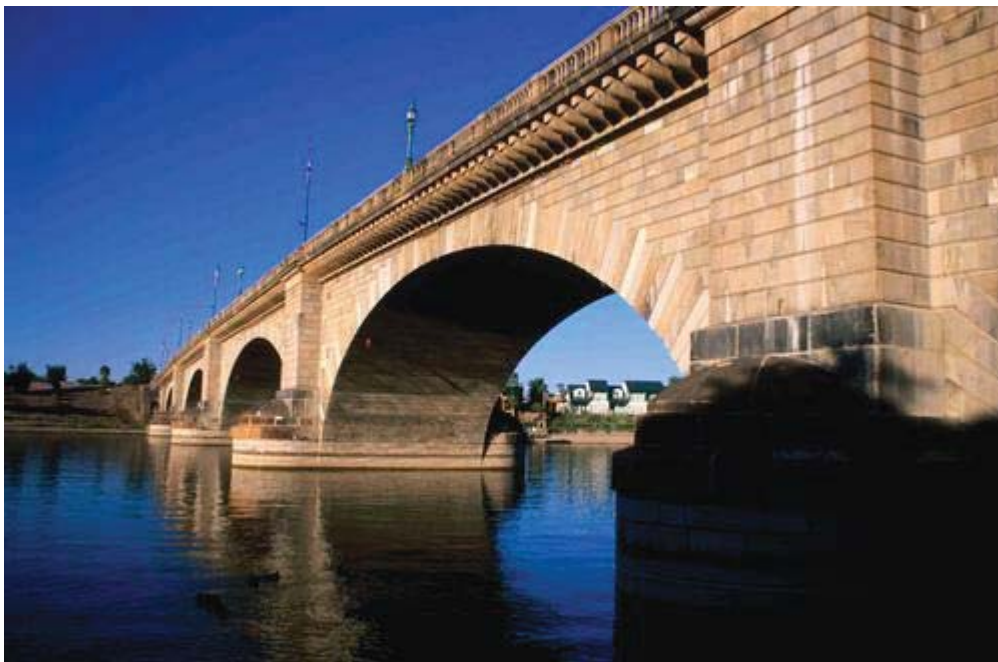
From Quartzsite, we headed for **Parker**, Arizona to once again see the Colorado River. Highway 95 parallels the river from Parker to Lake Havasu City. North of Parker are some of the most beautiful RV camping areas we have ever seen. The river is wide, deep, and a beautiful clear blue/green color. Beautiful water and beautiful sandy beaches and marinas. All this while flowing through deep and rocky gorges surrounded by incredibly beautiful and jagged rocky mountains. Unfortunately, we couldn't spend any time in this scenic area as there was no Verizon data coverage and we couldn't get

online. Donna has to be available to her tax clients this time of year. (Want your taxes done? Drop Donna a note with your phone number.) The changes in the Colorado River are very dramatic. Above Parker, it is spectacular. Downriver near Ehrenberg and Blythe, it's still very beautiful. By the time you get to Yuma, however, it is barely a creek as the water has been used to irrigate the desert.



Cattail Cove State Park, north of Parker, Arizona

Since we couldn't get online around Parker, we continued north to **Lake Havasu City**. Unfortunately, we couldn't get online at Lake Havasu either so we visited the **London Bridge**, stayed overnight and cut a trail right back to Quartzsite.



London Bridge at Lake Havasu City

Anybody remember McCulloch chain saws? Before the dawn of time, Paul Moyer and Chuck used to race go carts powered by Mac 10 go cart engines. These engines were the brain child of **Robert McCulloch**. Apparently, the late Mr. McCulloch was one wild and crazy guy. He and his partner founded Lake Havasu City and, as a publicity stunt and a tourist attraction, McCulloch purchased the London Bridge for around \$2.5 million. He then spent the next three years disassembling the bridge stone by stone and reassembling it at Lake Havasu. That little chore cost him another \$4.5 million. This was all back in 1968 when a million dollars was worth substantially more than it is today. It was a gamble that paid off. Next an **English Village** was built on the southeast bank. Ultimately, McCulloch sold the property to another developer who tried to expand it even further. But, the City Council gave

him so much grief that he finally gave up and sold the whole deal to the City who has managed to screw it up royally. Most of the shops and attractions are boarded up and empty thanks to government mismanagement. On the other side of the river, private enterprise is flourishing and the attractions are interesting and inviting. **God help us when we get all the government we pay for.**

Well, with that tirade, we are back in Quartzsite parked next to a small tent where a couple of guys make custom dash mats for cars and RVs. We will stay here until they get to us and we get our dash mat. Hope to leave here by Monday, January 30. We will be heading south.

So until next time, home is where you park it.

Chuck and Donna