

Clay's Corner for May 2017

Clay's Corner

Providing news and views from a broadcast engineers perspective since September 1986

Well, at last, we are able to drive conventional vehicles to the top of West Tiger. It almost seems strange...Like I've been on an extended vacation. The bad news...Lots of catch-up to do.

The crew from iHeart have been busy getting their new 106.1 Nautel GV40 on the air. On April 14th Marty Hadfield sent me this picture of his vehicle parked at West Tiger – Mother Nature is certainly being stubborn this year!



If you have believed that the Seattle area has rain all the time...Well....This year, you may be right with record setting amounts of wet....and it's been cool...Last year we enjoyed temps in the 80's.. this year they are in the 60's. Don't think that anyone accurately predicted this. In driving up to the mountain sites around here you can't help but notice all the hanging moss...in fact moss is growing everywhere, at a rapid rate. You used to have to drive over to the west side of the Olympics to see this kind of thing...not anymore! The old joke went something like this....Someone asked a Seattleite...if it rains all the time, what do you do during the summer to which the native responded...'Well, if it takes place on a

weekend, we go on a picnic'. Let's hope that this 'wet' will abate and we can have a summer like last year. Come to think of it, perhaps this extended monsoon has been a penalty for last summers extended dry and warm? To put all this in perspective – As of April 23, there are 'Critical/Elevated Fire Weather and Fed Flag warnings in – Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. Perhaps our water should be viewed as a blessing?

Once again, I did not make it to the big show in Vegas this year, however, I understand that attendance was strong with over 103,000 being reported. Whereas I am no longer in the 'looking for something to buy' or 'meetings to attend' mode...I would require a very good reason to go down to breath some more cigarette smoke and listen to electronic gizmo's make noise. Would be nice, however, to be able to be, one more time, with some old friends.

The FCC is, once again, talking tough about pirate radio broadcasters. Commissioner O'Rielly recently spoke at a Hispanic Radio Conference and said - , ***"The failure to properly address [this] highlights a deficiency in the Commission's enforcement tools and undermines our overall credibility."*** I, personally, feel that he should be a candidate for the 'Yah-Think' award. He went on to use a term I've not seen to describe these folks – He called them Squatters who are infecting the radio band at the expense of listeners and legitimate radio stations. Well said, Mr Commissioner – Now let me remind all that actions speak louder than words. Time will tell.

The FCC's effort to prop-up AM Radio with new rules that permit AM's to own FM Translators is applauded by some...and is being rejected by others. What many (that know better) should know is that the FM Band is not a waste land of empty spectrum waiting for every AM station to grab a channel and ride off to the bank with a bag of money. The band has been filling, quickly, with a host of other things....like LPFM's etc. The fact is – SURPRISE – There is not room for everyone. Recently an LPFM advocacy group call Prometheus has petitioned the FCC to slow up the train as it may well harm their members. One of the down sides of our spectrum regulators is that they, time after time, throw away the book of good engineering practice and attempt to accommodate everyone. You want evidence, just look at what happened to AM over the years thanks to this practice.

Apparently there are those broadcasters that still try and play a bit 'loose'....For example a station complained about interference from a translator. The station owning the translator did some checking and found out that the complaining station was operating in variance from their licensed parameters (oops) Our own, Seattle based, Hatfield and Dawson got involved with this one...Perhaps a member of that team would be willing to discuss it at an upcoming SBE meeting? The bottom line is this – If you are going to complain to the FCC about an issue – First make sure that your house is in order. Call letters involved are – KXEG and KSWG. (I'll let you research the details if you wish)

For many years I have been directly connected with the implementation of HD Radio systems. Over the years the equipment involved has improved, reliability has increased etc. However there are still some rough edges that tend to make some stations that are operating HD Radio look bad in the minds and

ears of consumers. Frankly, in this day and age, there is no excuse for it to continue.....Especially in light of the fact that just about all new vehicle radios have HD built in.

Specifically what I am talking about is the listener experience when they tune into a station operating HD-Radio. When you tune in the station, your receiver first is receiving the conventional FM signal, then, in about 8 seconds...(Assuming you are in range of the HD signal) the radio will cross-fade from FM to what we call HD-1 and will begin producing audio derived from the digital transmission. It's what happens when this transition takes place is where the problems are .

In the case of many stations there are several technical issues that should never take place –

- 1- **Time Alignment** This is where the timing of the FM and HD Audio is not aligned causing the listener to experience an echo/stutter or repeat of a piece of audio. This problem is multiplied significantly if the listener is in a weak signal area where the receiver is going back and forth between FM and HD.

The issue here is that the listener is going to be very annoyed by this taking place and is likely to feel that their radio is broken and may, in the case of a new car, take it back to the dealer demanding that the radio be repaired (yes, this does take place)

The bottom line is that this problem - should not take place. Further the responsibility to make sure it does not rests with the radio station. The listener may well discover that this problem only exists with some, but not all stations and may conclude there is something wrong with that station and avoid listening to it! A clear situation where the station loses.

For many years there have been methods for setting the time alignment and for monitoring the situation. More recently there has been equipment available that will automatically keep the FM and HD time-aligned. So why does it continue?... That's the \$ 64,000 Question. Perhaps, in some cases because the station is not aware that a technical solution exists, or, simply does not wish to make the investment?

- 2- **Equalization** This is where the 'sound' or 'fidelity' of the FM and HD-1 Signals is remarkably different. When the receiver is transitioning back and forth between receiving FM or HD signals the audio should sound the same. The exception being the noise and distortion of FM should be gone.

Recently while tuning around the FM band I came across a station that was clearly running HD (My vehicle radio has an indicator that lights up telling me that) I awaited the transition to HD and could not believe my ears. The HD audio was piercing and shrill sounding, making me want to grab the treble control and turn it down. Then, as I drove a bit further, the signal level dropped and the radio switched back to FM, and the audio quality changed back. Talk about annoying! This was one station that I could not listen to- regardless of how compelling their programming was. This back and forth audio quality issue was obnoxious. Clearly they were either not using a common audio processor or they had them considerably miss-adjusted.

Again the question came to mind – Why do they let this take place??? Does not any one at that station care? Could it be that the stations management and engineers don't have an HD Radio and simply are not aware?

- 3- **Loudness** This is where the station has miss-adjusted the audio loudness and either the FM or HD audio is louder than the other...rather than have them be the same.

The bottom lines –

The Time Alignment, Equalization and Loudness of the FM and HD should be such that a radio can go thru the transition between modes without causing the listener to feel there is something wrong. When the radio goes from FM to HD the only thing they should notice is that it sounds better because un-wanted things (like multipath distortion, picket-fencing etc.) go away.

What is perhaps the hardest thing for me to grasp is why the owners and managers of these stations have not created a policy that forbids this level of technical negligence? If you are just a listener to one of these stations, perhaps now you know that this is a problem that can be easily resolved, and will, upon hearing these issues, call the station and speak to their manager and ask them why they have not addressed the problem?

There was a recent piece written about some of these issues in Radio World – It should be a must-read for all radio broadcast engineers -

<http://www.radioworld.com/digital-radio/0014/maintaining-proper-hd-radio-time-alignment/339134>

The Radio industry is still talking about the Entercom/CBS Merger. Entercom's David Field has been busy telling everyone how this will create *"truly preeminent radio company with an extraordinary platform" covering virtually all of the country's top 50 markets. With nearly \$2 billion in annual sales, a value of over \$4 billion and a strong financial position*". Perhaps a pitch to investors who, by and large, pan investing in media companies. This merger was moving along with the FCC creating a formal docket to deal with it....That is....Until the DOJ announced that they wanted to take a look at the deal. Who knows what that will mean. One of the issues to deal with will be the spinning off of assets that place the new company over limits. Here in Seattle this means which stations will stay with the new company and which will become property of another. As usual, in cases like this, managers are telling the troops to keep plugging away and ignore all the uncertainty that comes with the territory. Perhaps in 6 months I will be able to write about how this all sifts out.

In one of the markets where the merged company had to divest of stations was Sacramento, Ca. Just so happened that Entercom was in 'hot-water' over their water contest that went tragically bad at one of their stations (KDND). Timing was good as Entercom surrendered the license for the FM Station a move that apparently satisfied the Commish. Therefore – The official end of 'The End' 107.9.

Shifting gears a bit to business in the Seattle area -

The Seattle area continues to amaze. If someone had told you that in 20 years –

- On-line retailing was going to be huge
- Many historic retailers would be going out of business because of it
- The major player would be a company called Amazon
- Seattle would be the home of that company
- It's CEO would be the 2nd richest person in the world.

Would you have believed it? Some of the headlines are pretty stark –

- *Stores closing at a record pace as Amazon chews up retailers*
- *Brick-and-Mortar Stores Are Shuttering at a Record Pace*
- *Some a filing for bankruptcy*
- *Other companies are plowing ahead with store closures outside of bankruptcy court. Sears., Macy's and J.C. Penney Co. are shutting hundreds of locations combined, reeling from an especially punishing slump in the department-store industry.*
- According to research from Slice Intelligence, Amazon [captured 38 percent of all dollars spent online](#) during the past holiday season. The next-closest retailer, Best Buy, had a mere 3.9 percent.

So how much of the e-commerce pie does Amazon have? 53% !

Jeff Bezos is now just behind Bill Gates with a worth somewhere north of 75 Billion Bucks! (Gates reportedly is still cruising with about 10 Billion more) Bezos has edged out Warren Buffett and Mark Zuckerberg. And if you don't know who Jeff Bezos is – he is best known as the founder, chairman, and chief executive officer of Amazon.com, which is the world's largest online shopping retailer.

And, if you have not heard – Radioshack is once again going under. Sad to say that the days when people actually built electronic gizmos from parts purchased at a local store have gone. Then again you can buy all of these items now on Amazon.



One of the big losers in all of this are some shopping malls. The formula is familiar...A mall is constructed with two or more major anchor stores and a little of smaller firms filling in the small footprints. The question is what happens when those big anchor stores close? In many cases the mall becomes history. Some malls have done something un-thinkable in the past – they have welcome large mega food outlets like Kroger etc. And who gets the blame for a lot of this? Yes, that Seattle based giant called Amazon.

There is an impact on broadcast here too. The demise of local, brick and mortar, stores puts a dent in historic advertising revenue.

Then there is the news that Amazon is going to be streaming NFL Games...And that Amazon is going to open a concept called Amazon Go which would be a technology powered grocery store that would not require shoppers to have to endure the dreaded checkout line. So why did I write all about this in this column?...To point out how a Seattle based company is making a huge difference in many ways....Ways that if they have not already, will in the future, likely touch us all.

Besides the insane amount of construction in Seattle...One of the major impacts has been to dramatically increase the cost of housing in the area. Not that there are not plenty of people with the income to buy them. Reports are there are over 165,000 people in King County that are making over \$150,000/year. A great indicator of this issue is the median home price. Go about 60 miles to the south to Olympia and you will find the median price there is about 260,000 – That over \$360,000 less than Seattle!

Recently Boeing issued a number of lay-off notices due to declining orders. In years past this would have sent shock-waves thru the Seattle area. Today, in light of the areas diversification, It's almost a non-event.

Here's another Seattle statistic for you to digest – The University of Washington (in Seattle) is now ranked #9 in the world...A long way behind Harvard...But not bad for a little town in the northwest part of the country.

One thing that the Seattle area does not often have to deal withThunderstorms...At least T-storms of the magnitude that recently struck Columbus, Georgia on April 5th. Lightning repeated struck the WLTV tower during that one. Can you imagine if this was one of the 6 TV Towers in Seattle?



Most of us are familiar with radio stations or EAS systems getting hacked...Well this time, on April 8th someone hacked in the Dallas Texas area weather warning Sirens.....All of them. Apparently they were controlled via a common radio repeater system. Officials had to turn off the repeater to silence the sirens that wailed for some time. Likely a lot of red-faces over this one....and a new and more secure system being deployed. Seems like if a device is powered by electricity, it's just a matter of time before it gets hacked.

On the subject of hacking - There are a couple of things that are very high on the FCC's NO-NO list. Messing with something involving aviation radio systems and the other something involving law enforcement. In the latter case a resident of New York City may have to give the Feds \$400,000 for his interfering with police communications...Including threats to police officers, false bomb threats etc. Unlike most pirate radio operators, this guy is in police custody on other, unrelated charges. My big question is whether or not he will actually pay the fine. In all too many cases these yahoo's seem to end up not paying for various reasons. BTW the \$400 Grand was the maximum permitted

The Commish had to deal with another one recently – This time in Pompano Beach Florida where they asked a party to contribute 20 Grand to the Treasury for operating a non-licensed FM station. This fellow had a lot of 'brass'. When an FCC field agent spoke with the person on the phone, he acknowledged that he had received an earlier notice from the Commission and when on to ask if he could continue to operate for a few more days.

Meanwhile, here in the Seattle area, a number of folks are monitoring 101.9 to see what might be on the air next. This is the same operation that recently was broadcasting programming supplied by a party that hacked into their IP Based STL system.

Nielsen continues to make news with the announcement that they are going to increase the number of samplers as well as introducing a mini-version of the device people wear to sample their media habits. This new creature will, reportedly, be so small it would fit inside a smartwatch, Fitbit or smart phone.

Another announcement on the technology front - Sony (yes they are still around) is rolling out some new solid state drives designed to work with video recording equipment. They claim their new model SB-G596 can achieve 2400 terabytes written. The 4K video world is driving a lot of this.

The recent mega merger announcement of Entercom and CBS has caused some to suggest that the FCC should take a look at what's call 'Sub-Caps'. These are limits on the number of stations that a single owner can operate in a given market. Presently, in markets the size of Seattle, an entity can own no more than 5 FM or AM stations or 8 total. I find it interesting that in Seattle, at one time, Entercom owned 5 FM's and 3 AM's...but ended up spinning off one of the FM's and all the AM's. This, sort of, indicated that there was not a lot of demand for the large clusters. In other, smaller, markets the demand is greater. There are groups that are lining up on both sides of this one. One of the drivers for this is the plight of AM radio. Perhaps a single operator, could make a go of a large cluster of AM's?

Some recently released first quarter 2017 totals to look at.

- The total number of AM's is down by 3 (I would have guessed more) to 4,666
- Eight more commercial FM's (6,754)
- Two more FM NCE's (4,112)
- 200 more FM Translators and Boosters
- 246 more LPFM's

On the Video Side –

- One less full power TV Stations (1,777)
- 6 fewer UHF translators
- 5 fewer VHF translators

Grand total – 32,846 active broadcast licensees.

I suspect there will be some significant shifts in these numbers with all the FM translator activity as well as the TV Repacking process.

Speaking of Repacking –There is a ton of news items related all of this-----

Some of the major TV sites are in for some rather dramatic changes. For Example – The Sutro Tower in San Francisco will be losing 3 TV tenants, changing channels for 6 and they may pick up some additional stations. This site alone represents a huge amount of hardware that will have to be changed. Certainly good news for those that supply the hardware as well as those that will be working at these

sites to make the changes. I suspect there will be number of requests for extensions and a shortage of qualified people to pull it all off.

According to reports, T-Mobile and Comcast were the heavy hitters in the spectrum auction. T-Mobile is estimated going to be spending something like \$10 Billion for new spectrum. And yes, there is a local aspect to all of this – The home office for T-Mobile just happens to be in the Seattle area – Technically on the other side of Lake Washington from Seattle in Bellevue (What locals call ‘the East Side)

Interesting that there are a number of stations that will be moving into the VHF band. This is contrary to the big push of not long ago to move the other way.

The FCC has, on-line, all the information about who is going where. For my readers in the 3 states were this column is read – The following should be helpful. The columns are (left to right)

- Call letters
- New channel
- Old Channel
- City of license

The Repack in Washington

KUNS-TV	24	50	BELLEVUE
KWPX-TV	33	33	BELLEVUE
KVOS-TV	14	35	BELLINGHAM
KBCB	19	19	BELLINGHAM
KCKA	19	19	CENTRALIA
KVBI-LP	17	42	CLARKSTON
K36EW-D	36	36	COLLEGE PLACE
KONG	31	31	EVERETT
KVEW	27	44	KENNEWICK
KVVK-CD	15	15	KENNEWICK, ETC.
KEPR-TV	18	18	PASCO
KWSU-TV	10	10	PULLMAN
KQUP	24	24	PULLMAN
KTNW	22	38	RICHLAND
KNDU	26	26	RICHLAND
KCTS-TV	9	9	SEATTLE
KFFV	16	44	SEATTLE
KIRO-TV	23	39	SEATTLE
KING-TV	25	48	SEATTLE
KOMO-TV	30	38	SEATTLE
KZJO	36	25	SEATTLE
KSPS-TV	7	7	SPOKANE
KXLY-TV	13	13	SPOKANE
KHQ-TV	15	15	SPOKANE
KREM	20	20	SPOKANE
KAYU-TV	28	28	SPOKANE

KGPX-TV	34	34	SPOKANE
KSKN	36	36	SPOKANE
KSTW	11	11	TACOMA
KCPQ	13	13	TACOMA
KTBW-TV	21	14	TACOMA
KBTC-TV	27	27	TACOMA
KWDK	34	42	TACOMA
KPDX	30	30	VANCOUVER
KORX-CD	16	16	WALLA WALLA
K21JQ-D	21	21	WALLA WALLA
K31KL-D	31	31	WALLA WALLA
K33EJ-D	33	33	WALLA WALLA
KAPP	14	14	YAKIMA
KNDO	16	16	YAKIMA
KYVE	21	21	YAKIMA
KUNW-CD	30	30	YAKIMA
KIMA-TV	33	33	YAKIMA
KDHW-CD	35	35	YAKIMA

The Repack in Oregon

KOAB-TV	11	11	BEND
KFXO-LD	15	39	BEND
KABH-CD	17	17	BEND
KOHD	18	18	BEND
KTVZ	21	21	BEND
KCBY-TV	11	11	COOS BAY
KMCB	22	22	COOS BAY
KOAC-TV	7	7	CORVALLIS
KEZI	9	9	EUGENE
KVAL-TV	13	13	EUGENE
KORY-CD	15	15	EUGENE
KMTR	17	17	EUGENE
KEVU-CD	23	23	EUGENE
KEPB-TV	29	29	EUGENE
KLSR-TV	31	31	EUGENE
K19GH-D	19	19	EUGENE, ETC.
K22FC-D	22	22	GRANTS PASS
KBLN-TV	30	30	GRANTS PASS
K47GI-D	36	47	GRANTS PASS
KOTI	13	13	KLAMATH FALLS
KDKF	29	29	KLAMATH FALLS
KFTS	33	33	KLAMATH FALLS
KTVR	13	13	LA GRANDE
KUNP	16	16	LA GRANDE
KOBI	5	5	MEDFORD
KSYS	8	8	MEDFORD

KTVL	10	10	MEDFORD
KDRV	12	12	MEDFORD
K23EX-D	23	23	MEDFORD
KMVU-DT	26	26	MEDFORD
K32DY-D	32	32	MEDFORD`
KFFX-TV	11	11	PENDLETON
KGW	8	8	PORTLAND
KOPB-TV	10	10	PORTLAND
KPTV	12	12	PORTLAND
KOXO-CD	15	41	PORTLAND
KORS-CD	16	16	PORTLAND
KOXI-CD	20	20	PORTLAND
KATU	24	43	PORTLAND
KOIN	25	40	PORTLAND
KNMT	32	45	PORTLAND
KORK-CD	35	35	PORTLAND
KKEI-CD	36	38	PORTLAND
KTVC	18	18	ROSEBURG
KPIC	19	19	ROSEBURG
KTCW	36	45	ROSEBURG
KPXG-TV	22	22	SALEM
KRCW-TV	33	33	SALEM
KRHP-CD	14	14	THE DALLES

The Repack in Colorado

K36DB-CD	36	36	AVON, VAIL
KTFD-DT	32	15	BOULDER
KBDI-TV	13	13	BROOMFIELD
KETD	15	45	CASTLE ROCK
KXRM-TV	22	22	COLORADO SPRINGS
KRDO-TV	24	24	COLORADO SPRINGS
KKTV	26	49	COLORADO SPRINGS
KMGH-TV	7	7	DENVER
KUSA	9	9	DENVER
KCEC	14	26	DENVER
KQDK-CD	16	39	DENVER
KPXC-TV	18	43	DENVER
KSBS-CD	19	41	DENVER
KRMT	20	40	DENVER
KTVD	31	19	DENVER
KRMA-TV	33	18	DENVER
KWGN-TV	34	34	DENVER
KCNC-TV	35	35	DENVER
KDVR	36	32	DENVER
KREZ-TV	15	15	DURANGO

KRMU	20	20	DURANGO
KRTN-TV	33	33	DURANGO
KFCT	21	21	FORT COLLINS
KREG-TV	23	23	GLENWOOD SPRINGS
KREX-TV	2	2	GRAND JUNCTION
KGBY	7	7	GRAND JUNCTION
KKCO	12	12	GRAND JUNCTION
KFQX	15	15	GRAND JUNCTION
KRMJ	18	18	GRAND JUNCTION
KGJT-CD	27	27	GRAND JUNCTION
KPJR-TV	17	38	GREELEY
KDEN-TV	29	29	LONGMONT
KREY-TV	13	13	MONTROSE
KTSC	8	8	PUEBLO
KVSN-DT	25	48	PUEBLO
KOAA-TV	28	42	PUEBLO
KGHB-CD	21	27	PUEBLO, ETC.
KRMZ	10	10	STEAMBOAT SPRINGS
KCDO-TV	23	23	STERLING

So what's happening with Toshiba? Back in 2006 the Japanese electronics firm bought an iconic American company- Westinghouse Electric perhaps on the notion that nuclear power was going to be a good investment. Thanks to huge cost overruns for nuke-plants in the Southeast U.S. their Westinghouse division has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Toshiba has announced that the net loss could hit one trillion Dollars. The effect of this is to be a huge financial drag on the parent company causing it to be forced to sell a big stake in their money making chip business and causing many to wonder what will come of the company. Westinghouse, has been a historic supplier of electrical equipment. If you recall your history...It was George Westinghouse that was a key proponent of using AC for commercial power while Edison wanted to use DC. At one time it was in the broadcast business owning stations and making equipment. I recall KEX in Portland was owned by the firm and was operating a Westinghouse transmitter (I got to see it in operation sometime in the last century). Up at West Tiger power to the building is supplied via a Westinghouse 'Power Pad' transformer. Toshiba is a historic industrial feature of Japan dating back to 1870. Apparently this has a basis in the meltdown of the Fukushima Dalichi nuclear power plant back on 2011 when many determined that there were too many risks with this type of power generation. Closer to home, I have two Toshiba Laptops. Not the first time I've owned something that was made by a firm that may be no longer around. A lot of great names have come and gone – Think Ampex, RCA, ITC, AEL etc.

While many have been taking a wait and see position regarding reverse auctions and repacking – Sinclair has been busy ...Reportedly trying to buy Tribune Media Co. Tribune owns or operates 42 local TV stations in the country.....Including –

- KCPQ and KZJO In Seattle
- KWGN and KDVR in Denver
- KRCW in Portland

Meanwhile, Sinclair owns and operates 173 Stations in 81 Markets, including –

- KOMO and KUNS in Seattle
- KATU AND KUNP in Portland

Then came the announcement that Sinclair was going to purchase the Bonten 14 Station group for \$240 Million. None of these stations are in the Seattle, Portland or Denver Market. However, they do own stations in 3 markets in Montana (Missoula, Butte/Bozeman and Kalispell)

The question is – Just how many TV Stations could be owned by the same firm in the same market? Apparently the whole matter of ownership limits, for Radio and TV, is being reviewed. Certainly there is going to be pressure from firms like Sinclair to see these regulations move in their favor.

I could not help but notice the new application for license for an LPTV station in Tacoma, WA. Owner is Denver Digital Television (Really-----Denver?) and then there are the call letters – KDMD. Wow – **KDMD** and **KOMO** look awful similar. (The official call sign is KDMD-LD)

From time to time I run across a product that brings a smile – Like the Bar-B-Q tools with screwdriver handles from your favorite tool makers (Craftsman and Snap On come to mine). This item is bound to find a ‘warm-spot’ in the heart of Engineers. http://www.canford.co.uk/Products/11-231_CANFORD-RACKWINE-Winerack-rack-mount-3U-black

When you get into Broadcast Engineering you will quickly learn about some of the tools of the trade. Early on you will hear the term ‘Butt-Set’. The technical name for these devices is a ‘Llineman’s Handset’...it’s a special telephone that can be held in one hand, or on the shoulder, and has been a classic item used for working on analog telephone circuits for many years. Most broadcast engineering shops will have one too. Recently in clearing out items in anticipation for their move of studios, Entercom’s engineers came across a piece of history. This fine example predates the push-button or Touchtone phones of today and should re-ignite some warm feelings with some of my older readers. One of my best memories of this term came from a conversation with one of the DJ’s at KBSG a few years ago. Scott Phillips could just not get over the term butt-set. I did not tell him that some called it a ‘Buttski’.



Congratulations to Mike Cooney on being honored by Radio World with their Excellence in Engineering Award on April 24th in Las Vegas. Mike is the CTO and VP of Engineering for the Beasley Broadcast Group/.



What makes this especially of interest to me is that I won this award back in 2007.

On the –bad news- front we again are reporting on the continued financial woes of the two largest radio groups. Cumulus and iHeart.

First Cumulus –

- They have been advised that they will be de-listed by Nasdaq.
- Their total debt is reported to be about \$2.5 Billion.
- Their recent stock price, on April 26, was 28Cents per share, well below the necessary \$1 threshold to remain listed.
- In order to boost their stock price the firm did a reverse stock split using a 1 to 3 ratio. Had they not done that, their stock price would be priced even less.
- Their stock has dropped 93% in the past year

iHeart Media-

- News releases in Mid-April were very downbeat.
- The company financial performance was presented to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission on April 20th announced that it may not survive another year.
- iHeart posted a net loss of \$240 million in 2016,
- The company has almost \$350 million of debt coming due this year
- Total debt is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$20 Billion.
- Some experts said bankruptcy is now almost inevitable.

- Their Stock Price was a \$2.10 on April 26. An Approx. 78% decline in the past year.

One of the major problems for these firms, aside from trying to figure out how to stay in business and avoiding bankruptcy, is talent drain. It is reported that both firms are experiencing high turn-over with the majority of those leaving doing so voluntarily.

There is another aspect of this – When the two largest firms owning primarily radio stations are on the cusp of Chapter ?? It's pretty hard to interest anyone in investing in this type of media thereby keeping stock prices low for those firms that have good balance sheets.

Looking at the Seattle March Radio Ratings, 12 + (Top 10)- some thoughts –

- Non-Comm's are well represented with KUOW's #2 and KNKX at #10
- 4 of the Top 10 are either CBS or Entercom...With their merger will be interesting to watch
- The popularity of AM Radio continues to slide – The top rated AM station in Seattle is KOMO at #16
- Population now up to 3.704 Megapeople.

The recent news releases from California about the ill effects of cellphone use got me to thinking... It's really easy for joe-citizen to object to a cell-site in their neighborhood....(Don't want those death-rays killing my chickens)...or for a citizens group to march on city-hall objecting to a broadcast station in their midst. What do you want to bet what would happen if they were told they had to stop putting their cellphone to their ear? My guess is that would be a recipe for a full-fledged temper tantrum among the masses. Is it just me, but this this have the odor of hypocrisy? Could it be that a rumored cancer

causing device is only bad if it belongs to someone else? Sort of like the heavy cigarette smoker that objects to what he feels are illnesses are caused by fumes from an industrial firm in his area.

On a related note....Looks like Washington State may be ready to really crack down on distracted driving. Already you are not supposed to hold a cellphone to your ear. New laws would take this a step further, you are not to be touching your phone under the terms of the (love this name) **Driving Under the Influence of Electronics Act**. I'm sure you have seen people – still – holding a cellphone to their ear...or holding it in front of them (with the phone in speaker phone mode). Thankfully my truck enables me to operate completely hands free. I can make a call by simply speaking the number or answer a call by pushing a button on the steering wheel. Text messages are even read to me. Now we will see just how many are willing to put the phone away after being able to use it while driving. Fines of \$136 for the first offence and \$245 for the second may help. You have some time, however, before the law goes into effect. Now about the fellow driving this vehicle -



Those of you that have been reading this column for a while will recall how I often comment about how, despite living in a world full of technology, the level of 'technophobia' still remains very high. A recent study in the U.K. helps us understand that there are a lot of fairly helpless people in other countries too. Here is a sample of some polled tasks and the percentage of people who said they could confidently complete the task.

- Boil an egg – 81%
- Change a light bulb – 79%
- Read a map – 66%
- Wire a plug – 57%
- Check the oil level in a car – 53%
- Change a flat – 37%
- Replace a faucet washer – 30%

There is a bright side to all of this – It assures that there will be continued employment for those that are not this challenged. Then again, perhaps these folks figured that this is what You Tube videos are for?

About 48 years ago I met this young man that had recently become my Nephew. Several years later he called me one evening asking me if he should take a job at a broadcast station where I used to work. (I said yes). He's come a long way over the years....And now he turned 60!. Reminds me of that T-shirt saw a while back – 'I thought getting old would take longer'. A belated Happy Birthday to Tom Pierson.



Time to wrap this one up for another month and leave you with some bits of advice – from an old farmer.

- Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.
- Words that soak into your ears are whispered... not yelled.
- Meanness don't just happen overnight.
- Forgive your enemies; it messes up their heads.
- Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you.
- Every path has a few puddles.
- When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty.
- The best sermons are lived, not preached.
- Don't judge folks by their relatives.
- Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
- Live a good and honorable life, then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.
- Don't interfere with somethin' that ain't bothering you none.
- If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging.
- The biggest troublemaker you'll probably ever have to deal with, watches you from the mirror every morning'.
- Always drink upstream from the herd.
- Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment.
- Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin' it back in.
- If you get to thinkin' you're a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around.
- Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly, and enjoy the ride.

Have a good one- Thanks for the read –

Clay Freinwald, CPBE aka – K7CR