

Clay's Corner for Feb 2011

Wow ! ...Did this month go by fast or what? For those of us up here in the PNW we had been led to think that this winter was going to be rough, i.e., lots of snow and cold. It started out that way, however, of late, it's been rather mild. We had Alan Robinson all ready to provide multiple trips to the mountain top broadcast sites and he has received no calls.. While we have been basking in relatively mild weather the rest of the country, especially the Northeast, have been getting slammed. To underscore the situation, just this morning I saw a Robin in my back yard.

Thanks to all of you that turned out at the last meeting. You have heard me talk about how our State is making great progress with its EAS system, for those of you that attended, now you know why I have been so excited. About 230 I check the time and, to my surprise, our meeting was at the 2- ½ hour point when I thanked everyone for attending. No one had left the room! To keep up on what's happening with EAS in our state there are a couple of things you should do –

1 – Make sure you are subscribed to the Washington State EAS Remailer. This is where our states EAS system is managed between the by-monthly SECC meetings. Go to the following address and sign up - <http://sea.sbe16.org/mailman/listinfo/eas-wa>

2 – To keep up on what's happening on the national scene – Go to the following and subscribe - <http://eas.radiolists.net/>

In – both cases – I highly recommend that you subscribe to the 'Digest' form. This will keep your mail box from being filled with emails. The Digest form will, periodically, send you a list of postings to the system, along with the titles, enabling you to quickly see if you want to scroll down and read a submission, or press the delete key.

Here's a trivia question for yah.....For what invention was Patent Number 223,898 issued? The answer was the Light Bulb to Tom Edison. The Date - ? January 27, 1880. Roughly 131 years ago. Wonder what Tom would say if he knew that his invention is being phased out? Governments, all over the place, are putting limits on energy use. But suppose you still want to have a, soon to be old fashioned, 100 watt light-bulb in that lamp next to your recliner? There are some alternatives. I've read how some are buying up life-time supplies of Edison's creation, knowing that the day is fast approaching when you won't be able to buy one. Over in Germany, where they are facing the same issue, one fellow has come up with a work-around. Recognizing that light bulbs, of the Edison type, produce more heat than light, is now offering 75 watt and 100 watt incandescent light bulbs for sale as heaters, dubbing the bulbs "heatballs". So why all the fuss? Apparently someone has figured out that if we got rid of Tom's invention we would save enough energy to supply a small country. With all this being said...What do you want to bet that industrial users will get a waiver? Think about the light bulb energy use on the Las Vegas strip! We are not likely to see those chasing light arrays converted to CFL's. LED's...Well that's another matter. Some of the new LED offerings look pretty good. The big issue is, of course, price. For the time being CFL's are making a lot of headway in putting Tom's invention out to pasture.

As we near Super Bowl time, folks in Yakima may have some concerns, however. Apparently there is a dispute over there regarding rates between Direct TV and KCYU-TV that will carry the game. Is this a growing problem or just my imagination?

Looks like the economic picture is getting a bit brighter as indicated by a number of recent transactions involving broadcast properties. Here are some examples of what I mean – The mega deal between Comcast and NBCU -- The big shuffle in the Yakima valley involving a number of Radio stations. -- Entercom's purchase of an FM in the Bay Area of California -- The attempt to purchase Fisher here in Seattle. --The Bonneville/Hubbard dealetc. Before the recession hit, I was constantly writing about stations changing hands. Some local stations are likely to move now that 'conditions' are better. The AM/FM in Forks and the 104.5 FM here come to mind.

Here's a way to sell your radio station. Instead of using a broker, use Craigslist. This is exactly what a station in Georgia has done. WSBX-AM.

According to SMPTE, 2010 was the year of the tablet. One can not help but note the nifty promo that KOMO-TV did recently featuring the devices. Their popularity is certainly on the rise. Wonder if they will really save trees? Related... Comcast recently announced live TV streaming for tablets.

If you have been using 2-way radios at your station or on the job...you might want to consider what happened to an Arizona auto dealer. He got hit with a \$10,000 FCC fine! In this case these were operating on GMRS frequencies that require a license. The FCC stated that these units are supposed to be used by "persons for short-distance two-way communications to facilitate the activities of licensees and their immediate family members." Only individuals may obtain them. The FCC now has decided that the dealer "apparently willfully and repeatedly" violated the law, and that as a business, it is not even eligible for a GMRS license. Unfortunately for the dealer, the base forfeiture amount for operation of a radio station without commission authority is \$10 grand, and the commission staff was unyielding in adjusting that amount. "Lack of specific intent to violate commission rules (even based on a lack of knowledge) is not a mitigating factor that warrants a downward adjustment," the staff wrote. It said the owner's manual also had made clear that "serious penalties" could result. They rejected the dealer's other arguments for a reduction of fine as well. Yeeouch !

As you may know, certain AM stations are now receiving authorization to operate a relatively low powered FM, in this application referred to as a translator. KMAS, an AM Station licensed to Shelton, has recently filed an application with the Commish for one in that Mason County community.

Grass Valley, a long time producer of gear for the TV industry is (again) under new owners. This time it's Francisco Partners who have stated they are committed to make the company a technology leader by committee about 15% of their annual sales to developing new products.

Cox, owner of KIRO-TV here in Seattle, has a new name at the top of their technical operations. He is Dave Siegler who moves up from operations director at their Charlotte market.

WSU recently replaced their old Harris FM25K in Tri -Cities with a new Nautel NV30. Wazzu's Northwest Public Radio's KSWP in Centralia is awaiting delivery of a new Nautel VS2.5.

U-Dub is installing new equipment at King Mountain in Bellingham; in this case, a new Nautel VS1 is in the package.

A good indication of the conjunction of wireless devices and legacy radio took place recently in Boston where Entercom's WEEI generated more than 10,000 entries to their Text-to-win contest in 10 Minutes. Many broadcasters have been scratching their heads trying to figure out how to integrate their stations into today's world of wireless devices.

I love it when a piece of our industry is selected as a historic item. I was recently announced that the WSM power in Nashville as been selected by the Tennessee Historical Commission as a nominee to join the National Register of Historic Places. The classic, diamond shaped, tower was erected back in 1932.

On the topic of historic towers, I could not help but notice the series of pictures in the Seattle Times Sunday magazine taken from the Smith Tower. Wow, Queen Ann Hill looks funny without towers.

Then there is what's going on in Great Falls, Montana. A new radio station in the Montana city has upset county officials who suggest that the station should have talked with them before they erected their 164 foot tower. The county has stated that either the tower has to be moved, or needs to request a re-zone of the area to a classification that permits towers. Guess that would not likely happen in King County?

Here's a cool little site with some interesting information and pictures – Check out – <http://www.theonlineengineer.org/>

Slowly HD Radio is adding more auto manufacturers to the list that provide HD-R in new vehicle. Most recently, VW and Toyota have been added. I was talking with a local engineer the other day about the acceptance of HD. He told me about a management level person that had no use for HDThat is until he purchased a new vehicle with it built in. Suddenly HD is cool.

One thing that appears to be moving forward on its own is Web radio and TV. With so many on-line computers and faster connection speeds broadcasters of all types are being forced to re-focus their efforts. Gone is the day that 100% of your audience is connected via RF....That is, unless it's RF associated with computers.

With the FCC relaxing their rules for adjacent channels on FM, granting translators to AM's ...Now TIS wants more. TIS or Travelers Information Stations are those little low powered operations that highway signs reference from time to time, or like the one at the airport etc. Since the service was started back in 1977. You will now find TIS broadcasting NOAA weather, local tourist information and other things that appear to be contrary to the purpose as set out in the beginning. So the Commish has issue an NPRM as a means of finding out where things should go. Should they permit the airing of Amber Alerts or other public service programming, should they be allowed more flexibility in where the transmitters are placed etc.

By now you heard that a federal appeals court threw out a 1.2 mega-buck penalty against 44 ABC stations for airing an episode of NYPD that showed a woman's bare back-side. The FCC had proposed a \$27.5K fine against each station. The poor FCC they get criticized for what they do and if they don't do it. At least, in this case, they have a Court decision. Meanwhile, back to the project of re-writing what a broadcaster can and cannot do. Sure would not want to be on that project.

Remember the story about Galaxy 15, the satellite that got a mind of its own and wandered off back in April? Well something happened. The theory is that the bird became aimed the wrong way and with its solar panels no longer pointing toward the sun it, somehow, reset itself and started accepting commands from the Intelsat control center. Engineers put the bird in what they call 'safe mode' where it is no longer a threat.

Well, my friends, I am late getting this column into circulation so had better end it at this point, however, I would like to leave you with the following, much of which this writer can relate to.

YOU KNOW YOU ARE LIVING IN 2011 WHEN:

You accidentally enter your computer password on the microwave.

You forgot when you last played solitaire with real cards.

You e-mail the person who works at the desk next to you

You email the person who sent you an email asking that you call them on the phone

Your mother doesn't hear from you anymore because she does not have email

Every commercial on television has a web site at the bottom of the screen but they leave out the address.

You cannot leave the house without your cell phone...and if you did, you turn around to go and get it..

You get up in the morning and go on line before getting your coffee.

Until next month – Hope to see you on the 10th in the Meadow Room at the Museum of Flight at Boeing Field.

Clay Freinwald, K7CR, CPBE.