

CLAY'S CORNER FOR MARCH 2011

A lot going on in the news these days. At this writing we are having snow and cold (very unusual for this time of year) Gas prices are heading skyward due to all the changes in the Middle East etc. Makes the news that I have to report rather tame by comparison.

The good news is that all the economic indicators for our business appear to be heading in the right direction with major radio and TV groups reporting business is getting better.

As we predicted last month, a good deal of activity in the area of ownership shuffles. The big item recently has been the deal between Cumulus and Citadel. These two radio outfits are coming together to form a rather impressive operation. Reports are the deal is worth about 2.5 Big ones. Not a lot of impact in this area as neither one of these firms operate stations here in Washington State. Cumulus operates 4FM's and 2 AM's in Boise, including KBOI, while Citadel has the same count in Eugene. Citadel owns KGO in San Francisco. An interesting side-bar – It was reported that Entercom was involved in the bidding for Citadel. This is interesting as Entercom has tried for some time to become much larger with little success. Entercom owns 4 FM's in Seattle.

For some time we have been following the multi-moving parts process that saw a radio station licensed to Hood River Oregon, KMCQ, move to the Seattle area and become licensed to Covington, with a transmitter on Cougar Mt (albeit low powered). Apparently the outfit that did all this has been trying to find a buyer with little success. From the looks of things, it appears that the wheels may have fallen off their financial wagon as certain assets of the company were recently sold at an auction to the owners lenders, sort of a Repo I guess. Of course, that does not include the stations FCC license as the FCC frowns on having ownership changes via someone else's auction. Other stations were involved at the same time in other markets.

While I'm on the topic of changes – Two stations in Mt Vernon are going to be changing hands. The FCC has received an application that would change the ownership of KAPS and KBRC in Mt Vernon. Price, including their FM Translator, just over 1 Megabuck.

There is also a rumor that perhaps the stations in Forks are going to have new owners

The Feds are staying the course as they continue to give in to the new monster called 'Broadband'....This monster appears to be crawling all over WDC looking for food. What does the Broadband Monster eat you say? Why it's Spectrum. A few Megahertz here and there at a time. Here's a thought - Lets, quickly, re-brand TV as 'Broadband Video Distribution Service'....At least with the work 'broadband' they are less likely to want to take our spectrum away. I can't believe how the FCC (and those in high places in WDC) have become so fascinated with this. It's the current bright shiny thing. So just how much money are we talking about should the FCC auction off a big chunk of TV spectrum? Estimates are in the range of 30 Billion Dollars....Not that money has anything to do with making the right decisions. IMHO, the biggest problem here the fact that a lot of people in high places are of the opinion that spectrum is much like space with an unlimited supply. What happens when you tell the Broadband Monster that here is nothing more to gobble? Whoa – Don't want to be around for that one!

The latest area the Feds are looking at, called HR – 607, is not for Broadband, but for what's call – First Responders Act of 2011. The thinking is to come up with paired spectrum (making it easy to build repeaters) 420- 440 and 450-470. It would force us give up our 450 band. Gee, just think – No more spectrum to worry about for RPU's, TRL's, News Dispatch systems. To add insult, the bill does not propose what should be done with the existing users of this spectrum. (Nice) I would hope that this is a call to action on behalf of all broadcasters. SBE is already urging it's members to fight this move. I can tell you who will also raise a stink over this one...Its Amateur Radio. Hams are heavy users of the 420-450 band, immediately adjacent to our 450-451 allocation.

Belo's TV stations across the country are ramping up for the small screen, the really small one often called Mobile DTV. This was the big talk at NAB a couple of years ago. Obviously the industry has taken a long look at the demise of the Qualcomm/MediaFlo system, but they, along with others see a future here. Belo is currently on the air is KING-TV here in Seattle....They also own and operate KONG...who else is doing the same thing here?

I supposed you heard about the two couples that were recently killed by Somali Pirates. One of the couples was from Seattle. Ham Radio operators learned that 3 of the 4 were licensed Amateurs, including Bob Riggle who was KE7IIV.

On the subject of Amateur Radio – We have a couple events for which you might wish to mark your calendar - March 12th is the Annual Mike and Key Club Flea Market at the Puyallup Fair Grounds. June 3-5 is the Sea-Pac gathering at Seaside Oregon.

Here's an item that Hams in the group will appreciate. It's a neat site with some pictures of old radios etc. You want to make sure that your speakers are turned up as the music is great. I have to admit, I've never heard this song before, nor did I ever thing anyone would sing about this item. Let me know what you think – <http://www.antiqueradiomuseum.org/>

A lot of EAS activity in our area ahead of the FCC deadline this fall for installation of new, CAP compliant, equipment. I'm now receiving several calls a week from those that have their new equipment ordered or in house. Here in our State, as you found out at the January Chapter Meeting, already rolling out our new CAP based system. As the guy that tries to manage the Monitoring Assignments, I am being kept very busy updating our State EAS Plan – Tab 10. If you do purchase a new EAS endec, you will want to get in touch with Don Miller at WEMD so he can relay the 'secret sauce' that will get your new device connected to the CAP service. For lack of a better name, I have been calling it CAP-Net. There will be some changes in Monitoring Assignments. Stay tuned to the WaState EAS Remailer for details. Don't forget the next meeting of our States EAS Committee, (the SECC) will be on March 9th. The location, this time, will be the King County DEM facility in Renton. There will be details on the EAS Remailer.

If you are an old coot like me, you have a lot of fond memories building electronic gizmo's from kits. Remember Eico (I still have a battery charger that works great that I built while in High School) Of course there was the big guy in that field, Heath. Remember the Knight Kits from Allied Radio? Here's a link to something that will bring back those memories - <http://www.ohio.edu/people/postr/bapix/KnightWB.htm>

Congrats go out to Robert du Treil and Tom Keller for being awarded an Engineering Achievement Award.

Interesting how Magnetic North is moving at a rate of about 40 miles per year. Right now it's heading for Russia, away from Canada. If you use GPS, you are probably OK until a giant solar storm wipes out the satellites, but if you use a compass, things are not as they were in the amount of about one degree difference over 5 years. One thing is impacted....How they name airport runways. They are always based on compass headings. The cost of changing runway numbers, signs, publications etc can run up. Next time you see a fellow out there painting new numbers at the end of Boeing field, you will know why.

The FCC has granted a CP to a couple of NCE FM's. As reported a while back, KXOT will be moving from Indian Hill (between Tacoma and Federal Way) to Gold Mountain (Same mountain as KCPQ and KTBW TV) and Bellevue Community College's KBCS will be moving from their present location to Cougar Mountain.

What should you do if someone wants to take a look at your public file? >> You let them see it << Apparently the FCC came knocking at KCET-TV in L.A. recently. The stations security guard was obviously thinking more about security than FCC rules when he told the agents they first needed an appointment. Making matters worse, the agents came back and were told the same thing. OOOOOP'sAbout a 10 Grand fine. I recall when I was on the road for the company walking into stations and asking to see the public file and being told a number of things that would likely not please an FCC inspector. At our next meeting, Jim Dalke is going to be discussing this kind of thing I'm sure.

One of the major topics in the news of late has been government budgets. Interesting to note that the President has proposed a 5.6 percent increase in the FCC's 2010 budget. This would mean an additional 18.4 million....Now just what do you propose some of that money be used for? Why of course – to implement the National Broadband Plan. You knew that...didn't you?

The House is messing with another broadcast related item. They are proposing to remove federal funding for public radio and TV. Now I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I have to believe if NPR had not fired Juan Williams this would not be the case. Or if NPR had been right-leaning. Ain't politics wonderful?

Remember how Satellite Radio was a bad idea and few years ago? Well perhaps having two companies doing it was bad....Apparently with only one in the business, it's good for about 22,000,000 subscribers.

I a recent thread on a remailer devoted to EAS and public warning matters, the conversation has been on where do people get their news when things go bump in the night. If you add the power is off to that thought... you pretty much eliminate cable and TV due to the lack of battery powered TV's these days that can receive ATSC. This leaves radio for a number of reasons. Even if you don't have a battery powered radio, there is always one in your vehicle. Now then, would you tune to AM or FM?. I want to share with you a quote - This from Warren Shulz from Chicago – "The end of the world will be broadcast on an AM station." What do you think?

Chapter 124 in Portland are going to have an interesting program this month. Local electronics firm, Tektronix, will be there discussing measuring loudness as a result of what's call the 'Calm Act'. It will be on March 8th if you can make it down. Check out the PDX SBE 124 web-site for info.

Here's a scary thought – apparently the folks that make GPS equipment are concerned that a proposed (here's that word again) Broadband Internet network could do a decent job of jamming GPS devices. Can you imagine what that would do? Perhaps create a need for classes to learn map-reading?

Here's a web site you should check out - <http://www.frolympia.org/> - This is for Free Radio Olympia who is, apparently, proudly operating with 100 watts on 98.5. Interesting how folks like these are so boldly challenging the authority of the FCC.

Can't believe someone has done it again...Broadcasting a telephone conversation without first getting permission of the caller to do so. Happened in South Carolina, the tab....\$4K.

Every once in a while I like to offer some tech-tips – Here are a couple that perhaps should made into sign for posting in the shop at your station –

1- You only need two tools in life – WD-40 and duct tape. If it doesn't move, and should, use WD-40. If it shouldn't move and does, use the duct tape.

2 – If you can't fix it with a hammer, it must be an electrical problem.

3 -. Opportunities always look bigger going than coming.

4 - Junk is something you've kept for years and throw away three weeks before you need it.

5 - Someone who thinks logically provides a nice contrast to the real world.

6 - . Blessed are they who can laugh at themselves for they shall never run out of material

That's it for this month – Hope to see you at the next Meeting of Chapter 16 at the Museum of Flight at Boeing Field. March 10th – 1130 AM

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