

Clay's Corner for May 2011

For my readers here in the Seattle area ...This is the winter that just won't go away. At this writing (May 29) the snow level is expected to dip to 1000 feet. This means snow at Cougar Mt and – More snow – at West Tiger. In fact, I just got an email from Arne Skoog from CBS. He was looking at his West Tiger Outdoor camera and reported it was 29 degrees and snowing hard!

In the 20 some years I've been going to West Tiger, this is the latest winter I can recall. Some are saying that this may be the coldest April on record. Crystal Mountain is talking about skiing until July. So while I look out the window at cool and moist – the folks in the southeastern portion of the country are dealing with severe storms and tornado's I've seen reports that several broadcast towers have been taken down already. Apparently these storms are linked to our weather here as colder than normal air from the PNW moves southeast and collides with warm moist air from the south. I would not want to be in that part of the country...and most of those folks would not want to be in the PNWAfter all we have earthquakes and volcanos.

The big news in our town is the battleground at 4th and Denny, aka, Fisher Plaza. In all my years I've never seen such a scene here locally. Leading up to their showdown meeting on May 11th, both sides have been firing salvos at each other. Kind of reminds me of a political battle with both sides accuse the other of being unfit to hold office etc. Wonder what it's like to work there with all this going on?

Did I tell you last month that KAPS and KBRC in Mt Vernon are being sold? I spoke with Jim Keane the other day and he said it was time to move on. The new owners have a name that should bring back a lot of memories for many of you– Dimeo. Good luck John.

Every year the RTDNA announces the winners of their Edward R Murrow Awards. Region 1- Radio Large Market Awards this time around have largely been awarded to KIRO-FM and KPLU-FM. On the TV side – KING, KIRO and KOMO were honored. Edward R Murrow was, of course, a grad of WSU. To this day the school at WSU is named in his honor.

NAB announced their 2011 Crystal Radio Award Winners...And, no one from the Seattle area was among the winners. The closest winner was KRLC-AM in Lewiston, Idaho

The battle between Broadcasters, NAB etc and the Feds continues. The FCC feels the need to go after spectrum for new broadband users and has made it clear that TV broadcasters are on their hit-list. Recently, our side has been asking whether there actually is a spectrum crunch. A new report from NAB makes the claim that there actually is not a spectrum shortage. This is an issue that is not likely to go away, as long as the broadband alliance is the darling in WDC.

All reports are that the economy is perking up and the worst of the recession is behind us. Money must be starting to flow if the recent mega-sale of Citadel to Cumulus is any gauge. Cumulus did not fund this move with cash from their corporate mattress. But did come up with the 4 billion to pull it off with funds from a number of sources that included half if the tab from bank financing. It's reported the new outfit will have nearly a

72 megabuck line of credit. Of course there is the \$39 billion dollar deal between AT&T and T-Mobile - Looks like the banks are lending to me.

Another sign that money is flowing is this item – It's reported that the board of CBS awarded their CEO a 27.6 megabuck bonus. Things must be doing well at CBS. Wonder how their success translates into CapEx for equipment?

The present occupant of the Whitehouse appears to be a pretty heavy user of the teleprompter. He should be thankful that Hubert Schlafly invented the device. Mr. Schlafly recently passed, he was 91. He established TelePrompTer Corporation. Come to think of it...What would any TV news program look like without one today? Remember when the talking heads actually had to read what was printed on paper and divided their time looking up at the camera? Ah....those were the days.

The ATSC is working on a new broadcast TV Standard. Gee I thought we just started using it. The new one will be ready in five to ten years (you don't want to rush into these things) and will deal with things like mobile TV. Uhhh, like don't we have one of those now?

This item comes from John Price, Entercom Corporate dude. How about a tower made of wood? Check these links for a better look -

<http://www.modestoradiomuseum.org/wooden%20tower.html>

And a close up picture at -

<http://inlinethumb57.webshots.com/44536/2507826330105101600S600x600Q85.jpg>

Reported to be the tallest wooden, self supporting tower at 385 feet. It went into service back in 1935. Now you would have thought (or should that be wood have thought) that a tower like this would be here in the Pacific Northwest, what with our rich history of logging etc.

I remember, years ago, when broadcasters were adding FM signals to their AM stations (for reasons not fully understood at the time). Often those FM's shared the programming of their AM brother. Now that FM has overtaken AM as primary aural delivery mechanism, we are seeing an increase in the number of AM stations that are simulcasting on FM. Here in this area KOMO has been doing this for some time. I vividly recall having an FM-Converter in the glove box of my 1963 VW Beetle...It was fun to amaze people with my ability to drive places where they knew AM faired poorly while listening to a station that appeared to have no problem.

Here's something you don't see very often – an offer of a free FM transmitter. In this case it's a 'seasoned' 2.5kw Collins 831C. According to Jeff White, the rig was recently taken out of service. For more info – Contact Jeff at Grays Harbor Radio. His email address is - jeffrey.white@morris.com.

With broadcasters wondering what the rules are regarding indecency...The FCC is trying to get the Supreme Court to clarify the issue. This is going to be interesting. Are they going to tell the FCC how to write their rules?

It seems like only a couple of years ago that scientists pondered whether or not there were any other planets orbiting stars out there. Recently they have discovered a bunch of them...some of which some are saying could support life.

Meanwhile the SETI program has been looking and listening for ET. Now, on the heels of budget woes are all levels, it appears that funding for the program is being cut. Gary Engard points out - As soon as we shut this down, that's when the aliens will invade. Hmmm – Good point Gary.

So now that we have switched from analog to digital TV...What percentage of homes actually have digital TV sets? Reportedly – 60%. Gee, that means the 40% of TV viewers are looking at down-converted 4x3 pictures. Here are a couple more stats – only 40% of TV stations accept spots in HD. Wow – and HD Radio is having a hard time getting accepted.

Remember a while back when SBE was trying to get more technical expertise on the FCC? Well the pressure to get the FCC more technically savvy continues. Recently Senators Snow and Warner have introduced a bill they claim will provide greater technical resources to the FCC Commissioners. (Does this mean that they might become more objective about Broadband?) SBE leadership has made some 12 visits to congressional offices pushing the idea. The new bill would add scientific expertise at the FCC's policy level by requiring new assistants be either electrical engineers or computer scientists. Keep your fingers crossed....or, better yet, encourage your congressman to support this effort.

Another battle going on in WDC and supported by NAB as well as other broadcast entities is the effort to get FM receivers in cell phones. This one is not looking all that good with opposition from the cellular industry and their organizations.

The FCC is seeking comments regarding public files. Whereas many Engineers are tasked with this responsibility, you might want to read more about it – Here is the link

<http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/04/18/2011-9251/notice-of-public-information-collections-being-reviewed-by-the-federal-communications-commission#p-1>

From time to time I like to mention stations that the FCC has fined. My primary reason for doing so is to alert my readers in this industry as to things the FCC is acting on that perhaps should be checked at the station you work for. Periodically, the Commish will issue a stiff fine or NAL. We don't often hear about FCC actions for non-broadcast violations. Here's one from that category....Security First of Alabama has been requested to pay-up to the tune of \$342, 000....For making 43 unsolicited robocalls...Yikes !

The world of EAS is watching with great interest as the FCC is about to issue their NPRM dealing with changes to the EAS rules or Part 11. According to the FCC, the document has been drafted and will be released any day. Here in our State we are, slowly but surely, ironing out the bugs in our own CAP based system. The next SECC meeting, May 11th at WEMD at Camp Murray promises to be very interesting. If you

can't attend in person, you may do so via telephone Conference Bridge. The number to call, and agenda, is on the State EAS Remailer.

The FCC's deadline is fast approaching for you to have your new EAS equipment installed. Most of the folks I work for have either already received their new equipment or have it on order. I would not recommend waiting for the last minute.

If you would like to stay up on what's happening with EAS, there are a couple of remailers I highly recommend 1) The Washington State EAS Remailer. You can sign up by going here – <http://sea.sbe16.org/mailman/listinfo/eas-wa>

I also encourage you to sign up for the EAS Forum where you can keep up to speed with the latest in EAS happenings on the national and regulatory level – Sign up by going here - <http://eas.radiolists.net/>

The FCC has spoken out regarding HD Radio. Peter Doyle, the chief of the Audio Division said he was encouraged by the opportunities HD radio provides broadcasters but he is not please with how long it's taking radio stations to get with the program. Reportedly only 16% of radio has added the system and the adoption rate has slowed to a trickle. He noted concern that very few stations have opted to increase their digital power.

It's quite likely that a number of stations have held off on adding this equipment due to the state of the economy, however with that improving???

This market has a lot of HD Radio to choose from and, with our high elevation transmitter locations, it works quite well. I still am puzzled that the local Fisher Station appears to just about the lone hold-out. Interestingly, during a recent trip to Tri-Cities, I found only a couple stations running HD. Smaller market stations are apparently very reluctant to, as Peter Doyle put it, 'Get with the program'. I have to wonder if the reluctance is philosophical or economic? With the number of auto manufacturers installing the system in their new vehicles, I have to wonder how long these stations can hold out. It's really too bad when you think of all the pressure there was to develop a digital radio system. I remember taking a bus-ride during NAB so we could hear digital radio actually work. Funny when you think about that rack of equipment they had in the front of the bus for a receiver. There appears to be many broadcasters that simply don't believe that digital radio is worth the effort or the money. The problem is that those that feel that way are contributing to the very problem that they are critical of. The success of digital radio depends on stations taking the lead in the process, in all market sizes.

Well folks....That's it for this month – Think Summer, or at least, think spring. Catch you next month.

Clay, K7CR, CPBE.

