

## CLAY'S CORNER FOR JUNE 2010

Talk about time flying! Here we are half way through 2010 and getting close to our shortest season – Summer. Unofficially, the Seattle area, Summer starts after the huge rain storm on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and lasts, hopefully, until half way through the Puyallup fair.

At our last Chapter meeting, held at the Museum of Flight at Boeing Field, we had a presentation on Arc-Flash safety. After looking at a few of those videos, I'm sure that everyone gained a new respect for what can take place in our plants electrical systems. A very interesting and educational meeting.

The next meeting of our SBE Chapter will be in the South End, Federal Way to be exact and the topic will be EAS. Our guest speaker will be Don Miller of Washington Emergency Management who will demonstrate the new Sage Endec and how it will be connected to our states new CAP (Common Alerting Protocol) network. This will be a great opportunity for you to see what EAS is going to look like in the not to distant future and ask questions. I sincerely hope you can make it as this is an issue that will impact everyone.

I traveled over to Spokane during the last week of May to chat with the Inland LECC (Local EAS Committee). Was a great turn-out and a very warm welcome. While in Spokane, we had dinner with our #2 Son who has made him home there for some time. The weather was 'very Seattle' – Gray, cool and very wet. Of course they all blamed me for bringing it their way.

This coming weekend will be my annual trek to Seaside, Oregon for some R&R and Ham Radio. In years past I'd see a number of broadcast engineers, unfortunately their ranks have thinned with the passing of time. Some other Amateur Radio related events up-coming are – Field Day, the last weekend in June and the Radio Club of Tacoma Hamfest on August 14<sup>th</sup>.

It's hard to believe that it's been two months since I left my full time job with Entercom...The period ahead is going to be very busy with not only with my new position with WSU but my contract clients as well. Notable activity includes – Building a new transmitter facility for NWPR (KSW5) at Crego Hill and re-configuring KVTI in Tacoma. In addition to Studio and transmitter construction for one of my clients. Not much goof-off time this summer. One highlight of the summer will be attending my High School Class Reunion – Geeeeesh - 50 years!

Have you been following the wayward satellite? Apparently one of the communications birds, Galaxy 15, has lost it's 'stay put' system and is drifting toward another bird that's used by US Cable Companies (AMC 11). Suppose it's a matter of time until we have some of the geo-sync birds crashing into each other. What makes this frightening is how much we have come to rely on these creations. It is noteworthy that there are now over 19,000 items over 4 inches in diameter in low earth orbit. Now they are trying to figure out how to implement a space-age litter patrol and clean up the mess. We've come a long way since Sputnik.

You would think with all the rain and gray skies that Seattle would be the nap-capital of the world. Actually Seattle does rank high in some surveys...However one lists Seattle as the 11<sup>th</sup> most stressful US city. The major reasons – lack of sunny days and cost of living. (Never understood how drizzle and gray skies was stressful) Interesting that in the sunny day department we are behind Pittsburgh, PA. Who wudda thought? In the category of ‘Fittest Cities’ Seattle came in #4. So why did they rank us so high? Apparently due to our low level of obesity and opportunities for physical activity. Wonder if that includes snow-shoeing to West Tiger in the winter? When it comes to a good place to do business- Washington State now ranks #30, up from #40 last year. The best state? Texas, the worst ? You likely guessed it, California.

You think you have a big power bill?.....The Microsoft data-center near Moses Lake pays about \$3.4 Million annually.

We lost a legend recently with the passing of Art Linkletter. I can hear the announcer now ...”It’s the Art Linkletter House-party’. One of the greats in our industry to be sure.

Looks like the economic news indicators are just about all looking up – finally. Over the past 20 + years I have been writing this column, I don’t recall be compelled to write about economic issues. Certainly, as they call it, the Great Recession, will be long remembered. Even though the percentages look impressive, most of them are based on growth over the past year which means that we have a while to go to get business back to pre-recession levels. In some quarters, it may never be the same as things have shifted in ways that it might never come back. The good news is the climb back appears to be exceeding some projections as the ‘estimators’ are having to revise their estimates upward.

Things are apparently not all bad at NPR. They recently announced the awarding of a contract to build their new headquarters in WDC. It will have a 10,000 sq.ft. Data Center and a 100,000 sq.ft. news room.

On the down side comes news that New Northwest Broadcasters are going through a reorganization similar to Chapter 11. The firm owns 21 FM and 2 AM’s in Washington, Oregon and Alaska.

It’s official now, an FM station can now seek higher power for their HD operation. In some locations, Los Angeles for example, operators of stations that are adjacent to certain high powered stations are not happy with the fact that those HD carriers are actually on their channel and causing them grief. Some of them have hired consultants to do battle. Meanwhile NAB and Ibiquity telling the FCC that it’s not that bad. Certainly, in some cases, this matter will be lawyer-fodder. In our area, thus-far, as far as I know, only one station has filed for the power increase and that’s CBS’s 96.5. Actually this will be to formalize what they have been doing for some time under and STA. The big issue is who is going to shell out the bucks for the equipment to make it happen?

To many this is a chicken and egg situation. Radio Broadcasters, generally, are saying they are not willing to spend more money on HD until there are more people with HD

Radios. Yet the very thing that would make people want to buy a new radio is compelling content.

I can recall, in my brief almost 50 years doing this stuff, many times when listeners would swam to a station with lousy audio and poor signal because they were broadcasting something compelling to listen to. Today, I am afraid, most broadcasters have forgotten the lessons of the past and put pre-recorded cheap programming on their HD channels and then gripe because no one is buying radios! Don't tell me it's because of coverage either (well maybe on the other coast with their flea powered operations) Recently I listened to KPLU-HD2 out beyond 65 miles from their transmitter. (I-5 south to US12) Since when is a 65 mile radius not good enough?. An FM station in Seattle is on the block with a fraction of this coverage and they are reportedly asking millions for it. A local 1Kw AM would die for coverage like this. And yet there is a chorus of boo's out there that have nothing good to say about HD. HD technology has handed radio stations an incredible opportunity...yet many have apparently snubbed their nose at the gift. Someday, somewhere, a radio station is going to put something 'really cool' on their HD-2 and promote the heck out of it (like you should do with any good product) and they will prove my point. Do you think that Ford, or Proctor and Gamble etc would put out a new product that is deemed lame by most and then hope that someone would purchase it just because it's on the shelf? This 'Field of Dreams' attitude that people will swarm to HD just because it's there is not going to cut it..... I don't get it! On the positive side, locally, I was recently scanning the band with my new HD radio in my pickup and noted that 92.5 HD-3 is programming directed to those from Viet Nam. A good use for HD Radio. Certainly far better than the old SCA's these folks used to lease.

The 'Commish' is tweaking it's rules regarding towers, lighting and painting etc. If you own a tower- Heads up – The new stuff has now been published in the Federal Register (meaning its real) Comments are due July 20 with reply comments August 19. Look for Docket # 10-88.

Why they are in the publishing mood – The FCC has put out a reminder that there is a chance that this year will have a higher than normal level of hurricane activity this season. Perhaps the reminder is because of the attention being paid to the oil spill mess in the gulf. Not sure what happens when you mix up that mess with high winds...Talk about ugly!. I get the feeling that the sentiment for off-shore drilling is pretty much universally changed. This disaster will likely create pain in the wallet in years to come.

And....Two people were caught operating pirate radio stations on the FM band in the New York City area. They get to contribute 10 Grand to the Government for their efforts. Speaking of which – Have you listened to 87.9 around this area lately? Hmmm. Aside from the occasional passing car giving you a dose of Howard Stern etc – There is quite a Bit of activity. I listened to that frequency in Spokane, nothing heard. Apparently a different mind-set over there. What I did hear in Spokane was a huge intermod product on 88.5, sounds like a couple of stations are doing some excellent mixing.

Two individuals were caught using three different FM frequencies without a license in the greater New York City area, and both have been hit with the standard \$10K FCC fine for being involved with an unauthorized FM operation.

The FCC also brought enforcement activity to WCLM-AM in Highland Springs VA. No functioning EAS System (\$8000) Transmitter control system issues (\$3000) and Public File violations – (\$10,000)...21K total.

In Florida – WFUN-LD ran out of 'fun' recently when the FCC stopped by and discovered the station was operating with about 3 times it's authorized power (oops) Then they found out they did not have any EAS Equipment (more oops). The EAS issue cost them \$8000 and the over power, \$4000.

And...In Orlando, Florida a fellow was operating an FM station on 91.3 without a license. In this case NOT priceless...actually \$10,000 is the amount he will be paying.

Sumner Redstone was recently quoted as saying that he will 'never, never, sell Viacom or CBS. Well alrighty then. Likely the remark made in response to deal-talk involving NBC, Comcast, CNN etc.

The matter of do towers kill birds is still being debated. I still have a hard time with this one as I have been walking around towers for the last, almost, 50 years and have yet to see dead birds on the ground. Perhaps these towers are in places I have not been? Perhaps there should be a law banning motor vehicles? I bet you they kill millions of birds each year. Then there are cats vs. birds...but that's another matter. What do you want to bet that this whole activity is just another 'I don't like the looks of towers' exercise. Reminds me of what happened on Vashon and Maury Island a few years ago when King County was debating towers, NIER etc. There were several very vocal people objecting to the towers on Vashon, the reason stated – NIER, Cancer etc etc. Then when 770 diplexed the 1090 array, doubling the ERP at that site..... Not a peep was heard. As it turned out these folks did not like the towers, or the looks of them and they were just trying to get a 'better argument'.

Think back 30 years ....May of 1982 – Mt St Helens blew it's top. Bet you know where you were when that happened? Me? I was South of Cayuse Pass on my way to Yakima. The sky turned black as midnight and it was raining pea-gravel. I turned around and got out of there with a full air-filter and scratched up windshield.

Congratulations to Howard Schmidt, W7HAS from Issaquah. Not only has he been inducted into the CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame, but last December he was named by the President as the new White House Cybersecurity Coordinator.

This month – some trivia

- Stewardesses – The longest word typed with only your left hand.
- Lollipop- The longest one with your right hand.
- Typewriter – the longest word made only using one row of letters on the keyboard.
- There are no words that rhyme with- Month, orange, silver or purple
- Our eyes are always the same size, from birth, but our nose and ears keep growing.
- A goldfish has a memory of only 3-seconds (why do some people act the same way?)

- Remember the old term – ‘in a jiffy’? Did you know that a ‘jiffy’ is an actual unit of time for  $1/100^{\text{th}}$  of a second. Like to see that term on a piece of test-equipment!
- Almonds are a member of the Peach family.
- Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite.
- Leonardo Da Vinci invented the scissors
- Percy L. Spencer invented the microwave oven in 1945. He never finished elementary school.
- John Robinson Pierce designed the first communications satellite in 1960

Til next month – Thanks for reading my ‘stuphph’

Clay, CPBE, K7CR