

Clay's Corner for July 2010

As most of you know by now – I have agreed to have my name placed in nomination for Chapter Chairman. It's been a long time since I served in that role. I think it was back in the 70's. Does anyone remember? I recall that Bill Pickering (KOMO) was the Vice Chair...Our meeting place was perhaps the Mountaineers Club, I think. We will see how the elections turn out and go from there. A big thanks to those that also have volunteered to have their names placed in nomination. Remember this is – our – Chapter.

The big event on this month's schedule is our annual Picnic...Again this year we are going to be on Vashon Island in the 'backyard' of KOMO. This is a wonderful location for this event and I sincerely hope that we again have a great crowd. Our sponsor this year will again be Broadcast Supply Worldwide of Tacoma. My sincere thanks to Shannon Nichols and the crew there for helping making this event possible. Oh yes, for those that want to look at the heavy iron, there will be a transmitter tour of selected facilities. It's also my understanding that Jim Hatfield will be presenting his amazing collection of pictures of many of these installations. If you have not seen Jim's collect, this is – alone – worth the trip. Last year we had attendees from all over the PNW – I look forward to seeing you there again this year.

As I am writing this, I just received word that one of our local broadcast operations, Bustos Media, is being taken over by their lenders. Bustos purchased the Auburn 1210 AM facility over 5 years ago from Entercom and later purchased the South Mountain 99.3 from Greg Smith. According to the press release, the poor economy was the major factor in forcing the change. It's too early to know what this will mean, whether the new company will operate or sell or what. I have an interest in this in that this is one of my clients.

Forgive me while I deviate from my normal chatter to relay some personal history – The year is 1957 when I found myself moving from Portland to Lakewood and enrolling in Clover Park High School. In Portland I was attending Benson Tech and had developed quite an interest in electronics, ham radio etc. To my delight, in a little green building behind the high school housed a couple of classrooms, a lab, a ham station and a radio station. At each end of the building was a tower, on the North the antenna for the radio station, KCPS on 90.9 on the South end a rotatable 10 meter yagi for the ham station (Ready for this?) W7SBE. Being a new student I found myself in Ron Manning's class. The more advanced class was taught by Tex Turner, W7DAI. After school I would head back to that little building and where I spent many hours in the 'ham-shack' which consisted of an old Lysco VFO driving a home-brew amplifier (think it had an 813 in the final) The receiver was a brand new HQ100. We spent our afternoon on 10 meters because in the late 50's propagation was incredible. I recall my first look at the radio station's transmitter, the first FM I'd seen. It was an old GE running about 250 watts. In short – I was hooked on what happened at both ends of that building.

Shortly after, the school district had big plans for a vocational campus on what was an old Navy supply depot, also in Lakewood, these plans called for not only a radio station but television as well. By the 1959-1960 school year the old building 11 warehouse was well underway being turned into a broadcast school with courses in Radio TV Broadcast Engineering as well as Radio TV Production. Whereas I had, by now, determined that

this was what I wanted to do for a career – I spent the next several years soaking as much of this in as I could. The Radio station was moved to the new campus using a Donated antenna from then KTNT-FM hanging inside the tower that had been erected for the new Ch 56 TV antenna on top. Unfortunately the Ham Station did not survive and the license was left to expire. Sadly W7SBE would be lost. Little did anyone know, back then, what those call letters could have meant today. (You know, we might be able to get them back as a club call???)

Over the years the little FM's power was increased and the antenna relocated a couple of times finally ending up on the campus of Lakes High School on the west side of Lakewood with an ERP of 51 Kw. The call letters were changed from KCPS (Clover Park Schools) to KPEC (to match the TV call) and eventually to KVTI and part of the Clover Park Technical College. I eventually found myself being on the schools industry advisory committee. Never did I maintain anything there, that was done by several other Engineers, Al Bednarczyk, Nick Winter, Tim Vik etc. It was a sad day when I learned that CPTC was going to shut down their long standing course in Radio Broadcasting as I felt that this would be the end of the road for 90.9. I asked the instructor, John Mangan, what the college would do with the radio station, he said his guess was shut it down.

This past March I had decided to leave my job of 28 years with Entercom and rely on contracting to put food on the table. Shortly after making that decision I agreed to accept a part time position with WSU's Northwest Public Radio. No sooner had I agreed to that change came the news that 90.9 would continue to live, this time as part of NWPR and this would be part of my work-load. Wow, talk about full circle! . On June 16th KVTI did indeed sign off it's long standing and quite popular rock and roll format. On June 20th, after myself and 3 others from WSU made major changes, the station signed back on.

Today I went to the transmitter, as part of my new routine, to check on things. A lot of funny feelings came over me. 53 years is a long time to look back. The transmitter is still located next to the athletic field at Lakes High School which is begin completely re-bult. My oldest Son graduated from there. On August 8th will be my 50th class reunion for Clover Park High School. To think that I will be telling the folks there (most of whom I will not recognize) that I am still associated with 90.9.

As they say – In other news.....

More changes in the NCE FM band are planned. This one crafted by Michael Brown from Portland. In an application to the Commish, it is proposed that KXOT (91.7) moves from Indian Hill (between Tacoma and Federal Way) to Gold Mountain trading their 23kw ERP for a significantly lower 4.3 Kw. At this point, I don't know which of the several Gold Mt sites they propose to use. Lower power, but greater elevation will yield a better signal (covering more population). For those of you that recall, 91.7 was operated, for many years, by Bates Vocation School in Tacoma (they also were teaching folks how to be DJ's) more recently it's been operated by KUOW in Seattle. The big question will be what will this mean for the Indian Hill tower (that's another story). The other part of this equation is the proposal to, at the same time, to move KBCS;s 91.3 operation to Cougar Mt for similar reasons, more elevation. Even though the stations would have some overlap, they are asking the FCC to approve it based on the population gains for both stations.

Retirement means changes coming at KIRO-TV as they are advertising for a DOE. I found it interesting that one area they wish to have proficiency is 'mobile'. Not likely to have many candidates that have mobile-TV experience as this is just getting off the ground.

Apparently a big OOPS at Apple with their new I-Phone. Buyers are complaining that if you hold it wrong it will not work as well. Something to do with the metal band around the little critter and its antenna. One would have thought that this would have been caught in the design phase. I can just see the warning – For best results, don't hold with the _____ hand. Huh?

The FCC is going to Hold Broadcast Spectrum Forum on June 25th to consider how it might free up broadcast spectrum that could be reallocated for wireless broadband services. A couple of the sessions sound interesting ...1- Cellularization of Broadcast Architecture...Huh – You mean a bunch of little Low Powers? 2) Methodologies for Repacking the TV Band – They must have been reading a recent column where I was very critical of the Commish for their 'checkerboard' allocation schemeand, 3) Improvements in VHF Reception....Guess they heard enough moaning about lack of coverage with the switch to ATSC. If I were a TV station owner, I'd be concerned about what the FCC is up to. One could read between the lines that they would like to make another round of changes. To make matters worse, these sessions are reportedly not open to the public. Probably all due to the demand for spectrum for broad band.

Going to make it a short one this month, folks – However – I have to leave you with some interesting items–

Case #1

A neighbor had to have the garage door repaired. The repairman told him that one of his problems was that he did not have a 'large' enough motor on the opener. . . He thought for a minute, and said that we had the largest one they made at that time, a ½ horsepower. The repairman shook his head and said, "No.... you need a 1/4 horsepower." The neighbor responded that ½ was larger than ¼. He said, "NO, it's not. . . Four is larger than two. . .".

Case #2

A friend was at the airport, checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked, "Has anyone put anything in your baggage without your knowledge?" To which he replied, "If it was without my knowledge, how would I know?" Mr. Security smiled knowingly and nodded, "That's why we ask."

Forecast is for Summer to start right on time here in the Pacific Northwest – promptly after the 4th of July. Finally it will be our turn for sunshine and blue skies (we hope). For those of you not in this area, this has been a very cloudy and cool spring in these parts.

See you at the picnic on Vashon, at KOMO, July 24th –

Til next month –

Clay, K7CR, CPBE