

CLAYS CORNER FOR AUGUST 2010

The annual SBE Chapter 16 Picnic, just like last year, it was held in the back-yard of KOMO...a wonderful location for this event. Jim Hatfield showed a number of historic pictures of the early days on the island. Later it was tour time to take a look at some of the high powered AM's on the Island. Attendance was great with folks coming from as far away as Portland and Wenatchee. The weather was nothing short of spectacular. I have the feeling that this will be venue for this event for years to come. For those of you that were not able to make it – Mark your calendars now for the last Saturday in July of 2011.

The Chapter will be, pretty much, taking the month of August off - Coming up in September –

- The annual 'Taste of NAB' presentation at a location TBA.
- Election of officers
- Meeting of the new Board of Directors
- Charting our course for the next year.

Yours truly has been busy with a couple of projects – 1) The conversion of KVTI to an outlet for NW Public Radio and, 2) Putting on the air a new station, KSWs/88.9 in Chehalis at Crego Hill. While at Crego recently I ran into Al Bednarczyk, of all things, a retired guy there working! He was telling me about his planed long road trip across Canada etc. Sounds like he has begun to forget about pagers and alarm clocks. Apparently he was at the KCKA Transmitter site doing a favor or two for Darin.

The twin ATC towers on West Tiger have a fresh coat of paint...very noticeable. Someone mentioned that they could see the difference in Issaquah.

What about that guy the climbed up the KIRO-TV tower on Queen Ann Hill? I've heard a number of versions of why he decided to do it, mainly...Because it was there. If you have ever thought about climbing that tower, the cost for doing so has now been established...\$1000. At least that was the amount of his fine. Have not heard if KIRO is going to install some gizmo's to make it a bit harder to access the tower...might be a good idea.

As usual this time of year, we are being blessed with wonderful weather. Not so in the upper mid-west where Wisconsin and northern Illinois have been getting soaked. In Milwaukee the rainfall was so heavy that it flooded and closed their airport and knocked off several TV stations. The storm dropped up to 8 inches of rain in a short time. KDJT-TV was flooded. Reportedly WTMJ came to the rescue pulling their normal channel 4.3 programming giving the flooded station a was to be on the air.

The East Coast has been hot with record breaking temps. Add this to their normal sky-high levels of humidity and you have a place to avoid. One of the impacts of all the heat on the other coast is on propagation, especially in the FM band. If you have ever experience FM on the 'right-coast' you know that it's far more congested than it is 'out west'. Add to this thermal ducting and you have a real mess. We occasionally get some of this out this way. Just the other day Nick Winter was listening to KGY –FM in Olympia and heard another station, on the same channel....at time overtaking KGY.

What was most telling was when he heard tornado warnings and a time check that put the station in the Central Time Zone.

Another giant of our industry, Daniel Schorr, recently passed at 93. I think we can all recall listening to this man and his unique style. For the last 25 years he has been working with NPR as a news analyst. There is a northwest connection here – Not only was Dan Schorr hired by Edward R Murrow, back in 1953, but he received the Edward R. Murrow College's lifetime award in Pullman a few years ago.

Ever wonder about those stations that are licensed to one city but identify with another? Here in this area we have a couple TV stations (KSTW and KCPQ) and several Radio (KBKS, KMTT, KIRO etc) that are licensed to Tacoma, KRWM is licensed to Bremerton etc but all of them identify with Seattle. Well back on the East Coast the city of license, a suburb of Philly, charged that the station was too focused on Philly and failed to serve it's city of license. The FCC was not convinced and turned down the license renewal challenge. Every since I got into this business there has been this fascination with the 'big city' in the area by broadcasters....something that will likely not change.

Apparently trying to do a good deed, San Francisco has recently put on the books a cell phone radiation law. From what I understand the new ordinance requires those that sell cell phones to have a display that shows the handsets SAR (specific absorption rate). The cellular industry trade association, CTIA is obviously not happy with this and has informed the city that they would no longer hold their fall show there. They followed this up with a suit to block enforcement of the new rules.

The CTIA pointed out – "FCC's exclusive, congressionally derived authority" of radio frequency emissions from cell phones and other wireless devices. If not enjoined, the ordinance will "cause irreparable harm to plaintiff, its members, and the public," This will be an activity that everyone involved in marketing wireless devices will be keenly watching. The city wants everyone to be safe from that nasty stuff that comes out of antennas. Meanwhile users of these devices don't want products that loose calls from lower ERP's. Will a cell phone user choose a phone with less NIER and less coverage? This reminds me of the product that was out a few years ago designed to minimize the impact on the person holding the phone, it apparently did very poorly...especially when folks discovered it reduced the effectiveness of their phone.

Every once in a while the matter of NIER and physical harm surfaces. Recently this issue came up in a location that one would not suspect....Italy. In this case it's the Vatican that fighting charges that their radio transmitters pose a cancer risk. Apparently a new study purports to show a link between exposure to electromagnetic waves and an increase in leukemia and lymphoma in the surrounding population. Now the Catholic Church is on the defensive. (not going to say any more!)

For some reason, I like to report on the antics of those that attempt to operate un-licensed broadcast stations. This month the news is full of items in that category.....

In Mt Vernon New York (not to be confused with Mt Vernon Washington), back in 2008, the Feds found that a Mr Dexter Blake was operating a radio station on 101.5. The FCC order him to pay an NAL in the amount of \$10,000. He didn't respond to the notice nor pay the fine. So now the FCC is demanding he pay up. No word on why it's taking them so long.

Here's another one – In this case, Mr Christopher Meyers has also been requested to pay \$10,000 for his pirate station operation on 95.9 in Lauderhill, Fla. This too has been a long running saga. Back in 2008 Mr Meyers was contacted by the FCC for operating an unlicensed station on 91.7 but resurfaced on a new frequency. In this case, it's not operating without a license, but rather operating at variance with one. KEIF-LP is a low power station in Enid, OK. What bothered the FCC was –

1) Their antenna was 75 feet taller than authorized, 2) They were operating with 155 watts, 73 watts higher than they should. 3) Unauthorized transfer of control, 4) Selling advertising. This fellow will pay the customary 10 Grand and received a shortened license term.

It's finally done !!!! So says Spring/Nextel as they announced that the 2 Gig BAS transition is complete. The project was launched back in 2005 and was supposed to be done by September of 2007...However, like a lot of things that involve politics and technology, it took much longer than projected. Its been reported that Sprint spent about \$750 Megabucks to git'er done. For those of you that have not followed this activity, It involved changing TV's 2 Gig ENG band plan and changing everything from analog to digital. I suspect that tons of equipment was swapped out at the nearly 1000 TV stations involved. The last of some 213 markets to make the change ? Anchorage, AK

Vinny Lopez, president of the Society of Broadcast Engineers said the group's "national network of volunteer frequency coordinators, with unique and valuable BAS information, was a key factor in Sprint's facilitation of an effective transition to a new, efficient digital platform for stations to provide vital news and information to the public. The Society's partnership with Sprint in this effort is a great example of how all broadcast engineers serve and support our industry and make technology work for business, government and broadcasting."

Wow ! It's a price roll-back at the FCC. If you are a licensed Amateur Radio operator (Ham) and have been thinking about getting a Vanity Call Sign but have been holding off until it went on sale – Now is your time. Starting August 17th the FCC will roll-back the cost for a vanity call by 10 Cents from \$13.40 to \$13.30. Get 'em while they are hot. To give you an idea of just how 'profitable' this program is – The Commish projects to bring in just under \$200,000 in FY 2010. That's over 14,000 Hams trading in their old, FCC assigned, call letters for new ones. If you are not a Ham, you may not appreciate the reason why a person being assigned KC7HHH would want to change to K7FUD OR something shorter etc. By the way, my call sign, K7CR, is technically not classified as a vanity call. It was assigned back in 1976, long before the vanity call sign system was established.

Could Qualcomm's FLO TV be in trouble? There are rumors floating about that – Maybe- things are not a rosy as they had hoped. This has been an interesting trail to follow. Qualcomm dumped a ton of money in their system building out a rather large system. In this area, they have some very impressive installations at sites like – Tiger Mt, Gold Mt, Capital Peak etc.....for a while, Marty Hadfield was doing their service work. I suspect that FLO has had a lot to do with the recent zeal that broadcasters have had to target the really small screen. Could be that those folks too will be taking a closer look at their business models.

The Feds continue to be suffering from 'bright shiny object fascination' with the latest buzzword ...'Broadband' (even if they don't know what it means). All the lawmakers understand is that it requires spectrum and broadcasting might be a place to get some of it. A new bill, introduced by Senator Rockefeller, would give the FCC permission to pay broadcasters for those that opt to give up some for the 'cause'. To quote Dave Ross – YIKES !

Talk about bad timing! With newspapers barely hanging on... now the FCC has filed a brief defending their 2008 vote to relax broadcast-newspaper cross ownership. Can anyone name a TV station that wishes to go out and buy a newspaper? Or, better yet, can you identify a newspaper that has the money go purchase a TV Station? Geesh!

It's that time again for elections at SBE. Half of the Society's Board of Directors are elected each year. The list of candidates for the annual election of SBE national directors and officers has been finalized. The SBE national Nominations Committee, chaired by Board Member, Jim Leifer, CPBE of Boynton Beach, Fla, submitted a slate of candidates and no additional candidates were submitted from the membership by the July 12 deadline. Serving on the committee with Jim are Leonard Charles, CPBE, Madison, Wis., William Ryall, Portland, Maine and James Schoedler, CBNT, Denver, Colo.

Nominees for the Board must be voting members (Member, Senior, Life, Fellow or the official representative of a Sustaining Member) in good standing (dues paid through March 31, 2011) and hold a current SBE engineering level certification (CBT or higher) all through Board service if elected. All four officer positions will be on the ballot as will six of the 12 director seats. Officer terms are for one year while director terms are for two years. Election ballots will be mailed from the National Office to voting members in good standing by July 27 and are to be returned so they are received by the National Office by August 26. Voting members are urged to cast their votes. Ballots will be tabulated on the evening of August 26 by volunteers from Chapter 25 in Indianapolis. Those elected will take office during the SBE National Meeting on October 27 in Madison, Wis.

The complete list of candidates and their photos can be found on the SBE website.

Stations are always on the hunt for NTR or, means of generating revenue beyond selling Spots. Here's a novel idea – Meredith (a TV group owner) is running obits. My guess it will be on a multicast channel. Their claim is that it's cheaper than running obits in newspapers. Craigs list and EBay pretty well did-in newspaper classified ads, not sure that broadcast is the place for this....but what do it know...I'm in Engineering.

A TV network you don't hear a lot about is ION. (The place the Terry Spring works) Now that they have restructured they are looking outside the box. ION is actually bigger than one would think with 59 stations covering 64% of the country they could be a factor.

NAB has released a list of stations that are finalists for the annual Marconi awards. Some stations in our neck of the woods were named.... Congrats to -

Small Market Station of the year – KGMI in Bellingham
Country Station of the year - - - - KMPS in Seattle
News-talk Station of the year - - - KBOI in Boise

Looks like the world slow-down finally reached Nautel. It was recently announced that John Bisset who has been regional sales manager for Europe etc. was leaving the company. John will continue to write a popular column for Radio World. John's position is being filled by Hal Kneller who was a presenter at one of our chapters meetings last year.

What do you do with low producing AM signals – You give them away. Well, at least this is what Clear Channel is doing with 4 of their stations. The recipients are minority and female groups.

The fur continues to fly in some cases where stations have increased their HD power level. The FCC, when they OK'd the boost, said they would deal with complaints. All eyes are on this issue for sure. I suspect that many stations are in 'wait and see' mode to see how this sifts out before laying out the bucks for a bigger HD Radio transmitter. In this area, the only station I have heard about that's operating north of -20 is CBS's 96.5 in Seattle.

Have to wonder what George Carlin is thinking now that the 2nd Circuit Court has struck down the FCC's Indecency Policy? Under this ruling, George could not do his routine on the air, however "fleeting expletives" are now OK. Guess this means that a potty mouthed Senators remarks would not have to be bleeped? I have to feel sorry for the FCC for they are in, perhaps, a no win situation here. How do you craft rules that keep broadcasting from sounding like certain Satellite Radio programs and yet be in compliance with these court rulings? Will Radio back off on their use of their program delays? We have certainly not seen the end of this.

This item from SBE headquarters – Engineers are famous for their organizational abilities, attention to detail and problem-solving skills. Ironically, many engineers, when it comes to certain personal things, are quite disorganized and, shall we say, forgetful. The Society of Broadcast Engineers is well aware of this phenomenon. To aid engineers who hope to get their SBE Certification renewed, the SBE has updated a handy, downloadable and free brochure (PDF). Go to the SBE website – www.sbe.org for more info.

Kudo's to the FCC. The Office of Management and Budget has released its latest federal employee job satisfaction study, and its finding is that out of the entire federal government, the FCC is the most improved agency. Now if they would just poor Kris McGowan some help !!! (Grrrrr)

Understand that KGY in Olympia is working toward re-locating their AM operation to a new tower about 3 blocks from their old site. Once the move takes place, the old tower will be taken down. Still no word on whether or not they will have to vacate their studio facility at the Port of Olympia. Meanwhile they are working on a power increase and the addition of HD Radio to their FM signal.

Another 'Radio' bit the dust. This time it was NPR that is no longer National Public Radio becoming...Just NPR. Change the name, not the product. About the same time the YMCA has become – The Y. Do you remember when Radio Corporation of America became just RCA? I have wondered how long the term Radio would be around as it is starting to sound very old fashioned. (I can relate)

Bustos Media, licensee of KDDS-FM and KTBK-AM, has been taken over by its lenders and have filed with the FCC to transfer ownership to NAP Broadcast Holdings LLC. The first ownership change around here that can be attributed to the state of the economy.

Remember how many in our business were crowing about how Satellite Radio was doomed? Then XM and Sirius merged and since then....Things have been getting a lot better. Recently the Sat-Radio outfit reported they had about 19.5 million users, adding over half a million in Q-2. Coming back from the picnic on the Pt Defiance Ferry I was chatting with a couple and the topic of Satellite Radio was brought up. One of them was a salesperson traveling around over half of the state on a weekly basis. They liked talk radio and found that only with Satellite could they continue to listen to their favorite shows. They pointed out that with land-based radio they would be constantly pushing buttons and, in some areas, have no coverage at all. This underscores what I have maintained for a long time – There is a market for this system...A market that we cannot serve with our existing transmission systems.

Well enough for now – Time to leave you with a means to increase your wisdom. This month, courtesy of Phil Johnson, retired Newsman at KIRO, some new medical terms and definitions. Just remember, knowledge is power.

Artery - The study of painting
Barium - What you do when CPR fails
Colic - A sheep dog
Coma - A punctuation mark
Congenital - Friendly
Dilate - To live a long time
Fester - Quicker
G.I. Series - A baseball game between soldiers
Hangnail - A coat hanger
Morbid - A higher offer
Medical Staff - A doctor's cane
Nitrate - Higher than the day rate
Node - Was aware of
Outpatient - A person who has fainted
Post Operative - A letter carrier
Protein - In favor of young people
Secretion - Hiding anything
Serology - A study of English knighthood
Tablet - A small table
Tumor - An extra pair
Urine - The opposite of you're out

Thanks Phil !

Til next month – Enjoy the summer !

73, Clay, K7CR, CPBE etc.