

Clay's Corner for September 2010

As I write this column it's the 31st of August and we are having the first rain in what, in terms of Pacific Northwest measurement, is a very long time. At least my lawn will appreciate the moisture from the sky, even if it means that the lawnmower will be pressed back into action for a while.

This past weekend was spent with Kevin Douglass who is the new DOE for the company that has been known as Bustos Media owners and operators of an AM and FM station here (and one of my clients) A whole lot of changes are 'in the pipe' that are certain to remove any thought of being bored this fall. Kevin's background is with Jaycor and Clear Channel. He is presently moving from Kauai to Sacramento. I promise to get him to one of our Chapter meetings in the future, a fun guy with a lot of stories to tell.

Our next meeting location has been announced – It will be the Taste of NAB – and election of officers. Hope to see you all at the Clover Park Technical College in Lakewood on the 10th of this month.

Our Chapter general remailer sprung to life, like never before, with the announcement that a broadcast engineer was killed while working on a transmitter (not in this market). A number of Chapter Members posted comments proving that is this a sensitive issue. It's good to see this Remailer being put to use for us to chat about issues between meetings....This is what it is for.

As for the fellow that lost his life – A contract engineer. Jerold Campbell, 73, working at WDMS radio station in Greenville, Ms, is believed to have been electrocuted Thursday, August 19th while repairing the station's transmitter. This incident brought up the matter of working on high-voltage/transmitter equipment while alone. It's well known that stations, across the country, do not have any procedure that forbids working on transmitters alone...in fact they would likely object to the cost of a 2nd person. In many cases, the Engineer is placed in the position of 'providing' that 2nd person. Many feel that there should be a law forbidding working on transmitters and other high-voltage equipment alone and that stations should pick up the tab. What do you think?

I subscribe to a number of media related remailers and, from time to time, are some pearls to share – Here's an example ...The topic had something to do with engineers that design broadcast equipment and those that sell it – "Great sales departments can sell almost anything. The rest need the crutch of numbers." And, "Great rocket scientists may have the best rockets, but they can't sell them!" Could this explain why many broadcast managers purchase equipment based on factors other than superior performance?

The FCC recently cracked down on a California station that was not monitoring the correct sources for EAS. Yes there are those that feel they can just monitor whatever they like – Read the following very carefully - <http://www.fcc.gov/eb/FieldNotices/2003/DOC-301059A1.html>. To bring this home, if you have difficulty monitoring a particular EAS source – You have an obligation to run this past the Washington State SECC. Best way to do this is by stating your case on the Washington State EAS Remailer. If you are not a subscriber, drop me an email and I will get you on board.

Those that predict what the Sun will do are out with prediction about what they think our nearest star is getting ready to do – Read more here - <http://www.news.com.au/technology/sun-storm-to-hit-with-force-of-100-bombs/story-e6frro0-1225909999465>. Certain those that are Hams and are interested in the propagation that this brings with it are anxious for this to get underway...but there is certainly a down side....The potential for failures of systems that we have come to rely on.

Earlier in the year, at the EAS Summit in WDC, we heard from folks promoting that FM Radios become part of all Cell Phones. The rationale for this is based on the notion that FM radio stations will be providing citizens with information in times of emergency and this capability should be in the hands of the majority that now carry these devices. The other goal (not talked about very much) is to get more radios in the hands of potential listeners, many of which are younger folks who many are fearful might not listen to radio as much as previous generations. The cellular industry is well organized and is now fighting back. It's anyone's guess how this will turn out. Lots of bandwidth about this in the media publications.

In the event you don't follow such things – The younger generation these days is hooked on texting – In fact a recent studies have showed just how texting has become an addiction and the addiction is much like being addicted to drugs. Statistics show 80 percent of all 15 to 18-year-olds own a cell phone. And the rate of texting has sky rocketed 600 percent in three years. The average teen sends 3,000 texts a month. Neuroimaging studies show the same brain areas are stimulated with both texting and using heroin. How can broadcasters overcome this one?

Radio is not the only media system that is impacted by the changing habits of younger people. Many, under 45, are opting to drop paying for TV from Cable or Satellite providers in favor of online video. Between Texting and on-line distribution of content one has to wonder just how this will impact our business....I think I know.

Certainly of interest to those that work for Tribune's two TV stations in Seattle is news that negotiations continue as the company tries to exit from bankruptcy. Apparently one of the issues is just who will lead the company in the future.

Looking at the business side of our business – I keep reading about how revenues are up, in fact there was a piece in a recent trade magazine stating that Cap Ex spending is starting to come back. The 'recovery' is also predicted to be a slow one. The one bright side is the coming elections that, hopefully, will inject some needed revenue into our industry.

USA today just underwent a RIF, laying off about 130. The reason – Less advertising revenue and, To compound the problem, fewer readers are paying for newspapers as free news proliferates on the Web. Quoting their news-release - "We have to go where the audience is," Hillkirk said. "If people are hitting the iPad like crazy, or the iPhone or other mobile devices, we've got to be there with the content they want, when they want it Sounds familiar, does it not?

Can you imagine how you would feel if someone proposed to build a sky-scraper on Queen Anne or Capital hill that was only just slightly shorter than the TV towers? Well

that's what's happening in New York City. The proposed Penn Plaza building would be built just two blocks from the cities existing main TV and FM site, The Empire State Building. A similar concern was expressed with the construction of the WTC towers resulting in most TV's moving there. With the destruction of the WTC, the TV's moved back to Empire. I've not heard, but it's likely that they proposed new building would have an antenna farm on it's roof also. Here in our area, the good news is that the city would not likely allow a big structure on one of Seattle's hills. Then again, unlike NYC, we don't have all our TV and FM's in one location.

Ever see a really old TV that had Channel 1 on it? Well, way back when, there actually was a Ch 1, but that's another story. Today's TV has gone from actual to 'Virtual' Channels. It's my understanding a low power DTV in San Jose, Ca (KAXT-LD) is using Channel 1 as it's virtual channel. Cool!

The FCC told a station to pay-up recently in Maryland. August 24, 2010: The FCC's Enforcement Bureau has sent a \$4,000 forfeiture order to Nassau Broadcasting over contest violations at WWEG/Myersville, MD, saying WWEG "failed to conduct a contest substantially as announced or advertised."

Not sure what drove this decision, but it's interesting to note that Trinity Broadcasting Network has made a gift of 155 low-power outlets to the Minority Media & Telecommunications Council. Trinity operates a full power TV in the Seattle market.

Talk about – in your face Mr FCCPirate stations often are brash, but they usually don't give advance warning to the FCC. The San Francisco Weekly recently reported that Radio Valencia is about to begin broadcasting on 87.9. The owner of the 'pirate' station claims that he is not worried about being shut down by the FCC. 87.9 is a favorite location for un-licensed stations. I recently heard one in Federal Way on that Frequency .

A strong storm recently took now the array at WWVA in Wheeling WVA. The classic 400 foot Blau-Knox towers destroyed. The following link will provide some pictures of the destruction -
http://www.wwva.com/cc-common/gallery/display.html?album_id=244870
According to NOAA, it was not a tornado, as first suspected, but rather a wind burst that hit 70 mph. Wow, we have winds in that category here in this area just about every winter.

You may recall this column noting the death of Dave Young, a broadcast engineer in Bend, Oregon. The stations owner, Jim Gross, announced that Wes Davis who comes to central Oregon from NextMedia. The Bend Radio Group consists of 4 – FM's and one AM.

Another passing to report – This time Jimmy Jontz a broadcast pioneer at KBOI in Boise. Jimmy was credited with designing and building KBOI television. He was 90.

This past month also saw the passing of Elliott Klein. In addition to being a consulting engineer, Mr Klein also owned of a station in Idaho. Elliott was 61.

Good news from Everett – the KRKO towers are back up after being knocked down by a vandal about a year ago. Many of us have memories of this transmitter site as it was the location of a Chapter 16 meeting. Congratulations to Andy and the crew at KRKO.

I recently received my bill for receiving television – and – again – the cost has gone up. I also was prompted to dig out that UHF TV antenna to see what I could do with over the air TV. Granted I would miss some of the channels that are not over the air...but there must be a limit somewhere. The problem is that you only watch 10 to 20 channels while these providers give you a zillion channels and charge you for it. Never thought I'd see the day. Many folks, faced with the same decision, have opted for an outside antenna and enjoyed the \$900/year savings. Knowing that I will indeed retire one day, this decision is only being put off....for a while.

I am still hearing stories about towers causing death to birds. Could it be that those that don't like the looks of towers are just trying to find an excuse to ban towers? I ran across a statistic the other day – More birds are killed by flying into windows than by towers. Perhaps then we should start demanding the elimination of windows?

The Society of Broadcast Engineers has named John Luff of Sewickley, Pa. its recipient of this year's SBE Broadcast Engineer of the Year award. Luff has been a member of SBE since 1984. He was nominated for the work he has done in the broadcast engineering industry as well as with SBE Chapter 20 in Pittsburgh. Luff is currently a media technology consultant and has his own company, HD Consulting. His past work experience includes senior vice president of business development at AZCAR, founder and president of Synergistic Technologies Inc., engineering manager at TPC Communications, as well as volunteer service as chairman of SBE Chapter 20 and conference vice president with the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers.

The SBE also announced that Charles 'Buc' Fitch, P.E., CPBE, AMD has been named its 2009-2010 SBE Educator of the Year. Fitch has been a member of SBE since 1975 and has held SBE certification since 1976. He was nominated for his more than 40 years of contributions to educating the industry through articles, presentations and mentoring, not only in mainstream technical areas of broadcasting but also important adjacent technologies such as the National Electrical Code (NEC), project management and collateral regulations. He currently writes a recurring feature in Radio World called, "Certification Corner," which is aimed at helping readers understand and prepare for the SBE certification exams.

Winners will be recognized at the Society's National Awards Dinner on October 27 in Madison, Wis. The event is part of the annual SBE National Meeting, which is being held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Broadcasters Clinic, hosted by SBE Chapter 24 and the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association (WBA) at the Madison Marriott West Hotel.

This item comes from Montana – “ Bozeman radio station burglarized -- by former employee, police say”

A former employee of Bozeman radio station is in the Gallatin County jail after admitting to stealing several thousand dollars worth of broadcast equipment from the station's studio. Travis Patrick Malone, 35, was terminated from Gap West Broadcasting, which owns the station, on June 21, according to court records.

Nearly a month later, on Wednesday, July 28, a radio station employee told police he saw Malone walking along Mendenhall Street carrying a directional antenna and some cable typically used for commercial radio broadcasting.

During a search of the man's residence later Wednesday, police found an FM transmitter, FM exciter, electronic voice microphone, mixing board, other audio production equipment and clothes that matched those the program manager saw Malone wearing when he was walking along Mendenhall, according to the documents. Malone is being held at the Gallatin County Detention Center on \$10,000 bond.

Well folks that's all for this month.

Hope to see you all at the next meeting at Clover Park Technical College on Sept 10th in Lakewood.

Clay Freinwald, K7CR, CPBE.