

Clay's Corner for September 2011

This month all the news is being made on the other coast.

When I heard about the little earthquake on the East Coast I was instantly reminded of many conversations I had with folks while 'back-east' where they would tell me that they just could not live on the West Coast because 'you have earthquakes'. I remember telling them that no-one is really immune from them. This all comes down to the fact that people have a greater fear of something that they have not experienced. As if this were not enough, right on the heels of the quake they experienced a big hurricane the result of which was a massive amount of damage from winds, flooding, power outages etc.

From what I have read, less than a hand-full of broadcast stations were forced off the air, the majority of which did what we broadcasters always do, provided listeners and viewers with the kind of information they so badly needed by dropping their normal programming, and spots to go wall-to-wall with storm coverage. Let's face it, Broadcastings Point-Multi-Point distribution system is very efficient. Let us hope that those in Government that want to take away our spectrum for broadband gizmo's will learn from this experience.....Well, we can always hope.

Here's a stroke of good timing.....NAB is working with FEMA and some other entities as they launched campaign for National Preparedness Month. Probably don't have to tell the folks impacted by Irene about the necessity to prepare for emergencies. Events like this should be a call for all of us to double check our preparedness level. Let's face it, we may not get hurricanes... but we certainly can have extended power failures, earthquakes etc. NAB continues to pound away on the idea that all cellphones should have FM radios installed and hopes that these natural disasters will help make their case.

Meanwhile, we have been enjoying wonderful summer weather that has gone a long way toward helping us forget that we were all openly wondering if it were ever going to start. Thankfully, unlike Texas, it's been quite mild with only a few days into the 80's. Looking at the calendar you have to know that it will be over soon. According to those that get paid to make predictions, we are once again looking at a La Nina situation that could/should/might mean a repeat of this past winter with lotsa snow in the mountains and who knows where else.

For some time your local SBE Chapter 16 has hosted a Remailer to enable us to all communicate with each other, not to mention this is our primary method of letting you know about Chapter activities. From time to time one of our members will post something that will greatly increase the level of activity and traffic on the system. John Price and Dwight Small, both Engineers at Entercom recently significantly increase the amount of email traffic with the announcement of the formation of BARCS (Broadcasters Amateur Radio Club of Seattle). Along with the announcement came word that they had applied for and were granted a Club-Call for the new outfit – K7KXA...The last 3 letters having a great deal of significance to local broadcasters. KXA was one of Seattle's early radio stations (Now KTTH on 770). Another announcement was that Dwight had just upgraded his Amateur License to Extra Class.

So what is to become of this new entity? I quote John Price -
“No BARC’s rules yet. No website. The club station is in planning stage. Goal is to get on 14MHz first”. John explained that much of the inspiration for this effort came from New Orleans where several broadcasters, that were also licensed Amateurs, (Hams) decided to form a group...In the case of NOLA, they got the call letters W5WWL ...WWL is, of course, the historic station in that area. John added –“Thanks to everyone for all the responses to the K7KXA post and the side track threads that grew out of it. Seeing guys like Dick Harris, Schneider and Walt chime in makes it all worthwhile. Will keep you all in the loop as we move forward”

Understand that the amount of activity on this Remailer has been quite light...That’s a big ‘was’. Seemingly out of the woodwork came people I have not heard from in years...Here’s a sample...

Dick Harris, WYVCD, who wrote “Hi guys! Great to know I'm not the only "oldtimer" still around. Retired, yes, but still active at 86” Dick was on radio for years here.

John Schnieder, W9FGH, who operated the RF Specialties branch in Seattle for years and was very active in the Chapter . John wrote “This is great news, congratulations! Why didn't you guys get a ham club together when I was living in Seattle? It would have been fun for me to participate. When you get on the air on 20 meters we can set up a schedule. I am W9FGH and need a reason to get on the air more often”.

Others heard from included – Lee Hurley, WA7PBK who is retired in California - - - Nels Harvey, WA9JOB from Wisconsin (I had no idea we were connected that far away) - - - Mike Bach, WB6FFC, who works with Scala near Medford Oregon - - - Al Sarri who said he has been licensed for over 42 years, Walt Jamison, W7PRB (retired from KOMO) - - - Marty Hadfield, WB7FFV - - - Jim Stevens, KL7FIR - - - Jim Dalke, W7PB...., and this is just a sample.

Along the way there have been a few that have asked to be removed from the Remailer either because of the amount of email or because they can’t relate to the topic. The solution to the first issue is to subscribe to the system in ‘Digest Mode’. This means you will receive the days postings in one email permitting you to review what was discussed and from that determine if you wish to read it....or push the delete key. As for relating to the topic...A number commented that they had always wanted to get a Ham-License but the requirement to send and receive Morse Code was an obstacle. The good news is that the code requirement has been dropped.

I was very pleased with the amount of traffic on our Chapter Remailer...Now I hope that some of you will feel led to come to our Chapter Meetings. And a big thanks to John and Dwight for K7KXA and BARC...You have inspired many.

SBE’s National Election Results are in –

- Ralph Hogan is the new President.

- VP - Joe Snelson
- Secretary - James Leifer
- Treasurer - Jerry Massey

Each of these follows terms is one year.

Elected to the Board of Directors, and serving a 2 year term are –

- Ray Benedict
- Paul Burnham
- Mark Heller
- Charles 'Ched' Keiler
- David Priester
- Gary Stigall

These newly elected members of the BOD will join the other 6 to form the 12 man group. Vinny Lopez, the immediate past president will also serve another year.

One news item recently was likely received well by broadcasters...The announcement that the, so called, Fairness Doctrine is gone for good. The courts struck down the regulation back in 1987. In a recent clean-up of obsolete media rules, some 83 of them were wiped off the books including some left over items from the F.D.

This item caught my attention recently. Someone was trying to describe how drivers in various parts of the country act. When it came to Seattle, the writer put it this way –

“One hand on latte, one knee on wheel, cradling cell phone, foot on brake, mind on game”Maybe.

One by one automakers are adding HD Radio to their model lines. Toyota finally announced they will join the club with their new Camry. This will be part of a larger project to add a number of features to the audio systems in their newly designed 2012 models. Automakers are doing all they can to install all the electronic-entertainment gizmo's they can to their dashboards. Not that long ago that Radios were optional.

If you are a member of SMPTE....You are aware of their 2011 Technical Conference and Exhibition. Oct 24-27 in Hollywood, Ca.

This past month saw a man climb up a tower in Tulsa, Ok and refuse to come down. Finally, after several days, he was talked into climbing into a bucket and lowered to the ground. Can you imagine what would happen if this was on one of the big TV towers in Seattle? Time to have security check?

The FCC reported some good news recently that Radio and TV Complaints were down. Normally the majority of these are related to programming, but this is good news.

Broadcasters have been victims of copper and metal theft for some time. Recently I reported on how local electrical utilities have ramped up their theft prevention efforts. From time to time you hear about someone stealing wire from street lights. A couple of years ago someone was so bold as to steal wiring for lighting along SR16 near Gig Harbor. Now comes the story that Copper Thieves have struck along i-95 in Florida. In this case it was not just a few feet of wire, but over 30 miles worth. They are talking about 175,000 feet of copper wire! Yikes !. According to the story they are trying to set up a system whereby the thieves would be caught as they try to sell the wire. My question is – Can't they do more to prevent the theft in the first place? How is it that 175,000 feet of wire can be removed and with it turning off a whole bunch of street lights and no one notices?? Can an alarm system be that difficult?

Sorry to report the passing of Peter Dahl. If you worked around transmitters you probably knew his name as a maker of fine transformers.

Another passing is William Moulic. Mr Moulic owned Sono-Mag which developed a number of pieces of broadcast radio equipment, perhaps the most famous was the Carousel that was used in countless radio automation systems, some 10,000 were sold.

Local TV Station, KFFV, has new owners. They contacted me the other day saying they were looking for an Engineer. I asked for something in writing and posted the info on the Chapter Remailer (see it's not all talk about Ham Radio). The stations transmitter was recently re-located from West Tiger to the Richland tower on Capital Hill.

You have, no doubt, heard of 802.11 the protocol for the distribution of data that's used widely. The IEEE, on August 1st announced a new standard – 802.22. The main use will be for WRAN's or Wireless Regional Area Networks. Now where do you think they came up with spectrum for this ?? ...Whitespace turf in the VHF and UHF TV Bands, of course.. These new systems may cover an area as large as 12,000 square miles or a 60 mile radius. This is similar to the area served by an FM Station at West Tiger Mt. Data rates of 22 Mb/second are in the works.

The FCC did something this past month that I thought I'd never see.....They released new rules for Part 101, Fixed Microwave Services. The headliner in this change was the elimination of the rule that prohibited Part 101 frequencies from being used as the final link in an STL system. This rule was a huge obstacle for many a station and engineer. To get around the rule required a waiver that, at times, was very difficult to get. Hats off to the FCC for this one!

The big TV stations have all made the transition to Digital, but not the little ones. Now the FCC made it clear....There will be no delay in the digital deadline for lower powered TV stations. For a number of reasons, many are predicting that a number of these facilities will go dark.

After 9/11 the TV stations that were at 'World Trade' began transmitting from the Empire State Building. Now that a new building is under construction, and already about 80 some stories

high. The owners of the, soon to be 1776 foot sky-scraper are trying to get the stations to move away from Empire. Will be interesting to see what happens.

I recently reported that, once again, there were complaints that the RFR levels at L.A's Mt Wilson were too high. So who they turn to? Why our very own Hatfield and Dawson. They came, they measured and they found the RF Levels to be compliant with FCC Rules. Perhaps you guessed that this would be the case.

Cord cutting continues to make the news. The term refers to those that elect to discontinue purchasing TV from Pay-TV suppliers. Reasons cited include – Economic where some have 'cut the cord' to save money, while others are now obtaining content in other ways. Who knows, perhaps have discovered that you don't have to pay for TV and have installed that new device called an antenna?

According to recent radio ratings, KISW is the top station in this market. KOMO remains the only AM station on the top-10.

Well, my friends, that's about it from this end for this month. Quick, go find some sunshine and soak it up....You know what is coming....Fall, Halloween, Winter, Christmas. Wow, where did this year go.

Hope to see you at the next SBE Chapter Meeting.

Clay Freinwald, K7CR, CPBE.