

Clay's Corner for November 2010

Wow....What a political season !!!! The only good news is that the coffers of many broadcasters are being filled with record setting amounts of political advertising bucks. Big money is even being spent on Radio this cycle with, reportedly, \$100 Million going to the audio-only medium. I wonder how our neighbors in Canada view all the mud-sliding? As I write this, it's just about over. Whew !

Are you ready for winter? If we are to believe those that try to predict the weather, we are in for a doozie this year. Perhaps a repeat of what we had in '07 and '08. For those of you that only have to navigate the low-lands, all you have to worry about is contributing to the paycheck of a local auto body shop...for those of us that must go to those RF producing gizmo's in the mountains, this year could be quite a challenge. Ahhh to have an over the snow vehicle, like a 4x4 ATV with tracks. Owning one of those toys is like buying a generator for your house. It's something you swear you are going to do, but fail to do so when the next winter is a El Nino' and mild.

Some big news in the world of EAS this month –

First – 45 States, NAB and SBE have asked the FCC to delay the due-date for having new EAS equipment installed by an additional 180 Days or to Sept 30, 2011. This would make a lot of sense to me. I was having difficulty getting my head around a requirement to purchase new equipment for which no rules have yet been created. Sounded to me like a classic cart in front of the horse problem. I'd like to know that whatever a station buys, is in compliance with the Commission's rules. Knowing that changes are going to be made to Part 11 would appear to be a big help in making this purchase....A delay is a prudent move. Let's see what the Commish does.

Second – The SBE Board, at it's meeting in Madison, Wi, has disbanded the SBE EAS Committee (the one I chaired for 10 years). Replacing it will be an effort by SBE to assist Engineers in the field deal with the changes that are in the pipe. The SBE EAS Exchange will continue to be an important tool in that effort. I highly encourage you to not only subscribe to that system, but your State EAS Remailer.

The economic situation continues to perplex the experts. For some it's getting better...for others, it's getting worse. One form of media is certainly seeing numbers go the wrong way....Newspapers. According to recent reports, the Seattle Times circulation is off by 4.5% in the last 6 Months. The News Tribune is off by 8.5%. Apparently the Everett Herald is doing something right with their numbers up by .7%. You would think with all the younger set adopting texting as their preferred means of communication that newspapers would be 'in'. Perhaps it's their writing style? You know, their use of full words and punctuation, upper and lower case etc. I would bet that many younger folks view the way newspapers are written as 'quaint' or, perhaps, old fashioned.

Major equipment maker Harris reported the most recent quarter business was up a bit, but not enough to erase a 9 million dollar loss in their broadcast segment. Guess that's a way of saying that the bad is better.

One way of measuring the health of the industry is to look at the number of radio stations that are dark. Presently there are 334 stations in that mode. This is up 18% and represents the highest total ever. I don't have a figure on dark TVs but it must be pretty high as well.

Caught Dave Ross on KIRO-FM the other day saying that there were 3 people in the Seattle area with HD Radios. Honest Dave?

Have you been following the battle between the Fox Stations in New York and Philly. Appears there is a big battle over how much is being paid for putting these stations on Cable. Result.....A huge jump in antenna sales. Wow - Over the air – free TV !!! Apparently another battle is brewing between Fox and the Dish Network. The FCC may get sucked into this dispute. This is so much like the person that is shocked to find out that milk comes from a cow...TV actually can be picked up off the air with a gizmo called an antenna – what a concept!

It may sound like science fiction, however, this is apparently true. The FCC has formed a new Technical Advisory Council. This one is tasked with figuring out how to get more spectrum for broadband. In this group is Geoff Mendenhall from Harris and Lynn Claudy from NAB. I had the privilege of sharing the platform at the recent OSAB/WSAB convention at Skamania recently where Lynn explained, in great detail, the FCC's quest for obtaining spectrum with a lot of it coming from broadcast television. The problem, as I see it, is that consumers are expecting everything wireless. And makers of equipment for this segment are seeing money to be made by the train load. The only question is where to get the spectrum to do it. Let's face it, the good Lord quit making spectrum a while back. Those with dollar signs in their eyes are mounting a campaign to try and convince everyone that broadcasting is a spectrum waster with yesterday's technology and should be squeezed and made to release those wasted frequencies for the greater good. One proposal has broadcasters 'cashing-in' or giving up spectrum for a portion of the fees paid by those that want spectrum. Tragically, there are those that feel that spectrum is like a lot of things – unlimited in supply. Gonna get ugly with a capital U!

Last month we reported that Qualcomm was going to shut down or 'shutter' their MediaFlo operation. Latest news is that the service will wind down in the spring of next year. Apparently consumers were not interested in spending over \$600 plus \$9/Mo....especially during a recession. Obviously there are brokers looking for buyers. Gee with a full TV channel in most of the country, you'd think that this would be spectrum that potential broadband operators would be anxious to grab. The idea of spending \$629 plus installation for in-car service Flo TV - plus a \$9 monthly fee wasn't attractive for consumers during the recession. Now Qualcomm is suspending sales of its mobile television service that's been available on a handful of Chrysler SUVs and minivans.

The FCC has been doing some 'fine business' since we last met....Here are some examples.

Citadels radio cluster in Baton Rouge, LA is likely to be paying \$8,000 for failing to maintain its public inspection files. The number was much higher, but was reduced because the owner was apparently honest in dealing with the Feds.

Multicultural Broadcasting has also been informed they are in violation of the FCC's rules re: Public Inspection files. In this case, in Babylon, NY they will be asked to pay \$10,000 for missing Issues/Programs lists from that file.

In New York state the FCC has issued a 10K fine for a pirate (unlicensed) FM station in Spring Valley.

In Florida they do things differently. There, local law enforcement deals with pirate operations. In a recent case, Broward County Sheriff deputies arrested two pirate station operators for airing a hardcore rap station. Apparently the station was causing interference to adjacent, licensed stations.

One area that has been creating a lot of heat has been the matter of broadcasters paying musicians and record labels huge sums of money for royalties. Historically radio stations have maintained that if it were not for radio airplay the music industry would not be where it is. This has worked, to a degree. But the pressure continues. Now, NAB, representing their members, has a tentative agreement on the table. This is not sitting well with smaller broadcasters who are struggling to stay above water...many of which predict that this will create a whole new list of dark stations. In this economy, this is a tough one.

Remember when Jim Dalke and Salem put KKOL on the air with a ship-mounted antenna in the bay? How about a saltwater antenna? Likely not very stable in terms of electrical characteristics, however....Take a look – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tIZUhu21sQ>

If you have been following the issue, you know that the light bulb – is about to join the CRT. Here's an interesting site that's full of info about LED lighting etc. <http://members.misty.com/don/light.html> Speaking of which – I still have a box of Pilot Lights....you remember them, 47's, 1829's....Just can't convince myself to throw them away.

Remember all those that predicted that Satellite Radio would be a passing fad? Well, they almost had their wish come true. That is until the two Sat-Radio outfits merged and since then it's been pretty impressive growth, proving that this is indeed a viable product with almost 20 million subscribers. Recently the firm went to the Wall Street Bond market looking for \$550 million and came away with \$700! They recently announced a new receiver that can be plugged into a vehicle's lighter jack, thereby eliminating the installation charge. Meanwhile they launched a new bird that will be a spare.

For the 4th year in a row, CBS has received RTDNA Edward R. Murrow awards for overall excellence. Let us not forget our connection to Murrow in our state. In Pullman you will find that Northwest Public Radio is alive and well operating from the Murrow facility on the WSU Campus. If you every get a chance to visit Pullman, stop by. A lot of great history there.

One of our Board Members, Mike Gilbert, brought our attention to a fire that destroyed the transmitter building of one of the stations his company owns. In this case, KSJX in San Jose, CA and another station sharing the site, KZSF saw their transmitter building totaled in a fire caused by a car crash that set off a brush fire that spread to consume the broadcast facility. Earlier in the year we were all holding our breath as fire raced up Mt.

Wilson in LA for fear that it would take out one of the largest broadcast transmission facilities in the country. In the summer I have visions of the same thing taking place at West Tiger. Unfortunately a lot of transmitter facilities are lost due to fire or vandals.

What's in a name? For some reason, I can't stop smiling about the name of a station licensee in Wyoming....Canned Ham Communications, LLC.

The recent firing of Juan Williams from NPR has again ignited the call for eliminating federal funding for public broadcasting. NPR's timing appears to be poor, with all the national polls showing voters tilting to the right in this election cycle. Certainly there are broadcasters that are trying to stay afloat that might not mind if the Feds stop giving money to the other guy.

Big change in Seattle Radio came when it was announced that Bob Rivers would no longer be on the air. A number of popular radio 'morning men' are no longer on the air, perhaps due to the economic situation.

Legislators in WDC are making progress with regulations aimed at turning down loud TV spots. Seems to me that this issue came up back in the 80's. Remember the CBS Labs device for that purpose? If I recall it was called a Dynamic Loudness Controller.

Every once in a while someone comes up with a new clock. Here's a link to one that will not only provide you with the correct time, but provide a whole lot of other information.
<http://www.poodwaddle.com/worldclock.swf>

Something you don't see very often....In late September, KVOS-TV in Bellingham was off the air for a couple of days. Apparently, some kind of serious transmitter problem. Thanks to their direct feeds to cable etc, only over-the-air viewers were effected.

In a departing memo, Ray Ozzie of Microsoft wrote about a future day when the PC would be replaced with what is being called 'Cloud Computing'. For industrial applications, like many of the uses in Broadcasting, this is hard to see. Speaking of Microsoft, I was talking with a fellow the other day about the power consumption of their Central Washington State server farm. They have, installed, 22 – 2 Megawatt Generators and are installing more. We are talking about close to 50 megawatts of power! Wow! Wonder If Cloud Computing catches on to what this number might become?

Understand that Walt Lowery is no longer representing RF Specialties in this area and has relocated to the Southeast part of the country. Walt represented a number of broadcast equipment makers in this area for many years and was a former Board Member of Chapter 16.

Here in the Seattle area, Bustos Media is no more. The two stations, KDDS-FM and KTBK-AM are now owned by Adelante Media Group. I understand that Bustos continues to own and operate a radio cluster in Portland.

The conversion of television from analog to digital is moving forward with the FCC announcing that analog Low Power operation on Channels 2-51 will end sometime in 2012. I understand that owners of some LPTV are struggling with the decision to make the change or throw the switch.

And finally –

Obviously someone has way too much spare time – from that person we learn –

Stewardesses – is the longest word typed with only the left hand. If you are texting would that be the left thumb?

Lollipop is the longest word typed with your right hand (Unless you use only two fingers)

No word in the English language rhymes with – month, orange, silver or purple.

Dreamt is the only English word that ends in the letters 'mt'.

Here's one that will surprise many computer keyboard operators...The word 'typewriter' is the longest word that can be made using the letters only on one row of a qwerty keyboard. Bet the inventors of the typewriter never knew what was going to happen to their machine and that this would live on.

And did you know that your left hand (or maybe your thumb) does 56% of the work?

Everyone seems to know about the time measurement 'nanosecond'. But do you know the length of time represented by a 'jiffy'?..... $1/100^{\text{th}}$ of a second.

Talk about bad mileage – The ship 'QE-2' only gets 6 inches per gallon.

If you think she is flirting, consider that women blink twice as much as men.

That's it for this month – Thanks for the read –

Clay, K7CR, CPBE