



# Washington Report

## KTTL Changes Calls, Format As FCC Readies Action

The first glimpse of how the FCC plans to deal with racist broadcasts on KTTL/Dodge City, KS was expected this week (10-17). KTTL's license renewal, petitions to deny the renewal, and a competing application were due to be designated for a comparative hearing by the Commission. Observers are watching closely to see whether Chairman Mark Fowler, an ardent foe of program content controls, will allow the designation of any programming issues against KTTL.

Meanwhile, the station has gotten FCC authorization to change its calls to KMCS, effective October 22. Station employee Joe Blackburn said the change is linked to a format switch from automated Country to live CHR in the near future in an attempt to "change the image" of the station. KTTL's controversial co-owner, Nelly Babbs, has moved to Missouri and is no longer associated with the station, according to Blackburn, leaving the outlet under the control of her husband, Charlie Babbs.

## Planning Starts For '85 Joint Radio Convention

Meeting last week in Atlanta, the NRBA Executive Committee recommended to the board that a joint convention with NAB be staged once again next year. And it's "green light and go" from his standpoint, says NAB President Eddie Fritts.

Officials of both associations journeyed this week to Dallas, where next year's meeting is tentatively set for October 6-9 at Loew's Hotel.

But NRBA Sr. VP Abe Voron says the site and dates aren't set in concrete. Voron vowed to have the convention "under one roof somewhere," even if a change of city is required. And the dates may be changed to accommodate programmers who are reluctant to leave their stations during an Arbitron ratings period.

The profit from last month's convention in Los Angeles hasn't been finalized, but the estimated figure is \$300,000, which the groups will share equally. Had the total been much lower, NRBA was guaranteed to receive the first \$125,000.

Meanwhile, NAB says a survey of radio attendees at its spring 1984 convention in Las Vegas showed over 90% reacting favorably. Next spring's meeting will include Saturday radio programming sessions for the first time. An extra 70,000 square feet of exhibit space has been added, and the price per square foot goes from \$10 to \$12.

## Radio Gets One Slot In Pentagon War Pool

Responding to criticism of the secrecy surrounding the United States invasion of Grenada, the Pentagon last week announced creation of an 12-member pool of journalists that will go along on any future military operations. One slot goes to a radio correspondent, while television will have six persons in the pool. The remaining positions will be filled by representatives of the two wire services, three national magazines and one daily newspaper.

Creation of the pool was recommended by the Pentagon's own Sidle Commission, chaired by a retired general. The pool would be transported under strict secrecy to the scene of a conflict and permitted to file stories "when the operation commenced or as soon thereafter as practical."

Sidle Commission member Richard Sal-

ant, a former CBS News President, warned last week that he believes a news blackout is still possible despite the new pool setup. He plans to discuss his concerns further at an RTNDA regional meeting in New York on Friday (10-19).

## NBC's Bongarten Joins NAB Board; Mutual Losing Seat

NBC Radio President Randy Bongarten was named last week as the network's representative on the NAB Board of Directors for a term expiring next June. He takes the seat previously held by his predecessor at NBC, Mike Eskridge.

Meanwhile, Mutual's impending sale of its last radio station, WHN/New York, will cost the network its seat on the NAB Board. The association's bylaws require that a network also be a station licensee to have a slot on the board. The seat filled by Mutual Executive VP/GM Jack Clements is expected to go to the National Black Network.

## SIX-MONTH BANISHMENT

# Industry Rallies Behind Arbitron Delisting Of "Hot" Call Letters

Industry support seems to be building for a proposal to impose an Arbitron "delisting," possibly lasting six months, on stations that pick up recently dropped or "hot" call letters. A delisted station would be banished from an Arbitron book entirely.

The concern is that stations seizing "hot" calls improperly receive diary credit that actually belongs to the stations that relinquished the call letters.

The Arbitron Radio Advisory Council surveyed all of the ratings firm's subscribers and found delisting to be by far the most popular solution to the problem, favored by 58%. Based on that finding, the panel has recommended the punishment to the Electronic Media Rating Council (EMRC). That group will make a formal proposal to Arbitron, which has said it will abide by the recommendation.

## Length Of Delisting Disputed

The main point of contention is how long the delisting period should last. Arbitron Advisory Council Chairman Ed Giller, President/GM of WFBG-AM & FM/Altoona, PA, said the council couldn't agree on a length, although many members favor six months.

EMRC Executive Director John Dimling says his council's radio committee will vote on the issue October 31. Its recommendation will then be confirmed in mail balloting by the EMRC's board of directors, and then forwarded to Arbitron. Dimling says it's possible the delisting could become effective in the winter book, which begins in January.

The problem of "hot" call letters was born last January when the FCC almost totally deregulated the assignment of call letters. One of the abandoned rules imposed a six-month cooling-off period before calls dropped by one station could be picked up by another station in the same market. Now those calls can be picked up immediately.

## Half Dozen Incidents

Although "hot" calls have not yet become a major problem, Arbitron has reported about a half dozen cases of calls being picked up soon enough to cause diary confusion. The danger of misleading ratings is exacerbated by the fact that old calls crop up in Arbitron diaries up to two years after they've been dropped.

Dimling said the EMRC may also petition the FCC to drop the requirement that stations begin using new calls within 45 days of receiving Commission authorization to do so. The rule forces stations into early use of disputed calls, said Dimling, who criticized the "ridiculous inconsistency" of maintaining the regulation while most other call sign rules have been thrown out.



**RADIOACTIVE'S 100TH ISSUE** — NAB officials paused last week to note the publication of the 100th edition of the association's monthly radio magazine, RadioActive. Seated (l-r) are RadioActive writers Jim Dawson, Angela Coulumbis, and Catherine Seigerman. They were joined by (standing, l-r) NAB President Eddie Fritts, Radio Board Chairman Ted Snider, Joint Board Chairman Gert Schmidt, Radio Board Vice Chairman Ed Giller, and Sr. VP/Radio Dave Parnigoni.

# FAA Seeks New Controls To Combat Potential FM/Aircraft Interference

FM broadcasters seeking new antenna locations or power levels have a new obstacle to worry about. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), long concerned about the physical hazards that radio towers pose to aircraft, has begun trying to regulate potential FM interference to aviation radio traffic as well.

FM and aviation radio are close neighbors. FM occupies the band from 88 to 108 MHz, while aircraft use the frequencies right next door, from 108 to 137 MHz. That can lead to two types of interference: a wandering signal from a station near 108 MHz, or a "spurious emission" created by a freak mixing of two FM signals.

Although there are relatively few cases of reported problems, NAB staff engineer Ralph Justus says the FAA began cracking down on FM stations about two years ago. In "scores" of cases it has issued a "determination of hazard" on interference grounds when asked by the FCC to comment on proposed new FM towers, according to Justus. The Commission almost always honors such objections.

## FCC's Spectrum Management Usurped?

Rather than fight the determination, broadcasters usually work with the FAA to find a more suitable tower location. But Justus complains, "They're assuming the role of a spectrum manager. That's not their domain. That's the role of the FCC." He adds that FAA regional offices make interference judgments in an "inconsistent manner."

## New FAA Notification Proposed

Stations are already required to notify the FAA of any antenna 200 feet or more in height. The agency is now proposing that it be notified of "any construction or alteration" of a station above 30 MHz and 10 kw. NAB has attacked the proposed notification rules as "burdensome" and argues that the

FAA should rely, as it always has in the past, on FCC public notices of radio applications.

Justus places much of the blame for interference on cheap radio receivers used in many small planes in the general aviation service. In fact, he says there is no problem for commercial jets, which use higher quality receiving equipment.

## Private Aircraft Jeopardized

According to Justus, FM stations can interfere with two types of aircraft transmissions: the signal that centers a plan on the runway during an instrument landing, and the signal that gives planes bearing information while they're en route.

Justus asserts there has never been an aircraft accident caused by FM interference, and problems have been limited to some "nuisance background noise" or intermittent errors in readings, usually lasting no longer than a few seconds. Justus credits the FCC staff with recognizing the problem and trying to work with the FAA to find a resolution.