

Holland Cooke Newsletter • December '09

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IF YOU'RE A RUSH LIMBAUGH AFFILIATE, AND YOU COMPETE WITH CLEAR CHANNEL...

...YOUR STATION IS A TIMEBOMB.

As this goes to the printer, a major development. My analysis on page 2...

What did Ed McMahon, Farrah Fawcett, Billy Mays, Michael Jackson, and Walter Cronkite have in common?

Other than they-died-in-2009? We knew them at a glance. They understood the limitations of attention, and delivered accordingly.

As we pore over data from Arbitron's Portable People Meter, it couldn't be clearer that radio dares not over-estimate its share-of-mind. Every...single...syllable has to be relevant, distilled, and engaging...or listeners are gone.

Yet, dangerous as subtlety is, Talk radio needs to exercise more self-restraint. The fashion in-which some talkers are grasping-for-attention is at least irresponsible, and borders on dangerous. Our industry has eight decades invested in setting-the-expectation that what-you-hear-on-the-radio is true. We have trained people to believe us.

Now, it has become business-as-usual for voices-seeking-to-cut-through-the-clutter to overstate and misstate facts, and say rude things you'd splice-out-of an aircheck intended for advertisers. At risk: "the next Timothy McVeigh" will take what's-being-said literally. 10,000 signs distributed at a Washington protest read, "Bury ObamaCare with Kennedy."

*“Some of the ranters don't have the
faintest idea where the line is.”*

Ex-Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan, in her Wall Street Journal column

Yep, even The Gipper's own wordsmith frets about some-of-the-things-being-said on radio and cable:

“I see it this way. There are roughly 300 million people in America. Let's say 1% of them, only 1 in 100, are composed of those who might fairly be called emotionally unstable – the mentally ill, those who have limited or no ability to govern their actions, those who act out, as they say, physically or violently. That's three million people.”

“Violent images excite the unstable. Violent words do, too. This is why, I think, so many people – I include, literally, every person I know, from all walks of life, and all ages – are worried that our elected leaders are not safe, that this overheated era will end in some violent act or acts.”

How could Rush Limbaugh not understand that words have consequences? But for his, he'd own a football team.

In 2010, radio confronts challenges that are formidable-enough without adding self-inflicted wounds. When we focus on innovating and delivering genuine value, our opportunities dwarf those challenges. Each month here, I report what-I'm-seeing-and-hearing in my travels...how smart stations are making-the-most-of radio's still-enviable assets, how you can adapt what's-working-elsewhere... and misfires you should avoid. This month, as each December, a look back, and a look ahead.

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“Holland Cooke, our News/Talk consultant, has been promoting talk on FM for years. It’s time. If it’s the hottest format (and Talk is), and the majority of the audience available listens to the FM band, then why wouldn’t we offer Talk on FM as well as AM?”

My associate, McVay Media president Mike McVay, who got quite wealthy programming music radio, in a letter to his client stations

Many expected that the specter of music royalties might, finally, move Talk to FM. Instead, it appears, financial desperation will. And, in-the-process, incumbent AM talkers can end-up better-off. Certainly listeners will.

After a 20+ year affiliation, Rush Limbaugh will be leaving Curtis Media’s WPTF/Raleigh and WSJS/Winston-Salem at the end of this month. Ditto other Premiere programs. Premiere owner Clear Channel is flipping an FM in each market to Talk.

‘Hard to believe that this is just a North Carolina thing. Choking on debt -- and smelling-the-coffee that “music radio” is becoming an oxymoron -- Clear Channel will likely replicate this template elsewhere, putting their-own programming on their-own stations, in markets where, until now, they’ve been competing with it. To the Gordon Gekko guys who hold the debt, it’s “vertical integration.”

Implications:

- Ironically, Clear Channel -- the company many blame for breaking radio -- may unwittingly help fix it by doing this. Way-back-when, Rush was a cost-saver, on the underdog station in most markets. Stations could cover 3 weekday hours without the expense of a local host. Then, as The Big Guy got bigger...and bigger...so did his clearance fee, and he ended up upgrading to alpha-dog stations in each market, trophy call letters. Now, in many markets, The Rush Limbaugh Show costs more than a solid local host would. So, as Clear Channel replicates this template elsewhere, one of the unintended consequences may be the restoration of live/local programming to those hours, on Talk Radio’s biggest stations.
- Weekends will suck less. Premiere is cramming-down weekend Rush and Sean Hannity re-runs. Can Glenn Beck replays be far-behind? An Arbitron diary comment I read, referring to a Limbaugh affiliate, said “on the weekend, it sounds like the station thinks nobody is listening.” These six weekend hours -- nine if re-Beck is crammed-down -- are hours when affiliates could otherwise be doing more-weekend-appropriate, more-Sales-friendly programming, the how-to buff-stuff that’s more in-synch-with listeners’ lifestyles than yet-more blah blah blah from Thursday.

Sometimes, things have a way of working out.

Talk belongs on FM, for “the right reasons:”

- Some 80% of TSL is on FM.
- FM covers a Metro better than many AMs, whose footprints change month-to-month with sunrise/sunset.
- News/Talk/Sports programming is more-Sales-friendly than music radio.
- Increasingly, people are getting their music elsewhere.

When I programmed WTOP/Washington, we were a 50KW AM @ 1500, north/south. I’ve heard that station, at night, in Canada and in Florida. If only we could’ve gotten-into West Falls Church VA and Germantown MD. Now, on FM, the station is #1, and its median age instantly dropped 10 years. Those are “the right reasons” to move News/Talk/Sports to FM.

In this case, “the right thing” could happen “for the wrong reason,” because Clear Channel is crippled by debt. Ironically, Homer & Marge Listener end up with better radio, with News/Talk/Sports on FM, and as Premiere-jilted stations increase local programming.

Next month: It’s a Solid-Gold Weekend! I still get occasional requests for my September 2006 newsletter, which included recommendations for weekend Talk programming, shows that I consider “appointment listening,” and which are money-makers for my client stations. Next month, an update.

Also in the January issue, my notes from Arbitron’s annual Consultant/Programmer Fly-In conference.

Then, another month, another convention: In February’s newsletter, my notes from next month’s massive, mind-boggling 2009 Consumer Electronics Show in quieter-but-still-fabulous Las Vegas.

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2009 CHRISTMAS GIFT OF-THE-YEAR: SOMETHING DIGITAL

Consumer Electronics Association research: 29 cents of every holiday gift-giving dollar will be spent on something-electronic.

Where shoppers-say-they'll-shop may surprise you, with e-commerce so hot now. 2/3 plan on purchasing from big discount mass-merchants like Sam's/Costco/Wal-Mart/Target. 60% will get their gadgets at an electronics store. Only 41% say they'll shop online. Why? Not-surprisingly, price, although CEA research -- which nailed last year's holiday shopping trends -- projects a 4% increase in gift spending, with the average Santa shelling out \$764 this year.

Adult gift-givers surveyed say their top three purchases will be:

1. notebook or laptop computers,
2. portable media players,
3. flat-screen TVs.

New to the top ten list this year are Amazon's kindle and other E-readers, the iPhone, and Blu-ray DVD players. Top three items teens hope to see under-the-tree: iPod/other portable media players, video game consoles, digital cameras.

And keep-any-eye-on a new item on teens' top-ten wish-list: "netbook" computers. Half-to-two-thirds-the-size-of "notebooks," netbooks retail in the \$199-\$499 range, and can run up to 8 hours between charges. Netbook sales doubled in 2009, and industry-watchers say this is only-the-beginning. I'm writing this on mine.

Other electronics trends to watch in the new year?

- Further blurring of the line between television and the Internet. We don't just "watch TV" any more. Almost half surveyed say they've visited a TV show's web site, and almost half of us are watching entire episodes online. YouTube adds 1200 hours of you-name-it per hour! And 3-D TV is about to explode, driven by gaming, movies, and sports.
- With all this stuff to choose from, entire new product categories will emerge to help-us-manage-our-information-and-entertainment-content...at home, on mobile devices, and in-the-car.

Yes, we're now "The Jetsons."

2009 MEDIA MILESTONE-OF-THE-YEAR: IPHONE APPS TOP 100,000

When I was a kid, the definition of cool was a transistor radio, small-enough to fit-into my shirt pocket. It played The Beatles, Motown, The Beach Boys, et al, hosted by local DJs in deep reverb.

This year, I got iPhone, after waiting until the-flip-phone-it-replaced was at-death's-door, and for Apple-and-early-adopters to work-out inevitable first-generation bugs. I wasn't alone. The 3GS unit I held-out-for was among 7.4 million sold that quarter, a record.

It's a shame to call it a "phone," because it does SO much. HOW much? Late in 2009, Apple's App Store added app #100,000. Most apps are pretty cool, many are free, some deliver incredible convenience, others are stupid (although I'm told that the lad who authored one of several fart-sound generators made over \$400K on it).

Now, in my shirt pocket, is "the new transistor radio," which I use to hear client stations, none local...yet...

2010 SLEEPER-OF-THE-YEAR: IPHONE FM RECEIVER

Secretive CEO Steve Jobs won't talk about it, but Apple reportedly shipped new iPhones with yet-to-be-activated FM tuner circuitry. And in 2009 Q3, Apple introduced an iPod Nano wired for FM. Why not? Radio programming is "a free app."

It's also a safety tool. With new media options now eating-into time-spent-with-radio, extending emergency alert capability to these devices is a FCC goal. The 2006 WARN act required phone makers to build-in EAS. Having FM on the phone would do so.

"Your computer is also your radio at work."

GREAT promo copy, for WCBS (AM), New York online streaming

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RADIO DISAPPOINTMENT-OF-THE-YEAR: JUNE 25, 2009

Arbitron PPM data for stations that broke format that night prove how radio can still turn-on-a-dime and touch people...if we bother. Many stations, on corporate auto-pilot, didn't.

“As famous as a human being could get.”

The Washington Post, upon the death of Michael Jackson

He sure was a thriller. Do the math:

- Michael Jackson only lived to 50, and his performing career spanned five decades...nearly six.
- He sold 750+million records.

Michael Jackson's musical gift was undeniably unparalleled. And the quirky provocative caricature he created kept him at the center-of-attention. After years of controversy, Jackson seemed to have found his footing, and would fill some big shoes. "The King of Pop" was headed where "The King" went before him, to be the biggest act in Las Vegas. Also like Elvis, Michael succumbed to life-in-the-bubble, surrounded by an obsequious entourage and impaired by a permissive physician.

Unlike the passing of Elvis, Michael Jackson's death was, in many places, a radio failure. The night Elvis died, I was the 7-midnight DJ on then-Top 40 WPRO/Providence. By midnight, I was drained, and relieved by a DJ who brought Elvis albums from home, and declared that "Elvis has never been bigger than he is right now." At stations everywhere that night, clocks seemed to stop; and listeners got goose bumps, and a place to share tears. If you're a Baby Boomer, you not only remember where-you-were when-you-heard, you remember which station you listened to, to this very day.

I didn't recognize that kind of radio based on what aired – I should say what-DIDN'T-air -- the night Michael Jackson died.

“Apparently Clear Channel's John Slogan Hogan, Citadel's Farid 'Fagreed' Suleman and Cumulus' CEO Lew Tricky Dickey forgot to plan ahead again.”

Inside Radio founder, USC professor, and outspoken Inside Music Media blogger Jerry Del Colliano

"Firing employees has left their stations threadbare," Del Colliano opined. "They neglected to factor in news and weather emergencies when conjuring up grand schemes to build various repeater radio platforms." Radio – to which Jackson contributed so much – paid him what Del Colliano called "the most unfitting tribute of all, voice tracking...some stations didn't even break for news of Jacko's death."

2009 TALK RADIO EMBARRASSMENT-OF-THE-YEAR: RUSH LIMBAUGH REJOICES AS USA LOSES BID TO HOST 2016 OLYMPICS...

...because – like heads-of-state from all other finalist nations – our president made the pitch in person. Imagine Limbaugh's scorn if Obama didn't go? Heck, if we GOT The Games, Rush would've found something wrong with THAT! After suggesting that our president hates America, Limbaugh's giddy celebration that day renders his own flag-waving suspect. This sure wasn't the aircheck clip you'd play for a prospective advertiser.

2009 TALK RADIO TURN-OFF-OF-THE-YEAR: RUSH LIMBAUGH, ON PROSTITUTES

As Michael Jackson was, Rush must be surrounded by people who won't tell him his guano isn't Haagen Dazs, because I've heard him make this comment more than once, and winced each time: You don't pay a call girl to have sex. You pay her to leave [after].

Imagine ANY woman listening NOT-leaving after hearing THAT?

One didn't. I heard a middle aged caller – who began by assuring Rush that she was a longtime fan – plead with him, that (paraphrasing from memory), "you're setting-yourself-up-for a series of superficial relationships." To which El Rushbo quipped, "you have just described every man's dream."

How many local retailers, and agency people, are women?

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2009 TALK RADIO GO-GETTER-OF-THE-YEAR: HEIDI HARRIS

While members of Congress were getting hollered-at in town meetings elsewhere during summer recess, KDWN/Las Vegas' Heidi Harris didn't expect her local delegation to show up. She hosted a packed event without 'em, had it video'd, and sent it to 'em!

2009 BEST RADIO COMMERCIAL OF-THE-YEAR: NONE

For the first time, Radio Mercury Award judges determined that no radio station-produced commercial was worthy of honor: "Our final round judges felt strongly that only those commercials that met a certain standard should be recognized."

2009 BLOOPER-OF-THE-YEAR: MUSICFIRST COALITION RIPS-OFF BEATLES LYRIC

NAB's witty news release surmised that the recording industry lobbying group seeking to impose royalty payments on radio stations "apparently forgot its own advice," when it quoted lyrics, in their entirety, to the Beatles classic "We Can Work It Out" in its press release "without securing permission from [rights holder] Sony/ATV Music Publishing." MusicFirst declined comment.

2010 BLOOPER-OF-THE-YEAR: GLENN BECK

Remember the movie "Fun With Dick & Jane?" The original, with George Segal and Jane Fonda, not the remake with Jim Carrey and Tea Leone. Flat-broke, Dick and Jane visit Jane's filthy rich dad, asking for help. But he can't, because bailing them out would be unfair to them, he figured. It'd kill their initiative, he explained, in his Jed Clampett-size mansion. "The day man set foot on the moon...THAT'S when I sold my aerospace stock," he exclaimed. The situation had nowhere-to-go-but-down.

An act just can't get any hotter than Glenn Beck is right now. Every time Rush Limbaugh has been interviewed lately (about Rush Limbaugh) he stifles a grimace when the interviewer asks him about Glenn Beck...then he takes credit for inventing Beck's genre.

ON-AIR, mind you:

- Glenn Beck has talked about killing Michael Moore.
- As the first Muslim elected to Congress was sworn-in: "Sir, prove to me that you are not working with our enemies."
- As California wildfires raged, Beck offered: "I think there's a handful of people who hate America. Unfortunately for them, a lot of them are losing their homes in a forest fire today."
- And there was: "Al Gore's not going to be rounding up Jews and exterminating them. It is the same tactic, however...You got to have an enemy to fight. Then you can unite the entire world behind you, and you seize power. That was Hitler's plan. His enemy: the Jew. Al Gore's enemy, the UN's enemy: global warming."

"Finally! A guy who says what people who aren't thinking, are thinking."

Jon Stewart, regarding Glenn Beck

On TV, Beck will punctuate extreme statements with that creepy smile and effeminate giggle...or his trademark tears. Often his radio show halts the train of thought for self-amused crosstalk with deferential sidekicks. Now at his zenith, Beck's guard is down.

- To over-tasked station managers, syndicated longform programming is plug-N-play hours that tend-to-themselves. When -- as he occasionally does, sometimes intentionally, to attract attention -- Rush Limbaugh says something especially rude, many affiliate GMs only hear-about-it in media coverage, because they just can't find time to monitor the show in real-time.
- Were I the licensee of an affiliate, I'd pay closer attention to The Glenn Beck Show.

"I find Glenn Beck to be historically inaccurate. His appeal is directed toward limited thinkers and those who are paranoid."

USA Today Letter to the Editor

MOST-PREDICTABLY-ENTERTAINING TALK RADIO FARE IN 2010: SARAH PALIN, UNCHAINED

It was Christmas-in-July. Over the Fourth weekend, with rambling sports metaphors, and without saying-specifically-where-to, Sarah Palin abruptly announced that she would leave the office of Governor of Alaska...

“Some will question the timing. Let's just say, this decision has been in the works for a while.”

Citing cruel remarks made about her baby and mounting legal costs of defending against ethics charges, and saying her decision had been “fortified” by a trip to visit wounded soldiers in Kosovo, Palin quit – and at the same time, dove-full-time into -- what-she-called “this superficial, wasteful political blood sport.”

She inveigled herself into a New York congressional race that went Democrat for the first time in generations (and she was absent from successful GOP campaigns for governor of New Jersey and Virginia). And lickety-split, she signed-on with the most elite speaker’s agent in the business, and sold HarperCollins an instant 432 page book, the-hardcover-version-of-which Amazon discounted from \$28.99 to \$9 before its release. Professional pundit David Gergen estimates Palin will make \$10 million in a year.

Will Sarah-speak continue to give Talk Radio great copy in the New Year? You betcha.

“Anybody who doubts her intellectual heft or her ability to learn and study, go to her Facebook page.”

Rush Limbaugh

2009 PROMOTION OF THE YEAR: DENNY’S GRAND SLAM FREE BREAKFAST

Some 2 million folks lined-up to chow-down gratis, taking the restaurant chain up on an invitation in their Super Bowl ad. Denny’s costs (the commercial + meals served) were \$5 million; and the measurable media value of news coverage was estimated at \$50M. Goodwill? Priceless, with the recession deepening, and many Americans appreciating a free meal. Nice comeback for Denny’s, which suffered some self-inflicted PR wounds a while back.

2009 NON-PROMOTION OF THE YEAR: HOT 99.5/DC DJs LOCKED-IN-THE-STUDIO (REALLY)

In local radio’s heyday, the oldest-joke-in-the-book stunt for introducing a new DJ was to pretend he was locked-in-the-studio for what-turned-into a marathon shift. After voices-EQ’d-to-sound-like-an-intercom assured that help was on the way, sound effects depicted the rescue break-in. We could barely keep a straight face, but listeners ate-it-with-a-fork-and-spoon.

Fast-forward to 2009, when Hot 99.5/Washington’s Kane Show morning talent really did get locked-in, when a studio door handle came loose. A cross-cuming listener used the request line to tip-off the Loo & Lori morning show on sister WASH, and Loo Katz rode-to-the-rescue.

“We encourage Los Angeles residents to find and ‘save’ news radio stations on their battery-powered portable and vehicle radios.”

LAFD web site, as wildfires raged in 2009

2009 CRIME-OF-THE-YEAR: NEW KRKO TOWERS TOPPLED

I myself have seen the room (literally) full of documents from the decade-plus legal travails that eventually won KRKO/Everett WA the power increase that would permit this local family-owned broadcaster to better cover its entire locale. No sooner were two new towers erected than they were felled in the night. Published reports theorized that heavy excavation equipment was used, and federal agents quickly joined police investigating what-they-regard-as a local eco-terrorist group.

“BIGGEST FAILURE” OF THE DECADE: SIRIUS XM RADIO...

...among Time Magazine’s “Ten Biggest Tech Failures of the Last Decade.” The article surmised that subscriber growth slowed, “most likely because of new and more popular consumer electronics devices like the Apple iPod and multimedia cellular handsets.”

Noting that “Sirius shares had traded at \$63 in 2000, dropped to \$.05 earlier this year,” Time concludes that – net of “hundreds of millions of debt” – “neither Sirius nor XM ever made a dime.”

Satellite radio was also on a list of “25 Biggest Tech Flops” by respected CNET: “Even with commercial-free music stations and coast-to-coast coverage, how many people are willing to pay for radio after getting it free for so long?”

CNET’s list also included HD Radio, which “was supposed to be the next great thing in ‘free’ radio, offering clear, digital ‘CD quality sound’ and more listening choices. But it’s been slowed by the manufacturing costs of the HD Radio chips and the radios themselves – as well as poor marketing.”

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EARS WE'LL MISS IN 2010: TOM MERRIMAN

His initials were the "TM" in TM Studios. Best-known for some of the most-familiar jingles in radio and TV history, he also wrote and produced music for Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and others. Just days after he was inducted into the Texas Radio Hall of Fame, and in declining health, Merriman died at 85.

VOICES WE'LL MISS IN 2010

Radio has some big shoes to fill.

“I loved every minute of it.”

Casey Kasem, a spry 77, signing-off, 39 years to the day after the first "American Top 40" show aired.

“The proudest part for me has been saying, ‘for all of us at ABC News...’”

ABC World News and ABC Radio 5PM ET anchor Charles Gibson, Emailing staff to announce his retirement.

As we wish Casey and Charlie well, we mourn radio's most iconic character, **Paul Harvey**, who died on his 90th birthday. Early-on in an on-air career that spanned seven decades, he used his real name, Paul Aurandt, when he was on WKZO/Kalamazoo during World War II, and the station owner poo-poo'd what-became his trademark staccato delivery. I had the pleasure of scripting several projects that he voiced, anniversary promos for client stations, and it was a real kick to write in his famous voice.

“The Most Trusted Man in America,” **Walter Cronkite** passed at 92. He worked KCMO/Kansas City in the 1930s, covered World War II in the trenches, and nudged President Johnson into retirement when he surmised the Vietnam war unwinnable. His commentaries were a fixture on CBS Radio while he anchored The CBS Evening News 1962-1981; a broadcast his voice continues to introduce every night. After retiring from CBS, Cronkite appeared on National Public Radio.

“We lost our voice today.”

Team President and CEO David Montgomery, announcing the sudden death of 38-year Philadelphia Phillies announcer Harry Kalas

That “HK” you saw on the Phils' jerseys during the World Series saluted “Harry the K,” who collapsed in the broadcast booth before the Washington Nationals' season opening game. You also knew him as the often-imitated voice of NFL Films, and from those great Campbell's Chunky Soup spots. And Harry never said no when someone asked him to voice their answering machine greeting, in which he'd inform callers that – in his trademark home run call – the-person-you're-calling is “OUTTA HERE!”

Harry called the first and last games played at the old Veteran's Stadium. When the Phillies met Tampa Bay in the 2008 World Series, Harry's son worked the game for the Rays. Harry – who did TV and radio – usually did the middle three innings on radio. But when the Phillies won, he was in the radio booth for that final out, then went on-field and led the crowd singing Frank Sinatra's “High Hopes.” Harry, 73, is already a Hall of Famer, as 2002 Ford Frick Award winner, “for major contributions to baseball.”

Delaware Valley listeners also remember:

- **Frank Ford**, who was on the air somewhere in Philadelphia from 1937 until 2000. A friend quoted Ford's advice that “There are three topics that will always light up the phones: Will Social Security be there when I get old? Nobody can tell me where I can walk my dog. And why can't two parents take care of all the children and all of the children can't take care of the two parents?”
- Another Philly talker, **Irv Homer**, died at 85. Like other Talk notables, Irv broke-into radio as a regular caller. At the time, he was a bartender, a profession that requires being-a-good-listener. He was a fixture at FM Talk pioneer WWDB, until it went back to music in 2000, when Homer segued to nearby WBCB/Levittown, and took calls there until the day he died.

- Like many financial professionals, longtime KYW voice **Fred Sherman** moonlighted on radio. After Fred's job was among early-2009 CBS Radio cutbacks, he died at 85, injured in a car accident.
- I remember when he was "Diamond **Jim Nettleton**" at WDRC/Hartford in the 1960s. You might have heard him later on WABC/New York. But he's fondly remembered from Philadelphia's WFIL, and eventually, WPEN, WOGL, and – shortly before his recent death at 69 – a 'Jersey Shore FM that now bears the call letters he and fellow "Famous 56" DJs beat way-back-when, WIBG.
- **Les Keiter**, 89, called Philadelphia's Big 5 college basketball games in the 1960s. And he was the ringside announcer for the 1964 Cassius Clay-Sonny Liston fight. And Keiter was one of the last practitioners of the dying art that the young radio announcer Ronald Reagan also employed: recreating game play-by-play from wire service reports and sound effects.

Other sportscasters radio lost in 2009:

- Baseball Hall of Famer **George Kell** played with the old Philadelphia Athletics, and the Tigers, Red Sox, White Sox, and Orioles, before 40 years in the broadcast booth. He was 86.
- Sirius NASCAR Channel's **David Poole** was only 50.
- Among New York Jets games **Merle Harmon** called 1964-1970: Joe Namath's "guaranteed" win in Super Bowl III. With many games blacked-out on local TV, radio was big. Harmon also held down various other play-by-play gigs for ABC and NBC. He was 82.
- From 1956-1991, CBC Radio/TV's **Ted Reynolds** did play-by-play for EVERY sport, and appeared on his country's ultimate appointment TV, "Hockey Night in Canada."
- Here in New England, we remember 44-year Voice of the Bruins **Fred Cusick**, the first American broadcaster to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Fred had retired in 1997, and was 90.

You didn't have to be a New Englander to hear longtime overnigher **Larry Glick**, who got into 40 states and Canada on WBZ/Boston's Godzilla-size footprint, for 20 years. "I like people better at night," Glick once told The Boston Globe. "During the day, they're in a more business frame of mind. At night they might be the same callers, but they're more relaxed and less stressed. They might have their feet up, with a drink next to them while they're listening to the radio."

Another night owl many will miss...

“When you punch those buttons, you never know what's going to be on the other end of the line.”

Jim White, who -- for 20 of his 30 years on KMOX/St. Louis' massive overnight pattern – was known to much of America as "The Big Bumper"

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch recalled how, "one night, armed prisoners who had planned a jailbreak summoned Mr. White to be their spokesman." White, who retired in 1999, died at 72, suffering complications from surgery.

We lost **Mary Travers**, who – with Peter Yarrow and Noel Paul Stookey – topped radio playlists in the 1960s as Peter Paul & Mary. "If I Had A Hammer" became an anthem in the fight for racial equality, and they shared the stage with Dr. King at the 1963 March on Washington to sing Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind." They had three of Billboard's top 6 selling albums then.

PP&M's 5 Grammy Awards included John Denver's "Leaving on a Jet Plane," which put 'em back on top in the 70s. Every summer when I lived in Washington, I'd lay a blanket on the lawn at Wolftrap, the National Park for the Performing arts, on the night they played. They seemed to harmonize with crickets chirping in the distance; and they always sang "Puff The Magic Dragon" before intermission, "so the children can sing along." Mary succumbed to a long battle with leukemia at 72.

Dan Seals was half of England Dan & John Ford Coley, whose "I'd Really Love to See You Tonight," "Nights Are Forever," and "Love is the Answer" were big 70s hits on many AMs that are now News/Talk; sharing the playlist with his brother Jim Seals of Seals & Crofts.

Few of today's musical acts don't owe **Les Paul**, who put a phonograph needle in his acoustic guitar to prototype the instrument later used by Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and maybe you. As late as 2006, he played in New York joints; and Jimmy Page, Bruce Springsteen, and Eddie Van Halen sat-in with him. With wife Mary Ford, Les Paul had 36 gold records; and they pioneered multi-track recording and other techniques we take for granted now. He was 94.

Best-known as Johnny Carson's sidekick, **Ed McMahon** started in radio, at WLLH/Lowell MA. Toward the very end, he appeared occasionally on Doug Stephan's syndicated "Good Day" morning show. A World War II veteran, McMahon interrupted his

broadcasting career to serve again, as a fighter pilot in the Korean War. He succumbed to what a friend called "a multitude of health problems" at 86.

For 26 years, **Senator Ted Kennedy** did a daily radio vignette, "Face-Off," swapping point-counterpoint with Senators Bob Dole and Alan Simpson and Fred Thompson and John McCain. We aired it every morning on WTOP, and if we didn't, the phone rang.

Soupy Sales did radio alrighty, on WNNNNNNNNNNNNNBC, on a 1980s airstaff that included Imus, Howard Stern, and Joey Reynolds...after his mischievous 1960s afternoon TV show, which pretended to be for kids, but had adults roaring at double entendres, and the Frank Sinatra-sized celebrities who lined-up to get a pie-in-the-face. Milton Supman was 83.

Before "The Streets of San Francisco," before the American Express "Don't leave home without it" spots, before "On The Waterfront" and so many other great films, young **Karl Malden** acted on some of the biggest network radio shows of the 1940s and 1950s. **Joan Stanton**, 94, also acted on 1940s radio, as Lois Lane in "Superman" and gal-Friday Della Street to "Perry Mason." James Earl Jones, Cicely Tyson, and Kevin Bacon were only three of a parade of future stars who appeared on the ultimate soap opera, "**The Guiding Light**," which began on radio in 1937, moved to television in 1952, and ended in September.

I heard **George Taylor Morris** as a newscaster on superb mid-70s FM rocker WCOZ/Boston. You might remember him from WPIX or WWDJ in New York, or NBC Radio's "The Source" network, or as PD of Westwood One, or for his syndicated "Reelin' in the Years" show, or various signature shows at XM. George was just 62. Throat cancer.

Turns out there was a dark side to gifted ABC News Radio anchor **George Weber**, found stabbed-to-death in his New York apartment, just before his 58th birthday. The New York Daily News described his 16-year-old male confessed killer as a "Satan-loving sadomasochist and hustler who agreed to a drug-fueled rough sex romp for \$60." Before he went-network, Weber worked KIMN/KTLK/KOA/Denver, KOGO/San Diego, KGO/San Francisco, KABC/KMPC/LA, and WABC/NY.

Other news voices silenced this past year:

- CNN Radio National Correspondent **Ed McCarthy**, who fell to cancer at 56, after 23 years with CNN.
- Dallas heard **Sam Pate** on KBOX, KLIF, and KVIL back in the '60s. Locals recall his as the first radio report of the sad news there on November 22, 1963.
- In 1964, CBS moved **Dale McCarren** from Detroit to Chicago, so he was there when WBBM went All-News in 1968, and he stayed until his 1997 retirement. Remembered as a great story-teller, he reported from Vietnam and other hotspots. Born Carl Barge, he died of complications from diabetes at 74.
- **Harry Warren** spent more than three decades as a newsman and announcer at KFBK in Sacramento, beginning in 1951.

Also signing-off this year:

- **Ken Roberts**, 99, did EVERYTHING on-air on CBS Radio way-back-when, and for decades you heard him as the announcer for soaps "Love of Life" and "Secret Storm," and PBS' "Electric Company." His son is Broadway and movie actor Tony Roberts, Woody Allen's pal in "Annie Hall" and "Play It Again Sam."
- **Harvey Hudson** was WLEE/Richmond's morning man 1946-1972, and became station manager. Harvey was 88.
- At one time, **Steve Cannon** and his cast of character voices had the highest-rated afternoon radio show in the USA, on WCCO/Minneapolis. Cancer got him at 81.
- WSM/Nashville's **Hal Durham** was the voice of The Grand Ole Opry, and its GM for 15 years. He was 77.
- **Paul Sidney**, 69, was on WLNG/Sag Harbor NY for 45 years.
- **Calvin Walker**, 62, worked almost everywhere in Charlotte radio.
- When he was WBLX/Mobile's morning jock, **Arthur "Ray Ray" Russell** would visit public schools every week, to read to children. He was just 42, waiting for a heart transplant.
- Texas station owner and sitting Chairman of the Texas Association of Broadcasters **Jason Hightower** succumbed to brain cancer at 38.
- Power 95.3/Orlando's **Erika Roman**, "Your Chula," died in a car crash, in her 30s.

Who could make this name up? At WTOP in the 1980s, our garden show host was "**Jack Eden**" (his real name). Sundays 9-noon, our non-stop newscast stopped, for a show that sure wasn't slick radio and had horrible ratings and – in, 1990, the last year I managed there, when this was still alotta dough – made the station \$400 grand. When Jack mentioned a product, it flew off the shelves. He also wrote gardening columns for The Washington Post and the Washington Times, and taught consumer horticulture at the College Of William And Mary.

Brother Bill Goodman was one of the leisure-suited Pro Personalities at WPRO/Providence in its 1970s Top 40 heyday, as was I. Back before AM radio got so angry, and voices-from-somewhere-else started telling us what to think, the on-air voices were cheerful local minstrels. "WKRP in Cincinnati" depicted a kind of theater that played in every city in the USA. The disc jockeys were characters, and this particular one was a REAL character, a tireless cheerleader for Southern New England and loveable oddball who never ceased to amuse his co-workers. Later, he hosted a talk show in Las Vegas, a precursor to Art Bell's shtick. I remember howling when I turned on "60 Minutes" as they were doing a piece on mysterious Area 51, and seeing The Brother, with a bullhorn, as desert tour guide to a busload of the curious. This past year, Billy lost his long, brave, and very public battle with cancer... during which he was relentlessly upbeat, ever in-character. He was 67.

Another voice we lost in 2009 was **R&R**, radio's biggest, oldest trade publication, age 36. I can tell you why in two words: "Radio" and "records." And does THIS sound familiar? R&R's big corporate owner consolidated it into a sister property, cutting jobs. If you were among-the-very-few at what-turned-out-to-be R&R's final Talk Radio Seminar in California, you saw this coming on stilts.

2009: THE YEAR NEWSPAPERS DIED

It wasn't just Autotrader and Craigslist that killed 'em, by stealing newspapers' two big revenue streams. It was also the blurry-busy pace of listeners' lives. Sit-and-read doesn't do 2009 as well as radio, the original mobile info-app.

“Corporations that fail to figure out how to couple permanence with perpetual change will be ‘swept away.’”

BusinessWeek review of "The Future Arrived Yesterday" by Michael S. Malone (Crown Business)

According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations – the Arbitron of newspapers -- there were tens-of-millions fewer newspaper buyers per day in 2009 than in 1940.

- Biggest loser: The San Francisco Chronicle, down 26%. Not-far-behind: The Dallas Morning News, down 22%.
- At least they're still publishing. 2009 saw farewell editions of Denver's 150-year-old Rocky Mountain News, and the 146-year-old Seattle Post-Intelligencer (now just a web site), among others.
- The New York Times – itself financially in deep doo-doo – hired an investment firm to try to sell its Boston Globe.
- With USA Today's circulation down 17%, The Wall Street Journal is now the USA's most-read newspaper. Smart affiliates use WSJ Radio Network assets to deliver its brand and content to the busy in-car listeners who fuel so much of the retail economy.

Meantime, radio gained four million new listeners. 235 million 12+ now tune-in each week. But that's not enough any more.

“Consumers are spending more time with media which they support and pay for as opposed to ad-supported media. This development is a culmination of two decades of this secular shift towards consumer-controlled media, and shows no signs of slowing.”

Veronis Suhler Stevenson's annual Media Growth Forecast.

At last month's Streaming Media West conference in San Jose, Xbox LIVE GM Marc Whitten began his keynote address with a picture of a 1930s family gathered around the radio in the living room, and audio of Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" broadcast, which he called "a watershed moment for social media."

Fast-forward to present day, and his company's gaming console streams instant-on 1080p HD with 5.1 Surround Sound.

And his system isn't just delivering content. It is shifting the media model from broadcasting's one-to-many to social media's many-to-many.

- Xbox LIVE makes Facebook a-more-easily-shared experience. Instead of inviting someone to squint-over-your-shoulder at a Friend's photos on your laptop, the photos fill your living room.
- "Games like Halo stay fresher longer because of the interaction players have with each other."
- In the UK, where Xbox LIVE streams Sky TV, the on-screen programming guide shows you which shows your Friends are watching, and allows you to watch the shows together – sharing comments, etc. -- wherever you and your Friends are. It's what Whitten called "a heat map" of what-people-you-like are-interested-in.

Meanwhile, radio gets excited about which FM goes All-Christmas first in its market. 'May as well. If a station is merely pushing-content-at people, it'll take a change that radical to get noticed, given the way people now choose to interact with their media. Accordingly...

FUNDAMENTAL IN 2010: THINK “COMMUNITY,” NOT “AUDIENCE.”

When Whitten spoke of “marrying content and community,” I had to smile. That’s “Talk Radio,” when the host isn’t the only one talking...and only talking about one thing...and when the station’s web site is more than just a brochure about the station.

During Q+A, I asked him “What’s the hardest part of your job?” After a thoughtful pause, he spoke about the mindshift from “audience” to “community,” a mindshift that is imperative to engaging people-we-used-to-think-of-as-audience, who will, instead, be so much-more-responsive if we treat-them-like-community.

“Conversations are driving the new social economy...participating here is not optional.”

From “Now Is Gone: A Primer on New Media for Executives and Entrepreneurs” by Geoff Livingston with Brian Solis (Bartleby)

SO NOW WHAT?

With so little “there there,” in newspaper advertising revenue for radio to try to switch-pitch, our biggest opportunity in 2010 will be raiding Yellow Pages.

- And I have that on good authority. I’ve been working with what-the-Yellow Pages-don’t-want-you-to-know consultant Merritt Matson, who notes that “even in today’s economy, the Yellow Pages are still taking more money out of your market than all of broadcasting combined.”
- Although radio has what-it-takes, this won’t be easy. Yellow Pages reps are extremely well-trained, and auto-renew insertion orders stipulate complicated cancellation provisions. Merritt told me of an attorney who retained him to re-assess his Yellow Pages strategy. When shown the contract, the lawyer said “I’d never sign that!” “You already did!” Matson replied.
- Many Yellow Pages advertisers don’t even know what they’re paying, because they’re never invoiced. Charges are buried in their monthly phone bill. It’s the perfect crime.
- Working together, we show stations:
 1. how to reconfigure local retailers’ ads to use the book more cost-effectively, and to
 2. re-allocate what can be considerable savings to radio and radio-driven Internet assets, which we outline.

This is especially efficient for seasonal businesses like landscapers, whose ads run for 12 months, but are only pertinent for 3 or 4. So they can heavy-up on radio in-season, and save a bundle off-season. Call me if you’d like to know more about this successful strategy. You can make significant new money from attorneys alone. We can share one fact that will INSTANTLY make lawyers-who-use-Yellow Pages very angry with the Yellow Pages.

HERE, IN YOUR CONSULTANT’S HUMBLE SURMISE, IS “WHAT RADIO IS STILL GOOD FOR.”

Sorry that makes radio sound so mature, but hey, we’re in our 80s.

1. **“Incumbency:”** Millions of installed receivers, used habitually by the two living generations that control the most money.
2. **“Immediacy/mobility:”** Radio is still a great way to tell a bunch of people something right now, i.e.,
 - Michael Jackson is dead.
 - “Don’t cook tonight, call Chicken Delight.”
 - Hurricane warnings, and other time and/or place-sensitive broadcast “Tweets.”
3. **Play-by-play sports** (though now games are non-exclusive, because of streaming and satellite radio).
4. Old-school **branding**: “HEYYY, SEAN HANNITY HERE, FOR [product];” or other attention-getting copy, high-frequency.
5. **TO STEER TRAFFIC TO THE INTERNET**, which Arbitron/Edison Research tells us radio does better than any other companion medium.

And...for the handful of remaining stations staffed to do so...

6. **Local content**, which – when well-done – makes radio unique and special.

RSVP if you’d like the-next-level-of-detail, eh? I do this stuff full-time, I know what’s worked elsewhere and how to adapt it to your specific needs, and you can’t afford to experiment.

Best wishes for happy holidays, and good health and success in the New Year.

