

IEEE

Broadcast Technology

The technologies to deliver information and entertainment to audiences worldwide, at home and on the go



Are ENG Vans Becoming Just Fond Memories? – p. 5

BTS Pulse Event Explores Latest Technologies – p. 12

President's Message

Ralph Hogan, BTS President



Well, it appears that the world is gaining ground on the pandemic. There are now several vaccines being distributed worldwide and they are having some effect on the virus and its variants. Once enough people are vaccinated and herd immunity kicks in the restrictions on travel, both domestic and international, may slowly ramp up again. With that in mind, there are several meetings, conferences and trade shows being planned this fall as "face-to-face." The IBC trade show is planned to be held in Amsterdam in September 2021 and the NAB Show, NAB Radio Show, and SCTE, along with several

others, are planned to be held in Las Vegas in October 2021. It remains to be seen what the turnout may be, certainly down from previous years. Registrations are starting to open up this month, along with housing reservations for several of those events. Restricted travel budgets will also have an impact. The outlook now for the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 is starting to show some glimmer of change towards in-person meetings. For now, however, virtual meetings, conferences and trade shows are still the norm.

The Broadcast Technology Society has remained strong by offering virtual meetings, webinars and training to its members. The IEEE BTS Resource Center has been growing as additional content is being added after each event and webinar. If you missed a session and would like to view the event or training session, it is likely posted to the Resource Center. This is a great opportunity to participate on your own schedule in whatever IEEE Region you may live. Users of the IEEE Resource Center also have an opportunity to earn continuing education credits (CEUs/PDHs) that will help you maintain your professional engineering license and stay on the forefront of your technical field.

BTS has members actively participating in several international organizations such as ATSC 3.0 NextGen TV, Radio DNS, 5G Media Action Group, the IEEE Committee on Man and Radiation (COMAR), the IEEE Women in Engineering, and the ITU-R SG6 Standards Group. Contributions by our members further the development of standards which support the growth and vitality of these groups. Jian Song has been recently appointed BTS representative to the ITU-R SG6 Standards Group.

Every five years, each IEEE Society/Council goes through a review by a committee of the Technical Advisory Board (TAB). The reviews are conducted by the Society and Council Review Committee (SCRC) which have three main purposes:

- To provide feedback and recommendations to Societies/Councils to ensure they remain the top organizational units in their fields of interest
- To help the Societies/Councils in any area they may need help, and
- To share effective practices among Societies/Councils

The Broadcast Technology Society is up for review at the June 2021 TAB meeting. BTS leadership is preparing for the

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OUR COVER: The ENG vehicle shown on the cover of this issue represents the latest in broadcast technology. The WRAL-TV Storm Tracker is a hybrid vehicle, and is equipped with a LiveU high-gain Xtender antenna and Ku VSAT uplink and downlink capability for IP bandwidth. (Photo courtesy of WRAL-TV)

From The Editor

'There's One Born Every Minute'

By James E. O'Neal, Editor-in-Chief,
BTS Life Member



Even though he's been dead for some 130 years, Phineas Taylor Barnum's observation that "there's a sucker born every minute" perhaps more than anything else he said or did has helped to make the 19th-century American showman immortal. I couldn't help but think of him when a friend recently sent me a news clipping about a settlement having been reached in a court

case involving the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and a New York-based entrepreneur selling antennas and amplifiers for off-air TV reception.

The long and short of the case is that the company, Wellco, began duping consumers some three years ago with its advertising for antennas that were no less than miraculous, offering "hundreds of channels, including premiums" for free, as well as pulling in stations up to 300 miles away.

As broadcast engineers, we know that such long-distance reception is limited to freak propagation occurrences, and you would think that most anyone with any business savvy (or even a small measure of common sense) would know that buying an overpriced cheaply made antenna would not gain you access to the likes of HBO and Showtime, but apparently enough people "bit" and were bilked to prompt FTC intervention. The FTC said that Wellco peddled more than 800,000 antennas and close to 274,000 amplifiers.

According to one source, the cost of a Wellco antenna averaged about \$30 and their amplifiers cost about the same. When you do the math that adds up to some pretty serious money.

The "bait" Wellco used to get the "suckers to bite" was based on elimination of expensive cable bills, and many of those that "bit" were the elderly, living on fixed incomes and looking for ways to stretch their meager resources.

Here's how the acting director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, Daniel Kaufman, summed things up:

"The defendants used every trick in the book to sell their antennas and amplifiers to people, including older adults, who wanted to save money on cable and satellite television channels."

He added:

"People should be able to trust companies' claims and not discover they were told lies after they buy."

Obviously, business was good at Wellco—while it lasted. Interestingly, although the FTC proposed a \$32 million judgement against the company, this was reduced to a mere \$650,000, as it seems the defendants in the case are now challenged to come up with much more.

So, what does this have to do with the broadcast engineering community and the stations that many of us work for?

Well, actually a lot.

Even though the pandemic has slowed things down during the past year, the ATSC 3.0 "Next-Gen TV" buildout is continuing, with the promise of bringing a new breed of television to the consumer, all for the price of an antenna. Madeleine Noland, president of the ATSC, noted in a presentation at the March virtual HPA tech conference (covered elsewhere in this issue of Broadcast Technology) that

ELECTRAD

**Just Plug In—
That's All, No
Trouble With
This Antenna**

NO trouble putting up an aerial. Just plug in on any electric light socket. No inconvenience or interference from neighbors' sets and aeri-als. Also smothers static and helps get distance. Uses no current. Perfectly safe to use. Tested and certified electrically. The simplest, neatest and most efficient on the market.

At all good radio stores, or they can easily get it for you. Price U. S. 75c., Canada \$1.10.

"Miracle" antenna products have been around practically ever since broadcasting was invented. (This ad appeared in a 1926 popular radio magazine.) Engineers know that such products are too good to be true. Unfortunately, many consumers don't and get bilked.