



General Manager's Report

Idahoptv.org

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QUOTE

"I have supported (Idaho Public Television) for many years, and the main reason I do, is that I believe they have some of the very best investigative reporting on television today...I would like to see PBS do more of these types of programs, our founding fathers knew how very important a free press (media) was to the survival of a true democracy, recently, we were reminded of the role the press played in the "Watergate break in," and the Nixon debacle, (and I like Nixon), but what he did was wrong!"

Bart Eben, Mountain Home, Idaho

U.S. HOUSE RESTORES \$100 MILLION TO PUBLIC BROADCASTING BUDGET, BUT . . .

On June 23, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to restore \$100 million to the public broadcasting appropriation. The week before, the House Appropriations Committee voted to cut public broadcasting funding by \$100 million, to \$300 million as well as eliminating funding for several other critical components including approximately \$130 million needed to replace the satellite system PBS and its producers use to distribute their programming nationally. Congress funded the current system eleven years ago and is set to expire in 2006. Congress funded the previous three national interconnection systems. The House also failed to restore funding to "Ready to Learn," which funds many well-known children's programs and outreach efforts.

The public broadcasting appropriations now moves to the US Senate in coming weeks. I've included a recent thought-provoking article from the Sacramento Bee at the bottom of this report.

We'll keep you posted on this critical issue facing public broadcasting.



For more Buzz, checkout idahoptv.org

-IdahoPTV is preparing material for the July 12 deadline for fiscal year 2007 budget requests required by the State Board of Education. IdahoPTV's budget request will conform to the "maintenance of current operation" (MCO) guidelines set-forth by the Division of Financial Management. The State Board of Education is encouraging its agencies to submit new program ideas (also called Line Items or Decision Units) for consideration. In light of the critical nature of IdahoPTV's Phase 2 (of 3) replacement capital request for studio equipment in Moscow and Pocatello, that will benefit our partnerships with the universities' communications programs, IdahoPTV will decline this opportunity. In addition, IdahoPTV will again request funds for the replacement of five rural translators and related maintenance equipment that was declined in the last legislative session.

-IdahoPTV will be covering the August Sun Valley Writers' Conference on August 19th and 20th. Producer Marcia Franklin is anticipating interviewing veteran journalist Robert MacNeil as well as other notable writers. The interviews will be broadcast this fall on Dialogue.

-On June 23 and 24, Peter Morrill participated with seventeen other PBS professionals in the initial session of a new strategic scenario planning project funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and America's Public Television Stations. This project was envisioned nearly two years ago at a meeting of the Organization for State Broadcast Executives (OSBE), which is composed of the statewide public television systems in the United States. Peter Morrill has served as Co-Chair of OSBE since 2003. This project is anticipated to be completed by early winter 2006.

IDAHOPTV RECOGNIZED

"Lewis and Clark Crossing the Centuries," received First Place in the Documentary category by the Society for Professional Journalists, Northwest Chapter.

IDAHOPTV SIGNALS UPDATE

IdahoPTV has received more than twenty telephone calls over the last three weeks from viewers in the Hagerman area complaining of a signal outage on the translator owned and operated by the Hagerman Translator District. I've attached a recent news article on the subject published in the Twin Falls Times News at the bottom of this GM Report.

IDAHOPTV REACHES OUT

-On June 21, Ron Pisaneschi was interviewed for an article by the Boise Weekly on the loaned artwork from local artists in IdahoPTV's conference room.

-On June 23, Peter Morrill was interviewed live on KBOI, 670 AM on the future of public television. The program was also live broadcast on KTRV-TV.

-On July 1, 2005, Peter Morrill spoke to the Orofino Rotary Club on public television past, present and future.

A TASTE OF IDAHO: A NEW OUTDOOR IDAHO SPECIAL

-Airs Thursday, July 7 at 8:00/7:00 p.m. MT/PT

-Repeats Sunday, July 10 at 7:00 p.m. MT/PT

On the menu: morel mushroom appetizer, gourmet salad greens, Kobe beef, huckleberries and ice wine. All these foods begin in the Idaho outdoors but are served to tables around the world.

From the forests, mountains, vineyards, fields and pastures come a rich array of distinctive foods that say Idaho. In this newest OUTDOOR IDAHO presentation, Chef John Mortimer puts the flavors together in a feast for the eyes and mouth that he serves to the people who produce the bounty.

Between courses, the film explores how each item reaches the table. "A menu of Idaho is full of the flavors of our state," says producer Jim Peck. "The beauty of our state is one that can strike all of our senses."

Sponsor: Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission & US Bancorp Foundation

DIALOGUE: THE FIRE NEXT TIME

-Airs Thursday, July 14, at 8:00 p.m. MT/PT
-Repeats Sunday, July 17, at 5:00/4:00 p.m. MT/PT

This Idaho Public Television special picks up where the July 14 at 7pm PBS P.O.V. documentary entitled "The Fire Next Time" on Montana's Flathead Valley "eco-wars" leaves off. Host Marcia Franklin speaks with experts who have worked with communities struggling with the same issues. They talk about how to get past the shouting and work on conciliation and collaboration.

Guests include Martin Goebel, president of Sustainable Northwest, a group that works with communities to develop healthy economies and ecosystems; and John McCarthy, policy director for Idaho Conservation League, which has been at the center of negotiating compromises over contentious environmental issues. The program also provides an update on the Flathead Valley area.

"A decade ago, Idaho was experiencing the same level of emotion that is depicted in "The Fire Next Time," says Franklin, a Peabody Award-winning producer/host, who has covered public policy issues in the West for more than 20 years. "But today, in our state, there are examples of compromise on these contentious issues that have become models of collaboration for the nation. We are highlighting those, as well as successful programs in other states."

This DIALOGUE special is also being broadcast in Montana, Wyoming, Salt Lake City, Colorado and north New Mexico in conjunction with the P.O.V. film.

DIALOGUE GETS TO THE ROOT OF FAMILY GENEALOGY

-Aired Thursday, June 23, at 8:30/7:30 p.m. MT/PT
-Repeated Sunday, June 26, at 5:30/4:30 p.m. MT/PT

On this episode of DIALOGUE, experts shared their tips for genealogical research. Host Joan Cartan-Hansen was joined by Steve Barrett of the Idaho State Historical Society and Cecelia Sachtjen with the Idaho Heartland Genealogists.

Cartan-Hansen, Barrett, and Sachtjen took calls and answered questions from viewers at 1-800-973-9800.

Serving as a member of the Idaho State Historical Society, Steve Barrett revealed the increasing popularity of exploring genealogical ties, describing the different records available in the Idaho area. Barrett was accompanied by Idaho Heartland Genealogists member, Cecelia Sachtjen, who conveyed her thoughts on the importance of the family tree in today's society, and included tips on how to use the internet to discover more about genealogy.

DIALOGUE EXAMINED THE FUTURE OF THE IDAHO NATIONAL LABORATORY

-Aired Thursday, June 16, at 8:30/7:30 pm MT/PT
-Repeated Sunday, June 19, at 5:30/4:30 MT/PT

On this episode of DIALOGUE, we looked at the future of The Idaho National Laboratory. Host Joan Cartan-Hansen interviewed new laboratory Director and Battelle Energy Alliance President John Grossenbacher.

Some audio distortions may have been experienced by viewers in southern Idaho due to weather caused technical problems.

Cartan-Hansen and Grossenbacher took calls from viewers at 1-800-973-9800.

Grossenbacher has served as Battelle's senior vice president for Nuclear Science and Technology, where his job focused on delivering complex science and technology projects to build joint nuclear science and technology programs among Battelle-managed laboratories and with collaborating organizations. Prior to joining Battelle, Grossenbacher worked with the U.S. Navy, reaching the rank of Vice Admiral and Commander of Naval Submarine Forces.

SACRAMENTO BEE, JUNE 28, 2005

By Rick Kushman

While we wait for the fights in Congress over funding public television to move to the Senate later this summer, let's step back and look at the broader picture.

Last week, the House restored \$100 million proposed to be cut from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting budget, which helps fund public TV and radio, and the usual vague and self-serving chatter dominated the news.

But we're going in the other direction. We're going to ask the basic questions: Should public television exist? And, if so, what should it be?

The first part is easy. Of course. Here's why:

Television is unique among all entertainment media, among all media, in our society. It is show business, and it's a public service (in theory, anyway, when it does news), and it's a commercial entity. All at once. Meanwhile, its commercial nature is different from everything else.

Movies, for instance, make money by getting us to watch them. CDs by getting us to buy them. Theater, books, even the high arts, make money - if they do at all - by drawing the public in.

Television makes money by selling our attention to advertisers. It needs first to attract us, then to have us in the right mood to be persuaded by commercials.

Radio is in the same ballpark, but with the exception of talk radio, it's just a middleman. Radio takes music someone else makes, packages it with chat and weather, and serves it up alongside ads.

Television businesses - the networks, the studios, the cable channels - make their own shows designed to attract the viewers they package and sell to advertisers.

Ignoring for the moment the increasingly complicated nature of the relationship between commercials and viewers (thank you, TiVo and video on demand), the point is that commercial TV shows, by their DNA, are designed to play either blandly in the middle (think network sitcoms) or to niches of people with strong feelings (on subjects ranging from science fiction to golf to politics).

In other words, if you don't offend viewers, advertisers can sell products on your shows. Or if you get viewers shouting anything from "Go Tiger" to "Right on," advertisers can sell them things that match up with their beliefs and affections.

So here's the problem. Commercial TV shows are designed with that in mind. Networks and studios have it ingrained in them to make shows that make advertisers happy, not shows that are challenging or, simply, great entertainment. Sometimes it happens anyway, but rarely. Instead, commercial TV stays in the middle or on the edges and away from the complicated, unpleasant or unpopular.

That's how PBS is different, and special. PBS does real science and detailed nature shows. It does Shakespeare and smart, non-violent mysteries, serious documentaries and children's shows unconnected to action figures or brightly colored cereal.

Some people argue that with cable, there's news everywhere and plenty of documentary channels. First off, have they seen cable news? If it isn't political hacks screaming, it's Scott Peterson and Michael Jackson and whatever will be the crime of this summer that gets legal hacks screaming.

Why? Because they are commercial news channels, they need to attract viewers so they can sell their attention to advertisers, too.

As for those documentary channels on cable, they, too, are more commercial than science. They're owned by the same companies that own CBS and ABC, and they have the same pressure to keep their financial picture growing, which means drawing more and more viewers.

So they turn to fluff and reality and pseudo-documentaries following bounty hunters or detectives or celebrities. The Learning Channel - it was going to teach us - changed its name to TLC to do what it now calls "Life. Unscripted." Which means wedding videos and makeovers. A&E used to stand for "Arts and Entertainment." Now they say it means "The Art of Entertainment" so they can run docudramas and schlock like "Dog the Bounty Hunter." Even Bravo, which still has its moments, is also doing "Battle of the Reality Show Stars."

That goes for the kids' channels too. Networks like Nickelodeon - which, to be fair, run bighearted shows like "SpongeBob SquarePants" and "Dora the Explorer" - are still driven by commercial needs. Those shows are designed to sell children food and toys, and would not stay on the air if they didn't do that well.

The only thing left, the place not doing cheesy, mean-spirited, finger-pointing reality, celebrity junk and headline-of-the-week movies is the network responding solely to the public. PBS.

That doesn't mean it's responding to every member of the public with every show, but the goal is to give America series, movies, documentaries, science and art it can't get anywhere else. Yes, we need it.

That brings up the second question: What should it be? No doubt every person has a different answer because everyone wants the shows they like and the subjects that matter to them. Me, too. So here's what I want.

I want it smart. Don't dumb down the science and round off the challenging ideas. Tell me about the string theory in physics, about the origins of matter, about the exploration of Mars. Show me the animals and minerals and vegetables that make up this planet, take me to places I can't go, tell me what is happening to this Earth that is our only home.

Take long, thorough looks at history. Tell me about our wars, our music, our games. And show us some high art. Tell me about paintings and dance and theater. Not necessarily every day, and, honestly, I'm not sure how much dance I need, but enough, so I'll understand it a little. I want to think about art because I want to understand the human soul. I want to think about being alive.

And here's what I want even more. I want it to challenge power. This is an elected democracy, and the people in office have an obligation to tell the rest of us what they're doing in our name. Left wing, right wing, bat wing, I don't care. Congress and the courts and the president should be challenged.

I'm not saying trash them, but ask questions. They should have answers. If they don't, then we know we have good questions.

And I want it to challenge powerful companies and utilities and individuals. If you buy the notion we should all live moral lives, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, then we can ask private industry and influential people to do that, too. Besides, they can take care of themselves.

And you know what all of that sounds like? It sounds like "Nova" and "Nature" and "Scientific American." It sounds like Ken Burns on "Baseball," "Jazz" and "The Civil War." It's a lot like "Frontline" and "California Connected," "American Masters" and "Independent Lens." It's "Mystery!" "Masterpiece Theatre," "The American Experience," "Sesame Street" and "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."

Public television is a civic trust. It's the last outpost in the calamitous media world not directly serving someone's quest for money or power or ego. It is far from perfect, but it's still a unique, profoundly valuable enterprise and we are all better off because it's there.

PBS ABSENT IN HAGERMAN VALLEY

Translator district plans fee increase to fix equipment problems

By Karin Kowalski, Times-News writer

June 30, 2005

HAGERMAN -- Glenn McCleary would like to tune in to Idaho Public Television for "Globe Trekker" or "The Lawrence Welk Show," but instead he gets a screen full of visual fuzz.

For about 1,377 households in the Hagerman area, the regular PBS signal has been out of commission for several weeks and it could be a long time in returning. Local public television is available through basic cable, but not through Direct Satellite TV or household antennas.

The culprit, a breakdown of the power supply to the channel's translator, is difficult to repair because the translator is at least 10 years old, said Jim Scott, the Hagerman Translator District's secretary and treasurer.

"We're just out of luck when it comes to getting replacement parts," Scott said.

The translator district manages antennas that provide local television service to a roughly triangular area from the Snake River to Hagerman and over to near Wendell and Gooding.

At the same time, the district is in a cash crunch and needs money to pay to convert to digital signals.

The district is looking for replacement parts for the PBS translator, but has yet to find any, Scott said. If a part doesn't turn up, viewers might have to wait until next year, when the district might upgrade its translators.

The district will need five new digital signal translators to keep providing PBS, ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC to the district as it has since 1975. He estimates that the new equipment will cost about \$63,000.

"We're kind of limping along," Scott said of the current setup.

The district will raise part of that money through fees of \$7 per user, which will be added to the tax rolls next year, Scott said. The fee was approved June 13 as part of a \$72,000 budget.

The board levied \$7.50 fees for many years, but fee collection lapsed in 2002, when the previous board's members resigned, Scott said.

As for the PBS problem, Scott said much of the district's money is tied up in certificates of deposit that won't mature until October and December, so purchases could take a while. In the meantime, Scott said the board will search for a temporary replacement and might borrow money.

For some viewers, the wait for PBS is frustrating.

"People donate to it and they don't get it," McCleary said. "We haven't had any public broadcasting in at least 30 days."

McCleary doesn't watch much television, but he makes an exception for PBS.

"I like it because there's something worth watching," he said.

Peter Morrill, Idaho Public Television's general manager, said his station doesn't have an extra translator to loan the Hagerman district, but it is trying to help.

Morrill said the station has had 19 phone calls, letters and e-mails about the problem.

"When the signal is down it reflects badly on public television," Morrill said.

Times-News writer Karin Kowalski can be reached at kkowalski@magicvalley.com or 735-3231.