

**The Pickle Barrel Review**



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTON  
MOUNTAIN DIGITAL RADIO ASSOCIATION

May 2026

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**Introduction**

Greetings to one and all, and once again welcome to the Pickle Barrel Review! As in the previous issues, you'll find this issue filled with the latest happenings not only of the W7NEO system, and the NE-OREGON room, but System Fusion, Allstar, along with GMRS, from not only our system, but our partners here in the Pacific Northwest as well. All that said, as always, we invite others to contribute with articles, or if your club or organization is having an event such as a tailgate, swap meet, VE testing, or whatever, you can list it here as well. The only thing we ask is that your contribution be nonpolitical (unless it's a

government action that directly affects Ham, or GMRS Radio), respectful of others (no personal attacks), and relatively family friendly. We realize your pretty darn proud of it, but we really don't want to hear about your new tattoo, let alone just where exactly it's located on your body. And just to be clear, we apologize, but unfortunately your brother-in-law's bachelor party still doesn't qualify as an upcoming event. So, all that said, feel free to reach in the barrel, grab yourself a pickle, pull up a chair and have ah sit for a spell as we discuss the latest happenings in Fusion, Allstar, GMRS, and Personal Radio Communications in general. And for the record, you can rest assured that every line of the PBR is a 100% AI free zone, and will remain so (As proof just look at all the mistakes!).

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### **A word from our sponsor**

#### **Bob's plumbing and outhouse relocation service:**

Whether you have a slow sink, or are up to your derriere in last night's dinner Bob is ready to bail you out of all your plumbing woes. Bob has been clearing other folk's pipes for years, with very reasonable rates which unlike that pork surprise from the night before, won't leave you feeling cleaned out.

That old water closet of yours reached its limits? Or perhaps you're just looking to change the home decor of your back yard. Bob is at your service, and can help you to pick that special place in your back forty to sit and enjoy the great outdoors while you do your business. Bob can also upgrade your favorite latrine to include a custom gun rack should the opportunity arise to fill your freezer before you've completed your paperwork.

So, call on Bob for all your plumbing and outhouse relocation needs, you'll be glad you did. And that's no..... well, you get the idea.

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## Garnet Ruth (Fannin) Olson – WRKY505 (SK)

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> our dear friend Garnet Olson succumbed to her eleven-year battle with cancer. She departed peacefully leaving behind friends and family that had come to know her as a truly uniquely inquisitive, wonderful, and adventurous Lady.

Garnet was born on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1959 on Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico. Born with an intense curiosity, combined with her father Harold and wife Ada (Funk) Fannin, being career Air Force, the next few years only served to further feed that curiosity. This also provided her with an appreciation for people and places few have the opportunity to experience over the course of their own lifetimes.

As Garnet grew into a young woman, along the way she developed a quick mind, and keen intellect, which eventually developed into an extraordinary personal sense of an acute attention to detail. Graduateing from Brigham Young University's School of Business, it was no surprise to anyone given her keen attention to detail that she became a Certified Public Accountant. Hiring on with a CPA firm, she found her niche while working in accounting, quickly becoming particularly skilled in tax preparation, where she would often share her skills by help family and friends. Garnet became well known for both her precision and determination—not even allowing a single penny to escape discrepancy in her books until it was fully accounted for.

With unyielding courage and confidence, along with a thirst for adventure, Garnet also attended a police academy, serving as a part-time reserve officer for many years to follow in Anchorage Alaska. If that wasn't enough evidence of her courage and self-confidence, Garnet was also an accomplished skydiver. Having earned numerous awards over the years for her many jumps, and demonstrations of skill and daring.

Garnet had a deep appreciation for all the natural beauty surrounding her, and would often go hiking, along with fishing, camping, picnicking, target shooting, and picking blueberries. In this she was often lost in silent meditation, and appreciation for all the delicate beauty, and the complexity of life in general surrounding her.

Further complimenting that, Garnet put her skill as a pianist on full display, while sharing her angelic voice in song.

In 1990 garnet and her then husband to be, Mike, met while serving on a home owners association together in Anchorage Alaska. While working together the two became close friends, which soon developed into a wonderfully close relationship, and eventually a marriage that would span over 35 years of inseparable companionship.

One of Mike's many talents included having been a certified rescue diver. Both Mike and Garnet were equally matched in their spirit for adventure. So, while vacationing in Hawaii Garnet became a certified diver as well. Once that was done, the two of them enjoyed many hours of diving adventures together.

Throughout her entire life Garnet carried with her a deep sense of family, and would often speak highly of her family. Typically, she would unselfishly help them with many of their own various challenges.

Mike and Garnet eventually moved to Pendleton, Oregon, where they built their home, which Garnet designed, with Mike designing the shop. Both of them, along with the company of their small dog Gigi, made a home filled with love, and companionship.

Garnet will be forever remembered for her intelligence, adventurous spirit, generosity, and unwavering faith, and perhaps most of all the deep love she unselfishly gave so freely to family and friends. Her life was one filled with service, strength, and grace, and her memory will always be treasured by all who knew her.

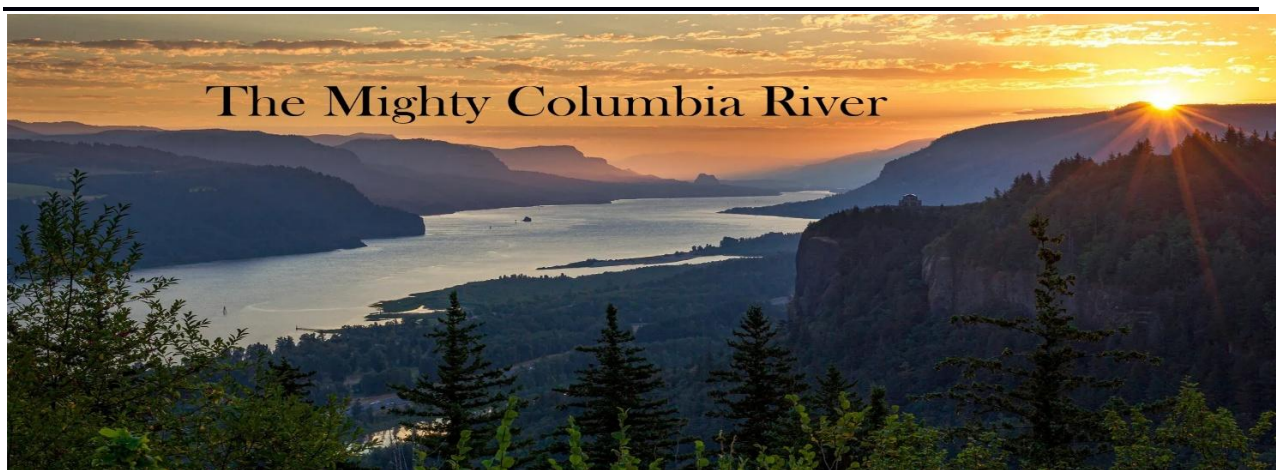
Most of us who came to know her by her welcome presents on the GMRS radio will remember Garnet for her jokes, which she would share with all of us during the weekly GMRS nets. On the day of her memorial service, she was honored over

one such net with a recording of her singing, and yes, a recording of her also telling a joke. I can tell you from my own experience that night, you would have been hard pressed to find a dry eye on the net with the word of her passing.

**Question:** What did the angel say to the gathering of friends and family upon Garnet's passing?

**Answer:** Grieve not for her passing, for she has lived a full life of generosity, and kindness, surrounded by a loving family. We will take good care of her from now on, for she has truly been a gift to all who knew her, and has earned a welcome place within our arms...

Lynn Wilson, K7LW/WRYP803



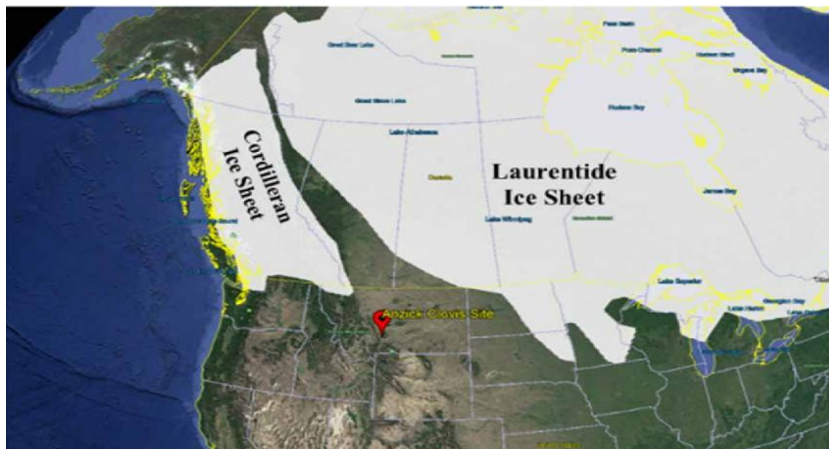
The other day I found myself on a ridge overlooking the Columbia River. From my vantage point high above the Columbia Gorge, I watched as the river flowed lazily towards the sea, while a barge tug loaded with goods bound for points east made its way up the river. Before I retired, I had spent many hours working on various sites which overlooked the mighty Columbia River. Since my retirement some ten years past now, I had forgotten just how magnificent the river really was. As I was sitting there taking in all the natural splendor of the river, I couldn't help but to think about the history of this natural wonder of the Pacific Northwest, and all the evidence left behind telling the story of just how it all came to be. So, with that thought in mind, let's take a little dive into the history of this great river, shall we?

The geological history of the Columbia River Gorge is characterized by several distinct developmental stages. The first of which took place about 40 to 17 million years ago, and began with Ancient Volcanism, which is a fancy scientific term for a whole lotta volcanos going off, a very long time ago. Before the Cascade mountains existed, the gorge as we know it today didn't even exist. Instead, the region was still relatively flat, and was defined by ancient, and equally violent volcanic activity. There were countless eruptions taking place during that time period, which intern resulted over time with the buildup of layer upon layer of thousands of feet of volcanic rock and ash. Eventually, this formed the underlying geologic layers of the area. Between 17 and 6 million years ago, there were massive fissures located throughout eastern Oregon and Washington, which erupted into colossal basalt floods, known as the Columbia River Basalt Group. These massive flows of liquid lava eventually made their way to the Pacific Ocean. The flows of lava also buried the landscape, forming the thick bedrock of today's modern gorge.

As the basalt flows eventually began to cool, the tremendous forces of an ever-shifting tectonic plate began pushing up what would eventually become the Cascade Mountain Range. This process of tectonic uplifting of the Cascade Range occurred simultaneously during the same time period as when the slow-moving magma upwelling was taking place beneath the surface of the Earth. It should be no surprise that as the mountains were rising up across the river's path, the Columbia River was refusing to give ground, and was intern acting like a giant saw, continuously eroding downward all while the mountains were being pushed upward by tectonic uplift. The end result was the carving of a deep canyon rather than the river having been diverted. This display of the rivers refusal to give ground is evident from the geological signs that were left behind from the ancient tug of war which can be seen throughout the Columbia Gorge.

About 15,000 to 13,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age, there was a massive ice lobe of the Cordilleran Ice Sheet, which in itself was a major sheet of ice covering a large portion of Western North America, much of present-day Canada, and the Pacific Northwest. During this time period part of that mass of ice included the Mazula Ice Dam, which blocked the Clark Fork River in northern Idaho, resulting in an equally massive glacial lake. Eventually, the immense pressure of the water behind the Mazula Ice Dam resulted in its destruction, releasing the cataclysmic

Missoula Floods. These torrential floods surged across eastern Washington at speeds in excess of 60 mph, helping to further carve out the Columbia River Gorge, while inundating parts of Oregon. In all, geologists studying the Columbia River Gorge, believe there were over 40 cataclysmic floods which flowed from the northern ice pack, surging toward the Pacific Ocean, while funneling through the Columbia River Gorge. These walls of water were estimated to be hundreds of feet high, scouring the canyon walls, widening the gorge, and over time creating the region's famous cascading waterfalls by carving out the hanging valleys we all know today.



*The Cordilleran Ice Sheet (Left), stretched from Alaska all the way down to the Pacific Northwest.*

Recent Landslides - by “recent” I mean going by geological standards, beginning about 500 years ago all the way to present day - have created the steep, unstable cliffs we see today. These were created by intense carving and flooding, leading to massive landslides. The most famous of these is the Bonneville Landslide, or more commonly referred to as the "Bridge of the Gods." This was the result of a massive collapse taking place roughly 500 years ago. Originally this was created when Table Mountain slid into the river, creating a temporary dam that backed up water for miles. True to form, the river eventually eroded through the blockage, thereby re-establishing its current path. To this very day, the Gorge remains an ongoing geologically active area, which continues to be shaped by continuous tectonic uplift, magmatic activity, and localized landslides.

The Columbia River's history includes thousands of years of Indigenous stewardship. The Columbia River has been the cultural and economic lifeblood of numerous Indigenous nations. These tribes developed a thriving regional economy based on salmon and extensive trade networks, centering around major gathering places like Celilo Falls. Long before Euro-American contact, the Columbia River was known by various Indigenous names, including *Wimahl* (Upper Chinook) and *Nch'i-Wàna* (Sahaptin), both translating to "The Big River." The river's immense salmon runs served as a foundational resource comparable to the Buffalo for Plains tribes, providing sustenance for tribes including the Chinook, Yakama, Umatilla, Nez Perce, and Warm Springs. Additionally drawing tribes from as far away as the Great Plains to trade salmon, shells, and obsidian. The river was more than just a food source; it was a continental highway. Major geological features like Celilo Falls and The Dalles served as massive annual trading hubs where thousands of people congregated. Plateau and Coastal tribes engaged in bustling commerce, trading dried salmon, shells, and whale bone for buffalo robes, horses, and roots. This active exchange led to the development of Chinook Wawa (Chinook Jargon), a vital trade language combining Indigenous, French, and English words.



*Celilo Falls, circa 1950's.*

When Euro-American explorers and settlers arrived, they brought with them diseases that devastated indigenous populations. As pressure for land increased, the U.S. government forced regional tribes to sign various treaties in 1855. The Umatilla, Yakama, Nez Perce, and Warm Springs tribes ceded millions of acres of their traditional homelands to the U.S. government. In exchange, they reserved the right to hunt, gather, and fish at all of their "usual and accustomed places."

A tragic turning point in Columbia River Indigenous history occurred in 1957 when the construction of the Dalles Dam flooded Celilo Falls. This tragic inundation destroyed one of North America's oldest continuously inhabited sites, thereby erasing a vital center of cultural and spiritual identity for the many tribes who had met there for thousands of years. Nowadays, despite other devastating historical impacts and further federal dam construction, river tribes still continue their traditional ways of life. Despite these losses, Tribal Nations have shown immense resilience. They continue to fight for the restoration of river ecosystems, the protection of salmon populations, and the upholding of their reserved treaty rights through organizations like the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC).

European discovery spawned by fur trade began around the 1770's thru the 1840's. But in the early 1800's a group of fur traders lead by a Canadian Welch surveyor named David Thomas became the first white fur traders to explore the area starting where the river began in northern British Columbia. Tasked with finding the beginning of the river, and mapping it to its headwaters, they established a trading post named Cotia, not far from what today is Invermere B.C. Their original task was to establish fur trading routes along the Columabia River ahead of the Lewis and Clarke expedition.

At one point along their travels, they came across some tracks in the snow looking as though they had been made by a large animal. The local indigenous peoples described an elephant like creature measuring approximately eighteen feet tall, that typically slept standing up while leaning on trees. Sightings such as this were reported in British Columbia all the way up until the early 1900's, suggesting that Wooly Mammoths may have lived in the area up until then.



*Wooly Mammoth, at the Royal Victoria Museum, British Columbia.*

Eventually, Thomas and his crew managed to make it to the Pacific Ocean where the Columbia River emptied into the sea. Along the way they successfully surveyed and mapped the entire river.

During the late 1700's, and early 1800's western interest in the river were initially driven by the search for a "Northwest Passage." This obsession carried with it, many failed attempts. These failed attempts included a few expeditions that were never heard from again in their search for a shorter trade route to Asian.

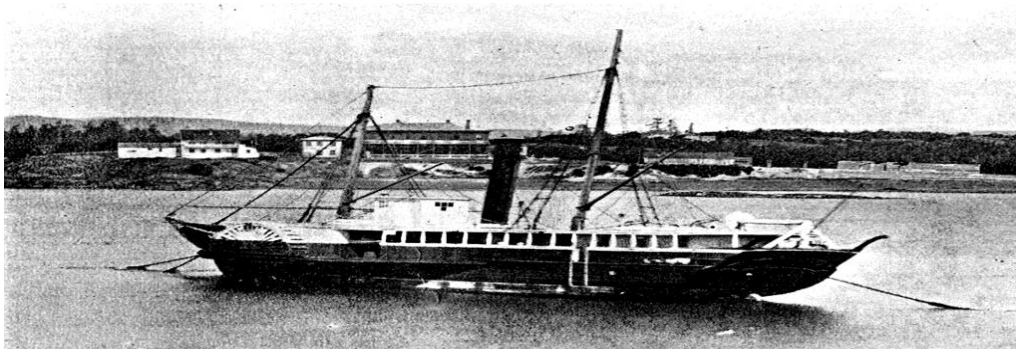


*The map shows all ship tracks 1990–2018, and shipping routes along the Northwest Passage.*

It was also during this time, that in 1792, the river gained its English name, when American Captain Robert Gray crossed the treacherous Columbia Bar and named the river after his ship, the *Columbia Rediviva*. A few years later in 1805, the Lewis and Clark Expedition managed to reach the river overland, spending a rain-soaked winter at Fort Clatsop near the river's mouth.

Established in 1824-1825, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) set up shop at Fort Vancouver. This served as the primary fur trading depot and administrative headquarters for the Columbia District, spanning from Alaska to California. Under Dr. John McLoughlin, it became a key economic center for agriculture and trade, using the river as a major transportation artery for the global fur trade. The site is now a national historic site in Vancouver, WA, with a reconstructed fort.

Steamboats, have long since been a symbol of the Mississippi river, but they have also had a long history in the Pacific Northwest, beginning with the appearance of the *Beaver*, which arrived in Oregon City, Oregon, in 1836. Commercial boat traffic on the Columbia River above Portland at one point was restricted by the presence of the Cascades Rapids. A private, mule-drawn portage railway was built there in 1850, allowing boats to run above and below that point. The Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company, which already owned a near-monopoly of local marine traffic, completed a rail line through the Columbia River Gorge in 1882. The OR&N soon moved its boats off that section of the Columbia River and transferred the carriage of both passengers and freight to its railway. Nevertheless, shippers opposing the OR&N grip on the regional economy eventually convinced Congress to build a canal and locks at the Cascades. Work was begun there in 1893 and completed three years later. Although steamboats remained active on the Middle Columbia River for many years, by 1916, the railroad and Columbia River Highway were forcing their demise. So, in 1947 the sole surviving steamboat made its last run through the Columbia River Gorge.



*SS Beaver, the first Steamship in Pacific Northwest, operating on the Columbia River.*

During the early days of railroad construction along the Columbia River, the fierce rivalry between the two major railroads, came to be known as the “The Deschutes River Railroad War.” Culminating in the early 1900s when Union Pacific (led by Edward Harriman) and the Great Northern/Northern Pacific (led by James J. Hill) fought for control over the Deschutes River canyon. Both companies raced to complete competing tracks simultaneously up the canyon to tap into the lucrative timber and agricultural markets of Central Oregon, ultimately leading to a truce and a joint-usage agreement. At one point the rivalry to be the first to complete

their line became so intense that rival builders would float barges loaded with explosives across the river in order to destroy the others railroad construction. The Columbia River Gorge was recognized early on as a vital gateway to the Pacific Northwest's resources during the 19th century. Henry Villard's Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (OR&N) laid the foundation for the region's rail expansion, eventually falling under the control of the Union Pacific railroad. Today, the Columbia River Gorge route remains one of the busiest and most scenic freight corridors in the western United States. Although you'll find that the days of floating barges laden with explosives back and forth across the Columbia have long since ceased. However, railroad competition on the Columbia River is still defined by a fierce transcontinental rivalry between Union Pacific and BNSF Railway. These two giants still operate parallel, high-capacity lines on opposite sides of the Columbia River Gorge, moving massive volumes of agricultural products, timber, crude oil, and intermodal freight between the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest.



*The first Union Pacific railroad train arriving in Portland OR. on November 25, 1884.*

Maryhill Museum of Art founder Sam Hill was one of the Pacific Northwest's foremost early advocates for modern roads. In his zeal, he traveled around Washington giving slide-illustrated lectures about the value of good roads. In 1905 Hill lobbied the state legislature and was instrumental in prompting the creation of the Washington State Highways Department. By 1909, Hill had realized that sceptics needed to actually see the types of roads that he was promoting. So, under the supervision of engineer Samuel Lancaster, Hill then spent three years and \$100,000 of his own money building ten miles of experimental roads on his

Maryhill estate. The cornerstones of his plan were two north-south paved roads, one on the western side of the Cascade Mountains and another on their eastern flank. The western road—The Pacific Highway—roughly corresponded with today’s Interstate 5 and U.S. Route 99. These two arterials were to be connected by a road running east to west along the Columbia River from Vancouver, Washington, to the Tri-Cities—The North Bank Highway. Washington State Route 14 now follows this very same route. Hill attended the First International Road Congress in Paris in 1908 with Lancaster, and other Pacific Northwest good roads advocates. A subsequent tour of Western Europe allowed them to see current continental road-building techniques. Roads built in park-like settings in the Rhine River Valley and elsewhere inspired Hill to redouble his efforts to build a highway along the Columbia River. Unable to convince Washington legislators to fund a highway through the Columbia River Gorge, Hill turned to their Oregon counterparts. In February 1913, then Oregon Governor Oswald West, numerous lawmakers, and a press corps—a total of 88 people in all—traveled by train to Maryhill to inspect Lancaster’s experimental roads. The legislators returned to Salem and established the largely unfunded Oregon State Highway Commission. The state’s lack of financial support passed the responsibility for actual roadbuilding onto the counties. Hill continued cultivating support for his east-west highway and his effort coincided with a groundswell of interest among Portland’s business elite. In August 1913, the Multnomah County Commissioners agreed to begin construction of an automobile route on the south bank of the Columbia River, something that Hill envisioned as “a great highway so that the world can realize the magnificence and grandeur of the Columbia River Gorge.” Eventually his vision became I-84 on the Oregon side, and HWY-14 on the Washington side.



*Columbia Gorge Highway, now I-84.*

Today, the Columbia River serves as a major trade route moving vast amounts of goods by rail, and barge throughout the Pacific Northwest, and beyond.



*One of many river barges transporting various goods up and down the Columbia River daily.*

Along with the commerce traffic, the river serves as a center for recreation, sport fishing, and even has a stern wheeler for those that are seeking a relaxing journey, or perhaps just a quiet evening dinner cruise on the river. Whatever your pleasure, you can take pride in this historic, and mighty icon of the Pacific Northwest.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

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## **Legal Corner**



In conversations with other GMRS operators, the question of the linking of GMRS repeaters is still ongoing. With various groups advocating for the reform of the FCC ruling prohibiting GMRS repeaters from being linked.

In 2024 the FCC came out with a ruling against the linking of GMRS repeaters. What followed was FCC enforcement actions and guidance, which led to major large linked networks, such as myGMRS, and others being immediately shut down, and the linking infrastructure dismantled. Efforts to change the FCC ruling on the linking of General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS), has remained ongoing. However, to date, repeater linking has remained stalled. The regulatory landscape and current community efforts involve have produced the following developments:

IAW FCC rule § 95.1733, and § 95.1749, makes it clear that the current regulatory stance of the FCC still prohibits the linking of GMRS repeaters over the internet, or other public networks (Voice over IP) in order to extend the repeater systems range. Under these rules, repeater interconnections are permitted exclusively for remote base station control only, and not for carrying user voice communications over a wide geographic area.

Enforcement, and Network Shutdowns in August 2024, resulted in the FCC issuing guidance and enforcement actions reinforcing this prohibition. This forced major GMRS operators—such as the myGMRS GMRS repeater network—to officially shut down their linked systems in order to be able to maintain compliance.

The amateur, and GMRS radio communities have actively pushed back against these restrictions. With operators arguing that linked repeaters are modernized communication tools that should be explicitly allowed under Part 95. Community advocates have discussed forming coalitions to file formal petitions for rulemaking or rule waivers with the FCC to request a carve-out or modernization of linking policies.

To date, there has been no formal, enacted rule change by the FCC allowing repeater linking. The commission maintains that linking leads to spectrum monopolization and increased interference. While community groups continue to voice their concerns that it will be a benefit in accommodating emergency communications, and the communities in general, while at the same time

discussing formal petitioning. However, the overturning of the FCC's enforcement stance still remains an uphill battle.

Currently, groups advocating for the reform of FCC Part 95 to allow the linking of General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) repeaters, particularly over the internet, largely consist of grassroots users, online community petitioners, and some emergency services proponents.

To sum it all up, unfortunately for now, under FCC section 47, parts § 95.1733, and § 95.1749, the interconnecting of GMRS repeaters in order to extend the systems range across large geographic areas still remains strictly prohibited. Stations may not be connected to the public switched telephone network or other networks (such as the Internet) in order to carry communication signals (voice and data). However, internet/phone networks can be used for remote repeater control. We'll continue to keep an eye on this as things (hopefully) progress.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW/WRYP503

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## **Radio Nostalgia**



## Sears – Roebuck, origins of the broadcast station *WLS*, “The World’s Largest Store.”

Back in the 1920’s, broadcast radio stations weren’t nearly as regulated as they are today. Stations not only had to share specific broadcast frequencies, but time slots as well. Many times, this was done – begrudgingly - with competing radio stations. On top of that, they could pretty much just make up their own call letters. Some examples of that were; *KDKA*, of Pittsburgh, PA that first went on the air starting on Nov 2, 1920, and has since been credited as having been the first officially licensed commercial station in the U.S. *8ZZ* was the temporary call used by *KDKA* when it gained notoriety for broadcasting the presidential election results of 1920 between Warren G. Harding, and James M. Cox. Soon to follow was *WHA* in Madison, WI. which was originally the 9XM experimental station. With others quickly following as various corporations of the time quickly saw the new broadcast radio as a means with which to better reach their audiences, and overall customer base.

I remember my grand parents telling me stories of having ran a wire from their old Model A Ford in order to power the radio so they could listen to the Grand Ole Opry. The Grand Ole Opry radio show began on November 28, 1925, as the "*WSM Barn Dance*" on *WSM* Radio in Nashville, Tennessee. The inaugural broadcast featured 77-year-old fiddler Uncle Jimmy Thompson, and was created and having been hosted by radio pioneer George D. Hay. The National Life and Accident Insurance Company originally launched *WSM* ("*We Shield Millions*") in 1925 as a marketing tool. Seeking to cater to southern audiences, they hired Hay—who had previously hosted a similar show in Chicago called the *National Barn Dance*—to create a Nashville equivalent. The Opry quickly became a massive hit. Thanks to a powerful 50,000-watt transmitter added in 1932, *WSM*'s signal could be heard across much of the United States, cementing the show as a national institution. To this day The Grand Ole Opry holds the record as the longest-running radio broadcast in American history.

In the 1920’s American Midwest, Sears-Roebuck and Company had flirted with the new broadcast medium by buying time on various local radio stations

throughout the Midwest in order to address, and target the lucrative farming market of the time. By the winter of 1923, it was apparent to Sears that they needed their own broadcast outlet to continue their relationship with the farmers. As a result, the company started the Sears-Roebuck Agricultural Foundation, which was initially designed to be a clearinghouse for information and assistance through its Farm and Home Service Departments. At the time, midwestern farmers had been particularly hard hit with the sudden economic deflation of 1920-21 following WWI.

At the time, Sears president Julius Rosenwald approved a plan to construct their own radio station. That was all it took, and once getting the green light, Sears was then anxious to get on the air. For three weeks prior to the completion of their own station, the foundation bought airtime for a noontime farm program beginning on March 21, 1924, with its first assigned call letters *WBBX*. Originally broadcasting from the studios of *WMAQ* Radio, which was a Chicago radio station transmitting on 670 AM, that had first began broadcasting in 1923.

The original call letters, *WES* (for “*World's Economy Store*”) radio broadcast station, first began broadcasting on April 9, 1924 from its own studios in Chicago, Illinois. The small studio was located next to the Agricultural Foundation offices on the 11th floor of the 14 story Sears-Roebuck tower. The company's drafting room served as a control room, sending the signal to the transmitter site, located in Crete, IL, located roughly 30 miles south of downtown Chicago, and 6 miles from the Indiana border. The initial night of testing featured singer Grace Wilson and the musical comedy team of Big Ford and Little Glenn. Ford Rush was actually the first employee of the new Sears station, and was also its first announcer. Glenn Rowell soon became Studio Director, and also headed up the station's music department. Over the next two evenings (April 10 & 11) Sears aired more test programs. The Sears switchboards reportedly "lit up like Christmas trees" with listeners checking in after hearing the broadcasts.

On April 9, 1924 Sears signed on the air with the new 500-watt *WLS* — call letters that represented Sears, the “*World's Largest Store*” — signed on the air for the first time with a train whistle, from a studio in Chicago on the 11th floor of the Sears-Roebuck tower. It soon moved to the Sherman House Hotel for its inaugural

broadcast on April 12, 1924, switching from *WES*, to *WLS*. Curtis D. Peck, a radio operator at the original *WES* station, made the change to its new name, *WLS*, after several days of transmission. The new callsign was broadcast during a formal dedication shortly after 6:00 PM that evening. That evening Edgar Bill - who was the director and program manager of the new station - stepped up to the microphone and exclaimed "Here ye, here ye, here ye! *WLS*, the Sears-Roebuck station is on the air!" With those words, station *WLS* was off and running!



*Original WLS staff, 1920.*

This was the dawning of the era of radio, and Sears knew they could get in on the ground floor by not only selling radios, but providing programming and farm service as well. As stated in the 1925 Sears Catalogue; "*WLS was conceived in your interests, is operated in your behalf and is dedicated to your service. It is your station.*" Broadcasting several hours a day, the station's slogan soon became; "*Bringing The World To The Farm.*"



Sears Images courtesy of Sears Holdings, Inc.

*Original ads promoting the Sears-Roebuck Agricultural Foundation.*

*WLS* soon became a national powerhouse, which covered much of the Eastern Seaboard, along with the Midwest. Their broadcast format included a diverse variety of programming including its own Barn Dance. Soon the station was broadcasting everything from children's shows, to a large variety of music, informational programming, such as various agricultural topics, and of course, comedy.



*“Hayloft,” the original Barn Dance entertainers.*

After a frequency shuffle in autumn of 1928, *WLS* changed from 3/7 to 5/7 time at 870 kHz. A court order permitted *WENR*, then known as "The Voice of Service in Chicago" to share equal on-air time with *WLS*. The station, owned by Great Lakes Broadcasting Company, signed on in March, 1925. Broadcasting mainly from the Civic Opera House, *WENR* appealed to a more urban audience, featuring a slightly different format such as the “Edison Symphony Orchestra,” and the “Home Services Show,” sponsored by *Peoples Gas Light & Coke Company*.

With the time-sharing agreement, the two stations would squabble back and forth for the next 26 years. *WENR* was eventually acquired by NBC in 1931 and became, along with *WLS*, the Chicago outlets for the Blue Network. By 1943, “NBC Blue” became the “American Broadcasting Company (ABC),” and the two stations merged in 1954.

Founded in 1892 by Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck, Sears, Roebuck & Co. revolutionized American retail, starting as a mail-order watch business before becoming the nation's largest retailer. It dominated the early 20th century with its

"Wish Book" catalog and later opened retail stores in 1925. It quickly began shaping suburban commerce with brands such as Kenmore, and Craftsman. Unfortunately, the company failed to adapt to the rise of specialized retailers, and competitors such as Walmart. After selling off divisions like Allstate and Discover Card, and ending its famous catalog in 1993, Sears merged with Kmart in 2005 to form Sears Holdings Corporation. However, by 2024 Sears had been reduced to just a few hundred stores, and after having experienced numerous bankruptcies beginning in the 1980's, and 90's, and finally in 2025. This ended the once great "Worlds Largest Store" and the legacy they had created.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

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## **Repeater Updates**



*Weston Mt site, the early days before the tower.*

This month has been filled mainly with de-winterizing the repeater sites, and getting them ready for summer.

The Cabbage Hill site was looking great, as usual. The only thing that really needed to be done was to sweep out all the dead wasps. The Weston Mt site on the other hand had been experiencing some issues with the GMRS repeater. It was noted that the duplexers were out of tune, so those were re-tuned. But I'm still not completely satisfied with the performance of the GMRS repeater itself. We have another UHF repeater in the inventory that will work, so although I'm not ready to replace the existing repeater just yet, it may just come down to that. Everything else looked great.

We're still planning some upgrades, and possible additions to the system, so stay tuned!

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

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## **Ham Radio Nostalgia**



### **Johnson Viking II transmitter**

Last month I mentioned the veritable Johnson Viking II transmitter, as having been one of the earliest transmitters I was introduced to as a young Ham operator. Although not the same transmitter I tapped out a CQ on looking for my first contact as a Ham, I still have one of these beauties in my shack as a prize among my classic collection of "Boat Anchors."

Introduced in 1952 by the E.F. Johnson Company, the Viking II has since become a legendary classic amateur radio transmitter. Famous for its rugged "Battleship"

construction, it quickly became a staple of 1950s ham radio, and Civil Defense operations.

Highly regarded for its robust construction, often featuring a copper-plated interior, earning it the reputation as the "1957 Chevy" of AM transmitters. Primarily covering 160 meters through 10 meters, the coverage also included 11 meters back in the days when 11 meters was still a Ham Band prior to Citizen Band taking over. The Viking II was much sought after in its day, and is still a true gem for the collector. With a pair of 6146's as part of the final amplifier section, coupled with a pair of 807's for high-level plate modulation, it's easy to see why it was so popular. The Viking II boasted an impressive output signal for its time of 135 watts on AM, and a whopping 180 watts on CW. An external VFO (often the Johnson Viking Model 240-122) was required for frequency agility (the one I first operated had a HeathKit external VFO).



*Johnson Viking Model 240-122 VFO.*

Like most transmitters of its era, the Johnson Viking II was sold by electronics distributors as either a complete, factory-wired unit, or as a more affordable kit for the builder to assemble at home. Today, the Viking II remains highly prized among vintage amateur radio operators, and restorers. Its excellent audio quality, classic aesthetic, and enduring reliability make it a favorite for "AM vintage" on-air roundtables. Making the Viking II still an excellent choice for a vintage AM Ham station due to its great audio and classic design.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

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## **VE Testing**

There is no VE testing going on that we're aware of, but if you check the Links section of our website, there may be information on some of our friend's websites as to where you might find a test session going on near you.

But in the meantime, if you do have a regular test session taking place, feel free to let us know, and we'll post it here in the next issue of the Pickle Barrel Review.

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## **The End**

Well, that's about it for this edition of the Pickle Barrel Review, with apologies for the late post. There was a lot of last-minute happenings that took place. Nonetheless, I hope you enjoyed it, even though it was a little late in getting out. So, in the meantime, we'll still continue to work hard to keep each and every issue as informative, fun, and at least as interesting as the previous issues.

So, until next time, we here at the WMDRA (W7NEO) hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather of spring, and getting out working on those antenna projects you've been thinking about all winter.

As always, in the meantime, feel free to reach in the barrel and grab another pickle. There's plenty to go around, along with plenty more great conversation, and maybe even a touch of rhetoric here and there!

73!

Weston Mountain Digital Radio Association,  
W7NEO

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*"Old men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die." - Herbert C. Hoover*

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One final request...



*On May 25th, please take a moment to remember those who pledged a solemn oath, not to a king, but to our nations Constitution. In doing so, some of whom bravely made the ultimate sacrifice for the preservation of our nations Democracy, and those freedoms guaranteed us by that Constitution. They did this out of the strong belief that we as a nation all deserve the right to live free from tyranny, and fascism. Never take our Democracy, nor our Constitutional Freedoms for granted. Also, never forget just how fragile both are, and that every one of us needs to remain forever vigilant against those who would seek to take all that away. Honor those that so unselfishly sacrificed their lives for what they believed in, the preservation of both our Freedoms, and our Democracy...*

*Thank you to those Veterans both past and present who have served with honor and distinction while protecting our freedoms.*

*Lynn Wilson, MSgt USAF (RET)*