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Inspiring Interpretation

Herbert Hoover History a Headliner on Heartland Highway

WEST BRANCH, IA: What former president grew up in a family of five and lived in an Iowa house smaller than a two-stall garage? Hint: He was also the first president to be born west of the Mississippi and was a mining engineer by trade.

Yes, it was none other than Herbert Hoover himself, who would be humbled to hear how the National Park Service is honoring him with an Information Radio Station (TIS) dedicated to his legacy. The radio service on 690 kHz is available to motorists whizzing along on Interstate 80 in Eastern Iowa as they approach Hoover's historic hometown – West Branch, Iowa.

Recent upgrades (<http://www.theradiosource.com/products/audio-control-ip76.htm>) have allowed the Hoover Presidential Foundation to take over the production of the radio programming, and the result is one of the best-sounding interpretive Information Stations heard anywhere. The broadcast segments include a mix of professionally recorded interpretive narration, details on how to visit, a schedule of events and live-sounding interviews with visitors who share their opinions about the site on the air. (Listen at this link: [https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/110628760/Sept 12 Full read 4x.MP3](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/110628760/Sept12%20Full%20read%204x.MP3).)

The Foundation's Brad Reiners told The Source that the 22-minute repeating broadcast includes multiple voices and interviews to be more engaging – and so the broadcast will sound more like a live radio program rather than a recorded narration.

General information about visitation is repeated four times during the cycle, so that motorists who are listening for just a minute or two will always hear the key facts, such as directions, offerings and hours. Interviews and sound bites are sprinkled in to keep the interest level high.

"We hope that people who listen but don't stop the first time they pass us will come by on their return trip across I-80," states Reiners. The signal range is such that travelers moving between Davenport and Des Moines at 70 miles per hour can listen for 10-15 minutes, as they go by.

Reiners knows that many first-time visitors listen before they arrive. "Today, for example, I noticed 16 cars in the parking lot and 14 of them were from out of state. The only place we advertise is at interstate welcome centers [brochures] and the radio station, so we suspect the impact from the radio message is high."

To get a better clue, the Park Service sometimes runs radio messages with "secret words" and asks visitors to report them to the park staff when they arrive, so they can track relative listening levels. "We also run interviews with staff too," comments Reiners, "which is a great way to get Hoover National Historic Site onsite personnel invested in the station."

Creating an engaging program such as Herbert Hoover NHS's can also be contracted out. Information Station Specialists, the Historic Site's equipment provider, offers a service named "InfoRadio Format" (<http://www.theradiosource.com/services/recording.htm>) in which multi-voice programs of this type are written, produced and delivered to operators to air on stations. A number of National Park Service parks and historic sites utilize the service.

Pilot Patter Proves Particularly Popular

Michigan Airport Lets Motorists Listen to Pilot/Tower Communications over Car Radios

GRAND RAPIDS, MI: Want to watch flights land, take off and ...talk? Gerald R. Ford Airport near Grand Rapids makes that possible for visitors who park their cars in a designated "Viewing Park" located just off the airport's 10,000-foot east-west runway. With the help of a local township foundation, the airport has provided a way for patrons to listen in on pilot-ground conversations in real-time over vehicle radios.

It's "unmatched entertainment for aviation buffs," according to the Airport's website. To say the viewing area is popular is an understatement. It's 57 parking spaces are often full of "bird watchers." There are nine permanent picnic tables, litter barrels and a portable restroom. Now it provides ongoing "commentary" to the aerial action that consists of the pilot and tower conversations as planes approach and depart.

Watching and listening to planes truly is entertaining, as evidenced by various YouTube posts (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S7f9xZ14Ig>) about visits to the Park.

The limited-area broadcast is managed by an InfOspot transmitter (<http://www.theradiosource.com/products/infospot.htm>), driven by the output of an airport-provided scanner set to monitor air navigation frequencies. FCC rules allow the use of the 1650 AM broadcast channel without the requirement of a license, due to the transmitter's output power, which is limited to 100 milliwatts. The InfOspot system delivers the signal to the viewing area and also to motorists on nearby streets who are "on approach" within a half-mile.

Vivid Visual Visitor Info

New Portable LED Message Sign Available Soon

ZEELAND, MI: How about a low-cost, highly flexible way to get information to patrons and visitors at your venue quickly in special situations? "Closed due to weather"; "Parking Available – Turn Right"; "New Hours: 8AM to 6PM"...etc.

This Fall, look for the introduction of the LIGHTNING LED Message Sign (<http://www.theRADIOsource.com/products/sign-lightning.htm>) by Information Station Specialists to fill the need.

Until now it required the rental of a large trailer-mounted Portable Changeable Message Sign (PCMS) to get visual messages to the public quickly. But the price to rent or buy a PCMS has driven the design of a more flexible all-weather alternative that can inform motorists and pedestrians at entry gates, parking areas, traffic lines due to construction, incidents and even at indoor locations.

The LIGHTNING LED Message Sign can have rechargeable batteries or a vehicle light adapter input, so it can be set up and operated quickly where there is no power available. Or it can be plugged into land power or a generator for longer-term applications.

Programming is through a wireless controller. It can hold hundreds of pre-programmed messages for instant display. The product is small enough to stow in the trunk of a car, making it ideal for public safety applications.

Options allow the sign to be mounted securely on a stand, vehicle hitch, wall or utility pole and remotely operated across a LAN/WAN or wireless modem.

Early adopters have been in the health community, preparing for drive-thru inoculation clinics. The manufacturer expects that virtually any public agency or private venue can similarly benefit. +