

Gannett/Multimedia gets FCC green light

Commission grants waivers as part of \$1.7 billion buy

By Chris McConnell

The FCC last week gave the nod to another multibillion-dollar media merger.

Seven days after approving Westinghouse's \$5.4 billion acquisition of CBS, the commission approved Gannett's \$1.7 billion purchase of Multimedia Inc. Gannett, which also is assuming about \$539 million in long-term debt as part of the deal, said it expected the merger to close today (Dec. 4). After the deal's close, Gannett will own 15 television stations covering 14% of the country.

The FCC also granted a series of multiple-ownership waivers to allow for the merger. "Facilitating such a multiple-station transaction by temporary waiver of our multiple-ownership rules will 'promote commerce [and] encourage investment in the broadcasting industry,'" the commission said, citing language from its grant of the Westinghouse waivers.

Specifically, the commission gave Gannett a 12-month waiver of national TV ownership limits to allow the company to own 15 stations. Gannett cited a pending FCC proposal to raise the national ownership limits in requesting the waiver, but also told the commission it plans to divest

itself of WMAZ-TV Macon, Ga., WLWT(TV) Cincinnati and KOCO-TV Oklahoma City. The commission granted the waiver based on Gannett's pledge to sell the three stations, adding that the company cannot rely on the pending ownership proposal to support the waiver request.

The commission also granted 12-month waivers to allow Gannett to temporarily own TV stations in Atlanta and Macon, and to hold a radio-TV combination in Macon. Additional 12-month waivers were granted to allow Gannett to own a TV-newspaper combination in Cincinnati and a TV-cable combination in Oklahoma City. ■

Merger or not, Citicasters buys three OmniAmerica stations

By Donna Pettrozzello

Two weeks after calling off its merger with OmniAmerica Communications, Citicasters Inc. last Friday said it will buy OmniAmerica's WLOH(AM)-WHOK(FM) Lancaster/Columbus, Ohio, and WLLD(FM) Upper Arlington/Columbus for \$24 million.

Citicasters CFO Greg Thomas says

the Columbus market "was the one market where each group's holdings overlapped." Citicasters already owns WTVN(AM) and WLWQ(FM) Columbus, taking it one station over the current FCC ownership cap of two FMs per owner per market. The acquisitions give Citicasters a total 11 FMs, three AMs and two network-affiliated TV stations in eight major markets.

The sale of its three Columbus properties removes OmniAmerica from that market. OmniAmerica, based in Los Angeles, continues to own nine radio stations in Jacksonville, Orlando and West Palm Beach, Fla., and Cleveland.

In a separate transaction last Friday, San Diego-based Triathlon Broadcasting Co. exercised its option to buy 10 radio stations from Pourtales Radio Partnership for \$18.5 million.

Triathlon will acquire KVOR(AM)-KSPZ(FM)-KTWK(AM)-KVUU(FM) Colorado Springs; and KTCR(AM) Kennewick-KEGX(FM) Richland and KEYF-AM-FM-KUDY(AM)-KKZX(FM) Spokane, all Washington.

Triathlon also said it has terminated its option to buy three of Pourtales' four remaining stations: WMYC-FM and WKSJ-AM-FM Mobile, Ala. Pourtales also is selling two FMs in Lincoln, Neb., to Triathlon; that deal is expected to close within 45 days. Triathlon maintains a joint sales agreement with an option to buy Pourtales's KEYN-FM Wichita, Kan.

Triathlon already owns four stations in Wichita and has filed its intent to buy two more FMs in Lincoln. ■

NBC sweeps up November

NBC won the November sweeps in nearly every category. But it shared some losing numbers with ABC and CBS: the three-network rating and share dipped to an all-time low for a November sweep period.

NBC finished first among adults 18-49 and 25-54 and among women 18-49 and 25-54, as well as among total viewers and households. It was the only network to show growth among adults 18-49 and households, versus November 1994. NBC averaged a 12.0 rating and 19 share in Nielsen national numbers among households followed by ABC's 11.4/19, CBS's 9.9/16 and Fox's 7.6/12. Among adults 18-49, NBC averaged a 7.6 rating, followed by ABC's 7.0, Fox's 5.4 and CBS's 4.7. In households, compared to November 1994, NBC was up 3%, Fox was down 6%, ABC was down 7% and CBS dipped a whopping 23%. In the category of adults 18-49, NBC was up 7%, Fox was down 5%, ABC was down 7% and CBS was down 23%.

CBS's nose dive clearly paced the way for the record low for an in-season sweeps month. The big three networks averaged a 33.3/54 beating the previous low of 33.4/57, which was set last May.

NBC capped off the sweeps with a rare Wednesday win on the last night of the sweeps. Thanks to the *National Geographic* special *Cyclone*, which won its 8-9 p.m. time period in homes and adults 18-49, the network finished first on the night in both categories. It was the first Wednesday night win among adults 18-49 by NBC since 1993. —SC



'Frasier' gave NBC strength on Tuesday.