N.Y. Times buys two TVs

By Michael Katz

Making good on its promise to analysts earlier this month, The New York Times Co. increased its broadcasting stake last week with the purchase—subject to FCC approval—of two TV stations from Palmer Communications for $226 million.

The Times picked up NBC affiliates KFOR-TV Oklahoma City and WHO-TV Des Moines, Iowa. It owns six other TV stations (four CBS affiliates and two ABC affiliates) and two radio stations, and publishes the New York Times, the Boston Globe and 21 regional newspapers.

"The law has created a frenzy of station activity," C. Frank Roberts, president of The New York Times Co.'s Broadcast Group, said in its presentation to analysts on May 2. "But it will also create more buying opportunities, as most owners now realize that they can no longer just sit on the sidelines with one or two stations. We strive to make broadcasting's contribution a more significant part of the company's future."

In the past year, The Times Co. also has stepped up its investment in the cable industry. The company has minority interests in Ovation: The Fine Arts Network, which launched last month, and The Popcorn Channel, a network devoted to movie-related programming and local theater listings, which launched last November. It also has ownership in news programming ventures Video News International and Sarasota News Now.

Ellis gets new investor

By Elizabeth A. Rathbun

After four months of searching, Bert Ellis has found a buyer for his 12 TV stations: Bert Ellis Communications Inc. last Tuesday trumpeted the news that it has been sold for $732 million in cash to a new company. The new company's name? Ellis Acquisitions Inc., located at the same Atlanta address as Ellis Communications.

But it didn't stop there. The new company's name? Ellis Acquisitions Inc., located at the same Atlanta address as Ellis Communications. The news release says, however, that Ellis Acquisitions will be controlled by mergers and acquisitions lawyer Stephen I. Burr of Boston. The deal is subject to FCC approval.

The most substantive change appears to be the main investor in the company. Ellis Acquisitions will be financed by Retirement Systems of Alabama, a pension fund for teachers and state employees that also funded Donald Tomlin and Gary Knapp's October 1994 purchase of Park Communications Inc. Ellis Communications' 80% investor was Kelso Partners IV L.P., FCC documents show.

"Key management of Ellis Communications...will remain in place and will