



VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #113

"Shelter in Place" Special Electronic Edition

April 2020

'We'll Make It Through This'

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**



For many of us in my age group, we can often say, "I've seen it all before" when some young whippersnapper treats some catastrophe as unprecedented. But not what we're going through now.

Like many of us Legends, I was born during the Depression, grew up during World War II, became a young man when we were legitimately worried about being vaporized by the Bomb, and stayed

away from swimming pools and movie theaters during the polio scare.

But we could still go to church, get together whenever we wanted and forget about war and the threat of war by enjoying baseball and concerts and other diversions.

Until now in this time of the coronavirus.

Now most of us are hunkered down at home watching television, reading, talking with friends on the phone and the internet, and wondering whether our food and toilet paper will last until our next foray to the supermarket or whether we should really go to that routine appointment with the doctor. One of the worst things about all this is that there's no predicted end date; as they used to say during World War II, we're in it for the duration.

Most of us Legends have put in our time in broadcasting and are enjoying our retirement. But for those who are still employed, the show must go on ... it's just going on a bit differently.

TV news crews are still out in the field every day bringing essential information to the viewers. And it's almost like being in the military. According to KCRA/3's photojournalist **Mike Carroll**, "We all carry letters issued to journalists across the U.S. stating we are essential personnel getting information to the public.

"At KCRA we have strict rules for interviews: Six feet of distance from the reporter to the interviewee. No physical contact/interaction and no more wireless lavalier clip-on mics.

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The Program That Wasn't

In ordinary times, we'd be using this space to promote our April program. In fact, we had it all arranged; it was to be about the increasing use of drones in the television news business. Then our regularly scheduled program was interrupted by COVID-19.

We still hope to present that program later this summer, Dr. Fauci and Gov. Newsom willing. As for our June program, we've scheduled the *Sacramento Bee's* ace reporter/columnist **Marcos Breton**. You're likely to find Marcos' byline associated with the big story of the day, whether it's the Stephon Clark shooting, the homeless crisis or the battling and bickering in the Sacramento school district.

So, mark your calendar for Thursday, June 11, which is SCHEDULED for our next luncheon at Club Pheasant. But if that becomes impossible because of you-know-what, we'll let you know and go back to the drawing board.

Bottom line: we hope to present the drone and the Marcos Breton programs later this year, as well as an October program on the crucial November election. In the meantime, keep your fingers crossed, and of course maintain a safe distance.

“Those Darn Dues!”

If you haven't yet paid your VBL dues for 2020, please do so. Mail a check for \$35 made out to Valley Broadcast Legends to Post Office Box 601861, Sacramento, CA 95860-1861.

If you cannot recall whether you're up-to-date, contact VBL Treasurer **Ron Middlekauff**.

ron@middlekauff.tv

These are trying times for everyone.

Your board is doing its best to keep the club afloat and appreciates your support.

You are part of the family,
and we're all in
this together.

President's Message: 'We'll Make It Through This'

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The stick mic is fixed to a stand or something similar, and only one cameraman touches the gear. Then immediately wipe down the mic and stand with a bleach disinfectant. And interviews with people who are homebound: talk to them via FaceTime, then ask them to send pix/video of life around the house."

As for KXTV/10, our **Ward Koppel** reports:

"At KXTV, other than the news department, everyone has been sent home ... even those who can't work from home. In the news department, photographers and reporters are not allowed in the building. They get their assignments on a conference call and feed their stories in from their laptops. The photographers and reporters do not ride together; they take separate cars.

"We try to have no more than one producer, one manager, one editor, one anchor in the building (at a time.) Weather will be done from the weather anchor's home via Skype/Facebook Live. On two-anchor shows, the plan is to have one anchor live via Skype/Facebook Live or via the TVU app. TVU is the backpack system we use to go live without a live truck; it uses cellular systems to transmit. I am working at home on a laptop and cannot re-enter the building.



"The goal is to make sure that nobody with coronavirus gets in the building. If that happens, we lose access to the building. In case that happens, we have tents and a bathroom trailer in the back parking lot as an emergency newsroom."

The folks in radio have also had to make a lot of changes in their routine to continue doing their jobs in this Age of Covid19. Reports **Sam Shane**, morning co-anchor at KFBK:

"In all my years in the business, this one is a first—no story compares with it. Cristina and I are going into the studio to do our show every morning. Our work stations in the studio and our desks in the office are at least six feet apart."

Co-anchor **Cristina Mendonsa** reports that she and Sam "give all our studio equipment a wipe-down with Clorox wipes each morning. We also have our own headphones and mic wind-screens. I wash my hands before the broadcast, about halfway through and after the broadcast. When we finish the morning show we take our own mic windscreens and wipe down all equipment (computer keyboard, mouse, broadcast mic keys, chair and desk area.)

"Our sales staff and all non-broadcast employees work from home. Sam and I have also set up home-based broadcast areas in case one of us comes in contact with someone who has been diagnosed. Friends have asked why Sam and I don't just broadcast from home right now. Sam and I both feel a responsibility to have immediate access to the latest information, and hopefully, a few lighter moments to ease the heaviness of the coronavirus story. For that, it's better that we're together each day. Thanks so much for asking. I wish you health through this crazy time."

You're welcome, Cristina.

This is all almost unbelievable. To think that for all these years we have focused on a possible nuclear attack, and it turns out the world is probably being brought to its knees by a diseased bat thousands of miles away. (Remember the Butterfly Effect, in which a butterfly's flapping wings can start a chain of events that leads to a hurricane?) *The New York Times* had a fascinating piece the other day showing how the infected Chinese meat market was close to a bus stop which linked travelers to the Wuhan airport, from which planes ... and the virus ... flew all over the world.

We'll make it through this, but at what cost to human life and the world economy? And what permanent changes will we make to the way we live?



KCRA's **Mike Carroll** is geared up and ready for a day in the field.

“All in the Family”: Life on Lockdown

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**

For most of us during the coronavirus lockdown, the biggest challenge is filling up our days without benefit of visits to the theater, the gym, our church or anywhere that more than two people congregate. But that’s not the story for the dynamic duo of **Ellie Kuechler** and **Greg Van Acker**. Here’s Ellie’s story:

“Both thoughts and prayers for all our members. Here’s how it’s going at our house.

“I’m very grateful that we both have jobs now. Professor Greg is now teaching his Excel class on-line, which is more of a challenge than one might think. He’s worked it out by delivering his lectures while I, an Excel newbie, demonstrate on the on-line computer video. He confidently tells the students the technique, and I hunt, peck, ask questions, delete, restart, and everything else a student is likely to do. The preparation for the class is much longer and more complex for Greg than preparing for it in person in a classroom. However, the students are able to continue their education, Greg’s enjoying teaching, and I’m learning Excel. A win-win-win!

“As for me, I’m back to teaching, with only one little student. The daycare for our granddaughter Louise has closed, of course. Our son is working from home while our daughter-in-law, a doctor, is risking her life every day by going in to UC Davis Medical Center. So I’m at work, caring for Lulu, an almost two-year-old learning machine. Fortunately, she finds everything interesting and all of Grandpa’s jokes funny. We’re having fun, and are so grateful we can help our kids.

“In an interesting turn of events, our elder son, Robert, has been sent home from his job as theater technician and master electrician at the College of Southern Nevada. He had been hoping to get a lot of deferred maintenance done



Ellie and Greg at the February meeting, when we all wore our station shirts and media passes.

while the students were away, but instead is doing what he can from home ... he tells me that the entire theatrical community of Las Vegas is hurting badly, as most of the crew members are on-call rather than salaried. No insurance, of course. We’re so grateful that he now works for the college, with tenure, paid vacation and health insurance. The turn of events is that we, retired engineers and teachers, are now working, while Rob, a much more than 40-hours a week kind of guy, is home.

“Weird times for us all. I hope this newsletter finds everyone safe and healthy, sheltering in place. Suddenly the local news is very important again, and for the reporters (and photographers) risking their health to keep us informed, I extend a sincere thank you.”

Inspiring words, Ellie. But like Dr. Fauci, try to get some rest once in a while.



Ron Middlekauff is a most valuable member of our family (he takes your money and pays our bills) and for the last several weeks he’s been staying home ... and he’s sick and tired of it! Before coronavirus reared its ugly head, Ron tripped over a doggie bed in his living room and shattered his left ankle. He was able to get his cast taken off, but he still has a heavy “boot” attached to his leg, and it’s going to be another four weeks before he can be truly mobile again. In the meantime, Ron is spending his days watching TV, reading and growing a beard and mustache (see picture just posted by Ron on Facebook).

Ron’s probably also growing hair on top of his head, as are most of us, and that’s eventually going to pose a problem with so many barber and beauty shops closed (mine is closed at least until the end of March). **Margaret (Pelley) Larson** reports that she’s worried about what the state of her marriage is going to be in a couple of weeks when her hubby Tim is forced to cut her hair. Worrying about what I might look like by the time the quarantine is lifted, I checked online and found the Flowbee, a \$140 gizmo you can hook up to a vacuum cleaner (or use with a vacuum attachment) to cut your own hair. Sounds like a dicey proposition, but Ron reports he had an uncle who was so

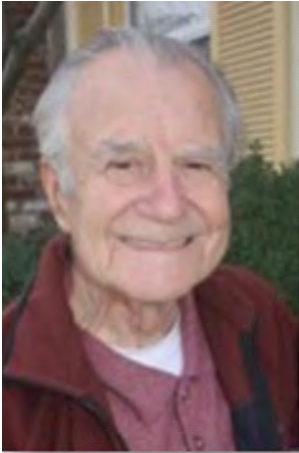


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“All in the Family”

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satisfied he ended up owning four of them during his lifetime. Who knows what desperate measures we'll be driven to before this is over?



I had the great pleasure of visiting our second-oldest member, **Lou Coppola**, a few weeks back. Lou is now residing in a really nice board-and-care facility in the Greenhaven area. His sunny room is festooned with pictures from Lou's long and busy life ... including one when he was a dashing, mustachioed sergeant during the Korean War. Lou's body is confined to a bed, but his mind is still sharp on most

days and we had a wonderful hour's worth of reminiscing. With us was his son Chuck, who was visiting from LA. Chuck recently completed an hour-long documentary, "Eastland: Chicago's Deadliest Day," about a hundred-year-old boat disaster. It may be airing on PBS later this year.

Sadly, the coronavirus pandemic is impacting Lou's life, adding to his isolation. His wife Betty reports that she's unable to visit Lou, even though she's a family member. Too dangerous for nursing homes to allow *any* visitors in this time of pandemic.

We just got word of the passing of the daughter of one of our members. **Gary Gerould** reports that his daughter Beth has passed away from complications from a stroke she suffered in January. Gary says: "A sweet spirit that never wavered over a near lifetime of medical issues has left us for a better place. Our sadness is profound."

I had a wonderful conversation this week with our oldest member, **Claire Elliott**. As you may know, I have known Claire since I was a little boy and she was my dad's secretary at Bakersfield High School. Anyway, because of a worsening heart condition, Claire has resigned from our board. She's unable to get out much, but she's fortunate in having both her son Larry and daughter Laura living with her and taking care of her. She's still a lively conversationalist and interested in everything going on around her. She sends her best wishes to all her fellow legends. And best wishes and much love right back at you, Claire.

Who's New

We're delighted to welcome **Bob Suffel** to our Legendary flock.

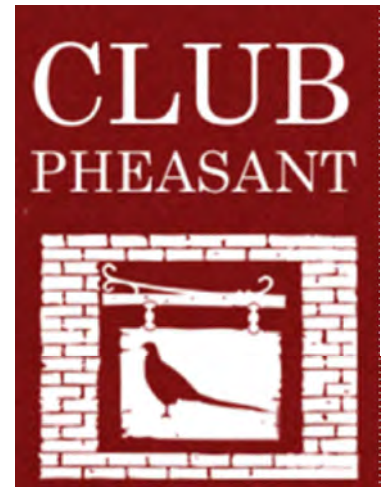
Bob began his distinguished career in 1968 as a producer at KXTV/10 in Sacramento, then went on to KOVR and KFBK in 1969-71 as state capitol reporter. From 1994 through 2000 he was manager of KBTU. He also served a hitch as foreign correspondent for NBC radio, reporting from Amsterdam, London and Beirut.

He's also the holder of a regional Emmy award for spot news reporting and a CBA local programming award. Bob is now a real estate investor and recording engineer.

Support Your Local Pheasant

These unusual times are taking a dramatic toll on many small businesses, including our beloved local restaurants. As of this writing, the Club Pheasant is offering a limited menu of take-out dinners Wednesdays through Sundays from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. If you're able, it would be a meaningful show of support for VBL members to help our meeting venue weather

these turbulent seas by ordering a take-out meal or two. Details on theclubpheasant.com. Be sure to call first, 916/371-9530, before driving out to West Sacramento, as things are changing rapidly these days.



Stay Home - Stay Healthy
We'll See You in June!