



VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #114

“Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media”

June 2020

President’s Message: Doing Our Best to Adapt, Persist

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**



When last we visited you, boys and girls, we had just entered the Twilight Zone of coronavirus quarantine. We didn’t know how we were going to live our lives, either working or in retirement. And we certainly didn’t know how to keep Valley Broadcast Legends going: one day we were thriving and growing, the next we were dead in the water. We still don’t know what the future holds, but we’re going to do our best to adapt and persist.

We’d been unable to hold an in-person board meeting since the quarantine began, and so on May 14 the board got together for a meeting on Zoom. We all looked reasonably good and our thinking processes hadn’t deteriorated too much.

The big issue was our bi-monthly newsletter, and as Joyce explains in the next-door column, we will go to a digital format, still providing a print version for those without internet access. Joyce is also looking into the possibility of issuing a shorter newsletter on a monthly basis for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis.

We also hope to hold some kind of in-person meeting for the membership in August, perhaps in an outdoor venue. Stay tuned.

A few days ago, we emailed to ask you how you’re coping with the stay-at-home orders. We got some good answers.

Roy Stearns says that in their Roseville neighborhood, the highlight of the week is Friday Night Happy Hour. “For the past six or so weeks, 10 to 12 neighborhood couples have gathered in the middle of our cul-de-sac street. We bring camping chairs and adult beverages and form a large circle with each couple six feet away from the other couples. Dogs welcome. We are solving local and national problems by the dozen.”

Rich Ibarra has always been my personification of the Energizer Bunny, and he hasn’t disappointed me during the current crisis: “I’ve been doing about 15 stories a month for

Continued on next page

From the Editor’s Desk

by **Joyce Krieg**, VBL Newsletter Editor

This is definitely one of those moments tailor-made for that cliché about one door closing and another opening.

For nineteen years ... ever since Day One of VBL’s existence ... a paper newsletter has landed in your box or slot via the U.S. Postal Service every other month. Six issues per year, no interruption, 113 paper editions in all.

Now the time has come to type a final “-30-” (that’s old-time newspaper slang for The End, kiddies) on our paper, mailed newsletter. No, I’m not quitting, just moving at last into the digital age. It took a pandemic to bring this long-simmering issue to its head. In March, the shelter-in-place order made print shops off limits. With no other options, I produced the newsletter in PDF format and Secretary **Allen Chamberlin** emailed it to you.

You guys loved it! Who knew? Least of all your humble editor. Just like seeing color TV for the first time.



If you’re reading this, we know you received the email from VBL World Headquarters and figured out how to open and read the PDF attachment. But we also know some of our members aren’t receiving our emails, and for that reason we decided to produce one last paper, mailed newsletter as well as this electronic version.

Going forward, my plan is to produce a PDF newsletter during even-numbered months. I’m also thinking about doing shorter newsletters tucked right into your email during the off-months, at least as long as we’re prevented from having our luncheon meetings.

The plan is to send newsletters on or about the first day of the month, so be sure to check your email for its arrival when you turn over the page on your calendar. For you Facebook users, I’ll also announce publication on the VBL FB page.

Appreciate your support as I look forward to many more years as your newsletter editor. It’s still the good ol’ VBL newsletter. Just a different format—in living color!

President's Message: Adapting and Persisting

Continued from previous page

the past few months for Capital Public Radio, and by April 8th I surpassed the 35-story limit which California recognizes as making me a permanent employee rather than a freelancer. No, I'm not interested in a permanent job, which my wife would consider 'failing at retirement.' Just about every story I've done since mid-March has been about the virus. Stories



about testing, food banks and businesses are all the rage, but there were some gee-whiz stories intermingled. Start with the Lodi baker who saw her orders dry up for graduation, birthday and anniversary cakes, but then she hit upon the idea of cakes in the shape of toilet paper rolls and the sales were back again

flush, so to speak."

Here's a report from **Matías Bombal**: "With the Covid-19 closing all the venues ... where I present movies, I've been alternating between working in the backyard and studio rebuild or watching a lot of movies in my home screening room ... I have, with great vigor, depleted my wine cellar. One interesting development was a call from the Ironstone Vineyards winery in Murphys ... With their tasting rooms closed, they came up with the idea of Facebook Live broadcasts of the silent movie shows I have done there in the past with organist **Dave Moreno** playing the Sacramento Alhambra Theatre's Robert Morton pipe organ. (I've done two) and the next, on June 6th at 1 p.m., is the silent *Peter Pan*. www.facebook.com/ironstonevineyards. I'm hoping we may all gather again sooner than later. I love our group and miss everyone."

Some "coping" observations from **Ellie Kuechler-VanAcker**, who's taking care of her husband, fellow VBL member **Gregory VanAcker**, and her two-year-old granddaughter:

"I've come to appreciate the things we can do a lot ... like riding bikes. The streets have been nearly empty, making it seem safer and more fun. We're a nice ride away from the Sacramento Zoo, so many rides involve a visit to the giraffes by the back fence.

Who's New

We'd like to welcome **John D. O'Brien** to our Valley Broadcast Legends membership. John spent three years at KCRA/3, then went on to L.A. where he worked as an engineer on a number of network shows including *ER*, *The Golden Girls*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Big Brother* and *Bob Hearts Abishola*. He's won five Emmys and earned 19 Emmy nominations.

"I actually bought a book and a shirt online and it felt like Christmas when they arrived.

"When you talk with a friend on the phone, you really talk. Nothing to rush off to. Many a phone call lasts an hour now.

"We have our sad events, as I'm sure you all do, where you want to reach out personally but can't. We have our first Zoom memorial service this Saturday. Other people are delaying services for now.

"I can't say the burdens are not there, but to cope we're trying to keep our chins up and focus on what we can do. I watch and wait, not at all eager to get back to crowds.

To those who want to hop onto that air-

plane or cruise ship, I say, 'You first' and we'll see how it goes. "We got out the blue Christmas lights, strung them on the front porch, and light them each evening. What can one do except, as **Fred Rogers** said, 'Look for the helpers' and be grateful for them?"

"Hope this finds all of you staying safe and remaining healthy. We're not thinking that sheltering in place is over, but perhaps it is the end of the beginning."



Happy B-Day, Keith Moon!

A very heartfelt "Happy Birthday" to **Keith Moon**—no, not the drummer with The Who, but *our* Keith Moon!—who is celebrating his 90th birthday. Keith lives in Salinas, so is able to attend our meetings only occasionally. Still, he was planning to make the trip to Sacramento to spend his 90th with us at our June meeting, but of course that is no longer possible.

In this 1958 photo, Keith is at left with **Gene Nelson** (center) and **Tom Thornley**, son of early Channel 10 newsman

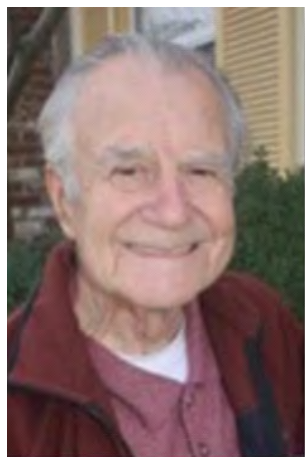


Hank Thornley. Keith was the producer, Gene the host and Tom the floorman for a local quiz show call *Pass the Buck*. As Keith relates the story, the show aired on KXTV "before the quiz show scandal made the station halt production."

Many happy returns, Keith, and may you be back with us to celebrate your 91st!

“All in the Family”: Farewell to Lou

by VBL President Jim Drennan



Lou Coppola, the guy who always had plenty to say at our Valley Broadcast Legends luncheons, has gone silent after a life that was both long and well-lived. He passed away on April 25 at the age of 92.

He spent his last months in a board and care home in the Greenhaven area of Sacramento, and I'll be forever grateful that I had the chance to spend a wonderful hour visiting with him before the

quarantine forbade such visits.

Up until his move into a board and care home, he and wife Betty had lived in a house on Eighth Avenue in Land Park they had bought in 1963. When word spread that Lou was nearing the end of his life, neighbors filled their front yards with American flags in his honor.

Said son Chuck: “My father was fervently patriotic ... To me, that simple tribute put a lump in my throat, more so almost than his passing!”

Emo Luigi Fernando Coppola's journey began 92 years ago in the northern Italian village of Uscio. His parents, Emilio and Rosa, brought him to America in 1930 to escape Mussolini's dictatorship and settled in Concord, California. Lou's dad worked as a laborer.

But from the beginning Lou seemed destined for greater things. Lou was president of his senior class at Mt. Diablo Senior High, graduating in 1945. He was a natural at baseball, and played on semi-pro teams in the East Bay and worked as an auto mechanic at his brother Mario's service station. One of their customers noted that Lou had a natural voice for radio ... which turned out to be prophetic.

Lou got into radio courtesy of the U. S. Army, which sent him to Korea where he picked up a gig broadcasting for Armed Forces Radio. After the war, he attended broadcasting school at San Francisco State, got his first radio job and met his future wife at KMOR in Oroville, and moved to Sacramento where he spent the next 40 years working for KCRA and then KGNR radio where he indulged in his greatest passion: calling the plays at Sacramento Solons games.

Chuck remembers being with his dad when he broadcast the last game at the Solons' Edmonds Field on April 12, 1964 ... an exhibition game between the San Francisco Giants and the Cleveland Indians in which Willie Mays and Willie McCovey hit back-to-back home runs.

Lou's second passion was Big Band music. Although he didn't play any instruments, he had a “great set of pipes,” according to friend **Lizette Martinez-Hopkins**. He used that voice to host many a Swing Era dance featuring live bands, and sang in the choir at Holy Spirit Church in Land Park. He also spent his time in a host of volunteer activities, including helping ex-cons write job résumés.

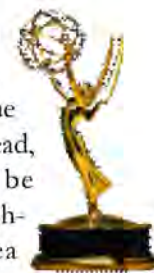
In our final conversation just weeks before his death, Lou showed that same love of life and luminosity of spirit that he showed all his life. I'm sure heaven is a happier and livelier place now that Lou's voice is being heard there and that God is letting him talk as much as he wants.

There's a new sheriff in town at KCRA/3 ... well, general manager, actually. Her name is **Ariel Roblin**, and she takes the helm at 3 on July 1. She succeeds **Elliott Troshinsky**, who will retire from Hearst Television at the end of June after leading Channel 3 for two decades.

Ms. Roblin comes to Sacramento after nine years as GM at Hearst's ABC affiliate, KETV in Omaha, NE. KETV is Omaha's TV news leader, so she should feel right at home at KCRA.

KFBK's **Sam Schoen** is proud to report that he and editor **Zac Foster** have won an Edward R. Murrow award for a podcast posted at kfbk.iheart.com. The podcast tells the story of how leaders in San Francisco and elsewhere in California ignored the warnings that preceded the Jonestown mass killing in Guyana.***

Speaking of awards, the 49th annual Northern California Emmy awards will be handed out on June 6, but not at their usual venue of the San Francisco Union Square Hilton. Instead, due to the coronavirus, the awards will be presented via a livestream webcast. In the English-language contest, KNTV/NBC Bay Area received 32 nominations, followed by our own KXTV/10's 26. The most individual nominations in the English-language category (nine) were made on behalf of KXTV/10 executive producer **Gonzalo Magana**. We're also proud to announce that two of our Legends were nominated. **Beth Ruyak** was nominated for her work in the Promotions/Single Spot category on “Lady Jesse.” And Legend **Joyce Mitchell** was nominated in the program writing category for her work on “Searching for Hope: Homeless in Sacramento.” Both entries ran on KVIE/6. For a complete list of the nominees in both the English and Spanish language categories, go to emmysf.tv on your friendly neighborhood computer or mobile device.



“It All Started . . .

...at a 5,000 watt radio station in Fresno, California, a 65 dollar paycheck and a crazy dream ...”

No, wait. That was **Ted Baxter** on the old *Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

In in the case of Valley Broadcast Legends, it *didn't* all start with **Lou Coppola** and **Jim Drennan**, despite what the otherwise-stellar obituary the *Bee* recently published for Lou would lead you to believe. As one of the *real* founders, Jim suggested I set the record straight.

So, here's the story. It's the summer of 2000 and **Maxine Carlin**, the one-woman news department at KVYN in Napa, and I are back in Sacramento to attend a reunion of the air staff of the 1970s-era KSFM Earth Radio 102. The next day, Maxine went “sailing”—yard sales, that is. Up in the foothills, she struck gold with a box of transcription discs from the *Max Baer Show* that aired on KFBK in the 1950s. Sold!

I suggested to Maxine she get in touch with **Harry Warren**, as I knew he'd worked at B-K in the 1950s. “Ol Har” passed along the news of the find to **Charlie Duncan**, archivist of the McClatchy collection at the Sacramento History Center.

The four of us—Maxine, Ol Har, Charlie and me—finally managed to set up a meeting in the spring of 2001 at the old Lyon's restaurant on Howe Avenue to formally turn over the transcription discs to the archive. As we chatted over lunch, one of us happened to mention the Broadcast Legends group in San Francisco. Next thing you know, we're asking each other, “Hey—how about setting up a group like that here?”

Our first meeting took place June 22, 2001, at Coco's restaurant on Arden Way. By the August meeting, we had 36 members and had moved the meetings to our present home at the Club Pheasant.

Now here we are, 19 years later, membership hovering around the 100 mark, handing out annual grants to schools, and holding six lively meetings every year—well, until a silly little virus put that on hold. It does feel a bit odd to be the only one left of the original Fab Four—Maxine has moved to Mendocino, and Charlie and Ol Har are in that big broadcast booth in the sky—but it's great still be here!

As Paul Harvey would say, “And now you know the rest of the story.”
— **Joyce Krieg**

Meeting Memories: Feb. 13, 2020

We were finally able to present our annual “Christmas gift,” slightly delayed, a grant of \$750 to the Oakmont High School media program. That's President **Jim Drennan** with the Oakmont High contingent. Your enthusiastic support of the opportunity drawing makes it possible for us to support the broadcasters of the future.



Photos by **Matias Bombal**

Your editor assumes this must be **Dana Michaels** in the Country Stereo jacket.



Dick Leeson



Barb Souza



Ray Nelson



We themed the February meeting around the sharing of bloopers and the wearing of station logo clothing and media passes. **Ellie Kuechler-VanAcker** and **Gregory VanAcker** managed to collect a few of the latter during their careers.