

VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #120

"Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media"

April 2021

President's Message: A Double Dose of Nostalgia

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**



I experienced a double dose of nostalgia on the evening of March 18.

Number One, I had dinner at the Club Pheasant, the first time I've eaten there since our meeting in February of last year. I'm happy to report that it still has the same atmosphere and the same familiar food. My dinner companion and I were planning to order the steak sandwich, but since they still had corned beef and cabbage the day after St. Pat's, we went for that,

and the classic minestrone and the spumoni. We ate in the room where we have our meetings, but because of Covid restrictions, there were only a dozen or so tables. The waitress was cheerful and welcoming and said the Pheasant was surviving these tough times and will be ready for us when the tough times are over.

Number Two, my dinner companion was the legendary **Bette Vasquez**. Like the Pheasant Club, she's been going through some tough times. A few weeks ago, her son **Bummy** fell and hit his head on his father **Gary's** bathtub. As a result, at least for the time being, he's a quadriplegic. And Bette, who's just turned 80, is his chief caregiver. That's a big load to carry, but if anyone can do it, it's Bette. We must have spent at least two hours at dinner, and nobody else would have been able to get a word in edgewise. Bette is still full of loving memories of her days doing the weather and *Weeknight* at Channel 3, and is looking forward to seeing a lot of her old friends. I think I talked her



Bette Vasquez in her KCRA weathercasting days.

Continued on page 4

Celebrity Double-header at April 8 VBL Zoom-fest

Two familiar faces will be joining us on April 8 at 11:00 a.m. for the latest Valley Broadcast Legends Zoom meeting.

One is of a guy who's been entertaining Sacramento radio listeners for 51 years.. The other is a gentleman who has been



Steve Kornacki

keeping MSNBC viewers up to date on politics and election results since 2012. Oh yeah, he's also been dubbed by *People* magazine as one of the "sexiest men alive."

The "sexiest" guy is MSNBC and NBC's **Steve Kornacki**, probably best known for his breathless delivery of election night results at the big board.. Steve is national political correspondent for the NBC News Group and appears on various NBC and MSNBC news programs.. He's also the author of *The Red and the Blue*, a history of political tribalism and the polarization of politics.



Joey Mitchell

Our other speaker, and sexy in his own way, is **Joey**

Mitchell. Joey swears that he came out of his mother's womb "with headphones, a microphone and a mustache," but that after all those years of getting up at 4:00 a.m., he's decided that "enough is enough." Joey put in his time at KRAK and KHITS, and his future projects include traveling, goofing off, and producing a podcast featuring the hundreds of celebrity interviews he's done over the years.

Steve and Joey should have a lot of great tales to tell, and we think this will be one of our most enjoyable meetings ever. As usual, we'll be sending the Zoom link a day or two before the April 8 meeting—watch your email.

“All in the Family”: Saying Goodbye

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**

We're saying goodbye this month to two people who were known to a great many of our members and who lived full and productive lives.

First is **Doree Steinman**, a frequent presence on Sacramento television in the 1960s and then a pioneering communications professor, who died in Capitola on Jan. 4 at the age of 93.

Born in New York City and a graduate of Syracuse University, Doree moved to Rochester, NY, and became the “Storybook Lady” on radio for several years, reading stories and playing the piano. When she and her husband Donald moved to Woodland, she converted the radio show for viewers of KVIE/6 and hosted a weekday show, *Women's World*, on KXTV/10. She also emceed the Miss California pageants during the State Fairs, and acted in TV commercials and community theater.

Perhaps her biggest claim to fame for many of our members was her 22-year stint as teacher of communications media at Cosumnes River College. And she was a popular teacher. As former student **Allan Biondi** put it, “In the time I was at CRC never once did I not want to go to her classes; in fact, it was my bright spot ... my ‘happy place.’”

After retirement, she moved full-time to Capitola, where she produced over 600 episodes of “Your Second Fifty Years” that aired on Santa Cruz County’s community television and wrote a book with the same title highlighting inspiring stories of what people have done in their “retirement” or in their “second fifty years.” She was also kept busy with a host of community activities in her later years.

Retirement? What's that? **Doree Steinmann** stayed involved in community television well into her senior years.



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LEGENDS**

P.O. Box 601861

Sacramento, CA 95860-1861

Harry Chittick is someone else you may remember from the distant past. Harry worked with us Channel Tensters back in the 70s and then went on to what we hoped were greater things. Unfortunately, we got word a few weeks ago that Harry had passed away peacefully at the age of 78 on March 8. I decided to do a little research about Harry’s life after Sacramento and discovered that he really did go on to greater things.

Harry spent two years as a West Coast field producer for CBS and then 23 years as a worldwide field producer for ABC’s *World News Tonight* and *Nightline*. In that capacity, he saw action around the world, including stunts embedded with the U.S. Marine Corps in Somalia and in Nicaragua at the end of the Sandinista rebellion (when he had to sleep in a bathtub to stay below the line of fire). After he left ABC, he and his wife Connie went on 74 worldwide cruises as guest lecturers. And if that weren’t enough, Harry was a world class orchid grower at his home in Sherman Oaks. There’s even an orchid named for him.

Greater things, indeed.

Harry recounts his adventures on Vimeo “Big Broadcast” video. Go to <https://vimeo.com/445891241>. It was done only seven months ago, and it’s a real treat.



Harry Chittick

Remembering Rush Limbaugh

The Legends

Membership as of March 30, 2021

Jerry Agresti • Bob Aldrich
 John Archer • Julie Archer
 Jay “DJ Jay” Arnold • Stan Atkinson
 Linda Bayley • Vic Biondi
 Bill Bishofberger • Thomas Blazowski
 Matias Bombal • Mel Boyd • Jim Brewer
 Tom Buck • Dick Cable
 Allen Chamberlin • Don Chandler
 Mark Chiolis • Chris Cochran
 Jim Drennan • Mike Duncan
 Claire Elliott • Curt Foley • Vicki Fox
 Bill George • Gary Gerould
 Dennis Grayson • Cyndy Green
 Michael Guiliano • Kristine Hanson
 Bud Harmon • Fred Harris • Jerry Henry
 Betsy Hite • Tom Hughes • Rich Ibarra
 Steve Jackson • John Jervis
 Rick Kavooras • Richard Kermickel
 Tip Kindel • Jan “Neely” Klevan
 Kim Kline • Ward Koppel • Bill Kreutzer
 Bud Kress • Joyce Krieg
 Eleanor Kuechler-VanAcker • Bob Lang
 Dick Leeson • Dee McCafferty
 Michael McCarron • Jeanne Marie
 Lizette Martinez-Hopkins
 Michael Messmer • Dana Michaels
 Ron Middlekauff • Bob Miller
 Alan Milner • Joyce Mitchell
 Mike Montgomery • Keith Moon
 Ray Nelson • George Nyberg
 John D. O’Brien • Deborah Pacyna
 Mary Jane Popp • Tiffany Powell
 Craig Prosser • Rich Raymond • Rick Reed
 Bruce Riggs • Jay Rudin • Beth Ruyak
 Bill Schmechel • Walt Shaw
 Becky Shephard • Dann Shively
 Ken Shuper • Barbara Souza
 Roy Stearns • Barry Stigers • Bill Storm
 Bob Suffel • Steve Swatt
 Gregory VanAcker • Bob Venditti
 Gregory Virtue • Tom Wagner
 Frank Wallace • Marla Wells
 Dennis Yoder • Jan Young

Love him or hate him, one thing about **Rush Limbaugh** is certain—he was by far the biggest name ever to come out of the Sacramento radio market. His passing on February 17 turned into an Old Home Week of sorts for the folks who worked with Rush during his early years at KFBK, as former and current staffers reached out to each other on the air and in social media. A common thread emerged—the Rush they knew was not the Rush the public perceived.



Rush Limbaugh during his KFBK radio days, circa 1985.

Dave Williams, who anchored the morning news at KFBK when Rush arrived and now does the same at KLIF in Dallas, reminisces, “It was a great time to work at KFBK and Rush was a major part of it, not only for his enormous popularity on the air but because everyone who knew him off the air absolutely adored the guy. Over the years I’ve never heard anyone whose opinion caused me to wonder if he had changed. He was genuinely warm, humble and generous. I hope people will learn that side of him to understand the complexity that drove a good man, with an entertainer’s heart and a patriotic passion that came from his upbringing in Cape Girardeau, MO. I will miss him.”

Former KOVR anchor/reporter **Linda Laird** is married to **Rick Eytcheson**, GM at KFBK during Rush’s tenure. On her Facebook page she writes, “We knew him as a loving, kind, generous person with an amazing sense of humor. Rick always said he was one of the smartest, most talented, and articulate guys he had ever met. He was the only one in the newsroom who wore a jacket and tie every day. Rick said he did this because he wanted people to know he was serious about his show. He had such passion for it and wanted to dress for success. We pray for his family, loved ones, his fans and those who knew the real Rush. He will be deeply missed.”

VBL Newsletter Editor **Joyce Krieg** worked with Rush in her gig as Promotions Director at KFBK in the 1980s. She recalls, “He was the hardest-working person I’ve ever run across in radio. He would accept any invitation to speak or emcee a charity event. He showed up every day at the station between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. to prep for a show that started at 9:00. I think he must have realized Sacramento really was his last chance. Remember, he’d been fired from every other radio gig he’d ever had, and he was now in his mid-thirties. This was his last chance, and he was determined to make it work. That’s the sense I got.”

Joyce continues, “In the beginning, I don’t think Rush really bought into all the ‘stuff’ he was spewing over the air. He just stumbled onto something that resonated with the audience. It was show biz, pure schtick.”

She concludes, “I always tell people my greatest claim to fame *and* shame is that I worked at the radio station that discovered Rush Limbaugh and launched his career.”



Goodbye Steve, Hello Stephanie!

I first met **Stephanie Haskins** in 1979. Her name then was **Steve Haskins**, and he was the new executive producer at KCRA/3. I was a refugee from KXTV/10 and understood that 3 was looking for an assignment editor to replace Steve, who had been promoted. Steve and I clicked immediately and I was hired for a job I did for the next 15 years. In addition to being my supervisor, Steve became my close friend. I was best man at his wedding to his wife **Nancy**. He left 3 several years later and gradually we saw less and less of each other until finally we didn't communicate at all. I would often hear people ask during my Valley Broadcast Legends days, "Whatever happened to Steve Haskins? I'd sure like to see him again." Well, a few weeks ago our prayers were answered and Steve emerged on Facebook ... as Stephanie Haskins. This is his story.—Jim Drennan

Hi everybody

I've been thinking about joining the group for several years—but to be honest, I was in such turmoil and emotional distress, I had it in my mind that I didn't deserve to be a part.

So here's the deal: I am a transgender female, and have been all my life. Unfortunately, I didn't really come to any sort of real understanding about my soul until about two years ago, when I came out to my family and a few others as gay/bi/trans. I've always known about my sexuality—at least since I was 13—but my gender? Not so much.



Steve in the 1980s

game, but can't imagine playing it. I just wanted to be me, neither a male nor a female.

So I learned how to imitate being a male. I watched television and saw how boys were supposed to walk, talk, think, act. And I was a great actor. NO one ever knew or suspected.

Recently, I was texting with a woman with whom I worked at KCRA for almost 15 years. "I never suspected. You never

I was never confident about my masculinity. I felt I was an impostor in my body. I never wanted to play with dolls, never wanted to wear lingerie and dresses. But I was never at all interested in male stuff either. Never cared about engines. Or organized sports—although I could hit a baseball a mile, as long as it wasn't a fastball. I love watching a great football

ever gave off a vibe." She almost sounded like I'd betrayed her for not dropping all sorts of clues about my sexual and gender turmoil.

And all I can tell you is that transgender people are experts in concealing their real identities. Because we don't want you to know, you CAN'T know. You'll never catch us in a mistake. Ever. We are experts in disguise. Maybe that's why trans chicks love learning about makeup. It's just another means of disguise.

So a couple of years ago, after decades of severe depression and many little secret breakdowns, my truth exploded out of me. And I lost everything. My family and extended family have either ignored me or made it known they are hurt, angry and feel betrayed. That's the story of almost every trans person I know. They live in terror of coming out or being outed, because when it happens, by choice or not, their lives disappear.

I'm writing this on a Sunday night after one of my weekly group sessions with other transgender people—who either identify as male to female or female to male. And if you think you can spot one of us before we present as our real selves, you can't. Most of the natal females in my various groups APPEAR to be beautiful young women. But in their souls, they are not.

Continued on next page

President's Message

Continued from front page

into joining Valley Broadcast Legends, and I have high hopes that we'll all be seeing her at our April meeting.

One of the perks of retirement is being able to spend as much time as you want on the internet. My daily routine includes the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Variety* and Facebook, but my most addictive habit is YouTube. In recent days, for example, I checked out **Sinatra**, **Crosby** and **Dean Martin** doing "Together" on Frank's old ABC *Timex Show*, **Karen Carpenter** and **Ella Fitzgerald** performing duets on the Carpenters show, **Harry Truman** reminiscing about firing **Douglas McArthur**, and a tribute to radio station WNEW. I'd known that WNEW was a powerhouse station in New York radio with show like *Make Believe Ballroom*, but I had no idea what a huge contribution it made to our industry over its 50-year life. They didn't just play records, they also had the artists make live appearances. Talk about a golden age! Like Ella and Frank and Dean and Bing they're gone, but their heritage lives on on YouTube and on the many classic radio ports of call on the internet as well as classic radio broadcast stations.



From Steve to Stephanie

Continued from previous page

The moderator of my Sunday group is a young Latinx dude named **Yesi**. He is a handsome young guy, has a full beard, an absolutely male voice, has all of the mannerisms of a young man in his early 20s, and yet his chromosomal display is XX. I think he's fabulous. And he's in despair because his traditional Mexican Catholic family can't find it in their hearts to love him unconditionally.

Being transgender almost always means starting over. Rebuilding your life. Embracing a new community. That's what I'm doing right now, as I come out to all of you—many of whom used to be my extended family years ago at KCRA, KOVR and KTXL.

Don Chandler knew me as a 20-year-old college kid who started in his art department at KCRA making supers by hand on a hot press, making maps, coloring UPI Fotofax black-and-white pictures and working as a stage manager. Don probably knew me the longest of anyone here. And I'll bet he didn't see a young trans chick when he first met me.

I'll close by describing what's next for me. I have been on hormones for almost 14 months, and I love the results—emotionally and physically. I am so much happier—and healthier—since I started. I had a tummy tuck a few months ago, so I now have a waist and hips that you can identify as such. I had breast augmentation surgery about a month ago, and as one of **Jerry Seinfeld's** girlfriends—**Terri Hatcher**—told him, “They are SPECTACULAR”

At some point, you can judge for yourself.

I'll be getting feminization surgery in three or four months to get rid of all the vestiges of my male-born face: nose job, jaw reduction, a trach shave, a hair advancement on my scalp where my hairline is actually pulled down an inch or so to more closely resemble a female hairline, and whatever else I can get. And yes, maybe in a year or so—perhaps a bit sooner—I'll get a vaginoplasty. I jokingly refer to the procedure as “the REALLY big owie” or “the big banana split.”

But I don't mean to trivialize it: It is a surgery I desperately want.

So. Your old colleague Steven no longer exists. He passed away quietly about six weeks ago. But Stephanie is here now. A strong, vital, trans-chick with the same smart-ass attitude, but with a lot less baggage ... who is so much more at peace, softer, gentler and kinder, I believe.

I hope you'll welcome her—maybe in a month or so. We'll see.

All the best,

Stephanie Bryn Haskins

(Stephanie Haskins is building a new life at the age of 74.)



Stephanie today

Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics

by Michael Messmer

Although **Mark Twain** claimed that this statement originated with **Disraeli** there is no direct evidence that it was anything but another Twain observation of our world. As a speech writer I loved Twain. He had a quotable comment about almost everything.

In view of the recent speakers at our Zoom meetings and the thoughtful observations by **Bob Lang** in the last newsletter, I thought it might be useful to consider the relationship between the media and the world of statistics.

Nightly we are bombarded with charts and numbers. Visual representations of what is going on in the pandemic world. Unfortunately there are very few people in the media who really understand how these numbers came to be or what they really mean.

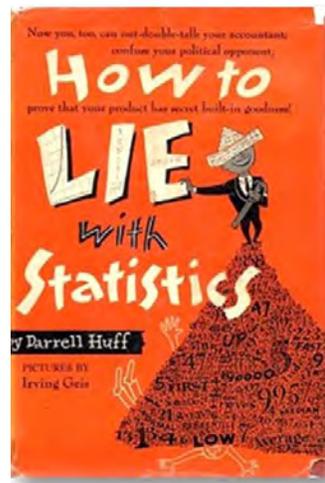
I started college as a psych major and the first class for psych majors was in statistics.

This was not what I had expected. I hated math. When my folks got me a fancy slide rule for high school (you do remember slide rules) it was a little bit like giving a monkey a computer. It did not make me brilliant. But the professor in this class was more interested in us not misusing statistics.

We were required to buy a slim paperback book that was incredibly cheap as college books went in those days (and today!). The title of this little thing was *How to Lie with Statistics*, originally written in 1954 by a journalist concerned that his fellow journalists did not fully understand the numbers game ... especially the barrage of numbers coming from big business ... and big government.

It was not a math-driven book but a concept-driven tale. Almost every quirk of statistics was revealed in real-life examples. Never did he suggest that statistics lied but rather that people, for whatever purpose, could pick a kind of statistical revelation that supported their objective.

For instance, I can statistically prove to you that the average American household earns \$43,500 a year, and \$65,200 a year ... and \$81,200 a year. All these fictional numbers are possibly accurate and true. It just depends on what you mean by "average". In statistics there are, at least, three kinds of average: the mean, mode and median. And, depending on what you want to prove, they can show radically different results. You'll have to look up the steps required to get these, sometimes,



vastly different results.

But when was the last time you heard a reporter question any statistic ... from the CDC, the EDD or Google?

When I enlisted in the Army (to avoid the draft) with a contract to keep me working in broadcasting ... the Army sent me, instead, to work in psychological operations as a military journalist (that's not an oxymoron). I was a propaganda writer for the U.S. government (which translated to public relations writer in the civilian world). My mentors explained the rules: first, never lie. A lie will be found out and credibility will be gone. Second, use selective truth. Focus on the positive and support it with the appropriate statistics. Appropriate, meaning which statistical truth best met our objectives.

No journalist ever questioned our stories. I never lied (although I had to be very creative with the truth at times). The only times I got in trouble were when the State Department became concerned I was giving too much information, and when military intelligence questioned where I was getting my information.

I was amazed then as I am often now about how many misuses of statistics there are to prove the truth. I still have that little book. I suspect some form of it still exists but I doubt if any journalist or journalism school has ever heard of it. If interested, the author was **Darrell Huff**. Shortly after writing the book, he left journalism

Oh, and if you think selective truth isn't still in use, the other night I heard a reporter claim that vaccination sites were "only getting a fraction of the doses needed.". Ninety-nine one hundredths is as much a fraction as one-tenth, but in real life that's an incredibly wonderful fraction. Sloppy writing, sloppy thinking ... or someone with an agenda?

Editor's Note: How to Lie with Statistics, originally published in 1954 by W.W. Norton, is still in print and available on Amazon. Free PDF downloads are also easily found. Just Google on "How to Lie with Statistics free PDF" and see what pops up.

Got a Story to Share?

An opinion to air?

Submit it to the VBL newsletter!

Editor **Joyce Krieg** is always looking for suitable material. Anything even remotely broadcast-related is welcome. About the only thing verboten is blatant political soapboxing or religious proselytizing. Preferred format is Word docx. Try to keep it under 700 words. Pictures are also welcome; JPEG format preferred.

Send your items to pacificgrovejoyce@gmail.com