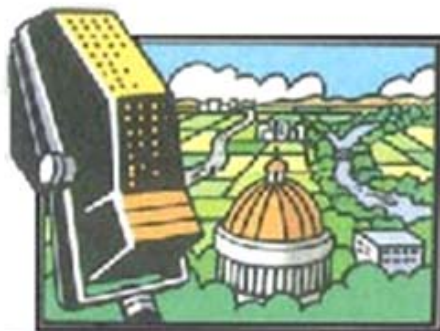




VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #148 *"Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media"*

December 2025

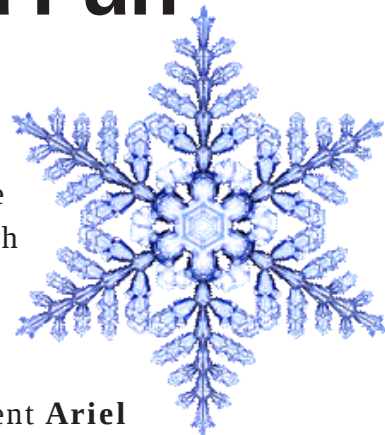
Dec. 9 • Old Spaghetti Factory, Rancho Cordova • Doors open at Noon. • Lunch service at 12:30

Tis the Season for Food and Fun

It doesn't matter what holiday you celebrate in December—Christmas, Hanukkah, Solstice, Kwanzaa, Festivus, or none at all. What matters is that you join your fellow Legends for our annual holiday luncheon. This year, it's December 9 at our new (well, new-ish) home at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Rancho Cordova. Doors open at 12 noon, with lunch served at more-or-less 12:30 p.m.

The 2026 edition of our holiday luncheon will be extra-special, as we'll be awarding our first of what we hope will be an annual tradition, the **Jim Drennan** Memorial Scholarship. This year's recipient is Sac State student **Ariel Airada**. Jim was, of course, the long-time president of VBL who made a generous gift to us in his will, making the scholarship possible. Ariel plans to use the \$1,000 to purchase a camera. She hopes someday to become a film director.

Many of us have vivid memories of working in broadcast news during the holiday season. If that includes you, then come to the December 9 meeting prepared to share those stories. We plan to pass around the mic, offering everyone the chance to recall a holiday memory in the news biz, whether it be wild times at the station Christmas bash, or a heartwarming charity fundraiser, or "something completely different." If you do plan to share a memory, let Allen know when you phone or email your RSVP. Once we have a rough idea as to how many of you plan to participate, we'll have a better idea as to how much time to allocate.



As always, RSVPs are required. The deadline is December 4. Don't forget to let Allen know whether you want the spaghetti with red meat sauce, mizithra (pasta with cheese and browned butter) or ravioli with cheese.

RSVP for the December 9 Meeting:
Allen Chamberlin: 916/456-7654
secretary@valleybroadcastlegends.org
Entree Choice: Rich Meat Sauce, Mizithra,
Ravioli with Cheese
Cost: \$25 payable at the door.
Cash or check only.

Reservations required by Dec. 4!

47 Years on the Front Desk

by VBL Treasurer **Ward Koppel**

Maren Schloeman has announced she is retiring after 47+ years as the receptionist at KCRA. A 1976 graduate of Encina High School, Maren started in 1978 when the front desk of KCRA was still on 10th Street. The front desk is on Television Circle now, formerly 9th street. In a Facebook post Maren said, “I’ve witnessed a lot of history ... some of it life changing ... some amazing ... some tragic. Even though on occasion it’s been a wild ride, I’m grateful for all of my time there, for all of my experiences. But above all of the world history I’ve seen, I’m most grateful for the incredible people I have been blessed to work with, and meet. I’ve made some of the most amazing lasting friendships.”



Maren was the first person guests and potential employees saw at KCRA. She was the voice on the phone when viewers had questions or complaints and juggled more cable and satellite provider blackouts than she probably would like to think about. Enjoy your retirement, Maren.

Meet Our New Treasurer

When the VBL board put out a call for a volunteer to take on the treasurer gig, **Ward Koppel**’s hand went up almost immediately. Ward has been a valued member of the VBL board since 2021, joining shortly after retiring as assignment editor for KXTV-ABC10. A Sacramento native, Ward spent over 40 years in the local broadcast market, putting in time at KQVR and KCRA. All of us on the VBL board are grateful to Ward for stepping up in our time of need, perhaps none so much as **Allen Chamberlin**, who has been handling the duties of both secretary and treasurer since we lost **Ron Middlekauff** in 2022.

Those Dues are Due

Yes, it’s that time of year again. Time to pay your VBL dues. Just \$20 will keep you paid up and current through 2026. Easiest way to pay is to bring \$45 in cash or a check to the December 9 meeting—\$25 to pay for lunch, \$20 for dues. Or, mail a check, payable to Valley Broadcast Legends, to P.O. Box 601861, Sacramento, CA 95860-1861. Your board appreciates your prompt attention so we don’t have to keep nagging you!

Officers

President: Bill George

Vice President: Bud Kress

Treasurer: Ward Koppel

Secretary: Allen Chamberlin

Directors: Walt Shaw, Anita Fein,
Kristine Hanson, Joyce Krieg

In Perpetuity Our Founder

Harry Warren

Newsletter Editor: Joyce Krieg

Webmaster: Allen Chamberlin

Audio-Visual: Bud Kress

VALLEY BROADCAST
LEGENDS

P.O. Box 601861

Sacramento, CA 95860-1861

President's Message: A Christmas Gift that Lasted a Lifetime

by VBL President **Bill George**



The term ‘adulting’ has emerged as a cultural phenomenon, especially among millennials and Gen Z, referring to the practice of managing life’s responsibilities, from budgeting to planning. In other words, taking responsibility for your own actions and not relying on your folks to do it.

When doing things like paying bills, buying new furniture, or just going to work, young people say they are “adulting.” Leaving college, getting your first job, and getting your first apartment are hallmarks of adulthood. People are leaving the college and family cocoon. This can be stressful, especially during the holidays.

A significant “adulting” experience for me came when I worked my first Christmas. It’s a time of joy for most, and a time of sadness for some. For those in broadcasting, it is often just another day on the job. Broadcasters, along with cops, firefighters, nurses, and a few others, are usually expected to work on and around the holidays. Many stations try to give some of the staff a day off. The reduced staff is required to fill the shows with ... something. Since the usual sources of news have dried up, out go the crews to cover the turkey feeds, church services and other holiday fare.

I remember my first Christmas-on-the-job in 1977 at WHO-TV, Des Moines. I was twenty-two years old, just six months out of journalism school. It was the first year I missed my family’s big holiday dinner. I was raised in Chicago, so not only was I away from home in a new city, but I also had to work over the holidays. So I was a bit downcast and homesick. I think I wanted to scream “mommy help” but I ignored the impulse.

In the morning I went and covered a meal a local church was putting on. When I returned to the station, my co-workers put on a lovely buffet lunch. I was a bachelor and somewhat helpless without a barbecue to grill meat on, so I don’t remember what I brought. But we had a fun feast and it was then that I realized I now had a new family, my co-workers, who were every bit as treasured as my blood relatives. Most of us were under thirty, but one of the “old timers” was there. He had worked many holidays and I asked him how he had become accustomed

continued on next page

The Legends

Membership as of Nov. 24, 2025

John Archer • Jay “DJ Jay” Arnold
Mark Baggs • Bill Bischofberger
Matias Bombal • Tom Buck
Allen Chamberlin • Mark Chiolis
Tim Church • Kevin Dougherty
Anita Fein • Curt Foley • Vicki Fox
Bill George • Gary Gerould
Marty Gonzalez • Samuel Gonzalez
Kristine Hanson • Mark Hedlund
Jerry Henry • Betsy Hite • Rich Ibarra
Steve Jackson • Rick Kavooras • Kim Kline
Erin Kobayashi Komatsubara
Cindy Koppel • Ward Koppel • Bud Kress
Bill Kreutzer • Joyce Krieg
Eleanor Kuechler-VanAcker • Bob Lang
Dick Leeson • Mike Luery • Jeff March
Lizette Martinez- Hopkins
Michael McCarron • Michael Messmer
Dana Michaels • Mike Montgomery
Keith Moon • Ray Nelson
George Nyberg • John D. O’Brien
Alan Oda • Sue Peppers • Deborah Pacyna
Gary Popejoy • Greg Popejoy
Mary Jane Popp • Craig Prosser
David Ramos • Rich Raymond
Jay Rudin • Beth Ruyack • Walt Shaw
Dann Shively • Barbara Souza
Jim Stimson • Steve Swatt
Gregory VanAcker • Bob Venditti
Gregory Virtue • Hilary Vos • Tom Wagner
Dennis Yoder • Jan Young



President's Message: Gift that Lasts a Lifetime

Continued from previous page

to it. He said he actually liked working the holidays. He said that many viewers were alone, and we were coming into their homes and keeping them company. That thought stuck with me for the rest of my career and helped me navigate the season and realize I was doing some good for the world. Whenever trouble hit, the public would respond with overwhelming charity.

I once did a story about a Vietnamese refugee family whose furnace had broken down. Dozens of people called the station and offered to donate money or even come out and repair the furnace. Witnessing events like that helped me leave adolescence behind. Broadcasting bestowed many gifts on me. Helping me grow up may have been the best present of all.

Have a great holiday, and Happy Adulting!

Bill Schmechel: 1951-2025

Legend **William “Bill” R. Schmechel**, passed away peacefully at his home in Rocklin on October 15th after a courageous and lengthy battle with pancreatic cancer.

Born on January 25, 1951, in Torrington, WY, he grew up on the family farm, where he developed a lifelong knack for problem-solving and machinery. By 10 he was confidently steering the pickup down the highway to help move cattle. Bill's curiosity and resourcefulness were evident from an early age.

Talent and passion aligned; Bill was a gifted photographer in both personal and professional life. His career began at KGWN in Cheyenne, WY, and later worked for a production company in Denver. He went on to help establish the NBC affiliate in Chico/

Redding, briefly worked as a cameraman in Salinas, and after being described as “one of the best hires made in 25 years,” ultimately found his long-term professional home at KCRA in Sacramento.

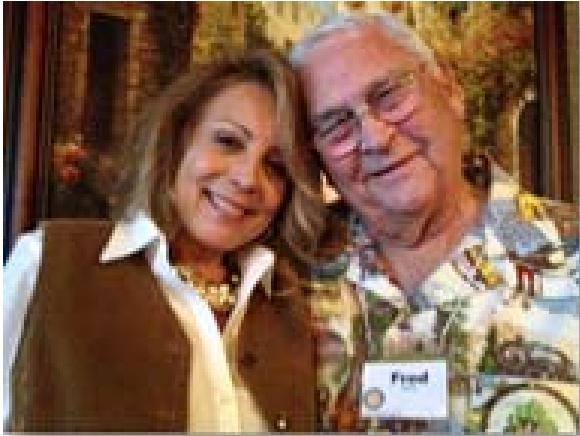
Until his retirement in 2017, Bill worked alongside his friends at KCRA as a news photographer, microwave and satellite truck operator, and news editor. His colleagues have shared he was “not only an excellent videographer and whiz with the live truck, but was an outstanding contributor to all phases of our news operation.” Many tales of his professionalism, kindness, and his affable nature were shared during the weeks prior to his death.

Throughout his career, Bill documented countless Sierra Nevada snowstorms, covered the funerals of Presidents Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, and provided national coverage on the untimely death of Sonny Bono. He helped Mark Felt confirm his identity to the world as “Deep Throat” and even traveled inside the border of North Korea during the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. He often marveled that a farm kid from Wyoming would find himself present at these moments of historical significance.

Per Bill's wishes, no services will be held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to a charity of your choice.



Fred Harris: 1936-2025



Fred Harris catches up with Bette Vasquez at a VBL meeting.

Retired KCRA engineer, live truck and satellite truck operator, and VBL member **Fred Harris** died from congestive heart failure October 23rd in his Orangevale home at the age of 88.

Fred was involved in the building and operation of the first microwave truck, Live Camera 3, at KCRA. To say that truck was a real Rube Goldberg design would be an understatement. Legend **Ward Koppel** remembers Fred as one of many mentors he had during his days as an intern at KCRA. "I think those that knew him would say it was hard, if not impossible, to fluster him. I remember doing a technically complicated microwave shot from the 16th floor of the Water Resources building. We used a

shoebox microwave to shoot the signal out a window down to the truck on the street. There was just one spot near that building where we had a path back to the receiver site and it meant parking the live truck in the crosswalk. A few minutes before our hit, Parking Enforcement came by and ordered Fred to move the truck or it would be towed. Fred just went about his business and said, 'Just make sure you order a heavy duty tow; this rig weighs about 8,000 pounds.'"

Ward also recalls a running joke among KCRA staff came from a promo done on Live Camera 3. "The final shot was of the Live Truck garage door closing, and a voice saying 'Goodnight Fred' followed by the sound of a dog barking in the distance. I wonder if he got tired of us always saying, 'Goodnight Fred, (woof woof)' to him."

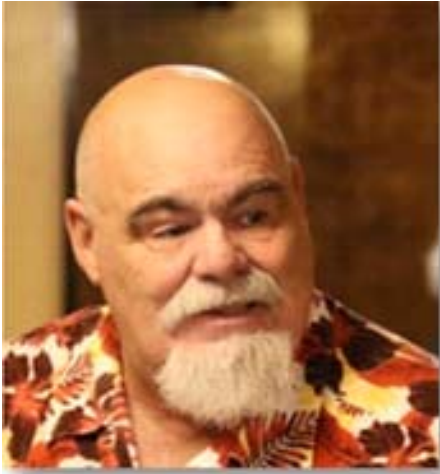
In retirement Fred spent a lot of time in his shop doing woodworking. Granddaughter **Samantha Kathleen Porter** says, "He made most of the furniture in their house, and my mom's and uncle's and a good percent of mine and my siblings." I gave him a lot of lumber that my dad had stockpiled in my parents' garage, and he turned some of it into a beautiful file stand for me. A reminder for me of both my dad and Fred.

Samantha says he also enjoyed being a part of Valley Broadcast Legends. "Oh how I loved hearing about the Legends meetings! He affectionately called it the 'Old Timers Club,' but would scoff at the idea of himself being old until the day he died. Please pass on all the Harris love." Rest in peace. Goodnight Fred, (woof woof).

Fred Harris operating an early version of Live Camera 3 back in the day.



Mike Giuliano: 1951-2025



News has reached VBL of the death of Legend **Mike Giuliano**. Little else is known. After diligent searching, your newsletter editor was unable to locate anything in the way of an online obituary.

From his Facebook page, we know that Mike is a native of Stockton, graduated from Stagg High School, and attended CSU-Sacramento. He worked as a DJ at KJOY and as a satellite truck operator for KOVR. Later in life, he had a second career as a real estate agent, a notary, and a retirement planner. He joined VBL, served as vice-president during Jim Drennan's tenure, and regularly attended our meetings during the Club Pheasant years.

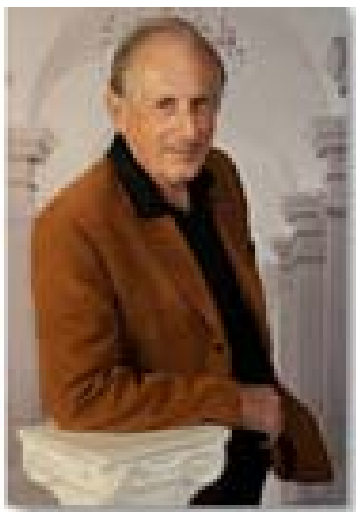
Colleagues from Mike's days at KOVR posted condolences on his Facebook page. "You were a great KOVR colleague. Lots of fun times covering the news." "He was a fun guy to work with and he had a great sense of humor." "A lovely man." "A good guy."

He is survived by his wife, Jan, and a daughter, Misty Giuliano Fogerty.

Mike with the KOVR team in front of the satellite truck in 1992.



Fred Harbott: 1942-2025



Former KCRA newscast director **Fred Harbott** passed away October 19 at the age of 83. Besides newscasts, he also directed *Weeknight* and was producer/director of *Ron Schmeck's Easy Livin' Country*, a country music show produced at KCRA in the late 1970s and early 80s.

Following his career at KCRA, Fred worked for two state agencies. He was a motion picture specialist for the Employment Development Department for 15 years. In 2005, he joined the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation as a television director, retiring in 2014.

After retirement, Fred volunteered his time and talent, helping with camera work for large events like the Medal of Valor.

Details as to services were not available at the time of this writing.

Six Meetings or Four? You Decide!

Your VBL board is considering reducing the number of meetings in 2026 from six to four. Why, you may ask? There's a strong feeling that with meetings once a quarter instead of every-other-month, we'll be able to offer programs that are "spectacular," as one officer put it. We are all volunteers with limited time. And let's face it, we're not as young as we once were. Quite frankly, planning six programs a year is putting a strain on all of us.

But, this is not a decision we are taking lightly. VBL has been meeting every even-numbered month since our very first year in 2001. The board definitely wants to know what **you** think. When you RSVP for the December 9 luncheon, please let Allen know how you feel about this. Don't be shy! If you think it's a terrible idea, say so. If you love it, say so.

This leads up to an obvious point. We could really use some new, fresh faces on the VBL board. If you have a few hours a month that you could donate to VBL, especially when it comes to planning those "spectacular" programs, we would really appreciate your participation.



Meet Our New Member

Say hello to our newest member, **Jeff March**. Jeff worked at several Sacramento area stations early in his career, including KROY and KNDE when they ruled the Top 40 airwaves. He is the author of a series of books, *Where Have All the Pop Stars Gone?* From 1994 to 2025, he was the co-owner of EditPros, a copyediting and proofreading service in Davis. Jeff tells us, "My career highlights were defined by the people with whom I was fortunate enough to work. In Sacramento they included **Dave Williams, Chuck Roy (Charles Gratner), Don Christie (Dave Hinton), Terry Nelson, Steve Moore, Hal Murray, Bill Stukaloff, Norton Spitzer, Mike Hamiel** and others."

Congrats, George!

VBL member **George Nyberg** recently scored his first hole-in-one at Antelope Greens golf course. What made it extra-special was that he was playing with his son, Bobby, and grandson, Levi. He used a lob wedge on hole #7, a 77-yard par 3 island hole.

Let us know about your accomplishments and we'll make note of it in a future VBL newsletter.

**Stock Up on
VBL Swag!**

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boutique](https://shop.spreadshirt.com/vbl-boutique)