

# VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #122 *"Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media"*

August 2021

## In-Person in August? Not Happening!

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**



I can think of a whole host of sayings as I sit down to write this President's Letter: "These are the times that try men's souls," "These are the times that try meeting planners' sanity," "To Zoom or not to Zoom," "To meet or not to meet," etc. etc. ad nauseam.

Just a few weeks ago, we were all excited about the Grand Reopening, a time when the COVID vaccines would make it possible for kids to go back to school, sports fans to go back to the stadiums, barflies to go back to their stools, diners to go back to intimate restaurants.

In keeping with this, we were planning to go back to the Club Pheasant for our Valley Broadcast Legends luncheon after months of stay-at-home meetings by Zoom; Zoom is fine, but there's no substitute for in-person, in-your-face contact. Our next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 12. Fine and dandy.

We all know what happened next. Thanks to all those wonderful folks who refuse to get vaccinated, the rate of COVID infections has started to rise again. The highly contagious delta variant is extremely worrisome. Yolo County, where the Club Pheasant is located, has reinstated its order requiring the wearing of masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

We began hearing from some of you expressing concerns as to the advisability of meeting in-person, given all the troubling announcements coming from the CDC. We double-checked with the Club Pheasant and

was told that yes, they were still prepared to welcome us back on August 12. Still, the doubts and uncertainty mounted. Finally, the VBL board held an emergency meeting this afternoon (August 1) and with great reluctance decided to cancel the August 12 meeting. We debated options, including requiring members to show proof of vaccination to gain entrance to the meeting, but finally decided the only prudent course of action was to not meet at all.

We're especially sad about this as this gathering was to be VBL's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. **Joyce Krieg**—our newsletter editor from Day One, never once missing a deadline—was putting together a multimedia presentation on the history of the club. And Secretary **Allen Chamberlin** had volunteered to order and deliver a cake, complete with the VBL logo. Now we're hoping we can move our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration to the annual holiday luncheon in December.

And even though we're canceling the August meeting, we're determined to have one in October ... preferably at the Club Pheasant but if not, by Zoom. We'll be mostly

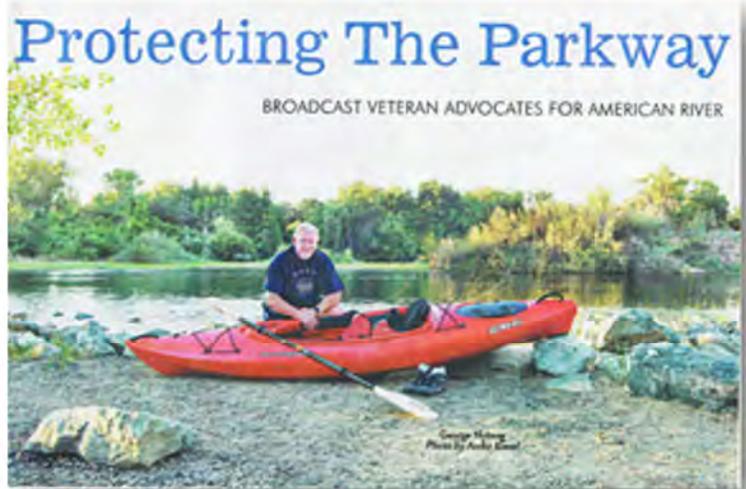
talking politics ... the results of the **Gavin Newsom** recall effort and the progress so far of the Biden agenda ... infrastructure, voting rights, etc. We'll feature an all-star lineup of presenters: **Steve Kornacki** of MSNBC, **Steve Swatt** of KXTV/10 and KCRA/3, and **Dr. Barbara O'Connor**, emeritus professor at CSUS. It promises to be timely and lively.

Think a good thought and in the meantime, wear a mask, wash your hands frequently, and if you have a friend or relative who refuses to get vaccinated—try to talk some sense into them!



## Nyberg in the News

Kudos to VBL member **George Nyberg**, whose dedication in protecting the American River Parkway was featured in a recent edition of *Inside East Sacramento*. George is on the board of the Save the American River Association (SARA) and is an avid hiker, jogger and kayaker. He especially enjoys watching the wildlife and calls the parkway a “zoo without fences.” With 40 years of experience in film and video production, it’s only natural that George often brings his camera to capture on video egrets, herons, river otters and more.



## Out of This World June Zoom Meeting

### Officers

**President:** Jim Drennan

**Vice President:** Michael Guiliano

**Treasurer:** Ron Middlekauff

**Secretary:** Allen Chamberlin

**Directors:** Kristine Hanson,  
Walt Shaw

**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



We were inspired and entertained at the June VBL Zoom meeting as former astronaut and Stockton native **José M. Hernández** told us how he rose from being the child of migrant farmworkers to serving on the crew of the space shuttle in 2009. The very essence of a high-achiever, he’s also a motivational speaker, an author, the owner of an engineering firm, and a vintner. His life story is being developed into a Netflix feature film.

For us broadcasters, the highlight of the presentation may have been when José shared childhood memories of him and his dad both crushing on KCRA weathercaster **Bette Vasquez**.

Thank you **Rich Ibarra** for arranging for this excellent program.

# “All in the Family”

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**

A celebration of life will be held at the V.A. Hall in Folsom on Saturday, Sept. 4, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. for **Mel Boyd**, who lived life to the fullest during his 74 years. Mel died of brain cancer on June 26.

Mel spent much of his career at KCRA/3, where he started out as a delivery driver in 1970 and worked his way up to being a star photographer (and world traveler) for the *Weeknight* show. After he left KCRA in 1983, he started his own production company doing features, films and commercials. A veteran of the Air Force in Vietnam, Mel always had an interest in veterans' affairs. As a member of Vietnam Veterans of America, he created a video on You Tube to promote federal funding for victims of PTSD (from which Mel suffered). One of the projects closest to his heart was recording the stories of Air Force fighter pilots. Mel served on the VBL board for several years, starting in 2013, then left to devote his time to recording the pilots' stories while they were still living.

Mel earned his BA in communications from CSUS. In his infrequent spare time, he enjoyed rock-and-roll music, guitars, classic cars and serving his fellow veterans. He and his wife Linda shared 54 years of marriage and raised two daughters and a son; they had eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

If you're planning to attend the celebration of life on Sept. 4, you are asked to RSVP at (916) 988-8596.



**Mel Boyd**



**Fred Zehnder**

\*\*\*  
 “A unique soul with a great personality and an amazing sense of humor, diligent and caring.”.... words more likely to describe a saint than a TV news director, right? But those are the words used to describe the late **Fred Zehnder**, who died on June 27 at the age of 87. He was killed by a truck driver, believed to be under the influence, while taking his regular evening walk on the streets of Alameda.

Fred was one of those guys who took newscasting seriously, giving his reporters enough time to tell their stories and mentoring them while ... and after ... they worked for him. His most notable stint was as news director at

Oakland's KTVU from 1975 to 1999. Before that, he worked at KPIX, KOVR and KGO. After he left broadcasting, he stayed in journalism as the editor-in-chief of two Bay Area newspapers, the *San Leandro Times* and the *Castro Valley Forum*.

\*\*\*

Speaking of long and distinguished careers, consider the case of Legend **Ward Koppel**, who retired on July 16 after 42 years in the business.

It all began in September 1975, when Ward started working at the campus radio station KUOP; he was graduated from UOP in 1979. In September of that year he was hired as production assistant on KCRA/3's *Weeknight* show. The next year, KCRA assigned him to create a 6:30 a.m. newscast. In September 1989, KOVR/13 hired him to produce

# The Legends

Membership as of July 29, 2021

John Archer • Julie Archer  
 Jay “DJ Jay” Arnold • Stan Atkinson  
 Linda Bayley • Vic Biondi  
 Bill Bishofberger • Thomas Blazowski  
 Matias Bombal • Tom Buck  
 Allen Chamberlin • Don Chandler  
 Mark Chiolis • Chris Cochran  
 Jim Drennan • Claire Elliott • Curt Foley  
 Vicki Fox • Gary Gerould  
 Dennis Grayson • Cyndy Green  
 Michael Guiliano • Kristine Hanson  
 Bud Harmon • Fred Harris • Jerry Henry  
 Betsy Hite • Rich Ibarra • 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  
 Keith Moon • Ray Nelson  
 George Nyberg • John D. O'Brien  
 Alan Oda • Deborah Pacyna  
 Mary Jane Popp • Tiffany Powell  
 Craig Prosser • Rich Raymond  
 Bruce Riggs • Jay Rudin Beth Ruyak  
 Bill Schmechel • Walt Shaw • Dann Shively  
 Barbara Souza • Roy Stearns • Barry Stigers  
 Bob Suffel • Steve Swatt  
 Gregory VanAcker • Gregory Virtue  
 Tom Wagner • Frank Wallace • Marla Wells  
 Adrian Woodfork • Dennis Yoder  
 Jan Young



Continued on next page

## “All in the Family”

Continued from previous page

and expand its 6:30 a.m. newscast and in December 2005 he began a 13-year stint at KXTV/10. At 10 he performed a number of duties, including running the assignment desk and producing.

He married co-worker **Cindy Nevils** in 1978. Cindy retired the same day as Ward after working at KCRA/3 as an editor and archivist. They have two children, son Adam, who's in IT for Workers Comp, and daughter Hillary, a director at KXTV/10. Their granddaughter Harper is currently unemployed, but she's only two years old. Give her time!

\*\*\*

A remarkable man will be remembered on Sunday afternoon, Sept. 19, at the Firehouse Courtyard in Sacramento. The service, delayed by the Covid pandemic, will honor **Lawrence (Larry) Haskel Fein**, who passed away on Sept. 23, 2020. Larry was the husband of Legend and former KCRA/3 photo journalist **Anita Fein**.

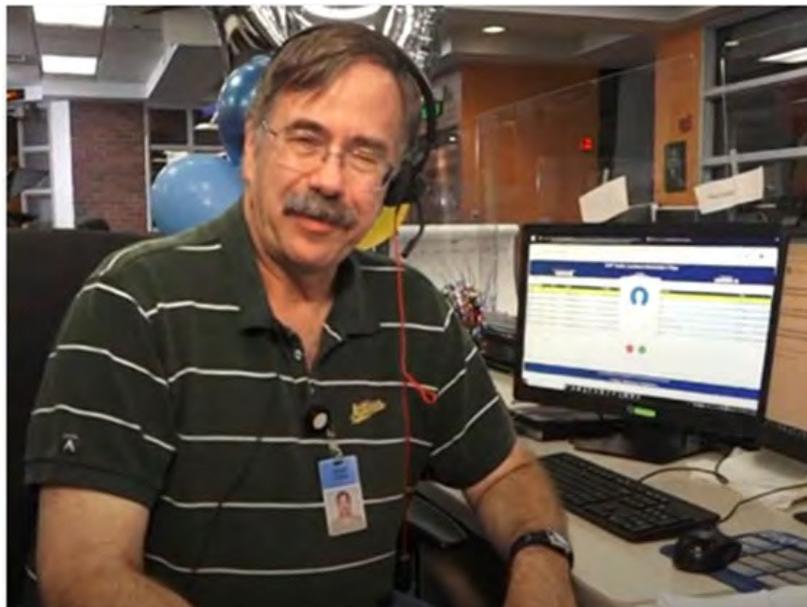
Larry was graduated from UCLA and passed the California Bar in 1967. Larry, Anita and son Aaron moved to Sacramento later that year; Larry went to work for the California Legislative Counsel Bureau. By January 1975, Larry was working up to 80 hours a week writing legal opinions and drafting bills during the era of Prop. 13. One morning he suffered chest pains while riding his bike to work. He was seen at a hospital ER and sent home with medication for muscle spasms. The pain continued and on the third visit to the ER an EKG revealed he had suffered a massive heart attack resulting in the death of one-third of the left ventricle of his heart.

Larry and his attorney sued the Permanente Medical Group for medical malpractice and prevailed. After ten years of appeals, the case was finally decided by the U. S. Supreme Court, and directly impacted the standard of care for chest pain management in emergency rooms throughout the U. S.

After healing from the heart attack, Larry returned to work at the Legislative Counsel Bureau on a three-quarter time basis. But ultimately, his damaged heart failed and he received a transplant in 1990. Unfortunately, the transplant failed and he had to undergo a second transplant in 1998. This one worked.

Despite his heart problems and damaged hips, Larry and wife Anita led an active life, seeing and enjoying much of the world and doing volunteer work.

As Anita puts it: “Larry’s courage, his love of life and gentle kindness were an inspiration to all who knew him.”

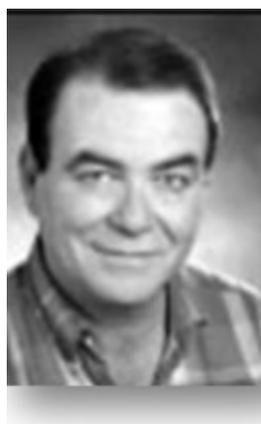


Ward Koppel on his last day at the assignment desk at ABC10.

Larry is survived by his wife Anita, his sons Jordan and Aaron, and three grandchildren.

\*\*\*

We would also like to mark the passing of local radio personality **Don Wright** in Roseville at the age of 72. He is



Don Wright

best remembered as the force behind the creation of KSFM Earth Radio 102 in 1974, competing with KZAP for the ears of thousands of young Sacramentans tuning in to underground FM radio. Don later worked at KSJO in San Jose as well as Sacramento stations KXOA, KNDE, KZAP, KGNR, KFBK, KROY, the Point, and KERS. And Don was an on-air talent at KNX-FM in Los Angeles and KCBS-FM San Francisco. More recently it was a DJ on internet station Planet Pootwaddle, which calls itself, “Your Magic Brownie of the Airwaves.”

Throughout his career, Don helped many youngsters get their start in broadcasting. One of these was a whippersnapper named **Rush Limbaugh** at KFBK. Don was the original producer/call screener for Rush’s show until **Kitty O’Neal** came on board.

# COVID Year: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

by Ellie Kuechler-VanAcker

Haven't ever had a year so full of extremes—I was worried, frustrated, angry, amazed, amused, grateful. Sometimes all in the same day.

You already know all too well the bad (illness, death, and hardship on an unimagined scale) and you know the ugly (some of our fellow Americans are idiots), yet some good things came from our COVID Year. I binged the Great British Baking show, bought flour, sugar, and butter in bulk, and got a lot of baking done. Bulk's the word — we didn't gain the entire COVID 19 pounds. Gained a few.

I wrote a note for Greg [husband **Greg VanAcker**] to take into the bank, “One Hundred and Fifty dollars in small bills, please,” then watched as he donned mask, gloves, and note to go into Wells Fargo. We're lucky they didn't ring the direct line to the police for a robbery in progress! Once home, I cleaned our cash in the washing machine and hung them outside to dry. Remember, we didn't know then how the disease was spread. We became money launderers. Went through a case of Clorox wipes—bet you did, too.

We felt bad for the neighborhood kids on Halloween, so we created a new tradition: went from house to house getting the kids' names and noting their favorite candy, then on Halloween delivered personalized treat bags to them all. Liked it so much, we might do it again.

Got to really slow down and fall in love with Greg again. He's great company in an emergency, tells me a new joke at least once a day, and we kept each other laughing. With time on our hands, we engaged in no-guilt binge-watching. Never watched *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* before, and it turns out it's our favorite of the entire genre because Sisko is the best captain. Plus,

every single *Perry Mason*. Love the cars, the clothes, and the first roles for many actors who later made it big. And we have a new drinking game: take a sip every time a young reporter on a live shot begins her report with the word, “Yeah.”

We have an exhausting new job: babysitting our granddaughters 2-3 days a week. We've really gotten to know them, are grateful we can help the kids, but when our son kept the baby one day instead of bringing her over, I yelled to Greg, “Snow Day!”

Zoom meetings turned out not so bad. Participants seem more polite than at in-person meetings. The “Chat” feature is the new way to pass notes in class. And the few people who show up on camera naked or worse are hilariously outed on Reddit before the meeting is over (No one I know.)

It was a good year to be retired for me. It was a good year to master on-line teaching for Greg. Both our sons kept their jobs; great relief. A day trip to take a walk on a beach became the biggest event of the week. Local take-out really stepped up, making portions big enough for two meals. Facebook became the way to communicate. Walking the dog around the block was an outing. It was weird, worrisome year, and it ain't over yet. We'll continue to see how things work out.



# Memories of Happier Times



Ah, yes, remember a time when we could actually meet in person at a restaurant? Stand less than six feet apart? Go out in public without a mask? Now those days feel like a lifetime ago. Your editor is not sure when this group photo in front of the Club Pheasant was taken, but it's obviously a warm weather month, judging by all the shorts and t-shirts. The photo's date stamp says August of 2020, but obviously that cannot be right.

## History on Your Bumper



Some 40 years of KFBK history, captured in bumper stickers through the decades, starting at top left. From the collection of Pat Walsh, host of KFBK's evening sports talk show.

**“Got Merch?”**

For all your  
VBL logo swag needs,  
shop the VBL Boutique.  
[https://  
shop.spreadshirt.com/  
vbl-boutique](https://shop.spreadshirt.com/vbl-boutique)

”