

VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #141 “Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media”

October 2024

October 8 • Aviator’s Restaurant at Executive Airport • Doors open 11 a.m. • Lunch service at 11:30

We’re Talking Politics on October 8

VBL’s October meeting is traditionally devoted to politics during an election year, and this year’s presidential race promises to be one for the record books. VP **Bud Kress** has put together a stellar panel of experts: veteran political analyst **Steve Swatt**, KCRA capitol correspondent **Ashley Zavala**, and “another special guest to be announced.” Stay tuned for details when they become available in the K-VBL newsroom!



Steve is a VBL member who has graced our stage in numerous past pre-election programs. In 1979, he became KCRA’s Capitol and political correspondent reporting on every major ballot proposition, issues in the state legislature, as well as state and national elections. This included exclusive interviews with presidential nominees during a twelve year period and every California governor. After leaving KCRA, Steve worked as a public affairs executive, providing strategic media relations and political counsel. He is the author of two acclaimed books on California political history, *Game Changers: Twelve Elections that Transformed California* and *Paving the Way: Women’s Struggle for Political Equality in California*.

Ashley joined KCRA-3 after working as the state capitol bureau reporter for Nexstar Media Group. She started her career at KOMU-TV in Columbia, Missouri, then worked as a news and sports reporter at multiple outlets in Columbia and Jefferson City. Since coming to California, Zavala has been a member of the Capitol Correspondents Association and she was recently elected president of the organization. She is also on the board of directors for the Sacramento Press Club. Ashley is the recipient of multiple journalism honors, including two regional Edward R. Murrow awards.



Our October political panels have always been lively and informative, and this year’s is sure to deliver. That’s Tuesday, October 8, at Aviator’s

Restaurant at Sacramento

Executive Airport. Doors open

at 11:00 a.m., with buffet lunch service starting at 11:30. As always, RSVPs are a must. Our host, Chik, requires a head count one week in advance, so please contact Alln on or before October 1.

**RSVP for the October 8 Meeting:
Allen Chamberlin: 916/456-7654**

VBL-geek@theguys.org

Cost: \$30 payable at the door. Cash or check only!

Reservations required by Oct. 1!

Friends, Colleagues Honor Ken Day



It was a KOVR reunion when friends and colleagues of Ken Day gathered for his celebration of life September 6 at Maidu Community Center. Ken was a long-time KOVR photographer who died in February after a long battle with Multiple Myeloma. Thank you Ward Koppel for sharing the photograph.

Meet Our New Members

Greg Popejoy started his radio career by running a pirate radio station while still a teenager. He then moved on to the Sacramento State University station KERS and KOBO in Yuba City. He was a guest DJ on KZAP during its underground radio days. From 1987 to 2007 he worked in an environmental agency for the state. He is now a producer for Access Sacramento, a position he has held since 2007.

New member **Gary Popejoy** has had quite a career in country music in Redding, having worked as DJ at HankFM, AM600, KCNQ and KCLM. He's been profiled in *Country Music Magazine* and *the Redding Record-Searchlight*, emceed most of the country music acts that passed through Redding, and also emceed the annual Redding Christmas parade. Gary became friends with many of the country music stars that he met "mostly due to being a regular, not star-struck, guy who would take them fishing, golfing, or whatever they wanted to do."

It's always gratifying when a guest speaker has such a great time with us that they decide to join VBL, and that's exactly what happened with our August presenter, **Carla Henson**. Carla kept us entertained with insider stories of her years working for Tower Records.

Officers

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Secretary: Allen Chamberlin

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Kristine Hanson, Ward Koppel

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VALLEY BROADCAST
LEGENDS

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President's Message:

Election Day Memories

by VBL President **Bill George**



Election day!

Those two words stir massive excitement in newsrooms across America.

Election day is a supreme challenge for radio and T.V. newsrooms. I worked for four news organizations, and each spent countless hours, time, and huge amounts of money in the race to be the first with election results. The stakes were highest in the quadrennial presidential elections, but

even “off-year” elections required major efforts.

What’s remarkable is that the entire station, not just the newsroom, was involved. Admins and staff from other departments helped collect the vote, and as a reward were treated to pizza and soft drinks. Stringers were employed to go to county seats in remote counties and phone in results as fast as possible, and it’s an unfounded scurrilous rumor that bourbon was pulled out of desk drawers late that night!

It seemed like every year, an expensive and sophisticated new software system was installed. Bright new graphics spun out the raw numbers and percentages as pundits opined on their mystical meanings. Reporters and live trucks were stationed at key campaign headquarters. Usually candidates did not emerge until the race was declared, but supporters were more than willing to fill the time explaining why their candidate would win.

Since the political parties gathered in L.A., satellite feeds were arranged from there. Reporters, arrayed on a tiered set of bleachers, delivered live reports from the back of the grand ballrooms. A hundred little dramas played out as the evening wore on—some county would go dark, a computer would freeze up, a live truck lost its signal. But it was fun and exhilarating, and the long hours passed in the twinkling of an eye. The night came to an end, the winners buoyant, the losers disconsolate. The lights and tripods came down, and the lights in the great halls and the small watering spots blinked off. Like Brigadoon, it all vanished for another few years, only to return with even faster computer systems.

Our October meeting will be about the current election, but I hope you will come prepared with your stories. You may consider bringing an old press pass or election mementos. As long as elections are fun, democracy will thrive

The Legends

Membership as of Sept. 21, 2024

John Archer • Julie Archer
 Jay “DJ Jay” Arnold • Stan Atkinson
 Mark Baggs • Vic Biondi • Bill Bishofberger
 Thomas Blazowski • Matias Bombal
 Tom Buck • Allen Chamberlin
 Mark Chiolis • Tim Church
 Tony Cox • Judi Decker • Anita Fein
 Curt Foley • Vicki Fox • Bill George
 Gary Gerould • Marty Gonzalez
 Henry Grambergu • Dennis Grayson
 Cyndy Green • Michael Guiliano
 Kristine Hanson • Bud Harmon
 Lois Hart • Mark Hedlund • Jerry Henry
 Carla Henson • Lizann Hunt • Rich Ibarra
 Tip Kindel • Jan “Neely” Klevan
 Kim Kline • Cindy Koppel
 Ward Koppel • Bud Kress • Bill Kreutzer
 Joyce Krieg • Eleanor Kuechler-VanAcker
 Bob Lang • Dick Leeson • Mike Luery
 Jeanne Marie • Lizette Martinez- Hopkins
 Michael McCarron • Michael Messmer
 Dana Michaels • Mike Montgomery
 Keith Moon • Ray Nelson
 George Nyberg • John D. O’Brien
 Sandy Ofsenek Helland • Sue Peppers
 Gary Popejoy • Greg Popejoy
 Mary Jane Popp • Craig Prosser
 Bruce Riggs • Jay Rudin
 Bill Schmechel • Walt Shaw • Dann Shively
 Barbara Souza • Roy Stearns
 Jim Stimson • Steve Swatt
 Gregory VanAcker • Gregory Virtue
 Tom Wagner • Dave Walker
 Marla Wells • Dave Williams
 Dennis Yoder • Steve Zraggen



Member Hobbies: Meet the FunBuggy

by VBL Board Member **Ward Koppel**

When is a Dune Buggy not a Dune Buggy? When it's a FunBuggy. A FunBuggy has been in the lives of Valley Broadcast Legend Secretary **Allen Chamberlin, Joe Shields** and **David Waling** for 16 years.

What is a FunBuggy? To the casual observer it looks like a Dune Buggy. But due to another manufacturer holding the trademark for the Dune Buggy name, the maker had to use another name for the fiberglass body shells they were marketing. Allen's FunBuggy has a DNA profile that includes Sacramento and German heritage. The chassis started out under the body of a Volkswagen Bug that rolled off a West German assembly plant in 1962.

But life as a VW Bug ended a few years later in a traffic collision. The fiberglass body was made right here in Sacramento at Allied Fiberglass on North B Street. Allen and Joe's neighbor, **Jim Locke**, and Jim's dad brought the fiberglass body and chassis together in 1967 when Jim was in his late teens. Surgery was needed on the Volkswagen chassis. It was shortened by 16 inches to fit the body.

Jim enjoyed the FunBuggy for many years, but then it sat in a shed for 20 years, unused. That shed was between Jim's and Allen's house, and time was taking its toll on the structure. A board fell off the shed, making the Gold Metal Flake FunBuggy visible. Dave saw it, and asked Jim if he wanted to sell it. He did not, and he cautioned it needed to be completely rebuilt to be drivable again.

Years passed, and as Jim's health declined, Allen shared many meals with him. Then on Christmas Eve 2008 at dinner, Jim put the keys and the pink slip on the table and said "If you want it, it's yours."



You supply the chassis, we supply the body. That's how it worked at Allied Fiberglass as they capitalized on the Dune Buggy fad of the late 1960s.



"Hey kid, you got a license to drive that thing?" Everyone, it seems, wants to take a spin in the FunBuggy. That includes Allen's neighbor Dylan, who thinks this cool car ought to belong to him.

Allen says it did need a complete mechanical rebuild: engine, wiring, electrical system upgraded from 6 volt to 12 volt. The mechanics at Kombi Haus brought it back to life, along with the help of the owners and their friends, **Ken Montgomery** and **Richard Lopes**.

Amazingly, the fiberglass body was still sound. When the restoration was done, Allen let Jim drive his teenage dream car again. Since then, Allen, Joe and Dave have enjoyed driving the FunBuggy, and getting thumbs up from a diverse group of people they pass. The FunBuggy has even made a couple of trips to Burning Man, as an art car dressed up like a lady bug. Once a bug, always a bug ... or a FunBuggy.



Bob Miller: 1931-2024

by \Bob Androvich

Editor's Note: Bob Androvich was a long-time friend and fine art colleague of our own Bob Miller.

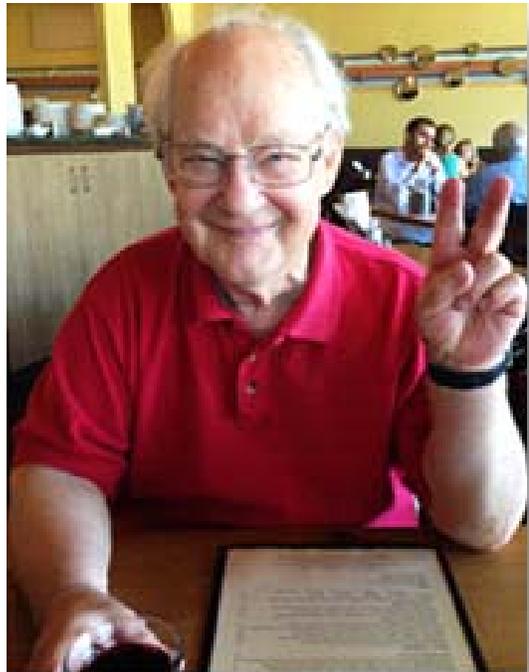
Sacramento lost another Legend of Broadcasting when **Bob Miller** passed away in early September. Legend? Bob began his television career in 1954, as art director at KTVU Channel 36, in Stockton. Here are a few brief tales from his life that go to the heart of this kind, gentle, humble, sweet, smart, talented man.

“Being involved in the birth of television didn’t seem like a big deal then, but looking back, it amazes me: Everything was so new, experimental and live!”

One of Bob’s jobs at KTVU [Editor’s note: this was several years before the KTVU call letters were assigned to Channel 2 out of Oakland] was a weekly appearance of “Magic Jeannie,” a daily, half-hour show for children.

Appearing as “Uncle Bobby,” Bob would show the children in the audience how to draw a character, usually an animal like “Elmer the Elephant.” As he drew, he told a story about Elmer. He’d ask the kids at home to send in their drawings of the character. They’d receive upwards of a THOUSAND drawings a week! Bob and Jeannie would pick out the ten best and the winners would appear on the show and pick out prizes from the show’s sponsor, Lyman Cox’s Toy Shop. A drawing from an 11 year-old Sacramento boy, Michael Dunlavey, was chosen. His parents drove him to Stockton to the show. He lost first place—on the flip of a coin—but he didn’t care: he got to meet his hero, Uncle Bobby.

Fast forward about 15 years: Michael Dunlavey had a one-man show at Town and Country Village. Bob Miller came to the show. Mike had known of Bob and his work. Bob was telling Mike of his background and he mentioned the Magic Jeannie Show. Mike couldn’t believe it! “YOU’RE UNCLE BOBBY!!!!



Bob Miller: Continued from previous page

Bob went on from KTVU to KCRA TV in Sacramento. He got the Art Director position by correctly identifying the KCRA logo's font at the end of his interview. Of the time Bob spent at KCRA, Stan Atkinson remembered:

"...a small, perpetual flash of human activity. A manner of speech that was often as rapid ... and all coming from an always upbeat and positive life-force. Amazing, considering what he was always asked to do. Bob, as a wizard of show cards and rubber cement, could get virtually anything done that was needed for the TV screen in record time and with a First Class look."

After 10 years at Channel 3, Bob joined **Fred Wade**, another KCRA alumni, at his advertising agency. Wade and Associates enjoyed serving some of the largest firms in town: Channel 3, Crystal Creamery, Blue Diamond, River City Bank. They were tremendously busy. After one long day, Bob and Pete Higgins, the Sales Rep for the company, raided Fred's Tanqueray gin and downed most of its contents. They went to the store, bought some cheap hootch and poured in into the Tanqueray bottle. A couple days later, one of their good clients strolled into the office at the end of the day looking to have a drink with Fred. Fred was gone, so the client helped himself and sat down with Bob. After a couple sips, he said, "Bobby, today's been so crappy even Fred's gin tastes bad."

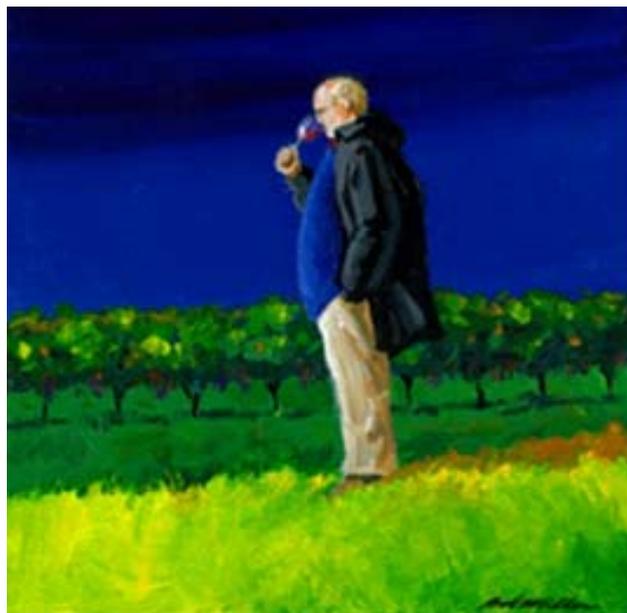
Bob's illustrious career in commercial art ended around 2000. He moved on to painting iconic Sacramento landmarks—restaurants; bars; neon signs—and established a huge following for his pieces. He worked extremely fast and sold out nearly every piece at every show he attended. His pricing was extremely fair—for the buyer. He and Anita knew what people would want to pay and it was hugely successful. Through a friend he once was given a commission—from a zillionaire collector in Florida—to paint a four-by-five foot rendering of the Torch Club neon sign. Knowing Bob's low pricing, the friend suggested \$3,500, hoping to possibly boost Bob's income. At that point, the friend turned the Floridian over to Bob to finish details for payment and shipping.

A few days later Bob and his friend met for lunch. "How'd the Torch Club commission go?" asked the friend.

"Oh, it's done. I shipped it off yesterday."

"How about that price! That must set a high for you!"

"Oh, I sold it for \$1500. That's what I'd charge! She was very happy."



Bob Miller.
RIP

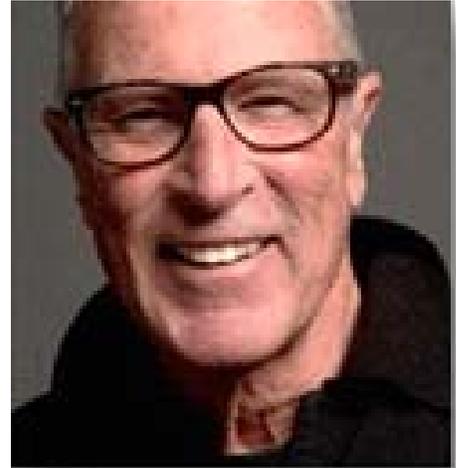
Kenneth “Kenny” Wardell: 1947-2024

Kenny Wardell was one of the original KZAP air personalities back in the underground radio days of the late 1960s. He started his radio career at KERS, the student radio station at Sacramento State University, and in 1969 became part of the staff at KZAP. Ken quickly rose to the position of Music Director.

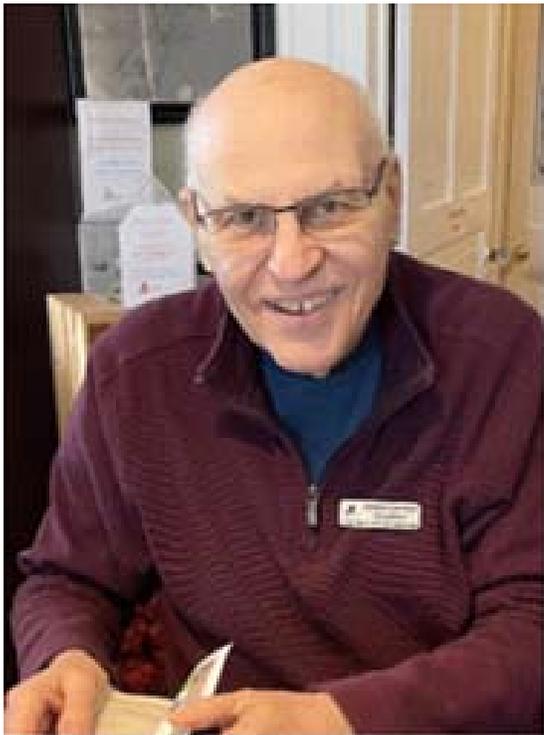
Colleague Robert Williams recalls, “In those days, KZAP was barely hanging on financially and technically. But we all knew KZAP was something special, and it became just that!”

As Music Director, Ken became noticed by the record companies, and in 1972 was lured away by RCA to become their Northern California sales rep. Later, he went back to radio and worked at San Francisco radio stations KSAN, KMEL, KCBS and KFOG. He was the Promotion Director for KTVU=Channel 2, did promotions for the 49ers, and in 2018 brought back the BAMMIES (Bay Area Music Awards). He has been inducted into the Bay Area Radio Hall of Fame.

Kenny Wardell leaves his wife Lizette and sons Kenny Jr. and Justin



Dennis “Denny” Grayson: 1944-2024



VBL member Dennis “Denny” Grayson passed away of a massive heart attack on August 23. After graduating from the University of Dayton, Ohio, he served his country as a medic in the U.S. Air Force, while also pursuing his love of television. After putting in his time at a number of Midwest TV stations, he landed a gig at KCRA, where he spent many years as a writer, producer and director. In his “off” hours, he created his own action, sci-fi, martial arts and adventure productions and books. From September 2, 2008 until March 26, 2014, he was a branch director in the Rocklin Police and Volunteer Department, where he created training videos.

Denny’s last residence was in Fort Mill, South Carolina, where he volunteered at the Fort Mill History Museum.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Margaret “Peggy” Grayson, and a daughter, Heather. A celebration of Denny’s life was held at Palmetto Funeral Home on, September 15.

Aloha from VBL's August Meeting



VP **Bud Kress's** idea of a luau/beach party theme at our August 13 meeting proved to be a big hit with the Legends. **Carla Henson** kept us entertained with her insider tales of working at the West Sacramento headquarters of Tower Records during the height of its popularity. Photos by **Matias Bombal**.

Show and Tell



In case you missed it in President Bill George's column, we're suggesting you wear or bring your political campaign media credentials or other election memorabilia to the October 8 meeting. Let's rekindle those memories of election nights of long ago, and have some fun!

Stock up on Swag!

VBL logo mugs, t-shirts, caps and more:
<https://shop.spreadshirt.com/vbl-boutique>



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VasleyBroadcastLegends>