

# VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #144 *"Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media"*

April 2025

April 8 • Old Spaghetti Factory, Rancho Cordova • Doors open 11:30 a.m. • Lunch service at 11:45



See Page 2  
for Details!

## VBL's April Meeting – Play Ball!



VBL's April 8 meeting will feature **Chris Townsend**, host and senior broadcast producer for Sacramento's latest major league sports team, the West Sacramento Athletics.

Chris enters his seventh season of being responsible for creating and delivering multimedia A's content across multiple platforms. He hosts the weekly talk show, A's Cast Live, and the A's pre-game and post-game shows on both TV and radio. When it comes to covering the A's, Chris has done it all.

Our guest speaker joined the A's after working for a number of local sports entities, including Oakland Raiders, 95.7 The Game, KNBR 680 and CSN Sports Bay Area. Chris has lived in the Bay Area for more than 25 years after attending San Jose State and playing baseball for the Spartans.

Chris's baseball heritage goes back three generations. In 1947, his grandfather, Bob Elliott, was the first third baseman in baseball history to win the MVP. Elliott was a seven-time All-Star during his 15-year career. He also was the manager of the Kansas City Athletics in 1960.

The entire city is buzzing about the latest sports team to call our region its home. You definitely do not want to miss this meeting! Make your reservation today, and be sure to keep scrolling to Page 2 for all the details on our new venue.

**RSVP for the April 8 Meeting:**  
**Allen Chamberlin: 916/456-7654**  
**secretary@valleybroadcastlegends.org**  
**Entree Choice: Rich Meat Sauch, Mizithra,**  
**Spinach/Meat Tortellini**  
**Cost: \$25 payable at the door.**  
**Cash or check only.**

**Reservations required by April 3!**

# We're Moving to The Old Spaghetti Factory!

Exciting news for VBL—we've found a new place to meet! Here's the news you need:

- Our new home is The Old Spaghetti Factory, 12401 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova, in the Nimbus Winery Mall.
- Our meeting dates remain the same, the second Tuesday of even-numbered months. Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 8.
- A slight change in time: Doors will open at 11:30 a.m. and lunch served at 11:45.
- The price is going down! \$25 gets you a pasta entrée, salad, dessert and coffee, tea or milk. Sodas and alcoholic beverages are available at an extra charge.
- Entrée choices must be made in advance, just like at the Club Pheasant. The choices for the April 8 meeting are rich meat sauce, mizithra (cheese sauce with browned butter) and spinach/meat tortellini.
- Reservations must be made by the end of the day on Thursday, April 3. Be sure to let Allen know your choice of entrée!
- There's plenty of free parking and it's a short walk from the parking lot to the restaurant.

Your VBL board has made an exhaustive search of possible new venues for our meetings the past several months and in the end, The Old Spaghetti Factory proved to be the best fit when it came to space and price. We appreciate everyone's suggestions and give a special shout-out to **Lizette Martinez-**

**Hopkins**, who first brought The Old Spaghetti Factory to our attention.

All of us on the VBL board are grateful to **Chik** and his team at Aviator's for welcoming us these past two years, especially when Club Pheasant closed so abruptly just before our December 2022 meeting. Aviator's worked well for us, but the quarters were tight, and the glare from all those windows made it challenging to do video presentations. We on the VBL board have high hopes for The Old Spaghetti Factory, and trust you will be as excited about our new home as we are.

## Officers

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VALLEY BROADCAST  
**LEGENDS**

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## President's Message: Seat Shuffling at the State Capitol

by VBL President **Bill George**



Many of us spent time covering the California Legislature during our careers. We know firsthand the challenges of chasing legislators down hallways to get comment on pending legislation. While politicians profess “transparency,” it is often the case that they prefer to do “the people’s business” with as little scrutiny as possible. And now it looks like they are taking another step in complicating the people’s right to know what is happening in state government.

For at least a century media has been allowed to operate from desks on the Senate Floor. As KCRA-TV capitol reporter **Ashley Zavala** explained, “These desks have allowed journalists to ask lawmakers questions and get clarity on floor action or a vote that’s taking place.” But media access to those desks has been curtailed since Covid, and Senate leadership has reserved those seats for its staff. The Senate has also barred TV cameras from the hallway outside the chamber. While print and radio reporters are still allowed to operate in that space. “This means senators can evade TV cameras about tough or pressing issues if they arrive at session late or leave early,” Zavala said.

The hall restriction does not pertain to print and radio reporters. “I don’t think we’re over asking. We’re just saying treat us the same way you would treat any other entity,” said **Steve Stuck**, the President of the California Broadcasters Association. But with newspapers unfortunately fading away, more people are relying on television news to fill the gap. Senate President Pro Tempore **Mike McGuire** blamed the capitol remodeling project for the seat shuffling. The project has been kept secret and there is no word on when it may be complete. This is an issue I will keep my eye on, as well as other changes to the Capito building. The billion-dollar remodel may create a palace for the legislature, but it must also be accountable to the press and public.

## More from President Bill: Who Wants a Seat in the A’s Press Box? See Next Page!

## The Legends

Membership as of March 22, 2025

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  
 Kevin Dougherty • Anita Fein  
 Curt Foley • Vicki Fox • Bill George  
 Gary Gerould • Marty Gonzalez  
 Henry Grambergu • Dennis Grayson  
 Marty Gonzalez • Samuel Gonzalez  
 Michael Guiliano • Kristine Hanson  
 Bud Harmon • Lois Hart • Mark Hedlund  
 Jerry Henry • Carla Henson • Lizann Hunt  
 Rich Ibarra • Jan “Neely” Klevan  
 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 • Jeanne Marie  
 Lizette Martinez- Hopkins  
 Michael McCarron • Michael Messmer  
 Dana Michaels • Mike Montgomery  
 Keith Moon • Ray Nelson • Alan Oda  
 George Nyberg • John D. O’Brien  
 Sandy Ofsenek Helland • Deborah Pacyna  
 Sue Peppers • Gary Popejoy  
 Greg Popejoy • Mary Jane Popp  
 Craig Prosser • David Ramos  
 Deborah Ramos • Bruce Riggs • Jay Rudin  
 Beth Ruyack • Bill Schmechel  
 Walt Shaw • Dann Shively  
 Barbara Souza • Roy Stearns  
 Jim Stimson • Steve Swatt  
 Gregory VanAcker • Bob Venditti  
 Gregory Virtue • Hilary Vos  
 Tom Wagner • Dave Walker  
 Marla Wells • Dave Williams  
 Dennis Yoder • Jan Young  
 Steve Zraggen



# Your Chance to be a MLB Beat Reporter!

by VBL President **Bill George**

There will be only one reporter covering the Athletics on a daily basis this season. He's **Martin Gallegos** who works for MLB.com.

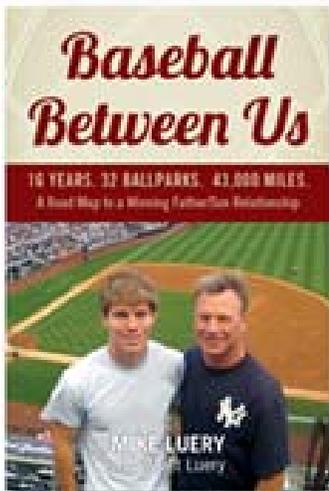
The website "Awful Announcing" announces that "the Associated Press will not deploy a reporter to Sutter Health Park, as the AP does not have a sports bureau in Sacramento. The local *Sacramento Bee* newspaper is not hiring a beat reporter to cover the Athletics after gutting its sports section in recent years."

This could be a VBLer's chance of a lifetime to cover Major League Baseball as a freelancer for AP. "We are still covering the league as thoroughly as anyone out there with the bulk of our resources," AP's global sports editor, **Ricardo Zuniga**, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "There will be some challenges with Sacramento, that's undeniable. It will be a combination of Bay Area AP writers and freelancers." So jump on the phone can get in touch with the AP and see if you can land the A's beat reporter job.



# Member Hobbies: Father-Son Road Trips

by VBL Board Member **Ward Koppel**



Valley Broadcast Legend **Mike Luery** grew up attending baseball games with his dad. Mike watched the Yankees on TV from his Connecticut home, and remembers going to Mets games with his dad. He even got to skip a day of school to go to Game One of the 1963 World Series between the Yankees and Dodgers with his dad. Mike says "**Sandy Koufax** struck out 15 Yankees, including my hero **Mickey Mantle** three times and I cried all the way home." Thirty years later, and on the other side of the country, the father-son tradition of going to baseball games advanced a generation in the Luery family with Mike and his son **Matt** going to A's and Giants games in the Bay Area. More and more stadiums and cities were added over 16 years, finally visiting every Major League Baseball stadium in North America.

Over those years, and stadiums, Mike kept a diary of what he and Matt experienced. Those trips grew into more than baseball. They built a father-son bond. And those diaries became more. With that the book *Baseball Between Us* was born. In 2012 their personal story was published. As Oakland A's Announcer **Ken Korach** said of the book "Mike and Matt experienced that baseball could serve as a conduit for them to grow as a parent and son. Any parent, or anyone who loves baseball, will appreciate the stories and the messages in the book. This is a book for fathers, mothers, sons and daughters."

Mike and Matt continue their baseball trips to this day, and yes, the West Sacramento Athletics are on the schedule.

Mike's favorite stadium is Oracle Park. "You can't beat the view of the bay and the garlic fries are sensational." Speaking of food, Mike says his favorite ballpark treat is "definitely the lobster roll at Fenway Park. But the salmon burgers in Seattle are good too!"

# Tip Kindel: 1943-2025



It is with profound sadness we announce the passing of **Tipton “Tip” Craig Kindel** on February 28, 2025, in Sacramento at the age of 81.

Born on October 11, 1943, in Kankakee, Illinois, Tip spent his early years in Terre Haute, Indiana, and Phoenix, Arizona. He pursued his passion for journalism at Indiana State Teacher’s College (now Indiana State University), earning a degree in the field. His broadcasting career began at WISH-TV in Indianapolis before his dislike of cold winters led him west. After a brief stay in Denver, he settled in Sacramento in the early 1970s.

In Sacramento, Tip joined KCRA Channel 3 as a news reporter and later served as News Director at Channel 40 before returning to KCRA. In 1988, he transitioned to public service as the Public Information Officer for the California Department of Corrections, in addition to working as a media consultant for the Bureau of Federal Prisons. His career took him across the globe, including Europe, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Grenada, and even Antarctica.

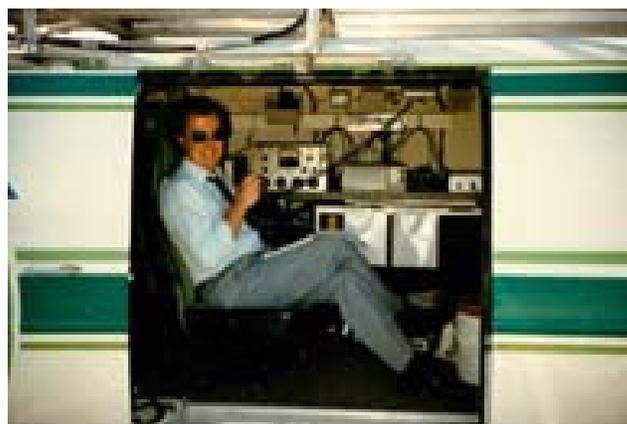
Beyond journalism, Tip had a deep love for music and played the trumpet in numerous bands and symphonies. A dedicated Freemason, he attained the degree of Master Mason and was a member of Shriners International, performing with the Shrine Band. Honoring his passion for music education, his trumpets will be donated to local elementary schools. He also enjoyed technology, stained glass art, and working in his garage.

Tip and his wife **Claire** enjoyed boating and wine tasting, which evolved into many lasting friendships with local area vintners. They also enjoyed watching old movies from Tip’s personal collection at home with their fuzzy rescues Cassie, Lexi, and Bailey.

Tip is survived by his wife of 46 years, Claire Ruth; his children **Tipton Craig Jr., Brett Allyn, Kimberly Dawn, and Cherie Beth (George)**; grandchildren **Tipton (Melissa), Samuel (Casey), Addison, Kristin (Michael), Lisa (Dallas)**; and great-grandchildren **Carson, Nathan, Cooper, Oscar, Louie, Sally, and Allyn**. He was predeceased by his parents **Henry Tipton Kindel and Pansy Evelyn Kindel (McClure)**.

A Celebration of Life will be held on April 19 at 1:00 p.m. at the Ben Ali Shrine, 3262 Marysville Boulevard. Guests are encouraged to wear tropical attire since Tip loved his vast collection of Hawaiian shirts!

In lieu of flowers, it was Tip’s wish that donations be made to Shriners Hospital for Children Northern California or the Sacramento SPCA.



# Ray Nakamoto: 1949-2025

**Ray Nakamoto**, a well-known local voice talent and coach, closed his mic for the last time on February 13. As CEO of Nakamoto Productions, Ray had a long-time, successful career as a voiceover talent. When throat cancer and the harsh radiation treatments that followed sidelined that career, he turned to coaching, helping dozens of hopefuls discover their “money voice” and find success in the world of audiobooks, TV/radio commercials, and other related endeavors.

When Nakamoto Productions moved into the old Oasis Ballroom building at 20<sup>th</sup> and I Streets in downtown Sacramento, Ray asked **Dennis Newhall** to help decorate the place by hanging a few of his rock music posters. Soon those “few” grew into a collection of dozens of handbills, posters, calendars, and other memorabilia from the local rock music scene from the 1960s and 1970s. Ray would open up his studio one Saturday a month for anyone interested in viewing the Rock radio Museum. Today, this historic collection is being stored in the archives at CSU-Sacramento.

Services were held March 8 at the Antelope Christian Center.



# Big Al Sams: 1969-2025



**Alvin “Big Al” Sams**, the popular local radio DJ and TV personality considered by colleagues an ambassador to the city, died on February 11. Big Al had celebrated his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday in December.

Big Al was a prominent presence on Sacramento’s airwaves on KHYL-FM V101. After hosting his “V Mornings with Big Al” for nearly a decade on the hip-hop station, corporate owners iHeartRadio let Big Al go in 2020, one of several high-profile Sacramento on-air personalities who were victims of mass layoffs by the radio behemoth. But Big Al soon found a new home and new fans as a reporter on “Good Day Sacramento” on KMAX-TV, Channel 31.

Big Al’s career on Sacramento’s radio and television airwaves spanned a quarter-century. He worked as a co-host and entertainment reporter at KTXL-TV Fox 40. His Facebook introduction was an apt summation: “Do what I do like I do it for TV & radio.” Calling him a “fun and fantastic part of the ‘Good Day’ weekend show,” Big Al “loved being out in the community, focusing on positive stories in neighborhoods all over Northern California.”

CBS Sacramento said on its website. “It was an honor to have such a caring and talented man as Big Al on our team,” the station said.

Services were livestreamed on March 6 at the Center of Praise Ministries in Sacramento and may be viewed on the “Good Day Sacramento” website.

# K.W. Lee: 1928-2025

He made his name as a print reporter, but if ever a local journalist was worthy of legendary status, it was **K.W. Lee**. “The godfather of Asian-American journalism” died in his Sacramento home on March 8 of natural causes.

During his trailblazing career, K.W. —short for Kyung Won— appeared on local TV newscasts, usually because the stories he wrote were so newsworthy he could not be ignored. He was best known for uncovering evidence that led to freeing a wrongfully convicted Korean immigrant from Death Row. That crusade was later turned into a PBS documentary, *Free Chol Soo Lee*. K.W. also achieved acclaim—and notoriety in some circles—for his newspaper series “The Golden Dome,” exposing lavish spending of taxpayers’ money by state legislators.

Born in what is now North Korea when it was occupied by Japan, K.W. came to the United States to study journalism in college. He joined the *Sacramento Union* in 1970. The newspaper promoted their new investigative reporter with radio ads proclaiming, “K.W. Lee ... digging, probing, tackling the bureaucracy, infiltrating the unknown!” He left the *Union* in the 1980s and relocated to Los Angeles to publish a newspaper for the Koreatown community.

K.W. was the first recipient of the Asian American Journalists Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 1987 and the first Asian American journalist to receive the Freedom Forum’s Free Spirit Award in 1994.

VBL Newsletter Editor **Joyce Krieg** recalls, “I didn’t know K.W. well, but I would run into him from time-to-time in the 1970s when I was working as a print reporter. ‘Intense’ is the word that comes to mind. He was quite possibly the most intense individual I have ever met. We need fearless reporters like K.W.—and the media outlets that support their work—now more than ever.”



## Remembering Alexa Smith

Local radio personality **Alexa Smith** died March 17 at UC Davis Medical Center at the age of 53 after a battle with a rare lung disease called PVOD that affects 1 in 10 million people.

Smith’s lengthy radio career included her most recent stop at EMF’s KLOVE & Air1 network, and on-air at KLLC (Alice 97.3) in San Francisco. Her programming resumé includes Assistant Program Director, Program Director and Music Director gigs throughout the West Coast, including KSFM here in Sacramento.

Her Facebook page is overflowing with heartfelt remembrances from her many friends and colleagues. Among those is VBL’s **Tony Cox**, who wrote, “Alexa was the kindest sweetest, caring, talented woman. She started right out of high school as my intern at FM102 back in the late 80s. A quick learner with super talent, Lexi worked her way up to becoming one of the top broadcasters in America.”

# Meeting Memories: February 11, 2025



Guest speaker **Ishani Dasai** from the *Sacramento Bee* gave us the inside scoop on the scandal surrounding CapRadio at what turned out to be our last meeting at Aviator's. *Photos by Ward Koppel and Bill George.*

## Please Pay Your Dues!

If you've not already paid your VBL dues for 2025, please do so now. Just \$20 keeps your membership active until December 31, 2025, and helps us keep our club alive and well.

The easy way: Come to the April 8 luncheon and bring a check or cash, \$45, to cover lunch and your dues. Checks should be payable to Valley Broadcast Legends.

The not-so-easy way: Find an envelope and stamp, and put a check in the mail. \$20, payable to Valley Broadcast Legends and sent to: Post Office Box 601861, Sacramento, CA 95860-1861

Thank you to the approximately 40 members who have already paid their dues for 2025!



***Join the VBL Facebook Group! Once you're signed in to Facebook, go to the search bar near the top of the page. Type in "Valley Broadcast Legends." That should take you right to us!***

**Stock Up on Swag!**  
<https://shop.spreadshirt.com/vbl-boutique>