



VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #124

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

December 2021

President's Message: Celebrating The *Other* Holiday

by VBL President **Jim Drennan**



For me Thanksgiving has always been The *Other* Holiday: Christmas without the bright colors, gifts, and music; Halloween without the fun scary stuff; Easter without the joyous promise of spring—that is until Thanksgiving 2021. This one was way, way different.

This is my first one in an assisted living facility, a nice name for a nursing home. As you may be aware all of

this came about because of a combination of ailments, including a urinary tract infection, pneumonia, depression, and finally a fall outside Kaiser Morse. That left me full of injured muscle and bones plus edema. I soon wound up in a room at Sunrise of Carmichael—a really nice assisted living facility at the corner of Fair Oaks and Garfield that doesn't smell like urine when you walk in.

My every physical need is catered to. The food and hygiene and medicine are provided without my even asking. And there is always companionship. The cost is much cheaper than if I tried to do this at home.

As for companionship, there is a variety. Some residents are in a group of schizophrenia or Alzheimer's. Others are recovering from injuries or just enjoying a respite from the daily grind. Almost all of them have been somebody in life. We have teachers, a seismic scientist, a cement mason, a woman who was an ice-skater, and a pilot, and a refuge from Croatia. But almost all of them respond to love and attention and to visits from friends and family. There is no excuse for neglecting them because they are not the same any more. They're still there. And that includes me. **Eleanor** and **Greg VanAcker**, **Anita Fein**, **Rich Raymond**, **Joyce Mitchell** and husband **Eric**, and **Bud Harmon** and his his finacee, **Pamela Nowain**, have special places in my hall of gratitude.

Love to all, Jim.

Here We Go Again!

Once again, our hopes have been dashed. The plans were all in place for our return to an in-person luncheon on December 9—the large room at the Club Pheasant reserved, the 20th anniversary cake ordered, a program in the works. Then the news broke that the first case of the Omicron variant had been detected in the U.S. —and in the San Francisco Bay Area, no less!—just as the VBL board was meeting. The board reluctantly decided the only option was to cancel the December 9 luncheon.

But all is not lost. There will be a Zoom event on December 9. Watch your email for details on the start time and what the program will consist of. We know there will be a check presentation in our school grant program, but beyond that, your board is still working out the details. Stay tuned!



Feeling the Holiday Spirit

by VBL Vice-President **Michael Guilliano**



Season's Greetings to all our VBL members. I hope this newsletter finds everyone in the holiday spirit and in good health!

As you all know, not all of us are in good health. Our President, **Jim Drennan**, is in failing health and we pray for a recovery. **Allen Chamberlin** will be giving you an update.

There has been a small change to our school grant fund. Due to a generous donation by former board member **Claire Elliott** before her passing, we are now going to name our fund the Ramsey and Claire Elliott Memorial Grant Fund. This year's recipient is the Arden Middle School.

Dues for 2022! Many of you paid your 2021 dues. For those paid, your dues will be waived for 2022. If you have not paid your 2021 dues, please do so by December 31, 2021. If not you will be charged \$20 for 2022.

So, What's the Latest with Jim?

Like the rest of us, our beloved president has his good days and not-so-good days, but one thing is for certain—any day he gets a visit from his broadcast “family” is a good day. As he shared with us in his President’s Message, **Jim Drennan** continues to be cared for at the Sunrise of Carmichael assisted living facility as he deals with a variety of health issues. We hope he’ll be able to join us at our December 9 holiday gathering via Zoom.

If you’re planning to visit Jim, here are two things you should know:

1. Call first to make sure Jim is actually there and not out at a medical appointment. 916/485-4500.
2. Please do not bring candy or other edible treats without first clearing it with the staff. Jim’s issues include difficulty in swallowing. Even something as seemingly innocuous as a jelly bean could become a lethal choking hazard.

Keep in mind that Sunrise is requiring that all visitors be masked and show proof of vaccination or a recent negative Covid test.

What about emailing? Phoning? Jim’s ability to respond to emails or retrieve messages on his cell phone remains iffy, so best not to attempt to reach him via those methods.

In addition to visits, cards are always a thoughtful gesture. Jim’s mailing address is Sunrise of Carmichael, 5451 Fair Oaks Blvd., Room 106, Carmichael, CA 95608.



At left, a recent photo of **Jim Drennan** in his room at Sunrise. Below, a closer look at the poster hanging on Jim’s wall. Created by your newsletter editor, it features the VBL logo and our last group photo. As for the slogan, “I Shall Return,” let’s hope it applies to all of us before too long when it comes to returning to the Club Pheasant for our lunch meetings.

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Secretary: Allen Chamberlin

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Walt Shaw

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Webmaster: Allen Chamberlin

Audio-Visual: Bud Kress

**VALLEY BROADCAST
LEGENDS**

P.O. Box 601861
Sacramento, CA 95860-1861



Remembering Claire Elliott

The Legends

Membership as of Nov. 30, 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 • 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
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 Alan Milner • Joyce Mitchell
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 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

Claire Elliott may never have worked in the broadcast industry, but she became the very heart and soul of Valley Broadcast Legends. She came to our informal social organization by way of her late husband, McClatchy Broadcasting exec **Ramsey Elliott**, an early member of VBL. When he passed away in 2002, Claire started coming to our meetings as a way of honoring her late husband. Before we knew it, Claire was on the board. Her special passion was the Opportunity Drawing and the school grant program, as she felt strongly about the need to train the next generation of broadcasters. Declining health forced her to retire from the board in March of 2020, but her belief in the school grant program continued to the very end. One of her very last acts was to donate \$1,000 to VBL so that the grant could still be awarded, despite the suspension of the drawings during the pandemic.

When news of her passing, at age 96, reached VBL, many on the board contributed tributes.

President Jim Drennan:

Claire was my oldest friend. She was with me when I was a child. She was with me when I was an old man. She was with me when she was a young woman, a young mother, and then she was with me when she was an old lady.



Claire Elliott as we often saw her, keeping an eagle eye on the tickets for the Opportunity Drawing. This image is from our October 2019 meeting. *Photo by Matias Bombal.*

Everywhere she went she made an impact. She impacted me when I was a pre-teenager. I met her when I was 12 when she was my dad's secretary at Bakersfield High School. She taught me how to type, which was my entryway into my profession. She caught up with me again 50, 60, 70 years later when we re-connected thru our love for Merle Haggard. She gave her all to Valley Broadcast Legends. She made sure the books were kept; she made sure that the Opportunity Drawing tickets were sold.

Everything she did, she put her whole heart into. She never did things halfway. She was a perfectionist. And she held everyone, including herself, to a

high standard. She was really in many ways the guiding spirit of our club. I will always remember her as a decent person, as a caring person, as a serious person, and I hope that she's helping God keep things in order Up There and is having just a fine old time.

She and **Merle Haggard's** sister were both working at a jewelry store in Bakersfield—that's how they got connected, I think—and my dad became acquainted with her thru the jewelry store because a friend of my dad's was a jeweler.

Dad encouraged Ramsey to go into broadcasting. Ramsey did and he became a young staff announcer at KERN, which was the McClatchy station in Bakersfield. So anyway, my dad became acquainted with Ramsey who was just a youngster out of



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Remembering Claire Elliott

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World War II, and Claire was just a young wife, and my dad gave Claire a job and the rest is history.

Ramsey was a great guy who went on to run KOVR and eventually became the executive in charge of all the McClatchy broadcast properties throughout California and Northern Nevada. He had a huge impact on local radio and television.

But Claire never accepted the Internet. She refused to have a cellphone. She refused to go online. She wrote letters, and her letters were always ended “Fondly, Claire Elliott.” And her house is an old-fashioned ranch-style house from the 1950s. She had her wing and her son Larry had his wing and I guess they met for meals on a regular basis.

I’m just really sorry to hear that she’s passed. She was an incredible person, and a Republican, too. But she freely admitted it and she was no friend of Trump’s. Oh, God, she hated that guy.

Secretary Allen Chamberlin:

Claire Elliot could be opinionated; but her opinion was always that we be transparent and do what was right. Her vision of accountability was often far more detailed than a casual club of retirees like ours needed to be. She never doubted our best of intentions for our members. But that didn’t mean she didn’t want every ‘t’ crossed and ‘i’ dotted when it came to recording current expenditures. And as for future budgets (like we need a budget?), she demanded we anticipate where future ‘i’s’ and ‘t’s’ were headed while minding the clubs ‘p’s’ and ‘q’s’. She was old school all the way.

She also definitely wanted to be sure our school awards made a difference to the students and classes studying broadcasting. One of her final acts was to contribute \$1000 to fund the school award for the next two years because we haven’t had an in-person meeting since February 2020 and thus had not funded the award via Opportunity Draws. I think she saw our scholarship as a mandate. She enjoyed that we came together as members of a broadcasting community, shared a meal, enjoyed a program, reminisced. But she expected more from us. She expected us to use our legacies to inspire and support new careers. VBL’s Board of Directors respected her exacting accountability even when she asked for more penurious or picayune detail than the nature of our club warranted. Having said that, I’m glad we had Claire on our board—her integrity honors us all.

Board Member Walt Shaw:

I was a long-time friend of Claire long before VBL. We worked together back in the 80s when I was the media PR rep for the Tierra Del Oro Girl Scout Council and Claire was on the board of directors. She helped my two oldest

girls in their quest for 1st Class, which is like Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts. Claire was a good friend of our family and we all miss her.

Board Member Kristine Hanson:

I sure loved this woman’s energy. So smart and efficient. She kept us all on our toes with budgeting, goals, job description and other questions and observations during our meetings. I will miss her help at meetings for our drawings and of course the wonderful TV/radio memories of times gone by.

Board Member Bud Kress:

We are all so blessed to have Claire sitting at our table. She was super special and will always have a special place in my heart.

Newsletter Editor Joyce Krieg:

Claire Elliott was definitely a force to be reckoned with. I always felt she was born too soon. Had she been a young woman today, with her intelligence, attention to detail, and scrupulous ethics, she could have been running her own company ... or running for office. Instead, she had to settle for the only role acceptable for a woman of her era who happened to be married to a corporate executive—volunteer work. She will be missed, that’s for sure.

Note: Per Claire’s request, there will be no services.



*All your holiday favorites,
hosted by Bud Kress.*

thatchristmaschannel.com

Losing Will Heryford, Plus 'This and That'

by VBL Treasurer **Ron Middlekauff**



Will Heryford

This one hurts. A few weeks ago I/we lost a giant. **Will Heryford**. He was photojournalist in the KCRA Stockton Bureau. I've known him as long as he worked at KCRA, 42 years. Long ago, he was a Kelly Broadcasting Scholarship winner. That parlayed into a videotape editor on the night shift for the 11:00 p.m. news. That's when we met. When the 11:00 p.m. show was over, a couple times a week, we'd go buy a package of hot dogs and go to his apartment off of Arden Way. We'd boil the hot dogs and without buns, we'd just dip them in mustard, and we'd listen to *Larry King Live*—*Open Line America* on the radio. That's my best early memory of our 42-year friendship.

Will then became a staff photographer in the Stockton Bureau with the great **Rich Ibarra**, **Kent Pierce** and fellow photographer **Dan Schueler**. He worked right up to the end, frequently doing his own reporting and photography. He leaves behind his wife Tina and two sons, Peter and Andrew. RIP buddy.

Dues

The VBL Board has decided to forgo collecting dues for 2022. This applies only to those who are **current** on their 2021 dues. With no in-person meetings in nearly two years, we've managed to save a bit of money and we're passing along the savings to the members. If you've lapsed or joining new, we need to collect \$20 to bring you current.

School Gift

We have not met as a club face-to-face in almost two years. Thus, we've been unable to raise funds for our yearly school donation. However, our dearly departed friend **Claire Elliott**, before her passing believed so strongly in our club's vision, she wrote us a check to cover a donation for a couple

years. The Board has selected Arden Middle School as this year's recipient. The campus is brand spanking new and the old school was bulldozed. The media class of instructor **Matt Rowland** will receive up to \$500 based on their needs. At press time, we are waiting to hear from them on their plans. But we expect them to be at our December 9th Zoom meeting for the check presentation.

Our Condolences . . .

. . . to VBL member **Jay Rudin** over the loss of his mother, **Anne Rudin**, Sacramento's first elected female mayor. Anne Rudin died on Thanksgiving day at age 97. She served as mayor from 1983 to 1992. Jay said of his mother, "... rather than rule with an iron fist, she led with wisdom, communication, civility and diplomacy to bring people together."

Meet Bruce Riggs

by VBL Vice-President **Michael Guiliano**



Welcome to our new addition your VBL newsletter. As you can decipher, we will be profiling a different member each month. The member will be someone who comes to meetings regularly, but is not "high profile". For the first Member of the Month, we have chosen **Bruce Riggs**.

Bruce has been working 38 years part-time in broadcasting. His first job was a camera operator. He is still working part-time on-call with Sacramento Television and loves his job.

Bruce and his wife, **Sandra Warner Riggs**, are Parrotheads and are active members in the Jimmy Buffet PHC. They have made several trips to Florida to join in activities of the PHC. Bruce also enjoys travelling to the East Coast of the US, Mexico, and Canada. Bruce's home town is Portland, Maine. Carmichael is his current city of residence.

Some of Bruce's favorites are: Food—Pizza, Performer—Jimmy Buffet (not surprising), Movie—M.A.S.H., Restaurant—Strings. Given a choice between mountains or ocean, Bruce prefers ocean. Bruce's favorite season is summer because he gets to swim and enjoy the warmth.

Bruce has one wish—good health and wants everyone to enjoy good health! Take a moment to say "Hi" to Bruce at the next VBL meeting.

Under the Big Tent in Aspen

by Don Chandler

Sorting through my daily mail in the KCRA Art Department ran the gambit from mundane, sleep-inducing to electrifying and motivating. The latter was in full bloom as I read the invitation to the 1971 International Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado.

June 20 - 24, 1971, grabbed my attention. I shared the brochure with KCRA owner **Bob Kelly**, underscoring the points in the program that would be useful in keeping pace with the industry. Bob agreed and encouraged me to go. "Observe, listen and learn from the pros," was my assignment. Yes, I could take my wife. And yes, the company will pick up the bill. But I must "bring back something relevant."

The list of panelists during the week-long extravaganza was eye-popping. People admired by those in broadcasting and creative professions were on the list. **Jack Roberts** of design world fame moderated and introduced speakers.

First was **Mike Murphy**, co-founder of the Esalen Institute, who 'purified' the minds of attendees in his "Revolution of Consciousness" session. He had everybody perfecting their "owwoooooommmms" and seeking states of detached bliss. Well, half of them. The other half were rolling their eyes. The goal was to purge our minds of distractions like political chaos, wars, drought, hurricanes, naughty kids, hangnails and other burdens.

Buckminster Fuller of geodesic dome fame filled the circus-sized tent that was the venue for programs. His holistic view of the future provided "relevance" I was sure Bob Kelly would appreciate.

Carolyn Bird was ahead of her time as she 'shot straight' about women's rights. She was challenged by some in the audience (men) who asked why she didn't believe that the woman's place was in the home, shaping lives of youngsters who would grow up and make the world a better place. (Would that be relevant information to broadcasters? Yes. And a lot has happened in fifty years. Remember, this was 1971)

Gene Youngblood, one attendee claimed, "Said nothing in one and a half hours". Well, how about this: "Of the 250 'black' radio stations, 10 are owned by blacks". (The critic must have missed Mike Murphy's event.)

Visionary FCC Director **Nicholas Johnson** coordinated with Gene and helped tie the program together with the conference theme.

Andrew Young captivated the audience with his presentation on "The Revolution in the Third World".

Karimu Kadura talked about "the often hidden emotions on race" and posited that, "the racial revolution is alive but will never be televised". (But it has been. Sit-coms took care of that.)

Another presenter was **Saul Bass**, designer of film titles, notably *The Man With the Golden Arm*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho* and many others. He also designed logos. Bell Telephone, Kleenex, and AT & T, to name three well-known.

The film and TV forums excited creative juices. I was asked for a critique and provided it. Stimulated by all that I saw and experienced, I was inspired to write my views of the conference. I submitted my comments to CA (Communication Arts) magazine. I was asked for a couple of paragraphs. Unable to decelerate, I sent three columns. The editor called, asking

if I would mind if they published my 'short story' in total, which I was pleased to approve.

It was my experience at KCRA and Bob Kelly's passion for knowledge and growth that provided the canvas for me to paint on. Thank you, Bob Kelly



Instead of a typical conference program with bios and mug shots of the featured speakers, the 1971 International Design Conference that our own **Don Chandler** attended feature ID cards of various sorts, including **Buckminster Fuller's** Social Security card, **Michael Murphy's** business card for the Esalen Institute, **Caroline Bird's** membership card in the National Organization for Women, and **Andrew Young's** ID card for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.