

VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #146 *"Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media"*

August 2025

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

A President Stalked: 50 Years Later

by VBL President **Bill George**

The true test of a broadcast operation is an emergency. In the case of floods, fires, earthquakes, and other disasters, a broadcaster's performance can save lives. Everyone, from the folks answering phones to the station manager, must make sure the operation is functioning at its optimal level.

Then there are the truly huge news stories that also consume a lot of time and energy and devotion. This is beyond the ubiquitous "breaking news" that is everywhere these days. These are the events that capture national and international attention. These, too, bring massive pressure onto an operation's resources and demand a station-wide response.



Steve Swatt

Our August program recounts such an event. It was September 5, 1975, when **President Gerard R. Ford** came to Sacramento and was the subject of an attempt on his life. It was—and remains—one of the biggest stories in Sacramento's history. Fifty years later, we get the inside scoop, peppered with reflection from two of our members who covered it. **Steve Swatt**, long-time Capitol correspondent for KCRA-TV, and photographer **George Nyberg**, a KOVR-TV photographer, were both at the Capitol, but in different areas, when **Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme** tried to kill Ford.



George Nyberg

In historic terms, 50 years is not even the blink of an eye. But in broadcasting, it's an entire epoch. The technology that transformed our industry was just starting to take hold, and it presented enormous challenges and opportunities for the journalists, engineers, and editors involved. How they dealt with those challenges makes a fascinating story. We hope to see you there! That's Tuesday, August 12, at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Rancho Cordova. **Note the new time: doors open at 12 noon; luncheon service at approximately 12:30**

p.m. RSVPs must be made by August 7. Be sure to let Allen know your entrée choice (pasta with red meat sauce, mizithra, cheese ravioli) when making your reservation.

RSVP for the August 12 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 Aug. 7!

VBL Launches Jim Drennan Scholarship

VBL is pleased to announce the first annual Jim Drennan Scholarship, which provides a cash award of \$500 to a student who is interested in pursuing a future in broadcast journalism or media content production. Examples of the latter include websites, podcasts, and social media.

The skills required to create and deliver compelling stories have changed dramatically in the last decade and the career path to do so no longer requires a standard academic course. So we have created the world's easiest scholarship application form. No long essays or reports on how many community service hours an applicant may have served or sports played. Our application asks three questions:

1. Who are you? Tell us about yourself in a page or less.
2. Why you qualify for the award?
3. How do you plan to use the money to further your career or create content?

There may be an interview if multiple candidates apply. The applicant may be attending school or working in a related field. The one unbreakable



Jim Drennan

rule: the successful applicant must be willing to attend our December luncheon to accept the award.

If you know of a deserving recipient of our scholarship, have them answer the three questions send it via email to to President **Bill George**, Nimbusbill@icloud.com.

The scholarship honors the memory **Jim Drennan**, a Sacramento TV news assignment editor who was a president and board member of the Valley Broadcast Legends. He generously bequeathed half his estate to VBL, which enables us to offer this scholarship.

Heads Up: New Start Time!

Our new venue at the Old Spaghetti Factory is a definite hit, but as with anything new, there are adjustments to make. A key change for VBL is our start time for our luncheon meetings. **The doors now open at 12 noon, with lunch served at approximately 12:30 p.m.** Make a note of it!

Also please note that our \$25 lunch deal with the OSF covers only limited beverage service: coffee, iced tea or water. If you wish to order anything else to drink (sodas or an alcoholic beverage) you will be expected to pay for it on your own.

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Vice President: Bud Kress

Treasurer: Allen Chamberlin

Secretary: Allen Chamberlin

Directors: Walt Shaw, Anita Fein,
Kristine Hanson, Ward Koppel

In Perpetuity Our Founder

Harry Warren

Newsletter Editor: Joyce Krieg

Webmaster: Allen Chamberlin

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**VALLEY BROADCAST
LEGENDS**

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President's Message: Et Tu, Brute?

by VBL President **Bill George**



At our next meeting, we will have a presentation on the September 5, 1975, assassination attempt on President Gerald R. Ford in Sacramento. Several of our members have memories of that event that happened 50 years ago.

There are few things more shocking than assassinations, and they have fascinated people for centuries. The most famous ancient case, thanks to Shakespeare (who wrote about it 1600 years after the event), was the assassination of Julius Caesar by his fellow senators. It was a definite conspiracy as 60 or more men participated in the assassination, and Caesar was stabbed 23 times. The physician who performed an autopsy on Caesar established that only one wound (the second one to his ribs) had been fatal. This autopsy report (the earliest known post-mortem report in history) describes that Caesar's death was mostly attributable to blood loss from his stab wounds. In modern times, Presidents Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, William McKinley, and John F. Kennedy were all murdered in office, and Trump, while running for office, was almost assassinated last year.

Add the word "conspiracy" into the discussion of an assassination, and an instant and almost insatiable lust for information is created. It's estimated that between 1,000 and 2,000 books about the Kennedy assassination have been written. Oliver Stone's 1991 movie *JFK* raised all kinds of questions about the assassination and the Warren Commission report that deemed Lee Harvey Oswald the sole assassin and said there had been no conspiracy, contentions that remain controversial to this day. I believed there had been a conspiracy until I interviewed **David Belin**, who served as assistant counsel to the Warren Commission. It was 1977, and I was a rookie reporter in Des Moines. Belin was a celebrated Des Moines lawyer and part-owner of the *Ames Tribune*. He firmly and politely rebuffed every one of my biased questions about the Warren Commission. It was a great learning experience for me about interview preparation and not genuflecting to conventional opinion. Since then, I have looked very critically at all conspiracy claims. Turning to Shakespeare again, we find this quote from *Romeo and Juliet*: "Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."

The Legends

Membership as of July 26, 2025

John Archer • Jay "DJ Jay" Arnold
Mark Baggs • Bill Bishofberger
Thomas Blazowski • 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 • Michael Guiliano
Kristine Hanson • Bud Harmon
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
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 • Bill Schmechel
Walt Shaw • Dann Shively
Barbara Souza • Jim Stimson • Steve Swatt
Gregory VanAcker • Bob Venditti
Gregory Virtue • Hilary Vos • Tom Wagner
Dennis Yoder • Jan Young



Under the Causeway

by VBL Board Member **Ward Koppel**

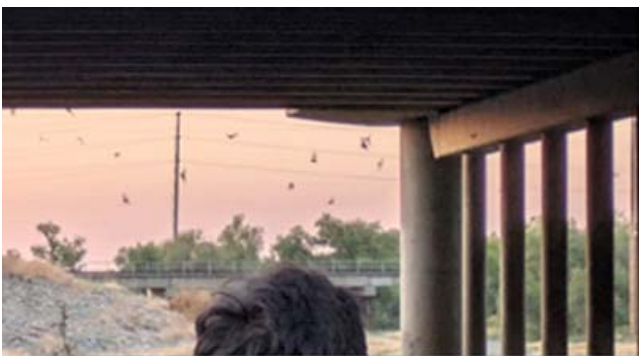


Hundreds of thousands of these flying mammals have made a home under the Yolo Causeway. They sleep by day and then emerge at sunset to hunt for insects to make a tasty dinner.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is open to the public from sunrise to sunset. Some walk in to watch the evening departures. Another option is to sign up for a Bat Walk and Tour put on by the Yolo Basin Foundation, a 501-c-3 non-profit that partners with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to offer educational programs on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

The Bat Walk and Tour has been on Cindy's list of things to do for some time, and at the end of June we were able to go. It all starts at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Headquarters on Chiles Road in Davis. Bat expert Corky Quirk gives an overview of bat life at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Several bats that have injuries live at the Headquarters, and are used to provide a close up look. From there you head to your car to caravan through the wildlife area. Each car is given a walkie talkie for the audio narration of the tour. A word of warning: the road inside the wildlife area is smooth but unpaved, so expect to need to get a car wash afterwards. After the driving tour, you park near the west end of the causeway to wait for the evening's bat departure. Cindy and I really enjoyed the experience.

The next Bat Walk and Tour is August 16th. The tour costs \$17 and you can sign up at the Yolo Basin Foundation website, yolobasin.org/battalkandtour/



No, that is not a flock of birds emerging from the Yolo Causeway at sunset.

Did you know that when you drive across the Yolo Causeway between West Sacramento and Davis during the day, there are several hundred-thousand sleeping under you?

The Causeway crosses over the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The grooves in the underside of the bridge are home to an estimated 500-thousand bats. They sleep by day and around sunset, they begin leaving in flocks. Many drivers crossing the Causeway at sunset may think they are seeing flocks of birds, but those are in fact bats heading out in search of insects to eat.

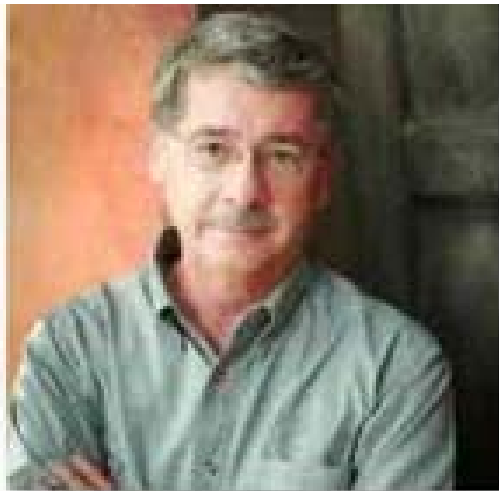
The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is open to the



A scale model at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area headquarters show the groves where thousands of bats sleep during the day while traffic thunders overhead.



Bud Harmon: 1944-2025



Longtime VBL member **Alvin “Bud” Cecil Harmon**, passed away peacefully on April 20, 2025, in Vacaville.

Bud served in the Army from 1967-1971 in Vietnam and continued as a reservist in Sacramento, retiring with honors in 1975. He was a graduate of Enterprise High School in Redding and attended Shasta Junior College and California State Sacramento before beginning a career in broadcast journalism.

Bud delivered the news from the air in KCRA’s “LiveCopter 3.” He filmed everything from governors signing important laws to the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl. He

would return full-time to his first love of still photography., opening Bud Harmon Photography. Together with his first wife, Bonnie Harmon, they would create memories for many happy couples, families, and high school seniors.

In addition to VBL, Bud was a member of Davis Sunrise Rotary, and The Professional Photographers of Sacramento Valley. He is survived by his second wife Pamela, and a son Jason Harmon. He is also survived by his step-children, Joel Engrahm and Tracy Engrahm, several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife of 35 years, Bonnie.

A graveside memorial service and reception took place on June 25 at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon.



Mick Martin: 1949-2025



A huge hole was ripped into the fabric of Sacramento culture with the death of “godfather of the blues” **Mick Martin** on July 13.

Mick was the “voice of the blues” as the host of “Mick Martin’s Blues Party” on Capital Public Radio. When that gig fell victim of budget cuts, Mick went full circle, moving the show to KZAP, the station that had originally launched his career decades earlier.

He was a founding member of the Sacramento Blues Society and the leader of the band Mick Martin and the Blues Rockers, as well as a three-time Sacramento Music Award winner

KZAP’s social media pages remembered Mick as the station’s “irreplaceable soul,” writing on Facebook, “Mick wasn’t just a host — he was the heartbeat of the blues, a walking encyclopedia of its rhythms, riffs, and raw emotion ... whose passion for the genre lit up every note and story he shared. Mick honored us all with his wisdom, warmth, and that signature harmonica howl, reminding us why the blues endure as life’s truest soundtrack. Mick’s legacy will echo on in the airwaves and in our souls.”

Mick was also a writer, penning movie reviews for *The Sacramento Union* and KTXL-40. When VCRs were brand-new, he quickly realized the owners of the device needed a guide to movies worth renting. With co-author **Marsha Porter**, he produced numerous annual editions of *Video Movie Guide*, a perennial best-seller for Ballantine Books.

But it was his love of the blues and his advocacy for the art form for which Mick will be remembered. One encounter has become the stuff of local legend. While performing with the Blues Rockers at the 2004 Sacramento Jazz Jubilee, Mick heard a young harmonica player playing with him from the crowd. He stopped the set and invited the boy onto the bandstand.

The boy was **Kyle Rowland**, and he had been taken to the festival by his father, who thought he should hear a “real” harmonica player. Kyle recalled, “I heard Mick and it was ‘Whoa.’ I was in awe. When I heard him playing I was in a trance. I started playing in the crowd. He said, ‘Get on up here. Get on stage.’” That chance meeting began a lifelong relationship, with Mick mentoring Kyle in the rhythms, history and heritage of the blues.

A high point in Mick’s career was performing at Carnegie Hall as part of an all-star lineup that included legendary organist Jimmy Smith, blues and jazz vocalist Jimmy Witherspoon, saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr., and guitarist Mark Whitfield.

Mick had been dealing with serious health issues in recent times. Kyle recalled one of the last conversations he had with his mentor. “He said he was content with where he was in his life. His dreams came true. He got to play with some of his heroes. He was confident in knowing where he was going with his life.”

A celebration of life is scheduled for Sunday, August 3, at 3:00 p.m. at Powerhouse Pub, 614 Sutter Street in Folsom. The Blues Rockers and other special guests will perform.

Dean Cull: 1935-2025



Dean Cull built a distinguished career in broadcasting as a radio host, upper management, engineer, programming, and sales positions in a career that last 55 years. One of his proudest accomplishments was his role in bringing FM radio to Northern California. He was known for his creativity, programming skills, smooth voice, sharp insight, and ability to connect with audiences, making him a familiar and trusted voice to countless listeners as “the voice of KCTC.”

Tributes from colleagues poured in to social media when news of his death on July 7 began to circulate.

Dave Williams wrote, “Dean gave me my first radio job in 1969. He inspired my career and my entire life. We stayed in touch and I’m so glad we did. I’m a better man in every way for having known and loved him. I will never forget him. Never. He’s my hero.”

“So much appreciated Dean’s calm, insightful personality,” said **Tom DuHain**. “I remember him being

quietly driven, friendly and wise.”

Jay Arnold remembered how much he loved Dean’s radio shoptalk whenever he visited KVYN.

Kristine Hanson remembered how, as a newbie to broadcasting in 1975, Dean “helped me with his bits of wisdom about the industry, taught me how to do radio cut-ins since radio was in the same building. Always upbeat, great laugh and sense of humor. I remember that big personality like it was yesterday.”

Outside of work, Dean had a passion for politics, boating, fishing, sports, assorted technical projects, and travel. He could often be found tinkering in the garage and cheering on his favorite team on his back patio, always embracing life with enthusiasm and determination. He believed in kindness, hard work, and integrity, and he lived each day with purpose and gratitude. Dean will be remembered not only for his professional accomplishments but for his warmth, humility, and the way he made others feel seen and heard. His legacy lives on through the countless lives he touched. His last wish for all who knew him was, “Please take strength in my memory.”

Dean was married to his first wife, Patricia Cull, for 32 years, with whom he raised three children: Robin Barraza, Shawn Larsen, and William “Bing” Cull. Later in life, Dean found love again and married Jennifer Cull, with whom he shared 30 more years of marriage. Together, they built a beautiful life and blended family filled with love, laughter, and many cherished moments.

A memorial and celebration of life will be held early this fall, with details to be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Dean Cull’s name to the Sutter Youth Organization, <https://www.sutteryouth.org/donate>.

Chris Collins: 1960-2025



We've lost yet another well loved Northern California radio and television pro — **Chris Collins**, probably best known for his memorable stint as OM/PD and popular leader of *The Morning Zoo* at **KSFM (FM 102)** from 1980-92, as well as stops at **KFRC/San Francisco**, **KBKS/Seattle**, and the legendary **KDIA-AM 1310/Oakland**, to name just a few. He died in the early hours of Wednesday, June 18, just two days shy of his 65th birthday.

Just hours earlier, Collins' wife **Shannon** shared her husband's dire situation in a Facebook post, noting that he had been fighting Stage 4 liver bile duct cancer for over a year. "He has endured surgery after surgery and fought with everything he can to beat the cancer. Round after round of chemotherapy. After his last procedure he was doing fine but they gave him an antibiotic which put him into liver failure ... The cancer did not kill him, but a medication he was given is ending his life."

Shannon added, "He is the most amazing father and greatest husband anyone could ask for. He fought this battle without telling many people. Please pray for him to be relieved of his suffering and please pray for his boys. They will be lost without their dad. My husband of 35 years is an incredible human being who has done so much to help people his whole life."

In addition to Shannon, Collins leaves behind sons **Nick** and **Shayne**. A heartbreaking Facebook post from Shayne reads, "Dad, my best friend, the only man I could count on to talk to anytime I needed it, and the best father to me and my brother, and best husband to our mom there was. We will continue to celebrate your life and never let your name be forgotten for as long as we're on this earth. Please send prayers out to our family, as this is a dark time for us and we don't know what we will do without him. Love you dad — you will be missed by many and never forgotten."

We would be remiss if we didn't mention Collins' other passion — hockey. He owned two minor league hockey teams, and had also served as the color analyst for the NHL's San Jose Sharks, working alongside play-by-play announcer, **Dan Rusanowski**.

Needless to say, Collins' Facebook page is absolutely overflowing with messages of love and loss from his many friends and former colleagues.



The Morning Zoo crew on KSFM-102 in the 1980s. That's **Chris Collins** at front and center, holding the football and helmet.

Congratulations, Rich Ibarra!



Congratulations to VBL's own **Rich Ibarra**, who is being honored with the Legacy award El Concilio, a Stockton-based nonprofit that provides services for minorities, low-income and other marginalized communities in the Central Valley.

Born in Stockton and raised in Sacramento, Rich began his broadcast career at KXTV 10 as a studio camera operator. When he starting working weekends as a general assignment reporter, he became the first Hispanic reporter on the air for KXTV.

In 1977, Rich began reporting from Stockton for KXTV as the bureau chief, and in 1978 went to KQVR 13 as a reporter. He then joined KCRA 3 in 1980 and stayed with the station for 31 years until he retired in December 2011. His latest gig has been the Central Valley/Foothills reporter for Capital Public Radio.

During his lengthy career, Rich reported on countless major stories including the Laci Peterson murder case, the Jaycee Dugard story, the Sandra Cantu murder case, the Loma Prieta Earthquake, major floods, forest fires, and other disasters.

Rich has the nickname of Mr. Mayor, the unofficial mayor of Stockton, by his colleagues because he is so well known in the area.

The Legacy award will be presented at a gala dinner in Stockton this fall.

Meeting Memories: June 10, 2025



Alex Alcantar and Darla Givens from the State Fair gave us a preview of this year's event, while **Cindy Koppel** shared her collection of State Fair memorabilia. Also on the program were **Patti Roberts** and **Chris Cochran**, sharing their experiences working in the media office at the 1997 State Fair.