

VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #145 “Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media”

June 2025

June 10 • Old Spaghetti Factory, Rancho Cordova • Doors open 11:30 a.m. • Lunch service at 11:45

State Fair Memories and More

Few of us who worked in Sacramento radio and television could escape the State Fair. It was part of our collective experience: remotes on opening day, publicity stunts like the media cow-milking contest, and too many trips through Gate 12 in the station van to ever keep track of. We'll be reliving those memories and taking a look at this year's State Fair at the upcoming Valley Broadcast Legends luncheon June 10 at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Rancho Cordova.

Two representatives of Cal Expo/State Fair will be our special guests: Media Director **Darla Givens** and Business Development Manager **Alex Alcantar**. Darla's media experience includes meteorologist at KTXL, then at KXTV for many years. She continues to do fill-in weather reports for KOVR/KMAX. Alex worked in sales at KXTV before joining Cal Expo/State Fair.



We've got plenty more to spark your memories: old State Fair jingles, memorabilia, and blooper reels. Let's just say any time you're doing a live 'cast that involves an animal, there's going to be trouble. Of course, it wouldn't be the State Fair without food you can't find anywhere else, and we've got that too. Hint: it's not fried spaghetti on a stick! You'll have to come to the meeting to find out.

Our meetings are now being held at the Old Spaghetti Factory, 12401 Folsom Boulevard, Rancho Cordova. It's at the Nimbus Winery shopping mall, near the Hazel Avenue exit from Highway 50. Two important things to know: Doors don't open until 11:30 a.m. Meal service will start at 11:45 a.m. And, you **MUST** give us your menu selection when you RSVP. Choice of rich meat sauce, tortellini alfredo with spinach and meat, or mizithra (pasta with cheese and browned butter), the Old Spaghetti Factory's signature dish. Cost is \$25 and includes salad, dessert, and coffee/tea. Lunches are paid for at the door, cash or check only.

This promises to be a fun program full of memories, so turn in your RSVP early. **Deadline is Thursday, June 5.**



RSVP for the June 10 Meeting:
Allen Chamberlin: 916/456-7654
secretary@valleybroadcastlegends.org
Entree Choice: Rich Meat Sauce, Mizithra, Spinach/Meat Tortellini
Cost: \$25 payable at the door.
Cash or check only.

Reservations required by June 5!

Member Hobbies:

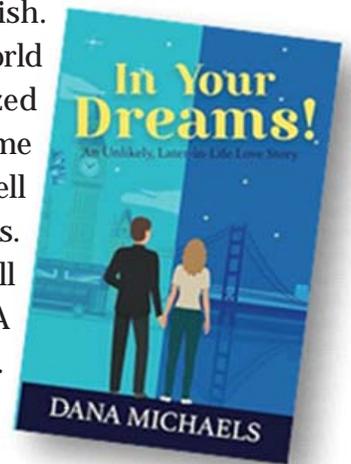
Writing the Book She Wants to Read

by VBL Board Member **Ward Koppel**

“If there’s a book that you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.” So advised the late Nobel Prize-winning novelist **Toni Morrison**. That advice in part motivated Valley Broadcast Legend **Dana Michaels** to turn what she originally envisioned as a film screenplay into a book. That is how *In Your Dreams! An Unlikely Later-In-Life Love Story* was born and published as an eBook and paperback in 2022. But a lot of years, and re-writes preceded that achievement. “I had the main premise of the story with some important events in it, and the ending ... but there were a lot of details between those points to come up with,” according to Dana. It started as a romantic comedy, but while Dana was writing the story, her mother became ill and passed away. “I lost my sense of humor,” she says. “I hadn’t written down the funny scenes and dialogue that I had thought of previously.” So, the book transformed to a contemporary, later-in-life romance, “with as much humor as I could inject”. The Amazon synopsis calls the book “an emotional roller coaster following an upper-class British actor’s pursuit of an American who is *not* impressed by or attracted to him just because he’s the leading man in a BBC-TV drama.”



Dana decided to self-publish. “After the internet turned the world upside-down and democratized mass communications, it became easier to truly self-publish and sell eBooks on Amazon,” she explains. Bookstores also began selling all book formats on their websites. A hardcover was published in 2024. An AI narrated audiobook came out this year, but Dana says, “I can’t recommend it to anyone else. I’ll record it myself after I publish the sequel.” With her lengthy career as a radio personality and TV booth announcer, Dana should be a real natural as an audio book narrator.



A second book, *Dream On*, is in the works but according to Dana it “has been harder to write than the first, and I dare not predict when I’ll publish it. I have some great scenes in mind for the third book, but I want to finish *Dream On* before I start writing it”

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VALLEY BROADCAST
LEGENDS

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President's Message: Creating Our Own Layers of History

by VBL President **Bill George**



Our next meeting will one again be held in the Old Spaghetti Factory, 12401 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova, CA 95742.

The feedback from our initial meeting was very positive. Please provide any suggestions for improvements going forward. But it appears we have a long-term location for our meetings.

Our June meeting will be about the history of the California State Fair. Like many of you, I have many memories of working at the fair—mainly long, hot days, but it was always fun. I hope you will share your fair stories with the group.

I recently took a trip to my hometown, Chicago. I left 50 years ago and marvel at the changes. Fifty years is a long time, and many of the people I knew have passed away, and many of the buildings and monuments gone or altered. One of the great treasures of Chicago is the Art Institute and I always try to visit when I'm in town. Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Two Sisters* is here, part of one of the greatest collections of the works of the French Impressionists in the world. There is an interesting connection to Sacramento in the story of how Chicago acquired these masterpieces, but that's a story for another day.

Also at the Institute was a special display, a selection of 58 rarely seen ancient Roman sculptures from Italy's storied Torlonia Collection. These are marble and granite statues from thousands of years ago. Some of it is funerary art. It's moving to see the images of the deceased on the tombs and the tributes their relatives paid them.

Rome is a city of ruins, in "layers like lasagna," one set of buildings built atop another. Archeologists dig down one layer at a time, revealing treasures lost for centuries. It is in this way we come to catch a glimpse of the ancient world. Here at VBL, I think we are creating the records that could last a long time and contribute to future generations' understanding of our era; we are creating our "layer" of information about the important events of our time. If our efforts will be discovered and how it will be interpreted, we can't portend. But we can try.

As for the lasagna analogy, remember we're meeting in an Italian restaurant!

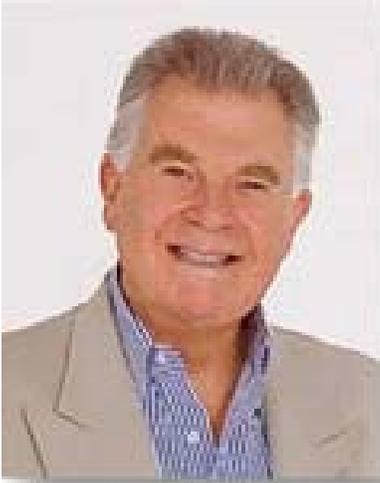
The Legends

Membership as of May 23, 2025

John Archer • Jay "DJ Jay" Arnold
 Stan Atkinson • 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 • 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



Stan Atkinson: 1932-2025



There are Legends, and then there are **LEGENDS**. Our own **Stan Atkinson** was one of the few who belonged in the latter category. The *Bee* summed him up: “The man who owns Sacramento.”

In a career that spanned four decades, Stan anchored the news at KCRA and KOVR, retiring in 1999. When he started out in 1957, KCRA had been on the air only two years. Everything was black-and-white, and the anchors were expected to promote sponsors’ products as well as report the news. When his career ended, local TV news had gone digital.

A native of San Diego, Stan first got bitten by the news bug by writing for his high school newspaper. His first paid broadcast gig was at a radio station in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Stan was just 25 when he began anchoring the 11:00 p.m. newscast at KCRA. The story has it that then-owner **Gene Kelly**, when first viewing Stan’s on-air performance, demanded, “Who in the hell ever hired that damn kid?!” Somehow, “that damn kid” survived and thrived.

Beyond anchoring, Stan was equally legendary for his exploits in the field, covering turbulent situations around the world. Stan was chased down by a Soviet helicopter in Afghanistan. Leftist guerillas robbed him in El Salvador, and he was shot at in Cambodia. He went undercover to report on resistance movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Central America. Stan filed reports from Baghdad just before Operation Desert Storm began and from Somalia as the nation collapsed into anarchy. Here at home, he landed on the Manson family’s “hit list” after doing an interview with Charles Manson.

Stan had a special interest in Vietnam. He covered the beginnings of the war in the early 1960s. In 1987, he returned with former Green Beret **B.T. Collins**—the first Americans to drive through the country since the fall of Saigon. Later, he and Collins led the fundraising campaign to create the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the State Capitol grounds.

His many honors: three Emmy awards for reporting from Afghanistan and Somalia, the George Washington Medal for Individual Achievement from the Freedoms Foundation, the World Affairs Council Award for International Reporting, and the Albert and Mary Lasker Award for Medical Journalism. He was inducted into the Silver Circle by the San Francisco/Northern California chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce named him the “Sacramentan of the Year,” and he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Sacramento Regional Foundation.

Stan was a graduate of Pasadena City College and in 1967 attended Stanford University under the prestigious Ford Foundation Journalism Fellowship.

Even in retirement, Stan remained active in community affairs, lending his celebrity status to numerous charitable causes, including his own Stan Atkinson Foundation. Among many other contributions, he volunteered to be one of the first seniors to receive a Covid vaccination in hopes of proving there was nothing to fear.

Continued on next page

Stan Atkinson: continued from previous page

Stan signed off on Sunday, May 25. He is survived by his wife, **Kristen McCann**, sons **Brad**, **Mike** and **Alex**, daughter **Sarah**, and 14 grandchildren. A fourth son, **Lance**, died in 1994.

Our understanding is that Stan did not want any service. If this changes, we will let everyone know.

Martin Ashley: 1948-2025

To thousands of teens growing up in Sacramento in the late 1960s and 70s, he was simply “Wonder Rabbit,” one of the legendary DJs spinning the hits on Top 40 powerhouse KROY-AM 1240. But for those working in the industry, **Martin Ashley** was also known as one of the best engineers in the business.

Interviewed in *Radio World* magazine in 2023, Martin summed up his career: “I loved radio and just wanted to be a part of it.” As a child, he enjoyed tinkering with AV equipment and at age 15, he approached West Sacramento station KJAY, offering to work for free. The PD, **Rick Cimino**, advised Martin that he could make more money as a DJ than an engineer, so Martin decided to pursue both on-air work and engineering. At 17, he landed his first paying gig (92 cents an hour!) at KXOA.



Martin Ashley at KROY in 1980.

The Army interrupted his radio career for two years. Martin served his country in the radio/TV section of the Fort Bliss (Texas) Public Information Office. Then it was back to Sacramento and to KROY. A fellow DJ bestowed the “Wonder Rabbit” on-air nickname after noticing how Martin was constantly hopping around the station, eagerly performing whatever tasks needed to be done: cleaning cart machines, adjusting tape recorder heads, changing the needles on the turntable tonearms.

Martin’s voice was later heard nationwide as he voice-tracked for a CHR (Contemporary Hits Radio) format syndicated by Concept Productions out of Roseville. He was the chief engineer for Sacramento’s Heavenly Recording Studios and the station announcer for KVIE-6 for 23 years. His last gig involved running the audio management department at the State Capitol.

Martin had other enthusiasms besides radio. He had a private pilot’s license and owned a Cessna 150H. He flew voluntary medical missions for AirLifeLine, which provides free transportation for low-income children and adults needing specialized medical treatment. He purchased a retired Sacramento Fire Department engine, fixed it up, and drove it to schools and in parades. He restored a 1943 World War II Jeep and a 1966 Ford Mustang. And he formed a World War II reenactment group called the 427th Air Squadron that attended Big Band dances and regional air shows.

When news of Martin’s passing became public, tributes poured in on social media. **Art Ballard** wrote, “Martin was funny, quirky, unassuming and didn’t have a clue how to be mean to anyone.”

Martin died on March 25 after a short battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife, **Lin**. At his request, no memorial service was held.

Tip Kindel's Celebration of Life April 18 at the Ben Ali Shrine, Sacramento



Photos courtesy of Ward Koppel.

Meeting Memories: April 8, 2025



Our new meeting venue, the Old Spaghetti Factory, proved to be a hit.

Photos courtesy of **Ward Koppel**, **Jay Arnold** and **Jay Rudin**.



Mike Marando, former PA announcer for the Sacramento River Cats, was one of several "pinch-hitters" when our scheduled speaker was a no-show.



Curt Foley (left) and **Dave Ramos** seem to be having fun.

A pair of "Jays": **Arnold** (left) and **Rudin**.



Jim Stimson (left) and **Adrian Woodfork**.