

VALLEY BROADCAST LEGENDS

Issue #147 *“Honoring the Past, Sharing the Present, Embracing the Future in Media”*

October 2025

Oct. 14 • Old Spaghetti Factory, Rancho Cordova • Doors open at Noon. • Lunch service at 12:30

You Knew the Job Was Dangerous . . .

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a nation frequently in the news, most recently with the UN imposing sanctions over its nuclear program. VBL member **Michael Messmer** will be giving us an insider’s look at the nation once known as Persia at our October 14 meeting. He was in Iran working for Bell Helicopter in 1979 when the Shah was overthrown in a revolution, and lived to tell the tale.



Michael tells us, “My talk is in part about how cultural differences can make things very strange and complicated, in part about what it was like to work in that environment and under a dictatorship, and finally about how it is to live and try to get work done at the outset of a revolution.”

Michael’s career highlights include attending a dinner with President Eisenhower and VP Nixon, plus their children and grandchildren. A few decades later he found himself late for a dinner with President Carter and the Shah of Iran. In January 1969 he arrived at Haneda airport in Japan to start work in psychological operations. A little over a decade later he was being evacuated by military aircraft from Mehrabad airport in Tehran, ending his work for Bell Helicopter.

Along the way Michael did graduate work at the University of Minnesota and produced an award winning educational radio series for the university radio station (KUOM) that was distributed statewide, produced programs to teach bankers how computers could work for them, worked in a giant PR department for SoCal Gas and a financial PR firm in Beverly Hills. After tiring of the hassle and hustle of a revolution and life in L.A., Michael landed in Sacramento, writing editorials for KTXL while producing a talk show for KGNR. He was also given the task for putting KDVR TV in Denver and KPDX TV in Portland on the air. He also managed KTXL’s new tower project, bringing it in on time and under budget. Later he built a new video production studio and produced videos for EDD.

As Michael puts it, “To keep from getting bored I also served as president of the Sacramento Public Relations Association, Vice President of the State Information Officers Association, was a member of the International TV Association, and National Broadcast Editorial Association, acted in many community theater shows, helped start the Fair Oaks Theater Festival, bought a live theater (Stage Door Comedy Playhouse) then later built a new theater (Arden Playhouse) where I was producer, writer and director of many comedies.”

RSVP for the October 14 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 Oct. 9!

Our First Jim Drennan Scholarship Winner

by VBL President **Bill George**

We are proud to announce that Sacramento State University film major **Ariel Airada** has been selected as the winner of the \$1,000 Jim Drennan Scholarship. Jim was president of VBL for many years, and was the news assignment editor at KXTV and later KCRA. And it was his generous gift to VBL that makes this award possible.

Ariel will attend our meeting in December to accept the award. She plans to use the money to buy a camera. Here is a little bit about this amazing young woman that she shared with us:

Since childhood, I have always had a large appreciation for the arts. Growing up, I loved to sing, dance, and act, but it wasn't until sophomore year of high school when I took my first film class that I found my true passion for film and digital media. At the time I had also been involved in theater, and my director happened to be the teacher of the film courses, allowing me to pour all my effort and creativity into projects without feeling nervous.

While taking the film classes in high school, I had the opportunity to create my own short film, working on everything from script writing, to directing, to editing, and experiencing first-hand the immense effort that goes into making films. Upon reflection, I can honestly say that it was one of the most difficult projects I have ever done, having to also balance AP courses and a lead role in a theater production. Throughout the whole process I stayed determined, driven by my passion for this truly unique art form.

Upon the film's completion, I knew that filmmaking was the career I wanted to pursue. I'm hoping to one day become a Hollywood director. My life goal is to create films that have an impact on the world. I want to share different perspectives in a matter that provokes thought and discussion.

Ariel received excellent training at River City High School in West Sacramento under the guidance of Christopher Hanks who advises the Arts, Media and Entertainment program. Here's wishing her luck in becoming the next Greta Gerwig!



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President's Message: From 7 Dirty Words to Today

by VBL President **Bill George**



It is not often that the right of free speech and the powers of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are thrust into the public eye. Still, the events of the past few weeks have served as a trampoline to vault these issues into everyday discussion. Often, those discussions do not explain the nuances of the issues.

Broadcast outlets have unique limits on speech. Broadcasters are issued licenses to operate by the federal government. While the FCC may not censor content, it can revoke a broadcast license or fine a station for “violations” of FCC rules. You may recall George Carlin’s “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television” (not reprinted here; you can look them up), which became a de facto test for many broadcasters. Critics pointed out that such words can be found in Shakespeare and the Bible, but the Supreme Court ruled that “grossly offensive” words are a public nuisance and thus restricted to late-night hours when it is least likely to reach children. So, broadcasters have fewer First Amendment protections than other forms of media, which generally allow them to publish what they see fit.

The FCC holds another lever over broadcasters. Stations are supposed to operate in the “public interest, convenience, and necessity.” I remember a “book” stations maintained detailing “public interest” programs they presented, such as telethons and blood drives. In the era before competition from cable TV, I personally wish the FCC had required more public-service content, which I believe broadcasters could have easily accommodated without cutting into profits. In fact, TV news began as public service content and proved to be very profitable.

While these restrictions exist, they should not significantly impact freedom of speech, “the beating heart of a democracy.” Congressman Tom McClintock says free speech is a cornerstone of free societies, “even when that speech is hateful, malignant, or stupid. No central authority must ever be given the power to take this vital freedom away from the people or to punish anyone solely for expressing their opinions.” Or, as the famous quote puts it, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

For better or worse, the internet has resolved most of these issues, and everyone with a cell phone has access to a global audience. The United States Congress has shown little inclination to limit speech or anything else on the internet or address the harm such content may cause. Carlin’s seven dirty words now seem quaint compared to the massive amounts of bile coursing through the internet unbridled.

The Legends

Membership as of Sept. 29, 2025

John Archer • Jay “DJ Jay” Arnold
 Mark Baggs • Bill Bishofberger
 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
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 Rick Kavooras • Kim Kline
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 Bill Kreutzer • Joyce Krieg
 Eleanor Kuechler-VanAcker • Bob Lang
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 Lizette Martinez- Hopkins
 Michael McCarron • Michael Messmer
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 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



Honoring the Legacy of Stan Atkinson

by VBL Board Member **Ward Koppel**

It was a remarkable evening where dozens of former co-workers and friends of **Stan Atkinson** gathered to honor his life and legacy. Dubbed, “A Toast to Mr. Sacramento, Stan Atkinson”, it was held at Wildwood Kitchen and Bar at the Pavilions Shopping Center on August 13th. It was a mix of KCRA, KOVR and other media who spent decades competing against each other, united in their love and respect for Stan. Stan’s energy could be felt. Honoring him brought together co-workers who had not seen each other in some cases for 40 years or more. As they mingled, they shared their Stan stories, and his presence was felt. Stan’s professional accomplishments are legendary.

Speakers included **Maria Nicholas Kelly**, a former KCRA anchor and widow of former KCRA co-owner **Robert Kelly**. She talked about how Stan came to work at KCRA, and how he convinced Robert Kelly to start doing reporting from around the world, something that would become a trademark of Stan’s career. **Kelly Brothers**, **Jennifer Whitney**, and **Kitty O’Neal** spoke of their professional and personal experiences with Stan. Stan’s widow **Kristen**, and daughter **Sarah** spoke briefly, Sarah saying that her dad did not want any organized event after he passed, but that he would be very pleased with this gathering.

This event brought into focus what made him Mr. Sacramento, his involvement with the community and of particular interest to Stan, the Mercy Foundation. He dedicated untold hours over 30 years, both doing fundraising, and serving over 20 years as a trustee on Mercy Foundation Board. Those efforts will benefit the community for years to come.

Thanks to Kitty O’Neal, Jennifer Whitney, Kelly Brothers and Stan’s widow Kristen for organizing this perfect way to honor a man who was so much more than a news anchor and Journalist. He was Mr. Sacramento.

If you would like to honor Stan’s legacy, the Mercy Foundation has set up a memorial fund at: <https://supportmercyfoundation.org/stanatkinson>.





Thomas Blazowski: 1945-2025

VBL lost a long-time member with the death of **Thomas “Thom” Blazowski** on Sept. 23. Thom grew up in Maywood, New Jersey, and was a veteran of the US Air Force, serving in the 451st Missile Maintenance Squadron.

Thom’s career in radio and television included working as an engineering supervisor at KTXL-Fox 40. He also coordinated slow-motion replay for the Sacramento Kings. His passion for fitness prompted him to open a gym, where he inspired others to lead healthy lives. After he retired, he and his wife **Dianne** ran a pet-sitting business.

Proud of his Polish heritage, Thom was a member of The Polish-American Club of Sacramento. One of his cherished memories was the trip he took to Krakow, Poland, where he was able to connect with relatives.

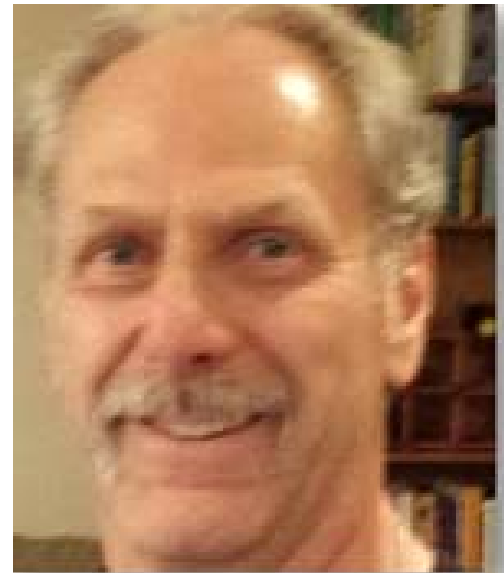
Thom is remembered as a devoted husband, father, and friend who touched countless lives with his kindness and generosity.

He was a mentor to many, always ready to offer a helping hand or a listening ear. He lived by the golden rule, loving others as he wished to be loved, and his warmth left a lasting impression on everyone he met.

Funeral services are scheduled for October 24 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Mary Catholic Church, 1333 58th Street, Sacramento. A reception follows from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at St. Mary’s Cemetery at 65th and Folsom Boulevard. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests a donation to the Gary Sinise Foundation to benefit veterans and their families.

Thom’s family has set up a Go Fund Me to cover funeral costs. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/celebrating-the-life-of-thomas-blazowski>

In addition to Dianne, Thom is survived by three children: **Karen Baddley, Jared Blazowski** and **Robert Hartkopf**.



Meeting Memories: Aug. 12, 2025



George Nyberg (far left) and Steve Swatt shared memories of covering Squeaky Fromme's attempt on the life of then-President Ford at the State Capitol 50 years ago.

Photos by Matías Bombal and Joyce Krieg.



Please Do **NOT** Be Patient!

by VBL Secretary/Treasurer **Allen Chamberlin**

Not long enough ago, a new member asked me about our newsletter. Took me a tick before realizing he was asking if we had one, cuz he hadn't gotten any. [We have been having email problems.]

After forwarding him belated copies, I felt like blaming the victim (as one does), for being so darn patient. I need wheels to squeak when there's a problem, otherwise I lead a blissfully ignorant life. [If only...]

Legends: please complain to me if you DO NOT get your Valley Broadcast Legends super-duper electronic newsletter by the first of each of these months: February, April, June, August, October, December.

Also remember our website ValleyBroadcastLegends.org has all our previous newsletters posted, should you be interested.