

succeeds *This Week in Northern California*, a station mainstay for two decades.

KQED is announcing *KQED Newsroom* as a new multi-platform service for television, radio and online, and three-time Emmy Award-winning journalist and anchor **Thuy Vu** will be its host.

**Scott Shafer**, the award-winning host of KQED Public Radio's *The California Report*, will join Vu as senior correspondent.

The new weekly television program will build on the public affairs roundtable format that has been the core feature of *This Week in Northern California*, which *KQED Newsroom* will replace on its Friday evening television schedule. New segments will give viewers access to features and stories from all KQED News sources with newsmaker interviews, debate segments and field reporting.

The title, *KQED Newsroom*, is a nod to KQED's groundbreaking 1968 program, which was the first nightly news series on public television and informed the 1975 launch of the national *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*.

The new half-hour program, which will also feature a brand-new set, premieres Oct. 18 on KQED Channel 9. It will also air on KQED Public Radio 88.5 FM at 6 p.m. on Sundays..

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**Editor's Note:** In the October issue of *Off Camera*, **Thuy Vu** writes exclusively about her new program, *KQED Newsroom*. Watch for her story next month.

## Gold & Silver Circle Profiles



# GOLD & SILVER CIRCLE PROFILES

by Kevin Wing



In a broadcasting career that spanned 53 years, **Al Sturges** practically did it all. Sturges is not only a television pioneer of the San Francisco Bay Area television market, his influence stretched beyond the Bay, to places like Chicago and Los Angeles.

His love for broadcasting was so immense that when he retired from television, he plunged

into radio, purchasing a station on California's Central Coast, to be followed later by a series of radio stations to which he would serve as general manager.

Sturges, inducted into the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 1986, celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday last month. He spent his birthday weekend traveling with his wife of 40 years, **Dorothy**, from their home in Palm Desert to the Bay Area to visit family.

To learn more about Sturges and how he became interested in a career in broadcasting, we must go back to his early years of growing up in San Francisco.

"I was always intrigued by broadcasting," Sturges says. "I was always listening to the radio when I was growing up. Growing up during World War II, radio was everything. Radio was always a part of my life."

"I will never forget that Sunday morning, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941," Sturges recalls. "My mother was listening to the New York Philharmonic broadcast on CBS radio. My father, brother and I were in front of our house, on Juanita Way in San Francisco, tossing the football around. My mother called us in to hear the frightening news."

Pearl Harbor had been bombed, and with that, the United States entered the war. Sturges says "radio had the ability to transport you by the turn of a dial, not only across the nation, but to foreign lands and into the fifth dimension."

While still in high school, Sturges' broadcasting career began.

"It started one morning in 1948 at Lincoln High School in San Francisco," he says. "My homeroom teacher, **Mrs. Blenerhassett**, mentioned to me that KGO-AM's sportscaster, **Ira Blue**, was seeking a young high school student to serve as a production assistant for his nightly ABC Radio Network sports-interview program."

Sturges got the job. It was an opportunity of a lifetime, for Sturges had known about the famous art-deco facility known as Radio City Studios, located at 420 Taylor Street in San Francisco. "It was a chance to work there," he says.

That same year, television was about to make its debut in the Bay Area. KPIX Channel 5 was the first station to sign on, in December of 1948.

Sturges was fascinated with television as much as he was with radio, and he landed a part-time job as a film editor and floor manager at KPIX.

"I was one of the station's first part-time employees," he says. "One of my jobs was to take all the kinescope recordings, walk across the street to the Mark Hopkins Hotel, where our transmitter and telecine were located. In those days, the station was located on Bush Street adjacent to the hotel. I would bring the recordings to telecine where they would be put on the air."

While at KPIX, Sturges also worked on the station's newscast, anchored by **William Winter**. He also worked on *The Del Courtney Show*, *The Faye Stewart Show*, *The Edna Fischer Show* and *Family Vespers*.

Sturges also worked on a weekly children's show, *Pow Wow Indians*.

Keep in mind that Sturges was still in high school when his career began.

But, high school football came calling, and Sturges temporarily gave up his television career briefly to take on the challenges of the Lincoln High School gridiron, where he played guard.

As high school graduation was approaching, Sturges' teacher, Mrs. Blenerhassett, suggested that he enroll in the broadcast communications program at San Francisco State College. So he did.

In 1950, Sturges was hired at KQW-AM (now KCBS-AM) as an usher for *The Red Blanchard Show*. The program was one of the last comedy-variety radio programs with a live 10-piece studio orchestra.

"The station's studios, in those days, were located in the famed Palace Hotel, and it was a wild scene when Red's audience stampeded through the Palace's sedate lobby," Sturges recalls.

That same year, Sturges was hired as a part-time film editor at KGO-TV. The following year, he was back at KPIX, producing and directing dramatic vignettes for the *Family Vespers* program.

Many jobs, and a lot to juggle for a college student. Sturges was still attending classes at San Francisco State while he worked. In 1952, KGO-AM hired him to be a writer and producer of *Cooking with Music*, which was also aired by the ABC Radio Network.

In 1954, Sturges graduated from San Francisco State with a bachelor of arts degree and a lot of broadcasting experience under his belt. And, he was just 21 years old.

That same year, he was back at KGO-TV, where he would begin a seven-year stint there as a production assistant, stage manager and assistant director. Sturges worked on numerous programs there, including *The Jack LaLanne Show*, *San Francisco Tonight* with **Don Sherwood**, **Bing Crosby** *Golf Tournament from Pebble Beach*, *Queen for a Day*, *William Winter News and Comment* and **Billy Graham's** *San Francisco Crusade*.

While working at KGO-TV, Sturges, who, by then, had earned a reputation for having quite the drive to want to work as much as he could, took on freelance positions: in 1955, he worked for KQED-TV as director of *Speeding Your Reading*; and, in 1960, he directed San Francisco Giants baseball telecasts.

But it was around 1961 that Sturges had read an article in *Broadcasting* magazine that a new television station was about to go on the air in Portland, Oregon.

"Here was my opportunity," Sturges says. "I had always been put off by applicants for creative positions who submitted a standard resume for a job. So, I decided to submit my resume - in fortune cookies. I typed up all the highlights in my 'show business career' and set off to find a fortune cookie bakery in Chinatown."

Soon, Sturges sent off his "resume". **Bill Hubbach**, the newly-appointed general manager at KATU in Portland, responded to Sturges' unique resume with the following Western Union telegram: "Have made reservations for you at the Multnomah Hotel. Send more fortune cookies."

"My interview at KATU exceeded my expectations, and I left the interview not being offered a position as a television director, but as the program manager of the new station," Sturges explains.

At that time, Sturges, all of 28 years old, was one of the youngest program managers in a major market.

Sturges' programming highlights at KATU during his tenure there included the station's inaugural broadcast featuring actress and Portland native, **Jane Powell**; 1964 election night coverage with Oregon Gov. **Mark Hatfield** as KATU's political commentator; and coverage of numerous sporting events, including Oregon State University football games and Portland Beaver baseball games.

Hatfield's exclusive commentaries on KATU, unheard of at that time, made headlines in *The Oregonian* and in *Newsweek*. But, the exclusive affiliation with KATU scooped the station's competition.

In 1964, Sturges was facing turmoil; his mother was dying of cancer in San Francisco, and he was making frequent trips to the family home from Portland to be with his mother and father during this difficult time. At the time, KATU was also riding a wave of success, and the rest of the country was watching. Sturges was fielding numerous job offers elsewhere, including one from KTVU, in Oakland. He was also being wooed by **Elton Rule**, the general manager of KABC-TV in Los Angeles, who was offering him the position of assistant program manager there.

But, Sturges chose to be closer to home and accepted an offer to be KTVU's new program manager, beginning in 1965. It was short-lived.

"I knew that **Bill Pabst**, former co-owner and general manager (of KTVU), had held it against me that KATU had hired (news anchor) **Les Nichols** away from KTVU. But, I knew Les Nichols wanted to leave the Bay Area and had approached KATU about a position in its news department," Sturges explains. "

At that time, KTVU's new general manager, **Frank King**, assured Sturges that Pabst was out of the picture, retired, and living in Hawaii.

"Much to Frank King's and my surprise, Pabst returned from Hawaii and was back at KTVU, and my days were numbered," Sturges says.



Sturges left KTVU in 1966.

Unfortunately, the KABC-TV position was already filled, but Rule helped Sturges land a job as an account executive at ABC Films in Hollywood.

"My position at ABC Films gave me a new perspective on the television industry from the other side of the desk," Sturges explains. "At ABC Films, I gained insights into the production and distribution side of the television industry."

Sturges was only with ABC Films for a year, but says during that time, he met "many wonderful station owners and program managers."

He enjoyed working for ABC Films, but Sturges grew tired of being away from home. "My territory consisted of the 13 western states, and I was in the air Monday through Friday," he explains. "An awful life for a family man."

In 1967, Sturges went to work for Kaiser Broadcasting Corporation, based in Oakland. The company was launching television stations across the country, including a new station in the Bay Area, KBHK-TV. But, the company needed Sturges' talents in Cleveland first, where WKBS-TV was going to sign on. Sturges secured the station's license, designed the studios and acquired the programming.

By 1968, Sturges had returned to the Bay Area to become program manager at KBHK-TV. And, for Sturges, it was bittersweet to work at the station, because it was to be located at 420 Taylor Street in San Francisco, the same Radio City Studios where Sturges began his broadcasting career 20 years before.

The Kaiser station saw tremendous growth in the five years Sturges was there as program manager.

One of the stalwarts of the KBHK-TV schedule was *The **Joe Dolan Show***, along with *Point of View*, hosted by **Jerri Lange**. **Terry Lowry** also served as substitute host.

In 1969, KBHK-TV got a big break when KRON, wanting to expand its early evening news programming, made plans to sell off some of its programming inventory, which included reruns of *The Flintstones* - a big hit since its network debut on ABC in 1960.

Sturges made it known that he wanted Fred, Wilma, Barney and Betty on the Channel 44 schedule.

"*The Flintstones* became a cornerstone of KBHK-TV's late afternoon programming," Sturges says.

In 1972, Sturges purchased reruns of *Hogan's Heroes*, which had ended its popular CBS run the year before.

"I scheduled two half-hour episodes back to back in the early evening," Sturges says. He also persuaded actor **Werner Klemperer** - *Hogan's* Col. Klink - to record stay-tuned announcements that would run in between the episodes.

The programming was a ratings smash for KBHK-TV. Later, Sturges added sports programming to the schedule, including live broadcasts of Golden State Warriors basketball games and Oakland A's baseball games.

Sturges' successes with KBHK-TV were certainly recognized, enough that Kaiser Broadcasting wanted him to run a station in Chicago that it was about to acquire.

They wanted him to be station manager of WFLD-TV. The year was 1973.

"As station manager, I would be responsible for all aspects of the station's operation except for sales and engineering," Sturges says. "I was thrilled."

Sturges remained with WFLD-TV and Kaiser until 1977.

In 1977, Sturges switched gears, returning to his radio roots. He returned to California, and purchased KQSB-AM in Santa Maria. He had grown tired of corporate politics in Chicago, and it was time for a change. Time for Sturges to be his own boss.

Not only did he own the station, he was its general manager.

In 1984, Sturges became general manager of KTOB-AM, in Petaluma/Santa Rosa, closer to his Bay Area roots.

In 1985, he would make a decision to return to the Central Coast, serving as general manager or station manager for a series of AM and FM stations in Santa Barbara. In 1998, he joined Clear Channel Communications, becoming local sales manager for seven Santa Barbara radio stations.

During his three years with Clear Channel, Sturges also served as an adjunct professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the University of LaVerne in Oxnard, and Allan Hancock College at the U.S. Penitentiary at Lompoc.

During his 53 years in broadcasting, Sturges' career took him from San Francisco to Portland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Cleveland, back to the Bay Area, Chicago and Santa Barbara.

Throughout his career, Sturges made a point to be involved in the communities he served.

Looking back, he says his years in Portland were the most memorable for him.

These days, Sturges and his wife live in Palm Desert, and visit the Bay Area regularly to see their four grandchildren.

## Soundbites



**Anne Makovec** has been working as a reporter and anchor at KPIX 5 in San Francisco since 2011. The Wisconsin native says she's very happy to be living and working in the City by the Bay, adding it's a far cry from her hometown. This month, find out more about Anne, how she became interested in journalism, who has inspired her the most, what's her favorite ice cream flavor, and more.

### **Where did you grow up?**

Medford, Wisconsin.

### **Do you have siblings? If so, are you the oldest? Youngest? Middle?**

I am the middle child. I have an older sister and a younger brother.

### **When did you first realize, and at what age, that you wanted to work in television news?**

I fell in love with journalism in high school, after writing an editorial on why I didn't think physical education should count in your GPA. I saw the waves it created and realized the power of the pen. The TV stuff came in college - when I saw a sign for anchor tryouts for the college TV station.

### **Who has inspired you in your career? As a person?**

My mom has inspired me in both - always supporting and believing in me no matter what the dream.

### **Before KPIX, where did you work before?**

I started in TV at a cable station outside of Atlanta, then WQOW in Eau Claire, WI, KION/KCBA in Salinas, KGO-TV in San Francisco, and KXTV in Sacramento.

### **As a journalist, every day at work is different from the one before it. Can you describe a "day in the life of Anne Makovec"?**

The alarm goes off in the wee morning hours (and then it goes off again after at least one tap of