



Silver Circle Profile

DOMINIC BONAVOLONTA

By **Kevin Wing**

Dominic Bonavolonta certainly has had an illustrious career as a television director. He got his start in his hometown of Chicago. He made it to the Bay Area to enjoy lengthy, successful tenures at KPIX and KTVU, directing newscasts at both stations from the 1970s through the 1990s. Then, he went Hollywood, and for nearly a decade, Bonavolonta directed the popular syndicated entertainment program, *Extra!*

But as all of us know, it is difficult to be away from the Bay Area for very long, and Bonavolonta – who joined the prestigious Silver Circle in 2004 – returned after eight years in Los Angeles.

Today, Bonavolonta is helping to guide the next generation of television directors. He teaches live TV direction for the Broadcasting Department at Ohlone College in Fremont.

"I love teaching," says Bonavolonta, an Oakland resident. "I love teaching my students. It's a lot of fun to watch when these kids get it."

Bonavolonta was lured back to the Bay Area – and to Ohlone – by his longtime friend and colleague, **Gary Kauf**, who is perhaps best known for his many years as a reporter and producer at KTVU where he and Bonavolonta worked together through the 1980s. Since 1999, Kauf has been the director of Ohlone's Broadcasting Department. When he was ready to add to his talented stable of instructors at Ohlone, he didn't have to look far. Kauf called Bonavolonta.

At Ohlone, which is located in the hills of Fremont's Mission San Jose District, Bonavolonta helps teach the fundamentals of television directing, from newscasts to sitcoms. He's only been on campus three years but already is one of the most respected instructors on Ohlone's staff.

And why not, you may ask? You wouldn't know it from his youthful, carefree appearance, but Bonavolonta has been in the TV business since 1968. That's when he started his television career at the TV station for Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL.

Bonavolonta's first paid job was working in master control for WSIU-TV. From there, he went to work for a UHF station in Chicago. That's where he met **Ken Czys**, another TV director who would become a lifelong friend.

"It was an amazing time for me," Bonavolonta says. "I did everything. It wasn't a union shop or anything and everything I did, it was live television."

Czys would later leave Chicago and head for San

Francisco. It wouldn't be long before Czys was calling on his friend to follow him to the Bay Area.

"I came out to the Bay Area in 1975," Bonavolonta says. "It's one of the best things I've ever done." He went to work for KPIX, directing their 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. newscasts.

Three weeks after joining KPIX, the nation and the world would zero in on San Francisco, its colorful Union Square the scene of an assassination attempt on visiting President **Gerald Ford**.

"Of course, the day that happened, we went on the air right away," Bonavolonta recalls. In those days, images were still being captured on film, and KPIX crews were not only processing the images for their needs, but they were feeding film via satellite to CBS in New York.

It was during this time that Bonavolonta, who was directing those live news updates from the KPIX control room, would have a brush with fame. CBS, of course, was ready to go live with the story with **Walter Cronkite** anchoring from New York. With his own KPIX anchors live on the air and on IFB, Bonavolonta also had Cronkite on IFB.

"It was Walter Cronkite," Bonavolonta remembers. "I was nervous as hell. It was Walter Cronkite, the most trusted man in America. The man who made his mark reporting the Kennedy assassination and man's first walk on the moon!"

"It was an exciting moment for me," he says. "I'd only been at Channel 5 for three weeks and all of this was happening right in front of me."

The momentum continued, but in a different way. The mid-1970s was also a time for a new kind of programming, and it came to KPIX in the form of *Evening Magazine*. Bonavolonta directed that show for awhile, and he also assisted in scouting locations for the fledgling show, which would last into the early 1990s in its original incarnation.

There was a lot of news happening in the late 1970s, Bonavolonta says.

"Jonestown. The murders of San Francisco Mayor **George Moscone** and San Francisco Supervisor **Harvey Milk**," he says. "All of it was a tragedy, indeed. But, it was also an important part of my career."

In 1977, Bonavolonta jumped ship and went to work for KTVU. He would go on to direct the station's much-respected 10 p.m. newscast for 13 years.

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"I worked with some great people at Channel 2," he recalls. "There was **Willie Kee** and **Al Corral** and **Dennis Richmond**. My directing buddy, **Ron Louie**. **Elaine Corral**. So many people. And, of course, there was **Fred Zehnder**."

In 1990, Bonavolonta was lured back to KPIX by then-news director **Harry Fuller**. Eventually, Fuller left. Friend and former KTVU colleague Al Corral replaced Fuller, and once again, it was a reunion for Bonavolonta.

In 1995, he decided to try something new when he was hired as the show director for *Extra!* But, it would mean a move to southern California. He would also go on to direct TV pilots for *Celebrity Justice* and a game show, *Change of Heart*.

He remained in Hollywood for eight years. Then, Kauf came calling, and Bonavolonta found himself a new home at Ohlone.

"I care for my students very much," he says. "I want them to get what I've been given in my career. It's exciting for me to work with these kids. I've come full circle, and I'm loving every second of it."

ON THE MOVE

Steve Charlier, currently the News Director for Sacramento's **KOVR/KMAX**, the CBS owned duopoly in California's capital city, has been named Senior Vice President, News, Product and Operations for Local TV.

Tom Matheson to Account Executive, CBS 5 (KPIX) from Senior Regional Sales Manager at Reply.com.

SINKOVITZ ON AIR

Former KRON 4 anchor **Tom Sinkovitz** joins NBC11 as political reporter and fill-in anchor for NBC11 News. Sinkovitz's career began with the Armed Forces Vietnam Network when he was in Saigon in 1969. Before coming to the Bay Area eighteen years ago, he anchored and reported in Pennsylvania, Cincinnati, Baltimore and Atlanta.



Sinkovitz has covered many significant stories, among them: Three Mile Island, Hurricanes Agnes and Hugo, the Oakland Hills Firestorm, the Los Angeles Riots, Superbowl XVI and the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He won an Emmy® award for his coverage of the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion. He also reported live from the Nashville campaign headquarters of then Vice President Al Gore on the infamous election night of November 2000.

"Bay Area viewers know Tom, trust him and respect him. We are pleased to welcome his talent, knowledge of the Bay Area and his perspective to our news team," said NBC11 Vice President of News **Susan Sullivan**.

Sinkovitz is married and the father of twins. He has a twin brother who is also a TV journalist in Pennsylvania.

DENNIS RICHMOND CANCER SURGERY



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the newscast introductions, viewers have been told simply, "Dennis Richmond is off tonight."

"It makes me sound stupid — like I'm not working with a big election coming up," he said. "It makes it sound like I'm just cruising into retirement. ... I want viewers to know that I'm not taking days off."

On KTVU's Friday 6 p.m. newscast, co-anchor Julie Haener informed viewers for the first time that Richmond had undergone cancer surgery. "He's in good spirits and hopes to be back as soon as he is physically able," she said.

Regarding his recovery, Richmond said, "I'm going through hell, but I'm dealing with it." He estimated it will be at least a "week or two, minimum" before he can return.

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