



# Silver Circle Profile: Pete Giddings

By Kevin Wing



For nearly 30 years, **Pete Giddings'** name was synonymous with anything to do with weather in the Bay Area.

He was a unique presence — in style and personality: the type of television weathercaster and meteorologist that Bay Area viewers are unlikely to ever see again. Some might say Giddings, for all of his knowledge of Bay Area weather forecasting and his dedication to community service — especially his attentiveness to the needs of underprivileged children — was a polarizing figure during his three decades in local television.

Polarizing or not, it is safe to say that many longtime Bay Area residents and viewers of local newscasts still know who Giddings is today, nearly 10 years after abruptly leaving Bay Area airwaves. His departure followed an illustrious career as KGO-TV's chief meteorologist, a title he held from his hiring in October 1969 to his unexpected dismissal in 1998.

In January 1999, **Spencer Christian**, for many years the nationally-known weatherman of ABC's *Good Morning America*, was brought in to replace Giddings at KGO-TV. Giddings talked with other Bay Area stations; either none would consider hiring him, or, none had immediate openings. Years before, Giddings was so in demand by those same stations that he turned down their lucrative contract offers to jump ship from KGO-TV, which, by then had become a huge ratings powerhouse, lasting throughout the 1970s and 1980s. During this period and beyond, Giddings was among the highest-paid talent in the Bay Area.

"I basically was (Channel) 7," Giddings said during a recent interview. "I didn't think of entertaining those offers at the time."

During his three decades at ABC 7, Giddings said he became synonymous with the station. "My identity was 7," he said.

Giddings added that he was traumatized when told he was being fired from a job he loved very much. "I didn't sleep for six weeks after I was told I was being fired," he said. That was April 1998. Due to contractual obligations, he was forced to stay on the air until the end of 1998.

It was a somber, not-so-celebratory end to a career as a Bay Area television weatherman that

remains unprecedented to this day. To date, no Bay Area meteorologist has lasted as long as Giddings, nor lasted as long at one station, for that matter.

The New York native began his TV weather-casting career at WTVT in Tampa. From there, it was on to Nashville for a brief stint. That's when San Francisco came calling.

The still youthful-looking Giddings, who, in his younger years sported stick-straight blond bangs on the air, is almost 70 now. He is still working, but not in television news.

After leaving KGO-TV, Giddings became chief meteorologist for KOLO Channel 8 in Reno, where he remained for three years. One day, upper management at the station informed him that his six-figure salary would be slashed to a five-figure salary, so he resigned. He returned to California, going to work in the Salinas-Monterey market for duopolies KCBA Channel 35 and KION Channel 46. He remained there for three years.

By then in his mid-60s, Giddings faced a future without television news. He recently celebrated his first anniversary as volunteer coordinator with Second Harvest Food Bank in San Jose, a job Giddings relishes and speaks of with much pride and satisfaction. His new role in life is perfect for him: for many years, he became well-known for his community service efforts, especially with his Little People Fishing Program, a successful effort that spanned much of his time at KGO-TV. Just as he cared for Bay Area children, his position at Second Harvest Food Bank allows him to care for the hungry and families in need.

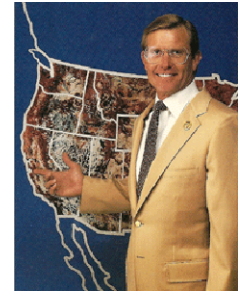
"We are central to a number of agencies who feed 186,000 people a month," Giddings said. "There is a very small percentage of people who genuinely care about their fellow man. Volunteering is good for bonding and it's good for corporations and the community. It's all about community involvement."

Giddings explained Second Harvest's role as a clearinghouse for food donations.

"We get food donations, or we go out and purchase produce and non-perishables. We then separate all the food and put it into 13 different categories. Rice, pasta, meals in a can, juices, all miscellaneous," Giddings said. "Then, we make them

*continued on page 9*

# Your Favorite Weatherman!



*continued from page 8*

available to the agencies and they distribute the food. It's very rewarding."

While Giddings is very proud of his work with Second Harvest Food Bank, he is still doing weather — on the Internet. Listening to him speak about weather forecasting, it is not difficult to realize early on that he still has a passion for it.

"I still get to do weather, which I love to do," he said. Through his Web site, [www.petegiddingsweather.com](http://www.petegiddingsweather.com), Giddings forecasts Bay Area weather with what he calls "a neat format."

When it comes to his forecasts, Giddings is "simplistic." "I do forecasts for the next three days, then look at the next four days," Giddings explained. "The National Weather Service produces a 16-day model. I give you an idea of what the trend will be. Will it be hot, cold, wet or dry? As far as temperatures, I do lows, middles and highs. I do ranges. It makes more sense. There's not much difference if it's 65 in one city and 64 in a city next door. In other words, if it's a sunny day, my forecast will be sunny. If it's cloudy, I simply say it'll be cloudy. My wife likes it that way. I do weather for my wife."

Reminiscing about his years at KGO-TV comes easy for Giddings. Back in 1969 and 1970, when the station's news broadcasts were re-branded as "News Scene", it ushered in Channel 7 as the news team to watch, and perhaps for the competition, the team to watch out for.

It all began with the now-famous Old West-themed promotion that featured Channel 7's new



news team at that time: anchors **Van Amburg**, **Jerry Jensen**, sportscaster **John O'Reilly**, and Giddings. They were like the new cavalry, riding into town to push the other stations aside. And they did, for nearly two decades. Giddings was the last survivor of that original team. John O'Reilly left for the East Coast several years later. Jerry Jensen died in 1984, and Van Amburg left the station unceremo-

nously during the summer of 1986.

But, when they were doing "News Scene", the atmosphere was unreal, Giddings recalled. "It was a real chemistry. We really enjoyed each other. It was one of those things. It's rare that you find great chemistry like that. It was serendipity. Van was like a big brother. John was the perfect sports guy, and Jerry was the perfect foil for Van, the perfect Ed McMahon for Channel 7. Jerry was brought on first, then Van."

Giddings' fondest memories are of the Little People Fishing Program he created. "I loved those kids, and caring about them was very important to me," he recalled.

Today, people on the street still recognize Giddings.

**Rigo Chacon**, ABC 7's former South Bay Bureau Chief who worked at the station nearly three de-



**Giddings Vacar Chacon**  
Silver Circle reunion luncheon

cares, lives within a mile of Giddings' home in south San Jose. "It's not uncommon for people to still recognize Pete," Chacon said.

Giddings and **Janet**, his wife of 30 years, live in The Villages, a golf retirement community. He has three children: **Gina Louise** and **Ward**, from a previous marriage, and **JohnHenry**, from his marriage to Janet. He is also a grandfather to five.

"Channel 7 was my identity," Giddings reminisced. "Life was great."

By all indications, Giddings' life today is still great.



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