



# Ron Louie



## Class of 1997

*Silver Circle Profile*  
By: Kevin Wing



**James Gabbert** (*Silver Circle class of 1990*), who eventually moved the Peninsula FM station to San Francisco and re-branded it K-101, it was an FM station destined for greatness. And a strong signal. It was, and continues to be, one of the most powerful stations to be broadcasting in the country.

Louie listened to KPEN, and then K-101, religiously. He eventually outfitted his Dodge Seneca with an eight-track cassette player.

He loved the music of the era, but like a lot of radio listeners, he liked certain songs. So when it came down to purchasing an eight-track tape album, he had to listen to all of the songs before he could hear his favorites again. "Back in the day, tapes were sold as 'listen only,' you couldn't record and/or mix songs like you do today," he reminisces. That bugged him to no end.

"I hated that," Louie says. "There has to be a way around that. There's got to be a better way. With no fast-forward function, it was impossible to listen only to the songs you wanted to listen to."

So, he and friend, **Carl Woo**, decided to do something about it. They researched through countless catalogs and finally found a rare piece of equipment that fit the bill. They bought a reel-to-reel tape recorder with a separate eight-track recorder and player called the Roberts 1725-8L. They could then make their own eight-track tapes with only the songs they wanted to listen to.

"That's how I got interested in the engineering/recording side of radio," Louie says. "And then I thought, maybe this was something I wanted to do for a career. It was serendipity."

It was a major turning point for Louie. As he slowly abandoned his dreams of joining NASA, he went back to school. Already with Laney and Merritt College behind him, Louie enrolled at San Francisco State in 1969 to study broadcast engineering. He was a student of **Herbert Zettl** (*Silver Circle class of 1998*), an innovative, iconic television production professor at San Francisco State University.

While at San Francisco State, student Louie enrolled in the Broadcast Communication Arts (BCA) department. And while there, he was exposed to many philosophies from various professors on the type of career trajectory he should pursue: television department head **Dr. Stuart Hyde** (*Silver Circle*

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**Ron Louie** could have been a rocket scientist. In the mid-1960s, he certainly had his mind on the moon and the solar system with the fever-pitch aspirations of working with the NASA space program.

And, for Louie, a 1997 inductee into the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, a career in television was the farthest thing from his mind.

Louie, who was born in Canton, China, in 1948, immigrated to the United States when he was 20 months old, and grew up in Oakland, where he attended Oakland High School, graduating in 1966.

After high school, Louie was accepted to California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, but because of the family's financial picture at the time, he was unable to attend there, so he attended Laney College in Oakland.

In the summer of 1967, Louie heard NASA was finished with the Research and Design phase of the Apollo program and was laying off countless research and development engineers (something that he aspired to be). He figured that if he stayed with this course of study, he would have no job opportunities when he graduated.

"I was really disappointed at the time," Louie says. "I went to school to study for a career in the space program. When I didn't think I could have a career in space exploration, I had to figure out what I would do with myself."

Louie loved the music of the 1960s, and in 1967, he drove a 1959 Dodge Seneca. For Louie to refer to it as "a land yacht," you can just imagine how big this 4-door behemoth was.

"It was a six-passenger sedan," he explains. "Just a huge car for the road, but I loved it."

Of course, during this time in Louie's life, AM radio was king, and FM radio was just beginning to make some headway as the upstart in radio broadcasting. But, with those meager beginnings for FM radio, Louie, with an ear for quality radio broadcast sound, eventually tuned to one of the Bay Area's few FM stations at the time.

It was none other than KPEN radio. Owned by



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class of 1996), professors **Quinn Millar** and **Dr. Benjamin Draper**.

It was Dr. Draper who helped Louie get his first television job... well, his only television job. After all, he's only worked for one station: KTVU, in Oakland.

"One day," Louie recalls, "Dr. Draper asked me if I had thought about my education and what was I going to with my life."

Dr. Draper reminded Louie that networking was an important part of having a successful career. He then asked Louie if he would like to attend a party with him. Someone important was going to be there. Someone by the name of **Roger D. Rice**, who just happened to be the general manager of KTVU.

Louie accompanied Dr. Draper to the party who introduced him to Rice. After a long conversation, Rice took an instant liking to Louie and was impressed enough to ask him to travel to KTVU to show him around the station.

While there, Louie was offered a summer position and a \$750 student scholarship.

"I remember Rice telling me that working at KTVU would give me the experience of what it was like to work at a real television station."

Still in school in April of 1971, Louie knew he would have to make room for his new job as an intern at KTVU. And he did, juggling school, a growing family and his new position.

"I started in the engineering department, working with all the on-air engineers," Louie recalls.

Eventually, like all internships, Louie's internship wrapped up. But the station liked him and liked his work and they wanted to keep him around. In November of 1971, Louie became a full-time staff employee at KTVU.

In that capacity, he began as a courier in the news department. At that time, **Sherm Bazell** was the news director. As part of the duties, Louie would be dispatched to various locations around the Bay Area to pick up supplies or news reels. Often, he would travel to San Francisco or Oakland International Airports to pick up canisters of news reel (Vietnam war footage) to be broadcast on the station's 10 p.m. newscast.

One day, Bazell sent Louie to SFO to pick up a package. At the time, Louie did not have a car, but he got around on a Honda 350 motorcycle. When he

arrived at the airport, he could not believe his eyes. The package he came to pick up was huge – too big to carry on a motorcycle. But, he managed, tying down the package to his motorcycle with bungee cords.

Crossing the Bay Bridge, Louie rode back to KTVU with the package precariously balanced but safely strapped to his motorcycle, not even knowing what was in the box.

Waiting for him at the station was Bazell and a whole host of other managers. When Bazell saw Louie riding up on his motorcycle with the box strapped to the motorcycle, Bazell admonished Louie.

"You picked it up with that?," referring to Louie's motorcycle.

Louie had no idea what he had just picked up until he was told that it was one of the first Ikegami mini-cams, the first one to be used on the West Coast.

"Luckily, it made it in one piece," he says.

Louie has seen many technological changes through the years.

"The electronic tech side of broadcasting has changed tremendously," Louie says. "We've gone from film, 2-inch videotape and slides to computer-generated graphics, and now, media cards and the Internet."

Before the advancement of computer-generated graphics, KTVU would receive images off its teletype machine. At the time, they were the next best thing to having still photographs. The images would be cut from a roll of teletype paper and mounted on art cards. Sometimes, Louie and other employees would color the black and white images with color pen markers.

With the passing of time, Louie says "one time it was just TV news. Now you have the Internet on your phone; information at your fingertips when you want it and how you want it. Unfortunately, television news is losing viewers to the immediacy and convenience of the Internet."

This November, Louie will celebrate his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a full-time employee at KTVU. He has worked as a director and associate director/producer on countless programs produced at KTVU, including the station's iconic 10 p.m. newscast. As

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the years went by, the station added newscasts in the morning, afternoon and on weekends. Louie has been a part of them all.

As of today, Louie is the third longest-serving employee at KTVU. Community affairs director **Rosy Chu** (*Silver Circle class of 2002*), is the longest-serving, followed by news editor **Ron Acker**.

Louie admits that one of his favorite jobs through the years was working as the coordinating network producer-director for the San Francisco Giants (1985-2008). From KTVU's inception in 1958 until 2008, it was the flagship television home for the Giants. With a network consisting of broadcast stations from Hawaii to Reno and from the California-Oregon border to Phoenix carrying KTVU's signal, Louie coordinated each station by "multi-tasking to the nth degree." He did that for 23 years before KTVU relinquished the Giants as its broadcast home. KNTV now broadcasts Giants games and is the new flagship home for the World Series champions.

"I had a great time with the Giants," Louie says. He also had a great time with the Oakland A's, which sister station, KICU also broadcast at one time (2000-2009).

Louie resides in Alameda with **Linda**, his wife of 43 years. They have two daughters: one is a successful Bay Area accountant, and the other is an accomplished public relations guru for major recording artists in Los Angeles.

Louie has been heavily involved in NATAS, both locally and on the national level. He began serving on the Board of Governors of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter in 1991. Then, in 1996, he became board president for two years. Louie has also served as a national trustee, board treasurer and chair of the *Gold and Silver Circle* Committee.

Among his honors, Louie received a regional Emmy® Award in 1996 for his contributions to news graphics and special effects for the station's *The 10 o'clock News*. Two years prior, the Chapter awarded him with its prestigious Governors' Service Medallion for his service to NATAS.

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## In Memoriam: Fred Beytin



### Fredric Martin Beytin

passed away unexpectedly on July 2. He was 56 years old.

When the complete history of television is written, Fred Beytin will get his own page. After earning his BA in Broadcast Arts at SF State he got his wish of being a television engineer. That's all he ever wanted. KRON, KPIX, KGO, KCSM, KICU, KTEH and KQED kept him employed

with a patchwork of vacation relief, part time, and finally full time master control work.

Fred was born in Brooklyn in a house built by his grandfather. He grew up in Northport, New York, third of four brothers. (**Gary, Jeff, Ken**) Fred was very mischievous but endearing. His mother claims he always got in the most trouble of all the boys, but "everybody loved Freddy."

Fred's friends and family knew him as a man without enemies, the glue, always cracking a pun, and calling together the troops for a meal.

Fred married **Gwen** in 1982; next year they would have celebrated their thirtieth wedding anniversary. Beloved, amazing daughter **Jill Alexa** was born in 1991.

Besides his family, Fred's biggest love was for rock and roll, especially **Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones** and **Jethro Tull**. In fact they just saw Jethro Tull in June.

Fred worked the overnight shift for many years so he could spend time with Jill.

Gwen says Fred spent hours each month on the phone talking to friends and family near and far.

Relationships were very important to him. He worked hard to maintain friendships.

Fred Beytin was an organ donor. He is survived by Gwen, Jill, mother **Vivian**, and brothers Jeff, Ken, and Gary.

A memorial service was held on July 6th. Donations in Fred's name can be made to Music in Schools Today, 582 Market Street #213, San Francisco, CA 95104.

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