

Paleo Peabody Party

By John Odell

More than sixty TV veterans showed up for a mid-January get-together at San Francisco's Public House brew pub. It was to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake and to again celebrate KGO-TV's receiving the George Foster Peabody Award for its coverage of that 1989 tremor.

NATAS Silver Circle member **Harry Fuller**, Channel Seven's news director at the time, came down from Ashland, Oregon to lead the festivities. The party was organized by Paleo TV Reunion, an old-timers' group first organized by Harry in the 1990's.

In honor of the occasion, and of Harry, the Paleos presented him with a donation of \$2500 to the Klamath Bird Observatory, a non-profit on whose board he serves as president. Harry, author of "Freeway Birding: From San Francisco to Seattle," also regaled the Paleos with tales of the Grey Owl, his latest study bird.

And to commemorate his creation of "The Naturalists," Channel Seven News' pioneering foray into environmental journalism, **Joel Bartlett** and **Penelope Dunham** presented Harry with a painting by noted landscape artist **Carol Peek**, who was present at the event.

I asked some attending Silver Circle members about their memories of the earthquake. **George Lang**: "When the earthquake first hit I was in Marin. The first thing I did was run over to the shopping center, and Macy's was on fire. I was actually able to do a live broadcast where I was narrating what was going on. It was kinda cool for a camera guy. Just seeing how something as natural as an earthquake could virtually stop civilization as we knew it. I had never been exposed to anything like that before." **Paul Jeschke**: I was over in Marin... started heading back to the city, got up on the Waldo Grade, and it looked as if the whole city was on fire, because of the flames in the Marina. It was just incredible. And travelling across the Golden Gate Bridge to get back to work ... every single traffic light was out. And yet traffic was flowing smoothly through every intersection because there were volunteers out there directing traffic. It was amazing. The city came together in an emergency. The question was, we've just had an earthquake, should I go through the Broadway tunnel? 'What did you do?' I went through the tunnel!" **Carolyn Tyler**: "My most vivid memory was being confused!! I had arrived in the Bay Area in Spring of '86 and of course knew it was earthquake country. When it hit, I was talking to a friend long distance and the phone went dead. I jumped up and looked out my window. No one seemed rattled. One woman was calmly walking with a bag of groceries, a guy was on his bike and cars were still driving by. So I thought 'maybe this isn't a big one... Maybe it just feels like that to a newbie.' But I turned on the radio and all hell was breaking loose!! I called the assignment desk and asked if I

should come in and the answer, of course, was hell yes!! After that it was all rather surreal... anchoring out of the newsroom for days, my friend **Laura Marquez'** apartment destroyed, urgent calls from friends and family around the country, and working long hours." **Don Sanchez:** "What impressed me most is, we immediately responded. People came in who had days off. Everybody seemed to know, under Harry's direction, where to go, what to do. And I have never seen, I was never so proud, of such an amazing response to the event, and the work that obviously led to the award. It was just extraordinary." **Mike Clark:** "I was with **Paul Zaro** and we were at Candlestick. We had done our live shots and were on the elevator to the press box to get our free hotdogs. We stepped out of the elevator and I hear this noise. I thought, people are stomping on the stands. But wait a minute, these stands are concrete, they don't make any noise. And I looked out and the light standards were swaying back and forth. And I said, "Oh my God, Paul, it's an earthquake!" And we turned around and started to get back on the elevator. Wait, wait, wait. Can't do that! So we ran all the way back to our truck, hearing as we go KCBS radio, 'The Bay Bridge collapsed, the Marina is on fire.' We grab our gear, get back on the field, and start doing live shots with **Pete Wilson.**" **Sydney Kohara:** "My most vivid memory is sitting at the update desk and looking outside at the SF skyline and not seeing a single light. Not one. The entire city was dark. Also, the video of people helping firefighters pull fire hoses through the streets of the Marina District. It says so much about the people who live here. I still can't watch it without getting choked up. And of course being part of an amazing newsroom operation that night. I had just been hired a few weeks before, didn't know everyone's name, but saw a team come together like a well-oiled machine, with Harry as the driver. It was the best of newsrooms in the worst possible scenario."

In addition to this writer, other Silver Circle attendees that night included **Bob Anderson, Joel Bartlett, John Catchings, Rigo Chacon, Janice Gin, Kate Kelly, Sydney Kohara, Pam Moore, Fred Pardini, and Jan Yanehiro.**

Paleo TV Reunion meets informally about three or four times a year. If you would like to have your name added to the contact list, e-mail me at jodell@ccsf.edu. All are welcome. You don't have to be old, or have worked at KGO!