

Alumna author explores female journalists behind the pseudonyms

A new chapter is about to open for alumna Maryellen Burns, BA '73, as she pursues yet another book.

Burns, who was editor of *The State Hornet* in 1972-73, has written or edited numerous books and articles on Sacramento history, with a focus on food writing including *The Lost Restaurants of Sacramento and Their Recipes*, *Pear Perfection: Heritage Recipes from Sacramento Delta Home Cooks, Extracts - Mostly True Stories*, and *Whip Up a Cookbook*.

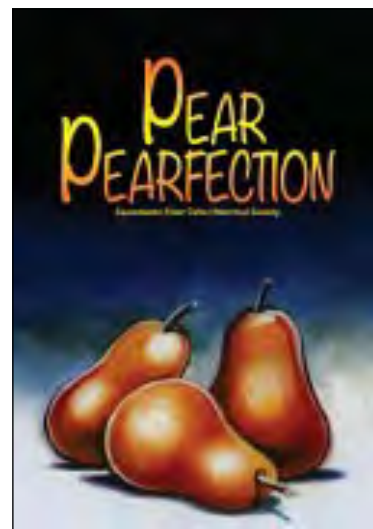
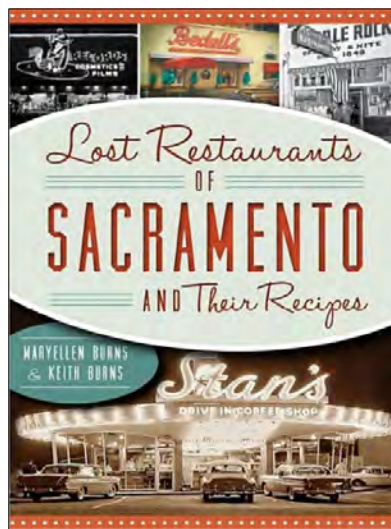
Burns is embarking on another intriguing food history, about the legions of (mostly) women journalists who labored under the pseudonyms of Katherine Kitchen in the *Sacramento Bee*, Prudence Penny in Hearst newspapers and Marian Manners the *Los Angeles Times*. Her latest project is likely to become another book.

A popular seminar leader and board member for the Renaissance Society, Friends of the Sacramento Library and the Sacramento Book Collectors Club, Burns gave a recent presentation, "Who Killed Katherine Kitchen?" at the Arden-Dimick Library (a collaborative series sponsored by Renaissance Society and Friends of the Sacramento Library). She described the strict (and blatantly discriminatory) limits placed on women journalists, who were consigned well into the 1970s to food writing or "social" news.

The *Bee's* Women's Activities section, and others like it, eventually became features sections - Scene at the *Bee*, Style at the *Washington Post* - but only after intense pressure from women writers and editors who argued *they too* could cover politics, government and other "regular" news.

Burns notes that Katherine Kitchen was actually *many* writers, usually women, laboring under the ubiquitous, and vaguely insulting, pseudonym. But the demise of Katherine Kitchen and her ilk did not occur in any significant way until the 1970s, when experienced journalists and food writers and editors (both women and men) redesigned newspaper food sections, including feature articles and food criticism, as well as recipes.

Editors, like the formidable Elaine Corn, author of six cookbooks, was awarded both the Julia Child and James Beard awards and served as the food editor of the *Bee* (1986-91) as well as the *Austin American-Statesman* and



HUNGRY FOR BOOKS — Two of the food-related books by Sacramento State alumna **Maryellen Burns** are shown above, *The Lost Restaurants of Sacramento and Their Recipes* (2013: Arcadia Publishing) and *Pear Perfection: Heritage Recipes from Sacramento Delta Home Cooks* (2017: CreateSpace).

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the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. Corn and other food editors took food writing (and newspaper food sections) well beyond the limits of favorite recipes and advice columns - and their work was published under actual bylines.

Burns' family has deep roots in the Sac State community. Both of her brothers are Hornet alumni: brother Scott Burns, BA '72, was editor of *The State Hornet* in 1971-72, then went to law school and worked as a lawyer for the California Department of Transportation for 27 years. Keith Burns, BA '68, worked for the campus radio station, then known as KERS, and after graduation was a longtime editor and producer for NBC News in Los Angeles, as well as a screenwriter and director.

Burns' late husband, Dr. Leo Dabaghian, was a professor of mechanical engineering at Sacramento State from 1962-2007. Lifelong book collectors, he and his wife were active members of the Sacramento Book Collectors Club. He died in 2015.

Maryellen Burns has also been a ghost writer, set up author tours and West Coast promotions for Ten Speed Press, Simon and Schuster, Chronicle and Prima Publishing, and is the author of eight books. She also teaches and produces books with I Street Press and has worked as a caterer and events planner as well as in media relations for authors, political candidates, nonprofits, libraries, museums and educational institutions.

■ Article by Sigrid Bathen