

## ***LIVING THE STANISLAUS: RON PICKUP BIOGRAPHY***

Ron Pickup's first memories of the Stanislaus River are playing on the white sand and old bridge while grownups fished in the old town of Melones where he spent his first years of childhood. A little later he learned to kick and paddle in his grandmother's arms at Parrotts Ferry -- his family's favorite place on the river -- then swim in the shallow water and lazy green currents flowing between fine white beaches where the old ferry once traversed the Stanislaus. Later he learned to expertly read and respect, but not fear, the fast white water rapids above Parrotts. He and his brother, sister, brother-in-law, cousins and friends would dive into, bob above, and float on the early summer runoff. Eventually they could swim across the highest river, knew every rock above and below its surface, every eddy to rest in, and every seasonal charm and personality of the river. Ron took delight in teaching his son Mark to swim at Parrotts, and watching the next generation of families learn and love the Stanislaus.

In 1969, due to safeguard concerns, Ron resigned from his position at the General Electric Vallecitos Nuclear Center in Pleasanton, where he was employed almost a decade as an Atomic Energy Commission licensed Senior Reactor Operator. He then returned to school to pursue a lifelong interest in writing and literature. He eventually graduated from San Francisco State University with a Masters in English and taught communications, creative writing and literature at the College of Marin, Mendocino College and Yuba College.

In 1970 Ron met Mark Dubois on the river above Parrotts, and was soon caught up in this kindred spirit's zeal to Save The Stanislaus. Mark introduced Ron to the unique beauty and recreation of the upper canyon, and when Mark founded the Friends of the River, Ron did volunteer work for Friends throughout the decade long campaign to save the river. Ron discovered that the best way he could express his feelings for the Stanislaus was through poetry and photography. In addition to writing letters, collecting petition signatures, and lobbying congressmen with slide shows, he contributed his art to several Friends of the River photography exhibitions, including Streams of Life and Condemned Rivers of the Mother Lode. The poems and photography in *Remembering The Stanislaus* are from the *Impressions* section of his book, *On The Stanislaus: A Stream of Life*, which traces the human and natural history of the Stanislaus River system from its headwaters on the Sierra crest to the San Joaquin River. Ron's prose, poetry and photography have been published in numerous publications and exhibits.

The defeat of Proposition 17 and eventual river drowning was a huge blow to Ron as it was to all that loved the Stanislaus. But he believes that the loss of the Stanislaus has served as a learning process to save our remaining rivers. *Remembering The Stanislaus* is designed to let those who knew her, see her again, and for those who didn't have that blessing, to see some of what was lost.