

Environmentalist, photographer Ron Pickup dies at 81

By GIUSEPPE RICAPITO
The Union Democrat

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She believed he was perhaps most well-known for his decision to join Mark Dubois and other environmentalists in 1979 in chaining themselves to rocks in the Stanislaus River Canyon to oppose the filling of the New Melones Dam.

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Marin County and a native to the town of Old Melones, wading into the frigid water. As he proceeded to chain himself to the rocks with a few others, they all shivered, visibly freezing in the cold, and soon turned blue, she said.

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Dubois told them to stay where they were and left to another more clandestine spot. Pamela Pickup said over the next three days, she made salads and sandwiches for her husband and others while they carried on their protest.

"He was a true library of history and culture of this area and of the Stanislaus River Canyon. A person like that can never be replaced," said his friend and collaborator, Martin Blake, 75. "There wasn't a battle he couldn't take on. I always said you never had to turn



the other cheek when Ron Pickup was in town. He was always ready to stand up to any injustice."

The Stanislaus River Canyon eventually flooded in 1972, but the river preservation movement

gained international attention due to the peaceful protests by Pickup, Dubois and the Friends of the River advocacy group.

In the 1990s, Ron Pickup was also a member of the Tuolumne County Farm Bureau and convinced them to vote against a plan from the Turlock Irrigation District to dam multiple sites along the Clavey River.

"It was the final nail in the coffin when they did that," said



Ron Pickup was a noted environmentalist and photographer known for his work to preserve the Clavey River and the Stanislaus River Canyon.

Pamela Pickup.

One of Ron Pickup's chief strategies for environmental advocacy intersected with his love documentary photography. He presented exhibits throughout the county and state, Blake said, to educate the public on the significance of preservation.

"He realized that people try to save what they know and if you want to preserve what has yet to be lost, you have to know what has been lost. His desire was to never let people forget what the Stanislaus River Canyon was all about," Martin Blake said.

His photography was shown in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., the California Academy of Sciences

In San Francisco and the San Diego Museum of Natural History.

Ron Pickup was also essential to the preservation of over 500 local acres as a board member of the Tuolumne County Land Trust in the early 2000s: at the Red Hills Bureau of Land Man-

agement Preserve, at the Rosasco Ranch along Old Don Pedro Road and part of Table Mountain.

"A picture says a thousand words and Ron's gift in photography helped convey the story of how important it is to preserve those lands not only in Tuolumne County, but in California and the west," said his friend Sharon Marovich.

Ron Pickup was born in Sonora on March 23, 1938, and attended Sonora High School.

He served four years in the United States Air Force, then at the Vallecitos Nuclear Center east of San Francisco for nine years, before he resigned in protest due to the "inadequacy of the safety regulations," according to "Stanislaus: The Struggle for a River" by Tim Palmer.

His wife said he attended San Francisco State, where he earned a masters degree and taught at in the community college system in Marin county for 20 years.

The pair met at San Francisco State in 1974 and were married in 1977.

They returned to Tuolumne County as permanent residents in 1983.

Ron Pickup was diagnosed with cancer on Oct. 9. He died three weeks later.

Ron Pickup is survived by his

sister, Lois Marzocchi, his brother, Raymond Pickup, and his son from a previous marriage, Mark Pickup.

A public service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30 at the Al-taville Catholic Cemetery in Angels Camp.