

Obituary of Phillip Denney Brown

August 29, 2017

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On August 16 Phillip Denney Brown passed away at home surrounded by friends and family. He was 72. Phil was born in Portland, OR December 12, 1944 and his family soon after moved to California. He grew up in the Redwood City area and graduated from Los Altos High School. He went to UC Davis to become a veterinarian and while there took an art class from Wayne Thiebaud, the artist known for painting cakes and pies, started taking art classes, and never looked back. He had found his calling for life. He got a BA from UC Davis in Art and Art History. After college, he went to NYU briefly in set design, ran lights for an off Broadway theatre, and eventually returned to CA. He had various jobs in his 20s from running a fork

lift at Colgate Palmolive moving boxes of soap, running the tram at Sugar Bowl in winters, babysitting, and picking apples. He also drew picture frame molding for Victor Molding's frame catalog.

In 1974 he moved to Nevada County where he met and married his wife of 42 years, Barbara Brown, who owned the original Scotch Broom in Nevada City for 20 years. Together they fulfilled their dream of building a home in the woods, running the store, and having a family. For seven years, Phil owned Phil Brown Typography where he set type for many commercial artists.

At age 45, he was taking an art class at Sierra College when his teacher Dick Hotchkiss talked him into applying for graduate school. He went to Mills College where he graduated with a Masters in Fine Arts in Painting. He started painting on his own and also worked part time as an aide in special ed preschool at Champion Mine School and was a teacher at Argosy Preschool. When the local campus of Sierra College opened, he was hired as an adjunct professor where he taught drawing and painting for 10 years. There he developed a following of students who, when he retired, followed him to classes he taught at the Center for the Arts, Artist Studios of the Foothills, and eventually his own studio. He won several awards as teacher of the year. He was known for his quick wit and sense of humor, kindness, and generosity as an art teacher and a friend. One of his classes formed a group called Phil's Guild that meets regularly to paint together.

He decided in the mid 90s to dedicate his art to preserving images of the Yuba River and it became the focus of his work for 20 years. On August 11, Phil's last outing, was to a ceremony in his honor at South Yuba River Citizen's League (SYRCL) where he received the Guardian of the Yuba Award.

He painted over 400 images of the river which are owned by many people in Nevada County and around the world. One of his paintings had a showing by the US State Department in Uganda. Over the years he had many interests such as playing guitar and

fiddle in blue grass bands (The New Depression String Band and Cabin Fever who opened several times for Kate Wolf), fly fishing, fly tying, sailing, enjoying wine and Japanese art, traveling to Europe and Mexico, watching Giants and 49er games, camping and backpacking, reading about history and geology, doing things with his family, and following politics.

Phil is survived by his wife Barbara, son Tor and wife Kristen of Bend OR, grandson Saunders Brown-Ferguson of West Sacramento, brother Bob Brown and wife Connie of Fort Collins, CO, sister Beverly Jacson of Rapid City, SD, plus numerous nephews and nieces. He was predeceased by his parents John Allan and Margaret Brown of Rough and Ready.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to SYRCL or another environmental group.