

PETER TROXELL
1938 - 2004

Longtime KUSP manager, SLV arts pioneer dies at 65

By WALLACE BAINE
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Peter Troxell, longtime station manager at KUSP (88.9 FM) and a leader in the San Lorenzo Valley arts community, died Wednesday at his home near Felton. He was 65.

Troxell held the top position at the Santa Cruz NPR-affiliated station for 10 years, and had retired in September. He had battled prostate cancer for eight years, but the disease had spread in recent months.

Troxell's community involvement dates back to the 1960s. Before his tenure at KUSP, he was most known for helping found Mountain Community Theatre, the Ben Lomond-based community theater group that nurtured the performing talents of young people all over Santa Cruz County, including two of his three children.



TROXELL
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"Peter's gifts as an actor, director and producer provided a living example to a host of artists and audiences," said friend Lance Linares, executive director of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and, like Troxell, a former station manager at KUSP.

"His stage presence was significant, but his life force was even more inspiring. Peter loved where he lived and, through his work and life, tried to create ways in which others could also find that love."

He also lent a hand in establishing the San Lorenzo Valley Children's Center and managed Oganookie, the landmark Santa Cruz hippie band of the '60s.

But in recent years, Troxell was most known for shepherding KUSP through the turbulent times of the 1990s and, in that position, maintaining a high community profile in the arts. On the air, he was the casual, inquisitive host of the weekly shows "State of the Arts" and "In the Green Room," in which he interviewed hundreds of local and visiting artists.

Troxell assumed leadership at KUSP when the station's board fired previous station manager Marcia Krauss and gave Troxell the task of dealing with the dissension at the station caused by the firing.

See **TROXELL** on **BACK PAGE**

Troxell

Continued from Page A1

He presided over tempestuous internal squabbles and spearheaded the acquisition of new equipment and a lengthy and costly remodel of the station's offices near Twin Lakes Beach.

In his final years at KUSP, Troxell faced steep downturns in revenue thanks to the collapse of the high-tech boom in Silicon Valley, and was confronted with a new competitive threat when KAZU in Pacific Grove broke KUSP's exclusivity to NPR programming in the Monterey Bay Area.

He also worked to establish KUSP as an important and prominent player in California public radio circles and had developed a strong relationship with NPR president Kevin Klose.

"Peter's a wonderful human being and a talented spokesperson for the arts," Klose told the Sentinel last fall, shortly after visiting the station at Troxell's invitation.

Last fall, Troxell admitted the burden of having to raise \$1 million a year was draining his energies and his enthusiasms, but he remained close-mouthed about his cancer.

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LANCE LINARES,
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Troxell was a proud family man, and his family followed his example in community involvement. His wife, Diana, a painter, helped Peter in the early days of Mountain Community Theatre. His son Lyle, who lives with his wife, Daria, and son, Wyatt, right next door to his parents' home, made his first appearance on stage at MCT at 9 months of age. Daughter Marina grew up on stage at MCT as a singing and dancing prodigy. Oldest daughter Adriana was also involved in local theater.

When Marina suffered kidney failure in 1988, her father donated one of his.

The Troxells were honored as a family in 1997 with the Gail Rich Award

for contributions to the arts by the Sentinel.

"His legacy will be belly laughs, full houses, a bunch of Troxells, a rousing song and the inevitable standing ovation," said Linares.

"I liken this whole experience to parachuting," said Troxell last fall contemplating his retirement. "You just leap out into space and see what happens."

Services for Troxell will be private, but a public event remembering him and his work will be in the next few weeks. For information on contributions or messages to the Troxell family, go to <http://troxell.com>.

KUSP is airing a commemorative

Peter Troxell

BORN : May 29, 1938, Illinois.

DIED: March 17, 2004, Felton.

EDUCATION: Graduate, San Francisco State College, 1964.

OCCUPATION: Former station manager of KUSP-88.9 FM, Santa Cruz; co-founded Mountain Community Theatre.

SURVIVORS: wife Diana; three grown children, Adriana, Lyle and Marina; six grandchildren.

SERVICES: Private family service. Public event to be scheduled.

DONATIONS: Family contact is Tara McMillin. Donations may be arranged by calling her at 335-4269 or by e-mail at mountainmacs@juno.com.

show on Troxell, playing examples of his favorite music and soliciting call-in remembrances. Those comments will be recorded. Those interested can call the KUSP comment line at (888) 549-6421 before 6:30 p.m. today. The show will air from 10 a.m. to noon Friday on 88.9 FM.

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