

art & artists 1990-1999
✓ **Ella Alluisi**
dies at age 83

By MIKE TYLER

Sentinel correspondent

BONNY DOON — Ella Wharton Alluisi, a well-known artist who helped win a battle to preserve 500 acres of land surrounding her property on Ben Lomond Mountain, died Thursday at her home. She was 83.

Alluisi's dream came true in 1989 when the state and the Nature Conservancy, a non-profit conservation group, paid \$1.75 million to buy the environmentally rich land from the Teacher's Management Investment Company, a financial planning and investment company for teachers.

In the late '70s, TMI tried to sell the property to a Fresno-based developer and later to a winery owner who wanted to grow grapes on 100 acres of the site.

Both efforts failed thanks in part to the efforts of Alluisi and her neighbors.

"She felt that land was extremely valuable as a preserve," her nephew Nick Vaughan said Saturday.

The land has been known to contain extremely rare plants, insects and birds such as the peregrine falcon, long-eared owl and golden eagle. Environmentalists have said the land is filled with species that occur in fewer than 20 places in the world.

Alluisi and her late husband Joseph had set up a trust that would leave 33 acres of their 40-acre Bonny Doon property to the Nature Conservancy upon their deaths, said Vaughan. Their wishes will be honored, he said.

The couple had lived on the property since 1955.

Until these battles over development in the late '70s and '80s, Alluisi had gained a reputation as one of the county's most talented artists.

Before settling in Bonny Doon, she and her husband lived in Point Richmond and spent about 10 years traveling the world and lived in various locations, including Haiti, where she did some of her finest paintings.

Her mostly acrylic paintings, sculptures, cloth collage and graphics were once displayed at the De Young Museum in San Francisco, San Francisco Museum, Legion of Honor Museum and at UCSC.

Alluisi was best known for her semi-abstract and expressionistic works related to animals and primitive art.

A New York Times art critic once wrote that "when dealing with fantastic animals in outlandish colors, she is at her best."

Alluisi studied art at Smith College and gained an art degree from UC Berkeley. For three years, she studied at the studio of noted artists Robert and Sonia Delauney in Paris.

Joseph Alluisi, a carpenter and one-time boat navigator for the Scripps Institute, died in 1979.

Alluisi is survived by several nieces and nephews. Services will be private.

Contributions in Alluisi's memory are preferred to the Mendocino County Library Bookmobile Book Fund, 105 N. Main Street, Ukiah, Calif. 95482.