



JUST BREATHE It has been a challenging holiday season for the greater Chico family. In just one month, the community has lost so many of its guiding lights.

The word is just getting out about the passing of longtime local freelance writer and social commentator **Ronald Angle**. Ron was a frequent contributor to and supporter of the Chico News & Review, for which he penned compassionate essays on everything from the folly of war to the war on the unhoused. His most recent Guest Comment provided this succinct bio: *Born six months after Pearl Harbor was attacked, Ronald Angle began writing for newspapers in 1958. He and his family moved to Chico from Southern California in 1980. He lives in the Chapman Neighborhood.*

Ron died Dec. 2. He was 80.

Over the last 30 years, I've had two employers: the CN&R for the past 19, and Upper Crust Bakery for the other 11. One of my bosses at the bakery/cafe for most of those years was my friend **Lori Powers**.

I'm not indulging in my usual hyperbole by saying that Lori was one of the world's bright lights. Ask anyone who's so much as met her; she was unfailingly kind, friendly, quick to laugh, quick to blush and just plain delightful. (She deserves sainthood for putting up with years of ridiculous shenanigans from the unshaven hooligans of the night crew that I was responsible for supervising.)



Ronald Angle



Bill "Guillermo" Mash

Lori bought Upper Crust in 1993 and, with business partner Becky Shadd, turned it into a local icon. If you've lived in Chico for any amount of time, you have an Upper Crust memory—as a downtown hangout or as provider of sweet sustenance for life's milestones, from wedding cakes to Thanksgiving pies.

Lori retired and sold the business in 2018, and she used the free time to fulfill her passion for outdoor adventures with friends and her longtime partner, Diane Richard.

After a months-long battle with cancer, Lori died peacefully at home. She was 63.

I am still having a hard time believing that **Bill "Guillermo" Mash** is gone. I've counted him among my best friends in Chico in the decade since he moved to town, and after hearing that he'd suffered a heart attack and was on life support at Enloe, I did a search for him/me on my/his Facebook pages to find a pic of the two of us together. Sadly, I found none, but I was blown away by how many photos he had taken of important moments in my life. He was there for all of it—from birthdays and rock shows to community events and radio programs.

As I've grieved with his many friends and loved ones, others have shared the exact same realization. In all of his endeavors—citizen journalist, radio personality, music/arts supporter/fanatic, tireless advocate for the unhoused—he was fully committed to being there for and documenting this community that he loved. He showed up, he played, he helped, and he manifested the words from his most recent journalistic endeavor: "Imagining Community."

There's a slogan making its way around social media: What would Guillermo do? (WWGD?). I can't think of a more wonderful guiding



Mark McKinnon
PHOTO BY KEN PORDES



Lori Powers
PHOTO BY MEREDITH J. COOPER

principle to follow.

Bill died Nov. 29. He was 62.

I've heard it said many times since moving to Chico: **Mark McKinnon** is a giant of a man. The 6-foot-5 educator/writer/musician was large of stature for sure, but it was his heart and spirit that made him stand out to his Butte College English students, his Ha'Penny Bridge bandmates and fans, and his tribe of Butte County friends and family.

Mark was one of the founders of the CN&R, part of the rag-tag crew that negotiated the separation of the former Wildcat newspaper from Chico State in 1977. I would love to have been a fly on the wall in that university office to witness this huge, passionate bearded hippie wearing a toga as he stared down administrators until they caved to his demands.

Mark and his wife, Wendy, were Camp Fire survivors, one of the many families who lost their home in the 2018 blaze. In the aftermath, Mark worked through the trauma by writing a song, which in turn helped many others process the loss as well. At the 2019 CAMMIES Awards ceremony at the Sierra Nevada Big Room, he was joined by a supergroup made up of fellow Ridge musicians for a powerful performance of the song, "Just Breathe," as well as a cover of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah." It was a moving experience to watch these fire survivors relive the tragedy through Mark's epic tune, which winds its way through flames and smoke before settling in clear air, taking a deep breath and falling into the open arms of community—a message that also offers comfort today as we mourn so many friends:

We're still calling on our angels to help us all remember; none of us are traveling alone ... Help us breathe and dream gently through the night ... Just breathe.

After a long battle with cancer, Mark died Dec. 1. He was 71.



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