



In Loving Memory of Rick Bettis

Ricardo (Rick) Bettis passed away following a heart attack on February 12, 2022. A stroke had prompted his move into Pioneer House for Seniors a few years ago, but he remained active with the help of friends. It was a good life led right up to the end, as he continued to promote the well-being of our Sacramento community with philanthropic support and advocacy for sound public policy.

Rick was born on July 8, 1936, and grew up on the family farm in Escalon, with his brother Raymond and parents Elizabeth and Lester Bettis. Rick told stories of harvesting watermelons, and occasionally dropping one “accidentally” to order to enjoy a snack while working. He ran track and played football in high school before leaving to earn a degree in civil engineering from UC Berkeley. He was employed by a firm after graduation that took him to Iran to help construct dams. Later he settled in Sacramento to work for the California Departments of Water Resources and Transportation.

After retiring and until his death, Rick became the consummate volunteer and community advocate. He was everywhere with that warm welcoming smile, attending events and meetings to support the causes that mattered to him, and there were many. His nickname was “Ubiquitous Rick,” often seen walking to his many meetings, events, and volunteer stints through the central city that he called home. Rick was a quiet man, reserved but replete with historical accounts of Sacramento and learned background on everything from water issues to electoral reforms. He had many friends, countless community-minded colleagues, and was admired for his comforting presence, study of issues, and measured approach to being the change we hope to see. These efforts were legendary, as he could be seen and/or heard at countless city council meetings. He cared deeply for our city, the environment, clean air and water, responsible utilization of natural resources, civil rights, voting rights, public transportation, historic preservation, sound governance and making democracy work. Oh yes, and electing worthy public servants, particularly able and outstanding women.

Rick was a founding member of Common Cause, a national organization with a mission to build and sustain democratic practice with open representative government that works for all. He was active with Sierra Club and with another of his esteemed organizations, the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County (yes, men are welcome). There he served as a board member, the Natural Resources Director, and in 2012-13 as president. Rick used his retirement to the fullest. He rented a modest apartment in midtown for decades and walked, eschewing automobile ownership, or used public transit. He also supported the Union of Concerned Scientists, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sacramento Area Peace Action, the Alchemist, Save the American River Association, the Environmental Council of Sacramento, Breathe CA, Sacramento Preservation (Sacramento Old City Association), Stonewall Foundation of Greater Sacramento, Mutual Housing, River City Food Bank, Mercy Peddlers, and Loaves and Fishes. Rick relished seeing friends, touted the Renaissance Society and loved his classical music but could also be found at a Mumbo Gumbo concert whenever possible. He is survived by his brother and sister-in-law, Raymond and Juanita Bettis and his cousin Mary Rosa. A gathering to celebrate Rick’s remarkable life is planned for March 18, 2022 (5:30pm) at the Sacramento History Museum in Old Sacramento.