

Albert Lavenson Wahrhaftig, 85, passed away at his home in Sebastopol on Friday, January 15, 2021. He led a long, full life enriched by a fulfilling career, an extended family, travel, music, books, a life-long love of RC airplanes, and an ever-present curiosity about the world.

Born in Oakland in 1935, Dr. Wahrhaftig received an undergraduate degree in Architecture from Stanford University, followed by a Ph.D. in Anthropology from University of Chicago. In addition to a 30-year career as Professor of Anthropology at Sonoma State University, Albert was also an active member of the American Anthropological Association. He conducted field work in indigenous communities in the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America. He worked on acclaimed documentary films in rural Mexico, traveled to Russia, Japan and the Philippines to participate in conferences and seminars, and volunteered in community organizations.

As a very proud member of Columbia 1—the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers—Albert led community development projects in rural Columbia in the early 1960s. He maintained strong ties with the Peace Corps for the rest of his life, and returned to Columbia many decades later to revisit the site of his work, despite safety concerns at the time.

In the 1960s and early '70s, Albert spent several years among the traditional Cherokee communities of eastern Oklahoma, working on ethnographic research and developing lifelong relationships, interests, and connections with tribal elders. Later in life, he returned to Oklahoma to work with the Cherokee Tribal Government on issues including cultural identity and social justice. His work was highly regarded by the Cherokee at the time, and it remains so today.

Albert's long tenure at SSU was marked by classroom teaching, terms as Department Chair, and the design of several newly accredited upper division courses. His classroom style was both warm and formal. He took special care with student writing, all of which he graded personally. Under his dedicated mentorship, many of his alumni moved on to Master's degrees and Doctorates of their own. He took special pleasure in helping his students secure employment as Anthropologists.

Professor Wahrhaftig called upon his own background in Applied Anthropology to advocate *pro bono* for marginalized communities in Santa Rosa. He assisted displaced persons from Southeast Asia in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. He sought economic and social justice on behalf of homeless persons in Santa Rosa, and actively supported the missions of Radio KBBF.

In retirement, Albert re-discovered the clarinet and learned to play sax. He was a member of six community bands and loved driving to practice in his Miata with the top down, big band jazz (or maybe blues or the grateful dead) on the stereo. Music was part of his life, always.

Albert loved to read, usually multiple books at a time. When not practicing music, building or flying a model plane, he could be found lying on his bed reading with a dog at his side. To his

family, Al was known for his sense of humor, his stories and his collection of outrageous shirts, worn in perfect seriousness.

Albert Lavenson Wahrhaftig is survived by his wife Madeline, brother Paul, children Rebekah and Sol, and their families. He will be missed by his wife, his children, and his extended family—both of the blood and of the spirit. Memorial observations are not yet in place due to the pandemic.