



life

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MONDAY

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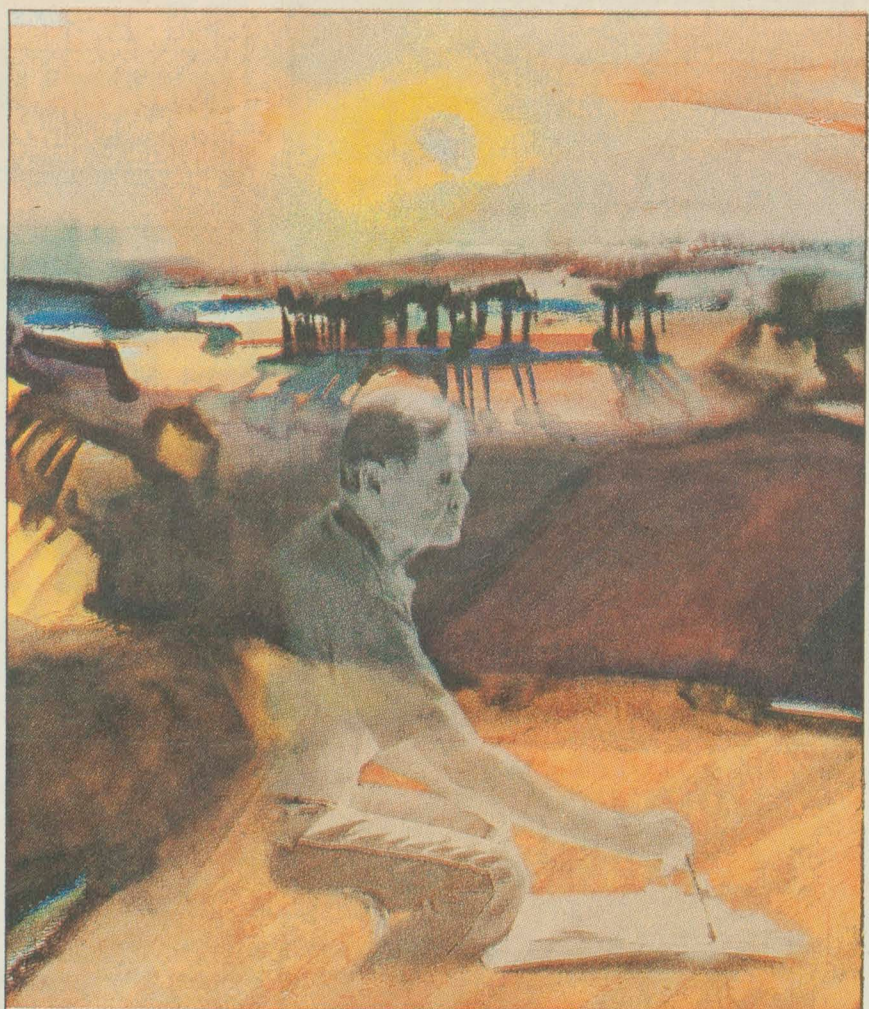
THE FRESNO BEE • MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2000

ART



Rollin Pickford is shown painting a scene in Monterey. Pickford is a master of plein-air painting, a technique that concerns itself with outside light and atmosphere. PHOTOS BY JOEL PICKFORD — SPECIAL TO THE FRESNO BEE

A COLORFUL LIFE



Rollin Pickford is shown on the video jacket produced by his son, Joel Pickford, as a companion piece to the book "California Light."

At 87, a Valley artist becomes the subject of a film by his son.

BY DAVID HALE
THE FRESNO BEE

Rollin Pickford, patriarch of the Valley's plein-air painters, can't begin to guess the number of miles he has walked, searching for likely subjects in the scenic reaches of the San Joaquin Valley and Central California coast.

What makes Rollin run, at 87, still perhaps the most prolific of local artists?

A new documentary illuminates the mystery of the artist's creative drive. "Master of Light: The Life and Watercolors of Rollin Pickford" will be aired at 8 p.m. Thursday and at 4:30 p.m. March 18 on KVPT Channel 18. The film will be available starting Friday at Fig Garden Bookstore, the Movies in Van Ness Village, the Fresno Art Museum and the Fresno Metropolitan Museum.

Five years in the making, the film is a companion piece to a book, "California Light: The Watercolors of Rollin Pickford," published last fall by the Press at California State University, Fresno. Filmmaker/photographer Joel Pickford, son of the artist, produced the book and created the documentary.

SHOW INFO

'MASTER OF LIGHT: The Life and Watercolors of Rollin Pickford'
8 p.m. Thursday;
4:30 p.m. March 18
Channel 18

"I'm proud of it," said Pickford the younger about his labor of love. "But I was lucky along the way. A lot of people made contributions, including my father. He's shy but he's really articulate and he gave me a lot of ideas. It was a lot of work but I had a lot of fun with him doing it."

Painter Pickford, characteristically self-effacing, finds the whole matter — a private premier party at the Fresno Art Museum, the publicity surrounding the telecast and the prospect of video signing sessions — "kind of disconcerting."

"It's a good piece of work, just like the book was," Pickford said. "But he's [Joel] the author. I'm just the subject."

The documentary, explained "the author," was a natural extension of the book, "California Light."

"While I was working on the book, I started thinking about how much more effective the idea [of the biography of Pickford Sr.] would be as both a book and film. It seemed to fit."

"Oscar Speace [erstwhile production director at KVPT] made the thing happen. Please see **PICKFORD**, Page E2

Pickford: Film on his father was inspired 25 years ago

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pen," Pickford said. "I took the idea to him. He said, 'Your dad's done so much for the station, let's do it.' He even did some of the early filming, before I got my own camera."

In fact, the idea for a film first struck Pickford 25 years ago, after he saw an innovative film about Paul Jenkins, a painter then famous for works made by pouring acrylic on canvas.

"My dad was at his peak then," Pickford said. "I'd watch him doing really daring things, like where he'd make watercolor run uphill against gravity. He could pull off most anything. That's when I first got interested in film making. My main goal has always been filmmaking. By the '90s, I'd been through film school and everything. The idea for a project with my dad resurfaced while I was working on the book."

Pickford filmed "Master of Light" on location, accompanying his father to painting sites in the San Joaquin Valley and on the Monterey Peninsula. Interwoven with episodes of his painter father at work are comments by journalists, Pickford's painter colleagues and family members — the artist's wife, Glenna; daughter, Melissa, and two other sons, Loren and Jeff.

Incidental music for the film

showcases the talents of Loren, a multi-talented musician and composer; cellist/composer Eugene Friesen, a former Fresnan living in New England, and a trio — violinists Cynthia Stuart and Betty Iacovetti and violist Claudia Shiuh.

"I like to think of ["Master of Light"] in the tradition of filmmaking, even though I knew I was producing it for television," Pickford said. "I tried to use cinematic techniques, in terms of dissolves and camera angles [shooting from above and over the shoulder directly into the canvas]."

"Sharp cuts are traditional with documentaries, but dissolves that flow from one segment to another make the film more transparent, the way layers of watercolor come together. They give the film a softer, more flowing quality."

Satisfying aspects about the project to the filmmaker included learning a lot about how he paints.

"I'd never just stood and watched him do a complete painting," said Joel, who has dabbled in painting over the years. "I understand more about structure and how watercolor should flow together. I have the illusion I could probably paint a pretty good one."

Through the film, Pickford,

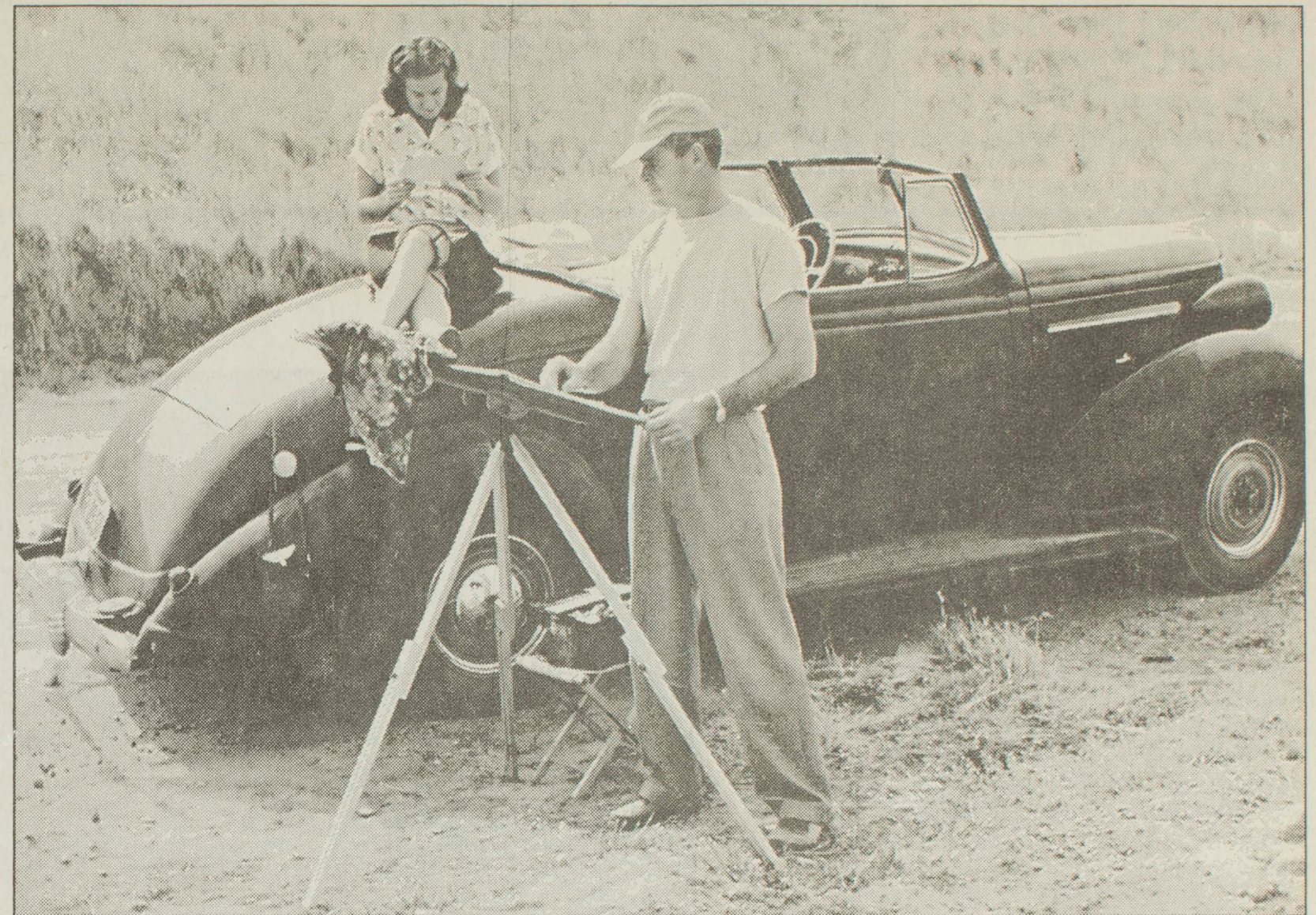
the artist, delivers succinct observations about topics such as theory ["design, color and space division — all the things that really matter about painting"]; about longtime friend, William Saroyan ["he had a great love for the San Joaquin Valley, just as I do"], about the disappearance of his favorite painting haunts ["I have to look at the street signs to know where I am"] and about ambition ["I'd like to continue painting as long as I can sit or stand and see"].

Pickford Jr. views the film's acoustical score as a key ingredient to conveying the emotions behind his father's comments and painting.

Loren Pickford and Friesen improvised much of the music in two days of studio sessions in Fresno, drawing on the filmmaker's suggestions about themes and feelings he sought to provoke while they watched the film running on a screen.

"It was just a process of playing, playing back the tape and sometimes repeating," Pickford said. "They'd never played together, but they [Loren and Eugene] really clicked and they had a great time."

"There's a little piano theme Loren wrote and plays in the blossom scene, the river scene and at the end of the film. I really loved it. Another theme I really liked was that sort of



Rollin Pickford paints and his wife, Glenna, reads to him. It's something they have done their whole married life — she likes to read, he likes to paint. RUE FARIS DREW

traveling theme you hear at the very beginning and at the seashore where my dad's painting the cormorants."

Pickford spoke admiringly about the versatility of all the musicians, particularly soloists

Loren and Friesen. "The wide range of emotions Eugene can evoke with only a cello just amazed me."

"Everything Loren [a jazz musician of 40 years] did was so completely out of his idiom."

The only written music was his music for the string quartet [heard in a segment with the "Tuesday Group" and in the credits]. He wrote it late nights while he was traveling with a jazz-funk band in the South."

Arbitron: KMJ reigns supreme for morning news listeners

Continued from Page E1
minutes.

In the battle for morning

Second place in the mornings last fall went to KSKS with a

FALL ARBITRON RATINGS

Following are the ranking, station and market share for Fresno.

1. KMJ-AM 7.3
2. KSKS-FM 6.9
3. KJWL-FM 6.7
4. KBOS-FM 5.5

14. KJFX-FM 3.4
15. KRZR-FM 3.2
16. KLBN-FM 3.2
17. KEZL-FM 3.1
18. KFRE-AM 1.9
19. KKPW-FM 1.5
20. KMPH-FM 1.3

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P ₃	A ₁	S ₁	S ₁	I ₁	O ₁	N ₁	RACK 1 =	59
T ₁	I ₁	N ₁	I ₁	E ₁	S ₁	T ₁	RACK 2 =	64
B ₃	A ₁	L ₁	L ₁	E ₁	R ₁		RACK 3 =	24

