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News Release

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Famous 'Dragon Tales' Creator Appears at Nevada County Fair

Triple bypass heart surgery made Ron Rodecker mad and led him to become the creator of a public television program which became the number one animated series for children two to six years old.

Rodecker's *Dragon Tales* program embodies the same whimsy that caused him to wake up with a pun on his lips. "When I came out of the anesthetic the first thing I said was, 'I hope this wasn't all in vein'. Along with that came an anger. I had this ability all my life and I got this notice that my life was in peril and I hadn't done anything with my art talent."

So he abandoned the various careers he had followed graduating in art from UCLA. Gone were the jobs as ad agency art director, working at an insurance agency, a bank, the post office, and as a teacher.

He got some sheets of illustration board and started doing pen and ink drawings.

"I did some pretty good stuff and got into the Festival of Art in Laguna Beach." Then he moved to the Sawdust Festival across the street. There he was able to sell prints of his work, which by this time included some whimsical dragons.

"One day people from Columbia Tri-Star pictures came into my booth and really liked what they saw. They invited me to Culver City and asked me if I could create a

series based on my art. That's how *Dragon Tales* was born." The series, which started in 1999 is still airing on PBS. Emmy nomination plaques hang on his studio wall.

A Nevada County resident, along with his wife Katherine and two golden retrievers since 2004, he still serves as producer for the program, in charge of developing new characters. For a year he drew a series of more than 50 whimsical cartoons for The Union.

One of his main activities these days is serving as the star attraction at the Nevada County Fair's Magic Forest, a special area that presents day-long entertainment for young Fair visitors.

There youngsters can watch Ron at his drawing board creating his whimsical dragons. The Nevada County Fair, and the Magic Forest, run from August 8 though 12 at the fairgrounds in Grass Valley. This year's Fair poster is his artistic interpretation of the theme "Pirates of the Barnyard."

What's ahead? "I'm 77 so I prefer to think of the now, instead of the future," he says whimsically.