

## Fresno Film Commission leader Ray Arthur to retire

By Rick Bentley



Ray Arthur

Ray Arthur has rubbed elbows with the stars for much of his life, the last eight years through promoting Fresno to the movie, TV and advertising industries as Fresno film commissioner. That will end Dec. 31 as Arthur's retiring from the position that he's done both as a paid city employee and on a volunteer basis.

"It's just the right time," Arthur, 63, said Thursday. "It's not easy to leave but I'll miss it less than if it was the full-time, paid position when I had the ability to go out and bring in reality TV shows and national commercials to film here.

"It's been a fulfilling and fun job but the last five years weren't the same as the first 18."

Arthur came to Fresno city government in 2006 after running the Ridgecrest Film Commission for 15 years. After the budget for the Fresno Film Commission was cut in 2009, Arthur continued to work on a volunteer basis through

Creative Fresno, [a volunteer organization of creative professionals started in 2004](#) to promote the city.

During Arthur's tenure, the commission generated an estimated \$52 million in local revenue through more than 200 productions including "[Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull](#)," "[Blade: Trinity](#)" and "[Parental Guidance](#)."

Arthur called working with "Indiana Jones" director Steven Spielberg one of the highlights of his days as the Fresno Film Commissioner despite that most of the footage shot at the Chandler Downtown Airport didn't make the final cut of the action film.

Mark Standriff, the city's director of communications and public affairs, said that since the city hasn't had an official film commissioner for years, Arthur's retirement has no direct affect. Work will continue with Creative Fresno or directly with filmmakers who want to film in the city.

No one officially will be picking up Arthur's duties. Andy Hansen-Smith, chairperson of Creative Fresno, said that the city will be involved with handling all filming permits.

"They want us to help do promotions, but we have no money for that," Hansen-Smith said.

The lack of money to promote the city made Arthur's job increasingly more difficult to attract film projects.

His efforts were particularly appreciated by many of the independent filmmakers he helped.

Local filmmaker [Matt Sconce](#) said Arthur is one of the reasons so much filmmaking came to the area. With the help of Arthur, Sconce was able to shoot his feature films "Stricken," "Firefall" and "Gold Fools" here.

"He made everything extremely easy for independent filmmakers to work," Sconce said. "You go to L.A. and mention films and people want to know what they can get out of you. Here, everyone jumps on board and just wants to be a part of the project.

"Ray Arthur's attention to detail and his caring about filmmakers allowed the filmmaking business to thrive. I hope many of the practices he put in place will remain."

The Philadelphia native spent 21 years working in radio before launching the Ridgecrest film office. He started his career as an on-air personality but moved to management and sales after he suffered a vocal chord injury. Arthur worked at 13 radio stations in eight markets.

Arthur will continue his full-time position with the city of Fresno's public utilities department. He will remain active in the film community through Creative Fresno, the city's Public Television Joint Powers Authority and the Fresno Filmmakers Alliance.

The [Fresno County Film Commission](#), which was in place before the city launched its version, continues its work to lure filming here and to assist productions once they come to the area.

While the city film commission was in place, the county commission would pass off requests to shoot within the city limits to Arthur. Now, the county commission will expand its work to cover the city as well as the county.

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