

OPINION

EDITOR'S NOTE



This week, I wrote a cover story about **Michèle Benson**, the longtime GT photographer and filmmaker who pulled together the definitive

history of our most famous club with her 2009 documentary *The Catalyst*, and is now deep into tracing the history of the Santa Cruz music scene for her next. What I didn't mention in the story is that I'm one of the interviewees in the new film; actually, I was going to write a whole section of the piece about what that was like, but it turned out I had so many more important things I wanted to get in there that I couldn't waste any space rattling on about that.

So I thought I'd waste *this* space instead! Because I think it's kind of funny what happens when you get into a situation like this. When Benson first asked me to participate, I thought, "Well, how much do I

really know about the history of this music scene?" I warned her I know a lot more about certain eras than other ones, and she said that was perfect. And though she claims that interviewing is not her specialty, when I actually sat down in front of the cameras, she asked all the right questions that got me going off on everything from '80s punk and alt-rock to '90s and 2000s, uh, punk and alt-rock. But also Americana and ska and emo and folk and electronic—and suddenly I was on a roll about all kinds of Santa Cruz music for an hour and a half.

Times that by 200, which the list of people she's interviewed now exceeds, and you get a sense of what Benson is dealing with trying to tell this story. But for a lot of reasons, which I think are laid out clearly in the story, I think it's hugely important that she has taken this on, and I'm totally in awe of her. Check out the piece, and then check out her work at allaccessfilm.net and michelebenson.com.

STEVE PALOPOLI | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LETTERS

FLAVOR SAVER

Regarding "Foraged Flavors" (GT, 1/18) by the wonderful Christina Waters: Here in the South County oak forests, mushrooms—including boletes—have been plentiful since right after Thanksgiving. This was after a dry year, and before the rains! They are still going, with different species coming up. Perhaps they start later in the North County, or in the redwood forests?

SANDY BARON | WATSONVILLE

WHAT'S MY LINE?

Re: "Tracks of the Trade" (GT, 2/2): Since the discussions about the Santa Cruz Branch Line are heating up, it is important to talk about some new developments in regards to the line.

In recent weeks, it was revealed that after Sierra Northern pulled out of its contract with Union Pacific in 2011, Roaring Camp wanted to purchase the branch. The county told them not to, stating that they were going to use state funds to preserve the line. That hasn't happened. The county has very clearly neglected the line, and we should try

to have a local operator run the line.

Environmental Concerns: I did a live stream about this on my YouTube channel, but while the commuter rail is not possible due to the profit margins and overall costs, freight trains are more than possible if the bridges are repaired. According to the EPA, the average freight locomotive emits 22 grams of CO2 per ton-mile, compared to truck operations which emit approximately 65 grams per ton-mile. If Roaring Camp takes over full freight operations, it will undoubtedly decrease greenhouse gas emissions. If we have fewer trucks transporting freight and have more trains on the line, it will ease the environmental impact.

Roaring Camp's Defenders: Along with the thousands of letters sent, California State Senator John Laird and San Lorenzo Valley Fire have both jumped in to defend the railroad. Roaring Camp is a for-profit company, meaning it pays taxes to the county, state and country. More tax dollars would come in if they became the operator. Those tax dollars would benefit everyone. A multi-use pathway will make no money; freight does.

Traffic: Greenway argues that

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PHOTO CONTEST

TALON SHOW A great horned owl at Lighthouse Field. Photograph by John Myer.

Submit to photos@goodtimes.sc. Include information (location, etc.) and your name. Photos may be cropped. Preferably, photos should be 4 inches by 4 inches and minimum 250 dpi.

GOOD IDEA

MEMORIAL PARK

On Monday, the Deputy Sheriff's Association announced a \$100,000 donation to a memorial for Sgt. Damon Gutzwiller, who was killed in the line of duty in June of 2020. This is the largest donation in DSA history, and will help the memorial reach its goal of \$805,000. In addition, the campaign has raised \$18,000 through contributions from community members and businesses. The memorial will be at Willowbrook County Park in Aptos, where Sgt. Gutzwiller would walk his dog Shasta. To learn more, visit countyparkfriends.org/willowbrook.

GOOD WORK

WATERSHED MOMENT

Last week, the Coastal Watershed Council's (CWC) Executive Director Greg Pepping announced he will be stepping down this June. The CWC works to protect watersheds across Santa Cruz County. Pepping has been with the CWC for 12 years, and in a blog post about his decision, he highlighted some of the CWC's achievements he is most proud of: a youth education program called the Watershed Rangers, the Chinatown Dragon Gate artwork and bridge renaming, to name a few. Read the full post at coastal-watershed.org/cwc-ed-change.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Music is dialogue." — RIDLEY SCOTT

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