

IT'S TIME TO **DISCOVER** *Butte County*

**NEW
EDITION ON
STANDS
NOW!**



A FREE Guide for *Visitors* and *Locals*, too.

On stands in September and March.

CN&R

ARTS DEVO

by **JASON CASSIDY** • jasonc@newsreview.com



WITH ALL MY HEART No public, no paper. Seems pretty straightforward, right? Everything that brings us together in the physical world—fun, art, music, meetings, food, sports, work, school, booze—is gone for the time being. And if everything is shut down, what's there to advertise? The answer to that question is the same as the answer to: "How much does it cost for a copy of a weekly newspaper that depends on ad revenue to operate?"

Still, it's hard to accept that—due to a dramatic loss of advertisers in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic—all three **News & Reviews** (Chico, Sacramento and Reno) have suspended publication until further notice. As arts editor, I watched helplessly as my entire beat shut down in the matter of a few days, and I had to cross off every story planned for the next four weeks. But at no point did I imagine this is where I'd be one week later: sitting at my computer and fighting back tears as I try to form a coherent goodbye.

What will the future look like? I don't know. So, I'm just going to get this out now in case I don't get another chance.

This job changed my life. As a poor, anxiety-ridden kid from the cultural desert of Redding, I was desperate to escape, get out and experience the world and maybe find a place in it where I could feel comfortable in my own skin. To have wound up in this arts editor chair in the middle of this fun, weird, always evolving arts-rich community is a miracle that far exceeded my teenage dreams. And I was damn lucky to get hired. When I applied for this job in 2003, I was a college dropout who'd skipped classes to study guitar, write poetry and put on rock shows. I had taken one journalism class, and my work history to that point was almost exclusively spent in restaurant kitchens.

I never asked then-Editor **Tom Gascoyne** why he hired me. My guess is that it was a combo of two things: I could string words together in a fairly organized manner, and I knew and loved the local arts scene. And I devoured the opportunity like a hungry dog fearful that the bowl might be taken away. With no other blueprint to follow, I molded the position to suit my vision of completely owning the art scene in Chico. I tried to shine the spotlight in every corner and bring the hidden artists onto the stage alongside the big names, and cover the scene so completely that it and the CN&R became inseparable. Over time, that relationship between the paper and the community has become what defines me.

I am forever grateful to Gascoyne for giving me a shot; and to **Bob Speer**, **Devanie Angel**, **Josh Indar** and **Tom Angel** for schooling me in journalism; and to **Tina Flynn** for her creative kinship; and to **Jeff vonKaenel** and **Deborah Redmond** for their commitment to, and sacrifices for, N&R's vision; and to **Mark Lore**, **Ken Smith**, **Alec Binyon**, **Brian Corbit**, **Mazi Noble** and **Howard Hardee** for being my righteous dudes; and to **Melissa Daugherty** and **Meredith J. Cooper** for not letting bare-bones budgets keep them from speaking truth to power during trying times; and to **Jamie DeGarmo** for being my partner in putting on kick-ass community events; and to **Evan Tuchinsky** for showing me kindness when I really needed it; and to **Jane Corbett**, **Jen Osa** and **Ruth Alderson** for keeping the parties lit; and to the inspiring young guns, **Andre Byik** and the irrepressible **Ashiah Scharaga**; and to all the committed freelancers—most especially the nonpareil **Peter Hogue**, aka film critic **Juan-Carlos Selznick**—and to all the presenters, artists and other passionate freaks of Chico; and to everyone I forgot in this rushed moment. I appreciate all of our friendships, and I love you with all my heart.

And to the faithful readers, I am grateful for you, too, and I apologize if this comes across as a bit self-centered (what's new?!) and insensitive considering the greater issues affecting so many who are impacted by this pandemic. It's just that it's a very sad day when one of the most important things in your world stops unexpectedly. And it is acutely painful to imagine that when the plays and concerts and community events do eventually return, there's a chance the CN&R might not be part of the moment.

But I am hopeful that the News & Review will find a way. A person would have lost a lot of money betting against the newspaper's owners over the years. I know that all possibilities will be explored and that no matter where I end up, I will help the News & Review remain a vital source of independent journalism and a source of light for the community at a time when it's most needed. Goodbye ... for now.