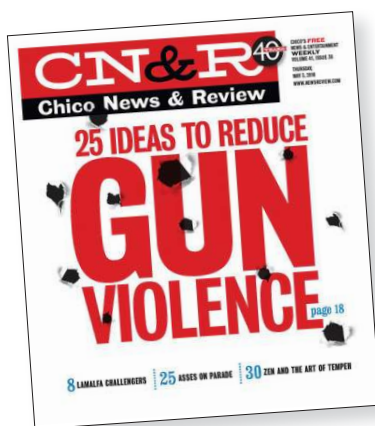


Chrisanne Beckner, the interim editor who hoped to return to her real job writing for the SN&R as soon as possible; Bob Speer, who'd agreed to return on a contract that, I quickly learned, expired at the end of the week; and the lone holdovers from my predecessor's staff, calendar and arts editors Jason Cassidy and Mark Lore.

The cover story that week profiled another new guy in town, then-City Manager Greg Jones. I don't remember much of the first few days except hiding under my desk when folks weren't looking and wondering, "What have I gotten myself into?"

But things turned around fast. Bob agreed to stay as news editor, willing to give me a chance—and accepting that I'd already hired an associate editor, Meredith J. Cooper, with whom I'd worked in Riverside. (She was traveling the world and wouldn't arrive till June. She'd accepted the job from a callbox in London.) Jason and Mark were Jason and Mark: funny, friendly and unflappable.



May 7, 2017

Readers also were willing to give me a chance, even those who doubted I'd succeed as a successor. My boss's assignment for me helped immeasurably: Jeff vonKael gave me a list of 30 people to meet in 90 days, and 29 of them—from council members and county supervisors to business leaders and community activists—shared their local knowledge with me. (I still haven't met Ken Grossman of Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. ...

maybe some day!)

Our group of writer/editors, contributors and interns carved our own identity. Bob and I had the temerity to endorse a conservative for City Council—somehow, the world didn't end!—and my columns became known for taking on so-called friends (see: "Frenemies of the park") as well as so-called foes (see: "Chief concerns"). A feature on 9/11 conspiracy theorists drew a sharp rebuke from a Chico State journalism professor who liked me even less after we revealed one of his students apparently plagiarized AP in her Orion article.

We also continued the award-winning legacy of the CN&R, most notably with a feature story by Richard Ek that spurred a series of follow-ups on city pensions, long before anyone else sounded the alarm. The California News Publishers Association recognized Ek for his reporting and the CN&R with its public service award. Our opinion section, news, arts and design (i.e., Tina Flynn) also rated among the state's best. We expand-

ed environmental coverage with the GreenWays section.

When I left, 100,000 readers were picking up the CN&R each Thursday. The staff, which by then included future editor Melissa Daugherty, kept putting out must-read issues weekly. I started freelancing for Bob and Melissa after moving out of state; when I moved back, Melissa brought me in on three occasions as contributing editor, the News & Review's equivalent of a professor emeritus.

I'm proud of that point in the paper's history. Even more, I'm proud of the people. We were, and remain, family.

## Bill Unger

Distribution driver (2007-2024)

Eight-track tapes, the typewriter, disco, film, and yes, print media. What do they all have in common? Hands please.

As part of the CN&R delivery staff for many years, I'll miss my gig, driving 150 miles to such places as Artois, Proberta (let's hear it for Proberta!), Gerber, Dairyville, etc.

I'll also miss the personal relationships I've developed over the years with other CN&R employees, both past and present. After the Camp Fire, the CN&R really felt like a part of my family (the good part). As Camp Fire survivors, my wife and I (like so many others) have really appreciated the hundreds of articles and great writing you have provided on this topic.

Thanks to the CN&R for providing us with such thorough coverage for over four decades. Also thanks for having the testicular fortitude to print alternative points of view. I've personally had two letters printed that were quite critical of the paper. (Geez, just what does it take to get fired around here?)

Lastly, thanks to Ken Smith, Evan Tuchinsky, Melissa Daugherty, Ashiah Bird, Jason Cassidy and all the other writers.

I will miss holding the paper and physically turning the pages. The good news is the CN&R will still be online and I look forward to reading the latest political, entertainment and other news online. □

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