

SANTA CRUZ STYLE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2006

Art + Artists - 2000

1-1-06

GAIL RICH AWARDS

Perhaps the most illuminating way to mark the 10th annual unveiling of the Gail Rich Awards — our New Year's appreciation to the artists among us — is to gaze upon the list of past winners, provided on Page B8 inside. Counting the recipients of the award this year, the "Gailies" have encompassed at least 114 people, all of whom collectively form the backbone of a community that embraces the creative life — sometimes in extremes — like few other towns in America.

The idea was spawned a decade ago, as a simple yet elegant way to take advantage of the stock-taking of the holiday season, to put faces to that amorphous term the "arts community" and give our talented photographer Shmuel Thaler a forum to pursue his interest in portraiture. Gail Rich — who had her hands in a dizzying number of artistic pursuits in the county, including a gig as a correspondent for the Sentinel — was in on the first discussions of the project in the summer of 1996. When she died suddenly that fall, we decided to name the project in honor of her tireless spirit of volunteerism and enthusiasm.

Since then, of course, the Gailies have become something of an institution in Santa Cruz. Our gratitude goes out to the Cultural



GAIL RICH

Council of Santa Cruz County for transforming a newspaper spread into a highly anticipated annual event at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center (this year's event takes place Jan. 25). This year, we also throw the spotlight on Shmuel for his work over the years in applying an artistic spirit to his portraits of artists, musicians, writers, performers, businesspeople, media people and arts supporters throughout Santa Cruz County. His magnificent photos will be on display through January and February at the Attic in Santa Cruz.

And, finally, we offer our appreciation to the hundreds of people in this community, living the creative life, oftentimes without much in the way of recognition and financial reward. You enhance the lives of the rest of us in a thousand direct and indirect ways. The glory of the Gail Rich Awards in Santa Cruz County is that, even after 10 years, our list of artists who deserve this kind of acknowledgement never seems to deplete itself. I'm sure that the list of deserving names will be just as long when we mark our 20th year.

— Wallace Baine,
Sentinel arts writer

Photos by **SHMUEL THALER** Text by **WALLACE BAINE**



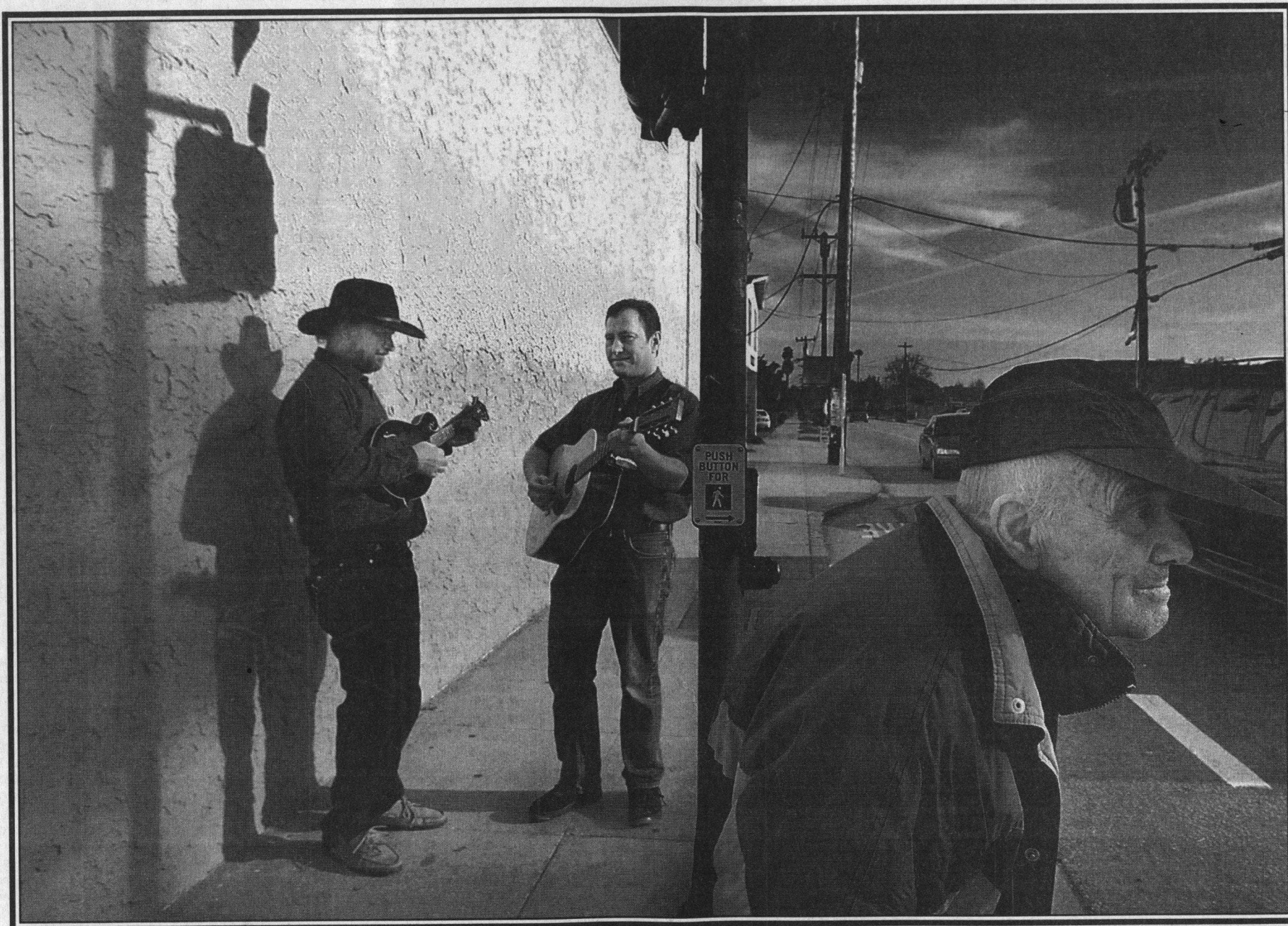


DINA SCOPPETTONE

Still a few years shy of 30, Santa Cruz's Dina Scoppettone has already played both sides of life in the arts, as the artist and the academic. With a master's degree in art history from the prestigious Courtauld Institute of Art in London, Dina teaches the history of modern art at Cabrillo College, with an emphasis on modern visual culture. But the former model is also an up-and-coming fashion/fine art photographer, named by American Photo magazine as one of the most promising young photographers of 2004. She came to photography after spearheading an ambitious project to create an enormous mural in Cuba for the Havana Biennial in 2000, featuring 100 artists from all over the world. The project, a tribute to a similar mural created in Cuba in the 1960s, inspired Dina to pursue her own artistic passions. Part of an old-line Santa Cruz family — her father was an artist; her grandfather a well-known Santa Cruz judge — Dina may have also been inspired by the ghosts that haunt the Scotts Valley home where she grew up, a home once owned by a man named Alfred Hitchcock.

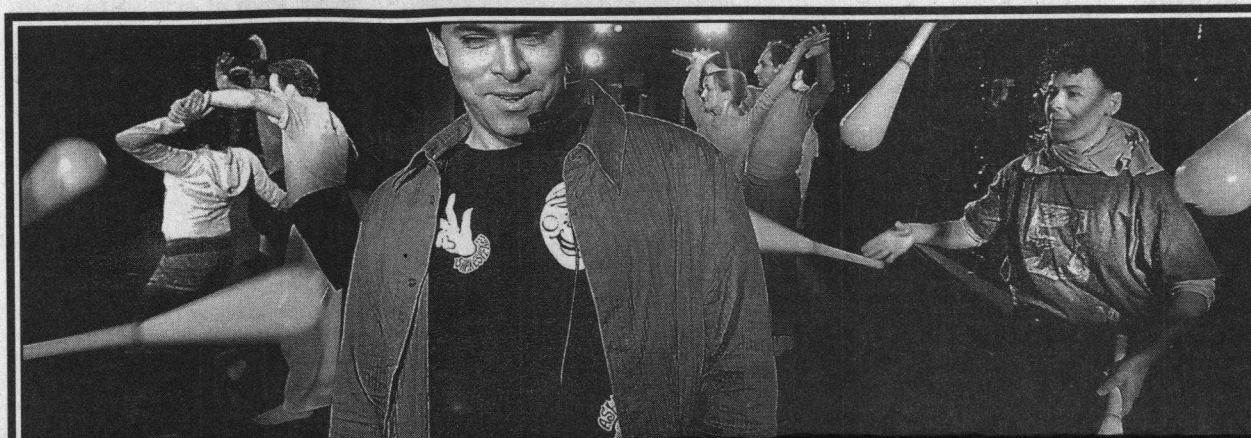
For the rest of the 2006 Gail Rich Award winners, please turn to Pages 6-7.

2006 GAIL RICH AWARDS

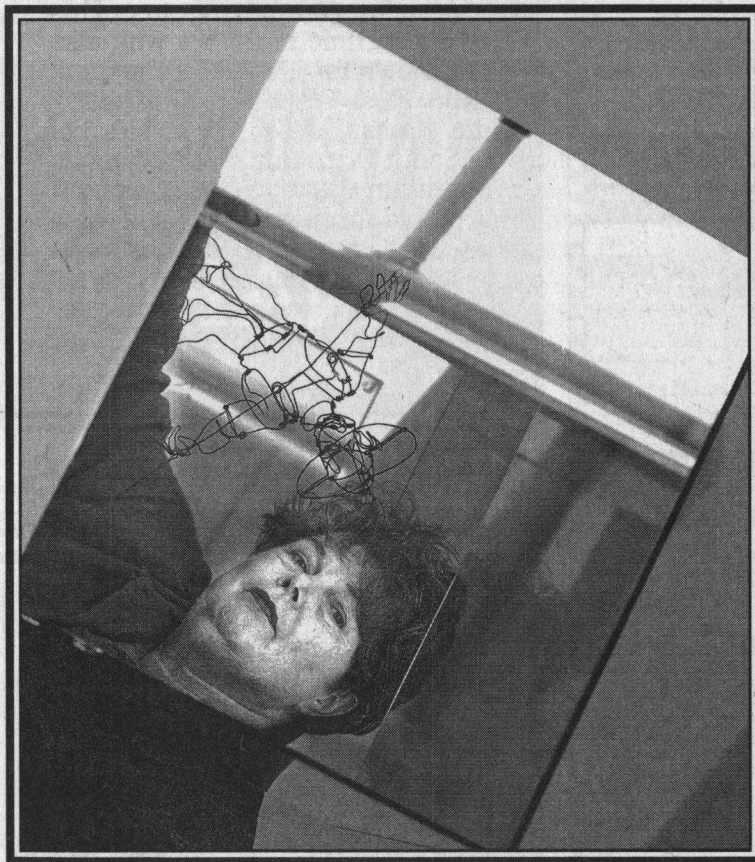


HARMONY GRITS

In the past two decades, the bluegrass musical tradition that grew from Kentucky and the neighboring Appalachian range has gone from square to cool. But Santa Cruz's Harmony Grits was playing bluegrass long before the Starbucks generation discovered it. In 1984, Michigan transplant Mike McKinley, an old-school bluegrass true believer, hooked up with mellow California-



boy guitarist Jim Lewin and dobro player Jeff Baldwin (not pictured) to form a group that now ranks as one of Santa Cruz's longest running, still active bands. The Grits sit atop the burgeoning Santa Cruz bluegrass subculture, not only by virtue of their music, but because of their participation in the Northern California Bluegrass Society and their establishment of an annual downtown bluegrass festival. The Grits also feature bassist Bob Kolb and part-time members Sonia Shell and Dennis English. Outside the Grits, Jim has become a top, in-demand guitarist, playing in Lacy J. Dalton's band and backing up bluegrass mandolin giant Frank Wakefield, among others. Mike, who for years hosted a bluegrass radio show, can rightfully be called an enormous influence on the career of a former housemate who discovered her latent musical talent while living with Mike and his old record albums. Her name is Gillian Welch.



CHIP

As if it were a drag on his boundless energy to get things done, Chip jettisoned his surname years ago, legally changing his name to the one syllable nickname applied to him by his sister when both were kids. Everyone on the Santa Cruz arts scene, however, seems to know that name. For more than 15 years now, Chip has dedicated his waking hours to establishing and maintaining a culture of creativity in downtown Santa Cruz. In recent years, he has partnered with artist Kirby Scudder to create the Santa Cruz Institute of Contemporary Art, which has set up a series of galleries in the downtown area to spark what he hopes will turn into a thriving arts district, finding a home base at the Attic on Pacific Avenue. Before that, Chip was the director of the 418 Project on Front Street, bringing in adventurous and fringe artists and performers that otherwise would never play small-town venues. He's a longtime figure on the city's Arts Commission and has worked as a backstage presenter and organizer for countless performances. What's more, he's as familiar a presence downtown as the Town Clock, constantly working the streets in an effort, if not to keep Santa Cruz weird, at least to keep it fertile ground for the artistically inclined.

If You Go

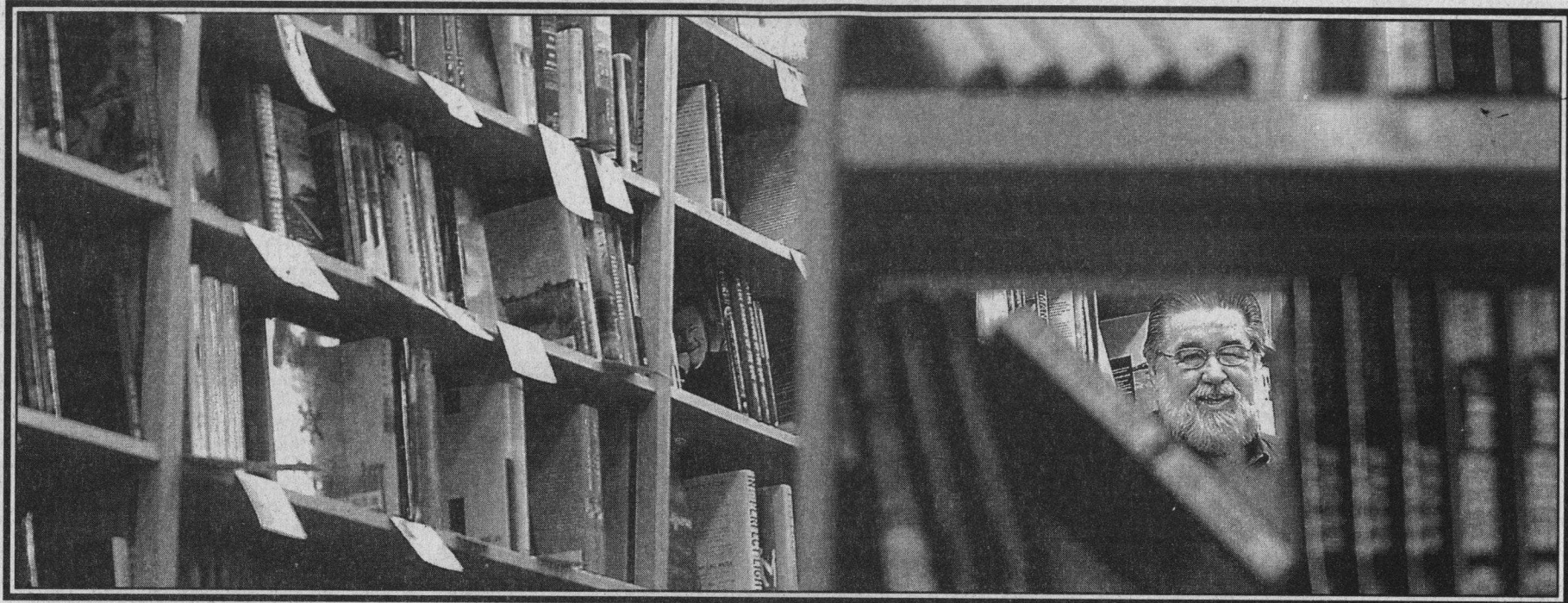
WHAT: The Gail Rich Awards.
WHEN: Wednesday, Jan. 25., 6 p.m.
WHERE: Kuumbwa Jazz Center, 320-2 Cedar St., Santa Cruz.
COST: Free.
DETAILS: 429-2427.

WHAT: 'The Gail Rich Awards: A Decade of Portraits,' photographs by Shmuel Thaler.
WHEN: Reception 5 p.m. Friday, exhibit to run through Feb. 28.
WHERE: The Attic, 931 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz.
COST: Free.
DETAILS: 460-1800.

CAROL TRENGOVE

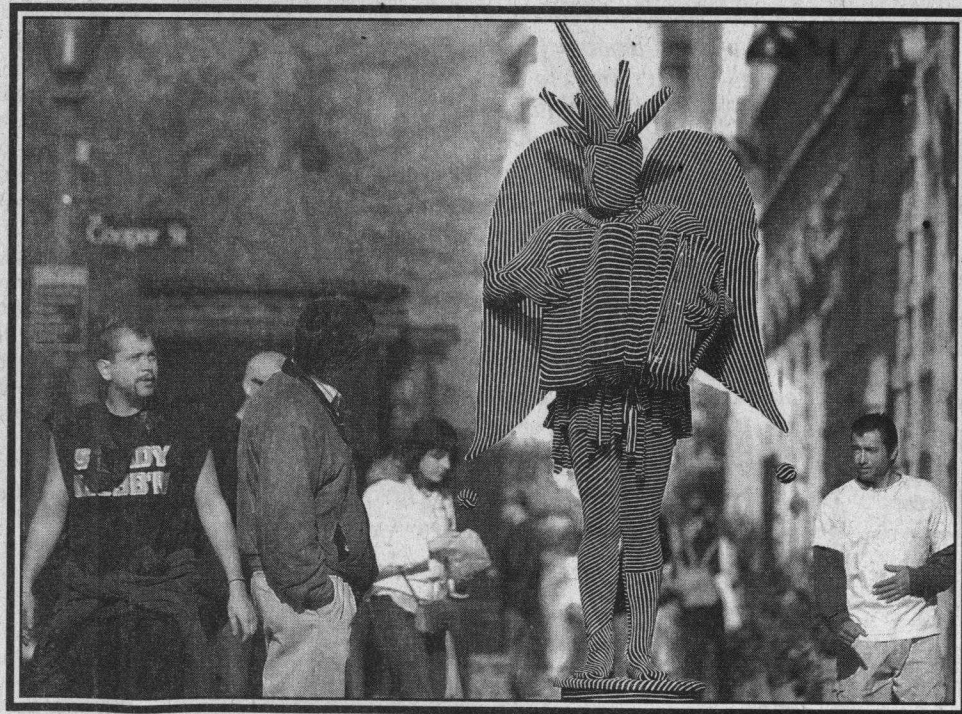
The Pajaro Valley Gallery is located in a beautiful, banana-yellow, century-old Victorian in downtown Watsonville, designed by famed architect William Weeks. It's also where you'll find Carol Trengove most days. Carol, the executive director of the Pajaro Valley Gallery for the past eight years, is a central figure in the visual arts community in Watsonville who has brought stability to an arts organization with a sometimes chaotic history. Carol, who was also a longtime member of the gallery's board before becoming executive director, is an artist herself, a photographer whose own work has been shown at the gallery. She oversees some 115 volunteers, presenting four or five shows in its intimate gallery space every year, inviting local artists and art lovers in as guest curators. With a base of visitors from north Santa Cruz County at about 37 percent — the annual 'Mi Casa Es Su Casa' exhibit devoted to Dia de los Muertos is especially popular with North County visitors — the gallery is also one of the leading agents for the cultural connection between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

2006 GAIL RICH AWARDS



NEAL COONERTY

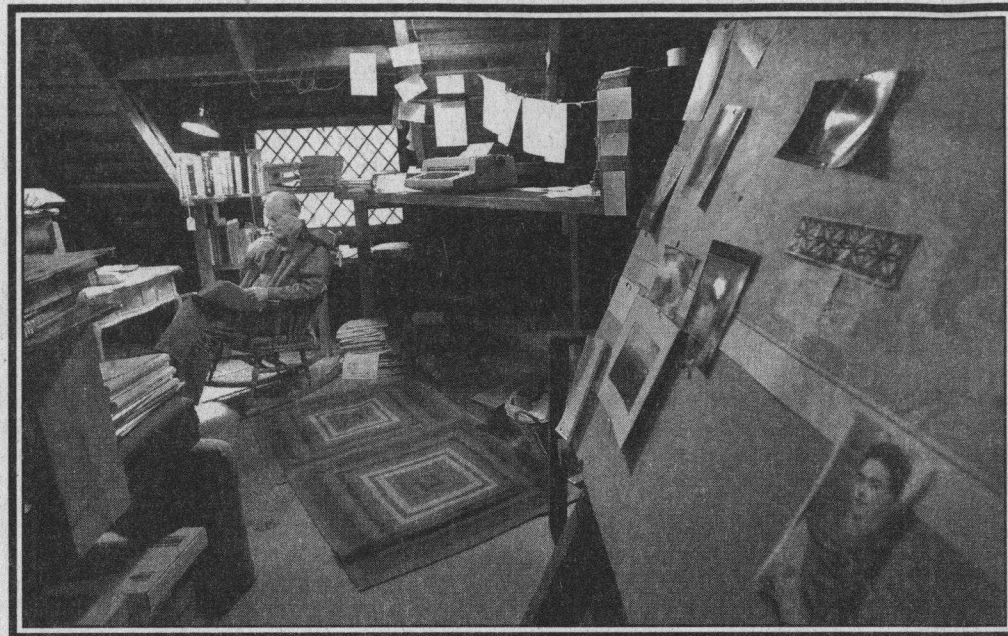
In the years after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, Neal Coonerty's Bookshop Santa Cruz was the symbol of the rebirth of downtown Santa Cruz. The original Bookshop was destroyed by the quake, so Neal and his late wife Candy jumped into a temporary space they jauntily retitled Booktent Santa Cruz, before moving into their present state below the St. George Hotel. A longtime city councilman and former mayor, Neal has also been a leading figure in the fight of independent bookstores versus chain bookstores, both locally in the Borders controversy in 2000 and nationally, as the president of the American Booksellers Association. Neal also has shown a taste for the well-timed political publicity stunt, usually at the expense of public figures such as Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh. The Bookshop has brought in many of the most high-profile writers in the country to Santa Cruz and has a solid record of supporting local literary voices. In recent years, Neal has been busy championing the eccentric culture of his hometown in an effort to "Keep Santa Cruz Weird." Can anyone guess at which downtown retail establishment one might hope to purchase a T-shirt emblazoned with those defiant words? Neal Coonerty can answer that one.



FRANK LIMA, THE GREAT MORGANI

Frank Lima has been playing accordion since the age of 9. But his Inner Performer didn't emerge until years later ... almost 50 years later. Nine years ago, the retired stock broker decided to unleash an alter ego that has become such a symbol of benign Santa Cruz weirdness, his picture should be on the city's official letterhead. The Great Morgani has evolved in those years from

merely a strangely dressed guy playing an accordion to a brilliantly exotic downtown creature, outfitted in such outlandish garb that he draws gapes from locals and out-of-towners alike. With his face usually covered in material, and his body vacuum-sealed inside a body suit of usually gawdy colors and designs, Morgani brings an otherworldly vibe to downtown shopping. In his Santa Cruz apartment, the 63-year-old lifetime Santa Cruzan — also a longtime performer in the Young At Art program that brings musicians into local elder-care facilities — keeps 38 accordions and more than 110 outfits, including a few so brazen in their imaginative flair, there's little chance he'll be dethroned as the reigning king of Santa Cruz Weird for a long, long time.

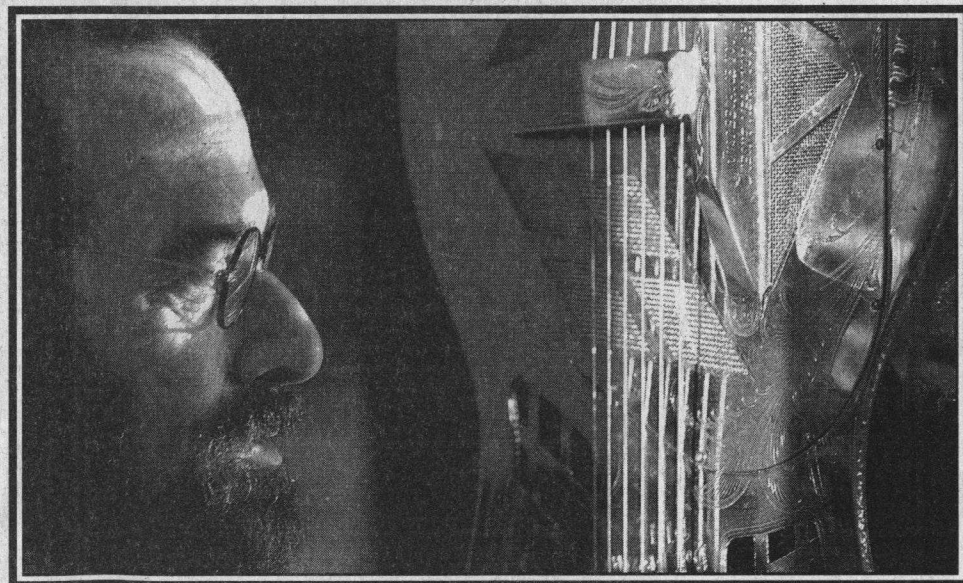


JAMES D. HOUSTON

One of the finest writers in the American West has called Santa Cruz home for 45 years. James D. Houston has written seven novels, including a trilogy of historical novels that won him the American Book Award. His work has been steeped in a strong sense of place and has explored the unique culture of California while at the same time acting as an antidote to the overheated romanticism attached to the state's "Land of Paradise" image. With his wife Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, he co-authored the landmark "Farewell to Manzanar" about Jeanne's experiences in World War II-era internment camps, which has become a standard in California's classrooms. Jim is just now starting a stint as distinguished visiting professor at San Jose State on the 50th anniversary of his graduation from SJSU. A longtime musician who also studied drama, he's also known for his work in helping establish the Pacific Rim Film Festival and bringing Hawaiian legend Eddie Kamae, with whom he's co-authored a memoir, to Santa Cruz. Jim's most famous work may be "Snow Mountain Passage," a novel about the ill-fated Donner Party told through the point of view of Patty Reed, one of the party's survivors. Jim has a special relationship to the story of the Donner Party, since the house that he and Jeanne call home near Twin Lakes Beach was once the home of Patty Reed.

BOB BROZMAN

Of all the artists who get their mail in Santa Cruz County, none has more international reach than guitarist and ethnomusicologist Bob Brozman. The longtime Ben Lomond resident rarely gets to sleep in his own bed, however. Since being struck by the power of the delta blues as a young player, Bob has been on a constant mission to expand his musical horizons to all corners of the globe. One of the world's leading authorities on the National steel guitar and a lifelong devotee of the traditional music of Hawaii, Bob regularly performs all over the world from the cultural centers of Europe to the villages of Papua New Guinea. He's also a professor of ethno-musicology in Australia and is involved in an effort to bring new musical instruments to Third World musicians. Taking a particular delight in collaboration, Bob has played alongside some of the most accomplished players in the world. As a musician, he combines blinding virtuosity with a kind of unquenchable musical appetite for ethnic string music. In the musical cross-pollination taking place in our suddenly smaller world, Bob Brozman has spent his life as a tireless worker bee, constantly in flight.



Photos by **SHMUEL THALER** Text by **WALLACE BAINE**