

# KRUZ, a different kind of local station

## Cable company operates its own television station

By NANCY BARR  
STAFF WRITER

High school football, the Capitola Begonia Festival and the Santa Cruz County Fair can now be seen from the comfort of your favorite chair — if you subscribe to cable television.

While the battle rages in Santa Cruz over who will operate the local cable franchise for years to come, Group W has established a local television station.

Whichever of four bidders is awarded the Santa Cruz cable franchise, public, government and educational access to the system will be a requirement of that franchise. All four bidders have also included a community

since KPIX broadcasts the same network shows as Monterey station KMST (cable channel 3) during evening "prime time," Group W can pre-empt KPIX during those hours without depriving viewers of any programs.

KRUZ programs produced to date have been focused on local community activities or local people. The station regularly covers high school football games, and is airing a game each Sunday evening.

The KRUZ staff has also put together programs on the Capitola Begonia Festival, the Tin Man Triathlon, the Santa Cruz County Fair, the Santa Cruz County Symphony and a local ballet company. A local woman produced her

community access" station. But station executive producer Tony Hill said the community will be given some opportunity to air shows or have events played on KRUZ.

There was a community access station in Santa Cruz County until a few months ago when the group running it concluded they couldn't continue without financial support.

Capitola Community Channel 8 was operated by Open Channel. Open Channel was founded in the late 1970s by a group of "video-fanatics" who wanted to see TV made accessible to local citizens — for producing shows, not just for watching them.

The city of Capitola was in the process of changing its franchise, a time that was perfect for trying to gain local access to TV, according to Dennis Speer, one of Open Channel's founders. Sonic Cable agreed to dedicate channel 8 on its Capitola system to the new community access station.

Capitola Community Channel 8 set up a studio, with some equipment purchased by the city and plenty of equipment donated by its volunteers. Over the years, the City Council had given Community Channel 8 several thousand dollars to purchase TV equipment.

In the course of its less than six years of operation, Channel 8 moved to four different locations, Speer said, and operated largely on the sweat and donations of its volunteers, because it did not receive any financial support from the city or Sonic.

Sonic was not required to give anything to Channel 8, but it did give the use of its channel and a converter to inject the programs into the cable system, and helped with engineering at the station. If not included in the franchise agreement with the city, the cable firm is under no obligation to financially support a community access

### Group W decided to go ahead and start its own station to 'reflect good faith.'

access channel in their proposals.

Group W decided to go ahead and start its own station to "reflect good faith," said station producer Doug McVadon.

Group W's new local station — KRUZ — is in operation, producing shows about local events, and can be seen by all Group W subscribers.

Residents of the cities of Watsonville and Capitola, and of the rural area of Watsonville, who subscribe to Sonic Cable, will also be able to see some KRUZ productions, because Sonic has agreed to play some of the programs produced by KRUZ.

By next year, KRUZ should be available regularly on channel 6 to Group W subscribers. In the meantime, KRUZ programs are being played Sunday and Tuesday evenings on channel 5.

Channel 5 is usually KPIX-TV from San Francisco, but

own cooking show, and now has a regular series planned on KRUZ.

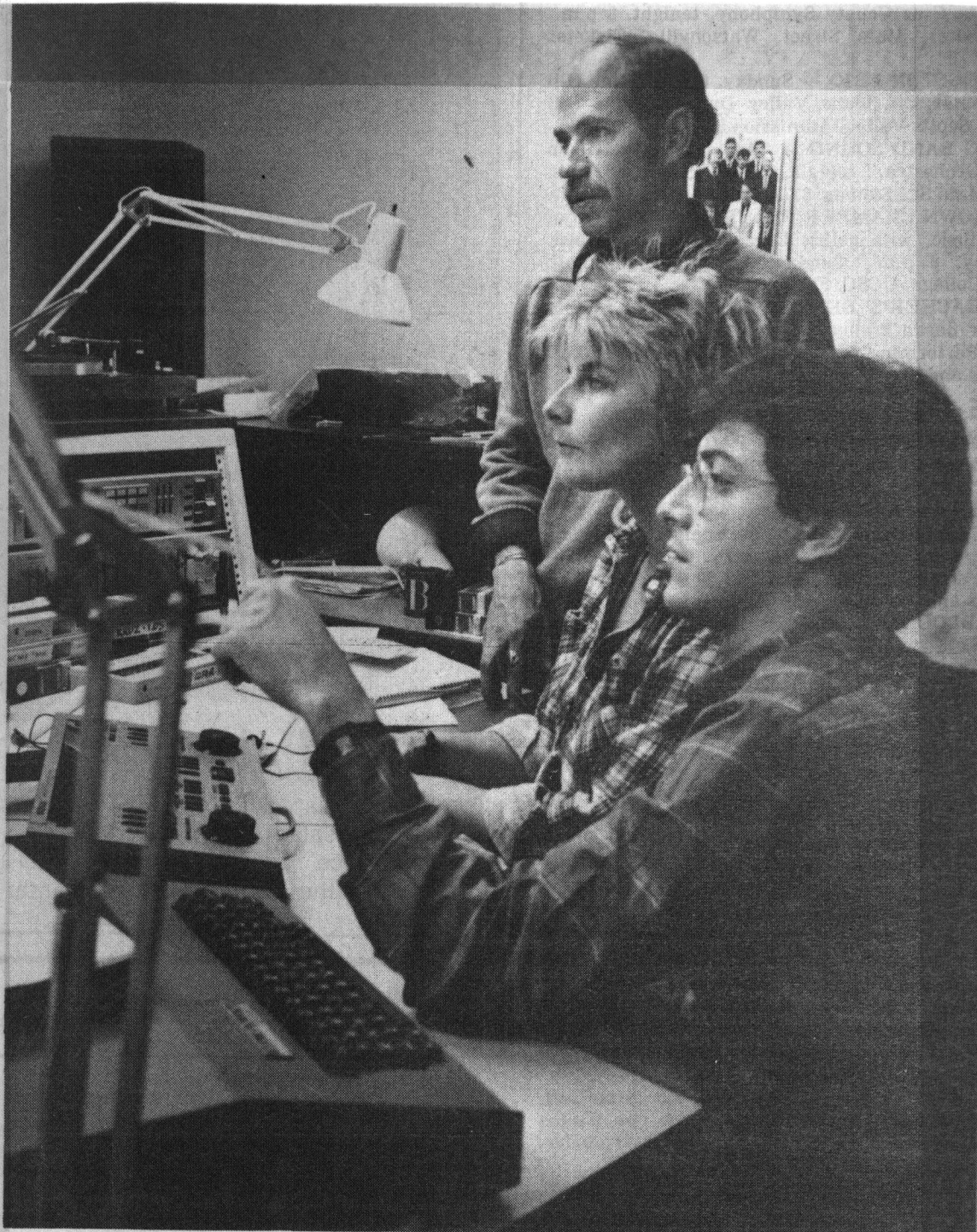
KRUZ also plans shows on travel, rock music, local artists and public affairs, producer Doug McVadon said, and some shows produced by local people will be aired.

As a commercial station, KRUZ sells air time and sponsorships, McVadon said.

Most KRUZ shows are documentaries, producer Eric Mathes said, and require hours of production and editing time on the part of the station's seven full-time staff members.

The shows will often be played a second time on the air, and unlike network television, KRUZ encourages people to tape shows that interest them and play them back again and again, Mathes said.

In cable TV jargon, KRUZ is what's called a local origination station, not a "com-



Nancy Barr

**Eric Mathes, top, Becca King and Doug McVadon edit a show for KRUZ.**

or local origination channel.

"It was an all-volunteer operation, without a means of support from the city or Sonic," said Greg Becker, Channel 8 coordinator. "We devoted our energies to getting that changed in the franchise, and they weren't."

Open Channel was seeking some form of subsidy from the city, and had proposed, at varying times, either a "tax" on the city's 2,000-plus cable TV subscribers, a portion of the franchise fees collected by the city, or an

outright subsidy by the City Council.

All of the proposals were ultimately rejected by the City Council.

Capitola Community Channel 8 has departed, leaving behind most of the station equipment for use by the city. The city is continuing to broadcast City Council meetings, which had been done for years by the volunteers at Channel 8.

Sonic is keeping channel 8 on the Capitola cable system open for the city to use, and

has agreed to give the city \$20,000 in new equipment.

Sonic General Manager Les Johnson also said Sonic's channel 31 has been designated for public access. That means that anyone who produces a videotape that Sonic deems is in the public interest, and in good taste, can have it played in Watsonville or Capitola. For example, a tape about traffic problems in the Pajaro Valley would probably be played; a tape of someone's birthday party would not. Johnson said.