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A Day On The Bay

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The fishing net is spread over the patio, twisted and coiled like a giant sea serpent. Tony Ghio sits over the net, his powerful fingers mending it just the way they did in the old days.

"Hey, Tony!" calls Riccardo Gaudino as he comes through the gate.

In his hands he carries an album, full of photos, momentos, wedding records, naturalization papers. The album tells the story of Tony's family and the others that arrived in Santa Cruz at the turn of the century from the village of Riva Trigoso on Italy's Ligurian coast.

And now that story is being preserved on video tape. Gaudino, the 24-year-old UCSC senior who originated "A Day On The Bay" as a tribute to Santa Cruz' Italian fishing families last June, says that the goal of the film is "to show the integrity of this distinct culture."

"There's a unique, distinctive Santa Cruz Italian

quality to these people — and we're never going to find anything like it again. I want to show other people the things I love about these people — so that everybody else can be Italian, too."

Gaudino, a fourth generation descendant of Genovese stock — with some Irish thrown in — hails from Napa. He describes himself as "a Californian — a native Californian."

He is the founder of UCSC's CIAO (California Italian Arts Organization) study group, which will sponsor its second annual "Day On The Bay" and Fishermen's Festival April 20.

CIAO is sponsored by UCSC's Center for Coastal Marine Studies, and represents a broadening from biological to sociological concerns.

"CIAO is dedicated to promote and educate the people of California who have contributed to the development of the farmlands and waters of this great state," says

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Gaudino. "Farmers . . . fishermen . . . it's obviously not an urban oriented group."

"A Day On The Bay" is also the title of the video tape Gaudino is producing, with Mark Schwartz directing and Eric Thiermann of Impact Productions doing the shooting. The project has received support from the National Endowment for Humanities and the Lockheed Missile and Space Corporation, Gaudino said.

The tape is being prepared for showing as part of the April 20 festivities, and there are also hopes of airing it on broadcast television.

The tape's plot is structured around "the day of a fisherman — sunrise to sunset," according to Gaudino.

"It's a conceptual 'Day On The Bay,'" adds Schwartz. "The crew follows the interviewer (Gaudino) in and around Santa Cruz . . . and through an historical pattern."

The format will intertwine some 20 interviews with some of the original immigrants and their descendants, with still photos, documents and even old moving pictures shot as a sort of "home movies" by the fishermen on the wharf.

Two Success Stories

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Regular gigs at JJ's Pizza provided the Humans with its first following — and a very enthusiastic and aggressive one at that. And while the Humans have moved on to bigger things (although they do still play JJ's) the pizza parlour has continued to break new acts with vigor.

The freshness of new wave music, the influx of new talent it has provided, and the fact JJ's allows minors at its shows has made the Portola Ave. club while the happening place for the young crowd — and a fair share of oldsters as well.

"I'm just the hipster of the high school crowd," joked Texas import Johnny Waters, who has "booked the acts at JJ's since last year.

"The thing I found out, first of all, is that there's no place

for these kids to go. They can't get into any clubs, which really blew my mind since in Texas the drinking age is 18.

"So, Don (Jilka, JJ's owner) and I go together and said let's get some good, high quality bands in there.

"Now, we got Kid Twist every Monday night, and they're drawing 200 people" (previously unheard of on the local front).

On weekends, bands such as the Humans, the Joe Richards Group, No Sisters and JJ 180 are packing the place to the gills.

"Those damned kids are just starved for new wave music," said Waters, who contrary to new wave chic describes himself as "blue jeans, t-shirt, tennis shoes kinda guy."

Chalk up two more Santa Cruz success stories.

All of this will be set to the music that the Genovese brought with them from Italy, and sang here at their gatherings.

"The film begins with the old timers talking about the old days — and ends with their children talking about tomorrow."

The historical material was gathered by Gaudino during three years of research.

It tells of the families of the patriarchs who founded Santa Cruz' fishing industry, beginning in the 1890's. The family names are now integral parts of the city's history. "But they were very much a colony, separate from the English speaking population until 1937," Gaudino recalled.

Originally the seamen from the same Genovese tradition that produced Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus) and Giovanni Cabato (John Cabot), followed the seasons, fishing out of San Francisco in the winters and moving south to the Monterey Bay for salmon in the summers.

In the 1890's some began settling in Capitola, and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake spurred many more to this region. They found their ways to "La Baranca," the hills on Santa Cruz' west side, where there was room to hang their nets. The work was hard for the fishermen and their wives, but the families prospered throughout the early decades of this century — as long as the fish were running.

Like the strands of their nets, themes of the families' histories will be woven together in the documentary. It has no "script" as such, but does feature Gaudino's disarming, animated and spontaneous interview style, which is equally effective whether he's speaking English or Italian.

On camera, he says, "I'm just doing what I do whenever I see these people. I always yell at them — it's a tradition to give each other a hard time. It's 'allegro' — it's life!"

"The middle of the film — lunch time — represents the high point of the community. It thrived from the early part of the century through the early 1940's, but then it peaked out.

"The war changed a lot of people's lives, and members of the younger generation found their lives did not center around fishing. They moved onto other businesses, and then there was another generation, and some of them weren't exposed to fishing at all and others went off to college.

"Fishing is like farming — it's a hard life, a real hard life. But some of them still do fish — I'll be going out with them for a week, and shooting on the boat.

"Even for the ones that don't fish any more, they still talk about their boats as their pride and joy."

"Fishing was the high point in many of their lives," concludes Schwartz. "They still gauge their lives in terms of the boats they owned."

