Sarah Bae

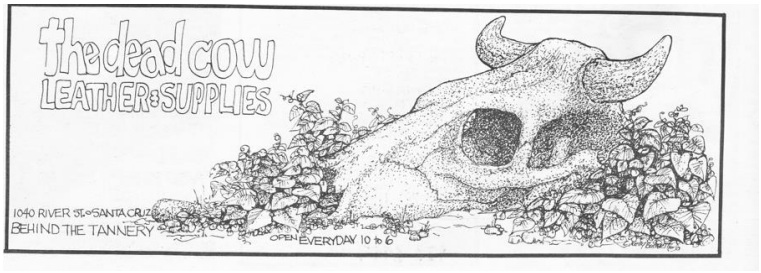
Free Spaghetti Dinner

The **Free Spaghetti Dinner** was a biweekly newspaper published in Santa Cruz, CA[4] from October 1969 to October 1970. It got its name from the staff cooking a big pot of spaghetti with the motto "all the news that's fit to eat." This politically radical underground newspaper covered a diverse range of subjects such as community initiatives and ecological perspectives, as well as politics such as the women's movement.

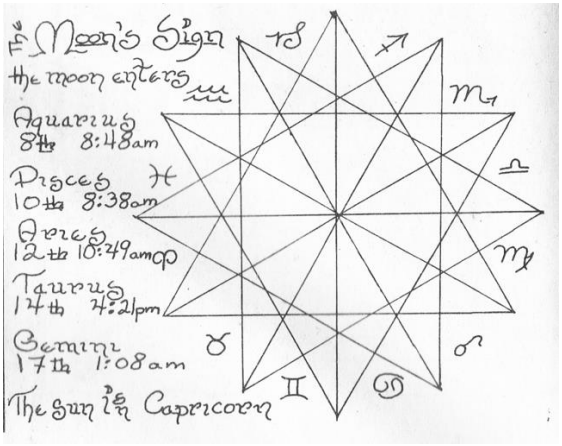
History

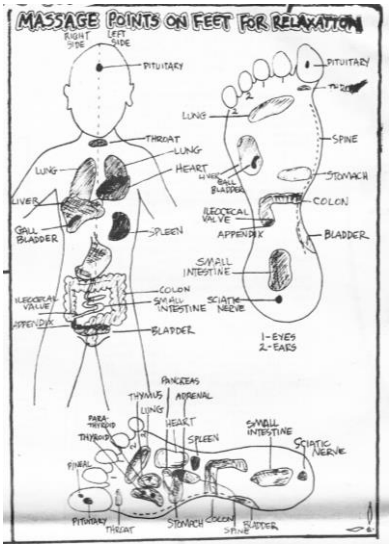
The newspaper was founded by Rick Gladstone, born in San Francisco and later moving to a ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains at the age of seven. While attending the University of California, Berkeley and later transferring to Cabrillo College, Gladstone was involved in the many movements around campus, branching out his desires to create an alternative press journal.

The Free Spaghetti Dinner was a local-focused alternative newspaper[11] that was originally sold for thirteen cents but was later given away for free. It earned money through a display-ad base and created revenue through the local hip merchants and craftspeople advertising in the Santa Cruz area. This was enough to provide the basic costs of creating and publishing the paper.[1] The local ads catered towards the people in Santa Cruz and the Bay Area.[5]



In relation to the many hippies[6] living in this area, the newspaper focused a lot on spirituality, music, and peace. Many of the editions featured astrological references such as moon signs for readers to interact with. It also had different cartoons and drawings, sharing different ways people can destress and relax. A lot of the local issues in the Santa Cruz area were related to hippies. Rick Gladstone says "this was in late '65, early '66' and so I started living like a Santa Cruz 'hippie.' We never called ourselves, or though of ourselves as hippies. But we were sort of culturally transmuting into what other started calling 'hippies.'[1] Some of the articles addressed the drug problems and what the Drug Abuse Prevention Center has been doing to help as well as how hippies were unqualified to receive surplus food from the Welfare Board of Santa Cruz County.[7]





Alongside being in-tune with the local news, the Free Spaghetti Dinner also brought up bigger news happening nationwide. There were articles on many aspects of the Vietnam War[8]: what was going on, the Soledad case[9], and if it societally acceptance to consider killing in war as murder. It also touched upon the women's movement [10] as well as the importance of voting as a citizen and encouraging people to do so.

Throughout its run, many were fond of the newspapers being published. Many said they were well-written, covered lots of different topics, and were enjoyable to read. There were some people who disliked it, calling it "juvenile"[1] and "fish wrap."[1]

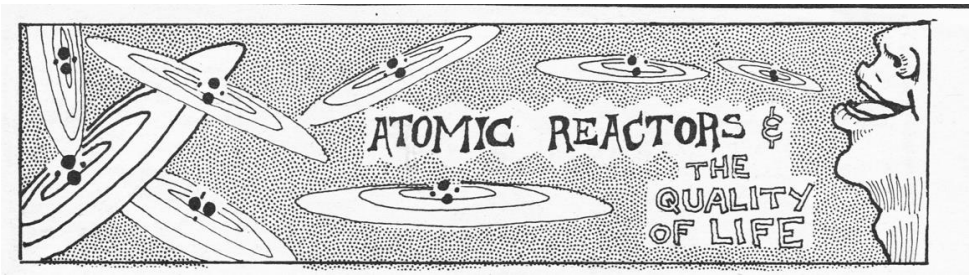
The Free Spaghetti Dinner was sold to Anders Paul and Bill Buritta, the graphics staff at this time. It was sold for thirty-two dollars and fifty cents, the original price of the business license. The Underground Newspaper's name was later changed to Sundaz.

Environmental Issues

One of the subjects covered by the Free Spaghetti Dinner was ecology and spreading awareness about the surrounding environment. Community groups were provided with two pages in the newspaper edition. Laying out their ideas and programs, these groups wrote about local news and educate the community about what is happening around them.

In Volume 1 Issue 3 – December 13, 1969,[2] there is an article that teaches readers how to build a “layer cake” compost pile. It gives examples as to what one can put on each layer of the cake, such as coffee grounds and small bones, barnyard manure, soil as the “activator” layer, and water. The end result is a rich compost for one's garden, improving the quality of one's soil to be used for healthy plants.

There is another article from Volume 1 Issue 9 – May 5, 1970[3] titled “The Whole World Is Our School.” It touches upon the idea of passing the city down to the children. It emphasizes the automobiles, gas masks, and pollution taking over the world. It uses the imagery of baby Jesus and Mother Mary obtaining a gas mask due to all the pollution.



When P.G.&E. chose to plant a big atomic power plant in Santa Cruz, The Committee to Examine the Dangers of Atomic Reactors (CEDAR) provided a list of issues in regards to the negative impacts of this power plant. Then, it shared some things the reader can do to stop this from happening. Another article on this topic was featured once again, specifically mentioning how nuclear power plants are unhealthy for us due to the exposure to radiation.

Rabbit Circus

The Free Spaghetti Dinner featured a segment called “Rabbit Circus.” This was a concurring section seen throughout the many editions, touching upon the earth and news related to the environment. It mentioned topics on politics and how politicians are bringing up the word “ecology” or “environment” to gain votes and supporters as it has become a popular issue. It also talked about the pros and cons of technology and ways that it can be used rationally and humanistically. It was showcased as an information, how-to guide for readers. It shared many different ways that readers can help the environment through easy-to-read bullet points and ultimately urged community members to take action.

Headquarters

The Free Spaghetti Dinner was located on Blaine Street, a vacant farm house owned by the county. They later moved to a two-office suite on Pacific Ave across from the old County Courthouse.

See also

- List of underground newspapers of the 1960s counterculture

References

1. "Notes on a Hip History." *Hip Santa Cruz*, https://hipsantacruz.org/stories/notes-on-a-hip-history/. Accessed 31 Mar. 2025.
2. "FSD Vol. 1, Iss. 3." *Hip Santa Cruz*, 13 Dec. 1969, https://hipsantacruz.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/FSD-Vol-1-Iss-3-Dec-13-1969.pdf.
3. "FSD Vol. 1, Iss. 9." *Hip Santa Cruz*, 5 May 1970, https://hipsantacruz.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/FSD-Vol-1-Iss-9-May-5-1970.pdf.
4. "Santa Cruz, California." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Cruz,_California.
5. "San Francisco Bay Area." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Bay_Area.
6. "Hippie." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippie.

7. "Santa Cruz County, California." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Cruz_County,_California.
8. "Vietnam War." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War.
9. "Soledad Brothers." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soledad_Brothers.
10. "Feminist Movement." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_movement.
11. "Alternative Newspaper." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Mar. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_newspaper.

Categories: Newspapers published in the San Francisco Bay Area

Alternative weekly newspapers published in the United States

Counterculture of the 1960s | Underground press

Defunct newspapers published in California | Weekly newspapers published in California