New Staff Faces On Co-op Scene

Rapid development brought some growing pains to the Olympia Food Co-op in 1982-83. The good news for members: increased services and product selection, along with a new financial stability.

For workers, however, rapid growth created some problems. Essentially, the daily work and planning cycle needed to operate the store exceeded the labor supply. Co-op working member involvement didn't increase enough to meet the higher workload. Staff was stretched to its working limit, trying both to take up the slack in daily operations and to maintain the annual planning cycle necessary for coping effectively with the challenges of growth.

At one point, a temporary solution was sought by paying a few steady working members to assist staff with store operations. In late 1982, the co-op undertook a process of evaluation and reorganization. The transition hasn't been easy, for members or staff. The Co-op is now the beneficiary of a hiring process, which gave us three experienced, articulate new staff members. I recently had the pleasure of talking with them for this interview. So read on...get acquainted...then stop to say "hi" and welcome them next time you're in.

Cher: Let's start out by just getting acquainted...perhaps you could tell us who you are and a little about how you got here.

Harry Levine: I'm Harry Levine, I just turned 27. I'm originally from Connecticut, but after eight years in Massachusetts, consider myself much more from there. I'll have been in this area a year in July. I came out to Olympia to farm last year, and after a wonderful summer farming—but very unsuccessfully financially—I became a VISTA volunteer with Farmer's Wholesale Cooperative and Farm Community Council. I live with my partner, Jean, in a household of seven people in the Delfi Valley, although our existence is threatened because our water supply is no good. And our land is for sale—it feels like the whole thing is crumbling apart. We live in a cooperative household. That's been real nice, to get to know people.

My other big involvements or passions in the world are political things, and music. Music has been wonderful since I've moved out here.

Cher: What areas of music?

Harry: Well, we just recently formed a political folk music band. Words are so strange when you try to describe that. We describe ourselves as songs of social change and celebration. It's all acoustic instruments, a kind of folk orchestra of seven people. We've just started playing in the area, but it's been great. That's been a dream of mine, and it was amazing to go from this place of expressing a dream and talking to one or two people, and all of a sudden we put it together and now it's happening. Citizen's Band!
This is a test. How many things can you list about the Spring issue of the Co-op News that differ from past issues? Delivered to your door? Very sharp! (If you are a member and yours wasn't mailed, let us know. Or if your household received more copies than needed, let us know that, too.)

Next? We've changed to newsprint? Yup. For the cost of 500 copies printed the old way, we can get copies for every one of our 2,000-some members by using newsprint. Plus, we have a lot more flexibility in style.

And we're working on that.

We've had quite a mix of trauma and fun working all this out. Trauma is when, a week after the organizational meeting, with all the story assignments made, every one of your writers (through no one's fault, I might add) has to quit. Before the stories are written. Trauma is a co-editor whose other commitments were such that, when material did finally trickle in a bit late, she was out of time for putting it together. Some folks (oh, little faith) weren't sure the thing ever WAS going to materialize. And trauma is spending hours trying to conjure something to fill all the white space, then ending up with more great material than could be included, so that we were crying for a little—you guessed it—white space for relief.

Fun? Fun is interviewing the real people you will meet in these pages. Fun is putting two co-editors together, one hooked on words, and the other on graphics and layout, letting them explore together what the right balance is. (Too many words, not enough balance this time. We need more pages—or fewer ideas to communicate.)

Fun is looking forward to hearing from YOU—what you like, what you'd like to see different. We've got more ideas, but hearing from you tells us if we're on the right track.

So now it's all yours. Enjoy getting acquainted with the new staff in our front page interview. Try some of the great recipes offered by Debbie Leung, Produce Manager, and Pam Mattson McDonald, local writer and chef. A regular column by Beth Hartmann, Financial Manager, will demystify co-op finances for us, and Personnel Manager Karen Berkey Huntsberger explains how the working member system operates and suggests some ways you can help. Tyra Lindquist writes a regular editorial feature to keep you posted on current co-op issues and events. And a special two-issue feature takes us a little farther from home, as we share the experiences and insights of a woman recently returned from Nicaragua.

Enjoy! And write (The Co-op News, 921 N. Rogers, Olympia, WA 98502) or call Cher (357-9217) to let us know what you think.

And if you'd like to join the newsletter staff (photographer? cartoonist? mailing helpers?) or want to contribute an article, or...obviously, this editorial is written by the one hooked on words. But she knows when to stop. Now.

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**INCOME STATEMENT FROM 1983**

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Net Income | 5,517.53

See "Finances", page 15.

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**MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS OF THE OLYMPIA FOOD CO-OP**

The purpose of the Olympia Food Co-op is to contribute to the health and well-being of people by providing wholesome foods and other goods, accessible to all, through a locally oriented, not-for-profit cooperative organization. We strive to make human effects on the earth and its inhabitants positive and renewing.

Our goals:

* Provide information about food.
* Make good food accessible to more people.
* Increase democratic process.
* Support local production.
* See to the long-term health of the business.
* Assist in the development of local community resources.

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The Co-op News is the quarterly publication of the Olympia Food Co-op. It is mailed free to members; non-members may get a copy at the store.

Co-op News is put together by a working member staff and welcomes reader contributions. News staff reserves the right to refuse material that exploits any person or group of people on the basis of gender, age, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic origin.

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Mailing address: The Olympia Food Co-op News, 921 N. Rogers, Olympia, WA 98502.
Harry: I still feel basically at that very young stage or something...young and single stage...and I haven't often thought past one year commitments in what I do. However I've never been able to do something like this, as much as I've wanted to do it. So it's very interesting. I haven't worked a lot of that out yet, because I didn't perceive staying in this area for years and years and years, but that's starting to change a little bit. Like the Co-op, I am doing some long range planning for the first time. It's very new, but I can see just wanting to be here, because I like the situation so much.

Cher: Is there anything else you'd like to say to the Co-op members?

Harry: I would encourage people to say anything in the world they need to say to me.

Phyllis: Supporting children on co-op income is difficult.

One fun thing—I was a mime in the Bay area, a liturgical mime, going around to churches and performing. That was a lot of fun.

Cher: Was that with a group?

Phyllis: Yes, a group called Fools Rush In. We had a good time.

Right now I'm a member of Rain Runners, in the group training for the marathon. I haven't any idea if I'll make it— I'm having terrible trouble with blisters. But it's fun to be out there trying.
Mycophagists
in Olympia

Shiitakes vary in size from 1/2 to 4 inches across with the top of the cap being a rich brown to chocolate brown-black. Its underside is a mass of light tan pleats. They have a stem in the classic mushroom style which is extremely tender. I usually discard most of it in preparation. When cooked their texture is pleasantly chewy. Some consider it meat-like.

With their strong flavor they can be used for seasoning as well as a featured ingredient of the dish of your choice. Their expense sometimes demands their seasoning aspect when I have a craving, but limited capital. I consider them a luxury to be brought out on special occasions with my second-hand rose crystal goblets.

The first mushroom I ever gleaned in the wild was a budding cluster of oyster mushrooms (Pleurotus Ostreatus) on the dead limbs of some elms in the cemetery down our street. It was all very symbolic to the fact that mushrooms grow on decaying material. Gratefully, they are more readily available at the Co-op, coming to us from steamed wheat straw bedding. They are the descendants of a variety brought back by Paul Stametes from his trip to China where he met growers developing and perfecting many wild mushroom strains.

Oyster mushrooms are elegantly colored, from pearl to brownish grey with a brushed satin sheen on their hoods. They grow as a clump with the undersides of the hood-like cap a delicate grey of deep pleats which run from the cap down to the stem. Sometimes they are positioned in a group like a pack of hooded cobras about to strike.

Texturally they are more tender than the shiitake. The entire mushroom can be used except for the very base of the clump which tastes and feels like new green wood. If you steam them, you’ll savor the aroma that named them, for they do indeed smell like oysters. Overall their flavor is distinctive and light. A complement to most anything, almonds to zucchini.

Choosing good mushrooms is easy to do. The ones with the closed caps are the freshest. Open caps revealing the gills are the result of loss of moisture. These are richer in flavor than the freshest ones. Do not be concerned by the mold-like fuzz near the base of the mushroom. It is mycelium, part of the mushroom’s reproductive system. The minute threads originate from the spawn and later fuse to form more mushrooms.

Choose mushrooms to suit your purpose according to the effect you desire in your recipe. Small closed cap mushrooms are good for marinating and recipes requiring whole mushrooms. Large, open ones are good for stuffing and flavoring sauces, stews and soups.

CONT. ON PAGE 13
NEW PRODUCE DISPLAY!

The produce department's new refrigerated display cases were 'fired up' for the first time on Thursday, March 22. Many thanks for all the help moving out old cases, moving in the new ones, working with produce during the transition and for all other help with the project! Thanks, too, to shoppers who tolerated the transitional disarray.

The unit was purchased from a local company, Commercial Refrigeration; they also handled the installation. Others contracting for the remodeling project were Nozama Construction (wood racks on the east wall), Steve Carras (modular wood end-aisle and island display racks) and Olympia Electric (making the electrical connections).

We found that commercial display cases are all similar in design and construction and that the few manufacturers are highly competitive. They are also as energy conscious as current technology allows. The best method for improving on the energy efficiency of these units is reuse of the generated heat. Several large supermarkets have done this. We may be able to consider this project in the future.

In spite of being open, the coolers are surprisingly efficient about cooling produce—and not the aisle. The system is designed to take advantage of the natural tendency of cold air to sink and uses suction of warm air along the outermost edge (along the aisle) to contain the cool air inside the case, around the produce. Cold air blows down from the top and out from the back. The air from the back lands directly on the bottom layer of produce. The air from above cools the upper level of produce and aids the natural sinking of the cold air. The new cases have given the Co-op the opportunity to have more varieties of produce available for its members. Suggestions are always welcome.

Again, thanks to everyone who helped: working members, shoppers, local businesses, the Board of Directors who approved the project in its 1984 plans, and the staff who kept the store together through all the changes.##

Crisp Up Wilting Lettuce

A little care can bring limp lettuce back to life! Soak the lettuce in lukewarm water with a small slice of the bottom of the stem cut off. The warmth opens up the pores in the leaves and stem so moisture can enter. The lettuce doesn't need to soak long. Drain well and refrigerate. Store in the refrigerator crisper, plastic bag or other closed container in the refrigerator.

Warmth and moisture followed by cold storage will renew leafy greens...IF they are still revivable.##

Protect Potatoes From Light

Greening occurs when potatoes are exposed to light during the first three months or so after harvesting. Some varieties, like Yellow Finns, are more prone to greening. The green portions of the potato contain alkaloid solanine. This has a bitter taste and can cause nausea if eaten in large quantities. Usually only the skins are green, but it can penetrate into the flesh.

Storing potatoes in a dark place or a brown paper bag will prevent greening. At the Co-op and most stores, potatoes are exposed to light in their displays. As long as they are sold quickly, this doesn't cause a problem. Potatoes waiting to be displayed are stored away from light. When buying premium potatoes, pick ones without any tint of green. If the potatoes turn green, they can still be eaten by peeling away colored skin and flesh.##

Banana Ripeness

Ready-to-eat, ripe bananas are a favorite of most co-op shoppers. Bananas (as well as avocados and tomatoes) give off ethylene gas. Trapping the gas around the fruit speeds ripening. To ripen green bananas quickly, put them in a plastic bag and keep between 58 and 64 F until they reach the desired ripeness.

Yellow bananas with brown spots are the sweetest. As the spots get bigger, the fruit remains good while the flesh is firm. When the flesh softens, the bananas are wonderful for cooking in breads and desserts.

Organic bananas brown faster than non-organic ones. Don't turn away from the brown ones. If they are firm, they're not overripe. Signs of over-ripeness are soft spots and broken skins. Although not as large or cosmetically beautiful, the organic bananas have an excellent flavor.##

[Look for Deb's recipe on p.19!]

SOMSPRING 1984, CO-OP NEWS, 5
PENNY: How did you decide to go to Nicaragua?

JAMIE: I wanted to learn Spanish, and since I was doing a lot of political work around Central America, writing about Nicaragua in "Atento," I learned about the revolution that has just happened. I thought about going down, but didn't believe it was possible. Then the Nicaraguan government started asking people to help with the harvest, and North Americans were going there—it seemed more possible. And we found out about a language school, Casa Nicaraguense de Espanol, that was set up for solidarity workers (people who work outside of the country in support of the people's cause). We'd go to school for four hours in the morning to learn Spanish, and in the afternoons we'd have various activities. We'd meet with unions, go to factories, meet with people in the ministeries. It was really incredible, because we could go all over and meet people.

Nicaragua is a Central American Country located between Honduras and Costa Rica. Coffee and cotton have been major exports. The U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933; upon leaving, the U.S. government selected and installed leaders they felt could be dependably influenced to do our bidding. Under the U.S.-controlled government, sixty percent of the children under four years of age were malnourished; and the land and business monopolies which affected so many basic elements of the peoples' lives were owned by a mere 1.4% of the population.

On July 17, 1979, Somoza was driven out by the Sandanistas—the Nicaraguan people's army. After a war for liberation costing $2.8 billion in destruction and 50,000 lives, Nicaraguan people face a major reconstruction effort.

This year, two women from Olympia visited Nicaragua for a period of two months. My friend Jamie was one of them. We'd like to share her observations about the people, their work and lives, and present conditions in this sister country.

---Penny Martindale

P: What were the arrangements you had to make?

J: First we talked about it a lot. It was a dream. Patricia Serpas came up from San Francisco to Olympia and she talked about people going down to Nicaragua being valuable. She's with AMES, the Salvadorean Women's Association. She said that you will grow from going to Nicaragua in a way that's not really explainable—you're involved in the whole experience of a revolutionary struggle. We would be with the people, plus we could bring material items down that would help out. Right now, AMES is helping organize the women in Nicaragua, serving collectives, day care centers, grain cooperatives. She suggested that we raise funds here and take material aid when we go in exchange for concrete education material about Nicaragua for people here in the States.

To start making arrangements to go, we first wrote the language school to find out the procedure. We received an application and found out the cost. It was a large amount of money for me—that was hard, but we had to think of ways to get it.

We knew once we were in Nicaragua, the school would arrange to pick us up and find us a place to stay. We met with an AMES rep—
resentative in Vancouver, Canada before we left, and she gave us contacts in Nicaragua and we took things down to her family for her. She told us what it would be like and how we could help out when we were there. This was the best preparation for us. And for me, being involved in working for non-intervention from the U.S. was good preparation.

People in the Central American Action Committee supported our trip by a fundraiser. The people that organized it were really creative and it gave us a feeling of community support. It was held the week before we left at a local church. Each person wrote a question for us to take with us. This was part of our preparation—to get community input—what did people here want to know? What could we bring back?

P: Where did you go?

J: We went to Managua, because that is where the school is. I stayed with a family. The school places you with families through the local neighborhood organization. We lived in Maximo Jerez, a working class barrio [neighborhood]. We lived on Anden Street, named after Francisco Lopez. He was a 16-year-old person tortured by Somoza's guard, because he couldn't pay money to save his life. People on the Anden were forced to watch him being taken away.

P: What was your neighborhood like?

J: My neighborhood was a very political area. In 1979, it was one of the first barrios that built barricades as an insurrection, and took a stand against Somoza's national guard. People I talked to had direct experiences in the war and were still fighting now, because of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua's affairs.

I would go around with Amelia because she worked organizing the nightly vigilance of the neighborhood. I would go out at sundown and all the doors were open, kids were out playing, people would visit. There was a big sidewalk in front of the houses. All the houses were hooked together in some way, very close and back-to-back. Sometimes, I would be shown a passage or tunnel. They were kept up, because there was still a need for them.

P: Would you talk more about the neighborhood vigilance?

J: This is organized through the CDS, local neighborhood committee. Almost everywhere in Nicaragua civil defense is a priority because the people are under attack by forces fostered by our government. People are organized at a local community level to defend themselves. At a very local level, that comes down to defending your home. From 12:00 to 3:00 nightly there is a watch. Many of the folks participating in that are women, older women. It's really amazing. It has cut the crime rate down in Managua by 75-80%. It's virtually safe to go out at night because there are local people patrolling, just regular people, not police.

One last thing I want to say is the feeling of the people when I was down there was really open. I went down there as a supporter of the Sandanistas already, and I knew about Nicaragua and I knew about the level of attack on Nicaragua financed by our own government, and about the misinformation here. I wondered how people would view me, being a North American. The feeling immediately was very open and generous from them because the Nicaraguan people knew we came down to learn so we can bring news back to our community. I found the peo-ple happy and open-hearted, even though they had faced such terror. Everyone I met had lost some family member in the fighting. The war was very real to people in my neighborhood, yet they were warm. They had a spirit about them that was a pride. They loved to tell of the changes since the revolution and their feeling of being Sandanista. They told me how proud and different they feel now—'they're free.'

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NEXT ISSUE: Women of Nicaragua and the AMES day care center.

SPRING 1984, CO-OP NEWS, 7
cranked out 17 miles. I about died doing it! I got a chance to do some bicycle touring last summer. I enjoyed that a lot. I like to read—I haven't had time to do that—I haven't done my reading or my yoga since I started working here, but that will change.

Cher: I'm going to ask you the same question I asked Harry, about your early background, whether that was consistent with...

Phyllis: I think the consist-ency would be that my par-ents, especially my father, felt that you really should throw yourself wholeheartedly into what you believe, and he was an example of that. There's no halfway commitment. I grew up in a very authorita-rian family. It was very painful to me and to my par-ents as I grew away from them in just about everything. The move out to California was both symbolic and literal. But the good side of it is recon-ciliation. Somehow it doesn't seem to happen until you hit your early thirties, then you begin to think it's pretty important. I'm lucky, because my parents are both still living, even though my father is in very poor health. But the reconciliation did happen and we can accept each other for who we are and we love each other. We don't have to deal with the fact that we don't agree on anything! That's pretty neat—it's a good place to get to.

Cher: Is there anything else?

Phyllis: Just to second Har-ry's points—I think that would be really super, if in the co-op we can foster people being able to feel free enough to share with one another openly, rather than set your way of doing things, like slow down. That you wouldn't say to their face. We ought to be able to do that in the church and the co-op!

Cher: Suvia, it's your turn.

SUVIA JUDD: I'm generally called Suvie, and I'm 31 years old. I grew up in a small rural college town in Vermont. I went to a private high school with an emphasis on informality, ideals, farming, backpacking and arts—that had probably more shaping influence on my life than college did. I went to two colleges in Massachusetts, was a VISTA volunteer, I moved from carpentry, then recently I've been living and going to gradu-ate school and working. I have a graduate degree in nutrition and am very close to having a law degree... I hope I moved out here in January, but actually I bought my stuff out here and rented the house last summer.

I live with a friend on the westside. I may have to move, because the house is up for sale. I'm a person who really likes to be settled. I love my garden and I want to be able to participate in creating a friendly little ecosystem around my house, with lots of perennial flowers and vegetable plants and stuff. This is an experiment moving to the Northwest, and I don't know whether I will like it or not. I don't mind rain at all—I like it when it rains.

My life has just been going through so many changes recently that there are no consistent patterns yet. Some of the things I do outside the co-op involve doing environmental consulting with the person I live with, who is an environmental hazard analyst. I do Ikido, which is the gentle martial art. That's something important to me.

Cher: What about your back-ground?

Suvie: I came from a liberal college family. My parents were, in a sense, radicals for their generation. My father was the first faculty person helping to start what was then an alternative college back in 1946. They went to Vermont and built their own house. So for their generation, they were radical. The difference which Harry brought out also, the difference between me and my parents... since they made one step, I've taken it another step. So that, not uncommonly for radicals in my generation, politics and lifestyle are very interwoven for me. Resolv-ing my own feelings about going to law school and whether to be a lawyer and what to do with that has tuned me into that. So I would say I grew up with an orientation toward living in the country, toward doing things with my hands, toward natural and organic foods and organic gardening, toward liberal politics, and toward an interest in people, socializing and talking. But the tensions have come around my parents' generation—especially my father—an expecta-tion that your life is somewhat defined by a single, monotonous career you select sometime in the twenties, then stick with, rather than being a person who goes through a number of different activities. I've changed so much in the last years, it's impos-sible for me to tell whether I'm going to keep along the same lines or whether my life will continue along the same lines. There are really strong underlying values becoming clearer and clearer to me. But what activities those will lead into, I don't know. And the reason I wanted to work at the co-op, even though my training would have allowed me to work at a lot of other jobs, it's really important to me to work in a place which has the potential for a friendly and egalitarian working environment, that's tremendously important to me, more than the tasks.

Cher: Anything more you want to say to the members?

Suvie: I want to get to know more members, I hope that members will feel free to come and talk to me and I want to get to know the co-op community better—I want to get to
new staff (cont.)

know people in Olympia better, because I just moved here.

Cher: It's somewhat unusual for a group of people to be hired, which then has to blend into a long-established staff. What has that experience been like?

Phyllis: It's too early to tell. It's just so brand new. It's a mixed thing, but I feel like I'm getting to know people better, but it's still a long way from that. So it's not as much fun now as I expect it will be.

Harry: There's room for difficulty, with three people coming into an established staff of five... we're trying to be aware, we're trying to make that good. Training as a group has been fun. We have each other as support, yet we also trip over each other a lot. Three people stocking one tofu bucket is pretty messy!

Suvi: It's probably too soon to tell. We're training and the existing staff is really anxious to have us develop a minimal level of competence so that they can begin easing up after a long period of having to cover extra shifts. It's hard to tell how things will settle out. We're still trainees, and they're waiting and expectant for us to 'graduate'. It's difficult.

Cher: Is it easier as a group then, than if one of you had to do this alone?

Harry: Yes, the expectations might be harder to deal with if it were just one person. With three of us, we have some common experiences to share. You can talk to the other one and say, "I'm not getting this," and the other one will say, "I'm not getting it, either, so don't feel bad."

Suvi: We've been supportive of each other. Phase II of the management plan isn't completely clear yet, so our role hasn't been completely clarified, if there are any differences between us as a group and our responsibilities, compared with responsibilities of the other people in the collective. There may be some confusion about the ways in which we are subordinate, if we are.

Phyllis: In the hiring, my understanding was that we were support staff, not managerial staff.

Suvi: Yes, but on the other hand, there's discussion about ways in which we are 'equal', so it will be good to see how that works itself out.

Phyllis: Of course we're still in training, so we're in no position to comment on a lot of things until we've been here longer.

Suvi: That's certainly true.

Cher: There's been some controversy over the outcome of the hiring. Has that had any direct effect on you?

Phyllis: No, I don't know anyone else from the co-op, so it hasn't affected me. I think it's unfortunate, but I've been involved in co-op hirings before, so I'm aware of the difficulties involved.

Suvi: I felt some discomfort at first, especially before started working. At first I was afraid that they the people not hired would feel hostility toward me. I was somewhat sensitive to that for the first while after I started working. It's made me somewhat curious to meet the people. I feel that it's probably had some effect on how the existing staff has watched us, and how we have watched them knowing there was a controversy before... that there was strife. It probably means that people are a little more guarded.

Harry: It had no direct affect. It had some indirect affect at first, an uncomfortable feeling of a little bit of pressure. I knew a lot of people who had been at the co-op. It had some kind of direct affect with working members, wanting them to feel okay about the hiring, not knowing if their friends were the people involved in the controversy. But time--we've been here now a month--that's made it go away.

Cher: What experience have you had before working with collectives and co-ops?

Harry: I lived a year on a working collective farming and lumber business. We didn't collect any income personally, but we made income collectively, then met our needs out of that. My only food co-op experience has been working about four years with a preorder co-op back in Massachusetts. It was all collective decision-making, one person, one vote. I was the treasurer for that. Then a number of other living experiences--collective households, situations like that.

Suvi: My most directly relevant experience was as the equivalent to a staff manager here of a collective of five or six people at a food co-op in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Also, when I was a VISTA volunteer, I worked as a member of a crew of four people, doing repairs for low income people in Indiana, and even though we had a leader, we functioned basically as a collective. There wasn't formal recognition of democratic principles, but it worked that way. I've had some academic training in democratic management. I have an experiential base and strong intellectual interest.

Phyllis: My first year of teaching I taught at the only alternative high school in the country, in New York. It wasn't a pure collective, and wasn't intended to be, but everybody had a voice, which was pretty interesting with seventh, eighth and ninth graders. That was quite an experience. In the Bay Area, I participated as a member worker and a board member of a day care cooperative in Stanford and through the Briarpatch Food Cooperative in Menlo Park. But predating even those days was the Palo Alto Tenants' Union Food Conspiracy, which was not a grocery store, but one of those once a week affairs where you go out and shop for each other, then come together and divvy it up. That was a lot of fun--except when it rained.

Cher: Given that you all bring other co-op experience with you, so that you are not just students of the Olympia Food Co-op, and that you've been here now almost a month, what do you find as strengths in our co-op?

Suvi: I'll start--I already wrote those things down! "Three things that I like." I'm impressed by the organization of the worker system, and I would say that even if Cher weren't

SIMPSON 1983, CO-OP NEWS, 9
MEMBER SELF-APPRECIATION DAY

Thursday, June 21st 1984

ALL DAY

☐ Mark on your calendar

LOYAL PATRONAGE BY CO-OP MEMBERS IS MAKING THIS THE MOST FINANCIALLY SUCCESSFUL YEAR EVER. WE'RE CELEBRATING BY PASSING SOME SAVINGS BACK TO MEMBERS THROUGH THIS DISCOUNT. LOOK FOR OTHER BENEFITS IN THE MONTHS TO COME: LOWER PRICES, SPECIAL PROMOTIONS, FOOD DEMONSTRATIONS, SPECIAL EVENTS, OTHER DISCOUNT OFFERS.

* Current members are those who have paid June 1984 dues.

10% additional discount
re, and I'm impressed by the organization and the completeness of the bookkeeping, and also the financial evaluation, and I'm impressed by the cleanliness and spaciousness of the store. All three of those things compare very favorably--in fact, we're in far better shape in those two than my other co-op, although there were other things I liked about my other co-op that I don't see so strongly here.

Harry: I second all those. Organizationally, it's just been amazing. It seems to be our greatest strength.

Suvie: That's good--to say "our".

Harry: It has some organization, and it doesn't feel overbearing, and yet it really works...most of the time.

Suvie: The worker system?

Harry: The worker system and the journal system for everybody, and where things are. Also it's a strength of the business that's just real solid.

Phyllis: One thing that's very different for me is the broad community support. I belonged to a co-op that...if you were a member, you worked there. That's just very, very different...some pluses and minuses.

Cher: The other side of that coin...where would you like to see change take place, let's say over the next year or two?

Suvie: I've got those written down, too. [General laughter.] One of you guys go first!

Phyllis: I'll go first. I'd like to see more communication, a newsletter that comes out much more frequently, with consumer information, just general philosophy, recipes and that stuff. That's where the real strength of the worker member co-op is, that communication can happen much more easily. It's a real challenge. Can you take 4,000 ordinary citizens out there and get them as interested as the few who are workers?

Cher: I would echo the communication thing. We need to reach out to members, let them feel free to get more involved if they want to.

I'd also like to see us help other organizations in the community, whether through the loan program, food support programs, or some other kind of program. I just want to give something back to the community, get people to believe in cooperatives.

Suvie: Okay--I have a wish list of four things, and a lot of these things are already in the works. I look forward to having a good long-range plan. I hope for an organized method of evaluating regularly how well we're meeting the objectives that define in a sense what the co-op is. I think that can be done. I see no reason why that should be burdensome in the long run, provided one gets over the initial energy barriers, people being afraid to communicate with each other about their ideals.

I'm looking forward to the co-op having a well-developed, efficient and informative product information system, and that is something I will be working on. I'd like a set of clear criteria for product selection--things to take into account.

The third thing is, I wish for harmonious integration with the existing staff, and the fourth thing, I'm looking forward to having bylaws that set very clear membership criteria for participation and decision-making, including how to set quorums for meetings and elections. I've also worked in a co-op before, and I recognize that things move on co-op time, and that it can sometimes take a long time for things to happen, and I know better than to be perennially, existentially disappointed.

Cher: We are out of time--space--although I would enjoy going on and on! I want to thank you all for being so open and responsive. You made my job very easy. Welcome to the Olympia Food Co-op!

Send your letters to "Member Forum", Olympia Food Co-op Newsletter, 921 N. Rogers, Olympia, WA 98502.

Dear Editors,

Re the sentence "Women and folks interested in property purchase/use are invited to join." in the minutes of the General Membership Meeting (III Committee Reports). This is the unconscious form of sexism that shows more than any other wording how deep the concept of men as people and women as adjuncts runs.

"Everyone enjoyed the races, even the women and children."

"Pioneers settled Thurston County, bringing their wives and children."

I am surprised that the Co-op in its striving for awareness did not see this, rather Mr. Jasmine Van Peit.

Sincerely,
Pamela Mattson McDonald

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The Member Forum will be a regular column in which your thoughts, ideas and responses to other newsletter articles are communicated with the rest of the membership.

Guidelines: Issues should be of interest to the general membership, should be appropriate for family readership and should be screened for racism, sexism, agism, etc. So that we can print as many letters as space allows, please keep yours brief and to the point. To prevent editing of your letter, keep it below 200 words and in accord with the above.

Mail or bring submission to "Member Forum", Olympia Food Co-op Newsletter, 921 N. Rogers, Olympia, WA 98502.

SPPRING 1984, CO-OP NEWS, 11
Olympia Co-op members Kari and Alan Brisley-Bown won fourth place in Organic Gardening magazine's first national organic garden contest. The Brisley-Bowns were urged to enter the contest by several of their friends.

According to Kari, "We entered on a whim. We didn't even subscribe to the magazine at the time."

"We entered on the basis of how much you could do with limited resources. We wanted to show how much of your own food you could grow in a rental situation and we emphasized how much you could do without a great deal of money. Our garden more than paid for itself," Alan said.

In August Kari and Alan, along with 24 other applicants, were selected as semi-finalists in the contest. Later that month an editor and a photographer flew to Washington State from the magazine's headquarters in Pennsylvania to see the Brisley-Bown's garden.

"All the pictures they took reminded me of when we got married. We had spent the two weeks before they visited doing a lot of the work in the garden. We weeded more than we ever would have ordinarily. By the time they arrived there were no weeds in the garden at all. We had to pretend to be working on things when we posed for pictures because there really was no more garden work to be done," said Kari.

The Brisley-Bowns believe their garden was chosen for several reasons: The editors were impressed with the detailed map and entry piece the couple submitted. They were also surprised at how young Kari and Alan were and the relatively few number of years they had been gardening in the Northwest. (Kari has been gardening for four years and Alan for three years.)

The garden is also quite beautiful, with a profusion of flowers inter-planted among the vegetables. But the most striking thing about their garden is the phenomenal variety and level of experimentation within it.

Kari and Alan's garden covers 7,000 square feet or a little less than 1/5 acre. In this small area are nearly 100 different varieties of vegetables, as well as an assortment of herbs, flowers, perennial berries, and fruit trees. The vegetables are planted in wide raised beds and in some portions of the garden, the couple has relied solely on nitrogen-fixing beans, rather than manure, to enrich the soil. Kari and Alan grew ten varieties of beans last year - enough to meet their entire winter supply needs. They raised strawflowers, dried them and sold them, along with fresh flowers and vegetables, at the Farmer's Market.

In the winter, the Brisley-Bowns' garden continued to supply a large amount of fresh vegetables since they had planned for year-round growing. In November they still had two varieties of lettuce producing, as well as leeks, carrots, onions, potatoes, beets and a large selection of brassicas. They also had several cover crops planted in portions of the garden, including rye, crimson clover and Austrian field peas. Kari and Alan rely primarily on Binda Colbrook's suggestions for winter gardening (Winter in the Maritime Northwest) and urge other gardeners to take advantage of the temperate climate here, too.

Kari and Alan enjoy talking with other gardeners in the area and assisting people with garden plans. If you would like help with planning your garden this year, call Kari and Alan at 866-0817.
CO-OP OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT
By Karen Berkey-Huntsberger

As a Co-op member, you can be actively involved in helping the Co-op run. The Co-op depends upon maintaining a percentage of working members at all times. Workers learn about store operations and policies through their experiences, make competitive pricing possible, allow us to expand services...and they pay less for their purchases than other members. Members can train for weekly in-store shifts or sign up for special projects.

Project workers may sign up at any time, by filling out skills cards and filing them in the Worker Center. Project coordinators call workers as needed. Watch the bulletin boards and newsletters for news of projects in need of people.

Members interested in scheduled weekly work shifts make a long-term commitment in return for specialized training and guaranteed work. Weekly workers can train as cashiers, produce workers, openers, closers, packagers or stockers. Workers are asked to make a three-month commitment to a job, training sessions are scheduled at the beginning of each quarter.

Current Opportunities
By-Laws Revision Committee seeking members. Committee is reviewing existing by-laws, doing research and rewriting parts that are out-of-date. Meeting time still flexible according to needs of members. To join, contact Beth at the Co-op.

Yard Maintenance person to care for co-op landscape during summer. Mow, nurture flowers, etc. To take over this project, contact Karen at the Co-op.

Whether you are a weekly worker, project worker, board member or committee member, the benefits of working are the same. Besides the satisfaction of playing an active part in making good food accessible, workers receive credit hours which accumulate in a personal account until "spent" for discount coupons. (1) Coupons good for a 10% discount from shelf prices (on up to $60 in purchases) 'cost' 3 hours. (2) Coupons good for a 25% discount (on up to $100 in purchases) 'cost' 12 hours. Coupons are valid for up to 60 days from the date you take them. Credit hours are cumulative, and do not expire.

For more information about the worker system, or current work opportunities, check out the Worker Center in the store, or contact Karen Berkey Huntsburger, Personnel Manager, Olympia Food Co-op, 921 N. Rogers, Olympia, WA 98502; or call 754-7666.

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DEB'S GREAT RECIPE

Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie
1 cup honey
1/4 cup flour
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
3 cups sliced rhubarb
1 cup sliced strawberries
Recipe for 2 crust 9" pie

Mix honey, flour, nutmeg, salt. Add fruit, mixing well. Let stand 20 minutes. Spoon into 9" pastry-lined pie pan. Dot with butter. Moisten edge of crust, adjust top crust and flute edge. Bake in hot oven (400°) 40-45 minutes, or until done. Serve slightly warm.

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MYCOPHAGISTS...Continued

CREAM CHEESE PASTRY ENVELOPES WITH WILD MUSHROOMS

**Pastry**
8 oz. room temp. cream cheese
8 oz. soft butter or margarine
1/4 cup sour cream
1 tsp. salt
2 cups whole wheat PAstry flour

**Filling**
1 pound white button mushrooms
1 pound fresh shiitake mushrooms
6 Tbsp. butter
4 large green onions, minced
2 cloves garlic, smashed
2 Tbsp. port (optional)
Dash lemon juice
3/4 cup sour cream or creme fraiche
1/2 cup roasted broken cashews
2 Tbsp. minced parsley
Salt & fresh ground pepper
Pinch dry thyme (or 2 pinches fresh)
1 egg beaten with 1 Tbsp. milk

Combine cream cheese and butter. Add sour cream and blend together well. In another bowl add salt & flour together, mix with the cheese/butter mix gradually. Wrap and chill 30-60 minutes.

In large frying pan, saute chopped mushrooms in butter, stirring over high heat until all juices have evaporated, about 5 min. Add garlic, green onions. Sauté a couple of minutes, then return to high heat & add port & lemon juice. Cook 2 minutes. Add sour cream. Lower to med. high heat & cook about 10 min. to reduce moisture in mixture. Add cashews, salt, pepper, parsley and thyme. Allow to cool.

**Assemblage**

Roll pastry out to 1" thickness. Cut 4" to 5" squares. Place 1 heaping Tbsp. filling in center of each square. Paint edges of square with egg mixture. Start at each corner, press edges together until you reach center. Leave small vent in top. Brush each packet with egg mixture glaze. Place on greased baking sheet in 375° pre-heated oven for 25 min.

May be stored, unbaked, in freezer up to 4 weeks. To bake, do not defrost. Add 10 min. to baking time.

Yields 10-12 pastries.

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NEXT ISSUE...MORE MUSHROOM LORE AND RECIPES FROM PAM.

SPRING 1984, CO-OP NEWS, 13
The time has come around in the Co-op's bi-annual lease contract cycle to the thought-provoking question: should we buy this building or should we move? As usual, a building committee has been convened, and—as usual—this group of people has done a great job of researching and analyzing the information. But this particular committee has also had insights into some philosophical voids that exist at the Co-op.

Unfortunately for the committee, these voids didn't become apparent until after committee work had started. Two problems, in particular, presented themselves repeatedly. One is that the Co-op lacks a long range plan; and the second is that the Co-op lacks an established process for membership involvement in Co-op decision-making.

The lack of a long range plan is distressing simply because without one, the Co-op has no larger context in which to put short to medium range plans it needs or wants to make. I'd like to use a hypothetical situation to illustrate what I'm trying to say. Let's pretend that the Acme Food Co-op has a long range plan, part of which is to corner the health food market in Olympia. This plan dictates that they locate themselves in a large facility and that they acquire similar additional large facilities say at a rate of 1 every 2 years, until their analysis tells them they have saturated the market. Their goals of cornering the market will dictate lots of decisions they make, not just about their facilities, but about their buying and marketing policies and such.

Now, the Olympia Food Co-op has no plans to corner the health food market in Olympia. It also has no plans to stay small. The Olympia Food Co-op does not know what it wants to be in the longer range. You can begin to see how difficult it is to make the medium range decisions in regard to the size of our store and its location without this information.

My point here, however, is not to say that we cannot make the building decision because we lack a long range vision. We have no choice but to make the decision because our lease is up in August. The point, rather, is that the building decision will dictate the long range plan, rather than vice versa.

The backward order in which these decisions are being made is probably only distressing because the building decision is so big, so costly and seemingly so permanent. But all of the decisions we have been making for the last 7 years, from downtown) have been made in the long-range-plan-vacuum. We are still afloat and doing very well. It seems that all of our decisions have been propelling us in a direction and that our current mission is to define and embrace that direction and go toward it more purposefully.

In any event, such is our Board of Directors' next mission (should they choose to accept it) and we wish them well.

Hopefully, after the board tackles the long range plan, they will be in form to define the role of the membership in helping the co-op make complex decisions. The membership situation is analogous to the lack of a long range plan in that we haven't had a well-defined process for years and yet we have managed to muddle through. Mostly we have been interpreting our (hazy) bylaws and using our (hazy) memories of what we did last times to decide on a case by case basis how to include membership. The 'case' at hand--the building decision--seemed too big to the building committee to be handling in this way. But again, we did not really have a choice, given the time constraints.

We like to view our dilemmas, crises and problems here as opportunities. And we have some fabulous opportunities arising from this building work. It has been good, in the larger sense, to have an outside deadline imposed upon us. It has forced us to identify the places where we lack clarity in our process and plan. The trick now is to define these things before the next need for them emerges.
Anyone who has been shopping in the Co-op for at least the past few months can easily see that we are growing. There are more people using the store. On the average, people are buying more at the Co-op when they do shop here. And the Co-op is offering more products for sale, especially in the areas that have been remodelled.

All of these factors indicate a positive overall financial situation. In this article I will review some of the positive indicators in Co-op finances, as well as some potential problem areas.

The Income Statement

There are many kinds of financial statements and analyses produced for the Co-op finance committee, staff and board of directors. The most consistently monitored of these is the income statement, which is produced for each calendar quarter and for the whole year.

The 1983 income statement presented here is an unofficial one. In the process of preparing federal income tax forms, our accountant recommended some minor adjustments, but none which will affect the overall picture.

Sales

Sales for 1983 were $684,178.51. This represents a growth rate of 13.3% over 1982. But the growth rate was not even throughout the year. It started out slow and gained momentum after some of the remodeling projects were completed.

First quarter growth was only 3%. Second quarter growth was 7%, third quarter was 18%, and fourth quarter was 26%. First quarter 1984 is coming out between 28% and 30%. The new produce department may result in even higher figures going into the second quarter of 1984.

These are phenomenal growth rates. According to Natural Foods Merchandiser, the average growth rate in 1983 for medium-size natural food stores (24% of which are co-ops) was 7.5%. And growth in natural foods retailing is far greater than business growth in general.

To what can this growth be attributed? We wish we could say, exactly, but we can't. We do know that most people who find out about the Co-op do so by word of mouth. We can assume our growth is partly attributable to members and non-member shoppers saying nice things about the Co-op.

Gross Margin

"Gross Margin" (GM) is not a slimy paper edge. GM is equal to sales minus the cost of goods sold. GM is the portion of our sales we retain to cover expenses and to create reserves. For purposes of financial analysis, GM is usually expressed as a percent of sales.

The 1983 GM of 20.5% was a higher margin than we have been able to attain in the past. Also of importance, it held steady all year (a first) indicating greater control over pricing and unaccounted losses.

Expenses

Expenses are the cost of running the business, and are subject to continual monitoring.

Labor costs, being by far the greatest expense in a retail food business, is the most crucial and in many ways the most difficult expense to control. Staff costs in the income statement includes wages, payroll taxes and employee benefits.

In 1983 staff cost equalled 11.4% of sales, at least 1% over what was planned for. Most of this overrun occurred during the second half of the year when we were both experiencing a very high growth rate and making our plans for 1984.

CO-OP SALES IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

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<th>Year</th>
<th>1977</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>600</td>
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This labor cost overrun cost the Co-op in terms of the bottom line, net income. But the problems which contributed to the overrun are being brought under control as the staff members work into new job descriptions tailored to a busier co-op. Early labor cost figures for 1984 show this expense moving quickly back into line.

Supply costs were also very high. Consequently that budget area is being carefully monitored so that spending can be minimized without leaving the Co-op short on necessary supplies.

Compared to other medium-size natural food stores, the Co-op pays little for advertising, rent and energy.

Net Income

Net income is commonly referred to as the "bottom line" and is also known as profit. The Co-op is a not-for-profit business. This means that the Co-op should never make an excessive profit and should return all profits into the business for improvements and increased services. Like any business, though, the Co-op does need to earn some net income to finance changes (such as the new produce department) and to retain some reserves against emergencies.

Our net income last year was $5,517.53, or .8% of sales. (Average for stores like ours was 7.6%) This income falls short of equalling the Co-op's history of loss of over $8,000 for 1977-82.

This brief overview cannot begin to address the complexity of Co-op finances, a complexity which grows exponentially as the business grows. Your questions are welcomed, and I will try to address them in future articles.

Address questions to Beth Hartmann, Financial Manager, Olympia Food Co-op, 921 N. Rogers, Olympia, WA 98502, or call 754-7666. Include name and address or phone number so Beth can respond personally or seek clarification.
FARM OFFERS NEW WAY TO BUY PRODUCE

South Bay Organic Farm is starting a Clientele Membership Club (CMC). The objectives: access for members to larger quantities of wholesome, local produce (particularly in quantities for freezing and canning) at reasonable cost; the chance for members to visit a working farm and to harvest their own produce; and for the farm, having an assured market and a timely source of working capital. Two kinds of memberships are offered:

A "working membership" entitles the member to a 50% discount off market price on any product harvested by the member. Annual fee: $35.00.

A "non-working membership" purchases for the member a "$credit tab" of a specific value that can be exchanged for farm-grown produce on sale at South Bay Organic Farm's stand at the Farmer's Market throughout the season. For instance, the member paying $50.00 in advance will have a credit for $58.50 in produce at the regular market price; $100.00 buys a $121.00 credit, and $150.00 buys $187.50 credit toward the organic produce purchases.

Products available for the 1984 growing season include vegetables to preserve and store, such as peas, green beans, Yellow Finn potatoes, winter squash, broccoli, pickling cucumbers, cauliflower, beets, cabbage, garlic and basil. Also available are garden fresh spinach, lettuce, leeks, shallots, chard, zucchini and others. Fresh and dried flowers will be available, too.

An agreement outlining the responsibilities of both members and the farm is available. For more information, call Pat Moore or Betsie DeWrede, 1-273-5882.

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Thanks to Pat and Betsie for inspiring a new regular column for the newsletter—a spot for highlighting small, local businesses that are of interest to co-op members. If you know of a small business that seems appropriate for this spot, let us know!