

Moscow Food Co-op 

Newsletter



REMODELING AND REARRANGING

By: Bill London

So, did you notice that the Co-op looks different now? Those funny cubbyholes and shelves jutting into the main aisle -- as well as the dreaded 5 gallon plastic buckets -- are now only a vague memory. They've been replaced with reconditioned bins arranged along two long aisles.

Sure, I think it's an improvement. The store does look more attractive and less cluttered. The Health Department is happy now that baseboards have been added (a lack of baseboards was a rule violation). The floor was waxed and will remain that way, thanks to the ever-vigilant janitorial staff. And of course, no one mourns the loss of those funky white buckets.

The the best news is the cooperative spirit that made it all possible. Over the first three days of February, the staff and thirty Co-op members (aided by a pallet jack, handfuls of Co-op tamari chips, several sixpaks, and plenty of laughter) finished the job. It worked, and it was fun. Thanks, all.



March 1986

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1985 IN A NUTSHELL, A VERY SMALL NUTSHELL

By: Ginger Clemm

January through April, we did enough business to keep our heads above water, but when school let out for the summer, we lost about \$2,000 every month. By September, the returning students, and the cost-cutting measures instituted at the store, brought us out of that depression. In October, the best month in Co-op history, we brought in over \$17,000. Things were looking up.

November came - another best in history, this time more than \$17,700. Unfortunately, we were in the middle of a management transition, so most of the extra money went into training. In December more training was needed for our two new purchasers.

In the early months of 1986, our sales are increasing by a healthy 7½ percent. Now we can get on with 1986, the best full year of Co-op history.

By: Bill Beck

Ginger, her husband Dennis and I recently returned from sunny Los Angeles where we attended Natural Foods Expo West 1986. It rained throughout our visit, but the trip was still well worth it. The Expo is the largest natural foods industry trade show in the world. It was held at the Anaheim Convention Center February 13-16. Over 300 exhibitors, representing every imaginable natural foods product and seventeen hours of seminars presented a deluge of useful information.

Between the three of us we attended ten different seminars. Topics covered in the seminars included produce from the Group Up, Merchandising, Industry Trends, Macrobiotics, The Wholesaler-Retailer Connection, Remodeling, and Nutritional Selling. Promotional ideas, selling techniques, store layout, educational resource information, and display and merchandising ideas were presented during the seminars. In the near future you will see many of these ideas implemented in our Co-op.

The array of products on display at the Expo was simply overwhelming. In addition to meeting wholesalers whose goods we are familiar with, we reviewed products from hundreds of manufacturers that are new to us. Wonderful organically grown olives, numerous macrobiotic snacks, unrefrigerated tofu, many natural cosmetics, and vitamins were among products of interest to us. This opportunity to meet manufacturers and become familiar with their products is a first step toward dealing directly with these manufacturers. Advertising and promotional support as well as the ability to stock products our suppliers don't sell is now available to us as a result of the Expo.

Possibly the most valuable result of our trip was the opportunity to meet other store owners and managers and discuss the operation of our stores. There was lots of discussion about discount structures. Most stores seem to avoid non-member surcharges. Especially for Co-ops, another major topic of discussion was changing management structures. Most agreed that until a store reaches \$500,000.00 annual gross volume, a small management team operating by consensus works efficiently. As their stores get larger, most co-ops have adopted general manager, hierarchical management structures. For us, an especially encouraging aspect of these discussions was the realization that many stores manage to do three times the gross volume of our Co-op in the same or slightly larger floor space. Though all the stores represented at the Expo have individual histories, different market areas, and varying areas of expertise, it was helpful for us to learn about and compare our stores' operations.

Amidst the time-consuming, energy-packed visits to the Expo, we did manage to visit various stores in the L.A. area. Display and merchandising techniques, store layout, discount structures, and membership procedures provided interesting comparisons for us.

This trip left many lasting impressions. For Ginger and Dennis my death-defying freeway maneuvers were something they'll never forget. For all of us, the incredible growth and vitality of the natural foods business was especially evident. The products we learned about, the knowledge gained from seminars, and discussions with others in our business will help the Co-op grow and prosper.

By: Phil Lettieri

A good handful of us showed up at Mercy Beanz for the February Board meeting on the 24th, and we welcomed a sleepy Bill Beck to his first meeting as staff representative.

The big deal on the agenda was the budget. David had worked up a split proposal based on a projected 7.5% increase in sales. One part was for the first three months of 1986, and was pretty much how we've been operating all along. The other part was for the last nine months of the year, with the only major alteration being an increase in staff wages.

The problems we had in adopting this budget were: there was no allowance for a paid cashier in the second part; an inaccurate figure for the amount of sales tax to be paid; the gross margin wasn't accurate - seemed low; a discrepancy in the wages for the first part, due to Pam, and now Sharon, earning \$3.75/hr, instead of the projected \$3.60; and the old problem of the ambiguity of the mark-up system.

Some quick figuring by Melissa reassured us that Pam and Sharon's wages were within the budget, and that the sales tax was only slightly higher than had been projected. As for the trouble with the mark-ups, Ginger presented us with her revised pricing system, and we all felt confident that it would alleviate the old problems. We couldn't do much about the cashier wages not being shown for the second part; and the gross margin admittedly wasn't accurate, but since it seems to be such an elusive creature anyway, we felt that, with effort, we could get a fairly firm grip on it, eventually.

So, what we unanimously decided to do was to approve part 1 of the budget, for the first three months, and wait until the April Board meeting, by which time we should have an accurate first quarter financial statement, and decide then about the rest of the year.

Moving right along, we dealt with Ginger's three-month evaluation, and everyone agreed that "she done good!"

In the Manager's Report, Ginger said she spoke to our landlord, John Walker, about expanding into Star High's space next door, as they'll be moving shortly, but the rent was too high. In another landlord related matter, he will replace our busted water heater and assume all costs. Ginger said the trip to California was fantastic, despite the rain and flu, that she learned a lot, and that she and Dennis got to see Disneyland! There's also trouble in bookkeeper-land, and the Board gave Ginger approval to explore alternatives to our present situation.

Then, that Bill London showed up and presented us with his idea for what our involvement in the Renaissance Fair should be this year. Some folks from St. Maries have expressed interest in setting up a booth, under our name, and sharing the profits with us, which seems downright unethical, but is apparently within the written rules, even if it's not within the spirit of the event. Anyway, their proposal would be to pay the set-up fee, buy their food from the Co-op at wholesale prices, and give the Co-op 15% of their gross profits.

After some discussion, we decided that we would modify that proposal, to be more in our favor, by charging them a 20% mark-up on the food, and 20% of their gross profits. If they accept our "20-20" proposal, fine; if not, we'll go with our other idea of a dessert potluck, etc., and hope the volunteerism will be present.

That's about it folks. See ya at the next Board meeting, which will be held at Blue's, on St. Patrick's Day - so wear green, Monday, March 17, 6:30 p.m., at 515 S. Almon, Moscow. Ya'll come!

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6 SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD

or

I'M TIRED OF BAGGING RAISINS

By: Tom Lamar

In the February edition of this Newsletter, I identified what a well-managed Board of Directors can use to enhance the effectiveness of its decision-making process. This is not to say that Boards that do not employ all of these techniques are not effective decision-makers, only that these qualities have been found to help streamline the "average" non-profit organization Board of Directors. Indeed, for the Moscow Food Co-op to implement any of these attributes, long-term planning would be necessary to set appropriate goals matching our desires and resources. I would like to take this opportunity to make several suggestions of goals which the Co-op might set.

Presently, the Moscow Food Co-op Board members receive an information packet containing established Co-op policies. I suggest that included in this packet could be a Board Contract to be signed by the individual Board members. This contract would identify various responsibilities and commitments as stated in the previous article. This would ensure a Board made of committed individuals who have agreed to specific duties while on the Board. Since the majority of the Co-op's "fundraising" is through the sale of food, a "fundraising commitment" made by the Board member to the Co-op would include a statement to do the lion's share of their food shopping at the Co-op. This type of commitment should keep the Co-op's decision makers in touch with the Co-op.

Those studying boards say that they should not meet more than four times per year, with one of these meetings occurring during a weekend retreat. I suggest a weekend at Bill London's cabin. Certainly, Moscow Food Co-op decision-making would need to move from the monthly Board meetings to a system of committees where Board members would act as committee chairs, and a whole new set of Co-op volunteer positions would open to fill these committees. This may be a viable alternative for those Co-op members who wish to serve their Co-op but would rather not bag raisins. These committees would meet on a monthly basis reporting their findings and proposals to the quarterly full Board meetings.

Given a quarterly Board meeting schedule, it may help to allow nine or ten members on the Board, increasing the number of Board member-chaired committees. It would also be helpful to recognize the potential conflict of interests and/or possible benefits that would arise from allowing staff members to appear on the Board. For example, if the Co-op membership felt that staff members should not appear on the personnel committee (in charge of hiring and firing), some mention of that would be made in the Board Contract. Similarly, it may be important for a staff member to appear on the Board as the chair of the volunteer committee.



Researchers of non-profit organizations, such as the Moscow Food Co-op, point out that a danger exists of a two-tiered Board of Directors developing if the Board is made up of those who dominate decision-making and others who merely observe decision-making. This, in turn, results in a lack of diversity of membership representation and a loss of a unified Board effectiveness.

As stated previously, none of these qualities can be obtained without long-range planning and careful implementation. The first step, of course, lies with the Moscow Food Co-op Board of Directors which must ask itself what direction the Co-op is going, and compare or contrast that with where it wants to go.

FOOD AND CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY GROUP

By: Arlene Hespelt

In the January newsletter, Carolyn Young reported on a new group which has grown out of a sign-up sheet placed on the bulletin board by the Co-op staff. The group meets monthly, alternately in Pullman and Moscow, for the purpose of exchanging food and chemical allergy information. The name has been changed to "Food Allergy and Chemical Sensitivity" (FACS) Group, in order to better describe the purpose of the group.

Those persons who have been attending the meetings are enthusiastic about learning from each other and from research by group members. At our next meetings we plan to discuss a review on food allergies by Dr. Steve L. Taylor on March 25; information on vitamins and other supplements helpful for persons with allergies at the April meeting; and a discussion on sources for obtaining foods, plus a recipe exchange at the May meeting.

Times and meeting places will be in the Idahoian Calendar of Events prior to each meeting. For more information contact Mary Ann Green (in Moscow, 882-6650) or Keith Wollen (in Pullman, 334-2149).

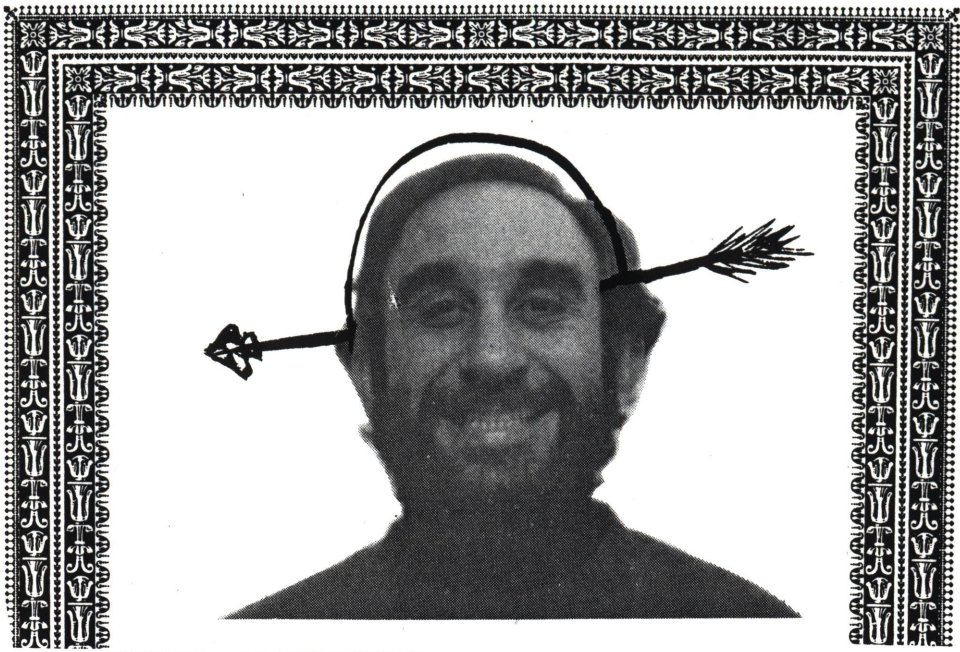


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PHIL LETTIERI, BOARDWRITING

By: Sara Donart

A year ago last December board member Phil Lettieri attended his first Co-op general membership meeting. Afterwards, he signed up to help with the Co-op Newsletter, thinking he could type or help with production. But newsletter editor Bill London told him, "I don't want you to type. I want you to write."

Phil agreed, went after his first story and captured his first by-line. According to Phil, that initial push gave him the confidence and encouragement he needed to try his hand at writing, something he had often thought about but never pursued.

Now, a year and a half later, Phil writes for the Whitman-Latah Reporter, the Co-op Newsletter, and has his eye on the Palouse Journal. He takes his writing seriously and says, in fact, that "writing is the priority in my life right now, above all else."

His involvement in the Co-op has also increased during that time, and last November he was elected to the Board of Directors. He is now Board secretary and feels the most important contribution he makes to the Board is his commitment to follow-through, describing himself as "someone who does what he says he'll do."

Things that Phil has already done are numerous. He has raised quarter horses in California, manned a fire look-out in New Mexico, surveyed land in Colorado and served as a military policeman in Vietnam. A transplanted easterner, Phil was born in Fair Haven, New Jersey, and headed west not long after returning home from serving overseas.

"Vietnam came and went, and I went home and became a hippie," he says, adding that the Kent State shootings soon after his return to the U.S. "put me in a political mode."

He first landed in Colorado where the building boom around Steamboat Springs provided him with work on a surveying crew. Housing shortages meant he was living in a tent, however, so when winter came, he headed west in his dilapidated jeep to sunny California, 30 mph, full speed ahead.

Over the next fourteen years Phil lived in various places around the west, including two years on the Palouse while his wife attended WSU. It was then, in 1977, that Phil first joined the Co-op, located at that time near the present-day Kinko's.

When he returned to Moscow in the summer of '84 Phil renewed his membership and got immediately involved in the Co-op. He encourages other newcomers to do the same, calling Co-op involvement "a good way to break into Moscow."

"I had no crutch when I came here," he says, "so I just got out and did what I wanted to do."

Besides reporting for the Latah-Whitman Republic, Phil washes dishes at the Main Street Deli, a job he took in response to advice from a local publisher, who told him "If you want to learn to be a writer, just find a mindless job and write."

Phil seems to have taken that bit of counsel to heart. So save those old newsletters and bring them to Phil's first book signing. He is, after all, someone who does what he says he'll do.



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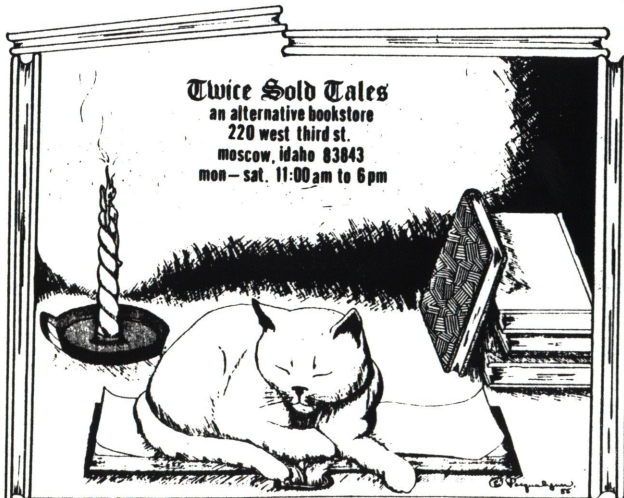
By: Judy Simpson

Ginseng, perhaps more than any herb, is known for its power. More specifically and herbally we call it the king of the tonics. It can be used for any chronically deficient condition where there are no "heat" symptoms such as fever, very red color on skin, face or tongue, nor inflammation or burning sensation in the body. It is not for acute conditions such as cold or flu, but can aid the rebuilding process once these maladies are past. All the herbal products mentioned in this article are available through the Co-op.

True ginseng has the scientific name Panax, but many other herbs are called ginseng because they share at least some properties of true ginseng. One example is Siberian Ginseng or Eleuthero Coccus. Another is Salvia Root or Sage Root (an ingredient in Peaceful Tablets), called "ginseng for the heart" by the Chinese because of its strengthening effect on the heart and nervous system. The highest grade of Chinese ginseng is Wild Tung Pei, which fetches over \$5,000 per ounce. A small amount along with other fine ginsengs and other herbs is found in "Sages Ginseng" tablets. This is so strong that an article in High Times Magazine last year encouraged cocaine users to switch to Sages Ginseng for the sake of their health.

Since quality ginseng possesses such power, it can get "stuck" in one organ system or area of the body, and therefore is often combined with other herbs to help circulate its energy. An example is "Four Ginsengs" tablets, which contain nearly every tonic Chinese herb, and seem to be most useful when the whole body needs strength. Another ginseng combination example is related in the March 1984 Esquire Magazine. Ron Rosenbaum writes of "Express" tablets: "I started with half a tablet. And was astonished. It was just right... The whole experience feels upbeat and balanced."

Rather than a tablet, some prefer the whole root such as Shiu Chu ginseng whole red roots. Common practice with these is to simmer one in water for 1 or more hours, or to dissolve a small piece in the mouth.



DON'T THROW AWAY YOUR USED EYEGLASSES

By: Robin Kelly, O.D.
President, VOSH-Washington

If your eyeglass prescription has changed, what use are your old eyeglasses? Of no value to you, certainly, but they could allow someone else to see clearly. Give them to us, we'll recycle them.

We're Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH), a non-Profit organization which gives its time and talent to deliver visual care to needy people throughout the world. Most of the emphasis has been on Third World countries, where the need is greatest.

Dr. Franklin Harms, an optometrist from Kansas, founded VOSH in 1972. Dr. Harms' basic idea was to collect a library of used eyeglasses from patients and distribute them in area of the world where eye care is unavailable.

A typical VOSH mission will include five or more optometrists who examine eyes for disease and visual correction. There will be two or more opticians to dispense the glasses and several optometric assistants. Since visual care is in such high demand, there is usually a long line of patients awaiting eye examinations. It is not unusual to examine 2,500 patients on a one-week mission. Each optometrist will examine from 75 to 100 patients on a typical day. The hours are long and the pace is hectic as persons of all ages file through for the first eye examination of their lives. The working conditions are varies -- the clinic may be in the village town hall, or on a makeshift table in the middle of a tropical rain forest.

Each team member is responsible for his or her own travel expenses. VOSH has no government financial assistance from the United States or the country in which the mission is serving. Sometimes the host organization will provide the team with meals and sleeping quarters, if available. Frequently, food and lodging must be obtained on the local economy. The host organization may be a religious missionary group, a local Lions or Rotary Club, Peace Corps Volunteers, or the government of the country may invite us.

The thousands of eye glasses dispensed on each VOSH trip are donated by civic clubs, churches, professional of ices, optical companies and individuals. Only glasses that are in good condition and that have been cleaned and labelled are used. Preparing the glasses for a mission is in itself a monumental task!

We need all the used eyeglasses we can get. Donations may be made to a local Lions Club (the Moscow chapter has set up a collection box at the Washington Water Power Office on Main Street in Moscow) or mailed to VOSH at POB 18705, Spokane, WA 99208.

CO-OP = VOLUNTEERS = CO-OP

By: Bill Beck

Our Co-op was founded with, and exists because of volunteer labor. The recent turnout for our remodel was an example of the effectiveness of cooperative volunteer spirit. We are currently in need of janitors. If you or any of your friends would like to further support our Co-op and earn a 15% discount on purchases, contact me today. We need your help.



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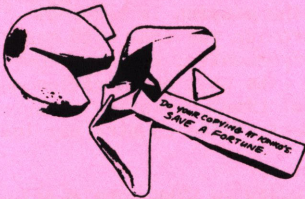
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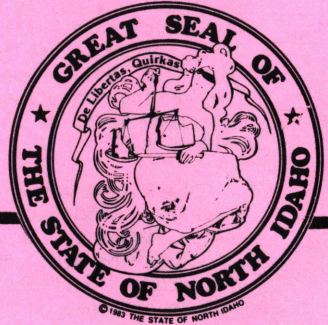


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Q: How many times does the name Phil occur in this newsletter?
A: Submit answer at the COOP. Answer will be in the April issue!