

# LINEWALTERS' GAZETTE

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February 10, 2000

## GM Approves Marketing Survey

By Jane N. Barrett

About 50 members trudged through a heavy snowstorm to the General Meeting held Tuesday, January 25. The group gathered in the social hall of the Garfield Temple was a mix of first-timers, veteran members, the Board of Directors, and members of various committees, as well as long-time activists in the Coop. Carl Arnold and Stana Weisburd chaired the meeting.

Three formal items were on the agenda: 1) election of members to the Disciplinary Hearing Committee; 2) a proposal to conduct a marketing survey of membership satisfaction; and 3) an emotionally charged proposal to revise procedures for approving the minutes of the prior GM.

Before addressing these items, reports were received on finance, a debit and credit card proposal and renovation.

Mike Eakin briefed the membership on the Coop's financial status. Mike based his presentation on a detailed six-page report, which compared in detail the income, operating expenses, sales, memberships, assets and liabilities for the 48 weeks ending January 2, 2000, with the 48 weeks ending January 3, 1999. A copy of the statement was distributed at the meeting; copies are available at the Community Corner around the corner from the ground floor bathroom.

Net sales were up significantly, from \$8,281,000 last year to \$8,906,000 this year. However, the gross margin

(the money retained by the Coop out of every dollar received) was slightly down. Last year, the Coop retained 15.81 cents out of every dollar; this year that figure was only 15.55 cents, probably due to theft. Eakin pointed out that this gross margin is low compared to other store-based coops, all of which have a much higher mark-up on merchandise, typically 53% as opposed to our 20% mark-up. The Coop's income this period before taxes was about \$48,100, a little lower than last year's figure of \$55,600. (Last year was an exceptionally good year.)

The relative percentage of operating expenses devoted respectively to personnel, occupancy, store, and office remained virtually unchanged.

Average sales per week rose 7.5% and membership rose by 3%.

The total assets of the Coop showed a dramatic rise, from \$1,680,00 last year to \$2,815,000 this year, largely attributable to the acquisition of the new building. Eakin explained that of the Coop's cash reserves, \$114,000 is in a restricted account with the National

Cooperative Bank (NCB). The Coop has agreed to use these funds only for building purposes, and to place all subsequently received member loans in the restricted account. These terms were part of the deal when NCB agreed to extend a \$926,000 mortgage for the purchase of the new building.

Over the existence of the Coop, retained earnings have totaled \$176,000, out of a total of about \$80,000,000 in sales.

Linda Wheeler, General Coordinator, reported that the issue of debit and credit cards continued to be a source of both great interest and controversy amongst the membership. A spate of articles and letters in the *Gazette* has prompted the Coordinators to draft a proposal to the membership. A draft proposal was circulated at the meeting and will be on the agenda of an upcoming GM, perhaps in March. The proposal and the accompanying article appear in the January 27 *Gazette*.

Myra Klockenbrink, of the Renovation Committee, gave an update on the status of

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ILLUSTRATION BY ROD MORRISON

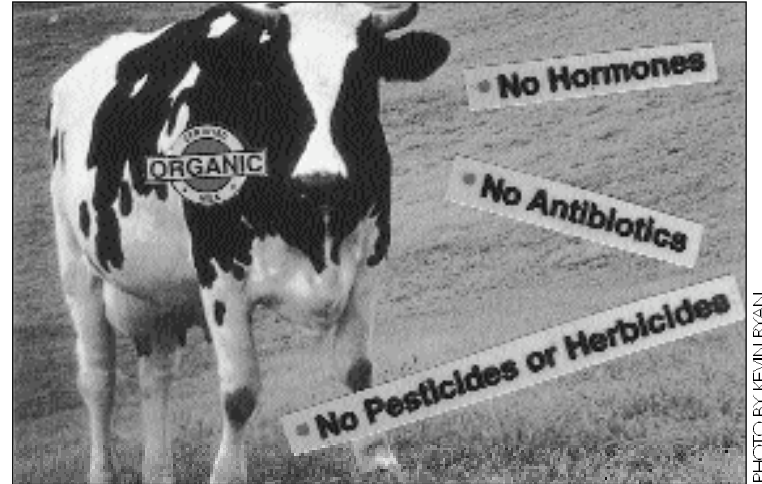


PHOTO BY KEVIN IVAN

## Bovine Growth Hormone

By Ann Pappert

The Coop may unknowingly be buying dairy products that contain a controversial, synthetically engineered hormone that many environmental and consumer groups believe may pose a health hazard.

Bovine Growth Hormone is made by Monsanto Chemical Co. and was approved by the FDA for use in the U.S. in 1993. The drug, which is also called BGH, rBGH, BST and rBST, is sold to dairy farmers under the brand name Posilac. BGH is a genetically-engineered copy of a hormone that is produced naturally by cows. When Posilac is injected into dairy cows it increases milk production by 10-15%.

Opponents believe that BGH is a dangerous solution to a non-existent problem. Studies have shown that BGH can cause a wide range of health problems in cows, including reduced pregnancy rates, cystic ovaries and uterine disorders, digestive problems, and knee enlargements and calluses. More problematic, the use of BGH increases the risk of udder infections, which in turn increases the use of antibiotics to treat the infection. Increased antibiotic use can mean an increase in antibiotic residue in milk produced by the cows.

There have been no long-term health studies about the effects of BGH on humans. But it is known that BGH increases the levels of another growth hormone called IGF-1 in the cows. Although BGH produces only a slight increase in the levels of IGF-1 in milk, IGF-1 is a strong risk factor for prostate and breast cancer. Some scientists have expressed concern that even a

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## Next General Meeting on February 29

The General Meeting of the Park Slope Food Coop is held on the last Tuesday of each month. The next General Meeting will be Tuesday, February 29, 7:00 p.m. at the Congregation Beth Elohim Temple House (Garfield Temple), 274 Garfield Pl.

The agenda is printed inside this issue (see index below) and is posted at the Coop Community Corner. For more information about the GM and about Coop governance, please see the center of this issue.

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## Coop Event Highlights

- Thu, Feb 17** Nov. Coop Concert at Bklyn Museum on WNYC, 11 pm
- Fri, Feb 18** Good Coffeehouse—Zen Music, Zen Words V, 8:00 p.m.
- Mon, Feb 21** Coop OPEN EARLY—8:00 a.m.
- Thur, Feb 24** Blood Drive, 6:30 p.m.
- Thur, Mar 2** Food Class—Sea Vegetable, 7:30 p.m.
- Fri, Mar 17** Good Coffeehouse—Steal the Donut, 8:00 p.m.
- Sun, Mar 26** Family Concert—Imagination Workshop Band, 3:30 p.m.

Look for additional information about these and other events in this issue.

## GM Approves Marketing Survey

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the new building. The projected schedule is to seek bids in April, start construction in June, and complete the job in twelve months. The Committee has not yet decided whether to use union or non-union labor. One member, a life-long union man, passionately argued against the use of non-union labor: While cheaper, it is exploitative and often exposes a largely immigrant work force to hazardous conditions. He was invited to submit a proposal to the Renovation Committee on this topic.

The design, architectural plans, lighting and mechanicals are all in their final phase. The Renovation Committee has hired Jay Jacobowitz, a merchandising consultant, to develop a plan to deploy products effectively and regulate traffic flow. This led to some concern that Jacobowitz' work would overlap the consulting already done by design consultant, Tony Bucci.

Myra reported that the NCB has agreed to charge interest only, not principal, on the construction loan up to late May. (Even so, interest charges come to \$7,000 a month.) Myra stressed the importance of members making any contemplated loans to the Coop as soon as possible. When the construction loan deal is finalized in late May, its terms will depend in significant part on the Coop's cash assets and membership support as reflected in loans made. Thus, the more money we loan the Coop in the period of February through May, the more favorable the terms of the construction loan. A loan drive is under way.

Wally Wentworth of the Marketing Committee made a presentation in support of the agenda item to conduct a "membership satisfaction survey." Wally has had extensive experience in conducting such surveys for local and regional transportation entities. The Marketing Committee felt that while good feedback appears in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, the Feed-

back Book, the General Meetings, and the official web page (foodcoop.com), it is hard to determine whether these sentiments are widely shared, or advocated by a particularly vocal minority. The Committee proposed to conduct a random sample of the members by mail, contacting 300 to 500 members and querying them on items like: time of visits to the Coop; product satisfaction; tenor of interactions with fellow members and staff; and overall satisfaction. The survey will cost about \$500 and about 15-20 workslots. The data, when analyzed, will be used to "tune up" Coop procedures to maximize members satisfaction. This led to some grumbling about not wanting to be manipulated as "consumers," with e.g., impulse purchase items at check out and similar ploys. Nevertheless, the proposal passed by acclamation in an amended form, authorizing one survey before construction of the new building and one survey after.



The Disciplinary Hearing Committee offered five veteran members for re-election, but before balloting, the Committee members wanted to explain how their committee functions. Karen Kramer gave a detailed report of the workings, investigations, follow-up and documentation of instances of violations of Coop rules (everything from

theft, to signing in for a workslot and then disappearing.) Five members were presented for re-election, a much-needed measure in view of the shrinkage on the Committee from twelve members to eight. All five candidates (Andy Feldman, Sherry Fitelson, Ellen McLeod, Gail Rosenstrauch, and Cheryl Haywood) were resoundingly re-elected.

Up to this point, the GM proceeded in a businesslike and cordial fashion. However, when the third item on the agenda was reached, a proposal to revise the procedure for approving minutes from the prior GM, passions and tempers flared. Long-time member Allen Zimmerman said to the new members in the group, "I want to officially welcome you to the psycho portion of the General Meeting." He expressed the fear that the emotions spent on a minor procedural matter, and the unpleasant personal tone of the debate would send first-timers fleeing, never to return.

The proposal sparking the debate was offered by Israel Fishman. He proposed to set aside five minutes at the beginning of each General Meeting "so that members

who have factual corrections to the minutes can raise them and then vote whether to accept the minutes as a whole." This generated a wide range of comments Pragmatists pointed out that members who were not at the prior meeting could hardly be heard to comment on the minutes' accuracy. Moreover, each meeting is taped for the archives, and documented with some meticulousness by Secretary Riana McLoughlin. Others implied that the current procedure, which gives the Board final authority over the minutes, is part of a conspiracy aimed at promoting a Board takeover of the Coop. Coop. President Eric Schneider gave a handout and reiterated his position that minutes are required by law, and that the Board of Directors is entitled, under applicable statutes to vote on the minutes. Eric said he had consulted not only with Coop counsel John Sandercock, but also with Larry McGaughey, a recognized expert on not-for-profit corporations.

The membership seemed to have little taste for a prolonged discussion of the Fishman proposal and at 9:30, voted against extending the discussion for an additional 15 minutes, when the chair called the question. This meant that Israel never got to speak on behalf of his proposal; he had been invited to share his views by the chair early in the discussion, but he had declined, saying he'd rather first hear the opinions of others. Israel's proposal was defeated by a vote of 39 to 7, with 6 abstentions. The vote was accompanied by clapping and other rude noise-

es, all of which left Israel visibly upset and turned off many new and old members alike. Israel said his feelings had been hurt and other members agreed that he had been treated shabbily, with a lack of cooperative spirit. One first-time member said she found the whole episode "unprofessional."

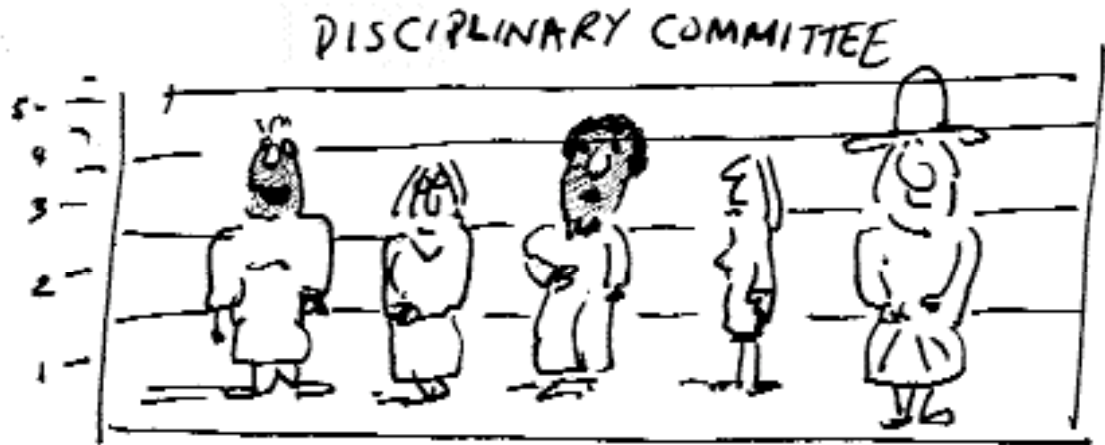
The minutes of the previous meeting were then presented. Board Member Melinda Marx pursued claimed inaccuracies in the minutes, noting that one of her votes had been improperly recorded, and should have been an abstention. Secretary Riana McLaughlin agreed to make this correction. Melinda then went on, stating that she wanted to add to the previous minutes, "I am privy to the discussions and leanings of my fellow Board Members," and she felt that the minutes did not properly convey those sentiments. Riana declined to do so, stating that neither her recorded minutes nor the account in the *Gazette* supported Melinda's claim that she had made such a statement.

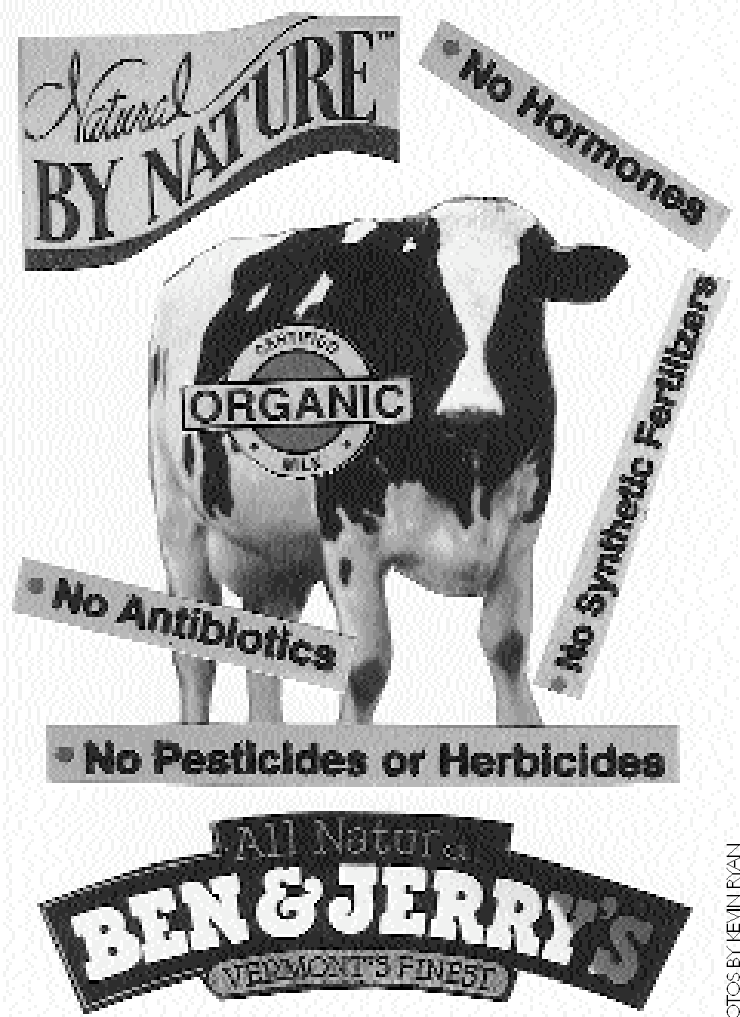
All members were encouraged to participate in the Coop's third blood drive, to be held in cooperation with Methodist Hospital, on February 24, 6:30 at the Coop.

In the wrap-up session, there was general agreement that the response to the Fishman proposal was inappropriately heavy-handed and hostile. It was agreed that such occasions challenge all members to aspire to the true spirit of cooperativeness, admittedly an ongoing process. ■



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROD MORRISON





PHOTOS BY KEVIN RYAN

**rBGH**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

small increase in exposure to IGF-1 might raise an individual's risk of cancer, and have called for more studies into the potential risks to human health from BGH.

So if BGH is unhealthy for the cows and may be a health risk for humans, why did the FDA approve it? Currently, BGH is approved for use only in the U.S., Mexico and South Africa. Both the U.S. government and Monsanto insist that BGH is safe and poses no health risk. But last year the Canadian government denied approval of BGH and flagged what may turn out to be a crucial oversight in the U.S. approval process.

The Canadian decision was based, in part, on a review of unpublished data from one study that found that 20-30% of rats who were given high doses of BGH developed antibodies to it, a sign that the hormone was still active in their bloodstream. Some of the male rats also developed thyroid cysts and prostate abnormalities.

After the Canadian deci-

sion, it was revealed that the FDA had not looked at the rat study before approving BGH. Since this information became public, several consumer groups have filed a lawsuit demanding additional safety tests of BGH.

If bovine growth hormone is bad for cows, it's not so great for farmers either. Indeed, some of the strongest criticism of BGH is that it is not just dangerous, but a threat to the very existence of many small farms.

For years, the U.S. has produced more milk than it consumes. In fact, overproduction is one of the most persistent economic problems for American dairy farmers. For the last ten years, there has been an annual surplus of over a quarter of a million tons of milk and the government spends billions on subsidies. The use of BGH will only increase this surplus. According to a study by the Federal Office of Management and Budget, the projected increase in milk production from BGH-injected cows will cost an additional \$116 million in one year alone. Farm-

ers are concerned that an increase in the milk surplus will lead to lower milk prices, and accelerate the demise of many small farms.

For these reasons it is understandable that the Coop would not want to carry products made with BGH-treated milk. But the FDA has made it virtually impossible for consumers to know if the products they are buying contains milk from BGH-treated cows. They have refused to allow product labeling information that would tell consumers which products contain milk from BGH-treated cows.

One of the most vocal opponents of BGH has been Ben and Jerry's. After a long court fight, they won the right, in some jurisdictions, to label their products as BGH free. But several states have enacted laws that prohibit food manufacturers from identifying BGH on their labels.

But even a company as committed to non-BGH use as Ben and Jerry's has run into a glitch. They buy all of their milk from one Vermont dairy cooperative. Recently,



some of the members of that co-op have said that they will start using BGH. Ben and Jerry's has gotten a promise from the managers of the coop that no milk from BGH treated cows will be sold to them. But because it is virtually impossible to test for the synthetic BGH, Ben and Jerry's, like every other food producer who wants to sell products that are free of the synthetic BGH, must accept the promise on good faith.

What about products made with organic milk? By its very nature organic products should be free of chemicals and preservatives. But unless you know the producers and trust their reputation, there is no way to guarantee the product is free of BGH. (Most organic producers

- No Pesticides or Herbicides
- No Hormones
- No Antibiotics
- No Synthetic Fertilizers
- Family Owned and Operated Farms
- Humane Treatment of Farm Animals
- Regionally Produced and Packaged to Insure Freshness and Quality

have been strong opponents of BGH.)

Several years ago the Coop coordinators attempted to draw up a list of all the products—which included milk and milk products like casein and whey—that the Coop carried that might contain BGH. The problem was that there was absolutely no way to know which products might contain BGH. According to the coordinators, in many cases even the manufacturers did not have any way of knowing if they were using BGH-treated milk.

Because the FDA is a federal agency, their decision not to allow BGH specific labelling has not affected some local producers. Sunnydale milk, for example, is not distributed nationally, and does carry labelling information that it contains no BGH-treated milk.

So what can you do? Ben and Jerry's suggests contacting dairy suppliers directly and demanding BGH-free products. If you have children in school, contact the school board and demand only BGH-free milk be available in schools. ■

Write to Monsanto. They can be reached at:

**Monsanto Company**  
**The Agricultural Group**  
**800 N. Lindbergh Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 83167**

And most important, write to the FDA demanding the right to buy food with labels that contain information on BGH.

**Food and Drug Administration**  
**200 C St. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20204**

FEBRUARY

## GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

**FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 7:00 P.M.**

- Items will be taken up in the order given.
- Times in parentheses are suggestions.
- More information on each item may be available at the entrance table at the meeting. We ask members to please read the materials available between 7:00 & 7:15 p.m.

**Location:**  
 Congregation Beth Elohim Social Hall  
 (Garfield Temple)  
 274 Garfield Place at Eighth Avenue.

**Item #1: Agenda Committee Election (15 minutes)**  
 Election: "One two-year term is open. Nominations are being accepted now and will be accepted on the floor of the GM." —submitted by the Agenda Committee

**Item #2: Hourly Employment Policy (40 minutes)**  
 Proposal: "To authorize the General Coordinators to amend the existing Hourly Employment Policy as needed." —submitted by the General Coordinators

**Item #3: Added Value Membership Cards (35 minutes)**  
 Proposal: "That the Coop implement a discount program at participating local businesses for Coop members." —submitted by the Marketing Committee

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**Future Agenda Information:**  
 For information on how to place an Item on the Agenda, please see the center right page of this issue.  
 The Agenda Committee minutes and the status of pending agenda items are available in the office and at all GMs.



# Are You A List Person?

By Mary Harmon

While searching through the basil box in aisle one last November, member Hal Wicke overheard Lisa Sack chatting with another shopper about organization techniques. Hal describes himself as "list person" who shops with a computer-generated

through nuts, finishing with bagels and bread.

To learn the Coordinators' reasoning when assigning products to their locations, I spoke with Mike Eakin. Mike explained that the items that are in aisle one are there partly because traditional markets position produce in



Stephanie Golden always uses a list. Today she uses a small list for a small shop.

shopping list. He developed the habit while working as a director in the theater.

Hal was delighted to see that Lisa, a former stage manager, also shops with a computerized list and the two struck up a conversation, comparing how and why they rely on shopping lists. Their chance meeting inspired this article.

## A Method to the Aisles

Some shoppers organize their shopping lists by aisle, and some of those people even list items according to their locations within each

the first aisle, and also because it's more practical to put the heavier items into the shopping cart first, and the bottled items and produce (squash, sweet potatoes, apples...) in aisle one are the heaviest.

Mike pointed out that the signs hanging from the ceilings in aisles one through three list products according to categories assigned by the old price book (computerization has replaced the book). There seem to be a zillion categories for items in aisle four, hence no signs there.



Koji Yamamoto uses inspiration, not a list, when shopping.

aisle. My weekly list, for example features four columns, one for each aisle. Column one might begin with bananas or apples and end with garlic or mochi, and column two might start with milk and progress on

## No Common Denominator

It might seem logical that members who live a long distance from the Coop and people who shop for large households would rely more heavily on shopping lists. However, member interviews

showed that shoppers have developed their habits based simply on what they've found works. The only thing interviewees had in common is that all reported satisfaction with their methods. It was surprising that not one of the non-list people interviewed spoke of discovering upon a riving home that items had been forgotten. All members, whether list-dependent or list-free, seemed satisfied with and committed to their shopping styles. The intention of this article is to share ideas that might improve Coop shopping for readers who find any of the methods appealing.

Lisa Sack and Hal Wicke, who were mentioned earlier, each keep a shopping list on their hard drive. It includes all the items Lisa buys regularly for her family of four and Hal buys for his family of three. As they run out of items throughout the week, they jot them down on lists in their kitchens. They print out their computerized lists before shopping and mark everything they wrote on the kitchen lists that week. Hal adds non-Coop items at the bottom and Lisa leaves a space under 'Other' where she adds items she doesn't ordinarily buy, such as ingredients she might need for a new recipe.

"Lists help to keep me from coming unglued by chaos," notes Hal.

Lisa agrees that they help organize her thinking.

"I plan menus in advance so I know exactly what I need to buy," she says. "Without a list I tend to overbuy."

Lisa used to work as a professional organizer, and she offers insights:

"People might begin a master list by browsing through the index of a cookbook to find the names of food items," she says. "Whatever the method, the real issue is whether you can find what you need. If the way you shop works for you, try not to feel guilt-ridden."

## Shoppers Speak

Nancy Soyer is a list-free shopper whose method works for her. Even though she does not live near the Coop (15 minutes by bicycle from her apartment in Cobble Hill) Nancy's shopping trips are not planned.

"I let the aisles tell me what I need," says Nancy. "As I walk past, products jump out at me."

Meg Leveson writes things



PHOTOS BY LISA COHEN

Hal Wicke likes shopping with his computerized list

down as she runs out, and before shopping checks the refrigerator for items she may need to add. Nevertheless, while shopping she doesn't look at her list until she gets to the end of aisle one.

"By writing down the list, it becomes imprinted in my brain," says Meg. "I just check the list when I'm almost done shopping to be sure I haven't forgotten anything. As long as I have a list, I feel secure. I panic if I drop it and can't find it."

Lisa Cohen, another computerized list shopper, lives with her husband and daughter. Like Lisa Sack and Hal Wicke, her list includes the family staples.

"Each week we print a fresh list and pass it around for family members to check off items they want to be sure to have that week," says Lisa. "There's space to write notes, such as flavors of yogurt or juice to be sure to buy or to avoid buying; and specific requests for brands, sizes and quantities."

Lisa finds that lists can be limiting.

When shopping, we check off items as we get them so that afterwards we can be sure to transfer them onto the next week's list," she notes. "This is extra work. You have to remember to bring a pen and then find a surface to write on."

Esther Hertzell lives with her eight children in Crown Heights. She keeps a handwritten list in the kitchen, organized by aisle.

"I do my major shopping once a week," she says, "but I almost always return a second time and for a smaller list of items."

Esther shared a habit which may be valuable to other members: she always keeps her Coop receipt with her shopping cart, just in case she finds during the week that a product needs to be returned (she recently discovered bugs

in a box of cereal).

Stephanie Golden, who lives alone, relies on lists even though her apartment is a quick walk from the Coop.

"I have a little wooden gadget on my kitchen counter that I made in shop class when I was a kid," says Stephanie. "It has a dowel that holds a roll of two or three inch wide adding machine paper. I write down items as I think of them. It's never occurred to me to list things by aisle."

Only occasionally does Stephanie arrive home to discover that she's forgotten to buy something, and this tends to happen only if she is distracted or tired.

Koji Yamamoto travels from 21st Street and Fourth Avenue, but never uses a list, and views shopping as an irritating necessity. As for lists, he says, "I have a computer in my brain. Lists take too much time. Before I leave for the Coop, I take a very brief look around my house to see what I need."

This outlook is in keeping with his attitude about eating.

"I see eating is just a way to put energy into my body, like filling a car's tank with gas" says Koji, who teaches spiritual healing, natural healing, shiatsu, sotai and yoga. "I'd rather not eat at all. It's the least important thing." ■

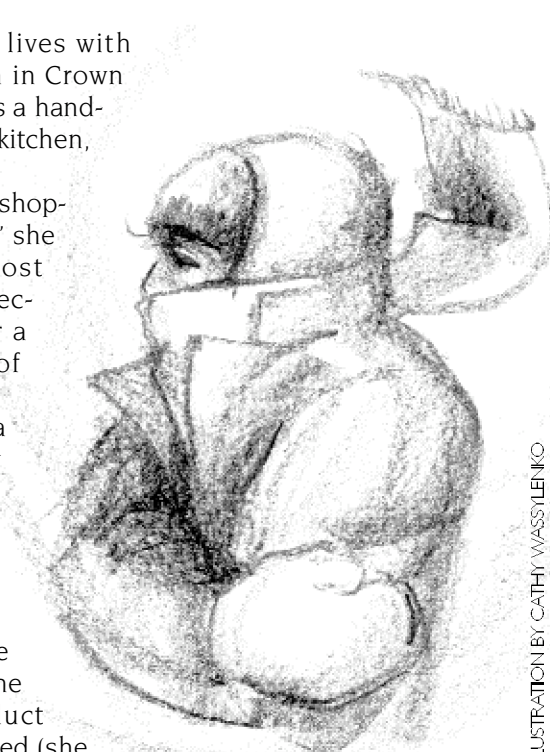


ILLUSTRATION BY CATHY WASSILENKO

