

# THE NEW FRONTIER MARKET PRESENTS



A PARTY with  
the *Cashiers*

Saturday  
**AUGUST 10<sup>th</sup>** 9:00  
Admission 3.50

after  
12 years of doing  
business, New Frontier  
will be under new  
ownership.  
Come see us at  
the Red Barn  
Grocery.

**\$1** OFF admission  
with COUPON  
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purchase at  
New Frontier or  
Red Barn Grocery  
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in cooperation with CCPA at the  
**WOW HALL 8th & Lincoln**

## The Final Frontier

by Hilary Anthony

Ownership of the New Frontier Market is changing on August 17. For the last 12 years Cary Thompson has shaped the spirit of the market. Here he talks about the history of the store, the people who have worked at the market, the natural foods industry, and why he has decided to move on:

**CT:** The building was a horse barn around 1895. This corner has been a commercial space of one kind or another since at least 1920. Before I was here, it used to be a little grocery store. There used to be an old wagon wheel out front, and a plow up on the roof. I think I remember an alligator hide on the wall; there was a wood stove inside that was not connected to anything. The store was real dark and real folksy. It sold mostly beer and chips and that sort of thing. [The previous storekeepers] had a dispute with the landlady, so they pulled out—lock, stock and barrel. Then the landlady remodelled the space inside a bit and put a foundation on the building. I rented the empty space in 1973. I started it on \$5,000. Those days are gone. You can't do that any more. It took years to get the stock in; to start we had nothing on the shelves. We started out slowly with sweat equity.

It was more neighborhood oriented [than health food oriented] from the beginning. We had a whole line of Betty Crocker cake mixes, Hamburger Helper, that sort of thing. I thought that was what people in the neighborhood wanted—Wonder Bread, Twinkies, the whole shot. But then I used to go over to Community Store and buy two pounds, three pounds of almonds off the shelf and take them over and mark them up just a little bit to have a few natural foods. I could not afford to buy whole boxes of stuff. When we started with the produce, I remember thinking, "Oh, no sweat, a whole box of oranges." Then we couldn't sell a whole box of oranges. They got all wrinkled and dry at the end. I have been looking back at the old records; for a long time we were doing only \$200 to \$250 a day. That was close to a year into the business.

The neighborhood-oriented blend of natural foods and grocery items baffles some customers; they might ask, "Why do you carry cigarettes if this is a health food store?" Other shoppers are satisfied to get their Atlantic sea dulse, and do not seem to worry about what others put into their bodies. Some regulars buy nutritional yeast because their vets recommend it to control their pet's fleas; other customers are known to use the "hippy dust" on every meal. And there are those regulars who have seen little of the store besides the beer cooler and the check-out line. Coke, marzipan, bulk flour, organic broccoli, dried papaya, urva usi or candy bars—New Frontier has it.

**CT:** Natural foods began to take off in town in the mid 1970's. People wanted to buy bulk foods, both for the nutritional aspect and the cost savings. There was a large counter culture population that was very receptive toward it. There were a number of stores that started up at that time. . . . The co-ops could not compete. . . . The only co-op to survive has been Grower's Market, which is a pre-order co-op. Grower's used to have 500 orders a week. In the old days it was the biggest thing going in town in natural foods for a while. Then, as the other stores took hold, people thought, "Why should I work when I can get all this stuff down at the store?" The last three or four years, the supermarkets have jumped on the bandwagon. They decided that the little stores were getting all this business and they might as well get a part of it. So they started natural foods sections, bulk food sections and every other kind of sections. Recently, the natural food market has expanded mostly because of the large chains getting into it.

Things have changed at New Frontier Market over the years. Now employees want more hours rather than fewer. The parties at which people climbed into the chest freezers are history. The free box is gone, so is the picnic table. "Tofu to TV dinners" is still on the sign—sometimes you will see a couple of turkey TV dinners in the freezer, whereas the selection of tofu products is now large.

One thing that has not changed over the years is Cary's efforts to make contributions to the community through the New Frontier. The store contributes to many local organizations. The mark-up on local products is less than that on products from outside of Eugene. The market has been a comfortable, stable place to work, with generous benefits for employees.

**CT:** Well, what goes around comes around. I am idealistic. I like to support little groups and causes that cannot easily get donations from other places. Also, it comes around too. If I am nice to them, maybe they will come and shop here.

The produce section is probably the single best draw of any department in the store. It does between 17 and 20% of the business over the year. It helps support a lot of local people. Having organic produce has set us, and a few of the other natural food stores, apart from other stores that don't carry anything like that. For health conscious people, people who care what goes into their bodies, they can be fairly assured they are getting a product that is cleaner and does not have added chemicals. This recent watermelon scare, for example, would not have happened with organic certification. Everything like that helps the organic movement.

The sale of New Frontier came as a surprise to many people who know Cary. Neighborhood residents have expressed feelings of dread, despair, concern and anger; they realize that Cary shaped the market they have so much affection for.

**CT:** New Frontier has been real good to me in general. It has been a lot of hassles, too, of course. It has helped me to get to know a lot of people, and of course, support myself. It has been a real good experience overall to be able to work down the street from where I live and keep it in the neighborhood.

I am still going to be a grocer after I leave here, with my other store [Cary owns half of Red Barn]. I have thought about doing other things, but as a career I can't think of anything I would rather do.

The new owner, Rich Hardy, says he wants to keep the flavor the same and keep as many of the same people working here as he can. He is a very different personality than I am, from what I have seen, but I have to take him at his word and hope for the best.

Cary and Joan have been spending time sorting through the papers in the attic. Some of the old receipts and checks can finally be tossed. The old dance notices and posters that have blurred can go. Ancient adding machines appear; spare parts for every chip rack in the store are somewhere in the office-lounge-kitchen upstairs. "Look, here is a group photo from the late seventies," Cary held out a photo taken in front of the New Frontier. A dozen familiar faces smiled from behind beards and long hair.

On August 10, New Frontier will have a party at the WOW Hall. Appropriately, the Cashiers will be the band; this will be their last gig before breaking up. For a discount off the admission price, drop by New Frontier or Red Barn for a coupon before going to the event.