

# Zoo Zoo's: Restaurant goes co-op

## Workers shun traditional role

As I stumbled through the multi-colored former gas station early Tuesday morning a dark-haired woman cooking omelets behind the counter smiled and offered me coffee and breakfast. I gratefully accepted and slowly began to wake up as Roscoe and Jesse, two members of Zoo Zoo's cooperative, began to relate the history and philosophy of their restaurant to me.

Zoo Zoo's is a vegetarian and natural foods restaurant that shifted into a worker-owned, worker-controlled co-op only fifteen days ago. It took three months to get things together such as legal research, investigation of other co-ops and a loan to buy the business from the owner.

The twelve cooperatives that went through the cooperative venture reached deep for collateral. "We put up stereos, bikes, cash, cars, musical instruments and nearly everything else we owned to obtain credit," says Roscoe. "We got credit through OUR and had a great time doing business with them because they're a cooperative lending institution that makes loans to low income people or people who don't have the collateral that a bank would require."

According to Roscoe, things went smoothly with OUR because of the similarity in business philosophies held by the lending co-op and Zoo Zoo's workers. "The philosophy we hold is one of total involvement. We have to get involved with other co-ops, with the neighborhood, with the system," he says. "For two-and-a-half years Zoo Zoo's was 'Cosmic Hippie'...too concerned with self. Under the previous owner, it was definitely a '70s restaurant: too into the Great Capitalist Structure."

What they're trying to create is a combination of a '60s and '70s restaurant with emphasis on emotions, feelings and the realization that there are other existences. "We want to create a spirit of activity and involvement," he says.

Of the twelve workers comprising the Zoo Zoo's co-op, seven are men and five are women. They range in age from Kim, the youngest at 19, to Lorenzo, the oldest at age 30.

All have worked at Zoo Zoo's for the past four to six months. During that time each came to the realization that the only way to run the restaurant is to run it themselves.



Photo by Kim Smith

*Soup's On! Zoo Zoo's, a vegetarian and natural foods restaurant, opened for business after a recent take-over by workers. The co-op, prior to the management change, was known as the Cosmic Hippie.*

Thus started the co-operative effort. Most of the workers believe that if you work for a boss, you're always going to withhold a little energy. When you're working for yourself, however, you put out to-

natural foods, they use an absolute minimum of canned foods in their meals. They have two full time buyers who shop for fresh vegetables, cheeses and eggs everyday. Workers say that day-

By MICHEAL MERBACK  
Of the Emerald

tally.

On Wednesday Zoo Zoo's holds a weekly board of directors meeting. At this meeting the schedule is made out, the finances discussed and the general business of the restaurant inspected. The twelve workers then decide on any changes to be made in trying to determine the destiny of their restaurant.

Because Zoo Zoo's features

to-day shopping means they are able to maintain a great variety in their menu, featuring a large selection of omelets, a different soup each day, and a dinner special every night. "Some people eat here three times a day," says Roscoe as he continues telling me about the operation of the restaurant.

"When we started the place, we tried to put an emphasis on the

mistakes of other co-ops. The present culture doesn't put enough of events throughout history. We're trying to change that."

According to Roscoe, they used two successful co-ops in the Eugene area as models for their operation. "The Homefried Truck Stop and Hoedads are both excellent examples of co-ops here in town and we're keeping their operation in mind as we make decisions concerning our business."

He also added that they maintain an open file as a resource for anyone interested in starting a co-op.

About half-way through our conversation, a 70-year-old man wandered into the restaurant. Roscoe called him over to our table for me to meet. His name was Ted and he turned out to be the landlord of the building Zoo Zoo's occupies. Ted has owned the building for some 40 years. He smiled as he tried to remember some of the history surrounding the building.

"This building was built in 1920 and when I bought it in 1937 it was a Union Oil Company filling station. It was then one of the first filling stations in Eugene. When Union Oil sold out in 1941, it was converted into a King Cone ice cream stand. That was when soft ice-milk was first invented. During the '60s it was converted into a fast foods Mexican restaurant. In 1971 it became part of a chain of hamburger stands known as Lighter Brown, Darker Brown."

Three years ago it became Zoo Zoo's and on May 1 this year it was bought out by the workers.

"We're seeing a lot of definite improvements already," says Roscoe. "We're trying to run a restaurant where the community can get together, exchange ideas and express themselves. Starting in June, in fact, every Thursday night will be poetry night. We've gotten together with a group of poets who are a spinoff from Kelsey's Hoo-Haw and each Thursday night will be devoted to one particular poet and his works."

A number of local musicians come to Zoo Zoo's to play at various times. Some of them will be at a celebration of Zoo Zoo's on May 18 from 7 p.m. till 1 a.m. at W.O.W. Hall.

"It's kind of a coming out party saying that we're part of the community now," says Roscoe. "It's a party and dance featuring the musicians who are regulars here."

I finished my omelet and emptied my coffee cup as Roscoe concluded his story about Zoo Zoo's. "Ours has been a story of a struggle and we think we're winning. We're now a part of the community and we're a place people can come and interact with others, both intellectually and socially. We have kind of a magical quality, with people singing and dancing, reading poetry, and discussing philosophies."

Besides all that, Roscoe, you have great omelets.

## Workshop for counselors set

Playground leaders, day camp counselors and others in search of new ideas for summer programs can get help at two summer workshops at the University June 11 and July 16.

The first workshop will help counselors prepare for the summer. The second will offer a boost after counselors have used up all of their ideas.

Topics to be covered include liability, first aid, music and storytelling and arts and crafts. Water activities, field trips and games will also be covered.

The games will include low organized and minimal equipment games, and new games.

New games is the name for an

emerging style of play that encourages cooperation and flexibility. The games are not limited to a specific age or group, and the philosophy behind new games is to turn spectators into participants.

The workshops are being co-sponsored by the University Park Management Department and the Oregon Park and Recreation Society.

Cost will vary with the number of persons attending as a group. It ranges from \$10 for one person to \$5 per person for groups of more than 16. The fee covers both sessions.

Applications are now available from the University Recreation and Park Management Department, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403.

Applications are due May 25.

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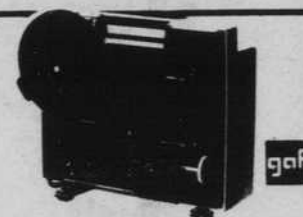


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