

**Ducks
beat
Huskies**
... in Volleyball
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To market Produce & prices please pocketbooks

"Anybody that doesn't buy their produce here is crazy," says Steve LeBow, his voice rising as he springs from a chair in the Spartan-like office of the Growers Market in Eugene. "This is the best show in town."

LeBow, who works for local sprout producer Sprout City, quickly ruins his credibility as an impartial judge when he tosses a free bag of his product to a reporter. "Eat sprouts or eat shit," he says pleasantly on his way out the door.

Sprout City aside, others are willing to testify that the Growers Market offers a nice array of foodstuffs at sharply reduced prices, in an friendly, cooperative atmosphere.

The store had humble beginnings in a couples' garage in 1971.

Originally, about 30 orders were placed each week, and in just a few years orders were running at 500 a week. The booming, non-profit co-op soon moved into the large warehouse it now occupies at 454

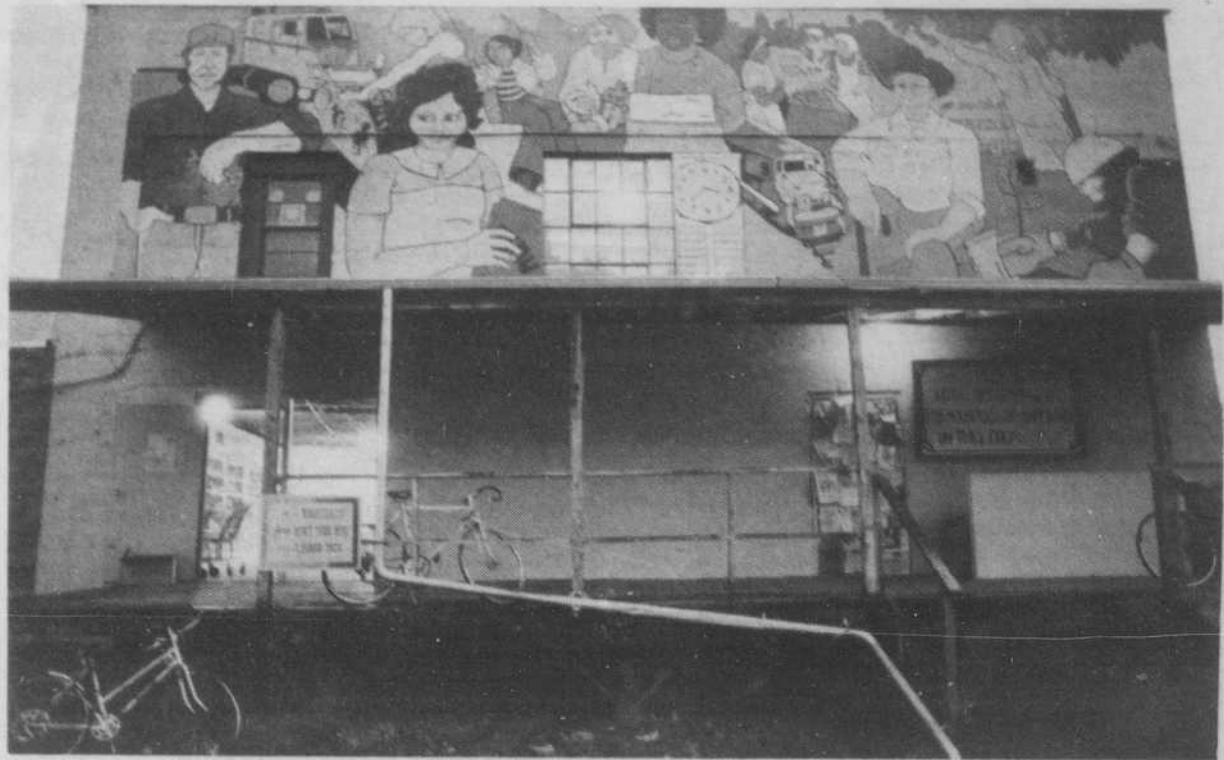
Willamette St., in the shadow of the Hult Performing Arts Center.

Most local merchants agree that as unemployment and business failures have soared to levels unmatched since the Great Depression, Eugene area consumers have drawn a tighter fist around their pocketbooks.

It would seem reasonable to conclude that any business designed to offer essential commodities at lower prices, such as the Growers Market, would thrive in an uncertain economy.

But after those years of prosperity in the mid-70s, the Growers Market, the last food co-op of its type still surviving in Eugene, is up against the financial wall. Business has plummeted from that high of 500 orders per week in 1975 to just 50 a week at present, just enough to keep afloat.

"Things got to the point in June where we figured we needed a manager to keep the thing going," says Alan Siporin, who was awarded that task. "In



The mural on the wall of the Growers Market warehouse shows satisfied, smiling co-op members, but hard times have hurt the market's business.

spite of the economy, it seems that the number one concern in people's shopping has been convenience. People have apparently been comfortable enough to go down to the neighborhood grocery and pay the higher prices."

Taking advantage of the downturn in consumer confidence, the Growers Market hopes to build up its membership again.

"We feel that the economy has changed to the point where the market should pick up," says Siporin. "Beliefs are changing — people are getting laid off. If they found out about the market and gave it a try, many of them would find it more than satisfactory."

The co-op concept is simple and relaxed — anyone can order food from the co-op and thereby become a member. There are no questionnaires to fill out, no membership fees to pay. Orders are placed each Wednesday by phone or in person and picked up on Thursday.

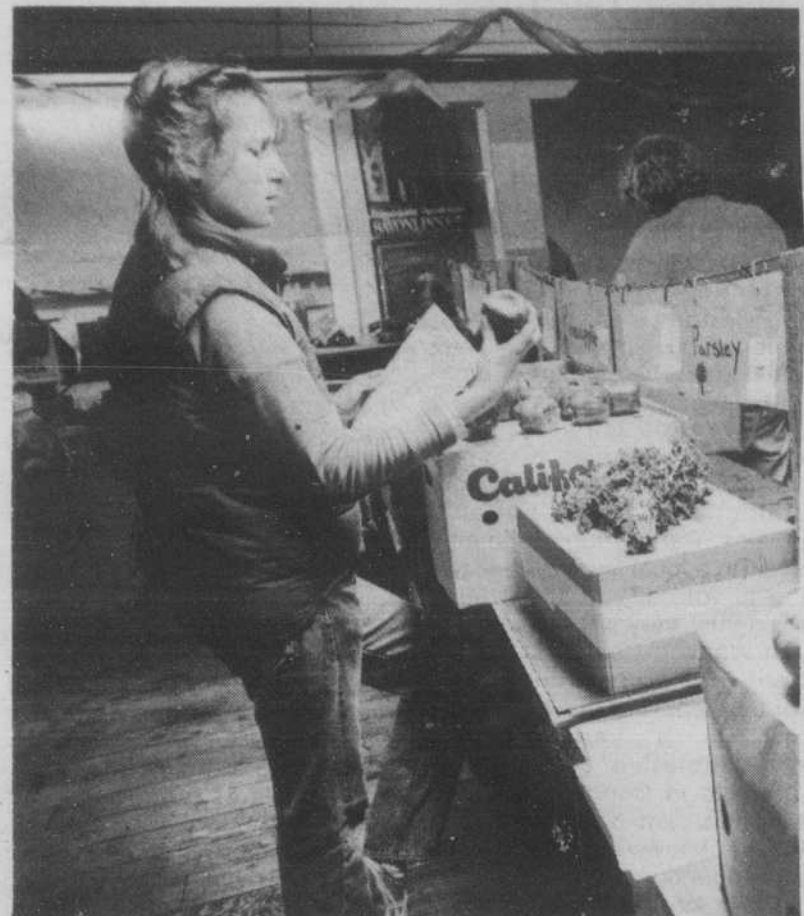
Co-op members can get a 10-percent reduction on their food bill if they agree to work in the store one hour per order, regardless of the size of the purchase.

Work might include parceling out large bags of flour into smaller bags, filling orders, running the cash register, taking orders over the phone, cutting cheese and other tasks.

The market stocks more than 100 items, including a variety of fruits and vegetables, rice, granola, cheeses, nuts, juice, bagels and breads. Personal articles are sparse — there is a healthy supply of toilet paper but shampoo and other sundries must be ordered from a catalogue a week in advance.

Despite the inconveniences, there is at least one distinct advantage.

"You can do \$20 worth of shopping at a supermarket for \$15 here," says Siporin. "The basic mark-up at a supermarket is 50 percent. We mark ours up 15 percent, so even if you don't



Co-op member inspects an apple — just one of the many kinds of produce available at the Growers Market.

work and pay the extra 10 percent, it's still a good deal."

A sampling of current prices are 9 cents a pound for white potatoes, 8 cents a pound for yellow onions, \$1.06 per pound of local mushrooms and .98 cents for 46 ounces of pineapple juice.

The prices are competitive — the decline of the Growers Market's appeal can be traced in part to an image problem.

"We've probably had an image for several years of, well I guess the word would be 'hippies'," says Siporin, who has been with the co-op since 1972. "But what I want to say is that we've had a lot of different folks in and out of here. We've had a lot of older folks, and we still do. We've had a good deal of middle-class working people, and we still do, and a lot of students.

"What we're really trying to do is to just let people know we're here. I think maybe that's the major problem. We don't really want to slick the place up. We've got an answering machine that doesn't work."

Not that anyone would accuse the place of being too slicked up. The atmosphere of the Growers Market can only be described as early bohemia — rough-hewn wooden floors and an overwhelmingly-and-determined lack of decor.

"It's not a warm, cozy, fire-side-chatting kind of place," admits Marcia Cutler, a long-time member. "I go there because I like to get goods that are healthy and inexpensive. It's just a pleasant experience — a nice way to be around people."

**Story by Sean Meyer
Photos by Bob Baker**



Photo by Mark Pynes

What's a 'mother' to do?

You wouldn't think the University's venerable pioneer mother, circa late-1800s — would have to suffer such indignities, but some disrespectful Halloween pranksters planted a grinning pumpkin on her head Sunday afternoon. What's the pioneer father to think?