

IN MEMORY OF ANDREA "TRACI" O'KELLY

September 16, 2025



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By Thomas Rayfiel

Andrea “Traci” O’Kelly, who joined the Coop in 1985, died on April 1 at her home in Brooklyn. She was 74 years old. Traci studied acting at the Afro-American Studio for Acting and Speech in Harlem. She performed a musical tribute to Billie Holiday at Danny’s Skylight Room and Don’t Tell Mama. Later, she settled in Park Slope and worked at several businesses, including Jumpin’ Julia, Tarzian West for Housewares and the Plaza Center for the Healing Arts.

At the Coop, Traci worked checkout and had a near-perfect attendance record. Her daughter Raine recalls that “the Coop was an essential space for my mother. She was very proud to be a member. She primarily worked at checkout because she loved talking to people and learning about all the items the Coop carried. She appreciated its affordability and organic food. My mother raised four young children as a single mother. Being able to provide us with artisanal, organic high-quality products was the reason she was grateful to be a member.”

Some of Traci’s favorite Coop items were chicken for roast chicken Sundays, kombucha, fresh corn, ramps, cantaloupe, and essential oils such as lemon, peppermint and lavender for sleep and meditation.

Membership Coordinator Jana Cunningham, who was often in charge of Traci’s shift, remembers: “Traci was always wearing a smile. She was one of those people who made the room brighter by just being present. Traci worked on the Shopping Squad, which could at times be very hectic and stressful, yet she remained pleasant, helpful, kind and...smiling.”

A great animal lover, Traci always had dogs and cats in her house. She was particularly fond of Irish setters, cocker spaniels and Maine coon cats.

“THE COOP WAS AN ESSENTIAL SPACE FOR MY MOTHER. SHE WAS VERY PROUD

TO BE A MEMBER.”

RAINE, DAUGHTER

Traci is survived by her daughters, Lani, Toi, Raine and Jurnee; her sisters, Donna and Frances, and her dog, Joey. Her mother, Helen, predeceased her in 2006. Her brother, Arnold, predeceased her in 2015. Her only son, Hunter, predeceased her in 2020.

Coop member Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written “living obituaries” for VICE TV.

IN MEMORY OF DAN CLEARWATER GROSS

September 16, 2025



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By Thomas Rayfiel

Dan Clearwater Gross, a Coop member who was heavily involved in composting, both in Park Slope and other parts of Brooklyn, died unexpectedly on July 14. He was 40 years old. Dan joined the Coop in 2010, left in 2013 then rejoined in 2022. Dan's partner, Alexia Cohen, describes how "for the past two-plus years we did the composting shift together on Saturdays at the Old Stone House community garden. We hauled and processed the compost in the garden. We loved our composting shift so much. We often did it while playing music on our speaker, chopping the compost to the rhythm of the music. Little kids would stop by and ask what we were doing. They loved participating in the process for a couple of minutes. We had nice interactions with all sorts of folks in the park. Dan was a socialist, and the Coop aligned with his values."

Sherry Showell, squad leader of the Composting Squad, remembers Dan as “a fascinating and enthusiastic person. I filed it in the back of my brain to try and introduce him to my son. I thought they had a lot of things in common—hands-on building, inventing, physics. This just is too sad. He really impressed me.”

Dan was also on the board of BK Rot, a bike-powered, fossil fuel-free food waste hauling and compost service that operates at the local level, enlisting community members. In the photo accompanying this obituary, he is standing in front of a compost sifter he and Alexia designed and fabricated.

During his previous time as a member, Dan was on the Commando Squad, an elite cleaning unit that met once every 12 weeks and gave the Coop a deep cleaning on Sunday nights from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Dan’s professional life was varied. At the time of his death, he was Senior Director of Membership for the Newlab Brooklyn in the Navy Yards, a company devoted to helping startup technologies gain a foothold in the commercial world. Previously, he was a scientific instrument maker. He also collaborated with artists to create various art pieces and installations.

He is survived by Alexia Cohen, his life partner, his parents Penni Harmon and Alan Gross, his brothers Eliot Harmon and Mowgli Holmes, and his sisters Crystal Clearwater Gross and Lily Harmon.

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IN MEMORIAM: TIM MOHR

September 16, 2025



June 3, 2025

By Thomas Rayfiel

Tim Mohr, acclaimed translator, editor and author, died on March 31, 2025. He was 55. Tim joined the Coop in 2010. For many years, he worked in the basement, bagging bulk fruit, nuts and spices for sale upstairs.

Michelle Bosch, a friend and fellow member, recalls how he “fluffed up like a peacock when he told me he was a food processing squad leader.” She continued, “When I had a note about olive- and cheese-packing, he listened and tried to implement change. We also liked to talk about how the spice bags were the best deal in Brooklyn and how weighing the dried fruit was fun. Tim loved the Coop.”

TIM’S MOST SIGNIFICANT WORK WAS *BURNING DOWN THE HAUS*, A CORRECTIVE TAKE ON THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL.

Tim’s professional accomplishments are almost too many to name. He was a club DJ in Berlin, which led to his becoming a foremost American translator of contemporary German fiction. (He deliberately pushed for the inclusion of more women, feeling they had been unfairly overlooked when it came to foreign acquisition.)

Returning to America, he became an editor, working with, among other journalists, Hunter S. Thompson. He also ghostwrote autobiographies of such notable rock musicians as Duff McKagan of Guns N’ Roses and Paul Stanley of KISS. But his most significant work was *Burning Down the Haus* (longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction and the Historical Writers’ Association Crown for Nonfiction), a corrective take on the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the book, he credited East Berlin’s punk culture with having far more of an impact

than such facile staged news events as Ronald Reagan's "Tear Down This Wall" speech. *Publishers Weekly* praised the work, saying:

"... he chronicles the ongoing clashes between the East German authorities and several microgenerations of punks, describing a compelling war of subversion, persistence, attrition, and defiance, where every act meant to crush spirits and enforce conformity only helped to fan the rebellious flames."

"TIM WAS UNABASHEDLY PROUD TO BE A FOOD COOP MEMBER," SAID FRIEND KRISTEN KUSAMA-HINTE.

Tim's wife Erin recalls how her husband loved "the salted onion cashews, the produce, THE CHEESE, the beer specials (we still have cans of West Kill Brewing Brookies from when they were on sale for 25 cents a pop), and, most of all, the people." During the pandemic, Tim and Erin lived in a fourth-floor apartment with a view of the line that, at times, snaked up Union Street, along 7th Avenue, and down President Street. Tim would often monitor the line from his window, texting friends when it was short enough for them to run out and buy food.

His friend, Coop member Kristen Kusama-Hinte, remembers of Tim: "He was unabashedly proud to be a member." She elaborated, "With others, I would potentially have interactions about the Coop that involved a comment about rules, or an eye roll. But never with Tim. Honestly, he made me love and appreciate the Coop even more than I already did."

Tim is survived by his wife, Erin Clarke; his parents, James and Elizabeth; his children, Greta and August; and his sister, Stephanie Mohr.

Michael Reynolds, publisher of Europa Editions, which issued many of Tim's translations, wrote: "I loved and admired Tim for his eloquence, his moral compass, his

large, rebel heart, his consummate cool.”

IN MEMORY OF KATHRYN DRUMMER

September 16, 2025



April 1, 2025

By Thomas Rayfiel

Kathryn Drummer, for many years a Saturday morning Shopping Squad Leader, died on January 12, 2025. She was 73. Longtime residents of Park Slope may remember Kathryn's store Waltzing Matilda, on First Street off Seventh Avenue. From 1995 until 2004, the store featured an eclectic mix of salvaged and restored furniture, not to mention antique jewelry and, briefly, "retro candy," including wax lips and giant jaw-breakers. Over a varied career that included teaching, catering and renovating local buildings, her abiding passion was to haunt estate sales and flea markets, finding offbeat and funky décor which she displayed in a space reflecting her own very personal aesthetic. Her college friend and roommate Jan Cunningham Hodson, recalls:

"Kathy was the first person to interest me in antiques, in upcycling furniture, and she taught me the joy of finding treasures along the street. She knew about all-things-vintage at that young age and often came home from class with a treasure she had picked up from someone's junk at the curb."

CARING FOR OTHERS, BOTH HUMANS AND ANIMALS, PLAYED A HUGE PART IN KATHRYN'S LIFE.

Kathryn joined the Coop in 1990 and was, in the words of her daughter, Anna Sarfaty, "a true believer," not only arriving before 6am to prepare the Coop but coming earlier in the week to pick up the keys so she could open the doors. Anna remembers, in those less liability-conscious times, happily wandering in the Coop, bagel in hand, from the basement to the main floor to the upstairs offices, a child on the loose, while her mother ensured the smooth running of the early-morning rush. Kathryn loved to cook, later in life sending her daughter care packages of Coop food. She was willing to shop at any time, wait on any length of line, chatting with fellow members, enjoy-

ing herself.

Caring for others, both humans and animals, played a huge part in Kathryn's life. She volunteered to take part in hospice vigils, a program that provides support and comfort for patients in their final stages of life. She would bring homemade soup or talk or just sit with people. She would also take in stray cats and elderly, often sick, dogs, feeding and nursing them. "It's no wonder," Anna says, "that I became a veterinarian."

Kathryn lived on Sixth Avenue for 45 years and was an integral part of the neighborhood. Her friend Gerry McCleave wrote: "I must mention her joy when we would meet accidentally and her big welcoming smile and positive approach even when things got difficult. I was lucky to know her and enjoy her conversation."

Kathryn is survived by her daughter, Anna Sarfaty, grandson, Rafi, her brother, Alan, nephew and niece Dylan and Dasha, and her sister, Dorothy.

Coop member Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written "living obituaries" for VICE TV.

IN MEMORY OF MAITEFA ANGAZA

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

October 15, 2024

Maitefa Angaza, a journalist, activist, filmmaker and spiritual leader who co-founded the Coop's Diversity & Equality Committee, died August 8, 2024. Maitefa joined the Coop in 1989. As Jasmina Nikolov, her friend and fellow committee member, recalls:

"The committee formed partially in response to a change that Black members of the Coop community had been feeling. As the neighborhood gentrified, the Coop had become less friendly to its Black and Brown members and more incidents occurred. Maitefa was one of those who felt the shift and wanted to bring about positive changes to ensure that all Coop members felt protected and included."

Lewanika Senghor, former membership coordinator and liaison to the committee,

praised Maitefa's commitment to this mission. She did not live near the Coop. Despite pressing demands on her time at home, she would take a bus, then a train to attend meetings, supplying fellow members with vegan snacks such as Uncle Eddie's Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies and Cocomels. A consistent thread running through the reminiscences of those who knew her was Maitefa's empathy and resourcefulness in solving the often difficult problems this committee was presented with. Senghor emphasized her strong desire to contribute to the community and "help the Coop become a better version of what it could be."

Outside of the coop, Maitefa led an extraordinarily productive life writing for *Essence Magazine*, *Black Issues Book Review*, *The Network Journal*, *The New York Amsterdam News*, *Nu Origins Magazine*, and *Black Star News*, as well as serving as senior writer and copyeditor for *Our Time Press*. She also co-produced the documentary *In Our Heads About Our Hair*, in which Black women (and girls) talk about their hair and its relation to identity, politics and self-expression. In addition to her professional accomplishments, Maitefa was co-founder and one of the High Priestesses of Shrim Sa, an Afro-Kamitic spiritual organization. Kamta is a shamanic tradition based upon ancient Egyptian theology, Kongo-Angolan philosophy, Caribbean Spiritism and Afrikan American Spiritualism.

She is survived by her husband, Menshemsaka Angaza; her brother, Bradley Barton; her sons, Osayande Angaza and Hemamset Angaza; and her grandchildren, Tuji Foxworth, Kayson Fox, Maati Angaza, Annura Angaza and Senmeri Angaza.

Maitefa was also an author. Of her book, *Kwanzaa: From Holiday to Every Day*, a reviewer for the African American Literature Book Club wrote: "Her aim is not only to encourage folks to observe Kwanzaa during the seven days of the holiday's season, but also to inspire observers to keep it alive year-round by finding ways to put the seven principles (Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith) into practice on a daily basis," principles Maitefa clearly embodied in her own life.

Member Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written “living obituaries” for VICE TV.

IN MEMORY OF MAGGIE LEA-COLLIER

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

Readers who remember when the *Linewaiters' Gazette* was printed on paper and had ads for personal services in the back may well recall one that seemed to run in every issue:

“MADISON AVENUE HAIRCUTTER is right around the corner from the food Co-op, so if you would like a really good haircut at a decent price, please call Maggie. I charge \$60.00.”

Maggie was Maggie Lea-Collier, who died February 2, 2024. Maggie joined the Coop in 1991. She worked various shifts, including a morning shopping squad, but her main interaction with the Coop was through haircutting. Many members responded to her ad and, in addition to loving the haircuts they got, became lifelong friends. Maggie was also an avid knitter, producing scarves and blankets, as well as a baker, gifting people with rolls, scones and cookies.

An orphan born in London, Maggie was adopted by Muriel Massy-Collier, who drove an ambulance during World War II. She always dreamed of coming to America and finally did, studying art, then combining that ambition with hairdressing at an upscale salon where, as she put it, she “sculpted hair” for the rich and famous before going out on her own in Park Slope.

Her daughter, Stana Weisburd, recalls: “She had many adventures and enjoyed traveling, particularly to small islands where she could live in a hut reading good books. She also enjoyed going out dancing all night with friends. She loved playing scrabble and doing jigsaw puzzles.”

Fred Dupiton, her longtime partner, emphasized that “her experience at the Coop was a great one. She was always talking about how fortunate she was to have it nearby, how she met a lot of great people, some of whom came to be clients as well, which helped her hairdressing business grow.”

One of those people was Mary Gerety, who initially received a great haircut.

“Over time and at the start of the pandemic, when I retired, I offered to shop for Maggie and take her to her doctors’ appointments. We soon became close friends and often cooked for each other, took walks and kept each other posted on what was going on in our lives. Maggie was a generous person with her time and talents. We both talked about how grateful we were for our lives and the people in them. Maggie loved that she had been independent all her life and enjoyed it to the fullest.”

Maggie is survived by her daughter, Stana Weisburd, son-in-law Paul Wepy, grandchild Devin Wepy, and her partner of 46 years, Fred Dupiton.



IN MEMORY OF SHELLY WEISS

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

Shelly Weiss, an early member of the Coop, and, by all accounts, a force of nature at whatever she set her mind to, died February 22, 2024, of late-stage kidney disease. She was 77. Shelly joined the Coop in 1976. For many years she worked at the long-gone but fondly remembered cheese section, which she described in a *Linewaiters' Gazette* interview as:

...more like a phenomenon back then. People hustled over to the cheese section and wrote their orders, which were custom cut to size and picked up as they headed to the checkout line. We would set out samples, which made cheese the place to be and highly interactive. I think Trader Joe's plugged into our model.

Her motto, when putting out bits for people to try, was “ample samples.”

Shelly, considered by many to be the first “out” lesbian in Park Slope, had jobs as a social worker, couples sex therapist, health care administrator and elementary school teacher before finding her true calling when she started the non-profit OUTMedia, which specialized in booking LGBTQ acts at college campuses.

“SHE WAS DEDICATED TO MAKING THE COOP WORK DURING A PERIOD WHEN FUTURE SUCCESS WAS SOMETHING THAT HAD TO BE EARNED ONE WEEK AT A TIME. I WILL MISS HER AND HER CAN-DO SPIRIT.”

GENERAL MANAGER JOE HOLTZ

“I realized that the arts were a prime vehicle to change consciousness,” Shelly explained in a 2015 interview with the Keshet Blog—a project of My Jewish Learning, a website with articles, videos and other resources to help navigate all aspects of Judaism and Jewish life. In the piece, Shelly continued, “Forget people’s heads, reach

their guts, their hearts. In this new way, I could really reach a new generation and frame thinking.”

Shelly was a coordinator for Jews For Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), an organization that describes itself as a movement to dismantle racism and economic exploitation. She was also a leader in JFREJ’S steering committee for New York Caring Majority, a statewide, multi-constituency movement that seeks higher wages for home care workers. Shelly also served on its Poor & Working Class caucus and Disability caucus.

She did all this as a single mother, raising her son, Noah, on three principles: “Try everything twice,” “Never go to bed angry,” and “There’s an unlimited budget for books.”

The Coop’s General Manager Joe Holtz remembers Shelly as “...one of the early members who understood how special the Coop was. She was dedicated to making the Coop work during a period when future success was something that had to be earned one week at a time. I will miss her and her can-do spirit.”

Shelly is survived by her son, Noah Desai Weiss, his wife Monica Desai Weiss and granddaughter Willow Desai Weiss; stepdaughter Rebecca Shaw and her wife, Jillian Sussman; her brother, Jerry Weiss, his wife Diane Weiss and their children and grandchildren.

IN MEMORY OF KATIE ZABRONSKY

September 16, 2025

By Thomas Rayfiel



PHOTO BY JUN TAN

Katie Zabronsky, who was a Coop member for only four years but made a lasting impression, died on Nov. 18, 2023. Katie joined the Coop in 2019. She worked mostly in food processing, receiving, and stocking. Her partner, Harry Shock, recalled how: "Katie loved the Coop and all its quirks. She always came home from her shift having purchased something new and intriguing. She dubbed these her 'PoW' or 'Purchase of the Week.' It was a very necessary part of every shop. As friends and family returned to NYC, post-pandemic, they all moved into the neighborhood to be near Katie, and, in turn, Katie persuaded them to join the Coop as well."

This is borne out by the testimonies of her many friends. Liz Hart wrote: "Katie adored the Coop and was a huge champion and spokeswoman for it. Before I even moved to New York she made sure to give me a tour during a visit. Katie was so warm. She loved food, cooking, feeding her friends and family, and would often be heard saying, 'It's from the Coop,' whenever she was hosting."

Another friend, Naomi Sabbah, added: "Katie is the reason I joined the Coop! Every time I went to Katie's she would put a snack out on the table or share a new skincare purchase and laugh when I asked where she got it, responding with a smile and a shrug: 'The Coop!' She was a true, pure member in the best sense, never pressuring me to join, or sticking up her nose at me that I hadn't, just being generous with the joy (and items) the place gave her."

Katie was a social worker with the Sanctuary for Families at Queens Family Justice Center, supporting children and teens who had witnessed domestic abuse. Before that, she had worked with the health care consultant Rabin Martin, partnering with the Gates Foundation to broaden access to maternal immunizations, and studied in Uganda where she supported PDI Uganda, an organization in rural, eastern Uganda that supports children's education.

Diagnosed with ovarian cancer at twenty-six, she underwent surgery and chemotherapy. Ten weeks later, she ran a half-marathon to raise \$25,000 for cancer research at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Despite her illness, she received a Master's degree from

the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College.

Katie is survived by her loving parents, Rob and Lorri Zabronsky; her sister, Rachel Zabronsky and brother-in-law, Jake Sabbah (both Coop members); and her partner, Harry Shock (also a Coop member).

During the first few days of COVID, Katie did a hectic shift in the stock room. At one point, a coordinator yelled, “Forget the goji berries! Focus on cheddar cheese!” (Apparently, hard cheese is a good source of protein and does not go bad quickly, so everyone was rushing to buy it.) For Katie, who told this story to many friends, this epitomized the eccentric, hilarious, but also very touching tone of the Coop, one with which she obviously identified.

IN MEMORY OF PAUL MILKMAN

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

Paul Milkman—one of the Coop’s earliest members—died December 6, 2023. He was 75. Before retiring, Paul and his wife, Cathy Kaczmarek, usually worked a shift together, she as squad leader, he as a cashier. Paul was passionate about the Coop’s mission. He was also a serious cook. His friends Donnie Rotkin and Linda Ellman recalled how he:

...took great joy in using high-quality, fresh ingredients. Over the course of many, many meals we can envision Paul, standing at the stove spatula in hand, regaling us with the excellent recipe that he usually adapted using food from the Coop.

Paul’s professional life was long and varied, including running the progressive Camp Thoreau, famous for its coed skinny-dipping and left-wing songbook, as well as directing summer programs for the American Society for Jewish Service, where he led groups of teenagers who built housing for people in need.

But his most lasting and significant impact was as an English teacher at Midwood High School. Former students saluted him as being, “a memorable and inspiring teacher,” “a legend,” “literally my favorite teacher of all time,” and “a key feature in my intellectual development.”

Paul was a swimmer, a walker, a musician, a traveler, a historian, and a Mets fan. His death came after a long-planned 75th birthday celebration where, in his wife Cathy’s words:

...he was showered with tributes to his passion, intellect and devotion. He spent two more days communing with family. Tuesday morning, he took his regular nine-mile walk with his dog, Roxie, before becoming unresponsive. He died less than eighteen hours later surrounded by those very loved ones he had recruited for celebration, having magically ensured not to be a long drawn-out bother to any of us. He died happy and loved as infinitely as he loved us all.

Paul is survived by his wife, his children Rebecca and Jesse Alson-Milkman and Caitlyn Milkman, son-in-law Craig Thomas, daughter-in-law Lauren Raab, grandchildren Elliot and Celia Thomas, sister Marilyn Milkman, brother-in-law Adam Gordon, nephew Joshua Meer, in addition to, in Cathy's words, "countless other cousins, friends, loved ones, campers, and students who constituted his private republic over the years."

IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH OCCHIOGROSSO

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

Joseph Occhiogrosso, who joined the Coop in 1987 and was a squad leader for over ten years, died on August 20, 2023. He was 60 years old.

Maria Treglia, a member of his squad—a Friday night receiving shift—remembers him as:

An amazing guy. I used to wait for a cab in front of the Coop at the end of the shift, and he offered to drive me home. Our ride became a way to catch up about our lives and a way for Joseph to reflect on how smoothly the shift went. He was concerned when someone was absent and didn't call and often asked me about my feedback on ways to improve the efficiency of our squad. He was a kind squad leader who took on the task with care and understanding. I never saw him get uptight or argue with anyone. He never enmeshed himself in personality conflicts but made everyone feel comfortable and asked folks to do jobs they felt comfortable with. Shifts were pleasant and there was a strong sense of camaraderie. We got things done because we worked as a team.

“HE LOVED BEING A SQUAD LEADER AND THE CLOSE CONNECTIONS HE'D BUILT WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TEAM. JOE LOVED THE COOP AS AN INSTITUTION. HE WAS VERY PROUD OF HOW LONG HE'D BEEN A MEMBER.”

JOSEPH'S WIFE, SUZY BORDEN

Joseph taught English for 30 years at John Dewey High School in Gravesend, Brooklyn. Testimonials from friends and colleagues mention his commitment to education, his passion for the Italian language and culture of his ancestors (from the Puglia region of Italy), as well as for music, photography, bicycling and the Mets. A student, Hryzoleta Ciercierka, wrote: “He was such an amazing teacher. Pushed me so hard and saw so much potential in me and my writing. To this day I think about how encouraging he was.”

Joseph is survived by his wife, Suzy Borden, and their adored cats Jasmine and Calypso; his loving sisters Joanne (Rob) and Marie (Steve); his niece Jessica (Jason); nephews Jeremy and Michael; grand-niece Avalee; Aunt and Uncle Carmela and Angelo Silecchia; Aunt and Uncle Angela and Stanley Pearlstein; and Aunt Connie Marzella, as well as many cousins and their children.

Suzy, his wife, recalls:

He loved being a squad leader and the close connections he'd built with other members of the team. Joe loved the Coop as an institution. He was very proud of how long he'd been a member. I came along much later, and Joe liked to correct me: When I'd ask if "they" carry a certain item, Joe would say, "you mean if we carry it!"

Member Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written "living obituaries" for VICE TV.

IN MEMORY OF DONALD THOMAS

September 16, 2025



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DONALD THOMAS PARTNER

By Thomas Rayfiel

Donald Thomas, who worked the Coop's Sunday night inventory shift for many years, died Aug. 18, 2022. He was 71. Donald joined the Coop in 1989.

"He was a quiet, kind, and reliable squad member," shift coworker Andrea Dobro recalls. "Always happy to train new squad members and to stay late to get the work done. Whenever I would run into him, either while shopping at the Coop or walking in the neighborhood, it was always nice to see him. He had a great smile and friendly demeanor."

"DONALD WAS NOT ONLY A LOVING HUSBAND, BUT A CARING AND COMPASSIONATE FRIEND TO EVERYONE HE MET."

DONALD'S WIFE, EVELYN DAVIS-THOMAS

Donald's wife, Evelyn Davis-Thomas, says on their first date he made her a Coop meal of salmon and jewel sweet potatoes.

"Donald was not only a loving husband, but a caring and compassionate friend to everyone he met. He was a master of conversation and always had some wisdom to impart to anyone who would listen. He had a sense of family and of friends, too, who were dear to his heart. There was nothing he would not do for either. He was cherished by everyone who had the privilege to know him."

Donald was born and raised in Brooklyn and lived here all his life. He was employed as a postal worker and a computer repair technician. He also volunteered at the Boys' Club of New York as a mentor and helped many young people individually. "A father to the fatherless," his wife said. In addition to Evelyn, he is survived by his sister, Maxine Eula Thomas, and his goddaughters, Anissa Smith and Tracy Alexis Ma-

cHolmes.

IN MEMORY OF RACHEL PORTER

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

During the pandemic, Rachel Porter began hearing store-wide announcements referring to “shoppers” and “customers.” Dedicated not just to the efficient functioning of the Coop but to the concepts behind its creation, she immediately wrote, in the *Line-waiters’ Gazette*:

“The Coop has never referred to members as shoppers or customers, because those

phrases suggest competing interests between store owners (or staff) and those who shop. Our Coop is practically unique in rejecting that division, which is why members can trust the Coop to provide the groceries we want without advertising or deceptive practices.”

Rachel, who died recently at the age of fifty-three, joined the Coop in 1995. She was, as her friend Sara Ivry recalls, “a principled, strong-minded brilliant individual who lived her ideals in a way that few others I know do. She was fiercely committed to the mission of the Coop and was a great champion of it.” A squad leader for ten years, she then worked on both the Revolving Loan and Committee Oversight committees.

“Rachel was the driving force behind the Coop having a 40th birthday celebration in 2013,” General Coordinator Joe Holtz remembers. “About a year before that, Rachel co-founded the Revolving Loan Committee whose purpose is to financially support start-up coops that use our member labor required model. Rachel loved our Coop and was always working to encourage us to build on our foundational strengths and not take continued success for granted.”

“SHE VALUED THE STRUCTURE OF INDIVIDUALS ORGANIZING THEMSELVES FOR THE COMMON GOOD. FOR HER, I THINK, IT WAS THAT VERY RARE AND TREASURED EXAMPLE OF THE WORLD ACTUALLY WORKING AS IT SHOULD.”

DAVID TEPPER

At Edward R. Murrow High School, where she was a special education teacher, Rachel initiated and led a Restorative Justice Initiative, “striving to establish an effective, evidence-based alternative to retributive criminal justice policies and punitive school discipline, capable of reducing violence and fostering public safety.” She was also, for many years, a social justice researcher volunteering for organizations involved in progressive causes.

But Rachel's engagement with the Coop extended well beyond serving on committees and monitoring store-wide pages. Almost everyone who remembered her raves about her phenomenal skills as both a baker and warm-hearted host.

"I have images of her cart overflowing with enormous amounts of produce, always the most straight-from-the-earth variety in terms of no extra packaging or pre-washing, of her leaving the Coop on her bike with a Garden of Eden bursting from her bags and basket, ready to be orchestrated into splendid food," says Lara Tabac.

"As a very skilled baker," David Tepper notes, "a voracious reader of recipes and all kinds of food writing, and an incredibly generous host who always had a crowd at her table. Rachel loved the Coop for its food and culture. (She was very upset when we stopped carrying yeast in bulk.) Moreover, she valued the structure of individuals organizing themselves for the common good. For her, I think, it was that very rare and treasured example of the world actually working as it should."

Rachel is survived by her two sons, Ulisse and Sasha Narici-Porter, her former husband Manlio Narici, her mother Joan, and her brother Josh.

IN MEMORY OF HELEN HOLTZ

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

Helen Holtz, a longtime Coop member and organizer of many memorable celebrations at the Coop, died recently. She was 74. Helen joined the Coop in 1979. In the early 1980's, she chaired many General Meetings and was later Recording Secretary, but it is for her pioneering work on the Fundraising Committee that she will be most fondly remembered.

"She was creative and dedicated to making every event work well," Sarah Zahnstecher recalls. "She made it fun to paint signs announcing the latest event and even kept one of mine after it was over. Importantly, she was a fighter for gender equality and social justice before many people understood the divisive society we live in. What else would you expect from someone who spent so much time making the Coop thrive and the world a better place by her presence in it? Helen was the kind of person I thought would always be here with us."

Martha Siegel, who succeeded Helen on the Fundraising Committee, points in particular to her organizing of huge parties for the Coop's fifth, tenth, fifteenth, and twentieth birthdays as well as the Food Coop Music Festivals from 1983-1987, which took place at PS 321. "Helen probably organized the food. Steve Browman and I ran the music," Siegel says. "They were very successful events and definitely increased the feeling of community."

Daniel Brooks, also a member of the committee, notes: "Helen led a dedicated team of 'Funsters' who organized dances, auctions, performances and other festival opportunities. We would meet in her apartment and discuss and argue over themes and events and the kind of flowers that would decorate the tables. She let no detail slip through the cracks and kept us all thinking of new ways to socially engage the Coop members."

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NEW WAYS TO SOCIALLY ENGAGE THE COOP MEMBERS.”

DANIEL BROOKS, FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE MEMBER

In her professional career, Helen liked to say she worked first as a “stripper,” a job that involved removing a photographic emulsion with its image from an individual negative and combining it with others in position on a glass plate. When that skill became obsolete, she retrained to become a diagnostic medical sonographer, a health care professional trained to use imaging technology to help physicians diagnose heart problems.

“She made a tremendous effort in going back to school in order to make a living for the purpose of helping people,” Zahnstecher adds. “It was very hard and she kept at it.”

Helen is survived by her husband, David Chorlian, her brother, Coop General Coordinator Joe Holtz, her sister-in-law, Kathy Blyn, her niece Sarah, and her nephew David.

Member Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written “living obituaries” for VICE TV.

ALISON ROSE LEVY OBITUARY

September 16, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

“WHERE IS OUR FOOD COMING FROM? WHO GREW THIS? HOW DID IT GET HERE?”

These were the type of questions Alison Rose Levy, a longtime Coop member, asked

repeatedly, both in her professional career as a journalist and as a longtime reporter for *The Linewaiters' Gazette*. A resident of New York and Aquinnah, Massachusetts, Alison died on December 31, 2022, at her family home near Menemsha Pond. She was 72.

Alison focused on social justice, the healthcare system, and progressive medicine. She ghost-wrote or co-wrote several best sellers on diet, fibromyalgia and Lyme disease. Her work appeared in *Truthout*, *AlterNet*, *Common Dreams* and other publications in the alt press. Her many *Gazette* pieces include articles that explored the danger of GMOs (genetically modified organisms), the risk posed by fast-tracking trade deals, fracking, and many other nationally sensitive debates directly affecting products that the Coop stocks on its shelves. "She believed fervently that health was not merely a personal matter but a collective, systemic endeavor that concerns us all," her husband, Ed Levy, recalls.

In later years, she also hosted the podcast *Connect the Dots*, on the Progressive Radio Network, which promoted "health activism, linking personal health to the health of our culture, society, and environment."

Alison joined the Coop in 1998. She contributed to the *Gazette* for eighteen years. General Coordinator Joe Holtz remembers her as "an excellent reporter who had a very good understanding of the health food industry." Former *Gazette* editor Erik Lewis, who worked with her, writes: "Alison brought her political and polemical and high journalistic skills to the paper, always pitching stories on natural foods, food safety and government laxity regarding safety. We met at a local coffee house and debated stories, the future of the *Gazette*, editorial policy and all. She was so spunky, with strong opinions and so well-researched. I'm so sorry she's gone."

When assigned the task of profiling herself for an article on *Gazette* reporters, she wrote: "After 9/11, seeing the diversity here soothed my heart. The Coop is my local home base community and also my model for what can be. The produce aisle is paradise. Where else can you get organic bitter melon and okra—and lychees (even

though they're not organic)?"

Alison is survived by Ed, her husband of 27 years, her brother, Dan Cohen, her nieces Anna and Rosalie Cohen, as well as her twin tabbies, Pete and Cubby.

In a 2008 article, headlined "A Guide to Action," she sounded a clarion call which has lost none of its urgency: "Today, after the years that have passed since the founding of the Coop, those interested in constructive social change have their work cut out for them like never before."

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