IN MEMORIAM: TIM MOHR

June 4, 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."

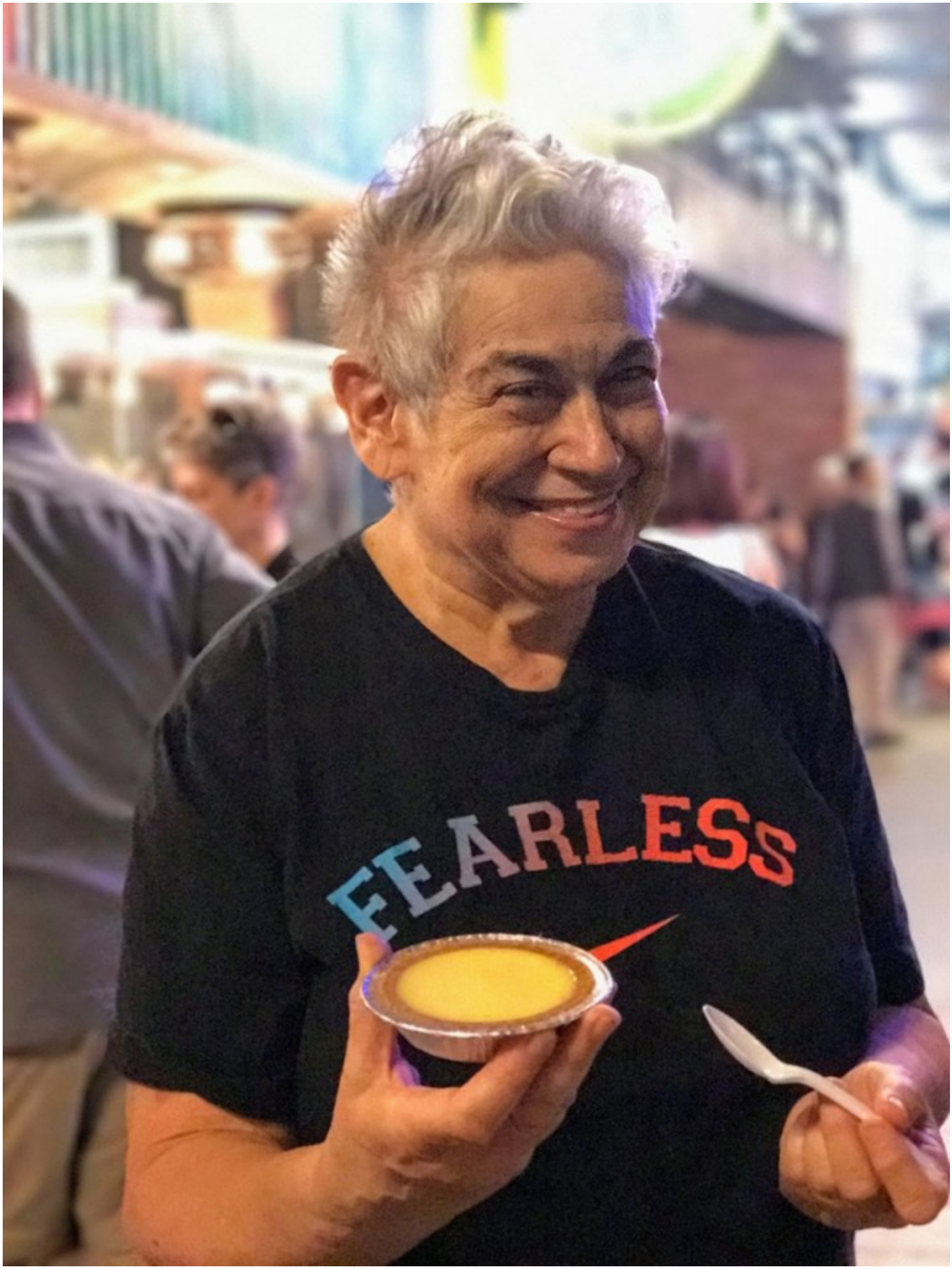
Tim is survived by his wife, Erin Clarke; his parents, James and Elizabeth; his children, Greta and August; and his sister, Stephanie Mohr.

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 SHELLY WEISS

June 4, 2025


FEARLESS

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

June 4, 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

June 4, 2025


EOS

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

June 4, 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

June 4, 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.