



spring 1999
issue no. 9

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ALUMNI
NEWS
NETWORK

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oberlin student
cooperative
association
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Expanding the Co-op Movement: OSCA Properties

by Graf Douglas

This past year a new OSCA-related corporation was created. OSCA Properties is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit educational and charitable corporation. OSCA itself is a 501(c)7 not-for-profit and is much more limited terms of what it can put its money toward than the newer corporation.

Every member of OSCA is also a member of OSCA Properties since the corporations share the same board and officers. However, OSCA Properties is open to non-students as well.

The formation of OSCA Properties shows our resolve to follow the ideological roots that run all the way back to the first Pyle Inn Cooperative in the 1950's. It allows us to give

scholarships to low income students.

While the scholarships are small right now, only about a quarter of the board bill for a handful of students, the Scholarship and Finance Committees have mapped out policies to insure growth through socially responsible investing.

OSCA Properties will also be the springboard to broadening our contact with the town, allowing non-residents to join Fuller and Bliss co-ops, our off-campus houses, as well as enabling the creation of a Center for Co-operative Studies.

The Center will be a major part of OSCA's thrust to expand the cooperative movement in our college as well as the

community. It would help arrange and fund student work-study programs and internships with local community

co-ops, and provide experience and funding to other co-operatives around Ohio, either as they start up or seek to expand

We will also be able to bring in a scholar- in-residence for a semester and have a support base for ExCo classes and community seminars.

"OSCA shows our resolve to follow the ideological roots that run all the way back to the first Co-operative in the 1950s."

Growing up Co-op Style

by Tracy Murry

I'm the Area Coordinator for the cooperatives at Oberlin College. Hopefully, those of you that have graduated from Oberlin the last couple of years know me. I have been the CAC for three years. I'm a liaison between OSCA and the College, as well as an advisor to OSCA and the individual members of OSCA.

When I was asked to contribute to the Alumni newsletter, I thought about what I would write but nothing really came to mind. But eventually I decided that I'd like to tell you about my daughter, Rowan.

She's four months old and loves living in Tank. She is so

sociable we have to take her out in public once a day to get her fix of people. She is the most special person in my life. I used to think that it was my responsibility to make a difference in this world and to make the world a better place for everyone.

I now know that my responsibility is to nurture and support this special lady so that she feels that she can make a difference in this world and make it a better place for everyone. I don't think we can change the world, we can only change our view of the world.

I know, I know. People who know me are choking on their tofu right now. I can hear it now, "Tracy is being positive. Just wait, it is a trick. Where's the punch line?" Well, I figured out how to be positive. Stay up all

night with a baby who is so stuffy with a sinus problem that she can't breathe and you're frazzled. Several days of this, and even I am forced to look on the bright side of things.

Seriously, though. Next year I am thinking about facilitating an ExCo course about student co-ops. I would like to research the history of student co-ops at different institutions and also their relationships with schools. If you have any information or personal experience (like, bringing up a child in a co-op, for instance), that might prove valuable, please email me. I think the course would be very informative and would create positive discussions about OSCA and its future.

tracy.murry@oberlin.edu

OSCA and the Community

by Kate Donaldson-Fletcher

Last fall I thought I had the best co-op job in the world. Every Friday afternoon I would drive the OSCA truck out to the Amish farms to pick up food. I got to watch the seasons change in the farm lands surrounding Oberlin from late summer, to fall, to winter as I drove. I also established relationships with the families I saw every week.

While that was a good job, someone else won the election this fall, and I had to do something else. The job I found this fall is possibly even better. I am now the Community Liaison.

This is a relatively new position, and many co-ops don't even know that it exists. For me, however, this is one of the most important jobs in OSCA, and definitely the most interesting. What do I love about this position? What do I do as a Community Liaison?

Those are questions that I find myself pondering frequently. The mission statement of the Community Relations Committee is "to promote better OSCA-Oberlin residential community relations and to increase OSCA's participation in the wider Oberlin residential community."

Our three main areas of focus are communication, resource sharing, and education. The Community Liaison heads the Community Relations Committee and tries to make that mission statement a dream come true.

Last semester was a semester of exploration. No one was too sure what direction this job, or the committee I head, should be taking. We began

attending block meetings, community meetings, and printed a pamphlet about what OSCA can do for nonstudents (mainly concerning low-interest loans).

We had a table at the 50th anniversary celebration for the International Declaration of Human Rights and applied for a Hewlett grant to create an

"The mission...of the Community Relations Committee is to increase OSCA's participation in the wider Oberlin Community"

educational presentation involving Langston-Bliss House, OSCA, the Afrikan Heritage House's monitoring program, Shule, and O.H.I.O, the Oberlin historical society. That was a good start. Talking to residents of Oberlin made me realize how much more communication and interaction could be happening between OSCA and the rest of the community. We are an enormous organization and have a strong impact on our surroundings. The impact can be good, but it can also be harmful. It has been very rewarding for me to work towards creating a positive impact.

When I attended NASCO (North American Student Cooperative Organization) in October, I was surprised to find that OSCA was one of the more outwardly looking and socially conscientious of the student co-operatives represented at the conference. While attending that

conference I also discovered how much being the Community Liaison, if even for only a short time at that point, had influenced my thinking. I no longer felt that if we aren't hurting anything then we are being good neighbors. I feel like we, as individuals and as organizations, need to be involved in and aware of where we are living.

I have also been looking for ways to help support other co-ops in Oberlin. They are wonderful places, but are often overlooked by the residents of the town as inaccessible to non-college students. So far, through presentations at the high school, the bike

co-op has increased its membership by one high school student who has begun hanging out there on weekends and is considering becoming a bike mechanic. Hopefully this will help make the bike co-op accessible to other high school students, who won't feel too out of place when they come.

OSCA Staff!

Mugs \$2.50
Frisebees \$1.00
Hats \$7.50

Please include
\$2.00 shipping and handling

A Co-op by Any Other Name...

by Benjamin Sanders

I proposed a namechange for Asia House in order to eliminate confusion and to be more accurate. Many students expect Asian food and programming upon seeing the name. In fact, the co-op does not engage in any official cultural programming. It is merely located in the Asia Program House.

There is one exception, however. Membership policy reserves 20 co-op spots every year to Asia House residents in return for using the space. But there are no discussions, cook or food preferences geared towards Asian culture. For this reason I felt it inappropriate to have the name Asia House.

These are the reasons for my proposal, but I cannot speak

for the co-op in its reasons behind approving to change the name.

But, if we aren't going to call it Asia House, the question arises of what should the name be? I proposed 'Pyle Inn', after the first co-operative of OSCA, which has been torn down.

I felt that with a permanent change we should think of what relevance our new name should have to future co-op members. I felt that many jokes contained in other proposed names (like "The Co-op Formerly Know as Asia House Co-op" or "Magnum Pyle Inn," to be abbreviated Magnum P!) would not make any sense or have any relevance to members 5 years from now.

In addition, I felt that naming it Pyle Inn was a move to recognize OSCA's strong and rich history. Including the above examples, there were quite a few other names suggested, some more humorous than others.

There was a divided opinion in the co-op. One group of people supported the more "conservative" 'Pyle Inn' and another, more divided group touted a number of other names. Eventually, the co-op agreed to reduce the final number of possible names to 5 or so and vote on them. A majority was needed, and Pyle Inn won. It was made official with ballots and board approval.

OC ALUM

Andy Rowan, OC '83

maintains this ListServ at Rutgers U., where he works and is a graduate student. Conversation widely. To Subscribe, send e-mail to oc-alum-request@oc.nj.rutgers.edu with "subscribe" in the subject line. Andy maintains a World Wide Web home page for oc-alum subscribers and wannabes.

ALUMNUS UPDATE

Sue Greet, OC '96

a former member of Harkness, Kosher, and Bliss, informs us that she has joined the Peace Corps. She will be teaching English in Bangladesh.

*Check out the
OSCA Web page*

www.oberlin.edu/~osca

WANTED:

OSCA

ALUMNI

OSCA is looking to create a database of knowledgeable alumni willing to act as advisors (i.e., we would call you with questions pertaining to your area of expertise)

LAW: *skilled in real estate/nonprofit tax laws*

BUILDING MANAGEMENT: *buying, renovating, and acquiring property and houses*

ANYONE *with skills and connections useful to OSCA*

Please send your name, address, phone#, e-mail or fax and a statement about your expertise to us at:

OSCA - Oberlin College

Wilder Box 85 - Oberlin, OH 44074

-or- osca@oberlin.edu

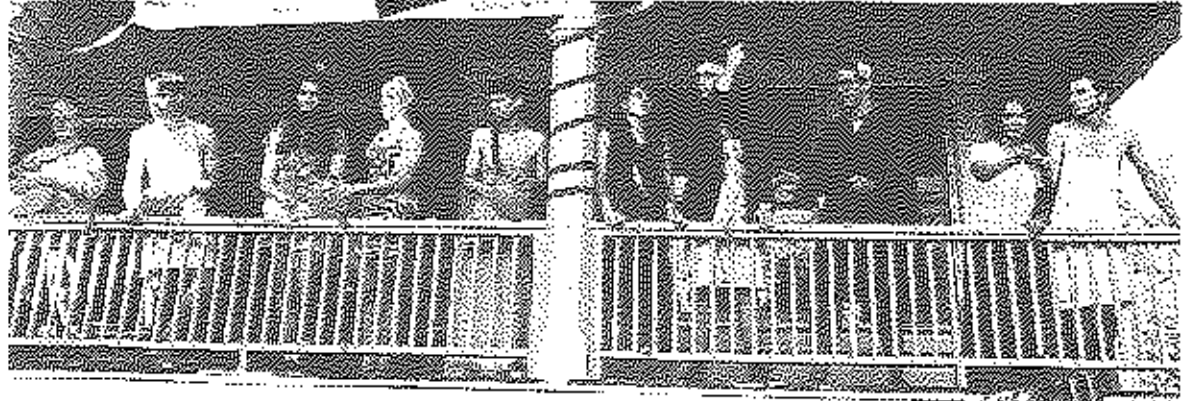


*The
MC:
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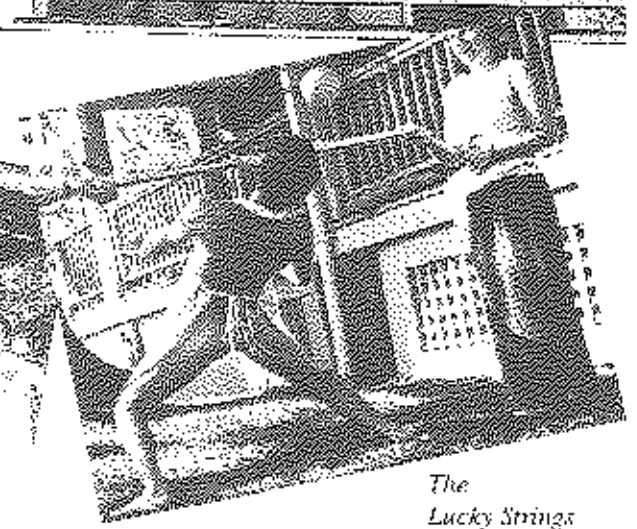
*The
Contest*



*The
Contestants*



*The
Sexy Apron Parade*



*The
Lucky Strings*



*The
Limbo*

*The
Anxious Watchers*

And the winner is

What is the name of "Bliss"

Located at 207 East College Street, O.S.C.A. owns a house. It's pretty big, blue, holds great parties, and has a volleyball net in the back - but what the hell is its name? We always call it "Bliss" without thinking. The name seems short, easy to remember - and it allows those who live there to let loose the catchy slogan "I'm living in Bliss!" But, is there something we've forgotten here?

The name of that big, blue house is not really just "Bliss" house, it is Langston-Bliss House. The Langston part, of Langston-Bliss, is of great importance to the Oberlin community. John Mercer Langston graduated from Oberlin College in 1853, and then went on to be admitted to the Ohio Bar as a lawyer, was the first African-American to hold elected office as Brownhelm Township Clerk, and served as a Republican Congressman from Virginia - the only black man to hold that position until recently (1993). He lived in that big-blue house from

1856 - 1868. For this reason Langston-Bliss house was named a National Historic Landmark in 1979.

Many may ask, and it is a good question, why is Bliss retained with Langston as the name of the house? It's been told many a time in O.S.C.A. that it was named as such because O.S.C.A. purchased the house from Earl & Isabelle Bliss (in 1987). This is not the end of the story. After Langston graduated from Oberlin College in 1853, he studied law with Philamon Bliss, who was an abolitionist and a district judge in Elyria. Earl Bliss was, in fact, a descendent of Philamon Bliss. For these reasons, it was fitting to name the house Langston-Bliss House.

The moral of this rigamaroll is: when you are thinking about that big-blue off-campus house owned by O.S.C.A., remember that it has more significance than just having a cool name. It also has a longer name: Langston-Bliss. Let's try not to forget it.

*Author: Daniel Orr &
The Off-Campus
Housing Committee
March 31, 1997*

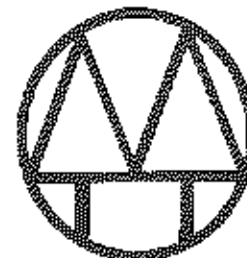
More grist for The Mill!

by Cindy Meyers

As the Publications Coordinator, I create *The Mill*, OSCA's internal newsletter, once a month. I've been having a lot of fun doing my job so far, primarily because OSCA has offered me the freedom to redesign *The Mill* into whatever I choose. It's taken many forms in the past, but my primary goal is to computerize the whole effort and make it look visually appealing as well as more interesting to read.

Lately I've been hard at work on the special Secret Lust issue, which is comprised of the messages and poetry (some of it truly awful!) that co-op members write anonymously to each other in belated celebration of Valentine's Day. *The Mill* accepts all forms of submissions, from essays on the politics of veganism to erotic poetry involving Hobarts to cartoons of OSCA board members. We'd love to hear about your post-OSCA experiences - how does the co-operative spirit fit into your life after Oberlin?

Any good recipes that would feed seventy people? If you have anything you'd like to submit, please send it to the Publications Coordinator c/o OSCA. We look forward to hearing from you!



*Stefani - Miss Harkness
The 1998 Miss OSCA.*

Waxing Poetic about the Hobart??

Some OSCA-influenced poetry by David Rees (he graduated a few years ago: we dug these up)...

I. When the sun sets, the steel of the machine catches some of its dying rays, holds fast to the warmth that it can never truly know. There is a sad, metallic melancholia in the sighs of the machine -- a coldness that is a curse, a tenseness that refuses to subside into warmth. This can never become nor know the fundamental warmth or comfort of life. The only warmth it knows is an aberration, the scalding water that rips grime off the utensils. This is heat as a temperature, whose function it is not to soothe -- rather, to destroy, to revert a piece of metal to its "proper" state.

And the machine must comply, its duty is as ingrained as the name stamped into its chest: HOBART. It hears this name, called throughout the day. But sadly, only in reference to its utility. Never is the name said in a delicate whisper, as is the name of a lover. A whisper would be so precious, and so wonderful! If only one sweet utterance of its name were presented, it would be so cherished! More precious than any gem, any possible maintenance of its parts! More precious than the sunlight so desperately held by its steel, ever slipping away. To be a friend would be so wonderful...

II.

So much depends
upon

A silver-grey
Hobart

Glazed with sink
water

Beside the dairy
fridge

III.

My little fork must think it queer
To stop without a Hobart near
I dare not ask what made it break
On the busiest evening of the year.

I give my dirty plate a shake
And marvel at the mess we make
The only other sound's the weep
Burned out dishwashers oft make

The sink is scary, dark, and deep,
Refuse forms a moist dank heap
But there's no reason I should weep -
I hear it's just as bad at Keep,
I hear it's just as bad at Keep.

IV.

Are there any forks left?
Where the hell are the forks?
Why do I never get a fork?
I'm sick of using serving spoons.
I want a fork!
Where are the forks?
Go check in the kitchen.
There're no forks in there
but wait
there's something shiny
down there
in the bottom of the the Hobart.
It's a fork!
But it's stuck in the damn
Hobart!
The piece of shit is broken
again.
I'll get the fork
It's just a matter of
reaching down
into the Hobart
Where is my finger?
What the hell happened to my
finger?

OSCA Invites
YOU to...
DIG IN

at the OSCA Alumni Picnic
Saturday, May 29
12:20 pm

Tunk Co-op