

# Voices

OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

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April 1998

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# Community & Lifestyles

## Sharing Warms Oven of Tuff Entrepreneurs

By Judy Thomas

What would you call two girls who attribute human characteristics to their culinary creations?

Tuff Cookies.

Their cookies have been said to "have serious life in them," to behave like snobs and to engage in trickery in the oven, pretending to be done when really they are only half-baked. Tuff Cookies partner Lauren Hubert said there is a "whole life that goes on in the oven without us."

The Tuff Cookies duo, Hubert and Ali Berlin, have even called their cookies their "children." Hubert went to school part-time last semester to dedicate herself to nurturing her newborn cookies.

Hubert and Berlin said they feel passionate about their cookies. It appears that others are beginning to feel the same about their homemade items. Morgen's Natural Foods has been carrying their latest cookies, which are frequently sold out by the end of the week, said employee Caroline Smith. Irving's Bagels employee Jessica Dattilo said their cookies are asked for by name.

"Customers want to know when we are getting them in," she explained, if there are no cookies in stock.

The women are thrilled by their success, they say, but mildly surprised. They said it has been a struggle to be taken seriously in the business world and to have their product marketed in local food shops. "We had to be pretty

persistent," said Berlin, in many of the places they promoted their cookies. They said they often felt "brushed off" and were not treated as professionals. Berlin said she wants people to realize the pair's success was earned by persistence and hard work.

Despite their products' introduction into local stores, the women say the majority of their sales come from "cookie house calls." Following their cookies' debut at the Student Book Store last fall, Tuff Cookies have been making their way around State College. Berlin and Hubert said they crank out nearly 25 dozen cookies a week, sometimes more. They said there is no real pattern to the cookie business. The women say their biggest seller is the "Chooley Ooey Gooley," composed of "slivers of grated chocolate, fine-blended oatmeal and mouthfuls of milk chocolate chips" as described on their menu.

This dedicated duo takes pride in delivering their cookies by foot or car fresh and warm, just out of the oven, to the doorstep of cookie recipients. They boast that their cookies are made "from scratch" and are as natural as they can be. In the future, they hope to have the luxury of using even

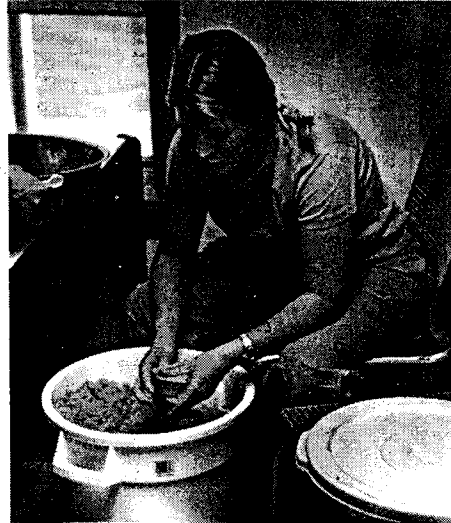


Photo by Judy Thomas

Tuff Cookies partner Lauren Hubert uses unrefined sugar to make the new specialty cookie, "cow patty," which is made for delivery and sold at Morgen's Natural Foods.

more natural ingredients.

They say they admire the Ben and Jerry's policy of using chemical-free dairy ingredients. They have recently sent their cookies to Ben and Jerry's, hoping to get their product

carried at their stores nationwide. They say they can relate to their philosophy of business as well.

"Their whole outlook is like ours," Berlin said. They just want "people to eat their ice cream."

Tuff Cookies have been sold at the local Ben and Jerry's. Their healthy alternative cookies can be purchased at Morgen's Natural Foods. Two of their newest cookies were designed in response to a proposition by Morgen's owner, Massie Jones, to create products composed with non-dairy products and unrefined sugar.

They "went ahead and made them and they're awesome," Jones said of the cookies. One of the new cookies has been such a hit, Jones said, that Hubert and Berlin recently bought themselves a 50-pound supply of the unrefined sugar that binds the cookies together. Massie coined this creation the "cow patty" for its two-toned appearance. The cookie is made with unrefined sugar that is dark in color, and whole oats, giving it a "spotted cow" effect. Smith said it is the most popular Tuff Cookie among her customers.

Another specialty cookie, the nananutter, which is made with soy margarine and non-dairy products, was designed especially for the health store. Smith said she recommends the cookies to Morgen's customers, and offers to "nuke them." She said she thinks that the cookies are better warm.

Jones said Tuff Cookies are the "best darn cookies on the East Coast." She and her employees have a problem not eating them, she said: "When I walk in in the morning I think 'to cookie, or not to cookie,'" she said.

The two bakers hope to see their "children" grow and mature and make a business for them into the future. Hubert, a junior and art major at Penn State University, hopes to go on to culinary school for "pastry arts." She said baking has been a "part of her whole life," and hopes to open a bake shop with Berlin following graduation.

It would be called "Tuff Cookies, Etc.," she stressed. She said she likes to make breads, pies and muffins as well as cookies. But for now, drop cookies are the easiest for us to do," interjected Berlin.

They claim they have cookie baking "down to a science."

"It's a little ridiculous," Berlin confessed. This writer has learned from speaking with Berlin that ridiculous is a good thing. "We know what each of us has to do," she said. Berlin said they "don't have to think about

## Nadine's Corner

By Nadine Kofman

State College is known for a multitude of fine characteristics; architecture is not one of them. Unlike Bellefonte, with its elegant Victorian period, State College was a Johnny-come-lately, settling its neighborhoods in the first half of this century. That makes a signature profile difficult. Even so, we have numerous handsome building faces from the teens, '20s, '30s and '40s to inspire us.

Our rows of mail-order houses from Sears Roebuck and elsewhere are charming; our singular architectural designs, such as the whimsical "Camelot" on S. Fraser St., are delightful discoveries for walkers, joggers and surprised motorists.

Their fashion statement is one of taste and creativity. This extends, also, to a number of non-single-family dwellings—to older homes converted into professional offices, and to revamped and new structures. Look at the lovely expanded white-frame Univer-

sity Mennonite Church on South Atherton Street. Look at the stately Arnold Addison Court on East Beaver Avenue. A welcome new arrival is the Marriott Residence Inn, along the curve of University Drive into South Atherton Street. It tucks in beautifully and has classic and stylish lines.

These street faces are in stark contrast to our growing number of expressionless high rises. Apparently, it is more difficult for perfect rectangles to show a pleasing face.

And, yet, right in the heart of downtown is that handsome exception: Arnold Addison Court—with its sculpted cornice treatment and painted nuances. The Addison Court planners and designers examined older nearby buildings, and mirrored some for their details onto the newcomer.

What a wonderful idea. To emulate, to imitate our best street features. In a town like ours, beauty is no small matter.

Unforgettable charm is a beckoning quality that State College has both a deep and far-reaching need to wear: We need it to keep on attracting parents of 18-year-olds; to please conference and sports visitors, browsers and shoppers; to maintain a faithful and devoted resident population.

"Unforgettable charm" should underpin every foundation committed to. That doesn't mean that Plain Janes have to be left out. Just look at what has become of the former mopey-looking Holiday Inn on South Atherton. As a Ramada, it now reaches out with a welcome.

Plain Janes could try on cornices or pictorial murals—even painted details or color accents. Our historical commission people could work-up drawings of, say, picturesque 20th-century roof-lines that could tie all of our high and low rises together. And give us an unforgettably charming face with which to look into the future.

# Historic Matters

By Marlene Stearns

- The Borough of State College is now a member of Preservation Pennsylvania, a non-profit organization based in Harrisburg. Congratulations on this effort!
- Preservation Pennsylvania is sponsoring the conference "Historic Preservation and Heritage Partnerships" May 3-5 in Williamsport. Topics include: how to protect rural land, the economics of heritage events and the legal aspects of preservation. Registration fees include some meals, and one day attendees are welcome. For more information please call (717) 234-2310.
- A local nomination for the Historic Preserva-

tion Construction Award was recently sent to the Bureau for Historic Preservation in Harrisburg by the Historic Resources Commission. The nominee is property owner Robert Poole, who added two units to an existing historic home. His exemplary work can be seen at 436-440 West Beaver Avenue.

- Results are pending for the Historic Resources Commission XYZ award. The award is given to an HRC member who makes an outstanding effort to promote preservation.
- The Doty and Hench Insurance Company has vacated its former location at 314 South Pugh.

The final plans for demolition and new construction are on their way to be reviewed by the Borough Planning Commission.

- Are you in the process of adding onto or improving the exterior of an existing property? Or are you constructing a new property in a historic district? If so, please stop at the Borough Planning Office and pick up a copy of the recently published "Design Guideline for Historic Properties and Historic Districts." The guide costs \$2.50 and is chock full of suggestions on how to help properties fit in with the existing neighborhood. The booklet is in the process of being up-

dated and soon will include an addendum of 12-14 photos of completed projects. The price will rise slightly for the new edition.

- Copies of the Urban Village District report created by Penn State landscape architecture students are available for viewing at the Borough Planning Office. This report, contains data on properties, sketches and suggestions for the district. The Urban Village District stretches west of Atherton Street along both sides of West College Avenue and extends north of West College to the University boundary line.
- Reminder: Mark your calendars. The Historic Resources Commission meets the last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the 2nd floor council room of the Municipal building, 118 S. Fraser St., State College. Public input is welcome!

## JUSTICE, from p. 10

process litigation; for example, regarding libel, slander, and assaults.

A few lights flicker locally. They include the Laurel Highlands Gay and Lesbian Association (LH-GALA), with support largely from Somerset and Cambria Counties, including Johnstown. LH-GALA is ably led by Randy Fisher, a highly intelligent, dedicated stalwart. He continues to form alliances with other groups such as The Unity Coalition of the Southern Alleghenies. But he needs help.

Another Casa Nova hero is Billy Hileman, editor of *Planet Q*, a gay-lesbian newspaper in Pittsburgh. He often visits the Casa Nova, lambasts McRae and officials, and publicizes a calendar of events scheduled at the restaurant. Other heroes are sprouting elsewhere, too. Some Metropolitan Community Churches, for example, now meet frequently at the Casa Nova. And the Lesbian Avengers have followed the path, too, at my initiation.

This summary no doubt justifies the Casa Nova rescue, but a few comments may stress the urgency.

First, reflect on the only four-letter word that the bigots have not used—LOVE. No decent human being should tolerate the Casa Nova abuses. Or, remember this four-letter word—DUTY. The blood of patriots from many wars has flowed onto Pennsylvania's soil. Surely citizens today can dirty their hands or part with a dollar to help an important new cause.

Measure the Casa Nova situation, too, against these standards—JUSTICE AND EQUALITY. None of us is truly safe and free when some among us suffer injustice and inequality and when all of us may be the new victims. New Klan rallies and random church burnings in our state underscore this point.

The Casa Nova terrors stain our state's reputation as the "birthplace of freedom" and home of the "City of Brotherly Love." They darken Somerset County's image as a winter wonderland, with famous ski resorts, and a summer playground, with historic sites. At night, the highest elevations in the state are the site of the lowest ethical, animal behavior.

Government paralysis regarding the Casa Nova undermines confidence in our democracy and our supposed leaders. Will McRae soon rank with the leaders of the Whiskey Rebellion? With his leadership abilities, maybe

he, not Ridge, should be Governor, or Vice President?

If the Casa Nova fails, Pennsylvania will encourage hatemongers and send a harsh, cruel message to millions of fair-minded Americans nationwide.

The Casa Nova represents more than a beautiful stone building, friendly watering hole, and tiny, frontier outpost near the edge of the Allegheny plateau. The building now symbolizes a lighthouse. From the ugly scenes it tries to withstand, a new spirit or ideal has emerged, one that protesters or bigots can never destroy: Through courage and tenacity and against great odds, many of us must fight to save, and shall always revere, a unique beacon of hope and love within a dark sea, or valley, of hate.

Please help the Casa Nova—the New House—triumph over Old Bigotry. And hurry!

### Implementing the Casa Nova Rescue Plan

The Casa Nova rescue entails three major needs. First, we must give the Casa Nova financial and moral support until it thrives. Second, we need at least one pro bono attorney to courageously confront the hatemongers. Third, we must pressure our supposed democratic leaders, especially District Attorney Spangler, Governor Ridge, and Attorneys General Fisher and Reno, into fashioning short- and long-term solutions.

\* Send contributions to the Casa Nova owners or patronize the restaurant and leave a big tip. Encourage groups to join the effort. Call *Planet Q* to for free publicity on your event and your support.

\* Witness the protesters' abuse, first-hand. Photograph or videotape their activities, and understand the reasons for opposing them. But do not repond in kind to the protesters, who provoke, videotape, and prosecute "obscene" language and actions other than their own. Report incidents to the state police or FBI.

\* Find pro bono legal support for the Casa Nova. Inform the owners of the volunteers. Help fund at least one case against the protesters' language and acts.

\* For about \$1, write to three federal, state, or local officials and send a courtesy copy to others. Be brief, if necessary. Urge quick action on the Casa Nova and improved gay-lesbian protections.

\* Encourage national and local groups, asso-

ciations, churches, and prominent citizens to join the struggle. Join LH-GALA and other groups.

\* In classrooms and meetings, publicize and discuss the Casa Nova situation and its nationally important issues—legal, political, and ethical. Ponder the excesses of the First Amendment Freedoms; e.g., how the protesters' hysterical screams somehow advance a search for truth and help religion.

Pat/Merrit Cramer (Owners), Casa Nova Restaurant, RD 1, Box 126, Boswell, PA 15531; (814) 629-9911

Jerry Spangler, District Attorney, Court House, Somerset, PA 15501; (814) 443-2894

Honorable Thomas Ridge; Governor of Pennsylvania; State Capitol, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120; (717) 787-5062

Homer Floyd, Executive Director Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Suite 300, 101 S. Second St., Harrisburg, PA 17101, (717) 787-4410

President William Clinton, The White House, Washington, DC 20500, Attn: Richard Socarides; (202) 456-2930

Honorable Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Chairman, Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; (202) 224-3121

Randy Fisher, President, Laurel Highlands Gay and Lesbian Alliance, 281 Decker St., Johnstown, PA 15906; (814) 539-0147

Pennsylvania State Police, (814) 445-4104; Federal Bureau of Investigation, P.O. Box 1315, Pittsburgh, PA 15230; (412) 471-2000

Honorable Michael Fisher, Pennsylvania Attorney General, Three Strawberry Square, Harrisburg, PA 17120; (717) 787-3391

William R. Lloyd, Jr. (Somerset County), PA House of Representatives, Room 128, South Office Building, House Box 202020 Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020; (717) 783-5183

Attorney General Janet Reno, U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20530-0001; (202) 514-2000

John P. Murtha (D-PA)(Attn: William Allen), U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; (202) 224-3121

## See TUFF, p. 9

what is going on," and both agreed they work well together as a team. But, Berlin said, they would have a hard time having other people in their work space.

So, they begin baking between 7 and 8 a.m., when Berlin's three roommates are still in bed. They said the kitchen is less congested at that time.

Berlin, also a junior at Penn State who self-designed her major of "personal peace studies and social change," admitted she has "always played with food." She said she frequently experiments with "lots of natural ingredients" to "see what is going on outside of cookie world."

The women are immodest about their cookies. Berlin said "if there is a Tuff Cookie, they are going to eat it." But, she stressed, the cookies are the snobs, not she.

Despite their youth, Tuff Cookies are well traveled. Hubert and Berlin said their creations have ventured "all over the country." They have even crossed the ocean by plane to a cookie enthusiast and friend in Italy, Megan Lucidi. According to Hubert, they got caught up in customs. She said it cost nearly \$20 to ship the goods overseas.

The women have settled on \$6.50 for the shipment of a dozen cookies within the contiguous states. A discount is offered when ordering more than one dozen. Two dozen cookies can be shipped for \$8.50, Hubert said.

The "cookie girls," as they sometimes call themselves, are just learning about priority mail. They said they lost money when they first started shipping cookies.

To date, on the balance sheet Tuff Cookies have just broken even, but this is of little concern to the baking duo. As Hubert said, a cookie compliment is her paycheck. "We like to bake the cookies," said Hubert. "Neither of us is interested in the 'business end,'" she explained.

"We didn't start the business to make money," said Berlin. "Cause we like to give our cookies away, we had to start a business," she explained. "If we could give a cookie to everyone in this town, we would," said Hubert.