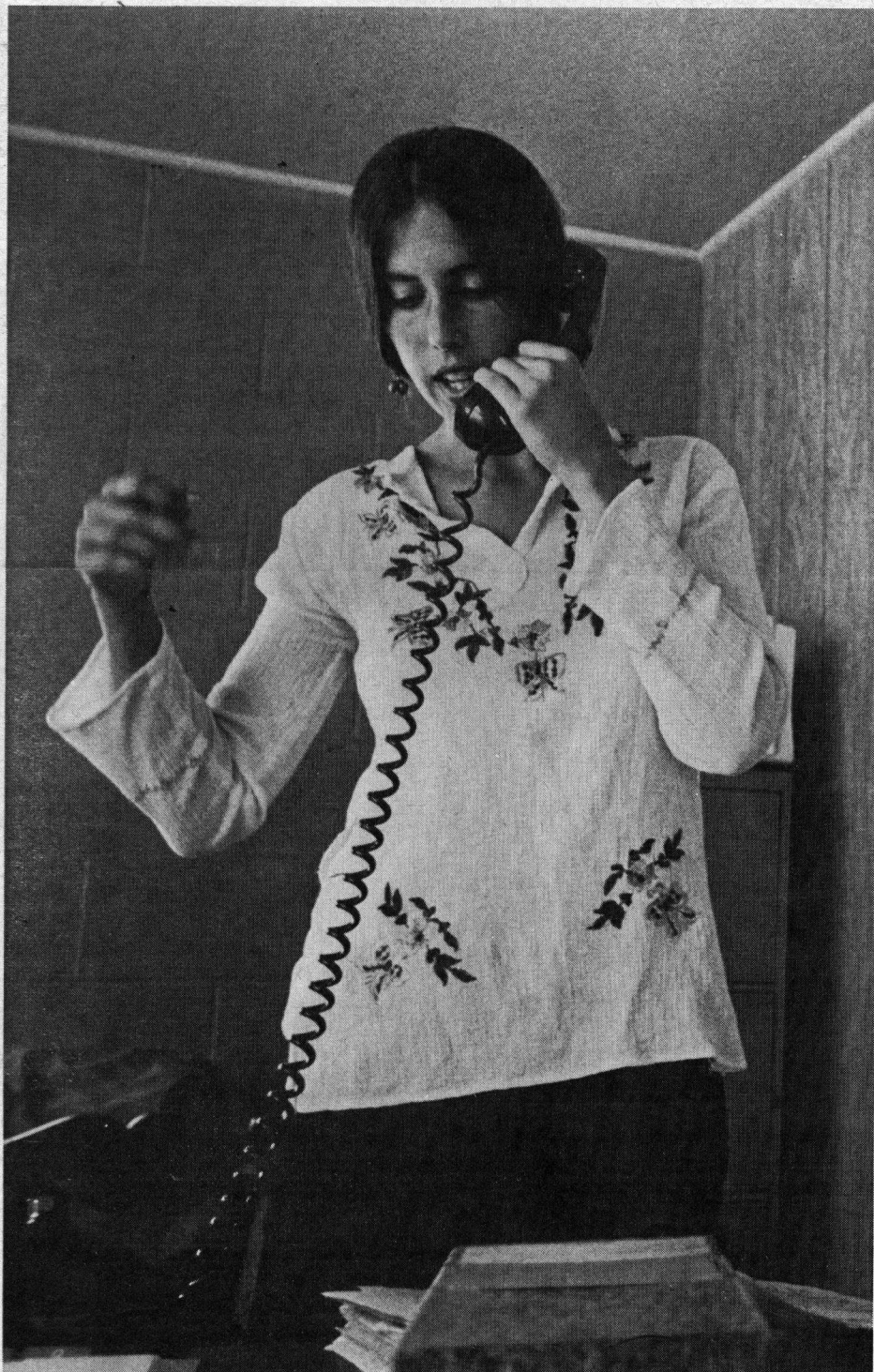


grey Bears

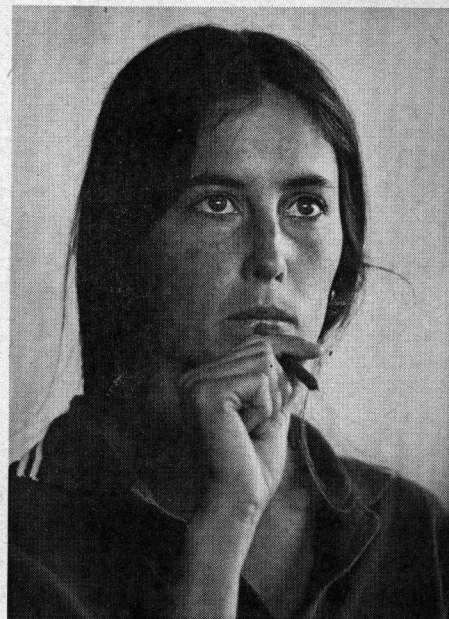
# HAPPY

## A DETERMINED GOLDBLOCKS LEADS THE GREY BEARS TO BETTER NOURISHMENT



Photographs by Paul Fusco/Magnum

**At 23, Kristina Mailliard may be too young to be called Mama Bear, but she does serve as Grey Bears' executive director.**



**Kris, pondering the Grey Bears' future, sees the Santa Cruz experiment as the forerunner of a national trend.**

**T**he California Grey Bears—another rock band? New pro football team? Zoological discovery? More prosaic, it is a self-help program that is bringing nutrition and hope to old people.

The idea took root last year in the minds of 23-year-old Kristina Mailliard and her boyfriend Gary Denny, 32, who live in Santa Cruz, Calif. Kristina, the activist daughter of former Republican Congressman William Mailliard (now ambassador to the Organization of American States), and Denny, a dropout from the Los Angeles business world, were appalled at the malnourishment of the elderly poor. Even in affluent Santa Cruz County (pop. 120,000) their number is estimated at 12,000. The two young people wanted to share the surplus fruit and vegetables from their large garden, "but," Kris explains, "nobody had the mechanism to distribute it."

Undaunted, Kris and Gary themselves organized a "harvest festival" at which the needy were to be treated to a free meal by neighbors who had extra produce. It turned into a disaster. "The old people stuffed the vegetables in their purses," recalls Kris. "Then they stole all the butter for the buffet. The food wasn't taken in the spirit in which it was given. At the end,





**Visiting shut-ins like Mrs. Ebba Roberts, 83, is part of Kris's job, even though she thinks she's not "good" with people.**



**Kris and her boyfriend, co-founder Gary Denny, put their heads together in Grey Bears' California headquarters.**

I was mad, uptight and depressed."

There had to be a better way, Kris and Gary figured. And there was. "It took me two weeks to realize that these people came from a generation that liked to work for what they could get," says Kris. The young couple came up with the idea of sending healthy senior citizens into the fields to pick leftover produce. The farmers approved because the surplus crop would have only

gone to waste. And the elderly harvesters found that the fruits and vegetables were fresh and palatable. More important, they also felt useful again. "I'd rather do this," says 63-year-old Myrtel Schullanberger, "than sit home watching TV."

Kris and Gary put in six hard months lining up local support. "Gary suggested we call them the Grey Bears," Kris says, "meaning they were older

than the Golden Bears of the University of California (Berkeley) football team, but still feisty. Our board of directors hated it but couldn't agree on anything else."

Today there are 1,200 Grey Bears, each paying a dollar a year for the right to a weekly brown bag stuffed with produce. Some 500 members don't even accept the bag. "We don't need it," says Mrs. Schullanberger. "We do the







**Kris and the Grey Bears glean a lettuce field near Santa Cruz. The surplus vegetables would otherwise go to waste.**

picking so somebody else can have it." Mrs. Josephine Banducci adds, "Most of all I like the fresh air and the other people."

With Kris as the principal organizer, a storage and distribution system, staffed by other Grey Bears, has evolved. Food is delivered to some 190 disabled members, who benefit as much by the social contact as by the improved diet. Local government has

funded the project for a year, and donations from private citizens have enabled the Grey Bears to buy a truck.

Kris, who graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz last year, now serves as executive director at \$9,000 a year. "What I'm good at," she says, "is organizing. I like to put ideas into action. I'm a mover." The organization's future, nonetheless, is uncertain. "We've set it up," Kris ob-

serves, "in such a way that if people are unwilling to volunteer, we'll fold." Still, she adds, "We're hoping Grey Bears will turn America around. There are old people eating dog food while wealth is dumped down the drain. We want to offer an alternative to government handouts." □