

Last Chance

Barbara A. Van Flandern

Thirteen years ago I was 29. My husband was a research scientist for the U.S.A. Government. We had four young children. Life was pretty good to us. And I decided to go back to school, and pursue a career in Art.

I took a painting and drawing course for a year and a half in studios where I used turpentine, or was exposed to it while working. I used it at home in my art work.

At the same time I had been taking tetracycline, an antibiotic, off and on for years trying to deal with a chronic sore throat — thought to be caused by overly enlarged pitted tonsils.

After taking the antibiotic at closer intervals, every two weeks, because of my inflamed throat, I decided to have my tonsils taken out. After the operation I suffered earache, and each ear abscessed. I continued to have chronic sore throat after the operation for the next two years.

Also my memory had been affected. Whole segments from my art lectures had been deleted from my memory — lectures in which I had learned new techniques, and watched them being applied by my instructor.

I began to find I could not follow lectures. I would hear the beginning and the end of sentences with the middle missing. I didn't know

it was me at first. I asked to have things repeated, since the lectures didn't make sense. I began to feel I wasn't concentrating hard enough on what was said, and felt the pressure and anxiety of missing out on the conversation. I couldn't retain anything in sequence. I lost my sense of time. Time would sometimes fly by — say a three hour session would seem like 10 or 15 minutes. It was confusing to me to have the classes seemingly shortened abruptly. Then there were days when time seemed to stand almost still. I watched the clock. It seemed it had been an hour since the last time I looked, and it had only been a few minutes. I lost sleep. I couldn't rest. I felt intimidated by any questions directed at me. Being anxious, I couldn't answer them correctly. I remember being angry and frightened at the same time in class.

One day we were doing a study of a nude, when I began to feel an overpowering urge to cry and scream out. I could not hold back the tears. But I ran from the room as fast as I could to keep from screaming. In the hall I bawled uncontrollably. Some young woman student put her arms around me to comfort me. She asked what had

happened. I had no explanation. It was all feelings.

I became very nervous, anxious. I couldn't hold a discussion with my husband. Every conversation was a confrontation. We argued. I began to feel everything that was said to me had ulterior meanings, that he didn't love me anymore. I arranged a meeting with a marriage counselor at my University. We agreed to see the doctors separately after our initial visit.

On my second visit, I noticed the room had been rearranged — the furniture was on opposite ends of the room from my first visit. The room had been a psychedelic yellow. Now, it was a dull yellow. The rug on the wall was tiny. It had been a medium size rug wall hanging and the length of the room was much shorter now. Everything was the same except now things were smaller and the colors were pale instead of bright. My first reaction was that it was a similar room, but not the one I had been in before. When I inquired about the office we had first met in, I was told this was the same office. I explained the walls were much brighter yellow, etc. The doctor tried to reassure me that it was the same room. Then I began to wonder what kind of a test they were putting me through. Perhaps, they wanted to see if I would get angry, or if I would reason with them in a normal way. Just what kind of a trick was this and how should I react? I decided to explain what I had seen before. I was told this was the same room. I decided not to pursue this chain of conversation. I would see what their next move would be.

Had they joined forces with my husband against me? I was afraid of being alone at night. Tom, my husband, had many business trips that took him away for three days to a week, on occasion as long as a month to Europe. I had become totally convinced that the mail man and meter man would physically harm me. My vision was usually blurred now and I couldn't make out people's faces very well which unnerved me, making me more anxious. Normal every day interaction with our children caused extreme anxiety. I could not cope. My moods would swing from violent behavior to a catatonic, frozen state. I tore the phone off the wall, often broke dishes, and sometimes furniture. I would cry hysterically, or sing

loudly with the radio at full volume trying to drown out my thoughts and the violent depressing feelings I had running through me. Sometimes I would hide in a closet, the attic, or the stairwell when I couldn't interact with the family or other people. I felt very guilty and helpless about not taking good care of our children.

I entertained fantasies of suicide, in the form of a game: wondering how far up one could jump from a bridge and still dive into the water and swim ashore, or how far out on a lake that wasn't completely frozen solid could one walk before falling through, or how many sleeping pills one could take before dying. What would be the least painful way of dying. As time went on I became physically worse.. My whole body would go into muscle spasms. I was unable to walk, or talk most of the time. I saw I was a burden to my husband and no help to my children. My parents lived in a distant city, and were elderly. They could not care for our children. I felt my husband unequipped to keep a clean home, and care for the children's needs. I knew I could not go on living this way much longer. But who would care for my babies. I felt no one loved them, or would take care of them the way I wanted them to be. They would wind up in an orphanage or with an uncaring stepmother. I began to have fantasies of buying a gun, giving my children sleeping pills in their food and when they were asleep shooting them and then shooting myself. I loved them so much. It hurt to see them wearing soiled clothing and not getting fed properly; not living a normal childhood.

By this time I was seeing a Dr. Dora Nicholson. I was frightened of my fantasies about the children when I was feeling better, and confided in her. She immediately took steps to have a homemaker come and care for the children and the housework. It did lighten my stress. But I still lost my muscle control and would go into deep depression. Finally, Tom heard through a friend of a new book by Dr. A. Hoffer and Dr. H. Osmond. By this time I had already seen several psychiatrists and psychologists and numerous M.D.'s to check out the physical disabilities. The psychiatrists diagnosed me

as schizophrenic in their reports. The general practitioners found nothing physically wrong with me. Only the last two doctors I saw, before we found out about the Schizophrenia Association of Greater Washington (SAGW), knew anything about preventive medicine, and they used vitamins in combination with drugs. I had extensive testing done at a nearby laboratory. They found I had a bad case of Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. My anger and depression evolved very strongly during the blood sugar drop. Also I physically blacked out.

The testing showed my liver was extensively damaged. One doctor felt I must have been an alcoholic, because of the extensive liver damage. Tom assured her I only drank occasionally at social gatherings, which were few and far between, and non-existent for the past two years, since I had become so ill. The late Dr. Woidich was the last doctor I saw before joining the SAGW. He tried to relieve my muscle spasms with magnesium injections, to no avail. We tried some vitamin injections of B-6 intramuscularly that seemed to help some with the depression. But I still had muscle spasms and the returning depression, with anger, and paranoia. Tom literally tied me down to keep me from hurting myself and destroying the house on occasions.

I couldn't go anywhere alone anymore. I was frightened by the sounds of cars. Any noise was amplified. People's faces were blurred and distorted. If I continued to look at them they would evolve into frightening creatures. Any movement toward me would frighten me so much I would scream hysterically. I tried to avoid looking at people's faces. Cars sounded like huge hungry animals that could devour me. If I had to walk outside I'd walk on the lawns instead of the sidewalks for fear the cars would come up on the sidewalks after me. At night the street lights and headlights looked like huge illuminated snowflakes. I felt like I was outside of my body looking at myself. I always felt like running away but I had nowhere to run. Once when I was out by myself all the houses on the street reversed themselves and then everything went back to normal. It frightened me and I panicked and tried to run home. But my body felt like I was floating and every step was in

slow motion. Colors were brilliant and intense, and objects had sharp outlines that gave the appearance they were cut outs. When things were blurred, I would strain my eyes to focus a clear picture of objects, often holding up a hand to see if I could focus it in clearly.

Thanks to the SAGW and especially Dorothy Nagel, my husband was able to find help for us. I could not attend the meetings. But Tom went and listened to the speakers and read everything he could get his hands on. Eventually he heard a Dr. William Philpott speak about cerebral allergies — allergies that affect people mentally as well as physically; allergies caused by foods, and our environment that most people are not bothered by (at least not to disabling degrees, as his patients were). Many of the symptoms his patients had, Tom saw that I was experiencing. Tom talked to Dr. Philpott at length. He came home excited and full of new hope. He told me about the testing procedures. I agreed to see Dr. Philpott as a last resort. Here was a new approach — testing, working with the patients closely and finding results. I felt this was my last chance. I hoped he could help us. I was encouraged by Tom's enthusiasm.

The testing was held at Fuller Memorial Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island. It took approximately one and a half months for the testing. My first meeting with Dr. Philpott was in his office in Providence. We had been waiting in the reception room. And I had just put on some lipstick before going into the hospital. By the time I was to see him, I had lost my muscle control, and was having some muscle spasms. My vision was blurred and my speech slurred, and I was having difficulty breathing. After speaking to Tom awhile Dr. Philpott gave Tom a kleenex to help me wipe off the lipstick. I thought he was going to give me an eye, ear, nose and throat examination. But he continued to talk to Tom. After awhile I started to regain my muscle control and vision. Now I was able to follow the conversation about my medical history. Dr. Philpott asked me how I felt and I replied "a lot better", never making the connection. He then asked me to take out my lipstick

and to hold it under my nose. I thought it a bizarre request, but I did it anyway. Immediately I could feel my muscle control going, and my blurred vision returned. After I put the lipstick away, I regained my muscle control and my vision back after a short interval. Then he gave me a magic marker to hold under my nose. After breathing that, I lost total muscle control, and immediately began having muscle spasms. He explained to us that I was a "hydrocarbon reactor", and that this was the major reason for my muscle control loss.

I found I reacted to any burning carbon or residue from carbon. Cigarette smoke and its residue in clothing etc. is the hardest to avoid coming in contact with, and the worst of the hydrocarbons to affect me. Gasoline is another hydrocarbon difficult for me to avoid. I never fill the tank at a gas station. We own a van with the gasoline tank and engine at the rear, and must make sure it has no rusted out holes in the floor for gas fumes to come into the car now.

I was excited and relieved: for the first time we had an answer to my muscle control loss. We saw the cause and the result. I was anxious to start testing on foods now.

Lipstick is a petroleum product; so are plastics. Many people are unable to tolerate carbons and hydrocarbons made from petroleum products.

Gasoline is a hydrocarbon and so was the turpentine I'd been using in my art work.

The late Dr. Mary Allen of Richmond, Va. had ordered a muscle biopsy done on me. She found I was missing enzymes. Dr. Philpott confirmed that enzymes can be worn away by hydrocarbons in some individuals who are susceptible. Without these enzymes a person can't eat certain foods or breathe certain chemicals without having physical and mental symptoms.

Before starting our testing for the next six weeks I fasted a total of six days, drinking only mineral water. I knew I was supposed to fast for the first four days after arriving at Fuller. So to get a head start I fasted two days at home before going to the hospital. But Dr. Philpott preferred I do four days of fasting at Fuller. Thus I did a total of six days. After fasting I felt like a human being again! I not only had clear vision and actively participated in

conversations, I could make decisions, and was confident in myself again. Best of all I felt good, really good. I was able to take an interest in my surroundings, and other people. It felt so good to be back in charge of myself again, for the first time in over two years.

Now for the next month and a half we would be testing every food we could think of, plus some carbons and hydrocarbons, and chemicals such as: cigarette smoke, gasoline, magic markers, plastics — like my plastic alarm clock that heated up the plastic casing enough to make my body go into muscle spasms. When it was removed from my night stand and unplugged I slept well. We tested chemicals such as cleaning fluids and chlorine in the water. With the above I could just smell them and lose my muscle control, to different degrees. After each test I would have my pulse taken, and the dilation of my pupils was checked. I would tell them if my vision was good or blurred. And I timed each reaction until I regained full muscle control and vision. I was asked to take my own pulse and keep a log of my feelings and thoughts, and any symptoms such as sleepiness, inability to concentrate, sadness, anxiousness, worry, talkativeness, hunger, thirst, itching, hyper, etc. I followed this procedure after eating each food I was tested on.

The doctor and nurse were there if I had a bad reaction. When the reaction was bad I had to wait until the symptoms were gone before I could continue to test the next food. For instance I became very angry, and eventually suicidal, after eating wheat — in the form of hot cream of wheat with hot mineral water in it only. I ate only a small bowl of it. It took me three days to clear it out of my system. Because you have been fasting and you test only one food at a time, if you are going to have a bad reaction to that food it is really going to be a bad reaction, simply because you have no other food in you to buffer the reaction. Although I knew I was testing, my feelings of anger and suicide took over. My self control was gone. I wanted to be put out of my mental and physical misery. I wanted to die. It took three days before that reaction wore off. I fasted, drinking only mineral water. I took

enemas with only warm mineral water, until that reaction cleared.

My next worst food reaction that caused mental symptoms was corn. I hallucinated on corn. Every noise was like a shock to me, and I was frightened. Peoples' faces were distorted and blurred. The photograph of my children I had taken with me on the dresser jumped out from its frame at me. And the faces were all distorted. Motion was speeded up. I was taken back to my room in a wheelchair after testing on corn. I had the sensation we were speeding. We came to a stairwell and I had the sensation and illusion I was falling through a tunnel. I lost total control of my emotions. I began screaming hysterically. It took several days to recover from the frightfulness. A nurse sat with me at night because I was fearful one of the male patients would come in and harm me. I stayed awake all night. And in the daytime the noise was painful so I couldn't sleep then either. And it took almost a week before my physical symptoms of a sore throat cleared up. My chronic sore throat turned out to be a reaction to corn.

My body no longer had the enzymes to cope with these foods. Corn and wheat were the only grains that bothered me. And they were the worst of my testing on food. I did test on many other foods and had various reactions. Eggs make me groggy and hard to keep awake. Potatoes made me chatter away impulsively. I couldn't stop talking. Tomatoes gave me very dark rings under my eyes. In general I did very poorly on the nightshade family of which tomatoes and potatoes are a part. If I had no reaction to a food — normal pulse rate, felt clear headed, showed no physical or emotional symptoms — I could eat some of that food until the next test. I had to wait at least four hours between testing food if I passed with no reaction. By the end we had a lot of foods I could eat and a lot of foods I could not eat. Many of the foods I ate all the time and liked very much were the ones I seemed to have the most problems with.

Luckily we had given up sugar, caffeine and alcohol from our diet a year earlier, after the low blood sugar testing. But many of the patients had the extra burden of having to go through withdrawal symptoms

from these substances while testing. I learned a lot about myself and other patients, and the impact our diets and environment can have on our mental and physical stability.

I also learned about vitamins and the need for megadoses for people like me whose bodies are so deficient in them for many reasons. After testing on hydrocarbons I learned that I would lose total muscle control on gasoline or turpentine. My breathing was very laborious. Since the heart is a muscle it was important to stop the muscle spasms and regain control. On these occasions Dr. Philpott would give me intravenous injections of B-6, and vitamin C. My muscle spasms would stop immediately. Vitamin C is an anti-toxin, and rebuilds cells; it also adds oxygen to the blood stream — shakes off that tired feeling, and makes you feel refreshed again. C helps to strengthen the immune system to fight diseases. I found many vitamins have fillers. Corn starch is commonly used as a filler in vitamins. I had to test vitamin brands, even the no sugar and no starch brands. Sometimes I had a negative reaction to a vitamin because of the way the vitamin was processed.

It's been eleven years since I was at Fuller and my life has been busy and rewarding. My husband, myself and my children now run our own family business. It's a new adventure we took on two years ago. I do just fine as long as I keep up with my megadoses of vitamin C, and avoid hydrocarbons, carbons, and the foods I didn't pass on. I was tested at Fuller for vitamin C deficiency. The results were that even at intakes of 20 grams a day I still spilled none in my urine. Vitamin C is water soluble, so if you get more than you need your body spills it out in the urine. I have taken 20 grams a day for the past eleven years and it's helped me through some rough times. It helps with stress. My thanks to Dr. Linus Pauling who has worked with vitamin C and found the benefits in his research, for passing this knowledge on to doctors in preventive medicine. Doctors like William Philpott and Linus Pauling should be commended for their courage in standing up to their peers and the Traditional Medical Establishment to bring us to

a new era in the field of medicine, so that we as laymen may live longer, happier lives.

I continue to take other vitamins as well. I have deficiency in vitamin B-6; and I understand from Dr. Philpott's research that most individuals diagnosed as schizophrenic are deficient in B-6. B-6 is needed for mental stability. It keeps depression down. It must be taken with the other B vitamins as they all work together in balance.

We have three teenagers and one adult son, who all benefit from our knowledge about our environment and the biochemical reaction it and foods can have on a person's health. We still have our ups and downs; but we know how to "up the downs" now.

I would like to thank Dorothy Nagel (president, Schizophrenia Association of Greater Washington), Dr. William Philpott (Orthomolecular physician, Philpott Foundation), and Dr. Linus Pauling (research biochemist, Nobel laureate) for their work and dedication to helping people like me and our families. I truly owe my life to them, and to my husband Tom, who never gave up, but searched and searched until he found their help.