

History of Natural Health and Home Part 1

In 1974, I was both a college student and a hospital clerk working in the emergency room (ER). An itchy rash showed up on the top of my left foot, so I asked the ER doctor what it might be. He didn't know, but he was sure a round of strong antibiotics would get rid of it in a week, advising me that this particular antibiotic was quite strong and couldn't be refilled.

A week later, the rash was worse. Next, he prescribed a topical steroidal cream. It did nothing. The ER doctor said the next step would be for him to admit me as a patient so he could run tests. HA! I reminded him that I worked at that hospital, I saw daily what "went on behind the scenes," and I WOULD NOT be a patient there or anywhere else!

"Nan! I'm a DOCTOR!" he defended.

"I don't care! I will NOT be a patient in a hospital!" (Maybe I was just a bit disrespectful, but I really did know what "went on behind the scenes" with the staff, and I didn't want to be the subject of their gossip or worry.

My brother was in high school, and one of his science teachers was also a naturopathic doctor on the side. I thought he was a quack—after all, I worked with *REAL* doctors. But those real doctors weren't helping, so it was time to do something different.

Doc Paul, as his patients fondly called him, looked at my foot, then looked with a magnifying glass and announced, "You have a spider bite."

"A spider bite? How'd you figure that out?"

"Do you see these two little darker red spots in the middle of the pale rash? That's where the spider bit you. You're having a slight reaction."

"But why didn't the ER doctor see that?"

"Because he didn't observe closely. The first rule of naturopathic doctors is to observe and listen closely," explained Doc Paul.

He left the room for a few minutes to go to his back room. I heard jars being opened and closed, followed by a blender whirring. He reappeared with a jar of "green goop" and instructed me to soak my foot in hot boric acid solution for fifteen minutes, then apply this green herbal stuff on the rash each day. The rash should be gone in five days. I was also to come to his office each day for colored light therapy on my foot.

In five days, the rash was gone, and the only evidence of the bite was a slight pink shadow.

Humpf. Did the herbs really work? The ER doctor saw my foot and said the healing would not have been from the antibiotics. Too much time had elapsed since I'd taken them.

It seemed all my life I'd had horrible colds that were always preceded by a raging sore throat. These colds would knock me out for two weeks. I was miserable with swollen, weepy eyes; clogged nose rubbed raw and red from blowing and wiping; and clogged ears. The next time I felt the sore throat coming on, I knew I was in for two weeks of misery. I stopped at Doc Paul's office to see what magic he thought he might work.

"Take 1000 mg of vitamin C an hour while you're awake. Do a juice fast. You may choose from apple, grape, pineapple, or lemonade sweetened with maple syrup. Drink only whichever juice you choose for one day, then switch to a different juice and you may eat the fruit of that juice, as well. Drink plenty of water, too. Just don't eat anything else."

The next day, I woke up without a sore throat and no congestion. Okay, so this guy's some sort of genius. He has the "cure" for the common cold! (Thinking back, I'm not so sure I was dealing with colds. I suspect it was the result of mold in the basement of the house we lived in.)

I was fascinated by my experiences and began to take classes in herbs and nutrition from Bernadine College of Naturopathy. After graduating from college with my BA in English, I taught during the school year, and during summers and breaks, I worked at New Dawn Health Food Store in St. Louis and later at Natural Way in Webster Groves in the 1970s and '80s.

Part II

Fast forward to the early 2000's. We all have "Job" experiences in life when it seems life dumps a truck load of problems. I was teaching part-time. I had tried to get a full time position, but no one wanted to hire a 50 year old full time because I was "too expensive" (their words) --insurance would have been more expensive, and they would have to put money aside for my retirement plan. Plus, state funding to higher education had been cut, so colleges were letting go of part-time staff.

Natural Way in Fenton was looking for a clerk, and since the owner and I knew each other, and she knew my experience as an herbalist and clerk, she hired me full time. A little over a year later, I was manager, but the pay was less than I thought I was worth. I was still driving to Kirkwood, South County, and St. Louis, teaching at Meramec and Fontbonne Colleges as well.

One day while in prayer, I told Heavenly Father that I needed a change. My old car was breaking down more than it ran, and I was driving too much and too far to pay bills. Should I move to the city? What should I do?

A few days later as I drove through Hillsboro, I heard, "That's where you'll have a health food store."

Me? Own a business? I have no background in business other than sales. I know nothing about ordering, bookkeeping, taxes, or anything else; but I'd been shown the exact location. I'd even argued that a thriving business was in that location.

Days later at Natural Way, an employee at Sanford Brown Business College in Fenton came in to make a purchase and asked, "Aren't you a teacher?"

"Yes. I still teach at Fontbonne and for UMSL."

“Well, we’re looking for a tutor in our writing lab. Would you be interested? It’s only twenty hours a week, but we’ll pay you well.”

I said I’d consider it. I talked to the department chairwoman on the phone and she hired me on the spot, due to my experience. I started the next week with a private office in the library. I cut my store hours to one shift a week and kept my classes at Fontbonne and UMSL for the term.

Fortunately for me, I tutored very little—fortunate because I decided to see what I needed to do to start a store. After all, I was in a BUSINESS LIBRARY with a high-speed computer, Internet access, and a librarian who also owned a small business. I learned how to write a business plan, determine pricing, and identify funding opportunities other than just a bank loan. I also surveyed Jefferson County for potential customers. Other than the health food store in Arnold, Jefferson County had no health food store. I contacted suppliers to learn what I had to do to establish accounts with them. They also gave me good business advice. Finally, I contacted a lawyer and both city and county offices about licensing. The lawyer took care of the state license.

It was time to look at store fronts. I spent my day off checking out several locations, and found one that I thought might do, although it would need some re-modeling. The day we were to sign, the owner phoned me saying a friend of his wanted it, so I was out—I hadn’t even gotten in! I took it back to Heavenly Father, saying there was still a thriving business in the location He’d shown me several months ago. His hand was in this plan, though. The next day was Sunday. On my way to church, I passed that store front and saw a large sign, “Store Closing! Everything must go!”

I pulled into the parking lot and went in asking for the name and phone of the person I needed to talk to about renting the place. I’d come back Monday to chat more about purchasing shelving, counters, and anything else they had for sale that I could use for my new shop. Wow! When Heavenly Father wants something done, He sure stays right in the middle of things! He provided the opportunity for knowledge, my prior experiences in sales, herbs and nutrition, and my work at the hospital familiarizing me with medical background, as well as, a fine location in the middle of Hillsboro at the cheapest price of any of the buildings I’d checked.

However, I still hadn’t chosen a name for the business. The name should reflect what I was offering. I kept it simple—I wanted to offer natural products for health and for the home. That was it—Natural Health and Home. Simple.

What about a logo? When I walked into the storefront on Monday, I saw a yellow stripe painted around the perimeter of the store a few feet from the ceiling. Immediately, I had a mental picture of what I wanted: A yellow sunshine with twelve rays and three stalks of wheat across the sun. It was all symbolic: yellow showing the light and healing power of the sun as well as abundance; twelve rays for the Biblical references to twelve (priesthood power, tribes, etc.); three stalks of wheat—three is Biblically symbolic and wheat represents food for the body as well as abundance.

What completely amazes me is that in the whole world, I was “chosen” and prepared to own a health food store. I seek Heavenly Father’s guidance daily for myself and my customers that I may be a blessing to each of them in some way. My customers have blessed my life, not only by shopping at Natural Health and Home, but by becoming friends. They’ve seen me through the trauma of my

mom's stroke and given me care giving tips based on their experiences. We've shared our lives—the joys, struggles, and sadness, the concerns, and—well—life!