FOR THE PEOPLE

ESSIAC

The Story Of A Remarkable Canadian Indian Remedy For Cancer

By Richard Walters

Essiac, a harmless herbal tea, was used by Canadian nurse Rene Caisse to successfully treat thousands of cancer patients from the 1920's until her death in 1978 at the age of 90.

Refusing payment for her services, and instead accepting only voluntary contributions, the Bracebridge, Ontario nurse brought remissions to hundreds of documented cases, many abandoned as "hopeless" or "terminal" by orthodox medicine. She aided countless more in prolonging life and relieving pain. Caisse obtained remarkable results against a wide variety of cancers, treating persons by administering Essiac through hypodermic injection or oral ingestion.

The formula for the herbal remedy was given to Caisse in 1922 by a hospital patient whose breast cancer had been healed by an Ontario Indian medicine man. Essiac came within just three votes of being legalized by the Canadian parliament in 1938. Over the years, many prominent physicians voiced their support for the efficacy of Caisse's medicine. For example, Dr. Charles Brusch of the prestigious Brusch Medical Center - former physician to President John F. Kennedy - declared that "Essiac has merit in the treatment of cancer" and revealed that he cured his own cancer with it. In a notarized statement made on April 6, 1990, Dr. Brusch testified, "I endorse this therapy even today, for I have in fact cured my own cancer, the original site of which the lower bowel, through Essiac alone."

Despite such support, Rene Caisse lived under the constant threat of persecution and harassment by Canadian authorities. Today Essiac is unapproved for marketing in the United States or Canada. Resperin Corporation of Ontario provides Essiac to patients in Canada under a special agreement with Canada's Health and Welfare Department, which permits "emergency releases of Essiac on compassionate grounds" while deeming it an ineffective cancer treatment. Another company reportedly has the authentic formula for the herbal remedy in Caisse's handwriting, plus eight of her formula variations for specific cancers, including cancer of the prostate. It recently made Essiac available through various distributors. A number of herbal distributors claim to sell the original Essiac tea. Prospective users should carefully weigh the background of all vendors and examine all claims with caution.

CONFLICT OVER ESSIAC

Rene Caisse refused to publicly divulge the precise Essiac formula during her lifetime, fearing that a monopolistic medical establishment would either try to discredit the formula once they got hold of it, or else would use it to reap enormous profits. Also, Caisse wanted Essiac safe for immediate use on suffering cancer patients, but medical experts demanded prior testing on lab mice. Caisse repeatedly offered to reveal the exact formula and method of preparation if Canadian medical authorities would first admit that Essiac had merit in the treatment of cancer. Doctors and politicians argued that they realistically couldn't give any such endorsement until they first knew what was in the herbal mixture. The result was a stand-off.

INGREDIENTS OF ESSIAC

The principle herbs in Essiac include burdock root, turkey rhubarb root (or Indian rhubarb), sheep sorrel, and slippery elm bark. Burdock root, a key active ingredient, is also a major ingredient of the Hoxsey herbal remedy. Significantly, two Hungarian scientists in 1966 reported "considerable anti-tumor activity" in a purified fraction of burdock. In 1984, Japanese scientists at Nagoya University discovered in burdock a new type of desmutagen, a substance uniquely capable of reducing cell mutation either in the absence or in the presence of metabolic activation. The Japanese researchers named this new property, "B-factor," for burdock factor. Another herb in Essiac, turkey rhubarb (Indian rhubarb), was demonstrated to have anti-tumor activity in the sarcoma-37 animal test system. Herbalists believe that the synergistic interaction of herbal ingredients contributes to the therapeutic effect. They point out that laboratory tests on a single, isolated compound from an herbal formula fails to address this synergistic potency.

WHAT ESSIAC DOES

From her work with cancer patients, Caisse observed that Essiac broke down nodular masses to a more normal tissue, while greatly alleviating pain. Many patients would report an enlarging and hardening of the tumor after a few treatments. Then the tumor would start to soften, and people frequently reported discharging large amounts of pus and fleshy material. Masses of diseased tissue were sloughed off in persons with cancer of the breast, rectum and internal cancers. After this process, the tumor would be gone.

Caisse theorized that one of the herbs in Essiac reduced tumor growth, and that the other herbs acted as blood purifiers, carrying away destroyed tissue as well as infections thrown off by the malignancy. She also speculated that Essiac strengthened the body's innate defense mechanisms, enabling normal cells to destroy abnormal ones as nature intended.

Even if a tumor didn't disappear, Caisse maintained that it could be regressed, then surgically removed after six to eight Essiac treatments, with much less risk of metastasizing and causing new outbreaks. "If there is any suspicion that any malignant cells are left after the operation," she stated, "then Essiac should be given once a week for at least three months, supplying the body with the resistance to a recurrence that is needed."

"In the case of cancer of the breast," she wrote, "the primary growth will usually invade the mammary gland of the opposite breast of the auxilla, or both. If Essiac is administered either orally or by hypodermic injection, into the forearm, the secondary growth will regress into the primary mass, enlarging it for a time, but when it is all localized it will loosen and soften and can then be removed without the danger of recurrence."

TESTING OF ESSIAC

Caisse spoke from personal experience, having administered thousands of Essiac.
injections to gravely ill patients, always under the supervision of a physician. One wonders where are the controlled clinical trials of Essiac today for desperate patients who might benefit from it? In 1983, Dr. E. Bruce Hendrick, chief of neurosurgery at the University of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, urged Canada's highest health officials to launch "a scientific clinical trial" of Essiac.

In a letter to the Canadian Minister of Health and Welfare, Dr. Kendrick reported that eight to ten patients with surgically treated tumors of the central nervous system, after taking an Essiac regimen, had "escaped from the conventional methods of therapy including both radiation and chemotherapy."

Yet today patients in Canada must go through a bureaucratic maze which makes it difficult or impossible for them to receive Essiac therapy.

REDISCOVERY OF INDIAN TREATMENT

The story of Essiac began in 1922 when Caisse, a surgical nurse working in a Haileybury, Ontario hospital, noticed an elderly patient with a strangely scarred, gnarled breast. When Rene asked the woman, who was nearly 80, what had happened, the woman replied that some 30 years earlier she had developed a growth on her breast, and an Indian friend offered to heal it with herbal medicine.

This woman and her husband then went to Ontario, where doctors confirmed the diagnosis of advanced cancer and told her the breast would have to be surgically removed. Opting instead to take her chances with the Indian herbal healer, the woman returned to his mining camp and drank the brew daily. Her tumors gradually shrank, then disappeared. More than two decades later, when Caisse stumbled across her in the hospital, she was totally cancer-free.

Caisse asked the woman for the herbal recipe. "My thought was that if I should ever develop cancer, I would use it," she later wrote.

In 1924 Caisse's aunt, Mireza Potvin, was diagnosed with advanced cancer of the stomach and was told she had six months, at most, to live. Remembering the Indian brew, Rene asked her aunt's physician, Dr. R.O. Fisher of Toronto, for permission to try it on her dying relative. Dr. Fisher consented, and Rene gathered the herbs to brew the tea. After drinking this herbal concoction daily for two months, Mireza Potvin rallied, got well, and went on to live another 21 years.

Soon Caisse and Dr. Fisher teamed to treat cancer patients who had been written off by their doctors as terminal. Many of these patients, too, showed dramatic improvement. Working nights and weekends in her mother's basement in Toronto, which Rene converted into a laboratory, she and Dr. Fisher experimented on mice inoculated with human cancer. They modified the combination of herbs to maximize efficacy. It was at this point that Rene named the herbal treatment Essiac (her name spelled backwards).

One of Caisse's first cases was a woman with cancer of the bowel, complicated by diabetes. In order to avoid complications, the patient stopped taking insulin in 1925. Under Essiac therapy, the tumor at first became larger and harder, almost obstructing the bowel. As Essiac injections were continued, the tumor softened, got smaller, and disappeared. Oddly enough, the woman's diabetes also disappeared during the course of the Essiac treatment.

Dr. Frederick Banting, world-famous as the co-discoverer of insulin, reviewed this case in 1926. According to Caisse, Dr. Banting concluded that Essiac must have somehow stimulated the pancreatic gland into normal functioning, thus clearing up the diabetic condition. If this reported result is true, Essiac would appear to have potential in the treatment of diabetes.

Nine doctors petitioned the Canadian federal health department in 1926, urging that Caisse be allowed to test her cancer remedy on a broad scale. In their signed petition, they testified that Essiac reduced tumor size, prolonged life in hopeless cases, and showed "remarkably beneficial results," even where "everything else had been tried without effect."

In response, Ottawa's Department of Health and Welfare sent two investigating doctors armed with official papers to arrest Nurse Caisse or restrain her from practicing medicine without a license. When Rene explained to them that she was treating only terminal cases and accepting only voluntary contributions, the two interrogators backed off. One of them, Dr. W. C. Arnold, was so impressed by Caisse's clinical reports that he persuaded her to continue her experiments with mice at the Christie Street Hospital in Toronto. In that series of tests, mice implanted with human cancer responded to Essiac injections by living longer, and their tumors regressed.

In 1935, the Town Council of Bracebridge turned over to Rene Caisse - for $1 per month rent - the old British Lion Hotel for use as a "cancer clinic." Over the next seven years, she would treat thousands of patients in this building, which had been repossessed by the village for back taxes. This unique arrangement came about after Dr. A. F. Bastedo of Bracebridge referred a terminally ill patient with bowel cancer to Caisse. Dr. Bastedo was so impressed by the patient's recovery, he persuaded the town council to make the hotel building available to Caisse.

Shortly after the clinic opened, her 72-year-old mother, Frieselde, was diagnosed with cancer of the liver, inoperable because of her weak heart. One of Ontario's top specialists, Dr. Roscoe Graham, said she had only days to live. Caisse began giving daily injections of Essiac to her mother, who had not been told she had cancer. After ten days of Essiac treatment, Frieselde Caisse began to recover. She regained full health, with diminishing doses of Essiac, and lived another 18 years before passing away quietly from heart disease.

"This repaid me for all of my work," Caisse reflected years later, "having given my mother 18 years of life which she would not have had. (It) made up for a great deal of the persecution I had endured at the hands of the medical world."

After word of Caisse's impressive results spread to the U.S., a leading diagnostician in Chicago introduced her to Dr. John Wolder, director of the tumor clinic at Northwestern University Medical School. In 1937 Wolder arranged for Caisse to treat 30 terminal cancer patients under the direction of five doctors. Caisse commuted across the border to Chicago, carrying her bottles of freshly prepared herbal brew. After one and a half years of Essiac therapy, the Chicago doctors concluded that Essiac prolonged life, shrank tumors, and relieved pain.

Dr. Emma Carson, a Los Angeles physician, spent 24 days inspecting the Bracebridge clinic in 1937. A skeptical investigator who originally intended to stay in Bracebridge for a couple of days, she scrutinized clinical records and examined over 400 patients. In her detailed report,
Dr. Carson wrote, "Several prominent physicians and surgeons who are quite familiar with the indisputable results obtained in response to "Esiac" treatments...conceded to me that the Rene M. Caisse "Esiac Treatment" for cancer is the most humane, satisfactory and frequently successful remedy for the annihilation of cancer "that they had found at that time"...

"I also visited, examined and obtained data at patients' homes where they were pursuing their business vocations as ably as if they had never experienced the afflictions of cancer. They declared their restoration to normalcy was indisputable due to Miss Caisse's "Esiac" treatments...They emphatically declared "were It not for Miss Caisse's "Esiac remedy for cancer, they would have departed from this earth"...

"As I examined each patient regarding intervening progress during the preceding week and recorded notes of Indisputable improvements...I could scarcely believe my brain and eyes were not deceiving me, on some of the most seriously afflicted cases..."

"The vast majority of Miss Caisse's patients are brought to her for treatment after surgery, radium, x-rays, emplastrums, etc., has failed to be helpful, and the patients are pronounced incurable. Really the progress obtainable and the actual results from "Esiac" treatments and the rapidity of repair was absolutely marvelous and must be seen to convincingly confirm belief."

Another independent investigator of the Bracebridge clinic was Dr. Benjamin Guyatt, a University of Toronto curator and anatomy professor. After making dozens of inspections of the clinic during the 1930s, Dr. Guyatt summarized his findings as follows: "The relief from pain is a noticeable feature, as pain in these cases is very difficult to control. On checking authentic cancer cases, it was found that hemorrhage was readily brought under control in many difficult cases. Open lesions of lip and breast responded to treatment. Cancers of the cervix, rectum, and bladder had been caused to disappear. Patients with cancer of the stomach, diagnosed by reputable physicians and surgeons, have returned to normal activity."

"...The number responding wholly or in part, I do not know. But, I do know that I have witnessed in this clinic a treatment which brings about restoration, through destroying the tumor tissue, and supplying that something which improves the mental outlook of life and facilitates re-establishment of physiological functions."

ESSIAC RECEIVES SUPPORT

Supporters of the Bracebridge nurse presented a bill to the Ontario parliament in 1938 which would allow Caisse to treat cancer patients with Essiac, free from the constant threat of arrest to which she had been subjected. Over 55,000 people signed a petition supporting the bill, including patients, their families, and many doctors. The bill failed to pass by three votes.

This set the stage for the creation of a Royal Cancer Commission, which turned out to be one of the biggest judicial farces on record. Comprised of six orthodox physicians with expertise in surgery, radiation, and diagnostics, and led by an Ontario Supreme Court Justice, the Commission was charged with an impartial investigation of alternative cancer therapies. Public hearings opened in March 1939.

Even though 387 of Caisse's patients showed up to testify, only 49 were allowed to be heard. One after another, patients and ex-patients testified that Rene Caisse had restored them to health and saved their lives, after they had been given up as dead by their orthodox doctors.

Annie Bonar testified that her diagnosed uterine and bowel cancer had spread after radium treatments until her arm had swelled to double its size and turned black. Weighing 90 pounds the night before she was to have the arm amputated, she opted for Essiac therapy instead. After four months of the herbal treatment, her arm was back to normal and she had gained 60 pounds. A series of x-ray exams revealed she was cancer-free.

With characteristic dishonesty, the Royal Commission listed Annie Bonar's case as "recovery due to radiation."

Walter Hampson, another patient of Caisse who came to testify, had cancer of the lip, diagnosed by a pathologist. Refusing radium, he underwent Essiac therapy and was restored to normal. Despite the fact that he never had an operation (other than removal of a tiny nodule for analysis), the Commission classified his case as "recovery due to surgery."

These examples could be multiplied many times. The Cancer Commission, in its godlike wisdom, played another trick: It labeled numerous cases as "misdiag-

noses." even though the patients had been definitely diagnosed as having cancer by two or more qualified physicians. Using duplicitous tactics like these, the Royal Commission was able to conclude that "the evidence adduced does not justify any favorable conclusion as to the merits of "Esiac" as a remedy for cancer..."

THE CLINIC CLOSES BUT TESTING CONTINUES IN THE U.S.

In 1942, a disheartened Rene Caisse, fearing imprisonment for her medical work, closed the clinic. Over the next 30-odd years, she would continue to treat cancer patients, in great secrecy, from her home. Documents indicate that she was under surveillance by Canada's health department during the 1950s.

At the age of 70, in 1959, Caisse was invited to the Brusch Medical Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she treated terminal cancer patients and laboratory mice with Essiac under the supervision of 18 doctors. After three months, Dr. Charles Brusch, eminent physician to the Massachusetts elite, and his research director, Dr. Charles McClure, concluded that Essiac "has been shown to cause a decided recession of the mass, and a definite change in cell formation" in mice. "Clinically, on patients suffering from pathologically proven cancer, it reduces pain and causes a recession In the growth; patients have gained weight and shown an improvement in their general health... Remarkably beneficial results were obtained even on those cases at the "end of the road" where it proved to prolong life and the quality of that life...The doctors do not say that Essiac is a cure, but they do say it is of benefit."

Sloan-Kettering tested one of the herbs in Essiac, sheep sorrel, between 1973 and 1976. Caisse sent a quantity of the herb to Sloan-Kettering along with detailed instructions on how to prepare it as an injectable solution. On June 10, 1975, Dr. Chester Stock, a Sloan-Kettering vice-president, wrote to Caisse: "Enclosed are test data in two experiments indicating some regressions in sarcoma 180 of mice treated with Essiac."

Despite these promising results, the tests ground to a halt when Caisse was horrified to learn that instead of boiling the herb, as she had instructed, the scientists were freezing it.
FORMULA IS SOLD
In 1977, Caisse sold the formula of Essiac to the Resperin Corporation, a Canadian company. Resperin's tests on Essiac, though initially encouraging, were dropped on for years. Patients in Canada seeking Essiac through the government must first find a physician who will sponsor them and submit the appropriate form to the government. Many doctors are apparently reluctant to do so, fearing establishment pressure or ridicule. Even if the necessary forms are submitted, permission to use Essiac is not always granted.

A report issued in 1982 by the Health Protection Branch of the Canadian Health and Welfare Department found that "no clinical evidence exists to support claims that Essiac is an effective treatment for cancer." This blanket condemnation ignores sixty years of clinical documentation and observational evidence, as well as laboratory studies. The report said: "In 1982, 112 physicians who had received Essiac under these circumstances, were asked to submit case reports. Seventy-four responded on 87 cases patients. Of these, 78 showed no benefit. "Investigation of the nine remaining cases revealed that the cancer was progressing (four cases), the patient had died (two cases) or that the disease had stabilized (three cases)."

"Of this last group, all of the patients had previously undergone some form of cancer treatment which could have stabilized the disease."

The report does not explain why only 74 of the 112 physicians responded. Were the other 38 doctors perhaps afraid to submit responses favorable towards Essiac, fearing orthdox ridicule and peer pressure?

Of the 78 patients that "showed no benefit," it is not clear whether they experienced a substantial reduction in pain and an improvement in appetite. These important components of cancer care are generally not counted as "benefit" in such studies.

Where any of the severely ill 87 patients given intramuscular Injections of Essiac, as Rene Caisse so often administered in advanced cases? Critics of the report state that no patients were given intramuscular injections.

Was the herbal mixture prepared correctly, or were the herbs possibly frozen and damaged, as was done at Sloan-Kettering? We do not know. Were the oral doses given frequently enough?

In three cases "the disease had stabilized." What does this jargon mean? That the cancer is no longer growing? If so, that is indeed highly significant.

What about the four cases where the "cancer was progressing," plus the two cases where the "patient had died? Why are these counted among the remainder, rather than among those that "showed no benefit?" Doesn't that mean they did show some benefit, and if so, what was the benefit? The report does not say, And so on.

Even a casual analysis of these poorly run trials illustrates the bias that pervades much research purporting to be objective and scientific.

Gary Glum, biographer of Rene Caisse, calls the Canadian government report an outright deception. He says that some people listed in the report as "dead" were actually alive and well, and that a number of them showed up on Caisse's doorstep in 1978, the first year of the study, to thank her profusely for having saved their lives. Glum views reports as one more attempt by Canada's medical orthodoxy to discredit Essiac.

A Los Angeles chiropractor, Glum spent three years researching Caisse's story. In his biography of Caisse, "Calling of an Angel," published in 1988, Glum says he obtained the formula for Essiac from a woman who had achieved total remission of her cancer after going to Rene Caisse for treatment. This woman, according to Glum, was given the Essiac formula in writing by Caisse. The unidentified woman, as Glum tells it, tried to alert the world to the efficacy of Essiac in treating cancer, and in the late 1970s she took her case as far as the Michigan Superior Court, but was then constantly harassed by FBI and FDA officials. Glum states that he later verified the authenticity of this formula with Mary McPherson, an Ontario woman who was Caisse's close friend. McPherson lived and worked alongside Caisse for many years, after the Bracebridge nurse had cured McPherson's mother of cancer in the 1930s. In my telephone interview with McPherson (Aug. 27, 1991), she confirmed that she did in fact meet with Glum and told me that his formula was indeed correct, although there were variations that Caisse occasionally used.

Glum's critics contend that the formula Glum gives is an instruction sheet accompanying his book is inaccurate. They charge that it is missing at least one key ingredient of Essiac, and is drastically off in the ratios of the various herbs. The critics allege that Glum's version of Essiac is not the true Essiac, and is potentially harmful to patients.

Glum steadfastly denies this. He points out that he put himself at great personal and legal risk to divulge what he maintains is the correct formula. He asserts that he is the only person in the alternative cancer field who has openly publicized the exact details of a purported cancer cure, unlike others who keep the details of the therapy secret of proprietary. Thousands of copies of Glum's book were seized and held up at the U.S.-Canada border by Canadian authorities who said they viewed the book as "advertising" of an unapproved drug. The book was finally allowed into Canada through the strenuous efforts of a high-ranking Canadian politician, yet thousands of the confiscated books have never been released, according to Glum.

Glum says he paid the woman $120,000 for the Essiac formula and insists that he will never recover the money. He claims that his formula is identical to the Essiac tested by medical researchers in the Soviet Union and China when Resperin officials were attempting to interest the medical establishments of those nations in a cancer cure.

According to Glum, the herbal potion prepared by following the instructions supplied in his book has helped many cancer and AIDS patients get well. Some AIDS patients taking the herbal tea report that drastically low T-cell counts have risen to normal.

Sheila Snow, who co-authored a pivotal 1977 article on Caisse for Canada's Homemaker's magazine, believes that Glum's version of Essiac "is the recipe Rene used in the 1930s when she prepared the remedy in her Bracebridge clinic for hundreds of patients, and quite conceivably the one passed along to the Resperin Corporation for its clinical studies." In a July 1991 article on Essiac in the Canadian Journal of Herbal Medicine, Snow gives the exact Essiac recipe and preparation instructions as presented by Glum. In Snow's opinion, "We owe a large debt of gratitude to Dr. Glum for having the courage to take on this enormous responsibility - no small task - at great personal financial expense, time and energy."
Dr. Charles Brusch, co-founder of the Brusch Medical Center where Caisse worked in 1958, reported, in a recent letter to this author (Aug. 3, 1991), "I have been taking this (i.e. Essiac) myself since 1984 when I had several cancer operations, and I have every faith in it. Of course, each person's case is different as well as each person's own individual health history... Someone may respond in a week: someone else may take longer, and whether or not someone is cured of cancer, the Essiac has been found to at least prolong life by simply strengthening the body."

Brusch went on to note: "I was given the true original formula by Rene when she worked with me in my clinic." He further stated that he passed along the authentic formula to Canadian radio producer broadcaster Elaine Alexander of Vancouver, who had been following the Essiac story for twenty years and had interviewed on her program many recovered cancer patients cured through Essiac. "Caisse later strengthened and perfected. This Essiac is offered strictly as a nutritional product, under a different brand name, and no claims are made by the manufacturer as to reputed value in treating cancer."

Alexander pointed out, in an interview, that the method of preparation of Essiac, the precise ratios of the Ingredients, and correct dosages are all crucial to its efficacy. She said that Caisse continually improved on Essiac over the years through experimentation, and she believes that Glum's version of Essiac may be "an early, primitive version" of a formula which Caisse later strengthened and perfected. Alexander further claims that the various "peculiar facsimiles" of Essiac on the market can be quite dangerous.

Testimonials from cancer patients who achieved complete remission or considerable improvement using Essiac are obtainable from Elaine Alexander. These remarkable letters document cases of the last fifteen years and encompass many types of cancer, including pancreatic, breast, and ovarian cancer, cancers of the esophagus, bile ducts, bladder, and bones; lymphoma and metastatic melanoma.

Muriel Peters of Creston, British Columbia, one of the people who wrote to Elaine Alexander to describe her experience with Essiac, was diagnosed in 1981 with a malignant tumor, the size of an orange, on the coccyx (the triangular bone at the base of the spine). She underwent surgery a week later. The surgeons told her, "We got it all," but according to her, "By the time they had found the tumor, it had begun to flare up the spine among the nerve endings, so they could not cut there." In September 1982, sensing numbness in the lower abdominal area, she went to the Cancer Clinic in Vancouver and was told by a head surgeon that the tumor had spread to the spine, was inoperable, and that nothing more could be done.

When her brother-in-law mentioned a man with cancer who had been given three months to live but was cured "somewhere down South," Muriel Peters followed up the lead. One month later she visited the Bio-Medical Center in Tijuana, Mexico and embarked on the Hoxsey herbal therapy. Within three months, sensation returned to her lower abdomen, but this was followed by "three months of excruciating pain which no pills could relieve." She then began taking Essiac in liquid form which she obtained from the Resperin Corporation through her doctor. After 12 days the pain subsided. "From then on I was on my way up."

For the next year and a half Peters took Essiac daily. She also remained on the Hoxsey regimen, consisting of a herbal tonic, vitamin supplements, and a special diet stressing fresh vegetables, greens, and fruits. "I felt the two complemented each other," Peters explains. "Without the diet and the vitamins, I really doubt if either of the tonics would have been quite enough. The body has to rebuild what the cancer has broken down, therefore healthy foods are needed by the body to reconstruct itself."

About a year after she started her dual Essiac/Hoxsey program, she returned for tests to the Vancouver Cancer Clinic. Incredulous, the attending doctor told her, "For reasons unknown there have been notable changes in your body."

"When the doctor left the room," recalls Peters, "the attending nurse asked me what I was doing to bring about these changes, and I only said "I'm on a diet and vitamins." The nurse asked, "On your own?" I replied, "No, by doctors directing." She then said, "Well, as long as you're not going to Mexican quacks, as many are doing."

A complete medical checkup in September 1989 pronounced Muriel Peters cancer-free and in excellent health. At 68, she reports, "I'm the healthiest person in British Columbia. I love life and living, I have learned what life is all about." Subsequent x-ray scan and blood tests in January 1991 confirm her to be in complete remission, nine years after she was diagnosed with inoperable, "hopeless" cancer.

Elaine Alexander says she met a Vancouver physician who in 1990 spoke with an oncologist at Canada's Health Protection Branch in Ottawa. This physician, according to Alexander, was told by the government oncologist, "It is known, at this office, that Essiac is effective against brain tumors, especially brain stem tumor." Critics of Essiac will no doubt dismiss this story as a self-serving fabrication. Yet, Gary Glum, when I interviewed him, had a remarkably similar story. He recalled a man who telephoned him to say that his two-year-old daughter had been diagnosed with an inoperable, advanced brain tumor and was given just weeks to live. The man, according to Glum, was calling to thank him for writing Caisse's biography, through which the caller had learned about Essiac. His daughter was saved through the herbal remedy and, at age five, was in perfect health.

Are these stories just a remarkable coincidence? Glum and Alexander do not speak to each other. Their relationship, if anything, is one of rivalry, each party feeling that he or she possesses the "correct" Essiac formula. So it is ridiculous to suggest that they "compared notes" in order to concoct similar accounts of Essiac's reported efficacy in treating cancer.

"For the People" subscriptions are available from For the People, 3 River Street, White Springs, Florida 32096 Phone 1-800 888-9999 or 1-904 397-4268

Reproduced (with permission) by NAP Buffalo, N.Y. (716) 873-6600