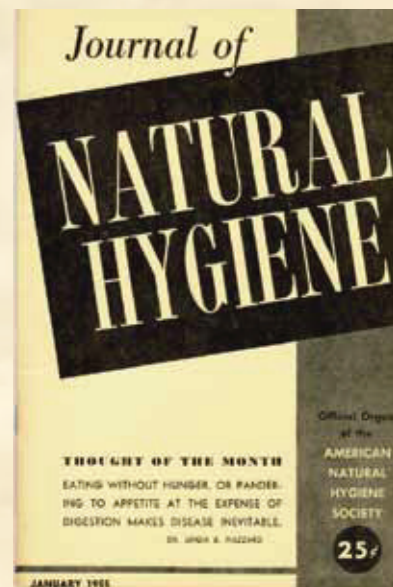


## The Climb to the Shelf

by William Esser, N.D., D.C.

**Editor's note:** The first health journal of the NHA (originally called The American Natural Hygiene Society) was called The Journal of Natural Hygiene and its first issue was produced in September 1954 and continued until September 1957. Like Health Science today, it was largely devoid of advertising and contained scholarly articles written by the leading voices and pioneers of today's whole-foods, plant-based health movement, including Drs. Herbert Shelton, Gerald Benesh, Christopher Gian-Cursio, and more. The following powerful article appeared in the January 1955 issue and was authored by our organization's co-founder, Dr. William Esser. We once again think you will find Dr. Esser's words to be as timely and insightful today as they were an amazing 61 years ago!



**T**he climb to the shelf is an easy one. For many people, especially men, it takes place between the ages of 40 and 60. For some it takes place even earlier. Those in athletic circles usually relinquish their places and step down from the pinnacle of the champion when they should properly remain there.

To see a boxer or tennis medalist at the youthful age of 30 unable to stay in the heat of competition when he should stand superior to the younger fry by the great advantage of experience is a sad indication that physically he is "going soft," and has neglected the machinery which won him his laurels. This is indeed a shortsighted state of affairs. The racecar driver well knows the perfect care he must give his metal steed in order to continue winning the race. The race horse owner realizes, too well, the pains which must be given to every detail of his horse if it is to be in fine fetal.

Perhaps a good many athletes understand this, but due to the popularity distilled by the combination of great achievement and the strength of youth, society adopts them as its pets and surrounds them with conditions incompatible to the very thing for which they are acclaimed—their health and strength. Long hours devoted to eating rich foods, drinking alcohol, over-indulgence in sex, and the soft living indulged in by society make short work of top athletic performance.

Babe Ruth's inordinate appetite made him a cripple and caused premature death when instead he could have gone on to greater achievements, along with Honus Wagner, Connie Mack, and others.

The deaths of prominent figures such as Rudolph Valentino, Heywood Broun, Wendell Willkie, Lou Gehrig, F.D. Roosevelt, Robert Taft, Fiorello La Guardia, and Phillip

Murray are shocking examples of premature and unnecessary deaths. These are tragedies which occur almost daily and their announcement often saddens the entire nation.

They are felt more strongly because often death takes place at an age at which one should be in the very strength and vigor of life. It strikes men in prominent public positions and frequently influences all of

us in one way or another. Writers, actors, executives, athletes, professional men and women, those who form the very bulwark of society people who are depended upon and leaned upon by others; these are the people whom we notice most and who affect us most when ill-health or ill-advised care snatches them from our midst.

In the smaller circle of our friends, there are individuals for whom we have much more personal attach-

ments and often great dependency. To have them become ill and suddenly leave us long before they should is a tragedy, particularly if they have been leading useful lives and are contributing something constructive to society.

In the past 30 years, claims are constantly being made to the effect that man's life expectancy has been raised from a possible 35 to a probable 65 years. Professor C.H. Forsyth, then at Dartmouth College, refuted this by pointing out that the average lives of the young have been increased, but that the old die younger.

He said that those who have predicted marvelous

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increases in the average length of life have failed to consider that practically all reductions in the death rate have been in children, and that little or no attention has been given to ages beyond the prime of life. He found that the great gains at early ages are more than offset by the losses at advanced ages. He concluded, with the somewhat startling statement, that the average life span in this country is actually decreasing, and that unless the adults can manage to live more sanely, it will be a losing fight for the elderly for some time to come.

Adults were urged to inform themselves and give some thought to the habits which they clearly know to be bad and could be easily changed. This analyst stated that there is surely no worse influence than that wielded by the well-meaning authorities who go around airing their ill-founded beliefs that all is going fine and that before long everybody is going to live from 75 to 100 years.

The great reduction in death rates in children is wholly a result of improved hygienic conditions—to cleanliness, sunlight, fresh air, better sanitary engineering, saner clothing habits, and a more plentiful supply of fresh fruits and vegetables. These improvements alone, for which the revolutionary work of the early Natural Hygienists may be thanked, are responsible for the reduction in serious and generalized epidemics and plagues.

The adult, however, is becoming further and further engulfed in a quagmire of injurious habits, which lead to premature ageing, senility, and unexpected death. No one but a mad man will knowingly walk in front of a rapidly approaching automobile, nor will anyone but a mad man or a congenital idiot knowingly jump into the grave 20 to 30 or more years too soon if he knows how to avoid it. If he knows how to avoid it, it is probably the whole solution to the matter.

John J. Tilden, M.D., in his publications, many times asked the question: "Does education educate?" Any sober thought on the matter would be hard pressed to come up with an affirmative reply. This is true in modern medicine and it is true in the matter of sociology. Man is becoming more sickly in his body, his mind, and his relationship with

his neighbor. It is education which has failed to point out and teach the simple necessities of life. With all of his science, man knows less about "living" than the natives of jungle Africa.

To the man or woman who finds good health a thing of the past, and the necessity for slowing down at work, in exercise, or in anything which was part of normal vigorous life, Natural Hygiene offers the solution. It points the way out. It teaches and fills the void left by conventional education.

Don't go on the shelf, and if you're already there, don't console yourself with the drab thought that everyone gets old until you have fully investigated the possibilities of losing the encumbrances, the pains, the inertia, the digestion problems, the catarrhal manifestations or, in short, the toxemia and enervation responsible for premature retirement.

Ill health and inefficiency, fatigue, and irritability do not result from a "virus infection." Health is lost by driving the body beyond normal limits in eating and play, in working and sensuous gratification, and in study and idleness. Anything which uses energy beyond a point where the amount of rest permitted by the body will not replenish it is excessive and causes premature aging. Waste products of metabolism are not entirely disposed of and the

body is made to harbor poisons against its best interests. It does so with the least possible danger, but the enemy is there and doing serious injury nevertheless. Maximum health is robbed and mediocrity becomes the standard in everything which is done.

Don't go on the shelf without trying the new, exciting mode of life Natural Hygiene will outline for you. As Dr. Herbert M. Shelton has often said, "Health must be built, not bought," Devote a year or two to Natural Hygiene and the evaporation of your problems will seem like a miracle.



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