

## Freedom from IBS & Obesity after 44 Years

*The China Study and TrueNorth led me to amazing health and freedom from debilitating IBS.*

*by Joan Ransier*

I am 63 years old and have lived with an embarrassing secret since my late teens: I have Irritable Bowel Syndrome (D), with urgency. It affected everything and every choice I made on a daily basis. I did not live life to the fullest because I lived in fear I would have an accident or have to run to the restroom at a moment's notice. I avoided any outing where there wasn't a restroom easily accessible.

I have also been overweight since I was 10. Overweight was my normal, except for those very few years when I starved myself to get to an ideal weight. I had short-lived success with Weight Watchers, and also tried Nutrisystem, Atkins, and calorie restriction. I wouldn't stay on any program for long because I couldn't tolerate being hungry all the time. Both IBS and my weight consumed my daily thoughts and decisions for at least 44 years.

In 2006 my health declined further. I experienced Bell's Palsy (temporary paralysis) on the right side of my face. I was one of the fortunate ones who recovered quickly with very few noticeable effects. But a year later I started having frequent debilitating events of extreme pain in my neck and throat area, which would stop me dead in my tracks. I believe it had something to do with

the Bell's Palsy, as the pain was on the same side, but no doctor, dentist, chiropractor, or physical therapist could diagnose it. After a couple years of living with this pain, I chose to go to an acupuncturist, which helped dramatically. As a side note, my weight at this time was a dangerous 257 pounds.

In July 2010, my acupuncturist, Nikki, asked me to read *The China Study*. Her only comment was that I was a "very intelligent woman" and that she

thought it would be good for me to read. I didn't know anything about the book, but I wasted no time reading it. It fascinated me and I could not put it down. It answered many questions about why heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, and autoimmune diseases are so prevalent today.

It was clear that a whole-food, plant-based, no-oil diet offered the best chance to reverse or avoid those diseases completely.

Knowing many family members and friends with these diseases, I realized that at my weight and age I would probably be next. I had given up on weight loss and starvation

diets, but felt I could change the food I ate to regain health on my insides—such as lowering my cholesterol of 215—and hopefully avoid those diseases. I embraced a plant-based diet on August



*Joan in December 2017*

*"Both IBS and my weight consumed my daily thoughts and decisions for at least 44 years."*



*Joan, in foreground, at a family gathering in 2006*



*Joan and her husband, David, biking in 2007*

1, 2010. My meat-centric husband, David, read *The China Study* too and, shockingly, joined me. But in retrospect, we had not become healthy, we had only become vegans.

### More to Learn

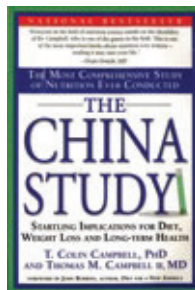
During our first year as vegans, we ate a lot of transitional foods, including oils, nuts and peanut butter, and vegan restaurant food. In spite of our imperfect plant-based diet, my lab numbers did go down, along with my weight. Eventually we started reading more books and watching videos about the plant-based lifestyle. We also attended Portland's annual VegFests, with their many amazing speakers, including Dr. Michael Greger, and we watched the premiere of the documentary *Forks Over Knives*. Following this, we started to eat healthier. We cut out the vegan junk food and oil, and by February 2012 I was down to 175 pounds and my cholesterol was 155.

Neither of us knows what happened, but we went back to our old vegan junk food ways and started gaining weight back. From that point forward we had a series of ups and downs on our journey to good health. But ultimately we were the problem: we didn't want to give up our overeating, nightly snacking, eating out, and binging on nuts.

Through all this, my IBS did get slightly better, but not enough. By late 2016 my cholesterol was back up to 178, my weight was over 200 pounds, and I had the awful, embarrassing IBS accident that I always dreaded one day might happen. Thankfully I was alone with David and, let me say, I married the most amazing man. The kindness and support he showed through something so horrific for me will never be forgotten.

Portland VegFest in November 2016 was the turning point for my health, weight, and IBS. I attended a lecture by Dr. Alan Goldhamer, founder of TrueNorth Health Center, located in Santa Rosa, California, which is known for promoting water fasting, followed by a salt-, oil-, and sugar-free (SOS-free), whole-food, plant-based diet as the road to recovery. I had heard about TrueNorth before, but decided that it was too extreme for me.

Right after the lecture I saw Melanie, an acquaintance I had met through our plant-based journey. She looked amazing and told me she had been to TrueNorth. She gave me her testimonial, describing her experience there, and I gave her excuses why I couldn't go, such as cost and work commitments. (The real reason was fear of change.) She looked at me and said, "What is your health worth?" I was



*"We were the problem: we didn't want to give up our overeating, nightly snacking, eating out, and binging on nuts."*

speechless. That single question got my mind racing. Between Dr. Goldhamer and Melanie, I realized I was receiving a message from the universe.

After much introspection, I decided to go to TrueNorth for three weeks in March 2017. David chose to join me, with goals of getting off his blood pressure meds, lowering cholesterol, and losing weight. My only goal was to heal myself from IBS. Weight loss and cholesterol lowering would be secondary benefits, if I were to be so fortunate. David and I talked about the possibility that I could leave TrueNorth with very few safe foods I could eat, and we decided that if it resolved my IBS it would be worth the limitations.

My doctor was Peter Raisanen. What an amazing experience I had working with him. He really listened to me; there is no doubt in my mind that he truly cares about his patients. He prescribed a seven-day water fast followed by re-feeding of "safe" foods for people with digestive issues.

Every three days I would add a new food and watch for a reaction. The personal attention, care, and emotional support of the TrueNorth staff, along with the camaraderie with the other patients, truly made for a positive healing environment.

A comforting message I remember from one of Dr. Goldhamer's lectures was that it wasn't my fault I was so overweight. Today's foods are so highly

concentrated with calories, salt, oil, and sugar that many people's bodies can't judge anymore when it is appropriate to stop eating. The satiation mechanism is being fooled and the foods are highly addictive.

### My Health Today

I am now SOS-free and gluten-free, which has eliminated food cravings and given me a new freedom—one where I no longer obsess about food or my next meal. I love the food I eat now. I eat a reasonable serving, get comfortably full, and if I am still hungry, I eat more food without feeling guilty. Eating out means I bring my own food, and I am content with that because I feel so great! My plant-based, SOS-free way of eating has also stopped me from nightly snacking and binging.

My IBS is now 95% under control, and when I do have a problem, I'm able to clearly identify what food is causing it. I have about 50 safe foods and have actually slowed down adding new ones, as I love the foods I am eating and am in no hurry to add more. Since March 2017 I have lost 84 pounds, with a grand total of 137 pounds lost since 2010. I'm no longer hungry all the time and food no longer dominates my thoughts. My cholesterol is 136, triglycerides 85,

*Continued on page 28*



for Responsible Medicine, Leslie decided to apply to Food for Life to be a PCRM cooking instructor. She was quickly accepted into the program and traveled to Washington, DC to study to become a PCRM instructor. Once certified, she began teaching classes in Sun City, including classes focused on foods for weight loss, cancer prevention and survival, diabetes management and prevention, and heart disease prevention and management.

More recently, Leslie has expanded the number of people who can learn from her by going on Sun City TV with her own cooking show, titled *Healthy Eating with Leslie*. By doing so, she is no longer speaking to just 25 students at a time. Instead, she is able to reach many of Sun City's 14,000-plus residents daily and on YouTube. This television program has been an extension of Leslie's mission to educate and motivate.


### Cruising to a Better Lifestyle

It's not all work and no play for Leslie, however. For the last five years, she has been on the Holistic Holiday at Sea Cruise, also known as the Vegan Cruise, out of Miami, Florida each spring. She enjoys this up to 11-day conference, featuring gourmet whole, plant-based foods, visits to Caribbean islands and countries, onboard entertainment, and numerous lectures by leaders in the WFPB movement.

Unfortunately, because of his schedule as a pilot for sporting events around the country, her partner Richard has only been able to join her on one of these cruises to date. True to her calling, Leslie has taken advantage of his absence to volunteer and assist the program staff with various duties, including introducing speakers during the cruise. Her introductions have become so popular that

cruise organizers now have Leslie introduce all the big-name speakers during the cruise.

Leslie enjoys cruising and she is hoping that she and Richard will be able to get the time off in October for NHA's river cruise in Germany. To Leslie, that will be the best of both worlds, combining her love of travel with a boat full of WFPB cruisers. She is looking forward to the sights and the gourmet plant-based meals being offered by that cruise.

Leslie has also been actively promoting the NHA cruise to ESLL members. As a result of her promotions, there are several women in ESLL who are looking at the cruise as a girls' fun vacation. For Leslie, it's all part of her mission, a mission that derived from watching one talk given by Dr. Esselstyn to the city of Medina. It all goes back to that decision and the statement, "We cannot not do this." Leslie will tell anyone she meets, "You cannot *not* do this." 



**J. Lanning Smith (Jim)** is past president and current board member of the Eat Smart Live Longer Club in Sun City Hilton Head. He lost 150 pounds and got off of all prescription medications through following a whole food, plant-based lifestyle. He is a graduate of the eCornell T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies and the Rouxbe Forks Over Knives Plant-Based Online Cooking School. You can visit Jim's blogs at [FinallyOurTime.com](http://FinallyOurTime.com) and [TheArtofPlant-BasedMealCreation.com](http://TheArtofPlant-BasedMealCreation.com), and read his column in his community newspaper, *The Bluffton Sun*.

### Joan Ransier Testimony

*Continued from page 26*

LDL 73, HDL 47, fasting glucose 85, and A1c 5.1. I'm on no meds. In addition, David is off his blood pressure meds and has lost weight too (as an added bonus, he is off his CPAP machine and has stopped snoring). TrueNorth was life changing for us both.

For the first time in my life, I am confident the excess weight is never coming back. I don't think much about my IBS anymore, and I don't live in fear. I have a new relationship with food that makes me smile, because it's all very clear to me.

Last year I became a member of



*Joan and her husband, David, with their grandkids, Keller, Finley, and Carlie (left to right), and their dog Lady; taken December 2017*

the NHA and am excited about all the health-promoting educational resources available through this remarkable association. Exploring the website, it is clear there is a wealth of benefits to membership.

I am so grateful to Nikki, Melanie, Dr. Raisanen and TrueNorth, my work for ensuring I could be gone for three weeks, and David for his unwavering support on our journey of growing old together in good health. One of the first things Dr. Raisanen said to me at TrueNorth was, "You are going to lose a lot of weight and feel great from this point forward." I didn't realize how very prophetic that statement was. 