

## Taking Control of My Life and Health

*I knew the elements of truly good health but needed help putting them into action*

*by Wanda Huberman*

**P**rior to meeting my husband, Mark Huberman, in 1989, I knew very little about vegetarian diets, and I certainly had never met someone who had been a vegan since birth, which Mark had.

My parents had a small farm in Ohio and my grandparents had a large tobacco farm in South Hill, Virginia, where meat and dairy were staples. Oddly enough, I was never a big fan of cheese (unless it was melted on a pizza), and I never liked milk. However, when I was pregnant with my daughter, Heather, the doctor said, in no uncertain terms: "You must drink milk, even if it is chocolate." And so I followed his advice.

My first introduction to a healthier diet and lifestyle didn't come from my husband, but from his father, Max, who suggested I read the book *Sugar Blues*, which he and his wife, Ruth, sold in their health food store. At the time, my daughter, now five years old, was scheduled for surgery to remove her tonsils and adenoids (surgeries that I also had growing up). After reading the book, I immediately took her off sugar and dairy and began to introduce more fruits and vegetables into her diet. With just these basic changes, the improvements in her health were dramatic. When I went back to the doctor for her pre-op appointment about six months



*Wanda in October 2011*



*Wanda in July 2012 after her visit to TrueNorth Health Center.*

later, the doctor couldn't explain why he previously thought this child had needed surgery. This was a very powerful experience for me as I was learning about better health.

To a large extent, my decision to become a vegetarian was the result of the education I received through attending National Health Association (NHA) conferences, where a wholesome, plant-based lifestyle was advocated. The education I received was powerful. However, the biggest challenge for me was eliminating eggs and dairy. You can get by eating out almost anywhere as a vegetarian as long as you were willing to eat cheese pizza, cheese lasagna, or processed foods; but if not, your choices are more limited. I found that giving up meat was pretty easy, but dairy and fish were more challenging for me.

Mark and I were married in 1991, and were dealing with the same pressures and challenges experienced by other parents raising children, on a whole-foods, plant-based diet. Our children Heather and Lisa were eight and five at the time. But continuing to attend the NHA confer-



*Wanda and Mark vacationing in Israel in 1992.*



Wanda Huberman meeting with Dr. Peter Sultana in his office at TrueNorth Health on September 13, 2016.

ences made life easier since I was able to spend time with many of the wives of the doctors who were raising children the same age as mine.

While the speakers were powerful in their lectures about eating a whole-foods, plant-based-diet, it was

Lisa Fuhrman, Elaine Cridland, Jennifer Goldhamer, Victoria Moran, and others who helped me gain confidence in the many benefits of this lifestyle. We all became friends and would spend time talking about the intricacies of raising plant-based children—from learning how to feed them, to attending school events, to coping when they went to sleepovers, and how to deal with other children coming to your house.

From 1993 to 2000, I was able to work part-time, raise our two children, and lead a pretty healthy lifestyle. However, when the girls got older and I went back to work, I found myself making one compromise after another and sliding back into the “pleasure trap” of coffee and processed foods—what my husband would call “health food junk food.” Between 2002 and 2009 my 10 year old niece moved in with us, as did my Mark’s 90 year old mother. After about 10 years of paying the consequences of one compromise after another, I gained 50 pounds. I lacked energy and was having general health complaints.

*Ah-ha!*

In November 2011 I had an “ah-ha!” moment. I thought to myself, “For goodness sake; I have more knowledge and resources about attaining good health than most people in the world, and I am not taking advantage of them.” I felt like I was aging way too fast and losing control of my life. I found myself addicted to coffee and I couldn’t function in the morning without it. I also found myself struggling as so many do with striking a balance between work and family. I just felt like I had to get back to the basics of what Natural Hygiene has been advocating for decades with their motto of “Health Care is Self Care.” I realized that I needed to stop worrying about everyone else and get my own life under control, with the first point of business being to take control of my health.

*“I felt like I was aging way too fast and losing control of my life.”*

I had been to TrueNorth Health Center (in Santa Rosa, California) before, so I knew there was a place I could go to get help. My first stay at TrueNorth was in 1999 following a hospitalization from a miscarriage where I had been given a lot of drugs. I felt that I needed to detox. Back then I had very specific reasons for water fasting and my focus was mostly limited to that.

This time, in 2011, I was focused on learning and embracing philosophies and tools which enabled me to make and sustain life-long health changes. I became persuaded by the notion that we all have what Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn describes as a “warranty period” in terms of health. At age 51, my warranty felt as if it were running out. Fortunately, my children were older and no longer dependent on me, so I purchased a one-way ticket to TrueNorth, where I came under the care of Dr. Peter Sultana and Dr. Alan Goldhamer.

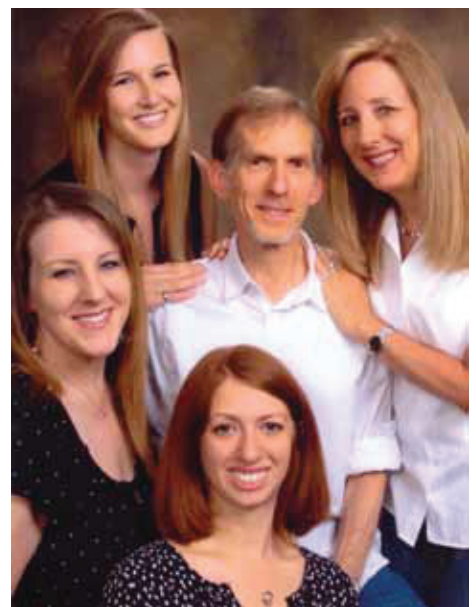
When I first arrived at TrueNorth, Dr. Sultana sent me to the hospital for testing so that he could have a very clear medical picture. When the results came back, he said that I was a great candidate for a water fast. I had no idea if I would be fasting for 5 days or 30 days. So I just took one day at a time and ended up fasting 19 days under the

wonderful care of Dr. Peter Sultana.

I was fortunate that I was able to sleep through much of the fast. I was so physically exhausted that I actually slept the first 10 days of my fast. Afterwards, I would go to daily lectures and, oddly enough, like so many others did who were fasting, I would go to cooking demonstrations! During my stay at TrueNorth I decided I was going all-

in. I finally began internalizing and understanding things more, as in a complex movie, where every time you see it you understand something different and get more out of it.

I stayed at TrueNorth for two weeks after I broke my water fast, and the outcome was very positive. Dur-



The Huberman family: Top l to r: Liz, Mark, and Wanda. Up front l to r: Heather and Lisa.

ing my prior stay at TrueNorth, I don't recall ever really enjoying the re-feeding program, and I wonder if this was because they have made such great strides in this regard. The cooking demonstrations by Cathy Fisher and the meals by Chef Bravo were amazing. I would step into the kitchen and watch how they prepared food. I was again appreciating Dr. Joel Fuhrman's concept that you should "eat to live" not "live to eat." I also knew that when I got home it would be a lot easier to sustain this lifestyle because I could always search the Internet if I had a question or needed a recipe idea. Today, it is so easy to Google a recipe from folks like Cathy Fisher, Chef AJ, Katie Mae and, of course, the Fuhrmans. I was excited to discover that this would no longer have to be a diet of deprivation where I'm going to just eat salads, steamed vegetables, brown rice, and baked potatoes for the rest of my life. It doesn't have to be boring; I can eat foods that are different and enjoyable all the time.

## Discovering Exercise Again

Learning the importance of exercise was one of the most unexpected and profound impacts of my stay at TrueNorth. Dr. Alec Isabeau diagnosed me with sarcopenia (muscle loss that comes with aging and being physically inactive). I had worked out when I was younger, but with child rearing and my career I had stopped all of that, and as a result had lost an incredible amount of muscle mass.

A wonderful TrueNorth intern, Dr. A.J. Gregg, encouraged me to find a Pilates class when I got back home, and I thought, "Oh right; in Youngstown, Ohio?" But, sure enough, we have an incredible Pilates studio that I still go to today. I started doing Pilates four to six days a week and it was life-changing. It also provided an additional motivation for me to eat well so that I'd have the energy to exercise well and learn more about my body mechanics.

One of the things that really surprised me after coming home from TrueNorth was that I continued to lose weight as long as I followed the diet and lifestyle. During my November 2011 stay, I lost about 30 pounds but gained 10 back during re-feeding. By June or July 2012, simply by following the vegan SOS-free diet and including exercise, I had lost 50 pounds and reached my target weight, which I still maintain today.

Another key thing I learned after my stay at TrueNorth was the importance of keeping balance in daily life. When I returned to work, I had six weeks of catch-up to do. But this time I vowed to get enough sleep because coffee was no longer an option as a crutch to get me through. I came home not only with better physical health, but greater mental clarity that was very helpful at home and at work.

I have become very committed to exercise. It started with Pilates or cardio and some walking for about six



*Dr. Kathy Padgett, M.D., with Wanda Huberman in Boardman, Ohio.*

months. I then had the good fortune to meet a wonderful M.D. in Youngstown, Dr. Kathy Padgett, who also promotes a plant-based diet. She told me that at 50-plus years of age and being post-menopausal, I had to exercise to maintain good bone health. She introduced me to a trainer who offered private sessions, and I got on a program that I really love. So now I do private weight training on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and I do Pilates or cardio on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. I realize that this is a pretty big commitment, but you truly can't buy health and I consider this the best investment of time and money I have ever spent. It really helps to have somebody pushing and motivating you.

## Where I am Today

I have made a very strong commitment to this lifestyle. When I go to corporate or customer meetings, I either pack my own lunch or ask the chefs at our corporate headquarters to prepare meals that meet my requirements. When I have out-of-town travel, I rent a car and arrive two to three hours before anyone else and locate a Whole Foods Market where I can buy groceries. I try to pack my own lunch when we are having working lunches. Before dinner I often go back to my hotel and eat a salad so that when we go out to eat as a group, and if the choices are limited, I don't have to eat very much. Handling my eating this way no longer feels like deprivation.

As I look back on the journey I have taken, I know that I have enjoyed the great fortune of having a loving and supportive husband whose roots and understanding of this health movement are incredibly deep. I have also had the privilege of knowing some pretty inspiring people who have helped guide me along the way. In particular, I cherish the close relationship I have enjoyed with Dr. Joel and Lisa Fuhrman. Lisa has been inspirational for me and I treasure the close friendship we have. She is someone I can always count on for encouragement and support. What the



Mark and Wanda Huberman with Joel and Lisa Fuhrman at a farmer's market in New Jersey on July 3, 2016.

Fuhrmans have accomplished, the amount of lives they've impacted, and the education they provide is amazing, and I think their positive influence will only continue to grow. And of course, there is Dr. Alan Goldhamer and Dr. Jennifer Marano, who have assembled a remarkable group of physicians at TruthNorth, who are providing groundbreaking care that exists nowhere else on this earth.

I am increasingly optimistic that more and more people are being enlightened to the fact that there is a healthier and more rewarding way to live. I am also seeing great-

er respect, tolerance, and even acceptance of a whole-foods, plant-based lifestyle. I find it amazing and reassuring that when family, friends, and colleagues find themselves having a health crisis, I get calls asking, "What can you tell me?" "Who should I talk to?" "What should I eat?" Toward this, I have hosted local women's retreats and cooking classes for others who have become interested in this lifestyle.

Some people may look at my strict commitment to avoiding meals with meat, dairy, added oil, salt, and sugar and describe me as being extreme. There might just be some truth to that since I have come to believe in the "pleasure trap" (a term by Doug Lisle and Alan Goldhamer referring to the factors that make us susceptible to dietary and lifestyle excesses). This lifestyle has given me, at age 56, a healthy weight, great vitality, and a life that is currently as satisfying and enjoyable as I could imagine.



Mark and Wanda celebrating their 25th Anniversary on June 7, 2016 in Eleuthera, Bahamas.

## letters & notes

## Much Appreciated Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 4

Dear Mark,

*Health Science* has taken a giant leap forward since you took over. There is so much more useful information in it; although, it could have more advertisements of products and services pertaining to the health movement. Keep up the good work.

**FRED OBST**  
STEVENS POINT, WI

Mark,

Thank you for your effort to keep *Health Science* in print. I habitually read the magazine from cover to cover. Your recent issues have been some of the best. Keep up the great work.

**CESAR LOPEZ**  
OCALA, FL  
(LIFE MEMBER)

Hi Mark,

You are doing a great job editing *Health Science*. It must take a lot of your time. We especially appreciated the article on chronic pain in

the Winter 2016 issue. I was experiencing some leg and back pain, but after physical therapy I feel fine. The article appeared at the right time.

Our older daughter and her husband (a retired two-star admiral from the Coast Guard) are off to Italy next month to spend a week at Dr. Fuhrman's Italian conference, and to do a little sightseeing. They have been to Dr. Fuhrman's other conferences also, and are strong supporters of this lifestyle.

**MARILYN & BILL KELLAR**  
CLIFTON PARK, NY  
(LIFE MEMBERS)

Hi Mark,

Thanks for all you do. The magazine is fabulous!

**ARLENE TITKO**  
NASHPORT, OH

Hi Mark,

I appreciate all your efforts to keep *Health Science* magazine going. I enjoy every issue.

While I am online, I think it is very sensitive of you to recognize that a lot of us older folks are not. It would be such a shame to shut out the very people who have lived to a ripe old age due to following the advice in the magazine! Hang in there: You're doing a great job!

**KAREN BARRON**  
OAK RIDGE, TN  
(LIFE MEMBER)



**We'd love to hear from you, too!**

Send your letter or email today!

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