

Interview with Stephen Cheek

a

Herbal Doctor

Folk Medicine

Stephen Foster

11/05/90

Stephen Cheek, a twenty-nine year old herbal doctor, whose youthful countenance and bright red hair make him appear even younger, is gaining wide respect in his practice throughout the area of central Kentucky and Tennessee. Stephen has been practicing as a herbal doctor for three years and has a growing list of patients. His wife, Sharon, is a physiotherapist and x-ray technician at a local chiropractic clinic. The couple has two young boys. Stephen practices and prepares his herbal remedies in the home.

Stephen grew up in a family that enjoyed the outdoors. His father owned a hunting goods store and the family was always active in hunting and enjoying the woods and nature. Stephen's father also grew ginseng and yellow root. Therefore, as a boy, the son learned to appreciate the value of herbs and nature's remedies.

The following interview was given on Saturday, November 3, 1990. It was taped in the dining room of the couple's home. A parrot and the Cheek's two young sons provide some interesting background noise.

Tape: 90.1

(000-043)

Introduction

Definition of Stephen's practice

Background

Formal training or two year correspondence course

Oral tradition

Use of healing or hands on approach

(043-085)

Scope of the practice

People treated

Working with other traditional healers

Exchanges with other practitioners

Television interview

Working with the Amish community

(085-114)

Common herbs found in the area

Dandelion

Prickly ash bark

Chickory

White oak

Hawthorn berry

Burdock family

Wild cherry bark

Yellow root (Golden Seal)

Ginseng

(114-406)

The following is a list of specific ailments. I attempted to obtain full information about the remedy, how it was used and in what form.

(114) Aches

Use white willow bark

(123) Acne

Use the "dock" family. (ex. burdock)

Dandelion

(127) Arthritis

Mainly controlled by diet

Limit sugars, alcohol and fats

Devil's claw (Imported)

Teatree Oil (Australian import)

(135) Blood disorders

Dock family

Chickory

Dandelion

(137) Boils

Use the same as blood disorders

(138) Bruise

Chinese liniment

Prickly ash

Cayenne

Hysup *hyssop*

(144) Burns

Common aloe

Slippery elm bark

(145) Chicken pox

Probably use blood disorder herbs

Use a drying herb on the pox

(150) Chills

Cayenne or cinnamon powder taken as a tea.

(160) Common cold

Garlic

Garlic also used to prevent fleas from biting

(164) Colic

Common herbs; peppermint, lemon balm, catnip and chamomile

Used for children

(169) Constipation

Yellow bark

(170) Convulsions

Tea made with cinnamon and nutmeg ( Also stops vomiting)

(178) Coughs

Mixture of honey, lemon, eucalyptus oil, or peppermint oil

(182) Use of alcohol with remedies

Uses vodka in tinctures for extracting

(191) Corns

May apple (Boil down roots until black resin appears)

Does not use incantations or verses

(200) Cramps

Chinese herb in combination with cramp bark (from western United States and false unicorn, grown locally).

(205) Croup

Same herbs as for cough

(210) Cuts

Stops bleeding with clay or moss

Uses pond algae also to stop bleeding

Powdered golden seal is used to fight infection

(225) Dandruff

Witch hazel

White oak bark

(228) Diabetes

Has not dealt with diabetes

Probably use liver <sup>e</sup>trating herbs  
^

(234) Earache

Garlic

Teatree Oil

Mixture of garlic, golden seal, olive oil and teatree oil

(239) Eye disorders

Eye <sup>b</sup>right made into a tea with golden seal  
^

(245) Flu

Treat the symptoms

Fever: Bring down with peppermint

Aches: Willow bark

Decongestant: Ephedra

(254) Frostbite

Treat with circulation herbs such as cayenne

(260) Hangover

Don't drink

Eat bananas for potassium

Take diuretics such as cornsilk

(274) Use of cornsilk

Often used as diuretic: Powdered and put in gelatin capsules

(282) Hayfever

Goldenrod

(282) Headache

Depends on type

Often caused by problems in colin

(296) Heart trouble

Uses Hawthorn berry: Treats both high and low blood pressure

Also good for irregular heart beat

(304) Hiccups

Never treated hiccups

(307) Hives

Oatmeal bath

Anti-spasmodic herbs: Lobelia

(315) Indigestion

Peppermint tea

(325) Infection

Wash with solution or powder made from golden seal

Also take golden seal internally

Echinacea: Best herb to use for antibiotic (Flour used in ice cream cones)

(334) Insect bite

Same herbs used for infection

(336) Kidney trouble

Keep regularly flushed

(346) Labor pains

Blue or black cohosh: Used to decrease pain (Cherokee)

(353) Measles

Don't know

(360) Snakebite

Slippery elm bark and golden seal: Used for drawing out poison and purifying blood

Tobacco can also draw poison

(371) Sprains

Uses a Chinese herb

Local herbs: Prickly ash and cayenne

(386) Teething

No methods

Wife, overhearing, stated that they used herbs to calm children

No preventives for thumb sucking

(397) Toothache

Cloves: Rub on gums

Lobelia: Used for pain

(406) Herbs used for treating animals

Most herbal remedies for humans will work on animals in the same way

Side 2: Tape 90.1

(001-008)

Stephen is completely open in his practice

No secret cures or remedies

Labels all herbal remedies and discloses all ingredients

(008-016)

Herbal doctoring can sometimes conflict with institutionalized medicine

Herbal doctor must know the patients background, especially, their prescribed medications and treatments

(016-029)

Patients mostly come by word of mouth

Communicates with and provides herbal medications for other herb doctors

(029-037)

Prepares remedies in teas, tinctures and capsules

Always strives to provide a uniform product

(037-044)

Legal aspects of profession prevent Stephen from prescribing medicine or diagnosing.

Patients must explain their problems

(044-056)

Provided Stephen with a specific illness and requested his remedy

(056-065)

Recommended readings

The Way of Herbs, by Michael Tiara

The Herbal Book, by John Lusk



1-9/11

(065-075)

Herbs are gathered at different times of the year

Tea herbs are gathered during flowering in the spring

Root herbs are gathered in the fall when the sap has gone down

Herbal barks are gathered in spring after all the leaves have turned green

Nuts are gathered when ripe

(075-085)

Beeswax is the only animal substance used: Used in salves

Doesn't use lard because it spoils

(085-100)

Does not use herbs grown by the Mennonite community

Treats some of the Mennonites for high blood pressure

Has not worked with the Mennonite doctor

(100-116)

Works and communicates with the herbal doctor for the Cherokee Indians, Walt Buchett

Buchett uses traditional Cherokee remedies as well as the occult  
Uses sweat lodges and ceremonial circles

At this time, the Cheeks two small sons decided to make an appearance in the dining room. The interviewer then decided that the taping was finished for that session.