

ESSIAC TEA

Disclaimer: All information is for educational purposes only and not meant to prescribe, diagnosis, treat, or cure. If you have health issues, consult a qualified health care provider.

We all have the freedom to learn about all alternative healing modalities when we CHOOSE to take responsibility for our health. Knowledge is freedom from fear of the unknown.

Essiac™: (ess-ee-ack):

Essiac™™ is the most popular and favorite alternative medicine for cancer of all alternative remedies for cancer. If you are looking for an alternative medicine to compliment your cancer care, Essiac™ would be a good first choice.

Essiac™ has been used for over 60 years to remedy the side effects of cancer treatments and to remedy cancer itself. Essiac™ is a time proven safe remedy for cancer.

Essiac™ is a trademark name of a company that we are not sure of who really holds the trademark. The word Essiac™ has become a generic name for a herbal tea commonly used by cancer patients for their cancer.

History of Essiac™ and Rene Caisse. Canada's Cancer Nurse.

Rene Caisse spent her whole adult life treating cancer patients along with her life long friend, Mary McPherson, with this herb tea in her own clinic, until she died in 1978 at the age of 91. Many of the people she treated for cancer reported they were miraculously cured by taking it, while others claimed the tea relieved the pain and agony of cancer and made their lives living with cancer much more bearable.

When Rene presented her Essiac™ and its effectiveness to the medical society, some doctors were so impressed by the results that they petitioned the Canadian Government in 1938 to pass a Bill to "authorize Rene Caisse to practice medicine in the Province of Ontario in the treatment of Cancer and conditions resulting there from".

The Bill failed to pass by only 3 votes. Soon after, a Legislative Assembly passed "An Act For The Investigation Of Remedies For Cancer", by which Rene would have to reveal her formula. Rather than do this, Rene closed her clinic, later opening it again at the behest of the Minister of Health. Thereafter, she was allowed to treat patients certified as terminal by their physicians.

Rene Caisse kept the formula a secret all those years, fearing it would be exploited. Finally, 14 months before she died, she signed the properties (formula, trademark name Essiac™®, notes, etc.) over to a Canadian company named Resperin, with hopes that it would clinically validated (which Resperin failed to do) and made available to all people.

Resperin failed miserably with the manufacturing of their "ORIGINAL RECIPE" Essiac™. The Essiac™ manufactured by RESPERIN was of such poor quality that users felt that RESPERIN were not using the correct formula. To date, RESPERIN no longer is the manufacturer of Essiac™.

Essiac™ Information:

Essiac™ has become a generic name for a herbal tea that is today's most popular alternative remedy for cancer. Essiac™ was originally a herbal tea attributed to Canadian nurse Rene Caisse (reen-case) of Bracebridge Ontario, Canada, who claimed that the formula came from a Native Ojibwa medicine man. She named it after the backward spelling of her own last name, Caisse.

Many users of Essiac™ believe that Essiac™ can and does improve the bodies ability to fight cancer and that Essiac™ is effective at reducing the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. User have reported that with the reduction in chemotherapy / radiation side effects, they are much better able to handle the full course of their treatments without interruption and delays in treatment.

Fresh is best.

Quality of Essiac

The quality of essiac depends solely on the quality of the herbs used. An essiac tea made from poor quality herbs will yield a poor quality essiac tea. Poor quality herbs also contribute to a nasty taste of essiac. Essiac made from quality herbs has a mild slightly sweet flavor and there is no after taste. Some essiac teas have a woody / earthy taste. This is an indication of poor quality herbs being used in the manufacture of the essiac tea.

Basic 4 Essiac Ingredients.

- 1. Burdock Root (Arctium lappa),**
- 2. Sheep Sorrel (Rumex acetosella)**

Two types of Sheep Sorrel exist. Hybrid or Domestic Sheep Sorrel and Wild Sheep Sorrel.

Make sure your version of essiac is made or contains sheep sorrel weed.

Wild Sheep Sorrel has tiny leaves which are bitter to the taste. Hybrid Sheep Sorrel has large leaves and is used in garden salads.

Hybrid sheep sorrel should not be used in essiac. Several manufacturers use hybrid sheep sorrel in place of the weed version. Hybrid sheep sorrel is still sheep sorrel but it is very weak in comparison to the weed sheep sorrel.

Note: The two sheep sorrels have the same name but are very different.

Legally people using Hybrid sheep sorrel can still call it sheep sorrel and not tell you it is the weaker version in their product.

Sheep sorrel is a very important component in essiac.

- 3. Slippery Elm (Ulmus fulva)**
- 4. Turkey Rhubarb (Rheum palmatum).**

Medicinal Herbs from Canada tend to have a stronger potency. Speculation is that the harsher climate in Canada produces heartier more potent herbs.

Brewing Instructions for a two-week supply of essiac tea using aggressive treatment dose OR maintenance dose.

(Please note: Steps 1 and 2 will vary depending on if you are using the aggressive or the maintenance dose. Steps 3 thru 5 are the same no matter what.

Typical Aggressive Treatment Dose: Two-Week Supply(Using the most usual dose of 3 oz. taken three times per day)

1. Bring 132 oz. (1 gallon plus 1/2 cup, to account for evaporation) of spring water or distilled water to a boil in a stainless steel or glass (Pyrex) pot (you will need one with a lid) and reduce to a simmer.

2. Add 4 oz. of the essiac herbs powder. Please actually weigh your herbs on a kitchen scale to ensure you have the correct amount (If you don't already have one, please purchase a small inexpensive home kitchen scale to help you brew your tea). If you have purchased the pre-measured 4 oz. bags from us, these have already been weighed and do not need to be re-checked or measured. Simply add one bag.

Typical Maintenance Treatment Dose: Two-Week Supply(Normally the maintenance dose is 3 oz. taken once per day)

1. Boil 44 oz. (5 and 1/2 cups) of spring water or distilled water in a large stainless steel or glass (Pyrex) pot (one that you have a lid for).

2. Add 1.33 oz. of the essiac herbs blend. Please weigh your herbs on a kitchen scale to be sure you have the correct amount. A rough approximation if you

have to use dry measurement cups is a rounded 1/4-cup. If you have purchased the 4 oz. bag from us, this will be 1/3 of the bag.

Steps 3 through 5 are the same for any size batch:

3. Turn the heat down to medium-low and let the tea simmer for about ten minutes, stirring occasionally. Keep a cover or lid loosely on the pot during this time, with just a bit of air exposed to reduce evaporation.

4. Turn the heat off, cover the pan completely, and leave the mixture sitting at room temperature for twelve hours or overnight.

5. The following morning, stir the tea vigorously to disperse the sediment of the herbs throughout the tea*, heat again ALMOST to a boil (but do not boil), funnel the tea into clean glass bottles, let cool, then quickly cap the bottles. Refrigerate immediately.

***We STRONGLY URGE that you leave the herb residue in the tea -- DO NOT strain the herbs. Because these are powdered herbs, you don't have to strain anything--the herbs are fine enough to be taken as you drink the tea. The herbs increase the strength and effectiveness of the essiac recipe treatment. If you really find the "goop" at the bottom of the liquid unpalatable, you can strain the tea, but it may be less effective in the long run.**

Do not try to brew essiac tea more than two weeks ahead: it will stay fresh for about 14 days, but after that you should make a new batch of tea. Shake the container well before pouring your dosages to disperse the herb particles throughout the tea. Do not use the tea if there is any sign of mold.

The brewed tea has been described as having a palatable, "earthy" taste, though sometimes it is somewhat bitter due to differences in some of the herbs' growing seasons. If you find it difficult to drink essiac straight, you may mix your essiac tea with fruit or vegetable juice. Most people consume essiac tea cold. You may also add a bit of stevia, an herb that many people use for a sweetener.

With essiac, it's always best if your doses are taken on an empty stomach. Try to avoid eating two hours before and one hour after drinking essiac. However, if you have to eat and then drink essiac tea at the same time, that is much better than skipping the essiac dose completely.

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a woman named Rene Caisse. For more than 50 years, until her death in 1978 at the age of 90, she treated thousands of cancer patients, most of them written off by doctors as terminally ill, with her own secret herbal formula. She called it Essiac - Caisse spelled backwards - and she brewed the tea herself, alone in her kitchen.

Her patients swore by her. They were devoted. Men and women who believed she cured them of cancer told their friends and families, wrote letters to doctors and politicians, swore affidavits, testified before the Canadian parliament and pleaded with Rene Caisse to supply them with more Essiac when they needed it. Some husbands and wives of patients who died wrote Rene letters thanking her profoundly for making life easier - free of pain - and longer for their loved ones. Her funeral in the village of Bracebridge, about 170 kilometers north of Toronto, was attended by hundreds of people, including former patients Rene had treated for terminal cancer as far back as the 1930s and who were still on their feet to bury her and tell their stories.

I'm convinced that Essiac works. It has potent healing -- and preventive -- power. It is a gift from nature. I've seen a small part of the evidence with my own eyes, and I've experienced Essiac's power as a healthful tonic in my own life. I suffered from chronic bronchitis until a few years ago when I first heard of Essiac and tried it myself. Within days my cough disappeared and it hasn't returned. I still drink the Essiac. It tastes like what it is, an herbal tea. About as plain and mild as any of the other herbal teas from around the world you can buy in any supermarket. I've never felt better. All through Canada and in parts of the United States today there are people of all ages who are absolutely convinced that Essiac saved their lives or the lives of friends and loved ones. But you can't buy it in any supermarket.

Claims have been made - since about 1925, in fact - that Essiac is an effective treatment for cancer. So the governments of North America have classified it as a "drug." The Canadian government almost legalized its use by Rene in 1939, and has gone through fits and starts ever since in deciding how to handle the situation. The policy has ranged from threatening to arrest Rene if she didn't close her clinic to promising her publicly - on the record, in the press that she wouldn't be arrested if she would agree to keep her clinic open, thus quieting the public clamor that arose after the government threatened to shut her down. In the last decade, the Canadian government has classified Essiac as an "experimental drug," and then an "experimental drug" that had failed to show promise, and today - as Dr. Hendrick's letter shows - the internal battles are still going on in Canada over the future of Essiac.

In the U.S., a 1978 class action suit in federal court in Detroit seeking to authorize the importation of Essiac for cancer treatment was defeated by the government. Other than that, the U.S. government hasn't faced much pressure about Essiac. There are probably high level officials in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration - and the National Cancer Institute - who make life and death decisions about cancer drugs who could honestly say they've never heard of Essiac. I hope they'll take the time to read this book.

I don't claim that Essiac is a miraculous panacea, capable of curing all cancers in all people, nor do I believe that. Rene Caisse didn't even believe that. She didn't claim Essiac as a "cure for cancer." Her former patients were the ones who put forward that claim, strenuously and over many decades. What Rene maintained was that Essiac caused regression in some cancerous tumors, the total destruction of others, prolonged life in most cases and - in virtually every case - significantly diminished the pain and suffering of cancer patients.

If the testimonials of Rene's former patients, including those sworn under oath, have any credibility at all - and when I present them, I think you'll agree they do - then Essiac's powers as a pain reliever in cancer patients are nothing short of phenomenal. In sixty years of personal accounts, the easing of agony and an increased sense of well-being - often to the point of getting through the day without narcotics - is one of the predominant themes. You hear it over and over again, and always told with a deep sense of gratitude.

Rene fought almost her whole adult life against overwhelming odds and under incredible pressures, some of them self imposed, to establish those simple facts as accepted wisdom. She never gave up her fight. But for one woman many years ago to persuade the medical and legal institutions of North America that a natural treatment for cancer - based on herbs that grow wild - might make more sense than the accepted means of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy...she might as well have been telling them in an earlier century that the earth is round.

Remember: Rene was fighting cancer with a natural treatment in an era when the conventional wisdom of the medical establishment denied even that diet might be a factor in causing cancer. It's hard to believe, knowing what we know now - and what has become the conventional wisdom - but for generations those doctors who preached dietary causes of cancer were dismissed by most physicians as quacks. So what was the medical establishment to make of this woman - who wasn't even a licensed doctor - who preached that a cancer treatment was to be found in plants that grow wild?

My goal in this book is simple: I want to tell the story of this ordinary woman's extraordinary Life and share the knowledge of Essiac so that people can make their own informed decisions about what it's future should be. I don't pretend to have all the answers about how and why Essiac works, or the final scientific proof that it does. There are large gaps, as I'll explain, in my own knowledge of this story. Much of it remains a mystery to me, raising deeply intriguing questions which I would love to see answered.

But I do know that there is already enough evidence that Essiac has benefited cancer patients in the last 60 years to warrant those controlled clinical studies that some physicians - such as Dr. Hendrick - have advocated for decades.

The risk to the public would certainly appear to be minimal. There seems to be universal agreement among the doctors and scientists who have done investigations of Essiac - and the patients who have used it - that Essiac is non-toxic and without harmful side effects. Rene Caisse drank it every day for half a century and some of her family and close friends always made sure they had their daily cup. Not even Rene Caisse's worst enemies ever put forward the argument that people were hurt by drinking the tea.

This nontoxic nature of Essiac is an important consideration in making it a treatment worthy of serious investigation. Many of the conventionally accepted chemotherapy drugs actually come with toxic warning labels. One of the commonly administered cancer drugs is the chemical Fluorouracil (5-FU). Note this warning on the manufacturer's brochure: "Precautions: Fluorouracil is a highly toxic drug with a narrow margin of safety. Therefore, patients should be carefully supervised since therapeutic response is unlikely to occur without some evidence of toxicity...Severe hematological toxicity, gastrointestinal hemorrhage and even death may result from the fluorouracil despite meticulous selection of patients and careful adjustment of dosage."

As if that weren't bad enough, the officially accepted "experimental drugs," on which the government and the drug companies lavish huge sums of developmental funds, can be even worse. According to a 1981 Washington Post story, a major American drug company spent significant amounts of money and years of research on a weed from India they hoped would have a beneficial effect on certain forms of leukemia - even though it was known in

advance that the weed caused severe liver damage in livestock. And sure enough, when the weed was synthesized into a chemical and given to cancer patients, there were reports that it was helping some people - and killing others.

But there was nothing unusual in that. "We knew from the beginning that this caused toxicity in animals," the Post quoted a U.S. Food and Drug Administration official as saying. "Almost all investigational cancer drugs are highly toxic." As you read this story and wonder - as I did many, many times while I was researching it - if an herbal compound developed by one woman could possibly - even possibly - be safer and more effective than the best of what medical science is already bringing us, please keep this quote in mind from that same 1981 series of Washington Post articles:

"Over The last decade, more than 150 experimental drugs have been given to tens of thousands of cancer patients under the sponsorship of the US Federal Government's National Cancer Institute. Many of these drugs have come from a list of highly toxic industrial chemicals, including pesticides, herbicides and dyes...While all anti-cancer drugs can cause side effects among some of those who take them, the experimental drugs - along with leading to hundreds of deaths - have elicited a nightmarish list of serious adverse reactions, including kidney failure, liver failure, heart failure, respiratory distress, destruction of bone marrow so the body can no longer make blood, brain damage, paralysis, seizure, coma, and visual hallucinations.

"So little is known about many of these chemicals that doctors have found these ironic results: In some cases the experimental drug actually stimulated tumor growth rather than stopped the cancer - and in other tests, doctors and researchers found that the experimental drug itself caused cancer."

Rene Caisse wouldn't have been surprised to read that. Her own feelings about the use of these toxic drugs, after a lifetime spent fighting cancer, were blunt and nasty: "Chemotherapy should be a criminal offense," she told one reporter.

Though the medical establishment has not yet recognized Rene Caisse's herbal treatment for cancer as legitimate, there is more than ample precedent for the approach she was taking. According to a 1987 NOVA documentary on "The Hidden Power of Plants " , aired on the Public Broadcasting System: "Indeed, the history of medicine has been largely the story of plants and the potent chemicals they produce. Around the world, traditional healers, using plant medications, provide health care to eighty percent of the human population - over four billion people."

Since the 1950s doctors have been using an alkaloid called vincristine - which comes from an evergreen plant known as the periwinkle - in the treatment of childhood leukemia and other cancers. Digitalis, which comes from the leaves

of the foxglove plant, is an important heart medication. According to the NOVA documentary, "Over 25 Percent of the drugs prescribed in the U.S. still contain plant materials as their principal active ingredients."

Throughout history there are countless examples of people discovering the healing properties of nature before science could understand them - or even believe that they existed. South American Indians treated fevers, especially malarial fevers, with an herbal tea made from cinchona bark. Scientists eventually discovered that cinchona bark is nature's source of quinine.

Science didn't discover that Vitamin C prevented scurvy. English sailors discovered that without even knowing it. All they knew was that they'd better take some citrus fruits - lemons, limes along with them on long ocean voyages. That's why the English came to be called "limeys." Science didn't discover Vitamin C until 1932.

For centuries, American Indians treated various aches and pains with an herbal tea made from white willow bark. It must have seemed terribly primitive to the doctors who first heard of it. They were trusting their science; the Indians were trusting nature. But eventually science caught up. Today, synthesized and refined white willow bark is the basis for what we call aspirin.

Always, in all cultures, there was what might be called "living proof - medicinal value of plants long before there was scientific proof - and acceptance. Living proof, of course, is not acceptable to the scientific community. Not even the testimony of ordinary individuals, sworn to oath, meets the rigorous standards of scientific proof. But no matter what happens in the scientific world, living proof will be what passes from person to person and prevents Essiac from dying out altogether in the modern world.

Rene Caisse's files are filled with letters from people all over North America testifying to lifesaving experiences with Essiac. Almost 404 people showed up at the Canadian Cancer Commission hearings in 1939 prepared to be sworn to oath and state that Essiac saved their lives.

Today, all over Canada and in parts of the U.S., there are thousands of people who may not know the first thing about scientific proof, but who know that Essiac benefited or even saved them or someone they love. For science to deny that there is a cause and effect relationship between Essiac and the relief of pain and the regression of cancerous tumors is almost like saying, "well, we can see all those great huge billowing clouds of smoke, but we haven't been able to determine with certainty that there is a fire."

While most Americans have never heard of Essiac, the controversy it inspires has raged in Canada since the 1920s, every few years in the public glare of the press, and frequently involving the highest medical, legal and political circles in Canada. But always that controversy centered on this one woman who

lived, most of the time, in the tiny village of Bracebridge, Ontario, population 9,000 or so.

Rene Caisse was an unlikely public figure. She was a skilled nurse who didn't crave attention or money. "I never had \$100 I could call my own," she used to laugh with her friends. She didn't charge a fee for her services. She accepted only voluntary contributions in the form of fruits, vegetables or eggs, as often as not - from those who could afford to offer them, and she didn't turn away people who couldn't make any payment at all.

One man, Ted Hale, was so grateful watching his wife recover from cancer using Essiac that he slipped a \$50 bill under a book on a shelf when he came to pick up another bottle from Rene. The next time he arrived at her front door, he says, she grabbed him by his shirt collar, pulled him inside and gave him a piece of her mind. How dare he leave her that much money? She didn't like it one bit. He apologized and asked her if she would accept it as his way of donating for the next people who needed her Essiac and couldn't afford to leave anything at all. She finally relented on those grounds and kept the money, but Ted Hale still laughs at his own embarrassment when he tells the story ten years later.

Rene Caisse lived her whole life in modest circumstances while rejecting offers of vast sums of money to reveal her formula. She refused to reveal her formula to people who wanted to help her; she refused to reveal her formula to powerful institutions that demanded it before they would consider legitimizing Essiac. What Rene Caisse wanted was to heal the ill and guarantee the legalization of Essiac for all, yet her intransigent refusal to budge from secrecy about the formula cost her - and us - dearly.

She refused to reveal the formula to the Canadian government, the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York - the world's largest private cancer research center - and the National Cancer Institute, just to name some of the institutions that wanted the formula at one time or another. She wouldn't give them the formula until they would admit that Essiac had merit as a treatment for cancer. They refused to admit any merit until she gave them the formula.

There were legitimate arguments made on both sides. Rene was fearful that the medical establishment would either exploit Essiac, charging exorbitant prices to make a fortune and placing it beyond the means of the poor, or discredit it and bury it. The doctors and politicians argued that they couldn't very well accept the legitimacy of a cancer treatment if they didn't even know what was in it. The result was a tragic standoff.

We have lost decades of precious research. With hindsight, it can be argued that Rene Caisse should have given the formula to anyone, anywhere, at any time, who wanted to have it for any reason, on the grounds that the more

people who have it, the better chance that the truth will out. That certainly will be the position taken in this book.

I am going to release to the public, for the first time, the formula and the procedure for preparing Essiac. I will explain in detail at the end of this book how I will do that, and how anyone who wants that information may have it.

I believe that information should be in the hands of the public. People should have the right to make their own decisions about whether or not they will drink the Essiac tea. People can make it themselves, if they wish, just the way Rene did. There is no mystery about the preparation. It must be done carefully and accurately - as I will explain - but it finally comes down to: Put in so much of this herb, so much of that herb, brew it and drink the tea.

The herbs themselves grow in many regions. Rene used to say that enough of the herbs grow in Ontario to supply the whole world. But in revealing the formula, I share one of Rene's deep fears that played an important role in her refusal to release the formula until after the governing bodies of medicine and law would admit that it had merit: Namely, that once the herbs are publicly identified, these inexpensive and widely available plants will be placed on the federal "controlled substances" roster - like some dangerous drug - suddenly become very difficult - and illegal - to acquire.

But there's nothing I can do about that. As always, those decisions are up to the governments. But my decision is to tell the story of how I came into possession of the formula, place it before the public and let people make up their own minds about what they want to do with it. At least once the formula is in the public domain, the old argument that was used for so long against Rene - we can't do proper scientific studies until we know the formula - will no longer have any validity at all. Sloan-Kettering, for instance, was telling Rene Caisse at least as late as 1975 that they would perform more clinical studies on Essiac, if only they had the formula. Well, now they'll have it. And so will anyone who wants it.

Rene Caisse was a sweet woman who gave her best and saw the worst. She was surrounded most of her life with the pain and suffering of others. She lived under siege much of the time, with a legion of supporters who saw her as a saint and powerful enemies who wanted her arrested for practicing medicine without a license. She became so fearful and paranoid about arrest that she sometimes had to turn away dying people who were pleading with her to help them. But more often, she found ways to help the people who came to her, even total strangers who had nothing to offer her. She said once about her situation: "I was always just one jump ahead of a policeman. We were right across the street from the town jail and the keeper used to joke that he was saving a cell for me."

The blessing of Essiac brought a curse for Rene Caisse: Her life was never her

own.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In May, 1959, Rene flew to Boston and was met by Ralph Daigh. She was given a comfortable apartment in the Commander Hotel in Cambridge, not far from the Bruschi Medical Center. At the clinic, three rooms-a waiting room, a dispensary and a treatment room-were made available for Rene's use. Her treatments were to be supervised by Dr. Bruschi's director of research, Dr. Charles McClure. Dr. McClure would personally maintain the case history files.

One of the first patients treated was a 40 year old woman named Lena Burcell. Four years after surgery to remove a cancerous breast, the cancer had reoccurred in her lung. X-rays showed her to be terminally ill. She received her first treatment from Rene Caisse on May 26, 1959. Almost immediately, her ability to breathe improved markedly. Prior to treatment with Essiac, Mrs. Burcell had complained of severe joint pains. These pains lessened noticeably, she told the doctors. She lived for three months.

Exploratory surgery-followed by biopsy-on a 37-year-old man named John Cronin confirmed that he was terminally ill with inoperable cancer of the right lung. An alcoholic, Cronin was known as a difficult and unreliable patient.

When he started treatments with Rene Caisse, he was too weak to climb one flight of stairs comfortably. He was suffering severe pains in the area of his chest incision and was being given narcotic painkillers.

Cronin had seven weekly treatments, each consisting of one ounce of Essiac orally and one ounce by intramuscular injection. He told doctors that the pain in his chest had disappeared, and he was not as short of breath. He could climb several flights of stairs without discomfort and had taken up his old hobby of swimming.

A drinking binge landed him in the V A. Hospital, where he was threatened with loss of his veteran's medical benefits if he continued non-V A. treatment. When he got out of the V A. hospital, Cronin went back to the Bruschi Medical Center saying he would gladly sacrifice his veteran's medical care in favor of the relief he was receiving from Essiac.

The file merely notes that under the circumstances, no further treatment was given by Rene Caisse.

A 58-year-old man named Wilbur Dymond was suffering from prostate cancer. After two months of treatments, all hardness in the prostate had vanished, except for one small nodule. He reported to doctors that he no longer suffered excruciating pain during urination.

Russell McCassey was suffering from a basal cell carcinoma of the right cheek, proven by biopsy. The open lesion had been present for months. He had not had X-ray or radiation treatments. After four treatments -both orally and intramuscular injections-in two weeks, the color of the lesion changed from red to pale pink. The lesion reduced in size. The central ulcer crater was disappearing.

After three more weeks of treatments, the lesion was healed, leaving only a small white mark where the biopsy incision was made. The file notes that this case appeared to be cured.

Those are typical examples. The supervisor, Dr. McClure, wrote about his experiences with Rene and Essiac: "After having personally observed Miss Caisse administer her remedy' for cancer on known cases of malignancy for about three months, and the results of such administration, I am certain the remedy is efficacious. It is to be regretted that the patient sample is so small, although small as the sample was, her gratifying results on all cases are indisputable.

"The sense of well-being engendered in the patients is heartening and easily noticed. The return of strength and will to do, obvious. The relief from pain is possibly the most dramatic change. In those cases of cutaneous cancer the evidence of quick healing and regeneration visible and positive."

To supplement her treatment of patients, Rene agreed -at Dr. Bruschi's urging- to perform experiments on mice inoculated with human cancer. Initially the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Institute in New York agreed to provide the mice.

The first group of mice treated with Essiac was returned to Sloan -Kettering in mid June, 1959. According to Dr. Bruschi's records, Dr. Philip C. Merker of Sloan-Kettering called to say that Sloan-Kettering was very interested in what it was seeing: namely, a physiological change in the cancer growth characterized as "a tendency of the cancer cells to amalgamate and localize."

But then Sloan-Kettering said that it would have to have the formula in order to continue any further studies. Dr. Bruschi and others seriously considered that possibility, but Rene remained adamant that she would not release the formula until she had some guarantee that it would not be "bottled up in the laboratory" or permanently shelved as worthless.

It was the same old Catch-22: Admit its merit and I'll release the formula; we can't admit merit until we know what's in it. The experiments would have to

continue without the cooperation of Sloan-Kettering.

A prominent Boston surgeon who was familiar with the work being done at the Brusck Medical Center suggested that the National Cancer Institute might be helpful in future animal experimentation. Ralph Daigh contacted the NCI. They were interested, but placed the same demand as Sloan-Kettering: the formula first.

So the experiments on mice continued without the involvement of the huge cancer research centers. Here is what Dr. Charles McClure and Dr. Charles Brusck later wrote of those experiments: "On mice it (Essiac) has been shown to cause a decided recession of the mass, and a definite change in cell formation."

On the treatments of patients, their final report concluded: "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.

"This, after only three months' tests and the proof Miss Caisse has to show of the many patients she has benefited in the past 25 years, has convinced the doctors at the Brusck Medical Center that Essiac has merit in the treatment of cancer. The doctors do not say that Essiac is a cure, but they do say it is of benefit. It is non-toxic, and is administered both orally and by intramuscular injection."

During the time Rene spent at the Brusck Medical Center, Dr. Charles McClure mailed questionnaires to some of Rene's former patients. He received back several testimonials from people

treated as long as 31 years earlier, including some who had testified for Rene at the 1939 Royal Cancer Commission hearings:

Clara Thornbury-treated 22 years previously. Alive and well at 75. (She eventually died in 1975 at the age of 91.)

Nellie McVittie-treated 23 years previously. Alive and well and still in touch with Rene in 1959.

Wilson Hammell-treated 31 years previously. Eliza Veitch-treated in 1938. Age 76 in 1959.

After about a year, with only a limited number of patients available for treatment-due to American Medical Association restrictions on remedies of unknown substances-and laboratories increasingly reluctant to supply mice inoculated with human cancer, Rene returned home to Bracebridge. She was convinced that the labs were under pressure to stop cooperating with her.

Once again, she was pessimistic about Essiac ever gaining recognition and acceptance.

But she had made a friend and believer out of Dr. Charles Bruschi. They remained on good terms, in communication and cooperating with each other about the future of Essiac for the rest of Rene's life. To this day, as I write this, almost 30 years after Rene's work in Cambridge, Dr. Bruschi remains an outspoken advocate of Essiac as a valuable treatment for cancer patients.

CHAPTER EIGHT

As the 1960s began, Rene remained active. She was supplying Essiac to Dr. Bruschi. She was secretly treating patients out of her home in Bracebridge. But now she was also trying to interest large institutions in the idea of exploring Essiac's capabilities.

In March, 1960, she wrote to the Biochemical Institute at the University of Texas, telling them what she had. She received back a polite note, dated March 22, 1960, from a Research Scientist named Alfred Taylor: "We are interested in checking various plant products for their effects on cancer growth from the standpoint of laboratory tests with animals bearing cancers. ... We are always glad to check materials which can be used in our testing programs."

But nothing came of it. She tried to interest Merck & Co., the huge pharmaceutical manufacturer. Merck's Office of General Counsel responded in legalese saying basically that they would have to have the formula, and then they would make up their own minds in their own way in their own time. It was not a response designed to encourage Rene to put her hopes in them or to indicate that they knew of or had any interest in this opportunity to get to the truth about Essiac.

A physician in Arcadia, California came to believe in Essiac. In October, 1960, he wrote a long letter to Rene offering his strategy for a new crusade for Essiac: Find a "few trusted physicians" to run "pilot studies." Then offer the results of these new pilot studies to the profession. "It seems advantageous to offer the results of a new testing program which has not already been assigned a 'thumbs down' position by a legislative body," he wrote. And then they should present "an improved, tested chemotherapy called Essiac."

But he counseled great patience. The testing program "would take a minimum of one and one fourth years before the date of product availability. This may be much too short a time because of the nature of the disease. The diagnosis of a Cure is arbitrarily based on a five year period."

There was a lot of wishful thinking of that sort going on all through the 1960s. But there wasn't the organization or the money or the political clout to bring any of it together into a major political movement or to persuade the big institutions to negotiate a research arrangement with Rene. And with Rene well into her 70s by now, she was no longer strong enough to fight the same kind of publicized political fight she had waged three decades earlier.

Essiac remained alive through word of mouth. People from all over North America found Rene when they needed it. She'd get phone calls in the middle of the night from people in Europe who wanted to get some. In her spare time, Rene produced a pamphlet: "I was Canada's Cancer Nurse." She wrote more warnings about our food and our environment. In one, she railed against poisoned additives, chemical processing of flours, oils and fats, and chemical aging of such foods as cheese.

She urged people to take four steps:

"1. Do NOT eat these foods if alternatives are available.

2. Urge our governments to take action against these conditions.

3. Read the labels (especially the small print) on everything you buy to eat or drink.

4. Patronize the manufacturers who produce foods without added colors and other additives, and who are growing foods in soil not contaminated with chemicals and where they do not use poisonous sprays."

Even now some of her former patients from as far back as the 1930s stayed in touch with her, offering encouragements. May Henderson, who had testified so powerfully at the Royal Cancer Commission hearings in 1939, was still alive and well and corresponding with Rene.

In 1971, when President Richard Nixon declared his "War On Cancer," May Henderson wrote to Rene: "I guess you read the headlines in our papers recently. `Nixon prepared to spend billions to find a cure: I guess that and the fact that a dear old friend had to undergo surgery and have a breast removed recently has kept me wondering what is going on -if anything-with your wonderful work and formula."

May Henderson noted that she was now 75 years old and experiencing "usually good health." A year later she sent a copy of Rene's "I Was Canada's Cancer Nurse" brochure to her Member of Parliament, asking him to get involved in a new crusade. She received back a polite thanks, but no thanks note.

In 1973, when she was 85 years old, Rene decided to make one last try with the

medical establishment. She contacted Sloan-Kettering and asked them if they wanted to renew the encouraging tests they had done in 1959. Dr. Chester Stock, a vice president and associate director for administrative and academic affairs, said they would be willing to run tests on mice if Rene would send them some Essiac.

Rene agreed. Sloan-Kettering was interested in tumor regression, so she began supplying them with one of the Essiac herbs. In her experiments with mice at the Christie Street Hospital in Toronto in the early 1930s, she had determined that this was the herb that caused the regressions. (The others acted as blood purifiers.) She gave Sloan-Kettering detailed instructions on how to prepare the herb as an injectible solution.

It will probably never be known outside of Sloan-Kettering what actually happened in their experiments with the Essiac herb. But the tests do seem to have gone on for an extended period and there is at least one piece of documentary evidence that Sloan-Kettering was getting some positive results.

On June 10, 1975, on the letterhead of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in Rye, New York, Dr. Chester Stock wrote to Rene: "Enclosed are test data in two experiments indicating some regressions in sarcoma 180 of mice treated with Essiac. With these results we will wish to test enough more that I should ask if you can send more material. If you have questions about the data, please don't hesitate to ask them."

"Two experiments indicating some regressions in sarcoma 180 of mice treated with Essiac. " That one sentence alone written by a top Sloan-Kettering official in 1975 should be cause for even the most skeptical to agree that Essiac should be taken seriously by today's medical and scientific communities. (Sarcoma 180, incidentally, is a type of cancerous tumor often used in medical research.)

But unfortunately-despite those encouraging test results in 1975 -the Sloan-Kettering tests came to a halt the next year. Other test results were coming out negative, so Rene looked into the situation. On August 22, 1975, Dr. Stock wrote her: "I will check to determine whether our laboratory group is not adequately informed on making up the Essiac from the material you supplied. I will see that the next test is above reproach."

But when Rene received an explanation of how Sloan-Kettering was preparing the injectible solution, she was horrified. They had ignored her instructions. They weren't boiling the herb. They were freezing it, then thawing it. As far as she was concerned, they were making one mistake after another. In an angry scrawl, she wrote on Sloan-Kettering's explanation: "All wrong. Rene M. Caisse."

Her reaction was cold fury. She terminated the agreement with Sloan-

Kettering and stopped providing them with the material. (Two years later, in 1978, a group in Detroit filed a class action suit against the U. S. government, seeking to legalize the importation of Essiac for cancer treatment. In his sworn affidavit in that case, Dr. Stock stated: "We have tested Essiac in a very limited way against sarcoma 180 in the mouse. We have not seen any consistent activity." But he admitted: "After our testing was done we were informed that we should have had two preparations for test and also that we made improperly the injection solution from the dried material supplied to us. We were never provided full information about the nature of Essiac. ")

But even with Sloan-Kettering out of the picture and Rene almost 90 years old, Rene and Essiac were about to burst, once again, into the public spotlight.

CHAPTER NINE

In 1977, the editors of Homemaker's, a nationally distributed Canadian magazine based in Toronto, heard an awesome story: An 88-year-old nurse from Bracebridge had been successfully treating terminally ill cancer patients for 50 years with her secret herbal formula.

By its own account, the magazine assigned a team of very skeptical reporters to investigate. What those reporters discovered over the next six months caused a profound transformation in their attitude.

In the Summer, 1977 issue of Homemaker's, the magazine reported: "Essentially, Rene's story was true. She had been getting remarkable results against many kinds of cancer with Essiac, and she had been prevented from carrying on treatment unless she revealed the formula. Whether it would have been swept under the rug by a jealous medical hierarchy, as she feared, or hailed by a grateful profession that heaped honors at her door, is a question that no one can answer, since Essiac never stood the test of controlled clinical studies."

Until the last moment, the editor of Homemaker's wrote, the staff had "real reservations about publishing a story that would give false hope to cancer patients. The knowledge that our decision would possibly cause traffic jams in Bracebridge as the public beat a pathway to an old lady's door didn't help, either. But the consequences of the alternative -not to publish-were too ghastly to contemplate. There were too many if's: What if Essiac works? Even if Essiac only relieves suffering, it must be tested. Clearly, the possibility for good far outweighed the negatives."

The editor mentioned their initial skepticism about Essiac and wrote that the staff members had asked each other when it had crumbled. "When asked this

question individually, we all had the same answer. Shearer (the magazine's executive vice president) was the last person I queried: "It was the day I realized that if I was told I had cancer, I would visit Rene. It wouldn't be the only thing I'd do. Hell, I'd try anything—the works, conventional and otherwise—but I'd go see Rene first: That's a pretty strong indication of our feelings."

The Homemaker's article then outlined at great length the entire saga of Rene Caisse and Essiac, going all the way back to the day in the 1920s when Rene was told by the old woman with the scarred breast about the Indian who gave her the herbal formula that cured her breast cancer.

The article described the political battle of the 1930s "that reached right to the floor of the Ontario legislature, and made headlines all over the continent."

Rene was vividly described by the journalists who had come to know her: "Though Rene was wary, extremely sensitive to doubt, and frightened that at any moment 'they' (the arm of the medical profession that she felt had squelched her in the past) would stifle or subvert us, she had a brilliantly sharp mind and almost total recall of names, events and personalities.

"Each time we visited her over the next few months, she would be sitting in her favorite easy chair, resplendent in a vivid flowered dress, the winter sun glinting off masses of costume jewelry, her hair hidden under a jaunty sable wig. She was always ready to produce more documents, newspaper clippings, letters from supportive doctors, and case histories as well as before—and-after photographs of cancer patients plucked from drawers or cardboard boxes stashed under her bed. And when we allayed her suspicions by setting up her own tape recorder as backup, she talked into our recorder about her experiences. She had lived many years with the possibility of fines and arrest hanging over her, and trust did not come easily.

"She resented our insistence on the need to verify every fact. In somnolent, discouraged and impatient, she often expressed the fear that she would not live to see Essiac recognized. In modest circumstances, she seemed genuinely disinterested in reaping any financial rewards, and was determined that Essiac should never fall into hands that would exploit it for unseemly profit."

The Homemaker's reporters wrote of interviews they conducted with some of Rene's former patients who had testified at the Royal Cancer Commission hearings in 1939 and were still alive in 1977.

One of the witnesses in 1939 was a railroad engine watchman named Tony Baziuk. His lip cancer was so severe that it disfigured his whole face and forced him to give up his job. Six months after he started Essiac treatments, he was working again and could, as he told Homemaker's almost 40 years later: "Eat for one man, work for three, and sleep like a little baby."

The magazine quoted May Henderson at 81 reminiscing about Rene's clinic in the 1930s: "We liked to get an early start," Mrs. Henderson told *Homemaker's*, "because the clinic was always filled. We tried to get our treatment before lunch, have a bite to eat in Bracebridge, and then drive back. It only took a minute to get the injection and drink the tea, and the patients used to exchange progress reports while we waited."

May Henderson said that she was still healthy in 1977 and had never suffered any recurrence of her cancer.

The *Homemaker's* reporters interviewed Dr. Chester Stock at Sloan-Kettering. He claimed that their tests with Essiac were not encouraging, but he "doesn't rule out the possibility that Essiac could be effective against human cancer."

About their interview with Dr. Stock, *Homemaker's* reported: "The material Rene sent him was 25 years old, and only one herb—the injectable one—was used on the mice. Rene never did send him either the complete formula or all the materials."

According to *Homemaker's*, Dr. Stock told them that he would agree to conduct further tests if Rene would give him the formula for Essiac so that Sloan-Kettering could administer both the injections and the oral treatment.

Attempting to play the role of mediator, *Homemaker's* passed that offer on to Rene. "Her refusal was instantaneous, and failed to yield over the next weeks in spite of our urging. She felt it was futile to go on testing on animal cancer; she wanted Essiac used on patients, or at the very least, on human cancer in animals. Furthermore, she did not believe that Sloan-Kettering would prepare the material properly.

"`Last time, they froze it,' she claimed. `They might as well have been injecting distilled water:"

The magazine also talked to Dr. Charles Bruschi. He praised Essiac and told them about his recent treatment of a man named Patrick McGrail for cancer of the esophagus with herbs supplied by Rene Caisse.

The article went to press only 14 weeks after McGrail's treatment with Essiac began. McGrail was reported to have gained 11 pounds and was "feeling a heck of a lot better." (When Dr. Bruschi chose McGrail as an example, he had no way of knowing that McGrail would still be alive and well ten years later.)

At the end of their research, the management of *Homemaker's* believed enough in what they had learned that they made an official proposal to Rene. As it was described in the magazine: "In the hope that we might speed Essiac

on its way through the bureaucratic maze with no more loss of time, we offered to set up a trust to represent her in any dealings she might have with the government, Cancer Institute or any interested pharmaceutical companies."

Much to their disappointment, Rene turned them down. At the end of their story, Homemaker's concluded: "There s a tragic and shameful irony in the Essiac tale. In the beginning, a simple herbal recipe was freely shared by an Indian who understood that the blessings of the Creator belong to all.

"In the hands of more sophisticated (and allegedly more `civilized') healers, it was made the focus of an ugly struggle for ownership and power.

"Perhaps our cure for cancer lies back in the past, with our discarde d humility and innocence. Perhaps the Indians will some day revive an old man's wisdom, and share it once again. Perhaps this story will be the catalyst; if so, our efforts will not have been in vain."

The Homemaker's article caused an immediate sensation in the Canadian media. Newspapers picked up the story. Television crews arrived in Bracebridge-one of them to prepare an hourlong documentary about Rene and the history of Essiac that was later aired on Canadian television.

Rene Caisse's two phones were ringing practically around the clock. People besieged her home, pleading for treatment. She received threats from people saying they would take action if she didn't turn the formula over to them. She finally had to unlist her phone and-for a while-accept police protection.

Rene received a flood of letters after the article appeared. "My husband, Yves, has been doing just wonderfully well, with your blessed Essiac," one woman wrote. "Your formula has been a miracle for Yves and God willing-we so want him to continue with it."

"I thought of you many times over the years," a woman named Annie Goynt wrote. "I hope you remember me. I came to you for treatment thirty years ago and I have seen many pass away with cancer and always thought of you and what a shame you could do nothing. But at last from what I have read in the paper and an exclusive report in the Homemaker's Magazine your cure has at long last been accepted. I only hope it is used as it should be used."

"We read of your treatment `Essiac' in the Hom emaker's Magazine," another woman wrote. "I would like to tell you how pleased we are with the progress of my brother who has been on your treatment for a few weeks."

The Essiac was acquired with the help of their family physician, she wrote. "There was improvement from the start. Now, about 8 weeks later he is certainly much better." He had gone from too weak to do anything for himself

to driving his own car and looking after his show horses. "His case was considered terminal with only a short time to carry on. Please accept our thanks and wishes for continued recognition of this great discovery and also for better health for you."

One physician from Coldwater, Ontario had the courage to write to Rene saying that one of his patients had improved over the last three weeks on Essiac. "Both appetite and strength are better," he wrote under his official letterhead. "She is anxious to get home and is being discharged from the hospital on Monday Thanks once again for your help."

Rene wasn't surprised. She took all the fuss in stride, and even continued to treat certain patients who were able by one means or another to work their way through all the defenses she had built up around herself.

But the most significant breakthrough of Rene's defenses -perhaps in her whole life-was made by Dr. David Fingard. A handsome and well-dressed man of about 70 who could really turn on the charm when he wanted to, Fingard was a vice president of the Resperin Corporation, a Canadian company that had interests in the pharmaceutical field.

Resperin had physicians on its board of directors, including Dr. Matthew Dymond, who had once been the Ontario Minister of Health -the official Rene had complained to about government harassment in the late 1950s. Fingard himself was a research chemist who was credited with involvement in the discovery of a drug that was effective in treating tuberculosis.

After reading the Homemaker's article, Dr. Fingard met with Rene and did his own research and came out of it wildly enthusiastic about Essiac. He shared that enthusiasm with Rene.

Finally, in the fall of 1977, Rene was persuaded to turn over to Resperin the formula for Essiac. Her contract with Resperin granted her \$1.00 upon signing, and \$250 a week for the six months Resperin agreed to conduct tests of Essiac.

At 89, Rene had tired of battling the medical establishment. She believed that Resperin was big enough and powerful enough to prove Essiac's legitimacy.

Once again the story was alive in the Canadian press. Resperin's top executives began giving enthusiastic interviews. After the Canadian Federal Department of Health and Welfare approved Resperin's plan to test Essiac on humans, Dr. P B. Rynard-the Resperin chairman and a Canadian M.P -was quoted in one newspaper as saying: "They looked carefully at all the facts and reviewed case histories which were very helpful. And one thing they discovered is that it wasn't toxic in any way....There is no doubt that it (Essiac) is effective for some types of cancer."

David Fingard went so far as to tell one reporter that Essiac was "one of the greatest discoveries in modern science." He told the Orillia Journal: "We have found certified cases of cancer ranging over a period of 25 to 30 years which have been cured by Essiac." He quoted the 1975 memo from Dr. Chester Stock at Sloan-Kettering saying that they had seen regressions in tumors in mice.

On November 25, 1977, the Ottawa Journal reported on two cancer patients who said they were feeling better after treatment with Essiac. Their doctors claimed there was no improvement in the condition of their tumors. But one of the patients-a 22-year-old Toronto Star employee who was not identified, at her request-was suffering from cancer in her pelvic bone that had spread to her lungs. She was quoted: "I received radiation and chemotherapy, and I swore I would die before I would go back for any more chemotherapy. I'm taking Essiac now and I feel all right. I come and go just as any normal person and do a day's work."

The paper also quoted a surgeon named Dr. John Barker who said he hadn't seen evidence of tumor regression in patients using Essiac. But their appetites had improved and they experienced less pain. In Dr. Barker's own words: "It's quite possible that there is something in the Essiac formula which stimulates appetite and decreases nausea and also relieves pain."

There it was again: The theme of Essiac as a pain reliever in cancer patients. Spoken over several decades, by patients and doctors alike. In 1978, it looked at long last as though Essiac were finally going to receive the controlled scientific scrutiny it had so long deserved.

In the spring there were several newspaper stories reporting that Resperin, with the approval of the Federal Department of Health and Welfare in Ottawa, was launching its tests of Essiac on human cancer patients. Resperin's chairman, Dr. P B. Rynard, cautioned readers that it would be some time before the results would be known. "The complexity involved in a study of this kind is mind-boggling," he said.

Resperin left no doubt about their own optimism. One of the physicians working with Resperin, Dr. H. D. Wilson, was quoted as saying: "We know it's going to be scientifically proven by the best minds in the country."

But somehow Resperin's study went awry. Within months, Rene Caisse complained publicly: "I think I was able to accomplish more myself." She charged Resperin with carelessness in their studies. Resperin denied that, but the study dragged on.

On August 11, 1978, Rene Caisse celebrated her 90th birthday. The Mayor of Bracebridge, Jim Lang, an old friend of Rene's, personally organized a party

for her. Friends and former patients came -some of them by the bus load -from all over Canada and the U. S. to share the day with Rene.

One newspaper reporter described the scene as the guests arrived: "They lined up to greet the guest of honor, who sat beaming in an easy chair. Miss Caisse is short, somewhat overweight, and looks years younger than her age. Her faculties are very much intact. She instantly recognized patients she hadn't seen for 35 years-and remembered their names."

There were speeches. Rene spent the day laughing and crying as she listened to the heartfelt tributes from men and women who credited her with literally saving their lives, some of them more than forty years earlier. The newspaper reporter wrote: "Scores of those present told the Muskoka Free Press that their only claim to life had been the administration of Essiac, when all other treatments had failed."

A couple of months after her birthday party, Rene was asleep in her den when the phone rang in her bedroom. In a hurry to reach the phone, she slipped and fell and broke her hip.

In excruciating pain, she managed to drag herself to the phone and call her old friend Mary McPherson. Even in that moment she didn't lose her sense of humor. She made a smart crack at her own expense about how clumsy she was and asked Mary to please hurry over.

When she arrived, Mary couldn't get in. Rene had the screen door latched shut from inside. Mary could hear Rene moaning in pain. The ambulance arrived and the attendants had to tear the screen door off its hinges.

Rene was so heavy that they had a terrible time lifting her onto a stretcher and negotiating their way through the house and out the door. They took Rene all the way to a hospital in Toronto for surgery. Some days after the operation on her hip, Rene was brought home. But her friends say that the medication had left her weak and groggy and that she was never herself again. She died on December 26, 1978, at the age of 90.

She was buried in a cemetery near Bracebridge. Several hundred people attended her funeral on a cold day in the snow. At her memorial service, they listened quietly as Father James Grennan eulogized Rene as a person who "manifested love and concern for humanity," and who wanted only to "further the wellbeing and health of her fellow man." He added: "History may have further to say about her work someday."

I don't know all the details of what happened with the tests by the Resperin Corporation. But what was initially supposed to be a six-month study dragged on for a few years. As late as 1981, David Fingard was quoted in the Kitchener - Waterloo Record as saying, "Speaking loosely, we already have evidence of (Essiac) cures, but the evidence is not sufficient to convince the scientific world. But we are getting excellent results."

That same newspaper story announced that the results of the government - approved test were expected to be released shortly. "Fingard says he is confident that Essiac does cure, or at least control, cancer in patients, depending on how early in the diagnosis it is given," the newspaper reported. "He also has confidence in it as a preventive. He and his wife have been taking weekly two-ounce doses (twice as much as usually recommended) for the past two years."

An accompanying article told the story of a cancer patient, Murray Braun of Kitchener, who was convinced that "he is alive and well today because he refused conventional follow-up cancer treatment three years ago in favor of Essiac, an Indian herbal remedy."

After surgery for testicle cancer in 1978, tests revealed "cancer markers" in Braun's blood. He was told at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto that he would have to have four weeks of radiation treatments. "If I had gone through all that, could you imagine what would be left of me now?" Braun told the newspaper. "I'd probably be dead by now "

Instead he got accepted into the Essiac test program. After ten days of Essiac, he said, the color returned to his face. After three weeks, the warmth returned to his body. "On Essiac I started feeling really good," Braun said. So good that he took up skiing again.

But despite cases like Murray Braun, in 1982 the Canadian government shut down Resperin's tests, calling them "flawed," and accusing Resperin of poor quality control in its experiments. The director of the Canadian Health and Welfare Department's bureau of prescription drugs admitted that there was no concern about Essiac's safety. It was safe, all right. But he was quoted as saying that they "cannot say this is an effective treatment."

Patients who were already using Essiac would be allowed to continue using it, in the government's words, "purely on humanitarian grounds." On those same grounds, future patients who could fight their way through the bureaucracy might also be allowed to use Essiac legally.

On December 8, 1982, a man named Ed Zalesky of Surrey, B.C., one of the cancer patients who had been treated with Essiac provided by Resperin, expressed his outrage at all the obstacles placed in the way of people who needed Essiac. In a letter to the editor of an Orillia newspaper, he wrote: "My

life expectancy in 1977 was from six months to two years maximum. The fact that I'm `clean' (according to our over-worked staff at the Vancouver cancer clinic) and still very much alive I owe in great part to Essiac. I was fortunate enough to be one of the people involved in an Essiac test program conducted by Resperin Corporation."

He went on: "I had a terrible time convincing my doctor to submit the short reports required by Resperin to compile test results, let alone to make any commitments. It seems that many doctors refuse to complete the forms, or conveniently `forget' or make them so vague as to be useless.

"That Essiac gives relief from suffering in many cases and prolongs life there is no doubt. Why can't the people who administer the cancer funds give it a fair trial? It isn't going to hurt anyone. The medical profession should stop playing 'God' and allow us cancer patients to use the treatment of our choice."

He concluded: "I am now three years past my final death sentence, well, working full time and then some, and enjoying life, thanks to this `unproven' compound." (Ed Zalesky was still alive and well five years later in 1987.)

When the government was criticizing Resperin's tests, David Fingard told the press that Resperin could even sell Essiac as an herbal tea if they didn't make any claims for its curative powers. But Resperin, he said, wanted Essiac to be officially accepted as a cure. "We don't want to sell it as a tea through stores," he was quoted as saying. "The only way we want to sell it is as a cure."

Resperin didn't give up after the government shut down their tests -and apparently Sloan-Kettering remained interested. On May 12, 1983, David Fingard sent a telegram to Dr. Charles Young at Sloan-Kettering, thanking him "for your interest in ascertaining the possibility of Essiac curing cancer. We naturally feel optimistic based on present results. Also delighted with your offer to come to Toronto for a meeting."

Five months later, on October 5, 1983, E. Bruce Hendrick, the chief of neurosurgery at The University of Toronto's Hospital For Sick Children, wrote his letter to the Canadian Minister of Health-quoted as the epigraph to this book-saying that Essiac appeared to have benefited children under his care sufficiently to warrant serious scientific testing.

Once again, after the latest round of controversy over Essiac, this time sparked by the Homemaker's article in 1977, the authorities did everything in their power to discredit and dismiss Essiac-and yet Essiac just would not disappear and die. Cancer patients continued to speak out in its support. Some physicians who had worked with it were willing to risk censure to push for more research.

That's been the story of Essiac for more than sixty years now, ever since those

eight physicians signed that first petition to the Canadian government in the 1920s. Rene Caisse could never have dreamed when those first doctors showed up at her front door to arrest her, and then refused to do it after they heard what she had to say, that she had just experienced the perfect metaphor for the next sixty years of Essiac.

And so the battle continues. In my case, I had never even heard of Essiac until 1985. When I did first hear of it, I certainly wasn't looking to commit my life to an uphill struggle, any more than Rene Caisse was when she casually asked that woman what had happened to her breast.

In 1985, I was devoting all my attention to my thriving chiropractic practice in Los Angeles, where I treat a large roster of patients who include some of the most successful professional athletes in the world. Among my patients are track stars, worldclass weight lifters, both men and women, and members of NFL teams.

Previously I had spent five years developing a new technique that offers my patients important benefits in the healing of injured muscles and the relief of pain. I was contracted, for instance, by the Baptist Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, one of the largest orthopedic hospitals in southern America, to instruct them in how to implement that technique into the programs of their pain control unit.

I was-and am-proud of that work, and happy to be helping people to heal themselves. I feel that I am a success in my chosen career, respected in my field, with a long list of present and former patients who will vouch for my integrity and sincerity in anything I undertake.

One day in 1985 a friend of mine introduced me to a woman who was striking in how private she was about herself.

My memories of this woman are fresh. Certain phrases and words remain indelibly with me, along with her tones and expressions. She gave the impression of great fragility. Small and raw-boned, she had obviously lost weight. Her appearance was one of delicate survival, a balance between life and disappearance from life.

As we got to know each other and she came to trust me and respond to my curiosity, she began to tell me the story of Rene Caisse and Essiac. She had met Rene many years earlier when she had gone to Rene for treatment of her cancer. She had been in remission ever since. She regarded it as a miracle.

She and Rene had become close friends. She told me of the life and death struggles Rene had lived through for so long. She talked easily and willingly of Rene Caisse, but of the formula for Essiac, she spoke sparingly and with difficulty. Always, a silent dialog within her seemed to be in progress.

Eventually she admitted to me that Rene had left her a copy of the formula. As gently as possible I began trying to persuade her to trust me with it. Rene had freely given it to this woman, who had guarded it with complete inflexibility for years, and now here was someone else, once again, asking that the formula for Essiac be released.

I realized that for this woman to pass on the formula was an ultimate act of trust, and also her acknowledgment that she had, in some way, finally made her choice and passed on her role in what would happen to Essiac. It was an agonizing time for all concerned as doubts, suspicions and fears came and went and came again.

Our conversations, interrupted by days or weeks of withdrawal and silence by this woman, stretched over almost a year. It was a humbling experience. I learned patience. I learned how to wait.

The break came during one of those difficult periods of hiatus. This was the third or fourth time I had been put on hold, and I was braced for the worst. But when the break came, there was no ceremony. Merely an indistinct message on the tape of my answering machine saying: "Come now " I flew to the city where she lives, then anxiously waited in my hotel room for several hours. I had a contract drawn up that defined our responsibilities to each other, and to Rene and her formula, in great detail. But none of that turned out to be wanted or necessary.

When I arrived at her home, there was a soft silence for some time. She stirred in her chair and said, "Well, all in God's good time." Then another long silence. Then her eyes, normally a faded blue, were burning. She said, "Gary, there are things better learned by you only when they happen to you." And she handed me a sheet of paper with a list of herbs, typed out, and the instructions for brewing the tea.

She didn't feel like visiting, so I rose and left and returned to Los Angeles, with a formula and my belief that what this woman had told me was true. But I had no proof.

The first thing I did was brew a batch of Essiac for myself. This woman had told me that its preventive powers were awesome; that Rene had drunk the tea every day of her life. And sure enough, within two days I felt fitter than I had felt before. I had been suffering from chronic bronchitis. The bronchitis disappeared. I have been taking the Essiac ever since. It has done me nothing but good.

But that still wouldn't be proof to anyone else. To begin finding that proof, I had only one solid lead: the name of Rene's closest friend, a woman who lived and worked alongside Rene off and on for many years, ever since Rene had

cured this woman's mother of cancer in the 1930s.

Rene's friend's name was Mary McPherson and she was a native of northern Ontario. That was all I knew I finally tracked down her phone number, and when I did it was in-why was I surprised? -Bracebridge.

I called and told her about my conversations with Rene's other friend -though not that I had the formula-and asked if I could meet with Mary in Bracebridge. I could tell that she was suspicious, wary of this stranger, but she agreed to see me.

I flew to Toronto and drove the 170 kilometers to Bracebridge in a blizzard. The snow was so thick and heavy that I could barely see the road in front of me. I don't recall seeing another vehicle for the whole journey.

As I pulled into Bracebridge for the first time, it was hard to believe that this little country town, surrounded by wooded hills and carpeted in snow, had been the center of such controversy for so many decades. Built near the banks of the Muskoka River, it's a lovely town, clean and well-tended, with rows of victorian houses and big front yards. The population is about 9, 300 -with thousands more who visit in the summer to enjoy the area s water sports and outdoors life.

The rustic buildings on the main street are occupied with shops and stores. There is one movie theater that shows the latest releases. Bracebridge has the appearance of a solid community that is thriving economically.

I drove down Dominion Street, and there was the red brick building, the old British Lion Hotel, where sick people could line up for treatment only if they had a written statement from a doctor stating that they were sure to die -and so were now free to do as they wished.

I knew that here in this town were Rene's rec ords, in Mary's care, long secured in boxes and waiting for someone to come for them once more. I knew that Rene had kept every piece of paper -the diagnoses from doctors, correspondence with SloanKettering, with Premier Hepburn, with her thousands of patients, all the newspaper clippings, the parliamentary testimony. Everything. There were said to be records of everyone she had treated, written in copperplate scrawls on yellowed paper.

I desperately wanted to see it all. I was consumed with the idea that I wanted the whole truth from Mary. I had to "know it all." At the beginning of our first meeting on that bright, crisp, snowy morning, Mary seemed disillusioned and cynical. She had the same guarded manner I had encountered with Rene's other friend. If I had known then what hell Rene and they had lived through for most of their lives, I would have expected her to turn me away at the door.

Mary later told me that there had been so many doctors, lawyers and corporations pursuing the formula that she couldn't take much more of the pressure. She said that she had made a promise to Rene -when Rene was on her death bed-that she would never reveal the formula to anyone, and she said she would never break that promise.

I think that was probably Mary's polite way of saying that if getting the formula was what I had in mind, I might as well forget it, just pack up and go home and leave her alone.

I promised her that I would not ask her to give me the formula, and she seemed to relax a little. As we talked she told me her own story: At different times in the twenty years or so after Rene cured Mary's mother of cancer, Mary and her husband Cliff had each had cancer, and Rene had cured them both with Essiac. With what she'd seen, there was absolutely no doubt in Mary's mind about the value of Essiac.

After Mary became Rene's best friend, she watched Rene go through the hell of threatened arrests, promises of millions of dollars, even death threats from desperate people she had to turn away for lack of proper documentation-and all because Rene wanted to cure a deadly disease and not charge for doing it.

We talked for eight hours. I think Mary could see how sincere my interest was. As she reminisced about Rene, she seemed to enjoy herself. Her spirits picked up. "She saw it all," Mary said. "She even had quite a joke with the jailer right across the street from the clinic. Because she was so big, he used to say, `Don't worry, Rene, I'll reenforce the floor. I know you're going to be with me one of these days."

Once when some official showed up with a warrant to arrest her, Rene went and put her coat on, then asked him what the charge was. He told her it was giving unauthorized medicine for cancer. "Rene said, `Well, if it's an offense in our great land of Canada to save lives, then I guess I'm guilty and I'm ready to go: And the official tore up the warrant and left. They never did arrest her."

The years of the clinic were Rene's happiest years, Mary said. "She was a happy person when she had the clinic. She helped a lot of people and that was always her aim in life: to help people. A lot of our local doctors thought the world of her. They'd drive their own patients in their own cars to be treated by Rene. Dr. Bastedo drove his patients to the clinic. But he got too loud about it, I guess, and the medical association stepped on him. They told him he couldn't do that any more. What was the man to do, eh? That was his life. So he stopped."

Mary told me a story about Rene when she was a young nurse that sort of summed it all up for me. "She was attending an expectant mother who was going to give birth in her home. The doctors came and made their

examination and left. They said they'd be back at a certain time. This was before most people had telephones. They left Rene in charge and before they came back, the mother's labor quickened. Rene saw that the baby was in the wrong position. The baby had to be turned to save the mother's life. So Rene did it.

"Mother and child were resting comfortably when the doctors returned. The doctors were horrified at what she'd done. One of them said, 'Don't you know you could have been sued if things had not turned out well?' Rene said, 'Yes, but if I hadn't done anything, the girl would have died. Then what?' That's just the way Rene was all her life. She used to laugh about that story and say that everything had a funny side. She said the expressions on those doctors faces were priceless."

That night I took Mary to dinner, and I will never forget the look on her face when I recited to her the list of herbs that make up Essiac. She was shocked. Her eyes went the size of silver dollars. For a moment I thought she was going to be outraged.

"How did you get that?" she snapped at me.

But then she collected herself and sighed, a deep sigh, as if she were relieved, glad that someone she trusted finally had it without her breaking any promises.

Later that evening she opened up completely, smiled a lot, confirmed the accuracy of the formula, and finally she said: "I don't know why I'm going to do this, but I trust you and I'm going to let you have the documents that no one has seen since Rene gave them to me."

Mary was as good as her word. Over the next few months, I made two more trips to Bracebridge, becoming closer to Mary each time, hearing more of the story, and returning with large suitcases filled with papers.

It took me two weeks just to read all those papers. By the time I was finished reading, I knew I had more research to do, but I was convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that Essiac was effective-at the very least for its pain relief qualities-as a treatment for cancer. I was certain that my initial faith was backed up with cold, hard fact. Reading those papers the first time was, for instance, how I learned of Rene's work with Dr. Charles Brusch.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When I first learned of Rene Caisse's work with Dr. Charles Brusich three decades ago, I thought it would be too good to be true that I might be able to locate him and persuade him to talk with a stranger about his use of a cancer remedy that was not accepted by the American Medical Association -and that might make him a source of controversy.

How wrong I was. The Brusich Medical Center is still in operation and still one of the largest medical clinics in Massachusetts. It has a staff of about 40, most of them specialists, and Dr. Brusich -now in his late 70s-is still involved on a part-time basis.

Dr. Brusich took my first long-distance phone call. When he was actually on the other end of the line and I began to explain who I was and what I wanted to ask him about, I was expecting the same kind of guarded -even fearful- response that Ralph Daigh and Paul Murphy had gotten from the three doctors in Bracebridge.

But the moment I mentioned Rene Caisse, Dr. Brusich reacted with enthusiasm. It was as if I'd said the magic word. He was thrilled that after all these years someone was finally going to tell her story -and present to the public the available information about Essiac.

In my first phone call to him, we talked for an hour and a half. He was happy to reminisce about Rene Caisse. "She was just a young woman when she started and she died at 90," he said. "That three-story clinic of hers was jammed. In this little town, she picked up 55,000 signatures. People raised such a fuss that they had to give her permission to treat cancer."

I asked what she was like as a person. "She was a kind, gentle, stocky woman," he said. "She was remarkable, a real saint." When she arrived in Cambridge, he said, she was still relying primarily on intramuscular injections of Essiac in her treatment. But he worked with her to refine the formula so that the injections would no longer be necessary. They could rely on the oral treatment, merely drinking the tea. "We worked it out," Dr. Brusich said, "and found out that there was too much by injection. You couldn't give it as often as you should, so we changed it over to sticking mostly with the liquid form."

I couldn't believe how outspoken he was on the subject of Essiac. At one point, he said to me without any hesitation in his voice: "I know Essiac has curing potential. It can lessen the condition of the individual, control it, and it can cure it."

As far as Dr. Brusich is concerned, after being involved with Essiac since 1959, that is a well-established matter of fact. That the cancer establishment has ignored Essiac and still does not include it on their list of accepted cancer treatments doesn't change that fact one bit for Dr. Brusich.

I asked him about the tests on mice conducted by Sloan-Kettering in 1959. He remembered them, quoting from their memo that he had received: "Enclosed are test data in two experiments indicating some regressions in 180 sarcoma of mice treated with

Essiac. With these results, we will wish to test enough more that I should ask if you can send more material."

But Sloan-Kettering, Dr. Bruschi said, wanted the formula as part of the deal. "They said to her, 'You'd better send us more material and the formula:'"

I asked Dr. Bruschi: Why, after all these years and all these cases, have the governments and pharmaceutical corporations and cancer research institutions failed to give Essiac the serious research-and application-it so obviously deserves?

Dr. Bruschi was reluctant to draw conclusions. It was the one moment in our 90-minute talk when he hesitated, when I got the feeling that he was holding back. I could tell Dr. Bruschi was wrestling with himself as he spoke, his cryptic remarks an attempt to communicate without really saying what he believed.

But even with his best attempt to be polite and avoid criticizing anyone, here is what Dr. Bruschi had to say: "The trouble is....all these centers that have gotten a tremendous amount of grants and done tremendous amounts of work, you don't seem to see much difference....These other companies, I can't understand.... Sloan-Kettering, they tell you there's a recession in the growth of the carcinoma and keep wanting medicine, well, there's some merit to it.

"You've got to wonder. Is it for mercenary acts? A lot of reports have been written about cancer and all and always a hope of getting close to it, but....we don't get anywhere.

"The medications you can buy now-well, the action of that medication, a lot of it, isn't good....But they're making a great penny on it. Why should they go ahead and-I don't know It surprises me....But now-I don't know A lot of people are getting large sums."

But as soon as the conversation returned to the blessing of Essiac, Dr. Bruschi's enthusiasm and openness returned. "I know:

the stuff works," he said to me. "It's very inexpensive. You can get a gallon of the stuff for about \$40, transportation and all. Just try and get radiation and chemotherapy-and see what it'll cost you.

"And it (Essiac) works! If it doesn't cure them, it will help them. There are no side effects. They're just herbs. There's no addition of preservatives or anything at all. You can continue using your other medications-heart, blood

pressure, anything you want. There doesn't seem to be any reaction at all.

"If they (the patients) can go 11 or 12 years when they're told they're going to get two years, and the lymphs clear up and they do fine and gain weight -why don't they give it a try?"

"Rene's the one who carried the tradition over from the Indians to us, and it's worked better than all the (other) traditions that have been handed over. It helps. It helps."

Dr. Bruschi encouraged me to continue my research and said that whenever I could get to Boston, he would be happy to meet with me and share some of the case histories of people he has treated with Essiac over the years. There were a few, in particular, that he was proud of and who had given him permission to discuss their cases publicly. They, too, wanted to do what they could to help by waiving the confidentiality of their medical records.

Then he mentioned that he included himself in that group. In 1973, Dr. Bruschi said, he had had cancer. He had three operations. "I had the Essiac," he said, "and so I was able to take it and I'm still taking it now And I had a test done a few months ago, and I've been negative." He said he was convinced that Essiac had played an important role in keeping him free of cancer.

Not long after our phone conversation, I called Dr. Bruschi and asked if this would be a good time for me to see him in Cambridge. He said yes, and invited me to spend a Saturday afternoon with him at his home. He would have his files ready for me. I think he was as excited about the opportunity to tell his story as I was about the opportunity to hear it.

On a lovely New England autumn day, I drove along the Charles River, then through Harvard Square, which was bustling with activity, as always, and past the colonial homes with their rich history. A plaque in front of one identified it as the home of the poet Longfellow

A few blocks away, on a quiet, tree-lined street of two-story houses that date from the 19th century was Dr. Bruschi's home of the last many years.

Dr. Bruschi and his wife, Jane, greeted me at the front door. They're a handsome couple. Jane is probably in her 40s, a warm and gracious woman. Dr. Bruschi is distinguished looking, with a full head of gray hair, a warm smile and an alert twinkle in his eyes. On a Saturday afternoon he was wearing a well-tailored dark suit and tie. I smiled at that. I was charmed that the doctor would dress formally to greet someone who'd just arrived from southern California.

But the formality was only in his clothes. I was quickly made to feel at home, a welcome guest. Dr. Bruschi gave me a tour of his home and told me a bit of its

history. Hanging on the wall in a hallway was a photograph of Jack and Jackie Kennedy with Dr. Bruschi.

The dining room table was covered with files and papers that Dr. Bruschi had collected from the Medical Center to go over with me. We sat at the table and Dr. Bruschi told me a bit of his own history as a doctor. As a practicing MD for more than 50 years, he had long been interested in nature's ways of healing the ill.

Many years ago, as a supplement to standard medical techniques, Dr. Bruschi had studied the curative powers of sea kelp and various herbs. He had also studied the value of nutrition in preventing and treating illness.

So he was not inherently hostile in 1959 when he first heard about Rene Caisse's cancer treatment that was based on an herbal formula. After seeing the results on the patients she treated, he knew that Essiac had value. No question about it.

After Rene returned to Bracebridge, Dr. Bruschi continued to receive Essiac from her and give it to patients who had no other hope. He found that Essiac worked better on people who hadn't had radiation treatments. It did work on people who'd had radiation. Not as fast and not as well-but it helped.

Then we got into the specific case histories. Knowing that many in the medical establishment-of which Dr. Bruschi himself is a respected member-scoff at personal testimonials, no matter how impassioned, and accounts of cures that can be dismissed as anecdotal, Dr. Bruschi made it an important point that he wanted to read some of his own carefully documented cases into the record. He had with him the medical papers-the lab reports and such-that supported every statement he made.

There were two cases in particular that he regarded as difficult, if not impossible, to deny.

The first was the 1975 case of a man named Patrick "Sonny" McGrail-who had been mentioned in the Homemaker's article in 1977. Dr. Bruschi had known him for years. "One day he called me up," Dr. Bruschi said, "and he told me, 'I've got something wrong with my stomach: I said, 'Well, come on over, Sonny.' I found out he had a swelling and a lump in the lower part of the esophagus. I said, 'Sonny, you're going to have to have a little surgical treatment here.'"

McGrail was operated on at New England Baptist Hospital. The surgeon told Dr. Bruschi that the diagnosis was esophageal cancer.

After the operation, McGrail was given radiation treatments. Reading from his case file, Dr. Bruschi said that McGrail's weight dropped to 109 pounds.

"He called me up and said, `Will you please see me? I'm going to die. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I'm losing weight. I've got severe pain. I'll be dead in two years.'"

Dr. Bruschi told him to come on over. "I had the material all there, the Essiac, the powder and liquid we used to make it up. I kept giving him that, and I loaded him up with the vitamins and nutrition. He improved right along, went up to 125 pounds."

Years later, McGrail's surgeon wrote in his hospital report: "Mr. McGrail is doing well and essentially asymptomatic and looks better than he has over the past couple of years. He saw Dr. Bruschi one week ago and everything was fine with his checkup. On examination, head and neck are negative. Lumps are nice and clear. Heart sounds are fine. Abdominal examination is unremarkable... We are delighted with his progress."

On February 15, 1979, Patrick McGrail wrote to Dr. Bruschi: "This is a note to let you know what Essiac has done for me. I was operated on on February 2nd, 1975, for esophageal cancer. After about five weeks my doctor that operated on me put me on radium treatments. I had 11 treatments in 11 days and I lost 12 1/2 pounds. I kept losing weight after that from 156 to 109. Lost my appetite, could not sleep and was very weak."

"Dr. Bruschi gave me a bottle of Essiac to see what it would do for me. I was just using it one week when I started to improve and put on weight. I went from 109 to 130 pounds in six months, and the pain eased. That will be two years ago, February 19th."

"I used to take one ounce of it every night before going to bed. Last November the doctor could not get it, so when I stopped taking it, I started losing weight again. No energy If Dr. Bruschi did not give it to me, I would not be alive today. I do hope that it will soon be available for cancer patients."

That note had been written eight years earlier. I asked Dr. Bruschi what happened to Patrick McGrail after that. Dr. Bruschi pulled out a letter McGrail had written to him just a few months earlier, on May 11, 1987: "I am still being treated by Dr. Bruschi for my cancer of 11 years and am doing good. When I was operated on, they said I would not live two years. The Essiac worked wonders."

I asked Dr. Bruschi for his own personal comments about the McGrail case. He said simply: "It was the Essiac that does the trick. That's one case."

The second case was much more recent-and even more dramatic. This one involved a man named Ross Nimchick. Along with Nimchick's case file -which contained all the supporting medical records-Dr. Bruschi had a written

account from Nimchick detailing every step of the way in his own words:

"June 15, 1986. I, Ross Nimchick, came down with a cold and loss of voice. My glands were swollen and I noticed a lump near my left collarbone and in the groin area.

"June 23rd: Appointment with Dr. Clinton. He examined the lump and gave me a prescription and had me go for blood tests. "June 25th: Blood tests taken at Holyoke Hospital.

"July 7th: Dr. Clinton recommends a biopsy "July 21st: Biopsy completed at Holyoke Hospital.

"July 30th: I called Dr. Clinton's office for the biopsy report. Dr. Akers told me I had malignant lymphoma and to contact Dr. Ross.

"July 30th: Stitches taken out from biopsy operation. "August 6th, `86: Dr. Ross examined me in her office. She measured the nodes, took my height, weight, and had me go for more blood tests. Dr. Ross said I was in the third to fourth stage of lymphoma.

"August 8th: Bone marrow test done in Dr. Ross' office. "August 18th: CAT scan done at Holyoke Hospital.

"August 22nd: Dr. Ross gave me the results of all the tests. I do not have to return until October 2, `86, unless I feel my condition begin to deteriorate.

"August 28th: I discuss my condition with Dr. Bruschi and we go over the vitamins and Mr. Croft's daily food intake program. "September 3rd: I begin to take my vitamins and start on the food program.

"September 12th: I begin to take Essiac. Two ounces mixed in two ounces of warm water. All water I am drinking is purified by reverse osmosis.

"October 2nd, `86: Dr. Ross examines me and she has a blood test done. I no longer notice any sweating and I feel stronger. I am still on my vitamins, food diet and Essiac.

"December 2nd: Dr. Ross examines me and I have blood tests completed. No treatment needed, although white blood count up to 25. I. Dr. Ross wants me to come in for blood tests January 3.

"End of December, `86: I caught a cold and felt weak. I have increased my vitamin C. The nodes under my armpits have grown slightly and the nodes near my groin have remained the same.

"January 3rd, `87: Went in for blood tests but no exam by Dr. Ross. Dr. Ross

informs me over the phone that my white blood count has increased and that next time she may have to start me on medication. I have discontinued my diet and begun to eat pineapple, take vitamin B-6 and I increased my intake of broccoli.

"February 3rd, `87: Dr. Ross examines me and has blood tests done. I have gained two pounds. White blood count has dropped slightly. I have noticed my nodes have decreased in all areas. I have decreased my vitamin C to one gram, my vitamin B-6 to 100 milligrams per day. During February, I noticed my nodes going down about 50% . I feel in good health and I am no longer tired.

"March 2nd, `87: Dr. Ross examines me and has a blood test taken. White blood and red blood count are normal. Dr. Ross said they must have made a mistake and ordered another blood test taken. Same result. Nodes under my left armpit are no longer there. Nodes under my right armpit have gone down 95 % . Nodes on both my groins have decreased in size by about 95%. My neck has only one node left, and that is also decreased by about 95%. I feel in excellent health. I am continuing with my vitamins and two ounces of Essiac and two ounces of warm water."

Nimchick's statements are verified by the official hospital records in Dr. Brusck's file. Then Dr. Brusck read a letter he'd received from Nimchick, dated May 30, 1987:

"I just wanted to send you a brief note to say I am feeling great. I am continuing my vitamins, food program and two ounces of Essiac daily. As I look back to last fall of `86, I remember how tired and weak I used to feel. But today I am strong, full of energy and back to my old self prior to having lymphoma.

"I have enclosed a picture taken last December, which shows lumps under my chin. This is the only picture of myself. I have also enclosed my latest report from my blood test of April 27th. My next test is June 22nd, `87, which I will forward to you upon completion.

"In closing, Dr. Brusck, your program with Essiac has returned me to 100% health with no further lymph nodes and a normal life again. I look forward to talking to you soon after my next report. Sincerely, Ross Nimchick."

With cases like that in his files after almost 30 years of personal experience with Essiac, Dr. Brusck is frustrated and unhappy at the lack of attention it has received from medical authorities. But he has no plans to give up his public praise of Essiac.

Why? Because he's convinced that Essiac has too much value to humanity to allow it to disappear. "I don't say it cures everything," Dr. Brusck told me. "But it's the only thing I know so far that can do the work as well as this. That's

why I feel so good about this stuff. I know: The stuff works!"

The day after my meeting with Dr. Bruschi, I left to visit Bracebridge again. Mary wanted to introduce me to some of the people in town who had known Rene and had their own personal experiences with Essiac. I'll always be grateful for what those good and generous people in Bracebridge shared with me on that trip.

CHAPTER TWELVE

In the transcript of the 1939 Royal Cancer Commission hearings is the testimony of a woman named Eliza Veitch. Sworn to oath almost 50 years ago, she told her own story under interrogation by doctors and lawyers.

She'd been operated on in 1935 for cancer of the bladder. "So then I went home and months went on and I began to get worse, gradually going down and getting off my feet. I could not stand on my feet. That was where my pain was. When I would stand I would have this terrible pain."

She went for an examination. The doctor told her that one spot had started to grow again. "So I didn't know what to do. I didn't think there was any use going back. I had my mind made up. I was going to die with it. There is no use going back and being tortured again."

She got worse. She lost weight. She couldn't sleep. When she'd finally given up all hope, she went to Nurse Caisse. That was in May, 1938. "I began to see the neighbors around. My next neighbor was getting cured, and one here and one over there, and I talked to them. People came to see me and told me and this one and that one told me and I thought, 'Well, there is something in it. I'll go in: I didn't have faith at first."

For eight treatments she didn't notice any change. Then she had a bad reaction. "I thought I was done for sure then but that was the turning point. Then I began to improve and I improved fast."

When she testified, Eliza Veitch said she was at her normal weight of 143 pounds. "I am not saying I am cured yet, but I can tell you in percentage that I am 75% better today. I have cabins on Three Mile Lake, and I look after my cabins and my guests, and last year, I could not hardly walk to the place."

She finished: "I owe my life to Miss Caisse. I would have been dead and in my grave months ago."

Months before my trip to Bracebridge in October, 1987, I had read the hundreds of pages of transcript from those hearings. I'd read Eliza Veitch's testimony and been moved by it. But most of the names of Rene's witnesses had long since faded to the back of my mind. They were voices from the past, people who were all probably dead now, their stories-except for the passages in this obscure transcript-buried with them.

On my second day in town, I went to the Bracebridge City Hall to ask for an interview with the municipal clerk, a man, Mary told me, who dabbled in the history of Bracebridge and knew something about Rene's story. Mary believed he had accumulated some of the documents from Rene's era. When she mentioned him, I thought I heard his name as Ken Beech.

The best I was hoping for was that he might be willing to share his documents and tell me a little bit about what he knew. But knowing the skepticism -even nervousness and paranoia- of the locals who were familiar with Rene Caisse, and guessing that a public official would dodge controversy about her, especially with a stranger who just showed up at his office without an introduction, I was ready to be turned away.

The Bracebridge City Hall is a large, two-story building just down the street from Rene's old clinic. Inside, it is clean and well cared for, with a large open area where a dozen or so men and women keep the tax roles and manage the business of the city.

I waited in a short line until it was my turn. The woman behind the counter seemed surprised to hear that I was from Los Angeles, had no appointment, and wanted to speak to Ken about someone named Rene Caisse. But she said just a moment and walked to the rear of the building and went into an office with a closed door.

A few moments later, she came out and asked if 2:00-right after lunch-would be okay. I think I was as surprised as she was by the answer, and I told her I'd see her then.

When I returned at 2:00, Ken came out immediately to greet me. He looked to be in his 40s, a nice-looking man wearing a well-tailored suit, someone who appeared as though he would be just as comfortable doing the same job in a much larger city. I was impressed and glad that he seemed happy to see me. But I was surprised. His reaction didn't fit my image of how a city official would react to an outsider asking about Rene Caisse. He escorted me into the office and we sat down at a large conference table that sat in front of a desk.

Ken showed none of the reserve I expected to encounter. All I had to say was that I was writing a book about Rene Caisse and that I believed in her work, and he was all smiles and enthusiasm. He opened up instantly. He said he'd already been to his home at lunch and brought back some of the old

documents-newspaper stories, the town ordinance granting her use of the hotel for her clinic, and so on-and he was passionate, he said, that the truth be known about Rene Caisse.

"She treated a lot of people," he said. "I can't tell you who was cured or who wasn't cured, but my family had faith in it. I don't know what she had, but she had something that made people feel better. She had something that saved a lot of suffering. There are people using it today."

Ken told me one recent story around town that he'd seen with his own eyes. "A fellow I know had cancer and was on his deathbed, and I know this because I saw him. He was skin and bones and had terminal cancer and he was on his way out. He started taking Essiac and, I kid you not, I saw him a few weeks later and he was driving his car. Now, he still died. He was just too far gone. But when I saw him driving his car, he didn't look bad. He looked sort of full in the face. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it. But he felt all right. I heard that from his daughter. She told me he really felt good."

Growing up in Bracebridge, Ken said, he heard the stories about Rene Caisse. He wasn't paying much attention at the time. But what he heard did convince him that Rene Caisse's treatment was for real. "She had something," he said. "There are people of high witness for that. It eased their suffering, and by God, what the hell's wrong with that? If you meet my uncle, he'll tell you all that, where he saw people come into her clinic in desperate shape, jaws exposed, just awful stuff, hideous stuff. A few months later, they'd walk away happy and healthy. I could go on for hours."

The whole history, he admitted, had left him with "a hatred for a system that causes this. But I don't know what to do about it. It's pretty hopeless. It boggles my mind."

After we'd been talking about a half hour, I happened to mention the 1939 Cancer Commission hearings. "I think I've read them," Ken said. "I can't say I read every word of them, but I know that it all took place. My grandmother was one of them Eliza Veitch. She had cancer of the uterus. She was 89 when she died in 1966 or 1967."

Chills went up my spine. Suddenly I understood why this city official was so friendly to a stranger asking questions about Rene Caisse. He was the grandson of the woman whose words I had read and been moved by. I felt a personal connection to Eliza Veitch that I hadn't felt before.

I told Ken that I'd read his grandmother's testimony and hadn't expected to meet someone in her family. "My dad and my uncle can really tell you the first-hand account of the whole thing," he said. "I tell you, I'd love for you to meet them. You can put into words what they can only in their own modest way try to tell you. They're not particularly educated people, but their

sincerity will blow you away."

What did Ken personally remember about what his grandmother said about Rene Caisse?

"Well, Rene was like a hero worship to my grandmother, because she knew she was cured. A few of the little things she told me, I can still recall. In every case, she said that after taking it for a certain period of time, there was a sickness, a sort of a weak spell, and my grandmother told me she collapsed out in one of our parks here. My father or my uncle was with her, and they took her right straight back to the clinic. It was after one of her treatments, and Rene Caisse said to her that it was a good sign. That was an indication that something was working, that the treatment was taking effect, and from that time on she started to revive.

What else did his grandmother tell him about Rene?

"Well, there was frustration, a little bit of distrust of the doctors because they fought her so hard. One of the doctors that opposed her so vociferously in those years in the 30s died himself of cancer, and the story goes -I wasrit there to hear it, but my grandmother told me-that he pleaded with Rene to treat him for cancer and she wouldn't do it."

He laughed. "I don't know whether it's true or not. That's the story. But Rene was always very kind, very nice. She had visitors galore. People traveled from all over the country to plead with her to treat their husband or wife. I guess a lot of the cancer treatment is the hope that people feel when they get on the cure. Psychologically, I think that's a factor. But there's no doubt in my mind either that these herbs somehow purify the blood. So if it's not a cure for cancer, then why isn't it a tonic, an herbal tonic, available for \$ 1.00 to everyone in the country?

"I think maybe one of the problems was that it was called a drug. I don't think it's a drug. It's a tonic. You buy vitamins every day in the health food stores and drugstores all across the world. What's wrong with it being used as a tonic? Perhaps that's the approach.

"It's confusing, to say the least, how these things happen. I don't know what the process is where people can get some things on the shelves -here, take this. It's a puzzle. But an herbal recipe, how wrong can it be? What harm can it cause? Why should an association that wants it proven first that it's a cure hold back that kind of relief from people who are dying every year of cancer? What's wrong with making them feel better? I don't understand that.

"My grandmother told me, and I believe this, that Rene Caisse would never have had any problem saving people's lives, saving their suffering, if the local doctors had left her alone. And I have to believe that. My grandmother was a

god-fearing woman. The doctors harassed Rene about her business and it was they who took her to task as she was treating people and she wasn't a doctor . God forbid. I expect Rene was taking some of their customers away. If they'd kept their mouths shut...it was awful."

By now, we'd been talking for almost an hour. I was concerned that I might be taking too much time out of Ken's afternoon schedule. When I suggested that perhaps I should let him go, he said, no way. Anybody who came all the way to Bracebridge from Los Angeles to learn about Rene Caisse was welcome to as much of his time as was needed.

He said he had a videotape of a Canadian television show he wanted me to see-the one that aired after the Homemaker's article appeared -and he wanted me to meet Mayor Lang. "The mayor, he knew Rene, and he believes, too, that she had something. He knows it helped ease people's suffering and made them feel good, and he'll tell you his own story because he was a personal friend of Rene's, even though he's my age."

Ken took me upstairs to a conference room with a television and went to get the tape. A few minutes after he returned, the mayor walked in.

Jim Lang is a tall, lanky man with the hearty look of an outdoorsman. He was dressed casually and wearing cowboy boots. He gave me a friendly greeting, said he was happy that someone was looking into the story of Rene Caisse, and got to the point as quickly as Ken had: "A fellow who used to be a neighbor of mine, he died a couple of years ago, I guess he was 77 years old. But his mother used to run a boarding house here in town. He didn't marry until his 50s, so he was living at home at the time Rene had her clinic going. He used to tell me of dozens and dozens of people who came and stayed at his mother's boarding house while they took treatments. They were from all over the place, from Timmons and Sault. Ste. Marie and down in the states-just all over the place-and they'd stay there maybe two, three, four months, depending on the length of treatments required.

"He used to tell me of some of them. When they first came in there, you'd wonder how they could even get around, they were in such terrible shape with either tumors exposed on their face or because they were so thin and weak, and he said that when they left his mother's place they were cured, they were just like new persons, you wouldn't recognize them as the same people, when they came and when they left."

The mayor had organized Rene's 90th birthday party, a few months before she died. More than 600 people were there, from all over Canada-and some from the U.S. "A lot of people," the mayor said, "just voluntarily wanted to say something because they had been treated by her for cancer. That sort of thing went on for hours. If you'd been here and heard some of the tributes that were paid by her former patients, it would bring tears to your eyes.

"You know, I often wonder if the treatments that have been performed by research doctors when they test the stuff were done in the same manner that Rene did it. That's the other thing nobody knows, because she certainly had results. She cured people that were given up on by doctors -totally given up on. They said, `You're going to die and there's nothing we can do about it: And they went to Rene and 20 years later they were still walking. I know that for a fact because I knew Rene for probably 25 years."

As a young man, Jim Lang had helped Rene out doing odd jobs around her house. "I can remember working in her home in the 50s and 60s. I used to look after all of Rene's stuff. And people were coming into her home for treatment then. Her patient load was down because she had to be careful about what she did, but there were people that she knew and for some reason, she looked after them. They'd come to her house."

I mentioned that the worst thing I'd ever heard about Rene was that she was stubborn. The mayor laughed. "I wouldn't have cast her as being stubborn. She was certainly set in her ways, but I would say more determined than stubborn. She was very determined. If you were having a discussion with Rene, you'd certainly know that you were in an argument before you were finished, and most times you'd probably be convinced that she was right. No, I wouldn't say she was stubborn. She was a very kindly person, very compassionate and very dedicated. She really believed in what she was doing, really believed it. I think if the truth were known, there are probably a good number of treatments that she never got paid for."

After a few more minutes, the mayor said he had to leave. He offered any help he could give, and said: "The stupid part is that we've got nothing to lose (by giving it a try) and everything to gain. But how do we get the right people to listen? It's a shame, you know, every year that goes by, Rene's story is getting buried deeper and deeper. Pretty soon there won't be any of these old people left to tell it."

Ken said that he was going to make certain that I had the opportunity to hear it from his uncle Elmer, Eliza Veitch's son. Ken wanted to make sure that I heard about Essiac from three generations of the same family. "My uncle had personal experience going to Rene Caisse's clinic for months while he took my grandmother in for treatment. To hear his story with the sights he saw and the people he saw come at one stage and leave walking and happy months later is just absolutely phenomenal. He's not going to kid you. These aren't people who are going to lie to you. They're going to tell you the truth. My uncle has a very good memory. He's a great memorizer of poems and stuff like that."

The next day at 10 a.m., I pulled up to park on the street not far from the city hall, and just as I was turning off my engine, I saw an old man struggling up the front steps. He was carrying a cane and he was having difficulty making

the short climb to the front door. One leg was completely bowed, as if from severe arthritis. He was slightly hunched over. He was wearing old work clothes. I learned later that he is 75 years old.

A nice-looking, gray-haired woman, dressed up as if on her way to church, had him by one arm and was helping him. I thought: I'll bet that's Ken's uncle Elmer and his aunt Edra, and I was touched that someone who knew Rene so many years ago would take the time and trouble to come to town and climb those stairs to talk to a stranger about her.

I waited until they were through the front door and had enough time to get settled, and then I entered the building. The lady at the front desk told me to go right on in. Once in the office, it turned out I was right. The old man struggling up the stairs was Ken's Uncle Elmer.

But up close and comfortably seated, Elmer appeared differently, not a vulnerable, crippled-up old man at all. He had thick, muscular arms and strong hands and a powerful grip. As he greeted me with a big smile, I felt the warmth of his personality. His eyes sparkled, and he was handsome in the craggy way of those old ranchers and woodsmen. He was totally alert, with a quick wit and a booming voice and a loud and hearty laugh that came from deep within.

His wife Edra was a formidable presence in her own right, obviously a woman of radiant good health. The thought actually crossed my mind that even though she was in her late 60s, she looked like one of those people who'd never had a sick day in her life.

After a few minutes of getting to know each other, I turned on my tape recorder and asked Elmer to tell me about his mother, Eliza Veitch, and Rene Caisse. In that strong, deep voice, and every once in a while pounding the table for emphasis, Elmer spoke without interruptions or questions for several minutes. Like everyone I met in northern Canada, he has the endearing habit of occasionally punctuating his sentences with an "eh?" Pronounced like a long "A" with a question mark. Before I got out of town, I heard myself starting to do it, too. It's catchy. What follows in the next few pages is a verbatim transcript of Elmer's impassioned opening account. This man can speak for himself:

Elmer Veitch:

This is getting on 50 years ago, and my mother had been diagnosed as having cancer. So she got wise to Miss Caisse's clinic here. Of course, it was going all over in those days, it was quite famous. So every week that was Miss Caisse's wish-that you come every week for treatments. At that time, she administered the treatment by hypodermic needle.

As a result, I took my mother down and we started these treatments every week. I had an old Model A Ford and I was a young fellow in those days. But I'll never regret it-and I'll never forget it either, because some of the sights I saw over here on this corner. . . horrible. The people were from all over North America. A lot of people from your country came over here.

My mother had the statement saying she had cancer, otherwise they wouldn't allow Miss Caisse to treat her. So every week I brought her down and Miss Caisse told her, "Now sooner or later, and probably sooner, you'll have a reaction with this stuff."

It didn't happen for a couple of weeks, but then it happened right here in the clinic. She sort of went into a kind of a fever and chills, you know, but it didn't last long, not long enough to worry too much about. I took her home. She was all right.

So these treatments went on for, well, as I remember, must have been six months, I guess. She kept taking these treatments and feeling better all the time. So at the end of about six months, Miss Caisse thought she'd had enough, which was probably right.

Now mother lived to be 83. That's 30 years after this happened ,eh? Mother lived to be 83 and died a natural death, as natural as anybody would, and the cancer evidently was blocked tight-it never got nowhere.

But yours truly was coming down here every week to this clinic. You'd have to wait a couple of hours to get your turn. It was a big building and the bottom floor was all taken out and seats put all around the big room, and every time I'd come in there, it was on a Saturday, they'd be all sitting around there. Heavens, you thought they'd been there all week.

So having nothing better to do, I went around and I talked to these people. They were very nice people and some of them had half a face, you could see their teeth. Some of them, you could see their ribs. Sights like this haunted me for a long time, you know, and I talked to these people. They talked to me, a good many of them.

The pain they went through was something awful. They'd suffered, and I could see that, you know, but they said since we've been taking Miss Caisse's treatment, thank her and the Lord, we've got no pain. No pain after suffering for months with desperate pains. She stopped the pain.

Now, I don't know, I don't know Mind you, she couldn't put back flesh that was gone off your ribs or jaws that are gone off your face, and some of them - oh, God, it was horrible, I'll tell you. I can still remember this. It used to haunt me for quite a while.

But that impressed me very much when they told me what they were suffering, and now they had no pain. "Oh, Miss Caisse is an angel," they'd say. I guess she seemed like that to them.

I don't know about a lot of the terminal cases, they probably...but a lot of them got better. Now I couldn't tell you their names. Never did know their names. But I talked to them every week and invariably they all told me the same story: We have no more pain. And they were quite emphatic about that. You can well understand it, too. My mother, oh, she was a great friend of Miss Caisse.

Now about this time there was a neighbor of ours just across the lake from us. His name was Wilson Hammell. He was one of the old -timers in this country here, one of the old pioneers, if you will, and then up towards Bracebridge a little further was another fellow, Burt Rossen. He was born and raised in Muskoka, so I knew these guys all my life, both of them, eh?

They both had trouble and they went to Toronto, to the big hospitals, and they both had cancer of the rectum. They stayed down there for a while and the powers that be told them that they might as well go home. Same thing happened to both of them. They're only going to live a month -you can't possibly live more than a month.

Now those guys were up in years, they were grown, maybe 50 years old or thereabouts. The doctors sent them home, go to your homes, boys, you're only going to live a month, it's impossible for you to live any longer because of what you have, eh?

I remember all this quite vividly. They each came home with the fact that they could only live a month. So, you know, a drowning man will grasp at a straw, and then Miss Caisse was treating `em, boy. They just went for her like that, eh?

They started out with these needles in the arm, eh? With the Essiac. I can't remember how long they took the treatment, but it was for quite a length of time, maybe six months, eh? Or thereabouts.

I'll tell you what happened. Now this was common knowledge all over. They passed that big black cancer that was in the rectum, both of them, it came away, and those men lived for 35 years after that, both of them, and died a natural death as old men. Now I'll lay this on a stack of Bibles, and I'm not given to lying, I hate anybody that does, but that is actually what happened.

Now, well, everybody around here was completely sold on this deal, eh? So she tried to get the medical profession to recognize her, and I'll have to tell you there was a couple of doctors in this town, they're dead and gone long ago, but they would a killed her if they could of. They said she's only a quack, and the one fella said, I wouldn't take that stuff, I'd die first-and die he did, with cancer.

Now this was the general feeling of the medical profession all over the country I don't know why. I can't imagine why anybody that could help anybody, God, I don't know why it knocked em, eh? There was people from your country, all over the states. They came to this clinic, and I'll tell you, I witnessed quite a few of them.

They were there every day. I only came on Saturdays, but when they told me about their suffering and the fact that after the treatment started their pain vanished-could you blame them for standing up on their hind legs and screaming about it? I didn't. My mother died, as I say, a natural death, she lived for 30 years after that. She died an old lady in the hospital here in Bracebridge.

That was the end of Elmer's uninterrupted story. When he was imished with what he had to say, I asked him if his mother had gone for surgery or other treatment besides Essiac. "No," he said. "She wouldn't go for the surge ry."

Then the conversation wandered for a few minutes. Edra hadn't said a word since I'd turned on the tape recorder. Finally, out of nowhere, she said: "I had cancer, too."

"You did?" I blurted out. I'm sure the surprise showed on my face.

"Three years ago," she said. And Edra, the picture of health, told her own story. She had gone into the hospital in Perry Sound for a simple hysterectomy. But they found a malignant growth on her left ovary. "They took the uterus, they took everything, and they sent it away and found that it was fairly aggressive - that was the term they used. They said I'd have to have further treatment. I said, what does this entail? The surgeon said radiation, and I said, oh, Lord. I felt as if my whole world had fallen apart.

"When he said radiation, I thought, well, Lord, this is the end, or the beginning of the end, and I think I'd better come to terms with it. I had so much experience with the rest of my family, on my mother's side. She had seven sisters and five of them died of cancer.

"I nursed my aunt, my mother's younger sister, for a year. She had cancer of the bone. Her arms broke off here, her legs broke off between her hips. She was just like a rag doll, and there was nothing left of her but a hank of hair and these broken bones. She didn't weigh 35 pounds when she died, and she was only 32 years old. "It started out a little, wee growth in her left breast no bigger than a peanut, but it was on the breast bone, and she had suffered with a lame hip. She had a little girl who was less than two years old, and after she had that little girl she could hardly walk, you know, for a long, long time, and then she noticed this little lump in her breast, so she went and they did a total mastectomy, just cleaned her right out down to the rib cage, you know "It was

dreadful, and all the nodes under her arm and everything, and then it came back in her hip, that's where it came first, and her ribs let go from her spine - they were crossed over each other. You never saw such a pathetic and heartbreaking sight in your life, and I will never forget her.

"In those days, they had nothing to treat her. She came to Miss Caisse, but she was so ill she couldn't stand the car ride. So she had to give it up. She was too far gone. Had they got her when they found this little lump, if Miss Caisse had got her then, she would maybe still be living today."

"It was a horrible death. I witnessed it," Elmer said.

"And my mother had cancer-both her ovaries. She had a four pound tumor on one and five or six pounds on the other, and she swelled up like a woman in the last stages of pregnancy That was in 1948. But at that time, Nurse Caisse's treatment wasn't available."

"You couldn't get it," Elmer said. "No way. They banned the whole works."

"We couldn't get it for mother," Edra said. "It was no longer available."

"Miss Caisse was under pain of imprisonment. She had to quit " , Elmer said.

I asked Edra how she felt about that in 1948.

"Oh, I was very bitter about that. I was very angry with the doctors in this town, in particular, for blackballing her the way they did. They really did blackball her. I am not so familiar with it as my husband and my mother-in-law, but my mother-in-law was the closest thing to a saint."

Elmer perked up. "That's why I'm so good!"

We all laughed. I asked Edra how she had felt after her radiation treatments.

"Oh, sick!," she said. "Nauseous, diarrhea, shaky. I would sit and my stomach would go like that-you could see it jumping. It didn't just quiver inside. You could see it jumping with the nerves, you know Oh, burn, oh! They don't prepare you, you know, for what that radiation is like.

"I had one every morning at 9:30. Well, I was so sick I could hardly get to the hospital. That's the dread I had. After about 17 or 18 treatments, I couldn't even go to the dining room because of the smell of food. I was like someone in the first stages of pregnancy. I couldn't stand the smell of the dining room."

I asked her what kept her going.

"Well, I knew I had 30 treatments to go and I just thought , well, that's one less. Tomorrow I'll have another one and that will be one less, and I took it

one day at a time. It was the only hope I had at that point. The last three weeks, I was just too ill to drive the 125 miles to get home and back. I was too ill to even come home.

"In the meantime, he's got this in motion to get me the Essiac. This is what I was looking forward to. I thought if I could just get that, I'm going to get better."

I asked Elmer how he went about getting the Essiac. He explained about getting a doctor to provide a certificate, then getting it cleared through somebody's office in Ottawa, then getting the Resperin Corporation to send the Essiac. A lot of paperwork and red tape, was what it was.

"Then the Resperin Corporation sends it to you, eh?" he said. "For about six months they never charged us a cent. Miss Caisse left a legacy for people, and how much funding I don't know, but we got it for six months and it never cost a penny. Now we pay what for three or four bottles-\$40? That's \$ 10 a bottle. You can't measure money against Essiac."

But the first step in the process was written documentation that Edra did have cancer. "I can't really say what kind it was," she said. Some medical term she doesn't recall. "But it was carcinoma."

Weeks had gone by after Elmer wrote the health officials in Ottawa asking for approval to get the Essiac. Nothing happened. So he contacted their member of parliament. "Boy, Elmer rattled their chain," Edra laughed. "I'll tell you, he went right after them." And, she says, the MP's secretary went after Dr. Sproul, the Minister of Health, and before long, they received their Essiac.

Edra had been home from the hospital for about a month. She was totally beaten. "I would lay awake all night, my nerves were so bad," she said. "It was just like this." She shook her hands, imitating someone who's intensely jittery. "I couldn't sleep. You know, oh, it was dreadful, and then I'd get up and cry at the least little thing. My nerves were just-I was just shot. I hadn't taken the Essiac 10 days until I started to pick up."

She was emphatic about it. "I was so sore from the radiation , you know, my bowels, my bladder, everything. I was so badly burned from the radiation. But I hadn't taken Essiac 10 days when I got up one morning and I said, `Gosh, I'm hungry for breakfast: Elmer looked at me, you know, because I hadn't said I was hungry for a long time. But I was really hungry for breakfast. I started to eat again and lose the nausea and the diarrhea and my general well-being-my outlook on life-seemed to improve. I seemed to feel better every day. I've never missed a meal since. I've never had a sick stomach. Mind you, my nerves were hot. I guess-poor father here-I was pretty hard to live with for a while."

She looked over at Elmer and laughed. "That's when I took to drink," Elmer

said. "I'll tell you," Edra said, "I've been taking it for two and a half years now, and quite truthfully I don't think I'd be here today if it weren't for Essiac. I feel sure. I think this Essiac is my insurance. That's the way I look at it. It's my insurance. I do all my own work. I help Dad whenever I can."

"Dad don't do a hell of a lot, either," Elmer laughed.

"And I'm involved with my church work a lot," Edra went on. "I keep busy. For an old lady of 67, I think I'm doing pretty good. I think I'm very, very lucky, you know My own doctor has taken blood test and blood test, bone marrow, liver, chest X-rays, bladder sample, you name it, he's taken it, blood sugar - everything is A-1. So praise God, I have a lot to be thankful for.

"I think it was about the 6th of September when I had a checkup. The doctor says, 'You know, you're incredible: I said, 'No, I'm not. You know what's doing it, don't you?' He says, 'Edra, I really believe it. I'm really beginning to have faith in this medication. You just keep it up: He's beginning to see that it has done me some good. You see, they're skeptical. They have to be. Whenever there's something new, you're skeptical until it's proven. Areri t you? Well, he sees me on a regular basis and he's beginning to believe that this is really working for me. The last time I was down there, they couldn't find anything. I feel fine."

At this point Edra was finished telling her own story. So I asked Elmer to tell me more about the years of Rene's clinic. What was the mood in the clinic?

"Well, it was subdued, to say the least. But these people knew they were going to get help. Having nothing to do and being a little snoopy, I went around and talked to some of the bad cases, and by God, I'm telling you, there was some god-awful looking sights, to put it mildly, and those people told me that they'd suffered the tortures of hell, for years some of them, eh? That's almost the identical words to what they told me.

"But since they'd been coming here, oh, were they pleased. 'We have no pain anymore, no pain,' they'd say. In big capital letters! So how the hell are you going to dispute something like that? Actual testimony from people with their jaws, their teeth, in sight, and some of their ribs in sight, holes eaten in different places, dirty old cancer, eh?"

I asked how the people felt when the clinic was closed. "Despair," Edra said instantly.

"Well, there was a lot of ill feeling going around this country at the time," Elmer said. "Damn near everybody you talked to was quite provoked at the medical association. They were so powerful that Miss Caisse was on the verge of being arrested, eh?"

"Heavens, she was an angel of mercy," Edra said.

"People reacted when they closed her down," Elmer said. "But they were more or less powerless. They couldn't battle the powers that be that were against her. It was like beating your head against the wall. But everybody was pretty mad at the time. Those people that were afflicted, they were pretty damn badly provoked to think that nobody else was going to get help, eh?"

We talked for a few minutes about the old days in Bracebridge and some of the people Elmer had known who were helped by Rene's injections. Then I asked Edra how she takes the Essiac today.

"I take one ounce in two ounces of hot water each night , preferably on an empty stomach. Take it on an empty stomach and it goes through all the organs, you know By itself. It's not mixed in with anything else and you get the full benefit of it. I don't mind taking it. I've rather acquired a taste for it. At first it was kind of, yech. But I hadn't taken it long before I got to like the herbal taste. It's all herbs, that's all it is."

"The Indians knew all the herbs and the value of them," Elmer said. "Today we know nothing about most of them."

"I'd like to see this made available to everyone that needs it " , Edra said. "For the medical profession to accept it and dispense it to their patients. If they have the authority to ban it, then they also have the authority to okay it and put it on the market. If they want to charge people \$10 a bottle for it -if they've got to make money out of it, fine -but for God's sake give it to people and give them a chance at life! It's not synthetic. It's pure stuff."

"Those Indians, they knew something," Elmer said. "I'll tell you, those herbs can help you. You know if you take the burdock root and black cherry bark, it'll straighten up any skin eruption. It's so damn powerful. You wouldn't believe it."

I'd never heard of that, so I asked Elmer to tell me about it. "Just peel the black cherry bark off and boil it up and grind up the burdock roots and drink it," he said.

"It's sure bitter," Edra said.

"Well, they're basic elements in a lot of medicines, patent medicines today. It's used in cough medicines to a great extent. But you combine the two -burdock and black cherry bark-and it's the greatest thing there is for any skin eruption. Poison ivy. Shingles."

Edra told the story about one of their daughters. Two years ago she was in tears from the shingles, the pain was so bad. All the doctor could do was

prescribe pain pills. "Well, that poor child couldn't sleep for the pain. So Elmer said, `Well, I'll get something fixed up for her before you come home. I'll get some black cherry bark and some burdock: Sure enough, she took it for two or three days and the pain was gone and her leg was clearing up."

"Don't doubt it, for Christ sake," Elmer said. "Because it's authentic."

I asked Elmer how he brewed up his homemade herbal shingles cure. "It's very, very simple," he said. "You peel the bark off the black cherry tree, preferably the young trees with the softer and more aromatic bark. Some of those trees get so big that the bark is hard and tough, something like an old man, like myself. So you get the younger trees. Peel the limbs and you end up with a bunch of shavings. The inner part is green, very green. Get about five or six handfuls.

"The burdock blood roots you can get at any health food store. They're cheap as hell, eh? And you put about a handful in the pot and boil it all. Don't hesitate to boil it plenty. It just looks like a very strong tea when it's made, but you taste it, it's great. But you've got to boil it good to get the essence out of the bark, and then like she says, drink a wine glass every day "

"You have to strain it well," Edra said.

At this point Mayor Lang came in to say hello to everyone. Elmer was calling him "young fella," and teasing him about this and that, and after a while as everyone was starting to leave, I thanked Elmer and Edra for coming to town to talk to me. "What we've told you is to the best of our ability," Elmer said.

"And it's all true. There's no fabrication-none whatsoever. I've witnessed these people that were cured, and I'll tell you, it means something when you witness it yourself. There's one sure way of selling anything. As they say, the proof of the pudding is eating the damn stuff."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The day after my meeting with Elmer and Edra Veitch, Mary took me to visit her friends, Ted and Iona Hale. Ordinarily they don't talk to people they don't know well about their experience with Essiac. I learned later that they haven't even told the oncologist who treated Iona Hale. But with Mary providing the entree, they had agreed to tell me their story.

On a crisp autumn afternoon, Mary and I left Bracebridge and drove about 20 minutes into the country, through the beautiful Canadian plain country and past small farms. Just outside a village even smaller than Bracebridge, we

turned onto a quiet street and parked in front of Ted and Iona's home, next to their big RV.

The Hales came out to greet us. Ted's a muscular man in his 60s, a retired truck driver, with a square jaw and a thinning white head of hair. He's from a clan of pioneer types, one of those guys who's spent his life proudly helping to build the communities of the Canadian northwoods. When we visited, he was recovering from a stroke.

Iona had worked hard taking care of him as he'd gradually gotten better and back on his feet again. She's a trim, nice-looking woman in her 60s, but she looks younger than her years.

We went into their living room, a large, comfortable room with a spectacular view of the countryside. Ted sat in his lounge chair, Iona sat across the room from him, then she nodded to Ted and asked him to just go ahead and tell the story, his own way, in his own words.

Ted had known about Rene Caisse and Essiac ever since he was a young man. He was working with a crew building a highway, for wages of \$1.00 a day, and boarding at his sister's. "There was this Mrs. Graham, she used to like you to come in and play cards," Ted said. "She was sick. Dr. Bastedo of Bracebridge said that she had cancer, and if she didn't have an operation right away, she'd die within a couple of months time. She could only be up about an hour a day and she spent most of that hour laying on a couch."

Ted and a friend of his named Tom told her that she should go down and try Nurse Caisse. They talked to her for quite a while trying to convince her, "Finally, she said, 'Well, I can't drive a car. I can't go down there: "Tom said, 'You don't need to drive a car. We'll drive you down, and we'll help you in and back to the car and bring you home again and help you into the house: And she said, All right, I'll try it: "So we took her down. Her first treatment was around the first of March. We were finishing up the job on the road there about the end of March, and I saw her car go driving down the road. When she went inside again, I ran in and said, 'You know we're going to Bracebridge tonight, right after supper.' And she said, 'You boys don't have to take me down. I can drive myself down.' So she did. She drove herself down, got her treatments by her self. And that fall, she was out playing ball with the rest of us. She was out running around the bases and everything."

Mary smiled in recognition at the story. "I think her name was Elsie Graham," she said.

I asked Ted how long Elsie Graham lived. "Oh, for years after," he said.

"She lived a long time after that," Mary said. "I don't know how long, but a long time." (A few months after this conversation, I was rummaging through

Rene's files and came across a letter written in 1938 by Elsie Graham. "It gives me the greatest of pleasure to write this testimonial in favor of Miss Rene Caisse ", she began. Then she said that four doctors had told her she had cancer of the cervix. "I had to keep lying down most of the time & could not work. I could hardly sit in a car to go and get treatments," she wrote. But after four or five treatments by Rene, "I was able to drive my own car." She added: "I feel just fine. I haven't any pain, and as far as I know, I am cured. I have talked with hundreds of her patients at the clinic in Bracebridge who all claim to be helped by her treatments, many claiming to be cured. I feel sure Miss Caisse has got a cure for cancer. ") Ted knew of others from those days when Rene had her clinic, he said, and he mentioned some names: John McNe e, Wilson Hammell, Jack Clinton.

But then many years later, in 1977, Iona was diagnosed at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto as having cancer of the bowel. The doctors told Ted that Iona was going to die-and soon. "The specialist at Princess Margaret explained to me how sick my wife was. I told him, `You don't have to explain to me how sick my wife is. I know how sick she is.' He said, `She can't live only a couple of days. You realize she's not eating anything.' And I said, `Yes, I know that: He said, `She's just starving to death. She's got nothing left. She can't eat because she's full of cancer from the bottom of her stomach to the top.' "So I said, `Well, I'd like to know something. I've heard they're trying out this Essiac on a hundred patients here in Toronto, to test and see how well it works. This is the most likely place to have a hundred patients with cancer, so are they testing it in this hospital?'

"He said, `What do you mean?' "I said, `Essiac. Nurse Caisse in Bracebridge, she got this treatment from some lady up north. I'd just like to know where they're testing that:" He said, `What do you call that?'

"I said, `Essiac. Miss Caisse's treatment for cancer, in Bracebridge: "Oh, his face just went livid red. I never seen anybody turn red so quick. He started down the hall swearing something awful. He said, `That damned Essiac, that damned laetrile in Mexico, it's nothing but a fraud, there's nothing to it. It's nothing but quack medicine. She's just another one of those quacks: "I said, `What do you do for cancer patients here in this place?' "He said, `If you're so damned smart, you tell me.' "I said, All you're doing here is keeping cancer in suspension: And he left and I never saw him again. They gave Iona five radiation treatments and sent her home to die. They said that was all they could do for her. They couldn't do anything for her."

"They just gave me the radium treatments," Iona said, "hoping it would take the pain out of this cancerous stone I had."
I asked them what happened next.

"Well, I came home. You tell him," Iona said to Ted.

Ted said that the ambulance brought Iona home and two or three days later his sister called with the phone number of a doctor in Bracebridge who could help them get in touch with Rene Caisse. So Ted made an appointment to see the doctor. "I told him what she was like and how she'd had an operation and had a tumor taken out of her stomach, that they'd found she had a type of cancer that would scatter fast, that she wouldn't live long at all.

"After sitting there nearly an hour talking, why he pushed himself back in the chair and said, 'There s no use of you getting Essiac for your wife. It won't help her.' He said, 'I know a girl in north Bracebridge who just died of cancer. Essiac didn't help her one bit: "I said, 'Listen, I don't want your advice. I just want to know where I can find Miss Caisse. You kept me sitting here for nearly an hour telling you all about my wife, and then you tell me it won't work. I didn't ask you if it would work. I asked you where Miss Caisse is living. I want to see her: "He said, 'Well, I don't believe in it, but I'll take you to another doctor here who does believe. Come on with me:"

So they went down the hall and Ted was introduced to another doctor. He told Ted that he couldn't put Iona on Essiac until after hed given her a thorough examination. Those were Miss Caisse's orders. And she had to have a written description of Iona s illness-type of cancer, what the surgery was, everything that had been done.

Ted got their doctor to write up the description, had Iona taken by ambulance for the examination, and the doctor called Rene Caisse and told her that Ted was coming over with a prescription for Essiac.

"I took this prescription up to her front door and gave it to Miss Ca isse. She read everything over and said, 'What did you have your wife operated on for?' I said, 'They said she had a tumor of the stomach. They operated and took it out. My wife couldn't eat. She hadn't eaten for a month.' She said, 'Oh, well.'

And she just went and got the bottle of Essiac. She said, 'Now hide this under your clothes. I don't want people to see you taking it out of here. Everybody around's watching me. I'm under threat of spending the last day of my life in jail if I'm caught giving this to anybody:

"She told me how to give it to Iona: One ounce of the Essiac , measured out in an ounce shot glass, then pour it into another cup, then boil either distilled water or pure spring water-bring it right up to boil-then pour the boiling water in with the Essiac. She said that would cool it down pretty near to where Iona could drink it, and have her drink that the last thing before she's going to sleep at night. Don't have her eat anything for two hours before she takes it. Don't give her even a cup of coffee for two hours after she takes it."

"I couldn't eat anything, anyway," Iona said.

"So on the seventh day about 11:00, I said, `Iona, you haven't had any pain pills. Should I get you some?' She said, `No, I don't want the pain pills. I don't need them anymore. I have no pain: And I said, Are you sure?' And she said, `Yes. I have no pain. I don't want any more pain pills. Just throw them away: She'd been taking so many of them that the doctor refused to increase her amount."

"The next morning," Iona said, "I woke you up about four o'clock in the morning and said, `I'm so hungry:" They both laughed, enjoying their memory of that wonderful moment.

"In the evening," Ted said, "you asked for a small bowl of cornflakes. Then I got her a cup of coffee and she kept it down. Before that, everything she'd eat, it'd just fly right back on her. And then she went to the bathroom all by herself. Then her bowels kept moving freely after that."

"I was down to 75 pounds when I got to where I could get on the scales," Iona said.

I asked her what she had weighed initially. "A hundred and fifty."

"So about a month after they operated on her," Ted said, "her incision broke open and this cancer stone started to go soft and it drained out. It just kept draining out and draining out."

"All that day," Iona said, "I didn't want to do anything but walk. I just kept walking. I felt as though I wanted to keep going. Then I went to bed and I thought, humm, my stomach feels awful funny tonight, all soft, and I woke up about midnight soaking wet, and there was this awful smell. I thought, what's going on here? Finally, that thing moved and it was just the worst stuff you ever saw It drained out."

"A cup full came out that night," Ted said.

"The doctor came down the next morning," Iona said, "and called it a miracle. They took me back to the hospital and wondered whether they had to open me up again to see if there was any more to drain out of me. But it was all out, I guess."

I asked Iona if she immediately felt better after ward. "Uh-huh."

And that was ten years ago? "Uh-huh."

I asked Iona how her personal experience left her feeling about Essiac.

"Great!" she said emphatically. "I'd recommend it to anybody." I told Iona that I wanted to make certain that I correctly understood the story I'd just

heard: When she came home from the hospital, they told her that she still had cancer inside her and that she was, in fact, going to die from it. Correct?

"Yeah." I asked her if they'd made that fact absolutely clear to her. "The nurse came in one day and said, `You know you're going

to die, don't you?' I said, `No, I never even thought about it. I was so burned on anyway, I guess it didn't matter to me, but she often told me I was going to die."

I asked her if she'd had a path report when she was diagnosed that came back saying malignancy.

"Yeah," Iona said in barely a whisper. "It was a tumor on the bowel." Then after the surgery, she had radiation treatments. Correct? "Just to numb the pain where this lump was," Ted said. "They said there was nothing more they could do for me," Iona said.

I asked specifically how long they gave her to live when she left the hospital.

"They said about two days," Ted responded.

I asked if they thought there was any hope at all.

"No," Ted said, trying to control his emotions. He was on the verge of tears. "We didn't think there was any hope."

"Nobody else around did either," Iona said. "I went in to see my doctor afterwards and he stood there and looked at me and said, `Well, here's my miracle woman: He couldn't believe it. This was in March. It was the first of January when I came home. So I wasn't supposed to be living. The doctor I'd had quite a bit, I spoke to him when I went in and he kept looking at me and looking at me and looking at me all the way to his office. When I went in, I said, `You didn't speak: He said, `I thought I was seeing a ghost. I didn't think I'd ever see you back here again."

Not even realizing it might be a sensitive question, I asked Iona if the doctor had asked her if she'd taken any medicine he wasn't aware of that might have helped her to recover. "No!" she said loudly, rising up slightly out of her chair. It was far and away her most emotional reaction of the whole conversation. "And I never told him!"

I was surprised. Surprised that the doctor hadn't been curious enough to ask and surprised that Iona wasn't beaming with pride as she explained to him that she had taken Essiac and passed the cancer out of her system. Why didn't she tell him?

Iona took a moment to ease herself. She thought it over before she answered. "Because I was scared," she said. Then she tensed again: "I thought if I told him I was on Essiac, they might give me a needle, or do something to me that would bring it all back again."

There was real fear in her voice. She'd made up her mind that she wasn't going to tamper with success -and she wasn't going to let anybody else tamper with it, either. "Oh, I wasn't going to tell them," she said. "I got a letter a couple of weeks ago wanting me to go down there for a checkup. I just wrote on the bottom: `I'm fine.'"

She laughed and Ted laughed. "And I sent it back to them ", she said. "No way. I didn't go down for all my checkups."

I asked Iona when she had her last checkup.

"I guess I went down, what? Three times, eh?" she said, looking over at Ted.

"Three times," Ted said. "Last time we went down there I parked the car and ten minutes later, we were getting in and driving away My wife said, `No way I'm coming down here:" They both laughed again.

"The doctor last time," Iona said, "he just looked at my stomach and said, humm, if you keep on in the sun, you're going to be as black as I am: Because I tan quick. That's all he said to me and I got dressed."

"They kept sending her appointments, though," Ted said. "Oh, yes, oh, yes," Iona laughed.

I asked Iona if she'd had any prior experience with Essiac.

"Just what I'd heard Ted talking about. Even myself, I couldn't believe in it."

Was there a shadow of doubt in her mind, I asked, that it was Essiac that caused the cancer to pass from her system?

"I wasn't on anything, only the pain pills," she said. "That's all they were giving me. So it had to be the Essiac that brought me back, eh?"

I asked her if she felt as good as she looked. "Certainly," she said. No hesitation.

Did she ever talk to Rene Caisse? "I never met her."

If Rene were alive today and Iona could talk to her, what would she say?

"I'd be down on my knees, that's for sure," Iona responded instantly. "I didn't

get to meet her because they didn't want too many people going into her house."

Rene's friend Mary agreed. "Rene was pretty scared at that time," Mary said. "Everybody kept threatening her and phoning her. Imagine the pain she must have went through. She had one phone call where they said if she wouldn't tell them the formula, they'd beat it out of her. She said, 'If you do that, you'll never find a thing. Just remember, it's not written down: Sometimes she'd call me and say, 'What are you doing?' I'd say, 'Nothing that matters, what do you want?' 'Well, I wish you could come up here. I've had a call and there s somebody coming. I don't know who they are: I'd drop whatever I was doing and go.

"I'd stay in her kitchen, rattling the pans like there might be four or five people out there." Mary laughed, remembering their little trick. "And she'd talk to whoever was there. Afterwards , she'd say, 'I'm ashamed to call you, but I'm scared to death. If it's a person in need and wants to talk to me, I can't turn them away: She was that kind to people."

The conversation wandered for a few minutes through reminiscences of the treacheries Rene faced from various doctors and researchers -and the ever-present threat of jail. Ted was fighting back tears again, as we talked of how fearful Rene must have been. He mentioned that on his third visit to her, she was so frightened that she initially refused to give him any Essiac.

"She said, 'I'm afraid to give you any. The police are watching my house: So I said, 'Why be afraid to let me have a bottle to take home?' She said, 'Because if they find that bottle on you, they'll take it off you and that'll be their proof to put me away.'" But Ted was a desperate man at that point. He promised to hide the bottle in his clothes. Then he promised hed never tell anybody. Then he finally pulled his German Lugar out of his belt and said he'd use it if necessary. "She said, 'You wouldn't use that: I said, 'I would so: She got pretty scared then."

She gave him the bottle and he hid it under his jacket, but nobody stopped him on the way home. As we joked with Ted about his excessive enthusiasm for protecting Rene, he mentioned that he got himself into hot water with her once. She was mad as hell at him. It was over money.

"She wouldn't take any money for a bottle," Ted said. "She wouldrit take anybody's money. She wouldn't let you pay for it. So once when she went into the kitchen to get a bottle, I got out my purse and all I had in it was a \$ 10 bill. I stuck it under a book on the desk and she brought the bottle out and gave it to me. "When I went for the second bottle, she sat in her chair talking to me for about ten minutes, wanting to know how Iona was and everything, and then she went into the kitchen for the bottle. I got my purse out again and took a \$50 bill and slipped it under the book and put the book over it.

"When I went for the third bottle, oh, boy, was she ever mad. Oh! I knocked on the door and she opened it and reached out and grabbed me by the front of the coat and yanked me right into the house. Slammed the door right after me. She said, 'I've got a bone to pick with you.' I said, 'What'd I do wrong? I haven't been talking to anybody.' She said, 'No, you haven't done that. But you left a \$50 bill here the last time you were in my house. That's an insult. I don't take money for my Essiac: She said, 'You've got to take it back: So she reached down alongside her big chair and got her purse.

"I said, 'Put it away. I won't take it: She said, 'You've got to take it: I said, 'No, I don't have to take it. You keep that. The next fellow who comes to the door, maybe he can't afford to pay for a bottle, so take some of that \$50 and pay for his: She tucked it in her purse and put it on the floor and said, 'Well, you put it that way, you can leave anything you like after this.'" We all laughed.

Mary said: "Rene used to say that she'd have been rich if she'd ever got what shed been promised, cars, money, anything she wanted. But you know something? She got more from the poor people than the rich."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Rene Caisse's family-dozens of nieces and nephews and cousins -is scattered all over Canada and the United States. Some of them barely knew her or what she was doing. Others were close to her. One of her nieces, Valleen Taylor, helped manage the clinic in the 30s.

But even those who were supportive of Rene have tended to play down the family connection, to shy away from publicity of any kind. They saw the crushing pressures Rene lived under, and they haven't been keen on the outside world intruding into their own lives.

Cracking through the walls the family has built around itself over the decades is not an easy task. I was thrilled when one of Rene's close relations who knew her best-and is said by other family members to be extremely knowledgeable about the history of Essiac-agreed to see me after I'd been in town a few days and talking to people who'd lived there all their lives. In his eighties, but healthy and alert, he was polite, even warm, when the conversation was about the natural beauties of the Canadian northwoods and his own past adventures on several different continents.

But he refused to let me turn on my tape recorder and when we began to discuss Rene, he pleaded ignorance and a failed memory -which was clearly not something he suffered from and quickly shifted into the role of

questioner. Why was I there? What was I doing?

We stood in my motel room and fenced like that for about fifteen minutes, and then he was giving me a friendly goodbye and shaking my hand, then walking down the hallway He hadn't told me anything about Rene, and he hadn't been rude by refusing to see me.

I was impressed. To this day I don't know for sure why he agreed to the meeting. I think he was just curious to meet this stranger who was going around town asking all the questions about Rene. He was willing to spend a few minutes to size up the situation, but he wasn't about ready to open himself up to an outsider, even one sympathetic to Rene. I had the strong feeling that I'd seen more evidence of the paranoia among the people who surrounded her during her life.

But one of her relatives did open up to me. When I contacted him, he said he'd been wanting to tell his story for a long time. He was dying to talk to someone. For years he hadn't shared what he knew even with his own friends. It caused too many problems. He was afraid for his family. He was afraid for his business. He was afraid of the authorities.

Hearing that someone was, after all these years, writing a book about Rene was enough to prompt him to talk. He wanted to talk. Would I be able to guarantee-absolutely guarantee-his anonymity? I said yes, and meant it. He said he couldn't wait to see me. That night he drove to my motel, the Muskoka Riverside Inn in Bracebridge, and spent two hours reminiscing in front of my tape recorder about his relative Rene Caisse and his personal experience with Essiac.

In his own words, here's his story:

I can remember when she ran the clinic. I can remember going in the clinic and what it was like, and I can remember seeing people waiting there. I knew people who were in the clinic.

She wore a nurse's uniform. She was very good, very accommodating to everybody. She was looked highly upon by the whole municipality and the surrounding area. She was always very professional, quite an astute lady in the respect that she could be very hard and she could be very tender, and really quite business-like. Being very heavy and very much out of shape, and in not the best of health, I was amazed at what she accomplished.

One of my aunts had cancer of the breast, I think. I didn't delve into it, but someone had to actually carry her into Rene's clinic. That was back in the 30s, I guess, and apparently the doctors had given up on her. She's still alive today.

After the clinic closed, it was kind of a mystery to me. I knew she had people

coming to her house, and it was pretty well all on the QT because it was against the law for her to give this medicine out. So the family never talked about it very much, but we were all very supportive and proud of her. I can remember asking: If this is such an important thing and it was so viable, why wasn't she able to accomplish something legally with it?

I would go and visit her quite often. She really liked to have visits from everybody. She quite openly talked about it, and many times I would ask her: Why is it that you can't do something?

Well, she would explain that she could have sold the formula for money, but the people were going to experiment with it on animals without giving it to human beings, and all of her life she had been experimenting with animals. She had gone to clinics in the states and in Montreal and all over, and as far as she was concerned, she had done all the experimenting that was necessary. All she wanted to do was cure humanity with the thing. But she was astute enough to realize that she wasn't going to give it to just anybody. She didn't want to make a million dollars on it; that wasn't her goal. But she really wanted to make sure it didn't get into the wrong hands. She was dreadfully afraid.

She was afraid that people would use it to their advantage to make a lot of money without helping humanity. That was really what she was afraid of. She was afraid of exploitation. She didn't mind the rich getting hold of it, if they would use it for humanity, but she was afraid that would just use it to make money for themselves. But really, I never did have it explained to my satisfaction why something couldn't be done to promote this thing and accommodate her needs at the same time. I never could get it through my head. I never did have it explained to this very day why it couldn't have been done.

She felt that the medical association was her mortal enemy, and the Cancer Society was her mortal enemy. The Cancer Society to her was bureaucratic, evil. They were hoodwinking the public, the money wasn't being spent where it should have been spent, and she told me of many instances. Right from the day I met her until the day she died, the medical association and the Cancer Society were her very deep foes.

She felt very strongly that the Cancer Society did not want to find a cure. She said that over and over again. "They do not want to find a cure." There are too many people making too much money out of funds and grants for cancer. She claimed that it was bureaucratic larceny. It was a public fraud to beat all public frauds.

She was in a total state of frustration for most of her later life because her phone would be continuously ringing from people wanting help, and she very seldom turned anybody down. But she was so scared of the Mounties coming and putting her in jail. She would say that over and over again.

I would go for medicine. I would go for a little-the whole family got medicine from her-but she would never let me watch her make the Essiac. She might have let some of the family in, but I don't think so. She made the formula in the evenings by herself-other than Mary helped her.

She would always wrap the bottles in newspaper and she would put it in a brown paper bag and say, "Now you carry that out as though it's Christmas cake or something." I'm sure she did this with everybody. I've gone to her home many times and people would be there. She'd tell me, Oh, that person's from such and such and that person's from Saskatoon, and th is person came up from Albuquerque.

People would phone her and beg her for medicine. I don't think she really charged. I really don't. I know that she got a lot of gifts from people. She would point out gifts that she got from somebody shed cured. If she got money, she didn't get a lot of money. I don't think she asked for money She might have asked for a donation, but I know that she gave a lot of it away for sure.

Oh, I know she had a hard time getting the herbs. The amazing thing I really can't get through my head is: You take the supposed cures they have for cancer now A lot of the cures have a very ill-effect on the human body. These herbs never hurt anybody. As a matter of fact, she insisted that they were a tremendous blood purifier.

When I was 18, I quit school and got a job prospecting with a mining company. They'd found uranium. I was out for about six months, I guess, and when I came back, I was out drinking beer with the fellas and I started bringing up blood. They took me to the hospital and I had a duodenal ulcer, a very bad ulcer. The doctor gave me a long list of things that I had to eat and a bunch of milk. He said you keep taking it and by the look of that ulcer, it's going to take about six months to cure.

When I got home, my mother phoned Rene and sent me over. I got a couple of bottles of her Essiac and I took it for about a month. You take it before you go to bed every night, the way she tells you to take it in a glass of warm water, and it's super stuff. Like, you feel good. Mentally it does you a hell of a lot of good. It's like taking a tonic. It's no big deal. It's just a bunch of herbs. I went for a regular X-ray and the ulcer was completely cured. The doctor couldn't figure it out.

There wasn' t even a trace of an ulcer. The doctor couldn't believe it. He showed me. I can remember him showing me the two X-rays. The one showed a huge ulcer. The other was clean. But I didn't tell him I'd been taking Essiac. Under oath I couldn't tell him about the Essiac. It was something you never talked about. I never talked to my friends about it. She would go to jail if

anyone talked about it. Just to show you how deep it is, the whole family took Essiac, and only one person in the family ever died of cancer. And she was the one who didn't take it.

Rene was death against the knife, and she was death against radium, and she was death against this chemotherapy. She said it was just like water and oil, Essiac and this chemotherapy. People who knew I was related to Rene Caisse would come to me and say, "Listen, how do I get hold of Essiac?"

If I knew them well enough, I'd say, "Well, I'll try and get you a bottle, or two bottles, or whatever." Rene would ask me two or three questions. She'd say, "Is your friend taking chemotherapy? If they're taking chemotherapy, then I don't even want to give it to you. It's just a waste. Have they had surgery? Are they taking radium treatments?"

If they had chemotherapy, she wouldn't give it. If they'd had a knife or radium treatments, she would give them the medicine, but she said once they have the knife, the knife seemed to produce more cancer. When they tried to cut the cancer out, it seemed to inflame the cancer and spread it. That was her theory. The radium-she felt it did more harm than good. She said it killed a lot of cancer, but it also killed a lot of people. But she felt her medicine could still help and could still take away the pain.

She said it would definitely relieve pain. Just that, if it did nothing else, it would relieve the pain, and if it did nothing else, it would purify the blood. She also stated that it was good for the prostate, obviously good for ulcers, and it was just a complete cleansing. That's why I've been taking it on and off all my life.

I can remember in the 50s-or maybe the late 40s-going to visit her quite a bit. She really liked to have us come. She was a heavy woman and found it hard to get around. It was an effort for her to go to the front door, but she baked for everybody, she gave everybody presents for Christmas, even the little kids and the nephews.

She was always cheery. She had a good sense of humor, and she was always strong. I remember one time she broke a hip, and you could tell that she was in great pain, but she would never let on. She also painted. She was extremely prolific. She would do maybe four or five paintings a week, or more, and she was always giving away her paintings. Like you could go there without getting something because she always wanted to give you something.

My impression was that she was a very strong person, an extremely strong person, not only strong-willed, but strong physically. I was actually surprised that she lasted as long as she did, and I think the reason was that she had a goal in life. Her goal was to let the world know about Essiac so that people could get better by it. If she hadn't had that goal, I think she would have died

years ago.

The worst thing that could be said about Rene was that she was stubborn. She was a strong person who would say her piece, and she was able to stand up on her hind heels and talk in front of an audience. But they could never say that she wasn't fair or a humanitarian.

I would be safe in saying that anybody who knocked on her door would be let in, and under duress for Rene. Like anybody who phoned her long distance and said, "If I come to your door, can you help me?" I can remember her saying to me that she had to say no to these people, but I also know that she relented under pressure from these people, saying, okay, come on.

You know what's funny is that a lot of doctors-and I could never figure this out-felt that she was helping people. But the doctors would not admit it. In this little community, as an example, she knew a couple of doctors who really believed in her. She also knew quite a few doctors who were dead against it, and she kind of felt that the doctors who believed in her were scared to say anything.

She felt that the doctors had a bit of occupational loyalty to the medical association, and she felt that the medical association held a wand over these doctors. I know there were doctors who came to her to get Essiac for patients, and yet they didn't help her. They didn't help her!

It's kind of a mystery to me, it really is. I know just lately there are doctors in this community who will give out Essiac. I have talked to one doctor and told him that I'd heard that he would give out Essiac if his patients have cancer. He said, "Who told you that?" I said, "Well, I just heard it, and I happen to be one of Rene Caisse's relatives. I just want you to know that I admire you for doing it." He said, "Well, you don't have to tell anybody."

She felt that money was the big thing behind it all. She felt that the Cancer Society was a farce. She felt it was a moneymaking scheme that would be an everlasting money-making scheme as long as a cure for cancer was never found.

As far as the medical association was concerned, she felt that they were so powerful that the doctors daren't breathe a word. It wasn't so much money with the medical association. The doctors were afraid of losing their credibility, losing everything. But she insisted it was strictly money with the Cancer Society.

I think the reason she finally released the formula to Resperin was because they promised her that they would actually use it on human beings. They would give it out to people who actually had cancer. I'm not sure she lived long enough to realize that Resperin wasn't getting very far.

I feel really bad about that. I felt good at first when that article came out in Homemaker's. I thought, oh, gee, at last she's going to get recognition and it's going to start going. Now that she's dead and the Resperin Corporation doesn't seem to be doing anything with it and Mary's on her last legs, you know, it doesn't look good at all.

I've often wondered, is this formula just going to evaporate? Is nothing going to happen with it? I feel very bad about it, very sad. We need to be able to give to humanity what's there, what is available right in front of us, and nobody is doing it. The very fact that this thing may die, it's just making me sick. Just making me sick.

My perception is that she helped thousands of people. She used to help all kinds of people that I knew I'm talking about people who significantly benefited. She always used to say that she only got the people that the doctors gave up on. She never got the people before they were either treated or the doctors gave up on them.

She had a cure for cancer. She has got a cure for cancer. We all knew A lot of the family were cured. I think even maybe Valleen has been cured. We knew that she could cure cancer, and I think something that we were always afraid of-every single one of us-was the fact that we knew somebody in the family who could cure cancer and that this cancer cure was going to die with Rene. We weren't going to be able to be cured someday in the future. Rene was afraid of that, too. She wanted to make sure that the family was looked after.

The frustration of having the cure, but not being able to talk about it was terrible. Terrible. What can we do to help her? How can we help? Even today, the whole thing has connotations of a mystery type of thing.

Unfortunately, people are forgetting about Rene. She was a legend, especially when she had the clinic, but even in her later years just before she died. But I would say now that most people younger than 60 really aren't aware that something very special was going on here in Bracebridge.

All of the events and characters depicted in this book are non-fictional

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Silent Walker Publishing, Los Angeles.

ISBN 0-9620364-0-4

Manufactured in the United States of America

Typography and binding design by Silent Walker Publishing

First Edition