

SEBASTOPOL LIVING

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THE BEST OF WEST COUNTY



The People's Doctor Dr. Elson Haas

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By Ashley Napier

Cover photo by Jade Turgel Photography

A member of the Sebastopol community since 1993, “The Healthy Doctor” Elson Haas devotes his life to treating patients with an approach of “Lifestyle first, natural therapies next, drugs or surgery last.” Known as a leader for promoting integrative and nutritional medicine, Dr. Haas has seen public acceptance move in his common-sense, health-based direction toward the “N.E.W.” medicine he has advanced in his 12 published books.

“Dr. Elson” grew up in Detroit, and wanted to be a doctor since the age of eight after meeting a dermatologist with his mom. He embraced the idea of being able to connect and help people. Young Elson naively thought that being a doctor meant simple hours and no work on Wednesdays, but he found out it took devotion to his craft and consistent hard work.

Dr. Haas received his MD degree at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, studying conventional western medicine. He loved the subject of medicine but hated how impersonal it seemed. He wanted to treat people and not just their diseases. He saw early on that people's lives were intertwined with their illnesses.

After graduating from medical school in 1972, Dr. Haas packed up and moved to Berkeley to start his internship at Highland General Hospital in Oakland. After his internship, everything started to change for him. He wanted to integrate newer methods into staunch western medicinal practices, to make medicine more people focused, and to bring it back to Nature. This is when he participated in a ten-day “Master Cleanse” – a popular lemonade juice cleanse – and instantly felt “restored and rejuvenated.” He says that he had never felt healthier and was inspired to continue a healthier lifestyle as well as his research into both natural and traditional Chinese medicine. From this, he developed and wrote his first book, *Staying Healthy with the Seasons*, and these concepts of N.E.W. medicine continued for his recent book, with N.E.W. being an acronym for Natural, Eastern, and Western healing approaches.

He describes this approach as focusing on restoring proper body physiology to promote healing. It introduces what Dr. Haas calls *Five Keys to Staying Healthy: Nutrition, Exercise, Sleep, Stress Management, and Attitude*. According to him our core belief/attitude “has a lot to do with negative self-talk and how we put ourselves down when we could just as easily build ourselves up.” The Five Keys were inspired by the Chinese selection of five elements: Fire, Earth, Metal (Air), Water, and Wood.

Dr. Haas says that using these five elements and health keys is a way to explore whether you are joyful and in harmony with your lifestyle and whether you are willing to change your lifestyle to improve your health and prevent disease? Dr. Haas stresses that “The number one aspect of health is that you have your one body. It's your responsibility to take care of it, love it.”

As he developed his approach, Dr. Haas started his first clinic in Bolinas, and began utilizing “nutritional medicine, herbs,





Dr. Haas at home with his beloved feline

studying Chinese medicine and mind-body guided imagery." Practicing these new techniques and seeing their value, he wanted to share these insights with the world as well as have his parents understand what the heck he was doing. So, he wrote his first book, *Staying Healthy With the Seasons*, a revolutionary book for its time that taught the reader how to lead a healthy lifestyle with practices that changed with the seasons, and which has been called "a classic of integrative medicine" by Dr. Andrew Weil. His long-time associate, Bethany Argisle, helped him produce this book and his next 1200-page tome, *Staying Healthy with Nutrition*.

In 1980, Dr. Haas moved to Fairfax and opened another private practice that focused on prevention and living in harmony with nature and the seasons. This led him to open a practice in San Rafael in 1984, originally naming it Marin Clinic of Preventive Medicine and Health Education, changing it later to the current practice, Preventive Medical Center of Marin (PMCM).

Dr. Haas always wanted to function as "a people's doctor...to bring good healthcare to the average person who can't easily afford to pay \$1,000 or \$2,000 to see an integrative doctor

who takes a couple hours with them." With this approach, PMCM is one of the few, if not the only, alternative-oriented practice in the North Bay that takes most insurances and Medicare for many of its services. Dr. Haas also plans to start seeing patients in Sebastopol.

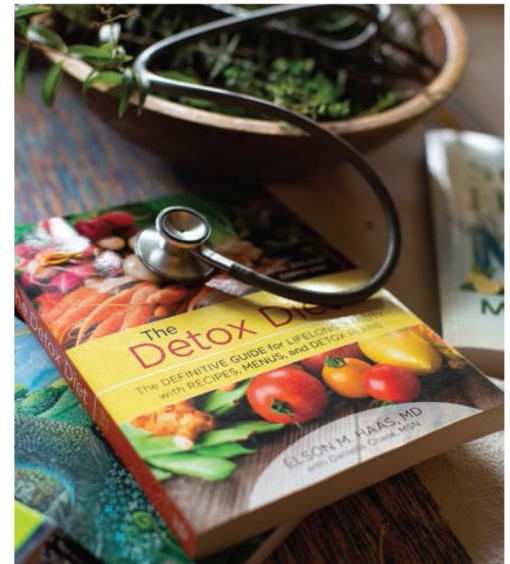
As Dr. Haas grew his practice and promoted his ideas of alternative and health-focused medicine, he met his partner, Tara West, through a mutual friend in 1984. Together for 20 years, they have two wonderful children, son Orion (1985) and daughter Ishara (1989). Tara and Elson got married "as a family," instead of choosing the "conventional route," which seems to be a pattern for Elson Haas.

Dr. Haas and Tara (a Sebastopol resident also) are cooperative parents with their own lives. They both have mastered the art of "peacefully not getting along," (but they usually get along), as he describes in his N.E.W. Medicine book. They both have new partners, but still remain a family. Ishara plans to be married in June, and son Orion has worked in Nepal since the earthquake there to help rebuild the many destroyed homes. (See www.ConsciousImpact.org).

Before Nepal, Orion worked in Ghana Africa for several years and Dr. Haas joined him there in 2010, offering medical care to local communities along with his daughter and her fiancé, Max Prescott. Elson Haas and his current partner, Jeanne Krafft, have participated in orphanage meetings the past few years. Jeanne's family and father Frank have helped to raise money to fund and build nine orphanages in Mexico and Central America. Elson and Jeanne have worked in other disadvantaged countries such as Haiti, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic as part of annual orphanage meetings for Our Little Brothers and Sisters.

Back home in Sebastopol, this world-trotting doctor can be found home in his quaint house nearly hidden by lush, green forestry and surrounded by small farms and apple trees. Elson says he loves being outside gardening, interacting with his fellow residents of Sebastopol and hiking the North Bay's many scenic trails. He finds Sebastopol to be "just a wonderful community" that he has come to love over the past 26 years as a resident, doctor, partner and father. Both his kids graduated from Analy High School.

Reflecting on his past 46 years as a physician, Dr. Haas finds that he still likes his work and the wonderful team he works with at PMCM.



In addition to the many publications he has written and produced, Dr. Haas also creates unique retail items.





He finds pride in healing and being a pioneer in N.E.W. integrative medicine practices. He is proud of the research he has conducted over the years to create his dozen books and other products, with over a million copies sold. Now, Haas says, “My personal motto in life for my 70s is keep love in my heart, say yes whenever I can, but be able to say no.” His message to all of us is, “Health starts with you. You have one body and you’ve got to take care of it, because if you don’t, who’s going to? This starts with loving yourself just how you are, yet always able and willing to improve.”

You can learn more about Dr. Haas’ work and classes on his website at <https://elsonhaasmd.com>. And more about his clinic at <https://preventivemedicalcenterofmarin.com>.



Dr. Haas is also known as Dr. Sun in the publishing world

