



Dr. Mitchell Bebel Stargrove

What started your pathway in naturopathic medicine?

I have been interested in service, especially medicine, since I was a child. However, I could see that conventional medicine was not addressing the fundamentals. Repeated episodes of strep throat were only dealt with symptomatically. Allergy shots did nothing to improve my symptoms. I could see that industrialized medicine didn't even consider causal factors, even when the family doctor was friendly. I gave up on a pathway toward practicing

medicine and began studying Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi in grade school. They were looking at the causes of illness and suffering at the socio-economic level and worked to serve Justice and Peace.

My trajectory toward law school and presumed work in government or nonprofit service led me to a double major in History and Government at Oberlin College. My focus was on comparative revolution in the modern era and group process in cooperative management. This led me to getting a job coordinating a pioneering food coop in Minneapolis where food, herbs and community self-management were my daily work. I came to see even more how illness and self-care operated at multiple levels, individual, family, community, planetary.

One day late in 1980 I saw a little flier on the coop bulletin board posted by Bruce Borass who called himself a traditional naturopath. He was a good person and skillfully practiced multiple disciplines although he was unlicensed, as was the situation in Minnesota at the time. Even though he had not attended an accredited college he featured information on NCNM in his office. I subsequently also met Dr. Tom Stowell at Wellspring in St. Paul. Funny how we didn't remember the clinic name until years later when Daniel Lamarr mentioned that he and Tom had previously had a clinic in Kansas also called Wellspring. Hmmm. We were in sync.

The NCNM brochure mentioned herbs, nutrition, acupuncture, homeopathy and manipulation. Well, my undergraduate classes had included no sciences so I started premed coursework at the University of Minnesota. Then, on a windy afternoon climbing up the hillside of the



Mississippi River on my way to premed classes, I came down with pleurisy. In search of pleurisy root I met Matthew Wood at a local herb shop where he prescribed Bryonia 30c. I experienced a cure within 24 hours, in contrast to two previous episodes when it took weeks to partially recover from pleurisy when treated conventionally. Since I was already studying Jung and mythology I immediately dove deeper into homeopathy in a framework much broader than a more elegant method of cure.

Soon Lori and I were visiting Portland and Seattle to see about this most opportune opening. After feeling a deep resonance with NCNM and Oregon we moved from Minnesota to Portland. I attended and graduated from both NCNM and OCOM (Oregon College of Oriental Medicine) with two amazing cohorts and faculty that would become lifelong colleagues and dear friends. Lori also graduated from NCNM, in 1991. We had become the Stargrove family in 1989 and soon set up practice in Beaverton together.

However, becoming a father and a physician of naturopathic and Chinese medicine wasn't getting all my attention. Aiming to compile and enrich the dialogue of clinical practice I coordinated the publication (and wrote the acupuncture module of) the pioneering electronic therapeutic encyclopedia IBIS, the Interactive, then Integrative BodyMind Information System. That was a multidisciplinary project bringing together over 100 clinicians, instructors and students while I was starting up my practice. Apart from creating a modern easy access blackbook for the computer era, one of our major goals was to preserve and build upon the clinical traditions of "the old docs" such as Bastyr, Turska, Broadwell and others. Later I edited and was the main nutrition author of the landmark multidisciplinary clinical pharmacology reference resource Herb, Nutrient, and Drug Interactions: Clinical Implications and Therapeutic Strategies. I love digging into the research literature, piecing it together from a transdisciplinary perspective, and reframing the findings of "science" in alignment with clinical realities and informed by the worldview of medicine that respects Nature and the amazing ingenuity of living systems.

My third "career" has been that of teaching history, specifically the history of medicine. From 1990 to 1993 I taught History of Medicine at NCNM. I taught History of Medicine: East and West at OCOM starting in 1990 and then, in 2022, I shifted over to teaching Chinese History and Culture at NUNM. Last year began teaching Naturopathic History and Philosophy at the University of Western States. For a decade or so I worked extensively with Jared Zeff, Pamela Snider and a crew of students as the History Editor and chief history content contributor within the Foundations Project. It seems that with curiosity, persistence, and a love of sharing with students, I have become one of the main voices for the history and principles of medicine in our profession and beyond. Frankly, I am always enthusiastic about discovering hidden gems,



revealing lost teachings, and honoring the traditions and elders of medicine that respects and serves life and the healthy evolution of humanity.

I am particularly inspired and honored to be teaching at Western States, the school of Dr. W.A. Budden. I now see Western States as the central living trunk of our profession's historic tree of academic continuity and the accomplishments of the OANP as the exemplars of self-defining our professional privileges and responsibilities. Ah, the ironies and paradoxical mysteries of the once dreaded Oregon Basic Science board exams! More than ever I see the Naturopaths (and Sanipractors) of Cascadia as central to the global renaissance of natural medicine. Robert V. Carroll, Sr., A.R. Hedges, Horace Beatty, Henry Schlichting, Jr., and their colleagues built a pivotal alliance of naturopathic physicians and chiropractic "mixers" under the umbrella of "non-medical physicians" with strongholds around Chicago, in the Pacific Northwest, and in the US Southwest, especially Texas and Colorado. Along with Joseph Janse at National in Chicago this handful of institution-building colleagues shifted naturopathy's professional institutions from a proprietary founder-based first phase to the enduring institution-centered set of schools and professional associations that brought us the physician-level academic institutions and legal status that we have subsequently built upon. Even though I don't always agree with priorities and particulars of policy, I am proud to know those at the local, state, national and international levels who carry on this noble work.

What do you like most about being a naturopathic doctor and what are some of your challenges?

At A WellSpring of Natural Health, Lori and I practice and teach Person-Centered Medicine. We work upon the understanding that each person's self-healing response is the central operative force in medicine and that the therapeutic relationship is the second most influential component of medical care. Skill in clinical modalities is essential but they can only work with the strengths of and within the limits of self-healing and compassionate relationships. I love seeing people who come in with a narrow complaint and guiding them through a process of reframing their symptoms as aspects of broader patterns in their bodies and their lives. As our relationship evolves we move from our treating their local problems to our working through a curative process of curing their underlying patterns of susceptibility and recurrent vulnerabilities and then shifting into the lifelong process of their emerging healing of self-care and creative activation. Each phase opens new layers of clarity in awareness, self-discovery, enhanced resilience, and recovery of lost potential. This is the magic people seek; not just herb-based pills or even whole person medicine but liberation, self-empowerment and service to their own relations. Somehow in their instincts and in their dreams they knew that there were physicians rooted in the most



ancient traditions and pushing the edge of innovation in providing authentic. This wasn't just about using Nature as in foods and plants but about expressing their own true nature while repairing and reorganizing their bodily functions in healthy ways. Ultimately, our profession is at its best when we are compassionate revolutionaries, pragmatic visionaries, exemplars of healthy living and life as art. From what I see, most NDs got into this Work that way and our biggest challenge is being authentic to that motivation.

More personally, I practice the medicine I teach, most of the time, as I recover from injuries and rebuild my own health after several health and family challenges. I am not so good at living according to puritanical rules so I work to cultivate in myself what I work with each individual at WellSpring: bring down the noise in my system, enhance my awareness of my response patterns, and cultivate health, resilience and activation in my daily life.

On a more professional level, I am always opening myself to new therapeutic approaches and deepening my skills in how and what I practice. I am more of a hands-on empirical clinician than a conventional "science" or lab-based one. In a profession like ours, as with colleagues in Chinese medicine, I am continually impressed by the genius and creativity of those practicing and evolving these traditions of medicine. Our first loyalty is to those who trust us with their care, not to our therapeutic tools, or our profession, or insurance companies, or our own practice building and income. Some aren't happy with "the way the profession has changed" but as a student of history I accept what is and watch to see where the flow is going. We each do it in our own way and are generally pretty good about respecting each other in collaborating for what best serves our patients. I love referring one of my patients when a colleague can contribute to a personalized strategy through teamwork and phased interventions. I learn more and our patients get better results over the long term when we apply the Person-Centered Collaborative Care model. Our medicine is the intervention that catalyzes their inherent healing because fundamentally, all healing comes from inside.

I am proud of but sometimes challenged by enthusiastic patients as they move from dependence on my intervention to shared transformation into a relationship where they are driving. This is especially wonderful when we work with folks for decades and engage several generations of family members and often close friends. Then we have reframed the agenda from medicine to remove symptoms into empowering them in their life trajectory and their social context. The challenge here is to minimize our own influence and support them in their initiative, responsibility and perseverance, that is, claiming their own healing.

Lastly, professionally, as physician who investigates history on a nearly daily basis, I sometimes wince when I see respected teachers and clinicians repeat truisms, marketing slogans, and seemingly self-evident declarations meant to invoke tradition and historical authority but are



simply historically inaccurate or clinically not actionable. We miss opportunities for deeper understanding and set ourselves up for debunking when we don't study our own lineages and practices critically. I am in this profession to help make us better at who we are at and what we do. I may be a Romantic but I am always wary of damaging our credibility and sacrificing our authenticity by idealizing the past.

What makes your membership with AANP valuable as a naturopathic doctor?

As a student I joined the OANP and then the AANP as soon as I learned about them. I have been engaged with the AANP from its beginning. While we were publishing the IBIS software system through AMR'TA, the Alchemical Medicine Research and Teaching Association, we shared office space with Paul Bergner. At that time, amidst his usual multiple projects in motion, Paul was working with the team crafting strategies and details for the AANP. Since then I have known a lot of amazing people in these networks. A lot of the presidents and other officers and those on committees and projects were my friends and colleagues. Ed Hoffman-Smith and Carlo Calabrese were friends and they were involved in setting up national accreditation. I developed an alliance with Michael Cronin when he and Kyle were working on opening Southwest as we were both keen on electronic media for the schools and our clinicians.

For decades I've been a vendor at conventions exhibiting IBIS, Interactions and other information tools. I received the Vis Award in 2012. Lori and I have presented on topics such as Herb-Drug and Drug-Nutrient Interactions; Person-Centered Collaborative Care models of therapeutic strategy and multidisciplinary collaborative care; Aging; Polypharmacy in the Elderly; Dying and Death. In San Diego I was the keynote speaker for the AANP Convention. I've enjoyed days of on the floor time at the conventions sharing great projects exploring naturopathic history and philosophy. I come to the convention when I can and stay in touch broadly all year round.

As a champion of robust self-organization in biology and humanity I'm always happy to support mutual aid in operation. Both the membership and the key players over the years share the authentic goal of the AANP embodying the healthy collective coherence, just like the medicine we practice. In particular I have developed a deep appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the Officers, those in the House of Delegates, the various committees, and, of course, Laura and the central office team.



I heartily support and appreciate the AANP and other state associations. In observing history, I love seeing people and communities come together to create new culture and institutions. Education and advocacy are key in the way we practice medicine. The primary role of the physician is to serve self-healing and healthy living in alignment with Nature, specifically our planet Gaia, as the beautiful and powerful biological being in which we are enmeshed.

Anything else we've missed that is important? What do you think is important for the naturopathic profession to take note of?

I think the information about the history of naturopathic medicine and organizations is really interesting, and **why you do it**.

The Stargrove clinic: A WellSpring of Natural Health, PC: www.wellspringofhealth.com
Our online medicinary: vitalgoods, Health Resources Unlimited, Inc.: www.vitalgoods.com

For many years I have facilitated two groups on Facebook: Living Medicine — Cultivating Coherence, In Each and All for clinicians and students, and Cascadians sharing Healthy Culture and Natural Medicine for patients and the broader public in our bioregion.

I am currently working on bringing an online library of resources to naturopathic schools and physicians around the world through a recently launched, collaborative, history-framed website of traditions, philosophy and clinical practice, culture and context: Nature's Medicine Through Time: A Landscape of People and Practices, Principles and Institutions — Highlighting the Profession of Naturopathic Medicine as Physicians of the Person-Centered Traditions: <https://www.naturesmedicinethroughtime.org>

This large and growing guide to the history of medicine website focuses on the naturopathic profession and highlights our evolving worldview, therapeutic lineages and institutional formation. The hundreds of pages of people, events and institutions bring our roots into living relevance in our relationships with our patients, our colleagues and the broader medical ecosystems.

During the past decade I have been actively exploring issues like these:

- Who were the Hippocratic physicians?
- Where did the vis medicatrix naturae concept come from and what did it mean in classical medicine.



- How did American culture of the 1800s demonstrate medical pluralism and set the stage for the emergence of naturopathy?
- Who were the therapeutic innovators and the institutional creators of early naturopathy?
- How did Lust distinguish naturopathy from nature cure?
- How did the clinical and educational legacy of the “mixer” DC/ND “old docs” make Chicago and Cascadia core communities of naturopathic medicine in the mid-20th century?
- How have naturopathic traditions influenced emerging schools of integrative medicine and functional medicine?
- What does the future hold for naturopathic medicine as regional variants evolve around our planet and demonstrate our rich traditions as aligning with Gaia?

Old stories take on new life with previously unavailable depth and a consistent emphasis on pragmatic clinical approaches.

Oh, and in the meantime, I enjoy a beautiful life with lovely Lori and our amazing family, stewarding land in the Tualatin River Valley, taking care of goats, bees, frisky dogs and a queenly cat, canoeing, enjoying music, practicing qigong, cocreating healthy culture with several lively communities in alignment with Gaia.