

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, February 11, 2008

The Hay Diet: In 1926, my father retired from National Vulcanized Fibre Co., where he had been in charge of all the machinery, when he was only 40. After over two years of relative idleness, he had eaten well and gained about 30 pounds. He told people he was "sick." My mother, a registered nurse in World War I, was the same age, did not always feel well, and was diagnosed with a "fallen stomach," whatever that was. In 1931, they embraced something called the Hay Diet.

William Howard Hay, M.D., ran a sanatorium at East Aurora, New York, 20 miles southeast of Buffalo. His diet theory was never to mix protein with starch at the same meal. Fruits and vegetables were "neutral" and could be eaten with either. Dr. Hay promoted raw vegetables as having more nutrients; he was ahead of his time, as most Americans were not yet ready to eat uncooked vegetables, other than tomatoes, lettuce, and cabbage (cole slaw). But for best results, Dr. Hay first had to "clean you out" and strongly recommended that his clients come to his sanatorium for two weeks to get started. Leaving Aunt Helen Shallcross in charge at Auburn Heights, my parents drove to East Aurora in November 1931 in my father's new '32 Packard 902 Club Sedan.

The first "cleaning out" was the worst. Patients had to stop eating briefly, then consume at least a pint of Pluto Water with a picture of the devil on the label. This awful-tasting stuff came out of the ground at French Lick, Indiana, and the Taggart family made a fortune from it. Castor oil was delicious by comparison. Dr. Hay also prescribed exercise, which of course was good. After two days or so, my parents began eating fruits and vegetables and soon thereafter began breakfast foods like Jackson's Meal (a whole-grain oat meal manufactured by a Canadian doctor in Toronto). It was only a matter of time until they could enjoy the entire Hay Diet. They stayed for the recommended two weeks and were quite positive about the experience when they returned. My father had lost 45 pounds, but he felt much better. Once they were back home, I was pulled into the Hay Diet way of eating.

Since most cereals were "starch," bacon, eggs, and whole wheat toast were okay for breakfast, so long as the bacon was fat and not lean, and the egg whites were not included when the yolks were scrambled (my mother made and sold angel food cakes with the whites). Potatoes, beans, and bread were the main "starches." Protein items never to forget were meat, fish, eggs (the whites), and cheese. Often lunch would be starch, so long as the sandwich was not ham or cheese, and dinner would be served without bread or potatoes. My father, having grown up on meat and potatoes, made out fairly well and even learned to love hearts of lettuce (so long as the heart was loaded with Russian dressing). There were all sorts of supplements recommended. We bought about two dozen ½-pint glass milk bottles, with the same paper caps used by dairies of the time. Through the winter months, fresh oranges were squeezed to fill between 12 and 24 of these bottles daily. The three Marshalls, one of them small, were supposed to consume this much orange juice, and for several winters, we did. Some auxiliary products such as Swiss Kriss (a powdery stuff to be chewed up) were always on hand, and some terrible new vegetables such as kale, Swiss chard, turnip greens, and parsnips supplemented spinach, which was bad enough. Otherwise, eating was not so bad, except once a month the regimen required cleaning out again with Pluto Water if you followed the Hay Diet as recommended.

In late April 1932, my mother went back to East Aurora for a second two-week stay. Over a long weekend in early May, my father took Aunt Helen and me to get her and bring her home. I was new to the Susquehanna Trail north of Harrisburg, and we stayed overnight at the Lycoming Hotel in Williamsport. Staying two nights near the sanatorium, we visited Niagara Falls, and I had my first and only ride on the *Maid of the Mist*.

About 1934, Dr. Hay moved his sanatorium to an old frame hotel (called Pocono Hayven) in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania. My parents were there once or twice, but I don't think they stayed very long. Getting up in years, the good doctor closed his operation before World War II. At Auburn Heights, eating by the Hay Diet declined after 1936. Even though it was not followed strictly thereafter, a lot had been learned about nutritious food and combinations thereof.