

Helping old dogs acquire new moves

By Captain D

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Poor 'ol Harvey. My dopey but lovable nine-year-old basset hound, stumpy as he was, could no longer scramble up onto our bed. We made a ramp for him, but it was literally a pain. Then I read that Stonington's Coastside Bio Resources was conducting tests on Sea Jerky, a product derived from sea cucumbers that were billed as a flexibility supplement for dogs.

By coincidence, Bill Paquin, publisher of *Discover Downeast Maine With Captain D* had been after me to do a story about Peter Collin, owner and operator of the aforementioned company.

Seeing this as a great opportunity to kill two birds with one stone, I decided to let my basset hound be a guinea pig.

Although I have consumed my fair share of Omega-3 fish oil, ginseng, ginkgo biloba and other herbal extracts said to possess wondrous medicinal properties, I confess to being an agnostic on this whole issue. I guess when I come down with something serious, I'll trust a man with a medical degree hanging on his wall; meanwhile, I'll hope that some of the alternatives will work as preventatives. Needless to say, I didn't have a whole lot of confidence that Sea Jerky would do Harvey any good.

But it did! After two weeks, Harvey was acting like a kid again. He could scamper up onto the bed with no problem.

This didn't surprise Collin. He says that sea cucumbers have amino acids and polysaccharides that are similar to our own cartilage. He claims that sea cucumbers really do help supply the nutritional building blocks for cartilage tissue.

"We started out with products designed to aid joint mobility in people," he says. "Then when the humans started having good effects on their mobility problems, they started giving them to their dogs and cats. It was a natural development for us to begin formulating products especially for animals."

Collin says that today veterinarians comprise his primary customer base. "More than 600 vets from all over the country buy from us on a regular basis," he says. "They're always asking us for new products, and it seems to be that once they like a product they want more of the same or



Peter Collin

something similar for different animals. We've collaborated with facilities that care for larger animals such as llamas, camels, and even elephants. The Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago buys our horse product for its old elephants. They hide it in cantaloupe with peanut butter. It's just that elephants require a much larger amount for their nutritional support."

Collin seems to be walking a fine line between aggressively promoting sea cucumbers and making sure that everyone understands that this is truly about *nutrition* and not "*medicine*."

"We certainly want to get the word out there," he says, "but at the same time we don't want to falsely promise cures for serious diseases, but rather.....offer some nutritional support."

Collin says that sea cucumbers hold great promise in many areas, but that research is still being conducted and

at this point much is inconclusive.

“We are collaborating with medical schools about cancer, and we’ve gotten grants from the National Cancer Institute, and we’re looking at sea cucumber-derived compounds in relation to abdominal aortic aneurysms in humans.”

Collin repeatedly said he did not want to claim that sea cucumbers are a cure for cancer, but that research done elsewhere has indicated that sea cucumbers can have anti-cancer effects. “This is all in the published literature,” he notes. “It is not just us saying this.”

According to Collin, Asians have eaten sea cucumbers for centuries and in recent times various companies have bottled sea cucumber capsules. But Collin asserts that Coastside Bio Resources is marketing the best designed and most “nutritionally relevant” sea cucumber products ever.

Becoming the world’s number one sea cucumber guy hasn’t been Collin’s lifelong ambition. One might almost say he drifted into it.

In the early seventies, Collin was a sociology student at the University of California in Berkeley when he decided to pack up and move to Maine. “In the early seventies, there were a lot of people looking for the right environment in which to live and work, to raise a family, to find some sort of

fulfillment. I knew I liked the idea of islands. I liked the water, and I knew a bit about fishing.”

Collin says he chose Stonington by looking at a map and thinking it looked about right. “I knew nothing about it, but I guessed right.” he says. “This is one of the most beautiful places on Earth.”

In the early nineties, and after 15 years of commercial fishing, Collin says he gravitated into looking at the sea cucumber as a nutritional supplement.

By necessity, he is self-taught. “There aren’t any courses you can take,” he points out. “This is all learned by the seat of your pants.” One might say Collin is an overnight success twenty years in the making.

“When we started making the supplements, selling them through chiropractors, they became extremely popular very quickly.” he says. “From 1994 when we were incorporated until now, it’s just been an increase every year, and that’s from word-of-mouth, friends telling their friends about their increased mobility and general good health.”

Well, Harvey, for one, has gotten the word. He’s never been friskier.~



Sun setting over the Camden hills—Sunset, Maine