

My Life and Work with Alfred Vogel

Jan de Vries



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MY LIFE AND WORK WITH ALFRED VOGEL

An autobiography packed with expert
advise for healthy living

Jan De Vries



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Preface

The first time I actually came face to face with the late Alfred Vogel was in 1958, just after I graduated in pharmacy, when, by chance, I sat next to him at a lecture in Amsterdam. I did not know who he was at that time but when he started up a conversation and enthused about his work, I was almost instantaneously converted to his way of thinking.

I was so fascinated by all he said that I travelled to Switzerland to see what he was doing there and we talked about the prospect of opening the first naturopathic clinic in Holland. As we discussed the future of medicine and health, we came to the conclusion that by making such a clinic accessible to those searching for an alternative approach to orthodox medicine we would be taking a step in the right direction.

Roode Wald, which opened in 1959, developed into one of the finest clinics I have ever known. In the first volume of my autobiography, *A Step at a Time*, I have written of the many memories I have of the years spent there and how during that time the working relationship between Alfred Vogel and me developed into a deep, lasting friendship.

The clinic ran successfully for a number of years but, eventually, due to a number of factors, including the lack of support from the government and staffing problems, we were forced to close it down. Fortunately, however, despite its closure, the valuable remedies that Alfred had created over the years – many of which were his own formulations – continued to be produced so that those in need could still benefit from them. When I think of all the Bioforce remedies available throughout the world today, I know if Alfred could see the results of his hard work and pioneering activities, he would be very happy.

Alfred realised early on that he had one mission in life and that was basically to help people. He also told me that the most important thing that one can do in life is to share one's knowledge with others and I am pleased to say that his influence continues to be felt today. We worked together for nearly 40 years off and on, and, although we often went our separate ways, we regularly met up to discuss health issues. I feel privileged that I was the only pupil to whom he taught everything he knew about health and healthy living. He instilled in me that same great desire to help others and every day I feel proud that I have been able to carry on in his footsteps.

Alfred's interest in learning all about plants and herbs started at a very early age. While he was still a young boy, his mother and grandmother shared with him their knowledge about the benefits of herbal medicines. Then, between 1920 and 1932, he managed a health food store in Basel and it was here that he met his wife Sophie. He decided to expand on his knowledge by studying homoeopathy, naturopathy and botany, and by his late 20s, he had turned his property in Teufen into a residential clinic. Beside the clinic, he worked in the fields tending his plants and herbs, which he greatly loved.

He visited various colleges and universities with the aim of learning as much as he could, and through his lifelong devotion became, in my opinion, probably the greatest botanist of all time. He would meet people from all corners of the world and was eager to compare his thoughts and findings with others. He was very open minded and was always willing to listen to other people's ideas.

Sadly, however, his amazing findings were not always appreciated, as the Swiss are a very conservative nation. At the start of his career, as he tried to secure acceptance for his unorthodox methods, it soon became clear that a mammoth task lay before him. But despite apparent resistance to his ideas, he continued with his efforts.

Alfred never advertised his services but his reputation grew rapidly by word of mouth and, eventually, he became known to people all over the world. As his business grew, he was able to employ more qualified staff, including doctors. In 1929, he published his first monthly magazine, *Das Neue Leben* (New Life) – renamed *Gesundheits Nachrichten* (Health News) in 1944 – in which he shared an insight into his work with his readers.

As he was always totally engrossed in what he was doing, he could be quite intolerant of distractions. I had personal experience of this when I first arrived in Teufen to meet him and found him working in the fields. He was so absorbed in his plants and herbs that I was given a cold reception and instructed to come back later. When he had finished work, he met me in the little boardroom in his clinic and the atmosphere between us quickly changed: from that moment on, we were the greatest of friends. I often think back to that meeting, when he trusted me enough to tell me about many of his findings. Eventually, he would even give me control of the recipes that he had painstakingly formulated over many years.

In the Foreword that he wrote for my book *Traditional Home & Herbal Remedies* ten years before his death in 1996, it becomes clear what our friendship meant to him. It is for that reason I have decided to repeat that Foreword in this book. It also explains a lot about his work and shows how he devoted his life to helping to alleviate human suffering.

Jan de Vries

Foreword

This Foreword originally appeared in Traditional Home and Herbal Remedies in 1986.

It was a fortunate occasion when I met Jan de Vries in the Netherlands. With pleasure and conviction I spoke of my 40 years' experience in the field of herbal medicine and my views on diet and nourishment. I soon realised that I had an extremely interested listener who fully appreciated my acquired knowledge of the whole sphere of medical science.

Jan de Vries was not only interested to learn everything about my experiences of when, where and how to collect herbs, and which methods were to be followed, he also insisted on taking part in the actual process of extracting beneficial ingredients. As he was a trained and qualified pharmacist, he was already familiar with the world of plants and herbs, and had considerable knowledge in this field. He accepted an invitation to join our firm, which gave us the chance to establish a working relationship which has lasted for years. He was one of my best pupils, if not the very best, and he had the opportunity to further develop his given talents in the field of natural medicine.

I was very happy to share with him my enthusiasm for nature and the world of plants, as originated by the sovereign power of the Creator. He was also prepared to accept my principle that herbal medicine should always have priority in the treatment of illnesses.

As a result of our experiences, we both agreed that, through knowledge and advice on natural methods and herbal remedies, it was possible to improve one's health and keep illnesses at bay. Nature itself is capable of healing.

Drawing on my many years of experience, I was able to convince Jan de Vries completely that herbal medicine in combination with a natural diet could create positive

responses in the body in order to ward off ailments. By creating the right conditions for the body and supplying it with the correct nourishment, one is able to activate one's own regenerative system. In this way it is possible to overcome, as well as cure, ailments. We realise more and more, and my experience over many years in practice has contributed to this, that we don't just have an important role to play in the curing of illnesses but also in the prevention of medical disturbances. This requires us to put emphasis on preventative medicine. Prevention is better than a cure.

This principle plays a major role in our programme. In an effort to clarify this for patients and other interested parties, I myself have written several books, such as *The Nature Doctor: A Manual of Traditional & Complementary Medicine*, *The Liver as the Regulator of our Health* and *Nature: Your Guide to Healthier Living*.

Jan de Vries was immediately prepared to share with his friends, and later with his patients, my experiences and he recommended these books for their information. He is, I am pleased to repeat, my most successful 'pupil'. His success from which many patients have benefited is, however, not only a result of his talents, it is also thanks to the Creator who has supplied so many plants with healing powers.

I am very pleased that Jan de Vries is making the effort to share his knowledge and experiences with us on paper. His books are written in a straightforward manner and can be readily understood by both patients and laymen alike. In them, he deals with natural ways and methods using herbal remedies to overcome ailments and illnesses.

It is important that not just the obvious symptoms are cured, as conventional medicine would teach us. We must look for the cause of the illness in order to continue the treatment and find a cure for the source. Very little benefit is obtained by clearing up an ache or easing a sensitivity if we are not able to eliminate the cause. In order to do this, we should study the whole person and attempt to recognise

which factors have contributed to this condition. There could be very many reasons – for example, a breathing difficulty or a movement disorder, shortage of oxygen, rest or sleep. There can be so many causes of a biological imbalance.

Jan de Vries has acquired and developed a large knowledge in this area. With perseverance he builds up an overall picture of total health, not forgetting the physical and mental condition of the patient.

I am convinced that, in this book, he will show many sufferers the right way to recovery in plain and simple language. It is an excellent complement to my books, as we have both sincerely attempted to serve our fellow men and share with them our knowledge acquired from our understanding and experience of the bounty of nature.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Alfred Vogel". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Dr.", "Alfred", and "Vogel" being capitalized and prominent.

Dr Alfred Vogel
1986

Chapter 1

Good health should be treasured and never abused - for good health leads to happiness.

Alfred Vogel, 1902-96

From reading the Foreword that my great friend Alfred Vogel wrote for one of my previous books (and which I have repeated here), it becomes apparent what a wonderful relationship we had. Vogel and I worked together for over 40 years and I still believe that he was brought into my young life to give it some direction - one that I have never regretted. We had very similar views in that we both wanted to promote good health and we realised the importance of maintaining a positive mental attitude, whatever the circumstances might be.

At the time of our first meeting at a lecture on homoeopathy in Amsterdam in 1958, I was sceptical about the benefits of complementary therapies. After talking with Vogel, however, he changed my way of thinking to such a degree that I went to visit him in Switzerland, where I was so impressed by his work that I decided to join him. From that date on, my life, like his, has been devoted to alleviating suffering in thousands of people.

He possessed a wonderful spirit. Not only was he a genius but he was also a man with a big heart who cared passionately about his fellow human beings and spent his life striving to achieve good health for everyone. Every single day I treasure the wonderful relationship I had with my great mentor and friend. When my mind is in a quandary, I often think to myself, 'Alfred, what would you do about this?'