

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white lace dress, is shown in profile, reaching out to touch a branch of a tree in a dense, sunlit forest. The scene is filled with vibrant green foliage, creating a sense of being immersed in nature. The lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the textures of the leaves and the woman's dress.

A Natural Legacy

The Paul Penders Story

Paul's Adventures



Chapter 3 & 4
**Florida &
California**



Chapter 3
Ireland

Chapter 7
**The
Caribbean**

Around the World



Chapter 1 & 2
The Netherlands



Chapter 8
China



Chapter 6
Langkawi



Chapter 7
South Africa



Foreword

When I sat down to write this book about my life and the story of how I started my company, the one theme that kept recurring was – freedom. The freedom to live my life the way I chose and to do the things that I passionately believed in. This search for freedom has led me on many adventures and taken me on many ups and downs; it hasn't always been easy and there were many instances where my self-belief was really put to the test. People have asked me, “Did you ever feel like calling it quits and giving up?” and to be completely honest, the thought NEVER, ever crossed my mind! I've always stood up for my principles and I love to challenge the status quo. Nothing motivates me more than when someone tells me “It can't be done,” or “It has to be done this way.”

My first major ‘rebellion’ took place during the 1970s when I willfully broke Dutch laws because I refused to test my organic cosmetics on animals. At the time (and to this day) I couldn't understand why on earth animals had to be subjected to the most cruel, inhumane torture. It just didn't make any sense to me. The entire episode garnered plenty of publicity and support for my fledgling company but it also meant that I had to leave the

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Netherlands or face a possible prison term. To put some distance between myself and the Dutch authorities, I ended up in Ireland and eventually took my company across the Atlantic to the US. Today, we’re based on the tropical Malaysian island of Langkawi, where I also happen to live.

Looking back now, it all sounds like an amazing adventure and believe me, it was! I hope that you’ll enjoy my journey, and along the way I’ll share with you the natural goodness of botanicals and organic cosmetics as well as pay my respects to the many people who have helped me along; my mentors, family, friends, staff and business associates. I feel incredibly proud and privileged to be surrounded by so many amazing people who have supported my dream and built Paul Penders into the organization it is today.

If there is one thing I’ve learnt from a lifetime working in the (often) cut-throat beauty industry, it is to treasure your dreams, pursue them with all your heart and not to sell out simply for the sake of a bigger bank account. I followed my dreams and by doing so created a number of ‘firsts’. We were the first company not to test on animals way, way back before it became fashionable, and the first to remove potentially harmful FD&C colors from our formulations.

I don’t profess to be some sort of management guru, many of the so-called gurus I have come across don’t have the experience I have – of staring financial disaster in the face time and time again and pulling through even stronger than before. I’m not here to tell you how to live your life, or how to run your business, however I do want to show you that there is room for ethics and integrity in the business world. It is possible to do good business, enjoy yourself, contribute meaningfully to the community and keep your principles intact! Your dreams and soul are far too precious to be traded on the streets of corporate greed. ✿

Chapter One

My Salon Days

From an early age I had been exposed to the healing properties of herbs and plants as my maternal grandparents owned a traditional barber shop in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and my father and mother were also hairstylists. Growing up in their hair salon and helping them out with clients exposed me to working life from a very young age. I loved the hustle and bustle of the salon, the smells of the hair products and the stream of attractive women; it was all very exciting. I had already made up my mind when I was still a teenager to follow in my parents' footsteps and become a famous hairstylist myself. I left school when I was very young determined to make this dream a reality. I left the Netherlands and headed for the style capital of the world – Paris - where I spent years on and off working at the legendary Alexandre de Paris.

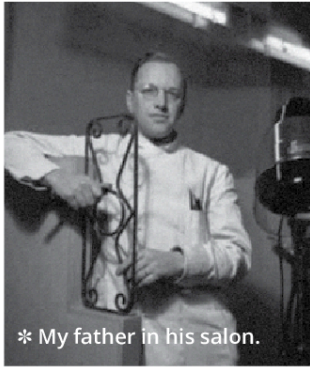
* My grandfather and his apprentices
outside the family salon.



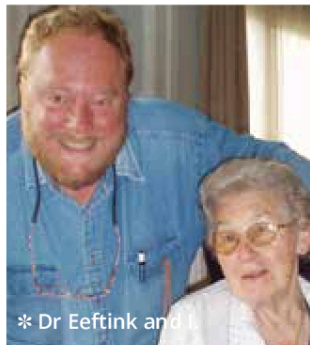
In the 1960s, Alexandre's was the place famous celebrities and entertainers flocked to for fabulous, glamorous hairstyles; he was the pioneer of the 'haute coiffure' style and he also worked with all the great fashion houses. Among his collection of celebrity clients were Sophia Loren (who he apparently styled over 500 times!), Greta Garbo, Lauren Bacall, and Elizabeth Taylor — who owed him her much-copied Cleopatra hairstyle from the 1963 movie epic.

The salon was situated off Place Joffre in an extremely chi-chi part of Paris, and I remember the feeling of being overwhelmed when I turned up for my first day at work. My early experiences in the salon were all with a brush, sweeping up after le maître Alexandre. I was only thirteen at the time and was extremely shy being around the rich and famous. When I wasn't busy tidying up or running errands I would take cover by the washing stations and watch the drama unfold, glued to the interaction taking place between the stylists and their clients. The experience felt light years away from the town I had grown up in and my parent's salon; this was the high life!





* My father in his salon.



* Dr Eeftink and I

PAUL'S THOUGHTS

I can't imagine what went through my parents' minds when I announced I was dropping out of school to gallivant around Paris. Today, it would be impossible to tear a teenager away from their phones or ipads, but even back then I was stubbornly determined to travel the world and learn the trade.

Making money and becoming rich was never a priority, it was far more important to chase my dreams, ultimately it was also more fulfilling. Now when I look back on my life I know I made the right choice and that feeling is far more valuable than any amount of money.

MEETING MY MENTORS AND EXPERIMENTING

Fast forward and I'm pleased to say that I eventually became a hairstylist and opened my first salon in Almelo. I enjoyed my work tremendously and started to experiment with creating my own shampoo and hair care concoctions.

I was greatly inspired by Dr Herma Eeftink, who was a remarkable woman. She was trained as a vet and she always had a way of doing things differently. For instance, she discovered that her four-legged patients responded better to natural medicines than modern preparations, which typically contained chemical-based ingredients. She used homeopathy to treat the animals under her care with remarkable results and no horrible side effects. However, her non-conventional approach to healing meant that she upset many people in the medical and veterinary establishment.



"...she taught me the importance of understanding as much as possible about the different plants, herbs and natural ingredients such as vinegar and honey."

For some reason or other Dr Eeftink took me under her wing and taught me as much as she could about homeopathy and the healing properties of natural organic ingredients. She also taught me the ins and outs of making basic cosmetics. I was fascinated by this woman and her tough, no-nonsense approach. To be honest there were times when I felt like quitting her strict training and each time I brought this up, she scolded me for being lazy and unmotivated...talk about tough love! I'm glad I stayed the course because my life would have been completely different if I hadn't.

It was Dr Eeftink who took the time and effort to nurture my existing interest in natural beauty products and she taught me the importance of understanding as much as possible about the different plants, herbs and natural ingredients such as vinegar and honey.

While Dr Eeftink had a practical influence on me, a gentleman by the name of Dr Ab Steyn also had a very profound effect on me and the direction I would later take in life. Dr Steyn was a homeopath and naturopathic doctor and his gift was clairvoyant healing. Just like Herma, Ab was an amazing person. He was my best friend till his death and whenever I think of him today I still feel his guidance and imagine the advice he would give me if he were still here.

Ab was a typical Libra always pushed me to expand my boundaries. He was an incredibly popular healer in the Netherlands and people from all over the world came to him for healing (he was also able to heal people over the phone). The best thing about talking to him was that patients didn't need to tell him anything about themselves or their problems - he already knew the moment they entered his room or phoned him. He was always willing and ready to give me plenty of advice on natural medicines, healing herbs as well as learning to trust my gut instinct.

At that stage, I was combining commercial shampoos and hair products with natural ingredients to enhance their effects. To test out my blends I'd hold 'shampoo parties' every Wednesday night at my salon and invite all my clients to be my guinea pigs. The ladies would sit around with their coffee and biscuits as my staff and I went to work on their hair.

The benefits of this approach were that we could immediately see the results first-hand and obtain feedback from the clients. It was a fun way of working and it gave me invaluable insights into what clients wanted out of their hair products. I'd be lying if I said that all the shampoo parties were a success and there is one absolute disaster that sticks out in my mind.

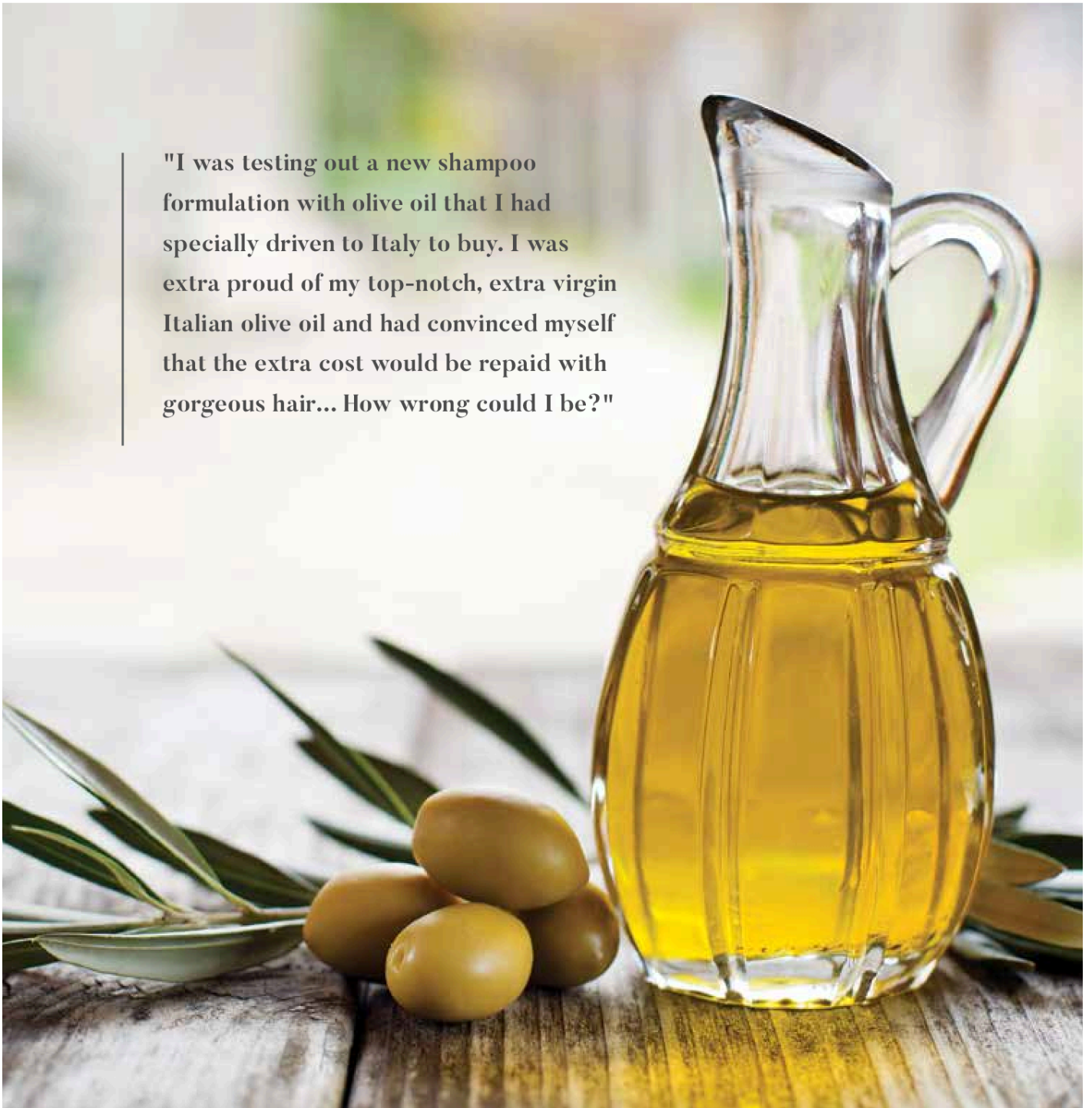
I was testing out a new shampoo formulation with olive oil that I had specially driven to Italy to buy. I was extra proud of my top-notch, extra virgin Italian olive oil and had convinced myself that the extra cost would be repaid with gorgeous hair. I could already see my clients' shining tresses in my mind's eye, I was that excited! That evening one of my willing guinea pigs turned out to be a young lady who was getting married the same morning. "Perfect!" I thought, this bride-to-be would be the first to experience the magic of Paul Penders' olive oil infused shampoo. How wrong could I be?

The effects of my shampoo were an unmitigated catastrophe because I added too much olive oil into the formulation. The poor young bride was left with lank, oily hair which couldn't be fixed in time for her wedding (if she's reading this, I remorsefully hope that the bad hair didn't ruin her big day too much). In my entire life I have never seen a woman so angry.

This episode taught me a very valuable lesson - events don't necessarily turn out the way we imagine and what seems like a good idea on paper may not necessarily translate into success in real life.



"I was testing out a new shampoo formulation with olive oil that I had specially driven to Italy to buy. I was extra proud of my top-notch, extra virgin Italian olive oil and had convinced myself that the extra cost would be repaid with gorgeous hair... How wrong could I be?"



I realized that my name would be on all the product bottles and packaging, my reputation depended entirely on my products and I was determined to give my customers only the very best that they deserved.

Despite my initial setback I kept working to get the proportions of olive oil just right. Remembering the poor bride's face was the perfect motivation for me; I didn't want to let any of my future customers down! We all make mistakes, we just need to learn from these and move on. I eventually perfected the shampoo which we call Love in the Layers Shampoo and it includes Malaysian virgin coconut oil in stead of olive oil.



GOING COMMERCIAL

After about six months of shampoo parties and countless hours of fine-tuning, I was ready to launch my range of Paul Penders shampoos. This was an easy transition to make as I already had two salons and had established a very loyal client base (aside from the 'oily' bride). Selling shampoo from a hair salon wasn't rocket science and sales picked up very quickly encouraging me to expand into natural beauty products.

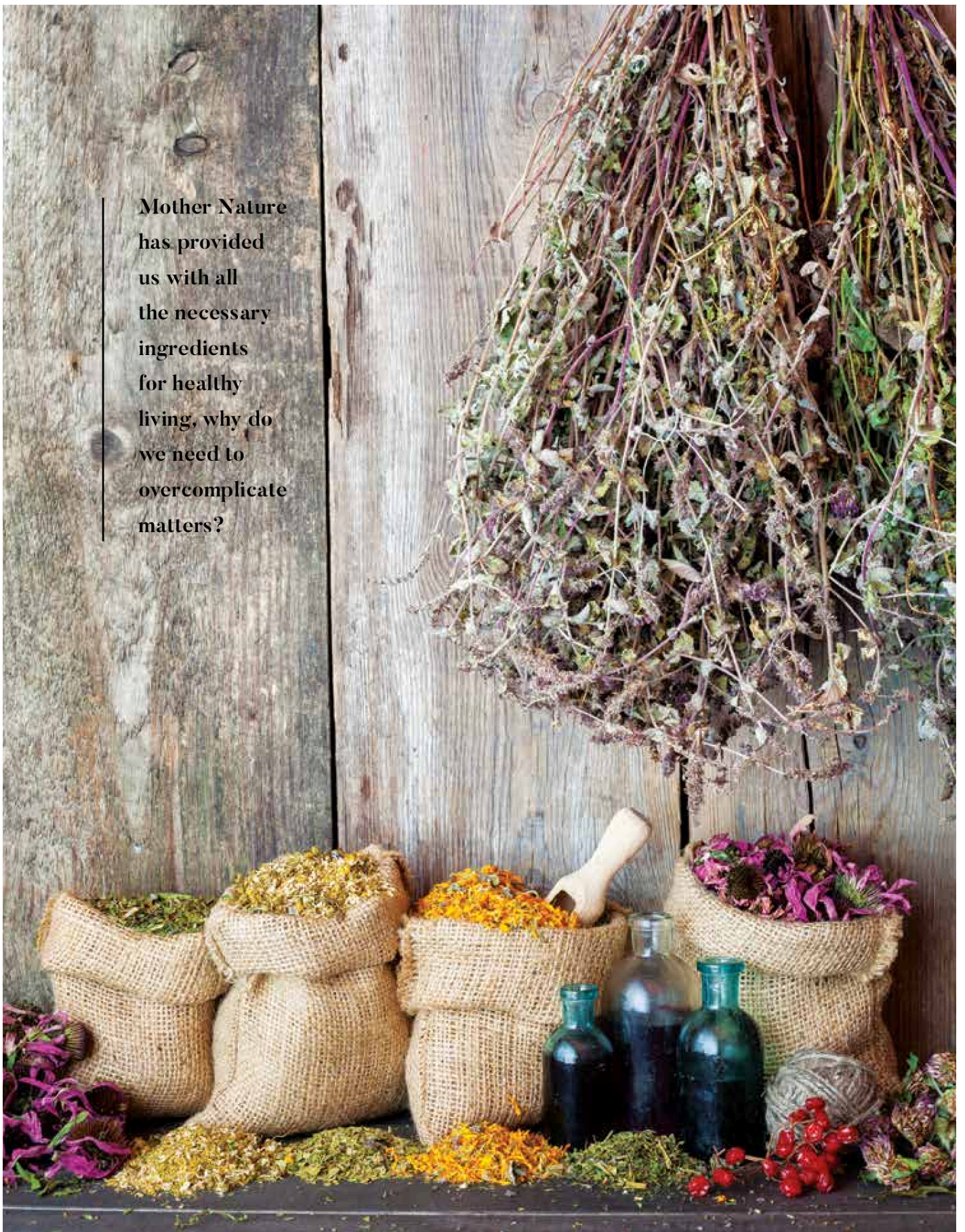
Diversifying the range not only made good business sense, I was also looking for a way to free myself from the constraints of running two hair salons. As much as I loved being in the salons and talking to clients and styling hair, my ultimate goal was to travel the world. I couldn't do this if I was tied to the salons.

I took a similar organic approach to creating my cosmetics range as I did with my shampoos. My ever-willing clients were extremely generous with their time and opinions, which made me all the more determined to create products that were not only natural, but safe and effective. As my grandparents, my own parents and Dr Eeftink were such strong advocates of natural organic ingredients it had never even crossed my mind to look into producing products full of chemicals, even though it would have been more cost-effective and in tune with industry trends.

My logic has always been, Mother Nature has provided us with all the necessary ingredients for healthy living, why do we need to overcomplicate matters? I'm not a chemist by training and over three decades I've had to work with countless chemists, many who didn't understand my vision and my insistence on keeping my products as pure and as natural as possible. I'm not saying they were bad people, but their training and their experience in the beauty industry had closed their minds to the wonders of natural ingredients. They were often totally convinced that beauty products had to be packed full of the latest chemicals and 'wonder' ingredients to be effective. We only have to look at the artificial world around us to realize that this way of thinking is completely untrue and can pose dangers to our well being.



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As the new beauty range began to gather momentum my company experienced its first major setback. One of my customers had bought a jar of face cream that caused an allergic reaction, as a result she complained to the Dutch FDA. Now that Paul Penders was officially on the FDA's radar I was summoned to their offices and asked to explain why my products hadn't been certified by them. I explained that I only used natural ingredients and didn't realize that these needed to be certified. An official patiently explained that all my beauty products needed to undergo the simple process of animal testing to verify that these were safe. Once the laboratory gave me the green light, my products would be officially certified by the FDA and could be sold in the Netherlands.



As all my products were made from natural ingredients I assumed that these would be safe enough to meet the FDA requirements.

I may seem extremely naïve to readers when I say that I had absolutely no idea what animal testing involved. Remember this was during the early 1970s, the mechanics of animal testing were not common knowledge and there was no internet for me to do any research. In my mind the scientists would take samples of Paul Penders shampoo to wash cats and dogs (or maybe even some rabbits), then they'd towel off the animals and check if their fur was nice and shiny.

As all my products were made from natural ingredients I assumed that these would be safe enough to meet the FDA requirements. That was the image I had in my mind when I set off to the laboratory to meet with the Professor who performed animal tests. After the bad experience with the olive oil shampoo and having said that things don't always turn out the way we imagine, nothing on earth could have prepared me for the shock of visiting the animal laboratory.

I arrived full of confidence in the knowledge that my products had all been tested on willing human volunteers and that all had survived the experience. I was happy that the formalities would soon be out of the way and I would be accredited by the FDA - hopefully that would translate into even better sales. I had no idea what was in store for me or what the Professor would reveal during the course of our meeting.

Looking back, that day was a major turning point, not just for my company but for my life. Everything I had worked so hard to build was about to come crashing down and I had absolutely no idea what was going to hit me. ❁



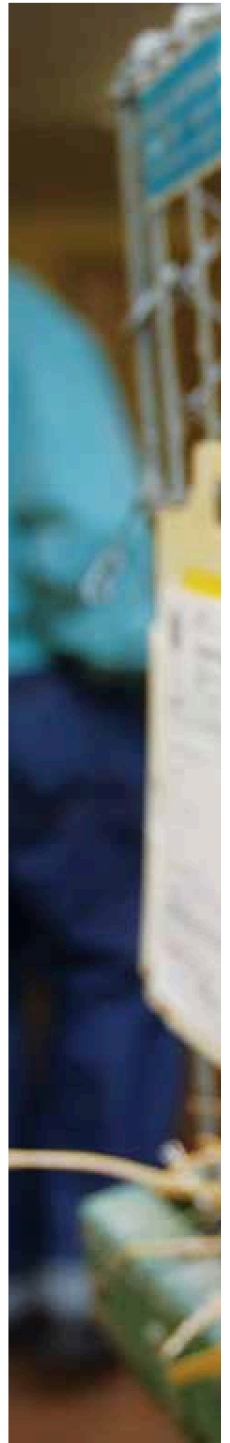
Chapter Two

My Fight Against Animal Testing

I arrived at the laboratory with my organic products, full of enthusiasm and hope - once the animal testing had been completed Paul Penders products would finally reach the mainstream market.

I was warmly greeted by the Professor who welcomed me in his office with a cup of tea and we began to chat. Eventually the conversation wandered to how the animals would be tested... that's when I learnt how the lab rabbits would be force fed my shampoos. Why should rabbits drink my herbal shampoos? I couldn't believe my ears, and it was only when I demanded that we take a tour of the facility that the whole horrible truth dawned on me.

Seeing the mutilated animals suffering made me physically sick. The Professor started to tell me about LD-50 and Draize tests that they proudly performed. I had to constantly stop myself from throwing up. At that moment I desperately wanted to be somewhere else, away from all the misery and pain inflicted in the name of science. Back in the warmth of the Professor's office I was bordering on the hysterical. He looked stunned when I started to yell at him. I quickly gathered up all my shampoo bottles headed for the door, and rushed for the next train back home.



Why on earth should these animals be force fed shampoo when no rational person would pick up a bottle and drain it down their throat? What was the point of all this unnecessary suffering?





The journey home was a complete blur and I can only remember thinking about the rabbits and how evil animal testing was. Why on earth should these animals be force fed shampoo with LD-50 tests until half of them died? Why should we put ingredients into their beautiful eyes? The Professor told me that rabbits were used for these tests since they do not have tear ducts.

No rational person should ever pick up a bottle of my shampoo and pour it down an animal's throat. What was the point of all this unnecessary suffering? I made up my mind there and then that none of my products would EVER be tested on animals, no matter the consequences.

THE GOOD SISTERS COME TO MY RESCUE

Feeling very down after the debacle at the animal testing labs, I received a call from my aunt soon after. A family member had spoken to her about my issues with the Dutch FDA and she called to offer support. My aunt was a nun who lived with her sister (my other aunt and another nun!) in a convent in Baarle-Nassau; she had spoken to her colleagues and convinced the rest of the sisters that they needed to help the lab animals by testing my products on themselves!

I was so touched that my aunt had galvanized her convent to my cause and I hoped that my so-called 'nun testing' would prove to the Dutch FDA that my products were completely safe.

LESSONS FROM MY AUNT

My aunt, or Sister Bertha as she was known within the order was a real character. She was a true Pisces, an accomplished artist and sculptor in her own right and she believed in standing up for the underdog.

She spent plenty of time in Amsterdam befriending prostitutes as she felt that their spiritual needs shouldn't be neglected because of their profession. As a result she was very popular in the Red Light district in the center of Amsterdam. One year she brought a small group of prostitutes to the Convent on Christmas Eve, only to be turned away by her Mother Superior who would not allow the group to enter and pray. This incident upset her a great deal.



I vividly remember her telling me about the dramatic instance she fell in love with one particular Mother Superior. "Always when she walked into the room, our eyes met and I had such a warm feeling!" That was my aunt. Always open and although a Catholic, she was a radical at heart who helped to buck the convent's traditional old-fashioned system by showing her art at big expositions in the Netherlands. At times, when I feel radical, I think of my beloved Sister Bertha.



For the next eight months I visited the Convent every week to participate in a solemn ritual. I would present myself promptly at the front door of the Convent and I would then be led to a large empty room with a long wooden table and bench. There I would quickly don my white lab coat and wait for the bells to clang at 6pm, marking Angelus.

After the bells stopped ringing, the door would open and a nun would serve me dinner and silently glide out of the room. I had 20 minutes in the large room to devour my food with the incessant ticking of a large wall-clock to keep me company. It felt very surreal. After my meal the mysterious nun would return and take me up via a long staircase through a secluded and holy part of the Convent to another huge room full of nuns waiting for the evening's activity to commence.

On my first visit to the Convent I was rather startled by the sight of the large group of nuns silently waiting for me. I thought that they looked like a beautiful penguins huddled in a corner. Eventually, after a number of visits they soon got used to me and we bonded.

I felt very privileged to be allowed into their cloistered world. Aside from their doctors or pastor I was probably the only man who had ever been inside that sanctuary, seen their hair and was allowed to touch and wash their hair. I am very pleased to say that in the eight months of testing, no skin or hair problems were recorded, none of the nuns died and the nuns were very happy with the results!

THE GREAT X'MAS ESCAPE

As I was making new friends with the nuns I also got involved with animal rights groups. My company was beginning to gain a name for itself and I wanted to lend whatever support I could to the animal rights campaign. I even appeared on a number of TV and radio shows speaking out about my experiences and the horrors I witnessed of animal testing.

Despite all my media appearances and live debates outside the Netherlands, I still wanted to more attention. This is how I eventually hatched a plan with some like-minded individuals to break into the animal labs I had visited over a year ago to 'liberate' the rabbits.





KATJA – THE FACE OF PAUL PENDERS

I'm very proud to say that my daughter Katja has been the face of Paul Penders right from the beginning, from our first campaign when she was a cute little girl holding a fluffy rabbit. I've always encouraged her in her modeling and film career which has taken her all over California. She's appeared alongside Hollywood stars in Scream and Harley-Davidson advertising campaigns.

Today, Katja retains her ambassadorial role as Paul Penders spokesperson. It's a very unique experience to be able to work closely with someone I love very dearly.

PAUL'S THOUGHTS

Believe it or not, after all our meetings and discussions about animal testing, Professor Dr Liem, the head of the Dutch FDA became a very close friend of mine. He was your typical chemist who was always preaching the wonders of chemicals. However, when his wife was pregnant he didn't pump Mrs Liem with plenty of chemical substances. Instead he asked his mother in Indonesia to prepare traditional Indonesian herbs. Ironic isn't it?

This little anecdote is the perfect example of a person's mind and heart not being in sync. In Dr Liem's case, he thought like a super-chemist and the law when it came to his day job, but in his heart he followed centuries-old traditions that relied on natural herbs and plants. Imagine what he could have accomplished if both his mind and heart were focused on the same thing?

Our group decided to make our move on Christmas night 1970 as we knew that no one would be working and security would be very relaxed. Breaking into the labs went smoothly and we gently gathered up all the rabbits, doing our best not to scare them. We reassembled in a field close to the lab building and released our furry friends. What happened next was a tragic. The poor rabbits had spent all their lives cooped up in the warmth of the laboratory and were poorly equipped to deal with winter. All of them suffered heart attacks when they were released into the snow-covered field.



Dutch consumers were now curious about Paul Penders and Paul Penders products and many consumers were also very supportive of my strict anti-animal testing preaching.







* My daughter Katja, all grown up now!

The media had a field day when the dead rabbits were discovered the next morning. The popular Rotterdam-based paper, Trouw carried the news on their front page and denounced the campaigners and myself as 'alternative animal torturers'. If there was any consolation from this episode it was that at least the rabbits died quickly and in relatively little pain. Not exactly what we had expected though.

When the media frenzy eventually died down I thankfully realized that at least we had gained plenty of publicity even though most of it wasn't good. At least Dutch people were finally exposed to the truth of animal testing. We were lucky that our bad episode was viewed as an honest mistake.

ON THE ROAD, ON THE RUN

The by-product of all this publicity and media coverage was a dramatic increase in sales. Dutch consumers were now curious about Paul Penders and Paul Penders products and many consumers were also very supportive of my strict anti-animal testing preaching. Several years on from my initial shampoo party days in my salon, Paul Penders products were now sold throughout the Netherlands and were making some headway in the rest of Europe.

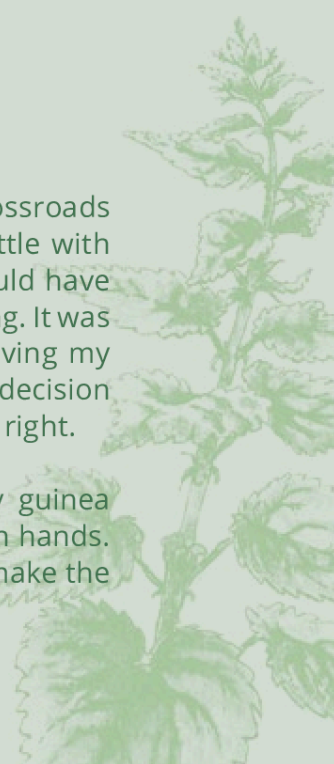
This relative success was just a prequel to the disaster that was waiting around the corner for me. My battles with the Dutch FDA, my refusal to test on animals and my recent high profile hijinks had marked me out as a wanted man. The time had come for the authorities to act.

PAUL'S THOUGHTS

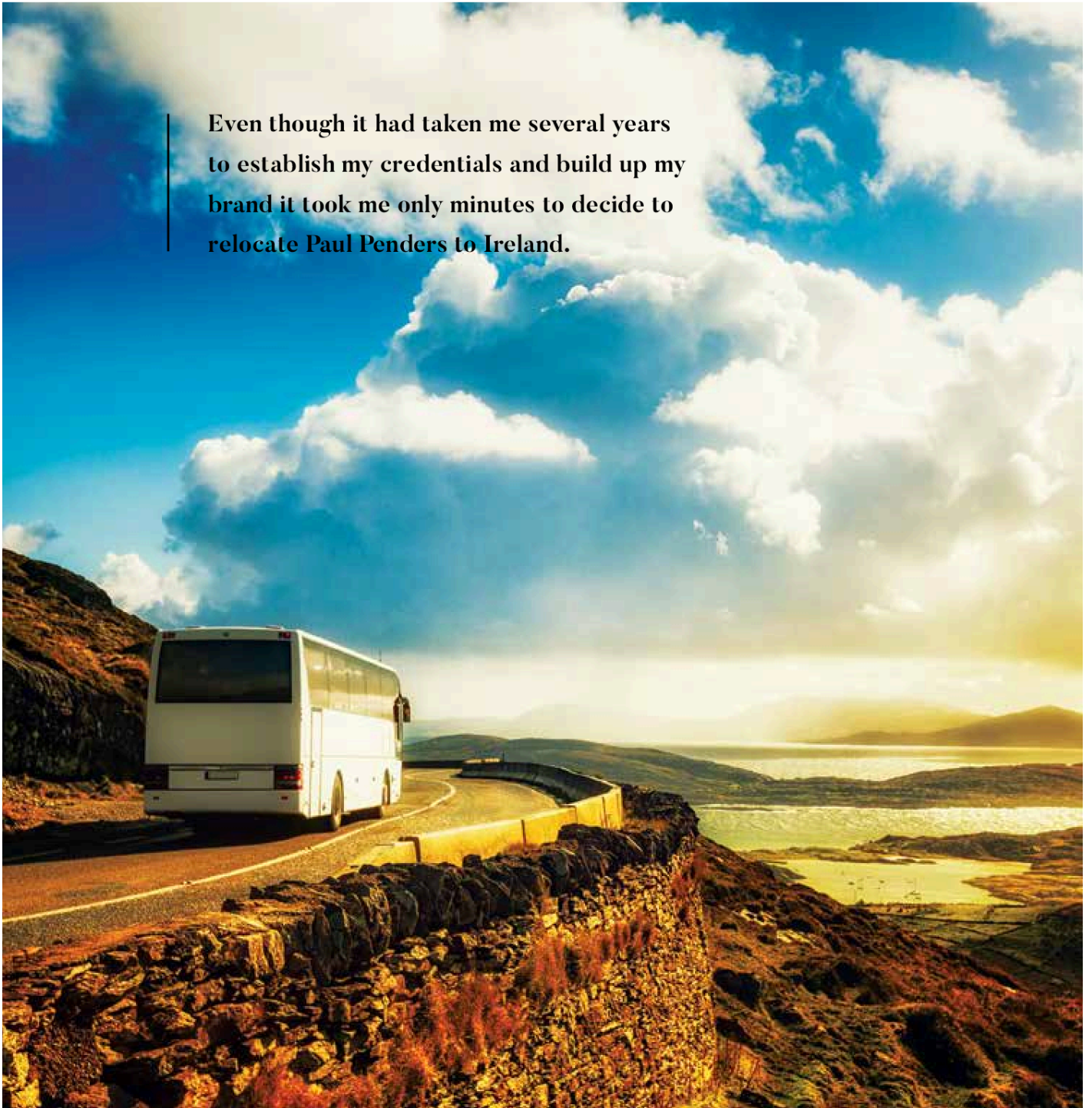
In life we often find ourselves at the proverbial crossroads and believe me I've crossed many! My on-going battle with the Dutch FDA was an important crossroads as I could have lost everything I had worked for if I had waited too long. It was a time for decisive action even though it meant leaving my home, family and friends behind. It wasn't a difficult decision to make as I fully believed that what I was doing was right.

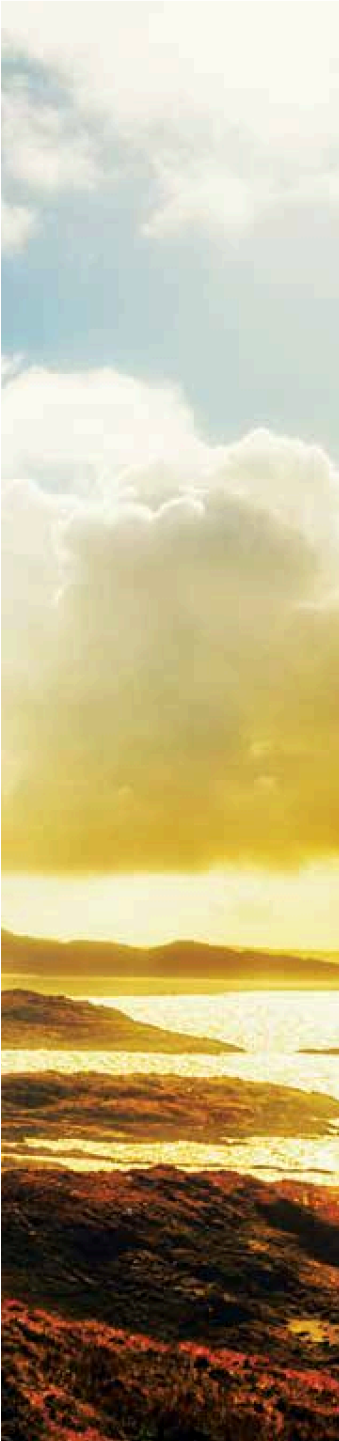
Just like my aunt volunteering her Convent as my guinea pigs, I grabbed the Irish government's offer with both hands. Opportunities come by for a reason, it's up to us to make the most out of these.

Corran



Even though it had taken me several years to establish my credentials and build up my brand it took me only minutes to decide to relocate Paul Penders to Ireland.



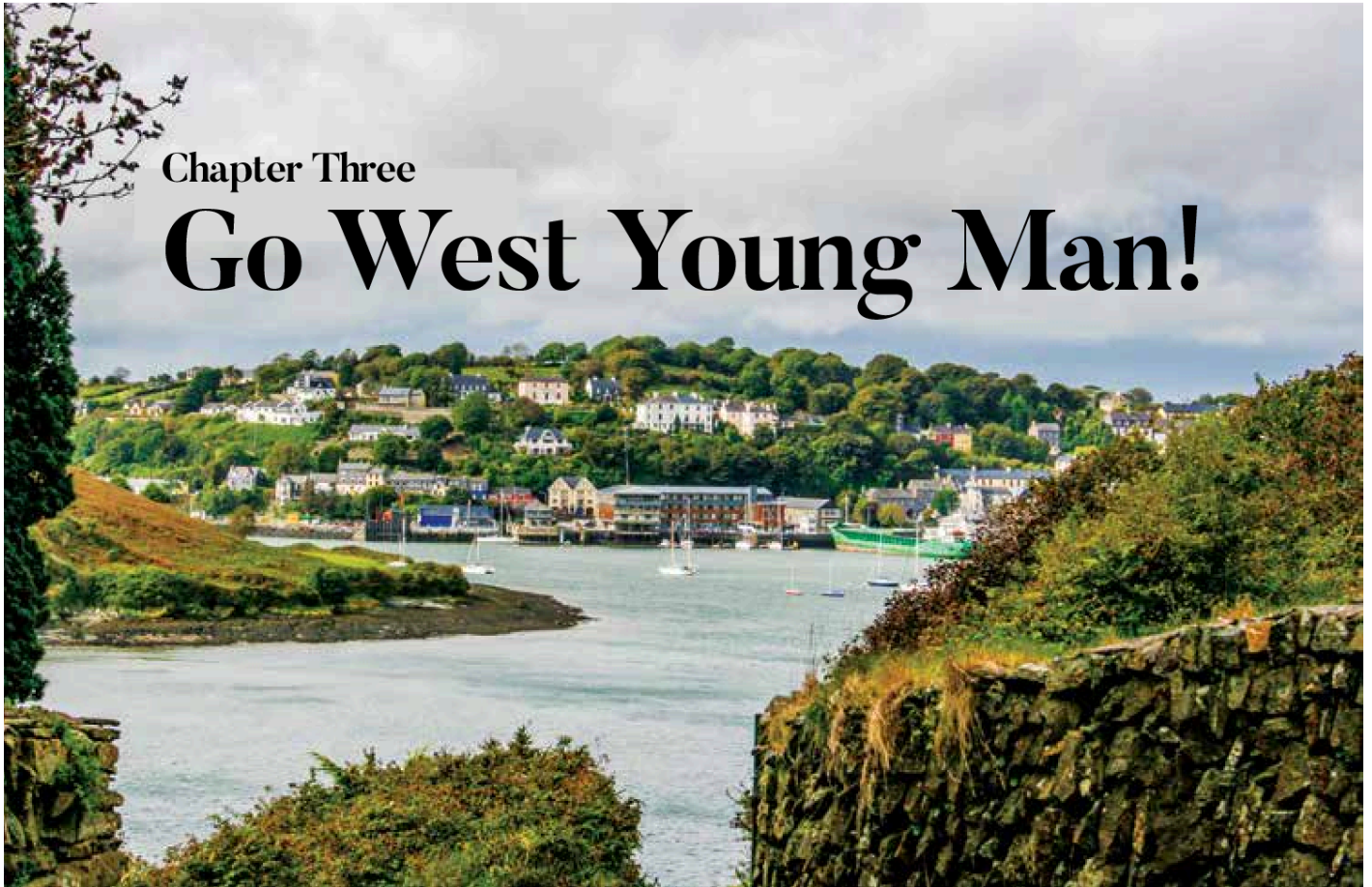


During my increasing interactions with the Dutch FDA I also became a good friend of Dr. Rundervoort - who assisted Dr Liem - he was privately very supportive of my anti-animal testing stance. I know that he felt very upset when the time came to close my factory because I refused to carry out the mandatory tests. It is a funny world we live in. I was always welcome at his office and we often drank coffee together, I consider him one of the nicest people I have ever met but our circumstances were so different. To advance professionally he had to do things that he didn't believe in, and which made no sense at all (just like in the Hollywood blockbuster 'The Green Mile').

In my heart of hearts I knew it was only a matter of time before the Dutch authorities shut down my factory and I had taken steps to relocate my manufacturing overseas. During my animal rights escapades my media exposure had caught the attention of the Irish investment authorities. The Irish government was actively promoting the Emerald Isle as a business-friendly location and offered many attractive terms and tax benefits to investors. They approached me and I saw an opportunity to get out of the chaos that was fast approaching.

Even though it had taken me several years to establish my credentials and build up my brand it took me only minutes to decide to relocate Paul Penders to Ireland. It didn't matter that I was leaving behind my factory and headquarters, these could easily be replaced even if it meant starting from the ground up.

I was determined not to compromise my principles on animal testing even if it meant becoming a fugitive and not being able to return to the Netherlands. I was adamant that animal testing was morally wrong and I refused to take part in it, however, I wasn't going to sit idly by and let my business be seized either. The Irish opportunity made good sense morally and financially. It was definitely high time for my next big adventure! ❀



Chapter Three

Go West Young Man!

Once it became clear that I had passed the point of no return with the Dutch FDA, I made arrangements to relocate all my operations to Ireland. The Irish government was extremely enthusiastic and made the process as hassle-free as possible. Little wonder that Ireland came to be known as the 'Celtic Tiger' in the 1990s thanks to its impressive economic growth.

With an Irish grant I was able to set up a new factory in Kinsale in West Cork and my company was afforded tax-free status for the first 10 years. This went a long way to make up for the loss of my Dutch facility. On the bright side, I also had the foresight to move whatever equipment I could to Ireland before the bailiffs shut down my Dutch factory for good.

The two and a half years I spent in Ireland were incident-free and it was a happy time for me and my family. Unfortunately, my stay in Ireland came to a very abrupt ending no thanks to the animal testing issue which reared its ugly head once more. Having initially been assured that I wouldn't have to carry out animal tests the tables had suddenly turned and now I had the Irish authorities breathing down my neck when Ireland became a member of the EU.

I was extremely disappointed and angry with them for insisting I had to carry out animal testing on my products. I had only been in the country for a short period of time when the bad news broke. Again, I knew I had to move on and find another base. The problem was that I didn't know where to go and other EU countries still required that animal testing be carried out on cosmetic products. It felt like déjà vu all over...





One morning as I was having breakfast and reading the newspaper an image caught my eye. It was a large group of people dressed up in bunny suits holding protest signs along New York's famous Fifth Avenue in front of a major cosmetics company. I nearly dropped my coffee! I scanned the article about the animal rights protest march and something clicked immediately. I knew had to go to the US!

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

My gut instinct told me that my life was about to change for the better. Maybe it was the romantic idea I had of America, as the land of opportunity and freedom. I didn't have much time to act. I quickly packed my bag and jumped on a flight to New York. I had to be sure that the promised land was everything I hoped it would be. As my plane touched down at JFK Airport my mind was racing ahead. The first thing I had to do was to find the nearest FDA office and present my case. Everything depended on the outcome of this meeting; it was a scary thought.

A few quick phone calls from my hotel revealed that the nearest FDA authority was in Brooklyn, and with that I was off on another cab ride. In those days Brooklyn wasn't a very picturesque neighborhood and that didn't really help my mood as the cab drove past endless rows of grimy brownstones.

The officer in charge was your stereotypical bureaucrat, pen-pusher who barely looked at me as I entered the office. He glanced up, asked me what I wanted and for the next half an hour I babbled mindlessly about everything from my



PAUL'S THOUGHTS

I love to travel and I do believe that this has been one of the keys to my success. Travel continuously opens my eyes and mind to new ideas, new ways of doing things and has given me a better insight into how to understand and communicate with people from different backgrounds.

I think that many people are scared of expanding beyond their boundaries both mentally and physically; this fear of the unknown can be a powerful deterrent to growth. If I hadn't moved my company from the Netherlands to Ireland and then on to the US, I very much doubt the company would have survived.

Although it helps to be naturally adventurous, there are also practical considerations at play - relocating your business or your home can bring many financial and spiritual rewards, believe me.

organic formulations, to my run-ins with the Dutch FDA, to my stand on animal testing. What a mess! I could feel my hands getting clammy and clammy all the way through my monologue. Not once did he stop scribbling on the forms in front of him.

When I finally ran out of things to say, he slowly looked up at me. The moment of truth had arrived. With his best dead-pan expression he said, "Sir, your organic products don't need to undergo animal testing. All the ingredients you've listed down were tested over fifty years ago and are on the GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe) list."

And that was it. I practically flew out of the office feeling a million years younger and 100 pounds lighter. I was elated and kept thinking to myself, "What an amazing country this is! What an amazing country this is!"

I was stunned by how quickly my case had been handled and also amazed to learn how far ahead in its thinking the US FDA was with regards to organic skin care and cosmetics compared to its European counterparts. It was a wonderful first impression of the logical US framework of regulations. Not only would my principles be kept intact but with hard work and determination I too was going to live the American dream! I had found a new home and it felt like I was in heaven.



FLORIDA FUN

The decision to base my company in sunny Tampa, Florida came about as a result of a new investor who came on board - Cocaine Bill (his nickname really summed him up perfectly!). Cocaine Bill, true to form was a real character. He was a very wealthy individual who drove a huge Rolls Royce and had a very young, blonde wife. This was actually the first time I had taken on an investor, I thought it was the right thing to do as I was the 'new kid on the block' and needed to find my bearings in the US.

Bill introduced me to plenty of people and soon I was up and running. It was a lot of fun traveling around the US and spreading the word about Paul Penders products; compared to the stuffiness of Europe I felt for the first time that I could breathe. It was certainly a relief to know that all my animal testing issues had been left far behind.

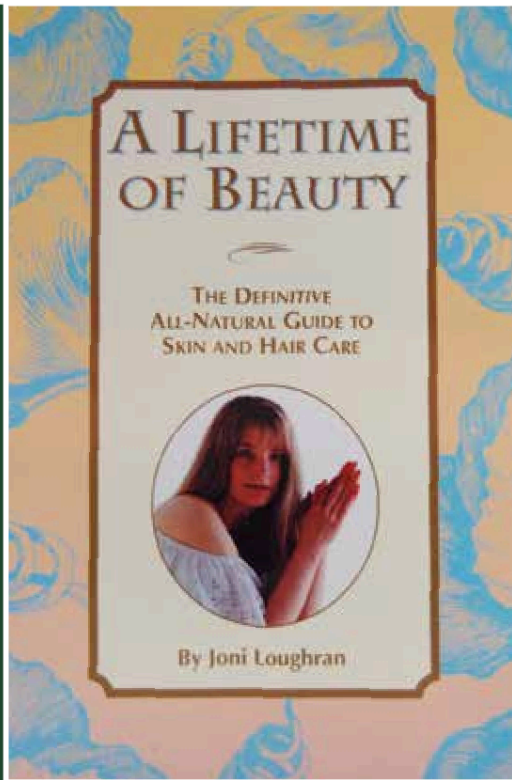
Although I loved the warmth of Florida I soon got itchy feet and to be honest I also got depressed by all the old folks homes. I know it's not a very politically correct thing to say but it's true especially these days. I was young and full of energy and the time had come to move! I must say though that it was far nicer to move because I wanted to and not because I HAD to.





PUTTING DOWN ROOTS IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

My many business trips had taken me to San Francisco and I fell in love with the city immediately. I have an easy-going, relaxed personality and was immediately drawn to the creativity and liberal attitudes the city was world famous for. To this day I still believe that San Francisco is the best city in the world. San Francisco's trippy-hippy vibe played a huge role in turning around my company's fortunes after the roller-coaster ride courtesy of Cocaine Bill. Thinking about it now, it makes perfect sense. California in the 1980s, was at the forefront of the new organic movement and people were really into the latest health and diet fads (admittedly not all of them good).



MEETING DR JONI LOUGHRAN

At one particular trade show I definitely got more than I bargained for! A striking woman swept into the Paul Penders booth and started to examine all our cosmetics and beauty products. She spent a long, long time going through all our ingredients before finally turning her attention to me.

“This is a pile of junk!” she loudly proclaimed pointing at my products. That was my first introduction to Joni Loughran, the acclaimed cosmetologist and author of several books on natural skin and hair care.

After we got talking we realized we had a lot more in common than we initially thought. Joni actually joined the company and played an important role helping to shape up my mind with her encyclopedic insights and experience.

I learnt so much from Joni about natural beauty products and she played an important role in helping to educate my employees. She was extremely systematic and organized - thanks to her the company finally put together a set of training manuals.



BECOMING A MUSLIM

I've never been a religious person although my travels around the world have introduced me to people of many different faiths. I've enjoyed plenty of discussions on faith especially with those who have experienced it from the heart rather than simply from a book. I've also observed first hand how healing and religion can go hand in hand.

My good friend Dr Ab Steyn in the Netherlands was not a particularly religious person but he always stressed that it was the power of God that guided him to heal people (see page 15). Another friend of mine, Professor Gary Goldschneider is a psychiatrist and trained classical pianist who performs all over the world. His books have sold millions worldwide and much of his thinking centers around a strong belief in the healing power of God.

Ab was often called to hospitals to deal with serious cases where modern medicine didn't seem to make a difference. His specialty was working with deaf children who could not speak or hear. Once I was on a business trip and called Ab to tell him about my stomach ache. He told me to hang up and place my hand on my stomach for 15 seconds. The pain left, it was an amazing experience.

On one long flight from Malaysia to San Francisco I read a beautiful book on the life of Prophet Muhammad written by Annemarie Schimmel, a Harvard Professor from Germany. She wrote so lovingly and compelling that I read it from cover to cover and only got less than an hour's sleep. At 6am I pushed up the window shade and was greeted by a morning sky full of deep reds, purples and blues – I felt a deep warmth from within and felt that I had been touched by the love of God; in that instant became a Muslim (and later this brought me to Sufism).

It was a beautiful feeling which I had never experienced before and two days later I visited a mosque in San Francisco. I knocked on the door and told the Imam I wanted to convert. He looked at me and asked, "What do you know about Islam?"

"Not much," I admitted. "But I have read an inspiring book on the life of the Prophet."

The Imam took a good look at me and admitted that he wasn't sure if that was enough. "If you don't help me know, I may change my mind," I said. The door flew open and I was converted on the spot in that freezing San Francisco mosque in one of the greatest days of my life.

MY EXPERIENCES AS A MUSLIM

I often get asked, "How good a Muslim are you?" and regularly get taught how to pray in a certain way, I also often get told I have to do this or that by people who were born as Muslims. It makes me feel sad. I experienced such joy becoming a Muslim and maybe I am an uneducated one, but at least I have light in my heart. I always tell these people that I am a bad Muslim but I am trying to do my best.

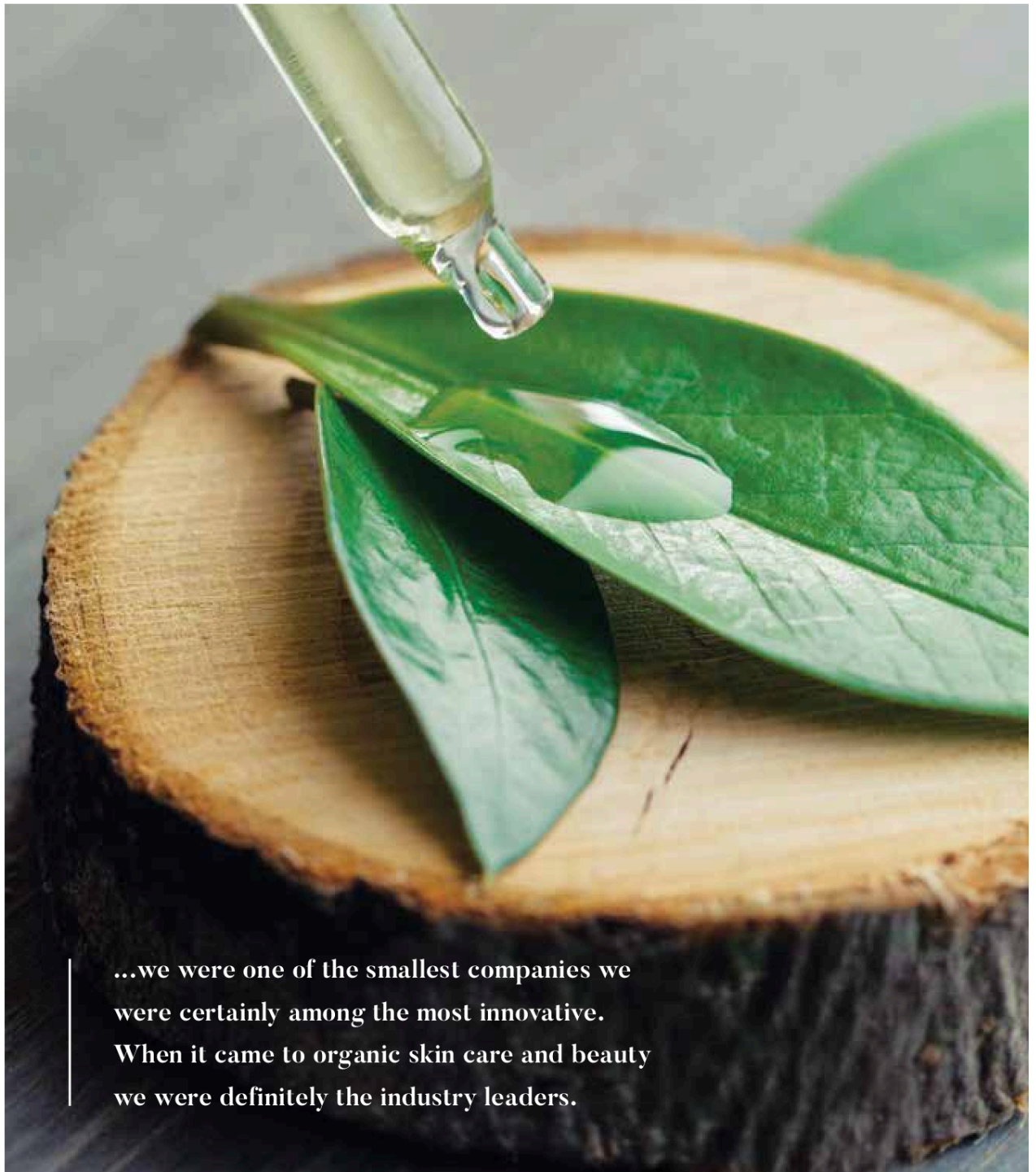
The base of Islam gives me structure and I feel that God is not only good but God is great! When people ask me why I suddenly became a Muslim at 55, I can't really explain, all I know is that I have the same warmth in my heart 15 years later. I just hope that my life and work are a living example of my faith and how I keep trying to be a better person.

My faith has also influenced the way we manufacture Paul Penders products as we have tried to make these even more pure by removing all ingredients made from animals or animal by-products. We make sure to work with people who share the same values as us – people who are spiritual, believe in a better world and care for good health. I believe that these good vibrations

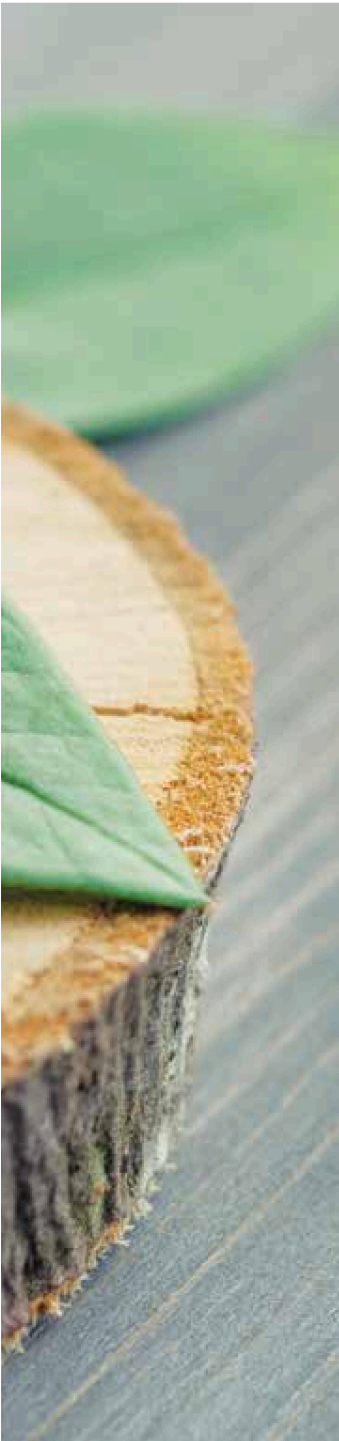
make our products even better. I hope that when people see the Halal logo on our products, they will know that these are safe products created without harming the environment; plenty of love and deep thoughts went into creating these and the Halal logo represents also the strict values of most Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and various other religions as well.

I feel proud and extremely thankful that God guided me to take the helm to make the best possible products with the light of peace, love and warmth in our hearts; for giving me the strength to reject animal testing and animal-based products over 50 years ago.





...we were one of the smallest companies we
were certainly among the most innovative.
When it came to organic skin care and beauty
we were definitely the industry leaders.



There was a huge interest in looking good and staying young with natural beauty products so we were able to catch this wave and ride it. By this time the company was reasonably established and we already had a wide range of products perfect for Californian consumers. Whenever my team and I visited cosmetic trade shows around the US although we were one of the smallest companies we were certainly among the most innovative. When it came to organic skin care and beauty we were definitely the industry leaders.

What set us apart from the bigger brands were two key differentiators - Paul Penders products were made from truly natural ingredients, hand-made in small production batches and never tested on animals. We were also the first company to ban FD&C colors from all our lipsticks.

These factors won us many friends and loyal customers as well as serious opposition from major industry players. I knew that we were definitely doing something right if we got up the noses of so-called respected industry icons who threatened to sue us on a few occasions.

At one trade show the CEO of a very large US cosmetics brand stopped by our booth with a big cigar in his mouth. He said, "Are you that Paul Penders?" I knew who he was - a colorful person in the industry and a big player. "Why?" I asked.

He took a big drag on his Cuban and blew some smoke into my face, "Well Paul I'm looking for a nice small company for my girlfriend so she has something to do. Your company fits the bill, so name your price and consider it sold!"

As you may have gathered by now, I love challenges and I hate being told what to do. I wished the guy all the best in his search and he angrily left. As flattering as his interest was, I would never sell out to a cosmetic company that had totally different principles to ours. I think the sale would have made me rich, but why would I consider giving up and selling out my principles? NEVER. ✿


Chapter Four

Further Adventures in the US

THE HOLLYWOOD BUG BITES

The years my company was based in San Francisco are definitely among my best memories thanks to the many friends I made there. California is such an interesting place thanks to its pioneering history and spirit. When gold was first discovered in California in the mid-nineteenth century it sparked the legendary gold rush that attracted hundreds of thousands of settlers from all over the US and beyond. The state became a real lightning rod for people looking to make their fortune. The same can be said of modern day California, just think of the influence of Hollywood and Silicon Valley on the outside world. Phenomenal!

Perhaps it was the sunshine or the proximity to Hollywood and by in the early 1990s I decided that TV advertising was what I needed to take Paul Penders into the big league. For several days I sat in a Los Angeles movie agency with my daughter Katja looking for an actress who would become the face and spokesperson for the 30 minute infomercial I had decided to produce.



We talked to Hollywood producers many times, it was a real hoot and an experience to have famous movie stars doing their best to impress me with each audition similar to a job interview. By the end of each trip I was beginning to feel a little jaded and worn out by the fakery, the limos and the endless buttering up. Was I going to find my star I began to wonder?

The last audition took place before my flight back to San Francisco with a wonderful actress called Meredith MacRae. I knew in a flash that I wanted her to be my spokeswoman. Meredith was a well-established actress who I can only describe as the American version of Catherine Deneuve.



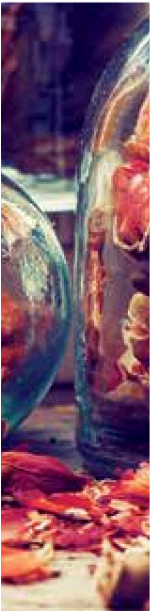
Photo by Alan Light.



She had a graceful, gentle, intelligent personality and her gift was being able to put people instantly at ease. Not only was her personality a perfect fit for the company but she was also very high profile and had appeared in a number of very popular TV series including, Petticoat Junction and My Three Sons. I was confident that her star power and our products would be a perfect match; her agent was notified and Hollywood's legal wheels rolled into action!

Dealing with entertainment lawyers was a complete waste of my time. What could have been sorted out with a five minute conversation and a handshake between a gentleman and a gentle lady, evolved into a two week long saga.

The contract negotiations were very intense and I can remember some of the most important points very vividly. As a star it was expected that Meredith and her entourage would only travel first class, this was to be expected. I didn't expect a clause stating that Meredith had to be served croissants during the flight which needed to be heated to 35C exactly (but then again I had never had any contact with movie stars up to this point!).



Things nearly got off to a disastrous start when Meredith and her entourage had to fly coach up to San Francisco thanks to a ticketing botch-up. Luckily for me the baker managed to deliver the croissants on time. We spent several long days shooting in Petaluma. We had the entire works: a film crew, trailers, it was all super professional and I had a great time pretending to be a movie producer.

Meredith was a consummate professional who was an absolute pleasure to work with, she really captured the spirit of the company and put on a good show. After our stint in Petaluma, we packed up and headed back to Hollywood for several days shooting in a studio; the very same one used by Jay Leno. At the end of it all I felt like a real movie mogul. I couldn't wait for the infomercial to air and the orders to start rolling in!



HIT WHERE IT HURT

After all the excitement of meeting stars, filming and getting a taste for glitz and glamor it was all back to earth to strategize the airing of the Paul Penders infomercial. The ad people were very excited at the prospect of booking lots of airtime and had devised a strategy where the infomercial would run in 25 major cities, including, Boston, New York, Seattle and San Francisco. Before they went nationwide with the infomercial they planned to do a test run in order to gauge the level of response.

The first screening of the Paul Penders infomercial took place in Amarillo, Texas. The infomercial ran at 2am as that was supposedly a good time to attract insomniac shoppers. I stayed awake all night tossing and turning, wondering how many customers would place their orders through the centralized call center.

When I woke up first thing in the morning the ad people were ecstatic, we had hit our target rate of 1%. What they forgot to mention was that Amarillo, Texas had a population of 200,000 people, and the reality was that out of two thousand callers only two people had placed orders (statistics don't lie, but they certainly don't give the full picture either!).

With the infomercial in the bag and the testing a success there was little left to do but book some serious ad time and hope that Meredith's magic would cast a spell. I booked over 100 30 minute slots which cost a bomb. Then sat back, chewed my finger nails and waited and waited...

The infomercial garnered the most success in the San Francisco area, probably because we had already established a decent following on our home turf. We started to make some decent profits and I slowly began to breathe again. By the time the infomercial ran in New York and Boston simultaneously the costs had escalated considerably. Once all the booked slots had run, I decided that it was time to pull the plug, no more TV! Ever!



PAUL'S THOUGHTS

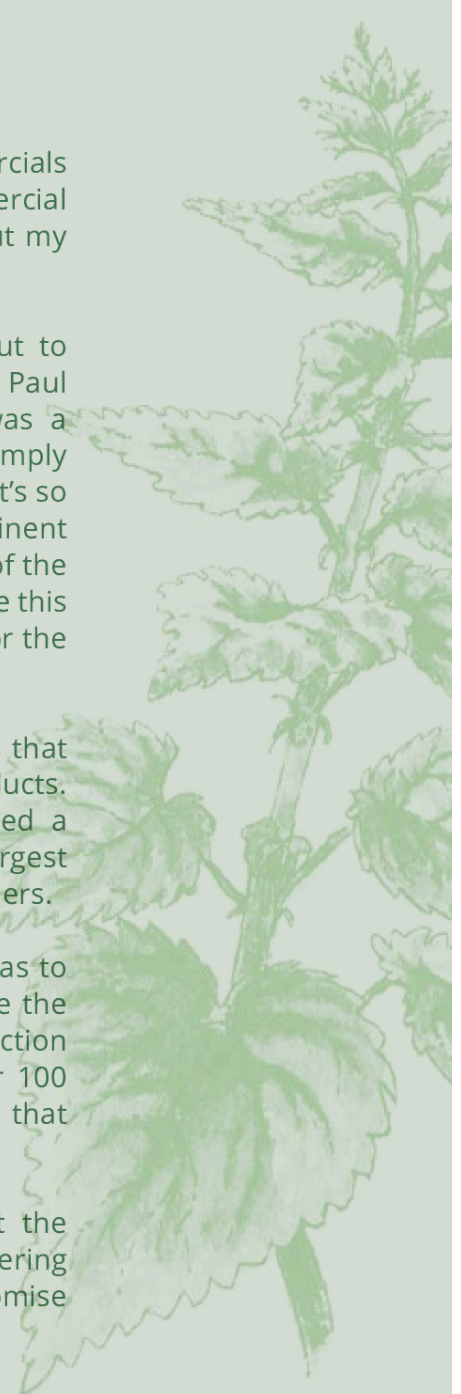
I don't want you to get the idea that I'm against TV commercials or anything like that, just because the Paul Penders infomercial nearly ran my company financially to the ground. I'll put my hands up and accept most of the blame.

The positive side was that the infomercial reached out to many potential consumers who had never heard of Paul Penders before. So, in that respect the campaign was a success. What I hadn't counted on was that there were simply not enough stores across the US carrying our products. It's so easy to forget that America is such a vast nation, a continent on its own. Raising brand awareness was just one part of the challenge, being able to sustain the interest and translate this into sales was another. This was something neither I, nor the ad people I had hired had factored in.

The most valuable lesson I got out of this episode was that I had got distracted from creating natural beauty products. Up till that point my company had already established a good, honest reputation. We may not have been the largest company but we had soul and the respect of our customers.

I had mistakenly assumed that the next step forward was to grow and for that to happen we had to sell fast, hence the investment in the infomercial. Investing a fortune in production costs for a 30 minute infomercial and airtime for over 100 screenings was a large bill to foot and I'm very relieved that the experience didn't ruin us financially.

When all the dust had finally settled, I realized that the infomercial had been a huge gamble. It was a sobering thought. I promised myself I would never again compromise the soul of my company.





PAUL PENDERS HAIR DYE HOLDS UP A MOVIE SHOOT

Movie star Dustin Hoffman was a big fan of our natural hair dye and I don't say this as an idle boast. When he was shooting on the set of *Tootsie* in New York, apparently all stocks of our hair dye had been used up and the hair stylists couldn't find any in department stores or chemists.

Dustin immediately requested a halt to the shooting because he didn't want his other cast members to use a chemical hair dye. When we took the order from Dustin Hoffman at our headquarters in California, we couldn't believe the news! Needless to say we didn't waste any time couriering the hair dye straight to New York so that shooting could resume.

I thought that was a very classy act. This man really had principles and a heart. Rather than letting the cast die their hair with chemicals, he insisted on getting the best, natural hair dye for them. How many people would hold up a movie production for something like this? I'm willing to bet there are less than a handful.

A few years later we ran into some issues with the same hair dye when one of our small ingredient suppliers was bought by a large color ingredient company which was in turn owned by an even larger US color corporation. After some teething problems



It's about time I tell you more about natural beauty and skin care and why you should take a serious interest in the ingredients in your facial scrubs, lipsticks and shampoos.



dealing with the parent company it turned out that one of the so-called natural colors we had been supplied with was actually not a natural color ingredient but included some coal tar.

Our immediate reaction was to recall all the affected hair dye and try to reformulate it with new natural color ingredients. It took plenty sweat and tears in the laboratory and at the end of it all we still couldn't match the consistency offered by the earlier coloring. It was extremely disappointing. From a financial standpoint it was even more disappointing as this had been our #1 selling hair product.

The experience with Dustin Hoffman reiterated that it was more important to do the right thing and to stand by my company's values. Since we couldn't come up with a new formulation that was just as effective but without the chemical ingredients, we decided to discontinue the product. Perhaps this is where my company differed from the large corporations, we really had a soul and a belief that it was our duty to give consumers only the best.

So far I've told you the story of my company up till our wonderful San Francisco days and the struggle it took to get there. It's about time I tell you more about natural beauty and skin care and why you should take a serious interest in the ingredients in your facial scrubs, lipsticks and shampoos. You may be very surprised when I say that the whole beauty industry isn't as beautiful as it seems.

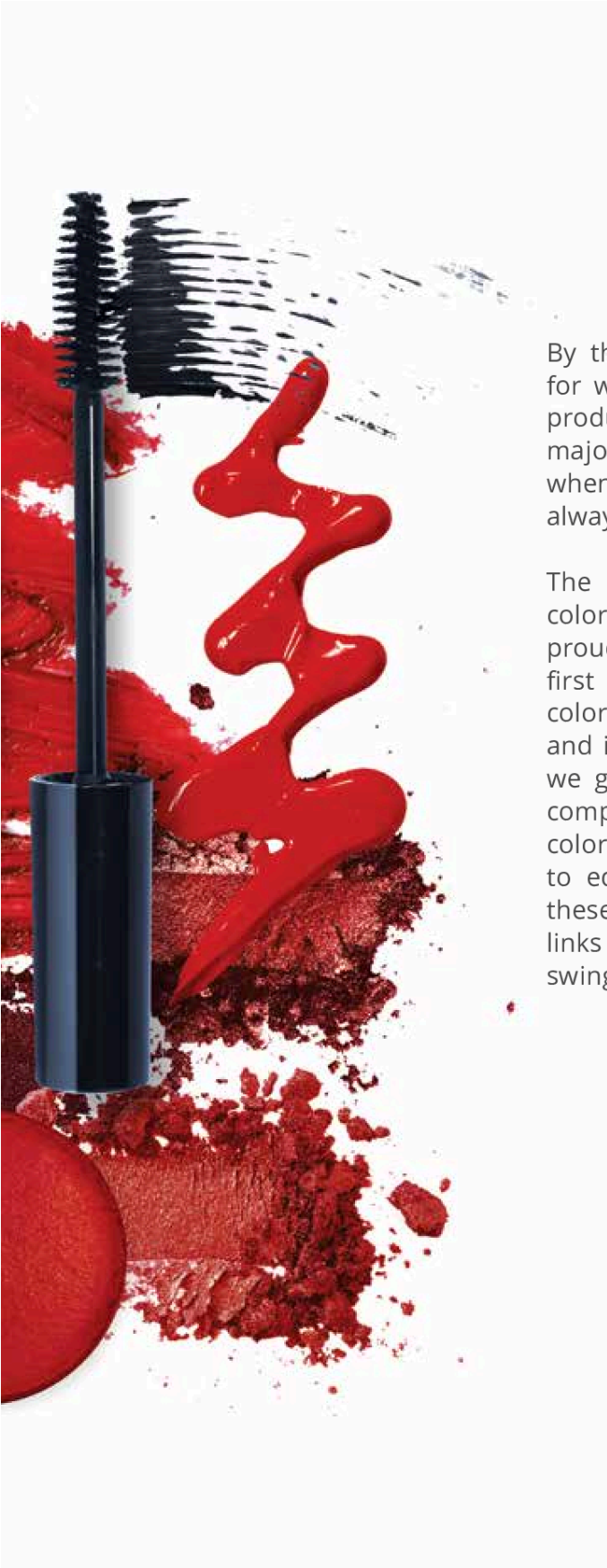
SPEAKING OUT AGAINST FD&C COLORS

In the time my company had set up facilities in California we had built a dedicated cult following of loyal customers, impressed by our anti-animal testing stance (we were the first cosmetics company in the world not to test on animals) and innovative botanical-based beauty range. From hair and skin care products we now produced natural makeup including lipsticks, eyeliners and mascaras. The infomercial with Meredith MacRae had also introduced us to a wider audience.

My team and I had read about the research conducted by Dr Benjamin Feingold - a pediatric allergist - who had made a connection between Food Drug & Cosmetic (FD&C) colors and hyperactivity in children in the 1970s. FD&C colors were heavily used in processed snack foods and soft drinks which appeared to trigger or exacerbate behavioral problems in kids.

Children were not the only potential victims of synthetic coloring, women who regularly used make up were also heavily exposed to FD&C colors. Studies have shown that the average woman absorbs between 4 to 9 pounds of lipstick during her lifetime. Now I'm not sure what an average woman is, but common sense told me that we needed to find an alternative to these chemical colors for the sake of our customers' health.





By the early 1990s, we were already looking for ways to remove FD&C colors from all our products. Working with natural coloring was a major effort in itself; nature isn't precise and when we first started experimenting there were always color variations to contend with.

The research and development into natural coloring was definitely worth it and we could proudly proclaim that Paul Penders was the first cosmetic company not to use FD&C colors. When we made this announcement and incorporated it into our media advertising we got a lot of flak from the large cosmetic companies who were heavy users of artificial colors. They were unhappy that we were trying to educate consumers about the dangers of these colorings, especially the well-documented links to behavioral problems (including mood swings, irritability etc) and cancer.

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FD&C COLORS - POTENTIAL HEALTH HAZARDS

Researchers in Japan and the US have discovered that several FD&C colors are in fact carcinogenic and the FDA admits areas of concern and cannot completely guarantee consumers safety. Over time a number of FD&C colors have been withdrawn for safety reasons.

Despite these concerns, millions of women around the world still literally EAT these health hazards on a daily basis. Do read a published article about the dangers of lipsticks by Dr. Steinman in "Doctor's Prescription for Healthy Living" (May 2001), at www.freedompressonline.com The same newsletter raves about our lipsticks!



BUG-GED BY COLORS!

Working with natural colors is a lot trickier than it sounds and the best example of this is a natural pigment called carmine. Now, principally, none of our products include any animal-derived ingredients or by-products (this includes beeswax, lanolin, silk, dairy and honey). The one exception to this rule was carmine, a natural red color that is derived from the wings of Cochineal – a South American insect that lives on cacti.



Although we have clearly stated that we used this one insect-derived coloring we still incurred the wrath of a number of vegan societies who were very unhappy with us. I tried to placate them by explaining that we only sourced for insects that had died naturally (yes, we went to these lengths!) but to no avail.

Until 2009 we used carmine in our lipsticks rather than using FD&C colors despite the fact that carmine is almost 50 times more expensive than chemical dyes, however it doesn't have the same health and safety issues. I'm glad to say we've since sourced for an alternative red coloring that doesn't involve carmine anymore and all our products are certified as 'vegan' by the American Vegan Association in New York. Case closed! ❀



Chapter Five

Oma, My Inspiration

My parents and my grandparents were all involved in the beauty business, and I am the only one of my generation to continue in this line. When I was a young boy I'd spend ages in my parent's beauty salon becoming an expert with the broom. After school I would regularly visit my grandmother to chat and listen to her stories. Granny or Oma as I called her, had a great mind and loved to philosophize. We had a wonderful connection and she was very proud that I followed in her footsteps.

Oma worked closely with my grandfather in his beauty salon and over time she created a special homemade herbal extract which she called **LevensESSENTIE Gold™** (Dutch for 'Essence of Life'). **LevensESSENTIE Gold™** included a mix of various herbs and botanicals which she included in skin care and hair care preparations that were popular with customers. Many regulars used to remark how her formulations kept their skin and hair looking shiny and healthy-looking all thanks to the natural ingredients carefully prepared by my grandmother.



Oma was a dreamer but a practical dreamer and her dreams about expanding her beauty range were interlocked with business practicalities. She understood her customers' demands for safe, effective beauty products as well as the need to expand her operations from the beauty salon.

She told me about her trips to Paris and Berlin to research what was happening in the global beauty industry and what the latest innovations were. Unfortunately grandpa passed away and Oma's dreams of commercializing her skin care and hair care preparations came to a halt with the closure of the beauty salon. The dream never died though, and she spent her time inspiring me and encouraging me to achieve what she had started.





* Close up of the ingredients that make up my grandmother's secret formula - **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™

Something that struck me was how Oma was very much part of a generation which had been raised using herbs and botanicals for a variety of purposes, for remedies, skin care, hair care, you name it. She didn't use these natural ingredients because they suddenly became trendy; rather she had seen her own grandmother and mother using these to good effect and had continued the tradition. Thanks to my grandmother and my mother I have a great deal of respect for herbs and botanicals and this fascination is still very much ingrained in me.

As I mentioned earlier, Dr Herma Eeftink and Dr Ab Steyn were both big influences on me and both of them advised me on certain herbs to be used in my products. Although they often disagreed - they saw things from very different perspectives - I took both sets of advice and incorporated these in the formulation of **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™. Although this special pair have since passed away, each time I see the extraction of **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™ in action I say a silent 'thank you' from the bottom of my heart to Oma, Dr. Steyn and Dr. Eeftink.

ESSENCE OF LIFE

The 'Essence of Life' or **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™ is the secret ingredient originally created by Oma that is added to all Paul Penders products. This is a blend of 22 European and Asian herbs formulated to bring out the skin's natural radiance.

LevensESSENTIE Gold™ is also added to all my hair care products as effective hair care starts with a healthy scalp. Hair is dead after all, nothing you add to it is going to make it come to life, which is why you should be more interested in nourishing your scalp to produce healthy hair.

My grandmother first formulated **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™ over 100 years ago and eventually passed on her recipe to me. She always encouraged me to make the most of her formulation and to create my own hair and beauty products to continue her dream. As I travelled around the world and researched more natural ingredients I experimented with adding new ingredients to her formula.

PAUL'S THOUGHTS

While it would have been possible for me to continue using my grandmother's original formula, I feel that continuously updating **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™ made my products more effective which my customers loved.

It can be very easy and even tempting to get stuck in a rut and to continue doing the same thing day in and day out but why limit yourself and your knowledge? The world is such an exciting place, and there are so many things I am still learning about botanicals all over the world!





* Pegaga which is widely used in traditional Malaysian medicine.

Being based in Langkawi, Malaysia – A UNESCO Geopark – has given me and my team amazing access to tropical botanicals including Pegaga and later on, Mujonso. Pegaga is now one of the ingredients in **LevensESSENTIE Gold™** and is known as the 'miracle herb' of the rainforest because it helps to heal the body in so many ways. It is used in traditional Malaysian medicine to alleviate fatigue and depression and it clarifies skin for greater radiance.

PAUL'S THOUGHTS

One of the struggles I've gone through from time to time is not to give in and 'sell out' to a larger corporation. I've been approached by larger organizations offering me huge sums of cash, it has been very tempting! While it would have been easy to take the money and sail off into the sunset (I do love my sailboat!) in the long-term I would have regretted it.

I've seen so many nice, start-ups with solid values sold to the big boys. Almost overnight these small family companies become corporatized and lose their very soul - their 'X-factor' - in the process. I don't want my company to lose its values for the sake of greed and I have worked very hard throughout to keep the company small and not to become too big. This sounds easier than it is.

Another factor that keeps me grounded is the fact that large organizations are often conservative and lose the risk-taking element that got them to the top in the first place. Being a small company keeps us on our toes, keeps us innovative and agile. We're able to innovate quickly because we have to. It can be nerve-wracking at times, but it's definitely exciting and best of all my team and I have the freedom to decide our future.



INTEGRITY IS CRUCIAL!

I have a very romantic image in my head of Oma carrying out all her experiments and manufacturing from a simple beauty salon without the need for animal testing, toxic chemicals and expensive machines. It sounds so simple and quaint by today's standards and it was.

Many people have said to me, "Your grandmother must be so proud of you for continuing her legacy and turning it into something good!" On one hand I do agree, Oma would have been very proud to know that thousands and thousands of people worldwide have benefited from her special blend. On the other hand I know that building a large company with many employees is not something that would have impressed her a great deal. This is also something I have worked on very hard throughout my business life – to keep my company small, not to sell out to a large company and to continue to do charity work.



Maybe I inherited this old-fashioned way of doing business from Oma and hearing about the way she interacted with her loyal customers. Remember, there is a huge difference from my grandparents' salon and many large corporations - it has nothing to do with size, rather, it's all about INTEGRITY. That is simply the way she operated her business. My grandmother loved to talk and no doubt spent plenty of time talking to customers day in and day out, developing a strong bond with her customers. These were real human relationships built up over time that were not just about selling the latest anti-wrinkle cream.

As Oma knew her customers personally, she took great care to select the best natural ingredients and to ensure that her products were effective and always safe to use. She left me two very important legacies, her secret formulation and the importance of doing good, honest business.

... a huge difference from my grandparents' salon and many large corporations - it has nothing to do with size, rather, it's all about INTEGRITY

I see integrity lacking from many cosmetic companies and organizations all over the world. There is also plenty of hypocrisy within the industry. Plenty of cancer research contributions come from a few large corporations within the beauty industry, yet numerous cosmetic products are also laden with known carcinogens. Just look the Environmental Working Group (EWG) list. The next time you're in a drugstore or natural product store pick up a well-known brand of facial scrub or shampoo and take a quick look at the ingredients. It's shocking. The most effective way for consumers to bring about change is to educate themselves about the potential dangers lurking in their bathroom cabinets and to actively support organizations that manufacture with integrity.

... the feedback from my clients was overwhelmingly positive, they loved the end results despite the fact the shampoo didn't lather as much and had to be shaken before it could be used.



TRIALS AND ERRORS

Growing up with my grandmother and absorbing her wisdom and experience, it isn't hard to see why I took such a deep interest in plants and natural healing. However I would be lying if I said that I never tried to improve or enhance my products with chemicals.

In the early days of my shampoo parties which I held in my salon, I would test out my new hair care products on willing clients. These clients were the perfect guinea pigs as they were all knowledgeable about the latest hair products and had no qualms about bombarding me with questions and feedback. When I formulated my non-emulsified shampoo, now called Love in the Layers Shampoo, the feedback from my clients was overwhelmingly positive, they loved the end results despite the fact the shampoo didn't lather as much and had to be shaken before it could be used.

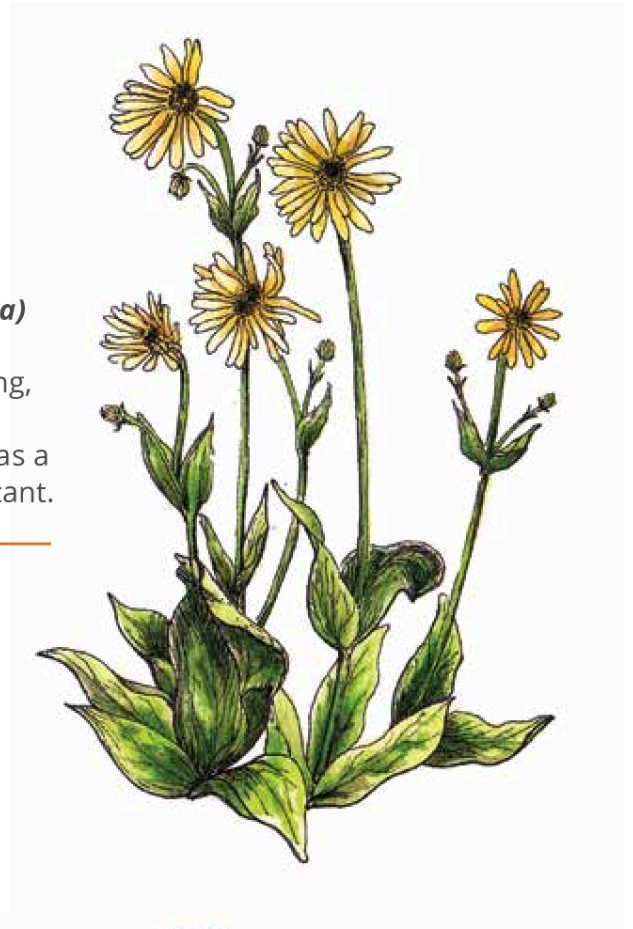
Once, a Swiss customs officer in Basel who was a cosmetic chemist noticed that I hadn't added any chemical emulsifiers to my shampoo. He looked at the bottle with its two distinct layers and laughed at my traditional shampoo. As I was still relatively new to the industry and was just starting to find my feet, I took his advice to go back to the lab and add ingredients to fix the shampoo.

Luckily for me, I had time to test out the new shampoo on my regular group of ladies before launching it. The results this time were dismal. Despite the fact that the new formula with the chemical emulsifier lathered much better than the non-emulsified shampoo (what does not use chemical emulsifiers), the women noticed that the results were not the same and their hair lacked luster and body. Despite my best efforts to convince them of the virtues of my new, improved formula, they weren't having any of it. That put an end to my dealings with so-called industry experts and any advice from Swiss customs officers! ✿

Levensentie 22 Organic Herbs



Angelica
(*Angelica Archangelica*)
Cosmetic uses:
Mild anti-microbial herbs
to soothe irritation.



Arnica
(*Arnica Montana*)
Cosmetic uses:
Promotes healing,
stimulates
circulation and as a
natural anti-irritant.

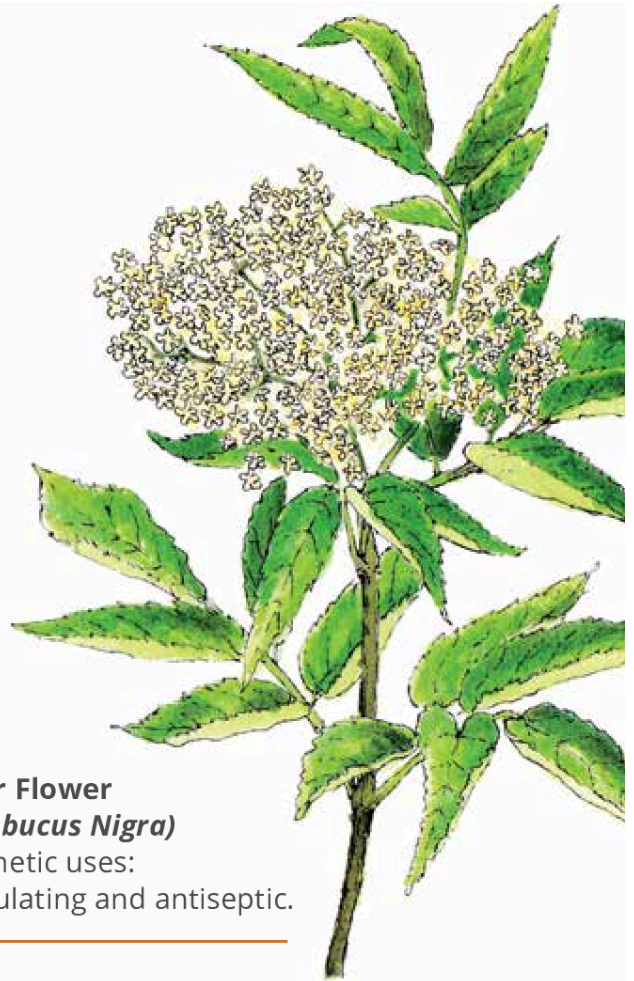


Calendula
(*Calendula Officinalis*)
Cosmetic uses:
Antibacterial,
anti-inflammatory and
anti-oxidant.



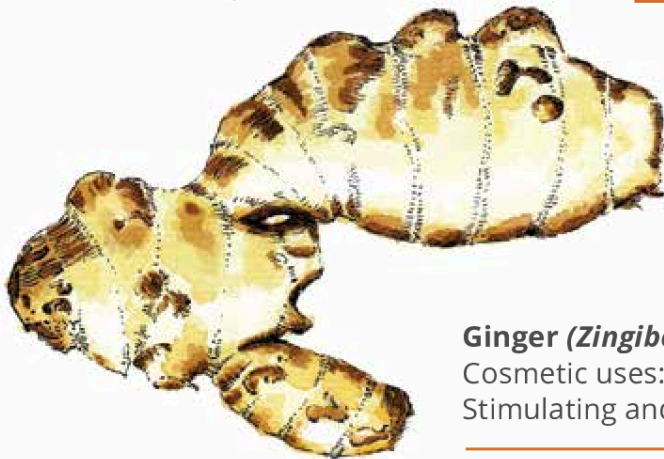
Chamomile
(*Matricaria Recutita*)

Cosmetic uses:
Calming quality,
improved tissue
regeneration and
soothes skin.



Elder Flower
(*Sambucus Nigra*)

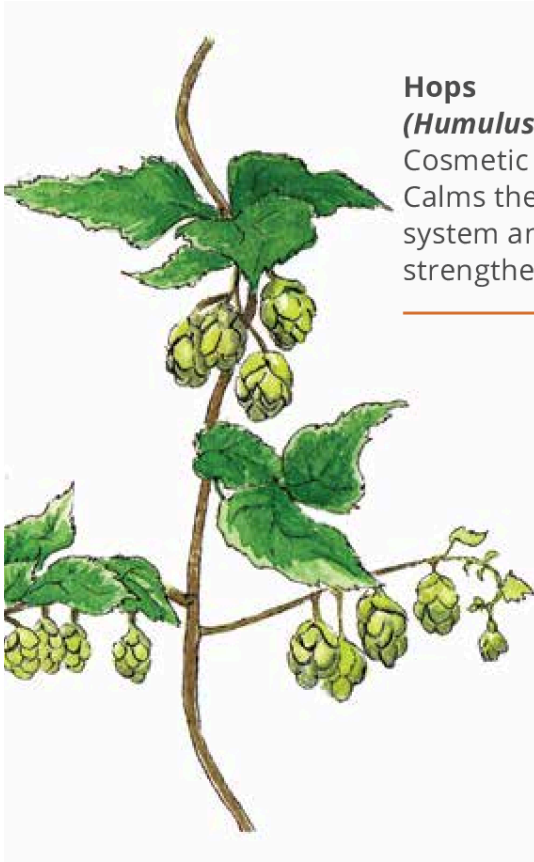
Cosmetic uses:
Stimulating and antiseptic.



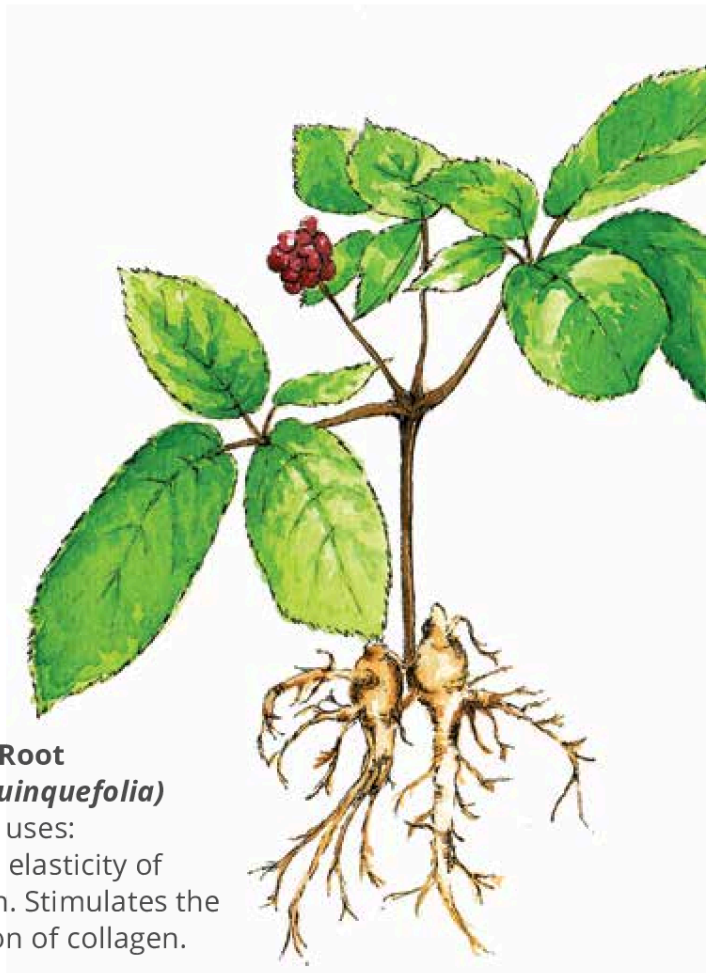
Ginger (*Zingiber Officinalis*)

Cosmetic uses:
Stimulating and cleanses.

Levensentie 22 Organic Herbs



Hops
(Humulus Lupulus)
Cosmetic uses:
Calms the nervous system and strengthens the skin.



Ginseng Root
(Panax Quinquefolia)
Cosmetic uses:
Improves elasticity of aging skin. Stimulates the production of collagen.

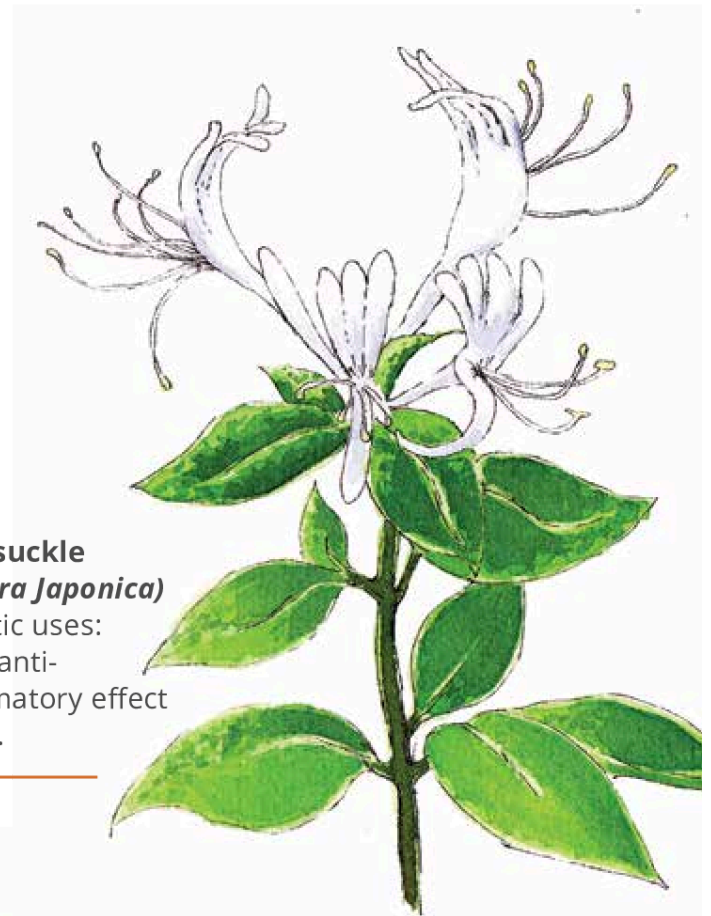
Horse Tail
(Equisetum Hyemale)
Cosmetic uses:
To add color and sparkle to soaps, candles, shampoos and body gel bases to make body glitter, antibiotic antiseptic and anti-inflammatory characteristics, astringent properties.





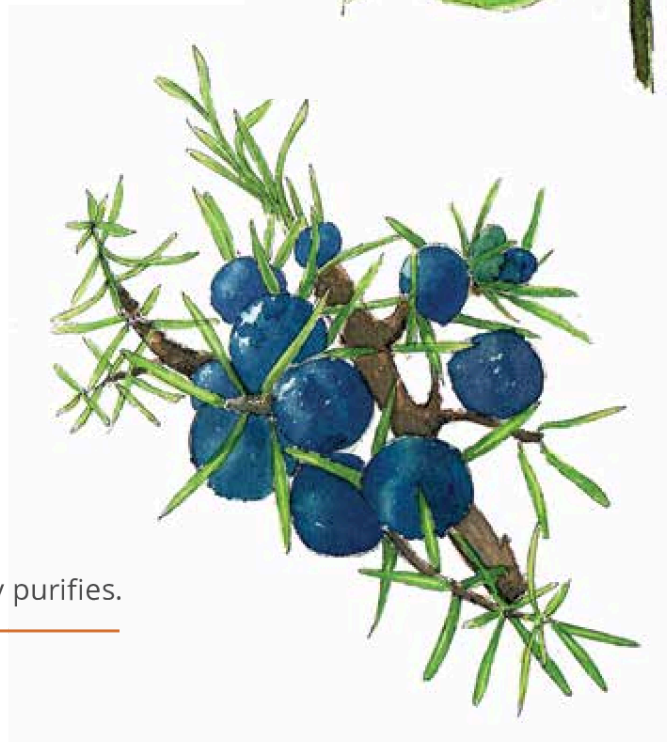
Lavender
(Lavandula Vera)

Cosmetic uses:
Characteristic fresh
fragrance, used to
soothe, strengthen
and balance mood.



Honeysuckle
(Lonicera Japonica)

Cosmetic uses:
Strong anti-
inflammatory effect
on skin.



Juniper
(Juniperus Communis)

Cosmetic uses:
Stimulates and strongly purifies.

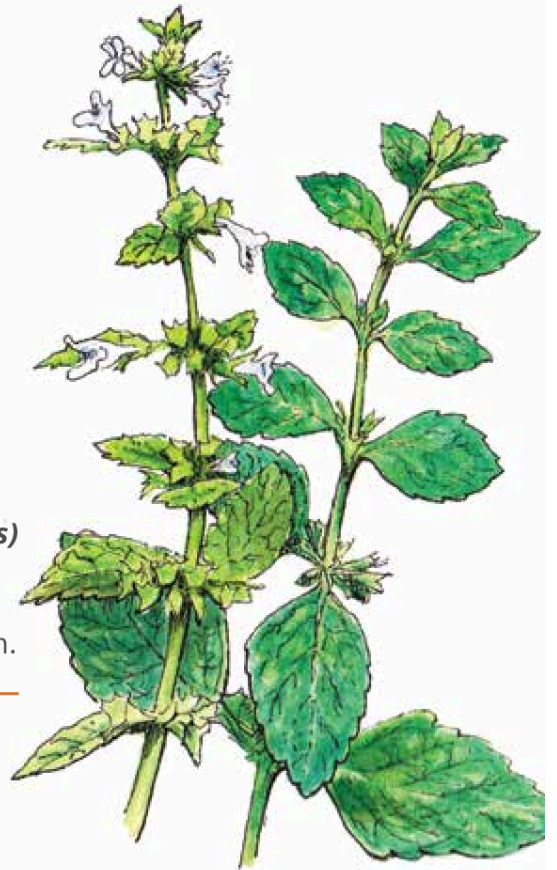
Levensentie 22 Organic Herbs



Nettle

(Urtica Dioica)

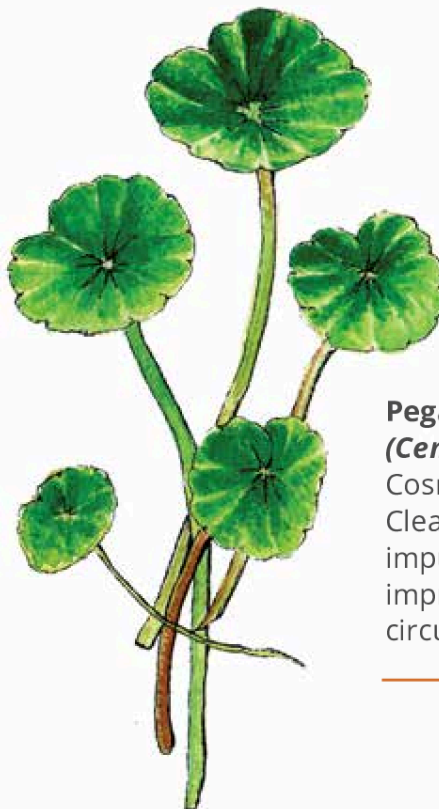
Cosmetic uses:
Used to tone and
improve circulation.



Lemon Balm

(Melissa Officinalis)

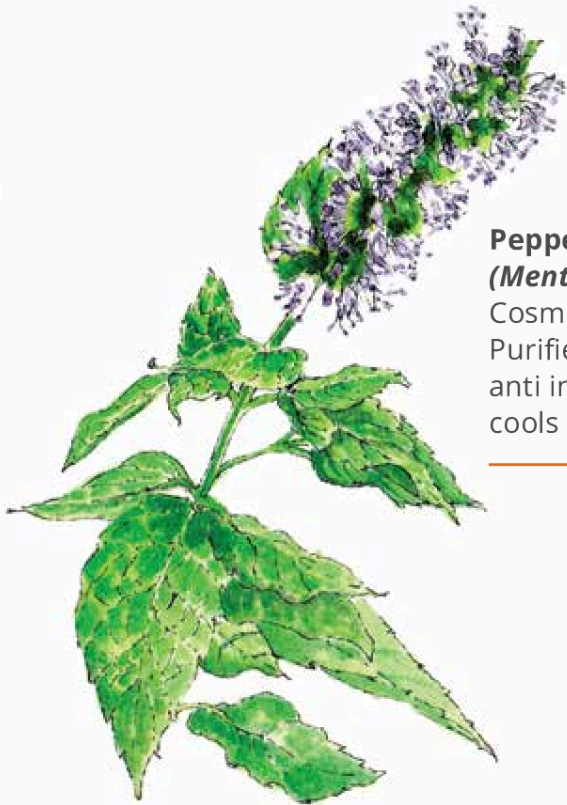
Cosmetic uses:
Used to tone and
improve circulation.



Pegaga

(Centella Asiatica)

Cosmetic uses:
Cleanses skin
impurities and
improves blood
circulation.



Peppermint
(*Mentha Piperita*)

Cosmetic uses:
Purifies with antiseptic,
anti inflammatory,
cools and soothes.



Sage
(*Salvia Officinalis*)

Cosmetic uses:
Effective for
skin disruptions
and treats hair
imbalances.



Rosemary
(*Rosmarinus Officinalis*)

Cosmetic uses:
Stimulates circulation, and metabolic
processes. Masking agent in creams, lotions,
perfumes, and soaps; the lotion is said to
stimulate hair growth and prevent baldness.

Levensentie 22 Organic Herbs

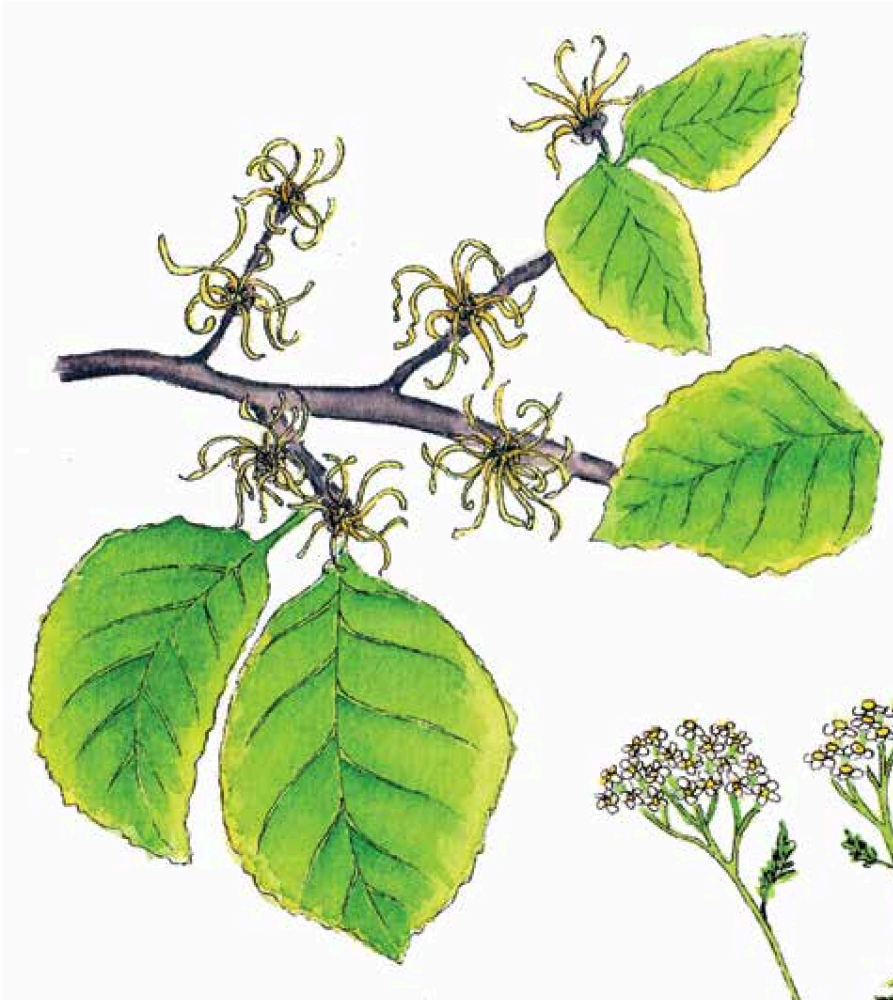
St. John's Wort *(Hypericum Perforatum)*

Cosmetic uses:
Used to tone, strengthen,
heal and calm the skin.



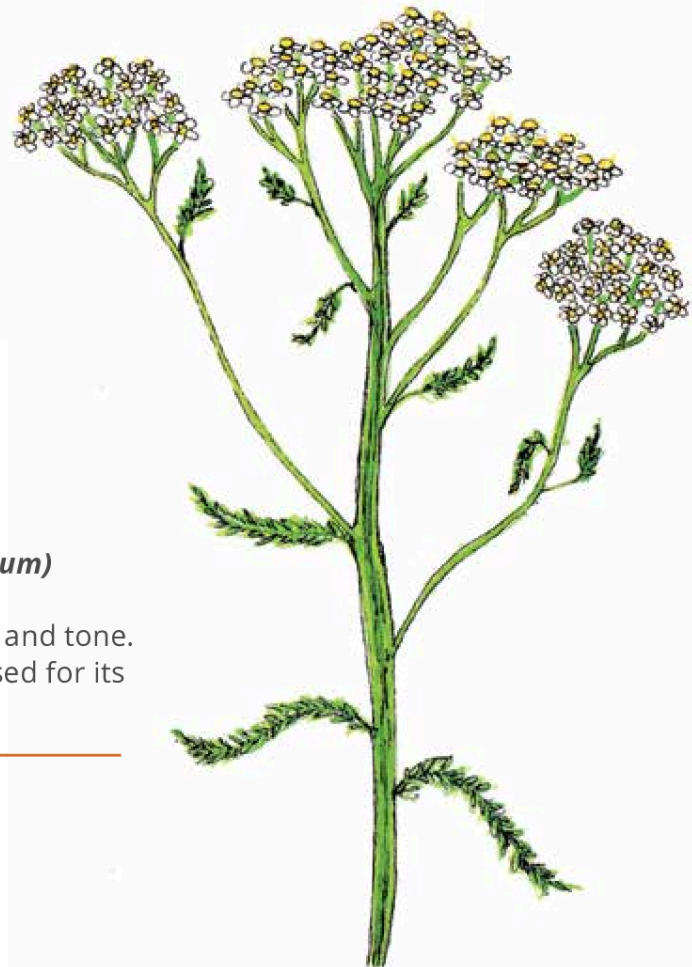
Turmeric *(Curcuma Longa)*

Cosmetic uses:
Natural antibiotic with
fungicide, stimulates
circulation.



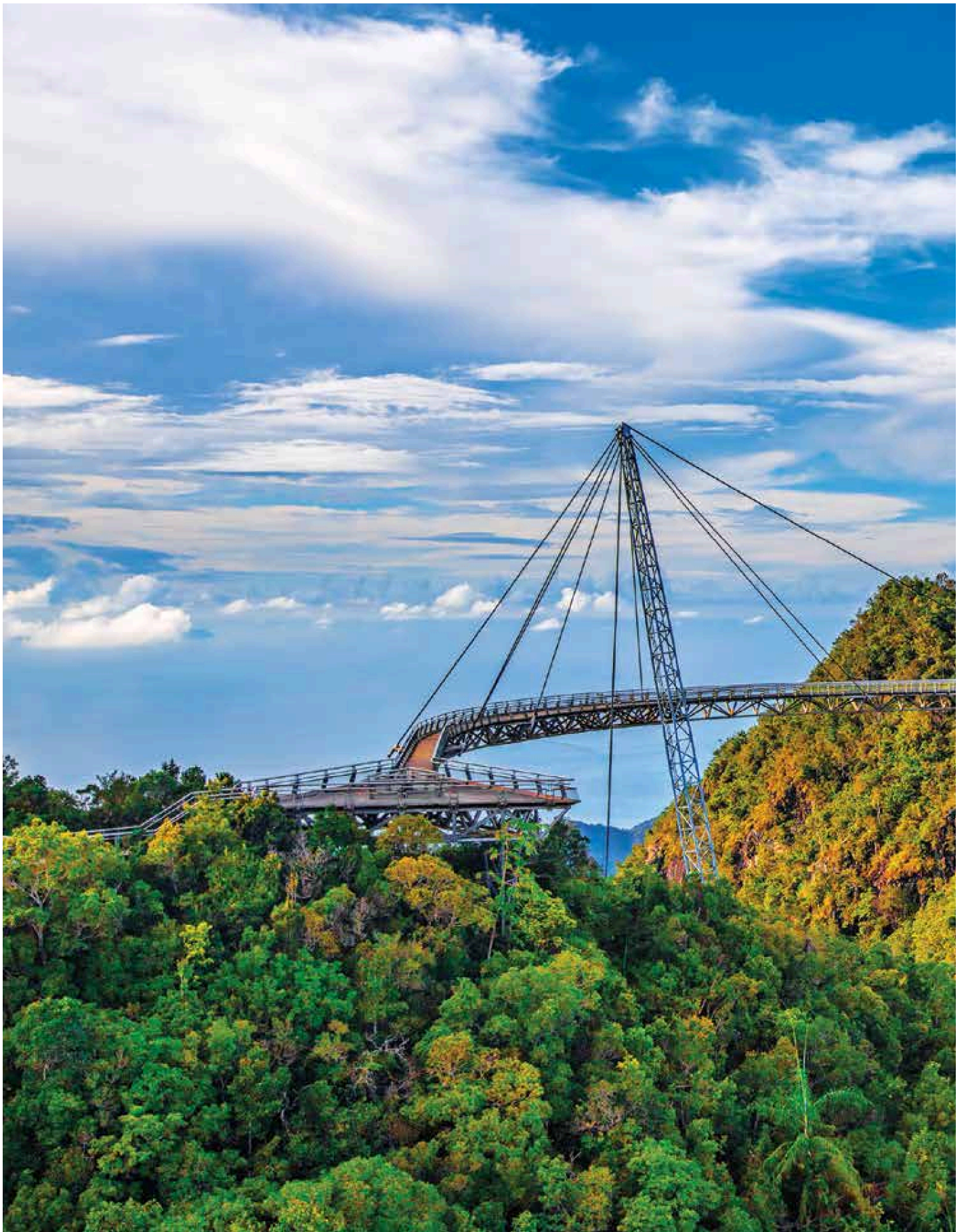
Witch Hazel
(*Hamamelis*
***Virginiana*)**

Cosmetic uses:
Soothes, also an
astringent for
smooth skin.



Yarrow
(*Achillea millefolium*)

Cosmetic uses:
Used to stimulate and tone.
Antiseptic. Also used for its
astringent action.





Chapter Six

Paradise Island



The early-nineties were a real boom time for many businesses in California including my own company. I began to notice that during trade shows there were a lot more international participants, especially from Asia than before, which intrigued me. The more I talked to these international companies the more I began thinking about visiting Asia and seeing these new, dynamic economies in action.

It was also a good excuse to learn more about tropical botanicals in Southeast Asia and their applications. I was most interested in visiting Malaysia because of all the good things I'd been hearing from my enthusiastic Malaysian contacts.

When I boarded the 36 hour flight from San Francisco to Kuala Lumpur the last thing on my mind was relocating; the company was very settled in California and we were still making waves. Maybe it was the Malaysian sun that short-circuited my brain

because after a few weeks spent traveling around the country the wanderlust started to get restless again! I think that by this point all my business partners and colleagues were aware of my deep love of learning new things in life so it wasn't too surprising when I picked up the phone and began regaling them about the wonders of Malaysia's rainforests, the potential for Paul Penders products in Asia, the beaches, the food, the sailing, the mix of cultures, I went on and on...

I was very lucky to have very patient, capable people working for me and to their credit none of them batted an eyelid when I returned to California and enthusiastically announced that the future of the company might lie in SE Asia. It felt exhilarating to feel the adrenalin running at such high speed. Bear in mind it had been many years since my relocation from Ireland to the US, so perhaps this move was just what the company needed to inject new ideas into it!



FINDING MY FEET IN MALAYSIA

After I set up office, the Malaysian economy nose dived. Talk about timing! The year was 1997 and what became known as the Asian Financial Crisis swept though SE Asia sending local bourses and currencies into free fall. As I was unpacking boxes of samples in my new office I could almost imagine my US colleagues expressions.

The new Paul Penders office was in a building distinguished by a giant polar bear on top, If anything at least it made me laugh when I got to work each day. Setting up the office and new manufacturing facilities was a straightforward affair with no major hiccups and the financial crisis actually had a small silver lining; it helped to reduce our manufacturing costs.





PAUL'S THOUGHTS

Many people are so surprised when I tell them that I established my Malaysian subsidiary during the Asian Financial Crisis. Obviously with the benefit of hindsight I may have timed things a little differently, however none of us are blessed with this gift and we have to do the best we can when times get bad.

Yes, it was a tough time for the new subsidiary and the economic situation seriously hampered our ability to penetrate the Asian markets, due to the high costs of our products. On the flip side, the lower manufacturing costs helped our products enormously in Europe and the US. So it wasn't all bad. Life is like that too, we can either choose to get depressed when bad things happen or try and make the most of a bad situation. My own tactic is to wallow in depression for a while, let it wash right over me and then spring back into action!

I spent plenty of time traveling around Asia learning all I could about local botanicals as well as natural traditional skin care and beauty treatments. It was a very eye-opening time for me as I had very little contact with Asia previously. What I liked about Malaysia was that although the country's cities and towns seemed very modern, the soul of the country was still traditional at heart.

The country openly embraced new innovations yet was very protective of its traditions and cultures. It was a very different experience for me compared to living in the US and western Europe, where people tended to be obsessed with the latest fads and trends. The way western consumers reacted to Oma's **Levens**ESSENTIE Gold™ formula is a perfect example. They were always intrigued to hear about all the different blends of plants and natural ingredients that went into the formula, yet if you suggested that they too could make basic skin care products with natural ingredients they were not so enthusiastic.



People in the west are often too quick to downplay and relegate traditional wisdom as 'old-fashioned nonsense' or 'old wives tales'. This is very short sighted thinking. When it comes to hair and skin care not everything dressed in fancy packaging with the latest synthetic ingredients is going to guarantee you good results. I can think of a number of Malay, Chinese and Indian traditional facial treatments that are simple to prepare yet offer excellent results. I prefer to understand why natural ingredients work the way these do, and what makes traditional preparations so effective. It's all about results. I definitely prefer substance over style!

SOME SOUND ADVICE

The nature of our products meant that I sourced many ingredients from Europe, the US and other parts of Asia for our manufacturing operations in Malaysia. This required regular trips to the customs office in KL and as much as I love living in Malaysia, the bureaucracy can be infuriating at times.

One fine day I got into a particularly heated discussion with a customs official. The crux of the matter was the huge duty that I had to pay for importing some very small ingredient or other. As I was venting my anger, she got annoyed with me too and snapped, "Well if you don't like paying the duty, why don't you just move to Langkawi."

At first I thought she was just telling me to get lost as in my mind Langkawi was a remote tropical island. I looked at her for a while and realized that maybe she was being serious. "Why?" I asked her. The patient customs official then took the time to explain that Langkawi was a duty free island, and that I should consider setting up an office there to take advantage of this. I took this advice and did further research.

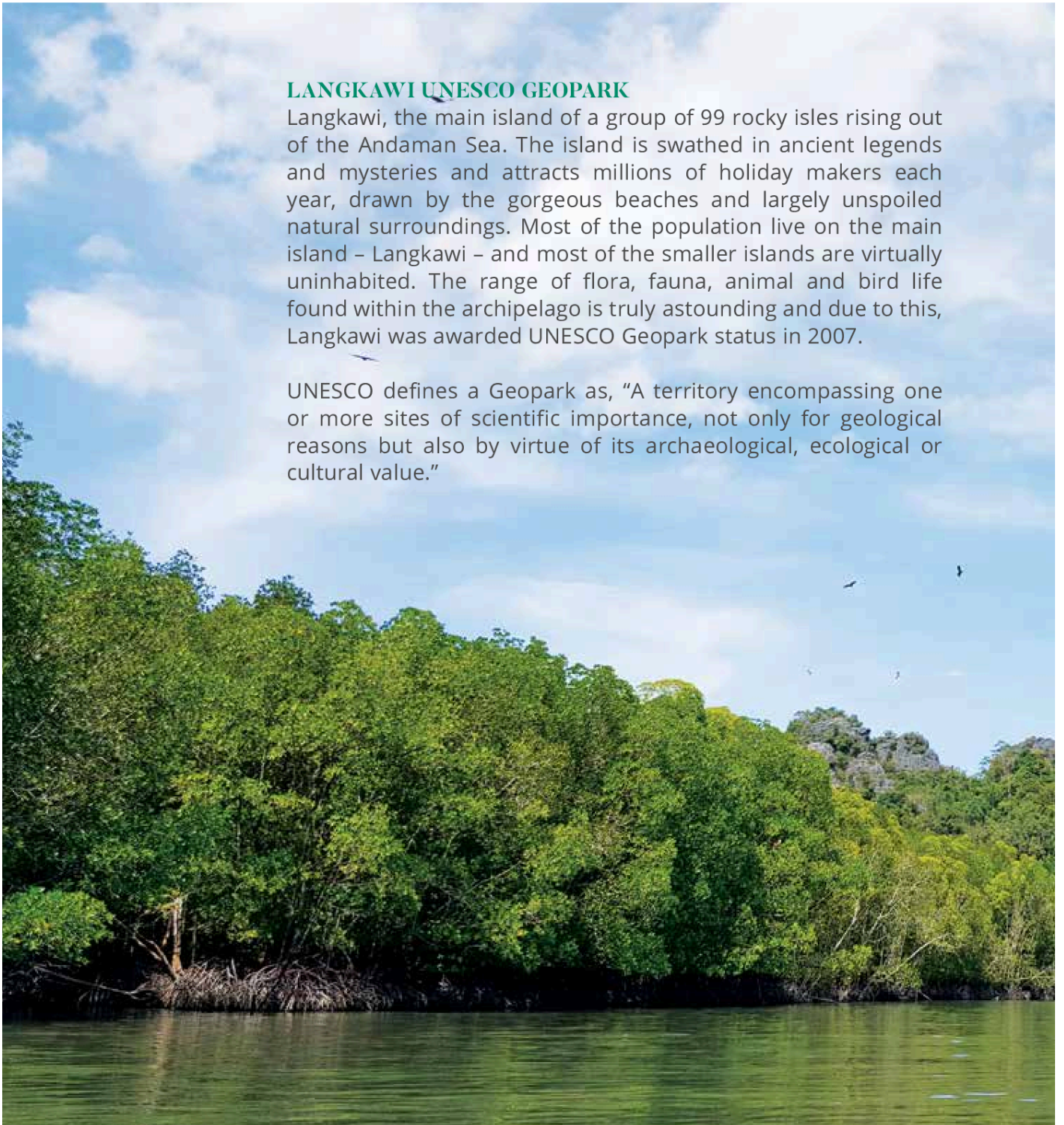
* Dr Gatot in the lab.



LANGKAWI UNESCO GEOPARK

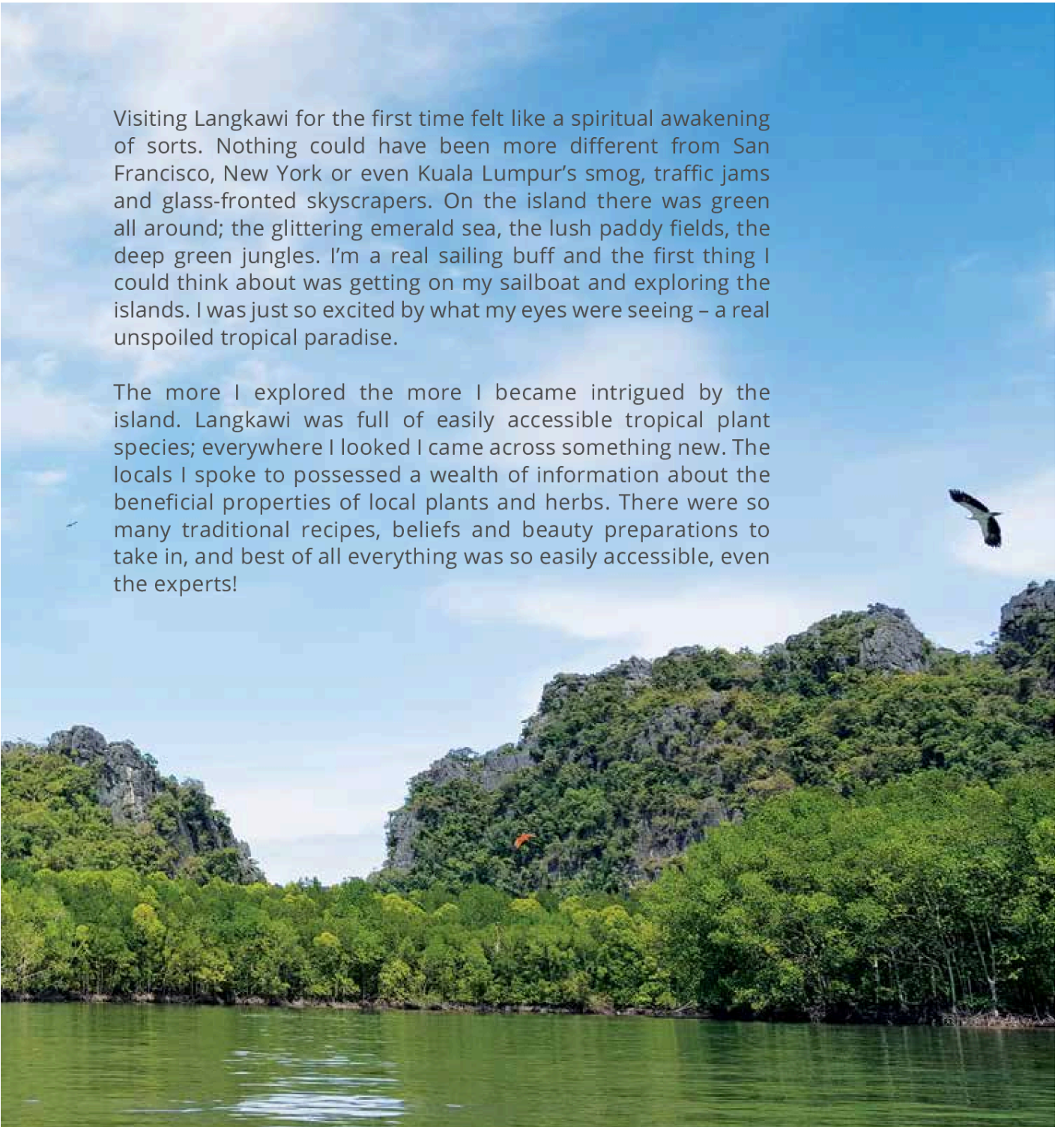
Langkawi, the main island of a group of 99 rocky isles rising out of the Andaman Sea. The island is swathed in ancient legends and mysteries and attracts millions of holiday makers each year, drawn by the gorgeous beaches and largely unspoiled natural surroundings. Most of the population live on the main island – Langkawi – and most of the smaller islands are virtually uninhabited. The range of flora, fauna, animal and bird life found within the archipelago is truly astounding and due to this, Langkawi was awarded UNESCO Geopark status in 2007.

UNESCO defines a Geopark as, “A territory encompassing one or more sites of scientific importance, not only for geological reasons but also by virtue of its archaeological, ecological or cultural value.”



Visiting Langkawi for the first time felt like a spiritual awakening of sorts. Nothing could have been more different from San Francisco, New York or even Kuala Lumpur's smog, traffic jams and glass-fronted skyscrapers. On the island there was green all around; the glittering emerald sea, the lush paddy fields, the deep green jungles. I'm a real sailing buff and the first thing I could think about was getting on my sailboat and exploring the islands. I was just so excited by what my eyes were seeing – a real unspoiled tropical paradise.

The more I explored the more I became intrigued by the island. Langkawi was full of easily accessible tropical plant species; everywhere I looked I came across something new. The locals I spoke to possessed a wealth of information about the beneficial properties of local plants and herbs. There were so many traditional recipes, beliefs and beauty preparations to take in, and best of all everything was so easily accessible, even the experts!



I was introduced to a very kind gentleman called Dr Abdul Ghani Hussain. Dr Ghani was (and still is!) very well known as he has practiced medicine on Langkawi for over twenty years. He combined his formal medical training with his passion for traditional Malay and Islamic medicine, studying and collecting medicinal plants. His own personal collection includes over 500 different species which is still steadily growing; I was completely blown away by his knowledge and his sheer enthusiasm. At one stage, Dr Ghani's wife had been very ill and she didn't respond to any allopathic medicines or treatments. The turning point came when Dr Ghani experimented with some traditional Langkawi herbal medicine and his wife's condition immediately improved.

Meeting him, got me thinking about the practical realities of living on Langkawi, from a creative perspective it was an ideal location for me – beautiful surroundings, a relaxed pace of life with plenty of new natural ingredients for me to study and experiment with. The right thing to do was relocate our entire company to Langkawi UNESCO Geopark where we could freely experiment with herbal extracts.



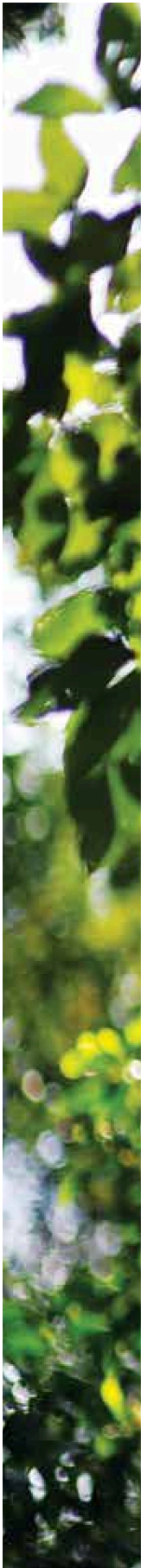


I was introduced to Paul in 2002 through my friend who is a distributor for Paul Penders products in Malaysia. My wife tried his skin care products and became a big fan. During our discussions, Paul was very interested in my love of herbs and plants and how I used these to create natural beauty products. I joined him and became the Head of R&D.

Working with Paul was such an enjoyable experience for me because his products are all natural and green. Compared to other Malaysian cosmetic companies I have worked for, Paul Penders products are the most pure.

Personally I find him to be an understanding leader who always keeps an open mind. He is constantly looking at ways to improve our products and is always researching the latest products out on the market. He's definitely not afraid of trying different things and experimenting with new raw materials. His enthusiasm has made my job so much more rewarding and fulfilling!

Dr Gatot
Head of Research & Development
Paul Penders International



Malaysia made a commitment to maintain at least 50% of its forest cover and trees in perpetuity at the Rio Summit in 1992.

THE OCEAN RESIDENCE, LANGKAWI

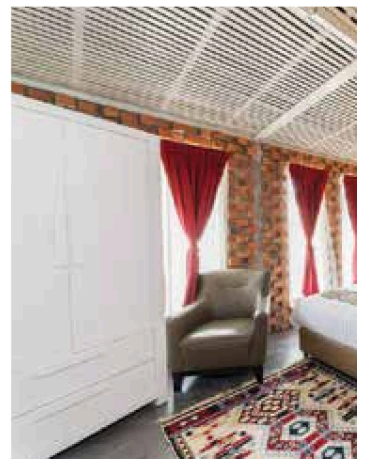
I am always intrigued by people who are inspired by their work to the extent that it isn't 'work' but their way of life. In fact I feel that living close to your place of work is a wonderful way to combine your working life with your 'living' life. I've always lived where I work and have been most happy. I think it's worked out like this because I know that should I wake up with a 'golden idea' I can always run to my office to put it down on paper, then walk back to bed knowing that my idea is safe!

When I was a hair-dresser and cosmetologist I lived on top of all my salons. When I start making my first cosmetic products I literally lived inside the factory. I built a very creative, cozy house and would walk from the house into the lab, office or wherever at any time of the day or night. During the day when I felt exhausted, I could easily go home for a short nap.

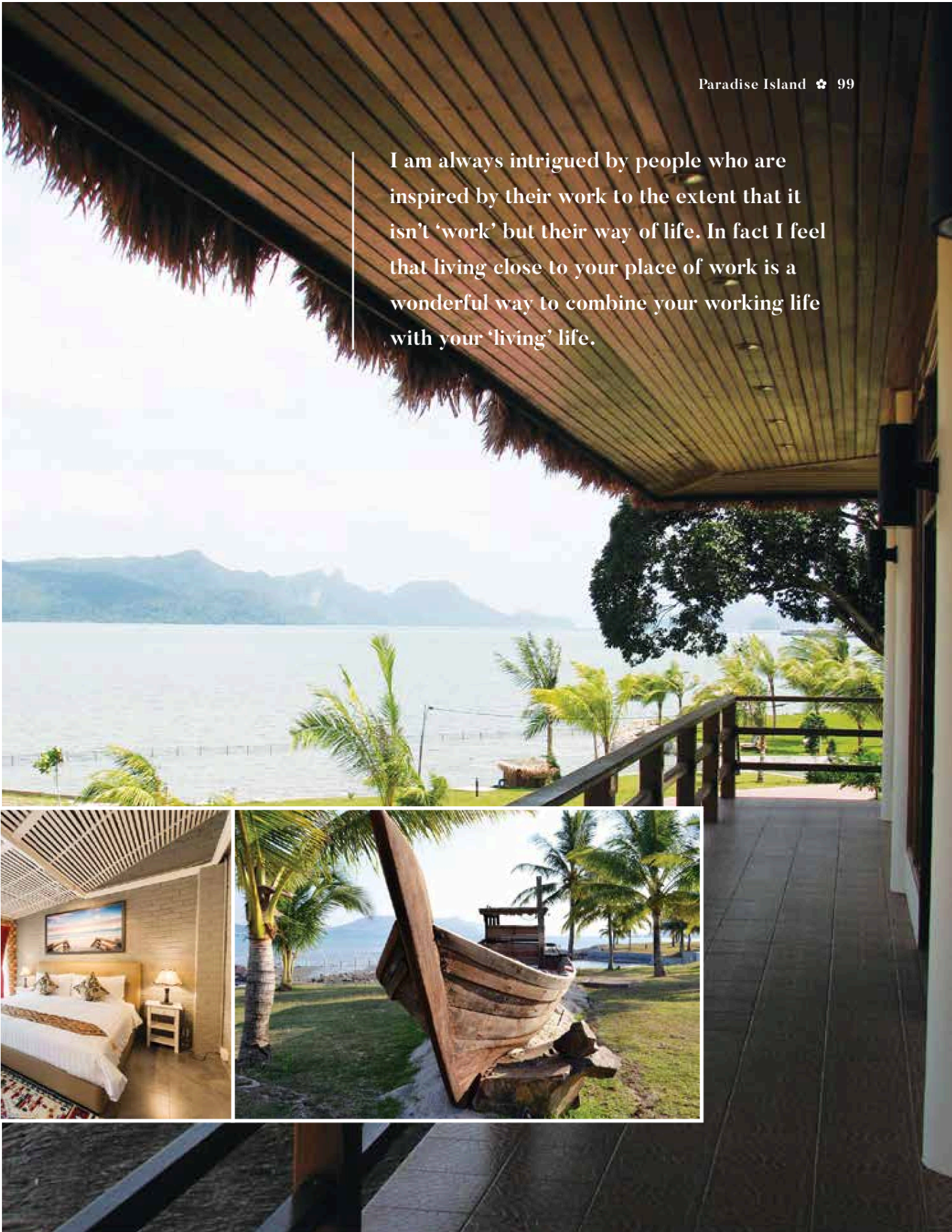
Of course this is nothing unique, I've seen plenty of other entrepreneurs all over the world do this; several big business people still practice this. Most recently in India I met an industrialist who lives on site with his entire family. Once in the US, I built my home inside a warehouse - I loved it! You have to be crazy to want this kind of lifestyle but for me, as a creative highly-strung inventor it works well.

When I moved the company to Langkawi I named our headquarters and my new home, The Ocean Residence. Unlike my first Malaysian office in an industrial zone when it came to Langkawi I decided to build everything from scratch on a plot of land that overlooked the sea. This beautiful three-story building is surrounded by five acres and is right on the seashore.

I designed it so that all our partners and staff could enjoy their surroundings as they worked. When I open the warehouse doors, or look out from my office the view is of the sea. On some days, when nothing is going well in the lab and I get frustrated, all I have to do is walk out of the door, sit under an umbrella and calm myself by taking in the sea breeze and the warmth. It's one of the best choices I have made in my life.



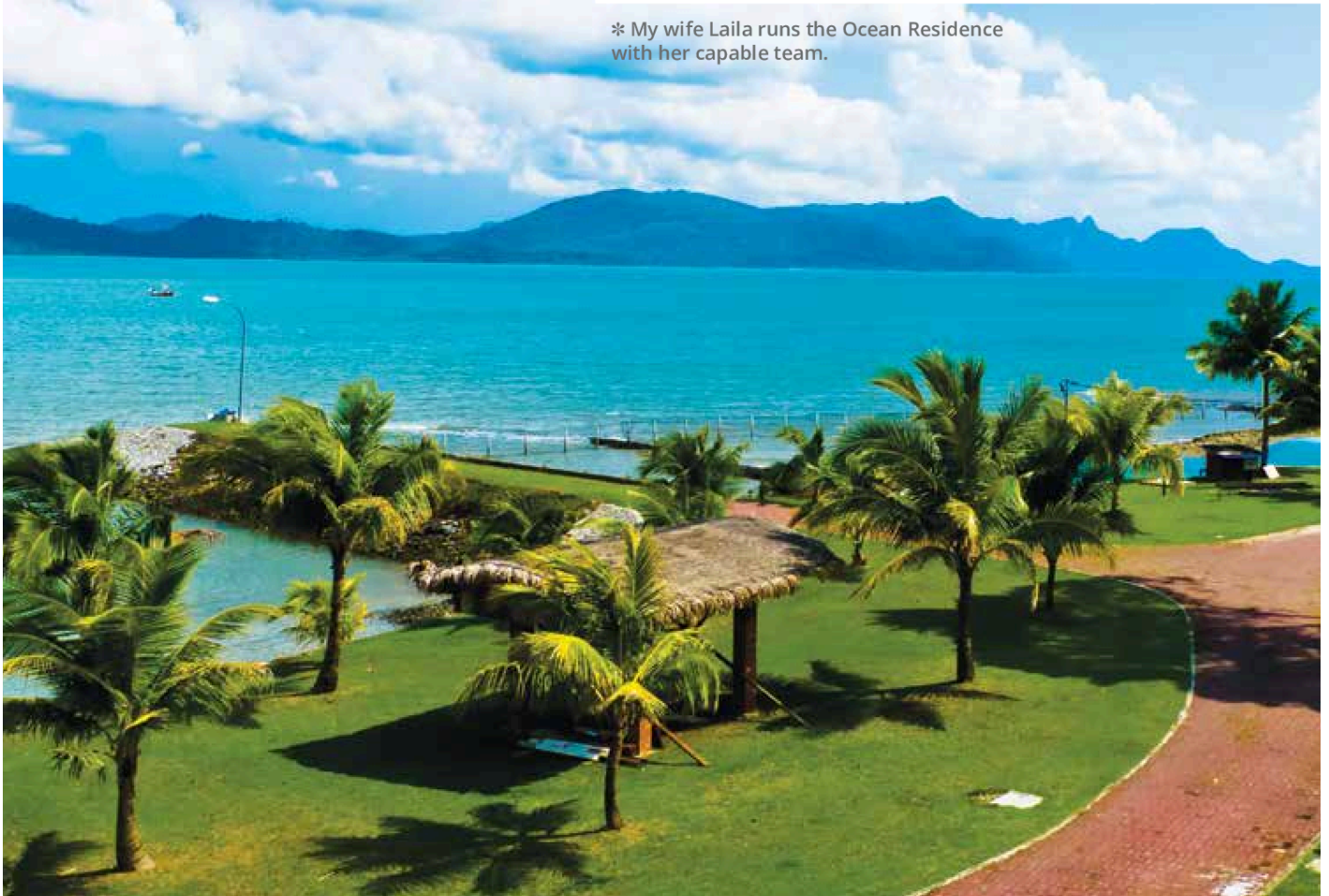
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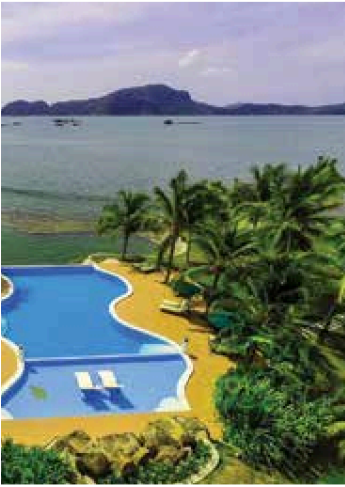


From a cosmetics manufacturer I became a hotelier ...we won award after award - the latest is the Global Circle Award 2017 from Agoda - not bad for a resort of only 35 rooms.



* My wife Laila runs the Ocean Residence with her capable team.





As the company grew and grew we shifted some operations to Penang leaving the big building of The Ocean Residence empty. I spent time thinking what to do with it and at one point considered converting the building into apartments. Eventually, I settled on the idea of creating a small resort with three main structures and three giant swimming pools. From a cosmetics manufacturer I became a hotelier and thanks to the hard work of my wife Laila, we won award after award - the latest is the Global Circle Award 2017 from Agoda - not bad for a resort of only 35 rooms.



We've kept to only 35 rooms as I'm not in this for the money. I wanted to create something special, to make The Ocean Residence a place to relax, feel at peace, and never to feel overcrowded even when we're fully booked. We easily have the space to build up to 50 more suites but that wouldn't suit me at all. I still live there, enjoy the swimming pools and eat lunch with the guests.

When I came back from my travels in Africa I planted Mujonso all over the place and now we have over 10,000 plants growing (see Chapter 7). I'm a huge fan of Mujonso and welcome all our guests with a Mujonso health drink and encourage them to make tea from the leaves that we put in their rooms.

So what's next for The Ocean Residence? My dream is to work with natural doctors and other natural healing professionals and slowly transform it into a hotel/health resort. I'd love to have natural health practitioners living here too who would then work on healing guests and patients. There's nothing quite like personal contact. So you see, I still believe in living where I work, and even though it's on a slightly bigger scale I've managed to keep to my principles.

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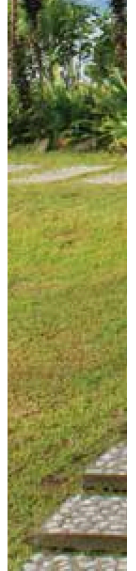
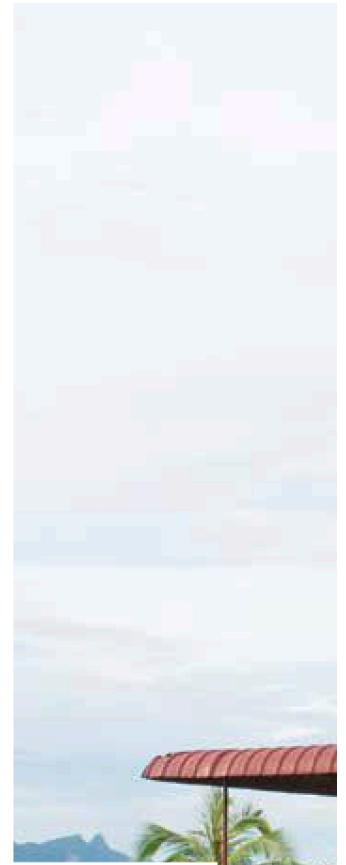
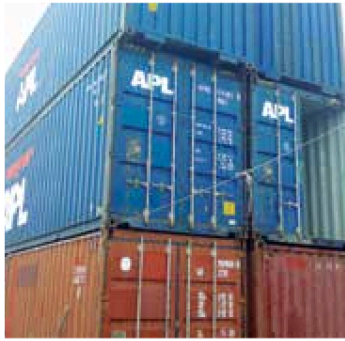


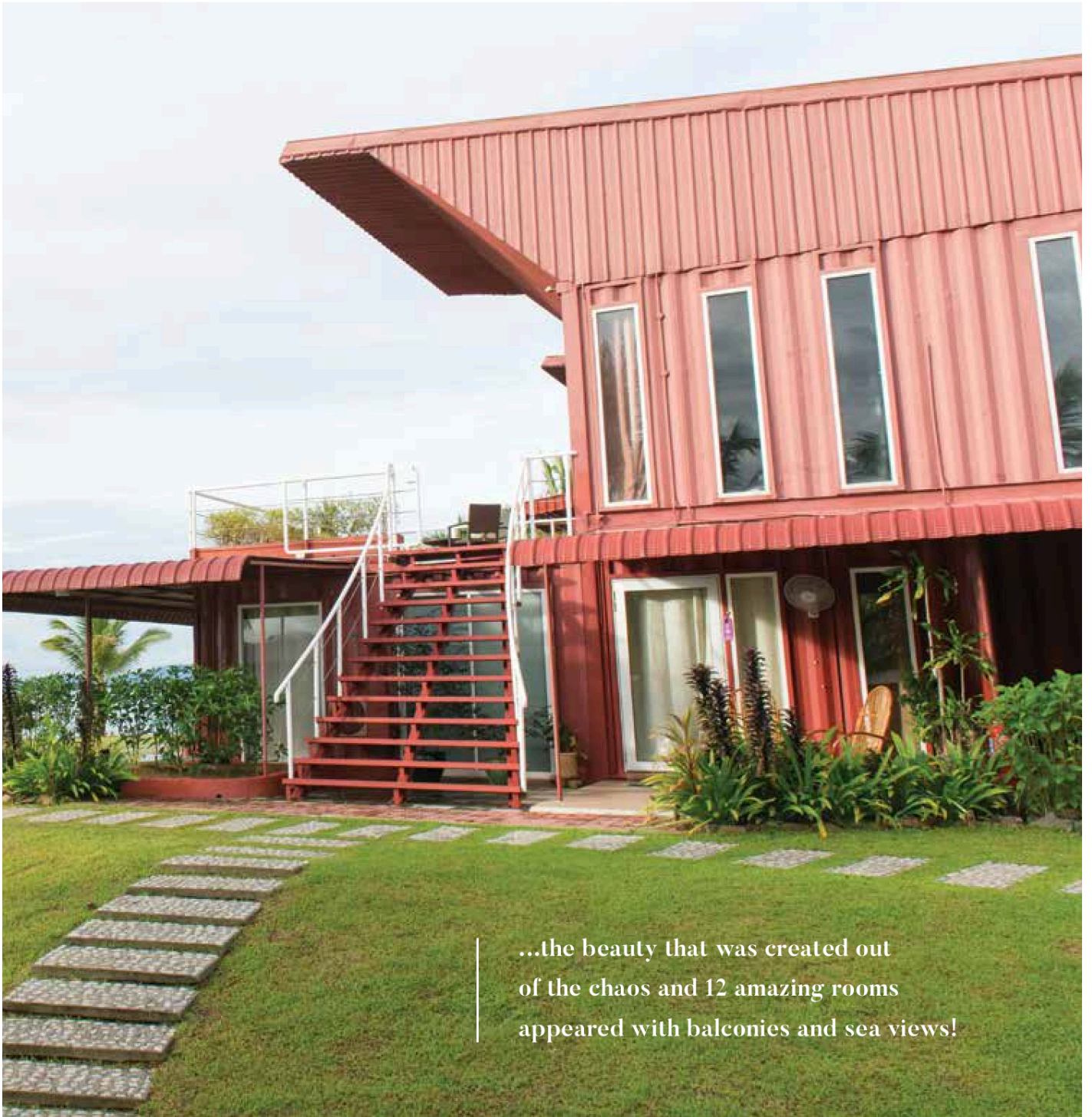


THE CONTAINER HOUSE

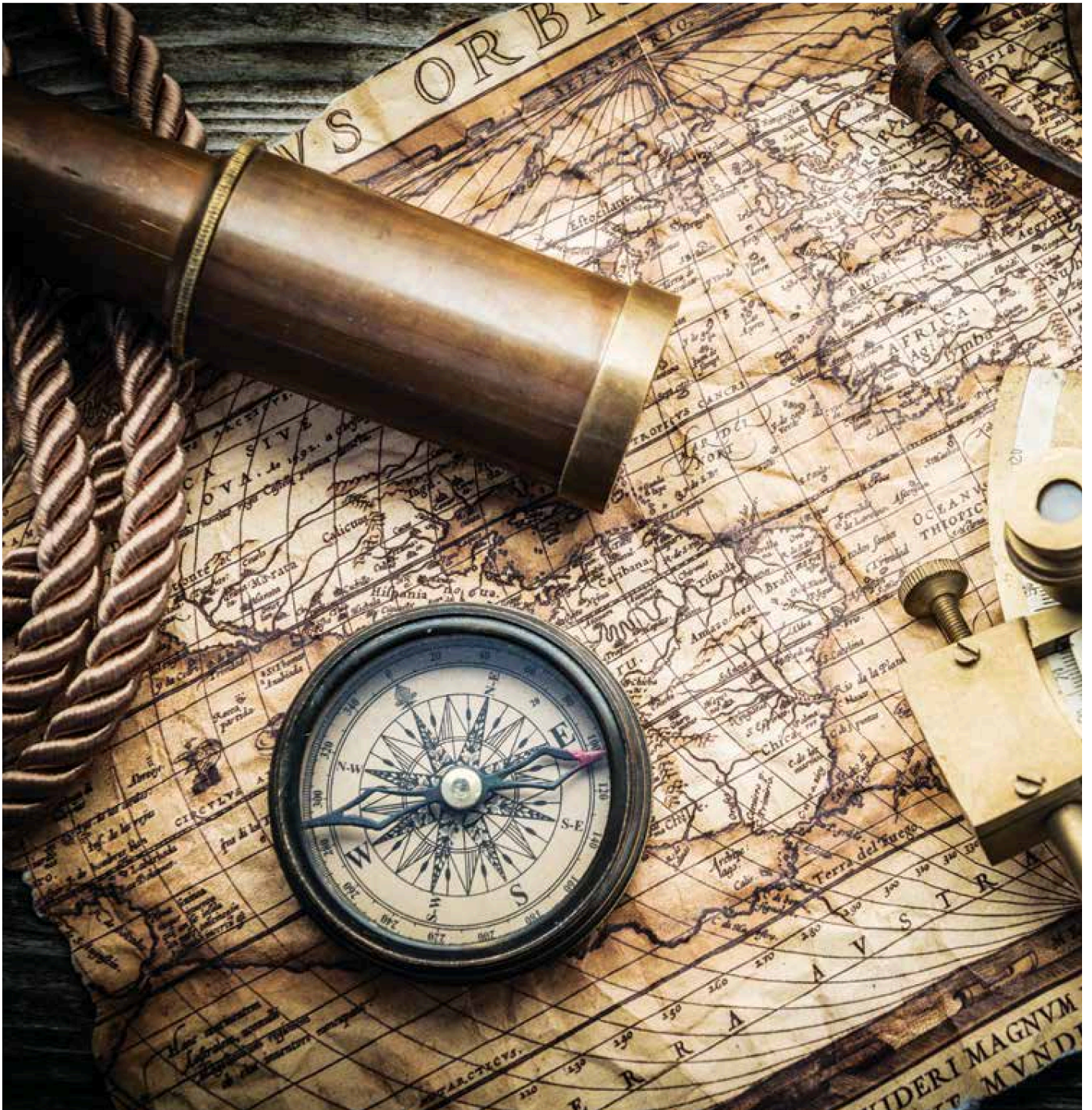
The Container House has always been an odd dream of mine from my San Francisco days, although I could never get a permit to build it there. In Langkawi I managed to turn the idea into reality. In fact, I was probably the first in Asia to build a 12,000 sq. ft. structure from 18 huge shipping containers.

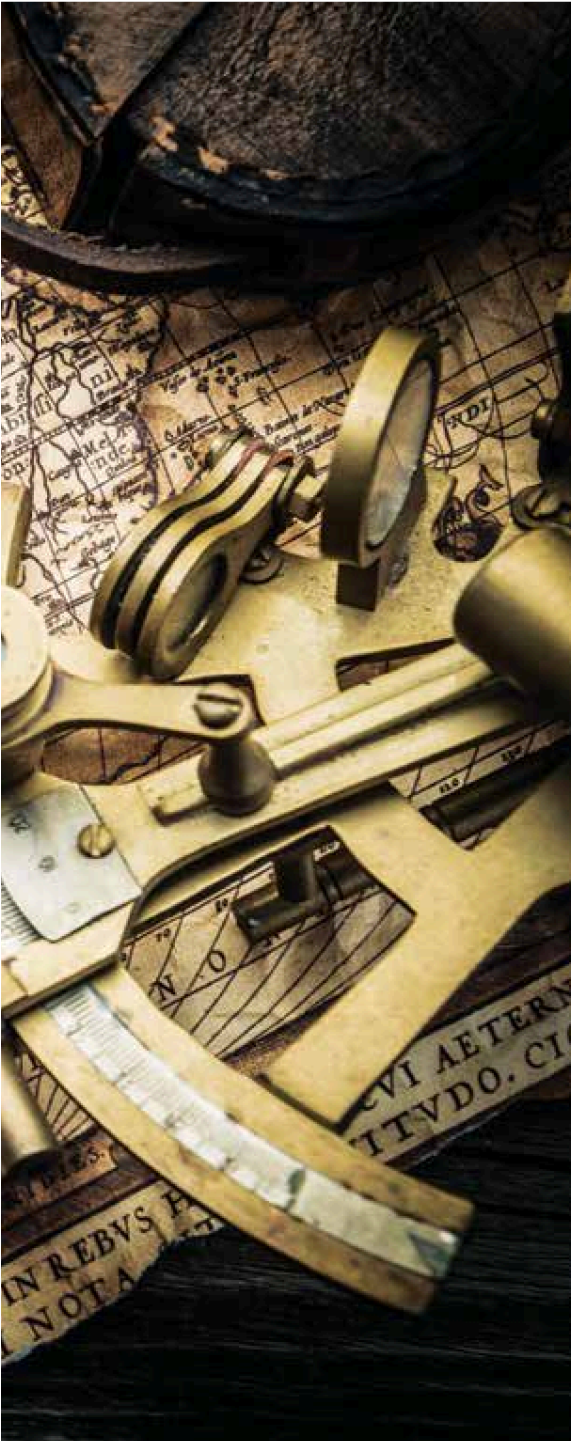
My neighbors kept wondering what I was up to – they thought I was building an ugly warehouse or new manufacturing site with all the steel boxes stacked one after another. In the end, they saw the beauty that was created out of the chaos and 12 amazing rooms appeared with balconies and sea views! ❁





...the beauty that was created out of the chaos and 12 amazing rooms appeared with balconies and sea views!





Chapter Seven

New Frontiers

Settling down on Langkawi was really one of the best things to have happened to me. This beautiful island is really a paradise for the soul with its lush jungle rainforests and tropical blue sea. I've experienced so much personal and spiritual growth on this magical island and I believe the company has also benefitted from this immensely. When I feel happy, relaxed and at peace this is when my mind starts to wander and unique ideas come to me. It's exactly what triggered a sailing expedition to the Caribbean to find a special seaweed that would become the base of my Fitness Complexion Booster.

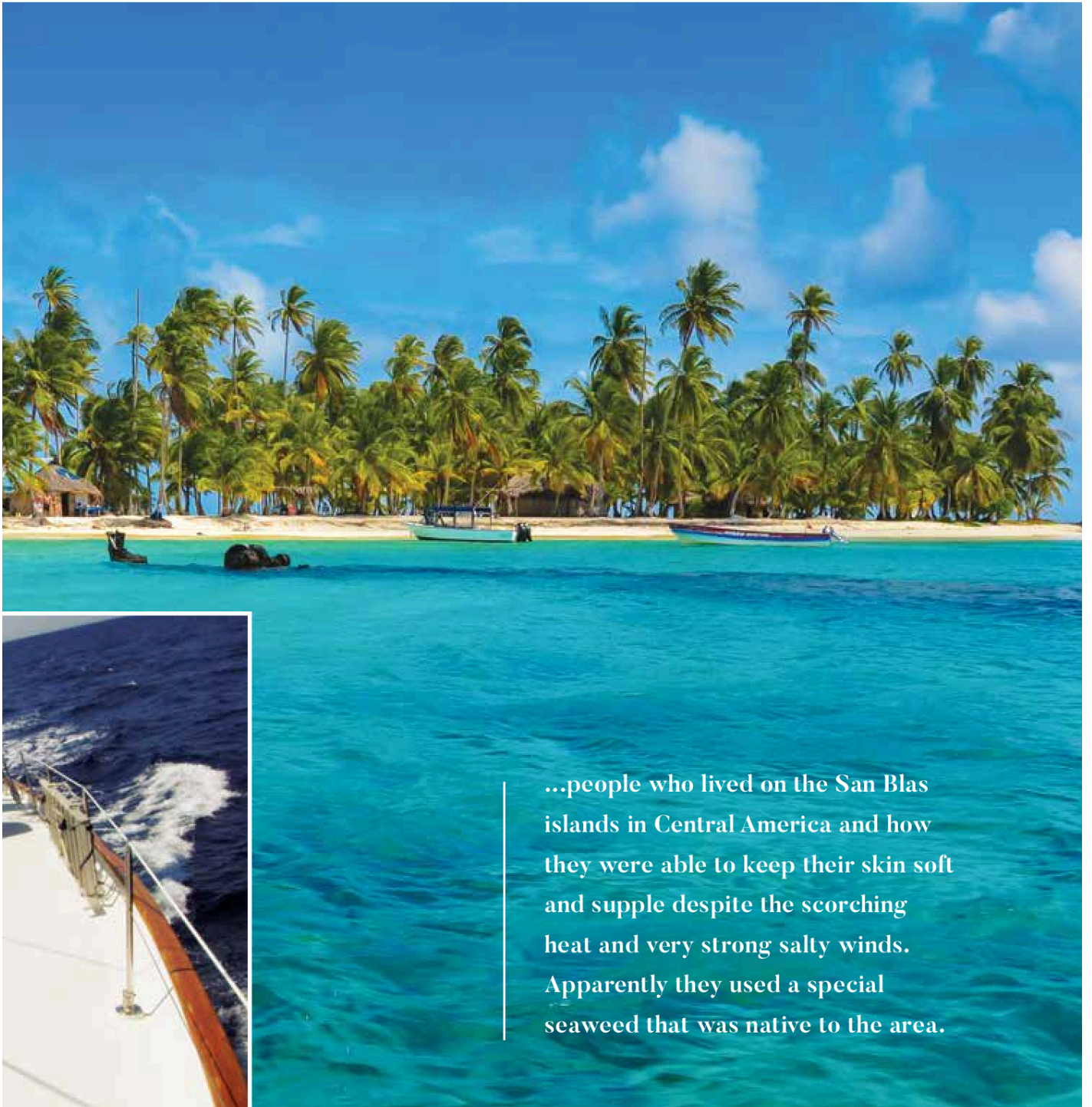
SAILING, SEAWEED AND SHIPWRECKS

I'm constantly thinking about and researching natural ingredients – the effects they have on our body and well-being and how I can incorporate these into our products. I think this joy of learning something new goes well with my zest for traveling and making new friends so that I can try to make sense of the world. Paradoxically, I feel that the more I travel, the less I know! My travels to the four corners of the globe have made me realize that there is a common desire for belonging, for everyone in the world to find a place to call home and for companionship. These two human needs are the same, whether you're from the north or south; east or west.

One fine day, I was reading a tiny article about the people who lived on the San Blas islands in Central America and how they were able to keep their skin soft and supple despite the scorching heat and very strong salty winds. Apparently they used a special seaweed that was native to the area. I was immediately hooked. Online research did not yield much helpful information so I decided to go there and examine this seaweed for myself.

Luckily Paul Roncken - my good friend of 40 years - is an experienced sailor and I was able to convince him to take a trip with me to the islands. We flew to Cuba where his yacht and crew were, then sailed from Havana to Columbia to take on provisions for the next leg of our journey. The trip to the San Blas islands wasn't plain sailing and we were warned not to get distracted by the dazzling water and stunning beaches. This beauty hid treacherous rock formations and sharp corals that had caused many adventure seekers to lose their ships and even their lives.





...people who lived on the San Blas islands in Central America and how they were able to keep their skin soft and supple despite the scorching heat and very strong salty winds. Apparently they used a special seaweed that was native to the area.



The sea can be intensely cruel and I could see plenty of ships scattered all over the beaches and marooned for God only knows how long on the reefs. All I could think about was my friend's luxury yacht and how I didn't want to be the cause of a shipwreck all because of some seaweed!

We managed to anchor safely by one of the smaller islands in the group where we were sheltered from the rough waves. Our relief at our safe arrival soon turned into dismay as we were welcomed by a black cloud of mosquitos. No matter what we did we just couldn't escape from these pests - we wrapped ourselves in thick blankets to no avail, we hid below deck but somehow the mosquitos would find a way in. We sprayed ourselves with every chemical we could find, even with diesel oil but in the end nothing worked. Surprisingly the mosquito attack lasted for only one day and they vanished as quickly as they had arrived. We were left with itchy arms, legs and feet for weeks afterwards.

The next day we set out in a dingy for one of the small islands which was totally deserted; we felt like the first explorers. One of our divers went deep into the clear waters and came up with some of the seaweed I was looking for. We only took a very small sample of the seaweed which I intended to send to Dr. Gatot back in Langkawi. I certainly did not want to disturb the natural beauty of that island by harvesting the seaweed to bottle it as a commercial beauty product. No, the idea was to study a sample in our lab and to see if we could find a similar seaweed closer to home.

Dr. Gatot's in-depth analysis revealed that my Caribbean seaweed shared several elements with a Sabah seaweed that was readily available.

I dried the seaweed in the sun and packed it carefully away. The expedition had been a success and sailing around the Caribbean with my friend had been a wonderful experience. Now, it was time to return to my own tropical island.

Dr. Gatot's in-depth analysis revealed that my Caribbean seaweed shared several elements with a Sabah seaweed that was readily available. We were so excited that we continued with the research and made several follow-up visits to Columbia and Panama. We had another wonderful time in the Caribbean, but what has stayed in my mind are the memories of the waves and the large wooden ships floating close to the shore like forgotten ghosts - dangerous, treacherous beauty at its best.



AFRICAN TRAVELS AND THE MUJONSO PROJECT

I always have been intrigued by the healing powers of plants and herbs thanks to my teachers, Dr. Ab Steyn (a natural healer and homeopath) and Dr. Herma Eeftink an apothecary who specialized in natural medicines. They helped me to work out my natural shampoo formulations using olive oil when I was still a hairdresser.

Although the days of my famous Shampoo Parties are long gone I still get very excited when I hear news of some interesting new herb and its healing effects. It was decades later when someone in Langkawi casually mentioned that she had a super-herb growing near her house that had healed her entire family of various illnesses ranging from diabetes to serious conditions. I was immediately hooked!

I looked into it further and discovered that the Mujonso herb in Malaysia is known colloquially as Bismillah (wishing you good health). Its other names are Daun Sambung Nyawa and Ketum Cina. The herb originated from Africa and is known in the west as Bitter Leaf. It has been used by generations of African families in their cooking and for medicinal purposes. The plants' leaves can be chewed raw, made into an extract and into teas, pills and creams to treat skin problems. It was time to plan a trip to Africa to discover if this wonder herb was grown on a commercial-scale and also to talk to ordinary people about their experiences of the herb.

A week later, I was on the African continent driving for many long hours in hot, dry conditions looking for the herb. Luck seemed to have deserted me and no one I met knew anything about Mujonso. As I was on the verge of turning around and going home, I came across a family living just north of Cape Town who told me (through a translator) that they used the herb in all their three meals. They mixed in the Mujonso with their fish, meat and vegetables just as their parents, their grandparents and great-grandparents had done.

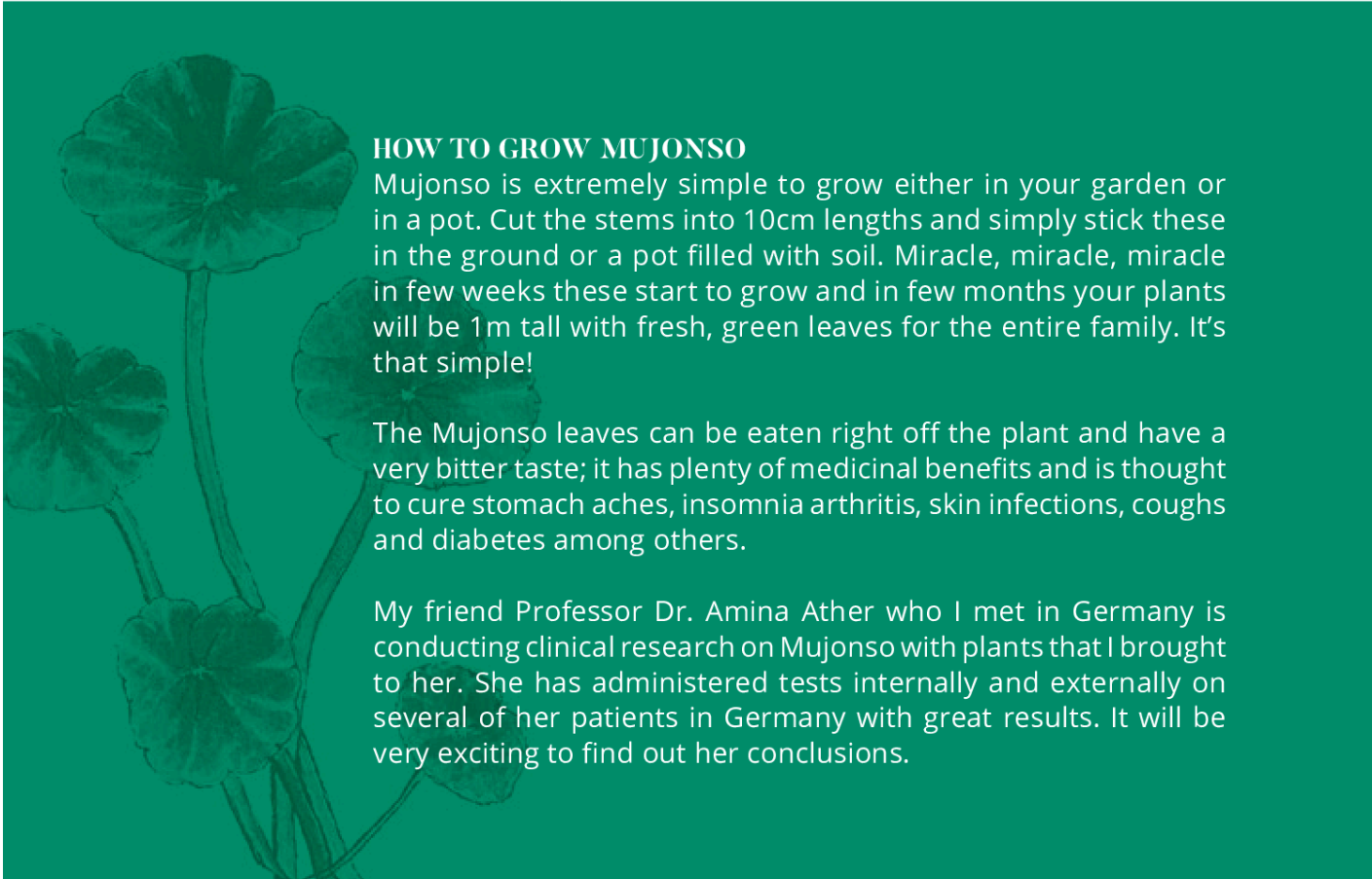




It was an exciting moment for me and a real break-through. They too called the plant Mujonso and showed me a few leaves which were exactly like the leaves I had seen in my neighbor's garden. I popped a leaf into my mouth and chewed, I immediately recognized the same extremely bitter taste. The South African family explained that thanks to these leaves, no one in their family got sick, had diabetes or was obese (they all looked in great shape it has to be said). Aside from eating the leaves, the family also boiled these and used the extracts for skin care and body rinses. They advised me to travel to Nigeria or central Africa to see the Mujonso plantations for myself; according to them the tradition of using Mujonso was on the decline.



My head swam with all this new information. My original intention had been to come to Africa to find the source for this herb and use it in our products. Now, my vision expanded. It was obviously an easy plant to grow and it was already available in Malaysia... what if I cultivated the Mujonso on Langkawi? I began to wonder...



HOW TO GROW MUJONSO

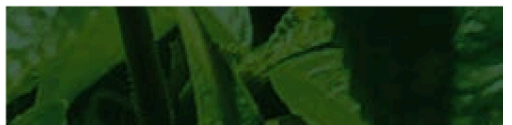
Mujonso is extremely simple to grow either in your garden or in a pot. Cut the stems into 10cm lengths and simply stick these in the ground or a pot filled with soil. Miracle, miracle, miracle in few weeks these start to grow and in few months your plants will be 1m tall with fresh, green leaves for the entire family. It's that simple!

The Mujonso leaves can be eaten right off the plant and have a very bitter taste; it has plenty of medicinal benefits and is thought to cure stomach aches, insomnia arthritis, skin infections, coughs and diabetes among others.

My friend Professor Dr. Amina Ather who I met in Germany is conducting clinical research on Mujonso with plants that I brought to her. She has administered tests internally and externally on several of her patients in Germany with great results. It will be very exciting to find out her conclusions.



The Mujonso leaves can be eaten right off the plant and have a very bitter taste; it has plenty of medicinal benefits and is thought to cure stomach aches, insomnia arthritis, skin infections, coughs and diabetes among others.



MY MUJONSO DREAM

I never made it to the Mujonso plantations in central Africa because I was so excited by my new plan. My dream was to have every household in Malaysia growing this plant in their garden, in little planter boxes, whatever, just so they could use the leaves daily for their own health. Such a simple, beautiful idea that would offer tremendous health benefits for the people.

I flew back to Langkawi and my team enthusiastically planted Mujonso at The Ocean Residence. I put my heart and soul into promoting Mujonso, speaking about it wherever and whenever I could to the media and anyone who would listen. To start small, we also began to serve Mujonso tea to The Ocean Residence guests on a daily basis. Eventually our plants took root and multiplied

- we had over 15,000 plants growing all over our property. I encouraged our friends and guests to help themselves to leaves and even to take cuttings to grow these at home (Mujonso doesn't grow in cold countries though).

The next step in my big plan was to encourage the people of Langkawi to cultivate Mujonso for themselves and for commercial purposes. My friend Dato Prof. Dr. Kamarulzaman - the ex-general manager of the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) who fought with heart and soul to have the island inscribed



My dream was to have every household in Malaysia growing this plant in their garden, just so they could use the leaves daily for their own health. Such a simple, beautiful idea that would offer tremendous health benefits for the people

as a UNESCO Geopark - developed the idea of a cooperative scheme that would allow the villagers of Pulau Tuba to grow Mujonso and produce Mujonso-based natural products, with the profits going back to the local community.

It was an exciting time for me as I had such high hopes for this project that would not only benefit Langkawi's rural community financially, but also improve their health. I received great support from various islanders who put in their time and effort to establish a Mujonso farm and healing garden on Pulau Tuba just a 30 minute ride on a small boat from Langkawi's main island. I am truly so thankful for the efforts of these people who gave so much with no expectations of financial reward. Eventually, Dato' suggested having an official opening for the healing garden and inviting the previous Prime Minister of Malaysia - Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad - to officiate at the launch. As a medical doctor, Dr. Mahathir has an interest in natural medicine and combined with his long-time efforts to develop Langkawi this seemed like an excellent idea.

We visited Dr. Mahathir in Kuala Lumpur and only a few weeks later, he and his wife Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali came to visit us in Langkawi. It was a wonderful day with hundreds of villagers and the press who turned out to welcome the couple. I had a great conversation with the ex-prime minister and especially his wife who were both curious and positive about the project. We all enjoyed a wonderful lunch that included Mujonso leaves. All in all it was a truly memorable day.



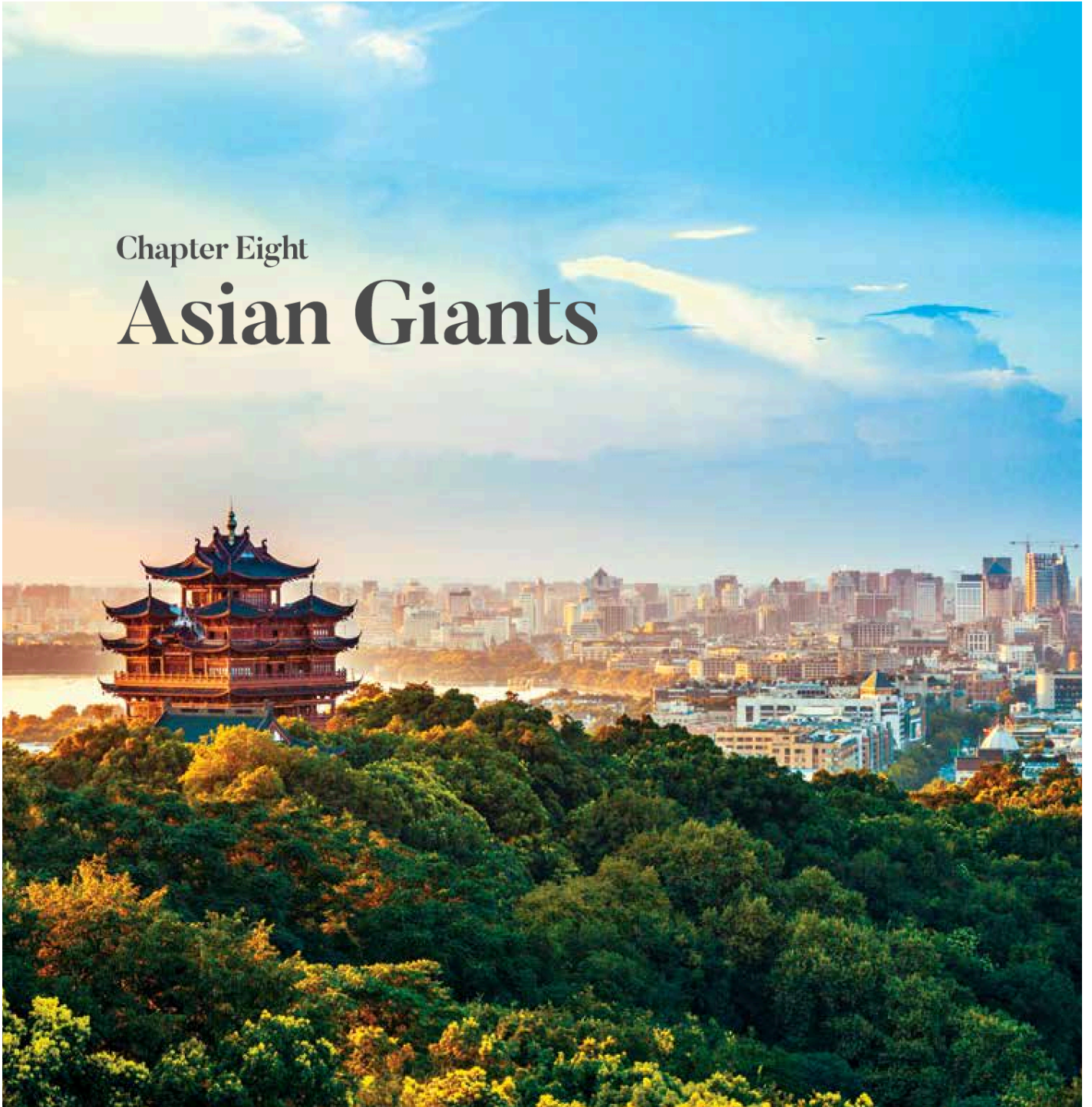


Although I'm married to a Malaysian and have lived happily in Malaysia for many years, I had no idea how deeply politics can affect the lives of ordinary people. Only a few weeks after the official launch of the Mujonso Project a close friend of mine was called by a powerful person with political links to 'advise' me to stop my dealings with the former prime minister. If I didn't, he warned that my cosmetics business and The Ocean Residence would run into problems. It was chilling to hear such news. I was shocked and extremely disappointed to the extent that my health suffered.

After much contemplation and great sadness I decided to withdraw from the Mujonso Project, I just couldn't continue this way. The entire Project we envisioned eventually fell apart despite the heroic efforts of Dato' Kamarulazon and other friends to keep it running. I still feel ashamed, sad and disappointed in myself for backing out of this. It wasn't just my own dreams that were shattered but also the hopes of many islanders who could have benefitted from this venture.

Despite the fallout in Malaysia I still have hopes of incorporating Mujonso in Paul Penders products. One of my ideas is to work with our new Indian partner (see Chapter 8) to grow Mujonso on a large scale in the Himalayas. The big question is whether or not the climate at the foothills of Himalayas is suitable for this herb (which usually grows in tropical temperatures). If all else fails, there are my friends at an all-women cooperative in Kerala who cultivate many organic herbs and have a small GMP certified factory. Anything is possible with enough heart and my dream to introduce the world to the healing benefits of Mujonso continues. ✿

Chapter Eight
Asian Giants





My Langkawi base was a good stepping stone to China which was only a short flight away. Since I arrived in Malaysia I had dreamt about selling Paul Penders products in China but had not been able to set aside the time to do so. Finally, in 2004 I made my first trip to the Middle Kingdom.

CHINA – THE NEW FRONTIER

My good friend recommended that I visit Hangzhou, a beautiful city close to Shanghai. Despite being bombarded with images and news reports of China's economic miracle, I still expected to see hordes of grey Mao-suited locals cycling around. The drive from the airport to my hotel and then on to the city's new industrial zone soon wiped that foolish idea from my head immediately. My overall impressions of Hangzhou were very positive; it was a beautiful city full of history and with a pleasant environment. Even the industrial areas were thoughtfully designed, clean and orderly.

Hangzhou is world famous for its tea (Queen Elizabeth II is apparently a big fan of Hangzhou tea) and the West Lake district is one of the birthplaces of Chinese green tea. The quality of the rain that falls in the tea mountains close to Hangzhou is said to be of exceptional quality, full of benefits for the skin. I later discovered an ancient well in the middle of the tea gardens where visitors gather to wash their faces. This tradition has been kept alive for centuries and I was hopeful that this water could be an important ingredient in our products.

I was simply swept off my feet by this beautiful city that effortlessly combined the old with the new. I would have to agree with Marco Polo who described Hangzhou as the most beautiful city he had ever seen. Spending time at the tea mountains, the world famous botanical garden, the concert hall, the city's many great restaurants, the West Lake, breathing in the clean air and absorbing the overall sophistication of the city was an overwhelming experience. I never even came across a sweet wrapper on the streets... so clean was the city! Hangzhou is undoubtedly the cleanest city in China and perhaps even the world as far as I'm concerned.

It took only a short time to set up a new office and GMP approved manufacturing plant despite working with new staff who couldn't speak any English. Although we were able to set up our operations, I never doubted that it would take considerable patience, time and investment to make any impact on the Chinese market.

Despite all its outward modernity, China is still a nation in transition and we needed to slowly educate consumers about the benefits of natural organic cosmetics. I was full of optimism for China and put plenty of effort into brand-building which is an essential part of our long-term strategy. In the early days, the focus was on getting our manufacturing processes right and achieving product quality and consistency up to international standards.

PULLING OUT OF CHINA

Unfortunately, China and PP were just not meant to be. A few of my Chinese partners did the unthinkable and behaved in a very unethical manner during our product launch – on our first official day of business!

During that day, interested distributors from all over China arrived in Hangzhou thanks to the hard work of my Malaysian friend who has great business ethics. The distributors were interested in buying our products through my friend but my Chinese partners completely disregarded this business arrangement and tried to cut him out of any deals. This guy had arranged the entire launch of Paul Penders in China and now he was being mistreated by my so-called business partners.

I felt full of shame and to be honest it really ruined my appetite for doing business in China. Only now do I realize that my Chinese business partners thought it was the right thing to do "to make a few more bucks". Still, the episode upset me and I became concerned that I would have to deal with more of this old-China way of doing business in the future. Eventually, the Chinese government decided to enact a law that required animal testing for cosmetic products. That was the final straw.

I made the bold and costly decision to dissolve the business right there and then, even though this meant giving up our brand-





new production facilities with all our lab and manufacturing equipment. It was all wasted... Morally and ethically this was the right thing to do and a giant step in protecting the image of the brand. Yet another expensive life lesson!

SOME REFLECTIONS ON CHINA

There is a common misconception among many consumers and even business people that China-made products are inferior and of low quality. From my first hand experience of dealing with government laws and health & safety regulations I can say that China is taking dramatic steps forward in this regard. It is unfair to tar all Chinese manufacturers with the same brush; after all you can find lousy manufacturers everywhere – but China especially seems to get a very rough deal in the Western media.

China's big advantage lies in the speed with which its government can bring about change. The Chinese government has upgraded infrastructure and opened China up to the world creating a very dynamic and business-friendly environment. Of course there are always going to be teething problems but think about this - in 1980, Chinese GDP was USD189 billion and by 2017, it will exceed USD23 trillion, making it one of the world's largest economies. Such phenomenal growth does not occur by accident and it certainly does not occur with only inferior products and services.

While my experiences in China were disappointing I still have hope for our future there. It certainly didn't stop me from venturing into India, one of the world's most populous nations and one with a long tradition and appreciation of natural herbal treatments and beauty care.



Chapter Nine

Certification for Peace of Mind



A NEW BATTLE TO FIGHT

The early days of Paul Penders were very much characterized by my battle against animal testing. The 1980s were a defining moment for many activists and organizations as groups like Greenpeace and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) really grabbed headlines and pushed their causes into the spotlight. So many of their supporters put their reputations and lives on the line for their beliefs, it was a complete contrast to the yuppie culture that was prevalent at the time

The world has since changed and although there are still plenty of good people out there working for good causes what really annoys me are the professional pimps that have over commercialized charities. I've been a staunch financial and

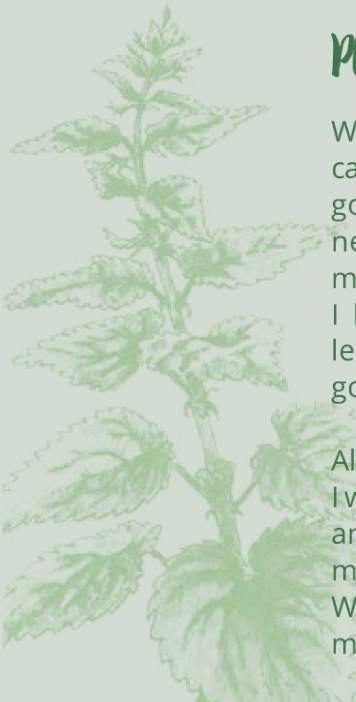
moral supporter of a number of charities since their early days - especially PETA. I've also supported vegan and organic charities for their efforts in educating the public about healthy living, healthy eating, respect for animals and the environment. I've followed their exploits closely and have come to the conclusion that these organizations were at their best before the so-called professionals came onboard.

We supported one well-known UK vegan organization for years, linking their website to the Paul Penders site and proudly displaying their logo on my products in exchange for royalties on our UK sales. Imagine my surprise and annoyance when years later they asked me for a percentage of our global sales as well. After years of supporting this group financially and morally they suddenly turned around to demand even more money. What happened to the ethics and integrity envisioned by the group's founding members? Why did this organization decide to hold manufacturers such as us to ransom?

PAUL'S THOUGHTS

When I started out manufacturing natural skin and hair care products my first adversaries were the Dutch and Irish governments who insisted on animal testing. I'm proud to say I never gave in to these regulations even though it meant relocating my company to the US. I would never have lived with myself if I had compromised on my principles. More recently, this also led to me moving Paul Penders out of China when the Chinese government required animal testing.

Along the way I supported many charitable organizations because I was impressed by their integrity and their spirit. Today's cynicism and professionalism has destroyed and corrupted the souls of many of these organizations which are now run like corporations. We need to get back to basics and learn to help each other on a more personal level.



ORGANIC CERTIFICATION? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING

Despite manufacturing natural hair and beauty products and priding myself on only using the best natural ingredients I'm not a fan of organic certification for beauty products at all – ironic isn't it? My distaste for this latest craze is because organic certification can be misleading.

Not all natural organic ingredients are always good for us and on the other hand, not all chemical ingredients are very bad either and sometimes we need to include very miniscule amounts of harmless, non-toxic chemical ingredients in our cosmetics. This always leads to discussions about what is organic? What is natural?

Put these questions to a room filled of chemists and chemical engineers and they will talk and argue till night falls. First of all the cosmetic and food industries have badly misled consumers over their 'organic' marketing claims in the hope of increasing prices and making more money. Some organic certification companies have become very rich powerhouse players. From the beginning I didn't want to have any dealings with them as I don't agree with all their policies, especially making a fortune and getting richer and richer. The exceptions are small vegetarian and organic organizations

Second, I'm a big believer in the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) principles, that cosmetic products should be safe for long-term use, whether natural, organic or whatever – no exceptions. Keeping people and the environment safe from harm is the most important thing.

I'll share another interesting fact, not all certified organic materials are natural, in fact there are synthetic materials used for skin care which are certified as organic but are NOT natural. Confusing isn't it? Therefore I believe that plenty of certified organic stuff is marketing and hype and isn't always about producing the safest skin care products.

Paul Penders

My way of life...naturally yours

LevensESSENTIEGold® • Certified Organic Herbs



100-years Time Tested Formulation



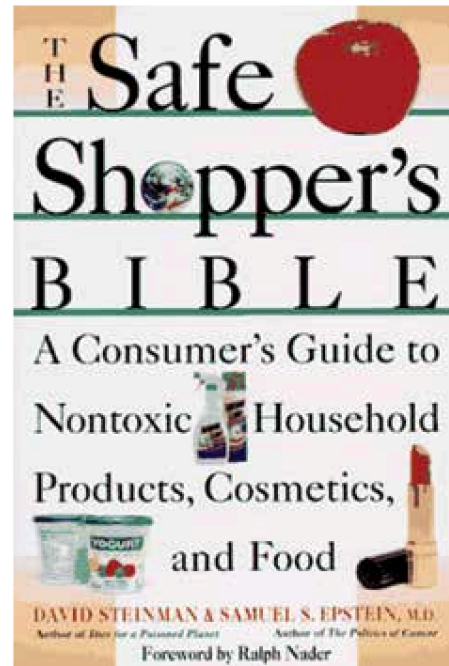
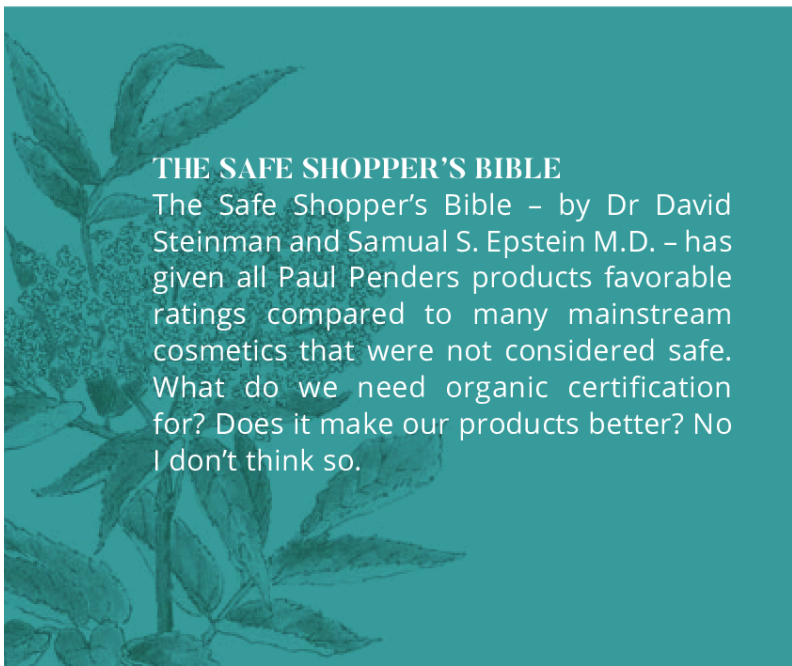
Our approach at Paul Penders has always been to give our customers the very best cosmetics made from the highest quality natural ingredients. For instance, all the herbs used in **LevensESSENTIE Gold™** are certified organic by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which I believe sets the global benchmark.

Although we have used organic ingredients for years and years we're not recognized as a 'certified organic product' manufacturer. Why? Because this requires a lengthy, expensive and convoluted process which by itself, does not pass on any benefits to the end consumer.

My stand on this issue has always been clear, why are all these extra costs necessary if my company already uses organic ingredients certified by the USDA? The extra costs and bureaucracy involved in becoming a certified organic product manufacturer do not ensure the integrity of the final product and too often consumers are misled into believing that such certification is a 100% guarantee of better quality.

Many certification systems are far from foolproof and at times these are (mis)used as an advertising gimmick for certain cosmetic products. Organic certification by itself does not guarantee anything. It only shows that at the time the product was tested it did not contain any non-organic materials. It does not reveal what has happened to the product on its way to the retail outlets.

We have always poured our hearts, souls and love into Paul Penders products and wherever possible we use the best certified organic materials. I personally travel all over the world to search for the very best natural ingredients so when I say we're committed to natural ingredients I mean it!



PAUL'S THOUGHTS

It would be great if we could all eat organic food, but why do we suddenly need certified organic skin care products as well? Has non-organic skin care been bad for us? Are the 'certified organic' skin care products which were only created in the last few years the most effective products? Of course not.

The only way to ensure that cosmetics and skin care are really organic is to test the finished products which are sitting on shelves in retail stores. I believe this is what all the inspectors traveling all over the world, should be doing!

Do I practice what I preach – yes! ALL Paul Penders product batches are independently tested by an Australian accredited NATA ISO 2009 laboratory right before these reach customers to ensure that the products are safe. This is how my customers can be sure that what they buy has not had any additional chemicals added after the manufacturing process.

I should also point out that it is impossible for manufacturers to claim that they use 100% certified organic ingredients; technically speaking this is impossible. This is another myth perpetuated by the industry in order to confuse the consumers and enrich manufacturers. I am personally against this certification because I do not believe that it offers consumers all the tangible benefits they expect.

BOTANICAL

Introducing the new
HERBAL SUN PROSPERITY

Protect & Refresh

This rich, non-sticky formula combines the power of botanicals and fine organic herbs to help protect and hydrate skin. Botanicals naturally derived from selected cold-pressed plant oils leave skin smooth, soft and refreshed. Use at any outdoor place other than the beach or pool.

Exclusively made by Levens from 22 organic herbs

ACHIEVING RESPECTED CERTIFICATIONS

Langkawi doesn't have any certifying bodies or any inspectors based on the island, but I can guarantee you that there are plenty of certifying bodies who are willing to fly over and verify our company as soon as we can send them the air tickets and pay for a good time.

It is irritating that despite spending over 40 years fighting against animal testing and innovating natural beauty products that some people expect us to bend over backwards to certify our products. What really annoys me is that there are not always any additional benefits for the consumers. An ingredient can be certified organic but it doesn't always have the same benefits as its natural counterpart ingredient. The certifications which I wholeheartedly embrace and believe in are, The American Vegetarian Association (AVA), The Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Halal certification.

AMERICAN VEGETARIAN ASSOCIATION (AVA) CERTIFICATION



An organization that is close to my heart is the American Vegetarian Association (AVA) based in New York. It was set up to promote the interests and concerns of individuals and organizations involved in the preservation of vegetarian products.



I had the honor and very good fortune to meet its founder Len Torine who is a lifelong proponent of healthy eating and living. Aside from opening many successful food businesses and restaurants, he is also a best-selling author and probably best known for establishing VeggieLand, a strictly vegetarian food manufacturer.

Len invited me to New York to receive the AVA certification for our products and where better to meet than the world-famous Candle 79 restaurant which serves delicious organic vegan cuisine. Let's face it, people like to eat healthy,

they want to know what they're eating, and now, they also want to know what they're putting on their face. Transparency is the key, and this means truth in labeling, maintaining a trustworthy brand, and having valid, strong certifications. Consumers demand clarity, words and ingredients they can understand. Doing ethical business today requires companies to speak to their customer base and not just overwhelm them with marketing gibberish.



EWG CERTIFICATION

Environmental Working Group (EWG) certification is important to me as it reflects the heart of what we are. EWG based in Washington DC is the largest independent group that certifies the safety of our products and guarantees that these do not include any harmful chemical ingredients. EWG is also involved in fighting on many fronts for improved food, pharmaceutical and agricultural product safety.

EWG's scientists and researchers work hard to give us the tools to limit our exposure to harmful chemicals and where better to start than with personal care products. Here's some scary news, cosmetic companies are allowed to use almost any ingredient under the sun in their products. That's right – they can put almost anything in their products including phthalates and parabens that have been linked to serious health issues.

To qualify for the EWG VERIFIED™ mark as Paul Penders has done, companies cannot use substances that have been banned by the US, other international government agencies, or public health bodies such as the World Health Organization. Manufacturers must also fully disclose everything they put in their products – including the chemicals in 'fragrance', a vague term that can hide lots of potentially harmful or untested ingredients – and follow good manufacturing practices. It's very, very tough but at the end of the day it protects consumers!

We are the ONLY full product line in Asia that has been awarded both EWG and AVA vegan certifications – not for a few products only, but for our entire range.

KEEPING IT SAFE & SIMPLE

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) uses three simple criteria to certify cosmetic products – the keyword here is simple! It took us two years and many headaches for all our 50 over products to achieve the EWG VERIFIED™ mark based on the following:

1. All our products avoid EWG's ingredients of concern (and there are hundreds!),
2. We provide full transparency meaning that all lab tests and legal agreements are disclosed.
3. Our products are manufactured according to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) standards, which assures customers of the safest and most hygienic conditions.



HALAL CERTIFICATION

Jakim in Malaysia is a leader in trusted halal (Islamic) certification; there are a few more professional halal organizations in Europe as well. One of the good things about halal certification is that it also covers most if not all Kosher requirements as well as those of a few other religions as well.

For 50 years I've created clean products and have never used animal ingredients including, honey, dairy and silk in my products. In the beginning we used beeswax and carmine (red color for color cosmetics) and have already eliminated these from our products years ago. We have never used alcohol either as I've never believed that alcohol should be used in cosmetic products.

CHEMICALS TO AVOID OR CHEMICALS YOU WILL NEVER FIND IN PAUL PENDERS PRODUCTS

There are thousands of chemicals in cosmetics products, many of which are absorbed into your body. Many of these synthetic chemicals are skin irritants, skin penetrators, endocrine disrupters and some are carcinogenic. I can't go through all of these harmful chemicals, but here are few you should highly avoid.

1,4-Dioxane

This is of the most of concern to me as it is a carcinogen linked to organ toxicity. It may be found in over 20% of over 25,000 cosmetics products in the Skin Deep database, but you won't find it on ingredient labels. That's because 1,4-dioxane is a contaminant created when common ingredients react to form a compound. 1,4-dioxane is generated through a process called ethoxylation, in which ethylene oxide - a known breast carcinogen - is added to other chemicals to make them less harsh.

The FDA does not require 1,4-dioxane to be listed as an ingredient on product labels because the chemical is a contaminant produced during manufacturing. Without labeling, there is no way to know for certain whether a product contains 1,4-dioxane making it difficult for consumers to avoid it.

Consumers can avoid products that contain sodium laureth sulfate, PEG compounds, and chemicals that include the clauses xynol, cetareth and oleth (learn more at: <http://www.safecosmetics.org/get-the-facts/chemicals-of-concern/14-dioxane/#sthash.aflAdnEt.dpuf>)



“The fact that 1,4-dioxane, a potentially dangerous chemical, is hiding out in everyday products expected to make us clean is very disturbing, and to make matters worse, likely carcinogens like this one can be even more harmful to kids.”

*US Congress Senator
Schumer*

Fragrances

This can be vague and misleading because what does fragrance mean anyway? This term was created to protect companies 'secret formulas.' But as a consumer you could be putting on a concoction that contains chemicals that are hazardous to your health

Phthalates

This is a group of chemicals used in hundreds of products to increase the flexibility and softness of plastics. The main phthalates in cosmetics and personal care products are dibutyl phthalate used in nail polish, diethyl phthalate in perfumes and lotions, and dimethyl phthalate in hair spray.

Triclosan

This is a widely used antimicrobial chemical that is a known endocrine disrupter especially for thyroid and reproductive hormones, and a skin irritant. Studies have raised concerns that triclosan contributes to making bacteria antibiotic-resistant.

Formaldehyde and formaldehyde-releasing preservatives (FRPs)

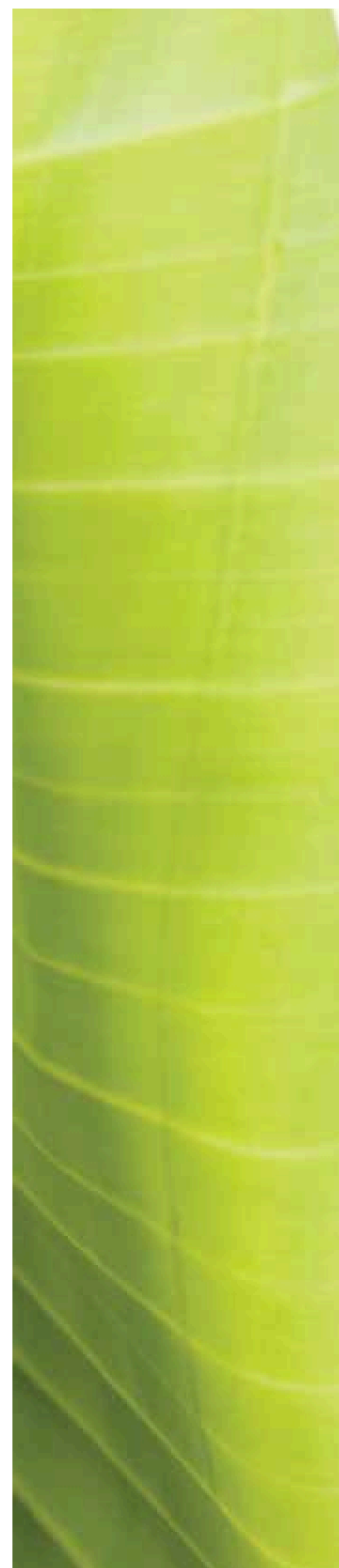
These preservatives are used in many cosmetic products to help prevent bacteria growth. This chemical was deemed as a human carcinogen by The International Agency for Research on Carcinogens (IARC)

Toluene

A petrochemical derived from petroleum or coal tar sources. You may see it on labels where it is listed as benzene, toluol, phenylmethane or methylbenzene. Toluene is a potent solvent able to dissolve paint and paint thinner. Imagine putting that on your skin.

Propylene glycol

This is organic alcohol typically used as a skin-conditioning agent. It's classified as a skin irritant and penetrator and has been associated with causing dermatitis as well as hives in humans





Sunscreen chemicals

Some sunscreen chemicals absorb ultraviolet light and these chemicals are endocrine disrupters and are believed to be easily absorbed into the body. Common names are benzophenone, avobenzone, homosalate and ethoxycinnmate.

Of course it's impossible to avoid every single synthetic chemical, but you can do your part in limiting the amount of toxins your body is exposed to. We are proud to be EWG world-wide certified to assure you that none of our ingredients are of any concern to EWG or any other environmental group in the world. Note that not one or a few of our products are certified, but all of them! ✿

**We are proud to
be EWG world-
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Conclusion - Some Final Thoughts...

As a company we're not afraid of doing things differently even if it means that other people may not understand why at that point in time (just as animal rights awareness wasn't so prevalent decades ago). When you believe you are right and that you are doing the right thing, you just have to go with it.

Being so close to nature in Langkawi gives me great inspiration for future concepts and products, while the island's relaxed atmosphere helps me to focus on what is important for the long-term growth of Paul Penders and not get fixated with the latest fads. Although I'm a strong believer in continuous growth and evolution for the company, I'm 100% against prostituting our principles for money and power. Growth doesn't just mean more profits and more staff either, for me it has always been about creating the very best products with the best ingredients for the best results.

Over 50 years ago the company only had one employee in the office – me. Some years later our organization consisted of 10 people.

"Wow!" I thought. "We've grown!"

Even though I was happy we had expanded, the R&D Department was still close enough to my own office, so we could shout at each other without an intercom. Now, the company has definitely expanded and in order to protect its soul we have grown in pieces. Even though our offices are split between Asia, the US and Europe, the lab people, Dr. Gatot and I can still communicate easily. We always have time to meet and drink coffee together, enjoy time with our families and share our adventures.

People are still very surprised to hear that I still play a small hands-on role in the company and I'm usually asked:

"Don't you get tired?"

"Don't you just want to spend your time sailing?"

"Where do you find the energy?"

It was never my intention to create the company as a nest egg so that I could go off sailing into the blue yonder – that’s just not me. Eventually I’d get bored on my boat and start to dream about plants and new beauty products. The simple truth is that I love my job, it’s my passion and it gets me excited every day when I wake up.

Yes, there have been many times when I felt like I was trying to fight a brick wall but I’m glad that I kept at it. I spent years fighting and speaking out against animal testing; I even relocated my organization not once but TWICE, so that I wouldn’t have to compromise my principles. I felt so happy when the Netherlands finally banned animal testing for cosmetics products and when the EU called for a complete ban in all member states by 2009. Yes change is possible, it can take time but it is possible. It was worth speaking out against animal testing and I wouldn’t have done anything differently.

The episode where we removed FD&C colors from our cosmetics and sourced for natural alternatives is another source of pride for me. As a company we're not afraid of doing things differently even if it means that other people may not understand why at that point in time (just as animal rights awareness wasn't so prevalent decades ago). When you believe you are right and that you are doing the right thing, you just have to go with it.



Looking ahead, we're focusing on gaining more international exposure and as I also have a

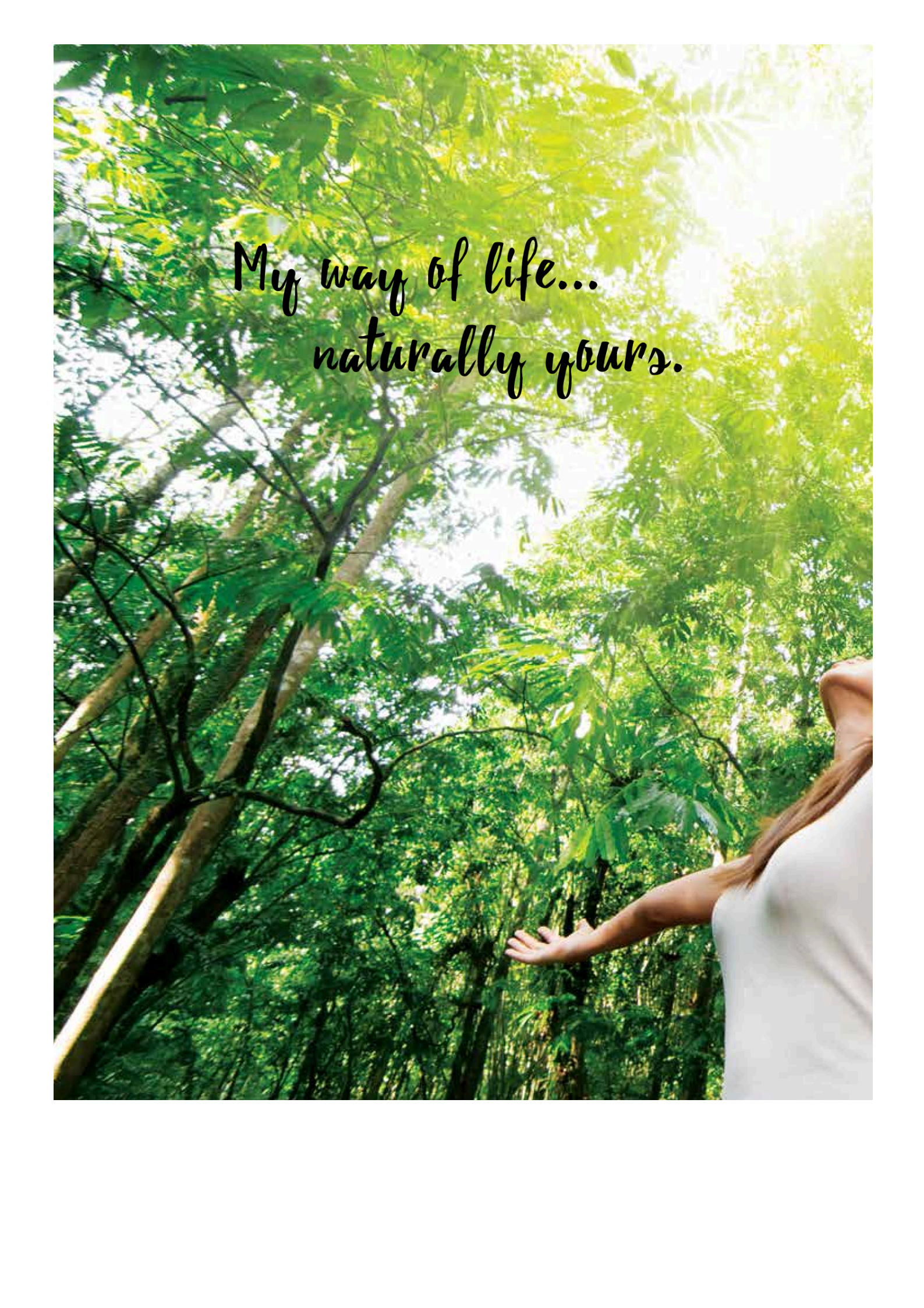
home in beautiful West Palm Beach, Florida, I have plans to break back into the US market in a fresh way. To build the base, we will set up a warehouse in Dallas, Texas. It will mean that I'll spend more time shuttling between Malaysia and the US. Of course, I also have high hopes for our India venture.

* Katja and I.

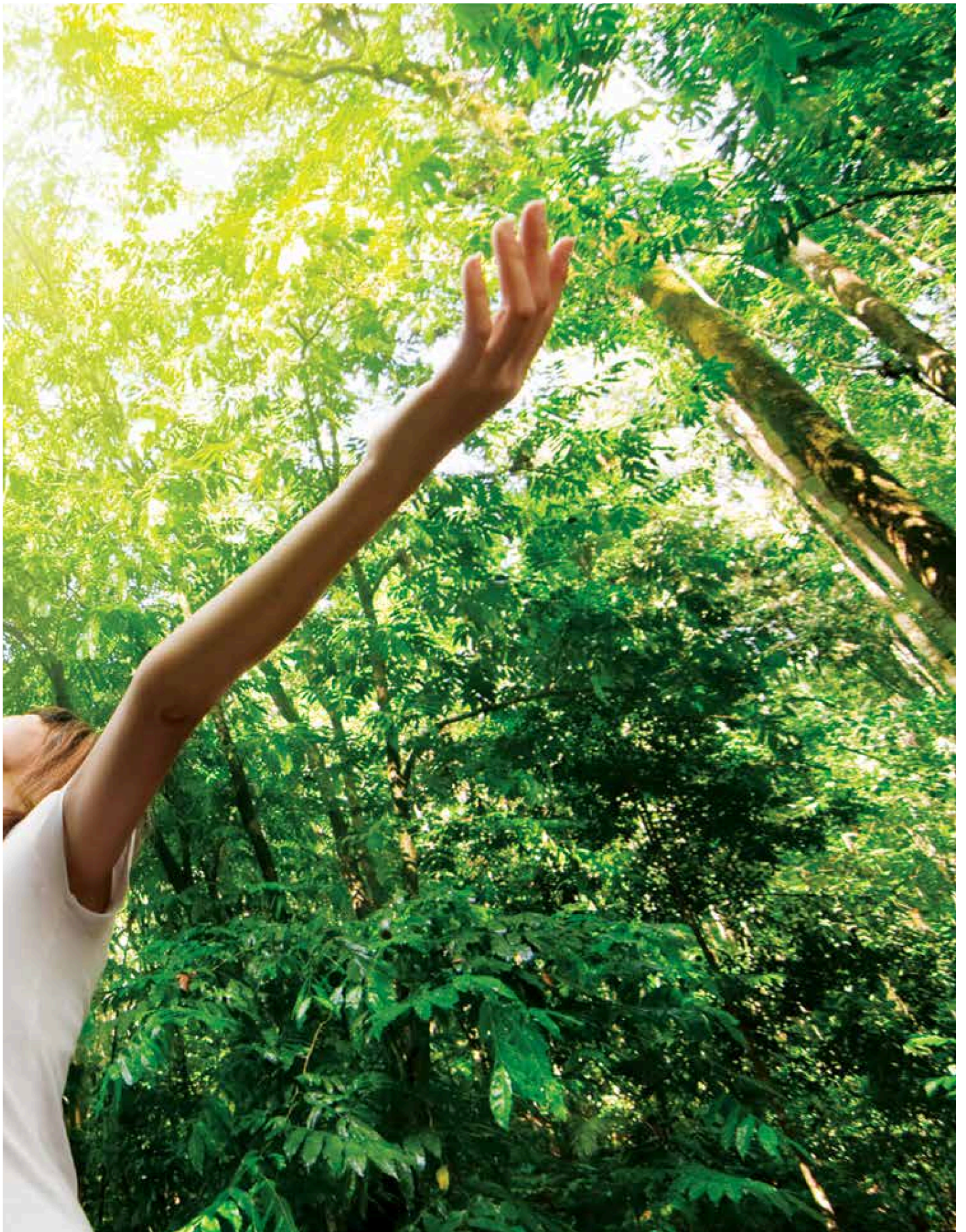
At 71, I'm still far away from retirement as life is full of opportunities when one wishes to see these. My philosophy is to grab these and be happy with the learning experience and the excitement of new projects.

Bastiaan is now involved at executive level at the International Marketing Company together with Sargam Dhawan, the grand daughter of our Indian business partner, V.K. Dhawan. We look forward to getting Katja into the business too.

This business is a real family affair where we all enjoy having a personal involvement in the company. Our goal is simply to give our international customers the very best products. I think my parents and Oma would be proud. ✿



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