



## the CRAYFISH TALE

### CRAYFISH AND CHOLESTEROL

As a teenager and a young man in Sweden, I learned to love eating crayfish. When my mother insisted that shellfish was 'brain food', I became convinced that crayfish were a healthy and nutritious food.

But then, at the time I moved to the US, everybody was getting indoctrinated to watch cholesterol levels and to avoid fat foods. That created somewhat of a dilemma for me. I knew that crayfish, like other shell fish and animal meats, were relatively high in cholesterol. But as I loved eating crayfish – to say nothing of the ritual of eating, drinking and singing songs at the same time – I more or less ignored the then accepted notion about high cholesterol. And as I usually only ate crayfish after occasional crayfish catches during the summer, I did not see much harm in it. But deep down, to some extent, there was that little gnawing feeling of guilt about eating these lovely cholesterol filled delicacies.

Then, after I retired and had more time to devote to fishing for crays, I realized that I ate crayfish, not only during summer, but also during every month of winter after I had learned how to freeze my summer catches for all-year enjoyment. So, now I was eating crayfish at least twice a month,

sometimes even more. So I wondered, should I be concerned? But I also remembered what my mother had told me about brain food. And, strangely, usually after a meal of crayfish I often feel unusually vigorous and satisfied, in contrast to my other meals. And my other meals often consisted of vegetarian foods with lots of breads and other baked delicacies filled with sugary carbohydrates.

And I always had to keep an eye on my weight charts. Every time I feasted on breads, pasta or cookies, I had moments of fast heart beats that often kept me awake at night. And I who did not eat any animal fat to speak of. Except for crayfish now and then...

Then a cardiologist scheduled me for two angioplasties with stent insertions. I became really concerned. I was told to lower my cholesterol and to stay away from animal fats. And my cholesterol wasn't really high, about 200, and I was practically a vegetarian anyway. Except for crayfish.

After the heart procedures I was put on statin drugs, the medicine to lower cholesterol. After one year on statins (Lipitor, Crestor and Ruvastatin) my cholesterol was down to 100, a level so low that some consider it dangerous and possibly carcinogenic!

I hastened to the internet to learn more about statins and how low cholesterol levels could – and should – go. I was stunned. Many medical opinions about cholesterol said that 200 was normal, not high. Some reported bad reactions to statin medications, including brain damage and memory loss to say nothing of weakness of legs. My legs!

Further research led me to a series of medical books that all questioned the whole theory of high cholesterol levels. I started with Uffe Ravnskov's book "The Cholesterol Myth" where this Danish medical doctor and PhD tore to shreds the arguments for lowering cholesterol after showing that study after study revealed that statistics indicated no significant correlation between cholesterol and cardiac heart disease (CHD). I was bewildered. All these years, after a doctor came to the erroneous conclusion about cholesterol and CHD in the 1950s "Seven Countries study" (Ancel Keys), the medical community had clung to this conclusion without actually questioning how he reached it.

Then I read the book by flight surgeon and astronaut Duane Graveline, MD., who very convincingly, as an astronaut should, proved that the Danish Dr. Ravnskov was very correct when demonstrating that there was no correlation between cholesterol and CHD. He specifically pointed to the Framingham study in Massachusetts. The dangers of lowering cholesterol with statins were also emphasized in the writings of the well known cardiologist Stephen Sinatra.

I read some more books on this topic that so intimately concerned me,

and my interest in eating crayfish. I found "Life Without Bread" (Christian Allan, Ph.D. and Wolfgang Lutz, MD.) which also convincingly accused carbohydrates (sugars, breads and baked goods) of the dangerous heart problems that were inundating the US, and me. He even said, like Ravnskov and Graveline did, that we need plenty of cholesterol to keep our brains in good shape (just like my mother had implied) and that a cholesterol of around 200 is perfectly normal and healthy.

That book led me to Natasha Cambell-McBride, MD, who practised heart medicine in the UK. In her book "Put your Heart in your Mouth" she also came to the conclusion that the real culprit for the heart are not cholesterol but carbohydrates, who induce the pancreas to produce more insulin which irritates the heart arteries, creates atherosclerosis and inevitably turns into fat in our bodies. No wonder people who eat plenty of carbohydrates (sugar rich drinks and baked goods, breads and cakes with icing) tend to become obese.

With all this cholesterol information under my belt, I came to view the nutrition of crayfish in another light. No longer did I hesitate eating my favorite food, and no more did I hold back on eating animal meats, butter and bacon and eggs for breakfast. And my cholesterol is slowly creeping back to a normal level around 200 while my weight stays steady at around 150 pounds.

And twice a month I raise my glass of red wine in memory of my mother and her advice about brain food while shelling another fat crayfish from some Arizona crayfish lake.

