

## **A PERSONAL CASE STUDY**

**David B. Jones, Ph.D, L.P.C.**

My father had his first bypass surgery in 1974. These were the very early days of this intervention in Mississippi. The surgeons had to take him back to surgery twice to repair leaking graft sites. All three of my uncles had already died from cardio-vascular disease by this time.

With the knowledge that heart disease was rampant in my family, I became committed to not letting it happen to me. While in graduate school in Texas, I had the opportunity to hear a lecture by Dr. Kenneth Cooper, the pioneer cardiologist who conducted groundbreaking research into the positive effects of aerobic exercise on cardio-vascular health. It was at that moment that I became a committed lifelong runner, believing that I had found the answer to preventing heart disease in me.

Dad did well for a while. He began to walk, but nothing else changed. Before too many years had passed, his bypass grafts had reoccluded and he was back for more. He never was the same after that. He became more depressed. He retired. Eventually, he died from congestive heart failure.

I still believed that I had become immune. At least I did until December of 2004. My wife and I had been in New York. I had taken a long run through Central Park. We rode in a carriage through the snow. It was glorious.

The night before we departed for home, my back started hurting. I thought it was due to picking up luggage or some other benign strain. While sitting in my office with a patient two days later, I broke into a cold sweat and felt the pain grow worse. I knew the signs. Like a dumb man, I drove myself to the emergency room and told them that I thought I was having a heart attack. My wife, an Ob/Gyn, happened to be at the hospital and called two cardiologist friends down to help. Two stents later to open a fully occluded LAD, I had to come to grips with the fact that my great aerobic condition had not saved me from having an MI. It may have saved my life due to more collateral circulation, but it wasn't the answer to coronary blockages.

I eventually got back to running, even to the point of completing the Chicago and New York marathons. Nothing else changed however. I didn't know what else to do. Three years ago, my good friend and cardiologist, Dr. Rick Guynes, asked me if I would look at the film Forks Over Knives. Finally, the missing piece fell into place. Since that time, I have not eaten any flesh and have removed my need for any medication.

Dr. Guynes and I worked to bring the Dean Ornish Reversing Heart Disease Program to Jackson, MS and are working actively with the program at this time. It is an absolute delight to now be able to bring whole food plant based nutrition, exercise, stress management and group support to people suffering just like I had.