➤ continued from front cover

to handle subscriptions and circulation, and Alan Gaby, MD, signed on as medical editor. Gaby had written for the Northwest Academy of Preventive Medicine newsletter when Collin was editor. "I was impressed with his open-mindedness and his interest in nutritional medicine," Dr. Gaby told me by e-mail. "When he founded the *Townsend Letter* and asked me to be a writer, I was happy to be a part of his new endeavor."

"*Townsend* is a very important magazine."

Philip F. Murray, MD, long-time subscriber

That issue contained many of the same features found in the magazine today. The front page, however, consisted of text – in this case, the text of Stephen Barrett's August 23/30, 1985, *JAMA* article that condemned commercial hair analysis. In "Letters to the Editor," E. Blaurock-Busch, PhD, and colleagues at Trace Minerals International rebutted Barrett's article; and George Hickok, chairman/CEO at Doctor's Data, described steps that his company had taken to defend hair analysis from assault, including PR countermeasures and hiring a lawyer to combat New York Department of Health's intention to outlaw it. Other *TLfD* features in issue 32 included reviews in "Book Corners," editorials by Collin and Gaby, "Townsend Calendar," and Gaby's "Literature Review. True to Collin's original vision, multiple letters debated patients' allergic reactions to the starting material for ascorbic acid manufacture (corn, sago palm, tapioca, potato starch).

The next year, 1986, brought major changes to *TLfD*'s small core staff. Both Jan Kelley and Chelle Roberts left. Reba Be (later Rebecca Brown) took charge as managing editor. She kept track of subscriptions and advertisers, did paste-up layouts for each issue, and oversaw the mailing. Ten times each year, the mail crew – a group of adults and teens – took over the living-dining room of Dr. Collin's clinic to address, add inserts, and organize according to zipcode and post office regulations the boxes of finished issues, trucked from Printery Communications down the street. Irene Alleger, a writer who also managed Dr. Collin's Port Townsend medical practice, became *TLfD*'s editor. Alleger was known for her "eagle-eye" attention to detail and thought-provoking editorials and book reviews. Barbara Smith performed *TLfD*'s typesetting, layout, and film at the the Printery, tasks that she continued as a private contractor (the TypeSmith [a.k.a. Sign Me Up!]) in 1987.

By June 1986, those 28 pages had grown to 36 pages and five advertiser inserts, held together with a single, heavy-duty staple centered on the right-hand side of the magazine. In headline articles on the front page, Bruce Halstead related his dealings with the California State Board of Medical Quality, resulting in a truly "draconian sentence" of four years in state prison, $10,000 fine, delicensure, and court orders to "desist from all professional activity in the health care field." He was also ordered to "desist from ... professional or scientific activity within the World Life Research Institute," an organization that researched marine biotoxicology. Halstead was the institute's cofounder and president. What terrible actions had led to this sentence? Halstead had recommended a homeopathic herbal preparation to patients in the hope of enhancing their immune function. He neither manufactured the product nor profited from its sale. Dr. Halstead was just one of numerous physicians being prosecuted in the US for advocating alternative therapies.

No Longer a Newsletter

With the August/September 1988 issue (#61/62), *Townsend Letter for Doctors* graduated to magazine; two staples on the publication's spine secured its 64 pages. Two editorials headlined on its front page. In the first, Jonathan Collin marveled at *New England Journal of Medicine*'s acceptance of research linking cobalamin (vitamin B12) deficiency to neurologic and neuropsychiatric disorders and the therapeutic value of B12 injections; conventional medical journals usually ignored or disparaged vitamin therapy studies, especially ones with positive outcomes. In the second editorial, homeopath Dana Ullman, MPH, reviewed the response to *Nature*'s publication of Jacques Beneviste's research in which potentized, highly dilute preparations of IgE produced basophil degranulation. Although that famous (or infamous) experiment has been reproduced at other laboratories, it is still widely denounced because it seems to validate homeopathy.

Inside that 1988 issue, a robust "Letters to the Editor" section debated the possible toxicity of *Streptococcus faecium* used in some probiotic products. In other letters, Warren M. Levin, MD, suggested applying nitroglycerine patch to acupuncture point Pericardium 6. Bernard Rimland, PhD, asked for scientific references that support kinesiology. Serafina Corsello, MD, responded to an earlier writer's criticism of the "interventive naturopathic approach." Sherry A. Rogers, MD, notified doctors of a recent paper that explained how to test for environmental chemical reactions, at a time when sick building syndrome and multiple chemical sensitivities were just beginning to be acknowledged. *TLfD* had become the "bulletin board," the forum for questioning and discussion as physicians and patients sought answers to recognized illness and to new syndromes that failed to respond to conventional therapies.

While mainstream press assured readers that the new disease AIDS was "incurable and almost always fatal," *TLfD* reprinted an article by Robert F. Cathcart III, MD, describing