



113 Pilgrim Creel Road Noxon, MT 59853

**Home of Montana YewTip products made
from the legendary Yew tree (*Taxus brevifolia*)**

2019 FALL NEWSLETTER

The 2019 YewTip Harvest went well over the summer and our annual inventory is secured. We had no close encounters with grizzly bears, wolves, or mountain lions this year and it was a peaceful harvest. Anymore, we manufacture our Montana YewTip® products year round which keeps us pretty busy and ensures you get what you need when you need it.

Many times over the years I've been asked how my relationship with the Pacific Yew tree (*Taxus brevifolia*) began and I think the time has come to document it. It's a very unique life changing story I am very blessed to have lived.

Back in 1991 I had been running my outfitting and guide service business in Northwestern Montana for 13 years taking people on hunting, fishing and wilderness pack trips with horses and mules. I was young and it was an adventurous lifestyle, but the thrill of climbing on a horse several hours before day break, riding into the mountains, hunting all day and riding back to camp after night fall was beginning to wear off. I began to think of looking for an easier way to make a living and still get to live in "Paradise."

Early in January 1991, I had a booth at a sportsman show in Seattle promoting my Outfitting business. When the show opened the very first guy that came up to my booth asked me if we had any Yew trees in Montana. I knew we did because I had fooled around with making bows from Yew wood a little and told him, yes. He told me he was buying all the Yew bark he could get. I then asked him why he wanted Yew bark and he told me, for a new cancer drug called Taxol. He asked if I was interested and I told him yes I was. He gave me his card and walked off. We talked for less than a minute and I never saw or talked to him again. It was an event that changed my life. I thought, Bingo, a new way to make a living and help people with cancer at the same time. What could be better? Driving home I couldn't stop thinking about Taxol and tried to remember where I had seen Yew trees. When I got home I tried to call the Yew bark guy in Seattle and left a message with his assistant and my number. I waited a week and when he didn't return my call, tried again. I left another message with his assistant who said he was very busy. I waited another week and when I called I got a recording that the number had been disconnected. I knew something was wrong. The following year, I heard the guy was in prison for black marketing illegally harvested Yew bark stolen from Forest Service lands. I stewed on it for about a week and thought, aw, to Hell with it I'm going to track this down. I called the National Cancer Institute in Washington D.C. and asked who was in charge of developing the new cancer drug Taxol and they told me Bristol Meyers Squibb Pharmaceuticals in New York and gave me the number to call.

I called Bristol Meyers Squibb Pharmaceuticals and told them I was a licensed Montana Outfitter with a good working relationship with the US Forest Service which owns about 80% of

the land in NW Montana where the Yews grow and was interested in supplying Yew bark for Taxol. They told me I needed to talk to Hauser Chemical in Boulder, CO who was in charge of extracting Taxol for them and gave me a contact name and number. I called Hauser and talked with one of their vice presidents, Phil Hassirick. I told Phil I had been working with the Forest Service for many years, had extensive knowledge of the country, and could put together a workforce to supply them with Yew bark. The following week Phil came up to Montana in mid-February and we rode snowmobiles to a Yew patch. I asked Phil, is this what you want? He said; yes and that he would send me a contract when he returned to Colorado. The trail was heating up! I began working with the Forest Service and developed an experimental project on the Kootenai National Forest, where I live, registered as "The Willis Yew Project." We supplied Hauser Chemical with over 13,000 lbs of dried-milled Yew bark in 1991. In 1992, the project spread to the Flathead National Forest and also the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and we supplied Hauser with over 90,000 lbs that year. In 1992, I began hearing stories of people in the Pacific Northwest drinking Yew tip tea and successfully treating themselves for cancer. After talking with them, I began drinking Yew tea myself and liked how it made me feel, Invigorated!

In 1993 we supplied Hauser with over 225,000 lbs of Yew bark and at that point we were the largest employer in Noxon, Montana with our processing plant operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with over 400 people involved in harvest operations. On Forest Service lands we were only allowed to harvest areas that were scheduled to be logged where the Yews would be destroyed anyhow so it was basically a huge salvage operation. Hauser told me that year, the Taxol content in the Montana Yews was more than twice as high as the Oregon and Washington Yews because we were at the fringes of its range. In February of 1994 Bristol Meyers made the announcement they had developed a semi-synthetic Taxol and would no longer need Yew bark and the gig was over.

By this time I knew a few folks who had been dealing with cancer; some of them stage 4, mostly using the Yew tea but sometimes powdering the tea in a blender and including it in their food. I began to think Yew could be useful in an herb type of cancer treatment but knew I needed professional help to test it in a clinical setting.

I ended up in the best place possible recommended by Montana friends who had been to Mexico and been successfully treated for cancer with medicinal herbs. The name of the clinic was (and still is) The Bio-Medical Center also known as The Hoxsey Clinic owned and operated by Mildred Nelsen, R.N. Mildred, a native of Texas, established the Bio-Medical Center in Tijuana when Harry Hoxsey turned the operation over to her in 1963. I wrote Mildred a letter, introduced myself, and told her my experience with Yew. Mildred had heard of Taxol. Mildred called me in Montana and asked how soon I could come to Tijuana with some Yew tea. The following week, I flew into San Diego and Mildred and I immediately hit it off and began a very special friendship. She was a tough, no non-sense Texan who tucked me under her wing and taught me an enormous amount about herbal cancer treatments and the politics of cancer treatment in the United States. By the time I got hooked up with her during the final years of her life, she had decades of experience with tens of thousands of patients.

I had smuggled a suitcase full of Yew bark tea to the clinic and showed Mildred and her head doctor, Dr. Elias Gutierrez, how to make the tea and we drank it. I left the Yew tea with her before returning to Montana. A few weeks after I got home, Mildred called and asked me to send more tea and that she was coming to Montana and wanted to see the Yews. In mid-

July 1994, I took her out into the mountains and showed her the Yews. I'll never forget that she ran her hands up the trunks of the Yews out to the branch tips as if she was trailing something. She then told me she thought what she was after in the Yew was in the tips of the limbs and she wanted me to harvest and process YewTip Tea for her. I said; Yes Mam, we're on it!

Years later, scientific research documented what Mildred instinctively knew that the anti-cancer compounds (*Taxanes*) peaked in the very tip of the limbs in the summer.

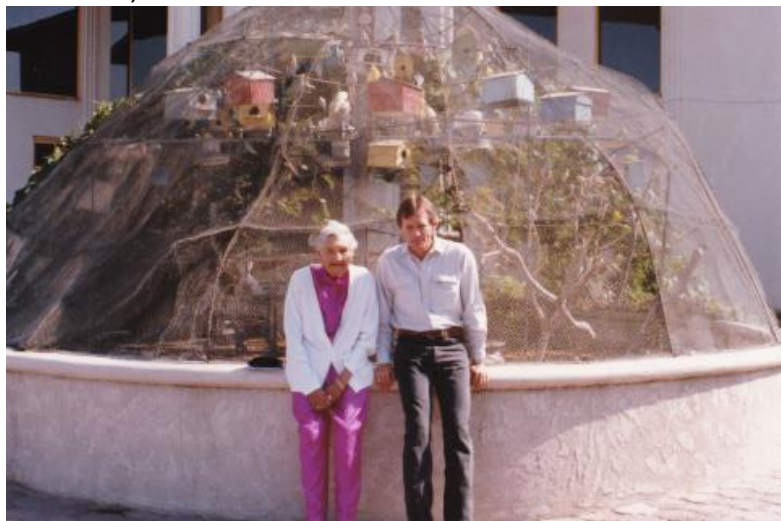
I went back to Tijuana in March of 1995 and asked Mildred, Ok, what'a we got? Mildred told me her patients preferred the YewTip® Tea and her doctors told her the YewTips were even more effective than the bark. We never cut down another Yew tree after that and only prune the tips of the limbs, which does no harm to the plants and actually stimulates them to put on growth. We've been working with the Bio-Medical Center for 25 years now with over 20,000 of their patients including Montana YewTips in their protocols. YewTips are included in about 80% of their treatments. The clinic is now owned and administrated by Mildred's nephew, Mike Thornton. Part of Mildred's legacy is she is the mother of Montana YewTips and was the first health care professional in the world to utilize Pacific Yew as a medicinal herb in a cancer therapy protocol. And that is how my relationship with Yew began. I've told my children to pay very close attention in life because you never know when a life changing opportunity will present itself if you can just see it and pursue it.

I'm 66 years old now and sort of semi- retired and was asked recently what will be the future of Bighorn Botanicals, Inc. and Montana YewTips.

My daughter, Chelsey, will take over running the company when I am gone and pretty much already does. Her sons are next in line. I've got it all planned out. Best wishes to you and yours for a wonderful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

Rus Willis
President of Bighorn Botanicals, Inc.



Rus and Mildred at the Bio-Medical Center- 1997