

Attorney tackles own ulcer problem

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

You could find a better occupation for someone writing a book on stomach pain, but you couldn't find a better name.

Gas is the name; lawyering is his game. David Gas has always been something of an overachiever. He graduated as a valedictorian from West Bloomfield High in 1973, was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1977 with majors in English and economics; he graduated from Harvard Law School in 1980 and has practiced law in Grand Rapids for a year.

A career in law and a family (wife Ann, kids Joseph, 2, and Carolyn, 2½ months) would be enough for most people. Not for Gas, who has written and self-published a book for people with ulcers and chronic stomach pain.

THE BOOK IS titled "Curing Ulcer Disease: A Revolutionary Approach." It's the result of Gas' two-year battle against constant stomach pain, fruitless treatment by a variety of doctors and, finally, his own painstaking research at the University of Michigan Medical Library, Harvard Medical Library, Michigan State Medical Library and Wayne State.

When doctors couldn't cure him, he cured himself, and now he wants to get rich curing you, you're wrong. The book was costly to publish, and so far it appears he stands little chance of making his money back. Of 2,738 copies, he sold 12 so far.

But all of that is getting ahead of the tale, which began in 1976, when the book's senior year at U-M, when his stomach began to kill him.

"My stomach hurt all the time, and that has a big impact on your life," Gas said in a telephone interview from his law office. "It dominates your mind."

GAS WENT to doctors at U-M and at Harvard after he enrolled there. They all told him the same thing: he had an inflamed stomach, a pre-ulcerous condition. They gave him the same advice: Eat bland foods, take antacids, take drugs. They gave him the

same relief: none; his stomach was still killing him.

"It didn't work at all," Gas said. "I never felt any real relief. I later found out that's not uncommon with stomach patients, because those things (drugs, tasteless food and drugs) often don't work."

So he did what was natural for him as a law student: He did the books. With the aid of a computer to do his searching, he immersed himself in medical literature.

(The book shows his extensive research: The body of the book is just 83 pages, but there are more than 400 footnotes, which take up 27 more pages.)

WHAT HE FOUND again and again, in a wide variety of sources covering more than 200 years, was proof that sugar and simple carbohydrates caused ulcers — not acid or spices in his food, not stress in his life.

He adopted a low-calorie (2,000 a day), no sugar, low-carbohydrate diet. The result? "My stomach no longer hurts," said Gas, who began the book in 1981 and got his first copy hot off the presses a month ago.

Originally, Gas sent his manuscript to a publishing house in New York. They returned it, said they liked it and suggested changes. They wanted to popularize it," said Gas, who often writes like a lawyer and whose prose is less than scintillating. But then, he wasn't trying to excite; he was trying to help others cure what had nearly driven him nuts.

"So I decided to do it my own way," Gas said. He hired a printer in North Carolina and published it himself, an expensive proposition that has resulted in the book's price of \$9.95.

"I know that's high," Gas admitted. "But it costs you \$25 at least just for an office visit. I would have paid hundreds and hundreds for that book. Frankly, the chances of my ever breaking even aren't that good. I never intended to write a book, but once I had done all that research."

"I know people are buying something right unseen, so what I'm doing is, if they don't like it, if it doesn't help them, I'm absolutely guaranteeing them their money back. I'll return their money, no problem."

GAS HAS SENT the book to various talk shows around the country and has made one appearance so far, on Channel 8 in Grand Rapids.

"I have one big handicap," Gas admitted. "I'm a lawyer, not a doctor. People think, 'What in the world does a

lawyer have to do with the stomach?' "I answer with three points. One, I'm a lawyer and taught to find answers to problems. Two, I've been there; my stomach hurt, and I have a special sensitivity to that. Three, virtually every fact and figure in my book is based on and footnoted to the medical literature."

Gas stresses in his prologue that he is not a doctor. He is a self-cured stomach patient who thinks his cure may be applicable to others.

If nothing else, it is a common sense approach that involves cutting down on calories, sugar and carbohydrates. Like all diet books, it has charts of what to eat and what to avoid.

Anyone wanting a copy of the book should send a money order for \$9.95 to David Gas, 4247-9 Crooked Tree Road, Wauvont, Mich. 49509.

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