I first became interested in the remedy Ginseng while attending a lecture by Nancy Herrick at the Hahnemann College of Homeopathy in the fall of 2001. As a second year student at the college, and only a few months into my studies of constitutional remedies, I was surprised to hear a lecture in which I was so well described, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Fearing that I was suffering from the homeopathy student’s version of hypochondriasis with which so many of my fellow students seemed to be stricken; that is, being sure that my constitutional remedy was whatever was being lectured on that day, and unsure of my skill as a homeopath, let alone being so bold as to self-prescribe, I postponed my serious study of the remedy for a few months.

The initial points in Ms. Herrick’s lecture that alerted me to the suitability of Ginseng were as follows (italics indicate quotes from my lecture notes; my commentary on my own state follows):

Ginseng is an adaptogen. This is key to the homeopathic remedy as well as the herb. It adapts to almost anyone’s problem, constitution, any issues that you have. I’m quite flexible mentally and physically, am interested and skilled in a lot of areas, and am able easily and quickly to shift gears completely from one topic or skill to a radically different one. In fact, I particularly enjoy doing this as it keeps me from being bored (an indicator of the Tubercular miasm).

One of the main themes is capability and increased energy. My friends and colleagues often describe me as very capable and quite energetic. Starting in my college days, I’ve often found that I’m awake and ready for more action, while my colleagues and friends have collapsed and are ready for rest.

From a prover: I was so hot and I’m not usually hot. Nancy’s comment: That came out a lot in the proving (being hot). My biggest physical concern, at the time, was the hot flushes and night sweats associated with menopause. Generally, however, prior to menopause, I tended to be a colder person, even wearing socks to bed every night except during the hottest weeks of summer.

Very indulgent in wine and food…. especially red wine. I have a great fondness for good food, and especially for red wine. Part of the year, I live near Napa, California and make frequent trips to the wineries of Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, and Monterey.
Counties. The rest of the year I live in Washington, which is also known for its wineries, which I enjoy visiting, as well as those of nearby Oregon.

From a prover: I usually don’t need water by my bed at night; with this remedy three glasses. (thirst) Nightly I place a pint of water by my bed even since beginning menopause. Prior to that, I never understood why anyone would want water by their bed.

From a prover: A sense of emotional groundedness, and an incredible ease with people. Since middle school, my friends and teachers have often commented on how grounded I am. I even feel my energy pulling me toward the ground. In addition, although quite shy at a young age, in my 30’s and 40’s I became very comfortable with myself and, soon thereafter, very much at ease with others. I do not hesitate to strike up conversations with strangers, often much to their surprise and sometimes alarm.

**Calmness is another theme.** For the past 30 years I’ve felt quite calm. I’m not easily agitated in situations that seem to make others emotional. (This was particularly evident to me when I was once talking on the phone with a friend while cooking dinner. While frying some vegetables, a flame leapt up out of the pan towards the ceiling of my wood house. I calmly asked my friend if he knew how to put out a grease fire. He asked why, and I said, “Because there’s a flame coming out of this pan and shooting up toward the beam in my kitchen.” He said, “Right now? Why aren’t you excited or screaming?” I replied, “I don’t know. Perhaps I should get off the phone and attend to it.” My brothers are the same way.

**Sense of trusting herself.** I have a deep trust in myself, partly because of the good intuition with which I’ve been blessed. I usually feel I can figure things out myself and do whatever needs to be done in a given situation without needing to ask someone else to do it. If I need to take advice I don’t hesitate to call around and find out what I need to know.

**Hiking—Ginseng is a Tubercular remedy.** Being outside, being physical, is extremely important to Ginseng and to all Tuberculars. I have always loved hiking and being outside. I used to hike regularly in the mountains of New England, and I lived alone for ten years in a small house in the woods so I could step out my front door and be in the wilderness. I hike partly because I love being in the natural world so much and partly because I need to move to feel settled inside.

Theme of *desire for luxuries: red wine, indulging one’s self, a sensuous kind of indulgence in one’s self*. Also, from a cured case: “I like to wear things like silk and satin, particularly my underclothes. I love to wear silk and satin next to my skin when I go to sleep.” I like really nice things, although I don’t always let myself indulge in them. For 15 years, I worked as a volunteer for a nonprofit organization and lived on room and board and $75-100/month stipend. Despite my poverty, rather than buying things of low or average quality, I would save up my stipend for months and always buy the finest quality of whatever goods I needed or desired, albeit very few of them. As for the silk, I used to buy silk charmeuse by the bolt so I could make myself silk sheets to sleep on and silk lingerie to wear close to my body. I have the same feelings about velour.

**Overconcern for others’ feelings.** This is one of my greatest weaknesses. Oftentimes I’m so concerned for the feelings of others that I go to great lengths to protect and soothe them. I often find I’m more worried about something untoward that has happened to a friend than they are. In college, I wouldn’t date men who asked me out if I felt there was no chance for a relationship, as I was terribly afraid of ever hurting their feelings if they started to like me. I never wanted to be put in the position of having to break up a relationship.

**Ginseng is an amazing remedy for sciatica.** I’ve had so many cases with sciatica. From the original proving: “Deep lancing around the loins. Pains from right hip to toes. Specific in lumbar, sciatica, and chronic rheumatism.” I suffered from sciatica for a few years while living in an ashram and meditating four to eight hours a day. I even had to transfer from an ashram in Puerto Rico to an affiliated ashram in Washington, D.C., so I could get treatment for my sciatica pain, which was preventing me from sitting in lotus to do my meditation.

It didn’t come out in the proving, but I’ve seen this in quite a few cases. **Desire for organic foods and exercising; it’s like the panacea effect.** It’s a strong aspect of Ginseng. I try to eat organic foods whenever possible. While I lived alone in the countryside, I had a one-acre garden so that I would have organic foods to eat year round. Also, as discussed previously, I love to exercise.

**From a cured case: I guess I want to be the best.** I’ve always wanted to be the best. I could be— not so much in a competitive sense as feeling I always want to do...
my best at whatever I’m doing. I’ve lost jobs because I’ve refused to cut corners and do mediocre work.

From a cured case: I’m always... [I like] to read about new things and do new things. To me that’s what’s exciting about life. It’s learning new things and reading new things. I had a double major in college: Biology and Environmental Sciences. In addition, I earned three graduate degrees: a masters in Indian Philosophy, a masters in Elementary Education, and a PhD in Ethnobotany. In my spare time, I have also formally studied gemology, anthropology, shamanism, finance, Ayurveda, homeopathy, and untold number of other things. My enthusiasm for new things never seems to ebb.

They start telling you what they’re doing, and you can’t believe they’re doing so many things. As above, I’m always studying and/or doing a lot of things. It’s partly the Tubercular miasm trait of not being able to sit still, to endure more than a few minutes of boredom, and the fact that my mind is always desiring to be engaged in something, even if the something is saying my mantra in meditation. I’ve never felt like I do a lot of things, but my friends keep telling me they’re amazed and exhausted just hearing all the things I’m doing. Always on the go, mentally and physically.

Nancy: What do you like to do? Patient: I just like to go out to dinner with my husband or my friends, and maybe listen to some jazz. I like to go to the art exhibit or the opera or symphony. Nancy’s comments: She’s a very refined Ginseng. Other Ginsengs will like to rock and roll. While in college, I frequently went out dancing every week. That was the rock-and-roll aspect. As an adult, I became interested in many different forms of music and frequently attend classical music concerts. I also like jazz, blues, new age, world, and rock music. My musical tastes (like most everything else in my life) are quite eclectic.

Ginseng is known for having high sexual energy (typically) or the polarity depleted. I had a lot of lovers in college and my 20’s, but then entered an ashram and lived under a vow of celibacy for 15 years without any difficulty. I didn’t feel depleted then, just no desire for sex when I was meditating all day long.

Strong element of romance, longing, desire for relationship that is intimate and connected. I often dream of having a more romantic relationship than I have with my partner. When I was still dating, I was always a shoe-in for a man who would give me flowers and chocolate, and wine and dine me. In addition, I cry easily in romantic movies or on seeing any romantic moments. I can start crying within thirty seconds of seeing a romantic or sappy scene in even a TV commercial.

My other physical complaints, before taking the remedy, in addition to night sweats and hot flushes associated with menopause were: TMJ, stiff neck and shoulders, a dull lower back pain, hip pain while sleeping and on first arising, reduced clarity of thinking and focus, poor memory, reduced energy, and frequent colds, usually ending with a persistent cough that lasted for at least a few weeks.

A few months after first hearing Ms. Herrick’s lecture, I studied Ginseng in the literature and found the following confirmatory symptoms:

Boericke: “Acts on the lower part of the spinal cord. Lumbago, sciatica, and rheumatism.”-corresponding to my lower back pain and sciatica.

Boericke: “Skin symptoms, itching pimples on neck and chest.” I had acne from adolescence through my 40’s, which I controlled with allopathic medication.

Boericke: “Tonsillitis, just like Bellad., but in dark-complexioned people.” I had chronic tonsillitis as a child and am dark-complexioned.

Boericke: “Bruised pain in small of back and thighs... Crackling in joints. Stiffness in back.”- all symptoms I was experiencing before taking the remedy.

Boericke: “Semi-lateral headache; occipital.”

Allen: “Pressure in temples; in right, and in left sensation as if too thick”

When I get headaches, which is infrequently, they are often felt in the temples on both sides of my head.

Allen: “Lips thick, covered with dry rough scales. Lips red and dry, they crack and bleed, agg. lower.” I have thick lips, which get covered with dry rough scales when chapped. If I’m not careful and don’t protect them, this can lead to cracking and bleeding, especially of the lower lip.

Allen: “Thirst absent.” I have very little thirst and drink very little. I have to remind myself to drink so I don’t get dehydrated. The exception is great thirst at night since menopause, especially with night sweats.
Allen: “[Nose] Dryness; with sensitiveness to air…. Bleeding from right nostril.” This is a perfect description of my nasal passages as I’m writing this article.

Allen: “Drawing in left side of lower jaw; D.in ascending ramus of lower jaw, zygomatic and upper jaw of right side.” The drawing is on the right side of my lower jaw, and is related to my TMJ.

Allen: “Frequent desire to urinate.” I have to urinate so often that I once considered being tested for diabetes.

Allen: “Voice rough; and hoarse, deep. Dry cough; in afternoon; in paroxysms… Oppressed breathing; worse when sitting than when walking; slow, deep, difficult; short, anxious; deep now and then. Frequently deep, labored inspirations; when sitting; frequent deep I., with tightness of chest, anxiety and heaviness of limbs.” This is a precise description of my breathing.

Following are more symptoms from the repertory that describe my state:


“Back. Pricking in scapulae extending to left shoulder. Lancinations between scapulae, in shoulders and along spine to sacrum agg. straightening himself, with difficult breathing.

“Extremities. Cracking in joints on moving them.


The first dose of Ginseng that I took was 200C in March 2002. On the first two days after taking the remedy, I experienced a dramatic increase in menopausal hot flushes, especially during the day. They resolved quickly. The following week I felt swelling of my left tonsil, with a reduction in energy for four days. I had suffered from frequent tonsillitis as a child, but I’d had no tonsillitis for over forty years. These symptoms also resolved within a couple of days.

Within a few days of taking the remedy, I also noticed that the stiffness and creaking in my neck was reduced, and the pain and soreness in my lower back had dramatically decreased. Also, I had a week of odd nausea and gastrointestinal distress, perhaps due to two bouts of amebic dysentery treated with western drugs.

Within a week after taking my first dose of the remedy, my night sweats were dramatically reduced and I was only awakened by them two or three times a night, rather than every hour or two, as had been my experience before the remedy. At present (March 2004), I have one or two a night for a period of days, and then go for weeks without any.

Within a couple of weeks after taking the first dose, my thinking had cleared up and my memory improved. I no longer have hip pain on arising or that wakes me while sleeping. My energy is increased and is pretty much back to my normal high level mentally and physically but since menopause I’ve never regained the extraordinary level of physical energy I had prior to menopause. There has been no change in my TMJ.

Most dramatically, I have had no serious colds since taking the remedy, despite frequent exposures. When I feel a cold coming on, I take a 30C dose (once a 1M dose, as that was what was available) and this prevents the cold from developing. The cold/flu symptoms are usually completely gone within a day or two. I also have never had a cold go into a cough, which pretty much happened almost every single time I got a cold. I used to have a chronic cough, after a cold, for three to four weeks every winter.

My hot flushes and night sweats are generally better, but fluctuate. The times I feel I’ve antidoted my remedy (once from exposure to a heating pad and twice from deep dental cleaning), the only symptoms that have recurred to indicate I’ve antidoted are hot flushes and night sweats. These pretty much resolve on re-dosing. The potency of the last dose I took was 2M.

On reading the chapter on Ginseng in Sacred Plants, Human Voices by Nancy Herrick, which was published after I took my first dose of the remedy, I found that perhaps ninety percent of the mental rubrics and well over fifty percent of the physicals applied to me. All of the themes are very much themes of my life: Calm/Capable/Determined. Courageous. Emotional/Incapable. Self-acceptance/Self-worth. Confidence/Assertive. Self-denigration. Community/Connection. Solitude/Alone. Energetic/Industrious. Flowing. Tired/Exhausted. Travel. Red.

Two aspects of Ginseng that aren’t reported in the
literature but I feel must be taken into consideration are energy and spirituality. My senses are more attuned to the energy in the world than the usual objects of perception (speech, smell, taste, etc.). When I’m conversing with people, it’s their energy that I’m listening for, rather than their words. With regard to spirituality, Ms. Herrick has told me that she’s noted a strong spiritual element in Ginseng cured cases. In my case, without question, the principle guiding force of my life for the past thirty years has been my devotion to God and to the path of God realization.

One of the salient points of my case that has changed my case taking and how I view remedies as a whole was recognizing how similar my favored dwelling places are to the natural habitat of my remedy. As a botanist by training, I am often very familiar with the growth habit, environment, and botanical family characteristics of the plant remedies I study and prescribe; so I was already familiar with the natural habitat of Ginseng before taking it as a remedy. I can describe with precision the type of soil, smell, amount of light and how its filtered through the trees, and even the climate that make me most happy, that make me feel most at home. These are all the conditions in which the American ginseng plant naturally thrives.

This recognition of the potential importance of habitat has led me to investigate whether my clients’ favored dwelling places may, in fact, be the habitat of their remedies. I now ask all my patients what their preferred habitat is, where they feel most at home, where they would like to live if no other factors intervened. Here are a few examples of the responses I’ve gotten:

**Lac delphinium patient**

“I love the water (her eyes get big). I love to see the seals swimming. I can feel like I’m that animal when I’m watching them. I really merge. I’m very adventurous. I’ve always loved the water. As a child I was an adventurous child. I always wanted to try everything. I loved climbing tall trees. I’d always swim far out. I always had confidence that I could do everything… As a kid, I would often have dreams of breathing underwater. I’d just be really comfortable underwater and hanging out and swimming there, and I could breathe.”

“What’s the feeling when you swim?”

“Just how it looks when you see seals or dolphins, or any streamlined water creature. It’s smooth and cool and silky and such a flow. It’s incredible. It’s very much a… I would say it’s a feeling of oneness, although you feel the water against the skin. I always make sure my head gets under the water to do the full experience.”

**Agaricus muscarius patient**

“Where do you feel most at home in terms of the environment?”

“There are two places… that I really felt at home when I was a kid. One was in this ditch among the roots, and you could walk up and there was this moss and a stream. Places that remind me of that feel really great. If I’m on a hike and there’s a gully with moss and roots… I also like the top of hills where I can feel the breeze and the wind blowing, and then I can run down the hill.”

**Lac defloratum patient**

“I just think food should be in a state that is nourishing, feels soothing when you put it in the mouth, tastes good, when it goes into your body it makes you feel good. That was just difficult (when she was a child and her parents forced her to eat cooked food and a nonvegetarian diet). I would think, all these great things that grow in the ground, why did they have to go through a cow, why can’t I just eat them from the ground? … I loved the garden and I hated everything cooked. I loved to go in the garden and eat things raw…. It was a beautiful garden. There were lots of things there and I would eat anything raw. My parents were always on my case… about raw food, which was what I desired. I just loved raw food and I hated meat and I hated milk.”

**Ginseng patient (myself)**

“I feel most at home in the woods. I most love being in a deciduous forest, with humus-rich soil, my nostrils filled with the fragrant smell of wet humus on a warm spring day, with filtered light coming through the trees. When my environment is just right, simply living my daily life and walking in the woods is a perpetual epiphany. The reason I studied botany in college and graduate school is that I was happiest in a career in which I could spend my time in the woods. Ever since my partner took me out of the woods, I keep telling him I love him and never want to leave him, but my soul is dying and my energy is dissipating because he has forced me to live in the sun in sterile cities and suburbs. This is why I bought...
land in the country last year and am building a cabin there. The woods, that is where I go to recharge my energy. It's something I can tangibly feel.

Also, with regard to the specifics of how the remedy source lives in its natural world, I've had the peculiar habit for over ten years, while sleeping, of working my hands under my underpants such that my inner wrists are touching my inguinal area—skin to skin—and my legs are spread apart, almost in a shallow V shape. My elbows are out to my sides. When I wake up in this position, I feel comfortable, that my body energy is more balanced. Once I realized that my constitutional remedy was *Ginseng* and found myself unconsciously assuming this position one night, I realized that the position I assume closely resembles the shape of the root of the ginseng plant.

*Cenchris contortrix* patient (a classmate being treated by Nancy Herrick)

“I just love the desert. I have to go to the desert every year, without fail. . . . But I really think I'm a plant remedy (vs. an animal). When I go to the desert I just love to get down on my belly and look up at all the plants.”

On Ginseng rubrics reported by Nancy Herrick.

The vast majority of the rubrics for *Ginseng* from Nancy Herrick's proving (well over 70%) describe my state. Knowing this has taught me the value of provings. I often feel like giving my partner Nancy's proving and saying to him: “Read this, and you'll learn more about me than you've picked up from our living together for the past ten years.” Ms. Herrick's proving and lecture, more than the older literature, most accurately describe my inner state. Following are many of her rubrics that apply to me:

- **MIND, ACTIVITY, increase**
- **ANXIETY; conscience, of someone walks behind him studying, while; agg.**
- **AUDACIOUS**
- **CHEERFUL**
- **Happy, very emotional, sensitive**
- **COMPANY; aversion to, agg.; presence of; people intolerable to her**
- **Solitude, fond of**
- **CONCENTRATION; difficult in a haze**
- **CONFIDENCE; feel capable**
- **CONTENTED**
- **Flowing feeling, all is well Self, with**
- **CONTRACTION; intolerant of**
- **COURAGEOUS**
- **DELUSIONS**
  - **Body Separated from**
  - **Expanded, he is**
  - **Separated Outside his body**
- **DEPENDENT; refuses to be**
- **DESires**
  - **Helpful, to be**
  - **Play to**
- **DETACHED**
- **DISTURBED, averse to being**
- **DUTY; cannot handle things anymore**
- **EGOTISM**
- **EMOTIONS**
  - **Changeable**
  - **Labile, shifts without holding onto past**
  - **Flow easily into one another**
  - **Happy, very emotional, sensitive**
- **ENTHUSIASM**
- **EXCITEMENT, excitabile; amel.; pleasurable**
- **FADSTIDIOUS**
- **FEAR**
  - **Attacked, of being, by animals while hiking**
- **FEARLESSNESS; can take on anything that comes along**
- **HAPPY**
  - **Positive, little things don't bother**
- **HAUGHTY**
- **HOPEFULNESS**
- **IDEAS; abundant, clearness of mind**
- **IMPATIENCE**
  - **Conversations, with People, with**
  - **Small talk, with**
- **INDIGNATION**
  - **With disrespectful people**
- **INDUSTRIOUS**
  - **Productive**
  - **Motivated, efficient**
- **LEARNING; desire for**
- **LOGICAL; while debating or discussing**
- **LOVE**
  - **Children, of**
  - **Nature, of**
- **MENTAL exertion; amel.**
- **MOOD ALTERNATING**
  - **Changeable**
  - **Labile, shifts without holding onto past**
  - **Happy, very emotional, sensitive**
- **MOTIVATED; EFFICIENT; SYNERGISTIC**
- **OCCUPATION; amel.**
OPTIMISM
PASSIONATE
PATIENCE
PERTINACITY
RESPONSIBLE for everything, does not want to be
RESPONSIBILITY; unusual agg.
   Wakes thinking of her
SELF-SUFFICIENT
SINGING; cheerful
SYMPATHETIC, compassionate
TENSION
THOUGHTS
   Rapid
   Rush, flow of
TRANQUILITY; grounded, centered
   Responds to true inner core
   Serenity, calmness; morning, on waking
TRAVEL; desire to
   Have experienced, to, and
TRUTH; tells the plain; and shares feelings
WORK; desire for mental
   Fatigues
   Motivated, efficient
   Productive

I hope that my own case has helped to elucidate more of the feeling of the Ginseng patient. In addition, I would urge those practitioners who find the concept of habitat in homeopathy of interest to ask their patients about their favorite environments and to note whether they match the natural habitats of their constitutional remedies. I would love to hear from you on this matter, in hopes of trying to gather more evidence to test this hypothesis. You can reach me at: <kathiunger@mindspring.com>.

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