

# Vermont Crosen: Diabetic for 50 Years

By JESSICA SULLIVAN  
Star Living Section Editor

**GAINESBORO** — Vermont Crosen is 73. For the past 50 years he has lived with diabetes and daily insulin injections. His disease was diagnosed at a time when little was known about it.

As a result of his conscientious care of himself, Crosen has been awarded medallions by two pharmaceutical companies in recognition of his successfully carrying out treatment for insulin-dependent diabetes.

At the November meeting of the Winchester Unit of the American Diabetes Association, a representative of Eli Lilly presented him with a sterling silver medallion. Joslin mailed him a bronze medallion recognizing his 50 years as a diabetic. The Lilly rep said Crosen was one of 327 persons who have received the awards since 1975.

**CROSEN RETIRED** in 1970 but remains active. He never allowed diabetes to interfere with his life. He credits much of his robustness to his wife Lola.

"I was in my teens when my eyes first started to go bad and I had terrible headaches," Crosen said. "I had my eyeglasses changed but I still had the headaches. I went to an old doctor in Berkeley Springs, W.Va. who told me I had diabetes. He sent me to Dr. C.R. Anderson in Winchester."

Little was known about diabetes mellitus then, a disease that dates back to the Greeks of 2000 B.C. The disease was named for its main physical symptom of "sugar in the urine."

Insulin was developed in 1921, not as a cure, but to help control diabetes.

Crosen said the first insulin he was given lasted only 12 hours.

"And I had to eat green stuff all the time," he said. "I'd go to the doctor and he'd give me insulin twice a week. But I couldn't keep it down. I went to a black doctor in Roanoke, a Dr. Pinkard, and he told me I didn't have diabetes but a glandular problem. He treated me with herbs. I took half a bottle of the stuff and felt pretty good."

"Dr. Anderson said if I wasn't going to listen to him, he wasn't going to doctor me. I decided I'd rather die than keep taking that insulin."

Crosen said that after about a month on the herb mixture, he "went to pieces."

His parents took him to the late Dr. John B. McKee, a new physician in Winchester at that time.

"He came me a dose of insulin and put me in the hospital. I got real sick." Crosen was in a deep diabetic coma. He was given large doses of insulin, intravenous electrolytes, and glucose.

"I was scared when I found out what I had but I was too sick to worry about it," he said.

He was diagnosed as a brittle diabetic, which meant that his blood sugar fluctuated a lot and he could go into an insulin reaction with episodes of hypoglycemia.

Crosen has juvenile-onset diabetes. The warning signals of this type of diabetes are constant urination, abnormal thirst, unusual hunger, rapid loss of weight, irritability, obvious weakness and fatigue, and nausea and vomiting.

Adult-onset diabetes is the more common form. It usually appears less abruptly and is generally less severe than the juvenile-onset type.

"I was in the hospital over a month," Crosen said. "The doctor had to pump my stomach one morning because (acidosis) had set in."

Crosen took injections of insulin twice a day until his condition improved. He now gives himself daily injections, 70 units a day of Lente insulin mixed with regular insulin. A 10-day supply costs \$6.80. Through the years, he has tried various combinations to regulate the diabetes.

**CROSEN SAID** he was the only person he knows of in his family to have diabetes. However, a daughter and granddaughter both have inherited the disease. Diabetes is a hereditary and chronic disease, genetically transmitted and persisting over a long time.

Crosen married in 1936. He operated a poultry business, performed manual labor, was a substitute mail carrier on horseback, hauled apples to a processing plant, and farmed. He ran Crosen's general store and gas station in the Reynolds Store area of Frederick County for years, retiring in 1970.

"I couldn't work for about a year after the coma," he said, "but I never let it get me down after that."

Crosen has three children, Vermont Jr., Shirley Hovermale, and Joyce Yost.

Crosen has nine brothers and sisters. He is the oldest. His father was named Utah and his mother Rhode Island. After they married, they named all their 10 children after states. Besides Vermont, there's Georgia, Montana, Kan-

sas, Oklahoma, Virginia, Minnesota, Maryland, Florida, and Tennessee.

**FAMILY MEMBERS** recalled a time in 1933 when it was believed that Vermont would die.

"A funeral home in Winchester sent a representative to the hospital to tell my granddad that they'd be glad to take the body," Crosen's daughter, Joyce Yost, said.

According to the ADA, most people underestimate the seriousness of diabetes as a national problem.

Dr. Robert Green, a local physician who specializes in internal medicine, is president of the local diabetes chapter.

"He has said that there are enough people locally who have diabetes to have 150 to 200 people at the meetings," Mrs. Yost said. The chapter meets the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in Farmers and Merchants National Bank on North Cameron Street in Winchester.

Members are working to raise money during November—National Diabetes Month—to assist with research, detection; patient, professional and public education; and children's camps.

Donations may be made to: Virginia Affiliate, American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 695, Winchester, Va. 22601.

Two rockathons are planned locally to help raise funds for the ADA. One will be held Saturday beginning at 10 a.m. at Montague Avenue United Methodist Church in Winchester and another Nov. 28 at Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, south of Gerrardstown, W.Va. on the Apple Pie Ridge Road. Free blood glucose testing will be available at both events.

To make a pledge for a rockathon participant or to join in the event, phone Sandy Touchstone at 667-1244 or 662-0688.

"YOU CAN'T CATCH diabetes from a pet or a friend but you can have it and not know it," Mrs. Yost said. "Every 60 seconds another American is diagnosed as a diabetic."

She said there are 10 million diabetics in the U.S. Four million of them do not even know they have the disease or are not being treated for it.

"When I first got diabetes, not many people lived long with it," Crosen said. "But if you take care of yourself, you can live a normal, productive life. After I got straightened out in the beginning I never wanted to give up."



Vermont Crosen with awards from Eli Lilly Co. and Joslin.

Star Photo by Jessica Sullivan

## How One Family Handled Drug Abuse

By JESSICA SULLIVAN  
Star Living Section Editor

Tom and Joyce Tobias of Annandale told members of the local Kids Are Our Concern organization how they handled the drug and alcohol problem of their older sons and grew in strength as a family.

The Tobiases addressed the Wednesday night meeting of KAOC at the Amherst Campus of James Wood High School. Mrs. Tobias organized PANDAA (Parents' Association to Neutralize Drugs and Alcohol Abuse) in Fairfax County, which is said to be the largest group of its kind in Virginia.

**TOM TOBIAS** profiled his family of seven children. When he and his wife discovered that their two oldest sons were involved with drugs and alcohol in December 1979, they read books, became strict, then lenient. They gave their sons more attention, then less attention. They made restrictions, handed out privileges, supervised them, lectured them, and even formed a parent peer group.

They went to family counseling. With each new approach, the problem seemed to improve—for a while. But as the oldest son went off to college and the other entered his senior year in high school, the abuse continued and became more prevalent.

The Tobiases eventually took their sons to Straight, Inc., in Florida, a long-term drug rehabilitation program. Both sons signed themselves into the program and are undergoing intensive therapy.

"WE THOUGHT when our boys entered high school the scene was the same as when we went to school," Tobias said. "It's quite a different scene."

Before their children's involvement with drugs and alcohol, the Tobias family was the picture of family

togetherness. As the two older boys began experimenting with drugs and alcohol, communication with other family members lessened and problems with school, the police, and the family erupted.

"I felt hopeless, desperate, and confused," Mrs. Tobias said. "I didn't understand what was going on."

She said her youngest son would sometimes stop drinking and using drugs for days, but could not remain in a drug-free state. Tests showed he was a borderline alcoholic.

"During the winter he frequently asked me to help him with his calculus," Tobias said. "It became obvious to me that he didn't mentally function very well. I could see he was going downhill quickly."

In March, just months before he was to graduate from high school, the Tobiases took their son out of school and traveled to Florida to encourage him to sign himself into the program. He eventually graduated from high school via a correspondence course.

**MRS. TOBIAS** spent three months in Florida with her son, and serving as a foster mother for other young people enrolled in the program.

"It's hard to get straight," she said. "And it takes a long time. I know that when my kids get out of the program, it's going to be hard for them to stay straight."

During the family turmoil of dealing with the problem, Mrs. Tobias said a lot of friction developed between her and her husband. "We were having a lot of disagreements which we never had before. We accused each other of being too soft, too strict. . . ."

She said they both did a lot of crying

and lived in fear that the older son would introduce the younger children to marijuana.

"Our family was sick," she said.

Mrs. Tobias said "druggie" kids are very good at splitting up homes. She said some of them make a real effort at it and then choose to go with the parent

who is more lenient.

Since Straight, Inc., came into the Tobias' family life, all family members have attended "rap" sessions, which included the younger brothers and sisters.

"IN LOOKING back, I try to think of the signs that were there if I had the awareness," Mrs. Tobias said.

She recalled that her one son became rebellious and lazy, and did not like to be with the family. "He thought we were prudes," she said. "He slept a lot and was difficult to wake up. There were dramatic behavior changes."

She said she found screens like those in a kitchen faucet and thought they were from her washing machine. She said the screens are used as filters for marijuana pipes.

"I found a lot of burnt matches," she said. "I learned after that that it's hard to light marijuana."

Mrs. Tobias said her sons were "drugging" for three years before she and her husband found out. "This is not unusual," she said. "Like a lot of kids, they were able to run a dual life."

She said one of her sons told her that he has used marijuana, uppers, downers, cocaine, LSD, laughing gas, "everything you can think of."

The couple said alcohol is a number one problem and getting a lot more serious. Mrs. Tobias said kids are learning that if they combine alcohol and marijuana they don't throw up since the THC chemical in marijuana suppresses nausea.

"A lot of kids of ODing (overdosing) on alcohol nowadays," she said.

**THE TOBIASES** fielded numerous questions from the audience after their two-hour presentation. Many were about the Straight program, which costs \$2,100 despite the length of time needed for rehabilitation, be it nine months or

three years. There is a monthly food fee of around \$35. The program has been in existence for five years. Minors in the program must voluntarily sign themselves in.

"There's so much caring there you can't believe it," Mrs. Tobias said.

"Best of all, our sons like themselves and their family," Mrs. Tobias said. "They wear a smile on their face and have a beautiful glow in their eyes. They are proud to be straight and are anxious to help others by relating our family story."

One teacher at the meeting asked the couple how they would have reacted if a teacher told them their son was on drugs. She said she can smell marijuana smoke of some of her students, but has hesitated to confront the parents for fear of a lawsuit.

Col. James Longerbeam, president of KAOC, said there is a law that gives teachers immunity if they report to authorities a student suspected of using drugs.

Section 8.01-47 of the state code says:

"In addition to any other immunity he may have, any teacher, instructor, principal, school administrator, school coordinator, guidance counselor or any other professional or administrative staff member of any elementary or secondary school, or institute of higher learning who, in good faith without probable cause and without malice, acts to report, investigate or cause any investigation to be made into the activities of any student or students or any person or persons as they relate to alcohol or drug use or abuse in or related to the school or institution on activity, shall be immune from all civil liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as the result of the making of such a report, investigation, or disclosure."



Tom and Joyce Tobias at last Wednesday night's meeting of Kids Are Our Concern.

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