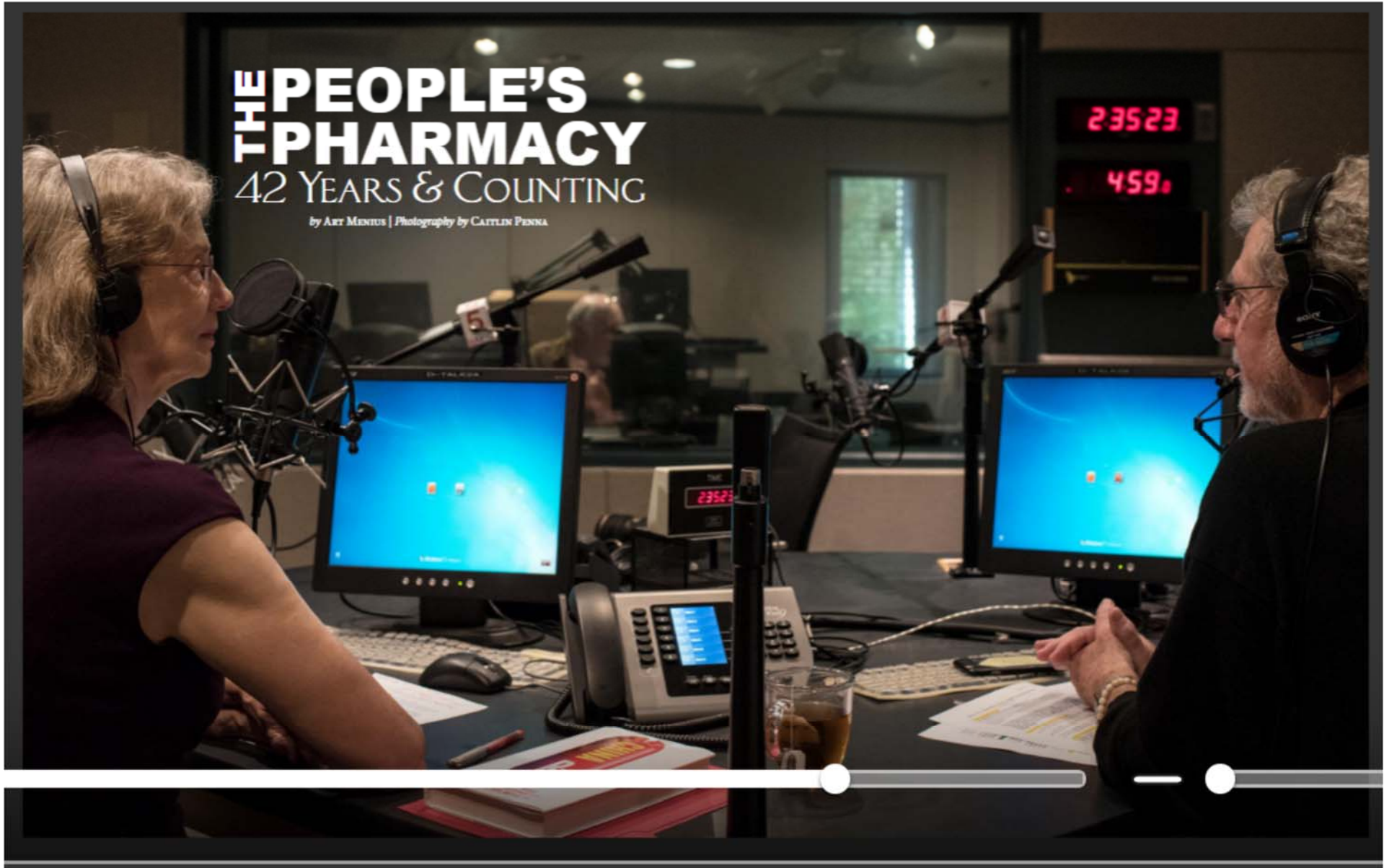


# THE PEOPLE'S PHARMACY

42 YEARS & COUNTING

by ART MENIUS | Photography by CATTILIN PENNA



"Terry probably would be fine without Joe," says public television producer Will McIntyre about his friends Joe and Terry Graedon, "but Joe would be a wreck without Terry. Like a lot of successful couples, each supply each other's deficits. Terry has strengths that Joe doesn't have, Joe has strengths that Terry doesn't have. They're much stronger together than they are apart."

The Graedons, who live in a sylvan area between Durham and Chapel Hill, have helmed The People's Pharmacy from a single book into an impressive cottage industry encompassing a well-known public radio show, close to 20 books that have sold more than two million copies combined, a nationally syndicated newspaper column, an email newsletter with more than 150,000 subscribers, more than 30 free or low price health guides on specific topics, an information-packed, constantly updated website, even TPC-branded lip care and deodorant products. Every aspect drives their mission: "Empowering you to make wise decisions about your own health, by providing you with essential health information about both medical and alternative treatment options."

"The People's Pharmacy," which airs weekly on almost 200 public radio stations, provides the flagship of the Graedons' operations. NPR began distributing the show nationally in 1994. Some 200,000 listeners tune in each weekend. "The People's Pharmacy" is WUNC's longest running national production. In so many ways Terry and Joe have been ahead of their time and WUNC has benefited by being along for the ride," explains David Brower, program director for WUNC-FM, the originating station for the show since its beginning.

"The People's Pharmacy" is exactly as the title indicates," Brower says. "It's thoughtful, practical conversation about health from the patient's perspective. Joe and Terry are not afraid to get personal, and I think that's immensely helpful to our listeners as they explore what it means to be healthy."

Everything started with Joe's book entitled – wait for it – *The People's Pharmacy*, which appeared only five years after he completed his master's in pharmacology at Michigan. The tome, filled with information about prescription drugs written for the layperson, climbed the New York Times best seller list. Joe explains how Terry's anthropology fieldwork in Oaxaca led to the book. "I was sitting on the on the veranda, and I had an idea for a book. I'm not the kind of person who can just sit around. So, there I was with a manual typewriter and a ream of paper, and I just started pounding the keys. It was partly because I was just interested in making information about pharmaceuticals understandable."

An aunt had put the idea in his head when her questions showed him how

to *The People's Pharmacy* proved his aunt was not alone. "The success of the book surprised me as well as the publisher beyond our wildest imagination," Joe admits. Success took them to many of the media outlets associated with

news and celebrity, including *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *20/20*, *Today*, *Good Morning America*, *The Tonight Show*, *Larry King Live*, *Dateline NBC* and *CBS Morning News*.

Terry thinks the timing was key. "In 1976 *Our Bodies, Ourselves* also came out. We caught a wave and have been riding it ever since. We had no idea that this would consume our lives. We've been very fortunate in how our lives evolved."

Otherwise, Joe thinks, "I probably would have been a very unhappy person. I would have been doing research that I would have been very sad about." Simply put, Joe does not feel progress in the pharmaceutical field has kept pace with his dreams in the late '60s and early '70s.

Instead, "We've had an influence on millions of people. We've had so many people visit our website over the last 10, 15 years. Sometimes I sit there in awe. People from all over the world visiting us, getting our newsletter, listening to our podcasts."

The debut volume hit the shelves scarcely a year after Terry's job at Duke brought them here. "I wasn't quite sure this is where I wanted to land," Joe told *Chapel Hill Magazine*. "Here we are years later, and ... this is the ideal place for us."

Book after book – and even one medical novel – followed *The People's Pharmacy*. Their books have not appeared as often this decade. "Writing books is hard work," Terry says. The website needs daily attention that takes away our time to write. We have several books we'd like to do."

Exploring their website could take as much time as writing a book. One can look up seemingly any prescription drug, herb or home remedy. Nearly 700 episodes, going back to 2003, of "The People's Pharmacy" show are available in their entirety. Thousands of in-depth articles are organized by topic.

When "The People's Pharmacy" newspaper column launched in 1978, they expected it only to last a year before they would run out of topics. Forty years later they still have plenty of content. When the column began, Joe was already developing an interest in radio. According to Terry, "Joe fell in love with talk radio on the book tour for *The People's Pharmacy*. He saw the best at work and approached the general manager at WUNC-FM about doing a show."

She became co-host a couple of years later in 1983. "Joe said that when he didn't have a guest, he felt like he was talking to himself. So, he asked me to come along. I fell in love with talk radio too."

Listeners have fallen in love with Joe and Terry. "Terry and Joe are old friends to our listeners," Brower observes. "They've aged with them and and analysis. They are scientists first but – afraid to try gin raisins or a pinch of turmeric between the cheek and gum. It's real, human and friendly."

Their son joined the family business as sound engineer and then webmaster.



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"Dave is an amazing sound editor," says the proud father. "We could not do 'The People's Pharmacy' radio show without his assistance. He has evolved into what I think is one of the preeminent sound editors in public radio land."

McIntyre attributes the enduring success of "The People's Pharmacy," which reached episode 1126 on June 14, to expertise and enthusiasm. "They each have a passion for their own areas, but together they combine expertise and just are so knowledgeable about everything. You can talk about any sort of drug that you might find anywhere in the world, and they'll say 'oh, yeah. We know about that...' They're not afraid to delve into areas that trained medical personnel will not approach. Plus, they make it understandable to the average person. They dispense an amazing amount of information, but they also entertain."

The radio show displays the Graedons' remarkable partnership. As a recent guest pointed out, kindness and generosity are essential to a lasting union. Joe and Terry have that combined with the strength that comes from working both together and separately and approaching the same matters from different places. "I think that's it. Complimentary and overlapping, bringing different perspectives. Joe's a pharmacologist; I'm an anthropologist," Terry says, modestly adding, "There is more interest in health than before."

"Terry and Joe are the best. They are easy, forgiving and light up a room whenever they enter," Brower gushes. "They complement each other, fill in gaps and are not afraid to push back when necessary. They have one of the most honest and loving relationships I've ever seen, and that comes through on the radio. Terry and Joe are the real deal."

The focus of the show has evolved over the decade. Terry says, "The shift has been toward living healthy rather than just drugs." In the mid-1990s, she became interested in herbal remedies and other alternative approaches. "I was surprised at how much research was available, some of it not done as well as we would like."

Joe's training made him a believer in double-blind trials written up in peer-reviewed journals. "Terry opened my eyes to what I'll call experience and that there was an amazing amount of science around the wisdom of the old wives, the grandparents, the great-grandparents. That information that had been passed down from generation to generation. It was based on 'did it work?'... What we try to do is we try to blend the science and the experience"

Now in their early 70s, the Graedons show no signs of slowing down, intending to keep rolling with The People's Pharmacy as long as they still enjoy it. "That's the plan," Terry assures me. "We're about two years away from our 50th wedding anniversary and not too many years after that our fiftieth anniversary of working together."

Their titles include 1988's *50+: The Graedons' People's Pharmacy for Older* and 2001's *50+: The Graedons' People's Pharmacy for Older*. They began with "It's not how old we live, but how we live that counts! Growing older ought to be wonderful.... But even with good planning, time, and a measure of economic security,

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