

Interview with Amazon John

By Dawn Fazende with Peter Mount Shasta

John Easterling, a treasure hunter from the United States, wandered into a Shipibo Indian village in the Amazon Rainforest sweating and chilled with jungle fever. The Indians gave him a healing tea and by morning his fever had broken and he was feeling better. He continued drinking the tea for ten days and discovered, to his surprise, that he felt in better health than he had been in for years.

Realizing he had at last found the real treasure of the Amazon, “Amazon John” as he is now called, began importing herbs from the jungle and offering them to people in the states in the form of a variety of healing formulas. Today he has a thriving business based on ecological sensitivity, right action and integrity.

DF: Your story is intriguing. How did you end up “Amazon John”???

I resonated early on with the Inca and that sort of thing. When I was a kid we used to get these weekly readers. There was a story about a kid your age in another part of the world doing something wild and exotic while you’re still sitting there in grammar school reading about it. One week there was a story there about Sangre and his llamas high up in the Andes in Peru hanging around the ruins and doing different things. That really got my imagination going and inspired me to go there. It became a dream to be held until I got done with school.

When I completed college I sold my car and bought a ticket to Ecuador. At that point in time I was in treasure hunter mode. I figured I’d go down and find some of the Inca treasure.

Originally I applied for the Peace Corps. I said I’m really looking forward to going down to Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. But as I sent in the application, knowing that it took me six weeks to fill it out, that I was waiting on forty pages of government bureaucracy, I thought it was going to take weeks if not months to hear back. But I went on Thursday and they called me on Monday. They had me all fixed up on this cotton-growing project on the Ivory Coast of Africa! I think they were looking for warm bodies. They asked me, “What’s your agricultural experience?” Two tomato plants as I was growing up.

Now, this was in the early ‘70’s. There was a waiting list. Everyone wanted to go to Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

So I sold my car and bought a ticket and headed for Ecuador. After being down there a couple of weeks without finding any lost cities, I went down to the coast of Peru and spent a couple of weeks there. Still no gold. I had a couple of hundred bucks left. I bought some locally produced sweaters and scarfs and brought them back to the states and sold them. That provided a means to an end.

I bought another ticket and returned to South America. I’d spend two or three months at a time down there, traveling around. I’d collect from a co-op of Indians making alpaca sweaters and such. I also had time to explore and pursue my avocation of looking for the lost cities. It was about three years before I got into some real digs up on the north coast, in the Chimu and Moche periods of civilization, a pretty ancient civilization. The name of the company then was the “Raiders of the Lost Art”. (laughter) We were recovering different pre-Columbian textiles and artifacts for different collectors and museums and that sort of thing along with sweaters and handcrafted items. I went along for a while and then I went up over the Andes and back into

Brazil and Uruguay and got into gemstones – tourmaline, quartz crystal, rose quartz and a lot of amethyst. We'd import fifty-five gallon drums of crystal balls and things.

That supplied most, for a while anyway, most of the psychics and seers in the states with crystal balls. I got into a lot of that, and of course then you're introducing a whole different kind of energy, subtle energy of stones and that sort of thing.

Later I started going into the Amazon Basin and working with the various local Indians gathering tribal artifacts, ceramics and things like that. I had hepatitis and Rocky Mountain spotted fever years before, and I had a near death experience. My liver was in really rough shape. It was very severely compromised, as bad as livers get.

You know, the liver performs several hundred different functions of the body so my energy was compromised and my mental acuity – the liver balances all that sort of thing.

The native Shipibo Indians looked at me, saw I had this recurring fever that would come on, and I would just kind of break out in a sweat and have to lie down for a few hours. It would slowly go away but I'd be extremely weak and in chronic fatigue all the time.

That symptomatology was part and partial to who I was. The Shipibos offered me a mix of healing teas. I said, "sure". Drinking these teas over a period of ten days took my health not only back to where it was prior to when I was sick, but to a whole new level of life experience. My energy came rushing back in as did my mental acuity, my sense of groundedness, my vitality. I thought, "This is really great! Now here's a real treasure."

I continued to chuck this stuff down while looking for the lost cities in the jungle. Then I met Nicole Maxwell who spent forty years researching medicinal plants down there. She told me about some of her experiences. She had cut her arm and had some arterial bleeding. That happens often in the Amazon, because people use machetes in their right hand and they get a glancing blow off a tree or something and bam! And they've cut their arm. When she couldn't stop the bleeding a couple of Indians stepped off into the forest and cut this Dragon's Blood tree they call it. It bleeds red sap blood.

It looks just like blood. You drip the sap in and it seals up the wound. Her arm healed with almost no scarring. Now we know that the sap by dry weight is ninety percent pure antioxidant. It's being researched by several drug companies for its ability to eliminate herpes and a rare form of lung virus. It's totally anti-viral.

Nicole and I started swapping stories. "Well, this is what happened to me... Well I experienced this..."

She spent the next forty years after her experience researching herbal remedies indigenous to the Amazon. She went to see one tribe, which had a sap you mix with the bark of a tree and pack around an infected tooth. It kills the pain, kills the swelling, kills the inflammation and the tooth self-extracts leaving a nice clean spot.

The natives also told her about a plant they use – a grassy looking plant with a tuber that grows underground. The women mix that tuber with other herbs and drink it as a tea for three days over the menses and they don't conceive for seven years.

There are over two hundred thousand species of plants growing in the Amazon, and western science has looked at about two percent for therapeutic value. Yet about half your pharmaceuticals are based on the model of some kind of rainforest plant. Clearly we're looking at the treasure house of planet earth. I believe we have stuff that could reverse almost all the degenerative issues that are going on.

The rainforest, centered in the Amazon basin, has the highest concentration of life energy on the planet.

There are a couple of reasons I believe that. If you look only at the tea the Indians gave me, of course, it is obviously good for the immune system. It really gets the shields up in the entire immune system. The name of one plant used means “to shatter the stones,” and it’s considered infallible for kidney stones, for gallstones, and that sort of thing.

Chanca Piedra also has unique properties: reverse transcriptase inhibitor, which interferes with viruses’ ability to replicate – a whole broad spectrum of viruses, especially hepatitis, and it might work with HIV as well. There is extraordinary material growing in the forest!!!

I started bringing that stuff back to the states. My brother had hepatitis and he got a similar benefit as I did. Then a couple of friends of mine, a chiropractor and a naturopath, looked at the herb and said, “Hey, this is the kind of stuff we could use in our practice.”

DF: How did you do this research?
You’re not a doctor.

We used different ways of testing it. One of these friends is a real master kinesiologist and the other used EDS computerized equipment to see how the herbs would interface with the human physiology before you actually test it. They were both impressed. I said “I have garbage bags of this stuff” and I have others which are supposed to be good for diabetes. Diabetes is not my problem so I didn’t know if it would work or not. Through the testing we were able to refine formulas and put them into play in the practitioners office with their patients. For three years we worked exclusively with doctors and healthcare practitioners here and in Spain, Canada and Belgium so we were able to see what would happen in real human beings eating these products.

DF: What were your results?

We ended up with forty-three formulas at one time. Patients began to ask, “What do you have for this? What do you have for that?” We had to go back to the treasure house and sure enough we always found something there.

The research helped us identify similar symptomatology and how these symptomatology are expressing themselves. We began to recognize they were caused by some type of deficiency; this was the reason these things were happening. The question was: why does someone feel so compromised that they actually seek out professional health consulting? Why do they walk into the doctors? What do they say when they come into your office? What’s their problem?

That was probably the most extraordinary piece of information we gleaned from the three years of working exclusively with practitioners. Everybody has got the same stuff – immune system dysfunction and inefficient digestion and metabolism, stress, environmental toxicities, energy circulation, hormonal imbalances and then pain, swelling, and inflammation. Ninety percent of the complaints were in those categories. We focused our formulas to address the major issues of ninety percent of the population.

DF: Is anyone else involved in this research?

Several others. Dr. Hawver, Dr. Innes and Gabriel Cousins are some of the practitioners who check out the formulas. The main thing is that everything we do is based on traditional formulas actually used in the rainforest. We’ve got the medicine men down there.

We're trying to refine those traditional remedies to address the issues that we're facing in today's industrial cultures. The medicine men don't have to deal with that or with environmental toxicities we're being bombarded with.

It's no mystery that we're living in these exciting times in civilization, and at the same time, as a species we're being threatened more now than ever before.

There are more challenges – viruses, fungi, mold, and bacteria – to our health than any time in history. The degenerative issues here like cancer, arthritis and diabetes, which are out of control, have become commonplace. It used to be that one out of three people would get cancer. Now it's even less than that, two and a half or something. If you get upriver a couple of days in the Amazon you don't see cancer, arthritis, or diabetes.

DF: Why do you think that is? Is it a function of the social environment?

Or a function of the physical environment? Or a function of the mental environment? as contrasted with our civilization?

The reason people in our society are experiencing these kinds of degenerative issues is twofold. One, the amount of bacterial, fungi, mold and challenges we face, many of them created by toxins in the environment. Second, is the deficiency of our food supply. The nutritional content in our food supply is at an all time low. Our diet is not like the diet our parents or great-grandparents had. They were eating wild-grown food, pulled right out of the forest, and they got a broad spectrum of nutrient matter ingested into the system to feed the organs, glands and systems. Our diets have become so deficient that our organs are essentially starving to death. We're sitting ducks in a very compromised state of health. Throw in toxins and boom! You get all these degenerative issues.

The information in plants growing wild in the Amazon is different than that in a tomato growing beside the interstate in California. That "interstate" tomato comes up through the ground in an artificial environment and is sucking in exhaust fumes all day long. The information in that plant – and certainly the chemistry and nutritional factors aren't there – the information that is in that plant is not the same as the information in plants that have been growing for thousands and thousands of years in ecological harmony.

When you're wild crafting, you're getting the strongest of the species by definition because it's still there, in its original environment. The information about harmony and balance ingrained in that plant when ingested resides in us on a subtle level. Some people are aware of that connection. When I'm drinking a tea and it'll be doing a number of things over a period of a few weeks, I feel a real peace. I feel better and at home in my immediate environment and more connected to plants and living things.

DF: It sounds as if you are partaking of wholeness, reminding the body that it is part of the divine whole.
PMt.S: I understand some of these herbs, such as the Una de Gato, grow where they have gone through clear cutting. Is that a factor? I understand people will clear-cut a whole area down there and for two years they can graze cattle. When they came through to round up the cattle, they found some of these herbs there.

Cultivating is not what we do. Our sense is to work with the wild plants so we're wild crafting everything. I have always had this spirit, this feeling, that for whatever reason, things should be in balance. When the plants were introduced to me, everything started coming together and I recognized that all these areas I had been dealing with – handcrafts and stones, learning about subtle energies – these were all prerequisites.

Then I was introduced to the real treasure of the Amazon, which is the Amazon itself, the botanicals. I am serving as kind of a link in the chain to facilitate knowledge, and at the same time to provide the indigenous

people with resources so we can ecologically and sustainably wild craft these materials. Again, two things happen. One the rainforest provides us with the raw materials we need for the healing aspects of these botanicals, and two, it provides the indigenous people with resources so they can make new decisions about their own future, decisions they haven't had the opportunity to make in several generations.

DF: In aboriginal societies, the primary producers of herbal formulas were the spiritual members of the tribe, the witch doctor or the shaman. Do you have any opinions about how using these wild crafted products affects us now, spiritually?

Yes.

DF: Will they? Would they? Could they?

I believe the information in the plants, all the chemistry and nutrition, shows us we are capable of a whole new level of life experience. In fact, I'm certain of it because it happened to me, and I'm healthier now than I've ever been. And why is that? You would expect to peak out around your twenties and then kind of stabilize and then start failing apart and degenerating.

DF: Speak for yourself John... (laughter)

I would suggest that most people aren't aware there is another state of health beyond being not being sick. You know, most people think, "Well if I'm not sick then I'm healthy". There is a whole other state available if you start feeding your body nutrient matter that it has never had.

Those organs and glands and systems haven't had that nutrition in several generations, since our great great grandparents were eating wild out of the forest. When you introduce these things into the body, the pancreas and the spleen and the thymus start saying, "Wow where has that been?" You start moving to a whole new level of efficiency. When the whole body is doing that, all sorts of symptomatology starts going away. That certainly effects people on every tangent.

The idea of the information coming from these plants, which we get from everything we ingest, is about the life of this grape or the life of this peach, or what happened in the life of this plant. To bring that out of the rainforest – there are some wonderful things about harmony and balance that come with that.

DF: In a sense your work gives us an interesting take on the whole mind-body-spirit connection. You're saying we can re-program our biological computers from natural archetypes and bypass the copy we get from the hothouse.

Yes. We can't reprogram the software when we defeat the hardware with the software and the software is where the action is.

DF: How do you think all of this has affected you on a spiritual level?

It's made a difference in my connection with the people down there. One of the plants has facilitated my ability to ... I wouldn't say necessarily my ability to communicate but to receive information from the plants in terms of the energetics of the plants.

We don't market that. Personally I would never do that in the United States. To me, it's personal and it doesn't make sense to me to use it recreationally. You need to be deep in the jungle, in the correct environment and correct setting.

DF: And with the correct people around you.

Oh yes, and the correct intent. You will pick up energy even hundreds of miles away. If you're in a metropolitan area it's different. When you ask, "How do you know that plant does that?" the medicine men will say, "The sacred plant told me". Sometimes their information comes from experiences they've had, they've seen, and they've watched themselves or the animals or the parents or family or other members of the group or something. And other times it's the plant itself that's told them.

DF: Do you mean you ingest it and experience it talking to you on an intuitive level?

Well certain plants, when combined, create a visionary substance. What it may do is actually unlock the memory of our ancestors. We're born with what has been passed on from our parents and our great-grandparents. Packed in the DNA structure somewhere, is some memory that the plant allows you to decode or download. You're getting information from your genealogy, and there is a lot of information that comes rushing forward based on the intent.

DF: That sounds like a Castenada experience. But if I want to have such an experience I'm going to have to go down to the Amazon and find a legitimate tribal shaman.

Right. That is the way to do it. Or you can take a group down.

PMt.S: So you're accessing the DNA, in a sense, the cellular memory?

DNA has a double helix structure. One of the biggest visions people have is of the snakes wrapping themselves around trees and such. It could be that part of what you're seeing there is actually DNA.

DF: Without the metaphor, what else would they have called it?

PMt.S: Sure. So are you going to take groups down there?

I send a group every year, a group of Amazon Herb associates, the people who are connecting and distributing the most material. In the beginning when I was bringing herbs back, I'd bring one kilo, ten kilos, a hundred kilos and the Indians would say, "Wow, how big is your family?" (laughter)

Well there are two hundred million in my village. Last year we brought in about sixty-four tons of raw material. It took a while to get them moving on that – collecting and bringing that kind of quantity of material down river – but now we're affecting the lives of numerous villages. They're throwing the lumber guys off because they have the resources they need. People come to me all the time to say, "Isn't it terrible what is happening to the rainforest?" I say "No, no you're on the wrong mode, I've got the good news!" If you really want to be part of the solution, the whole idea is to make the rainforest more valuable alive than dead. I think the plants are sending out a message from down there, the plants are broadcasting...

DF: Can you see them craning their little necks, "Hey up there?" (laughter)

It's more of "help!" but not in a selfish way. It's like "I have help for you. Here I am. I can resolve most of your issues. But at the same time, I'm being threatened." They're broadcasting that into the collective consciousness, so people know. When you talk about the rainforest, many people have certain degree of concern but many people don't know why. It sounds like, "Save the rainforests. Well, what for? I don't know, let's just save it."

If it's not worth anything, why don't we just pave it and make a giant parking lot out of it? But I know what it is worth, and it turned my life around. These plants have an influence on the collective consciousness of everyone. People know something is going on down there. Now I know at least one very powerful reason why we could make a more vital life and death. We've got a neat structure and format where that is happening.

DF: How widespread is your operation down there?

We're operating on about a hundred miles of river, measured in hours or day it takes to get there. Probably about a hundred, a hundred fifty miles of river. So if things really expand I think we could really influence the entire Amazon basin.

PMtS: By using these herbs people are really participating in the regeneration of the rainforest.

DF: . . . while regenerating themselves. That's the thing. I do not endorse any particular product over another, but I've been drinking Shipibo tea. For me, it's an amazing substance.

There are two hundred thousand known species of plants. There's a ton more that still haven't even been worked with and identified.

DF: How do you know which plants to use?

There are medicine men of the different groups and there are some older residents in the groups who have a knowing-ness and remembrance of what the plants do.

There are a lot of signature plants, meaning that the plant itself is telling you what it's used for. For example, Chanca Piedra is considered infallible for dissolving kidney stones. It's a frail looking little fern-like thing with a bottom stem like an appendage, like little balls, like little stones all on the bottom, like kidney stones and gall stones, and that's what the plant's for.

PMtS: There does seem to be a strong spiritual component to the herbs.

I respect that and know that there is. It certainly goes beyond my understanding. My thinking is that I should make it available, and the more I work with it, the more I recognize how important it is. One of the processing methods is a technique which was used in eighteenth century Europe. The raw material is dried and then run into the solvents known at that time – alcohol and water.

You're breaking this stuff down into a solution, and after a period of a couple of weeks – we like to start on a new moon and finish on the full moon so we get the full energetics going – we press it on a fifty-thousand pound press. Once that's pressed, the material, everything that is going to go into the solution is in the solution and the only thing left is the cellulose material. But we know that there are some minerals locked in that as well, so we take that separately and reduce that to an ash. That yields an alkaline mineral ash, so we get the minerals. We put that back into the solution. The bottom line is everything that is in that wild, living entity miracle of a living plant ends up in the bottle in a bio-available form for human physiology.

DF: There is something not at all subtle that does seem to happen with this particular tea. I'm sitting here saying to myself, "God, I'm in my body!"

What a powerful testimony. "I'm in my body." Wow, strong words.

DF: The energy is subtle but it's not subtle. It's subtle but it's obvious. The effect happens subtly. I find myself using words like wholeness to describe the effects because that's what it feels like. You feel whole. There's a rejoicing going on. I may be the number one cynic on this planet when it comes to faddish ideas or products. I just don't buy in to hype. You have to really convince me. I've been drinking your tea for a few days. The pot is always in need of refilling. Somehow – I'm not quite able to put my finger on it and you may have already said it – within the integrity of the plant life in that tea, we find our own integrity, the body feels as if it is coming back to it's own integrity.

Somehow it's being fed something at some level. Certainly there is the nutrition. There is the information. The body is being fed something at some level it recognizes as able to respond to. There are a lot of different stories of things that have happened over the years. There is one thing that actually started with this. I was going to take a break and I sold The Raiders of the Lost Art to go to China and hang out like I was hanging out in South America, you know, twenty-two years and a hundred and fifty times.

I sold the business. I was doing mostly stones at that point. I was doing a gem show with the new owners and for three months I went around and showed them how the business operates. I showed them the mines in South America. Well, it was the last day of the last hour of the last gem show, and I was going to be free, and I was going to Nepal and Tibet to hang out.

I had a lot of stones there at the table, and a guy came up to me and - he was looking at the stuff – and we started talking. I was telling him about the positive and negative energy. He said, "I came because I was sent here on this mission." At the gem shows you get a lot of that, crystal balls and other energies. He said, "Have you ever thought about doing anything with health?"

I told him, "No, I've haven't really considered that, but I have some herbs I do and I work out once in a while. You know, no big deal."

And he said, "Well, you're going to be doing something that is going to affect the lives of millions of people. So would you accept that charge?"

He held out his hand and without hesitation I said "Yeah."

I held out my hand and he dropped this little crystal point in my hand. It was a little three-dollar Arkansas crystal point, and he said, "You're going to be careful and you're going to be really busy so you've got to make sure that you take care of your own health." And he turned around and kind of disappeared into the crowd.

DF: He sounds like one of those men who do business in Mt. Shasta – you know those Ascended Master guys. (Laughter)

On the way back home I had this strong inclination. I knew when I got back home I needed to call Nicole. I talked to her for a while. She said she was going to miss the jungle, and that I should go back and say goodbye to everybody because I was going to go off to China, and she knew I wanted to get a big stash of herbs for myself.

And I said, "Oh gosh, this sounds so good, I really wish I had an opportunity to go." So I just asked her if she wanted to go with me. She was eighty-four years old. She said "Yeah." She jumped at the chance. I took her with me and of course then a whole new path just unrolled, so there I was back in the jungle to get some more herbs and I had Nicole Maxwell with me. We were talking and then we're talking to the tribe, and it's not about gems and monkey bones it's all about herbs. I just can't stand it, a whole new path just unrolled. It was years and years later before I got to Nepal for a couple of weeks.

I came back and the whole thing started, the old path was cleared and the new one started right away.

DF: How would someone know what products they should be taking? Is it an intuition thing or do you have guidelines?

It's real easy. As I said, we got down to eight major issues people deal with; the immune system, the digestion, the metabolism, stress, things that we are all dealing with every day.

Of those eight, we saw five that everybody is dealing with every day, which are the immune system, the digestion, metabolism, stress and environmental toxins. We put herbs for all five of those into one bottle called "Illumination." That's like the superhero, multi-herbal daily tonic. There are thirty-four different herbs in that. So figuring out what to take is really brain-dead work. Everyone we find can benefit from that one. Then the tea is clean and simple too.

In fact the major ingredient is a very, very powerful anti-fungal. So yeast, candida, most of the prostate stuff in there, so that is one of the biggest offenders, the virus and the bacteria, but the yeast and mold is just rampant. It stays hungry for sugar, and telling you to go eat some sugar and some processed white bread and stuff like that. So you got a little war going on there.

Sumacazon is extraordinary for the endocrine system, the thyroid, the hypothalamus, the adrenals, and reproductive organs. All the stuff that slows down, as we get older doesn't necessarily have to slow down if it's got the right nutrients. The thyroid, the adrenals – I think most people's adrenals have been fried with stress, overwork and that sort of thing.

It really supports that whole system, so not only do people feel like they're getting younger; they're actually beginning to look like they're getting younger. They're not getting younger chronologically, but physiologically I think it does actually make you sort of subtly youthful.

DF: And it'll make you live to a hundred!
(Just a tinge of sarcasm here)

A hundred and twenty is what I'm planning on. (laughter)

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