

Grandmother, 74, hails new-found wellness

By DR. CHRISTOPHER CIANCI

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With her daughter, Dona, Frances Goeller, 74, stood for two hours this spring on a sidewalk in Easton as the town's 300th anniversary parade passed by.

Big deal? Yes, for Frances Goeller.

Time was when she could not stand anywhere for more than 20 minutes.

In the mid-1970s, Mrs. Goeller, then living in Baltimore County, and suffering extreme back pain, underwent two spinal surgeries – the first to remove a bone spur which had severely damaged a nerve and the second, some five weeks later, to remove some scar tissue which also was interfering with the nerves there.

Fortunately, she was pain free, she recalls, for about 20 years. The Goellers came to Easton in 1984 but, as the world entered a new millennium, Mrs. Goeller said, “my back started hurting again... I felt a burning sensation in my right leg ... I knew something was wrong.”

More surgery. The removal of more scar tissue. But, she would discover, no long-term relief from the pain. That would come later.

In 2001, Mrs. Goeller and Dona opened “The Cultured Pearl,” a gift shop and boutique in St. Michaels.

Until it closed in 2009, it was a 24-7 operation which was open all but five days a year – Christmas, New Years, Easter, Thanksgiving and Mother's Day – the latter, Mrs. Goeller said, “at the insistence of my daughter.”

Clerking and tending to other day-to-day responsibilities at the store, however, seemed to aggravate the pain so, in 2006, on the urging of a friend, she had become a patient of Easton chiropractor Dr. Christopher Cianci.

She recalled that she had found herself simply “at wit's end” because of the constant and continuing pain in her back and “I figured ‘why not?’” she said. “I had tried everything else.”

The inability to stand or walk for extended periods of time is often a sign of spinal disc problems, Dr. Cianci noted. And that can have an enormous impact on a person's lifestyle.

“It can progress to the point,” Dr. Cianci said, “that even standing in the kitchen preparing a meal can be difficult because of the pain radiating from the back to the hips, to the buttocks, to the legs.”

Retirees often want to travel but find that their bodies simply can't handle that activity.

Shopping is another activity that limits back pain sufferers... "They find they just can't keep up and have to sit and rest while their fellow shoppers -- friends and family -- move on without them."

Other patients have difficulty sleeping soundly, having to constantly roll from side to side to get comfortable, Dr. Cianci noted.

Mrs. Goeller's treatment has included spinal decompression. "The great thing about the spinal decompression technique is that it works so well for patients, like Mrs. Goeller, who have had multiple surgeries or chronic discomfort," Dr. Cianci said.

"I could get no greater satisfaction than when Mrs. Goeller told me she had just returned from a Mother's Day trip to New York during which she and daughter Dona had walked 'all over Manhattan and topped it off seeing a show on Broadway,'" said an obviously heartened Dr. Cianci.

Mrs. Goeller also revels in her new-found wellness.

"I have much greater stamina," she said., "I can do things I couldn't do before."

She lives in Easton Village. "It's sort of the silly little things. I can walk three blocks and back to get the mail."

There are ponds in the village. One is down the road for a block or so and up a little hill.. She goes there with her grandsons, ages 4 and 2.

"They love to throw stones in the water... and they watch with delight the minnows in the water... and there are two resident ducks ... each now has six babies..."

She paused. She was thinking about those moments. She smiled. "It's the little stuff," she said.

Frances Goeller, age 74, has her life back again.