

Longtime Westport resident shares life lessons in *How Can I Help You?*

By Karen Kovacs Dydzuhn

It's not uncommon for people to emerge from the brink of death with a renewed zest for living.

In M. Walter Levine's case, though, he exuded enthusiasm—as well as an innate entrepreneurial spirit—from a young age, long before he received a dire diagnosis of multiple myeloma cancer almost 20 years ago.

Beginning with a profit-making enterprise Levine concocted at the age of six, his business acumen and propensity for establishing long-lasting professional and personal relationships has resulted in a lucrative and fulfilling career.

Candidly sharing all of his triumphs as well as the disappointments, Levine's recently released book *How Can I Help You?—The Most Important Question in Business and Life* offers 12 "life lessons," a blueprint for how to navigate through life's sometimes treacherous but always interesting waters.

Levine, a resident of Fairfield and Westport for more than 30 years, will sign copies of the book on Friday, Nov. 5 at Stew Leonard's Norwalk store and on Saturday, Nov. 6 at 1 p.m. at Border's Bookstore in Fairfield.

Levine will also discuss his recovery from cancer and Diversified Holistics, a non-profit foundation he established to help others find treatments for chronic illnesses in an interview on The Lisa Wexler Radio Show on WNLK 1350 AM on Thursday, Nov. 4 at 4:30 p.m.

"In my life, this question—'How can I help you?'—became a tag line for everything I did," Levine explained. A kin to The Golden Rule, Levine truly treats everyone he comes in contact with as he would like to be treated. Except that he goes one step further by asking how he could, at that moment, meet their individual needs, especially if it concerns how to beat cancer. In stark detail, Levine describes how a New York City doctor advised him to "get his affairs in order" in 1992 since there was little hope for his survival. After several rounds of chemotherapy at a Manhattan hospital, Levine traveled to The Arkansas Cancer Research Center, a high-rated multiple myeloma treatment center in Little Rock.

In "How Can I Help You?"—which is written with the assistance of Virginia Juliano—Levine says, "I arrived with the will to live and the passion to fight. I knew the ABCDs of Life (Attitude, Believability, Commitment and Discipline) worked in business, and I shared them with so many people. Now I would have to test this philosophy in ways I had never even imagined...Thinking positive is a must—you have to want life more than anything! Beating cancer is your fight. The right doctor, hospital and medicine, along with the right attitude, are all part of the equation."

Along with chemotherapy, Levine received a stem cell transplant. However, Levine also readily attributes much of his remission to his willingness to take a daily regimen of TBL-12 sea cucumber, a

dietary supplement harvested in Australia that reputedly contains a compound that slows cancer cell growth.

Levine noted that a clinical trial using the TBL 12, a blend of sea cucumber, sea sponge, shark fin and sea urchin, under the direction of Dr. Sundar Jagannath, is presently underway at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York.

"It kills cancer cells, it's an antioxidant and it rebuilds the immune system," Levine said.

In Chapter 10, called The Fight, Levine writes of his alternative medical regimen, "We are well on our way to hopefully conclusively and scientifically proving its effectiveness and have about 85 percent stability in the trial so far, which, from what I understand, is almost unheard of. My vision is to have it officially approved for use by the medical community so that it can be manufactured and marketed by one of the large pharmaceutical companies. Only then can it get the widespread distribution needed to provide everyone with the benefits of this miracle product, which I believed helped save my life."

More information about this dietary supplement is available at www.sea-cucumber.com.

Unfortunately, although Levine's health regained momentum, his beloved wife of 50 years, Fritzie, was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) in January, 2007 and died six months later. Throughout his memoir, Levine professes a deep love and respect for the woman he married on Fourth of July in 1957 after a whirlwind three-month courtship.

Also revealed throughout its pages are a strong commitment to his family—four children, Steve, Larry, and twin daughters Leslie and Lori—and seven grandchildren. Larry, who was identified as having developmental disabilities at the age of 5, was especially confused by the loss of his mother. Fritzie spent much of her adult-life devoted to raising funds to support children and adults with disabilities, especially those living at the Lower Fairfield Regional Center, where Larry resides.

Throughout their lives, the Levine clan has embraced Larry's disabilities and viewed his presence in their lives as a gift, said daughter Leslie. Getting together with their brother every Sunday for bagels is a longstanding family tradition. "We all say that he is the Sunshine child because he is always so full of love," she noted. "He keeps us all grounded."

Levine added that he's taught them all about

what it means to be compassionate. In his book he described this special time spent with his son.

"Larry is the most loving kid in the world, and we love him up to the sky and over the moon. Our life is never dull when he is around. For the past many years, Sundays with Larry have been a constant and cherished part of my life. I drive the 30 minutes to pick him up early in the morning so we can spend as much father and son time together as possible." One of the highlights of their day is stopping at Stew Leonard's to purchase delicious food, he added.

Levine first met Stew Leonard, Sr. in 1974 when he used to regularly stop in to purchase luncheon fare for the sales team he was managing at a burglary and alarm company in Norwalk. A firm believer that good relationships begin by breaking bread over lunching together, Levine still invites people to share a midday meal with him.

"We built strong relationships because the sales team liked coming to the office," Levine explained. "We became the number one sales organization in the country."

And, through feeding his hungry crew back in the mid-70s, Levine and Leonard became good friends and have remained so over the years, he explained.

Both Levine and Leonard feel it's fitting to launch "How Can I Help You?" at the Stew Leonard's Store next week.

"Walter Levine certainly named his book correctly," Leonard mused. "Walter's mission in life is to help other people. I know of several that he has helped and encouraged. He is never too busy to lend a helping hand."

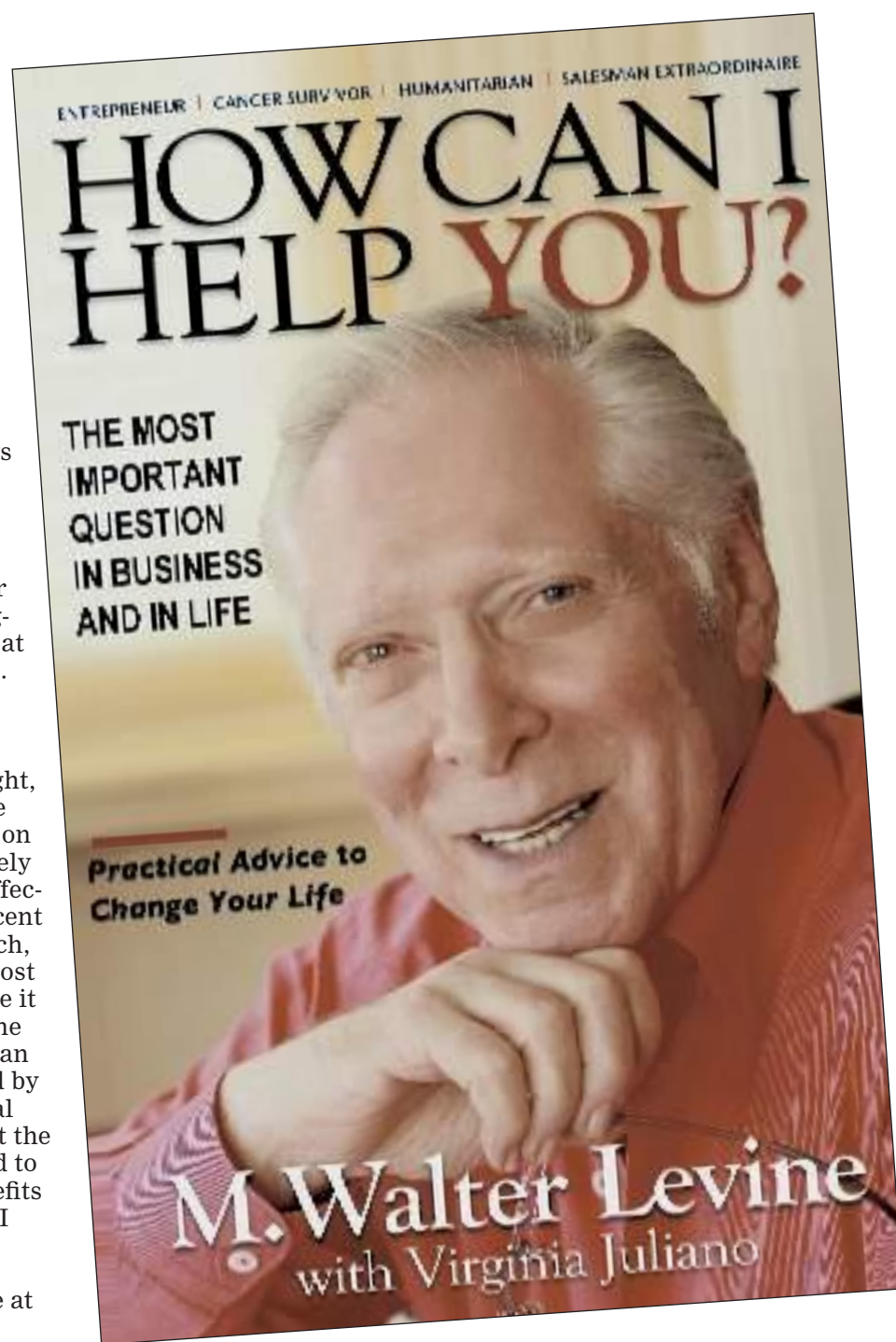
With no plan for retirement, Levine continues to oversee several businesses he owns and work on health care issues for people who seek his assistance. He also feels blessed to have met a woman, Diana Lynn, to spend time with.

"When one has to face the prospect of creating a new life after losing a partner I think it's wise to put yourself out there, get involved with people and see what life brings. I believe that life is better when you have someone special there to share it with," Levine writes.

A New York City book-signing party is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 17 at 1:30 p.m. at Matt Sherman Public Relations, 140 East 45 St., 37th Floor. For information, contact kbeck34@optonline.net.

Levine will appear at Stew's Nov. 5 at 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and 6 p.m.

Stew Leonard's will sell the book for \$19.99. For information, call (203) 847-7214.



Contributed photo

How Can I Help You? author and longtime Fairfield resident M. Walter Levine is pictured with his family in the Bahamas.