

Man figures plankton stopped his rare cancer

By VALERIE WILSON
Daily News

Tom Harper didn't plan on finding a remedy for his cancer.

The founder of Unique Sea Farms in Cedar was merely looking for an innovative way to extract phytoplankton from the ocean — and then recreate its bloom in tanks. Harper was successful in his quest, and thinks it may also be responsible for stopping in its tracks a rare form of lung cancer. Doctors had given him nine months to live.

The process Harper developed begins with extracting a small amount of seawater from the Strait of Georgia through a pipeline that sinks some

80-feet below the water's surface, says company marketing director Tiffany Haarsma, Harper's daughter.

"We bring in a small amount of seawater and then we start the bloom process," Haarsma said. "Dad has recreated the bloom process in the tanks. We can grow up to 45 tonnes of bloom a day."

At first, Harper was feeding the phytoplankton-microalgae, made up of 200 single cells, exclusively to

shellfish. But several months ago, while walking among the tanks at his business, he decided to have a taste himself.

"I said 'are you crazy?'" Haarsma said of her initial reaction. "You can't stick your fingers in the algae."

Harper's response: "What have I got to lose?"

One year ago Harper was diagnosed with a rare form of lung cancer for which there is no known cure. Since he began eating the algae, the cancerous tumours in his lungs have stopped growing and are now benign, a situation Harper said has puzzled his physicians.

"They did 11 sites for biopsy and every one of them is clear," he said.

Harper was also an insulin-dependent diabetic but no longer requires the insulin since taking the algae.

Haarsma said she had an overactive thyroid and could not control her weight. Then she also started eating the algae and went from a size 12 to a size four in just four months.

"My intention wasn't to lose weight, it was preventative," she said.

Haarsma said she has no way of knowing for certain whether the algae contributed to her father's newfound good health. But she's glad he decided to eat it, all the same.

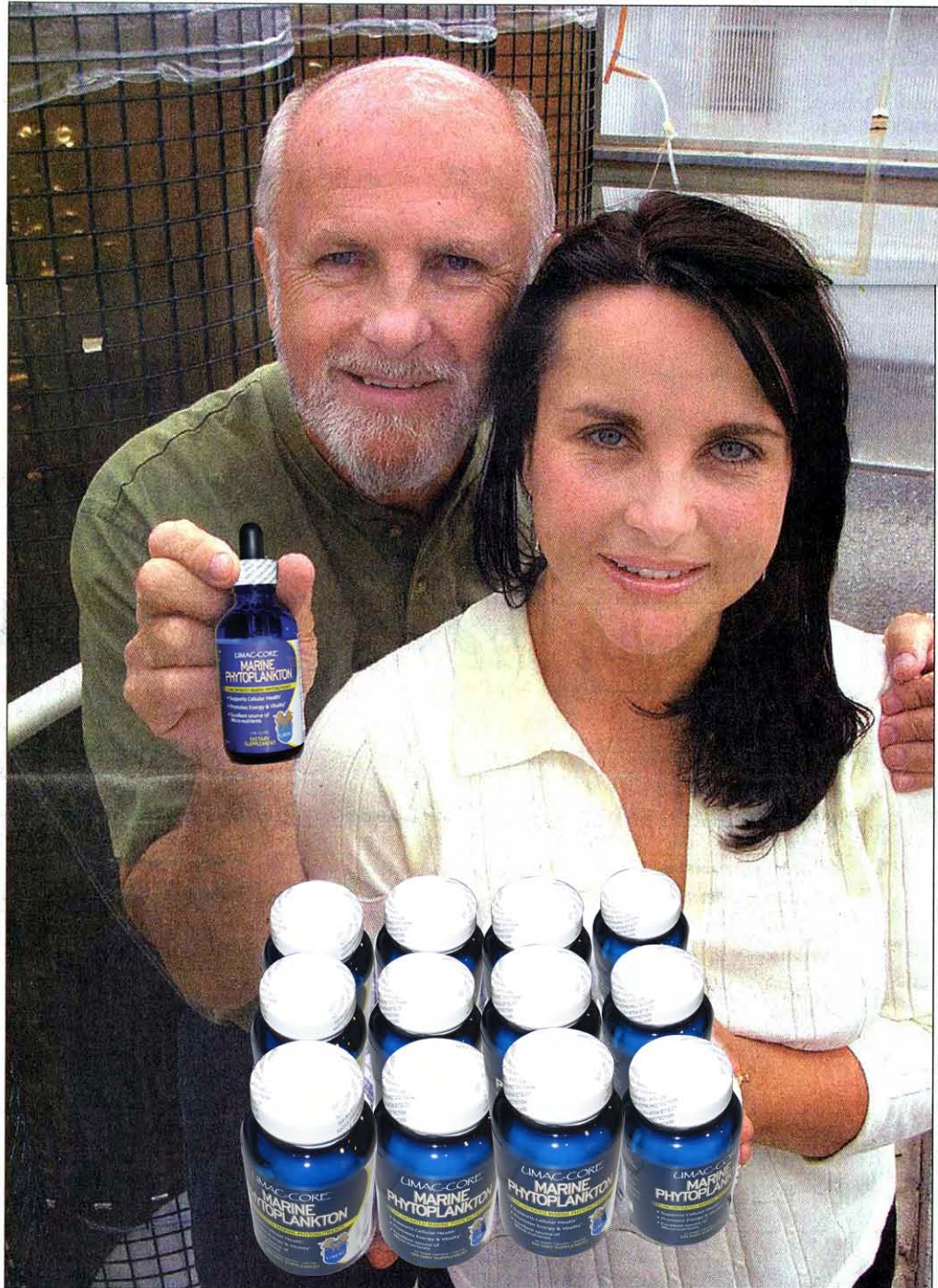
"I still walk into the office and get all choked up," she said. "(Dad) is still here!"

Until recently, the company was in the business of producing shellfish seed. The focus now is on meeting the human demand for the algae, available in numerous health food stores in both capsule and liquid form.

"No one has it for human consumption in the world," Haarsma said of UMAC CORE, the name

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TIFFANY HAARSMASMA



RESEARCHER TOM HARPER and his daughter Tiffany Haarsma show bottles of UMAC CORE, the name given to the product that Tom credits with stopping his rare form of lung cancer in its tracks. (Glenn Olsen/Daily News)

given to the product. "It is really, really exciting."

She described the product as a whole food that is not missing any co-factors.

"When you are taking a supplement you are missing co-factors," Haarsma said.

"This product is whole and complete. Nothing has been extracted."

Many other users of UMAC CORE also say it has done wonders for their health conditions, ranging from psoriasis, to sleeping disorders to boosting energy levels, Haarsma said.

The product, approved by Health Canada and the U.S. Federal Drug Agency, can be found locally at select health food and vitamin stores.