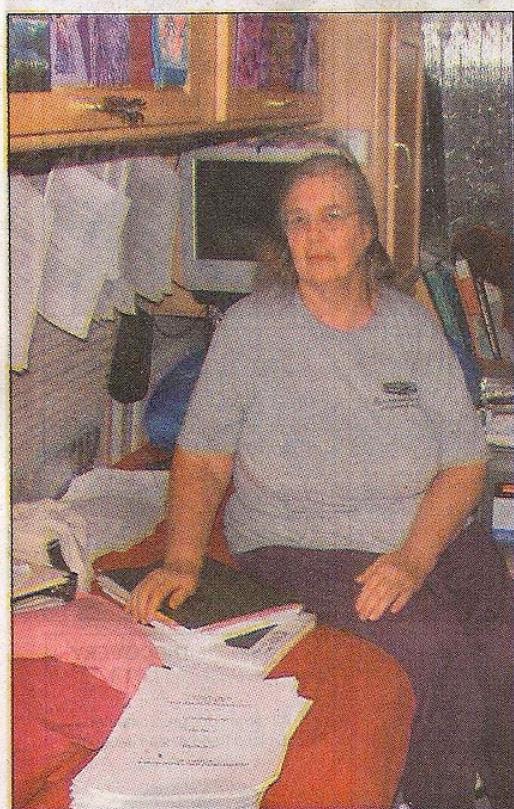


C.F. woman seeks relief from tech-crazy world

Sufferer hopes to raise awareness to electromagnetic sensitivity



By **Stephanie Abel**

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PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE ABEL

Diane Schou sits inside her and her husband Bert's RV surrounded by printed research studying electromagnetic sensitivity. The RV sits inside their metal shed located only feet from their house. Her small space's windows are lined with foil-covered visors for protection. She and her husband spend their time together in this cramped space because Diane's condition keeps her confined there.

Holiday fever is in the air, and while shoppers search for the best deal and families travel to share evenings in front of warm fires, Cedar Falls resident Diane Schou will not be able to join.

Instead, at the edge of Cedar Falls, she sits in a 10-by-20-foot aluminum-protected RV inside an aluminum shed on her property where her home, too unsafe for her to be inside, sits only feet away.

Diane Schou believes she is electromagnetically sensitive (EMS), and she needs her shell of aluminum to protect herself from the outside electromagnetic waves.

Her condition, which she refers to as "technological leprosy," causes

her extreme head aches, face rash, ringing in the ears, blood sugar elevation and extreme tiredness.

“For those with EMS, anything with an electrical current is extremely toxic,” says Diane. “It’s almost like having radiation sickness.”

Diane’s symptoms started in 2003 when a large cell phone tower was built not even a quarter mile from her home. At the time, she ran the home office for her husband’s agricultural research business.

Diane fondly remembers being able to work on projects. One day, while travelling, she was hit with a stabbing headache. Unsure of the cause, she dismissed it, but when the headaches reoccurred, she went to the doctor.

“The doctor was perplexed,” says Diane, “but my son was very alert to what might be going on.”

At the same time, Diane began to notice her headaches would worsen around highly charged areas, her son, Paul, was studying for his American Radio license and had done extensive research with different types of radio and electromagnetic waves. The Schous began to wonder if the cell phone tower was causing Diane electromagnetic wave sensitivity, so they moved to their farm down the road.

But it may have been too late.

“The headaches became more constant and then all the time, to the point where I couldn’t even be in my own home,” Diane says fighting back tears. “I stay out here now because it’s gotten worse.”

Diane is confident that the constant, high-powered emissions from the cell phone tower caused her condition. Her lifestyle has become sedentary as a result, and the only pain-free place for her, she believes, is a place without cell phones, microwaves, digital communication and wireless Internet.

“Just as people can become overexposed to any unnatural part of the environment and get cancer or be sick, I got sick,” she says. “I’ve been to George Wyth Park, Waverly Campgrounds, rural areas in Clarksville, searching for some relief. I stay there for a few weeks or months until somebody comes around with a cell phone or they decide to put up more towers - then I have to leave.”

In search of a symptom-free environment, Diane and her husband Bert also traveled to Nicaragua and Sweden.

“I did have relief there for quite some time,” Diane says of her overseas travels. “But in Nicaragua, where we went, there’s hardly even running water or good roads to travel through there, which makes it difficult to live.”

At home, the couple sleep and eat together in their small space dimly lit by the light of a unique non-florescent bulb.

“He comes home from work and comes in here,” says Diane. “It’s small, but I miss and love my husband. He wants to be here for me.”

During 2004 and 2005, Diane found some comfort again in Queen Valley, Ariz., where she lived during the winter months deep in the valley where people had limited to no access to cell phones.

“I could go to church, attend quilting groups and do what I wanted,” she let out a deep sigh. “Then a cell phone booster antennae was installed and I got radiation sickness again and had to leave.”

Although documented research is limited, especially in the U.S., it didn’t stop Diane from writing to representatives, senators, medical journals and hospitals, hoping to spread the word about EMS and prompt some action.

“It is not just me who has experienced this,” says Diane as she shuffles through e-mails of her correspondence with others in her same condition. “There are more people around the United States I’ve been in contact with. Now, I’m talking to people right here in Cedar Falls who are dealing with this. Cell phones and electromagnetic waves are everywhere. Where are people with EMS supposed to go?”

Even though Diane is still searching for the answer, she knows there is hope in numbers and awareness is the only key.

“I understand that this is so unheard of yet around here,” says Diane frustrated. “But there are other countries where most people are very aware that this condition exists.”

Early in 2006, Bert traveled to Benevento, Italy, for a World Health conference on EMS. There, the city has made significant investments to ensure that its residents are protected from an overgrowth of cell phone towers.

“This condition exists,” states Bert. “It’s just not widely recognized in the United States. We’ve tried contacting people and authorities here to help us, and we experienced absolutely no protection.”

In Stockholm, Sweden, the Schous were in touch with Rigmor Granlund-Lind and John Lind who authored the book, *Black on White: Voices and Witnesses*. Based on documents submitted to the Council for Work Life Research in Sweden in March 2000 from more than 400 electrohypersensitive sufferers, their relatives, doctors and engineers, the book provides a unique insight into the condition.

“During my travels, I’ve come across some people who can’t tolerate a watch powered by a tiny battery in the room or in adjacent rooms,” says Diane. “It just depends on how overexposed they were to begin with.”

Ultimately, Diane hopes that increased awareness will start a grass-

roots campaign that will help those with her condition and educate the medical community, pastors and teachers to recognize this exposure-response correlation.

"Ideally, I want to live at home like everyone else," Diane says. "I want to be able to see the beautiful perennials grow that I planted so long ago. My son wants his Mom to have a home. I don't enjoy waking up everyday saying, 'It hurts here. How am I going to find protection today, tonight and tomorrow?'"

For more information on EMS, visit www.electrosensitivity.org or contact the Schous at EMS-holiday@wavr.org, (319) 277-4338 or via mail at P.O. Box 249, Cedar Falls 50613 U.S.A.



Bert Schou experiments 'with the GAUSS Meter, which measures magnetic fields (mG) and an Electrostatic Voltmeter, which measures low frequency (V/m). Together these make up the Electro-Magnetic Field (EMF) strength. At their home, his wife, Diane is bothered by these electromagnetic waves that pulsate

through the air from various sources. Above, the power line that powers the Schous home gives out moderate field strengths, 0.7 mG and 166 V/m.

The high-powered electricity lines that sit across the road about 50 feet from the Schous' home are easily picked up by the instruments. Bert measures the frequencies at car level on the highway, near the powerline to be 3.4 (sometimes 12) mG and 1,982 V/m. "Can you believe the amount of frequency runs through your car?" Bert says. "The higher I hold the Instruments" he continues, "the worse it gets."

Above, at SUV and semi-truck level on the highway, the instruments jump dramatically to measure 4.2 mG and 6,025 V/m of electricity.

For comparison, electric fields in the home, on average, range from 0 to 10 V/m.
SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH