

## **From riches to rags – the story of Alan Simms**



**Alan served in the Vietnam war, where he was wounded twice. Then a successful businessman in Tucson, he gradually developed MCS, which got dramatically worse after inhaling fumes from a car fire.**

I started feeling sick in about 1987, reacting to clothing, bedding, polyester products, and a few foods. At the time I was too busy working in management, running nightclubs from 1974 to 1989 in Tucson. I supervised over 200 employees at this job. In 1989 I decided I wanted to get out of the nightclub business. I wanted to get into a more stable business, one that I owned.

By 1990 I thought I had the world by the tail. I owned Tucson's largest used tire wholesale business. I was only working three days a week, three or four hours a day. Also I was working for United Cerebral Palsy, Monday through Friday, three hours a day, teaching emergency first aid to the parents of the afflicted children.

Additionally, I was working part-time two to ten hours a week modeling men's dress suits making \$50 per hour at Bracker's advertising agency. I also went back to school in Tucson two nights a week to earn my degree in Business and Public Administration. Previously I had a year and a half in BPA at the University of Hawaii in the 1970s.

In 2001 I got very sick from an electrical fire in my car. Subsequently I had to close down my tire business because I was bedridden. I lost a car and two trucks, and had to quit school, teaching emergency first aid, and my modeling job because I could no longer tolerate these environments. I consulted with Michael Gray, MD, in Benson, Arizona, and was diagnosed with multiple chemical sensitivities. Robert Crago, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Tucson, performed numerous perceptual, memory, and brain tests on me shortly thereafter. Dr. Crago was instrumental in helping me get disability payments.

In 2003 I decided to go the Environmental Health Center—Dallas, TX, founded by William Rea, MD, for three weeks of testing and therapies. I participated in a number of therapies, saunas, supplemental IVs, oxygen, and colonics. Three weeks and \$7,000 later I still had no more answers and felt little improvement in my health.

Katherine Henry, MD, was another practitioner I saw in Dallas. She took my medical history and diagnosed me with an overuse of the prescription medication Ranitidine for stomach ulcers, a drug meant for short-term use only. For over seven years I was on a large, daily dose of this drug which was prescribed by the VA Medical Center. She said that the VA was bordering on negligence for not routinely testing me for adverse reactions to the drug. My resultant symptoms included significant vision loss, bald spots on my head, a heart murmur, multiple allergies to food and clothing, and open sores on my back and legs. I stopped this medication immediately on Dr. Henry's advice. Within days I was feeling somewhat better, getting out of bed and starting to function independently. She started me on a supplement plan and a four-day food rotation schedule. Within three months my symptoms had improved by 50%. My vision improved and my bald spots and heart murmur disappeared. However, I am still left with permanent damage from Ranitidine.

I did pursue negotiations with attorneys in Dallas and Tucson regarding a lawsuit against the VA Hospital for their negligence. Although I was counseled that I had an open and shut case against this federally owned and operated facility, my attorneys advised me that my case against the VA would never get settled in my, or even my children's, lifetime. Now I am pursuing 100% disability from the VA

through the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). I had served in the military in Viet Nam in the early 1970s in the American Division, 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade Reconnaissance. I received two purple hearts for my wounds sustained from grenade shrapnel in the chest and back of the head. Later, I was wounded in action in the right leg by sharpened bamboo punji sticks in a booby trap. I was medevaced out of the field to Okinawa, Japan, where I was in the hospital for over three months and on crutches. I served in the army for two years before receiving an honorable discharge for my injuries.

In addition to the supplements and vitamins that I can tolerate, and daily home saunas, I spent a small fortune making my house safe for me and visitors. To that end I accomplished a complete house makeover, gutting the unsafe portions, removing carpet, asbestos tile, toxic cleaning supplies, old cabinets, and all the furniture including the bedding. I replaced the furniture with poplar, maple wood and glass. I installed American ceramic tile. I found a wholesale tile establishment in town to make my purchases. I cleaned my ducts by soaking a sheet in vinegar and water, and tying a rope around the sheet and pulling it through the duct system a dozen times. I washed all the walls down with water and hydrogen peroxide, and did not have to repaint. I also removed some outdoor vegetables, citrus trees, 38 rose bushes, and giant fern tree, all of which bothered me. I have a newer Rheem AC/heat pump on the side of my house which is very efficient and EI safe.

Finally, in August of 2004, I ordered an EI-safe one-person dry sauna from Heavenly Heat in Colorado, built in Arizona of hardwood poplar, glass, and screws (no glue). I had done saunas at the Environmental Health Center in Dallas. Within a week of daily home saunas, starting at first with 20-minute exposures and working up to 35 minutes a day, I began feeling better. I felt as if my entire body just opened up and got cleansed. I had to remember to drink plenty of water, at least a pint during the sauna.

Afterwards, I take tri-salts, consisting of calcium, sodium, and potassium, in a glass of water to replace minerals sweated out during the sauna. Overall, the sauna has been a major contributing factor in my improvement. After the first year of daily saunas, I have been able to reduce my saunas to every other day. My daily exercise, which consists of swimming, working out with weights, and calisthenics in my case, has really helped me to improve my physical and mental condition.

I would especially like to thank Ariel Barfield and Madeline Rivera for being the backbone and strength of our local support group for the people with MCS in HEAL of Southern Arizona.

### **Editor's notes**

Alan Simms passed away April 7, 2022 at the age of 74 after an eight-month battle with pancreatic cancer. He joined the HEAL of Southern Arizona MCS support group in 2001 and was its president from 2004 until 2020.

The above story was first published in the HEAL newsletter *Ecologic News* in 2007.

### **More stories**

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