

After years of enduring pain, Ripon's Al Klapperich is

Very happy to be gluten-free

And now he is starting a group to help others

by Ian Stepleton

Before Al Klapperich thought about creating a support group to help others, he lay on his floor, curled in a ball, shivering and shaking.

"I wondered if I was going to die," the Riponite said of the incident about six years ago.

It's a thought his wife, Peg, too, had allowed to flit across her mind — not that she dared utter it to Al.

"He'd lost so much weight, he was so sick, that I thought he was going to die," she said.

That night Al's body was battling a poison he never suspected.

"A bowl of clam chowder and half a sheaf of Sal-tines," he said.

He'd been in pain for months, but this was about as bad as it ever had been.

Al had lost 40 or 50 pounds, felt "hung-over" all the time, and constantly fought gastro-intestinal problems such as acid reflux.

It wasn't the clam chowder, per se, or the crackers creating the agony.

As it turned out, the culprit was something so simple, so basic to everyday life that most take it for granted.

Gluten.

A combination of proteins found in such every-



DISPELLING THE IDEA one can't eat well while gluten-free, Al and Peg Klapperich sit with a bountiful breakfast of gluten-free pancakes and more. *Ian Stepleton photo*

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