

Agent ORANGE: Colors of Death

Cam Ranh Bay AB, 1966 **12th SPS, Cam Ranh Bay Air Base**

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Colors of Death

To our God who Gave us all another life after Vietnam.

I was trying to decide what to write as follow up to “**37 Years**.” I was gathering my thoughts over the last year about happenings in Vietnam. Then the brick hit me in the head. I broke the brick. Last year at gathering of females during our business meeting. They gave our women an over view of PTSD and Agent Orange. Thus, the basis of this article was born in Tucson Az. The main point was for our women to get your man tested for Agent Orange. I know we always say Yes Dear to our wives and girlfriends. During the year, two close VSPA and VVA members died from Agent Orange. Another old retired Cop and VSPA member was found with another form of cancer in his body. They caught the cancer early and he is fine. VSPA should never educate our women about the effects of Nam on us. They come home and make us say YES DEAR. This material got my wife’s attention, which made me pay attention.

After 38 years, the only thing I wanted from our government, education and house loan. I got my education under GI Bill. I went to work with Mentally Retarded. I was only staying six months. After 37 years still working in this field. I would like to fast forward to Oct 2004. I asked my local VVA chapter for help in dealing with VA. I got no help at all. I decided to call VA myself, which I did four months ago. All the nasty stories might be true but I turned to local Phila VA for help and direction. It only took about 3 to 4 months to get appointment for Agent Orange testing. The Agent Orange Brief dated January 1997. “An appointment unusually can be arranged within two to three weeks.” I will follow my time leaning up to this fun day at Phila. PA VA.

It took 2 to 3 months of playing phone tag to get appointment. I had heard horror stories about dealing with any VA. Since the local VVA, help was MIA. My wife and I decided to have me call myself. I called and found woman at other end of phone to be very helpful and knowledgeable about answering my questions about Agent Orange. She explains the process to me. Then I began the journey into VA health care. I was told it would take six to eight months to get appointment. She promises me a 2005 appointment. The local VA did keep it promise.

I made deal with my wife, if I made the appointment, Joan would go with me. I was mad they made the appointment on my day off.

Yesterday we made the appointment to Agent Orange Screen Tests. I spent the night studying for these tests. I got A++ on all tests. Joan did not take any test. It takes about 15

minutes to get down to local VA place. We pulled up to gate with cop [gun] directed us to right place. After finding parking space on first level, it was going to be good day.

We asked for directions and found the right person. Some things never change, hurry up and wait. We were told to be there half hour early for paper work etc. After waiting for about 2 1/2 hours, they took me for my first interview. This lasted a whole 1/2 minute, then back to chairs. I asked my wife to guard our seats while I was away. Joan did an excellent job. About 1/2 hour later, I got my 4.5 second physical exam. The marine got 10 second special exam. After this extended exam, I was given paper work to get blood work and chest x-ray. After about 3 hours my exam was done, we headed home. My wife kisses and thanks me for going. We treated ourselves to nice dinner after this.

This is brief over view of my day yesterday. There are few other stories from yesterday. Homeless Vet's While Joan and I were waiting yesterday in lobby. A man sat down and went to sleep in record time. He had a nametag on his wrist. For the next two hours he woke up and went back to sleep while sitting on hard chair. Two employees of Phila. VA knew this man. One woman came from Vets Outreach program, offered, and got him tokens. He said he told her he rather has money. After about hour she gave him tokens and left. Another woman walking by knew the man and offered assistance. He refused all offers of help. The man was still sleeping in the same chair when we left.

There was homeless Vet came from cold to get physical, blood work etc. Another VA worker asked him he doing in Vets Outreach program. He told her he was doing ok. These two men are under side of Vietnam War. They are both lost in themselves and the world. These 2% are still at war. They never came home in their minds from war. Somehow, we have to help these people but sad part is they may not want anyone's help! Doctor Exam. The doctor was very business like in my dealing with him. He did ask questions about my Viet service. He was writing all this data in pencil on piece of white loose-leaf paper. The VA handout says, "A medical history is taken, a physical examination is performed." Since I got Friday afternoon special in record time. He gave me paper work to get blood work and Chest X-ray. The VA requested any copies of my medical records. I asked doctor if he wanted a copy he said NO.

Blood

I had to take number, #1. The other Vet was going to bathroom for urine test. Somehow taking number made little sense. Another Vet was following me, he took number two. I had nerve to ask for directions to X-ray. The funny thing they were on the back of door in blood area. Note-there was nobody waiting for blood work.

X-Ray

There was younger Gulf War Vet waiting in X-ray dept. My fellow Vietnam Vet came in and we talked for few minutes. There was Marine Vet waiting. He had three strikes against him, Marine, Postal Worker and Vietnam Vet. I had to inform him about one but three problems? He laughed at my bad jokes.

There was sign in X-ray saying if you think you are pregnant tell us -- I did. The young woman just looked at me and laughed.

First Interview

The VA letter told us to be there “one half hour before your scheduled appointment in order to complete the necessary forms.” The Agent Orange test was scheduled half hour later. My wife and I got there 45 minutes early. They did ask me for copy of my DD214. I even had to answer some simple questions of any exposure to Agent Orange. I was given a map and ask to point where I serve in Nam.

Handouts

I was given a few handouts about Agent Orange, Agent Orange Brief, 2 maps of Nam, Agent Orange Website {I read this data before}, and General Information about Agent Orange, Agent Orange Review and Vietnam Page [funny experiences about Nam and best handout].

Summary of Day

I have many thoughts about going yesterday. After waiting so long, I wanted to leave and told my wife so. She just smile kiss me and made me feel better. All during this time I wanted to leave, it was going to waste my time. Somehow, our wives know what is good for us while making us believe it was our decision. I guess time will be judge of I need VA for anything. I guess I still have mixed feelings about dealing with VA. After Vietnam, I wanted no part of any government programs. Agent Orange and PTSD forced to me seek help from our government. If I had listen to every person with their VA nasty story. I would have never gone. I always and will continue to ask Why in all areas of my life. I am trying to find nice pleasant happy conclusion for this article.

“Ask not what Agent Orange has done to you; ask what you can do to help yourself in getting tested for Agent Orange.”

The Truth Shall Set You Free

Sometimes in writing the truth, it has away of changing our direction in life. After Vietnam, I had very little interest in war that was raging until 1975 for America. My life had change from making up for 3 years 7 months 10 days and 17 hours away from home. I forget about Vietnam. I wanted my piece of American dream, education, wife, kids etc. How do you put a dollar figure on this time away? When our leaders in Washington DC started to spray Agent Orange on another Country and its own troops. The leaders who authorized this are now dead. I believe in America. I was lied to and had by our own government. This led me to send out e-mails to fellow Vietnam asking about Agent Orange. If you ever been hit in the face with truth once in your life. It gets your attention. It makes me mad as He.. [no bad words].

It makes me asked what can I do to help the situation about Agent Orange and Vietnam. I received two e-mails yesterday that got my attention. The first one from former firefighter at CRB RVN. The first e-mail went into specific area on CRB where Agent Orange was sprayed. My year of fun in the sun I had protected, guarded, walk, patrol, rode and ate food in these areas. The 2nd e-mail informed me that USAF used Agent Orange to control weeds and grass around Air bases in Southeast Asia. The third and four e-mail messages arrived with pictures of Agent Orange on board C-130 located on flight line of my former base. I want his article to get all Vietnam Vets tested for Agent Orange. To make fellow

VVA and VSPA members aware of dangers of Agent Orange to themselves and their families. I have started my individual campaign by sending and sharing my knowledge with my peers via net and this article. Another vet told me that Black vets were only sprayed with purple or blue colors. You white boys were only sprayed with white stuff. We need some humor in this area.

Just moral outrage to channel my talents into making this an excellent article about effects of Agent Orange.

Outpatient Care NSC or 2-25-2005 Bill

After 2 years of fun duty of winter sports around F-101, KC-135 and B-52 at Dow AFB Banger Me. It was time for change and the summer sports of South Asia. The USAF paid for a year of fun on the beaches. They even included chemicals to change the environment of Vietnam and us.

After waiting for 2 ½ hours for an Agent Orange check up. I was given the privilege of paying part of my own Screening for Agent Orange. The tests results have not come yet but the bill has. I think I am missing something here. I waited four months to get appointment, 2 ½ to 3 hours wait for first interview, ½ hour wait to see Doctor, who almost forget to hand me the Blood work and X-ray forms. There was no waiting for Blood test and a few minutes for X-ray. This time does not include phone tag with local VA to answer some questions on Agent Orange Screening.

The bill came in less than 10 days. I just paid the VA bill. Some how this seems unfair nobody asked for money to go or come from Vietnam. After they sprayed Agent Orange on Cam Ranh Bay AB RVN, the American government or USAF never requested money from me. Now in March 2005, they wanted money from me to pay for Agent Orange Screening. My wife suggested I pay for my treatment. I wanted to send them fifteen separated checks over 15 months. I should have paid the bill with Orange Check?

They never asked me to pay for trip to Southeast Asia. Now 38 years later, the American government request that I pay for part of my treatment. Some how I am getting little confused on how money is object. When you sent me money no object and now, it is important. I must be missing something," HAD IN 2005."

ADD Money Story. I called the local Phila. VA for my test results after three times over four days. I finally got hold of real live person and not an answering machine. Ponder Question-- *have we lost something a society when we accept to speak to machine and not a person.* I asked WHY I was billed for my Agent Orange test and no test results yet. The man told me that the VA Doctor did not read the tests results and it will be few more weeks. Nevertheless, He would give me back my money for this free test. How many Vets asked WHY reason for a VA bill? This article was small and has grown in size.

The world of Agent takes many strange turns and twists. On 3-10-1005, a federal New York dismissed a Suite filed by Country of Vietnam. They claimed that American Chemical Companies supplied the American Government chemicals to spray their country with Agent Orange. This spray destroyed their jungles and caused major health problems with its citizens. Somehow, the chemicals in this stuff cannot tell the difference between American or Vietnam children born with Agent Orange health problems.

Point to Ponder—Who is responsible to help these children? Who is helping the Vietnamese effected with Agent Orange Health problems? Who will explain to dead persons caused by Agent Orange? Who made all money off Agent Orange? What seems to be missing in today world?

I know this article will offend some. I know some will find this material interesting. I am writing this article for myself and world ..."Truth shall set you free to question WHY?"

The Results

Today -- 37 years ago -- we came from our last Search and Destroy. It was Holy Thursday April 1967, Easter Season the USAF was asking us if we wanted to reenlist or extend. Since this amily reading material, I decline both offers. My annual PTSD attack came at work today. I stayed and won this battle today. The VA letter came with test results of Agent Orange Screening. I had called and was told it would take few weeks. Let me quote from letter "The result of your examination, laboratory tests and Chest x-ray indicate there are no new detectable medical problems. At this time you have no reason to be concerned about any adverse health effects resulting from your service in Vietnam or Korea." I called my wife and shared the good news. Since it was Joan's idea to get me tested. Joan asked if I got my money back from VA. Two battles were won today gifts from my service from my duty tour country. The sad part is many of our fellow Vets have died from Agent Orange or PTSD. I hope this funny and sad look at my experiences will encourage my fellow Vets Please GET CHECKED FOR AGENT ORANGE.

Written by Frank Pilson

We Take Care of Our Own