

Nobody Expects Military Service To Be Safe

What Happened At Camp Lejeune?

But Nobody Expects To Be Poisoned

I Wanna Be An Airborne Ranger I Wanna Live A Life Of Danger

Every veteran has stories. Lots of stories. Most of them true because you can't make up stuff like that. Thirty years ago, veterans of World War II were in their 60s. They had saved the world from real fascists. Defeated the bad guys. Unleashed a torrent of peace and prosperity that transformed the planet. Thirty years ago, WWII vets were thinking about their own retirement and passing on their legacy. Some of them did estate planning. And they had stories. That they hardly ever told.

Most vets' kids hadn't heard their dads' war stories. Too bad because it was not so long ago that we were surrounded by actual heroes. Guys who went out and did what was necessary. Most all came back. The American Way of War dazzled our enemies and allies. Americans would rather spend equipment and weaponry than our fathers', sons', brothers', uncles' lives. Americans prefer that equipment get smashed instead of American bodies. But war is war, and you don't usually get to choose. The bad guys killed lots of people. The bad guys looked like they'd be killing lots more. The bad guys did not give up easily. So.

A gentle, soft-spoken, smiling gentleman worked at a farm stand in southwest Michigan. His sweet, good-natured wife baked. His name was John. He spent that day stacking huge round bales of hay with a forklift to make Halloween figures. He was a grunt in the Third

Infantry Division, serving in France. On a weekend pass, he got to Paris. He ran into his brother, a pilot. Coincidence? Brother flew close air support in a P-47 Thunderbolt. The P-47 was enormous for a fighter. Heavily armored. Eight .50 caliber machine guns. Over a ton of bombs. 5-inch rockets. And whatever other frightfulness they could think of.

Pilot brother was worried about John. He flew

to blow up the stuff that could kill his brother. Thunderbolts almost always came back. Missing wings shot full of holes, but they came back. Unless a German 88 got 'em in the belly. Infantrymen got shot, blown up, worn out. Pilot brother didn't want John taking unnecessary chances. John thought his brother was relatively safe. Both men were concerned about their wives. How would their wives get by if the husbands didn't make it? They made a pact to look out for their sister-in-law, if necessary. The brothers had a fine weekend. Then back to their units.

Next week, Pilot brother flew over a German 8.8 cm Flak anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun. Got it in the belly. Didn't come back. A little later, John got a "Dear John" letter. From his soon-to-be ex-wife.

John fought his way to Berlin. Then back to southwest Michigan. Went through with the divorce. Kept his promise to his brother. After a couple of years, they got married. And spent the next 50 years together. Smiling, baking, and occasionally stacking round bales of hay.

A machinist mate on the Yorktown fleet aircraft carrier served at the Battle of the Coral Sea. The Yorktown got so beat up, repairs at Pearl Harbor would take months. He was looking forward to a little R&R along with the work. But 3 days of 24-hour emergency repairs later,

the Yorktown was back in the fight at Midway. When the battle seemed to be over, he went up to the flight deck to get some air. Spotted black smoke from a snorkeling Japanese submarine's diesel engine. Watched as the Japanese torpedoes came at the Yorktown. Went swimming when the Yorktown sank. Picked up by a guard destroyer. And was on the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay for the surrender.

Wake Island is not far from Pearl Harbor. Indefensible, it was assaulted by the Japanese a few days after the attack on Pearl. The Marines managed to sink a couple of Japanese destroyers and a sub. About 1000 Japanese died, but the island fell within weeks. All survivors were tortured. The Marines on Wake were killed randomly, for any reason or no reason at all. 98 American civilians were machinegunned in a single incident. Few survived. Sailors were treated a little better. One POW went from Wake to China, the Philippines, various atolls, and finally the home islands. Starved for 4 years he recovered and eventually retired after a long Navy career. I made the mistake of suggesting he had "missed the war." He did not see it that way.

Patton loudly claimed that on his way to kick Hitler's ass, he would pee in the Rhine River. When the first pontoon bridge was across, Patton kept his promise. With thousands of soldier eyewitnesses. Some with cameras. Including a gentleman of my acquaintance.

My uncle Francis was executive officer on a PT boat. His commander decided that attaching limpet mines to Japanese destroyers would be a good idea. Captain reasoned that the PT boat was so low in the water, the destroyer's guns couldn't hit it. But somebody on the destroyer had a rifle. Shooting at the PT boat. Which was loaded with barrels of high-octane avgas on the deck (before diesels replaced the

gas engines). When the boat blew up, most of the crew survived. Including my uncle who refused to ever serve with Captain Johnny Sioux again.

My father spent his Navy career at various naval air stations that trained pilots. Dad's job was to photograph the remains (sometimes headless, always bloody or burnt) of unsuccessful pilot trainees.

My uncle John flew B-24 Liberators. Survived enough missions to rotate back to the States.

A fellow trustee on my township board was a gentleman with a limp. He acquired the limp escorting bombers to Japan in a P-51 Mustang. A bullet came through the bottom of his plane, was slowed by the parachute stowed under the seat. Clipped an inch out of his thigh bone. When the doctors set the bone, they used a device to allow the pieces to grow back together, so the wounded leg would not be too short. Unfortunately, they did it wrong and the leg was too long. So, he limped.

Another gentleman had not slept through the night since he was at Tarawa. According to his wife of 48 years.

As a ROTC cadet I was volunteered for Airborne School, Basic Parachutist training. But if a fellow cadet had not fallen off the "Slide for Life" and broken 3 vertebrae, I would not have had the chance. At Airborne School, as at any training facility, there were broken legs, ankles, arms, wrists, dislocated shoulders, and more cracked vertebrae. I only got a finger that bends a little funny. Plus, I got to jump out of perfectly good aircraft. For my country.

The point is that the men and women who enter military service accept that bad things happening is part of the deal. When you are training to kill people and break things, sometimes things get broken.

Training must be tough. Realistic. Dangerous. Best to find out whether someone can hack it at Fort Benning than a foreign battlefield. That is OK. Nobody has a problem with it, least of all the soldiers, sailors, Marines, Coasties and others taking the risks. But who wants to be poisoned by dry cleaning fluid that somehow got into the water supply at your training base? Nobody signed up for that. But it happened at Camp Lejeune.

We Agreed To Get Blown Up By Bad Guys

Camp Lejeune: What They Are Doing About It

We Did Not Agree To Be Poisoned By Negligence

It is really pretty simple. From 1953 through 1987, chemicals from the dry-cleaning plant seeped into the ground water. The wells that supplied drinking water throughout the facility were contaminated. There is no

argument about these basic facts. There is no question of responsibility. Like the veterans who have suffered from exposure to Agent Orange. Like the veterans who have suffered from exposure to asbestos. The fight is over. The battle has been won. The powers-that-be have admitted responsibility. All we have to do now is find out who was on the receiving end. Who are the men and women whose lives have been damaged or destroyed by this?

We need to find you. We want to find you. Those who did this to you are ready, willing, and able to make amends. Well, at least to move in that direction.

Toxic chemicals that were found in the waters of Camp Lejeune are the following:

- Trichloroethylene (TCE)
- Perchloroethylene (PCE)
- Benzene
- Vinyl chloride

Those chemicals cause a wide range of diseases. Including cancer. Not just for the service personnel, but their families and unborn children.

Diseases include:

- Multiple Cancers
- Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)
- Bladder cancer.
- Brain cancer
- Breast cancer.
- Central Nervous System cancer (CNS).
- Cervical cancer.
- Esophageal cancer.
- Hodgkins Lymphoma.
- Kidney cancer.
- Leukemia.
- Liver cancer
- Lung cancer.
- Myelodysplastic syndrome.
- Multiple myeloma.
- Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma.
- Ovarian cancer.
- Prostate cancer.
- Rectal cancer

- Other Diseases
- Cardiac defect.
- Epilepsy.
- Fatty liver disease (hepatic steatosis).
- Female Infertility.
- Kidney damage.
- Immune disorders.
- Nerve damage.
- Miscarriage.
- Myelodysplastic syndromes.
- Neurobehavioral effects.
- Parkinson's disease.
- Renal toxicity/disease.
- Scleroderma.

Everybody dies. Lots of folks get cancer. Bad things happen. People suffer. That is life. Deal with it. The luck of the draw. Sometimes your number comes up. You can't beat fate.

But sometimes, it's not just bad luck. Sometimes the folks who should be paying attention look the other way. Blow it off. Won't upset the applecart. Do the easy thing instead of the right thing. And that's what Lejeune is all about.

You signed up to get blown up, beat up, tortured, shot, stabbed, drowned, killed. By the bad guys. Not poisoned by your own leaders' negligence or incompetence.

They acknowledge they ignored it. And admit that they should not have ignored it. And you should be paid for the damage they did to you. The hard part is done.

Now they are willing to make amends. With dollars. They took your health. They can't give it back. They can only give you a few bucks. Maybe more than a few. Money won't fix it. But it is all that can be done.

If you were poisoned and suffered the diseases they caused, should you hold them accountable? Should you let them get away again? Should you allow them to escape their comeuppance? Get off scot-free? Why would you do that? Why not accept their apology?

Everyone knows most stuff like this gets swept under the carpet, ignored, rejected, forgotten. But not this time.

Unless you let them get away with what they did to you... or to your family member.

Is it a ridiculous idea to make a phone call? Is it too much to find out if you qualify?

Is making a phone call so hard?

You know how good it was to trust your chain-of-command. You also know how bad it is when that trust is betrayed. They can never "fix" what happened there for more than 34 years. But one phone call can start.

Is now a bad time to call?

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