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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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June 1, 2013 @ 5:33 pm

Ep. 149 “Agent Orange in Guam, Part 1: Sprayed and Betrayed”

(hosted by Dr. Vivian Dames with production assistance of Joy White) was recorded via Skype 11/17/12 and airs 5/31/13.

Since the 2006 announcement of the planned relocation of US marines from Okinawa to Guam, we have learned much about the commonalities between these two heavily militarized island communities with extended colonial histories. Another commonality is the use in Guam and Okinawa of Agent Orange (AO) herbicides reported by US veterans and others which the US Department of Defense denies, despite mounting evidence. Since the release in 1994 of the first comprehensive report on Veterans and Agent Orange by the Institute of Medicine, an informal network has emerged seeking recognition and compensation for these veterans and their dependents.



Program guests are retired disabled US Air Force veterans MSgt. Leroy G. Foster (RetAirForceMan@aol.com) and Sgt. Ralph A. Stanton (rstanton@stjoelive.com) who are key figures in the struggle to uncover the extent of damage done to veterans, their dependents, and civil service employees stationed at Anderson Air Force Base-Guam during the Vietnam War period, as well local civilians affected by the legacy of this toxic contamination. [For more information about this network, go to <http://www.quamagentorange.info>]

For ten years, from 1969-78, Leroy Foster handled, mixed by hand, and sprayed Agent Orange herbicides on Guam. He sprayed often along the Air Force fuel pipelines and Marbo Barracks Complex and fuel tank farms at Tumon, Potts Junction, AAFB Andy I and II fuel tank farms and flight line areas, along with hydrant pump houses and perimeter/security fencing. He now lives in Westfield, New York and suffers a litany of AO related autoimmune and inflammatory diseases. He is convinced that the chronic health problems of his daughter and the multiple birth defects of his granddaughter are also related to his AO exposure.

Foster's struggle with the Department of Veteran Affairs began in December 1987 and continues to this day. Although hundreds of veterans are claiming compensation for AO exposure on Guam, Foster is one of the few whose claim for direct exposure (but with no mention of Guam) has been approved. This weekend he is going to Washington DC to attend his Board of Veterans Affairs appeal hearing. He seeks to have Guam specifically indicated on his decision as the site of exposure to document the truth of what happened and to help other claimants and the people of Guam. He anticipates this may be the last time he will be going to the nation's capitol to challenge the "Delay and deny until they die" stance of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He says, "The next time I go will be in a coffin to Arlington Cemetery."

Ralph Stanton was stationed at AAFB in 1969-70. He performed maintenance and repairs daily on fuel storage and delivery systems which were sprayed often with herbicides. He now lives in Savannah, Missouri, and also suffers several debilitating AO related diseases but was denied his claim for direct exposure to Agent Orange. The official reasons for this denial are that "data from the Department of Defense does not show any use, testing or storage of tactical herbicides, including Agent Orange, at any location on Guam," and that "The Joint Services Records Research Center does not document the spraying, testing or storage of Agent Orange Anderson Air Force Base, Guam". Stanton appealed this decision on 10/9/11. A hearing was held 15 months later on 3/5/13 which Sgt. Foster attended and provided testimony. A decision on Sgt. Stanton's appeal is still pending.

The testimonies of Leroy Foster and Ralph Stanton parallel what has happened in Okinawa where dozens of former service members and local civilians have spoken out about the use of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War and its toxic legacy. While the U.S. government has approved several individual claims, it continues to deny that Agent Orange was ever kept, buried or used on Okinawa. As a result, hundreds of sick American veterans have been refused medical assistance and the Japanese government has been able to reject calls from citizen's groups for health surveys and environmental testing and mitigation. [see the award winning film documentary entitled "Defoliated Island - Agent Orange, Okinawa and the Vietnam War" by *Asia-Pacific Journal* affiliate Jon Mitchell.]

Music selection: "Agent Orange Song" by Country Joe McDonald

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