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Local vet travels to DC to speak on Agent Orange



Ralph Stanton traveled to Washington D.C. last week to speak about his exposure to Agent Orange. Stanton (right) is shown meeting with another veteran that had been exposed to the defoliant over 40 years ago.

By Ryan Richardson

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Local veteran Ralph Stanton traveled to Washington D.C last week for a conference on the health effects of veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

Stanton was one of nearly one million servicemen who had been exposed to the toxic defoliant used during the Vietnam War era. The defoliant has been cited as the cause in several health and genetic issues since that time. Stanton was stationed at Guam when he came into contact with Agent Orange and he believes that the health problems he has experienced during his life can be traced back to Agent Orange

“I went to Washington so our voice could be heard,” Stanton said. “Our government should be doing more for our vets across the country. I feel like we are fighting another war, a war our government doesn’t want to help us with.”

Stanton addressed the Institute of Medicine at their biennial meeting on Agent Orange. Every two years, the institute issues new books on the ongoing impact of soldiers that have been exposed to Agent Orange. Stanton feels that while it is important that people, like him, who received direct contact, be acknowledged, the impact on further generations is something that needs addressed.

“There needs to be more studies conducted by our government and they need to step in and do more for the next generation,” Stanton said. “We know that it acts like certain pesticides that have impacted the children of people that were exposed. If our government doesn’t step in and get help to veterans, then we don’t know what will happen to our kids and our children’s children.”

Stanton said that he was in Washington for a short period, but was still able to meet with other vets that were in his situation or worse.

“Sadly, it isn’t surprising to see what has happened to vets that even came into casual contact with it,” Stanton said. “This is something we all feel strongly about, more strongly than almost anything else in our lives.”

This was Stanton’s first trip to Washington to speak on the subject, but he said that he will continue to be an activist.

“Our voice was heard and it will continue to be heard as long as we are still here,” Stanton said. “To see if it does any good with our government is yet to be seen. It is important to go and put our face on this so that they know that we continue to fight.”

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