

For 27 years, I blamed myself for the death of my newborn son. He was born on November 9, 1973 and died on November 10, 1973, 15 hours after his birth. I believed that there must have been something that I did or something that I failed to do that caused this to happen.

During my pregnancy, I was violently sick from the beginning to the end. Immediately before my son was born, my weight had dropped to 95 pounds. Doctors were clueless as to what was causing all my symptoms. I received many different diagnoses... from jaundice to gallbladder disease to psychological. It should be noted that with my other two children, I had normal pregnancies and deliveries; however, I was not pregnant with them at Camp Lejeune.

Coincidentally, in November 2000, while watching local television programming, an announcement was made for anyone who had resided or worked in certain areas aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina from 1968 to 1985 should make contact with the National Opinion Research Center in order to complete a survey. This was done and I later received a packet of information from ATSDR detailing the contamination at Camp Lejeune.

My initial response to the information was one of RELIEF because finally I had a viable explanation as to what could have caused the death of my baby. After reading and rereading the material my RELIEF slowly turned to ANGER and disbelief. I could not imagine that Marine Corps officials had knowledge of this contamination for so many years without divulging it to the masses that had been adversely affected by it.

In January 1973, my husband (USN enlisted), my two small children and I moved into base housing at 2310 Tarawa Boulevard, Tarawa Terrace, North Carolina and remained there until January 1976. While living there, my children and I especially were plagued by a myriad of health problems and we made many visits to the neighborhood clinic and regional hospital for treatment.

I specifically recall an incident that occurred after the birth and death of my infant son wherein I visited the Naval Regional Medical Center on several occasions complaining of nausea, vomiting and dizziness. In one instance, I even reported that I had lost consciousness. This is documented in medical records that I currently have in my possession. I assume that because they could find nothing that caused these problems, it was strongly suggested that I speak with someone on the psychiatric ward.

In closing, many people have needlessly suffered because of the negligence of the Marine Corps in the handling of and response to the drinking water contamination at Camp Lejeune. It is now time for them to step up to the plate and take responsibility for that negligence.

Respectfully submitted,

Louella D. Holliday

San Antonio, TX