

My name is Peter Brannon.

I'm a Marine and a victim of cancer.

Being a Marine was my life's ambition. Growing up in a small rural community in West Virginia, I was filled with a deep sense of pride in my American heritage and humbled by the sacrifices of our founding Fathers and those in the Marine uniform who kept our great Nation safe.

Shortly after graduating High School, I joined, as others had before me, a brotherhood – a brotherhood of patriots and selfless servants dedicated to ensuring the safety and welfare of the United States.

In 1977, I became a Marine.

From 1979 through 1980, I was stationed at Camp Lejeune, living and working as a young Marine at Hadnot Point.

In 1983, my life became complete when I married my High School sweetheart – Robin. She was the epitome of a Marine wife – caring, strong, devoted, and supportive. She deftly managed the house, bills, repairs, and loneliness while I was deployed. She wasn't just my wife – she was a Marine wife. She was a part of the same Marine family of the thousands before her. We loved the Corps and we loved each other.

In 1989, I received orders assigning me back to Camp Lejeune. With my growing family, we moved back to Camp Lejeune and were assigned housing at 818 Inchon St. Tarawa Terrace (TT-1). Throughout the years we lived there, I was deployed on numerous occasions. Robin, the Marine wife she was, handled all that life threw at her. She was a “single-parent,” raising our 3 year old son, Hunter.

During my longer deployments, her father, Wallace, would come and stay keeping her company and helping around the house.

In 1990, we were again blessed with a child. Christopher was born at the Naval Hospital on Camp Lejeune, and my Marine family was now four. Our life was blossoming with our two sons and we made close friends with the other families living in Tarawa Terrace.

Christopher's birth however, was not typical. He was diagnosed with a high upper palate and what they said was “asthma” at four months of age. He had difficulty breathing and sleeping demanding that Robin keep vigil during many nights. Doctors prescribed albuterol, administered through a portable nebulizer inhaler machine. Daily, for one year, Christopher depended on this device to breath.

Because of his high upper palate compounded with severe breathing problems, Christopher was unable to speak effectively. Beginning soon after, Christopher attended aggressive speech therapy for eight years.

In 1997, I left active service, stronger, wiser, and grateful for the opportunity to serve with the Nation's best. And as my family and I began a new chapter in our lives, we were comforted in having known great Marine's and their families and strengthened by our lifelong bond with the Corps.

In December of 2006, Robin, my beautiful wife of 23 years was diagnosed with Thyroid Cancer and

Autoimmune Thyroid Disease. We were crushed – I was destroyed. All I could think of is all the years I protected our Country – I couldn't protect the one person in my life I loved the most. The doctors said Robin had been sick for several years, and they needed to work quickly. She underwent surgery, radiation therapy, and is surviving through the grace of God. Although she nearly passed away twice in 2007 because of complications, she has been spared, yet will take medication each day for the rest of her life.

In 2007, Robin's father Wallace was diagnosed with Thyroid Cancer. Robin, just recovering from her illness, was now forced to relive it, and the possibility of her father's death. Wallace underwent numerous surgeries, radiation therapy, and he, like his daughter, will take medication the rest of his life.

After Robin was treated, I agreed to a medical screening for myself and children as a precaution. For me, it was a series of tests, x-rays, MRIs, CAT scans and sonograms. Hoping for the best – yet it wasn't to be. And in early 2008, I was also diagnosed with Thyroid Cancer and Autoimmune Thyroid Disease. Again, we were forced to ride the roller-coaster of emotions.

Robin and I, facing our own mortality, and our two children facing the possibility of losing both their parents, forged a newborn strength and love for one another. We – as a family, would fight.

I underwent the same surgeries, radiation therapy, and medication as Robin and her father, and although the latest test results looked positive, we all continue to live under the cloud of cancer and what it may portend.

All of this confounded our surgeons, oncologists and other doctors. None had ever seen a family stricken with all having the same cancers at the same time, compounded by Christopher's birth defects. They asked if we – collectively, shared any commonalities that would bring about such an extreme rarity. I began to research as the only location the four of us had in common – Camp Lejeune.

As I write this, I know those of you reading this letter have also been affected and truly understand the level of shock I and my family faced when we learned of the ground water contamination at Camp Lejeune. Perhaps even more shocking is the high probability that it remains a significant threat – even today.

In Sept 1999, the ATSDR apparently sent letters out to previous residents who met criteria for an established survey. The residents were identified through health and housing records and the USMC apparently cooperated with ATSDR to identify and build a database of former residents.

My question is – Why were we not identified and why did we not meet the criteria for the survey?

In March of 2001, HQMC received additional records from Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital in an effort to locate potential survey participants.

In October 2007, the U.S. Senate approved a defense authorization bill to provide the Secretary of the Navy authority to notify Camp Lejeune residents/workers that they may have been exposed to contaminated drinking water.

Again – Why were we never contacted concerning surveys or notifications?

Marine Major Thomas A. Townsend (Retired), sent a faxed letter on the 30th of October 2004, regarding

the Camp Lejeune water contamination and results of a fact-finding panel to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. It is my belief that Major Townsend's observation that the panel disregarded investigating other critical periods, especially after 1989, is extremely critical. Just because they stopped monitoring the levels of contamination in 1987 does not mean the contamination was gone. My family is proof to this.

The panel must reconsider and adopt Major Townsend's recommendation.

Since being affected – I've been researching contamination in and around where I, my family, and father-in-law lived with the following results –

1985 - Tarawa Terrace: Ten (10) wells that served the Tarawa Terrace and Hadnot Point water systems were removed from service because of contamination. Concerning two of those wells on Tarawa Terrace, in one well, TCE was detected at 57 parts per billion (ppb) and PCE was detected at 158 parts per billion (ppb). In the other well, TCE was detected at 5.8 ppb and PCE was detected at 132 ppb.

1995 -Site 35 Camp Geiger: Near my work place- removal of "15,770" tons of contamination containing unspecified solvent and petroleum hydrocarbons.

1997- Site 7- Tarawa Terrace: was approx 500 ft from our residence were pesticides and PCBs were detected at elevated levels in the soil. Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), pesticides, and metals were also detected.

1997- Site 36 Camp Geiger: Near my place of work removal of 240 tons of PCB contaminated soil.

Respectfully,

Peter Brannon