

Hello. My name is Paula Orellana (Keefer). I am one of the children who was born at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

My father, MSGT Ret. Calvin E. Keefer, Jr., faithfully served his country for 22 ½ years in the United States Marine Corps. My mother Carol J. Keefer (Edwards) was pregnant with me when my father was stationed at Camp Lejeune in 1969. I was born on April 30, 1970 and remained until 1972. Then for a short time in 1976, until my father was able to locate a house off base for us to live in. We lived at 126 Inchon Street (I believe that is the correct number) at Tarawa Terrace. As a child my mother did not breastfeed me, I was given formula, which as one knows was mixed with water. I do not have to tell you about the bathing of newborns or toddlers, or the hot days playing in the water sprinklers. Kool-Aid was the family favorite.

I have been ill pretty much all my life. From ear infections over and over as a child, enlarged liver, strep throat over and over, depression, attempted suicides, bipolar, optic nutritious, kidney problems, brain tumor and cervical cancer. These are the things I remember. I remember being stuck with needles all the time as a child and the doctors would tell my mother that the severe pain in my stomach was in my head! After months of testing and blood work and enemas, one doctor did a rectal exam and discovered my liver was enlarged. I still remember one doctor telling my mother it was all in my head.

My mother was ill for as long as I can remember, as well. Numerous surgeries, a double mastectomy (due to fibrocystic disease), where the military surgeons butchered her. The miscarriage of my brother, this really wasn't a miscarriage because in medical records the doctor states she "is still pregnant viable pregnancy" and after telling her my brother was dead and "the rest would come out on its own." They gave my mother medication after medication which in turn killed my brother and they had to do a D and C and then a hysterectomy a short time later. My mother passed away 2 years ago April 10<sup>th</sup> from end stage lung disease among the rest of her illnesses. There are far too many to list. I took care of her, bathing her, changing her, cleaning her, feeding her, holding her and watching her die. I would like for you to know the pain and sorrow I had to go through day after day knowing she was dying at the age of 58. I would check her every 5 minutes to see if she was still breathing and then the last time I checked she wasn't. There was no pulse and I could not do CPR because I would have broken her ribs and most likely punctured her lungs. Then having to go into the bedroom and tell my father "Daddy, Mommy is dead." In my 37 years of life, I have seen my father cry once, that was when my grandmother died, and he sobbed like a child when my mother died. Big tough Marines don't cry. Wrong. Those in charge of the big tough Marines don't cry!

My children suffer from learning disabilities, ADHA, ODD, Bipolar, salivary gland blockages in their mouths, ear infections and who knows what else will show up in the years to come.

The Marine Corps knew what they were giving us to drink and what it could do. We were lab rats for their chemical testing. Hundreds of thousands of Marines and the families and civilians who worked on base did so faithfully to serve and protect, and what did we get in return? A death sentence.

I, in all good faith, believe the VOCs in the drinking wells at Camp Lejeune are the cause of all of my and my family's health problems. Military personnel sign that little piece of paper stating they can take no

recourse against the military. Well, I didn't sign and neither did my mother nor did the hundreds of thousands of other victims in this matter. I want and deserve health care for myself and my children as do ALL those who have been affected by this tragic event. Please have some compassion for us. For a moment, just think if it were you and your family, what would you want?

Respectfully,

Paula Orellana