

I was stationed at Camp Lejeune in April 1983. I was six months pregnant with my first child at the time. My husband, also active duty, and I lived off base. He was with the 2nd Marine Division and I was at 2nd Radio Battalion. My son was born in July 1983 on base in the new hospital.

While stationed at 2nd Radio Battalion, I was often on base more than off of it. I shopped at the commissary and the PX and ate, at the very least, one meal a day on base. I was a Sergeant at the time and was required to do barracks duty at least once a month. That meant staying on base in the barracks after duty hours overnight. I would also often shower on base after PT or PFTs.

In October 1983, the Beirut bombing occurred. We had Arab linguists in Beirut, so it was a hectic time for us. I was assigned to do all outgoing classified messages sent by the Commanding Officer of 2nd Radio Battalion, Colonel Keller, while I was acting clerk for the Operations Officer, Major Robinson. This required me to be on base before the CO arrived, to pick up his classified messages and sort and prioritize them. I was also required to remain at work until he left, in case a classified message needed to be sent out.

I was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in May 1984, but remained at Camp Lejeune with my husband until September 1984 when he was transferred to Camp Pendleton. I was eight months pregnant with my second child when we left North Carolina.

In March 1997, it was discovered that my oldest son (born on Lejeune) had squamous cell carcinoma of the nasal pharynx. He was 13. Squamous cell carcinoma is an adult cancer, so my son had to be treated with adult chemo. He began toxic from the treatment and his digestive system shut down. He lived on TPN (Total Parenteral Nutrition) for six months. On his 14th birthday, July 1997, he was transferred to PICU for vomiting blood. Shortly after that, he had his gall bladder removed, a pyloroplasty and a nissen wrap performed.

My second daughter (conceived at Lejeune) has suffered severe depression for many years. No anti-depressants have helped. As a child, she suffered tonsil infection after tonsil infection. They would not remove her tonsils. When my then-husband was no longer in the Marine Corps, a civilian doctor agreed to remove them. After the surgery, the ENT doctor told me that she had a hard time removing the tonsils because there was so much scarring from past infections. It was outpatient surgery, but my daughter was admitted to the hospital the next day due to complications. She is now 23 and has just been informed that her pap test was abnormal and she needs to have a coloscopy performed. She has no health insurance, so she isn't getting the test.

My third child was neither conceived nor born on Camp Lejeune. However, at the age of 16, she had an ovary removed due to a huge cyst that had wrapped itself around the ovary so that it could not be removed separately.

My fourth child was also neither conceived nor born on Camp Lejeune. He has had problems since birth, though. He suffered from severe reflux, to the point where I could not hold him when he was fed or for an hour afterward. He had bronchiolitis at 2 months old which later developed into asthma. At two years of age he was diagnosed with a Pervasive Developmental Disorder. He did not speak, so we had to learn sign language in order to communicate with him. It turned out that he could not hear, but it was something that could be corrected surgically. Three months before turning four years old, he had the surgery. When he was in 4th grade, he was removed from speech therapy. He is now in 12th grade, but is still in Special Education for a learning disability and an emotional disability. He suffers from severe depression and anxiety.

My problems started in the late 80s. In the beginning, they were just gynecological problems. My period wouldn't start or it wouldn't stop. I was off and on hormones more times than I care to remember. When my third child was born in January 1989 (repeat C-section), the doctor discovered seven cysts on my ovary. These problems persisted until April 2002 when I had a total hysterectomy after having been on my period nonstop for eight weeks and the cysts on my ovaries had gotten out of hand.

In October 2005, my gall bladder was removed. I have several liver lesions (one is a sizable one that is growing) that the radiologist thinks are hemangiomas. I have basal cell carcinoma. I have a huge cyst approximately 1-1/2 inches in diameter protruding from the center of my back.

In November 2006, I was diagnosed with a brain tumor, the size of a lemon. It was on my frontal lobe. Since that, I have been diagnosed with severe depression, severe anxiety and agoraphobia. I am now on Social Security disability. I have another brain MRI scheduled next week and have several tests this week for extreme fatigue and other symptoms. I do one errand and I'm wiped out for the day. I can barely watch my grandchild anymore (the saddest part of all of this). My husband or daughter have to do the laundry because I can't go down the basement steps. Since the tumor was on the speech and memory part of my brain, I'm sure I've forgotten something, but this is all I can remember right now.

Peggy Price