

I returned from Vietnam in January 1970 and was ordered to Camp Lejeune in Feb. 1970. I was attached to the 2nd Field Artillery Group as the Communications Chief.

By July of 1970 I started noticing a tingling sensation in my hands and feet and noticed that when I climbed up a few steps my legs felt tired and heavy. I went to the local dispensary on or about the 5th of August 1970 and again on the 7th of August and they ran a few tests but couldn't find anything wrong. On Monday morning I went to get out of bed and fell flat on my face. My legs were like rubber and wouldn't support my body. My wife tried in vain to get me up and when she couldn't, she called an ambulance and I was taken to the Naval Hospital at Camp Lejeune. I was admitted to the hospital on the 10th of August 1970. I was initially told that I had Polyneuritis of undetermined etiology. My condition deteriorated to the point that I could not walk. I could not raise myself up in bed. I could not hold a spoon- even that was too heavy to hold. They finally told me after awhile that I had Guillain-Barre Syndrome. Now that a 6 week period had passed my body should show some signs of recovery but it was going to be very slow. What I wasn't told, nor did they tell my wife, if it attacked the heart, which is a muscle, there was absolutely nothing they could do. I would just die. I was the 5th case that year and 3 cases had died. At least that is what I was told.

But I remained in the hospital for almost a year. It was finally determined that I did suffer a residual weakness and was unstable or unfit physically to perform the duties of a Marine. So on the 31st of July 1971 I was transferred to the Temporary Retired List. I was granted at that time a 40% disability. I feel to this day, knowing what I now know, that the contamination in the water table at Camp Lejeune was the main culprit in triggering the immune system to attack my own body. It is fact that the chemical TCE is linked to immune system damage and increased incidence of autoimmune diseases. It cost me my military career, and my promotion to E-7 which would have happened in Nov. of 1971.

In 1973 I was sent to Wright Patterson Air Force Base for a reevaluation physical and was told that my reflexes were borderline normal and it was felt I still had some weakness in the extremities. The VA then dropped my disability to 10% and finally reduced it to 0%. So all of these years I have been considered a disabled vet with no compensation. How did all of this start? I am firmly now of the opinion, it was the contaminated water system at Camp Lejeune.

Ron Williams