

## **Background**

My name is Michael J. Segura Jr. and I was born in New York in April of 1958. I currently live in Orlando, Florida. I am a former Marine and retired Army Master Sergeant. In April 2008, I received a letter from the Marine Corps informing me of the water contamination issue at Camp Lejeune. I am a recent bladder cancer survivor and immediately felt that this letter and associated information was a link to some of my health problems.

At age eighteen, I decided to serve my country and join the Marines. There was no other service choice for me, I had friends who were in the Marines and I wanted it too. I enlisted on December 10, 1975 and went to Parris Island in July 1976. I graduated boot camp in October and was assigned to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for artillery training. In December of 1976, I was transferred to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and assigned to 10<sup>th</sup> Marines artillery. I lived in the barracks.

When I got out of the Marines in 1980, I joined the Army National Guard in New York and served for 16 more years. I had a good career, two Meritorious Service Medals and other significant accomplishments. I retired as a Master Sergeant in 1997.

I always led a healthy lifestyle, I never smoked cigarettes and I always watched my diet and stayed fit. I was always very active, running, playing tennis and golf and frankly, I feel I lived an above average active lifestyle, participating in extreme sports like mountain biking and scuba diving.

## **Health Issue – Low Testosterone**

In 2002, I was diagnosed with low testosterone. After treatment, my mood and disposition improved, I realized that I had been suffering from low testosterone for a few years (since 1996). I remain on a testosterone supplement to this day.

## **Health Issue – Bladder Cancer**

### **Diagnosis**

On September 21, 2005 I was diagnosed with a tumor in my bladder. Testing revealed it to be high grade (fast growing) malignant bladder cancer. On October 6, 2005, I had surgery to remove a 5cm x 5cm tumor. The surgeon was surprised at the size and how it mal-shaped the bladder. It was cut out down to the muscle of the bladder and biopsies were taken of the underlying muscle.

Within a few days, the bladder muscle biopsy came back positive for cancer; my situation was now MUCH more serious. I was now diagnosed with stage 2 (muscle invasive) bladder cancer. Biopsies of my pelvic lymph system would determine if the cancer has spread even further. At this point due to the muscle invasive test result and the location of the tumor (near the bladder neck), my only choice was to have my bladder removed.

### **Chemotherapy**

I elected to start chemotherapy with an aggressive MVAC regimen prior to surgery. This course of treatment (chemo prior to surgery) would hopefully eliminate any of the cancer that may have already spread from the tumor site. It could increase my chances for a

positive outcome. My first chemo was on November 17, 2005. The chemo treatments were very difficult. By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of chemo, I was beaten and worn down, physically and emotionally. I almost could not finish the third month of treatment. These mere words on a page can barely describe the experience, only who have had to endure it know what it's really like. The hair loss wasn't too bad, the worst part of it was the hours of nausea, severe constipation, severe weight loss and constant exhaustion caused by anemia (low red blood cell count). I was virtually confined to bed the second month and almost couldn't go on. The doctors adjusted the dose and assured me that the same treatment effect would be achieved with a slightly lower dose. I was very reluctant, having experienced the extreme side-effects, but everyone urges me to continue and somehow I do complete treatment.

### **Cystoprostatectomy (removal of Bladder and Prostate)**

Two months later, in March 2006, I had the operation to remove my bladder and prostate. I had to choose a urine diversion option and selected the internal neo-bladder, which was to be built from a section of my small intestine. This choice was driven by my active lifestyle and relatively young age. The healing process was long and I endured a month of having to wear a catheter so the operation would heal. During the operation the pelvic lymph system was removed and thankfully the biopsies were clear of cancer.

### **Summary**

I feel these health problems are related to exposure to volatile organic compounds at Camp Lejeune. I endured countless hours, days and weeks of suffering and healing, I have permanent problems as a result of this ordeal. I have to urinate five times a night, it disrupts my sleep. I also leak urine at night and have to wear protection. Worse of all, I suffer from erectile dysfunction due to nerve damage during the operation.

Since getting the letter from the Marine Corp, I researched the issue and I am angry, shocked and dismayed not just about the exposure, but MOSTLY about the 28 year delay to inform me. I have severe and permanent effects from my illness. Given my healthy and active lifestyle, I could've been significantly more proactive regarding preventative health screening for the major risks IF I was told that I was exposed.

I survived one of the 'signature' cancers caused by exposure to the types of chemicals in the water at Camp Lejeune. I survived that difficult time due to the unselfish love of my sisters and my faith in God, BUT my life has been altered and affected permanently.

The Marine Corp must take proper responsibility and search out all affected soldiers and families.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Segura Jr.