



Agent Orange, an interesting commentary

January 9, 2:45 PM · [Miami Veterans Affairs Examiner](#) · Harmon Biehl

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This interview is long I know, please be patient. I am actually presenting this article as the first part of a three part series. I crave the comments of you my readers.

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Mr. Charles Kelley or Kelley as he goes by is a Veterans/Widows Advocate/Herbicide (AO) researcher, Battalion Historian, and author of Vietnam's Rain...Agents Orange, White and Blue (Weapons of Mass Destruction)

Hello Mr. Kelley, May I call you Chuck? Please call me Harm.
This interview is going to be published on the Examiner.com Internet web site from the Miami Office.

I will ask the questions, as H and Chuck will answer as Kelley.

H Chuck, are you are a veteran? Please tell me a little about yourself.

Kelley - Yes, I am a Veteran of Vietnam. I served with a 175mm gun outfit in I Corps along the DMZ from 1967 to 1968. I came home with many medical issues and like many of us that wanted to get on with our lives we just passed it off as the hand we were dealt by nature and worked through it as young men. We had no idea as well as our doctors had no idea

what was wrong with us created by the herbicides (plural) exposures. Primarily as I found out years later due to the information void created by our own government.

H Besides being a veteran, you are a Veterans Advocate. As an advocate do you have any first hand knowledge of interaction with the V.A.?

Kelley - Yes I have. I am presently at 50% disability with a BVA held two years ago in Atlanta. It was nothing but a joke. My wife went with me as well as my sister-in-law as witnesses. I thought after 5 years of fighting I would finally get a chance to present my case. I was wrong. I was not allowed to present my case to the judge. If any ten other people in the nation can present a well grounded case on the effects of Agent Orange and the issues that VA Atlanta did not rate me on to begin with I would be surprised. Yet, I was not allowed to present my well grounded case. My case now resides in VA DC appeals remand center where it has been for the last two years. I call and call and call and get the same answer. "It is in the file room waiting for someone to look at it." One person on the phone told me she had no idea what was going on with my claim and would have to request overtime to work on it and call me back. She also said that if management did not approve the overtime then she could not even status it. Another person told me they use to have five units doing the claim remands and due to budget cuts they were down to one. Congress says they give VA all the money they need but I think this is an example of they did not or VA is creating its own bottleneck for yearly budget control on behalf of the Executive Branch while Veterans suffer in disgrace.

What is even more staggering is in 2007 a report indicated that over 50% of all regional VA claims that are denied are later on either overturned in entirety or remanded. Two centers, Atlanta and St Petersburg had over 63% of their denied claims overturned or remanded. Probably not something you want to put on a resume unless you work for Veterans Affairs. Of course they are just waiting for the Veteran/Widow to just die or just give up and go away using their very adversarial processes.

I hear the same story time after time from Veterans and Widows alike.

H I came back from Vietnam and had a lot of very bad experiences with the nightmares and not sleeping and breathing problems, etc... but mostly I have come to find out just recently that I suffer from PTSD. I am sure it is more than just stress related issues because even I can see that Vietnam Veterans are way different than all the rest of the vets I deal with. Have you noticed a pattern in the responses of the Government or the V.A. in terms of denial or flat out refusal to admit A.O. is directly involved with a whole array of mental problems like PTSD as an example?

Kelley – Yes there is an obvious aversion to even looking at such impacts even though we now know that many of these herbicides were neurotoxic. Neurotoxic with many outcomes such as:

Paranoia, memory loss, somatization, personality changes, suicide, etc. Physical signs of limb weakness or numbness, loss of short term memory, vision, and/or intellect,

uncontrollable obsessive and/or compulsive behaviors, delusions, headache, cognitive and behavioral problems and sexual dysfunction. You must remember if this issue were to be brought forward it would explain why non-combatants have the same mental issues, it would explain the suicides, and it would certainly explain the exacerbated PTSD found in Vietnam Veterans. However, then the blame would not be on the enemy soldier but our own government. Even though more and more data points towards herbicide neuropsychological issues, many of which were known early on, it will never be brought forward in our lifetime. The government has minimized or covered up so much now just in cancers and other issues this would be just too damaging for them to face and admit. They prefer the stigma of the deranged Vietnam Veteran rather than the government brain compromised honorable warrior. Early on it was "Waiting for the Vietnam Veterans to die" but recently in some articles we are seeing "When will the U.S. Government Kill the Last Vietnam Veteran". The first rule of differential diagnostics in DSM-IV (PTSD and Mental Disorders) is if an outside source such as drugs, alcohol, and most importantly exposures to toxic chemicals is creating the problem. This is not being done nor is it even being considered. If you are talking about your COPD breathing problems there is enough scientific and statistical evidence to sink a battleship as this group of disorders being 'dioxin associated' all of it is denied by Veterans Affairs by some subjective process that stakeholders are not privy. Sort of like Germany circa 1939. If you are talking about apnea that also should be associated.

H Chuck, is Agent Orange as dangerous as it has been reputed to be?

Kelley - Dioxin is one of the most toxic, complex, and perplexing toxic chemicals ever made by man. Let's be clear here. It is not just Agent Orange or the nomenclature Agent Orange but the entire dioxin family of toxic chemicals of which the dioxin, TCDD found in Agent Orange is considered the worst offender. In our toxic chemical herbicides there were more than just the one dioxin, but also other close dioxin like furans, nitrosamines, picloram, etc. Denying claims based on a single compound is nothing but bad science. While they deny claims based on evaluation of studies that are supposed to be comparable there is no doubt that Vietnam Veterans stand alone in that category of multiple herbicide exposures whether chronic or acute. This creates a chemical reaction not found in comparison studies of what is known is synergy or amplification factor of outcomes. Remember the other agents including Agent Blue and Agent White which have their own set of issues.

It is like throwing a hand grenade into the center of human biology. While some toxic chemicals enter the body and do one thing dioxin enters the body and has the ability to affect many things in parallel. From cancers, autoimmune disorders, neurological issues, blood disorders, learning disorders, birth defects, etc. It certainly is considered a potent immunotoxicity toxic chemical which can have multiple outcomes. Another complex factor is dioxin damage due to the long period of half life within the body itself can manifest 60 years after exposure and still be associated.

H Is there any evidence to show when people were told to use A.O., that the people in charge of those work details knew about the danger to the people handling it?

Kelley – I would assume those that went to school for chemical usage would have had an idea of what to do. It is doubtful they knew how dangerous of the toxic chemical and toxic chemical cocktails. Those would be the men who served in the Ranch Hand Operations. However, the Soldiers and Marines that were detailed to spray the perimeters would have not even been properly trained in any of the required precautions of even the safety of dispensing. They were doing a detail no different from filling sand bags or stringing wire. In fact, one of my gunfighter Marines that was detailed to mix and spray Agent White out at Khe Sanh during the siege is now a quadriplegic.

H Were there any adverse reports on A.O. published before the military started using it?

Kelley – Yes, there were some fraudulent studies done by the chemical companies that were indeed proven fraudulent in a court of law. Ironically or should I say typically in this issue of government collusion the EPA scientist (Dr. Cate Jenkins) that caught them and demanded action by EPA enforcement had to legally fight to even keep her job. There were also statements made by DOW in 1964 such as “exposure to dioxins could result in "general organ toxicity" as well as "psychopathological" and "other systemic" problems.”

H I would like to know if the Military people being discharged were aware of the massive health danger after their tours of duty by way of counseling or an awareness presentation/discussion prior to their discharge. I can tell you for a fact that I was not told about the risk.

Kelley – There were no warnings. Veterans Affairs job at that time after our war was over when our veterans appeared in VA hospitals and outpatient clinics blaming Agent Orange for their illnesses was to distance the issues from military service. VA’s top-level officials rejected any claims that Agent Orange made Veterans sick. Their illnesses were not recognized; their claims rendered no compensation or service connected care. What was paramount to our government was that the unexplained illnesses not be linked to Vietnam or to Agent Orange. For Agent Orange studies, VA found scientists who could be expected by their prior work and employment to conclude that veterans had not been harmed by Agent Orange.

H Was there any evidence to the effect that the military as well as the American Government tried to minimize the problems or to go so far as deny the danger existed?

Kelley – YES! As previously discussed early on it was clear VA’s intent was to distance the government from any source of connection to the Veteran’s illness and death. To include calling any doctor who found a connection to the dangers of dioxin nothing but a witch

doctor. Senator Daschle clearly stated after the first report came out and was totally different from the original scientific draft that it was not just a disagreement in data evaluation, but the perpetration of fraudulent government conclusions. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt (deceased) uncovered a White House Bureau of Budget Memo to all the agencies of the government in essence not to find a correlation between Agent Orange and the health affects. Stating that it would be most unfortunate for two reasons.

A) The cost of supporting the Veterans

B) The court liability to which corporations would be exposed

Not only did our Congress know and did nothing they still have not done anything to stop what must be considered government collusion. Including they House Report 101-672 concluded in 1990 in House Report 101-672 “Charges of a White House cover-up have been substantiated by report, HR 101-672, from the House Government Operations Committee. That report, released August 9, 1990, charges that officials in the Reagan administration purposefully “controlled and obstructed” a federal Agent Orange study in 1987 because it did not want the admit government liability in cases involving the toxic herbicides.” (HR 101-672 “The Agent Orange cover-up: a case of flawed science and political manipulation.” Finally at least two scientists, including the lead scientist for over 12 years, on that study have come forward last year and stated the study is worthless. Yet this fatally flawed study is used to deny our claims time after time after time. The guardians of that study the United States Air Force even though every scientist on the study voted to include the cancer data refused to publish the all site cancer data concluding that all site cancers are associated to the exposures. Clearly in violation of at least two federal agency scientific study integrity laws. Of course if you have ‘all site cancers’ then just about any autoimmune disease would also be associated. With the only difference being arrested cellular maturation.

H In all the research materials you have run across is there any information based on race or rank as to the level of A.O. problems Veterans experience, or was it as wide spread as it appears to be?

Kelley – The only one that I recall is the fact that Vietnam Veterans with prostate cancer are four times more likely for a more aggressive re-occurrence normally in bone cancer. Of that group African American Veterans were higher. Enlisted versus Officer you get into a whole flawed premise and would take too long to explain here. It involves the flawed assumption of dose rates with dioxins. When thrown into the mix it only dilutes the findings which of course the government wants to do.

H Who in the U.S. government is trying to search for the Veterans from Korea thru Vietnam and on into the current non-wars we are involved in. and have them tested for illnesses that the V.A. could help with?

Kelley – NADA, ZIPPO, NO ONE. VA and DOD do not want the Veterans or their Widows to know.

H Based on all your research, what is your personal opinion of the way Vietnam Veterans have been treated based on all we know about A.O. at this time as well as 40 years ago?

Kelley – Our first mistake was even trusting the United States Government and that mistake has cost more lives than the NVA and the VC combined were able to kill on the battlefield. No other segment of society has been treated so wrongfully; met with so much government collusion, conspiracy, and out and out government corruption; and been denied the simplest of citizen rights to justice. The Department of Veterans' Affairs should be compared to the old Bureau of Indian Affairs who were given such omnipotent power that they became lawless.

At this point I would have to discourage anyone from serving in the military until VA is reformed or done away with and the despicable Feres Doctrine that protects these officials at VA and DoD in their collusion is done away with or at least clarified. Congress still refuses to do either. While our nation deserves to be protected those in our government no longer deserve that blank check that is written when a person signs up for military duty that includes his or her life. "...with the thanks of a grateful nation" are nothing but meaningless words to the Presidents and our Congress. Their lack of action has cancelled out the meaningless ceremonies and yawning platitudes.

H What are "They" doing to our current warriors that will cause them to have weird diseases in their older years as well as causing the next generation to have sicknesses brought on by thoughtless actions now?

Kelley – The present Veterans we have to wait and see. The first Gulf War Veterans it is obvious those men and women got into something. Gulf War Syndrome is real. The government is using the same tactics they used for the herbicide Vietnam Veteran in stalling these men and women to see how many will die off first. (Cost savings for obsolete government assets).

The present Veterans complain about their claims taking six months yet we have been fighting for over 40 years with some claims waiting for 20 years. While our congress talks a good story to these present men and women as they need them now. When the war is over they also will be dropped like a hot potato to spend money elsewhere so the elected officials can barter for votes.

Including it has already started. When a soldier is blown up by an Improvised Explosive Device and DoD then states it was 'not combat related' then it has already started in cost savings as the expense of the warrior. DoD seems to think that serving in a combat theatre is same as working at Waffle House. Now since we have an all volunteer Military that is fine as long as you tell the young man or women 'before they sign up' and NOT AFTER THEY ARE BLOWN TO PIECES in service to this nation.

H Thank you for your very precious time and talents, tenacity and bravery in the face of certain rejection. I hope this interview will give some clarity and insight to the last 40 years and A.O. and Vietnam vets.

I haven't met Kelley face to face but I would like to.

President Obama, Are you reading this or are any of your people reading this? If so lets talk about it. I fact let me give you or your people several ways to solve these very real problems. I have solutions.

Be blessed;
Harm.....:)



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Comments

donald mobley says:

Donald has Diabatie 2, nerves disorder, sleep acmea, stomach problems, PTSD, enlarge heart, soft tissues, arthritis,colen disorder, hormono (none),he has been going to VA since 2001. Donald has some of his records where he was. VA won't help him even with non service connection. Donald had to quit working due to his memory was going. He can't drive anymore due to road rade. Please help me before his time runs out.

February 27, 1:12 PM

ron degesero says:

- 1.do not use deodorant,let your indocrine system work, use balm rock samesame charlie
- 2.do not take antibiotics Va gives you go holostic our livers and ,kidneys and gall balders are now just puking out the criminal agents that we were dossed with when we we kids
3. keep the salts and sugar from "drinking" to a low ,metabolic upkeep is dangerous especially with diabetes ,hepitis, and all the alphabetical ills we have been totally and illegally ignored with; by the gifted VA docs.I have been letting my lymph nodes under my arms and in my grion swell and when they fissure I cut and bleed them and treat them as my any foreign object on my body-by freezing

them. I am determined to see my grandchildren grow up" VA be damned"! on to WASHINGTON DC
ron d welcome home all

4.

January 29, 5:11 PM

ron de gesero says:

VA-varmits alike!my file 30"tall and growing told by va why wasn't I given a puprle heart and other medals.i proved by" NEXIS" that I was given 3ssn'&2ras by the army, found my file in thier keeping after 24 years and not deadas stated thier hearing are to keepa record of how they punishthe Viet Nam

vets who dare live past 58yearsof age

January 24, 11:18 AM

ray corder says:

this is not even to mention the parasites that were in the water and food in nam. the first sign of anything wronge, your liver is destroyed - the parasite dead and passed out your system. claims are denied, veteran dies - widows got nothing but anger, heartache and stsd (secondary traumatic stress disorder). good article, too bad it's all true.

January 23, 10:12 PM

Shirley Linares says:

Thank you for this interview. I am anxious to read more. My husband died in April 2008 from cancer of stomach and esophagus. VA keeps denying that it is caused by AO. He was 70% disability for PTSD and 20% unemployable. He lived 8 months after being diagnosed with cancer at 60 yrs of age. I am so angry. VA is telling me his cancer was not related to AO. My ex-husband (Special Forces Viet Nam) died of the same thing at the same age, five days after my husband. This is a very sad thing VA is doing to the veterans.

Thank you,

Shirley Linares

January 22, 7:30 PM

Harmon David Biehl says:

Well all these comments are heartwarming if not a testament to the bad treatment we Veterans have been receiving from the V.A. We have a new President and I believe him when he said he is going to make changes to the way we treat our war weary Veterans. Having said that I have chosen one comment that parallels my thinking entirely on the interview with Kelley. Look for it as a posted article.

Be Blessed;

Harm.....:)

January 22, 1:21 PM

snakecharmer says:

I also have a link for Johnson Atoll on my site and it has some claims that was approved...go to veteransinfo.org

January 22, 11:14 AM

snakecharmer says:

I also have a link for Johnson Atoll on my site and it has some claims that was approved...go to veteransinfo.org

January 22, 10:51 AM

Paul says:

I too am a VET that was exposed to AO on Johnston Island 72/73. VA turned me down for all of my AO diseases.

I have had 3 Soft Tissue Sarcoma cancer surgeries. The 1st cancer weighed 26 lbs and lost my left kidney, spleen and some colon. The 2nd one was small, but lost more colon. The 3rd was big again, took two people to pull it out of me, and lost some back muscles and damaged more nerves feeding my legs.

I also have Peripheral Neuropathy affecting both legs, arms and hands, with my left hand almost useless now. I was originally mis-diagnosed with MS when the Docs found the Myelin around my spinal cord was damaged and gone. What changed their diagnosis was no lesions were found in my brain.

Soc Security gave me full disability. VA, as usual, gave me 60% for non-related AO problems.

Paul... Retired MSgt USAF

January 22, 10:28 AM

John M, Pollardy says:

I served in Vietnam (Bein Hoa AB-1963 to 1964) I was exposed to "AGENT ORANGE" AND NOW SUFFER FROM Isopathic, Pulmonary Fibrosis (lung breathing problems, and was placed on full time Oxygen utilization because of not being able to breathe without it.

I file a claim and was denied by the V.A for whatever reason, basically, stating this was not service connected recognized illness, I currently have a 70% disability rating from the V.A and concurrent connected service disability for diabetes/depression. I never smoked in my lifetime, and I strongly feel that the problems I now experience if my lungs were in fact due to exposure to "Agent Orange". I have no way of proving it. Many others are having "Isopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis" problems as well, if so I would very much appreciate hearing from you.

Thank you John M Pollardy TSgt, USAF(ret)(jpollardy@aol.com)

January 21, 5:45 PM

Jim Wallace says:

there was a lot of herbicides sprayed around Dade County in the early 60s by us Army and others!

January 21, 3:02 PM

JohnFrog says:

Kelley knows as much and more as anyone about the problems veterans have with the VA, and he's not afraid to say it. He's paid dearly in what is a blatant case of retaliation in how they're handling (NOT) his compensation claim. He knows the facts and figures - and we all cheer when he spouts them out. But nobody, not the VA, not the House or Senate does a thing about it. The Department of Veterans Affairs is a corrupt, rudderless and near-useless organization - specifically the Compensation Division. You won't find more graft and corruption anywhere. And it's the biggest adversarial roadblock that a veteran will ever run into. It needs to be taken apart. Does it need to be rebuilt? Not in any way that resembles the closed-loop, self-monitored and self-serving system it is today. Kelley has some plausible ideas about what to fix and how to fix it. Turn him loose; let him speak out. And someone in the legislature Please! Please listen to him, for he knows of what he speaks.

January 21, 11:20 AM

Wayne Anderson says:

I am a veteran who served in Thailand from Nov 1967-Nov 1969. Those of us who served in Thailand, Laos, or Cambodia have almost no chance of our problems being covered. Those of us with nerve problems, such as myself who is disabled with peripheral neuropathy, even if you were in Vietnam have virtually no chance of the VA accepting any claims.

January 21, 10:27 AM

Tom Spruck says:

Wow, sounds as if all of us get the same response from the VA. I also am at 60% and think it ought to be 100%. I had a hearing in NY from Washington and because I did learn not to stick my finger up at bad drives and told the judge this I was denied any increase!

January 20, 9:09 PM

Caroline Meyer Young says:

My husband, a career Marine, died 18 months ago of adenocarcinoma of the stomach. He did 3 tours, the last at Danang for the Tet Offensive. My claim for service connected death benefits has been denied and is now in appeal. I won't get my benefits until the bill in the House of Representatives is passed that will cover gastrointestinal cancers. And then the VA will drag it's feet for as long as possible. I too hope our new President will have some interest in the plight of us war widows.

January 20, 8:54 PM

snakecharmer says:

For info on AO from all over and GWS go to veteransinfo.org

January 20, 7:57 PM

snakecharmer says:

For info on AO from all over and GWS go to veteransinfo.org

January 20, 7:56 PM

snakecharmer says:

I have much info on my site about AO and the spellman report email me at snakecharmer_878@hotmail.com

I have tried to post my site but to no avail

January 20, 7:52 PM

Michael H. Howell says:

Jean Spellman was doing research at Columbia University and the moment she mentioned degenerative diseases to the VA her study funding was removed and told to stop all work on the research. I suffer from Degenerative Bone and Disk disease that is more probably than not caused

from the dioxins. I don't know how to get her study restarted but I believe her to be an honest outside source to find out more and give us a true statement of fact on dioxins. I also have diabetes type II and many other issues to deal with. One of which is the coronary artery disease that I am preparing a claim for. Michael Howell

January 20, 7:19 PM

john king says:

I have diabetes II caused by exposure to agent orange in Vietnam. I also have secondary conditions from the diabetes. The VA makes a veteran prove that all secondary conditions of DMII are a result of DMII. This requires that a vet get a medical opinion when the usual secondary conditions of DMII like cataracts and cardiovascular conditions occur in order to prove the connection. This puts an undo burden on the veteran The VA should approve as service connected all well known secondary conditions of DMII when the DMII is caused by agent orange without having the burden for the veteran to file claims and prove the connection.

January 20, 5:32 PM