

A Marine Widows Battle

I would like to begin by telling you I am a widow, of a Vietnam Veteran. He was a highly decorated Marine, which including purple heart Bronze Star With Valor, and also Marine/navy commendation award with valor. After I received his military records, I knew where it was stationed and saw where Agent Orange had been sprayed heavily in that area. But, I don't think in my lifetime, we will ever get the truth, and the list of presumptive illness is a joke. He had been stationed at Camp LeJeune, after leaving Vietnam Nam after 2 tours. He suffered from PTSD, but both of us didn't understand his anger issues. Although an extremely hard worker, his anger caused him to lose a lot of jobs. His last job, caused him to suffer big time from PTSD. He couldn't get a job, gee sounds familiar, age was probably the issue. The only jobs he found were, picking up bloody dear parts as a garbage collector, or delivering coffins and lining them in the warehouse. Nice jobs for a Veteran with PTSD, he received 100 percent disability because of unemployable because of his PTSD which my then had really become severe. He nightmares would always wake us up. But he never remembered them. I went the route of unemployability because that was the fastest way. But, afterwards I thought wow, thank god its over I don't have to deal with VA anymore. Well surprise, because of terrible care at the Veterans Medical Center, he did not even have a chance to fight for his own life, he died 4 weeks after being diagnosed with primary liver cancer. My life was pure hell, and I have had to fight the VA for widows benefits for 2 1/2 years. That is actually relatively fast for VA and especially their appeal process. It was one long nightmare, but I learned too much I think about the VA and the fact that it is one big MESS. Even with the aid of a Senators office, the mix ups and losing evidence was terrible. But I kept plowing ahead. I am disabled on Social Security and my son is also, he has autism. So we suffered big time financially, during this process but that motivated me to push as hard as possible, it was like having a full time job, but harder. It affects ones health. The emotional strain is horrible. I thought after all this, it is about time that Widows and wife's of Vietnam Veterans make a big noise so Washington takes notice. This will not be tolerated anymore. I found out the hard way that the VA Medical Centers and Hospitals are immune from liability, or accountability, wow, considering medical errors are the number one killer in America, 765,000 a year die of them, this comes out of Johns Hopkins, now mind you that is with accountability and liability, not us we must sue the US, and the US has enacted laws that affect the widow directly, making it almost impossible to find an attorney, while the US has an army of them working for them. I won't list the changes in the laws, I have found, because this is already long. But how all these laws slipped by the women of America is shocking. While we worked and took care of children, and stressed out about life's problems, our rights have been shaved away. I want to go to Washington, and make some noise. Committees and groups are fine, but America is not taking notice. If women unite which is hard, men can unite but woman have a real problem doing that and I am aware of that, but if they did, things would change. I feel if men can unite like the Million Man March, why not women, after all we have to fight for benefits, our husbands have PTSD, By the way, I just received a letter stating that I won my appeal for my husbands service related death, based on Camp LeJeune, by the VA doctor, couldn't get anyone to write that because of the white coat of silence up in upstate NY. So it can be won, but it is really hard. So keep up the good work, I would like to pick out a date in the Spring or Summer, to show Washington how unfair the VA is to widows and unjust. I have worked in a teaching hospital mostly on acute medical floors and ICU's and saw the worst care possible to our Veterans. If you are interested in pushing for real progress I am interested in helping but just to offer support, no, we need to demand changes, so other widows from the new wars will get justice.

Signed

A Marine Widow