

**Agent Orange Conference: March 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> 2006**  
**Report for the Record by Daniel J. Shea**  
**1968 Vietnam Veteran who served in the United State Marine Corp (1968-1969)**

I am about to speak to you about my Vietnam experience and the pain it has caused me and my family, but first I want to thank VAVA and the Conference organizers for this opportunity and for the generous invitation to come to this conference and to all of you for coming.

In these times of U.S. global domination I am not surprised that our political leaders lied to us to leads us into a protracted war in the Middle East and attacked the Nation of Iraq with total disregard of International Law or that they lied to us at the expense of lives of both the men and women of my country and the innocent Iraqi people. This is a pattern I have seen before, in Vietnam, in Central America, in Grenada, and most recently in Haiti.

The lies are always the same, we are told it is a war to fight terrorism, like we were told that Vietnam was a war to stop the spread of Communism. Ohhhh those Communists, they are the boogiemens coming to get ya, but wars are in themselves their endgame. They need a "Perpetual War" a war to replace the "Cold War", to carry out their ambitions for corporate global domination, which is an affront to the desires of the good people of the world who want only to work and live in peace.

I am here to witness to the crime and injury my country caused your people and its own soldiers through its poisoning of our minds and your lands and to join you in your battle for reparations and reconciliation and to help bring our two nations closer together in peace and harmony. Your efforts in this regard and those who have the courage to join you will invite more lies by the evildoers and they will try to dismiss you and those of us here in solidarity with you, with the usual suspect brands: communists, socialists, liberals and traitors. Words that in my ignorance use to be fighting words but now they no longer have power over me. I know myself and I understand the meaning of those words. All men and women who profess the liberation of the oppressed, and

believe in universal healthcare, the pursuit of happiness, human rights and worker rights and that a different kind of world is possible,-it is true, what say- we are communists, socialists, liberals, but are traitors only to the ruling class, of which I find no disgrace and am most proud to be associated with.

In 1968 I spent 3 months in your country and remember only three geographical locations; Da Nang, Phu Bai, and Quang Tri. I was a marine M60 machine gunner rated as an expert shot, fortunately I never had to fire my weapon except to practice. Unfortunately, I was fired upon by snipers and incoming mortar shells, fortunately I survived without a scratch or I thought I did. Unfortunately others in my company did not fare as well. Snipers rounds met their mark, shells exploded wounding many with a single strike, and landmines and booby traps harvested the lives of many more poor souls.

It was the invisible weapons that would eventually remove me from combat. The rice patties we marched through and the typhoons with its monsoons and constant rain help breed a fungus that would torture my feet and make walking almost impossible. Because of this invisible warrior and the fact my brother was serving in the same combat zone and company with me that I was sent out of country and eventually ended up in the Philippines. Four months after my taking leave of Vietnam my brother was one of some 18 people who survived Operation Meade River. My brother Michael D. Shea most probably saved my life and whom I love very much was sent back to the States in a straight-jacket and today is trying to get on a liver transplant list.

After serving my time, like prison time I tried to settle into normal life in my hometown of Portland Oregon. I tried to put Vietnam on the back shelf in my mind and to live my life in peace. I fell in love and married my wife Arlene with whom on June 16<sup>th</sup> of this year I will have been married to for 35 years.

We had two beautiful children Casey and Harmony. Casey my first was born December 16<sup>th</sup> 1977. That day should have been the most joyous occasion of my life but he was born with a congenital heart disease, a cleft palate, and stomach abnormalities and

suffered a seizure requiring immediate specialized care. I thought I had survived Vietnam but the war reached out and wounded my family and my state of mind. Agent Orange exposure was the first thing that came to me, I pulled the book on Vietnam off the shelf in my head and never was able to shelve it again.

I didn't have much time to place blame on the military, the chemical companies or to file claims for disability, I only had time for my son, my wife and our daughter who would come 14 months later in February 1979.

As an artist I attempted to understand my son's disease by studying biological illustration, learning everything I could about his heart condition and could draw it with some precision. I wanted to find a cure for my son and even applied for premed at our City College.

In 1980 Casey's blood oxygen was too low and his leg pains were becoming more regular, his ability run and play and keep up with his little sister became more difficult and he was scheduled for surgery in the late 1980's to put in a shunt in his heart to help the flow of oxygen. I can still see my son's hands outreached in my direction while he cried out Daddy, Daddy, Daddy as the nurses wheeled him through double swinging doors, his voice fading into the echoes of sterile hall ways. I am haunted by that image to this day because I got this terrible premonition that I would never see my son again. I have never been so frightened and tried to pull the plug on the surgery explaining my reservations to the hospital staff and councilors that came to assure me that my fears were normal but recommended that we proceed with the surgery it was in the best interest of my son, they lied. I suppressed my natural intuition and allowed the surgery to begin. After 10 hours in surgery, an doctor assisting in the surgery came out and told us something had gone wrong and that Casey had suffered an oxygen shock to the brain and was in a coma. Casey remained in a coma for 7 weeks, during which time he was subjected to other surgeries, tests, medications, as my wife and I sat everyday at his bedside. Arlene and I asked that he be taken off the ventilators and we took turns holding Casey and Arlene had just handed him to me saying he is getting cold and felt his face and hands and tried to warm him up by holding him close but I could feel his

life fleeing his shell of body and I held him tighter as he breathed his last breath and died in my arms. My world as I knew it crumbled and I could bare it no more, I wanted to end my life as did my wife, but we lifted each other up and found the strength to remain for the love of our daughter who we could not abandon.

That is my story and the story of my son Casey Allen Shea who would have become just another medical statistic, a number filed away in the hospital dungeons where such records are kept and never heard of again. If not for those cries of Daddy, Daddy, Daddy that still haunt my mind and the revelations that were unveiled as the crumbling world I once thought to be real, had not vanished and if the light of truth and love had not comforted me in my grief, then this story would never have been told. Casey continues revealed himself to me in many ways as a child of war, as a Vietnamese baby, as an orphan, as a Cuban, a Russian, and an African, as a child of the world he whispers to me how are any of these different than me, what mother, father, brother or sister should suffer the grief you have known over me, what right does anyone have to buy bullets and bombs to kill other peoples children, to deny them of their future together, what right does anyone have to make chemical potions to poison the land and its' people they deem in the way of their grand ambitions, is it not criminal, even in times of war to poison a people's food crops? The world has condemned chemical warfare because it takes not only enemy soldiers but innocent men, women and children alike, both victors and victims are shackled by its deadly grip and it cripples generation after generation of those exposed to its toxins.

As long as there is breath within me, Casey will never be just a statistic nor will your children. Please don't forget that these kinds of statistics are about real flesh and blood, they have names, and they had lives and their stories need to be told. Their deaths require justice and the living victims need to be compensated and we all must work to end the insanity of war.

I want again to thank all of you for giving Casey back to me, by allowing him to live again for a few minutes in my memory as I speak of him and that I was allowed to bring him here and introduce him to all of you. Thank you.

Peace and Solidarity