Agent Orange won't let Vietnam veterans forget

First of two parts By SANDRA ARMBRUSTER

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Tim Rea looks at his two healthy, preschool children playing at his feet.

"I feel lucky," he says. "They seen have all their faculties, but that's not to say that something won't show up when they're five."

Rea, a veteran, believes he is suffering physical side effects from Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant used in Vietnam. The chemical was sprayed from the air to rid the area of underbush that obsecured enemy troops.

"When you run in the backyard and scream at the sky, you know something is wrong." said Rea.

A former Redford resident now living in Hazed Park, Rea spent two years in Vietnam from 1988 to 1970.

"Now he wonders if the chemical valent or said the genes he has passed on to his daughters. That's a question he says no one

genes he has passed on to me --- ters. That's a question he says no one

ranswers.

21 "The VA (Veteran's Administration)

4 won't even give us our tests back," he said. "There's no way we can get results. You can find out the results of tests for clap and pneumonia, but not

suits. You can into out the results of this.

"You might spend two days trying to see a doctor (at a VA hospital), and when you do, they make you feel as shough they're doing you a favor. . . I don't have too much faith in government anymore,' he adds.

Rea isn't alone. He was one of a small group of Vietnam veterans who gathered for a rally in Hings Park on Saturday. Originally planned for the Westland section of the park, confusion resulted in the really linally gathering on Woodbine in the Dearborn Heights section of the Wayne County park.

Other veterans complained of discrimination against Vietnam vets, for information about Agent Orange and slow receipt of benefits.

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technical differences in administration.
"There's no medical relationship established, except for a skin condition, as a direct relationship to Agent Orange," said Moore. "Anyone who's alleging exposure should contact the nearest VA medical center for examination and treatment.

nation and treatment.

"Just because a link hasn't been proved doesn't mean we'll turn them down,' he continued. "We do want to examine them and keep histories because independent organizations as well as us are doing studies on this.

"If they (veterans) feel they have a disability, then they should file a claim. It will be treated like any other claim with no prejudice."

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Rea and others argue that prejudice exists.
"We're like exiles,' he said. "This is the first war the U.S. lost, and they just want to push it out of the history books to forget it. We're like the American Indians — they want to fence us in and push us out."
"There definitely is a difference in feeling when the VA is dealing with Vietnam vets and those of World War I or Korea,' said veteran John Covell of Paylor. "It's like we're using up their space."

of Taylor. "It's like we're using up their space.

Covell believes a change is needed in the "national attitude" toward Vietnam veterans.

"We have a stigma attached to us," he explained. When I returned from Vietnam, I sought out a veterar's oranization for someone to share the experience of what I was going through.

"At a VPW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) post I was hassled becuase they said we lost the war. This was from the post commander," Covell added. "He said we didn't deserve the name veterans. That we were all just a bunch of drug addicts and that's why we lost the war.

WHILE THAT ATTITUDE: may THE VETERAN'S administration is aware of the problem.

Blake Moore, assistant veteran's service officer in the Detroit regional office of the Veteran's Administration, add the benefits are "essentially the same for Vietnam era veterans as for those from World War II and the Korean War. There may be some small, where the some some small, and the veteral service of the veteran's and the veteral service of the veteran's Administration, and the benefits are "essentially the same for Vietnam era veterans as for the veteral service of the veteral serv

about eight million who served during that period.

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troit (phone 535-333), and the Flight of the Phoenix, 5514 Woodward north of Kirby in Detroit (phone 371-323).

BUT VETERANS ARGUE that counseling centers aren't the answer to their problems with Agent Orange.

"We're not neurotic," said John Rucker of Detroit. "Agent Orange affects the central nervous system. We're trying to make a clear path to help because we're getting ready to leave this place. These guya are geting pancreatic cancer and they're dying.

"I hate to be called a liar when I go into the VA hospital," Rucker added. "When you tell them you have a rash, they say, "When was the last time you had a bald." They keep saying it's all in your year to 18 months I have to report for an exam. I've been on disability since the day I came back." Covell said. "They're real prompt about

an appointment for that — to see if they can take your money away." When a doctor does say that some-thing is wrong and tests are needed, ap-pointments are scheduled six to seven

pointments are scheduled six to seven months away, according to Covell.
"You say, "Now wait a minute," but it ends there," said another veteran. "They tell you to take it or leave it because money is tight. And travel—they're supposed to pay travel costs to go to a VA hospital, well, they've cut

back on that." The veterans say they want improved delivery of benefits and information provided by the government to those who may have come in contact with Agent Orange. Until that happens, they say they will continue to try to reach other veterans in the area who are experiencing symptoms similar to theirs — rashes, liver and bladder problems.



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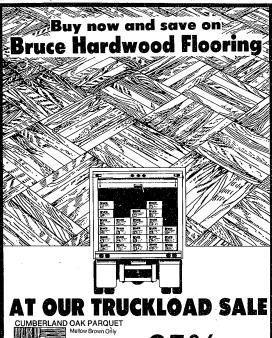
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