

Local

Vietnam vets want Agent Orange records released

United Press International
AUSTIN — A Vietnam War veteran and his wife said Monday their children are deformed because he was contaminated with an herbicide that was sprayed in Southeast Asia, and thousands of other veterans are afraid of father children for the same reason.

Dan Jordan, president of the Brotherhood of Vietnam Veterans, told the House Health Services Committee enactment of a bill authorizing the Texas Health Department to gather medical data on veterans who might have

been exposed to Agent Orange — the herbicide sprayed in Vietnam to remove jungle foliage — would be the first step to alleviating a deep concern.

The legislation also would authorize the attorney general to file class-action lawsuits on behalf of veterans who believe the Veterans Administration is withholding information on their exposure to Agent Orange.

"But this is only the tip of the iceberg," Jordan said. "My two children (ages 8 and 10) were born with severe birth deformities.

And many thousands of others are afraid to have children."

Jordan's wife, Donna, said many veterans cannot live without knowing if they were exposed to Agent Orange, and if so, what effect the contamination would have on their children.

She said that of the first 100 veterans her husband's organization interviewed, 24 had fathered a total of 35 deformed children, including six who died.

Jordan, who said he has been denied psychological counseling because he has no prior criminal

record, said the VA insists that Agent Orange is harmless. But he said a small dose of the herbicide was given to rats and they died. "I find it very hard to believe that rat poison is good for us," Jordan said.

Rayma Plummer said her husband died more than four years ago of cancer, and she has suspected that it was caused by Agent Orange. But she said she has been unable to get detailed records from the VA on tests conducted on her husband.

Plummer also said her oldest daughter — who was conceived

before her husband went to Vietnam in 1966 — is normal, but the four daughters born after her husband served in Vietnam have either physical or psychological problems.

She said her twins have learning disabilities, and the two youngest daughters have lumps on their bodies that cannot be diagnosed but are painful to the

children. She also said the youngest child suffers an eye disorder not common in children.

Dr. Jack Whitaker, a cancer specialist who consulted Mrs. Plummer's husband before his death, testified that he has only seen one patient who had severe cancer malignancy all over the body as Mrs. Plummer's husband did.

"He's a 15-year-old boy who lived behind the plant where Agent Orange is produced," the doctor said.

Mrs. Plummer said many veterans can no longer wait for help.

"My husband didn't have time to wait. He was only 29. My daughters don't have time to wait."

Vickie Daniel says suit useless

United Press International
LIBERTY — Vickie Daniel, fighting to retain custody of her two sons by former Texas House Speaker Price Daniel Jr., said Tuesday the socially and politically prominent Daniel family was out to get "every last penny I have."

Mrs. Daniel, charged with shooting her husband to death Jan. 19, told UPI the entire custody battle over Franklin Baldwin, 3, and Marion Price, 1, could have been avoided.

Asked if she would have given visitation rights to Daniel's parents, former Texas Gov. and Mrs. Price Daniel Sr., she said:

"Of course. My children love their grandparents."

Mrs. Daniel, whose fitness as a mother is being challenged by Daniel's sister, Jean Daniel Murph, said she would have preferred to settle the situation out of court amicably. She said the only reason the custody suit was

filed was because "Jean wanted to fight me on it."

Mrs. Daniel said she was angry that she and the two boys were being kept out of the rambling ranch-style home she and Daniel shared during their stormy marriage. She said the house was being rented out to a family who was watching over it while the custody battle went on.

"They're out to get every last penny I have," she said of the Daniel family.

Mrs. Murph's husband, the Rev. David Murph, testified Monday he would be willing to accept the responsibility of raising the children and would not mind if he and his wife won custody of the boys.

Murph said he would treat the boys as if they were his own children and would agree by court order to allow Mrs. Daniel to visit her sons.

Under questioning by Mrs. Daniel's attorney, Richard "Racehorse" Haynes, Murph acknowledged neither of the boys had ever visited his home in Richardson, Texas.

Earlier Monday, a Houston psychiatrist, concluding three days of cross examination by Haynes, said good foster parents could help the children avoid developing a psychological disorder.

Dr. Kenneth Wetcher, whose \$110-an-hour fee is being paid by Mrs. Murph, said if the boys were placed with good foster parents "it would mitigate against the development of a separation anxiety disorder."

Jurors in the bitter custody battle, which entered its fourth week Monday, appeared bored by the tedious questions put to Wetcher by Haynes. Some jurors stared at the audience or their feet, while others leaned forward in their seats, resting their head in their hands.

Legislator celebrates car's 300,000 miles

United Press International
AUSTIN — Rep. Paul Colbert, D-Houston, celebrated the 300,000th mile on his 1962 sky-blue Volkswagen by adding to it his state official license tags.

Colbert, a freshman legislator, drove the car near the south steps of the Capitol at noon, and as friends watched, he used a screwdriver to undo the AKS-575 Texas license tags. He replaced them with a set reading 50-190. 50 stands for state official.

He said he bought the car from a friend 4½ years ago and has personally put 100,000 miles on the car.

While Colbert was laboring

over his car, reporters noticed that his state safety inspection sticker had expired on April 1. He looked a little embarrassed and then explained that repair on his right-turn signal light must be performed before a new safety inspection sticker can be obtained.

Colbert's friends brought a few bottles of champagne to the affair. But the freshman legislator only poured a few ounces of the champagne on the hood of the car instead of breaking the bottle over the car's bumper.

"I thought about which would break first (the car or the bottle), so I'd better pour," he said.

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