

OBITUARIES

David Cline, Vietnam War veteran who became a leader in peace movement

Jan. 8, 1947 — Sept. 15, 2007



David Cline, a Vietnam War veteran who became a leader in the antiwar and peace movements, died Friday in his Jersey City, N.J., home from liver disease. He was 60.

Mr. Cline was born in Buffalo and graduated from Eden Central High School.

After being drafted, he served in the Vietnam War in 1967 and 1968 as a rifleman in the Army's 25th Infantry Division. He was injured several times in combat and was awarded three Purple Hearts and the Bronze Star medal for valor in combat.

He returned to Buffalo in 1968, and while convalescing from injuries, came to the support of his brother, Bruce, and others arrested after federal agents stormed a church. They had been given sanctuary there following the burning of their draft cards and refusal to be inducted into the military. They became known as the "Buffalo Nine."

Mr. Cline went from believing in the military effort to concluding the war was unjust. That experience would shape his outlook and his life's work. He is remembered by those who knew him as a tireless and fiercely committed advocate for social justice.

"David was quite a remarkable guy. He was dedicated to the peace movement, and his dedication to the American veterans and Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange was unswerving," said Bruce Beyer, one of the Buffalo Nine.

After the war, Mr. Cline opened a coffee shop in Fort Hood, Texas, where veterans could safely question the war during a time when doing so

was not widely accepted. He also produced an underground, one-page newsletter for GIs about politics and psychological and medical issues faced by veterans.

Mr. Cline joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War in 1970, and became one of its earliest leaders organizing against the war. In 1984, he became the first president of Veterans For Peace, which represented veterans of all eras. The group expanded to more than 100 chapters, including Chapter 128 in Buffalo.

Mr. Cline also was an early leader of the Agent Orange Campaign, which pressured the government to improve medical care and give compensation to veterans exposed to the highly toxic chemical used during the Vietnam War.

He traveled throughout the United States and abroad in support of the peace movement. He visited Vietnam as part of a delegation that looked into the effects of Agent Orange and the plight of Amerasian children. Later, he led a delegation of veterans to Vieques, Puerto Rico, adding their voices to calls for the Navy to stop bombing tests on the island.

Mr. Cline also opposed the Iraq War. He spoke at a rally with other veterans and parents of slain soldiers in Kleinhans Music Hall in June 2006.

Mr. Cline was permanently disabled from his combat wounds, but worked as a post office union representative in Jersey City for 15 years, rising to vice president of the Transportation Workers Union Local 600. He retired in the mid-1980s.

Survivors include a son, Daniel; two daughters, Ellen and Sabrina; his parents, Donald and Ruth; two brothers, Steven and Bruce; and a sister, Linda.

Services will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. today in McLaughlin Funeral Home, Jersey City.

— Mark Sommer