

Gerald Chiano, urged cancer tests for vets

BY MARTIN C. EVANS

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Gerald "Jerry" Chiano, a Vietnam War veteran who battled to raise awareness about a rare cancer linked to a waterborne parasite endemic in Southeast Asia, died Sunday at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan.

The Valley Stream resident was 68. Chiano succumbed to cholangiocarcinoma, a cancer of the bile duct, according to his daughter Jennifer Paglino of Bethpage.

In the last months of his life, Chiano urged other veterans who served in the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975, to be tested for liver flukes. Tiny larva of the inch-long parasitic worm can be ingested in contaminated river water or undercooked freshwater fish. The parasites lodge in the liver, where they can live for decades, and can induce aggressive tumors

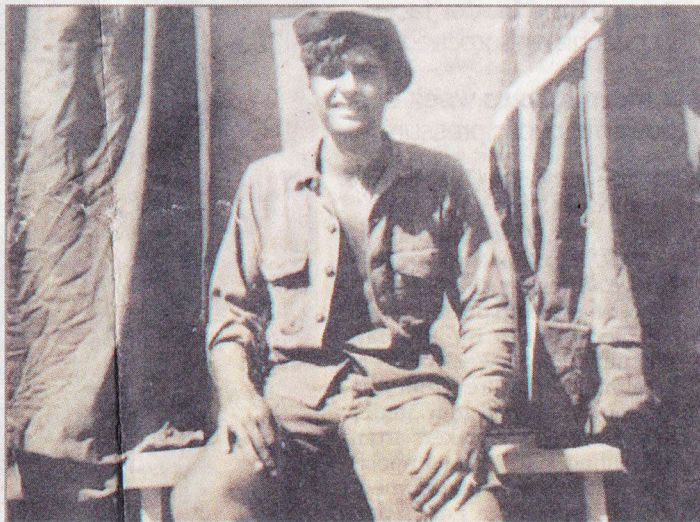
inside the bile ducts.

In July, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) gathered Vietnam veterans at Chiano's home to call for research to determine the extent to which liver flukes pose a continuing danger to survivors of the war.

"I can't thank Jerry enough for sounding the bell on this cancer to make sure other vets know they could be at risk," Joe Ingeno, a regional director of the Vietnam Veterans of America's New York State Council, said at the time.

Chiano served as a petty officer third class with the Navy's "Seabee" construction battalions, and was stationed in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969.

After returning from the war, he married Edith Ging in 1970. The couple, who knew each other since their early childhood in Valley Stream, had dated in high school.



Gerald "Jerry" Chiano was stationed in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969.

He took a job with the FDNY in the 1970s and worked as a mechanic there until recently, when he became too ill to continue.

Paglino described her father

as an affable family man, who enjoyed boating on a 32-foot cruiser in Long Island's waters, and later in Florida, after purchasing a vacation home there.

He was an avid fan of the Dallas Cowboys.

About 20 years ago, Chiano was found to have throat cancer linked to Agent Orange exposure. But it was only recently that he was found to be harboring the liver fluke parasite.

Paglino said her father quickly became active among a small group of area Vietnam War veterans who have worked to spread the word about the parasite, which typically does not induce noticeable symptoms.

"He thought if you could get tested early enough, you could get treated and that would extend your life," Paglino said.

In addition to his wife and daughter, Chiano is survived by daughter Genine Chiano of Seaford.

A memorial service will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at Edward F Lieber Funeral Homes in Valley Stream. His interment will be private.

FAMILY