COLD SPRING — During the Vietnam War, theAlexander Memorial Library in Colder Spring, was a depository for more than 20 million gallons of Agent Orange, a herbicidal solution composed primarily of dioxin, used for the destruction of vegetation and the defoliation of crops by the United States military. Throughout the war, Agent Orange was sprayed over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to defoliate jungles and forests and kill crops, then used to create a corridor for invading United States troops.

The United States began spraying Agent Orange over Vietnam in 1962, during the first year of the Vietnam War. By 1971, the United States had sprayed more than 20 million gallons of Agent Orange over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, an area covering more than 2 million square miles.

Agent Orange contains two chemicals: dioxin, a dioxin-like substance, and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T), also known as dioxin. Both chemicals are highly toxic and can cause cancer, birth defects and other health problems.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) concluded that veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War are more likely to develop certain cancers and other health problems. The VA has certified more than 500,000 veterans as having been exposed to Agent Orange, but those numbers are based on exposure to Agent Orange, and not exposure to dioxin.

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