

The Journal of Humanitarian Demining

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From the Director's Desk

Dennis Barlow, Director
HDIC

Dedication

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I never saw Danaan Parry socially. I never saw him operate in the field. I only met him three times in the hurly-burly environment of the work-a-day Pentagon. Yet he made an impression on me that will drive me as long as I am privileged to work toward the elimination of landmines as a threat to innocents around the world.

Danaan did not care to label or prejudge others involved in the demining world; he felt that there was plenty of work to go around and many roles to be filled. He did not disparage the military role in eliminating the landmine menace, in spite of the combat role in laying many of them, nor did he criticize contractors or large non-governmental organizations that hold the prospects of profits and donors respectively as important. Danaan could see the big picture and exuded a contagious enthusiasm and optimism that made a person want to check his or her parochial interests at the door. He truly believed that, by working together, we could all contribute to improving humanitarian demining efforts.

Danaan, however, was not such an idealist that he believed that he could wish away the complexities of the demining threat or of the human problems and antagonisms that threaten stability and peace throughout the world. He merely made us aware of his mission, forged the road ahead, and plunged into doing good.

As the Director of Earthstewards Network, Danaan worked towards the double-noble goal of converting devastated land to productive land by having disenfranchised groups, or those with habitual friction toward one another, work together. As he was the first to acknowledge, the twenty Earthstewards PeaceTrees projects did not always result in immediate amelioration of cultural conflicts. But there is no doubt that—through his skills in conflict-resolution, his ability to foster personal empowerment, and his great sensitivity to the human context at the center of the humanitarian demining effort—Danaan made a direct positive difference in the lives of the participants, while leaving behind renewed land as a tangible result of such efforts.

Danaan's last project, PeaceTrees Vietnam, was—and remains—perhaps the most dramatic of these efforts. In spite of diplomatic and policy difficulties, Danaan and his wife Jerilyn Brusseau created a PeaceTrees project in the heart of Quang Tri Province (part of the Demilitarized Zone) in Vietnam with the help of both U.S. Vietnam veterans and Vietnamese militia. The program, which boasts a mine awareness as well as a train-the-trainer component, has allowed forty participants from around the world to work with forty Vietnamese counterparts in clearing and rejuvenating the land to create the Friendship Forest Park. This effort epitomized the Parry approach to problem solving: go to the heart of the problem and use direct methods in a straightforward attempt to right wrongs.

Danaan Parry died suddenly of a heart attack on November 14, 1996, in the midst of one of his life's great challenges. Jerilyn and John Boyden are keeping his vision alive at PeaceTrees, but we must share his vision as well. As we launch *The Journal of Humanitarian Demining*, we dedicate it and ourselves to the principles which Danaan Parry espoused and lived: fairness, open-mindedness, a direct and frank approach to challenges, and a spirit of participation which does not allow for an "on-the-sidelines" approach to demining—or life. Danaan, in his book, *Warriors of the Heart* described the attributes of a peaceful warrior. He was unwittingly describing himself. We should try to make it a description of ourselves as well.