

# Dioxin

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Oregon State University, believes that Van Strum and O'Brien have greatly exaggerated the effects of dioxins.

"The probability of miscarriages being caused by dioxins is zero," Newton said. "The scientific community is in remarkable agreement on this subject. Controversy doesn't exist among scientists working in this field."

Newton further believes that dioxin-contaminated herbicides expose people to such small levels of the compound that its overall health effects are minimal.

"Natural fires, stove fires, gasoline engines, and steaks on a coal fire all produce dioxins," he said. "The concentration of dioxin on foliage produced by 2,4,5-T is much lower than on a char-broiled steak."

### The Agent Orange factor

However, Van Strum contends that the EPA has data that support her claim that dioxins do present a health danger. But the EPA fears the consequences of releasing the data, she said.

"It all relates back to Agent Orange and Vietnam veterans," Van Strum said. "Many of the chemicals we were exposed to around Five Rivers are the same chemicals that were used in Vietnam. If the EPA were to release their test results, the government would have to face a whole new bunch of Agent Orange-related claims."

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army mixed 2,4,5-T with the herbicide 2,4-D and sprayed the mixture on the Vietnamese countryside. The compound was used to defoliate Vietnam's jungles and deny cover to the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army.

The mixture received the name Agent Orange because of the bands of orange painted on the barrels containing the herbicide.

Thousands of Vietnam War veterans claim that their exposure to Agent Orange has led to a wide variety of health problems, including severe skin rashes, respiratory problems, birth defects in their offspring, and an increased risk of developing cancer.

The Army ended its use of Agent Orange in 1970, but the EPA didn't suspend the domestic use of 2,4,5-T until 1979, Van Strum said.

"The results of the EPA studies lend support to our claims and those that veterans have made against Agent Orange," she said. "All we want is to see those results."

The Merrell-Van Strum lawsuit is still pending in federal court.

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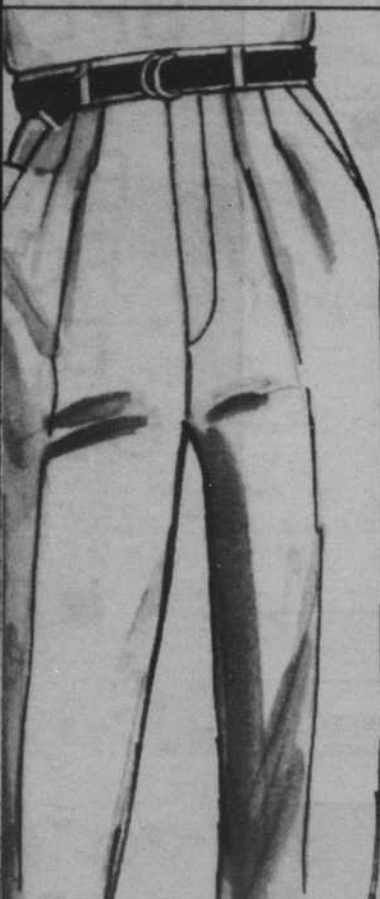
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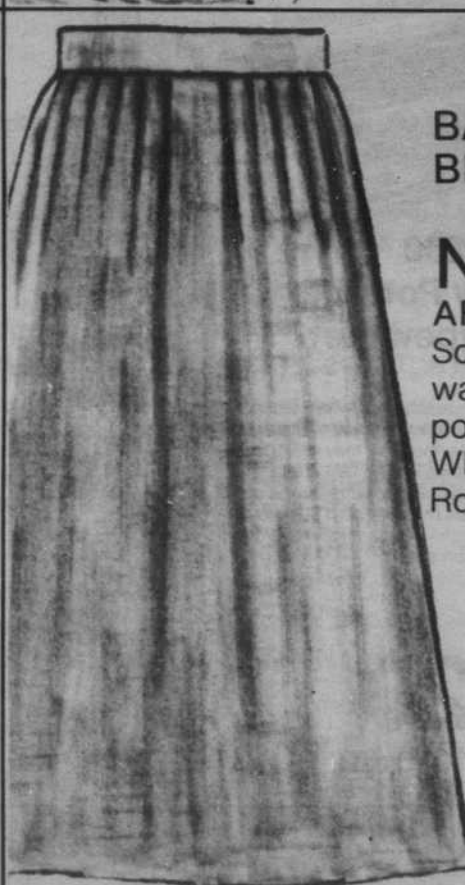
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