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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "TWO MORE CASES OF RARE BIRTH DEFECTS ARE REPORTED"
NCBC GULFPORT MS
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Why did this man note there were No leaks? We now know from the 1979 USAF report they were redrumming the barrels because of leaks.

Two more cases of rare birth defects are reported

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By EDITH BIERHORST BACK
SUN STAFF WRITER

Two more cases of a rare birth defect may be added to a state investigation of three incidents in Gulfport last year.

Dr. Robert Edwards, now retired from the U.S Air Force, said he performed autopsies on two infants born with gastroschisis while he served as chief pathologist at Keesler AFB Medical Center between 1972 and 1976.

Last week Dr. Durward Blakey, chief of the Bureau of Disease Control of the State Board of Health, said he was nearing completion of his investigation into the cause of the cluster of three cases of the defects in infants born in Gulfport in 1975.

Gastroschisis is characterized by an opening in the abdominal wall and in some instances intestines and organs outside the body at birth. Health officials report the defect appears in 1 of 5,000 births.

Based on information available, the defect occurred by chance, he said. He found no scientific basis for linking the disorder to Agent Orange, a defoliant that was stored at the Seabee Base in Gulfport from 1970 to 1977. He also noted that there had been no known leaks of the chemical while it was stored on the Coast.

Agent Orange, used to kill jungle vegetation during the Vietnam War, was banned in 1970 after laboratory experiments showed that it produced birth defects in laboratory animals.

Blakey also said a study of three cases was not sufficient for arriving at scientific conclusions about their cause. The addition of two more, he said, would give him another opportunity to "try to tie them together."

"The biggest help we get from publicity" about health problems, Blakey said, is that it elicits "leads from people, things we alone might never uncover." He said he "certainly will follow up" Edwards' information and request medical record information from Keesler.

Edwards, who is now a pathologist [illegible] Hilts Coffee Memorial Hospital in Flo[illegible] Ala., learned about the state's investig[illegible] when Mrs. Ann Taft Bosse, a nurse [illegible] worked with him at Keesler and no[illegible] tired, sent him clippings from *Th*[illegible] earlier this year. When he replied th[illegible] had encountered two cases while at Ke[illegible], Mrs. Bosse called the newspaper, whi[illegible] turn passed the information to Blake[illegible]

In a telephone interview, Edwards [illegible] the birth defect under study was the su[illegible] of an article in the current issue of the [illegible] *Archives of Pediatrics*, which offers "[illegible] proof now for a genetic basis for som[illegible] these cases." He said "as far as I kn[illegible] there has been no study linking Agen[illegible] ange to the defect.

The occurrence of five cases in this reg[illegible] "might be just chance, but you would [illegible] to rule out environmental factors," [illegible] wards said. The three cases now u[illegible] occurred in the Gulfport area, [illegible] of the mothers reported they had [illegible] the Seabee Base during their preg[illegible]

[illegible]ards did not recall precisely whe[illegible] [illegible]ned the autopsies on the infan[illegible] [illegible]mmunities in which their mo[illegible] "That would be in the medica[illegible], and they can be identified by [illegible]ic code" used at Keesler.

Bl[illegible]y said he will request the re[illegible] from [illegible]eesler, which has "always been [illegible]ative."

[illegible] [illegible]lexander Sloan, commander [illegible] [illegible]al center at Keesler, said, "[illegible] willing to cooperate to the fullest wi[illegible] [illegible]gency."

Med[illegible]al records are kept at Keesl[illegible] [illegible]ars, after which they are sen[illegible] [illegible] federal medical records c[illegible] Sloan said if the records are not at K[illegible] he could request them and foresee[illegible] problem" in obtaining them for Bla[illegible]