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Warm Winter Tidings From the Air Force Health Study Team

December 2005

2002 Follow-up Physical Examination Report: The sixth follow-up physical examination report was officially released 8 July 2005. The complete report is available on our website, www.brooks.af.mil/AFRL/HED/HEDB/default.html.

House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (HSVAC) Briefing: 6 October 2005, Col Fox (medical consultant/principal investigator) gave the annual briefing to the HSVAC staff. A copy of the briefing slides is available at our website soon.

Ranch Hand Reunion 2005: As you know, the number of hurricanes this year surpassed all past records. The availability of fuel was a little slim in the Ft Walton Beach area and along some highways into Florida but neither circumstance deterred the Ranch Hand organization from holding its annual reunion. Col Fox gave an Air Force Health Study update at the meeting.

Next year will be the fortieth reunion of the Ranch Hand Vietnam Association. The reunion will be held at the Ramada Beach Resort in Fort Walton Beach FL, 5-8 October 2006. More information will be forthcoming in the association newsletter. If your address has changed please contact Jack Spey at 435-877-1166 or write to him in care of Ranch Hand Vietnam Association, 4245 South Rome Way, Hurricane, Utah 84737.

Staff News: A number of staffing changes occurred within the Air Force Health Study (AFHS). Lt Col Julie Robinson retired in March after 28 years of active duty, but returned as the AFHS branch chief in June. Dr Joel Michalek, the AFHS principal investigator for many years, retired from civil service in May. Upon Dr Michalek's retirement, Col Karen Fox, our medical consultant, became the study's principal investigator. Mr. Richard Ogershok, the program manager, will retire this December. Because of the impending completion of AFHS activities, all our civilian staff positions were deleted this year as an Air Force Research Laboratory reduction in force (RIF). Fortunately, all but two were retirement eligible. The retirement eligible personnel will retire 30 September 2006 and the two non-eligible employees will be placed in different jobs by February 2006.

Institute of Medicine's Committee on the Disposition of the Air Force Health Study Committee: This committee released an interim letter, 15 November 2005 that focused on recommendations for the storage of the specimens, hard copy data, and electronic data files. We are working on their suggestions. The final report will be released either in December 2005 or January 2006. If you wish to read this interim letter you can find it at the following website, <http://www.iom.edu/report.asp?id=31117>. Before you can download it you need to fill out a form. The process is very quick and simple.

FY06 Activities: Although the study will end 30 September 2006, we still have a list of research activities to complete. We are finalizing a comprehensive report that summarizes all significant health outcomes identified in the physical examination reports as well as in our published articles. A compliance study is underway that assesses why participants were not able to attend one or more physical examinations – health, financial, work, health of a family member, etc. The specimen viability study discussed in last year's letter will be accomplished very soon. We are also writing the history of the Air Force Health Study.

Since this will be our last holiday letter to you, we would like to say how much we, the entire AFHS and the Project Ranch Hand II program management staff appreciate your dedication to the study.

All of us associated with the Air Force Health Study wish you and your loved ones all the best this Holiday season.



Karen Fox, Col, USAF, MC
Principal Investigator/Medical Consultant



Julie Robinson
Branch Chief