

## *Historical Profiles of Mayo*

### **Mayo in New Guinea**

In 1940, the 71st General Hospital was organized in Rochester, Minnesota, for preparedness before entry of the United States into World War II. Many of its officers and enlisted personnel were recruited from the Mayo Clinic and the Rochester area. In January 1943, the hospital was activated in Charleston, South Carolina. For 6 months, it was a training unit of Stark General Hospital in Charleston. Dr. Charles W. Mayo, a Mayo surgeon and son of Dr. Charlie, was appointed executive officer of the unit. Colonel C. M. Reddig, a member of the regular army, was the commanding officer. He had been with the 89th General Hospital in Charleston. Approximately 550 enlisted personnel were also transferred from the 89th to the 71st General Hospital about that same time.

The leadership of the hospital included 12 officers from the permanent staff of Mayo and 21 officers who were fellows in Mayo's graduate medical education program. Two of the leaders were Dr. James T. Priestley, who was appointed chief of the surgical staff, and Dr. Charles K. Maytum, who became chief of the medical service. Many of the nurses had been trained at the nursing schools of the two Mayo-affiliated hospitals. With a total of 662 personnel, the 71st General Hospital was initially formed to care for 1,000 patients but could treat as many as 2,000 during emergencies.

On June 24, 1943, the 71st General Hospital was divided, and its personnel were assigned to either the 233rd or the 237th Station Hospital. Popularly known as the "Mayo units," these new detachments received additional training in Charleston; the 237th spent a brief period in Utica, New York. In January 1944, personnel from both hospital units were transferred overseas, from Camp Stoneman, California, to New Guinea. Members of the 233rd erected a station hospital at Nadzab in the Markham Valley near the 5th Air Force base, and the 237th built one at Finschhafen near the New Guinea coast. Both facilities were located in the rain forest, and they experienced the challenges and discomfort associated with almost 200 inches (508 cm) of annual rainfall. On Oct. 15, 1944, the 233rd Station Hospital was redesignated the 247th General Hospital. Along with the 237th, it continued to care for wounded persons in New Guinea until the middle of 1945. Both hospital units were then individually moved to the Philippines. The 247th was established near Clark Field and the 237th at Batangas. The hospitals were in these locations for the rest of the war.

After the units returned to the United States, the surgeon general sent certificates of appreciation to the Mayo Clinic for its contributions in staffing these hospitals.

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