

**RECOLLECTIONS of a  
MAYO CLINIC FELLOWSHIP  
At MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY  
1948 - 1952**



**By KENNETH R. WOOLLING, M.D.**

# INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, I have wanted to write a history of the Mayo Clinic fellowships as they existed during my tour of duty there for the four years 1948 through 1952, so that there would be some record of this for posterity. I did not aim necessarily to write a book, but, as time went on, it became apparent that it would require a book to contain all of the information. It ought to be said, at the start, that I have written this volume not with any feeling on my part of special qualifications to do so, but rather with the desire to ensure that the history *is* recorded by *someone* who was actually on the scene in Rochester during that period of time.

To realize, in retrospect, how the invaluable lessons and defining experiences of those four short years would prove, through the “tincture of time,” to be deeply woven into the tapestry of my subsequent life and entire medical career, and still within easy memory recall more than a half century later, is telling of their major impact. I look back from my current distant vantage point with deep appreciation for those formative Mayo years. I believe the other fellows who shared those halcyon days would also share my sentiments.

Health care has changed dramatically since 1948. While at Mayo’s and through the years of my medical career, I was privileged to be “on the front lines,” so to speak, at the advent of many of the major developments. I was also honored to be acquainted with a number of the medical giants who brought about this progress. Yet, in spite of all the amazing technological breakthroughs now at the disposal of physicians, the foundational principles of medicine itself, so clearly demonstrated in the benevolent operation of the Mayo Clinic, remain of utmost importance.

Books about the fellowships in subsequent years could, of course, be written and probably will be, but the time I spent there during

the exact mid-twentieth century quadrennium seems pivotal. As a guide in composition and for validation of specific dates, I have used the *Quarterly Bulletin of The Staff and Assistants of The Mayo Clinic and the Fellows of the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, University of Minnesota*, for the years 1948-1952. Sadly, the number of those still living who also experienced those years is rapidly dwindling. Already many of my colleagues are no longer here to critique and supplement my recollections.

I also realize that an account and point of view written by a Mayo fellow in a field other than internal medicine, such as obstetrics or surgery, would be quite different from my dissertation. Be that as it may, my chronicle does not purport to be representative of any experience other than my own, and I believe it will stand independent scrutiny successfully.

When I retired from private practice in 1987, it seemed I had better get on with this project if it were to be accomplished. Nevertheless, time has passed and the book still has not come into being, until now.

So here it is, for better or for worse ... the former, I trust. May it serve as help to those considering medical education at Mayo's as well as a tribute to the Clinic itself, a most extraordinary institution. It is also my hope that the salient facts presented in this volume of the noble undertakings of the Doctors Mayo and the Clinic's subsequent flowering into a colossus beyond anyone's wildest dreams will inspire and embolden readers to attempt great things in their own fields – medical or other.

*I have lived long enough to know not only what people became, but also what became of them.*

— Kenneth R. Woolling, M.D.

## BEGINNINGS

As a Captain M.C. AUS<sup>1</sup> in World War II, my active military duties officially ended on October 6, 1946, at Fort McPherson, a southern suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, where I was assigned on return to the U.S.A. after duty in the E.T.O.<sup>2</sup> While in the service, I had observed that the medical officers who had the most expertise were those who had received extra training in their respective fields prior to being taken into the Army. I also noted that their rank had apparently been largely determined by that training. Those with advanced training were given higher levels of command and greater responsibility. Therefore, I had made up my mind that, immediately after discharge, I would seek further training in medicine – the best available – since my goal was to become an expert in some medical specialty. I chose internal medicine as my field.

On return to Indianapolis in late October 1946, I applied for a medical residency both at Indianapolis General Hospital and Indiana University Medical Center Hospital. I was informed that no residency was then available at either institution, and that each had a long waiting list of applicants. My father was acquainted with Dr. Kenneth G. Kohlstaedt, then Director of the Eli Lilly Research Clinic located at Indianapolis General, and spoke with him about my predicament. Dr. Kohlstaedt responded that there currently was an opening for a resident at the Lilly Clinic. I quickly applied, was

<sup>1</sup> Captain in the Medical Corps of the Army of the United States

<sup>2</sup> European Theater of Operations

accepted, and began my residency on January 1, 1947.<sup>3</sup>

The Eli Lilly Research Clinic residency basically was one in the broad field of internal medicine, but there was special emphasis on hypertension, pernicious anemia, arthritis, and diabetes mellitus. Three other residents were already working there: Drs. John S. Schechter, William R. Kirtley and Vernon Lee. Dr. James D. (“Babe”) Peirce, grandson of the late, famed Dr. Henry Jameson of Indianapolis, was Assistant Director.

It was during one of my first days of this residency that, while sitting at a desk opposite John Schechter in the residents’ office on the third floor of the A-wing (A-3) in the Outpatient Department building, I noticed some books on an upper shelf of an adjacent bookcase. One of these volumes was Allen, Barker, and Hines *Peripheral Vascular Diseases*.<sup>4</sup> The authors of this book were members of the staff of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. John remarked that this was one of the newer books, was “very good,” and dealt with many conditions hardly or not at all included in medical textbooks. Later, I perused the book and looked through it again with interest many times thereafter. I never imagined then that, at a later date in Rochester, I would be privileged to get to know well and work closely with every contributor to that volume and, indeed, to enter that subspecialty of medicine in my later professional career.

Whether it was by coincidence or intention, it happened that, in 1943, as a Christmas present, my parents had given me the book, *The Doctors Mayo*, by Helen B. Clapesattle.<sup>5</sup> I believe most probably they chose the book simply because it dealt with the medical profession and I had just become a physician, having received my M.D. degree from the Indiana University School of Medicine in August of that year. Nevertheless, this book is one which has since become and

3 “A Medical Residency at Lilly Research Clinic (Eli Lilly Laboratories for Clinical Research, Marion County General Hospital, Indianapolis, Indiana) in 1947;” Kenneth R. Woolling, M.D.; *Indianapolis Medical Society Bulletin*; Vol. XCVI; No. 10; June 2007; p. 12 et seq.

4 *Peripheral Vascular Diseases*; by Edgar V. Allen, Nelson W. Barker, and Edgar A. Hines, Jr.; W.B. Saunders Company; Philadelphia, London; 1946.

5 *The Doctors Mayo*; Helen B. Clapesattle; The University of Minnesota Press; Minneapolis, 1941; Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press; London.

remains the *opus magnum nonpareil* of the Mayo Clinic's early history. *The Doctors Mayo* was given to me at a time when I was in no way considering any future association with the Mayo Clinic, but, in retrospect, it was prophetic of things to come and subliminally might have inclined me toward fellowship there later on.

At the time of my residency at Lilly Research Clinic, I was aware that several of my Indiana University School of Medicine classmates were already in Rochester on fellowships – Paul E. McGuff in surgery; Chester A. Stayton, Jr., and John W. Beeler in radiology; John A. Hetherington in neurosurgery; and Phil (Walter P.) Anthony in otolaryngology.<sup>6</sup> (Chet, John Hetherington, and Phil had been in my medical school class, graduating in 1943.) Bob (Robert F.) Kimbrough, from Logansport, Indiana, and Bill (William O.) Starks, from Muncie, Indiana, both of whom I had formerly known, were quick to follow.<sup>7</sup>

During the year of 1947, I became aware of the high-quality postgraduate medical education available at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, through hearing about it from Drs. E. Paul Tischer and Richard M. Nay, Indianapolis internists, both of whom had received training there. I also became acquainted with

- <sup>6</sup> After return to Indianapolis, I had a longtime professional association with Chet Stayton and John Beeler, both outstanding radiologists, and with John Hetherington, exemplary neurosurgeon. Chet Stayton initially joined his father, Dr. Chester A. Stayton, Sr., in the practice of radiology. Chet's brother-in-law, Dr. James C. Katterjohn, also was a member of the group, Stayton and Katterjohn Radiology, Inc. Jim Katterjohn was a good friend and capable in his field. John Beeler joined his father, Dr. Raymond C. Beeler, and Dr. James N. Collins, both excellent radiologists, in Beeler and Collins Radiology, Inc.
- <sup>7</sup> Bob Kimbrough returned to Logansport, Indiana, after his Mayo fellowship, practicing orthopedic surgery there for many years. Bill Starks began his orthopedic fellowship in 1945 but left Rochester to serve as a Captain M.C. AUS from 1946 to 1948, after which he returned to the Clinic and completed his training in 1950. Bill's wife, Dawn, and Cathy were well-acquainted in Rochester. Bill ultimately practiced orthopedic surgery in Muncie, Indiana. In later years, I called upon Bill to attend a good physician friend of mine, Boynton H. Booth, M.D., who, with his wife, Joann, had been seriously injured in an automobile accident near Anderson. They were taken to St. John's Hospital in Anderson and later transferred to Indianapolis. While they were still in Anderson, Bill Starks continued to care for both of the Booths for their orthopedic problems, from which they recovered. The daughter of the Booths, Sally A. Booth, M.D., was later a fellow in dermatology in Rochester. She joined her father in his practice. Boynton retired at age 90 and passed away several years ago, but Sally continues to practice in Indianapolis, specializing in dermatology.

an older physician, Dr. Harold Dunlap, then on the teaching staff at Indianapolis General Hospital, who earlier had received training in internal medicine at Mayo's. I had been impressed by his ability and thoroughness in handling patients on the wards. One day after rounds, I spoke at some length with Dr. Dunlap about training at the Mayo Clinic. He was kind and helpful, ultimately suggesting I write to Dr. Donald C. Balfour, chairman of the Mayo Foundation, about obtaining a fellowship there. Accordingly, I wrote to Dr. Balfour, who replied that, due to the large number of applications for fellowship from physicians all over the country then returning from military service, it had become necessary to establish a waiting list and that this list of applicants was very long. He added that he nevertheless would be pleased to see me for an interview but suggested that, meantime, if an opportunity for a residency elsewhere presented itself, I should avail myself of it. Of course, I had already done that with the Lilly Clinic residency, which I was then finishing. I promptly made an appointment to see Dr. Balfour.

KENNETH R. WOOLLING, M.D.



Courtesy of Kenneth R. Woolling, M.D.

"The Shining Light of St. Vincent's,"  
Catherine Margaret "Cathy" McColl Woolling



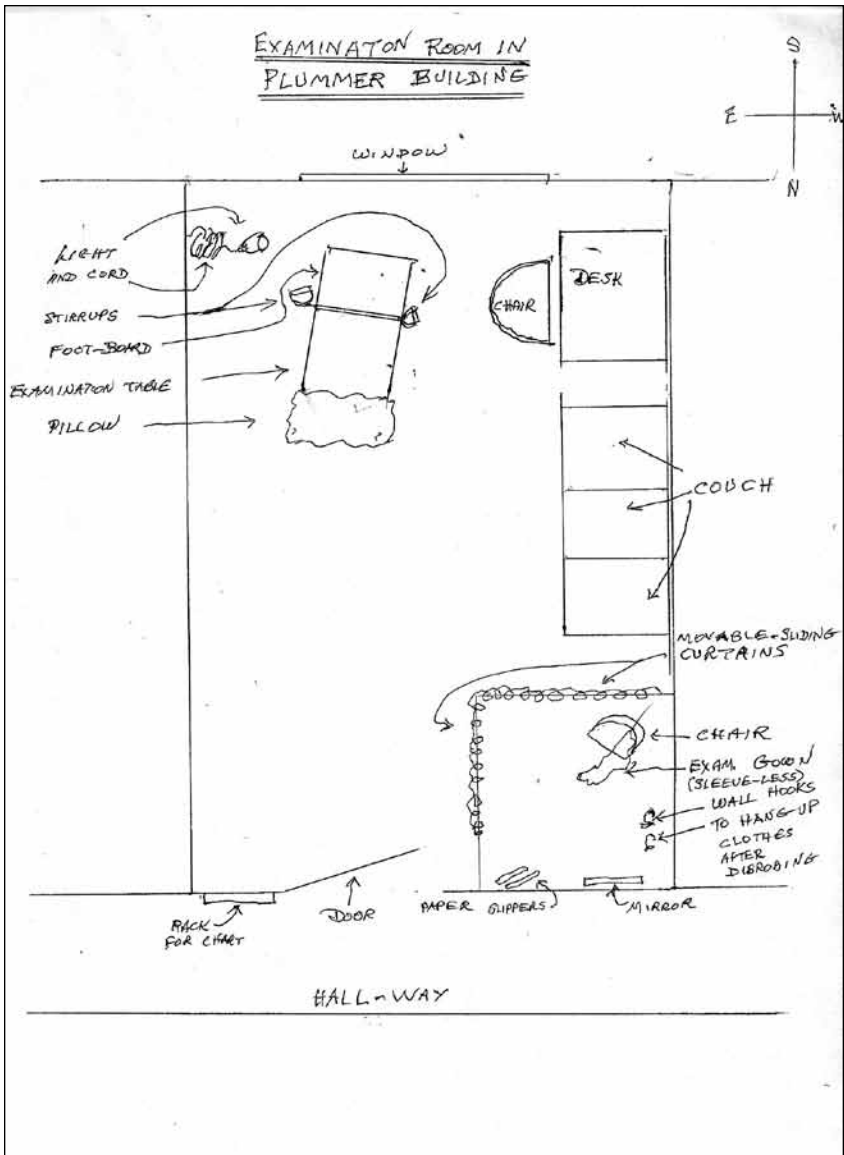
Courtesy of the History Center of Olmstead County

St. Mary's Hospital



Courtesy of the History Center of Olmstead County

Aerial view of St. Mary's Hospital



Courtesy of Kenneth R. Woolling, M.D.

Examination room in Plummer Building



Courtesy of Kenneth R. Woolling, M.D. (from personal file)

Photograph taken in 1956 on the tenth floor of the Indianapolis Athletic Club. The occasion was a meeting of the Indiana branch of the American Heart Association (AHA). Edgar V. Allen, M.D., the incumbent president of the AHA, addressed the group. Pictured left to right are: Raymond M. Rice, M.D., head of Clinical Research, Eli Lilly and Company, Indianapolis; Ed Allen, M.D., head of Vascular Diseases Section, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota; KRW, M.D. (age 38); Harold C. Ochsner, M.D., head of Radiology Department, Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis. Ray Rice and Ed Allen had known each other while at the University of Nebraska School of Medicine.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A MAYO CLINIC FELLOWSHIP: 1948 -1952



Courtesy of the History Center of Olmstead County  
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**Howard B. Burchell, M.D.**

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