

From the War of 1812 to NNMC

Since the infancy of our Nation, when drugs often did more harm than good and surgeries took place whenever and wherever possible, military medicine in the U.S. has grown to be in the forefront of modern medicine and has led the way in innovative emergency quality care in remote and dangerous environments.



Old Navy Hospital Pennsylvania Ave. 1866.

The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) was established in 1842, as the central administration for Navy medicine and was given the responsibility for all Navy hospitals and the care of Navy and Marine Corps patients in the US. Dr. William P.C. Barton, a surgeon in the U.S. Navy, became the first Chief of the Bureau (later known as Surgeon General).

In 1843, patients from the medical facility were transferred to the Marine Barracks at 8th and I Streets. In 1866, during the Civil War, Congress



1908: The first Navy Nurses "The Sacred Twenty" were also the first women accepted into the Navy.



"At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they made their tracks."

—President Abraham Lincoln, 1863 Referring to Union Navy Sailors.

In 1812, the first naval medical facility in the Washington, D.C. area was established in a rented building near the Washington Navy Yard.

appropriated \$115,000 for the construction of a 50-bed naval hospital at 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, in Washington, D.C., between 9th and 10th Streets. Soon outdated, the Naval Hospital at Pennsylvania Avenue was deemed "antiquated and insufficient," and in 1906, Congress appropriated \$125,000 for a replacement.

Built behind the Old Naval Observatory at 23rd and E Streets NW, the "New Naval Hospital" included quarters for sick officers and nurses, a contagious disease building, and administrative offices. From that day to this, the original Navy hospital on Pennsylvania Ave. came to be known as the "Old Navy Hospital." The "New Naval Hospital", along with the Naval Medical School, became the Naval Medical Center in 1935. To this day, these historic buildings are an integral part of navy medicine, housing the current location of BUMED and the offices of the Surgeon General of the Navy.



New Naval Hospital/Naval Observatory now BUMED

Even in its conception and early history, NNMC was an integral part of the expansion of military medicine and warrior care. President Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed the growth of modern military medicine into the future as he prepared for the inevitable American involvement in WWII. He



New Navy Hospital circa 1925

knew that the very best medical care for our returning Sailors, Soldiers, Marines and Airmen would be needed. December 7, 1941, "a day that would live in infamy..." proved him right.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt Selects the Present Site

As the former Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1913 to 1920, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was very dedicated to the Navy, and particularly to Navy Medicine. He envisioned a Navy Medical Center complete with a vital training college, research capacities, a laboratory, a pharmacy, a dental school, an extensive medical library, and medical services and care second to none in military medicine.



FDR with Rep. Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee; Senator David Walsh, Chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee; and Rear Admiral P.S. Rossiter, Surgeon-General of the Navy, at the site of future Naval Hospital.

In 1937, Congress appropriated funds for the construction of a new Naval Medical Center. When President Roosevelt saw farmland with a spring-fed pond on the outskirts of the town of Bethesda, MD; it reminded him of the Biblical "Healing Pool of Bethesda", and he felt it would be a perfect spot for the medical center.



At the laying of the Cornerstone, FDR stated, "the striking architecture of this great center (combines) practical usefulness (with) the harmony of its lines and gives expression to the thought that art is not dead in our midst,"

and apparently the US Department of the Interior agreed, designating the original Tower a historical landmark in 1977, citing the building's significance as an outstanding example of Art Deco architecture.

At the time there was pressure from both military and political sources to choose an alternate site closer to the city. Some even suggested the Navy hospital be built on the grounds of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in order to foster medical cooperation between the two services. Ultimately, President Roosevelt's choice became the final location. He drew a sketch of the building on White House Stationery, reminiscent of the State Capitol Building in Lincoln, Nebraska, which he admired. This sketch became the template for the design of the new Naval Medical Center. Ground was broken on June 29, 1939, by Rear Admiral Percival S. Rossiter, MC, USN, the former U.S. Surgeon General, and President Roosevelt laid the cornerstone on Armistice Day, November 11, 1940.



President Roosevelt delivering dedication speech. 1942



Navy nurses during greensward maneuvers at the call of a Marine. 1944.

The Original Center

With a final ribbon cutting on August 31, 1942, again officiated by President Roosevelt, the Naval Medical Center was comprised of a 500-bed Hospital, the Medical School, the Dental School and the Medical Research Institute, and consisted of the Tower (building 1), the back of the tower (building 2), and two “wings” (buildings 3 and 5, and buildings 4 and 6).

Temporary ‘Quonset’ type Ward WWII Wounded. 1945



Wounded soldiers at Naval Medical Center. 1942



Always standing ready to treat the Nation’s Heroes

Nearing the end of World War II in 1945, temporary buildings were added to accommodate 2,464 wounded American Sailors and Marines. With the start of the Korean War, the medical center’s capacity once again rose, this time to 1,167 beds in 1951, and during the Vietnam War, the bed capacity peaked at 1,122 beds in 1968. Temporary buildings remained on the grounds in one form or another to accommodate War Wounded until 1979.

The Medical Center is Expanded



In August of 1960, a \$5.6 million dollar expansion project was initiated and consisted of two five-story wings attached to the original

Dr. Janet Travell, personal physician to President Kennedy, touring the NNMCC facilities. 1961

building. Completed in the summer of 1963, buildings 7 and 8 provided space for 258 additional beds and replaced some of the temporary ward buildings.

In January of 1973, the mission of the Naval Medical Center was modified to include the provision: “provide coordinated dispensary health care services as an integral element of the Naval Regional Health Care System,

1969 Vietnam. U.S. Marines carrying out their wounded 10 miles northeast of An Hoa.



including shore activities.” This change established the National Naval Medical Center Region, and placed all naval health care facilities within the Naval District Washington under the authority of the Commanding Officer of the Naval Medical Center. The new inpatient buildings and the Naval Medical Center were consolidated into one command to form the National Naval Medical Center.

In 1975 another extensive renovation was needed which included the construction of two new buildings: Building 9, a three-story outpatient structure and Building 10, a seven-story, 500-bed inpatient facility. Combined, the buildings covered more than 880,000 square feet. In 1979 the remaining temporary buildings were finally razed to make room for a multi-level staff-parking garage.



The caption from the back of this 1942 souvenir postcard: *The United States Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., twelve miles from Washington, is practically a city in itself. It is hoped that eventually it will become the Medical Center of the World, even surpassing that of Vienna.*

The mission of NNMCC changed again in 1982, when the Center was reorganized as the Naval Medical Command, National Capital Region (NMCNCR), but in January of 1989, NMCNCR once again became the National Naval Medical Center. In 2004, the Naval Dental Center integrated with the National Naval Medical Center into one command, and in 2009 Naval Support Activity Bethesda was established to oversee the 247-acre complex.

“I can imagine no more rewarding a career...any man who may be asked... what he did to make his life worthwhile...can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction I served in the United States Navy.”

– John F. Kennedy



Front page of the 1st issue of “The News.” Jan. 6, 1945

The launching of the “News” by Vice Admiral Ross T. McIntire, then Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy, was an important step toward creating solidarity among Navy Medical Center personnel. “The decision to launch a newspaper (here) is a wise one and the result, I am confident, will be beneficial to all hands” he said. *The News* was the predecessor of the current Command newspaper; *The Journal*.

List of Past Commanders

1935-1936: CAPT Ulys R. Webb, MC, USN.	1965-1966: RADM C.L. Andrews, MC, USN.
1936-1938: RADM C.S. Butler, MC, USN.	1966-1968: RADM G.M. Davis, MC, USN.
1938-1941: RADM H.W. Smith, MC, USN.	1968-1969: RADM R.O. Canada, MC, USN.
1941-1942: RADM C.M. Oman, MC, USN.	1969-1973: RADM F.P. Ballenger, MC, USN.
1942-1944: RADM C.W.O. Bunker, MC, USN.	1973-1975: RADM R.G.W. Williams, MC, USN.
1944-1944: CAPT John Harper, MC, USN.	1975-1976: RADM D.E. Brown Jr., MC, USN.
1944-1946: RADM W.M. Chambers, MC, USN.	1976-1981: RADM J.T. Horgan, MC, USN.
1946-1948: RADM T.C. Anderson, MC, USN.	1981-1984: RADM Q.E. Crews, MC, USN.
1948-1951: RADM M.D. Willcutts, MC, USN.	1984-1985: COMO R.G. Shaffer, DC, USN.
1951-1951: RADM C.A. Swanson, MC, USN.	1985-1987: RADM R.G. Shaffer, DC, USN.
1951-1952: RADM W.J.C. Agnew, MC, USN.	1987-1988: RADM Donald L. Sturtz, MC, USN.
1952-1953: RADM B. Groesbeck, Jr., MC, USN.	1988-1991: RADM Donald F. Hagen, MC, USN.
1953-1955: RADM L.O. Stone, MC, USN.	1991-1994: RADM Davis M. Lichtman, MC, USN.
1955-1956: RADM H.L. Pugh, MC, USN.	1994-1997: RADM Richard I. Ridenour, MC, USN.
1956-1956: CAPT E.C. Kenney, MC, USN.	1997-1999: RADM Bonnie B. Potter, MC, USN.
1956-1959: RADM T.F. Cooper, MC, USN.	1999-2002: RADM Kathleen L. Martin, NC, USN.
1959-1960: RADM B.E. Bradley, MC, USN.	2002-2004: RADM Donald C. Arthur, MC, USN.
1960-1962: RADM F.P. Kreuz, MC, USN.	2004-2007: RADM Adam M. Robinson, MC, USN.
1962-1963: RADM R.B. Brown, MC, USN.	2007-2008: RADM Richard R. Jeffries, MC, USN.
1963-1965: RADM C.C. Galloway, MC, USN.	2008-Current: RADM Matthew L. Nathan, MC, USN.

The President's Hospital

Since 1942, the National Naval Medical Center has served, treated and cared for every President of the United States and their families.



NNMC's Recent History 2000–2010

The new millennium came fast, and the decade flew by. It seems like just a few years ago we were welcoming in the 21st century and worrying about the Y2K scare and all the computers in the Command crashing at the stroke of midnight....well it didn't happen, but a lot did. While major milestones such as the BRAC announcement, patient care, OIF/OEF/OND and deployments continued to guide our decisions, many other events both big and small filled our days.



(A) 2000: RADM Kathleen Martin buries a Time Capsule at a staff picnic celebrating a "Transformation" to a Services/Service Chiefs model. Newly formed directorates wore tee-shirts of differing colors; BOD wore "tie-dye" signifying the unity of all directorates. The Capsule included Commander's Coins, the Journal, a document signed by the BOD, photographs and other mementos and is buried in front of the tower. (B) 2001: When WRAMC lost power, NNMC stepped in and accepted a number of its patients and Bldg. 10 lobby was converted into a triage area. (C) 2004: LCDR Chris Gillette (Ret.), speaks with Channel 13 reporter at Annual NNMC Mass Casualty Drill. (D) 2002: NNMC received the DoD's first Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan which allows a more accurate diagnosis. (E) 2004: NNMC, NIH and Suburban Hospital create the Bethesda Hospital's Emergency Preparedness Partnership (BHEPP), which combines resources to respond to local, regional and national emergencies, the first such partnership in the country. (F) 2004: Cpl Laura Langdeau, a purple heart recipient injured during OIF is being treated with new state-of-the-art equipment which helps improve range of motion. (G) 2003: CAPT Laura Blair Salton Clark was one of seven astronauts who perished aboard the space shuttle Columbia. She was an experienced Naval Flight Surgeon and attended NNMC's GME program for Pediatrics. At dedication of The Laurel Clark Memorial Auditorium. (Husband) CAPT Jon Clark, USN, (Ret.) (H) 2004: Forty volunteers from the Falls Church Quilters Guild presented a hand-made quilt that honors our deployed active duty.



(A) 2006: CDC is recognized as a model for the nation by the National Association for Education of Young Children. Lynn Williams, Speech and Language Pathologist, teaches 2 year-old Christian Sutton education exercises. (B) 2005: NNMC earns the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal for its support with contingency operations during OIF/OEF. (C) 2007: NNMC sailors mentor local elementary school students during a weekly trip to Langdon Elementary School, in D.C. 2nd grader Jalynn White reads to LCDR. Willie Williams. (D) 2006: Country music singer Toby Keith received the DoN Superior Public Service Medal, after a performance for wounded service members from NNMC and WRAMC. (E) 2007: Capt. Joseph Pasternak, an ophthalmology surgeon at NNMC, uses the new LASIK IntraLase procedure, resulting in faster recovery. (F) 2005: Launch of the Graduate Education and Research (GEAR) Center, to support medical research and graduate education. (G) 2008: At Annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony to honor nearly 200 volunteers, Shirley Adams, a volunteer in the Pastoral Care Department for 15 years was honored. (H) 2008: Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, RADM. Richard Jeffries, resident Lance Cpl. Michael Stilson, Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England and Navy Surgeon General VADM Adam Robinson at the celebration of renovation of Mercy Hall, wounded warrior's outpatient lodging facility.

2000–2010, continued



(A) 2008: July 3, President George W. Bush and joint military members break ground for the future Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Bethesda. (B) 2009: President Obama visits wounded warriors and their families, seven inpatients, 16 outpatients, 25 family members and personally recognized more than 90 hospital staff members. President Obama and Sgt. Alejandro Ramon. (C) 2009: Firefighters Louis Felton, Jonathan Lang and Jody Sealey awarded the DoD Heroism Award for saving the life of 2 year-old Coleson Petrucelli. Sealey rushed into the burning building and was forced to remove his protective gloves in order to cut through the netting over the child's crib, while Lang and Felton kept the flames at bay. L to R: Navy Fire and Emergency Services Director Bill Killen (Ret.), Bethesda's Fire Chief William Holzberger, Firefighters: Louis Felton, Jody Sealey and Jonathan Lang, CDR. John Lamberton and Regional Fire Chief Edward Stillwell. (D) 2008: It is not often we lose Active Duty Navy Medical personnel in combat, but on June 18, 2008, HM Marc A. Retmier was killed in a rocket attack in Afghanistan. We were reminded that medical active duty personnel bravely put themselves in harm's way while caring for and saving others. HM Retmier worked in the Internal Medicine Clinic at NNM and was a member of the USNS COMFORT platform. (E) 2009: Sailors, staff and patients were pleasantly surprised when Santa stopped by to spread holiday cheer during the Operation Christmas Miracle-Believe in Santa Tour. "The wounded warriors give so much; I wanted to be sure Christmas was going to be great for them and their families," said Santa. (F) 2010: Members of the Navy Medicine Support Command Visual Information (NMSC- VI) Directorate received third place at an international video production competition in Baracciano, Italy. "Navy Medical Public Affairs, Telling Our Story," was selected from 60 entries from 25 countries. Jeff Johnson, VI- Manager, accepts award.



(A) 2010: Muriel "Mike" Jones is recognized for 60 years of GS at NNM. (B) 2010: NSA Bethesda's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center hosts the annual Fall Festival. (C) 2010: COL Norvell V. Coots of WRAMC pops the cork of a non-alcoholic beverage to toast one year remaining until WRNMMCB opens. (D) 2010: Doctor/Inventor, CAPT Mark Johnston, (Ret.), Chief of gastroenterology, invented cryotherapy, which uses liquid nitrogen to freeze and kill cancerous and pre-cancerous cells in the esophagus. (E) 2010: FDR arrives at NNM to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone. Mr Delmas Wood, FDR archivist and impersonator. (F) 2010: Chief of Naval Ops Adm. Gary Roughead joined NNM staff and Ride 2 Recovery (R2R) cyclists at NCoE to commemorate R2R program, which helps speed up rehabilitation through cycling. (G) 2010: First Lady Michelle Obama and Fisher House Foundation Chairman Ken Fisher dedicate the three new Fisher Houses at NNM.

USNS Comfort: Healing Missions During War and Peace

Initially built as an oil tanker in 1976 by the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company, the USNS COMFORT (T-AH-20) was commissioned as a U.S. Navy vessel in 1987 and converted into a hospital ship. The COMFORT's primary mission is to provide mobile, flexible, and rapidly responsive medical support for wartime operations, disaster relief and humanitarian operations worldwide.

At full capacity, the 894 foot full-service hospital ship has a staff of approximately 1,200 active duty Navy medical and hospital support personnel (mostly from NNMCC) and 60 Navy civil service mariners who operate the ship. The impressive ship contains 12 fully equipped operating rooms, a 1,000-bed hospital facility, radiological services, a medical laboratory, a pharmacy, an optometry lab, CAT scan equipment and oxygen-producing capabilities. The ship also has a helicopter deck capable of landing large military helicopters, as well as side ports to take on patients at sea.

1990/1: Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

Approximately 1,400 NNMCC medical personnel set sail for the coast of Saudi Arabia near Khafji, in close proximity to Kuwait, during this nine-month deployment.

1994: Operations Uphold Democracy and Sea Signal

The COMFORT deployed to Port-au-Prince, Haiti and Kingston, Jamaica twice during 1994 to provide both combat surgical support for U.S. contingency operations, and health aid to approximately 35,000 Cuban and Haitian migrants.

2001 Operation Noble Eagle

The mission, which started out with the hope of providing medical aid to possible survivors, ended up being a mission of humanitarian relief for thousands of 'ground zero' workers such as NYC fire fighters, rescue personnel and police. Designed to care for war-wounded service members, the hospital ship provided immediate

treatment for hundreds of relief workers for cuts, respiratory ailments, fractures and other minor injuries. The psychology and social service personnel provided over 500 mental health consultations helping relief workers to mentally prepare before they headed back to the disaster site. The crew provided food, showers and beds for more than 10,000 relief workers.

While moored at Pier 92 in New York Harbor, the COMFORT was designated by the City of New York as the secure location for emergency helicopter landings for VIP personnel visiting ground zero, and safely conducted 16 launch and recoveries for U.S. Marine Corps Sh-60's and U.S. Army Black Hawks, as well as New York Police Department H-1 aircrafts.

Nearly two years after 9/11, crewmembers from the USNS COMFORT were awarded the Humanitarian Service Medal for their assistance in Operation Noble Eagle, the majority of which were Active Duty personnel assigned to NNMCC.



"In a matter of hours, the crew mobilized, got underway and changed their mission from trauma support to disaster relief", said CAPT Charles Blankenship, COMFORT Commanding Officer, "...the ability to prepare for one mission, then immediately carry out another, demonstrated the mobility, flexibility and capability offered by this crew."



"Our presence during OIF was an intense two months; an experience I will never forget. Treating Iraqi civilians presented many challenges and stresses, especially when caring for children caught in the cross-fire. Our natural response was to help those in need of medical care, a response that we, as Navy Medicine Active Duty personnel, can be proud of."
- Theresa Lavoie, CDR NC USN (Ret.), Dept Head, Executive Health

2003 Operation Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom

In January, the USNS COMFORT set sail for the northern Arabian Gulf. During this six-month mission, the crew conducted more than 800 helicopter deck landings to bring aboard personnel, patients and cargo, and performed more than 500 surgeries, transfused nearly 600 units of blood, and treated over 700 patients, a third of which were Iraqi civilians, including children in need of medical care.



January 8, 2003, Robert Lambe, 35, from Bermuda, clung to a piece of wood for 20 hours without a life jacket in the Atlantic Ocean while 50mph winds battered him and waves rolled him over again and again during the night. Lambe and two others had been on a 40-foot boat that capsized in the high seas. The two others were never found. Alerted by the Coast Guard, the USNS COMFORT, en route to the Indian Ocean, diverted its course to rescue the survivor.

2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

The USNS COMFORT provided medical assistance to the Gulf Coast following the devastation of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. During a seven-week mission which included stays in both Pascagoula, MS and New Orleans, LA, the COMFORT's medical crew provided treatment to nearly 1,500 residents and emergency workers.

2007 Partnership for the Americas

The USNS COMFORT conducted a four-month humanitarian assistance mission to Latin America and the Caribbean and treated more than 98,000 people in 12 countries. For this unique mission, the ship was staffed by medical professionals from the U.S. Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Public Health Service as well as Canadian troops and civilian volunteers from a number of nonprofit organizations.

2009 Operation Continuing Promise

In April, the hospital ship began a four-month deployment to Antigua, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Panama. Each stop lasted 10 to 12 days, and brought medical, dental, veterinarian, educational and civic action programs both ashore and afloat. The humanitarian mission offered training for U.S. military personnel while providing valuable services to communities in need; and medical treatment for more than 100,000 patients including 1,657 surgeries. The crew also worked on sanitation initiatives, building new schools, community relations projects and public relations campaigns.

2010 Operation Unified Response Haiti

On Jan 16, the USNS COMFORT began its race to aid the people of Haiti after a devastating 7.0 earthquake. The crew treated thousands of injuries and performed numerous amputations due to victims' limbs being crushed under rubble. The presence of the hospital ship proved to be a symbol of hope for the wounded Haitians.

