

BORDEN'S DREAM

The Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Mary W. Standlee



BORDEN INSTITUTE

Martha K. Lenhart, MD, PhD Colonel, , MC, US Armt Director/Editor in Chief

BRUCE G. MASTON

Layout Editor

Doug Wise

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Published by the Office of The Surgeon General, US Army Borden Institute Walter Reed Army Medical Center Washington, DC 20307-5001

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Standlee, Mary W. (Mary Walker)
Borden's dream / by Mary W. Standlee.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-9818228-4-6
I. Walter Reed Army Medical Center-History. 2. United States-Armed Forces-Medical care-History. 3. Borden, William Cline, 1858-1934. 4.Doctors-United States-Biography. I. Borden Institute (U.S.) II. Title.
UH474-5-W3S73 2009
355:7'209753-dc22
2009010398

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If you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development.

—Aristotle



PREFACE The Story of the Book

Publication of this book has been abandoned twice—its appearance now coincides with the abandonment of Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), established over 100 years ago. The story begins in 1938 when Mary Walker Standlee began to collect anecdotes about WRAMC. She was a Texan, born in 1906. She left medical school at the University of Texas to marry First Lieutenant Earle Standlee, MC, USA. He was a graduate of Baylor University School of Medicine and also a Texan. She accompanied him on service tours to Washington, the Philippines, Boston and New York, and on his return from World War II to Washington. He held senior staff positions in the Surgeon General's office and the Department of Defense. Promoted to Major General in 1952, he served as Far East Command Surgeon, U.S. Army forces in Japan, 1953–1957.² He retired on returning to the United States in 1957.³ During the three years in Japan Standlee, with a Japanese collaborator, wrote The Great Pulse (Rutland, VT, Tuttle, 1959), a short monograph on the history of medicine, midwifery and obstetrics in Japan. She later wrote, "This I did... so that I would always have a good excuse for escaping the ladies luncheons." Standlee notes in her foreword that she had been collecting Walter Reed "stories" and had begun an informal history in 1948. The book really began in 1950 when Brigadier General Paul S. Streit, MC, Commanding General, requested and partially funded the work. She did much of it on her own time as she was the "general's dogsbody, editing a nursing procedures manual, speech writing and 'ghosting' articles." (Foreword) She was also editing two histories of Army nursing, but neither was published. The 399-page, 300-photograph manuscript reflects Standlee's vivid personality, for example, page 157: "... the topic for social conversation at Army dinner tables"; pages 160–161: "Twice told tales ... wide circulation ... "; pages 180, note 13 and 181, note 27: "Personal knowledge of the writer" and variously "Social conversations with " Chapter 3, "The Intermediate Host" (on the Walter Reed yellow fever study), led to extended correspondence with Dr. Phillip Hench of the Mayo Clinic (and Nobel Laureate). Hench collected Walter Reed material (now deposited at the University of Virginia), and sent her a detailed, single-spaced, 15-page letter of advice on 15 August 1961. This chapter was published earlier, in 1954, as a journal article.⁶ Standlee's draft manuscript was circulated to a number of readers. In general the letters praise the text—but usually with a demur or two about what was said about the readers. There is no evidence that she altered any of the text. The final typed manuscript with photographs was prepared in four copies. The original was sent to the Office of the Surgeon General, one to the Walter Reed General Hospital library, one to the Borden family, and one Standlee kept. The manuscript was not published. In 1988 Colonel Mary Sarnecky, writing a history of the Army Nurse Corps, found an item in the National Archives labeled "Borden's Dream." She gave the call number to me; I filed it and resurrected it 20 years later for Colonel Lenhart, director of the Borden Institute. She and her staff found a treasure chest of letters (including mine) and other records in the National Archives, which I have used for this account. The reasons that the manuscript was not published are not fully obvious, but a story can now

be suggested. In chapter 17, there are hints that Standlee and MG Streit had a falling out. The chapter does not have the analysis of WRAMC's commander found in all the other chapters. There are hints in three of her letters that she is preparing a new chapter 17 about MG Streit that might not be favorable. Perhaps the best evidence that Streit stopped the publication is his letter of September 1974 to Colonel John Lada, Director of the Army Medical Department's Historical Unit. Noting that there was a re-awakening of interest in "Borden's Dream," he writes that "in the early 1950s I had some reservations about publication without some revisions, but I am now convinced that enough time has passed to remove my previous reservations. I write now to withdraw previous reservations and to urge you most strongly to publish Borden's Dream. It is a delightful memoir . . . I am most anxious to see Mrs. Standlee's volume inprint." In 1961 Standlee published a very short Part II to "Borden's Dream" on the Army Medical Library, which began as the Library of the Surgeon General's Office in 1836 and later evolved into the National Library of Medicine. Her account is brief, not as well documented as Part I, but has the same insouciant air and unique oral histories. The account covers the period from 1836 to 1956, when the Army turned over the library collections and responsibility to the U.S. Public Health Service and the National Library of Medicine began. In 1974 the Commanding General of WRAMC, MG Robert Bernstein, MC, asked me to write a history of the medical center for the upcoming dedication of the new hospital building. I agreed, found the "Dream" manuscript in the hospital library and said, "Here is the history." I planned to edit and update the manuscript. I learned that General and Mrs. Standlee were alive and active in Texas. LTC Charles Simpson, MSC, USA (Ret.), was the Executive Officer of the Army Medical Deptartment Historical Unit and an old friend. He knew the Standlees "from the old days." When Mrs. Standlee agreed to my request to permit publication, I immediately asked him to help, especially with publishing the book. In fits and starts as time allowed I edited the chapters. To I described my editorial approach as "look at content and for documentation of facts, and then do an overall rough cut at format." Mrs. Standlee, who did not agree with some of my suggestions, commented, "You know the modern Army. I knew the 'old Army.' Let's not nitpick. In general, I think your suggestions are excellent." However, she did comment after reviewing some of my later suggestions about "the blood on my ax. . . . "12 In August 1976, after five years at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, I accepted a faculty position at the new Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences medical school. I kept in touch with Standlee and the manuscript's situation through Simpson. By 1977 the Historical Unit had been absorbed by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Charles Simpson died in 1982. His replacement, Dr. Jeffrey Greenhut, asked me about the "Dream." I sent all the material I had collected to him, discussed the issues, and lost track of the project. I discovered a year or so later that he had left the center, and "Borden's Dream" was not going to be published. COL Lenhart told me April 2008 that Robert Mohrman, the Walter Reed librarian, had brought the "Dream" to her attention, suggesting that publication might be germane as part of the commemoration of the closure of WRAMC, and she agreed. So there it is: a tale that begins in 1938 and ends 70 years later. A book that twice comes near to publication

and fails each time. Finally, ironically, the first history of WRAMC is being published as the medical center is being closed. And Mary Walker Standlee? She passed away in 1985, twice disappointed by not having her work published. She would have wonderfully pithy comments on the reason her book appears at last. But the book is being published as she wanted. "I would not want anyone to update it to carry through later administrations. It represents the end of an era." "I do not want the material updated. It is a 'period piece' and not Swedish Modern. Let's keep it that way." ¹⁴ This wonderful text is published exactly as she wrote it.

Emeritus Professor Robert J.T. Joy, MD, FACP
Department of Medical History
Colonel, MC, USA (Ret.)
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

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Unless otherwise noted, all references are to an extensive collection of material at the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 112, Entry 1004, "Borden's Dream: (1936–1977)." Copies of this material are on file at the Borden Institute.

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- 3. Department of Defense Press Release, 23 April 1957.
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- 5. Florence A. Blanchfield: The Army Nurse Corps in World War II, 2 vols and Organized Nursing and the Army in Three Wars, 4 vols. She was Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, 1943–1947. Manuscript copies are in the library, USUHS.
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- 11. Letter, Standlee to Joy, 11 February 1976: comment written on return of edited chapter 7.
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- 13. Letter, Standlee to Joy, 26 July 1974.
- 14. Letter, Standlee to Joy, 17 August 1976.

PROLOGUE

If you peruse the history of Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) on the hospital Web site, ^I the first entry is dated 1909, the date Walter Reed General Hospital was founded, and the second entry is dated 1972, when planning for the current hospital building began. Only two sentences between the two entries summarize what transpired in that 63-year period. At the WRAMC Medical Library, we have been asked more times than I can count where to find additional historical information about the intervening years. Aside from a chapter in a 1923 book about the US Army Medical Department, ² when the hospital was only 14 years old, any detailed history or description of the development of this installation is hard to find (except perhaps in boxes in the National Archives). We are approaching two milestones in WRAMC's history: the centennial of its founding and the anticipated closing of the original site (for the planned integration of WRAMC with the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland). Closing the medical center without a published history would be a sad legacy of its 100-year history.

Fortunately, a record of the first 40 years of the medical center does exist. The little-known manuscript, called "Borden's Dream" after the surgeon whose concept it was to build this institution, started out as a collection of newspaper clippings and historical photographs by the hospital's first librarian, Mary E Schick. Intending to the use the collection as the basis for an institutional history, Schick continued to file materials but never found time to tackle the writing for the project. Instead, in 1943 she urged a younger member of the staff, Mary W Standlee, to write the story as an informal narrative history. The story was finished in 1951, but Schick died shortly before the first draft was typed and never saw the finished product. It was deposited in the post library as a permanent documentary record.

Except for a copy donated to the author's alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin, and a few photocopied volumes distributed to military medical libraries, the book has never been made available to the public. It is known only to a few researchers as a source of historical information about WRAMC. When I came to work in the WRAMC library in 1997, I was briefed on the existence of this rare manuscript, but aside from trying to keep it intact and safely locked in a cabinet, we did nothing to preserve it. As the years passed, a number of the photographs and illustrations fell out or disappeared, and the ink slowly bled into the onion skin paper and became illegible. Clearly, something needed to be done to save this work for the future, but there were always more pressing issues.

When I took charge of the library in 2002, I decided it was time to correct this oversight. Inspired by the Library of Congress' American Dream project, I researched digitization as a means of not only preserving but also providing access to the document. There was much more work (and expense) involved than I had anticipated, however, but then a serendipitous meeting with the staff of the Borden Institute

provided the answer. Over the last 5 years, first COL Dave Lounsbury and then his successor, COL Martha Lenhart, gave their wholehearted support to the project, and not only have we succeeded in preserving a digital copy of the original manuscript, but it has been formatted for publication for the first time.

As this icon of dedicated military medical care enters its second century, WRAMC finds itself once again crowded with soldiers wounded in combat. As in decades past, state-of-the-art care is being provided by a committed professional staff to men and women injured while serving our country. We hope that this book will help place the mission of this great hospital in the context of 100 years of honored service, as well as in a larger tradition of the Army medicine that dates to the founding days of the Republic.

Bob Mohrman Librarian Walter Reed Army Medical Center June 2007

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PROLEGOMENON

Borden's Dream represents the culmination of years of work by Mary Standlee. It includes research, interviews, and interpretation by the author that provide insight into lesser known events in the history of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Although significant time has passed between completion of the manuscript and its publication, many of the situations, interactions, and reactions revealed within translate as familiar scenarios—lessons learned—still applicable today. Readers need to keep in mind that the manuscript content is original and unedited. In so noting, reflection on some of the contents may uncover circumstances that in their time went unremedied. No offense is intended by publishing this manuscript as originally written; rather, it is in keeping with the author's comment of more than fifty years ago that the book represents a "period piece" at the end of an era.

The publication is laid out with contemporary additions to the front matter – Preface, Prologue, and this introductory material, the Prolegomenon. The text of Mary Standlee's work begins with her Foreword on page xii and concludes at the Index on page 424. We have added a Postface after the Index that includes Major Borden's article: "The Walter Reed General Hospital of the United States Army, Mil Surg. 20–35, 1907," detailing his vision. Original suggested edits with hand written comments shared between Dr Joy and Mary Standlee (original materials now housed at the National Archives) and author information bring to a close the Postface.

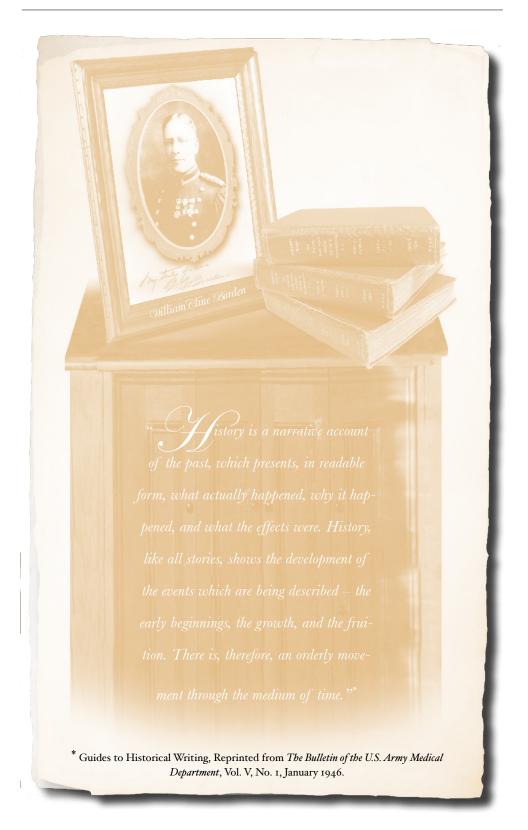
And yet, this manuscript would remain unpublished today if not for the efforts and contributions of those acknowledged below.

- Robert J. Mohrman —— as WRAMC librarian tasked with maintaining the manuscript and who sought preservation of this remarkable aging text and its images.
- Bruce G. Maston —— who created the original design and layout that inspired further efforts toward publication of this work. His artistry and eye for imagery is extraordinary.
- Sheryl Cohn Chiasson whose intrepid attention to detail resulted in the accurate transition of the original manuscript to the published text.
- *Dr. James Cox, Jr, COL, MC, USAF (Ret)* who imparted energy, expertise and thoughtful input assuring our attention to detail in the final push to publication.
- *Dr. Chuck Callahan, COL, MC, USA (former WRAMC DCCS)* wholeheartedly supported the publication efforts.

Dr. John Pierce, COL, MC, USA (Ret) — as unwavering supporter of WRAMC history.

Dr. Robert Joy, COL, MC, USA (Ret) — who earlier engaged the author, Mary Standlee, and more recently bridged the gap between initial efforts to publish the manuscript and its ultimate printing.

Martha K. Lenhart Colonel, MC, US Army Director, Borden Institute



FOREWORD

The life story of the Army Medical Center has long been of interest to the library staff of the Walter Reed Army Hospital, who have been obliged to answer many pertinent reference questions each year. The writer collected some of the human interest stories used in this manuscript as early as 1938, as by-products of social conversations with Miss Mary E. Schick, senior librarian, the most frequently consulted authority on Post history. General and Mrs. M.W. Ireland, as well as other distinguished members of the Medical Corps, had often asked Miss Schick to write the hospital story, but, contrary to the usual conception of a librarian as a sedentary person stamping the "date due" on an endless succession of books, her activities left no free time for so exacting a pastime as writing. Largely because of her insistence, in 1943 the writer began an informal narrative history, one which did not, however, discuss the growth of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in context with the general development of the Army Medical Service. As word got around that a collection of "Post Lore" was being made there were many interested inquiries regarding the progress of the history, and in the summer of 1948 Colonel Clifford V. Morgan, then Deputy Post Commander of the Army Medical Center, urged that a permanent record of Post activities be prepared for local use. Unfortunately, the writer was not then free to devote the time necessary for completing the project.

In the late winter of 1950, Major General Paul H. Streit, the nineteenth Post Commander, was interested in the project and suggested that the writer develop an adequate history of the installation but disclaimed an ability to provide appropriated funds for what would be a possibly two-year project. The writer requested, in turn, at least a six-month period of subsidized research, the final history to be completed, as begun, on a non-pay status. No time limit was imposed, but in accordance with the policies established by the Historical Division of the Surgeon General's Office, the manuscript was to be properly coordinated with the broad aspects of the Medical Service history by individuals familiar with the Corps history, two copies of the finally assembled material, including some two hundred historical photographs, were to be deposited with the Post Library as a permanent documentary record.

Only two specific guideposts were proposed for developing the manuscript. The first was suggested by General Streit, who requested inclusion of biographical sketches of the eighteen former Post Commanders. The second requirement, consensus of several opinions and endorsed by the Commanding General, provided that a discussion of the hospital activities, Walter Reed Army Hospital, constitute the main theme of the story. Under the written terms of reference the writer became the final authority on the inclusion of any material presented in the volume. The agreements, both verbal and written, which encouraged completion of "Borden's Dream," are undoubtedly unusual; it is therefore appropriate here to acknowledge publicly a debt of gratitude to General Streit for his interest in and endorsement of an installation story of this scope. Sufficient material for an additional volume, "The Interrupted Dream," mainly dealing with the locator problems of the Army Medical Library and Museum, long proposed as part of

the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, is organized and partially written but could not be completed prior to termination of General Streit's term as Post Commander, a goal toward which the writer has driven with stubborn determination.

It has been a pleasure as well as a privilege to recreate through interviews with former Army Medical Service personnel, and insofar as such personnel has been available, the individuality of some of the Post Commanders. The physical appearance of these men was familiar, for The Library has long maintained a chronological collection of their portraits. As individuals, the majority were unknown to the writer. In one or two instances the biographical sketches are meager past the point of acceptability, for contemporaries who knew the subjects well cannot be located. This is an unfortunate handicap, not an oversight. The writer has, however, accepted the familiar precept that the recording and interpretation of history "involves not only a clear conception and a lively explanation of events and characters, but a sound, enlightened theory of individual and national morality, a general philosophy of human life whereby to judge them and measure their efforts."

In 1935 a former executive officer of the Army Medical Center, Major (later Major General) Paul R. Hawley, unwittingly proposed a satisfactory maxim:

The Army Medical Center was, in the beginning, an idea. By slow and at times painful processes the institution has evolved to its present state. It is not yet complete; and no one man is responsible for all of the accomplishments thus far. Many distinguished officers have left indelible impressions upon these masses of brick and stone.

The story of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center could not be encapsulated and set apart from the plans and policy program of the Army Medical Service, and so it has been necessary to include some general discussions which clarify the military hospital program. The reader should, therefore, fully understand the interrelationship of this installation to the Office of the Surgeon General, which prescribes the medical doctrine implemented in this and other Medical Service installations. The writer has made a conscientious attempt to keep this relationship in sight without detracting from the unusual development of the Army's most famous general hospital.

The majority of the photographs and illustrations were provided from the files of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. However, Miss Helen Campbell and Mr. William C. Harris of the *Arts Section*, Catalogue Division of the Armed Forces Medical Library, not only assisted in the selection of some of the pictures, but with unfailing industry and cheerfulness they provided many "missing links." To Miss Josephine Cobb, Chief of the *Still Pictures Section*, National Archives, the writer owes a very special debt, for as a result of her interest in locating early pictures of the U.S. Army General Hospital, Washington Barracks, D.C., the writer made the acquaintance of Daniel L. Borden, M.D., who permitted the uncensored use of his father's personal records and papers, without which the story could not have been written.

The list of interested readers was long, and the writer has profited immeasurably from the careful comments and kindly criticisms offered for the improvement of the manuscript. Colonel James M. Phalen, M.C., ret., editor of *The Military Surgeon*, not only volunteered his services as editor but provided considerable first-hand information of a historical nature. Major General Charles R. Reynolds, M.C., ret., formerly a Surgeon General of the Army, likewise edited the manuscript with extreme care, providing for the writer some fifteen pages of laboriously hand-written notes to be used as supplementary material. Colonel J.F. Siler, M.C., ret., provided comprehensive and complete technical editing of such a high nature that the writer is unable properly to express appreciation for the time expended. Chapter III, "The Intermediate Host," has been the most difficult section of the book to write and would have presented nearly insurmountable obstacles without the unstinted editorial efforts of Philip S. Hench, M.D. of the Mayo Clinic, the outstanding civilian authority on Major Walter Reed and the Yellow Fever episode. Dr. Hench twice reviewed and corrected drafts of the chapter. As there are many published manuscripts on the strictly scientific aspects of the Yellow Fever experiment in Cuba, Chapter III was prepared as a medico-historical sketch of Walter Reed, the man, patron saint of the hospital and Center rather than as an evaluation of the scientist or his work.

More than one reviewer called to the writer's attention the fact that much of the credit for successful installation management is due the able executive officers of the hospital and center who so loyally supported their chiefs. Unfortunately, proper acknowledgment of the services of these men could not be made, for the framework of the military structure is such that the commanding officer alone is finally responsible to "higher authority" for the success or failure of his organization. Further, the criticism has been offered that the only claim to distinction for the majority of the hospital commanders evolves from their assignment to the installation. This, however, was the first assumption used in preparing the manuscript.

It is an indisputable fact that the military hospital management is unique, not only from the standpoint of the complex administration but because of the generally homogenous employment background of the patients. Like members of a guild, they belong to a specialized group. The doctors, nurses, attendants and even the civilian employees reflect the group mores. Government Issue, military orders, inspection, "chow call" and formation are all familiar words in the daily routine. The writer has, for many years, been impressed with the lack of interest in, and knowledge of military medical administration evidenced by the average civilian, layman or doctor. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the reader will gain cleared insight into the intricacies of a service so often taken for granted and an appreciation of the splendid men who have given their lives to its development.

May W. Handler

Mary W. Standlee 29 Fenwick Road, Fort Monroe, Virginia 5 December 1952

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lt. Col Jessie M. Braden, ANC, Ret.

Miss Clara Birmingham

Mrs. Montgomery Blair

Daniel L. Borden, M.D.

Colonel J.R. Darnall, M.C.

Colonel Chauncey Dovell, M.C., Ret.

Colonel James D. Fife, M.C., Ret.

Mrs. Leon Gardner

Miss Juanita Gould

Colonel James F. Hall, M.C., Ret.

Philip S. Hench, M.D.

Colonel John Huggins, M.C., Ret.

Colonel E.C. Jones, M.C., Ret.

Colonel H.W. Jones, M.C., Ret.

Mrs. J.R. Kean

Mr. Robert Kean

Portia B. Kernodle, PhD

Colonel James C. Kimbrough, M.C., Ret.

Major General N.T. Kirk, M.C., Ret.

Brig General Albert G. Love, M.C., Ret.

Major General George F. Lull, M.C., Ret.

Major General James C. Magee, M.C., Ret.

Major General Shelly U. Marietta, M.C., Ret.

Colonel Clifford V. Morgan, M.C.

Mrs. William Nichol

Colonel James M. Phalen, M.C., Ret.

Miss Frances Phillips

Major General Charles R. Reynolds, M.C., Ret.

Brig General Frederick F. Russell, M.C., Ret.

Miss Mary E. Schick

Colonel J.F. Siler, M.C., Ret.

Brig General James S. Simmons, M.C., Ret.

Mrs. Emmy Sommers

Brig General A.E. Truby, M.C., Ret.

Brig General Charles Walson, M.C., Ret.

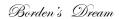


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