

# Skilled and Resolute

*A History of the*  
12th Evacuation Hospital  
*and the*  
212th MASH  
1917–2006



# Skilled and Resolute

A History of the 12th Evacuation Hospital  
and the 212th MASH, 1917–2006

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*Borden Institute  
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# Foreword

Few Army units are more effective in building the confidence and trust of the Soldier than the forward deployed medical team. The passage of time shows that a continual reduction in fatalities and debilitating injuries occurs when our Wounded reach medical and surgical care as soon as possible. That is a key message in this recounting of the history of the 12th Evacuation Hospital, 212th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, and 212th Combat Support Hospital and their 10 decades of service to Service Members, Coalition Forces, and the Nation. Throughout Army Medicine's history our experiences have strengthened our capacity and our resolve as a healthcare organization. We are America's most trusted premier medical team, and our successful mission accomplishment is testimony to the phenomenal resilience, dedication, and innovative spirit of Army Medicine's Soldier Medics and Civilians.

Sanders Marble, Senior Historian with the AMEDD Center of History and Heritage, has insightfully detailed their story in *Skilled and Resolute: A History of the 12th Evacuation Hospital and 212th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital*. Dr. Marble has created a history that is much like that of other histories in the Army—individual valor and unit glory. Similar histories do not, however, make identical histories, and the 12th—the oldest deployable medical treatment facility—owns a special place in the annals of Army Medicine. Time has marched on for military medicine, a second key message in this book. Today's battlefield and medical support on the battlefield are vastly improved from early wars of the Twentieth Century. Technology, force structure, and doctrine have changed, as has the composition and attitudes of the American public and the Army.

This book is more than a narrative of what one distinguished unit accomplished. These pages are filled with personal insights on how individuals overcame hardship and circumstances to provide the best care possible at the time. This book will make you think about how our healthcare team was brought together and how it sustained its effectiveness during varied and prolonged operations.

The focus for the Army Medical Department is to support and sustain the Army, enhance the care experience, and innovate Army Medicine. Overarching all of these efforts is the priority that Army Medicine is shifting in focus from healthcare to health. I thank Dr. Marble for providing us with the history of our oldest deployable hospital, giving us insights on how the specifics have changed but how the purpose of Army Medicine remains unchanged.

Serving to Heal . . . Honored to Serve.

Patricia D. Horoho  
Lieutenant General, US Army  
The Surgeon General and  
Commanding General,  
US Army Medical Command



## Preface

This book is essentially a biography of a military unit. It chronicles the history of the 12th Evacuation Hospital and its successor, the 212th MASH, through 90 years, and attempts to explain events, circumstances, and changes. Trauma care and medicine have changed dramatically over this period. The Army has changed in profound ways. The Army's deployable hospitals have changed as a result of both, including the creation, development, and demise of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. The 212th became the "last MASH standing"; the final chapter in the book explores how the MASH concept worked in its last combat deployment, the Iraqi desert.

It has not been possible to interview anyone from the 12th Evac who served in World War I or World War II, and I have had to write those portions of the book from documents. For more recent periods I have benefited from interviews with members of the unit and heard more about what life was like. For those who served in the unit during the world wars, unfortunately, we do not have their own voices describing the long hours, the jokes that were told, the details of the mess hall or bunks. When I write about setting up the hospital, the reader will have to imagine about 350 people moving around, hammering in tent stakes, sweating as they lift crates out of trucks, swearing as a hammer gets dropped on their foot. When I describe the hospital as busy, I gloss over the continuous work—by nurses and medics on the wards, in the kitchen, in the lab, by the x-ray technicians and litter-bearers moving patients around—and of course the work of the physicians, without whom there would be no hospital. But there would not be a hospital either without the electricians, the administrators, the soldiers on guard duty, and of course a commanding officer.

To make this account more readable, I have not used footnotes or other references to the various official documents and books from which I have drawn the story of the 12th Evac, the 212th MASH, the Army of which they were a part, and the wars in which they participated. The files I used are available in the historical reference collection of the Army Medical Department Center of His-

tory and Heritage, US Army Medical Command, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. In presenting interviews, I have made the soldiers' comments more readable while preserving their meaning as much as possible. Original transcripts are on file in the Office of Medical History. Where comments in an interview extract are in brackets, they are mine; parentheses are my explanations of official terminology or efforts to replicate a parenthetical comment in an interview. All ranks are given as they were at the time in question.

Many people have contributed their knowledge, experience, and expertise to this book. Interviews of the 212th during Operation Iraqi Freedom were largely done by Mr William Addison; Major Lewis L Barger, III; Dr John Greenwood; Major Jennifer Petersen; and Lieutenant Colonel Judith Robinson. Major Barger also conducted many of the interviews related to the Pakistan deployment. Many have reviewed the manuscript at various stages, especially Dr Greenwood and most of my colleagues at the Office of Medical History, contributing different perspectives to make a whole. They kept me from many errors, and those that remain are mine. I have contacted as many of the commanding officers as I could, especially those who served during deployments, and I owe them thanks for reviewing and fact-checking what I have written. Three directors of the Borden Institute saw merit in this manuscript and kept it alive: Colonel Dave Lounsbury, Colonel Martha Lenhart, and Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Banks. The team at the Borden Institute took a tightly focused manuscript and got me to tell the broader story, then fixed the technical errors that remained.

I am conscious that while my name appears on the cover, this is not just my book. All these people contributed to it, but it is still not our book: it is the story of the men and women who have served their nation and their fellow soldiers in the 12th Evacuation Hospital and the 212th MASH.

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