



## **Charette Health Care Center Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Va.**

Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, Va. is the oldest operating hospital in the U.S. Navy. It is located on the site of Fort Nelson, built in 1776 to provide harbor defense for Norfolk and Portsmouth. Architect John Haviland, of Philadelphia, designed and supervised construction of the original hospital. Work began on April 2, 1827 and a portion of the building was occupied in July 1830.

During the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1855 the Naval Hospital served the communities of Portsmouth and Norfolk, treating 600 cases of the disease. On April 17, 1861 the Virginia State Convention voted to secede from the Union. Three days later the Third Virginia Regiment occupied the hospital and renamed it Fort Nelson. Wounded from the naval battle between the ironclads USS MONITOR and CSS VIRGINIA were treated at the hospital. In May 1862 the hospital was retaken by the Union Army and eventually returned to the U.S. Navy.

In 1960 a new building, with a capacity of 778 beds, was opened to accommodate the ever-increasing demands of the Hospital. Congress authorized funding for a new hospital in 1952, with the design for this building starting in 1955. Construction began in 1956 and Bldg. 215 was completed in 1960 at a cost of \$15 million.

In 1988 a comprehensive study of the long-term military health care needs in Hampton Roads recommended a new hospital as the solution to many deficiencies with the existing Portsmouth Naval Hospital completed in 1960. The study, by Henningson, Durham & Richardson, Inc., of Alexandria, Va., evaluated seven options ranging from building a completely new hospital, to contracting out all medical care for an estimated 420,000 beneficiaries to the private sector.

The decision to build a new facility was based on several factors. The Navy would spend about \$40 million less each year to provide health care in an upgraded hospital than it would to rely on the private sector. Second, physical limitations and layout of the existing high-rise building, which was designed to provide in-patient care, could not be overcome through renovation to be compatible with the current emphasis on out-patient care. Third, construction of a new facility would be least disruptive to maintaining current hospital services.

The design creates a modern health care facility but doesn't overshadow the historic original hospital, Building 1. The \$400 million re-development project, begun in 1990, adds one million square feet of medical treatment space in a new acute care facility. The new facility includes hyperbaric chambers, magnetic resonance imaging, and a linear accelerator. Its in- and outpatient care offers 40 medical specialties.

During the re-development, 39 buildings were demolished and were replaced by various new facilities including a parking garage, public works building, gymnasium and a central energy plant. Ninety percent of the site utilities were replaced. The \$167 million acute care facility, named the Charette Health Care Center, was completed Oct. 31, 1998 and opened in April 1999. Building 1 and portions of Building 215 will be renovated to provide logistical support and administrative functions. Bldg. 1 will be complete in the summer of 2002 and Bldg. 215 will be completed in 2003.