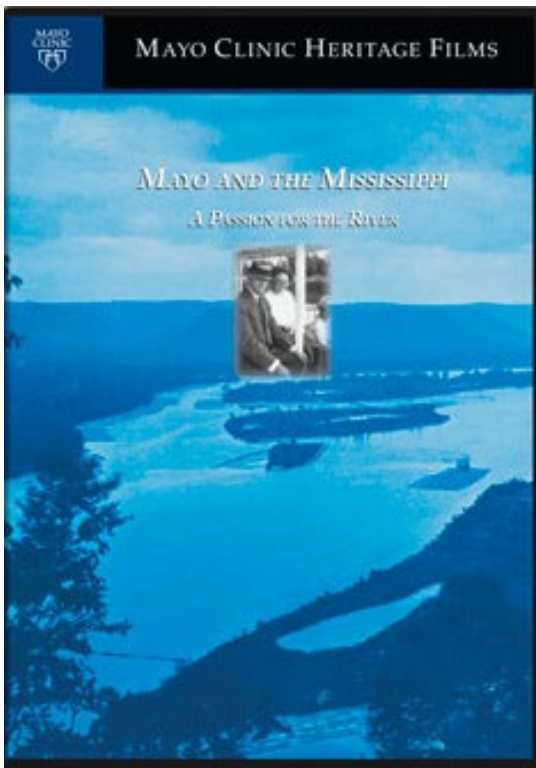




Mayo Clinic Heritage Films Discussion Guide

A Passion for the River: Mayo and the Mississippi



Everyone needs a place to relax and for Dr. William J. Mayo, that place was the Mississippi River. It was where he went to refresh himself, concentrate on his writing and enjoy his family and friends. His first boat was an old paddlewheel steamer he bought from a logging company in partnership with friends.

He and his family enjoyed it so much that he had another steamboat built to his specifications, then a yacht called the North Star which he freely loaned to friends and colleagues.

This documentary shares seldom-seen plans, photos and artifacts of the Mayo boats and the memories of people who traveled on them. The Mayos' hospitality and generosity reflect values that were central to their lives and can be felt at Mayo Clinic today.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have personal experiences that help you understand why Dr. Will found his time on the river so refreshing?
2. No matter how essential or fulfilling your work, why is it important to periodically take time off?
3. Dr. Will said the boat was "an ideal place to rest and work." Do you think it's better to completely disconnect from work when on vacation?

4. Given how hard he worked and what he created, few people would begrudge Dr. Will his prosperity. Why do you think he was so sensitive about the North Star being called a “palatial yacht” and downplayed the amount of money he spent on it?
5. What do you think it says about the Mayo family that Captain Richtman stayed with them through all their years on the river?
6. Dr. Will campaigned actively for maintaining the Mississippi for navigation and keeping it clean. How do you achieve a balance between using the outdoors for recreation and protecting the environment?
7. A reporter wrote that the North Star “is used almost as a vacation special. Members of the clinic staff spend a week aboard and return home to be replaced by others.” How would you feel if you were invited to take a trip on the “boss’s yacht?”