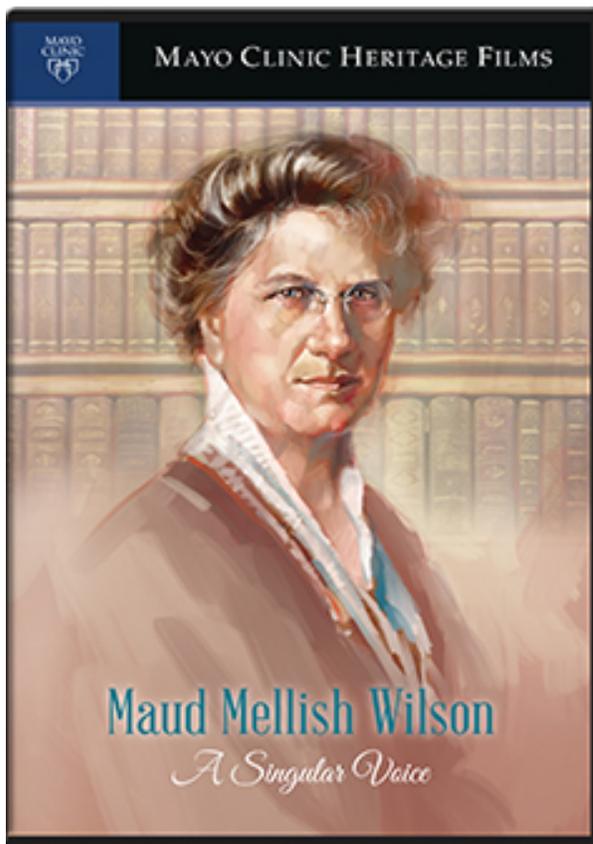




Mayo Clinic Heritage Films Discussion Guide

Maud Mellish Wilson: A Singular Voice



In 1907, Dr. William J. Mayo recruited Maud Mellish, a widow and former nurse from Chicago, “to organize a library and to do editorial work in connection with the publication of papers.” Over the next quarter century, she edited thousands of articles by Mayo Clinic physicians and scientists, developing a clear institutional voice that made Mayo Clinic recognized throughout the world for medical scholarship. She oversaw the creation of one of the nation’s great medical libraries, founded a publication that became a leading medical journal and married a distinguished colleague, Dr. Louis B. Wilson.

This docudrama tells the story of the woman the Mayo brothers considered a key figure in the development of the clinic’s reputation.

Discussion Questions

1. What challenges did Maud Mellish face when she started her job? How did she establish her credibility and leadership?
2. Why was she intent on maintaining a “singular voice” in Mayo Clinic’s publications rather than let physicians express their personal styles?
3. Describe how Dr. Albert Ochsner and Dr. William J. Mayo mentored Mrs. Wilson at different stages in her career. Who are your mentors and how have they inspired you?
4. Mrs. Wilson’s goal was to achieve “brevity, accuracy and clearness” in writing. Why are those qualities important, even when discussing complex medical topics?
5. How did the quality of Mayo’s medical publications help establish its reputation and credibility?
6. Maud Mellish Wilson and Dr. Louis B. Wilson were a “dual-career couple” when it was rare for married women to work outside the home. How did each person find inspiration in the other, and in their relationship?
7. Mrs. Wilson continued working after she developed a terminal illness. What motivated her? Why did she believe her work would live on after her?