

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Background and Backbone Of the American Red Cross**

The Red Cross movement was conceived by Henri Dunant, a Swiss philanthropist who, in 1859, witnessed the carnage at the battle of Solferino and was shocked by the lack of care given to the wounded left helpless on the battlefield.

In this country Dunant's cause was taken up by Clara Barton, who had done similar work for servicemen during the Civil War.

The American Association of the Red Cross was incorporated in 1881, and the following year President Arthur signed the Red Cross Treaty of Geneva.

For 18 years the organization functioned primarily as a disaster relief agency.

In 1900 Mabel T. Boardman suggested the general form of the organization we have today, and in 1905 a new congressional charter was granted establishing certain definite duties and functions for the American National Red Cross.

In the years following 1905 the great health and safety services were conceived and developed.

The American Red Cross came of age in World War I. Thousands of nurses were recruited, hospital units were organized and sent to the fighting fronts, and a welfare and recreation program was developed similar in many ways to the SAF program of World War II.

The year 1941 brought the American Red Cross its greatest challenge. Based on the experiences in World War I, the Red Cross mobilized all its resources and offered its services to American fighting men in every theater of operation.

Following the war, a reorganization was effected that gave chapters greater representation on the governing body and, on May 8, 1947, the bill revising the Red Cross chapter was signed by President Truman.

Out of the World War II experiences in the recruiting of blood donors, the new national blood program was born. This program had its official inauguration with the opening of the Rochester, N.Y., Regional Blood Center on January 12, 1948.

On October 1, 1949, President Basil O'Connor resigned and Gen. George C. Marshall was appointed to take his place by President Truman.

During General Marshall's term of office the international situation deteriorated and hostilities broke out in Korea on June 25, 1950. Immediately a revitalization of the whole organization was initiated.

Following his appointment as Secretary of Defense, General Marshall, resigned as president of the American Red Cross. He was succeeded by E. Roland Harriman, who took office on December 1, 1950.

The American National Red Cross is one of 68 member societies of the League of Red Cross Societies, which has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The American Red Cross is divided geographically into four areas as follows: Eastern, 1,068 chapters; Midwestern, 1,516 chapters; Southwestern, 757 chapters; Pacific, 390 chapters.

There are also 7 insular chapters outside the continental United States, making a total of 3,738 chapters in all.

General Marshall has said: "Volunteers have always been the major strength of the American Red Cross. Through two world wars and the uneasy years between they rallied to the Red Cross to serve their neighbors and their country. They are still with us or we would not have the human resources to accomplish our mission. Now that mission is to serve the nation in a time of great peril."

Mobilize for Defense, For Your Family, For Your Community, For Your Nation – this is the campaign cry of the American Red Cross during the request for funds to carry on the program for 1951, which will start March 1.