

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Seventy Years Old Without Fanfare**

The American Red Cross will be 70 years old on Monday. The organization will observe the occasion without fanfare because of the critical world situation.

In noting the anniversary, tribute is paid to the millions of volunteers whose efforts over the years have made possible the agency's work of mercy.

Clara Barton and a handful of volunteer supporters formed the organization at 1326 I. Street N.W. in Washington, D.C. on May 21, 1881. It was called the American Association of the Red Cross and was the 22<sup>nd</sup> National society to join the International Red Cross movement, started in Geneva, Switzerland, 17 years earlier.

Based from the beginning on the work of volunteers, the Red Cross remains an agency through which individuals give their time, money, and energy to help people in need.

Today, with 1,650,000 volunteers in 3,738 chapters covering virtually every county in the United States and its insular possessions, the American Red Cross is one of the largest of the 68 Red Cross societies of the world.

On June 7<sup>th</sup> the Monterey-Pacific Grove Chapter of the American Red Cross will be 53 years old. The meeting at which the chapter was organized was held at the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Henry and their daughter, Miss Lou Henry who later became the wife of Herbert Hoover, was the first temporary chairman. At the meeting Miss Margaret Jacks was elected president and Miss Henry became treasurer.

The first work of the new chapter was the task of making bandages for the soldiers taking part in the Spanish-American War.

The Reverend Vincent Coletta was elected president of this month's annual meeting of the Monterey-Pacific Grove chapter, to take the place so ably filled for the past two years by Dr. Hugh Dormody.

Currently the organization has been assigned major responsibilities in the national defense effort. It is providing essential welfare services at home and abroad to members of the greatly expanded military forces and their families. It is the official collection agency for the whole blood and plasma for the armed forces and for

defense stockpiling. It has launched a program to train millions in First Aid and Home Nursing and as Nurses Aides for Civil Defense.

The first Red Cross chapter was organized in Dansville New York, August 22, 1881. In the fall of that year this group sent a shipment of relief supplies to the victims of the disastrous Michigan forest fires.

The Spanish-American War saw the start of Red Cross services to the armed forces where Clara Barton led a group of Red Cross nurses to the battle fields of Cuba. The service reached a peak in World War II when some 20,000 Red Cross men and women served with the American troops in all parts of the world.

Home Nursing and Nutrition instruction was added in [190?] and the following year First Aid and Safety Instruction was added to the program, for which more than 23 million completion certificates have been given.

Thirteen million pints of blood were donated by patriotic Americans through the Red Cross and turned over to the armed forces during World War II when this significant program was added. The next visit of the Blood Bank Mobile Unit to the Peninsula will be on May 24<sup>th</sup> at the YMCA on El Estero.

In 1947, as an outgrowth of this wartime experience, the Red Cross launched its National Blood Programs to make blood and its derivatives available to the civilian population. Now serving more than 2,500 communities in all parts of the nation, it is playing a vital role in the national defense effort.