

In 1864, a diplomatic conference called by the Swiss Government was held at Geneva. The delegates represented officially or semi-officially 16 governments. Together they drew up a pact, later to be called the Treaty of Geneva - the first treaty in international law to assure protection to the wounded of the armed forces in time of war and to those who attended and treated them. It also called for the neutralization and protection of ambulances and military hospitals. For ready identification and protection of ambulances, hospitals and personnel attending the sick and wounded, the symbol of a red cross on a white background was chosen.

The United States Government was represented by observers at Geneva in 1864. It was not until 1882, however, that the government ratified the Treaty of Geneva. This it did primarily at the urging of Clara Barton whose efforts in behalf of the sick and wounded during the War Between the States had earned her the title of "Angel of the Battlefield". Anticipating ratification of the Geneva Treaty, Miss Barton had organized the American Red Cross Society a year earlier.

The American Red Cross was incorporated by Act of Congress in 1900, to give it national and international status and to more clearly relate its organization and activities to the military establishments of the United States and to the Geneva Treaty.

Since the Treaty of Geneva was drawn in 1864, 90 governments have ratified and acceded to one or more of these conventions, and there are now 80 national Red Cross societies

The Red Cross story is a story of people helping people:

- . . . A serviceman able to get an urgent message through to his family
- . . . Flood victims cared for at an emergency disaster shelter
- . . . A young teacher who took the home nursing course able to give better care to her bedridden mother
- . . . A woman able to save a granddaughter's life because she learned artificial respiration through Red Cross first aid course
- . . . A little boy alive because of the blood received through the Red Cross

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These examples are only a few of the thousands of helpful services rendered each year. The Red Cross is able to do its job because of the organization's nationwide network of volunteers. Typical Americans of all ages and varying interests and positions serve year after year.

The position of the Red Cross among national volunteer organizations is unique. While the Red Cross is a voluntary organization, voluntarily supported by membership fees and contributions, it is, by act of Congress, a chosen instrument of the federal government.

The congressional charter of the American National Red Cross charges the organization with the responsibility for providing volunteer aid to the sick and wounded of the armed forces - acting as a medium of communication between the American people and their armed forces - furnishing relief from the sufferings caused by fire, floods and other calamities, and devising and carrying out measures for their prevention.

For many years, most of us have been so conscious of Red Cross, we have failed to take time to familiarize ourselves thoroughly with the organization. You would be impressed, as I was as I started preparing for this talk, with the magnitude and the scope of service this great organization renders.

The American people can point with satisfaction to the record of their Red Cross. The organization's more than 2 million volunteers make Red Cross a reality - they and the career staff and the 45 million members, young and adult. Fund campaign contributions by members last year amounted to almost \$85 million.

The grand total of national and chapter career personnel is approximately 13,700 people. This paid staff organizes and serves the American National Red Cross program world-wide.

Last year, one of every three members of the armed forces at home and overseas received Red Cross services.

Every month during last year, Red Cross transmitted 172,000 emergency messages concerning the welfare of members of the armed forces and the members of their families.

Red Cross assisted more than 190,000 persons each month last year to make blood donations. Many problems with which servicemen and their families have to contend during the year either stems from or is aggravated by lack of money. Usually the condition is temporary pending the receipt of pay, allowances and allotments. More than \$14 million was disbursed last year by field directors and chapter workers to servicemen and their families to meet emergency needs. Usually the disbursements were in the forms of interest-free small loans most of which were repaid. Where repayment would obviously have involved hardship, however, funds were given outright. The high rate of repayment not only testified to the integrity of the American serviceman, but made it possible to help many more than could otherwise have been given financial assistance.

Red Cross has long-since learned to roll with the times. With the current interests in boating, skiing and water sports, it is only natural that Red Cross should step up its activities in the field. Red Cross conducted dry-land motor boat safety demonstrations and wide distribution of the new film, "Boats, Motors and People" are expected to help reduce the toll of accidents. The Red Cross cooperating with the National Small Boat Conference and the United States Coast Guard is working with other interested organizations in developing a standardized educational program and a textbook on small-craft safety.

During 1958, Georgia had its full share of service with the Red Cross. More than 27,000 welfare situations were handled at military installations and hospitals in our state. Volunteers gave more than 48,000 hours in personal, recreation and entertainment services at our military and veteran hospitals.

Blood donors during the year gave more than 70,000 pints of blood.

Few of us are aware Red Cross last year acted in flood, tornado, gas explosion and major fire emergencies in 8 different Georgia counties - Dodge, Bibb, Richmond,

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Hall, Paulding, Jones, Bleckley and Pulaski. Total cost of these operations, including food, shelter and some temporary maintenance in the emergency and other aid on a family basis amounted to \$32,354.

In addition to this, disaster preparedness training was given in a number of chapters in the sections of greatest tornado, flood and hurricane potential. Spelling out safety during 1958, courses in these subjects qualified more than 23,000 persons in swimming and life-saving and more than 11,300 in first aid, with the bulk of those in first aid predominant in industries.

Yes, the Red Cross and thousands of others like you responded and were equal to every challenge in Georgia last year.

The spirit of neighborly helpfulness motivates volunteer workers. Thousands of Red Cross volunteers just as many of you were on duty last year in every one of the 3,700 chapters throughout the nation and in many of the offices of field directors on military installations world-wide.

Service in the Red Cross represents the high aspirations and the generous impulses of the human race - it can reach its fullest and finest expression only through the collective strength of a Red Cross one and indivisible.

The President of the American National Red Cross, retired General Alfred M. Gruenther, had this to say: "The strength of Red Cross lies not solely in the fact that it is an instrument to bind up the wounds of the suffering - it is an avenue to better understanding between nations that has thus far never been closed."

Through the years, the Red Cross has been of inestimable value and benefit to mankind. Through its application and activities, the people of the world have sought to prevent or alleviate the suffering inevitably caused by armed conflict. As a deterrent to inhumanity and as an instrument of mercy, the Red Cross may yet see the time of its greatest usefulness and worth.