2-10-1950

Address at annual American Red Cross meeting

Strom Thurmond

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. code). Use of these materials beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

For additional rights information, please contact Kirstin O'Keefe (kokeefe [at] clemson [dot] edu)

For additional information about the collections, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

Recommended Citation
Thurmond, Strom, 'Address at annual American Red Cross meeting' (1950). Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100. 829.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom/829

For additional information about the collection, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscript Collections at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100 by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
To put it a better way, you are here because you have been willing to give something of what you have for your fellow man.

That is a simple way to put it, but that is the essential factor of the Red Cross endeavor—willingness to render service to others who need it.

The desire to help one's fellow man when he is in need is almost universal among Americans. The important thing is, that the Red Cross has learned how to take this desire to help and turn it into an efficient, organized method of rendering that help.

The service rendered by the American Red Cross during World War II is a matter of record. As a result of that service, there are few Americans today who do not have some personal knowledge of what the Red Cross means. There are few of us whose lives were not touched in some manner by the tragedy of war, whether we served in the armed forces, or whether some of our loved ones
were risking their lives in the service of our country.

As a member of the armed forces who served overseas, I know of my own knowledge what the Red Cross can mean to a man in uniform. From the time he enters the strange world of the induction center until he goes under the fire of the enemy's guns, the Red Cross is always at the side of the fighting man, ready to give him assistance which he cannot get any other way.

You do not have to explain the value of the Red Cross to a soldier or sailor whose life has been saved by the injection of blood plasma collected by the chapters back home.

You do not have to explain the value of the Red Cross to a soldier or sailor whose life has been saved by the presents of a skilled Red Cross nurse.

You do not have to explain the value of the Red Cross to a soldier or sailor whose only opportunity to find relaxation after the strain of battle was in a Red Cross center.

You do not have to explain the value of the Red Cross to a soldier or a sailor who has spent many weary months of near-starvation in an enemy prison camp, where the only ray of hope he had was an occasional letter or parcel from home, brought to him through the world-wide agency of the Red Cross.

It was in the prison camps, perhaps, that the Red Cross rendered its most noble wartime service. The visits of
Red Cross workers to our boys in enemy prisons represented the culminating of 80 years of effort by the International Red Cross to secure just and humane treatment of prisoners of war. There is no way of accounting how much human suffering has been prevented by this effort.

The work of the Red Cross back home was equally important to our war effort. It assisted the service man by acting as a link with his home, investigating conditions at home when he could not attend to it himself; caring for his family when his absence caused hardships; perhaps even finding a job for his wife so that she might help support the children. Its volunteers visited hospitals to bring cheer and assistance to patients. It provided service men's clubs and dayrooms so important to the morale of the armed forces. Its volunteer ladies served as nurses' aides to replace the thousands of trained nurses needed by the Army and Navy, and worked countless hours to make surgical dressings and other needed items in Red Cross sewing rooms. In scores of other ways, the Red Cross served at home and abroad.

The work of the Red Cross during the war was, indeed, a glorious effort. But its task was by no means completed when victory was won in the Pacific. That task is tremendous still, and the service of the Red Cross continues today in every county in the United States, meeting human needs wherever they may arise.
The Red Cross can never relax. Its vast volunteer training program must continue unabated, so that each one of its 3,745 chapters throughout the country will be ready to meet whatever local emergency its community may be called upon to face. In addition, the armed forces find the Red Cross program to be important in peace as it is in war, and its services to the men of the Army and Navy must continue. Thousands of our men are still serving in strange lands in our armies of occupation, and the Red Cross must be there to help guide their energies into constructive channels. Many thousands more are now lying in veterans hospitals because of their war service, and the Red Cross must go into those hospitals so that our war heroes will not be forgotten. Finally, in the training camps at home where our young men are serving their country, the Red Cross must be present to help allay the difficulties of separation from home ties, and provide the boost to morale which is so important to a fighting force.

During the last fiscal year the Red Cross gave assistance to more than 2,000,000 servicemen, veterans, and their dependents. It gave comfort and relief to many thousands of hospitalized servicemen. It helped to prepare more than 67,000 veterans' claims to the Veterans' Administration rating boards. Such was its contribution to the welfare of those who have served or are serving in defense of our country.
The most dramatic peacetime function of the American Red Cross is that of directing the resources of the nation in times of disaster--floods, forest fires, explosions, hurricane and tornadoes, mine disasters and wrecks.

Those who have never been near the scene of a great disaster may think, "it can't happen here," but the Red Cross knows that "it can happen" anywhere in the United States at any time. This is emphasized by the fact that during 1949 one-sixth of all Red Cross chapters helped in some form of disaster relief.

Last year a blizzard swept across the Northwest, piling up snowdrifts as high as 20 feet across seven states. The Red Cross, unable to reach victims through normal channels, sent an "air-lift" to the isolated areas, launching mercy planes through the icy winds with food, clothing, and medicine.

Last year a cloudburst caused the worst flood in the history of Fort Worth, Texas, leaving 4,000 families homeless. The Red Cross was there to provide temporary shelters, food, and medical attention.

Last year floods and tornadoes in Oklahoma left thousands stranded in trees and on floating debris. The Red Cross sent boats with loud-speakers and searchlights, to find them and rescue them.

Last year 10,000 Indians in Arizona, New Mexico, and
Utah were rendered almost destitute by the bitter winter. The Red Cross sent its angels of mercy onto the reservations with the aid that was needed.

Altogether, the Red Cross took part in 330 disaster relief operations during the past fiscal year, giving assistance to a total of more than 225,000 persons who could not have found relief any other way.

Such a vast program of assistance could not have been possible with the small professional staff maintained permanently by the Red Cross. It was possible only because of the millions of Red Cross volunteers given training over the years to carry out necessary roles in cases of emergency. These volunteers include the amazing number of 19 million children serving in the Junior Red Cross.

During the past year the Red Cross trained more than 1,100,000 persons in first aid, water safety, and accident prevention. It gave home nursing instruction to more than 125,000 persons. It persuaded 220,000 trained volunteers to give 12,000,000 hours of community service through the many Red Cross programs.

Reducing the tragic toll of death and injury to children is a major concern of the Red Cross. To help cut down that toll, a two-way training course is carried on, not only for the youngsters but for their parents. No one can say how many
lives have been saved in this manner. A young mother recently wrote this testimony: "I owe the life of my 16-month-old baby boy to the American Red Cross, and I am writing to tell you how deeply grateful I am. Five years ago, I took a Red Cross first aid course, and it was this training which enabled me to save my baby's life." This young mother was out of the room when her baby boy tried to slide out of his high chair and strangled. She immediately gave him artificial respiration. Within seven minutes, the apparently lifeless child was breathing again.

There are 30,230 Red Cross instructors who carry the major load of this first-aid training program--policemen, teachers, students, shop foremen, firemen, doctors, and many others. Last year they trained 400,000 persons.

The water safety program is carried on in much the same way, with an equally good record in preventing deaths by drowning and water accidents. Last year 680,000 earned water safety certificates.

One of the outstanding health programs of this century is to be found in the National Blood Program of the Red Cross. Through its 28 regional programs, whole blood, plasma, and other blood derivatives are being distributed to 1,800 hospitals across the land to bring life to patients whom no other "medicine" will help.
In many other ways, the American Red Cross is meeting vital needs, through its nursing service, its food and nutrition service, its college activities, its Junior Red Cross, and its international activities.

We do not have to go far from home to find the ever-present helping hand of the Red Cross. Here in South Carolina, the 58 Red Cross chapters piled up an amazing record of community service during the last fiscal year.

They gave assistance to more than 35,000 servicemen, veterans, and others. This included temporary financial assistance to servicemen amounting to approximately $700,000.

They trained more than 30,000 persons in the principles of water safety and life-saving.

They taught more than 1,500 persons the techniques of first aid, and trained 500 others in the principles of how to prevent accidents before they happen.

The instructed nearly 500 persons in home nursing courses and in nutrition classes.

South Carolina's volunteer workers gave more than 30,000 hours of service last year. In addition to the services to servicemen, veterans, and in veterans' hospitals, these South Carolina volunteers produced thousands of surgical dressings, hospital garments, and knitted clothing to be sent overseas. They served in every field open to them—as "Gray Ladies," as
administrative workers, as arts and skills workers, as canteen
workers, as social welfare aides, as motor service drivers, as
staff aides, as nurses' aides, as entertainment and instruction
workers, and many others.

Also among the volunteers are the members of the
South Carolina Junior Red Cross. Last year this group numbered
203,000. Their major project was filling and packing gift boxes
for the young war victims of Europe, and they shipped 46,000 of
these overseas.

College students in the state also participate in
Red Cross activities through four units located in our colleges.

While the National Blood Program is new to our State,
South Carolinians are proving themselves to be willing blood
donors. Since the regional center opened at Charlotte, South
Carolinians from 26 chapters have given blood amounting to nearly
2,000 pints.

Wherever you may turn in South Carolina, a Red
Cross chapter is nearby—ready to take charge in the event of
an emergency, whether it be community-wide or merely a personal
necessity.

Now that the time has come again for a nation-wide
Red Cross Fund Campaign, South Carolinians might do well to re-
member the tremendous list of services already being carried on
by our 58 Red Cross chapters. We must also remember that disaster
may strike any South Carolina community without warning at any

time.

As I consider the 1950 appeal of our Red Cross,
four points stand out, and I would like to underscore them and
emphasize them today.

The first is this:

The Red Cross is the best example in existence of
community preparedness against disaster. It is organized society's
best answer to the call for the Good Samaritan.

All of us are prompted by the desire to aid someone
who is in distress. Often, however, there is no way in which we
can render assistance personally. In the event of a community
disaster, most of us could do little more than stand around and
watch, although we might feel a compelling desire to help.

If it is the Red Cross which has provided the agency
through which all of us can make such assistance possible—any-
where in America. When we give a dollar to the Red Cross, we give
a dollar's worth of expert assistance to somebody, somewhere.

The second point is:

The Red Cross is the most efficient way possible of
helping one's neighbor.

It is natural that many people ask the question, how
much of my Red Cross dollar will actually be used for people
who need help, and how much will be spent for administrative costs? The best answer to that question is that there are 100 volunteer Red Cross workers serving without pay for every worker on salary. This means that the dollar spent for highly trained experts on permanent duty is returned 100-fold in service given free.

Another thing to remember in this connection is that very little of our Red Cross money goes for things like groceries and other tangible goods. The Red Cross dollar is a service dollar—providing relief through personal assistance in times of stress. A child may be drowning in the river—a swimmer trained in water safety dives in and saves his life. No money is spent on the scene, but no one evaluates the life that was saved.

The efficiency of the Red Cross lies in its ceaseless effort to be prepared, not only with trained and paid personnel, but through millions of trained volunteers.

The third point I want to emphasize is:

The Red Cross is an outstanding illustration of the value of self-reliance in a democracy.

To me the democratic principle of self-reliance is one of the most appealing features of the American Red Cross. It is a demonstration of what a democratic people may do to help them—
selves through an organized, cooperative effort.

To the regret of many of us, it has grown increasingly fashionable in recent times to depend more and more upon a distant Government to do everything for everybody. The danger is that we may be going too far in this direction.

Every time you depend on the Government for something more, you give up a little self-reliance. When you give away your self-reliance, you are giving up a quality which is very important in a democracy. A democratic people always have been, and always will be, a self-reliant people.

Under the program of the Red Cross, however, the people take things in hand and help themselves, whether by giving a dollar to the cause or by volunteering for service.

It is well to point out, too, that the chapters at home are actually in control of the American Red Cross. A Board of Governors of 50 persons determine Red Cross policies. Eight of these are appointed by the President of the United States; 30 are elected by voting delegates from the 3,745 chapters throughout the country; and 12 are elected by those already chosen. The chapters at home, therefore, have a very substantial voting majority in setting Red Cross policy.

The fourth point I would like to underscore is perhaps the most significant one. It is this:
The Red Cross is needed today more than ever before, because of recent developments in modern warfare.

With world conditions what they are today, Americans cannot afford to face the future without an organization such as the Red Cross standing by to assist in the event of an attack.

You may be sure the Red Cross is studying atomic warfare methods in the most detailed manner possible, and that it is making every preparation to help save the lives of Americans if an atom bomb or a hydrogen bomb should strike this country.

It is quite possible that a saving of 50 per cent in the number of casualties can be effected in such an attack, if the population is properly educated, and if a few minutes warning is available. The American Red Cross is determined to help save those lives.

In cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Red Cross is now distributing a pamphlet, "What to Do in Atomic Attack." Every possible effort is being made to educate our people as to the facts of atomic warfare, so that its effects may be rendered less deadly.

The American Red Cross never rests. It lives today for tomorrow. While its agents of mercy go about their duties bringing comfort to stricken areas today, its intensive training program continues without ceasing, finding new and better ways of
saving lives tomorrow.

The story of the Red Cross is not the story of a
distant organization of strangers in some remote place. It is
the story of one's own neighbors, volunteers from one's own com-
munity who stand ready to act on the instant when disaster strikes.

It is the story of your own son lying helpless out
at the veterans' hospital, and of how a cheerful visitor brings
him the joy of companionship and understanding.

It is the story of your own home, rocked to its
foundations by a storm or an explosion, and of how your stranded
family is given shelter and food.

It is the story of your own child, floundering
helplessly in the water, and of how a trained life-saver plunges
in to save his life.

It is the story of yourself, critically injured
when your car plunges from the road, and of how the gift of a
blood donor pulled you through.

It is all these stories, and many more. But always
it is the story of a democratic people, whose little gifts of
pennies and dollars are pooled to bring swift help in time of
trouble to your neighbors everywhere.

As Kipling would have said it, the American Red
Cross is "the everlasting teamwork of every blooming soul."