

Klamath Red Cross Chapter Established In 1917

On June 2, 1917, a small group of Klamath Falls residents formed the Klamath Chapter of the American Red Cross. Local chapter records show Mrs. Harold D. Mortensen, Mrs. Charles Wood Eberlein, Mrs. Charles F. Stone, W. P. Johnson, Capt. J. W. Siemens, Leslie Rogers, Mrs. S. E. Martin and Mrs. Wesley O. Smith applied for a charter and offered membership in the national humanitarian organization to the community. Four hundred twenty-nine patriotic citizens responded the first year, and are considered charter members of the local chapter.

Engrossed in the responsibility of recruiting nurses for service in France, national leaders called on communities for commodities, service, and funds. The women of Klamath County knit and sewed, while their husbands raised money for the War Relief funds of the National Red Cross. From the small beginning, the organization grew with the community and earned its place by the willingness of its volunteers to come forward to meet many needs.

World War II found the chapter matter of FACT

Hopeful forty-niners in the California gold rush were busting their britches carrying rock samples to the assayers in the pockets of their jeans. Then young Levi Strauss rounded the Horn with a roll of canvas that he hoped to sell for tents. But what the miners really needed were sturdy pants. Strauss used the canvas for pants, with copper rivets to reinforce the pockets. "Levis" are still a booming business 100 years afterward.

DOUBLE VISION
COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A stroll along residential Deerfield Road in suburban Lincoln Village is apt to leave the impression of double vision.

Five sets of twins live on the same block. They are Carolyn and Catharine Yale, 3½ months; Linda and Cynthia Ritzie, 3; Tommy and Ricky Overmyer, 3; Mark and Scott Blanchfield, 5, and James and Joseph Recouper, 7.

At war's close the need for veterans' rehabilitation occupied the thoughts of the Red Cross; the newly activated Oregon Vocational Technical Institute attracted an original enrollment of almost one hundred per cent war veterans. Chapter records show Red Cross busy with Christmas parties, and often financial help to the veteran while he awaited his first school check.

The Korean conflict in 1950 sparked the local chapter's entrance into the volunteer blood program, started during World War II days and then transferred to 1943 donors in three locations to during peace time to a stand-by basis serving civilian communities who had inadequate facilities for blood procurement.

The sons and daughters of the World War I volunteers assumed the reins of Red Cross and found the blood program one richly rewarding in satisfaction to meet another's needs. The first bloodmobile operation in Klamath Falls was during May of 1951, when staff and volunteers were exhausted after a six hour operation at the American Legion Hall, which produced 150 pints; in December of 1960 many of these volunteers helped to process 634 donors in three locations to send Klamath County over the top on its annual quota.

In the nine-year period between the two dates, nearly 8,000 people have been blood donors in this county, and every need for whole blood of local civilian hospitals has been met by the Red Cross. In 1955 and in 1959 the local chapter won the "Best Chapter Award" in the Pacific Northwest for outstanding success in this program.

Dr. G. R. Nicholson, pathologist at Klamath Valley Hospital in charge of the laboratory, describes the local Red Cross blood program as "the best community blood program I have ever known in any hospital where I have practiced."

In 1955 residents of Tulelake petitioned to join the Klamath County chapter in the interest of better Red Cross service to the people in their area and on Oct. 7, 1955, the chapter received a new charter as the "Klamath Basin Chapter" to more correctly describe the territory served. Operating as an all-volunteer branch, with the Klamath chapter staff as coordinator, Tulelake has maintained active programs in swim campaigns, blood program, help to servicemen and veterans and aid to disaster victims.

December of 1955 saw the locally activated, experienced chapter taking another step forward in its development. At the request of the National Red Cross the chapter assumed the duties of a field director for the air base then called the "Klamath Air Force Base." As airmen and their families moved to the new community the Klamath chapter often cushioned the blow when family allowances failed to keep up with the move, servicemen's pay was delayed in receipt, or the anticipated travel pay requirement was accompanied by expressions of thanks and the remark, "you people in Klamath Falls are sure nice to us," was a familiar one in the Red Cross office.

By the time the base was named Kingsley Field and officially activated, experienced chapter volunteers met the flow of requests for help for literally hundreds of service families between January and July of 1959. With the establishment of a paymaster at Kingsley, need for Red Cross financial assistance returned to normal; chapter workers recall the period as a hectic one, but one in which they learned to know and like Air Force families.

Almost without exception, every loan made during this period was repaid in full, usually repayment was accompanied by expressions of thanks and the remark, "you people in Klamath Falls are sure nice to us," was a familiar one in the Red Cross office.

In 1953 the local chapter joined as a partner with the United Fund, thus eliminating duplication of volunteer effort in fund collection. Red Cross leaders are among the fund's most enthusiastic workers. "We cooperate with other agencies in all of our Red Cross programs, and believe a cooperative effort to raise funds benefits all concerned. A successful United Fund is an earmark of a progressive community to-day," according to Al Nyback, 1961 Red Cross Chapter chairman.

Headquarters for the local chapter have changed frequently over the years; at present the Red Cross office is located in the attractive and modern Klamath County Library building, 126 South Third Street.

PAGE 21-C HERALD AND NEWS, Klamath Falls, Ore. Sunday, February 26, 1961



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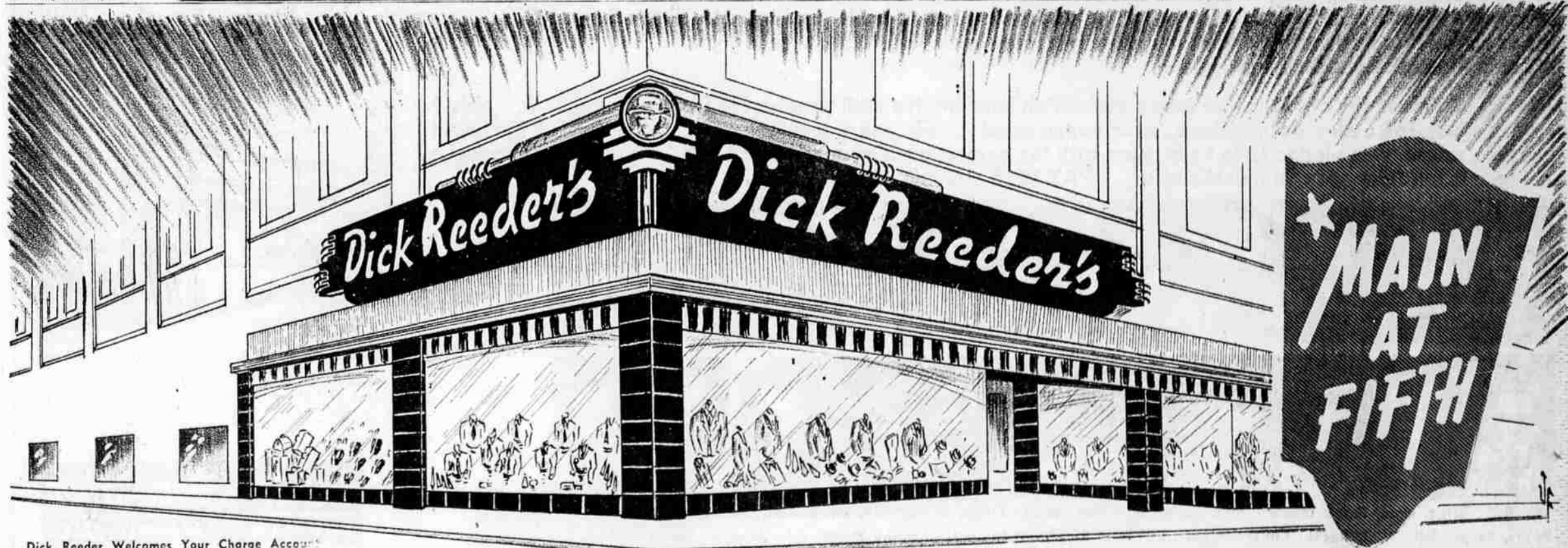


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Left to right — Elgin Hollis, office manager, Bert Denham, serviceman, Richard Allen, serviceman and Harold Smith, recapper.

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