

Way We Were

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

Sarah Hill, Research Librarian

Blood Mobile comes to Park City

“The benefits from this voluntary giving of blood have been immeasurable. Blood has saved many lives each year. Giving blood is good citizenship. Your own life may depend on it.” Published in the *Park Record* on May 22, 1952.

Since 1970, January has been known as National Blood Donor Month. Well known organizations like the American Red Cross would set up blood drives in communities throughout the country, in local community centers and school gymnasiums. The Union Pacific Railroad built a special train car and donated it to the American Red Cross in 1951, coining it the “Armed Forces Blood Procurement Car.” It would travel the country via railway and stop in small towns and cities along the way, collecting blood specifically for use by the armed forces. Park City was fortunate enough to become a stop along the 1950s blood mobile route.

Per the *Park Record*, the mobile unit arrived in town for the first time on May 16, 1952 (see photograph). It stated that the blood procured during this drive would “go directly to the Armed Forces in the form of blood plasma. The majority to fill the requirements needed to treat our wounded fighting men in the Korean War area.” The success of the mobile blood unit isn’t that surprising; we were a country who had just witnessed one of the most devastating wars in our history, World War II. Patriotism was still quite fresh in most minds and the idea of supplying something as simple as blood to our military was an honor.

Prior to the traveling blood mobiles most towns would hold blood typing events where everyone residing in the community would have their blood type tested and kept on file at the local hospital. For example the Miners Hospital would have a sheet matching donors to patients needs. The doctors and nurses could contact individuals on the blood data sheet if a transfusion was necessary. But as the population grew and military needs heightened, the American Red Cross established a blood bank, and by 1952 it was reported that nearly 5 million pints of blood were being taken a year.

The American Red Cross founded National Blood Donor Month in order to pay tribute and thank the nearly 11 million people who give blood each year, and to encourage others to give. On January 22, 2014 from 1:15pm – 5:30pm the American Red Cross

will be holding a blood drive at the Park City Community Church, for more information on other opportunities to donate please visit www.redcrossblood.org.



Image#: 1952.11.1

Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Kendall Webb Collection

Caption: Photograph taken in the Blood Mobile Unit in Park City on May 16, 1952.