

The SRAO Story

By

Sue Behrens

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For

Hannah, Virginia and Lucinda

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FOREWORD

In May of 1981 a group of women gathered in Washington D.C. for a "Grand Reunion". They came together to do what people do at reunions - to renew old friendships, to reminisce, to laugh, to look at old photos of themselves when they were younger, to sing "inside" songs, to get dressed up for a reception and to have a banquet with a speaker. In this case, the speaker was General William Westmoreland, and before the banquet, in the afternoon, the group had gone to Arlington National Cemetery to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

They represented 1,600 women who had served (some in the 50's, some in the 60's and some in the 70's) in an American Red Cross program which provided recreation for U.S. servicemen on duty in Europe, Korea and Vietnam. It was named Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO). In Europe it was known as the Red Cross center program. In Korea and Vietnam it was Red Cross clubmobile service.

In 1953, when clubmobile service began in Korea, the prediction was that it would be short-lived, meeting an immediate need after the truce to supplement military recreational services until they were fully established. But it was so successful in reaching the troops, however isolated in that rugged country, that it continued year after year, and when, in 1965, the troop build-up began in Vietnam, General Westmoreland asked for the service there. In Europe the center program began in 1954 and went on for thirteen years, fostering community relations so well, particularly in France, that it closed

only because of military withdrawals. It all ended in the Far East in 1973, but the "alumnae" had a network among themselves and many of them had been clamoring for a "Grand Reunion" for several years.

In 1981 I was personnel director for Red Cross national headquarters and worked long hours every day, and what I thought about this reunion, this pause in my busy life, was that it would be a happy diversion, going briefly back in time to recall a story or two when I had been a young clubmobile worker in Korea in 1953. Everyone at the reunion had stories to tell, just as I did, and that was what it seemed to be about. Well, partly.

It was really about the enterprise, the achievements and the courage of these women. They had, most of them, joined Red Cross for a year of service immediately after college, when they were 21 and 22 years old, and had, in a matter of weeks, found themselves in Korea or in Vietnam, thousands of miles from home, in the midst of the military and men, of hardship and danger. Many went from Korea to the center program in Europe and by the time they were 25 years old they had seen a good part of the world.

They were "the Red Cross girls". (They referred to themselves as "girls" and it was all right then. After all, the young soldiers for whom their program was intended were called "GIs", "you people" by their sergeants and "guys" by the "girls".)

They were the Red Cross girls who brought home to the GIs, who looked like their girl friends and sisters, who came from their home towns, who smiled at them (how they smiled), who listened to them (God, how they listened), who

brightened Christmas and other holidays for them and who said they were proud to do it. And they did it in a time of turbulence in the world - in the aftermath of the Korean War, in the post war years in Europe and in the midst of the war in Vietnam where three of them lost their lives.

They knew they were making a difference then, making things a little better, easing some of the hardship for the servicemen. But they were also, by their very action and enterprise, making a difference for themselves. As one of them put it, they were, before the burgeoning of the women's movement, becoming achievers and in the forefront of moving into careers. "In time," said one, "We all would have become mature and more confident, but that first job, that crash course in leadership, certainly speeded things up."

At the reunion someone said, "Well, here we are - all grown up." They certainly were "all grown up". At the reception I was greeted in the first 20 minutes by three Ph.D's (two were university department heads and one was a psychologist), one of the first women selected as a U.S. Secret Service agent, a lawyer and a friend who ran her own consulting firm. So, here they were - educators, entrepreneurs, administrators, managers, corporate executives, artists, writers, advocates of Civil Rights and equal employment and a multitude of other causes, volunteers in community action programs. They had married and were raising children - a compelling reason, they said, to get involved, to make a difference. They were some people. It was some reunion.

It was from the reunion that the idea was proposed to write down the story of the time when they were "the Red Cross girls". When I retired in 1983 I agreed to do it, to tell the history of the Red Cross service that they gave and how they had touched the lives of millions of GIs.

March 1987

Aerie Lake

Alborn, Minnesota

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Before Leota Kelly retired from Red Cross in 1973, she had assembled background papers and notes for the eventual writing of the SRAO story. I relied heavily on this material for the prologue and for information about the beginnings of the Korea and Europe programs. I am greatly indebted to her. As assistant national director of SRAO in the latter part of her long Red Cross career, she trained hundreds of staff members who remember her wisdom and her humor with much affection. She died February 6, 1985 at the age of 77.

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Finally, I thank my boxer dogs, Amy and DeeDee, for their patience. They sat by my side while I worked on the manuscript and when, in my preoccupation, I forgot to feed them, they gently reminded me by licking some of the pages.

CONTRIBUTORS

Penny Patston Berger, Mary Blanchard Bowe, Barbara Hudson Crocker, Mme. D.D. Dimancescu, Constance Mitchell Eichelberger, Dorothy Sherrard Faunce, Janice Feye-Stukas, Sally Beall Garcia, Eva Garvin, Margaret Neitzey Godson, Pat Toombs Green, Toni Rehner Harper, Jacqueline Hill, Larry Young Hines, Shirley Hines, Margaret Goodrich Hodge, Evelyn Safford Jacobs, Rene Johnson, Katherine Britt Keane, Winnie Fatooh Kingsbury, Claudia Sudds Kocher, Charlotte Leedy, Joann Weesner Lester, Sue Lewis Lipoma, Marilyn Schmokel Lohrmann, Billie McCann, Bennett C. Macdonald, Mike Crawford McLaughlin, Debby Griffith MacSwain, Amber (Cindy) Oliphant Meadows, Mary Niedenthal, Barbara Mace Otaki, Kathi Neal Parsels, Lois Hartvigson Patten, Harriett Barnes Richards, Sheila Otto Rosenberg, Avis Watson Schwab, Gwenellen Scupholm, Jean Kellgreen Seltzer, Sara Tyndall Seymour, Esther Smith, Anne Smyth Stewart, Margaret Greene Thompson, Linda Goettman Wilson, Jennifer Young.

ABBREVIATIONS

AEF -	American Expeditionary Force	NCO -	Noncommissioned Officer
ARC -	American Red Cross	OG -	Olive Green
ARVN -	Army of the Republic of Vietnam	PX -	Post Exchange
ASCOM -	Army Support Command	R&R -	Rest and Recuperation
DMZ -	Demilitarized Zone	ROK -	Republic of Korea
DOD -	Department of Defense	SAF -	Services to the Armed Forces
EM -	Enlisted Men	S-1 -	Regiment/Brigade section for Personnel
G-1 -	Army/Division section for Personnel	SEATO -	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
GI -	Government Issue	SMH -	Service in Military Hospitals
KATUSA -	Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army	SMI -	Service at Military Installations
KMAG -	Korea Military Advisory Group	SRAO -	Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas
LZ -	Landing Zone	U.N. -	United Nations
MAC-V -	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam	USAF -	United States Air Force
MASH -	Mobile Army Surgical Hospital	USIS -	United States Information Service
NATO -	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	USO -	United Service Organizations

PROLOGUE

It is recorded in the American Red Cross Archives in Washington D.C. that during the Spanish-American War Red Cross services to the armed forces of the United States included facilities in armories and other public buildings to provide books, games, stationery and "various amusements" to able-bodied soldiers. This was a natural adjunct to caring for the sick and wounded, and took into account the needs of all soldiers as, separated from home and families, they went to and from the battlefields. The year was 1898 and although the American Red Cross had yet to be chartered by Congress, it had already been accepted as the agency to provide certain health and welfare services to the armed forces in time of war. The Congressional Charter of 1905 made this role official, obligating the American Red Cross to serve the armed forces and to act as a communications link between the soldiers and their families.

The conduct of recreational activities as part of the total Red Cross service was there from the beginning, not only as an essential ingredient to the convalescence of the sick and wounded but also to the morale of the able-bodied.

In World War I American Red Cross workers were with all of the divisions of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, providing welfare, communications and recreational services. Red Cross recruited thousands of nurses to serve with the Army Medical Corps and hundreds of volunteers to run a vast complex of canteens. The canteens were both mobile and in buildings that were converted barracks, hotels and rooms in railway stations. In addition to food service

they had recreation and rest areas and supplies of comfort articles. After the armistice Red Cross phased out overseas services and turned at home to case work for veterans and their families and claims work for the disabled.

With the beginning of national military mobilization in 1940, the American Red Cross again geared up to meet social welfare and recreational needs of the rapidly growing armed forces. Between the wars the military medical corps had taken over recruitment of nurses for military hospitals, and instead of the medical role Red Cross had played in World War I, the organization's Service in Military Hospitals (SMH) provided social workers and recreation specialists. Service at Military Installations (SMI) had field directors stationed at each military base or camp to provide social welfare services and communications with families.

By now the War Department had an active morale branch and on-post Special Services clubs were opening at camps in the United States. As American troops began to move overseas the Secretary of War requested that Red Cross operate clubs, on-post and off-post, in foreign locations with high troop concentration. First opened in Great Britain, the off-post clubs were generally large enough to accommodate billeting and food service as well as recreational and entertainment activities. As U.S. Forces spread world-wide, Club and Clubmobile Services went with them. Red Cross club workers were everywhere - from London's famous Rainbow Corner Club to a hut on a South Pacific island - and clubmobile operations grew as the troops came and went and waited.

Following the end of the war Red Cross, in an agreement with the War Department, began phasing out Club and Clubmobile Service, gradually turning

over the club program to Special Services, now operating overseas. By 1948 the transition to Special Services was completed. Red Cross had, once again, given total service in time of war. But this time the American forces did not go home. While the emergent need for Red Cross club activities was over, SMH and SMI staff and volunteers continued to serve the armed forces overseas and Red Cross operations headquarters were maintained in Europe and the Far East.*

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950. General George C. Marshall, then president of the American Red Cross, cabled Red Cross Far Eastern Area Headquarters in Tokyo on July 17th requesting that General MacArthur be queried about what would be expected of Red Cross in the coming months.

On July 20th General MacArthur replied, stating that "requirements placed on the American Red Cross in Japan and Korea should approximate that in a theater of operations in time of war." In addition to citing the need for SMH and SMI services, he also requested that Red Cross open clubs in Pusan and P'ohang-dong "as soon as the situation will permit". Special Services would retain responsibility for athletic and recreational facilities in Japan and continue existing activities in Korea, which did not include clubs at that time. The Red Cross role would be to supplement these activities to

* The American Red Cross, by an Act of Congress in 1912, was obligated to provide services to the armed forces in time of war and when war was imminent. At the end of WW II the governmental authority for the continuing use of the Red Cross in aiding U.S. Armed Forces was based upon temporary emergency legislation that expired July 1, 1953. On July 17, 1953, Congress passed Public Law 131 which repealed the Act of 1912 and gave the President of the United States, with responsibility resting with the Secretary of Defense, authority to use Red Cross services to the armed forces when necessary, in times of war and of peace.

meet an emergent need as the large influx of troops arrived in Korea through Pusan harbor. It was also agreed that Red Cross clubs would be available to all United Nations Forces.

The nucleus of the quickly assembled club staff had World War II experience and by September the first of them had arrived in Pusan. By November a club had been opened in an old abandoned school house and immediately became the base for clubmobile operations - serving coffee and doughnuts at air strips, triage areas, replacement depots and debarkation points. The club had room for a games area, letter writing and serving snacks. There were participation type activities and spectator entertainment. The latter included performances by remnants of the Seoul Symphony Orchestra. Some of the orchestra members had made their way to Pusan with thousands of other refugees and, gathered together, agreed to play at the Red Cross club. Thousands of U.N. troops continued to arrive at Pusan harbor and the club staff met them with coffee and doughnuts while a military band gave them a musical welcome. "If I Knew You Were Coming," the band played, "I Would Have Baked a Cake."

In December 1950 the club supervisor, Virginia Griffith, was called to Seoul at military request to see about extending clubmobile operations to the forward areas. This was not to be. The Chinese offensive, launched in late fall, drove the U. N. Forces south, forcing withdrawal from Seoul. Ginny, back in Pusan, and her staff went to work serving troops arriving from the evacuation of Hungnam. As the Navy delivered some 100,000 soldiers and Marines to Pusan, the club staff met the ships and served over 10,000 men each day.

By the spring of 1951 Seoul was retaken as U.N. troops pushed north again, and in the summer a Red Cross club was opened at an airfield near Seoul. Now there were six clubs - the one at Pusan and five others at air fields - and all locations were bases for clubmobile operations. Again there was planning to extend clubmobile service into the forward areas and, at the same time, to plan for the takeover of club facilities by Special Services. In May Lt. General Matthew B. Ridgway, then Far East Commander, wrote to Red Cross, "It is my understanding that as more personnel and funds become available to you, you do plan to increase the number of clubmobiles operating in Korea. The comforts of the front-line soldier there are few, his deprivations many, and I know that I express their feeling that the sight of a clubmobile will always be welcome, and its cheering service gratefully appreciated."

Peace talks, begun that summer at Kaesong and later moved to Panmunjom, dragged on in a stalemate and the fighting went on. Although the lines were fairly stable, there were continuing guerilla activities behind the U.N. lines. Because of this the 8th Army Command decided it was too hazardous to have clubmobile operations in the forward areas. With this extension of service postponed for an unknown time and plans already going forward to turn over the club facilities to the military, Red Cross decided to withdraw this supplemental program. The last Red Cross club turned over to Special Services was at the Seoul air field, ending the operation on June 15, 1952.

While Red Cross club service was winding down in Korea another request was being considered at national headquarters. In February 1952, the U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff wrote to E. Roland Harriman, then American Red Cross president (and later chairman), requesting cooperation in making a survey of

needs for off-base recreational facilities for U.S. Air Force personnel in Great Britain. The request, originating from the Air Force Command in Europe, was to study the feasibility of establishing clubs or centers in communities adjacent to USAF bases, patterned after the all encompassing billeting, food service and recreational facilities Red Cross ran in World War II. Red Cross responded to the request by sending a team to Great Britain to conduct a survey. The results were submitted to the Air Force in June. Essentially, the Red Cross position was that existing on-base facilities did not need to be augmented with similar facilities off-base, but rather that activities could be expanded by utilizing resources in the local communities.

Circumstances were different from those in World War II. There were far less numbers of military personnel, many had their families with them and lived in local housing, and their tours of duty stretched over two or three years. What they were facing was not akin to wartime conditions. They needed to understand and interact with the local community in order to have as normal a living environment as possible. The Red Cross decision was that it would not supplement Air Force recreational facilities in English-speaking Great Britain.

The British organization that worked to meet the off-base needs of the Americans was the Women's Voluntary Services. Established in 1939, the WVS had long been active in running clubs and conducting other leisure activities for their own armed forces, and had provided hospitality to U.S. Forces in England during World War II. During 1952 the WVS opened five Anglo-American clubs in communities near USAF bases. The American Red Cross later gave consultative assistance to the WVS to support its efforts as it continued for several years to be a link between the Americans and the people of the host communities.

Throughout 1952 the Air Force Command in Europe continued informally to urge Red Cross to consider operating off-base clubs. It was now mainly interested in having Red Cross supplemental recreational activities in France and French Morocco where USAF bases were open or under construction. With the American commitment to NATO, U.S. Forces were again burgeoning in Europe. Toward the end of the year it became clear that if talks continued about Red Cross supplementing military overseas recreational programs, they should include all branches of the armed forces. The talks moved to the Department of Defense.

Because it was not a time of general war, final discussions with the Department of Defense could not proceed until the American Red Cross made a decision about giving total service, i.e., including supplemental recreational activities, in other than a state of war. This could only be decided by the American Red Cross Board of Governors. The Board's Committee on Program studied the matter, including the financial ramifications, and recommended that Red Cross undertake supplemental recreational activities overseas. At its meeting on November 24, 1952, the Board of Governors adopted the recommendation.

Red Cross informed the Department of Defense and soon more conferences were underway with representative of all branches of the military services. In the discussions Red Cross placed emphasis on the utilization of community resources with the objective to develop better understanding between U.S. military personnel and the people of the host communities. As in the Great Britain study, the Red Cross position was that requests from the military

for supplemental recreational programs would be reviewed for possible use of alternate resources. If other resources were not available, Red Cross would operate off-base community centers to extend existing activities at selected locations. The Red Cross said it would not again get into billeting and food service, viewing these as responsibilities of the military, and that any snacks served by the centers would be part of a planned recreation program and would always be without charge.*

A joint Red Cross - Department of Defense study plan was developed with representatives from the Army, Navy and Air Force designated to work with Red Cross teams to conduct surveys at various locations in Europe and North Africa. The entree that the American Red Cross had to foreign communities through its sister Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was obvious, and the Air Force Command in Europe was anxious to get on with identifying the locations where Red Cross centers would be most useful - places where cultural and language barriers were creating serious problems. With all of the plans

* Going in to World War II, the American Red Cross had a policy of free service. During the war, however, Red Cross charged token amounts for food and lodging in the overseas clubs. This was done at the direct request of the Secretary of War. Because of the disparity between the pay of American troops and those of the Allies, the War Department believed that rapport among the Allies would be enhanced if the Americans were treated as other, less well paid, Allied soldiers who were charged for food and lodging at their canteens and rest areas. The Red Cross acceded to the War Department request because the organization was endeavoring "in every possible way to be of assistance to those responsible for the military affairs of the nation." This practice was stopped in 1945 and never occurred again. But the ill feeling it engendered toward an organization that derived its funds from the contributions of the American people created a public relations problem for the American Red Cross that was to last for years to come.

and guidelines set, the Red Cross survey team was ready and flew to Europe on July 24, 1953.

At the same time as the survey team was preparing to go to Europe, another query came from the Far East. In April 1953 the Far East Command asked about the possibility of reinstating Red Cross clubmobile operations in Korea in the event of a truce. When the fighting stopped, there was potential for serious morale problems. Special Services planned for clubs at divisions and corps, but each division had to cover a certain geographical area. This meant that company and battalion size units would be scattered through the mountains and valleys of South Korea's rugged terrain in relatively isolated positions. Red Cross agreed to establish a clubmobile operation to supplement Special Services club activities. The formal request from the Far East Command, through the Department of Defense, reached national headquarters on June 18, 1953.

Now the stage was set for initiation in Europe and in the Far East, and eventually in Southeast Asia, of Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas. The name of the service was born simply by repeated use in discussions, letters, cables and memos of the words describing the purpose of the program. It was quickly shortened to SRAO. Through the years efforts were made to change the service title - to come up with something not so cumbersome - but nothing ever came of them. While the program would be known in Korea as the American Red Cross Clubmobile Service and in Europe as the American Red Cross Center program, those participating in it always, among themselves, referred to their service as SRAO.

The following pages tell the story of SRAO, and from its inception in 1953 to its ending in 1973 it was a proud and honored American Red Cross service.

KOREA

1953 - 1954

"Yesterday and today were full," wrote a clubmobile worker to her family on Christmas Day, 1953. "We tried to visit as many line companies as possible. Kay and I reached 12 in two days, which means we covered over 100 miles of mountain roads. That's an awful lot of bouncing around. Today we started at 7 a.m. and finished at 7 p.m. We ate our Christmas dinners from tin plates, sitting on sandbags with the GIs while snow and rain seeped into the tent. One GI asked me, 'Are you real?'"

The armistice was signed at Panmunjom on July 27, 1953. One week later the SRAO supervisory staff arrived in Tokyo from Washington. After initial conferences at the American Red Cross Far Eastern Area Headquarters and with the military Far East Command, they flew on to Seoul. There they began to lay the groundwork for clubmobile operations with the 8th Army Command. Clubmobile units would be established, they said, only by command request and where there was willingness to provide full support.

At the time of the cease-fire the United States had three corps (I, IX, and X) with seven divisions in Korea, all deployed north of Seoul. Along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) were the 2nd, 25th and 40th Infantry Divisions and the 1st Marine Division. In reserve positions were the 3rd, 7th and 45th Infantry Divisions. For the time being, 8th Army would not authorize clubmobile operations in the forward areas, citing security reasons.

Recruitment and training were well underway in the states, with some staff members ready to go by mid-September. The actual start of clubmobile operations was in October. The corps and divisions were working full time

to move into new defense positions and to prepare for another cold winter, and it was not until late fall that many of the commands could turn their attention to the logistics of billeting women.

The first clubmobile unit, with five staff members, began operating near Inchon at the Army Support Command (ASCOM) on October 3rd to serve the port operations and surrounding support activities. By this time the Red Cross "pipe line" had trained staff on hold in Japan and more on the way. When the corps and division requests for clubmobile service came in through 8th Army, SRAO was ready. The 3rd Infantry Division requested a clubmobile unit on October 21st. It opened on October 24th. In quick succession clubmobile units opened at 7th and 45th Divisions and at I, IX, and X Corps. Because of the geographical area covered by X Corps, two units were set up there. Two forward divisions, the 2nd and the 40th, requested clubmobile service, and in mid-November 8th Army reconsidered its restriction and authorized clubmobile visits to the forward areas provided staff were billeted in a reserve location. Both divisions were in the IX Corps sector where a women's billet was already under construction for the corps clubmobile unit. The corps commander agreed to expand the billet by adding another quonset, making room for staff who would serve the two divisions. By mid-December they were on duty with travel clearance that included visits to the DMZ outposts.

In all, ten clubmobile units, with 75 staff members, were operating well before Christmas, a crucial morale time for the troops. In that first winter of uncertain peace, in the penetrating cold, the clubmobile teams made their

way around and over the mountains to military units where the GIs met them with disbelief. On seeing a clubmobile team for the first time, one soldier said, "I don't believe it, but if it's true, it's wonderful." When the girls arrived in a company area, the men stood around them and stared. Some of them asked to shake hands and others were too shy to speak. One young GI, who said he had not seen an American woman for eight months, finally spoke up, saying, "I was afraid I wouldn't know how to talk to a girl and, well, I sure didn't want to say the wrong thing."

Plans for recruitment and training for clubmobile staff had begun in June. The four domestic area offices - located in Atlanta, St. Louis, San Francisco and Alexandria, Virginia were ready to recruit as soon as the cease-fire came and each office received a quota based on the anticipated overall need of about 100 staff members.

While it was planned that the clubmobile unit leadership would come from experienced current and former Red Cross staff, most would be recruited from outside. Only women would be recruited for the program. This had been the case in the 1950-52 Korea club and clubmobile operation, a difference from World War II when both men and women had been in club service. The sheer numbers required for the World War II club operations - some 9,000 - dictated the expediency of utilizing all qualified persons who could volunteer for overseas duty. Now, the nature of this new program, with emphasis on recreational activities - not on billet/food service type facilities - called for young women to bring that "touch of home" to the GIs.

The minimum age was set at 23, although almost immediately exceptions were made to take some applicants at age 22. Later this would be lowered to 21 and, as the SRAO story bears out, this proved the right step as the young leadership in the program, close to the ages of the servicemen, kept the service vigorous and energetic and "with the times" throughout its 20 years.

Another qualification was having a college degree. The academic and social experiences that came with four years of university life were assets that brought a wide variety of study and work backgrounds to the program. There were, of course, those who brought recreation skills, but there were also those who brought backgrounds in music, drama, speech, education, science, history and art, and all would contribute to the endless planning of recreational programs. Other qualifying things were being service oriented (a high percentage of applicants were into some kind of community volunteer work), having some group work experience, being in good health and able to withstand a Korean winter, and being single with no dependent children.

Area recruiters were told that no one could predict the length of assignment, that no further placement would be assured at the end of the clubmobile mission, except for staff transferring from other Red Cross services, and that they had three months to fill their quotas. The perseverance of these able recruiters - Hazel Breland in the south, Opal Wiegand in the middlewest, Amy Harris in the east and Eva Peterson in the west - paid off. They had then, and have now, the admiration of all who were involved in that first push to staff SRAO.

Red Cross chapters helped with disseminating information about this new program (as time went by the chapters would become one of the key elements in recruiting for SRAO) and applications came in from all across the states. Selected staff represented, if not every state, every region of America. There would be, for the time of the program, always this amalgam of customs, accents and idioms that was an essential part of taking "home" to the overseas GI.

The screening process, in spite of time constraints, was careful and thorough. References and transcripts were obtained for each applicant and a personal interview was required at an area office. When the writer applied for a position in September 1953, Opal Wiegand called with an invitation for an interview. "Don't come," she said, "unless you are absolutely serious about wanting to go to Korea." There was no time for people who were simply curious.

The interview process took all day. The applicant was talked to, questioned interminably by four or five interviewers about her motives as well as her background and skills, and then cooled her heels while all consulted about the pros and cons of sending this one to Korea. If all went well the applicant was told before returning home at the end of the day that she had made the grade and was offered a position provided she passed a complete physical. And she was told to be ready to go to Washington for training within a matter of days or, at the outside, two to three weeks.

The initial training, two weeks in length, was held at national headquarters. Beginning in late summer and continuing through the fall seven

classes were held, one right after another. The training course covered every phase of Red Cross - the historical development of the movement, the heritage of the International Red Cross, the organization of the American Red Cross with concentration on Services to the Armed Forces (SAF), and how SRAO fit in to SAF in the overseas setting.

There were sessions on the philosophy of the organization and one's responsibility to it and to co-workers, and the importance of understanding the military structure. There were sessions on understanding and appreciating the people and the culture of Korea. There were sessions on how to do the job, with time for planning and presenting the kinds of participation type programs that would be used in the military units. And there were sessions on administration of a clubmobile unit, on how it would run.

When it was all finished, when there was no more information to impart or to be absorbed, there was role play. Some of the skits were funny and some were serious and all were relevant. In the fall of 1953, in one of the classes, one of the skits had a taxi driver taking a uniformed SRAO staff member to a train station. A man from the personnel office took the part of the taxi driver, and he and the girl selected for the role play sat in front of the class in straight chairs, she behind the "taxi driver". He began by asking, "Are you a nurse?" The girl said nothing. Then he asked, "How come the Red Cross sells blood?" Still no response. He kept on and on with all the canards about Red Cross while the girl sat there, arms folded, saying nothing. Finally he gave up. The class leader asked her what was the matter. "Nothing," she replied, "My mother told me never to talk to taxi drivers and I never do."

During the two weeks in Washington the class members became a tight knit group. While they would not end up in the same clubmobile unit, they would always, in their assignments, be in a group - the unit concept that worked so well. A group of five or six women in the midst of twenty thousand men in a combat division in the middle of Korea would make it if they supported one another personally and professionally. It was one of the training themes - called "sticking together".

The people at national headquarters who were directly responsible for the administration of SRAO knew about "sticking together" from their own experiences as did those who were selected for the supervisory roles in Korea. SRAO was set up as a component of SAF and, like SMH and SMI, maintained a national office with a director who reported to the vice president for SAF.. During the months of preliminary planning for SRAO, Red Cross called on the expertise of Louise Wood who had been one of the top leaders in club service in World War II, then tapped Mary Louise Dowling to head up the program and she remained the national director of SRAO throughout its existence.

At the time of her appointment Mary Lou was a field representative with Red Cross chapters in New York state. She was a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, held a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin, and was teaching at Duke University in 1944 when she decided to join Red Cross for service overseas. She supervised clubs in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations and served in Italy as the Allies fought their way up the peninsula. After the war she worked in Service in Veterans' Hospitals until becoming a

field representative. On taking the SRAO job she did not know how long the recreational program would be required. But as long as it lasted she meant to make it a quality program with the best talent that could be found and the highest standards that could be set.

To newly recruited staff arriving in Washington she was Miss Dowling, but as she made her field trips overseas to monitor the programs around the world she was Mary Lou to the staff. In a service where first names were used exclusively for supervisors and staff alike, it was another reinforcement for "sticking together". Hers was the idea that young women, 21 and 22 years old, could handle responsibilities in faraway places, that they could be competent leaders. Mary Lou, who grew older all the time, of course, never let her attitudes or her ideas grow old. She was synonymous with SRAO, the young service.

For the first supervisory jobs in Korea, Marie-Louise Van Vechten, Jessica Hunter and Ella Cruise were selected. Marie-Louise, known as Metzie to all who worked with her, was appointed as supervisor, with Jessica and Ella as assistant supervisors. Metzie had been a club worker in Europe and had served in the earlier Korea program, as had Jessica. During World War II Jessica had served as a WAC in the Far East. With an Army background in supply and logistics, hers was the job of coordinating operational requirements. Ella had been in club work in Europe and was, by career, a teacher. She took a leave of absence from her school to help with the start of SRAO. Her forte was recreation and she was the "spark" for the girls that first winter as they sat huddled in cold quonsets

making program props in semi-darkness and worrying like mad about how it would all turn out.

The first trained group arrived in Japan on September 12th. With 8th Army not yet ready, SMH arranged interim assignments in military hospitals in the Tokyo area. This took care of the waiting problem and provided opportunity, under guidance of SMH recreation staff, for practice in program techniques while recreating hospitalized servicemen. As more staff arrived a U.S. Army convalescent hospital at Camp Omiya, on the outskirts of Tokyo, was utilized through October and November until the last group left for Korea. Staff trained and worked under the direction of Jane Wriston, the SMH recreation supervisor stationed there. She had as many as 30 SRAO staff at one time. It was known as "Jane's finishing school" and thanks to her hard work each girl left there with a bulging file of program ideas and plans.

When staff members left Washington they were wearing Red Cross Class "A" uniforms, had limited hand baggage, no more than they could carry themselves. They were allowed to ship one footlocker each to Japan for storage at the Red Cross supply warehouse in Yokohama. The girls had access to the footlockers while in Japan but civilian clothes were not yet authorized for wear in Korea so they had to leave behind all clothing that was not essential. For winter wear in Korea they were issued obsolete WAC uniforms purchased by Red Cross from Quartermaster stores. Shirts and slacks in wool olive drab, wool socks and boots, field jackets and overcoats, fatigue caps and duffle bags made up the issue. Into the duffle bags were crammed everything including the warm clothing the girls had brought with them - long underwear, flannel pajamas

woolen robes - and the duffle bag and one hand bag were carried by each girl onto the C-124s that flew them from Tachikawa Air Base to Kimpo Air Field.

Up to the time of their arrival in Korea the staff, with two weeks in Washington and some weeks in Japan, had been having a fun kind of travel and sightseeing adventure. As they came off the planes at Kimpo and started to their units, some by truck and some by light planes, they were suddenly thrust into the reality of war. The older leadership staff who had served in World War II and had seen the devastation of war knew what to expect. But most of the younger, newly recruited staff members, who were high school age during World War II and had gone to college in the era of Hollywood war films, were not prepared for what they saw.

Seoul was a shattered city. From the air one could see blocks upon blocks of rubble interspersed with standing shells of what had been large buildings. Those driving through the city saw thousands of homeless refugees making do with flimsy shelters in the streets. Seoul was officially closed to the refugees in an attempt by the government to prevent epidemics and fires like those that had ravaged Pusan, but the people kept coming back to try to find what was left of their homes and possessions. The countryside north of Seoul was also barred to civilians because of the danger that lay in unmarked fields of land mines. But like the city people, the farmers were determined to find their way home to their flattened villages and could be seen from the road sifting through the rubble, trying to salvage anything that might help them begin life anew. In a plane, viewing the series of brown mountains and valleys, one was reminded that this land was fought over, some of it foot by foot, with terrible loss of life. The brutality of what happened here somehow had to be handled so that everyone could get on with the work at hand.

On arriving at their units, the girls received more cold weather clothing. On a loan basis, the Army supplied parkas, pile caps (one girl insisted that they were "Ernie Pyle" caps), mittens, woolen scarves, sleeping bags and thermo boots with cushion sole socks. These last items worked on the same principle as vacuum containers - put a warm sock on a warm foot, stick it in the boot and it stayed warm like, as someone said, "coffee in a thermos bottle". The GIs called them Mickey Mouse boots because they looked alot like Mickey's feet.

Each clubmobile unit had a designated unit head and program director, and the number of staff assigned depended upon the number of daily runs needed to meet the scheduled visits to the companies and battalions. For program planning there was plenty of enthusiasm but not much formal organization. All participated in putting together some programs, making props and nervously practicing on one another. Then the teams, each of two girls, took the programs, with props carried in a large canvas bag, "on the road". They needn't have worried. The GIs didn't care what they did so long as they showed up. The soldiers straightened their uniforms, slicked down their hair, told each other not to swear, and gave the girls their undivided attention.

The programming was usually in mess halls because they were large enough for good sized groups and had coffee serving equipment. On the initial runs the modus operandi was for the girls to introduce themselves ("Hello. My name is Mary and I'm going to give you some clues so you can guess what state I'm from."), to explain how they got there ("I hadn't had a vacation for so long that when I heard there were tours to Korea, why, I jumped at the chance."),

and to introduce the program and get the activities going ("Whistle if you've ever heard of Lana Turner").

All the props had to be easily transportable, large enough for all to see, and stand up to hard use. Most used of supplies were rolls of brown wrapping paper, sections of which could be jazzed up with poster paint to produce most any kind of illusion. Horse racing games were assembled by painting tracks on the brown paper (easily rolled up for transporting), making construction paper money and using beer cans, painted in bright colors, for horses. Other programs were based on radio and TV shows of the day like Truth or Consequences and Beat the Clock, and games were made up using quizzes and charades and rebus cards. One of the early and easy programs was Who Am I.

On the first runs there was a good deal of apprehension on the part of the girls who were novices at recreation. One such team, reassured by Ella Cruise that, really, there was nothing to be nervous about - just get in there, she said, and the men will participate and enjoy. Her other reassurance was that this was not like performing on a stage, but rather having everyone join in, and usually the groups were small, being about 30 or 40 men.

Thus bucked up, the two ventured forth with Who Am I. The game had simple props. All that was needed were several pieces of paper with names of famous people printed in large letters and some pins to stick the papers on the backs of the GIs. They would do the rest by asking questions of the men to find out who they were. Enroute to their scheduled stops the girls were detoured by an officer to a replacement holding area where about 250 men were waiting to move out. They were sitting on boards and sandbags in a "circus tent", so called

because of its size. Hearing that the Red Cross girls were coming, some of the men hastily erected a stage at one end of the tent and when the girls arrived they were escorted to it with much flourish and there abandoned to their fate. One of the girls shouted, "My name is Joan and I'm from South Dakota. How many here are from South Dakota?" (The girls had been instructed that this was a good way to get participants). Out of 250 men, one man raised his hand. Importuned into getting up on the stage, he did not, from nervousness, grasp what it was he was supposed to do. With a famous name pinned on his back, he just stood there. After several explanations to him by the now frantic girls and much shouted advice from the men, he finally turned toward the crowd and said, "O.K., Who are you?"

Such experiences were quick teachers (for one thing, never be conned into getting up on a stage unless it's part of the plan) and showed the need for more skillful techniques and a greater variety of "tricks" to pull from the bag. By Christmas all had the practice and repertoires enough to deal with all sizes of groups. As time went on the program planning would become organized, the games less amateurish, the props more elaborate, the techniques more skilled and the evaluations more critical. But the proven fact was that when two young women, even in their obsolete WAC wear and Mickey Mouse boots, asked a group of young servicemen to join them in a horse race that consisted of a brown paper track, fake money and beer can horses, there was nothing that could match that hour of hilarious pandemonium.

The scenes in the mess halls those first months, until the men got used to seeing the Red Cross girls, were not forgotten. The girls remembered the

"double takes" by men coming through a mess line and seeing them serving the coffee. One girl remembered a soldier who pretended to faint, falling dramatically into the arms of his buddies and moaning as if, she supposed, in ecstasy. The first sergeants were uncertain of their roles, but certainly knew they were still in charge. Some of them treated the clubmobile visits as a mandatory part of the day until it was explained to them that the men did not have to attend. One staff member recalled, "After supper the first sergeant blew his whistle. 'At ease,' he bellowed, 'The Red Cross girls are here with a program. You, (pointing to a GI) go get your guitar so we can have some music.' " The sergeants began to relax after a few visits. Some of them would throw themselves into the competitive games and some would sit and drink coffee while the GIs enjoyed the program. Whatever they chose to do, they did stop blowing their whistles.

The transportation in 1953 was, for the most part, clubmobile vans. When it was anticipated in 1951 that the Red Cross club operations in Korea would be able to go exclusively to clubmobile service, the military began to convert two and a half ton trucks into clubmobiles at an Army ordnance depot in Japan. The trucks were rebuilt with the idea of making coffee and doughnuts for company sized groups. Each van was equipped with a water tank, sinks, a field range and cabinets for supplies. Both sides opened with counters for serving. Of World War II vintage, they had open cabs with canvas side curtains and no heaters. They were used, prior to the SRAO program, by Special Services units, not to bake doughnuts, but to deliver them to various military locations, and sometimes they were pressed into service as mobile libraries and PX outlets.

By the fall of 1953, when they were designated as clubmobile transportation, none of the vans were in very good condition. This was not the only drawback. Their size made them unwieldy and hazardous on the mountain roads. Almost immediately some of the military commands would not permit their use in areas where the roads were narrow, steep and winding, and other vehicles were often substituted. Generally, the substitute was a three-quarter ton truck, but jeeps were also used on the more treacherous roads. To identify the three-quarters when they were being used by the clubmobile teams, Red Cross supply service made up canvas side covers with the Red Cross emblem that were strapped on the vehicles and could be seen from a distance.

The clubmobile vans were often "deadlined" and spare parts hard to find. With no heaters, they were freezing cold in winter and, with no doors except for the canvas, full of dust in the summer. By mid-1954, when no more spare parts could be found, they were abandoned in favor of the three-quarters.

While the vans were used, they were a sight to see, especially in one regiment, in a forward area, where someone in the command had an outhouse built on a jeep trailer that could be attached to the van. Providing "accommodations" for the girls in areas otherwise barren of the right kind of facilities, this portable outhouse was seen by the military as a thoughtful convenience. It was, in fact, a harrowing experience to ride in the van hauling this contraption. The two awkward vehicles, swaying in opposite directions, creaking and groaning up and down and around perilous mountain roads was bad enough. Worse, the "caboose", as it came to be called by the girls, attracted more attention than a carnival. When the girls used it,

GIs and Koreans alike seemed to appear from nowhere to stand and gawk, and when the girls emerged from the caboose there was nothing to do except say a cheery "hi" to the crowd.

All of the vehicles for the clubmobile runs were driven by enlisted men. In the forward areas escort jeeps often accompanied the teams and this was always the case when there had been hostile incidents along the DMZ. In some areas the drivers were assigned permanently (as permanent as a tour of duty) and they and the Red Cross girls became fast friends, with the girls remembering their birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other occasions, just like at home.

At the beginning, the scheduling of visits to the military units was a real challenge. For one thing, nobody was sure how long it would take to get from point A to point B. As the crow flew it might take 20 minutes, but as the road went winding around and about, muddy and snowy, it might take two hours. The corps and division G-1 offices and the regimental S-1 offices provided information about the locations of the military units and helped with drafting the schedules for the best use of travel time, but all the same, there was a good deal of trial and error and the schedules were under constant revision.

One uncontrollable factor was getting lost. The drivers were assigned from their own corps and division areas but this did not guarantee that they knew all the locations, and the bleak, brown landscape made everything look the same. It was easy to make a wrong turn, to go up the wrong mountain road.

One clubmobile team, traveling in the van with the caboose, reported on one December day, "We started off across the mountains to our first stop. We went up and up and the road became a single lane with sharp curves, going round and round to a mountain pass. After an hour and a half of this the driver decided we were on the wrong road. We stopped and had to unhitch the caboose and turn it around on the snowy, icy road and then wait for the driver to maneuver the clubmobile around. It's hard to say which was worse - going up the mountain or coming down. It took us four hours to get on the right road and when we finally reached our destination a very unhappy major gathered the men and we presented our program which everyone enjoyed. Then we had to leave because it was getting dark and we were in a black-out area. We were so late getting back to the billet that we missed supper, but somebody finally found us some cold ham and beans."

As time passed the scheduling became easier, with visits becoming an integral part of each military unit's training schedule. But the days were long, usually being about 12 hours, six and sometimes seven days a week.

The first billets provided by the military were mainly quonsets, although for a time some of the girls lived in tropical shells which were roomy but almost impossible to keep adequately heated in winter. There was little or no privacy because full partitions would have blocked the warmth from the space heaters. Some of the billets had attached latrines and some separate latrines, and all who were there will remember that certain times of day they were closed to use while the metal receptacles were moved to a distant field for burning off.

Some of the quonsets had shower rooms attached that were operated by generators pumping water from truck tanks and, in one case, from a stream. The showers usually operated one or two hours in the evening. At MASH locations military shower points were used, with designated hours for female nurses. The hours were not always convenient to the clubmobile schedules and some girls went weeks "sponge bathing" with water tipped from jerry cans into tin basins. At IX Corps, where there were three clubmobile units housed, 24 women lived together in a double quonset. Where the quonsets met at a right angle someone put up a sign reading, "Hollywood & Vine". The attached shower room operated for two hours each evening when the generator worked. There were three shower heads and six girls showered at a time. Laundry was done in the same room in galvanized tubs on the floor. It was, said one of the participants, a watery madhouse. With some showering and others washing clothes, everyone had to hurry, hurry for fear the water would go off before everyone and everything got relatively clean. The return of Korean civilians to the military zone was still months away so there was no luxury of having mamma-sans wash clothes and clean billets while staff worked.

Doughnuts were, of course, the snacks that the girls took with them on their clubmobile runs. Prior to the arrival of SRAO, Special Services had been operating doughnut kitchens at several locations and had some type of distribution to corps and division headquarters locations. One Special Services unit operated a coffee and doughnut shop at a place called The Crossroads at the junction of two truck routes. Where these doughnut kitchens existed arrangements were made to have doughnuts baked for the clubmobile units. Eighth Army logistical support included supplying doughnut ingredients to the

extent funds were available (from non-appropriated sources and for Special Services use) and this was the arrangement through March 1954. After that Red Cross provided all ingredients for the doughnuts. The military paid the salaries of locally hired bakers throughout the length of the program.

There was no doughnut kitchen at ASCOM and Red Cross set one up, utilizing part of an army kitchen and hiring Korean bakers. This was by far the largest doughnut baking operation in Korea, not only supplying doughnuts for the ASCOM clubmobile runs but also for the extensive servings at the Port of Incheon. With four electric doughnut machines capable of turning out ten thousand doughnuts in a twelve hour shift, it was named the "doughnut factory" by the staff.

The bakers at all the kitchens went to work in the middle of the night to produce the doughnuts picked up by the clubmobile teams around 7 a.m. They were carried in wire baskets and covered with brown paper to keep out the dust and rain and snow, and where the girls went so, too, went the doughnut. It was not long before the GIs were calling the girls "Donut Dollies". Mary Louise Dowling deplored the phrase. It was not the kind of recruitment slogan that Red Cross needed and Mary Lou's contention, correctly, was that clubmobile service was about recreation, not about doughnuts which were snacks incidental to the program. But as the years passed it seemed to spread and even the girls referred to themselves as "DDs". They knew there was no derision intended. It was, if anything, a friendly term - as when the men in a company area, spying the approaching truck with the flapping canvas Red Cross emblem, shouted, "Here come the Donut Dollies!"

Doughnuts were not served in the SRAO programs in Europe or in Vietnam. The centers in Europe, while often serving refreshments with program activities, had wider culinary opportunities. In the climate of Vietnam it was not practical to transport perishable food and the sanitation concern would have been a nightmare. Military personnel who had been in Korea never stopped asking why Red Cross did not serve doughnuts in Vietnam. In 1968 when the writer was a guest at a division commander's mess there, the deputy commander asked why there were no doughnuts. When the reply was that they would probably be all soggy and yukky in that climate he became testy and disagreeable and said it was a serious matter and he was going to write to Red Cross national headquarters about it.

That the doughnut was so much a part of the overseas image of the Red Cross is attested to by the fact that the SRAO workers in Vietnam were called "Donut Dollies", too, although a Red Cross doughnut never passed through their hands.

The clubmobile girls quickly became a part of the military community. Almost by osmosis they learned the military life and the importance of esprit de corps. It became second nature to know the insignia and colors of each unit. It delighted the men when the girls appeared wearing neck scarves, the right color for the right outfit, with the insignia attached that the men had given them. They had permission to wear the patches of their assigned division (on the right shoulder - the left shoulder was for the Red Cross patch - and who cared when the 1st Cav came that the horse looked backward?). They learned the mottoes, the slogans and the songs. They were invited to change of command ceremonies, participated in organization day activities, supported sports events and sang in chapel choirs.

The girls were particularly active at Christmastime. They helped the companies and battalions decorate the mess halls, they got permission to take small groups of GIs - musicians and singers - with them on their runs to the more isolated locations for entertainment programs, they saw to it that every outpost was visited on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, they caroled wherever they went, they helped with the military sponsored parties for orphans, they made Christmas lapel decorations and pinned them on themselves and anyone else who passed by, and they ate Christmas dinner with the troops and attended chapel services with them.

Captain William E. Gamble was a chaplain then with the 45th Infantry Division and after the holidays wrote a letter to the Red Cross field director assigned there. Throughout his letter he referred to "The Girls" ("I need not explain which girls; they are the only ones we have working from this headquarters. Everybody knows them by their first names. Everyone has a warm spot in his heart for each of them.").

About the Christmas season he wrote, "The Friday before Christmas we at the Chapel In The Valley were having Chapel Fellowship Night. 'The Girls' were invited. When they came it was a beautiful sight to watch. Among the men they moved unobtrusively. The shy fellow found a girl sitting by him sharing a song sheet with him. You could see the change. All through the Chapel a gentle warmth was kindled. And they lighted candles and served coffee. It was from a 15 gallon stock pot, and doughnuts (were served) from cardboard 'C' ration cartons. Nobody noticed. They might as well have had fine china instead of canteen cups and paper cups. The season was somehow fulfilled for them."

In January 1954 the SRAO girls were advised that the tour of duty in Korea had been set at 12 months with possible extensions up to six months. This decision was in line with the overall policy of the organization to give double credit for the standard two year overseas tour in a location designated as a hardship area, which Korea was, and it pertained to all Red Cross personnel assigned there. At the same time, a leave plan was established. Eighth Army permitted civilians working with the military in Korea to utilize R&R (Rest and Recuperation) transportation and the Special Services sponsored recreation hotels in Japan, and Red Cross personnel were to be included. Immediately eligible staff were scheduled for R&R and were off to Japan for a much needed rest.

Since the time of the truce in the summer of 1953 there had been continuing incidents along the DMZ and there was always readiness for the possible resumption of hostilities. Syngman Rhee's government more than once announced the intention of reuniting the country by force and talked of reopening hostilities after the first six months of the truce. That January everyone was edgy and there were frequent alerts.

The clubmobile girls were briefed about evacuation, should that become necessary, and were instructed to carry ditty bags with snacks and other necessities in case they were moved south to await transportation out of the country. The snacks usually consisted of fruit - apples and oranges from the mess halls - and candy bars. The girls called them "bug-out" bags. The problem was that nobody ever saved the food for an emergency. With breakfast at 6 a.m., the clubmobile runs beginning at 7 a.m., and the long rides between stops, the fruit and candy were usually consumed before noon. Once in awhile

some wondered aloud about what would happen if they were evacuated in the afternoon.

One day toward the end of January there was an alert that rumor quickly spread as "the real thing". The writer and partner, Mary Jane Cromwell, were in a forward area, in the clubmobile van with the caboose driven by Red, a favorite driver among the girls, on a mountain road known as "General Kim's Skyline Drive". A radio jeep had been assigned that day for the trip. For the purpose of sending an evacuation message without revealing names, the clubmobile girls were given the code name "Powder Puff Patrol". On the crest of the mountain the men in the radio jeep waved Red to a stop. One of them shouted, "We have a message to evacuate the Powder Puff Patrol." And then he added, "And we have to report back to our company right away." With that, the jeep spun around and was gone down the mountain.

On the narrow road there was no room to turn the van and the caboose, so Red continued north, winding down the mountain, looking for a wide place. The writer remembered: "We drove down the mountain and finally reached an open area where we could turn around. A group of soldiers were standing there and one of them shouted, 'The war has started again.' A sergeant, who appeared to be in charge, came over to the van and said to Red, 'Get these females out of here.' Red told him we would make better time if we could unhitch the caboose and leave it behind. The sergeant said, 'I don't have the authority to let you abandon government property on this road. Just turn around and get out of here.' While the sergeant and Red were talking, Mary Jane and I

jumped from the van with baskets of doughnuts and passed them out to the men. They told us they didn't know when they would eat again and took as many doughnuts as they could stuff in their pockets and inside their parkas. The sergeant shouted at us to get back in the van and 'take off'.

"Turned around, Red drove the van and caboose back up the mountain pass. This time there were soldiers marching north on both sides of the road. Shortly after we reached the crest and started down the other side we came upon a line of tanks. There was just enough room to squeak by. When we finally arrived on flat land Red drove as fast as he could without pitching the whole shebang off the road. We could see a company of soldiers dug in along the road. One of them stood up and shouted, 'It's the Red Cross, by God. You got any doughnuts?' An officer came running up and said, 'Get out, get out. Keep going south.' Red, who had stopped the van, asked him if he could leave the caboose there. The officer ignored the question. He said, 'You are in the path of our guns. Take these women to safety. Go, go.' Red did not argue with him.

"We drove until we came to a supply company where the captain in charge agreed to keep the caboose. Red was about to unhitch it when Mary Jane said she had to 'go'. We could tell from Red's expression that this was the last straw on what had turned into an awful day, but Mary Jane knew that several hours of waiting might be ahead. She looked at Red and said, "I refuse to be evacuated until I have used the facilities." Red opened the door of the caboose, took down the portable steps and stood aside. With that accomplished,

the caboose was left behind and Red drove us to The Crossroads, the truck stop, where we were supposed to be picked up for the next phase of the evacuation. Red, his part of the evacuation plan fulfilled, now had to return to his unit. He was our 'mountain driver' and always took very good care of us. We did not know what would happen to anyone that day, and we hugged Red as he left.

"We found an assortment of soldiers at The Crossroads waiting for transportation to their units. Having been there for some time, they had already eaten all the available food in the coffee shop. We had, of course, long since eaten the snacks in our 'bug-out' bags and we sat on the floor, talking with the GIs, waiting for the war or a ride back to our billet, which ever came first. We were there until nightfall when a sergeant came by and took us back to the billet in his jeep. He told us that the war had not started again, after all, but there had been an alert when some troop movements were observed on the other side of the DMZ. The caboose was retrieved the next day and we went on with our work."

In the winter of 1953-54 the long work days, the travel (which averaged about 18,000 miles a month) in unheated vehicles and the often inadequate heat in the billets took their tolls. Some staff members had colds that couldn't be shaken off, and virus and pneumonia put several staff members in the hospital. It was the 121st Evacuation Hospital and was then located at Yong Dong Po, on the outskirts of Seoul. When recovery was sufficiently well along to leave the hospital, the military doctors generally advised "light duty" which meant staying off the road for a week or so. Often the recovering staff members found themselves "attached" to the office in Seoul

for the recuperating period. "Make work" assignments were given to them and it was not much fun compared to the excitement in the field.

One of the girls in this situation told the following story when she returned to her clubmobile unit: "I was doing odds and ends of paper work in the office one day when a 2nd lieutenant came in. He said he was from the Psychological Warfare Department and needed a woman's voice for a tape recording. I was immediately dispatched to do it. On the way to the van that housed the recording studio the lieutenant told me the recording I would make was to be used during upcoming maneuvers in a forward area and would 'approximate Communist propaganda'. When we reached the studio he asked me if I had heard of Tokyo Rose. I said, yes, I had, and he said that was what we were going to 'approximate'. He gave me the script and told me to read it in a husky and sexy voice. The script started out, 'Where are your thoughts tonight, gallant Americans? Do you think of home and loved ones? Are they thinking of you?' There was a lot of stuff in the middle like that and it ended, 'Just remember, whatever happens, I love you.' Because of mechanical difficulties and because my voice did not sound husky or sexy enough, I had to make the tape seven times. I couldn't believe I was doing this, and wondered who in the world would take it seriously, and then I thought, maybe, the 2nd lieutenant had been given a 'make work' assignment, too."

Six months into clubmobile operations, staff were settling into work patterns that made program planning easier and the programming more effective. The clubmobile units were now able, with firm run schedules, to set aside

one day a week for workshops and program "dry runs". This practice with an accompanying critique produced better techniques and ultimately better programs and from this time on a program pool began to grow - a process that would be refined and valuable over the years.

The clubmobile units, in the spring of 1954, were now putting together "party kits" based on themes such as holidays, birthdays, carnival and Monte Carlo activities, and seasonal sports. As these were being developed staff began to look for soldier talent, lining up barkers for carnival programs, dealers for the Monte Carlo games, musicians for combos and group singing. Red Cross purchased guitars, ukuleles and accordions and they were carried along by the clubmobile teams to stops where they knew soldiers who played them.

The girls also carried along state books - loose leaf notebooks with a section for each state - so that the men could enter their names and towns and look for the names of others from their home areas. The clubmobile units began a birthday card distribution project. Company first sergeants were contacted to get the names of the men to whom they sent handmade cards during their birthday months. This activity was extremely popular with the men, many of whom saved the cards as mementos, and they often wrote thank you notes to the girls for remembering them. One such note ended with the P.S., "Keep up the good work of making GIs like me happy."

Some of the units started square dance parties held at a different company one night each week. There was a talent search for callers, but if one could not be found in a certain company, one of the girls, "winging it",

did the calling. At one location they discovered that the division chief of staff was a square dance caller and he taught them new dance calls. The companies selected for this night activity were those with limited access to recreation facilities or with work schedules that made daytime clubmobile visits impractical.

After the brown bleakness of winter, the Korean countryside in spring was transformed to beauty as wild shrubs and flowers bloomed up the mountain sides and green returned to the valleys. The farmers were hard at work in the rice paddies and the villages were beginning to be rebuilt and take on the bustle of life.

For the clubmobile girls, heavy winter clothing was replaced by women's fatigues. About this time the military issued a directive formalizing the loan of military uniform items to Red Cross personnel and the girls augmented the fatigues with men's trousers and shirts. They were altered, said an SRAO report, "appropriately to present as attractive an appearance as possible." This meant having the zippered opening in the trousers moved from the front to the side.

The spring also brought substantial billet improvements. All but one unit now had shower facilities in or adjacent to their billets and three had flush toilets.

But the best change was yet to come. In the summer 8th Army authorized the wearing of civilian clothes during off-duty hours in the corps and division areas. The girls immediately sent for the clothing they had stored in their footlockers in Yokohama. They also relied heavily on Sears and

Montgomery Ward catalogues to build their wardrobes. Bennett Macdonald, one of the first staff members to arrive in Korea, remembered getting clothes through a catalogue for a special division party and "seeing a young Korean girl in the same outfit as I had, I thought that some serviceman had good taste."

1954 saw U.S. military changes in Korea with considerable reduction of troops by the end of the year. In the spring the 40th and 45th Divisions returned to the states and X Corps was deactivated. The 24th Division came from Japan for a temporary stay and while in Korea had a clubmobile unit. The 25th Division moved back from the DMZ early in the year and requested and had clubmobile service until its departure for Hawaii in the fall. Almost at the same time the 2nd and 3rd Divisions moved back to the states and IX Corps was deactivated. As the troops prepared to leave clubmobile teams visited the companies, as many as eight in a day, to say farewell. They served the men as they departed the division areas and again as they boarded the ships at Inchon.

Remaining in Korea were I Corps, the 7th Division and the 1st Marine Division. While the Marine command did not request clubmobile service in its forward area, it did request service to rear elements as well as to the men passing through the Port of Inchon and this was given by the girls at ASCOM. By October there were four clubmobile units operating - at ASCOM, 7th Division, I Corps Headquarters (Camp Red Cloud) and I Corps Artillery (Camp St. Barbara).

As the withdrawals of the divisions were taking place there was Red Cross

debate about continuing the SRAO program in Korea. Eighth Army wanted the service to stay at least another year, or until the situation in the Far East changed. Tensions in that part of the world remained high. The U.S. 7th Fleet patrolled the Taiwan Strait between the two Chinas, with the Communists repeatedly threatening the offshore islands. In Indochina, in May, Dien Bien Phu fell and that summer Vietnam was partitioned at the 17th parallel. In September the SEATO defense pact was signed. There was no doubt that American troops would remain as a force in the Far East.

Red Cross agreed to continue SRAO operations in Korea through the next year, and recruitment was put in gear again to replace staff members who would be completing their one year tours in November and December.

At 7th Division that fall there were 20 clubmobile girls and they decided to do a variety show. It was a huge undertaking with soldier committees working on stage props, costumes, musical numbers and skits based on the theme "Harvest Harmonies". A talent search turned up a former Yale drama student who became the director of the production. It was presented to 2,000 men in the division football bowl and received news coverage in the Pacific Stars and Stripes. It was before the opening of the Special Services clubs and the plethora of USO touring shows and they would not attempt it again, but it was right for the moment and a great diversion for the troops.

When they had time, the clubmobile teams visited other U.N. troops. When they presented programs to Turk or Greek or Dutch or Ethiopian units they stuck to games of skill, which minimized the language problem, and the men usually responded by entertaining the girls with music and songs of their countries.

There was a different kind of situation with the KATUSA (Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army). Korean troops, in the thousands, were integrated into the U.S. Army divisions down through company and squad levels. They were welcome and encouraged to attend clubmobile programs. Like other U.N. troops, they easily participated in games of skill, but beyond that usually sat in the back of the mess hall consuming coffee and doughnuts. The enterprising girls enlisted the aid of bi-lingual Korean soldiers assigned to headquarters offices to translate quizzes and puzzle instructions, hand lettered on stencils and mimeographed, so that the Koreans could have a table activity during the program hour. Another way to get them to participate was to have them teach Korean games, such as "Yute", to the American soldiers. Making the Korean soldiers feel a part of the hour of recreation was in line with the military goal to train them.

For Thanksgiving the 7th Division clubmobile teams made stops at all the division units in a two day period, taking along musical combos and chorus groups of servicemen. The girls wore pilgrim hats and white collars made from construction paper and fashioned silver buckles for their boots, and they hung brown paper turkeys in all the mess halls. It was football season and the girls became cheerleaders for the division games. Dressed in fatigues, they led the cheers waving crepe paper pompons they had made themselves.

Now there was much staff turnover with the departure of the original group and the arrival of newly recruited staff to be initiated into the living and working conditions. Harriett Barnes and Janet Miller were two

of the new arrivals, going to 7th Division on December 17, 1954. From Seoul they rode north for two hours in an unheated truck. Arriving at the unit freezing cold, they discovered that the billet heat came from a stove "that went out at night, and sometimes more often than that" and that the stove threw the heat "one foot - straight up and straight down". Harriett wrote home that the first night she and Janet slept on their cots "in pants, T shirts, long johns, flannel pajamas, sweaters, housecoats, head scarves, socks, with four doubled blankets and sleeping bags on top. We were just as tired when we got up in the morning as we were the night before."

At the end of the year the Special Services Community Centers began to open, and female staff arrived to operate the Special Services clubs. In addition to the clubs, the community centers had gymnasiums, theaters, libraries and hobby and craft shops. Seven were opened - one each at 8th Army Headquarters in Seoul, at I Corps and I Corps Arty, and four in the 7th Division area. They were located in high troop concentration areas where the greatest number of men could take advantage of them.

During 1953 and 1954 the SRAO girls had, along with their regular daytime run schedules, promoted evening company parties, musical programs, square dances, and even the big variety show - they had, so to speak, covered the water front. Now, with Special Services clubs open, they would turn their energies in the coming year to stepping up visits to the more isolated military units.

KOREA

1955 - 1960

"I remember very vividly my first day on the job. I suppose my feelings were no different from most of the other girls on their first runs, but when I walked into the mess hall full of GIs I was terrified and clung to my fellow worker like a child clinging to its mother. But I soon adjusted and learned to enjoy our daily runs. This was partly due to the politeness and kindness of the GIs. In 1959 swearing was not socially polite, and I never heard a swear word come out of the mouth of a GI while we were around."

-Recollection from Barbara Mace

In February 1955 the 1st Marine Division began pulling out of Korea for redeployment to Okinawa. The commander asked for SRAO service to the men as they passed through the Port of Inchon. The masses of men arriving and waiting at the port to board ships could not, practically, be served by club-mobiles, and the Marine command turned over a large building to Red Cross for use as a recreation "hut". Furnished with dayroom type furniture, it was open and staffed seven days a week. To accommodate the thousands of troops, company size units were assigned certain hours to use the recreation building, but during times when the girls were presenting programs as many as 500 or 600 men would show up (the average daily attendance was about 3,000).

The girls had musical programs with soldier combos, record request hours, bingo, slide shows, and there was available room for table games and letter writing. This operation, run by the ASCOM clubmobile unit, with temporary help from other units, continued through March and into April. As the Marines were departing the 24th Infantry Division was returning from Japan to replace them. Bennett Macdonald, then Unit head at ASCOM, remembered that hectic time:

"Inchon has one of the highest tides in the world and the ships had to anchor in the bay, and the men came and went on LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank). Our services would be required at all hours of the day and night, depending on the tide. Sometimes we served as many as 7,500 in a day. Bless the Navy men assigned to the port - they saw to it that we were warm and fed."

With the return of the 24th Division, the commanding general immediately asked for a clubmobile unit. This posed a problem - and the problem was staffing. Recruitment had not kept pace with replacement needs and while some hardy souls had extended their tours to 18 months, only a token staff could be assigned to the new division. This necessitated moving from weekly to bi-weekly visits at the 7th Division and starting with biweekly visits at the 24th.

Truman Solverud, then Red Cross director of operations in the Far East, wrote to national headquarters that the division commanding generals were unrelenting in their requests for more SRAO staff and would only accept the biweekly visits as temporary.

A major factor in the slowness of recruitment was that Korea was no longer in the news. It was almost two years removed from the combat of war and far from the domestic scene. SRAO workers returning home helped in recruitment by speaking to various community groups and being interviewed by local newspapers.

Jessica Hunter, home from her Korea tour and awaiting assignment to SRAO in Europe, went on a series of speaking engagements across the country, mostly to Red Cross chapters. The important product of these appearances was the local

media coverage. In April 1955 she spoke at a field service conference in Minneapolis. She told about a "typical" day of a clubmobile worker in Korea and then she said, "It is true we do not have beauty parlors, we do not have fancy living quarters, we do not have our own automobiles. But it is also true that we are very well taken care of by the military, we have many opportunities to meet interesting Americans and people from other countries, we have the experience of living in an ancient Eastern culture. We have lots of fun - and best of all we have the satisfaction which comes from serving the American military who are carrying out a very important mission in a very vital part of the world."

Up to this time there had been no active push to recruit staff below the age of 23, but the qualified applicants ages 21 and 22 who had gone into the program had more than made the grade. Mary Lou now proposed active recruitment for these younger ages, and recruitment in colleges and universities now took on new impetus. By early the next year staffing was up to strength.

In the early months of 1955 there had not been the time nor the staff to give concentrated effort toward increasing integration of the KATUSA into recreation activities or to meet one of the service goals which was to do more programs on Korean culture. When the time came to do something about this, Leota Kelly, who had succeeded Metzie Van Vechten as SRAO director, turned to the Republic of Korea Red Cross Society for help. Since the end of the war the American Red Cross had been assisting the Korean Red Cross members in getting their society fully reestablished and there was a comfortable, familial relationship between the two organizations. Local Red Cross members

made introductions to various individuals and groups so that SRAO staff members could learn more about Korean history and culture. They met members of the faculty of Ewha Women's University and the head of the physical education department talked about the country's customs and taught them Korean games. It was the beginning of many local associations which contributed greatly to staff knowledge and to better programs on Korea and increased KATUSA participation.

The girls continued to serve U.N. troops. They served the Thais and Greeks at railheads as they departed Korea and presented occasional programs to the Belgians, Filipinos and Ethiopians. At one Ethiopian unit the girls agreed to do a bingo night, using an interpreter. When they came to the game of stand-up bingo, they explained, or so they thought, how it worked to the interpreter. When he finished translating the explanation, the soldiers all stood up and, without a word, marched out the door.

In addition to developing more and better programs about Korea, the club-mobile units had programs on men's fashions, comic strip characters, automobiles and seasonal sports. Some educational and science subjects were introduced as well. Harriett Barnes remembered presenting such a program in which the quiz questions were rather hard. A private with "messy hair and dirty face" answered most of the questions correctly while the other men stared at him. After the program Harriett and her partner stayed to serve in the mess line. "When he came to lunch," she recalled, "his hair was neatly combed, he had washed his face and had on a neck scarf. His self-worth had shot way up!"

When Jessica Hunter, in her speeches, said that the clubmobile girls were "very well taken care of by the military" it did not begin to tell the story of efforts at all levels to provide the best in difficult and spartan situations. The commanding generals could order that adequate billets be erected, but it was the ingenuity all down the line that made them livable. Paint was found for the interiors, rooms were partitioned sufficiently for some privacy, furniture was "scrounged" or built. At ASCOM where, as a result of the "doughnut factory", there was a surfeit of flour barrels, they were turned into chairs. Harriett Barnes remembered how the men in an engineer company, hearing that the girls would like a bath tub, split an oil drum in two, soldered the ends together, painted it pink (she suspected they had used beet juice to dye the white paint) and installed it in the billet.

At one location an enterprising sergeant "found" a supply of "real" toilet seats in Seoul to put over the latrine holes. In some quonsets the engineers built fieldstone fireplaces in the lounge areas. Nothing was too much trouble. The girls learned, sometimes to their chagrin, that they could not say, even casually, "we miss...." or "it certainly would be nice to have..." without causing a stir and an extra special try by someone in the military to provide. At company visits the mess sergeants, if they could manage it, would serve the best menu of the week. Company medics extracted splinters, treated scrapes and blisters, and loved nothing better than to rewrap a sagging bandage around a sprained ankle. As for the thoughtfulness and politeness of the men, it was absolutely true that swearing was seldom heard and when it was an unsolicited apology was immediately given.

In the fall of 1955 Mary Lou went to the Far East on a month long visit. She found the same adamant military attitude as on previous visits - keep the clubmobile program going. The commanders told her that they wanted more staff to step up the frequency of visits and to reach more remote sites. She was able to reassure them that the program would continue and that the latest recruitment efforts would bring 17 new staff members to Korea before Christmas.

Dorothy (Duf) Sherrard remembered that Christmas. She was at I Corps Arty, Camp Saint Barbara, the northernmost unit. She was the musician of the group and the day before Christmas had borrowed a small portable organ from the chaplain to take along on a run to an isolated outpost. Enroute the truck got mired down in a stream (the stream's ford was the regular route) and had to be pulled out by the military police. Reaching their destination, they put up decorations "scrounged from more affluent units". Duf wrote that they "sang lustily, and ended, as usual, with the breaking of a homemade pinata. In the mad scramble that ensued the mess hall became a melee of flying combat boots, fatigue hats, doughnuts and salt shakers. When the dust settled, up from the bottom emerged triumphantly the small Korean orphan the unit had adopted. He was clutching two very prized items - a poker deck and a corn cob pipe. We had no doubt that even at his tender age he was adept at the use of both."

At the end of the day all of the girls went to the officers' mess for dinner and were greeted by the general, wrote Duf, "with his usual nightly command, 'Come on, girls, warm up your backsides by the fire'." She played the organ in the chapel for Christmas eve services and remembered that "It had been a real Christmas and we all honestly had forgotten to be homesick."

1956 saw the end of the staff shortage and the 24th Division clubmobile unit had sufficient numbers to operate five clubmobiles a day and visit all of the military units on a weekly basis. The other clubmobile units were doing the same, and the ASCOM unit was now reaching out to more remote sites - some of them on off shore islands that the girls went to by ferry.

The girls, always concerned that they were not generating enough new ideas for programs, were always looking for suggestions from the GIs and from unit exchanges. A partial list of the programs done in 1956, however, belie lack of creativity. Subjects ranged from A as in aviation to Z as in zoos, and in between were programs on, among other things, cameras, cooking, dogs, frontier days, hunting, jazz, pioneers, presidents, the roaring twenties, science fiction, state fairs, television and Wall Street. Several of the Christmas programs had pinatas to end the activities. More than once, as Duf Sherrard had noted the year before, they turned into scrambling melees. At a 24th Division stop, the men went outside with the pinata and tossed it around like a volley ball until it broke over a ditch. A soldier who crawled out from under the sprawling bodies yelled, "Well, I broke my watch, but I got a YOYO!"

For the girls, one of the nicer things about 1955 and 1956 was having "mamma-sans" employed in the billets to do the laundry (some places by pounding and scrubbing in the streams) and to keep the rooms clean. Each billet had "house rules". Some of the girls were less tidy than others and the rules addressed keeping things in order as well as noting visiting hours and quiet hours. The house rules for the 24th Division unit were typical. The first rule was: "It is imperative that the sitting room be kept neat and orderly

at all times. Any article left out of place will be put in a box in the lower recesses of 'Calcutta' and may be claimed by the owner at such recess." There was no reference as to the location of "Calcutta". There were nine rules, and the last one stated that after retiring for the night "there would be NO whispering in the billet".

In Seoul the person who took care of the rooms and laundry for the supervisory staff was Mrs. Lee. She is part of the SRAO story because she was there at the beginning and there at the end. Mrs. Lee had worked for some of the 1950-52 club staff. One of them was Metzie Van Vechten, and when she returned to Korea in 1953 to direct SRAO Mrs. Lee found her again, and ever afterward worked as the housekeeper for the director of the service.

Mrs. Lee went about her duties with an unswerving singleness of purpose. She had her own ideas about how everything should be done. She decided how the clothing should be placed in drawers and closets and when to wash and when to clean. She decided how the furniture should be placed and where the knickknacks went. The rooms she worked in were her domain and her dignity, honesty and self-respect endeared her, year after year, to the SRAO supervisory staff.

Good natured and roly-poly, she wore little wire glasses for sewing on buttons and mending clothes. In later years when the supervisors lived in a small house on Yongsan Compound she did her ironing in front of the living room window so she could see the comings and goings in the street. With a few words of English, she did not hesitate to phone the director at the office during a business day to discuss a housekeeping matter she thought vitally important. For twenty years Mrs. Lee directed the household of whomever

directed SRAO in Korea. And the director, whoever she was through the years, followed Mrs. Lee's "house rules" just as the unit members did theirs.

During the course of their tours of duty the clubmobile girls were usually transferred between units at least once and often twice, depending upon staffing needs. The major reasons for transfers were to provide a good mix of talent, to spread the strengths around and to give new experiences to staff. There was also the matter of promotion. When a group departed at tour's end new unit heads and program directors were selected and often this was reason for transfer. The girls accepted the transfers as part of the job and most liked the idea of seeing different parts of the country, of having a different experience.

Some military commands came to think of the clubmobile staff members in their units as part of their "teams" and when word went out from the SRAO office in Seoul about a transfer it sometimes caused a real flap. More than once commanding generals phoned "Seoul" with stiff objections, knowing full well how SRAO operated. On one occasion a general called, to the embarrassment of the staff member, to try to block the transfer. After listening impatiently to the director explain the reasons for the move, he finally blurted out, "All right, I understand, but can she please stay until her birthday? We're having a surprise party for her."

In February 1957 fourteen new SRAO staff members arrived in Japan. At the time there was a monthly publication for Red Cross personnel in the Far East, sponsored by the headquarters staff council, called the Rice Bowl. It faithfully recorded staff activities and that month carried the following item: "February

started off with a bang, the first day bringing fourteen new SRAO girls to FEA. After a week of 'programming' in area office, they were off to Korea to add their talents to those of other clubmobilers."

Lois Beck, then SRAO director (the title had been changed from that of supervisor), flew to Tokyo for their orientation and gave them their assignments there so they could go straight to their units upon arrival in Korea. As with all military travel, they were manifested on a flight to Kimpo Air Field. The manifest preceded their arrival and the sergeant in charge, thinking the number fourteen a telex error, reported to the Seoul Red Cross office that four clubmobile girls were coming in. He remained unconvinced that the manifest was correct until transportation for the girls began to converge on the air field - trucks and jeeps and three small planes - to whisk them away to a new life.

In 1957 the Army divisions in Korea were converted from the old regimental segments to the U.S. Army's new pentomic mode which called for each division to have five battle groups. In June the change over began for the 7th Division. With reassignment and redesignation of all division elements, there were new units formed, old units relocated, some units increased in numbers and some decreased. If it had been programmed by a clubmobile unit, it would have been called "Fruit Basket Upset". The clubmobile run schedule, nurtured and refined over the past year, was wiped out. The unit leadership worked with the G-1 office to rebuilt a schedule that fit in with the training routines of the new and relocated units, but it was a frustrating and exasperating time. One day during the process the girls were told that a company they were to see had moved out. They double checked to be sure the information was correct and were told again that the men were gone. They cancelled the stop and a few

hours later the company commander came to their office wanting to know why they had not visited his area where 30 men had waited one hour for them.

The 24th Division was not scheduled for the change until the 7th Division was settled. When it came, it was more gradual and not so traumatic. The trauma for the 24th Division was that in the fall its colors were lowered and it merged with the arriving 1st Cavalry Division. It seemed an uneasy transition for the men to go from the allegiance of the 24th to that of the 1st Cav. At the request of the military, the clubmobile staff did a special program on the history of both divisions, highlighting the best traditions and the similarities of both, and took it "on the road" to all of the division's units. It was not usual to accept a command request to do a specific program, but in this case, it seemed justified in order to make the transition easier for the troops.

Not often, but once in a while, commands asked the clubmobile units to do programs on military topics. Unless there were unusual circumstances, as for the 24th Division, the answer was no. Staff felt, rightly, that it was up to the military to get their own training information across to the men, and that the hour with the clubmobile girls was for diversionary fun. When pressed by a commander to do a program with a military topic, one unit head gave the usual reply, citing the purpose of SRAO. This did not satisfy the commander, so she finally said, "Would you believe that we are following an old Korean proverb?" When the commander asked what it was, she replied, "Do not draw a sword to kill a mosquito." He did not make any requests again.

The birthday cards sent by the girls to individual soldiers now averaged about 5,000 each quarter. The cards were all made by hand and signed by all unit staff members. To make the job easier and less time consuming, silk screening equipment was installed in each unit and, with the help of Special Services craft personnel, the girls perfected this new skill. The units received a steady stream of notes and letters from GIs whose birthdays had been remembered. One wrote, "Thank you for the birthday card. I am going to carry it with me for the rest of my duty in Korea (56 days!). Good luck to you."

Another innovation in 1957 was "program progression". It was not new to staff, but neither had it been formalized throughout the units. Now each week was designated as a step in program planning - the first to present an idea at the weekly workshop, the second to produce a program format, the third to prepare the props and the fourth to have a "dry run". The progression was staggered among the staff so that each week every unit had a new program ready. Ideas for the programs often came from the men, as the girls gathered recommendations on their runs. Comedy and current events were most frequently suggested, with emphasis on contests and team competition. When the ASCOM clubmobile unit took a survey to get some ideas, the returns included comments by several men that they would like to see the girls in dresses instead of fatigues.

All in all, 1957 was a good year. Clubmobile staff made more than 14,000 program visits during the course of the year, and somebody figured out from the travel statistics that the miles covered to reach the military units were equivalent to four trips around the equator.

In 1958 it was time again to assess the need for continuing the club-mobile program, now going into its fourth year of operation. Red Cross concern was that the service did not duplicate military recreational activities. The most important consideration was the morale of the men, and there was no question of the SRAO contribution as it reached beyond, with its mobility, the fixed facilities of Special Services. But some of the military units served by SRAO were near the service clubs, and men in these areas had access to the craft and hobby shops, the libraries and theaters. The commanding officers argued that their men needed all the morale programs they could get. Korea was a forgotten place, only mentioned in the news when soldiers were killed in skirmishes along the DMZ. Nothing had really changed. It was still cold and dangerous and boring in the winter, and hot and dangerous and boring in the summer. The commanders said that having Red Cross girls come to visit once a week, even in areas where there were service clubs, did not duplicate anything. The result of the review was that the program would continue, at least into the next year or two.

In January I Corps Headquarters had completed a new women's billet for SRAO and Special Services staff. It was a permanent building with central heating, a tiled bathroom with a real bathtub, and a washing machine. 1st Cav had completed a new billet, too, with central heating and tiled floors. Each person had her own room, which to the girls was the best part.

The I Corps Artillery clubmobile unit had, in April 1958, scheduled weekly visits to the newly organized 4th Missile Command at Chunchon. The mountainous region between Arty Headquarters and Chunchon precluded driving and visits depended upon the availability of aircraft and good weather.

It was the beginning of regular use of aircraft by the clubmobile teams to the more isolated, long distance military units.

It was also in April that SRAO received a request from the 83rd Ordnance Battalion to visit three newly organized detachments in the vicinity of Pyong-Taek, about 80 miles south of Seoul. The men, about 300, had come from 7th Division where they had received clubmobile visits, and they wanted them at their new location. A schedule of visits was set up from ASCOM and the clubmobile teams, provided with helicopter transportation, flew to Pyong - Taek one day a week, weather permitting. They presented hour programs to the three detachments in the afternoon, stayed overnight, and flew back to ASCOM in the morning. While at Pyong-Taek, they stayed in the commanding general's tent, which he gladly, he said, vacated for their visit. The commanding officer of the helicopter unit which flew them to and from Pyong-Taek said he wanted clubmobile service for his men, too, and they were added to the ASCOM schedule.

Clubmobile service to 8th Army Signal Long Lines had been, up to now, taken care of through verbal requests whenever it was possible to work some of the units into the schedule. Now the 8th Army Signal Battalion sent a written request for visits to its scattered units, mostly south of Seoul. Some of them could be included on the ASCOM run to Pyong-Taek, but some were extremely isolated and took special planning to reach. One of them was at the peak of a mountain, 4,000 feet above sea level. It was reached by driving over a crude mountain road, and that only in good weather. Helicopters could land on the peak only when the weather and air currents were right. With these

conditions there could be no set schedule for visits, but efforts were made to get there as often as possible. On one such visit, Nancy Jones, then SRAO assistant director in Korea, accompanied the clubmobile team, she riding in a jeep, the backup vehicle, and the staff riding in a three-quarter.

She wrote about it afterward and her account was published in the Rice Bowl. She described the road as going almost straight up, with boulders that the vehicles climbed over, creeks they forded "up to their noses", and harrowing precipices. "I was clinging," she wrote, "to the side of the jeep and trying to determine which way to jump when, as it seemed inevitable, we turned over. The occupants of the clubmobile were taking it all in stride, casually leaning out the window snapping pictures. When I missed the sound of the clubmobile behind me and added an assortment of gray hairs waiting for the crash, it was only because the wild flowers had proved too tempting."

Nancy went on to describe the site: "Some 20 men are stationed there, surrounded by the most beautiful view in Korea, but with a life that is, to put it mildly, limited. They have movies and a slide projector, a radio and a record player, a ping pong table and muscle building equipment. Their food is excellent and their housing adequate. But what ain't they got? Not just dames, but anybody much besides themselves to talk to, or anything to make the time pass faster and give them something new to think about, anything to look forward to from week to week. It's this situation that makes us drive four hours up and the same down the mountain and be quite sure the trip is worthwhile."

A request for clubmobile visits also came from the 314th Air Division. The ASCOM clubmobile unit had, for some time, been making occasional visits to one of the air units on Paeng-yong-do, an island just south of the 38th parallel off the west coast. Now they added visits to Cheju-do, a large island off the southwest tip of Korea (which later became a popular tourist area for Koreans and Americans alike), Changgi-gap and Kangnung on the east coast and Sunchon on the south central coast. The frequency of visits depended upon air transportation provided by the 314th, usually in connection with supply runs.

The year 1958 was one of severe drought in Korea, with an exceptionally hot summer, intolerable dust on the roads and a water shortage that resulted in rationing on the military compounds. In spite of this, particularly the dust which caused considerable discomfort to the clubmobile travelers, health was generally good. The worst that happened was when a mini-accident sent a clubmobile truck into a rice paddy and Myra Halpin, trying to extricate herself, fell face down in the paddy mud. It was a horrifying experience, considering the method used to fertilize the fields, and the aftermath was infection in her mouth and eyes and on her hands and feet which held on for weeks and weeks and finally took treatment in a military hospital in Japan to clear up.

There could be many vignettes written about the help and support SRAO received from other Red Cross services in the Far East. The offices of SMH and SMI, and their individual workers in the field, and the area office support services are not forgotten. The Far East operations were headed by Truman Solverud at that time. He served as director of operations from 1955 through 1958, and before that as the deputy director, and had seen the SRAO program operating from the beginning. He had supported and sustained it when there

were lows and recognized and applauded it when there were highs. As the top American Red Cross official in the Far East, "Solly" was an able administrator. But to the SRAO staff who passed through Far Eastern Area Headquarters those first five years he is remembered as a caring person who greeted them personally when they returned to Japan on R&R, who chatted with them, who bolstered their morale. And he was never nonplussed. One day he asked a tired, unsmiling, rumpled clubmobile worker, finally taking her first R&R after several grueling months, how she was. He did not so much as blink an eye when she replied, "I'm O.K., but my hemorrhoids are killing me."

In February 1959 Barbara Mace was one of the new arrivals. She remembered it this way: "Donna (Fearing), Helena (Paro) and I were assigned together and were flown into 1st Cav by a small plane. At the time of our arrival 1st Cav was in a state of practice alert and we were met by our supervisor and a couple of servicemen who were armed. We were taken to the evacuation site where we stayed for several hours until the alert was called off. I found it difficult to comprehend exactly what was going on, especially seeing my fellow workers dressed in GI issue with alert gear (including gas masks). I really wondered what I had gotten myself into."

Barbara and the other girls soon had their own issue of army clothing, and she recalled meeting a GI just recently arrived in Korea who told her he was upset with the clubmobile girls because when he received his clothing issue the zipper on the pants was on the side instead of in the front.

1959 was the year of hula hoops and flying saucers(frisbees), both put to use in programs of stunts and skills. Two staff members discovered them while on R&R in Japan and took samples back to Korea. They were a huge success and,

with more shipped from Japan, were used immediately in all kinds of programs, one of them called, "Scientific Phenomona".

There had been from the beginning of the program "romances" that culminated in many marriages. The concern of the service was not that normal American boys and girls were meeting, becoming engaged and going home to be married. The concern was that they sometimes went home at the same time - the fiancé rotating at the end of his tour of duty, the fiancée resigning prior to the completion of her tour. The concern was reasonable, considering the investment Red Cross had in trained staff, and early departure for marriage was not condoned. But it was a fact of life in the program. Early departure for a wedding did not diminish the hard work these girls did while in Korea. And afterward many, as military wives, were deep into Red Cross volunteer work.

Another fact of life in this military setting, where wives and families could not come, was the married man who said he was not married. Or said, yes, he was married but his wife did not understand him and he was getting a divorce. His lying did not matter much in a casual friendship, but sometimes a serious attachment developed and this was of much concern to the SRAO workers. The first thing was to try to protect the staff member from a situation that could end in personal disaster. There were ways to find out if a man was married, and one of them was through the field director who could check on the man's status.

The second thing was that the Red Cross did not relish, at a time when the double standard was a "given", the idea of a female staff member being accused of "homebreaking" or being "the other woman" by the wife back in the states.

The SRAO supervisory stand on the matter was that staff were not knowingly to date married men. In the summer of 1959 there was an all staff meeting in Seoul and the subject was on the agenda for discussion. In the minutes of the meeting it is recorded that Gladys Tibbot, then SRAO director, cautioned staff about the hazards of becoming seriously involved with a married man and stated the policy that would apply in the future: "When such a situation comes to the attention of the supervisory staff, it will be discussed with the staff member. If she feels that the relationship cannot be broken off if she remains in the unit, a transfer will be arranged to facilitate such action. If this does not prove to be effective, the staff member will be asked to resign - for her protection and that of the organization." It was further recorded in the minutes that this was accepted by the total SRAO staff present.

In the social climate of the 80s, this seems harsh. But the staff very much wanted to keep a good Red Cross image and, beside that, they hated for anyone among them to be duped and were quite capable of "fixing" things themselves. One staff member, whose relationship became serious to the point of a proposed engagement, found out the man was married, swore the entire club-mobile unit to secrecy, played out her role right to the moment of his departure and then struck. When he reached to embrace her for the last time until their "pre-nuptial" reunion in the states she said, "Don't forget to put on your wedding ring before you meet your wife."

Red Cross workers, like Department of Army Civilians (DACs), were assigned grade equivalencies by the military to conform to travel and billet regulations. These ratings were arbitrarily equated by the military as being of officer rank. Red Cross staff were expected, and in some locations required, to eat in the officers' messes and to participate in the officers' clubs social activities.

In the circumscribed military environment of Korea, the SRAO girls had little or no choice in the matter. As members of the military community they joined in club activities and, for the most part, socialized with officers.

There was little socializing with enlisted men. They had no access to transportation and evening activities with them were company parties with special transportation "laid on" to take the girls, as a group, to and from the company areas. While this arrangement also pertained to parties at most officers' clubs, they were far more frequent and transportation much easier to come by. Criticism fell on the SRAO girls for socializing with officers, but the fact of the matter was that they had little latitude to do otherwise.

From the SRAO staff viewpoint there were embarrassments connected with this that, as civilians with the military, they had to learn to live with. Barbara Mace described one such embarrassment: "At 1st Cav we were required to attend parties at officers' clubs quite frequently. I particularly remember programming at one base during the day and that evening going back to attend a party at the officers' club. One of the GIs whom I had talked to during the day had been assigned the duty of meeting the vehicles, opening the doors and helping us out." It was, Barbara recalled (the lack of social association with the enlisted men), the one negative she heard from the GIs.

The GIs no doubt thought that "a good time was had by all" at such parties. After a while some of them were downright boring, especially if the girls had to cancel or change plans in order to attend. One narrative report of this time noted the large number of social functions the girls were expected to attend

with the comment, "Too many parties become old hat and lose their charm over the long haul." Nevertheless, it was part of the military scene.

The marvel of it all was that, with all that attention, the SRAO staff members were, for the most part, level headed and never let go of the idea that this was not, after all, the "real world". The attention lavished on them was pretty much taken in stride. One returnee wrote a reminder to those going home: "Just because you get the 'glad eye' only six times a day instead of six hundred, don't let it get you down."

Although there were many improvements in living and working conditions through the first six years, one thing remained constant - the bouncing travel in three-quarters over the same rugged roads, going up and down and around. Eva Garvin, there in the winter of 1959-60, remembered going up a mountain road that was so steep the program props fell out of the back of the truck.

Eva recorded some stories about her year there, one of which she titled "London Bridge - Korea Style". She and her partner had been given a map showing how to get to a company on maneuvers, and bundled up against the cold, with trays of doughnuts, they started out.

Her story: "We ride and ride, past the 38th parallel, right on up and finally come to a long bridge. Some Korean soldiers stop us. We try to tell them, by showing our Red Cross patches, that it is perfectly all right for us to cross the bridge. One of the Korean soldiers shakes his head in wonderment and then slowly moves aside the barricade. Rumble, rumble, rumble, we cross the bridge, only to go about a mile and a half when we are halted by more Korean soldiers who rush to the windows and poke their guns right in our faces.

We show them our patches, the sign on our truck and our map. To no avail. They are tough little guys and they are not going to let us go anywhere, no matter what kind of patches we have on. While one keeps his gun on our driver, another tells us to turn around - and now. We try to make friends. We give them our lunch which consists of two oranges. They thank us but the guns are still on us. We are sure from our map that the company of soldiers is just over the next hill - if they'd just let us go. More soldiers come and motion for us to turn around. All has failed. You can't fight this city hall group. Like good Red Cross workers, we obey. We take our map and start to leave. We wave goodbye. One of the soldiers waves the oranges. Oh well, we have lots of doughnuts.

"Back to the bridge. Again we're stopped. This soldier is really angry with us for some unknown reason. He finally moves the road block and we go back across the bridge. We get off the bridge and to my right I see a familiar sign - one that is on the map - we did go too far - this must be the road. Many dusty, bumpy miles later we come to the encampment of men. Hooray. All is not lost. We talk to the captain and tell him of our travels and his not-so-easy-to-read map. The sergeant laughs and the story comes out. The bridge is slowly falling down, and no one, but no one, is allowed to travel over said bridge, Korean or American, because it is unsafe. It is a leftover from the conflict. And the guys who received our lunch were just trying to keep us from being lunch for the Red enemy. We found out that we were right at the line. We were trying to get across the line. South Korea, North Korea. Just another day on the road."

The news from Korea in 1960 was about the end of Syngman Rhee's government. President of the Republic of Korea since its inception in 1948, Rhee had been elected in 1952 and reelected in 1956 under growing clouds of corruption. Now, at the age of 85, he was elected again. His government was charged with election rigging and the country was thrown into turmoil. Student demonstrations in Seoul turned into riots and the police fired into the crowds, killing over 100 and wounding some 1,000. An uneasy calm was restored when ROK Army troops moved into the city and martial law declared. Rhee agreed to resign and leave the country (his Elba was the brand-new state of Hawaii). New elections were held, but early in the next year a coup by a military junta installed General Park Chung Hee as the head of the government.

During this upheaval the Americans were restricted and there were alerts and "readiness" activities, but minimal disruption of military training schedules. What was happening, however, was history in the making. Park's rise to power was to bring the beginning of real economic growth to South Korea. While his government, as Rhee's, bore little resemblance to American democracy - he did not relinquish his military role until 1963, nor thereafter hesitate to invoke martial law or declare it a crime to criticize the government - the Republic of Korea under his leadership tripled its gross national product in the next ten years. Among his proposed projects was one to criss-cross the country with decent roads so that farmers could more easily get their produce to city markets. It was a plan of some interest to the clubmobile staff who spent half their working lives on the roads.

By 1960 the ASCOM clubmobile unit had become the "travel" unit. As staffing allowed, more and more signal long line sites had been added to the southerly run until it reached all the way to Pusan. A two week travel run was set for locations in and around Kunsan, Taejon, Taegu and Pusan. In March the run operation was set and the report of it read: "Two staff members travel by air to Kunsan for their usual stops on Thursday and Friday morning, and on Friday afternoon they fly to Pusan. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday they operate out of Pusan, traveling by jeep, three-quarter or helicopter to serve the signal sites in that area. On Thursday they fly to Taegu and follow a similar plan, staying there until the following Tuesday. They then fly to Taejon, fulfilling their schedule there, and return to ASCOM Wednesday afternoon, ready to report on their mission to the two girls who are assigned to begin the run on the following day." The constant travel made it a long and tiring run, and after a few months it was revised so that a team was gone from the unit only one week at a time. With the growing number of military units in the south, the supervisory staff now were exploring the possibility of establishing a sixth clubmobile unit at Taegu.

Amber (Cindy) Oliphant was a new arrival that spring and remembered her first program stop "at a tank outfit so large we had to use a mike, and when I stood up to introduce myself I was so scared that I couldn't remember my name." Her apprehension did not last long and later she wrote of her experience: "If one didn't grow and develop in the SRAO program it wasn't because of lack of training or support.... creating the programs and putting them on were great confidence builders, both for the moment and for future life. My life

was greatly influenced (in) basic ways such as getting along with others, learning to work and pull together, being free to make decisions, learning to stand up for what you believe.... and daring to be different." A couple of Cindy's experiences, incidental to her job, but not forgotten, were not so happy. Bitten by a puppy, she had to have the excruciating series of rabies shots. She broke her leg trying to learn Judo so she could defend herself, if necessary, against the "village girls" who always assumed that the "other girls" from America were there for the same purpose as they. More than once they tried to stone and kick the Red Cross girls as they walked on the village streets.

In the summer of 1960 the 7th Division clubmobile staff decided to conduct an opinion survey to find out what the men thought about the clubmobile visits and to get suggestions for improving their recreation programs. The survey, which they distributed at each program stop, had four questions:

- Do you enjoy visits from the Red Cross girls every week?
- Would you enjoy the girls' visits if they didn't bring doughnuts?
- Do you enjoy the programs?
- What type of programs would you like to see them bring?

They received responses from 3,600 men, which was about 80 percent of the attendance. The response was so large that the returns were sent to national headquarters for compiling by the Office of Research Information. Ninety-five percent of the responses were favorable.

The men wrote that they enjoyed the clubmobile visits because they helped them from becoming homesick, took their minds off army life and reminded them

of the girl friends and wives they left at home. About the doughnuts, the majority wrote that since the girls were coming anyway, they might as well bring along the doughnuts. One soldier wrote, "If the Dollies didn't bring donuts they wouldn't be Dollies." They wrote that they enjoyed the programs because they made them laugh and relieved tension. Some of them wrote that the games were "silly" but that was all right because they were "fun", too. A soldier wrote, "They make me forget I am in Korea." Their suggestions for the types of programs reinforced that group contests and competitive games were the most popular. Several wrote, "Leave out anything about the army."

It was not an official survey and it tapped only one segment of the men served, but the soldiers' comments so closely reflected the objectives of the service that it made everyone feel good. Sara Tyndall, then a member of the 7th Division clubmobile unit, kept a copy for herself and referred to it as she reminisced: "The most frequent answers were that we were a bit of home they could see and talk to once a week."

In the fall of 1960 one of the periodic all staff meetings was held. There was always for these meeting a staff agenda committee to plan the sessions, and this time an army pyschiatrist was invited to speak. It was important to staff to understand as well as possible the situation of the servicemen. The girls were in Korea because they wanted to be there and many of the GIs did not understand that at all. They were there at no choice of their own and their situation could not be changed, only made more palatable by military and Red Cross morale programs.

The military tour had been reduced from 16 months to 13 months which lessened some tensions, but boredom grew out of being there "just in case" and the countdown, day by day, started for the GIs immediately upon arrival. But it was not just the boredom. The girls knew that the enlisted men, their identities submerged in the military organization, needed the tie with home and family that their presence could provide. There was not one among them who had not been told she looked like a girl friend, a wife, a sister and, yes, even a mother or an aunt ("We didn't look like anybody in their photos," wrote one staff member, "but they thought we did and that's what counted."). The psychiatrist told them they were the "symbol" of the women back home, and that theirs was one of the few pleasant contacts the GIs had.

Toward the end of the year a new clubmobile unit opened at Camp Henry in Taegu, relieving the ASCOM staff from the long travel runs. The Taegu unit picked up the visits to military units from Taejon to Pusan and immediately received more requests from isolated units, including Nike sites that were just in the process of being activated.

By December 1960 the six clubmobile units were reaching 360 military locations with weekly visits.

KOREA

1961 - 1967

"Sometimes we'd arrive, by any mode of transportation known to mankind, to find the mess hall full of GIs, already divided into teams for the program, napkins in hand to receive their doughnuts, and with eager enthusiasm. I can remember one incident where the program did not have a game, so we made one up on the spot to satisfy the competitive spirit. Then there were times you'd drive forever, arrive at an isolated compound and find four GIs who showed up after several announcements. A true test of our abilities was to make it the best program ever, and find the next week more show up."

-Recollection from Penny Patston

As the ninth year of SRAO operations began there were still more requests for visits coming from Air Force as well as Army units. They were mainly from locations to the south where the Air Defense Command was developing new sites and the Army continuing strategic redeployment. These locations were, for the most part, in hard to reach places.

The situation presented to SRAO now was whether to pick up these additional sites or call a halt to expanding. Early in the program, the situation was fairly simple - it was to get to all of the military units in divisions and corps in well defined command areas. With military redeployment, clubmobile service increased to widely scattered and remote locations and the travel time became longer and longer - like the four hours to get to a mountain peak. There was a question of limit.

Schedule commitments were utilizing staff time to the maximum. The wear and tear on staff (to say nothing of the vehicles) seemed at the maximum, too, and this had to be evaluated before more military units were added.

It was in this operational climate that Mary Lou made a field trip to Korea in the summer of 1961. Her trip coincided with the military takeover of the government. She reported it was business as usual for the Americans, and that her schedule was not disrupted. She was struck by the emptiness in the streets of Seoul, the result of martial law. Driving across the city without having to slow down seemed unnatural. From previous visits she remembered the streets jammed with every kind of vehicle imaginable. She spent the next three weeks meeting military commanders, talking with GIs and observing the clubmobile teams in action.

The collective response from commanders to her questions about how to make the program more effective was to expand the service. Since it was unlikely that Red Cross would consider increasing the number of staff, the answer lay in redoing the schedules. There were visits all clubmobile units made that were "non-program". Some of these visits were to men on field maneuvers, and these would continue. But others were "courtesy calls" (dropping off doughnuts and chatting in offices) and "lunch stops" (playing record requests and serving in mess lines) and these could be eliminated with no effect on the overall program. Without these non-essential stops staff could gain time to meet new requests for program visits. One stipulation the service made in accepting requests from far away, remote sites was that air support be provided whenever possible to reduce travel time.

In Mary Lou's travels, she talked with the first sergeants as well as the commanders and enlisted men. One of the sergeants said to her, "The men are very young, too young to be in Korea, and it's real important for them to see and talk with American girls."

One of the changes now taking place in Korea was that more and more families were coming with officers and NCOs stationed at 8th Army Headquarters in Seoul and at Taegu and Pusan Area Commands. This meant a semblance of normality in these areas, including commissaries and post exchanges with women's and children's clothes, and schools and teachers and civilian cars. It also meant volunteers for Red Cross activities in military hospitals and at field offices in Seoul and to the south. The SRAO office in Seoul had a small contingent of volunteer staff aides who helped with administrative duties. Some were bi-lingual Korean wives who were put to work translating program activities for KATUSA participation.

There are many stories among SRAOers that have been repeated down through the years, the lost portion usually being the identities of the persons to whom they happened. They were stories that started out, "Did you hear the one about the caboose...", or "...about the two girls who were riding down the road when...". Among the stories was one about the two girls who, on a bitter cold day, stopped in an orderly room to get warm, stood next to the space heater and when they stepped back found that their pants were burned off where the creases had been. And then there was the one about the two girls on R&R in Kyoto during the filming of "Sayonara". They were slim and attractive and wearing dark glasses and, spotted by a group of Japanese teenagers, were asked for their autographs which they gave without a moment's hesitation. There was one about the girl who rode in a bubble helicopter wearing her summer uniform dress. When she reached her destination and was helped down her dress caught on the steering stick and remained in the plane while she came out. And there was

the invention of a "staff member" named Sally Beasley. Sally acted as social secretary, taking lots of telephone calls nobody else wanted and transferred around a lot and finally went to Vietnam to help out there.

Whether or not the stories were embellished as they were passed along makes no difference. They were then, and are now, fun to tell. There was another story that everyone knew. In Billie McCann's reminiscences of the events of 1961, she remembered it because she was a witness. She told it like this: "I will never forget when we went to pick up a girl transferring to our unit from somewhere near Seoul. I went in a three-quarter ton truck with the driver and it was raining cats and dogs. She hated leaving her old unit and was uneasy because she didn't know what she was getting into. As we drove along the road it was getting dark and she finally turned to the driver and said, 'I have to stop and go to the bathroom.' So we stopped and the driver took a walk while she went off into a field with her poncho protecting her from the rain. She found a spot among some bushes, got her belt undone and pulled her pants down to her combat boots. Of course, she was covered up with her poncho. Much to her amazement, all the bushes that she had selected to squat by got up and walked away. They were Korean soldiers in camouflage."

Among staff members who arrived in Korea in March 1962 were Sue Lewis and Lynn Petrillo. They were assigned to ASCOM and after about a month of traveling with "old" staff went together as a team on the Kunsan run. Sue wrote home about: "On Monday Lynn and I left from Kimpo at 1300 (that's 1 p.m.), complete with 2,000 doughnuts, our clothes and program materials, and dressed in OGs, combat boots and parachutes - the whole works. We flew down in an L-20, a four seater. There were two other passengers and 450 pounds of mail.

I really didn't think the plane was going to make it off the ground. We flew to Osan Air Base and landed for a few minutes at which time some Air Force brass boarded the plane and I got bumped. Lynn went on and I stayed in Osan two hours (me and 2,000 men who hadn't seen too many American girls) and finally caught a DC-4 to Kunsan.

"Tuesday morning we started out at 0800 and programmed until 1730 (that's 5:30 p.m.) - steadily, seeing about 500 men. Honestly, by the time we got in at night we were exhausted, beat, and would have had to be better to die! Wednesday we had three stops in the morning and were supposed to catch the mail flight to Kimpo at 1200. But this particular morning there was no mail flight, so we hopped a C-54 to Osan and were frantically running around trying to get transportation when I happened to see a chopper pilot I knew. But that day his chopper was a bubble (only holds two people). It just so happened that there was an H-21 (the one that looks like a banana) on the way to ASCOM so they radioed it to stop and pick us up, which it did. By this time base operations was at a standstill - everyone just stopped work and watched. Arrived back at ASCOM to learn that I was schedule to go back to Kunsan the very next week."

There was now more movement of military units to the south, under the umbrella of the 7th Logistical Command. The critical need for space at Camp Henry in Taegu led the military command there to decide that certain units should move to Pusan, the Red Cross field office and clubmobile unit among them. Facilities for office space and billets were readily available at Pusan's Hialeah Compound, but it meant that the clubmobile staff would have to spend as much as five or six more travel hours each week to cover the Taejon area.

The move of the unit was made in May and the girls revised their run schedules and took the increased travel time in stride.

In the fall of 1962 the red jackets came out. They were authorized as uniform wear with the blue skirt at a time when OGs were mainly worn in bad weather and for air travel. In the clubmobile offices and on local runs the girls were able to wear the blue skirt with white blouse and blue cardigan sweater in the winter months and blue dresses in the summer instead of army fatigues. Now the red jackets replaced the sweaters and staff loved them. They were wool and short waist length with ribbed cuffs. Their bright color was cheery and seemed to pep everyone up, and the girls started calling themselves the "Red Coats".

One of the best Christmas programs that year was "Christmas is Everywhere" with hand illustrated flipboards portraying Christmas traditions, history and legends. Letters were sent to mess sergeants offering to help decorate the mess halls. One clubmobile unit made angels of foil, tinsel, net and glitter and gave one to each company for the top of the Christmas tree. Staff silk screened hundreds of Christmas cards to send to the military units. After their own daily schedule of programming, the Red Cross girls joined the Special Services girls in evening programs in the clubs and in Christmas caroling. They sang in the chapel Christmas choirs, ate Christmas dinner in the enlisted messes, accompanied commanders on Christmas day to visit the DMZ outposts, missile and signal sites and participated in military sponsored parties for orphans. When all this was done they attended social parties at enlisted, NCO and officers' clubs. Some of the staff members, especially those who arrived

in Korea near the holidays, voiced the fear that they would get homesick. But there simply was not time to think about it, and being with the servicemen who were really homesick made them double their efforts to be cheerful.

Sue Lewis, who was then at 7th Division, wrote home: "Christmas Eve several of us went to church and then to coffee call at one of the service clubs. Then we came back to the billet, built a fire, made coffee, and sang carols until 4 a.m.!"

Letters and notes of appreciation came to the girls all year round, but were especially meaningful when they came during the holidays when staff worked so hard. That Christmas one came to the ASCOM unit from the 4th Missile Battalion of the 44th Artillery: "Your success is measured by the continued high morale of the organizations that you serve. As we begin the New Year please accept our resolution to support you in all ways possible to insure that the impact of your excellent services can be felt by all units of this command. Please call on us anytime."

In 1963 the U.S. Army changed division configurations again. This time the reorganization was from the five (pentomic) battle groups to brigades. Each division converted to three brigades plus division artillery. The clubmobile schedules had to be revamped for the 7th and 1st Cav Divisions, but this time there were mostly name changes and little movement, and there was no disruption of service.

The Pusan clubmobile unit had been operating for a little more than a year when a command change of the 7th Logistical Command prompted discussion about

moving the unit back to Taegu. The reasons given were that it would be, at Camp Henry, in a more central location and result in fewer travel hours (which had been the Red Cross reasons for not wanting to move from Taegu in the first place). While it was the desirable thing to do, there was some reluctance on the part of SRAO because everything was fine in Pusan. There was excellent logistical support from the command, a newly renovated office/workshop, and fine relations with the military community. Through the field director the clubmobile unit had volunteer staff aides in the office. Two of the girls, Red Cross water safety instructors, were teaching swimming classes for dependent children, and all were enjoying the social activities as well as the work atmosphere. But the more advantageous location of Taegu sent the field office and the clubmobile unit back to Camp Henry in October 1963.

In mid-November a new class of ten arrived to get settled in before Thanksgiving. A few days later came the news, early in the morning, of the assassination of President Kennedy. Pat Toombs, like every American the world over, remembered the moment: "I will never forget waking up in my billet at ASCOM to the news on Armed Forces Radio, nor the period of grief and mourning that followed."

As has since been written of this time of tragedy, it seemed, in retrospect, to be the beginning of the end of the "bear any burden" era which would play itself out in Southeast Asia within the next five years.

As 1964 began there were enough U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam to heighten military concern about increasing morale services there. Some

officers and NCOs had transferred from Korea and others were being sent on temporary duty as technical advisors. The events there, now leading to the U.S. Forces build up, were not without impact on the military situation in Korea.

Military flights were now coming from Travis Air Force Base direct to Kimpo and when plans were set for returning personnel by the same route, Red Cross staff were included. This was all right for those who were in a hurry to get home, but there were some who looked forward to that last stop-over in Japan - for one last spurt of shopping - and this could be done with an authorized "delay enroute" in the travel orders. Most of the SRAO staff chose to do this. Some chose, on completion of tour, to resign in the Far East and travel commercially around the world. Pat Toombs was one of them. She wrote, "I arrived in Korea in November 1962. I loved the job MOST of the time and came to respect and admire Red Cross enormously. We really were in the forefront in offering fascinating, interesting careers to women, or perhaps starting points for careers and, certainly, adventure. I left Korea in 1964 to embark on my trek home. I sailed past the Statue of Liberty in June 1965. I had been around the world..."

For some years the ASCOM clubmobile unit had been making scheduled visits to the military units around Pyong-Taek, about 80 miles to the south. There had continued to be military redeployment to this area and it became a district command with headquarters at Camp Humphreys. The travel run from ASCOM provided, most of the time, for bi-weekly visits. The trips by vehicle were long and grueling, and air transportation still infrequent. The commanding officer

at Camp Humphreys proposed to 8th Army and to Quinn Smith, then the SRAO director, establishing a clubmobile unit there so that the military units could have regular weekly visits and more of the isolated sites in the mountains could be included. Toward the end of the year it was decided and a clubmobile unit opened there in January 1965.

Transportation for the Camp Humphreys unit included, in addition to trucks and jeeps and planes, the ancient steam trains that chugged along from town to town. This was one way to reach the more remote sites. When they got to a small station, the nearest to the site, the girls were picked up by army truck to get the rest of the way. This made for long, uncomfortable days of travel that often required staff to be at the local train station at 7 in the morning, with the day ending back at Camp Humphreys at 6 or 7 in the evening.

With this kind of schedule, the staff had four runs a day four days a week. Friday was "office day". It started at 8 a.m. with an hour program workshop, then at 9 a.m. there was "program coffee call". The men from the nearby headquarters companies who did not have clubmobile visits were invited to have coffee and doughnuts and be "critics" at the presentation of a new program being readied for the road. The men took their roles seriously, making comments and suggestions to help staff make last minute changes for program improvement. Then the staff attended to administrative matters and after lunch spent the remainder of the day working on new programs - gathering resources, writing formats, making props. All units followed this same pattern for the office work day.

In March 1965 in Korea the 1st Cavalry Division colors were replaced by those of the 2nd Division. The change did not affect the clubmobile schedules, but there were command changes and the girls decided to have an "open house" at their office at Camp Pelham. Other units also did this from time to time and it was a good way to interpret the service to newly arrived commanders and 1st sergeants. The highlight of the evening was presentation of a program in which all participated, including the commanding general and the division sergeant-major. One of the bakers demonstrated the doughnut machine operation, thus producing instant refreshments.

In March 1965 in South Vietnam the first ground troops, elements of the 3rd Marine Division, landed at Danang. The Red Cross SMI people were already on the job, SMH was gearing up, and within a matter of days a request came from the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MAC-V) to George Hand, then director of operations for Red Cross in the Far East, for a recreational program, similar to SRAO in Korea.

George cabled this news to national headquarters, recommending that Quinn Smith be sent to Vietnam to make a survey. She was completing 18 months in Korea as SRAO director and was the logical person in the Far East to assess the situation. She flew to Vietnam on April 12th and reported back that a clubmobile operation was feasible.

Quinn, her work in Korea done and her survey in Vietnam accomplished, flew home in May (she would, within weeks, return to Vietnam, this time as director of SRAO operations there).

Quinn's replacement was Gladys Tibbot, returning to Korea for a second tour as the SRAO director. Gladys immediately renewed her professional and personal contacts with the Korean Red Cross. At the time the Korean Red Cross was in the process of opening day care centers in Seoul and Taegu for children of working mothers - to meet a need that was growing out of the industrial boom as more and more women were taking jobs outside their homes. It was a pilot program that became highly successful and eventually led to government backing so that it could be expanded.

Gladys visited the day care center in Seoul and two staff members from the Taegu clubmobile unit represented the American Red Cross at the opening of the center there. The SRAO staff took special interest in the centers to which they periodically donated equipment purchased through personal contributions. They also sponsored Christmas parties for the children. Each year one of the field directors was pressed into service as Santa, complete with a bag of gifts. One year one of the field directors called to volunteer. When he was young, he said, and sort of on his "uppers", he had taken a job as a department store Santa and figured he was the best qualified person around.

For years the SRAO office in Seoul had no transportation of its own. Staff were able to "borrow" the SMI field office staff car from time to time, but trips to the units were often made by traveling on military buses that ran to and from the outlying commands and Seoul. In the early 60s a 1958 Chevrolet had been "willed" to the SRAO office, somewhat worse for the wear. Finally, in 1965 a brand new staff car was assigned to the office.

The Korean who was employed to drive this new car was Kim Chol Yong. He had been working at various jobs for the Red Cross offices in Seoul since 1958 and his appointment as the driver of the SRAO vehicle was a happy one that would last to the end of the program. Gladys called him "Charles", partly because it was close to the name of Chol and partly because there were two other Kims working in the Seoul Red Cross offices. To overcome confusion, she called the Mr. Kim who ran the small warehouse operation attached to the office "Mr. Kim Warehouse", and the Mr. Kim who drove the SMI staff car "Mr. Kim Driver". They were older men and this seemed proper. Charles was a young man and was pleased with his American name. He had a calm and cheerful disposition, the patience of Job, an enormous amount of common sense and was an excellent driver. During the years of his employment he married and had three sons, and he and his family came to be as endeared by staff as was Mrs. Lee. His only drawback, strictly from an occidental point of view, was the odor he sometimes exuded in an enclosed car after eating winter kimchi. Gladys and her successors kept a supply of Life Savers in the glove compartment for such occasions.

In June 1965 the SRAO program in Vietnam was set in motion. By now the U.S. military build up there was significantly affecting the Americans in Korea. The clubmobile staff, seeing more and more military transfers to the war, decided to put together a program about Southeast Asia. Not about hostilities there, but about the countries and the people.

With attrition and slow recruitment in the early part of 1965, SRAO personnel strength had fallen from the desirable level of 48 to 37 by the end of June. The goal of the summer and fall recruitment was to raise it

to 48 again and to add ten more staff members in order to allow for some transfers to Vietnam. The plan that was evolving for staffing the Vietnam program included giving new recruits some training in Korea and asking those already there about their interest in transferring. By the end of September the recruitment goal had been met, training classes completed, and 58 staff members were present in Korea.

Mary Lou returned to Korea for a field visit in November 1965. As before, she asked that a survey be made to help evaluate the effectiveness of the program, now in its twelfth year. She asked for written responses to her questions and some replies went far beyond addressing the usefulness of programming, which all commands unanimously endorsed. The response from 7th Division included this paragraph: "During the month of July the 7th Division area suffered from heavy rains and floods. Throughout the division men worked feverishly to save military installations and entire towns from being inundated. Civilians were displaced and sought shelter in military compounds and injuries to civilians and military were high. Facilities, so commonplace to us, such as water and electricity, failed. While the men worked around the clock, the women of the clubmobile system were in action making coffee and doughnuts available and assisting in the settlement of displaced civilians. Some even assisted medical personnel in rendering treatment to the injured."

At year's end Gladys, in her report, noted that during Mary Lou's visit another attempt was made to urge unit personnel and military commands "to strike 'Donut Dollie' from their respective vocabularies as it could hinder the stateside recruitment of qualified personnel. Sad, but true, the first release to appear following this effort announced the appointment of a new 'Head Donut Dollie' at I Corps Headquarters."

In the last months of 1965 and into the early months of 1966 the first clubmobile units in Vietnam were staffed by transfers from Korea and Europe, and by the return to SRAO of girls who had earlier served in the Korea program. But by mid-1966 the U.S. troop build up in Vietnam was such that there had to be recruitment for direct assignment to the program there, without the luxury of training time in Korea. The classes in Washington became larger and larger. In October 1966 there was a training class of 36. Twenty-two were recruited for Vietnam and 14 for Korea.

For Korea this meant a turnover of almost a third of the total staff. These "turnovers", plus the inevitable transfers, sometimes changed clubmobile unit rosters completely in a matter of two or three months. Penny Patston remembered such changes this way: "With the loss and addition of staff members, the entire tempo of a unit could change overnight. Considering the diversity, it was amazing the harmony that existed. I still feel very close to and keep in touch with girls I lived and worked with for just a few short months. On the whole, the calibre (of staff) was extremely high. Their diverse backgrounds, talents and interests brought a great deal of spunk and sparkle to each unit."

Early in 1967 Mary Lou returned for a field trip following a visit to Vietnam. It ended in Japan at Far Eastern Area Headquarters where the supervisory staffs from Korea and Vietnam joined her for a final session on operations.

It had been discovered a short time before Mary Lou's visit that Gladys Tibbot had cancer. She underwent a mastectomy from which she appeared to recover. But soon after her return to Korea from the Japan meeting another examination revealed more cancer and she was medically returned to the states

for therapy. Within a year she had died. It was a loss keenly felt. Her enthusiasm for the work of the staff, her support and compassion in their problem times, her empathy with the overseas servicemen, her interest in the people in the lands where she had worked - to all of this she had brought a kind of specialness.

It had been decided in the summer of 1967 not to plan further for any significant number of transfers from Korea to Vietnam. The overall military emphasis on Vietnam was affecting morale in Korea. There was never a time since the end of the Korean War that soldiers stationed there "just in case" did not feel forgotten. And there was not a year that went by without men being killed in a DMZ or air "incident". Now, with the focus on the Vietnam War, with the growing pinch on personnel, supplies, equipment and aircraft, there was a general feeling on the part of military and civilians alike that theirs were "secondary" jobs. The clubmobile staff felt it, particularly when transfers to Vietnam made their units temporarily short staffed. But far worse, the young men in the isolated places - at the DMZ outposts, on the mountain tops, at the missile sites - were, they told themselves, abandoned.

The command in Korea was very much aware of this attitude. The 8th Army G-1 had told Mary Lou when she was there that "morale needs of the servicemen in Korea are as great, if not greater, than last year." One of the ways the Red Cross could help was not to stint in the staffing of services in Korea. And it didn't. As for SRAO, personnel strength for the latter half of the year was kept at or above the normal complement of staff so that all commitments could be met.

When they were able and regular schedules allowed, clubmobile staff took on what they called "extension activities". One such activity occurred for the Camp Saint Barbara staff in September. It was recorded by Jenny Rose. It was a Friday afternoon and they were working in their office when a captain from the 6th ROK Army came by and asked if they would come with him to present a program to a group of Korean soldiers.

"Hoping for the best," wrote Jenny in her report, "we piled our collection of stunts and two I Corps photographers (who insisted on coming along) into our truck and we were off! When we nervously crawled out of the three-quarter we were wishing we could turn back, but bravely hauled things out. What? No interpreter? Luckily, one of the captains spoke and understood enough English to get the main ideas across - a good thing our program consisted of stunts. The captain somehow understood and explained to the men that we wanted two teams and that these teams would be competing against one another in a series of stunts. We then proceeded to pass out doughnuts and smile like crazy to overcome the language barrier."

Jenny described the stunts - penny toss, ring toss, one handed pushups, Indian wrestling, Kimchi-squat shoulder fighting and a rope trick. This last consisted of tying two men together at the wrists with about two yards of string, the goal being to get loose without breaking, cutting or untying it.

When the girls finished the program the men asked them to sing. This was always a good way to get around the language problem, so they sang several songs including "You Are My Sunshine", "Tom Dooley" and "Five Hundred Miles".

Jenny continued in her report: "After we finished our little concert we asked them to sing us some songs, which they willingly did. At this point we felt it was time to leave, but they insisted on each one of the girls singing a solo. We had managed, passably, to get through some songs. But ALONE? Two minutes later Jenny Rose was singing 'There were six little ducks...' This was followed by a chorus of 'Five Foot Two' with Jenny and Annisse doing the Charleston. They clamored for more, but we firmly sang 'Goodbye Gentlemen' and left waving at the end of the last chorus.

"So, if perchance, you see pictures of Annisse and Jenny doing the Charleston while Barbara, Mary and Jean are singing, arms linked, in the background, remember 1) it began as a program and 2) a little talent and a lot of nerve go a long way!"

The training classes in Washington were now averaging about 40 members a class with combined Korea/Vietnam recruits. Former staff living in the Washington area often helped with the classes and there was now a position for a program assistant which was filled six months at a time by a returnee. At that time it was Cece Dumbrigue who had served earlier in Korea and had just come home from Vietnam (and would go again to Vietnam). Leota Kelly was now the SRAO assistant national director and had responsibility for the training classes. Recruitment was going well and by November, when the last class was held, the quota had already been met for the first 1968 class to be held in January.

KOREA

1968 - 1973

"One of my most vivid memories was walking the DMZ perimeter fence with my friend Nadine Berry on Christmas Eve and talking and joking with the guys stationed at their solitary lookout points, isolated even from one another. We spent five or ten minutes with each one, wishing them 'Merry Christmas' and chatting about home.... I like to think that their day was a bit brighter for our having been there."

-Recollection of Mike Crawford

In January 1968 there were two crises in Korea. In the first, a band of North Koreans infiltrated South Korea, reaching Seoul and the Blue House in an attempt to assassinate President Park. Their plot was thwarted, but for several weeks, until it could be determined that all the invaders had been captured or killed, travel was restricted and security measures in force.

The second crisis was the seizing of the U.S.S. Pueblo by the North Koreans in the Sea of Japan on January 23rd, and the capture of the crew, one of whom was killed. Through the next eleven months negotiations went on at Panmunjom for their release and the return of the impounded ship.

In March Kate Wren, who had taken over when Gladys Tibbot became ill, departed and the writer arrived from Vietnam to be the new SRAO director. Reminders of the war were all around. The military commands in Korea held frequent blood collection drives for Vietnam at which the clubmobile staff served refreshments as well as donated blood. For the Koreans, themselves, there was family anguish from news of dead and wounded soldiers. Two of the best ROK divisions were fighting in Vietnam and there was a steady stream of

returning casualties. The Korean Red Cross set up recreation lounges and ward programs in military hospitals patterned after American Red Cross hospital service. SMH staff members in Korea gave their help as did SRAO's Barbara Bruegger, then program supervisor, by conducting workshops and donating materials for recreational activities. From the writer's notes at the time: "With Korean Red Cross representatives, I went to visit the large ROK army hospital in Seoul. The spring sun was streaming through huge windows, brightening the wards which had been decorated by Korean Red Cross hospital volunteers. I visited the wards of the convalescing amputees, some in beds, some in wheelchairs, and got smiles from them with the few words of Korean I remembered from my previous tour..."

Another reminder of the war was that most of the USO tours were going to Vietnam and a lot of entertainment in Korea was "home grown". Much of it came from Special Services units, companies of drafted musicians and actors who put on plays and had musical groups, often with SRAO staff participating. Kathi Neal remembered a show that she and Joanna Trask, both at 7th Division, helped plan. There was a small musical group called "J and B Rare" whose leaders, Joel Higgins (later of TV's "Silver Spoons" fame) and Bob Brinkman, staged a "Folk Rock Show". Besides helping to plan it, Kathi and Joanna had a musical number in it. They had been in their college glee club, and Kathi said that Joanna sang like "an angel" but she felt her voice was only "passable" and was really scared. Wearing mini-skirted costumes made by a local dressmaker, they got up on a stage in front of 5,000 men and sang "Leaving on a Jet Plane". It was, Kathi recalled, her "greatest conquest over fear".

Toward autumn of 1968 the three-quarter ton trucks, which were best for clubmobile travel, were gradually being replaced in the divisions by five-quarter ton trucks. Instead of the bench seat in the three-quarter cab, the new truck had two seats separated by a large gear box which slanted toward the rear. Military directives were issued prohibiting more than one passenger in the cab. This posed a real problem for the clubmobile teams as cold weather approached. With their creativity (not always confined to their programs) the girls discovered that the gear box could be turned around, making a level place to sit and, covered with an army blanket, be fairly comfortable. With that solution they obtained permission from the commands for two girls to ride in the cabs of the new trucks.

That winter the first wedding for SRAO took place in Korea. Cathy O'Connor, who was the SRAO assistant director, met and was courted by Army Captain Dennis Berrean, who was stationed in the Seoul area. In December Cathy completed her tour, resigned and married Denny. She was immediately put to work in the Seoul SRAO office as a Red Cross volunteer.

Eleven months to the day of their capture, the Pueblo crew members were released. They came across Freedom Bridge on December 23rd and were taken direct to the 121st Evacuation Hospital at ASCOM. The base was sealed off and hospital personnel and Red Cross staff and volunteers alerted. With all of their runs cancelled, the clubmobile girls, dressed in parkas against the cold, waited outside, watching for the helicopters that would bring the men to the hospital. The staff were Unit Head Connie Mitchell, Program Director Joanne Wilkins, Melinda Simpson, Vivian Hayes, Esther Schrader and Mary Alice Green.

Connie remembered, "I saw the first helicopter approaching, barely clearing the hill tops, heading south, straight to ASCOM and me. The crew members were all dressed identically in black uniforms and black peacoats, and some needed help off the helicopter. They were escorted one by one into the hospital by medical personnel. The arrival of all the crew members took less than 30 minutes. We waved and screamed, 'Welcome home, welcome home'. Tears were in my eyes, but they were joyful tears...they would be home for Christmas.

"That evening I received a phone call from Admiral Zumwalt. He told me that the men had been pronounced physically fit, well enough to travel. Some needed medical attention, but they also needed the sight of the Red Cross girls. He invited the SRAO unit to visit the wards the next morning to bring a little Christmas festivity.

"We were all nervous, anxious and excited. We were told not to be shocked by the physical appearance of the men. We were told not to ask them any questions and to veer conversation away from anything that had to do with their captivity. There were doctors, nurses, photographers, reporters and Naval officers on the wards. The post band wandered through playing Christmas carols and any requests the men had.

"Admiral Zumwalt escorted the six of us - Molly, Mag, Vivian, Esther, Joanne and me - to the first ward. The crew members were in pajamas and robes and some still had long hair and beards, but even as we visited them the hospital staff were shaving, clipping and restoring their appearances. They all wanted to talk with us. They wanted to know where we were from, who won

the World Series, how things were back in the states. We joked with them, danced with them, talked and sang. It was time to move on to the next ward. And then there was Captain Bucher standing before me. I remember he said, 'You can never know what it meant for you to be there yesterday to greet us. God bless you. Just the sight of American girls is wonderful and my men and I appreciate it.' He had tears in his eyes as he kissed each one of us."

That afternoon the girls were invited to the memorial service held for the fallen crew member and Mag Green sang "Ave Maria". Then the crew, in fresh Naval uniforms, boarded a C-141 for the trip home. "Once again," wrote Connie, "We waved and cheered, 'Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas'. We stayed until the plane was out of sight. We hugged each other and cried. We had a part of a special moment. And now we had work to do. Tomorrow was Christmas Day!"

Shortly after this Connie was transferred to 2nd Division. Some days later she was approached by a smallish man dressed in a black peacoat and black knitted cap who identified himself as being with the CIA. He said he was working on the Pueblo case. Connie, in her outgoing, friendly way, said, "Yes, that was so exciting and I thought Captain Bucher was a dear."

"No, no," replied the secret agent, "Not the crew, the ship!"

He had learned that the 2nd and 7th Division clubmobile units were invited to a luncheon at Panmunjom. "He felt," remembered Connie, "that with the right combination of cocktails and polite chatter, I could ask the right Communist the right question at the right time and get the right answer." He wanted

her to try to find out what the North Koreans had done with the Pueblo.

"You're crazy," Connie said to him. "First of all, they're not going to tell me, and secondly I'm a representative of a national organization and can't use my position to spy, no matter what my patriotic feelings are." That did not deter him. He said, "What about the other girls?" Connie told him he could talk with whomever he liked.

On January 11, 1969 the girls from the two divisions went to Panmunjom for the United Nations luncheon as guests of the Americans, the Swiss and the Swedes. The Communists present represented North Korea, Czechoslovakia and Poland. "The food," wrote Connie, "was delicious, the conversation lively and international. It was during dessert that I overheard one of the new girls ask innocently if anyone knew what had become of the ship, the Pueblo. There was an awkward moment of silence. Then with amused looks the delegates resumed their conversations. The question went unanswered."

The winter of 1968-69 was severely cold. Army OGs were issued to the staff for wear on the long, cold travel runs. Many vehicles were still unheated, and at Taegu and Camp Humphreys the girls often flew in unheated airplanes. They wore layers of clothes, in any combination that would keep out the bitter chill until they reached their destinations.

Through 1969 supply and other shortages continued. Fuel oil was rationed and there was a ten percent reduction in transportation throughout 8th Army. This did not affect clubmobile travel, mainly because in most places the military units rotated responsibility for providing vehicles - anything from

a deuce-and-a-half to a jeep. Toni Reher remembered the transportation at Camp Humphreys including "helicopters, small planes, C-47s ('Scare America'), Korean trains and any kind of land vehicle you could think of. Our drivers were great - there were the GIs who traveled in trucks and jeeps down mountain roads to small train stations to pick us up. They reassured us that, yes, the roads were safe. Many times we had faith to pull us through and some of those roads we traveled made faith a necessity!"

At Christmas the girls made their usual all out efforts to reach the maximum number of troops. Toni Rehrer, who by then had been transferred to 2nd Division, wrote that her favorite memory was of that Christmas Eve: "We donned flack jackets and steel helmets for an evening rendezvous in the DMZ to deliver cocoa and doughnuts as a Christmas surprise. Someone had knitted stocking caps for us and we wore them over the helmets. Each of us had a driver with a three-quarter and armed escorts. We felt important and excited! The men all grinned from ear to ear and were really appreciative."

When they finished seeing the men along the DMZ they started back to Camp Pelham, their home base, in several jeeps. Toni, Suzanne O'Fiaro and Nancy Calcese were in one jeep, bringing up the rear. They knew several enlisted men in the military unit there and had earlier joked with them about having a Christmas Eve toast at their EM club. On the spur of the moment, they decided to do it. When they got to the club and opened the door, Toni remembered, "We could see the backs of the men inside who were intent on a trio of Korean girls singing rock and roll on the stage. The rush of cold air must have disturbed one of them. He turned to see who the intruders were."

Eyes wide, he nudged his friend, who did the same thing. It was like a chain of dominoes! Within minutes we were surrounded by men happy to see us. We were danced off our feet the entire time and only caught glimpses of the men we came to share the Christmas toast with. The evening ended early as we were mindful of our driver's celebration for the holiday. The expression of appreciation as we left was something I'll never forget. Some of the men had tears in their eyes."

Shirley Hines, a black, was a member of the February 1970 SRAO class. She recorded her impressions and experiences for this story, but before coming to that some words about the blacks who chose to serve in SRAO. They were many, although never enough to satisfy the Red Cross or the military commands, and they served from the beginning. And the beginning was not a bed of roses.

In the fall of 1953 the U.S. Army had been integrated a scant year. In his book, "The Korean War", General Ridgway tells of seeking authorization in 1952 to integrate troops in Korea where there were several black combat regiments and battalions. His efforts, supported by the upward chain of command, succeeded when President Truman ordered integration of the entire U.S. Army. General Ridgway immediately implemented it in Korea. When SRAO operations began there it had been in effect a matter of months.

Among the first blacks to go to Korea in 1953 were Etta Takell and Mary Jane Cromwell. Etta returned to Kôrea in 1955 for a second tour (this time meeting the man she would marry). Mary Jane went on to Europe and then served in SMH in the states, but her field was education and she ultimately returned to her teaching career.

In that time, in 1953 and 1954, there were no problems in serving the integrated troops. The problems were with some white officers, who were not above racial slurs and snubs, and had mainly to do with social situations.

There were instances when group invitations to parties omitted the names of the black staff members and when a caller, phoning the invitation, would hem and haw, trying to get around to saying, "except so-and-so". This mean-spirited attitude was disheartening to the close-knit members of a clubmobile unit who worked so hard as a team to bring the military the service it wanted. One clubmobile group tried boycotting such invitations, but that was not the answer. The answer was to let the commander know that the clubmobile unit was just that - a unit - working and playing together and that's the way it was. All this changed, of course, but the Army then, in 1953, a microcosm of the United States, had its share of institutional bigots.

Sixteen years later when Shirley Hines joined SRAO the military commanders were asking for more and more black clubmobile workers. There were not enough (there never had been or would be enough in spite of national publicity efforts which included cooperation of such magazines as Life and Ebony).

Shirley was from a small Florida town and the youngest of thirteen children. As the youngest she had a good many family members helping her decide what to do with her life, and most of them did not think going to Korea was one of the things she should do. She attended a predominately black college and after graduation went to Detroit to stay with a brother until she found a job. She found one but had also registered with an employment agency and it was through the agency that she learned about SRAO (she paid a fee for the

job - and was not the only one - because Red Cross did not pay employment agency fees). She was interviewed in St. Louis and offered a job. She also received the list of personal clothing and other items she would have to purchase to take to Korea.

Having convinced her family, with her brother's help, that she should take the job, she set out to get the things on "the list". Leotards and cold weather underwear items had the notation that they should be "flesh color". With her brother she went to one of Detroit's large department stores and asked for the items in flesh color. The clerk brought out pink. Said Shirley, "I want flesh color." The clerk said, "This is flesh color." "Well," Shirley said, "it's not my flesh color. Sorry, I don't want these." Her brother told her she had to have them because they were on "the list" and, anyway, he said, she would be wearing them under her clothes and not to make a "big deal" about it. They argued about it and finally her brother bought her a pink undershirt, satisfying himself that she had met "the list" requirements.

In St. Louis Shirley had asked if there would be other black girls in her class and was told there probably would be because of nationwide recruitment. When she reached the hotel in Washington she began to watch for the arrival of other blacks. None came. As was often the case, she found herself the only black in the class. She ran into Lib Varn who was there to help with training before going out to Korea on her second tour, this time as assistant director. Shirley asked where the other black girls were. Lib said, "You're the only one, but don't worry, I'll be your friend." (They are still good friends). Shirley, who had lived the first 22 years of her life in what she described

as an almost totally black world, now found herself embarking on several "firsts", and one of them was sharing her hotel room with a white girl.

Her class arrived in Korea March 16th. They were given time to go to the Yongsan post beauty shop for hair washing and trimming. It was another first for Shirley - a first mistake - having her hair cut by a Korean. It looked, she said later, like a "patch work quilt". She did not make that mistake again. She found black GIs who knew how to cut her hair and she never went back to the beauty shop.

She was assigned to I Corps Headquarters where the commanding general had been asking for a black clubmobile staff member. Like all other new staff she was scared about going on her first run. Her partner was Nancy Calcese, a good teacher who laid her fears to rest. She and other new arrivals were also learning about military life. She and Penny McCaskill thought the music played over the loudspeaker at the end of each day was "nice" as they strolled on the compound, not realizing until they were told to stand still that it signaled the lowering of the flag.

Shirley had been on the job two weeks when she had to go on a local run alone. She had been to the same stops with Nancy and could not recall seeing any black GIs. When she arrived at the first stop there were no blacks. She was nervous and her nervousness grew as the men kept asking, "Where's the other girl?" She was feeling more and more uncomfortable and becoming, underneath, a little angry, thinking they did not want her there because she was black. Shirley remembered, "Finally I said, 'Well, a chocolate doughnut is all you get today.'" It broke the ice and they laughed and laughed and ever

afterward when I was not on that run the men asked where the chocolate doughnut was."

As always happened when a black staff member was assigned to a command, the word spread about Shirley's presence at I Corps and larger numbers of black soldiers showed up for the programs. Her recollection of dating was that it was always a "group" date. "Other girls," said Shirley, "could date one person. I might start out with one person, but pretty soon there would be another and another until the 'date' was five or six."

There was always an enormous amount of attention, but Shirley settled in to her job and after a few months was transferred to Taegu where she became the program director and later the unit director. At the end of her tour she was asked if she would go to Vietnam. She wanted to go. She went home for a rest and to talk to her father about it. He was old and not in good health and she needed to know how he felt about her going to the war. Her father said to her, "Go, and when you return I guess you will want to go to the moon."

Shirley and the other black staff members who served with Red Cross in Korea and Vietnam certainly had the fortitude, the guts, to take themselves to the moon.

There were changes coming in the configuration of 8th Army elements, with consolidation and some withdrawal, that caused Red Cross in 1970 to begin to give serious consideration to phasing out SRAO. The I Corps Arty clubmobile unit had been at Camp Saint Barbara since 1954. In addition to visiting the artillery units it covered forward elements of the 7th Division.

In the fall the division units were moved back and the artillery phased out of the Camp Saint Barbara area as the ROK Army moved in. The clubmobile unit there closed in November and staff were transferred to other units with increased troop population.

The 2nd Division was still in place along the DMZ and it was the Christmas of 1970 that Mike Crawford remembered so well as she visited the men stationed at the barrier fence. She also remembered the boredom and the loneliness of the men and their feeling that the people back home had forgotten them. About her experience she wrote, "I arrived in Korea fairly skeptical about the reception the troops would give our programs. And a number of them pooh-poohed the games as kid stuff. But my overwhelming impression was how receptive the men were to any type of distraction from their daily routine - at least for one hour a week we were able to distract them with our games - and how grateful they were just to sit and talk with 'round eyes'."

Mike remembered that it was an extremely demanding year and that there were times when she got "all peopled out". She remembered it as a year of "endless rides over rutted paths that couldn't pass for roads, of endless goodbyes as people transferred or returned to 'the world'. It was also a year of enduring friendships and a closeness born of being thousands of miles from home. If I had the year to do over again I wouldn't hesitate to go... I feel that our presence there was appreciated and made a difference."

True to his word, President Park built new roads. They were not where the clubmobile teams traveled, but they made it easier to get from the country to the larger towns and cities. There was now a four lane highway from Seoul to Taegu and eventually it would reach north to Uijonbu and south to Pusan.

"Perseverance," wrote Mary Lou in a February 1971 report, "is probably the most important ingredient in the make up of the staff in the Camp Humphreys unit." She was referring to staff initiative and ingenuity in reaching the isolated Nike missile sites. The "Standard Operating Procedure" (SOP) for the run to one of the batteries read like this:

SOP FOR RUN IV MONDAY (BRAVO 4/44)

CALL: Friday - Call Bravo and confirm your visit.

Sunday - Call 4/44 and check about a flight to Bravo. If you make no contact, call Capt. Raper at 38th at Osan. Also check on the pilot of your flight, as it may be possible to catch a ride back with him. If a flight is confirmed, you should check with the 1st Sgt. at Bravo and tell him your arrival time so they can send a vehicle to pick you up at the Sea Range landing area. If your flight is not confirmed, tell Bravo you'll be arriving by train in Daechon and need to be picked up at 1135 hours.

LEAVE:

Plane - If flight is confirmed and comes through uncanceled you will leave from the 19th Aviation flight line. Plan to be there early!

Train - If you're unable to get a flight, you must brave the Korean rails. Leave the office for Cho Non station no later than 0815 hours. Catch the express train to Daechon leaving at 0905 and arriving about 1135 (440 won). An Army vehicle should be waiting. If the Army doesn't come through after a reasonable wait, take a Kimchi cab to Bravo (300 won).

BRAVO - Check in with the 1st Sgt. upon arrival at the battery. You will probably eat first if you arrive at 1130 or later. After lunch program at IFC from 1200 to 1300, then at Launcher from 1300 to 1400.

DEPART:

- Plane - Because of time limitation, you must arrange your stops so that you can be on time for your flight to Osan or K-6. From either place, you can take a PX cab back to the hootch.
- Train - You must leave the battery in time to catch the train, allowing 30 minutes travel time from the battery to the station. Take the train to Pyong-Taek if possible. If not, deboard at Cho Non. Take a bus to Pyong-Taek (250 won). Take a micro bus (20 won) or a Kimchi cab (100 won) to K-6. Get a PX cab and you're home! Retain all travel receipts and prepare voucher for military reimbursement.

It was a 25 mile trip to Cho Non and 70 miles from there to Daechon, altogether a 200 mile round trip. The 4/44 Battalion commander knew what the girls went through to visit his men and wrote the unit director, Carol Jurinich, "Your tireless efforts have brought a weekly touch of home to the young men who must spend so much of their time in the strange and relatively unpleasant surroundings of the firing battery areas...our special thanks to you and your staff."

In March 1971 the 7th Division withdrew from Korea, taking its colors home. Two brigades of the 2nd Division moved into the 7th area, at Camp Casey, and the third brigade remained at Camp Pelham. With this change there was movement of military support units to the south and the Taegu and Camp HUmpreys clubmobile units picked up as many stops as they could absorb into their schedules.

At the same time there were changes in Red Cross administration in the Far East. The decision was made to deactivate Far Eastern Area Headquarters and divide the area into operating regions. The phasing out of the head-

quarters offices was completed by mid-summer. To SRAO it meant losing the support of an area personnel office and of the Far East central supply service. Suddenly the SRAO office in Seoul was inundated with huge quantities of recreation and program supplies from Japan as the large warehouse there was emptied out. Jane Tennyson, program supervisor then, had to figure out what to do. She begged and borrowed as much space as she could from the military, revamped the clubmobile units' routines for ordering and storing supplies and then, with Charles at the wheel of a deuce-and-a-half borrowed from the military, made supply runs to all the units to stock, chock-a-block, their shelves and storerooms.

By 1971 the use of marijuana and drugs by servicemen was a growing problem in Korea. It was not, for the most part, disruptive to the clubmobile program visits, probably because, as in Vietnam, the men using "pot" or who were "high" did not attend the programs. While not so noticeable at large military units, the problem was easier to see in the small units, and now and then the girls were confronted with a situation. One clubmobile team arrived at a small site, had their visit announced over the loudspeaker by the 1st sergeant, and went to the mess hall to find no one there. They heard voices, followed the sound outside and to the back of the building where they found several GIs sitting on the ground taking a "pot break". The girls said they would see them on the next visit and left. It happened infrequently, but the clubmobile staff had to be prepared to size up all kinds of situations and know when to stay and when to leave. As in Vietnam, the military in Korea had a Drug Amnesty and Rehabilitation Program, and treated the men who voluntarily came forward at the 121st Evacuation Hospital.

Judy Grigas and Brenda Shackleford, at Taegu, were injured in a jeep accident in September 1971 as they were traveling in the Pusan area. Judy had a back injury and Brenda a fractured collar bone. Hospitalized for a time at the 121st Evac, they recovered and went on to other assignments, but the men at the military unit they were to visit when the accident happened were so concerned they sent a "letter of condolence" to the SRAO director. It read: "The officers and enlisted men of the 44th Engineer Battalion wish to extend their best wishes for a speedy recovery for Judy and Brenda, the two Red Cross girls who were unfortunately injured in a motor vehicle accident on their way to our battalion. Both Judy and Brenda play an important part in keeping up the spirits of the troops while they are away from the states. Their voluntary work is greatly appreciated. Please extend our warmest regards and kind wishes to these girls. We hope to see them again real soon."

As the military changes continued, with more movement to the south, the clubmobile units at ASCOM and Camp Red Cloud closed. ASCOM was the first unit to open and both had been in operation for 18 years. This left four clubmobile units - at Taegu and Camp Humphreys, and the two that covered the spread out area of the 2nd Division. Red Cross believed it was now time to start phasing out the SRAO program and proposed this to the military. It was the writer who had to do the proposing. The recollection is this: "I received instructions from national headquarters to go to the 8th Army Command and 'feel out' the idea of bringing the clubmobile operations to a close by the end of the fiscal year - June 1972. The regional director went with me and

we rehearsed beforehand how we would approach the subject, knowing there would be strong opposition. In the meeting I had gotten about three words out of my mouth when the objections started. Everybody was nice, but I wasn't getting anywhere. The regional director decided to change sides and slid his chair around the table, away from me. I was sitting there alone with this bombardment coming at me. Finally, I said that since there were such strong feelings about keeping the program what they ought to do was to go through their channels to the Department of Defense, and the DOD could go to Red Cross headquarters in Washington. And that was exactly what they did. They sent a cable the next day pleading their case. National Headquarters responded, saying that the program would be funded for one more fiscal year - to June 1973. Eighth Army, delighted with the extension, accepted the closure date and the program went on."

1972 saw the end of the SRAO Vietnam program. The plan for staffing SRAO in Korea, where there was a need for about 25 girls, included transferring some staff from Vietnam as units closed, asking some staff in Korea to extend and to hold two last classes in Washington - in July and September.

Edna Schweitzer was now the SRAO director. She had served as a hospital field director in Vietnam and then had taken on the responsibility of closing the SRAO program there, and now was about to do the same thing in Korea. Pat Moran, who had a previous tour in Korea, was the last assistant director and doubled as program supervisor.

Among those coming from Vietnam was Mary Niedenthal. She recalled, "A fond memory is arriving in Korea straight from Vietnam and being treated to a hair cut, shampoo, facial, manicure, the works! What heaven! And the servicemen there were just as terrific and appreciative."

A time table was now set that would end clubmobile operations by March 1973. That the program would be over in a few months did not, to their great credit, deter staff from putting forth their best efforts or using all their energies. Program progression was still the order of the day and at 2nd Division Diane Olson put together a program on colors. Typical of the work that went into each format, she had amassed 120 questions, each answered with a color - "Alice B. Toklas refers to what dessert?" The girls continued to send out birthday cards right to the end. And right to the end received thank you notes for them. One read, "Thank you so much for your kindness in remembering me on my birthday...you bring much happiness to men away from home. Thanks for serving us."

In January and February Edna and Pat arranged a "round robin" - rotating staff among the units so that seeing new faces and new places would help keep spirits up. At Taegu the staff decided to combine the last two weeks of runs so that they could, all four of them, visit the sites "in full force" for the last time. The run schedules continued through March 8, 1973. Pat, in her last report on programming, wrote, "It can be satisfactorily noted that the quality of recreation activities produced and presented during the final weeks of the SRAO program were in keeping with the high standards maintained through the years."

The military had special recognition ceremonies for the girls, Special Services honored them and the Korean Red Cross had an elaborate luncheon for them.

By March 16th all of the clubmobile staff had departed or had taken other jobs in Korea. Edna and Pat remained to the end of the month to take care of the last details. Mrs. Lee, who was getting on in years and had talked of retiring, decided to stay on in the little house in Yongsan and take her chances with new tenants. Charles was being helped in job hunting by the Korean Red Cross and the U.S. Embassy.

Edna's last report concluded, "It is with a feeling of sadness and humility that we prepare this final report of the SRAO program. When we realize that we are at the end of an era of a specialized recreation service, we feel there are no adequate words with which to conclude. We only wish all of the hundreds of SRAO staff members and supervisors who have been a part of this program could have been present to receive the many expressions of appreciation for our services and of the regret at our leaving which were extended by all with whom we worked."

Over the years of the program, 899 young women served in Korea. Through those years they traveled 2,900,000 miles over Korea's rugged terrain. None of them would ever forget the roads nor, at the end of them, the appreciation of the men they reached.

General D.V. Bennett, who commanded the United States Forces, Korea, sent the last letter of appreciation to Red Cross. "Thank you," he wrote, "for a job well done."

EUROPE

1954 - 1960

" To assist military personnel and dependents who are located with them overseas in participating in leisure time activities of the local community, to encourage and assist military personnel and dependents in understanding and appreciating the customs, culture and mores of the local community, to encourage wives of the military and local women to work together as Red Cross staff aides in carrying on the center leisure time program, to encourage the interchange of community life between the local population and military personnel, to stimulate mutual participating on special occasions such as American and local holidays, festivals and celebrations, to plan a supplemental leisure time program for military personnel who are assigned in places where language and custom barriers may create misunderstandings, to interpret to the local community the customs and culture of Americans."

- SRAO program objectives in Europe

Gladys Tibbot and Leota Kelly were members of the joint Red Cross/Department of Defense survey group that went to Europe in July 1953 to determine the need for Red Cross community centers. In the fall the reports and recommendations were reviewed by DOD and in December a formal request was made to Red Cross to establish centers at Chateauroux, France, and at Port Lyauty and Marrakesh in French Morocco.

With these locations approved, they immediately set to work - Gladys in France and Leota in French Morocco -making initial contacts with the military and local Red Cross and other community groups, and searching for suitable buildings. On December 29th Corrine Smith and Marianna Rucker arrived, Corrine to become the center director at Port Lyauty and Marianna at Chateauroux. Four more staff members arrived in January 1954 and it was

estimated that once center operations were underway 14 staff members would be needed.

The U.S. Air Bases in France were under the 12th Air Force and were, for the most part, located near small towns. The 7322nd Air Depot Wing was at Chateauroux which in 1954 had a population of 30,000. A provincial town in central France, it was the seat of the Prefecture for the Department of Indre. The local government officials were more than willing to lend their assistance and support to a program designed to improve Franco-American relations.

The aggravations to the French there and at the other locations with military bases were many. Young airmen, full of exuberance, sped along the narrow roads on their motorcycles, scaring humans, horses and cows alike. Some of them drank to excess in the cafes and bars, encouraged the growth of the prostitute population, bought merchandise "on time" from the shopkeepers, never to return to pay, and learned only a few French words, usually the wrong ones (merde and voulez-vous coucher avec moi were favorites). The Americans drove cars that were bigger and newer than those of the townspeople, suggesting affluence not really there (the French chugged along in small Citroen cars, called deux chevaux, which the Americans could never quite bring themselves to take seriously, especially when they saw the owners measuring the gas level with a stick).

The aggravations to the Americans were many, too. The U.S. bases were all in central or northern France where winter weather was raw and wet, and more than one base seemed purposely situated in ankle deep mud. Many dependent families lived in rental housing in town where the electricity went off all

the time, the telephones (when they could get them) seldom worked properly and the lack of central heating brought on a permanent chill. The language barrier added to frustrations in getting things repaired and in shopping, and the French did not have much patience with an American housewife thumbing through an English-French dictionary trying to find the right word to explain herself. And one could not blame the Americans if they seemed unable to grasp the idea that France, steeped in history, had a national existence before Columbus discovered America (there were exceptions - there were those who thought French plumbing probably predated the Santa Maria).

It was in this climate that the American Red Cross began SRAO efforts to improve understanding between the Americans and their hosts.

When Gladys arrived in Chateauroux to begin her search for a building the base commander assigned the French liaison officer to assist her with community contacts and the first were with the prefect and the French Red Cross Committee. The location of the center was crucial - for the Americans it had to be easy to find and for the French it had to be in an acceptable part of town.

Gladys found an old building - about 100 years old - for the center. It was two stories, with the upstairs occupied by another tenant. The Red Cross rented the first floor which, when renovated, would provide a lounge area, information desk, coffee bar and space for game and writing tables. The inside walls were stone, as was the floor. Renovations included putting in new flooring and false walls, overhauling the plumbing system and rewiring the electrical system.

The last item - electricity - was always a problem. Even with rewiring there was daily possibility of overload. In those days in provincial France being plunged into darkness periodically was part of the way of life. In the Red Cross centers this would turn out to be a fairly routine occurrence. In addition to lights, they had central loud speaker and record player systems, slide and film projectors, electric guitars, coffee makers and other appliances. When in the course of a Franco-American evening the lights went out one could always tell the French from the Americans. The French sat quietly in the dark, chatting, until whoever was in charge of the fuse box (usually located in an obscure closet on a stair landing) groped to it and made repairs. The Americans milled about bumping into one another, called out like they were lost in fog and generally behaved in a way the French found foolish and mildly amusing.

The renovation of the building was the first Franco-American activity of the center. Gladys signed on a French contractor with workmen to make the major changes, and the base commander asked for airmen to volunteer their skills. About 30 men responded, volunteering in their off-duty time to help with painting, carpentry, plumbing and electrical wiring. With this arrangement in place in January 1954, Gladys decided to set the opening date of the center for February 14th. When she announced this both the Americans and the French thought she was joking and one American said she probably got the years mixed up and meant February 1955.

The disbelievers said the French would not work with the Americans and, anyway, the French were not noted for rushing things and would never meet the deadline. Gladys had the American volunteers and the French workers meet

together and got the contractor to pledge publicly that he would get the job done on time. A major incentive for him was the contract - it called for payment on completion of the work and it was to his advantage to do it in the least number of man hours. American strategy succeeded. The opening ceremony for the center was scheduled for 5 p.m. on February 14th. The last workman finished his job at 4 p.m.

It was a triumph of no small proportion. There was new respect between the Americans and the French who had participated in this effort. Franco-American relations were off on the right foot, and the lessons learned here would be used over and over again as new centers in France were readied for opening.

While the renovations were in progress, center staff were busy with publicity and with recruiting volunteers. On each American base there was an SMI field Director who, with a chairman of volunteers - a military wife - led the organizing of Red Cross volunteer efforts for the military community. It was through the chairman of volunteers that center staff worked to build volunteer service for the center. By the time the center opened there were 24 military wives and 15 persons from the local community recruited and ready. Later, here and at other centers, recruitment would include servicemen who were trained as staff aides and served regularly on their off-duty time.

By April, center activities were going full tilt. Dance, bridge and language classes had been organized, recreational activities were planned on a daily schedule, and local groups such as folk singers and dancers were booked for evening performances.

Plans were now being made to recruit junior hostesses from the local community - a group of young women who would become trained Red Cross volunteers known as Jeunes Aides. The local French Red Cross Committee supported this and members were extremely helpful in interpreting the need for these girls to be a part of the center environment for the young American servicemen.

The lower age limit for the Jeunes Aides was set at seventeen. They had to have parental consent, they had to come to the center unaccompanied, and at the end of the evening activity they were taken home in the center staff car and personally delivered to their doors by a center staff member. These rules held important reassurance for their parents, many of whom gave reluctant permission to their teenage daughters to socialize with American servicemen. The girls signed up for regular duty hours and had monthly meetings to plan their participation in center activities. Without them it would have been impossible to have square and social dancing, activities that became extremely popular events on center schedules.

It was the Chateauroux center that began the tradition of Sunday afternoon tea. With tea and coffee there were cakes and cookies made by the military wives. White sheets were spread on a ping pong table, flowers were arranged as a centerpiece, china cups and saucers were used (seconds bought in bulk from Limoges factories) and the Jeunes Aides served and poured. The young American men came looking their best. The mothers of the Jeunes Aides came, too, and sat and watched until they were satisfied that this place was safe and socially acceptable for their daughters.

Through the months that the Chateauroux center was getting started, Leota Kelly was finding suitable center locations in Port Lyauty and Marrakesh. She had gone to Port Lyauty in early January and by the end of the month was joined by Corrine Smith and two other staff members. With the help of the military she located a building. Unused for years, it had been an orange pop bottling factory. Built around a pleasant open court, it had room enough for a large auditorium on one side and a lounge on the other. At the back were smaller rooms that, once renovated, would provide office and work areas plus a kitchen, library and music room.

Finding the building was one thing. Negotiating the lease, renovating and getting the furnishings were others. The great American urge to get things done in a hurry, to be efficient and to the point, did not matter here. Time was eaten up skirmishing over the lease. The owner, a Moroccan living in Casablanca, wanted a three year lease. The Red Cross wanted a one year lease and with legal help from the military finally won out. The extensive renovations could not begin until the lease was settled. It took time to work out a contract for the labor to redo the building and then there were delays in getting materials and furnishings shipped from Europe. The center opened on July 25, 1954.

Prior to the initiation of the SRAO program in Europe, considerable thought had been given to developing program activities which could be carried on without having a center from which to operate. In February the Port Lyauty center staff put this idea to work and had, through the spring and early summer, a schedule of recreational activities on the U.S. bases and tours to local sites of interest.

The city of Port Lyauty (renamed Kenitra after independence) had in 1954 a population of 80,000. Just north of the city, where the Sebou River flows into the Atlantic Ocean, was the site of one of the Allied landings in North Africa during World War II. Afterward a small U.S. Naval installation remained there and then in 1951, with the signing of an agreement between the U.S. and France, three U.S. Air Force bases were established in French Morocco. The one at Sidi Slimane, the 3906th Air Base Group, was nearest to Port Lyauty and was the sponsoring military base for the Red Cross center. The center was also used by personnel at the U.S. Naval Air Activity base located on the outskirts of the city and at a Naval communications site at Sidi Yahia, some distance away.

Shortly after Leota found the orange pop bottling factory she went to Marrakesh to look for a suitable place there. Through her Navy contacts in Port Lyauty she had met a seaman whose family, Romanians who had fled the Communist bloc, lived in Marrakesh. She telephoned his mother, Ze' Dimancescu, who related the story: "It was in the spring of 1954. Morocco was still under French protectorate, though some anti-French movement had started. The American bases had been completed and Air Force personnel were already settled, many with families. The closest base to Marrakesh was Ben Guerir, about 40 miles from town.

"One day I received a phone call from Leota Kelly asking if she could see me and telling me she was a Red Cross representative. Of course, I arranged a meeting, quite puzzled why and how she found me. It was not long before I learned the mystery. She had met our eldest son who was in the Navy and had been sent from the U.S. to the Port Lyauty Naval Base. Leota was in search of someone to help find a location for a center in Marrakesh."

Ze found a villa, newly built, which the owner was willing to rent. It was two stories and each floor had a large room that could be used for a lounge, with smaller rooms for games, classes and offices.

Leota returned to the states shortly after this contact and, toward the end of the year, went on to Korea to head up the SRAO program there. Gladys Tibbot was designated as SRAO director for Europe and in May went to Marrakesh to sign the lease for the villa. In the meantime staff arrived, with Barbara Wagner as the center director. The center opened on July 31, 1954.

Ze Dimancescu joined the center staff as the administrative assistant. Each center was authorized to appoint a person, fluent in French and with knowledge of the local community and government, to assist with community relations, and they were all invaluable to center operations. Ze also took volunteer training and after a day's work often changed into her Red Cross uniform to teach French classes, among other evening assignments.

It was not an easy time in French Morocco. Problems had been brewing for the French in North Africa since the formation of the Arab League in 1948. As the movement for independence in Morocco grew and unrest in the country turned to violence, the French government thought calm could be restored by exiling the Sultan, Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef, who was sent off to Madagascar in August 1953.

This did not decrease the disorders and through 1954 and 1955 rioting and violence became more and more frequent, continuing into 1956 until Morocco gained independence and the Sultan returned to become King Mohammed V. Through this period there were times when the Americans were confined to the bases and families who lived in town to their houses. The Red Cross centers, guarded at

night by Arab watchmen, were open most of the time and staff took the unrest in stride, but it made for more than the usual problems for a new program, the heart of which was community relations.

Building Franco-American relations was not an easy chore. The branch of the French Red Cross in Morocco was very cooperative, but the French as a community felt besieged by the Arabs and intruded upon by the large number of Americans who had come flooding in with the building of the U.S. bases. Through staff efforts the volunteer program, with American military wives and a nucleus of interested French women, became a force to get things moving, but the Red Cross center operation in Morocco had its ups and downs.

When independence came there were other kinds of problems. In each city and town the French government officials were replaced by Moroccans, and in Port Lyauty the pasha disapproved of any reference to "Franco-American" and thought the American Red Cross centers ought to be teaching mother and baby care and other useful classes to the local populace (the French Red Cross in Morocco had been transformed into the Moroccan Red Crescent Society, responsible for such programs) and interpretation of the purpose of SRAO started all over again.

It had taken six months to get the first three centers up and running, and now the Air Force came with three more requests - Rabat in French Morocco and Nancy and Chaumont in France. These requests were reviewed and recommended by the Department of Defense and accepted by Red Cross, and searches were underway in the fall and winter of 1954 for buildings.

It was first at Chaumont that a building was found. A farm-market town in northeast France, Chaumont had about 16,000 inhabitants, many of whom, they would say, had never been beyond the limits of its department of Haute-Marne. The streets were narrow and cobbled, the stone houses an aged gray, and the town surgeon, one of the most prominent citizens, drove an ancient Chevrolet (it was a source of irritation that one of the American airmen had a late model Mercury). The air base, some miles from town, was the location of the 48th Fighter Bomber Wing.

The old people of the town were the first to accept the American military. They remembered World War I when General Pershing's headquarters had been at nearby Langres with AEF troops garrisoned there.

When the building for the center was located in the fall of 1954 the Air Force agreed to lease it and it took some months to complete the contract, postponing the renovation until early 1955. The building, in disuse for about ten years, was described in reports as "dilapidated" and "in squalor", but refurbished would be an ideal center. Built around an open courtyard, the rooms on all sides could be redone to include a large, airy lounge, games and music rooms, a small library, a kitchen and at the entrance a welcome and information area.

The problem was that in its not so distant past it had been a house of "ill repute". This news came from the local French Red Cross Committee, mostly made up of dowagers, with the information that it had been known as "the house of the green shutters". The committee had no objection to what the American Red Cross planned to do with the building and, indeed, were

prepared to support center efforts, but cautioned that the shutters should be painted a color other than green. Jean Fitzsimmons, the center director, had them painted, against a white plaster facade, red. The center was located on a short street that led to the town's gas works. The street was named, of course, Rue de Gaz. A petition made to the mayor's office to change the street name was approved and it became Rue Bartholdi after the sculptor of the Statue of Liberty and in recognition of the 48th Fighter Bomber Wing which had adopted the statue as its symbol. The change of the street name made the transformation complete.

The Chaumont Red Cross center opened on April 12, 1955 and was an immediate success. The Air Force provided bus service between the base and the center (as it did in other locations) making it easy for the Americans to come. The last bus to the base left the center each night at closing time. The center became the "hub" for the Americans - the central meeting place.

The townspeople entered into a program of home hospitality and there were a surprising number of groups to tap for center programs - bands and singing groups, a hunt club, a fencing club, stamp and coin and other hobby clubs. Center staff set up French classes, had archery in the backyard, ping pong tournaments in the courtyard, games of all sorts in the lounge and musical instruments available for the men to form their own combos. With the backing of the French Red Cross Committee it did not take long to have an active Jeunes Aides group. The administrative assistant Jean found was Madame Cravoisier who, among other talents, was an artist. As a young woman during World War I she had volunteered in AEF canteens, sketching the faces of the soldiers, souvenirs for them to send home.

Among the many special interest groups at the center was one in which the men, mostly corpsmen from the base hospital, practiced their writing and speaking skills by producing scripts they tape recorded, with appropriate sound effects, like radio programs. They spent hours on end working on a serial patterned after "Lamont Cranston, The Shadow" and called their character "Chaumont Cranston, The Shaddy" (ending each episode with "the Shaddy knows"). It was from this group that the idea came for a Wednesday night program on current events, which developed into a quiz format called "What's New in the News?" Among others it attracted were two airmen named Pop and Theo.

Pop and Theo were "center commandos". All centers had them. They were men who spent every off-duty minute at the center, which was all right, but they were usually not self-directed. Unless there was a planned activity they spent their time at the sides of center staff members whose days were used to prepare evening programs and do administrative work. Pop and Theo were firemen. Pop, who was older and a little gray around the temples, drove a firetruck. Theo rode with him, describing his job as "unrolling the hose". They worked shifts - 24 hours on and 24 hours off. On days off they would show up at the center first thing in the morning and remain there until the bus returned them to the base at night. Staff gave them all kinds of jobs - sorting playing cards, straightening up magazines and games, picking up litter in the backyard after archery contests - that were useful things, but with not much longevity, and they would be back at a staff member's side asking questions and talking about anything and everything. Bits of information were gobbled up, staff found out, for editing and later giving back.

While there were other "commandos", what riveted staff attention on this pair were Theo's announcement that he had been transferred to Chaumont from "Pepsi Cola", Florida, and Pop's comment that he liked cars, especially a British one called a "Royal Rice". They joined the program, "What's New in the News?", but became frustrated when others were quicker to answer questions. One night Pop asked why the Red Cross girls always asked the questions, never had to answer any. The group decided they would all bring their own questions and all, including center staff, would get to answer them. This worked fine until it was Pop's or Theo's turn to ask a question, not usually related to current events. Pop asked, "Who shot an apple off his son's head with an arrow?" When the correct answer was given by someone Theo said, "See, you don't know everything. It was William Overture." The French actress who was known as first lady of the theater turned out to be Sarah "Bremerhaven", and the lady who stuck her head out the window and said, "Shoot if you must..." was "Betty Crockett", and Theo added that she was also famous for writing a cook book. They said that Hiawatha wrote, "I shot an arrow into the air...", and that Sir Walter Riley was an English poet.

All this and more was duly recorded by staff, not because they wanted to make fun but because it seemed phenomenal that it could go on and on. Staff remembered one-time things the servicemen said. They remembered the man who spoke of the French liqueur, "Paranoid", and the airman who had been on temporary assignment in Greece returning with the information that Greek currency was the "Dracula". They had even heard a co-worker, about to begin a game, say

she was going to "break up the monopoly", and another who said she had a friend with "a heart as big as gold". But never before (or afterward) had they heard anything like the team of Pop and Theo, and it would be hard to forget Pop saying that Theo had a memory "about as long as a piece of string".

It was at this time that Gladys Tibbot came from area headquarters in Stuttgart to visit the center. She scolded staff for "blowing a few slips all out of proportion." She said she, herself, would have a conversation with Theo to prove that he did not talk "funny" all the time. It was his day off and she found him in the lounge and introduced herself. Theo asked her if she was the "chief honcho" and she said yes. "Well, then," he said, "you must know everything and I was wondering about the Donna." Gladys asked him what it was - was it a person, a thing, a piece of art - what? Theo said he thought it was a painting. Gladys said, "Oh, you mean the Madonna." "Yes," said Theo. "What I want to know is - is it a man or a woman?" Gladys never mentioned Pop and Theo again.

The Red Cross center in Rabat opened on August 7, 1955. Like the Marrakesh center, the building was a villa. It was located at 54 Avenue de Chellah and not far from military units housed in the city, elements of the 17th Air Force which had its headquarters in Rabat. The closest U.S. Air Base was at Nouasseur, some distance away on the route to Casablanca.

French Morocco's capital and the seat of the French Resident General, Rabat had a population of 170,000, of which about 50,000 were European.

It was a wonderful city for sightseeing when there were no restrictions because of independence troubles. Tours were a popular part of the center's activities.

There were the Chellah Gardens with tombs of Moslem holy men, the oldest fig tree in the world and a pool of sacred eels that swallowed eggs whole. There were the Roman ruins of Sala with remains of the forum, the baths, columns and statues, and Latin inscriptions surviving from the 4th century before Christ. There was a Kasbah with a palace museum where a 12th century sultan had lived, complete with harem room and wedding bed. There was the 800 year old Hassan's Tower, part of an uncompleted mosque, open for climbing to the top to see a magnificent view of the city. There was the Sultan's palace with 1172 rooms (it is not possible to go in, said the center guide, but you can take pictures of the guards).

Later, when independence came and calm was restored to the country, tours from the three centers in Morocco would be extended to include the medinas, rug factories, pottery centers, cedar forests and other attractions. And all three centers had fleets of bicycles for do-it-yourself tours.

Marrakesh had much to offer, too. The Moroccan Tourist Office claimed that the sprawling forest of palm trees before the city gates had its origin from camping tribesmen who, with stores of dates, came from the other side of the Atlas Mountains a thousand years before. Jemma-El-Fna Square had story tellers, acrobats, jugglers, snake charmers and sellers of mysterious powders and remedies. There were mazes of markets, "souks", where leather, silver and copper crafts were sold. There were the tombs of Saadian princes, palaces and

Moorish gardens, and the Koutoubia mosque with its tower that was the city's landmark.

In the summer of 1955 the Marrakesh Red Cross center was thriving in spite of travel restrictions that went on and off and on again as the political unrest continued month after month. It was time for the center's first anniversary. All the centers observed their anniversary dates with special programs to thank the military and community leaders for their support and to give public recognition to the volunteers for their hours of work and their accomplishments.

In the year the Marrakesh center had been open it had an attendance of 35,000. The volunteers - military wives, airmen and civilians from the base, and local community people, including the Jeunes Aides - had given in that first year over 8,000 hours of service and were to be honored at the anniversary celebration for this remarkable effort.

Margaret (Maggie) Daniel who, as assistant center director, was in charge of programs, related what happened in her program report: "For such a special occasion, speeches, cake cutting, a buffet supper and appropriate music were planned to insure a gala time for all. Those were the plans for the anniversary when we discovered 24 hours before the set time that a travel restriction would keep all military personnel at Ben Guerir Air Base. The day before the anniversary an all day tour to Mazagan (El Jadida after independence) was planned. One staff member arrived at Ben Guerir at 8 a.m. on that day with a picnic lunch for one hundred men only to find out that no one could leave the base. At the suggestion of the base commander the other staff members were contacted and

before noon the entire staff had joined the men around the base swimming pool for an all day outing. Our picnic lunch was supplemented by Special Services and over five hundred men enjoyed the day. The anniversary cake, which we feared would never be seen by us or the men, had been baked at Ben Guerir that morning. Although we had planned to have it served on a silver platter on a white table cloth and cut with a silver cake cutter, we were delighted when it arrived in the back of a truck, was placed on a large box and sliced with a huge meat cleaver."

That fall Jessica Hunter, assigned as assistant SRAO director in Europe, was loaned as a consultant for six months to the Women's Voluntary Services in Great Britain. Since the 1952 American Red Cross study there recommending U.S. Air Force bases utilize community resources, the WVS had opened six Anglo-American clubs. It said it now needed help from the American Red Cross. WVS promotion of leisure activities for the Americans was at a standstill and the trouble seemed to be lack of cooperation from the base commands. In the words of the WVS report, "It was felt that the difficulty could be overcome if the approach were made from an American and not a purely British viewpoint."

Jessica went, relying on her SRAO friends in France to send her warm winter clothing from the PX stores to wear against the coldest winter in Europe in a decade. All of her reports, she wrote back, she typed with her gloves on. She restored relations between the WVS and the American commands and made suggestions for expanding services for the Americans. They included visiting newly arrived families, providing baby sitting services while the Americans

went on WVS organized tours, increasing informational services and getting more young women to participate in club activities. At WVS request, Jessica remained an additional three months, returning to France in June 1956.

In early 1956 the search had begun for a center building at Nancy. The American military units in the area were Toul-Rosiere Air Base, sponsor of the center, and the Army's Nancy Ordnance Depot and Toul Engineer Depot.

The prefectural seat of the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, and a commercial and industrial center, Nancy had then a population of 120,000. The historic capital of Lorraine, its newer part was largely designed and built under King Stanislas, father-in-law of Louis XV, who left for posterity the remarkable Place Stanislas with its ornate and gilded gates. With a large student population at the city's university and an active France-Etats-Unis group, there was much interest in the plans of the American Red Cross to open a center for promotion of Franco-American relations.

The building leased for the center, at 109, Rue de Metz, was a 120 year old chateau that had once been the home of a French senator. The Germans had occupied it during World War II, taking away most of the furnishings, and after liberation the Americans had used it as a field hospital. When the war ended it was returned to the owner who moved back, refurnishing only enough rooms for family living.

The interior had to be completely renovated and Gladys, using her Chateauroux experience, signed with a French contractor to meet a deadline of May 7th as opening day, paying for job completion, not hours worked. The

contractor met the deadline, just barely, with the workmen finishing in the late afternoon as the military and community guests were arriving for the opening celebration, attended by several hundred people. Among them was Robert C. Lewis, then director of operations for American Red Cross in Europe (he was soon to return to the states to become vice president for Services to the Armed Forces. In at the beginning of the SRAO program in Europe, he would, in his new position, always be a staunch supporter of the service). Arriving early on opening day, he walked around the grounds and seeing an open kitchen window, stuck his head in. There was a center staff member giving the last swipe with a wash cloth to the kitchen counters. He said, "You look tired, honey, but it's going to be all right." The opening was all right, but when it was over at midnight and exhausted staff closed the center, some of the lights could not be turned off. The on/off buttons clicked back and forth, but the lights stayed on. The electricians had connected everything but, hurrying, had bypassed switches to save time.

On the center's first floor were three lounges, one for large group activities and two smaller ones for classes and games. There was a music room where a variety of instruments were available, including drums and electric guitars, and in the back of the house a spacious kitchen, large enough to hold cooking classes. The second floor had rooms for ping pong, letter writing, table games, a small library and staff and volunteer offices and workrooms.

The Nancy center, with some 5,000 American military personnel and their families within a 25 mile radius, proved to be one of the most popular centers

during the ten years of its existence. Barbara Wagner was then the center director, having transferred from Marrakesh, and Madame Eugenie Didier became the administrative assistant, a position she held until just before the center closed.

The next request for a Red Cross center came from the 21st Fighter Bomber Wing at Chambley Air Base near Metz where there was also an Army Quartermaster Depot. When Jessica Hunter returned from England in the summer of 1956 one of her first assignments was to go to Metz to make contacts and begin a search for a building.

On one driving trip to Metz Jessica stopped at the Nancy center and said she would stop again on her way back. When she returned a few days later she said she had tried to call from her hotel one night to tell staff when she would be back. The Nancy center telephone number was 55-66-77. Phone numbers in France then were usually six digits, with each two digits said as one number -- the Nancy phone number was spoken as fifty-five (cinquante-cinq) sixty-six (soixante-six), seventy-seven (soixante-dix-sept). Not knowing this, Jessica, in her best French, asked the hotel clerk to place a call to Nancy at "cinq-cinq, six-six, sept-sept". She went to her room and waited for the call which never came. Chalking it up to the vagaries of the French telephone system, she went to bed. The next morning her telephone rang at 5:05 a.m. and the clerk told her the time. Thinking he had rung the wrong room for a wake-up call, she went back to sleep. The phone rang again at 6:06 a.m. and again the clerk told her the time. Now it dawned on her what he thought the numbers were for. She did not know how to stop him. She sat up waiting for the next call which came at exactly 7:07 a.m.

Studying French at the time, Jessica was not the only one who ran into language problems, but it was not from lack of trying. Learning French was a requisite for SRAO staff in Europe. A few staff members came with fluency, some with high school or college French, and others with no French at all. They had immediately to enroll in a French class or get a private tutor, and practice every day. They did very well because French friends gave a lot of help and because daily usage built vocabulary and taught idioms (it was not possible to supervise center cleaning and maintenance people, take the staff car to a local garage for repair, meet mothers of prospective Jeunes Aides and arrange for French groups to perform at the center without learning something new every day).

At anniversary and other Franco-American times some center staff gave their short speeches in English and French and this was greatly appreciated by the French audience. (One staff member, speaking French before a local Red Cross group, had a mind lapse in the middle of her presentation and, after a pause, said - still in French - she was sorry but she had forgotten the words. "Bravo, bravo," called out the French Red Cross ladies.)

Many American servicemen and families were motivated to learn French and center language classes were always full. Lessons were geared to "useful phrases" so that the students could, with some confidence, hold polite conversations, go sightseeing on their own, take train trips, go shopping and understand restaurant menus.

The next months in Europe were tense. The nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt precipitated a crisis that led to British and French use of military force, with attacks on Egyptian air fields, and to another Egypt-Israel war. The United States opposed the military action and Franco-American relations at national levels cooled appreciably. This did not seem to affect relations at local levels, but the consequences of the closing of the canal touched the lives of everyone in France as fuel and gas rationing curtailed activities, even travel within cities and towns.

At almost the same time the Hungarian revolt occurred and as Soviet troops intervened thousands fled the country. Red Cross societies rallied to the plight of the refugees, operating dozens of camps in Austria. The American Red Cross ran some of them and staff in Europe - SMI, SMH and SRAO - were pulled from their regular jobs to help until the refugees were transported to the United States (where other Red Cross staff worked at Camp Kilmer). More than a thousand refugees passed through Nancy, and French and American Red Cross people, including the Nancy center staff, worked side by side to give service while both the French and American communities collected food and clothing.

In the fall of 1956 another request came from the Air Force for a Red Cross center at Evreux, where the 465th Troop Carrier Wing and the 322nd Air Division were located at Evreux-Fauville Air Base. This was accepted by Red Cross and planning for the center began.

Keeping up with changing military personnel was not so different from Korea - tours of duty were longer, rotation less frequent, but the same need existed to continually interpret and publicize the SRAO program. Center directors met with new commanders and invited them and their wives to visit the center. To get the word to newly arrived servicemen they participated in base orientations. All of the bases had newspapers which published information about center events, and many bases had local radio programs on the Armed Forces Network which were used for center program announcements. The Rabat center had its own newspaper with program information, news on base and local community events and articles on city points of interest. Center staff gave information sheets to newly arrived families and attended NCO and Officers' Wives Clubs meetings and luncheons to talk about the center program and the need for volunteers.

While families used the centers and attended a great many Franco-American programs and special interest activities, it was the daily use by the young, single servicemen that was the center's most important "raison d'etre". The men used the center as their "home away from home". For many who came from the base to spend a day off in town the center was the focal point of their activities. They came in the morning for coffee, checked out bicycles and rode around town, came back to the center with foot long jambon sandwiches and bags of pastries and ate lunch in the kitchen. They helped themselves to more coffee, played gin rummy or ping pong, wrote letters or read books, checked out musical instruments to play or, sometimes, in comfortable chairs, napped.

They went out for supper at a cafe and came back to ask if they could make popcorn in the kitchen before joining in the evening program, and then they caught the last bus back to the base. They had been in and out of "home" all day.

As center volunteer needs expanded, some of these young men became staff aides. They took the regular Red Cross volunteer training course and while "on duty" wore as their uniforms blue and white striped jackets with the Red Cross shoulder patch. They acted as hosts for Franco-American events, took charge of recorded music for the Saturday night dances, made and served refreshments, checked out musical instruments and bicycles, took head count (there was always the keeping of statistics), crawled up ladders to hang party decorations and crawled up again to take them down, ran movie projectors, and sometimes took care of drunks (there were no alcoholic beverages served in Red Cross centers but toward the end of an evening a certain number of men came reeling in from the bars for coffee, trying to sober up before riding the bus back to the base). And once in a while they were needed to thwart a prank, like the spirited young man who sneaked into the kitchen to pour a bottle of Vodka into the about-to-be-served punch. They, as other volunteers, gave valuable service and they were always proud at recognition time to stand up and receive their awards.

Center staff also organized Program Councils. Made up of a representative group - the single servicemen, a husband and wife, a member of the Jeunes Aides, a person or two from the local community - they met regularly to bring their ideas to center program planning and to help identify sources for special events and interest groups.

The Metz Red Cross center opened April 7, 1957. There were 25 staff aides, military wives, already trained and in uniform to greet and guide guests through the new center.

Metz, a commercial city in northeast France and the seat of the department of Moselle, had a population of about 80,000. It had been occupied by the Germans during the war. Liberated with heavy fighting, there was much damage on the outskirts, but the town itself survived, including the Gothic cathedral.

The Red Cross center was in one of a row of elegant three story town houses built at the turn of the century. It had front and back parlors separated by stained glass windows. In the renovation for center use they were removed to make a large lounge area. For safekeeping, the windows were stored in the wine cellar, to be put back in place when the center closed. The only other stained glass window, depicting St. Hubert, was in a small drawing room that had been turned into an office. Center guests often remarked that it seemed a strange place for a stained glass window and, stranger still, that there was only one in the whole house. Staff would say over and over again that there were other windows and they were now the contents of the wine cellar. The old house had many fireplaces and, with chimneys cleaned, they all worked. On cold, damp days (of which there are an abundance in that part of France) their fires brightened and warmed the rooms used for games and music and small group activities.

In addition to the American air base at Chambley, about 18 miles away, and the Army depot, there was also at Metz a Canadian Air Division. The Canadians were invited to use the center and many of the wives volunteered, with one of them becoming the center volunteer chairman.

The Evreux Red Cross center opened May 26, 1957. Here, too, with staff assigned early, a group of volunteers had been trained and were ready as staff aides when the doors opened.

Evreux, an old Norman town with then a population of about 23,000, had been under German occupation during World War II. It had borne the brunt of heavy bombing and, in the path of the Allied invasion forces, was extensively damaged. Now the townspeople had considerable concern about the influx of the Americans, coming back in another kind of "invasion". Bettering Franco-American relations was the center's immediate priority.

The French were invited to present a program about their town, how they managed during the occupation and in the aftermath of the air raids. They displayed pictures and were able to talk about the past and the present. It helped, and next they took the Americans on camera tours of the town and the Norman countryside. For the American part, the center staff obtained films and other informational material from the United States Information Service at Lille, and the USIS Cultural Affairs Officer came to visit the center and offered help with Franco-American activities (all of the USIS offices in France, from Strasbourg to Bordeaux, were always generous and helpful to all the American Red Cross centers). These actions got things off on a right start and soon there were other Franco-American activities - duplicate bridge, a discussion group, a dance class taught by one of the Jeunes Aides and a night set aside for table games, taught to the French by the American airmen.

The following month the Marrakesh Red Cross center closed. By agreement no center could close without prior coordination with the Department of Defense, but Red Cross guidelines were straight forward, taking into account military personnel strength, average monthly center attendance and military changes. At Ben Guerir Air Base there were now only about 800 permanently assigned airmen. Wings of the Strategic Air Command had, in past years, used the base extensively, pushing up base population for periods of time, but were now coming infrequently. The base was 40 miles from Marrakesh and had Special Services facilities, and dwindling use of the center did not, to Red Cross, warrant its continuation. The Ben Guerir command "reluctantly concurred" and Lisette Anderson, then center director, closed the operation on June 30, 1957.

Center operations at Kenitra and Rabat went on, but there were problems. Since independence the French communities were diminishing as more and more families returned to France. It meant the departure of active volunteers. Building Moroccan-American relations was a slow process, and became more difficult as the mood in Morocco turned against the presence of the U.S. bases.

Christmas in Europe was always festive and for the centers the possibilities for holiday programs and activities, if not endless, were enough to keep everyone who participated completely occupied.

First, there was getting a huge Christmas tree, which took collective effort, and standing it in place (through the years more than one Christmas tree keeled over, ornaments and all, and had to be repositioned). There was a tree decorating party and a party to decorate the center. There were programs

on Christmas customs in Europe and parties for children and old people, and open houses and caroling.

For the Christmas of 1957 the Rabat center had, as a highlight, the performance of an airmen's choir. At Metz, in a candlelight setting, there was a reading of "Amahl and the Night Visitors". At the Nancy center open house, music was presented by the Conservatory of the City of Nancy. At Chaumont American carolers sang through the town, ending with songs for the patients at the French hospital. There were special Christmas social dances with the Jeunes Aides dressed in their best gowns. On Christmas Eve the centers remained open long after usual hours so that Americans attending midnight services at the cathedrals could come for "breakfast" afterward. On Christmas Day each center had a buffet with the table centerpiece a Buche de Noel. The center staff and volunteers saw to it that there were more than enough activities to keep the young servicemen from getting too homesick.

As 1958 began there was a request for a Red Cross center at Verdun where the U.S. Army's 4th Logistical Command was located. At about the same time Chambley Air Base was deactivated and with the departure of its personnel the Metz center closed on March 30th.

Gwen Scupholm, then center director at Metz, had the job of seeing to the replacement of the stained glass windows in the town house and to the packing up of furniture and supplies. She had never ceased to be concerned about the windows in the wine cellar, not because they were unsafe, but

because the center's maintenance man kept his own wine store there and, when nobody was looking, periodically fortified himself. Gwen had a vision of his stumbling into the windows, the crash of glass, and the end of a cordial relationship with the owner. Nothing came of her worries and the windows were replaced without incident. The center furniture was stored with the quartermaster depot in town, waiting shipment to Verdun for use in the new center there. Gwen recalled that the center's cleaning ladies, who had scrubbed and polished every piece, were horrified when the storage place turned out to be an old horse stall in the town caserne.

There was more political upset in Europe and the Middle East. The French Army rebellion in Algeria caused the collapse of the French government. General DeGaulle came out of retirement to form a new government and, for the moment, contain the Army's Algerian faction. There was civil war in Lebanon and President Eisenhower sent in U.S. Marines to support the party in power. This action further provoked the Moroccans, already agitating for the withdrawal of U.S. bases, and intensified demonstrations. The Kenitra Red Cross center reported that "Moroccan unrest is continuous and unpredictable. Americans and French were constantly harassed in town, and by highway patrols, during negotiations in the Middle East. The air base at Sidi Slimane was completely cut off during one period of demonstrations." In spite of these troubles in Morocco, both centers there remained open and both had successful anniversary observances - the fourth for Kenitra and the third for Rabat.

During January and February 1959 Leota Kelly, who had now replaced Gladys Tibbot as SRAO area director in Europe, made several trips to Verdun to finalize plans for acquiring a center building, and in March Janice Shepard, who was then center director at Nancy, transferred to Verdun to begin work toward the opening.

Verdun exuded history from every stone, tracking back in written record to the Treaty of 843 which partitioned the Frankish empire and created states that would become modern France and Germany. A town of 20,000 surrounded by the remains of medieval walls and towers, it was the site of the longest battle of World War I in which one million French and German soldiers lost their lives. The two forts outside the town, Vaux and Douaumont with its ossuary, the cemeteries, the battlefields, are a national sanctuary.

Always a garrison town full of French soldiers, Verdun was now full of American soldiers, and nobody seemed to mind. Leota wrote that the town's French Red Cross Committee was "enthusiastic" about interpreting the center purpose to the community and was prepared to develop local volunteer service for the center.

The building leased for the center had been a theater. The large open area where the seats had been made a fine auditorium for Franco-American presentations, and when used as a lounge, portable room spacers sectioned it off for table games and small group activities. An open stairway along one wall led to a balcony at one end and to staff and volunteer offices and work-rooms at the other. Renovation went on through the spring and summer and the center opened on August 16, 1959.

When the Chaumont Red Cross center opened in 1955 it had helped, almost immediately, to alleviate much of the distress the small town experienced when the large American base came, and through the years the center had become an important part of base and community life. Toward the end of 1959 word came that the 48th Fighter Bomber Wing would be transferred to England. With the departure of the wing, the Chaumont center closed its doors on January 30, 1960.

In April 1960 the Air Force asked that Red Cross consider establishing a center at Taranto, Italy, where there was an air group. The NATO mission the Air Force was carrying out there was for a limited period, which gave pause in considering a center, but the situation for the Americans there was dismal.

An agricultural center and seaport, Taranto was described as having an attitude with "vigorous anti-U.S. overtones". The single airmen were billeted in unfinished city apartment buildings that had been hastily converted to barracks and the military families were living in equally sub-standard housing. The U.S. personnel worked on an Italian military base which had limited recreation facilities and there were no plans to extend them.

Because of the mission time limit, the Air Force reconsidered the idea of having a full center operation and recommended, instead, that Red Cross assign a community recreation coordinator on a six month pilot project to help the Americans develop leisure time activities they could continue on their own. Red Cross accepted this proposal and Margaret "Mike" Macdonald was selected for the task.

Mike, who came to Red Cross with extensive YWCA experience, had served in the Korea SRAO program in 1955-56, first as assistant area director and then as director. She went to Europe in 1957, serving as a center director in Morocco and France. She was at Verdun when chosen for the assignment and went to Taranto in July.

One of Mike's first contacts was with the city's branch of the Italian Red Cross which committed itself to the project and "effectively and enthusiastically" utilized its resources to help develop leisure activities. On the American side Mike worked to build volunteer groups and organized a program committee of servicemen.

With the Gulf of Taranto at their doorstep, the Americans had beach activities, and the volunteers planned dances, concerts, tours and holiday programs. A Labor Day celebration was attended by 1,000 Americans and Italians and showed both communities what they could do with combined resources and good will. By the fifth month the military declared the project a success and agreed that what Mike had started could now be self-sustaining. At the end of six months when Mike departed for the states, the Red Cross assigned an SMI field director who, in addition to regular duties, gave the program part time support and guidance. It was Kaye Gilbride. She had returned to SMI work after a two year assignment with SRAO in Korea and brought her experience to the project through the next year.

When Mike left Taranto the command sent a letter of appreciation to Red Cross expressing gratitude for her work. It cited her for giving "seemingly endless hours, nights and weekends" to the project, "never losing her enthusiasm", and ended with, "Miss Macdonald, who soon became 'Mike' to all of us, will be missed."

In 1960 the 17th Air Force Headquarters moved from Rabat to Tripoli, and with the U.S. military population diminishing in the Rabat area, the Red Cross center there closed on May 1st. With the help of Madame Schmidt, who had been the center's administrative assistant, the Kenitra center continued to utilize the Rabat Red Cross volunteers - staff aides and Jeunes Aides. They took over the guided tours in the capital city for center groups coming from Kenitra.

For over a year there had been, on and off, discussions about extending SRAO service to Turkey. A request had been made by the Air Force for a center at Adana to serve personnel at Incirlik Air Base. It was settled in the latter part of the year, and as 1960 ended plans moved forward for this new center.

EUROPE

1961 - 1967

" That first Christmas in Adana we were determined that we were going to have a Christmas tree. I had a committee of airmen and we scouted out the town. There were very few trees in this mostly desert area, but we found three tall, skinny cedar trees in the cemetery. There were no guards so we plotted how we could get one of them in the dark of night. But the day before we were planning our attack on the cemetery there was a terrible storm. A pine tree in a yard just a few blocks from us was struck by lightning, knocking off the top which the neighbors kindly offered us. So, we did have a beautiful Christmas tree, compliments of God."

- Billie McCann's recollection of Adana, Turkey

In January 1961 Quinn Smith, who had been at Evreux, was assigned to initiate the center program in Adana. The fourth largest city in Turkey, it had then a population of about 200,000. Once a Roman colony, it was in the vicinity of Biblical Tarsus and Antioch and near the ruins of castles said to be from the times of the Crusades. The concept of a community center was completely foreign to the local populace, but the Turkish Red Crescent Society, the governor of Adana Province and the city officials had indicated their support and during the next months would provide valuable assistance to the center project.

In February Mohammed V died and his son, Moulay Hassan II, succeeded to the throne of Morocco. This happened during Ramadan, the Islamic holy month when Moslems fast strictly from sunrise to sunset, causing emotions and tempers to rise to the surface. By order of the king's court a week of mourning was

declared and all social activity banned. All Americans were restricted to the bases and the Kenitra Red Cross center closed.

There was a feeling of confidence in the new king and shortly after the mourning period the Moroccan newspapers expressed the view that since the French had agreed to remove all troops from Morocco (they were to be out by October) tensions were easing between the two nations.

There seemed also to be better rapport developing between the Moroccans and the Americans. When things got back to normal the Kenitra center staff decided to have a program honoring the Moroccan Red Crescent and selected World Red Cross Day, May 8th, for the event. The Red Crescent representatives were pleased to come and talk about the services of their society. The pasha and other city officials were invited and the American bases were well represented with the commanders attending as well as servicemen and families. It was part of an upturn in Moroccan-American relations at the center - a far different climate from the days when the pasha thought center staff should be teaching health care to the local population.

On June 4th the Nancy center celebrated its fifth anniversary and an area report noted that there were many highly complimentary comments from attending military and community "dignitaries" about center accomplishments. Many of the comments were directed to Hope Buck for her contribution to the center's success. Hope had been the center director at Nancy for two years and was about to depart on completion of tour.

While SRAO staff were transferred from center to center as openings and closings and other needs dictated, it was not unusual for center directors to remain at one location for the length of their tours (Red Cross tours of duty in Europe were for two years, with possible extensions up to four years). The continuity this afforded with military commands and the communities was invaluable to center public relations, and when staff departed the expressions of respect and affection, as for Hope, made it hard to say goodbye. As Hope departed Hilary Whittaker, already at Nancy as the assistant center director, succeeded her as the new director.

In a progress report from Adana, Quinn Smith wrote that the center project "met with cooperation on every hand" from the military and that the interpretive job had been "difficult" but that the community was willing to accept the center. This was due in large part to the Turkish Red Crescent Society. The society's Adana Chapter did much to encourage community acceptance and the chapter members acquainted center staff with the community and gave advice about the very different culture and customs of Turkey. There were also a Turkish-American Association and a USIS Library in Adana, both willing and useful resources.

The center opened on August 27, 1961. The air base commander and the governor of Adana Province, who was also mayor of the city, shared the honor of officially opening the center doors. The president of the Red Crescent Adana Chapter was unable to attend, and asked the governor's wife to represent the society. He had decided on her, he said, because the American Red Cross center staff were women and it was his opinion that a woman of esteem in the

community should represent the Turkish Red Crescent. About 800 people attended the opening, and afterward for some weeks the governor kept coming back with out-of-town visitors to show them the center facility. By the end of September center staff had presented some 40 programs and the attendance for the first month was 3,500.

While the Adana center was going into operation, the Evreux center was getting ready to close. It had been open for four and half years and in that time had expanded Franco-American relations so well it was Red Cross and Air Force consensus that the base could now carry on community leisure time activities on its own. The center doors closed on September 5, 1961.

Late in the year the U.S. Army Headquarters in France, located at Orleans, requested establishment of Red Cross centers at Orleans, Poitiers, Tours and La Rochelle. In early 1962 a joint Red Cross/Army survey was made which resulted in the recommendation that centers be established at Orleans and La Rochelle. This was primarily based on American military strength in these areas. Surrounding Orleans there were military posts and depots with about 12,000 personnel and families and at La Rochelle about 8,000. Poitiers and Tours had less than 3,000 each and the requests for centers at these locations were later dropped as military planning called for moving from these areas.

The oldest center, Chateauroux, celebrated its eighth anniversary. Jane Wriston was there as center director and would shortly go to Adana to replace Quinn Smith. The assignments in Turkey and Morocco had then been set at one year, so that many staff would share the pleasures of working in France with

the often difficult situations, including summer heat, in the places staff came to refer to as "Africa" and "Asia Minor".

It happened that after Jane's assignment in Turkey she was transferred back to Chateauroux the following year. Knowing now the difficulty of obtaining a Christmas tree in Adana (notwithstanding Billie McCann's success that first year with "the compliments of God"), she told the plight of the Adana center to the military and to the community. On behalf of the city of Chateauroux the mayor presented her with a 15 foot Christmas tree and the base arranged for air shipment to Turkey.

When Jane went out to Turkey Esther Smith arrived at Chateauroux to take her place. She remembered the community relations as being "outstanding" and related an example: "A new staff member drove down a oneway street the wrong way. Brought before the judge, he asked, 'Are you one of Miss Smith's girls?' When she said yes, he released her and told her to 'go home'."

In May 1962 the search for a center building began in Orleans. In June it was found and in July the lease was signed. It was a large row house located on the banks of the Loire, at 2 Quai Barentin. On the first floor there was a large drawing room that became the center lounge. Across the entry hall was the dining room, turned into a ping pong room, and in the back of the house was a large kitchen, easily accommodating cooking classes. On the second floor the bedrooms were transformed into music, library and game rooms, an office and a work room.

In the first floor lounge and in one of the upstairs rooms facing the Loire were huge mirrors extending to the ceilings above large fireplaces.

Orleans had been occupied by the Germans and was, toward the end of the war, the scene of fierce fighting, the battle going back and forth across the Loire, the old houses on the quay in its path. Random bullets struck the houses and at 2 Quai Barentin slammed into the mirrors. The heavy glass did not crack and the bullet holes could be clearly seen for exactly what they were. The owner, proud that his house had these marks of the liberation of the city, did not replace the mirrors. With renovation as a Red Cross center, they were left untouched and were always one of the better conversation pieces.

A city with a population of about 80,000 then, Orleans had been around since Roman times, but its fame dated from 1429 when Joan of Arc, leading French troops, lifted the English siege and rode triumphant into the city. In the main square is a splendid statue of the "Maid of Orleans", in armor and on horseback, and every year in May the Orleanais honor her with a colorful pageant, a parade and a reenactment of the burning of the Cathedral of St. Croix.

With center renovations completed in August, there was an informal opening, but it was French vacation month and a formal opening celebration was postponed to October 2, 1962, afterward considered the anniversary date.

All of the Red Cross centers had guest lists for local community attendance and some gave out guest cards. While certain Franco-American (Moroccan, Turkish) presentations were open to the public, the guests lists included city officials, local Red Cross or Red Crescent members and "friends" of the centers and were used for invitations to the anniversary observances

and other special occasions. The guest cards were provided to a limited number of persons, usually young people such as university students, who related to center activities and to the young servicemen. The Americans could bring friends from the community and some centers had guest books for signing them in. While some men tried to bring in prostitutes as "friends" this was easier controlled than one might think - they were usually recognizable and, anyway, the other community guests pointed them out. Without a scene, staff simply asked the serviceman to take his guest out and return alone (at Orleans a soldier, about to be caught, shoved his "friend" out the first floor window of the ping pong room). The centers tried to keep attendance at a reasonable ratio of 65 to 70 percent for Americans and 30 to 35 percent for the community.

The centers were open to French forces and where there were garrisons nearby the soldiers regularly attended center programs and some of them became volunteers. There was one rule for them - as guests of the center they could not bring in other persons. This worked well up to a point, but when there large numbers things could sometimes get out of hand. Verdun had four French Army units and in the summer of 1962 problems arose. French soldiers started bringing their girl friends to the center and once inside made love in Gallic fashion "as they would on a park bench". There was an influx of young people, mostly high school age, into the center who said they had "appointments" with the French soldiers. These incidents were annoying and had to be dealt with, but there was more to come. One day a French Army detachment coming back from an exercise stopped the trucks in front of the center, all the men hopped out, ran in to the coffee bar, filled Red Cross cups with coffee, cream and sugar,

ran back to the trucks with them and drove away. Using the Red Cross center as a "truck stop" was the last straw.

Helen Jones was the center director and shared the problem of the French soldiers with the American base commander and his French liaison officer. None of them wanted to alienate the French commanders nor did they want to bar the soldiers from using the center. The liaison officer wrote a letter, in the most polite French, to the four garrison commands. It said the American Red Cross center was a "home" for the American military personnel and that it opened its doors to French soldiers "of all ranks in order to promote friendly relations between the two armies." It asked the commanders to remind the men they were invited to use the center as guests which meant they could not invite their own guests, and that the center was not a coffee distribution point. It was accepted by the commanders in the right spirit, solved the problem and did not dampen the attendance of the French soldiers. But soldiers come and go, and later when Charlotte Leedy was the center director there was a whole new batch of young French soldiers who tried the "hit and run" coffee bar caper and she had to use the same method to reinterpret the purpose of the center.

In the fall Helen Strehlis went to La Rochelle to establish a center there. The building found was at 40 Quai Duperre, overlooking the old port and the towers of St. Nicholas and La Chaine which had guarded its entrance for centuries. The center was on a second floor, reached by a winding iron staircase. It had a large open area with floor to ceiling windows facing toward the port. In back were small rooms for games, a library, an office and a kitchen.

A major Atlantic port since medieval times and the last stronghold of the Huguenots, La Rochelle could only be described as "picturesque". The Germans had used the new port of La Palisse as a submarine base during the war, but the city with its arcaded streets and ancient quays was spared damage. La Rochelle was an artist's town. The old port, with its masted fishing vessels against the background of the towers, was a subject for every painter who came (two of the most famous were Camille Corot and Bernard Buffet). There were always artists in the city, their easels set up in the parks and along the quays, and several galleries displayed their works. For the Red Cross center they would be a never ending source for exhibits and for wall displays all through the year.

The center opened on January 12, 1963. The U.S. military unit at La Rochelle was the Port Area Command. There was a military hospital nearby and the headquarters offices in a caserne in town, but the bulk of the men operated heavy equipment or drove "Red Ball Express" trucks moving supplies from the port to other bases in France and Germany. And a lot of them were, in three words, "rough and ready". When they came into town and gathered at the many waterfront cafes they were loud and boisterous and got into scraps that roving military police had to break up. This did not seem to disturb the townspeople who were used to equally boisterous French sailors who crowded the streets when their ships were in, wearing their jaunty red tufted ("pompon rouge") caps.

The men respected the atmosphere at the center and most of them were usually on their best behavior when participating in center activities. Some

of the burliest among them were regular attendees at the Saturday night dances and they did not want the evening disrupted, any more than staff did, by the few inebriates who came in from the cafes toward the end of the evening. They saw to it, sometimes with a push or shove, that their "buddies" sat down and drank coffee until the bus came. One of the factors contributing to the "decorum" was the fine group of Jeunes Aides (including the daughter of the chief of police) who helped to set the right tone.

Among the staff changes in the summer of 1963 was the transfer of Helen Jones from Verdun to Adana. She had been the center director for two years and on her departure was presented with the Medal of the City of Verdun, a personal honor to her and evidence of the high regard for the American Red Cross center held by the community.

The programs that spring and summer were as varied as the center locations. At Chateauroux the center had a circus exhibit. A French staff aide located miniature circus clubs in nearby towns and they agreed to set up their circuses in the center, complete with electric lights, animals and swinging trapeze artists. The display lasted for five days and drew an attendance of over 1,000 Americans and French.

At Verdun the center obtained special clearances from the city to have a Canadian Bagpipe Band parade, a Franco-American scavenger hunt around town, a two wheeled motor vehicle rally and an auto economy run. At Nancy the center had a Medieval Weekend, publicized by hand flyers distributed at the military bases by a knight in authentic armor, accompanied by a page. Activities included archery, badminton and chess tournaments, a feast and a dance, and

throughout the weekend jesters frolicked around the center and there was a strolling troubadour.

At Orleans there was a Hawaiian Weekend with a luau prepared by two Hawaiian families, including a roasted pig and island music and dances. In La Rochelle cooking classes were started and since the center kitchen was so small the agreeable chefs held the classes in their restaurant kitchens.

At Kenitra there was a variety show. The shows had become annual events at the center, directed by Jerry Salas, a civilian who worked at the Naval base. He found talent among the Americans, French, Spanish and Moroccans. He auditioned singers, dancers, instrumental groups and organized the acts around a central theme. Committees were formed to build stage sets, make costumes, print programs and prepare intermission refreshments. The variety show usually ran two or three nights and always attracted large crowds. This annual event had been going on since 1958 and Jerry made everyone work hard because, he said, the local community had come, through the years, to expect a good show at the Red Cross center.

That summer the last of the U.S. Air Force was leaving Morocco and the question arose about closing the Kenitra center. The Navy base wanted very much for the center to stay. There were only about 3,000 Naval personnel, including families, but they had no other recreation facility and had always used the Red Cross center to the maximum. The Navy proposed sponsorship of the center and, with this accepted, took over logistical support on July 1, 1963.

The Navy had not asked for or sponsored a Red Cross center before and had no set of regulations (as did the Air Force and the Army) to cover support of such a facility. There was always need for repairs, for expertise and materials not available from the local community, need for billeting (which the Navy took care of), need for occasional transportation to conferences in Germany (which the Navy did not take care of), need, generally, to give official status to this activity. The Navy always had the good will and good faith to help, but if it was not "in the book" things could get fairly complicated.

Esther Smith was there and remembered how it was. She, like others who started out in France, did not find the trip to Morocco particularly pleasant. She drove her car down from Chateauroux and remembered arriving in Tangier via the Gibraltar ferry: "It was bedlam with people all over the car and the only sign to proceed (after customs) through the mob was a chalk mark on the windshield. The one road goes straight down the coast but there were traffic jams - sheep, goats, burros, camels being herded along." She arrived at the center in the afternoon to discover she was officiating at a reception that evening. And after that she discovered the Navy.

There were no regulations which covered registration of the center staff car as an official vehicle for which Esther needed a "gray card" to satisfy local law. There was also the matter of a license plate. The Navy would not give the car an official license plate because it was not a Navy car. It could not be "red plated" under Moroccan law (for personally owned cars) because it was not owned by an individual. Esther worked on this problem for her entire tour in Morocco - fourteen months - and finally succeeded. "My last victory," she said, "was getting the 'gray card' to leave with Sue Behrens."

This was not the end of the staff car troubles. It was a 1959 Simca and did not weather the heat of Morocco too well. By 1964 the plastic strips around the windows had cracked and fallen off, and the window on the driver's side disappeared when rolled down, not to be seen again until a garage mechanic took the door apart to raise the glass manually. The gears slipped in and out, and later when bags of grain slid from the roof of a passing car and fell on it, the hood could only be opened with a screw driver. It did run, however, and Esther's "gray card" proved it was properly registered. For a license plate it had a wooden board bolted to the bumper, painted gray with many black numbers on it, another Navy innovation which the Moroccan police thought just fine.

The writer remembered the rest: "When we were advised that Maddie Franzen was being assigned to Kenitra and would be driving down from France in a long awaited new staff car, I tried to get clearance to sell the Simca. I ran into the same problem as Esther - there did not seem to be any way to get the necessary papers. Finally a civilian who had worked in the car registration office for years admitted that the numbers on the "gray card" and on the wooden "license plate" were simply made up. There was no record of registration, so there was no way to sell the car. Legally, it did not exist. At this point I was transferred back to France. I understood that Virginia Vierra, who replaced me, drove the car until it fell apart (which it was close to doing when I left) and could be categorized as junk, for which no registration was necessary."

In the fall of 1963 Red Cross was advised by the Army that the Port Area Command at La Rochelle would be phased out early the next year. Like the Metz center, it would be open for just a year. There was no way to second guess these things, but it reinforced the Red Cross decision not to move on the requests for center at Poitiers and Tours where the Army depots were also being deactivated.

Mary Louise Dowling arrived in Europe in November for a six week visit to the centers. She was at La Rochelle when the news came of the assassination of President Kennedy. In Korea the Americans had heard the news early in the morning. In Europe it came in the evening. In the La Rochelle center a Franco-American program was in progress. It was Ann Reed's program and a French riding club was making a presentation to a large audience.

The writer was then the center director there: "In the middle of the program Mlle. Tangau, who worked in the kitchen, came to me, crying, and said she heard on the radio that President Kennedy had been shot in the head. I said I didn't believe it but would find out what it was all about, and I called the base duty officer. He said, yes, there had been an assassination attempt, the President was alive, but wounded. I waited about 20 minutes or so and called again to see if there was later news. The duty officer told me President Kennedy was dead. When the program finished I had to make the announcement. The Americans were stricken, of course, but we never imagined the French would suffer as we did. When we walked outside they were weeping in the streets and came up to us and put their arms around us and told us how sorry they were."

By request of the military the Red Cross centers did not close in the days that followed. The people of France had to express their grief and give their condolences. They went to the U.S. Embassy, the consulates, the U.S. bases, and where there were American Red Cross centers they went to them. Each center, with all programs cancelled and with only quiet music playing, opened its doors to the French. Each center had a book for them in which to write their thoughts and their names. The Chateauroux center sent its book to Mrs. Kennedy.

The La Rochelle center closed on February 1, 1964. There was a brief farewell reception with the military commander, the French Red Cross and community leaders attending. Two rows of folding chairs were taken up by the remaining "Red Ball Express" boys, the soldiers who had livened things up so in the town and on Saturday nights at the center. In crisp uniforms and polished shoes, they sat through the ceremony with almost angelic expressions on their faces.

In 1964, in May, in Orleans on Jeanne d'Arc Day the center had an open house and was crowded throughout the day with Americans and French in the city to see the pageant. The same thing had been done the year before, but each passing year brought more and more involvement in this holiday. The military provided food - cold meats and cheeses and bread for sandwiches and fruit - for everyone, and that now included all of the American servicemen who marched in the parade. Their waiting point was in front of the center where they were delivered to stand around until it was time to form up. They needed lunch before the afternoon march and volunteers made sandwiches, 400 or 500 of them, in assembly line fashion on the butcher paper covered ping pong table.

That spring the center at Verdun sponsored a Franco-American Children's Art Show. It involved two American dependent schools, nine French schools, all of the center's French and American volunteers, Junior Red Cross volunteers, the teachers and a good many of the parents. There was a committee to select entries, a committee to arrange and hang the pictures, a committee for publicity, a committee for program details - all of these with the French and Americans working together. By the time the exhibit was ready there had been so much Franco-American activity that the program, itself, might have been an anti-climax had it not attracted everyone in town. It was the kind of interaction the center mission was all about, and the people of Verdun loved it. Charlotte Leedy and her staff, including Françoise Gervais, the administrative assistant, had carried it out, and when Charlotte departed early the next year she, too, was the recipient of the Medal of the City of Verdun.

At Kenitra one of the most popular tours was to the Roman ruins of Volubilis on the Meknes plains. It was near the holy city of Moulay Idress which, past a certain point, could not be entered by infidels. The tour caravan (usually several cars and a Navy bus or two) drove by Moulay Idress as a point of interest on the way back to Kenitra. Esther Smith remembered one of the tours that year: "Our bus was delayed at Volubilis by an Arab guide who insisted we owed him more money. The lead cars with our guide had gone ahead, so our driver followed the signs to the holy city only to come to an archway through which the bus could not pass. Local police came to the scene and told us to get out or be arrested. We were trying to turn the bus around in a space so narrow it brushed the walls. We looked up to see a line of burros heavily loaded with goods coming through the gate led by a driver with a large gray mule.

They would not stop. So as I was directing the bus maneuvers to get it turned around and stall arrest, I walked up to the gray mule and pressed my hand against his nose. He stopped. The bus turned. The next day a dependent school child told in 'show and tell' about the Red Cross lady who stopped a mule train."

That summer Esther Smith returned to the states and the writer, replacing her, drove the route to Morocco, taking the ferry across the Strait of Gibralter, getting the chalk mark on the windshield, dodging sheep and goats along the coastal highway, and pulling off the road to a complete stop as a herd of 17 camels passed by. The trip started at Verdun on the Fourth of July ("Accompanied by Martha Busse, from area headquarters, we began our long journey, with our first stop at Orleans. We arrived at noon at the center. As we drove up we saw some men on the second floor throwing lighted fire crackers out the windows. We found Janice Shepard, the center director, in the kitchen and I told her what 'her boys' were up to. 'Those rascals,' she said.").

A big attraction for the Americans at Orleans were the chateaux on the Loire. Between Orleans and Tours, a distance of about 90 miles, a day's sight-seeing trip could include Chambord, Blois, Amboise and Chenonceaux. In the summer months some of them had sound and light presentations to which the center arranged tours. Performed after dark with floodlights illuminating the facades, they were wonderful spectacles. Recorded music was background for narration and dialogue by invisible actors, telling the history of the chateau.

At all centers staff concentrated on having special interest groups because they offered something for everyone and provided opportunity to involve many local community clubs on a continuing basis. They ran the gamut from

duplicate bridge to archery and included groups for stamps and coins, chess, photography, little theater, model airplanes, crafts, classical and jazz music, cooking and art, and at one locations there was a ham radio group. For many Americans it meant an easy way to continue their hobby interests while overseas and for others it meant learning something new.

Chateauroux celebrated its eleventh anniversary in February 1965. During the previous six months there had been reduced center attendance as the military picture changed. This, coupled with the city's purchase of the ancient building for future demolition, prompted Red Cross to ask for a military review to determine justification for continuing the center operation. The result was a decision to close the center in June. It had been a part of community life for over a decade and the Red Cross, as well as the base command, wanted to end the operation with as much good will as possible. The top American Red Cross official in Europe, Thomas B. Smith, director of European operations, attended the closing and presented certificates of appreciation to the prefect, the mayor and the French Red Cross. This recognition helped to assuage feelings of "considerable regret". After the closing Red Cross received a letter from the air base commander advising that the base had just received a certificate from the Air Force for second best in community relations in Europe for 1964. He wrote, "The center played a tremendous part in helping us achieve this honor."

Another kind of recognition came to the center program at about the same time. Janice Shepard, who had been the center director at Orleans since its opening, departed, the recipient of the Medal of the City of Orleans and the French Red Cross Gold Medal.

It was toward the end of 1965 that the impact of the Vietnam War came to the American military communities in Europe. Friends were leaving to volunteer there. And then Red Cross staff - SMI, SMH, SRAO - began to leave for the war. The first SRAO staff member to go was Becky Fey who left in November. In early 1966 Jessica Hunter, who had been serving as SRAO director, went, and then Lillian White and Barbara Hudson. SRAO staff who went to Vietnam from Europe would meet more than one serviceman who had been a center volunteer. The writer, when there, walked into a mess hall at Dong Ba Thin and there was the cook, a Red Cross volunteer from Orleans, who had roasted the pig for the center's last luau.

In February 1966 General DeGaulle announced that France would withdraw from NATO, taking over all foreign bases within the next three years. U.S. Forces were to be out of France by April 1967 and began preparations almost immediately for withdrawal to England and Germany.

DeGaulle's announcement was met with mixed reactions from the French people. They argued in the streets and cafes and they came to the centers and argued. The Americans were cautioned to stay off the subject - not get into discussions with the French over their national politics. But it was international news and attracted media representatives from everywhere. Dan Rather, then assigned in London with his TV network, went to Orleans to cover the French reaction. He had gone to the U.S. Army Headquarters there and was referred by the public information office to the Red Cross center where, he was told, he could find English speaking French persons to interview. The TV crew moved into the center and set up lights and other equipment.

The writer was center director there then: "I walked into the center in late afternoon on my way to a dinner engagement. There were blinding lights everywhere and cameras set up ready to film. I had no idea who Dan Rather was and asked him what he was doing in my center. He said the base public information officer sent him, telling him it was OK to interview there. I said it was not OK, but relented and said they could do their interviewing in the center if they promised not to identify it or let anyone hold a Red Cross coffee cup in front of the camera. Then I left for dinner. I wasn't too worried, figuring all those lights would be too much for the center's fragile electrical system. Even running one vacuum cleaner could shut it down. There was an old fuse box high on a wall of the carriage house behind the center and only a few of us knew where it was and what to do to restore electricity - climb a rickety ladder and, as the French said, 'choque' the box - bang on it until the lights came on (the administrative assistant, Claudine Brunet, always referred to this activity as 'choquing the box'). The TV crew had no trouble which I thought was some kind of miracle, and the promise was kept not to reveal the interview location. The next morning I found a twenty dollar bill on my desk with a note saying the money was for the electricity used. I gave it to the SMI field director and told him it was an unrestricted donation from a friend of the Red Cross."

With Jessica Hunter's departure for Vietnam, Ruth Elwell became the SRAO area director and would now implement the closing of the center operations in France as U.S. Forces withdrawal began. During the next months periodic attendance surveys were made and as attendance began to go down the centers closed one day a week. Staff departing on completion of tour were not replaced

and slowly the center inventories were pared down, much of the old equipment "salvaged by sale". When the time came to sell the bicycles, which had been repaired and repaired and repaired, a nominal price was set, they were lined up in a courtyard or on a lawn and were all gone by nightfall.

In Morocco that summer, a review was made of the Kenitra center activities, and with reduced Navy personnel strength, the decision was made to close the operation on June 30th.

At Adana, where Ruth Horne was center director with a staff of three, on October 2nd the center had its fifth anniversary celebration. The Governor of Adana was there, and the Adana Chapter president of the Turkish Red Crescent, the U.S. consul and the base commander. There were musical numbers and a slide show on Turkey and brief speeches. Then the base commander led the Americans in three cheers for the center, "Hip, Hip, Hooray!", which the Turkish interpreter, after several minutes, finally succeeded in translating.

No decision had been made about keeping or closing the Adana center. Earlier in the year the lease had been renewed on the center building and activities were going well with good attendance. There was a Turkish-American teachers' reception, ping pong tournaments, walking tours, square dancing and a Halloween party with a house of horrors and a pumpkin carving contest. Thanksgiving and Christmas plans were underway.

In early November there was a riot in Ankara - an anti-American outburst in front of the USIS office - protesting the presence of U.S. bases in Turkey, mostly led by students. A few days later, on November 13th, there was a second riot, this time in Adana. There was a claim that it started because a number

of Turks had accused a group of American airmen in town of behaving improperly toward Turkish women, but general American consensus was that it was highly organized and there would have been a riot, no matter what. The crowd quickly swelled to about 6,000 and attacked the U.S. consulate, the USIS office and the American Red Cross center.

It was after 11 p.m. and the center was closed when the rioters stormed into the building, damaging the doors and breaking glass. At first it appeared that the wreckage was complete. It was not, but when Ruth was able to get back to the center she found the damage - broken record players and musical instruments, smashed dishes and glasses and lamps - enough to keep the center closed (the only things stolen were cans of coffee and the petty cash fund of about \$100). The base commander, the U.S. consul and Adana's governor were all consulted about whether or not to repair the damage and reopen the center. In the end they decided it should not be reopened and it was up to Ruth and her staff to salvage what they could, dispose of the rest and make their private farewells to their Turkish friends and to the military.

In France the Nancy center closed in October and the Verdun center at the end of December. In both communities there was an outpouring of praise for the center work through the years and much regret that the Americans were leaving. Carl Belliston, then director of operations in Europe, and his wife, Alice, made it a point to attend the closings so that he could personally, on behalf of the American Red Cross, thank the community leaders for their years of support.

The French Red Cross representative who spoke at the closing reception at Verdun reminisced about all the fine activities that had taken place in the center and how it had been a "home" for the Americans and French alike. And then she said, "But life is so made that at a given time everything must come to an end. Albert Camus was saying, 'Life appears to me more and more like a story of farewells.' No, there is no farewell when friendship remains. We hope to maintain with you bonds always so strong and so fraternal. Born during wartime, our gratitude will never leave you."

The Orleans center was the last to close, on March 15, 1967, about a month before the completion of withdrawal of the U.S. Army headquarters there. The writer had departed in January for Vietnam and Ruth Horne, back from her experience in Turkey, had the final center ceremony. "The evening," she wrote, "was kept fairly simple." The prefect and the mayor were there, the American commanding general, city French Red Cross representatives, Ruth Elwell and Carl and Alice Belliston. One of the soldiers played piano selections, a cake was cut and then everyone, including about 35 servicemen and the Jeunes Aides, were invited to dance, to take, Ruth wrote, "one last swing around the floor. The last dance steps were at eleven and then the happy times at the Orleans center were over, and so was the SRAO program in Europe."

VIETNAM

1965 - 1968

World War II has been called "the last good war". Coming on its heels, the Korea War was not a popular war. There were those who had begun to believe that the Far East was not a place for belligerent American involvement and there were those who were simply tired of war. I remember the distress of several officers and NCOs in Korea in 1953, World War II veterans who, as reservists, had been called up to serve there. Some of them were getting old by then and one gray-hair said to me, "Tell me what an old fart like me is doing in another Asian war."

In World War II soldiers went to war in convoys of ships and came home in ships, whole regiments debarking to enthusiastic crowds and marching in ticker tape parades. Soldiers went to the Korean War in ships, too, and returned the same way. The difference was that there were no crowds and no parades. Their welcome to the California shore was a quickly assembled military band that played "California Here I Come" and then packed up instruments and left the scene long before the men had debarked.

Soldiers went to the Vietnam War on Braniff "Yellow Birds", flying through the night from Travis Air Force Base to Manila, and in the morning from Manila to Saigon. On the last leg of their journey they were served hot and hearty breakfasts by attractive flight attendants in colorful costumes, just before the plane plunged almost straight down to Tan Son Nhut or Bien Hoa to avoid enemy fire. A captain sitting next to me on such a flight in 1967, his mouth filled with hot buttered muffin, said, "What a way to go to war". And the troops flew home from the war. No crowds were there to greet them, no bands played. They straggled off the planes and into a country that, at best, detested the war and, at worst, vilified them for having participated in it, as if, in some kind of topsy-turvy world, these young men had a choice in the matter.

- From the writer's notebooks

As early as February 1962 the number of American military in Vietnam warranted the assignment of American Red Cross field directors. By the end of 1964 there were some 20,000 military personnel in Vietnam, but none in ground combat units.

In 1965 the Marines arrived first, landing at Danang in March. Then came the 173rd Airborne Brigade, a brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, the 25th Infantry Division, the 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Air Cavalry Division. Engineer and other support groups came as did tactical fighter squadrons. The number rounded out to about 200,000 military personnel by the end of the year.

It was toward the end of March that the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MAC-V) asked for Red Cross clubmobile service. The request went to Far Eastern Area Headquarters in Japan. The response was that such a request would require Department of Defense approval, but things could be expedited if Red Cross made a survey. There were at the time two USO clubs in Vietnam - one in Saigon and one in Danang. Special Services had a sports program of sorts, a film exchange and library service, maintaining a library facility in Saigon and distributing paperback books to the field. The Army indicated that it would be at least a year before Special Services clubs would be built and staffed.

Quinn Smith, then SRAO director in Korea, flew to Vietnam in April to do the survey and, as well, to give MAC-V an understanding of the logistical needs of a clubmobile program. She reported back that the service was "feasible" within secure areas and that it appeared the best approach, in view of the

lack of recreation facilities, was for the clubmobile operation to work out of buildings that could be used as recreation centers.

On May 1st a cable went from General Westmoreland's headquarters to the Department of Defense requesting approval for clubmobile service at Danang as soon as possible and at other locations to be selected. The cable ended, "From a morale viewpoint there is no finer contribution Red Cross can make to the effort in Vietnam."

During the month of May Red Cross held discussions with the Department of Defense on security, logistics, staffing and projected plans for Special Services. The formal request from DOD to Red Cross came on May 26th and was accepted by the Red Cross president, then General James F. Collins (who had taken the Red Cross post upon retirement as commanding general of U.S. Army Personnel).

Quinn Smith, who had been home from her Korea assignment for one month, flew to Vietnam on June 18th to begin her duties as SRAO director. There were already a growing number of SAF staff there, headed up by Harry McCullohs. Two of the SMI staff were former clubmobile workers - Nell Staples and Bennett Macdonald, both assistant field directors. Nell was stationed in Saigon and Bennett at Danang Air Base. Twelve years before they had been in the first group of SRAO staff to arrive in Korea and now Bennett was on hand to welcome the first Vietnam SRAO unit to Danang. When the time came, she did it with flowers.

But before the first unit arrived there was the matter of finding living quarters. For the most part, civilians then, and in Saigon the military, were housed in hotels and villas. The military located a villa, under construction,

in Danang, about twenty minutes from the base. It had five small bedrooms, three baths, a living room and a porch. A small adjacent building held a kitchen and a laundry. The military leased it for the clubmobile unit and by September it was ready for occupancy.

It would take some time for the construction of a recreation center but this did not affect the start up of the clubmobile operation. Headed up by Carolyn Clinehens and Susan Bauernfeind, the unit staff members were all veterans of the Korea clubmobile program. By mid-September they were working from a temporary office and by October clubmobile service was operating five days a week, with an hour's recreation program scheduled at each stop. Within the base area they traveled by truck. For locations beyond, including Phu Bai and Chu Lai, air transportation was provided.

In the meantime the Marine command had contracted with a Vietnamese firm to erect a large quonset for the center facility, with the military providing the interior furnishings. It took longer than anticipated to get the quonset up and the interior finished, and the center did not open until the end of the year. When it did open there were, almost immediately, structural and mechanical problems. In the damp heat the shelves, cabinets and bulletin boards warped, and then the plumbing broke, and fans and a refrigerator burned out. There were window air conditioners and when they went off the quonset was suffocating.

Like the troops, the girls, as those who came after, had to adjust to the heat, which in typical Red Cross parlance they said was "sometimes uncomfortable". In their view, the wilting, fatiguing heat was not a hardship - the men endured

far worse - but rather a situation that caused them to try harder to stay "fresh looking" and to keep up enthusiasm. From the opening of the center it averaged an attendance of about 10,000 men a month, and the clubmobile runs reached another 9,000.

A second clubmobile unit opened at Bien Hoa in October with Cathy O'Connor as unit director and a staff of one until more arrived. They operated from a tent pending construction of a building that was to house an office and a small recreation center, and they lived temporarily with the 3rd MASH nurses while a billet was being constructed for them. By the time the staff reached five the billet was finished - a tropical wooden building, partitioned into three bedrooms and a lounge, with outdoor toilet and shower facilities. The clubmobile operation gave service to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, Army support units in the area and Bien Hoa Air Base. The service at the air base consisted mainly of serving cold drinks to the airmen on the flight line who worked on airplane maintenance in the devastating heat.

Before the end of the year another clubmobile unit opened at Nha Trang. The recreation center was a tent for the time being, later replaced with a large wooden structure. Operations were limited by the shortage of transportation. Throughout South Vietnam the U.S. military build up of ground troops had been so rapid that supply could not keep up with demand. Vehicles, building materials and equipment for the support areas were all in short supply. The completion of the deepdraft port at Cam Ranh Bay and the ever increasing flow of supplies to Vietnam overcame this in due course. Staff who came later would be overwhelmed by the logistical generosity of the military commands, but

in the early months this was not the case. When the transportation problem at Nha Trang was resolved, the unit averaged 70 clubmobile visits a month.

In January 1966 two more clubmobile units opened - at Cam Ranh Bay Army and at Di An, headquarters for the 1st Infantry Division. Opening these units meant reducing staff at Danang and Nha Trang until new staff arrived. More staff members were coming from Korea and Europe, but program commitments could no longer be met by transfers, and in the states direct recruitment was underway. There was now another need. Quinn had been directing the program alone up to this point and now sent an urgent request for more administrative staff. In a matter of weeks Imogene Huffman arrived to be the assistant director.

The troops kept pouring into the country and by the end of 1966 would double from 200,000 to 400,000. Through that spring and summer more clubmobile units opened - In March at An Khe for the 1st Cav and at Dong Ba Thin for the 18th Engineers, in April at Phan Rang for the 101st Airborne and at Qui Nhon for a support command, in May at Lai Khe for the relocated 1st Division headquarters, in June at Cam Ranh Air Base and in July at Phan Rang Air Base.

Jessica Hunter, coming from Europe, arrived in the spring to work with Quinn for a short time and then replace her as director. Jessica and Imogene were joined by Millie Deason as the third supervisory person.

Living quarters at the time varied from tents to tropical wooden structures to trailers to villas. Those who lived in the villas had indoor plumbing, but the others had outdoor latrines and showers. In and around the outdoor facilities

the least offensive animal life were the frogs croaking on the damp wooden planks while one was showering. The most offensive were the rats that scurried around the latrine areas and frequently entered the billets to explore human living. In between, to a greater or lesser degree, depending upon one's point of view, were the lizards, the enormous water bugs that crunched underfoot and sometimes crawled on sleeping bodies, the flies, and the tarantulas that had a way of clinging to door sills and swinging down at unexpected moments.

The billets were the best, under the circumstances, that the military could provide at the time, and everyone understood this. It did not, however, make the living less difficult. Sheila Otto remembered that the first billet at the 101st at Phan Rang was a tent: "Horrible, make-shift tent quarters, but the very best they had. The piece de resistance for the post commander, however, was that we had an electric doorbell. He said we had to have a doorbell. We would have settled for a wood frame and a wood floor - and what we would have given for air conditioning! But, we had a doorbell."

In Danang where there was really no hardship living in the villa, there was in the spring of 1966 another kind of problem. Through March and April there was rebellion among the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) First Corps troops in Danang and Hue which had been triggered by the firing of the corps general. The Buddhists chose this time to demonstrate in these cities against the military government, drawing international attention to their cause by several instances of self-immolation. Both groups, military and Buddhists, seemed to feed on the discontent of each other and then students added to the confusion by demonstrating, too.

Premier Ky decided to "retake" Danang and Hue by force. It happened that the SRAO villa was right in front of the ARVN military training compound, one of the locations where rebellious troops holed up and where Ky's marines came to get them. It started on Sunday, May 15th, just as the girls were getting ready to go to work. At 8 a.m. they heard the Armed Forces Radio announce that for Americans there was a "yellow alert" and that they should stay in their billets and keep off the streets. Not knowing how long the trouble would last, the girls decided to go down the street to a nearby American club for breakfast. The refrigerator in the villa was broken and all they had were C rations and warm coke and beer. When they got back things were still calm.

Barbara Hudson was there and wrote home about what happened next: "Some of the girls went upstairs to nap and the rest of us sat around the living room chatting. All of a sudden we heard shots and saw troops running down the street in front of the house. Then more shots, then machine gun fire and then mortars. We all rushed upstairs to the safest room - a bathroom - and got down on the floor, clutching each other (there were ten staff members). The firing went on and we stayed in the bathroom for an hour and a half. After a while the fighting moved on through town and we came downstairs. But all during the afternoon there was sporadic firing and we'd rush back to the bathroom. By 5 p.m., hearing nothing, we felt brave enough to go back to the club for supper, and moved down the street two by two. When we got back to the house there was a radio announcement that an 8 p.m. curfew had been imposed and anyone on the street after that time would be shot. So we locked up the lower part of the house and went upstairs to sleep."

On Monday, May 16th, American armed guards arrived to drive the girls to the base where they were told they would stay in the center until the danger was past. In the afternoon an outdoor shower was erected near the center and they were given ten cots for sleeping. On Tuesday the military command decided the girls could move back to the villa. The club down the street had closed "for the duration" and they had C rations and warm beer for supper.

Barbara, in her letters home, went on with the story: "We were all tired and I was asleep by 9 p.m. About 10 p.m. my roommate, Georgia (Brooks), came and dragged me out of bed, shouting to get down on the floor and crawl to the bathroom. A huge battle was underway at the compound behind the villa. Machine guns were going off and since it was night time we could see the red tracer bullets whizzing over the house. So, there we were, back on the bathroom floor. This time it was soaking wet because some of us had taken showers before going to bed. But also this time there were two Marine guards to protect us. I wasn't too scared and crawled to my bedroom to get a church key so we could all have beer while huddled on the wet floor. I did worry when we heard two windows in the next room shatter and a few rounds hit the outside walls, and I tried to remember all I knew about first aid. After an hour it stopped and we all said goodnight and fell into bed. The next morning the military moved us back to the center. It isn't easy for ten girls to live and work in the same quonset, but we manage - we just push aside the cots in the morning and break out the ping pong."

It was an experience, wrote Barbara, that brought home the realization "some of us could get hurt". It was not the first of dangerous times and all over the country the girls were learning the difference between the sounds of incoming and outgoing mortars, the sound of small arms fire through the din of other noises and the importance of following orders when the military went on alert.

In the meantime they went about their business - providing laughter and diversion through their center programs and their visits to military units, now expanding beyond the military enclaves to landing zones and fire bases. They were also asked to meet and serve cold drinks to troops returning from military operations and to visit patients in military hospitals not staffed by SMH. Sheila Otto wrote afterward of "our amazing ability to cope, to improvise (and) to perform under the most adverse conditions never to be equalled in any work we would do at home."

There were bad moments for everyone. Sheila recalls one soldier in a hospital bed shouting at her during a program, "Why are you here? Why don't you go back where you belong?"

But there were good moments, too. One was a letter received by the Nha Trang clubmobile unit from three soldiers who were convalescing in a tent hospital near the Red Cross center which they were allowed to visit in their hospital clothes. The letter read:

Sunday

June 5, 1966

Nha Trang R.V.N.

From our hearts to the A.R.C.

To the five most wonderful ladies we three, Ken,Bill,Chuck, have ever had the pleasure of associating with as friends. We would like to express our deep appreciation for what you have done for us and others like us who are serving in Viet Nam.

We are truly very sorry that we cannot do for you what you have done for us and many,many others like us. We admire you greatly for the many kind things that you five ladies and others like you are doing for the American soldiers serving in any part of the world where peace does not exist.

You have inspired us, and we are certain you have inspired many more like us. Through you we have found courage to go on. Others have also found it as well. You have lifted our spirits up so much that we will always want to help make peace prevail throughout the world.

Because of people like you, we live in a land known throughout the world as the land of the free. Just as long as there are people in the world who feel as you, there will always be freedom. We will always uphold the American standards to the best of our ability.

Yours very truly,

Kenneth Sims, 101st Abn Bgd.

William Presby, 1st Cav Div.

Charles Causey, 25th Inf Div.

The 25th Infantry Division clubmobile unit opened at Cu Chi and another opened at Long Binh, II Field Force, in August. Two clubmobile units opened in the central highlands in November - one for the 4th Infantry Division and the other at Pleiku Air Base under the sponsorship of the 633rd Command Support

Group. There were now 16 clubmobile units with a total of 86 staff members. Their combined center/clubmobile operations were averaging a monthly participation of 216,500 servicemen. While the centers had the bulk of attendance, there were 1,500 clubmobile visits scheduled each month reaching around 80,000 men.

For Christmas in Vietnam the SRAO girls undertook the same endeavors as those in Korea. One big difference was that the girls in Korea were bundled in parkas and scarves and boots against the freezing cold, and the girls in Vietnam were trying to stay cool and "fresh looking" in their blue dresses. They organized decorating parties and caroling groups, had special activities planned for the centers and traveled to as many outlying units as possible.

Winnie Fatooh remembered her Christmas visit to the 5th Special Forces "A" Camp in the highlands where the men introduced the clubmobile team to the Montagnards. This particular tribal group were converted Roman Catholics, so participated in the religious aspect of Christmas, but then turned to their own customs for the rest of their celebration. With the Special Forces men the girls were honored guests at a ceremonial feast. For starters they drank rice wine from a communal straw. They were seated at the head table so had no opportunity to dispose of morsels that looked too unsavory. Winnie told it like this: "I tried to eat everything as was expected of an honored guest. However, there was one dish I did not care to try, so passed it on. It was brought back to me. I put it on my plate and a Montagnard stood and watched me until I took a taste. Afterward I asked what it was and was informed it was a delicacy - smashed leeches."

Margaret Goodrich was at Lai Khe that Christmas and had saved some poems written by Sergeant Stokum who was with the 1st Infantry's 3rd Brigade. One of them was about the holidays:

The holiday season in Vietnam can make a soldier blue,
And lower his efficiency, not what we wish to do.

How can you make a fighting man retain his vigor and vim,
Just remind this fighting man the world is thinking of him.

So cheers for Hope and all the stars who come on Christmas day,
And more cheers for the Red Cross girls who are here with us every day.

Girls who dedicate part of their lives, not just at Christmastime,
To bring to us a touch of home and aid our peace of mind.

So, God bless Judy, "Donut Six", the boss of the Red Cross crew.
Don't forget our sunny Ellen, and our pretty Margaret too,

For bringing the spirit of Christmas to our units both big and small.
You made Christmas a whole lot better, we thank you one and all.

It was toward the end of 1966 that the public mood about the Vietnam War began to change. By early 1967 there were nonviolent protests at home that were to turn, as the months passed, into ugly confrontations and, as the years passed, into massive civil disobedience.

Of course, the Americans serving in Vietnam followed the news of this changing mood just as they did the news of the ever increasing "ceiling" of authorized troop strength. But, while the war was a great big "thing", being in it was an intensely personal ordeal. The Red Cross men and women dealt every day with the problems and concerns of the servicemen and their needs in the field and in the hospitals, and that took all their energy. Red Cross staff in all services worked long hours seven days a week in heat and mud and dust

and grime. They all had to be cheerful about it, and the SRAO group had to be "up" all the time and smiling, always smiling. The work was grinding and at the end of the day these dog-tired people did not sit around analyzing the pros and cons of the war. Most of them had a few drinks, ate dinner, watched a movie and then fell, exhausted, into bed.

One way to cope was to make jokes about everything. A gathering around a piano could bring on the song, "We Are Winning" (we are winning, this we know, for Westmoreland tells us so). It was sung to a variety of tunes and the words sometimes varied. The writer heard it for the first time, shortly after arrival in Saigon in February 1967, in the McCarthy Hotel bar. The tune the men around the piano were singing was clearly recognizable as that of a Protestant Sunday school song, "Jesus Loves Me" (Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so). Jessica Hunter, a Catholic, said nonsense, it was "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star". An argument ensued - about the tune, not about the state of the war.

Nobody in Saigon during the war will ever forget that city - the noise, the smells, the traffic, the black market stalls, the refugees living out their lives on the sidewalks, and the "cowboys" who busied themselves grabbing American watches off American wrists and snatching packages and purses and wallets. The "modus operandi" for them was to ride double on a motor bike - the person in back sat side saddle, one arm looped around the driver's waist and the other free to do the snatching.

One of the victims was the writer, and it is all in the notebook: "I had been in-country about two weeks, having come to replace Imogene Huffman who

left shortly before I arrived. It was Sunday, March 5, 1967, and although we usually worked in the office on Sundays, we decided to take the morning off - or rather Jessica and Millie decided to and to take me sightseeing. I was wearing a Peck and Peck cotton dress and carrying my shoulder strap purse, with the strap clutched tightly in my fist as I had heard several stories about the 'cowboys'.

"We started walking toward the waterfront. I stepped off the sidewalk to skirt some clutter and that's when they struck. The side saddle man grabbed my purse strap. I hung on to it for dear life - I couldn't seem to let go, which would have been the sane thing to do. We all sped down the street - the two men on the motorbike and me, running jerkily, in great strides, pulled along by the purse strap. They finally let go, probably because of the traffic. I was going forward with such velocity that when they let go I fell backward with enough force to be knocked out. When I came to there was a sea of Vietnamese faces peering down at me. My glasses were gone and I couldn't see too clearly, so I just lay there waiting for Jessica and Millie. They made their way through the crowd, leaned over me and told me to get up. I said don't you remember anything about first aid - you are not supposed to move the body until you find out what's wrong. What was wrong was that I had received a terrible blow to the back of my head and had a huge bump seeping blood. When I got up I found that my nice Peck and Peck dress was almost completely torn apart at the waist seam and ripped across my back where I had rather ugly abrasions. About that time an American civilian driving by, stopped, picked us up and took us to the 17th Field Hospital, just a few blocks away.

"The doctor who treated my injuries kept saying, 'Those sons of bitches, doing this to an American woman.' He told me to tell my friends to be careful and not to carry great big shoulder strap purses, and I did. About two weeks later the 'cowboys' struck again, this time getting Dorothy Goebelt, the SMH director. As they snatched her purse, they pulled her into a tree, giving her bloody gashes and abrasions on her face. The same doctor treated her. The next time I went to get my healing injuries checked, he was furious with me, saying, 'I thought I told you to tell your friends.' I had, and Dorothy was not carrying a large purse, so the size didn't seem to matter."

At the 1st Cavalry Division at An Khe there were eight SRAO staff members. That spring Nina Von Wellsheim was the unit director and Dianne Robb the program director. The center, a large wooden structure, was open 12 hours a day, from nine to nine, seven days a week, except for one morning when the girls had their staff meeting. They had four daily clubmobile runs. Two of the runs were to landing zones (LZs) and fire bases, which the girls usually reached by hitching rides on "resupply choppers". Every morning one of the girls went to the airfield to serve coffee to the men departing on R&R and rotating to the states. They greeted all incoming troops, took Kool Aid to the An Khe telephone operators, had a spot five nights a week on the Armed Forces Radio station, did local TV segments to give information about center programs and, in what they described as their "free" time, visited patients at the 2nd Surgical Hospital and the medical holding companies in the 1st Cav area.

The girls had been living in a tent but in April moved to a new wooden billet that was constructed to house the female nurses and the SRAO staff.

It had 20 rooms and indoor plumbing and the staff said it was "beautiful".

The An Khe Red Cross center had ping pong and pool tables, a pocket book library, musical instruments, package wrapping materials, table games and, outside, a volley ball court. On one wall was a large map of the United States with tacks so the men could mark their home towns. There was some type of participative program activity each night. One month these included Monte Carlo night, Carnival night, a weight lifting contest, a pie eating contest and a "wet sponge throw at the Red Cross girls". Center attendance averaged about 20,000 men a month and staff relied on many of the GIs to act as volunteers. They helped organize evening activities, brought in musical groups, came up with program ideas and, at closing time, helped to clean up the center for the next day.

On the clubmobile runs the girls saw another 20,000 troops a month. Their transportation was, for the most part, by helicopter provided by the pilots in the division's aviation battalions who took great pride in making everyone, including the Red Cross girls, "airmobile".

It had been agreed with Special Services that when club staff became available they would take over various Red Cross centers, thus freeing SRAO staff to expand mobile operations. In March Special Services assumed the running of the center at Di An. A small clubmobile unit remained there, and shortly afterward another clubmobile unit opened at Phu Loi. These two units, plus the one at Lai Khe, covered the 1st Division, the "Big Red One". The site at Lai Khe, division headquarters, was a rubber plantation and the personnel utilized the plantation buildings. The girls lived in a small two bedroom villa

with indoor plumbing. A Red Cross center had been set up in a one story plantation house with an outdoor patio. Lai Khe had its share of incoming and outgoing mortars, and the resulting vibrations shook bits and pieces of the center walls and ceiling loose here and there in a gradual crumbling process that the 1968 Tet Offensive would finish off. The center had an attendance of about 8,000 a month, but it was the combined mobile operation of the three units serving the 1st Division that reached most of the troops. The girls made an average of 100 monthly visits, seeing around 15,000 men.

That March a clubmobile unit was established for the 9th Infantry Division at Dong Tam in the Mekong Delta. Special Services had a club there and the Red Cross unit was a completely mobile operation. In April a clubmobile unit opened at Xuan Loc for the 11th Armored "Blackhorse" Cavalry Regiment. By then the troops strength in South Vietnam had reached 470,000.

Mary Louise Dowling came for a field visit, traveling throughout the country to visit the units and meet the commands. Back in Saigon, she met with the top military people and with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, who had served as president of the American Red Cross from 1954 through 1956 and knew the SRAO program from those early days. She was also interviewed on Armed Forces Radio. As she finished the interview and started to leave the studio, an Army sergeant came running up to her. "Say," he said, "Can I ask you a question? How come the Red Cross girls don't serve doughnuts in Vietnam?" The staff with her, who had heard the question a hundred times before, stepped outside and let her go it alone.

By mid-summer the troop strength rose to over half a million. Part of this

increase was Task Force Oregon, headquartered at Chu Lai, which was to become, with its amalgam of military units, the Americal Division. In July 1967 a clubmobile unit opened there. An element of the division, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, had wanted a clubmobile unit months before while at Tay Ninh, near the Cambodian border. It was not considered because clubmobile coverage to these troops was more practically given by the unit at Cu Chi. The commander of the brigade became the commanding general of Task Force Oregon and asked again for a clubmobile unit. This time there was no question about it. When the clubmobile staff arrived there was an air conditioned trailer complete with kitchen and bathroom facilities ready as a billet, and an office that was not entered until the general and the unit director "cut the ribbon". Jessica Hunter reported on it: "The clubmobile office was complete in every respect. In fact, the telephone and typewriter were in place and all the Red Cross supplies had been unpacked and neatly placed in the cabinets." The girls arrived at Chu Lai on July 14th, and with the help of Field Director Bill Hill and the division G-1 had two daily runs set up by July 16th and by the end of the month had made 83 visits.

The welcome at Chu Lai was representative of the respect and thoughtfulness that the SRAO staff encountered at all levels, high and low. The girls in Vietnam said the same thing about the soldiers that the girls in Korea said. They were never treated better, they said, than by the GIs.

Thousands and thousands of men saw the Red Cross girls on program visits, in food serving lines, passing out coffee and cold drinks. They saw the girls when they returned from missions and heard their voices on local radio broadcasts. The girls talked to as many men as possible, but they could not talk

to them all. But the men knew them, meeting or not, by their first names, always used for introductions to crowds and individuals.

Maggie Neitzey told how she got her nickname: "I had been Margaret all my life. One day, after being in-country about one month, I opened the door of the Phan Rang Air Base Red Cross hootch (my home) to see a very young soldier from the 101st. He told me he had been in town and had thought of me and bought a present for me. He handed me a box, got back in his jeep and drove away. I had never seen him before and never saw him again. In the box was a name tag with 'Maggie' on it. I pinned it on and have been Maggie ever since."

There were now 20 clubmobile units in operation, 12 of them with centers. Three units operated two centers each. The Danang unit had, in addition to the Freedom Hill center, a center in the transient area at the airfield; the Cam Ranh Bay Army unit operated a second center to serve the men passing through the 22nd Replacement Depot, and the Long Binh unit added the Post Day Room until such time as it could be staffed by Special Services. The combined monthly statistics of all units seemed staggering. Each unit kept daily logs for center attendance and clubmobile runs, and it was from these logs that a monthly report was completed. All of the unit reports were, in turn, compiled into one monthly report by the SRAO office in Saigon. In August 1967, with 109 staff members on duty, total estimated participation was 316,800, with the total number of clubmobile visits at 2,635. To accomplish this staff traveled 26,978 miles, 17,000 of them by air.

The military logistical support for the Red Cross could not be faulted. It was described in report after report as "excellent". Available air trans-

portation made it possible for the SRAO teams to travel 17,000 air miles month after month during the peak of troop strength. This was not so remarkable considering that the primary transport of men and supplies was by air. The number of aircraft that daily went to and from the base camps kept the skies buzzing. In the divisions where the girls regularly visited landing zones and fire bases, the schedules were coordinated by the G-1 offices, usually matching the movement of the resupply helicopters. Among other things they carried was personal mail to the men, taking the Red Cross girls along and coming back at designated time to pick them up.

The incessant flow of aircraft made it possible for the girls to reach the troops at such places as Phu Cat, Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, Phan Thiet, Dak To and Duc Pho. All the same, getting around the country took a lot of "waiting time". Staff sat at small air strips and large air bases waiting for the right flight to the right place. Once, two of them, bored standing in the hot sun, hopped up to sit on what they thought were fuel drums to wait out the time. They were horrified to discover that they were sitting on drums of embalming fluid.

Getting aboard some of the aircraft was an experience in itself. The first step of a "Huey" helicopter was high and had a rough tread. There were two choices - put one knee on the tread, scraping the kneecap, while someone gave a boost from behind to get a foot up, or, with a giant step, put one foot on the tread, take the door gunner's hand and count on him to look the other way. Some of the Navy fixed wing craft had open ladders that seemed to reach to the sky. The trick, in this case, was to ask one of the male passengers to follow so closely up the ladder that there wasn't a "show".

There were no dull moments on board. Avis Watson remembered riding in a Caribou with "several hysterical pooping cows" to get to a Montagnard village for a visit with Green Berets and stepping "very daintily" out the rear of the plane to avoid the mess. Katherine Britt remembered "flying in a helicopter with two Vietnamese prisoners - an old man and a little boy. They were bound and crouched fearfully on the floor. The doors were wide open and the noise was terrific. By the end of the flight the crew had given them everything that wasn't bolted down. They left with warm flight jackets, caps, gum, candy and money. I just sat and watched, I had nothing they could use (Red Cross note paper?). They were still prisoners, but perhaps the men felt a little less guilty."

In August 1967 Jessica Hunter completed her tour and the writer was appointed as the director of the service for the next six months. And it was in August that Red Cross had its first casualty. SMI Field Director Vernon Lyons was riding in a jeep that struck a land mine. He died on August 29th. There were more tragedies to come. They were never expected and staff did not worry about the danger, but the war would take its toll from Red Cross before it was over.

Elections were held in South Vietnam in September. The Constituent Assembly, elected the year before, had drafted a new constitution aimed toward having a civilian government instead of a military junta. There were a number of candidates for president. The military junta leaders, Generals Thieu and Ky, ran on a ticket for president and vice-president. On election day the Americans in Saigon were confined by a curfew. A large billboard had been erected in the square in front of the National Assembly building for the purpose of keeping track of the votes for all candidates and small men ran up

and down ladders all day posting the results. The Americans billeted at the Rex and Brinks hotels could see all this from the hotel roof tops where they ate and drank and generally enjoyed a day off. The Thieu-Ky ticket swept the country. The generals changed into mufti and were inaugurated in October. It was an episode that bothered the war not at all.

In October there was a war protest march of 50,000 people in Washington D.C. There had been similar marches in New York and San Francisco earlier in the year, but the one that autumn in the nation's capital was not so orderly. The march took the protesters to the Pentagon, and before it was over hundreds had been arrested for disorderly conduct.

For the average middle class, middle American, the disenchantment with the war was nonviolent, but it was there and it was growing. There were young women who came into Red Cross for SRAO service in Vietnam who were against the war and who had joined in campus protests. It should be clearly noted that they went to Vietnam for the humanitarian purpose of bringing some comfort to the soldiers - most of them had relatives and friends in the military there - and not to demonstrate or to air their views. But in the process of doing their jobs, they were finding out about the war and about their feelings toward it, or as one young staff member expressed it to the writer during that period, "to see if I should be for or against it."

One of the staff members who thought the war was wrong was Katherine Britt. She was against war - any war - and today is an activist for peace. But when she went to Vietnam in 1967 she discovered an age-old truth about men making

war. The exhilaration of it - the excitement of risk taking, the thrill of extreme danger, the enjoyment of instant comradeship, the fun of it. Reams have been written about it, but Winston Churchill's one short sentence seems to sum it up. "Nothing in life," he wrote, "is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result."

Katherine wrote of her experience, "I am glad I went to Vietnam. My life has been different - richer, sadder, wiser. I went as a war protestor and I left as a war protestor, but humbled before the vast and awe-ful, terrible, alluring power of war. War changed from being a far-away theatrical exercise to reality, to knowing the names of the men who were killed. I remember the gentle LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) who left a Christmas stocking on my door, and was killed the next day...I remember listening, listening, everywhere listening to men tell their fears and revelations, heartbreaks and hopes...I remember the women I met in the Red Cross and their wholesomeness and patriotism...I remember what I learned of war, of the allure of it, the attraction of living constantly with death. Even when we thought we were safe, we weren't. Nha Trang restaurants blew up without warning. Our truck was shot at by a sniper as we were merrily driving down a quiet country road. At least three times we had to be lifted out of LZs when incoming mortar rounds broke up our little show. You are never more alive than when you might be dead. Unless you are dying, war is the most exciting, exhilarating activity known to man. When I realized that - that war is fun, blasphemous fun - I knew I had to leave... war cannot be fun." A relative close to Katherine died in Vietnam while she was there. She saw him four days before his death.

One of the members of the 1967 September class was Marilyn Schmokel. She went first to "Blackhorse", the 11th Armored Cav. "Our quarters were quonsets," she remembered, "bath and toilet outside, which we shared with the nurses. There were four of us. Our office was a tent with a wooden floor, two desks and a table. There was lots of red dust." The red dust - Marilyn's "lots of red dust" - permeated everything. Eventually it stained the threads in the seams of the blue uniform dresses so that, no matter the washing, it never quite came out. The "Blackhorse" girls were always recognizable by their red tinged uniforms.

There were terrible battles going on that summer and fall. One was at Loc Ninh which engaged the 1st Infantry Division. Another was at Dak To. The SRAO staff members were asked by the military commands to serve meals and beverages to the men going out to such operations, and to greet them when they returned to their base camps. It was one of the hardest things to do. Several staff members, remembering, made reference to the fact that the military doctors and nurses had the brunt of the battle aftermaths, but they hoped their being present at those times provided some comfort to the men.

The battle of Dak To was fought in November and lasted 26 days. The equivalent of a division - the 1st Brigade of the 4th Division, elements of the 1st Cav and the 173rd Airborne Brigade engaged in what the Army described as one of the bloodiest battles of the war. The 173rd fought for Hill 875 and took it on Thanksgiving Day. Katherine Britt remembered that, too. She was one of the Red Cross girls who served the surviving men of Dak To their Thanksgiving dinners.

In December 1967 American Red Cross chapters, as they would do each year of the war, sent Christmas gift kits to the servicemen and women in Vietnam. In a project called "Operation Shop Early" (it began in the summer) the chapters produced 610,000 kits. It was a gigantic task. Red Cross volunteer production workers made the bags. Other volunteers went about collecting the gift items. They enlisted the local newspapers, radio and television stations as sponsors and involved local organizations, groups and individuals in the project. It was estimated that more than 4,200,000 items were gathered. The kits contained personal toilet articles and such other items as small games, puzzles, paperback books, playing cards, ballpoint pens, stationery and voice tapes.

The kits, or "ditty bags" as the GIs called them, were shipped to Vietnam for distribution by the SMI and SMH staff who had the job of seeing to it that each and every serviceman and woman received a kit. The SMI field directors relied on the traveling clubmobile teams to get the kits to the men in military units beyond the base camps and to help with distribution in the huge complexes at Cam Ranh Bay and Long Binh and at the air bases. Everywhere during Christmas week there were soldiers with the multi-colored ditty bags. It was a remarkable feat for the American Red Cross volunteers.

Marilyn Schmokel remembered that Christmas at Blackhorse making "200 red bows with tape on the back to stick on the guys' hats and helmets. We also wrapped red ribbon like candy canes on the perpendicular exhaust pipes of the deuce and a half trucks." Such antics, unexpected by the soldiers, made them laugh. The other clubmobile units were thinking up their own cheerful Christmas activities in the centers and on the mobile runs. The commands made it possible,

by laying on additional air transportation, for the girls to reach outlying places on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Another way of getting around at holiday time was to accompany the chaplains.

When the American Red Cross began to expand services in South Vietnam in 1965, the area staff operated from an office in a downtown building in Saigon, under the jurisdiction of the Far Eastern Area Headquarters in Japan. As the operation grew (at the height of the troop strength there were about 500 Red Cross staff members in Vietnam) and support services were added - supply, personnel and public information offices - it was designated as Southeast Asia (SEASIA) Area with a director of operations who also had responsibility for Red Cross operations in Thailand where staff were assigned at American air bases.

With more staff, the SEASIA area headquarters moved to a villa. It was about halfway between downtown Saigon and Ton San Nhut, off the main road and down a side street named Minh Mang. During the monsoon season the street was a morass of mud. There was a guard shack at the entrance of the villa grounds occupied by a Vietnamese soldier who periodically ran out into the street and shot off his rifle, at what no one ever knew. The villa was not air conditioned and the SMI, SMH and SRAO offices were in a row in what had been small bedrooms. On the grounds behind the villa was a large cistern, a good place to sit, and it was there, in privacy and fresh air, that many conferences were held. Gerald Van Genderen was the director of personnel and spent countless hours sitting on the cistern giving counsel. Dotty Goebelt was the SMH director and Jack Stinson the SMI director then. Jack Gordon was the director of operations.

Outwardly gruff, he had enormous concern for staff. With all his responsibility, he noticed a too tired staff member or some one whose morale was low and always did the right thing about it. After his tour, he was followed by equally caring men - Jack Higgins, Joe Carniglia and Harry McCullohs.

In mid-January 1968 the area headquarters moved again, this time to what was called the MAC-V Annex. It was a three story barracks type building about five minutes' walk from MAC-V Headquarters which abutted Ton San Nhut Air Base. The Red Cross offices were on the third floor. By the end of the month everything was in place, just in time for the Tet Offensive.

As was the national custom, the 1968 Tet celebration began at least a full week before Lunar New Year's Eve with the shooting off of fire crackers and as the end of January approached, each night heightened the deafening racket in the streets of Saigon.

In the week preceding Tet there were sporadic rocket attacks on some of the American bases, not an unusual activity, but this time at Lai Khe such an attack brought Red Cross its second casualty. Field Director Paul Samuels was there and in a building that took a direct mortar hit. He died on January 25th.

In Saigon, on Monday, January 29th, the SRAO supervisory staff members were getting ready for the week's scheduled field visits. Judy Hunter, then one of the assistant directors, had gone over to 8th Aerial Port to get her flight, but returned to the office in mid-afternoon and said no flights were going up country because of a military alert, and staff began to listen to the radio for any announcements about trouble.

Shortly after midnight, now January 30th, Nha Trang was attacked. The clubmobile girls were moved by the military from their villa in town to the base at 2 a.m. A captain gave up his quarters for them and they crowded in six cots for sleeping. As other attacks started against American bases around the country the clubmobile girls were moved in to bunkers. At An Khe, where there were reports that the enemy had breached the perimeter, the girls were given flak jackets and helmets and restricted to their billet. At Danang the girls were quickly moved from their villa to the base. At Qui Nhon they moved from their billet, near the airfield which was under mortar attack, to the commanding general's house.

There was still no trouble in Saigon and all of the area headquarters staff members were able to go to work. Patiently, patiently, the SRAO supervisory staff placed calls to all the clubmobile units to check on the safety of the girls. Calls were preempted by polite operators, saying there were military emergencies, but by 6 p.m. contact had been made with everyone. The girls at Qui Nhon called in to say that, not allowed to leave the general's house, they had been playing bridge since 8 a.m. At the end of the day Red Cross staff in Saigon returned to their billets, there to remain for the next 48 hours.

In the early morning of January 31st the attacks began on Saigon, Ton San Nhut, Bien Hoa and bases to the south. Sappers gained entrance to the U.S. Embassy grounds and three American billets in the city were attacked. With that news, all other billets became fortified arsenals, with military personnel collecting all available weapons and instructing civilians to stay in their rooms with the doors locked.

The writer remembered: "The Armed Forces Radio was broadcasting up-to-the-minute reports about the fighting in the city. I was hanging out the window watching the helicopters fly by taking troops to the embassy (I was living then on the eighth floor of the McCarthy Hotel) when there was a knock on the door. I opened it to an Army major who wanted to know if I had any weapons. I said no, I was a non-combatant, a civilian, and he said, 'OK, stay in your room with the door locked in case they breach the building.' Then he left. Up to that moment I had not worried, having established Tuesday that all of the SRAO staff members were being well taken care of by their military commands, and knowing that all other Red Cross people were safe. Then this guy comes along and says 'breach the building', spoiling my whole outlook."

The McCarthy Hotel was not breached, but the fighting went on in the city all the next day and civilians were not allowed to leave their billets until February 2nd. Meanwhile, the rocket attacks continued against the bases, particularly heavy at Cu Chi and Lai Khe. The girls at Cu Chi literally lived in their bunker. The girls at Lai Khe had to be evacuated to Di An where they stayed in the relative safety of the Special Services billet. The Red Cross center at Lai Khe - the crumbling plantation house - began to self-destruct. The boom of near misses shuddered and cracked the walls and, finally, a direct hit damaged it beyond use.

There continued to be rocket attacks and Ton San Nhut Air Base was closed for a time to passenger traffic. Those, military and civilians, who were completing tours of duty at the time, who had their travel orders and firm departure dates were ready, really ready to go. They included the SRAO staff

members who had arrived in February 1967 and who were now eager to go home to their families, come hell or high water or a Tet Offensive. They had taken the war in stride, had worked like dogs all year, and weathered these last ugly days of Tet, and now had to wait the resumption of flights to the states. Maggie Neitzey was one of those waiting and remembered that when the plane traffic resumed she and others missed their flight because "Tet made the ground rules change and nothing was flying out after dark. No one informed us the flight time had been moved up two hours. It really irked me until I realized it was part of the 'Tet story'."

The heartbreak about Tet for the clubmobile girls was that they knew men, friends, who lost their lives in the attacks and in the fighting. Lois Hartvigson remembered: "On a trip (in January) to Dalat, a resort town in the highlands, we found, when we got there, only a lieutenant and a clerk who worked in his office. So, we had a day of rest and relaxation. I had met the lieutenant a few months earlier when I visited a fire base. They showed us around the town and then took us to lunch at a fine French restaurant. The lieutenant said he felt guilty being in such a civilized place when all his buddies were out fighting the war. The weather was beautiful and we spent the afternoon sitting at a lakeside restaurant drinking champagne and discussing life as only 25 year olds can do. About a month later I left Vietnam during the Tet Offensive. I found out just before I left that he and his clerk were among the first American casualties."

Of that year of her life, Lois wrote long afterward, "Although there was certainly much suffering, pain and sorrow (please excuse the cliches - but they .

seem to be the only words that work) the main feeling I brought back from Vietnam was the nobility of the human spirit and its ability to grow and strengthen under adversity."

With the clubmobile operation at a standstill the girls, when they were allowed by the military to come out of their safe places, went back to work in the centers. They were most busy in the transient areas where large numbers of troops had been stopped in travel. The busiest location was Cam Ranh Bay's 22nd Replacement Depot where staff saw 2,000 men a day. In locations without centers staff went to work serving coffee, cold drinks and meals in the base camp areas until they were cleared to travel again.

On February 6th a new SRAO class of fifteen arrived. It was still considered unsafe to travel through the streets of Saigon because of the continued rocketing of the city. It was decided to billet the girls the first night at Ton San Nhut and arrangements were made with the chaplain to use a meeting room attached to the chapel. Mattresses were obtained from Special Services and placed wall to wall on the floor and there the group slept. They viewed this improvization as a good adventure. They were sent quickly on to their assignments. Some days later the base chapel took a direct rocket hit and the room in which they had stayed was destroyed.

During this time and into the spring the Marines withstood attacks at Khe Sanh, and the build up of North Vietnam troops there and in other areas near the DMZ caused redeployment of American military units north of Danang. Among elements relocated were the 101st and the 1st Cav. As they moved north, the 173rd moved into the central highlands.

By early March clubmobile operations were fully resumed, but there was considerable rescheduling of visits to keep up with the changing military scene. For the time being the Long Binh and Bien Hoa clubmobile units were consolidated. The Phan Rang unit that had served the 101st was closed and the Di An unit combined with the one at Lai Khe. The An Khe unit took over service to the 173rd, and wherever there had been other movement in secure areas the clubmobile units nearest or with the most convenient transportation gave service. It was a joint military and Red Cross decision that clubmobile service would not be given in the area north of Danang until a more stable and secure situation existed there.

At home, the shock of the Tet Offensive, carried into every living room with television, seemed the turning point for the government. On March 31st, President Johnson, in a speech announcing the stunning news that he would not seek reelection, called for a partial bombing halt in North Vietnam, confining bombing attacks to the DMZ area, if Hanoi would join in peace negotiations.

There was throughout the time of the war an outpouring of goods and articles from Americans - individuals, groups, organizations (both commercial and volunteer) - for distribution to the men and women serving in Vietnam. Much of this was shipped through the American Red Cross. The General Foods Corporation donated tons of Kool Aid which the girls served in the centers and on clubmobile runs. Other groups donated ballpoint pens by the thousands, popcorn and other snacks that would not deteriorate in the heat, paperback books, greeting cards, musical instruments, among a hundred other things.

One of the unique ways within the American Red Cross that support was given to the SRAO and SMH recreation programs was through a project undertaken by chapters called Operation Helpmate. A chapter or group of chapters accepted sponsorship of a clubmobile unit or an SMH staffed military hospital and, in direct contact, sent items that contributed greatly to the ability of staff to vary their recreational activities and distribute useful articles to the troops. There were seasonal needs that the chapters met - decorations for all the holiday times as well as favors, often made by junior volunteers. They sent current magazine subscriptions, new commercial games, model kits, ballpoint pens, jigsaw puzzles, musical instruments, playing cards, ballons and myriad other items the units requested, including candles. The candles were for distribution to men at fire bases who asked for them to light their bunkers.

This was a most useful service and greatly appreciated by the Red Cross field staff in Vietnam. Each center and hospital Red Cross lounge had a framed sign on a wall, giving the name or names of the chapters participating in this way (a list of the chapters sponsoring SRAO units appears at the end of the book).

The clubmobile girls used other resources, too, to get information and materials for their programs. They wrote to travel bureaus to get brochures and posters for travel programs, to casinos in Reno and Las Vegas to get colorful posters for Monte Carlo nights, and they wrote to their families and friends for help.

Avis Watson remembered the result of one such letter for help: "In April 1968 we held the I Corps Wrestling Championships in Danang at Freedom Hill center. I wrote home to my parents in Olympia, Washington and they contacted

the A-1 Trophy Company there which graciously donated several large trophies for the weight classes. Men came from all over I Corps, some with special leave as far away as the DMZ. All branches of service wrestled, enlisted men, officers - Blacks, Whites, Orientals. Such cheers, such enthusiasm, such crowds, such pride!"

Freedom Hill center, as Avis noted, saw all military services, and this included the Navy. Jackie Hill, unit director there, remembered that the Navy provided its share of logistical support. About one occasion, she wrote, "We really wanted to put tile down on the floor in the ping pong and pool room, and we got the Navy to give us the tile. We hadn't had it overnight when we discovered it was missing - dozens of cases of asphalt tile, gone, just like that...the mastic stuff, too. On a hunch we sped over to the Marine side of the air base just in time to see the last piece of tile being firmly cemented into the floor of the Marine air wing offices. Those Marines just smiled at us with their looks sort of saying, 'All's fair...'. Imagine stealing from the Red Cross girls!! As the Marines knew would happen all along, the Navy gave us more tile, so everyone ended up with shiny floors."

That spring at Dong Ba Thin Verna Owens was the unit director, with a staff of four. They had a calendar of nightly program activities at the center which included a fashion show, soap carving (the soap provided by their Helpmate chapter), a scavenger hunt which had to stay within the confines of the center, a skit night in which the men took all the parts and a spring carnival for which the men built the booths and then ran the activities. For the clubmobile runs there was another set of programs. These were mostly programs of puzzles,

"brain teasers", and quiz questions for competitive teams, which enabled the girls to make the programs long or short, depending on how much time they had at each stop.

Such programs were exchanged with the other clubmobile units and all staff members had in the backs of their minds a never-ending number of trivia questions to use when they did not have the time or the setting to do anything else. Almost two decades before "Trivial Pursuit" they were ready with questions like, "Exactly how wide is a football field?" or "When a person sneezes how fast is the air expelled?" or "What was the name of the Cisco Kid's horse?"

Such questions appeared in theme programs, too, related to the program subject - sports, movies, television, music, what have you. These programs were fixed on posterboards that folded into the canvas prop bags which the girls hauled with them, even to the fire bases. Once at a fire base, with maybe 25 or so sweaty, dirt stained men ringed by their sandbagged mortars, the girls would banter with the men while setting up their props, many times on top of a shelf of sandbags, the better for everyone to see. At one such fire base, the girls shouted questions to two competing teams and the men shouted back the answers. When it was over, one soldier shouted, "Where DO you get those questions?"

The mobile visits to the fire bases were without doubt one of the more crucial services of the SRAO operation in terms of the morale boost they gave the men. At a base camp, a young squad leader told a reporter, "I was at this grubby fire base waiting to go out again and the next thing I knew there were two girls standing there talking to me. I mean, you know, American girls. It kind of makes the place a little more sane, if you know what I mean."

In May 1968 preliminary peace talks began in Paris. In Vietnam there was a second enemy offensive, directed at the cities, not at the American bases, but it precluded for the time being any extension of clubmobile services.

At home that June there was another violent tragedy and Janice Feye remembered: "Just as Vietnam was the first war to be seen nightly on prime time TV by the folks back home, it was probably the first time that the troops in the war zone were able to view what was happening at home. I was in the Cam Ranh Bay center the day Bobby Kennedy was shot and the news was flashed immediately over the TV in the center. The impact was devastating - tears, shock, anger and enormous depression over such a tragedy. What kind of society were they sacrificing their lives to defend?"

It was during the summer and fall months each year that SRAO staff turnover was so heavy. About two-thirds of the field staff rotated, which meant substantial changes in unit leadership positions. It was a remarkable thing that this constant shift in leader responsibility went as smoothly as it did. One reason was the uniformity in administration of the units. The other reason was the competence of staff. After only a few short months on the job, many of the staff members found themselves with administrative and supervisory responsibilities far beyond anything they imagined when they left home to take their assignments. Years afterward they would say, almost without exception, that the experience was a turning point in their lives. And no matter what they did afterward, no matter what careers they undertook, their thoughts would return to this professional beginning of responsibility, of building confidence and "people" skills, and of learning to "get the show on the road".

But it was a hard way to learn, in the middle of the war with all of the experiences and emotions that accompanied being there. They came away, most of them, patriotically supporting their country, but with the resolve that peaceful solutions had to be found to world problems. They had seen the human suffering of war and wanted no more of it.

Some of the staff members did not make it through their tours. Some left for the same reasons staff left Korea - marriage, return to school, take another job. Some left for health reasons, some because they could not adjust, and some because they had trouble following the rules. There were those who left because they could not stand the violence of war. One of them was Sally Beall, whose fiance was killed there. When her struggle with accepting the war culminated in this personal tragedy, she left. Afterward she wrote an acutely sensitive statement about it which she titled, "The War Got in the Way". "I had wanted," she wrote, "to do my part, to cheer the troops, to serve my country right or wrong, but the war got in the way. It was too big and violent... it ravaged me the way it ravaged that delicate Asian land."

The military, at all levels everywhere, wrote letters of appreciation to the clubmobile units and to the girls individually. In turn, the clubmobile units gave recognition to the military to show appreciation for assistance. One way to give individual companies attention was to name an "Honor Unit" each month and have special activities for the men in that unit. The response of the men and company commanders to this kind of attention was worth all efforts. A company commander of a quartermaster "Honor Unit" wrote to Karen Melgaard, unit director at Cam Ranh Bay Army, "Selecting us as the Unit of the Month

is only one of the many fine contributions you have made in support of our company. The men have expressed to me their appreciation for the breakfast, the early morning formations you attended and the fabulous party that you gave. The various coffee calls were terrific, but what the men really look forward to is your weekly clubmobile visit. The friendliness of your staff, the unending smiles, and the faithful service (make) a truly effective program. We sense that you and the girls enjoy coming as much as we enjoy your visits. You have greatly increased the morale of this unit and, no doubt, countless others."

For the most part, the health of the staff was good. There had been some minor injuries and the usual ailments like colds and flu and the effects of fatigue, but there had been no major accidents or injuries since the inception of the program in 1965. This was a kind of miracle, all things considered. The Special Services club program had lost a staff member in a plane crash in 1967 and it was always on the minds of supervisory staff that something could happen. It did in September 1968. Linda Hall and Georgette DeRoche were on a scheduled clubmobile run from Phu Loi to Quan Loi. The weather conditions were not the best and the helicopter in which they were riding was flying low level. It was hit by ground fire and a bullet struck Linda in the thigh. It was, to the relief of all, a flesh wound, with no damage to the bone. She was to complete her tour that month, and so was evacuated to the states for convalescence, and recovered completely. It was the only instance in SRAO of injury from hostile fire. The air safety record continued to be excellent and the girls were still traveling an average of 17,000 air miles a month.

There were more changes in clubmobile unit operations. The Long Binh unit closed its center as a Special Services club opened there. At Cam Ranh Air Base, a second center was opened on the west side of the huge base to give more complete recreational service. The An Khe clubmobile unit was cleared to travel north to Quang Tri and now made twice weekly visits there.

In the central highlands the Pleiku clubmobile unit, in addition to serving the Sub Area Command and Pleiku Air Base, traveled to Ban Me Thuot, Dak To and Kontum as well as to engineer job sites and fire bases. When it was not possible to get to forward locations because of military operations, they went to Special Forces camps and visited MAC-V advisory teams. This was the monsoon season in the highlands, a time when the roads became sloughs of mud. If the red dust of Xuan Loc permeated everything, so did the reddish-brown mud of the highlands. It splattered on clothes and sucked on shoes and splashed into open jeeps from spinning tires and could coat the back seat occupants in nothing flat if they were not covered by ponchos. Leather loafers, never dry, cracked and rotted. As a solution, the girls were authorized to wear tennis shoes. About the loafers, Linda Goettman remembered that the Vietnamese billet maids insisted on washing them. "We could never get them to stop," Linda recalled, "and leather does shrink."

Besides the tennis shoes, there were other departures from strict uniform wear. Culotte uniforms, in the same material as the blue dresses, were issued to the girls and made it easier to climb in and out of planes and trucks. Blue head scarves were authorized to hold down hair against the turbulence of the helicopter blades and "floppy" hats were issued to wear against the blazing sun.

In the fall of 1968 changes continued. The Phu Loi clubmobile unit closed and service was consolidated at Lai Khe. The Bien Hoa unit reopened as Army groups expanded there, now including the 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division which had arrived in February to fight in the battle for Hue. At Danang the Marine command took over running the center in the transient area, freeing clubmobile staff to expand service in the Quang Tri area.

President Johnson ordered a total bombing halt of North Vietnam on November 1st while peace negotiations went on, still in the preliminary stage. But there was no let up in the ground war.

At Christmas the Red Cross chapters again sent thousands of gift kits - ditty bags - to Vietnam, and SRAO staff, as before, helped the SMI field directors with their distribution.

That Christmas Mary Blanchard was at the 4th Infantry Division and remembered, "We were, like all other days, set to go clubmobiling over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, but no choppers. Someone had sent us in the mail a Santa suit, so I suggested that I dress up as Santa, pillows and all. We convinced the commanding general that the guys needed a lift for the holidays and he lent us his two helicopters to visit as many fire bases as we could reach in one day. So, off we went, me dressed as Santa, with ditty bags to hand out. Santa with his elves coming in a chopper from the sky was the greatest thrill to those guys. They cheered and yelled and ran to greet us. We got to ten fire bases and not only did Santa and the elves give out ditty bags, but almost every guy sat on Santa's lap and whispered what he wanted for Christmas - a shared secret between Santa and the troops. I was totally exhausted and very

hot with the extra padding and the whiskers, but it was a time I shall never, ever forget. It made the meaning and joy of Christmas come alive in this heart. Even now, I still get cards from those I keep in touch with, with the heading, 'Dear Santa'."

Linda Goettman was at Chu Lai on that Christmas Day: "We were given exclusive use of three choppers for the day and each pair (there were six staff members) of us hit the 11th Brigade, the 196th Brigade and the 198th Brigade. Carol Krupp and I had the 198th. Our second stop was a large LZ with several units. We intended to spend a couple of hours there and then go on to several other LZs. But our chopper was pulled for a combat assault and we ended up spending about four hours there. We must have served 150 men their dinners - turkey and all the trimmings. At the end of the day we'd been to most of the LZs, and convinced the pilots to take us to a Special Forces camp we had been trying to get transportation to for weeks. Enroute back to Chu Lai the pilots informed us we were invited to dinner at the brigade commander's mess. The 198th Brigade headquarters was across Highway 1 from Americal Division headquarters and we were cautious about the restriction of not going out the division gate after 6 p.m. The brigade commander assured us that he would have a chopper fly us over the highway after dinner!"

As the year ended, South Vietnam had agreed to join in the Paris peace talks with the United States and North Vietnam.

VIETNAM

1969 - 1972

"You'd never believe how impossibly difficult it is for me to write a letter to someone I've only spoken to once! But I just wanted you to know I wasn't just making 'GI conversation'. I really enjoyed sitting there with you. Crazy, but I sure smiled for a couple of days afterward.

You girls really impress me. You know you were the third one I'd seen in-country. The other two times were at some of the most out-of-the-way LZs you could imagine. I quite honestly admire the strength of character you girls display. May God bless you, Jenny, and watch over you for your efforts and personal sacrifice."

- From a letter written by a GI to Jennifer Young

The Vietnam War had now become the longest war in U.S. history. Richard Nixon, inaugurated as president, had promised to end it and in the coming months would announce the beginning of troop withdrawals.

The North Vietnam forces launched a new offensive toward the end of February 1969, and by the time the fighting had subsided in April U.S. combat deaths surpassed the number killed in the Korean War.

Larry Young was transferred from Cam Ranh Bay to Chu Lai as the clubmobile unit program director during this time. On her first day there she visited the hospital wards and wrote home, "They were almost full due to the recent increased enemy efforts. This was my first contact with men recently wounded in combat and I have been affected deeply by the conversations we had. These guys are very young, and yet also very brave and proud of their individual sacrifices. Many of them have their purple hearts pinned on their pajamas.

I know how much just a quick bedside visit means to them and I hope to go over there as often as possible."

At Danang that April a bomb dump explosion destroyed the Red Cross Freedom Hill center. The Marines moved quickly to provide a temporary facility while construction began on the original site for a new center which opened in the summer.

There were clubmobile unit changes. Two opened and two closed. The new units were at Tuy Hoa Air Base and at Phu Bai (Camp Eagle) where the 101st was now deployed. The clubmobile units at 11th Armored Cav and at Dong Ba Thin were closed, with other units picking up service to these areas.

SRAO had an authorized table of organization of 130 staff members, but that spring there were only 103 on duty and this figure continued to fall through the summer, making a severe staff shortage that imposed extra work on everyone. In spite of this, morale did not seem to suffer and the supervisory staff, now headed again by Quinn Smith, saw to it that scheduled R&Rs were kept. Set up under the same plan as in Korea, the leave out of the country provided for two R&Rs during the year's tour. The choices for R&R were almost as exciting as going to one of them. Australia had been added to the list which included Bangkok, Manila, Tokyo, Taipeh, Singapore, Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong.

To fly out of the war zone to, say, Hong Kong, and check into one of the best hotels, the Mandarin or maybe the Peninsula, dine on gourmet food at Gaddis and go sightseeing and shopping was just short of Heaven. Heaven was a bathroom, a luxurious bathroom. Every girl who went to Vietnam had a "latrine story" or a "getting clean" story and to be for a short time where one could

"go" whenever and soak in a sudsy tub, that was Heaven.

Jennifer Young remembered a "getting clean" story. She had been to Phan Thiet where she was drenched with salt spray when the jeep in which she was riding along the beach came too close to a wave. And then she was spattered with "misty black specks" which turned out to be tar and covered her skin and blue uniform dress. When she returned to her home base at Dong Ba Thin, to the billet, she got in the shower, shampooing her hair and soaping her body. Then the water in the holding tank ran out and there was to be no more until noon the next day. "In order to get the shampoo out of my hair," she said, "we melted down ice cubes and I just had to let the soap kind of dry on my skin until the next day."

Finding a latrine when one wanted to "go" was another kind of problem and staff learned to drink as little liquid as possible and to "hold it". Jenny said she had written home that her goal was "to go 12, maybe 14 or 16, maybe 18 hours without needing to use the facilities." The girls called it "bladder power". Jenny remembered that Linda Sullivan's bladder power was "amazing". Linda told her that her philosophy about it was, "mind over matter - if you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

Another trouble was that where there was a latrine, using it usually turned into a production. Someone had to check it out to make sure it was vacant and then someone had to stand guard while the girls were using it, and there were not a lot of places where the latrines were sufficiently private.

Linda Goettman remembered the officers' latrine at LZ West (196th Brigade, Americal Division). "It was on the side of a mountain, facing a drop-off. The front was only screen, providing ventilation and a lovely view. Carol Krupp and I were sitting there, looking out over the valley and feeling very secure when a LOH (light observation helicopter) flew by, supposedly to land at the LZ. However, they flew around and came back to hover in front of our picture window and wave! It happened that the next week we both made the same run and found the latrine had been completely covered with tarps with a big red cross painted on it. We used it in complete darkness and stifling heat, but this time feeling it was really private."

Claudia Sudds was at Long Binh when she wrote home about "getting clean":

"The guys, as usual, are great and I have been to such good places all week, but today will leave a mark on my memory. Nancy and I went to Fire Base Marge. I had been there before but Nancy had not. I really like the base and the guys. FB Marge is in a rubber plantation - very small and very muddy. We got off the chopper and I was leading Nancy through the puddles when I came to a really narrow path with a huge puddle on each side. I said to Nancy I didn't think we could make it through, but I looked up and all the guys were watching us because news that the 'Donut Dollies' had come had already spread. I decided to make it - slick as glass - slipped and landed on my bottom in mud up to my waist.

"Well, I remembered how others had reacted when they slipped, so I tried to play it cool, laughed and jumped right up...I was solid mud from my waist down. But now to prove how great our American GI is - they laughed and ribbed

me, but were very concerned. They insisted that I take a shower, so they hauled water, a clean set of fatigues and a towel to the shower. It was a contraption made for men, only private from the waist down. They got a poncho liner and Nancy stood and held it for my privacy.

"Then, if that wasn't enough, we couldn't get the shower to work and the water came out in a trickle, making the shower extra long. When I put the fatigues on they just hung - I mean, this girl was a sight. The 1st sergeant took it upon himself to wash out my slip and dress. He had to change the water three times before my clothes were clean. Then he made a clothes line and hung them out to dry - my yellow panty/petti slip flapping in the wind on Fire Base Marge, out in the middle of nowhere. There were no clothes pins, so the clothes kept falling off the line and got all muddy again, and the sergeant washed them again and finally just laid them over a bunker.

"Then Charlie Company came in after three days in the field. The men were dirty, hot and tired. As soon as I saw them I went over to say 'Hi', but before I could get there the men ran over and said, 'You missed Claudia's fall in the puddle.' When our chopper came back five hours later the men had made another path and escorted us to it. And when Nancy and I got back to headquarters, two of the guys said, 'OK, which one of you slipped?' The news had traveled fast."

Claudia added in her letter that there had been no morale problem that day at Fire Base Marge, and that her tumble in the mud was "well worth the ribbing."

As in Korea, the SRAO units included birthday card distribution in their activities. Linda Goettman recalled, "We would get lists from the various companies with names and birth dates. I remember Pat Reid being in charge of organizing it and I can remember sitting around as a group signing our names to 'this month's' birthday cards. I just received (September 1984) a letter from a guy who had received one of the cards in August 1969 signed by seven of us. He said his letter was a belated thank you to us and that the card was one of his prized souvenirs of Vietnam."

For the most part, new arrivals worried about the programs, not sure, even with the Washington training behind them, just how they were going to go about presenting them and what kind of reaction they would get from the men, especially those coming and going on military missions. The girls understood very well that without these participative activities they could not reach large numbers of troops and that in the support areas where there was boredom and dragging time their hour visits took up a pleasant space in the day. At the LZs and fire bases they had to be in tune with the mood. One of the difficult things, Ann Alloway had remembered, was to know when to pull out a program and get some laughter going or to "just sit and talk", which was likely to be the right thing to do when the men had just returned from a mission.

But there were instances when the right thing to do was the program. Joann Weesner told of such a time: "While stationed in Danang, six of us visited a Marine fire base for Christmas. A few days later it was attacked by snipers and seven or eight men were killed. Three days after the attack two of us visited the fire base again. Morale was low because of the loss and this

sad Christmas away from home. But we opened our bag of tricks and probably did our best routine ever. I really think it helped. So did the young lieutenant in charge because a few days later I received a letter from him. It was addressed simply to 'Joann, ARC, Freedom Hill'. The letter thanked us for enduring the conditions, the danger and all the rest of being in Vietnam, so that we could make things a little easier, a little better for the men."

Jennifer Young commented on sometimes hearing the phrase "silly games" from the men. "At first it appeared that it was just 'tolerance' of these girls in their blue dresses and with their games. But most did not realize how 'into' the games they got. Here is a common scenario: 'You know, we play these games just to be polite...by the way, what's the game going to be next week?'. "

In July 1969 President Nixon announced the withdrawal of 25,000 troops by the end of August. The Vietnamization of the war was beginning - what the Army called the "New Look" - and the involvement of the American forces was, if slowly, moving toward an end. The 9th Division was the first to go and the clubmobile unit at Dong Tam closed on August 19th.

At the same time a clubmobile unit was established at Phuoc Vinh to serve the redeployed 1st Cavalry Division. The staff living quarters were two air conditioned trailers and nearby was, for the time being, a make-shift office.

In early September the Bien Hoa clubmobile unit again began operating a center. Hannah Crews, from Thomasville, North Carolina, who was in the June

class and had arrived in Vietnam on July 2nd, was assigned to the Bien Hoa unit. One evening in late September she left by jeep from the center which she had just closed. As the jeep went down an incline she fell out, striking her head on the ground. She suffered a skull fracture. There was to be no recovery and on October 2nd she died. It was the first time in the history of the SRAO program that a staff member had died in an overseas accident. It was a sad time for the service. The unthinkable had happened to Hannah and to her family. As many others in SRAO, she came from a "Red Cross family". Her mother was executive secretary of the Thomasville Chapter.

If there was something to take heart in, it was that American involvement in Vietnam continued to wind down. As troops left the clubmobile staff members were there, whenever possible, to see them off. Elsie Wright was then unit director at Danang, having transferred from her tour in Korea, and when a contingent of the 1st Marine Division departed she and the Danang staff saw the men off. A few days later she received the following letter from the commanding general:

9 October 1969

Dear Miss Wright,

This is to thank you and your young ladies for a sterling performance.

On 6 October, some 900 members of this Division loaded aboard the USS IWO JIMA from Deep Water Piers for the long voyage home. These were all Marines completing over 12 months in combat. You may remember the day - it was, like today, wall-to-wall rain! In order to make very sure that everyone was there in plenty of time, as we are wont to do, it worked out that everyone stood in driving rain for 3 - 4 hours. I don't claim this is a hardship, for they were going home, but it was wet - real wet!

Among those not going home but who stayed throughout this deluge to let these young Americans know that their service in Vietnam was known and appreciated were eight young ladies of the Red Cross. They stayed throughout the driving rain, serving coffee and donuts and talking with these drenched Marines. There was a touch of reality and home which these Marines needed and deserved.

For being there, we honor them. For their unfailing good humor and their perseverance we applaud and are most grateful. I very much regret to think that these men will not, on debarking in the U.S., receive the honor they deserve for having followed the flag with such fidelity. At least we can all be sure that they left Danang knowing that somebody cared. A large part of this was the presence of those gracious young ladies of the American Red Cross.

I hope you will thank them for me and for all the members of the 1st Marine Division (Reinforced). When our turn comes, we would like to leave the same way - without the rain, perhaps, but certainly with the Red Cross!

Thank you and good luck.

Sincerely,
Ormond R. Simpson
Major General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding General
1st Marine Division (Rein), FMF

P.S. The above is not based on staff reports. I was there - and also wet!

At home, on October 15th, millions observed Vietnam Moratorium Day with prayer vigils, candlelight processions and mass gatherings. This was followed on Veterans' Day by demonstrations supporting the war, and then on November 14th by a second Vietnam Moratorium Day with a "March Against Death" in Washington D.C. and the next day, in the capital, a gathering of 250,000 people protesting the war.

That same week in Vietnam Anne Smyth and Christy Sullivan were on a clubmobile run from Danang to Quang Tri that involved, Anne recalled, "flying there by C-130, spending two nights in a 'hootch' and traveling by helicopter and jeep to visit the men in the field."

Their first stop was at Fire Base Fuller to visit 5th Infantry Division men. The fire base was located near the DMZ on a rocky peak on top of Dong Ha mountain. When they arrived the commanding officer asked them to forego the program and, instead, tour the perimeter to visit the men.

Anne recalled, "We found this awkward at first since small talk under the circumstances seemed inappropriate and these men were not used to having Red Cross girls visit. However, the men were so naturally American and interested in showing us their innovations that we soon felt at ease. The perimeter cut an irregular circle around the top of the mountain. We marveled as the men proudly displayed their cave-like homes dug into the side of the rugged peak. Bunk-like beds were cut into the rock and clay and cushioned by sleeping bags, poncho liners and duffle bags. The more creative had shaped shelves into the dirt walls for personal items, but many dwellings were only large enough to crawl into. Sandbags covered the bunkers, providing protection from the rain and other not so natural elements. This visit was followed by several stops to isolated units in the field where our chopper dropped messages and needed supplies.

"Christy and I spent that night in a rugged 'hootch' containing only beds, ice cold water from a hose on the floor and a latrine (indoors, at least). We showered from the hose and felt like we were really roughing it. But remembering the men on the mountain put our inconveniences in proper perspective.

"The next day we were dropped at a fire base of the 'Big Red One', the 1st Division. Everything was underground with only sandbagged mounds, tanks, APCs (armored personnel carriers), and artillery in view. Making our way across the camp with the chaplain, I stepped directly down into a urinal which, thankfully, had been rather recently dug. My embarrassment overshadowed any pain I might have felt and gave the men something to laugh about. These men had returned to their fire base only the day before after a month in the bush. They were enjoying showing us their creations with C rations when they were alerted to assist two companies in trouble nearby. Within seconds they were armed and ready, running to choppers that sped them to combat only a few miles away. Christy and I spent the remainder of the afternoon and evening down in the S-1 bunker listening to communications from the field. In military fashion the killed and wounded in action were called in on the radio. As the situation worsened it became apparent that a chopper was unavailable to take us back to the base camp, so we made tentative plans to spend the night. Finally, at 10:30 an APC carried us to a chopper pad where we were lifted off into eerie blackness. This strange flight returned us to our base camp under 'red alert' and we were hustled quickly into a bunker to await the 'all clear'. When finally we slept, it was with the knowledge that there were others not so fortunate on this night, November 12, 1969, in Quang Tri Province."

As in the preceding years, military transportation during the Christmas holidays enabled the clubmobile teams to reach a maximum number of military units. The Chu Lai clubmobile unit members highlighted their Christmas activities with two days of caroling at the LZs. Members of the Americal

Division band accompanied them to present 17 caroling programs. A headquarters office duplicated 2,000 copies of a carol book so that the program could be a real sing-along.

Rene Johnson, with the Cu Chi unit that Christmas, remembered a visit to Nui Ba Den, the Black Virgin Mountain, located near Tay Ninh, where there was a radio unit and various detachments of the 25th, 1st Cav and 1st Divisions. It was one of the favorite stops for the clubmobile unit, and Rene recalled that because of their isolated location the men received a good deal of publicity from the press. The result at holiday time was their receiving many gift packets from civic and social groups back home. This was her recollection:

"For the Christmas holidays of 1969, the clubmobile unit at Cu Chi had put together a revised edition of 'Charlie Brown's Christmas' (major credit going to Marrilee Shannon for both script writing and masks), which we took 'on the road'. All nine of us visited various units to present this - in civilian clothes, yet! (Yes, permission had been received from Saigon to fly together so clad!!). Naturally, Nui Ba Den was on our list of stops for Christmas Day, and the commanding officer contacted us to ask if we could come there first to help pass out the mountain of gifts piled in the mess hall and to have breakfast with the men. We were quite flattered and arranged our schedule to accommodate this request.

"Little did we know that the real intent was to give US a gift. Bright and early on Christmas morning, Santa led us over to the cutest little building and Pat Reid, our unit director, cut the ribbon on our very own outhouse -

built with ceiling high wood walls (most were wood to the waist and then screened) and painted 'blushing pink' inside. No longer would we have to ask the men at Nui Ba Den to hang poncho liners on our behalf and then stand guard. All we would have to do would be go to the S-1 office and ask for the key to the padlock, enter and do our thing! (However, even with such luxurious accommodations, the day I found several issues of Playboy beside the seat I felt compelled to leave a note of thanks, but explain that we really didn't have the time to read while we were there)."

The girls themselves sometimes had a hard time away from home at Christmas and experienced a little depression of their own. Debby Griffith recalled feeling homesick and a little depressed on Christmas Day, having, with her partner, spent two days away from Bien Hoa making clubmobile visits. She wrote, "The last unit we were to stop at that day had undergone heavy losses of men over the past few months. We were hesitant to spread cheer where it might not be wanted. On arriving at the mess hall, we walked in. There, dressed in civilian clothes, with the Christmas tree shining bright, was the full company of soldiers. They all stood and clapped for us. For the first time in front of troops I had tears in my eyes."

In January 1970 the withdrawal of combat troops continued with the departure of the 1st Infantry Division. The Lai Khe unit closed. Other withdrawals caused the closing of the clubmobile units at Pleiku Sub Area Command and at Nha Trang. Then came the redeployment of the 4th Division to An Khe, with consolidation of clubmobile service there for the central highlands.

At the same time, the An Khe Red Cross center closed as a Special Services club opened there.

On April 20th President Nixon announced withdrawal of an additional 150,000 troops from Vietnam by early 1971. A matter of days later he announced that American and ARVN troops had launched a major drive into Cambodia. This news sparked further protests on college campuses. The May 4th shooting by National Guardsmen at Kent State University, resulting in the death of four students, set off a chain of events that included a bloody confrontation between war protesters and construction workers in New York City and a demonstration of some 100,000 in Washington D.C. It was, by far, the worst time of violence since the anti-war movement began.

This stormy dissension at home took its toll on the morale of the servicemen in Vietnam, already eroded by a no-win attitude with the ongoing withdrawal of combat units and exacerbated by the spreading use of drugs. The sinking morale made for a severe and difficult set of problems for the military commands.

Along with a lot of other Red Cross workers, the clubmobile staff had to try harder. They had to be more innovative, more creative with their programs, they had to keep up their cheerfulness and to keep up their own spirits. Sometimes spirit lifting came from completely unexpected sources, from a man, or men who were undaunted. In the spring Margaret Greene, at Chu Lai, remembered visiting an evacuation hospital..."a ward of seriously wounded men being stabilized for evacuation. Many were amputees. I attempted to talk to all

who were conscious unless they indicated they weren't interested. One young man was a triple amputee - both legs and his right arm. His outlook was so very positive. His concern was that he could learn to draw with his left hand as well as he'd been able to draw with his right hand. He wanted to be an illustrator when he got out of the service. I often wonder about him and truly pray he is an illustrator today."

It was in August 1970 that the worst happened. Virginia Kirsch, a member of the July SRAO class, just newly arrived, was assigned at Cu Chi. In the night of August 15th a deranged soldier, who had apparently hidden himself earlier in the women's billet, brutally stabbed Ginny to death. That a Red Cross girl had been murdered was, the next day, flashed on the Armed Forces Radio, heard as a news announcement throughout the Far East. The SRAO staff at Cu Chi suffered the worst anguish of it, but other Red Cross staff, as far away as Korea, hearing the words on the radio and not yet knowing who it was - simply a "Red Cross girl" - were at first disbelieving and then stunned into silence.

Ginny was 21, newly graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where she had been when the Kent State killings occurred and had, with her classmates, mourned that violence and loss of life.

Jean Kellgreen, of the SRAO supervisory staff, escorted Ginny home to Brookfield, Ohio where Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had ordered the Old Guard, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier guards, to provide a military honor guard for the funeral. Jean found Ginny's family "remarkable in their strength and faith".

Clubmobile service at Cu Chi was curtailed and the staff assigned to other units. Visits to the division brigades were scheduled from other clubmobile units. The Cu Chi unit resumed operations in late October for a short period of time until the 25th Division withdrew toward the end of the year.

Life and work went on. But as Jean Kellgreen pointed out, the atmosphere, the spirit, she had found on her first tour in 1967 were gone. The violence of this long war, which had now reached into the SRAO ranks, and the toll it was taking seemed beyond what reasonable people could absorb. And for the first time in American history there was to be no victory, always before, in war, one assuagement for the personal grief for the dead.

Cam Ranh Bay was, so far, not much affected by the withdrawals. The huge complex, with its deepdraft port, large air field, storage and supply depots and a replacement depot, was the country's major funnel for materiel and men. It was like a small city with beautiful sandy beaches at the edge of town. The beaches were an attraction, but the fine sand that made them good for sunning and swimming was the same fine sand that sifted into shoes and through clothes. The heavy rumbling trucks and other moving machinery stirred up sandy dust that drifted through the slats of the tropical buildings, covering everything. What wasn't sand was concrete, acres and acres of it. One wag suggested that if the rest of the country could be cemented over like Cam Ranh Bay it would be one way to find the enemy and win the war.

The problem with Cam Ranh Bay was that it was notorious for low morale. Whether or not, as one staff member said, it had the "worst" morale problem

in Vietnam, it did have a problem. The men were not combat troops. They were supply and maintenance people. They kept records and inventories and stored things and repaired things and moved things around a lot and guarded things like petroleum dumps. Like any rear echelon men in war, they were bored and many expressed feelings of guilt about not being in the battle zones. One staff member recalled a young soldier coming into the Cam Ranh Bay Army center, somewhat drunk, saying he was going home in a few days. He started to cry as he talked. He was worried about all the letters he had written his family telling of his feats in battle and the "hero's welcome" they were planning for him. He was a clerk, a pencil pusher, and who would believe, he said, that he had been in Vietnam for a whole year and had not seen any hostile action.

For many clubmobile girls, Cam Ranh Bay was not a favorite place to be. They tried to keep the centers attractive and full of activities, but keeping spirits up - theirs and the thousands of men they saw - was sometimes an uphill struggle. In October 1970, Patricia Spenser was one of the staff members at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base. A typhoon struck the coast that month and damaged the west side center. What happened afterward in this place of low morale she wrote in a letter to Mary Louise Dowling: "We arrived on Herky Hill about 9:30 a.m. There were three of us - Dibby Clark, Margie Cole and myself. We discovered that a section of the roof was gone and the floor covered with enough sand to make shoveling mandatory. Herky Hill was a pretty big mess so we figured we wouldn't be disturbed, but to our surprise within minutes men began coming over - not to stare, but to help. By 10:15 we had heavy plastic over the roof hole and were well into the mess on the floor. As more men arrived we decided that a more substantial roof was needed. Scrounge parties went out

to get corrugated tin that had blown off barracks. A first sergeant let us use his truck to go get hammers and nails. Boards to replace those missing were fast appearing. The sergeant at the mess hall sent lunch over for everyone. We have complained about this particular center a lot, but when we opened up and were ready for business by 1:30 in the afternoon I could have cried. Anytime you have a problem with the girls feeling unappreciated, tell them just to wait until they really need the help of these wonderful men."

With the opening of a Special Services club at Tuy Hoa in October, the Red Cross clubmobile unit there closed. In November the 4th Division was withdrawn and the An Khe unit closed. The holidays were especially crucial, with the falling morale, and the remaining clubmobile units tried hard to be creative in their program planning.

One of the new and different things that Christmas was done by the Long Binh clubmobile unit. They decided to do a Christmas show. Evelyn Safford remembered it as one of the highlights of her tour. The six clubmobile girls and men from the 1st Signal Brigade's Southeast Asia Pictorial Center (SEAPC) got together to put on a "miniature Bob Hope Christmas Show". They took it "on the road" for the seven days before Christmas, going to remote fire bases where the men did not have access to the real Bob Hope show. Through those seven days, from dawn to dusk, they presented the show 43 times and then on Christmas Day performed three more times at hospitals in the area.

The show was directed by 1st Lt. Robert Demchuk, SEAPC motion picture team leader, with Specialist 5 Dennis Tanner, a SEAPC correspondent, writing the script. As a parody of Bob Hope's show, it had all the elements of the real

thing. The cast of characters included Roseanne Sturtevant posing as Bob in camouflage jungle fatigues and carrying a golf club, Diane Acevedo and Mary Ann Dixon as beauty queens in mini skirts, Sheila Shanahan and Sally Edwards as women libbers and Evelyn as a sergeant-major.

Roseanne had one liners like, "The guys at Long Binh are the only GIs in country who have to be treated for frostbite. Too much air conditioning." The "beauty queens" danced with the "sergeant-major" and the men nearest the stage were invited up to dance with everybody, and then all joined in singing Christmas carols to close the show. It was about a 30 minute presentation, and everyone moved fast so they could get into a fire base, do the show, pack up and move on to the next, in order to reach as many places as possible. SEAPC filmed the show and segments were dispatched to the major television networks for a two or three minute showing on nightly news.

In their travels there were some places where they had to turn back because of hostile fire and some places where they had to make quick getaways because of nearby fire fights. But it was an enormous, exhausting success. The dusty, dirty, homesick GIs were surprised when the show appeared, and during the performance, as an article in The Jagged Sword (1st Signal Brigade magazine) noted, "they whistled, howled, applauded, stomped their feet and laughed" just like a Bob Hope show.

Some days later Lt. General Michael S. Davison, II Field Force commanding general, sent the girls a letter of appreciation in which he wrote, "The show reflected the imagination, spirit and talent so typical of Red Cross girls. It added a touch of humor and pleasant diversion for the troops in the field

at a time when they are more homesick than usual. Most importantly, it demonstrates your warm and compassionate concern for our men serving under difficult conditions so far from home."

In Vietnam 1971 began with a three day New Year's cease-fire, through which sporadic fighting continued. The U.S. Congress asked President Nixon to set a deadline for troop withdrawals, which he would not do. It was to be the year of the Calley court-martial, of the "Pentagon Papers", of massive civil disobedience in Washington D.C. when young Vietnam veterans threw down their medals and war decorations on the steps of the capitol. It was another year in the long war.

And there was yet another blow to SRAO. On February 9th, after a sudden illness, Lucinda Richter died at Cam Ranh Bay. The swiftness of the disease, diagnosed as post infectious polyneuritis, that took her life shocked the staff. Twenty three years old, Lucinda had come from St. Paul, Minnesota and was a member of the October 1970 class. It was never to leave the minds of those in SRAO who served in Vietnam that three of their co-workers had lost their lives there. They would remember them and the two Red Cross men who died there with a permanent memorial at national headquarters when the tragedy of the war was over.

The U.S. Army now had a Drug Amnesty and Rehabilitation Program in Vietnam. Men who came forward voluntarily admitting heroin use were given treatment at hospitals at Cam Ranh Bay, Long Binh and Danang. As the therapy progressed, SMH staff coordinated visits by the SRAO girls to these men and the clubmobile teams scheduled recreation programs for them.

In the field at program presentations there were few instances of disruption from men smoking marijuana or using drugs and this was, staff felt, because these men did not come to the programs. There were occasions when GIs warned the girls that somebody was "stoned" and not to involve him in the game.

Special sessions on the drug problems of the servicemen in Vietnam and in Korea were now part of the training in Washington. Besides hearing from Department of Defense representatives, the girls had to define their own roles. There were, from time to time, requests from some of the commanders to have the girls use their "eyes and ears" to report things from military units they visited, as if they were a part of the commander's staff. While they knew instinctively they were not going to do any such thing, it was an important point to consider. When the drug problem emerged, the point was reviewed again - be realistic about the problem, but be careful that a clubmobile unit does not become a reporting agency.

Some commanders were completely open about the drug problem and others were not. Evelyn Safford remembered one commander saying there were no drugs on any of his fire bases. A few days later a major TV network highlighted a drug story from one of them. By mid-summer the U.S. Army had decided on another course of action - urine testing of all departing servicemen for heroin use.

The now constant troop movements meant ever changing clubmobile schedules. As one clubmobile operation closed, one or more units at other locations took over coverage of remaining military elements. This often involved long distant

travel and justified establishing a small unit, if even for a brief time, at some location. The previous December a new clubmobile unit had opened in Quang Tri, sponsored by the 5th Infantry Division, and in April a unit was opened at Binh Thuy for several military groups. At the same time the clubmobile unit at Phuoc Vinh closed with the redeployment of the 1st Air Cav. The clubmobile teams were still traveling from one end of the country to the other - from Quang Tri to the Delta - and still covering about 25,000 miles a month.

As had always been the case, the greater part of this travel was by air, and most of that by helicopter, and there were always the "chopper stories". Sometimes they were about danger and sometimes they were about how the girls got their program props from place to place. Evelyn Safford remembered the time a clubmobile team dropped a cassette recorder from the height of 1,000 feet and when the pilot landed to let them retrieve it, it still played. Earlier, Linda Goettman, on her tour, remembered the ultimate in program prop disasters - the prop bag fell out of the helicopter over the South China Sea. The program that disappeared into the deep had been borrowed from another unit.

As troop withdrawals continued, morale at the big bases was particularly low and clubmobile units with centers tried all kinds of programs. At Qui Nhon the staff had a Saturday afternoon hoedown, complete with two greased pigs named Freckles and Clyde, and the mess hall provided the refreshments - black eyed peas and grits. At Phan Rang Air Base the play,

"Barefoot in the Park" was presented in the center by a drama group and it played to full houses four nights running. At all centers staff developed special interest groups in hobbies and ran card, pool and ping pong contests. The idea was to keep as many activities going as possible.

The Quang Tri clubmobile unit closed in August. The withdrawal of combat troops was moving faster and faster, and in September MAC-V headquarters announced that the number would be reduced to 177,000 by the end of 1971. SRAO staff members were still coming to see the program through to the end.

One of the new staff members was Mary Niedenthal. She was, like many others now, a war protester while in college. She went to Vietnam, she said, to give credibility to her "opinionated view" of the war. "It (the war) was wrong," she wrote, "but I could not hold that against the soldiers. I had great respect for them and a bond that will never be broken. I'm not sure they understood why any of us were there. They were often skeptical about our purpose, but I do remember several telling me after a particularly enthusiastic program on a fire base, 'It worked - we did forget for a little while'."

In October the clubmobile units at Qui Nhon and Chu Lai closed. As the year ended the eight remaining units were staffed with 45 girls who made the same concerted efforts as in past Christmases to reach the military

units with holiday cheer. Marguerite McAuliffe told how they tried to make it snow on the fire bases that Christmas. As the helicopters brought them in to land, they threw out dehydrated potato flakes which blew back and covered them by the time they reached the ground.

Red Cross had made the decision, with the concurrence of the Department of Defense and MAC-V, to close out SRAO service in Vietnam by July 1, 1972. This was in line with the planning to fulfill requirements to give club-mobile service during the combat period, and not to remain to serve a residual force.

The withdrawal was proceeding faster than anticipated, and it now appeared that the service would end well before July 1st. The Phan Rang Air Base unit closed in February. On April 1st Binh Thuy closed, followed by Cam Ranh Bay Army and Air Force and Long Binh. In May the last two units at Danang and Bien Hoa - the first to open - ceased operations.

The last clubmobile run was from Bien Hoa. Laura Riskedahl, Trish Hinkley, Peggie Bowie and Beth McGlone went to Fire Base Bunker Hill. And then it was over. By May 18th all of the SRAO staff had departed, some to go home and some to go on to clubmobile operations in Korea.

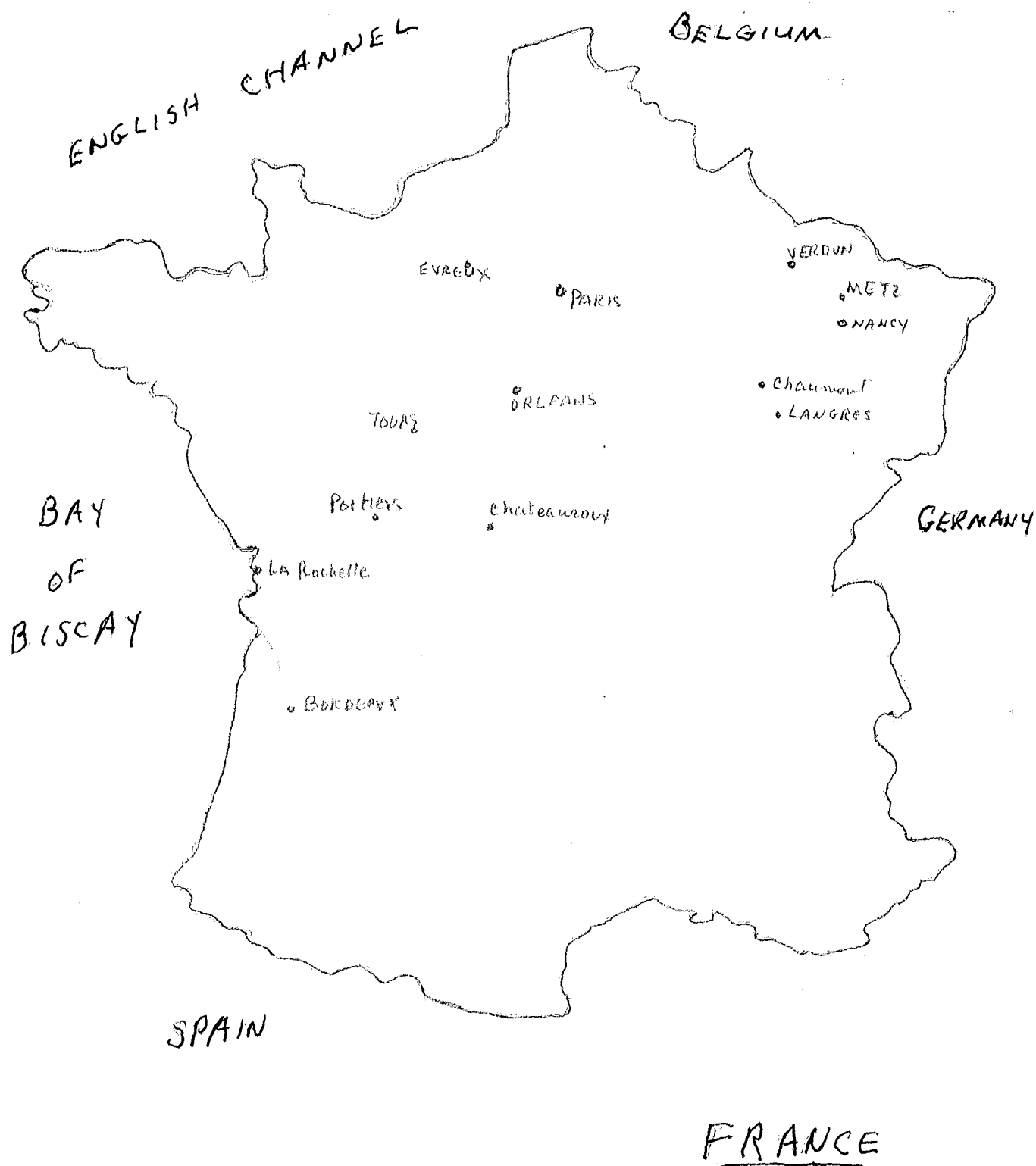
In the seven years the clubmobile units operated in Vietnam, the traveling teams logged over 2,125,000 miles.

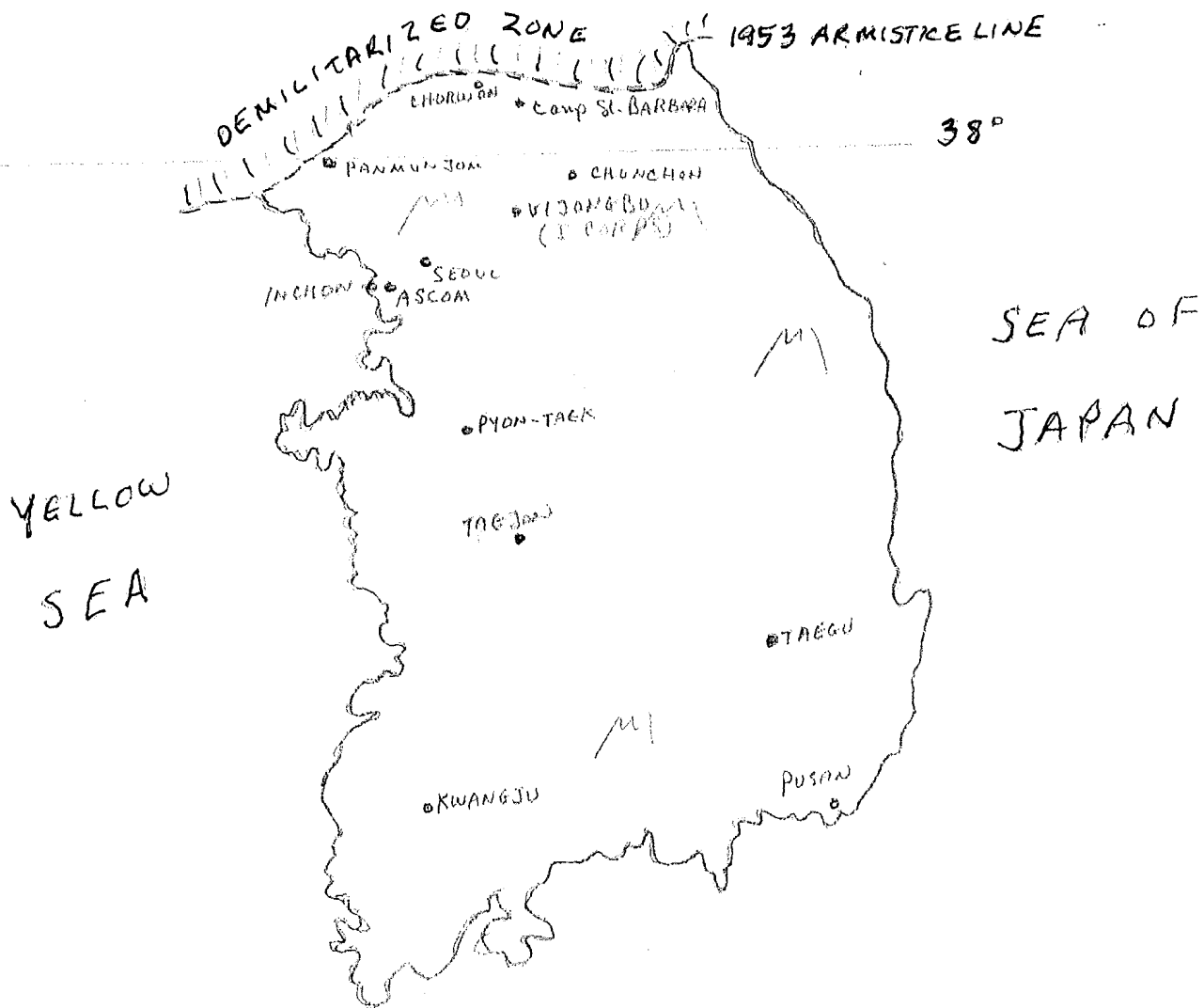
As the program was drawing to an end, General Creighton W. Abrams, then commanding MAC-V forces, sent to Red Cross President George M. Elsey

a letter and a certificate of appreciation for the service.

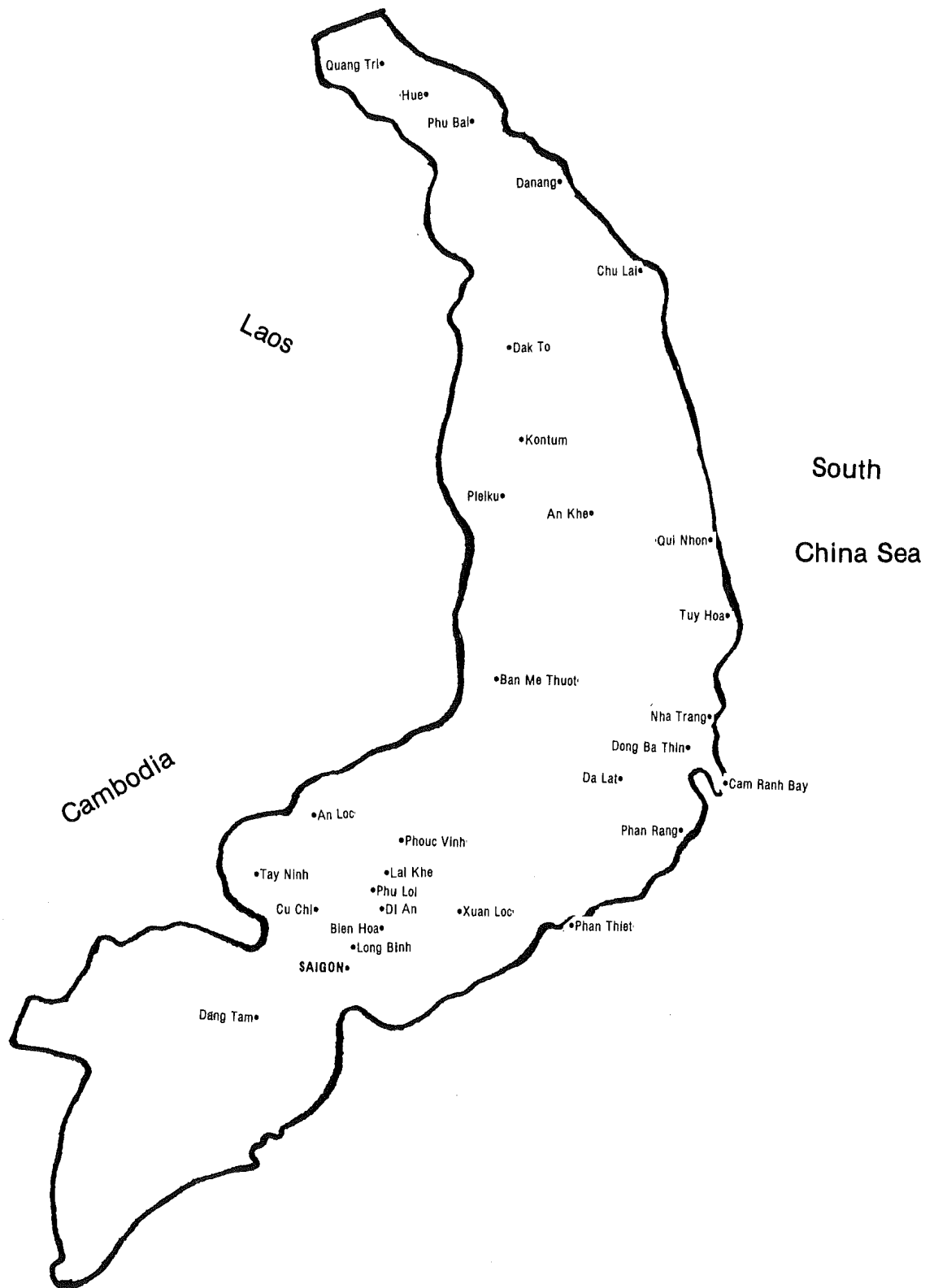
The certificate read: "The Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, wishes to express his sincere appreciation to the young ladies of the Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas Program who contributed significantly to the morale of thousands of United States troops in Vietnam from 1965 to 1972. The cheerful and willing attitude displayed by all those connected with the program reflects great credit on the American Red Cross and the individuals concerned."

It was signed by General Abrams in Saigon on April 19, 1972.





SOUTH KOREA



SOUTH VIETNAM

SRAO Supervisory Staff

<u>Years</u>	<u>Korea</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Europe</u>
1953-54	Marie-Louise Van Vechten* Jessica Hunter Ella Cruise Helen Wolek	1954-55	Gladys Tibbot* Jessica Hunter
1955-56	Leota Kelly* Ruth Stolz Margaret Macdonald*	1956-61	Leota Kelly* Catherine White
1956-57	Lois Beck* Grace Fossati Jessalee Mallalieu	1962-66	Jessica Hunter* Ruth Elwell
1958-59	Jessica Hunter* Nancy Jones Mildred Deason	1966-67	Ruth Elwell*
1959-60	Gladys Tibbot* Betty Williamson Jane Wriston	<u>Years</u>	<u>Vietnam</u>
1961-62	Ruth Elwell* Grace Chapin Charlotte Leedy	1965-66	Quinn Smith* Imogene Huffman
1962-63	Imogene Huffman* Betty Hopper Ruth Horne	1966-68	Jessica Hunter* Mildred Deason Sue Behrens* Judy Hunter Nancy LeCraw Caroline Wood
1964-65	Quinn Smith* Alice Hinerman Kenley Pearson	1968-70	Quinn Smith* Cecille Dumbrigue Sharon Hillyer Joan Johnson Rita Barbraitis Kay Brownfield Barbara Bruegger Rose Karlo
1965-67	Gladys Tibbot* Lucy Davidson Katherine Wren* Barbara Bruegger Cathleen O'Connor	1970-71	Frances Douglass* Joan Christianson Jean Kellgreen Sharon Lewis Karen Kitzke Nancy Calcese
1968-69	Sue Behrens* Kay Walton Myra Halpin* Kay Griffin	1972	Edna Schweitzer*
1970-72	Sue Behrens* Elizabeth Varn Jane Tennyson Carol Jurinich		
1972-73	Edna Schweitzer* Patricia Moran		

* Denotes service director

(The years given do not represent precise dates, only that staff members, as their tours overlapped, were present during some portion of the periods indicated.)

OPERATION HELPMATE

Clubmobile Unit

Marine Amphibious Force, Danang
 25th Infantry Division, Cu Chi
 II Field Force, Long Binh
 Cam Ranh Bay Army
 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), An Khe
 U.S. Army Support Command, Qui Nhon
 Cam Ranh Bay Air Base
 U.S. Support Command, Nha Trang
 18th Engineer Battalion and
 10th Aviation Battalion, Dong Ba Thin
 1st Infantry Division, Lai Khe
 1st Infantry Division, Phu Loi
 173rd Airborne Brigade, Bien Hoa
 4th Infantry Division, Pleiku
 Pleiku Sub Area Command
 11th Armored Cavalry, Xuan Loc
 Phan Rang Air Base
 101st Airborne Brigade, Phan Rang
 Americal Division, Chu Lai

 Tuy Hoa Air Base
 9th Infantry Division, Dong Tam
 101st Airborne Division, Phu Bai

Sponsoring Red Cross Chapter

Rochester, New York
 New Orleans, Louisiana
 Nashville, Tennessee
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Seattle, Washington
 Denver, Colorado
 Columbus, Ohio
 Greensboro, North Carolina
 Minneapolis and
 St. Paul, Minnesota
 Wichita, Kansas
 Birmingham, Alabama
 Fort Wayne, Indiana and Springfield, Illinois
 Cincinnati, Ohio
 Santa Barbara, California
 Detroit, Michigan
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Buffalo, New York
 San Bernadino, California and Albuquerque,
 New Mexico
 Des Moines, Iowa
 Hartford, Connecticut
 Los Angeles, California

The majority of these chapters were designated, according to the Red Cross organization of that time, as Combined Service Territory headquarters, with clusters of smaller chapters falling within their jurisdictions. In many instances, chapters within a CST rotated Operation Helpmate responsibilities so that many chapters, not listed here, participated in the program. Additionally, other chapters, large and small, sponsored SMH staff in military hospitals in Vietnam and throughout the Far East.

About the Author Sue Behrens

It was an honor to serve the U.S. Forces in critical overseas areas at a time when the services of the American Red Cross (ARC) were needed. To accomplish the mission effectively, the ARC relied upon capable young personnel coming from more than 450 universities and colleges, upon training and on-job-training, upon development of young unit leadership, and above all, upon thoughtful and caring supervisors. Major credit for the quality of the Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO) center and clubmobile operations goes to the supervisory personnel.

Sue Behrens, a native of Minnesota and a graduate of the University of Arizona, began as a recreation worker in a SRAO Clubmobile Unit in Korea in 1953. In the ensuing years she served in the Office of Personnel in St. Louis, Mo. and in Washington, D.C. She served in Charmont, Verdun, LaRochelle, and Orleans in France and in Kenitra, Morocco as an Assistant Center Director and Center Director; in Korea and Vietnam she had responsibility for Center/Clubmobile Operations as Assistant Area Director and Area Director. She completed her final assignment in Red Cross as Director of Personnel, National Headquarters before she retired. Because of her extensive field and headquarters experience, she was in a unique position to write the twenty year story of this specialized Red Cross service. It must be noted that the on-going Red Cross Services for the Armed Forces – our field directors who worked with servicemen's problems and communications to their families, Service to Military Families in chapters at home, social workers and recreation workers in military hospitals – were functioning full time in the U.S. and overseas at this same time. The SRAO was only a small part of Red Cross Services for the Armed Forces.

All of us who served in SRAO are indebted to Sue Behrens for her skill in writing this history and her diligence in pulling together this story in which many of us feel our lives were enriched in working together and working with the American Serviceman.

Mary Louise Dowling

National Director of Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO) for the American Red Cross, 1940-1945, 1955-1975

1986