9

USO

# YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

*Annual Report of the President*

Director, hostess, workers on every hand
In groups and classes—the "stars" who volunteer,
Gag-men and clowns of shows, the lively band,
The dancing feet, partners from far and near,
Music and books and games, the word of light
That warms the heart like home and lights the brain
And keeps our single purpose burning bright—
The human bond we shall not lose again—
See to it that we keep it burning then
Where in our camps each race and creed combines—
Fount of the faith that guides our fighting-men,
Lamp of the spirit, alight behind the lines!

*From the poem, "USO-USA,"*
*by William Rose Benet,*
*in the Saturday Review of Literature*

# *A Glance at the Past . . .*

***"Know where I can get a room?" . . .***
***"A theatre ticket?" . . .***
***"Where's the nearest USO?" . . .***
***Millions of questions like these are handled yearly at USO Travelers Aid desks in key rail centers.***

It is a long road the American people and their USO have traveled together since that first day, on February 4, 1941, when the charter of incorporation was filed for the United Service Organizations for National Defense, Inc.

The history of those early days is now a twice-told tale. It is the story of the impact of the first peace-time draft on the American community; of the psychological problem of men forced to leave their homes to engage in military or naval training when the nation had not yet been attacked. It is the story of certain small towns whose citizens, geared to a leisurely living pace, found their equilibrium disturbed and their stores and movies taxed to the breaking-point by the influx of thousands of service men from new camps and naval bases nearby. Off duty, these men had literally nowhere to go.

Six agencies—the Young Men's Christian Associations, the National Catholic Community Service, The Salvation Army, the Young Women's Christian Associations, the National Jewish Welfare Board, and the National Travelers Aid Association—met to combine forces, professional personnel and long experience in a joint war effort, endorsed by the Government, through the USO. The American people responded to the idea

***Officials breaking ground in 1941 for one of the first USO clubs.***

and the ideals of the USO by oversubscribing the first campaign for funds. The officials of the new organization envisioned a need for some 300 clubs to take care of the centers most heavily burdened by service personnel and defense workers.

That year, 1941, saw the initial organization of the USO, the use of a number of Government-built clubs and rental of many others. USO Travelers Aid units were set up, the first aid for war plant workers organized, and USO began its services to men on maneuvers. In November, USO-Camp Shows was founded to provide entertainment for men in camps and naval bases.

Pearl Harbor electrified the country into intensive action, created a need for an immediate increase in the military establishment, and catapulted the USO into an unforeseen and unprecedentedly rapid expansion in all its operations.

On January 1, 1942, the USO Overseas Department came into being, and, at the request of the Government, clubs were established at Western Hemisphere points outside of Continental United States. Inauguration of USO Lounges for troops-in-transit was another innovation. The services to men on maneuvers were extended to include permanent work in behalf of men on outpost duty through the expansion of the Mobile Services Division. Early in the year, the Committee on Services to Women and Girls first assembled, and later, when the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps was established, extended its services to women in uniform. The influence of music upon individual well-being led the USO to send ten well-known musicians to various parts of the country as advisers to club directors and military and naval personnel. And during that year the USO participated with other organizations in the Victory Book Campaign, which ultimately collected more than ten million books for service men.

Expansion of USO operations to more than 1,200 clubs and other units and a general maturing of its policies, program and competence marked the year 1943. One reason for the sudden increase in the number of units lay in the integration of many community-conducted operations within the national USO system.

Next came the inception of the inter-agency training-course for new professional USO workers. Following this there were refresher courses for experienced field workers, and, from time to time, institute workshops. Concomitantly, that year, USO volunteer training institutes began.

Intensification of the program resulted from the employment of program specialists in social recreation, arts and crafts and dramatics, in addition to the music division inaugurated the year before. Marine mobile units, both in this country and overseas in this Hemisphere, were colorful and needed.

Twice the USO had conducted its own campaign for funds, first in 1941 and then in 1942. In 1943 it became a member of the National War Fund, which now continues to raise funds for USO and other war-related agencies.

That is a brief summary of the progress of the USO up to 1944, the year for which this report is submitted. Perhaps the summary is all too brief. It leaves out of account the human factor—the planning and foresight of the founders, the cooperation of the agencies, the generous response of the American people in funds and volunteer services, and the adoption of the USO by the men and women of the armed forces as their "home away from home." But perhaps, also, this brief resume does show the progress of the USO from an idea to a reality, from an experiment to an achievement in democracy—and where it stood on the threshold of another year.

# The Story of the Present . .

## CONTINENTAL USA

It seems safe to say that, barring future unforeseen developments, the USO has passed the peak of its mass expansion. On the first anniversary, in 1942, there were 554 clubs and other service units. On February 4, 1943, there were 1,215, and on March 13, 1944, 3,040. Today's total of 2,775 clubs and units (December 31, 1944) indicates the leveling off of USO services.

From its inception the USO has been a flexible organization, geared to meet quickly the changing needs. Its ability to readapt to new, and often emergency, conditions is bearing fruit now, when continuous adjustments of USO services are proving necessary as troops complete training at one camp or base and are shifted to other training-centers or to combat areas. Further adjustment of USO work in war production areas is required as plants reconvert to the manufacture of civilian goods.

USO still faces a considerable period of full operation, but further expansion is not indicated.

Arising during 1944 was the necessity for USO services to returning service men. For some months, therefore, the USO has had the dual function of serving an army preparing for combat and the needs of those coming back from fighting fronts.

Naturally, the same type of USO program services which have prevailed at the clubs during the past four years will be continued. There will still be dances and parties and club sings. There will still be arts and crafts programs and music activities, photography and discussion-groups and information services, and the literally infinite variations of the program created locally by human ingenuity. Every USO club will continue to be a home to men and women in uniform.

Yet the outlook of those preparing to go overseas and of those returning from combat zones is inevitably different. Many of the men returning from overseas have been through fatiguing and harrowing experiences. They belong in four general groups: The casualties, who require hospitalization because of physical injury or mental stresses; the task forces, detachments of Army or Marine units or naval personnel on furlough and awaiting reassignment to combat areas; casuals, who because of extreme fatigue are sent home on extended furlough for rest or reassignment; and discharged service men, who will be served for a short time incidentally to the regular USO work.

It is gratifying to note that returning military and naval personnel are resuming their visits to USO clubs

***Dads by proxy are the men volunteers who take a hand in the work at USO clubs and station lounges.***

as a matter of course. Where the USO club is located near a military hospital, often the ambulatory patients make their first visits outside the hospital to the club, and through the normal club programs acquire the flavor of civilian life again. In a few places where the USO is located near hospitals for specialized work in orthopedics, in eye or ear injuries, the Army or Navy gives special advice to the USO junior hostesses who will welcome the disabled men at the USO club.

***"I was a member of a large family, and I miss my little brothers and sisters. I wish I could play with some children." Such wishes of young service women are granted when USO can arrange home hospitality for them.***

While sympathetic advice and assistance have been given in USO clubs to any man or woman in uniform seeking them in the past, it was deemed wise to prepare USO professional personnel for counseling of returned service men and women who had been subjected to the more severe stresses of war experience. Thus, another innovation of 1944 lay in the employment of a national director of USO counseling services.

In addition, more widespread training of volunteer junior and senior hostesses began to take place locally, to prepare them for the reception of persons returned from combat areas.

Volunteer work may well be said to be the backbone of USO. The USO has had a relatively small paid staff of approximately 4,000 professional workers in national agency and community-conducted operations in the field. Their work is supplemented by upwards of 7,500 paid non-professional workers, and by 1,377 professional and clerical workers at national headquarters and in the eight regional offices. But the vast network of USO services has been made possible by the loyalty and devotion of hundreds of thousands of volunteers. Junior and senior hostesses comprise the majority of this number, but many older men make their contributions to the war effort also by aiding in the snack bars and checkrooms, or being just plain "dad" to the homesick service men whom they meet.

It is therefore a source of satisfaction to be able to report that added recognition to and use of volunteer services was effected in 1944 by the completion of the organization of the National USO Council, composed of the business, professional and educational leaders who serve as our State Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen. The functions of these men and women volunteers are advisory, and since they are in close touch with local conditions they are in a position to give valuable assistance to the USO on the application of national policy and on local interpretation of its work. Because of their high degree of competence, they are able to exert an important influence on local operations, stimulate individual communities to use of their own resources and initiative, and to insure the full cooperation of USO with other war-related agencies.

Because of the speed with which USO was put together and because of the necessity of full meetings of

the Board of Directors in order that important policies might be decided quickly, it was necessary to appoint to the Board of Directors men and women living in or near New York. This did not, however, supply the wide geographical representation which an organization of national scope should have. The State Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen supply the necessary geographical spread. They are, in a sense, auxiliary to the Board of Directors of the USO.

***Life was bleak in the trailer towns when American war production swung into high gear. USO provided recreation centers for rootless families.***

## USO OVERSEAS SERVICES

Today the USO operates clubs in the Western Hemisphere outside of Continental United States in Alaska, Newfoundland, Bermuda, the islands of the Caribbean, the Canal Zone, on the coast of South America and in Hawaii. The value of the USO "home away from home" for men stationed outside of this country is attested by the attendance at the overseas clubs, now reaching three million visits monthly.

That value has become enhanced by the more aggressive activities of the American armed forces abroad. The USO in this Hemisphere has stood by as a haven for men far away from home and subjected to military discipline, but sometimes oppressed by a feeling of futility, as, away from combat zones, they cannot see the tangible results of their war service.

Further development of overseas services to men at isolated outposts has marked the year 1944. Essentially, the principal growth in this area has been in the numbers of mobile units serving men on outposts and the fact that local entertainment units of a high calibre have been taken to these outposts through USO mobile services. Such a statement, however, does not begin to describe the value of this work. Small groups of men stationed for months on end at strategic points in the jungle or on the shores of Central and South America naturally grow restive without contacts with familiar American civilians or the types of recreation which they had enjoyed at home. The arrival of USO entertainment units with singers and dancers, and with scripts for shows in which the service men themselves may participate, gives an incomparable "lift" to isolated men.

While the USO overseas services require the same readjustments to changing military conditions indicated in regard to continental operations, there took place during 1944 an unprecedented expansion of its clubs and units in Hawaii. The USO was urgently requested by the military authorities to increase the number of its operations in Hawaii, and it is doing so, raising the total there from 42 to 60, and doubling its professional personnel. And arrangements were completed for two new clubs in Honolulu for the service women who will be assigned to duty there in 1945.

## USO TROOPS-IN-TRANSIT LOUNGES AND TRAVELERS AID SERVICES

Travel in the line of duty or on furlough by millions of service men and women and war production workers has taxed to the limit railroads, buses, airlines and the station facilities of the country. USO Lounges and USO Travelers Aid Service in transportation centers have consistently helped meet the needs of these travelers for a comfortable place to rest in and for information on any and all community resources, or help with their individual problems. During the past year, an estimated 35 per cent more travelers used these two USO facilities than the twenty-seven million who sought them in 1943.

As many returning service men requiring diversified information and services are included in the additional people aided, Travelers Aid has instituted training-programs for its volunteers in how to recognize the special needs of the disabled or war-weary veterans.

Wives and children of the service men have used USO Travelers Aid extensively on their trips to the camp towns, for information about housing, hospitals, travel service and the community itself.

Answering the need of the times, during the past year USO established Travelers Aid Service for airline passengers at certain points where wartime travel by plane has created a need of such assistance.

## USO MOBILE SERVICES

Early establishment of outposts for defense at strategic points in this country and of small armed forces detachments with vital war duties placed many service men and women where they were unable to reach USO clubs in their daily free time. These people are virtually incommunicado for weeks on end. They perform valuable services, but they can have little contact with the outside world until they are relieved or go on furlough.

At the beginning of 1942 the USO devised its mobile units, specially-equipped automobiles, to take cigarettes, candy, games, magazine, books and moving-pictures to these men, just as the USO mobile units had served men on maneuvers. As time went on, the Mobile Services Division provided more than friendly visits by its workers and automobiles. It literally took the USO club program to the outpost, setting up community sings, arts and crafts, dramatic and discussion groups for the men, thus giving them all the facets of the USO club work except the clubhouse itself. Even dancing became a part of the outpost work when USO mobile service workers took selected junior hostesses to become dancing-partners for the men at eagerly-attended parties in often barren surroundings, or at square dances on the outposts. During 1944, expansion in the number of USO club activities which moved, like the mountain to Mahomet, through mobile units to the outposts, was the keynote of the period.

## USO AND THE WAR PRODUCTION COMMUNITY

In the charter of the USO, the goal of serving "the religious, spiritual, welfare and educational needs of the men and women in the armed forces and defense industries of the United States" was clearly stated. At Government request the USO therefore established clubs and other services in certain heavily-congested and chiefly small or new communities where vital war materials were produced.

To indicate why the USO was needed in certain areas, I quote from the section on early war days in the final report of the President's Committee for Congested Production Areas: "The absence of community facilities and services affected war production directly and adversely. For example, the War Manpower Commission, having by special efforts recruited 52 skilled workers for an important war plant, reported that 51 of them quit their jobs and left because of lack of suitable housing. . . . At a time when war plants were scouring the country for women workers, one-third of the mothers in two New England States, who were not working, gave lack of child-care facilities as their reason for not taking jobs."

Primarily the task of the USO in war production communities has been to coordinate local community facilities so that the men and women on the assembly-line and their families might receive full benefit from them. USO supplements, rather than supplants, the work of private and public social agencies. It has worked with war production workers rather than for them.

Compared in volume to our services to the armed forces, USO work in war production communities has been a small part of the total. In addition, costs to the USO were low, as in most areas the assembly-line workers themselves paid for all services except salaries and club maintenance. Because of the national emergency, however, this phase of USO work has been an important service in the war effort.

Gradually, however, the USO is working itself out of its job for war workers, and discontinuing its operations as fast as the necessity for making shells and tanks and planes and guns for victory wanes, or as these

***"Hi, folks!"—Arrival of USO mobile units at isolated spots in the jungles of Brazil or on a snow-covered Alaskan mountain supplies a welcome link with home for American service men.***

communities become capable of meeting needs of the war workers residing there.

## USO SERVICES TO WOMEN AND GIRLS

Five groups of women affected by the war have long been able to depend upon the USO for information, advice and recreational opportunity. They are, of course: Service women, wives and mothers of service men, employed women—including war production workers and wives of men in war production work, certain Civil Service and camp maintenance employees —junior hostesses and adolescent girls.

There are no sharp lines of demarcation between these groups of women. A service woman is often the wife of a service man or of a war production worker. The junior hostess is often the employed woman, or herself a service man's wife. The 'teen-agers, drawn into the USO picture when the draft age for men was lowered to 18, are often, too, employed and are thus doubly eligible for USO counsel, although USO efforts in their behalf have usually been confined to interpretation of their problems to the community.

In 1944 a concerted effort was made to obtain more community understanding of and home hospitality for service women, whom one thoughtful soldier designated as the "forgotten men" of the country. They have always been eligible to participate in the activities of all USO clubs. Last year more clubs and lounges, and occasional dormitories, just for service women—Wacs, Waves, Spars, women Marines and Army and Navy nurses—were established.

For service men's wives and families the program continued during the year without noteworthy change. This program includes classes and club groups, athletics and parties, and the overwhelming job of meeting their need for information about housing and jobs.

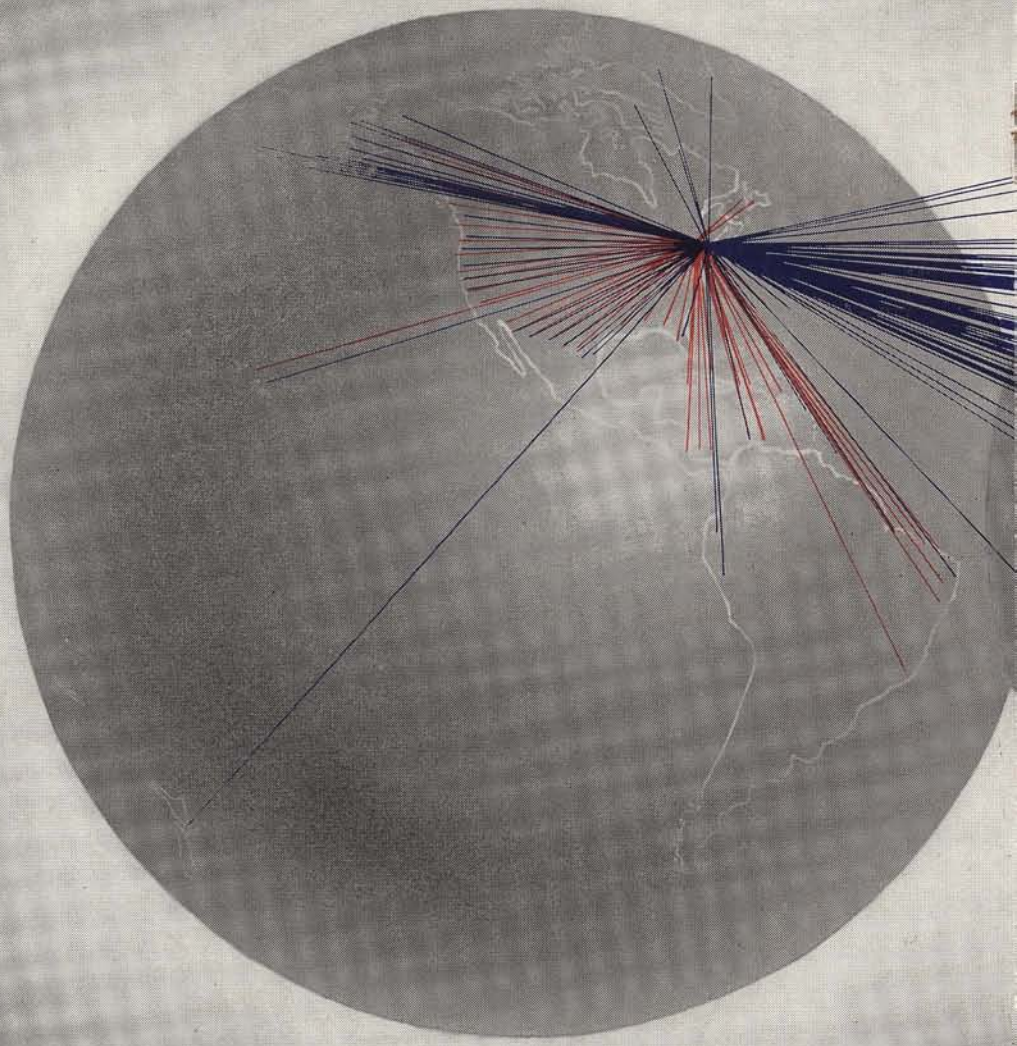
Work for women and girls will, of course, remain a continuing and valuable part of the USO program, since the self-confidence as citizens and the well-being as individuals of these women is vitally necessary to the assurance of the men in the armed forces and on the production front, as well as to the war efforts of the country as a whole.

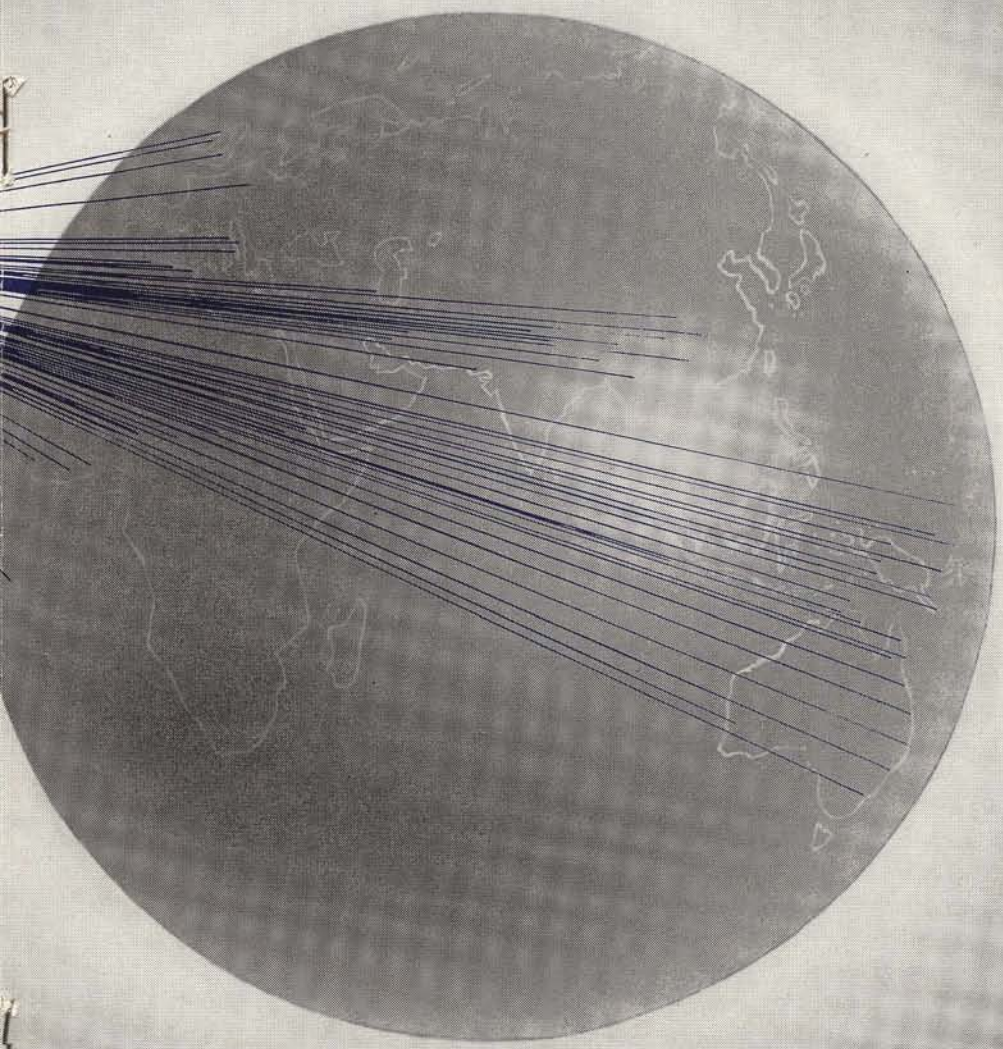
## USO SERVICES TO NEGROES

From the outset, the USO has served Negroes in the armed forces and war production work.

The major purpose of the USO in regard to Negroes, as is true for all persons served by this organization, has been to do the best job possible in meeting their welfare, educational, recreational and spiritual needs. A by-product of this effort has been increased understanding and tolerance on the part of Negro and white groups in the communities in which USO is located.

# Where USO operates today





● USO

● USO–Camp Shows

*Service men find relaxation in games of skill at USO clubs. This championship chess game is taking place in Honolulu.*

Particularly is this true in the small towns near large camps where the desirable results of interracial leadership in professional capacities, or as volunteers on USO Councils, have been more immediately evident.

Another by-product of USO services to Negroes has been its influence, as with war production workers, on the Negro members of a community, who have assumed an increasing share of volunteer participation in and community planning for the Negro club or program. During 1944, when troop reassignments required the closing of certain USO clubs, instances occurred in which Negro leaders raised funds to purchase the equipment of the USO club and plans were outlined for continuing the club work as a community project for the civilian population.

It is expected that other such long-range community planning by Negro civilians will take place in the future. In many cases, the USO has been the first welfare or recreational agency ever to work in a given community, and the first to introduce trained professional leadership therein. It is our belief that Negro appreciation of the value of community organization and constructive self-help, and the development of more widespread Negro leadership have resulted from the work of the USO. There is ample evidence that other such community planning by Negro civilians and comparable efforts by Negro and white leadership will long continue in the future.

## USO-CAMP SHOWS

In 1941, USO-Camp Shows, Inc., was founded as an affiliate corporation, financed by the USO, to provide theatrical and concert entertainment on military and naval reservations, posts and stations. Through the untiring efforts of its Board of Directors and its many thousands of performers, it has reflected great credit on the entertainment world. Great names of the theatre, screen, concert stage and radio make its talent roll illustrious.

But thousands of lesser known performers have sacrificed time and comfort and safety to entertain American service men at home and overseas. Equally with the famous these small song and dance teams, magicians, vaudeville artists whose names have never appeared in lights on Broadway, have traveled hundreds of thousands of miles to present "live" entertainment to soldiers, sailors and marines all over the world. In fact, 98 per cent of the troupers are the "little people."

To date, these performers have given their shows in 39 countries, areas and continents, moving up in combat areas right behind the front lines. So that the full

***No matter how rigorous the military or naval training has been, service men off duty could find fun and companionship at the nearest USO.***

scope of USO-Camp Shows' work may be known, the countries into which its troupes have gone are named:

Alaska . . . Alcan Highway . . . Australia . . . Bermuda . . . Brazil . . . British Isles . . . Burma . . . Canada . . . Caribbean . . . Central Africa . . . Central Pacific . . . China . . . Egypt . . . Greenland . . . Hawaii . . . Iceland . . . India . . . Iran . . . Iraq . . . Italy . . . Labrador . . . Malta . . . New Caledonia . . . Newfoundland . . . North Africa . . . Panama . . . Persian Gulf . . . Peru . . . Sardinia . . . Sicily . . . South America . . . South Pacific . . . Southwest Pacific . . . Venezuela . . . West Africa.

And close on the heels of the American invasion forces, USO-Camp Shows performers in 1944 entered France, Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany!

USO-Camp Shows today has four main circuits, which since 1941 have provided more than 150,000 separate shows for a total audience of 85,000,000 service men both at home and overseas (as of December 31, 1944).

Earliest established was The Victory Circuit, which presents full-sized musical and variety revues, dramas and concerts to approximately 640 Army posts and naval stations in the United States with theatres large enough to accommodate them. To date, more than 2,200 performers in 75 units have toured this circuit. Next came The Blue Circuit, offering smaller companies of entertainers to about 1,500 Army and Navy installations in the United States which have limited theatre facilities, if any. Performers in its 94 units to date have numbered more than 1,500.

Perhaps most famous has been The Foxhole (Overseas) Circuit. Since USO-Camp Shows was established, 407 separate units comprising 2,226 entertainers have gone overseas, often at great risk, to put on a show. There is little we at home can say that would pay adequate tribute to their heroism.

Last March USO-Camp Shows added to its program The Hospital Circuit. These performers furnish specialized entertainment in wards and auditoriums of all Army and Navy general and convalescent hospitals in the United States at least once every two weeks. By autumn, 13 units with a total of 222 performers had serviced this circuit. Eight more units were added by January 15, 1945. In American hospitals overseas, Foxhole Circuit performers present their regular shows.

Distinct from entertainment, but recognized as a valuable therapeutic and recreational service is the hospital sketching program handled by USO-Camp Shows. Through this service, well-known artists and illustrators visit the wards of military and naval hospitals and sketch portraits of the convalescent service men. Each man receives the original portrait and two photostatic copies. These he may keep, or have mailed home, as he prefers. The men look forward eagerly to the sketching hours.

# A Glimpse of the Future . . .

***"WOW!"—USO-Camp Shows audiences at an Alaskan post cling from the rafters and rock the walls with laughter. All over the globe millions of men and women in uniform are entertained by its troupers.***

When the armies of the Allies invaded France, and an Armistice with Germany seemed imminent, many persons asked: "What is the future of USO after the cessation of hostilities?"

The road toward victory in Europe may be a long one, and that question last fall may have been premature. But, then or now, the answer is the same. USO must continue to operate until perhaps not less than two years after the last-made Armistice. This will hold true whether Japan or Germany capitulates first.

There are several reasons for this statement.

Overseas, in what are now combat zones, the signing of Armistices will certainly not mean the sudden withdrawal of all American troops. Aside from those who will be stationed in Europe and Asia for security reasons, many others will have to remain overseas until transportation home can be arranged for them. As a recreational outlet for these men, who will still be far away from home after victory is attained, USO-Camp Shows troupes will be needed more than ever. In fact, expansion of its circuits is contemplated for the immediate post-Armistice periods.

Next, disabled service men will need the help of USO in their readjustment to civilian life. The advances of medicine have speeded up the processes of recovery to an extent undreamed of in the last war. But many men will still be in hospitals for awhile, and at least for the duration of its existence the USO should be able to offer them its clubs and other resources as a bridge back to normal contacts with civilians.

Further, announced demobilization plans of the Government indicate that the procedure will be implemented with care, to insure full reabsorption of service men and women into civilian life. This will mean, however, that the USO clubhouse will continue to be needed as a recreational center for men and women still under military orders but without the stimulus of national emergency. The individual tensions here may become acute.

At the present time, therefore, no sudden diminution in the scope of USO services within the United States or overseas in this Hemisphere is to be expected in the immediate future. For, while one USO club is closed in one area because of troop removals, another is

opened to serve transferred troops in some other place. In addition, it has been the policy of the Army to reduce rather than to close out military establishments. Local services of USO must then be readjusted to the new situations rather than terminated.

To finance USO services during the coming months, the National War Fund has allocated $56,000,000 to meet our minimum budgetary requirements for the period of October 1, 1944, through September 30, 1945. As USO must ever remain responsive to changing wartime needs, some curtailment of our services may be possible within this period. On the other hand, the exigencies of war may even decree that USO seek additional financial aid through the National War Fund before the end of next September. Because of shifting world events, the exact situation cannot be forecast now.

But of one thing we may be certain: There can be no slackening of the efforts of any one of us until our job is finished. The support and faithful work of USO volunteers, in local executive and advisory positions and at our clubs and lounges, where operations continue, are still urgently needed. We know we can look forward confidently to the loyalty and cooperation of our volunteers in meeting the challenges still before us.

It is possible that, when the USO job is finished, the ideals and methods of the USO will be adopted by civilian communities through the work of our volunteers of today. In many areas, the USO has awakened for the first time an organized community interest in the welfare and education, the recreational and spiritual needs of people. While trained volunteer leadership has been invaluable to the USO, in many instances the USO has trained new volunteers who will become the community leaders of the future. The joint efforts of the returned service men, who know what USO has meant to them, and of the volunteers who united to serve them, may well create patterns of lasting value to American life in the peace to come.

After the USO work is ended the trails it has blazed may long endure.

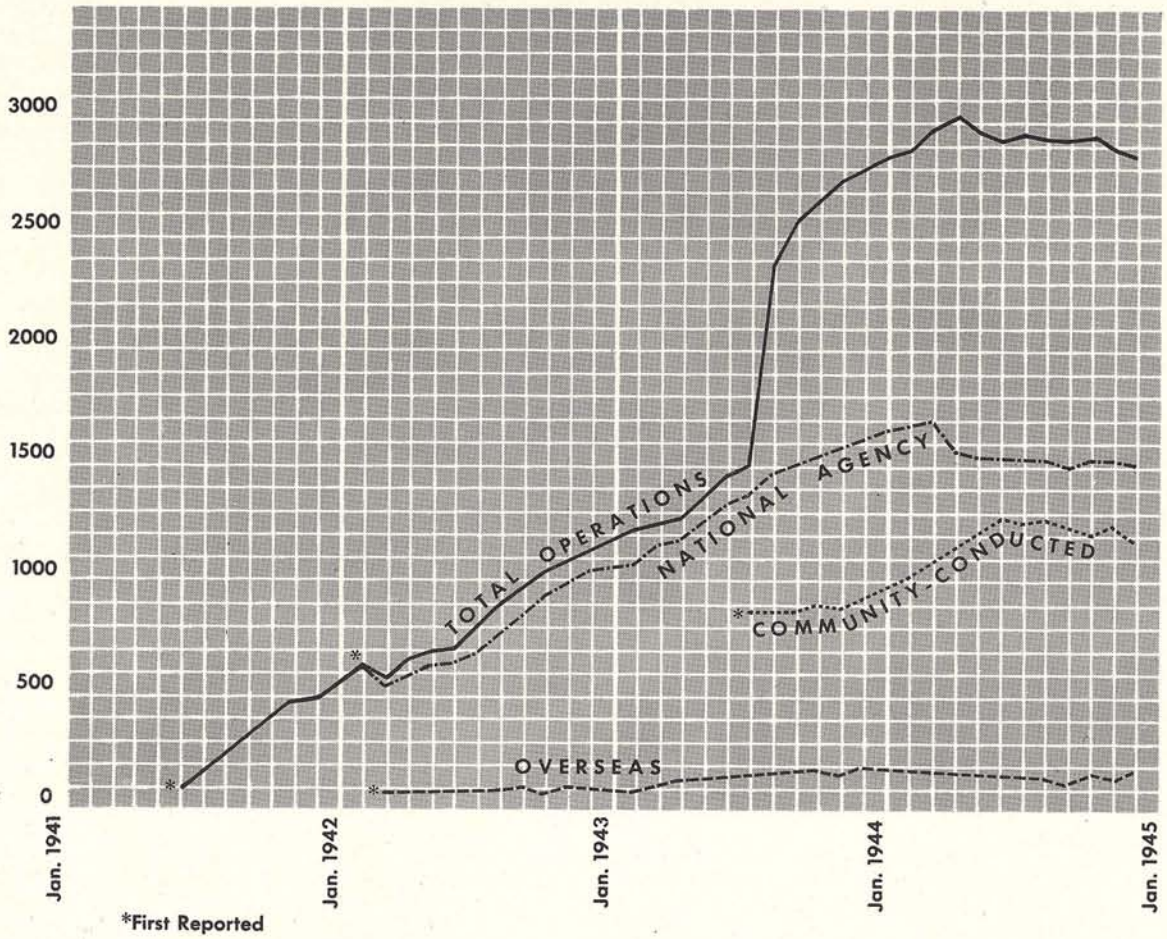
Chester J. Barnard

*President*

February 4, 1945.

# USO in Charts and Graphs

## U. S. O. OPERATIONS




**OVERSEAS OPERATIONS**

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| March 1942 | | 18 |
| January 1943 | | 92 |
| January 1944 | | 166 |
| January 1945 | | 170 |

**MOBILE AND MANEUVERS OPERATIONS**

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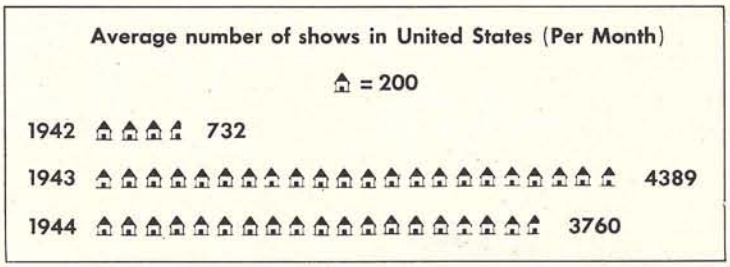
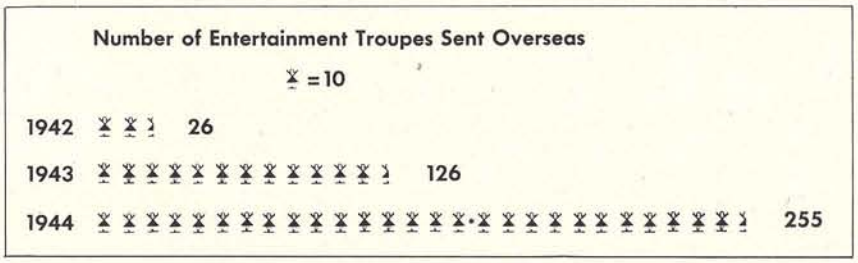
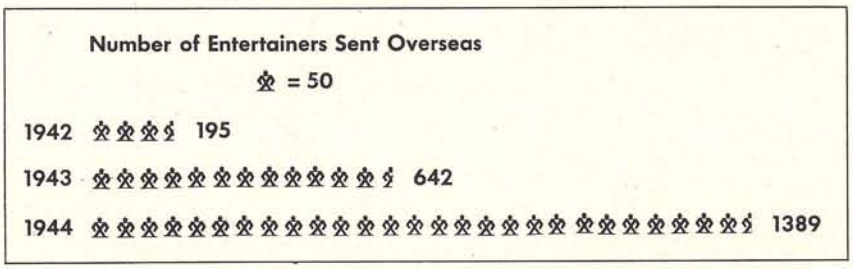
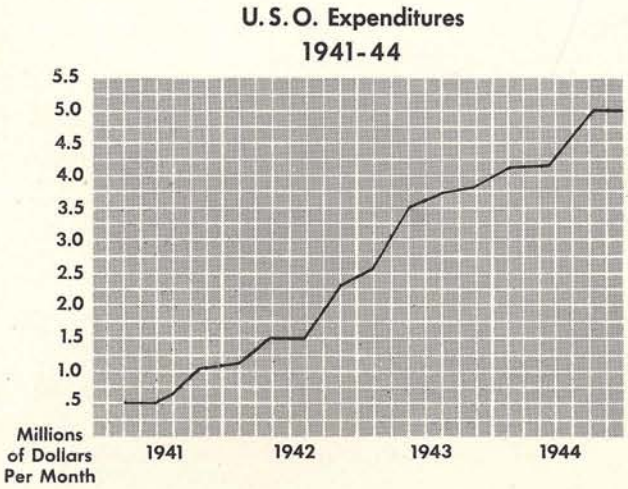
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| July 1942 | | 19 |
| January 1943 | | 44 |
| January 1944 | | 107 |
| January 1945 | | 116 |

## U.S.O. CAMP SHOWS

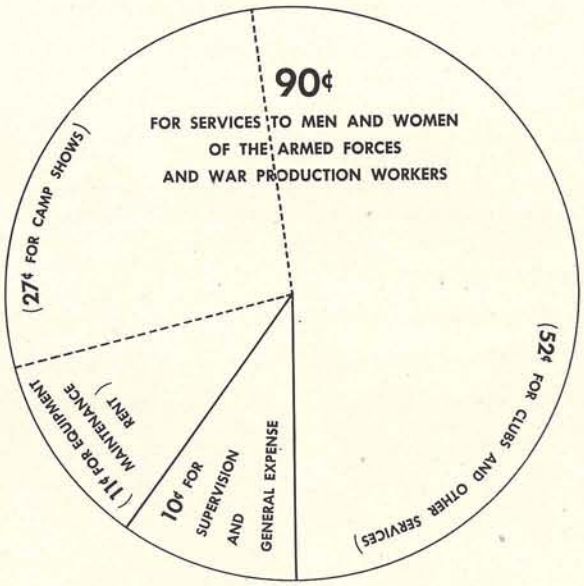



## HOW THE U.S.O. DOLLAR WILL BE SPENT IN 1945



# ★ Members of ★ the National ★ USO ★ Council ★

Mrs. Maurice T. Moore, *Chairman*

*State Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen:*

ALABAMA
Whit Windham, Birmingham

ARIZONA
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