ground on a new club in Twenty-nine Palms, California and a new airport lounge opened in O’Hare Airport in Chicago, Illinois.

Difficulties hit the USO on domestic soil as it had in Vietnam in 1969. Hurricane "Camille" destroyed a USO club in Biloxi, Mississippi. The club’s replacement came through the city and the National USO Council. The city provided a building and the USO renovated it and supplied the furnishings.

In 1969, the USO’s 129 clubs in the US served 11,912,000 visitors. Autonomous councils ran 115 of the 129 clubs and only 37 of those needed financial assistance from the National USO. Seventy-one new United Funds and Community Chests added to the amount of money made available to the USO.67 As usual, extensive efforts were made to raise funds, especially in areas where the United Funds and Community Chests were not provided. The fund-raising activities included “Mayor’s Campaigns,” veteran organizations’ fund raising, the support of schools, and USO officials traveled across the country to talk about the USO and encourage support.

The public relations slogan changed in 1969 to “The USO is for someone you know, a long way from home.”68 As in past campaigns, the D’Arcy Advertising Company tugged on the heartstrings of the American public; this year they do so with an added slogan, “There are no medals for loneliness.”69 This statement was attached to a picture of a soldier sitting somewhere alone. As in past years, the public relations


68 Ibid., 19.

69 Ibid., 19.
The campaign was possible only because a great many media outlets agreed to handle the USO appeal as a “public service announcement” without charge.

Throughout the sixties, visits to the USO continually rose and 1969 was no exception. In that year, USO activities all over the world received 33,551,000 visitors. Financially, the USO had another difficult year because accidents forced the USO to spend more than it received. The USO earned $6,202,541 and over spent that by $261,358. This reduced the emergency fund to $681,405. Despite the financial situation, the USO chose to establish a new fund to help pay for projects that come about outside of normal operational expenses, such as, buying new buildings. This fund would limit the need for the USO to dip into its general and emergency funds when unanticipated expenses.

USO Operations in 1970

With the beginning of 1970, came big changes for the United States. Most significant were the changes implemented by President Richard M. Nixon. As promised in his campaign, Nixon took his first steps in further decreasing the number of military personnel in Vietnam. The process under which Nixon lowered troop numbers, Vietnamization, entailed America removing troops and turning responsibility of fighting the war over to the South Vietnamese Army. By the end of 1970, the US presence in Vietnam fell to 334,600. Though the US troop strength in Vietnam was dropping, visits to the USO clubs remained strong. In 1970, there were 10,877,026 visitors to USO clubs.

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in Vietnam.\footnote{1969 Annual Report, 19.} This was because "the higher concentration of forces in non-combat areas brought an increased demand for services. With a more routine duty schedule and extra leisure time on their hands a larger percentage of the existing force was able to take advantage of USO Services."\footnote{USO Annual Report 1970: Wherever they go. (New York City: United Service Organization, 1970), 8.} Though visitation was up in 1970, three clubs were closed in An Khe, Nha Trang, and Vung Tau, because the areas were less active and had less need in 1970. By the end of 1970, the USO implemented a new service that supplied low-cost charter flights for military personnel who were issued 14-day leaves. The USO was able to provide the service with the cooperation of a large air carrier that helped to transport many members of the armed forces to the states for their leave.

In Thailand, the USO continued to operate five clubs in 1970. However, the USO moved one of the clubs from Takhli to Udorn because the military felt they would be useful there. The USO also opened a new club in Taegu, Korea on which construction had begun in 1969. This club was greatly needed as the only other the USO club was in Seoul, Korea.

On United States' shores, the USO decreased club numbers from 129 facilities in 1969 to 124 in 1970. The USO maintained five USO airport terminal lounges in Chicago, San Francisco, Cleveland, Seattle, and Dallas. The USO lounge at the airport in Seattle
saw about 88,000 military personnel in 1970. The 88,000 visitors took 20,000 hours of labor to run the lounge 24 hours a day.\textsuperscript{73}

Very little changed for the USO in 1970, a year in which 33,048,000 visitors used USO facilities. The majority of visits were made to USO facilities overseas. However, visits to USO facilities dropped 503,000 from the previous year.\textsuperscript{74}

The number of new United Funds and Community Chests also decreased in 1970. Only 37 new Funds and Chests added the USO to their lists of organizations to which they gave financial support. Of the 124 facilities operated in the United States, only 37 required the financial support of the National USO. The rest were financially self-sufficient.

**USO Operations in 1971**

As the direct American involvement in the war diminished, so too did USO operations in 1971. By the end of 1971, troop numbers had dwindled to 156,800. As a result of the lower numbers of military personnel, the USO closed three more clubs, but the need for the USO remained as long as American military personnel remained in Vietnam.

In Thailand, the USO increased its presence by adding another club in Korat. The Pacific, Caribbean, and European areas continued their operations in 1971. They


\textsuperscript{74}1970 Annual Report: Western Region., 1.
benefited from the slowing of the Vietnam War. Since fewer USO services were needed in Vietnam, the USO was able to redirect resources to other areas. Samuel G. Anderson, Executive Director of the USO in 1971, reported, "Much has been said about the plight of servicemen in Vietnam resulting from withdrawals from active combat and the frustrating wait in rear echelon areas for reassignment outside of Southeast Asia." These long waits in rear echelon areas required the USO to make services available in the Pacific area to make transitions and down time less stressful.

**USO Operations in 1972**

In 1972, as the number of US military personnel in Vietnam dropped to 24,926, the USO closed eleven of the twelve remaining USO clubs. As a result, much of the resources were focused on other parts of the world. In Thailand, the USO experienced high traffic in the six clubs operated there. Approximately 245,000 visits were made to the six clubs every month. The USO also developed a new program for military personnel in Korea where USO staff trained Korean-born wives of American service personnel how to live in the United States. The USO believed the school would "reduce the higher than normal divorce rates between American servicemen and their Korean

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brides by giving the brides some of the homemaking and social skills and cultural knowledge necessary for a smoother transition to their new life in America."

Another big shift for the USO in the Pacific was a new focus on families. In 1972, places like Okinawa, Manila, Guam, and Taiwan became important community centers for families. For example, in Okinawa when the island was given back to the Japanese, the United States community living off the base became more isolated. The USO met this problem by increasing service to the wives and children of military personnel through recreational and social centers. In Manila, the USO began another service when it developed a program to welcome new military families. The USO supplied the families with information of all kinds and even offered them transportation.

The USO attempted to make life better for military personnel in the Caribbean as well as in the Pacific. The USO operated five clubs in the Caribbean, but the USO in San Juan was reduced and portions of the operation were moved to the USO at Roosevelt Roads. With the focus having shifted to the Roosevelt Roads Club, the USO decided to build a new and bigger club for those stationed at the base and visiting ships’ crews. "The new facility, together with USO’s San Juan operation, would continue to serve military personnel on the islands of Culebra and Vieques on the eastern tip of Puerto Rico. Life on these small islands is especially difficult. Culebra, the larger island, is seven miles wide

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77 1972 USO Annual Report., 8.

78 1972 Annual Report., 8.
and ten miles long. There is a sparse civilian population and virtually no opportunities for off post recreation or social contact.  

Like the rest of the world, the European theater benefited from the American disengagement from Vietnam. In 1972, there were 210,000 men and women stationed in West Germany. This constituted “the largest concentration of military personnel overseas.” This meant the need for the USO was great. The USO planned to build new clubs in Baumholder, Mannheim, and Hanau. In 1972, the V Corps commander in Frankfurt, Germany, Lieutenant General Willard Pearson, stated, “We believe that these three Centers will enhance troop morale and welfare, as well as, being a highly desirable adjunct to our anti-drug, anti-alcohol, and anti-crime programs.” In December 1972, the USO began its increased operations in West Germany. In downtown Frankfurt, a club opened providing services to military installations and hospitals in the area. They also operated in an airport lounge at the Frankfurt International Airport, the RheinMain Military Terminal, and the Frankfurt Railroad Station.

The USO also opened a club in Keflavik, Iceland, which became particularly important to military personnel stationed there as the Icelandic government imposed extremely restrictive rules on them, including a curfew for American servicemen. This situation made the relief offered by the USO necessary and precious to the military personnel stationed there. In appreciation, enlisted men wrote a letter to the USO Board


of Governors to express their appreciation: "With the opening of the USO, it has brought a new lease on life up here. Now we can spend many happy, cozy, free hours in a facility that offers so much to the servicemen. Once again we must say thank you for caring for us. It is good to know that someone cares and the USO proves it every day of the year."  

Another big change in Europe was the moving of the Sixth Fleet USO homeport to Athens, Greece, a location from which they could more effectively run the temporary centers in the Eastern Mediterranean. This facility served both members of the Sixth Fleet and military dependents in the area. The building was larger and had access to better resources, making USO service easier. The homeport for the Sixth Fleet in the Western Mediterranean continued to be Naples, Italy, but the Naples club shared the responsibilities with the club in Nice, France.

With the withdrawal from Vietnam, there was an overall reduction in the size of the armed forces, and thus USO visits dropped to 20,304,385. In the new environment for the first time, stateside USO facilities received more visits than overseas clubs. The USO decreased the number of clubs to 138 to match the decreasing need for the USO. A unique statistic that the USO found themselves keeping in the clubs during 1972, was the amount of drug referrals needed by members of the Armed Services and their dependents. The 1,927 referrals attested to the new problem of the drug culture that developed throughout the sixties and illustrates how the USO adapted to the changing needs of military personnel.

82 1972 Annual Report., 7.

83 1972 Annual Report., 5.
Beyond the statistics of the clubs were the activities and the people who participated. USO activities served two major purposes. Of course, they were there to brighten the lives of military personnel in the service of the United States all over the world, but they also served as an opportunity to gain the attention of the general public. Getting the attention of general public enabled the USO to gain new volunteers and funds to support the USO. Funding was critical to the function of the USO.

The USO regularly made efforts to tie their activities in with fund-raising efforts. For example, sporting events often included USO days, with proceeds from the event going to a local USO. Solicitations in the mail were popular ways to get donations. Sometimes these mail solicitations would come from celebrities or from military personnel who simply mentioned the USO in letters home to loved ones. The USO developed a long list of ideas to raise money, and the local USO councils had the greatest responsibility for keeping the USO as a whole functioning.

The USO served military personnel, but they could not have done so without the help of their surrounding communities. Therefore, when given the opportunity, the USO engaged in activities that gave back to the community. In Monterey, California, USO volunteers and servicemen organized a tutoring program. The USO’s goal was to “solve educational problems of minority groups in the community.”84 So for one hour a week, USO volunteers and military personnel gathered to help minority students and also to let the students know someone cared about them. A similar program developed in Key West.

Servicemen and USO volunteers organized a carnival on Halloween for slow, deprived, and retarded students at the Sunshine Center and May Sands School.\textsuperscript{85}

The USO’s target audience was mainly military personnel, but the spouses and dependents were included in the programs. Service to military dependents increased greatly as the war in Vietnam wound down and funding could be redirected to other areas. For example, in Frankfurt, Germany the USO created a program that familiarized the wives of military personnel with areas of Germany. The program took the women on a sightseeing tour of Frankfurt. They were given a detailed explanation of the Frankfurt transit system, rode the system to a shopping complex and had a German lunch. To complete the day’s program the women were taken to a central market so they could learn where to shop and the range of prices they could expect.\textsuperscript{86} The significance of this program helped the wives of servicemen learn how to best spend and stretch their finances. At this time, Germany was very expensive and it was hard for American military families to cover their expenses on their limited pay.

Though the Department of Defense offered religious guidance and opportunities through the services’ chaplains, the USO also filled the religious needs of military personnel. It was quite easy for the USO to meet the spiritual needs of military personnel since five of its founding agencies were religiously grounded organizations. The three major religions of the United States during the sixties were Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. The YMCA, YWCA, Salvation Army, National Catholic Community

\textsuperscript{85}Programs by Pros., 14.

\textsuperscript{86}Programs by Pros., 16.
Service, and the National Jewish Welfare Board represented all three religions. The USO thus gave attention to military personnel's spiritual side.

The USO developed rules to integrate religious programs into their activities. The first and most critical step was for the USO to build relationships with their local religious centers not just as places to send military personnel but also as community contacts to work on projects together. The USO also developed strong working relationships with chaplains. USO staff were required to send those seeking religious guidance to a trained professional. Of course, the USO was careful to include all significant religious groups. A strict rule mandated that only in an emergency could religious services be held inside a USO facility. This did not limit all religious activities in USO facilities, only services. The USOs also took great care not to favor one religion over another. For example, if a Cross was put on a bulletin board there also had to be a Star of David. All USOs had to display literature given by the aforementioned member organizations, and literature that originated elsewhere had to be approved by an office under the control of the executive director of the USO.87

Thanks to the USO, then efforts of thousands of volunteers, and its wide variety of programs, military personnel had many great choices of ways to pass their time and relax. The men were grateful for the USO's efforts. In a journal kept by the USO in the Seattle-Tacoma Airport military personnel left many comments about their USO

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experience. These comments were written in the seventies and attest to the importance of
USO support in the anti-military climate military personnel faced in the United States.

"To the Vietnam returnee you have given him a place to relax, release his
tensions, and slowly adapt himself to his democratic way of life. We praise your
accomplishments and I wish to thank you from the depths of my heart. Your
thoughtfulness makes me proud to know there are those who care." These feelings were
expressed by William Bryant. 88

Larry Gustafson said, "Just returned from Vietnam and was unable to make it
home today due to lack of flights. Don’t know what I would have done with myself if it
hadn’t been for you. In this time of trouble you’ll never know how much it means to find
someone who cares! Keep up the good (I mean very, very good) work." 89

And from James Carey, "An exceptionally fine job by the ladies concerned. Your
reception is exactly what Vietnam returnees need to boost their spirits after reading of
demonstrations and non-defense support in the States. God Bless you and may your
efforts be an example to others." 90

Military personnel were not the only ones touched by the USO clubs. The USO
volunteers and employees also found their lives altered by their experience. For Nancy
Joyner (Assistant Director and Program Director of the Tan Son Nhut USO Club, 1970-

88 Sea-Tac Comment Book, Sea-Tac USO, Seattle-Tacoma Airport, 1.
89 Sea-Tac Comment Book., 7.
90 Sea-Tac Comment Book., 6.
1971), the USO club experience was “Just a huge family.” And many vets would agree because they all share Vietnam. She enjoyed her job a great deal. “She says the most fun was watching us perform in the ‘pie eating contests’.” Her favorite time of year was the holidays. “We (the staff) would prepare huge turkeys with all the trimmings, have candles on the tables, and when we all say down to eat, it was truly [like] having the family in for the holidays.”

Mara Hodgkins found her USO experience moving, but also belief changing. Hodgkins was a New Yorker who had served in the Women’s Air Force. During the Vietnam War she chose to get involved in the USO. She served as Program Assistant in Saigon in December 1967, Assistant Director in Vung Tau in 1968, Director in Qui Nhon in 1969, and Cam Ranh Bay and Danang in 1970. Mara felt courageous while in Vietnam. “The USO club was always busy, and in spite of the war and knowing the conditions that the GIs endured out in the boonies and fire bases, Mara felt no fear. She was supposed to project an image compatible with her job, and she did. She was calm; her feeling was, ‘Whatever happens, happens.’” Though she lived fairly free from fear she was not always safe. Sometimes she witnessed the violence of war or was prevented from working because of the war. “During the Tet Offensive, the South Vietnamese USO

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92 Ibid., 2.

93 Ibid., 2.

gate tender proved to be a turncoat and killed all those he had worked with. It was a wild night, with tracer bullets spinning by the club, which had to close and be left to the rat and roach inhabitants."\textsuperscript{95} She was also quickly whisked away from a firebase as it was being overrun. Mara’s opinion of the Vietnam War changed as a result of the time she spent working the USO all over Vietnam. In the beginning Mara found herself quite frustrated with what seemed to be a useless war. “All those boys dying while politicians sat around tables discussing what was to be done....Too long and drawn out. Wasteful...of lives!”\textsuperscript{96} Her feelings changed as she spent increasing time with military personnel. In fact, she seemed to believe strongly in the war. Mara wanted to help military personnel relax. Specifically, she wanted to give them “a relaxing spot away from all the hurt and unfamiliarity that was there.”\textsuperscript{97} But this desire to help transformed into something different.

I then felt that a war should be just that. Like the hawk, go after what you want and get it. War is hell, and it should be over and done with as quickly as possible, in my view. Don’t stretch it out when lives are at stake. I don’t like bombing but the South Vietnamese were peaceful-type peasants who didn’t for the most part care where the road went. The North Vietnamese wished to gain the South’s rice paddies, et cetera, and they were the aggressors. How to stop them? Not sure. But if bombs were required, so be it. I wished to help.\textsuperscript{98}

Mara’s experience with USO was important to her because she did help; she made war a little more livable.

\textsuperscript{95}Olga Gruhzit-Hoyt, \textit{A Time Remembered.}, 171.
\textsuperscript{96}Olga Gruhzit-Hoyt, \textit{A Time Remembered.}, 174.
\textsuperscript{97}Olga Gruhzit-Hoyt, \textit{A Time Remembered.}, 174.
Despite all the good the USO did, it suffered a setback in its reputation when, in 1972, it was revealed that some USO employees were making illegal profits through the USO club in Vietnam. On April 14, 1972, the American press reported that the Department of Defense had begun an investigation of the USO upon receiving information that indicated that “some USO personnel [had] been engaged in fraudulent activities involving very substantial sums of money which [had] inured to the benefit of such personnel at the expense of our servicemen.” The incidents involved as many as five USO employees who were using USO clubs in Vietnam to convert black market money and products into U.S. dollars. For instance, two women who worked for a USO club in Vietnam reported that a USO worker took “about $10,000 worth of cigarettes donated by cigarette manufacturers and an undetermined quantity donated by veterans for free distribution to American servicemen” and sold then on the black market. Other examples included the theft of air conditioners from USO clubs, and their sale on the black market, and the theft of gifts meant for American military personnel for their own personnel use.

The USO took these allegations very seriously and conducted its own investigation in addition to the investigation by the Department of Defense. After the investigation, it was revealed that certain club managers and men with USO management

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jobs had filtered millions of dollars out of the USO clubs in which they worked. Those involved in the scandal were dismissed from their jobs and brought up on charges by the Justice Department.\(^{101}\)

The scandal hurt the USO a great deal. People lost trust in the USO when they learned of these activities. "As disagreeable and unfounded as it might be, the USO has itself lost some public confidence over the Vietnam scandal,"\(^{102}\) concluded a USO Public Relations Department report dated June 19, 1973. The USO strategy to limit the impact of the scandal was to inform the public of all the wonderful and helpful things they did to help military personnel and their dependents. They knew to regain the confidence and support of the general public they would have to "know from USO's program engineers [what were] the basic data concerning how the program devices [were] to work, the extent of the problems that they [were] designed to solve, and data that [indicated] that these designs [had] a significant effect upon the problems."\(^{103}\)

Though the scandal set the USO back in terms of its image and reputation with the public, it by no means destroyed the USO. The public still understood that the USO had a very useful and necessary purpose. The public also understood that it was an easy way for them to offer support to the military. By contributing money, food, books, etc., to

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\(^{103}\) Ibid., 4.
the USO they could help the military and it would be a very small sacrifice on their part. Though the general public offered up money and supplies and sometimes their time, there were those who wanted to give more. They were ready to make a sacrifice and gave the USO their talent to entertain military personnel and their dependents in locations overseas.
CHAPTER III
USO SHOWS

The activities for which the USO is most widely known and famous are the shows and tours made by movie stars, athletes, and beautiful women. According to Frank Coffey, who wrote the official photographic history of the USO, the USO initially wanted to "provide live entertainment for the troops, both as a morale boost for the men and as a way of taking the burden off the small towns near the bases, which at best, usually had only a small movie theater."\(^{104}\)

Organizing this kind of entertainment was no small task. The USO shows have become a popular and endearing event for military personnel, in times of war and peace. World War II was an experimental period for the USO's entertainment programs. During that war, USO shows took place away from the front lines, but that changed in America's wars in Korea and Vietnam. Knowing the importance of the shows, the USO made a concerted effort to make shows and clubs available to all soldiers, especially the ones facing danger on the front lines of America's wars.

In bringing shows to military personnel the USO had three missions. They sought "to provide a continuing, regularly scheduled flow of high quality, tasteful entertainment from home to our service personnel stationed overseas."\(^{105}\) The USO also wanted "to assemble groups composed of either professional or college personnel and to provide

\(^{104}\)Coffey, Always Home, 25.

\(^{105}\)USO Shows Program, National Catholic Welfare Conference/United States Catholic Conference Collection, Department of Archive and Manuscripts, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1.
programs so staged that they could be presented effectively under the most isolated and primitive staging conditions.” \(^{106}\) Finally, they wanted “to provide a program that is sufficiently diversified to meet the varying taste preferences of our military personnel overseas.” \(^{107}\)

The USO Entertainment Department had two components. The first, the Armed Forces Professional Entertainment Branch, was located in the Office of the Adjutant General of the Army. Its staff included a full time military officer from each of the major military services. This branch had the “responsibility for coordination between USO and the using overseas command of all USO shows. This office also [paid] all transportation, messing and billeting expenses of entertainers touring under this program.” \(^{108}\) The second component was the Overseas Military Entertainment Coordinators, who maintained an office in each major command. Each office had “responsibility for scheduling, arranging, and full logistical support of the entertainment units touring that command. The top entertainment agency of each command is assisted in this task by a subordinate agency in each sub-area of the command.” \(^{109}\) The subordinate agencies had the ultimate and complete responsibility for the units when it came time for the tour.

Early on, the USO sought the assistance of Hollywood to organize the tours and shows. On October 30, 1941, the USO formed Camp Show, Inc., which became a branch

\(^{106}\) USO Shows Program, Catholic Conference Collection.  
\(^{107}\) USO Shows Program, Catholic Conference Collection.  
\(^{108}\) USO Shows Program, Catholic Conference Collection, 1.  
\(^{109}\) USO Shows Program, Catholic Conference Collection., 1.
of the USO, run by the entertainment industry. Camp Show, Inc., made deals with major
entertainment unions, like the Screen Actors Guild, that exempted entertainers from pay
and working conditions rules so they could work with the USO. Camp Show, Inc., made
entertaining shows, like the annual Bob Hope Christmas Show, a reality every year.
Camp Shows, Inc., continued to organize USO shows until 1957. In 1957, the tours
shifted from all over the United States and overseas, to just doing shows overseas and in
replacement of Camp Shows, Inc., the USO formed “the USO Entertainment
Department...as a staff agency in USO national headquarters effective 1 November 1957
to plan, administer and operate the USO Shows program.”110

USO tours were divided into three categories: the Standard Professional Service,
the Gratuitous Celebrity Service, and the Gratuitous College Service.

**Standard Professional Service**

The standard professional shows played a vital role in the USO show operations
because they could go where the larger groups could not. The entertainers were groups,
usually small in size, that required very little extras. This configuration enabled the USO
to send these groups to the most remote areas of the United States’ operations. “Their
staging requirements [were] minimal and they [could] perform in an open meadow
without a stage or on the hatch cover or fan tail of a ship if necessary. These were the

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110 USO Shows Program, Catholic Conference Collection.
units that meet the top Department of Defense entertainment priority of servicing isolated outposts and represent the only USO service that [could] reach areas of greatest need."

The professional shows were vital because they serviced the most isolated areas, but they did so at a high price. This category incurred great expenses because the USO not only paid insurance, but they also paid the performers a salary. The Department of Defense paid for transportation, food, and housing. From 1963 to 1973, the USO sent over 300 different groups out to perform shows in hardship areas of United States' operations.

All groups had a military officer assigned to escort them and to ensure the tour ran smoothly. At the end of these tours the escort officer was required to submit an itinerary and final report detailing the tour. The groups that went out on these tours were usually composed of two to seven people, and varied in their type of entertainment. One group that fit this example perfectly was the Yanceys. The Yanceys were a husband and wife team led by Hugh Yancey. Hugh Yancey had a talent for speed painting. He "dazzled military personnel with his talent for turning out scenic oil paintings in three minutes flat, all the while giving out with a stream of humorous banter while his wife passed the paintings out to surprised members of the audience." As if this was not enough, Mr. Yancey could produce similar paintings blind-folded and in five minutes.

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111USO Shows Program, Catholic Conference Collection, 2.

Other entertainment included music, which ranged in styles from country and western, to rock and gospel.

Another unique professional tour that highlights both the positive and negative aspects of these tours was one made by two football coaches of universities in Ohio. Coach Woody Hayes, the head coach at Ohio State University and Coach Bill Hess, the head coach of Ohio University, made a tour of Vietnam from January 5-15 of 1969. This tour showed film footage of football games and the 1969 Rose Bowl Game.

In total, Coaches Hayes and Hess interacted with about 8,320 United States military personnel in Vietnam, about two percent of the military personnel in Vietnam at the time. Both coaches showed film chronicling their respective seasons and then answered questions about football and their teams. Their shows ran in length from 35 to 150 minutes, but usually lasted around 90 minutes. The two coaches were awarded honorary memberships to two military units, the Seabee Team, and Advisory Team 51. The coaches made many visits to hospitals, which were greatly appreciated since the morale of injured soldiers often needed the most help and support. Hayes and Hess also


found a welcome sign awaiting them when they arrived at the Binh Thuy Air Base, near Can Tho. 115

There also were some negative aspects to the tour. There were two incidents when locations were unprepared for the visitors. The first of these was on January 9 when the coaches arrived in the Stateside Lounge at Can Tho. As reported by the coaches’ escort officer, Captain Chris Mueller, “A definite lack of preparation was noted. The movie projector was inoperative, there was not an extension cord available for power and no attempt was made to darken the lounge for the showing. A 45-minute delay was caused.”116 The second incident occurred on January 12 when arrival times were mixed up and the coaches had to wait for 30 minutes in Chu Lai for their jeep to pick them up.

Another negative aspect of the tour occurred as a result of a man who allowed his self-importance to get out of hand. Coach Hess received a great deal of praise for his behavior, but Coach Hayes’ attitude was not nearly as good. Hayes began making demands as soon as he set foot in Vietnam. He first declined to take part in an exit interview, which typically ended all USO tours. These interviews enabled the USO to determine areas for improvement for those on the tour, as well as for the servicemen who were to benefit from the USO tours. His second demand really was not bad, just unrealistic, and put undue strain on the coaches’ escort officer. According to Chris Mueller, Coach Hayes “stated that the purpose of his visit was to show the Rose Bowl film to as many troops as possible and that if he did not show the film at least six times

116Ibid., 4.
each day, he would feel that his trip was wasted.” One has to admire Coach Hayes’ determination to reach as many military personnel as possible, but his demands and attitude created a stressful situation for all those involved in the tour, particularly Chris Mueller.

Hayes’ largest display of self-importance occurred on the last day of the tour. After a showing of the films at the 67th Evacuation Hospital, Coach Hayes shouted and cursed at Chris Mueller for not getting him water during the showing of his Rose Bowl film. As if the obscenities were not enough, Hayes also tried to get Captain Mueller to take off his glasses so he could punch him. Though Coach Hayes had threatened a fight, the escort officer ignored him and the situation soon resolved itself.

Over 8,000 military personnel got to see some great film of football highlights and talk to two successful coaches. Several days after the tour, Mueller submitted a final report in which he concluded the tour was a success because of the showing of the films. Coach Hayes’ demand that the Rose Bowl film be shown six times a day was met on only two days of the eleven-day tour. In his final report, Mueller clearly stated that Coach Hess should be invited to return to Vietnam for a tour, but that Coach Hayes should not.

“It should be noted, however, Mr. Hayes’s attitude of self-importance was officious and his open vituperation of his assigned escort officer, Captain Mueller, was particularly
offensive. Mr. Hess conducted himself as a gentleman and is welcome to return at any
time. ¹²₀

For the most part these negative incidents were infrequent. Most people who
toured for the USO understood that sacrifices were part of the tour. Most were able to put
any inconveniences into perspective during their tours, because not having a glass of
water could seem quite trivial for a man laying in the 67ᵗʰ Evacuation Hospital without a
leg. The final tour reports enabled the USO to weed out the inappropriate performers like
Coach Hayes.

Gratuitous Celebrity Service

The tours that brought the USO the most attention naturally were those made by
celebrities. The term celebrity is defined as any person who is widely known by the
public. This meant that the celebrities on tour included prominent individuals in many
fields: athletes, actors, musicians, comedians, cartoonists, etc. The USO owed a great
deal to the celebrities who made tours because of the great morale boost they gave to all
military personnel.

As the war in Vietnam dragged on, the need for tours increased. Though the USO
easily found regular groups to go on tours around the world, finding and organizing
celebrities to go entailed a few more challenges. The principal challenge was scheduling
time when the celebrities were free from their own professional projects to make the tour.
Without a war it was difficult to get a large number of celebrities to go on tour, but with

¹²₀Hayes/Hess After-Action Report, MACV/USARV Collection., 2.
the Vietnam War celebrities were ready to bring a little bit of home to the United States military personnel overseas. In fact, nearly all of the celebrity tours were sent to Vietnam because the stress of combat meant military personnel in Vietnam were most in need of USO celebrity tours.

From 1963 to 1973, the USO sent more than 600 units of celebrities out to entertain the troops. Some of those celebrity units like Roy Acuff and his “Grand Ole Opry” out of Nashville, Tennessee, Johnny Grant (from radio and television), and George Jessel (star of vaudeville, television, and movies) chose to make repeat tours overseas. In 1967, Johnny Grant made three tours, all to Vietnam. A wide range of celebrities went on USO tours. Military personnel knew some extremely well, while others were only known because of their tours, but all had in common the sole desire to cheer up military personnel far from home.

The celebrity tours were a huge undertaking for the USO, armed forces, and the celebrities themselves. The USO paid the bill for insurance and administrative overhead. With the help of the armed forces, the USO could keep costs low to provide these celebrity shows. Usually the USO had only to appeal to the humanitarian side of celebrities to get them to go. Martha Raye (star of vaudeville, broadway, and movies), who was a true humanitarian, went on tours to be a mother of sorts to the military personnel in Vietnam. Sometimes the best method of getting a celebrity to do a USO tour was to appeal to their sense of patriotism. There is no better example of patriotism than the Duke himself. Many would argue that John Wayne symbolized the flag loving, hard

working American, in support of democracy and our boys. The USO could sometimes convince the celebrities to participate because of the public relations benefits they would enjoy. Of course, for the USO this was not the desired reason for people to make USO tours, but the USO was grateful for those able and willing, regardless of motivation. They would prefer that celebrities made the choice principally to help American military personnel. Most of those who participated in the USO tours did so with only the best intentions: to make life a little happier for military personnel away from home.

The armed forces also had a large burden in supporting the USO celebrity tours. They were responsible for providing transportation, food, accommodations and, most importantly, security. The Overseas Military Entertainment Coordinators had total responsibility for USO tours once a group began a tour. They had to assign escort officers to travel with the group. They also were responsible for establishing staging areas, which ranged from the back of a truck to a full-size auditorium built for significant groups like Bob Hope and his troupe. The Overseas Military Entertainment Coordinators also were responsible for physical security, a particularly important concern when traveling and performing in a combat zone. If there were mortar attacks while celebrities and others were touring, then the armed forces had to keep them safe. In the case of the Bob Hope Christmas Shows, security entailed crowd control, crowd protection, and preventing unauthorized personnel backstage. If anything had happened to celebrities while on these tours, the USO and military would certainly lose the support of the American citizens, whose contributions made many of these shows possible. Celebrities would probably be more apt to stay away from these tours because they would feel the military could not
ensure their safety. Overall, the armed forces had full responsibility for the logistics necessary to make the USO tours a reality.

Celebrities were really the ones who made celebrity USO tours possible. The celebrities had a great responsibility to make the USO shows work. They had to show up. This is simplifying things of course, but if they were not willing to make these tours, then there would be no tours. A great deal was demanded and expected of a tour group; therefore, the people who went on USO celebrity tours had rules to obey and standards to maintain.

Each tour unit chose a manager from within the group. Before any tour, the manager of the tour unit would be advised of his/her responsibilities for the USO tour and the group. With tours like the Bob Hope Show, the headliner usually assumed responsibility as manager. The manager was responsible to ensure “all material presented [was] inoffensive.” The definition of “inoffensive” material usually came from commanding officers and military chaplains through their reports on shows presented. These official reports enabled the commanding officers and chaplains to advise higher authorities if a show was obscene or unacceptable. Further, they could recommend whether others should see the show.

The USO tour group managers’ second responsibility was to control off stage behavior. Members of a USO troupe were obligated to follow military rules and regulations. More specifically, they had to follow orders of commanding generals or

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other officers who were responsible for them. In addition to offensive material, the manager of a USO tour had to be careful of the comments made by the troupe members. They were prohibited from making reference to "local customs, local persons, or any inconvenience with which [they] may have met in the course of [their] tour." This rule had the implied purpose of increasing "good will between the American Forces and the people of the country in which they [were] stationed." Another benefit was for their own protection and reputation, as well as for the USO.

The guidance to managers of USO troupes repeatedly emphasized that all entertainers on USO tours were considered a part of the armed forces and thus were subject to military orders by commanders and escort officers. Even though the entertainers were considered "employees" of the armed forces while on tour, they were also on tour in service of the USO and therefore had a responsibility to advertise for the USO. They were specifically required to "make sure that whenever a performance [was] given, either the officer or a member of the group who acts as Master of Ceremonies [states] that the show [came] from the USO and it [would] be appreciated, if the men [liked] the show, if they [would] in their next letter home, tell the folks at home that they enjoyed it." Clearly, the USO hoped that if soldiers wrote home to tell their family and friends about the USO shows, the family and friends would offer more financial support.

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123 Letter to Jimmy Snow, MACV/USARV Collection, 1.
124 Ibid., 1.
125 Ibid., 2.
to the USO. The increased support from home would enable the USO to supply more shows to the troops abroad.

Some obvious orders were given to the troupes. They had to get necessary immunizations. They were also reminded to report any incident of injury or hospitalization while on tour if they wished to have the medical bills covered by the USO. The groups also were issued Invitational Travel Orders that explained their trip, and where necessary, the USO obtained individuals' passports, which were critical for overseas tours.

During most tours, groups were interviewed at the close of the trip. This interview or debriefing enabled the armed forces and USO to learn of any problems that may have occurred during a tour and what could be done to improve on the experience for future parties. Once the groups returned to the United States they were also asked to report to USO headquarters in New York or Los Angeles. This meeting served the purpose of tying up loose ends from the tour. The manager was responsible to turn in airline coupons for all members of the group, baggage receipts, daily reports, and a report on the weight of the troupe's baggage while traveling. Troupes would be charged for the amount of baggage they brought back with them. The troupes had a certain weight limit they could carry with them on their trips, anything over that maximum weight required a charge and the USO did not cover this charge. Therefore, the performers had to be prepared to pay for anything extra they brought back to the states.

The troupes were even given a list of rules and regulations for the amount of work and travel they were allowed to do during their tour. For every seven days of a tour, a
group had a day off. There also were regulations concerning performing on days of extensive travel. If a group had traveled more than five hours in a day, then they did not have to perform that day. Their arrival time also determined when they performed. In cases where groups arrived after midnight they did not have to perform until twelve hours after their arrival time.  

Once the detailed itineraries were set, the groups were able to go out on their tours. When the celebrities went on tour, large numbers of military personnel benefited from the shows and handshake tours. Country music star Jimmy Snow made a USO tour to Vietnam from January 9 to February 9, 1969. During that month long tour, Jimmy Snow reached 16,810 military personnel. The show was very popular due to the broad style of music, country and gospel music. “The Jimmy Snow Show was well received throughout the country. All hardships were accepted without undue complaint. The group had just one major complaint and that was the long waits for delayed flights. The tour helped the morale of the troops greatly. It is recommended that this show be asked to Vietnam again or anywhere else US troops are stationed.”


Despite all of the planning, shows did not always go so smoothly. Celebrities were not exempt from the problems that can occur when a group tours. One of the most frequent and difficult problems during tours was related to transportation. Frequently in Vietnam, planned flights for tour groups were postponed or canceled because of combat operations. There were many occasions where tour groups had to wait hours on end for transportation to a firebase or other camp because their scheduled flight met with difficulties. Sometimes these difficulties were caused by something as straightforward as a resupply requirement of a firebase or the danger of combat, against which troupes were protected at every possible moment.

Singer Chris Noel, for example, once found herself under fire while on tour. Noel dedicated herself to improving the lives of military personnel. Her service started with a very popular radio show, moved on to live shows, and today includes a home for vets who need help. While out doing tours in Vietnam, Noel found herself stuck while there was incoming fire. “I remember one time when we were on top of a mountain and there was incoming and I was flat up against the bunker as they brought in a helicopter to get me out,” she said. “I was literally thrown into it, and I heard the bullets hitting it as we took off.”129 To further support the importance of these performers to military personnel was the danger in which the GIs were willing to put themselves to secure the safety of people like Noel. But most times entertainers were kept clear of danger or were heavily guarded in areas where their lives were endangered.

Other problems that occurred were lack of supplies, unprepared units, and equipment problems. Jimmy Snow's tour in Vietnam in 1969 also experienced theft. On January 8, 1969, while driving to Long Binh, the group stopped at a red light when a Vietnamese boy grabbed some equipment from the truck and ran. Some MPs and the escort officer chased him down and recovered a guitar, but the group lost an echoplex.\textsuperscript{130}

On occasion the problems with the tour came from those actually on the tour. During a tour by actor Jim Begg in March of 1969, the escort officer had many problems with the way certain aspects of the tour were handled. He complained about everything from the sheets on the beds to how distant his billeting was from the troupe for which he had responsibility. One supervisor even accused this officer of extremely poor behavior as an escort officer.\textsuperscript{131}

Sometimes the problems came from the performers themselves. A very serious problem arose during the Tony Diamond tour in November 1969. Near the close of the tour, one of the female members, Miss Jo Ann Smith, took time off from her tour schedule to be with a Navy officer. Though this sounds innocent, it created many problems. The biggest problem came with the reputation that such behavior could give the USO if it had become public knowledge, particularly if Miss Smith had suffered any harm while away from her group. Miss Smith went with the Tony Diamond Show from November 5-30, 1969. On the 24\textsuperscript{th} the escort officers had to escort a Navy officer away

\textsuperscript{130}Jimmy Snow After Action Action Report, MACV /USARV, 4.
from outside Miss Smith's room, telling him specifically to stay away from her. Three
days later, on the 27th, as the escort officer tried to round up the troupe for Thanksgiving
Dinner, he discovered Miss Smith missing from her room, so he and the group manager,
Tony Diamond, set out to find her. Unsuccessful in their search, they spoke with a
military policeman at the gate, from whom they learned she had left with the Navy officer
who had been ordered away from her three days earlier. Miss Smith did not return until
the next morning. The escort officer and Tony Diamond took this seriously, and wishing
to preserve the reputation of the USO, Miss Smith was immediately dismissed from the
tour and earned herself a plane ticket home.\textsuperscript{132} Despite rare incidents like these, most
entertainers carried themselves with the utmost character. Two who best symbolized this
for the USO were Martha Raye and Bob Hope.

Martha Raye, better known as Colonel Maggie (an honorary title), was a star of
vaudeville, movies, and Broadway. She went above and beyond the call of duty for
military personnel during the Vietnam War. She got her start doing USO tours during
World War II. In fact, she was one of the first USO entertaining units ever sent out. Once
her tour ended, she chose to stay on in North Africa. She continued to perform for the
troops and also began to help care for the troops when they were sick and wounded. This
extended time in North Africa enabled her to learn nursing skills that she put to great use
during the Vietnam War.

\textsuperscript{132}Tony Diamond Show After Action Report, Military Assistance Command,
Vietnam (MACV) United States Army Vietnam (USARV) Special Service Agency.
Entertainment Branch, National Archives, College Park, 5-6.
Martha Raye made her first trip to Vietnam in 1965. It only took that one tour for her to dedicate the rest of her life to helping Vietnam veterans. While on her tours, she did not always travel for the USO; a number of times she traveled on her own (and presumably at her own expense). But if the USO called, she always did what she could to help them because of her dedication to military personnel in Vietnam. And as dedicated as Colonel Maggie was to the troops, they loved her in return.

On her lengthy tours to Vietnam, Martha Raye managed to collect a great many honors from military, governmental, and civilian organizations for all of her work. Her most prized recognition were her honorary membership into the Green Berets and the Medal of Freedom, which the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, awarded her in 1993. Raye also had a great deal of pride in her talent for nursing and her ability to help while in Vietnam. Her dedication to the troops is widely remembered. “A doctor reported she assisted him in combat surgery for 15 hours, then went on to reprise her role in Hello Dolly in a hangar super-heated by a tropical sun.”

Maggie Raye went far beyond what any other celebrity did for military personnel. Her tours lasted for months and she took food and special treats with her to hand out. She also collected phone numbers and messages from soldiers and once she returned to the states, she called those phone numbers and personally delivered those messages. It did not stop there. When she was not touring, she invited Vietnam veterans to come visit her. Many times she invited them to spend the night at her house. When doing shows in a

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theater she always saved her house seat tickets for Vietnam veterans and the parents of boys in Vietnam.

Raye did a tremendous show of comedy and singing. She even took these shows to the most remote and dangerous firebases because she thought all the troops deserved to see her. On one tour alone, she did shows for as many as 38,000 troops. She even performed to an audience of one. The USO felt great pride in association with her, despite the fact that she ignored their rules and spoke out politically about her stance on the war. She showed her opinion a great deal on the topic of the anti-war movement. Upon being asked about the movement during the war she was quoted as saying, "The guys (the men fighting the war in Vietnam) told me to try to put some sense into those kooks when I got here. They're pretty bitter about it. They feel badly. And I don’t blame them."

She also had a great deal of anger for Jane Fonda who many believe stepped far beyond the lines of anti-war protest and betrayed her country. Raye referred to her as "a lousy American."

Raye made one of the largest contributions to USO tours in Vietnam. Her impact can still be heard in the stories of her actions. Upon her death in 1994, she received military honors at her burial. She had the flag draped across her casket, but because of rules did not get a 21-gun salute or taps played at her funeral. She did receive the great honor of being buried at Fort Bragg with her ‘boys’, the Green Berets. During the burial,

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\item[134] Jean Maddern Pitrone, *Take it From the Big Mouth: The Life of Martha Raye* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1999), 147.
\item[135] Ibid., pg. 158.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the ‘Ballad of the Green Berets’ was played in her honor, for she had become one of them. In a report of her USO tour from December 20-January 8, 1971, Jimmy Dorsey offered a great summation of her work with the USO: “Her complete devotion to the military—the advisory teams, support personnel, the hospitalized, as well as the grunts (soldiers fighting the war in Vietnam), sets her apart from all other celebrity visitors. Her sense of mission and her energy set an inspiring pace for those who support her visits.”

When mentioning the USO, the general public often is not familiar with the name, but when you add to it the name Bob Hope and his Christmas tour, people instantly know what the USO is. Bob Hope and his Christmas tours became a staple of USO operations. Hope began to do his star-studded tours for the USO during World War II and continued to go during every major conflict the United States has been involved with into the Gulf War. With his first tour, Hope established a successful recipe for his shows. The shows were made up of music, jokes, and of course, beautiful women.

In 1942, Bob Hope began his entertaining tours for the USO and it didn’t take long before his efforts gained recognition. Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower gave Hope the Medal of Merit in 1946. Nineteen sixty-four was the first year that Bob Hope took his troupe to Vietnam. Hope took Ann Sydney (the reigning Miss World), Anita Bryant (Miss Oklahoma), Janis Page, Peter Leeds, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Jill St. John, Jerry Colona, and Les Brown and his Band of Renown.


137Coffey, Always Home, 28.
This first Bob Hope Christmas Show in Vietnam developed into the seminal event that the USO and Hope repeated every year of the war. Making the Bob Hope Show work every year presented the USO with many challenges. The Vietnam War and the difficulties faced in it made planning the show more difficult than ever. For instance, there was no front in this war so there was potential danger to the performers at all locations. Also, the terrain and geography of Vietnam made areas impossible for groups like the Bob Hope show to travel. Scheduling Bob Hope was quite easy because the Christmas tour was a priority for him. The difficulty came for the armed forces, which had to plan the logistics of, and security for the tour.

Planning the Hope tours in Vietnam required a full year. Starting in 1966, the United States Army, Vietnam (USARV) had responsibility for the Hope Christmas Show. On November 11, 1966, USARV named the office that planned the tours the Bob Hope Show Project [Office]. This office had the responsibility to pick show sites, set-up security, transportation, and just make sure the show would work out. In 1966, the office decided that the Hope troupe would do four shows in Thailand, eight shows in Vietnam, two shows on aircraft carriers, one in the South China Sea and one in another location, and a show for the King of Thailand. These fifteen shows were done in addition to


hospital visits. In a tour of eight days, Bob Hope and his group entertained about 117,300 military personnel. ¹⁴⁰

Security concerns received first priority when it came to the Hope Christmas Show. Early on, security became an issue in Vietnam because the Viet Cong made Hope a target for elimination because of his ability to build and sustain morale. On Christmas Eve of 1964, an explosion at the Brinks Hotel in Saigon missed the Hope group by ten minutes. Later, Hope learned that the explosion had been intended for him. Captured documents revealed the failed attempt on Hope’s life. “The Viet Cong leadership [had] rebuked Saigon terrorists for missing comedian Bob Hope and his troupe of entertainers.” ¹⁴¹ In his typical form, Hope made jokes about the incident, “It’s hard to believe they were that critical of my act,” Hope declared in Palm Springs, California. ‘I think maybe the Viet Cong are drinking a lot. This isn’t the first time people have tried to do away with me. The same thing happened with my vaudeville act—they were always trying to get me.” ¹⁴² American military personnel did not take the issue quite so lightheartedly, and therefore made detailed plans to keep Hope and his peers safe while entertaining military personnel.


¹⁴¹ “VC Errors Saved Hope” Unit II: Military Operations, Box 8, Folder 12, Douglas Pike Collection, Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, Washington Post, 17 March 1967.

¹⁴² Ibid.
One of the first security actions taken concerned announcement of the shows. The location and time of Bob Hope Shows was withheld from military personnel, cast, and crew until five hours prior to performance time. American personnel and the Viet Cong were aware of where the shows would be because stages and bleachers had to be built. It was just a gamble to guess when the troupe would arrive. Though the Viet Cong could never predict with accuracy when a show would occur, and this made them less vulnerable to attack, though Hope would joke about the North Vietnamese always seeming to know where he would be before he did. They would get this help from North Vietnamese radio jockey, Hanoi Hannah. According to Hope,

*Before our first trip to Vietnam we were warned that all names, places, and destinations would have to be top secret; that they couldn’t take a chance on any breach of security. We never knew where we were going, and the troops were never notified of the show until the last possible moment. In most cases they were not told who or what was appearing. Yet, despite all the precautions, we seemed to be the only ones who were confused. Each night on the radio we could listen to ‘Hanoi Hannah’, the ‘Tokyo Rose’ of the North Vietnamese, and find out our exact destination, our time of departure, and what time we should have our bags in the lobby.*

The armed forces’ security concerns were not limited to the safety of the celebrities. When Hope did his shows, they were to thousands of troops. These large groups meant the enemy had a large target. The last thing the military wanted or needed was for the Vietnamese to launch an attack against military personnel while watching a show. To protect against such an attack the military implemented a system where there was a “sweep of show sites and quarters; counter mortar measures in the field; crowd

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control in stage areas.” The greatest worry the military had was to protect against Vietnamese small arms fire and mortar attacks. They were successful at this aspect of security.

Another security measure was to have passes. These passes were equivalent to the backstage passes used by performers today. A specific pass allowed an individual into an area that would otherwise be off limits. The passes were of a new design every year and had a system of color-coding. For instance, in 1970 the backstage pass consisted of a profile drawing of Hope and the name of the tour, ‘Operation Holly.’ The color coding consisted of: brown-wardrobe assistant, blue-electrician detail, pink-carpenter detail, orange-camera detail, purple-press, green-food handlers, red-equipment detail, yellow-auto detail, gray-‘cue’ card detail, and white-cast/Op Holly staff. Very few cards were handed out, and they never were given to Vietnamese, to ensure the safety of the troupe throughout the tour. With all these precautions, Hope and his troupe always returned from the Christmas tours safely.

Despite all the logistics requirements and security concerns, every Christmas Bob Hope successfully brought the spirit of holidays to the stressed and lonely military personnel in Vietnam. Hope’s Christmas Show tradition brought happy faces to millions of Americans and allied military personnel. Troops would wait hours in the worst conditions for just the privilege to be present at a Hope Show. Sometimes this meant waiting for hours in a hot blazing sun only to be called back to work right as the USO