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Collection 504
USO Trenton, 1943-1973

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History

The United Service Organization, also known as USO, was founded in February of 1914. Right before the United States had entered World War II, the nation sought to make an organization that would give servicemen and women a place to feel at home while across seas or in an unfamiliar state. The USO became a nation-wide group aiding in meeting the needs of the armed forces through the help of volunteers, such as educational, recreational, social, spiritual, religious, and welfare. In order to do so, the USO set up 212 locations across the country and for those serving overseas, there were 22 locations opened abroad. The goal of this organization was to provide the service men and women, and their families, the resources to help them while being deployed and to provide them with “a home away from home”. The overseas locations included Anchorage, Athens, Balboa, Cannes, Casablanca, Fairbanks, Guam, Greece, Hawaii, Istanbul, Manila, Naples, Nice, Okinawa, Paris, Puerto Rico, Rhodes, Rome, Salonika, Seoul, and Tokyo.

The USO would hold events every month such as dances, parties, and dinners. For entertainment, the USO would find theater shows, or set up game nights, or group discussions for the men and women to participate in. All events were organized by the USO but used the help of Junior Volunteers (JV) to run the entertainment aspects of it. Although the volunteers were there to set the good ambiance, at dances the JV were set to help serve the men and dance with them upon their request. The USO also held “Pal Day” every November for the community to help celebrate the service men and women. Each club in different locations would hold its own dinner party filled with guests and speeches, all in appreciation of the friendships formed between the USO and their volunteers, and the servicemen and women. The whole month of April was also used to educate the public on the USO’s story and all it did as an organization. The month-long

celebration was also used to remind people that the organization was helping the G.I.'s who were facing homesickness, away from their family and friends.

The USO was funded by the people, not by the government or tax dollars. It gained the money from its six-member agencies: The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the National Catholic Community Service, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), The Salvation Army, and the National Travelers Aid Association. These agencies helped fund the clubs that gathered in the United States. The USO would run campaigns to fund events through the help of United Funds and Community Chest. Being a voluntary federation, the USO made efforts to reach out to the community for financial support through the use of press statements, whether it be through the newspaper or a news station. They also received a small portion of funding from their Junior Volunteers who paid monthly dues.

The USO also worked with the Department of Defense, receiving feedback and intel from the G.I.s. Such feedback could be anything from the need for a new location overseas, to improvements in their clubs.

In 1973, the USO came to an end. As the United States tried to come to peace during the Vietnam War, the organization saw a decline in visitors. The USO of Trenton found themselves selling items from their club, located at 132 North Warren Street, once the doors closed.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection includes reports, publicity kits, brochures, newsletters, documents, and objects from the United Service Organization from the years 1914 to 1973. The collection consists of 15 folders and 5 scrapbooks.

The collection has been split into 7 series including: I. Operation of USO; II. Publicity Kits; III. Newsletters and Brochures; IV. Volunteering and Events; V. Dissolution; VI. Objects; VII. Scrapbooks.

The USO Trenton Collection recounts the mission the USO set off to accomplish across the United States and across various borders. It displays the efforts taken by the organization and volunteers to have servicemen and women feel at home while at a completely unfamiliar location.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Operation of USO

This series contains various folders with documents on the operation of the USO from 1952 to 1960. The USO released yearly booklets called Directory of Operations, which followed the six-member agencies and the people who ran it. It also listed the regional offices open across the United States and overseas, and explanatory notes about what the USO did to help servicemen.

Different facilities offered different services to aid the soldiers while being stationed, and assisted with spiritual and religious needs. Services such as Troops in Transit Designation (TT) and Standard Service Designation (SS), helped troops moving to different locations and housing, case work and referrals to community resources. The Directory was released annually with a letter addressing all the revisions.

In addition to their annual meetings and directories, the USO also released annual reports issuing the purpose of the USO, how it helped servicemen, the ways it raised money, and the programs it ran for the soldiers. The reports also include a balance sheet of December 1957 and a statement of receipts, expenditures, and fund balances for its corresponding year.

The USO tracked its finances on a unit report of income and expenditures for each month. The expenditures had a description with the date paid, check numbers and the amount that was paid, expenses for administration, maintenance, program activities, and canteen services. Some of the charts tracked receipts deposited in banks while others did not. These charts tracked the USO's finances from February 1956 to March 1957, with one from December of that same year. Additional financial statements noted the receipts and disbursements for March 1963.

In Washington D.C. the USO held an annual meeting in which all the national council members were invited to attend. Council members were provided with an itinerary of the workshops in an information kit.

Series II. Publicity Kits

Publicity kits were an essential part in fundraising and campaigning for the USO, and they would receive them to help structure press releases, radio station announcements, and posters. The general kits included statements from celebrity spot announcements, motion pictures, TV slides and TV film spots. They also contained order sheets for posters, pictures, mats, and television and movie materials. All pieces of press were given to local campaigns free of charge, aside from shipping charge. The messages were able to be customized for each local campaign to add their location and name. There were also messages from council members and servicemen and women who recounted their positive experience with the USO and the clubs. The goal of the kits was to fundraise and campaign in order to get the community to donate money towards the Community Chest and United Funds.

The USO Month publicity kits, similar to the general kit, provided TV announcements, newspaper editorials and more. It kept the same message as the general kit that the USO was helping millions of soldiers inside the U.S. and overseas, and providing them a sense of home away from home. April, as USO Month, was used to educate the masses on the way the USO unites servicemen and the community

Another kit for Pal Day included information of the dance, the cost, the programs and details that help set up the dinner. It emphasized that the club organizing the dinner should be seeking support from the military, the local chief official, the community and other committee members. They were to help with paying bills, budgeting for the party, and ensuring ticket sales. The kit included ideas for publicity photos to release to the local press about Pal Day, the dinner itself and set-up, and the mayor signing a Pal Day proclamation.

Series III. Newsletters and Brochures

In the years 1958 and 1959, the USO had a newsletter with the YWCA called *The RoundUp* which made announcements and shared about the families of the USO. Although the newsletter came to have 8 volumes, the USO started their own newsletter November 1, 1966. By the release of the second newsletter, they had formulated the name *The Chatterbox*. Rather than having photographs, its cover had different hand drawings each month, sometimes to match the theme of the month. This newsletter would advertise upcoming events but also recounted the success of past activities. The USO also used it as an opportunity to reach out to the community to help their causes and to find Junior Volunteers willing to participate, while also praising the volunteers who dedicated their time to the USO. *The Chatterbox* also had some advice columns from helping the readers to fashion tips for each season or different occasions. The newsletter ran for 4 volumes with 8 newsletters.

The USO reached out to the community through the usage of brochures and posters. The brochures gave little facts of the USO, the history, how the organization gained funding, and general information. Posters were offered to local campaigns as part of the publicity kits.

Series IV. Volunteering and Events

A major factor that kept the USO operating was the use of volunteers. The Junior Volunteers were women from the age of 18 to 25, or 28 for Junior Hostess. Having to follow so many rules and protocols, there was a Junior Volunteer handbook detailing the expected behavior and dress code, what it means to be a JV, the benefits of being a JV and how they would be helping servicemen and women by becoming a volunteer. They were expected to attend a specific number of events per month to ensure there were always volunteers available to entertain the servicemen and women. Junior Hostesses had the same expectations as JVs but volunteered at the parties and had to attend one meeting every two months. A letter in this series entails how the volunteers were thanked for their hard work towards G.I.s and had a party thrown for them.

The events that took place in the month of July 1969 were printed on a calendar displaying the time of each one and information for the volunteers to follow. The events included informal dances, coffee calls, and JV meetings. Aside from the calendar, the USO had programs for a specific week or for events such as the Coronation Ceremony for Miss USO of the Mid-Atlantic

States Queen, or for the Dedication of New Clubroom USO. There is also a photograph taken in December 1954 of a dinner or informal party.

Series V. Dissolution

In 1972, the USO had started to see a decline in visitors at the Trenton club. In an attempt to keep the club alive, the council members were asked to participate in a study that was being held to determine whether the doors will remain open or not. The letter asked the council members to write their recommendations, observations, and criticisms to be presented at a budget hearing. The Trenton USO facility was ultimately closed down, and the equipment and furniture sold off. Anything that did not previously belong to the building was sold and the money put into the facility's bank account. They were able to handle their financial records, mail, lease agreements and documents that had to be stored and specified for how long. They had to return money to different organizations that had lent money to the USO for renovations. The Trenton USO officially closed in 1973.

Series VI. Objects

This series contains eight cardboard-like printing plates and three ribbons in an envelope. Four light blue plates have "USO" on the lower part, and the other four are a light pink color. Two of these are of a cartoon with "Support USO Through United Community Campaign" and an image of a woman telling a man that the military will make a man of him. In the background there is a colonel looking concerned while another woman explains that the man asked the woman to yell at him as it reminds him of his mother. The other two display a woman wearing an USO armband using a sewing machine as a soldier watches her, with "A Stitch in Time ... USO."

The ribbons are in an USO envelope that read: "Committee Ribbons". There are two 3rd Place ribbons, one red, one yellow, and a red 1st Place ribbon.

Series VII. Scrapbooks

The scrapbooks contain memories of the USO Trenton throughout the year, with photographs, newspaper clippings, and written notes. There are also drawings that people made, and calendars marking the monthly events the USO had. There is a total of 5 scrapbooks from 1956 to 1973.

The SB015 scrapbook contains newspaper clippings of photographs captured of the USO events and articles speaking about the events. Many parties were held where there was a crowned king or smaller events where the servicemen and women were served tea. The first few pages include many news clippings from a golfing event with more than 625 competitors where \$100,000 was raised for charitable purposes.

SB060 (1956-1959) contains newspaper clippings from events.

SB016 includes photographs and hand-written notes. Each page has a different event, such as parades or holiday dinners, along with a few clippings about JV and its operations overseas.

SB059 also contains photographs and captions describing events. In the beginning of this scrapbook, there is another scrapbook dedicated to the Underground Coffee House that was located in the cellar of a house. Due to fire safety regulations, they had to make adjustments to the cellar and reopened in May 1969. The rest of the scrapbook has calendars of each month's events. Some of the photographs show trips to the beach and New York, and parties they held for Halloween, and for their Labor Day carnival.

SB065 (1970-1973) contains photographs from Pal Day and the glee club that performed, different themed parties such as Las Vegas night, the "Pie in the Face" Auction, Columbus Day Parade, and the formal dances. This book has pages made with red, white and blue construction paper, and in the middle of it is a star shaped message surrounded by pictures of each event.

Container List

Box/ Folder/ Folder Title

Series I. Operation of USO

1/ 1 / Directory of Operations, 1956-1960

1/ 2 / Annual Reports, 1957, 1960

1/ 3 / Ledgers and Finances, 1952-1957

1/ 4 / Minutes and Memorandums, 1968

1/ 5 / Annual Meeting, April 1959

Series II. Publicity Kits

1/ 6 / General Publicity Kit, 1959-1960

1/ 7 / USO Month Publicity Kit, 1960

1/ 8 / USO Pal Day Publicity Kit, 1959-1960

Series III. Newsletters and Brochures

1/ 9 / Newsletter: The RoundUp, 1958-1959

1/ 10 / Newsletter: The ChatterBox, 1966-1969

1/ 11 / Brochures and Posters, c.1959-1960

Series IV. Volunteering and Events

1/ 12 / Junior Volunteers, 1958

1/ 13 / USO Events, 1943-1968

Series V. Dissolution

1/ 14 / Dissolution Records, 1972-1973

Series VI. Objects

1/ 15 / Plates and Ribbons

Series VII. Scrapbooks

Wrapped - SB015, SB016, SB059, SB060, SB065