

V Was For Variety

The American Theatre Wing,
Broadway, and World War II.

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A week after Pearl Harbor Representative John W. Flannagan Jr. of Virginia described the conflict as "a war of purification in which the forces of Christian peace and freedom and justice and decency and morality are arrayed against the evil pagan forces of strife, injustice, treachery, immorality, and slavery."¹ The isolationist mood of the preceding years was drowned by a wave of patriotic support for the war. "Hizzoner," the Mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia was one of many to urge everyone to "Give an hour a day for the U.S.A,"² and the population readily responded.

Few groups responded more enthusiastically to such a call for support than the legitimate theatre. Two years before Pearl Harbor, a year and a half before the formation of the U.S.O., the people of the theatre had united behind Rachel Crothers, as they had done during World War I, to do their part to fight the fascist threat. During the war volunteers used the unique resources of the theatrical professions to organize programs outside the domain and interest of other organizations. A member of the American Theatre Wing's Board of Directors declared that the functions of the theatre in a war were:

- A. To supply much needed relaxation and diversions for servicemen and war-working civilians alike.
- B. To raise money for war-worthy causes; and
- C. To spread propaganda of the right kind, for which the theatrical performers and writers are by experience especially suited.³

The American Theatre Wing undertook to organize the profession to meet these war needs. Wing activities such as the Speakers Bureau, the Victory Players, and the famous Stage Door Canteens, prompted the Saturday Evening Post to suggest that "V is for Variety" as well as "Victory."⁴

World War I and the Legacy of the Stage Women's War Relief

When war first broke out in Europe in 1914, "America was self-centered and self-contained" as President Wilson tried to keep the United States neutral.⁵

The theatre produced a series of plays relating to the war, with elaborate disclaimers in their programs professing neutrality.⁶ When the United States entered the war, theatre managers dropped the disclaimers and let loose a torrent of plays including Inside the Lines, Stolen Orders, Arms and the Girl, and Allegiance, plays notable for their patriotic zeal and their romanticized view of trench-warfare. United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer investigated Broadway to make sure German writers did not slip in any propaganda, but he need not have worried, for the theatre was firmly committed to star-spangled extravaganza. Tableaux with stars like Ethel Barrymore portraying "Unconditional Surrender" were commonplace. The musical sensation of the war was a show written by Sergeant Irving Berlin at Camp Upton. Yip, Yip Yaphank, with its songs, "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning" and "You Can't Stay Up All Night on Bevo" raised thousands of dollars for the War Relief Fund while contributing to the general morale-boosting function of the theatre.⁷

Before the war Rachel Crothers was a playwright concerned with women's rights as human beings, but like many other playwrights, she set her interests aside during the war in favor of plays suited to the conditions of the home front. Crothers' contribution to the war effort, however, did not stop there. She came from a well-to-do background that encouraged membership in various women's clubs. These had familiarized her with the private philanthropic charity work that characterized the period.⁸ The United States declared war on Germany April 6, 1917, and within two days eight New York papers, including the Times and the Tribune, carried Rachel Crothers' appeal to "every woman who has been and is now connected with the (theatrical) profession of any of its branches -- dramatic, musical, vaudeville, chorus, motion picture, circus, burlesque, playwrights, and concert artist" to attend a mass meeting to organize a war relief organization.⁹ Her message read:

Why cannot the women of the American stage stand together as a unit for war relief work. Other women of America are already organized and registered and ready. We can do infinitely more as a body than individually. We can inspire each other, and by concentrating on a few practical, definite ways of work, and by putting the results in one main channel, we can become a strength for usefulness for the help the tortured world needs. We ask you to come for the sake of your nation, of your profession, and for your own sake, that you may be part of the most important thing in the world just now-- the bringing the healing and comfort to suffering humanity.¹⁰

The assembly was scheduled for April 13 at the Hudson Theatre-- the only theatre at the time that was owned by a woman.¹¹

Crothers' appeal was successful; several hundred women attended the first meeting of what was to become the Stage Women's War Relief. The afternoon was devoted to planning the activities of the organization and to edifying spectacle. The Hotel Knickerbocker sent its orchestra to the meeting, George M. Cohan donated a flag, and the program featured a recitation of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Representatives of more experienced relief groups like the Women's Emergency League of London attended to lend advice, and speakers such as Elisabeth Marbury attempted to inspire the audience with a call to "let pacifists crawl under the bed and hide if they must, but make them stop singing the 'Star-Spangled Banner' at the top of their voices."¹² The session was further high-lighted by the reading of a telegram from President Wilson, "My deepest appreciation and my sincere approbation goes out to you at the meeting this afternoon," the President wrote. "It is a splendid thing for the women of the theatrical profession to ally themselves . . . and I wish to extend my congratulations as well as my approbation."¹³ United by a common purpose, the Stage Women left the meeting and set to work.

While the more glamorous War Relief activities received the most attention, many activists tried to avoid undue display. The first committee to be organized was the Stage Women's War Relief Workroom. Dorothy Donnelly called upon actresses to knit and sew during the day at a workroom at 366 5th Avenue and act at night.

More experienced actresses taught others tricks like turning a man's shirt into a baby dress, or using bits of donated leather to make jackets for the troops. In a year's time the workroom averaged 2,500 dresses, 630 supply kits, 900 baby garments, and 50 vests sent abroad each week. By the end of the war, the War Relief estimated a total of 1,863,645 separate garments had been sent abroad. There were other unglamorous activities; Minnie Dupree, having once taken a first aid course, taught it to others. Actresses volunteered to relieve the food shortage by growing crops, like Frances Starr's radishes and Billie Burkes' strawberries, that were sold in New York restaurants. In an attempt to offer a safe alternative to seamy flophouses in New York, the War Relief established a service house where men could have "bed and breakfast" for twenty-five cents -- 17,000 accepted the offer.¹⁵ One woman gave her home on Clinton Avenue to serve as a convalescent house for returning veterans. James Montgomery Flagg's design for the official symbol of the Stage Women's War Relief was an actress with her glamorous gown over her arm, wearing the nurse-like uniform the women of the workrooms wore, and a sign in the Relief offices read, "One for all, All for One."¹⁶

While more traditional relief work was important, the Stage Women's War Relief was aware that, "to turn the heel of a sock properly may be beyond the ability of an actress who can turn the heads of the audience," and they developed programs particularly suited to the skills of the theatre.¹⁷ There were a series of benefit shows like three playlets of J.M. Barrie as well as special Sunday performances of established hits. Special events with celebrity entertainment were staged both at the Waldorf Astoria and Macdougall Alley. The theatrical profession was especially important in fund-raising. On the steps of the Public Library Elsie Ferguson sold \$185,000 in Liberty Bonds in less than half an hour.¹⁸ In the "Wake Up America Day" parade, the Stage Relief

alone stood guard over the "Uncle Sam's pocketbook" float as khaki-clad members passed the "dipper." Eventually, they established a soldiers' and sailors' canteen at a space donated by the City of New York at Broadway and 47th Street. On Saturday afternoons-- foreshadowing the Stage Door Canteen of World War II, the Stage Women's War Relief would entertain the troops.¹⁹

Another World War I activity of the Stage Relief was the genesis of the U.S.O. When the United States suddenly drafted half a million men it had few camps in which to lodge them. A hastily conceived building program was put into operation, and the Commissioner of Recreation in Military Camps contacted the Stage Women's War Relief for assistance in providing entertainment for the troops. The organization felt so massive an undertaking would be "impossible" without the aid of the men of the theatre and Sam H. Harris was asked to coordinate a series of camp shows. The government cooperated by constructing thirty-four wooden "Liberty Theatres" which seated between 2,000 - 10,000 men. The highest admission fee was twenty-five cents, but this was often paid with "Smileage Books" -- coupons donated by civilians for the soldiers and distributed by the Stage Relief. The program was popular; over the course of the war the Stage Women's War Relief sent out 1,430 shows to camps, battleships, and wards.²⁰

Ironically, in both World Wars theatre relief was largely supported by money earned from motion pictures. The theatre profession had formerly ridiculed the "movie craze," but when staunch critic and powerful Broadway producer David Belasco wanted to help the Stage Women's War Relief, he encouraged actors to volunteer to make twelve two-reel films. Their films earned \$78,078.30 for the organization.²¹

Crothers was quick to point out that the War Relief was fiscally responsible and that it never had to appeal to the general public for funds. Her concern was understandable in light of the many scandals connected with relief work during the war. Many ostensible Relief groups were collecting large sums of money from the public and yet only spending a fraction of what they received on the needy.

Eventually, the government established a National Investigating Committee to set guidelines for Relief expenditures. The level of misappropriation that existed was so great that even the guidelines allowed an organization to keep as much as 33% of donated funds for administrative expenses. The Stage Women's War Relief only kept 12% for operating costs. District Attorney Edward Swann said that "no complaint has ever been made" against the theatre's organization, and cited the Stage Relief as having among the best kept books of any group.²²

Another important scandal occurred when the Red Cross tried to monopolize the privilege of free transportation of relief goods. If other organizations wanted to ship items, they would have to accept the Red Cross umbrella. The Stage Relief was one of seventy-five groups to protest this "Charity Trust." Although the Stage Women's War Relief was enrolled under the National Red Cross and the League of Women's Service, it functioned as an "absolutely independent unit" and left its members with a legacy of autonomy.²³

The Stage Women's War Relief showed that the theatre could be useful in wartime. At the end of the war the Stage Relief still had \$39,000 in its treasury. The money was used to keep the service house open as long as possible in the belief that "surely the best possible way to spend our remaining (money) . . . is not in marble, but in living monuments -- to leave after us in those boys who come home to us."²⁴ Plans to raise additional money were not successful, and on March 19, 1920, a "Carry On" meeting was held to assess the group's role during the war. In Rachel Crothers' keynote speech she spoke of the "Spirit of unity" which held the women of the theatre together, and regretted that the "unavoidable unreliability" of earning a living in the theatre makes such "palship" difficult over an extended period. She stressed, however, that "At least we know this":

. . . if we are ever needed again in a call which supersedes everything else in the world, we are here and ready-- and if it comes after we ourselves are gone we shall leave it in the annals of the theatre that the trained imagination of the theatre can be used for serving humanity in more ways than entertainment.²⁵

Starting Again, 1940

Opinion was sharply divided in the years before Pearl Harbor as to the nature of the German threat. Before September 1939 a generally optimistic attitude prevailed that thought no war would break out, and if it did, America would stay out of it. The Nazi invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 was the beginning of the end of the noninterventionist outlook, but it was slow in fading. In May of 1940, 55% of the population was sure the Allies would win the war without the help of the United States. Only after the fall of France the following month did that percentage drop to 32%. Nevertheless, on January 4, 1940 five months before William Allen White founded the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies,²⁶ Rachel Crothers wrote to five other women of the theatre asking them to a meeting at Antoinette Perry's apartment the ninth of that month to once more establish a war relief society: the American Theatre Wing of the British War Relief Society.²⁷

Three of the founders of this organization, Josephine Hull, Vera Allen, and Gertrude Lawrence were actresses; Thea Helburn was a playwright/producer; and Antoinette Perry was a director. While all these women knew each other professionally, this was not just a group of friends.²⁸ Crothers contacted people whom she thought would be interested in relief work. It is clear why Gertrude Lawrence was concerned. A native of Great Britain, she desired to return to England when hostilities broke out, but Lord Lothian advised her to stay in the United States and encourage American support.²⁹ The New York theatre, with its close ties to the London stage, needed little urging. Some of the early volunteers, though, were less interested in politics than in the fact that "a lot of people needed clothes for children and the Wing could help."³⁰ Most of the people working for the Wing in the beginning, however, were there because they shared Rachel Crothers' viewpoint that "we're going to get into the war, we might as well get organized."³¹

Although there was no mass meeting in 1940 as there had been twenty-two years before, they did get organized. Since the United States was still technically neutral, the founders felt it would be more "discreet" to begin quietly without

"Ballyhoo." Funding was an immediate problem. They had only \$800 in the bank and Crothers was reluctantly forced to appeal for the first time to the public for help. They made curtain speeches asking for support while "the bombs are still falling in England."³³ Virginia Kaye saw Lady in the Dark sixty-four times as she sold programs for a dollar to raise money for relief. Jean Dalrymple, the press secretary, set the goal of letting "the public know what we were doing so it could make contributions."³⁴ She encouraged special events like a Gertrude Lawrence benefit in order to "get something the newspapers would want to publicize."³⁵

Most of the money taken in went to buy ambulances, mobile feeding kitchens, children's cots, hospital equipment, or to bring orphans of British actors to America, but some was committed to the support of a workroom. "Apparently times have not changed," Crothers said in early 1941. "During World War I we did exactly the same things we are doing now--except that the younger generation of Americans doesn't know how to knit or sew. . . but we find that if they don't . . . they're eager to learn."³⁶ The Wing was able to teach them, with the help of volunteers among the women of the Garment District. Edith Maison, one of the most active workers, recalls that "sewing was always my hobby, and when we heard there was a demand for boy s' suits, a woman from the Hattie Carnegie Workroom taught me how and it became my specialty."³⁷ Every day twenty-five to thirty women were sewing at the 5th Avenue headquarters. Some days were set aside for the cast of a particular show, like Twelfth Night, and those who could knit could take material home. In the first year of operation alone the Workroom sent abroad 36,000 sewn articles and 50,000 items of new and used clothing.³⁸ The Workroom was so successful that branches were opened in Harlem, Westchester, and Dennis, Massachusetts. Initially, photographers were quick to catch the sewing actresses "working without benefit of champagne or orchids," but soon they were interested in more "glamorous" Wing activities.³⁹ The photographers left, but the workrooms quietly continued making garments until the end of the war.

Society and Broadway After Pearl Harbor

It is estimated that over sixty million Americans listened to their radios on December 8, 1941 to hear Franklin Roosevelt declare a "Day of Infamy." Within the hour and without debate Congress voted to go to war by votes of 82-0 in the Senate and 388-1 in the House. Division gave way to unity and a desire to get involved, to be of service. Three times as many men enlisted on the first day of World War II as did at the beginning of World War I.⁴⁰ For those not in the Armed Forces, there were many opportunities to serve. Statistics indicate that 40% of the population was involved in some kind of volunteer work, in addition to countless others who donated blood, bought bonds, and collected scrap.⁴¹ By 1942, there were 596 separate relief agencies registered with the Control Board of Relief Organizations. A week after Midway, New York City conducted "the biggest parade in its history," a thirty mile extravaganza with 500,000 marchers that took eleven hours to complete-- a parade dedicated to "New York at War."⁴³

After Pearl Harbor the entertainment industry did a quick about-face. Hollywood stopped production on "Pearl Harbor Pearl" and "I'll Take Manila" and started filming "Wings Over the Pacific" and "Remember Pearl Harbor."⁴⁴ The Broadway production of The Admiral Had a Wife starring Uta Hagen and Alfred Drake was scheduled to open December 10, but did not: it was about the inefficiency of the Navy in Hawaii.⁴⁵ Dozens of war songs were rushed into release in an attempt to repeat the success of "Over There," but "You're a Sap, Mister Jap" and "We're Goin' to Find a Feller Who is Yeller and Beat Him Red, White and Blue" never caught on.⁴⁶ The public most wanted to hear sentimental songs of a less perilous time, and "I'll Be Seeing You," "I'll Be With You in Apple Blossom Time," and "White Christmas" were far more successful than any of the strident war tunes.

Broadway was not slow in seeing what was popular. There were relatively few shows like The Wookey, which told of the trauma of a man who disagreed with Churchill, only to lose his family in an air-raid, and featured sound effects of an actual attack

on London.⁴⁷ By and large, dramatists did not make "the eagle scream" as they did twenty-five years before.⁴⁸ There were serious dramas such as The Hasty Heart and A Bell for Adano, but comedies involving brave wives following their husbands or the antics of a heterogeneous group of people thrown together by the housing shortage were more successful. Revivals of The Front Page, Pygmalion, and Cyrano also did well. Musicals were especially popular. Irving Berlin once more sang "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up," this time in the all-soldier show This is the Army, which opened July 4, 1942. It also included "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen," about a soldier who had to leave his dream girl "Eileen" (see appendix). Moss Hart gave a similar tribute to the Air Force in Winged Victory. Cole Porter provided a less reverent portrait of the military in Something for the Boys, a vehicle for Ethel Merman in which her romance with a sergeant runs into trouble when her boarding house is declared "Off Limits." Fortunately for Ethel, the carborundum fillings in her teeth allow her to become a human radio that intercepts a message which saves flyboys' lives and wins the sergeant. Just as "White Christmas" was more popular than topical war songs, the most successful musical of the war years was Oklahoma! "White Christmas" and Oklahoma! shared a homespun quality that celebrated American values. At a time when America was in jeopardy this was an attractive theme to worried citizens.

No Pulitzer Prizes for Drama were given in 1942 and 1944, but although Broadway's lights were still blacked-out, Broadway made a successful comeback after the first war-time season's poor record of fifty-four flops and six hits.⁴⁹ People had more money to spend on shows. The average family income rose from \$2,760 in 1938 to \$4,044 in 1942 and a more middle class audience began attending the theatre.⁵⁰ Soldiers flooding New York contributed as well to the boom. In 1940-41 there were sixty-nine new productions, four years later there were ninety-two. Neither a rise in the Federal Amusement Tax from ten to twenty percent nor War Mobilization Director James Byrnes' midnight curfew (La Guardia insisted New York's be 1:00) significantly hurt business.⁵¹ Broadway was operating at capacity, providing

entertainment and reaping profits. These profits enabled Broadway to donate nine million tickets to servicemen, and to support the American Theatre Wing.⁵²

The American Theatre Wing

By the time of Pearl Harbor the Theatre Wing had a new leader. Rachel Crothers was an older woman and in poor health. The trek from her home in Danbury, Connecticut to New York was becoming increasingly difficult. April 21, 1941 she announced the change:

For a year and a half the American Theatre Wing Workroom has taken every ounce of my energy and virtually all of my time. It's a going concern now, and while I shall expect to come to town frequently to help; there is no need for me to be here night and day as it was when we were getting started.⁵³

Crothers continued to be President, but Antoinette Perry took on the job of Chairman of the Board in addition to her duties as Secretary. Perry is best remembered today for her direction of the hit Harvey. She and Vera Allen were the only Board Members to have offices at Wing Headquarters at 730 Fifth Avenue.⁵⁴ Perry preferred to stay out of the spotlight. When the Times and the Post tried to write articles about her contributions to the Wing, both were told that "there's nothing interesting about me, it's the Wing you should know about."⁵⁵ Perry was extremely well liked and respected in the profession, and like her predecessor, brought many people into the Wing.

On December 12, 1942 the organization turned over all its assets to the British War Relief and reincorporated under the shortened title "The American Theatre Wing." The term "Wing" originally meant "branch" of the British Relief, now it was a "double-edged play on the word 'Wing' as a tactical unit of the new Army Air Forces and as a behind-the-scenes work space in a theatre."⁵⁶ According to the new Constitution, the basic objectives of the organization were:

1. To render voluntary service and aid toward the successful prosecution by the United States of the war in which it is now engaged.
2. To organize the theatrical profession; and
3. To work with other organizations.⁵⁷

A Board of Directors was established with over forty members. One of Antoinette

Perry's shrewdest move was to invite the heads of all the stage unions to join, for the activities of the Wing would have been impossible without the full support of labor.⁵⁸

Membership in the Wing itself was limited to "persons whose living is connected in any way with the Professional Theatre in the United States."⁵⁹ Once again a mass meeting was held at the Hudson Theatre. It lacked the "hoopla" of the World War I version, and this time both the women and the men joined forces to expedite an increase in activity. The immediate problem was to raise \$100,000 to get underway. Individual "Captains" volunteered to raise \$500. Clare Boothe started the drive by agreeing to bring in \$2,000.⁶⁰ The Wing appealed to many sources for funds, never forsaking the Wing's autonomy to do so. The Philadelphia branch wanted to work with the U.S.O., but Perry declared that "the Wing could have no tie-up with any other organization."⁶¹ When someone thought the Wing should get the support of the Mayor on a project, it was deemed an "unfortunate suggestion," as "it is necessary for the Wing to keep clear of politics."⁶² In both membership and operation, the Wing was most comfortable working out of its own theatrical milieu.

Activities of the American Theatre Wing for Civilians

In the same spirit as the chorus women of Cohan's Revue of 1918, who slipped into overalls to study the art of driving a truck in case all the men were called overseas, the Wing established a "War Production Training Committee."⁶³ Its purpose was to take a survey of members of the profession to catalogue skills that might be needed in wartime. 27,000 census forms were sent out in mid-1942, and they received a 30% return-- good for a voluntary poll.⁶⁴ With the help of the survey, employment shifted. Actresses worked on assembly lines and men from the theatrical crafts were matched to jobs as welders and electricians in shipyards. One stage director ended up as a wood pattern maker in an "Aeroplane" plant. While the Committee did lead such people to defense work, the burgeoning demands of home front Broadway discouraged a fullscale switch in employment. Besides the "Training Committee," the Wing had many separate divisions of varying sizes, including first aid courses, a Youth in

Wartime program, and cooking classes taught by Alfred Lunt. Wing members soon discovered that the most successful programs were those that made the fullest use of the special skills inherent to the theatrical profession.

One of the most successful activities of the American Theatre Wing was the Speakers Bureau headed by Vera Allen, which was the basis for several other Wing efforts. The Bureau was a more sophisticated version of World War I's "Four-Minute Men" speeches. Miss Allen felt that such a Bureau was needed because:

War has already changed the whole pattern of our lives. The entire civilian population must learn to adapt itself to new conditions and must understand clearly the reasons for doing so. This will necessitate a tremendous job of public education in which the Speakers Bureau of the American Theatre Wing hopes to help materially. Its members have the trained voices and disciplined bodies necessary for good public speaking. Equipped further with accurate information and a strong urge to help win this war, they should be invaluable workers in this field of morale building.⁶⁵

She persuaded prominent voice teachers Marian Rich, Fanny Bradshaw, and Garrett Leverton to agree to conduct classes in speech-making. On April 21, 1942 Allen held a mass meeting at the NBC studios to encourage actors to join the Bureau. She told her audience that early in the war the police instructed air raid wardens that "bombs must not be allowed to drop until the air raid warning has been given." The Speakers Bureau was needed because, "we can not count on their staying up there until we're ready for them."⁶⁶

The classes taught the speakers both what to say and how to say it. They were told to be "friendly" and include personal experiences in their speeches, using a simple, direct, and sincere manner-- they should, "Remember Hamlet's Advice to Players."⁶⁷ Most of all, the Speakers Manual instructed them to "BE BRIEF." Words, in addition to truth, must have power, and students learned that the government was wrong in wording a sign, "Illumination is required to be extinguished before these premises are closed to business," instead of "Turn out the light before leaving."⁶⁸ While the content of the speeches was laced with war rhetoric of the type that might ask an audience: "Do you remember Pearl Harbor and our pledge to help pay back this treacherous assault a thousand times?", or observe that "There is a drop of seaman's

blood in every gallon of gasoline," most of the speeches were devoted to explaining what the Office of Price Administration or the Office of Civilian Defense were with minimal editorializing.⁶⁹ Accuracy was important. For example, when the Treasury Department curiously wrote that since it was short of paper it could only send the Wing one copy of its official statement, the Bureau tested the research skills of potential speakers by having them seek the correct information on their own. If the students passed the test and completed training, they were sent out to the field with the added caveat to "remember that the Wing is responsible for what you say."⁷⁰

The Bureau thought it would be more effective if each speech was individualized, Vera Allen recalls being pleased to find that:

Actors can write their own lines. We were afraid they might overdramatize instead of being simple and accurate. We had forgotten that actors work off all their exhibitionism behind the footlights...they sold the subject not themselves.⁷¹

In the first five months of operation the Bureau filled 815 assignments. The total by the end of the war was 4,035 engagements with 1,377 individually prepared speeches.⁷² The Wing wanted to be the sole agency speaking in theatres, but it could not impose restrictions on federal departments which thought otherwise. Many government organizations did appeal to the Bureau for help, with the notable exception of Elmer Davis at the Office of War Information who wrote that he felt the Office of Civilian Defense would organize necessary speeches. Allen felt his attitude partially resulted from Davis' distrust of actors; however, it may also have been Davis' reaction to what he may have felt was another threat to his Office's already unstable position.⁷³ A more favorable governmental response came from the Writer's War Board which requested five copies of the Speaker's Manual.⁷⁴ The speakers themselves were mainly radio performers, largely unknown to a mass audience, although one of the best, Jean Stapleton, was to find fame later as "Edith Bunker" on television's All in the Family.

Not being able to send stars like Katherine Cornell to every meeting became a problem for the Bureau as its popularity increased and requests redoubled. The demand for stars grated on the staff, they felt "Some people think they can get the Virgin

Mary for 150 people." The topper came when someone requested that the Bureau "put me in touch with an acrobat who can do an act on the Fire Department ladder 80 feet high. It can either be a straight act or a comedy act."⁷⁵

Brooks Atkinson, hearing of this difficulty, asked, "why don't you send them little plays?"⁷⁶ He felt plays would be interesting to the public and they would not demand stars as they did when someone gave a speech. With the idea that "one play is worth a 1,000 speeches," the Wing created the Victory Players. At first the players were a part of the Speakers Bureau, but as it grew, it became a separate unit under Esther Hawley and Harold Vermilyear. The Victory Players appealed to groups like the Writer's War Board for scripts, but had little luck in finding appropriate material. Finally, Miss Hawley herself sat down and wrote ten of the first eleven playlets. The goal was to dramatize and stimulate civilian war activity with tales like I Didn't Think, ("the tragic consequences of a careless conversation"), Is It Asking Too Much? ("the direct relationship between tin salvage and saving life"), You Give What You Got, To Serve Tomorrow, and Through the Dark Days. The Black Market was a popular subject. Wise Guys portrayed two men talking about how shocking treason is-- while buying illegal gas. Another, It's Up To You, told of a soldier dying for lack of an orange because a man was tempted by the Black Market, in this case personified by a gorgeous dancer dressed as a prime-rib.⁷⁷ There were thirty-six scripts on fifteen subjects that were available for production without royalty charge. The United States Treasury Department alone distributed 97,400 scripts. The Victory Players had a successful run of 1,059 performances. No one worked who was not a union actor and with Equity's consent no one was paid. Of the 241 actors involved, most did between ten to twenty shows but eight did over a hundred.⁷⁸ Brooks Atkinson wrote to Vera Allen, who was the initial organizer of the Victory Players, that, "That's a very dangerous enterprise you have. It could prove anything to anybody whether it was right or wrong."⁷⁹

The Wing continued to explore ways of using theatre's talents to improve home front conditions. English performers had been entertaining civilian defense workers

in Great Britain. Moss Hart got the idea for a unit called the "Lunchhour Follies," where shows would tour to defense plants and shipyards to boost morale, even when "lunch" was at midnight. He told the Theatre Wing Board that, "This was the chance for the theatre to get out of Broadway and right to the people."⁸⁰ The Wing allocated \$10,000 for two test units. Special songs were written by Hart, Harold Rome, and Kurt Weil. For example:

A thousand ships are launched today
A thousand tubs are on their way
A million planes are off, hooray!
For the man who worked for the drill
That turned the wheel
That ran the belt
That built the plane
That held the bomb
That dropped on Hitler!⁸¹

The Follies was "standing room only." Demand increased so much that eventually plants were charged \$200 a show to defray expenses. Nonetheless, requests continued to pour in.

Something for the Boys-- The Stage Door Canteen

Despite rationing and liquor shortages the New York nightclub business boomed during the war. Lines outside bars were long, and at many of the nicer places the enlisted man was discouraged. In this situation, the Wing started the Stage Door Canteen, believing that "the soldiers should have some relaxation and some way to be involved and that the people who could do the best job for them would be theatre people."⁸² Rachel Crothers first proposed a canteen at the Hudson Theatre meeting. Jane Cowl and Selena Royle agreed to head the committee that was to organize the operation. The theme of the next four months work was later inscribed on a placque at the Canteen, "Never before have we had so little time in which to do so much."⁸³ After much searching for a suitable location, the Wing accepted Lee Shubert's donation of the basement of the 44th Street Theatre. It had been Justine Johnson's "Little Club", and a speakeasy, and had fallen into disrepair. Twenty-seven truckloads of debris had to be taken away. Although Brock Pemberton said it would cost over \$25,000 to turn it into a night club-- the Wing did it for \$300 in cash.⁸⁴ This was possible

because the stage unions committee, headed by Emmeline Roche, provided free labor and design skill. Even so, the night before the Canteen was to open, Virginia Kaye recalls staying up until five in the morning painting newly-donated chairs. On March 1, a preview was held for the general public, admission was a pound of sugar or coffee, or perhaps five cans of tomato soup. Thereafter, only "G.I.s" were invited in. March 2, 1942 what was to become the famous red door of the Stage Door Canteen opened for the first time. The Wing expected as many as five hundred men, instead they greeted three to four thousand.⁸⁵

For most, the prime attraction of the Canteen was the celebrities.⁸⁶ Servicemen could see in one evening more entertainment than in every nightclub in town, and some were able to say, "Wow! I danced with Loretta Young, or Gracie Fields, or Bette Davis."⁸⁷ Radie Harris was the head of the Entertainment Committee and it was her job to fill a program every night from five to midnight-- "It was whoever was in town that we could grab," Harris called.⁸⁸ Ethel Merman, Al Jolson, Ethel Waters, and Howard Keel were some of those who had dropped in. Every night had a mixture of talent. Sometimes the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team would be there. Other times Yehudi Menuhin played. Much to everyone's surprise, the men seemed to enjoy them both. The only restriction on the type of entertainment was in discouraging such songs as "The White Cliffs" and "Miss You", in order to give the men a break from well-meaning sentimentality. On a typical night there were twenty-five signatures in the guest book. The choruses of Broadway musical such as Oklahoma, By Jupiter, and Star and Garter were regular visitors.⁸⁹ An evening's fare would be rounded out with novelty acts, organists, and the like, with a good dance band always on hand. Some celebrities came to dance, Shirley Booth made a point of coming almost every night to jitterbug with a sailor nick-named "Killer Joe." Everyone stopped dancing to watch the couple put on a floor show of their own.⁹⁰ No entertainer was paid. Stars came, some "because they wouldn't dare say no," but most because it was a way to be a part of the fight. From every corner American were greeted with exhortations of self-sacrifice. Young men went to war, but women and older men could not. The Stage

Door Canteen was one place where they could use their talents in a cooperative effort for the good of the common cause.

The celebrities did more "hum-drum" tasks besides entertaining. Some of the biggest producers on Broadway could occasionally be found working as bus-boys. One popular story told of how young Vincent Sardi Jr. taught Alfred Lunt how to wash dishes. Mr. Sardi confirms that Lunt was indeed at the sink:

I had just enlisted in the Marines and was waiting to be called up and thought I'd go volunteer at the Canteen. There was Alfred Lunt washing dishes with a little apron around him; I watched him for awhile, and saw that there wasn't a constant flow of dishes, it was carry it here, move it there, so I offered to move the drainboards around a bit and just make it more efficient. Of course, he was fascinated with that. He was convinced from then on- that I was the greatest restaurant man in New York-- which is not true.⁹¹

Established performers helped when schedules allowed, but the day-to-day operation was in the hands of people whose names were "only household words in the sense that they were called Mother or Sis."⁹² The Kitchen Committee alone needed fifty workers a day. In order to operate, the Canteen used 25,000 individual volunteers over the course of the war. There were 25,000 workers, but only a few hundred "star" performers in all of New York. Young talents just starting out did much of the work. The rest of the slack was taken up by the wives, sisters, cousins, and secretaries of people who were in the theatre. Certain clerical and maintenance jobs throughout the Wing had to be salaried because they demanded a full-time committment.⁹³ Performers, the Wing felt, were better utilized on the stage.

A serviceman was told upon entering that "All you have to spend here is your time." Sandwiches and soft drinks were provided cafeteria-stye, free of charge. The Wing was indebted to the local businesses who donated food stuffs despite rationing restrictions. The Men's Committee had a station wagon that weekly picked up gifts worth about \$6,000. Food Committe member Helene Dumas admitted:

What chisellers we are! If we get a ham from some hotel manager, we write and say the ham was so delicious and the boys appreciated it so much, we know he'll just love to send us one every week and may we count on that.⁹⁴

Sardi's, the Canteen's next-door-neighbor, in addition to offering surprisingly inex-

pensive meals to Canteen hostesses, was a particularly large contributor.⁹⁵

Antoinette Perry figured the cost to the Wing per man per week was only seventeen to twenty cents because of the quantity of donations. The Canteen had an enormous volume of food, "If the sandwiches made in the kitchen were stacked on top of each toher, they would reach to the top of the Empire Stage Building and have enough left over to fill Al Smith's derby."⁹⁶ More precisely, the Canteen averaged weekly 14,000 sandwiches, 21,000 slices of cake, 22,000 cups of coffee, 185 pounds of candy, and 42 crates of citrus fruits.⁹⁷ The most popular drink was milk.

Milk was not a surprising choice given the fact that alcohol was strictly forbidden. Jane Cowl remembers that when the Canteen was first being organized the Wing had to decide what kind of a place it should be. Cowl and Royle decided to ask the servicemen themselves, who apparently responded that:

We want a place where we can meet nice girls our own age.
A place where we can see good entertainment. A place
where we can pick up a spack such as you fix up when you
raid the icebox at home.⁹⁸

Servicemen originally from New York would usually stay with their families and visit old haunts and the Canteen's clientele was primarily strangers in town who welcomed the Canteen's homey atmosphere. The Stage Door Canteen was an all-American place for the all-American boy. The Canteen staff and hostesses "acted as if they were entertaining you in their home. As a result the attitude of the men was not so much that they were going to a dance hall but to somebody's house."⁹⁹ The Canteen staff encouraged a homey environment in a variety of ways. For example, every day there would be a birthday cake appropriate servicemen were to share in addition to the gift of a free phone call to anywhere in America.¹⁰⁰ Artists such as Frances Paelin and James Montgomery Flagg made hundreds of sketches of the men that were sent home to their families. Later, a photograph service began that snapped over 5,000 pictures for this purpose. Milicent Feingold started a serviceman's contact with the Canteen off warmly as she checked him into the building. She was able to identify over 4,000 military insignia and knwo where the divisions had fought.¹⁰¹ The Canteen had its own

infirmary and nurse Irene Carleson and her volunteers saw over 5,700 cases. The Canteen was the kind of a place you could write home about, as one soldier said:

Here I am about to go overseas. I have a wife and four children, the youngest a brand-new baby... and this was the farewell message I got from my wife, a telegram saying: "Don't forget to see the Stage Door Canteen before you go."¹⁰²

Probably a major reason that the soldiers's wife was comfortable with the idea of her husband visiting the Canteen was the system that regulated the Junior Hostesses. Senior Hostesses were usually older women who acted as head mistresses, and the Juniors were the women who danced and talked with the men. For the Canteen to work the conduct and reliability of the Junior Hostesses had to be assured. To oversee this aspect of the Canteen Rachel Crothers called Virginia Kaye, who was a "struggling young actress" at the time:

She told me of the idea of the canteen, which had no name yet, and since I had worked for the Wing when it was the British War Relief, she asked me if I'd co-chair the Hostess Committee with Vivian Smollen, who was a radio actress in "Our Gal Sunday" at the time. I discussed it with Vivian, and decided, "Well, I can spend ¹⁰³three weeks organizing things before I have to look for work.

Instead of three weeks it became an all-consuming job that had to deal with issues of serious import. The first problem they face was that withing two weeks of its opening "everbody wanted to work at the Stage Door Canteen. It was the place to be."¹⁰⁴ A woman could not simply volunteer. Smollen and Kaye interviewed applicants in groups of ten or so to make sure that they were members of the profession, that they were personable, that they could dance, and that they were not solely interested in meeting a Big-Broadway-Producer. The Committee heads developed a set of twenty-one "rules" instructing the hostesses "not to spend too much time with any one group," not to eat any of the food since it was donated "for the exclusive use of the servicemen," and not to permit the men to "consciously or unconsciously" reveal troop movements.¹⁰⁵ The last rule reflects the fact that the military was concerned about security, and all hostesses were fingerprinted and periodically lectured about "Careless Chatter."

One rule stood out in capital letters:

NO HOSTESS IS TO LEAVE THE CANTEEN AT ANY TIME UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES WITH A SERVICEMAN OR TO MEET HIM OUTSIDE IN THE VICINITY OF THE CANTEEN. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE NOT ONLY TO OURSELVES AND THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING-- BUT TO THE NAME OF THE ENTIRE THEATRE.¹⁰⁶

The Wing did not want the Canteen to be a "pick up spot" Everyone tried to preserve a wholesome atmosphere, and they succeeded. For many, it was like "being in college again" or a home-town "social" with the added attraction of entertainment. The reaction was positive. The idea that the Canteen hostesses were not allowed to date the men or even give their last names was one of the most frequently repeated news items. It is curious, however, that the press never commented that the rules did not prohibit dating entirely, they just did in the vicinity of the Canteen. Hostess Kathleen Claypool feels the rule was also a "safe guard for the girls" as an "easy way of saying no without hurting anyone's feelings."¹⁰⁷ Kaye wanted to impress upon the women that, though working at the Canteen may be "fun," the institutional purpose was paramount. The hostesses were assigned shifts of 5:00 to 8:30, 7:00 to 10:30, or 8:30 to midnight, and they had to be available to come when needed.¹²⁹ As Kaye said: "The rules were more of a 'request,' I didn't stand watch at midnight as 'Goodnight Sweetheart' was played, and I'm sure many of the girls did have romances, but the tenor of the rules was very much respected."¹⁰⁸

The Canteen, it should be remembered, was not exactly the romantic place that was pictured in newspapers. As Junior Hostess Margaret Halsey observed:

Most servicemen fail to resemble the pictures in the War Bond posters, the Canteen is small and hot and the dance floor cannot compete in charm and appeal with a jungle because a jungle stands still... the majority of the men are so shy that a lady could make more headway with a lockjaw patient.¹⁰⁹

While the men may have been looking for their "Eileen," the hostesses were singing their own version of Berlin's song: "I Left My Feet At the Stage Door Canteen, I Left My Feet With A Dancing Marine." Someone somehow calculated the Junior Hostesses danced 4,5000,000 miles by war's end.¹¹⁰ There were men like the man who proposed to every hostess at the Canteen, with the logic that "tomorrow you'll kiss me goodbye and

probably never see me again." More common were the men with a loved one back home. One woman felt a hostess "could get by at the Canteen with two sentences, 'Gosh!' and 'And what did she do when you said that?'¹¹¹ Sometimes silly things would happen: a soldier who insisted on dancing with his pet racoon around his neck, or a hostess who had to be told to wear a bra and panties when jitterbugging. Sometimes there would be going away parties for the hostesses whose careers were taking them out of town, like one held for Lauren Bacall when she left for her first screen test.¹¹²

To fully understand the Canteen however, it is necessary to understand a subtext that was far from "fun." As hostess Rosetta LeNoire recalls:

I was always a little sad when I would go home. New York was the point of debarkation. I always had in the back of my mind, despite all the dancing, the fact that it was the last time some of the boys would ever sing, dance, or set foot in America again...that ran through your mind.¹¹³

The Fame of the Stage Door Canteen.

With the success of the Canteen, the Wing started to get appeals to start other branches. Helen Hayes came to a meeting of the Board of Directors on May 6, 1942 to lobby for other canteens. The Board was worried about controlling branch canteens and how they would be supplied with entertainment. Miss Allen, however, reminded the Board that part of the original concept of the Canteen was in something that might appeal to the whole country. The Board decided that the Wing would selectively authorize branches without the entertainment resources of the New York Canteen. These branches would stress "home-made fun" and the canteen as a place to "meet pleasant people and be able to dance," instead of the celebrity appeal.¹¹⁴

Miss Hayes was appointed President of the Washington Canteen, but it was Armina Marshall who handled the day to day administration. Miss Marshall's husband, Lawrence Langner of Theatre Guild was also a patent attorney who served on an advisory council for the federal government. Antoinette Perry knew that Miss Marshall would be in Washington so she asked for her help. "I was worried about going down there and taking over," Marshall recalls, "but at that time anything you were told to do for your country, you did."¹¹⁵ The Washington Canteen emphasized the local flavor. Eleanor Roosevelt rallied support

for the project, feeling "the Capital should set an example for the rest of the country in giving a glamorous and colorful recreational center for servicemen," and on Congressional Night a serviceman would find Sam Rayburn working as a bus-boy.¹¹⁶ Radie Harris invited Bette Davis to the New York Canteen and Miss Davis was so impressed that within six months, she and Miss Harris opened the Hollywood Canteen. It was the largest Canteen greeting 10,000 men a night who were entertained by Humphrey Bogart, Roy Rogers, Hedy Lamar, and many more. It also had the distinction of being the only Canteen sued for damages by a hostess who injured her coccyx jitterbugging with a "jive-maddened marine."¹¹⁸ Soon there were Canteens in Boston, Cleveland, Newark, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, plus a Merchant Seaman's Club in New York. Eventually fame carried the Canteen to branches in London and Paris.

Word of the Canteen spread faster than its branches. Papers far removed from Broadway, including the Rigeland, South Carolina Record, the Orwell, Vermont Citizen, and the Loogootee, Indiana Tribune, regularly carried news of its glamour. The Canteen was featured in Life as well as Black Terror comic books and the New York Sun's "Olly of the Movies."¹²⁰ Stage Door Canteen "true-life" stories abounded. A particularly popular one was about two ships passing in the Atlantic, one sailor signals the other ship and asks what to do in New York. The message flashed back was: "Stage Door Canteen. No liquor but lots of fun."¹²¹ Hundreds of letters arrived at the Canteen each week, some to say thank you, some to complain that the hostesses were either too tall or too short, and many to request

photographs. According to publicity director Isadora Bennet, the early letters asked for pin-ups of starlets, but in time there were more requests for "the Canteen in action."¹²² When the natives of Middlesex England wanted to give the soldiers stationed there a "100 % American Day," they gave a Stage Door Canteen party with the aid of volunteer performers.¹²³ Helen Menken helped arrange a "Stage Door Canteen" weekly radio program, but the Wing declined with thanks most of the many invitations of manufacturers who wanted to make Stage Door Canteen hats, dolls, perfumes, and rings.¹²⁴ The Wing, however, had no objection to the Navy naming a Liberty Ship after the Canteen. Not to be outdone, the following year the Air Force had Mary Churchill christen a new bomber "Stage Door Canteen."¹²⁵ The Wing was pleased when the Duke and Duches of Windsor stopped by to visit, and honored by Eleanor Roosevelt's well-publicized and consistent interest in Wing activities. She once declared it "the finest of all contributions toward war morale."¹²⁶ The English were correct in seeing the Canteen as an American phenomenon, growing out of the home front aura of cooperation but with an extra glimmer of star appeal that fascinates Americans and thus makes good press. Considering all the free publicity the Stage Door Canteen received, it is not surprising that Hollywood thought it was a valuable property that would be a great idea for a popular film.

The Stage Door Canteen and Blacks

One aspect of the Stage Door Canteen that did not receive a great deal of attention by the press was the fact that the Canteen was "open to everyone wearing a uniform of the United Nations," regardless of race, color or creed.¹²⁷ The years before the war saw a rise in racial tensions. Some floggings and lynchings regularly made the news, countless others did not. Separate but equal was the law of the land with an accent on "separate." In 1941, A. Phillip Randolph threatened to lead thousands on a march on Washington to protest conditions. A march was averted at last moment by the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Commission. Many blacks tried to join the army as an answer to unemployment but found only limited numbers were welcomed in.¹²⁸ Once in the service, blacks had to accept the fact that the Armed Forces were strictly segregated. As late as 1948, General Eisenhower testified before Congress that they should remain so, claiming, "you cannot legislate about people's feelings."¹²⁹ Race determined what jobs were available. In the military a black could be a cook, truck driver, or perhaps a laborer. If a black soldier did get wounded in action, he could be assured of getting "black blood" to take the place of what he lost, for the Red Cross carefully separated blood plasma.

Most service groups took their cue from the military. The United Service Organization, or the U.S.O., was a national group uniting the efforts of prominent service associations including the Salvation Army, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Jewish Welfare Board. It was the recipient of millions of dollars through the national war fund drives. Official U.S.O. policy was not to discriminate because of race, color or creed, but each local U.S.O. club was left to determine its own rules. An incident at the U.S.O. Territorial Conference of December, 1942 capsulizes the situation perfectly. A group of women wanted to give a Christmas party at the Y.W.C.A. for servicemen and they wanted blacks to be able to attend. A U.S.O. local head and a military representative said "no" with the rationale that "the least that would happen at such a gathering would be the feeling of strain that

permeate the group and spoil their enjoyment of the party." The best alternative would be to build a separate club for the blacks as "the men themselves would prefer to have a place of their own, where they might enjoy themselves in their own way."¹³⁰

The result was that in 1943, when there were hundreds of U.S.O. clubs in the United States, few if any were desegregated and only six were designed for the exclusive use of blacks.¹³¹ When two professors of Anthropology at Columbia University edited a booklet which in non-technical language refuted the popular basis of much racial prejudice, U.S.O. President Chester I. Barnard ordered it removed from the club's reading rooms. Playwright Elmer Rice was incensed, and asked Barnard how an organization dedicated to "the educational needs of the men in the armed services" and "to the maintenance of morale in American communities" could deny such a book to the soldiers who were "fighting to overthrow the exponents of racism and to establish democracy and justice as world principles."¹³² Barnard answered that "the doctrine of the equality of races runs directly counter not only to social practice, in large sections of the community, but also to definite legal prescription."¹³³ He, in effect, was acquiescing to Jim Crow laws. Incidents of this nature were not uncommon. When Eleanor Roosevelt gave a biracial dance, she received criticism from people who felt they were "not in favor of sacrificing upon the altar of so-called patriotism the white womanhood of this country to boost the morale of the negro soldier in this, or any other war."¹³⁴

The situation was better in the theatre. Blacks had "long viewed careers in the field of entertainment as one of the few avenues available by which to escape poverty and anonymity."¹³⁵ Although much theatre was segregated in the sense that there were all black shows and most of them were concentrated in Harlem, the black performer was respected by theatre people as a member of the theatrical profession. Bill Robinson, Bert Williams, and Paul Robeson, to name a few, were not considered second class talents. After World War I several of the legitimate theatre's most important shows dealt with blacks and starred black actors, including The Emperor Jones, All God's Chillun Got Wings, Green Pastures, and the musicals Finian's Rainbow and Porgy and Bess

The Federal Theatre Project of 1935 paid special attention to the needs of the black actor by starting "Negro units" across the country which produced acclaimed shows. The New York unit was noted for ground breaking productions of Doctor Faustus and Native Son under the direction of Orson Welles. Paul Robeson's Othello played 296 shows, a record for the tragedy.¹³⁶ Although black actors had gained the respect of their peers and were slowly beginning to be accepted by Broadway ticket-buyers, no restaurant in the theatre district would serve him or her an after-show drink. New York law insisted a paying customer must be served regardless of race-- but it did not say how long it should take. Several actresses can remember waiting a very long time.¹³⁷

Blacks were served as quickly as whites at the Canteen. There was no formal decision to have a racially-mixed canteen. Virginia Kaye recalls:

I don't think anybody was conscious of the issue. Pearl Harbor was so great an event, and we all rushed so quickly into setting up the Canteen, that no one really thought about the racial question. It evolved, of course, as the Canteen neared opening, but as theatre people we always felt it was terribly important for it to be a non-segregated Canteen.¹³⁸

Kaye implies that perhaps theatre people, themselves part of a group perennially outside the main stream of society, might more readily accept other outsiders. Margaret Halsey, however, felt that the Canteen workers at least maintained a pretense that what the Canteen did was "simply the normal and obvious thing to do. By no stretch of the imagination could we have been called militants."¹³⁹ Nevertheless there were those at the Wing Halsey referred to as "Timid Souls" who were hesitant about integration. They felt it might "embarrass" the black soldiers and lead to various kinds of "Unspecified Trouble."¹⁴⁰ The Army and Navy warned the organizers that they were "sitting on a keg of dynamite." They did not condemn the Canteen's policy, but they warned that "one incident and you could be closed down."¹⁴¹ Once the Wing established the policy and put it into operation it fought to maintain it. When an outside interest proposed a separate Harlem Canteen, the Wing spokesman reacted vehemently,

declaring "we have never at any time contemplated a special neighborhood Canteen... it is an absolute violation of basic policy of being open to all servicemen...it would result in segregation."¹⁴²

Though the Wing determined basic policy, the Stage Door Canteen had its own executive board to govern its operation.¹⁴³ The Junior Hostess Committee was most directly affected by integration. Its members had to deal directly with the men in social situations. Co-chairman Virginia Kaye, felt strongly that "it was one thing to give lip service to an idea and another to find ways of making racial policies work that ran contrary to the values of the rest of society."¹⁴⁴ Vivian Smollen's role was that of a soothing influence. She would talk to the girls personally and calm tempers when needed. Virginia Kaye was the fighting half of the team. It was she whom Brock Pemberton introduced as "our little red" and who received a gift of a glass frog with a baton on a pedestal from Kermit Bloomgarten with the inscription, "to the monster leading the band."¹⁴⁵ Kaye was constantly lobbying for attitudes one step more liberal than the status quo. She was twenty years old, and Smollen was but a few years her senior, when they planned and executed a way of making integration work at the Stage Door Canteen.

The focus of their plan was to carefully select and indoctrinate the junior hostesses. Kaye and Smollen interviewed potential hostesses in small groups and explained the policy. They emphasized that though "we all come from different worlds," each girl must guarantee that whatever her personal feelings were, "no one's feelings were to be hurt." They told them what Eleanor Roosevelt said about "what you do in your home is your own concern, but what you do outside of it carries social responsibility." They reminded them that "a bullet doesn't stop in midair and decide what color skin to penetrate"-- an injunction repeated so often that it almost became a cliché.¹⁴⁶ Most of all, the Chairmen tried to get the young women to be open about their fears.

Margaret Halsey was a Captain of a hostess shift who wholeheartedly supported Canteen policy. When someone questioned the idea, she would reply that the policy

was based upon a quotation-- "that all men are created equal."¹⁴⁷ Later, however, she wrote that:

I spent hours and hours talking to my girls about democracy and the Constitution, and then discovered inadvertently one day that what preoccupied many of them is that Negroes have a different body odor from ours. So I put the Constitution away in moth-balls and started right away by saying that a sweat gland is a sweat gland and since Negroes have the same kind we have they couldn't possibly smell any different.¹⁴⁸

Many of the girls were afraid of rape and had to be persuaded that they should not fear a black man any more than a white one. The biggest concern of the hostesses, felt Halsey, was of falling in love and facing the prospect of intermarriage. Halsey would respond: "suppose you fall in love with a soldier who's already married? If you're so susceptible that you fall in love while dancing twice around the room with a total stranger, you ought not to be working in the Canteen at all."¹⁴⁹ Kaye and Smollen found that if they were gentle and non-belligerent, the women would open up to them. They learned that despite all the attempts at education, there would be someone who would say "I agree with you intellectually, but what do I do about my feelings?"¹⁵⁰ If she still wanted to be a hostess and could promise not to hurt anyone, she would be given a chance under the supervision of an observant shift captain. Most of the hostesses at the Canteen, according to Halsey, would fit this category, but of the over 4,500 young women Kaye and Smollen interviewed, only ten declined the job because of the racial policy.¹⁵¹ No white hostess ever had to be fired for intolerance at the Canteen. As hostess Kathleen Claypool put it, "if you didn't feel like doing it, you didn't belong at the Canteen."¹⁵² "If there weren't the people to care, we couldn't have done it just by putting up a sign." says Virginia Kaye.

The hostess Chairmen went so far as to hand-out sheets with prepared answers to soldiers who insisted on discussing the "Goddamn Niggers." Carefully armed and controlled by the structure of the Canteen, the hostesses were able to deal with a potentially volatile situation. They learned that the 6-8% of their clientele that was black was no more and no less well-behaved than the other 92%. The servicemen

accepted the policy as a fait accompli, apparently with the attitude "when in Rome do as the Romans do." As the war progressed and the Canteen began to welcome returning soldiers who may have seen action with black troops, the hostesses noticed an improvement in racial relations.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, there were still men who felt the need to "rescue" a white hostess dancing with a black. Miss Kaye can distinctly recall, also, at least one soldier proclaiming loudly that where he came from "it only takes \$35 to kill the bastards."¹⁵⁴ The important point, however, was that from March 1942 to November 1945 when the Canteen closed there was only one racial incident that threatened to explode.¹⁵⁵ A white man accused a black of stealing his watch. Tensions were getting out of hand, but the Canteen had an emergency plan. Emmeline Roche suggested whenever violence seemed imminent, the orchestra should immediately play twelve renditions of the "Star Spangled Banner." The servicemen would then have to snap to attention and the situation could cool. On the night in question, the song was played. The watch was found on the floor near the serving line.¹⁵⁶

There was never a battle about having an integrated Canteen, but there was one on the issue of whether to have black Junior Hostesses. Jane Cowl believed since there were relatively few black women in the theatre, it would be difficult to find enough hostesses to make such a policy work. The hostess faction argued that without black hostesses the goal of having an integrated Canteen would be a farce. In an unprecedented move, the Wing therefore decided to allow black women who were not involved with the theatre to be hostesses.¹⁵⁷ When possible, the Canteen tried to contact black performers. Rosetta LeNoire recalls that:

A lady on the kitchen committee knew I was a singer and wanted me to sing. There were a lot of white singers at the Canteen but very few black singers downtown. Most people played clubs in Harlem, I came in and sung songs from the show I was doing, Marching with Johnson and it went over very well. I stayed to dance with the soldiers and soon I was called to be a hostess. They didn't try to have integration-- they did it.¹⁵⁸

Other hostesses were found by appealing to college and professional groups with the result that many of the black hostesses were extremely well educated.¹⁵⁹ Shortly there was the same percentage of black hostesses as black servicemen.¹⁶⁰

"The most complicated realization we had," says Kaye, "was that we didn't just have to deal with the situation with the white hostesses, but we had to deal with the 'hurt' of the black hostesses."¹⁶¹ Working at the Canteen made them easy targets for abuse. The women were in some sense prepared for insults from white servicemen, but not for the ignorance of their co-workers. Well-meaning Senior Hostesses would inadvertently wound black volunteers by loudly telling newly arrived black visitors "there's some sweet darkies in the corner."¹⁶² Virginia Kaye appealed to Jane Broder, the Chairman of the Senior Hostesses, for help, but Broder could not believe her women would act like that. She told Kaye that, "I tell them not to be prejudiced and they know," to which Kaye responded, "at what age does it set in? At what age does one turn from being discriminatory to non-discriminatory?"¹⁶³ Discrimination was not only confined to the whites. In what Kaye describes as "the toughest thing I ever had to do at the Canteen," she had to fire the daughter of a prominent black leader for "refusing to dance with men of her own color."¹⁶⁴ Despite the advice of some hostess captains who suggested "letting sleeping dogs lie," Smollen and Kaye held a mass meeting at the balcony of the Martin Beck Theatre of all the black hostesses and all the white workers who wished to attend to openly discuss the Canteen. The Chairmen appealed to them to be tolerant, to understand there were problems, but to stay at the Canteen and make the policy work. They lost a few hostesses after that meeting, but most chose to stick it out.

Public reaction to Canteen policy was consistent with the values of the period. Not too much Wing publicity made note of it for fear it could backfire. The newspapers, moreover, were primarily interested in the celebrity appeal of the Canteen. The New York papers when they mentioned integration were favorable and referred to the policy's "surprising effectiveness" and Hirschfeld casually drew black and oriental soldiers intermixed with the white in his caricatures of the Canteen in the Times.¹⁶⁵ In 1944 and 1946 Margaret Halsey wrote two books, Some of My Best Friends Are Soldiers, and Color Blind, about the racial aspect of the Stage Door Canteen but

with fictionalized names and locations. Reception of the work epitomized the schism in society. The N.A.A.C.P. ordered thirty copies for each of its chapters, while someone else wrote Halsey that:

Between the Communists, Left Wing New Dealers...and nigger-loving newspapers...looking for nigger support at the expense of white dignity and supremacy...I can only pray for the coming of the good old Ku Klux Klan-- then the likes of you will be tarred and feathered as you deserve.

(signed) A Real Pure White American¹⁶⁶

Other Groups and the Stage Door Canteen

Allied servicemen were also welcome at the Canteen. A visitor wrote that in one night he saw troops from France, England, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and Russia.¹⁶⁷ Russian and Chinese soldiers were greeted with some unease. The Canteen News was dotted with references to their "brave fighters," as the Wing bent over backwards to welcome them. Of the foreign troops the British made the greatest impression. Miss Claypool remembers:

The British sailors in particular always looked so undernourished in comparison to our soldiers. I always had plenty of oranges and candy for them, because some of them hadn't had any in years. It brought tears to your eyes.¹⁶⁸

Neither the press nor some of the workers at the Stage Door Canteen were able to remember whether the Canteen was open to officers. The truth was, officers were welcome, but relatively few attended. To the perception of many, including Wing Board members, the relation of enlisted men to officers could be summed up by a Sad Sack cartoon where a G.I. is frustrated by a succession of bars for "Officers Only." When the soldier finally finds a place for "Enlisted Men," it turns out to be a latrine.¹⁶⁹ New York was so crowded with servicemen that many clubs could afford to restrict their business to officers. In addition, there was an Officers Service Committee, a private organization which saw to it officers got cheap theatre tickets, shopping discounts, hotel rooms, and passes to country clubs. Saturday night it threw formal dances for the men at the Hotel Commodore.¹⁷⁰ Since World War I, moreover, performers touring military bases had openly resented the special treatment

received by officers.¹⁷¹ Possibly as a result of the theatre's own vagabond roots, theatre people have often shown concern for the disenfranchised. At the Canteen, no man had to salute another. Deciding to run a canteen for all troops in effect discouraged officers from attending because it disrupted the discipline upon which the military runs.

Enemy aliens, however, were formally prohibited from attending or working at the Canteen. The Wing was fully aware of the potential security problems the Canteen posed. It cooperated with the government in screening volunteers and in teaching workers how "not to listen." Nevertheless, restricting enemy aliens from the Canteen was not an easy decision. Virginia Kaye remembers it as one time she went before the Board of the Wing and lost:

There was a girl who was one of the first to oppose Hitler. She was a great organizer and had barely escaped the Nazis with her life, and I felt it was terribly unjust to have to have let her go just because she wasn't a naturalized citizen.¹⁷²

In a rare move, the Wing conferred with other organizations to learn their policy toward enemy aliens. At a Board meeting February 10, 1943, members reported that the Office of Defense, Health, and Welfare, the U.S.O., the Red Cross, and Temple Emanuel restricted the participation of enemy aliens. A letter was read from Lt. Commander Charles B. Crawford of the U.S.N.R. which said:

Perhaps these people as individuals, are as much against the Axis as we are. However, there should be a policy, and I feel sure that you will agree, that it is in the interest of the best war effort to keep these people away from servicemen.¹⁷³

Reluctantly, the Wing concurred. The following year some enemy alien workers were allowed to apply for a special dispensation, but for the most part, the Wing remained off limits.

Ironically, the Theatre Wing, which was founded and run by women, did not allow servicewomen at its Stage Door Canteen. The official reason given in press releases was that when the Canteen started, there were no WAACs or WAVEs, and thus no accomodation was made for them. The Canteen then got to be so crowded with just male servicemen it was not feasible to start admitting women.¹⁷⁴ Instead the Wing

established separate tea dances on Sundays at the Roosevelt Hotel that over their two year life-span attracted 29,090 servicewomen.¹⁷⁵ A closer look reveals the decision hinged on more than logistics. In an October 1942 Board meeting, a male member suggested that since the WAACs and WAVEs were only "auxiliary groups" he did not feel it was part of the job of the Canteen to entertain them.¹⁷⁶ True, the servicewomen did not see action, but what would have been the harm in allowing them at the Canteen? Was it simply a question of numbers? One clue was that when the Cleveland Canteen wanted to invite women, it stressed that they would only come at limited times, under special supervision, and while at the Canteen they would follow the same rules as the Junior Hostesses.¹⁷⁷ The Wing was committed to maintaining firm control at the Canteen and it did not want servicewomen to come in and upset the carefully constructed atmosphere of a college social. The Canteen cultivated an image of a sanctuary in a "big bad city." The Wing was dedicated to boosting morale, not making matches. Board members did not want anything to tarnish the reputation of the Wing or of the theatre.¹⁷⁸

Controlling the Branch Canteens

When various cities began clamoring to start branch canteens, the Wing wanted to devise a way of ensuring the name "Stage Door Canteen" would not be misused. Representatives from the New York Canteen were sent to each new city to make sure the canteen was following proscriptions. The structure and rules of every canteen were supposed to be the same. Usually this appealed to the branches, except when racial policies were concerned. The Wing insisted on providing half the underwriting cost of a new Canteen even when a Canteen had sufficient funds of its own in order to "insure the controlling authority of the American Theatre Wing over the Branches."¹⁷⁹ The Wing immediately ran into opposition. A month after establishing the policy and sending the Philadelphia Canteen \$5,000, Philadelphia Financier Livingston Sullivan tried to send the check back.¹⁸⁰ According to Miss Perry, the problem arose because of the "difficulty in getting them to have Negro hostesses."¹⁸¹ Moreover, reporters

told the Wing the Philadelphia Canteen "was not admitting Negro boys." Board members were angry and unanimously voted for "insistence on the admission of Negro servicemen."¹⁸² The Wing refused to accept the check and continued to scrutinize the Philadelphia operation.

The pressures were similar in Washington but careful management avoided a crisis. Many performers in New York told tales of segregation in Washington. Rosetta LeNoire remembers being on tour in You Can't Take It With You:

We were on the train near Washington, when the conductor told me and the black actor playing the butler we had to move to a black car. The butler refused and took the next train to New York. When he told others what happened no one would take the part and I ended up playing the butler and the maid.¹⁸³

Katherine Cornell was in Washington performing Candida when Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the D.A.R. after it refused to allow Marian Anderson to sing. Her business manager Gertrude Macy recalls that:

No blacks were allowed in the orchestra in the theatre we were playing. Miss Cornell, in sympathy with Mrs. Roosevelt bought a booth and invited the President of Howard University to come as her guest. It caused a showdown. The theatre managers told us we might have a riot if we persisted. I¹⁸⁴ conveyed to them Miss Cornell's message, "Tell them I'll risk it."

In light of stories such as these it is clear why the Wing was concerned about the Washington operation. At a meeting of the Board of Directors August 25, 1942, before the new Canteen opened, the Board reiterated that "it must be definitely understood we were adamant on no racial discrimination." A Board member reported that:

Mrs. Roosevelt understood this and was in sympathy with it, but her advice was for us not to give it undue publicity until after the Canteen was open so that Congress could not attempt to stop our activities until we were ready to work.¹⁸⁵

Managing Director of the Washington Canteen, Armina Marshall, agreed that the Canteen had to proceed tenderly. Since there were not enough actresses in town to serve as hostesses, Miss Marshall got the wives of military men or politicians to fill the ranks, and often these women would bring their daughters along to be Junior

Hostesses. The women were very experienced in knowing how to graciously entertain guests. Occasionally, a few blacks came to the Canteen and were admitted, but on one occasion Miss Marshall remembers:

The park in front of the Canteen was suddenly filled with black soldiers. There must have been over a hundred...well some of my hostesses said, "What should we do? Who's going to protect our daughters?" I said to them, "Don't worry, you, as Southern women will be able to handle this situation better than anyone else. It'll be all right." Then someone asked, "What if they want to dance?" So I said, "Well, we won't have dance music tonight, we'll have a concert instead and the girls must sit out with the men and talk with them and make them as happy as they can." Well we let the men in and you would never have known there was worry. Everything went off beautifully, just beautifully.¹⁸⁶

After that incident there was "no problem whatsoever" in admitting black troops. While some of the people at the New York Canteen felt not playing dance music that night was a halfway measure, for Washington in the 1940s it was a step toward change.

The Boston Canteen caused the most problems for the Wing and injected a new note to the situation absent at the New York Canteen: anti-semitism. A Mrs. French of Boston, a prominent socialite who had been influential in previous relief work, was the founder and director of the Boston Canteen. Reports are unclear about what actually happened. However, in a memorandum to the Board of Directors dated October 2, 1943, Brock Pemberton accuses Mrs. French of having "no long range plans, no means of paying bills or correlating accounts, and no chain of command."¹⁸⁷ In addition, Mr. Pemberton claimed that Mrs. French ordered a man who had raised \$6,000 for the milk fund off the premises, castigating him as "a damned kike whom Hitler should have got."¹⁸⁸ Within ten days, thirty-two workers quit and the Canteen was in a shambles. In December it closed down, and the public was told they needed more time to set up. The Wing was surprisingly slow in sending an investigating team of Board members, but after the closing the Wing did send a committee to find what was wrong and to advise solutions. In addition to

the Board members on the team, Antoinette Perry even called Virginia Kaye to ask her to lecture on racial tolerance. Finally, after many long meetings, on January 20, 1944, the Canteen reopened. Mrs. French stayed on, but a business manager was appointed and the structure revamped.¹⁸⁹ In the assessment of the Wing's Board of Directors, the reason for difficulties in Philadelphia and in Boston was "non-theatrical people in control of the Canteen."¹⁹⁰ The Board felt that the more traditionally stratified world of the socialite was less willing to accept change.

The Stage Door Canteen Film

One month after the New York Canteen opened, Hollywood was already anxious to capitalize on the Canteen. By December, 1942 four studios had projects planned. RKO with "Canteen Girl," Republic with "Canteen Hostess," and both Paramount and Warner Brothers proposed "Hollywood Canteen."¹⁹¹ The Board of Directors was bombarded with films offers of varying merit. Columbia wanted to pay \$15,000 for sixtwo-reel shorts with the Wing supplying the stars. Paramount claimed it got the idea for a Canteen before the Wing opened the real one, but it offered to pay \$2,500 as a gesture of good faith and to avoid potential court fees.¹⁹² Board members Miller and Fliesher formed a committee of two to negotiate the film rights. Finally, the Wing accepted Sol Lesser of United Artists' offer of 90% of the profits. To insure the cooperaton of the Hollywood branch, the Wing agreed to pay the Hollywood Canteen 20% of 50% of the profits with an additional 20% of 50% donated to the Motion Picture Relief Fund.¹⁹³ With that, a project started which was to have far-ranging influence on Wing activities and how they were perceived.

Originally, Lesser wanted real-life actor/servicemen Jimmy Stewart, Jeffrey Lynn, William Holden, and Ronald Reagan for the soldier leads, but the Army's demand for 100% of the profits proved insurmountable.¹⁹⁴ Lesser was not familiar with the theatre and henceforth relied upon the Wing to supply the stars. Radie Harris was asked to be Talent Coordinator. She induced forty-eight performers and six big bands to make cameo appearances in the film. The Lunts were on the screen for 81 seconds, Tallulah Bankhead for 50, and Helen Hayes for only 43. Credits were listed in alphabetical

order and each script had on the first page the message:

It is the intent of the producer to assure each and every artist whose name appears in this script, that his or her scenes will be subject to their unqualified approval and will be revised if necessary to get such approval.¹⁹⁵

The biggest coup Harris made was in securing Katherine Hepburn and Katherine Cornell. Hepburn agreed after Harris got Robert Sherwood to write her scene.¹⁹⁶ Cornell was frequently referred to at that time as the "First Lady of the Theatre." She resolutely refused film offers-- until the Wing asked. Miss Cornell's film debut, and in fact her only film appearance, was a nationwide news story. Miss Harris, feeling that Cornell needed a special moment, conceived the idea of the actress playing the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet across the serving line to a dewey-eyed soldier.¹⁹⁷ The Screen Actors Guild did not force the stars to join, but it did insist they be paid the regular cameo rate-- about \$300. Most gave their check to the Wing.¹⁹⁸ There were only two casting disappointments for Harris:

The girl and boy were not my first choice...the girl I chose found out she was pregnant a few days before filming began...the other problem was that I wanted a young singer I knew to sing "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen," but Lesser said he was too much of an unknown-- the singer was Frank Sinatra.¹⁹⁹

Of the 1,313 feature films from 1942 to 1944 almost one-third were directly concerned with the war. Besides the blatantly propagandistic war films, the Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture "recommended subtle scenes of self-sacrifice to encourage similar actions by the audience"-- the Canteen film was packed with such scenes.²⁰⁰ In the movie, for example, Gertrude Lawrence refuses an encore because she is needed in the kitchen. Ray Bolger easily switches from bus-boy to dancer to bus-boy. Moreover, the film was consistent with the unabashed patriotism prevalent in the country and approved of by the government. The first image in the film is of a train purposefully speeding along carrying troops. One man asks his sergeant, "Where are we going?" and the sergeant answers, "we're going to win a war." Four soldier friends are introduced. "California" is nineteen and never been kissed; "Jersey" wants to marry his high school sweetheart; "Texas" prefers Southern girls; and "Dakota", well Dakota's a swell guy who turned down sergeant stripes to stay with his buddies. They

visit the Canteen before shipping out and are entertained by Gracie Fields singing "Remember Pearl Harbor." Each refrain of "ACK ACK ACK" shoots down another Jap plane. A comedian asks the hostesses in the audience, "if you could be any woman in the world who would you be?" The winning answer was "Hitler's Widow." Shot late in 1942, the film reflected a kind of courageous optimism that helps a willing audience believe "Jap Jiu-jitsu is no match for a Marine round-house to the jaw."²⁰¹

There were a number of celebrity jokes, as when a sailor faints when he realizes he is dancing with Bette Davis, but the film was remarkably successful in putting forth the ideology of the Wing. The Canteen's open-door policy is given great play. The shooting script calls for the camera to pause on "two colored Junior Hostesses" who reflect "pride in their compatriots while Count Basie accompanies Ethel Waters." Johnny Jones, a black soldier is introduced. He calls the ribbon on his chest "nothin'!" a white serviceman says, "Yeah, nothing but the Distinguished Service Cross." Chinese airmen drop by shortly after winning their wings. When they are called away because "they have a job to do across the Pacific," servicemen put the Chinese men on their shoulders and parade them about the room. Soon thereafter, Russian sailors visit and prove that Communists are people too. Passing references to other Wing activities are worked in. More than anything else, the homey aspect of the Canteen and the rules that helped preserve it are emphasized. A soldier says, "You don't look like an actress, you look just like a girl from back home in Sioux Falls." Another man asks Helen Hayes, "How far can you go with these girls?" and she answers, "Just as far as the door." Dakota is hurt by producer-hunting Eileen's indifference and strict adherence to Canteen non-fraternization rules. Slowly she learns what is described in the script as "the real meaning of the Canteen," of a world-wide drama that dwarfs Broadway. Eileen forgets all about finding Brock Pemberton and meets Dakota after closing-- but without breaking the rules. She explains to him:

I just can't tell you the subway station where I get off...
it's against the rules...But the girls, they live with me,
and they get off at Washington Square.²⁰²

A glance through the press packet given to film exhibitors confirms the dual attraction of the Canteen-- stars and the war. The ad campaign had three facets: national preselling, national tie-ups, and local exploitation. The packet mentions that articles about the Canteen had already appeared in Newsweek, Liberty and Life, among others, which it claimed reached 100,000,000 readers. An additional 80,000,000 read ads placed in Redbook, Cosmopolitan, and Look. Several companies planned to release songs and books tied-in to the movie. The most interesting publicity move, however, was in local exploitation. The publicists suggested staging events like "finding the local Eileen" having a "Canteen Night" with the Mayor and officials acting as bus boys, or locating the mother in town with the most sons in the army and having a "Canteen Party" for her. The pages in the packet devoted to the homey approach are only rivaled by those devoted to caricatures of the celebrities entertaining the boys (see appendix). Despite all the concern for war service, the one-sheet poster stressed "48 Stars-- One for every Star in the Flag."²⁰³

Louella Parsons called the movie simply, "the Greatest Entertainment ever seen in a single film,"²⁰⁴ but others commented with more analysis. The film was so much a product of its time that even contemporary reviewers noticed, James Agee wrote that:

Stage Door Canteen is beautiful as a preview of a period piece. Any film is, but this one carries a saturation of the mannerisms of the fourth decade entertainment, patriotism, and sub-idealized love-making which could supply almost twenty others.²⁰⁵

Some reviewers called it a "concatenation of drivel" in which performers "sing indifferent songs indifferently."²⁰⁶ Others resented what they felt was a depiction of show business people as modern-day saints.²⁰⁷ Wing members themselves enjoyed the movie, while thinking the love story was "silly."²⁰⁸ The Times summarized critical reception:

No matter how you look at it, there is poignancy and bravery in every scene. This may not be the picture to arouse sophisticates. But it will fetch thrills, tears, and laughter from millions throughout the land.²⁰⁹

It was a prophetic analysis, the film was the box office hit of the year, earning a then incredible 4.5 million dollars.²¹⁰ Although hardly ignored before, the Wing was flooded with a new wave of letters like this one from "the Pacific":

Have just seen for the fourth time the movie Stage Door Canteen. For God's sake don't close the joint before I get home!²¹¹

Part of the reason the popularity of the real and film Canteen was significant was that it reveals what American people wanted to see-- what themes they accepted. It also reveals a kind of propaganda Americans were exposed to that may have influenced attitudes. Sociologist Robert K. Merton, in his book Mass Persuasion, provides a clue to understanding the Canteen's effectiveness as a propaganda tool. Merton's analysis of why Kate Smith in one day's radio broadcasts was able to sell thirty-nine million dollars in war bonds hinged upon the "anomaly that an entertainer in our society can take on the attributes ordinarily reserved for the moral leader."²¹² Because Kate Smith was an entertainer, she could attract an audience, but once in the position to influence others, her singing talents were not important. Merton found when he asked a sampling, "Why was Smith so effective?" only 7% thought it was because she was an entertainer; 60% emphasized her sincerity, her ability to be glamorous but down to earth and "one of us" at the same time.²¹³ Hollywood intuitively saw the attraction of stars just like the girl next door. Variety reported a new technique for publicizing a female star:

No longer are actresses pictured as luxury loving dolls. Today's femme star is as virile as the men-- shown washing dishes in Canteens, sweeping, lifting five-gallon coffee cans...proving that she can take it...that she's doing her share.²¹⁴

News of celebrity bus-boys and dishwashers had the same connotations. The public liked to think that stars joined them in the fight against destruction.

The film may have influenced society, but it certainly had a tangible effect on the Wing. Prior to the release of the movie, the Wing's primary source of income was from donations, drives, and benefits. Over the war period these sources earned

\$1,717,311.87. The film, however, contributed \$2,277,857.23.²¹⁵ Not only was it a great deal of money, but the Wing did not have to drain its energy to get it. Other media proved kind to the Wing as well. The radio "Stage Door Canteen" program netted \$471,4000. When the sequel film Hollywood Canteen, came out, the Wing got another slice of the profits. The Wing's financial worries were over and its members were free to embark on activities hitherto out of their reach.²¹⁶

The U.S.O. and "The Barretts of Wimpole Street"

Early in its operation, the Wing wanted to organize camp shows as the Stage Women's War Relief did years before. Members worked on the project for a long time before realizing there was no money to finance the plan. Apparently, "they even considered going to Congress for an appropriation but felt Congress was not in any mood to give anything to actors."²¹⁷ Instead, the job fell to the U.S.O.. The theatre professionals of the Wing frequently disagreed with the U.S.O., whose members came from a social service background. When U.S.O. Camp Shows asked the Wing to form a liason committee to assist them in May of 1942, Bert Lytell said he "did not see how we can avoid it."²¹⁸ The Wing inquired if it was an official request, it was. Lytell and Brock Pemberton also became Board members of the U.S.O.

The U.S.O. specialized in streamlined musical comedies and vaudeville acts. Overseas Program Director Royal H. Burpee summed-up the idea behind Camp Shows, explaining that, "the outstanding need in our program is for live friendly cooperative entertainment, well-spiced with young, attractive women."²¹⁹ The women, however, were told not to be too attractive. The Army Special Services division reviewed every show and was empowered to censor it if necessary:

Vulgarism, double entendres, or references to race, color, or creed are not permitted. When a script has been approved it cannot ²²⁰be altered. If changed-- the performers will be sent home.

The U.S.O. and Army sometimes went to ridiculous excess. Gertrude Lawrence was not allowed to sing her hit "Jenny" from Lady in the Dark with its customary "bumps" because

the censors thought them lewd. When soldiers were upset and called for the bumps, the camp cabled the War Department for a special dispensation. The Department replied that Lawrence could do the bumps-- but only if she did them "sideways."²²¹ Later in the war, Lawrence wanted to do Noel Coward's Private Lives for the troops. She was again told no. This time because the U.S.O. said it preferred variety programs.²²² When the U.S.O. did do straight shows, more often than not they were productions of My Sister Eileen or Arsenic and Old Lace. The Wing representatives complained about the lack of legitimate drama, feeling there was more that theatre had to offer, but these complaints met with limited success.²²³

The success of the Stage Door Canteen film suddenly gave the Wing resources to do almost anything it wanted. Various proposals were made. Someone suggested starting a Service House in New York to lodge soldiers. The Board of Directors decided that since other groups handled service houses very well, the Wing should stick to the "Kind of activity it does best."²²⁴ Actress Margalo Gillmore suggested that since the Wing was so dissatisfied with camp show fare, the Wing should send its own production abroad representing the best in theatre. Gillmore then advised contacting Katherine Cornell, who had previously helped the Wing by giving benefit performances of Candida and in appearing in the Canteen film. The Board decided if Cornell agreed to tour, she could choose any play she wished and the Wing would allocate \$75,000 to send it abroad through a special arrangement with the U.S.O..²²⁵

Gillmore, Perry, and Lytell phoned Cornell who was in Baltimore with a show and they asked her to consider the idea. Miss Cornell's business manager, Gertrude Macy, remembers that "it was a shocking suggestion to all of us...we talked about it for hours that night, and told the Wing we needed time to think."²²⁶ It was a difficult decision for Cornell. At the least, it meant cancelling her tour, and at the most, there was the possibility of death. Fortunately, Miss Macy knew General Marshall's aide de campe and through him asked the general's advice. Marshall came backstage in Baltimore and was "very enthusiastic" about the project. Cornell and company felt, that "if they

really want us, we should do it."²²⁷ Miss Cornell shared the Wing's view about what kind of show the soldiers should see. She chose to give them "her best"-- and that meant The Barretts of Wimple Street.

From the start, the "B.O.W.S.," as the soldiers called it, was an unusual project. The Company did not want to wear the U.S.O. uniforms, and at Antoinette Perry's orders they had special American Theatre Wing outfits made for them at Saks. Other plays the U.S.O. sent to the troops were cut to only one hour long, had casts trimmed to about seven people, and carried 500 pounds of scenery. The Barretts, however, had sixteen company members, packed 5,000 pounds of scenery, and was done in its entirety.²²⁸ The group took the usual battery of inoculations, was trained to use gas masks, and got generally uneasy about the fact they did not know where they were being shipped. They were frightened when a sailor mentioned that, "a German sub passed right under our ship last night," but their greatest worries were generated by the Army and the U.S.O..²²⁹

Margalo Gillmore, who was one of the actresses in the Company, said that:

Everyone was enthusiastic and everyone agreed to everything until the U.S.O. found out about the play and then doubts began to set in. "The Barretts of Wimple Street? Wasn't that the play about Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning? But weren't they poets?" We said they had been. "And weren't they, well...not very young poets?" We said strictly speaking they were not exactly adolescent. "And wasn't it a costume play, long skirts and things?" We said it was. "Oh dear," said the U.S.O., "oh, dear, dear, dear."²³⁰

The U.S.O. went on to say the men wouldn't like a play about middle-aged poets-- "they wouldn't like a play about middle aged ANYTHINGS."²³¹ The men wanted pretty girls and lots of laughs. If they did go to see the Barretts, they would stay only to laugh the cast off the stage. The U.S.O. suggested doing a different play, or barring that, cutting the love scenes and eliminating mention of Italy. They told the actors that they did not "know the G.I.." For Gillmore, "the home-sick men of imagination were replaced by creatures from Mars."²³² The feeling of unease was

compounded when a major informed them they should remember that "it is primarily your duty to make every man who leaves the theatre after seeing The Barretts of Wimple Street better able to turn a knife in the guts of a German."²³³ Miss Cornell was not sure what to do in the face of such opposition. At last she told the Company: "We'll let the soldiers decide."²³⁴

The U.S.O./Army contingent insisted on an out-of-town try-out at Mitchell Field on Long Island before 2,500 G.I.s. The show passed muster. A Special Service Captain reported to his superior that:

Such a situation has never come up before. All the many calls received were high in their praise, and the various individuals stated that they were anxiously looking forward to entertainment of this sort from time to time...it is definitely practical.²³⁵

The real test, however, would come further from Broadway before battle-weary troops in Italy. The first performance was in Naples. The house was packed when the play started. The cast was unnerved by immediate audience participation. Lines mentioning, "Italy, land of romance," were greeted with laughter. Brian Aherne as Robert Browning kissed Katherine Cornell and the men started shouting, "Pass it around!" The actor playing the domineering father was hissed whenever he came on stage and a soldier asked, "Who does he think he is, a top sergeant?"²³⁶ Slowly though, hecklers were "shushed" as the men, many of whom had never seen a live performance before, became enraptured. When the final curtain fell the actors were greeted by a solid wave of applause, "of stamping, cheering, whistling khaki."²³⁷ The Company felt they had seen an "audience born." The next day's headline in Stars and Stripes was "Long-Haired Drama Makes Hit With G.I.s."²³⁸ Better yet, Miss Cornell overheard one soldier tell his buddy, "See, didn't I tell you it was better
²³⁹
than a whorehouse?"

Unlike the U.S.O. shows, the men were allowed to go backstage. Many of them gave up their monthly liquor ration to give a gift to the cast. A frequent comment was that The Barretts was like "home." It was a "perfectly plain story" about a family "with a hero, and a heroine, and an ogre, and had love and excitement and

suspense."²⁴⁰ Home-sick soldiers loved it. The Company returned the favor by playing 78 shows in 79 days in Italy in 11 cities-- the leads never missed a performance.²⁴¹ After the scheduled twelve weeks the cast was exhausted, the costumes and set were seedy, and the occasional frustrations from dealing with the military were tiring.²⁴² General Omar Bradley, however, invited them to visit Northern Italy and he managed to persuade The Barretts to tour France for an additional four months-- "we had commitments back home, but nothing as important as what we were doing."²⁴³

The Company was blessed by the Pope and received a citation from the Army.²⁴⁴ They paved the way for a new interest in legitimate theatre by the U.S.O.. Starting in 1944, twenty-two shows followed, including productions of Shakespeare such as Maurice Evans' Hamlet.²⁴⁵ For the actors, though, the most memorable tributes came from the men themselves. They visited hospital wards and saw "men who had no hands making an automatic gesture of applause."²⁴⁶ Their experiences followed them home as people would come backstage "clutching letters from their sons who'd been overseas and had written that they liked The Barretts." Parents would ask Miss Cornell if she remembered their boy. Cornell would always say, "Oh, I believe I do remember... Yes;" and the visitors would leave happy.²⁴⁷ Miss Macy recalls that:

Around Christmastime overseas when we visited the hospitals Miss Cornell wanted something to give to the boys. She bought about 5,000 "Santon," miniture nativity figures that we'd carry in baskets and give out to the G.I.s in bed.

You cannot imagine how moving it was when in 1960 on Miss Cornell's last tour, a man still cared enough to come backstage. He reached into his pocket and took out one of those figures, and said, "I never go anywhere without this."²⁴⁸

Women in the American Theatre Wing

It was not surprising the principal figure in The Barretts project was a woman. From its inception, the officers of the Wing were women. Women founded the Wing and shaped its direction. A Men's Committee under Gilbert Miller did not start until late November 1940.²⁴⁹ Before Pearl Harbor the men's organization remained strictly separate from the women's, planning its own activities and having its own

stationary (see appendix). Why was it that women were so involved? A large part of the explanation is that women have traditionally "rolled bandages" at home while the men went off to war. The idea of women's service was very important, throughout the war women were told, "women by themselves cannot win this war, but quite certainly it cannot be won without them."²⁵⁰ Many Wing members attributed the predominance of women to the nature of the work. Edith Maison explains that, "the men didn't sit around and knit, but they did other things...including fight."²⁵¹ Armina Marshall agrees that men aren't as suited to certain tasks as women are, she feels that "women are the hostesses, the people who know how to arrange parties. If dancing and lunches have to be given, the women are better at them than the men."²⁵² Men of the Canteen shared these sentiments, Vincent Sardi Jr., thinks that the difference in skills between the sexes was useful because, "the Wing wanted to appeal to men's minds, not just to have a good time. They wanted a home away from home. Men don't think in those terms. If it had been men organizing the Stage Door Canteen it probably would have been a billiards parlor or bowling alley."²⁵³

The concept of "women's work" explains a great deal, but it does not fully account for the genesis of the Wing in relation to men and why after Pearl Harbor the Wing became much more intermixed. The new Board of Directors of the Wing was open to both men and women. The urgency of the times and the scope of the projects may have necessitated more men getting involved as it did when camp shows were planned in World War I, however another element was the differences in style and attitude toward men of Rachel Crothers and Antoinette Perry.

Though only ten years older than Perry, Crothers was tied to an earlier generation of women. Before World War I, playwright Crothers was noted for her feminist dramas. Her subject was the New Woman trying to make a place for herself in a Man's World. Her female protagonists, like Ann Herford in He and She, were frequently caught trying to reconcile their aspirations with the constraints of society. It

should also be remembered that the Stage Women's War Relief existed simultaneously with the women's suffrage movement. Crothers and her peers were fighting the battle of the women in her plays. In this context, Crothers' desire to have an all-female organization was understandable. Antoinette Perry, however, came from an entirely different mold. While Crothers never wed, Perry gave up her career in the theatre for twelve years to get married-- exactly what Crothers' heroines were trying to avoid. Moreover, their differences as directors of the Wing are paralleled by differences in the way in which each directed the stage. Crothers has been described as a demanding director who insisted actors accept her vision.²⁵⁴ Perry, on the other hand, was if anything, overly solicitous. She directed a male actor by saying:

It seems foolish for a woman to tell a grown man how to act, but dear, would you mind.. it's only a suggestion...but...²⁵⁵

Perry did not have Crothers' background and women in the 1940's had a different place in society than thirty years before. Perry brought men into the Wing because the Wing needed them. There was no driving reason to exclude them. While the overriding image of the American Theatre Wing may accurately be expressed as a painting of a young woman clad in Red, White, and Blue, One should remember there were many contributions by men as well; especially considering James Montgomery Flagg, a male, painted the picture.

The Reputation of the Theatre

It was important to Rachel Crothers that the Stage Women's War Relief be a group of women, but perhaps even more dear to her, was that they be women of the theatre. The theatre has rarely in history had an esteemed place in society. The founders of America thought theatre was "the ante chamber of the devil" and that actors were the "caterpillars of the commonwealth."²⁵⁶ Theatre was suppressed in the United States for decades and the climb to respectability was a slow one. The Stage Women's War Relief and its successor, the American Theatre wing, as theatre organizations, recognized the need to champion the cause of the legitimate theatre.

From the first meeting of the Stage Relief there were signs of what the women were up against. Newspaper coverage described ingenues in their "spring finery, eyes sparkling, and cheeks flushed." The headline in the Times was "Actresses in Tears Over War Appeal."²⁵⁷ The same tone was continued in coverage of a Stage Relief function with the heading "Chorus Girls Give Benefit." If the theatre had a poor reputation, women in the theatre had a terrible one. Crothers was aware of this. In her play 39 East, a man tries to put his arm around a woman and she says, "You think you can do that just because I'm in the chorus."²⁵⁸ The Stage Relief tried to protest such cavalier treatment. The Relief wrote to the offending newspaper and asked its editors not to refer to people as "chorines," but to call them "Ladies of the Ensemble." The newspaper did not understand the Stage Relief's need to be taken seriously and it printed a facetious retraction.²⁵⁹ A similar affront occurred by the Y.M.C.A.. Many actresses had volunteered to entertain overseas. The Y.M.C.A. issued a press release which said:

Actresses going from Broadway to the champagne district of France need not expect to imbibe the golden grape juice with handsome officers, because they must agree before going not to drink or smoke in the presence of men, and not to be with them after hours. They must obey, for cannot "walk the ties" back from "over there."²⁶⁰

Equity demanded a full apology. Even women who were in effect doing the Y.M.C.A. a favor could be publicly castigated as whores. Perhaps, part of the reason the women in the Stage Relief workrooms wore nun's-type habits was in an attempt to tell the world they were more than a pretty pair of gams.

They did not wear robes in World War II, but the well-publicized, self-imposed "rules for hostesses" might have been a similar effort at respectability. Other aspects of publicity did not fare as well. Some members of the public ridiculed the Wing for its glamorous appeal, yet, paradoxically, it was news of the glamour that sold the most newspapers. The Wing was very upset when after the Speakers Bureau did extensive work of the O.P.A., the Bureau was never mentioned. The Board resolved

that "in the future, before volunteering its services, the Wing make an effort to get credit for its work."²⁶¹ The depth of the anti-theatre attitude can be measured by the response to Eleanor Roosevelt's relatively innocuous comment in her column that groups should be more appreciative of actors appearing at rallies, and not always insist upon a "Big Name." Public response was vehement as many accused her of being an "actor-lover."²⁶²

Public resentment led some people in the theatre to see themselves as kin to minority groups. Rachel Crothers said that:

We are a people apart. In the present day of the merging arts and trades this is difficult to grasp, perhaps unless one realizes that from the centuries of oppression when the actor was but a vagabond we have grown instinctively to cluster together.²⁶³

Many Wing members shared the attitude that "theatre people are only thought of when they can be made use of. You cannot give a fund-raising event without a star... But who supports the theatre?--- the theatre community supports itself."²⁶⁴

World War I and World War II stage relief organizations tried to help actors and the theatre. In the first war, the Stage Women's War Relief helped support 284 actors' families. Actor/servicemen were made "godchildren" of the War Relief which sent them care packages and letters from home.²⁶⁵ As in all the Relief's work, Crothers stressed there was no public money used. In 1932, though obviously not as a part of war relief, Crothers showed her concern for her profession by organizing a Stage Relief Fund to aid needy actors in the Depression.²⁶⁶ Before heading the Wing, Antoinette Perry was respected for helping the theatre by running apprentice auditions for young actors who otherwise did not have a chance of breaking in. One of the first activities of the British War Relief was to help the orphaned children of actors. One of the last activities of the Wing was post-war retraining of actors coming back from the war. In all efforts, the Stage Door Canteen, The Barretts of Wimple Street, the Victory Players, the Wing expressed two concerns. Most important was service; but after that was an awareness for the theatre's skills and needs.

The End of the War

By 1945 United States citizens were waiting expectantly for V-J Day. The workers at the Canteen vowed "to be on hand as long as they need us;" and soon thankfully, the boys were home and the Canteen was out of place. The first bell tolled when plans were made to tear down the 44th Street Theatre. Calls flooded in from people willing to donate space; but no permanent location could be found near enough to the theatre district. The Canteen moved temporarily to 43rd Street opposite the Wing's Seamen's club, with Mayor La Guardia leading a parade complete with brass drum.²⁶⁸ The Mayor's interest reflects the fact that the Stage Door Canteen was an important war-time symbol for millions of people. One of the many poems sent in was called "Post-War Suggestion:"

So, you dream of a world that is
 kind and serene
And you think it is too good to attempt it,
Well I know a place called the
 Stage Door Canteen
Where the world is just as you dreamt it.²⁶⁹

It was only a matter of months, however, before the Canteen finally shut its doors on October 28, 1945. The branch Canteens closed as well. In London, soldiers rioted in protest. Only Washington managed to stay open until January. Citations thanking the Wing and its officers continued to be announced. The Board established a post-war planning committee. The job of the Wing, as originally conceived, however, was done, and to survive it needed a new direction.

The search for direction was made more difficult when in June 1946 Antoinette Perry died. Perry was a Christian Scientist and had kept her ill-health a secret for some time. Her compatriots felt she literally "gave her life" for the American Theatre Wing, and they were devastated by her loss.²⁷⁰ Vera Allen observed that:

When Antoinette Perry died there was a feeling that it was a wartime organization which had served its purpose and had just lost an irreplaceable leader; some members of the Board were inclined to let the Wing close down at that point.²⁷¹

In the face of this negative attitude, Vera Allen was elected Chairman of the Board.

Miss Allen, since 1941 when she accepted the Chairmanship of the Speakers Bureau on a "temporary basis," had devoted herself to the non-glamorous aspects of the Wing. The Stage Door Canteen may have closed, but as Allen said, "Never for a moment did we at community service consider stopping what we were doing."²⁷²

There were no more soldiers to entertain, but there were people trying to rebuild their lives, and the Wing's post-war activities were geared to help them.

The first concern was for the veterans still lying wounded in Veteran's Administration hospitals. The idea for a hospital committee was first suggested in 1942. The Wing felt it could do a better job entertaining than the Red Cross.²⁷³ Eventually an agreement was worked out with the Red Cross and the U.S.O., but the Wing had autonomy over programming. The philosophy of hospital service was that:

No matter how well adjusted patient may be, he is still cut off from the main course of life. . . Any successful hospital entertainment recreation program must do more than relieve tedium . . . it must recreate within the hospital some small segment of life outside. It must break down that separation between inside and outside.²⁷⁴

The cornerstone of the policy was that it was better to have a program with patients rather than for them. After the war the Committee's work grew. In 1946 there were 494 auditorium shows, 166 legitimate plays, and 2,016 ward appearances.²⁷⁵ The Wing carefully indoctrinated each worker on every aspect of hospital procedure, behavior, dress, make up, and choice of material. Family comedies were in this case preferable to problem plays or psychological dramas. Initially the Committee mainly did auditorium work, but as time went on and theatre people could be counted on "to behave correctly in an emergency" workers entered locked wards, plastic surgery divisions, and cancer compounds.²⁷⁶

Since the Victory Players were so effective in promoting war aims, the Wing was hesitant about stopping the program. Problems of rationing, war bonds, and salvage no longer existed, but juvenile delinquency, mental illness, and the family in transition did. With the support of Vera Allen, Victory Players changed its name to "Community Plays" and began to address these problems. They learned by trial

and error. In 1945, they produced a playlet called, "The Little Girl With Brown Braids." Dr. Nina Ridenour of the New York City Committee on Mental Hygiene objected to the portrayal of a social worker who got emotionally involved with her own problems, claiming that "she wouldn't hold a job with a reputable agency."²⁷⁷ Ridenour successfully rewrote the play with the new title, "The Sandbox." The Wing thereafter insisted on working with experts, such as Dr. Lawrence Kubie, Dr. Howard Rusk, and Dr. Margaret Mead. Dr. Mead considered Community Plays "an extremely significant invention in social communication appropriate to the new needs of the mid-twentieth century."²⁷⁸

Community Plays, however, turned out to be an expensive proposition. They could no longer expect an actor to pay his own transportation costs as they did in wartime, and Equity suggested a \$7.50 stipend per show would help. Playwrights received \$250 per script, and directors \$125. The Wing also had to pay for administrative overhead. To help cover costs, Community Plays accepted commissions from the Parent Teachers Association and the Mental Health Association to address specific problems. By 1958, Community Plays had 47 scripts and had played over 2,000 performances in New York alone.²⁷⁹

One project was particularly dear to the Wing and its perception of the theatrical profession. At a Board of Director's meeting July 5, 1944, Bettina Cerf proposed the idea for a "Professional Training Program" to help retrain actors who "can't face Broadway after years of combat with only the \$100 the Army gives."²⁸⁰ The Wing also wanted actors to be able to benefit from the G.I. Bill. In 1946 306 returning professionals started classes at the school run by Winston O'Keefe and Mary Hunter.²⁸¹ By the second session, the number had grown to 1,120. A prime attraction was the teachers. The department heads were the foremost experts in their fields. The first year, Brock Pemberton taught producing, Oscar Hammerstein spoke about the musical, Agnes de Mille taught dance, and Robert Anderson was head of playwriting. The school was noted for its high placement levels. In 1953, 103 Wing actors were appearing in thirty-five productions on Broadway. These students

included Eli Wallach, Tony Randall, Charleton Heston, Gordon MacRae, James Whitmore, William Warfield, and many more. 75% of the actors came back to the Wing for classes even after they had jobs.²⁸² The Professional Training School was one of the Wing's major successes. Unfortunately it too was expensive to operate, especially when the Federal Government fell \$90,000 to \$200,000 behind in G.I. payments in 1950.²⁸³ The faculty had to contribute money to keep the school going, and nonprofessional actors were admitted to fill the ranks.

Epilogue

The financial problems of the school were typical of the post-war Wing. When the war ended the Wing had \$591,568.93 in the bank and no new movie or radio show about to bring in more revenue.²⁸⁴ Rather than conserve its resources, the Wing continued to embark on ambitious projects for as long as possible. The Hospital Committee was abandoned in 1951 as too costly. The Professional Training School lasted until the 1960's but died when it became in effect just another trade school far removed from its original purpose. Community Plays gained greater and greater praise, with My Name is Legion successful enough to make the pages of Life. On March 14, 1958, however, when funding the Community Plays became a burden that the then Chairman of the Board, Helen Menken, thought was excessive, Vera Allen reluctantly left the Wing.²⁸⁵ She took the Community Plays with her, this time under the umbrella of the Family Service Association with yet another name--- "Plays for Living." "Plays for Living" continues to thrive today.

Once the Stage Door Canteen was a household word, but now people ask, "what's that?" The home front during World War II has been long overlooked by scholars more concerned with foreign policy, the atomic bomb, and military strategy. Richard Polenberg likens this attitude to a saying of Thomas Carlyle: "When an oak tree is felled the whole forest echoes with it, while a hundred acorns are planted by some unknown breeze."²⁸⁶

If the home front has received little attention, the contribution of the theatre to the war effort has receive even less. The theatre itself has tried to preserve its history of genuine commitment to the United States and to the ideals of drama. When Antoinette Perry passed away, the Wing wanted to give her a living monument, a vital project to "stimulate improvement in the arts" as she herself had done. The "Tony" Awards were created in her honor. These awards, or rather, the concept of service that inspired them, are the most visible example of the legacy of the war. The Wing today is small, but it is trying to restart hospital service, and it organizes seminars for young people interested in theatre. Most of all--it exists. The James Montgomery Flagg Paintings hang in its office. There has been no cessation of activities as there was between World War I and World War II. If there is ever an occasion for the talents of the theatre to be used on a grand scale, the legacy can be tested. Until then, it might be best to end as the Herald Tribune did in 1945 when the Stage Door Canteen closed. The editorial said of the American Theatre Wing volunteers that "They have not left the usual war memory. They have left a happy one."²⁸⁷

E N D N O T E S

- 1
Rep. John W. Flannagan Jr., Democrat from Virginia. Speech before the House, December 16, 1941.
- 2
Richard Polenberg, America At War. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) p.6.
- 3
John Golden, quoted in P.M., June 8, 1942. Unless otherwise noted, all clippings are from the scrapbooks and clipping file of the American Theatre Wing or of the Stage Women's War Relief at the Theatre Collection of the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts.
- 4
Saturday Evening Post, January 9, 1943.
- 5
Mark Sullivan, Over Here, 1914-1918. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) p. 47.
- 6
Ward Morehouse, Matinee Tomorrow. (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949) p. 154.

As Morehouse explains, in the playbill for Under Fire by Roi Cooper Meagrue, the following message appeared:

"This play deals with certain phases of the Great War. It attempts to be neutral, although its character's being English, Belgian, French, and German, are naturally partisan. The management earnestly requests therefore, that no member of the audience will indulge in any unpleasant demonstrations which might be offensive either to others in the audience or to those on stage."
- 7
Brooks Atkinson, Broadway. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1970) pp. 167-169.
- 8
Lois C. Gottlieb, Rachel Crothers. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979) p. 18.
- 9
Clippings, Some of the New York newspapers to carry the message were Review, Sunday Telegraph, Sunday Tribune, Morning World, Herald, Sunday American, Times, and the Morning Sun.
- 10
Review, Saturday, April 7, 1917.
- 11
Clipping, Mrs. Henry B. Davis owned the Hudson Theatre.

- 12
Morning World, April 14, 1917.
- 13
Telegraph, April 14, 1917.
- 14
"Report of the Carry On Meeting of the Stage Women's War Relief." March 19, 1920, at the Bijou Theatre. Lincoln Center Collection.
- 15
Ibid. The only program of the Stage Relief that lost money was the farm idea, it lost \$202.17 its first and only year.
- 16
Review, June 15, 1918. The nurse-like outfits sometimes resulted in confusion. For example, the August 27, 1917, edition of Telegraph told the story of two Stage Relief workers mistaken for Red Cross nurses and rushed to the scene of an accident. The paper said, "fortunately, (the actresses) were familiar with the rudiments of First Aid."
- 17
Frances Starr, in Harper's Bazar, July 24, 1917.
- 18
Morehouse, p. 155.
- 19
Clippings, Branches of the Stage Relief carried on similar activities in Chicago, Indianapolis, and Detroit.
- 20
"Carry On Meeting."
- 21
Ibid.
- 22
The Evening World, February 26, 1918.
- 23
Clippings, Stage Women's War Relief File.
- 24
"The Carry On Meeting" The Stage Women's War Relief amassed \$241,602.72 for its own disbursement and \$6,996,678.87 for that of others.
- 25
Ibid.
- 26
Ralph B. Levering, The Public and American Foreign Policy. (New York: William Morris and Co., 1978) pp. 74-78.

27

Letter from Rachel Crothers to Vera Allen, January 4, 1940. Copy of the manuscript. The original is misplaced, copies exist at the offices of the American Theatre Wing and in the possession of Dale Cendali.

28

Personal interview with Vera Allen, March 17, 1981. Allen and Lawrence were actresses in Crothers' play Susan and God.

29

Richard Aldritch, Gertrude Lawrence, Mrs. A. (New York: Greystone Press, 1954) p. 85. Lawrence was the official liason with the British War Relief, when the Wing briefly became the Allied War Relief (thus including France in its aid) Irene Bordoni was the French liason with the French War Relief.

30

Telephone interview with Edith Maison, February 25, 1981.

31

Telephone interview with Jean Dalrymple, February 19, 1981. The quote is from Rachel Crothers who was peruating Miss Dalrymple to act as Press Representative for the Wing in early 1940.

32

New York Herald Tribune, January 23, 1940.

33

Scrapbooks of the American Theatre Wing. This quote was part of an unidentified speech given in summer theatres in 1940.

34

Dalrymple. Miss Dalrymple was Press Agent and Assistant to Producer John Golden, who presented most of Miss Crothers' plays. She worked with Crothers on As Ladies Meet and As Husbands Go.

35

Ibid. Miss Dalrymple had an office in the Sardi building. As time went on the job became so enormous assistants had to be hired, and eventually, a full-time publicity director as well.

36

New York Herald Tribune, April 21, 1941. Jean Carson was the first work-room director.

37

Maison.

38

Typescript from the private collection of Edith Maison, which also included the following facts about the first year of the Wing's operation in which it donated:

4 ambulances	1,500 blankets
3 mobile feeding kitchens	1,100 children's cots
450 comfort kits	\$1,714 for children's shelters
	\$4,000 to the Lord Mayor's Fund

- 39
Brooks Atkinson in the New York Times, November 17, 1940.
- 40
Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On? (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970) pp. 27-29.
- 41
Geoffrey Perret, Day of Sadness, Years of Triumph. (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geohegan Inc. 1973) p. 37.
- 42
Isabelle Stevenson, ed. The Tony Award. (New York: Crown Publishing, 1980) p. 3.
- 43
Perret, p. 213.
- 44
Garth Jowett, Film, The Democratic Art. (Boston: Brown and Company, 1976) p. 293.
- 45
Lingeman, p. 286.
- 46
Perrett, p. 240. The most popular war song was probably Frank Loesser's "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition."
- 47
Theatre Arts, (New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., January 1939 to December 1946)
- 48
Atkinson, p. 303. The eagle did, however, scream a bit in the lobby. For 10 cents, a theatre-goer could buy a "Crack-A-Jap-Cocktail": a glass of water and a Defense Stamp.
- 49
Lingeman, p. 289.
- 50
John Morton Blum, V Was For Victory. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) p. 47.
- 51
Lingeman, pp. 283 and 291.
- 52
George Oppenheimer, ed., The Passionate Playgoer. (New York: The Viking Press, 1958) p. 522.
- 53
New York Herald Tribune, April 21, 1941.
- 54
Allen.
- 55
New York Post, February 20, 1943.

71

Speech by Vera Allen at Town Hall, April 11, 1944. From the collection of Vera Allen. Typescript.

72

Statistics compiled by Nina Ridenour September, 28, 1945. Typescript from the Theatre Collection of Lincoln Center.

73

Alan Winkler, Politics and Propaganda: The Office War Information 1942-1945. Dissertation, 1974. Microtext, Yale's Sterling Library.

74

Letter from Clifton Fadiman to Vera Allen, October 2, 1942 from the collection of Vera Allen.

According to Miss Allen, the Writer's War Board submitted speeches to the Wing, however, they were unsuccessful and not used.

75

Memorandum from Vera Allen to her Staff, May 16, 1962. From the collection of Vera Allen.

76

Ibid.

77

Board of Directors, May 19, 1943. It's Up To You was so popular it was praised in the House by Congressman John McCafee.

78

Allen, and Memorandum from Vera Allen of May 16, 1962. The appendix to Allen's memo told that actors with the Victory Players included Ed Begley, Clement Brace, and Julie Harris. Miss Harris appeared 4 times.

34	actors	did between 10-20 shows
15		did between 21-30
13		between 31-40
4		between 41-50
16		between 51-100
and 8		did over 100 performances.

79

Letter from Brooks Atkinson to Vera Allen, dated May 1, 1947. Typescript from the collection of Vera Allen.

80

Board of Directors, June 17, 1942.

81

Article by Arlene Wolf, New York Times, July 11, 1943. The song is by Kurt Weill.

82

Personal interview with Armina Marshall, January 8, 1981.

83

Quote from President Roosevelt, from the photo collection of Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts.

84

Robert Sullivan in the Sunday News, March 14, 1943. Clippings from the scrapbooks and The Canteen News reveals that phone bills accounted for the bulk of the \$300 with \$65 for heating repairs and \$42 to sand blast the dance floor. The canteen was closed briefly during the summer to make additional renovations and to install air conditioning.

85

Atkinson, p. 384. The Minutes of the Board of Directors also reveal that an "Angels Table" existed. To raise funds, the Wing would rent one table a night for \$100 to a civilian patron.

The Wing did observe the fire laws, so although on one night the Canteen had 4,600 guests, they weren't all there at the same time.

86 Telephone interview with Kathleen Claypool, February 26, 1981.

87 The Canteen News #1p. 2 said that the most frequently asked question at the Canteen was, "Any celebrities here tonight?"

88 Telephone interview with Radie Harris, February 11, 1981.

89 Guest books of the American Theatre Wing, Lincoln Center Theatre Collection.

90 Personal interview with Virginia Kaye, March 12, 1981. "Joe" was really named Frank Piro. Booth was appearing in My Sister Eileen at the time.

91 Personal interview with Vincent Sardi Jr., January 10, 1981.

92 Margaret Halsey, Some Of My Best Friends Are Soldiers. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944) p. 94.

93 American Theatre Wing War Service Inc. Financial Statement, December 31, 1945, compiled by the firm of Pinto, Winokur, and Pagano. According to this statement, in 1944, salaries paid by the Wing were:

\$34,443.65.....	The Stage Door Canteen
\$21,913.03.....	Hospital Committee
\$ 4,790.37.....	Speakers Bureau
\$ 9,627.14.....	Workroom
\$ 4,451.00.....	Entertainment Committee
\$ 9,746.01.....	Administrative and Executive

94 New York Herald Tribune, date unknown.

95 Kaye.

96 The Canteen News, #3 p. 1.

⁹⁷American Theatre Wing Scrapbooks.

⁹⁸Jesse Wiley in The Christian Science Monitor, undated.

⁹⁹Sardi.

¹⁰⁰The Canteen News #1 p. 2 reveals that ironically, the first birthday winner lived on 57th Street, and decided he did not want the free phone call because he didn't want his girlfriend to know where he was. On another day, only one man had a birthday, so Rita Hayworth gave him a kiss along with with cake, suddenly everyone remembered it was his birthday too.

¹⁰¹Robert McG. Thomas Jr., New York Times, March 25, 1943. Miss Reingold was made beneficiary of a G.I.s' insurance policy. Her booklet on identifying insignia along with her Canteen pin is in the Theatre Collection at Lincoln Center.

¹⁰²"Canteen Newsletter," September 7, 1944. Lincoln Center.

¹⁰³Kaye.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵"Rules for Hostesses" by Vivian Smollen and Virginia Kaye, Co-Chairmen of the Hostess Committee. American Theatre Wing collection at Lincoln Center. To paraphrase:

1. Don't be late.
2. Sign in and out so we know who's there on a given night.
3. Report to the shift Captain.
4. Wear the Stage Door Canteen Apron at all times inside the Canteen.
5. Only Captains wear arm-bands and headdresses, learn to recognize them.
6. "Hostesses are not to spend too much time with any one group of service-men, and the girls are requested not to dance too long with any one man. This must be left to the discretion of the girls themselves, but realize that we have many more guests than hostesses."
7. "There should not be more than one hostess at any one table of men, especially if there are groups of men by themselves."
8. "Hostesses should not congregate in groups and talk among themselves on duty"
9. Keep quiet during entertainment.
10. No worker in the Canteen is permitted to eat the food.
11. Keep fire aisles clear.
12. Don't dance with men in overcoats, they must be checked at the door.

13. "Hostesses should stop immediately any serviceman who consciously or unconsciously begins to give information as to troop movements, boat departures, or any military information. She should tell him gently but firmly that it is against the rules for her to listen."
14. (See body of paper)
15. Report problems to the Officer of the Day.
16. Keep the backstage passage clear.
17. Don't ask visiting celebrities for autographs.
18. Don't wear hats.
19. Never leave the Canteen with an Apron.
20. "Scrupulous politeness at all times to all men in uniform is demanded. If there is any difficulty with a serviceman, please report this immediately to the Officer of the Day who will deal with him. You must not attempt to."
21. Refer to the Bulletin Board.

106 Ibid.

107 Claypool.

108 Kaye. Vincent Sardi Jr. says he knows of several marriages that grew out of the Canteen, and that he knows dating went on because Sardis' was a popular after-Canteen rendezvous.

109 Halsey, p. 10.

110 The Canteen News #4 p. 1. The scrapbooks of the Wing also tell about Ethel Merman singing a song called, "I'm Getting Corns For My Country At The Stage Door Canteen."

111 Halsey, p. 10.

112 Kaye.

113 Telephone interview with Rosetta LeNoire, February 26, 1981.

114 Board of Directors, May 6, 1942, Brock Pemberton speaking.

115 Marshall.

116 Times Herald, August 7, 1942. Congressional bus-boys led Ed Wynn to quip in the Stage Door Canteen film from United Artists, that "Gee, I hear the service is really slow at the Washington Canteen." "Why?" asks a soldier, and Wynn answers, "Well, you know how long it takes Congress to pass anything."

- 117 Harris. The Hollywood Canteen opened October 3, 1942.
- 118 Perrett, p. 381. The injured hostess was awarded \$8,000 in damages.
- 119 Usually each Canteen would have an honorary celebrity President, as Bob Hope was in Cleveland, but someone else did the actual administrative work.
The Minutes of the Board of Directors reveal that the Wing refused requests for branches too, including that of Frances Paperte who wanted a Brazilian Canteen.
- 120 "Olly" was in The New York Sun, the Canteen was in segments from July 7-11, 1942.
- 121 Lewis Nichols, "One of the Town's Better Institutions." in the New York Times, undated. A similar tale about messages was told in The Canteen News #3 p.1. Sidonie Espero's son, John Steele Jr., was a signalman in the Pacific. His ship was flashed a message that said: "Saw you mother at the Stage Door Canteen. She sent you her love."
- 122 Scrapbooks of the American Theatre Wing. Sometimes soldiers sent the Wing poems. The Canteen News volume 2 #3, June 7, 1945 printed Sgt. Frank E. Fitzpatrick's ode:
- So here's to all the Stage Door folk,
For what you've done to aid us,
For all the cheer and all the fun
How happy you have made us.
And when at last PEACE reigns o'erall
And silent rests the gun,
You may well relax and hear our call
"Bravo, a job well done."
- 123 The Canteen News, #1, p.2. The Stage Door Canteen was also caricatured by an American base in Iceland. Soldiers impersonated Clark Gable, Monte Woolley, and Sonja Henie.
- 124 Board of Directors, September 9, 1942.
- 125 The New York Times, May 3, 1944.
- 126 Oppenheimer, p. 510. Mrs. Roosevelt christened the Merchant Seaman's Club on 43rd.
- 127
Kaye.
- 128 Perrett, pp. 147 and 152.
- 129 Margaret Halsey, No Laughing Matter, the Autobiography of a WASP. (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1977) p. 128.

130 "U.S.O. Territorial Conference," December 1 to 3, 1942, Honolulu, Hawaii. Frank C. Atherton Chairman. The U.S.O. was composed of the Jewish Welfare Board, the National Catholic Community Service, the National Traveler's Aid society, the Salvation Army, the Y.M.C.A., and the Y.W.C.A.. It received \$61,226,827 in 1945's National War Fund Drive, according to their own Board of Directors's minutes.

131 "The Red Shield of the National Headquarter of the Salvation Army." newsletter, vol. 2 # 14, July , 1943. Sterling Library, Yale University.

132 Elmer Rice in the Saturday Review of Literature, July 15, 1944, p. 13. The name of the booklet by Prof'l Ruth Benedict and Dr. Gene Weltfish was, "The Races of Mankind."

133 Ibid.

134 Blum, p. 193.

135 Porter Woods, The Negro on Broadway. Dissertation, the Yale School of Drama, 1965

136 Edith J.R. Isaacs, The Negro in the American Theatre. (New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1947) p. 24.

137 Halsey, No Laughing Matter, p. 128.

138 Kaye.

139 Halsey, No Laughing Matter, p. 128.

140 Margaret Halsey, Color Blind. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946) p. 12.

141 Kaye.

142 People's Voice, August 7, 1943.

143 Selena Royle, Jane Cowl, and Kermit Bloomgarten were on the Boards of both the Wing and Canteen. Despite some members on both Boards, many Board Meetings of the Wing, including August 12, 1942, October 7, 1942, and October 14, 1942, showed that the Wing was concerned with the Canteen becoming too autonomous.

144 Kaye.

145 Kaye. Mr. Pemberton introduced Miss Kaye as "bur little red" to Major General Wilby, the head of West Point.

Miss Kaye later married Mr. Bloomgarten.

146 Kaye

147 Margaret Halsey in P.M., August 15, 1943.

- 148 Halsey, Best Friends.p. 50.
- 149 Ibid, p.51.
- 150 Kaye.
- 151 Claypool.
- 152 Kaye.
- 153 Halsey, Color Blind, p. 10. Many letters arrived, especially from North Africa, from soldiers who praised the Canteen for its racial policy, claiming that "seeds were planted there" that quickly bore fruit.
- 154 Kaye.
- 155 Kaye, and Claypool, and Halsey.
- 156 Kaye. Miss Kaye recalls that: "There was never a night when I went to sleep and the phone rang at an odd hour that I didnt think, 'Oh my God...something happened '"
- 157 Kaye.
- 158 LeNoire.
- 159 Kaye. Among the black hostesses were sociologist,Margarite Cartwright and Lawyer, Dorothy Williams.
- 160 Halsey, Color Blind, p. 70
- 161 Kaye.
- 162 Ibid.
- 163 Ibid. Miss Broder was a powerful agent at the time, and Miss Kaye recalls thinking that, "Oh, I wish it could have been anyone else but her I had to argue with." The disagreement, however, had no bearing on their professional relationship.
- 164 Kaye.
- 165 The People's Voice, March 14, 1942 and The New York Times, July 2, 1944.

¹⁶⁶Halsey, Color Blind, p. 62. Miss Halsey had previously written the humorous best-seller, With Malice Toward Some, about vacationing in England before the war.

¹⁶⁷Liberal Kansas Times, October 18, 1944.

¹⁶⁸Claypool.

¹⁶⁹Scrapbooks of the American Theatre Wing.

¹⁷⁰Charles C. Auchincloss, History of the Officers Service Committee. (New York: Officers Service Committee, 1946) p. 4.

Antoinette Perry and John Golden were on the Advisory Board of the Officers Service Committee.

¹⁷¹Scrapbooks of the Stage Women's War Relief. Officers were barred from the Canteen the Relief had in World War I because they took all the seats in the theatre when the War Relief brought shows to camps.

¹⁷²Kaye.

¹⁷³Board of Directors, February 10, 1943.

¹⁷⁴Press Release, May 6, 1943, from the American Theatre Wing scrapbooks.

¹⁷⁵Board of Directors, May 15, 1945.

¹⁷⁶Board of Directors, October 28, 1942.

¹⁷⁷Board of Directors, March 17, 1943.

¹⁷⁸Possibly the only other group discouraged at the Canteen was homosexuals. Evidence is scanty, possibly because homosexuality was not openly discussed. Men at the Canteen were prohibited from dancing with one another. When they did, The Canteen News instructed the hostesses to laugh at them to persuade them to stop. This however, may only indirectly be because of an anti-gay attitude, the dance floor was crowded and one way the Wing had to keep it manageable was only having a limited number of partners. See The Canteen News, number 8, April 20, 1944 for more information.

Virginia Kaye cannot remember any mention of homosexuals at the Canteen.

¹⁷⁹Board of Directors, February 10, 1943, statement by Antoinette Perry.

¹⁸⁰Board of Directors, September 23, 1942.

¹⁸¹Board of Directors, July 1, 1942.

182 Ibid. At the October 14, 1942 Board Meeting of the Wing, the Philadelphia Branch again came under attack. This time for paying too much in salaries. The New York Canteen paid \$331 weekly, Cleveland payed \$56, and Washington payed \$200, while Philadelphia paid over \$500 a week. The Board attributed this to poor management by the socialites in control.

183 LeNoire.

184 Telephone interview with Gertrude Macy, March 13, 1981.

185 Board of Directors, August 25, 1942.

186 Marshall.

187 Memorandum from Brock Pemberton to the Board of the American Theatre Wing, October 2, 1943. Lincoln Center.

188 Ibid.

189 Board of Directors, January 19, 1944.

190 Board of Directors, September 23, 1942.

191 New York Mirror, December 2, 1942.

192 Board of Directors, April 29, 1942.

193 Board of Directors, August 25, 1942.

194 Board of Directors, August 12, 1942.

195 Stage Door Canteen, shooting script by Delmar Daves, 1942.

196 Sunday News, -June 20, 1943, Hepburn, however, was one of the few stars in the movie to have never attended the Canteen.

197 Harris.

198 Macy.

199 Harris.

200 Lingeman, pp. 205 and 183.

- 201 Frank Borzage, Director, The Stage Door Canteen, United Artists, 1943.
- 202 Ibid.
- 203 Exhibitors' Packet, Stage Door Canteen, 1943, Lincoln Center.
- 204 Financial Statement
- 205 James Agee, Agee on Film. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1958) p. 74.
His reviews of this period originally appeared in The Nation.
- 206 James Agate, Around Cinemas. (London : Home and Van Thal Ltd., 1946) p. 248.
- 207 Richard Winnington, Drawn and Quartered. (London: Saturn Press, 1948) p. 36.
- 208 Kaye, Claypool, and Marshall. Marshall said, "Everyone I knew liked it, and we all went to see it."
- 209 Review by Bosley Crowthers, The New York Times, June 25, 1943 p. 13.
- 210 Tino Balio, United Artists. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976)
- 211 Letter from Sgt. Frank Tyre, read at a meeting of the Board of Directors, September 11, 1944.
- 212 Robert K. Merton, Mass Persuasion. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946) p. 8.
- 213 Ibid, p. 80.
- 214 Lingeman, p. 170.
- 215 Financial Statement.
- 216 Board of Directors, April 26, 1944. The Board agreed to accept 25% of \$250,000 and 25% of 90% of the profits from Hollywood Canteen. Most of the other money went directly to the Hollywood branch Canteen.
- 217 Board of Directors, June 17, 1944.
- 218 Board of Directors, May 6, 1942.
- 219 Board of Directors of the U.S.O., December, 1943. Only 3% of U.S.O. performers were volunteers. The rest were paid in a revitalization of vaudeville, touring the U.S.O.'s four circuits. Victory- 600 installations Blue- 1,150 locations, but not as fine as the Victory stops, Hospital- wards and auditoriums everywhere, and Foxhole- near the front line.

- 220 Julia M. Carson, Home Away From Home. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946) p.1
- 221 Aldritch, p. 210.
- 222 Ibid, p. 208.
- 223 Board of Directors of the U.S.O., November 26, 1941.
- 224 Board of Directors of the American Theatre Wing, March 17, 1943.
- 225 Macy. The money went to pay for costumes and sets and also to give \$75 a week to each Company member to cover expenses. (Antoinette Perry insisted on the stipend) The Army paid for billeting and transportation.
- 226 Ibid.
- 227 Ibid. The aide was Captain Frank McCarthy.
- 228 Margalo Gillmore and Patricia Collinge, The B.O.W.S.. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945) p. 7.
- 229 Macy.
- 230 Gillmore and Collinge, p. 6.
- 231 Ibid, p. 7.
- 232 Ibid, p. 34.
- 233 Macy.
- 234 Ibid.
- 235 Macy and Mosel, p. 457.
- 236 Macy. Hissing of the father was particularly unnerving because in the original London production, Sir Cedric Hardwick played the part and was the intended star of the show.
- 237 Gillmore and Collinge, p. 50.
- 238 Ibid, pp.51 and 57.
- 239 Macy.
- 240 Gillmore and Collinge, p. 150.

241 Macy.

242 Ibid. Miss Macy explained that the top brass was wonderful, but first Lieutenants who did not understand the theatre were difficult. Fortunately, Miss Macy's sister was married to Harry Hopkins and living in the White House. If something unpleasant happened she could always write to her via the diplomatic pouch for help and advice.

243 Ibid.

244 Gillmore and Collinge, p. 111. The production received the 5th Army Placque for meritorious service that "contributed materially to the enhancement of morale."

245 Oppenheimer, p. 519. Bert Lytell was able to get the U.S.O. to produce MacBeth.

246 Gillmore and Collinge, p. 71.

247 Macy.

248 Ibid.

249 Pantagraph, Bloomington Ill., November 24, 1940.

250 Margaret Culkin Banning, Women for Defense. (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1942) p. ix.

251 Maison.

252 Marshall.

253 Sardi.

254 Allen, who was directed by Miss Crothers in Susan and God.

255 Charles R. Hill, Brock Pemberton. (Emporia State Research Studies, 1975) p.39.

256 Isaacs, p. 14. Jean Dalrymple feels that, "Nobody has considered the theatre to be of any importance. Only in the past twenty years have I been able to get any contributions for theatre for City Center. Opera and Ballet, yes, but theatre, that was entertainment pure and simple."

257 Herald Tribune, April 15, 1917. The Tribune also offended when it said in its December 23, 1917 edition that "actors are as scare as hen's teeth in the Army." The Stage Relief protested that this was false, and cited the 1,000 actors registered in its "Godchildren" program as evidence.

258 Rachel Crothers, 39 East. (New York: Brentano's, 1924).

259 Morning World, July 15, 1918.

260 New York Review, October 26, 1918.

261 Board of Directors, July 1, 1942. The June 17, 1942 meeting also mentioned the struggle in getting publicity for the Speakers Bureau as it was difficult to get the newspapers to take anything but the most picturesque stories."

262 Letter from Eleanor Roosevelt to Vera Allen, March 4, 1942, from the collection of Vera Allen. Roosevelt told Allen that the Speakers Bureau was not the cause of her difficulties, she wrote, "the attack on me was a political one" and not because of the theatre. Most likely, it was a combination of both.

263 Louise Closser Hale in The Ladies Home Journal, October, 1918.

264 LeNoire. A flyer for the Stage Relief read:

For Our Profession
In Our Profession
By Our Profession from Lincoln Center

265 "Carry On." The money donated to actors' families totalled \$26,527.67.

266 Gottlieb, p. 121.

267 The Canteen News, vol. 2 #1, April 15, 1945.

268 American Theatre Wing Scrapbooks. The red Canteen door was taken off its hinges and moved too.

269 The poem by Elinor Ventura continues:

...Where food is plentiful and free,
and bills are but a memory,
Where Artists for a noble cause,
will work for nothing but applause,
Where smiling faces lead the way
And People dance all through the day.
Where no attention and no heed is
paid to color, race, or creed.
Where every person black or white
Has equal power, equal right, (continued)

And where at least, we have the proof
That we all can live beneath one roof,
Now this Canteen is very small
And there is never room for all,
Therefore to solve a post-war question,
I make the following suggestion:
As Shakespeare proved throughout the age,
That all the world is but a stage,
Let's ring the curtain, change the scene,
And make the world a

"STAGE DOOR CANTEEN"

270 New York Times, June 29, 1946.

271 Memorandum from Vera Allen, May 16, 1962.

272 Allen.

273 Board of Directors, June 3, 1942.

274 Esther M. Hawley, Recreation is Fun. (New York: American Theatre Wing, 1949)p

275 Board of Directors, February 5, 1947. They used 13,448 actors.

276 Hawley, pp. 13 and 7.

277 Allen.

278 Memorandum from Vera Allen, May 16, 1962.

279 Allen. According the Miss Allen's Memo, in 1946 Community Plays had an income of \$3,268 and expenses of \$14,013 for 23.3% self-support. In the 1950's, in an average year (1951), that percentage rose to 61.3% as the group took in \$9,681 and spent \$15,617.

280 Board of Directors, July 5, 1944.

281 Allen. Mr. O'Keefe and Miss Hunter were succeeded by Charles Vane and later, Louis Simon.

282 Allen.

283 Minutes of a Faculty Meeting of the Professional Training School, January 22, 1950. Lincoln Center.

284 Financial Statement.

285 Allen.

286 Perrett, p. 9.

287 Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, October 29, 1945.

On March 29, 1979, The New York Times put a
placque on the site of the Stage Door Canteen
which reads:

"During All the Combat
Days of the War Between
The United Nations and
the Axis powers, The
American Theatre Wing
Stage Door Canteen
Occupied this site.
This Tablet is Dedicated
to Men and Women
of the Entertainment
World Who Brought Cheer
And Comfort to The
Soldiers, Sailors, and
Marines of America
And Her Allies."

I Left My Heart At The Stage Door Canteen

From The All-Soldier Show
"This Is The Army"

Words and Music by
IRVING BERLIN

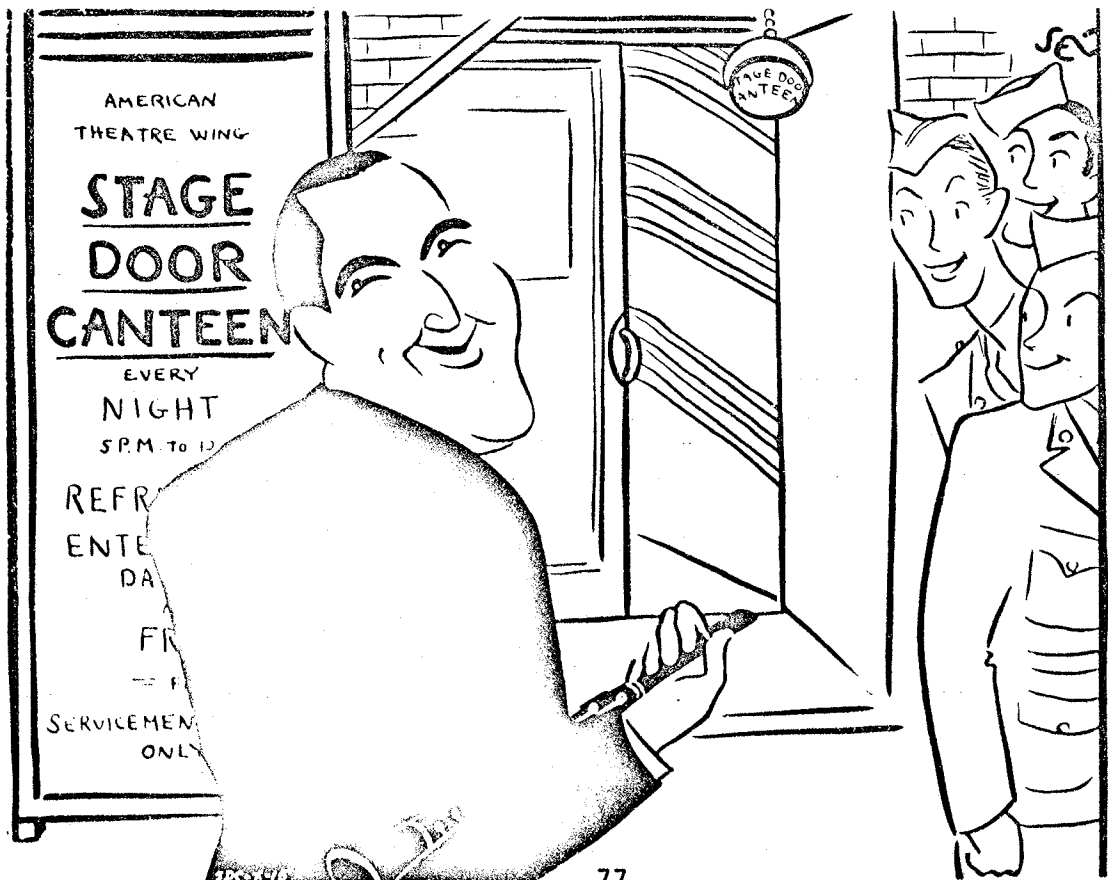
Slowly with expression

VOICE

Old Mis-ter Ab-sent-mind-ed that's me. Just as for-
get-ful as I can be. I've got the strang-est sort of a
mind. I'm al-ways leav-ing some-thing be-hind.

CHORUS

I LEFT MY HEART AT THE STAGE DOOR CAN-TEEN — I left it there with a girl named Eil-
een — I kept her serv-ing dough-nuts 'til all she had were gone — I sat there dunk-ing
dough-nuts 'til she caught on — I must go back to the Arm-y rou-tine. And ev-ry
dough-boy knows what that will mean — A sold-ier boy with-out a heart has two strikes on him
from the start and my heart's at the Stage Door Can-teen. I LEFT MY teen...





AMERICAN THEATRE WING

OF

THE BRITISH WAR RELIEF SOCIETY

INCORPORATED

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rachel Crothers, *President*

Gertrude Lawrence, *First Vice-President*

Helen Hayes, *Second Vice-President*

Vera Allen, *Third Vice-President*

Antoinette Perry, *Secretary*

Mildred Morris, *Executive Secretary*

Josephine Hull, *Treasurer*

Mrs. Winthrop Ames

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Beverly Bayne

Mrs. Martin Beck

Michelette Burani

Ilka Chase

Margaret Dale

Minnie Dupree

Ruth Gordon

Peg LaCentra

Jessie Royce Landis

Auriol Lee

Christie MacDonald

Marion Moore

Laura Pierpont

Selena Royle

Dorothy Sands

Lucile Watson

Margaret Webster

HONORARY COMMITTEE

Viola Allen

Tallulah Bankhead

Ethel Barrymore

Aline Bernstein

Ruth Chatterton

Ina Claire

Constance Collier

Katharine Cornell

Jane Cowl

Lynne Fontanne

Grace George

Dorothy Gish

Lillian Gish

Theresa Helburn

Chrystal Herne

Beatrice Kaufman

Doris Keane

Madge Kennedy

Mary Mannering

Armina Marshall

Helen Menken

Mrs. Brock Pemberton

Florence Reed

Mrs. Robert E. Sherwood

Hilda Spong

Peggy Wood

Minnette Barrett

Director of Entertainment

Jean Dalrymple

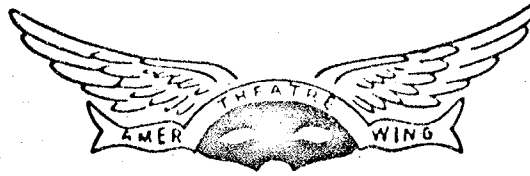
Press Representative

Jean Carson

Director of Work Room

Edna H. Anspacher

Director of Knitting



AMERICAN THEATRE WING

OF

THE BRITISH WAR RELIEF SOCIETY

INCORPORATED

MEN'S DIVISION EXECUTIVE BOARD

Gilbert Miller, *Chairman*
Brooks Atkinson
Ben Boyar
Eddie Dowling
Vinton Freedley
Sam H. Harris
Max Gordon
George S. Kaufman

Raymond Massey
Brock Pemberton
Arthur Richman
Billy Rose
Lee Shubert
B. G. de Sylva
Walter Vincent
John C. Wilson

HONORARY COMMITTEE

Richard Aldrich
Keley Allen
John Anderson
Maxwell Anderson
S. N. Behrman
Ray Bolger
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Johnson Briscoe
John Mason Brown
Otis Chatfield-Taylor
Robert Chisholm
Noel Coward
John Emery
Maurice Evans
William Gaxton
Edmund George
Frank Gillmore
John Golden
Harry Wagstaff Gribble
Walter Hampden
Moss Hart
Marcus Heiman
Walter Huston
Robert Edmund Jones
Dennis King
Bert Lahr
Lawrence Langner
Howard Lindsay
Joshua Logan
Alfred Lunt

Charles MacArthur
Burns Mantle
Guthrie McClintic
Burgess Meredith
Raymond Middleton
Jo Mielziner
Ward Morehouse
Elliott Nugent
Donald Oenslager
Laurence Olivier
Tom Powers
Eduardo Raquello
James F. Reilly
Stanley Ridges
John Root
Robert Ross
Robert Emmet Sherwood
Otis Skinner
Raymond Sovey
Ashton Stevens
Paul Streger
Frank Sullivan
Deems Taylor
Lawrence Tibbett
John Van Druten
Clifton Webb
Sidney Whipple
Dwight Deere Wiman
Alexander Woolcott

B I B L I O G R A P H I C E S S A Y

No secondary sources exist which deal more than parenthetically with the war service efforts of the entertainment industry. Indeed, only a few books of scholarly merit have been written about the home front as a whole. Scholars have so far concentrated on matters such as economic changes, the entrance of women into the labor force, and the enemy alien problem. When the entertainment industry is mentioned it is usually used solely to provide a cultural backdrop to the home front. Books specifically about film or theatre during the war mainly discuss the social context and propaganda value of the productions. Occasionally, particularly with the film industry, there will be mention of stars speaking at rallies, and books will cite Carole Lombard's "tragic accident," but few, if any, made any allusion to the existence of any self-directed organizations coordinating activities.

A notable exception is Brooks Atkinsons' Broadway, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1970). Atkinson was the theatre critic for The New York Times as well as a member of the American Theatre Wings' Board of Directors. His book is presently the definitive account of New York's legitimate stage and deals with social and economic factors as well as artistic. Unfortunately, in attempting to cover all of Broadway there is little space for extended analysis of any one aspect. The nine pages he devotes to war service contain the most detailed information in print. Moreover, Atkinson's book, along with several histories of the Wing that appear in prefaces to Wing publications, make frequently compounded errors, such as saying the Wing was first organized in 1939. There is no doubt that the first meeting of the six founders took place on January 9, 1940. Rachel Crothers' letter was dated January 4. Miss Allen and Miss Dalrymple insist planning started in 1940. Yet, the 1939 date persists. Since any secondary information is both scarce and unreliable I have concentrated on primary research.

The Theatre Collection of the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts has been an invaluable resource. The Wing and several figures prominent in it, donated all the archival material from its inception to the mid 1960's. The core of this material is 198 4"thick scrapbooks under the heading "American Theatre Wing," of newspaper clippings, photographs, and pamphlets. There are additional scrapbooks devoted to the Stage Door Canteen, to Katherine Cornell, and to the Stage Women's War Relief. Unfortunately, though there is some attempt at chronological order, the scrapbooks are badly organized. Much of the problem results from the fact the information was originally mounted on pages four times the size of the present books, and whoever translated them to their present form arbitrarily sliced the pages in quarters cutting articles in two and losing key parts. No index to the volumes exists.

The library also has almost all of the minutes of the American Theatre Wing's Board of Directors. It was invaluable to be able to see what issues the Wing thought were important and how they chose to deal with groups like the U.S.O. or the problem of racial integration. As an example of how rarely the information is used and how disordered the material is, I had to put the minutes into chronological order myself. Lincoln Center also has the minutes from the U.S.O.'s Board Meetings, the Report of the "Carry On" Meeting of the Stage Women's War Relief, the Constitution of the Wing, the original shooting script for the film Stage Door Canteen, the press releases for the film and for the Wing itself, and several Victory Players scripts, such as Esther M. Hawley's Crossroad and Helen Sloan Stetson's Wise Guys.

Key material, however, was missing. The Library of Congress may have the only extant copy of Esther Hawley's Recreation is Fun (American Theatre Wing, 1949), which discusses the structure of the Hospital Committee. Sterling Library at Yale, has a complete set of The Canteen News (American Theatre Wing, vol 1-2, 1944-1945), because of a donation by Wing member Carl Van Vechten. (Yale's Bienecke Library has his complete theatre collection.) The American Theatre Wing of today

has a small but select collection of material from the war, including the James Montgomery Flagg paintings, and the movie one-sheet poster. Most useful is a copy of Marian Rich's American Theatre Wing Speaker's Manual (American Theatre Wing: 1942) and the Financial Statement of the War Service prepared by Pinto, Winokur, and Pagano that covers the period from incorporation in December 1941 to December 31, 1945. Without this Statement, the internal functional impact of Wing activities and the film could not be determined.

The present-day Wing was also invaluable in giving me a list of names and phone numbers of people active in the Wing during the war. Although many of those numbers were out-of-date, it gave me a start. The individuals seemed surprised when I contacted them, but they were almost eager to give me advice and show me their files. I found each interview generated at least on other interview. I interview the following people:

Personal interview with Vera Allen, (Co-Founder of the American Theatre Wing, organizer of the Speakers Bureau, Chairman of the Board) on March 17, 1981.

Miss Allen is the only surviving founder of the Wing and is invaluable in researching the early years, the civilian Wing activities, and the post-war years. In addition to her knowledge she has extensive files about the Wing, including a complete collection of Community Plays.

Telephone interview with Kathleen Claypool, (Junior Hostess, head of Plays For Living) on February 26, 1981.

Miss Claypool not only candidly spoke about the Canteen and post-war activities, she led me to new avenues of research.

Telephone interview with Jean Dalrymple (First Press Representative of the Wing, and Wing Member), on February 19, 1981.

Miss Dalrymple explained the early Wing's fiscal needs and was invaluable in explaining Crothers' motives for starting the Wing in 1940.

Telephone interview with Radie Harris (Chairman of the Entertainment Committee of the Stage Door Canteen, manager of the Hollywood Canteen, Talent Coordinator for the film), on February 11, 1981.

Miss Harris was able to tell me important information about the performers and their attitude about the canteens and the film.

Personal and telephone interviews with Virginia Kaye (Co-Chairman of the Junior Hostess Committee), on February 26, 1981 and March 12, 1981.

Without Miss Kaye's candidness about integration at the Stage Door Canteen that section would have been impossible. Not only was she knowledgeable about the details of the Canteen, she led me to Margaret Halsey's books, and provided the true story behind the mountains of press releases at Lincoln Center.

Telephone interview with Rosetta LeNoire (Singer, Actress, Junior Hostess), on February 26, 1981.

Miss LeNoire spoke eloquently about what it was like to be a black actress in the 1940's and what she felt was the result of the Canteen's racial policy, in addition to telling what it was like in general to deal with men about to go off to war.

Telephone interview with Gertrude Macy (Business Manager to Katherine Cornell and for the Barretts tour), on March 13, 1981.

Miss Macy has an uncanny memory for names and figures, which was invaluable in getting a picture of the project. She also was knowledgeable about performer's attitudes and racial inequities. She told stories that have never appeared anywhere in print.

Telephone interview with Edith Maison (Senior Worker at the American Theatre Wing Workroom), on February 25, 1981.

Miss Maison was vital in telling me how the workroom of reality compared to press releases. She also, as a former Equity staffer, shed light on Equity's position, and loaned me part of her personal Wing collection.

Personal interview with Armina Marshall (Managing Director of the Washington Canteen), on January 8, 1981

Miss Marshall not only helped me to understand the structure of the Washington Canteen, she was influential in the development of the racial equality theme.

Personal interview with Vincent Sardi Jr. (Marine, owner of Sardi's restaurant), on January 10, 1981.

Mr. Sardi helped confirm the celebrity participation part of the Canteen as well as providing general information about Broadway during the war. He led me to rethink the rules for hostesses concept.

The popular histories of the home front are useful in providing an understanding of the period. Those include Jack Goodman's, While You Were Gone (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), Cabell Phillips' The 1940's (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1975), and Ronald H. Bailey's The Home Front: U.S.A. (New York:

Time-Life Books, 1977). Most helpful and detailed are Geoffrey Perrett's Day of Sadness, Years of Triumph (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan Inc., 1973), and Richard R. Lingeman's Don't You Know There's A War On? (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970). The best book and most scholarly study is John Morton Blum's V Was For Victory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), which was especially valuable on the racial issue. Richard Polenberg's War and Society (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1972) and the book he edited, America At War (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) are also scholarly works with more of a sociological thrust. Allan Winkler's Politics and Propaganda: The Office of War Information 1942-1945 (Yale dissertation, 1974) is a specialized, but useful account of one aspect of the home front.

To understand American citizen's opinions before and during the war, Ralph B. Levering's The Public and American Foreign Policy (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1978) is both unique and invaluable. Opinion can further be deduced from reading the selected addresses of President Roosevelt, in Nothing To Fear, edited by B.D. Zevin (New York: Books for Libraries, 1946). The only book to analytically deal with the appeal of celebrities during the war is Robert K. Merton's Mass Persuasion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946). A similar study showing the power of a spokesman, though not directly related to my topic, is Hadley Cantrils' The Invasion From Mars (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942).

Suitable information about World War I is more scarce, Mark Sullivan's Over Here (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) and more so, Edward Robb Ellis' Echoes of a Distant Thunder (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1975) were helpful.

For general information about the theatre during the war I viewed a special screening of G.I.-Jive, a Jack Sameth Production for P.B.S. television in 1979, which, while glossing over the facts, re-enacted some of the entertainment popular during the war. Listening to Irving Berlin's This is the Army and Moss Hart's

Winged Victory also gave insight about what was popular. Theatre Arts magazine, (New York: Theatre Arts Inc., January '39 to December 45), in particular Rosamond Gilder's column, allowed me to regularly chart the interest of the theatre in the Axis threat and how it effected London.

Emory Lewis' Stages (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), David Ewen's The Story of America's Musical Theatre (New York: Chilton Book Company, 1961) and Stanley Green's The World of Musical Comedy (New York: Ziff-Davis Company, 1960), especially the latter, gave good overviews of the theatrical seasons and the changes in genre the war wrought. Ward Morehouse's Matinee Tomorrow (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949) and George Oppenheimer's The Passionate Playgoer (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), while highly subjective, give insight to the season's beyond the productions themselves. Most useful in examining fiscal trends, is Jack Poggi's Theater in America, The Impact of Economic Forces (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968).

The definitive history of blacks in theare has yet to be written. Many studies tend to be prone to evangelistic sweeping comparisons that leave the reader mystified, such as somehow moving from the theatre in 1934 to blacks discovering America before Columbus. The most straightforward, is Edith J.R. Isaac's The Negro in the American Theatre (New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1947). Absolutely vital to looking at blacks at the Stage Door Canteen are Margaret Halsey's books, Some Of My Best Friends Are Soldiers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944) No Laughing Matter, the Autobiography of a WASP (New York: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1977), and Color Blind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946). She never mentioned the Canteen by name, but Virginia Kaye led me to them and vouched for their authenticity. The only unclear incident is when Halsey mentions a major anti-Semitic crisis that caused the Junior Hostess heads to resign. Miss Kaye says it did not happen, at least not in New York, but Halsey may have been hinting about the Boston problem.

The only reviews in anthologies of the film Stage Door Canteen are in James Agee's Agee on Film (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1958), Richard Winnington's Drawn and Quartered (London: The Saturn Press, 1948), and James Agate's Around Cinemas (London: Home and Van Thal Ltd., 1946). Some information about the success of the film can be found in Tino Balio's study of United Artists (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976). Facts about The Hollywood Canteen film are in The Warner Bros. Story by Clive Hirschhorn (New York: Crow Publishers Inc, 1979). The film itself can be seen on late, late movies or ordered from Budget Films of California at reasonable cost. Good general works about Hollywood are Film, The Democratic Art (Boston: Brown and Company, 1976) and Hollywood in the 40's by Charles Higham and Joel Greengerg (London: Tantivy Press, 1968).

For other service organizations, an accurate and comprehensive view of the treatment of officers in New York is in Charles C. Auchincloss' History of the Officers Service Committee (New York: Officers Service Committee, 1946). Transcripts of conferences such as the "U.S.O. Territorial Conference" December 1, 1942 in Hawaii, and the "Defense Moral Conference" in Washington in 1941 helped me to get a glimpse of U.S.O. operation. More helpful, particularly by its pictures of "Smiling negroes dunking donuts" at U.S.O. clubs, are in The U.S.O. Bulletin published by the U.S.O. and the Red Shield, a bulletin produced by the Salvation Army. These newsletters tell what the U.S.O. thought was acceptable to publicize and what the public might accept. Library of Congress has At Ease, (U.S.O. Camp Shows Inc., 1942) which shows the kind of entertainment the U.S.O. approved of. Bob Hope's books, I Never Left Home (New York: American Book, 1944), and Have Tux Will Travel (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), are designed to be humorous mass-market books. Although self-serving, they do reveal the mentality behind much U.S.O. entertainment.

Some of my information about Rachel Crothers and her goals was deduced from reading representative plays of hers. 39 East (New York: Brentano's, 1924), He and She (New York: Brentano's, 1911) and Susan and God (New York: Random House, 1938) show what Crothers may think about career women and the theatre. Lois C. Gottlieb's Rachel Crothers (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979) is the only in-depth examination of her work. For a contrasting viewpoint, particularly about the ability of women to write play, is George Jean Nathan's The Entertainment of a Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942).

Biographies and autobiographies of the entertainers important to the war years occasionally yield unusual information, as does Richard Aldrich's book about his wife, Gertrude Lawrence, Mrs. A (New York: Greystone Press, 1954), Richard Rogers account of Oklahoma in Musical Stages (New York: Random House, 1975) and George T. Simon's Glenn Miller and His Orchestra (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1974), and particularly, Gertrude Macy and Tad Mosel's Leading Lady about the life of Katherine Cornell (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1978). A complement to the latter, is Margalo Gillmore and Patricia Collinge's narrative of the Barretts tour, The B.O.W.S. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945).

The fount of information has only just been tapped.

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