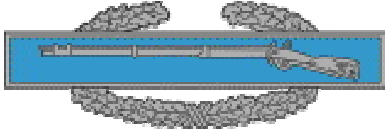


# ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry Association



December 2011

Cover Page

## FROM THE TC HATCH

**Jimmy Segars, President**

I hope you had a great Veteran's Day. I appreciate all the e-mails I got from several of you. Many celebrations went on in our area including the dedications of two Veteran's memorials, one for veterans from my hometown of Albertville and one in Huntsville for Madison County veterans. Madison County also held banquets and activities for veterans including special events for Wounded Warriors and a Valor Flight for Korean War veterans. Many businesses gave free meals and discounts to veterans to show their appreciation. A local restaurant was packed with veterans from young men to seniors in wheelchairs. It's wonderful to see so many people across our country remembering those who fought for our country in so many wars and in so many places around the globe. I am proud to have served with such men as you and also proud of the present men being trained by the finest commanders in the world at Ft. Benning.

A special thanks goes out to our Ladies Support Team who sent 8 packages to Col. Burns in Iraq for Veteran's Day as part of their Operation Home Front. He and the men there in his unit will get a little taste of Christmas because of these boxes. I encourage you to support these ladies with donations to help with their projects. Send donations to Lorretta Segars, 2323 Half-Sectionline Road, Albertville, AL 35950.

Also, if you would like to understand more about what our POW's went through in Hanoi, I recommend the book *Surviving Hell A POW's Journey* by Leo Thorsness. Thorsness was at the Hanoi Hilton, and this book is the story of how he and his fellow prisoners survived under horrendous conditions. Mr. Thorsness, who resides today in Huntsville, Alabama, signed a copy of his book for my wife when she purchased it for me.

The holidays are coming up soon, so I want to take this opportunity to wish all of you a special Thanksgiving in which we all take time to thank God for all the blessings He has given us. And I hope you and your families have the best Christmas ever. Being with family is important, so take time to remember those who cannot be home for the holidays. God bless. Play the Game!

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- † Tom Schroeder
- † Monica Burch
- † Roger Burch
- † Lavone Clark

Please keep these individuals & their families in your prayers.

## Welcome to the 1/50<sup>th</sup> New Members

Gary E. Erxleben, Delta, 01/68-05/68  
Marvin L. Brophy, HHC-Scouts, 0/68-05/69  
Ernest J. Milit, Delta, 11/67-

## RECIPES NEEDED

Send your favorite  
recipe to  
Loretta Segars



### IN THIS ISSUE

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Billie McGregor, Editorial Assistant

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## **FROM THE EDITOR**

**Lorene Burch, Editor &**  
*A proud wife of a veteran*

Where has the time gone? Here it is already December and some of the ladies will be in Washington D.C. to represent the 1/50<sup>th</sup> by laying wreaths on the graves in Arlington Cemetery. How I envy them in their endeavor and how proud I am of them for wanting to make the trip.

Life goes on for many veterans of the many wars over the years. As I make the trip with Roger almost weekly to the VA hospital in Wichita I see the devastation the wars have caused. Young and old they all have one common thread, they are the brave men and women who have stood in battle to keep our country free. The ladies of our local DAV will give a small gift to 105 veterans in nursing homes this Sunday. Please remember others who have served who may not be as fortunate as some of the rest of us.

I am proud to be associated with such a special and wonderful group of people it is an honor to serve you all as editor. Please let's not forget Billie as well, she does a wonderful job of keeping me on track and helping me to know what we need.

United we can accomplish so much this Christmas season. May God bless you all and may you all find the peace and rest during this busy time of the year.

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## **NIXON PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS**

**Submitted by John Topper**

The fall of Saigon happened 30 April 1975, two years AFTER the American military left Vietnam. The last American troops departed in their entirety 29 March 1973.

How could we lose a war we had already stopped fighting? We fought to an agreed stalemate. The peace settlement was signed in Paris on 27 January 1973. It called for release of all U.S. prisoners, withdrawal of U.S. forces, limitation of both sides' forces inside South Vietnam and a commitment to peaceful reunification. The 140,000 evacuees in April 1975 during the fall of Saigon consisted almost entirely of civilians and Vietnamese military, NOT American military running for their lives. There were almost twice as many casualties in Southeast Asia (primarily Cambodia) the first two years after the fall of Saigon in 1975 than there were during the ten years the U.S. was involved in Vietnam. Thanks for the perceived loss and the countless assassinations and torture visited upon Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians goes mainly to the American media and their undying support-by-misrepresentation of the anti-War movement in the United States.

As with much of the Vietnam War, the news media misreported and misinterpreted the 1968 Tet Offensive. It was reported as an overwhelming success for the Communist forces and a decided defeat for the U.S. forces. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite initial victories by the Communists forces, the Tet Offensive resulted in a major defeat of those forces. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the designer of the Tet Offensive, is considered by some as ranking with Wellington, Grant, Lee and MacArthur as a great commander. Still, militarily, the Tet Offensive was a total defeat of the Communist forces on all fronts. It resulted in the death of some 45,000 NVA troops and the complete, if not total destruction of the Viet Cong elements in South Vietnam. The Organization of the Viet Cong Units in the South never recovered. The Tet Offensive succeeded on only one front and that was the News front and the political arena. This was another example in the Vietnam War of an inaccuracy becoming the perceived truth. However, inaccurately reported, the News Media made the Tet Offensive famous.

Isolated atrocities committed by American Soldiers produced torrents of outrage from anti-war critics and the news media while Communist atrocities were so common that they received hardly any media mention at all. The United States sought to minimize and prevent attacks on civilians while North Vietnam made attacks on civilians a centerpiece of its strategy. Americans who deliberately killed civilians received prison sentences while Communists who did so received commendations. From 1957 to 1973, the National Liberation Front assassinated 36,725 Vietnamese and abducted another 58,499. The death squads focused on leaders at the village level and on anyone who improved the lives of the peasants such as medical personnel, social workers, and schoolteachers.

**HISTORIAN REPORT: winter – 2011**  
Jim Sheppard, historian

Things have started to pick up here in the 50th Infantry Archives! After a long break over the summer learning to navigate New Jersey's Back bays with my new 17 foot Carolina Skiff, I am back to work on format editing for the documents I procured on my last visit to the National Archives in July. I am converting several hundred After Action Reports and Daily Staff Journals for "E" and "F" Companies. Although these do not hold much interest for most of us from the Battalion Proper in the 60's, I thought it would make a nice addition to the 50th Infantry Document Archives we are building and be of interest to those existing current day "E" and "F" Companies at Fort Benning.

I am also working on creating Memorial Pages for the men from those designations killed in action...and hope to have them all posted within the coming year. As usual, I am working on updating our existing KIA Memorial pages as well. These updates generally involve adding Awards we have documented...but from time to time...I am adding additional descriptive commentary gleaned from relatives, friends, and former Comrades from their units.

This all brings me to my main point for this report: PICTURES! - no, not your prized palm tree or water buffalo photo - I mean photographs of the men killed in action. I began my efforts to obtain a photo for every one of our KIAs when I started creating the Memorial pages about 4 years back. My efforts have been aided by too many to list here but, of course, our friend Barbara Daniels was the one I think of right away! We have photos for a majority of our men but still have far too many we have not yet acquired. If you have a photo of one of our men killed in action and do not see a photo on his memorial page PLEASE get me a copy!

As many of you know, the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Fund has a "push" on for photos as well. I am making sure they receive every one of our KIA's photos as my efforts produce them. I also post a brief invite for those who knew our man to visit our website.

It's hard to believe that we are only about a year from posting up the details on the next Association Reunion in the spring of 2013! We have had some new additions as members this past year who are looking forward to attending!

Wishing everyone a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year!

**C H A P L A I N ' S**

**Parker Pierce**

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Greetings to all the 1/50th veterans and their families. It is the day after Thanksgiving, which is hard to believe that the year 2011 is getting close to being completed. I pray that everyone, whatever was going on, had a very blessed Thanksgiving Day with their loved ones and friends. My wife, Kim and I were blest to have traveled to Wake Forest, N.C. to spend Thanksgiving weekend with our son, his wife, our twenty months granddaughter, and our sixth grandchild, a girl due in December. We all have so much to be thankful for we could never thank God enough for His blessings. The freedom of living in America, our loved ones, friends and a God in Heaven, who shows us unconditional love, and so many other blessings we can't even name all of them, but a rewarding challenge for each of us would be to write down a list of as many of our blessings as we possibly can, so as to realize how much we really are blest of God! A quote from Thomas Jefferson: "How little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of, and which no other people on earth enjoy!" The next significant event on the calendar is Christmas, undoubtedly the greatest event in the history of the world! The celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Savior. and the Hope for the world! I will be praying for all of you and your families that you have a very blessed and wonderful Christmas this year. I know we all will be continuing to pray for our great nation, America, our military and their families, each other, our President, and for one of our own, Tom Schroeder, who recently had surgery and is recovering. May God's blessing continue to be with each one of you and your family members. Because of Him, Parker

## 1/50<sup>th</sup> Ladies Support Team

Loretta Segars

Jim and I just mailed 8 boxes to Col. Burns in Iraq for our first Operation Home Front shipment in conjunction with Veteran's Day. The boxes contained simple items to help them enjoy Christmas away from home. Let's keep up the good work. We need more of you to participate. A special thank-you to Jean Curtis and Gladys Grubb for your donations that made sending these boxes possible.

I contacted Arlington National Cemetery. Six of us will be going on December 10 to help lay wreaths on the graves of our soldiers buried there as part of Wreaths Across America. Plans are for us to be in the section where Lawrence Douglass Greene, 1st Lt. lies. At some point he was a part of the 1/50th but before our men deployed, as I understand it. He was an armored officer from Ft. Hood and whose hometown is Ft. Knox, KY. He was also a part of HH CO, 40 BN USA. You will find information on him on the Arlington Website. It might take a little digging, but you can find his name. He lies in Section 1, Grave # 164-A, which is on the backside of the cemetery about one mile from the visitor center, according to the directions given me. I have been unable so far to discover any other soldier buried there who was connected with the 1/50th. If you know of any, please send me an e-mail about them.

At noon there will be a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. After lunch, we will board the Metro and head to Bethesda Hospital. Plans are to be there from 3:00-4:00 p.m. to present them with gifts from our unit and a booklet from my church and cookies to as many Wounded Warriors as we can meet in an hour. The lady who started Operation Bandanas, Mary Gray, is donating at least 100 bandanas to us, and we are purchasing a few from what is left in our Operation Home Front fund. This is a very patriotic organization that has provided over 100,000 bandanas to our men and women in uniform. Special thanks go to Ms. Gray.



Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas. Let me know if you can help with Operation Home Front for next year. We want to mail as many boxes as we can. Even though many of our soldiers will be coming home, there will always be some that stay. Also, I still need at least a dozen cookbook entries. Don't forget. Thanks.



**Arlington West** refers to the "temporary cemetery" itself, as well as Veterans for Peace's project of installing the temporary memorial. The name, Arlington West, was given to the memorial by WWII veteran Ted Berlin and reflects the name of the national cemetery of the United States, Arlington National Cemetery, a burial place of honor for fallen war heroes. Arlington National Cemetery is the location of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and is also the final resting place for John F. Kennedy. Arlington West—in a manner similar to "real" cemeteries—is intended by the project organizers to be a place to mourn, reflect, contemplate, grieve, and meditate, to honor and acknowledge those who have lost their lives, and to reflect upon the costs of war.

The memorial in Santa Barbara, California, which was first put together on November 2, 2003 by local activist Stephen Sherrill, was soon adopted by the local chapter of Veterans for Peace. It is installed each Sunday by a team of volunteers on the beach immediately west of Stearns Wharf. Visitors walking to the tourist attractions on the wharf have a clear view, from the boardwalk, along the beach with the white crosses in the foreground. From the walkway, visitors can see a flag-draped coffin and more than 3,000 crosses, made of wood, which are intended to resemble and represent traditional military grave markers. In addition to the simulated graveyard, a placard listing all the fallen American military personnel since the U.S. invaded and occupied Iraq is prominently displayed; this list is updated weekly. Due to logistical constraints, the number of new crosses was halted at just over 3000 even though the latest death toll has exceeded 4400. Adjacent to the placards is a sign containing the message: "At 3000 crosses, the Arlington West Memorial is 141 feet wide and 310 feet long. A memorial for the Iraqi dead would be 141 feet wide and 12.8 miles long."

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**Interesting Veterans Statistics off the Vietnam Memorial Wall**  
**A little history most people will never know**  
**Submitted by Robert Melendez**

***"Carved on these walls is the story of America, of a continuing quest to preserve both Democracy and decency, and to protect a national treasure that we call the American dream."***  
**~ President George Bush**

SOMETHING to think about - Most of the surviving Parents are now deceased. There are 58,267 names now listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010. The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 36 years since the last casualties.

Beginning at the apex on panel 1E and going out to the end of the East wall, appearing to recede into the earth (numbered 70E - May 25, 1968), then resuming at the end of the West wall, as the wall emerges from the earth (numbered 70W - continuing May 25, 1968) and ending with a date in 1975. Thus the war's beginning and end meet. The war is complete, coming full circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side and contained within the earth itself.

The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass. Listed by the U.S. Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965.

- There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall.
- 39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger.
- 8,283 were just 19 years old.
- The largest age group, 33,103 were 18 years old.
- 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old.
- 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old.
- One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.
- 997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam .
- 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam .
- 31 sets of brothers are on the Wall.
- Thirty one sets of parents lost two of their sons.
- 54 soldiers on the Wall attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia . I wonder why so many from one school.
- 8 Women are on the Wall. Nursing the wounded.
- 244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.
- Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons.
- West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita in the nation. There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall.
- The Marines of Morenci - They led some of the scrappiest high school football and basketball teams that the little Arizona copper town of Morenci (pop. 5,058) had ever known and cheered. They enjoyed roaring beer busts. In quieter moments, they rode horses along the Coronado Trail, stalked deer in the Apache National Forest . And in the patriotic camaraderie typical of Morenci's mining families, the nine graduates of Morenci High enlisted as a group in the Marine Corps. Their service began on Independence Day, 1966. Only 3 returned home.
- The Buddies of Midvale - LeRoy Tafoya, Jimmy Martinez, Tom Gonzales were all boyhood friends and lived on three consecutive streets in Midvale, Utah on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh avenues. They lived only a few yards apart. They played ball at the adjacent sandlot ball field. And they all went to Vietnam . In a span of 16 dark days in late 1967, all three would be killed. LeRoy was killed on Wednesday, Nov. 22, the fourth anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Jimmy died less than 24 hours later on Thanksgiving Day. Tom was shot dead assaulting the enemy on Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.
- The most casualty deaths for a single day was on January 31, 1968 - 245 deaths.
- The most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968 - 2,415 casualties were incurred.

For most Americans who read this they will only see the numbers that the Vietnam War created. To those of us who survived the war, and to the families of those who did not, we see the faces, we feel the pain that these numbers created. We are, until we too pass away, haunted with these numbers, because they were our friends, fathers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters. There are no noble wars, just noble warriors.

## LIST OF DISEASES LINKED TO AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE GROWS

More than 40 years after the U.S. military used Agent Orange to defoliate the jungles of Vietnam, the health care bill is escalating for taxpayers. Over the past two years, federal officials say, an estimated 10,000 more veterans have sought medical compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange, an herbicide that contains a toxic chemical called dioxin. In a recent report, the Institute of Medicine said there is sufficient evidence of an association between exposure to Agent Orange and illnesses including soft-tissue sarcoma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, Hodgkin lymphoma and chloracne. The report recommended further research to determine whether there could be a link between Agent Orange exposure and other illnesses such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, tonsil cancer, melanoma and Alzheimer's disease.

The findings come at a time when lawmakers are grappling with the long-term health care costs for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which could approach \$1 trillion, according to Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. Over the next decade, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is expected to shell out \$50 billion for health care compensation for ischemic heart disease alone — one of the 14 diseases the VA says is associated with Agent Orange exposure. Last year, ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease and B-cell leukemia were added to the list of diseases the VA associates with Agent Orange exposure. That added an extra \$236 million in 2010 and \$165 million this year in compensation costs, according to a VA report. In addition, today's soldiers could experience a larger backlog for disability-compensation claims from the VA because of veterans from previous generations, said Ryan Edwards, a Queens College economist who has studied the life cycles of veterans' costs.

"We're probably not going to see the peak in demand for service needs for another 30 years," Edwards said. "We have not begun to see the end yet."

### AN OBLIGATION

Providing compensation for veterans' health care is not an economic issue, argued U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-El Paso, who has served on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for 15 years. "It's not a question of being able to afford it; it's an obligation to our veterans, those who put their lives on the line, those who were told it was safe," said Reyes, who served as a helicopter crew chief in Vietnam. "We flew our helicopters through clouds of Agent Orange when it was being applied." Still, some prominent political leaders argue that many veterans could have developed these diseases regardless of whether they were exposed to Agent Orange. Those leaders are asking how the VA will afford the compensation claims without breaking the nation's budget. "You're going to find out," said Alan Simpson, former chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "These unbelievable compensation systems will fail. There's no way they can be sustained." The former Republican senator from Wyoming recently served as co-chairman of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, created by President Barack Obama.

Retired Army Capt. Allen Clark of Dallas said he served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967 and was exposed to Agent Orange. A year ago, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, though he said he has no way of knowing whether his condition is related to his exposure. And he did not file a claim, because he already has 100 percent disability compensation after losing both legs in a mortar attack. Proven link or not, he said, "We're the ones that went off to an unpopular war. ... We have earned those benefits by our service to our country under very trying circumstances."

### SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Other proponents of providing health care compensation in these Agent Orange cases argue that scientific research can rarely provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt. "We always tend to think of science as cut and dried, yes and no, black and white — and there's a heck of a lot of gray in there," said Dr. Terry Walters, the Department of Veterans Affairs' deputy chief consultant for post-deployment health. "That's why you need experts to evaluate it."

Usually, to file a claim for compensation, a veteran must show that he has the disease, that he was exposed to Agent Orange and that there is a connection to the disease. But a presumptive link takes the burden of proof off of the veterans, Walters said.

Luther Newberry, 64, a retired Marine Corps E4 corporal who served in Vietnam, said that his ischemic heart disease, diabetes and neuropathy are a direct result of his exposure to Agent Orange.

"There's not a doubt in my mind," said Newberry, of Fritch, Texas, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America Texas State Council. "Vietnam veterans my age, we're probably dying at a faster rate than the Korean [or] World War II veterans are right now."

If these veterans had been aware of the risks of Agent Orange exposure, many of them could have gotten the care they needed earlier — before it was too late, advocates said.

"If our guys had known that we're more than twice as likely, almost three times as likely, to get prostate cancer, more than twice as likely to get diabetes, more than twice as likely to get sarcoma or renal cancer, people would have been on the lookout for these health care risks that accrued to veterans who served in the Vietnam theater," said Rick Weidman, executive director for policy and government affairs at the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Disability compensation for Agent Orange-related illnesses is going to be expensive, but it's an expense that the VA is willing to accept, Walters said.

"It's a lot of money, a huge amount of money," Walters said. "But the [secretary of veterans affairs] doesn't make the decisions based on money; we try to make the decisions based on science. But the science is very fuzzy. It's very emotional and it's political. It's difficult."



## A Soldier's Christmas Poem

By Michael Marks  
Thank the troops!

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light, I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.  
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest, my daughter beside me, angelic in rest.

Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white, transforming the yard to a winter delight.  
The sparkling lights in the tree, I believe, completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.

My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep, secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.  
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem, so I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near, but I opened my eye when it tickled my ear.

Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.

My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear, and I crept to the door just to see who was near.  
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night, a lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.  
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled, standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

"What are you doing?" I asked without fear "Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!  
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve, you should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts, to the window that danced with a warm fire's light  
Then he sighed and he said "Its really all right, I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night"

"Its my duty to stand at the front of the line, that separates you from the darkest of times.  
No one had to ask or beg or implore me, I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.

My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December," then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always remembers."  
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam and now it is my turn and so, here I am.

I've not seen my own son in more than a while, but my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.  
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag, the red white and blue... an American flag.

"I can live through the cold and the being alone away from my family, my house and my home,  
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet, I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat,

I can carry the weight of killing another or lay down my life with my sisters and brothers  
Who stand at the front against any and all, to insure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright your family is waiting and I'll be all right."  
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least, "Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?  
It seems all too little for all that you've done, for being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret, "Just tell us you love us, and never forget  
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone, to stand your own watch, no matter how long.

For when we come home, either standing or dead, to know you remember we fought and we bled  
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust. that we mattered to you as you mattered to us.



### HISTORY OF THE USO\*<http://www.uso.org>

Supporting America's troops was the first mission of the USO. In 1941, as it became clear that the nation was heading into World War II, several organizations mobilized to support the growing U.S. military: the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created synergy among these agencies by forming the United Service Organizations, with the objective of providing the emotional support the troops needed.

Over time, the USO has evolved, developing new programs and services to meet the ever-changing needs of the troops and their families, while holding fast to the original mission. Today, the USO continues to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families, and will continue to be there for them until every one comes home.