

U.S.O. HISTORY GREENVILLE, S. C.

Sam Francis

Introduction

The history (1951-1963) of U.S.O., Inc. in Greenville, S. C., is presented on the following pages. It is filled with names of community leaders and the dates they served as well as how U.S.O. was established in this city.

World War I

The remarkable acceptance of meeting the needs of approximately 6,000 men assigned to Donaldson Air Force Base plus those passing through our community came as no surprise to our civic leaders. Greenville had already established itself as a servicemen's town because of its efforts during World War I at Camp Sevier where the Knights of Columbus, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the YMCA, YWCA and hundreds of patriotic citizens voluntarily provided spiritual, recreation and social needs to those who were serving our country from all parts of the United States. Greenville received recognition as a "soldiers" town and many who were at Camp Sevier returned to make Greenville their home.

World War II 1943-1945

At the out-break of World War II, Greenville again accepted the responsibilities of providing the services to the men who were assigned to Greenville Air Force Base (GAFB) and the Airborne Group on the Lowndes Hill Road. Mr. John M. Holmes, ("Uncle Johnnie") Executive Director of the Greenville YMCA, took the active leadership in bringing the community together to provide services within the downtown area. A center was established in the old Textile Hall on West Washington and then later moved to upstairs of the Cleveland building located on the corner of South Main Street and East McBee Avenue. Sudie and Monk Mulligan were very active in assisting "Uncle Johnnie."

In addition to the center, downtown churches and recreation departments were asked to open their doors to serve the needs

of our visiting servicemen and women. St. Mary's Church, First Presbyterian, Buncombe Street Methodist, Trinity Lutheran, Christ Episcopal, and Second Presbyterian responded. Before too long the community recognized that there were too many places open with not enough men and women to make all the efforts worthwhile.

Korean War 1951-1963

With the beginning of the Korean conflict, Greenville Air Force Base re-opened and the name was changed to Donaldson Air Force Base. H.F.A. Lange from the City Recreation Department was asked to organize a program and provide facilities to take care of the needs for military assigned to the base.

U.S.O., Inc. was discussed and the happenings recorded in the history presentation *"U.S.O., Inc. in Greenville, S. C. 1951-1963."*

History of U.S.O. Greenville, South Carolina 1951 - 1963

Although the Greenville U.S.O. Clubs were formally opened in August of 1951, plans for them began shortly after Donaldson Air Force Base was reactivated in 1950.

At the request of Broadus Bailey, then Coordinator of Civilian Defense for Greenville County, Mayor J. Kenneth Cass called a meeting of citizens concerned about providing wholesome recreational facilities and welfare services for the men who were being stationed at Donaldson.

The group, which met at Sears Shelter, appointed the late H.F.A. Lange, then Director of the City's Parks and Recreation Department, Chairman of a committee. He immediately named a sub-committee of four to work with Miss Elizabeth Mahon, DAFB Service Club Director, in starting a recreation program at the base; and also named a four-man sub-committee to look into the possibility of getting information on United Service Organization, Inc. (U.S.O.) services in the community.

A meeting was held with the U.S.O. Regional Executive in

February of 1951. During March and April of that year the original committee became the first U.S.O. Committee of Greenville, S. C. and was enlarged to include representatives from the organizations that make up National U.S.O. — the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, Travelers Aid, Jewish Welfare Board, and National Catholic Community Service. Also on the committee were persons connected with civic clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Donaldson Air Force Base, and city and county officials.

Mr. Lange remained as Chairman of the re-organized first U.S.O. Committee. Other officers were Leonard Todd, Jr., Treasurer, and Mrs. Thomas Parker, Chairman of the Operating Committee.

On Armed Forces Day, May 19, 1951, a campaign was launched to raise \$15,000.00, to set up two U.S.O. Clubs and operate them until November 1, when the National U.S.O. would assume the responsibility for current operating funds. Contributions were solicited through the sale of "good will shares" and \$15,277.00 was raised. Alan Newcomb served as General Chairman and Mrs. E. S. McKissick was Chairman of Special Gifts.

Sam J. Francis was appointed Club Director at the 533 South Main Street Club located in the Traxler Building (now Falls Place), and he was made responsible for the administrative operation of the Fall Street Club, where Mrs. E. L. McPherson was named Program Director. Both clubs were formally opened August 18, 1951, with Mayor Cass and Major General Robert W. Douglass, Jr., 18th Air Force Commanding General, officiating.

September 1, 1951, Mrs. Willie Mae Pinson, later affectionately called "Mother Willie" by the many servicemen whom she made feel at home, was appointed house mother. In 1957 she was named Greenville's "Mother of the Year."

Mrs. McKissick was elected the first Chairman of the Volunteers Corps at the South Main Street Club. Members of the Executive Committee were Mrs. Nelson B. Arrington, Mrs. Bruce Hagood, Mrs. S. M. Beattie, Mrs. Robert W. Douglass,

Jr., and Mrs. Mitchell King. Donald J. Sampson was elected first Volunteer Corps Chairman at the Fall Street Club.

In January of 1952, Mrs. Jack Kearney was appointed part-time bookkeeper after she had volunteered her services for several months.

A U.S.O.-Travelers Aid intake point was set up at the South Main Street Club on February 1, 1952. Directions, case aid, housing and counseling services were given by either full or part-time case workers until the unit was discontinued in March of 1956. From that time until 1966 Greenville County appropriated \$4,200.00 annually for the continuation of U.S.O. housing and welfare services.

In 1953 the City of Greenville provided \$4,000.00 to cover the major part of the annual rent expense on the two U.S.O. buildings. This allocation continued each year.

On April 15, 1956 Mrs. Lottie Beal succeeded Mrs. McPherson, at the Fall Street Club, becoming the first full time professional Club Director there.

The Fall Street Club, after moving to another building on East McBee Avenue, officially re-opened February 14, 1958, with a Valentine Dance. Paul L. Barrett, then U.S.O. Committee Chairman, was guest speaker at the formal opening on April 23.

Since the first U.S.O. Committee and Volunteer Corps, there have been five other two-year administrations. In November of 1952, Preston S. Marchant became Committee Chairman. Serving with him were Jack W. Burnett, Jr., Vice-Chairman; Julian L. Webb, Jr., Treasurer; and Mrs. Curran B. Earle, Secretary. In June of the following year, Mrs. W. Harrison Trammell, Jr. was elected Volunteer Corps Chairman. Other officers were Mrs. McKissick, Vice Chairman; Mrs. Robert W. Douglass, Jr., Recorder; Mrs. Bruce Hagood, Secretary; Mrs. Arrington, Treasurer; and Mrs. H. W. St. John and Mrs. Stanley B. Hart, Historians.

In December of 1954 William F. Gaines became Chairman of

the third U.S.O. Committee. Bentley Hines was elected Vice-Chairman; L. Clay Elrod, Treasurer; and Mrs. Marguerite Johnson Hays, Secretary. The third Volunteer Corps administration (elected June 1955) was made up of Mrs. R. M. Caine, Chairman; Mrs. Arrington, Vice Chairman; Mrs. William P. Barton, Secretary; Mrs. E. E. Wells, Treasurer; and Mrs. Bruce Hagood, Corresponding Secretary.

The fourth U.S.O. Committee elected Mr. Barrett as Chairman. Others elected were William H. Hughes, Vice-Chairman; Mrs. Trammell, Secretary; Mr. Elrod, Treasurer; Theron C. Cleveland, Jr., Assistant Treasurer. The 1957-59 Volunteer Corps Chairman was Mrs. Arrington. Serving with her were Mrs. Barton, Vice Chairman; Mrs. Thomas H. Coker, Secretary; Mrs. Charles Sterling, Corresponding Secretary; and Mrs. W. D. Dodenhoff, Treasurer.

The fifth U.S.O. Committee officers serving from 1959 - 61 were W. Harrison Trammell, Jr., Chairman; Mr. Gaines, Vice-Chairman; Mrs. J. Alden Simpson, Secretary; and Waddy Thompson, Jr., Treasurer. Mrs. Barton was Chairman of the Volunteer Corps from the 1959 - 61 term. Other officers were Mrs. Dodenhoff, Vice Chairman; Mrs. William F. Robertson, Recorder; Mrs. Francis M. Hipp, Secretary; and Mrs. Paul A. Guthrie, Treasurer.

The sixth group of officers serving from 1961 to 1963 were T. M. "Spat" Bailey, Chairman; W. Harrison Trammell, Jr., Vice-Chairman; Mrs. William P. Barton, Secretary; and Waddy Thompson, Jr., Treasurer. Mrs. W. D. Dodenhoff was elected Chairman of the Volunteer Corps. Other officers were Mrs. E. S. McKissick, Vice Chairman; Mrs. H. Beaumonde Drake, Secretary; and Mrs. Nelson B. Arrington, Treasurer.

When the U.S.O. Clubs closed in July of 1963, the U.S.O. Committee remained organized with the following members; William H. Hughes, Chairman; T. M. Bailey, Mrs. E. S. McKissick, Waddy Thompson, Jr., Paul L. Barrett, Bernard L. Berthland, Sam Francis and Mrs. W. D. Dodenhoff. Each year this group presents the U.S.O. budget requested by National U.S.O. to the United Way of Greenville

County. Presently William H. Hughes serves as chairman.

Junior Hostesses

During the twelve years of operation of the two clubs in Greenville, the Junior Hostess Organizations at both clubs played an important role in the activities of U.S.O. in the community and at Donaldson Air Force Base. Recognition is given to the following for their leadership which contributed to the clubs being named as "one of the ten best" clubs in the nation for program services.

At the South Main Street Club the following served in this area:

Mrs. Ben Sloan (Mary) 1951 - 1955
 Mrs. Grace Rhodes 1955 - 1957
 Mrs. Luther G. Causey (Allen Harrison) 1957 - 1959
 Mrs. Anne M. Beattie 1959 - 1963

At the East McBee Avenue Club:

Miss Martha Latimore
 Mrs. Alice Smith
 Miss Ella Latimore
 Mrs. Theresa Lockhart
 Mrs. Ruth Freeman

Also contributing their services to this part of the program were Mrs. Florence Earle, Mrs. Grace Donaldson. They served as chaperons for the girls for the weekly base dances and special events.

U.S.O. Chairmen and U.S.O. Volunteer Corps Chairmen 1951 - 1985

U.S.O. COMMITTEE	YEAR	U.S.O. VOLUNTEER CORPS
H.F.A. Lange (Deceased)	1951-1953	Mrs. E.S. McKisick
Preston S. Marchant	1953-1955	Mrs. W. Harrison Trammell, Jr.
William F. Gaines (Deceased)	1955-1957	Mrs. R.M. Caine
Paul L. Barrett	1957-1959	Mrs. Nelson B. Arrington
W. Harrison Trammell, Jr. (Deceased)	1959-1961	Mrs. W.P. Barton (Deceased)
T.M. Bailey	1961-1963	Mrs. W.D. Dodenhoff
William H. Hughes	1963-1985	

U.S.O. - National, Regional, Local

In March 1956 Mrs. Caine represented Mr. Gaines at the First National U.S.O. Council meeting in Washington. Mr. Barrett attended the second annual meeting of the Council in 1957. Mrs. Trammell went to the national meeting in 1958, Mr. Trammell represented the local clubs in 1959.

Up until 1954 Greenvillians contributed to National U.S.O. the area's fair share of club operating costs by giving to the Community Chest, from which was sent Greenville's quota through the United Defense Fund. The U.S.O. has been a member agency of the United Fund of Greenville County since its inception in 1955. Last year \$10,016.74 in United Fund collections was sent through Carolinas United Community Services to National U.S.O., which returned approximately \$35,000.00 for maintenance, salaries, programs and administrative costs for the two clubs in Greenville.

Greenville U.S.O. followed National U.S.O. Council recommendations that the local club seek financial support for National U.S.O. from six surrounding towns and cities that have no military installations, promote more on-base activities, plan more programs and services for married service personnel, and give pre-induction talks to high school seniors.

Spartanburg and Asheville set up U.S.O. Committees, and one was planned for Anderson. Clemson and Clinton each had a U.S.O. Chairman. A chairman was named for Easley. These six communities contributed their fair share U.S.O. quota through United Community drives.

Statistically Speaking

In 1961 the South Main Street and McBee Avenue U.S.O. Clubs in Greenville meant:

A wholesome place with programs and activities for 67,779 servicemen, dependants, and guests.

Summer picnics, sponsored or financially assisted by civic organizations and community groups, for 2,505 servicemen and their wives and guests.

Valentine, Easter, Halloween and Christmas parties for 1,024 children of military personnel.

Sixty-one on-base events for 10,911 servicemen, and their wives or guests.

Housing information for 1,438 service families.

Housing placements for 839 servicemen and their families.

A total of 93,810 services for members of the Armed Forces moving into the community or passing through Greenville.

Special events — such as Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners; family night; and Military Ball - for 2,860 military men, dependants, and guests.

The giving of 76,650 hours by 7,291 volunteers.

The cooperation and support of 36 churches, 54 community clubs, 42 garden clubs, 24 civic and fraternal clubs, 33 firms, 4 Donaldson Air Force Base groups, 9 schools, 6 private agencies, and 2 entertainment groups.

During the years there was notable increase in U.S.O. Housing Service, family parties and picnics, price reduction on tickets to various community events, and a baby sitters' list because of the many wives and children of service personnel moving into the community.

On-base programs increased from 10 per month to 16.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

For more detailed information these references are in the S. C. Room in the Greenville Public Library located on College Street:

U.S.O. films courtesy Fidelity Federal (Now American Federal).

U.S.O. film-script written by Miss Eugenia Helen Ligon and taped by WFBC (Now WYFF).

Scrapbook kept by members of the U.S.O. Volunteer Corps and Junior Hostess Organization.