

History of Klamath Commando Unit for Past Two Years Told

(Editor's Note: The story of Klamath Commando Unit No. 1 is presented below, on the occasion of the disbanding of the unit after two years of service. This review was prepared by the Commandos themselves and published in souvenir booklet form.)

Klamath Commando Unit No. 1 was organized June 8, 1942, by thirty attractive, energetic, business girls.

The title "Commando" was selected because it typifies action, and the girls were anxious to start carrying out programs that other groups were merely talking about.

To be a member of this military unit, a girl must be between the ages of 18 and 28, of proper moral character, physically fit (many long hours are necessary) have a relative in the service and be willing to devote all of her free time aside from her paid position.

The purpose of this organization was to provide our service men with entertainment and hospitality whenever and wherever needed.

These girls organized on a military basis, instigated rules and regulations, incorporated and elected a "Mother" to act as counselor and four major officers. Captain, one First Lieutenant and two Second Lieutenants to act as president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. All non-commissioned officers were appointed by the captain.

Failure to carry out missions to comply with all rules and regulations is punishable by special k. p. duty or demotions, and if the offense is serious enough, revocation of membership.

Convoys Visit

In the beginning the Commandos were chiefly concerned about the visiting service men and convoys passing through the town and many thousands enjoyed the hospitality, street dances and special entertainment given at that time.

Gay smiles, warm hearted and friendly overtures do far more in describing these tireless volunteer workers of Uncle Sam. Willingly adhering to a strict program and spending many long grueling evenings perfecting intricate military drills, radio programs to promote bond sales and trips to Camp Tulelake as entertainers was the work the girls were doing through June and July of 1942.

Need for a service center was recognized by this group in August and the girls went to work with a vengeance. They secured their present location, rent free, but plenty dirty and repairs of all kinds needed. After begging three hundred pounds of kalsomine from local merchants, the girls themselves mixed and applied this "goosey" mixture to the walls and ceiling using a bicycle pump, a long hose, tall ladders, and a tub of kalsomine. When the room had been completed a glance at the splattered floor brought many a groan as thirty pretty girls bent tired, aching muscles and on hands and knees scrubbed, not once but twenty times, the large floor space until it sparkled with cleanliness.

Painting they say requires a bit of training but the Commandos unadvisedly painted the building inside and out. Carpenters were few and hard to find, so daintily well-manicured hands of these lovely ladies grasped hammers and saws, and with lumber donated by local lumber companies set about to fill in much needed partitions, cupboards, shelves, bookcases, and last but not least a food counter. Soon, the Commandos were invading homes, securing furniture, dishes, and all the necessities to give the room a homelike atmosphere. A raid on our local heating plant brought a donation of warmth to the room, and in one month and with less than fifty dollars in their treasury, these fast moving Commandos opened their completely furnished center September 12, 1942. However, busy minds found ways of working check and coke concessions at local dances and soon funds started rolling in. Scrap drives, personal donations from citizens as well as dues and fines from the Commandos, helped toward building up the treasury.

By this time the community awoke to the true sincerity of this group, realizing it was not personal pleasure the girls wanted but comfort and happiness for the service men.

Regular meetings, drill practice, assisting with bond sales, radio programs, operating the Center and working their full eight hours a day in offices kept the girls pretty busy. However, urgent appeals for the Commandos to entertain at Camp White, Oregon (an army camp consisting of 30,000 soldiers) eighty miles distance from Klamath Falls brought the girls to wedge in one trip a month into their already over-crowded program.

These trips meant more hours of extra practice and working out new drills and floor shows. The statement made by these girls when asked, "Don't you get tired?" was "What if we are tired, so are the boys on Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Italy and all the other fronts. It's little enough to do."

In making these trips, each Commando had to complete her day's work, grab a prepared lunch and with uniform in one hand, lunch in the other, jump into the car scheduled to carry her to camp. On the way each girl ate her dinner, freshened herself after her day's work, put on her uniform in the car and was ready for a large evening of dancing and entertaining.

Rules governing these trips were very strict, no dating on the part, arriving and leaving in a batch, and under no circumstances would a Commando leave the area of activity alone.

The Camp White paper, "The Grenade," was very generous with their praise usually giving front page space to the Unit. "The Commando girls of Klamath Falls are all glamorous dancers, interesting conversationalists and well-mannered as well as beautiful. Many G. I.'s lost their hearts this past weekend. Initiative and hard work developed this Unit until today it stands as an example of what young Miss America can do and is doing for the service men."

In January, 1943, the Commando Mother, Mrs. Lois Serrou, helped entertain a visiting wounded war veteran. Out of this meeting came the inspiration to do something for the boys who are doing so much for those of us at home. She immediately brought the idea to the attention of the Commando Unit and of course you can guess—they launched another program. "The wounded service men's project."

This program has brought them much national publicity and fame.

First Step

The first step was made through the Red Cross who in turn contacted their Field Director and then the Commanding Doctors of Mare Island Hospital at Vallejo, California, (approximately four hundred miles from Klamath Falls). A period of seven days was decided for the entertainment program, five days in Klamath and allowing two days traveling time. The visiting wounded men were to be placed in the very best homes Klamath Falls had to offer and the entertainment to be planned in advance, allowing for physical disabilities. The request mailed to Mare Island Hospital was for boys who were disabled from overseas duty, had spent a long period of time in the hospital, whose homes were on the East coast and had not as yet been home. All expenses were to be paid by the Commandos, including transportation, berths, meals, spending money, and entertainment while in Klamath Falls.

Permission from the Commanding Doctors was granted and so was born the Commandos' worthy Wounded Servicemen's Project.

The first group was scheduled to arrive February 20, 1943, so a big dance was sponsored by the Commandos for the purpose of honoring the wounded men and also to raise funds to continue the project. No city ever responded more whole heartedly than Klamath Falls. The largest crowd ever gathered in our county attended and contributed to the dance. This was only the beginning, donation upon donation came in until the Commandos were able to increase the number of wounded men to twelve each trip, which entailed an approximate cost of \$500.00 per month.

Word spread from State to State until one day photographers appeared—Life Magazine, American, Cosmopolitan and Associated News, to record on film the true Americanism as portrayed by these girl Commandos. Publicity was permitted for one

reason only—to further the project. It was hoped that every community throughout the nation would find some similar way to show these wounded veterans their appreciation.

This program benefited the boys tremendously. Reports from the hospital were "Boys in much better frame of mind, also gained weight. What do you do to them in Klamath?"

Soon the girls were including other hospitals—Pleasanton, Lettermans and Mare Island all in California and U. S. Naval Hospital in Seattle, Washington, (over 500 miles away.)

Letters of Thanks

Many letters of appreciation were received by the girls and townspeople participating in the program. "... words cannot convey how much I enjoyed my trip to Klamath Falls. I deeply and sincerely appreciate what you people did for me. I shall never forget your kindness and sincerity. It was an honor and a pleasure to go and keep the war from our beloved U. S. A. for people like you. I didn't do much but I did all I could."

This project did much to inspire the people in the entire Klamath Falls area; it brought the war closer to them and also a realization of what the boys go through.

Time passed by—over a year was gone. Sailors started moving into Klamath Naval Air Base and the Commandos heard of the big Marine Barracks to be built. They realized there would be many obligations to be taken care of at home. One day an article appeared in the local paper; it was an appeal from the Commandos to the people of Klamath Falls, "Help us decide! Shall we give up our wounded project when there are hundreds of boys at the hospitals waiting their turn to come to Klamath? Also how can we ignore our local boys when there will be thousands of Marines straight from battle fronts? What do you say Klamath Falls? Ballots for voting purposes were printed and the Commandos said that when all votes were in, the result was a tie. So the final answer fell to the Commandos after all and their decision is to continue doing their best here at home where they feel most needed.

Perhaps when their destiny has been fulfilled, more history may be written but until that time the Commandos wish to express their pride, admiration and wholehearted support to the gallant members of our armed forces who have fought and are fighting America's war for freedom in all parts of the world.

As a unit the Klamath Commandos feel that they have fulfilled this destiny. As individuals they will continue their efforts in some capacity to which they have pledged themselves.

May we take this opportunity to thank the friends and supporters of our Klamath Commando Unit No. 1.

Hostesses

MERRILL—Mrs. Dan Barry, president of the Altar society of St. Augustine's church, has announced the following list of hostesses who will serve during the last two weeks of September at the Cadette service room in Tulelake.

Saturday, September 18, Mrs. Hugh O'Connor and three daughters; Sunday afternoon, September 17, Mrs. John McCulley, Mrs. Pat O'Connor; Sunday evening, September 17, Mrs. W.C. Dalton, Mrs. Posil; Monday, September 18, Mrs. Clarence Schott, Mrs. Frank Moser.

Tuesday, September 19, Rosie and Helen Suty; Wednesday, September 20, Mrs. Hennessey, Mrs. Pulkabek; Thursday, September 21, Mrs. Leonard Petrik, Mrs. George Yost; Friday, September 22, Mrs. John Burke, Mrs. Dan Cashman; Saturday, September 23, Mrs. Tim Sullivan, Mrs. Dan McAuliffe.

Sunday afternoon, September 24, Mrs. C. C. Duggan, Mrs. Mock; Sunday evening, September 24, Mrs. Jerry Abern, Mrs. Helen Denney; Monday, September 25, Mrs. Heisterman, Mrs. Huto; Tuesday, September 26, Mrs. Steve Takacs, Mrs. Dick Miller; Wednesday, September 27, Mrs. E. M. Hammond, Mrs. Donald Colwell; Thursday, September 28, Mrs. Pat McGinley, Mrs. George Yost.

Friday, September 29, Mrs. Tim O'Keefe and Mrs. Dan O'Keefe; Saturday, September 30, Mrs. Dan Barry and Mrs. Pete Calise.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TEA

Mrs. George Rogers will be chairman of the League of Women Voters tea to be held at the library this coming Tuesday. A special guest will be, at right, Mrs. George Engles, national board member of the organization.

—Rogers, Kennell-Ellis

Annual Dinner

Employees of the Ivory Pine company were hosts at their second annual dinner for Klamath Falls railroad men on Thursday, September 7, at the Pelican party room.

Ivory Pine men who entertained for the others were E. P. Ivory, A. J. Jones, George Butler, Wright Larky, George Sample, Earl Brandeberry and Jim McMillan.

Guests were L. S. Stitt, L. Z. Carter, O. V. Gibson, Ray R. Ruger, F. C. Bechtel, E. G. Childers, Lester Alexander, H. O. Brandenburg, Howard Pernell, C. H. Foster, all of Southern Pacific; Harry Wayne, C. M. Ferguson, Pete Lesmeister, Vic Josephson, J. R. McClellan, Bill Preston, Frank Sexton, A. A. Montgomery, Tom Towey and W. R. Minton of Great Northern; Jim Fitzgerald of OC & E; Chris Molden, R. R. Taylor of Western Pacific; B. P. Costello of Union Pacific; Guy Harmon of Missouri Pacific; A. C. Laboree of Rock Island; Ray Cowles of Ann Arbor; Glen Arehart of D & RGW, and George Misdelf of the U. S. Employment office.

Shower

MALIN—Two guests of honor were feted at showers Thursday afternoon, September 7, at the home of Mrs. A. W. Schultz when gifts for the new home of the bride, Mrs. Emil Leitold, and layette gifts to Mrs. Phil Leitold, both of Malin, were presented. Co-hostesses with Mrs. Schultz were Mrs. Floyd King and Mrs. Willard McCulloch.

Games were enjoyed, the gifts admired, and refreshments were served to Mrs. Cecil Buell, Mrs. Christine Leitold, Mrs. Glenn Maharry, Mrs. Jay Howard, Mrs. Emma McGuire, Mrs. Clarence Moore, Mrs. Orla Cheek, Mrs. C. A. Maharry, Mrs. Ollie Moore, Mrs. Thomas Macklin, Mrs. Earl Schultz, Mrs. George Kasperian.

Mrs. Alvin Buell, Mrs. Emil Leitold, Mrs. Phil Leitold, Mrs. Warren Cornelius, Mrs. Albert Schultz, Muriel Buell and Maxine Buell.

Riverside Parent-Teachers association will open the year's program with the first meeting of the fall on Tuesday, September 19, at 2:30 p. m. in the school auditorium. Mrs. Lane Warren, president of Riverside PTA, urges all mothers to attend the session.

A Delta Zeta summer rush dinner was held Wednesday evening in the Pelican party room. Hostesses were Patricia Sexton, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sexton, and Betty Ray, daughter of Mrs. Ruth Ray. Both girls will be seniors at Oregon State college this fall. Covers were laid for five guests.

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Catholic Daughters

Friday night, September 8, the Catholic Daughters of America and the Knights of Columbus sponsored a dance for the entertainment of servicemen of the community and this proved so successful that the two lodges have decided to make them a monthly affair; plans are being formulated for another some time in October.

The committee composed of Phillis Mahoney, Agnes La Londe, Martha Lavenik, Mildred Smith, Otto Smith, John Watson, Mike Lavenik and James Cronin, wishes to thank all who made this so successful, and give special thanks to the following ladies who furnished homemade cakes: Lillian Dale, Geraldine Roycroft, Emma Grey, Azita Kennedy, Gwendolyn Miller, Enley Watson, Mabel Roman, Anne McDonald, Pearl Hoskins, Elmer Brunner, Adeline Towey, Peggy Sexton, Winifred Hooker, Marcella Murray, Lenore Gallagher, Agnes La Londe, Phillis Mahoney, Frances Druliner, Emilie Miller, Violet Plesier, Louise Vaughn, Hazel Landry, Lola Hemmingsen, Virginia McCormick, Lillian Hendricksen, Martha Lavenik, James Moty, Martha Lundell, Marie O'Sullivan, Ellen Ely, Freda Newman and Thelma McEnerney.

Jolly Neighbors

The Jolly Neighbors met for their monthly meeting on September 5 at the home of Mrs. Andrew Eck. Dessert was served at 1:30 by the hostess who was assisted by Mrs. James Cooper.

Members attending were Mrs. Joe Russell, Mrs. David J. Hoffman, Mrs. Warren Pohl, Mrs. James Francis, Mrs. Glen E. Scott, Mrs. William J. Horbelt and Mrs. Bruce H. Hull.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Mrs. C. W. Sessler, 4844 Cannon, on October 4.

Bly Club

BLY—Hazel Madison entertained the Ladies' club on Wednesday, September 6. A business meeting was held and refreshments were served to Etta Padlock, Veda Dixon, Lyndell Harrison, Ethel Geijsbeck, Lyla Ross and Charlene, Jean Cline and Marion, Mary Luck and Nancy, Ruby Hanan and Billie, Audrey Geijsbeck and Leslie Jane, Elizabeth Campbell and Jo, and the hostess, Hazel Madison and sons Roger and Stephen.

Mrs. Catherine Johnson and daughter, Sarita, formerly of Klamath Falls, have returned to their home in San Francisco after a vacation spent here visiting their many friends. Sarita remained one week after her mother's departure which she spent with Clare Ann Landrum of 533 North Sixth.

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Lawn Party

Sunday afternoon, September 10, found an informal group of guests and friends of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cofer enjoying the comfort and coolness of the back lawn.

The guests were all members of the IOOF organization and included the following officers and friends: Mrs. Ethel Bailey, president of the Rebekah assembly of Oregon, a member of Roseburg lodge 41; R. H. Anderson, grand patriarch of the Grand Encampment of the jurisdiction of Oregon; Mrs. Alma Cofer, the hostess, conductor of the Rebekah assembly of Oregon; Mrs. Nellie Wattenburg, past president of the state assembly of Oregon; Mrs. Charlotte Martin, past president of the ladies auxiliary of Patriarchs Militant; Mrs. Minnie Willis, wife of J. Q. Willis, deceased, district deputy grand master who instituted the IOOF lodge in Klamath Falls; Mrs. Mae Anderson, color sergeant of the ladies auxiliary from Merrill lodge 151; Mr. J. B. Bailey, special district deputy grand master from Roseburg lodge 41; Mrs. Alice Goeller, charter member Prosperity Rebekah lodge and for 34 years the corresponding secretary; Mrs. Ruby Kenyon, one of the last initiates into Prosperity Rebekah lodge 104; Mrs. Elizabeth Ramsby, Mr. Robert Wattenburg, Mrs. Mary Curtis, noble grand P. R. L. 104; Mrs. Nina Currier, vice-grand, P. R. L. 104; the host, Mr. Fred Cofer, and Mrs. Alice Gowland, of Hope Rebekah lodge 14, of Ashland, who was assistant to the hostess.

At six o'clock the hostess served an Italian style dinner in the dining room. Clever arrangements of fruit were used as centerpieces for the table.

Friendly Circle

On Thursday, September 14, the Friendly Circle met at the home of Nettie Good, 5648 Denver, for luncheon at one o'clock. Mrs. Good was assisted by Agnes Lowe, and those attending were Nona Hall, Lizzie Little, Violet Vance, Pearl Martin, Ipha Brown, Kathryn Billings, Fannie Goddard, Arthur Stone and Lula Wilson. During the business meeting it was decided to give \$5.00 to the Community Chest drive. Lizzie Little, Nettie Wood and Kathryn Billings received birthday and anniversary gifts. The next meeting will be with Grace Bock, 137 High.

Contract Club

On the afternoon of September 14 the Thursday contract club met at the home of Bertha Hewitt for dessert and cards. Attending were Fannie Thompson, Alice Lawrence, Idoline Schupp, Dorothy Schupp, Clara McPherson, Willa Bark, Stella Dryden and the hostess, High score for the afternoon was held by Alice Lawrence, second by Idoline Schupp, and the traveling award went to Fannie Thompson. Alice Lawrence will entertain the next time at the Winema hotel.

The study group on currency stabilization which is sponsored by the League of Women Voters, will hold the rest of their meetings at the home of the president of the club, Mrs. Donald McKay, 2019 Manzanita, instead of at the chamber of commerce board room, as announced previously. The meetings will be held for four more Friday evenings at 8 o'clock.

Delta Kappa

The first meeting of the coming year of the Delta Kappa Gamma society was at the home of Mrs. R. B. Elliott on Garden street, Saturday evening, September 9. Mrs. Geraldine Owsley, president, presided.

With the initiation last spring of Mrs. Nett Peterson, Mrs. Mary Waggoner, and Grace Lytle, the Alpha chapter now has 32 members in Lake and Klamath counties. It was organized in Klamath Falls on November 20, 1941.

The yearly program was outlined and it was voted to again have individual copies printed. Committee chairmen are as follows: legislation, Nell Olson; membership, Florence Ollmann; letters and publication, Dea Jean Hardy; program, Irene Foster; preparation of year book, Ida Edsall; social affairs, Nell Olson; progress of Delta Kappa Gamma, Augusta Parker; equal opportunities for women teachers, Mabel Humble; retirement fund for teachers, Borghild Mehlen; nominations, Buena Stone; auditing, Maye B. Wells; initiations, Olive Wilson; war time activities, Ida Edsall.

Mrs. Maye B. Wells was unanimously voted corresponding secretary.

Mrs. Owsley presented the group with a Bible bound in the sorority's colors. She announced the purchase of a \$100 war bond in the month of June. The chapter's goal will be the buying of one each year.

Plans for a rummage sale to be held later in the month were made. Mrs. Elliott will be in charge.

Refreshments were served later in the evening by Mrs. Elliott and Mrs. Owsley.

The next meeting will be at the home of Mrs. Buena Stone at 1503 Canby, on Saturday, October 7.

Pinocle Club

Mary Martin, 2200 Martin, was hostess to the Lucky Pinocle club on Wednesday, September 13, and after luncheon at one o'clock, cards occupied the afternoon. Attending were Rita Fuller, Zella Blankenship, Ursula Bratton, Florence Young.

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