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Jubileers spend Christmas in Orient

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The University of Montana Jubileers are spending Christmas oriental style this year. The 14-member troupe, plus Director Dr. Joseph Mussulman, left November 6 by air to travel under the sponsorship of the United Service Organization, to bases in Korea, Japan, Okinawa and elsewhere in the Pacific.

Servicemen have shown great appreciation for the Jubilee's show. Members of the group are: Carol Ash, Butte; Edd Blackler, Don Collins, Doug Dunnell and Nancy Senecha, all of Missoula; Susan Burns, Conrad; Dennis Burns, Dillon; Greg Devlin, Polson; Gary Guthrie, Livingston; Diane Morrow, Baker; Marcia Olson and Judy Stowe, Great Falls; Ruth Silvius, Fort Benton, and James Selway, Phoenix, Arizona.

A letter to the University Information Services from Jim Selway tells of the troupe's experiences.

Selway says the group spent two days in preparation for the tour after arriving at Yokota Air Base, about 30 miles out of Tokyo. A 10-day tour of military camps in and north of Seoul, Korea, was first on the schedule.

In Seoul the home base was Walker Hill. From here the group bussed daily to various camps just north of the city. Selway writes, "On several occasions we performed in camps only a few miles from the DMZ and the North Koreans."

At the rather isolated outposts, the show was warmly received. "The Jubilee girls, 'round eyes,' the G.I. term for American girls, were a welcome sight to men who only see Korean women from the villages."
At one camp close to the DMZ, the Jubilee women were on hand in the compound to give departing front-line troops a warm send-off. One G.I., after being kissed by Nancy Senechal, swore he would never wash his face again.

At one extremely isolated hill-top camp, the servicemen were overjoyed to see girls and new faces from home. They took the troupe up to the missile site and the Jubileers entertained the men, who rarely see live entertainment, in the mess hall.

Selway writes, "All of the troupe agree that the highlight of the stay in Korea was entertaining and talking with the servicemen. A tour of duty in Korea can become very dull and lonely so any contact with home is warmly appreciated."

The Jubileers have received some letters from servicemen who heard them perform. One G.I. said, "I wish to thank you for bringing some enjoyment into the life of the men in Korea. This thanks comes not only from me, but from everyone that you entertained. I especially enjoyed talking to some of you after the performance."

Another writes, "I wanted to thank you all for the USO show you did here at Misawa Air Base. None of the guys really express it, but you can't imagine the good feeling one gets just to hear and visit with people from the states."

The troupe spent Thanksgiving dinner with the servicemen in the enlisted men's mess at Kuma Station.

The next few shows were hospital shows. "A visit," writes Selway, "to the wards at Zuma Army Hospital in the Tokyo area was a sobering experience for us all. Here we sang for wounded men from Vietnam scarcely older than most of us. Some of the guys we talked to were badly shot up but few of them held any resentment."

Carol Ash reported talking with servicemen who had spent two to two-and-a-half years in Vietnam and had only left their tour of duty wounded, yet none of them regretted being in the war.

As one 19-year-old wounded G.I., who talked with Nancy Senechal, put it, "It isn't a question of whether we like the war or not, it's simply that we've got a job to do and somebody has to do it."
Members of the Jubilee troupe have met several servicemen from Montana, among them boys from Missoula, Polson, Wolf Point, White Sulphur Springs and Butte. Jubilee Don Collins met a classmate from Missoula, Richard Engel, at one base on the tour. Two other classmates, Greg Devlin and Sp. 4 Gary Matt, both of Polson, were reunited at another base.

The troupe performed in Iwo Jima and Okinawa where they are staying for two weeks. They will return January 6.

Selway's letter ends on a homesick note, "The Orient possesses a thousand surprises yet there are a few luxuries that 15 homesick Jubileers can't find anywhere but in Missoula: like pizza, Christmas trees and 'Big Bun' sandwiches."

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