

A STUDY OF RECREATION IN THE
UNITED STATES ARMY SERVICE CLUBS

by 6791

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B.S., Alcorn A&M College, 1958

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Physical Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation is expressed to Mr. T. M. Evans, chairman of the Department of Physical Education; and Associate Professor Raymond A. Wauthier of the Department of Physical Education at Kansas State University for their personal and professional advice and their time and effort throughout this study.

The author also wishes to acknowledge her profound indebtedness to her husband, Richard H. Smith, and friend, Jerelyn Booker, whose numerous suggestions and counsel have contributed so greatly to the completion of this report.

INTRODUCTION

Military leaders have long known that an Army's effectiveness is largely dependent on its morale. Obviously, basic necessities must be provided: food, clothing, shelter, pay, and various types of equipment. However, there are varied opinions as to what other things are essential to morale. It is only since World War I that there has been an organized effort to provide guidance for a systematic Army-wide approach to all factors bearing on troop morale. One result of this effort in the Service Club, which provides off-duty recreation and entertainment for military personnel, and under some circumstances, for their dependents. The Service Club is the Army's way of providing its personnel with opportunities for recreation equivalent to those that were available to them in civilian life.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information and foresight into the recreational phase of the Service Clubs of the U. S. Army. This information will further enhance the knowledge of those seeking a career in military recreation. Moreover, this report seeks to inform those related directly or indirectly to the field of recreation of leisure time activities available in the Army Service Club facilities; consequently broadening their general repertoire in the area of recreation.

This report further seeks to enlighten prospective recreation majors as to the extent of activities available in the Service Clubs, as well as the operation, history, scope and mission so that the prospective recreation specialist may better select a career via his cognizance of offerings in various recreational areas.

METHOD OF STUDY

The information for this report was secured by obtaining requested material from the Recreation Specialists on Army bases throughout the United States and overseas. The information sought was the mission, facilities and operation of service clubs. Responses were received from the following: Okinawa - 4 bases; Germany - 5; Taiwan - 3; United States - 13.

The material was then compiled and presented in this report.

CHAPTER I I

HISTORY OF THE SERVICE CLUB

"It was not until World War I that the need for some type of morale was fully realized in the Army and the first steps were taken toward providing it."¹ With the development of a large citizen - Army in 1917, it became apparent that something not usually provided as a part of Army life was needed to alleviate homesickness, boredom, and fatigue, and to decrease the number of men going absent without leave as well as the number of disciplinary actions required. The citizen - soldier of World War I needed social clubs, libraries, movies, music and athletics.²

Many public agencies rushed to fill this need in the soldier's life, and the public gave liberally to support these agencies through contributions to the United World Work Campaign.³ Crafts work was carried on by the American Red Cross in hospitals as therapy, but apparently not offered as a recreational activity.

Soldier music and show activities were organized mostly under the direction of voluntary civilian groups. In 1918, the Over There Theater League was formed to supply, through the YMCA, professional entertainment for the troops overseas. At the request of the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities, book distribution and library service were handled by the War Library Service, an organization established by the

¹U.S. Department of the Army, "History and Mission Special Services: Memorandum 441," (Harrison, Indiana: The Adjutant General's School, March 1962), p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 3.