



2004 Annual Report

*"Thank you are not enough for what I wish to say.
You are right beside each and every one of us soldiers
wherever we are. We don't just thank you.
All of us, and our families love you for
a small part of home you give us."*

AN ARMY STAFF SERGEANT, FORT HOOD

HENRY FONDA

27 April 1967

Dear Jim -

Here's the short memorandum
I promised you about my
reactions on returning from a
tour of Vietnam -

I had been skeptical of what
kind of contribution I might
make to troop morale since I
am in no way a performer or
"entertainer" - but I discovered
very quickly what a satisfying
experience it is to make personal
contact with the men, talking to
them in their work, in their mess,
in their recreation halls - and
the very obvious appreciation on
the part of the men -

It has been the most
rewarding experience of my
life - and I will be forever
grateful that I was given
the opportunity -

Henry Fonda

A Message to our Supporters

In 2004, after years at the Washington Navy Yard, the USO moved its corporate headquarters to our new location across the Potomac River in Arlington. As often is the case with moving, as we packed up, we came across some things long forgotten. Among them were two letters found buried among the folders and boxes and dusty mementos. There was one from Henry Fonda after his USO tour of Vietnam, and another from Gracie Allen, one our most cherished veterans of the WWII USO tours that started it all some 65 years ago.

In Fonda's letter he says that his tour of Vietnam was "the most rewarding experience of my life, and I will be forever grateful that I was given this opportunity." Gracie's letter is pure Gracie. A few jokes followed by a few more jokes, followed by "Love, Gracie."

As we passed the letters around lovingly and read the words aloud, we realized how little things have changed. The wonderful entertainers and volunteers who work with us today can be heard saying the same things about the experiences they have with the USO and the men and women of our armed forces. It's reassuring to all of us to know that the core values of our organization have remained constant and strong.

GRACIE ALLEN

April 28th, 1941

Dear Soldiers:

My brother Willie doesn't seem to be getting along so well with the sergeant. He was in trouble yesterday because he told the sergeant he was bald and the sergeant said he wasn't and Willie said if he wasn't he had the tallest face Willie ever saw.

But you can't be too polite, either. We just had sad news about our Uncle Croveney, who was a deep sea diver. According to our information, he ran into a mermaid one morning and tipped his hat through force of habit.

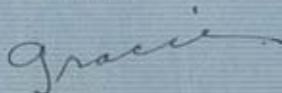
During maneuvers yesterday, Willie was standing in a corn field waiting for the battalion to catch up with him and the birds mistook him for a scarecrow. He frightened them so much, the crows brought back the corn they had stolen three days ago.

Willie's been in the service some time now but he's still very green--especially after bayonet practice. He's so green that yesterday he stopped on a corner to yawn and an officer dropped a letter in his mouth.

As a matter of fact, that's a good idea. Let's fry our letters in chicken gravy, so we could eat them after we finish reading them.

Anyway,

Love,



Gracie Allen

GA:jm

These last few years, beginning with September 11, 2001, brought about changes in the lives of all Americans—in the way we view our safety and security, the way we conduct our daily lives, and the way we held fast to the principles on which our great nation was founded. For the USO, these changes demonstrated to us the strength and generosity of the American people, the valor and spirit of the American military personnel around the world, and the dedication and compassion of our employees and volunteers.

These changes also meant the USO needed to find new and more efficient ways to ensure that USO World Headquarters and affiliates and centers worldwide kept pace with the increased demands for our programs and services. As thousands of troops deployed and families they left behind came to the USO for help, the USO proved once again that we were up to the task. The number of volunteers nearly tripled—from 12,000 last year to more than 33,000 today—as individuals who wanted to do something for the troops knew the USO was the organization best equipped to assist our men and women in uniform. Donations to the USO greatly increased since last year as well. From individuals who had never given to the USO before to corporate sponsors who reaffirmed their steadfast support for the USO, it was a record year for donations.

- A mobile canteen and four new centers were put in operation—two stateside and two overseas, including Qatar.

- The ground was broken for a new center in Bagram, Afghanistan.
- More than half-a-million Operation USO Care Packages were distributed, and several hundred thousand prepaid international calling cards were delivered to deployed troops.
- From providing free Tuesday night dinners for service members and their families to manning a break room for mortuary staff, escorts and family members of fallen troops at Dover Air Base—the USO was there to provide comfort and relief to our men and women in uniform.

Our successes over the course of the year are due to the dedication and support of employees and volunteers, individual donors, and organizations and corporations. Our dedication to those who sacrifice so much on behalf of all Americans is steadfast. We look to the future with confidence in what we have accomplished and commitment to our mission. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our donors who helped us through the year to honor service members around the world.



John Gottschalk
Chairman



Edward A. Powell
President and Chief Executive Officer

USO president and CEO Edward A. Powell (right) and chairman of the USO World Board of Governors John Gottschalk present Wayne Newton with the "Spirit of the USO" award at the annual USO World Headquarters' Gala in October.

USO PHOTO BY DENNIS BRACK

