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NEW TIMES; NEW NEEDS; NEW WAYS

They are dancing. The girl's eyes look into his with bright and shining attention. He makes some passing comment, and she smiles appreciatively. The girl is lovely; about twenty-four, carefully groomed, and dressed in an evening gown perfectly suited for the occasion—gay and partyish, but not fluffy or gaudy. Her hair is gold.

The man she is dancing with is about her own age. But his attire does not complement her evening gown. He is dressed in pajamas, bathrobe, and slippers. Nor is he handsomely groomed. The right side of his face and his entire head is swathed compactly in bandages; the left side of his face reveals a skin, angry looking and puckered, and an ear partly nibbled away by flames. The bandages cover an extensive skin operation for his charred cheek and hold snugly in place the new ear that the plastic surgeon has recreated for him out of cartilage and skin grafted from other parts of his body. The girl makes some pert remark, smiling and laughing into his eyes. He grins, the faint trace of boyishness still there. They dance away.

He is a Normandy beachhead hero. When the piercing shell of an 88 set fire to the hundred octane gas, turning his tank into a steel inferno, he was the only man of the crew who managed to crawl out. He has been out of bed now about a week, following this his second plastic. Two or three more such operations and he will have a passingly presentable face, able to take his rightful place in the world. The Normandy beachhead hero and the girl circle around another dancing couple, careful not to near the wire and plaster-of-Paris contraption which holds the man's left hand rigidly curved and thrust away from his body. Another couple glides by. The man is wearing the white skull cap concealing the gaunt shaven head of a recent skull operation.

Bone and flesh near the temple is gouged away; his face is liberally pocked with sere, brown markings, telltale evidence of a light peppering of shrapnel. Another man limps as he dances, his brace visible below the cuff of the pajamas. Quite a number of the men have bandages over an eye, or wear dark glasses; several wear specially constructed leather and steel orthopaedic braces to harness spine, neck and head in place. They are all still dancing.

These are the men returned home from the wars. The men who hit the beachheads of Anzio and Normandy; who fought the twin enemies, the jungles and the Japs, in New Guinea and Bougainville; who made the amphibious landings in Saipan and Guam; who captured Aachen—and who in the process helped create a new word in the language; “Aachenize”: to reduce a city to dust and rubble.

These, the wounded, wearing bathrobes and pajamas, or perhaps, convalescent suits, are dancing with girls more than a cut above the average in appearance and dress. The place is the auditorium of the Northington General Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The girls, all residents of Tuscaloosa, are junior hostesses of the Service Center of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

These junior hostesses are among the first pioneers in a new type of canteen, USO, and service center work. This is not to negate the years of work performed and yet to be performed by the USO and canteens for the able-bodied and healthy. Their work is necessary and vital. But with the continuation of war, and the increasing boatloads and plane-fuls of wounded reaching these shores for long periods of convalescence, there must be a shift in emphasis and direction of soldier servicing. It is worth examining this new and important direction now, at an early date.

Let us face this fact: the honeymoon days of soldier servicing is over. Not so long ago when a junior hostess entertained a soldier, she had a gay and easy time. Sometimes, even, there was romance. The men were healthy and bubbling over with spirits; it was fun to talk with them; it was wonderful to watch them pack away large quantities of sandwiches, cakes, and

quarts of coffee. Occasionally a bruised soul had to be healed. The possessor of said bruised soul may have just gone through a fifteen hour stretch of K.P., or a twenty mile forced march with full field pack. However, junior hostesses soon discovered the remarkable therapeutic properties of a bowl of hot soup or of a thick slab of chocolate cake. Bruised souls were healed in the twinkling of an evening!

But now, some of these very men have gone to foreign lands, fought the good fight, and have been returned. Now the bruises are genuine; they are truly crippled and truly broken. The therapy must be equally genuine. And the dancing can no longer be the spontaneous carefree dancing of two young healthy people. That trip across the ocean fixed that. Yes, the honey moon days are over; the days of hard work are upon us.

The brief story of Tuscaloosa's Service Center will serve as a striking example of the new path which this center had to hammer out and which others will have to follow.

Organizations whose attendance has been falling off will have to replan their activities. This is especially true of those organizations (and there are a surprising number of them) situated close to both camps and hospitals. This is true because the camps are emptying, and the hospitals are filling up!

Tuscaloosa was ready for a Service Center long before one was actually founded. Finally, in January, 1943, a center was formed by the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Tuscaloosa, which now acts as the official sponsoring body. A directress was needed, and upon being approached, Elizabeth Coles Morley (Betty Morley, to her friends) volunteered to serve. Located originally in a small building which was soon found inadequate, they moved into their present quarters, furnished by the Federated Club Women of Tuscaloosa, on September 1, 1943. Their overhead was supplied by the War chest; current running expenses are supplied by the citizenry of Tuscaloosa. They entertained men who were taking the Army Specialized Training program in the University of Alabama, which is situated in the town of Tuscaloosa; French and

American cadets who were training at the Van de Graaf Airport two miles outside of Tuscaloosa; Air Corps cadets training at the University of Alabama and sundry other small groups of men—all of them young healthy soldiers fairly bursting at the seams with robust energy.

So far, this is the average story of the average service club dotting the United States. But significant changes began to occur. First the A.S.T.P. was cut down to negligible proportions, soon to be followed by the transference of the French cadets to another field with Van de Graaf Airport turned over for commercial use. Then the Air Corps program at the University of Alabama was closed down. Notice the exodus of the healthy young men! It is only coincidence, but a striking one, that the last of these programs closed down during the month of June, 1844 [sic] (should be 1944)—the month of the European invasion.

Meanwhile construction of the Northington General Hospital was progressing, and the hospital was dedicated on September 5, 1943, just five days after the Service Center took over their new home. Soon many Pacific area veterans were routed to Northington General Hospital. Mrs. Morley, who is also a member of the Recreation Council of the hospital, saw this change of balance from two sides, the Service Center's and the hospital's, and appreciated its significance. If the Service Center was to function and be meaningful, it would have to reorient its program. And it would have to do it fast.

Betty Morley called a meeting of all the hostesses and discussed the situation. Originally these hostesses were not haphazardly chosen. Between the ages of eighteen to thirty, they represent an excellent cross section of teachers, students, professional and business girls, all residents of Tuscaloosa. They were checked carefully and once accepted had to take a five hour indoctrination course which covered such subjects as Military Security (conducted by Northington General Hospital's Director of Intelligence); Boy Meets Girl in Wartime (conducted by a member of the faculty of the University of Alabama); Dress and Approach (by the Bureau of Home Economics, University of Alabama); Physical Health in Wartime and Sex Hygiene

(delivered by a County Health Nurse—and not all stuffy, prissy, or old hat!) Now these girls, about one hundred twenty strong, were called together and told the story. The able-bodied soldiers were being syphoned off for the wars; in the future, they would be few and far between. They were being replaced by the very sick and the very wounded, the men who were brought back for extensive hospitalization and treatment; the long term war casualties.

This was the new job. Those who were not interested or did not feel up to it were invited to resign. No one resigned.

Then began a short intensive course of learning. Appropriate articles were studied. There were group discussions. Again and again the girls were impressed with the fact that a bad error on their part could invite psychological catastrophe. The girls were taught the art of seeing without looking—to see the whole without looking at the injured parts. To conclude the course, the Chief of Plastic Surgery of Northington General Hospital, Major John Francis Pick, delivered a talk to them on the type of cases they would most likely come across. This talk was illustrated with “before and after” slides. They were gory slides indeed—but then, plastic work, the recreation of the mangled body, is a gory business. There were nervous giggles in Major Pick’s audience, and some of the girls turned green and gray when certain slides flashed on the screen. But they all remained. No one resigned.

Thus it was no accident at all that when the wounded were flown back from France and Germany those who were routed to Northington General Hospital were met by intelligently trained, human, and good looking girls. Their training stood them in good stead. They did not turn away, and they did not shudder. They smiled, they carried on friendly chit-chat looking directly and steadily onto the faces and into the eyes of the scarred and wounded men. No one resigned.

One girl confessed that she couldn’t sleep that first time after she had been with a bad plastic case. But she hadn’t let the man down, for he had no idea of what was going on in her

head that evening. Several evenings with this man and with similar plastic cases and she accepted the men for themselves; she saw the men, not the injuries.

And so it has been from then on. There is the weekly dance in the auditorium at the hospital, and there is the daily entertaining in the Service Center's home in Tuscaloosa. The physicians and surgeons of Northington General Hospital are uniformly delighted with the accomplishments of the Service Center. That intangible, that thing known as self-confidence, is a necessary ingredient of any cure. Without it the doctors' load is increased; with it the patients' cure is effected more speedily. The men are urged to go down to the Service Center—especially in the in-between stages of complicated plastic work. They go down, frequently with hesitance, and discover that they are not pariahs, that they are accepted, that they are human beings with a place and on a plane with other human beings. Their self-confidence flares high. The relationship of this self-confidence to the faster recovery of the patient is apparent on the medical charts. The doctors have a place in their prayers for the Service Center!

But the dance and the entertaining are the least exacting, the easiest parts of a full program. These ambulatories, the men who can dance and those able to leave the hospital and visit the Service Center, are men who are on the road to recover. But there are many, many wards filled with the seriously wounded: the paralyzed, the shocked, the burned. For these, teams of junior hostesses have a weekly schedule of ward rounds. This work calls for tact, patience, and kindness to an inconceivable degree. They must sense what that man in the bed has on his mind (the war, his girl at home, his kids, his plans for when he gets out, perhaps a date with the girl he's talking to when he finally becomes an ambulatory), and frequently have to lead the conversation in that direction. When they play checkers or cards, they must know when to win (if they can!) and when to lose. They do skits, frequently of their own authorship. "Sometimes we get into costumes and act gay and silly. We do what we think will make them happy, what will

give them an hour away from their hurt.” After a while these girls develop a sixth sense; they are marvels of imaginative generosity.

The close connection of bed patient, to ambulatory patient confined to the hospital, to visits to the Service Center, to gradual absorption [sic] into the stream of civilian life, is apparent in this typical story. Only a few weeks ago, there were three bad patients in Northington: one of them had a bashed-in, stoved-in face, jaw shoved way over to the left side; the other was a bad burn case, the skin cracked and red, slits for eyes, the eyes rheumy and glazed, the burnt hairless scalp splotched pink and white; the third, one eye gone, a section of the nose clipped away, the upper lip twisted into a challenging grimace. When they first arrived from their respective theatres of operation they were bed patients, and it was during this period, through the ward parties, that they met the junior hostesses of the Service Center. After a few weeks they became ambulatories; it being necessary to wait for the first stage of their work to heal properly before the second stage could be embarked upon. During the ambulatory period they were persuaded and teased by the girls into getting out on the floor during the weekly dances.

Finally, toward the end of the healing period, prior to undergoing the second stage, they were allowed evening and week-end passes. A pass is a precious thing; a soldier avails himself of its privileges at every opportunity. But these three soldiers didn't go out. They looked into their mirrors and remained in the hospital. They haunted the halls and corridors, and more frequently hung around their wards and beds.

Three girls, with their highly trained perceptions, realized what was happening. They went to the hospital and cajoled the men into a promise to visit the Service Center. The soldiers were as good as their word, and they came to the Center the very next Saturday afternoon. That short two-mile journey from hospital to the Service Center was the first voyage made on their own since the day they were hit on the battlefield! They were not in an Army ambulance, an Army hospital train, an Army hospital plane; they were not surrounded by doctors, nurses, and

wardmen. They were in a public conveyance. They paid their 5¢ bus fare, sat amongst civilians, and proceeded on their journey. It was a difficult journey. They hunched down in their seats, hiding their faces, and the Service Center, when reached, was a haven of refuge. At the Center those wonderfully perceptive girls met the men with whoops and glad cries of joy. They were made at home, put at their ease. After a suitable interval, one of the girls casually, oh, most casually, suggested they take a walk through the town on this most lovely, sunny afternoon. The men held back, but the girls couldn't be denied. More persuasion, more cajolery, and finally the six-some started out for their walk.

What happened on that walk? Nothing happened. Nothing at all. Therein lies its wonder and glory.

In back of their minds, for months on end, the men were frightened at the public's reaction to their blasted, torn faces. They were frightened at the prospect of staring eyes and the gaping horror of the citizen approaching on the street, and then, passing, the craning neck, and cluck-cluck of sympathy, the eyes and cheeks stiffened with fright at the sight of these walking wounded. But nothing happened. Nothing at all. The six bantered and chatted, and for all the wary eyes of the three men, they couldn't find a single citizen of Tuscaloosa staring at them, craning back at them, commenting about them. They were taken in stride—which is precisely the way they want to be taken. Indeed, one of the great worries, perhaps the greatest worry of these wounded, is fear of the reaction of their family and friends to their disfigurement. There are cases upon cases, tragic hundreds upon hundreds of them, of men allowed furloughs and not taking them, afraid to go home, afraid of that first look, that first minute, that first hour, that first day, that first week, that first month, that first year, that entire life-time. . . if they who had have the fortune to stay at home want to maintain the love and respect of that returning soldier-son, soldier-husband, or soldier-friend, they had better measure up to Service Center standards. And they have a high mark to aim for.

The home of the Service Center was built in 1834, and was the Governor's Mansion from 1837 to 1841 when Tuscaloosa was the capital of Alabama. But the house is not one of those huge creations with a riot of wings and annexes. It is rather, a very large, exceedingly comfortable one-family home with the usual Greek columns set off by a good sized lawn dotted with magnolias, flowers, and bushes. The ground floor contains the lounge, a comfortable place to dance, a game room, and The Kitchen. The Kitchen is a large sized kitchen and is a true magnet. Sooner or later everyone drifts into it, draws himself a cup of coffee, finds himself a good seat from which to chat, gossip, and work away at one of the bowls of cookies. There is a patio for the good weather months. Here is the outdoor fireplace for the "weenie" roasts and the hamburgers. And there are watermelon cuttings and dancing under colored lights. The second floor is the Men's Floor, and no female is allowed up there during open hours. Working on the correct assumption that because there is so little privacy in the Army, frequently a man wants to come to the Service center, not to be entertained or talked to, but to be alone—to lie down, to read, perhaps "to take stock of his loneliness." And that is what the second floor is for. There is also a dark room, a music room, and a room with a north light for those so inclined.

Elizabeth Coles Morley, directress and continuing spark plug of the Service Center, was presented with the Civitan award as the outstanding citizen in Tuscaloosa County in 1943. She is the wife of Burton Raymond Morley, a professor of economics at the University of Alabama, now on leave of absence as War Manpower Director for the Southern part of Alabama. As a girl Betty Morley studied for the stage. She soon realized that she wasn't much good at it, and, wonder of wonders, gave it up. Both she and her husband, however, are members of the Tuscaloosa Little Theatre which presents several plays a year covering such items as "Skin of Our Teeth," "Night of January 16," "Claudia," and "Anna Christie."

Betty Morley is an exceedingly young-looking forty-two. She has wavy hair and wears glasses, behind which shine a set of lively, friendly and quizzical eyes. The boys' names

for her range from “Mom” and “Honey” to “Cutey” and “General.” One day a Bougainville veteran, twenty-two years young, but aged by his experiences, looked her over appraisingly and said, “You know, General, we two could go walking down the street, and no one would know but that you’re my girl.” Mrs. Morley laughed and said, “Poof! I’m old enough to be your mother.” “Now look a here,” said the veteran, “I’m twenty-two but I feel much older. And you,” he said appraisingly, “you’re not a day over thirty. So there you are.” And as far as he was concerned, and to the huge delight of Betty Morley, the issue was settled: Mrs. Morley could walk down the street as his girl.

But the real glory of Tuscaloosa’s Service Center are the junior hostesses. The good they do is invaluable. Morale is an imponderable of war. The logistics and charts of General Staffs have been swept off the table by it; battles, which on maps should have been lost, have been won by morale. Taken individually, they are average young American girls; judged collectively they are heroines: imponderables of war. When the final score is computed, their work will prove to be one of the important morale factors responsible for the home front victory.

Names of Junior Hostesses who assisted Mrs. Morley:

Sara Walls Bessie Bailey
Harriet Burke Anita Whaley
Camille Wright Azelia McGill
M. Jiminez Agnes Golpin
Edith LeMasitre Constance Taylor
Gwen Phifer Betty Bradford
Peggy O'Rear Mildred Swain
Barbara Dowling Tim Smith
Martha Moore Doris A. Shamblin
Martha Jean Freeman
Margueritte Henderson M. Jiminez
Lesba DeVasher
Ruth Cox Helen Blair
Dorothy James G. Jiminez
Mildred Thorpe Mary Etta Lewis
Farley Moody Margaret McLeod
Doris Panabaker Beth Snyder
Sweetie Yoder
Jean Deason Jane Tatum
Mary Morris R. Jiminez
Dorothy Dickson Princese Daffery
Peggy Kemf Helen Morgenthau
Sue Kemp Nan Huthnance
Frances Bagwell Mary Lewis Winston
Betty Maxwell Lois Terry
Valoris Henderson Carol Buchanan
Peggy Echols Virginia Moses
Mary Fellows Margaret Little
Mary Sue Johnson
Zelma Marlin Emma Powell
Evelyn Paine F. Richardson
Frances Smith Barbara Little
Margaret Wilson Ruby Mullenix
Miriam Simpson
Adaline Collier
Sue Daniel
Jean Deason
Martha Smith
Margaret Price
Mary Coe
Mary D. Clark