



ALL EARS!!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

"OUR EARS SPAN ALL FIELDS"



SOUTH OF SUNSET BOULEVARD in LA, at 1451 Cahuenga Blvd., sits a parking lot & an office building. In Manhattan near Times Square, at 216 W. 44th St., there was until recently a large display of miniatures, a NYC tourist destination. But more than 75 years ago, for about 3 years, these two locations drew over 3 million visitors each! These venues were essentially nightclubs, offering food, beverages, performances, music & dancing! But much more than that, they offered their patrons a listening ear, a comforting voice & a moment's respite from their fears, worries & despair. These clubs made no money, they were paid only in smiles, hugs & gratitude!

(In our ALL EARS!! tradition, this week we step aside from the news of the week to honor those who protect our freedoms, our Constitution, our values & our lives!)

THE CANTEENS: On May 8th, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Victory in Europe, V-E Day, the defeat of the National Socialist Workers Party, the Nazis, who were responsible for tens of millions of deaths by waging war & genocide. The USA celebrated, but the war was far from over. In the South Pacific, the Battle for Okinawa would rage on for almost another 2 months. Afterwards, the USA would stage for a massive invasion of the Japanese homeland. My Dad's hospital unit was stationed in Korea, preparing to be on the second wave, as they were at Luzon, Leyte & Manilla. The Japanese vowed to fight to the last man, woman & child. The invasion would result in several million deaths & casualties. President Truman, in an attempt to reduce the suffering, decided to use the atomic bomb, unleashing the nuclear age.

By the war's end, nearly 25 million Americans served in the military. Seventy percent of the young male population served, young men who today would be graduating from high school, attending college or looking for their first jobs. The draft actually began in 1940, with a service requirement of 1 year. But soon the requirement became *for the duration*. These young men came from big cities & small towns, steam-filled factories & green farms, grimy mines & high school classrooms. Many had never left their hometowns, never took a train or a bus. Their first trip away from home took them to training bases in the northeast fields, southern swamps, Midwest plains, western deserts & mountains.

In the towns near these bases arose canteens, usually put together by the local civic community or women's groups. At the canteen a soldier could enjoy some food, hear some music, have a conversation or share a well-chaperoned dance with a young lady. Near the bigger cities, San Francisco, New Orleans, Washington DC, New York & Los Angeles, where GIs embarked or arrived back in the USA, or spent time in area hospitals recovering from their wounds, the canteens were much larger. In New York & Los Angeles, something very special took place.

Hollywood, like the rest of America (**ALL EARS!! THIS MEANS WAR**, 3/28/20) stepped up to support the war effort. While many of the then & future stars joined the service (**ALL EARS!! HEROES**, 5/27/17), others entertained the troops & did fundraising for war bonds. One star alone was responsible for raising \$600M in war bond sales (\$10.4B in today's dollars) – the lovely & talented Kate Smith, the *Songbird of the South*, who sang the everlasting, iconic version of Irving Berlin's *God Bless America!* Tragically, the beautiful comedienne, Carole Lombard, Clark Gable's wife, died in a plane crash on a war bond tour. Hollywood &

Broadway's other mission was to entertain & keep up the morale of America's soldiers & citizens! Broadway staged now-classic new musicals like *This is the Army*, *Here Comes the Navy*, *Follow the Boys*, *On the Town* & the most American of American musicals, *Oklahoma!* With movie after movie, comedies, musicals, tearjerkers & war dramas, a list of classics too long for this essay; Hollywood enchanted America, raised the spirit of the Nation & our troops. Hollywood did this not just as their stars joined the war effort, but also as directors & cinematographers were drafted to make training films, documentaries & do aerial reconnaissance & the studios' skilled workmen went to build bases, airplanes & ships!

But some in Hollywood & on Broadway wanted to do even more. In Hollywood, the *Queen of Hollywood*, Bette Davis, with help from John Garfield, created the *Hollywood Canteen*, a place where the Hollywood stars could *serve those who serve*. She went to the Hollywood unions, the carpenters, electricians & painters (already taxed by the loss of workmen to service) to work overtime to prepare the Canteen! She called on the set designers to provide blueprints. Then she asked her fellow actors & actresses to work in the kitchen, wait & bus tables, entertain the troops & dance with the boys! The pages, script girls & secretaries all helped. This was after their normal workday, churning out dozens of movies a month for America & our troops, days that often started at dawn! In New York, a similar effort, the *Stage Door Canteen*, was led by Broadway actress Nedda Harrigan.

The Hollywood Canteen was special. Hundreds & hundreds of stars helped out! Suddenly, the idols of the silver screen were serving GIs cookies, cake & sandwiches! Glamorous girls, like Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner & Alexis Smith, danced with the GIs! Marlene Dietrich & Hedy Lamarr worked in the kitchen! Milton Berle, Jack Benny, Joe E. Brown told jokes & Bing Crosby, The Andrew Sisters & Doris Day sang as Kay Kyser, Harry James & Tommy Dorsey led the band! And everyone was willing to lend an ear, spread some cheer & offer comfort. The Hollywood Canteen was open to GIs, WACs, WAVES & Allied soldiers, some here for training, others recovering from wounds in our Homefront hospitals.

America is a blessed country. We have men & women who willingly put themselves in danger to protect us. Besides our military, this includes our police, firemen, EMTs & at this time in our great history, our doctors, nurses, med-techs, truckers, delivery people, grocery & warehouse workers & those who produce our food & needed medical & household supplies. These people today, including our military, *chose* their professions & *thankfully & gratefully*, they rose to the challenge of our time. But for those soldiers, sailors, airmen & marines of the Greatest Generation it was very different & that is what made them very special people. On July 1, 1939 the USA had a standing regular army of only 174K personnel. That means 99.3% of the men & women who served our Nation during WWII were either drafted or they enlisted. They were called to duty & went to war; not just to fight any enemy, but enemies that had spent a decade building their military might. In January 1942, these enemies controlled the world, from Moscow to the English Channel, into Africa & all the way to our Atlantic shore. They controlled the South Pacific, from India to China to Australia & all the way to Alaska. It was these young men, these schoolboys, farmers, factory workers, pump jockeys, soda jerks & store clerks who saved the world!

As always, our thanks to those who serve & sacrifice, & the families that support them, never seems to be quite enough. To those who made the greatest sacrifice, we hope that somehow they know that they are never far from our thoughts, our hearts & our prayers.

SEEDS, SPROUTS, GROW, HARVEST!
THE LITCHFIELD FUND – *Tom Malenka*

V6issue49.05.23.20

The Litchfield Fund is a family owned & operated limited liability corporation. We do not solicit or accept investment from outside individuals or entities. Opinions contained in *All Ears!!* are ours & should not be considered investment advice or recommendations.