



The American Red Cross girls working with the 1st Division include, from left, Kathy Hansen of Denver, Colo.; Kay Wellinger of Arlington Va.; Pam McMahan of Long Beach, Calif.; Diane Kusrow of Mantes, N.C.; Mele Sturm of Sacramento, Calif.; Nancy Carracciola of McLean, Va.; Freida Luker at Uriah, Ala.; Leah O'Leary of Norwood, Mass.; and Lynn Andrews of Kellogg, Idaho.

A Woman's Touch

It may be a woman's world in America, but for an American girl in Southeast Asia, femininity and a beautiful wardrobe are all but forgotten in an effort to keep pace in the man-sized world of Vietnam.

The fact that Vietnam is a man's world will draw no argument from the eight charming American Red Cross girls who reside in Lai Khe, headquarters of the 1st Infantry Division. Their special Red Cross duties in Vietnam are involved in a program labeled "supplemental

recreation activities overseas" (SRAO). It's a big title for a big job that takes the young women on daily treks through the division's area of operation, where they try to lighten the burden of combat for the American fighting man.

The girls engage the soldiers in conversations about hometowns, new records on the charts, and just about any topic that will take the soldier's mind off his immediate environment. The girls carry with them a huge brown canvas bag that con-

tains group participation games, puzzles and just enough fun to keep their visits lively until a late afternoon helicopter arrives to fly them back to Lai Khe.

The nine girls associated with the Red Cross effort in the 1st Infantry Division include Pam McMahan of Long Beach, Calif., Kathy Hansen of Denver, Freida Luker of Uriah, Ala., Leah O'Leary of Norwood, Mass., Mele Sturm of Sacramento, Nancy Carracciola of McLean, Va., Kay Wellinger of

PFC John Beard



SP5 Thom Arno



At left, Pam McMahan shares a soft drink with a Division soldier in the EM club at the 121st Signal Battalion area in Lai Khe. Above, she offers a special touch during a lull in combat activity at FSB Mahone. At far left, Pam and Kathy Hansen dip into their bag of games before an avid audience at the fire base.

Arlington, Va., Diane Kusrow of Mantes, N.C., and Lynn Andrews of Kellogg, Idaho. All the girls are college graduates.

The girls sign to work with the Red Cross for one year in either Vietnam or Korea. These are the two areas of choice open under the SRAO program. Though the girls are asked to serve in those areas for the full year, they can cancel the agreement at any time and the American Red Cross will pay their transportation back to the United States.

A few years ago Pam McMahan was a college student at the University of California at Davis. Now, in a world far different from late-hour college dances and Saturday football games, she is among the select team of American Red Cross volunteers. Like Pam, most of the young women working for the movement will stay the entire year in Vietnam. Later, the girls may even choose to extend for extra overseas service.

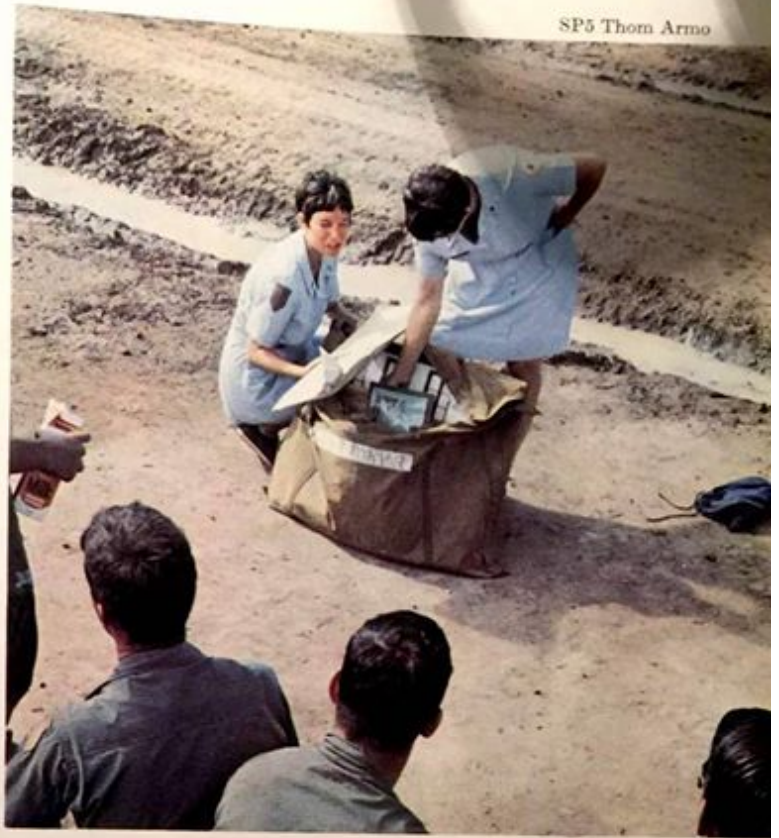
Together with Kathy Hansen, Pam is a familiar sight at "chopper" pads during the early morning hours, trying to catch a flight to an area inaccessible by jeep.

Most of the soldiers in the field haven't seen an American girl in several months, so it's no wonder

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the men are at first shocked to see a twosome like Pam and Kathy hop out of a helicopter and start walking toward their area.

"It's really great to see you, and you're both a wonderful sight. But, what in the world are you doing here in Vietnam?" is the usual initial reaction to the girls.

There is at first a slight problem on the part of the men to curb their field jargon, but comments Pam, "you quickly learn to accept it all and in a while you stop blushing."

"The men may make a lot of fun out of their visits, but they're always glad to see them here," said 1st Sergeant Andrew Zimmer of Brooklyn. He is assigned to the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, at Fire Support Base Mahone.

"It's been so long since I've seen an American girl, it's a little difficult to know how to act," said Private First Class Gary Tucker of Greenville, South Carolina. Specialist 4 Ronald Kendrick of Bristol, Tenn., added, "It's nice just to be able to talk to a girl from back home." Both men are assigned to Alpha Company, 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry.

A brown-eyed brunette, Pam agreed that comfort did not play a big part in her decision to serve in

Vietnam. She quickly mentioned she shares a two-bedroom house with the eight other girls, "and if you've ever tried to hurry in the morning when there's only one bathroom, you'll know what I mean when I say we're really tightly housed." Kathy added that there also was no hot water with which to bathe or shower.

A world traveler and once a stewardess for Trans International Airlines based in Oakland, Calif., Pam confided that several of her friends had tried to talk her out of coming to Vietnam. But, after much soul searching, she decided in favor of Vietnam. She doesn't regret the decision. In fact, she looks upon it as one of the best she's ever made.

"Being in the Red Cross, I think you learn a lot about life. Vietnam has only reinforced my idea that the American man is just about the greatest guy in the world," she said.

A graduate of the University of California, Pam has a Bachelor of Science degree in genetics.

Coming from a non-military family, Pam is unique as the only member of her family to serve in connection with the military.

Dark-haired Kathy Hansen had a friend back in Denver who had recently been with the Red Cross over-

seas. Eventually, the friend talked Kathy into checking out the program more closely. Kathy liked what she found and in a few short months was on her way to the National Headquarters of the American Red Cross in Washington D.C. to undergo the traditional training sessions before she could be sent overseas.

A graduate of Colorado State University, Kathy's degree is in sociology.

"The majority of the men we knew back home were in the Army and had been in Vietnam. We came to do our part," related Kathy. "I'm anxious to get back, but it's really not that bad over here," she said.

Like Pam, Kathy asserts, "I wouldn't trade these guys for anything. We both feel needed here."

Caring for and caring about people are the age-old ideals that inspired the formation of the American Red Cross effort. The story begins with Clara Barton, the "Angel of the Battlefield" of the American Civil War. The story continues to be told in girls like Pam and Kathy. Their year in the Republic of Vietnam will be a memorable one for them, and few soldiers will forget their part in bringing a little joy to the battlefield. ♣