



THE CHINA LAKER

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GIFT SHOP TO BE FURNISHED IN STYLE

Some two dozen display cases and a cashier's desk for the Foundation's gift shop are nearing completion under the eye of their designer, Foundation member Dick De Marco. At the beginning of summer, confident that official Navy approval for the Museum is forthcoming, the Board of Directors authorized up to \$10,000 for the necessary furniture, and Dick contracted with Ridgecrest's Unique Designs firm to build it.

Using his own computer design tools, Dick designed and drew up specifications for the items and laid out a floorplan. Most of the cabinets will stand against the north and west walls of the room; one is a stand-alone unit containing its own interior lighting. The cabinets are of birch with glass fronts and white milimean interiors. The cases will hold glass shelves.

The Directors intend for the shop to be open for business before the end of this year. It is located in the 35' x 15' room south of the Foundation's office in the Conference and Exhibit Center, next to the Center's principal exhibit space.

Provision of the furniture is Phase 1 of a four-phase plan the Board has worked out to make the gift shop a significant source of revenue for the Museum's construction and operation. Phase 2, currently under implementation, involves determining specific merchandise to be stocked initially, and its pricing. Phase 3 is the opening and operation of the shop, and Phase 4 is the implementation of a periodic review, evaluation and adjustment process to assure the shop's successful operation.

At present, several items that have been sold for some time at the Exhibit Center continue to be available. These include two of the four original Larry Zabel tiles created for the NOTS/NWC 50th Anniversary celebration, "On a High Desert Point" and "Where Rams and Hornets Meet." Priced at \$20, they come in a choice of cherry or oak frame.

A number of signed-and-numbered and artist's-proof prints of Zabel paintings are also in stock. "50 Years RDT&E" and "Secret City" are available, as well as the two named in the paragraph above. A few are framed. Prices range from \$80 to \$230. Copies of the "First 50 Years" 50th Anniversary poster are priced at \$20 signed and \$10 unsigned.

Rounding out the current supply of for-sale items are copies of the "Secret City" videotape produced for the 50th Anniversary. This 3-hour video history of China Lake features over 50 interviews with noted China Lakers, as well as actual laboratory, test range and combat footage—some never before released to the public. This unique historical document sells for \$25.

All of these items make ideal holiday gift offerings, of course, for anyone with a connection to or interest in air weaponry. Purchases may be made by Visa or MasterCard, as well as by cash or check. To place an order or to get more information, call the Foundation's Office Manager, Jeanie Copeland, at 939-3530.

FAREWELL DINNER HONORS PIONEER FOUNDATION STALWARTS

Nearly thirty members of the China Lake Museum Foundation Board of Directors and their guests gathered to honor Milt and Janie Burford at a no-host dinner catered in the China Lake Exhibit and Conference Center on the evening of July 20. The Burfords were warmly acknowledged for their immeasurable contributions of service to the Foundation since its inception.

As he conferred Life Membership No. 0000 upon Janie, Foundation President Burrell Hays read a statement of thanks for the countless hours she has volunteered in operating—virtually single-handedly—the Foundation's office for four hours or more a day, five days a week. The letter identified her as "the Foundation's Ambassador of Good Will and Positive Presence." Her outstanding competency in interfacing with the public, community offices and the local Navy establishment, the letter said, have enabled the Board "to attend to other matters without a worry concerning ineffectual operations of the office or possible political improprieties."

"You've been a godsend to us!" Burrell concluded.

Board Member Paul Homer presented Milt with a humorous memento of some salient activities on the base in recent years and jokingly suggested he donate it for retention by the Foundation.

Official Washington Recognition

President Burrell then called Milt to the podium and read a letter of commendation from Dr. William Dudley, Head of the Naval Historical Center in Washington. Burrell noted that such official recognition of the kind of professionalism and dedication Milt has demonstrated should be helpful in securing official Navy endorsement of our proposed Armament and Technology Museum.

A second letter of commendation, from the Foundation, praised Milt for envisioning the need for a China Lake historical museum "long before the Navy recognized the need or a Museum Foundation was cre-

ated." The letter acknowledged his working "tirelessly and almost single-handedly for several years to first establish the China Lake Exhibit Center and the the Navy organization for an armament museum. His personal determination led to the formation of the China Lake Museum Foundation."

The commendation went on to describe Milt's role as the Foundation Board's Secretary, author of the Foundation's by-laws and operational policies, and the one who steered the Foundation to qualification as a non-profit organization. The document cited his generous personal donations of time, financial support and enthusiasm and acknowledged him as the "conscience and driving force to continue the effort to establish an Armament Museum in the presence of overwhelming obstacles." It also said he is to share the initial Life Membership No. 0000 with his wife.

As a token of the Board's gratitude for Milt's service, Burrell presented him with a unique glass plaque provided through contributions of individual Directors.

"Tons of People Helped"

Milt expressed his thanks to the dinner participants, especially to its planners, Phil Arnold, Eleanor Johnsen and John DiPol. He told the assembly he considered himself "fortunate to have had the fire in my guts" to help move the museum project to reality. "Tons of people have helped out," he said. "Especially the Technical Information Department folks who've done 99% of the fine professional work you see throughout the Center's exhibits."

He said he shared the other Directors' frustrations at the delays in securing official Navy approval, but he is confident the approval will come through and the China Lake Armament and Technology Museum will become a major attraction in the Indian Wells Valley. "This will be a place," he wrapped up, "where people will come to learn what happened in the past and be inspired to help with what still needs to be done to assure our country's strength and security."

**LOG JAM BREAKS
AS FOUNDATION PUSHES FOR
OFFICIAL NAVY MUSEUM STATUS**

The China Lake Museum Foundation's Board of Directors has learned that on Oct. 3 the Commander of the Naval Air Systems Command endorsed the Foundation's request for approval of the proposed China Lake Armament and Technology Museum as an official Navy museum. NavAir has forwarded the request to the next level required for approval, the Chief of Naval Operations.

For nearly two years, the absence of NavAir's endorsement has been the principal obstacle to the Foundation's moving forward with a major fundraising effort on behalf of building and opening the proposed facility. The Board determined in early 1994 that California state law makes such an effort inappropriate in advance of U.S.N. approval.

Now that NavAir has given its OK, and with expeditious movement of our request through the remaining few levels of the approval hierarchy, Board members are optimistic that an energetic fundraising program can soon begin.

Progress Timeline

The following correspondence chronology lists highlights of the Foundation's struggle over three years (including preparation of the initial detailed proposal) to secure Navy approval and move the dream of a primary historical-cultural asset for the American people a major step closer to reality:

- 14 Jul 93 - Commanding Officer, NAWS to President, CLMF:
 - Confirms Navy regulations' requirement of a non-profit organization to develop, fund and build a museum facility
 - Expresses support for CLMF's objective
 - Endorses CLMF's request to lease 25 acres of government land at the northwest corner of China Lake Blvd. & Inyokern Rd.
 - Establishes a NAWS CLMF Advisory Committee to work with CLMF
- 18 Jan 95 - CO NAWS to Chief of Naval Operations via Commander NAWCWPNS, Commander NAWC, and Commander Naval Air Systems Command
 - Requests establishment of China Lake Armament and Technology Museum at NAWS
- 18 Jan 95 - Commander NAWCWPNS to CNO
 - 1st endorsement of CO NAWS 18 Jan 95
- 20 Apr 95 - Commander NAWC to CNO
 - 2nd endorsement of CO NAWS 18 Jan 95
- 1 Jun 95 - Internal NavAir memorandum informally received by NAWS
 - Questions Navy's annual operation and maintenance costs for the museum
 - Questions legality of a non-profit foundation's using private donations to build a museum and then turn it over to the Navy
- 27 Aug 95 - Chairman, NAWS CLMF Advisory Committee to NavAir-7.0
 - Cites CLMF's use of 3 major official Navy museums as models in developing the proposal underlying NAWS' 18 Jan 95 request for approval
 - Provides a rough estimate of expected annual operation and maintenance costs
 - States CLMF's intent to continue its support of operation and maintenance after the museum's opening
 - Renews NAWS' request for NavAir's support and endorsement
- 22 Sep 95 - Commander NAWC to Commander NAWCWPNS
 - Returns NAWS' 18 Jan 95 request for clarification of concerns regarding estimated annual costs and an arms-length relationship between contributors and the Navy

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OFFICIAL STATUS

(cont'd. from p. 3)

- 6 Nov 95 - Comander NAWCWPNS to Commander NavAir
 - Asserts the Navy will not be linked directly or indirectly to any contributor
 - States CLMF's agreement to to assume responsibility for operation and maintenance of the museum building
 - Restates the modeling of CLMF's proposal on 3 of the Navy's foremost museums
 - Re-requests NavAir's endorsement and forwarding to CNO
- 4 Jan 96 - President CLMF to Commander NavAir
 - Summarizes CLMF's purpose and history
 - Explains the blockage that delaying official approval has had and is having on moving the project forward
 - Requests forwarding of the request for SecNav approval
- 9 Feb 96 - Commander NavAir to President CLMF
 - Expresses awareness of the importance of the museum proposal
 - Promises close attention to the matter
- 3 Apr 96 - Staff Judge Advocate NAWCWPNS to Staff Judge Advocate NavAir
 - Details CLMF's plan to raise funds for building the museum and provide long-term support
 - Cites compliance of CLMF's proposal with draft SecNav Instruction regarding gifts from non-profit organizations
- 30 May 96 - President CLMF to Director Naval Historical Center
 - Requests support in moving request forward to approval
- 12 Jun 96 - Director Naval Historical Center to President CLMF
 - Agrees to review proposal only after NavAir gives approval
- 13 Jun 96 - JAGC NAWCWPNS to President CLMF
 - Proposes process for screening out impermissible gifts
- 26 Jun 96 - President CLMF to JAGC NAWCWPNS
 - Welcomes the screening process letter and states intent to establish internal review policy to assure compliance
- 11 Jul 96 - JAGC NAWCWPNS to JAGC NavAir
 - Cites CLMF's acceptance of screening process
- 29 Aug 96 - CO NAWS to CNO via Commander NavAir
 - Resubmits approval request package with amplification developed since the 18 Jan 95 submittal
- 3 Oct 96 - Commander NavAir signs endorsement and forwards approval request to CNO

MEET JEANIE COPELAND

Jeanie Copeland became the Foundation's Office Manager on July 1, bringing along a wealth of experience to stand her in good stead as she helps the organization transition toward the invigorating era expected to follow the granting of official Navy museum status.

Jeanie retired this past February after 22 years of service in a variety of business enterprises operated by Ridgecrest entrepreneur Pat Tharp. Clearly not one to be comfortable with a lack of responsibilities and activity, Jeanie sought part-time employment through the local Staffing Services and Alternatives firm (S.A.S.S.) She says her first four months on the job give her the sense of "a comfortable fit" between the Foundation's needs and her skills.

Staffing the Foundation's office in Room 3 of the Conference and Exhibit Center from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (except Flex Fridays,) Jeanie has familiarized herself with the organization's files, administrative procedures, correspondence requirements, and the current inventory of salable items (videotapes, tiles, posters, etc.)

See **MEET JEANIE** p. 5

MEET JEANIE

(cont'd. from p. 4)

Recently Jeanie's been interfacing a good deal with Dick De Marco as he oversees construction of "store furniture" for the gift shop. She is also responsible for taking and publishing minutes of the monthly Board of Directors meeting.

Commerce courses in Hemet High School laid the foundation for Jeanie's business expertise. Her hometown of Hemet is also where she met her husband Gene, a heating/air-conditioning/ refrigeration specialist. They were introduced at the wedding of friends they had in common, apparently an auspicious environment since the Copelands' own marriage has endured over 45 years.

It was her husband's acceptance of work for a Ridgecrest propane gas supplier that brought Jeanie to the Indian Wells Valley in 1959. Before he took employment at NOTS in 1962, Jeanie was his company's bookkeeper.

Different Places/Different Jobs

In 1966 the family relocated to Indio. In their 6 years there Jeanie worked as receptionist and teletype operator for a stock brokerage firm and as receptionist for a medical doctor. When the Copelands moved to Lancaster in 1972, she was hired by a law firm, where she learned to blithely rattle off "Morris, Cosgrove, Miechelusi, Swabacher & Ward!" as she answered incoming calls.

A half-year later the family returned to Ridgecrest. Their first home here this time around was Bill and Marilyn Porter's residence on the base, which the Copelands house-sat for 6 months while the Porters were away on a developmental assignment. Jeanie and Gene commissioned a house to be built "in town," and that's where they live to this day.

The Copelands boast 3 children—2 of whom reside in Ridgecrest—and 10 grandchildren. When the latter allow, Jeanie invests a significant amount of time training women for mission work in the High Desert Association of Southern Baptist Churches. She also has an im-

pressive record as a Sunday School teacher at Immanuel Baptist Church. She and Gene regularly treat their church youth groups to water skiing outings, when she often serves as flag tender.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Office Manager Jeanie Copeland has tallied 37 new Foundation memberships since the preceding issue of The China Laker was published in February. This brings current total membership to 61.

Among the newcomers are Life Members Gerald and Loretta Schiefer. Five additions to the Contributing Member category are: Elizabeth Babcock, Manny Baker, Dick and Bernice Boyd, James E. Vasbinder, and Don and Mary Witcher.

The 31 new Regular Memberships are:

Vera K. Appleton
Howard Auld
Barbara Auld
Bill Blanc
Robert Burkhalter
Bill E. Camp
Harry Charles, Jr.
Joseph Clavet
Beverly Clavet
Alma M. Cowan
Barbara A. Daggett
Fred Ernsberger
Will Forman
Richard H. Isenberg
Bette Jacks
Roy Johanboeke
William R. Lalor, Sr.
Robert & Berniece Meade
Andrew Neilson
Mabel Ellis Ower
Lenora J. Palmer
Fletcher & Harriet Phillips
A. Lincoln Pittinger
William Roy Slagle
Bernard Smith
David C. Stoessel
John & Mickey Strang
Dick & Donna Tolkmitt
Frederick H. Weals
Jerry Whitnack
Elsie Whitnack

Welcome aboard!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The period since we distributed the last issue of *The China Laker* has been simultaneously frustrating and encouraging for your Board of Directors. The frustration comes from the miles of Naval Air Systems Command red tape that got wrapped around our request for official Navy approval of the proposed China Lake Armament and Technology Museum. However, that development stimulated us to be very pro-active in pursuing approval, and it now appears the bureaucratic stranglehold has been broken.

After 21 months of waiting, we now have VADM Lockard's (i.e., NavAir's) endorsement of our request for official Navy museum status. The request now moves up to the Chief of Naval Operations (N88.) We expect Dr. William Dudley, Director of the Navy Historical Center, to be of significant help in expediting the request's progress through the final approval echelons.

NavAir's delay has been a roadblock to launching a fundraising effort for the Museum. Nonetheless, we've sustained our focus as a dynamic organization, and Board members Dick Murphy, Bill Porter and John DiPol have consulted professional fundraising resources and developed a multi-phase fundraising

plan that can get off the ground immediately, once SecNav's approval is assured.

Phil Arnold and Paul Homer have come onto the Board to help us gear up for the plan's implementation, and we're seeking two more "Boardies" to enhance the effort. We're glad to have Bill Blanc come on board as a Foundation member and agree to serve as editor of our quarterly newsletter.

Hiring Jeanie Copeland to manage the Foundation's business office also moves us toward a solid launching pad for the impending fundraising campaign. Following in Janie Burford's footsteps, Jeanie makes it possible for us to continue doing Board-type things without bogging ourselves down in every detail of interfacing with Exhibit Center operation and the visiting public. In addition, Jeanie's services help keep us qualified as a Combined Federal Campaign agency with regular hours of operation.

Our optimism regarding Navy approval has enabled us to commit to opening a gift shop adjacent to the Exhibit Center as a basic component of our fundraising program. The contract we authorized to construct display cases and other furniture has been overseen by vol-

unteer Foundation member Dick De Marco and is nearly completed. We send out a hearty "Thank you!" to Dick for his dedication and hard work on this project. This month we're getting down to brass tacks on determining the initial merchandise inventory for the shop's December opening.

A promising recent development is NAWS historian Leroy Doig's identification, cataloging and storing of an impressive number of artifacts that illustrate major NOTS/NWC contributions to air weaponry. Not only is his work a boon to the national Navy History Program managed by Dr. Dudley, but it appears many of these items will be ideally suited for display in our museum. We look forward to working closely with Leroy in this area.

Well, we've been working hard; we're optimistic about (finally!) shattering the approval-process logjam; we're moving ahead in an energetic, reasoned fashion to make the dream of a China Lake Armament and Technology Museum come true. We welcome your contributions and your indications of willingness to help in a variety of volunteer capacities. Let any of us Board members know what you'd like to do to help.

**NOWADAYS AT NAWS
MESA: WHERE FUZE AND TARGET MEET**

The Missile Engagement Simulation Arena (MESA,) placed in service in the summer of 1995, is now among the most active of the Naval Air Weapons Station's cutting-edge facilities for 21st-century air weaponry development. The unique laboratory enables the simulated terminal engagement of a guided missile fuze with a target for a comprehensive spectrum of new and existing weapon systems.

The facility has been named the Dr. Jon A. Wunderlich Laboratory in honor of the deceased Naval Weapons Center department head who vigorously supported the lab's development from conceptual design through congressional approval

With its imposing dimensions, the "Wunder Lab" has dominated the base's skyline since early in its construction phase. The high-bay simulation arena itself is 405 feet long, 150 feet wide and 90 feet high. Such spaciousness allows the use of actual airframes under precise motion-position control of fuze and target. MESA is the only facility in the

world to combine the use of full-size targets with extremely high data precision levels.

Broad Customer Base

Innovative simulation technology gives the \$28 million lab an edge in cost-effectiveness, timeliness and accuracy. Intended for a "customer base" that comprises all branches of the U.S. military community and possibly allied forces as well, the facility is frequently used in the evaluation of missile lethality and air-vehicle survivability. Its accurate measurements of sensor properties have broad application in the development of new anti-air weapons to counter new threats.

One of your Foundation's Board of Directors, Paul Homer, served as master of ceremonies at the laboratory's ribbon-cutting in June, 1995. Foundation President Burrell Hays was an honored guest at the same occasion, commended for his invaluable "vision and support" for the project during his tenure as NWC Technical Director.

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P. O. Box 217
Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0217
619-939-3530

Jeanie Copeland, *Office Manager*
619-939-3530

Bill Blanc, *Newsletter Editor*
619-375-5978
billb@ridgecrest.ca.us

Board of Directors

Burrell Hays, *President*
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POSTWAR CAMARADERIE AND CULTURE ON THE UPPER MOJAVE

Excerpts from *Magnificent Mavericks*
by Elizabeth Babcock

- We worked hard, we played hard, we shopped together, we went to church together, and our whole lives were just intertwined.

Polly Nicol

With proximity came an easy camaraderie among Navy and civilian families that contributed much to the richness of community life. Professional, civic, fraternal, and hobby organizations of an astonishing number and variety flourished, often in club-houses maintained by a Command anxious to provide all the amenities necessary to keep employees and their families happy. LaV McLean recalled that:

- ... when we got some new people and they had a new idea, we just started a new club. At one time, I remember about 200 clubs like the Gem and Mineral Club, the Rockhounds and Square Dancing. You name it, we had a lot of different things to do. We had Art Clubs, Music Groups, Drama, etc. It only took a few members to start a club. ...

Sports events were favorite community activities, with softball, baseball, bowling, football, and boxing vying for the attention of the all-purpose category enumerated by the *Rocketeer* as "FANS." And fans were determined in those days. When 1,200 hardy souls turned out to witness an outdoor professional wrestling exhibition, the show went on despite high winds.

The military clubs were the center of social life for the entire community. The Commissioned Officers' Mess, familiarly referred to as the O Club or just "the Club," had

been going strong since 1945. In October 1948 the Club officially became an open mess, allowing membership for civilian employees in grades comparable to the ranks of the military members. In a letter of support for the open mess, BuOrd Chief Noble commented that "The success of the classified programs assigned this station depends in large measure on ability to attract and hold civilian scientists of the best type." He also offered his opinion that "Equality of privileges in an open mess would make such employment more attractive to the civilians living on the station." ...

Like the O Club, the Chief Petty Officers' Club offered dancing, drinking, dining, and conviviality. The Chiefs' Club had started in late 1945 in a couple of Quonset huts at Inyokern's Harvey Field. As the Station's main activities moved to China Lake, resourceful Chief George Hucek, who had come to NOTS as a member of the Station's first explosive-ordnance demolition team in 1944, obtained permission to move the huts to a new location across the street from the China Lake fire station.

Through volunteer labor, after-hours use of NOTS equipment, and favors collected, Hucek and the other chiefs had a large slab poured and began modifying the huts to fit their new location. According to Hucek, the chiefs made one big change:

- ... we'd taken those old huts and instead of putting them up with a 20-foot radius, we moved them out to 40, and the idea is when they come up here, we're going to put props across there and then tie them across the top, and that would make it larger.

Magnificent Mavericks is Volume 3 of the official history of the Naval Ordnance Test Station. It covers the period from 1948 through 1958 and is now undergoing pre-publication review by Navy Department authorities and individuals quoted in the text. The final, published version of these passages may differ from the excerpts as shown here.

The only thing is we outsmarted ourselves. The wind came up and blew them all over into the swimming pool.

As the chiefs fished pieces of sheet metal out of the water, they decided to rethink their construction plans. Somebody mentioned a pile of used lumber stashed behind the O Club, and somebody else remembered seeing cartons of rock wool stacked beside the base steam plant. The chiefs used such "liberated" materials to construct a building that opened with appropriate ceremony on September 11, 1948, as the first Chiefs' Club in China Lake. ...

In the Station's early days slot machines drew gambling enthusiasts to both clubs. In 1951, however, after an Act of Congress prohibited slot machines on Federal premises, China Lake's popular one-armed bandits were taken to the dump, where a bulldozer smashed them beyond all possibility of repair. Adjustments to club budgets became necessary, since the machines had added substantially to club coffers.

Concerts and Cultural Events

The community also participated avidly in cultural activities, with plays, concerts, and other such diversions invariably drawing large audiences. In 1948 the NOTS Concert Series, operated by a committee of the Station's Navy-Civilian Recreation Council, was just in its second season—a glorious one, featuring famed ballerina Mia Slavenska ..., the Vienna Boys Choir, the Pasadena Civic Orchestra, and internationally renowned pianist Arthur Rubinstein. When season tickets at \$8 each went on sale in the Station's work areas, the entertainment-hungry community snapped up all 1,200 tickets. Station management smiled on the sale of concert tickets in the workplace, and consequently, as Bruce Werthenberger recalled, he was able to use "a technique that I'm sure would not be acceptable now" to achieve the status of star salesman:

- I simply went to Personnel and asked for a list of all the JPs [Junior Professionals]. I thought that since they would be used to going to concerts during their college days, that they might like to continue that. Well, I sold quite a few.

For the first few seasons of the concert series, a committee of volunteers traveled

to Los Angeles to book the programs. Kenneth H. Robinson, an early and continuing force behind the success of the series, felt strongly that the community deserved to view "the very best talent in the United States," and with that aim in mind, he arranged to book subsequent seasons through the West Coast booking agent for the Sol Hurok Organization. Arthur Rubinstein was a favorite of that second season and returned to great acclaim in 1952, when the *Rocketeer* reported that he "reflected warm appreciation of his audience's unstinted applause, responding with generous encores." Artists performing in China Lake frequently expressed their amazement at finding a well-equipped 1,300-seat auditorium in such a remote, obscure location. Yehudi Menuhin, for example, was pleasantly surprised to find that, contrary to his original surmise, he would be playing his repertoire in an auditorium for a large, knowledgeable audience rather than in a dinner recital for some wealthy sheepherder.

Performances in the Station Theater differed from those in more metropolitan areas in several respects, though. For one thing, ... the uniformed ushers were the same sailors who normally patrolled the aisles during movie showings. Lois Allan recalled:

- I've forgotten what the concert was, but at any rate it was classical music. Everybody was sitting there decorously and quietly, and these two sailors came walking down the aisle, looking around at everybody, and came backstage at intermission and said, 'Well, Mr. Robinson, we're glad to report there were no disturbances out there tonight,' and Ken said, 'Son, I've got news for you. *You* were the only disturbance.' ...

China Lakers also demonstrated a seemingly insatiable appetite for entertainment and cultural enrichment, including homegrown divertissements. In celebration of the 1948 Christmas season, for example, WACOM and the Joint Navy-Civilian Recreation Council sponsored a play entitled "Why the Chimes Rang," presented to a capacity crowd in the Station theater, enhanced by scenery constructed and painted in Public Works shops, and numbering among the cast the wives of both Commanding Officer and Technical Director.