

Supervises Hawaiian Canteen

Imbued with the spirit of adventure and a desire to get closer to the war, Ann Koebel, '42, headed westward with the U.S.O. canteen service in January, 1945. She describes her experiences as assistant canteen manager with a U.S.O. Victory Club in Honolulu.

ARRIVING in Hawaii, we visited most of the U.S.O. clubs on Oahu, the activities of the organization were explained, and we were assigned to our specific locations. I was fortunate in being assigned to a large club in Honolulu.

The club itself had been a Japanese department store in peacetime days, a far cry from the activity supplied by almost half a million men passing through its doors monthly during the war. Ping pong, pool tables, an A.P.O., a check room, a canteen store room and a preparation kitchen filled the basement floor, while the major part of the first floor consisted of the all-important canteen and offices plus the only escalator in the islands.

On the mezzanine one could always find men busily writing letters, reading magazines and newspapers or taking advantage of the piano and music rooms.

Next up were a classical music room, art exhibits, craft rooms and a theater which showed first run movies and stage shows. Third floor held the dormitory of close to 300 beds, with shaving, showering and pressing facilities.

Topside boasted of the only roof garden in town with a glorious view of the harbor backed by the mountains. Here we had dances every noon and three nights a week, with a small kitchen and soda fountain to supply refreshments.

The club had 10 professional workers, and the special domain of 2 of us was the canteen and everything connected with it. Theoretically our work was supervisory, but actually we did everything from training and supervising the help to ordering and checking food, waiting counter, running the dishwasher or making sandwiches. Often we tried three or four things at a time.

WE served primarily sandwiches and salads, hamburgers, cakes, pies, doughnuts and waffles. A soda fountain with about 60 stools made it possible for men to grab a quick lunch. In the busy months we served between three and four thousand men a day. In addition, a buffet luncheon was served on the roof during the noon dances. Food was not free but sold at cost; however, on V-J day we served free food to about 12,000. I still dream about it.

The labor problem was a prime factor for headaches in the winter and spring months. No one over 16 years of age could be hired without a U. S. Employment Service referral, and it was 2 months before

we obtained an "A" priority. We solved the problem in the summer by hiring high school students and by the time they went back to school the situation had eased considerably.

Our employees were the strangest assortment one could ever find—ranging from army men who were ex-cooks and ex-chemical engineers to non-English-speaking Oriental, and even a few *haole* (white) shipyard workers. But you never knew just what members of your crew would be on hand in the morning. Imagine coming to work on a sleepy Sunday and



U.S.O. canteen hostess serves refreshments to a sailor

finding that there was no one to make waffles but a man who had sold shirts in civilian life and never as much as looked at a waffle iron. Usually in such cases the dishwashing machine was also broken and the sandwich man was missing. There was nothing to do but commence operations yourself.

After ordering a pound of meat it was quite a change to suddenly be making out slips for several tons of it, and for everything else in like proportion. We bought as much food as possible from the army quartermaster and without that source could never have obtained it. Local fresh fruits and vegetables were scarce, and we'd go for weeks without lettuce and tomatoes. Pineapple and papaya were always there in abundance but that was about all. Even bananas were almost non-existent in the city. Syrups, bread, baked goods, some staples and whatever the army didn't have we bought locally.