

# Sunday Independent

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## Civilians invade the Curragh!

....AND 500 ARMY FAMILIES JOIN IN THE GAIETY

By GUS SMITH

I walked round the expansive Curragh Camp the other evening and saw more civilians than men in green uniforms. Children played with abandon, cars rolled into the camp in hundreds and out came women in bright evening dresses. There was a gay sparkle in the spring air that made a mockery of bitter wars, world strife and the atomic bomb.

Of course, first impressions can be misleading. These are but the two weeks in the year when the Army men seem to take a back seat to the civilians. For it is the annual musical held in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund and I was told that every music-lover from here to Belfast is welcome. It is a welcome invasion.

This year it is "South Pacific", and the production has cost more than £2,000 to mount in the 1,000-seater Curragh gymnasium. A big percentage of the 500 Army families living in the camp are involved in the show, but not surprisingly there is a rich contribution from the people of Newbridge, Naas, Kildare, and other areas round the camp.

### Many visitors

Indeed, there is got to be, for the splendid ladies' chorus in "South Pacific" is drawn from these adjoining towns. And there are three excellent guest artists this year, operatic bass **Joe D'Alton**, tenor **Joe Lane** and Belfast's charming -soprano **June Boyle**.

"People will visit the camp during this fortnight from as far apart as Belfast and Cork" chairman of the Curragh Musical Society **Lieut.-Col. P. Dempsey** told me. "In fact, we have bloc bookings from fourteen music societies ranging from Dublin to Carlow." And he summed up the feelings of the Army men and their families in the camp towards the popular annual event when he added: "The musical certainly injects the camp with life and every year seems to be growing in popularity. I feel a show like this is really looked forward to by the families and the people in the towns about the camp."

## Big successes

I was told that interest in musical comedy was stimulated in the Curragh Camp when the re-formed Newbridge Musical Society presented "The Arcadians" there in 1952. Since then, the Curragh Musical Society has gained a fine reputation through their outstanding presentations of "The Merry Widow", the "Student Prince", and particularly "Die Fledermaus", which was a great success.

"I would like the society to present 'My Fair Lady' in the future" Lieut.-Col. Dempsey told me.

"South Pacific" seems ideally suited to the talents of the society. The action, for instance, takes place on Pacific Islands during the Second World War. And I have no doubt that off-duty Army men will be humming beautiful numbers from the show such as "Some Enchanted Evening." and "There is Nothing like a Dame".

A run-down the large cast underlined the contribution made by the Army personnel themselves. In leading parts are **Lieut. Brian McKevitt**, **Lieut. Tony McCourt**, **Lieut. Noel Mangan**, **Capt. Pat Mulcahy** and **Corporal John Lynch**. In addition, **Garda Sergeant John White** plays Sergeant Kenneth Johnson in the show, while **Journalist Senan Carroll** fills the role of Marine Cpl. Hamilton Stevens.

But the abiding Impression to the visitor is the Cead Mile Failte extended to the music-lover at the camp, and of course the lovely music.



★ Prettiest salute ever seen in the Irish Army. June Boyle in the Curragh Musical Society's "South Pacific."



★ ARMY CHORUS LINE . . . Maire Daily, Patsy Rowe, Carmel Treacy, Ann Dillon and Mary O'Reilly.



Curragh Musical Society members (from left) . . . Mary Quinn, Nancy Healy and Betty O'Connor run through a number from "The Boy Friend" with Captain Dennis Mellerick, Musical Director, at the piano.

