

# Helping people her concern

## for 45 years

By BARBARA BURKLO

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**C**ALM AND SWEET AS SHE APPEARS, Major Martha Galbraith has dealt with the nitty-grittiest as well as the most sordid of people-problems in her 45 years with the Salvation Army.

From flood victims to rape victims — from those who have attempted suicide to the homeless and hungry — Major Galbraith has provided spiritual and material comforts for them all.

She is retiring this week as commanding officer of the local Salvation Army unit.

And she says she has never regretted her lifetime commitment — one that took her all over the United States and to Europe, as well.

The commitment is total — even harsh.

When you become an officer in the Salvation Army, you are expected to go wherever you are sent, and cheerfully, too. And, because they are human, after all, not all of the organization's appointments are good ones.

But that's army life.

Major Galbraith began her first association with the Salvation Army Church (for it is an established church) with the resolve to convert its members to the Mormon faith. It happened in Ft. Myers, Florida, her home.

"When I was 13," she recalls, "I was a member of Girl Guards — very much like Girl Scouts. One of the requirements was that we attend Sunday School — any Sunday School — four times.

"My mother was a Mormon — I didn't go to Sunday School because the Mormon Church didn't have one. So when I asked to go the Sunday School at the Salvation Army Church, my folks didn't want me to go because the Mormons didn't like their members to go to other churches. Finally, they consented.

"At first, I thought I'd convert all the Salvation Army people to the Mormon way of thinking!

"But, while I was reading the Bible, finding passages to convince the Salvation Army that the Mormons were right, the Lord told me to go the other way."

At 19, she joined the Salvation Army as a career soldier and first was sent to Cumberland, Maryland — a town set in a deep valley between two railroad yards.

The whole place was always covered with coal dust and her fruitless efforts to keep clean, along with having to drive hazardous mountain roads, made life difficult.

When a flood swept through the valley, the young soldier was swept into her first disaster relief work — making potato soup because there was no time to go out and buy other supplies.

Posts in other Florida towns followed and she became an officer. She then was sent to teach

remedial English, Salvation Army orders and regulations and homiletics at the army's officers' training school in Atlanta, Georgia.

She remained there for 14 years — her longest stint in one place.

Major Galbraith served in the education department of the army's national headquarters in New York next, writing young people's books and doing editing work.

Then back to a post in North Palm Beach, Florida, where she also was able to tend her ailing mother.

Her parents died within a year of one another, and Major Galbraith then realized she had no real ties, no reasons to keep her in any particular part of the world. During her early years she was given a two-month enrichment program — she went to the International College for Salvation Army Officers in London, followed by a month's tour of Europe.

After being commanding officer at Ft. Pierce, Florida, she was sent in 1967 to San Francisco, where she worked at the army's training college.

her next duty was perhaps the most glossy — the most glamorous of her career.

She became director of the army's territorial travel bureau, writing airline tickets, meeting the army's V.I.P.s at the airport and accompanying them on tours around the area.

But strictly public relations type work didn't satisfy the little major — she wanted to minister to people in need.

So, after three years in the travel job, she was assigned to the San Francisco Mission Corps in the Mission District.

She found the district an ethnic mix and found a lot of satisfaction in working with the people there —especially the many Nicaraguans, whom she says entered into the life of the church with great zest.

During that time, there was a disastrous fire in one of the run-down hotels in the area. Major Galbraith played a major part in the disaster relief. Fifteen people died in the fire and the other hotel residents were taken to a nearby school.

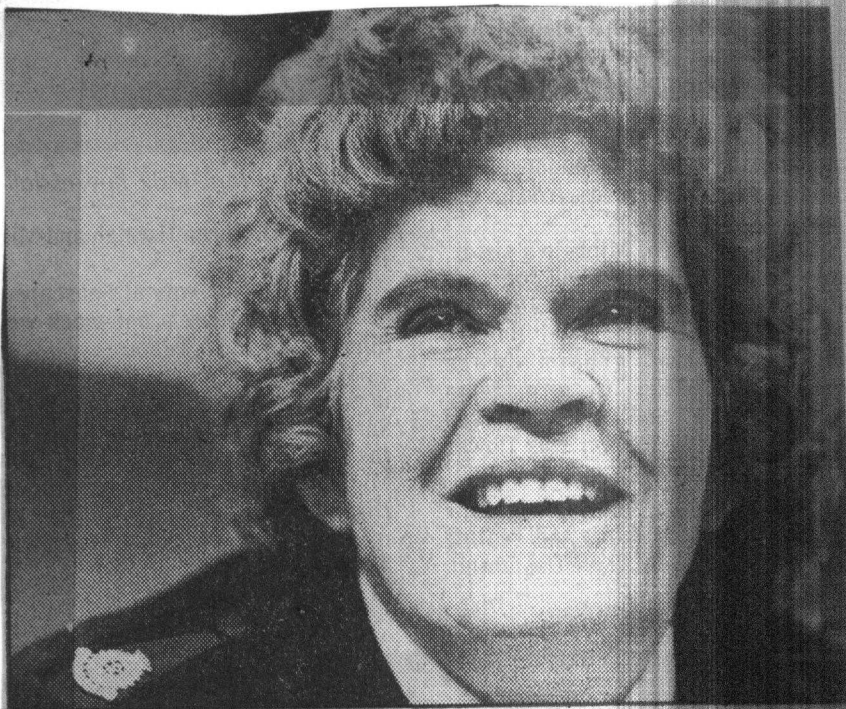
"One man was inconsolable," she recalls. "He came in, weeping and hysterical, carrying a portable television set.

"I couldn't comfort him — he had picked up the television and when he got out of the hotel he realized he hadn't brought his wife out. She died in the fire."

After serving there six years, Major Galbraith in 1977 received her appointment as commanding officer of the Santa Cruz unit.

"I used to come here on my vacations," she says, "and I've always loved Santa Cruz and Mt. Hermon."

She considers her two major accomplishments



When she was 13, as a Girl Guard (similar to Girl Scouts) in Ft. Myer, Florida, Martha Galbraith was required to attend Sunday School for four sessions. She decided to attend the Salvation Army Church with friends — but her Mormon mother didn't want her to go. When the mother finally consented, Martha went with the resolve to convert the Salvation Army church people to Mormonism. Instead, things happened the other way around and she has been with the Salvation Army ever since — for 45 years.

here the building of the new addition to the unit, nearly doubling the space, and the Salvation Army's relief role in last January's flood.

Amid the kaleidoscope of memories of those dark days in January, she remembers going door to door at the Palomar Inn, taking food to residents who weren't able to use the stairs and who didn't have access to the elevator because the power was out.

She remembers comforting a woman who came into town from one of the slide areas, found a motel room as temporary housing and was raped by a man who told her he had come in to fix the heater. Major Galbraith was able to find her a house to live in.

She remembers the anguish of another woman, telling about finding her way out of the mud at Love Creek and seeing others, trapped in the mud and calling to her — but she couldn't reach them.

The sight of her uniform alone has brought people in trouble to come to her for aid — as in one instance where a troubled woman saw Major Galbraith on a street corner and started telling her her troubles. The woman had just come from her doctor's office. The doctor had told her she was pregnant, but had a dangerous condition that would make it necessary for her to choose between terminating the pregnancy or having the baby and losing her own life in the process.

In that instance, a simple prayer on the street corner gave the distraught woman some comfort, Major Galbraith recalls.

Is the Salvation Army a good career?

Major Galbraith believes it is. Although the actual pay is fairly low, housing, car, insurance and retirement are also provided.

Looking into her future — you may see her around town in a few weeks, wearing pretty dresses instead of the severe uniform she's been seen in so long.

On Saturdays — or whenever she hasn't had to perform in some official way — she has enjoyed wearing what she calls her 'private clothes' — usually in pinks and blues and very feminine.

She wants to stay in this area, perhaps taking on a post-retirement responsibility for the Salvation Army or finding a little job that would use some of her talents.

She has, by the way, remained single by choice.

She's had opportunities to marry on the 'outside' — but she didn't find a man she would give up her officer's commission for. The Salvation Army has some strong rules about their officers marrying anyone but other officers.

Besides, as she says, "I'd rather be single than wish I was!"

Thursday, the community will honor the plucky little officer at a dinner at the Sun Room of the Cocoanut Grove.





At right, Major Martha Galbraith in her early career with the Salvation Army, doing one of the many radio broadcasts connected with her work. At left, on the staff of the army's officers' training school in Atlanta, Georgia, she was pictured giving a trainee some materials. Below right, Major Galbraith talks about her 45 years with the organization and her upcoming retirement.

