

Morning Star Entertains the Troupes
by Rosemarie Howard
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November is National Native American Awareness month; it is also the month we honor our war veterans. So it is significant that on November 1, two groups of Native American performers, including Gary Fields, and his wife, Angela, boarded a plane heading for Europe to entertain members of the armed forces and their families stationed on American military bases—courtesy of the Department of Defense Armed Forces Entertainment program.

They will be gone for 30 days. Morning Star, Field's group will perform in Turkey, Italy, Spain, and the Azores. The other group will go to northern European countries, including Norway and Germany. Performance venues will include international schools that U.S. nationals attend, embassies, and NATO bases. Between the two groups, Native Americans from the Lakota Sioux, Hopi, Cree, Shoshone, Quechan, Kiowa, Navajo, and Apache Indian nations are represented.

Serendipity seems to have played a part in Fields' initial involvement with this entertainment opportunity. Over the past few years, the Fields family has often been the opening act for Michael Martin Murphy. A couple of years ago, Murphy's management agent told Fields that a booking agent from Park City was looking for Native American groups, and the connection was made.

"It's not a paid vacation or site-seeing trip," laughed Fields. "I've seen Rome ten times—from the airport."

Aside from the fact that they are quite well-paid for their efforts, there are many reasons he and his wife have chosen to participate in the demanding schedule of the tours.

"It's an opportunity to see and do things that are unique. We have gone to remote places tour groups would never go," commented Fields.

For example, the last time they were in Europe they performed on a small island called La Madalena off the coast of Sardinia, where Navy submarines are serviced—not your typical tourist stop. Interesting facts about La Madalena include: the stone used to build the foundation for the Statue of Liberty came from quarries on this island; a recent James Bond movie was filmed there; and it was from La Madalena that Princess Diana was returning when she was killed.

"We have also gained a great appreciation for military service personnel," said Fields. A year ago last May they toured along with a Polynesian group and performed at Aviano Airbase in Italy, just north of Venice. The performance, done in an old building, was punctuated by the sound of jets taking off to fly Bosnian missions.

"It's fun to visit other places, but we have more freedom and security here than anywhere else in the world," said Fields. "It's always nice to come home. The images on TV mean something to us after we've been there."

"The children on the bases are so appreciative of anything from home," said Fields. "That in itself is a rewarding reason for doing the tour. They always express gratitude to the performing groups from the United States."

However, the main reason for the Fields' involvement in this touring program is to reach people—entertain them and educate them that there are important things to be seen and understood in all cultures. "Tolerance cannot be legislated," Fields remarked.

Their performances include stories, songs and dances intended to help the audiences understand the Native American culture.

"We try to honor veterans, as well as currently serving Native American warriors, in our performances," said Fields. They do this by demonstrating the

traditional songs and ceremonies honoring veterans and warriors. "In the Native American culture," explained Fields, "the warrior walks a close line between the spiritual and physical realms. He sacrifices his physical self to protect the spiritual self—whether in actual combat or not."

And so, along with these traveling performers, this month we honor warriors from all cultures, wherever they stand guard, who protect and defend the freedom of the United States of America.

Gary and his family are residents of Orem. Their performing company, Morning Star is available for performances here in Utah as well. They can be reached at 226-0395.