

Japanese planes were shot down in flames.<sup>65</sup>

Conditions during the rainy season nevertheless proved so unexpectedly bad as to raise the issue of whether or not the Wacs should be sent back, even over their objections. Proceeding through hub-deep mud to Tacloban, the GHQ Wacs were housed in a deserted mission school where Japanese soldiers had been recently garrisoned. Fortunately, the yards were already honeycombed with Japanese foxholes; the entire day and night were described as "a series of enemy air-raids and ducking for shelter."<sup>66</sup> USASOS men and women, arriving soon after, shared an area in a sea of mud, in which frameless tents were pitched so closely that they had to be tied together. FEAF Wacs were slightly better off. On the day after their arrival General Kenney himself inspected the area, and in the next month drainage ditching was performed by "shovel-equipped Colonels, Majors, Lieutenants, and non-coms from the A-2 Section."<sup>67</sup> However, the chief WAC problem on Leyte was not housing, which was the same for men and women, but rather the lack of suitable equipment. There were no overshoes for women, and only four of the GHQ Wacs had more than one pair of field shoes, which never dried out but had, the commander reported, to be "cleaned and put back on while still wet." The supply of coveralls was still so poor that, she noted, "there is no way of keeping in dry clothes."<sup>68</sup> A search was made for men's overshoes or field shoes in small sizes, but even after calling upon the Navy it was impossible to find enough to equip the women.

Nevertheless, the women were averse to leaving Leyte, and no move was made to return them. The History of USAFFE reported:

They kept communications open at Leyte between alerts that sent them into foxholes, only to return to take more messages all through the night.<sup>69</sup>

The deputy chief ordnance officer noted:

The Advance Section, USASOS, which went into Leyte, worked long night hours in the lantern-lighted tents when we were getting ready for an operation. We were interrupted frequently by air-raids, but they didn't panic.<sup>70</sup>

After a rough three months on Leyte, conditions improved as they had at previous stations; food and supply were better, laundry and hairdressing facilities were obtained, and emergency housing was improved. Troops of both sexes had more time for swimming, sight-seeing, and shopping at the local market. The chief interest was the battle for Manila; as usual, the Wacs again wished to move forward. As released prisoners, wounded, and sick began to be evacuated, some Wacs took up clothing collections among their own scarce stores for the women and children from internment camps, and volunteered off-duty help in hospitals.

#### *Other Bases*

Meanwhile, during and after the move to Leyte, Wacs had been sent to other bases.<sup>71</sup> The decision was made by USASOS headquarters that Wacs must go out to all of Intersec's lettered bases

<sup>65</sup> (1) Folder, 5205th WAC Det, Drawer X-29853. (2) Griffith Account.

<sup>66</sup> Descriptions of Philippines experiences not otherwise documented are from: (1) Griffith Account. (2) AFPAC Reply, both versions.

<sup>67</sup> Folder II, WAC Det FEAF, Drawer X-25096.

<sup>68</sup> Folder, 5205th WAC Det, Drawer X-29853.

<sup>69</sup> History of the United States Army Forces in the Far East 1943-1945, by Hist Sec, G-2 Far East Command. OCMH. Cited as USAFFE Hist.

<sup>70</sup> Interv with Col Merle H. Davis, 24 Jul 47.

<sup>71</sup> This section based on Griffith Account, AFPAC Reply, and Interv cited n. 50(1).