

proud, however, if you had been standing there when they got off the train—their noses were powdered, their shoes were shined, they showed that they were well-trained and well-disciplined. Before the last ones had got off the train, the cannon was fired for retreat. Like one woman they came to attention and saluted. . . . The salutes so impressed the photographers that they stopped taking pictures and faced the flag. . . . I am sorry that no pictures were taken at that time.⁴⁰

The other unit, composed of Negro enrolled women with Negro officers, was likewise well received at Fort Huachuca, and housed in new barracks with hair-dressing facilities, recreation room, and athletic area. Upon arrival the women found their bunks already made up and their first meal prepared.⁴¹

Shipment of post headquarters companies to the seven other service commands was postponed indefinitely to permit the opening of new training centers, but the defrauded commands set up such protest that certain exceptions had to be made. Just before Christmas Director Hobby called a meeting at New Orleans of WAAC directors from the service commands, to explain the situation and to point out that delay at this stage would result in tremendously greater supply when all training centers came into full production. Nevertheless, all appealed so earnestly for at least one unit per command that Director Hobby promised to send it, as token to the service commands that Waacs really did exist. This was done, and during the last of December 1942 companies were placed on orders for shipment to stations in the remaining seven service commands. Very little could yet be told of what their assignments or job performance would be, although WAAC Headquarters eagerly awaited such news.⁴²

In December also two experimental

antiaircraft units reached the field, their "secret" station being actually Bolling Field, within sight of the Pentagon. The Antiaircraft Artillery, as directed by General Marshall, began the task of determining which of its duties could be performed by women and with what degree of success.⁴³

First Overseas Shipment

Considerably more complications attended efforts to get the first two units overseas in December. These units had been ready for shipment since September, and were by this date trained to a hair-trigger state of tension while waiting for a shipment priority from England, which had not arrived. To ease the crowding at Des Moines, they were shipped to Daytona Beach, as soon as its cadre arrived, for another period of training.⁴⁴ Their morale was scarcely improved by the constant turnover of officers. Since no one yet knew what qualities a women leader needed, there was a process of trial and error by which several officers were successively relieved from duty because of in-

⁴⁰ Ltr, Lt Charlee Kelly, Rctg Off, to Capt Mary-Agnes Brown, WAAC Stf Dir 8th SvC, as quoted in Ltr, Capt Brown to Dir WAAC, 9 Jan 43. SPWA 319.1.

⁴¹ (1) Ft Huachuca file, SPWA 291.21. For difficulties experienced by the first Negro Wac units, see Ch. XXX, below. (2) WAAC Daily Journal, Vol. I, 30 Jan 43.

⁴² (1) Notes of Dir's speech to CGs of SvCs, New Orleans, La., 17-18 Dec 42. SPWA 334.8 Conf (11-18-42). (2) Weekly Rpts, WAAC Hq for CofAdm Serv, 14-19 Dec 42 and 27 Dec 42-1 Jan 43. SPWA 319.12 (1942).

⁴³ AG Ltr, WD 320.2 WAAC (12-23-42) PR-W-WPOPU, 24 Dec 42, sub: Activation of 150th and 151st WAAC Tech Cos, and 1st Ind from MDW, 17 May 43. AG 320.2 WAAC (5-10-43).

⁴⁴ Ltr, WAAC Hq to Comdt 2d WAAC Tng Cen, 31 Oct 42, sub: 75th and 76th Cos, and two Inds. SPWA 320.2 sec 1.