

of these being for the officer sent to fill, in the Army Air Forces, a position comparable to Director Hobby's in the Service Forces.³⁴

Major Commands Receive Waacs

Army Air Forces

At this point it was evident that the Air Forces' share of the WAAC field units would be almost double that of all other commands combined. It was currently scheduled to receive 253 field companies as against the Service Forces' 120 and the Ground Forces' 7. The receptive Air Forces attitude toward the employment of women was due largely to the announced policy of Gen. Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General, AAF, who repeatedly wrote field commanders that efficiency required the employment of Waacs to the widest extent possible, to make up manpower deficiencies.³⁵

The Air Forces Waacs began arriving in March, accompanied by staff directors for the various subordinate air commands. The first unit, fifty-seven WAAC enrolled women and two officers, arrived at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, on 3 March 1943 to work for the AAF's Map Chart Division. On 22 March the AAF's first two WAAC post headquarters companies arrived at Chanute and Scott Fields. Twenty-three more WAAC units arrived at air bases in April; by the end of the summer there were 171 air bases which had WAAC personnel as part of the permanent party.³⁶

The choice of a woman to head this organization and to serve on General Arnold's staff was not announced until May. Although the importance of the position was second only to Director Hobby's,

and in fact equal in echelon as long as the Director remained assigned to the Army Service Forces, the top rank which could be allotted was that of lieutenant colonel, in view of the legislative restrictions which limited the Corps to one colonel. The position was given the title of Air WAAC Officer, and was set up as parallel to that of the Air Quartermaster, the Air Engineer, and other such staff officers.

The woman chosen for this position was the Director's former aide and current acting deputy, First Officer Betty Bandel, who upon assuming this duty was promoted to be the Corps' first field director, or major; she was to remain the WAC's second-ranking officer throughout Director Hobby's tenure of office. The new Air WAAC Officer was at this time thirty years old; as the Director's aide she had accompanied Mrs. Hobby to Europe and on most field trips and thus had a firsthand knowledge of the WAAC situation. As Acting Deputy Director since February, she had written many of the Corps' more important staff papers and had played an active part in co-ordinating the decentralization plans with ranking officers of other agencies.³⁷

Army Ground Forces

Since the Army Ground Forces ordinarily trained on ASF-serviced posts and needed overhead only at a few schools, it had been allotted only about 5,000 Waacs of the first 150,000 expected to be re-

³⁴ Memo, WAAC Hq for CofS through CofAdm Serv, 18 Feb 43, and atchd corresp. SPWA 314.7 (6-2-41)(1) sec 3 (1941).

³⁵ See Ch. XVI, below, for details.

³⁶ AAF WAC Hist, p. 17.

³⁷ WDBPR Press Release, 4 May 43.