

affected the appearance of the WAAC uniform, by making correction of early mistakes impossible before mass production was required. For every amateur theorist who supposed that any other cause had damaged WAAC recruiting, there were ten who put the blame on the appearance of the uniform. Some nine out of ten of the unsolicited letters of advice received by the WAAC went so far as to place sole responsibility upon this one factor.

Actually, OQMG had been well aware from the moment uniforms were issued that many items of clothing needed modification, and plans for such modification were being made when the need for immediate mass production intervened. The Quartermaster General, soon after the opening of the First WAAC Training Center, sent to Des Moines an expert committee which included a representative of the Philadelphia Depot and a civilian consultant, Miss Dorothy Shaver, vice-president of Lord & Taylor. These catalogued various complaints, and Colonel Faith reported others. All garments were cut with wide collars and narrow hips, as for men; skirts, shirts, and jackets were for this reason generally ill fitting, uncomfortable, and unbecoming to the average woman. Hats were out of shape before they were issued; raincoats leaked at every seam in even a light shower; seams of hems were sewed down so that they could not be easily raised or lowered, and some garments had no hems at all. The suspenders on girdles were too short and pulled runs in stockings, as the War Production Board had allotted insufficient elastic.²⁵

The attempt to discover the reason for the poor appearance of what had been a basically sound uniform design revealed that the Philadelphia Depot had never

made a graded designers' model of the uniform, but had somehow got hold of a rough pattern cut by a manufacturer to estimate the cloth needed. This the depot had henceforth called "the master pattern," and from it each manufacturer had developed a set of sized patterns of his own. Those manufacturers who received contracts were all in the men's-wear industry, since, The Quartermaster General reported, "The manufacturers of women's clothing were not able to handle the production of WAAC uniforms at the prices which the Philadelphia Depot was willing to pay." Moreover, winter uniforms had already been made upon the defective patterns used for the summer ones.

For the poor results obtained, the Philadelphia Depot blamed The Quartermaster General for failing to consult it earlier, thus giving it insufficient time for development of patterns. Further developmental work was therefore relinquished to the depot so that it might not be hampered. A new jacket was developed, with a better-fitting collar. It had no belt, as the women had shown a tendency to pull the belt too tight. Unfortunately, the depot, in omitting the belt, respaced the jacket buttons so that the bottom one fell quite low; it was now impossible for a Waac to sit down without unbuttoning the lowest jacket button or suffering what Director Hobby described as an "unsightly gap." Since large quantities had been acquired, The Quartermaster General refused to correct the spacing. The new jacket, as turned out by the men's garment contractors, was also too flat across the bust and still too stiff and awkward.

²⁵ (1) Rpt, 20 Oct 42. SPWA 421. (2) Ltr, Faith to Dir WAAC, 12 Aug 42. SPWA 421 (8-22-42). (3) Risch, *Wardrobe for Women of the Army*, Ch. IV. The following paragraphs, unless otherwise stated, are based on Risch, especially pages 40-47 and 61-63.