

The WAAC utility bag had likewise proved unsatisfactory. The cheap imitation leather adopted by the economy-minded Quartermaster General almost at once cracked and peeled. The Director then presented him with a leather bag designed by Richard Koret, and requested its adoption. Mourned a Quartermaster historian: "It was apparently immaterial that the bag was expensive and that it used calfskin leather, a critical material."³⁰ This sample was delivered to the Philadelphia Depot, which immediately let the contract to such low-priced manufacturers that the resulting bag was unrecognizable and quickly wore out. Finally, OQMG announced with pleasure that it had located a quantity of seal leather, tanned goatskin, and genuine water buffalo. These were durable and noncritical materials, and an excellent utility bag resulted.

The Navy avoided most clothing difficulties by giving its Waves a clothing allowance with which to purchase uniforms. Various commercial firms produced the uniforms, apparently without any of the Philadelphia Depot's misfortunes, and sold them through department stores which gave expert fitting. Shoes and other personal items could thus be chosen from standard models whose fit suited the individual. The Army was unable to adopt this system, since to provide a money allowance in lieu of clothing would have required Congressional action to amend existing Army legislation. Army women eventually benefited in that they received maintenance of the uniform by free re-

placement of worn-out items, whereas the Waves' monetary maintenance allowance of \$12.50 every three months was reputedly scarcely enough to keep them in stockings, much less in new uniforms, shoes, and underwear.³¹

The Need for New Types of Work Clothing

As Waacs began, under the expansion program, to do various kinds of Army jobs which had not been anticipated by the WAAC Pre-Planners, a need arose for new types of work clothing. Of the four types of jobs which had been originally authorized—clerks, drivers, cooks, and telephone operators—the first and last could be performed in the A uniform. Accordingly, the only work uniforms authorized for Waacs were white dresses for cooks and coveralls for drivers to put on over their uniforms while making motor repairs. These work uniforms were issued only to the few specialists concerned. The majority of Waacs when shipped to the field had only the A uniform plus two of the seersucker exercise dresses, which were worn to protect the service uniform during physical training, kitchen police, and barracks fatigue duties.

With the expansion of the Corps, Waacs soon were working in hospital wards and laboratories, driving light trucks as well as staff cars, and being assigned as full-time mechanics, welders, pier checkers, messengers, and gas pump attendants. In the Air Forces many worked "on the line" in aircraft maintenance and in other jobs that required them to climb in and out of aircraft and up and down control towers. Neither the A uniform nor the fatigue

WAAC, 23 Feb 43, and Inds; (4) Ltr, WAAC Hq to Des Moines, 3 Apr 43; (5) Ltr, WAAC Hq to Reqmts Div ASF, 10 Jun 43, with Inds; (6) Memo, Col Hobby for Gen Somervell, 9 Jul 43; (7) Change to T/E 21, Sep 43; (8) Ltrs, Field Stas to Dir WAAC, various dates, atchd to above. All in SPWA 421.3 Shoes (9-4-42) 1943.

³⁰ Risch, *Wardrobe for Women of the Army*, p. 73.

³¹ Memo, Asst Exec WAC for Dir WAC, 14 Mar 44, sub: Uniform Issue of Marines, WAVES, and SPARS. WDWAC 421.