

edge and acceptance to a degree that would insulate the WAAC against the later rumors. Certain anti-Administration newspapers from the beginning made the WAAC the subject of caustic comment, evidently regarding the Corps as a New Deal creation. Even in the most favorable press, there was a natural tendency for "news" to consist of those items amusing or spectacular enough to reach reporters directly, such as stories headlined, STORK PAYS VISIT TO WAAC NINE DAYS AFTER ENLISTMENT,¹⁶ or, ARE WOMEN PERSONS? DEBATED BY HOUSE VETERANS COMMITTEE.¹⁷ There was also a tendency for headlines to include the word WAAC in reporting all accidents, murders, suicides, and family troubles involving a member of the Corps; a headline that might more properly have read ARMY OFFICER TRIED FOR BIGAMY became, instead, WAC BRIDAL BRINGS TRIAL.¹⁸ Even when friendly newspapers arranged for visits of their own reporters and photographers or foreign correspondents, the results frequently tended toward the coy or frivolous rather than a serious emphasis on actual WAAC jobs.¹⁹

Also, from the first, cartoonists had found the WAAC amusing and had contributed caricatures which ranged from light humor to emphasis on anatomical detail. Of these, a training center commandant protested to WAAC Headquarters: "There seems to be no restraint on funny papers and cartoons with the WAAC as subject matter." He was informed that "legally there is nothing that can be done to restrain cartoonists from caricaturing the WAAC."²⁰

The more extreme actually were seldom commercial cartoons, but were more often soldier products from camp newspapers, which held with rather monotonous lack of originality to the idea that the best way

of ridiculing a woman was to exaggerate those portions of her figure that differed from the masculine version. Although peculiarly masculine garments were not considered funny, the mere depiction of a brassière, empty or otherwise, was alone enough to seem comic to cartoonists.²¹

Certain clergymen had also published their protest against the Corps as an improper place for young Christian women. Of these, the Catholic chaplain at Fort Des Moines wrote:

It is unfortunate that the few clergymen who have sounded off against the Corps get so much publicity, while the thousands I know who are in favor of it get little or no publicity. . . . I have had to have three masses every Sunday—about 1,400 Waacs each Sunday.²²

Attacks by Private Letter and Gossip

These relatively minor cases of poor published and broadcast publicity or ill-chosen humor bore little resemblance in degree of virulence to the slander campaign which followed, and which had an entirely different character. The first manifestations of a deeper change in public opinion came early in 1943, when there began to be evidences of more vicious attacks on the Corps spread by word-of-mouth gossip and by private letter. Some of these were merely the "nut" letters that any organization might expect; quite often these included miscellaneous charges of

¹⁶ Washington *Times-Herald*, May 1, 1943.

¹⁷ Washington *Evening Star*, February 3, 1943.

¹⁸ Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, August 8, 1945.

¹⁹ For WAAC clippings, see Vol. IV, WAAC Hist file, SPWA 314.7 (1942-43).

²⁰ Ltr, Comdt 5th WAAC Tng Cen to Dir WAAC, 3 May 43, with atchd comment. SPWA 319.1.

²¹ Malvina Lindsay, in *Washington Post*, July 17, 1948.

²² Ltr, Chaplain Urban J. Baer, Ft Des Moines, to Dir WAAC, 9 Dec 42. SPWA 319.12.