

matter, for their only authorized coat remained the rough field coat. The old WAAC "beaver" coat of light olive drab, comparable to the enlisted women's overcoat, was not restored because of shortages of its particular material, and in any case had never been authorized for nurses. As a result, women officers began wearing unauthorized overcoats of various designs and colors, especially "pink" coats modeled upon those of the men—likewise unauthorized, but worn by many officers. To stop this practice and standardize the coat, both Wacs and nurses agreed upon a coat cut exactly like the enlisted women's, but of dark olive drab to match the winter uniform. Its adoption came too late to standardize field practice to any great extent.⁵⁵

Battle Jacket

The only other addition to the service uniform after 1944 was the battle jacket, resembling the civilian lumber jacket, first procured in England by the European theater. As European theater personnel, male and female, began to bring battle jackets to the United States, it proved impossible to stem the tide of their popularity, and it was necessary to authorize their wear by men in the zone of the interior. Many women officers also began to purchase them, and since the men's jacket could not be purchased by women, The Quartermaster General, after consultation with prominent New York stylists, produced a design for women. This lacked the pockets of the men's version, and had more of a bloused effect, since the men's bepocketed jacket had an unbecoming appearance when worn by short or plump women. Except for those individuals who had received them in Europe, the garment

was not issued, but purchased at the wearer's expense.⁵⁶

Necktie and Handbag

The complexity of setting up rules for a new group in an army was well exemplified in a minor controversy over the necktie and the handbag. The shoulder strap of the handbag had originally been worn on the right shoulder, crossing the body diagonally, with the handbag resting on the left hip. This system was abandoned in WAAC days because the diagonal strap wrinkled the shirt and was awkward to put on and off; when worn by women of heavier build, it cut beneath the bust line to produce an undesirable profile. The rule was therefore changed to authorize wearing of the handbag on the left shoulder, hanging straight down. This method proved even worse; most women did not have large enough shoulder muscles to prevent it from slipping off, so that many handbags were lost and police reported an epidemic of handbag-snatching. Also, tailors reported that Wacs hunched the left shoulder to keep the strap on, and were rapidly becoming deformed; the marching gait was also uneven because the left arm swing was restricted. The original diagonal system was therefore restored, although later those who wished were allowed to remove the strap and

⁵⁵ D/F, G-1 for TAG through CofS, 6 Nov 44. WDGAP 421, copy in WDWAC 421.

⁵⁶ (1) Memo, Dir WAC for Col Kessinger, G-1 Div, 4 Sep 44. WDWAC 421. (2) Memo, Dir WAC for CG ASF, 4 Oct 44. WDWAC 421. (3) Memo, Dir Research and Development ASF to OQMG, 17 Oct 44. SPROG, in WDWAC 421. (4) Memo, Exec WAC for WAC Stf Dir ETO, 31 Oct 44. WDWAC 421. (5) D/F, G-1 for TAG, 4 Jan 45. WDGAP 421 WAC, in WDWAC 421. The design was approved by the Directors WAC and ANC, and by G-1, G-4, and the DCofS.