

carry the purse in the hand when not in formation.⁵⁷

Tucking the necktie into the shirt in the Army fashion was likewise forbidden because it added a certain undesirable bust fullness to individuals not in need of additional fullness in that respect. This provision had also shortly to be dropped in favor of the original system, for Wacs complained that the necktie hanging loose flapped in their eyes, became caught in machinery, was dipped in soup, or caused them to be arrested by military police who were not aware that the WAC had a different rule. The extra bust fullness was eventually deemed the lesser evil.

Work Clothing

The WAC uniform regulations from time to time added authorization for various types of work clothing that had been proved essential to replace the drivers' cotton coveralls, which from the first had proved an extremely poor substitute for either summer or winter work garments.

The herringbone twill cotton coveralls, as originally issued, had been designed only for tire-changing and emergency repairs. Both one- and two-piece models were used at different times, but all were ill-fitting and unbecoming garments. They were too hot for summer and for work in kitchens, too thin for protection in winter, too clumsy for use in laboratories, too unsightly for chauffeurs of staff cars, too unsanitary for hospital work. In warm climates they scratched the women's skin, causing rashes and infections, and some women proved allergic to the dye used in them. Their weight made them difficult for women to launder in the barracks, especially when the garments were grease-stained, and women who had only

one pair found that they would not dry overnight.

Even in Auxiliary days, various Army commands bombarded Director Hobby, whom they considered responsible, with requests for a substitute for the coveralls. The Army Air Forces requested a different type of work garment for Waacs engaged in aircraft maintenance, declaring that the drivers' coveralls lacked the necessary tool-holding devices for a mechanic's efficiency and were not designed for safety around moving machinery. The AAF's First Mapping Group also asked for medium-weight culottes for Waacs on duty in photo-laboratories and dark-rooms: "The culotte uniform will improve the operating efficiency of personnel to such an extent as to warrant its procurement."⁵⁸ Such early requests were all disapproved by the Army Service Forces.

By mid-1944, complaints concerning the WAC herringbone twill coveralls had come in from every part of the world where Wacs were stationed, including the four major overseas theaters. In the United States, the most complete study of the deficiencies of the herringbone twill coveralls was made in the Air Forces' testing center at Wright Field. It found that the material was too thick to allow circulation of air during physical training, long sleeves and trousers limited free movement during formal exercises, the allowance of two per person was insufficient for duty assignments on flight lines or in warehouses, and the material was too hot for wear in warehouses. The uniform was supplied only in three sizes, and "The woman who needs a size 10 is a very

⁵⁷ Intraoffice Memo, Well-Being Div for Dir WAC, 6 Oct 43. SPWA 300.2 (1-7-43) sec 2.

⁵⁸ Ltr, 1st Mapping Gp AAF to Dir WAC, 24 Jun 44. SPWA 400.34 (3-21-42) sec 4 (1942).