

ordering wrong-sized shoes. With this improvement, and with The Quartermaster General's decision to issue only shoes made on government-owned lasts, most problems in the fit of the service shoe and the field shoe were eliminated.

The Quartermaster General concluded that earlier troubles had not arisen from poor shoes but from imperfect fit. Earlier shoes had been procured on as many as twelve different commercial lasts and, while each was of good design and construction, attempts by field companies to order by size were thwarted as the "result of stocking shoes made on different lasts under the same stock number."⁶³

No similar solution was ever found to the need for an athletic shoe, since neither the high-laced field shoe nor the medium-heeled service shoe proved suitable for the required physical training. Quartermaster Corps investigators late in 1944 found that Wacs were wearing for this purpose and for kitchen duty what remained of the discontinued issue of tennis shoes, in "an advanced state of disrepair," as well as bedroom slippers, moccasins, and civilian sports shoes, presenting a "shabby and unsightly" appearance. The issue of tennis shoes could not be resumed, since all available materials were needed to produce canvas rubber footwear for combat men.

The Quartermaster General's Office was able to devise a substitute of non-critical materials, but the Army Service Forces and the General Staff refused to permit procurement of this item for women. Since WAC physical training was seldom done in public, the item was not, in the women's opinion, unduly important; most Wacs would have been glad to dispense with the physical training as well as with the shoes.⁶⁴

Stockings

In tropical countries, and in semitropical areas of the United States, it proved virtually impossible to keep the Wacs in stockings. The five pairs of rayon stockings per quarter—one and two thirds pairs a month—which had by this time become the authorized issue, deteriorated badly in hot climates, forcing the women to buy their own or go stockingless. In any event, many women preferred to leave off stockings in the interests of comfort. Both the Air Forces and the Ground Forces recommended to the War Department that Wacs be authorized to omit stockings from the uniform between reveille and retreat, on the post only, at the discretion of the commanding officer. On the other hand, health authorities pointed out that at least clean socks or other foot coverings were required in the interests of health and shoe preservation.

The socks proposal was vetoed by The Quartermaster General's Office, which had not procured women's cotton socks except for use with the exercise or tennis shoe, long since discontinued. The stockingless state, particularly off the post, was frowned upon by both the first and second WAC Directors, since it became only those whose legs were shapely, well-tanned, and well-shaved—and there were, all too obviously, many Corps members not thus qualified. Finally, after V-J Day, a new authorization was published for eight pairs of stockings per quarter in tropical countries and Zone 3 of the United States—a provision that was supposed to

⁶³ (1) Ltr, WAC Stf Dir TC to QMG, 14 Dec 43. SPWA 421. (2) Memo, Research and Development Div ASF for OQMG, 4 Sep 44. WDWAC 421. (3) Quotation from Risch, *Wardrobe for Women of the Army*, pp. 76-78.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*