

tional deficiencies of Negro men at that air base, Colonel Hobby replied with some emphasis that one of the War Department's invariable policies was that Wacs, regardless of race, would not be removed from their jobs to be "social companions."⁴⁴

Negro WAC units also experienced a special problem outside their control in that in some cases a serious race problem had already arisen in certain areas before their arrival, including what was described as "race riots," "unrest," "inflammatory gossip," and "rumor of a nature to incite the men."⁴⁵ Not only did such emotions prove contagious, but the sentiment in neighboring civilian communities was also sometimes anything but favorable toward the women's arrival. When it was planned to send a unit to Gardiner General Hospital in Chicago, where a strained situation already existed, protests were received by the Army from four suburban civic groups, to the effect that stationing the women in a restricted white residential area, near a white bathing beach, might cause "incidents" and race riots. Although the Army ignored these protests and successfully stationed the unit at Gardiner General Hospital, such a community reaction obviously presented an adjustment problem to unit members.⁴⁶

The women's adjustment to the Army situation was also rendered more difficult by well-meaning civilian groups in their constant watchfulness for discrimination. It was not surprising that many of the experiences that had been encountered by white Wacs everywhere, and attributed to their sex, should be interpreted by Negro Wacs as racial discrimination: these included the early malassignments, clothing shortages, malicious gossip, and other common difficulties. Possibly the most

serious report investigated was one of "terrorization and mistreatment," which actually proved to be the common experience of many WAC units—a chilly initial reception, rude remarks by civilian employees, lack of enthusiasm about Wacs on the part of USO hostesses, and pranks by soldiers. The unit, except for three complaining members, was actually found to be in good morale, satisfied with its recreational facilities, and satisfactory in its duties.⁴⁷

A similar situation arose when, in the last days of the war, both white and Negro units were recruited for general hospitals. Shortly afterward, Congressman Adam C. Powell informed the War Department that "Trouble is brewing at Fort Oglethorpe." Upon investigation it was found that Negro civilian employees were being given better hospital jobs than Negro Wacs; that Negro Wacs worked in hospitals 12 hours a day and civilians only 8; that Negro Wac orderlies had to take orders from civilian nurses.⁴⁸ These were exactly the problems currently reported from white hospital units.

An almost identical and widely publicized case of alleged discrimination concerned the court-martial of four Negro Wacs at Lovell General Hospital in Massachusetts. A summary of their grievances was endorsed by white medical technician recruits everywhere:

⁴⁴ Ltr, Air IG to CG AAF CTTC, with 10th Ind, Dir WAC to Contl Div ASF, 27 Oct 43. SPWA 291.2.

⁴⁵ Ltr, CofS to AAF, AGF, ASF, with 1st Ind, 13 Jul 43. SPWA 291.2.

⁴⁶ (1) Memo, Col John Nash for Dir Pers ASF, 6 Apr 45. SPDC, in SPAP 220. (2) Memo, Exec to CG ASF for TSG, 3 May 45. SPDC, in SGO 330.14 Gardiner GH.

⁴⁷ Ltr, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt to Dir WAC, 25 Oct 44, and reply, 16 Jan 45. WDWAC 330.14.

⁴⁸ D/F, G-1 for Leg and Ln Div, 3 May 45. WDWAC 291.2.