

members in Auxiliary days, more time and concern was given to this one course than to any other, with less satisfactory results. Although Wacs did not require hardening for combat, and would perform jobs similar to those they had done in civilian life, some moderate exercise or sports appeared desirable to offset sedentary work.

In determining the necessary measures, the WAC was handicapped by the fact that there apparently flourished in the United States at least two large and mutually hostile schools of physical education, as well as a considerable body of those who felt some antipathy toward any form of required exercise.²⁸

For the first training classes, civilian experts were hired, who set up a course based on Swedish-Danish gymnastics. The student body reaction was generally critical. One school of thought asserted that the exercises were "positively harmful to women over the age of 18,"²⁹ while another—that of a group of former physical education teachers—held that they were not strenuous enough, in that "strength-building exercises were not included."³⁰ The latter opinion prevailed when a group of newly commissioned women officers was assigned to revise the course. These officers immediately substituted a program designed to increase the strength of the women, who, they alleged, "are greatly in need of development. This puts a temporary strain on their physiques, but will pay dividends in the future."³¹

From this time to the end of the war, the WAC physical training program remained in the hands of WAC physical education experts of the strength-building school, whose chief, Capt. Donna Niles, informed a staff conference, "It is as much a part of our responsibility to keep physically fit as to uphold the Code of Conduct."³² Ac-

cordingly, there was produced a WAC physical training manual, which prescribed a warm-up "cadence series" followed by muscle-building "strength progressions" designed to give women strong muscles in arms and shoulders, abdomen, upper back and neck, and legs. "Progressions" started with simple exercises for these areas and worked up to very difficult ones; they were virtually identical with push-ups and other exercises given men. The manual also contained a number of careful photographic illustrations, which for some cause proved extremely popular with male personnel.³³

Opinion on the success of the course was as divided as was that of the civilian profession in the United States. Civilian physical educators of the strength-building school highly approved the program. One wrote:

Many of the most prominent women in the physical education profession feel that the WAC has the best physical training program for women of any of the branches of the Armed Forces.³⁴

On the other hand, the nationally prominent women of the WAC's Civilian Advisory Committee recommended that more relaxing sports and recreation be

²⁸ (1) Interv with Lt Col Helen H. Woods, 9 Oct 48.

(2) M/R, 26 Jun 43, sub: Program Relative to WAAC Physical Tng. SPWA 353 (9-22-42), 1942.

²⁹ Memo, 3d O Helen H. Woods for Dir WAAC, 11 Dec 42. SPWA 353 (9-22-42) Phys Tng.

³⁰ ASF Hist of WAC Tng, pp. 91-92.

³¹ Memo, 2d O Donna Niles for 1st O Dorothea A. Coleman, Tng Plans Div WAAC Hq, 13 Jan 43. See also Ltr, Dir Tng, Ft Des Moines, to WAAC Hq, 22 Sep 42. Both in SPWA 353 (9-22-42), 1942.

³² Min, WAC Stf Dirs Conf, Chicago, 15-17 Jun 43, SPWA 337 (6-1-43).

³³ WDFM 35-20, 15 Jul 43. The manual was reproduced and sold by *The Infantry Journal*.

³⁴ Ltr, Mabel Lee (Member, NCAC from University of Nebraska Department of Physical Education for Women) to Dir WAC, 13 Mar 45. WDWAC 720.