

# Mrs. W. P. Hobby Delivers Address

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fields of education, social and personnel work, and in group leadership. Between them these women had personally interviewed some 4,000 women who aspired to be officers in the WAAC.

After days of patient, conscientious, democratic consideration of the qualities of leadership of these applicants, the final selection of 440 was made.

As I looked over their applications I was impressed by the integrity of their devotion to their country; I was moved by the intensity of their desire to serve that country.

There was the music supervisor for the midwest, who wrote: "I feel this is my country and I consider it a duty, an obligation and a privilege to serve. Two uncles fought in the world war. One uncle, too ill now, but anxious to go again, was decorated for bravery in France. I should be proud to have him know I am carrying on."

There was the young scholar working for a B. S. in education at a large eastern university who said: "I want to be a part of history now being made. I am moved to apply for admission into the WAAC through an earnest desire to do my share, and with full realization of the seriousness of the job to be done."

From New England, a young college graduate now engaged in community welfare work, tells us that she wants to join the WAAC—"because America is my country and needs my help."

Listen to this: "My father was an officer in the national guard before he went to France to serve in the last war. He was recommended for the Croix de Guerre. To say that I want to serve my country would be a trite phrase; to say that I want to serve my race would be more explicit. Today, more than ever, leaders in our race are needed to carry on the traditions of service and loyalty so apparent when our country is in distress."

And this, from a university graduate now working in Nebraska: "There are very few opportunities for Negro women to perform work and duties which will allow them fully to express their realization of the need for a united effort to carry out the war effort of the United States. I feel that the WAAC will give me a purposeful and challenging experience in carrying out my duties."

There were applications from girls from Tuskegee and from Wilberforce; girls from Prairie View, and from Howard university and from many other schools and colleges. There were applications from many members of your own civic-minded sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha. One distinguished leader in this organization sums it up; it seems to me, when she writes: "In a desire, as a member of the Negro race, to serve my country at this time, I wish to enroll in the WAAC. At this time in history when the entire world is at war, it is the duty of every citizen, regardless of race or creed, to do his share to bring back peace and security to our country. I hope in some way to be able to contribute towards this peace and harmony."

I could go on for many minutes, giving you similar, yet always individual expressions of the patriotism to their country, the loyalty to their race and the responsibility to their sex that these applicants feel.

But I always want to tell you, and to tell them, that while membership in the WAAC is first and fundamentally in order to help the country, there are other, real, though secondary, dividends that this membership pays a member.

For instance: The training a WAAC member receives will not only make her an efficient person in the corps, but will make her a better citizen when she returns to her community after the war is waged and won. The value of a disciplined mind and a trained body must not be ignored by her; cannot be overlooked by her community.

"The WAAC member will return to her home with a sharper sense of civic responsibility and a deeper devotion to her country. She cannot fail but to be a powerful influence and inspiration in her community. She will want to make democracy work; she will be better equipped to help make democracy work.

In a practical way, too, she will return a more efficient wage-earner, and a more skilled worker; she may have learned new skills or she may have had old talents more perfectly trained.

All these things are second to the first thing—of helping win the war. But when the peace comes, these other things will fall into proper place, and the woman who has served with the corps will take her place as a leader.

You want me to tell you about Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, and I want to tell you about it. A new chapter in American military history is being written by the WAAC. We are earnestly determined to make this new chapter a serious contribution and not a feminine footnote.

Today, in many areas of endeavor, this war, if you will pardon the pun, is being "manned" by women. There is nothing new or surprising in this. In every national crisis, just as in all neighborhood progress, the American woman has frequently and courageously played a man's part.

There was Molly Pitcher, who seized her husband's gun as he fell dead at the Battle of Monmouth in the Revolutionary war, and fired her way into the history books. She won a sergeant's stripes from a grateful general, George Washington.

There was Clara Barton, who pushed against the doors of masculine opposition until she finally obtained the hospital supplies which enabled her to found the American Red Cross.

There was heroic Harriet Tubman. With a price of nearly \$50,000 on her head, she held that head high and, by her courage and resourcefulness, brought more than 300 of her people from slavery to safety during the night-watches of the troubled years of the 1850s.

This new corps is a 1942 expression of the patriotism and the courage that, as I have said, the women of America have always demonstrated in every national crisis.

The women of America have always been brave enough, adventurous enough, to dare take the path that led to liberty. They have long known, as you have long realized, that the road to liberty is marked by milestones of endurance and courage and faith.

The women who join the WAAC know this—they are ready and eager to undertake a long journey, up a new road. They are ready for sacrifice, as they are eager for service.

Creation of this corps was authorized May 14, when President Roosevelt signed the bill which had been introduced into Congress by Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, of Massachusetts.

The purpose of the corps, the first of its kind in American military history, is to enlist women, not in the army, but with the army, so that they may replace, and thereby release men for the fighting front. This does not mean that the war department is afraid of, or faced with, any shortage of man power. It does mean that there are certain tasks,

now being performed by soldiers, which women may properly take over.

Enrollment in the corps is voluntary and open to all women, regardless of race, creed or color, married or single, citizens of the United States, by birth or naturalization. These women, in the majority of cases must be between the ages of 21 and 45. A small number of women between the ages of 45 and 49 have been accepted as candidates for the officer-training school, but this is a rather specialized category.

Recruiting for candidates for the officer-training school which starts at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, began May 27 and ended June 4. In this recruiting, and only in this recruiting, did the applicant have to have had a high school education or its equivalent. In all future enlistments for auxiliaries (who are like the enlisted men in the army) there is not even the high school diploma requirement.

This is in the interests of a truly democratic women's army.

Once a woman is in the corps, however, there are certain professional and technical tasks to which she can be assigned, quite properly, only if she has had adequate professional or technical training, and some specialized work experience.

This was the recruitment procedure. The applicants, from all parts of the country, went to their nearest local recruiting station and got the proper blanks. They filled them out and filed them at the appropriate male recruiting station, of which there are 52 in the United States. It is estimated that more than 30,000 blanks were turned in.

This response is gratifying, not only because of its numerical size, but because of its spiritual strength.

The applicant whose papers were in order and who met other specified requirements were summoned within a week for a mental alertness test and a preliminary interview. This mental alertness test was similar to, but not identical with, the mental alertness tests given the boys in the army.

The applications of all those who had successfully passed the tests up to this point, were forwarded to the appropriate corps area, of which there are nine. At each corps area, approximately 500 of the highest ranking applicants in that area were summoned for a physical examination, and a very detailed interview.

A group of women, known as director's representatives, took an important part in these interviews. These 19 women, working in small groups in each of the nine corps areas, interviewed, between them, more than 4,000 applicants. They brought their findings to Washington, Saturday, June 27, and met with me, for four days of careful, almost prayerful, work of making the final selections.

Meanwhile, another committee, called the evaluating board, and composed of eminent psychiatrists, both men and women, had been reviewing the applications and paper work of the applicants.

These two groups, working first separately and then in consultation, exchanged views and adjusted any differences in selection which they had made independently, and finally, Tuesday night, June 30, the final, and I am sure you will agree, careful, selection of the accepted candidates was made.

The women will presently be informed, by officials in their own corps area, of their success, and they will go to Fort Des Moines, July 20, there to learn to become "leading ladies." Leading ladies, no prima donnas. We have this on the word of Colonel Don C. Faith, who is commander of the training school.

Colonel Faith says: "These women, prospective officers in the WAAC,

will be trained, first, last and always, in leadership—the leadership that means self-confidence but no arrogance; the ability to understand as well as to command."

In addition, Colonel Faith has planned a course of study designed to teach the women "how to get along in a military atmosphere, and how to merge individualism into community living."

The course of study will include: Military courtesies and ceremonies; military discipline and drill. Student officers will also be thoroughly instructed in military hygiene and sanitation, first aid, aircraft identification, gas mask drill, mess management, and mess life requirements.

The candidate will wear an olive drab uniform, attractive, but workmanlike. While in training she will live in comfortable quarters. She will receive \$50 a month during this period. Her meals and all necessary medical and dental services will be supplied by the government.

The candidate will work hard. She will be on a military schedule from 6 a. m. to 11 p. m., six days a week. She will have seven, 45-minute classes each week day and 45 minutes of military drill, in addition to the regular camp routine.

But she won't work all the time. A physical fitness and recreation program will be under the direction of Miss Catharine Van Rensselaer, of Russell Sage college. A resident counselor will be on hand to aid the girls in their personal problems, and to help in hospitality.

The candidate will get week-end passes but, she must remain in Des Moines unless special leave is obtained and this will be given only in special cases of emergency. She will be permitted to wear civilian dress when on leave and off the post.

On post, and in uniform, she may wear a bit of jewelry; a wedding, guard or signet ring, and a wrist watch.

At Fort Des Moines, candidates will take a six-week intensive training course. At its conclusion a few trainees will be commissioned according to their individual achievement records. The balance of the candidates who satisfactorily completed the course will be given "certificates of capacity," but will not be commissioned until vacancies occur.

Following the six-week course, there will be an additional two weeks spent in training for the specific jobs assigned.

Recruiting for the auxiliaries, the equivalent of the enlisted men in the army, will start later this month. In the group to be recruited this summer, there will be a sizeable representation of Negro women.

The first group of Negro auxiliaries will report to Fort Des Moines for training August 24. A second group, whose specialized training does not have to be so long, will go to Fort Des Moines, September 21. The third detachment, whose specific tasks call for a still shorter training period, will enroll at the fort October 19.

These groups will finish their required courses at the same time. And two companies, of 150 each, of Negro auxiliaries, commanded by Negro officers, will report to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in the ninth corps area, November 16.

Two companies, of the first eight companies to be turned out of Fort Des Moines, will be composed of Negro women.

At Fort Huachuca, there will be headquarters platoons, who perform the duties of the first sergeant, supply sergeant, mess sergeant, company clerk and other related tasks.

There will also be clerical platoons whose personnel will include clerks, stenographers, typists, postal clerks, etc.

There will be a variety of neces-

sary and suitable tasks for the women to perform, and in performing them, they will, in many cases, release men for combat service.

The rate of pay in this WAAC is as follows:

First officers receive \$106.67 per month, second officers, \$131.27 per month, and third officers, \$125 per month. All this is plus quarters and a subsistence allowance of 60 cents per day.

Auxiliaries have their own scale: First leader, \$72 per month; leader, \$80 per month; junior leader, \$54 per month. Auxiliaries will receive \$21 a month for the first four months, then \$30 per month. All members can earn additional pay as specialists.

There will be other benefits. For instance: Medical and dental services, hospitalization, medicines and other appropriate health services are all provided by the government. In addition, members are entitled to all the benefits to which civil service employees are entitled under the United States employees compensation act. They will also receive all the benefits provided by the soldiers' and sailors' civil relief act of 1940.

By the end of the year 1942, it is expected that the numerical strength of the corps will reach 13,000.

It is estimated that by June of 1943 the WAAC will number approximately 17,000. These officers and auxiliaries will be serving wherever they are needed; doing whatever is needed.

Back of each one of these 300 women who will make up those two companies, will be the hope and faith and pride of the five million Negro women of the United States.

The WAAC corps gives the Negro women of 1942 a new opportunity to serve her country in a crisis. The Negro girl of 1942 who joins the corps will give to her country the full measure of devotion.

And she will receive new opportunities for expression.

Liberty is a dangerous thing; but not nearly so dangerous as suppression. Liberty belongs to those who admire its significance and accept its sacrifice.

It requires a spirit of adventure to start up the path to liberty. It takes a spirit of determination and devotion to keep on the path. In this crisis, those who complete the journey, will be the ones who know the milestones. They will have an ability to chart the way for a re-established freedom in the world when we have won over hatred and evil. They will also have an obligation to help chart this new and needed freedom.

In this task, so far-reaching in both space and time, the women of the WAAC and, in a very special sense, the Negro women of the WAAC will have a unique and historic opportunity.

The question you and I, and our contemporaries, are called upon to answer today is clear, its implications are unmistakable.

"Shall our nation control all others, materially and economically for its own benefit? Or shall we the people in a sovereign force govern ourselves according to our own laws?"

The answer is clear; its implications unmistakable. The peoples of the earth shall govern themselves by a government of self-made laws.

And until we die at our posts, if die we must, we are one with unflinching service, with unalterable faith and with unremitting determination nobly to save the last best hope on earth.

Approximately 33,000 freight and passenger trains are operated daily by the railroads of the United States.