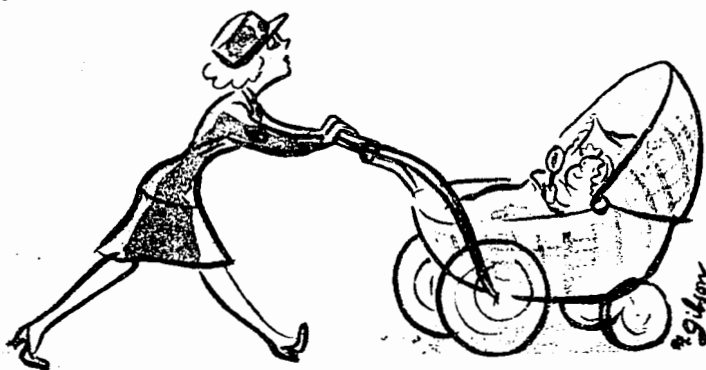




When GI Girls Return

WHEN the Wacs, the Waves, the Spars and the lady Marines were first added to our armed forces, opponents to women in uniform raised the bugaboo that the women of America would come out of uniform barking like drill sergeants. They won't be fit companions for civilian men, they'll never settle down to being wives and mothers, and their morals—the arguments would end at this point with a sorrowful shaking of the head.

A survey of Woman's Army Corps members stationed in the New York area indicates that all this headshaking was unnecessary. Being in uniform has not deprived them of their essential femininity nor of their normal desires for husband, home and children. On the contrary it has in many instances convinced the "By God, I'm going to be a career woman" girls that marriage is not only a sacrament but something they might be interested in when the boys come home.

Their experience in the services, most uniformed girls report, has helped them see more clearly woman's place in the general scheme of things. They don't feel that life is a struggle between the sexes for supremacy, nor do they think that women are going to try to run the post-war world. However, they do believe they have extended feminine horizons by proving that women could make important contributions in wartime, and peacetime, too.

Wac Lieut. Irma Bouton, who served nine months in North Africa as a noncommissioned officer, is typical of the majority of women in uniform. Her one and only post-war plan is to get married. She has the bridegroom already picked out and the only barrier between her and the altar is the 5,000 miles that separate her and her future husband.

"SO far as I'm concerned," said Lieutenant Bouton, "men are still the guys who bring home the bacon. One thing I've learned in the Army is to appreciate the simpler things in life. When I get out I want to have a home and enjoy those simple things.

"Another thing I've learned is confidence in myself. In the Wac a job is thrown at you, and it is assumed that you can do it. I've had some pretty tough assignments, but I've had to do them. That does something to you; pretty soon you aren't afraid of anything. I think that will make me a better homemaker."

Those girls who plan to combine marriage and a job talk in terms of working "just for a few years." Some of them are worried about whether their husbands and sweethearts will be able to get jobs when they get back from overseas, and they anticipate having to work for a while to help out.

It is estimated that only 25 per cent of returning service men will want to go back to their pre-war jobs, and it seems probable that even fewer service women will resume their peacetime chores. Girls who held routine clerical jobs or worked as salesgirls or in beauty shops, and even some professional women, have acquired new skills and new ambitions.

Wac Lieut. Madeline Bushman, who used to teach physical education, has had just such an experience. "The Army has taught me things about myself I never knew before," she said. "When I returned from North Africa I was asked to give some radio talks. I was terrified and tried to get out of it. But I gave the talks and the more radio work I did, the more I loved it. Now I think I'd scrub floors in a radio station for the chance to do some acting or announcing. I'm certainly not going back to teaching physical education if I can help it."

GIRLS who held interesting jobs before the war summoned them to temporarily more important tasks are for the most part planning to pick up where they left off. And those who were in school and college are generally planning to take advantage of the educational provisions of the GI Bill of Rights.

And, strange as it may seem, there are many service women who would like nothing better than to remain in uniform if the women's services are continued as a permanent part of our armed forces. They find some encouragement in the announcement by Representative E. E. Cox of Georgia that he would seek a commission to study plans for a military academy for women officers. Pfc. Thelma Giddings, a member of the Negro detachment at Halloran General Hospital, is representative of this group.

"They're just going to have to kick me out of this Army," said Thelma, who was a domestic before the war but who has become a surgical technician in the Army. "Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be a soldier. The Wac was made to order for me. I sure would like to stay in after the war."

BEATRICE BERG.