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The Army Plans His Uniform for Comfort.... His Recreation for Morale

Women's Interest Section, War Dept.

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The Army Plans

His Uniform for Comfort

Today's Army uniform is trim, light-weight and weather-proof

In clothing, as in armaments, the Army is rapidly becoming streamlined. The new uniforms are trimmer, better fitting, less bulky than any in our history. They are also more wind-resistant and water-repellent. The old and awkward wrap-around leggings of the first World War are rapidly going the way of the celluloid collar and high button shoes. The breeches formerly worn with these spiral leggings are being succeeded by full-length, slack-type trousers which can, and indeed must, be kept as carefully pressed as any business blue serge.

The 1917 coat collar is giving way to the more graceful lapel of 1942. This regulation coat lapel collar, worn with shirt and tie, is a military adaptation of a corresponding civilian dress.

A comfortable, smart-looking field jacket, authorized by the War Department in September of 1941, is now being turned out in great production and with great popularity. It is wrinkle-proof and weather-proof. It is warm, with a lining of 10-ounce wool, a collar which can be turned up and fastened close around the neck, and wrist straps to keep out wind and weather.

The new fatigue uniform is made of olive drab herringbone twill, with full cut trousers and a pleated-back jacket with two commodious pockets. Three such suits are issued each enlisted man. Intended primarily for work, they also serve as an informal drill uniform.

Army shoes have been streamlined. At least one of the pairs issued the soldier can "go to town" with greater grace than its more clumsy ancestor of 1917. This is the new oxford, a low-quarter tan, with a plain toe, a sturdy single sole, a half rubber heel with leather quarter linings. It is the favored footwear of the enlisted man when he is off duty.

Work gloves, of either heavy leather or olive drab wool, now come in but two sizes. This reduction in number of sizes has worked no hardship on hands, for work gloves do not fit skin-tight. It means a saving to the Government of about 20 cents a pair, as well as a saving in storage space, and in minutes and motions in handling procedure.

There is a special horsehide glove to protect hands from cuts and scratches when working with barbed wire. A double layer of grain horsehide covers the palm of this new gauntlet type. This glove, which underwent extensive tests at Fort Belvoir, Va., remains pliable even after being soaked in the rain.

The soldier's uniform has to take it. That is why the Army maintains a laboratory in the Quartermaster's Depot at Philadelphia, where it tests all the materials that go into uniforms. As many as 2 million yards of cloth and 4,000 cases of finished clothing have been put through this huge Army "bureau of standards" in a single day.

Technicians at delicate machinery yank and pull samples until they rip. Artificial weather machines give a strip of cloth months of rain and windstorm in a few concentrated minutes. Bright man-made sunshine burns and fades the cloth. A seeing-eye detects holes in raincoats. A button crusher tests the endurance of the buttons. When materials pass these tests, they are ready to go to join the Army, whether it be in the North or South.

The soldier's headgear, like so many items in his wardrobe, is being modernized. There is a new field hat now being developed for use of troops in warm weather. Made of khaki twill with a protecting brim, it is lightweight, waterproof and ventilated. It is flexible enough to be folded up or rolled up and placed in the pocket or under the belt. It will be worn by troops in the field for drilling and maneuvers.
VARIED programs of recreational activities in the Army are designed to brighten the spirit of the soldier after a long day of work, thus strengthening his ability and desire to perform his military duties.

Uncle Sam is busy turning today's trainee into a first-rate fighting man. He drills him rigorously; exercises him vigorously. He feeds him well; dresses him warmly. He puts a doctor and a minister at his beck and call. He trains him and teaches him, from dawn to dusk. But when the soldier has stood retreat at Camp theaters furnish a pleasant setting for movies and amateur theatricals.

The Day Room, one for every company, is a friendly place in which to loaf and laugh when the day's work is done. Here there are no hostesses and no guests. It is the men's "home."

Athletics for all—this is the goal of the athletic director in every camp. He cannot use a whole battalion as a basketball squad or even a baseball nine. But he organizes a number of teams, wherever possible, and stages intramural contests between Platoons and Companies, and tournaments between battalions and regiments. This not only permits a wide participation of men, but it also fosters a spirited sense of competition and group pride.

Boxing is popular with the men because it is a sport in which one amateur can compete with another amateur, on an individual basis. Boxing is popular with the athletic director because it is a sport which, because of this individual competition, permits large-scale competition. The Army is rapidly equipping all camps with boxing rings and platforms as well as an assortment of gloves.

The Service Club plays an important part in the soldier's social life. These clubs are of three different sizes and are "manned" by from one to three hostesses. Each building, large or small, has a dance floor, a game room, a library and reading room, and a cafeteria.

The Army Motion Picture Service runs all the movie performances for the Service men. "Big Top" tents, each seating 2,200, take care of the crowds in the larger camps. Smaller encampments usually have smaller theaters, each accommodating about 1,000.

"Stage truck" is a popular summer time phrase in the camps that are far from the city. To these more isolated camps, from upper New York State to Wyoming, go the Truck Shows, sponsored by the Citizens' Committee for the Army and Navy, Inc.

The side of the main truck slides down to form a porch-like roof and stage. Baby "spots" are rigged up on the front and side; amplifiers are hooked up and the show is ready to start. If the troupe has to play two shows in an evening, which is often the case, all hands set to with speed. They can fold up the stage, stow the gear, embark the troupe, and report for action two miles away in thirteen minutes flat.

In addition to the formally planned entertainment series there are many incidental events, when a stage screen or radio celebrity comes to camp and gives a performance. Camps near Hollywood particularly benefit from these visits from celebrities in the entertainment field. Camp Roberts, in California, stages a weekly open house, so that visitors may see how Uncle Sam is turning a selectee into a soldier.

The recreational officer at camp also is a talent scout always on the look-out for men who can take part in amateur theatricals, minstrel shows and concerts. There is usually an abundance of willing talent and the men who take part seem to get as much enjoyment out of their volunteer activity as the men who sit in the audience and applaud.

The cultural training in the homes and schools of the country during the past generation is reflecting itself in the recreational interest of many of today's trainees. Music, art and reading, interests that have been fostered by the public schools and the national women's groups, are among the leading recreational occupations in the 1942 Army camp.

Tests of taste in music are being made at Fort Belvoir and Fort Myer, Va., both of which camps are considered a pretty good cross-section of American soldiery. If the experiment shows that the soldiers want to supplement "jive" with more serious music, the music officials will try to satisfy that desire.

At Fort Meade, Md., an officer who introduced classical concerts into his program of recorded music rejoiced over the rising curve of attendance after the change. Symphonic recordings in the library at Fort Knox, Ky., are much in demand. At Camp Claiborne, La., in response to popular demands, weekly classical concerts were inaugurated with a commentary on the works and composers on the program.

Mass singing is everywhere encouraged. In an endeavor to keep alive its long traditions of song, the Army publishes its own song book and gives a copy to every enlisted man.

—Prepared by the Women's Interest Section, War Dept.

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