

# "At Home" On The Range



**T**HERE is no regular Visitors' Day at this particular camp. This parade ground and this stretch of wind-blown tussock seldom support the tread of any but army boots, these walls seldom witness a *toilette* more elaborate than the khaki coat and skirt of the woman in uniform. But to-day makes history. For to-day, on the occasion of yet another passing-out parade of the radio-location branch of the W.A.A.C., the trainees are for the first time permitted to invite to the ceremony and the subsequent "At Home" one female friend apiece.

So on this day of days the sentries at the gate are almost engulfed beneath a swarm of gay femininity. Passes are duly inspected, and the chattering throng surges up the driveway and elongates itself against the ropes.

On the far side of the parade ground Waacs stand in formation. There is a preparatory growl from the band, the units spring to attention, ready for the ceremonial inspection by their Commander-in-Chief, Lieutenant-Colonel Jowett. The band launches into "Annie Laurie," and the official party begins its symmetrical weaving from rank to rank and from unit to unit.

## The March Past

The inspection is over, the march past begins. The official party takes up its stand at the saluting base, the unofficial photographer merges into the crowd on the sidelines. Rank after rank the troops swing past, and murmurs of admiration rise from the guests gathered beside the parade ground. "And in those boots!" exclaims a young woman, whose high-heeled court shoes might be considered even more unsuitable for feminine wear than the inch-soled stout two-pounders worn by the marching girls.

After the march-past come the speeches, like the radio location course, short and serviceable, and then the guests are claimed by individual Waacs and taken to see the graduands of the course demonstrating with actual equipment. It's all a little involved to the guests, who, after the first five minutes become a trifle bored with watching small parties of girls rushing hither and thither, and a large gun swinging round and round, and divert their attention to their fellow guests and their hostesses.

It's an interesting contrast. There are the Waacs themselves, khaki battledress and boots or khaki tunic and skirt with very khaki lisle stockings and brown walking shoes. Side by side with them the female friends in a variety of summer and winter bests. Tailored black costume with fur, plus large black halo with veil. Midnight blue, two-piece silk ensemble with white trimmings, hat and gloves. Pale blue stud frock with black bangkok picture hat. Tan and green check sports suit with green turban. Someone else hatless in cool green linen (too cool, in view of the wind).

The demonstration is over. Next item in the afternoon programme is the inspection by the guests of Waac living and sleeping accommodation. The crowd begins to drift from the demonstration ground. En route, Lieutenant-Colonel Jowett, ex-president of the

Wellington Plunket Society, pauses to take an ex-professional interest in one small but very satisfactory specimen of babyhood, who has been watching the demonstration with a suitable air of interest from the seclusion of his pram.

Spurred on by the thought of afternoon tea to come, the guests cross from building to building, traverse corridors, climb stairs, put their heads round doors,

murmur "How nice!", "How compact," "How well-equipped!", "How cosy!" And with justification.

Afternoon tea, a crowded function, is now over. The guests begin to disperse, the kitchen staff to cope with the flood of cups and saucers, crumby plates and half-nibbled sandwiches. Outside, the radio-location girls, their dignity temporarily forgotten, are singing lustily "Hallelujah, Join the Waacs," and posing in laughing groups for photographs from the unofficial photographer. The guests, reds and greens and blues and blacks, trickle slowly out the gate. By half-past four, even the grey of the unofficial photographer is no longer to be seen, and the camp settles down once more into its monotony of khaki and brown and camouflage green.



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