

# Textiles, Teachers, and Troops

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA 1880-1945

## The Elixir of War: Greensboro, N.C. as an "Army Town," 1942-1946<sup>1</sup>

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On June 2, 1942, Mayor William H. Sullivan of Greensboro told the City Council that he and the city manager had been approached by officers of the United States Army who had informed them of the possible location of an "Air Training Camp" in or near the city. The initial contact had been made in April, about the time Sullivan became mayor, and after a detailed study the army had determined that the most suitable place for the camp was a wooded tract of land which straddled Bessemer Avenue in the northeast part of the city, owned by a subsidiary of Cone Mills. Sullivan added that the officers had requested that he be given authority to sign "certain letters" to facilitate the creation of the camp. The council voted unanimous approval and in the days that followed Greensboro would abandon most of its blue laws, close streets, agree to construct water and sewer lines up to the "bounds" of the reservation, allow the army to use the police target range, agree to provide garbage collection, guarantee 1,350,000 gallons of water every 24 hours, and promise not to charge tuition to the children of army personnel enrolled in city schools.<sup>2</sup> These moves were the culmination of weeks of secret talks

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<sup>1</sup> In the early 1970s Dr. Stoesen, along with some of his history students at Guilford College, began extensive research on WWII era Greensboro. His research evolved over the next twenty years from a small paper to this final version, which incorporated material from the Paul Younts Collection at the Greensboro Historical Museum which had been acquired in 1990. This final version is still, in 2014, almost twenty-four later, the best documentation we have on the "birth," development, and post-war history of the 650 acres of land at the corner of Summit and Bessemer Avenues. This research included at least two oral histories that were conducted by Meg Breeden, which are housed at the Greensboro Historical Museum in the Stoesen Collection (namely, those of Katherine Ravenel, along with the joint interview with Eula Whitley and Rose Vines.) They are included elsewhere on the *Teachers, Textiles, and Troops* website. The *Elixir of War* was never published, so it appears here to the general public for the first time. Those interested in World War II Greensboro are very fortunate that this ground breaking research was preserved by Dr. Stoesen and presented as part of his archives at the Archives at the Greensboro Historical Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the City Council of the City of Greensboro, N.C., June 2, 1942, Minute Book 17, 404, 405. Letters of agreement from Mayor W.H. Sullivan to District Engineer, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington N.C., June 3, 1942, in Exhibit Book, City Clerk's office, Greensboro, N.C. The Letter of agreement from Ben H. Smith, Superintendent of Schools, Greensboro, N.C. to District Engineer, July 3, 1942 is in "History of BTC No. 10, Greensboro, N. c., 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943," 229.29 Appendix, Enclosure # 8, Vol IV. The records of Basic Training Center No. 10 and the Greensboro Overseas

which helped to create a bond between the city and the army which would last throughout most of the war. There was no notice of these actions in the next day's papers but it was public knowledge to anyone attending the meeting. The letters were duly prepared and signed by Sullivan with copies placed on file in the city clerk's exhibit book. Later in the July the *Record* briefly noted the prospect of the camp, but it would not be until the fall that any real notice was taken of what about to happen to the city.

This was the second move the Army Air Force had made in the Greensboro area in the months following Pearl Harbor. In March of 1942 the east wing of the Pilot Life Insurance Company's campus-like headquarters at Sedgefield had been taken over. There, the Army Air Forces had located the Headquarters of the First District of its Technical Training Command. This was a small detachment of 220 men engaged in administrative work, housed in the Sedgefield Inn which also was commandeered. A third move came on July 8, 1943 when the 2nd Ferrying Service Station, a unit of the Air Transport Command took over the Greensboro-High Point Airport.

In 1941 Greensboro's population was slightly under 60,000 people. It was a quiet southern town which had grown rapidly after the creation of textile mills and colleges in the late 19th century. This had been accompanied by the construction of rail lines to the west and southeast and the development of insurance companies and wholesale grocery and hardware firms. One historian found that Greensboro was a classic study of a "New South" city with an unusual ability to integrate newcomers into its business and commercial elite.<sup>3</sup> In 1940 Huger King, a young lawyer recently arrived from South Carolina, became mayor simply because it was "his turn."<sup>4</sup> During World War II Greensboro would continue to integrate a swarm of newcomers into its social fabric as long as it seemed the patriotic thing to do.

There had been little to ruffle Greensboro's essential calm and sense of progress as the twentieth century unfolded. While the city had known many problems during the depths of the depression, by 1935 its insurance, tobacco, patent medicine industries along with its women's hosiery factories were running full-tilt and even expanding. In 1940 the future seemed bright, and with its rail and highway connections, and a well-established airport, one view held that "when the war interrupted, Greensboro was

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Replacement Depot are at the United States Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Millard Kipp, III, "Urban Growth and Social Change in the South, 1870-1920: Greensboro, North Carolina as a Case Study." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1974. See also, Kipp, "Old Notables and Newcomers: The Economic and Political Elite of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1880-1920." *Journal of Southern History*, August, 1977, 373-394.

<sup>4</sup> Huger King, [date]3. *Greensboro Daily News*, April 16, 1942.

rapidly moving toward its goal as a major distribution center."<sup>5</sup> The prospect of becoming an army town probably never crossed anyone's mind. The Babson annual review of business reported 1941 as a "good year" except in construction which was \$750,000 below 1940. Babson's forecast for 1942 emphasized continued building sluggishness and in the absence of war-related activities a generally "slack" economy.<sup>6</sup> The war replaced the optimism about Greensboro's economic future with a deepening pessimism. Earlier the city had obtained a glimpse of the effect of war on an economy as citizens and businessmen had enthusiastically welcomed hundreds of soldiers on maneuvers on weekend leave. It gained the reputation of being "the most friendly city of them all for servicemen." For some soldiers it was too friendly. All they wanted was a place where they could relax on their own. Greensboro's "planned weekends" were more than some could stand, so they adjourned to hotels where they would be left alone.<sup>7</sup> But the most important long term economic development could not even be seen at first. This was a pipeline from Louisiana which crept up to the outskirts of the city during 1941. After Pearl Harbor this project was rushed to completion and the first tanker trucks departed in February, 1942. Soon over 100 a day were heading for points in the Carolinas and Virginia.<sup>8</sup>

But pipelines and visiting soldiers could not quell the anxieties of Elm Street merchants. They worried and fretted as they saw people either entering the armed services or heading for centers of defense industry. Patriotism might say grin and bear it, but a reporter found that "a greater amount of uncertainty than is normal beclouds the [business] scene."<sup>9</sup> The *Greensboro Record* reported that what the business community hoped for most of all was "that ways and means will be found toward...helping a nation at war and at the same time have a profitable year of operations."<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the *Daily News* feared the possibility of war's having a "dampening effect on the local economy," and wondered whether the city might ever find a way to "participate in the war."<sup>11</sup> If a way was not found, Greensboro's economy would become depressed and although this could not be "disassociated from the war effort" there would be no succor from Washington because priorities would go elsewhere. As a result Greensboro would "suffer greatly."<sup>12</sup> There seemed not even the remotest chance that any major wartime activity would be located in Greensboro so that it would continue to have a constricting civilian economy and perhaps eventually be punished for its lack of participation. This was deeply troubling but no answers came.

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<sup>5</sup> *Greensboro Daily News*, November 7, 1942. Hereinafter cited as *Daily News*.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily News*, January 1, 1942.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily News*, April 16, August 14, 1942.

<sup>8</sup> *Daily News*, February 22, 1942

<sup>9</sup> *Greensboro Record*, January 1, 1942. Hereinafter cited as *Record*.

<sup>10</sup> *Record*, January 1, 1942.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily News*, January 1, 1942.

<sup>12</sup> *Daily News*, January 2, 1942

By late February, 1942 at a Civitan Club meeting which featured testimonials on the topic "How the War is Affecting My Business" several were "practically extinct."<sup>13</sup> Retail establishments had been hit the hardest, but fears were expressed that the virus would spread quickly to wholesale houses and other "nonessential" activities. One of the few bright spots was Woman's College which began its spring term with a "full complement of faculty and students" and showed "no effects of the emergency of war which is threatening enrollment at men's institutions."<sup>14</sup>

To be the recipient of Washington's attention in 1940 and 1941 was not necessarily something to be envied. It was probably better to be ignored if the [illegible] found by a select committee of the United States House of Representatives in war-impacted areas are even partially true. In Jacksonville, Florida war workers were living in "hovels made of scraps of metal, building paper and even palmetto leaves over rude frames." In Tullahoma, Tennessee they lived in "boxcars, barns, churches, tents, shacks, while others slept in the streets," and in Radford, Virginia they were "living like hogs." Closer to home the 17,000 people of Fayetteville had become hosts to 60,000 soldiers and 28,000 construction workers. "Practically everyone turned homes into rooming houses, with as many as 6 or 8 men in a room."<sup>15</sup> The calm that prevailed in Greensboro was more to be envied than the activity elsewhere even though it was disquieting to merchants and businessmen. The city would enter the war with little disruption to its normal pace and little pain for either residents or newcomers.

While there was worry about loss of business there was little concern with civil defense. After a brief flurry of patriotic interest following Pearl Harbor when it was hoped that 10,000 volunteers would join a Civil Defense Volunteer Organization few in Greensboro seemed concerned about a requirement that they protect themselves from "bombing attacks, sabotage, or other war hazards."<sup>16</sup> Even so, city manager Carl W. Smedberg expressed disappointment on finding that Greensboro was allotted only 59,319 gas masks instead of the 75,000 he believed were needed.<sup>17</sup> None were ever delivered. Talk about a "Jap or German bombing spree" deep in North Carolina fooled no one, although it was said that "this isn't funny stuff to be taken lightly." A later effort to find just 100 civil defense volunteers to give two hours a week to man a control center produced

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<sup>13</sup> *Daily News*, February 21, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> *Record*, January 5, 1942.

<sup>15</sup> United States House of Representatives, Select committee to Investigate National Defense Migration, 77 Cong. 1 Sess., *Hearings*, 6429, 6437, 6440, 6441.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily News*, February 1, 1942, clipping in "Civil Defense Scrapbook," Greensboro Public Library. The "Scrapbook" describes in detail the effort to establish a Civil Defense Voluntary Organization in the city. *Daily News*, March 16, 1942.15.

<sup>17</sup> *Record*, March 3, 1942

only twenty.<sup>18</sup> Advice such as "Attendance upon or absence from the women's mass meeting this afternoon might well represent the difference between a home saved and loved ones rescued and total destruction after a lightning stab and rain of fire from overhead" were soon replaced by semi-humorous items such as one from Ahoskie where an insurance agent offered to insure the whole town against attack for \$292.50. The *Record* noted that this "was the first tidbit we [have] had as to the odds being offered by the insurance companies against the dictators getting over."<sup>19</sup> More useful probably were a series of "Victory Institutes" at Women's College to provide information about vegetable gardening.<sup>20</sup> Blackouts were so disappointing in early 1942 that the Fourth Civil Defense Region director charged the city with "lagging," adding that Greensboro would be in "an awful predicament" if an attack came.<sup>21</sup> During the summer, compliance with a "dim out" was reported to be "very bad."<sup>22</sup> Blackouts in Greensboro would be abandoned long before the requirement at the national level was dropped in August of 1944.<sup>23</sup> There was always a small core of people willing to volunteer for this work, but the majority seem to have seen it as pointless. Local citizens were not alone in rejecting "play like" civil defense. The influential magazine *American City* called it "hiding under the bed" and urged getting on with production, enhancing efficiency, and creating a "vital public spirit" aimed at victory.<sup>24</sup>

Within a month of the Civitan Club meeting, the *Greensboro Record* headlined "ARMY UNIT WILL BE MOVED HERE," breaking the news about the arrival of the First District of the Army Air Force Technical Training Command on March 17.<sup>25</sup> Almost immediately 211 officers and men were quartered in the Sedgefield Inn.<sup>26</sup> To the *Daily News* this was an "undreamed of development" made possible in part by the army's faith in the ability of local leaders to maintain secrecy requirements.<sup>27</sup> To Lacy McAlister, in charge of office management at Pilot, it was something of a nightmare forced on the company by patriotism. He recalled that the army first "took over one floor of one building, however, they began to ask for more space --- the initial request was merely letting the camel's head in the tent." But "the camel kept needing more

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<sup>18</sup> *Daily News*, March 16, 1942; *Record*, March 3, 1942.

<sup>19</sup> *Record*, June 14, 1942, July 12, 1942.

<sup>20</sup> *Record*, June 22, 1942.

<sup>21</sup> *Daily News*, February 1, April 5, 1942; *Record*, Mar. 14, 1942. See also the "Civil Defense Scrapbook," Greensboro Public Library.20.

<sup>22</sup> *Record*, June 19, 1942.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily News*, August 13, 1944.

<sup>24</sup> *The American City*, April, 1942, Editorial, "This War Will Not Be Won By Hiding under the Bed," 60.

<sup>25</sup> "History of Signal Corps Section, 2d District Headquarters, Army Air Force Technical Training Command, St. Louis, Mo., 1 April 1942 to 31 December 1942," General Order #18, Headquarters ACTTC, Tulsa, Oklahoma dated March 1942, 4. The General Order established the Greensboro headquarters which included 17 states plus the District of Columbia. *Record*, March 11, 1942.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily News*, March 12, 1942; *Record*, March 11, 1942.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily News*, March 16, 18, 1942

space" and soon Pilot Life's "workers and executives were sitting in each other's laps...with barely room to breathe." In all the army took over 9 floors with demands every few months...until the end of the war."<sup>28</sup> By 1943 the army had made Pilot the headquarters for all technical training in the eastern United States, a fact the *Daily News* said "attests to the growing importance of Greensboro and environs in air force plans."<sup>29</sup> McAlister said "in a way it was ludicrous and funny, but seriously inconvenient, but Pilot's "board of directors and officers considered it a contribution to the war effort" as well as the local economy. The workers "put up with it and got by" since they "couldn't do anything about it."<sup>30</sup> Inconvenient or not, the *Daily News* relished "the importance of being host to such an important installation."<sup>31</sup> The men working by the lights that "blazed at night" in the insurance buildings were important to army aviation training in 17 states, and it had come with very little effort on the part of local leaders. It also had been discovered that these men were people of "higher than average intelligence."<sup>32</sup> They had money in their pockets. Thus, the thought began to occur to some that the Army Air Force might have a superior type of soldier. Would it be possible to have more of these? In a short time the city would soon have them beyond the wildest dreams of the gloomy days of early 1942.

The *Record* reminded citizens of Greensboro's "reputation for hospitality and friendliness to men in uniform" and urged citizens to "continue to live up to that reputation."<sup>33</sup> When Brigadier General John C. McDonald arrived on the 17th he expressed his "personal appreciation...for the welcome being shown" his men.<sup>34</sup> But a few days later on Easter the *Record* lapsed into gloom asking: "How much longer shall we of Greensboro be able to escape a more direct contact with war's blighting curses? That is known only to God."<sup>35</sup> There would never be any "blighting curses" and in a short time the paper was hoping that the army would take over the airport and "develop it as a large military aviation center." This would bring not only concrete runways and other facilities, but "would mean more trade for our merchants, hotels and restaurants...and more profitable employment for our home people at home."<sup>36</sup> In early July the Army leased ten acres and a hanger at the airport for the Second Ferrying Service Base Unit which by April, 1944 would be servicing 727 plans a month.<sup>37</sup> This

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<sup>28</sup> Lacy McAlister, telephone interview with author, Greensboro, N.C., 19 January 1978.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 13, 23, 1943.

<sup>30</sup> McAlister telephone interview

<sup>31</sup> *Daily News*, March 13, 1942.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily News*, December 6, 1942.

<sup>33</sup> *Record*, March 12, 1942.

<sup>34</sup> *Record*, March 17, 1942.

<sup>35</sup> *Record*, April 6, 1942.

<sup>36</sup> *Record*, April 25, 1942.

<sup>37</sup> Detachment History, 571<sup>st</sup> Army Air Forces Base Unit (2d Ferrying Service Unit), Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, Greensboro, N.C., 15 July 1943 to 20 August 1945, Record Group 301.073-2. United States Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

development led the *Record* to note that "Greensboro's life is becoming more and more widely and strongly linked with the growth and progress of aviation."<sup>38</sup> Most civilian aviation at the airport ended for the duration as the ferrying station at the airport grew to 11 officers and 120 enlisted men with 16 buildings, one hanger and 13 tents. In Mid-May, 1943 a battalion of "Negro aviation engineers bivouacked at the airport" to work on improvements.<sup>39</sup> The *Daily News* hoped that "when the project is completed the Greensboro-High Point airport will be one of the finest in the South."<sup>40</sup> By October, 1944 the 571st Base Unit was servicing 744 aircraft a month including over a hundred "hospital ships" loaded with wounded from Europe. Work continued on runway development until shortly before the station was deactivated in August, 1945 when a new parking apron was completed. The final moment came with an air show attended by 8,000 people on August 20, 1945.<sup>41</sup> The last word, however, would come from the Greensboro - High Point Airport Authority which in May of 1946 announced it might seek \$250,000 damages from "heavy army use" of its facilities.<sup>42</sup> Nothing would come of this, although it was not untypical of many communities with facilities taken over during the war. Greensboro was the hometown of two of the leading aviators in the European Theater of Operations. Major George E. Preddy was Europe's leading ace at the time of his death on Christmas Day, 1944, and Major General Samuel Egbert Anderson, who commanded the Ninth Air Force which specialized in the destruction of lines of communication. The hopes for a role by the Army Air Force in the city's future was being worked out in secret at the time. It would be large.

During the early days of 1942 the Army Air Force had commandeered a number of large resort hotels in New Jersey and Florida for use as basic training centers. They were soon crowded and were not considered the best places to turn civilians into soldiers. The proper way for this to happen was in an environment of barracks, mess halls, parade grounds, and rifle ranges.<sup>43</sup> As a result the headquarters at Sedgfield was ordered to find a site for the construction of a camp to hold about 5,000 trainees.<sup>44</sup>

The search centered on North Carolina, the state that contained facilities used to train one-fourth of the military personnel of World War II.<sup>45</sup> Six sites in the Raleigh-Durham

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<sup>38</sup> *Record*, July 7, 1942.

<sup>39</sup> *Record*, May 14, 1943.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily News*, May 15, 1943.

<sup>41</sup> "Detachment History," 571st Army Air Forces Base Unit (2d Ferrying Service Station), Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, Greensboro, N.C., April, 1945, 1 April 1945 to 20 August 1945.

<sup>42</sup> *Record*, May 4, 1946.

<sup>43</sup> History of Basic Training Center No. 10, Greensboro, N.C., 1 March 1943 to 7 July 1943, Three Volumes, I, 59. Record Group 229.29-1, United States Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereinafter cited as History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943.

<sup>44</sup> "History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943," I, 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Daily News*, January 1, 1944; August 19, 1945.

area were examined along with locations in Winston-Salem and Reidsville. All were rejected. An aerial survey of Greensboro turned up five likely places. A detailed study of each area, including one in the fashionable Starmount Forest area, revealed that one in the northeastern part of the city was the most promising.<sup>46</sup> In April army officers began secret meetings with city officials aimed at construction of the camp on that site. Led by Mayor William H. Sullivan, the city was ready to accommodate the army in every possible way.<sup>47</sup> The mayor was empowered to make extensive contractual arrangements to provide city services to the army which was assured that schools would be tuition free to children of military personnel. In a departure from a long-standing tradition, the ban on Sunday movies was lifted.<sup>48</sup> Negotiations proceeded smoothly during the spring and summer. The army negotiators had no fears that the city would balk since they knew that the local economy needed a "shot in the arm" and that Mayor Sullivan was known to be searching for a "means of bringing business to the city," but wanted to "avoid great postwar adjustments." A small training center would fit this need perfectly since it "would be temporary, would tide the city over the war problem period, and yet would not upset the normal labor-industry balance once... postwar adjustments had to be made." As a result army officers found "local officials...enthusiastic about the prospects" and noted that they "gave a great deal of time and effort to...gathering statistics, and arranging for commitments to serve so great an influx of military personnel."<sup>49</sup> Sullivan would receive credit for his work at the polls when he was reelected to a full term in 1943 with one of his assets listed as "close cooperation with the armed forces."<sup>50</sup> He had been elected mayor by the city council in 1942 after Huger King was commissioned in the navy.

So while the Philippines fell and great naval battles raged in the Pacific not to mention the epic struggles on the Russian steppes and in the Atlantic, Greensboro quietly eased into participation in the war effort mainly concerned about its temporary economic needs. Throughout the process local leaders never lost control of events which moved almost as evenly and smoothly as it was peacetime. The essence of the plan was that the army would lift the city out of its economic doldrums while the army got what it wanted.

None of the secret negotiations were leaked by any of the participants 10 involved in the negotiation process. The *Daily News*, apparently in all innocence, continued to fret

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<sup>46</sup> History of BTC – 10, 1 March 1943 – 7 July 1943, I, 6, 9; see also, statement of Lt. Col. Jack R. Younger, in Appendix, Vol III.

<sup>47</sup> Letters of agreement from William H. Sullivan to District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington, N.C., June 3, 1942 and June 4, 1942. Exhibit book, city clerk's office, Greensboro, N.C.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the City Council, Greensboro, N.C., July 21, 1942

<sup>49</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943- 7 July 1943," I, 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> *Daily News*, May 11, 1943.



about the city's faltering economy and blamed it on Washington for failing to provide for a "wider distribution of defense work and activity" so that other "sections and communities might benefit" from the war.<sup>51</sup> Delighted that the army had taken over the airport, the *Record* hoped this would help to make it a "key aviation center" in years to come.<sup>52</sup> But the frustration of the *Daily News* burst forth again in the summer of 1942 when it listed defense activities in other parts of the state and cast a jealous eye on Durham with Camp Butner and described Wilmington as a place "literally buzzing with activity" from Camp Davis and a large shipyard. Greensboro, it lamented, stood "almost alone in its lack of permanent camps or training bases" and the "official spokesmanship [sic] of the community" was urged to get busy and find something before it was too late.<sup>53</sup> Even more galling was a report that \$5,000,000 had been authorized to construct an "Air Force training camp near the town of Goldsboro."<sup>54</sup>

A closer look at Greensboro by the army revealed that it had 800 vacant rental units with an average monthly rent of \$25.64 most of which were in good condition. Recreational facilities were underutilized, schools were not overcrowded, and cultural activities were available. Although nearly a third of the dentists and physicians were in the armed forces, enough remained to care for the population and the public health organizations of the city and county were active and well-organized. Laundries were under-utilized and needed more business, a fact of significance to the army. Prostitution existed, but the army report noted that "there was no red light district." The army also found that Greensboro was the "only city in North Carolina with Sunday beer." But most important of all was the "splendid spirit" of cooperation exhibited by the city's leaders.<sup>55</sup> The officers at the Sedgefield headquarters had apparently found diamonds in their own back yard.

The site chosen for the training center consisted of 652.27 acres of wooded land lying east of the intersection of Summit and Bessemer Avenues. Most of it was owned by the Cone Mills real estate operation which leased it to the government for the duration plus one year at an annual rate of \$1,500. When a few landowners on the perimeter of the Cone tract balked at leasing, real estate broker and city councilman, Kemp Clendenin, bought several tracts and leased them to the army. The site met all of the transportation requirements for railroad connections and highways and would require virtually no

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<sup>51</sup> *Daily News*, May 2, 1942.

<sup>52</sup> *Record*, April 25, 1942.

<sup>53</sup> *Daily News*, July 28, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> *Record*, April 26, 1942.

<sup>55</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943, II, 1, 12, 13, 19, 20. Conversation with Dr. O. Norris Smith on April 28, 1991 who stated that out of 90 physicians and dentists, 33 were in the armed forces at the height of the war. *Record*, Jan. 28, 1942 for the average monthly rent.

"evacuation of inhabitants or closure of highways."<sup>56</sup> To add to the army's delight the location was on a city bus line, and water and sewer connections could easily be installed. The city had received an "award of merit" in 1940 for its "outstanding sewage disposal system" a fact of importance in the location of the base.<sup>57</sup> Of vital importance was the fact that the main line of the Southern Railway adjoined the tract so that rail sidings could be quickly constructed. Connections for telephones and electricity could easily be completed. The city would even pick up the garbage. The land was surveyed and mapped, leases for the property and contracts for construction were signed in October, 1942.<sup>58</sup> Bessemer Avenue was closed, but the army paved Liberty Hill Road and Textile Drive to provide access to town.

By late October the secrecy which the city's leaders had so carefully preserved since June was dropped and the city "literally boiled over with rumors" about the nature and size of the camp.<sup>59</sup> One rumor was that the camp would contain only black troops, which was quickly discounted by the mayor.<sup>60</sup> In early November it was announced that a two million dollar facility would be built, but soon the figure rose to five million after a 700 bed hospital was added to the plan.<sup>61</sup> The final total cost would be over eight million as the plans expanded to a camp for "25 - 30,000 men."<sup>62</sup> This was good news for Greensboro where in October, 1942 building permits had fallen to only \$4,935 due to "Washington's restrictions," while in Durham for the same month they were \$235,722 apparently due to Washington's attention.<sup>63</sup> For the entire year, the drop was \$771,337 to \$1,903,439.<sup>64</sup> Now perhaps Greensboro's "moribund" construction industry would revive and once again "contribute to the business life of the community."<sup>65</sup> By January, 1943 the problem no longer existed: permits had risen quickly to \$232,025 and would continue to rise for the duration.<sup>66</sup> Now no longer whining, the *Daily News* began to laud the community leaders "who set the example in co-operation with army officials, who convinced them that Greensboro was the place for the establishment and who never lost patience or let down in their efforts during the uncertainties, the discouragements and the recurring complications over the four month period for

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<sup>56</sup> A Historical Study of Basic Training Center No. 10, 8 July 1943 to 1 March 1944," 8 volumes, Record Group 229.29, Appendix, Vol. V, Army Air Force Regulation No. 85 - 3, "Buildings and Grounds: Acquisition of Real Estate" (April 25, 1942).

<sup>57</sup> *Report of the City Manager*, 1940, Greensboro, N.C.

<sup>58</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943- 7 July 1943, I, 22, 25, 27, 31.

<sup>59</sup> *Daily News*, October 31, 1942; History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943, I, 28.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily News*, November 4, 1942.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily News*, November 3, 7, December 18, 1942.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily News*, December 18, 1942, August 19, 1945.

<sup>63</sup> *Daily News*, November 6, 1942.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily News*, January 2, 1942.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily News*, November 6, 1942.

<sup>66</sup> *Record*, February 2, 1942.

which conferences, investigations, reports, rumors, surveys, checkings and recheckings ensued."<sup>67</sup> Sullivan noted that "one of the big factors in bringing the camp to Greensboro was the spirit of co-operation on the part of the Cone family."<sup>68</sup> Especially to the city's credit was that this had been carried out under "strict military censorship."<sup>69</sup> At last, the city was no longer a "strictly civilian community" but one with a "definite place in the war effort."<sup>70</sup> Clearly there might be "liabilities" in being an army town, but there was no doubt that the city would begin to "receive increasingly large attention and consideration" from Washington. The *Daily News* seemed unable to restrain its joy over this development and swept aside a momentary observation that "the material side shouldn't be overemphasized" with the comment that the "material contribution should provide a physical lift which ought to be reflected in just about all fields of endeavor."<sup>71</sup>

Whether the presence of a military base in the city would turn out to be socially desirable or not, it was certain to "affect mightily the business life of the city during the war period," and bring an end to the economic malaise.<sup>72</sup> The *Record*, crediting the "cooperative spirit shown by Greensboro city authorities, utility officials, and property owners," announced that the Army Air Force was "good news of first importance" to Greensboro; it was, after all, the most "popular branch of the service." Such an organization could not help but "stimulate Greensboro business" and even better "add zest and pep to the city's social life."<sup>73</sup> The rejuvenation of the construction industry began almost immediately as the ground was cleared in early December and crews began to assemble hundreds of buildings.<sup>74</sup> These were "theater of operations" type structures with composition board sheeting nailed onto two-by-four frames. The roofs were of roll tarpaper. The winter of 1942-1943 proved to be one of the coldest and wettest in years. What had been a pine tree forest became a mire of mud, but the work went forward unceasingly. Most of the trees were saved in a move that would reduce the bleak appearance of the buildings. The flimsy structures sat on concrete piles grouped around latrines and mess halls. The headquarters complex was no better in appearance than the barracks, and the most substantial of the buildings were the hospital, warehouses, and motor pool.

Labor was at a premium and the deadline for completion was the end of June, 1943. There was a shortage of workers because many local men had been recruited to extend the Plantation Pipeline to Richmond and the city's industrial activity had begun to pick

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<sup>67</sup> *Daily News*, November 4, 1942.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily News*, November 4, 1942.

<sup>69</sup> *Daily News*, November 3, 1942.

<sup>70</sup> *Daily News*, November 6, 1942.

<sup>71</sup> *Daily News*, November 6, 1942.

<sup>72</sup> *Daily News*, November 3, 1942.

<sup>73</sup> *Record*, November 3, 1942.

<sup>74</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943, II, 692-695.

up. Construction required at least 1,200 skilled workers such as carpenters, plumbers and electricians along with 900 unskilled persons. The fact that the J. A. Jones construction Company of Charlotte, the contractor, would use only union carpenters caused a brief anti-union outburst in the form of a full-page newspaper ad accusing the unions of offering "War Work Jobs For Sale" for \$50.00 down the amount of the union's initiation fee.<sup>75</sup> The union remained unbudged, but who wanted to work as a common laborer in a cold, wet muddy place? Apparently not white people. But it did not take long to find the people who would do the work. As the *Record* put it: "the contractors even hired negro women as common laborers."<sup>76</sup> It was reported that this was the "first time in the history of the local [employment] office that women have been put on construction jobs as laborers."<sup>77</sup> It probably should have added "much less negro women." These people were soon reported to be "doing an excellent job."<sup>78</sup> To aid new arrivals in the city the Mayor Sullivan appointed a sixteen member Negro Steering Committee headed by Thomas Hunmons of the YMCA. This facilitated the housing of these people which seemed to have been done through networking and friendship arrangements.<sup>79</sup> Even so, by late February the pressure to complete the project was so acute that the police began a "roundup of vagrants" under a state law aimed at forcing idlers to "fight, work, or serve time."<sup>80</sup> Municipal Court Judge E. Earle Rives made a public statement that "Men are needed badly for work on the new camp, and certainly, if there was ever a time when manpower was needed, now is that time. Able-bodied men who refuse to work are not only sorry citizens, they are unpatriotic, and in this time of critical need, shiftless men are almost guilty of treason, so far as I am concerned."<sup>81</sup> A plan for enforcement was developed but used only intermittently at the convenience of the police usually to arrest vagrants, since clearer heads considered it a had a potential for infringement on constitutional rights.<sup>82</sup> The *Daily News* denounced the whole business in a editorial titled "Over-Doing It" and suggested that it was a matter for federal not local authorities to handle.<sup>83</sup> Thus, women, almost all black, working for 40 cents an hour [60 cents overtime] for ten hours a day seven days a week, took up the slack and made up an over a third of the construction force.<sup>84</sup> In the later stages of construction, which approached panic, several hundred A & T College students were persuaded to come to help out.<sup>85</sup> One officer connected with the

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<sup>75</sup> *Record*, December 14, 1942.

<sup>76</sup> *Record*, April 14, 1943.

<sup>77</sup> *Record*, February 12, 1943.

<sup>78</sup> *Record*, February 25, 1943.

<sup>79</sup> *Record*, December 21, 1942.

<sup>80</sup> *Record*, February 25, 1943.

<sup>81</sup> *Record*, December 5, 1942.

<sup>82</sup> *Record*, December 5, 1942.

<sup>83</sup> *Daily News*, September 10, 1943.

<sup>84</sup> *Record*, March 4, 1943.

<sup>85</sup> *Daily News*, February 14, and March 2, 17, 23, 1943.

construction recalled that a time cutting effort to put improperly insulated chimney pipes in the coal burning "cannon" stoves nearly caused the whole camp to burn down and required replacements in all of the buildings where the improper installation took place.<sup>86</sup>

During the period from December 1 through March 26 it was reported that the construction workers "had only ten full days of fine weather...but the barracks and various other buildings of the camp shot up despite the snow, sleet, rain and extreme cold prevalent during the greater majority of the period."<sup>87</sup> When it was completed BTC No. 10 had 964 buildings which included hundreds of barracks, an eight large consolidated mess halls, four theaters, ten post exchanges, two libraries. In 1945 a giant canvass covered "Kitty Hawk Big Top" was added. The total floor space was 2,561,081 square feet. The "Big Top" was the conception of Colonel Converse R. Lewis who saw a need for a "recreation and entertainment center for enlisted men with a greater capacity than any other similar facility on the Post." It consisted of a concrete floor covered with a large fireproof tent, bleachers and chairs brought from Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis and had a capacity of 3,000. The official history claimed that it had "one of the best stages in North Carolina" and did "more for the enlisted men's morale than any other facility on the Post."<sup>88</sup> The motor pool buildings and warehouses were of a more "permanent" nature and some are still in use.<sup>89</sup> A "mobilization type" hospital of 89 buildings with wooden siding was also constructed on a site that required the blasting away of granite formations.<sup>90</sup> A prison for 280 prisoners was prepared. There was also a rifle range "8 7/10ths miles north of the post." The lake at Camp Herman, a former Boy Scout camp, was taken over for the duration.<sup>91</sup> Basic Training Center No. 10 or BTC-10 as it was known was completed in the summer of 1943; the last camp to be built from the ground up in the United States during World War II.<sup>92</sup> It is noteworthy that on December 12, 1942 the city council unanimously approved an appropriation of \$9,850 to increase the size of the water line from 8 to 12 inches, and the sewer line from 19 to 30 inches when "It was pointed out to the Council that increasing the capacity would inure to the benefit of the City on abandonment of the camp, making available a 12" loop

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<sup>86</sup> H. R. McLawhorn, Jr., conversation with author, 25 May 1991.

<sup>87</sup> *Record*, April 14, 1943.

<sup>88</sup> "The History of Army Air Forces Overseas Replacement Depot, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1 July 1944- 30 September 1944," V.I, GB 108- 109. Hereinafter cited as "History of Army Air Forces Overseas Replacement Depot... 1 July 1944 - 30 September 1944."

<sup>89</sup> The History of Army Air Forces Overseas Replacement Depot, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1 July 1944 to 30 September 1944," 5 volumes, I, GB-108. Record Group 256.43-1. *ORD News*, January 12, 1945. A complete file of the newspapers of the camp is available in the Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

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<sup>90</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943, I, GB-70. McLawhorn conversation.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* V, GB-800.

<sup>92</sup> *Daily News*, March 14, 1943.

which could serve in the future development of the area."<sup>93</sup> The future of this project was not unclear to Greensboro's elite.

The speed with which the work went forward was a tribute to hundreds of unsung workers who pushed themselves in the effort to make it possible. But they had not finished the camp when the first trainees arrived on the "rainy, wintry morning" of March 1, 1943 in spite of a plea from the District Engineer not to begin bringing the men in because of the weather's effect on the site.<sup>94</sup> The Training Command Headquarters had replied "do not concur...most urgent need for facilities of Greensboro will be during near future."<sup>95</sup> Thus, the men arrived and burst "into the Army Air Force song as they marched to the barracks."<sup>96</sup> But there was no "Wild Blue Yonder" in Greensboro but rather a quagmire of "knee deep mud" at a place they would soon call "Camp Mud."<sup>97</sup> Mud was only the beginning as they were beset by an array of discomforts which included unheated barracks, lack of equipment, meals eaten out of mess kits, food poisoning, and sleeping on the floor.<sup>98</sup> One officer used his own money to purchase materials to build duckboards to keep his men dry. The reason for this precipitate action was that the Atlantic City hotels were full and the training schedule was set. Thus, the men who were mostly signal corps recruits and draftees, found themselves in a place that must have resembled the trenches of World War I. Undaunted, the process went on with the official history stating that the training cycle began with "enthusiasm" and claiming that conditions offered a challenge that resembled "America's pioneering period."<sup>99</sup> A camp newspaper, "BTC IO'shun" was started and widely distributed "so that the surrounding communities could be kept well informed to what was happening almost in their own backyards."<sup>100</sup> Special Services, defying the "disorganization that...prevailed throughout the post during the early days" quickly organized dances at the Women's College and at the O'Henry and King Cotton Hotels and provided permanent party with Greensboro library cards.<sup>101</sup> But the "arrival of troops could be a shock in a "moonlight and magnolias southern town."<sup>102</sup> It certainly alarmed Luther L. Gobbel, president of Greensboro College who obtained "the

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<sup>93</sup> City Council Minutes, Greensboro, N.C., Special Meeting of Dec. 12, 1942.

<sup>94</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 - 7 July 1943, Vol. V. Appendix, telegram, nd, Col. Moore, District Engineer, to Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> District, Army Air Forces Technical Training Command, Greensboro, N.C.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, Appendix, typescript copy of a telegram to Col Moore, nd, "Jones Dist. Engineer."

<sup>96</sup> *Record*, March 1, 1943.

<sup>97</sup> History of BTC - 10, 8 July 1943 to 1 March 1944, I, 271.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, III, Appendix, 434, Interview with Col. H.J. Jenkins, 18 October 1943. "History of BTC No. 10...1 March 1943 to 7 July 1943," I, GB-874.

<sup>99</sup> History of BTC - 10, 8 July 1943 to 1 March 1944, II, 479. Statement of Major H. M. Light, 14 Sept. 1943, III, Appendix.

<sup>100</sup> History of BTC- 10, March 1, 1943 to July 7, 1943, II, GB-749.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, GB-854.

<sup>102</sup> C. Leroy Shuping, conversation with author, 23 May 1975, Greensboro, N.C.

presence of two military police regularly assigned to the campus each evening and on Sunday afternoons" to protect his female charges.<sup>103</sup> Later he devised an identification card system by which soldiers were permitted to visit students at the small women's college.

When large numbers of uniformed men began to appear on Elm Street in Greensboro there was incontrovertible evidence that the city was "no longer a strictly civilian" place, to use the *Daily News's* term. Whatever the risks involved in close contact with thousands of soldiers was incidental since the economic worries of the past were over. Prosperity was assured at last. The army soon hired over 1,200 civilians through an employment office in downtown Greensboro. Two-thirds of these were women, many in traditionally male jobs.<sup>104</sup> The *Daily News* offered the army a "hearty welcome" and gave assurances that BTC-10 would be "absorbed into the community with the least difficulty and dislocation."<sup>105</sup> Given the previous stand of the *Daily News* perhaps it really meant that the soldier's money would be absorbed without difficulty at all. But it was wartime and nearly everyone had friends, relatives and loved-ones in the service; citizens were urged "to treat the soldiers at our camp as we would have Greensburghers, wherever they may be, any treated."<sup>106</sup> Was there a difference when it came to thousands of strangers in uniform crowding restaurants and other facilities? One student of this subject observed that "A number of men who normally are conventional in their behavior and whose verbal beliefs are reasonable consistent with their behavior, have, under war conditions, developed a sort of *schizoid morality* --- one moral code for peace time in the home community and another for war time in a strange community."<sup>107</sup> It was noted that many cities "welcomed with open palms the visitors' money, but not the visitors," but Greensboro seems to have tried to do both with a reasonable degree of success throughout most of the war period.<sup>108</sup> Few raised any questions or concerns about the future although one letter writer to the *Daily News* said that Greensboro was now an "army town" and the "citizenry is faced with a mighty question: whether to have our city transformed into a place teeming with brothels and saloons where service men are allowed and encouraged to degrade themselves and their uniform or to make our city a place where those service men who come here shall be encouraged to recreate themselves in wholesome activities." He urged "the citizens of Greensboro to set a standard of public morals which will tolerate...only those forms of

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<sup>103</sup> Luther L. Gobbel, *Greensboro College: My Seventeen Years as its President With a Resume of the Years Before 1935* (Greensboro, 1977), 110.

<sup>104</sup> History of BTC - 10, 1 March 1943 to 7 July 1943, I, 48.

<sup>105</sup> *Daily News*, March 3, 1943.

<sup>106</sup> *Daily News*, March 3, 1943.

<sup>107</sup> Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's A War On: The American Home Front, 1941 - 1945* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 90.

<sup>108</sup> Lingeman, 76.

recreation that prove to be an uplifting influence upon our citizens and guests" and which would be "treasured by every service man as a time of real happiness."<sup>109</sup> A group of ministers expressed a concern to have military personnel come to know the "importance of God over relaxation and recreation."<sup>110</sup> Work in dealing with recreation began in December, 1942 when the Mayor's Hospitality Committee which had provided for troops on maneuvers sent two representatives to "study other cities," and the *Record* commented that "when the camp opens, it will be a whole time proposition for us here, not just a matter of week-ends alone."<sup>111</sup> This was followed in January, 1943, by Mayor Sullivan's appointment of a Community Planning Council to "coordinate local efforts in meeting problems which will arise in construction and operation of the army air forces replacement center being built here."<sup>112</sup> Its 16 members would have to "cover many things with which Greensboro has not yet had to cope" and would do this by providing "a wholesome atmosphere and recreational facilities for the thousands of soldiers who will move into the air force replacement training camp here."<sup>113</sup> This group began to meet with the leaders of local civic, church, social and other groups to coordinate plans for the entertainment of the soldiers, and was provided with a budget authorization of \$9,750 from the city in 1943.<sup>114</sup> By early May 15, 1943, the Council had aided in the establishment of a white USO on North Elm Street which enrolled over 800 volunteer hostesses. Located in two buildings it had "across the front a large open terrace" which became a favorite spot one "warm summer evenings." It contained a "spacious foyer with large openings to the right and left" along with an "attractively furnished snack bar." There was a library, "attractive bulletin board," a large office for Personal Services" and "ample writing space for 25 to 30 men." There were also six ping-pong tables, "the largest Ballroom in Region IV," a "large stage" and a "large snack bar." The director, Erle Stapleton, reported few problems and noted that the cooperation among various groups in the city which led to its establishment had brought the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish people of Greensboro into a closer relationship which would probably aid the city in the future.

In sum, Stapleton found the USO operation in Greensboro to be a near perfect example of community action and cooperation with the USO organization and the military.<sup>115</sup> An extensive program of dances, musicales, plays and athletic events was supplemented by a counseling service aimed at "discussing problems with soldiers [and], helping them to

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<sup>109</sup> Phil Griffin to *Daily News*, March 15, 1943.

<sup>110</sup> *Daily News*, March 15, 1943. 69

<sup>111</sup> *Record*, Dec. 5, 1942.

<sup>112</sup> *Record*, Jan. 19, 1943.

<sup>113</sup> *Record*, Jan. 20, 1943.

<sup>114</sup> *Daily News*, March 15, 1943, City Council Minutes, Mar. 16, 1943.

<sup>115</sup> *HISTORICAL RECORD OF THE USO CLUB AT GREENSBORO, N. CAROLINA*, by Earle Stapleton, May 1, 1945. Military Collection, World War II Papers, 1939-1947, United Service Organization, Box 139, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.



reach a solution."<sup>116</sup> During the war it served 1,675,000 military personnel and was closed with a "big public ceremony" in late September, 1946.<sup>117</sup> One example of community cooperation was Mayor William Sullivan himself who worked as a regular at the USO and frequently took soldiers back to the camp but "didn't tell them that he was mayor."<sup>118</sup> Henry A. Yancey, who became city manager in July, 1943, concurred in this recalling that the relationship between the city and the army was "very beautiful," adding that "we went all out to see what we could do to make the army comfortable and they responded."<sup>119</sup>

One of the Community Council's major activities was the operation of a Traveler's Aid booth in the railroad station which assisted over two million people during the war, at a time when it was reported that "business is the heaviest in history on the Danville Division of Southern Railway" with passenger trains were running at "full capacity."<sup>120</sup> So effective was the Planning Council that it became a model studied by other cities.<sup>121</sup> Clearly there was no lack of effort to anticipate events in Greensboro.

Other voluntary and civic activities to aid the effort included a Women's Christian Temperance Union soldier entertainment center on Summit Avenue, an effort by the Council of Garden Clubs to help "beautify" the camp, an invitation to use the public library, and eight child care centers which were set up for working mothers.<sup>122</sup> On a sour note, and a harbinger of some things to come, was a report that sixteen people had been "arrested in vice raids on tourist camps."<sup>123</sup> By August the city had secured federal matching funds through the Lanham Act to support an expanded child care program for eight nursery and seven school age centers.<sup>124</sup> While enthusiasm was high for this type of work Greensboro was notoriously laggard in such things as scrap metal and fat collections and in the purchase of war bonds and stamps.<sup>125</sup> In 1943 an effort to sell war

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<sup>116</sup> *Daily News*, Jan. 19, Mar. 7, 11, 14, 17, 1943; Feb. 4, Aug 19, 1945; Sept. 29, 1946. "U.s.o. Roll of Service: Volunteers Who Served Defenders of America in World War II in the Elm Street Club of Greensboro, N.C. In Greensboro Public Library. Historical Study of BTC -10, 8 July 1943 -1 March 1944, II, 854, 863. "Annual Report" Recreation Commission of Greensboro, N.C., 1944-1945, 3, 25.

<sup>117</sup> *Daily News*, Sept. 29, 1946.

<sup>118</sup> Marguerite L. Couron, William L. Sullivan's Secretary, conversation with author, 23 June 1989. See also Mayor Sullivan's "Scrapbook, May, 1943 - May, 1946" at the offices of the W.H Sullivan Co. offices, 4413 W. Market St. Greensboro, N.C.

<sup>119</sup> Henry A. Yancey, taped interview with William D. Smith, Charlotte, N.C., 26 March 1978.

<sup>120</sup> *Daily News*, Sept. 29, 1946, *Record*, Dec. 21, 1943.

<sup>121</sup> *Daily News*, Dec. 12, 1944.

<sup>122</sup> *Greensboro Record*, May 6, 1943, July 5, 1943, May 27, 1943. William Buie McIver, "Extended School Services in the Greater Greensboro School District, 1942-1946" Unpublished M.A. thesis, University North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1947, 19-28, 37-47.

<sup>123</sup> *Record*, March 22, 1943.

<sup>124</sup> *Record*, August 4, 1943.

<sup>125</sup> *Record*, August 13, 18, Oct. 18, 1943.

savings stamps in the schools led to a headline that read "JIMMY DOOLITTLE DAY CHARACTERIZED AS FLOP."<sup>126</sup> It soon became apparent that among the soldiers at the camp were a number of highly talented people, including musicians and athletes. In September of 1943 a Labor Day program of sonatas for violin and piano was held.<sup>127</sup> A year later, in August, 1944, at a time when it was reported that 196 Guilfordians had been killed in the war, the sports pages carried such headlines as "Cherry Point Always Tough for ORD" in baseball.<sup>128</sup> The next month the "Tech-Hawks" competed in the national semi-pro baseball tournament at Wichita, Kansas and were welcomed back to town by "200 ardent admirers" including Mayor Sullivan himself.<sup>129</sup> One name people would recall for years to come was Charley Trippe an All-American football player and "rose bowl hero" from the University of Georgia who played several sports for the Tech-Hawks.<sup>130</sup> Another was the boxer, Billy Conn.<sup>131</sup> It was like having Greensboro's own pro teams. Later in 1944 Major William C. Phalman, of Lord and Taylor, and one of the country's "leaders in interior design," gave a "tea lecture" for local matrons on the topic "don't be afraid to take a chance."<sup>132</sup> One of the most persistent memories is that Charlton Heston was married at Grace Methodist Church on West market Street on March 17, 1944 shortly before he went overseas.<sup>133</sup> But more important to the moment by far was the fact that in the first ten months of 1943 bank debits had risen by \$35,411,731.<sup>134</sup> They would continue to rise throughout the war. In a forward looking step the Chamber of Commerce set up a Postwar Planning Committee in the fall of 1943.<sup>135</sup> There were problems in the city schools. Superintendent Ben L. Smith reported a loss of half of the teachers and five janitors to the war effort.<sup>136</sup> Less exhilarating was a notice that "some type of social disorganization such as crime, delinquency, divorce, child neglect, mental disease or illegitimacy" had affected 2,555 families in the city in 1943.<sup>137</sup> Since no comparative statistics were listed it is not possible to say whether there was a dramatic increase in such stress because of the war or not.

In year following March, 1943, 87,427 persons received four to eight weeks of "modified" Army Air Force basic training in Greensboro.<sup>138</sup> Most were enlisted men who

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<sup>126</sup> *Daily News*, July 17, 1943.

<sup>127</sup> *Daily News*, Sept. 5, 1943.

<sup>128</sup> *Record*, Aug. 31, 1944, Aug. 3, 1944.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily News*, Sept. 2, 1944.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily News*, November 23, 1944. The article from the sports section was titled: "ORD 'Owned' Some of Biggest Names."

<sup>131</sup> *ORD News*, June 2, 1944.

<sup>132</sup> *Daily News*, Dec. 7, 1944.

<sup>133</sup> *Record*, Dec. 5, 1973. This was an article under "Scene" by Rick Stewart who had received a letter from Heston stating that "We both will always remember Greensboro as a place where our life together began."

<sup>134</sup> *Record*, November 5, 1943, July 5, 1944.

<sup>135</sup> *Record*, November 16, 1943.

<sup>136</sup> *Record*, February 4, 1943.

<sup>137</sup> *Daily News*, May 17, 1944.

went on to advanced schooling to become gunners, electronic technicians and aircraft mechanics. In general they were intelligent, highly motivated, single, and in the city for a short time. Instead of trouble these men and women brought an economic and patriotic lift to a city that had begun to despair about its future in early 1942. Even by early 1943 bank deposits were reaching "all-time highs" and "new records" at local banks.<sup>139</sup> The military payroll averaged at least \$2,000,000 a month in 1943.<sup>140</sup> In the first year there were also detachments of pre-aviation cadets who entered the army with "letters of recommendation as evidence of good character" or were combat veterans sent back to the United States for aviation qualification tests along with several hundred registered nurses who came "directly from civilian life" to receive four weeks of "basic military knowledge prior to commission and transfer."<sup>141</sup> These were some of the most select people in the army, or the nation, for that matter. Thus, it is little wonder that one version of the official history stated that for the first five months of BTC - 10's existence there were no courts-martials, a statistic that was thought to be a "world-s record."<sup>142</sup> That statement was too good to be true, since in another place the station history statistical summary lists 66 summary, 42 special, and 2 general court martials in July, 1943, and the number would not decrease in the months that followed.<sup>143</sup>

Changes in the mission and quality of personnel would destroy the record and by June of 1944 there would be 191 courts martials and the following month 1023 men were absent without leave. Civilians were not immune to malingering so that a drive aimed at halting absenteeism was begun which included hiring a visiting nurse to check claims of illness.<sup>144</sup> By summer of 1944, as the venereal disease rate began to rise, Capt. E.J. Vogel the VD control officer denounced "local civilian authorities" for their lack of "really effective cooperation" claiming that "vice prevailed...without penalties."<sup>145</sup> The official record even notes that in the first year post vehicles drove two million miles without an accident.<sup>146</sup> But for the first year or so the people of Greensboro and the personnel at BTC - 10 were living in a wartime idyll.

The cement of army-city unity lay in pride taken over the "uniqueness" of BTC - 10 as the only camp in the United States located "wholly within the corporate limits of a

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<sup>138</sup> Colonel Paul R. Younts to Commanding General, Army Air Forces Personnel Distribution Command, Louisville, Kentucky, "Fact Sheet," Feb. 9, 1946. "Modified" from 229.29, 8 July 1943 - 1 March 1944, V. I, GB66

<sup>139</sup> *Daily News*, Jan 13, 1943.

<sup>140</sup> 229.29 Mar -July 1943 GB587.

<sup>141</sup> "Historical Study," I, 8, *Greensboro Record*, May 5, 1943.

<sup>142</sup> "Historical Study," II, 620.

<sup>143</sup> 229.29, 8 July, 1943 - March, 1944, GB116.

<sup>144</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB230 #of courts martials. 256.43 - 1 GB061 AWOL

<sup>145</sup> 256.43 - 1 V I, GB 224.

<sup>146</sup> 229.29, 8 July 1943 - 1 March 1944, V. I, GB89.

city."<sup>147</sup> This would also become one of the reasons for army- city discord in the future. It was pointed out that the "far greater contact" between town and soldier in Greensboro compared to elsewhere required both sides to exhibit an unusual degree of "understanding and complete cooperation."<sup>148</sup> The claim was made that the base had been "absorbed" into the city and the *Daily News* gave its personnel a "commendable" rating on conduct and appearance.<sup>149</sup> The compliment was returned by the personnel of the training center who reportedly found Greensboro's citizens "ready to aid" them with "spontaneity and sincerity."<sup>150</sup> But after all it was a situation where local citizens were trying to treat the soldiers in the same manner as they would their own sons and daughters, many of whom were in other places in military service. This form of backslapping would continue throughout the war and resulted in what was said to be a solidly "happy and mutually beneficial relationship" for all.<sup>151</sup> A soldier - reporter writing in a column provided by the *Daily News* put it in these words: "I never heard of Greensboro until got here...but we've been made to feel welcome down here."<sup>152</sup> Women students at Guilford College, where most of the men were gone, were mildly amused by soldiers who made their way to the campus to "brighten the lives of lovelorn campus damsels." They were "thrilling conversationalists" who "sat and talked of their top sergeant; the talked and talked about their drills; they ate and talked about the wonderful food in camp..." but apparently had a "good time" at the "un-barracks-like campus" with its "quiet atmosphere." The writer continued: "The most unusual feature of the evening was the discovery made by several girls that all of the boys had been half way through Harvard or Yale before enlisting."<sup>153</sup> Although it was reported in the *Record* that the army had negotiated an arrangement to use three of Guilford College's dormitories on a "permanent basis" to house officers and their families, there is no record at the college or memory of this having happened. Such a situation would have been totally out of keeping with the Quakerly pacifist tradition of Guilford.<sup>154</sup>

However, there is little in the official record to contradict the claims of army-city amity. Typical of the effort by the army was an open house on the fourth of July, 1943 attended by 25,000 citizens. This was only the first of many such occasions to allow local people to see what the army was doing in their town. One person who found his way easily around Greensboro was Floyd Smith, a warrant officer, who had returned from overseas duty to serve as band director. He found "the people just marvelous" and that

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<sup>147</sup> "Historical Study," I, 68.

<sup>148</sup> "Historical Study," I, 78, 228.

<sup>149</sup> *Daily News*, May 30, 1943.

<sup>150</sup> *Daily News*, May 22, June 12, 1943; *ORD News*, Nov. 30, 1945; Nellie Rowe Jones, "Greensboro Public Library, 1902-1952," 10. Typescript in the Greensboro Public Library.

<sup>151</sup> *Daily News*, May 30, 1943.

<sup>152</sup> *Daily News*, June 12, 1943. Column titled "One of A Series by a Trainee."

<sup>153</sup> *The Guilfordian*, Oct. 23, 1943.

<sup>154</sup> *Greensboro Record*, June 1 and 5, 1944.

he was taken in as a "full-fledged member of the Starmount Country Club" for six dollars a year. He recalled "no sense of isolation" as a soldier and "no hostility" towards his uniform. Frankie Smith, a Greensboro girl whom he married during the war, recalled that "practically everybody dated soldiers" and that she decided Floyd was alright "after the third date." After they were married, the Smiths lived in an apartment in town, but recalled that there was "not a lot to spend money on." They tended to confirm the point that a fair portion of the payroll, which "took nine hours to count and disburse" was "sent home," saved or conserved in some way.<sup>155</sup>

The only altercation of any large size occurred on August 1, 1943 when the police attempted to break up a fight between two soldiers. What was described as a "near riot" ensued with fighting between "several hundred soldiers and civilians at South Elm and Edwards Place." Order was restored, but city police complained about the failure of the military police to come speedily to their aid.<sup>156</sup> Later the *Daily News*, sensitive to these conditions, apologized for exaggerating the incident with the word "riot" adding that there was "nothing in the clash to cause any great perturbation or to mar the happy relationship between Greensboro and the military men in our midst."<sup>157</sup> During the remainder of the war civilian and military police and medical personnel worked together to reduce friction and to control prostitution and venereal disease. Newspaper accounts record only one rape and two robberies attributed to men stationed in Greensboro. Toward the end of the war period a major venereal disease eradication campaign was mounted.

As the Army Air Force "reached its planned strength" and as the effort in the air war over Europe reached its peak with the approach of D-Day, the need to expedite the flow of men across the Atlantic mounted.<sup>158</sup> A conveniently located installation was required which would prepare officers and enlisted men "for overseas shipment by processing their administrative records, correcting medical deficiencies, providing mental and physical conditioning, and completing military training requirements, clothe and equip them according to the specific requirements of the theater for which destined, and organize them into provisional squadrons for physical control until arrival at overseas destination."<sup>159</sup> Men leaving Greensboro had been issued such specific items as "flying jackets, helmets, navigation and bombardier kits and life vests."<sup>160</sup> The base hospital contained a "Consultation Service" section which effectively "cut people out of overseas

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<sup>155</sup> Author's taped interview with Floyd and Frankie Smith, Greensboro, N.C., \_\_\_\_\_ when was it that i did that?

<sup>156</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 2, 3, 1943.

<sup>157</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 4, 1943; "Historical Study," I, 84.

<sup>158</sup> 229.29. March April 1944, GB1.

<sup>159</sup> 235.111.2, 1 March 1946 - 31 March 1946, GB 001.

<sup>160</sup> 256.43 - 1 V.I GB 153.

duty" through psychological examinations.<sup>161</sup> The rail connections and facilities of BTC-10 made it the ideal location for the movement of men who had completed this process. In April, 1944 the Training Center was transformed into the principal Army Air Force Overseas Replacement Depot in the eastern United States, a title soon shortened to O.R.D. Its mission became "receiving, processing and shipping men." In the two months following the change the business at the post exchanges jumped by a quarter of a million dollars.<sup>162</sup> By June 1, in the impersonal words of Lt. Albert D. Kaiser, Jr., the base historian, the "turmoil of the reorganization days were [sic] subsiding. The Post was settling down to the job of training and processing overseas shipments."<sup>163</sup> Officers who had been involved in basic training had now created an "assembly line...fool proof one stop" system which was devised to refresh the men's knowledge of weapons, self-defense, chemical warfare, camouflage, military aquatics, and to get them in top physical condition all in nine days.<sup>164</sup> By the end of June entire troop trains could be "loaded by mass formations in less than three minutes."<sup>165</sup> Lt. Kaiser took pains in one of his historical accounts to describe the intense experiences of "Private Smith" and "Lieutenant Jones" typical of the 15,665 men processed from April 6 to July 1, 1944.<sup>166</sup> There was virtually no free time in a two week period, a fact that intensified the work of the permanent party which had its load doubled and even trebled in some cases.

Colonel Converse M. Lewis, an officer quoted in the official history as having said: "I don't like a civilian in uniform" was made ORD commander on April 24, 1944, and began with an attempt to tighten up military courtesy and discipline with the comment that although many of the officers in the command had come from successful business careers which were well suited to the type of work they were doing at the ORD, "soldier business is different from civilian business."<sup>167</sup> In particular Lewis was determined to eliminate malingering, sloppy appearance, and to make sure that saluting was properly carried out. A series of inspections turned up men lounging about the barracks and wandering about the post with no direction or purpose. A truck with a loudspeaker, labeled "ORD TOP KICK", roved about blasting out reprimands such as "Button that pocket" or "Where's your gas mask?" and gave the "impression of an all-seeing eye or *deus ex machina* suddenly become articulate and from whose omniscience no one could escape." Lt. Kaiser noted "It was effective."<sup>168</sup> One could not escape the Colonel's patrols off the post where military police in roving jeeps served as "surveillance patrols" to pick

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<sup>161</sup> 256.43 - 1 V. I, GB247.

<sup>162</sup> 235.111 - 1, GB227.

<sup>163</sup> 256.43 - 1 V. I, GB XVII.

<sup>164</sup> 235.111 - 1, GB193; 233.111 - 1 Vol. III, GB 700 has the training schedule.

<sup>165</sup> *Daily News*, April 30, May 21, 1943; *ORD News*, June 30, 1944; "Historical Study," I, 136, 270.

<sup>166</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB114, GB159-GB176, and GB183-GB189.

<sup>167</sup> 235.111 - 1 Vol. 2, Appendix, GB345, Transcript of a meeting held in Theater No. 3, 26, April 1944 -1100.

<sup>168</sup> 235.111-1 VI, May June 1944 V I, GB 027-028.

up minor discrepancies in dress or a sloppy salute.<sup>169</sup> Reveille formations were held every morning and men were gigged for lateness and sloppy appearance. Soon "formations lost their 'loose' look, but reading the results of courts martials at formations, and fixing it so passes to go into Greensboro were "tied in closely with the military appearance of enlisted men" proved disastrous with wartime draftees and volunteers.<sup>170</sup> Colonel Lewis, a graduate of VMI, was an old soldier with many years in the Philippines, and other regular peacetime posts, where the personnel were considerably different. If the appearance of soldiers on the streets of Greensboro improved, there was a corresponding drop in morale at the ORD as the AWOL rate shot up to 1023 in July of 1944.<sup>171</sup> Colonel Lewis was relieved of the command in August and replaced by Colonel Nissley who "removed all of the regulations" in an effort to make the post "a thoroughly efficient and happy one."<sup>172</sup> Given the nature of the operation which Lt. Kaiser, in a moment of despair, described as "routine labor...drudgery ... [and]...unspectacular administration" the decision made by Colonel Nissley seems to make sense.<sup>173</sup> Also, at least twenty percent of the assigned enlisted men were either over 38 years old or were in the "limited service" category. Others were men who had "washed out" of flight programs and, in some cases, no longer cared. In May of 1945 72.3 of the permanent party was rated "poor" or "very poor" on a physical fitness test.<sup>174</sup> This was probably about the average for the history of the post. Most of the assigned personnel were there to work at what was described as "a nearly perfect processing organization" and this was done at a desk or in a warehouse and not in the barracks, field, or rifle range.<sup>175</sup> In "receiving and shipping" men there was no room for slackness or mistakes and equally little time for parades or other ceremonies. That they performed their duties can be found in the consistent "excellent" rating the ORD received. As long as these people were allowed to do their jobs, and to make "additional refinements" they would succeed in reaching the "pinnacle of efficiency...as the model for overseas replacement depot processing" with high morale and low hospital admissions.<sup>176</sup> Greensboro was the place where visiting officers came "for the express purpose of studying the processing procedures in operation."<sup>177</sup> It was a matter of an unrelenting, intense 24 hours a day work which left little time for military niceties or particular attention to rank and position.

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<sup>169</sup> 235.111 - 1. May - June, 1944, Vol. I.

<sup>170</sup> 256.43 - 1. V. I, GB013.

<sup>171</sup> 256.43 - 1 V. I, GB061.

<sup>172</sup> 256.43 - 1, V I, GB023. Later that fall, Col. Lewis would receive the Legion of Merit following his retirement.

<sup>173</sup> 235.111 - 2. 0002.

<sup>174</sup> 256.43 - 4 1 April 1945 - 30 June 1945.

<sup>175</sup> 256.43-3 VI GB280.

<sup>176</sup> 256.43- 5 1 July 1945- 2 Sept. 1943, GB185. Pinnacle from 256.43 - 4 1 Apr 1945 - 30 June 1945.

<sup>177</sup> 256.43-4 1 Apr. 1945- 30 June 1945, GB 277.

On September 27, 1944 the command was handed over to Colonel Paul R. Younts, who retained the concept of a "thoroughly happy and efficient" post. At the same time it was reported that "Whenever there was a condition which tended in any way to lower the efficiency of his command, Colonel Younts would 'attack it with all guns blazing'."<sup>178</sup> An enlisted man during World War I, Younts was commissioned through the North Carolina National Guard and been commander of the North Carolina American Legion. He served as a vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1932 and was rewarded with the postmastership of Charlotte where he was when he was called up in 1940. He came to Greensboro after 22 months in the South Pacific where he had received the Air Medal and Legion of Merit for repeatedly flying to outlying bases in an effort which led to the "organization, consolidation and unification of the Thirteenth Air force."<sup>179</sup> While not a pilot, he was picked by Major General Hubert Harmon, commander of the Army Air Forces Personnel Redistribution Command because he was organizer and administrator of considerable ability with an outstanding record of motivating people. A "civilian in uniform" as he described himself, Colonel Younts stated a "conviction that team-work [sic] and initiative among all soldiers was still essential" to the operation of the Replacement Depot, and wrote a regular "Colonel's Column" in the post newspaper to keep everyone informed.<sup>180</sup> Younts's major concession to things military was a semi-monthly Saturday morning parade at which half of the personnel were required to be in attendance.<sup>181</sup> Given the nature of the command with personnel arriving all day and all night who had to be fed and processed as fast as possible, it was clear that Colonel Lewis's efforts to tighten things up was misplaced in Greensboro. It was noted that one of Younts's strongest points as a leader was in helping personnel who had returned from combat to make an adjustment to administrative work. They needed time and understanding and he saw to it that they got it.<sup>182</sup> Recommended for a brigadier general's star, Younts would not receive it during the war.<sup>183</sup> It is unlikely that many people in the city knew much about the internal politics of the post, even Lt. Kaiser found his efforts stymied at times by the reticence of personnel to present the unadulterated truth in historical summaries. One thing was clear, however, and that was that after four changes of command in 1944, Younts gave the post the "stability" it had long needed. Also, as a native he was "at home" in North Carolina and especially suited to the job. After all, how much different was processing and shipping mail in Charlotte from doing the same thing for men in Greensboro? It was exactly what he had been doing for more than ten years. Many officers probably could have organized a processing line, but it took more than that in Greensboro. In the words of the commanding General of the Army Air Forces personnel

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<sup>178</sup> 235.111.2, 1 March 1946- 31 March 1946, GB002.

<sup>179</sup> 750.2801, 201 file of Col. Paul R. Younts.

<sup>180</sup> 235.111 - 2 1 Mar. 46 -31 Mar. 46 GB001 - GB 004.

<sup>181</sup> 256.43 - 2 GB010.

<sup>182</sup> 256.43- 2, GB017.

<sup>183</sup> 235.111 - 2 GB144 BG star for Younts



command, Younts, "a tower of strength to the Army Air Forces in determination and dependability" was picked to "command of Greensboro at a time when the morale of the station was exceedingly low and conditions generally unsatisfactory, due to a long line of rapidly changing and in some cases incompetent commanding officers."<sup>184</sup>

The most intense activity of the post would come during Yount's time. An eighty-five page standard operating procedure for the processing line covered every possible detail and included in the personal affairs interview a requirement to: "Ask Enlisted Man is there any problem which he has not discussed and if so attempt to answer it to his satisfaction or refer him to proper officer on the line for consultation."<sup>185</sup> In May, 1944, shortly before Younts took over, the number of personnel shipments was 13,345 enlisted men and officers, but November of that year it would reach 25,612 which by that time included not only overseas shipments, but redistribution of man to bases in the United States as well as the separation of personnel. The post had begun to serve as a separation center on September 20, 1945, with the release of 211 persons. Younts planned to go to 520 per day, but noted the "loss of key men" and asked "where we will get personnel to meet the next situation?"<sup>186</sup> This situation would not improve while Younts was in Greensboro. The greatest morning report strength for the existence of the station was on December 17, 1945 when it reached 39,692, which included 6,948 officers.<sup>187</sup> There were usually about 2,200 "colored" troops at the ORD, mostly members of the permanent party. Money paid out during the last three months of 1945 was:

	Disbursement	Cash	Check
October	\$4,645,484.87	\$1,493,352.22	\$3,152,132.65
November	\$6,852,241.14	\$2,069,908.46	\$4,782,332.68
December	\$6,056,323.01	\$1,576,849.17	\$4,479,473.48

It was noted that "It takes trained finance people to pay out this much money."<sup>188</sup> An average of \$175,000 worth of clothing was issued each day during this time period. During the last two months of the year a total of 9,392 enlisted men's bags were picked

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<sup>184</sup> Major Gen. Hubert Harmon to Commanding General Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C., October 9, 1945, Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum.

<sup>185</sup> SOP for Processing, Greensboro Overseas Replacement Depot, 3 March 1946, Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>186</sup> Younts to Colonel Henry Bailey,, Sept 21, 1945. Similar, but smaller, operation in San Antonio, Texas. Greensboro Historical Museum Archives. Bailey was running a Younts papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>187</sup> Office Memo from Statistical control Officer to Commanding Officer, Greensboro Overseas Replacement Depot and Fifth Redistribution Center, Jan 6, 1946. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>188</sup> Office Memorandum from Statistical Control Officer to Commanding Officer, ORD, Jan. 6, 1946.

up at the railway station.<sup>189</sup> The disbursement figures included one to three months travel pay for 90% of the personnel coming through. Since separation policies meant that permanent party personnel would also be released, a considerable strain was placed on the system. The operation required about 4,000 people, and by January, 1946 was inundated with arrivals which came in "groups of over 1,000 a day."<sup>190</sup> Colonel Younts reported that by mid-January, 1946 there had been a "100% turnover in the past 90 days of permanent party personnel," and that the proposal that he retain personnel rejected for overseas shipment would not work because they "were not qualified in the particular MOS [military occupation specialty] positions that we needed to carry out the functions of this post."<sup>191</sup> In January, 1946 an inspecting team from Army Air Forces headquarters found "general dissatisfaction among permanent party" and "too much work for each member of permanent party" who served at a place set up for 15,000 which was processing 33,000 a month. The permanent party contained "not one regular army officer and less than 60 [regular] enlisted men." Even so there was "much activity, smooth operation, good food."<sup>192</sup>

Some of Greensboro's citizens seemed to be closely attuned to what was happening at the Depot. A variety of reasons existed for this, first was which was its location within the city itself. This was combined with the fact that an average of from twenty to twenty-five thousand men a month were there and the figure rose as the war progressed. What might happen if these people became too unhappy? The happiness of these people was also a concern to some in the city for business reasons and for reasons connected with the peace and security of the city. Whatever these fears and the reasons for them, Paul Younts was the perfect commander for the post and the man who would lay them to rest for an eighteen month period. This was quickly realized by Mayor Sullivan who reacted to a rumor that Younts was to be transferred in December, 1945, with a telegram to General Hubert Harmon the commander of the Army Air Forces Personnel Distribution Command, asking that Younts be retained and noting "He is held in high esteem by military personnel and civilian officials of the city. His interest and understanding in all matters pertaining to matters of mutual cooperation is outstanding."<sup>193</sup> One citizen, writing to Younts later noted that his home was "headquarters for a large group of GI's registering complaints" and that by the time Younts got to Greensboro "morale was so low as to make one wonder if the camp was

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Younts to Major General Hubert Harmon, Jan 15, 1946. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Memo of January 21, 1946 from Lt. Col. R. S. Sleeper to Major General Robert W. Burns, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C.

<sup>193</sup> William H. Sullivan to Major General Hubert Harmon, Commanding General Army Air Forces Personnel Redistribution Command, Atlantic City, New Jersey, December [?], 1944. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

not almost bordering on mutiny." But since Younts's arrival "the men have been happy, morale high and their universal praise of the way you have administered the post has been something that could only reflect the excellent administration and understanding leadership that you have given."<sup>194</sup> Others noted this, including Major General Samuel E. Anderson, in town on a visit, who said: "It was a real pleasure to meet you and to learn from the citizens of Greensboro of the really fine job you are doing there. I have heard of troubles there in the past and am delighted to tell you that this time I heard nothing but compliments."<sup>195</sup> In the summer of 1945, Roy L. Morgan, a lawyer, noted that prior to Younts's coming, he and others had noted that "morale at the camp was quite low" and that the improvement he noted was "a tribute to your executive ability... your knowledge in the handling of administrative problems which arise in a transient organization as ORD..."<sup>196</sup> In January, 1945, Ceasar Cone, not one to hand out a compliment easily, observed "I...can truthfully say that we have enjoyed having the Air Forces installation in our city."<sup>197</sup> Others wrote, including two ladies who ran a "taylor shop" to tell Younts that they had "been wanting so long to tell you what nice boys you have at our camp here" of their "beautiful manners" and how they were "very courteous to everyone." Again the tribute went to Younts: "It may be all due to your leadership."<sup>198</sup> Finally, Mrs. Julius W. Cone added "I rejoice in the good feeling that exists between Greensboro and the camp, and believe that a large part of this good will is due to your attitude toward us civilians."<sup>199</sup>

Evidence would seem to indicate that the post was not a particularly spit and polish military one. In 1945 a sergeant, who said his earlier experience had been with the infantry, wrote Younts to say: "I have found this post to be a G.I.'s paradise, with its limited facilities and provisions in trying to make our short stay as comfortable and pleasant as possible." But he added "privileges are being abused and I believe its [*sic*] about time that something is done to make all of us remember that while we still wear the uniform of the United States Army, *we are all still in the United States Army...*" He noted the "laxity of military courtesy and discipline" apparently because there were "more urgent things pressing" but since discipline was "enforced and practiced elsewhere it could and should be practiced & enforced here" and that something should

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<sup>194</sup> Joseph R. Morton to Younts, March 29, 1946. Paul Younts Papers, MS Collection 95, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>195</sup> Major General Samuel E. Anderson to Younts, June 16, 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum.

<sup>196</sup> Roy L. Morgan to Younts, August 2, 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum.

<sup>197</sup> Ceasar Cone to Younts, Jan. 24, 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum.

<sup>198</sup> Mrs. Grace McSwain and Mrs. Myrtle Russell to Younts, June 16, 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum.

<sup>199</sup> Mrs. Julius W. [Laura W.] Cone to Younts, Sept. 13, 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum.

be done to "curb this laxity."<sup>200</sup> Younts seems not to have replied to the sergeant, but to carry out the idea would mean returning to Colonel Lewis's practices which had brought the post to its low point in 1944. Besides, by this time the war was over and the number of personnel would rise dramatically as it was turned into a separation center as well.

Citizens were advised not to ask service men prying questions and to provide rooms for friends and relatives who came to see them off. Since Greensboro might be the last American memory of some, everyone should "show tolerance and understanding to make their stay as pleasant and unforgettable as possible."<sup>201</sup> The number of military personnel in the city increased by several thousand but they were in town for shorter periods of time. All of this gave the city an added sense of excitement and importance. The intense movement of men destined for "dangerous assignment" meant that Greensboro with its O.R.D. was the focus of high level activity vital to the war effort.<sup>202</sup> It was not just shipping supplies or equipment, but men, who made out their wills at the ORD, destined for the most dangerous and glamorous of the services --- the Army Air Forces in Europe.<sup>203</sup> The cost in American lives was 79,265 along with 33,770 aircraft.<sup>204</sup> An intense program was begun to instruct the people of Greensboro about safeguarding military information and a one hour program for civic clubs and other groups was devised to "fill this need." It included a short lecture and a film titled "Sucker Bait."<sup>205</sup> Whether there was much danger of anyone in Greensboro handing over secrets to the enemy, it satisfied a need for participation and the program was much in demand. A more present security problem was theft on the post, and in June 1944 all of the newsboys on the post were fingerprinted and issued ID passes with the "purpose of discouraging petty thefts."<sup>206</sup>

The official history described what happened when a soldier arrived in Greensboro where the "railroad station...was the welcoming and receiving office of the post."

Here a small room had been set aside for the Shipping and Receiving Section. Direct contact to the Post was maintained by phone. Incoming personnel reported to this room for further instructions. After the preliminaries had been completed the new men were transported to the post. A small War Orientation display helped to keep the men occupied while awaiting transfer. This was

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<sup>200</sup> Sgt. Abraham I. Lieberman to Younts, Aug. 17, 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>201</sup> *Daily News*, May 8, 1944.

<sup>202</sup> *Daily News*, May 8, 1944.

<sup>203</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB078.

<sup>204</sup> Ronald H. Bailey and the Editors of Time-Life Books, *The Air War in Europe* (Morristown, N.J., 1979), 191, 127.

<sup>205</sup> 235.111 - 1, GB066.

<sup>206</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB071.

augmented by magazines and periodicals. The men on duty at the railroad station were overseas returnees, a fact which helped to impress the incoming soldier who was arriving for training and preparation for overseas assignment. Transportation was furnished to the Post. Trucks were standing by a short while after the arrival of each train.<sup>207</sup>

In the summer of 1944, the *Record* in a rather pensive editorial noted that "War has marched into Guilford on steady but muffled feet in the three years since news of Pearl Harbor..." It noted "the changes it has brought" had come "quietly, without flag-waving and parades, but it is here just the same." The war had "juggled the position of women in industrial and military affairs with a thoroughness that would startle a suffragette." The writer added in these words: "There is a new spending power too, as great as the throngs that crowd every bus, as unlimited as restaurant waiting lines." The writer concluded by comparing postal money orders paid out at the Greensboro Post Office. In June, 1941 there "only \$184,293.48...by June 1944 the figure had increased to \$396,169.63."<sup>208</sup> In the last three months of 1944 the funding for the ORD, not including the pay of military personnel, was \$715,653.89, of which \$509,635.25 was in "civilian personnel salaries."<sup>209</sup> Within this figure the Quartermaster Corps purchased \$116,523.94 worth of services and supplies locally which ranged from \$300 for dog food to \$21,000 for "Contract Laundry-Dry Cleaning" to \$60,000 for "Subsistence & Troop Train Rations."<sup>210</sup> The exact figures on military pay are not available except by an estimate. A conservative way to do this would be to estimate the average pay of each person to be \$100, with the average number of personnel at the post at 20,000 over a period of 42 months. Thus  $\$100 \times 20,000 = \$2,000,000$  a month and if this is multiplied by 42 the overall figure is \$84,000,000 in military pay for the entire period.<sup>211</sup>

The tensions and anxieties of the men being processed and shipped from Greensboro can only be imagined, but life in the city continued at an even pace. A few sacrifices had to be made, however, as citizens were urged to have their "fun at home" and vacation in their own back yards, and to take the "home front pledge" to observe rationing.<sup>212</sup> The Nutrition Council sponsored victory gardens on the old Benbow Farm on Friendly Road.<sup>213</sup> War bond campaigns, although seldom successful, gave many a personal feeling of participation in the war. Civil defense was no longer of any particular

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<sup>207</sup> 256.43-2 1 Oct. 1944 - 31 Dec. 1944 V I GB131.

<sup>208</sup> *Greensboro Record*, July 13, 1944.

<sup>209</sup> 256.43- 2, V. 1, 1 Oct, 1944- 31 Dec. 1944, GB 117.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, GB 118.

<sup>211</sup> "The National Defense Act: Approved June 3, 1916, As Amended to January 1, 1940...The Pay Readjustment Act Approved June 10, 1922, As Amended to January 1, 1940...Army Pay Tables. USGPO, 1940.

<sup>212</sup> *Daily News*, May 3, Oct. 3, 1943. ?????? Wrong time on this one.

<sup>213</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Feb. 21, 1942.

importance or interest, although the state was not exempted from "mandatory blackouts" until August of 1944.<sup>214</sup> At the behest of McDaniel Lewis, a World War I veteran, the library maintained a scrapbook of local men and women who died in the conflict.<sup>215</sup> Nearly 30,000 men and women from Guilford County would serve in the War, 300 would die --- almost exactly the national average or numbers in the military compared to deaths. Only a few black market scandals were recorded. One, which made the headlines, was in nylon hose but was quickly broken up by federal officers.<sup>216</sup> The police and fire departments coped despite shortages of personnel. In a slogan contest aimed at reducing absenteeism in war industries a Quaker minister was the winner.<sup>217</sup> The Greater Greensboro Open Golf tournament was not held in 1943 and 1944, and the inevitable Eleanor Roosevelt visited the military base and the city on July 26, 1944 and March 22, 1945 while the *Daily News* commended women volunteers for the "tremendous job" they had done on the home front.<sup>218</sup> Through it all the central business district enjoyed the final golden years of its dominance of retail trade in Greensboro.

In the spring and summer of 1943 Agnes Meyer, the wife of the publisher of the *Washington Post* took a tour of the South from Texas to North Carolina in order to study and describe the social impact of the war. One of the cities Meyer visited on her "journey through chaos" was Wilmington, N.C. where the population had swollen from 33,000 to 120,000 and people lacked food and housing. She stood in line for 20 minutes and later gave up trying to obtain an evening meal. Workers she interviewed told her they were "hungry all the time" and from Meyer's observations the "native population [was] no better off." Life in Wilmington was "indecent...enervating and depressing." Her final words on Wilmington were: "I would not be a war worker in Wilmington if you gave me the whole city." To Meyer the place was, like Mobile, Alabama, an "example of what happens in a large but poorly organized community when it is overrun by war workers."<sup>219</sup> Even worse was a description of Norfolk, Virginia by Meyer Berger which had "150,000 war workers plus 200,000 servicemen...in the space originally intended for Norfolk's 130,000 residents." An estimated 1,500 to 2,000 prostitutes had arrived and in the end the federal Committee for Congested Production Areas would virtually take over Norfolk and Mobile, the two most war congested cities in the nation.<sup>220</sup> The only "cure" said Berger was to "win the war."<sup>221</sup> It is unlikely that

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<sup>214</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Aug. 13, 1944.

<sup>215</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Feb. 19, 1943. Record books of Guilford County natives who died in World War II.

<sup>216</sup> *Daily News*, June 24, Dec. 12, 24, 1944.

<sup>217</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 20, 1944; Feb. 10, 1945.

<sup>218</sup> *Daily News*, Jan. 22, 1944; *ORD News*, March 23, 1945.

<sup>219</sup> Agnes E. Meyer, *Journey Through Chaos* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943), 202, 222-224. *Daily News*, Dec. 13, 1942, Jan. 3, 1943. See also George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New south, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967, Ch. XX, world War II: The Turbulent South."

<sup>220</sup> *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1943. Lingeman, 67.

Mayor Sullivan or other leaders in Greensboro would have agreed with Berger. There were ways to deal with the problems of the war, but admittedly as the *Record* said in commenting on the *New York Times* article, "Greensboro, only a little more than half the size of Norfolk is crowded; but by contrast, conditions here seem almost idyllic."<sup>222</sup> The previous month the Greensboro police had padlocked two hotels, arrested sixty-three female prostitutes [48 white, 15 negro], and two negro hotel porters.<sup>223</sup> By the end of the war Greensboro would experience much greater problems with prostitutes.

Meyer's conclusion about the communities she saw was that they suffered from "mass disintegration" caused by a "weakening of civil leadership and generally intolerable social conditions." The only solution seemed to be stepped up federal intervention as the war progressed. Federal authorities did intervene in Mobile and Norfolk and some other communities. None of the conditions described by Meyer were present in Greensboro where the local authorities remained in control of events.<sup>224</sup>

"About mid-July, 1943, the first colored troops arrived" reads one of the official histories.<sup>225</sup> "In the ensuing months the number soared without permitting the Post to make proper preparations and hurried means were devised to handle the new men."<sup>226</sup> By November, 1943, the number reached a peak when 6,674 black troops were stationed in Greensboro as part of the 303rd Training Wing located on blocks 400 and 500 "which was closest to the colored section of Greensboro thereby expediting transportation and promoting morale."<sup>227</sup> Morale, however, seems to have been low in the black wing which was staffed by white non-coms until "seventy EM were promoted" to serve in the black units. The base historian reported hearing "amusing" stories of roll calls that usually took ten minutes lasting for fifty and "men doing 'push ups' by lying flat on the ground while the instructor frantically counted cadence," but added that he could confirm little of this because the story-teller was usually "hesitant to commit himself."<sup>228</sup> The record did note, however, that their "presence...brought problems." They were assigned to a training wing with "separate housing, messing...entertainment...chapel, theater, dispensary and PX."<sup>229</sup> The presence of these troops created a sense of unease in

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<sup>221</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Dec. 24, 1943.

<sup>223</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Nov. 29, 1943.

<sup>224</sup> Meyer, *Journey Through Chaos*, xii.

<sup>225</sup> GB-24 from a history which quotes things from July '43 and March '44 and therefore must be from the period after March '44.

<sup>226</sup> 235.111-1 V.I, 1 May - 30 June 1944, GB-C.

<sup>227</sup> GB - 24 of unidentified item probably after March '44.

<sup>228</sup> GB- 64 unidentified item after March 1944.

<sup>229</sup> "Historical Study," I, 9.

Greensboro as reports of racial disturbances came in from elsewhere.<sup>230</sup> Nearby, in April, 1943, trouble had hit Durham when Camp Butner soldiers clashed over the color line in that city.<sup>231</sup> After the Detroit race riots of 1943 the *Daily News* expressed its thankfulness that the South was relatively peaceful in wartime.<sup>232</sup> But the army in Greensboro was ready for trouble with a "mobile force" which could be used to quell "domestic disturbances" in a six county area.<sup>233</sup> In June of 1944 it saw its only use when it was rushed to aid Greensboro police armed with tear gas and machine guns to confront a minor altercation involving black troops.<sup>234</sup> That same month in an effort to allay further trouble in the black sections of town "eight negro NCO's were selected...to become Military Police for the purpose of patrolling the colored sections of Greensboro."<sup>235</sup> It was noted that this not only relieved the "regular MP's" but "was greatly appreciated by the colored citizens of the town" who "expressed appreciation for the careful selection given in selecting outstanding, highly intelligent Negro men for duty in the city."<sup>236</sup> In addition, the official history reports that there was a "large gymnasium" in the black area which "was used as a recreation hall where dances, parties and sporting events were held. A hostess was on duty six days a week. Post exchange No. 8 and Chapel No.4 were designated for the colored unit's exclusive patronage." It added that touring USO shows came to the recreational facility and that "Bill Robinson, the famed colored dancer, also entertained during the holiday season" of December, 1943.<sup>237</sup> It also reported that there were dances for the soldiers at Palmer Memorial Institute.

One reason that black troops "brought problems" was said to be that "Greensboro was not as well prepared for colored as for white troops."<sup>238</sup> Additionally, "the city was not aware of the sudden influx of colored personnel, and as a result, little had been done for the entertainment or recreation of the men."<sup>239</sup> In fact little thought seems to have been given to the possibility of their coming to the base and they received a cold, suspicious welcome in Greensboro. It was not until November of 1943, a year after the initial moves which led to the USO on Elm Street that plans were developed to construct a building for Negro troops at the intersection of Macon and East Market Streets. This was the result of "efforts covering a period of months" and would face a number of

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<sup>230</sup> Some of the other places were: Ft. Bragg, N.C., Aug. 2, 1942, Jacksonville, Fla., Aug. 3, 1942, Phoenix, Ariz., Nov. 28, 1942, Reidsville, N.C., Feb. 16, 1943, Mobile, Ala., May 25, 1943, Los Angeles, June 11, 1943, Detroit, June 23, 24, 1943 and Philadelphia, Aug 3, 1944.

<sup>231</sup> *Daily News*, April 8, 1943.

<sup>232</sup> *Daily News*, ?????????? wrong date on this one

<sup>233</sup> "History of the...Overseas Replacement Depot," II, 715; I, 66.

<sup>234</sup> *Daily News*, June 2, 1944.

<sup>235</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB073.

<sup>236</sup> 256.43 - 1 V.I colored MP's appreciated. Intelligent from 235.111-1 V I, May - June 1944, GB038.

<sup>237</sup> GB 111 of post March 1944 history.

<sup>238</sup> "Historical Study," I, 93.

<sup>239</sup> 235.111-1. V. I, 1 May 1944- 30 June 1944, GB-C- GB-D.



hurdles connected with purchase of the land, the raising of the money to build the structure, paving of Macon Street, and the bureaucracy of the Federal Security Agency in Washington and the Federal Works Administration in Richmond. There was a director in town, Harold Taylor, who operated out of the Windsor Community Center.<sup>240</sup> By Christmas of 1943 a Travelers Aid desk had been set up in the "negro division of the railroad station" on the initiative "the negro council of social agencies."<sup>241</sup> It sought to aid "hundreds of soldiers ... wives and travelers pouring into the city for the Christmas holidays."<sup>242</sup> In spite of these hopes the funds were "temporarily blocked" nothing happened.<sup>243</sup> Later it was reported that the project had been "indefinitely deferred" a fact that prompted Mayor Sullivan, city manager Henry A. Yancey and Judge W. M. York to go to Washington to obtain a resolution.<sup>244</sup> The *Record* commented that "Whatever it is necessary to do should be done to see to it that the Negroes in uniform have what they need and deserve."<sup>245</sup> The *Record* continued a few days later commenting that the need for a Negro USO was a matter of "urgency and importance" and that it was unfair for whites to have a USO and the Negroes not to. The failure would "leave the way open to charges of discrimination," and although there had been much done for Negro soldiers "more could be done." Finally, it was said "This is the negro's country, too, and he is doing his part on the home and the fighting front to defend and preserve it."<sup>246</sup> The government, however, refused to be moved by the efforts of Sullivan and others, claiming that the number of negro troops was being reduced at BTC 10. Instead of approximately \$50,000 for a building and equipment the allotment would be \$11,000. If conditions changed the army spokesman said the case would be reopened.<sup>247</sup> It was not until August 18, 1944 that a USO was provided for them --- a year and a half after the white one, and it contrasted sharply with the facilities described above at the white one. Help had come from a local citizen, John L. Vines, who "almost single-handedly...built a two-story building at the corner of East Market and Dudley streets," and then offered it to the USO for \$200 a month.<sup>248</sup> The delay could be blamed mostly on the national USO headquarters which refused dozens of requests on the grounds that the "quota of negro troops... [about 1,200] was not sufficient to warrant one."<sup>249</sup> The USO headquarters finally yielded to pressure from the ORD commander and local officials threaded their way through the political

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<sup>240</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Nov. 2, 1943.

<sup>241</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Dec. 4, 1943.

<sup>242</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Dec. 4, 1943.

<sup>243</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Feb. 7, 1944.

<sup>244</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Mar. 1, 1944.

<sup>245</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Feb. 7, 1944.

<sup>246</sup> *Greensboro Record*, March 6, 1944.

<sup>247</sup> *Greensboro Record*, March 6, 1944.

<sup>248</sup> *Greensboro News and Record*, Sept. 20, 1984. According to this story Vines "remained in the background and never sought any recognition for his efforts...He claimed no credit and was given none. Newspaper articles at the time carried no mention of his benevolence.

<sup>249</sup> "Historical Study," I, 228.

maneuvering and red tape to obtaining Lanham Act funds for the facility.<sup>250</sup> Located at Dudley and Market Streets it was far from the central business district, but near the center of the black business district on East Market Street.<sup>251</sup> Located on the second floor of a two story brick building it was heavily used in spite of its meager offerings. Up until May 1, 1945 it had an attendance of 130,810 a figure that included military personnel of all services who passed through Greensboro.<sup>252</sup> A black citizen served on the Community Planning Council, but black soldiers suffered from morale problems in Greensboro. Although hit by segregation both on and off the post still they never challenged the color line.

Harold Taylor, the director of the Negro USO offered some telling comments in his summary of the operation. The place was nothing to be proud of, hidden away as it was on the second floor of a commercial building. Although he had been in town running a temporary soldier recreation activity at Windsor Community Center he was not consulted in the selection of the USO site. He was totally excluded from the Community Planning council, and added that the only concession made to Negroes was to allow the Negro community to have one person on the Council ---Dean J.C. McLaughlin of the School of Agriculture at A & T College. The greatest strength came from the Negro USO operating committee which Taylor credited with having "survived...all of the ups and downs, pains and heartaches of establishing the USO organization. And when I refer to ups and downs, I mean ups and downs." It was their unselfish work which enabled the club to function. One major problem, Taylor found, was that Negro volunteer hostesses lacked "recreation experience and background" so that the idea of entertaining someone was unfamiliar to them and they had a tendency was to want to "receive rather and to give." This, he said, was "due to the very limited recreational facilities in Negro communities or accessible to their use."<sup>253</sup> It was difficult for Negro USO's to build "the kind of constituency USO likes to develop and have patronized its operations."<sup>254</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that on a voluntary basis a number of black women moved to take action in the community. They set up and manned a small lounge in the black waiting room of the railroad station to assist arriving black troops. They worked to get and maintain the USO with Rose Vines among those offering considerable help, although it was not possible for them to move into leadership positions. In Mrs. Vines's words the idea was to get "the soldiers off the street. If there was no place for the black

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<sup>250</sup> *Daily News*, Feb. 20, June 21, 22, Aug. 18, 19, 1944; *ORD News*, June 23, 1944. Lingeman, 85.

<sup>251</sup> footnote myself with mkt st thing here.

<sup>252</sup> "HISTORICAL RECORD OF *East Market Street* USO CLUB AT Greensboro, N.C.

Reported by Harold Taylor, May 1, 1945. Military Collection, World War II Papers, 1939-1947, United Service Organization, Box 139.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* Historical Record E. Mkt St. USO

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

soldiers to go to let off their steam with a little recreation, they would be out there fighting and cursing." But most of them, as Helen Hill, secretary at Windsor Community Center, put it accepted life as it came to them "Segregation was just how things were. We were having such a good time that we didn't notice it." Others such as Grace Lewis, who helped to organize the lounge at the train station, had less sanguine memories and believed that blacks had been "treated like dirt." Surprisingly, there were some women in the white community who did not realize that there were black soldiers in town, one saying "I don't know a thing about the black USO, I never ran into any black soldiers, I never saw any." Thus, perceptions differed as to what one wanted to see and hear.

Basically the reactions for the black community in Greensboro seems to have been one of patriotism mixed with a strong desire to keep things on an even keel. Whatever temptation there might have been to use the war for bringing about change was lost or avoided in the rapid movement of men and events.<sup>255</sup> Perhaps an observation made by Lt. Col. George E. Wilkinson, the post provost martial, of June 27, 1944, was the most telling comment about the race relations situation. Noting that the "Negro problem demanded little attention" he added "Greensboro has the quietest Negro section I have ever seen in a southern city."<sup>256</sup>

Another group which had problems was Air WACS who first arrived in Greensboro in April, 1944. A WAC officer reported that both on and off duty they were viewed as a "means of entertainment and as the butt of trite jokes, rather than as a group of soldiers who wanted to use their skills and capabilities in doing a job of which they could be proud."<sup>257</sup> In the city they became "the recipients of whistles and calls such as 'wacky, wacky'." It became necessary for the provost martial to appeal to both military and civilians to respect the WACS and to try to understand "the need for their services."<sup>258</sup> He met with the women to "assure them of their welcome and advised ways and means by which they could cooperate to defeat the existing conditions."<sup>259</sup> According to the History of the WAC Detachment, in the "span of one month" the women "proved themselves capable of almost everyone [sic] of the occupational specialties that must be done in an overseas replacement depot," but "the change of attitude toward them slowly became perceptible."<sup>260</sup> The *Record* found two staff sergeants in April 1944, to comment on the WACS. Sergeant Roseberry F. Jones who was skeptical at first reported

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<sup>255</sup> Margaret B. Breeden, "Greensboro, N.C.: 1942-1946, Blacks and Whites Embrace the Newcomers, but Not Each Other." Unpublished history seminar paper, Guilford College, April 27, 1983.

<sup>256</sup> 235.111 - 1, V I, May -June 1944, GB037.

<sup>257</sup> "Unit History: WAC Detachment, BTC 10, 1 March 1944 - 30 April 1944," 9. Hereinafter cited as "Unit History: WAC Detachment." "Historical Study," I,229; *Daily News*, April 9, 1944.

<sup>258</sup> "Unit History: WAC Detachment," 19; "Historical Study," I, 229.

<sup>259</sup> History of WAC Detachment, W-4.

<sup>260</sup> Unit History WAC Detachment, W-4.

"I'm sold" on their performance, and Sergeant Horace Small said "As far as administrative work is concerned, they can do anything we can --- sometimes better."<sup>261</sup> As they became more accepted a slow "change in attitude developed," but an effort to recruit Greensboro women to serve "right here at O.R.D." was not successful.<sup>262</sup> One device for raising morale which proved eminently successful was the "importation" of German prisoners of war who were "detailed to work in mess halls, on policing and cleaning details, and [who] received \$.80 a day compensation in the form of post exchange coupons" which could be used to purchase luxuries. This was said to have "contributed enormously to...efficiency and morale."<sup>263</sup>

Much of the harmony and cooperation between city and army came from the efforts of the men who commanded the base. While eight men, some regulars, some reservists, served in that capacity, only Colonel Paul R. Younts is well-remembered since he involved himself fully in the community. The reason was obvious. He was North Carolinian; the former post master of Charlotte who had been president of both the North Carolina and national associations of post masters.<sup>264</sup> Younts came to Greensboro in September, 1944 after 22 months in the South Pacific with the words: "Its a real pleasure to be assigned here."<sup>265</sup> Gregarious, sympathetic to the city, efficient but never a martinet, Younts became the most respected of all the commanders. The *Daily News* never tired of pointing out his virtues. Among them were "tact, understanding, and... consideration" which created a "close and cordial...unusually happy relationship" when the potential for the opposite was strong.<sup>266</sup> Younts was the only officer to receive an editorial tribute when he left Greensboro. It was noted that he had "gone beyond official necessity both in spirit and in action" during his tenure.<sup>267</sup> The choice of Younts as commander during the peak of army activity in Greensboro and during the early months of its demise could not have been better.

Since the goal of the war was victory it went without saying that at some point this army-city rapport would come to an end. Between March 1944 and May 1945 the ORD maintained a monthly strength of about 25,000 men. Inspectors repeatedly noted the high degree of efficiency with which men were shipped to assignments in Europe.<sup>268</sup> In August of 1945 the camp became "Reassignment Center No. 5" and on September 17 it was made a separation center for thousands of men being returned to civilian life and Colonel Younts noted that the army would return the "hotel type installations" to their

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<sup>261</sup> *Greensboro Record*, April 6, 1944.

<sup>262</sup> *Daily News*, July 30, 1944; *ORD News*, July 28, 1944.

<sup>263</sup> 256.43-5 1 July 1945 - 2 Sept. 1945, GB140.

<sup>264</sup> *Daily News*, Dec. 4, 1944.

<sup>265</sup> *ORD News*, Sept. 29, 1944.

<sup>266</sup> *Daily News*, March 28, 1946; Sept. 26, 1945.

<sup>267</sup> *Daily News*, March 27, 1946.

<sup>268</sup> *Daily News*, Feb. 13, 1944; Nov. 6, 1945.

owners and increase the number of personnel coming to Greensboro.<sup>269</sup> In the last three months of 1945 62,906 officers and enlisted men were processed in Greensboro, some as replacements overseas, others reassigned in the United States, and others discharged. Seven hundred men a day were being processed with 21,167 discharged, 33,481 sent overseas, and 8,258 reassigned. The staff at the Center consisted of 4,076 enlisted men and 510 officers.<sup>270</sup> By March of 1946 the number of personnel "shipments" reached 18,429 with 18,561 enlisted men paid an average of \$325 each.<sup>271</sup> The average number of personnel was 24,509 enlisted and 2390 officers from April through June of 1946.<sup>272</sup> The high quality of the discharge operation was attested to in November of 1945 when a special congressional committee led by Representative Thomas E. Martin of Iowa. Compared to other separation centers the group had visited, Martin said the Greensboro operation was "more comprehensive" and "one of the best organized and best carried out processing functions I have seen in my entire inspection of these camps."<sup>273</sup>

During August of 1945 a veritable deluge of men descended on Greensboro to be redistributed to other units and posts. There were 4,058 officers and 10,102 enlisted men to be handled. Squadron "H" was set up for officers and provided a program of 'well equipped day rooms, sports equipment, tennis courts, practice driving ranges, and volley ball courts' in addition to water sports at Cone and Ritters Lakes, use of local golf courses all of which came with bus service and "scheduling those officers needing flying time for flights at the air field. ....In short, everything possible was done to make the returnee officer's stay in Squadron "H" convenient and enjoyable."<sup>274</sup> The idea of "making the returnees' stays at this Post as pleasurable as possible" was carried out for enlisted men as well.<sup>275</sup> The number of black returnees totaled 271. They were segregated in Squadron "X" where the facilities for entertainment and recreation were "comparable" to those for whites and the purpose was to "make the returnees ... stay in Greensboro enjoyable."<sup>276</sup> The only trouble was that being an army town was no longer enjoyable to the people of Greensboro.

When V-E Day came in May 1945, Congressman Carl Durham, soon to be in an election contest with Judge Earle Rives of Greensboro, telegraphed Mayor Sullivan to assure the city that the ORD would remain.<sup>277</sup> This would prove to be exactly what Sullivan and

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<sup>269</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Aug. 27, 1945, Sept. 14, 1945.

<sup>270</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Jan. 16, 1946.

<sup>271</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB094 # of men here in March 1946.

<sup>272</sup> 235.111 - 2, vi

<sup>273</sup> *Rotator*, Nov. 9, 1945.

<sup>274</sup> 256.43-5, 1 July 1946 - 2 Sept. 1945, GB120-GB121.

<sup>275</sup> 256.43-5 1 July 1945 - 2 Sept 1945, GB122.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.* GB124.

<sup>277</sup> *Daily News*, May 10, 1945.

others did not want. After V-E Day the post began to serve as a redistribution center for men returning from Europe, and after V-J Day it served as a separation center. For a six month period ending in February 1946 an average of 500 men a day were discharged in Greensboro.<sup>278</sup> Even so, in early 1946 as many as 1,000 men a day were being processed for new assignments at home and overseas.<sup>279</sup> The importance of Greensboro ...excellent rail connections for moving men prevented a sudden shutdown. Nevertheless, rumors began to fly that the army would soon pull up stakes. This was denied by local officers although it was not denied that the most might be eliminated "gradually."<sup>280</sup>

By May 1946, the army's welcome in Greensboro was wearing thin. The city, largely without wartime emergency housing, faced a housing shortage so acute that it was believed it would be necessary to put up a tent city for veterans and their families.<sup>281</sup> Under these conditions, it was only natural that the ORD with its hundreds of flimsy but nearly new buildings should be seen as a possible temporary solution to the problem. Why not create living quarters out of them to tide the city over? More to the point, however, why have military families occupying housing in the city now that the war was over? It did not take long for the army to be seen as a burden to the city. That same month the station was placed under the Army Air Forces Training Command and plans were begun to convert the "former WAC quarters...into housing units for officers, and first three grade enlisted men and their train families." This was aimed at relieving the housing shortage in Greensboro, but it also gave the impression that the army was not planning to pull out soon. Colonel Mooney, who had taken command in April, told his staff "he had written confirmation continuing this base as an overseas replacement depot, and no change in mission in the near future was expected." Noting a request by Mayor Sullivan that the base be removed, Mooney said that this "was prompted only by his civic responsibility and desire to obtain housing for local returning veterans...." In the end, a committee was "chosen" to look into the possibility of "establishing housing units" on the post, something which had not been done before.<sup>282</sup>

The prospect that the Army would remain in Greensboro much beyond the end of the war was highly unlikely, although it would occur to some that it could be a good thing, with the *Daily News* taking the lead in that direction. By May of 1946, the trend was heavily in the direction that the Army's welcome was running out. Mayor Cornelius M. Vanstory, Jr. telegraphed Congressman Carl M. Durham on May 6, asking him to use his influence as a member of the house military affairs committee to "at once take

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<sup>278</sup> *Daily News*, Sept. 18, 1945, Aug. 28, 1945; *The Rotator*, Feb. 15, 1946. Hereinafter cited a *Rotator*.

<sup>279</sup> *Rotator*, May 10, 1946.

<sup>280</sup> *ORD News*, Oct. 13, 1944.

<sup>281</sup> *Daily News*, July 16, 1946, Oct. 14, 1946.

<sup>282</sup> 235.111 - 2, 1 April 1946- 30 June 1946, 0116- 0117.

necessary steps to close local army camp" citing the housing shortage as the main reason.<sup>283</sup> Patriotism now dictated attention to the returning veterans. Durham reported back that after a thorough investigation the Army Air Force "feels they are forced to continue use of ORD until overseas activities have been greatly curtailed." The main advantage of Greensboro was the convenience and economy of its rail connections.<sup>284</sup> Soon other civic leaders and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans began to urge removal, and Mayor Vanstory sent a follow up letter saying that 75 percent of the people were "eager to see the camp removed" and that "Frankly, I cannot understand why the Army Air Corp [*sic*] should not be ready to cooperate."<sup>285</sup> Adding pressure, he told Durham that "it is up to your office to pursue this matter further."<sup>286</sup> Durham found that the fuss had "come up at a very bad time for me."<sup>287</sup>

Housing was not the only reason for wanting the camp removed. There were bits and pieces to be picked up --- perhaps for a song. Claude E. Bishop of the Triton Chemical Co. could see a good use for "one or two warehouses to develop a screen printing and finishing plant of textile piece goods."<sup>288</sup> F.D. Bluford, President of A & T College wanted part of it for veteran students.<sup>289</sup> High Point College could see a good use for the bleachers, while others had their eyes on the empty land which had been used for drill fields and training.<sup>290</sup>

Only a few voices were heard calling for retention of the camp. Durham received an undated anonymous letter from a "group of interested citizens" saying "how much ORD has meant to Greensboro" and threatening Durham with reprisal at the polls if he complied with Vanstory's "request to close our base." The correspondents said that Vanstory's actions were "personally directed" and that the Mayor would never be able to "redeem himself" for the use of his office in this way. Durham was asked to "pledge" himself to ignore Vanstory.<sup>291</sup> The *Greensboro Record* headlined "Sentiment Here Divided on Effort to Close ORD" and quoted a "returned veteran" saying that it was "ungrateful

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<sup>283</sup> C.M. Vanstory to Carl M. Durham, telegram, May 6, 1946. Carl Durham Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>284</sup> Carl Durham to C.M. Vanstory, Jr., telegram, May 8, 1946.

<sup>285</sup> Vanstory to Durham, May 8, 1946, Harmon J. Davis [Commander, Major George F. Preddy Post, VFW] to Durham, May 10, 1946, Beverly C. Moore to Durham, May 15, 1946, John D. Goodwin [Commander, DAV Chapter #20], to Durham, May 20, 1946.

<sup>286</sup> Vanstory to Durham, May 20, 1946, Durham Papers.

<sup>287</sup> Durham to W.C. Jackson [Chancellor of Women's College], June 3, 1946.

<sup>288</sup> Claude R. Bishop to Durham, July 12, 1946, Durham Papers.

<sup>289</sup> F.D. Bluford to Durham, Aug. 2, 1946.

<sup>290</sup> E. N. Phillips [Mayor of High Point] to Durham, Aug. 1, 1946; Gideon I. Humphries [President of High Point College], to Durham, Aug. 29, 1946; Charles A. Hines [Chairman of Board of Trustees, A & T College] to Durham, Aug. 26, 1946; *Greensboro Record*, May 10, 1946, W. Ben Covert, President of the Greensboro Board of Realtors wanted it "removed as quickly as possible."

<sup>291</sup> "Group of Citizens" to Durham, ND, Durham Papers.

to ask for removal of ORD after the way this town broke its hump trying to get an army camp here."<sup>292</sup> In an editorial titled "Leave ORD Be!" the *Record* said "We hate to think of Greensboro being put on record as uncooperative and unhospitable to the extent of inviting the army to get out, or, worse employing pressure methods on congress to have it eased out." This would besmirch the city's vaunted "friendliness and hospitality" to soldiers as well as its "traditional patriotism." It called on people to "remember how Greensboro welcomed the soldiers with open arms when the war was going on," and accused the leadership of a lack of "gratitude and appreciation" for what the "armed forces have done." The *Record* favored "giving the military anything it wants within the bounds of reason. Certainly we should permit it to retain and maintain ORD."<sup>293</sup>

Thus, while most towns did everything they could to have temporary camps made permanent, Greensboro turned in the opposite direction. Mayor Cornelius M. Vanstory, Jr. telegraphed Congressman Durham in early May 1946 to request "immediate action on the closing of O.R.D."<sup>294</sup> While other Congressmen were pressured to retain bases, Durham was in a reverse position. In addition, he was in a primary election in which his opponent, Judge Earle Rives of Greensboro, stood with the Mayor.<sup>295</sup> The army refused to close the base and Durham wired Vanstory that it was "impossible " to close the ORD because of Greensboro's convenient rail connections.<sup>296</sup> Durham was reelected, but Greensboro began to resist being an "army town" in peacetime. It was a community which had done its service and acquired a veteran's status of its own.

By the fourth year of the war the euphoria and sense of patriotism had begun to wear off, and as victory seemed in sight and then came the need for any further efforts in the direction of keeping the "boys" entertained began to be replaced by a lack of respect. Soldiers had never been highly respected in peacetime, and once it returned the old attitudes could be resumed. The fears of the minister about Greensboro becoming an "army town" in the early days of the war could become real. Did anyone really want this? One only had to look around to see that some of the things the minister had warned about in 1943 were a reality by 1944 and by 1946, the question was: Was it necessary to continue to have these problems and if not how to end them?

The main problem was venereal disease, which by 1944 saw Greensboro with the "second highest VD rate [? incidence] in the Fourth Service Command."<sup>297</sup> Captain E.J. Vogel, the Base VD Control Officer, found that the city of Greensboro did not give him "any really effective aid in stamping out" VD. He complained that the "courts let off

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<sup>292</sup> *Greensboro Record*, May 10, 1946.

<sup>293</sup> *Greensboro Record*, May 11, 1946.

<sup>294</sup> *Daily News*, May 7, 1946.

<sup>295</sup> *Daily News*, May 9, 1946.

<sup>296</sup> *Daily News*, May 9, 1946.

<sup>297</sup> 256.43 – 1, V. I, GB248.



prostitutes and panderers with light sentences so that they were not discouraged from repeating their offenses and no serious attempt was made to treat those infected. Where treatment was instigated the City used old fashioned methods which did not quarantine those infected while their disease was still communicable."<sup>298</sup> The Greensboro police department in turn charged the army with lack of cooperation by discontinuing the "practices of examining military records on venereal disease contacts and appearance of servicemen in court to testify against women arrested with them in vice roundups." While local police examination of soldier's records was said to be "illegal" the army agreed that soldiers "picked up with women will be available on demand to the provost martial's office" to testify in court.<sup>299</sup> The official history continued "the high incidence of VD in Greensboro which has shown no real improvement since July [1944] together with the local lethargy toward the subject has proven to be, decidedly unfortunate and has reflected itself in the venereal disease rate in the Post."<sup>300</sup> Out of an average strength of 15,000, the combined white and "colored" total of VD cases was 140 that month --- a percentage of .01. Since two-thirds of these were among the black troops, an effort was made to lower the rate by awarding a plaque to the platoon with the lowest monthly VD rate and sending four NCO's to the VD control school at Tuskegee, Alabama.<sup>301</sup> It was reported that this form of competition helped to lower the rate.

As the police stepped up the effort as "squads of officers operating in patrol cars swapped down on the various hotels and rooming houses in different parts of the city" to arrest 41 persons and "overflow quarters at the city jail."<sup>302</sup> The list of names of those arrested noted that all of the "soldiers are stationed at ORD unless otherwise specified" and they were turned over to military authorities for trial.<sup>303</sup> Again, on June 9 there was notice of another "vice drive" which netted a fifteen year old girl.<sup>304</sup> And in August of that year when 14 "couples" were arrested the bag included an officer.<sup>305</sup>

In May of 1945, a joint city-army effort was begun to "educate the public to the existing factors conducive to the higher Venereal Disease incidence in Greensboro." A seven-page "plan of attack" was distributed in an effort that was to last five weeks.<sup>306</sup> By July of 1945 the incidence of VD was reported to be "on the decline" after an intensive campaign to educate not only the soldiers but the citizens of Greensboro to come to the

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<sup>298</sup> 256.43 - 1, V.I, GB 248-249.

<sup>299</sup> *Greensboro Record*, May 15, 1945.

<sup>300</sup> 256.43 - 1, V. 1, GB249.

<sup>301</sup> 235.111 - 1 GB102.

<sup>302</sup> *Daily News*, Apr. 2, 1945.

<sup>303</sup> *Daily News*, April 2, 1945.

<sup>304</sup> *Daily News*, June 9, 1945.

<sup>305</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 13, 1945. 78

<sup>306</sup> "A Plan for Consideration and Discussion at the General Meeting of All committee Heads: Venereal Disease Control Campaign" --- 14 May 1945. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

clinics and reducing dependency on "quacks and home remedies." A sixteen page report described the success that had been obtained in the effort. According to Captain C.L. Felker, the Venereal Disease Control Officer, "Greensboro...took Venereal Disease, out from under its cloud of 'hush-hush' undercover position and talked about it in public, on buses, over soda fountains, restaurant tables, in the newspapers, over the radio, displayed posters in every place of business, and of all places, the ministers of the city "preached about VD in their churches." A six weeks campaign with the title "No One Is Immune" saw Colonel Younts and Mayor Sullivan working together to create an awareness of sexually transmitted diseases with the appointment of a joint army-civilian VD committee. Illustrated presentations were held both on and off the post, while Boy Scouts distributed pamphlets to homes, and soldiers rode Coca Cola trucks to place posters at places along their routes. Bumper stickers reading "Defeat Venereal Disease" were distributed, and near the entrance to the post was a sign with a "grasping octopus, representing VD" which "drew comment from all the residents of the city." Information about the campaign was carried in the newspapers, including a black weekly, and plans were made for a permanent committee to "reduce the incidence of VD in Greensboro to an absolute minimum." There was a complaint, however, that while the "campaign was a civilian problem" the "problems...were left up to the military." And that Captain Felker had to do virtually all of the work in getting the speakers and visual materials. At the least Captain Felker was prepared to take credit for a change in attitude so that "VD was a disease that could be talked about in public and need not be a "hush-hush" matter that would violate the principles of society..." He reported to Colonel Younts that "the cooperation from many residents of the city had not been what it should, but that he believed...that the citizens of Greensboro were now fully cognizant of the meaning of VD...and would continue to hear about VD."<sup>307</sup> One veteran returning to his hometown of Greensboro from Europe on seeing the posters in the railroad station concluded that the place must have undergone some radical changes in his absence. "No one ever talked about that in public before the war," he recalled.<sup>308</sup> It is important to note here that the emphasis was not on the rate but on the "incidence." One can only wonder about the feelings of local leaders in having their city pointed out as a place with a festering venereal disease problem. It would not be one they wanted to deal with indefinitely, and one that they would probably prefer to have the public health authorities deal with in a more quiet way if possible.

While the leaders of the city might give varying degrees of support to the campaign it is unlikely that they saw it as a civilian problem, or that they wanted to "continue to hear about VD." Army statistics showed that most soldiers contracted VD away from the places where they were stationed, but that the situation at the ORD was the opposite

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<sup>307</sup> 256.43 - 4, 1 April 1945 - 30 June 1945, GB428 - GB 444. Public Relations Office Report on the Six Weeks Venereal Disease Campaign.

<sup>308</sup> Conversation with James L. Hege, April 20, 1975, Greensboro, N.C.

because the post was within the city limits. Also, those who contracted VD were in most cases continuing practices they had followed as civilians. It might be up to the army to attempt to change their habits, but it could only be done with cooperation of the local authorities. With the end of the war imminent, it would be possible to make the whole matter, especially the claim that Greensboro had one of the highest VD "rates" in the southeast, go away by getting rid of the ORD. Many citizens were disgusted by the antics of soldiers and their girlfriends in town and were clearly ready to see an end to them and a return to serious peacetime pursuits and controls over the actions of others.<sup>309</sup>

Consistent with its position the *Daily News* opposed the mayor and recounted the story of harmonious army-town relations. Any "disruption...dislocation and inconvenience" from the army's presence even in peacetime could be absorbed by the city which was reminded of the vital contributions of the army back in the dark days of 1942 "when business and commercial life was apparently dwindling as a result of the war." In addition, since peace had not come with victory, the city should wait and "cooperate with the military as they have cooperated since they first came in our midst."<sup>310</sup> Earlier the *Daily News* had waxed eloquent about the diversification of industries in Greensboro pointing out the "wisdom and value" of this and advising that the city should "never put all her eggs in one basket."<sup>311</sup> Perhaps a permanent military base in the city would be another egg, but it was certainly one that many did not want even on a temporary basis. One had only to look at the columns of the newspaper itself to find that the quality of personnel had deteriorated as accounts of larceny, rape, assault, and killings involving soldiers mounted, especially in 1946.<sup>312</sup> Another change was the departure of Colonel Younts in March of 1946. He received a gold embossed book containing letters of tribute from the city's leaders. Mayor Vanstory noted the "secure feeling we all had in knowing that regardless of what came up we could always count on your full support. The occasion never arose when you failed to do more than your part in harmonizing the relationship between your command and the interest of the city."<sup>313</sup> G. Sterling Petty, president of the Exchange Club wrote that the "deep feeling of friendship" between city and army was due to Younts's "ever friendly feeling towards our community as exemplified by your many commendable and cooperative acts."<sup>314</sup> Without Paul Younts the old euphoria was gone, the personnel at the base were no

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<sup>309</sup> Conversation with Sidney Cone, January 20, 1977. Cone recalled soldiers and their girlfriends taking liberties with each other in public places in the ORD and downtown areas. The absence of public parks in the area led them to find any place for whatever privacy it might afford.

<sup>310</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 2, 1946.

<sup>311</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Aug. 18, 1945.

<sup>312</sup> *Greensboro Record*, Jan 12, Mar. 25, April 5, June 11, July 9, July 31, 1946.

<sup>313</sup> Vanstory to Younts, March 30, 1946. Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>314</sup> G. Sterling Petty to Younts, March 28, 1946, Younts Papers, Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

longer the children of the middle class, but something else. After all, the war was over and still being in uniform was not necessarily a badge of honor.

Mayor Vanstory's proposal that the army leave town was reputedly part of an "intensive downtown campaign" to close the base and was supported by local veterans organizations.<sup>315</sup> Reports that closing the ORD would reduce business income by 20% were given little credence since many businessmen had plans for expansion and saw the army as a hindrance.<sup>316</sup> The ORD weekly, *The Rotator*, collected data which showed the payroll of the post for the first four months of 1946 to be \$21,036,967.82 to which could be added local army purchases of food and supplies of \$367,877.53. An army writer found it difficult to believe that anyone would want to cut off the flow of "more than five million crisp folding dollars a month [which] rustled to join their tightly packed predecessors in the coffers of Greensboro businessmen!"<sup>317</sup> Figures to back up this claim indicated that only about 2 percent of the money left the city as money orders and allotments, although there is no proof that such was the case.<sup>318</sup> In addition, Colonel Henry K. Mooney, the ORD commander, said that medical and fire help was always available to the city during emergencies. Also, in line with "army policy of contributing to the welfare of Greensboro," Mooney announced that 63 barracks would be converted into two family apartments.<sup>319</sup> Apparently, he was unaware of the lease arrangement. The buildings might be the army's but the land was not and the lease would soon expire under the duration plus one-year contract.<sup>320</sup>

On August 1, 1946, the army announced that the ORD would be closed the next month.<sup>321</sup> No indication of bowing to local pressure was indicated what was said to be part of the normal process of demobilization. Thus ended the agency which had revived the lagging spirits and economy of the city in 1942 and seen it through the first years of peace at a time when many much larger wartime activities elsewhere had been folded up precipitously. Mayor Vanstory with a symbolic wave of the hand to the army urged its personnel to "come back and see us in later years."<sup>322</sup> For 42 months, Greensboro had been an "army town", but now the need was to care for returning veterans of which there were over 18,000 in Guilford County and to get on with peacetime activities.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> *Rotator*, May 17, 1946.

<sup>316</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 14, 1946.

<sup>317</sup> *Rotator*, Aug. 9, 1946.

<sup>318</sup> *Rotator*, May 17, 1946; *Daily News*, May 12, 1946.

<sup>319</sup> *Rotator*, May 17, 1946.

<sup>320</sup> *Rotator*, June 12, 14, 1946; *Daily News*, June 11, 1946.

<sup>321</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 1, 1946.

<sup>322</sup> *Rotator*, Aug. 1, 1946.

<sup>323</sup> *Daily News*, Aug 1, 1946.

*The Rotator* aptly commented that by mid-1946 "men in uniform...[were]...ignored or just looked down upon" in favor of 12,500,000 veterans.<sup>324</sup> The O.R.D. was a reminder of a completed era; its work was done and its very uniqueness as a post entirely within the city limits made its removal more urgent and desirable. Greensboro had completed one of the most distinctive phases of its history. In a sense, the city seemed to be at a new stage of maturity and now faced the future with confidence.

While the *Daily News* remained "steadfast" in its desire that the "camp should remain," there seems to have been virtually no public outcry over its end. There was one letter in the *Record* claiming that the Mayor was a "cat's paw of the Cone Mills, and the *Daily News* published an anonymous letter from "An ORD Employee" which expressed concern over the closing and accused Mayor Vanstory of having a monetary interest in its removal.<sup>325</sup> His hackles raised, his honor obtained an apology for the printing of the anonymous letter and later another O.R.D. employee advised his colleagues to "go out and find yourself a permanent job."<sup>326</sup>

It has been noted that as early as the fall of 1943 a postwar planning committee had been formed by the Chamber of Commerce with the comment about the future being "Right now is the time for Greensboro to take hold; and there are indications that it is taking hold."<sup>327</sup> Earlier that year the *Daily News* had editorialized about the future under the heading "Look Ahead - Look South" noting that "the South is in a fair way to make great progress in the postwar era, if she mends her way and makes the best use of her native intelligence."<sup>328</sup> The idea of "rapid growth...during the years following the war" had been noted as early as February, 1943 even before BTC - 10 had opened.<sup>329</sup> By 1944, a state postwar planning board had been appointed in line with a belief that the state "like a smart businessman, is looking to the future, to the days of peace, when the road of progress lies straight ahead for the one who chooses to travel it."<sup>330</sup> There was never any intention to try to hold on to the military. By 1946, Greensboro had given her sons and daughters to the nation and provided them a place within its limits, but those were the limits of its commitment. It was not time to test the nature of the future that everyone had been waiting for so long.

The long-term impact of this brief period can be gauged up to the present. Nearly every other military base in North Carolina was turned over to the state if it was not retained

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<sup>324</sup> *Rotator*, June 14, 1946.

<sup>325</sup> *Record*, Aug. 9, 1946, *Daily News*, Aug. 4, 1946; Abe D. Jones, Jr. *Greensboro* 27 (Bassett, Va.: Bassett Printing Corp., 1976), "Cornelius M. Vanstory, Jr.," 322.

<sup>326</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 18, 1946.

<sup>327</sup> *Daily News*, Nov. 17, 1943.

<sup>328</sup> *Daily News*, May 19, 1943.

<sup>329</sup> *Daily News*, Feb. 28, 1943.

<sup>330</sup> *Daily News*, Jan 27, 1944, Aug 1, 1943.

by the federal government. Greensboro stood in a unique position since the land was in the private hands of the Cone organization. In August 1946, Caesar Cone of the Summit Avenue Building Company announced that 400 acres would be put up for sale with Cone Mills retaining some of the warehouses. Cone said his company had no interest in "going into the real estate business," but sought a buyer who would use the property "in the development of Greensboro, whether it be for industrial, commercial, or housing purposes."<sup>331</sup>

In October 1946 a corporation formed by three local businessmen, Joseph T. Carruthers, Jr., Oscar Burnett, and Herbert Falk purchased the stock of the Summit Avenue Building Company from the Cone interests. They then acquired 433 acres for a "substantial sum" estimated to be as high as \$1,000,000. Acquisition of the buildings on the property required further negotiations. The Bessemer Improvement Company, as the corporation was titled later purchased half of these structures for \$200,000<sup>332</sup> The impact had many aspects. Joseph Stephen Koury "began building his real estate fortune on the floor of a military base latrine in east Greensboro" where he and his brother Edmund established a piece goods mill in the aftermath of the war. Described in 1990 as an "empire" the Koury Corporation was "one of Guilford County's largest employers, taxpayers and property owners."<sup>333</sup> Private interests were not the only ones to benefit. A & T College acquired 52 acres including the hospital for \$90,000. <sup>334</sup> The remainder of the structures were acquired by Kemp Clendenin. Burnett announced the Bessemer Company's goals as "first...to aid veterans in temporary emergency housing, second to start a permanent housing project, and last to develop part of the area for industrial interests."<sup>335</sup> By the end of 1947 they had sold over \$300,000 worth of land not including leased portions of the tract, and the *Daily News* correctly noted that "Rapid Growth of O.R.D. Means Rapid Growth of Greensboro."<sup>336</sup>

In January 1947, the city council approved a rezoning plan for 500 acres of what is now known as the O.R.D. area. Land to the south of Bessemer Avenue was zoned for heavy industrial use while north of Bessemer was reserved for light industrial and residential purposes. The portion abutting Summit Avenue was designated "business A" would become the Summit Shopping Center in 1950, the second to be built in North Carolina.<sup>337</sup> By May, 1947, the Bessemer Improvement Company began to sell off tracts to industrial firms, small entrepreneurs, warehousing operations, and even a Moose Lodge. This was the start of "intensive" real estate development in Greensboro in the

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<sup>331</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 3, 1946.

<sup>332</sup> *Daily News*, Oct. 1,2, 1946; June 5, 1947.

<sup>333</sup> *Greensboro News and Record*, March 2, 1990.

<sup>334</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 29, 31, Oct. 2, Nov. 14, 1946.

<sup>335</sup> *Daily News*, October 2, 1946.

<sup>336</sup> *Greensboro Daily News*, Jan. 10, May 30, 1948.

<sup>337</sup> *Daily News*, Jan. 24, 1947, May 25, 1975.

aftermath of the war.<sup>338</sup> It was noted that the rezoning plan had thrown a "huge tract open to business and industrial development...." Greensboro found itself "suddenly changed from a city where it was hard for a manufacturer to find ten acres within the city of rail side land suitable for industrial purposes to a city with about 200 acres in the city ready to house industrial plants and with about 300 more acres adjacent to it for business, apartment, and recreational development." This was a condition "unprecedented in the city's history."<sup>339</sup> In 1951 Eugene Miller compiled a series of articles on North Carolina's cities since World War II and reported that: "Six years ago the 700-acre ORD area in the city's northeast was raw land, populated only by the barracks of an Army replacement depot. Today dozens of warehouses, truck terminals, and offices, representing an investment of some \$5,000,000 have mushroomed in ORD."<sup>340</sup> By way of contrast the once booming shipyard at Wilmington which as the largest employer in the state had built 243 ships and employed an average of 22,000 workers with a weekly payroll as high as \$1,000,000 during the war was "deserted...by the Maritime Administration" which still retained it in 1955.<sup>341</sup>

Thus, Greensboro moved in a smooth transition from war to peace with relatively little dislocation. As Robert Frazier, later to become mayor, noted of the local leaders, "They were glad to see the Army come and glad to see them go."<sup>342</sup> Evidence points toward local control over the trend of events in which responsibilities and prerogatives were never given up. Greensboro's experience during the war in comparison with other cities in the South and the nation appears to have been a superior one. The feared economic slump was averted and at least \$300,000,000 in payrolls were met at BTC-10 - O.R.D. Wholesale purchases totaled at least another \$42,000,000 to which could be added construction materials of about \$5,000,000. While these amounts are not particularly high, they seem to have provided just the right amount of stimulus to Greensboro's economy.

There was no significant social dislocation because of the wartime experience in Greensboro. The city emerged from the war with few unpleasant memories. Over

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<sup>338</sup> *Daily News*, May 30,31, July 19,25, 1947.

<sup>339</sup> *Daily News*, Aug. 2, 1946, Jan. 24, 1947; "Greensboro, High Point, Guilford County: Some Assets and Liabilities," mimeographed, North Carolina State Planning Board, 1947, 26, 59; David H. Shelton, "Greensboro '70: An Essay on the City and Its Economy," mimeographed, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, 1970, 78. See also: *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Housing : Supplement to the First Series Housing Bulletin for North Carolina, Greensboro Block Statistics* (Washington, USGPO, 1942), 1-16; *United States Census of the Population, 1950, Census Tract Statistics, Greensboro, North Carolina and Adjacent Areas, Selected Population and Housing Statistics* (Washington: USGPO, 1951), 1-21; *United States Census of Housing, 1950* (Washington: USGPO, 1951), 1-15.

<sup>340</sup> *Greensboro Daily News*, Jan 28, 1951.

<sup>341</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, Dec. 7, 1942; *Wilmington Sunday Star-News*, May 22, 1955; *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 6 1944. Clipping file, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina.

<sup>342</sup> Author's conversation with Robert Frazier, 1966 or 1967 ?

330,000 service personnel passed through the base during the war and it remains a continuing source of local pride that a number of them returned as permanent residents.<sup>343</sup> The nature of the army's lease prevented its holdings from remaining in federal hands or being turned over to the state as was the case with Camps Butner and Sutton. In line with its conservative past, Greensboro's growth continued forward at a steady measured pace in War and peace.

But all other considerations aside the city had done its part in the war. It had risen to the requirement of the national emergency and its leaders and people had provided for the needs of the army enthusiastically and competently. A sense of accomplishment over this remained in the city in the years that followed, and it must be re-emphasized that the army never came to dominate or direct local events. The official record makes the claim that "no riots, major fires, or subversive action took place during the history of the post" although the potential for trouble existed. These were listed as "colored troops, proximity of the town and the 'devil may care' attitude of men about to go overseas...Fortunately, order and control were maintained."<sup>344</sup> In its experience as an army town, Greensboro had succeeded far beyond the expectations of early 1942 while it maintained its social and economic balance with ease.

Greensboro's main contribution centered on placing itself on the line as a place which would deal in people. While its people would receive many benefits from the experience, there would also be drawbacks in many shapes and sizes. It could, and did, produce many material products for the war including a rocket fuel, ammonium perchlorate, at the Vick Chemical Company, as well as splints for setting broken arms, electroplated parts for ships and planes, shell casings for anti-aircraft ammunition, and parts of air craft carriers at Carolina steel which received the Army and Navy "E" award, but the main effort was always maintaining a good connection with the Army Air Forces.

Greensboro would become the center of significant Army Air Force activity during World War II, but there was nothing to forecast the events that would come. It was a city that seemed far removed from military influences lying 200 miles inland in a region settled by Quakers and other pacifist people. Yet it the impact of war on its history and development has been profound. The first of these came in 1781 at the battle of Guilford Courthouse, which the Americans lost but which led to the British surrender at Yorktown. Although an American defeat, the site today is a National Military Park and in a sense, the battleground is now as important as the battle. The second impact of war came during the Civil War when the Confederate government built the Piedmont

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<sup>343</sup> Col. Paul R. Younts to Commanding General, AAF Personnel Distribution Command, Louisville, Ky., "Fact Sheet," Feb. 9, 1946. *Daily News*, Apr. 12, 1976, June 6, 1974.

<sup>344</sup> 256.43 - 1 V I 078.



Railroad connecting Greensboro with to Danville, Virginia giving the city a new lease on life with a connection that powerful interests in the state had opposed. The third time war gave the city a boost was during World War I when the United States Railway Administration constructed the Pomona rail yard, which enhanced the city's importance as the central point on the line between Washington and Atlanta. But all of these moments would pale in comparison to the impact World War II on the Gate City.