

precipitated scores of requests from other Wacs for flying duty. A few more WAC radio operators, mechanics, and photographers were soon assigned to regular runs. Several such Wacs actually received Air Medals, including one in India for her work in mapping the Hump, and one posthumously after the crash of an aerial broadcasting plane.

Both the women and the airfields concerned were ordinarily so pleased with themselves for accomplishing flying duty assignments that Air Forces headquarters, when it discovered them, published a directive authorizing such duty provided that the flights concerned were not for purposes of combat training, and that Wacs did not replace any man who might be receiving combat training on these flights.

The Air WAC Officer, while not discouraging such duty for women well suited for it, did not encourage any extension of it, or widespread training of women for it. Her opposition was due partly to the difficulty of housing a female crew member when nonscheduled landings were necessary, and partly to the danger of public outcry if any Wac was assigned to a position that even remotely involved combat training. Later in the war the Air Transport Command repeatedly proposed to use Wacs to replace male flight clerks on scheduled passenger runs. This was at first discouraged because of the irregular housing arrangements involved, but was eventually approved on a small scale and proved successful in flights such as those from Paris to London.¹²

Even including these flight clerks, the number of Wacs on flying duty, wearing wings and drawing flying pay, was never great. Only twenty Wacs held the Specification Serial Number of Air Crew Mem-

ber, and flying radio operators and other technicians were equally scarce.

This comparative absence of a relatively exciting and popular type of Air Forces duty was one factor with which commanders of female troops had to reckon in maintaining morale. Many air-base commanders, recognizing the difficulty, directed that Wacs be allowed to go on local flights as passengers where space permitted, or for at least one orientation flight upon arrival at a station. Nevertheless, most AAF Wacs seldom saw the inside of a plane, and many were in the unfortunate position of Air Transport Command Wacs in Scotland and Wales, who were shipped overseas by boat and complained that they knew there was an outside world only by remarks dropped by transient men. Because of the value of occasional flights to women's morale, the Air WAC Officer secured a directive making clear that women were to have the same privileges as other military personnel in "hopping rides" or flying on military orders.¹³

Specialist Training

AAF headquarters from the beginning showed enthusiasm for training Waacs in other technical and mechanical jobs which were not ordinarily considered a woman's field. An elaborate training system was originally planned, with 8,000 women a month to be fed into AAF schools for training as everything from

¹² (1) AAF WAC Hist, pp. 19 and 41. (2) AAF Reg 35-45, 12 Nov 43. (3) WDBPR Press Release, 14 May 46. (4) Memo, AAF for Dir WAC, 30 Aug 45. WDWAC 319.1 AAF.

¹³ (1) For list of Specification Serial Numbers see AAF Stat Contl Rpt SC-PS-123, sub: Strength of AAF Pers in WAC Within Continental U.S. by Comd, SSN, and Race. (2) Hist Recs Rpt 315c, Wacs in European Division, ATC, June 1944-August 1945, by European Division, ATC. USAF Hist Div.