

armorers to weather forecasters, in addition to 5,000 a month to be received already trained in WAAC schools as clerks. This plan was very similar to the system actually used on a smaller scale by the Naval Air Service, which determined in advance to employ set numbers of Waves as Link trainer instructors, control tower operators, and other specialists, and trained them accordingly. The Army Air Forces carried the plan so far as to set up Wac classes at the AAF Photolaboratory School at Lowry Field, which trained several all-WAC photolaboratory companies. The AAF also earlier encouraged the WAAC to set up its radio training school at Kansas City, and contracted to employ all graduates.¹⁴

However, as women began to arrive, the AAF was surprised to discover that the majority of women, unlike the 17- and 18-year-old boys who were being inducted, had a usable job skill before they entered the Army. To employ the average Wac successfully, it proved necessary only to place her, fresh from basic training, on almost any airfield, where, if not immediately snatched into too many pieces by competing section chiefs, she ordinarily soon found useful employment. The number of recruits arriving was never great enough to make placement a problem.

The Air Forces therefore soon dropped all but a few of its formal technical training plans for women, and adopted a system which was believed to be the most natural, speedy, and economical under the circumstances. Most AAF Wacs finishing basic training were shipped immediately to air bases having need of personnel in their civilian skills and were assigned to immediate duty or to on-the-job training, which was believed less wasteful of time than the average technical

course. If a station needed a specialist it was unable to train, or if a Wac showed such aptitude that higher specialized training was clearly indicated, the station was authorized to send her to any noncombat AAF school that could arrange to house her. In such cases the station ordinarily had to take the trainee back upon graduation and employ her in the new skill; training was thus seldom employed merely to gratify individual desires for unnecessary training or to get rid of troublesome individuals.

Unfortunately for the compilation of statistics, the attendance of Wacs at AAF technical schools was so well integrated and came to excite so little comment that it was later impossible to determine exactly how many women had attended each course and how their record compared with that of male students. It was known only that approximately 2,000 women successfully completed courses in AAF technical schools, including weather observers, weather forecasters, electrical specialists of several kinds, sheet metal workers, Link trainer instructors, cryptographers, teletype operators, radio mechanics, control tower specialists, parachute riggers, bombsight maintenance specialists, clerks, airplane mechanics, photolaboratory technicians and photointerpreters, chaplains' assistants, and physical and military training specialists. Lt. Gen. Barton K. Yount, commanding general of the AAF Training Command, wrote, "Their record of accomplishment reflects great credit upon the Women's Army Corps and the Army. . . . Their contribution to the Training Command's mission has been invaluable."¹⁵

¹⁴ AAF WAC Hist, pp. 41-42.

¹⁵ Ltr, Gen Yount to Dir WAC, 5 May 45. WDWAC 201.22.