

graphing metals and metallurgical processes. Spectroscopic technicians were eventually qualified for advanced work with the spectroscope.

Most of the Wacs' positions carried considerable responsibility, and as the project had a liberal allotment of grades, many of the women had received good ratings by the end of the war. Both the responsibility and the ratings were a definite factor in aiding morale, according to the WAC commander, but even greater was the fact that the work was hard and most women were always kept busy.

Problems of Engineer Corps Wacs

Only one major problem was encountered by Wacs serving with the Corps of Engineers, quite similar to that already reported independently by other technical services. This was the fact that the secrecy surrounding all installations prevented inspectors and WAC staff officers from checking on the accuracy of job assignment or the compliance of post commanders with War Department directives.

Serious morale situations soon developed in the Pasco and Los Alamos units, where Wacs were habitually used as babysitters, servants for civilians, and other nonmilitary jobs. In one, a number of highly qualified communications experts were assigned as barmaids to serve beer to civilian laborers. The women stated that they were subjected to rough language and insulted by the civilians, until one fled to Washington to appeal to the Air Forces to obtain their transfer to bona fide communications work.⁶¹ The case was reported to the Chief of Engineers, who refused to transfer the women to the Air Forces; the ASF WAC Officer and the Ninth Service Command WAC staff director were both denied permission to visit

the installation. At the second WAC detachment, an even more widespread morale problem developed when a young WAC officer without troop experience, sent to the station to do an office job, suddenly found herself in command of a newly acquired WAC company in addition to doing full-time office work, and without the assistant required by War Department regulations.

The problems presented at both of these stations eventually became so serious that, late in the war, the Corps of Engineers was obliged to appoint a WAC staff director. To avoid bringing in an outsider, Capt. Arlene G. Scheidenhelm was named staff director and was cleared to visit the other stations. At one station the detachment was reorganized; at the other, the staff director stated:

I merely told the post commander that he shouldn't use Wacs as barmaids or we should all get in trouble; he asked which women to reassign, I named them, and he reassigned them at once. All that was needed was a WAC Staff Director who was a part of the Corps of Engineers.

Commendations

The day when the A-bomb news could be released was dubbed by the Wacs "our day," and they were, according to the staff director, "the proudest Wacs in the Army," feeling that they had done more than most other Wacs to shorten the war and save the lives of American soldiers. At this time, the WAC units were awarded the Meritorious Unit Service Award; twenty women were presented with the Army Commendation Ribbon; and one received the Legion of Merit. Congratulatory messages were also received from the Secretary of War, from General Groves,

⁶¹ Specifically, to the Exec, Air WAC Div, Maj Treadwell.