

them unassignable because of low aptitude or lack of skill; the Transportation Corps was confident that it could assign and use any sort of Wac. Puerto Rican Wacs, whose possible language difficulties were feared by some commands, were requested and successfully employed. When WAC training centers were forced to relinquish their bands in the interests of personnel economy, the Transportation Corps acquired the musicians. When at last station-and-job recruiting was authorized, the Transportation Corps used its own recruiters to conduct such a lively campaign for Port Wacs that it, like the Air Forces, had to be restrained from implying that a new corps had been set up.

Transportation Corps Job Assignments

The women assembled by these means were assigned to a variety of duties. Some 700 of them, in New York and San Francisco, were assigned to postal battalions where all V-mail letters were processed. Wacs opened the letters, checked for correct form and for rips and tears, and sent them to the commercial company that photographed them; incoming letters were likewise processed, with Wacs operating the machines that put each letter in an envelope. This work proved extremely monotonous, calling for 24-hour duty on several shifts, and was successfully performed for over two years.

Large numbers of Wacs, both enlisted and officer, also worked on the piers at every port, assisting in the staging of troops for overseas and the reception of returning troops. This type of assignment began in a small way when Wacs were tentatively assigned to assist in staging female personnel—civilians, nurses, and Wacs. More than a hundred Red Cross women thus

staged wrote to the commanding general

It is our unanimous opinion that we have never been in an area where everything functioned more smoothly. There has been none of the confusion or discomfort which we had come to consider a normal part of the embarkation process.⁷⁵

The use of Wacs in staging was soon expanded to include all types of personnel embarking or landing. WAC checkers on piers and ships processed not only outgoing personnel, but an estimated 800,000 items of supply for overseas forces. For example, in the San Francisco Unit Supply Office, Wacs not only kept records of the types of guns, the proper ammunition for each, and the type to be issued to each man according to his destination, but they also actually handed the gun to the man. One Wac said, "The soldiers come in unarmed and go out with a gun, and it gives me a pretty good feeling." As the men began to return from overseas, all-WAC bands in New York and San Francisco went out on small craft to meet the ships. As men came down the gangplanks, all-WAC teams met them for roll call and routine checking, after which other Wacs led them onto the proper train. Incoming officers also reported to a Wac's desk to receive any changes in orders. In this reception process, male military personnel were ordinarily employed only to check heavy baggage. The women generally reported no particular difficulty from the troops. One port noted, "Directions given [by Wacs] to troops debarking were cheerfully obeyed for the men 'just wanted to hear them talk.'"

In addition to postal and pier work, Wacs were employed in many other duties

⁷⁵ Ltr, Ruth Frederick, Gp Leader, American Red Cross, to CG NYPOE, 12 Nov 46. WAC Stf Dir TC file.