

which differed little from those of other commands. At a typical large port, the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation, it was reported:

Though pier duty had priority over all other WAC assignments . . . [there were] dozens of other jobs in water, rail, motor vehicle, and mechanical maintenance, machine records, salvage, communications, photo-laboratory, mess, and supply. . . . The Wacs key-punched tons of manifests, cargo loading reports, convoy recaps, and what not . . . proofread passenger lists one inch thick, which were checked and rechecked. . . . There were 45 MOS numbers: butcher, sales clerk, auto-parts clerk, multigraph operator, quartermaster supply technician, tailor, photographer, movie projectionist. . . .⁷⁶

At some ports, WAC medical companies were also assigned to administer shots, assist in processing, and keep records. During debarkations from hospital ships, these women were withdrawn from regular duties to act as guides, type admittance cards, and help in the Finance Department. On their own time, the women were discovered to be running errands and shopping for their patients, and carrying home the men's newly issued uniforms to iron. Most ports were deliberately striving to make wounded men feel that their country gave them a grateful and personal reception, and it was found that Wacs excelled in this effort. The effect on the women's morale was likewise good, as they felt less disposed to make known their own gripes when observing the greater discomforts of the wounded.

The chief difficulty encountered in the administration of Transportation Corps women concerned the fact that they often worked long hours and on night shifts as well as on monotonous duties, and were thus extremely susceptible to fatigue,

nervousness, improper sleeping and eating habits, and impaired health. To combat this situation effectively, it was necessary for the cadre to maintain long and irregular hours. One commander of a postal battalion stated that for months she habitually slept for only two or three hours at a time, since the only time to discover the women's needs was when they were relaxing, talking, and eating after completion of their work shifts. As a result, where health and morale were maintained it was at the expense of the company officers, who wore out quickly.⁷⁷

Later Experimental Assignments

As the Transportation Corps gained in experience in WAC administration, it began to show propensities, comparable only to those of the Air Forces, for experimentation with new and unusual duties. Soon after the invasion of Normandy in 1944, the all-WAC 29th Traffic Control Group was hand-picked from experienced Port Wacs and sent overseas. This group omitted the usual WAC overseas training at Fort Oglethorpe, and was entirely trained and equipped at the port, with such success that the European theater WAC staff director pronounced it the best-trained WAC group ever sent to Europe.⁷⁸

Shortly afterward, to cope with the huge backlog of supplies for Europe which developed after the invasion of France, the Transportation Corps in September of 1944 organized a flying squad of approximately 100 Wacs, who were rushed to help clear out the jam at the Elmira Holding

⁷⁶ History cited n. 73(1), Ch. 14, written by Sgt Freda Zegman, HRPOE.

⁷⁷ Interv with Capt Theresa Davis, wartime CO WAC Det NYPOE.

⁷⁸ Sec Ch. XXI, below.