

and Reconsignment Point. Here the Wacs found warehouses and a large open storage area crowded with an apparently hopeless assortment of boxcars, tanks, and other equipment. Much top-secret paper work was found to be involved in sorting manufacturers' lists and routing supplies to proper destinations. WAC clerks, checkers, and drivers worked outdoors for most of the winter, in three around-the-clock shifts, even operating the heavy lifts which moved and sorted supplies, and sleeping in the gymnasium of a local college. WAC officers later were of the opinion that the work involved had been too heavy for women, but no men were available to the Transportation Corps for the assignment and women performed it successfully.

With the end of the war and the resulting load of returning shipping, the Transportation Corps took a step not shared by any other zone of the interior agency, and set up rest camps similar to those used in combat areas. WAC camps were established shortly after men's camps were set up, one located near Camp Stoneman, California, and one at Vassar College. The idea proved extremely successful in combating fatigue, particularly for postal battalions and others in tedious and confining work.

Toward the end of the war, the Transportation Corps also achieved its previously thwarted objective of employing Wacs on shipboard. Earlier WAC objections to placing five or six enlisted women and a WAC officer on shipboard were based on fears that the women would either require expensive special provisions or would have none, since they could not use the men's recreational and living areas. Late in 1944 the Transportation Corps again requested Wacs for such duty, stating that "an urgent need exists for radio technicians for troop and hospital ships."⁷⁹

WAC radio operators were by this time as scarce as male ones, and could not be provided by the Signal Corps, but the nature of the idea appealed to the Air Forces, which voluntarily furnished Wacs who merited reward for long and superior service in radio instruction in AAF schools. Three or four enlisted women and one WAC officer were assigned to each of several hospital ships, where they proved successful; one reported later, "It has been weeks since we have been referred to as experiments."⁸⁰ With the success of the WAC radio operators, other Wacs came to be employed on shipboard as clerical workers and as medical technicians to assist the nurses.

Quarters for such women did not prove a major problem, since they were usually housed in a cabin with its own toilet facilities, or with the nurses. As feared, the life proved confining and lacking in provisions for recreation for women. Enlisted women were not permitted to fraternize with passengers of either sex or with crew members of the opposite sex. On hospital ships, women not on duty were allowed to visit with patients, which proved of some morale value to both. One Wac reported: "Most of them are anxious for a game of bridge or just talking . . . it makes us feel that our job is worth while if we have a small part in helping to bring them home safely."

Nevertheless, "hospital ship fatigue" often developed; commanding officers believed that two months' unbroken duty without shore leave should be the maximum, although some individuals were able to continue for a year or more with-

⁷⁹ Memo, CofT for CG ASF, 30 Sep 44. SPRPM 220.3 WAC.

⁸⁰ Ltr, Sgts Brown and Niles and Cpl Kunmick, undated. Folder, Hospital Ships, WAC Stf Dir TC file.