

assigned as orderlies, one station alone having converted thirty graduates of the motor transport school to this use.²⁶

Hours of Work

Surveys also confirmed another fact which began to suggest that hospital work on an enlisted status was possibly not proper for women. This was the difference in hours of work for military and for civilian personnel. The customary hours in Army hospitals were 40 hours a week for civilian employees or 48 hours with overtime pay, and 8 hours a day for Army nurses. Enlisted men were believed to have more endurance, and traditionally worked a 12-hour day in Army hospitals.

The difficulty for Wacs was that they were both female and enlisted. As females, a 12-hour day was no more appropriate for Wacs than for nurses, and even less appropriate when Wacs were used for strenuous physical labor. As one female medical officer observed, "Wacs are replacing enlisted men but you are not turning women into men by an Act of Congress. . . . Wacs are enlisted women but they are still women."²⁷ On the other hand, Wacs were enlisted personnel, and if they worked only an 8-hour day the damage to the morale of enlisted men on the same wards was reported to be considerable because of the discrimination involved, and one-for-one replacement was made even more difficult.

The surveys revealed that enlisted women were almost without exception required by hospital commanders to work 12 hours a day and often more. Also, many were working 7 days a week and were not allowed compensatory time off during the work day or any leaves or passes. In addition to the regular 12-hour day, all were

obliged to take night calls in emergencies, since civilian nurses' aides were not quartered on the post. Wacs also had to manage on their own time the four-hour-weekly continuation training courses required by the ASF, and other duties such as company fatigue, inspections, personal grooming, and sometimes laundry. As a result, enlisted women in Army hospitals were found to be working a minimum of 72 hours weekly and a maximum of at least 100, in addition to company duties. For example, Camp Wheeler, Georgia, employed trained WAC medical technicians as ward orderlies on a 12-hour, 7-day week, a total of 84 hours a week exclusive of emergency duty, training, and inspection. Camp Croft used a 13½-hour day, 6-day week, or 81 hours a week plus extras. Other variants at different hospitals produced the same general totals.²⁸

These discoveries posed one of the most difficult questions to be encountered by the Army in its employment of woman-power: to what extent the Army could be bound by labor laws and civilian rules in the hours of work for women. Eighteen of the states had laws to the effect that 48 hours per week, or 8 hours per day for 6 days, were the maximum for women workers. In England, the Factory Act of 1937 placed the maximum for women at from 48 to 54 hours, and even in the darkest days after Dunkerque, the Ministry of Labour recommended that these hours not be exceeded. The U.S. Army Industrial Hygiene Laboratory, after a study of women in industry, reported:

²⁶ Memo, MPD ASF for G-1, 12 Sep 44. SPGAM 322.5 WAC (9-6-44)-97, in SPAP 220.3 WAC (7-28-43).

²⁷ Min, Med Tng Conf, Ft Oglethorpe, 1-3 May 45, pp. 29-30, comments of Maj Margaret Janeway. WAC folder, SGO Tng Div.

²⁸ Memo cited n. 26.