

bridge, cooking, and feminine companionship. The theater also permitted the WAC staff director to call meetings of WAC company officers and to send them monthly news bulletins, in an effort to improve leadership and administration.⁴⁰

In the matter of decorations and citations WAC units and individuals were also included. The WAC sergeant who had supervised theater telephone communications received the Legion of Merit from General McNarney himself in a retreat ceremony. General Eisenhower awarded the Soldier's Medal to a WAC private who saved a soldier from a pool of flaming gasoline, at the expense of severe burns. Other decorations and battle stars were not unusual. Grades and ratings were likewise generally good, except among Fifth Army and Signal Corps personnel, and by the end of the war in Europe only a few hundred women who had been long overseas were still unrated.⁴¹

Soldier opposition had possibly a worse effect on morale than it did in the United States, since not only the Corps' existence but its presence overseas was questioned. Even before the women's arrival, letters streamed homeward advising against enlistment, and afterwards came the mass-pregnancy rumors which helped to inaugurate the slander campaign. Almost 100 percent of soldier comment was unfavorable or obscene. An Army supervisor noted:

That sort of thing has a direct effect on the morale of the girls over here because their families write to them and want to know if they are true. . . . It bothers me because I can see the effect on the morale, spirit, and pride of the kids working for me.

Early arrivals also had to face insults in the streets. One Wac, advising her sister on enlistment, noted, "How many times I've

heard some GI call us dirty filthy names, names that I would never allow anyone to call me if I were a civilian." WAC officers excited even more resentment than enlisted women, chiefly when they outstripped men in rank or promotions.

From those soldiers who worked in offices with Wacs, or were stationed in the same vicinity, the comments tended to become more favorable. The women's military bearing likewise was praised. Soldier comment noted:

As the girls came down the boulevard, they really drew the applause. You have to hand it to them, they look good on parade. I doubt if West Pointers could appear better.

Unfortunately, only a minority of soldiers ever worked in offices with Wacs, or had any opportunity for becoming acquainted with them. Even where soldiers and Wacs were stationed in the same cities, there were not enough Wacs to permit much firsthand acquaintance between the two. Women shortly became so surfeited with requests for dates that it was necessary to provide separate recreation rooms and snack bars where they might relax and enjoy feminine companionship. The conduct of combat men, particularly young Air Forces officers, was a problem, for, said the staff director, "They would just sweep into the dayrooms and take over the place, and nothing could be done with them." There was no doubt that a Wac date, where available, meant much to many American men. One wrote:

⁴⁰ (1) Intervs with Col Coleman cited n. 1(3). (2) MTO Ltr, 29 Apr 45, sub: Educational Interests of WAC Pers. AG 353.8/264 TWSD-O. (3) Memo, G-1 NATOUSA for Sp Servs, 29 Dec 44; Conf Notes; Monthly Ltrs. Coleman file.

⁴¹ (1) Statistical Data, 1943-45. Coleman file. (2) M/R, 10 Jan 44, SPWA 200.6. (3) At end of War: about 34 Pvts, 207 pfc's, according to Coleman interv.