

in the more unusual skills: medical technicians, mechanics, draftsmen, interpreters, weather observers, and photographic specialists.

The maintenance of this policy at times was carried so far as to result in the malassignment of women with "unfeminine" skills. Thus, some one hundred WAC mechanics in the Air Service Command, although pronounced "highly satisfactory" in this work, were ordered reassigned to unskilled desk jobs on the grounds that it was not appropriate for Wacs to wear coveralls. Other WAC mechanics remained unassigned at ports, and were eventually transferred to the Air Transport Command.³⁶

The policy also made it increasingly difficult for the War Department to approve theater requisitions, and for shipping agencies to fill them satisfactorily. Many requisitions, while numerically reasonable in view of the total strength of the Corps, would have required skimming almost all stenographers and many typists from stations in the United States—a sacrifice which the War Department deemed unjustified in view of frequent reports that there was already widespread theater use of WAC stenographers as typists and of typists as clerks. Stations in the United States experienced difficulty in providing even the numbers approved. The theater reported receiving typists labeled stenographers and clerks called "potential typists." Also, as volunteer stenographers and typists were all shipped, it became necessary for stations to send nonvolunteers who were known to be more liable to psychiatric breakdowns. Plenty of volunteers for overseas service remained in the Corps, but not in the requested skills. Eventually the War Department was obliged to inform the theater that its requisitions could no longer be approved if they asked per-

centages of scarce skills higher than could reasonably be supplied. The theater's requisitions thereupon dropped a notch in skill, but continued to concentrate upon clerical fields, in spite of the staff director's attempts to interest offices in using Wacs in medical, mechanical, and other work.

An additional complication in shipment was the matter of grades. Since arriving casualties were assigned to existing units, the theater asked that they arrive with low grades in order not to outrank men and women already in those units. Expert stenographers were sought in the grade of private, and experienced company officers in the grade of second lieutenant. The Army Service Forces filled several shipments with Wacs who voluntarily relinquished their ratings for a chance at overseas service. However, when later nonvolunteer shipments arrived with ratings, a morale problem arose and the War Department ordered the ratings restored to earlier arrivals, not wishing to establish a policy of reducing to the grade of private all men and women sent overseas. Eventually the War Department was forced to apply a percentage ruling to WAC shipments, requiring the theater to absorb a percent of higher grades equal to the over-all distribution.³⁷

Rather than ship women who did not meet the exacting specifications in theater requisitions, incomplete shipments were sometimes made, a practice that also met with objections from the theater, since short shipments upset assignment plans almost as seriously as did unqualified ones. At other times, shipments were delayed until after the theater's need had changed

³⁶ ETO Bd Rpt statistics, Vol. II, App. 12 of App. 1, and Vol. III, Apps. 95-96.

³⁷ (1) ETO WAC Hist, p. 26, 34. Also ETO Bd Rpt. (2) D/F, G-1 to MPD ASF, 10 Mar 45. WDGA 320.2 WAC, in WDWAC 320.2 ETO.