

mands free to meet the changing situation. For this reason, Colonel Baird noted that "the theater was most reluctant to publish a fixed policy or general rule to establish uniformity in WAC control and administration. This was true for the men also." Exceptions could therefore be found to almost any general statement which could later be made concerning theater Wacs as a group. A theater housing policy for Wacs was almost the only published over-all policy, and even this was found impracticable outside of Australia.⁴²

A source of some later comment was the fact that Wacs were assigned to the advanced echelons of all of these headquarters. For nurses, the theater had formerly adopted a contrary policy of "using them only in rear areas," causing them to be replaced by male corpsmen in evacuation hospitals and in field hospitals during active phases of service—a practice which, inspectors reported, had caused low morale and psychiatric casualties among the women.⁴³

Theater historians later expressed some doubt as to the necessity for the opposite policy concerning Wacs, since Australia was, to the end, a great supply base at which some noncombat men remained, and certain other headquarters, such as Air Transport Command, winnowed the necessary male clerical personnel for more advanced bases from among ordinary troops.

Maj. Gen. William O. Ryan of the ATC, upon inspecting the New Guinea bases, declared the area unsuitable for women and canceled the orders of ATC Wacs about to fly in from Hawaii. Nevertheless, responsible Army officers were unanimous that the theater could not have taken similar action. Col. A. Robert Ginsburgh, who was both G-1 and G-3 of USASOS, stated later:

USASOS could not possibly have moved from Australia without the Wacs. . . . Except for the Wacs, I had only the few clerically skilled men which higher headquarters let trickle through to USASOS, plus a few malarials and other men sent back from combat, naturally not very useful at exacting office work.⁴⁴

Colonel Baird of USAFFE likewise indicated that the decision was a military necessity. General MacArthur himself, when later questioned as to the advisability of this course, replied:

I moved my Wacs forward early after occupation of recaptured territory because they were needed and they were soldiers in the same manner that my men were soldiers. Furthermore, if I had not moved my Wacs when I did, I would have had mutiny . . . as they were so eager to carry on where needed.⁴⁵

The Wacs themselves were eager to get forward, and the staff director later expressed "complete accord" with the decision.⁴⁶

Oro Bay

Wacs began to move out of Australia early in August of 1944; by October only

⁴² AFPAC Reply, both versions; also Memo cited n. 22.

⁴³ (1) Memo, Maj Craighill, MC, Consultant for Women's Health and Welfare, SGO, for TAG through CG USAFFE, 8 Jun 45, sub: Med and Social Conditions of Women in Mil Serv in SWPA. WDWAC 333 Pacific, and in SGO Hist Div 319.1-2 Women, SWPA. Hereafter cited as Craighill SWPA Rpt. Attached is a list of interviews with more than 200 individuals in SWPA, including chief nurses, WAC detachment commanders, hospital commanders, Army commanders, inspectors, etc.; also Table of Comparative Rates of Medical Evacuation for Wacs and Nurses, 1 Jul 44 to 1 Apr 45. (2) Data in possession of Col Brown.

⁴⁴ Seminar Comments. (See Bibliographical Note.)

⁴⁵ Statement to Col Boyce in Tokyo, 14 Oct 45, quoted by her in Boyce Rpt.

⁴⁶ Ltr, Miss Mary-Agnes Brown to OCMH, 23 Apr 51. OCMH.