

and water, and at the foot of a hill a strenuous hike from the offices on top. For a time the FEAF unit also housed the USAFFE Wacs, most of whom worked for GHQ, but within a few weeks this arrangement became so unsatisfactory to FEAF that, without warning, it bodily ejected the GHQ Wacs and their belongings, without a company officer.

Emergency housing was hastily worked out, and the GHQ Wacs eventually benefited by a move to tents in the GHQ area on a cool mountain top. To prevent such misunderstandings in the future, the staff director recommended in September and again in January that the unit be formally organized and assigned to GHQ as were enlisted men, but she was again informed by USAFFE that "The Commander-in-Chief did not want Wacs assigned to GHQ and under the circumstances no attempt would be made to do so."⁵⁶ Because of its ambiguous status, the GHQ unit suffered chronic supply difficulties, and eventually departed from Hollandia without ever receiving its organizational equipment.⁵⁷

The GHQ unit, upon Colonel Brown's recommendation, attempted the experiment of housing Wacs, nurses, and Red Cross women in one camp without barbed wire, and with a minimum of restrictions. No particular difficulties were experienced, and there were only two instances of prowlers, of whom it was reported, "The Wacs took care of them."⁵⁸ The success of this experiment did not, as the staff director had hoped, persuade other commands to try it. USASOS units at all stations, employing some 60 percent of all Wacs, continued to use varieties of the unpopular "concentration camp" system. Air Forces units ordinarily relaxed the system to abolish locked compounds, requiring only armed escorts and traveling in minimum groups of four. The FEAF

staff director noted that "No serious incidents were reported as a result of the wider degree of freedom exercised by Air Force units."⁵⁹

A fourth WAC unit was eventually organized in Hollandia by the Far East Air Service Command (FEASC). Although handicapped when the departing FEAF transferred to it more than sixty WAC drivers and other unassignables needing retraining, the FEASC detachment requisitioned more Wacs and reached an eventual strength of approximately seven hundred.⁶⁰

At this time premature optimism was general when, toward the end of 1944, the WAC medical evacuation rate for the first six months in the theater was computed and proved to be not too much higher than the men's, the loss rate being 62 per 1,000 per year for men (nonbattle causes only) and 98 per 1,000 for Wacs. This rate appeared especially good in view of the current rate of 202 per 1,000 for Army nurses, a rate that had generally prevailed since their arrival. Theater reports stated that the WAC rate compared "very favorably" with the men's, and that the difference was due to gynecological disorders, other disabilities incurred by the Wacs being generally of the same nature and degree of severity as those incurred by men.⁶¹

⁵⁶ (1) WAC Hist Rpt (shows Stf Dir check sheets on 23 Aug and 7 Sep). (2) Folder, 5205th WAC Det, Drawer X-29853. Also minutes of seminar.

⁵⁷ From 16 different items of correspondence in Folder, 5205th WAC Det, Drawer X-29853.

⁵⁸ Statements by Colonel Brown at seminar and on margin of draft of chapter.

⁵⁹ Ltr, Lt Col Mary L. Kersey, WAF, to OCMH, 21 Apr 51.

⁶⁰ Hist Rpts, Jan, Feb 45. Folder, FEASC WAC Det II.

⁶¹ WAC Draft AFPAC Reply, cited in D/F, G-1 WD to CofS USA, 13 Sep 45. WDGAP 330.11 WAC (5-26-45).