

difficult assignments in a superior manner."¹⁹⁵

Many section chiefs, as well as Colonel Brown, felt that the refusal to permit WAC volunteers to be retained was unwarranted and deprived them of needed office help. The Commanding General, AFWESPAC, Maj. Gen. Wilhelm D. Styer, requested that the War Department at least allow a short extension; he proposed to make all Wacs warrant officers if this would allow them to remain. Colonel Boyce replied from Washington that the War Department was extremely sorry not to grant the request but that the January deadline could not be extended. Women were extended the same privilege offered in the European theater, that of remaining as civilian employees if they desired, but only about 200 elected to remain.¹⁹⁶

Demobilization

A final problem was presented: the shipment of the women to the United States. Colonel Boyce while still in the theater found the first large group already boarding the ship *Evangeline* for return. The ship appeared unsuitable—vermin-ridden, ill ventilated, with men obliged to walk to mess through the WAC sleeping quarters. The women's physical condition left much to be desired. They had no woolen clothing, such as was issued to men for a comparable voyage, the original clothing in which they arrived having long since deteriorated in distant warehouses.

Colonel Boyce, however, was unwilling to stop the shipment in view of the crowded state of port housing, the scarcity of ships of any sort, and the women's eagerness to get home. She radioed her office that she was "extremely disturbed" at the condition of the women, and feared that they "will make a very poor impres-

sion upon their communities unless their general condition can be improved upon their arrival." Accordingly, the War Department directed that the AAF WAC Officer and the ASF WAC Officer, Colonels Bandel and Goodwin, hurry to a west coast port to meet the shipment. This was accomplished, but obviously little could be done in the few days before the women were discharged, and the precautions did not prevent unfavorable publicity and headlines, such as VERMIN-RIDDEN TROOPSHIP, in both the Associated and the United Presses. WAC authorities feared the Corps' whole hard-won public relations victory might be jeopardized if the entire 5,500 women returned to their forty-eight states in a physical or mental condition alarming to the public.¹⁹⁷

The second WAC group was being loaded on another ship, previously used to transport Chinese laborers, when the commanding general of the Hollandia Base saw it and refused to allow his Wacs to join those already on it. Colonel Boyce hurried to the scene and, without authority, ordered the remaining Wacs off, and port commanders thereupon turned the ship back to its owners as unfit for military use.

Before she left the theater in November, Colonel Boyce conferred with the chief of the transportation section and secured the assignment of a WAC officer to the office of the port director, to co-ordinate future shipping arrangements for Wacs and nurses. The WAC staff director or her assistant thereafter personally inspected shipping space assigned to women before

¹⁹⁵ Ltr, Dir WAC to Mary-Agnes Brown, 12 Dec 45. Personnel Abstracts, WAC file, OCMH.

¹⁹⁶ (1) Ltr, Dir WAC to WAC Stf Dir, AFPAC, 11 Dec 45. WDWAC 320. (2) Ltr cited n. 193.

¹⁹⁷ (1) Memo cited n. 185. (2) UP Release, 23 Oct 45, with headlines such as that in the Denver, Colo., *Rocky Mountain News*.