

where living conditions were pronounced by detachment officers to be "far superior to any experienced by the unit since its inception." The brick-and-wood barracks were clean, modern, and airy, and latrines were in the same building. There was plenty of hot water, and a laundry with ironing boards and washing machines. In this the women's barracks were superior to those of some of the men's units, which did not all at this time have hot water. Barracks had single-decked beds, pillows, bedding, and shelves and hangers for clothing; there was also a well-furnished dayroom with recreation equipment. On the whole, the accommodations were described as being "in striking and overwhelming contrast to the haphazard facilities encountered in the United States." The only difficulty was a temporary one when, on the first morning, it was announced that Maj. Gen. Benjamin L. Giles was to review the Wacs immediately, and 240 travel-wrinkled women descended simultaneously on ten electric irons.⁵¹

Within a week, 126 of the women moved to Cairo for duty with Headquarters, Africa-Middle East Theater; the remaining 114 at Camp Huckstep were assigned to the Middle East Service Command. The unit in Cairo was billeted in the New Hotel, two to five women to a room. At the end of the year, after winter rains had flooded parts of the building, and after the arrival of more Wacs left it overcrowded, the Wacs moved to new quarters in a modern building with a bedroom for every three women and a complete post exchange and hairdressing shop.⁵²

As the women were interviewed and assigned to duty, a fundamental problem emerged: the theater was already at full

authorized strength and not in desperate need of personnel. If Wacs replaced enlisted men, the men were idle, and if Wacs were merely added as supernumeraries, there was only part-time work for all concerned. The majority of the women were stenographers, clerks, and typists; others were messengers, bookkeepers, telephone operators, and teletypists. Many were assigned as secretaries to ranking officers, and others were placed in almost every staff section of the two headquarters, with the largest numbers in the adjutant general's office, the Signal Corps, and the Censorship Section.⁵³

While most women were well satisfied with the type of work assigned them, the fact that it was not full-time caused a continuing morale problem among both men and women. At Camp Huckstep, the WAC historian reported:

Morale was affected by the existent morale at Camp Huckstep, which was poor and contagious. The majority of the men, and consequently of the women, felt that they were not actually needed and that what they were doing was not important to the war effort. Wacs were resented by some of the men.⁵⁴

Promotions could not be given to any of the Wacs, even to a few who had replaced master sergeants, so long as the command remained overstrength. The Cairo report added:

Comfortable living quarters and opportunities for enjoyment seem to be secondary in building morale . . . the important factor is the feeling that they are needed and that individual assignments keep them busy.⁵⁵

⁵¹ *Ibid.* All quotations from Unit Hist Camp Huckstep.

⁵² Unit Hist Cairo Det, p. 3.

⁵³ Asgmts at Hq not listed; July asgmts at Camp Huckstep given in Unit Hist.

⁵⁴ Unit Hist Camp Huckstep, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Unit Hist Cairo Det, Aug-Sep 44.