

During the first summer, only 56 of the 240 Wacs replaced enlisted men. Toward the end of this time, the theater appealed to the War Department for authority to return the surplus men to the United States. By October, enough men had been removed from the theater so that 157 promotions were made among the Wacs, chiefly to the grades of private first class and corporal. These were followed by others at intervals. By the following spring the Cairo detachment reported:

The morale for the past period has improved . . . due partly to the fact that most of the women are now fairly busy, and also to the fact that they have a feeling of being generally accepted as a part of Headquarters.⁵⁶

The theater consistently directed its efforts toward devices to maintain troop morale, and in these the Wacs were allowed to share fully. At Camp Huckstep, women were admitted to the excellent recreational facilities—a theater, a service club with cafeteria, game room, and library, and sports equipment. In Cairo, women were allowed to join a club with swimming, tennis, and golf facilities. At both stations, Wacs shared athletic programs in league baseball, volleyball, hockey, basketball, and even touch football, although such programs appealed only to the younger women. Women were also admitted to off-duty classes offered by the Armed Forces Institute in such subjects as French, Arabic, shorthand, and photography. Social activities were also encouraged, with organized parties and holiday celebrations, but the Wacs reported that such activities soon became burdensome and most women declined unit invitations.⁵⁷

Wacs likewise were given the same amount of leaves and passes as the men,

and were provided with equal transportation and accommodations to visit various points of interest for sightseeing or recreation. There were frequent conducted tours of the environs of Cairo, and visits by some of the women to Bengasi, Alexandria, Cyprus, Palestine, and other areas.

Restrictions were seldom sufficient to cause complaint. Marriages were permitted, suitable married quarters were provided, and women were allowed and even encouraged to spend furloughs with husbands stationed elsewhere. Nevertheless, WAC marriages in the theater were not frequent.⁵⁸

Considering the climate and the sanitary hazards of the surrounding cities, the women's health remained good. A sanitary mess was maintained, and the nature of the area caused only minor discomforts. During the winter a water shortage was suffered, and cold weather made the unheated buildings chilly, but kerosene stoves were soon obtained and men's pile jackets were issued to the women. Heavy winter rains found a small Nile coursing through the WAC barracks; the boiler broke down; a high wind blew down the reed blind fence around the WAC area and the improved view was enjoyed by both women and men until the fence was put back up. None of these minor environmental difficulties had any appreciable effect on morale or health.

Major Craighill, who visited the area late in December of 1944, found the women's health good and illnesses "relatively less than in other units in the area."

⁵⁶ (1) WAC AMET Summary. (2) Ltr, ME to TAG, 15 Aug 44. AG 320.2, Hobby files. (3) Quotation from Unit Hist Cairo Det, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Unit Hist Camp Huckstep, Jul and Oct 44 appendixes.

⁵⁸ WAC AMET Summary gives 10; Unit Hist Cairo Det gives 17.