

discharge for married and unmarried pregnancy: unmarried nurses found to be pregnant were given a dishonorable discharge, elsewhere reserved for convicted criminals. The whole subject was in fact of such abhorrence to the Nurse Corps that no attrition rates were officially collected, and the word *pregnancy* itself was replaced by *cyesis*.²² In conformity with this tradition, the earliest WAAC Regulations, written before Director Hobby's appointment, contained the provision that only married women would get an honorable discharge for pregnancy, others receiving the worst type within the Auxiliary's power to bestow, a summary discharge.²³

It was immediately evident to the Director upon her appointment that the distinction was untenable, from a legal standpoint. A military discharge "other than honorable" was never decreed except for definite violations of military or civil law, and there generally was no legal charge that could be brought against a pregnant unmarried woman in either civilian or military courts if her public conduct was not disorderly. The Army's only legal grounds for discharging such a woman was that she was no longer physically capable of military service. Therefore, in December of 1942, Director Hobby secured a change in the regulation to permit an honorable discharge by reason of "unsuitability for the service."²⁴ Certain officers who still felt that only married women should get honorable discharges were forced into hasty retreat when the Director inquired if they were also going to require legal proof that the married woman's husband was the father of the child. Where a couple had not met for several years a wife's claim to a better type of discharge appeared slim, yet had the Army investigated every time lapse, it

would manifestly have been placed in a somewhat ridiculous situation.

All subsequent WAC and Army Regulations therefore required an honorable discharge for all pregnant women, with the eventual entry on the discharge certificate being merely "By reason of Sec. III AR 615-361," or other appropriate regulation, without reference to marital status.²⁵ The Army Nurse Corps, after its later entry into full Army status, likewise authorized an honorable discharge.²⁶ In the Navy women's services, pregnant enlisted women were also discharged honorably, "For the Convenience of the Government."²⁷ The War Department's official policy on the matter was formally stated early in 1945 in a letter to Congress concerning the Army Nurse Corps, which applied equally to the WAC:

Pregnancy in the case of an unmarried woman is not cognizable by the criminal law. . . . Thus, the manner in which the Army disposes of such cases is consistent with the manner in which such cases are handled in civilian society. This office is aware of no justification for considering pregnancy of a militarized single woman as a crime, when civilian society does not thus consider it.²⁸

In the United States, those cases in which a child was born before a woman could be discharged were ordinarily handled, for lack of any other authority,

²² ANC Hist, p. 407. For WAC pregnancy discharges, see Table 9, Appendix A.

²³ WAAC Regs 1942 (Tentative) par 38a.

²⁴ WAAC Cir 17, 29 Dec 42.

²⁵ WAAC Cir 10, 9 Apr 43; WAAC Reg, May 43; WD Cir 289, 9 Nov 43, AR 615-361, 4 Nov 44, sec III, pars 16-24, EW only; WD Cir 404, 14 Oct 44, sec III, for offs.

²⁶ AR 40-20, C-5, 9 Jan 44; see also ANC Hist, p. 407.

²⁷ Bupers Directive PERS-66-THT-QR 8/P19, 23 May 43. WDWAC 702 (1945-46).

²⁸ Ltr, TAG to Rep Joseph C. Baldwin, 3 Feb 45. AGCH-P 321 Nurse Corps (15 Jan 45). WDWAC 702.