

Marriage

Marriage, according to the Army Nurse Corps precedent, had always been classed in the same category as illegitimate pregnancy; married nurses were not allowed in the Corps, and those who married while on active duty were dishonorably discharged.⁵⁷ The WAAC chose to follow the Army example; marriage was considered neither disqualifying for enlistment nor grounds for discharge. Soon after the WAAC's establishment, the Army Nurse Corps also permitted its members to be married, but not to serve on the same station as their husbands.⁵⁸ The WAAC never sanctioned any such restriction. Quite early in Auxiliary days, it was discovered that some station commanders and WAAC company commanders were refusing to permit the marriage of WAAC personnel, or were breaking up the association of married couples by transferring either husband or wife if both were stationed at the same installation.

In answer to a query as to whether a Waac required her commanding officer's permission to marry, the reply was, "The Director WAAC will authorize no action to prevent marriages of WAAC officers or enrolled women, whether to officers, enlisted men, or civilians."⁵⁹ Director Hobby then secured the War Department's concurrence to a circular which provided:

The marriage of a WAAC officer or enrolled member to a member of the armed forces will not be allowed to effect an advantage or a disadvantage in her assignment of duty, nor will it be allowed to preclude the privileges normally allowed to such personnel. WAAC officers or enrolled members will not be transferred solely because of marriage to persons serving at the same station.⁶⁰

A provision to this effect was included in

all subsequent WAC Regulations, and was generally well enforced in the United States.

Only two other amendments to Army Regulations were required concerning marriage of Wacs. One of these provided authority for change of name, which was discovered to be lacking in the existing provisions by which an enlisted man might change his name. This action—for females only—was made mandatory, not optional.⁶¹

The other amendment concerned the burial of husbands. As members of the Army, Wacs were entitled to burial in national cemeteries with the customary Army honors if their relatives so desired. The question eventually arose as to whether or not a Wac's husband might be buried in a national cemetery with her, in accordance with the rule which permitted wives to be buried with Army husbands. The Quartermaster General proposed that such interment be refused to servicewomen's husbands unless they had been soldiers and were entitled to it in their own right. Director Hobby appealed the question to the Under Secretary of War on the grounds that WAC legislation provided for equal rights for servicewomen. The Under Secretary agreed and directed that permission be granted, but asked that no publicity be given to the matter, since it was feared that it would be harmful both to the WAC and to the Army if the public knew that husbands

⁵⁷ ANC Hist, p. 108.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

⁵⁹ Ltr, 2d SvC to Dir WAAC, 12 Jan 43, and Ind. SPWA 291.12.

⁶⁰ (1) WAAC Cir 4, 5 Feb 43, sec I. Cf. WD Cir 462, 6 Dec 44, sec II, par 12b. (2) Memo, Dir WAAC for CofAdm Serv ASF, 13 Jan 43, and approvals from ASF and G-1. SPWA 300.3 (1-7-43) sec 1.

⁶¹ M/R, 11 Sep 43. SPWA 201.7.