

Company Officers' Quarters

For economy, WAAC Headquarters had been forced to consent to construction of company officers' bedrooms and latrine in a wing of the same building that housed the WAAC orderly room, supply room, and recreation room. By the end of 1943, reports from every command indicated that the economy had the unfortunate effect of lengthening the company commander's working day to 24 hours, since she was accessible at any hour to visits from company members, unless she arbitrarily denied herself. There was also a tendency to summon her in minor accidents, emergencies, and problems that might properly have been handled by the first sergeant.

As a result of an inspection trip, the Army Air Forces recommended that WAC officers, like male company commanders, be housed away from their units—not off the station, but in a location that would “remove them from the enlisted women so that they would not be on call 24 hours a day.” Again, it was too late to correct housing plans after buildings had been constructed; no general relief was ever obtained, although stations sometimes, when other quarters were available, permitted company officers to live elsewhere. In some cases stations went to the other extreme and permitted company officers to live off the post where they were not accessible in any emergency. In the Air Forces this practice was checked by a circular requiring one duty officer to be quartered on the station, although not necessarily in the unit.²⁴

Future Housing

Elaborate plans were drawn up by G-4 Division and the Chief of Engineers for

the proposed peacetime WAC housing.²⁵ Privates, corporals, and sergeants in field units were to have hotel-type housing, only two to a room, with 120 square feet per enlisted woman (the wartime officer allowance). Each building was to have a kitchen, a dayroom, and a date room, and bountiful latrine facilities, including bathtubs. Enlisted women might also look forward to even greater privacy and comfort as they grew older and attained the first three grades; there were to be provided two-bedroom apartments for every four such women, each apartment with its own living room, kitchen, and bath. Even in training center barracks, recruits were to have 90 square feet per person, and window shades, hairdressing facilities, a dayroom, and a date room, a storage room, and adequate laundry and latrine facilities.

Junior officers were not quite so well off as top-grade enlisted women, since in accordance with the nurses' requests they were to be given only a bedroom and bath apiece, with a living room for each 12 to 18 officers, and a communal kitchenette. Only the chief nurse, assistant chief nurse, and senior WAC officer at each station would have private apartments.

Such accommodations, which met and surpassed most of the proven needs of women for privacy and home comforts, could actually, it was discovered, be provided at a lower average cost to the government than housing for Regular Army enlisted men and officers. This surprising

²⁴ (1) Memo cited n. 6(1). (2) Rpts of Serv and Air Comds. Min cited n. 9(4). (3) Direct quotation from Ltr, AAF to Dir WAC, 11 Dec 43. SPWA 620. (4) AAF Ltr 85-6, 3 Jul 44, superseded by AAF Ltr 35-245, 7 Jun 45.

²⁵ (1) Ltr, Chief of Plans and Opns OSG to CofEngrs, 13 Sep 46. MEDCH-CR, in WDWAC 622. (2) Memo, Dep Dir WAC for Col Calloway, 26 Sep 46. WDWAC 600.1.