

of hundreds of men. Women also often skipped breakfast for the same reason, substituting oversweet snacks or candy bars at the post exchange. On the other hand, both health and morale were improved when women could enjoy a leisurely meal at their own small quiet mess, where they did not have to dress or walk far, but could sit and talk, read mail, or listen to records.²⁹

On discovering this, Colonel Hobby dropped the idea of consolidating messes, and instead requested that they not be consolidated without War Department consent to each exception. G-1 Division concurred, and a provision to this effect was placed in the first WAC Regulations in November of 1943. At once the Army Air Forces requested that authority to make exceptions be given to its headquarters, and Director Hobby agreed that such delegation might safely be made even further, to each general officer who had a WAC staff director on his staff. However, General Dalton instead decided that the authority should be given to "local commanders," which would permit station commanders to consolidate men's and women's messes without consulting higher authority. Over Director Hobby's non-concurrence in this wording, he directed publication of a circular to this effect.³⁰

Upon discovering this publication, Director Hobby renewed her recommendation to the General Staff, fearing damage to women's health if they did not eat regularly. Finally a compromise was obtained when the Army Service Forces agreed upon the wording "the Commanding General who is responsible for the operation of the post, camp, or station." While this did not necessarily bring the decision up to the level of a command having a WAC staff director, it prevented

most station commanders from acting without higher consideration of the factors involved. In view of the central role of the WAC mess in maintaining unit morale and efficiency, its abolition was ordinarily regarded by WAC advisers as a last resort where a unit had shrunk beyond any reasonable hope of maintaining its own mess.³¹

WAC Master Menu

It quickly became known to every mess officer that Wacs did not want, and could not eat, all of the items on the standard master menu for men, which were issued to each unit on a station. In general women wanted less potatoes, bread, flour, lard, syrup, pork, and other heavy or fattening foods, and more fresh vegetables and salads. Even of foods popular with both men and women, such as eggs, lean meat, and coffee, lesser quantities were consumed by women.

For the first years of the war, adjustment was attempted on a local level, with the WAC mess sergeant ordinarily adept at swapping mayonnaise for salad oil, potatoes for lettuce, and large quantities of pork for small steaks. By the end of 1944, research by the Office of The Quartermaster General, with control tests at selected installations, had established a WAC master menu that made swapping

²⁹ (1) Draft of Memo, Dir WAC for G-1, 23 Aug 43; (2) Memo, Dir WAC for Dir Pers ASF, 31 Aug 43. SPWA 220.6 Kitchen Police.

³⁰ (1) Memo, CG AAF for G-1, 2 Dec 43, with Ind, Dir Pers ASF for G-1 WD, 10 Dec 43; Ind, Dir WAC for G-1, 20 Dec 43, and Ind, Dir of Pers for G-1, 4 Jan 44. SPWA 331.4 (1943). (2) Memo, G-1 for Dir WAC, 11 Jan 44. WDGAP 331.4 WAC, in SPAP 220.3 WAC. (3) WD Cir 20, 17 Jan 44. (4) Memo, Dir WAC for G-1, 21 Jan 44. (5) Memo, ASF for G-1, 2 Feb 44. SPAP 220.3 WAC.

³¹ *Ibid.*