

stopped, saying that men received no such examination and that

. . . it is the opinion of this office that routine mental and physical examination of every individual prior to departure for overseas duty is not essential or practicable and that the amount of work involved would not be justified, particularly in view of the shortage of medical officers.¹¹

Director Hobby had also requested, for WAC shipments already at a port, that The Surgeon General's Office authorize a pelvic examination immediately before departure, followed, if there was any indication of pregnancy or venereal disease, by the proper specialized tests. However, it was the opinion of representatives of The Surgeon General's Office that such a system would not detect early pregnancies and that

. . . even with any means we would adopt we would be bound to have some cases of pregnancy after they get overseas. Wouldn't it be better to accept that as one of the costs of war?¹²

Thereafter, the physical check given women before overseas shipment was the same in all respects as that given men, although most overseas theaters were under the later impression that it had not been equally satisfactory. Some women arrived with obvious disqualifications that necessitated immediate return, including advanced pregnancies, which resulted in headlines such as one from the Associated Press: WAC GIVES BIRTH TO BOY IN DUTCH NEW GUINEA.¹³ Major Craighill, The Surgeon General's consultant on women's health, stated, "Medical Officers in all overseas theaters commented on the inadequacy of screening of women for overseas duty."¹⁴ Major Craighill noted that she considered the overseas screening system unsatisfactory but that "repeated

efforts to change the policy were unsuccessful." The Director's Office therefore replied to all complaints that The Surgeon General believed the cost of returning the women to be less than the cost of physical examinations for all women sent overseas, especially since men in the Army did not receive overseas examinations.

Psychiatric Screening

Major Craighill likewise never succeeded in getting a psychiatric examination for women going overseas, although Army psychiatrists reported that female mental and moral crack-ups overseas could have been almost eliminated by such an examination.¹⁵ No such examination was given for men, where the problem of screening would have been extremely complicated because of the combat factor. Although Wacs did not face the mental strain of entry into combat with the enemy, Major Craighill believed that they faced a type of combat which men did not, the defense of their character structure and their double standard of morality. She stated:

Women overseas were subjected to more tension than men by reason of their scarcity, which resulted in more emotional pressure, and because there was a more radical change in the pattern of their lives.¹⁶

¹¹ 1st Ind, SGO to Dir MPD, ASF, 30 Mar 44, SPMCB 322.5-1. Folder, Capt Berlien notes, SGO Hist Div.

¹² Tp Conv, Capt Strayhorn and Col Freer, 9 Jul 43. G-1 WAC 312-312.9, Drawer 6, DRB AGO.

¹³ *Denver Post*, July 4, 1945.

¹⁴ History of Women's Medical Unit (rough draft, only one ever filed) by Lt Col Margaret D. Craighill, MC, 23 Jul 46. SGO Hist Div 314.72.

¹⁵ All references to opinions of psychiatrists, unless otherwise stated, are from History of Psychiatry in the Women's Army Corps, 1946, by Maj. Albert Preston, Jr., MC. SGO and Hobby files.

¹⁶ Hist cited n. 14.