

it had never heard of the organization, and several shipments went to port before the situation was remedied. As a result, ports of embarkation rendered unsatisfactory reports on the first women who reached them, who were said to be poorly trained, untidy, furnished with improper equipment and ill-fitting clothing.²⁴

Within several months, the situation was greatly improved by the efforts of inspectors from Washington, who put considerable pressure on Fourth Service Command agencies, as well as by those of the cadre, who at times worked as long as eight weeks without a day off. Removal to Fort Des Moines also made available better facilities for such small groups as remained to be processed in the final days of the war.²⁵

Since the training center was not officially informed as to unit destination, except as the designated port gave some clue, it was not always able to prepare individuals specifically for the proper overseas area. Also, none of the cadre or instructors had ever been overseas, and attempts to get Wacs returned from overseas met with the reply that there were, at this date, none who had completed the prescribed tour.

The ASF training course, which the EFS Battalion had no power to alter, was patterned on men's combat courses, without much consideration of the ways in which women's overseas service differed from men's. Wacs were toughened, and incidentally given head colds, by long hikes in the rain in unsuitable clothing; they swarmed up and down cargo nets; they crept up on the enemy in the field, adjusting their gas masks as gas bombs exploded around them; and practiced dispersion and seeking cover. They studied first aid, map reading, defense against chemical attack and air attack, malaria

control; they got practical experience in using a compass, messing in the field, and extended kitchen police duty; they were, as one shipment said, "given endless lectures designed to confuse us about our destination."²⁶ Their training films included such unlikely items as *First Aid for Chemical Casualties*, *Rations in the Combat Zone*, *Combat Counterintelligence*, and *First Aid for Battle Injuries*—probably as good a selection as was possible in view of the fact that there were no films to prepare women for their specific overseas problems.²⁷

In the opinion of the Army psychiatrist at Fort Des Moines, Major Preston, women should have been prepared, not for combat first aid or map reading, but for the peculiar social environment of a woman overseas; the certainty of an exaggerated popularity and the danger of an overemphasis on social life; the tendency of unfamiliar surroundings or homesickness to cause quick friendships, overdependency on other women, or liaisons with married men; the probable effect of lack of privacy, lack of customary conventions, and the opportunity for excessive drinking; and especially the psychological effect of danger and restrictions.

In the last year of the war, there arose some question of the economy of the system: women already stationed on the west coast and destined for the Pacific had to be shipped to Georgia or Iowa and back for two weeks' processing, and the same was true of women in the New York area

²⁴ (1) 1st Ind, WAC Stf Dir, TC, to Dir WAC, 4 Jul 44, with incls. SPTPM 220.3 WAC, in WDWAC 320.2. (2) ASF WAC Off to Dir Mil Tng ASF, 22 Jul 44, with 1st Ind. SPAP 210.3 WAC. (3) Buck slip, WAC Br G-1 to Dir WAC, atchd to rpt 25 Mar 44. WDWAC 330.14.

²⁵ EFS passage, except as otherwise stated, from written statement by Maj Lathrope, and interv with Maj Lathrope, 6 Apr 48.

²⁶ Sources cited n. 23.

²⁷ For subjects taught, see ASF Hist of WAC Tng.