

climate, or area. Industrial surveys similarly concluded that "it would appear that the ability of women to perform mental or muscular tasks is not essentially altered by the menstrual cycle."⁴⁷

A strictly parallel conclusion was indicated by the more complete records kept for civilian women pilots by the Army Air Forces. Here, the Ferrying Division had at first forbidden women to fly from one day before the beginning of the menstrual period until two days after it, since the Civil Aeronautics Board handbook stated that "many women pilots have fainted while flying during this period with fatal results." This statement, the Ferrying Division noted with interest, seemed to have no foundation; many women flew steadily without fatal results, and the rule could not be enforced because

Actually, without the rather intimate cooperation of the women pilots concerned, it is difficult to understand just how the Group Commander could tell when a Waf was in a period. . . . There was little anyone could do if a Waf denied being in that condition.

Even among those women who observed the rule, it was noted that few were forced "to take to their beds," but instead used this time for the required paper work and ground school and therefore lost no more flying time than men.⁴⁸

Menopause

Menstrual disorders tended to merge into menopausal difficulties in a few older women or in younger women suffering from surgical menopause. These disturbances were ordinarily more distressing than those of menstruation, and Director Hobby, soon after the formation of the first WAAC companies, called the problem to The Surgeon General's attention, asking

whether medical examiners could not reject women who would be problems because of menopausal difficulties. The Surgeon General replied that there was no way in which the approach of menopausal difficulties could be foretold, and believed it unnecessary to take any specific action.⁴⁹ No provision was made for treatment or discharge of such cases. Upon her appointment, Major Craighill reported the policies regarding menopause to be in "a most confused state."

Throughout the next two years, WAC inspectors were informed by company commanders in the field that the problem was more important than the number of affected individuals would indicate. A company ordinarily had only one or two sufferers, yet the morale of an entire barracks could be affected by one such individual's constant complaints and chronic depression. Such women, although no asset to the Army, could not be discharged under any existing Army Regulations unless their difficulties became disabling or their conduct punishable, which was usually not the case.

Because of the number of such inspection reports, the Army Air Forces recommended to The Surgeon General that there be authorized a separate type of honorable menopause discharge for women "for the convenience of the government," similar to the special pregnancy discharge. However, this was refused by The Surgeon General on the grounds that menopause was a normal condition and not cause for discharge unless it became so

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴⁸ Hist Recs Rpt 319, History of the ATC: Women Pilots in the Air Transport Command, by Hist Br, Hq ATC (1946). USAF Hist Div.

⁴⁹ Memo, WAAC Hq for SGO, 23 Jan 43, and reply 26 Jan. SPWA 210.13 and SPMCM 322.5-1 WAC, SGO Hist Div.