

CHAPTER XXXII

Training

The fact that Wacs received military training at all was a departure from the precedent of the Army Nurse Corps, which at the time of the WAAC's establishment did not give any such orientation to new members.¹ In Director Hobby's opinion, the training needs of Wacs were simple: a brief basic military course to inculcate Army customs and discipline more quickly and efficiently than these could be acquired on the job, plus specialist training only for those few women who could not fill an Army job without it. The majority of Wacs, like nurses, possessed a civilian skill that required little modification to be of use to the Army.²

General Marshall's original decision to employ womanpower had been strongly influenced by this factor, since a woman with civilian clerical skill could be trained and placed on the job within a month, as against the six months or more required to train a man lacking this civilian skill. This departure from the Army's length of training was affirmed in the WAAC legislation, which stated the Corps' intent to make available to the Army the already-existing "knowledge, skills, and special training of the women of the nation."

From the time of the disbandment of General Faith's Training Command, shortly after the conversion period, responsibility for WAC training rested with the Director of Military Training, Army Service Forces. The WAC representative in this

office was Maj. Elizabeth C. Smith, formerly a member of General Faith's staff. Military Training Division's responsibilities to the WAC extended to three major fields: the supervision of WAC training centers, the arrangements for coeducational specialist training at Army schools, and the training of units in the field.³

WAC Training Centers

Of these, the largest responsibility concerned the WAC training system. Even after the bestowal of Army status, recruits for Air, Ground, and Service Forces continued to be trained on ASF installations, although some division of this authority had been contemplated by the AAF had the number of trainees warranted. Instead, the failure of expansion plans made further reduction a necessity. At the peak of the expansion plans there were five training centers, six separate administrative schools, and two radio schools. These, with the failure of expansion plans, had four times as much cadre as trainees; the WAC at one time had 148 percent overhead as against the average of 30 percent in male replacement training centers.

¹ ANC Hist, p. 321.

² (1) Memo, Dir WAAC for CG ASF, 6 Apr 43. Folder, Planning Serv Notes, WAC Plng Serv file. (2) Memo, Dir WAC for Dir Mil Tng ASF, 21 Dec 43. SPWA 353.

³ Unless otherwise stated, all references are to ASF Hist of WAC Tng.