

average intelligence and skill above men's, small but embarrassing numbers of inept women continued to arrive at training centers. Training centers found that such women were literally unassignable to fill any Army requisitions for women. For the first year this misfortune was ignored and the women were shipped out to hapless stations in the field, which quickly protested. Since such women could not ordinarily be discharged under Army Regulations based on men's standards of ineptness, an opportunity school was eventually established at Fort Des Moines, to which field stations were permitted to ship back their unassignables. Some 552 women were shipped back under this authority, about half of whom were Negroes.⁵⁷

These women spent half a day in formal training and the other half in on-the-job training. The formal instruction put great emphasis on military courtesy, drill, and a locally devised course called Manners for Military Women, of which this personnel seemed in visible need. In the apprenticeship period attempts were made to train women as hospital orderlies, messengers, supply clerks, assistant librarians, mimeograph machine operators and in many other jobs.

Under this intensive grooming, 70 percent of the students qualified in various skills, chiefly in hospital work, as mail clerks and orderlies, as machine operators, messengers, photographic technicians, and stock clerks and checkers. Some qualified in even higher specialties, such as radio operator. Under the apprenticeship system of actual training, many reported themselves "crazy about their work," and only some 64 women had to be discharged. Nevertheless, an additional and expensive three months beyond basic training, and the help of the most expert instructors and

cadre, were required to accomplish this result. The Consultation Service noted that "a number of the women who successfully completed the course required administrative separation at a later date," and concluded that "the results of the school did not justify its existence."⁵⁸

Special Training Unit

Opportunity School was succeeded, as soon as Military Training Division took control, by the Special Training Unit, which did not attempt to give women usable skills, but merely to assist through basic training those with educational deficiencies.⁵⁹ The course was exactly like that of men's special training units, except that weapons training was omitted. It emphasized reading, writing, arithmetic and all military subjects, including even tent pitching and knots and lashings.

Since the WAC enlistment standards, unlike the Army's, now included an educational requirement, few Wacs had real educational deficiencies, and much difficulty was experienced when basic companies sent this unit disciplinary problems and maladjusted women who did not lack education. Some 426 women were eventually trained by this unit—a tiny fraction of the Corps, which testified to the average efficiency of recruiters. Of these, some 80 percent were able to return to basic training, but no records of their later assignability were maintained. The Consultation Service noted:

The greatest problem of the women with borderline intelligence is their utilization on

⁵⁷ Opportunity School discussed: ASF Hist of WAC Tng, pp. 200-18. Established: ASF Cir 88, 24 Sep 43.

⁵⁸ Preston, Hist of Psychiatry in WAC, p. 20.

⁵⁹ ASF Hist of WAC Tng, pp. 219-28. Established by ASF Cir 76, 15 Mar 44. Opportunity School was ended by ASF Cir 147, 19 Mar 44.