

The Surgeon General reported that both training centers were "noting a high incidence of physical disability" and that 52 percent of all disability discharges that ever occurred in the WAC occurred in the first three months of a recruit's service. Training centers blamed this fact entirely on poor screening by recruiters, but The Surgeon General inclined to the view that some part of the responsibility belonged to the WAC basic training program. Psychiatric problems and questions of mental adjustment were reported by medical inspectors to be frequent at both training centers, and the injury rate was almost double that of men's training centers.

As a result, The Surgeon General undertook a survey called "Study of the WAC Basic Training Program in Relation to the Physical Fitness of Women." Since the WAC admitted women up to 50 years of age, enlisted chiefly for sedentary jobs, it appeared possible that the whole theory of giving women a training course was unsuitable and wasteful of personnel, especially since women did not require hardening for combat.⁷⁵ At the same time the Fourth Service Command's inspector general made a similar investigation, prompted by complaints from women's relatives and from Congress. As one irate relative put it, "It is the consensus of the civilian population that the basic training given a WAC should be only schooling for a particular job."⁷⁶

Director Hobby, while favoring a basic training course, was also inclined to believe that no training should be given which was so strenuous as to cause a breakdown and discharge that the Army job itself would not have caused. In late 1943 she informed Military Training Division that one of the criteria of successful basic training of Wacs should be that "the indi-

vidual has not become physically unfit for military duty."⁷⁷

In all of the resulting investigations, reports confirmed the fact that an excessive number of breakdowns had resulted from the training period. On the other hand, there was no evidence that these breakdowns had any provable connection with the noncombat basic training subjects, most of which were not strenuous. Instead, disability was almost invariably traced to administrative practices or conditions not at all intrinsic in the basic course.

Of these, mismanagement of fatigue duties appeared prominent. In some cases the women's "basic training" had apparently consisted less of the prescribed courses than of scrubbing and cleaning the various classrooms and offices of the headquarters, kitchen police in officers', consolidated, and unit messes, furnace firing, window washing, and most of the heavy labor about the training installation. Women had usually proved unsuccessful in permanent assignments to such heavy duties at field stations, and it appeared no reflection upon the academic training that women of 50 previously employed in desk jobs proved unable to complete classwork while carrying the additional load of training center upkeep.

The inspector general reported that no precautions had been taken to keep the length and nature of fatigue duties within a woman's strength. In a typical case a 25-hour detail of furnace firing was immediately followed, without time for sleep, by

⁷⁵ All in file of SGO Hist Div, unnumbered folders marked Capt Berlien: (1) Memos, Craighill for Bliss, 11 and 25 Mar 44. (2) M/R, SGO Med Stat Div, 6 Apr 44.

⁷⁶ Ltr, Fred C. Haase to Dir WAC, 25 Mar 44, with Ind, Dir WAC to CG ASF, 1 Apr 44, and Rpt, IG 4th SvC to CG 4th SvC atchd. WDWAC 330.14.

⁷⁷ Memo cited n. 2(2).