

Attendance at Army Specialist Schools

No bars were generally interposed to the attendance of Wacs at Army noncombat specialist schools on a coeducational basis, other than the limitations of available housing for women. The number of WAC students varied, from entire classes to a few individuals. In the latter case it was sometimes necessary to delay approval of a Wac's attendance until enough applications were on hand to justify use of a housing unit. Some students were sent direct from training centers to fill WAC quotas allotted by the school concerned, and others were sent by Army stations. The relatively small size of the Corps, and the fact that many women already possessed civilian skills or were given specialist training in WAC training centers, prevented coeducational specialist training from reaching any considerable proportions, although obviously the program would have ceased to be a minor one had it been necessary to fit a million women into the Army scheme, or to accept untrained younger women.

WAAC and WAC officers also attended the Army's Command and Staff School at Fort Leavenworth,¹⁰⁰ The Adjutant General's School, Ordnance School, Quartermaster School, Cooks and Bakers School, the Chemical Warfare School, and many others.¹⁰¹ In most such cases, women proved able to take the full course successfully. Instructors at the Chemical Warfare School reported, "We pulled no punches," as Waacs went through the obstacle course, complete with tear gas, mustard gas, and exploding booby traps.¹⁰² In addition, faculties noted with approval a cer-

tain increased industry among competitive-minded male students.

The only apparent defect in the informal and flexible assignment system was a lack of knowledge in the field as to how it operated. Recruiters, personnel officers, and individual women vainly wrote to training authorities for "a list of [specialist] schools, their mission, scope, prerequisites, and classification of successful graduates."¹⁰³ At the time of the conversion, WAAC Headquarters had begun preparation of a list, but the project was never completed. By the time that Military Training Division assumed authority, such a list would have been difficult to compile, in view of the wide decentralization of power to authorize attendance.

Not only were WAC quotas for specialist schools set up by Air, Ground, and Service Forces headquarters, but many Army stations made the proper arrangements with training commands at a lower level. Thus, it was frequently discovered that several Wacs were attending a class for aircraft mechanics, or other specialists, without any record of the fact in headquarters.

For this reason, and because the ASF disapproved of separate studies for women, no over-all report was ever made by Military Training Division as to which Army specialist schools Wacs had attended, in what numbers, and with what success.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ In the first class, a Waac scored fourth in a class of about 400. The best reported Wac record was in a later class: fourth in the General Staff Course (AAF Tactical subdivision), in a class of over 1,000.

¹⁰¹ WDBPR Release, 13 Oct 42.

¹⁰² Chemical Warfare Bull, Vol. 31, No. 2, Mar-May 45.

¹⁰³ Ltr, Chief, R&I Br, 7th SvC, to TAG, 12 Feb 44. SPKPI 353 WAC, in SPWA 353.

¹⁰⁴ See Chs. XVI-XIX, above, for technical schools of the AAF, AGF, and ASF.