

Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP)

There was, at different times, some consideration of allowing women to attend not only Army specialist schools but the civilian colleges that were concurrently training enlisted men under the Army Specialized Training Program. Soon after the Medical Department received authority to commission women doctors, The Surgeon General recommended that women be included in the ASTP, whereby young men were being sent to medical school at Army expense. He proposed that women medical students with two years of training be enlisted in the WAC for completion of a medical education of eighteen months, followed by a commission in the Medical Corps. This, he said, would assure a supply of women doctors for the Army, and would encourage women already doctors to serve with the Army, since "it will eliminate much of the prejudice . . . which is currently a large factor in their reluctance to enter the Army Medical Corps."¹⁰⁵ This proposal was rejected by Military Training Division, ASF, on the grounds that it would reduce the number of men who could be given medical training, and that women did not need the aid, as they could not be drafted and thus their medical studies could not be interrupted.

In the following year, when the ASTP for men was drastically cut during the manpower shortage of early 1944, bereft college authorities turned with some hope toward the WAC to fill the vacancies. At this time Military Training Division reversed its earlier stand, and proposed that 19-year-olds be enlisted in the WAC and given a year of college training at Army expense, which would include medical, communications, dietetic, statistical, or other work.

Many considerations caused the proposal to be unanimously rejected by the Director WAC, the Army Service Forces, and the War Department. Legislation would have been required to enlist women under 20, involving delay and possibly difficulties with Congress. Since there was no draft of women, it could not be said that the Army was drying up the source of college material and of future women scientists. Most girls of 19 would have been past college entrance age, yet to lower the entrance age to 17 or 18, with two or three years of training, would have been unjustifiably expensive and of little value in the current war. Furthermore, the WAC already had some 6,000 enlisted college graduates and some 10,000 more with partial college training, very few of whom were being used to fill assignments that required such training. For these reasons, no Wacs were ever sent to school under the ASTP.¹⁰⁶

Continuation Training in the Field

The War Department had for some time accepted the principle that "continuous refresher training" was necessary for male troops not engaged in actual combat; such troops were excused from their duties for several hours of training each week so that a review of basic training was accom-

¹⁰⁵ (1) Memo, SG for CG ASF, 30 Oct 43, and 1st Ind from MTD, 30 Nov 43. SPWA 353. (2) Ltr, ASW to Senator George L. Radcliffe, 14 Oct 44. WD 095 Bentz, Frank L. (Mrs.), in CofS 291.9.

¹⁰⁶ (1) Memo, Sp Asst for Dir WAC, 8 Apr 44; (2) Memo, Lt Vera Mankinen for Mrs. Gruber, 28 Feb 44; (3) Memo, CG ASF for CofS, 7 Mar 44. WDWAC 353.