

In exact proportion as women appeared to be more sensitive than men to the approval of their leader, it became more essential that there be no clique, group, or individual to which that approval appeared to be especially given.

Problems Peculiar to WAC Leaders

In a few respects women leaders faced especial problems with little Army parallel. One of these concerned the feminine interpretation of the Army leader's responsibility "to teach and encourage high moral standards in troops." Since military regulations had been modeled on men's moral standards, but not on women's, leaders were cautioned:

Although some [women] may feel that they should be able to exercise a man's freedom in their conduct, they must bear in mind that they are in the Army to do a job, and not to settle an old social problem.²⁹

To maintain the women's reputation and their social adjustment, the WAC leader was required far to exceed the male commander in the moral standards that she instilled and maintained. Release of personal tensions by means of alcohol, sex, or disturbing the peace ordinarily had far more serious social consequences for women than for men. Many women had been previously more sheltered than men, and were now given more unaccustomed freedom, which presented a situation more difficult for the commander to manage. In the leader's own life, whatever her previous habits or beliefs, she was also obliged to exemplify the strictest of feminine codes; nothing less was found to hold the respect of the average WAC company.

In many cases a female leader also needed leadership qualities in even greater

degree than the average male leader, in order to hold her position without the combat incentive. Army manuals stated, "The necessity for discipline is never fully comprehended by the soldier until he has undergone the experience of battle,"³⁰ and this no WAC unit would ever know. To overcome the meaninglessness of noncombat routine, WAC commanders were urged to

. . . bring the realities of the war home to your women in every possible way. . . . Try to make each woman realize what it would mean to her, as a woman, to live in a Nazi-controlled world; what it would mean in the education of her children; what the Nazi state could and would do with her menfolk; what restrictions would be placed on her opportunities as a woman.³¹

This remote stimulus was the WAC leader's only substitute for combat discipline.

A WAC company commander was at times under an additional strain in introducing female troops into a location in which they had not previously served. While the needs of male troops on the average station were well documented and remedies prescribed, the WAC commander was sometimes obliged to meet peculiar and unforeseen needs, and to advise the station commander in a way not commonly expected of the average male captain or lieutenant. There was also at times a problem of public relations and of community and post acceptance, in which the WAC commander had to lead the way for the women, as well as minimizing any initial friction. Failure in this respect was not uncommon. One staff visitor noted:

²⁹ *The WAC Officer*, p. 50.

³⁰ FM 22-5, Feb 46, Leadership, Courtesy and Drill, p. 6.

³¹ *The WAC Officer*, p. 4.