

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL COLLECTION
CORRESPONDENCE

CREATOR: Catherine Katopes

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WAC Detachment

Tuesday, 21 March 44

Dear Virgie:

Thanks so much for your letter and for writing so soon. I didn't think you would have any of those forms left either but no harm in trying.

So Mary Daley is going over, and Noble too. My but things have been changing over there in Oglethorpe. Linton is undoubtedly doing a good job but I suppose the ratings are frozen as far as Oglethorpe is concerned as they are here too (my goodness that's horrible English but you understand what I mean) Once in a while some of the men get a rating here but I guess they go through a lot of red tape to get the ratings for them.

All the general service men here are on edge. They have all had their physicals for overseas assignment and I understand that they will all be gone in a couple of months. Many have gone already and goodness they don't get much notice either. As a result the Wacs have been in great demand. They really began to sit up and take notice of them because they wanted Wacs to fill some of these places and there weren't enough to go around. It amused me because when we first came here though everyone was so nice, actually there was a feeling of not being wanted. I suppose all Wac outfits have to put up with such a felling in the beginning and just have to prove themselves. I imagine in another six months or so, the Wacs will come into their own and people will begin to realize that they really are accomplishing something.

We finally have the Army back of us now, after almost two years (What a waste, no?) So the Army is out recruiting the Wacs. If they had done so in the beginning, they probably would be turning applicants away instead of actually begging for them. But better late than never.

Over at the 4th Ferrying Command, a Captain Lowry has been appointed to recruit Wacs. He is in PRQ and so they called on us for a bit of help. One of the EM there was a fellow that worked

at PRO at Oglethorpe and he called me one day. Bill Graham. Did you know him? He was an awfully nice chap--I mean he is an awfully nice chap. So they wanted us to have a couple of Wacs talk to two different squadrons. Our two officers and four EW including me went over and two of the girls gave talks (recruiting talks) to the men. That's another angle. You see the Army had Gallup take a poll as to why women were not joining [sic] the services and one reason was that their husbands, brothers, etc. objected.

So now they are going to talk the men into seeing why they shouldn't say "No" to their womenfolk if they want to join.

We had fun going out there. Went three times. Each time the Squadron was having a dance in a few days and we were invited. I went to a couple of them and really had a very nice time.

One of the Squadrons out there called and asked us to their dance and we hadn't even met them. Our girls behave very nicely at these dances which makes me feel good because I want my company to be a damn nice one.

They sent out transportation for us and really treated us as though it was a party we were going to in our home towns.

We got six or seven Wacs in last week. Five from Daytona (the last five I believe) and one from Oglethorpe. One of the five was a Tech Sergeant and oh what a headaches the stripes are to the men hereabouts. It is difficult to place anyone with stripes because they are so stripe-conscious out here. They observe rank very very much here.

I sure would love to have you here and you would make an excellent Adjutant if they didn't drive you crazy first with the way they do things here. Much different from a training center. And then you have to cope with civilians.

I thought by this time you would be on your way to some extra special assignment. What so you hear from Grace Brock? I owe Agnes Huth a letter. Her last one is dated January 12th. It was quite cheery and they are getting along fine. She chums around with Helen Coon who was also working at Hqs. in Alice Piper's place after Piper went on the western trip.

The Master Sergeant at Personnel is a general service man and though I wouldn't doubt but what they have declared him indispensable, he may have to go. Now there's a spot you could step into, if the powers that be here would permit it, but the men's C.O. who does all the assigning is going to put his me in key jobs if at all possible, even if they are limited service men, in fact especially if they are limited service men. I suppose I would do the same thing if I was in his place too.

Slight intermission here. (Lee (my company clerk) and I went for a long walk. Walked away from the Hospital away from town and it took us out into the countryside. Not very pretty countryside like one would find where there are hills and mountains but some of the trees were lovely against the sky--they are still quite bare though budding. Everything smelled very "springy" or farm-like.

I can't remember what I have written you before about our barracks so bear with me if I repeat myself. We have luxurious quarters. It smacks entirely of a college dorm and I have had nurses refer to it as "over in your dormitory" It's all new and clean, hardwood floors which we have waxed. We have little scatter rugs in our rooms and chairs with a leather seat. We are permitted to decorate the room as we wish. Last Saturday or Friday I believe it was, I bought

some lovely cretonne to make a bedspread and to cover my footlocker. I cut it out and basted quite a bit of it together. Now I need a sewing machine and I guess they have one at the "Y" in town and so I'll have to take it to town to stitch together. Shall get some frilly curtains to put up and my room will be all set. Guess I'll get some curtains for the bathroom too. Sound like a civilian, don't I?

On Mondays and Fridays we have beer here in the barracks that the C.Q. sells to the girls. Usually there are a few girls that gather around one table in the mess hall and drink their beer there and eat crackers and sometimes cheese is provided. The girls are permitted to take the beer to their rooms. They are not permitted to drink it in the "Date Room" which is where the fellows are permitted to come, as they cannot sell the beer to the fellows. You see the fellows have a beer parlor in their recreation building which is off limits to the Wacs, so we fenagled [sic] a way for our Wacs to have a beer too. And it is nice this way. They really enjoy a bottle of beer or two with four or five girls in their room talking etc.

We not only live in what appears to be a dormitory but you might say we are in school again on Mondays. At first we had a class at seven and drill at six. Now we have an Orientation Hour at Four. Eat at Five. Drill at Six. And a Class at Seven. Thank goodness we have a C.O. who doesn't want to tie up any more than one evening a week for these gals. So we get all that necessary done on Monday. You should see our classes. We have them in the upstairs living room which is furnished very lovely. We arrange rows of chairs and the kids are there in their seats by five to seven. I take the roll and by that time our guest lecturer is on the way up.

First we had the Commanding General on an Orientation Talk; then we had the Executive Officer, Col. Prather. We had a Lt. Jaffe give us the Articles of War and you never saw such an interested audience at the reading of the Articles of War. He really put it over well. It was given in two parts. This fellow is Judge Advocate and was a lawyer as a civilian. From New York.

Not a bit military. When he comes into our Orderly Room and we stand up, he waves his hand and in his New York accent says "Sit down, sit down" and grins. Wears his hat tilted on the back of his head in a devil-may-care attitude. Is very amusing to listen to. And he is very smart, too.

Then we had a nurse here give us Personal Hygiene and the Sex Lecture. Can't say truthfully that she was good but she meant well. Remember the officer who gave us the lectures last summer after coming back from Johns-Hopkins? Well, she was a very good lecturer on that subject. They ought to give her the job of roaming the country and giving the lectures.

We don't have to do any of the lecturing at all. We have plenty of material to pick from here at the hospital, and they are all glad to come to do so.

Yesterday we took part in "Decoration Ceremony" at Retreat time. Eight fellows were awarded medals. One the Distinguished Flying Cross, one an Air Medal, one the Silver Star and five purple hearts. You should see the ribbons some of these patients wear when they are in uniform. Many of the cases here are ambulatory (which means they can walk about). The word always makes me think that they can't. So they are given passes to town three times a week. And that's when we see their array of ribbons. Many of them have the Purple Heart.

We have room for 3500 patients. They have had as many as 3000 at one time. I believe there aren't so many here now but convoys come in unexpectedly. We had a couple of them that came in by plane from the boat. These patients were brought from Italy. When the General talked to us he mentioned that many of the patients here were ambulatory but as the war progressed we would be getting more and more litter cases and I suppose he is referring to the pending invasion. The patients come from all over. Next to being overseas, you really feel as though you are doing a good share by working here, seeing these fellows who have come back.

We have several girls working as surgical technicians, laboratory technicians and are training ten of them at the moment out at Hot Springs. Many of the girls work in offices. We have five in physiotherapy and they are very good at their work. They have a very complete physiotherapy department here. And these girls are so absorbed in their jobs. One just received orders to go to University of Wisconsin for the physiotherapy course. However, the Captain she works for is going to requisition her and see if she can't be sent back here. Aren't we Wacs somethin' ?

We sent four back to Oglethorpe. I don't believe they have been there before come to think of it. They are in extended field service. I understand they are putting anyone in that service and washing many out. Do you remember Tommy Collins, one of the Motor Transport girls? She is here too and she is itching to get overseas. So if we can wangle her in on the next allotment, we will.

Getting to the end of the page so will stop. Say hello to Jean and please write soon and tell me what all to the girls and where they have gone.

Love, Kay