

Notes on “Should We Send Women to Combat?”
(from the files of the “Musings of a Windmill Jouster” written October 1996)

About three days after this was written, the Supreme Court mandated the admission of ladies to the Virginia Military Institute (my old school). The “Institute” is a fine old Southern Military School steeped in honor, tradition and glory. The VMI Corps of Cadets fought as a unit in the Battle of New Market, Virginia (May 1864) under command of their own Cadet Officers and NCOs and single-handedly captured the “Damnyankee” Artillery Battery. Even the Yankees had great praise for the “boy soldiers” who they described as the only unit in Gen. Breckenridge’s Brigade that gave the appearance of being “regulars” (Gen. Breckenridge was the former Vice President of the United States). The Yankee General (Hunter) was so incensed that he later burned VMI to the ground in revenge (he was too busy fleeing North after his defeat at New Market). Several cadet survivors of the Battle of New Market became famous painters, sculptors and even a governor or two of the State of Virginia.

General Stonewall Jackson was a professor of physics and artillery at the Institute prior to the *Late War of Northern Aggression*. Many notables have been graduates of that institution including General of the Armies George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army during W.W.II, Secretary of State of the United States and originator of the “Marshall Plan”. During W.W.II there were more general officers on active duty in the U. S. Army from VMI than from West Point. We even had a couple of Admirals... VMI has often been referred to as the “West Point of the South”... we of the Institute however liked to think of West Point as the “VMI of the North” (hee, hee, hee...).

VMI was the last holdout of the all male Military Schools. The Barracks are the same ones dating from the earliest days of the School (1839) and the accommodations are somewhat crude by modern standards... Showers are taken in large open shower rooms and the commode facilities are open with no privacy. The VMI Post is a very small piece of real estate and has been declared a National Historical Monument (meaning no structures may be added or substantially modified). How they’re gonna’ accommodate the girls’ modesty boggles my imagination... why any girl would want to subject herself to the rigors of that Spartan institution is a mystery to me. In my day and time, you had to be a dedicated masochist to finish four years of some of the most intensive military and academic training available. Friends of mine from High School attending West Point at that time told me that they considered our routine to be somewhat more strenuous than theirs... I would not argue with that observation.

At the time of my graduation (1958), West Point Graduates got a degree in “Military Engineering” while we (from the Institute) got “genuine” degrees in various academic disciplines... Even the U. S. Naval Academy (Annapolis, Md.) sent a delegation to VMI to study our Honor System (at that time Annapolis had a system that was laughingly known as “co-operate and graduate!... true story!).

More to the point, this latest ruling by the Supreme Court is being hailed by the feminists as a great day for women’s rights! The authorities at the Institute announced that they will accommodate the ladies, but they (the ladies) will have to strictly conform to the regulations of the Institute including physical conditioning and short hair. The “Femi-Nazis” of the NOW movement immediately announced to the press that “THEY” (whoever “They” are) were going to try to humiliate the women... hummm... suspicions confirmed! The feminists don’t want equal opportunity, they want to dominate and humiliate the male population... President

Clinton and his obnoxious wife seemed to think that single sex Male Military Schools were a "no-no" but same sex marriages are OK! "All girls schools" seem to be perfectly all right, but not "all boys schools".

Folks what are we coming to? The above simply substantiates my suspicions and provisos listed below and would deal a death blow to the morale and fighting spirit of our fighting forces. We've got to decide if the purpose of our Armed Forces is to defend our country or act as a social reform organization... I will stand by the observations enumerated below, but I feel that it would be impossible to keep politics and political correctness out of the equation. I leave the solution to the seemingly insoluble problems to history and your common sense... And may God have mercy on our souls...

Should we send Women to Combat? © 1996

By "The Master Joustler"

...When the Himalayan peasant meets the he-bear in his pride,
He shouts to scare the monster, who will often turn aside.
But the she-bear thus accosted rends the peasant tooth and nail.
For the female of the species is more deadly than the male.

When Nag the basking cobra hears the careless foot of man,
He will sometimes wriggle sideways and avoid it if he can.
But his mate makes no such motion where she camps beside the trail.
For the female of the species is more deadly than the male.

When the early Jesuit fathers preached to Hurons and Choctaws,
They prayed to be delivered from the vengeance of the squaws.
'Twas the women, not the warriors, turned those stark enthusiasts pale.
For the female of the species is more deadly than the male...

~ R. Kipling

Here's one subject that I approach with great trepidation... Unfortunately the legitimacy of the question has become so intertwined with The Women's Rights Movement, The National Organization for Women and numerous Civil Rights cases being championed by the ACLU as to immediately engender extreme hostilities on both sides of the issue. The enraged ladies refer to those who say women should not be exposed to combat as "Male Chauvinist Pigs" and worse. The men fighting against sending women in harm's way refer to the offending females as "Femi-Nazis" and immediately impugn the womanhood of the ladies in question. Unfortunately such lines are usually drawn before any meaningful discourse or analysis can take place. First let's take a cut at the question without the interjection of emotional rhetoric and without considering any civil rights issues.

Keeping in mind the above admonitions, I would like to say up front that in considering the advisability of exposing the "fairer sex" to the "up close and down dirty" rigors of pitched battle we need a couple of ground rules.

RULE # 1: Any changes in the current status quo in our Armed Forces must be to improve (or at least not degrade) the ability of our services to impose their will on the enemy in combat.

RULE # 2: Placing women in combat roles must be for the good of the service, not for the furtherance of Women's Rights or to make things "fair" in terms of job opportunities or sharing in that illusive thing called "glory". Political and/or Social Correctness must not enter into this decision under any set of circumstances.

RULE # 3: There can be no relaxing of the physical fitness or ability standards, period! There can be absolutely no quotas involved and perhaps more importantly no "Women's Minority Reports" required by the U. S. Government, the involved service(s), or any higher command(s). Such reports put pressure on the operating forces to comply with unspoken quotas and goals. This is usually much to the detriment of, and more importantly, the combat efficiency and "esprit de corps" of the fighting forces. If a male member of the Infantry (for instance) is required to be able to carry a 50 lb. pack for a 30 mile hike in a given time period, that must apply to everyone, no exceptions, no slack... and perhaps even more importantly, there can be no getting around this one by the back door by simply relaxing the rules for the whole group to ensure the weakest member can qualify!

RULE # 4: All promotions in a combat unit of any kind must be based on ability and fairness. We cannot have a "quota" system of promotion under any set of circumstances. First, quota promotions will destroy the morale and efficiency of our fighting forces quicker than disease, or combat casualties. Worse yet, a quota system not based on excellence and proven ability will get troops killed unnecessarily.

Now that we have established some basic ground rules, let's take a look at what we know about women in general, and examples of their performance in conditions of combat and extreme stress.

- 1) Women are usually referred to (by men at any rate) as the "weaker sex"... but this is a generality not an absolute! Granted that an all knowing God arranged their physiology in such a manner as to make them more efficient for the task of child bearing, and well that he did! In general, the female of the species lacks the upper body strength of their male counterpart... however those who have seen female body builders know that this can be overcome, certainly by at least some individuals. Anyone who has seen the performance of the women in marathon runs can attest to endurance of those dedicated to their sport. This then would belie the generality that women absolutely do not have physical ability to make it in a combat situation. Clearly some can, given extreme motivation and physical make-up. Physical toughness is not as common among the ladies, but it cannot be dismissed out of hand.
- 2) Women are often said to be emotionally unsuitable to the mental rigors of combat. Again this is an unfair generality. I suppose we've all known ladies who "come apart" in stressful situations, but then I've known a few men who didn't exactly perform in a creditable manner either. Much of this is too generalized to be taken as the norm. Again, I'm sure that there are some who will/can do well in combat. We have the positive examples of our Military Nurses in W.W.II, Korea and Vietnam. Little can be inferred from Desert Storm due to its short duration. At the very least, the general perception of the "hysterical female" is subjective not objective. Anyone who thinks that women can not mentally perform under conditions of great stress are unfamiliar

with Maggie Thatcher's¹ performance during the Falkland Island "unpleasantness" a few years back. Some women have performed very well as pilots and there are women Captains on major airlines flying such aircraft as 747's. If women pilots could not perform well under such conditions, insurance companies (noted for their hard nosed evaluation of percentages) would not cover their continued operation. We already have women qualified to fly fighter aircraft and helicopters and the Army has a number of lady graduates from Airborne School.

Clearly there are some women out there who could make it in a ground combat role. The question is should they be assigned to combat roles as a matter of course? ...and if not, why not?... Now we get to the "sticky" part...

In my personal opinion, making men and women different was one of God's better ideas! However, just because they are different does not mean that men are superior to women or vice versa. They are different for a very definite purpose... the continuance of the human race. The natural physical and emotional attraction between men and women assures the survival of the human race... Therein however, lies the greatest problem of the integration of women into the ranks of the combat arms.

The following historical example will illustrate one the greatest arguments against integrating ladies into the ranks of the infantry, or any unit engaged in close combat. In ancient Rome (contrary to popular opinion), not all those who fought in the arena were slaves or prisoners. The money was good and many mercenaries fought for pay and glory... the benefits were many and thought to be worth the risk by many men and occasional foreign units. One such unit was composed of Greek homosexual mercenaries² (please understand I'm not comparing the ladies to homosexuals... but the example will illustrate my point... read on). These "worthies" often used the Roman Square as a combat formation. The "square" was made up of several ranks of individuals (a square shaped formation furnished all around security) utilizing the Roman Short Sword as a weapon. Those in the outer ranks would initially do the fighting Those in the rear ranks would fill in for those in the front rank as casualties occurred or exhaustion took over. As long as the formation held fast the "square" worked well. This formation often allowed the Roman Legions to defeat barbarian armies many times their own size. When utilized by the Greek mercenaries however things usually went sour. They would often fight bravely and well for the first few minutes, but as soon as the blood would start to flow, the ranks would start to break. Those in the rear ranks (who were to fill the front rank as casualties occurred) would break the square to assist their wounded and dying lovers. The unit would usually be defeated because of their inability to keep the combat formation intact. There is a definite lesson to be learned here! Consider the following scenario. No matter what regulations may dictate, the natural attraction of boys and girls is going to result in romantic attachments... This is simply the nature of things and no amount of cajoling and intimidation is going to prevent it... Short of physical castration or the exclusive enlistment of both male and female homosexuals, human nature will take over. One of the hardest lessons to get across to any combat unit (even without the male/female integration) is the absolute necessity of continuing the attack and/or the assault regardless of casualties. If your best buddy falls badly wounded or dying beside you, you must continue to advance if your mission is to succeed. It takes every bit of discipline you can muster to continue to advance leaving your friend and comrade to his fate, the hospital corpsman or medic. Interjecting romance, or the normal protective male attitude will compound the problem many fold. We must decide if political correctness is more important than the accomplishment of the assigned mission. On this point alone, I would have to vote no to

placing ladies in harm's way in a ground combat role. This is not based on anything other than hard nosed analysis of human nature. Here we would seem to be violating RULE # 1.

The second point is based on the psychological reason that soldiers fight well in combat. Contrary to popular opinion, people do not fight for abstract theory or "holy causes." While such things certainly have an impact on the initial recruitment of a high hearted volunteer civilian population, intensive studies have shown that men fight for each other and for their unit when the chips are down. Has patriotism nothing to do with motivation? Yes it does, but only as an abstract concept. It's hard to think of the Stars and Stripes, truth, justice, the American Way, mom's apple pie and the girl next door when you are ankle deep in "the mud, the blood and the beer." When the time comes for the final assault or a last ditch defense, soldiers fight because they are expected to fight. As things heat up, it boils down to saving their friend's lives and personal survival! In the Marine Corps for instance, we have a tradition of never retreating, and never surrendering³. Tradition is a powerful motivator, and is imbedded deep into a recruit's psyche from the day he passes the gates of Parris Island, San Diego or Quantico. Many enlist because of tradition, having had one or more members of their family preceding them in the Corps. My father served in the Marines in W.W.I, the Banana Wars and W.W.II. I was regaled with stories of the Corps' daring-do from the time I was a "wee nubbin" and couldn't wait to join when I was of age. My son followed me into the Marine Corps when he turned 18 years old. Our current Commandant's daddy was a famous Marine General before him. The Marine Corps is in many ways a family affair; traditions and "esprit de corps" runs high. Marines are extremely proud of being members of the World's Finest Fighting Force. It is often said (with some amount of truth) that there is really no such thing as an ex-Marine... once they have earned the Globe, Eagle and Anchor, they will be Marines until the day they die, or certainly think of themselves as Marines. Spirit such as this is a priceless thing and not to be taken lightly, the ACLU and "Femi-Nazis" notwithstanding. In many ways, this tradition is the same sort handed down from Regiment to Regiment in the British Army... it is a real but nebulous thing and not one with which to trifle.

Winston Churchill once said:

"Regiments are not like houses. They cannot be pulled down and altered structurally to suit the convenience of the occupier or the caprice of the owner. They are more like plants, they grow slowly if they are to grow strong. ...and if they are blighted or transplanted the are apt to wither."

Lord Montgomery (of El Alamein fame and Britain's version of George Patton) spoke of "the Regiment" in the following manner:

"We must be very careful of what we do with the British Infantry. Their fighting spirit is based largely on morale and esprit de corps. On no account must anyone tamper with this."

Traditions loom large in combat success. The U. S. Army (although too large to have such esprit as a single unit) imbues its individual branches and regiments with similar traditions. The Special Forces and the Army Rangers have such traditions, as do the Airborne Units. They all think of themselves as the best unit in the Army. Nor is such tradition confined to national pride. The USA-Canada 1st Special Service Force ("The Devil's Brigade") had such a tradition as does the French Foreign Legion. These people fought/fight for the unit, certainly not for France (or the United States and Canada in the former). The five surviving Foreign Legionnaires in the battle of Camerone, were surrounded by thousands of Mexicans. They

were offered their lives with honor if they surrendered. Surrender would have been unthinkable to the Legionnaires, they simply fixed bayonets! The Mexican commander allowed them to go saying the killing of such men would border on sacrilege... and he was right...

My point is not that women are not courageous enough, or that they couldn't cope with the knowledge of sure death... they could of course. The problem is that existing elite units' esprit would be severely weakened or lost if they suddenly were faced with what THEY perceive as a mongrelization of their unit's proud traditions... simply for the sake of affirmative action or political correctness. Their unit pride is a living thing to them, more important by far in their minds than political correctness. Political correctness does not win battles, "esprit de corps" does! Such an attitude doesn't have to be correct, it simply has to be perceived as being correct for irreparable damage to be done. Couldn't this be overcome? Welllll maybe, but... Here's the rub. If you'll be honest with yourself, you'll realize that there will never be a large number of women capable of making it physically and mentally in a really tough combat unit. Even fewer will be truly desirous of doing so. The tendency for the "powers-that-be" to meddle in the selection of individuals would eventually result in relaxing the standards to admit a requisite number of female "infantrypersons"... The result would ultimately weaken our military to a dangerous degree. We cannot allow this, our very freedom and sovereignty as a nation depends on our ability to win on the battlefield. Unit pride, tradition and "esprit de corps" are the keys to winning on the battlefield. A well trained, but "unenthusiastic" unit will normally be beaten by a less well trained but "fired up" outfit assuming the weaponry of each side is adequate! Training is crucial, but it is not as crucial as the determination to win at all costs. Affirmative action and civil rights are simply not worth the price of slavery or domination by a hostile power. Assuming it would be possible to overcome the tendency of a male soldier to protect a lover or a member of the "weaker sex" in combat, we could possibly start new regiments and units that have a male and female integrated composition from their inception allowing them to build a tradition of their own from scratch. But again, affirmative action and quotas would plague such a unit, not to mention violating RULE(s) # 1, 2, 3 and 4. Let me explain...

Affirmative Action, as well intentioned as it may be, in my opinion has absolutely no place in the Military (Colin Powell notwithstanding), While it is certainly possible for a good individual to be deprived of a promotion due to the attitude of prejudiced individuals, such an attitude is certainly not currently rampant within the operating forces. Promotion quotas based only on color, ethnic origin or sex will get you killed in a front line unit! When I go in harm's way, I want the best NCO, Officer in Charge or Commanding Officer available. I personally don't give a "fig" whether a person's race or sex has been traditionally downtrodden. I want to both win the war and get home alive if possible! That's the bottom line. I don't care if the person in charge is black, white, spotted like a "paint horse" or female as long as they are the best. I am not willing to die in combat for the social advancement of any group with an ax to grind. While I was on active duty no man or woman ever suffered under my command because of their race or ethnic origin. I was a Marine Officer. My duty was to take care of my troops... this I did with a vengeance, often to the detriment of my own advancement. I did this because it was my job and they were my people and they were treated as members of my military family. The fact that they may or may not have been members of a previously downtrodden minority never entered into any decision I made. Good Marines were treated like good Marines regardless of color. The bad guys got treated in a manner commensurate with their crimes of course, but such is the nature of the Military. The Marine Corps "Brass" (much to my chagrin) often caved in to demands of the black power militants to the point of

allowing something called “the passing of the power” (black power of course) while were left relatively unscathed if they “neglected” to salute officers. Black haircuts were allowed to be grown in the bushy “Afro” of the day with small utility caps perched on top of this ridiculous “hair-do”. White Marines were still required to get strict military haircuts and resentment ran high between the races much to the detriment of morale. Southern Marines were required to take down their state flags if any vestige of a Confederate Flag was in evidence. Blacks were allowed to hang their green, red and black flags in their cubicle along with the legend “The green is for the land we’re gonna’ take, red is for the blood that’s gonna flow and the black is self explanatory”... Now that’s about as racist as it gets, yet it was allowed lest someone interpret the required removal of such flags and slogans as “anti-black”.

General Officers were essentially blackmailed (no pun intended) into allowing this sorry state of affairs to continue, and not one General had the brass testicles to stand up and say “now wait just a minute!” Careers became more important than principle, and not one of my sacred senior officers had the intestinal fortitude to resign or offer to resign as a matter of honor! My faith in the system came very close to being destroyed. If we had had to fight a war at that particular moment in time, it would have been a disaster... I personally don’t want an individual in my unit who’s more interested in advancing the agenda of their particular “power group” than being a good Marine. To me they were all green (or camouflaged), regardless of the color of their skin... but the politicians and thus the weak-kneed senior officers were not buying that approach.

No, I’ve seen this movie before and nothing that has transpired since gives me any confidence that the scenario would play out differently. Again in my opinion, using the Military as a social reform organization is a prostitution of its purpose. If we continue to do so can it will do nothing but weaken our national defenses and put our God given liberty(s) at risk... If we’re not extremely careful, we’re gonna’ “civil rights” and “political correctness” ourselves out of a free and independent country! Unfortunately, regulations and guidelines notwithstanding, exactly the same scenario would ensue if ladies were required by the “Femi-Nazis” to be placed into front line units... we cannot allow this to happen... we can’t...

But you might point out that women are already serving on naval ships afloat with no problem, “what do you say to that?” Well, I have several observations and comments. First of all, there have been a rash of unplanned pregnancies as a result of this practice (human nature takes over again... imagine that!)... hummm... Big problem, nobody seems to care. While service aboard ship might be more acceptable if the dedicated “Lady Sailors” were required to have their tubes tied, and/or the male crew members were required to have a vasectomy, this again would not be a realistic solution. Such a requirement would immediately wind up in the court system, compliments of that wonderful organizational defender of human rights, the ACLU⁴. Having a portion of the ship’s crew pregnant would hardly seem to add to its combat effectiveness, but that seems to be beside the point to the politicians. Where and when is common sense going to kick in? We’re now required to teach birth control and safe sex in school, why not in the military? With that education and proviso, further pregnancies would become subject to court martial. Would this work? Who knows, but it might be worth a try... Pregnancies in the Military are now allowed for married females. The individual lady is allowed maternity leave and the service loses her expertise while she continues to draw pay and allowances. Folks, this borders on idiocy. I certainly don’t have anything against a joint military family having children, but early on they should decide between a career or a family... once the child is born, either the man or woman should hang up their “cammies” until such time the child/children are grown enough to pose no threat to

the immediate deployment of both parents. "Not fair," you say? Whoever said that war (or the military for that matter) is fair. My point again is that the purpose of our Military is to protect our country from foreign aggression and more to the point, to impose our will on the enemy. Anything, and I mean anything that works to the detriment of this purpose is extremely ill advised! Here we are violating RULE(s) # 1 and 2.

I have pointed out before, that one possible exception to front line combat duty might well be the assignment of women as combat pilots. Technically, this one just might be feasible since combat in the sky becomes a bit more impersonal than an Infantry assault. Here, the tendency to protect the "object of your affections" is not as pronounced without being face to face while racing through the mud. While attempting to cancel the enemy's birth certificate can never be totally impersonal, "air to air" or "air to ground" combat at supersonic speeds keeps your concentration centered on the task at hand. Ladies often exhibit outstanding hand-eye coordination and often make superb pilots... As you will recall, I have never questioned a lady's courage or ability to kill with little or no remorse! Kipling had it quite right when he said the female of the species is more deadly than the male... that is not and has never been my point. Being a "fighter," "attack" or "helicopter gunship" pilot doesn't require the same upper body strength required in an infantry unit. Yes, I think the ladies could make it in the air. However... here we come back to the same old problem of an enforced "quota" program, and we know it's impossible to keep those with an agenda out of the loop. Sooner or later it would become politically necessary to have "lady squadron commanders," and of course "lady generals"⁵... not because they happen to be the best individual for the job, but because of "voting blocs", civil rights groups and the meddling of the court system... again all to the detriment of the morale of the squadron... morale is everything, and nothing can be allowed to screw it up!

Case in point, the great "Tail Hook Fiasco"... Now "Tail Hook" has been a traditional Naval Aviator's organization (or fraternity if you will), composed of those who hang their "fanny" out by operating off a carrier deck... a very hazardous undertaking indeed. Every year they have their "blowout" at the traditional "Tail Hook" Convention. Please understand that this is a social occasion and a very very voluntary proposition. It has always had the reputation of a "wild and uncouth party" where the fighter "jocks" let it all hang out. Everyone in the aviation community knows this... it was never a secret. A number of the female Navy pilots elected to attend this notoriously "macho bash". Things went as expected and eventually the guys (appropriately "oiled") started chasing the girls as guys are wont to do. This should have come as absolutely no surprise, but in the wake of the party several rather offended ladies decided to go to the Brass. Now if you listen to both sides, the men claimed that the ladies were "all for" the activities at the time, but came down with a sort of "buyer's remorse" after having considered the consequences of their actions. Suddenly virtually all male attendees of the Convention were painted with the same brush. Guilt was assumed and people were placed in a position of having to prove their innocence. No one was convicted, but senior officers were relieved and careers ruined... all on the strength of unsubstantiated accusations of the outraged ladies. While I'm relatively sure that some indiscretions did occur, the entire thing took on the character of the Salem Witch Trials... with similar results! My point is this... if you can't play with the big dogs, stay on the porch with the pups. Here we have a number of women who wanted to "swagger" with the fighter jocks soaking up the reflected glory and machismo but only on their own terms. They wished to be accepted as members of an extremely elite group of "fighting persons," but once allowed in, it had to be changed to suit them (they can resort to the courts, and the ACLU of course, but their male counterparts cannot, or at least not successfully). Being a fighter jock takes a special type of individual

where a macho attitude and a swaggering personality is a definite plus if not a necessity... If this is not acceptable, perhaps the ladies should choose a different line of work... It is necessary to win in combat, it is not required to be a gentleman, a lady or to be politically correct. Should these guys have behaved like perfect gentlemen? That would have been an extremely nice gesture, but the prospects of deadly aerial combat do not necessarily attract that sort of individual... Don't forget the name of the game is "success in combat", nothing more, nothing less! Here we must be very careful not to violate RULE(s) # 2 and 4.

The final stumbling block in the way of "ladies in combat" is public opinion. Simply put, I don't think the American Public is ready to see their women deliberately sent in harm's way. Our upbringing has always had the Judeo-Christian (or even Muslim) attitude that women were to be protected by men even to the point of death. Even I admit to such prejudices. I should say that it is something deeply imbedded in our traditions and mores, and will be the most difficult of obstacles to overcome. While my wife can shoot like a machine rest and has the instincts of a cobra when the chips are down, I would not like to have her exposed to the horrors of war. In a gun fight or protecting my backside if the home were being invaded, she'd be truly deadly... and I'd be happy to have her. Even as a police officer, the job is to "protect and serve". Granted there is some violence out there, but a police officer's primary job is not to kill or impose their will on the citizenry... (not yet at any rate)... But in combat you are sent out on a daily basis with the sole purpose of killing or subduing the enemy... this can do strange things to your mental make up, most of them undesirable. I don't think I'm ready to deliberately expose the ladies to this sort of horror. When you're defending your homeland from invasion (or establishing one as in the case of Israel) the choice is often taken out of your hands. Here, however, we clearly have a choice... If I were asked my personal "druthers," I would prefer to have the appropriately "feminized cobra" protecting my hearth and home while I go get my fingernails dirty and take care of the disagreeable tasks. When the last card is dealt, and the bad guys are coming over the ramparts, I'll issue the ammo myself, but until then...

To summarize then, yes I think some ladies are capable of making it both physically and mentally in a ground combat role. OK, if this is the case, should we allow them to be integrated in front line units? In my opinion the answer would have to be no for several reasons. First it would be virtually impossible to keep politics out of the equation. Quota systems, lessening of the physical requirements to allow a greater number of ladies to make the grade, political promotions to ensure the ladies were receiving fair treatment would all work to destroy morale in order to make a social point and achieve political correctness. This, as I attempted to point out, is a prostitution of the purpose of the military and will work to the detriment of combat efficiency. Problems having to do with female modesty in the barracks and in the field are relatively minor but would rapidly evolve into a bone of contention. Finally, and perhaps most important (assuming we don't form all female "Amazon-Type" units) is the natural human tendency to form girl-boy relationships. These would (or certainly could) cause failure in combat due to the natural human reticence to leave a girl/lover/boyfriend laying in the mud to die while you continue to advance... historical examples indicate this is fatal to combat success! If there is no lessening of the physical requirements as they currently exist, there are relatively few ladies capable of passing the required tests. A total disruption of the system and attendant destruction of the morale and "esprit de corps" of existing "old line" or "elite" units to satisfy the "macho" urges of a few would be very "cost ineffective" in terms of National Defense.

Women on ships is a different matter. If strict adherence to a “thou shalt not have sexual relations” program or at least “don’t get pregnant lest you suffer the consequences of a court martial” were instituted, it might be workable... On smaller ships, sanitary facilities would be unworkable without redesigning the vessel. Quite frankly, the idea of restructuring the routine or facilities aboard a “man-o-war” so a relative few can make a political statement or social point, seems to belie the legitimacy of the entire exercise. It would sometimes seem that what the “NOW” types really want is to prove that GOD is a Woman or at least not a man... many of the legal hassles are instituted in the name of Civil Rights instead of a legitimate desire to serve “in harms’ way.”

Women could probably serve successfully as combat pilots if they could make up their mind why they want to serve. They must decide if they want to be “macho fighter jocks,” or ladies trying to make a political point. Combat morale and esprit are the result of (in large part) the camaraderie of those who depend on each other in the air. If a man knows that he is dealing with a “female rights” or “Femi-Nazi” type who would turn in her own brother for some imagined sexual transgression or off colored joke, he’s not gonna’ be exactly heartbroken if such a lady goes down in flames... A potentially bad situation! If the gals can take the “gaff” and good humored harassment that goes with being a new pilot in any unit ...and do so while giving the men as good as they send without running to “momma”, they’ll be accepted and even spoken of with pride and affection by their male counterparts. They don’t need to act like or swear like men, but they must have a sense of humor and be resilient and understanding.⁶ Men take great pride in serving with tough ladies who can “talk the talk and walk the walk” while retaining their female mystique! The one great proviso is to keep the “social engineers” and “civil rights types” out of the loop (RULE(s) # 1, 2 and 4). Physical inadequacies will work themselves out and those who fail are usually allotted a six foot plot of ground in Arlington.

The final obstacle will not be so easily overcome. I don’t think the American People are ready to see their wives and daughters sacrificed in a cruel and bloody war. Sons have traditionally filled that role and deep seated traditions, convictions and mores do not die easily. If the country were being invaded, maybe... but even then there would probably be precious few who would flock to the colors. Judging by the statistics gleaned from the invaded countries in Europe during W.W.II very few individuals (either men or women) actually participated in the resistance movements. America could well up the percentages due to our strong traditions of freedom and individualism, but this is something I hope we never have to find out the hard way. In all, the number of females truly interested in being “Infantry, tank or artillery persons” would be a very small percentage of our female citizens. In closing I will make the following observation. While I stand by my above observations, the bottom line is that the Military Services can survive very nicely indeed without the services of our wives and daughters in the Combat Arms Branches. ...But then that wasn’t the question was it? Yes, in certain cases it could work for selected individuals, however, if the price of political correctness would be a weakened military or the destruction of our services’ morale and “esprit de corps”, it would be much too high a price to pay. Without the ability to defend our shores we will no longer need a military to defend our freedom, for it will disappear as the morning mist... our conquerors will probably not care about anyone’s civil rights...

Yes some women do have what it takes to fight and they most certainly have the courage to do so if it becomes truly necessary. Thank God it has not yet come to the point where we must make such a decision to survive as a nation.

ROC

In closing I wish to thank all of the wonderful gals who in the performance of their duties have inadvertently been exposed to, and endured the untold hardships and horror of war. Yours is a legacy of duty, honor and country... May it never become necessary again.

End Notes:

¹ While serving as Great Britain's Prime Minister in the 1980's.

² "Those Who are About to Die, Salute You"... Daniel P. Mannix circa 1968.

³ The only instances of Marine Units surrendering (being surrendered, actually) were on Wake Island, Guam and Corregidor. Marines are quick to point out that the Wake Island Commanding Officer (a Navy Commander) surrendered much to the chagrin of the still fighting Marines. Guam was also a Navy operation. Corregidor was surrendered by General Jonathan (Skinny) Wainright the Army Commander of the "Rock"... Left to their own devices, the Marines would probably have fought to the last man!

⁴ I would probably be more tolerant of the ACLU if they weren't selective about which Civil Rights they are willing to defend. Just try to get them to defend the 2nd Amendment of the Bill of Rights sometime!

⁵ Let me hasten to add that qualified ladies SHOULD be promoted, but it MUST be for the right reasons. No fighting "person" ever objects to a person getting ahead on their own ability, but political promotions are "beyond the pale". One instance comes to mind. The Marine Corps had a three star (Lt. Gen.) lady General (1996) several years back. While she is/was a nice person, and could no doubt do whatever job is assigned, her background was in disbursing (pay/finance). At one time (as a General) she was assigned to the job of selecting Combat Equipment for the Marine Corps. The year she pinned on her third star, a Marine two star General with the Medal of Honor and an excellent record was retired (not having been selected for Lt. General). Do you smell something that "smacks" of politics? I'm sure the Commandant (a consummate politician) would have said "of course not," and would have defended his position quite well... But quite frankly I have my doubts... Never forget, the military operates on money and there are many female members of congress who consider all male military members "Male Chauvinist Pigs"... During the day not so long ago when the administration was "anti-military", survival of your branch of service was the name of the game, and in politics it doesn't hurt to grease the skids!

⁶ The treatment/minor hazing that constitutes the rites of acceptance into the elite group(s), are essentially the same for both male and female pilots... if those who would seek "glory" cannot or will not submit to these traditions, they probably don't have the "moxie" to make it in combat.