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STRONGER THAN CUSTOM: WEST POINT AND THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN, 1972-1980

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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

Acknowledgements

I did almost everything wrong in graduate school. Really. I took too long with my course work, studied far too long for general exams, and spent so much time "working" on my dissertation that good friends were fearful I might one day die a student. One suggested my pursuit of a Ph.D. represented a "streak which humbles Cal Ripken - indeed, an epic saga which now eclipses the rise and fall of the Roman Empire...," and looking back I sometimes have that feeling myself.

Yet I bear few grudges. Life has a way of making us take as much time as we need to accomplish our given tasks, and there have been more than a few perks to accompany my leisurely river boat journey towards the ivory tower at the University of Oklahoma. I have relished the priceless opportunity to work among gifted and supportive people in the OU Department of History, made a few friends, and actually been paid to do what I love best: study and teach American history.

As a result of research directed toward the completion of my dissertation I have also been afforded the marvelous privilege of traveling to Texas, Colorado, and New York to conduct interviews and review documents, and to visit the United States Military Academy at West Point several times. Interviews allowed me to meet and visit with over a hundred current and former members of the Academy staff and faculty, including dozens of men and women who attended West Point during the 1970s. They have been a source of great assistance and inspiration these last few years, and more than a few went

out of their way to offer their memories, ideas, mementos from the past, and their good wishes to my endeavors. By forcing me to track them down in places as widely separated as Paris, France, Lithuania, Oregon, Alabama, Washington, New Hampshire, Germany, and a host of other places they helped me learn only too well those timeless lessons regarding weekend and evening phone rates and the price of international calls. For would-be interviewers my best advice is to NEVER make operator assisted calls to Lithuania, though in hindsight I'm glad I learned that lesson on my own, just as I learned so many lessons about travelling, interviewing, and research on a shoestring budget. I hardly claim to have found every possible source which might have clarified or been relevant to my work, but I will say I enjoyed the journey towards finding what I did.

Along the way my work has been touched by so many hands I am reluctant to call it my own. More experienced scholars tell me that fact governs every dissertation and book ever written, and I'm sure they are right, just as John Kenneth Galbraith was right when he said "Authorship of any sort is a fantastic indulgence of the ego."[1] With all that in mind I would be remiss were I to fail to thank those who helped me complete a project more challenging, unnerving, and ultimately rewarding than any other in my life.

At the University of Oklahoma my thanks go to the Graduate College, which furnished both a Crawley Research Award and Dissertation Grant to help fund my research, and to the OU Humanities Council, which provided me with a grant for travel

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[1]John Kenneth Galbraith, The Affluent Society (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), p. x.

to West Point. Within the Department of History I am indebted to Professors H. Wayne Morgan, David W. Levy, and Ben Keppel. They served on my dissertation committee, read drafts of the work in progress, and furnished invaluable insights and recommendations regarding research, what it means to be a professional historian, and how best to reach students in the classroom. I am grateful to Professor Paul A. Gilje, who triggered the idea for this work during the semester I was his teaching assistant and who became a valued teaching mentor, and to Professor Norman L. Crockett, who generously shared his office during the semester I began to write. Professor William W. Savage Jr. enlivened my graduate career with his thoughts on books, dissertations, academia, and the vagaries of university life, and his colorful impersonation of Marlon Brando lifted my spirits on several occasions when writing was especially difficult. Professor Alfred S. Bradford answered many of my questions about warrior life in the ancient world, and served as my trusted guide to the mysteries of Latin. I am also indebted to fellow graduate students, including Dirk Voss, Brad Raley, and Megan Benson. As roomate, trusted friend, and even editor, Dirk has been a quietly stalwart force in my life for many years, while Brad's rare combination of talents as a master brewer of beer and reviewer of my dissertation made my life much easier. Megan expanded my understanding of West Point flora and fauna, the Warner sisters, and the distinctions between equity and equality as they relate to feminism.

I am most profoundly beholden to Professor Robert L. Griswold. As chair of my

general exam and dissertation committees as well as the Department of History, he has had an inestimable impact on my professional growth. His confidence, enthusiasm, and professional mentoring shaped every facet of my development as a scholar and teacher, and his quiet faith carried me through many days and nights when my own reservoir of resolve was shallow. My fondest hope is that I might emulate his example and mentor others in the supportive way he and the other scholars here at OU nurtured me.

At the United States Military Academy I tip my hat to Dr. Stephen B. Grove, the West Point historian, to his assistant Patricia Mohler, and to Mr. Alan C. Aimone in the Special Collections section of the Omar Bradley Library. Dr. Grove was my professional host on two research trips to the Academy, and guided me through the archives and the wealth of material in his own office. He was particularly helpful, along with Ms. Mohler, in helping me gain access to many of the exit interviews conducted with the women of the West Point Class of 1980, and in answering my endless e-mail requests for often obscure bits of information. Mr. Aimone guided me through the considerable resources of the West Point library, and even let me stay with him after closing one night when the amount of material I needed to review and the number of hours left in my stay at West Point were in mighty conflict.

Within the Academy's Class of 1980 I am grateful to everyone who spoke with me formally or informally about their experience as cadets, and to all who so generously shared their photographs, journals, letters, and mementos. Those who were especially

helpful include Marty J. Eaton, Joan M. Gerth, Nancy L. Gucwa, Major Karen J. Hobson, Lieutenant Colonel David G. Jesmer, Susan P. Kellett, Kathleen Silvia, Doris A. Turner, William K. Wray, Lieutenant Colonel Donna S. Newell, Danna Maller, Lieutenant Colonel Anne W. MacDonald, and Robin R. Carrington. Major Kelly Lynch deservers special mention, both for sharing her photographs and memories and for generously reviewing the manuscript. Other West Pointers were a source of additional encouragement and insight. They passed me around the network of former graduates, offered invaluable opinions and background information in an effort to keep a civilian writing about military matters out of trouble, and generally spurred me onward. I cannot metntion them all, but am genuinely grateful just the same.

Others who were a rich source of insight include General William A. Knowlton (Ret), Colonel Robert P. Johnson (Ret), General Andrew J. Goodpaster (Ret), Lieutenant General Sidney B. Berry (Ret), Robert C. Lang IV, the staff of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Dr. William L. Wilson, and filmmaker Joan Jordan. John M. Anderson patiently edited every chapter and was a rich source of friendship and support, and I am grateful to General Berry for being the first to warn me my topic was too big and for proofreading portions of chapter one. My mother, Kay Janda, deserves may thanks as well, for she stands among the world's great proofreaders. We disagree mightily on the proper use of the lowly comma, but she has a much sharper eye than my own for spelling errors and typographical goofs and I am grateful she used it on my

behalf. Thanks must also go to Dr. Lionel Tiger, Charles Darwin Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University. He kindly shared his thoughts and current research with an outsider whose knowledge of anthropology, biology, and physiology may best be described as "limited," and was an important influence on my thinking during the final stages of my work.

Most of all, I hold a special place in my thoughts for the women of the West Point Class of 1980, for they were challenged far beyond the limits to which most in the military are ever pushed in peacetime. West Point is a unique environment even under ordinary circumstances, and survival there is difficult for every cadet. Yet in a way no outsider may ever fully appreciate, the women of the Class of 1980 were taken beyond the envelope of cadet life to a dark place those who have never experienced real hatred or discrimination will never know. In that environment they were driven to find courage and commitment to the Army, to West Point, and to themselves that even today should be the envy of us all. Even those who chose not to pursue an Academy education to graduation deserve respect, for they endured privations and made sacrifices as well. For these reasons, and because as individuals the women of the Class of 1980 who I met are among the most talented, erudite, and impressive people I have ever known, I give them special prominence and my heartfelt thanks here.

Finally, I offer my humble gratitude for a lifetime of love and support to my parents, Robert and Kay Janda, and for friendship to Xan E. Blake, Russell S. Post, and

James T. LaPlant. They have shaped my life in more ways than I could ever explain, and were vital to my completion of graduate school in much the same way they are vital to steadying my course through life. They believed in me even on those dark days when I did not, and most of all, reminded me that dissertations and graduate school are not the same as real life.

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Abstract

When the first women cadets entered the United States Military Academy in 1976, they were harbingers of massive changes at West Point and within the American Army. They arrived on the heels of the anti-militarism of the 1960s and 70s, defeat in Vietnam, the end of the draft, and a decay of the armed forces in general. They were despised by many cadets and members of the Academy staff and faculty who feared the end of male dominance at West Point. By the time sixty two of the original one hundred nineteen women graduated in 1980 they had endured harassment, assault, and vicious hazing from many male cadets in an environment where Academy officials often implicitly or explicitly condoned such behavior.

This dissertation examines how and why women were admitted to West Point in 1976, how they changed and were changed by the institution, and what the timing of their admission says about the Army and the America of the 1970s. It addresses the question of how society constructs gender, how the interaction of men and women at West Point represents in microcosm the gender problems plaguing society, and whether the military is the proper forum for promoting social and cultural change. Patterns of male resistance to women in institutions held sacred by men are discussed in detail, along with societal assumptions about the body, the chasm that sometimes exists between equity and equality, and the truth that for the Army gender is more problematic than race. Finally, it examines the experiences of the first group of women at West Point, detailing their

personal battles and victories, and assessing how far gender integration at the Academy progressed by 1980. It concludes that the pattern of harassment against women at West Point reflected deeply-rooted sexism within the military and American culture, and that while the assimilation of women into the Corps of Cadets was only partially complete when the first women graduated, their admission still paved the way for greater acceptance of women at the Academy and in the military overall during the 1980s.

A Word on Sources

One of the great joys of doing primary research in the recent American past is the abundance of source material. As every historian of the twentieth century knows, however, that abundance can also be a handicap. At a certain point the sheer weight of material becomes a daunting challenge. This is certainly true for anyone researching the role of women in the armed forces of the United States, and for studies of West Point in particular.

Yet another challenge is objectivity. Women were admitted to West Point just over twenty years ago, which in historical terms is less than the blink of an eye. My own perceptions of the America of the 1970s, vague as they are, may color my recreation of the past and challenge the collective memory of persons with either stronger recollections or more dogmatic views than my own. Writing about recent events is also particularly difficult because reaching definite conclusions is so fraught with risk. Hence the historian's cliche, often heard during my research, that "history stops when you were born," because an aloof, long-term perspective is difficult to find in the recent past. Some of the first women graduates of the Academy are still in the Army, for example, so assessing with finality what their admission really meant for themselves or the institution is problematic at this point.

Balanced against those concerns are what Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. called the "compensating advantages of writing so soon - in particular, the opportunity to consult those who took part in great events and thus to rescue information which might otherwise

elude the written record."[1] The "consultations" for this work primarily involved interviews with participants in the admission of women to West Point, and these oral histories pose a unique set of risk and reward all their own. When they are included into the mix of data, sources, and interpretation for any project, the historian risks both bafflement at the variety of accounts of the same event and the haunting knowledge his or her work may have consequences for persons whose reputations, memories, and even careers may be bound up in conclusions reached at a comfortable distance from actual events. This is not to say modern history cannot be done with judicious accuracy and compassion, only that it carries with it greater risks than the study of persons long dead or events barely remembered. It is for this reason I chose at the outset of my research to refer anonymously to almost everyone who shared their memories and insights about West Point with me.

I ultimately conducted almost one hundred interviews, of which seventy-three were taped. These interviews involved numerous men and women of the West Point Class of 1980, as well as six women who entered the Academy with the class in 1976 but left prior to graduation. The other interviews included members of the staff or faculty at West Point, along with former cadets and others who were in some way involved with the preparations to admit women or could provide background on Academy life. Interviewees were promised confidentiality except for General Andrew J. Goodpaster (Ret), General William A. Knowlton (Ret), Lieutenant General Sidney B. Berry (Ret),

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[1]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr The Crisis of the Old Order: 1919-1933 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. ix.

and Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore, Jr. (Ret). Each of these retired officers are too well known in the public record to be treated anonymously, and each reviewed and approved transcripts of their interviews. Neither those transcripts or the tapes of the remaining interviews are available to the public at this time.

The anonymity of the interviews is admittedly a problem, both for the flow of the narrative and for those who might follow up on my research. It was necessary, however, in order to encourage former cadets, especially those still in the Army, to consent to discuss their past with an outsider. I do not pretend they told me everything, but I am certain the invaluable assistance the interviewees provided was made possible in many cases only by my assurances that names would never be discussed in print. I could have invented names for everyone, but that seemed artificial and overly contrived. The honest approach is to say I simply will not say who they are. Members of the Class of 1980 will be able to figure out who said what in the pages that follow, and no one else needs to know. My conclusions rest both on their accounts of events at West Point and on relevant documents and secondary sources which can be verified by other historians. From a scholarly perspective, then, their identities are unimportant. They matter in terms of personal interest and little more, and in that way I hope anonymity protects the individuals without unduly hampering the work.

Academy documents came from the office of Dr. Stephen B. Grove, the United States Military Academy Historian, and from the Special Collections Section of the USMA Library. My citations to them are general because the material is not tightly organized. Documents in the historian's office were collected at the order of the West

Point Superintendent beginning in 1976. They were assembled to provide records for an official history of efforts directed toward the admission and integration of women, and as a defense against anticipated legal attacks. Sent over time from all over the Academy to the Office of the Director of Institutional Research, the documents were eventually moved to the office of the USMA historian. Neither office was ever ordered to do anything with the material, however, and both are consistently swamped with other projects. The documents are thus arranged in accordance with a wide assortment of methods; some are organized by date, some by topic, and others are simply tossed into file folders or crammed into the recesses of filing cabinets. Many are duplicated, and it would have been virtually impossible for me to provide precise location information for each of them. Instead, I have provided the name and date of each document referenced in the narrative, and retained copies of everything I footnoted.

Other sources include non-formal interviews, letters and e-mail correspondence, and exit interviews conducted by members of the West Point staff with the women of the Class of 1980. All sources are abbreviated in the footnotes as follows:

IWA	-	Formal interview with the author on tape.
IWA, author's notes	-	A non-taped interview with comments taken down by hand.
EI	-	Exit interview conducted with women in the Class of 1980 in April and May of that year by Dr. Stephen Grove, USMA historian, and Major Irene Evanekovich of the Superintendent's staff. Tapes and transcripts of these interviews are the property of the Academy and the individuals involved. I obtained permission from a number of women to review their transcripts during a research trip to West Point in 1996.

ETA	-	Electronic mail sent to the author.
LTA	-	Letter sent to the author.
USMA Files	-	Documents in the USMA historian's office.
GRF	-	Material from the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library

While I made every effort to remain true to the facts as they were presented to me and to be as fair as possible to all concerned, I am acutely aware of the limitations inherent in writing history. C.V. Wedgewood addressed the most compelling when he wrote that "...history is lived forward but it is written in retrospect. We know the end before we consider the beginning and we can never wholly recapture what it was like to know the beginning only."[2] Finished works often convey final, authoritative conclusions rather than the more murky but honest realization that recreating the past is more art than science, and it would be better if historians followed the more humble approach to which Ezra Pound alluded many years ago:

> And even I can remember
> A day when the historians left blanks in their writings,
> I mean for things they didn't know.[3]

I have left no blanks in my writing, but confess this work is hardly all-knowing or perfectly complete. It represents, however, a dedicated effort to be as precise and empathetic as possible. Any errors of fact or interpretation, either committed or implied, are solely mine.

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[2]C.V. Wedgewood, William the Silent (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967), p. 35.

[3]Ezra Pound, Draft of XXX Cantos, quoted in Peter Kemp, ed., The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Quotations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 104.

Preface

It is difficult to comprehend the magnitude of change the United States Military Academy and the Corps of Cadets underwent when women were admitted to West Point, especially at a distance of over two decades. We too often take historical events for granted, assuming the invisible Hand of Providence lay behind seemingly inevitable social evolutions whose drama diminishes with the passage of time. Yet real men and women confronted the daunting task of breaking 174 years of all-male tradition in 1976, and their most formidable barriers were often as difficult to see as they were to overcome.. After all, an academy whose graduates include officers who discovered the source of the Mississippi River and helped engineer the Panama Canal was certainly capable of *physically* preparing to accommodate the arrival of women.[1] Overcoming the truly resilient barriers, however, those that were mental, emotional, and psychological, was something else. Shaped by socialization, culture, and tradition, the limited perceptions of women's capabilities held by many officers in the Army were not easily or ever totally overcome. Part of the wonder of the transformation that did occur is that a proudly paternalistic hierarchy like the Army was forced to assume a leading role in the expansion of opportunities for women in American society in the first place. Bound as it was by almost two centuries of American custom, and linked to codes of gender exclusivity in organized warfare extending as far into the past as recorded history allows, West Point and the Army had trouble extending their world

[1]Second Lieutenant James Allen, USMA Class of 1829, discovered the source of the Mississippi River in 1833. The building of the Panama Canal was directed by Major General George Washington Goethals, USMA Class of 1880.

view to accept women as cadets and officers on an equal basis. The journey was difficult, occasionally traumatic, and hardly complete when the first women graduated from West Point in 1980.

Yet to study the integration of women at West Point is to examine in microcosm the entire spectrum of issues raised by furthering opportunities for women in the military. It is to see through a lens refracted by time the certainty that for the Army gender is more problematic than any other single issue, including race. Ironically, the federal government forced the Army to confront racial discrimination over a generation before mainstream society became engaged in the Civil Rights movement, just as it placed the military at the forefront in the quest to expand opportunities for women during the 1970s. That pattern, one in which Americans have consistently asked a defiantly and properly conservative institution like the military to lead society in revamping our cultural assumptions concerning race and gender is interesting indeed, and the study of women at West Point can shed considerable light on it. For while the Army has been extraordinarily successful over the long term in battling racial injustice, that odyssey pales before the challenge of integrating women into the society of warriors, a process that took a giant stride forward when Congress opened the service academies to both sexes in 1975.[2]

To study the admission of women to West Point is also to see the schism in American society over how we define what it means to be a man or a woman, and to

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[2]For a discussion of the Army's efforts to confront racism see Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

ask whether biology, physiology, or anthropology should shape the relentless push of American culture for absolute equality at any cost. It is to ask whether as a nation we have confused equity with equality, and whether we have mistaken the principle of equality of opportunity with that of equality of achievement. These issues are especially important in the military, for "...they dramatize in such heightened fashion the schisms that rend society as a whole."[3]

The arrival of women at West Point is also an important chapter in the larger story of the increasingly important role women have played in the armed forces since the end of the draft and the creation of the All Volunteer Force in 1973. It is a useful way to explore the essence of a citizen's relationship to the armed forces, for asking if anyone has a *right* to enlist, whether the military is so different in form and function from civilian institutions that traditional concerns over equity should not apply, and if a society rife with sexism can fairly expect the military to conquer problems of harassment and violence against women which plague civilian life. Fundamentally, such a study can help us address the question of whether the armed forces are an appropriate place for "social engineering," or whether they should be expected to do anything besides win our wars.

Such research may also deepens our understanding of how institutions respond to the challenge of social change, how they adapt to new realities while striving to protect their essential traditions. It can deepen insights into how we as a culture view the human body, assigning talents and limitations to other human beings based on their

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[3]Richard Rayner, "Women as Warriors," The New York Times Magazine (June 22, 1997): 27.

gender alone, and help explain the dynamics of change in previously single-gender environments.

Perhaps most importantly for our own era, an analysis of what happened when women entered the "warrior culture" at West Point holds the promise of illuminating the complexities of breaking down the monopoly men have historically held over organized, state-sanctioned warfare. It is to see male culture, and particularly male warrior culture, under the stress and strain of expanding to include women. In almost every culture there are always places or institutions where women may not go or participate, and in Western countries few male-centered organizations have cultivated greater deliberate exclusivity over their affairs than the military. Such organizations usually concede gender ground only when forced, and often do so in controlled ways which preserve *some* inner sanctum where men still rule. Certainly this is true of West Point, of the Army, and of the military in general.

An assessment of what went right and wrong at West Point during those first hesitant years of experimentation and evolution can also highlight the triumphs and tribulations of the Academy's Class of 1980, the first to include women within its ranks. More than any other cadets, members of that class bore the brunt of assimilating women into the Long Gray Line. Their successes as well as their failures deserve study and recognition, and can serve as lessons for other military institutions struggling with gender integration in our own time. In particular, the one hundred nineteen women who arrived to break down the gender walls at West Point deserve special notice. While sixty-two women of that class graduated, they were all pioneers in a great

drama whose outcome was hardly certain. Most suffered a litany of abuses while cadets, and those who graduated did so in triumph. Their story deserves telling for its own sake.

The experiences of those first women cadets also have much to teach us. They illuminate the myriad shades of gray inherent in asking men and women to live, train, sleep, and co-exist within a structured hierarchy for extended lengths of time, and of the difficulties the Army has faced addressing these issues. Many are so fundamental, so deeply rooted in culture and perhaps even biology they may never be fully solved. As a host of alarming incidents in recent years demonstrate, harassment and resentment of women is still a powerful force within segments of the armed forces. Even West Point has experienced troubles.

Most of all, the admission of women to West Point highlights how entrenched resistance to women has been within the military. With the power of the institution and the Army to command obedience, with a code of law wholly outside more lenient civilian jurisprudence, and with a determined plan of integration designed and implemented by officers generally committed to making the admission of women a success, the Academy still faced a variety of hurdles and controversies between 1976 and 1980. Women cadets endured the full spectrum of sexism, from daily verbal harassment to physical attacks, from persecution in the barracks and the classroom sexual assault. Some of those problems remain with West Point and the Army to this day, more than twenty years after women first entered the Academy. To understand that simple truth is to confront how deeply ingrained gender assumptions are within

our culture, how biological and physiological differences between men and women really do have consequences, and to recognize how long the military has been struggling with finding a role for women acceptable to society as a whole. Ultimately, it is to realize the real source of sexism and harassment and violence against women is not rooted exclusively in the military. Those problems pervade society; they belong to us. They *are* us. In that sense the story of the arrival of women at West Point can also illuminate the real progress the Army *has* made in addressing larger cultural problems within its ranks, and perhaps help us to discern how much longer and farther the journey towards a more fully equitable and efficient society will take us.

In truth, the journey may not end in our lifetime, or even in that of our children. But if the first chapter of a story matters as much as the conclusion, and if accomplishments matter as much as mistakes and grievous wrongs, then some assessment of what the men and women at West Point endured and conquered is in order. One measure of the triumph they shared, and what it means for America, can be gleaned through an exchange I witnessed between a father, his daughter, and a stranger on July 2, 1996. Sitting on a bench beneath the statue of Dwight D. Eisenhower at West Point, the father and his little girl silently watched as over 1,100 New Cadets assembled facing the Plain, the historic parade ground where cadets have marched since 1802. Under a brilliant blue sky softened by the receding evening sun, the cadets assembled in formation by company for the striking of the colors before dinner. The little girl's gaze shifted between the cadets, her feet, and her father. A woman transfixed by the fear and tension on the faces of the New Cadets, as well as

by the pageantry of the simple ceremony, sat silently behind them. The father made eye contact, smiled, and said, "This sure brings back memories."

"Did you go to school here?" the woman asked.

"Oh no. But I was in the Army."

Interested by their conversation, the daughter looked up at the woman and said "Did *you* go to school here?"

The woman smiled at the eager young eyes. "No," she said. "But you can."

Intrigued, the girl listened and watched with growing interest as the woman pointed out some of the young women standing silently at attention among the ranks of the Army's future leaders. Most impressive of all to the child was the fact a woman was actually *in command* of all the New Cadets. She watched the rest of the ceremony in silence, her demeanor transformed through the simple recognition that women were an important part of the panorama on the Plain, that she too might one day walk in the Long Gray Line. Her gaze no longer wavered. Instead, it remained fixed on the *women* of the United States Corps of Cadets.

Cynics will say the story smacks of sentimentalism, and it does. Yet there are insights to be gained as well. None of the adults present for this exchange came of age in a time when women were permitted to attend West Point. Only the little girl will. That fact is significant for West Point, for the Army, and for all of us as Americans. It is what the story that follows is all about.

Prologue

> Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?
> And that is the theme of war, the
> fortune of battles,
> The making of perfect soldiers.
> -Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

Sunsets come slowly at West Point, as if golden shafts of light dread leaving the hallowed grounds of the fortress on the Hudson. They linger, reluctantly pulling away from the river as El Sol descends westward behind the mountains, leaving long shadows in their wake. Beams recede past the timeless statues of George S. Patton and Dwight D. Eisenhower, shower through the barracks windows of a thousand cadets, and dance across the weathered visages of Sylvanus Thayer and Douglas MacArthur standing eternal watch over the Plain. Rays glint from the peak of Battle Monument, and retreat painfully from the shaded sanctuary of the post cemetery. Like the rearguard of a withdrawing column, one last glittering sliver of light often pauses atop the mountains to the west. Desperate to stave off nightfall, it darts brilliantly through the stained glass of the Cadet Chapel, glides across the dusk-shrouded ruins of Fort Putnam, and kindles the clouding eyes of an Old Grad lost in memory along Trophy Point. In an instant, the shimmering brightness is gone, abandoning the United States Military Academy to sable night, yet promising to lead the minions of Apollo back from the east in the morning.

It has been that way as long as anyone can remember, or at least as long as there have been people to stand on the peninsula that is West Point and notice. The sun rises across the majestic river, sets behind tree-covered mountains, and in Summer, as it has every year since 1802, the United States Military Academy receives a new class of

cadets.

One such class arrived on July 7, 1976. One thousand five hundred and nineteen strong, it represented every state in the Union, several foreign countries, and the promise of a generation eager to take their place in the Long Gray Line.[1] During a Summer when the nation celebrated its bicentennial, their celebration included a personal commitment to public service.

Gathering in Michie Stadium, many New Cadets accompanied friends and family during their offical welcome from Academy officials.[2] They were told what to expect from life at West Point, and encouraged to keep a sense of humor during the weeks ahead. Finally it came time for separation. New Cadets went one way; family and friends went another. Young men and women hugged their families, gathered their belongings, and were gone. It was a moment of extraordinary poignancy. Parents wanted it to linger; their children wanted it to end. One group fought back tears and faced a tour of the Academy and a long drive home to a world less full than before. The other stood on the threshold of admission to the society of warriors, at the beginning of the most challenging journey of their lives.

All too quickly the moment was gone. New Cadets moved from a world with precious few rites of passage to one with a dazzling array of hurdles, each linking them more closely to the Corps of Cadets. They left a world of individuality where little was

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[1]A handful of foreign cadets are admitted to West Point each year and educated at taxpayer expense. President Jose' Figueres Olsen of Costa Rica, for example, was a member of the Class of 1979.

[2]Home to Army football, the stadium bears the name of First Lieutenant Dennis Mahan Michie, USMA Class of 1892, who captained the very first West Point team.

expected, failure was commonplace, and the emphasis was on choice, to join a world where the group mattered most, a great deal was expected, failure was unthinkable, and the emphasis was on obligation.

After several hours and a dazzling array of in-processing formalities including haircuts, uniform issue, and instruction in the timeless art of the military salute, New Cadets saw their loved ones a last time before the beginning of Cadet Basic Training. Known as "Beast Barracks," the training was a six week program of instruction focusing on physical fitness, military protocol, and weapons proficiency roughly analogous to basic training for Army enlisted personnel. The Cadet Captain in charge of the first half of this training period was a first classman known and feared as the "King of Beast," and in July of 1976 his name was Kenneth Franklin Miller.

As the Cadet Training Battalion Commander, Miller led the New Cadets and their company commanders on to the historic Plain at West Point. After taking their oath to "...support the Constitution of the United States, and bear true allegiance to the National Government...," the New Cadets formed by company behind the famous United States Military Academy Band, better known as the Hellcats, to pass in review before the spectators gathered in bleachers to celebrate their first steps on the long road to graduation.[3]

The Hellcats, smartly in step and immaculately attired in Army dress blues, passed first playing the "West Point March." Behind them came the Academy color

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[3]Formally known as the United States Military Academy Band, the Hellcats are the oldest Army unit at West Point, and the oldest military band in continuous service in the United States.

guard carrying the Stars and Stripes and the colors of the United States Army. Atop the Army's flag were battle streamers commemorating the one hundred sixty-eight campaigns and major engagements in which the Army fought since the American Revolution. Saratoga mingled with the Argonne, Gettysburg with Normandy and Bataan, and Chosin Reservoir with the Ia Drang Valley. Behind the colors came the New Cadets, arranged into eight companies and struggling to maintain their newly-received places in the Long Gray Line.

Parents and friends strained to recognize their New Cadet in the sea of identical uniforms and closely cropped hair. They cheered en masse as the long column passed in review, letting out isolated bursts of joy when a solemn face became suddenly familiar. They hardly noticed the ragged marching, the awkward attempts to keep in step, or the grimaces stress was already placing on the faces of their loved ones. Caught up in the emotion of the moment, they would have forgiven these incongruities anyway. After all, their willing young soldiers were neophytes, not the disciplined formations of precision marchers that would astound crowds at weekend parades in the fall.

In many ways, this rite of passage was like so many others in the Academy's long history. It was civilians becoming soldiers, young people shouldering the burden of citizenship, and West Point unobtrusively accepting another class of young people to prepare for careers in the Army.

And yet, something was also different about the class of 1980. In the midst of the long column passing the reviewing stands were New Cadets who subtly stood out amongst their peers. Their hair was longer, and something about each one seemed

vaguely out of place, out of kilter with the masculine surroundings. Those amongst the crowd who peered closely (though of course they already knew) discerned there were *women*, one hundred nineteen to be exact, in the midst of the unbroken ranks turning and marching toward Washington Hall and the cadet barracks. The Class of 1980, it seemed, was breaking new ground at West Point, and quietly, very quietly, Army patriarchy began to crack.

The Long Gray Line marched on.

Chapter One: "The Corps Has"

> Maybe you could find one woman in 10,000 who could lead in combat, but she would be a freak, and the Military Academy is not being run for freaks.
>
> -General William Westmoreland[1]

Watching the president climb into his waiting helicopter, Lieutenant General Sidney Bryan Berry felt decidedly uneasy. For Gerald Ford traveled with more than his usual entourage on the way back to Washington; he was taking a West Point tradition along with him.

The president had come to the United States Military Academy on June 4, 1975 to be the featured speaker at graduation ceremonies for the Corps of Cadets.[2] Berry, the Academy's fiftieth superintendent, listened as the president began by ceremoniously pardoning cadets for any infractions of regulations, ending with a simple phrase the accumulated punishment tours and demerits of the previous months.[3] He told the

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[1]Family Weekly, September 25, 1976.

[2]The president traditionally appears at graduation ceremonies for each of the military service academies (the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado) once during each term in office. These are the three major service academies, with West Point often referred to simply as the Military Academy. The federal government also operates the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Merchant Marine academies, located in New London, Connecticut, and Kingstown, Rhode Island, respectively. Though they train officers for possible military service they are not part of the Department of Defense, falling instead under the auspices of the Department of Transportation (Coast Guard) and Department of Commerce (Merchant Marine).

[3]Ford clung to hallowed tradition here as well, and his actions met with hearty cheers from the Corps of Cadets. The tradition dates to the Revolutionary War. Upon hearing news of the defeat of British forces at Yorktown in 1781, the garrison commander at West Point became so overjoyed he emptied the stockade to allow prisoners to join in the riotous celebrations. Since then it has been customary for visiting presidents to extend similar immunities to members of the Corps, and high ranking foreign dignitaries sometimes (usually with the encouragement of cadets who write to them prior to their arrival) ask the superintendent for the power to grant "pardons" themselves.

graduates assembled at Michie Stadium that the "traditions of West Point run throughout our history. . . And now you accept that inheritance, carrying with you not only the traditions of West Point but the hopes of your countrymen." The president warned that the "battle of freedom" would never be over; that the "will of America will always be tested;" and that Academy graduates would serve in a dangerous world in which the United States faced a greater variety of potential enemies than ever before. In such times, the president intoned, Army officers who epitomized the West Point virtues of duty, honor, country, were more important than ever to the future of the republic. It was a timeless message, one made especially relevant by the recent fall of Saigon in April and the seizure and subsequent recapture of the S.S. Mayaguez in May. In closing, Ford reminded the audience that "freedom is never free," and his remarks were warmly received.[4]

Following his address, the 862 cadets of the Class of 1975, each wearing the academy's famous full dress gray over white uniform, strode across the giant stage to receive diploma covers and handshakes. Pictures were taken, graduates beamed, and family members swelled with pride. Then came the moment which every cadet dreamed about; the cathartic, triumphant moment made forever meaningful by four years of arduous struggle and anticipation. They were dismissed. The graduates paused for a

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[4]Government Printing Office, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford - Book I: June 1 to July 17, 1975 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), pp. 769-773. North Vietnamese troops captured Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, on April 15. Cambodian naval forces seized the Mayaguez and its American crew on May 12. When negotiation failed to free the ship and crew Ford ordered American forces to recapture them on the 14. Under cover of naval air strikes a landing party of U.S. Marines accomplished the task, suffering twenty-one dead and more than seventy wounded in the process. See "Ford's Rescue Operation," Newsweek, May 26, 1975, p. 16.

heartbeat, then erupted in war yells and flung their hats high into the New York sky. As handshakes and bear hugs were exchanged, and as children from the crowd scrambled for cadet hats to take home as souvenirs, another West Point rite of passage was complete. The one hundred seventy third academy class passed from the secure, isolated environs of West Point into the Army as second lieutenants.[5]

Afterward, Ford climbed into Berry's sedan for the journey back to the "Plain," the historic academy parade ground where an army helicopter waited to take him back to Air Force One. The superintendent joined him for the ride, planning to enjoy a few private moments with his Commander-in-Chief as well as discuss one of the more volatile issues facing the academy. For several years Congress had discussed opening the nation's service academies to women, and on May 20 the House had finally acted. In a 303-96 vote, representatives called for the Army, Navy, and Air Force academies to admit women in 1976.[6] With Senate action pending, and with the president's position in doubt, Berry planned to lobby against further action on the measure. In his view women had no place at West Point, which he believed existed primarily to develop future combat leaders for the Army. That exclusivity was what made the United States Military Academy unique, what had given it purpose for almost two centuries. Women were barred from direct combat duty, and the idea that they should one day join combat units struck Berry, along with most senior army officers, as anathema. It was a threat to the

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[5]The United States Military Academy educates a portion of the Army officers commissioned as second lieutenants every year. The others come from Officer Candidate School, or from Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs at civilian universities.

[6]Judith Hicks Stiehm, Bring Me Men and Women: Mandated Change at the U.S. Air Force Academy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 10.

cohesiveness, morale, and combat effectiveness of every unit in the army, they reasoned, and therefore women had no place in the Long Gray Line.[7]

In the course of their conversation, however, Ford dropped a bombshell. The admission of women was a "political inevitability," he said, adding that Berry "could expect within a very short time, days perhaps, for Congress to legislate the admission of women to the service academies..."[8] There would be no more debate.

When made public, the news struck Army leaders as both ill-conceived and ill-timed, for it came on the heels of one of the most turbulent periods in the Army's history, a time when even the geographic isolation of West Point could not protect the Academy from convulsive changes sweeping American society. On every front, social, political, military, and economic, the nation experienced galvanic shocks. No institution suffered more than the Army, which was riddled with problems in the wake of the losing effort in Vietnam. Drug abuse, discipline problems, officer corruption, and low morale plagued the ranks. The quality of many soldiers was appallingly low, and Congress seemed intent on ignoring decades of experience by returning to an all-volunteer force and opening the services to more women than ever before. Though the Army has suffered many traumatic periods when public support waned and the quality of troops was abysmal, the 1970s were as difficult a time to be a professional soldier as any in American history. Even West Point suffered an array of internal and external crises, each leading inexorably towards Sidney Berry's dramatic conversation with the president. How much more, he

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[7]LTG Sidney B. Berry, interview with the author (IWA), 10-24-95, p. 4.

[8]Ibid., pp. 4, 6.

may have wondered, could the Army and West Point withstand?

Beyond Thayer Gate, the dividing line between the ordered world of the Academy and the hustle-bustle of civilian life. America as a whole had indeed been in turmoil. The nineteen-sixties gave birth to a rejuvenated civil rights movement: to calls for equal rights for women; to a war on poverty led by an increasingly activist federal government; and to a war in Southeast Asia which ultimately proved the most divisive of all. Riots and violence seemed endemic, especially in college towns, where children of the generation that survived the Great Depression and defeated totalitarianism rejected the world their parents had given them. The most militant despised the materialism, the greed, and the blind patriotism that led America into quagmires like Vietnam. They rightfully criticized involvement in Southeast Asia, racism at home, and often assaulted the military as a Praetorian Guard for a right-wing establishment rather than an instrument of the American people. Controversy reigned over a wide variety of social and foreign policy issues, and the old morality was slipping away. Young people especially embraced the move towards more casual sex, a more widespread use of drugs, and an increasingly caustic and disdainful approach toward authority.[9]

West Point and the Army tried to steer clear of the domestic tumult and remain, as Douglas MacArthur had urged, "serene, calm, aloof," while the great issues of the day

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[9]The breakdown of traditional institutions during the sixties has been well documented. See Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), Paul Boyer, Promises to Keep: The Unites States Since World War II (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1995), Thomas Powers, Vietnam: The War at Home (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1984), and Jim F. Heath, Decade of Disillusionment: The Kennedy-Johnson Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

were debated by those who had not chosen to serve the profession of arms.[10] Yet it was difficult. Tainted by the increasingly bitter war in Vietnam, the Army became a focal point for the media, for opponents of the war, for those who attacked the draft, and for critics who denounced the increasingly large share of national resources pouring into Southeast Asia rather than remaining in the United States. Rather than seeing the military as suffering the consequences of misguided national policy, they often identified the armed services as a prime *source* of the nation's ills, particularly the war in Vietnam. They forgot, as Samuel J. Bayard said in 1854, "that according to the history of other republics, the people were always corrupted, before the army became dangerous."[11]

Volunteers for military service became increasingly hard to find, and as thousands of middle class young men evaded the draft by staying in college, joining the Reserves, or enlisting in the National Guard, Army standards were lowered to the breaking point.[12] Drug use, desertion, and discipline problems grew to frightening levels. With dissatisfaction over the war growing exponentially during the 1960s, even West Point began struggling to find qualified candidates. As a rule, the Academy was swamped with applicants. In the years following World War II it was a magnet for thousands of applicants willing to accept a term of enlistment as an officer in exchange

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[10]MacArthur's words come from his last public address, delivered at West Point on May 12, 1962. See William Safire, ed. Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History (New York: W W. Norton and Company, 1992), p. 77.

[11]The Honorable Samuel J. Bayard, "Address Delivered Before the Graduating Class of Cadets, June 16, 1854 (Camden: Office of the Camden Democrat, 1854), p. 3.

[12]See Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War and the Vietnam Generation (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), especially Part II.

for a free education and a place in the Long Gray Line. The Academy was the equivalent of an Ivy League university, a place where cadets took more hours than were required at Harvard, to which, as the Corps liked to say, a West Point man might have gone. Qualified candidates were normally turned away in droves because of a lack of spaces. In 1972, however, with the Army withdrawing from Vietnam and opposition to the war well-entrenched, West Point received so few applications for admission that *every* qualified candidate was accepted and vacancies were common.[13]

Just as upsetting, and just as clear an indicator of the growing disdain in American society for a military career, was the fact West Point graduates were resigning from the Army in record numbers. Graduates became eligible to leave the service between four and five years after graduation, but traditionally the overwhelming majority chose to stay in the Army. The war class of 1950, for example, only lost eleven percent of its members at the five year mark. In contrast, one third of the class of 1966 left after five years, and members of the Academy's faculty were leaving as well. When thirty-three instructors resigned in eighteen months the *New York Times* took notice, and the Army became so concerned that the Academy was suffering some sort of general malaise it commissioned a special study to examine the phenomenon.[14]

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[13]Rick Atkinson, The Long Gray Line (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p. 319. Of the hundreds of secondary works on the Academy, Atkinson's book is in a league by itself. It is virtually required reading for graduates.

[14]See Robert Leider, "Why They Leave: Resignations from the USMA Class of 1966" (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, July 1970), Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier (New York: The Free Press, 1971), Thomas Fleming, West Point: The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy (New York: William Morrow, 1969), and Seymour Hersh, New York Times June 25, 1972. Many of the resignations were administrative. Barred by law from sending regular officers to law school, the Army staffed West Point's Law Department with ROTC officers. Usually fresh out of law school, these officers voluntarily served for three years, as opposed to the two years expected of draftees. When they left the Army they were

The malaise it suffered was the war in Vietnam. It cast a palpable shroud over the Army, and soon the darkness hung over the Academy as well. Servants of a society which increasingly considered the war a wasteful mistake and military service the province of fools and brutes, cadets and faculty sometimes found it difficult to stay optimistic or enthusiastic about their careers. Even after 1968, when the number of American troops in Southeast Asia began to steadily decline, West Point graduates continued to deploy overseas and enter fighting that most believed was pointless. Some graduates of the class of 1969, for example, left the Academy in May, attended advanced training during the Summer, deployed to Vietnam in the Fall, and were killed and back at West Point to be buried by grieving cadets before Christmas. Year after year, from 1965 onward, the cycle continued unabated, with young men leaving the Academy in the prime of their lives only to return home in caskets. The persistence of death among cadets born into a culture already ambivalent about military service, and increasingly antagonistic toward involvement in Vietnam, made it difficult for some to justify the sacrifice. It also did nothing for morale, particularly since so many knew their fate might also lead to the hallowed grounds of the post cemetery.[15]

In such an environment, and with dissent beyond the Academy exploding into

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listed administratively as resigning from positions as instructors at West Point. They were neither Academy graduates nor long term members of the faculty, and most never intended to serve beyond the three year commitment. Press accounts of an exodus by West Point faculty were thus overblown, though they contributed to the widespread feeling that the Academy was in trouble. See GEN William A. Knowlton, IWA, 11-28-95, p. 12.

[15]IWA, 9-16-96, author's notes. According to USMA Historian Dr. Stephen Grove, 260 Academy graduates were killed in Vietnam. Another thirteen are still listed as missing in action (MIA), bringing total West Point losses to 273.

violence on college campuses across the country, it is little wonder that many of the young men at West Point felt estranged from their generation and felt the gap between the American people and their army growing wider.[16] At commencement exercises in 1970, Vice President Spiro Agnew contrasted the steadfast loyalty to the nation shown by West Point graduates with those who he said "...glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedoms those misfits abuse."[17] His sentiments were echoed by a cadet who expressed his dismay with those who attacked the military by saying, "It makes you wonder why the hell you should go risk your neck for those kinds of people."[18]

More than estranged, some also felt hated. Just as military personnel returning from Vietnam often met scorn, ridicule, and the ubiquitous protester willing to spit on any uniform, so cadets faced growing resentment while among civilians. Some began wearing wigs on leave, changing into civilian clothes when off post, and donning their uniforms only when absolutely required.[19] For much of American history the distinctive gray cadet uniform had been a common sight in the airports and train stations of New York. Always a magnet for attention, and an invaluable attraction for young ladies and their parents, the uniforms were often tickets to free drinks in bars, discounted hotel

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[16]Some critics fear the gap between soldiers and civilians has widened again in the 1990s. See Thomas E. Ricks, Making the Corps (New York: Scribner, 1997).

[17]Thomas Fleming, "West Point Cadets Now Say 'Why, Sir?,'" New York Times Magazine, July 5, 1970, p. 15.

[18]Ibid., p. 17.

[19]James Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 141.

rooms, and bargain prices at some of New York City's most exclusive restaurants. Yet by the early 1970s some cadets were afraid to wear their uniforms in public, especially in the Northeast, California, and Washington, D.C. Those who traveled to the Midwest or South on leave were still lionized as heroes, but even they were likely to encounter quiet opposition to their perceived role in the U.S. war machine. Whether through aloof former friends, snide comments uttered just out of earshot, or open criticism, cadets were forced to confront the awkward fact that many of their fellow citizens no longer respected those who served their country in uniform.[20]

The Academy also faced a series of wrenching changes and crises during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and by the Summer of 1975 the cumulative effect was to make the venerable institution seem a medieval citadel under siege. During the mid 1960s the size of the Corps of Cadets was gradually doubled, reaching a total of over 4400 cadets by 1972. This frustrated some Army officers and old grads, who feared accepting a significantly larger number of cadets would require a lowering of standards.[21] Their fears seemed confirmed by the steady decline of mean College Board scores for entering plebes, which dropped consistently between 1966 and 1972.[22] The larger size of each

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[20]Fleming, "West Point Cadets Now Say 'Why, Sir?,'" p. 15, 17

[21]Expanding was the pet project of Major General William C. Westmoreland, who served as USMA Superintendent from 1960-63. Congress approved the plans in 1964, which allowed the Corps of Cadets a strength of 4,417. To house and support them, Congress also called for an immense program of construction, including new barracks, housing for additional faculty, and renovations to existing facilities. See Theodore J. Crackel The Illustrated History of West Point (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 1991), pp. 263-265, 275. One reason Westmoreland wanted to expand the Corps was to make it approximately the same size as the Brigade of Midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy, thereby helping Army coaches recruit more effectively in their timeless quest to defeat the hated "Middies" in football.

[22]Mean verbal scores on the SAT for entering plebes dropped thirty points between 1966 and 1972, from 654 to 624, while math scores sank from 581 to 554. See Pointer View, May 31, 1974, p. 1.

entering class was only part of the explanation for this phenomenon, however. A general disdain for the military among many civilians, especially the young, and the war in Vietnam account for the rest.

In 1969 "bracing" was officially abolished, ending a time-honored tradition of disciplining (or intimidating and abusing) fourth-year cadets, who were known as "plebes" in the distinctive argot of the Academy.[23] Bracing was an exaggerated form of attention in which the chin was forced down as far as possible, creating wrinkles below the jaw. For decades plebes were required to brace on command, and while relatively safe from the demands of senior officers while in class, they were vulnerable everywhere else on post. Some upperclassmen organized wrinkle-counting contests to determine which plebes were most military in their bearing, and because bracing also involved ramrod straight necks and lower backs there were other criteria to consider as well. If an upperclassman could fit his hands between the wall and a plebe's body, for example, the plebe suffered. Common punishments included being forced to brace for extended periods, or "sweat" dimes and quarters by remaining at attention against a wall long enough to make the coins stick with perspiration when they stepped away.[24] The practice had no military importance, though it was deeply rooted in Academy tradition. Because generations of cadets had endured this often abused tactic for teaching military bearing and proper posture, many older graduates became convinced the ban on bracing indicated

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[23]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 403. West Point cadets are classified as follows: fourth year cadets, who would be called freshmen at a civilian university, are known as plebes; third year cadets (sophomores) are "cows," those in their second (junior) year are "yearlings," and first year cadets (seniors) are called "firsties."

[24]IWA, 1-15-97, author's notes.

the Academy was going "soft."[25]

In the Fall of 1969, the epidemic of campus anti-war protests reached West Point, when approximately two hundred Vassar students arrived from Poughkeepsie on "Moratorium Day" to distribute flowers and persuade cadets to abandon their military careers. They were notably unsuccessful in their efforts and left after only a few hours of fruitless debates with cadets, many of whom nourished a strong impish streak when dealing with protesters. One cadet told the Vassar girls he had to leave in order to attend "poison gas class," while others politely accepted flowers and proceeded to eat them.[26] There were other, less well-known incidents as well. During a weekend parade the following Spring, a protester jumped a barrier and ran on to the Academy parade field, known for decades simply as the "Plain." The man went straight for the color guard, in an apparent attempt to grab the American flag. A cadet marching behind the colors un-shouldered his rifle, struck the man in the face with the butt, and resumed marching as Military Police dragged the protester's unconscious body away.[27] Though such encounters were relatively rare at West Point, each confrontation reinforced the budding sense that the Academy and all it stood for were somehow out of step with mainstream America.

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[25]By virtue of their numbers, their positions of power in the military, government, and business communities, and their often steadfast loyalty and commitment, West Point graduates are enormously influential on the Academy. They traditionally despise *any* sort of change at West Point, and both cadets and faculty often refer to them as "D.O.G.s," which is short for "Disgruntled Old Grads."

[26]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 319, and Fleming, "West Point Cadets Now Say, 'Why, Sir?,'" pp. 18, 20.

[27]IWA, 1-21-97, author's notes. A similar event took place during the Armed Forces Parade in New York City during the Fall of 1968.

The following year West Point reeled from serious controversy when Major General Samuel W. Koster resigned as superintendent. Koster commanded the 23rd (Americal) Division in Vietnam at the time of the My Lai massacre and was being investigated for his role in the ensuing cover-up.[28] Rather than bring possible discredit on the Academy, Koster strode to the stone balcony in Washington Hall, which cadets called the "Poop Deck," on March 17, 1970. Before him the entire Corps of Cadets had assembled for lunch, and Koster stunned them by announcing he was stepping down. Referring to the Academy creed of Duty, Honor, Country, the superintendent pledged to remain faithful to those values always, just as he had as a cadet in the Class of 1942. In a parting shot at the powers that were, he added, "Don't let the bastards grind you down," and for ninety seconds the cadets stood and cheered. Still, the shock of a West Pointer, and the superintendent at that, being involved even remotely in a gruesome massacre and cover-up tarnished the Academy in ways no attack from the outside ever could.[29]

Beyond West Point there was also tarnish on the Army as a whole. It seemed that the fabric of the service was being torn asunder, and officers were appalled at the

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[28]On March 16, 1968, the 1st Platoon of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, assaulted a village known as My Lai 4 in the Quang Ngai region of South Vietnam. Commanded by 1st Lieutenant William Calley, the platoon massacred upwards of 500 civilians, including many women and children. The circumstances of the attack remain clouded to this day; what is more certain is that some Army officers attempted to cover up the incident. Others investigated and court-martialed many of the perpetrators after news of the massacre reached the press in the Spring of 1969. See James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, eds., My Lai: A Brief History with Documents (New York: Bedford Books, 1998).

[29]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, pp. 319-20. On the following day, upperclassmen ordered the entire Corps to march past Koster's residence at "eyes right" in a gesture of support. Some cadets kept their eyes straight ahead in quiet protest, and Koster was eventually demoted to Brigadier General as a result of the My Lai investigation.

declining quality of American soldiers worldwide.[30] Poorly educated and motivated recruits, low morale, racial strife, and a general dissatisfaction with the Army dramatically affected discipline, especially among troops stationed in Germany. Drained of veterans by the fighting in Vietnam, the American Seventh Army lacked strong leaders at the troop level and became notorious as a breeding ground for drug abuse, violence, and a severe lack of respect for authority. Race riots among U.S. troops were common, as was flagrant use of heroin, hashish, and a wide variety of other illegal substances.[31] Discipline all but disappeared in some units, and in others a frightening pattern of violence toward German civilians developed. Muggings, rapes, and even murders were numerous by the early 1970s, and some American officers feared for their own safety when entering troop barracks.[32] While criminal problems were less common at West Point, the Academy shared in the simmering racial tensions of the day, proving that the violence and tensions of American society at large were also present at every major

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[30]Upwards of one-fourth of Army recruits in the early 1970s were high school dropouts. See Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers, p. 127.

[31]A 1971 Army survey indicated over fifty percent of troops stationed in Vietnam had used marijuana during the previous twelve months. Thirty percent had used some other sort of psychedelic drug, thirty-two percent had used stimulants, and over twenty-five percent used depressants or narcotics. The numbers were marginally lower among soldiers stationed in Europe and the Continental U.S., but alarming just the same. See Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), p. 184.

[32]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, pp. 366-67, 371-74. See also Daniel J. Nelson, A History of U.S. Forces in Germany (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 104-127, William L. Hauser, America's Army in Crisis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 73-124, George H. Walton, The Tarnished Shield: A Report on Today's Army (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973), Haynes Johnson and George C. Wilson, Army in Anguish (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), and Gabriel and Savage, Crisis in Command. Racially motivated riots were widespread in Korea as well. See Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers, pp. 125-126.

Army installation in the world.[33]

In Vietnam, the collapse of leadership and discipline could also be seen in the number of "combat refusals," "fraggings," and desertions in U.S. units. A combat refusal occurred when members of a unit refused, often temporarily, to follow orders they considered ill-advised.[34] The refusals sometimes came under fire, and were usually explained by enlisted personnel as the only defense they had against the incompetence of officers. Fraggings were assaults by U.S. soldiers on each other, typically involving an enlisted soldier using a grenade to wound or kill an officer he considered a threat to himself or the unit. Between 1969 and 1972, eighty-six American soldiers were killed and 714 wounded in incidents *officially* blamed on other U.S. troops. How many fraggings happened in combat only to be blamed on hostile fire or accident will never be known. Ultimately, a growing number of soldiers chose the traditional method for evading military service and voted with their feet to leave the Army behind. Desertions increased from 1967 through 1971, when 73.4 out of every one thousand soldiers left their unit.[35]

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[33]For most of the Academy's history the number of black cadets was excruciatingly small - only eighteen graduated between 1889 and 1947 - and racism had been endemic By the late 1960s, however, there were enough black cadets to form a sizeable minority, and it took time for the Academy and the overwhelmingly white Corps of Cadets to adjust. See Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, p. 284.

[34]The phrase "combat refusal" is a marvelously antiseptic way of saying "mutiny."

[35]Gabriel and Savage, Crisis in Command, pp. 37-43, 45, 183. There is no historical precedent for the number of fraggings or combat refusals during Vietnam. Modern military units usually experience the phenomena only during periods of extended, severe combat. Yet in Vietnam the number of incidents *increased* during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when the total number of casualties from hostile action *declined*. Many fraggings even took place outside the combat zone, often when troops were on leave. In comparison to the mutinies suffered by the French Army in 1917, or those of the Royal Navy at the close of the eighteenth century, the American Army broke down under "minimal stress." See Gabriel and Savage, Crisis in Command, p. 37.

Discipline and morale problems also plagued units stationed in the United States. Fayetteville, North Carolina, home of Fort Bragg and the Army's elite 82nd Airborne Division, became so rife with military related crime that residents called it "FayetteNam." Drug abuse and violent crime were commonplace, with rape especially rampant. Thousands of young women lived alone in military towns during times of war, and with their husbands overseas they made tempting targets for military men who knew who was alone, where wives and girlfriends lived, and so on.[36] This was in stark contrast to life in Army towns prior to and even after World War II, when crime was low and the greater problems of civilian society rarely intruded. Though many U.S. units had few problems with criminal behavior, and most officers resisted the temptation to join their soldiers at "FTA" parties, the pattern of events was deeply disturbing to Army officers.[37] Many were so disheartened by the alarming trends that they resigned. Those that remained in the service faced daunting problems, especially since the Army was in the midst of losing a major war for the first time in American history. Spirits sank to a low ebb.[38]

In America, the growing tolerance of drug use, so prevalent among GI's in Germany and on domestic college campuses, found its way to the service academies.

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[36]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, pp. 310-311.

[37]"FTA" stood for "Fuck the Army."

[38]These problems took well over a decade to correct, and it was not until the late 1980s that the military could claim real success in improving discipline, raising standards, and dramatically reducing drug use. A West Pointer who graduated in 1979 summed up the chaos of the era by saying he was shocked to find that instead of entering the Army of Sergeant Rock (a comic book hero) he had enlisted in the Army described in Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead. See IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes.

Sixty cases of drug abuse were reported within three years. Most involved marijuana, and in comparison to civilian schools the number of cases was strikingly low. Yet the rising use of drugs among cadets concerned Academy officials, who feared their institution was losing touch with all but the vices of mainstream life. In a culture which at once scorned military virtues and scorned the appearance of civilian social ills in military ranks, it was hard to know how to make West Point vital to ordinary citizens again. It was harder still to cling to traditional compasses at a time when nothing was sacrosanct, when *everything* seemed subject to criticism and change.[39]

For the next several years, change came to the Academy at a frantic pace. In 1973, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird ordered an end to compulsory chapel at West Point, after a series of court challenges made it clear that the rule violated the First Amendment's separation of church and state. Attendance at Protestant chapel dropped by two-thirds and by half for Catholic Mass, leaving traditionalists shaking their heads in wonder.[40] In the Spring, Cadet James Pelosi gained national attention by graduating after enduring "The Silence" for over a year and a half. The Silence was a severe punishment handed down by the Cadet Honor Committee, normally reserved for cadets suspected of violating the cadet honor code who could either not be proven guilty or were deemed inadequately punished by the Academy.[41] Suspected of cheating on an exam, Pelosi

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[39]"A Decade in the News," The Pointer, Vol. 56, No. 4, January 1980, p. 6. Though strictly forbidden, alcohol was no stranger to the Academy, but officials viewed it with much less suspicion than newer drugs like marijuana, LSD, and heroin.

[40]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 407.

[41]It was also used informally as a means of driving unwanted cadets from the Corps. Many of the first black cadets, for example, were silenced by whites.

denied the charge but was convicted by the Honor Committee, which recommended his expulsion. Following an investigation the Academy overturned the conviction, so the committee resorted to its own brand of justice and subjected Pelosi to the Silence.[42] He was ignored and harassed by other cadets, who spoke to him only on official Academy business. He ate alone, slept alone, and studied alone for nineteen months, and though a few cadets bucked the system and secretly supported him the case provoked widespread criticism of the Academy.[43] When the Honor Committee officially did away with The Silence later in the year, another harsh but traditional aspect of Academy life was gone.

American policy makers eliminated another hallowed institution in 1973, when they ended the longest continuous draft in U.S. history. A hallmark of American culture since 1940, the draft was replaced by the All Volunteer Force (AVF), which supporters argued would be a more efficient, more equitable means for providing for the common defense.[44] Those supporters cited the findings of the presidential Gates Commission, which reported to Richard M. Nixon in 1971 that an all-volunteer force would be the best

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[42]For a full account of the incident as well as evidence Pelosi may have been guilty, see Ellis and Moore, School For Soldiers, pp. 268-69. Their evidence is supported by General William A. Knowlton, who served as Superintendent at West Point during the episode. He argues Pelosi was clearly guilty. During the Academy investigation however, the Deputy Commandant, who oversaw the work of the Cadet Honor Committee judging Pelosi, sent a note to his adjutant ordering him to "expedite" processing of the case. The adjutant mistakenly included copies of the note in packets detailing the investigation which went out to the Honor Committee. Pelosi's attorney argued the note proved the Academy's chain of command had ordered him convicted. With the appearance of impropriety too damning to ignore, Knowlton allowed Pelosi to remain a cadet rather than risk a court fight the Academy was likely to lose. GEN William A. Knowlton, IWA, 11-28-95, pp. 7-8.

[43]The Pointer, Vol. 56, No. 4, p.6. See also "The Silencing," Newsweek, June 18, 1973, p. 42, and "An End to Silence," Time, June 18, 1973, pp. 24-25. Pelosi lost twenty-six pounds during the ordeal, and was one of the few cadets to endure The Silence without resigning.

[44]Conscription began in 1940, as the U.S. prepared for World War II. The draft ended in 1945, following the surrender of Germany and Japan, and resumed in 1948 in response to Cold War tension.

alternative to the draft in the post-Vietnam era. Nixon followed their recommendation and ended the draft soon after the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973. Public disenchantment with the draft and the unpopular war in Vietnam were factors in the decision, which concerned both the Army and many liberals. Left wing critics argued the military would become dominated by soldiers who were predominantly poor and/or black, and that the armed forces would lose the leavening influence of civilians.[45] The Army saw the end of the draft as political maneuvering at their expense, and felt that having the AVF "forced on them by the president precisely at the moment they were held in the lowest esteem by their country...[was] a bitter betrayal."[46] Officers commanded units often composed of under-trained, under-equipped, poorly motivated soldiers, yet they were still charged with defending the free world against a wide array of threats, especially from the Soviet Union. Many feared the AVF would fail to produce quality soldiers in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the armed services, and would create a force comprised mainly of the poor, those with limited education, and minorities who would enjoy little popular support among mainstream Americans.[47]

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War also ended in 1973, and for the first time the American Army returned home in defeat. The ensuing shock, dismay and bewilderment of Army officers is impossible to overstate, particularly since so many senior officers came of age during and after World War II, when the United States was

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[45]Baskir and Strauss, Chance and Circumstance, p. 237

[46]Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers, pp. 134, 145.

[47]Ibid., 134, 149.

clearly the predominant military power on the planet. That peasants in a distant, underdeveloped country could defeat such a nation and such an army was astonishing. Though America as a whole reeled from the Vietnam experience, the Army was left in a quivering shambles. As James Fallows wrote: "Whatever damage the war in Vietnam did to the self-confidence and certainty of the nation, it did that much, squared, to the professional soldier."[48]

The damage was noticeable at every level of command. In addition to his final report on the My Lai incident, Lieutenant General William R. Peers submitted a memorandum to General William Westmoreland, then Chief of Staff of the Army. Peers argued there were grave problems in the officer corps, that a climate existed where the honesty and integrity of many officers could not be counted upon.[49] Westmoreland was so concerned by the report that he ordered the Army War College to conduct a study of the professional attitudes and leadership capabilities of Army officers. Entitled the "Study on Military Professionalism," the report echoed much of what Peers had implied, blaming careerism and a host of other internal factors for the decline in officer integrity. Westmoreland classified the study, and it never reached a broad audience.[50] However, those general officers who did plumb the depths of the War College report could not

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[48]James Fallows, National Defense (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 120.

[49]See LTG William R. Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident" (2 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 14 March, 1970).

[50]See "Study on Military Professionalism" (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: United States Army War College Study for the Army Chief of Staff, 30 June 1970), Cinncinatus, Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era (New York: W W. Norton and Company, 1981), pp. 129-131, and Fallows, National Defense, pp. 120-121.

have been pleased with the continuing decline in what was, after all, supposed to be the finest army in the world.

The early 1970s also saw an increase in attacks in the press. "The Pentagon Papers" were first published in 1971, and over the next few years a series of articles and books attacking the corruption and demise of the officer corps were released, many written by current or former officers. Lieutenant Colonel Edward King's The Death of an Army, Colonel David H. Hackworth's article, "Soldier's Disgust," and Major Josiah Bunting's The Lionheads all appeared in 1972, making public the Army's agony.[51] Disgust with the Army's decline was so rampant by then that the criticism should have come as no surprise, yet career officers and the general public were shocked that high-ranking men would attack the Army with such vehemence.

In the same year, K. Bruce Galloway and Robert B. Johnson, Jr. published a blistering attack on West Point entitled West Point: America's Power Fraternity. They presented the work as an "attempt to cut away the fairy tales and present a critical look at one of the most powerful and oppressive institutions in the country, a 'school' that professes to train 'defenders of freedom' but instead hammers out an elitist group of automatons who are prisoners of their education and afraid of the very concept they are supposed to defend."[52] Galloway and Johnson argued that the Academy was a breeding ground for narrow-minded elitists who, because they rose to positions of power within

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[51]A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, Bunting became Superintendent of VMI and presided over the admission of women into that historically all-male military institution in 1997.

[52]K. Bruce Galloway and Robert Bowie Johnson, Jr. West Point: America's Power Fraternity (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 21.

the Army and the national government, were ultimately threats to America and responsible for the debacle in Vietnam. More examinations of the Academy followed, including School for Soldiers: West Point and the Profession of Arms in 1974, and a variety of other books and articles which, while avoiding the withering assaults of Galloway and Johnson, generally argued that West Point needed serious reform.

For those with a sense of history, these problems were hardly unique to the 1970s. Traditionally, the American people have held great disdain for the military, and except in times of dire emergency even for West Point. Calls to close the Military Academy were commonplace throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [53] Davy Crockett demanded that the Academy be shut down in 1830, arguing on the floor of Congress that West Point's curriculum was "effeminate and pedantic" and castigating the institution for "spawning a military aristocracy."[54] His concerns were echoed by Alden Partridge, President of Norwich University, who in 1841 called West Point a "public charity school," a "nursery of aristocracy...calculated to form military pedants and military dandies."[55] Beyond West Point, discipline and morale problems were often much worse in the Army during the battle for control of the Great Plains following the Civil War than during Vietnam, and even drug addiction and desertion were common during the 1860s

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[53]See Stephen E. Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), and Thomas Fleming, West Point: The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy (New York: William Morrow, 1969).

[54]George Pappas, "What if the Academy Had Been Abolished in 1830?," Assembly, May 1995, p. 12.

[55]John J. Lenney, Caste System in the American Army: A Study of the Corps of Engineers and Their West Point System (New York: Greenburg Publishers, 1949), p. 113.

and 70s.[56]

Yet few officers were willing or able to take the long view. Most matured in the post World War II era, when the military was generally held in high esteem, and only a handful understood the period had been a fluke. One who did was General William A. Knowlton, who succeeded Koster as superintendent in 1970. As he put it, "We've been living in a kind of aberrated period since World War II. We've been misled by the general high standing of the military in a society that's always been ambivalent about the military." Such historical ambivalence, he argued, was the norm, and accounted for the shock experienced by the generation which endured the Second World War when younger Americans found their enthusiasm for militarism and overseas entanglements waning during the 1960s. As he put it, "Our traditionally strong antimilitary elements have been so sublimated that the people who have come of age in this period, and who have not gone back and looked at history, thought this atmosphere of esteem was the norm in American history."[57] That fact, even for those who took time to read Knowlton's comments, was little comfort for those who loved the Army or for those who resisted the clamor to close or modify West Point. Every superintendent struggled to balance an enduring reverence for tradition with the vital need for the Academy to keep pace with an evolving society. But the challenge was monumental and not always clearly defined except in hindsight. Knowlton was eventually sued more often than any superintendent in

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[56]See Walton, The Tarnished Shield, and Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[57]Fleming, "West Point Cadets Now Say, 'Why, Sir?,'" p. 20.

the Academy's history, as more and more cadets turned to the courts to redress their grievances with the system. Upon his arrival at West Point in 1970 he was appalled by the mood of the officers on the Academy staff and faculty, of whom he said "There was a tendency to cry doom and gloom and to consider that West Point was in the approximate state of Rome when the vandals climbed the last contour line of the inner city."[58] Within four years Knowlton felt that pressure himself. It became so acute, he told Sidney Berry, who replaced him as superintendent in July 1974, that he felt like "the commander of a stockade surrounded by attacking Indians."[59] He might have been speaking for almost every officer in the Army.

The litany of disquieting news continued. In August of 1974, President Richard M. Nixon resigned in disgrace as the Watergate cover-up destroyed both his administration and the faith Americans once had in government. At West Point, more change came in 1975, when the number of mandatory drills for cadets was reduced by one third to allow more time for study. Many of the Academy's old grads, those who lived in a "gray haze" which brooked no allowance for change, were outraged.[60] And in April, just before graduation and the arrival of President Ford, North Vietnamese troops overran South Vietnam, capturing Saigon and validating the conviction in American minds that U.S. involvement had been a tragic, losing proposition.

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[58]Ellis and Moore, School for Soldiers, p. 281.

[59]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 396. Adding insult to injury, the West Point football team went 0-10 in 1973. It was the worst season in Academy history, punctuated by a 51-0 thrashing at the hands of the Naval Academy. For older graduates who remembered a time when Army played for the national championship the apocalypse seemed imminent. See Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, p. 292.

[60]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 403.

In May, after testifying before Congress and working behind the scenes to prevent the admission of women to the Academy, Sidney Berry learned that they were indeed coming to West Point. Their arrival would have been opposed at any point in the Academy's history, and resisted by cadets at any time. No single-gender institution becomes co-educational easily. No one expected a patriarchal, conservative, traditional institution to leap willingly into the vanguard of social change. Yet for the Academy, which embraced the warrior cult dominated for centuries by men, the news was especially difficult to accept. For 173 years, almost as long as the United States had existed, the United States Military Academy at West Point was *omnes viri* -- all male-- and no one knew what bringing women into the Corps of Cadets would do to morale, discipline, or the Spartan environment advocates maintained was so crucial to preparing cadets for battle. Why, the critics soon thundered, did women have to come to West Point?

The answer was that women eventually entered the Military Academy because Congress said they could. Their admission was part of a larger social revolution which sought to redefine the roles women, and ultimately men, could play in American culture. Outside West Point, beyond the stoic Hudson River and the gray, Gothic omnipresence of Academy buildings, the world had changed a great deal. By the early 1970s political forces intent on expanding opportunities for women were in full stride. Congress, ever sensitive to public opinion, answered the clarion call issued by a resurgent feminist

movement during the 1960s and passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1972.[61] Though the amendment was never ratified by enough states to become part of the Constitution, the high tide of 1972 convinced many Americans that even more radical advances were in store for women. During the ERA debate, and immediately after its passage, members of Congress even suggested women should be admitted to the various service academies, each of which had always barred them from admission.

Unlike so many other advances for women, the push to demolish the exclusive male hold on American service academies was not driven by mainstream feminist groups. They saw gender discrimination in the military as far less important than issues like equal pay and sexual harassment in the civilian workplace which affected the majority of women and were often divided as to whether military women were liberal-minded reformers attacking patriarchy or sell-outs to a male-dominated institution that practiced violence and too often exploited women. In philosophical terms, the question was whether emancipation and equal access were the same thing, and whether women pushing to gain access to all-male societal enclaves eventually risk imitating the groups they join. This subtle debate was never concluded among feminists. Rather than pushing for the academies to open their doors to women, most were therefore silent on the issue until debate began in Congress, and even then their support was limited. Instead, it was average Americans and their representatives who pushed for the admission of women to the service academies, not because it was seen in their eyes as a step towards placing

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[61] Randy Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming: Lesbians and Gays in the U.S. Military, Vietnam to the Persian Gulf (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 161.

women in combat, but simply because it seemed fair.

Although Senator Dennis Chavez [D - New Mexico] called for the creation of a "West Point for Women" in 1954, the chain of events leading toward Congressional legislation admitting women actually began in the early 1960s when Representative Robert B. Duncan [R - Oregon] nominated a woman to the Academy.[62] The nomination was rejected, and the issue remained moot until 1972, when New York Republican Senator Jacob K. Javits nominated a woman to the U.S. Naval Academy only a week after ERA passed Congress.[63] Javits also co-authored a resolution with Representative Jack H. McDonald [R - Michigan] calling for an end to gender discrimination at the service academies. Though the Senate passed the resolution, it quickly died in the House, and the matter did not come before Congress again until 1973, when Representative Pierre S. du Pont IV [R - Delaware] introduced the first bill mandating the admission of women. At the same time, California Representatives Jerome Waldie and Don Edwards, both Democrats, nominated women to the Air Force and Naval Academies and sued Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger on behalf of their nominees, moving the

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[62]"Senator Chavez Seeks Establishment of Women's Armed Services Academy." Army Navy Air Force Journal, February 26, 1955, p. 754. Stiehm, Bring Me Men and Women, p. 11.

[63]Applicants to each service academy required nomination before their application for admission could be screened. In the 1970s, West Point cadets could be nominated by the Vice President, members of Congress, Congressional Delegates from Washington D.C., the Virgin Islands, and Guam, the Governors of Puerto Rico, the Panama Canal Zone and America Samoa, or the Department of the Army, which could offer admission to enlisted members of the Regular Army, National Guard, or Reserve, children of Medal of Honor recipients, honor graduates of ROTC programs, children of career military personnel, and a small number of foreign students. Nominating officials were allowed to name ten candidates for each of their vacancies. See Major William G. Tobin, Memorandum for the Director of Military Personnel Management, "Admission Process for Women at USMA," August 29, 1975.

campaign into the courts.[64]

In December, the Senate passed by voice an amendment to the Armed Forces Enlisted Personnel Bonus Revision Act, which stipulated women would not be ineligible for admission to the academies based on gender. The amendment was co-sponsored by Senators Javits, William D. Hathaway [D - Maine], Mike Mansfield [D - Montana], Strom Thurmond [R - South Carolina], and John C. Stennis [D - Mississippi], who chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee. With strong support in the Senate the measure seemed certain to pass through Congress. Instead, it was dropped by the House Armed Services Committee in a narrow 18-16 vote. Representative Samuel Stratton [D - New York], who supported the admission of women, argued that the Senate amendment had very little to do with bonus pay and thus was hardly germane. It had to be considered separately, after hearings on the admission of women were held in the House that Summer.[65]

The hearings were held during May, June, and July of 1974, and saw the services close ranks to present a determined, unified front against advocates of co-education at the academies. The Secretaries of the Army, Air Force, and Navy each testified against the admission of women, as did each of the three academy superintendents. Department of Defense General Counsel Martin Hoffman joined them, along with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel, Lieutenant General Leo Benade, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Worth H. Bagley, Air Force Chief of Staff

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[64]Stiehm, Bring Me Men and Women, pp. 11-13.

[65]Ibid., p. 14.

General George Brown, Army Vice Chief of Staff General Fred Weyand, a West Point Cadet, and Jacqueline Cochran, who directed the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) during World War II.[66] The number of witnesses, to say nothing of their high rank and prestige, said volumes about the seriousness with which the military establishment viewed the idea of opening academy doors to women.

Cochran argued "a woman's primary function in life is to get married, maintain a home and raise a family," and that "...women are nuts if they want to go into combat." Men, she suggested, *had* to go into combat. When asked why, she responded, "Because they are men and we don't have to do it because we are women." Though Cochran's experience as a test pilot testified to the ability of women to perform military duty if called upon, she argued passionately that women had no business at any of the academies. Women might be called upon in time of emergency, she argued, but they should never serve in combat and never attend the military academies.[67]

Military witnesses were more subdued in tone, though still deeply passionate. Howard "Bo" Callaway, Secretary of the Army and a West Point Class of 1949 graduate, dominated the presentation. He spoke against the admission of women to all the service academies in general, and protested their possible inclusion in the Corps of Cadets in

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[66]Cochran was an extraordinarily experienced pilot who logged more than 15,000 hours in flight, directed the training of women pilots during the war, flew experimental planes as a test pilot, and ferried virtually every type of American military aircraft between U.S. bases and England. Her life seemed to validate the claims of those who advocated a larger role for women in the military, yet she maintained a steadfast opposition to expanded opportunities for women in the armed forces, and especially women in combat, as long as she lived.

[67]U.S. Congress, House, Statement of Miss Jacqueline Cochran, "Hearings on H.R. 9832, et al. before Subcommittee No. 2 of the House Committee on Armed Services," 93rd Congress, 2nd session, 1974, pp. 254-264.

particular. Along with Generals Knowlton and Weyand, he argued that the presence of women would dilute the "Spartan atmosphere" of the Academy, lowering standards and dulling the combat-oriented training that made West Point so vital. The Army could hardly be accused of sexism, he continued, because women were eligible to become officers through OCS and ROTC programs, where the majority of Army officers received their commissions. The implication was that women posed no threat to ROTC or OCS training, and it was fine to allow women those forms of commissioning because they were inferior to the Academy. This sort of elitism was prevalent among many West Point graduates, some of whom genuinely considered themselves superior to officers who never attended West Point. As Ward Just wrote, "The Army is as hierarchical as the church and as class-conscious and snobbish as Great Britain, West Point its Eton and the Army War College its Oxford."[68]

Callaway argued that the minority of officers from West Point were vital because they received four years of total immersion in a military environment, advanced combat training, and after graduation were far more likely to enter one of the Army's combat arms than an ROTC or OCS graduate. He feared creating "two West Points," one for men who would enter combat units and one for women who could never serve in the front lines.[69] In the long run, Callaway's arguments remained the bedrock of opposition to the role of women at West Point well into the 1990s. Many West Pointers argued there *had*

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[68]David H. Hackworth and Julie Sherman, About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior, with an Introduction by Ward Just (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 14.

[69]Statement of Howard H. Callaway, Secretary of the Army, "Hearings on H.R. 9832," pp. 160-165. The debate continues within the military to this day, though it takes place privately because most personnel fear criticism of national policy regarding women in the armed forces will place their careers in peril

to be a place where professional soldiers learned the tools of their vocation in a demanding, unforgiving environment which cultivated the talents of those few who might one day lead the nation's armies in a time of crisis. They argued that West Pointers dominated senior leadership positions in every major American conflict since at least the Civil War, proving a hard core of dedicated career officers were invaluable even if their absolute numbers were relatively small. In short, they passionately insisted that in wartime experience and training mattered, and for Army leaders the best of both were gained at West Point.[70]

The combat-oriented mission of the Academy was merely implied, rather than directly stated, however, and critics had long argued that since many Academy graduates entered non-combat oriented branches of the Army there was no reason to keep women from competing for admission to the finest school in the service. This, said Callaway, was not the point. Law students might not practice law and medical students might not practice medicine, he pointed out, but that didn't mean there was no need for special schools to produce lawyers and doctors. West Point was a specialized school, he continued, and its graduates formed a core of highly trained officers to which the rest of the Army looked for leadership, especially in times of crisis. He closed by alluding to the accomplishments of generations of West Point graduates and inserted into the record

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[70]West Pointers have served in senior command positions in every major American war since 1861. A short list of the most famous would include Ulysses Grant, Robert E. Lee (Civil War), John J. Pershing (World War I), Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, Omar Bradley, and George S. Patton (World War II), Matthew B. Ridgway (Korean War), William Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams (Vietnam), and Norman Schwarzkopf (Desert Storm). Critics argue such lists say as much about the "old boy" network among West Pointers as they do about the fighting prowess of Academy graduates.

Douglas MacArthur's stirring 1962 speech entitled "Duty, Honor, Country."[71]

Proponents of the legislation included seven members of the House, representatives of several women's groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Army Lieutenant Colonel Grace King, who appeared as an individual rather than a military witness. Rooted in experience as an Army officer, King's testimony was the most powerful and concise. She argued the main issue was whether women would have the same freedom of choice as men within the military and whether the nation could afford to ignore a "pool of talent and intelligence more critically needed than ever." Since ROTC and OCS courses admitted women, she suggested the Army's position was that those programs were "good enough for women, but not good enough for men." King also pointed out that West Pointers had an advantage in competing for promotions. Thirty-nine percent of recently promoted brigadier generals were Academy grads, she noted, though only nine percent of all Army officers attended West Point. Those figures indicated women suffered serious professional disadvantages, according to King, because they could only compete for the restricted number of non-combat officer slots within the Army.[72]

The most vocal supporter was Representative Stratton, who blasted military objections and suggested no real argument existed for keeping women out of America's service academies. "...I do not regard the official Department of Defense report on our

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[71]Callaway, "Hearings on H.R. 9832," pp. 160-165.

[72]Statement of LTC Grace M. King, U.S. Army Reserve, "Hearings on H.R. 9832," pp. 226-237. The problem endures even in the 1990s, for officers without combat experience are second class citizens in the Army.

bill...as a serious document or even as worthy of what should regularly and predictably be the intellectual level of the Department of Defense," he said. "They have no official arguments, only excuses."[73] Stratton went on to argue that the bulk of opposition to women in the service academies stemmed from "inertia and resistance to change." He pointed out that 162 graduates of the West Point class of 1973 were commissioned into non-combat branches of the Army, and suggested "...the services need qualified women today more than the women need the service academies." For him, the combat-oriented mission of West Point was a smokescreen, as were arguments related to morale, cost, spartan living conditions, and Academy discipline, which he called "Mickey Mouse." "These are the sophomoric, Neanderthal traditional practices that still apply at West Point...," he said, and "...there is no excuse for these practices in the military academies anyway."[74]

The hearings settled nothing, though they allowed all parties involved to air their points of view. No report was issued and no further Congressional action took place until Stratton outflanked the military with a bit of legislative forced-marching in the Spring of 1975. In the past, chairmen of the Military Personnel Subcommittee had kept legislation aimed at opening the service academies to women pinned down within the committee. Stratton bypassed the committee quagmire by amending a military appropriations bill and bringing the issue to the floor of the House of Representatives. This amendment called for the academies to admit women in 1976, and passed 303-96 after a short

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[73]Statement of Samuel S. Stratton, Representative from New York, "Hearings on H.R. 9832, p. 35.

[74]Ibid., pp. 36-39.

debate.[75] Congress seemed intent on breaking down the gender walls at America's service academies, including West Point.

Ironically, few members of Congress saw the impending change as revolutionary. For most it was simply a question of equity, of extending another excellent educational opportunity to women for a career that through ROTC and OCS was already approved by each of the armed services.[76] They did not see the move as a step towards a greater sharing of power over state-sanctioned violence between men and women, and they failed to appreciate how in the long run the issue of women in combat might one day be finessed by the presence of women at the service academies. What actually was being debated was large indeed, involving as it did the question of what kind of society was best for both the military and the nation, and how much opportunity should or should not be tied to gender. These issues, however, were too controversial and abstract for most politicians. It was easier to focus on equity on a small scale, to take whatever political and social gain was possible from supporting the opening of the academies to women and move onward, and over the long run that is what they did.

For Sidney Berry, all this legislative maneuver and counter-maneuver, all the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of having women at West Point, and all the soul-searching of the last decade over the course the Army and America were taking was

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[75]Stiehm, Bring Me Men and Women, pp. 36-37. The courts were also closing in. The Waldie and Edwards case was defeated in U.S. District Court, but that decision was reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals and remanded for a full trial on its merits in November 1974. Given the tenor of the times, and the questionable constitutionality of the academy positions, the courts might have forced open academy doors by 1976. When Congress opened them in 1975, the case became moot.

[76]Ibid., p. 2.

a moot point. Like other senior officers in the Army he viewed changes at West Point in much the same way as Edmund Burke spoke of dramatic restructuring of government. It should be undertaken, he wrote, only with "pious awe and trembling solicitude."[77] Berry had taken that message to Congress and the president and had come up short. Now the president had spoken, and women were on their way.

So after seeing the president off, Berry walked slowly towards his home in Quarters 100 at the edge of the Plain. Completed in 1820, the Superintendent's official residence was the second oldest building on the post, and home to a pantheon of American heroes that included Robert E. Lee and Douglas MacArthur. All around him the routine of Academy life smoothly continued, and Berry paused to take in once again what Geoffrey Perret described as the "severe beauty" of West Point, "redolent of order, discipline, and purpose."[78]

As he turned to ascend the steps leading into the house Berry contemplated the future of the Academy. So much had happened already. So much had been endured. Ironically, the greatest change of all was yet to come. There would be much to do, much to consider, and much to explain to cadets, faculty, staff, and graduates. The last group would be the most difficult to win over, and he knew what they would say; *"The Corps Has..."*. The phrase was part of Academy lore, uttered by alumni each time a hallowed tradition, significant or otherwise, changed at West Point. The unspoken remainder of

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[77]Edmund Burke, "Reflections on the French Revolution," in Western Political Heritage, ed. William Elliott and Neil McDonald (New York: Prentice Hall, 1955), p. 684.

[78]Geoffrey Perret, Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 584.

the sentence was "*...gone to hell.*" and grads usually muttered the saying to each other with sly smiles, recognizing that they idolized an Academy which existed only in the hallowed memories of their youth. West Point had to evolve and most knew that, though they could argue with utter conviction and furious resolve about how *much* should be altered, or how fast. When profound change came it was too much for some to bear. They snarled "*The Corps Has...,*" reproached the unthinking, uncaring, ignorant civilian powers of the land with a vengeance, and yearned for a time when America and West Point were more pure. "*Reduced drill? No mandatory chapel? No bracing?,*" they would say. "*The Corps Has...*" "*Women at West Point?,*" they would grimace. "*THE CORPS HAS...*"

Sooner or later every significant social ill, every noticeable trend, every current of dissent or cultural change appeared at West Point, for like the Army it was but a reflection of the society from which cadets and soldiers sprang. Though the Academy cultivated an aura of unwavering dedication to timeless principles, the myth of an institution which never changed was shattered in the handful of years preceding President Ford's arrival at West Point. It was a weak myth, to be sure, shattered time and again throughout American history, but one the Academy faithful too easily believed and too quickly reconsecrated. Like the Army, the Academy was shaken by an unpopular war, sweeping social evolution, and a populace which rediscovered its historic antipathy for the military. Even for an American icon founded in 1802, one which weathered the Civil

War and two world wars in less than a century, the experience was searing.[79]

[79]Founded in 1802, West Point is the oldest of the American service academies. The Naval Academy dates to 1845, the Coast Guard Academy to 1876, and the Air Force Academy to 1954. See John Lovell, Neither Athens Nor Sparta? The American Service Academies in Transition (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 312.

Chapter Two: "A Measure of Our Maturity"

> To one who knows nothing of its practical benefits, military training for a girl sounds like a huge joke...But one who has experienced the advantages of this training has a very different story to tell...
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> -Cadet Elsie F. Fay, Fairfield Seminary and Military College, 1896[1]

In the wake of President Ford's visit West Point sprang into action with the determination of an army preparing for invasion, for against their will and despite their warnings, Academy leaders were being forced to address a social experiment without precedent in American history. Legions of captains, majors, and colonels on the Academy staff began preparing action plans, conducting studies, and fanning out all over the country to find out exactly what women could and could not do, and how the regular Army was faring as it also dealt with increasing the number of women on active duty. Yet they were not the first to tackle the problem. Planners quietly began determining the changes required to admit women almost three years prior to Ford's visit, and by 1975 the Academy's planning was already well advanced. Conceived during the American Revolution and created during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, the Academy had been run for one hundred and seventy-three years exclusively by and for men. Now West Point knew the change so many had dreaded was more than merely civilian threat or nightmare. It was actually going to happen, almost two hundred years to the day after America declared itself free from Great Britain by issuing a Declaration of Independence which proclaimed that "all men are created equal." By 1976, Congress wanted that spirit

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[1]Susan Finlay Watkins, "It is No Longer a Matter of Comment to See A Body of Young Ladies Under Military Training," Assembly 39, No 1 (June 1980): p. 6.

of equality to envelop West Point too.

Those with a sense of history may have known the "warrior society"[2] at West Point was hardly a stranger to women. One of the first members of the Corps of Invalids, which the Continental Congress established in 1777 to provide for wounded veterans still capable of limited duty, was Margaret Corbin. Struck by British grapeshot in 1776 while fighting alongside her mortally-wounded husband in defense of Fort Washington, Corbin joined the Invalid Corps at West Point and remained there for years. She drew a pension from Congress, could swill grog and curse better than most men, and remained a coarse figure in the nearby town of Buttermilk Falls until her death.[3] Briefly joining Corbin at West Point was Deborah Sampson, who left a life of teaching and farming to join the Continental Army in 1782. Sampson cropped her hair, donned male clothing, and served in the West Point garrison. Fighting Tories below the Highlands, she was wounded twice, receiving a saber slash to the head and a musket ball in one thigh. As a West Point graduate turned historian put it, "One gets the impression that she was a better 'man' than most of the recruits reporting to Washington's army in the twilight years of the War of Independence."[4]

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[2]John Keegan, Fields of Battle: The Wars for North America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p. 147.

[3]Dave Richard Palmer, The River and the Rock: The History of Fortress West Point, 1775-1783 (West Point: Association of Graduates, in association with Hippocrene Books, 1991), p. 308. The Corps of Invalids also tutored young officer candidates for military service, just as the Academy would after 1802. Buttermilk Falls is today known as Highland Falls. Corbin's remains were moved to the West Point cemetery in 1926.

[4]Ibid., p. 342. The abysmal quality of recruits in 1782 led Lieutenant Colonel Ebenezer Huntington to claim women were more spirited than his men. He suggested hiring several to recruit other women to fight for the Continental Army, arguing they would help recruit better men as well.

During the middle of the nineteenth century, Anna and Susan Warner became an established part of Academy life by offering Sunday school classes, Bible instruction, and music recitals in their home on Constitution Island, just across the Hudson from West Point. Since the Academy was isolated from the outside world, and because the Warner sisters were charming hosts, cadets competed for the coveted opportunity to row over and visit the women on Sundays. Susan achieved global fame as the author of Wide Wide World, a sentimental melodrama revolving around Ellen Montgomery, who survives a series of emotional challenges en route to conquering her passions and her will.[5] The book sold more copies during the period than any book in the United States except Uncle Tom's Cabin. Anna achieved her own fame by writing a number of famous hymns, including "Jesus Loves Me." The Warners developed a tremendous loyalty to West Point, choosing to give both Constitution Island and their prized Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington to the Academy when they died.[6]

At the turn of the century cadet editors of The Howitzer, the Academy yearbook, added their own contribution to the history of women at West Point. In a drawing labeled "The Cadet Adjutant Class of 2000," they portrayed a young woman dressed in cadet gray, complete with tarbucket hat, dress sword, and tails. The artist drew her in a very dignified, military pose, with collar-length hair that was both uncommon among women

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[5]First published in 1852, Wide Wide World followed a fairly conventional yet enormously popular 19th century plot. Women who repressed their natural desires and immersed themselves in marriage and service to others were portrayed as the most noble embodiment of humanity, and Wide Wide World is such an archetype for the period that Jane Tompkins called it the "Ur text of the nineteenth century."

[6]Jane Green, Powder, Paper and Lace: An Anecdotal Herstory of Women at West Point (Charlottesville, Virginia: Priority Press, 1988), pp. 1-4. Stuart's portrait was used in the design of the one dollar bill.

of this era and an uncanny prediction of the length allowed the first women to attend the Academy in 1976. Rather than comical or traditionally feminine, the woman's uniform is identical to that worn by men with the exception of a knee-length skirt disarmingly short by standards of the time, women's shoes with heels, and spats. No comment accompanies the portrait, though it takes little imagination to picture young cadets in 1900 contemplating the great changes the twentieth century would bring, reflecting on changes in the Corps during the previous ninety-eight years of Academy life, and concluding amid guffaws and general laughter that by the year 2000 West Point would change so much it would admit women. They were more prescient than they could ever know, and only twenty-four years off the mark.[7]

Charles Dana Gibson added his own contribution to the images of West Point women in 1909. Internationally famous for his drawings of elegantly beautiful women (whose distinctively recognizable features garnered them the name "Gibson Girls"), Gibson was also a subtle critic of the limited roles women were allowed to play in turn-of-the-century America. Though he often drew men and women in romantic and luxurious surroundings for romance novels, he also portrayed women playing football, serving in the military, and acting as ministers. These roles were unheard of for women in the early twentieth century, as was the notion that one day women might attend West Point. Gibson alluded to what seemed a farcical possibility when he painted a portrait entitled "A Woman as West Point Cadet" for the cover of an Army-Navy football game program in 1909. Rather than portray her as cheerleader or debutante, Gibson put her in

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[7]The Howitzer: Annual of the United States Military Academy, 1900, p. 18.

cadet gray, a subtle if unintended harbinger of things to come.

In an article published fifty-three years later, Colonel Elvin R. Heiberg joined the cadets of 1900 in predicting the Academy would admit women by the year 2000, though the USMA Professor of Mechanics was more openly tongue-in-cheek than his predecessors. Women at West Point, he suggested, would officially be called "Codettes" and live in separate barracks on Constitution Island, well-removed from the men of the Corps. A graduate in the class of 1926, Heiberg saw an Academy where women would gain admission after passing "rigid screen tests administered by a panel of Broadway talent scouts who perform this task as a public service." Women cadets could join a glee club known as "The Gray Canaries," or try out for their own gymnastic team, "The Black Knighties." Unofficially known as "Dolls," they would dress in gray berets and skirts, handle "all cheerleading and mule-riding chores," provide "Rockettes" who performed at half-time of Army football games, and dance partners on a roster basis for male members of the Corps. Though Heiberg noted the introduction of women "added immeasurably to the esprit of the whole garrison" and "the after-Taps rallies are overwhelming successes," there were some problems. The Academy, for instance, found it necessary to "disband the Sailing Club, and to make all canoes and other boats 'off limits' to cadets."[8]

Beyond futuristic predictions, other women played their part in cadet life and legends. Athena, the Greek goddess of war and wisdom, held a coveted place among

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[8]Elvin R. Heiberg, "West Point in the Year 2000," Assembly, Winter 1964, pp. 11-12. A feminist student of literature would have a field day with Heiberg's article. Though he clearly intended his remarks to be humorous, they say a great deal about traditional stereotypes of women in the 1960s. The references to "mule-riding" and "Black Knighties" stem from the Army mascot, a mule, and the name of Army sports teams, the Black Knights.

women residing at the Academy, and her helmet formed a portion of the West Point coat of arms.[9] Joan of Arc appeared in a magnificent mural in Washington Hall, towering above generation after generation of cadets as they took their meals. And in perhaps the most colorful yet less well-known legend of the Corps, world-famous ballerina Fanny Elssler was said to have danced the Cracovienne by moonlight for a party of cadets at their Summer encampment in 1840.[10]

Unlike the women of legends and myths, the wives and daughters of the faculty, staff, and garrison actually lived on post from the beginning, adding color to the often repetitious, dull routine of Academy life. They were not the most important women in cadet lives; that distinction usually belonged to girlfriends back home or young women brought in from schools around New York for regular cadet hops during the academic year. Vassar, Wellesley, and nearby Ladycliffe College students joined women from other schools and even working-class girls from New York City to vie for cadet attention. They could dance in Cullum Hall with uniformed "knights" in white gloves, take moonlit walks along the Hudson, or simply indulge romantic fantasy in a storybook setting with young men touted as "gentlemen." Women were as integral a part of cadet lore as Academy trivia, and tales of conquest as necessary for a young cadet seeking the acceptance of his brothers-in-arms as performing well on obstacle courses, strategy and

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[9]The original Academy coat of arms was designed by USMA professors in 1898, and included an emblem comprised of the helmet of Pallas Athena over a Greek sword..

[10]Kenneth Rapp, "The Legend of Fanny Elssler's Pirouette by Moonlight," Dance Magazine, July 1975, pp. 41-42. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Summer training for cadets involved bivouacking near the Plain. This "Summer encampment" was known for relaxed training schedules and an assortment of cadet balls and social activities. Of dubious military value, it was eagerly anticipated by most members of the Corps.

tactics classes, or marksmanship. The greater the risk with women, the more glorious the triumph, and virtually every cadet knew or at least heard of someone who sneaked a woman on post, into the barracks, or even into formation dressed as a member of the Corps of Cadets.[11] Pregnant girlfriends were hardly uncommon, though the Academy tried to cover up evidence of cadet parenthood whenever possible. Cadets were, after all, supposed to be gentlemen, and because they were forbidden to marry while members of the Corps any questions related to paternity carried with them the threat of expulsion. Year after year the number of marriages immediately following graduation was a legend rooted in fact. Not all the weddings were tied to pregnancy of course, but onlookers joked every May that many of the children in the crowds assembled to watch graduation parades came to see their daddies.[12]

Yet none of these women, important though they were to the Academy and to the lives of individual cadets, were full-fledged members of the Long Gray Line. The distinction was enormously important. Women were fought over, they were pursued, and their presence on Academy grounds was a cause for celebration and excitement, but they were *not* part of "what may well be regarded as the most significant of the world's officer-training institutions."[13] In fact, no institution dedicated to training professional

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[11]See Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 45, for a typical story of a young woman who dressed as a member of the Corps and attended formation. Such antics required the cooperation, or at least the indulgence of cadets beyond the intrepid soul who conned his girlfriend into dressing as a cadet in the first place. They usually occurred in cadet companies which had a reputation for being less stringent in their enforcement of regulations.

[12]IWA, 4-2-96, author's notes.

[13]John Keegan, The Mask of Command (London: Jonathan Cape: 1987), p. 177

military officers anywhere in the world admitted women, and the challenge facing Lieutenant General Sidney Berry and his staff was to find a way to make gender integration work with no precedent to guide them.[14]

They began by referring to studies already completed by the Academy. Hardly immune to the growing demand for gender equality in American society, West Pointers began seriously contemplating what impact the admission of women might have on the Academy as early as the late 1960s. When the Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress in 1972 it seemed destined for quick ratification, and many officers feared that a strict interpretation would require the Army to open the Academy to both sexes and drop the restrictions that kept women out of front-line combat units.[15] Joined by the Department of the Army and the Department of Defense, West Point strongly opposed any such changes. Lieutenant General William Knowlton, who served as Superintendent during the early 1970s, summed up the Academy's position before Congress in 1974. He argued admitting women would "seriously detract from the Academy's mission" which "was to

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[14]Ironically, West Point women were not the first to be recruited to a military school which stressed discipline and academics. Among the first in the United States were the women who attended Fairfield Seminary and Military College in the 1890s. Located in Fairfield, New York, the school modeled itself after West Point and served as a preparatory school for both sexes. See Watkins, "It is No Longer a Matter of Comment...," pp. 6-7.

[15]The shadow cast by the passage of ERA cannot be over-estimated. In his final report to Congress in 1973, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said, "Because of the impending ratification of the Constitutional Amendment concerning women, I believe that necessary funds should be promptly provided by Congress for facilities at the Service Academies so that qualified women can be enrolled." See Final Report to the Congress of Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird Before the House Armed Services Committee, January 8, 1973, p. 74.

provide the nucleus for the Regular Army's combat officers."[16] Although this argument formed the foundation of military antagonism toward opening all of the service academies to women, there were others as well.[17] Some argued that women would drop out at higher rates; others that an Academy education was too expensive to provide to a future officer barred from duty in combat units; and still others that women would ruin the esprit de corps of the academies.[18] The bedrock issue, however, was combat.

At West Point it was an argument suggested at least as early as 1972. In a hand-written memo regarding women at the Academy, the Deputy Commandant of Cadets wrote: "...my feeling is that we should come out with an 'over my dead body' approach to girls at West Point. The more we act like we can do it," he said, " the more likely we are to be told to do it. I believe we should hang our hat on 'this society is not prepared to accept women as combat leaders yet.'"[19] The admission of women was very much on the minds of the senior officers at West Point, who ordered contingency

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[16]Quoted in Major Alan G. Vitters and Dr. Nora Scott Kinzer, Report of the Admission of Women to the U.S. Military Academy (Project Athena I) (West Point: United States Military Academy Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, September 2, 1977), pp. 5-6.

[17]The rationale was based both on tradition and possible legal defense. As Secretary of the Army Howard H. Callaway noted, "My lawyers continue to stress our best argument in court or in Congress is the combat orientation of the Academy." See Howard H. Callaway, Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of Defense, "Service Academies' Admission Policies," January 12, 1974, USMA files.

[18]The cost of a West Point education was widely disputed. The Government Accounting Office estimated the cost of educating each cadet in the Class of 1975 at $101,654, while the Academy reported per cadet costs as $89,976. See MAJ Tobin, Information Paper, "Cost to Graduate Cadet," September 2, 1975, USMA files. Whatever the real costs, they were considerable, and historically have fueled critics who argue the Academy is too expensive to justify.

[19]COL Burke W. Lee to BG Philip R. Feir, December 18, 1972, USMA files. See also LTC Cline, "Women at USMA: Position Paper," January 27, 1975, and BG R.D. Stevenson, "Admission of Women to USMA," December 30, 1974, also in USMA files.

planning for integrating women into the Academy begun the same year.[20] While these plans were initially formulated to provoke thoughtful planning and long-range considerations of what gender-integration might mean at West Point, they no doubt were also contemplated in a spirit of damage control akin to that expressed by the Army Chief of Staff for Personnel when considering expanding the roles played by women in the Army prior to World War II. "The purpose of this study," he wrote in 1941, " is to permit the organization of a women's force along the lines which meet with War Department approval, so that when it is forced upon us, as it undoubtedly will be, we shall be able to run it our way."[21]

In Annapolis and Colorado Springs, the Naval and Air Force academies were operating in the shadow of ERA as well, and moving forward with studies of their own. A 1972 West Point memo on the subject indicated the depth of their preparations, stating: "The position of the Navy is that they will admit women when the Equal Rights Amendment is ratified. The position of the Air Force remains that they are developing contingency plans for entrance in the Summer of 75."[22] Passage of the ERA thus pushed all the academies into motion, and despite their public protests they were quietly preparing for the admission of women. These preparations were directed by senior officers in the Pentagon. As one officer concluded in September, 1972, "There is definite

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[20]See Commandant of Cadets, "Contingency Planning for the Admission of Female Nominees to the Corps of Cadets, September 27, 1972," USMA files.

[21]Cited in Major General Jeanne Holm (Ret), Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1989; revised ed., 1992), p. 22.

[22]LTC Kermit N. Henninger, Memorandum for Record, untitled, September 8, 1972, p.1, USMA files.

high level interest in the plans."[23]

Within the Army, specific preparations began that very month, when USMA staffers developed initial contingency plans to admit between twenty and fifty women at West Point. Their studies were conducted "in response to recent DCSPER (Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel) guidance..." from the Department of the Army, and scheduled for completion in December.[24] Alhough an indication the Army was prepared to investigate contingency plans, these early studies should be kept in perspective. They were short studies designed primarily to present alternatives in a worst-case scenario where women were actually thrust upon West Point, not detailed plans which seriously considered the arrival of women on the banks of the Hudson. In a way the Army was going through the motions, doing what was necessary to be ready on paper while harboring a faith that somehow the nightmare would never really come to pass.

In January 1973, the Army ordered further study of the entrance of women into the Academy,[25] and by Spring West Point developed a formal operations plan for their admission known as "OPLAN-73."[26] Formulated on the assumption that West Point would have twenty months to prepare for the arrival of women cadets, planners pushed

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[23]LTC Henninger, untitled Memorandum dated September 8, 1972, p 2, USMA files.

[24]BG T.H. Tackaberry, Memorandum for Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, "Contingency Plan for Women at the Military Academy," September 18, 1972, USMA files.

[25]See LTG Bernard W. Rogers, Memorandum for All ODCSPER Directors, "Utilization of Women in the Army," January 18, 1973, p. 2, USMA files.

[26]See Headquarters, United States Military Academy, "USMA OPLAN-73-1 Admission of Female Cadets," January 2, 1973, USMA files. The plan was clearly an outline. Officials did not want to spend too much time or too many resources on an issue that might go away, and they feared bringing women cadets on themselves if word escaped they were actually planning how to accommodate them. OPLAN-73-1 was classified "For Official Use Only," and only 100 copies were produced.

for an initial entry group of between thirty and fifty women. They feared a single woman, or even a small group, "will receive publicity and attention far beyond that desired for their appropriate or expected development as individuals as members of a cadet class." The attention would "further segregate the female cadets from their male classmates...could destroy the group's involvement with their class, and ultimately affect their development of class unity and spirit..."[27]

Discussion continued at the Academy over the next year, and in November 1974 Colonel Gerald W. Medsger submitted a memorandum for the Superintendent entitled "Four Issues Implied by the Admission of Women to USMA." In a wide-ranging essay, Medsger, who served as the Director of Institutional Research, argued that the Academy would ultimately be "ordered to admit women for the sake of equal opportunity," and "that the course of integrating females can go well or badly depending upon how it is handled." He suggested that the Academy "take a fresh look at its mission" in the light of issues raised by the possible inclusion of women in the Corps of Cadets. Those issues included the traits "most desired in female cadets," the question of how to manage publicity, the implications of "lower or different standards," how many women would be admitted, and how their "special needs would be cared for." Medsger called for further research by the Academy, pushed for strict equality in training whenever possible, and noted women would "face special problems not faced by males because of the stress of

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[27]MAJ Turner D. Griffin, Memorandum for Chief of Staff, March 23, 1973, USMA files. Given the experience of the small number of women admitted to The Citadel in 1996, Griffin appears to have been clairvoyant. He also accurately predicted the problems press coverage would cause the first women cadets at West Point between 1976 and 1980.

being integrators, and because of their unique physiology."[28] He also suggested that if "the nation needs female soldiers who are temporarily more aggressive, the girls could be administered small doses of testosterone to make them 'biologically' equal to males in the potential for aggressiveness." This remark, in the midst of an otherwise well-argued and researched essay, indicates the related fear many officers had that women were simply not aggressive enough for combat training or duty. It was never given serious consideration by the Academy, though it says volumes about the uncertainty confronting many officers as they pondered the myriad issues raised by the notion of ending male dominance at West Point.[29]

The essay was critically reviewed by a member of the Commandant's staff, Lieutenant Colonel John J. Cook, Jr. He echoed the position that women should not be admitted because "USMA has the specialized mission of producing leaders who are prepared for leadership in ground combat," and "Unless we can continue to accomplish this mission better than less expensive preparatory institutions, the justification for Academy existence will disappear."[30] He also suggested the Academy forego extensive

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[28]COL Gerald W. Medsger, Memorandum for the Superintendent, "Four Issues Implied by the Admission of Women to USMA," November 20, 1974, USMA files. Medsger referred often to research conducted by various police departments in the United States. Many were integrating women more fully during the 1970s, and faced similar questions regarding acceptance patterns by men in traditionally male environments, weapons training, and hand to hand combat.

[29]COL Medsger, "Four Issues," p. 5, USMA files. An officer reviewing the remark noted, "The proposal to administer testosterone to female cadets in order to increase their aggressiveness is absurd. By extension of the same logic, the football team could gulp uppers before a game, the Corps tranquilized by downers to achieve orderly rallies, and the Dean authorized to issue No-Doz to cadets who have difficulty staying awake in class." See LTC John J. Cook, Jr. to DCSOPS, "Memorandum Concerning Female Admissions," December 17, 1974, USMA files, p. 4.

[30]LTC Cook, "Memorandum Concerning Female Admissions," p. 1. It is an insightful comment, for generations of critics have pointed out an Academy education is far more expensive to the Federal

studies, because "too detailed and too complete a plan could take on a self-fulfilling character." He reiterated the importance of demanding physical training and a single-track system for cadets if women were admitted, noting that "The implications for military training are that women would be carefully managed and that certain positions and tasks, obviously beyond their capabilities, would not be assigned." Rather than special treatment, Cook explained how this meeting of abilities and responsibilities was actually what occurred when men entered the Army as well. "One should not consider this to be exceptional treatment. The same consideration is currently afforded all male soldiers in all stages of training and particularly in the MOS-selection process."[31] Finally, Cook called for women to be given combat training alongside men. Whether they eventually became involved in a combat situation, he suggested the aim of every Army officer was to support soldiers at the front. Officers had to be able to empathize with infantry soldiers and appreciate their "unique difficulties...An officer who has never been miserable, who has never been challenged by a tough and demanding training program...is shortchanging the soldier he supports."[32]

Government than ROTC programs or OCS. Further, over the last twenty years the domination of the Army's upper echelons by West Pointers has decreased dramatically, leaving some to conclude other sources of officer commissioning are better bargains for the money.

[31]Ibid., p. 2. "MOS" stands for military occupational speciality; in civilian terms it describes a soldier's job. The remark is telling, for the most persistent complaint among male cadets and some officers after women were admitted was that differing physical standards for men and women were unfair.

[32]Ibid., p. 3. See also COL Manley E. Rogers, "Memorandum Concerning Female Admissions," December 18, 1974, USMA files. Rogers argued "USMA should not continue to assume a 'head in the sand posture..," because "It does appear that women will ultimately be allowed to enter one or more of the service academies." He also suggested the example of Tufts University represented "a starting point from which to plan the future integration of women into the West Point community." At Tufts, women enrolled in an independent college within the co-educational university.

By the Spring of 1975, even before Gerald Ford's visit, there were those within West Point who watched with considerable alarm the growing political momentum gathering in Congress. They knew the Academy might soon lose the fight to prevent the admission of women cadets, but they hoped that resistance among senior Army leaders and civilians in the Department of Defense would prevent such a calamity. Even Lieutenant General Berry put his faith in the confidence of officials in Washington, who said privately that Congress was not really serious about sending women to the Academy. As he later wrote, "Right down to the day in May 1975 that Congressman Stratton took the issue to the floor of the House of Representatives, the senior people in Washington seemed confident that Congress would maintain the service academies as male institutions."[33] The contingency plans existed, he said later, "but nobody thought we would ever have to use them..."[34]

When the decisive House vote came on May 20, 1975, Academy officials were thus taken by surprise, but they dutifully and swiftly removed the dust from their contingency plans and prepared for the arrival of women cadets. In a memorandum dated the following day, May 21, 1975, the Academy Chief of Staff delivered "planning guidance for the admission of female cadets to the Military Academy." Under a heading labeled "Assumptions," Colonel James H. Tormey suggested that women would be admitted on a "deliberate" as opposed to a "crash" basis. They would be admitted,

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[33]LTG Berry to COL E.H.B., July 3, 1975, p. 1, USMA files.

[34]"Address by Lieutenant General Sidney B. Berry, Superintendent, United States Military Academy, Before the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services," November 16, 1976, p. 6, USMA files.

educated, and trained in the same manner as men, though it was "anticipated that there will be some deviations to avoid an unreasonable demand upon female cadets." Tormey concluded his list of assumptions by suggesting "there will be 30 female cadets entering with the Class of 1980" and by detailing planning responsibility to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS), who was to have a detailed draft OPLAN submitted by June 20, 1975.[35] Tormey would not have acted without the Superintendent's orders, indicating Berry was moving forward with specific plans even before his memorable conversation with the president on June 4. After the House vote, everyone at West Point realized the political battle was probably over.

Ironically, on May 20, the very day of the momentous House vote and a day *before* Tormey's memorandum was distributed, Berry had issued a memorandum for the record entitled, "Thoughts on the Admission of Women to the United States Military Academy." Encapsulating the major arguments against admitting women as cadets, Berry reiterated the primacy of land combat to the Army's mission, and pointed out that "no modern country in the world...as a matter of policy permits its women to participate in ground combat." He argued that Academy training was "austere" and "disciplined," to say nothing of physically demanding. Male cadets were able to follow a "single track" in training, generating a "shared common experience" that provided cadets with "a unity, cohesiveness, spirit and military ethos that has been the essence of West Point for 173 years." The Superintendent called for studies to examine the effects women might have

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[35]COL James H. Tormey, Memorandum dated May 21, 1975, USMA files. The memo is also classified "For Official Use Only."

on battlefield effectiveness, and suggested women would forever change the West Point environment because different physical standards would have to be established for them. He argued that greater societal discussion regarding the consequences of making women combat soldiers was necessary, and summed up the Army's position in this regard succinctly: "Those who would admit women to the Military Academy should first openly and clearly decide that women should and will be combat soldier-leaders."[36] Berry pointed out the connection by quoting General Accounting Office figures stating that 98.1 percent of West Point's graduates had served in combat assignments. He hoped that "any decision on this issue will be made thoughtfully, analytically, responsibly and with a view toward enhancing the wartime battle effectiveness of the nation's land combat forces." Perhaps with the conviction that change was close at hand, he closed by pledging the Academy would "do its best to make the change work smoothly and effectively" if necessary.[37]

Alhough the word "combat" did not appear in West Point's mission statement, the

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[36]MG Sidney B. Berry, Memorandum for Record, "Thoughts on the Admission of Women to the United States Military Academy, May 20, 1975, pp. 2-3, USMA files. Most members of Congress never equated admitting women to the service academies with putting them directly into combat. Instead, they focused on equity. In the long run, however, by finessing the issue they implicitly opened the door to accepting women in direct combat positions. The West Point administration did adopt different physical standards for men and women, though they refrained from calling the arrangement a "two track" system. The phrase was useful in trying to influence members of Congress prior to passage of the legislation opening the academies to women but detrimental to West Point's image afterwards. Adjusted physical standards for women were characterized as "equivalent."

[37]Ibid., p. 4. The 98.1 percent figure is interesting. It included combat *assignments* as opposed to combat branches of the Army, meaning a captain who visited the front for a day while serving with a public relations unit could be counted. The example is extreme, and to be fair the numbers undoubtedly included officers assigned to non-combat arms who were later temporarily attached to combat units. Yet even generously interpreted the figure is misleading and far too high an indicator of the percentage of officers who led troops in combat.

importance of the association many officers held between the Academy and leadership of combat units cannot be overestimated.[38] Most graduates did enter the combat arms initially, though never in numbers as large as the Academy might have liked. During the post-war era some were allowed to attend medical school, and those who physically could not serve in a combat unit were allowed commissions in support branches of the Army.[39] Ironically, the Army may have hurt itself by classifying units as "combat" oriented in the first place. Every Army unit was a potential combat unit, depending on how a given battle developed. Rear-echelon troops have been either overrun by enemy forces or thrown into front line positions and ordered to fight as infantry on numerous occasions in the Army's history. The best-known example is when cooks and clerks were rushed to the front as riflemen during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. Yet status and rank within the Army depended on rigid distinctions between those who have served in combat units in wartime and those who have not, and virtually every army and tribe in the world made the distinction an imperative delineator between those who would lead and those who would not. Warriors became supreme chiefs and generals, were honored in song and story, and held places of honor at social functions. West Point's orientation

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[38]The West Point mission statement was as follows: "The mission of the United States Military Academy is to instruct and train the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate should have the qualities and attributes essential to his progressive and continuing development throughout a career as an officer of the Regular Army." See Bugle Notes, vol. 68, (West Point: United States Military Academy, 1976), p. 4. It has since been modified slightly to be non gender-specific.

[39]Cadets unable to serve in combat branches for physical reasons generally injured themselves at the Academy, often as members of Corps athletic squads. The terms used to group different Army branches have changed over the years, making comparison difficult for the non-initiated. In brief, the Infantry, Armor, Air Defense, and Field Artillery branches are generally expected to be closest to the enemy. Engineers, Signal Corps, Military Police, and Military Intelligence personnel often move between rear areas and the front. The rest of the branches, everything from Quartermaster to Judge Advocate General, are normally in rear areas. In truth, no soldier is completely safe in wartime, but these distinctions serve as a basis for discussion.

toward combat was thus a matter of considerable pride, not just professional *raison d'etre*. Hence the confusing and often misleading separation of units into combat, combat support, combat service support, and so forth. The gray areas between each category were considerable, and politically it became easy for Congress to fit women into them. This was especially true once it became clear that even by Army definitions most soldiers supported combat troops rather than fighting with them. Because a sizeable portion of West Point graduates were also deployed in rear echelon assignments, there were those within the Department of the Army who shared the belief that the combat argument against women at the Academy was flawed.[40]

The most notable was Paul D. Phillips, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. In March 1974 he separated all active duty senior officers who were West Point graduates into groups by years of service and branch. Phillips concluded "the (combat arms) argument is a weak one since we seem to average less than 70% in CA over the years, less than 75% in the first 5 years, and about 80%...for the 1973 class."[41] Phillips excluded generals from the combat arms branch, leading the Secretary of the Army to add a handwritten comment suggesting the statistics were invalid. Yet the numbers are compelling. Whether or not generals were counted, the

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[40]In the post-World War II era, the Academy maintained that only in two periods, from 1945 to 1950 and 1964 to 1968 were some graduates commissioned in non-combat arms. Beginning in 1968, one percent of each class was allowed to go to medical school, a policy which ended in 1977 and was later restored. In 1969 the Academy began allowing cadets physically disqualified from combat duty to commission into non-combat branches. In short, the policy varied greatly over time. Academy officials maintained only a small portion of graduates ever entered non-combat arms, but it really came down to how one defined "combat." See Herman R. Stoudt, Memorandum for Assistant Secretary of Defense, "Admission of Women at the Military Academy," April 12, 1974, pp. 1-2, USMA files.

[41]Paul D. Phillips, Memorandum to Colonel Dyke, "USMA Graduates in Combat Arms Branches," March 13, 1974, USMA files.

number of active duty West Pointers in combat branches was well below 75 percent.[42] While impressive in its own right, and a credit to the combat-oriented mission of the Academy, the percentage implied that a fourth of every graduating class at West Point could be open to cadets who did not have to serve in the combat arms. Even though Phillips's report did not reach a general audience, the statistics were available to members of Congress.[43] Most of them looked at the Army's position, which suggested that every West Pointer served in a combat unit, and they knew better. They were not persuaded by arguments that Academy graduates were each *potential* combat leaders and moved to integrate the academies over the collective objections of the Department of Defense.[44]

After Berry released his memo for the record in May, West Point continued to work on comprehensive plans to admit women. On May 30, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas P. Garigan submitted his own memorandum dealing with the public affairs impact the

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[42]Phillips listed 9,324 graduates on active duty, with 6,222, or 67 percent in combat branches. Not knowing how many generals were in combat branches in 1974, I added *every* officer Phillips counted in branch groups one and two who could *possibly* have been a general (those with between 21 and 35 years of service) to the total serving in combat arms. Even with this egregious over-counting, I reached a total of 6,780, or 73 percent in combat arms, proving the accuracy of Phillip's conclusions.

[43]Congress also had results of a GAO study completed in 1974 which reviewed 102 randomly chosen service records of USMA graduates to determine the percentage of assignments which were combat or combat related. In results cross-checked by Army officers (including a LTC named John Shalikashvili who later became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), the study found 50% of the officers' assignments were combat or combat related. See MG Harold G. Moore, Jr., Memorandum for Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, "Attendance of Women at the United States Military Academy," November 8, 1974, pp. 1-2, USMA files.

[44]There were those within the Army who agreed. Brigadier General L. Gordon Hill Jr. wrote "...there is also no prohibition to the admission of women in the mission of West Point. The commissioning of officers to lead in battle is only an implied and derived mission." See BG L. Gordon Hill Jr., Memorandum for Headquarters, Department of the Army (DAPE-ZA), "The Admission of Women to the United States Military Academy," undated, USMA files.

admission of women would have on West Point. He noted that press interest would be especially high when women first arrived, and that "invasion by the news media, if not carefully controlled, will be highly disrupting..." Garigan also suggested the "giddying effect of intense notoriety on a young person can lead to inadvertent statements...which could be embarrassing both to the Military Academy and...to the individual." He closed by calling for the staff, faculty, cadets, and alumni to be thoroughly informed, and suggested "a fast implementation (of plans to admit women) might be preferable to a slow implementation because the life-span of high press interest would be short."[45]

Though much planning was conducted prior to President Ford's arrival on June 4, the pace accelerated after his departure. A week later the Secretary of the Army flew to West Point for a briefing on the admission of women. By then officials were committed to a one track system with "minimum essential, responsible and sensible changes taking into consideration physiological differences in females" and virtually no changes to the Academy's academic program.[46] They agreed to keep identical admission standards, substituted women's self-defense courses for the boxing and wrestling courses taken by male cadets, and planned a new Physical Aptitude Examination (PAE) for women

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[45]LTC Thomas P. Garigan, Memorandum for Record, "Public Affairs Impact of Women Admission to the U.S. Military Academy," May 30, 1975, pp. 1-2. Garigan served as the Academy's Public Affairs Officer, and his observations were astute. The press did disrupt training for women cadets, and some women eventually uttered innocent comments in interviews which caused them problems with their male peers. In 1974, Garigan recommended that if women were admitted the press be barred from women cadets after "limited access during the first days of New Cadet Barracks." See LTC Garigan, Memorandum Concerning Female Admissions, December 11, 1974, p. 1, USMA files.

[46]LTC Kermit M. Henninger, Memorandum for Record, "Meeting with SA: Admission of Women to USMA," June 11, 1975, p. 1, USMA files. No changes to the academic program were ever considered. The idea of making minimum essential changes based on physiological differences between men and women became part of the final legislation passed in October 1975.

because scaling the men's test had proved impractical.[47]

Once it became clear that different physical standards would be adopted, the problem of convincing male cadets that women were working as hard as men became obvious. As an evaluation team reported in July 1975, orientation of USMA staff and cadets "should emphasize that men and women in this Army are paid the same. In those areas of physical training where physiology may dictate different efforts, it will not dictate less effort."[48] Over time many members of the Academy staff did emphasize this fact to cadets, though it too often fell on deaf ears.

Just as West Point prepared for Congressional action well in advance, so did the other service academies. They worked closely with each other to coordinate planning. Each also took different approaches to the integration of women. Both the Naval and Air Force academies planned to admit more women than USMA, while West Point and the Naval Academy planned to place women together as roommates in otherwise integrated barracks. The Air Force Academy began with segregated housing, though it did take the novel and entirely successful approach of using active duty lieutenants as surrogate "upperclasswomen" during the first two years of integration.[49]

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[47]Ibid. Admission to the Academy was based on college board scores, leadership potential, athletic ability, and a score based on a standardized PAE. Early study showed women could not pass the male PAE in sufficient numbers, so a new one was created.

[48]CPT Anna M. Young, CPT Barbara J. Yost, and SSG Hazel M. Luxford, Memorandum for the Deputy Commandant, "Women's Evaluation Team - Preliminary Comments," July 14, 1975, p.5, USMA files.

[49]LTG Sidney B. Berry, Memorandum for Record, "Air Force Academy Planning for Admission of Women Cadets," July 17, 1975, p. 1-2, USMA files. Fifteen surrogate upperclass women gave the first class of women cadets at the USAFA a much-needed support network and role models among the upper classes. See Holm, Women in the Military p. 310. Women at USMA and USNA were not so fortunate.

The United States Merchant Marine Academy admitted women in 1974 and was a source of study for all the service academies. while the United States Coast Guard Academy chose in August 1974 to admit women along with the other service academies in 1976.[50]

In July, Brigadier General Walter F. Ulmer. Commandant of Cadets, submitted a memorandum for the record detailing his impressions of the ROTC Basic Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Women had been part of Army ROTC training since 1973, and Ulmer hoped to assess what women could fairly be expected to accomplish in military training. His memo is remarkable for anticipating many of the obstacles that women at West Point faced in the future. "A perception of fairness" in standards and requirements was essential, he said, as was the proper fitting of uniforms and equipment. Women needed "greater pre-camp physical conditioning" and "special training in voice projection." They objected to "being singled out individually or as a group because of their sex, and object specifically to being used openly as an example which males should surpass." Women who are "competent and fair" could be accepted by both men and women, and the young ROTC officers he talked with believed they could "subordinate their emotions" and not allow personal relationships between the sexes to interfere with "their sense of duty." Ulmer also remarked that women were more highly motivated, "often more proficient than male cadets," and "discernibly more perceptive and articulate." He commented ominously that "Women as a minority create attitudes among males which are

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[50]The Coast Guard Academy was not affected by the legislation pending in Congress, but Coast Guard leaders sensed they would be next and voluntarily chose to admit women in 1976.

remarkably similar to the attitudes of whites during early periods of our racial integration efforts."[51] This may have been the most accurate of his insights.

In August, the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore Jr., organized a conference on the admission of women at West Point attended by representatives of major Army commands which trained women around the world, as well as by himself, Berry, and an officer from the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.[52] Again, the attendees were able to accurately predict problems the Academy would face in the future. The commander of the ROTC Camp at Fort Knox noted women were generally rated lower than men in leadership and suspected "there was a backlash effect by men who resented attention women received." Other attendees noted that women needed to be "cautioned on food intake or they will gain weight," that "perception of both men and women on substitute training is very important," and that more women than men were injured during basic training. Brigadier General Mary Clarke, Director of the Women's Army Corps, argued cadets would follow the lead of USMA staff and faculty, while another officer commented she "was surprised at the extreme West Point Cadet

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[51]BG Walter F. Ulmer, Memorandum for Record, "Notes from Visit to ROTC Basic Camp at Fort Knox, 16-17 July 1975," July 18, 1975, pp. 1-2, USMA files.

[52]MAJ William G. Tobin, Memorandum for Record, "USMA In-Process Planning Conference, "September 4, 1975, USMA files. USMAPS accepts enlisted candidates for the Military Academy who need further academic or physical preparation prior to being fully qualified for admission. The school formed when programs in each Army area were consolidated at Stewart Air Force Base, New York in 1946. USMAPS moved to Fort Belvoir, Virginia in 1946, and to Fort Monmouth in 1975.

resentment to women cadets" she noticed during her visit.[53]

Virtually everyone agreed that challenging standards and cooperation were vital to making integration at USMA successful. Beyond this general agreement, however, a variety of other issues were discussed which bore on future debates, and which revealed the depths to which integration would change West Point. First, the director of the Academy's physical education program commented that in order to keep women in their program the Los Angeles Police Academy had "let standards for all graduates slip," and he feared a similar pattern would emerge at West Point. Second, an officer urged the Academy to establish a historical record of the admission of women, and plans eventually called for that job to be handled by West Point's Director of Institutional Research.[54] Finally, the DCSPER suggested notifying alumni of preparations for the arrival of women cadets on October 18, 1975, during the Army homecoming game, provided the legislation had actually passed Congress.[55]

In the long run these issues surfaced again and again in discussions over women at West Point. The debate over physical standards, whether they slipped, stayed the same, or improved, began as soon as women were actually admitted. Over the years standards rose considerably, though women still did not perform on the same level as men. Creating an institutional history was seen as vital, both for historians and to defend the

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[53] Ibid., pp. 5-8, 9-11. The depth of discussion is illuminating, as it highlights the conviction among senior Army leaders that Congressional action opening the academies to women was inevitable.

[54] Documents from throughout the Academy were stored in Office of Institutional Research files for several years, and later moved to the USMA Historian's office.

[55] MAJ Tobin, "USMA In-Process Planning Conference," pp. 13, 12, 8, USMA files.

Academy against anticipated legal attacks. Fears of legal assaults by men claiming discrimination because they were held to higher physical standards than women and eligible for combat duty never materialized. The historical documents compiled by the Academy, however, most notably the Project Athena reports, became an invaluable resource for scholars studying gender integration. The decision to notify the alumni of preparations that had been discussed or on-going for several years ultimately angered some graduates, who felt they should have received greater knowledge of the impending change beforehand.[56]

August also saw the completion of research by the West Point Department of Physical Education into the physiological differences between men and women. Based on studies done at both the Academy and Army bases around the country, the department found significant differences between men and women that might warrant "modifications" in the USMA physical entrance exam and training programs for women. Dr. James A. Peterson authored the report detailing departmental findings and generally found that "men perform far better than women in activities which require strength, speed, and power." Reasons for the difference in performance included the fact that women "have less bone mass, less muscle component, but more fat than men...," that men "have a higher center of gravity, different pelvic structure, wider shoulders, narrower hips, longer legs, and greater ventilation capacity." The study concluded that "men have a greater potential for endurance that cannot be matched by women," mainly because of differences in cardio-respiratory factors like blood-oxygen levels and heart

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[56]See E.H.B. to LTG Berry, June 8, 1975, USMA files.

size. At "submaximal work levels," Peterson noted, "women have to work much harder to accomplish the same amount of work," are "always operating at a level closer to their maximum than men and will reach exhaustion sooner." Last, he found that women generally had less tolerance to heat than men, so that under higher levels of heat they worked relatively harder than men to accomplish similar amounts of work.[57] This research formed the foundation for subsequent establishment of physical performance standards and a starting point for periodic re-evaluation of the performance of women. Peterson called for continued study because evidence suggested women were only beginning to reach their physiological and athletic potential.[58]

Differing physical standards for men and women cadets eventually proved to be one of the most persistent sources of complaint among men at West Point, though officers had reason to anticipate other resentments long before official Academy studies warned them of disturbing trends among the Academy staff, faculty, and cadets in 1976. In a study of the Army's military police school, which admitted women during 1974, Wayne B. Nicoll noted that women attending the school were victims of the "rumor mill." In the eyes of their male classmates, "They are either prostitutes or lesbians," and men constantly harassed women with "wisecracks," which Nicoll said reflected "a

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[57]BG Walter F. Ulmer, Memorandum for Superintendent, United States Military Academy, "Physiological Differences Between Men and Women," August 18, 1975, abstract summary, USMA files. The memo is attached to the paper by Peterson, whose research was instrumental in convincing Congress to insert language allowing minimal differences in standards for men and women that reflected physiological differences between the sexes.

[58]The latter evidence was accurate. Today physical performance standards are much higher for women than in 1976.

cynicism and general non-acceptance of the women as their equals."[59] Further research confirmed that similar cynicism and non-acceptance of women existed at West Point.

By September, the mountain of information assembled emerged as the operations plan that would govern the admission of women at the Academy. Known as OPLAN 75-1, it covered everything from haircuts and military training to necessary construction and admission policies. Women would be fully integrated into the Corps of Cadets, take self-defense classes and women's gymnastics rather than boxing, wrestling, and men's gymnastics, and participate in all athletic activities except combative contact sports. They would be placed in as many companies as possible depending on the number of quality applicants and in numbers sufficient to provide a support network in each company including women.[60] Major renovations and additions to existing facilities were planned, mainly to provide sufficient women's lavatories, showers, and laundy facilities.[61] Two other important distinctions were in women's uniforms and the regulations governing the length of their hair. Specific plans were not included in

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[59]Wayne B. Nicoll, "Women in the Military Police Corps: Sexist Attitudes at the U.S. Army Military Police School," Winter Quarter 1975, USMA files, pp. 12-13. Nicoll prepared the paper for a college political science class, but neither his work nor the accompanying letter mention the name of the university.

[60] Department of the Army, United States Military Academy, "OPLAN 75-1: Admission of Women Cadets," September 15, 1975, USMA files, p. a-vi-1. The United States Corps of Cadets was organized as a brigade, with four regiments containing three battalions each. Battalions contained three companies, and plans called for between four and twelve companies to receive women in 1976. One battalion in each regiment was to receive women each year through 1979, when every company would finally be integrated along gender lines.

[61] Engineers estimated the cost of required renovations/construction at $437,900. See Department of the Army, USMA, "OPLAN 75-1," p. j-6. The actual costs reached approximately $1.8 million by 1980. See Dr. Stephen B. Grove, Memorandum for Mr. David T. Simpson, Director, Resource Management, United States Military Academy, "Facility Modification/Start-up Costs to Admit Women to USMA," October 18, 1975, USMA files.

OPLAN 75-1, but it did make clear women would have different uniforms and be allowed to wear their hair longer than men.[62]

With the completion of OPLAN 75-1, the Academy moved from formulating policy to the implementation and fine tuning of existing plans. There remained the tasks of informing the alumni, educating male cadets, seeking outstanding women for admission in July 1976, and bringing qualified enlisted women into the USMAPS in January. Much work had already been completed during the almost three years prior to passage of legislation opening West Point to women. While strongly opposing their admission on the grounds it would hinder the Academy's mission of training officers who could serve in combat, staff officers had quietly assessed what an Academy which included women cadets would be like. They knew the first women would face resentment from male cadets and enormous attention from the press, feared higher attrition rates among women, and believed in as much uniform training as possible. Ultimately their concern was with finding ways to ensure West Point's effectiveness in training future Army officers, in maintaining the institution's almost mythical reputation as a forge for leaders, and in guaranteeing its survival and relevance regardless of which way the political or social winds blew. By the time Gerald Ford finally signed Public Law 94-106 on October 7, 1975, Academy preparations made the event anti-climactic for

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[62]Department of the Army, USMA, "Operations Plan 75-1," pp. a-vii-1, c-I-1.. The plan also side-stepped the question of pregnancy, stating the matter was "under revision and would be published at a later date." See p. I-I-1.

almost everyone.[63]

For the men of the Corps of Cadets, however, the event was anything but anticlimactic. They received word of President Ford's signature on October 8 during lunch in Washington Hall. The news was issued from the "poop deck," the large wooden balcony which dominated the mess hall, from which MacArthur gave his famous "Duty, Honor, Country," speech in 1962. For a moment the cadets were silent; then, as a 1979 graduate recalls, there were groans and curses as a pervasive feeling of disgust swept the Corps. Some upperclassmen even broke regulations by standing up and leaving the mess hall early as a sign of protest.[64] It was a subtle event, but indicative of cadet feelings in the Fall of 1975 and a dark omen of the reception awaiting women the following Summer.

Getting the word out to potential women cadets, alumni, and the young men of West Point became a priority as soon as the legislation was signed and the Academy could lift the thin veil of secrecy surrounding preparation for the admission of women. Between October 1975 and the arrival of women in July 1976, the Academy rushed to attract women candidates, control rumors, fully explain future policy to male cadets, and deal with occasionally severe criticism from former graduates.

Informing potential women candidates was a special concern because of the shortened period of admissions. Planners anticipated an attrition rate for women of 58

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[63]Though not subject to the legislation ordering the admission of women to America's service academies, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy voluntarily announced in August of 1975 that it too would admit women in 1976. See Lovell, Neither Athens Nor Sparta?, p. 313.

[64]IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes.

percent the first year, and believed forty Army slots would exist for women graduates of USMA in 1980. That meant that at least ninety-five women needed to be admitted in 1976, which in turn meant that approximately one thousand applicants were necessary in order to assure high quality in the first class of women.[65] With no recruiting program for women in place, and no tradition in American society of young women considering appointment to the Academy, the challenge was daunting. The Academy expected a shortfall in women candidates and feared that many would fail the physical aptitude exams. These concerns led West Point toward active recruitment of Army enlisted women to round out applicants in the first class.[66] To ensure that members of Congress were also aware of their opportunity to seek out and nominate women, General Berry wrote a letter on November 25 to members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives asking for their assistance.[67]

To reach potential applicants, West Point blanketed the press with announcements regarding the plans to admit women to the Academy and produced an

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[65]LTG Harold Moore, Memorandum thru Chief of Staff, United States Army for the Secretary of the Army, "Number of Women to be Admitted to the Military Academy," November 17, 1975, USMA files, pp. 1-2. Attrition for men averaged 30.9 percent between 1802 and 1975. See MAJ Tobin, Information Paper, "USMA Attrition," September 2, 1975, USMA files, pp. 1-2. LTG Moore reached the higher figure for women by assuming their attrition rate during Plebe year would be the same as for women during their initial year at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (33 percent). Assuming attrition for women would remain in the same proportion to that of men over their last three years as cadets as he was assuming for Plebe year, Moore concluded that 25 percent of the remaining women would leave by graduation. (Attrition for men during the last three years at West Point was known to be 15 percent) Combining 25 percent and 33 percent equaled 58 percent. It was a best-guess type of methodology, but fairly close to the 52 percent of women in the class of 1980 who actually left.

[66]LTC Darrell G. Houston, Memorandum for Deputy Commandant of Cadets, "Admission of Women to West Point," pp. 1-3, USMA files.

[67]LTG Sidney B. Berry to Members of the United States Congress, November 25, 1975, USMA files. Many needed no prodding from Berry. The chance to nominate one of the first women to attend any of the service academies was commonly seen as an excellent political and public relations move.

information booklet especially for women candidates. The booklet answered general questions about the admission of women and explained how they would be integrated into the Corps of Cadets, proclaiming, "West Point is offering you a chance to be a very special woman, an extraordinary woman." While cadet life would be "taxing," it promised women cadets that "one day you will emerge from the Academy a very confident young woman, ready to take your place in professional life: to lead men and women in our nation's defense."[68]

Soon the Academy began reaching out to male cadets, many of whom were both misinformed and under the scrutiny of family and friends wanting to know what changes were in store for the Academy. Briefings on the admission of women to West Point were begun on November 11th, in sessions that quickly became known as "Stump the Stars" because generals Berry and Ulmer appeared to answer cadet questions. Cadets zeroed in on any perceived or actual differences in planned policies for men and women, and often inquired into the divergent standards for hair length. One cadet suggested that since standards for men and women were going to be the same he should be allowed to wear his hair shoulder length, just like the women. Ulmer said that would not be permitted, and when the cadet asked why the Commandant's patience snapped and he barked, "Because I say so!" The Corps cheered his display of authoritarianism, but it reflected the anxiety of everyone at the Academy.[69]

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[68]United States Military Academy, Booklet entitled "Information for Women Candidates," undated, p. 5, USMA files.

[69]COL Joseph T. Griffin, "Briefings to Cadets on Women's Admission: Nov.-Dec. Schedule," November 6, 1975, USMA files. See also Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, p. 286.

In December, cadets published a special edition of their newspaper devoted to the arrival of women at West Point. *The Pointer* published photographs of model Jane Thacker modeling proposed uniforms for women cadets, and said the purpose of the special edition was "the elimination of a wildly absurd 'rumor control' presently clutching the Corps." While predicting cadets "will be briefed nearly to death concerning the entrance of women cadets in the Summer of 1976...," the paper presented the arrival of women as a positive step. It outlined what the Academy had done to prepare, discussed physiological differences between the genders, outlined what daily life for women cadets would be like, and argued, "The success of the program is a measure of our maturity. Let's do it right."[70]

To notify the alumni, General Berry sent letters to all living graduates and published an open letter in the December 1975 issue of *Assembly* magazine detailing preparations for the admission of women. After noting the Army's consistent opposition to the admission of women, Berry told graduates the issue was moot. "Women are coming to West Point," he said, "The orders have been issued." Berry outlined the minimum adjustments that would be made for training women, argued West Point had always been a changing institution, and suggested gender integration was "a good preparation for life in the Army and, generally, in American society." He closed by asking for support and understanding from everyone connected to West Point as the

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[70]*The Pointer*, Supplement Volume 52, No. 4, December 1975, pp. 5, 11 Cadets were briefed incessantly regarding the admission of women, a fact many resented and may have taken out on women when they arrived. *The Pointer* issue was decidedly informative and upbeat, though it should be remembered Academy officers oversaw the paper's publication. It may have represented the views of many cadets, but not all of them.

Academy "undertakes its most significant change since 1802."[71]

Some graduates rallied to the superintendent's side, writing letters of support and sometimes even condolence. "I have shown your letter...with great pride, to civilian friends.... Nothing could better inform them of the great excellence of the Military Academy," said one graduate.[72] Another told Berry "these times call for a steady pilot at the wheel, and you are the man. So hang in there...the corps will survive as it has many vicissitudes in the past."[73]

Others were not so kind. "I do not intend to support the Academy in the future either financially or otherwise," said a retired Brigadier General. "If there is anything I will support now, it is the legislation to eliminate the service academies since they have been relegated to nothing more than coeducational trade schools...."[74] Another angry graduate wrote a woman recently appointed as admissions officer for his section of the United States. "I am violently and unalterably opposed to females attending West Point," he roared. "In my view it is an act on the part of an ultra liberal Congress to destroy the greatest military institution in the world."[75] His sentiments were echoed in a more restrained manner by a citizen who wrote to Senator Barry Goldwater in June 1975 pleading with him to block the rider opening West Point to women. Fearing a two track

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[71]*Assembly*, December 1975, inside front cover.

[72]A. H. to LTG Berry, November 29, 1975, USMA files.

[73]J. L. R., Jr., to LTG Berry, October 20, 1975, USMA files.

[74]A. J. G. to LTG Berry, no date, USMA files.

[75]J. R. R. to Captain P. P. H., September 8, 1975, USMA files.

system would emerge, the person suggested a separate facility for women and noted with alarm the inability of Congress to alter the natural order. "There has been, in the history of the world, only one successful female combat officer," they concluded. "That was Jeanne D'Arc, and she was a Saint. Also she did not menstrate (sic)." The author closed by arguing, "Nature did not design women to be men, and even the honorable congress and Senate of the United States cannot repeal the laws of nature."[76] The letter joined countless others to Berry, members of Congress, and even the president opposing the admission of women. No less a figure than Matthew B. Ridgway suggested to Gerald Ford that opening the service academies to women would "prove to be an ill-considered action inimical to the best interests of the nation."[77]

In the end, most graduates opposed opening West Point's doors to women cadets because they shared the Army's belief that the combat-oriented nature of the institution would be diminished. It can be argued they were simply tied to tradition and an image of the Academy lingering from their own days as cadets, but there is no denying their conviction or passion. Even the Superintendent opposed the arrival of women privately, though as a professional officer he publicly committed himself to making the change a success. He summed up his unique situation well in a letter to a former member of the Academy staff. "It now appears certain that Congress will direct women to be admitted to West Point as members of the Class of 1980," he said. "I believe that this decision is unsound, illogical, irresponsible, and wrong. Yet, paradoxically, my responsibility as

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[76]Letter to The Honorable Barry Goldwater, June 18, 1975, author's name removed, USMA files.

[77]M.B. Ridgway to President Gerald Ford, June 9, 1975, USMA files.

Superintendent of the United States Military Academy will be to implement the decision."[78] Almost every old grad had trouble accepting the new order at West Point.

As preparations for women continued, the Academy received a presentation dealing with the integration of previously all-male civilian schools, including Yale, Dartmouth, Notre Dame, and Princeton. Prepared by the Air Force Academy, the most telling evidence researchers assembled concerned the social aspects of integration. The ratio of men to women needed to be equal, they said, or at a minimum no less than one woman for every three men. When the ratio was greater than 1:3, a variety of problems developed. Women were often "treated as different... regarded as inferior... socially rejected by males (not dated), and excluded from male clubs." Some women attempted to "make more friends than normal, possibly to gain a part of the power base" and all "need an unusual sense of self-order to maintain their self-respect."[79] The research also found "strong pockets of resistance from male students and alumni," and concluded that male faculty members often embarrassed women by trying too hard to make them comfortable or asking for the "female point of view" in class.[80] Though it cannot be known for certain who saw the presentation, it is clear that many officers at the Academy knew potential problems were brewing.

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[78]LTG Sidney B. Berry to COL E.H.B., July 3, 1975, p.3, USMA files.

[79]"Integration of Females Into Previously All Male Universities," a collection of transparencies from the United States Air Force Academy, USMA files, p. 5.

[80]Ibid.," p. 6. The evidence demonstrates how often male responses to breakdowns in traditionally all-male groups assume familiar patterns. Women at West Point experienced each of the phenomena described in the presentation. The trend, therefore, crosses occupation and age and may be shared by men in general. See Lionel Tiger, Men in Groups (New York: Random House, 1969), for an anthropologist's view of the problem.

Some officers were concerned about "male-oriented language usage and slang," and wondered what would become of Academy songs, sayings, and traditions. Cadets routinely called their roommates "wives," opened doors for women, and enjoyed pictures of women in *The Pointer*. Whether they would have to change their language and look forward to "pinups" of men in future issues of *The Pointer* was anyone's guess.[81] On a more profound level there were other concerns. General Berry noted in November of 1975 that in the initial transition period for women there might be frustrations the Academy "will just have to live with."[82] In February 1976, fears that the first women might resign or fail en masse led the Assistant DCSPER in Washington to conclude there was "no mandate from DA (Department of the Army) to keep women here," no "quota for tokenism," and that DA would back the Academy if the women all failed.[83] In many ways these fears reflect apprehension in the face of a new and untried situation, and the depth of Academy planning reflects the commitment of planners to make integration work as well as possible. Still, there is an undercurrent of powerlessness in some of the documents, as if planners were saying that there were many things they could influence but a good deal more over which they had no power at all.

In fact, they had reason to expect real problems, as the most revealing document

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[81]LTC Thomas P. Garigan, "Orientation Program, Admission of Women to West Point," February 27, 1976, USMA files.

[82]LTC Hugh E. Henson, Jr., Memorandum for Record, "Secretary of the Army Comments During Briefing on Admission of Women to West Point, 17 October 1975," October 20, 1975, p.3, USMA files. The Secretary of the Army noted concerns about educating the Corps of Cadets and indicated that those problems would probably have to be lived with as well. See LTC Leonard P. Wishart, III, Memorandum for Record, "Admission of Women to USMA, October 23, 1975, p. 3, USMA files.

[83]LTC Donald H. Cline, Memorandum for Record, "After-Action Report, Women's Admission Update Briefing - 28 Jan 76," February 10, 1976, p. 3, USMA files.

provided West Point's senior leadership prior to the arrival of women points out. Written by Dr. Nora Scott Kinzer, a research scientist with the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, the report details her visit to USMA and USMAPS in March 1976. Women entered USMAPS in January 1976 to prepare for entry into West Point in the Summer, and Kinzer noted that many of their problems could be traced to "undue and constant press coverage" and their entry in the middle of the USMAPS school year. "Women now resent the intrusion on their privacy," she said, and "male students are quite annoyed that they are not interviewed and that so much attention is focused on women cadets." The women interviewed were sometimes subject to "crank/hate mail," and she urged caution in allowing the press access to women at West Point.[84]

More alarming to Kinzer, however, was the clear harassment of women at the USMA Prep School. As a result of the press coverage, she reported that "...some male cadets are harassing the women candidates." The harassment took "relatively innocuous forms such as: fire-crackers thrown into the barracks area, barking at the women, throwing dog-biscuits into the dorm area, imitating the 'WAC' cadence," as well as "leaving a mess table whenever a woman sits down, sweeping dust on women candidates' shoes, and stealing the women's dorm cleaning supplies."[85]
While "seemingly innocent," Kinzer argued that the pranks "represent deep underlying hostility against the women," who "do not report incidents because they don't want to

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[84]Nora Scott Kinzer, Memorandum for Record, "Report on Trip to USMA and USMA Prep School," March 16, 1976, pp. 1-2, USMA files. The same pattern developed at West Point.

[85]Ibid.," p. 3.

generate further hostility, or appear too sensitive, or weak." She pointed out that if the women were "black males or Jewish or Spanish... the 'pranks' would not be tolerated." and that women could not fight back in the same manner as men because "fisticuffs" to solve personality differences were not an option. While USMA and USMAPS policy statements indicated women would be treated the same as their male counterparts, "the fact is that these women are pioneers, different, darlings of the mass media and in many respects guinea-pigs in a social-educational experiment."[86] Kinzer also raised the question of where training would lead. "While cadet training is predicated on the idea of training boys to be men," she wrote, "no one has addressed the problems of whether or not USMA training will turn women cadets into men." Under the pressure of the male-oriented training regime, she noted "The USMAPS women cadets resent the fact that they are acting like men (e.g. swearing, yelling, and becoming tough and vindictive)."[87] Kinzer closed by calling for firm ground rules at USMA making clear a policy that brooked no tolerance of teasing or harassment of women cadets, just as the Academy refused to tolerate "racial and ethnic slurs against male minority members."[88] In the long run, the Academy failed to take the measures Kinzer called for, and the pattern of behavior she noticed at USMAPS reappeared. Some women were hardly affected, and most men shied away from participating in the most abusive harassment. In a rigid

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[86]Ibid. Kinzer's point regarding blacks and ethnic groups is insightful. Officers could have stopped the harassment or at least limited it if they chose. They may have feared intervention on behalf of women would further alienate the women from their classmates. Interestingly, General Berry is not listed as a recipient of Kinzer's report.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Ibid.

hierarchy, however, it only took a few young men with authority to make the lives of many women extraordinarily difficult. West Point had good reason to be apprehensive.

Apprehension turned to alarm in March, though not from anything related to the admission of women. Instead, the Academy was thrust into the midst of the worst honor scandal in West Point history. Coming as it did on the threshold of the arrival of women, at a time when the Academy sought to separate itself from memories of Vietnam and the turmoil of the early 1970s, the scandal could not have appeared at a worse time. While there is no "good" time for scandal, the ensuing uproar over West Point's Honor Code distracted officials for a long time. For while the idea of women cadets was anathema to most West Pointers, the breaches of honor seemed to threaten the very survival of the institution.

The scandal involved a required course for all cadets, Electrical Engineering 304. Known as "Juice," the course was widely hated and generally considered an "exercise in 'spec and dump,' which in cadet lingo meant 'memorize and forget.'"[89] Trouble began in early March, when over eight hundred Cows (Juniors) from the Class of 1977 were given a take-home exam worth five percent of their grade. The exam contained explicit instructions that cadets were not to receive help of any kind, and was due two weeks later. When the exams arrived, one guilt-stricken cadet scrawled at the top of his exam, "I have received assistance on this paper." Instructors impounded all the exams for review and found "evidence of collusion on a huge scale."[90]

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[89]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 397

[90]Ibid.

Over the next several months the scandal grew to alarming proportions. Almost every company in the Corps contained a cadet accused of cheating, and well over a hundred were eventually expelled or resigned. *Time* ran a cover story on June 7 showing a cadet with one hand crossing fingers behind his back while the other hand was raised to take an oath. National press coverage was intense, and particularly alarming since reports argued cheating was rampant at the Academy, that the Cadet Honor Committee "fixed" investigations to protect friends, and that the Honor Code itself was out of date. Although the Academy survived the ensuing investigations by blue ribbon panels, and many expelled cadets were allowed to return after a year's absence, the scandal left a stain on West Point for a long time.[91]

Ironically, it was a stain which for many graduates overshadowed the threat women represented to West Point. For if women threatened the essence of the Academy, the implication that the honor code was an anachronistic joke posed a danger to its survival. West Pointers believed the Academy graduated better officers, that living for four years according to the principles of the code developed superior character in cadets, and that character in the long run was the hallmark of the best Army leaders. They argued that Aristotle was right in asserting character was habit. It was "the daily choice of right or wrong," a "moral quality which grows to maturity in peace and is not suddenly

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[91]Ibid., pp. 394-417. There had been previous cheating scandals at West Point, most notably one in the 1950s involving the Academy football team. Cheating was also hardly unknown during the nineteenth century, when George Armstrong Custer was caught searching for exam answers in an instructor's desk and allowed to remain a cadet. In the twentieth century, however, the honor code was considered holy writ. It read, "A Cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do." Evidence the honor code was not working became a threat to the very thing that made the Academy unique, and West Point leaders reacted accordingly.

developed on the outbreak of war."[92] Such beliefs carried with them the implicit assumption that if West Point stopped producing leaders of sufficient character it became a glorified trade school with no claim to superiority over ROTC or OCS programs. At that point, according to the purists, it would no longer have a reason for being. Many Academy graduates thus reacted with alarm and horror to news of the scandal, seeing in it the seeds of West Point's possible destruction.

As press coverage of the scandal slowly dimmed, West Point approached the day women actually arrived on the historic post. By June 23 the Academy had received over thirteen thousand applications for admission in 1976. Women accounted for 867 of the applicants, and 631 of them received nominations. Of those ultimately accepting offers to join the Long Gray Line, 102 were women and 1,446 were men. With Reception Day (R-Day) scheduled for early July, there was little the Academy could do but wait and hope their plans would work.[93]

Just before R-Day, West Point joined the rest of America in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. July 4 began inauspiciously with a mock military disaster, when the Academy's British Army liaison officer staged a prank on his American hosts by raising the Union Jack above the ruins of

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[92]Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), p. 160.

[93]MAJ Robert B. Cato, Memorandum for Record, "Comparison of Admissions Status: Classes of '78, '79, and '80," USMA files. The number of applicants for the Class of 1980 was considerably higher than for the two preceding classes, which received just over 10,000 applications each. One hundred nineteen women eventually entered West Point on R-Day. In comparison, the Naval Academy admitted 80 and the Air Force Academy accepted 123. See Randy Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming: Lesbians and Gays in the U.S. Military: Vietnam to the Persian Gulf. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 267.

Fort Putnam at dawn.[94] It was the first time British troops had occupied West Point since 1777, and hardly a promising augury of events to come.

In spite of the brief and comical setback, preparations for a massive celebration continued. As one of the nation's showcase institutions, the Academy planned an enormous fireworks display along the banks of the Hudson to commemorate American independence, and Academy officials looked forward to a relaxing evening that might take everyone's mind off the previous months of anxiety and controversy. But as thousands of spectators watched, one skyrocket after another was ignited. Each sputtered and tumbled to the ground over and over again. With the crowd waiting anxiously, technicians discovered the entire collection of fireworks had become damp. Nothing exploded. There would be no tumultuous pyrotechnics. As word spread of the disaster, "some of the Academy brass found the fiasco amusing. Given the way the Bicentennial year had gone thus far, they told one another, this debacle seemed only fitting."[95]

The first women cadets arrived three days later.

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[94]Keegan, Fields of Battle, p. 139. The British occupied West Point briefly in the Fall of 1777, only to withdraw when news of their defeat at Saratoga reached them in October. The grounds were fortified the following year, and thereafter remained in American hands. Fort Putnam became part of the fortifications and is today restored and open to the public. See Sidney Forman, West Point: A History of the United States Military Academy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 9.

[95]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 404.

Chapter Three: "A Higher Calling"

You cannot choose your battlefield.
God does that for you:
But you can plant a standard
Where a standard never flew.
-Stephen Crane, The Colors

In the Fall of 1975, in countless living and dining rooms across America, in barracks and college dormitories, the news that West Point was opening its hallowed doors to women began affecting civilian lives beyond the Academy. Walter Cronkite announced the news to the nation on October 7, while newspapers and radio programs followed suit the next day. Over the succeeding weeks word passed between family members and friends, from officers to enlisted personnel and from counselors to high school students. West Point played an active role in the process, encouraging continual press coverage, contacting candidates by mail, and going to great lengths to recruit as many women applicants as possible. With less than eight months between the passage of legislation and the arrival of the first women cadets on July 7, 1976, West Point faced the daunting prospect of seeking enough qualified women to allow selection of the best possible candidates, to avoid the appearance of tokenism, and to provide the first women with a peer support group who could conquer West Point's demanding regime and graduate. Confronting what an Academy report later called "an event without precedent in the history of the Western world,"[1] the Army sought to identify young women with the

[1]Vitters and Kinzer, Project Athena I, p. 137. Western military academies similar to West Point include St. Cyr in France, Sandhurst in England, and both the Royal Military College and the College Royale Militaire at St. Jean in Canada.

characteristics necessary for successful careers and encouraged them to apply. Working within a society and culture that seldom encouraged women to enlist and had never before offered them admission to the nation's service academies, the challenge was formidable.

For the young women who ultimately entered West Point with the class of 1980, there were also a series of challenges and hurdles to overcome. They had to answer for themselves the question of why they wanted to go into a lions' den of four thousand men, why they desired a West Point education or an Army career. They had to persuade dubious family and friends that the hazards of battering down walls of convention dating to the administration of Thomas Jefferson would really be worth it. Finally, the women had to obtain admission, which meant meeting both physical and academic standards designed to weed out all but the most fit, and being nominated by a member of Congress, the President, or the Department of the Army. The process was identical for the men of the class of 1980, but Academy officials knew how to recruit them, and they knew why most young men came to West Point. In return, young men had almost two centuries of legends, myths, and facts to use in determining why they wanted to join the Long Gray Line. When it came to understanding why women might want to attend the Academy, everyone, including many of the women themselves, was groping in the dark.

The West Point Office of Admissions sprang into action as soon as President Ford signed Public Law 94-106. Even as the ink from his pen was drying, the Academy reviewed applications from candidates and found that over 7,000 men had already applied for admission in the class of 1980. They also found files on 45 women, most of

whom had applied in anticipation of the change in federal law. To boost their numbers, West Point sent out letters to 18,643 high school counselors informing them of the opportunities available to young women on the banks of the Hudson and encouraging them to refer qualified candidates to the Academy.[2]

Officials also contacted 2,000 women who had applied for ROTC scholarships in 1974 and 1975, appealed to women already in ROTC programs around the country, and enlisted the aid of the American College Testing Program in identifying 2,200 young women who scored well on the mathematics portion of the widely given ACT college entrance exam.[3] These initiatives were in addition to Army bulletins issued to all major commands ordering officers to examine their units for qualified enlisted women. They demonstrate West Point's willingness to explore every known source of qualified candidates.

Like their male counterparts, women ultimately chose to pursue educations at West Point for a variety of reasons. Most were conservative, came from middle class families in which finding money for college was a concern, and were intrigued by the unique challenges offered by the Academy. Very few considered the recently ended war in Vietnam or the scandals that plagued West Point during the early 1970s in their decision-making process, and most were only lukewarm toward military careers. Most

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[2]Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, p. 286, and Vitters and Kinzer, Project Athena I, p. 15.

[3]Vitters and Kinzer, Project Athena I, p. 19. West Point's curriculum emphasized mathematics and engineering courses, an emphasis attributable to the Academy's original dedication to graduating trained engineers and a widely held Army conviction that math and science courses were the best means of teaching decisive, analytical thought. High scores in math on the ACT had been an excellent predictor of success for male cadets in the past, and West Point used the pattern to pursue women cadets as well.

were captivated by the Academy's aura, however, and all were tempted by the prospect of receiving an excellent education at taxpayer expense, a guaranteed career opportunity, and a salary during their years as cadets. Yet these are generalizations. In truth, the one hundred and nineteen women who ultimately entered West Point in 1976 did so for very individual reasons.

One former cadet was a senior in college when she discovered that West Point was opening to women. Unsure of what career path to follow, she found the prospect of four years at West Point more appealing than pursuing years of graduate work, and after talking with her professors decided to apply. She preferred attending the Air Force Academy, but her Congressman only had a nomination available for West Point. The reality of pursuing a military career never fully entered her mind; what mattered most was the challenge, and putting off real life for a little while longer.[4]

Another who applied after several years of college confessed to wanting an Academy education for "all the wrong reasons." Having spent three years in a college ROTC program, she realized her service commitment would begin as soon as she graduated. If she attended the Academy, however, the ROTC service obligation would be waived. West Point graduates were obligated to five years active duty after graduation, and a lesser term if they resigned following the first day of their junior (Cow) year.[5]

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[4]Interview with the author (IWA), 3-10-96, side A. Others were initially attracted to the Air Force Academy as well, only to end up for a variety of reasons at West Point. See EI, no date, p. 2, IWA, 12-12-95, and 3-10-96, side A.

[5]Academy graduates were not obligated to a term of service until 1897, when Congress passed laws stipulating that West Point graduates serve a minimum of four years on active duty. Since then the obligation has been modified many times. See Perrett, Old Soldiers, p. 30.

Cadets leaving *before* that time walked away without obligation. She could therefore receive three years of college through ROTC, two years at West Point, then resign with five years of college credit paid for by taxpayers and owe the Army nothing.[6] The two free years were a convenient rationale for others as well, regardless of their gender. Those who were uncertain about military life or West Point often decided to give the Academy a try because they knew they could leave early without being trapped.[7] That seemed like a deal too good to pass up.[8]

Other women went for more traditional reasons. One remembered hearing about the opportunities for women at the nation's service academies in December of 1975. Listening to the radio while driving with her father in the family truck, she heard news concerning women at West Point and the idea of applying suddenly made enormous sense. She was thinking about ROTC anyway, had been told by Texas A&M that women were not allowed in the Aggie Corps band, and knew a great deal about the Academy because her father was a West Point man. Combined with opportunity to purse an excellent education, the news made her decision easy.[9] Another cadet applied along with

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[6]IWA, 4-2-96, side A. The tactic was used periodically during the Vietnam War by men trying to avoid service overseas. In this case the Academy won the woman over, and she ultimately enjoyed a long and successful Army career.

[7]IWA, 2-4-96, and 11-28-95, both side A.

[8]It was good for West Point too. The Army had no reason to want soldiers in an all-volunteer army that did not want to serve, and certainly had no need for the negative press that would inevitably surround former cadets who complained of military entrapment.

[9]IWA, 1-22-96, side A.

other women at her high school after meeting with an officer recruiting for West Point.[10] Whatever their initial reasons for applying, many women saw the Academy as a way out of "the hometown trap" or became cadets because their hopes for an education at Wellesley, Smith, or other prestigious schools were impossible for academic or financial reasons.[11]

There were also those who applied on a lark. As a young freshman at the University of Nebraska, one woman found herself sitting with a group of friends reading the university newspaper. Someone discovered an article about the opening of the service academies to women. They laughed at the prospect of one of their group applying, then agreed to draw straws to see who it would be. The woman, a promising pre-med student, drew the short straw and applied for admission in the Fall of 1975. Less than a year later she stood on the Plain at West Point as a New Cadet and member of the Class of 1980.[12]

Most women who applied to West Point had to deal with the ubiquitous American press. Many were overwhelmed by attention and publicity from the start, and newspaper, radio, and even television stories quickly created a momentum to attend the Academy which few could resist. "As soon as I got the nomination," said one cadet, "the newspapers and radio station came to my house. The newspapers built it up so big I

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[10]IWA, 2-28-96, side A. West Point has officers assigned to various regions of the country to coordinate the recruiting and admission of potential candidates, and in 1975 and 1976 was assisted by the Department of the Army, which encouraged regular Army recruiters to seek out young women who seemed likely to succeed at the Academy.

[11]Exit interview (EI), no date, pp. 2-3, IWA, 7-28-96, 7-19-96, 12-12-95, and 7-19-96, all side A..

[12]IWA, 3-18-96, side A.

couldn't have backed out if I'd wanted to."[13] In many instances women learned they had been accepted to West Point from the governor of their state or from members of Congress who called them personally.[14] Politicians often called the local press before they called the women themselves. In turn, the press notified candidates and barraged them with questions before they received official confirmation from the Academy.[15] Some women benefited from this early experience and learned to "avoid the press at all costs," though for most that lesson came only with time at West Point.[16]

The limelight too often proved intoxicating for a young person. One Cadet said she was "swept away"[17] by the attention, and all were surprised and often overwhelmed by the pictures in the paper, the stories on radio and television, and their newfound prominence among teachers, friends, and family members. Most became home-town heroines, especially in smaller towns where cadets were featured on the front page of the paper and celebrated as native daughters of the entire community.[18] One woman remembers playing softball just prior to her departure for West Point. As she was batting the umpire asked over and over about the Academy and why she was going.[19] Everyone

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[13]Helen Rogan, Mixed Company: Women in the Modern Army (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), p. 193.

[14]IWA, 2-29, 96, and 7-28-96, both side A.

[15]EI, 5-6-80, p. 1.

[16]IWA, 7-28-96, side A.

[17]IWA, 2-29-96, side A.

[18]IWA, 3-6-96, side A.

[19]Ibid.

wanted to share or at least understand the accomplishment. Pride became a communicable phenomenon, easily acquired by parents who were often stopped on streets and in supermarkets to be asked, "How is your West Point daughter?"[20]

Members of Congress were often part of the pressure as well. When a midwestern woman learned of her admission, she informed her representative that she planned to decline. Her plans included medical school and a career as a doctor; spending four years at West Point and five more in the Army looked like a detour. The Congressman was incensed and called to let her know he had traded a representative from Delaware for the slot he wanted to give to her. Besides, he insisted, if she failed to go then her state would be left without a woman at West Point. After receiving assurances she could go to medical school (which the congressman had no power to give) via West Point, the young woman relented.[21]

The pride and prestige associated with West Point was another attraction to women. Some, however, were forced into pursuing an Academy education by their parents. One woman's mother and father learned of the changes at West Point and did much of the admissions paperwork for her. Although she had no interest in either the Army or the Academy, the applicant went along with her parents because she believed she would never be admitted. When West Point informed her she could join the class of

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[20]Ibid. It could also be a source of jealousy for brothers and sisters, and was felt by men who chose an Academy education as well. One member of the Class of 1979 described the reaction in other people when he announced his admission this way: "When I mentioned it [West Point] I got this immediate *glow*." See IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes.

[21]IWA, 3-18-96, side A. Members of Congress often trade nomination slots if they receive a large batch of qualified applicants, or if they wish to nominate someone but already have their allotted number of cadets in attendance at the service academies.

1980, she balked, flatly informing her parents she had no desire to attend. They responded by informing her there would be no financial assistance from them for college if she refused to go, and in the end she relented.[22]

Others used the lure of a West Point degree to more constructive ends. One cadet's parents were frustrated by her desire to become a carpenter instead of attending college. When West Point was opened to women her mother remembered that at one time her daughter had decried the lack of opportunity for women at the Academy. "Put your money where your mouth is," the mother insisted, "it's open now, so apply." Taking the challenge the daughter applied to West Point and nowhere else.[23] As she put it later, "If I hadn't gotten accepted...I would have gone into carpentry. All or nothing."[24] She was accepted and thereafter pursued a very successful career in the Army, traveling all over the world and living in several foreign countries. How different her life would have been as a carpenter.

In the Army, enlisted women usually found their decision to apply to West Point was also influenced by parental figures, though in their cases it was officers rather than family members who nudged them to consider the Academy. One woman's company commander encouraged her to apply, did the paperwork, and hand-carried it around for proper signatures to make sure it was approved in a timely manner.[25] Another woman

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[22]IWA, 3-11-96, side A.

[23]IWA, 5-13-96, side A.

[24]EI, 5-5-80, p. 2. There were other cadets who applied only to West Point as well. See EI 5-7-80, p.1.

[25]IWA, 3-26-96, side A.

discovered her commander started the admissions process without checking with her first. Though uninterested in West Point, she eventually went because she felt she owed it to her commanding officer for taking such an active interest in her career.[26]

Those who applied from the ranks of the Army often entered the United States Military Academy Prepatory School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, where they received training in mathematics and English to prepare them for the Academy. Most women entered in January 1975 and took an abbreviated six month course of instruction. The normal pattern was for USMAPS cadets to attend classes for a year, and male cadets were hardly pleased with the attention, accelerated admissions, or different physical standards which were applied to women.[27] Their frustration was magnified by the fact that the accelerated admissions schedule meant women also entered USMAPS with automatic privileges male cadets were denied for the first six months of their enrollment. The decision to bring women in as equals with established male students was "fair," in the sense they were slated to graduate from USMAPS at the same time as their male peers, yet it hardly endeared them to men who had fought several months for the privileges associated with being close to entering West Point.[28] Ultimately, trapped as it was between the passage of legislation in October 1975 and the legal requirement to admit women in July 1976, the Military Academy had no choice but to rush women through USMAPS as soon as possible. That fact hardly mattered to many men, however,

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[26]IWA, 4-4-96, side A.

[27]Ibid., and EI, 5-8-80, p. 2.

[28]IWA, 3-26-96, side A.

and resentment at the "poop school" foreshadowed the resistance men would show at West Point.[29]

That women were being rushed into USMAPS as well as West Point was undeniable. Men often began applying for admission during the Fall of their junior year in high school and worked towards admission for years. Driven by the relentless calendar, the Academy admitted some women in a matter of weeks. One woman saw a magazine article in March 1976, applied and visited West Point in April, was admitted in May, and took her place alongside the rest of the class of 1980 on R-Day in July. A southern belle whose boyfriend was crushed and dismayed by her sudden urge to attend West Point, she shocked her friends and pleased her parents in a span of time no male cadet could ever hope to match.[30] That fact was hardly her fault, for the Academy faced a situation unique in its 174 year history. No woman is on record as asking for special treatment from the Academy, but those who recieved it were a source of resentment for many men just the same.

One of the most unusual routes to the Academy was taken by a woman who applied as a "second thought" in January 1976. With little history of athletic prowess, she had trouble with the Physical Aptitude Examination administered by West Point and took it twice before passing. Still considered a marginal candidate, she was admitted and later

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[29]At West Point cadets describe required bits of knowledge as "poop"; hence the USMAPS was called the poop school, for it prepared cadets for life at the Academy. Like their male peers, women "prepsters" were generally better prepared for the military side of Academy life than their classmates who came from civilian environments, and had a better sense of the resistance to women at West Point as well. See IWA, 3-26-96, side A. Bitterness over the speed of women's admissions plagued men at West Point too. See IWA, 4-13-96, side A.

[30]IWA, 4-4-96, side A.

became adept at a variety of physical performance measures during a long Army career. Interestingly, she was told later that one of the reasons she was admitted had been her looks. Rumor had it some Academy officials complained there were "all these women who look like men" and West Point needed "women who look like women."[31] Ironically, sexism may have worked to her benefit and helped gain her admission prior to R-Day, though it certainly became a daunting obstacle afterwards.

Others also applied as a second thought or out of curiosity rather than any burning desire to attend West Point. One received a postcard from the Academy on the basis of her ACT scores and returned the postage-paid reply card requesting more information without much thought. "If I'd had to put a stamp on it I probably never would have gone," she said.[32] Rather than being committed to the notion of becoming soldiers, many women applied for admission and even entered out of a sense of inquisitiveness. Like many men, some later found a real devotion to the Army and to the Academy which endured all their lives.[33]

The process of gaining admission to West Point also had a way of incrementally creating a sense of commitment toward attending the Academy. It simply took so much work to be accepted that some candidates resolved to go even before they were admitted in order to justify the effort. There were physical and medical exams, the arduous battle to acquire congressional nominations, the attention from family, friends, and the press,

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[31]IWA, 7-28-96, side A.

[32]IWA, 2-16-96, side A.

[33]IWA, 2-29-96, side A.

and the tense waiting as an often rushed bureaucracy at West Point struggled to keep up with demands for decisions.[34]

At the Academy the most controversial and difficult problem for staffers during the admissions process was determining how to make their male Physical Aptitude Exam (PAE) fairly measure and challenge the very different physiology of women. The exam was "used to predict the potential of entering candidates to successfully complete the physical aspects of USMA training," and involved throwing a basketball and performing a standing long jump for distance, running a timed shuttle between two lines for a distance of three hundred yards, and doing pullups. The problem was that West Point had no established performance criteria for women and knew few women could do any pullups at all. In tests conducted by Army researchers few women could do one, and less than one tenth of one percent could do the six which classified male candidates as physically marginal.[35] Clearly a new measurement was needed, and the flex arm hang was chosen. Previously used by the Army in basic training for women, the test involved hanging with both hands with the chin over the bar for a measured period of time.[36] Researchers insisted it was as challenging for women as pullups were for men, but many male cadets were never convinced.

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[34]Ibid. Many women in the class of 1980 were "additional appointments," meaning they were appointed by the Department of the Army to bring the Corps of Cadets up to desired strength. Though discretionary, the Army gave these appointments to some women because so many members of Congress had already allocated all of their own nominations prior to passage of legislation opening the academies to women in 1975.

[35]The bigger question of whether doing pullups is vital for soldiers or simply part of male culture was not addressed at the time.

[36]Vitters and Kinzer, Project Athena I, pp. 15-16.

West Point also scaled the times and distances in the other activities on the basis of data accumulated in Project 60, a research program conducted to gauge the performance of young women in activities demanded by the Academy curriculum.[37] Based on results of the research, West Point issued PAE scoring guidelines for women that were significantly lower than those for men. Women who scored 250 or better were in the "A" Zone, while men had to score 450 or better to receive similar status.[38] The guidelines reflected physiological differences as well as sociological realities, but were hardly conducive to creating a sense of fair play among men who faced the PAE with equal trepidation.

As the Class of 1980 took shape it became clear that many women were generally far below their male classmates in height, weight, and physical aptitude as measured by West Point standards. Opinion polls showed that most cadets were comfortable with the Academy's doctrine of "approximately equal with few exceptions" policy regarding Cadet standards, but a sizeable minority of men wanted identical treatment with no exceptions.[39] This rift over standards on selected physical performance measures became one of the most significant and controversial issues among those who criticized the presence of women at West Point.

Unaware of the controversy their impending arrival had already created, several women candidates visited the Academy prior to their arrival as cadets, particularly if they

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[37]Ibid., p. 13.

[38]Ibid., pp. 17-18. The complete table read: A Zone - Men 450, Women 250; B Zone - Men 400-449, Women 200-249; C Zone (marginal) - Men below 400, Women below 200.

[39]Ibid., p. 31.

lived relatively close to New York. Most were struck by the shattering beauty of the Academy's Gothic buildings and the "majestic" grandeur of the valley and hills that inspired the entire Hudson River School of painting.[40] It was "awe inspiring"and "beautiful," even "idealistic," a place where it was easy to get "caught up in the myths" that have surrounded the Academy since the revolution.[41] They stayed in the historic Hotel Thayer, and walked among the red and white oaks, the giant sycamores, and the dogwoods near the statue of Dwight D. Eisenhower on the Plain. A symbol of rebirth, regeneration, and Easter, the dogwoods were joined by white pines, Virginia Creepers, and a prodigious assortment of wildlife including deer, possum, and a variety of birds.[42] The juxtaposition of an institution dedicated to the study of war and the training of combat leaders being located amidst such stunning natural beauty struck many who visited West Point, as it did Charles Dickens during a visit in the nineteenth century. "In this beautiful place," he wrote, "the fairest among the fair and lovely Highlands of the North River, shut in by deep green heights and ruined forts...is the Military School of America." Dickens described the Academy as "...hemmed in, all round with memories of Washington, and events of the revolutionary war...." and standing "...along a glittering

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[40]IWA, 3-6-96, side A.

[41]IWA, 7-19-96, 2-16-96, and 5-13-96, all side A.

[42]Much of the wildlife is practically tame. During one visit to West Point I arrived at 4 a.m. on the Plain to contemplate the Academy in the mystical quiet of early morning. Bathed in moonlight and surrounding the statue of Eisenhower were a half-dozen white tail deer. Most were asleep, and the few sentinels seemed undisturbed by my approach. I sat nearby and peacefully watched the Academy slumber. It was a moment of profound grace, one made interesting by the mingling of nature, human beings, and war, a mix common on the peninsula of West Point for almost two centuries. The real irony, however, is that while the Academy is dedicated to the study of war, it is also an institution which reveres order. Thus, the deer were probably safer surrounded by soldiers and guns than they might have been anywhere else in North America.

path of sunlit water, with here and there a skiff, whose white sail often bends on some new tack as sudden flaws of wind come down upon her from the gullies in the hills..." West Point, he said, "could not stand on more appropriate ground, and any ground more beautiful can hardly be."[43]

Beyond the beauty of the surroundings however, some women who visited during the Spring of 1976 discerned the subtle rumblings of men who did not want women among them as peers. They encountered the often adolescent male culture of the Academy in the mess hall, where bratwurst were known as "donkey dicks" and cadets often bluntly encouraged women to pursue an education elsewhere.[44] One Cadet recalled a conversation in Washington Hall: "Just as I was swallowing my last forkful of blueberry pie," she wrote, "a tall cadet sitting across from me leaned over the table and said, 'Excuse me, miss, but why do you want to come here?'" Putting her fork down, the young woman answered, "Because I want to become the best Army officer I can be." The cadet answred, "That's fine, but couldn't you do it someplace else?"[45]

Another woman encountered resistance as well, though in more muted form. As she waited with other applicants at West Point for an escort to show her around the grounds, a cadet walked in and asked for volunteers to accompany him. When none of the men seated around her spoke up, she raised her hand to go. Alarm spread across the cadet's face and he exclaimed, "Oh no! I can't take you!" He took one of the men instead,

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[43]Charles Dickens, American Notes (Boston: Dana Estes and Company, no date), p. 317.

[44]IWA, 2-16-96, side A.

[45]Carol Barkalow, with Andrea Raab, In the Men's House: An Inside Account of Life in the Army by One of West Point's First Female Graduates (New York: Berkeley Books, 1992), p. 9.

and soon another cadet came into the room. Rather than ask for volunteers, however, he asked for her by name, and explained he had volunteered to be her escort because he was one of the few men who supported the admission of women to the Academy. Most of the men, he said, were against it. The ingrained male culture within the Corps of Cadets became even more evident when she went to the mess hall and was greeted by catcalls, whistles, and shouts from legions of cadets.[46] Women who visited were also warned to get rid of their long hair, which was very much in fashion during the 1970s. "You gotta cut that when you get here!" they shouted. [47] Another woman who visited the mess hall felt like "a freak at a freak show," and sensed hostility from the men.[48] Her apprehension was echoed by still another woman cadet, whose escort told her bluntly that if he ever saw her again he would do everything he could to run her out of the Academy. As fate would have it, he was part of her Beast Barracks company.[49] Such open disdain for women cadets reached every level of the Academy in 1976, and cadets were able to harass women visitors because officer oversight was virtually non-existent. Under what the Academy called the Fourth Class System, the Corps of Cadets largely regulated and oversaw itself during large chunks of each day with only minimal oversight from commissioned officers.

Outside the Academy there were also men working more subtly to discourage

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[46]IWA, 11-28-95, side A.

[47]Group IWA, 5-19-96, side A.

[48]IWA, 2-5-96, side A.

[49]EI, 5-9-80, p.6.

women from applying to or attending West Point, from angry fathers to jealous boyfriends to dismissive counselors or teachers. One clearly effective effort was made by an Army doctor who told the daughter of a West Point graduate she could never make it physically as a member of the Corps of Cadets. Ironically, she would have been a member of the Class of 1980 had she been admitted, and chose not to apply in large measure as a result of her doctor's warnings. She later married a member of another West Point class, and in hindsight her husband, knowing his wife had the physical ability to become a cadet, wondered if the doctor's talk was simply a "male's ploy to keep another female out?"[50]

Others heard through the grapevine that they would be unwelcome, or encountered cadets in their home towns who shared the unhappy news with them.. One woman saw the West Point Glee Club perform and managed to talk with some of the cadets. They were clearly unhappy about the change made by Congress and dreaded the arrival of women at the Academy.[51] Many men waited their entire lives to attend West Point, and had watched television shows like "The West Point Story" with young stars Clint Eastwood and Leonard Nimoy as well as a host of Hollywood epics about the Long Gray Line.[52] Some women saw those cultural icons too, but prior to 1975 they had no reason to believe they could relate or aspire to them. In contrast, men usually shared preconceptions, myths, and hopes about what the Academy would be like, and none of

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[50]ETA, 9-24-96, p. 9.

[51]IWA, 7-19-96, side A.

[52]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 27.

those visions included the presence of women. The adjustment period promised to be difficult for everyone, a fact either lost or only dimly conceived by most of the women who went to West Point in 1976.

By far the most common appeal of West Point for young women, just as for young men, was the price. The allure of free tuition, room and board, plus a salary and an excellent opportunity at a career, was seen as too good to ignore, especially for those who came from large families in which money was tight. "The price was right," said one graduate, while another pointed out she was the fourth of five kids and had to find her own money for college.[53] One woman put the financial draw of the Academy in more traditional terms by calling her admission the "best scholarship offer" she received.[54]

Most cadets mentioned the "challenge" of West Point in interviews, with one arguing it gave focus and direction to her life.[55] Some pointed to a commitment to the military or society, to a sense of duty to America. As one woman who entered the Academy with a year of college under her belt put it: "I felt I really owed something to society."[56] Another cadet reflected this attitude, saying, "I didn't come here just to get an education and to be a cadet. It was more than that," she said. "I know, you can call it loyalty or just wanting to give something. Something like this is really hard to put your

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[53]IWA, 2-5-96, side A, 3-6-96, side A. Almost every interviewee mentioned the free tuition at West Point as a factor in their decision to attend, and many came from large families. See IWA 2-16-96, 3-12-96, 4-4-96, 7-28-96, 2-4-96, and 7-19-96, all side A.

[54]LTA, 9-2-96.

[55]IWA, 2-27-96, side A. Others mentioned the challenge as well. See IWA, 9-10-96, side A.

[56]Ibid., and EI, 4-30-80, p. 1.

finger on but it's just sort of a higher calling or something."[57]

A few also came from patriotic families in which a parent or sibling had served in the military, or from backgrounds in which a loved one had been killed fighting in Vietnam or been stationed at West Point.[58] A military career had been on the minds of these women for years, and some had joined ROTC units or applied to West Point even before women were formally admitted.[59] One applied because she dreamed of one day becoming the American ambassador to the Soviet Union and thought an Army career would prepare her for leadership and geopolitical challenges on a global scale.[60]

Most women enjoyed the support of their family and friends, though parents sometimes voiced concerns relating to combat, to the remoteness of West Point from home, or about the challenge inherent in living among over four thousand men who were generally appalled by the prospect of women joining the Corps of Cadets. Even parents who disagreed with the idea of opening the service academies to women often found it impossible not to support their daughters. As one father put it, "I'm opposed to women going to the military academies...but if they're going to admit women I might as well have my daughter there."[61]

A few women faced lingering resentment from those who carried a hatred of the

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[57]EI, 5-6-80, p. 3.

[58]Group IWA, 5-19-96, side A.

[59]IWA, 4-10-96, and 4-23-96, side A.

[60]IWA, 4-23-96, side A.

[61]IWA, 7-28-96, side A.

military dating to the Vietnam War. As a teacher told one future cadet. "You're too much of a lady to go to West Point."[62] Friends sometimes expressed amazement that anyone would give up Summer vacation and the perks of a civilian college to have their hair cut and join a restrictive and stressful military environment.[63] Having matured in a society that stressed individual rights and liberties, they had trouble understanding why their women friends would abandon so many of those rights and liberties to be soldiers.

None of the women who chose to enter the Academy that Summer in 1976 were really shaped by the end of the Vietnam War or the turmoil at West Point during the 1970s. They knew of these events, but usually in the superficial way most teenagers know about the outside world. One woman encountered the honor scandal during a final exam at the University of Tennessee. A teaching assistant monitoring the test paced between rows of students and called out, "No cheating here. This isn't West Point."[64] Still, most women took the attitude that "those things happen" regarding the honor scandal, and only time as cadets allowed them perspective on how the scandal and even the war in Vietnam really did affect them at the Academy. Prior to their arrival, there was no way for them to know.[65]

Much of what is statistically known about the first women at West Point was

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[62]IWA, 2-16-96, side A.

[63]IWA, 3-12-96, side A.

[64]IWA, 2-27-96, side A.

[65]IWA, 2-5-96, side A.

compiled by Academy researchers participating in Project Athena.[66] The project was commissioned in December 1975 to compile an institutional history and data base for the admission of women, and became a four volume series focusing on how well West Point dealt with the assimilation of women into the Academy. Researchers found women in the class of 1980 generally did better in high school than their male cadet peers, though the purposeful search by West Point for women with high ACT scores, ROTC experience, and prior enlisted service influenced that statistic.[67] Men and women were generally similar in their motivations for attending the Academy and in their background, and those differences that did exist were usually associated with culture. Men, for example, were more likely to participate in sports and to have tried to gain admission to other service academies prior to attending West Point.[68] Not surprisingly, over half the men of the class of 1980, and almost half the women, had fathers who served at least one tour in a branch of the military. It is interesting to note, however, that *Athena* researchers played down the importance of differences in physical performance. "Without a 'job analysis' which justified a preference for certain traits in West Point graduates," they argued, "there is no logical basis for preferring physical aptitude over mental aptitude in a candidate."[69] It was a remark utterly foreign to most cadets and officers at West Point, for in the Army leadership was physical.

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[66]The project was originally known as Project Assimilate.

[67]Vitters and Kinzer, Project Athena I, p. 36.

[68]Ibid., p. 31. Title IX legislation opening more high school and college programs to women had barely taken effect in 1976.

[69]Ibid., p. 34 and 36..

What everyone at West Point could agree on was the need to attract women who wanted to serve their country. As the information booklet sent to prospective women candidates explained, "West Point is embarking on a new chapter in its history of service to the country -- the education of women as well as men officers for the United States Army." It proclaimed that "The Academy and the Army offer remarkable opportunities for meaningful service and personal satisfaction. West Point is resolved to challenge all cadets to their best efforts and to graduate quality young leaders for the Army."[70] When all the attention from the press faded away, when the clamor of proud family and friends quieted down, that was the West Point mission in essence. For good or ill few women fully understood that mission when they arrived at the Academy. Like their male peers, however, the message soon came home.

The greatest paradox surrounding the 119 women who arrived at West Point on July 7, 1976 is that they were traditional women in non-traditional roles. Like most young people they were often self-absorbed, and many failed to appreciate the enormity of the journey on which they were embarking. Those who stayed four years as cadets and served at least the minimum five years on active duty were explicitly promising the Army nine years of their lives. For those who were eighteen years old that was half-again as much time as they had been alive, and few considered that profound truth in any meaningful way prior to taking the oath as cadets on R-Day.[71] Rather than dreams of

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[70]United States Military Academy, "Information for Women Cadets" (West Point booklet dated November 1975), p. 17.

[71]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

martial glory or the desire for a military career or a West Point ring, the majority of women went to West Point because it seemed to be in their best interests to do so, just like the men. They did not go to ruin or change the institution, to make a "trailblazer atmosphere" for the women's rights movement, or to find husbands as some male cadets feared.[72] Most had no idea how disturbing their arrival at West Point would be to cadets and officials of the Academy. They were "too young and naive to know," and while they knew their admission was unpopular, most had faith they would be accepted rather quickly.[73] As one put it when asked how she thought male cadets would respond to the arrival of women, "Once they see we can do it, I think they'll accept us."[74] After all, most had never confronted blatant discrimination or bias before, and they generally came from climates where they were accustomed to success and acceptance. West Point proved to be more difficult than any of them could have imagined.

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[72]Group IWA, 5-19-96, side A, and EI, 5-6-80, p. 2. One woman emphasized that those few who did go to West Point to meet men or find a husband didn't last long as cadets. See EI, 5-6-80, p. 2.

[73]IWA, 2-5-96, side A.

[74]Potomac News, 9 April 1976, p. A-2.

Chapter Four: "The Little Things"

> For there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself.
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> -Herman Melville, Moby Dick[1]

July 7, 1976 dawned gray and humid, with intermittent rain showers adding dampness to an already dreary day. The weather seemed to reflect the mood of the Academy as it solemnly pushed through daunting change, and it suited the apprehensive demeanor of New Cadets confronting an intimidating watershed in their own lives.

Change swept the outside world as well. At the Academy the admission of women was the most tangible sign of the greater social evolutions beyond the Hudson River Valley, and while cadets often deplored what it meant for the monastic confines of West Point, there was no denying the fact that women were seizing more national and international attention than ever before. In 1974, an unprecedented eighteen women were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, while 130 were chosen by voters to serve in state legislatures nationwide.[2] Barbara Walters broke new ground by becoming the first network anchorwoman to receive more than one million dollars a year for her work, and Nadia Comaneci dazzled the world on her way to gold medals at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. And though unrelated to the admission of women to West Point in any way, it is worth noting that Cliff Richard released a single in July which went gold virtually overnight. It was called "Devil Woman," and one suspects it was popular with

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[1]Herman Melville, Moby Dick; or The Whale (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 148.

[2]Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, p. 197.

many male cadets that Summer of 1976.[3]

No music greeted the Class of 1980 as they arrived at the Academy, however. Instead, as over a thousand young men and a handful of young women hesitantly approached West Point, they slowly crossed the threshold between civilian life and the myth-shrouded career of a cadet. The first day of their odyssey was officially known as "Reception Day," though everyone simply referred to it as R-Day instead. Between 7 and 10 a.m. New Cadets arrived with their loved ones at Michie Stadium, where they were greeted by Academy officials and briefly told what to expect as cadets. In short order parents and friends were escorted away for tours of West Point while New Cadets were led to buses which took them to the Central Gymnasium for in-processing. The ritual was utterly formulaic and planned, but emotional just the same for the young men and women who said goodbye to their loved ones and the life they knew before in order to enter the strange and foreign fold of the Academy.

It was also emotional for the cadet cadre and officials of West Point. Most of them could recognize themselves in the uncertain faces maneuvering through processing stations, for at one time the majority of them had been New Cadets too. Beyond triggering hallowed or frightful memories, however, the Class of 1980 seemed to threaten the institution as well. There were, after all, women among the New Cadets that July in 1976, and they added an upsetting dimension for every graduate who believed gender integration was a step towards weakness and a loss of tradition. As Rick Atkinson

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[3]Norm N. Nite, Rock On Almanac: The First Four Decades of Rock n' Roll: A Chronology (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 305.

wrote:"Had a company of Martians suddenly appeared on the Plain in dress gray and tarbuckets, there would have been no greater sense of invasion and outrage than was provoked by the arrival of ten dozen American females."[4] Academy leaders fell back on advance planning as well as time-honored ritual to cope on R-Day, so that despite their uncertainty it was like so many others endured by New Cadets at West Point over the years.

As soon as the New Cadets were out of sight of their loved ones, clutching the one bag or suitcase permitted by the Academy, the yelling began. Members of the upperclass, who were the real leaders of the Corps of Cadets as well as the trainers and enforcers of what was known as the Fourth Class System, began the long process of introducing the New Cadets to military life. As the buses discharged their passengers New Cadets were taken through a variety of stations inside the gymnasium. They were "stripped, examined, and fitted with new clothing - white T-shirts, black gym shorts, black kneesocks, and oxfords."[5] Women were issued crew-necked shirts while men retained the old v-neck variety, and all New Cadets received both green and yellow tags pinned to their shorts which included lists of where they had been, what they had been issued, and where they needed to go next.

R-Day was dominated by a cadet known as "The Man in the Red Sash," though in truth there were many men in the red sash.[6] They were Firsties, seniors who wore the

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[4]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 408.

[5]Barkalow, In the Men's House, p. 11.

[6]When women became Firsties the title was changed to "The Cadet in the Red Sash."

distinctive scarlet sash around their waist to distinguish themselves as the leaders of the Corps. Assisted by third year cadets and Academy staff, Firsties shepherded the New Cadets through a dehumanizing process meant to shock as much as to educate. R-Day began six weeks of military training known as Cadet Basic Training (CBT). Commonly known as "Beast Barracks," the period was designed to introduce New Cadets to military life and the fundamentals of being soldiers.[7] R-Day was the convulsive shock which began the process, and a day which no cadet ever, ever forgot. They were told how to salute, how to march, and issued a wide variety of equipment in a methodical and often hurried manner.

Along the way it quickly became clear that not all New Cadets were treated identically. Women, for example, were sent to the barber shop far more often to receive haircuts. This may have resulted in part from confusion over the differing hair regulations for women. While men's hair was cut well above the ears and very short, the rules stipulated that women's hair could not extend beyond the top of their collar nor more than a limited distance in any direction away from their head. Ultimately, however, the additional trips to the barber were a way for men to harass women in a seemingly legitimate manner, and because any upperclassman could order a New Cadet to get another trim there were many women who endured multiple trims that first day. One woman was sent to the barber shop *seven* times.[8]

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[7]New Cadets were "beasts" upon arriving at the Academy because of their ignorance in all things military. Hence the name "Beast Barracks." See U'Ren, Ivory Fortress, p. 17.

[8]Barkalow, In the Men's House, p. 12.

There were differences in the uniforms too. Women's trousers had no back pockets, for example, ostensibly to make the wider hips of many women appear as slim as possible.[9] Worse, the zippers and buttons on the pants were on the wrong side, and the flimsy plastic zippers broke time and time again.[10] In the long run each of these maladies were cured, but on R-Day it meant many women marched in the afternoon parade wearing borrowed male trousers or pants fastened precariously with safety pins.[11]

New Cadets were taught the famous "four responses," which were the only acceptable answers to any order or question. They were "Yes, Sir. No, Sir. No excuse, Sir." and "Sir, I do not understand." They learned to walk at 120 steps per minute, eyes straight ahead, squaring corners, with shoulders against the walls and their arms bent at ninety degree angles, and began to understand they were responsible for following orders immediately, no matter how many were issued at once.[12] Some, especially those who walked in with no idea what to expect, often expressed bitter frustration over why "they (upperclassmen) didn't explain everything," not knowing that was part of a system aimed at destroying old habits and painfully creating new ones.[13]

For most New Cadets R-Day was a blur of orders, processing stations, moving

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[9]In the long run this was a practical snafu of the first order, for it meant women had no place to carry feminine hygiene articles. They were forced to carry them in their hats or socks until pockets were added.

[10]Rogan, Mixed Company, p. 194.

[11]Barkalow, In the Men's House, p. 16.

[12]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

[13]EI, no date, side A. Stories concerning neophyte New Cadets are plentiful at West Point, and a great source of amusement for graduates. Over the years New Cadets have arrived with furniture, golf bags, stereos, cars, and the entire gamut of human naivete, and some have been so shocked by the military environment they left the Academy within hours of their arrival.

into rooms, briefly meeting classmates, eating lunch, and preparing for the afternoon parade on the Plain. No more rapid or astonishing transformation could be found in the theater of American life. At 10 a.m. over one thousand young civilians in distinctive clothes had nervously clutched their meager belongings and said farewell to their loved ones in Michie Stadium. At 5 p.m. those same young men and women emerged from the Academy's historic sally ports with military haircuts and wearing the familiar West Point white over gray uniform. They marched in great columns on to the Plain and assembled in formation behind squad and company commanders who were strangers only hours before, yet who now held power and leverage over their charges most parents would have envied. Thousands of friends and family members filled bleachers fronting the parade ground, searching for their New Cadet in the midst of a sea of utterly similar faces.

Waiting to take the oath of allegiance and begin their journey toward becoming Army officers, the New Cadets listened as they were welcomed to West Point by the Superintendent. He was speaking mainly to the nervous parents in the stands, however, so most spent the time checking their posture, their spacing between other cadets, and their uniform. All these things, utterly unimportant only hours before, already assumed monumental importance in their lives. Then they were asked to raise their right hand and take their *sacramentum* as cadets at the United States Military Academy. When the deed was done they passed through the intersection of anticipation and palpable experience, where adolescence began to give grudging ground to experience, and crossed the threshold between myth and reality, between tradition and tangible truth. They were no longer simply teenagers. Instead, they were young people en route to becoming officers

charged with the defense of their nation, and implicitly challenged with making the admission of the first women at West Point a success. This was history in action - one West Point replacing another.

The journey was different than in the old days, when New Cadets often came individually. They had once arrived by train at the station down by the river, or traveled by horse, carriage, or foot to pass through the Academy's main gate. In the 1850s New Cadets were greeted by their First Sergeant with a barrage of buttons fired from a brass candlestick loaded with gunpowder, and in throughout the nineteenth century there was little formality until training and classes began.[14] Even in the years prior to World War I, a young cadet might have several days or even weeks pass before every member of his class arrived.

Such informality passed away in later years, yet the journey from civilian to cadet was essentially the same, involving as it did the timeless exchange of individual autonomy for allegiance to a group; of loyalty to oneself for dedication to duty, honor, and country. The journey drew West Pointers of different eras together, and across the passage of time, throughout the tumult and triumph and sacrifice of American history, they helped the United States Military Academy cultivate an aura of unchanging, steadfast dedication to national service. Part of the euduring myth of West Point was that very little had changed since 1802, when Congress established the fledgling institution as a means of providing trained military officers and engineers for an adolescent nation.

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[14]Daughters of the United States Army, West Point Chapter, West Point: The United States Military Academy (Charlotte, North Carolina: C. Harrison Conroy Co., 1994), p. 37.

Even for outsiders it was an easy thing to slip into nostalgic reverie, to believe the romance of the place was static and permanent, above the pedestrian norms of American life. Yet change *did* periodically wrap its arms about the Academy, and never was that spirit of evolution more apparent than when the R-Day parade ended and the Class of 1980 returned through their barracks' sally ports for the evening. A new era had begun.

The next morning, with parents and loved ones gone and the press less noticeable than on R-Day, the Class of 1980 formally began Beast Barracks. They found West Point was an environment Jane Goodall would have recognized in an instant: a place where primitive, physical battles for supremacy were waged among males for leadership of the group. There were rituals to establish hierarchy, and a socialization process wholly unacceptable in the outside world beyond other closed male societies like fraternities and secret clubs. It was a world intended to break some, and from the Academy's point of view the sooner the weak ones left the better. Army careers, especially when they involved combat, hardly favored those who were soft, and immersion in the West Point experience was ultimately meant to prepare cadets for whatever challenges the world might offer. As Arthur M. Schlesinger wrote of Franklin Roosevelt's years at America's most exclusive college prep school: "...some - the tougher ones - were braced by their years at Groton even while they suffered under the system. They were strengthened," he said, "by the intellectual training, inspired by the moral purpose, and sent into the world with a high sense of their duties as Christian gentlemen. To survive unhappiness at

Groton was to be capable of anything."[15] He could have been describing West Point.

Very quickly, New Cadets learned the primal importance of physical prowess. It largely determined both the official and unofficial pecking order among cadets regardless of gender, and was measured primarily in terms of rigourous, mandatory runs which were a daily rite of passage and test of power in which personality and intellect hardly mattered. Success in those runs was the "only thing that got you accepted," because it indicated physical fitness, and that equaled leadership.[16]

This emphasis on running and physical power, while easily dismissed as unimportant and obsessively macho, made a certain amount of sense at West Point. Every group has rites of passage, tests potential members must pass to be accepted. For some human groups the rites are cerebral; attorneys must first graduate law school and then pass the bar exam, doctors must graduate medical school and become licensed, while professors must earn graduate degrees, research, and write on problems in their field of study. For others, the rites are physical and action oriented. Gang members must show a willingness to commit violence, football players must demonstrate strength, speed, and stamina, and soldiers must show proficiency at marching, shooting, and hand to hand combat. The more exclusive the group, the more challenging the rites. Earning a Ph.D. is more difficult than earning a bachelor's degree, being a neurosurgeon more prestigious than practicing family medicine, and joining an elite combat unit more

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[15]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 321.

[16]TWA, 7-28-96, author's notes.

physically challenging than doing paperwork in an administrative section. West Point made the tests both physical and the mental, but, true to military tradition, physical prowess counted the most. Always. No vocation demanded more physically than the society of warriors, and as future Army officers charged with winning America's wars West Pointers historically prided themselves on being especially tough and demanding. Women seemed to threaten that tradition, particularly when they did not have to meet the same physical standards as men.

Yet it was difficult for cadets and the Army to distinguish between standards that were vital for all soldiers to meet and standards which existed merely because they were masculine and within the range of most men. Whether things like upper body strength and speed really mattered for soldiers in either peacetime or war was an open intellectual question, but one which traditon made volatile for many West Pointers. The weight of that tradition meant that men could not simply change the harsh, male-oriented environment of the Academy when confronted with the first women cadets. Just as important, some of them had no intention of even trying to make the system equitable. Male New Cadets received physical harassment and hazing, while their women peers faced physical hazing, sexual harassment, innuendo, and an extraordinarily challenging environment where they were forced to go through the rites of passage to become Plebes without being fully accepted as members of the Corps. The high-pitched voices of some women were mimicked by the Beast cadre, who often complained that women's voices were unmilitary.[17] Women were routinely barked at by men, as at USMAPS the previous

[17]EI, 5-7-80, p. 4, and IWA, 1-22-96, author's notes.

Spring, and the cumulative stress was palpable for many New Cadets.[18] "The first time I called home all I did was cry," said one woman.[19] On daily runs, upperclassmen jumped on men who fell out before the first woman did, and once all the women had been eliminated the cadence and "Jody" songs became much more sexist and ribald.[20] While a handful of women tried to accept this pattern stoically because they realized "The power they [the upperclass] had over me was the power I gave them," most women found Beast the first of many traumatic hurdles to be overcome at West Point.[21] The Fourth Class System in many ways represented an enormous rite of initiation. It gave young people tremendous power over each other, however, and thousands of men power over a hundred and nineteen women who often had little understanding of where the privileges of rank stopped for their superiors. For members of the upperclass who bore the emotional scars of Plebe year themselves and harbored grudges Beast was a big frustration release, and that fact added to a situation in which the conditions were ripe for women to "catch it."[22]

Beyond stress, sixteen-hour days full of marching, shooting, and bivouacking, Beast was intended to develop in cadets the "cardinal military virtues of obedience and

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[18]IWA, 1-22-96, author's notes.

[19]EI, 5-7-80, p. 4.

[20]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes. Jody songs were sung on marches or runs and involved a call and response between the group and a leader. They were often both sexually oriented and obscene, and drew their name from "Jody," the ubiquitous civilian who stole soldier's girlfriends in times of war.

[21]IWA, 4-2-96, author's notes.

[22]Ibid.

loyalty."[23] It also introduced New Cadets to "Plebe Poop," the vast array of miscellaneous Academy knowledge and trivia upperclassmen demanded Plebes recite on command. Cadets had to know, for example, that the Administration Building was the tallest all-stone masonry building in the world, that the Federal Silver Depository was located just outside Washington Gate, and that the shaft of Battle Monument was the largest piece of turned granite in the Western Hemisphere.[24] At a moment's notice a Plebe might be asked to bark out the definition of leather, which ran:

> If the fresh skin of an animal, cleaned and divested of all hair, fat, and other extraneous matter, be immersed in a dilute solution of tannic acid, a chemical combination ensues; the gelatinous tissue of the skin is converted into a non-putresible substance, impervious to and insoluble in water; this sir, is leather.[25]

They had to know there were seventy eight million gallons of water in Lusk Reservoir when water was flowing over the spillway, that there were 340 lights in Cullum Hall, and were responsible for knowing the condition of the "cow." "How is the cow?" an upperclassman would demand. The Plebe answer was, "Sir, she walks, she talks, she's full of chalk, the lacteal fluid extracted from the female of the bovine species is highly prolific to the nth degree."[26] There was no point to the memorization, except to give

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[23]Richard C. U'Ren, M.D., Ivory Fortress: A Psychiatrist Looks at West Point (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), p. 18.

[24]Taylor Hall, the Administration Building, boasted a one hundred sixty foot tower, the depository was home to the bulk of America's silver bullion, and Battle Monument honored the 2,230 officers and enlisted men of the Regular Army who died in the Civil War. See USMA, Bugle Notes, pp. 131, 135, and 146.

[25]USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 188. In the mess hall, the "nth" degree was the number of containers of milk remaining at the Plebe's table.

[26]Ibid.

Plebes more tasks which demanded their time, their energy, and their immersion in the culture of West Point, and to demonstrate to each of them that when orders were given they were followed. Period.

As Beast continued, even neophyte New Cadets felt the persistent after-shocks of the Spring honor scandal, for they rocked West Point to its foundation. In June, during graduation ceremonies for the Class of 1976, Rabbi Avraham Soltes delivered an invocation referring to the higher ideals sought by West Point and the most idealistic members of the Long Gray Line. "While the world around us condones a cynical disregard of standards and the casual compromise of principle," he prayed, "We have sought, here, to affirm our unflagging faith in the integrity of man's word to his fellow man..."[27] It was a stirring appeal to principle, but one which stood in stark contrast to the ugly stain on the Academy's reputation the scandal represented. More than eighty attorneys representing cadets accused of violating the honor code were entrenched in Thayer Hall, suggesting some cadets placed more of their unflagging faith in the courts than their fellow man.[28]

As investigations continued, the constant press interest and pressure from higher authorities led Superintendent Berry to proclaim "I've never been in more of a combat situation than I am now."[29] Coming from a veteran of combat in both Korea and

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[27] Assembly, September 1976, p. 21.

[28] Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 401.

[29] Ibid., p. 395. It was a dramatic remark, for Berry was a highly decorated combat veteran with four Silver Stars. A former military assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert MacNamara, Berry was described as a "fast burner," and was profiled by Life in a 1970 article which predicted his eventual ascension to Chief of Staff of the Army.

Vietnam, his remarks said a great deal about the fear the scandal generated in the minds of many graduates, who believed the survival of West Point was at stake.

They feared that a gradual decline in standards throughout America was destroying the efficacy of the honor code among cadets, and to a point they seemed correct. Investigators found a "cool on honor" subculture at West Point, where roommates and friends cooperated on homework and exams and the honor code was a source of ridicule. This went beyond bed-stuffing incidents, when cadets piled clothing under their blankets to simulate their presence while they snuck off post. And it went beyond routine disregard for certain regulations, for among cadets it was understood there was a difference between breaking a rule and an honor violation. Sneaking out after taps, for example, was breaking a rule. Lying was an honor violation, and the gray area between the two was a source of much debate and humorous exchange among cadets.[30] The sheer scale of the 1976 cheating scandal frightened graduates, however, because it demonstrated that honor violations were not an aberration. They were a consistent fact of life for much of the Corps, and while that sort of generalization marred those cadets who were innocent, it was nonetheless true.[31]

When the honor boards finally concluded their investigations, 152 cadets from the

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[30]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 3. The classic cadet connundrum was deciding whether it was an honor violation to say "I love you" to a date if, at some later time, the cadet decided he or she was not in love at all. The consensus was that if the cadet meant "I love you" *at the moment* the phrase was uttered, then no honor violation had taken place.

[31]A similar scandal took place in 1951, when disdain for the Honor Code resulted in widespread cheating centered around the Army football team. Ninety cadets were expelled, and one player summed up his views on the honor code by saying "I don't give a fuck. I didn't come here for all this honor shit, I came to play football." See Hackworth, About Face, p. 217, and IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

Class of 1977 were dismissed from the Academy with the option to return the following year.[32] It was a decision which frustrated almost everyone. Some cadets believed that many more of their peers were guilty of cheating, while others concluded that the honor code was in such shambles by the late 1970s that almost all of the Corps should have been expelled. Opposing them were the old grads and those who believed honor violations threatened the essence of the Academy and should be punished ruthlessly. They were generally appalled by the option to return that was given to expelled cadets, for it implied there was no punishment for transgressors beyond waiting a year to graduate. The Academy argued it was a waste to ruin a good cadet's career for a single mistake, and that violations of the honor code were so pervasive during the scandal that some allowance had to be made for those who were simply caught up in the "cool on honor" subculture. Purists remained unconvinced, and their staunch, strict interpretation of the honor code harkened to the view espoused by the 1908 edition of Bugle Notes, which stated: "A thief, a liar, and a coward cannot be extenuated in the eyes of the Corps, and it is no part of the function of West Point to become a reformatory of morals."[33] Such a statement reflected the world of the early twentieth century, when West Point expected civilian society to inculcate morals in young people before they entered the Academy. By the 1970s, however, American society had changed, and governmental institutions were being forced to step in to develop morality and ethics among young people themselves, just as they were forced to revamp societal assumptions about race and gender.

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[32]ETA, 7-8-96, author's notes.

[33]Quoted in Assembly, June 1977, p. 7.

All through the late Summer of 1976 Beast Barracks rolled onward, and at the end of August the CBT Regiment returned from training at nearby Lake Frederick. Following their march back to the Academy, the New Cadets of the Class of 1980 became Plebes and were brought into the fold of the Corps at the annual Acceptance Day Parade, the parade in which they became members of the hive and began looking forward to the rigors of the academic year.

Soon after, the remainder of the Corps returned from Summer leave and training, and Plebes were removed from the eight companies which made up the CBT Regiment and dispersed throughout all thirty-six companies in the Corps. This process took approximately a week, which in formal Academy jargon was known as "Reorganization Week." The Corps called it "Re-Orgy," and it was a time of considerable fear for Plebes because they were suddenly outnumbered. During Beast Barracks there were approximately ten New Cadets for every upperclassmen; from ReOrgy onward there were three upperclassmen for every Plebe, and the vast majority of the returning Yearlings, Cows, and Firsties were quick to begin hazing.[34] They were often eager to take their first crack at women cadets as well, to locate, talk with, and investigate the most celebrated and despised Plebes in the Academy's history.[35]

Organized as a Brigade into four regiments of three battalions of three companies each, the Corps had an authorized strength of 4,417.[36] It was commanded by a Cadet First

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[34]ETA, 9-24-96, p. 9.

[35]EI, 5-1-80, 14.

[36]USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 46.

Captain, who was assisted by Cadet Captains, Lieutenants, Sergeants, and the like, who commanded every cadet unit down to the squad level. The Academy itself was commanded by the Superintendent, a three star (Lieutenant) General who was always an Academy graduate. He was assisted by a Commandant of Cadets, who oversaw the military training of cadets, and a Dean of the Academic Board, who handled academic affairs. Legions of Colonels, Majors, and Captains filled the Academy staff and faculty, with some serving as West Point Tactical Officers (TACS). The TACS were responsible for overseeing individual cadet companies, and served as mentors for cadets adjusting to their roles as leaders and future officers.[37] They were the primary role models for cadets, and the officers with the most direct responosibility for overseeing cadet behavior in and out of the barracks. And because their style of command influenced the cadets in their charge, TACS had enormous influence over the manner in which Plebes and matters of discipline were treated. Those who took charge and made no allowance for abuse typically oversaw companies in which discipline was tight and cadets knew how far they could push their authority. Those who made a habit of looking the other way, either because they believed in "tradition" or the concept that West Point needed to be unusually harsh to toughen cadets for careers in the Army, often let senior cadets run wild. TACS in the latter group were a terrible threat to all Plebes, for they sometimes deferred to the law of the jungle. While the women of the Class of 1980 did not know it, TACS in the latter group were an enormous threat to them, and one of the reasons that

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[37]U'Ren, Ivory Fortress, pp. 1-2. Many of the Colonels at West Point lived on "Colonel's Row," in homes on the hills above the Plain designed by Stanford White.

treatment of women varied so much from company to company.

Re-Orgy spread the small number of women at West Point precariously thin, and denied them any sort of meaningful support from each other during their first year at the Academy. It also introduced them to the unique identity of each company and regiment within the Corps. Companies were where cadets spent the bulk of their time and drew their identity, so it was a matter of considerable consequence when company assignments were handed out. Some companies by tradition and were relatively "easy," while others were notoriously "hard." This fact accounts for the wide variety of experiences among cadets, even those who graduated in the same class. Every regiment and company was unique, a function of its TAC, upperclassmen, and subordinates tied to whatever tradition the unit carried forward from year to year. First Regiment, for example, was considered the toughest at West Point, while Fourth Regiment was thought to be more lenient. Companies were labeled A through I, and connected to their parent regiment in correspondence. A cadet in Company B, Second Regiment, would abbreviate his or her home by saying they were in B-2, and each company had songs, chants, or phrases reflecting its character. Laid back I-4, for example, made "Quit the Corps and Join I-4" their battle cry, while the legendary strictness of F-1 garnered the company an unofficial name which was obscene.

The Academy was a virtual world, one in which the vocabulary, clothing, and mannerisms were strictly prescribed and entirely alien to civilians. Beds were "bunks," dorm rooms were "quarters," cafeterias were "mess halls," and so on. The quotidian life of a West Point cadet meant walking at 120 steps per minute, shoulder against the wall,

squaring corners, ducking into latrines to avoid hazing when possible, and being quizzed at meals by upperclassmen intent on exposing gaps in the required poop each Plebe had to learn. All were forced to read the New York Times to track national and international events, for they were liable for information in daily editions of the Times as well as their normal quota of West Point lore and legend.[38]

For women there was the persistent harassment of being ordered to get extra haircuts, and of trying to satisfy upperclass demands for a flawless "gig line." Gig lines were the lines made by jacket edges and trouser seams on a cadet's body, and regulations demanded they be straight. Male Plebes had to have proper "gigs" too, but the West Point uniforms were designed and perfected for over a century and a half to glorify the male physique. On the more rounded figures of many women the gig lines were virtually impossible to perfect.[39]

From the very first day of Beast, there were those who decided West Point life was not for them. The steady trickle of resignees continued into the Fall, and those who chose to leave the Long Gray Line were quickly shipped to the Boarders Ward in Eisenhower Barracks (known as the "Quitters's Prison"), lest their contagion spread to others.[40] There was little need for worry, however, for most cadets were hesitant to leave. The fame, excitement, and expectations associated with attending West Point made it

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[38]TWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

[39]Rogan, Mixed Company, p. 194.

[40]The Boarders Ward was a busy place in 1976. In additon to New Cadets who wanted to leave West Point, Cadets accused of honor violations were housed there pending the outcome of their investigations as well. See Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 401.

hard to quit, even for those who truly hated their new life. Leaving the Academy was really more like suicide. Those who said they wanted to go were counseled by other cadets, by the staff and faculty, and if they truly desired to leave then that was it. When they were discussed only in the past tense, as if they had died rather than simply left to attend another school.[41]

The grueling physical regime, which included running, exercise, and athletics every single day, meant cadets ate voraciously, and some Plebes lived for desserts especially. One member of the class said he survived Beast by reminding himself over and over again, "They're going to feed me."[42] Snacking was not permitted, though packages from home containing food (known as "Boodle") were acceptable provided the food was eaten on weekends and gone by the following Monday. Boodle was particularly valued by those Plebes who were kept so busy answering questions at meals they had difficulty eating. This was one of the oldest means of hazing Plebes, and no doubt the motivator behind the ancient battle cry which read: "Through the lips, O'er the tongue, Down the esophagus, By one lung, Cheer up tummy, Here I come, BOODLE!"[43]

Plebes became familiar with Corps discipline, which was meted out through a system of demerits known as "quills" and "slugs." Quills were given for minor infractions, and derived their name from the fact quill pens were once used to record them. Slugs were for more serious offenses, and usually included "punishment tours,"

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[41]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

[42]Ibid.

[43]The Pointer, September 29, 1923, p. 24.

which involved walking the Central Area between barracks in full dress uniform for a period of hours.[44] Tours were conducted in utter silence, and many a Plebe spent dozens of hours on weekends walking away their transgressions, marching monotonously back and forth in the Central Barracks Area with a rifle on their shoulder. Inclimate weather never delayed carrying out a punishment tour, and those who accumulated more than one hundred hours on the area were known as "Century Men." A handful of rebels, often those who chose to deliberately test the limits of the system, even moved on to become "Double Century" cadets. The process was precarious, however, for receiving more than a proscribed number of demerits each month led to a review board and possible expulsion.

In addition to being constantly ready for questions and inspections from upperclassmen and completely prepared for classes, Plebes were also subject to an assortment of mundane duties which kept the Corps functioning. These jobs rotated among Plebes within each company, normally on a weekly basis. Laundry Carriers handled the pickup and delivery of both dirty and clean laundry; Orderlies handled the cleaning of common areas; Mail Carriers delivered newspapers (a copy of the *New York Times* for every cadet every morning), mail, and official Academy correspondence; Linen Carriers dealt with the pickup and delivery of bed linens; and Minute Callers were barked out the time remaining prior to every formation which included more than half of the callers' company. To handle unanticipated situations, Company Minutemen were

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[44]William Manchester, American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964 (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1978), p. 63.

chosen to be available on a minute's notice to handle special duties.[45]

In the Mess Hall, designated Plebes served at each table as Gunners and Hot and Cold Beverage Corporals. Beverage Corporals had to know the preferences of everyone at the table, even if wicked upperclassmen indicated their preferences varied according to the day of the week or the dish being served, and serve beverages accordingly. Dessert Corporals handled and served desserts, and had the stressful responsibility of slicing pies and cakes into equally-sized portions regardless of how many people were at the table. Above all, they were to avoid marring the icing lest they face the wrath of the table commander. (The key was to make templates for the number of pieces and dip the knife into a glass of water to avoid marring the icing on cakes).[46] Those who butchered the job were often required to stand and shout, "SIR, THE DESSERT HAS BEEN RAPED, AND I DID IT!"[47] So it went, day after day, with meals eaten at attention and by the book, meaning Plebes sat erect on the edge of their chairs and cut their food into tiny, bite-sized pieces. The routine was occasionally relaxed only for those who received "Dear John" letters in the mail. They were allowed to "fall out," or relax at mess the day the letter arrived.[48]

Besides being arcane and utterly alien when compared with life in the civilian or

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[45]United States Military Academy, "The Fourth Class System: 1976-1977" (West Point: USMA, 1976), pp. 7-11.

[46]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes. Resourceful Plebes typically carried the templates in their trouser pockets or inside their caps.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

even the regular Army world, these rituals served to remind Plebes they lived in a world unto itself where nothing functioned as it had in their previous lives. Every ritual, every event, every encounter with an upperclassman was an occasion for pressured decisions and an opportunity for failure. All things being equal, they were opportunities for success as well, but few Plebes saw them that way. The penalties for failure were much greater than the rewards for success, and under the rigorous scrutiny of the upperclass and the grinding dawn to midnight schedule, every Plebe eventually failed at something many, many times. This sort of stressful environment led to faces breaking out among many cadets, and most women stopped menstruating for extended periods. When parents or loved ones came to visit the Academy Plebes were instructed to always take a fellow cadet along to get them out of the barracks and away from the stress too.[49]

Beyond these routines, running and physical fitness were the most important barometers of where cadets stood in the Academy pecking order, and Plebes quickly learned the paramount role of athletics. Douglas MacArthur formed the foundation for the focus on physical fitness and competition, and penned the famous passage, "Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that upon other fields, on other days, will bear the fruits of victory." It was a message the faithful believed at West Point, and every cadet participated in intramural or intercollegiate athletics. "Corps Squads" competed against other schools, while intramural sports pitted company against company in both the Fall and Spring of every year. They included football, track, soccer, triathalon, flickerball, boxing, wrestling, and many others. The coaches, officials, and senior cadets

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[49]Ibid.

in every sport were Firsties, so that even in sports upperclassmen were given experience in leadership.[50]

They used that experience primarily on Fourth Classmen, who learned the timeless truth that in the Army and at West Point only the group really mattered, that duty and sacrifice in the very best soldiers came before self. The distinction was noted by William Dean Howells, who, in visiting West Point, left a civilian environment to contemplate life in the military. During his stay he proclaimed: "We civilians talk, we almost talk solely, of our rights, but in the army, it seems that men talk chiefly of their duties,...and never of their rights... It seems to correct all the mistaken tendencies of the time before they became soldiers."[51] The view was widely shared at West Point.

Plebes also learned of the countless idiosyncracies of the specific and seemingly endless cadet vocabulary. To "smell hell"was to anticipate hazing.[52] "Flamers" were cadets or officers who were hard on Fourth Classmen, who were also known as "Beanheads," "Beaners," and "Smacks." Roommates were "wives," dates were "drags," and the path along the Hudson where cadets could escort guests was known as "Flirtation Walk," or "Flirty." The Brigade was formally known as the United States Corps of Cadets, which abbreviated U.S.C.C., and in cadet lore stood for "Uncle Sam's Community College." Cadets who were perfect in military bearing and knowledge were "STRAC," West Point itself was "Woo Poo" or the "South Hudson Institute of

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[50]USMA, Bugle Notes, pp. 78-80.

[51]William Dean Howells, "Editor's Study," Harpers's New Monthly Magazine 82 (January 1891): 317.

[52]Rick Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 30.

Technology" (S.H.I.T), and high ranking upperclassmen were known as "Striper Dogs," a reference to the large number of rank chevrons on their sleeves.[53]

To balance the demands of Plebe poop, academics, and athletics, there were social activities to keep cadets occupied year round. Seventy-six clubs offered a range of pursuits for every member of the Corps to pursue during their limited free time, and the more than one hundred hops held annually by the Academy meant weekends were often busy as well.[54]

Far more important than social activities, however, was the informal institution which dominated every Plebe's life. It was called hazing, and at West Point Plebes became aware of its realities from their very first day on post. That such a means of discipline, training, and even tyrannical abuse flourished at West Point was in some ways ironic, for officially it was outlawed. Plebes even had to memorize "Schofield's Definition of Discipline," which read in part: "The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army."[55] The

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[53]"STRAC" was an Army phrase which dated to the 1960s, when General Paul D. Adams' Strategic Army Command (STRAC) mandated standards for performance for all Army units. Aside from an acronym for perfection, troops said STRAC stood for "Stupid Troopers Running Around in Circles," or "Scatter, the Russians Are Coming." See Hackworth, About Face, pp. 452-453. At West Point STRAC stood for "Straight, Tough, and Ready Around the Clock." See Barkalow, In the Men's House, p. 15.

[54]USMA, Bugle Notes, pp. 70-74. Activities included language and athletic clubs, a cadet radio station (WKDT), theater, choirs for every chapel on post, a glee club, rifle team, band, and the spirit leading Rabble Rousers. Hops were typically held on Saturday nights, and often centered around a special weekend for one of the four classes, such as Ring Weekend (when Firsties received class rings), 500th Night Weekend (when the Cows began the countdown towards graduation), 100th Night Weekend (for Firsties), or graduation.

[55]Ibid., p. 39.

phrase sounded good, and in the Regular Army it had meaning. At West Point, however, it usually fell on deaf ears among tradition conscious upperclassmen.

As a rule, "hazing" referred to abusive or tyrannical behavior on the part of an upperclassman that was designed to indoctrinate, abuse, and humiliate Plebes. Officially it was outlawed. Unofficially it carried real weight with everyone, from graduates to members of the Academy staff, and certainly among the ranks of the upper classes. This weight stemmed from the conviction hazing made cadets tough, and the belief it represented a cohesive force among cadets from one generation to the next. As one writer noted: "Hazing is tolerated by the military authorities at West Point - not infrequently approved, openly or covertly. It is not one whit less binding upon the Academic Board, other military officials and the cadets of the military academy than the enactments of Congress."[56]

Hazing dated to the nineteenth century, when fraternities, the English school system, and other military institutions were also practitioners of the art. Cadets at the Virginia Military Institute required future general George C. Marshall to squat over a bayonet until his knees buckled and he fell on the upturned blade, narrowly escaping severe injury, and his experience was duplicated by young men at The Citadel and countless other military academies as well.[57]

At West Point, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were also a time

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[56]John J. Lenney, Caste System in the American Army: A Study of the Corps of Engineers and Their West Point System (New York: Greenburg Publishers, 1949), p. 136.

[57]Geoffrey Perrett, Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 32. Marshall was scarred for life. The Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and The Citadel are the two most important privately operated four year military colleges in the United States.

when hazing was notoriously brutal. Over a hundred different methods were used on Plebes, including scalding steam baths, "dipping (pushups)," "eagling (deep knee bends over broken glass)," forced feeding, paddling, sliding down splinter boards naked, and running a gauntlet of upperclassmen tossing buckets of cold water. Generations of cadets were abused with these and other practices, including a young Douglass MacArthur, who on one occasion was forced by three groups of upperclassmen to eagle for over an hour and eventually fainted. The incident left MacArthur convulsing uncontrollably in his tent afterward, but he refused to allow his tent companion to request any assistance.[58] Plebes were sometimes required to address insects as equals, and anyone who protested the system was "called out" and beaten with bare knuckles by the biggest upperclassman in the Corps. This pattern held at a time when the Academy was still isolated, and when cadets had little chance for a reprieve during their years at West Point. They were not allowed to dismount horses beyond the Plain, to go home for Christmas, or to leave the post except for Army-Navy football games and a brief furlough after their Cow year.[59]

By the middle of the twentieth century the most violent forms of hazing faded from most companies within the Corps, though a cadet still might be asked to "swim to Newburgh," which meant balancing on top of the wall which separated portions of older cadet rooms and duplicating the motions of a swimmer, or to sweat shadows or coins to

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[58]Manchester, American Caesar, pp. 62-63, and Perrett, Old Soldiers, p. 32. MacArthur later testified before Congress during inquiries into hazing at West Point which were prompted by the death of a cadet.

[59]Manchester, American Caesar, p. 48.

the wall.[60] Denying Plebes enough food was popular with some upperclassmen, and virtually all practiced some sort of emotional, psychological, and emotional harassment. While many graduates eventually applauded the reduction in brutal hazing, there were those who echoed the sentiments of General John J. Pershing, who had served as a notoriously brutal TAC at West Point and defended the spartan environment and training. Pershing even argued the merits of hazing, saying he hoped it would never end at West Point.[61]

While not as abusive as in the "Old Corps," in which upperclassmen sometimes had Plebes warm their toilet seats for them in the morning, hazing was still demanding in 1976.[62] Normally consisting of emotional, psychological, and physical challenges designed to push Plebes to the breaking point, it took on a wide variety of forms, including extra physical training, bracing, the endless recitation of "Plebe poop," and cheap shots during intramurals.[63] There was "crawling," in which Plebes were subjected to a rapid barrage of questions and insults from upperclassmen, and "clothing formations," in which Plebes were ordered to appear in formation wearing certain uniforms, then given an impossible amount of time to change into another uniform and report to formation yet again.[64] "Magical Mystery Tours" involved seemingly endless

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[60]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

[61]Perrett, Old Soldiers, p. 31.

[62]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 42.

[63]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 3.

[64]Fleming, "West Point Cadets...," p. 20.

recitations of Plebe poop to a never ending array of upperclassmen. Plebes were sent from one upperclassman's room to another to be hazed and run ragged in the process.[65] The ordeal could take hours, and ended only when upperclassmen tired of the proceedings, duties had to be performed, or it was time for lights out.[66] Upperclassmen occasionally tried to intimidate or test Plebes, as when one Squad leader pointed his dress sword at a Plebe's nose and then thrust it into the wall by the frightened fourth classman's ear to see if he would scare easily.[67] Through these and other practices many Plebes lost the small amount of free time they had in the evenings, despite the fact that hazing was officially prohibited.

For the women of the Class of 1980, hazing was often more personal and driven by appearance and gender. Cute women were accused of using their looks to try and minimize hazing or duties. Any success at lessining the arbitrary harshness of cadet life was known as "getting over," and those who attempted it were despised by their peers. Women thus ran the risk of being accused of a cardinal sin simply because a male cadet thought they were attractive. And the allure of a pretty face often led to other harassment as well, for some upperclassmen realized the only official way they could pay attention to or flirt with a Plebe woman was while on duty, and that usually meant hazing.[68] In that sense attractiveness mattered a great deal, but usually in a negative way, for

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[65]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]LTA, 9-24-96, p.4.

attractiveness in a woman meant attention, and attention, as every West Pointer knew, was usually bad. Anything, in fact, which made a cadet stand out was liable to bring unwanted attention, for at West Point "...to be different is to be in trouble."[69] Being unattractive meant being different too, though women who were "squared away" and yet considered less than beautiful by the men seemed to get less negative attention. By any standard, however, women received more hazing, regardless of the motive of upperclassmen.[70]

Attractiveness mattered for men too. No ugly, dumpy young man ever got to be First Captain, for example, and West Point had regulations barring the admission of cadets who were deemed unattractive. There were minimum and maximum height and weight requirements, and in extreme cases applicants could be given medical exclusion for extreme acne scars. Looks mattered. That was why cadets had to submit photographs of themselves in full body-profile wearing swimsuits prior to admission. The reasoning, according to one graduate, was that good appearance and physical fitness went hand in hand.[71]

That assumption worked in the real Army too, where "...studs with a little gray and a blaze of medals" often had a far better chance of promotion than even the most talented officers who didn't have the right look.[72] And while deplorable, the phenomenon

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[69]U'Ren, Ivory Fortress, p. 4.

[70]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 4.

[71]IWA, 7-28-96, side A.

[72]David H. Hackworth, About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 608.

was hardly different than the more understated but identical pattern among executives of Fortune 500 Companies or stars and starlets in the entertainment industry. Looks mattered in American culture "...since there is an aesthetics in all things..."[73]

At West Point, however, everything physical mattered, not just looks. While male cadets were certainly horrendous in their treatment of many women they were not entirely atavistic. Height, weight, and physical performance of all kinds were proof of prowess and leadership, not intellectual ability. From Sylvanus Thayer's days in the early 1800s for example, right up until 1957, every cadet at West Point was assigned to his company based on his height. The tallest cadets were placed in "flanker companies," which got their name from the fact they were usually assigned to the flanks of the Corps when on parade. Shorter cadets found themselves in "runt" companies, which over time became famous for producing the meanest, nastiest cadets and the most brutal hazing rituals.[74]

These rituals flourished in part because they relied on the adolescent world of young men, a world which the regulations at West Point easily froze in time. Many women were appalled by the common behavior of male cadets who seemed locked in a fifteen-year-old's time warp. Part of the problem was that men and women matured at different rates, and part of the problem was the Academy. By creating an artificial world which regulated every aspect of a cadet's life, the normal peer socialization pattern of

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[73]Herman Melville, Moby Dick (Norwood, Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1977), p. 298.

[74]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 44, and IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes. By tradition, some companies still use the terms when describing themselves, though today the reference typically refers to the level of discipline in a given unit.

choice and consequence was taken away. Cadets might be given the responsibility for a platoon of cadets at the same time they were denied the freedom to decide when they should to return to their barracks at night. Most social decisions in this schizophrenic world were made for cadets by the rigidly hierarchical system. It told them when and how to do everything, and very little emotional growth was required to survive or even flourish within the system. It was one of the reasons cadets often went wild on leave: given a measure of freedom, even for a limited period, they rushed to do as much as possible within the allotted time, whether it was drinking, dating, eating, or sleeping. All a cadet really had to do was know the rules, and in an environment where young and sometimes very immature, petty individuals exercised great power over their peers there were bound to be abuses. In a way a European peasant living under divine right monarchy in the 1700s would have understood with great clarity, rank mattered, and ineptitude or meanness were simply to be endured unless they became so egregious that outside intervention was necessary.

The worst hazers usually worked in packs like jackals, gaining strength in numbers. As one cadet put it, "They are always in a group. There is never any one-on-one."[75] It had always been that way at the Academy, just as it was in fraternities, gangs, and other social organizations where some form of abuse was part of initiation. In fact, it was part and parcel of initiation in most all-male groups throughout history, especially when those groups were dedicated to some form of violence. The standard elements of initiation included being "...separated from the women and being kept in seclusion,"

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[75]EI, 4-22-80, p. 8.

being "hazed and humiliated by their elders," and being "compelled to learn masses of arcane wisdom, as well as the proper conduct of ritual and the proper cherishing of myths and traditions of the group."[76] The process was as familiar to warriors in Africa or Asia as it was at West Point, though hazing became less and less acceptable during the twentieth century, when critics argued that it was too brutal and primitive to be of any value.

Yet there were those who defended hazing, even in the modern era. Rear Admiral James B. Stockdale suffered eight years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam, and argued after his release that hazing at the United States Naval Academy had helped steel him for the privations and degradations of being a POW. "I came out of prison being very happy about the merits of Plebe year at the Naval Academy," he said, adding, "I hope we do not ever dilute those things. You have to practice being hazed. You have to learn to take a bunch of junk and accept it with a sense of humor."[77] This attitude was echoed by a West Point graduate from the 1940s. "We were not guard-house lawyers in my era," he wrote, "And surviving such treatment [hazing] pulled our class together as an entity."[78]

Pulling units together was the most powerful positive influence those who defended hazing could point towards. While no one sought to defend abuse, there were those who argued that hazing was a form of shared adversity and a rite of passage that

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[76]Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, The Imperial Animal (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), pp. 158-159.

[77]Rear Admiral James B. Stockdale, "Experiences as a POW in Vietnam," Naval War College Review (January-February 1974) : 3.

[78]LTA, 1-26-96, p. 1.

made people bond together in the face of common enemies. That bond, what military leaders called unit cohesion, was part of what made the best units fight while others fell to pieces in the cauldron of combat. During the battles around Neuve Chapell in France in 1915, for example, the 2nd Scottish Rifles entered the fighting with over 900 men and emerged from the trenches five days later with less than 150 and only one surviving officer. Yet the unit did not collapse or break down, and John Baynes argued the reason was a series of rites of passage which created a loyalty to the unit transcending the fear of personal sacrifice. More than religion, patriotism, or even fear, Baynes argued it was shared experiences and a refusal to let the unit down that held the 2nd Scottish Rifles together, and on a smaller scale and in less frightening circumstances West Point tried to use similar rituals to push cadets closer to each other. The theory was that "Equality under stress fosters group solidarity...," that "the tougher the treatment, the prouder the sense of inclusion," and it seemed justified because historically the proudest, most effective combat units were those in which membership was the most difficult to obtain.[79]

There were also those who defended hazing precisely *because* it was unfair, arbitrary, harsh, and degrading, for in those details it reflected life on battlefields. During a dinner at The Citadel, a premier private military college in South Carolina, a retired Army general and West Point graduate told historian John Keegan that in his era the Academy had been so tough and disciplined that little in World War II surprised him. In his view, "...when every inch of self...has been subjected to the regulation of a higher,

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[79]U'Ren, Ivory Fortress, p. 4, and LTA, 2-14-96, pp. 2-3.

institutional will, the individual loses the capacity to protest against the cruelties and unfairness of the battlefield."[80]

The problem, of course, was in discerning how much hazing was necessary and whether rites of passage were truly vital or simply brutality masquerading as tradition. "One man's harassment is another man's hurdle to belonging to a unit," according to General William Knowlton, and the gray area between abuse and more constructive bonding rituals often blurred because rites of passage had a life of their own at the Academy. They were associated with toughness, with tradition, and with being "manly," and there was a recalcitrant reluctance in the upper classes to do away with rigors which they had endured as Plebes. Efforts to eradicate hazing usually met with scorn from those who argued it had to be tough in order to make cadets tough, and from others who enjoyed the enormous power hazing gave them over fourth year cadets. At West Point the arrival of women complicated this situation, because it became vital if sometimes difficult to determine the difference between harassment that was aimed at women because they were Plebes and harassment driven by sexism.[81] If an upperclassman asked a Plebe, "Do you want to listen to music and hang around?" and the Plebe said "yes," it meant he was allowed to hang by his fingers in the upperclassman's closet while music was played on a stereo.[82] That sort of treatment had nothing to do with gender. Unfortunately, other treatment clearly did.

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[80]Keegan, Fields of Battle, p. 147.

[81]EI, April/May 1980, pp. 5-6, and IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

[82]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

Women were spit on, punched, kicked, and called derogatory names at every turn. Old grads refused to return their salutes at Hops or ceremonial occasions, and members of the upperclass tried to run them out.[83] Women who called out "Good morning Sir" when passing upperclassmen sometimes heard "Good morning bitch" in return.[84] In one famous exchange an upperclassman responded "It's not going to be a good morning until you goddamn bitches get out of here."[85] Women saw sexual slurs on barracks walls, had condoms placed on their bunks, and received vibrators through the mail from male cadets. Women who were considered too feminine were "fluffs," while those who were too masculine were "dykes." Some women tried to blend in by lowering their voices and avoiding makeup, but men resented them anyway. They made fun of women for their inferior upper body strength and endurance, their longer hair, and they resented the attention received from the Great American Public (GAP), which fawned on women like tourists chasing the "bears at Yellowstone."[86] Men also made fun of women who gained weight consuming the Academy's 4,000 calorie a day diet, saying they had caught the dreaded "Hudson Hip Disease," and rumors abounded about how each of the gender-integrated companies in the Corps was actually a brothel. In one company a group of

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[83]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

[84]EI, 5-80, p. 8.

[85]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 411.

[86]As one of the nation's premier tourist attractions, West Point is an open post, meaning much of the installation is open to the public. Cadets on parade, in formation near the barracks, or walking between classes were thus at the mercy of tourists and their cameras, and women drew most of the attention.

men organized a contest to reduce every woman in the unit to tears at least once.[87]

In this environment of harassment and contempt for women there were some men who tried to stem the misogynistic tide. Major George Crocker, the A-1 TAC, promised the women in his company they would be neither "harassed out of the academy" nor "coddled," and along with some other TACS attempted to quietly protect women from undue harassment.[88] Some physical education instructors also attempted to explain the necessity for different physical fitness standards for men and women. One explained it by saying, "Okay, guys, physiologically the women have 40 percent more body fat, so just to make it even, let's give you a seventy-pound weight to carry. They have only 60 percent as much lung capacity, so let's degrade your breathing by making you wear this mask." He pointed out that women "...have a little mechanical disadvantage in the hip structure, so we'll put a brace between your legs to make you pigeon-toed. Now go run a mile, guys, and see if you can keep up with the women."[89] It was a stirring appeal to reason, but one which unfortunately fell too often on deaf ears. Most women, despite the instructor's efforts, continued to receive relentless harassment.

Ironically, even the men of the Class of 1980 were sometimes harassed along gender lines, for they were blamed for bringing women in with them. "Jesus Christ," an upperclassman would say to a male Plebe, "your class doesn't even average 2.0 balls per cadet!" Those men who supported women, especially if they were in a company that

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[87]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 411, 413.

[88]Ibid., p. 410. Crocker enjoyed a long career in the Army, eventually serving as the commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division.

[89]Ibid., p. 413.

resented women en masse, usually "caught hell."[90]

Women also received a mixture of protection and harassment through dating, which became a fact of life within the Corps of Cadets soon after their arrival. Interestingly, the Corps knew dating would present problems long before the first women arrived. In the April 1976 issue of *The Pointer*, Cadet Eric Pointe parodied Shakespeare with a brief version of *Romeo and Juliet* in which the star-crossed lovers were cadets. Entitled "Romeo and Juliet and Whiskey Papa," Pointe's rendition followed Romeo and Juliet as they were forced to hide their affections behind regulations and officially sanctioned behavior. The most revealing passage came from the character Benvolio, who decried the attention given to women Plebes by upperclassmen. "There has been a rash outbreak of indiscriminate recognition throughout the Corps" he said. "The few girls in our regiment have been recognized by half the Corps from the three other regiments...You know the kind...the type that say come to my room to listen to my stereo and have some pizza."[91] It hardly took studies or analysis to conclude there would be dating between men and women cadets, and the Corps quietly recognized that truth. What it did not publicly acknowledge were the ways in which dating proved to be a far greater liability for some women than for men.

Dating was officially permitted among Plebes, but even then there were hurdles to overcome. Beyond the jealousy of men who were not dating women within the Corps,

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[90]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 5.

[91]Eric Pointe, "Romeo and Juliet and Whiskey Papa," The Pointer, April 1976, p. 15. "Whiskey Papa" in Army phonetic code stood for "W.P.," which in turn represented West Point.

and aside from the distractions of flirting and finding precious time to be alone, Plebes risked harassment from their peers and upperclassmen and faced a variety of rules which made conventional dating impossible. They had no cars, little free time, almost no privacy, and few places to go. Regulations stipulated the doors to cadet rooms had to be open if men and women were inside, and traffic outside these rooms usually increased as other cadets glanced inward to see what was going on. One TAC even used masking tape on the floor to mark how far open the door had to be when women in his company entertained men.[92] The risks were magnified if either cadet in a relationship was in a company known for despising women, or if they crossed company lines. "God have mercy on those Plebes who crossed the company/regiment lines to date a female Plebe in a company of woman haters," wrote one cadet, who described how upperclassmen often tried to break up such relationships as soon as possible. Plebes from other regiments seeking their "date" were "run off," and curious upperclassmen often hounded the male in a dating relationship with questions regarding whether "Ms. _____ was 'putting out,' and argued the honor code compelled the Plebe to answer. If the male cadet responded in the affirmative, then he risked more hounding and demands for details.[93] In short, a great deal of abuse often accompanied dating, and for Plebes the key was to keep their relationship as secret as possible.

When upperclassmen dated Plebes the dynamic was different. One of the problems created was that these relationships conflicted with the prohibition on

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[92]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 411.

[93]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 5.

upperclassmen against "recognizing" Fourth Classmen. Recognition was defined as the "establishment of a personal relationship between an upperclassmen and a Fourth Classman on an individual basis," and was usually formally acknowledged by a handshake. Historically, recognition occurred between two male cadets, and was regulated to keep cadets at a comfortable professional distance from their superiors. This distance eased training and helped Plebes adjust to the formality of military life. When women arrived at West Point it was hoped the regulations would also serve as a barrier against problems associated with fraternization. Traditionally, Fourth Classmen were recognized by the Corps immediately following the Graduation Parade for the First Class in May. This was a rite of passage, the termination of a difficult first year as cadets and generally one of the highlights of a cadet's life because it signified they were no longer Plebes.[94]

In practice, many upperclassmen recognized Plebes early, especially if they were involved in cadet clubs or on USMA athletic squads with them. The rule, however, was that recognizing a Fourth Classman within one's own battalion was strictly forbidden. Dating destroyed the principle in theory and practice, for it was impossible for men and women to become familiar or intimate while playing the officially sanctioned roles of senior and subordinate. The limited number of women at West Point, and the fact that not all of them dated upperclassmen, kept recognition fairly limited, but it was a source of friction within the Corps because Plebe women who dated outside their class were seen as getting over.

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[94]USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 54.

Some women in the Class of 1980 minimized the risks of romantic liaison by refusing to date men outside their own class, arguing it caused problems because it broke the fraternal bond between classmates and because the men usually got too protective or jealous. Even perceptions could be damning. Those who were seen alone with a man were subject to dirty looks and the ubiquitous rumor mill, and for some women the easiest thing to do was to refuse to date men outside their class under any circumstances.[95]

Even so, dating flourished from the very beginning, despite the fact it was risky for everyone. Men who dated women cadets were often hated by their peers, and sometimes harassed by Academy staff as well. One male cadet was even "frozen out" by his TACS once it became clear he was dating a woman cadet.[96] Women risked being labeled "easy." All cadets had to deal with the "anxiety, jealousy, and envy" dating produced, but for women the risks were always higher.[97] If a women broke up with an upperclassman, for example, or if she refused him a date, it was common for him to begin hazing her.[98]

Dealing with romantic liaisons was the most obvious of the many battles West Point waged with American culture, for the Academy was expected to obliterate everything that delineated one civilian from another. Race, class, education, and ethnicity

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[95]IWA, 1-22-96, author's notes.

[96]EI, 5-5-80, p. 23.

[97]IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes.

[98]One woman remembered a male cadet asking one of her friends for a date. When her friend refused, the male began "hazing her like crazy." See EI, 5-5-80, p. 16.

were all to be overwhelmed by Cadet Gray, by the commitment to Duty, Honor, and Country that transcended the petty divisions of non-military life and which West Pointers made their credo. By and large, West Point was successful. Not always, of course, and not permanently, but over the years the Army and the Academy had consistently turned people into dogfaces, grunts, Plebes, enlisted soldiers and officers, and the old differences were pushed aside as much as possible. The very best armed forces knew how to "...obliterate the distinction between 'thou' and 'I' in favor of 'we,'" yet West Point had trouble obliterating gender distinctions.[99]

They were manifest in physical performance, in dating, in cultural assumptions, and in a variety of Academy regulations specific to women which caused resentment among many male cadets. Men initially had v-neck t-shirts while women had crew neck t-shirts, women ran with the M-16 instead of the standard M-14 because the former was two pounds lighter, and the operating rod springs on M-14's were cut down for women to make it easier for them to open the bolt of the rifle with one hand during the inspection of arms in formation. Some men shortened the springs on their rifles as well, and no one argued using one hand was something anyone would do in combat, but the distinction angered men anyway.[100]

Another constant source of fuel for the animosity so many men at West Point felt toward women cadets was the incessant attention from the press on everything related to women at the Academy. As one woman from the Class of 1980 put it years later, the

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[99]Martin Van Creveld, The Transformation of War (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 186.

[100]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

press coverage "...resulted in much of the animosity from our own male classmates." Ironically, she suggested that "maybe they [male cadets] felt like second class citizens?"[101]

For many women, an early irritant was the different Full Dress uniform designed for them. The men's uniform dated to 1816, when the Secretary of War formally approved the use of gray uniforms at the Military Academy to commemorate a victory won by troops under General Winfield Scott against the British Army in Upper Canada in 1814. Scott's troops wore gray during the battle because regulation blue uniforms were in short supply, and gray quickly became a symbol of honor and victory at West Point.[102] The Full Dress uniform, with a high collar and forty-four buttons, remained largely unchanged for men in 1976, but the Academy decided to change the women's uniform to make it more feminine.

With the help of Hart, Shaffner, and Marx, the Academy invested a great deal of time and effort designing uniforms for women similar to those worn by the men but still feminine. Their most important and misguided decision was to remove the tails from Full Dress uniform jackets for women because they believed the tails were unflattering on women's wider hips. As every woman knew, however, removing the tails only enhanced what the Academy was trying to conceal, especially when cadets marched in Full Dress jackets and white pants. As the only cadets without tails, women were noticeable at a

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[101]ETA, 4-9-96, p. 1.

[102]United States Military Academy, "West Point Cadet Uniforms" (West Point: Public Affairs Office Fact Sheet, undated), p. 1.

distance, and quickly became known as "cotton tails" by other cadets and spectators alike.[103]

As Plebe year wore on the cadets of the Class of 1980 also confronted the daunting richness and depth of the Academy's past. West Point may be "aptly defined as an area of the world that has produced more history than could be consumed locally."[104] The Academy was fond of saying "Much of the history we teach was made by the people we taught," and it retained a poignancy and power unique among American institutions, for in no other single place was so much of the nations' past concentrated.[105] Henry Hudson sailed past the site in his ship *The Half Moon* on September 14, 1609, and by the middle of the seventeenth century Dutch settlements dotted the eastern bank of the great river which bore his name.[106] Among those who lived along the Hudson, "the West Point" was a term used to distinguish the peninsula from what Europeans considered the older, more established areas to the east.[107]

West Point drew significance from the fact that it was a place where the Hudson River was narrowed and turned by mountains that were part of a belt of gneiss and

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[103]In time women's uniforms were made virtually identical to those worn by the men. In the interim the women of the Class of 1980 were forced to suffer the additional notoriety which well-meaning Academy staffers gave them.

[104]Russell D. Buhite, Decisions at Yalta: An Appraisal of Summit Diplomacy (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1986), p. 39. Buhite wrote about Poland, but the phrase befits West Point too.

[105] West Point: A Prospectus and 1991 Admissions Guide (West Point: USMA, 1991), p. 14.

[106]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 15.

[107]Augusta A. Berard, Reminiscences of West Point in the Olden Time (East Saginaw Michigan, 1886), p. 17.

granite rock roughly fifteen miles wide. The rock extended from New England southwest through what became New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and formed what was known as the Hudson Highlands, an area of deep river gorges, rocky islands, terraces (like the one which became the Plain), and sharp turns in the river where rock held the water back.[108] Those turns, at places like Dunderberg, Anthony's Nose, and West Point, became strategically important by the mid-1700s because they offered occupying armies the promise of controlling traffic on the river. West Point was the most important, and a month after the first shots of the American Revolution were fired at Lexington and Concord a Committee of the Second Continental Congress called for the area to be fortified.[109]

Early reports mentioned "Fort Constitution," which was located on Constitution Island, directly across from West Point, and soon other fortifications dotted both sides of the river. After the British briefly occupied the area in 1777, patriot forces returned and constructed more permanent forts and defenses which endured the Revolution intact. They included the Great Chain, which was dragged out each Spring between Constitution Island and the west bank, and Forts Clinton and Putnam, which dominated the river. George Washington moved his headquarters to West Point in 1779 for a brief period, and later called the site the "most important post in America."[110]

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[108]Forman, West Point, p. 5.

[109]Ibid., p. 7.

[110]Ibid., pp. 6, 8, 11-12. Dutch settlers named Constitution Island Martelaer's Rock Island, or Martyr's Rock. Polish patriot Thaddeus Kosciuszko designed most of West Point's fortifications, and added a small garden below the Plain which is preserved.

Following the revolution the United States Army was reduced to eighty men, and in 1784 fifty-five of them were stationed at West Point guarding stores and cannon for use in future wars.[111] By 1794 cadets for Army service were taking instruction at the post, which was purchased from Stephen Moore for $11,085 in 1790.[112] George Washington called for the creation of a permanent military academy to train officers for a standing army during this period, even addressing the issue in his last letter on public business before his death.[113] His advice was ignored by a fiscally conservative government which feared creating an officer caste, so it was not until the political climate changed in 1802 that Congress created the United States Military Academy.[114] President Thomas Jefferson mollified fears of an elite officer class by arguing that Academy graduates would be few in number and that the school would produce engineers rather than aristocrats. Desperate for surveyors and engineers who could help settle the growing American West, Congress relented.

During the nineteenth century the Academy evolved into the forge which produced the greatest captains of the American Army. Graduates were instrumental in victories during the Mexican War, and commanded armies in every American war fought

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[111]Palmer, The River and the Rock, pp. 354-356, and George H. Walton, The Tarnished Shield: A Report on Today's Army (New York: Dodd/Mead, 1973), p. 7.

[112]Palmer, The River and the Rock, p. 355, and Forman, West Point, p. 4. The West Point area was originally settled through land grants. Moore sold 1,795 acres to be the Federal Government in 1790.

[113]Palmer, The River and the Rock, p. 357.

[114]Forman, West Point, p. 18. The Academy was created at a time when western European nations were creating similar institutions. They were influenced by the French Revolution, and sought to place large armies of citizen soldiers under the command of professional officers who were no threat to the political order. See John Keegan, The Mask of Command (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), p. 5.

afterward. They also dominated the great engineering projects of the era, and their exploits were commemorated everywhere at West Point by the twentieth century. One of the most famous places to contemplate their achievements was the post cemetery, where one could walk amid sweet Mimosas filtering rays of sunlight through weeping branches and reflect before the resting places of Colonel Edward H. White II, Winfield Scott, George Armstrong Custer, and Robert Anderson, who each graduated from the Academy and found their place on the Army's roster of heroes.[115] It was a place where "Death and beauty intermingle in a cunningly contrived Arcadia, eloquent of the ease with which [West Pointers] fall into romantic communion with the ideals of self-sacrifice and love of country."[116] Outside the cemetery, yet still a part of Academy lore, were Montgomery C. Meigs, Class of 1836, who supervised the building of the National Capitol dome and wings, 1st Lieutenant Thomas E. Selfridge, Class of 1903, the first person killed in a plane crash when his aircraft, piloted by Orville Wright, went down at Fort Myer, Virginia in 1908, Brigadier General Henry M. Robert, Class of 1857, who wrote "Robert's Rules of Order;" and Lieutenant Richard Shea, Class of 1952, who refused a place on the American Olympic Team to join his classmates in Korea. He was killed on Pork Chop Hill, and posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.[117]

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[115]White was the first American astronaut to walk in space; Scott served fifty-four years in the Army and led U.S. troops to victory in the war with Mexico; Custer gained notoriety during the Civil War and in wars with Native Americans on the Great Plains, and was killed along with most of his command at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876; Anderson was the first Union hero of the Civil War, and commander of Fort Sumter when Confederate forces bombarded the post in 1861.

[116]Keegan, Fields of Battle, p. 239. Keegan was actually referring to the British people, but the passage suits West Point well.

[117]USMA, Bugle Notes, pp. 194-197.

Cadets also learned of the traditional strengths of the Academy; the patriotism, love of loyalty and honor, and above all the commitment to duty, honor, and country for which graduates were famous. West Point was an institution which appealed without reservation or remorse to the unselfish, noble nature of men and women - a place where honesty, integrity, courage, duty, honor, country, were more than words. They were tangible benchmarks by which cadets could measure their worth. If they endured, then like Saul on the road to Damscaus they were forever changed, brought into the true fold by turning all their previous cutoms on their heads.[118] As if by magic they found themselves members of a lionized cadre of heroes that included Lee, Grant, Eisenhower, Bradley, MacArthur, and Ridgway. What other route promised talented but unknown teenagers from obscure towns the chance to close ranks with American's paladins?[119] Where else could one feel so noble while so young?

As cadets immersed themselves in academics, the women of the Class of 1980 continued their struggle to endure the extra rigors of life in a predominantly male environment. They were assisted in the Fall by the women's basketball team, which drew large crowds of male cadets to games and gained a reputation for tough, gritty play. Basketball, like most sports at the Academy, was devoutly followed and appreciated by

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[118]A paraphrase of a passage from William Manchester, Goodbye Darkness, A Memoir of the Pacific War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 353.

[119]The roll of West Pointers also included diverse figures such as James McNeil Whistler, Edgar Allan Poe, and Timothy Leary, though none of them graduated. See Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 104. Critics often point out that Anastasio Somoza Jr., the brutal dictator of Nicaragua, graduated with the West Point Class of 1946, proving theAcademy's roster of "heroes" is more tarnished than commonly known.

cadets.[120] Football was in an Olympian realm all its own of course, but with the Army team struggling during the mid-1970s the Lady Knights, known to cadets as the "Sugar Smacks," were a sorely-needed antidote to the contagion of defeat and a powerful vehicle for gaining some measure of acceptance for women at West Point that first year.

The Academy attempted to assist the first class of women by adding more women faculty and staff members on post, but their efforts were hampered by the limited number of qualified women in the Army and the fact there were no women West Point graduates. Worse, many of the early women officers at West Point were perceived as weak and overly masculine by some women cadets, and hardly an inspiration to those seeking assurance there was a place for feminine women with talent to succeed at West Point and within the Army.[121]

Day by day, the Class of 1980 made its way through the Academy. The seasons changed, and as Fall gave way to freezing Winter and then to glorious Spring, many of the first women endured. By the end of their Plebe year most had gained an appreciation for the rigors of West Point life, and a shocking sense of the depth of the resentment among many men at the Academy toward them. Some believed the worst was over, for traditionally Plebe year was the hardest for cadets. After that came the greater privileges of life as an upperclassman, rank, and opportunities for leadership. Like most assumptions about improving gender relations in those early years, however, these hopes

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[120]West Point had its share of great coaches too. Both Bobby Knight and Mike Krzyzewski coached for Army during the 1960s and 70s. See Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 90.

[121]IWA, 4-4-96, author's notes.

were dashed. Men who were uncertain how far they could push women during that first year had gained a measure of how far they could push the system, and in truth many women found Yearling year to be the hardest and most frightening of all.

Chapter 5: "They Saw Through Us"

> There is an eternal dispute between those who imagine the world to suit their policy and those who correct their policy to suit the realities of the world.
>
> -Albert Sorel

As the Class of 1980 made the transition from Plebes to Yearlings and prepared for their Summer of training at Camp Buckner in 1977, it became more and more clear how profoundly the presence of women cadets changed and threatened the way many men saw West Point. Women never changed the Academy in profoundly physical ways, yet they threatened the image male cadets had in their minds about what it meant to be a cadet, a soldier, and even a man. In hindsight the real question was never whether women could handle the rigors of Academy training or prove their worth in the Army. The issue was whether male cadets could overcome cultural and social stereotypes of women and men that generated profound insecurities in their minds about gender integration. For the admission of women to be successful men had to overcome these stereotypes and accept women as peers. Whether Army officers or cadets, they had to be educated to overcome their phobias, uncertainties, and fears. They had to deal with social messages beyond the Academy gates which said women could not do all the things men could, the official word within which said women should be treated as equals, and the unofficial word within which said the process was a sociological experiment foisted on the military by ignorant civilians. Some cadets and Army officers never reconciled these different messages. Many of those that did found the process troubling, confusing, and sometimes fearful.

One of the first thing men confronted was the unstated but very real emotional and cultural connection between being soldiers and being male in American society. While women were involved in every war in U.S. history and played a role in all human conflicts over time, men still dominated organized warfare in virtually every culture on earth. This power usually gave them control of business, politics, and the major institutions in society as well. As Barbara Ehrenreich wrote, "War,...has for millennia existed in a symbiotic relationship with male domination, both drawing strength from and giving strength to it."[1] Some authors argue that men dominated war-making for physical reasons, others that specialized labor was the culprit; someone had to hunt while others guarded infants and children, and over time these roles became gender-specific. Martin Van Creveld suggested the phenomenon, which crosses culture and time throughout human history, may be best understood if viewed as an attempt by men to make up for their inability to have children.[2]

Whatever the reasons, however, the key is that most societies took as an article of faith the notion that men were responsible for fighting. Language in many cultures reflected this assumption. The "...association between 'man' and 'warrior' is," as one author wrote, "so close that in many languages the two terms are interchangeable."[3] This connection had enormous social and political consequences, because warriors often held positions of cultural leadership in addition to their roles as protectors of the tribe.

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[1]Barbara Ehrenreich, Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997), p. 237.

[2]Van Creveld, The Transformation of War, pp. 181-82.

[3]Ibid., p. 183.

Dominance over the waging of war was the basis of male power and control in most societies, a fact Homer to which alluded in the *Iliad:* "Not unjust it is that our kings hold Lycia, eat the fat hams and drink honey-sweet wine; they prove their right when they fight among the first rank of the Lycians."[4]

Women's roles were considered inferior by comparison, because women did not usually participate in organized warfare and as a result held few positions of political leadership. This was as true in small tribes as in organized nation states, and again, language reflected the pattern. In most societies, and particularly in the West, simply saying a job was "women's work" was to label it with "inherently lower social status" and prestige.[5] As William W. Savage, Jr., wrote, the language of masculinity is intensely cultural, composed of a "rhetoric of imagery" which is "inflationary" for men and "subordinating" for women.[6] Any thesaurus reflects Savage's conclusion. Webster's, for example, lists synonyms for "feminine" as including "soft," "delicate," "gentle," "sensitive," "tender," and "shy." In contrast, synonyms for "masculine" are "courageous," "honorable," "virile," and "potent." Thus it is hardly surprising that men in general, and warriors in particular, often attempted to connect themselves to virtues which language indicated were their special province, and in turn to denigrate the contributions of women. Men were said to be strong, to be leaders, and one of the vital

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[4]Homer, The Iliad, XII, 309-328, quoted in Alfred S. Bradford, Some Even Volunteered: The First Wolfhounds Pacify Vietnam (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), p. 171.

[5]Van Creveld, The Transformation of War, pp. 182-83.

[6]William W. Savage, Jr. The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 95.

proofs of their strength and leadership was their willingness (and even eagerness) to fight other men. Therefore, any implied connection between men and women, between the work "real" men did and the culturally subordinate work of women was an insult.

These cultural assumptions, preconceptions, and attitudes were passed down over time in the West and held by many Americans even in the latter half of the twentieth century. They largely ignored the vital roles women have played in every conflict in American history, but were passionately held in many quarters just the same. Even the fact that women served in large numbers in a variety of military occupations during World War II did little to change these assumptions. This was true because women were barred from serving in direct combat positions and generally mustered out of the service as soon as the war ended, and because male control of the military and other state-supported institutions allowed to use violence (like police departments) have been extraordinarily resistant to gender integration. Even more important, every generation re-invented the myth that women were second-class citizens incapable of contributing actively on the battlefield.

This American pattern was discernible elsewhere in the world. Historically, women were allowed to enter the armed forces in most societies only when severe discrepancies in force existed. When the tide of battle shifted or the war ended women were usually removed from the military for cultural or political reasons and relegated to more traditional, often socially inferior roles. This pattern holds in the United States for both World Wars, and in Israel prior to and during the 1948 War for Independence. Prior to that war, much of the Jewish resistance in Palestine was fought by the Palmach against

the British. An elite group of volunteers which eventually formed the core of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), the Palmach was gender-integrated and fought in raids and as a terrorist organization until 1948, when the IDF was formed and the War of Independence against surrounding Arab nations began. At that point women were relegated to secondary roles in the military as support troops for cultural reasons.[7]

The same pattern can be used to assess the expansion of opportunity for women in the American armed forces of the 1970s. With the Cold War raging and the draft at an end, U.S. planners feared a discrepancy in force might exist in the future and called for more women to make up for projected shortfalls in the number of qualified male recruits. No one expected that these moves would bring women to West Point or ultimately break the male monopoly on control of combat units. But they did, and no one at the Academy or in the Army was happy about it.

At West Point, assumptions tied to the past about the "proper"role of women as well as men were alive and well among generally conservative male cadets in the 1970s. Women were barred from admission to West Point, barred from direct combat duty, and considered physically incapable of combat. Even the vernacular of the Academy reflected the distinction between men and women in subtle ways. Cadets who were considered physically weak were "women" or "pussies," and men who showed effeminate characteristics were often viciously hazed.[8] Even the indignity of being a

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[7]Van Creveld, The Transformation of War, pp. 183-84.

[8] Cadet Stephen M. Bird, for example, committed suicide on New Year's Day, 1919, after being viciously hazed for writing poetry. See Thomas J. Fleming, West Point: The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy (New York: William Morrow, 1969), p. 305.

Plebe could be characterized in feminine terms. As Lucian Truscott wrote in a fictional account of West Point life, "Being a Plebe...was like being a woman for a year."[9] These types of messages and cultural assumptions were among the major obstacles women faced in their attempt to gain acceptance and respect within a society of warriors at West Point. They were difficult for the institution to overcome because they emanated from both inside and outside the Academy's walls.

There were also biological issues involved, though few in 1976 or after could confront them without being labeled a misogynist, male chauvinist, biological determinist, an apologist for sexism, or worse. At a certain level, however, there was no denying the differences between men and women. The question was whether they were truly significant, and whether they prevented women from fulfilling the duties of a West Point cadet or Army officer even if those duties included combat. Traditionalists argued women were unfit physically, psychologically, and physiologically for the hard work of leading soldiers and winning wars. That view faded slowly over time and was eventually proven empirically to be false.[10] Yet biology, as evidenced by the predictable pattern of interaction between men and women, did have consequences for West Point which caused considerable concern and which demonstrated "how fundamental is the fact of being male or female."[11]

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[9]Lucian K. Truscott IV, Dress Gray (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1979), p. 8.

[10]Physical standards for women rose throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and studies show most women can perform rigorous physical duties as well as men provided they are correctly prepared and trained. See Armed Forces Journal, "Undermining Old Taboos," May 1996, p. 13.

[11]Tiger and Fox, The Imperial Animal, p. 95.

The most important was dating and the ensuing impact romantic relationships had on the morale and cohesion of cadet units. As noted earlier, the Academy tried to minimize these forces by allowing cadets to date each other but prohibiting Plebes from dating upperclassmen. The latter condition was put in place to prevent early recognition of Plebes and any deterioration in the senior-subordinate relationship between Fourth classmen and those who outranked them. The rule was broken early and often at West Point, which struggled to manage sexual relationships within a structured, military environment.

That this pattern developed was hardly surprising, for human beings are fundamentally primates and social animals. Academic discourse often adamantly downplays the importance of biology and distinguishes between the natural and social sciences, implying along the way that "social life, especially among people, is not natural."[12] In practical terms this dichotomy is seen most clearly between those who believe Rene Descartes was right when he said "I think, therefore I am," and that by extension human behavior is driven primarily if not exclusively by culture. Social scientists are often prone to this body of belief, which stands in stark contrast to the view among natural scientists that nature and ultimately biology matter a great deal in determining interaction among all animals, including humans.

At West Point the vital truth that human beings are primates meant cadet men and women pursued sexual liaisons in spite of official regulations to the contrary, and that

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[12]Lionel Tiger, "Durkheim, Sociology, and the Science of Bodies in Conflict," Paper prepared for the Interdisciplinary Summary Conference Study of War Project," Triangle Institute of Security Studies, June 1997, p. 3.

these relationships had tangible consequences for cadet groups as a whole. This should have been no surprise. The surprise, as Lionel Tiger wrote of men and women serving aboard U.S. Navy ships in 1997, "would be if the animals did not chronically seek sexual congress."[13] Yet the tension such behavior sometimes created, between cadets and Academy officials, and between those cadets who dated other members of the Corps and those who did not, had implications that the traditionalists blamed on women. After all, they argued, the threat individual romantic relationships posed to group cohesion did not exist before women were admitted to West Point. They too easily forgot that men were equally to blame, and that upperclassmen, because they knew the rules best and were in positions of authority, were the most egregiously at fault.

Blaming anyone missed the point in any case, which was that sexual relationships within military units presented new problems for the Academy because "Healthy human males respond to healthy human females in predictable, biologically determined, and culturally mediated ways."[14] Those problems were hardly helped by any reliance on models of sexual integration taken from the civilian world, for in that environment men and women typically worked together for forty hours a week. At West Point they lived, ate, trained, and slept in close proximity *seven days* a week. Any comparison between gender and racial integration was also pointless, because race was "an unimportant

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[13]Lionel Tiger, "Are the Harassers in Charge?" Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues 8 (Spring 1997): 80.

[14]Tiger and Fox, The Imperial Animal, p. 96.

biological category."[15] Race and gender assumptions were enormously influenced by culture, of course, and tremendously significant behaviorally, but in the end the fact that men and women were attracted to each other sexually had repercussions which resonated more than racial differences ever could.

In practical terms Academy policies reflected two concurrent notions, one which held men and women were essentially identical and one which recognized their differences. The first argued that for the sake of equity men and women had to have the same opportunities, rewards, and challenges as cadets because they were virtually identical. The second said that when differences did become apparent, as when women became pregnant or had difficulty doing pullups, those differences would be handled either administratively or with the creation of modified standards for women.[16] Thus male cadets were told that in principle women would face the same challenges as men, only to find that women did not have to take boxing, run as fast as men, or do pullups, and it bothered them immensely. West Point struggled to be fair and reasonable in creating standards, and there was truth in the official pronouncements that women were equally challenged even in those cases where performance standards differed. Yet Academy leaders never effectively conveyed the reasons for these differences to men, any more than they thoroughly explained culturally driven variations like the length to which cadets were allowed to grow their hair.

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[15]Tiger, "Durkheim, Sociology, and the Science of Bodies in Conflict," p. 18. It is a compelling argument, for "The legal fiction," as Tiger wrote, "that race and sex are equal and similar categories of equity-risk is the strange and bitter fruit of biological ignorance." Ibid, p. 19.

[16]See Ibid., pp. 16-17, for a modern discussion of the phenomenon.

The driving power of biology even had implications for hazing, for without sinking into overwhelming determinism it seems fair to argue that sexual interaction and even some harassment among cadets was inevitable. Harassment was inexcusable, yet the climate in which it took place may have been in part the responsibility of Congress and the Academy, for they asked young people to wage war with what some anthropologists are prepared to call forms of natural and instinctive behavior. As Lionel Tiger wrote: "...I am suggesting the creation of a hostile environment is precisely not the responsibility of those who engage in wholly predictable human behavior, but of those who cause them to exist in conditions so fanciful as to constitute somewhat cruel and certainly unusual forms of quotidian existence."[17] Rather than implying male cadets were not responsible for their actions, such a view indicates the depth to which biology mattered among cadets regardless of gender. It was manifestly in the long term interests of the Academy and the United States to admit women, even if new problems associated with sexual behavior were introduced to the Corps of Cadets. These problems were significant, however, and were not eased by official doublespeak which proclaimed gender both did and did not matter. The entire process was difficult for everyone concerned, and posed formidable hurdles for both West Point and the military in general.

In essence, the problem was romance, which fundamentally meant individuals focusing their attention and concern on each other at a time and place where the military ethos held that individuals should focus their attention and concern on the needs of the

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[17]Tiger, "Are the Harassers in Charge?" p. 81.

group, whose primacy "is an important theme at West Point."[18] The jealousy, sexual passions, and flirting attendant with dating were barriers to forging the powerful group bonds which held humans together in combat, and interfered with training at every level.[19] They were an unavoidable hurdle attendant with gender integration, but that hardly made them easy for cadets to overcome, and many in the Army wondered if it was the military's role to deal with such shades of sexual gray. As General Knowlton once asked, "When does sacred love become profane?"[20] In other words, the question was when does the group love upon which military and especially combat units depend turn into the more indulgent and self-centered kind of exclusive romantic/sexual love that tears units apart?[21] West Point struggled to deal with these questions, to "create a machine designed for violence that is free from violence, from exploitation, from the naked use of power for any personal gain, a machine that permits sexual conduct that

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[18]U'Ren, Ivory Fortress, p. 3.

[19]The problem persists to this day. In December of 1997, an eleven member advisory committee appointed by Secretary of Defense William Cohen and led by former Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker of Kansas "unanimously recommended that the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force significantly roll back the integration of men and women in basic and advanced training." The committee argued gender integration resulted in "less discipline, less unit cohesion and more distraction from the training programs," because recruits and instructors spent too much time dealing with problems tied to sexual interaction, including illicit liaisons and even harassment. See Steven Lee Myers, "To Sex Segregated Training, the Marines Remain Semper Fi," New York Times, 26 December 1997, p. A1.

[20]LTA, 2-14-96, p. 3.

[21]Romantic/sexual bonds have been used in the past to pull soldiers together, as when the ancient Greeks deliberately placed male lovers side by side in battle under the assumption they would fight harder for each other. This system was not passed down to modern Western armies, however, and in the United States Army openly homosexual soldiers are barred from serving and sexual relationships are associated with dissension and discord within small units.

doesn't detract from the performance of a unit during an operation."[22] It was a tall order.

Where culture and biology mattered most was in the idea that some jobs were meant for men only, and while the opposition among many men to women at West Point lay far "...deeper than reason and ideology," it was true on a tangible level that men felt their unique roles in society were threatened.[23] Even by 1970, two years before Congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and a full six prior to the admission of women to West Point, critics were noting the feeling among many men that social changes were ending the days of gender-specialized jobs. "To the undying astonishment and regret of many men," wrote one, "there are few things in the United States today that American women do not or cannot do."[24] He added, "...in America today it is no longer possible for men to affirm their maleness simply in terms of the tasks reserved for their side of the fence."[25]

The threat was genuinely felt within the Academy, where a conservative, male-oriented, hiearchical, and "basically southern" culture thrived among cadets.[26] Moreover, the Academy drew cadets primarily from mid-sized and smaller towns, not from generally more liberal big cities. Members of the Class of 1975, for example, were predominantly from two-parent homes in moderate sized towns of fifty thousand or less.

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[22]Rayner, "Women as Warriors," p. 55. Rayner was writing about the Army as a whole, but the sentiment fits West Point as well.

[23]Tiger and Fox, The Imperial Animal, p. 101.

[24]Myron Brenton, The American Male (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1970), p. 81.

[25]Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[26]U'Ren, Ivory Fortress, p. 119.

They were more conservative than students at comparable civilian schools, and research indicated that cadets usually became more conservative during their years at West Point, not less.[27] By any standard the Academy was not an environment where change was either welcomed or adjusted to easily, and when the change involved pushing the envelope of socially constructed gender roles it is little wonder the Academy rebelled. After all, for the most conservative and hide-bound officers and cadets, Camelot could not work without princesses to be saved and protected, without ladies to fawn on knights and convince them of their nobility. These men derived satisfaction from their perceived role as protectors of women and children, not from the abstract notion they served their fellow citizens. To admit women into the warrior culture was to remove them from their pedestal, to allow them the dirty and yet honorable work of protecting the tribe. It denied men the exclusive role of guardian, and on a very visceral level many men recoiled at the infringement on their exclusive niche in society.

Of course, protection was not a zero sum game. It could be shared by men and women and extended to everyone. Service and sacrifice were noble virtues regardless of gender, and when pushed amid calm surroundings most men at West Point probably knew that. Yet their feelings were cultural and not always rational, especially among the largely adolescent Corps of Cadets. They were rooted in socialization, in the formative years of generally conservative young men who usually had definite ideas about what it meant to be a man, a soldier, and a leader long before West Point gave them formal ways of constructing these concepts. In the hyper-macho environment of the Academy it was

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[27]Ibid., pp. 8-10.

an easy thing for young men to become misogynists when it came to women in the military, and it took time for their views to begin to change. The admission of women to West Point represented "...the pitting of an ancient and culturally embedded view of what it means to be a warrior against the irresistible force of democracy, in the sense of absolute equality," and for some men the jump in thinking was simply and tragically too great.[28]

Women at the Academy also intruded upon an organization that for almost two centuries was exclusively male, and many men resented their arrival. This resentment stemmed from cultural forces as well as from a very male tendency to form or join groups dominated by men. Among younger men especially, "The most obvious (general principle) is that at all times and all places men form groups from which they exclude women."[29] This tendency was pronounced among men drawn to violent organizations like the military, where their exclusivity reinforced their power, unique roles, and dominant relationships with other men. As one author wrote: "...when men are called up to act together in an all-male activity, particularly a dangerous one, they may affirm their solidarity partly by degrading the male-female bond at the expense of the male-male bond..." The implicit message of such bonding "...is that, in some circumstances, no woman is as important to any man as men are to one another."[30] This pattern, like the tendency of men to dominate warfare and centers of political and social power, was

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[28]Rayner, "Women as Warriors," p. 26.

[29]Tiger and Fox, The Imperial Animal, p. 94.

[30]Ibid., p. 93.

rooted in male dominance of hunting and war over the ages. It was inextricably linked with both culture and biology, for "War and fighting and the hunt have always been the province of human males, just as the protection of the troop is the business of male primates," and women were kept out of these endeavors because their involvement was " always a potential source of disruption to the unity, loyalty, and trust necessary to comrades in arms."[31]

Certainly no cadet at West Point listed these factors as reasons for opposing the admission of women, though many argued that women had no business being involved in combat, but they were there as a cultural and biological undercurrent just the same. That meant that the admission of women to West Point was a far greater harbinger of change for America than was realized in 1976. It was part of a larger redistribution of power within society in which women seized greater influence than ever before, and a powerful step towards redefining gender roles within the United States. By triggering debate over what it meant culturally and biologically to be male or female, and by forcing the armed forces to adapt despite their reluctance, Congress did more than expand opportunities at West Point and the other service academies. It took the first steps toward sending women into combat and fundamentally altering the roles of women within the military.

There was irony in all this, particularly in the institution America chose to lead such mammoth social change. As in 1948, when President Harry Truman desegregated the armed forces well before mainstream society was prepared to confront the injustice of segregation along color lines, so it was in the 1970s when the armed forces were asked

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[31]Ibid., p. 57.

to lead the way in expanding opportunities for women ahead of mainstream culture and before any other nation in the world had taken similar steps. West Point was asked to accomplish quickly and with a minimum of conflict a social revolution unprecedented in any military Academy in the world. *None* of them admitted women, and it was easy to ask why Congress chose a proud bastion of male dominance and patriarchy to lead the way rather than leaning on the private sector or even state and federal institutions to expand opportunities for women. It was as if changes in the military became a sort of barometer for the kinds of changes society believed were right and just, even if it could not always bring those changes on itself.

The American military, however, was not designed to serve as a tool for social re-engineering, and like the society that produced it, was torn between the relentless drive for equality and the need for equity. As an ideal, for example, the principle of equality meant women deserved equal access to West Point. Once there, however, physiological differences meant adjusting standards so they would be fair, or equitable. What was fair, however, was not equal. The two concepts were not the same, yet neither American society nor the Academy ever really confronted this issue. Hence the confusing messages sent to cadets that things would stay the same except for a few things that would not, like length of hair, running times, and the like. Americans seemed unable to reconcile the gap between equality and equity in a way that left everyone feeling comfortable.

Part of the explanation for the government's willingness to tinker with the military is that it could *force* the armed services to drop the color barrier or admit women to the service academies. The rights and liberties guaranteed civilian individuals by the

Constitution and Federal statutes did not apply to members of the armed forces, which in practical terms meant private citizens could often find ways to discriminate while the soldier on active duty could not. Soldiers defended freedom and democracy, but did not enjoy them on duty. A separate body of law known as the Uniform Code of Military Justice governed all military personnel, and it made no allowance for dissent. Uncle Sam might be hesitant to make Exxon or General Electric promote greater equality between the sexes, but he could force the military to do just about anything, whether it was purchasing a certain weapon system, training recruits in a certain way, or even assimilating women into the service academies. It was an easy power to use as well, since the president was the Commander-in-Chief and could institute sweeping changes without Congressional consent, and because the military was often an easy political target. Its constituents were small in number, geographically diverse, and fearful of budget cuts. That meant members of Congress could experiment with the military to score public relations points without fearing a political backlash at home, and it meant that the armed forces themselves often had precious little leverage on Capitol Hill. That leverage had to be used both sparingly and wisely, and was generally reserved for the largest weapons contracts rather than for financially less explosive issues like women in the armed services.

A further explanation is that for America the armed forces represent what society hopes to be, as opposed to what it is. They are ideally the truest meritocracy, where birth, income, religion, race, and gender are in theory unimportant. Those trivial demarcations between people, it is said, pale in military ethos before the grander ideals of duty, honor,

and country, and the American people look to the services for proof anyone can still rise to the top. Hence the focus on generals who once were privates, or Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who grew up poor and uneducated in some rural or urban ghetto. Secretary of the Army Martin R. Hoffmann made note of the pattern when he addressed the West Point Class of 1976. "It is remarkable," he said, "how often in the past, when faced with...trials and doubts, the nation has found in the Army those ideals, inspirations, and leadership it seeks." Such ideals were visible, according to Hoffmann, "...not only in such commanding figures as Washington, Marshall, and Eisenhower, but also in the dedication and integrity of many thousands of soldiers - citizen and professional - who have compiled an enviable record of the nation's trust upheld." The Secretary said, "This trust is neither surprising nor suspect. It has survived well because the Army has been an essence, or distillation of the people, a symbol of the nation at its best."[32] Federal officials have taken advantage of this ideal time and again. When Harry S Truman concluded that the time and politics were right to begin the fight against racial discrimination, for example, he began by desegregating the armed forces in 1948.[33] It was the government's way of saying, "Here is the way things ought to be, and we expect the rest of the government and society to follow suit." So it was with furthering opportunities for women in the 1970s and 1980s, and for homosexuals in the military in the early 1990s. The latter effort may have failed in the short run, but it was no accident

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[32]"Graduation 1976," Assembly 35, No. 2 (September 1976): p. 20.

[33]Truman acted both from principle and from a desire to gain support from African-Americans in the 1948 presidential election. With the Democratic Party badly divided over civil rights, Truman needed all the support he could get.

President William J. Clinton chose to attempt mandating equal rights for homosexuals in the military before proposing similar legislation that would affect other segments of American society.

Americans, in the form of Congress, also asked the young to lead the way in enforcing new values and modes of behavior when women were admitted to West Point. The military is, after all, predominantly a young person's domain. To be thirty in the armed forces is to be old, perhaps a veteran with ten or more years of service already looking toward retirement, and the bulk of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines have traditionally been enlisted personnel between eighteen and twenty-five with a high turnover rate. Not even these professionals were chosen to make integration at West Point work. Instead, it was the young (18-22 years old) cadets of the service academies, including those at West Point, who were told to put aside their culture and make a revolution succeed. They were shepherded by their elders of course, but in the end the success or failure of the integration of women rested primarily on less mature, less experienced shoulders. It should be no surprise that some of them struggled with the transition, for the Academy learned from experience that supposedly more mature, more experienced, and more professional officers had trouble as well.

At the Academy, those young men struggling with their perceptions about the role of women in society included cadets who fought their own battles for women and felt something was being lost at West Point. Class of 1980 men sometimes endured harassment simply because women were among them. Upperclassmen attacking women cadets in general often turned to a man from the Class of 1980 and harangued him for the

performance of "YOUR" female classmates. Not all men of the 1980 class felt they were blamed for the presence of women, but all experienced at least some tangible reminders that their class was not like those that had gone before.[34]

For other men, even those outside the Class of 1980, there were social consequences tied to dating women cadets. After asking a young cadet woman to a dance, for example, a male cadet accepted a ride from the wives of two officers when he needed to travel from one end of the post to another. In the midst of idle conversation he casually mentioned that he was dating a woman cadet, and the women refused to talk with him for the duration of their journey.[35]

Inside the barracks, men felt women got away with bending the rules more often. Women, it was said, often called out "dressing" to keep upperclassmen out of their rooms until they were ready. Men could not do that. Instead, male cadets knew that privacy was an illusion, that at any moment upperclassmen might come barging into their rooms hoping to find items out of place or unappropriate behavior taking place. Women were said to use tears to leverage their way out of tough duty, and the men hated it. Such criticism was no doubt exaggerated, and some cadets maintain they never saw a woman cry on duty.[36] It should also be remembered that many a man cried too, a fact usually lost on male members of the Corps. Still, the perception that women were "getting over" was widespread, and a source of genuine hostility towards women cadets.

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[34]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

[35]EI, 5-5-80, p. 8.

[36]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

There were other frustrations. Male cadets often resented the unprecedented speed with which the first women were admitted, for it stood in stark contrast to the painstakingly slow process by which they were forced to compete with thousands of other candidates for an excruciatingly limited number of slots at the Academy.[37] They resented the fawning adulation showered on the women as well. The attention came from everywhere at once: from the president, the press, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, and every tourist on the post. In 1978 Columbia Pictures even made a movie for television titled "Women at West Point," and the men hated that too. Women "represented a very small portion of the class" of 1980, yet they seemed to garner more notice than the rest of the Academy put together.[38]

Women also seemed to quit too easily, and when they did the men grumbled mightily about the prized slot that had been wasted on a women while a more deserving man who could have entered the combat branches of the service had been left at home. "There goes another slot a guy could have had" they said, though one male cadet wrote later in life that "We forgot how many men quit so easily."[39]

Then there were the tiny but seemingly important changes to cadet life which women brought. Prior to their arrival, for example, it was a "big thing for the upperclassmen to saunter to the bathroom with nothing on but a towel over their shoulder," because such posturing separated them from Plebes who by regulation were

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[37]IWA, 4-13-96, author's notes.

[38]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 4.

[39]Ibid.

required to be clothed at all times except in the shower. Women destroyed that "privilege."[40] The "admission of women limited the lexicon available to the upperclass when dressing down Plebes," meaning some cadets (but by no means all) felt compelled to obey orders against swearing in the presence of women.[41] Plebes were barred by regulations from swearing, but for upperclassmen the new reluctance seemed to be yet another small but important denial of a privilege for many men. These seemingly petty changes had a real effect on the traditionally minded, for as William Whyte wrote, "The more exquisite distinctions are, the more important they become."[42] Women also had window shades, which became both a blessing and a curse for all parties.[43] While providing some measure of privacy they also clearly identified which rooms belonged to women to everyone passing by the barracks, thus making life easier for those who wanted to harass women cadets. On the other hand, as time went by and the rooms rotated among cadets they became prized havens because the shades allowed cadets regardless of gender to sleep in without being awakened by the sun.

Above all, there was great anger over the differing physical standards, over the fact women could pass with times and performances for which men would fail. Men also resented the fact women were put through self-defense courses while they were pushed

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[40]ETA, 7-8-96.

[41]Lovell, Neither Athens Nor Sparta?, p. 265.

[42]William Whyte, The Organization Man (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).

[43]ETA, 7-8-96.

through boxing. As one man put it, "I wish I could have avoided boxing and wrestling."[44] The differing regulations were hardly the fault of women, though they were still a source of consternation for many men.

And on so many levels, the admission of women just did not seem to make any *sense* to most West Point men. Why, they asked, admit cadets to an institution dedicated to preparing young leaders for combat if they would never be expected to command troops in battle? It was like seeing a football team invest the time and effort to devise drills and modified standards so that someone who would never be allowed to play in a real game could make the team. To some it was as if Congress had forgotten what the Academy was *for*. In the eyes of purists it was not for artists, poets, or musicians, or for philosophers, priests, or social workers. The institution existed solely to train people for combat, to instill in them a willingness to kill and the skills to lead soldiers in combat and to cope with death. Cadets were there to learn how to win wars, whether popular or unpopular, long or short, limited or total, and being *fair* had nothing to do with that sort of training. Fairness, after all, was completely foreign to the random injustice of a battlefield, and cadets railed at the "idiots in Congress and the Courts that made us accept women."[45]

For the men of the Class of 1980 there was the added knowledge that they did not have the same West Point experience as the men who graduated before them. They often resented women more than other male cadets because the attention from the press and

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[44]ETA, 7-24-96.

[45]ETA, 7-8-96.

Academy officials affected them directly.[46] They were "catching a lot of shit from the upperclassmen because there were women in the class" as well, and were perhaps influenced by the often bitter Class of 1977 Firsties who led the Corps during their Plebe year.[47]

Seldom-questioned male-oriented standards of leadership had to evolve as well, particularly in the realm of physical standards. Many men were bitter because the arrival of women and the establishment of some different standards for them seemed to tarnish the Academy's elite reputation. As one member of the Class of 1979 wrote, "It was the appearance of weakness that we perceived that women brought to West Point and simple resistance to change that caused us to resent the women."[48]

Such resentment was particularly acute among those men who conceived of West Point as a capstone of masculinity, a place where a young man went to prove his manliness or worth physically, mentally, and emotionally. These young men were usually conservative, with culturally induced conceptions of women that made no allowance for their inclusion in the Long Gray Line, and their views were perpetuated by the regular Army officers of the Academy and the legions of old grads for whom the admission of

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[46]. The depth of resentment triggered by press attention to the women of the Class of 1980 cannot be overestimated. One subtle indication came when the 1980 Howitzer was published; in a twenty seven page pictorial dedicated to the Long Gray Line and the Firsties who would graduate in May, 1980, only one photo of a woman appeared, and she was talking to a reporter.

[47]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 4. The Class of 1977 was decimated by the cheating scandal during the Fall of 1976, and many class members were angry and resentful towards the Academy. As leaders with no memory of women at West Point during their own formative years at the Academy, they were also unlikely to look upon the radical change in gender roles with approval.

[48]ETA, 7-8-96.

women was a lachrymal event.[49] One woman from the Class of 1980 suggested that family heritage influenced the feelings many young men had toward women cadets as well. "I think it's (male cadets who despised the presence of women) just the old 'die hards' that have wanted to come here since they were little because their dads and their grandads and everybody went here," she said. "I can understand that. That's kind of a tough thing, and then they find women are going. It's like the whole thing has just crumbled...When you're brought up with that idea, it's hard to get rid of it."[50]

To fit in, women learned to adopt the West Point style of leadership, and male cadets were confronted with the realization that many women were superb leaders even though they were hardly masculine and often donned "masks of command" which were unfamiliar to them. Even when leadership styles were different, cadets found in the long run that gender had nothing to do with real effectiveness. The best leaders showed themselves to their followers "...only through a mask...made in such form as will mark him to men of his time and place as the leader they want and need,"[51] and that was true whether the leaders and followers were men, women, or both.

It required extraordinary maturity and reflection for a male cadet to realize women were not to blame for the changes at West Point, and the Academy was not always a help in this regard. As one cadet said later, "Introspection was never something

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[49]EI, 5-80, p. 17.

[50]EI, 5-14-80, p. 16.

[51]Keegan, The Mask of Command, p. 11.

stressed at West Point..."[52] Women did not break down Thayer Gate or march in angry columns on the Superintendent's quarters to be admitted; Congress had opened West Point to them. Women were not to blame for the attention the press showered on them, and could hardly be castigated for occasionally enjoying the limelight. After all, male cadets liked the attention they received too. Women were not responsible for the differing physical standards, and could not be held responsible for the fact the Academy sometimes bent over backwards to accommodate them. They were not to blame for the fact tourists fawned on them and sponsoring families on post competed for the chance to feed them dinner and socialize with them as their "West Point family." The truth was simply that women came to the Academy for the same reasons the men did, because they were drawn by the aura, the free tuition, and the chance to serve their country. They were hardly dyed-in-the-wool feminists when they arrived at West Point, and though many were driven to become more active participants in the fight for women's rights by the injustices they endured at the Academy, they were hardly leading rebellions on the Plain. Instead, they wanted to fit in and be accepted, just as the men did. Too few male cadets recognized these truths, however, and in the competitive atmosphere of the Academy almost all bowed to the forces opposing women at least once.

Some men of the Class of 1980 struggled to reconcile a conviction that women did not belong at the Academy with the admiration and respect they felt for women as individuals. As one said: "When they are an impersonal group of 'women' it's easier to harbor ill will. When those same women become known as individuals that shared many

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[52]LTA, 1-18-96.

of the same concerns, fears, and hopes that you did it is harder to hold those views."[53] This sort of one-on-one example was often the only way some men came to change their views, a point made by a woman cadet in 1980. "I think the best way to get through to a male cadet is when he's working right next to female cadets and [they are] pulling [their] end of the load." There was nothing the institution could have done, she argued, to change the minds of men because "They already have a mind set once they are here...," and in the long run "There's nothing that the organization could have done to change his mind...There's just nothing you can do. Except for the piece-by-piece example."[54] In the end, most men who came to support the integration of women into the Corps were won over in just this manner, one at a time.

From the very beginning of the process, some men never held those views, choosing instead to support the admission of women to the Academy. They were in a minority, yet it should be noted the majority of the Corps of Cadets did not go out of their way to drive women out. If over four thousand men had closed ranks in an attempt to expel barely a hundred women they would almost certainly have been successful, and whatever the faults of many male cadets and the entire West Point system that clearly did not happen. Instead, most men were too concerned with their own survival to take the time to systematically harass women. Too many took the occasional cheap verbal shot, or engaged in misogynistic banter with their fellow male cadets, but most refrained from stepping beyond these forms of discrimination, especially in private. As one woman put

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[53]Ibid.

[54]EI, (no date), p. 12.

it, the "Corps" personality was against women, but in small groups or one on one the resistance among men was not as bad.[55] A violent minority of men went beyond harassment and engaged in sexual assault and physical intimidation. The rest grew to accept the presence of women cadets over time, and some men even embraced the arrival of women as a positive good for the Academy.

Those who supported women usually fell into two categories: those who supported women from the first, and those who grew to believe the Army benefitted from the presence of women after witnessing their performance at West Point. One cadet in the latter group opposed the arrival of women prior to Congressional action, then reconsidered because, as he said, "I strongly believe then and now that I am a servant of the people."[56] After seeing the women of the Class of 1980 in action his views moved even farther, until he argued, "If we're going to have women in the Army, why not make them the best officers we can?"[57] Making them the best, as every grad knew, meant allowing them to attend West Point.

For its part the Academy was generally doing the best it could to assimilate women, but was groping in the midst of a new and bewildering situation and predestined to make some mistakes. All of this made for wonderful news stories, and after the turmoil of the early 1970s and the catastrophe of the honor scandal the Academy leapt at the opportunity to capitalize on the admission of women as a positive public relations

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[55]EI, April/May 1980, p. 14.

[56]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 2.

[57]Ibid.

coup. Few cadets were able to see through the smoke of change and realize that their women peers were innocent by-products of the greater social evolution behind the turmoil. The changes at West Point were manifestly not the responsibility of women, yet because they were there it was far easier to lash out at them than to howl at abstract enemies like the American people or the distant Congress. Further, because many career officers on the Academy staff and so many of the alumni were criticizing women as well, it was an easy if ultimately despicable thing for a male cadet to jump on the misogynistic bandwagon.

Ironically, those young men at West Point were critical to making the integration of women any kind of success. For patriarchy to recede men always have to change, and at West Point that meant everyone from the Superintendent to the civilian work crews had to accept and become accustomed to seeing women in military leadership roles. They had to believe in their peers, be willing to follow them and defend them in environments where only men were present. Too few did, and women in subsequent classes were forced to endure many of the privations inflicted on the women of the Class of 1980.

West Point and its all-male tradition thus had a great deal to face when women were admitted in 1976. Culture, history, biology, and tradition intermingled to create myriad obstacles in cadet minds against accepting women at the Academy, and only with time and a great deal of effort were those obstacles overcome. Along the way, the old West Point passed away, and it is no paean to patriarchy to note that something unique and profoundly male was lost. Academy grads felt the loss most keenly, as did many

members of the Corps. It took time to realize something greater was gained in the process.

Chapter Six: "The Invisible Middle"

> ...the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding go out to meet it.
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> -Thucydides[1]

One of the many ironies of life at West Point is that it varied so much from one cadet to another. Certain broad experiences were common for everyone, but on an individual level it was still true that some companies were better than others, as were some TACS, members of the faculty, and individuals among the upper classes. The ways in which these factors interacted had a great deal of influence on cadet lives, especially for the women of the Class of 1980. They found, for example, that many of the old rules of cadet life hardly applied to them at all. After Plebe year most cadets were accepted as full-fledged members of the Corps, and the harassment and stress began to decline as they accumulated rank and power and began focusing on the responsibilities inherent in holding greater authority. While West Point was never easy, being a Yearling year was easier than being Plebe. Yearlings often reveled in their newfound freedom and were notorious for being the wildest pranksters in the Corps. They were also known for helping Plebes, for they were the closest in age, rank, and experience to the new class of cadets which entered on their heels.

This pattern was shattered for the women of the Class of 1980. They found instead that Yearling year was even harder than their baptism of fire as Plebes, for by the Fall of 1977 the Corps had polarized and there were some men bent on harassing women

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[1]Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War, ed. in trans. Sir Richard Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943; reprint ed., 1978), p. 113.

more than ever before.[2] While the men of the Class of 1980 tried as a rule to help the incoming Plebes, the women, driven by harassment to distance themselves from each other and from the women of the Class of 1981, were often distant and aloof from their subordinates, generating resentment from below that was sometimes the equal of the hatred and resentment they suffered from above. By the end of their Yearling year many women in the Class of 1980 were feeling more isolated and threatened than ever, and they continued to suffer in isolation. Each company was virtually an island unto itself, with its own peculiar mores and an often insular approach to training. As a day to day reality this meant that the five or fewer women assigned to each company in 1977-78 had few peers with whom they could discuss problems unique to women. As attrition inexorably reduced the number of women within the Corps the problem became even worse. This trend was compensated for in some small measure by the arrival of more women every year, but for the women of the Class of 1980 the pattern provided little comfort. Plebes, after all, were no solace for Yearlings, Cows, or Firsties. Thus, in isolation and without women role models, the suffering continued for most of the first women of West Point.

Their year as Third Classmen began with a surprise in the Summer of 1977, when both Superintendent Berry and Commandant Ulmer were transferred to other Army posts short of their expected tours of duty. The "Supe"typically served four years, while the Commandant normally served for three; Berry was reassigned after three years and Ulmer after only two. Their removal was downplayed by the Army at the time, though it

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[2]EI, 5-1-80, p. 7.

had much to do with the honor scandal and a conviction among some officers that the opposition both Berry and Ulmer had expressed towards the admission of women was making their integration into West Point especially difficult. Most agreed Berry and Ulmer had done their best to make integration work once the order had been given, but some felt their past opposition, well-documented in the press and an article of faith among many male cadets, was too much for them to overcome. Ulmer was replaced by Brigadier General John C. Bard, while Berry was succeeded by General Andrew J. Goodpaster, who was brought out of retirement as a four star General to serve in the three star (Lieutenant General) Superintendent's post.

Goodpaster was a former aide to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and served as Supreme Commander of NATO forces in the early 1970s. He was highly regarded in Army circles for his academic background and erudition, and brought out of retirement by Army Chief of Staff Bernard Rogers in June after serving as a professor at The Citadel.[3] For a venerated four star general to be brought out of retirement to serve in a three star post as Superintendent of the United States Military Academy was unprecedented, however. It spoke volumes about the trouble the Old Guard saw at West Point.[4] Their sacred alma mater, more accurately known as alma *omnia*, was in danger, and the Army took what steps it could to address the situation forcefully and, in the jargon of the service, to "drive on." While their fear was driven largely by the honor scandal, one graduate argued the change had a positive impact on the way West Point

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[3]GEN Andrew J. Goodpaster, IWA, 11-7-95, pp. 1-2.

[4]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

faculty members treated women as well, because many of those who were critics of the admission of women began changing their behavior and attitudes after Berry and Ulmer were "relieved."[5] Perhaps the Army hoped that would happen.

Goodpaster quickly took stock of the resentment towards women at West Point and realized there was a great deal of "submerged opposition" which needed to be brought out in the open. He attacked it by holding a series of meetings with staff and faculty in which he explained his views on women at the Academy. First, he argued, their arrival was good for the Army. His reasoning was that if women were going to be in the Army there had to be women officers, and women had to have "preparation equal to that of the men." That meant admitting them to West Point and avoiding a separate training regime. After all, he suggested, "we know from past experience that separate but equal is not equal." Further, it was a decision made by Congress and one which carried a strength of reason behind it. Finally, since the decision had been made it was time for every officer to "get with it." Anyone who could not perform under those conditions was told, "I will walk with you down to the South Gate, shake your hand, and send you on your way."[6] The Superintendent's tone began a gradual improvement in the climate for women at West Point, though the gap between official pronouncements and life inside the barracks remained enormous for many years.

As Goodpaster and Bard settled into their positions, the Class of 1980 returned from a brief Summer leave to attend Cadet Field Training (CFT) at nearby Camp

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[5]ETA, 9-26-96, p. 8.

[6]GEN Goodpaster, IWA, 11-7-95, p. 3.

Buckner. While some believed that resistance and overt harassment might begin to ebb during the second year for women at the Academy, the truth was that male abuse got considerably worse. To be sure, most men did not participate in sexual harassment on a routine basis. As noted earlier, if the majority of over four thousand men had decided to drive the fewer than two hundred women out of the Academy the position of the women would have been untenable. If only ten percent of the men were adamantly opposed to the presence of women to the point where they were willing to openly abuse them, however, that was still four hundred men in positions of authority who could make women's lives miserable. Far too many men took the opportunity to do so. While most cadets were a reflection of America's best and brightest there were a few who more closely personified society's ills. Such cadets were always present, for it was not possible to attract a representative galaxy of American youth without also garnering a cross section of otherwise intelligent and capable cadets gone morally and ethically astray. Unfortunately, those men who strayed from professional behavior toward bigotry and sexism became bolder in the Summer of 1977. They made their presence felt most forcibly at Camp Buckner.

The Summer training area known as Camp Buckner was located west of the Academy. Originally named after Lake Popolopen, the site was located at the edge of the West Point Military Reservation and renamed in 1946 to honor General Simon Bolivar Buckner, a former Commandant of Cadets who was killed on Okinawa in 1945.[7] Buckner was used every Summer for CFT, which involved a basic introduction to the combat

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[7]USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 64.

branches of the Army for Third Classmen. Courses lasted eight weeks, and were divided into infantry, recondo, armor, weapons, land navigation, communications, field artillery, engineers, and air defense artillery. They were taught by upperclassmen, and occasionally by regular Army soldiers who provided instruction in specialty areas and offered expertise regarding the latest field equipment. In addition, because all cadets at Buckner were upperclassmen, there were greater opportunities for relaxation than during Plebe year. There were hops, a variety of athletic activities, and facilities for swimming, water skiing, and other recreational pursuits.[8]

Unfortunately, there was also greater opportunity for harassment of women outside the close supervision within the barracks. Living in sparse wooden buildings or camping in the field that Summer of 1977, many resentful male cadets took advantage of their relative isolation to openly discriminate against and attack women on a routine basis, for there were few brakes on their behavior.[9]

One of the worst aspects of Buckner was that women were isolated in separate barracks from their male peers. Cadets slept in buildings which had not been modified with private latrines or partitions, so regardless of unit assignment women were housed in one centrally located area. This was good for their cohesion, but unfortunate because it made them easy targets for men. Worse, the barracks in which women stayed were at the bottom of a hill and a considerable distance from all assembly and training areas. Men stood at the top of the hill and threw rocks at them, breaking windows and harassing

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[8]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[9]EI, 5-14-80, p. 17.

women even at night.[10] Women were spit on at Buckner, there was cat-calling, and the distance created communication snafus that led to women sometimes showing up for drills wearing the wrong uniforms.[11] For women in this environment it was "...a daily occurrence and sometimes almost nonstop that someone was crying."[12]

As training continued it seemed difficult for the cadre to maintain control, and the accumulated hostility of male cadets erupted. One cadet told his sergeant that in a combat situation he would shoot women in the back.[13] Others clapped when women fell out of training runs, and the Jody songs became more wild and sexist.[14] Because the runs were more combat-oriented they involved full field gear on most occasions, including helmet, rifle, pack, fatigues, and combat boots. They were a shock to cadets who excercised individually in shorts and t-shirts during the academic year, and were extraordinarily difficult for most women. They struggled with the heavy packs, and in particular with regulation Army boots that seldom fit the smaller feet of women properly. It was not uncommon for half the women to fall out of the morning runs, to the accompanying jeers of men who argued that women had no place at West Point. Those same men usually ignored male cadets who fell out with little comment.[15] Women who

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[10]EI, 5-9-80, p. 29.

[11]EI, 5-5-80, p. 13.

[12]EI, 5-8-80, p. 19.

[13]EI, 4-30-80, p. 30.

[14]EI, 4-17-80, p. 18, 20.

[15]IWA, 7-28-96, author's notes.

could not run, after all, proved to many cadets that *all* women were incapable of being soldiers, while men who fell out reflected poorly only on themselves. Emotionally and psychologically the runs became a dreadful ordeal for some women, who felt themselves being slowly ground down by what Ken Kesey called "the Combine." As one woman wrote later: "In the women's barracks after the runs, it was a time of consolation, whispering, and quite. Very little was discussed."[16]

Buckner was where many women realized forcibly that their ill-treatment was rooted exclusively in sexism. Yearlings were not supposed to be treated as badly as Plebes, so when the abuses at Buckner continued many confronted the unpleasant reality that they were hated simply for being women. Paradoxically, it was also a time when many refused to appeal to the chain of command for help. Most did not want to be "martyrs" or say things were too rough, and the truth was, "Any girl that complains is a bitch, that's it."[17] Even worse, some women argued the TACS did not pay close enough attention to what was happening, and that rather than encouraging women to come forward with any problems they often discouraged women from coming forward with complaints.[18] On some occasions reporting incidents to TACS resulted in even greater harassment.[19]

As always, there were some men who were sympathetic from the beginning, and

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[16]IWA, 6-29-98, author's notes.

[17]EI, 5-5-80, p. 4, 6.

[18]EI, 5-80, pp. 11-12.

[19]EI, 5-1-80, p. 7.

others who grew to respect women as cadets and leaders only over time.[20] One woman cadet later noted she had "found guys [at West Point] that are just really super people themselves."[21] If they were too helpful, however, they risked bringing the wrath of the angriest men on themselves, and most succumbed to the "tremendous lure to play the game - to say the right things" in the presence of those who argued that women had to be expunged from the Corps.[22]

In spite of all the problems, there were good times for cadets too, including practical jokes and the use of Buckner's recreation facilities. Even then, however, the well-controlled fun was often interrupted because some instructors let male cadets rant about women.[23] These factors meant that for most Class of 1980 women Buckner was the nadir of their cadet years. "I remember crying a lot more at night by myself at Buckner," said one.[24] Another argued that many of the men "...were just incredibly mean. I think that's when it hit an all-time high - out at Buckner."[25]

Ill-treatment and resentment of women reached a pinnacle during the five day introduction to small unit tactics and patrolling begun by General Westmoreland during his tenure as Superintendent in the 1960s. Known as RECONDO, a hybrid of the words

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[20]EI, no date, p. 7.

[21]EI, 5-7-80, p. 11.

[22]IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes.

[23]EI, 5-8-80, pp. 24-25.

[24]EI, no date, p. 17.

[25]EI, 5-14-80, p. 17, and EI, 5-80, p. 7.

"reconnaissance" and "commando," the training was physically very demanding and culminated in a timed challenge involving an outdoor obstacle course and land navigation tests.[26] Those who successfully completed the course in time received a coveted black Recondo badge, and there was controversy from the beginning because women were allowed more time than men. When a number of cadets (men and women) were given more than one chance to complete the course in defiance of regulations, some cadets who earned badges burned them in protest. Men focused on the women who were given second and third chances, arguing it was proof of preferential treatment by the Academy while ignoring the men who were given extra opportunities to pass the course.[27] Though the number of patch burners was small, the act enraged many women, symbolizing as it did the frustration and sexism among many cadets.[28] It also caused a stir at the Academy because it was reported by the press.

When the Summer of 1977 drew to a close and the Class of 1980 returned to the Academy for their second year, they were stunned to learn that West Point officials had dramatically "shuffled" the Corps. Shuffling occurred when cadets were reassigned en masse to different companies and regiments. It was done periodically in an attempt to limit the power of cliques and to teach cadets to work with a variety of different people on a recurring basis. The shuffling done prior to the start of the 1977-78 academic year, however, was aimed specifically at women. Researchers with Project Athena concluded

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[26]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 66.

[27]EI, 5-9-80, p. 29.

[28]EI, 4-17-80, pp. 20-21.

that those companies which were all-male were the most antagonistic towards women, so the Academy scattered women into every cadet company in September. This came as a shock to many cadets, for it represented an abandonment of the original plan to slowly phase women into every cadet company by 1979. It was an effort to break down the entrenched sexism of the Corps and a recognition by the Academy that immediate steps had to be taken to make gender-integration more successful.

While well-intentioned, the shuffling of women in the Class of 1980 had disastrous results for some. The bonds within individual squads and companies were extremely tight, formed as they were in the shared crucible of Beast and Plebe year. Being a Yearling meant almost nothing in a company which had not seen a new member weather the rigors of Plebe year, and many a victim of the shuffle found themselves outcasts in companies which made no secret of their dislike for the new members. This phenomenon was magnified even further if a woman was transferred into a company of "women-haters" whose members thought they had another year (or more) before women invaded their ranks.[29] If a woman was lucky and transferred to a "good" company, or even luckier and stayed in her original assignment, the effects of the shuffle were minimal. For those who transferred into companies that were hotbeds of misogynism, however, the shuffle meant one more year of severe harassment and abuse.[30] And all women were forced to confront a new situation in which there were fewer women in

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[29]IWA, 9-10-96. Third Regiment's B Company, for example, was considered one of the worst "woman hating" companies in the Corps.

[30]The best example from the period was B-3, whose members called themselves the "Bandits" or "The Boys of B-3."

every company. That translated into a greater attrition rate because the support network among women was weakened.[31]

Throughout the Academy, those forms of harassment varied from company to company. In some, very little took place, while in others there was a great deal. One general theme was the persecution of homosexuals, for like the Army itself, West Point was a notoriously homophobic institution. Cadets known to be homosexuals were expelled, and those who were suspected of homosexual tendencies were often the victims of vicious hazing.[32] In the hunt for lesbians some male cadets even formed an informal "binoculars club" which routinely spied through open cadet windows on women. Besides the adolescent thrill of spotting women dressing or undressing, members of the club hoped to catch gay women being affectionate with one another.[33] On at least one occasion they were successful, spotting two women embracing each other in their room. The incident was immediately reported to higher authorities, and because the women were barely clothed they were dismissed from the Academy for getting "caught in the act."[34] Beyond bigotry, the incident demonstrated considerable hypocrisy on the part of cadets, for men were dismissed for homosexuality too. "But see," as one woman said, "nobody ever hears about that with the guys," and the expulsion of lesbians was touted as

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[31]IWA, 6-9-96, author's notes.

[32]Cadets were expelled very quietly by West Point, especially when homosexuality was an issue. However, five cadets are known to have been expelled in the early 1960s for alleged homosexual behavior. Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, p. 326.

[33]EI, no date, p. 16.

[34]EI, 5-80, p. 15.

more proof that the women at West Point were all either "whores or lesbians."[35] Some deliberately wore dresses when off post to combat being labeled "queer."[36]

There were other signs of abuse as well, signs which told every woman at West Point they were both despised and vulnerable to the misogyny plaguing the Corps. Often the abuse and harassment came with a lewd, adolescent sexual twist. One woman opened a drawer in her room and found her swimsuit balled up and filled with male ejaculation.[37] Male cadets yelled "Move out bitch!" through barracks windows at women below them, a janitor was caught stealing women's dirty underwear, and women were exposed to sexism aimed at non-Academy women as well.[38]

One of the most notorious examples was the "Pig Pool," in which a group of cadets contributed money into a pot prior to a Hop or other social event. The cadet who brought or engaged in sexual acts with the most unattractive woman was deemed the winner of the money, with results determined by a vote of the group.[39] It was an Academy twist on a game Regular Army soldiers sometimes played with prostitutes, and a demeaning exploitation of women. Cadet women sometimes took part in the judging, or at least in the accompanying banter, because it was a way of being accepted by male

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[35]EI, 4-30-80, p. 45, and EI, 5-80, p. 15.

[36]EI, no date, p. 14.

[37]EI, 5-7-80, p. 14.

[38]EI, 5-1-80, p. 9, and LTA, 5-15-96, p. 1.

[39]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, p. 123.

cadets and because resistance seemed so futile.[40] What it cost them to see other women treated so maliciously is impossible to know. The practice was summed up by one woman cadet, who said, "I see (it as) more of a subtle, silent aggression against women in different ways."[41]

Women saw their presence reflected in a cartoon strip which appeared for the first time in The Pointer during the Fall of 1977. Titled "The Adventures of Peter Parsec, Space Cadet," the long running strip focused on the United Space Military Academy, which orbited Earth in the year 2078. The First Captain of the futuristic Corps of Cadets, interestingly, was a woman named "Carrie Sabres," whose confident command blended well with the swashbuckling but lowly ranked Peter Parsec.[42] Whether artist Mike Conrad intended any sarcasm with this arrangement is unknown, but he seemed to recognize that women were at the Military Academy to stay.

Between the comic strip and the various forms of harassment, it was clear that women could not hide at West Point. "To move freely in the United States Corps of Cadets, you had to be *anonymous*," wrote one cadet, and anonymity was a condition impossible for women to achieve.[43] The most tragic consequence was that it made women vulnerable to sexual assault, since their small numbers and the lack of locks on cadet rooms made them accessible targets for the most sexist cadet men. Like other

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[40]Barkalow, In the Men's House, pp. 48-49.

[41]EI, no date, p. 16.

[42]Mike Conrad, "The Adventures of Peter Parsec, Space Cadet," The Pointer, October 1977, p. 12.

[43]Jamie Mardis, Memos of a West Point Cadet (New York: McKay Books, 1976), p. 70.

forms of abuse, assaults became widespread during the Class of 1980s Yearling year.

When colonial troops first began constructing fortifications at West Point in 1777 they called the site "Point Purgatory," because the climate was difficult and the post isolated from settled, more comfortable areas.[44] By 1977 some women had reason to think of the Academy as a purgatory of another kind, for if Yearling year was the most difficult in terms of physical and emotional abuse for many women, it was also the nadir in terms of sexual harassment and assaults for the Class of 1980. The Spring of 1978 in particular saw a dramatic increase in the number of late night incidents in women's rooms when cadet men appeared uninvited and molested or even assaulted them. The number of occurrences rose noticeably after Eisenhower Hall began serving beer to upperclassmen.[45] "Lots" of uninvited guests began arriving in women's rooms after taps, and though some of the encounters were relatively innocent if still inappropriate visits by shy men who "just wanted to have a nice talk with a pretty girl" and usually did not get "too out of hand," they were still an additional concern for cadet women.[46] Others involved alcohol, and sleeping women were sometimes awakened by a male cadet standing silently over them.[47] How many serious incidents actually took place will never be known, for West Point is notably successful at keeping unpleasant episodes out of the

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[44]Forman, West Point, p. 11.

[45]"Ike" Hall, the Cadet Activities Center, opened in May of 1974 and boasted the second largest theater on the East Coast (Radio Center Music Hall was first) as well as ballrooms, snack-bars, and a restaurant.

[46]EI, 5-9-80, p. 27, and EI, 5-14-80, p. 27.

[47]EI, 5-8-80, p. 18.

public eye and no victims have stepped forward publicly to name their attackers. Yet the attacks certainly took place and were a source of anger for many of the women of the 1980. They consistently referred to Yearling year as a time when a large number of sexual abuse/molestation cases took place.

The Academy recognized the danger inherent in asking a few hundred young women to sleep without locks on their doors in the midst of several thousand young men and instituted a policy which barred women from sleeping alone. The policy affected many women on weekends, when members of the upper classes often went on leave off post. It forced them to move for a night or two and sleep in a room with a stranger, and was bitterly resented because no similar policy affected the men of West Point. It was a policy born of a desire to prevent problems, but in the long run it was not entirely successful because some women ignored it.[48] Those that did appealed for the policy to be rescinded, because they felt it was unfair and that they could handle themselves in the event of trouble. The Commandant of Cadets in 1978 said some women from the 1980 class indicated "any time the 'cadet masher' has identified himself they have been able to turn him away," but that he "did not agree and intended to continue the policy."[49] Though the reference to the "cadet masher" was unspecific, the memo indicated how serious senior officials at West Point considered the problem of uninvited guests in the rooms of women cadets even before the most serious attack occurred in April 1978.

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[48]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

[49]BG John C. Bard, Memorandum for Superintendent, "Discussions with Women Cadets," March 1, 1978, p. 4, USMA files. The reference to the "cadet masher" is unclear, though one Academy official said it was a ubiquitous term referring to any male cadet who tried too hard to be attractive to women. See IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

The assault involved "Tiffany Clark," a Yearling in Third Regiment, and her Platoon Sergeant, a male Firstie in the Class of 1978.[50] Following "'flag pole leave' to the Golden Rail Bar and Grill in [nearby] Newburgh where alcoholic beverages were consumed," the Platoon Sergeant returned to West Point and "signed in the company departure book" at 4:15 am on April 16. Shortly afterward, he entered the room of Cadet Clark, "who was sleeping alone in her room" despite Academy regulations ordering women not to do so. Clark was "awakened by Cadet...as he stood beside her and placed his hands upon her in a vulgar, demeaning and intimate manner." At first Clark tried to frighten her intruder by moving about as if she were about to awaken. Rather than leave the room, however, her Platoon Sergeant tried to hide behind her desk. She then got out of bed, turned on the lights, and clearly identified her attacker. After ordering him out of her room, Clark attempted to go back to sleep. Still frightened, she moved to the room of two women in another company without awakening them, then returned to her room around 7:00 am and made contact with the Cadet in Charge of Quarters.[51]

For a time the Academy struggled with how to punish the offending male cadet. Though he admitted drinking in Newburgh and entering Clark's room, he denied touching her in any manner, and in the end it was his word against hers.[52] Some members of the administration questioned her version of the incident. They suggested she invented

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[50]"Tiffany Clark" is a pseudonym.

[51]LTC Bruzina, Fact Sheet, "Serious Incident Involving Cadets....., Class of 1978, and ....., Class of 1980," April 20, 1978, p. 1. The names of both cadets are omitted for reasons of privacy. The fact sheet did not come from USMA files, though it is an Academy document.

[52]Ibid.

her version for personal reasons, arguing it was suspicious because by her own account she did not scream or fight her assailant.[53] At first the decision was made to allow the man to receive a diploma but not a commission, yet this struck many cadets as a reward rather than any sort of reprimand or condemnation. Instead of having to serve his term in the Army as an officer, the decision would have allowed him to benefit from four years of free education and walk away. Eventually, in part because of protests made by a delegation of women from the Class of 1980, a review of the case led to the cadet being separated without a diploma or a commission.[54] No criminal charges were ever brought against him.

Most women in the Class of 1980 were troubled by the way the Academy handled the incident, by the secrecy surrounding the assault and the uncertain response of West Point officials.[55] The Commandant, one woman said, talked circles around women who went to talk with him about the incident, and others complained that Clark was treated "terribly" because she had little institutional support and no attorney or representative present in meetings with Academy officials or the attorney of her alleged assailant.[56]

In the aftermath the Academy went to greater lengths to punish late night visitors. One cadet said "Since then (Clark), like guys who have done the same thing have really gotten screwed, you know, a hundred hours [of punishment tours] and that kind of

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[53]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

[54]EI, 5-7-80, p. 13.

[55]EI, 4-30-80, pp. 17-18.

[56]EI, 4-22-80, p. 17, and EI, 5-7-80, pp. 8-9. Clark resigned from West Point soon after the incident.

thing."[57] Men caught near women's rooms after hours were punished more severely, yet it was not enough to stop the pattern or severity of abuse.[58] As one women said in 1980, "I don't really think it (the Clark case) has been the worst case though."[59]

As distressing as the case was there may have been others equally or even more serious, and despite the notoriety of the case among Academy women and some men the late night "visits" continued. The majority were suffered in silence. One cadet estimated that "Maybe fifty percent" of molestation cases were reported, in part because many of the victims were plebes who were afraid to say anything to the upperclass about what was happening.[60] Another cadet answered the question of whether a lot of sexual harassment went unreported by saying, "Yes, ma'am. An awful lot. I know myself that when I was a Yearling guys would come back drunk, and they would come to your room," she said. "And you couldn't report it or you felt stupid. People would say it was just you. The guy wasn't making an advance on you. And having to report it through your chain of command so everyone knows what happened.Where it's just such a 'touchy' issue is often very hard." Instead of reporting incidents, cadets often simply said "'Get out of my room. Leave me alone.'"[61] Some women maintained that all incidents were

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[57]EI, 5-5-80, p. 13.

[58]EI, 4-22-80, p. 16.

[59]EI, 5-1-80, p. 12.

[60]Ibid., p. 11.

[61]EI, no date, p. 15. "Ma'am refers to Major Irene Evankovich, the Superintendent's Special Advisor on Women's Issues. She conducted some of the exit interviews with Class of 1980 women.

reported to "someone," but too often that someone was not an Academy official.[62] One cadet said she knew of two women who were touched at night without reporting it; another indicated she had been touched late at night by an unknown cadet and slept with a broom balanced against her door afterward, while another said the Clark attack was merely one of "numerous" cases she knew of personally.[63]

One of the reasons so many incidents went unreported is that women were reluctant to announce unpleasant incidents to a male-controlled chain of command that often seemed indifferent to their situation. In such an environment the victim felt put on trial, just as many rape and assault survivors often feel attacked again by a judicial system that publicly describes their traumatic experience and allows attorneys to ridicule them. As one cadet put it: "How many rapes on the outside get reported?"[64] At West Point the cadet chain of command and TACS were often to blame when this pattern occurred, for they sometimes suggested women provoked improper behavior among the men. This happened in both serious and relatively mild incidents, as when a male cadet threw a prophylactic filled with water at a woman cadet. After reporting the incident the woman involved said "...it appeared to me I was the punished one. I was the one that had to report to such and such tactical officer's office to report to him what happened. And

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[62]EI, 5-9-80, p. 26.

[63]EI, 5-7-80, p.14; EI, 5-9-80, p. 26; EI, 5-5-80, p. 11. Late night visits persisted well into the 1980s, and some women became accustomed to sleeping with empty aluminum cans against their doors to frighten away would-be intruders.

[64]EI, no date, p. 15.

was I sure that this actually happened? Wasn't I exaggerating a little bit?" [65] When minor transgressions were handled poorly by Academy officials, women became less likely to report the more serious attacks which the Academy might have dealt with more appropriately. The end result was that at times the most responsible members of the chain of command were in the dark. As one cadet said in 1980, "...I don't know if the men realize that all of the women won't say anything."[66]

In the face of so much smoke it is difficult to understand why Academy officials never took firm action to quench the sexual assault fires raging in the barracks. One former graduate blamed institutional inertia and denial as well as a very military willingness to believe that behavior prohibited by orders simply would not take place. In this environment, officials turned blind eyes toward unpleasant information and believed their own reports which said sexual harassment simply was not a problem at West Point.[67] Such denial created a real hesitancy among some officers to follow-up orders to see that they were obeyed. Instead, they demonstrated a tendency the Duke of Wellington saw in William Pitt the Younger. He was, the Duke said, "too sanguine...He conceives a project and then imagines it done."[68] So it was at the Academy. As Major Nederlander of the West Point staff said in 1980, "Here, for example, they say there will

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[65]Ibid., p. 16.

[66]EI, 5-1-80, p. 11.

[67]IWA, 3-17-97, author's notes.

[68]Quoted in Manchester, American Caesar, p. 23..

be no more harassment, and leave it at that."[69]

How the Academy could believe reports which downplayed harassment in the wake of the exit interviews conducted with the women of the Class of 1980 is difficult to fathom, especially since the Superintendent's Special Advisor on Women's Issues, Major Irene Evankovich, conducted many of the interviews in which the extent of harassment was made perfectly clear. Moreover, given the widespread nature of the abuse there had to have been TACS and male cadets who were aware of the problem long before Evankovich's interviews, especially since some cadet men became so concerned about the phenomenon they began standing guard in their company hallways to protect women at night.[70] One member of the Class of 1979 argued the real problem was Academy duplicity, that women "exposed the hypocrisy of the institution," and "the Janus-faced nature of many West Point leaders." They showed a tacit willingness to permit harassment, he said, even while the well-oiled Academy public-relations machine assured everyone concerned that all was well along the Hudson.[71] In the end no meaningful changes to protect women were made until the early 1990s, when locks were finally placed on the doors to cadet rooms.

If the institution was willing to lie to itself, so were some women. A sense of denial extended to many of them according to some graduates, and there were those who were reluctant to believe what was happening inside barracks after the final notes of

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[69]Rogan, Mixed Company, p. 186.

[70]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

[71]IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes.

Taps drifted across the sleepless Hudson each evening. After fighting to enter a prestigious and world famous institution attended by cadets they were told were the finest young people in America, it was easy for some women to blame themselves rather than the powers-that-were for allowing assaults to take place.[72] "I guess," said one woman, "that, you like to think that the image they portray here is that these are gentlemen, and we don't expect un-gentlemanly behavior from them."[73] This chasm between the noble young knights of West Point myth and the crude reality of some male cadet behavior drove women to despair. As one put it, "I've never seen a group of men that were so ungentlemanly-like in my whole life." They put on a good show, she explained, but were "pigs" when no one was looking.[74]

It was Anton Myrer who said, "You fight your bravest battles unapplauded and alone," and that was certainly true for women at West Point. Everyone knew nights were the most dangerous time of all. That was when most cadets slept and the midnight gropers prowled the halls. Like members of the infantry who have struggled against fear in war zones since time immemorial to make it to sunrise, many women struggled to relax and combat their fears until daybreak. Not all of them fought these battles, but some did, and those encounters were the strongest indication that some men saw the women as targets rather than comrades-in-arms. All cadets had to fight against their inner fears and the tangible obstacles of academics and physical fitness to stay at the Academy,

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[72]IWA, 3-17-97, author's notes. Such denial usually led to anger when the women involved accepted the Academy's complicity.

[73]EI, 5-5-80, p. 8.

[74]Ibid., p. 11.

yet by their second and third years at West Point they seldom feared their fellow cadets. Too many women did.[75]

The assaults and late-night visits were part of a larger pattern of male aggression against women in the armed forces, for historically "at every step toward their incorporation into the military, women have been met with coarse, misogynistic resistance - jeers, hazings, and, above all, sexual assaults and harassment aimed at reminding them that, in the most primitive calculus, women are still not predators, but prey."[76] At West Point the hard truth was that while all cadets were liable for what they did, women cadets were also liable for what they were. Men might be intimidated. They might live each day worrying about failure. But few men were ever in fear for their personal safety. Many women were.

Officially, the Academy admits of no rapes involving cadet women on post between 1976 and 1980, and no hard evidence seems to exist to suggest otherwise.[77] Unofficially, however, and informally, some former cadets and members of the Academy staff and faculty believe rapes took place. "I don't want to remember what happened back then," said one woman who was an Academy staffer in the late 1980s, adding "Everyone was just so scared." She argued TACS and members of the staff knew about the worst incidents and turned a blind eye, and that word seldom reached the public

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[75]The problem may have continued well into the 1990s. The Academy installed locks on cadet doors very quietly in 1992, and the Superintendent told one graduate it was because of an outbreak of "thievery and male cadets sneaking into female's rooms after dark and groping them." See LTA, 3-28-96, p. 4.

[76]Ehrenreich, Blood Rites, p. 230.

[77]IWA, 5-16-97, author's notes.

because "They keep things very quiet..." at West Point. "I think there were rapes," she said, "I really do."[78]

In the midst of the harassment, the assaults, and the intimidation, it is interesting to ponder why so many women stayed. For some it was a question of stubbornness, of resiliency and a simple refusal to let their enemies win. Perhaps for others, as it was for Ulysses S. Grant, the virtues of the Academy outweighed the defects. Geoffrey Perret wrote: "The injustices inherent in the West Point system angered him all his life, yet Grant could not help his deep attachment to 'the best school in the world...'" It was "...a place that for all its faults provided an excellent academic education, a camaraderie among the cadets that led to lifelong friendships, a competitive system that allowed poor boys to compete on equal terms with the rich, and, above all, a place where Grant's deepest faith - patriotism - was taught as the highest virtue a young man could aspire to."[79]

For others the urge to leave was a daily temptation for a time, until they suddenly found themselves wanting to stay, desiring a military career and sometimes even loving the austere cadet life at West Point.[80] "By all stretches of the imagination," said one woman, "it was very clear that I should have left. But there was just something that held my heart."[81] This indefinable something, a spirit of sacrifice or patriotism or service, was

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[78]IWA, 7-9-96, author's notes.

[79]Geoffrey Perret, Ulysses S. Grant: Soldier and President (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 365.

[80]IWA, 4-2-96.

[81]EI, 5-8-80, p. 20.

important to more than a few women who decided to endure the rigors of the Academy, just as it was important to many men. One woman spoke of having some good days and some bad, until finally "You're out at a parade and tingles go down your spine when they are playing 'The Star Spangled Banner' because you are here for your country...not because you're first."[82]

Such idealism was not present among all cadets, and even among those felt the mystic pull of West Point it was a fleeting thing. On most days the parades and formations, the endless fealty to form, tradition, and regulations made cadets weary beyond their years. Most were too busy, too focused on simply getting through the day and surviving to get idealistic about West Point. For the first few months as a cadet the place scared them, and after that it became a test of endurance. Misty reverie was mocked as suitable only for old grads and gung-ho civilians. And yet, the more reflective cadets also knew they would one day be old grads themselves and that service and sacrifice and patriotism were an implicit and unavoidable part of the United States Military Academy. Some came to "love the discipline and the challenge," and sometimes, just sometimes, when the mood or setting was right, most could be overcome with the palpable *meaning* of it all.[83] Duty. Honor. Country. Each word resonated in the soul, animating the shadows cast by the Bradleys and the Pershings, making them somehow more comforting and less intimidating. The ties that bound cadets to each other, to the Army, and to America were tangible in such moments, heartfelt and

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[82]EI, 5-9-80, p. 38.

[83]LTA, 9-2-96, p. 1.

genuinely pure. They enjoyed a "...bond of shared experience no one can match," and a feeling of community apart from the pedestrian norms of a society outside West Point so seemingly drunk on egalitarianism it believed in nothing save the self.[84] Those moments could inspire almost anyone for a long, long time. As West Point graduate John Alexander Hottell wrote in his obituary: "...I deny that I died FOR anything - not my country, not my Army, not my fellow man, none of these things. I LIVED for these things, and the manner in which I chose to do it involved the very real chance that I would die in the execution of my duties." That chance he understood. "I knew this and accepted it, but my love for West Point and the Army was great enough - and the promise that I would some day be able to serve all the ideals that meant anything to me through it was great enough - for me to accept this possibility as a part of a price which must be paid for all things of great value." He concluded by saying, "If there is nothing worth dying for - in this sense - there is nothing worth living for."[85] It would be an absurd stretch to argue all cadets or officers shared Hottell's idealism or sense of sacrifice, but it is fair to say some measure of idealism, patriotism, or sense of duty helped convince many cadets to endure their years at West Point, and it was hardly the sort of motivation one could receive from IBM, General Motors, or a typical university. It was enough, however, on those few occasions it swelled to the surface, to hold most cadets in their ranks and keep them from bolting to civilian life.

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[84]ETA, 6-11-96, author's notes.

[85]John Alexander Hottell, "a Soldier's Own Obituary," New York Times, 3 March 1971, p. 43. Hottell was killed in Vietnam on July 7, 1970, less than a year after his personally written obituary was published in the West Point Alumni Quarterly, Assembly. The New York Times re-published the piece the following year.

Ultimately, there was a timelessness to West Point. A pervasive feeling of strength emanated from the storied granite rocks of the fortress on the Hudson. Even the bronze sentinels standing eternal watch over the Plain seemed humbled by the serenity, the utter conviction which flowed down from the hills and rose up from the mighty river to envelop the ghosts of MacArthur, Eisenhower, Patton, and the rest of the Long Gray Line. West Point was special. Three million visitors a year visited the Army's Holy of Holies to attempt to sense that uniqueness, bringing with them a sense of curiosity, admiration, and awe which was seldom disappointed. Mars, the Roman god of war, would have felt at home there. For the United States Military Academy was a Mecca for warriors, for those who sought the profession of arms as a vocation. It pulsated with conviction, with commitment, with purpose. That was one of the reasons most cadets went there in the first place, because being a cadet gave "...one a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself and doing something on a grander scale."[86] Though the Academy could be deliberately anachronistic that fact was sometimes enough reason to stay by itself. Man or woman, cadets knew they received a sense of accomplishment at West Point they could not receive anywhere else, that there they embraced ideals their civilian peers too often seemed to abandon, and it mattered.[87]

Some women, of course, went beyond patriotism and stayed simply because they were stubborn or felt outside pressure to endure. One who had thrown a newspaper route as a young girl using her brother's name because the paper in her hometown would not

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[86]ETA, 6-11-96, author's notes.

[87]EL, 5-8-80, p. 20.

hire girls said she hated being told no.[88] Others were trapped by the feelings of relatives, either real or perceived, or by the myths and aura that surrounded the Academy. Cadets, after all, didn't leave or transfer from West Point, they *quit*, and there was weight to the idea they should take advantage of what everyone in their lives usually told them was a golden opportunity, just as there was fear of disappointing loved ones. As one woman said, "There had been so much press coverage, so many people who had invested so much in me that basically I just couldn't let them down."[89]

There was also what Germans call the "Stalingrad syndrome," the idea that once you have invested a great deal of blood, sweat, and tears into any enterprise it has to mean something.[90] A single day at West Point took more effort, more strain, more drive than several days or even weeks at any other comparable school. The effort cadets made just to survive the system meant they were invested emotionally and psychologically from the very first day. A tremendous bond of shared experience tied them to other cadets in ways no other college would match, and even those who left often remembered their time as cadets as the most intense, challenging period of their lives. All these forces combined to give even cadets who hated the Academy pause before leaving. As one

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[88]IWA, 2-28-96.

[89]EI, 5-8-80, p. 20.

[90]The phrase dates to the Second World War and the Battle of Stalingrad, where the German Sixth Army was destroyed in a protracted struggle which the Wermacht might have avoided. Adolf Hitler committed division after division into the engagement, however, in part because after a certain point so many soldiers had been lost that to walk away seemed impossible. The battle, therefore, gained a momentum all its own, and in the course of their Academy careers many cadets felt a similar fate had befallen their lives.

woman put it, "it takes so much courage to resign from here..."[91]

Religion was a powerful influence on some, providing a sense of faith and courage to endure the many privations of Academy life. As one woman remarked, "...the Academy is very religious," and in the many chapels on post it was often possible to find a sense of solace notably lacking inside the barracks.[92] Church was also one of the few places where disciplining by the upperclass was not permitted, and in that sense it provided more tangible forms of relief as well.

Innertwined with the chapels was even more of the Academy's history, so that services were a time when cadets felt drawn closer to West Point as well as any sort of divine providence. The Old Cadet Chapel dated to 1836, and contained battle flags and plaques commemorating graduates and feats of arms throughout the nineteenth century. Above the altar stood a painting entitled "Peace and War," by Robert Walter Weir, who served as Professor of Drawing at West Point from 1834 to 1876. On the east side of the choir loft was a plaque honoring General Benedict Arnold for his service against the British during the revolution. His eventual treason led to the posting of the plaque without his name.[93] Cadets could enjoy services and even sit in the famous "sleeping pew," which legend said was held by upperclassmen who realized it was the one spot in the chapel where cadets could sleep behind a pillar without being seen from the pulpit.

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[91]EI, 5-14-80, p. 27. See also EI, 5-7-80, pp. 4-5.

[92]EI, 5-9-80, p. 5.

[93]USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 120, and Daughters of the United States Army, West Point Chapter, West Point: The United States Military Academy (Charlotte, North Carolina: C. Harrison Conroy Co., 1994), p. 18-21.

This sense of history, of tradition, was carried forward in the Gothic Cadet Chapel, which was completed in 1910 and dominated the Academy grounds from a perch three hundred feet above the Plain. Inside the chapel hung regimental flags and banners from the Civil War, the War with Spain, and the Philippine Insurrection, and stained glass windows commemorating every graduating class between 1802 and 1976 adorned both sides of the two hundred foot long nave.[94] Twelve bells weighing more than seven tons hung in the bell tower, along with a carillon consisting of one hundred twenty-two miniature bronze bell units whose peels could be heard for miles.[95] Finally, services were given a passionate power by the largest church organ in the world, which after extensive expansion included more than 290 ranks and 19,000 pipes.[96]

Some cadets also stayed because Academy life was sometimes *fun*. Beneath the uniforms and haircuts, and below the precision military image projected by most cadets were several thousand regular American college kids. They enjoyed their music, their free time, the occasional date, fast cars, sports, and the other accoutrements of American youth culture. Most of all, they relished letting off steam through pranks and assorted

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[94]George S. Pappas, The Cadet Chapel - United States Military Academy (Providence: Andrew Mowbray Inc., 1987), pp. 165-166.

[95]The bells were put to famous use by H. Ross Perot in 1975. A 1953 Annapolis graduate, Perot provided $25,000 to West Point Chaplain James D. Ford's planned expedition to sail across the Atlantic Ocean in honor of America's bicentennial celebration in 1976. In return, Ford slipped Perot and the Academy bell ringer into the Cadet Chapel prior to the 1975 Army-Navy football game. Perot gleefully played "Anchors Aweigh," the "Marine Corps Hymn," and "Sailing, Sailing" in the middle of the night while hundreds of angry cadets protested. Perot was eventually taken away by military police, and the incident entered Academy lore as one of the many pranks played on both academies by midshipmen and cadets. See Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, pp. 393-394.

[96]Marie T. Capps, A Guide to The Cadet Chapel, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York (West Point: Cadet Chapel Altar and Hospital Guild, no date), p. 3, Pappas, The Cadet Chapel, p. 165, and USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 121.

unofficial Academy activities. Mooning and flashing, for example, was the rage among cadets in the 1960s.[97] During football season rallies were held before every game to raise Corps spirit, and cadets appeared wearing "togas with sabers, or Full Dress coats with shorts instead of trousers," and cadets were encouraged to go crazy because it developed esprit de corps and released the pent-up anxiety of the Corps.[98]

Among those who chose to leave, personal reasons were the most common explanation for departing. Some women despised the regimented lifestyle, the lack of privacy, and the Spartan surroundings. One left because cadets were required to stay single, and she "...chose marriage over West Point." Ironically, she transferred to a civilian university, entered an Army ROTC program, and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant before the Class of 1980 graduated from West Point.[99]

As Yearling year drew to a close and the Class of 1978 prepared to graduate, other aspects of Academy life tied to the admission of women became more clearly discernible. The women appeared, for instance, to deflect harassment from African-Americans and other minorities because they were so deeply despised that they attracted almost all negative cadet attention.[100] Racial bigotry seemed to go increasingly underground while antagonism towards women stayed out in the open, and African-

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[97]Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, pp. 89-90.

[98]Barkalow, In the Men's House, p. 50-51.

[99]LTA, 9-2-96, p. 1.

[100]IWA, 8-14-95, author's notes.

American cadets were generally more sensitive toward women than were whites.[101]

In academics, which was largely unaffected by the admission of women, the clearest trend was that women were consistently graded much harder in Military Science classes. Some even stopped studying because they concluded it was impossible to earn either an A or B in the course because instructors commonly assumed women were incapable of understanding military operations.[102] Women were also "evaluated lower by upperclass cadets, but [they were rated] similarly by cadets and officers in the chain of command" in terms of leadership.[103] This may have had a great deal to do with the fact many men found it easy to disparage women as a group, but harder to dismiss the very real talents of women as individuals.

Among the women of the Class of 1980 there were also general patterns, most noticeably in terms of adjusting to the overwhelmingly male environment. Women could not just blend into the Corps, they had to prove themselves. Some women argued that once they did so most men left them alone. Those who complained less did better with men, but less well with other women, because there was a "thin line between blending in and being one of the guys."[104] Like the men, Academy women ruthlessly evaluated each other, establishing an informal pecking order based on strength, looks, and academics,

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[101]EI, 5-14-80, pp. 30-31. The empathy of one opressed group for another was hardly unique to West Point. Historians have, for example, noted that black soldiers were uniformly more humane in their treatment of German prisoners of war in World War II than were whites.

[102]EI, 5-8-80, p. 26.

[103]Alan G. Vitters, Report of the Admission of Women to the United States Military Academy (Project Athena II) (West Point: Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership, September 1977), p. xi.

[104]EI, 5-7-80, p. 6, and EI, 5-5-80, p. 6.

and these qualities were "graded by everyone."[105] In some cases women turned on other women who were having difficulty as cadets. As one wrote, "...if a woman was incompetent we would destroy her - even quicker than the men would - because she threatened all of us."[106] This Darwinian pattern was driven by the persistent reality that men condemned all women for the performance of even a single average woman, while male cadets who struggled were considered exceptions to the general rule that said men belonged at West Point.

The hyper-competitive atmosphere led women to build their own stereotypes of women outside the Academy too, in part to protect themselves against comparisons with non-military women. Male cadets often said civilian women were "real women," and in contrast some West Point women argued their civilian peers were "air heads" with "no brains."[107]

By the Spring of 1978 it was also clear the first women at West Point were distancing themselves from women in the Class of 1981. This distance was driven by the assumption of many male cadets that Class of 1980 women would become "big sisters" and "mother" the incoming Plebes. To avoid greater harassment, Yearling women "deliberately didn't," and in turn were considered to be "standoffish" and "snobs" by many women in the Class of 1981.[108] This led to a rivalry between women in the two

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[105]IWA, 7-28-96, author's notes.

[106]Barkalow, In the Men's House, p. 109.

[107]EI, 5-14-80, p. 27.

[108]EI, 5-5-80, p. 17, and EI, 4-17-80, p. 22..

classes, and Class of 1980 women sometimes "dumped" on women subordinates when the latter seemed to be getting favors or were perceived as having things too easy.[109] This rivalry meant that in each class many women continued to endure hardships at West Point in a kind of gender-isolation created by sexism and harassment instead of helping each other cope more effectively. It was one more way male resistance worked against them.

Following June Week in 1978, the Class of 1980 went on leave, then returned for their third Summer of training. As Second Classmen, most attended either Airborne, Flight, Northern Warfare, Jungle, or Ranger training at various Army posts within the United States. The majority also participated in Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT), which involved assignment for approximately a month to a leadership position with an active Army unit in Germany, Alaska, Panama, Hawaii, or the continental U.S. This phase of training allowed cadets to gain experience leading enlisted soldiers in the field, and to become better acquainted with life in the "real" Army.[110]

Women who reported to regular Army units throughout the United States and overseas for CTLT found their trials and tribulations at West Point repeated again and again, and for those who hoped the "real" Army would be a haven from the sexism of the Academy the Summer of 1978 was dispiriting. Like the Academy, the Army was struggling to adapt its own masculine culture to the growing number of women in

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[109]EI, 5-15-80, p. 22-23. Despite the rivalry, some women argued that women in the Class of 1981 had an even tougher Plebe year than their predecessors.

[110]USMA, Bugle Notes, pp. 67-68.

uniform, and every all-male unit erected the same old hurdles for women cadets to overcome. Men assumed women were either promiscuous, lesbians, or hunting for husbands, and women were routinely held to higher standards than men. At many posts there was precious little preparation of facilities for the arrival of women, and, as at West Point, the performance of less than superior women reflected on women as a whole while poorly performing men reflected only on themselves.[111] These assumptions permeated the Army, making every single day a rigorous test of each woman's commitment to the service. "Had one guy laugh at me while I was saluting," noted one cadet. A day earlier she wrote that the cumulative weight of sexism from fellow soldiers made her realize "...how keyed this world is toward suppressing women - how many men do."[112]

In Germany, the same cadet's regular Army commanding officer felt that his unit was being "hazed" because a woman from West Point was assigned to him. She saw enlisted women persecuted and harassed, noting how "chauvinist Pig" comments began immediately after two new women reported for duty. For herself, rumors about her alleged affairs with male officers became so rampant she defiantly wrote "I am NO WHORE" in her diary. This pattern of sexism routinely crossed national boundaries as well. She described an encounter with English soldiers in Germany this way: "I went outside and some British soldiers whistled. I said 'Gentlemen, I am an officer. That is enough of that. I don't care what they do in your army."[113] Such experiences were

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[111]EI, 5-9-80, p. 30.

[112]Cadet Journal, entry dated June 30, 1978, p. 37, and entry dated June 29, 1978, p. 35.

[113]Ibid., entries dated 7-11-78, p. 47, 6-11-78, 6-19-78, p. 21, and 6-21-78, p. 25.

common among women from the Class of 1980, who routinely had male soldiers make passes at them and suggest sexual liaisons, endured harassment and allegations of sexual promiscuity, and generally ran the gamut of sexist abuse.[114] Looking back on their time as Yearlings, from their nightmare at Buckner through the trials of the academic year to the challenges of CTLT, many women marveled at the depth of a sexism that most of them had only dimly perceived a few years before. As one put it, "We were just hated by some people. And you know, they don't even try to hide it. It really does teach you a lot."[115]

As another academic year began anew, the women of the Class of 1980 realized the very worst harassment was slowly ebbing.[116] There were still many male cadets who resented the presence of women within the Corps, yet the overt, physical hazing of years past was slowly diminishing as the Academy adjusted to integration and women proved themselves. Rank played a prominent role in this process, for hazing almost always rolled downhill. Cow women were typically posted as squad leaders and above, and because they ranked the majority of men at West Point they had more protection. No Plebe man, after all, would consider harassing a ranking woman. The process naturally left Plebe and even Yearling cadets vulnerable, and women in those classes received much of the physical harassment which had been focused on the women of the Class of 1980.

Cow year was also the period when many of the first women cadets began talking openly about the trials and tribulations of their first two years at the Academy. Rank

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[114]EI, 5-8-80, p. 23.

[115]EI, 4-22-80, p. 4.

[116]Ibid., p. 8.

permitted more open discussions, and for the first time many women realized their experiences had not been unique, that they were not persecuted because of individual flaws, and that the source of their agony was a kind of institutionalized sexism which affected all of them. The revelation was astonishing. The knowledge so many experiences were shared rather than being isolated to a particular company or regiment was critical in encouraging more women to speak out and in convincing women that they were not alone. These discussions also released a great deal of anger, however, for many women realized that "we suffered in silence for two years really."[117]

Beyond the anger, there were a few more lighthearted events during Cow year. One of the more colorful episodes of 1978 occurred during the fourth quarter of the Army-Navy football game. Losing badly, the Corps of Cadets stripped off their cadet jackets en masse and revealed t-shirts with the number twelve on them, symbolizing the role the Corps played as the Army team's twelfth man. Some members of the crowd were dumbstruck by the cadet showstopper, however, and one enraged matron claiming to be the belle of the Class of 1930 wrote: "I couldn't believe it - they took off their shirts! I fainted; thank God the women showed more restraint!"[118] Such incidents, while rarely in public or on so large a scale, were part of Academy lore and an unofficially accepted method for blowing off steam, relieving stress, and showing spirit.[119]

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[117]EI, 4-22-80, p. 8.

[118]"Tradition," The Pointer, April 1979, p. 32.

[119]Stealing the Naval Academy's mascot - a goat named Billy - was another favorite, though officials at both schools deterred this particular stunt over the years. Other famous Academy breakdowns in discipline include the Egg Nog Riot of 1826, and the legendary "Great Mess Hall Riot" of 1963, when cadets stacked the giant oak tables in the mess hall and two thousand cadets indulged in a massive food fight. The tactic

Besides issues relating strictly to women, the Academy continued to evolve during the late 1970s, and in 1978 yet another hallowed West Point tradition was abolished when officials did away with the General Order of Merit. For one hundred and sixty years cadets had been ranked in every subject and throughout their class based on merit. Class rank meant everything in terms of opportunities for advancement and rank, and followed West Point graduates informally throughout their lives. By the late 1970s the practice was seen as anachronistic, however, and Academy leaders abolished the practice that began in 1818 quietly and with little fanfare. The most noticeable casualty of the new order was the practice of recognizing the "Goat" from each class at graduation. Goats ranked at the very bottom of their class, generally got the loudest cheers from their peers, and received a dollar from every other graduate as a token of their narrow triumph over the system. Famous West Point goats included George Armstrong Custer, George E. Pickett, and Rene E. De Russy, but after 1978 the line of goats came to an end.[120]

Cow Year was also a time when class rings were chosen by the Class of 1979, and they soon became a source of controversy relating to the admission of women. Designed by Balfour, they were alleged by some cadets to have included a very subtle Omega on each ring. Others maintained the Omega was omitted, but that the letters

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raised spirits, however, and propelled the Army football team to an upset over Penn State the following weekend. See Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, pp.304-305, and Atkinson, The Long Gray Line, pp. 85-87.

[120]Kenneth W. Rapp, Whistler in Gray and Other Stories About the United States Military Academy (Croton-on-Hudson New York: North River Press, 1978), pp. 80-82, 84, 87. Pickett (USMA 1846) led the famous charge which bears his name on the third day at Gettysburg. DeRussy (USMA 1812) later became Superintendent of the Military Academy.

"LCWB" were engraved on the inside of individual rings according to the preference of their owner.[121] Both the Omega and LCWB represented a conviction among many class members that they were the last class of West Point's glory era. Omega was the last letter of the Greek alphabet, and LCWB stood for "Last Class With Balls," a phrase which became an unofficial class motto for many 1979 graduates and showed up on class t-shirts even while it was officially banned by the Academy.[122] It was another sign that even during their third year as cadets women were still despised by many men at West Point. As the Class of 1980 moved inexorably towards graduation and the senior leadership positions within the Corps, many women approached their Firstie Year with more anxiety than elation. After all, nothing at West Point ever came easily.

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[121]LTA, 9-24-96, p. 4, and IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes. The Naval Academy's 1979 graduates held similar view, and chose as their class motto the Latin phrase "Omni Vir" (all male). See Holm, Women in the Military, p. 311.

[122]IWA, 2-18-98, author's notes. The first Academy rings were worn by the Class of 1835, and West Point originated the tradition of college graduates wearing class rings in the United States.

Chapter Seven: "All of Our Children"

> Long life to the girl cadet! And may she go into the world to prove the benefits of her training and illustrate another phase of the Nineteenth Century Woman!
>
> -Cadet Elsie Fay, Fairfield Seminary and Military College, 1896[1]

As soon as the Class of 1979 tossed their hats into the air at graduation in May, the Class of 1980 became Firsties and rose to the most senior positions within the Corps. They were now the "old" men and women of West Point, serving as leaders from the platoon level up through company, battalion, and regiment. Aside from placing women in senior leadership posts for the first time at the Academy, the Class of 1980 also enjoyed the distinction of producing the first African-American First Captain, Vincent Keith Brooks.[2] During their First Class Summer their new responsibilities included assignment as a commander, instructor, or staff member within the New Cadet Battalion or at Camp Buckner. Both involved approximately two weeks of training as instructors beforehand, and gave the class the chance to pass on the lessons they learned as Plebes and Yearlings to the classes of 1982 and 1983. It was part of the symmetry of West Point, of the tradition and the rites of passage. Every cadet learned from another cadet, and everyone felt the weight of command during their four years at the Academy. Those Firsties who for some reason missed CTLT during their Second Class Summer were given that duty in addition or in lieu of regular First Class Summer assignments.[3]

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[1]Watkins, "It is No Longer a Matter of Comment...," p. 27.

[2]Kristin Baker became the first woman to serve as First Captain at West Point in 1989. She graduated in 1990. See Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, p. 290.

[3]USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 68.

In August, the class received their coveted class rings in a ceremony at Battle Monument. For the duration of their fourth year as cadets the rings were worn with the class crest facing inward, toward their heart, to remind them of their responsibility as leaders of the Corps. After graduation the rings were turned so that the Academy crest faced the heart, to remind them of their duty as Army officers.[4] The rings were another sign that the Class of 1980 was now in charge at West Point, though they posed a dilemma for some women. According to Academy regulations only one ring could be worn by cadets, which put women who were engaged in the awkward position of choosing between wearing a ring which showed their fidelity to West Point and one which showed their devotion to their fiancees. The problem was eventually solved when the Academy amended regulations to allow cadets one ring per hand.[5]

During the academic year the Firsties moved inexorably toward graduation, counting the days, passing through 100th night celebrations, and planning for their futures. As time crept by, women were increasingly frustrated with the attention that was showered on them. As one put it, "Everyone says, 'Do you realize that you are making history?' No, I don't realize that I am making history. I am just doing what everybody else around me is doing."[6] That was true on the surface, though on another level most women probably realized they would always be known as the first women graduates of the Academy. It was a heavy title to carry for some, and not one whose weight

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[4]*Assembly*, September 1994, p. 20.

[5]LTA, 5-15-96, p. 1.

[6]EL 4-17-80, p. 35.

diminished much with time. It was felt most keenly as members of the press returned to the Academy in droves in the Spring of 1980. Men were aghast once again, and women angry over the specter of their male classmates being ignored in May. As one put it, "...our whole class is dreading graduation because they are afraid the only people who are going to graduate are the females in the Class of 80."[7]

Their experiences as cadets also left many angry and resentful on the eve of graduation. "I have become much more bitter, more cynical," said one, who added she believed the chain of command was untrustworthy when it came to women.[8] Others said they would tell young women not to come to West Point, that it had been a mistake to open the Academy to women in 1976. "It is good PR for the outside world," one cadet told her exit interviewer in May, "but meanwhile we're suffering."[9] Some women focused their criticism on the men of West Point, who they argued were never satisfied by the efforts and achievements of ordinary women cadets. "They want the super woman," complained one graduate, "the Amazon Raquel Welch Amazon woman."[10] Others railed against reporters and the media, arguing all "...the press has done is to cause problems for us."[11]

The suffering was driven by lingering resentment toward women cadets from

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[7]Ibid., p. 33.

[8]EI, 5-5-80, p. 24, 22.

[9]Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[10]EI, April/May 1980, p. 15.

[11]EI, 5-14-80, p. 26.

many men, and that resentment showed few signs of disappearing even in 1980. Instead, it went underground, beneath the veneer of properly behaved cadets who vented in private and amongst themselves, though it was never far from the surface.[12] Instead, "...the men (cadets)...learned to be evasive, oblique in their comments" about women.[13]

This resentment showed itself at the other service academies as well, and was most clearly demonstrated by an incident at the Naval Academy. In November of 1979, Annapolis graduate James Webb wrote an article for The Washingtonian entitled "Women Can't Fight." A much decorated veteran of combat with the Marines in Vietnam and a prolific author, Webb savagely attacked the idea that women had any place in the nations' service academies, arguing they destroyed the combat-oriented nature of the institutions, destroyed cohesion, and lowered physical fitness standards. Shortly after the article was published, a senior admiral visiting the Naval Academy mess hall heard male cadets chanting, "Webb was right! Webb was right! Webb was right!" and one suspects a number of West Pointers would have joined in too.[14]

The damage done by this persistent atmosphere of resentment is difficult to gauge, especially since so many West Point women had such differing experiences as cadets. For some, however, and probably for most, the frustration of being in what at times was a despised minority could be overwhelming. "There were times that I

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[12]EI, April/May 1980, p. 7.

[13]Rogan, Mixed Company, p. 18.

[14]Robert Timburg, The Nightingale's Song (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 262. See also James Webb, "Women Can't Fight," The Washingtonian, November 1979, pp. 144-148, 273-282. Webb eventually became Secretary of the Navy during Ronald Reagan's administration, and was the author of Fields of Fire, an influential novel dealing with the war in Vietnam.

absolutely hated being female," said one woman. "I never did before I came here. When I was outside of here I would never want to be a guy. And there were so many times," she added, "that I would curse the fact that I was female and couldn't do what the guys could do. Or that I was blamed for some things simply because I was female, when I had done nothing to deserve it."[15]

Despite the adversity, many women left West Point with a profoundly changed sense of their capabilities, as well as a new sense of how limiting cultural definitions of concepts like "masculinity" and "femininity" could be. One said her concept of femininity shifted from one that was external, involving clothes, hair, and makeup, to one that was almost exclusively internal.[16] Another expanded this idea by saying, "What I had to learn was that femininity wasn't perfume and little pink dresses. And masculinity isn't pick axes and strong muscles." Instead, "...activities like driving a tank, running hard, wallowing in the mud, or crying are not male or female. They are activities. Males do them, and females do them."[17] And despite the notorious mistreatment of some cadet women, there were members of the Class of 1980 who maintained that great progress had been made in gender relations. In the beginning "everyone was tentative and hesitant to make a decision," yet after the polarization of the Corps during the Class of 1980s Yearling year, more and more people were either "for, against, or professional" when it

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[15]EI, 5-5-80, p. 26.

[16]EI, 5-9-80, p. 31.

[17]EI, no date, p. 8.

came to their views on the admission of women.[18] The professionals were those who worked to make gender integration work because that was their duty as cadets and officers, and dealt with their personal feelings privately. By 1980 that group was in the majority according to some, including one who said she had "no bad feelings" toward West Point because the "...Academy was very professional."[19] Other women labeled such positive accounts as "blind."[20] One compromised by saying "There is definitely a group of guys who have accepted us and there is a group of guys who have not accepted us. And the ones who have not accepted us, I don't think they ever will."[21]

Whether blind, selective, or simply different, these differing recollections were symbolic of the wide range of experiences within the Class of 1980, for among the sixty-two women who eventually graduated there were sixty-two distinct West Point journeys. Some women adjusted better than others, or for some reason were the targets of less abuse. Others, no doubt, repressed their most traumatic memories when discussing the Academy with strangers, and so any understanding of what four years at West Point were like for the women of the Class of 1980 must always be limited. What is clear is that the experience was difficult, that the women of that class had no role models, no experienced women to look to for support, and no script for how to survive the rigors of Academy life. They were isolated, often alone, and pioneers in the very truest sense of the word.

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[18]EI, 5-9-80, p. 32.

[19]IWA, 7-19-96, author's notes.

[20]EI, 5-9-80, p. 32. One graduate complained the Commandant and TACS had a group of women cadets they went to in the early years to get "good answers to assimilation questions." See EI, 5-5-80, p. 25.

[21]EI, 4-17-80, p. 13.

The Academy was certainly demanding and harsh for men as well, but the rigors they faced were not the same. Even the women who came later, the Classes of 1981, 1982, and so on, experienced an Academy that was more prepared to accept women as equals. Their experience was not easy, for it is fair to say women have always faced more challenges as cadets than men, but it was not what the women of the Class of 1980 endured. They were the precedents, the ones who confronted most dramatically the uncertainty and fear of the early years of gender integration, and the experience cost each of them dearly. "I'm a lot more bitter now," said one, adding "I think I lost a lot of confidence in myself by coming here. Just as a person."[22] Her feelings were echoed by another graduate who said the women of the Class of 1980 were "a pretty angry lot," because "we were never accepted."[23]

Some became more vocal feminists. As one put it, "If we weren't feminists when we went in, we were when we came out!"[24] This transformation in some was driven by the trauma of their years as cadets, by the knowledge that sexism was endemic to the Academy and in American life. As one graduate put it, "I think I have learned a lot by being in the first class of women here. In that you really appreciate what it is like to be a minority. It sounds funny, but it is true. You have no idea until you are openly ostracized at times."[25]

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[22]EI, 5-14-80, p. 35

[23]IWA, 6-5-96, author's notes.

[24]Ginny Carroll, "Women Have What It Takes," *Newsweek*, August 5, 1991, p. 30.

[25]EI, 4-22-80, p. 4.

Time left its mark on surrounding institutions as well. In 1980 Ladycliffe College, a four year all-women's college in neighboring Highland Falls, closed its doors for the last time. The irony of Ladycliffe closing down during the same year the first women graduated at West Point was not lost at the time, and the editors of The Pointer penned a farewell to the college that had been home to many of the young women who attended cadet hops and often ended up marrying cadets since the nineteenth century.[26] It was part of a trend noted sadly by many men at West Point, one in which many of the old familiar landmarks of cadet life were being swept away. A few months before, the tradition of electing an Autumn Queen had been eliminated because it was considered sexist, a fact duly protested by *The Pointer*.[27] Electing an Autumn Queen without a King was sexist, of course, and the Academy hardly needed Ladycliffe to continue as a source of dates for cadet hops. For cadets and old grads who clung to tradition for its own sake, however, the changes were sad just the same.

That Spring the women of the Class of 1980 chose from the gamut of available Army specialty branches, and, true to West Point tradition, a large number chose service in the combat arms. Infantry and Armor were closed to them by Army policy, but seven chose Field Artillery, eleven selected Air Defense, while the Aviation and Engineer branches received three and six women respectively. Of the remaining women, most went into the Signal Corps, with the rest scattered among Military Police, Military

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[26]*The Pointer*, May 1980, p. 9. The Academy eventually bought Ladycliffe, using the grounds as a site for the West Point Museum and the official USMA Visitor Center.

[27]*The Pointer*. September 1979, p. 3.

Intelligence, Transportation, and Ordinance.[28]

They were also the recipients of ornate cups presented to them by General Goodpaster and a group of graduates from the Class of 1939 to commemorate their years at West Point. On each an inscription read:

Congratulations to
a "First Lady" of West Point
from some friends
in the class of 1939

We admire the courage you have demonstrated
during your four years at the Academy
We think you are an outstanding example of graduates
whose good character and achievements in later life
have made us proud of the school

In the coming years
we hope you will help us
encourage young women of your quality
to enter West Point[29]

It was a noble gesture and appreciated by many women, though some noted that it was yet another way women were treated differently by the Academy. After all, no men were present, and no male cadet enjoyed an intimate reception hosted by the Superintendent.

As the Class of 1980 neared the end of their four years as cadets it came time for the annual Graduation Parade. Held on May 27, 1980, the day before the receipt of diplomas and graduation exercises, the parade was an occasion for an exchange of military honors between the outgoing Firsties and the cadets they were leaving behind.

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[28]Major Jerome Adams, Report of the Admission of Women to the United States Military Academy (Project Athena IV) (West Point: Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, 1980), p. 39.

[29]Noted during an IWA on 4-13-96.

Wearing the distinctive scarlet cummerbunds and plumed shakos that marked them as seniors, members of the Class of 1980 marched on to The Plain to the tune of "Stars and Stripes Forever." The USMA Hellcats slid effortlessly through other music, including "The Dashing White Sergeant" and "Auld Lang Syne," then played "Army Blue" and "Alma Mater" while the First Class formed front and center before the crowd. Forming shoulder to shoulder across The Plain, the Firsties watched as the entire Corps passed in review, mesmerizing the crowd with the seductive rhythms of their concerted efforts. The Hellcats reached a crescendo with the "Official West Point March," and when the last cadet company passed the final First Classmen, cadets exchanged the famous Long Corps yell with the Class of 1980 a final time.[30]

On the following day, graduation ceremonies were held in Michie Stadium. Watching and listening as the USMA Hellcats played the Star Spangled Banner on graduation day, the women of the Class of 1980 may have felt a tinge of the emotions which went through Jackie Robinson's mind during his first year in Major League Baseball. As he wrote: "At the beginning of the World Series of 1947, I experienced a completely new emotion, when the National Anthem was played. This time, I thought, it is being played for me, as much as for everyone else." For the first time, Robinson felt truly a part of Major League Baseball. "...I am standing here with all the others," he said, "and everything that takes place includes me."[31]

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[30]Crackel, The Illustrated History of West Point, pp. 306-307, and USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 199.

[31]Jackie Robinson, This I Believe, cited in Marjorie P. Katz and Jean S. Arbeiter, ed., Pegs to Hang Ideas On (New York: M. Evans and Company, 1973), p. 101.

Afterward, the Class of 1980 listened to the invocation, the remarks by Superintendent Goodpaster, and the Graduation Address from Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. As the ceremony moved towards its climax, the Combined Chapel Choirs sang "The Corps," one of the Academy's most beloved songs. The final verses implored graduates to "Grip hands - though it be from the shadows - While we swear as you did of yore, Of living, of dying, to honor, The Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps!"[32] When the song concluded, it was time for the presentation of diplomas.

One by one the members of the Class of 1980 crossed the stage, shook hands with the presenting dignitary, and turned to rejoin for the last time the ranks of their fully assembled class. How far they had traveled in only four years. In 1976 they took the oath on The Plain with uncertainty and trepidation. Now they received their diplomas, one of the artifacts of their dreams, with a sense of pride more palpable than words might ever convey.

The Reverend Richard P. Camp, Chaplain of the United States Military Academy, delivered the prayer for the class, and was followed by Lieutenant General Goodpaster, who administered the oath of office. The Class of 1980 ended their tenure at West Point as they began it, by raising their right hands and vowing to serve the United States. This time, however, they were officers.

Finally, the ceremony drew to a close as the entire Corps of Cadets sang "Alma

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[32]"Lyrics to The Corps" were written by Bishop H.S. Shipman, USMA Chaplain, around 1902, and were put to music composed by W. Franke Harling in 1910. See USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 206-207. MacArthur's allusion to "the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps" in his famous 1962 address was taken from the song.

Mater." The Class of 1980 faced their fellow cadets in the bleachers behind them and sang loudest of all, for the lyrics washing over the assembled crowd in Michie Stadium, so often the brunt of cadet humor and dark sarcasm, suddenly took on new meaning as the Firsties approached their departure from West Point:

> And when our work is done,
> Our course on earth is run,
> May it be said, "Well done;
> Be thou at peace."
> E'er may that line of gray
> Increase from day to day,
> Live, serve, and die, we pray,
> West Point, for thee.[33]

Then, after four years of struggle, after all the pain and tears, the stress and the mind-numbing fear mixed with pride and triumph, they were dismissed. The war yells sprang forth, hats flew in the air, and the crowning moment of every cadet's journey on the Hudson came at long last. They were finished.

As the hats rained to the ground in Michie Stadium it was a time to ask how far West Point had moved in the journey towards gender assimilation. To say women were fully integrated into the Corps of Cadets by 1980 would be inaccurate. To say they were fully accepted would be an outright lie. Resentment toward women remained a powerful force among many cadet men, and many of the first women graduates argued that while they were cadets women were never thoroughly accepted.[34] At the time, many graduates

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[33]"Alma Mater" was written by Cadet P.S. Reinecke in the Fall of 1908 while he walked a punishment tour. The lyrics were put to a tune called "Treuebeliebe," which dated to 1827, and became an Academy favorite after 1912. See USMA, Bugle Notes, p. 204-205.

[34]EI, 4-30-80, p. 35, and EI, 5-8-80, p. 23.

were fond of citing the unofficial "seven year rule" at West Point, which held that meaningful change at the Academy took a minimum of seven years because enough classes had to graduate so that no one could remember or talk with anyone who remembered a time before the change took place. Others said it would take longer. One instructor said that West Point would not really accept women until the Class of 1980 and below were generals. At that point, he said, the old grads who remembered an Academy without women would be gone, and their presence would be routine.[35]

As the years wore on, however, the subject remained a source of considerable frustration and division within the Academy. Though officially all was well along the banks of the Hudson, behind the official rhetoric there were still those who questioned the role of women at West Point, in the Army, and in the military in general. While most professionally accepted and often celebrated the achievements of women graduates, a minority felt uncertain or even outraged over the changes gender assimilation wrought on military institutions. They argued that a climate of political correctness existed which brooked no criticism or meaningful dialogue over the role of women within the Army. As one graduate put it in 1995: "Those who are still in the Army, of course, will (publicly at least) voice the official 'happy talk' viewpoint on women in the military and at the academies, deviation from which is sure death for prospects of advancement to general officer rank."[36]

In such an environment, they argued, meaningful review of national policy cannot take

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[35]EI, 5-14-80, p. 31.

[36]LTA, 6-13-95.

place, and when a prolonged war came only the harsh light of experience would determine whether the sweeping changes imposed on the military in the last two decades were truly practical in a national emergency.

In recent years the Academy has continued to struggle with resentment against women, and with the pervasive problem of sexual harassment. A General Accounting Office report issued in 1994 described an environment at the nation's service academies in which a poor atmosphere for reporting harassment existed because women feared reprisals from male students and commanders. More than sixty percent of the women at West Point said they would hesitate to report harassment, and more than eighty percent indicated they experienced at least one of ten forms of sexual harassment listed on a GAO survey on a recurring basis.[37] The report indicated women dealt informally with harassment, for at each of the academies a "long history of silence" surrounded sexual problems of any sort.[38] While it is true that a heightened awareness of what constitutes sexual harassment in the 1990s may have inflated the number of women reporting incidents in the GAO report, it is still a clear indication that the problems first encountered at West Point by the Class of 1980 are in no danger of disappearing anytime soon.

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[37]Eric Schmitt, "Study Says Sexual Harassment Persists at Military Academies," New York Times, 5 April 1995, p. A14. The forms of sexual harassment listed on the survey ranged from derogatory comments to assault.

[38]U.S. General Accounting Office. (Statement by Mark E. Gebicke, Director, Military Operations and Capabilities Issues, National Security and International Affairs Division) "DOD Service Academies: Further Efforts Needed to Eradicate Sexual Harassment." Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Force Requirements and Personnel, Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Senate. February 3, 1994, p. 4.

That truth was poignantly made to the Academy in the mid 1980s, when a cadet woman from the Class of 1986 wrote the Superintendent to explain why she was resigning from West Point. After detailing an incident in which a physical education instructor spent more than thirty minutes explaining why the Bible stipulated that women could only be happy as homemakers and mothers, she said her interest in the Army had disappeared and the Academy was "boring." As a cadet she never reported the incident with her P.E. instructor because she did "not want to make waves," and because she was "taught from the very beginning of my stay at West Point not to question the inconsistencies in the way men treated women."[39]

Despite the resiliance of sexism, however, women have endured and even thrived at the Academy, and to stand and watch cadets on maneuvers or at drill is to see that "women are proving it everyday."[40] Their contributions, as well as the entrenched male resistance which seeks to lessen the recognition given their importance to the armed forces, demonstrate both how far West Point has come and how far it has to go toward fully assimilating women. Breaking stereotypes and traditions takes time, and lingering sexism should hardly be seen as a reason for permanent despair.

Academics are fond of saying that gender is a socially or culturally constructed phenomenon. That is true, of course, in the sense that every society defines what it means to be a man or woman, husband or wife, mother or father, differently. Yet it is not the

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[39]Letter from T.B. to unknown West Point recipient, undated, pp. 1-3. USMA files. "T.B." was a member of the Class of 1986. Her letter was included with other letters to the Superintendent from the 1980s, so I surmise it was to him as well.

[40]IWA, 11-3-95, author's notes.

whole truth. Men and women are not completely the same. They are alike and dissimilar biologically and physiologically at the same time, and so gender is also a scientifically verifiable and predictable description of real distinctions in the human species. What the anthropologist, sociologist, or feminist might see as value-laden social constructs of gender the biologist might see as a normal turn of the reproductive wheel. When men and women in military units have sex in defiance of regulations and orders, for example, there is often shock and dismay among critics who see gender as an artificial tool of entrenched patriarchy. Such a view holds profound insight, though it cannot erase the simple biological truth that most men and women enjoy sexual intercourse and will indulge in the activity when possible regardless of rank or uniform. Physically fit and active young people are especially prone to this sort of activity, and it highlights the difficulty inherent in asking men and women to live, work, and train in close proximity to each other and somehow squelch the natural drives their bodies give them.

This is not to say the effort cannot or should not be made. It should, and in the long run it can be successful. As Barbara Ehrenreich put it, "This does not mean that social hierarchies cannot be overthrown; only that those who would overthrow them should be aware of their almost lifelike power to resist."[41]

Overthrowing those hierarchies at West Point involved recognizing that "Men and women can be equally good warriors in modern militaries. However, they remain primates."[42] That fact requires regulations governing romance and personal behavior, and

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[41]Ehrenreich, Blood Rites, p. 236.

[42]Tiger, "Durkeim, Sociology, and the Science of Bodies in Conflict," p. 17.

a recognition that proper behavior among all cadets must be rigidly enforced. This point was demonstrated by Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox when they wrote about efforts to promote equality in other areas in 1971. "Equality and an equal participation of men and women in the political arena...must be imposed," they said, and doing so will require saying "no to nature - our own human nature." Given the controversy over expanding opportunities for women in the armed forces, it is safe to say that bringing some measure of equality of opportunity to the military has involved similar obstacles. It is, after all, a daunting if still noteworthy goal to reshape thousands of years of cultural evolution, and society must understand what it has historically been up against. The process, as Tiger and Fox wrote, "may well be possible, but it will not be easy. And it will certainly not be made easier by pretending that all men really want to be equal or that women are simply men who happen occasionally to take time off to have babies."[43]

What really had to change at West Point was the way in which men thought of women, the way they constructed the limits of what women could and could not do. As Joel Barlow wrote in 1792, the most important changes in the world revolve around changes in a "habit of thinking." Many "astonishing effects...are wrought in the world by the habit of thinking"[44] he said, and nowhere was the point proven more forcefully than at the United States Military Academy.

The story goes that in 1872 Susan B. Anthony, one of the leaders of the women's

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[43]Tiger and Fox, The Imperial Animal, p. 101.

[44]Joel Barlow, Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe, Resulting from the Necessity and Propriety of a General Revolution in the Principle of Government (London: J. Johnson, 1792 and 1795; reprint ed., Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 14-15.

rights movement during the nineteenth century, was arrested for illegally entering a voting booth. When brought before a judge and fined $100 the fiery Anthony declared, "I will not pay it! Mark my words, the law will be changed," and stormed out of the courtroom. The court clerk turned to the judge and asked, "Shall I follow her and bring her back?"

"No, let her go," the judge said. "I fear that she is right, and that the law will soon be changed."[45]

So it might have gone if Anthony had tried to enlist or enter West Point. Change has a way of seeming inevitable in hindsight, and in a hundred years when women are found at every level of the American military fighting and leading alongside their male peers, much of the controversy over the admission of women to West Point will seem quaintly anachronistic. Even then, however, the admission of women to the service academies will be seen as one of the most important developments in the enormous expansion of women in the armed services which took place in the 1980s and 1990s. After the end of the draft and the creation of the All-Volunteer Force, the academies were high-profile proof that the military was changing, and that new opportunities for women truly existed throughout the armed services.[46]

That proof can be seen in a simple comparison between life in the United States and in the city states of Ancient Greece, where it was often easier to see and appreciate

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[45]Joanna Strong and Tom B. Leonard, "Susan B. Anthony," in The Book of Virtues for Young People, ed. William J. Bennett (Parsippany, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1996): 211.

[46]Becraft, pp. 9-11. Women made up less than 2% of the armed forces in 1973. By 1987 they accounted for more than 10%, and in the 1990s that percentage has continued to grow.

those who guarded the city walls and served as defenders of their friends and neighbors. There they were, spears and shields in hand, standing watch day after day or leaving through the city gates to campaign against unseen foes. Whatever their mission they were visible and their tangible accomplishments were known to others in the city.

It is much harder to connect on a visceral level with soldiers from distant parts of a continental nation like the United States who fight far away and are unknown to all but a handful of our population. It is difficult to remember they are defending us all, and to make the connection to each of them as individuals. Part of the magic of the modern military is that so many different people protect and serve so many more different people. The Ancient Greeks served and preserved their culture. American soldiers struggle to do the same for the United States, and women are a part of that struggle. They are part and parcel of our social fabric, and the experience of women at West Point demonstrated women could play a role in the nation's defense and represent the commitment of our society to utilize the talents of everyone - to make this democracy a more just meritocracy.

There are still those who look upon a gender-integrated West Point with sadness or regret. As retired Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore, Jr. put it, "The West Point I graduated from no longer exists."[47] They see the presence of women as an intrusive, disruptive force undermining morale, cohesion, and combat effectiveness of the male cadets. They fear a lowering of physical standards, and recoil at what they see as the Army's over-eagerness to make women seem successful at all costs. Moore, for example,

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[47]LTG Harold G. Moore, Jr., IWA, 9-30-95, p. 11.

cites an incident at West Point when his escort officer told him officers on instructor duty at the Academy "were under strict orders not to comment (on) or criticize women cadets in any way, shape, or form, whatever."[48] Some argue the Army's fighting effectiveness has been lessened, and point aghast at the deletion of the phrase "and to fight as Infantry if required" from all Army Combat Support and Combat Service Support organizations because women serve in those units and are prohibited from serving in direct combat.[49] If rear-echelon troops cannot be thrown into the breach in times of crisis, they argue, then the Army risks being unable to confront real disaster on the battlefield.

They also despise the variety of standards applied to men and women, which create resentment among the men and a feeling of inferiority among some women. Those divergent standards appeared at the Academy in the 1970s, and some old grads wish things had been handled differently. As one put it, "If I were King, nothing would have changed, one set of physical standards, single sex bathrooms, any hanky-panky and you are out on your ass...whether male or female."[50]

In the long run the Academy has survived changes and criticism and even flourished. It usually does, for at West Point every new and frightening change becomes hallowed tradition in less than a generation. Every new class recreates the Academy with their own perceptions and accomplishments, and while rules and regulations come and go West Point always remains challenging and unique, one part myth and another part

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[48]Ibid., 9-30-95, p. 11.

[49]LTA, 3-28-96, p. 2.

[50]Ibid., p. 3.

reality. The arrangement suites everyone's interests, even America's, and in hindsight even a monumental change like the admission of women followed the pattern on the surface.

We will never know what women of earlier generations might have accomplished at West Point or in more diverse roles within the Army. Was there a woman Ridgway, Patton or MacArthur whose abilities and talents America left untapped? Perhaps. We do know, however, about the accomplishments of the women who graduated West Point in 1980. They proved, for those who needed the lesson, that men have no monopoly on soldierly virtue. Courage, integrity, honesty, and devotion to duty are as readily found among women as men, as are weakness, cowardice, moral corruption, and dishonesty. Certainly the women of the Class of 1980 demonstrated their strengths in a very public, demanding environment, and many continue to do so to this day. What distinguishes West Point cadets regardless of gender is their goal, their conviction that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts - that service still matters.

It is said the best people give better than they get, and that is certainly true for West Point women, whose accomplishments are too often overlooked. In some measure that is the fate of all soldiers in a democracy, for as one speaker put it, "...you will serve a jealous mistress...Republics *are* ungrateful."[51] For women, those who graduated in 1980 and those that followed, the price of enduring West Point was excruciatingly high. Some still carry the scars of their years at the Academy with them. Some are afraid to return to

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[51]The Honorable Samuel J. Bayard, Address Delivered Before the Graduating Class of Cadets, June 16, 1854 (Camden: Office of the Camden Democrat, 1854), p. 3.

West Point for fear of the memories such a visit might trigger.[52]

Yet by any standard women have made valuable contributions to the Army, to West Point, and to the nation, and the military is a better organization - more inclusive, more representative, and more talented - for opening its ranks to that half of the population still struggling forcefully with stereotypes about gender. In the end the issue is not whether women belong in the Army or at West Point. They do. Instead, the central question is how long our culture will struggle to reconcile itself with the simple truth that the profound consequences of gender integration are worth the cost, that on a balance sheet comparing gains versus losses the military and America have prospered since women were allowed to showcase their talents in the profession of arms. It is a simple truth, one which was expressed well in 1978 by a thirty-five year old soldier with sixteen years service in the Army. Responding to questions concerning the impact women were having on the service he said: "The only real limiting factor is our crippling perceptions of what a woman can and cannot do, and these perceptions are not only those which the men have, but the self-perceptions women have. Overcome this," he wrote, " and they *can do anything* (emphasis in original)."[53] A male former cadet echoed the sentiment years later, saying that associating with the women of the Class of 1980 turned him into an ardent feminist. As he put it, "I have never underestimated women since."[54]

Though unrealized by 1980, the vision of an Academy open to the talents of every

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[52]IWA, 4-13-96.

[53]United States Army, "Final Report: Evaluation of Women in the Army," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Administrative Center, March 1978, p. A-4-2-15.

[54]IWA, 3-26-97, author's notes.

American and providing the finest leaders regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender endured. In truth it is an enduring vision, dating at least to the late nineteenth century when Cadet Henry Ossian Flipper described the promise of West Point. As the Academy's first African-American graduate, Flipper knew a great deal about discrimination, harassment, and abuse. Despite of the harshness of his cadet years, or perhaps because of them, he held great hope for the Long Gray Line. "No college in the country has such a 'heterogeneous conglomeration' - to quote Dr. Johnson - of classes," he wrote in 1878. "The highest and lowest are represented. The glory of free America, her recognition of equality of all men, is not so apparent anywhere else as at West Point." With great optimism, Flipper added, "...the day is not far distant when West Point will stand forth as the proud exponent of absolute social equality. Prejudice weakens, and ere long will fail completely. The advent of general education," he said, "sounds its death knell. And may the day not be far off when America shall proclaim her emancipation from the basest of all servitudes, the subservience to prejudice."[55] While Flipper was referring to racial prejudice, his optimism and faith are equally relevant to the enduring problem of sexism, and his faith remains a clarion call for the Academy and the Army to strive more forcefully to become more completely the beacon he described.

That West Point might be a place where the nation made known a desire to promote equality and open the Army up to the talents of all Americans was an idea on which Flipper had no monopoly, however. In a 1975 letter to Lieutenant General Berry, a

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[55]Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper, The Colored Cadet at West Point: Autobiography of Lieut. Henry Ossian Flipper, U.S.A., First Graduate of Color From the U.S. Military Academy (New York: Homer Lee and Co., 1878), p. 147.

Columbia University professor noted that the admission of women to West Point was simply another occasion where the Academy could adapt itself to the changing needs of the nation. Such adaptation was part of West Point's role, and the admission of women could be viewed as a positive development because "...resorting to an ideology of sexism, ...neglecting any resource which may contribute to our military posture," in short, by continuing to keep women out, "[is] to disarm ourselves in the face of the enemy." Further, he noted that the admission of women was a challenge well suited to the "tradition of flexibility and responsiveness to national needs" that characterized the Academy. "This change," he wrote, "which will bring all of our children into the officer corps is in the best tradition of West Point and our democratic society."[56]

Perhaps the time will come when these expressions of hope strike a greater chord of truth in American society, when the accomplishments and sacrifice of military women will garner as many accolades as those of men, and when women may serve their country without ever fearing their male peers in uniform. If that time arrives, West Point will be a step closer to becoming both a truer meritocracy and an even more meaningful ideal to which our fractured society can look for inspiration. That would be a remarkable achievement for the Army, for the Academy, and for all of us as Americans. No one deserves to see that time arrive more than the women of the West Point Class of 1980.

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[56]S.F. to LTG Sidney B. Berry, July 22, 1975, p. 2. USMA files.

Epilogue

> Yet it no longer falls to me to bear arms in my country's defense. It falls to you. I pray that if the time comes for you to answer the call to arms the battle will be necessary and the field well chosen. But that is not your responsibility. Your honor is in your answer, not your summons.
>
> -Senator John McCain[1]

Sunsets come slowly at West Point, as if golden shafts of light dread leaving the hallowed grounds of the fortress on the Hudson. They linger, reluctantly pulling away from the river as El Sol descends westward behind the mountains, leaving long shadows in their wake. Beams recede past the timeless statues of George S. Patton and Dwight D. Eisenhower, shower through the barracks windows of a thousand cadets, and dance across the weathered visages of Sylvanus Thayer and Douglas MacArthur standing eternal watch over the Plain. Rays glint from the peak of Battle Monument, and retreat painfully from the shaded sanctuary of the post cemetery. Like the rearguard of a withdrawing column, one last glittering sliver of light often pauses atop the mountains to the west. Desperate to stave off nightfall, it darts brilliantly through the stained glass of the Cadet Chapel, glides across the dusk-shrouded ruins of Fort Putnam, and kindles the clouding eyes of an Old Grad lost in memory along Trophy Point. In an instant, the brightness is gone, abandoning the United States Military Academy to sable night, yet promising to lead the minions of Apollo back from the east in the morning.

It has been that way as long as anyone can remember, or at least as long as there have been people to stand on the peninsula that is West Point and notice. The sun rises

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[1]Timburg, The Nightingale's Song, p. 462. McCain's words come from a June 1994 speech given at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

across the majestic river, sets behind tree-covered mountains, and in Summer, as it has every year since 1802, the United States Military Academy receives a new class of cadets.

One such class arrived on July 1, 1996. One thousand one hundred and eighty-seven strong, it represented every state in the Union, eight foreign countries, and the promise of a generation eager to take their place in the Long Gray Line. During a Summer when the Academy noted the twentieth anniversary of the admission of women, the New Cadets of the Class of 2000 began a new phase of their lives with a personal commitment to public service.

Gathering in the Holleder Center, many New Cadets accompanied friends and family during their welcome from Academy officials.[2] They were told what to expect from life at West Point, and encouraged to keep a sense of humor during the weeks ahead. Finally it came time for separation. New Cadets went one way; family and friends went another. Young men and women hugged their families, gathered their belongings, and were gone. It was a moment of extraordinary poignancy parents wanted to linger. Their children wanted it to end. One group fought back tears and faced a tour of the Academy and a long drive home to a world less full than before. The other stood on the threshold of admission to the society of warriors, at the beginning of the most challenging journey of their lives.

All too quickly the moment was gone. New Cadets moved from a world with

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[2]Opened in 1985, the Holleder Center is home to the Army basketball and hockey teams, and named after Major Donald W. Holleder, USMA Class of 1956, who was killed in Vietnam in 1967 and awarded the Medal of Honor.

precious few rites of passage to one with a dazzling array of hurdles, each linking them more closely to the Corps of Cadets. They left a world of individuality where little was expected, failure was commonplace, and the emphasis was on choice, to join a world where the group mattered most, a great deal was expected, failure was unthinkable, and the emphasis was on obligation.

After several hours and a dazzling array of in-processing formalities including haircuts, uniform issue, and instruction in the timeless art of the military salute, New Cadets saw their family and friends one last time before the beginning of Cadet Basic Training. Known as "Beast Barracks," the training was a six week program of instruction focusing on physical fitness, military protocol, and weapons proficiency roughly analogous to basic training for Army enlisted personnel. The Cadet Captain in charge of the first half of this training period was a first classman known and feared as the "Queen of Beast," and in July 1996 her name was Leticia S. Gasdick.

As the Cadet Training Battalion Commander, Gasdick led the New Cadets and their company commanders on to the historic Plain at West Point. After taking their oath to "... support the Constitution of the United States, and bear true allegiance to the National Government...," the New Cadets formed by company behind the famous United States Military Academy Band, better known as the Hellcats, to pass in review before the spectators gathered in bleachers to celebrate their first steps on the long road to graduation.

The Hellcats, smartly in step and immaculately attired in Army dress blues, passed first playing the "West Point March." They were followed by the Academy color

guard carrying the Stars and Stripes and the colors of the United States Army. Atop the Army's flag were battle streamers commemorating the one hundred seventy-three campaigns and major engagements fought by the Army since the American Revolution. Saratoga mingled in the breeze with the Argonne, Gettysburg with Normandy and Bataan, and Chosin Reservoir with the Ia Drang Valley, Grenada, and Desert Storm. Behind the colors came the New Cadets, arranged into eight companies and struggling to maintain their newly-received places in the Long Gray Line.

Parents and friends strained to recognize their New Cadet in the sea of identical uniforms and closely cropped hair. They cheered en masse as the long column passed in review, letting out isolated bursts of joy when a solemn face became suddenly familiar. They hardly noticed the ragged marching, the awkward attempts to keep in step, or the grimaces stress was already placing on the faces of their loved ones. Caught up in the emotion of the moment, they would have forgiven these incongruities anyway. After all, their willing young soldiers were neophytes, not the disciplined formations of precision marchers that would astound crowds at weekend parades in the fall.

In many ways, this rite of passage was like so many others in the Academy's long history. It was civilians becoming soldiers, young people shouldering the burden of citizenship, and West Point unobtrusively accepting another class of young people to prepare for careers in the Army.

In fact, very little seemed unique about the class destined to take the Academy and the Army into the next millennium. Press reports noted in passing that one hundred eighty-eight women reported on R-Day in 1996, which was an Academy record. They

also reported that the first women admitted as cadets arrived at West Point on July 7, 1976. Twenty years and another America had come and gone in the interim, and no one in the Class of 2000 seemed to notice.

The Long Gray Line marched on.

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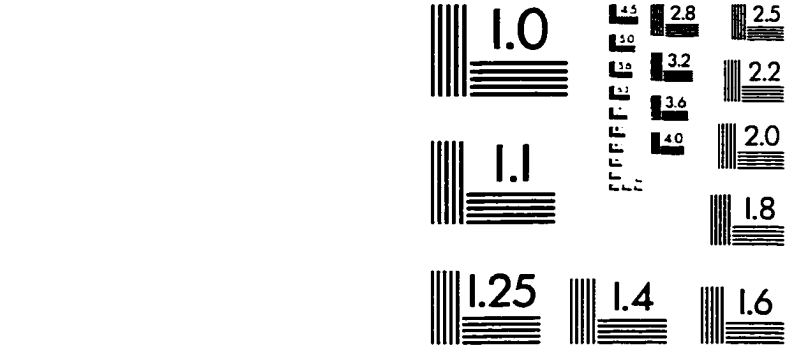

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