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“*Woman, Warrior: The Story of Linda Bray and an Analysis of Female War Veterans in the American Media*” discusses the media’s portrayal of former Army Captain Linda Bray, the first woman to lead American troops into combat in the Panamanian invasion of 1989, and how her leadership reignited the question of women’s roles on and off the battlefield. Central to my argument concerning the media’s representation of American women war veterans is the media’s reception and interpretation of Bray’s participation in combat action. In the conclusion, I also briefly address the representation of former Army Private Jessica Lynch during the Iraq Campaign in March 2003.

WOMAN, WARRIOR: THE STORY OF LINDA BRAY AND AN ANALYSIS OF
FEMALE WAR VETERANS IN THE AMERICAN MEDIA

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“A woman is the only thing I am afraid of that I know will not hurt me.”
--Abraham Lincoln

Female veterans’ stories are rarely told, and when they are, hyperbole is often added, to make them more exciting for the American public. These women’s stories color and add to the already rich experience of the American veteran. In her book, Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women’s Lives, Cynthia Enloe states of the warrior woman, “These ‘unnatural’ creatures capture the imagination of societies that are struggling to redefine social and political relationships. Always, they are surrounded by ambiguity, disguise, and confusion” (117).

Although she is surrounded by “ambiguity, disguise, and confusion,” the American warrior woman is a disciplined, trained, and—depending on whom you ask—dangerous member of our armed forces. She is also the epitome of freedom of choice. Does she walk away from hearth and home to fight? Can she find some place in between domesticity and her call toward military service? The feminine presence in the U.S. military has always been a source of contention, and that conflict is often played out in the American media, which places the women in symbolic positions. They become heroines of civilization or pariahs or both because they refuse to know their place. Journalist Ellen Goodman observes that, “Somehow or other, we believed war was

civilized because the fairer sex [did not] fight. War was moral because men did it to protect mothers and wives and daughters. War was glorified to prove manhood” (Goodman). If women fight, what does that mean for masculinity? There are those who feel challenged by a feminine presence in historically male-dominated fields, and war is no different. The fact remains that the archetypical war hero is not a woman.

Since the American Revolution, women have served in every American armed conflict in differing capacities. The first recorded women to associate themselves with the military were called “camp followers,” and they were usually wives, mothers, lovers, orphans, and some prostitutes (Enloe 1). They functioned as surrogates of domesticity, standing in to give all the benefits of home near the battlefield, and reminding the men what they were fighting for. Even though camp followers often resided in great proximity to the frontlines, they were not viewed as a part of war, but rather as representing the niceties of home. Enloe writes, “‘Camp followers’ are kept ideologically marginal to the essential function of militaries—combat” (1). These women served indispensable roles by feeding, nurturing, healing, and serving the sexual desires of military men during wartime, but when the work of men—combat—began, the women were summarily discharged. Despite the fact that these women provided essential care, they still ran the risk of being labeled whores when their usefulness ran out (Enloe 3). The battlefield was no place for a woman, even though a few managed to get there.

Modern American women have made great strides in their participation in the military, on and off the battlefield, but they still face challenges in how they are perceived and represented in the media. At present, the fact that women belong to our

armed services rarely causes heated discussion. Their presence in the military is not questioned, but the role that they can and should play on the modern battlefield is. When former U.S. Army Captain Linda Bray led her troops in an assault in Panama, she became central to arguments for and against women's greater participation in combat. As an adult, Linda Bray was baptized into the Catholic Church in the name of Joan of Arc (Bray).¹ Labeled a witch, Joan of Arc was burned at the stake for daring to wear men's clothes and participating in battle. It was only fitting that Capt. Bray would eventually become the first woman recognized for leading American Army forces into combat. Initially recognized as a hero by the media and the military, Bray, like Joan of Arc, soon found herself in the center of the controversy surrounding women's roles in combat.

Linda Bray not only made history, but also sparked polarizing debates. The events that transpired on December 20, 1989, at the height of the U.S. invasion of Panama called Operation Just Cause would ignite controversy in the American public and political spheres concerning women's roles in the military.² The mission of the Panama invasion was to capture General Manuel Noriega, an accused drug-lord and de facto leader of Panama, but the role that women played became a crucial part of the news media's coverage. Bray's story became the signature story of women in combat, and for a few

¹ See Figure 5, Appendix A, for a photo of Bray

² Operation Just Cause was the U.S. led invasion of Panama in December 1989. The U.S. relationship with Noriega began in 1959 and allowed the U.S. to gain a foothold on the Central American peninsula. Funded by the George H.W. Bush-led Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), Noriega served as a key intelligence asset for a number of years before coming into power. In 1967, Noriega attended the School of the Americas at Fort Gulick for a course in psychological operations (PSYOPS). In 1984, Noriega became the leader of Panama after the death of Omar Torrijos Herrera. In February 1989 Noriega began to fall out of favor with the U.S. government due to drug trafficking and the selling of U.S military technology.

days in 1990 she was a media darling. Her narrative soon took a more tragic turn as forces in the media and the government used her image and story for conflicting purposes. My analysis of Bray's story considers the challenges of representing battlefield stories to the American public via media. Through her story of heroism as represented by the media, Bray becomes a two-dimensional character and loses the nuance of her humanity in the telling of her story.

At the center of the story of each man or woman in the United States military is a very real humanity often lost when translated by the media for the American public. Communications professor Thomas N. Gardner states:

Most Americans experience war as a mediated phenomenon. When war is a mediated narrative, it becomes linked to its dramatized, mediated, represented narrative. It seeks, in the representation of itself and even in its very real playing out, to replicate the mediated narrative it has come to project about itself through its mediated representations. (109)

War stories become mediated narratives and performances—entertainment rather than information—when represented through the media. In addition, as with any kind of entertainment, enhancement most certainly occurs, which ultimately causes a conflict. This enhancement erodes the validity of the underlying narrative, a narrative that becomes more commentary than reportage.

As my mother once observed, “Why add to the story when the truth is sensational enough?” The stories of the men and women who have served our nation need no embellishment. They only need to be told accurately, so that their sacrifices and triumphs

are not forgotten. Yet many in the media seem to feel that heroes must be embedded within a recognizable mythos, a grand narrative. When the facts and clarifications come out, the story is often no less riveting, but it becomes tainted by the previous elaboration.³

This essay focuses on Linda Bray's story, the media's reception, and the public reaction to her forging of a new path for women in the military. The retelling of Bray's mission to capture a Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) dog kennel reignited debates about military women's roles in combat and caused greater scrutiny of military policy. The term retelling references the fact that Bray's story, which commentators construed as the epitome of the women in combat story, was literally retold and recycled by the news media. Retelling is also appropriate because of the secondhand nature of the published reports of Bray's mission. During the invasion of Panama, the news media were actually "held in an airport bunker until fighting ended" (Gardner 112). The media were not witnesses to the events, which they reported, thus making each news report already a secondhand telling.

In the process of retelling, four different versions of Bray's story emerged: 1) Bray's contemporaneous account; 2) the media's analysis and evaluation; 3) the Army's official account; and, 4) Bray's retrospective account nineteen years later. Using these four accounts, I argue that the public's opinion of women in the military is often mediated negatively through their interaction with the news media, in this case print media. Before we can look in depth into Bray's story, we must first look at the history of

³ The 2003 story of Private First Class Jessica Lynch during the early days of the Iraq invasion is an example of how forces striving to create a grand narrative dilute the heroism of those who lived the events. The exaggeration is problematic because her story of being a female veteran is already steeped with controversy, but when the elaboration was found to be false, somehow the real story lost its luster.

women in the American Armed Forces preceding the Panama Invasion and the policies that made Bray's actions both heroic and illegal. After detailing the historical, political, and legal ramifications of American women in the military and combat, I investigate the four different versions of Bray's story systematically. I start by creating a composite outline of Bray's initial account, based on details from newspaper interviews. Secondly, I examine the media's appropriation, which placed her in a symbolic discourse, of Bray's story and image. Thirdly, I analyze the official military version of the story, its impact on the combat exclusion policy for women, and the public backlash it caused against Bray. Finally, in analyzing Captain Bray's retrospective account, I explicate the negative implications of media celebrity on Bray's military career and the role of memory in her recollection. Central to my critical analysis will be the symbolic meaning of women in combat and what women's growing participation in combat has come to represent for different members of the American population. In my concluding comments, I look at where American military women are today, in particular at the media's handling of Pfc. Jessica Lynch's capture and subsequent rescue. The goal of this essay is to scrutinize the negative impact of media representation on American military women and how that representation makes a larger statement about war and the position of women in American culture as a whole.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

“We have women in the military, but they [do not] put us in the front lines. They do not know if we can fight, if we can kill. I think we can. All the general has to do is walk over to the women and say, ‘You see the enemy over there? They say you look fat in those uniforms.’”

--Elayne Boosler

Many women have served in the U.S. Armed Forces in varying capacities since the Revolutionary War. Some dared to work alongside their husbands. A few dared to don the uniform disguised as men to fight on the battlefield alongside men; their stories are often cloaked in mystery and scandal. During the Revolutionary War, Margaret Corbin, nicknamed “Captain Molly,” picked up a musket to return fire and manned her husband’s post when he was killed at Ft. Washington. Corbin injured in the process became the first woman to receive a military pension. Despite the fact that she took over the role of a whole man, she received half the pay that a male soldier would have received and one suit of clothing for her pension. Deborah Sampson actually donned the uniform and disguised herself as a man during the Revolutionary War, eventually gaining military honors and public acclaim. These women were not unusual in supporting their country in battle, but they were rare in the capacity in which they supported the war effort. By taking up arms and participating in open combat, both

Corbin and Sampson contributed in a way that is rare even for women today. These women represent a crucial link between women warriors of the past and the present.⁴

Even though historic precedent has been set many times concerning women's capabilities on and off the battlefield, there are many who believe that they have no place in the military, let alone in combat. To these individuals, women should be strongholds of the domestic sphere, steadfastly awaiting the safe return of this nation's fighting men. In "Unsung Heroes: Women's Contributions in the Military and Why Their Song Goes Unsung," Irene Jung Fiala gives a comprehensive view of how women are often portrayed and discussed in terms of their participation in war. Photos and stories of women going off to war often highlight the mothers of young children, giving the false impression that masses of women are leaving their children to do a man's job. Pictures of women holding crying children as they head off to war are often followed with taglines about G.I. Mom going off to war illuminated with editorials—not news stories—about the negative impact that mothers going off to war has on children. This perspective of mass femininity leaving the home is false because these women make up only 11% of the total military force; only 2% of women from the total American population are a part of the military (Fiala 53). In the context of the Gulf War, Fiala argues that such stories "serve to reinforce the gendered expectation that women are the most suitable care providers of children and fail to recognize that fathers, as well as mothers, were going off to war" (53). In the years preceding Bray's service, few questioned the negative impact of fathers called to duty. In recent years, this question has arisen in the media, but within the

⁴ Blacksmith, E.A., ed. Women in the Military. Vol. 64. New York: The H.W. Company, 1992. 5 vols.

historical context of generations preceding Bray, a father's absence due to war was not a major concern. Men are portrayed as guarding the domestic space, rather than participating in the processes of domesticity. Fiala continues:

The media's portrayal of women being deployed to the Gulf War, therefore, not only served to reinforce the idea that women should be the providers of child care and that women who wanted to pursue a military career were 'deviant.' Furthermore, men's roles as fathers were dismissed as not being worthy of the same discussion and that men are the more "capable" warriors. (53)

The notion that a woman's place is in the home is problematic because it fails to recognize both the important roles that men play in the domestic arena and simultaneously, women's war and peacetime roles in the public sphere. Women in the military present a conflict between honoring American social values of equal opportunity for all and protecting time-honored codes of perceived femininity and masculinity.

In order to comprehend the ongoing struggle of the military woman, one must understand the historical and legal background of women on the battlefield. The Army gained congressional approval to create the U.S. Army Nurse Corps in 1901 to support the Spanish-American War.⁵ Before World War I, women were allowed to serve the military only as nurses. These women were civilian contractors, not full members of the military. Approximately three years before America began participating in World War I, women were allowed to enlist in naval reserve units to fill critical support roles, meaning

⁵ "1,500 nurses were assigned to Army hospitals during the Spanish American War. As a result of their performance, the Army Nurse Corps was established in 1901" (Holm 10).

they could not have permanent professional positions in the U.S. military, but they could be recalled to duty for a certain period deemed necessary by military leaders.⁶ In all during World War I, “33,000 women served not only as nurses but in other support roles as well. More than 400 nurses died in the line of duty” (Highlights in the History of Military Women).

During World War II, many military organizations were created for women to offer their support for the war effort as uniformed members of the Armed Forces, including the WASPs [Women Air Force Service Pilots], ANC [Army Nurse Corps], WAC/WAAC [Women’s Army Corps/ Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps], WAVES [Women’s Reserve of the U.S. Naval Reserve], SPARS [Women’s Reserve of the Coast Guard], USMCWR [U.S. Marine Corps Women’s Reserve], and NNC [Navy Nurse Corps]. Two civilian organizations heavily staffed by women were also available for activation by the military during WWII, PHS [Public Health Service] and ARC [American Red Cross]. The military further expanded the jobs that women could have while serving in the military in order to release able-bodied men for combat. Women could hold reserve positions only in all-female military organizations; they were a disposable force used when manpower requirements necessitated their service.

Even though women had a significant presence in the Armed Forces earlier, it was not until 1948, three years after the end of World War II, that they were given a permanent place in the U.S. military when the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act

⁶ With World War I looming in the horizon, “on 19 March 1917, the Navy Department authorized the enrollment of women in the Naval Reserve in the ratings of yeoman, electrician (radio), or such other ratings as might be considered essential. Thus, when the United States entered the war on 6 April, the Navy was in a position to enlist women” (Holm 10).

of 1948 was signed into law.⁷ This law provided that women could enlist in active duty and attempt to make the military a profession. The Army was the only branch of the military that did not sign the law because it was divided into separate organizations for women and men. This fact is important because the act of 1948 officially excluded women from combat. Army officials felt that they did not need to sign the act because, in practice, they followed the combat exclusion law (Holm 120-121). Major General Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret.), writes, “The Army’s persistence in maintaining a separate identity for women is not clear except perhaps because it maintained the status quo” (121). With the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, the total percentage of women was limited by law to 2% of all branches of the military. Even though women had been a vital part of the U.S. military for a long time, there were still many constraints placed upon their service by the law. Pregnant female service members were required to separate from the military; women could not be assigned to units that participated in direct combat, and were limited to a select number of jobs such as nurses, administrative and logistical support. These legal constraints made it difficult for career military women to advance in the ranks.

Despite these limitations, women began to establish a solid place in the military, especially during wartime, and with each new global conflict American women made greater professional advances. In 1950 during the Korean War, women including some

⁷ “On 2 June 1948, by a vote of 206 to 133, Congress passed the Women’s Armed Services Act of 1948 (P.L. 625—80th Congress...On 12 June, President Truman signed the measure that finally established a permanent place for Women in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps”(Holm 113). This law also barred women from assignment to combat vessels and aircraft. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force were the only branches of the American armed forces to sign the law. Currently the Army policy against women in combat is based on policy, not law.

veterans of World War II were once again recalled into service. More than 50,000 women served during the Korean era (Women in Military). When the Vietnam War began in 1965, more than 7,000 women were deployed in support of the military action, many as nurses near or on the frontlines. Eight American military women and fifty-nine American civilian women died during the Vietnam War. While the number of female casualties could never compare to the number of male lives lost, one must remember that each one of these women was a volunteer.

The Vietnam War began at the height of the Civil Rights and Women's Rights Movements, and change was in the air, not only in American society in general, but specifically in the U.S. military. In 1967, the 2% cap placed on the number of women that could serve and the ceiling on the highest grade that a woman could achieve were repealed (Women in Military). At the end of the Vietnam War, America continued a process that slowly began to change the face of the American military.

The 1970s represented a crucial turning point. Elizabeth P. Hoisington of the Women's Army Corps (WACS) and Anna Mae Hays of the Army Nurses Corps (ANC) became the first women in all the armed forces to be promoted to brigadier general on June 11, 1970. Shortly afterward, gender-segregated Army units (WACS and ANC) were disbanded, and women were integrated fully into the regular army. The U.S. Army still did not sign the law of 1948, but introduced policies that followed the letter of the law, still banning women from combat. At the end of the 1970s, pregnant women no longer had to be involuntarily discharged.

In 1973 when the draft was ended and the all-volunteer force was created, military leaders found themselves in a difficult situation. The impact of the Vietnam War draft on the white male population caused a shortage of new recruits, and just as during World War II when the military began to allow greater numbers of black males to join, women became a sought-after commodity to fill crucial shortfalls in the ranks. Even as women were being allowed more opportunities, they were still limited by legislation, policy, and public sentiment.

In 1975 President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-106, officially allowing women to attend the service academies, including the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. In 1978 Judge John J. Sirica's decision⁸ against the Navy policy prohibiting women from ships "stated that the legislation 'tends to suggest a statutory purpose more related to the traditional way of thinking of women than to the demands of military preparedness'" (Holm 37). Women could no longer be treated as they had been in the past. They became more than tools used to fill roles left open by men; instead they were essential members of the total force. Even though progress was being made to give women greater opportunities in the military, the military's stance against women in combat remained the same. The Army created a policy in 1977 that effectively had the same outcome as the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, excluding women from combat. The crucial difference here is that policy can be and has been quickly changed to meet the needs of the mission,

⁸ "The Navy launched the Women in Ships program in 1978 with 54 female officers and 367 enlisted women on a variety of support ships after Federal District Judge John J. Sirica declared unconstitutional laws prohibiting women from serving at sea (on other noncombatant [sea vessels] besides transport and hospital ships)" ("Woman at Sea: It's All About Leadership").

but law cannot. Women continued to face obstacles because of gender, but doors were beginning to open.

Regardless of the impediments placed before them, several women still managed to achieve high positions within the American armed forces, paving the way for Linda Bray. In 1980, the first women graduated from the military academies, causing an influx of highly trained female leadership. When Bray was commissioned into the United States Army, the American public was becoming accustomed to, if not wholly accepting of, women in uniform. Despite women's record of honorable and high quality service, many lawmakers, military leadership, and members of the general American public still felt uncomfortable with women in the armed forces and, in particular, women in combat.

In recent years, critics of women combatants have raised a number of concerns, pointing to differences in the rate of stress fractures, women's limited ability to gain muscular and cardiac strength, and to the presumed interference that the female soldier poses to male group cohesion. In addition, concerns about pregnancy, probable capture, death, and the effect on the American public's psyche when seeing its mothers and daughters coming home in flag-draped caskets have fueled many of the arguments. Concerns about women's physical and emotional toughness in the heat of battle are central to arguments against increasing women's role in the military. Even the toughest male soldier has found it difficult to cope with the more painful aspects of war, and yet women have repeatedly shown their resilience in overcoming these difficulties.

On first glance, one statistical difference seems especially significant: Reportedly, on average more women have been diagnosed with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress

Disorder) than their male counterparts.⁹ Of this disparity, the National Center for PTSD observes, “Women are more likely to experience sexual assault. Sexual Assault is more likely to cause PTSD than many other events [and women may be more likely to blame themselves for trauma experiences than men]” (Women, Trauma, and PTSD). However, we should also consider that women are more likely to seek medical and emotional help, thus increasing the rate of women diagnosed (Women, Trauma, and PTSD). Any number of reasons may account for men’s reluctance to seek help. Some assume because of this statistical difference that men are more emotionally stable and thus, better able to handle the emotional rigor of combat. Men’s high suicide rate would suggest otherwise. The fact that men also participate in combat at a higher number than women is another component that should be considered when discussing the emotional impact of combat.

The supposed difference between the sexes continues to fuel the debate regarding women’s roles in the military. Lorry Fenner writes:

Some people believe that in a perfect world all soldiers would be androids or robots of science fiction. They would be the right size and have the “right” strength, speed, and stamina. They would have the right intellect and character for war, and they would have just the right amount of aggression, which we could turn off in peacetime—or we would quarantine them away from civilians when not in use. (17)

Fenner’s statement holds true for female and male soldiers, but more so for males. In the perfect world of those who feel that a woman’s place is in the home, all soldiers would be

⁹ “Women are more than twice as likely to develop PTSD as men (10% for women and 4% of men)” (Women, Trauma and PTSD).

men. Unfortunately for these critics we do not live in the “perfect” world of their imagination. We in fact live in a nation where many men and women feel called upon to serve their nation in the military. The question, then, is no longer, whether women will serve in the military, but rather in what capacity. Most critiques against are based on emotional appeals rather than hard science. Moreover, even when science is taken into account, little is said about how physical shortcomings and real-world experience are often overcome by teamwork and ingenuity.

One of the main difficulties in the debate about women’s abilities is defining combat. In Women in Combat: Civic Duty or Military Liability, Lorry M. Fenner states, “Ground Combat as a military term is not defined in most Army training manuals other than by description and historical scenarios” (108). Fenner’s statement suggests the complications of attempting to restrict women’s roles through use of a term that in itself is difficult to define. With the ever-shifting line of battle, the roles that women and some men play become more complex. Yet jobs that are likely to face combat situations or have major privacy concerns are closed to women, such as infantry, armor, field artillery, special operations forces, special operations aircraft, and submarines (Fenner 3). Cynthia Enloe observes, “Debates in the media and legislature over just what constitutes ‘combat’ and the ‘front’—as versus ‘support’ and the ‘rear’—are nothing less than arguments over how to make use of women’s labor without violating popular notions of femininity, masculinity and the social order itself” (7). More than anything else, the disruption of the social order forms the basis of arguments against female combatants. Captain Linda Bray’s story became a fundamental part of the women in combat debate even though she

was assigned a position unlikely to face combat. She found herself in a combat situation in the process of completing what appeared to be a routine mission. Bray's participation in Operation Just Cause caused her to become a symbol of women in combat.

CHAPTER III

THE GATECRASH HEARD AROUND THE WORLD: CAPTAIN LINDA BRAY'S CONTEMPORANEOUS ACCOUNT OF "OPERATION DOG MEAT"

"Once you no longer have a definable front, it's impossible to separate combat from noncombat. The women carried M-16s, not dog biscuits."

-- Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, D-Colorado

This section focuses on the effect of supplementary details added to Bray's story by journalists. The validity of Bray's story was questioned by media agencies as the spotlight grew and the more provocative elements of her initial account began to be viewed with suspicion by opponents of women in combat. To paraphrase "How to Tell a True War Story" by Tim O'Brien: 1) A true war story is never moral; 2) It is difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen; 3) True war stories do not generalize; and 4) You can tell a true war story if you keep on telling it (O'Brien 174-183). Ironically, when Bray's initial account is placed in conversation with her retrospective account it becomes apparent that the initial account as represented by the media is actually less accurate than the retrospective account. The irony is found when one considers that original accounts are closer to the moment of action; therefore, they should be fresher in the individual's memory allowing for greater accuracy.

In this section, I describe the contemporaneous account of Bray's mission and investigate the parts of the account that caused questioning of Bray's narrative. The

contemporaneous account is a compilation of the news stories written about Bray's mission days after it occurred, essentially the first telling of her story. In the process of analyzing the initial account, I draw out the details of the news articles written about Bray that sparked questions about the legitimacy of Bray's narrative. I demonstrate how Linda Bray—a character in her own war story—is created by textual exaggeration by the media and then discuss the breakdown of the image created by both the military and the media.

Looking first to the contemporaneous account allows us to see how Bray's mythos was both created and eventually destroyed by the same forces, the military and the media. Due to the absence of embedded reporting, which has recently become a central part of media war coverage, it is difficult to ascertain Bray's exact words immediately after the capture of the Panamanian Defense Forces' (PDF) dog kennel on December 20, 1989. Therefore, her initial account represents a compilation of various quotations attributed to her by newspaper and magazine journalists through secondhand reporting approximately ten days after her mission. In each of the accounts, I have emphasized phrases significant for my later discussion. After presenting each of the excerpts, I highlight quotations offered by Bray to the media, which leads into a discussion of the implications of the underlined phrases.

The main aim of American news reporting is supposed to be objective; the journalist's role is to present the facts without unnecessary conjecture. I show how, once we begin to examine Bray's story more deeply, that objectivity fails, especially when it comes to women in the military. By conducting a close reading of how Bray's own words

were used to present the capture of the PDF dog kennel, I show how the media created a hero, only to later tear down the image that they fashioned.

One major problem is that the language of the articles lacked specificity when crediting quotations. The anonymity of some of the statements undermines the credibility of the writer and army members quoted. In two articles, in particular, the same statement is credited vaguely to Bray and, alternatively, to her troops. The first article that reported Bray's capture of the PDF dog kennel was published on December 30, 1989, ten days after her mission was completed. Published in the U.S. military-oriented newspaper, The Stars and Stripes, and titled "Women take combat roles in Panama," the article states:

The 988th MP [Military Police] Company was led into action by Capt. Linda Bray. The unit's first action was an assault on a kennel that also housed an unknown number of PDF troops.

After deploying her unit around the kennel, Bray waited two minutes before giving the order to open fire with rifles and heavy machine guns. The next day a search of the building revealed three bodies, her troops said. (Newsday)

The statement "her troops said" conflicts with the account reported three days later in an article written by Peter Copeland, who has been credited with searching out Bray for her first interview (Richardson). In the account, published on January 2, 1990, Copeland wrote, "she said"—referring to Bray—when referencing the number of PDF soldier bodies found inside the kennel. The statement "she said" brings attention to the fact that the author is paraphrasing, and that leaves open the possibility that Bray did not make this statement exactly as Copeland presents it. This is crucial because when the military and

the media both begin to turn against Bray it is her own words or words attributed to her from the initial interview that receive the most scrutiny. Three enemy dead might have been mentioned by Bray, but in a context not related to the kennel's capture. The generic nature of the pronouns, "her troops said" and "she said," along with the failure to directly attribute the statements to Bray, calls the statements' validity into question. In this case, it is the lack of detail that causes narrative ambiguity; anyone could have reported that the three enemy soldiers were found dead.

Even though the narrative vagueness is troubling, what troubles most are the details added by others. One example of this can be found in Copeland's account:

According to her commanding officer—also a woman—Pfc. Proctor single-handedly captured an enemy prisoner after a fierce firefight at the Panama Defense Forces kennel for police dogs, which also housed 40 heavily armed troops.

This quote does not refer to Captain Bray directly, but it does concern one of the approximately 150 soldiers under her command and therefore represents an important part of this version of Bray's narrative. In later accounts, the capture of the enemy soldier is left out, but it is addressed in the military's official account. The official military account states: "According to Bray, however, when she counted her troops at the close of the operation, she had one more than she started with. The extra man was a frightened, unarmed PDF soldier who surrendered without resistance, she told the Army" (Broder). This refutation of Bray's initial accounts gives her narrative farcical undertones, turning Bray and her unit's mission into a joke in order to lessen the impact of Bray's actions.

In Wilson Ring's January 4, 1990 St. Petersburg Times article, "One U.S. attack in Panama was led by female captain," yet more detail emerges:

Bray said a bullhorn was used to tell the PDF troops in the kennel to surrender, but they refused. "I ordered a warning shot. Nothing happened. Then they fired the M-60 (machine gun) at the edge of the building." Still nothing. After the warnings were ignored, Bray's soldiers opened fire and the PDF troops returned it. The platoon spent almost three hours securing the building, Bray said. She said after the attack was over, three bodies of PDF soldiers were found in the kennel compound. Three of the facility's attack dogs also had been killed.

The "three hours securing the building" is different from a "three-hour firefight" as it is reported in other news sources. "Three hours securing the building" implies that the firefight was not necessarily continuous. Conversely, a "three-hour firefight" suggests that the exchange of fire between Bray and the PDF soldiers lasted for three hours.

One of the details not mentioned in the earlier articles is the outcome of Bray's mission. Journalists failed to discuss why she was at the dog kennel and what happened because of her actions. An important detail was overlooked in order to get out the sensational story of the first woman to lead U.S. troops into combat. In the March 1990, Soldiers magazine article "The Women of Just Cause," Donna Miles writes, "They did find 121 T-65 assault rifles, 31 AK-47s, 21 9mm pistols, three shot guns, several cases of fragmentation grenades, and thousands of rounds of ammunition" (Miles 23). The initial news and military accounts briefly mention that Bray's team found the cache of weapons, but these articles and the military's account mainly focus on the intensity of the battle and the number of enemy dead. In an attempt to ground the narrative in the genre of war story

and to give Bray's heroism greater narrative weight, the enemy dead serve as artifacts and proof that the battle happened. The details of the weapons cache did not emerge until after she had been discredited. Maybe this detail was overlooked because it seemed insignificant in comparison to the story of the physical battle.

The press coverage of Bray's mission brought attention to her story not only from the U.S. government, but also from the Panamanian government. In a January 4, 1990 article by Wilson Ring, Bray is quoted as saying, "Three of the facility's attack dogs also had been killed" (Ring). Before leaving Panama, Bray found herself the subject of a full CID [Criminal Investigation Division] investigation, spurred on by the Panamanian government who wanted her to pay fines in the millions (Bray). Central to the investigation was the slaying of the dogs at the kennel. In her retrospective account, Bray mentions being interviewed for the investigation by her superior officer. Bray told him that some dogs were killed by her unit in order to enter the kennel (Bray). The investigation determined that the female commander of the company that replaced Bray at the kennel had her soldiers kill the remaining dogs. Because Bray had become a recognizable public figure, she was an easy target for accusations of wrongdoing.

Along with reporting the action, reporters attributed a number of extemporaneous quotations to Bray as answers to reporters' questions. These quotations are relevant because they show how the press began to lead Bray toward discussing the impact of gender on her participation in the invasion of Panama. Bray states, "I was given a mission,' [...] 'I had to do it. I used all the minimal resources available and failing to do that, I gave the order to open fire.' The mission which began as a routine operation to

secure an area became a three-hour fire fight involving grenades, machine gun and rifle fire” (Reid). This statement shows that Bray, finding herself in a difficult situation, completed her mission in the manner that she felt best suited the circumstances. In a January 5, 1990 article titled, “Woman hailed for leading troops in battle during Panama invasion,” Bray states, “before all this started...I had always wondered what would happen. After this, in my opinion, there is no difference [between men and women]. They worked together as a team, all my soldiers” (Herald Wire Service). This statement is crucial because it places Bray as a spokesperson for gender equality. The mission becomes about gender issues rather than the actual capture of the kennel or the eventual capture of Manuel Noriega.

Wilson Ring also seems to quote Bray extensively and directly:

Bray said that, for all the distinction between combat and support units, with about 11 percent of the military made up of women, it was probably inevitable that some would see combat when U.S. forces were committed to battle.

“For whatever reason, the MPs are in a combat-support role. ...I hope this makes a statement. It used to be that just because you were a female you would not be able to fight. That is no longer true.”

Asked if she felt the Panama experience might cause the regulations about women in combat to be tightened, Bray answered, “I hope it doesn’t happen. Any female soldier in Panama, or male for that matter, will tell you they hope not ...I hope it doesn’t cause a regression. This is a big step.”

These statements are significant because Bray was making a clear declaration about women in combat. In these reported moments, by her own account, Bray became the

center of the woman in combat narrative created by the reporters. By using Bray's own words, the reporters' choice to center the woman in combat narrative on Bray is justified. The details of Panamanian resistance makes Bray's story more compelling, and the reporting and representation gain more credence by using words that she uttered.

In the process of reporting, Bray the character becomes mythologized and her story gains a moral. Vietnam veteran and author Tim O' Brien writes:

A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior... If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been the victim of a very old and terrible lie. (O'Brien 174)

The media's interpretation and Bray's own contentions suggest the moral of her story is that women can participate in combat. The question remains, is Bray's initial account false because it has a moral? The answer is complicated by the media's presence in the story. It is apparent that the purpose of reporting Bray's accomplishment is to advance the argument about women in combat.

The inconsistency of the reporting places Bray's narrative in a dangerous position because the public had already embraced the story as told by media representatives. Bray, being human, may have intentionally or unintentionally changed the story. It is also just as possible that the reporters, wishing to create a more satisfying narrative, intentionally or unintentionally "misheard" Bray, wishing to create a more satisfying narrative. The media's aim might not be to undermine Bray, but to create a hero. Just as in the child's

game of “Telephone,” there may have been no malice intended, but as with the game the rapid nature of information, sharing caused distortion of the original message. O’Brien writes, “In any war story, but especially a true one, it’s difficult to separate what happened from what seems to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way. The angles of vision are skewed” (175). When viewed through the different angles of journalistic endeavors, Bray’s initial account definitely becomes skewed. It is important to keep the secondhand nature of Bray’s account in mind, because in the course of delivery the story gained and lost some elements.

Even though Bray is quoted, the media’s report of her story is ultimately secondhand, a problem exacerbated by the media’s inability to gain access as the action was happening. In the case of Panama, the media were not allowed access to military personnel or even the civilian population until after the fighting had stopped. In the American invasion of Panama, journalists were not embedded as they are today. Robin Andersen writes:

Pool reporters were excluded from all military activity until the second day of the invasion. Five-hundred other U.S. journalists were restricted to a military base and barred from on-the-scene coverage of the invasion and its aftermath. . . . Journalists were directed to photo opportunities in Panama that served positive public relation purposes far more than public information. (150)

Media and Communications professor Robin Andersen writes, “the Hoffman report (released at the end of the Panama invasion) concluded that because of the events surrounding the failure of the pool arrangement, news reports produced stories and

pictures of a secondary value” (151). The news stories that were reported were chiefly secondhand stories because of the military denying reporters’ early access. Not allowing reporters access was a calculated move on the part of military and government officials; in the attempt to gain some positive press, the Army opened its policies concerning women in the combat for greater examination. Press pools were used as a way to corral the media and for the military to control what the media reported. Media agencies were lumped together and directed toward newsworthy subjects such as groups of celebrating Panamanians or the amazing women of the invasion. Their access was further limited because of the Pentagon’s refusal to release information about the effects of the invasion on the Panamanian population. This lack of initial contact makes Bray’s narrative a secondhand story. It is in the secondhand telling that the narrative becomes vulnerable to manipulation.

To return to the statements that I underlined earlier:

The next day a search of the building revealed three bodies, her troops said. (Newsday)

Pfc. Proctor single-handedly captured an enemy prisoner after a fierce firefight at the Panama Defense Forces kennel for police dogs, which also housed 40 heavily armed troops. (Copeland)

Three enemy dead were found there later, she said. (Copeland)

The platoon spent almost three hours securing the building, Bray said. (Ring)

Bray and her troops said that during the three-hour battle, three Panamanian Defense Force soldiers were killed. (From Herald Wire Services)

If we eliminate these problematic remarks often attributed to Bray or her troops, Bray's story becomes: Captain Linda Bray led the 988th MP Company in capturing a PDF dog kennel on December 20, 1989, while under fire and at the end of the battle a large cache of weapons was found. This brief account is still impressive, but it lacks the detail of the media accounts. I have focused on these particular phrases because of the role they played in the investigation of Bray's narrative. These quotations were central to the excitement of Bray's story for the American public. The three dead bodies give substance to the ferocious nature of the battle; the three-hour firefight suggests her endurance; and the capture of the enemy soldier shows resistance from the enemy. These phrases make for a great war story, but not a true war story. Bray's initial account becomes overshadowed by the details. With these supplementary details, the media moved the story from journalism to theater. Action is invoked to give the journalistic text more dramatic flair. Readers become an entertained audience, journalists become playwrights, and Bray gains a lead role in the Panama production.

For me the media's secondhand account conjures Bray, a modern day Joan of Arc, hair blowing in the wind as she led the charge and called her enemy to surrender. One would believe from the media coverage that the success of the Panama invasion rested in the hands of a few capable women. The details of the ferocious three-hour fire fight led by a woman, enemy bodies littering the floor, and a female soldier single-handedly capturing an enemy soldier add a sense of adventure to the story. These individually small, but collectively damaging statements made Bray's narrative controversial, and

they caused some in the military and the media to discount Bray's heroics, turning her from hero to pariah and, inevitably, to victim.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEDIA IS THE MESSAGE: PRINT MEDIA ANALYSIS OF EVENTS

“In many cases a true war story cannot be believed. If you believe it, be skeptical. It’s a question of credibility. Often the crazy stuff is true and the normal stuff isn’t because the normal still is necessary to make you believe the truly incredible craziness” (O’Brien 176).

In the communication process, Bray’s story became a product that the media used to sell magazines and newspapers. Her words and image were constructed by the media in a way that made her story marketable to information consumers. This section will more closely investigate the media’s role in creating Bray’s “woman in combat persona” and the questioning of the validity of her narrative by the American public via editorials. As editorials are generally based on the personal opinions of those who publish print media, an emphasis will be placed upon the editorial response to Bray.

Print media organizations affected Linda Bray’s narrative on an ideological level by placing her narrative into a larger societal context. The ongoing consumption of information is the central focus of mass communication. The public’s unquenchable need for rapid information-sharing translates into misinformation and then a later necessity for clarification. As Jean Baudrillard observes:

This technological process of mass communication delivers a highly imperative sort of message: the message of message consumption, of fragmentation and spectacularization, of misrecognition of the world and the valorization of information as commodity, the exaltation of content as sign. In brief, its function is one of packaging (in the publicity sense of the word – in the sense that advertising is the “mass” medium par excellence, one whose devices permeate all the others) and of misrecognition. (25)

The mass media produce a product that the American public consumes. The goal is to be entertaining, compelling, and informative; individual people become packaged personalities, and the nuance of humanity is lost. Captain Bray’s narrative and the later story of Pfc. Jessica Lynch share an important commonality: they were both commodities. A mythology was created by the media’s utilization of their narratives and consumed by society. As Baudrillard states, “If consumer society is engulfed by its own mythology, if it has no critical perspective on itself, and if this is its exact definition...it is how they function mythologically – as readymade signs, ‘fresh from the assembly line’”(24).¹⁰ Lynch and Bray became “readymade signs,” fresh from the [media] assembly line. Both were packaged by the news media and the military for consumption by the American public in order to display women in combat. Bray’s narrative was no longer about Operation Just Cause, but about social and political change—i.e. allowing women greater combat roles. This section hones in on the creation of the Bray mythos and the packaging of Bray as “Woman in Combat.”

¹⁰ This statement comes from Baudrillard’s essay “Mass Media Culture” translated in The Jean Baudrillard Reader. Here Baudrillard is actually referring to Pop art, but it also fits well in this discussion about the symbolic relationship between the media and the American public.

Baudrillard argues that fashion, sports, the media, and other modes of signification produce meaning articulated by specific rules, codes, and logics (Kellner). The specific rules and codes articulated in Bray's story concern what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. Cynthia Enloe has conjectured that combat is a sign of masculinity and is seen by society as an exclusively male pastime (151). Some critics regard women combatants as a disruption of that masculinity. Enloe explains, "The entrenched military notion of women and femininity is really a package of assumptions: women are distractions, women lack physical stamina, women are unaccustomed to complex technology, women require special facilities" (151). Supporters of women combatants regarded Bray's narrative as a positive challenge to these assumptions, but when the backlash occurred, her narrative was used to prove the assumptions. The attention paid to her one mission took attention away from the overall mission; therefore, in a sense, she was a distraction. And if the firefight did not last for three hours, consequently she showed no stamina. Her mission lost the significance of highlighting the fighting prowess of American military women.

The media and the military used Bray to highlight female capability on the battlefield, but as her narrative voice came under question—precisely because of the media's manipulation—she became an example of why women should not be on the battlefield. Jessica Lynch's later narrative was used during the Iraq invasion as a sort of rallying cry to motivate soldiers and the American public for an unpopular war. In both cases, their narratives were represented not only textually, but also photographically. The print media were not only able to represent their narrative with verbal accounts, but they

were also able to show the American public what the women—who were central to the narratives—looked like. Later in this section, I analyze the photographic representation of Bray. Whether textual or photographic, the media’s representation of both Bray’s and Lynch’s heroics were very much created by the media and the military. They were singled out because as soldiers they had both found themselves in extraordinary situations. Add to that the oddity of them both being women and you had a publicity coup for both the media and the military.

The headlines read, “G.I. Josephine”; “A Woman in Uniform”; “U.S. Tells Calmer Story of Woman’s Role in Commanding Attack”; “Dogfight Made Military History”; Linda’s Blast for Equality”; and “U.S. Women in Panama Battle Spark Combat Debate.” These headlines made one small battle seemingly more significant than the whole operation. The textual nature of print media allowed Bray’s story to become a point of social reference. No longer an individual, she is “The Woman in Combat”; and she now represents a societal quandary: should women’s role in the military be officially extended to combat?

The media put Bray in an adversarial position against the military’s policies excluding female combatants. In the article “Woman Hailed for Leading Troops in Battle during Panama Invasion,” Bray states, “before all this started...I had always wondered what would happen. After this, in my opinion, there is no difference [between men and women]. They worked together as a team, all my soldiers” (Herald Wire Service). Bray’s statement implies that her actions prove the equality of men and women. In this case, the

news media played upon the public's supposed concern about the breakdown of society and the unsexing of women (and hence of men).

Political and public opinions of the women participating in combat are always arbitrated by the media. Women in the military become objects and lose their subjectivity when pulled into the media process. While this objectification is not exclusive to the female members of the military, gender often amplifies the symbolic meaning of their news coverage. They become symbols given meaning by the reader and writer of their stories. Generally, femininity is used as a sign for the maternal and domestic sphere. In essence, women represent home, the place to which male warriors return after battle. As women go off to war, a breakdown of society's structure seems to occur. And even as they enter the hyperreality of war where in the heat of battle gender rarely matters, they become unsexed. Placed within the context of war, the media must find a new way to define what is feminine, and by association what is masculine. In a sense, if mommy can go to war and participate in combat, what does that mean for daddy? The singling out of one female participant out of the entire military causes a shift from what is seen as the most paramount thing—the mission.

In Bray's case, the invasion of Panama was no longer about the mission to capture Manuel Noriega, but rather, addressing the role of women in the military. In doing the jobs for which they were trained, the women inadvertently overshadowed the mission; they were recognized for doing what any male soldier was expected to do. Bray did nothing extraordinary when looked at from the context of being a well-trained member of the military. However, when gender comes into play, her acts become mythologized.

“Woman Leads Troops into Combat” became the story of Panama, not the capture of Noriega, the real goal of Operation Just Cause.

Journalists positioned the American military women of the Panama invasion as mythbusters who take a stand for women’s rights. The first line of an Associated Press article titled “Women Win Combat Patches in Panama” reads, “The women warriors who helped invade Panama have shattered myths about gender in combat and made mincemeat of a congressional ban.” This line places the mantle of responsibility on the shoulders of the women in combat. Rather than simply stating that women participated in combat during the Panamanian invasion, they now are making “mincemeat of a congressional ban” (Associated Press). The journalist writes that the women are busting the myths that “women can’t handle combat” and “men would spend their time protecting the women instead of fighting the war” (Associated Press). In the article, Bray is the example of women being able to handle combat. In this report the firefight was 30 minutes long and a male, Sgt. Rick McGowan, noted that, “[Captain Bray] knew exactly what to do and when to do it. Her voice did not quaver when she gave an order” (Associated Press). The male soldier’s quotation seems added in order to give Bray’s story credibility. This article shows a definite bias toward the view that women should participate in combat and strives to highlight women’s accomplishments during the Panamanian invasion rather than the fact that the mission was accomplished and Noriega captured.

Editorial commentary represents an individual’s or an editorial board’s opinion. Writers of editorials on women in combat, who compose from various points on the

ideological spectrum and from very personal feelings, have more power to articulate their opinions, unlike the military women, whose views are represented only indirectly via newspaper stories about them. In these editorials there seems to be two sides in the discussion of women in combat. The first is that women will become unsexed by participation in combat, and that this would be detrimental to American society. The second is that women should be allowed to participate in all aspects of military duty because of equal opportunity.

Even among critics of women combatants, there are nuanced differences of opinion as to why women should not be allowed to participate in combat. Donald Kaul presents a unique argument in his editorial. Kaul's main thesis is that women are "too bloodthirsty" and therefore too dangerous for the battlefield (C5). Colman McCarthy's opinion of women in combat is based on a more traditional viewpoint: "It's more than pseudo-feminism, hokey at best, to be hailing the example of Capt. Linda Bray as an argument for equality in the military. [...] In Panama, Linda Bray dressed like a man, shot like a man, and had been trained like a man and took orders from a man" (McCarthy). Even though in his editorial Colman argues from a feminist point of view and expresses anti-military ideas, he condemns Bray in the name of feminism for acting, as he sees it, as a man. To him, a real feminist would not join the military, and therefore Bray's actions are detrimental to the feminist cause. McCarthy sees women as losing their sexual identity by even being a part of the military.

In an editorial titled "It's Not a Woman's Fight," the anonymous author—possibly members of the newspaper's editorial board—argues, "Society, even modern society,

must sometimes take measure of differences between men and women. Equal pay, equal opportunity, and equal treatment for all are fine and necessary, but the frontline hell should remain for men only.” This argument is that American society is just too civilized for women to participate in combat. The author furthers states that women have the same rights and privileges as any other citizen, just not the right to participate in combat (It’s Not...). He also insinuates that the battlefield is no place for a woman.

Ann Quindlen’s editorial in The San Juan Star, “Should women soldiers be allowed to enter combat?” champions Bray as a feminist icon. Quindlen writes, “The Army captain’s first name was Linda. As though Central Casting had collaborated with the women’s movement to make the story even better in this telling, she is 5 feet 1 inch and weighs just a little more than 100 pounds.” Quindlen appropriates Bray’s story for the women’s movement. Bray is a character to Quindlen and fills the role of plucky Army captain who overcomes the odds in the face of certain danger. Bray is mythologized by Quindlen’s statement and she became an icon for proponents of women in combat. Quindlen also notes that, “The question of whether women should be permitted to fight side by side with men in combat goes straight to our deepest feelings—and prejudices—about how men should be obliged to treat women and how women should be treated by society.” Quindlen speaks to the big question behind the controversy.

In participating in combat, a place long thought to be free of femininity, Bray’s narrative goes straight to the public’s heart and conscience. What is society to do with women who overstep their bounds? Yet once the Pandora’s Box of combat is open, it is difficult to put women back into the narrow box of domesticity. In her concluding

thoughts, Quindlen states, “Imagine allowing women to practice law, but forbidding them to argue in court. Imagine allowing women to practice medicine, but forbidding them to wield a scalpel. Imagine allowing women to become reporters, but forbidding them from serving as war correspondents.” As Quindlen illustrates, many times before, women have made way into areas once closed off or where limitations were placed on their participation, but through time and perseverance they were able to become full participants. Even though she gives women in combat more agency, they are still being used to advance the purposes of the gender equality movement, further solidifying their objectification.

Women in the military are objects for the American media and public. Media agencies such as the Center for Military Readiness (a non-partisan, non-governmental organization) are vocal about their opposition to women in the military.¹¹ They publish numerous articles about the negative impact upon women’s presence in combat situations without giving credence to research that implies that women are capable of participating in combat. They are concerned not about balanced representation of women’s contributions to the military, but seek any negative impact that they can find to undermine these contributions. When placed within an ideological perspective, women in the military become depersonalized, positioned as a point to be argued rather than participants in a discussion. Star magazine, a celebrity tabloid, was one of the few periodicals to investigate Bray’s pre-Army life and to complete a profile with interviews of family and friends. The Star article focused less on the mission that gained Bray

¹¹“Women in Combat.” The Center for Military Readiness. <<http://www.cmrlink.org>>

notoriety and more on Bray the woman. Star also briefly mentioned her husband “guarding the fort” back at home (25). Even though Star magazine gave a glimpse of her broader humanity, it still must be considered that Bray’s story was a hot commodity, and she was used to sell magazines.

Even while humanizing her, Star magazine is still using Bray’s narrative for its own gain. Irene Jung Fiala views the mass media representation of women in the military as a manipulative relationship: “It appears that what makes the ‘news’ is not the selfless service to one’s country, but rather how that sacrifice can be used to reinforce stereotypical ideas of women as vulnerable while additionally serving a particular agenda” (52). Even though Fiala refers to the media’s representation of women during the first Persian Gulf War, her statements remain relevant to Bray’s narrative because of its chronological proximity to the Panama invasion.¹² Fiala’s article notes how women in the military are represented photographically. Fiala believes that many of the photos from the first Gulf War were taken by the media presumably to show the tension felt by the women leaving their children and the emotional impact on the children of watching mommy off to war (52-53). This manipulation of the feminine image is nothing new; instead of the formerly typical image of a weeping mother, girlfriend, or wife, we now have images of the capable woman warrior leaving her family behind.

Similar manipulation of women’s images occurred during World War II, with the media constantly bombarding the American public with posters and articles about women

¹² The Persian Gulf War occurred from August 1990 to February 1991. Were it not for medical discharge, Captain Bray would have deployed in support of this military action.

in uniform, encouraging women to do all that they could in and outside the home to support the war effort.¹³ Figures 1-4, Appendix A, highlight the message of femininity that was sent out to recruit women's support of the war effort. The femininity of the female models displays the idea that women could retain their beauty and help with the war, too (Streitmatter 150). Figure 4 is an advertisement for Cutex finger nail polish, making a link between consumerism, beauty, and the military. Women were in the fight with the men, but their place and image was circumscribed. They appeared in a supporting role, and were to remain pretty while doing so. Therefore, the posters served to inform female consumers about a beauty product as well as how they could serve their country. The caption reads, "These Women—1944's best dressed—choose favorite Cutex shade" (Partners in Winning). The caption implies that women in uniform are making a fashion statement by serving their country.

Bray's photographic representation differs from the World War II posters in that her femininity is placed into a secondary role to her military service. In each of her photos, she is shown in a position of authority. In the photos included in Appendix A, Figures 7, 9, and 11 present Bray smiling. In the case of Figure 7, her photo is more prominent than the other photos that accompany the article. The prominence of her photo is interesting because Bray's story takes up only a small paragraph in the whole article. In Figure 9, Bray is standing alone in full battle dress, staring heroically off into the distance. Despite the fact that Bray often gave recognition to all the people in her unit, in the photos printed in newspapers and magazines she is alone or standing away from the

¹³ See Figures 1-4 for illustrated posters used to recruit women during WWII.

crowd. In these photos, the media is positioning Bray taking on the world all by herself. The focus on Bray as lone soldier gave her not only name recognition, but also face recognition. The military prides itself in being able to take an individual and make him or her into a member of a group. Singling out individuals is counter to the main aim of every military organization. This singular focus on Bray's narrative also contributed to backlash within the military against her.

CHAPTER V

THIS IS WHAT REALLY HAPPENED: THE MILITARY'S "OFFICIAL" ACCOUNT AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S REACTION

"Soldiers speak one language and journalists speak another" (Richardson).

Bray's mission became a tool to reconsider women's roles in the military. The military, some elements of the media, and the government felt that the time was not right. The discrediting of Bray's story allowed the military to regain narrative control; they had the power to bring her to the forefront of the issue or to pull her back. When military leaders saw that the issue of women in combat was an unpopular cause, they just as quickly changed direction and withdrew their support of Bray. On August 1, 1991, Charlotte Grimes in "Another casualty of Panama" quotes Bray as saying, "It was like they kind of ganged up on me to prove I was not anything special or I hadn't accomplished anything special and I was nobody" (Grimes). Bray moved from heroine to victim in a matter of months. Her military career was almost unsalvageable without a fight, and Bray simply had no more fight. In this section, we will discuss the deterioration of Bray's narrative spurred on by the military's official account.

The relationship between the military and the media is best described as dependency. The military needs the media to represent it as a benefit to and an integral part of American society. The media, on the other hand, needs access to up-to-the-

minute news concerning military actions all over the world in order to increase ratings or advertising revenue. Because of its position as a mainstay of American society, the military is able to have a certain level of control in its relationship with the media. Thomas Gardener states, “The two forms of media control that are usually operating in war are loyalty or patriotic boosterism, which leads to self-censorship by the media, and direct censorship or denial of access by the military” (112). In the case of Panama, the media were denied access at the onset and were not able to pursue news stories on that front until after all the “news” had happened. Lack of access caused a breakdown in the news reporting process because the reporters only reported what they were directed to report by the military. Because of this lack of early access, misreporting was bound to occur. In the case of Captain Bray, the military had to gain control of her narrative even as it was being used by the media to spark the debate in the American public about women’s roles in the military. It took only a few days for the media and the military to begin placing a negative spin upon Bray’s initial story.

Thomas Gardener states:

We might get closer to motivation and to understanding the manipulation of our narratives about war by examining the approach of the military to the news media coverage of its combat operations. It should be said that the military has, for some time, had a strategic approach to its representation in both dramatic and news media. (111)

A central part of this strategic approach resides in the control that the military has over its personnel. Prior to moving to the official military account of Bray’s leadership we need

to recall a crucial point in the soldier's relationship with the military. For many years, U.S. military members were called "G.I.s"; the term abbreviates "Government Issue," which implies that the actual physical person of the American soldier belongs to the American government. Bray's image is owned by the military. The soldier is also in a sense manufactured or created through a series of indoctrination rituals—basic military training—the goal of which is to instruct the person against individuated practices. The successful recruit gains an understanding that his or her personal goals and aims must be diminished for group well-being. An individual enlisting or becoming a commissioned officer in the U.S. military is contractually owned by the government until the term of service has ended, and in some cases beyond the contractually agreed upon time.¹⁴

It is fitting that Bray would become a representative of women in combat because she literally does not own herself; she was the property of the U.S. Army. In appearing to step out from the corporate body—as she appeared to do in photos—Bray called attention to herself as an individual and took attention away from the military action. That is unacceptable, unless the military sanctions the attention. Along with the press, the military manipulated the representation of Bray to suit their purposes, and when her story was no longer serviceable, they began to publicly retract their accolades and downgrade the importance of her actions.

At first, it seemed that Bray had the military's support. Journalist Michael Gordon quotes an unnamed Army spokesperson as saying, "There is no front. ... You do not know

¹⁴ This account derives from my own experience as a member of the Armed Forces. When young recruits enter Basic Training they are informed that they no longer belong to themselves, but to the U.S. government.

where the enemy will be at any given time and soldiers are dispersed all around the area. Under those circumstances you have to be prepared to defend yourself at any time and that is what she did” (Woman Wins Praise...). This statement gives Bray license and measured support from the military. The Army spokesperson is not saying that the exclusion policy would be repealed, but that it is understandable that Bray as a woman and soldier participated in combat, given the fluid nature of the battlefield. Though the military was prepared for the eventualities of women participating in combat, they were probably not prepared for the public concern for women being fully involved in war. Only two days after this article was published and five days after the original wire story, the tide began to turn negatively against Bray.

When Bray’s story was first released, White House representatives lauded Bray’s actions. White House spokesperson Marlin Fitzwater stated before the amended account was released, “It was expected that American women soldiers would fight in Panama and lead combat units because they were trained for it” (Scripps Howard News Service). Of Linda Bray specifically, Fitzwater stated, “Be clear from the first day a woman was appointed to that position, it was understood she would carry out those responsibilities” and “The fact is that role was anticipated from the first day she was put in that assignment” (Scripps Howard News Service). Fitzwater’s statements solidify the idea that women’s roles in combat were anticipated by the military. Fitzwater also takes a rather supportive stance: “Do not put women into jobs where you do not expect them to carry out the functions” (Scripps Howard News Service).

Essentially, the White House was at first supportive of the role that Bray played, consistently lauding Bray's accomplishment in the press. When the military's official account was shared with the press, "A White House official said Fitzwater based his comments solely on newspaper accounts. He had no independent verification of the incident when he spoke about it ... officials said" (Broder). Like the general American public, Fitzwater had taken his version of the story from the press. He too, depended on secondhand or, in this case, third-hand accounts to establish his stance on Bray's story.

The article that ran on January 6, 1990 in The Los Angeles Times reported the official military account of Bray's mission as well as governmental response: "The Army said Friday that press accounts of a female commander's battle exploits in Panama, later repeated by White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, were grossly exaggerated" (Broder). This article showed how Bray's narrative came under the ownership of the military. Her recollection of events had to be cleared by the military not for her own sake, but so that the military could save face. The military took a very vocal stand in "clarifying" Bray's actions by presenting a press conference where they corrected the initial reporting of Bray's narrative. The main fallacy found by the military was that, "The original newspaper account of the action, distributed by Scripps Howard News Service, was widely repeated by other news organizations" (Broder). The other news organizations failed to do their own thorough reporting and then circulated "grossly exaggerated" claims. It is one thing to be denied access; it is completely different to fail to fact check or to go directly to the source. The article continues:

It was not clear how the inflated accounts of Bray's exploits began. According to the Scripps Howard story, Bray said that the three enemy dead were found at the scene later. But an Army spokesman, Gen. Bill McClain, said that Bray never reported any PDF casualties, nor did the Defense Department's Panama-based Southern Command, which ran the entire operation. (Broder)

We should recall the emphasized portions of the initial news stories that highlighted Bray's participation in combat by referring to: "three bodies, her troops said" (Newsday), "heavily armed troops" (Copeland), "almost three hours securing the building, Bray said" (Ring), and "a routine operation to secure an area became a three-hour fire fight" (Reid). The military's version of events differs greatly from the media accounts and clearly focuses on "clarifying" Bray's actual role in the events. Military leaders recognized the innate danger involved in the mission, but we can see the military beginning to distance itself from the story. The military's clarification insinuated that Bray really was not there when the action happened. The Broder article states, "McClain said that Bray was not even at the kennel when the shooting started. She was a half mile away at a command post" (Broder). It should be noted that even if she was not physically there, she still played a crucial leadership role in the capture of the dog kennel. The Army's official story takes over the narrative, placing the original account into a deferential role.

Media coverage of Bray's story began not only to raise questions of military policy, but also to become a strategic question for politicians. The political maneuvering began with President George Herbert Walker Bush who as the Commander-in-Chief was not shielded from being drawn into the debate over women in combat: "President Bush

hailed the ‘heroic performance of the American women who participated in the Dec. 20 invasion of Panama but said that he will reserve judgment on the future role of women in combat’ (Broder). Even though he recognized Bray’s ‘heroic performance,’ President Bush was still apprehensive about dealing with women’s roles in combat. When questioned about women in Panama, ‘‘Bush said that their original assignments were in noncombat duties, but ‘any time you have a highly trained, gung-ho volunteer force and they’re caught up in some of the fire-fights that went on, a person can be . . . put into a combat situation’’ (Broder). As the Commander-in-Chief of American Armed Forces, President Bush decided against taking a strident position in the debate concerning women in combat, choosing instead to reserve judgment. The President’s decision to finesse assessment of Bray’s actions probably further bolstered the military’s stance.

The subject of U.S. military women participating actively in combat was a political minefield that a number of political figures, nevertheless, wanted to traverse. Bray’s story gave many a reason to expand women’s roles in the military. She had become a political talking point for individuals such as Rep. Patricia Schroder and Senator John Warner. Broder stated of the congresswoman, ‘‘As a result of Bray’s and other Army women’s actions in Panama, Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.), said she would introduce legislation to allow women to serve in all military jobs, including combat, in a four-year experiment’’ (Broder). Rep. Schroder wanted to take advantage of the path opened by Captain Bray to make changes to the military policy excluding women from combat positions. Schroder was not the only political leader to take notice and realize that the roles of women in the military needed to be reexamined. ‘‘Sen. John

Warner, R.-Va. ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Service Committee,” saw it as a “time to take another look at the ban on women in combat” (The Associated Press). In an article published January 22, 1990, People Magazine’s Michael Ryan writes:

At first officials seemed pleased by the attention. Then the Army reversed itself, refusing to allow the media access to Captain Bray or other women in Panama, apparently in the hope that the issue would go away. “This is basically still a conservative, Christian country,” one officer explains. “Americans do not want to see women being wounded or killed—and that’s bound to happen if they’re in combat.” (40)

The officer’s comment matched the perspective of many opponents of women in combat. It was an issue of ideology, not capability. Ryan’s statement also presupposed that America was comfortable with seeing men wounded or killed, and that is very troubling. The statement also spoke to the general expectation that all soldiers are men and, therefore, all wounded soldiers are male.

Despite the strides made by women in the military, the military continues to be a patriarchal system that is seemingly uncomfortable with the feminine presence in war. In The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire, Cynthia Enloe writes, “Patriarchal systems are notable for marginalizing the feminine. That is, insofar as any society or group is patriarchal, it is there that it is comfortable—unquestioned—to infantilize, ignore, trivialize or even actively cast scorn upon what is thought to be feminized” (5). Discrepancies in Bray’s initial account made it easier for the military to discredit her actions. Bray’s narrative is undermined because she could not defend herself due to Army interference.

Bray went from powerful woman hero to tragic heroine all in under a year. Of Bray's resignation from the Army Grimes writes, "This past April, Linda Bray turned in her rifle, her captain's bars and her dreams of one day wearing a colonel's eagles or maybe even a general's stars. It had taken the Army a little more than a year to drive her out." She adds, "At 5 foot 1-inch and 105 pounds, she'd collected a career's worth of stress fractures in her legs from carrying too much weight in her field pack on training exercise. She'd always had to carry a little more" (Grimes). Bray in the end had to carry more than the burden of a heavy pack. She had to live with her words and image being used continually to highlight the folly of women in combat. The military's "clarification," caused Bray to go from great American heroine to lambasted outsider. Because of this "clarification" the media too, turned against her by presenting less favorable coverage and doing little follow-up. Bray's story lost its relevance in the eyes of the media almost as quickly as it took the media to create her persona as woman in combat.

CHAPTER VI

RECOUNTING AND REMEMBERING: LINDA BRAY IN HER OWN WORDS NINETEEN YEARS LATER¹⁵

“Often in a true war story there is not even a point, or else the point doesn’t hit you until twenty years later...” (O’Brien 181).

This section places Linda Bray’s oral history interview in conversation with the contemporaneous account, the media’s interpretation of her mission, and the military’s official account. In 2008, Bray recounted her story for an oral history project for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, adding another volume to the small women in combat canon. Through her retrospective account, Bray is able to speak for herself through her own version of events without the interpretative lenses of the media and the military. Linda Bray’s retrospective account is important because it highlights the PDF dog kennel mission and Bray’s role in it. I begin by looking at Bray’s early years, her commissioning in the military, her participation in the invasion of Panama, and the effects of subsequent media backlash on her military career.

It must be remembered that Bray’s retrospective account is as un-objective as the earlier media and military accounts. Through her retelling, Bray is able to reshape the narrative and increase her participation in Operation Just Cause. The oral history

¹⁵ The section entitled “The Story of Linda Bray in Her Own Words” quotes directly from an oral history interview conducted by Therese Strohmer for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at UNCG.

interview mentions a great deal of Bray's early life, as it pertains to her mission in Panama. Her interview also focuses on the aftermath of the Panama invasion on her military career. The critical approach to Bray's retrospective account considers the role of memory, and the validity of her statements, as well as Bray's position as a source of feminine empowerment.

In choosing to participate in the oral history project, Bray reopened the narrative connection between herself, the initial account, and the military's account of her mission. Though Bray was sought out by her interviewer, she chose to share her story (Bray). Bray offered to the archive her own scrapbook, which contained newspaper articles and magazine clippings that referenced her mission (Bray). Many of the articles used for this essay were found in Bray's own scrapbook, thereby connecting all of the iterations of Bray's story.

The interview allowed Bray to order and comprehend the narrative of her life. Bray's recollection is directed by the interviewer who coached her with questions. Therese Strohmer, the interviewer, is also an unseen narrator. Even though questions are used to direct her interview, Bray still has a great deal of narrative control. She made clear at the end of the interview her desire to tell the story directly from her point of view. Shortly after separating from the Army, Bray had been offered an opportunity to have a book written about her life and her participation in Operation Just Cause, but the memoir was never written. During the conclusion of her interview, she implied that the person who was writing her book wanted it to have a more negative tone, condemning the military for its treatment of Bray. She states, "I wanted it [her cancelled book project] to stay with what the 988th MP Company did because everyone there participated and everyone should be proud of themselves. . . . I wanted

it to be positive” (Bray). Like the media and the military she desired to manipulate her own image and to present a positive rendering of her time in the military, specifically her time in Panama.

One of the main difficulties of oral sources is that memory and performance play critical roles in how the interviewee presents the narrative. Over time, people forget important details, or their values change, prompting inaccuracies or the omission of details. Linda Bray’s retrospective narrative is not immune to this phenomenon. In his essay “What makes Oral History Different,” Alessandro Portelli states:

Oral sources are not objective. This of course applies to every source, though the holiness of writing often leads us to forget it. But the inherent nonobjectivity of oral sources lies in specific intrinsic characteristics, the most important being that they are artificial, variable, and partial (sic). (38)

Time can degrade a narrative and therefore make the story “artificial, variable, and partial.” These characteristics are detrimental to the oral history process. Even though this degradation can lead to faulty storytelling, it can also aid in making the story more believable. The oral history narrative becomes more believable because of variation. A rehearsed story that restates personal narratives verbatim without deviation loses some of the texture that makes oral histories compelling.

Bray’s retelling of her story is unrestrained from a mental script, a fact demonstrated by her questioning the “facts” of her memory. During one segment of her interview, where she recounts her unit moving into Quarry Heights after the taking over the dog kennel, she states, “I can’t remember. I’ll have to talk to

somebody” in regards the specific date her unit was assigned to an infantry battalion (Bray). Her interview is filled with such non-sequiturs as, “I can’t remember” or “I’ll have to check that.” Even though details are lost because of the ravages of time, the bulk of her narrative is strengthened by her willingness to question her own facts.

It is the facts of her early childhood and her decision to join the military that go the most unquestioned by Bray. From her oral history interview, we learn that Linda Bray was born to a police officer and firefighter father and stay-at-home mother in Sanford, North Carolina, and raised primarily in Butner. As a child, she enjoyed history and mathematics in school. Upon graduating high school, Bray enrolled in Western Carolina University in Cullowhee. Inspired by her father’s years of service, she decided to study criminal justice. Her father, discouraged by his daughter’s career choice, stated, “I’ll pay for your college if you’ll go be a veterinarian,” but Bray was undaunted. Between grants, student loans, some aid from her parents, and her earnings from a job working sixty hours a week, she was able to graduate in four years.

Norma Langley in Star magazine stated that Bray’s dream as a little girl was to become a wife and mother (24). However, Bray’s enthusiasm for her father’s years of community service and her desire to practice that in her own life were in direct conflict with her self-image as a wife and mother. From the first, Bray presents herself as a woman of action. Her relationship with her male parent--relating more with him than to her mother--appears to have given her license to be bold early in life, stepping out of her perceived gender role. By forging her own path, even when her father wanted her to choose a safer profession, Bray seemed determined to do things her own way in early adulthood. It is important to know Bray’s origin story because it

gives insight into her character. At the time of the Panama Invasion, Bray was judged in the public arena by one moment, the capture of the dog kennel. The media's representation of her was clearly one-dimensional, but her retrospective account gives her greater depth. From Bray's account, she grew up in a stable, loving environment with parents who supported her even when they did not agree with her. This kind of environment would be a source of support when the media and the military turned against her. Bray's choice to go against her father's will also shows the confidence and self-assuredness that she would need when she made the decision to pursue the military as a career.

Nearing graduation from college, Bray began to ask fellow classmates what their plans were, and "one guy told me [that] he was going back home to help his mom and dad sell pots and pans in their business. And I had another guy tell me that he was going to be a McDonald's manager. And so one of my friends who was at a different college, [said] "well I'm going to go home and open a convenience store." It was soon after that moment that Bray had as she calls it a "personal meeting" with herself: "you know what, there's no way, there's no way after I've worked this hard that I am going home and just do something small." After the meeting with herself, Bray asked another friend what he was going to do after graduation, and the friend told her that he was going to become a second lieutenant. Her curiosity was piqued. As she asked him more questions, Bray realized what she wanted to do after college. It was during the summer of 1981 that she went to the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) department at Western Carolina. It was also during that time, because of her interest in criminal justice, that Bray was assigned to become an Army MP (Military Police).

Like many young people before her, Bray chose the military as a way to live an exciting life and to participate actively in something (Bray). She was ecstatic about her plans, but she had yet to tell her parents. Of her parents' reaction Bray observed, "My mother thought it was just absolutely wonderful. Dad was not too sure of it." Despite her parents' trepidation, she went ahead with her plans. Graduating from basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Bray was transformed from a "young kid in college [to an] actual responsible adult." Her parents recognized and supported the change. Even her father was happy with her decision. Despite Bray's independent attitude, this part of the narrative presents her as someone needing acceptance and approval, particularly from her family.

Bray began her military career filled with the promise of what her future would hold. The prospects of retiring at a young age and having a career with variety excited her. Setting out with visions of a full military career ahead of her, she was optimistic about the future (Bray). Bray's first duty assignment was in Siegelbach, Germany, at a Special Weapons Depot, where she arrived on November 17, 1983, and eventually became the operations depot officer. It was in Germany that she met her future husband, Randy Bray, while on a shopping trip with mutual friends to a PX [Post Exchange]. During the interview, Bray reminisced about how her future husband was enamored with her from their first meeting and how they eventually married two years later on January 4, 1985. This relationship, though a central part of her life, was not a central part of the narrative that the media presented. Would her story have been more or less palatable to the American public had that bit of information been imparted to them? Bray's image as wife was at odds with the image of her as solitary and heroic soldier. The addition of her husband to the narrative

would have also been a greater challenge to those who oppose women in combat.

That Bray was a married woman with a supportive husband would have contradicted the common view that combat de-feminizes women.

Bray was more than qualified to lead troops into battle; like many male officers who came before her, she had received training that prepared her as a soldier to do just that. In 1987 Bray and her husband returned to the United States and were stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia. Before she could join her husband there, she was recommended to attend the Officer's Advanced Class and Provost Marshal's Class in Anniston, Alabama, taking almost a year to complete these programs. In 1988, Bray was assigned to be a Training Officer for the Officer Candidate School. Being a Training Officer proved to be challenging. Wanting to set a good example, Bray pushed her body beyond its limit, carrying more weight than her one-hundred pound, 5'1" frame could bear, and always running ahead of her soldiers. Pushing her body beyond healthy limits subsequently led to surgery to place pins inside her hips, requiring a six month recovery. Bray was suspended from training officer duties because of injuries and convalescence. Many detractors of women in combat would see this as further proof that women have no place on the battlefield, but it actually proves Bray's resilience and determination. At this point in her military career, Bray needed to show that she was capable of leading. In all likelihood, Bray carried this attitude and drive into battle. After her recovery, Bray was reassigned to the 988th Military Police Company. The main functions of military police during wartime are to provide area security and to detain and guard prisoners of war along with law enforcement among military members. Area security and prisoner maintenance would have been Bray's main mission when entering Panama.

In 1988, as the next captain in line to take command of the 988th MP Company, Bray faced one of her first major challenges as a woman in the military. It seemed to Capt. Bray that the Provost Marshal at Fort Benning, Colonel Fred Liebe, was resistant to having a woman take the position as a unit commander. Here, Col. Liebe, like many male leaders before him, showed his discomfort with having a woman in such a prominent place in military leadership. Being a colonel suggests that he had been in the military for at least fifteen years or more. The implications are that he would have started in the military long before women had been integrated into the regular Army in 1977; therefore he probably had more than a little apprehension at seeing a woman in such a crucial combat-support role. Because deployments and participation in combat are fundamental to professional development and advancement of any officer, Col. Liebe's insistence that Bray take an assignment in garrison at a prison would have been detrimental to her career advancement. Knowing the importance of deployments to her career, Bray pushed the issue, determined to be in a deployable unit. After getting a letter stating that she was fit for duty, she was finally allowed to take command of the 988th MP Company, even though Col. Liebe was still against a woman serving in that position.

Bray states that in 1989 her unit, with two hundred and five individuals at her command, received classified orders to deploy to Panama in support of Operation Just Cause. All the news reports stated that Bray had one hundred and thirty soldiers under her command (Newsday). The discrepancy here can probably be blamed on memory. It would be difficult, but not impossible, to miscalculate the number of individuals under Bray's command. It also possible that Bray had two hundred and five

individuals under her command and that only one hundred and thirty individuals deployed with her to Panama.

The media reports little of the preparation and training that Bray had to go through before leading the dog kennel mission. In Bray's view, the story began long before arriving in Panama. The additional details of the preparation for the invasion provide a context for her efforts and help to explain her mindset. Bray arrived in Panama prepared to fight and to lead. Bray recounts how her unit came to be deployed to Panama in support of Operation Just Cause:

In 1989, my company got orders to deploy to Panama. We were going to deploy as a peace operations assisting the Panamanian defense force. Because Noriega and his forces were basically wreaking havoc and he was in this dictatorship, people were getting killed and things like that.

Like any good officer, Bray prepared her troops for the daunting tasks ahead by making sure that they had, in addition to their training, all the resources possible: "So I blew every budget I had whether it was bullets budget, training budget, whatever; I blew it getting this company ready to deploy to Panama." Preparing her troops for any eventuality, Bray even got her Airborne Ranger husband to get Ranger instructors to train her unit in rappelling and maneuvering, an effort that shows her as an individual with a mind and body in motion.

To make matters more difficult, Bray felt that Colonel Liebe was becoming further dissatisfied with her. This dissatisfaction probably stems from the fact that he had no knowledge of her classified mission and thus could not control her actions. The classification of the mission would have meant only those individuals who had a

need-to-know could be privy to the preparations and plans. Not only was a woman in a position that Col. Liebe felt fit only for a man, but that same woman was involved in official activities in which he had no say. Without questioning Col. Liebe himself, there is no way to know why he had such an oppositional relationship with Bray.

In recounting her preparation for Panama and the reconnaissance mission, Bray suggests she played a greater role in the capture of the kennel than was presented by the media or the military. Even while feeling external pressure, Bray moved forward with preparing her troops for the possible tasks that they might face in Panama. Once her unit arrived in Panama, the real work began:

So for the next few days, next four days we just worked every day, almost every waking moment that we had to get the meals distributed, to get the ammo distributed, get magazines distributed for the guns. And then I had to take the officers and my first sergeant we had to hide in a van, in a Panamanian van, to go on recon [reconnaissance] the areas that we were supposed to [go] and what we were supposed to do and recon where the other two platoons were going to have to go and what they were going to have to do.

Bray's retelling of preparation and surveillance gives a sense of immediacy to her mission. The reconnaissance mission shows that she had prepared for the mission to capture the kennel. In the initial version as well as the military's account, there was no mention of her reconnaissance mission before the capture of the dog kennel. The reconnaissance portion of the mission gives Bray's role greater narrative depth. In the initial account, she is presented as riding in to save the day and in the military account she is nowhere near the action. In her own account, however, she is there participating in the mission from preparation to reconstitution.

It is only after a reconnaissance mission that Bray returns to her battalion with greater context and a plan to capture the PDF dog kennel:

So I put the plan together, I went back to the battalion; I presented it to the battalion commander. He said “no.” I said “no?” I said “why not?”

He said “I’m not going to let you put that many people at risk.” He said “you’re going to go with the absolute bare minimum.” We had [these] kennels and [the plan was to crash the gate of the kennel, and attack it right at the front door], straight on.

[...] meanwhile the rest of that platoon is waiting back down the road, you know they’re waiting for... the word “go.” And another platoon had come in and so what we were going to do is kind of attack it from the side and from the front, because we did not know what kind of resistance we were going to get. And so my idea was to have two Humvees and the colonel said “no.” He said, “you’re only going to go with one.

The media accounts do not give Bray the level of agency that she gives herself in this recollection. In most of the media reports, there is no mention of how the mission came about. We must consider further the resistance of the battalion commander to Bray and her position. Did the male battalion commander resist giving her additional support because she was a woman, or because he sincerely felt that the mission could be accomplished with only a few people? Bray’s troops were spread out across Panama guarding a number of locations. The resistance found here was probably based more on manning restrictions rather than on her gender. It is safe to infer that, while her gender might have caused him some trepidation, it was probably not high on the battalion commander’s list of concerns.

When Bray received notice from the battalion commander that she would not receive all of the personnel and equipment that she needed for her mission, she began

to weigh her options. As she was deciding her next step, there was a great deal of background chatter, making a precarious situation more intense:

I was on the command post talking on the radio [and the infantry battalions] were still on my radio frequency. So they're calling me and they're telling me what's going on and they're running into an ambush. So I'm like trying to talk to them and at the same time talk to the other two platoons that's getting ready to attack the kennel. And my first sergeant jumps in a Humvee and he gets a driver and he grabs [a] gun and weapon and everything and he takes off flying down there.

After finally convincing the two platoons to get onto the “infantry frequency so that [the] commander could direct them,” at approximately 1 o'clock in the morning of December 20, 1989, Bray quickly began to take action, getting into her own Humvee with her driver and rushing toward the target. Near the kennel, she sprang into action, placing her own vehicle in the middle of the road blocking traffic. The soldiers already at the scene asked Bray for further guidance, and she instructed them to “follow me.” As Bray and her driver ran through a nearby ditch toward the kennel, they realized that gunfire had already started. Members of her company began to return fire. Bray's account of not being at the kennel when the firefight started aligns with the military's official account, and in this version of the battle, it is unclear where Bray is exactly, though she remains noticeably a part of the action. What differentiates Bray's account from the military's is a matter of nuance. The military's account implies that Bray was far from the action, while Bray suggests she consciously rode into the line of fire.

Detractors would say that, since she was not physically at the scene of the fight, she is not playing an active role in combat. We should observe, however, that

on the modern battlefield, most military leadership stay behind the lines, directing the troops at the front. This concept is referred to as Command and Control (C2) operations, defined as centralized command and decentralized control. Most commanders remain at an operations center or command post from where they monitor the action and direct troops based on real-time reporting from the battlefield.¹⁶ At the operations center or command post, commanders have a broader perspective on the action, allowing them to see what most of their forces are doing. Therefore, even if Bray was not at the dog kennel initially, she still had a leadership presence over the radio. Bray was able to have greater situational awareness by being at first outside of the battle, and thus she was able to approach the situation with a fresh perspective.

Captain Bray's initial account and the military's account both fail to represent the intricacies of being in the heat of battle because they were condensed in an effort to make them easier to report. The argument for simplicity here does not release the military from culpability, but it does show one way that the military attempted to sell her story to the public. Both of those earlier accounts were probably simplified in order to get the story across without being bogged down by military jargon, which would have made the narrative more difficult for ordinary citizens to understand. Terms like "operations center or command post" appear obvious, but their complexity can be lost in translation. Bray's initial account and the military's response were edited down into digestible portions for newspaper readers to be able to comprehend.

¹⁶ As a member of the U.S. Air Force I worked in the U.S. CENTAF Air Operations Center where joint military forces monitored the air picture of a particular area of operations. This picture of the battlefield is accumulated through various forms of electronic and physical surveillance.

The discrepancy between the types of weapon, further, calls into question the soundness of Bray's account when placed in conversation with the early accounts. By the time Bray and her team arrived behind the gates, the people inside the building had mostly scattered because one of Bray's soldiers had blown up the side of the building with a 203-grenade launcher round (a difference from the original account; in that account it was a .60 caliber machine gun). The 203-grenade launcher as a weapon literally has a greater impact than a machine gun. But what accounts for the difference between the two narratives? Faulty memories, as well as "the fog of war," are the most likely culprits. It is quite possible that both weapons were used in the firefight, making the discrepancies minor, but problematic. Bray's details of the weaponry used to take control of the kennel highlight her use of military might and her own ingenuity.

For a while, Bray had a sort of celebrity, and her oral history outlines a personally exciting moment. Invited to a party at the Panamanian ambassador's home by Senator D'Amato (R-NY), Bray was more than prepared with a white dress and a nice pair of shoes, odd items for a soldier to have on hand. With her dress, shoes, Kevlar helmet, and flak jacket, Bray was ready for a night out at the ambassador's home. The absurdity of the situation was not lost on her or her troops, to whom the idea of a trained and tested soldier in a dress proved humorous (Bray). At the party, journalists from all over the world wanted a chance to speak with Captain Bray, the pride of America, but the festivities quickly ended for her.

In her oral history, Bray mentions that the controversy began with the discussion of whether or not her company would receive the combat infantryman's badge or the patch. The badge would be recognition that all her unit's soldiers, male

and female, participated in combat operations. We must remember that women were not lawfully allowed to be assigned to units that participate in combat, and Bray's unit did just that. After most military operations, medals and awards are handed out for commendable service. In any branch of the military, coming under fire while securing an area would be considered praiseworthy. Bray's sex caused her actions to be called into question. Had a man done exactly what Bray did, his behavior would have probably gained little notice outside the military. She became a curiosity. Bray clearly understood the developing interest in her story and the role that her gender played in the media's attentiveness to her Panamanian exploits.

One instance that stood out in Bray's memory is a pointed conversation with a four star general, which consisted of him asking if she knew the military's stance on women in combat. Bray's answer was that she believed she did and that was the end of the conversation. This encounter not only highlights the control that the military had over Bray and the very words she spoke, but also her understanding of the role of gender. Even though she formed the answer to the question herself, Bray still had the might of the military watching over her by way of a public affairs officer.

In the process of telling her story and having it appropriated by different news agencies, editorial writers, and the military, Bray herself took on a symbolic meaning. Her story was taken out of the context of the overall military action and came to be regarded as a statement about women in combat. Of the interview process, Bray shares this story:

I can't remember who the first person to interview me was, but I know my first interview did not go as well as every other interview

afterwards because they asked me the question, they said “what is your stance on women in the military?”

The question “what is your stance on women in the military?” leads Bray into making a statement about the significance of her role in Panama from a gendered position. It is important that she is asked this question, because she is led into the discussion about what her gender means within the context of the military and does not broach the subject herself. Bray continues:

And I sat there and I thought and thought and I said “I’ll tell you what [in] 1983 I raised my right hand and I said ‘I, Linda Bray, do solemnly swear to defend’”— you know I said my oath and I support and defend the country, or whatever. [...], I gave the swearing in oath,¹⁷ I gave that and I said “all I’ve done is exactly what I swore I would do.” And I could see the colonel, he was at the start of my answering that question, he’s you know I could see him [...], waiting to hear what I had to say and then by the time I was getting to the end of what I had to say, he goes, he sits back, smiles and he says “yes. yes.” So I learned very quickly how to deal with, [...] reporters and how to answer questions. I learned it by [...], trial by fire? [...] I stayed with this same concept, you know, I took an oath to defend the country and I have done what I was told to do, and that’s it.

Captain Bray’s statement represents the honorable American military woman who found herself in a difficult situation and chose to make a measured statement about being a woman in the military. Bray’s actions were not based on proving or earning her place in the military, but focused instead on her duty and honoring her oath. Bray’s story is one of an idealistic young woman who, in her own words, just

¹⁷ U.S. Armed Forces Oath of Enlistment: “I, (INSERT NAME), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.”

wanted to serve her country. But politics and the media combined, as is often the case, to create a caustic reaction. For Bray, her mission in Panama was her “war story.” It had no moral message except the one assigned to it by the media, the military, and, later, by Bray herself.

Captain Bray did not set out to make history or to generalize about women in the military, although she did. This does not make her story untrue, but it does add a complication to Tim O’Brien’s claims that “true war stories do not generalize” (179). O’Brien’s essay is for a male audience. His essay centers on war stories as stories of masculinity, as he claims that “war makes you a man” (180). O’Brien does not consider the war stories that women might contribute to the canon. The feminine presence alters the genre of war story. As long as women are excluded from combat, gender is not an issue. The media’s and military’s involvement in Bray’s narrative made her story illustrative of the feminine experience in combat.

As with most narratives produced from memory, Bray jumps around in her retelling of her role in the Panama invasion. This fact comports with the observation of O’Brien, who writes, “The pictures get jumbled; you tend to miss a lot. And then afterward, when you tell about it, there is always that surreal seemingness, which makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard and exact truth as it seemed” (O’Brien 176). Bray’s picture is jumbled, but this rearrangement gives her retrospective account greater credibility, a credibility that comes from the lack of rehearsal for a created narrative. If she had represented her story as it was told nineteen years ago, it would lend itself to becoming even more of a performance rather than a recollection.

Upon returning to the States, Bray began having problems with the pins that had been placed in her hip during her time as a training officer. She explains. “I literally had meat to screw and was tearing and I was bleeding on the inside” (Bray). Bray decided to accept a medical discharge rather than fight a poor Officer Evaluation Report (OER) rating.¹⁸ When she returned to the States in April 1990, damage had been done. All of the awards that were due Bray and her company had been held until the end of the investigation and her unit split up because leadership felt that “a company that goes to war together [could not] work in peace together” (Bray). In the process, Colonel Liebe completed Bray’s OER [Officer Evaluation Report] marking her as a (3) three; he marked almost every person in her company with a rating of one, almost guaranteeing the end of Captain Bray’s military career. She still had support from other leadership; a Major Pizell (intermediate rater) and the commanding

¹⁸ The form used to evaluate Army Officers is called DA Form 67-8-1. In Part II, three higher ranking individuals must authenticate the evaluation, by signing and dating the form. The first rater is the rated officer’s direct supervisor. In Bray’s case, her first rater was Col. Liebe.

In Part III of the form the rater writes a paragraph detailing the rated officer’s duties.

In Part IV, Performance Evaluation, the rater assigns the rated officer a score from 1 to 5; 1 being the highest score an officer can receive, in blocks 1-14. Blocks 1-14 contain statements concerning duty and professionalism: 1) Possesses capacity to acquire knowledge/grasp concepts; 2) Demonstrates appropriate knowledge and expertise in assigned tasks; 3) Maintains appropriate level of physical fitness; 4) Motivates appropriate level of physical fitness; 5) Performs under physical and mental stress 6) Encourages candor and frankness in subordinates; 7) Clear and concise in written communication 8) Displays sound judgment; 9) Seeks self-improvement; 10) Is adaptable to changing situations; 11) Sets and enforces high standards; 12) Possesses military bearing and appearance; 13) Supports EO/EEO; and 14) Clear and concise in oral communication.

Part IVb is labeled Professional Ethics. Here the rater must comment on any area of the Army Core Values in which the rated officer is particularly outstanding or needs improvement: 1) Dedication, 2) Responsibility, 3) Loyalty, 4) Discipline, 5) Integrity, 6) Moral Courage, 7) Selflessness, and 8) Moral Standards.

Part V includes space for the rater to comment further on the rated officer’s performance and potential.

The last two parts of the Evaluation report are spaces for the intermediate rater and the senior rater to comment on any area of the rated officer’s performance, professionalism, and potential.

The rating system for enlisted members has the same number rating system.

general of Fort Benning, Georgia (senior rater), offered their support. In the end, the general told Bray, “I think that there’s been a great injustice done here and I want you to know you have a right to appeal this OER and you can get your commission back in the military.” But Bray was tired from the events of the previous year and decided to accept her medical discharge (Bray).

At the age of thirty-one years old, in April 1991, almost a year after returning from Panama, Bray voluntarily resigned her commission—officially due to medical issues and partly due the backlash caused by her historic ride into history. Bray and her husband returned to a simple life in North Carolina. Now living in Kernersville, Bray prefers to focus on the positive aspects of her experience in the U.S. Army, such as the fact that she did eventually receive her awards and the Combat Pin for Army members who participate in combat, but are not infantrymen. Most of all, she is proud of what her unit had accomplished on that December day. Of her career, Bray said:

Back then the slogan was “be all you can be” and it said “join the army for excitement, adventure, and a challenge.” And when I talk to people about my experience I tell them, “I got every single thing in the world that I asked for. I got the excitement, I got the challenge, and I got the adventure.” So even though I did not get to retire out of the military I still got everything I wanted. (Bray)

Bray’s oral history interview allowed her to regain ownership of her story. In her oral history, she has taken narrative control away from the initial account and the military’s account. We should not pity her as a pawn of the military or the media.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

“In the end, this must be said: Any war that isn’t worth a woman’s life isn’t worth a man’s life.” (Goodman)

The arc of Linda Bray’s war story has been repeated in many versions, now in the form of other women soldiers who find themselves in the media and military spotlight. The stories of women in combat continue to be told because they continue to be novelties for the public. Women have gained more prominent positions and media attention since the first Gulf War, but there is little coverage of female casualties of war, military or civilian.¹⁹ When they do gain recognition for their service in the media, the representation of them still relies on their vulnerability as women and not as military members. During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the narrative of a woman in combat was once again enacted through the capture and rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch. Jessica Lynch was at first presented as a female Rambo and then as a damsel-in-distress. With her blond hair, blue eyes, and rural American roots, Lynch seemed, to many, the essence of all that was right with America, and the military was able to make propaganda use of her misfortune. My

¹⁹ Figures 12-15 are of women in today’s military. Figure 12 is a photo of an Air Force Academy student participating in a rite of passage from underclassmen to upperclassmen. Figure 13 is of an all-female aircrew. Figure 14 is the first female Four Star General. Figure 15 is the Strongest American military woman in the Middle East region. All of these photos were found on military operated websites and not on civilian media outlets.

conclusion considers how Lynch's narrative compares to Bray's, and argues that the media and military used their images to both women's detriment. I also examine broader ideas of femininity, masculinity, and war.

Linda Bray showed that gender need not be a limitation on the battlefield. Even though women have more opportunities than in the past and are in military leadership in greater numbers than when Bray served, women still face challenges beyond those of their male counterparts. Recently Rep. Jane Harman (D-Ca.) of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence reported that military women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by military males than to be shot by an enemy bullet (Harman). One thing that women in the military should never have to say to their fellow soldiers is, "I'm an American soldier just like you; please do not rape me." Irony abounds in the relationship between women in the military and traditional military culture. Brian Mitchell writes, "Astonishingly, military women voluntarily put up with a subculture that abhors their presence in it; this well-documented culture of misogyny routinely manifests itself in harassment, if not physical violence, toward women" (37). In 2007 "2,688 sexual assaults were reported"; that figure is over half the number of total American casualties since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Harman). Not only are women threatened by enemies on the battlefield, but they must also contend with enemies within the ranks—their brothers-in-arms. However, it was the rigors of battle that were Linda Bray's and Jessica Lynch's concerns.

In many ways, Private First Class (Pfc.) Jessica Lynch's story represents the legacy of Bray's narrative. In March 2003 Lynch's unit was ambushed after being

separated from a convoy on the way to Baghdad in An Nasiriyah. Following the attack, Lynch's injuries were extensive and she was taken to an Iraqi hospital where her wounds were treated. Lynch stated that "eleven" members of her unit died during that attack.²⁰ On April 1, 2003, in an event that was viewed all over the world, Pfc. Lynch was rescued by members of Task Force 20, a Special Forces unit. Images of the rescue played out on the nightly news as her frightened eyes stared into the camera. This indelible image would be used by the military and the media to gain support for the Iraq invasion.²¹

When her capture was first reported, stories of her firing her weapon until her magazines were emptied headlined the evening news. After her rescue, the story was soon changed to better represent what actually occurred based on her own account. In her testimony, to the Senate Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on April 22, 2007, Lynch recalled her capture in An Nasiriyah, Iraq and addressed the rampant fabrications that occurred directly after her capture.²² Lynch's story illustrates the awesome strength that all soldiers hope to have when faced with difficult circumstances. Yet like Bray's, Lynch's story was marred by misinformation and the need to create a grand narrative. Further in her testimony, Lynch states:

Because of the misinformation, people try to discount the realities of my story, including me as part of the hype. Nothing could be further from the truth. My experiences have caused a personal struggle of sorts for me. I

²⁰ See Figure 20 for photos of members of Lynch's unit

²¹ See Figure 18, Appendix A

²² The transcript of her full testimony is located in Appendix B

was given opportunities not extended to my fellow soldiers – and embraced those opportunities [to] set the record straight.

As with Bray, the mediated story of Lynch's experience is marred by recurrent distortion and misinformation. What she survived was diminished by the media and by the military's need for manufacturing a hero for the American public. In her closing remarks, Lynch states, "The truth of war is not always easy to hear, but it [is] always more heroic than the hype" (Lynch). In the rush to create heroes, this fact is more often than not lost, and real heroes are lost or destroyed in the publicity process.

Jessica Lynch's testimony touches on the importance of telling the story as accurately as possible. Although it was not her fault, other soldiers who had been captured alongside her received little of the recognition and attention that she gained. The media and the military embellished her narrative at the price of the real heroic story. With cameras rolling and bright lights flashing during her rescue, Lynch's story gained her a publishing contract, and her experiences became a Hollywood production, a made-for-T.V. movie. Fortunately, she was able to testify on her own behalf and on behalf of the other soldiers who were not given an opportunity to speak.

Like Bray in her retrospective account, the chronological distance allowed for a kind of clarity one can only gain with time. Bray's and Lynch's narratives were strengthened by the distance. In the essay "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives Over Time," Fred H. Allison writes:

Later interviews with veterans are valuable, certainly, and perhaps more understandable to those who are not ensconced in the context of the event. ... When we have both, interviews done immediately after the event and one done later, we have the best of both worlds, the raw, stark facts enhanced by explanations, context, and interpretation. (228)

Bray's and Lynch's narratives turn Allison's ideas upside down. The "evocative and interpretative" versions are the initial accounts, and the retrospective accounts are "ensconced in the context of the event." After their stories had been manipulated by the military and the media, both Bray and Lynch become prisoners of their produced images. Figure 19, Appendix A, though it refers to Private Lynch specifically, illustrates the difficult situation in which both she and Bray found themselves. The account reads: "Prisoner of War, Prisoner of the Media, Prisoner of the Entertainment Industry and Prisoner of Defense Department Propaganda" (Keefe). The women lost initial control of their narratives and were not able to take back their narratives until the limelight faded. The one way that Bray's narrative differs from Lynch's narrative is that her made-for-television movie was never made and her book never written.

Yet there are even more women whose war stories go untold, each like a tree falling in the forest without a witness. What does it mean if the media does not show mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives coming home in body bags or missing limbs? Today, women make up almost 15% of all active duty personnel, and one in seven troops in Iraq is female. Women continue to prove themselves on and off the battlefield.²³ To date, one-hundred and nine (109) women have died in Iraq and six in Afghanistan,

²³ See figures 12-16, Appendix A for photos of women involved in today's military.

with hundreds wounded in both operations; still women by law and policy are “excluded” from combat (icasualities). There is virtually no media coverage of their sacrifices. How do we reconcile Bray’s and Lynch’s extensive coverage with the absence of news about the other women who have faced equally harrowing circumstances? Can we reconcile these facts at all? The challenge lies in the public’s ability to move beyond the stories that they are presented by the media. In contemporary America, the media has become the creator and promoter of our society’s public “heroes and heroines,” and the more sensational the better. Twenty-four hour access to news and entertainment keeps us on, plugged in, and up-to-date on what FOX News, MSNBC, CNN, and BBC News decide we need to know and see. We as consumers of information must be willing to look with discernment beyond mass-market media and search out stories of our own. We must also be willing to critique and cross-examine the stories that we do receive from media outlets.

This essay concerns itself with critiquing the manipulation of Bray’s identity and image by the media and the military, but I do not find that manipulation to be the most compelling aspect of her story. I researched Linda Bray’s story precisely because it has been largely forgotten. I had never heard of her before a friend, a historian, mentioned her story to me in passing. I read history books and ran Boolean searches in every academic database I could find but found little information on her life and exploits. It was not until a library archivist—knowing my interest in Bray’s story—obtained for me the unpublished transcript of Bray’s oral history interview that this project began to come together. The transcript and Bray’s personal scrapbook and letters provide insight into

who she was and possibly still is—as she now resides in Kernersville, North Carolina, with her husband and pets. Reading the articles about her, the letters written by family, friends, supporters and naysayers, and then reading her own words as told to Therese Strohmer, I felt moved to share her story. It was not just a war story; it was a story about life. Tim O’Brien writes:

War is hell, but that’s not the half of it, because war is also mystery and terror and adventure and courage and discovery and holiness and pity and despair and longing and love. War is nasty; war is fun. War is thrilling; war is drudgery. War makes you a man (added emphasis); war makes you dead. (180)

Interchange the word “war” with the word “life” and O’Brien’s words are no less profound. Bray’s retrospective account illustrates the contradictions of war and brings her experiences into the genre of American war story. Yes, she is a woman, and yes, gender is central to her narrative, but she was a soldier, too. Her retrospective account brings no special clarity, no important lesson learned, unless it is that the engine of war rages.

The business of war has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My paternal great-grandfather served during World War I, my father is a veteran of the first Gulf War, and countless other family members have served or are serving. I myself have been a member of the United States Air Force for the past nine and a half years. I am also a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I left for Iraq in May 2003, shortly after Jessica Lynch had been rescued, with the hope that, should I find myself in the same position, I would survive with honor. Luckily, I did not find myself in such a situation, but I had a

few unique challenges. The sound of gunfire, the reverberation of bombs detonating, and the sting of hundred degree temperatures were only a few of things that have stayed with me all these years. There is also the camaraderie that I gained and the friendships forged. The people who served with me illustrated the strength and power of the human spirit even in the most unpleasant environments.

War is not just about political beliefs or the acquisition of resources; it is about people and the human condition. It is important to keep telling war stories because they are a lens into the human experience. In war, strengths and weakness alike are made more apparent, personal thresholds for suffering and understanding are pushed to their very limit, and one's inmost being is revealed. More often than not, the average soldier, sailor, airman, or marine does not get to ride into the heat of battle with guns blazing; the greatest battle they sometimes face is against tedium. And occasionally when the monotony of war is broken up by gunfire and explosions, there is such clarity, and a soldier knows that she will never forget that moment. She walks away wanting to tell and retell the story of how she was so close to death, and yet survived. There is therapy in sharing and a sad sort of peace in knowing that one did not experience it alone. The stories of women in the military are rare, and because there are too few to tell them, there should be many to listen.

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APPENDIX A:

PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF LINDA BRAY AND AMERICAN
MILITARY WOMEN THROUGH THE AGES



Figure 1



Figure 2

Both of these magazine covers show the military woman as able to keep the trappings of femininity while also serving their country. The covers were published during World War II to encourage women to join female units in the military.

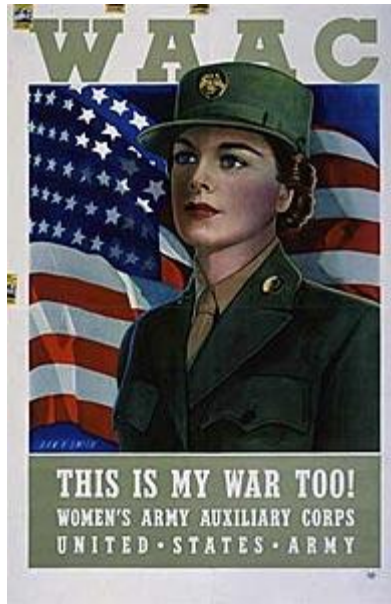


Figure 3



Figure 4

Both Figure 3 and 4 are military recruiting posters from World War II. Figure 4 is also an ad for Cutex finger nail polish, once again linking the military to femininity. The caption reads, "These Women - 1944's best dressed— choose favorite Cutex Shade." (Partners in Winning)



Figure 5

Captain Linda L. Bray in the center with New York Senator Al D'Amato in 1990. Bray is the fourth person from the left. The photo is signed: "Captain Linda, Congratulations on a job well done! We're all very proud of you! Sincerely, Al D'Amato." (Bray)



Figure 6

Linda Bray shakes hands with New York Senator Al D'Amato in 1990. The photo is signed: "Captain Bray, A great American hero! Best Wishes, Al D'Amato." (Bray)

Panama

Not since Vietnam had American women gotten the chance to prove themselves under fire in such record numbers. The women of Just Cause showed themselves to be top-notch soldiers.

The Women Of Just Cause

Story and Photos by Donna Miles

THEIR stories shattered the stereotypes once and for all—the unflattering Hollywood depictions and the thinly veiled slurs about the value of women in “this man’s Army.” The 770 female soldiers who participated in Operation Just Cause showed themselves to be top-notch soldiers in the face of combat.

Not since the Vietnam war had women gotten the chance to prove themselves under fire in such record numbers. And in Vietnam, most of them served as nurses and clerks.

The Army opened up all but 37 of its 467 military occupational specialties to women in 1977, excluding them only from infantry, armor, cannon field artillery, and short range air defense artillery units. But six years after that change, female soldiers still weren't per-



In combat, women soldiers pulled security patrols, drove infantrymen to attack positions and carried out a myriad of other support roles. Left: Capt. Linda Bray gave her MPs the order to fire on PDF soldiers, then joined in the action herself.



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Figure 7

First page of an article written about the women of the Panama invasion found in the March 1990 issue of Soldiers magazine (Bray)

Fitzwater defends women's combat role

Scotia Howard News Service

WASHINGTON — The White House on Wednesday strongly defended the use of Army women in combat roles in Panama, saying they were well trained and acted with distinction.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said it was expected that American women soldiers would fight in Panama and lead combat units because they were trained for it.

“They have been in those functions for some time. They weren't just put in them the first day of the Panama invasion,” Fitzwater said. “They have been training in these positions. They have demonstrated their leadership. And

women have done it well. So there.” Particular attention has been paid to Capt. Linda Bray, commander of the 123-member 988th Military Police Company from Fort Benning, Ga. Bray led soldiers in heavy fighting to capture the Panama Defense Forces kennel, which also housed a contingent of 40 well-armed Panamanian soldiers. She said 15 of her troops are women, 12 of whom saw combat.

Fitzwater said, “Be clear that from the first day a woman was appointed to that position, it was understood she would carry out those responsibilities.”

Asked if a woman led the operation because the Army

had not expected fierce fighting at the kennel, Fitzwater reacted sharply: “I think it's unfair to belittle the action by referring to this as a dog kennel. It was heavily defended. Three PDF men were killed.”

“Gunshots were fired on both sides. American troops could have been killed. It was an important military operation. A woman led it, and she did an outstanding job.”

Congress has passed laws forbidding women who serve in the Navy, the Air Force and the Marines from participation in actual combat. The law doesn't mention women in the Army, but Pentagon policy has been to keep all women out of combat. There have, of course,

been cases of women fighting in previous wars.

But Fitzwater insisted the participation of women in firefights in Panama “is not a change.”

“And it didn't just happen. Women have been participating in the armed forces for years. We haven't had a combat situation in some time,” he said. “These women were in these roles in terms of their military promotion and their assignment, their career field and responsibility.”

He added, “Don't put women into jobs where you don't expect them to carry out the functions.”

Speaking particularly of Bray, Fitzwater said, “The fact

is that role was anticipated from the first day she was put in that assignment.”

He added, “The women have been trying out important functions within the military now for some time. Those responsibilities are well established and laid out by their training and their assignments. They carried (them) out certainly in a distinguished manner. We think they performed with great distinction.”

White House aides said there are no plans to ask Congress to change laws to permit women to train — and be deployed — in all direct combat specialties. But the fighting in Panama already is spurring debate in Congress over the future combat role of women.

Figure 8

A photocopy of an article that mentions Captain Linda Bray (Bray)



Heroes of Panama invasion

U.S. soldiers distinguished themselves during the Panama invasion that began Dec. 20. Capt. Linda Bray (left photo) of 988th MP Co., Fort

Benning, Ga., led her unit in an assault that resulted in the capture of enemy soldiers and a cache of weapons on the first night of fighting. In

the photo at right, Gen. Carl Vuono, Army chief of staff, congratulates Sgt. Michael Alexander after pinning the Bronze Star to his chest on Friday.

Alexander won the medal for heroism when he killed five of the enemy with a grenade launcher while directing his unit during a firefight.

Figure 9

A photocopy of an article, which lists Captain Bray as a hero of Panama (Bray)



Figure 10

This editorial cartoon was sent anonymously to Captain Bray; it shows the stereotyping of American women in uniform. (Bray)

Page Two

The Journal/Thursday, August 1, 1991

Another casualty of Panama

By CHARLOTTE GRIMES

One of the supposed pleasures of a journalism career is the privilege of saying I told you so.

I can do that just now about Linda Bray.

But it's no pleasure. Bray, you may remember, was something of a celebrity of the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989. As commander of an Army military police company, Capt. Bray became the first American woman to lead troops in combat during an assault on a target that was, imprecisely called a dog kennel.

For a while, she was a media darling. She was on all the talk shows, always dressed out in battle kit. Even the White House and the Pentagon were momentarily proud of her, until conservative godmother Phyllis Schlafly reminded them that women were not allowed to do what Bray had done.

Then the backbiting started. It was apparent even before I left Panama about a month after Bray's famed assault. The Pentagon was already redefining combat to exclude just about anything Bray and the other women in the invasion force had done.

The White House had gone stone cold silent about her. Male Army officers — her presumed comrades-in-arms — seethed at the mention of her name. The Washington press corps ridiculed her target, an administration compound that also included a kennel.

"Add to the casualty list of the Panama invasion one career American Army officer: Capt. Linda Bray." I wrote shortly after coming home. The military does not like celebrities. Bray probably would not see another promotion any time soon, I wrote then.

The Army should be so kind. This past April, Linda Bray turned in her assault rifle, her captain's bars and her dreams of one day wearing a colonel's eagles or maybe even a general's stars. It had taken the Army a little more than a year to drive her out.

"It was like they kind of ganged up on me to prove I wasn't anything special or I hadn't accomplished anything special and I was nobody," Bray recently told Peter Copeland, the Scripps Howard News Service reporter whose story out of Panama triggered the media frenzy over her.

Officially, as Copeland recounts, Bray took a medical discharge in April. At 5-foot-1-inch and 105 pounds, she'd collected a career's worth of stress



Linda Bray: Lauded right after Panama invasion, then... told you so.

Associated Press

fractures in her legs from carrying too much weight in her field pack on training exercises. She'd always felt she had to carry a little more.

It was as good an excuse as any. But the reality was a shameful exercise that makes a bitter mockery of the Army's "Be All You Can Be" recruiting propaganda.

First, there was the Army's Criminal Investigation Division's greeting. A Panamanian had accused American soldiers of killing the dogs in the kennel. For weeks, the division interrogated Bray and her soldiers about the dogs. They never turned up any evidence against Bray's company.

Then there were the transfers of people out of the 988th MP Company. Within a few months of the invasion, it looked as though the Army was trying to break up Bray's company. And there was what Bray calls her daily "butt chewing" from the brass. And finally, last summer there was one disappointment too many.

Her company was on alert to go to Saudi Arabia. But Desert Storm apparently wasn't big enough for this hard-charging veteran of Panama.

That's when Bray decided to pack it in. She went into the hospital for surgery for her stress fractures. Now while her

husband continues his Army career, she's at home. That might make Schlafly happy. Bray's thinking about a new career in the law. That probably won't thrill Phyl.

In her brief glory days, Bray was often cited by members of Congress advocating an expanded role for military women.

The Army's chief of public affairs sent her an autographed photo dedicated to a "great spokesperson" for the service. Bray still keeps it, as well as a soft spot in her heart for the Army. Just not everybody in it.

And Bray knows she's left a legacy — whether the Army wants it or not.

Watching the coverage of the Persian Gulf War, she couldn't help but notice that, since Panama, even generals like H. Norman Schwarzkopf are careful to pay tribute to military men and women. She knows she's one of the main reasons.

That's something. But it's not enough. The code name for the Panama invasion was Operation Just Cause. What happened to Bray had nothing "just" about it. And I'm not at all happy to say I told you so.

Grimes is a columnist for The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Figure 11

Written four months after her voluntary separation from the U.S. Army, this is one of the last articles specifically about Captain Bray (Bray)



Figure 12

“Cadet 4th Class Madison Chilton runs up and down the Core Values Ramp with a weighted ruck-sack during Recognition. Recognition marks the transition of the fourth classmen to upper class status. It is the ceremonial acknowledgement that the fourth class has successfully met the training requirements expected of it, and is prepared to continue its four-year journey through the Academy.”
(U.S. Air Force photo/Mike Kaplan) (Air Force Link)



Figure 13

All female Air Force Air on a C-17 Globemaster III (Air Force Link)



Figure 14

“Gen. Ann E. Dunwoody became the first female four-star general in military history and also became the first female to lead a major Army command Nov. 14, 2008. On that date she was promoted in a Pentagon ceremony and later that day she took command of Army Materiel Command headquartered on Fort Belvoir, Va. Approximately five percent of general officers in the Army are women, which includes mobilized Army Reserve and Army National Guard general officers.” (www.army.mil)



Figure 15

Master Sgt. Tina Robinson named "Strongest (female) in the AOR" for 2009 after placing first in the women's category of an Air Forces Central Command power lifting competition at an air base in Southwest Asia. (Air Force Link)



Figure 16

“PFC Brandie Leon from the 101st Airborne Division patrols Baghdad. March 2006” (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Bart A. Bauer) (www.army.mil)



Figure 17

Basic Training graduation photo of Pfc. Jessica Lynch (U.S. Department of Defense)



Figure 18

Photo of Pfc. Jessica Lynch's dramatic rescue from Iraqi Forces (U.S. Department of Defense)



Figure 19

Editorial cartoon about Pfc. Jessica Lynch (Keefe)



Figure 20

Top left, Sgt. Donald Walters, Master Sgt. Robert J. Dowdy, Spc. James Kiehl, Pvt. Brandon Sloan. Bottom left, Pvt. Ruben Estrella-Soto, Chief Warrant Officer Johnny Mata, Pfc. Lori Piestewa, and Sgt. George Buggs, were members the 507th Maintenance Company who were ambushed March 23 near An Nasiryah, Iraq. All eight were killed in action after nine bodies were found during the rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch. A ninth body remains unidentified. (Associated Press Photo)

APPENDIX B:
THE TESTIMONY OF JESSICA LYNCH

On April 22, 2007 Jessica Lynch was called before the Senate Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to address misinformation on the battlefield. Initial accounts of Jessica's story of capture by Iraqi forces were deeply flawed and therefore, had to be corrected after her rescue.

Chairman Waxman, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to be with you today and I am grateful to have this opportunity.

I have been asked here today to address "misinformation from the battlefield." Quite frankly, it is something that I have been doing since I returned from Iraq. However, I want to note for the record, I am not politically motivated in my appearance here today. I lived the war in Iraq. Today I have family and friends still serving in Iraq. My support for our troops is unwavering.

I believe this is not a time for finger pointing. It is time for the truth, the whole truth, versus misinformation and hype.

Because of the misinformation, people try to discount the realities of my story, including me as part of the hype. Nothing could be further from the truth. My experiences have caused a personal struggle of sorts for me. I was given opportunities not extended to my fellow soldiers – and embraced those opportunities set the record straight. It is

something I have done since 2003 and something I imagine I will have to do for the rest of my life. I have answered criticisms for being paid to tell my story. Quite frankly, the injuries I have will last a lifetime and I had a story tell, a story that needed to be told so people would know the truth.

I want to take a minute to remind the committee of my true story. I was a soldier. In July 2001, I enlisted in the Army with my brother. We had different reasons as to why we joined but we both wanted to serve our country. I loved my time in the Army and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served this nation during a time of crisis.

In 2003, I received word that my unit had been deployed. I was part of a 100-mile long convoy going to Baghdad to support the Marines. I drove the 5-ton water buffalo truck. Our unit drove the heaviest vehicles. The sand was thick -- our vehicles just sank. It would take us hours to travel the shortest distance. We decided to divide our convoy so the lighter vehicles could reach our target. But then came the city of An Nasiryah and a day I will never forget.

The truck I was driving broke down. I was picked up by my roommate and best friend, Lori Piestewa who was driving our First Sergeant Robert Dowdy. We also picked up two other soldiers from a different unit to get them out of harm's way. As we drove through An Nasiryah, trying to get turned around to try to leave the city, the signs of hostility were increasing, with people with weapons on roof tops and the street watching our entire group.

The vehicle I was riding in was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade and slammed into the back of another truck in the convoy. Three people in the vehicle were killed upon

impact. Lori and I were taken to a hospital where she later died and I was held for nine days. In all eleven soldiers died that day, six others from the unit, plus two others were taken prisoner. Following the ambush, my injuries were extensive. When I awoke in the Iraqi hospital, I was not able to move or feel anything below my waist. I suffered a six-inch gash in my head. My fourth and fifth lumbar vertebrae were overlapping causing pressure on my spine. My right humerus bone was broken. My right foot was crushed. My left femur was shattered. The Iraqis in the hospital tried to help me by removing the bone and replacing it with a metal rod. The rod they used was a model from the 1940s for a man and was too long. Following my rescue, the doctors in Landstuhl, Germany found in a physical exam that I had been sexually assaulted. Today, I continue to deal with bladder, bowel, and kidney problems as a result of my injuries. My left leg still has no feeling from the knee down and I am required to wear a brace so that I can stand and walk. When I awoke, I did not know where I was. I could not move, or fight or call for help. The nurses at the hospital tried to soothe me and tried unsuccessfully at one point to return me to American troops.

Then on April 1, while various units created diversions around Nasiriyah, a group came to the hospital to rescue me. I could hear them speaking in English but I was still very afraid. Then a soldier came into my room, he tore the American flag from his uniform and pressed it into my hand and he told me, "We're American soldiers and we're here to take you home." As I held his hand, I told him, "Yes, I am an American soldier too."

When I remember those difficult days, I remember the fear. I remember the strength. I remember the hand of a fellow American soldier reassuring me that I was ok now. At the same time, tales of great heroism were being told. My parent's home in Wirt County was under siege by the media, all repeating the story of the little girl Rambo from the hills who went down fighting. It was not true.

I have repeatedly said, when asked, that if the stories about me helped inspire our troops and rally a nation, then perhaps there was some good. However, I am still confused as to why they chose to lie and tried to make me a legend when the real heroics of my fellow soldiers that day were, in fact, legendary. People like Lori Piestewa and First Sergeant Dowdy who picked up fellow soldiers in harm's way. Or people like Patrick Miller and Sergeant Donald Walters who actually fought until the very end.

The bottom line is the American people are capable of determining their own ideals for heroes and they do not need to be told elaborate tales. My hero is my brother Greg who continues to serve this country today. My hero is my friend Lori who died in Iraq but set an example for a generation of Hopi and Native American women and little girls everywhere about the important contributions just one soldier can make in the fight for freedom. My hero is every American who says, my country needs me and answers the call to fight. I had the good fortune and opportunity to come home and I told the truth. Many other soldiers, like Pat Tillman, do not have the opportunity.

The truth of war is not always easy to hear but it always more heroic than the hype.