

Right to fight

Women should be allowed on the front lines of combat with men



JIM FOREMAN

The war in Iraq has been a political hot potato due to the upcoming election, but while politicians and citizens debate the need for a war, one issue goes unnoticed: the role of women in combat.

Fox News reported there have been 24 female soldiers killed in action in Iraq, 15 from hostile fire. Although the death of any soldier, is tragic, the deaths of these women have been regarded as a great stride on the long road toward gender equality.

With rumors still circulating of the draft being reinstated, one would think it is time to open the ranks to women. Americans go to war with notions of serving and protecting their country, so why should women be given fewer opportunities to do so than men?

It would be unfair to say women are completely denied from serving their country. Women serve as pilots, sailors, nurses and other positions that do not require them to be exposed to enemy fire. In fact, 10 Navy vessels are under female command.

However, women are restricted from infantry, artillery, tanks and submarines. The military has loosened the rules that restrict women from direct confrontation with the enemy, but there is still room to grow.

Although direct combat is reserved for men, women serving in Iraq have been allowed to participate in field activities such as patrols and raids. Army Specialist Theresa Lynn Flannery was recommended for the bronze star, America's fourth highest military honor, for her valor. While under fire, Flannery gave medical attention to her wounded comrades and fired back at the enemy. She also received the Purple Heart.

Obviously, women can handle the mental stress and pressures that are typical of conflicts such as the one Flannery experienced, but other reasons for excluding women are abundant. Some say women can't handle the physical requirements, but a study by the U.S. Army proved that women who adhere to a regular schedule of physical training can achieve the same physical standards as men, including running with a 75-pound ruck sack through a two mile

wooded course. The Sunday Times of London, reporting on a similar study, said "by using new methods of physical training, women can be built up to the same levels of physical fitness as men of the same size and build."

Some traditionalists claim men would instinctively try to protect their female peers in combat, an argument cleverly refuted by Medal of Honor recipient, Dr. Mary Walker, who said "You men are not our protectors... If you were, who would there be to protect us from?"

The fact of the matter is some men would never touch a gun, vomit before considering flying and cover at the thought of close combat and some women are just the opposite. Generally, women can better withstand the high speeds of fighter jets, but men have slightly more control in heavy bombers.

When it comes to the more gruesome aspects of combat, such as Special Forces, neither gender is favored. According to Captain Barbara Wilson, USAF (Ret.), "I think it takes a particular personality type — almost on the edge of a pathological one — to even want to become a trained killer. This can have appeal for both men and women, but hopefully very few of either sex."

The ultimate question is: Why would a country built on the ideal that all citizens are granted natural rights deny half of them the right to fight for their country? Tactics and weapons used today have changed drastically compared to those used in the former male-only military. As American culture and technology advances, traditionalist reasoning must not prevent women from doing a job if they are qualified and capable.

Jim Foreman is a junior mechanical engineering major.



BRANDI DUNN • THE BATTALION

Gender segregation serves schools well



ERIC BROWN

Throughout history, society has gone through many phases dealing with societal norms in the areas of education, culture, religion and morals. Sometimes these

phases are cyclical, which can be a good or bad thing.

The recent trend is single-sex education in public schools. After

nearly a 40-year absence, people are starting to realize that the education system that was in place for the last part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century was successful.

The bottom line is the same: Separate the girls from the boys.

There are many factors influencing success. For instance, whenever the distraction of boys is taken away from girls or

vice versa, students no longer have to worry about how they dress, who they have to impress or who their friends are. Instead, they are able to concentrate more on academics.

Also, in single sex classrooms teachers can focus on the environment in which the particular gender learns better. Dr. Leonard Sax, a Maryland physician and psychologist, found in a study that girls tend to learn in a quiet and slower paced environment and liked to be called by their first names whereas boys like things energetic, fast paced and prefer to be called by their last names.

This is a nationwide trend re-appearing with the number of single-sex public schools increasing from four to 140 over the last eight years, according to Sax. And the trend keeps growing. CNN reported at least 10 single-sex schools were to open

this fall in Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and South Carolina.

This trend has such a positive impact on public schools that the U.S. Department of Education is looking to change parts of Title IX, the law that bars sex discrimination.

According to studies done by the National Association for Single Sex Public Education, over the last 40 years, co-educational schools may have done more damage than good. To a point, these schools help reinforce gender stereotypes rather than breaking them down.

The single-sex school trend is seen in other countries such as England, Australia and Jamaica. Studies have shown the difference between co-educational schools and single-sex schools has been significant, mainly in the areas of standardized test scores and grades. The single-sex public schools are producing higher grades and test scores than co-educational schools.

If these schools are as successful as people perceive them to be, one must hope that eventually colleges will continue the trend. That is where the history of the success of single sex education is, especially at A&M.

The single-sex education trend should not be mistaken for some passing fad. Separating the sexes has positive, long-term impacts that universities around the nation — maybe even Texas A&M — should consider.

Eric Brown is a student of post baccalaureate studies in education.

Are drugs the solution to addiction?



MIKE WALTERS

It may seem odd, but the old saying, "fight fire with fire," may be the solution to the problem of drug addiction. Scientists have recently begun scouring the lists of currently approved medications to help patients suffering from addiction

to drugs as serious as cocaine. However, it's important for the medical

community and the population to remember that just as recreational drug use does not cure unhappiness or solve problems, using drugs alone to combat addiction is not the answer either.

Though the latest applications of various medications are a recent idea, there is a precedent for this principle. In 1997 the government approved Zyban as a "stop-smoking pill." The same drug had once been marketed as an antidepressant under the name Wellbutrin.

There are serious advantages to using old drugs to do new tricks — obtaining federal approval for a new use of an existing drug is cheaper than introducing a new medication. In addition, drugs that have been market-tested for years already provide doctors with an idea of dose ranges and side effects.

There are some medications already being used in addiction therapy programs, but doctors have yet to find one that treats cocaine addiction. According to The Associated Press, the National Institute on Drug Abuse is sponsoring studies of 21 medications already being used for other purposes.

Perhaps one of these 21 drugs will hold the cure for patients struggling to overcome their addictions to cocaine.

However, patients and doctors must not fall into the mistaken idea that drugs provide instant cures to problems associated with not only physical but mental disease as well. While it is true that addiction and dependence have physical causes, they also involve a strong mental component. And while drugs can heal the body, healing the mind requires the use of psychology.

Dr. David Gastfriend of Massachusetts General Hospital exercises this principle, as he works with alcoholics. In his treatment of these addicts, he prescribes them Naltrexone in the form of a pill.

"The pill requires a daily awareness that this is a dangerous disease and a rational disease to take the pill," Gastfriend told the AP. "The problem with this illness is that on any given day, a person can feel, 'No, it would be better if I could

drink.' So you take the pill the first day, and you have to make 29 more decisions (the rest of the month)." Rather than simply giving his patients the once-a-month shot and hoping they stick to their commitment the rest of the month as other doctors do, he rightly recognizes that curing addiction isn't just about throwing drugs at people.

With any luck, this new approach to treating drug addiction will help those who have made poor decisions and become dependent on various medications, but are seeking to right their wrong. While doctors and researchers tackle this issue together, it's ideal that they will follow the lead of Gastfriend and treat these men and women with a holistic plan that involves not just medication, but psychology and counseling that can help these people heal their illnesses and lives.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.

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MAIL CALL

9/11 remembrance wasn't wanted

In response to a Sept. 9 Mail Call:

The Red, White and Blue Towel Out was created by a group of student leaders with generous help from the 12th Man Student Foundation. These groups worked with the idea all summer long, but they encountered substantial negative feedback from faculty members, students and the administration regarding the idea. Many felt that although it would be a great display of Aggie pride, it might take away from the "specialness" of the original Red, White and Blue Out. Control of the project was given solely to the 12th Man Student Foundation, and they decided to go for the commemorative towels, which I

personally think is a fantastic idea.

Don't lose faith in AggieLand, Ms. Grigg. Although the Red, White, and Blue Towel Out never came to fruition, the Spirit is still there.

Stacy Reeves
Class of 2006

Bonfire cannot be replaced by Yell

In response to Emily Guevara's Sept. 8 article:

Imagine my surprise when I opened The Battalion on Wednesday to read that First Yell was "created to replace Bonfire camaraderie..."

How can anyone expect one night to replace an entire year of friendship, work and

unity? There is nothing on campus that can replace that. Some students may work for a few months to prepare for the night of First Yell, but Bonfire was a year round effort. Even in the spring, Pots and Chiefs were preparing for the fall. And in the fall, even the average student had an opportunity to go out and cut.

Not every student can be involved in First Yell. First of all, not every student always has money to go, and not every student can get a ticket because of limited space. Aggie Bonfire was free, built by Aggie for Aggies. Not to mention no ticket told you where to sit. Don't get me wrong, I have enjoyed going to First Yell in the past. And I agree that Aggie Spirit is lacking. But it is wrong to even think that it could ever replace the hole that has been left by the absence of Aggie Bonfire.

Laura Laubach