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Why Women Should Not Serve in Military Combat

Testimony by Harold M. Voth, M.D. to the House Armed Services Committee,
Military Personnel Subcommittee, November 16, 1979

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I am grateful for this opportunity to express my beliefs in regard to women serving in the Armed Forces. I am a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst with 30 years' experience studying the human condition in the civilian, military, and Veterans Administration sectors. More recently, my attention has turned to the incredible changes which are taking place in our way of life and in the American character. I discuss these phenomena at some length in a speech — a copy of which I have brought for each of you — wherein I express the view that individual psychopathology is linked to social pathology and eventually to the decline of a society. It is in this context that I am expressing my views on the role of women in the Armed Services. I represent no organization.

Despite the non-scientifically based pronouncements of factions within the feminist movement that the obvious behavioral and temperamental differences between male and female are merely socially induced, and therefore easily changed, the facts are that there are marked differences between the sexes. These differences are in substantial measure biological and are most obvious with regard to physical size, physical strength, and the psychological quality called aggressiveness.

Furthermore, male-to-male bonding is profoundly different from male-to-female bonding. The former is a socializing force and can be demonstrated most elegantly and stirringly when men bond together under arms for the purpose of defending their families and their country. Male-female bonding, on the other hand, is highly possessive, private and is jealously guarded. Other males and females are excluded from this bond.

These fundamental but very different imperatives are essential for the creation of families and societies. That male and female form the family, and the males defend the family and the societies which families form, is a pattern that has persisted throughout the ages. These are givens which can be overridden but, when they are, disintegration begins immediately of both the family and society. This is happening to our families and to our society on a grand scale.

The Androgeny Trend

As a result of this disintegration, the character of our people is changing. The signs are everywhere — lowered productivity, a greater self-centeredness, trends toward mediocrity, high divorce rate, etc. A leveling process is upon us, and part of this is a blurring of the difference between boy and girl and man and woman. We are headed toward androgeny, unisexism and, at times, downright role reversal. This trend is contrary to the evolutionary developmental patterning which characterizes the higher animal forms including man.

When little girls and boys do not receive the proper kind of parenting, which millions of our children do not, they develop emotional conflicts which prevent them from fully developing their male or female identity. They shy away from the male-female bonding imperative, and many tend to seek social roles which are more typical for the opposite sex.

Such women understandably seek a place for themselves in society other than marriage and the homemaking function upon which the destiny of mankind depends. Men become increasingly irresponsible toward the family and society. They meekly stand aside as women flock into the social field and take over positions which have traditionally been filled by men. Please understand, there obviously are places for women outside the home and also within the Armed Services, but there clearly are positions which men fill best, just as there are places which women fill best, or tasks which both sexes do equally well.

I am absolutely certain that a major motive force behind the feminist movement is a search for an identity and role which permits them to live out a pseudo-

On November 13, 14, 15, 16, 1979, the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, Military Personnel Subcommittee, held four days of hearings in Washington, D.C., on the women's lib proposal to repeal the laws which exempt women from military combat. Carter Administration spokesmen and feminist organizations testified in favor of repeal. This newsletter contains some of the testimonies against repeal.

male identity. (Equivalent forces exist in millions of men, but since they are not organized they are less obvious.) The antifemininity or masculinity complex is easily recognized by the trained eye. Women with these psychological difficulties want what the male has, rather than strive for more recognition and greater reward for what women are and contribute to society.

One of the militant leaders of the feminist movement expressed it well when she said, "We are becoming the men we wanted to marry." A woman cannot become a man any more than a man can become a woman. When the attempt is made to do so, the individual suffers, because he or she is at cross-purposes within and can never be maximally effective in a role demanding clarity of sexual identity.

Combat Duty

For instance, forcing heavy industry to accept women is a mistake; their presence is almost surely contributing to the lowered productive efficiency of American industry, simply because they are trying to do work which men can do better. Similarly, placing women in combat positions on land, on the sea or in the air is a tragic error which must be avoided. To yield to their demands plays into personal and social trends which are pathological and which will lower the efficiency and effectiveness of our fighting forces and will reinforce the same trend in other sectors of society. This is so because:

(1) Women are not as physically strong, nor are they as physically and psychologically aggressive. We do not pit women against men at the Olympics, in professional sports, or at the collegiate and high school levels. Why, then, consider doing so on the battlefield or in the air or at sea where the issue is nothing less than our survival as a nation?

(2) The presence of women among men will severely disturb male-male bonding and the high level of organization and spirit required of fighting forces. Males will inevitably be distracted, not only by their attraction to females because of the male-female bonding force, but also by their inherent need to protect the female, resulting inevitably in placing themselves in jeopardy under combat conditions.

(3) Under no circumstances should men be expected to follow women into battle. To thus arrange a combat force is as absurd and destructive as when a family is headed by a domineering woman with a weak, passive male standing several paces behind her.

(4) Psychologically masculinized women, or

women who are not comfortable with femininity, are burdened by severe insecurity within the depths of their personalities. Though such women often are brassy and aggressive on the surface, they are fearful within and regularly back down when confronted by a self-assured masculine male. I cannot imagine that they would hold up in combat.

Non-Combat Duty

With regard to non-combat assignments, I wish to suggest the following:

(1) To have permitted women into the service academies was a mistake. The academies are for the purpose of evoking the very best in tough, skilled leadership in men who can lead us in a war. Every position filled by a woman is not filled by a man. The atmosphere in the academies has changed and will inevitably continue to do so. Women are a dilution. I believe women should be trained separately, both at the academies and elsewhere.

(2) It is a mistake to use women as drill sergeants for young men in recruit training. Many of these youngsters have had inadequate fathering. The last thing they need is a masculinized woman drilling them. They need men to teach them military matters who also serve as tough, demanding, yet protective father-surrogates with whom to identify, thereby toughening up their own personalities and not confusing their self-concepts as males.

The separation of the sexes has its place in the organization of society, especially so when to view male and female as equivalent weakens the organization of which they are members. Equal opportunity and equal ability are different; men and women are different.

Our military commanders should be given the freedom to place women where they can shine best, but they should be forbidden to use them in combat. They and not social activists, militant women's liberationists in particular, know best how to organize our Armed Forces and how to fight wars. Women produce better warriors than they themselves can ever become.

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Testimony by Tottie Ellis

First Vice President, Eagle Forum

My name is Tottie Ellis of Nashville, Tennessee. I am a wife and a mother of three grown children. It is an honor to testify before this distinguished committee. As a nation we are facing a crisis in philosophy which must be resolved if we are to continue as a free nation. In the nineteen sixties and most of the seventies we have said "YES" to nearly every proposal or idea coming down the road. It is time we start saying "NO."

I am opposed to placing women in the combat forces of the armed services of the United States.

Feminists are revealing their true colors by backing this radical step. The men who go along with them are allowing the seemingly short-term political advantage to outweigh the traditional courage and common sense which have characterized the thinking of civilized society.

Placing women in a situation where they will run a high risk of being killed, mutilated, raped or become a P.O.W. is a denial of women's rights, human rights, the dignity of the human personality, and might well end up in destroying part of humanity, that is, the American part. It "out Hitlers-Hitler." Not even this monster placed women in combat roles.

Women in combat is neither palatable nor plausible. Women in combat would be suicidal for women, the family, our children and future generations. To say "NO" to the minority of women who are seeking combat roles is not to damn them, but only facing the world of reality. The distinguished women who are now serving in the military and future generations of young women must not be drafted into combat duty for the following three major reasons which I will discuss under the headings of (1) differences; (2) danger; and (3) deception.

Differences

Men and women differ in a number of remarkable, mysterious and even wonderful ways. The logic of biology, research on sex hormones, and observational data from across cultures, species and history provide overwhelming support for these basic, inherited differences. It is better to live with a recognized reality than to die because of an unrecognized one.

Men are physically stronger than women, more aggressive and have more endurance. In sports there are men's teams and women's teams. No women are playing for the University of Alabama or the Dallas Cowboys. The Olympics have men's events and women's events. Charts and detailed evidence could be presented, but actually the only thing necessary is to open your eyes and see.

A second and major difference is child-bearing. Women have babies and men do not. There is a difference in bearing a child and begetting a child. How can the services be combat-ready if, at any given time, 15 percent of the women are pregnant? Some of these women would be in crucial jobs. In the last stages of pregnancy and certainly during the time of birth, someone has to carry on the women's work. To knowingly place ourselves in such a situation is unfair to the mother and her baby, and is to undermine our security as a nation.

When a woman in service becomes pregnant, either married or unmarried, we should give her an honorable discharge with all attendant benefits. I do not uphold pregnancy out of wedlock, but the plan of counseling them on single parenthood and having them submit a document naming the guardian of the child if the mother is deployed is nuttiness in its most ridiculous form.

The failure to recognize the dignity and value of motherhood is unrealistic. To put down motherhood and to say that children can be turned over to someone else at any time for nurturing will cause us to die because of stupidity. The military services must not say that driving a tank, digging a foxhole, or flying an airplane is more important than mothering. The family is important. It is the soil from which moral duty, natural affection and society grows. Unless all of us say "NO" to the forces destroying the family, there will be no future.

Danger

Not only must differences be taken into account, but the danger is something which must be faced. Combat is not a school-yard game, an amusement park, or a job opportunity with benefits. It is not something you participate in today and forget tomorrow. It is violent and dehumanizing. I have never known a man who liked it. The ones I have known who were in combat were there because they were sent. In fact, men I have known who were in combat do not even enjoy war movies.

To say that the next war will be different, that it will not depend on bayonets, grenades and physical force, but on technology, is something nobody can prove. If in the future there will be only buttons on panels and no front lines, then why train either sex for combat. Fighting has not become more humane with the passing of time, but just the opposite.

Although it is not a pleasant subject, we must admit that rape is a reality. Susan Brownmiller's
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Testimony by Kitty Werthmann

South Dakota State Chairman, STOP ERA

I am Mrs. Hubert Werthmann. I reside in Pierre, South Dakota.

I was born in Austria. I am a naturalized United States citizen. I am a survivor of Hitler's terrible war.

I have seen war at its worst; I am an eye witness of what war can do to women. My physical scars healed, but the emotional scars will never heal. I will take them to my grave.

I specifically remember one attack. Everything was on fire from phosphor bombing. People were running around like burning torches. Women became hysterical. I remember climbing over burned bodies. It was horrible, and to this day I cannot eat char-broiled steak.

If anyone has any plans to put women in combat, it would be a grave mistake, because

you have no realization of what war is like for women. I am an eye witness.

Women in my country who served in the army as anti-aircraft gunners and in the signal corps have been left emotional cripples. Thousands of women were raped when the Russian troops advanced.

Do you want this same fate for our American women? I ask you to search your conscience.

I have three daughters of draft age. I do not want them to see what I have seen of war and destruction.

As a mother, I appeal to you. I have lost two sons, one age twenty-two, just three months ago.

Please don't ask American women to serve in combat.

(Continued from page 3)

book *Against Our Will* says rape against women is one of the major horrors of war. To put women into combat would open the gates to rape from the enemy as well as from our own men. Rape is already a problem in the armed forces.

So common has rape been in modern times that nations have outlawed it under international rules of war as a criminal act. Yet, rape during wartime persists as a very common act. The historical stance has been to protect women from rape, but sending them to the enemy is to degrade and destroy not only women's rights, but women themselves. Rape is never excusable; it is a crime. Why encourage this crime with the blessings of Congress?

Deception

Not only would placing women in combat ignore the obvious physical differences in men and women, and place women in great danger, but it would foster an unthinkable deception and contradiction on the part of those who are advocating such action. We have a great hue and cry against violence aimed at women. Millions of dollars are being asked for shelters for battered women. The feminists go on and on about "battered wives." Their position is laudable, but they contradict themselves in now calling for women to be placed in combat. Is it all right for a woman to be battered if the man is not her husband? Combat demands that the successful use of women in battlefield units depends on men overcoming their natural impulse to treat women differently and more considerately. It means men cannot be more concerned over a mutilated woman than a man. It

means a man cannot abandon a post to look after a woman. Women in combat would bring stress and disruption. Men do have a special feeling toward women because, you see, they have mothers.

It is deception to think placing women in combat should be considered a way to give women equal opportunity under the EEOC. Neither men nor women look at this issue in that way. The armed services should not be used as agents for social change. The services are for our national security. The armed services should not be destroyed to pacify extremists in the feminist movement.

There have always been wars, crises and skirmishes, and will be until the end of time. To say that women in combat will discourage wars is to assert without evidence. Human nature is not yet tamed, and much of our civilization is a veneer. To me, one of the reasons men have been willing to risk their lives and die by the thousands in time of war is to protect the women and children. If a ship sinks, the cry is still "Save the women and children." This is not to demean men nor debase womanhood. It has been the basis on which humanity has been able to survive. Do not go against history, experience and common sense. Say "NO" to placing women in combat.

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