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by

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Women Reporting War:  
The History and Evolution of the Woman War Correspondent

by

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Report

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Women Reporting War:  
The History and Evolution of the Woman War Correspondent

Approved by  
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## **Abstract**

### Women Reporting War: The History and Evolution of the Woman War Correspondent

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2005  
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American women have been involved in the reporting of war since the birth of the United States. This report provides a broad overview of the history of American women war correspondents and addresses the issues and obstacles they have faced along the way, including discrimination, self-perception, safety, reporting style and family life. As specific examples of their evolution, four women from five major American wars are profiled: Marguerite Higgins in World War II and the Korean War; Gloria Emerson in the Vietnam War; Molly Moore in the Gulf War; and Anne Garrels in the Iraq War. The examination of both the internal and external forces affecting the way these women reported war provides insight into the specific historical changes of the female war correspondent.

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## **Introduction**

Each war in the United States' short history has evolved into a distinct identity in our national consciousness. The forces shaping our collective perspective are a cacophony of voices: the motivation for the war, public opinion, the military leaders, and the culture of the countries at war, the personality of the president leading the war, the voice of the veterans, television images, books, movies and photographs. When saying the names out loud – the American Revolution, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq– each one conjures a different mental image, sculpted from memories and history books. But overall it is the press that is the resounding voice of war, providing a conduit between two worlds: those fighting and those at home waiting.

American women have been involved in the reporting of war since the birth of the United States. During the American Revolution, Mary Katherine Goddard single-handedly published and edited Baltimore's first newspaper. In 1846, Margaret Fuller traveled to Europe as a foreign correspondent for the New York Tribune after working as the paper's book-review editor for two years. She wrote a book on the Italian Revolution, but the manuscript was lost when her ship returning to the United States sank and she drowned. In 1848, Jane Swisshelm started her own anti-slavery newspaper and wrote weekly articles in the New York Tribune. She stopped her paper to become a nurse in the Civil War and wrote about her experiences in an autobiography. During the Spanish-American War, Anna N. Benjamin, 23 years old in 1898, went to Cuba to report on

American troops there and later reported from the Philippines and Japan. In World War I, Peggy Hull was the first woman to receive official U.S. State Department accreditation as a war correspondent, though she was not allowed on the front lines.<sup>1</sup> Hull paid her own way because her paper, the El Paso Times, could not afford to send her. During the Spanish Civil War, Martha Gellhorn started her long career as a war reporter. During the Depression, Eleanor Roosevelt held weekly women-only press conferences so that every news agency would have to hire at least one female reporter. Many of these women went on to become war correspondents in World War II.

After Pearl Harbor, things changed for women reporters. World War II marks the transition point from the female war correspondents as occasional battlefield anomalies to a large number of professional journalists striving to carve out careers in a field overwhelmingly dominated by men on all sides – the men reporting, the men fighting and the men editing the media at home. The numerous women reporting from front lines today is a testament to the courage and achievements of the women reporting on World War II who opened the door for their modern counterparts.

However, despite the successes of so many women war correspondents, there have been numerous obstacles along the way. An example of the types of problems encountered by female correspondents is evident in the book on America's history of war correspondence published in 1995 by Nathaniel Lande, a former journalism professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Lande defined the role of war correspondents as not only documenting the drama of war but also chronicling the

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<sup>1</sup> Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*, (Washington D.C., The American University Press, 1993), 139.

evolution in combat techniques and changes in the reporting of war. He proposes intimate relationships between war reporting and the societal changes at home driving the United States to war, the impact of new technology on reporting, the emotion of war and the power of words. “Dispatches are the intelligence and information that helped us see into our national future.”<sup>2</sup>

However, of the 79 correspondents from 10 American wars whom Lande chose to represent America’s history of war correspondence, only four were women. Despite the nearly 300 accredited American female journalists<sup>3</sup> that reported the Vietnam War for publications such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, Newsweek and the Christian Science Monitor, among others, not one of the 10 journalists chosen to represent the Vietnam War was a woman – even though women covering the Vietnam War earned a Pulitzer Prize, several George Polk Awards, the National Book Award and the Overseas Press Award.

This illuminates two points: first, the difficulty women reporters faced in gaining frontline access during wars, and second, the difficulty they faced, and continue to face, in being taken as seriously as their male colleagues. This report examines the issues of the woman war correspondent through the profiles of four of history’s most daring reporters.

Chapter One provides a broad overview of the history of women writing war from World War II to the Iraq War and addresses the issues they faced along the way. Though

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<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel Lande, *Dispatches From the Front*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), x.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce Hoffm, “On Their Own: Female Correspondents in Vietnam,” *Quest Magazine*, Fall 1998, <<http://www.odu.edu/ao/instdv/quest/femalecorrespondents.html>> (12 July 2005).



the analysis focuses mainly on American women, there have been numerous female journalists of all nationalities that deserve mention. This chapter discusses the types of discrimination from readers, editors, soldiers, military officers, bureaucrats and peers and how it has changed or stayed the same through various conflicts as well as examining safety, article subjects and writing styles of the women.

Chapter Two profiles the extraordinary career of Marguerite Higgins with an emphasis on her role reporting on World War II and the Korean War. Higgins' fiery reputation and ruthless aggressiveness inspired both loathing and respect from her colleagues. She was as notorious for her love affairs as she was for stealing stories.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter Three profiles the eccentric Gloria Emerson, whose book on the Vietnam War won the National Book Award in 1978. After working the fashion beat in Paris for the New York Times, Emerson dedicated her life to reporting the effects of war on soldiers and civilians. She was both compassionate and prone to scathing bluntness, and she received much criticism for her reports on what she perceived as a waste of lives.

Chapter Four examines the career of Molly Moore with an emphasis on her dispatches from the Gulf War. Moore was invited by the commanding general of the Marines to follow him across the Saudi Arabian desert into Kuwait at the start of the ground war against Iraq. Her reports reveal the human side of war making and the fears of those executing the orders.

Chapter Five discusses the reporting of Anne Garrels, one of 16 reporters who stayed in Baghdad when the United States began its bombing campaign in 2003. She's

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<sup>4</sup> Antoinette May, *Witness to War* (New York: Beaufort Books, Inc., 1983), 11.

covered nearly every war from the Persian Gulf to Iraq, and her radio reports are a charming blend of description and insightful perspective combined with experienced reporting.

Chapter Six examines the changes experienced during the history of women war correspondents, both internal changes on how they report as well as external factors that have changed the way they report

These four women represent a broad spectrum of writing styles and attitudes toward war as well as providing specific examples of the issues faced by many women journalists. Each of the women also wrote books on their war experiences that reveal a personal insight into their motivations and emotions that complement and support their dispatches. A glimpse into their unique experiences provides a sharper insight to the story of the evolving female war correspondent.

## **Chapter One: Women Reporting War: from World War II to Iraq**

### **Historical Overview**

In World War II, 127 military-accredited women pushed their way into the male-dominated profession - marching with soldiers, reporting from the front lines and challenging the men.<sup>5</sup> Women such as Marguerite Higgins, who was among the group that liberated prisoners at the Dachau concentration camp, and Margaret Bourke-White, one of Life magazine's most famous photographers, made names for themselves for their fearless reporting. The first black female war correspondent, Elizabeth Murphy Phillips Moss, also went to World War II.

Despite the professional gains these women made, many lost their jobs to men returning from war. During the Korean War few women reported from Korea. Higgins is often credited with being the only one, but other women, such as Bourke-White, were also known to have covered the conflict. This low number of women in the Korean War is perhaps because of limited access to the Korean peninsula as well as reflective of less women journalists in the profession overall. There were fewer female correspondents -

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<sup>5</sup> Women Come to the Front, "Accredited Women Correspondents During World War II," <<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf0005.html>> (11 July 2005).

about 6 percent of foreign correspondents<sup>6</sup> - leading up to the Vietnam War then there were pre-World War II.<sup>7</sup>

During the Vietnam War, women reporters flocked to combat as never before. There were 467 military press-accredited women, of which 267 were American.<sup>8</sup> Women who couldn't find a publication or an editor willing to send them bought their own tickets to Saigon and became stringers for publications willing to buy their work but not hire them as staff. Denby Fawcett quit her job as a society reporter in Honolulu to pay her own way to Saigon. Jurate Kazickas, who could find no publication to hire her, won \$500 on the TV show "Password" to pay for her plane ticket. The loose military restrictions made reporting in Vietnam the most accessible of its time for women.

By the 1980s, the number of female foreign correspondents had tripled since pre-Vietnam War days to 33 percent. Women were studying journalism and choosing it as a career in record numbers,<sup>9</sup> and many were taking jobs with more authority. When A.M. Rosenthal, executive editor of The New York Times, went to Central America in the 1980s, he found the hotel lobby in San Salvador full of women correspondents.<sup>10</sup> In Beirut, news organizations turned to women reporters after the men started being taken

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1996), 16

<sup>7</sup> Library of Congress, "Women come to the Front," 3 April 2002, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf0004.html> >(19July 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Beasley, 223.

<sup>9</sup> Library of Congress, "Seeds of change," < <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf0004.html>> (17 July 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Kay Mills, *A Place in the News*, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1988), 203.

hostage.<sup>11</sup> In Bosnia, almost half of the journalists were female, and by Afghanistan it was routine to have women covering all aspects of the war.<sup>12</sup>

In the Gulf War, fewer freelancers had access to combat zones because of the military pool system in which reporters were escorted by military public relations officers at all times. Only reporters backed by publications that agreed to the strict military rules were allowed to send journalists to the pool system. Only 10 percent of military-registered journalists in the Gulf War were women.<sup>13</sup> Publications gave more of the foreign assignments to men. Some women that did go, while in Riyadh or Dhahran hotels waiting to go out in press pools, reported a difficult time maneuvering the strict female rules of Saudi Arabia. Women couldn't drive cars, shop alone, eat in restaurants or talk to men. Other women reported no obstacles.

The Gulf War was the first time women journalists, such as Molly Moore, reported receiving equal and fair treatment from military officers. It was the Gulf War that made CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour famous. Moore, the first female Pentagon reporter for the Washington Post, had an action-packed seat with the Marines entering Kuwait.

The Iraq War posed much of the same problem as the Gulf War for female journalists. Women correspondents embedded with the military, in which reporters traveled with troops under control of the military, made up 11 percent of embedded

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<sup>11</sup> Robin Wright, "The Media and the War on Terrorism," eds. Stephen Hess and Marvin Kalb, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2003), 192.

<sup>12</sup> Gloria Emerson in the "Note to Reader", "War Torn," (New York: Random House, 2002), viii.

<sup>13</sup> Beasley, 281.

correspondents.<sup>14</sup> An article posted on the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom reported the following numbers of embedded women reporters for the major broadcast agencies in the Iraq War:

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Total embedded</b>	<b>Number of women</b>
CNN	18	3
ABC	17	2
CBS	19	6
NBC	10	0
FOX	unknown	0

For those reporting from outside the military, only 16 American reporters stayed in Baghdad when the United States announced intentions to begin bombing Iraq. Of these 16, all of whom were living in the Palestine Hotel in the heart of Baghdad, two were women: Anne Garrels with National Public Radio and Melinda Liu with Newsweek. A handful of European women also waited for the invasion.

### **Gender and Reporting**

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<sup>14</sup> Brian Braiker, “‘Fembeds’ reflect on covering war,” *Newsweek*, 16 May 2003.

Throughout their history, women war correspondents have faced enormous discrimination from all fronts. They've had to fight to get to the wars, fight to stay in the wars and risk their lives to prove themselves worthy, often to the derision of those they worked with and wrote about. Of women in World War II, one reporter wrote:

Wherever they went, these 'gal correspondents' had to hustle harder than their male colleagues. For theirs was a double war: the war against the enemy and the war against the system. They had to fight red tape, condescension, disdain, outright hostility and downright lewdness.<sup>15</sup>

Historically, military men of power posed the biggest obstacles. A phrase infamous among early women war reporters was "no facilities for women." Military bureaucrats and officers used this excuse on a regular basis to keep women journalists out of war. Charlotte Ebener, who reported from Asia after World War II, including the Russian occupation of Manchuria and the build-up to the Korean War, even titled her book on the experiences "No Facilities for Women." Higgins encountered this excuse often in Korea.

These commanders had varied reasons for trying to keep women out of war. Some thought women would distract the troops during combat because they would rush to protect them. Gloria Emerson, a New York Times reporter during the Vietnam War,

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Jenkins, "'Gal Reporters': Breaking Barriers in World War II," *National Geographic News*, 10 December 2003, < [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/12/1210\\_031210\\_warwomen.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/12/1210_031210_warwomen.html) > (10 July 2005).

noted this problem when she refused to take a weapon. Not carrying a weapon is standard journalistic practice under the philosophy that journalists are neutral observers.

It was a long time later before it came to me that in refusing a weapon, all I had done was make it necessary for a GI to do the defending, that to refuse to take part in the killing only meant that others would have to do it for me.<sup>16</sup>

However, Denby Fawcett wrote that in reality the opposite was true. She was once caught in a firefight in Vietnam with Marines and was completely ignored by the soldiers.

Others thought women were too physically and emotionally weak to handle war and would become a burden. Fawcett responded to this stereotype saying

The truth is, the human mind has an amazing ability to block out the full horror of war when it becomes too difficult to endure; of course this ability to mentally withdraw is the same for men and women.<sup>17</sup>

Many thought women belonged at home, not in the man's world of war, while others wanted to protect the women from harm. Bourke-White was told it was too dangerous for a woman to fly to North Africa to cover the Allied invasion so she took a boat instead, which was torpedoed en route. In Vietnam, Fawcett wrote that one of the

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<sup>16</sup> Emerson, "Winners and Losers," 122.

<sup>17</sup> Fawcett, "War Torn," 13.



first officers she asked for permission to go into a combat area refused. He told her she reminded him of his daughter. “I swallowed hard in frustration knowing the same commander would never say to a male reporter, ‘You remind me of my son.’”<sup>18</sup> Tracy Wood called this “gentlemanly concern.”

Not overt sexual discrimination. Not conviction that women couldn’t do the job. Something much harder to fight: well meaning men in positions of authority who honestly believed it was more important to protect women from risks than encourage them to reach for the stars.<sup>19</sup>

Some did hold the conviction that a woman couldn’t do the job. When Tracy Wood with United Press International went to a base in Vietnam, the commander “took it as a personal offense that anyone would send a woman to cover that story. He didn’t care who I was with. The idea that I was a woman sent him into a rage.”<sup>20</sup>

In a Newsweek article, CNN’s embedded correspondent during the Iraq war, Lisa Rose Weaver, said that embedded female reporters were rarely assigned to the front line and instead were usually in helicopter and air units. Maj. Tom Blair, in the same article, attributes this to the low ration of female embedded journalists – about 85 out of 775.

But before the women could even get the chance to fight with the military over getting to the fight, they had to get past their editors. In 1971, the Associated Press

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<sup>18</sup> Fawcett, “War Torn,” 7.

<sup>19</sup> Tracy Wood, “War Torn”

<sup>20</sup> Mills, 205.

refused to give foreign assignments to women. The bureau chief of UPI refused to let Tracy Wood cover combat in Vietnam, which she maneuvered herself into on her own. This became more of a problem in the Gulf War when there were almost no freelance journalists because of the pool system. Since historically foreign/war, sports and business have been beats given to men, there were less women assigned to cover the war.

Once in a war zone, the male troops were the most accepting. From most accounts by female war correspondents, the “grunts” felt comfortable talking to them as both women and reporters and helped them often, lending clothes and gear or just providing companionship. Ann Brian Mariano, a Vietnam correspondent, described the grunts as “always respectful and welcoming.”<sup>21</sup>

Amy Schlesinger spent a year, from March 2004 to March 2005, traveling with the Arkansas National Guard’s 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in Iraq. She set up an online diary called the Baghdad Blog to write about her experiences. She wrote about the difficulty of showering for the 10 women among the 500 men; however, soon she and the troops were brushing teeth “side-by-side.”<sup>22</sup>

Male colleagues were another source of discrimination for female reporters. One of the most famous rivalries was between Higgins and Homer Bigart of the New York Herald Tribune during the Korean War. Bigart flew to Korea to replace Higgins, who refused to leave and a feud ensued. Bigart didn’t believe a woman should be covering

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<sup>21</sup> Mariano, “War Torn,” 38.

<sup>22</sup> Schlesinger, “Adjusting to dust,” Baghdad Blog, 26 March 2004, <<http://blog.ardemgaz.com/blog/>> (18 July 2005)..

war. He “kept ignoring and resenting [Higgins’] presence long after she had demonstrated her qualifications for being there.”<sup>23</sup>

The stereotype of the macho male reporter, drink and notebook in hand, was a sort of boy’s club that women were often excluded from. For example, In Washington the national press club would not allow women journalists to join. So instead the women formed their own club in 1919. The two didn’t merge until 1971.

### **Feminine Advantages**

Just as men use their gender as a tool for reporting – going to hostess clubs in Korea or drinking with politicians in male-dominated countries – so have women. Women often seem less threatening to locals. Emerson describes being in the villages of Vietnam and talking with the inhabitants, “... they did not see me as a menacing figure. “I did not frighten their babies or their children.” In 1994 Newsday reporter Tina Susman said that she received better treatment from her kidnappers in Somalia because she was a woman. They gave her plenty of food and water and let her use the bathroom when she wanted. “It helped a lot that I was a young woman,” Susman said in an article with the International Women’s Media Foundation. “I don’t know that a man would have been treated as well.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mills, 199.

<sup>24</sup> Heidi Deitrich, “Women who cover war: gender advantages,” International Women’s Media Foundation, < <http://www.iwmf.org/features/6831> >, (22 July 2005).

Using their gender to their advantage is especially true for women covering the Middle East. Though female reporters often encounter cultural problems in Arab countries – such as not being allowed to drive or eat in restaurants in Saudi Arabia – they can usually slip between the men’s world and the women’s world. Hilda Bryant of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer disguised herself as a boy in order to ride a donkey into the civil-war battles of Afghanistan. She wrote:

The disadvantages of being a woman in this strict Muslim culture were outweighed for me by the unique privileges. The tribesmen allowed me to go into the women’s working and living quarters whenever I chose, to hold their infants, gossip with their wives in stunted Pashto and denied me only their consent to take photos of their women.<sup>25</sup>

Male reporters find it virtually impossible to report on women in the Middle East. Garrels, the NPR correspondent in the Iraq War with experience reporting from other areas of the Middle East, said that her gender in the Middle East has been nothing but an advantage. Female reporters in China under Mao reported that Chinese women were much more willing to talk to them than to men. Joanne Omang of the Washington Post said that when in El Salvador in the 1980s, the women would “break into this long and

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<sup>25</sup> Hilda Bryant, “Tea in an Ammo dump with the Afghan rebels,” The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1 August 1980.

heart-rending story, and the men I was with couldn't understand it. They'd say, I talked to her already and she didn't say that to me."<sup>26</sup>

Judith Matloff, a professor at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and a veteran war correspondent, described the easier access women receive due to chivalry. The only problem she can remember having is when an Angolan officer refused to take her to the front because she was female. "I quickly melted his opposition with a live chicken and a bottle of vodka."<sup>27</sup>

### **Personalities, Reputations and Self-Perceptions**

Early women war reporters were controversial both on the battlefield and at home. As a result they earned reputations for being tough, gutsy and sometimes promiscuous.<sup>28</sup> Women war correspondents drink alcohol five times more than women journalists who do not cover war, according to a 2001 survey by the International Federation of Journalists. Emerson said of early women reporters: "They are usually young, have spirit and stamina, a passion for the story and the intent to be journalists ..."<sup>29</sup>

There are numerous accounts of adventurous young female reporters traipsing through battle fields and astounding the men. Ex-model Lee Miller, a photographer in Vietnam, designed her own helmet with a visor much like a suit of armor. Ann Brian

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<sup>26</sup> Mills, 212.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Matloff, "Women reporting war," International News Safety Institute.

<sup>28</sup> May, 199

<sup>29</sup> Emerson, "War Torn," xvii.

Mariano described being happy because she was living life “full throttle.”<sup>30</sup> Bigart, Higgins’ colleague and rival, was reported to have said “Wonderful. Who’s the mother?” when told of Higgins’ new baby. Bill Buford said of Martha Gellhorn, “She was a dame; she was a flirt; and she was a great reporter. That’s not a combination that you see very much now.”<sup>31</sup> NPR reporter Susan Stamberg described Gellhorn as “blonde, leggy, smart, sassy, impassioned -- and one terrific writer ... She had major moxie.”<sup>32</sup> Gellhorn was stripped of her press accreditation after appearing at the D-Day invasion as a stowaway. Emerson described the headstone of Barbara Stephens, a stringer for the Agence France-Presse, as reading, “She was young, brave, liked to talk, liked to drink. She had a husky voice. She is buried here.”

In order to make it in the male world, early war correspondents took extreme risks to prove their equality, though they rarely credited the feminist movement. They preferred to say they did it on their own. One of the reasons Bigart resented Higgins was because “Higgins nearly got him killed in Korea for making him take chances he would not have otherwise had to.”<sup>33</sup> Higgins snuck her way on to a boat of Marines landing at Inchon – grenades and bullets all around them. The male photographer turned back, but Higgins refused.<sup>34</sup>

Fawcett talks openly of her “friendly sex” with other reporters in order to relax and forget the war. Higgins dealt with gossip and rumors. Ebener wrote of her travels in

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<sup>30</sup> Mariano, “War Torn,” 37.

<sup>31</sup> James Tobin, “Reporting America at War.” ed. Michelle Ferrari, (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 35.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Stamberg, “Martha Gellhorn: a Twentieth Century Life,” *Morning Edition National Public Radio*, 6 October 2003. b

<sup>33</sup> Mills, 199.

<sup>34</sup> Marguerite Higgins, *War in Korea* (New York: The Country Life Press, 1951), 144

South Korea, “When Gayn (Mark Gayn, a reporter for the Chicago Sun) suggested our taking a trip to rioting Taegu, I gladly agreed. Gayn’s wife, Sally, was a friend of mine, and I could travel with her husband without causing gossip.<sup>35</sup>” She is worried that other correspondents will think she is “misbehaving.”

This fierce drive to gain respect from colleagues, editors and readers in a male profession resulted in some of the women journalists measuring their professional competence in comparison to men. When listing her reporting abilities, Ebener, who reported from Asia for the International News Service just after World War II, said, “I could even write sports like a man.<sup>36</sup>” Higgins called herself a “newsman” or a “one-man bureau.”

But some women mentioned their femininity beyond the difficulty of showering or finding a private bathroom. Ebener describes being in the jungles of Cambodia with the Foreign Legion. After a firefight leaving two Viet-Minh soldiers dead, a lieutenant with the Foreign Legion tells her “You are a woman. Go ahead and cry. Thank your God you can still cry at the sight of dead boys.”<sup>37</sup> So she did.

One of the characteristics noted of female war reporters as a group is their tendency to be loners. William C. Westmoreland, commander of the U.S. armed forces in Vietnam, had a change encounter with Fawcett at a remote army base. Because she was the daughter of a family friend, Westmoreland tried to ban women reporters from staying

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<sup>35</sup> Charlotte Ebener, *No Facilities for Women*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Ebener, vii.

<sup>37</sup> Ebener, 85.

overnight in the field. Fawcett said that fighting the proposal was the only time the women reporters ever came together as a group.

I never made an effort to be friends with other women reporters in Vietnam I am not sure why. When I think back now, I am sad, knowing how much we had in common and how we could have supported and comforted one another.<sup>38</sup>

Garrels' husband, Vint Lawrence, wrote that while Garrels was in Baghdad the hotel was a guy's world divided between print and TV journalists. He said Garrels was "too old to be a babe, too serious to be dismissed – but not really one of the gang, either."<sup>39</sup> Though she knew many of the correspondents in the hotel, she usually ate alone and stayed alone in her room, rather than sharing a room like many of the correspondents did.

## **Family Life**

Early correspondents tended to be young, unmarried and childless. This probably has as much to do with the type of adventurous and tough personalities the young women often shared as much as societal norms at home. It wasn't socially acceptable for husbands to wait at home for wives traveling the globe. Clare Hollingworth's husband divorced her on grounds of desertion when she left to cover World War II.

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<sup>38</sup> Fawcett, "War Torn," 13.

<sup>39</sup> Garrels, Anne. *Naked in Baghdad*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 144.



In America's more recent wars, many of the women, such as Garrels and Christiane Amanpour, were older and married. A few have children.

Garrels, who started her career directly after college, said "I thought I would have kids. I didn't, and I would not be doing what I am doing now if I had. With rare exceptions, the women who do this are single or childless."<sup>40</sup> However, she also said that her "secret weapon" was her husband who has given her the "security of home and family."<sup>41</sup>

BBC correspondent Yvonne Ridley was accused of being an irresponsible single mother after she was captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ridley said that much of the criticism for going to war when she had a 12-year-old daughter came from other female reporters. Marie Colvin with the Sunday Telegraph said that kind of attack annoyed her. "Male correspondents are the fathers of children. It's one of the few things that made me very angry that that's the way her very character is questioned not her professionalism," Colvin said.<sup>42</sup>

### **Women at War and Safety**

Being a war correspondent is equally dangerous for women and men. Many women journalists have been wounded or killed. American photographer Dicky Chapelle died from a land mine in Vietnam. Henri Huet took a picture of her on the ground being

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<sup>40</sup> Garrels, 50.

<sup>41</sup> Garrels, 51.

<sup>42</sup> BBC Woman's Hour, "Women War Correspondents," 10 January 2001.

given last rites. “She wore, as usual, small pearl earrings, and there was a flower in the band of her bush hat. Nearby, two soldiers are staring, stunned by the sight of a dying American woman.”<sup>43</sup> Kate Webb was captured by the North Vietnamese, held for 25 days and reported dead. When she returned to Cambodia, she had the unique experience of reading her own obituaries. In 1999 in East Timor government militia targeted journalists for making them look bad. Agence France-Presse photographer Maya Vidon had her camera destroyed by a sniper.<sup>44</sup> In 2001, the French journalist Johanne Sutton was killed in Afghanistan. Most recently Kate Peyton, a BBC producer, was shot and killed in Somalia in February 2005, just to name a few.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Press Institute, seven of the 41 journalists killed around the world so far in 2005 were women. From 2004 to the beginning of 2005, seven of the 30 kidnapped journalists were women. From 1993 to 2001, 18 women journalists were killed.

Rape is also used as justification for why women shouldn't be sent to war. In 2000, Jineth Bedoya Lima, with the Colombian paper *El Espectador* was kidnapped, drugged and raped by the right-wing paramilitary. Matloff said that rape is the “woman correspondent's nightmare. It is particularly frightening in this age of AIDS.” She said she knows of three correspondents who were raped on assignment and didn't feel comfortable telling their male boss for fear their careers would be affected.<sup>45</sup> However, some have argued that torture of equal magnitude can be used against men as well.

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<sup>43</sup> Emerson, “War Torn,” xx.

<sup>44</sup> Dietrich, “Women who cover war”

<sup>45</sup> Matloff, “Women reporting war.”

Over 82 percent of female foreign correspondents responding to a recent International News Safety Institute survey reported physical attack or intimidation while covering conflict. About 55 percent reported being sexual harassed, 41 percent had experienced mental abuse, 35 percent reported physical abuse, 7 percent had experienced sexual abuse and 7 percent had been taken hostage.

Matloff also addressed the need for smaller flak jackets. The current ones designed for men are too heavy, some have caused herniated discs, and cumbersome. The INSI also reported that though a few women had requested custom-made female flak jackets, 89 percent of women had never used one.<sup>46</sup>

Like trauma, the challenges confronting women are often overlooked because they're embarrassing – like menstruation and sexual harassment, Or they're inconvenient; after all, it's expensive to order a special flak jacket for the one girl on the team, or to pay for special training.<sup>47</sup>

## **Writing and Reporting Styles**

There is a presumption that women are more prone to writing about the human side of war while men tend to focus on the strategic aspects. However, some argue that this is an imposed, not an inherent difference. Moore said that in newsrooms in the 1970s

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<sup>46</sup> International News Safety Institute, "Women Reporting War," <<http://www.newssafety.com/stories/insi/wrw.htm>> (1 December 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Matloff, "Women reporting war."

women were often “shunted into ‘soft news,’ such as covering the school board or writing feature stories.”<sup>48</sup> Ebener was often asked by International News Service to find a woman’s angle – something she had difficulty doing. When Denby Fawcett arrived in Vietnam, the Honolulu Advertiser promoted her as a reporter “specializing in color stories on Saigon and its environs” and writing articles on “men and women lending their teaching, building and medical skills to winning the peace.” She wasn’t supposed to leave the city and cover the dangerous part of the war, which is what she wanted to do.<sup>49</sup> Later when she made it into the combat zone, she made a point of covering exactly the same stories as the men, “mainly because I never again wanted to be typecast as a women’s-page reporter.”<sup>50</sup> The first story The Washington Post asked Moore to do when she arrived in Saudi Arabia during the build-up to the Gulf War was the women’s story for the style section.

But many female reporters in Vietnam, such as Emerson, Patricia Penn and Martha Gellhorn, did choose to write about the human side of war. Gellhorn has been described as using “the craft on behalf of a cause”<sup>51</sup> because she wrote about the injustice and cruelty of war. In Sarajevo, Amanpour reported on a shelling that killed so many people there weren’t enough numbers to put the complete year of death on a 2-year-old girl’s gravestone. In East Timor in 1999, when the United Nations advised all journalists to leave, three women refused. A friend of Irene Slegt, a Dutch photographer that stayed, described her as the kind of woman whose sympathy for the people she worked overrode

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<sup>48</sup> Moore, 72.

<sup>49</sup> Fawcett, “War Torn,” 6.

<sup>50</sup> Fawcett, “War Torn,” 16.

<sup>51</sup> James Tobin, “Reporting America at War,” ed. Michelle Ferrari, (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 33.

her common sense, something she said was more common in women. Another explained East Timor as an unpopular war in which only a woman, who are usually less concerned with making journalism a career track, would stay. “Men, particularly younger men, they want to be big or they wouldn’t go into journalism in the first place. They’d become primary school teachers.”<sup>52</sup>

However, Philip Knightley, an investigative journalist with the Sunday Times, wrote about female reporters in Vietnam:

Lest this concentration on personal experience and human-interest reporting give the wrong impression, it should be noted that there were also women writers who were interested in the political, cultural and historical background of the war, Frances FitzGerald probably being the best known.<sup>53</sup>

FitzGerald later wrote a book about her Vietnam experience called “Fire in the Lake,” concluding the United States lost the war because it never understood the Vietnamese. Higgins was also known for her strategic coverage of Korea with little attention given to the human side.

Other correspondents, such as Orla Guerin, BBC correspondent in Jerusalem, have said that segregating topics by gender is cliché.

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<sup>52</sup> McLaughlin, 171.

<sup>53</sup> Knightley, 459.

There is this suggestion that is often peddled that men will want to write about tanks and women will want to write about refugees. I just don't think that is the case. A good journalist will follow the story.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> BBC Woman's Hour, "Women War correspondents."

## Chapter Two: Marguerite Higgins and World War II and the Korean War

Marguerite Higgins first reported from World War II. For six weeks Higgins traveled Germany with a typewriter and a sleeping bag to interview soldiers and citizens. Upon finding the concentration camp Dachau still guarded by SS guards, she walked straight up to the electric gate and demanded in fluent German that the guards surrender. Twenty-two men brought her their guns in surrender and she walked into the camp to announce to the prisoners in German, French and English that they were free.<sup>55</sup>

This anecdote sets the tone for the rest of Higgins career, though she is best remembered as the daring and beautiful young correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune in the first year of the Korean War. She demanded respect from everyone and worked tirelessly under perilous conditions to get her story to the American public. In reaction to gender discrimination and the prescribed role of women in war as defined by both military officers and male colleagues, Higgins responded overzealously in order to create her own place as a war correspondent. Her fearless, and often reckless, behavior was combined with a fierce sense of competition, anti-feminism and the breaking of societal stereotypes of women. In the face of hardship, she hid her feelings and refused any offer of unequal treatment – even if it would make her more comfortable. She perceived her competitive behavior as a professional survival technique and sought out dangerous situations, took unneeded risks and downplayed physical discomfort to prove to herself and others that she was equal to a man. Higgins insistence of assuming the role

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<sup>55</sup> Antoinette May, *Witness to War* (New York: Beaufort Books, Inc., 1983), 89-90.

of a male correspondent covering the war, rather than taking on a female role, shows in both her self-definition and her writing -- in sharp contrast to other women war correspondents who used their gender as a critical tool to report war from a female perspective.

### **Background – “Girl War Correspondent”<sup>56</sup>**

All of the foreign correspondents in World War II had difficulty relating the horror of the war in print to an American public unable to comprehend the full magnitude of the atrocities. Higgins “tired the hammer-blow approach written as an eye-witness account.”<sup>57</sup> At only 24 years old, she received her first journalism award for reporting on the liberation of Dachau.

After the war, the Herald Tribune transferred her from Berlin to Tokyo – an assignment she did not want. Her colleague, Keyes Beech, said, “Maggie didn’t do much to disguise the fact that she found the Far East assignment about as exciting as a duck pond.”<sup>58</sup> But this posting is what led her into notoriety as a courageous war correspondent when North Korea attacked South Korea in 1950.

Two days after the start of the Korean War, Higgins, along with three other foreign correspondents, flew into Seoul on an American evacuation plane en route to pick

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<sup>56</sup> Title of Carl Mydans article on Higgins appearing in *Life*, October 2, 1950.

<sup>57</sup> Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, (London: Prion Books, 1975), 360.

<sup>58</sup> May, 131.



up the last American civilians in Korea. For nearly a year she covered the war in Korea fighting gender discrimination as hard as she fought to get her stories.

In 1951, Higgins was the first female to receive a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting for her coverage of the Korean War (though Anne O'Hare McCormick won a Pulitzer for foreign commentary in 1937.). She shared the award with five other journalists that reported on the Korean War. It took 30 years until another woman, Shirley Christian, won the Pulitzer for International Reporting in 1981.<sup>59</sup>

After leaving Korea, Higgins launched on a whirlwind tour of interviews with world leaders, including Franco, Tito, Chiang Kai-shek, Nehru, Liquat Ali Kahn, the shah of Iran, Dwight D. Eisenhower, President Truman and the King of Siam.<sup>60</sup> She became a columnist and a Russian "expert," covered civil war in the Congo and began to spend time in Vietnam as a war correspondent. Her work in Vietnam has been criticized by many as too right-wing and blindly supportive of the war. In 1966, she contracted a rare tropical disease and died at the age of 45. She is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

### **Discrimination in Korea.**

Higgins faced enormous obstacles throughout her time in Korea. As she boarded the plane for her first trip to Korea, June 27, 1951, her co-passenger and Time correspondent Frank Gibney told Higgins "Korea is no place for a woman."<sup>61</sup> On her

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<sup>59</sup> The Pulitzer Prizes, < <http://www.pulitzer.org> > (29 November 2004).

<sup>60</sup> May, 189.

<sup>61</sup> May, 136.

second trip to Korea three days later, a colonel met her on the airstrip as she disembarked and said, “You’ll have to go right back, young lady.”<sup>62</sup> She was banished from Korea by Lieutenant General Walton W. Walker for the reason that “This is just not the type of war where women ought to be running around the front lines.”<sup>63</sup> When the Navy was preparing for its famous landing at Inchon, Higgins was not allowed to join the other male correspondents on one of the Navy boats because there were “no facilities.” When she got caught on board, she was banned and forced to sleep on the dock.<sup>64</sup>

For Higgins, this male-dominated war arena drew out a reckless determination to get her story. She consistently risked her life and went to greater extremes than her male colleagues to prove herself as a reporter. For example, after she got a concussion from a jeep accident, she snuck out of the hospital against doctor’s orders to get back to her story.<sup>65</sup> When she was ordered out of Korea, she marched directly to General Douglas MacArthur to argue her case. He lifted the ban and cabled the Herald Tribune: “Marguerite Higgins held in highest esteem by everyone.”<sup>66</sup> One correspondent said, “Her energy and recklessness made it tough on all the others.”<sup>67</sup>

Discrimination also brought out Higgins’s ruthless competitive side. “Marguerite Higgins and Bigart, who took chances that others rejected and spurred each other on in a private competition to get top billing on the Herald Tribune’s front page...Considering

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<sup>62</sup> Marguerite Higgins, *War in Korea* (New York: The Country Life Press, 1951), 39.

<sup>63</sup> May, 153.

<sup>64</sup> Higgins, 136, 149.

<sup>65</sup> May 159.

<sup>66</sup> May, 155.

<sup>67</sup> May 180.

the risks that this type of reporting involved, it was surprising that Higgins and Bigart survived.”<sup>68</sup> Gibney told Time “She’s as innocent as a cobra.”<sup>69</sup>

Higgins reckless and competitive behavior was a refusal to be perceived as weak or inferior to a man in the face of discrimination. She depended on being admired for her strength and courage to create her own self-definition as smart and talented reporter. She refused to be insignificant:

But, for me, getting to Korea was more than just a story. It was a personal crusade. I felt that my position as a correspondent was at stake. Here I represented one of the world’s most noted newspapers as its correspondent in that area. I could not let the fact that I was a woman jeopardize my newspaper’s coverage of the war. Failure to reach the front would undermine all my arguments that I was entitled to the same assignment breaks as any man. It would prove that a woman as a correspondent was a handicap to the New York Herald Tribune.<sup>70</sup>

### **Self-Perception**

Higgins considered herself equal if not better than her male counterparts but her insistence on gender neutrality in the field shaped her own perception of herself. She thought of herself in terms of a man, not a woman doing a man’s job. She called herself a

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<sup>68</sup> Knightley, 369.

<sup>69</sup> May, 173.

<sup>70</sup> Higgins, 17-18.

“one-man bureau”<sup>71</sup> and a “newsman”<sup>72</sup> and was very proud of a clipping sent to her by Robert Worth Bingham that said:

Miss Higgins shows no desire to win a name as a woman who dares to write at the spot where the men are fighting. Her ambition is to be recognized as a good reporter, sex undesignated...An envelope in our newspaper library’s clipping file is labeled ‘Higgins, Marguerite – Newsman. We believe Miss Higgins would like that.’<sup>73</sup>

Proud of her self-definition as a man, she lived her life in rebellion of societal stereotypes for women, both in life and in reporting. Outside the war zone, she had numerous affairs and ignored rumors of her promiscuity. In Korea, she could “hit a ditch as fast as any man.”<sup>74</sup>

She spent her time in Korea continuously proving this male identity. She refused to complain, slept on the ground with the troops or table tops with other correspondents even when cots were offered to her, marched at the head of column of troops, used the bathroom in the bushes, hid her fear and assumed the role of a man.

## **Comparison**

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<sup>71</sup> Higgins, 50

<sup>72</sup> Higgins, 96.

<sup>73</sup> Higgins, 109

<sup>74</sup> Higgins, 109.

In comparison to other female correspondents, Higgins reports on the Korean War were tactical. When she departed from this type of reporting, it was to report on problems within the U.S. military that was keeping them from getting the job done. In her book, "War in Korea," she rarely mentions Korean citizens unless it is in connection with the military. Her reporting is direct, concise and deals with strategical overviews and military analysis. When she does write descriptively, it is usually to describe the character of a major player in the Korean War, such as MacArthur or other military officials. Even the American soldiers rarely get personal coverage.

For Higgins, discrimination in Korea led to a self-image created in part as a reaction to male attitudes towards women and in part from an ambitious desire to be thought of as a good reporter on par with the best of the male foreign correspondents she worked with. In contrast with modern women war correspondents whose coverage includes women's issues and often presents war from a female perspective, Higgins's writing style in war coverage reveals a self-perception as that of a male correspondent and a rejection of the female perspective.

### Chapter Three: Gloria Emerson and the Vietnam War

Gloria Emerson was a daring, eccentric 6-foot-tall reporter who spoke her mind and wrote what she wanted. She covered many wars, but is most famous for her searing coverage of Vietnam. Once when crossing the street in Saigon, she saw an American soldier getting rough with a small Vietnamese woman, so she went up to him and punched him in the arm. “That’s no way to treat a lady,” she shouted at him. The astonished soldier replied, “That’s no lady. It’s a man.”<sup>75</sup>

Emerson believed that the role of the war correspondent was to “make clear what is happening in the country where the war is taking place and the effects of the war and why the war ... standing strong and finding out as much as you can for yourself.”<sup>76</sup> This is exactly how she is remembered.

The Vietnam War deeply impacted Emerson’s perspective on life. Though she dedicated her career to reporting from war zones, she was critical of her work, often saying it wasn’t good enough or that it was “messy.” Many have described her as funny and entertaining, however, she was a loner, withdrawing from ordinary life and choosing to immerse herself in the pain of war.

National Public Radio reporter Scott Simon said that Emerson reported on the terror, the lunacy, desperation and cruelty of war. “They are easier to convey because we know them,” she said. She shunned tactical reporting and instead focused on war effects on people, identifying with war veterans and detaching herself from the ignorance of the

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<sup>75</sup> Emerson, *Reporting America at War*, 164.

<sup>76</sup> Emerson, *Reporting America at War*, 171.

American public. Her frustration with how easily she thought Americans forgot the war compounded during her life and she was never free of her anger at the cost of war.

She found the problems of being a woman in a man's world trivial but said it was important for women to covering war because "men were boys at heart who got dazzled by guns and uniforms."<sup>77</sup>

## **Background**

Emerson started her career on the fashion page at The New York Times in 1957, where she "hated writing about shoes and clothes."<sup>78</sup> She finally persuaded her editors at the Times to send her to Northern Ireland and then Nigeria. She got the Vietnam assignment from the Times in 1970 when she was 31 after being refused by numerous other editors. "I was allowed to go to Vietnam because the war was supposed to be over. It didn't matter if a female was sent."<sup>79</sup> She also attributed her assignment to the fact that "they ran out of men."<sup>80</sup>

"She spent two years in Vietnam writing for the Times, for which she won a George Polk award for excellence in foreign correspondence. Her book on the war, "Winners and Losers," won the National Book Award in 1978. She also received the Matrix Award from New York Women in Communications. Her later book on Gaza won the James Aronson Award for social justice journalism in 1991. She published four books

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<sup>77</sup> Scott Simon, "War correspondent Gloria Emerson dies at age 75," National Public Radio, 7 August 2004.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Pyle, "Foreign correspondent Gloria Emerson dies," Associated Press, 6 August 2004.

<sup>79</sup> Scott Simon, "War correspondent Gloria Emerson dies at age 75," National Public Radio, 7 August 2004

<sup>80</sup> Tobin, 163.

over her lifetime; the last on Graham Greene was published in 2000. She won other smaller awards but was disdainful of them. When she received an award called the “Expanding Opportunities,” she said satirically of her “little prizes” that it was “as if no war need now shut out a clever, self-confident woman who did not mind a little mess, a little blood.”<sup>81</sup>

Emerson was married twice, both of whom she divorced, and like most female correspondents was childless.

After Vietnam Emerson went on to report on wars in El Salvador, Algeria and Gaza. At the age of 75 she committed suicide in her New York apartment because Parkinson’s disease was affecting her ability to write, something she didn’t want to face. She left behind a self-written obituary.

### **Personality and Perceptions**

In an article in the Los Angeles Times, Alvin Shuster, who was her Saigon Bureau chief during the Vietnam War, described her as “tall, lanky, funny, chain-smoking, eccentric -- and the troops loved her, as we all did.”<sup>82</sup> The 1998 documentary film *Imagine: John Lennon* portrays her as the New Yorker with no hesitation to speak exactly what’s on her mind. A foreign-affairs columnist with a paper in Cleveland said

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<sup>81</sup> Emerson, “Winners and Losers,” 6.

<sup>82</sup> Dennis McLellan, “Gloria Emerson – war reporter- author”, LA Times, 6 August 2004.



she was a “classy eccentric” who once lectured her as a child for trying to order milk in a French restaurant.<sup>83</sup>

However, despite this Emerson was a loner while in Vietnam. “I don’t drink Jack Daniel’s and I didn’t take dope or stronger stuff, so I stayed by myself, a little island,”<sup>84</sup> she said. She felt that no one in the press corps discussed the war seriously so she stayed away from them. She was such a maverick that Shuster said she would give him a heart attack. Photographers often said she was difficult to work with.

After the war, Emerson returned to the United States and began working on her book about the effects of the war. She interviewed deserters, veterans and families affected by the war. But it was the veterans that Emerson identified with. Like many veterans, the Vietnam War seriously affected the way Emerson dealt with the American world when she returned home. When talking about the war, she always used the term “us,” as in “I began to see what had really been done to us.”<sup>85</sup> She was unable to adjust to regular reporting. Once when covering a small town holiday, she immediately gravitated to the veterans standing on the outskirts, unable to find any enthusiasm for the celebration. They were the only ones she felt comfortable talking to. She also describes going into a book store and turning her book down so no one could see it out of embarrassment. “I had this piercing moment of shame that I had taken this catastrophe and dared to put it in a book.”<sup>86</sup> She thought her writing wasn’t good enough and that her articles were like ice cubes because they melted away and did nothing.

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<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Sullivan, “Remembering a writer who couldn’t forget,” Plain Dealer, 12 August 2004.

<sup>84</sup> Emerson, “Reporting America at War,” 165.

<sup>85</sup> Emerson, “Winners and Losers,” 6.

<sup>86</sup> Emerson “Reporting America at War,” 170.

Emerson became angry at the “glossy pieces” giving advice to families of veterans or writers who never suggested the war might be wrong. She refused to answer her phone. She was often brusque.

### **Gender and Reporting**

Emerson was dismissive of the women’s movement. She couldn’t bear their posters that said, “Save our sisters in Danang,” and hated the women who wouldn’t join the antiwar movement because they thought the crime of rape wasn’t sufficiently stressed, which she said it was. She thought questions about being a woman in Vietnam were irrelevant or not challenging. “I was reluctant to complain about the tiny problems of being female in a large male press corps when the lives of soldiers in all the armies were so unpromising and always wretched.”<sup>87</sup> Sometimes she would get angry over what she perceived as ignorance. She once wrote about a young college woman who told Emerson, “I’m so glad a woman was there to see it.” Her response was to turn her back on the young woman in anger.

It was as if she were dismissing all the Vietnamese women whose lives were deformed by the war, the many Vietnamese women in the South who risked

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<sup>87</sup> Emerson, “War Torn,” xvi.

torture and death in opposing the Americans and their Vietnamese allies and the American nurses who cared for the wrecked soldiers.<sup>88</sup>

However, later Emerson wrote that the women reporters in Vietnam needed to tell their stories so she participated in a book of recollections of female reporters in Vietnam called “War Torn.”

Emerson said she hated the military officials, calling them “dangerous, treacherous people,” and they hated her because she was a woman.<sup>89</sup> She also said that though she had problems with them, the problems weren’t worth remembering. “Sometimes they cared about where I would go to the bathroom and I did not.”<sup>90</sup> She compared the enlisted men to women because they were “leashed, confined, made so small and uncertain.”<sup>91</sup>

Emerson expected to be treated equally and didn’t like to dwell on it when she was not. Of the relatively free access women reporters had during the Vietnam War, she said “During the war I was equal at last, and often it was too much to bear.”<sup>92</sup> She mentions occasionally being forced to turn back because she was a woman because the soldiers thought a dead white woman was more bothersome than 10 dead men.<sup>93</sup> A pilot refused to let her in his helicopter because he might be taking fire.

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<sup>88</sup> Emerson, “War Torn,” xv.

<sup>89</sup> Emerson, “Reporting America at War,” 165.

<sup>90</sup> Emerson, “Winner and Losers,” 7.

<sup>91</sup> Emerson, “Winners and Losers,” 7.

<sup>92</sup> Emerson, “Winners and Losers,” 7.

<sup>93</sup> Emerson, “Winners and Losers,” 7.

## Writing and Reporting Style in the Vietnam War

Emerson tried to write so that war was imaginable. She once said the horrors were in the details. A reporter said her stories “reflected her own searing sense of the waste on all sides and the utter loss of illusions among those who observed the war in its last years.”<sup>94</sup>

Her articles are overwhelming about people’s lives. She wrote heartbreaking stories of American GIs but was also one of the few who paid attention to the lives of the Vietnamese.

Some of the topics she wrote about include a South Vietnamese woman jailed for participating in anti-government demonstrations, how the villagers left behind from an American massacre were coping, heroin buying among American troops, how French businesses were fairing in Saigon, a visit by South Vietnamese troops to a site where Cambodians had massacred Vietnamese civilians and a profile of Army doctors.

She received criticism for her articles that portrayed the uselessness of the war and its tragic effect on soldiers, local civilians and families at home. When her editor came to Saigon, he told her to start writing about the aspects of war that worked. “I was astonished. There was no way to comply with his suggestion, so I promised nothing.”<sup>95</sup>

Her topics are usually emotional and her quotes are painful. Of writing in these topics, she said “When you write about pain and loss, you have to be very strict with yourself

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<sup>94</sup> Tobin, 163.

<sup>95</sup> Emerson, “War Torn,” xx.

and not indulge your own emotions”<sup>96</sup> and that “You have to be careful not to be too sentimental. You have to write with a bit of dry ice.”<sup>97</sup>

Many were often critical of her work in Vietnam as well as other wars. In her obituary she wrote of herself and her book on Gaza:

The book provoked hostility among friends, and others felt it was anti-Israel, but Emerson insisted this was not the reason for writing it... She hoped to provide a primer for those who felt the situation in the Middle East was too complicated or too controversial to understand.<sup>98</sup>

## **Comparison**

Like other women correspondents, such as Garrels in the Iraq War, Emerson writes to portray the effects of war. However, her writing is less descriptive of her surroundings and more concentrated on the horror and cruelty of war. Other reporters describe their lives in war zones – the small details about daily life and what the environment looks like. Emerson didn’t do this. She was often depicted as writing the opposite of male correspondents, who were “caught up in the hardware and strategy.”<sup>99</sup> Also like Garrels, Emerson relied on an interpreter, who also became her guide and friend, to help her write the stories of the Vietnamese people. Like Molly

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<sup>96</sup> Emerson, “Reporting America at War,” 170.

<sup>97</sup> Emerson, “Reporting America at War,” 172.

<sup>98</sup> Craig Whitney, “Chronicler of war’s damage,” *The Gazette*, 6 August 2004.

<sup>99</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, “Obituary: Gloria Emerson,” *The Independent*, 17 August 2004.

Moore in the Gulf War, she attempted to humanize the war, reporting on the lives of regular soldiers.

## Chapter Four: Molly Moore and the Gulf War

In a caravan of 11 Chevy blazers, Molly Moore rumbled across the Saudi Arabian desert into Kuwait with the Marines during the ground war against Iraq. The only woman and the only reporter among the 38 men, Moore ended her four day trip with the liberation of Kuwait City. On one stop to inspect a group of 3,500 Iraqi prisoners of war, Moore followed Lt. Gen. Walter Eugene Boomer, the commanding general of the Marines, as he walked along the length of the corral. The prisoners smiled, waved, pointed and whispered at them as they walked by. “What are they saying?” she asked a Kuwaiti officer. “There goes the general who put us here?” “‘No,’ he said with a grin. “They are saying, ‘Look! There is a woman!’”<sup>100</sup>

Moore is a woman of many firsts: the first woman to cover the legislature for the Lake Charles American Press, the first of two women to have a news beat at the New Orleans Times-Picayune and the first woman to cover the Pentagon for the Washington Post. She was also the first female civilian allowed in the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation in Riyadh and the first to female reporter travel with a commanding general during the Gulf War.<sup>101</sup> Moore covered the Gulf War for the Washington Post, where she still works.

Moore writes from the perspective of the American military and provides a clear and concise picture of events from her vantage point. But under this she attempts to

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<sup>100</sup> Moore, 254.

<sup>101</sup> All “firsts” attributed to Moore’s own accounts in “A Woman At War.”

humanize the military, providing small details and background information on the people in the war, something often missing in technical dispatches.

## **Background**

Born in Lake Charles, La., Moore started her career path in journalism only after a man with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service told her that women in the service could only be secretaries. In high school she started writing for the Lake Charles American Press and then after college for the New Orleans Times-Picayune. Three years later she got a job with The Washington Post covering a school board and was then assigned the Pentagon beat.

“Managing editor Robert G. Kaiser bucked tradition in assigning me to the Pentagon as the paper’s first women military correspondent, then sent me to war.”<sup>102</sup>

Like women correspondents before her, 35-year-old Moore was unmarried when she went to the ground war of the Gulf War in 1991, but her fiancé at the time, who she later married, supported her from their home.<sup>103</sup>

Moore reported on the Gulf War from August 1990 until the end of the war in February 1991. As part of the military-organized pool system, she and the other journalists rotated between covering press briefings in hotels in Saudi Arabia and going out with American troops. She was invited by Boomer to join his group of Marines to

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<sup>102</sup> Moore, ix.

<sup>103</sup> Moore, xi.



report on the beginning of the ground war as they entered Kuwait. She later wrote a book, “A Woman at War,” on the experience.

Since the Gulf War, Moore has worked in India, Mexico, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel.

### **Gender and Reporting**

In 1986, Moore was the only woman from a major paper covering the Pentagon. She said she had to be doubly prepared for interviews in order to be considered “half as credible as a male reporter.”<sup>104</sup>

However, in writing her book, Moore had extensive help from military officers. There were many who

spent many hours reconstructing details of the buildup and the war. Many of those officers gave me extraordinary access to war operations at a time when they were under immense pressure from their superiors to distance themselves from the news media. After the war they gave me thousands of pages of documents, war journals and personal diaries to help me write this book.<sup>105</sup>

Moore was the only woman invited to follow Boomer into Kuwait. Even the women Marines were left behind for the mission, and Moore wrote they “were pissed

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<sup>104</sup> Moore, 72.

<sup>105</sup> Moore, x.

off<sup>106</sup>” about it. However, despite the occasional uncomfortable moments she describes – such as dressing inside her sleeping bag and worrying about being seen using the bathroom outside - Moore was surprised at the equal treatment she received, especially from the “brass.”

For the first time in America’s history of war correspondence, Moore writes that “in Saudi Arabia, the senior military officers seemed to be taking both the women in uniform and the women journalists more seriously.”<sup>107</sup>

Moore is concerned about receiving special treatment. One night in the desert when the wind keeps the Marines from setting up the tents so they have to sleep under the cars, Boomer invited Moore to sleep in his tent because he felt sorry for her. Moore at first refuses. “I had never allowed the military to give me any special treatment in seven months of desert camp-outs. I’d always insisted that I be treated the same as the troops.” But then she changes her mind. “This was the chance of a lifetime. Who cared if it was special treatment? I’d have access to every detail of the war, every decision Boomer would make during the night.”<sup>108</sup>

When staying in Dhahran, near the U.S. military base, she was required by law to have a letter from the U.S. consulate saying that she was there on legitimate business. She called it the “I am not a whore” letter.

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<sup>106</sup> Moore, 15.

<sup>107</sup> Moore, 73.

<sup>108</sup> Moore, 11.

Like many female reporters in the Middle East, Moore is in the position of being able to cover both the men's and women's worlds. Because of this, the first story the Post wants from Moore is the women's story. This is not what she wanted to write about.

I winced at the thought that my first war story would be an article on women's problems for the Style section. I wanted to do stories on the U.S. plans for defending Saudi Arabia and how the harsh desert environment was going to affect the capability of American troops and equipment. I argued that these stories should be done first.<sup>109</sup>

When writing the story, she said, "I had entered a territory even more hostile to women than the Pentagon's chauvinistic male bureaucracy."<sup>110</sup> She also wrote a story about what it's like to be a female military officer.

As a woman journalist, I could go on warships that were off-limits to women in the Navy, ride in tanks that were closed to women in the Army and go into combat with the commanding general of the Marine Corps. On a battlefield that, under law, was not open to women Marines.<sup>111</sup>

## **Reporting and Writing Style in Gulf War**

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<sup>109</sup> Moore, 31.

<sup>110</sup> Moore, 32.

<sup>111</sup> Moore, 235.

Just getting to the Gulf War was a privileged trip for journalists. Moore was invited to ride on Dick Cheney's plane to Saudi Arabia with a handful of journalists from major papers. On the way she discovered she had a 30-day visa for Saudi Arabia and wondered if she should tell her colleagues on the plane. Her competitive instincts struggled against her desire for companionship, which won.

Moore's motivation in writing her book was to humanize the military during the Gulf War. In her Note to the Reader she wrote

I do not profess to present the definitive history of the war here, but rather to describe the human dimensions of war making and war fighting that are all too often overlooked in historical accounts.<sup>112</sup>

Her book is written in first person and her voice is clear. She includes her own perspective of events as well as the people shaping the war and the soldiers carrying out their orders.

Moore does little speculating on her opinion of the war. When told that casualties for some troops might be 50 percent, she writes that "I did not believe this war was worth the cost to so many American families."<sup>113</sup> However, it is not something she expands on.

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<sup>112</sup> Moore, xiii.

<sup>113</sup> Moore, 144.

Later, when Moore enters Kuwait City and reports the joyful celebrations she sees, she calls it a “just war.”<sup>114</sup>

Though Moore writes in a concise newspaper style, she also uses descriptive comparisons. For example when describing the circular arrangement of vehicles parking for the night she calls it an “old-fashioned wagon train.”<sup>115</sup>

“No other reporter in the Middle East was spending the war with a higher ranking commander,” she writes. “Although several women reporters had covered previous wars from the front lines, I knew of no case in which a female journalist has ever accompanied such a senior commanding general into the battlefield – much less lived in his tent with him.”<sup>116</sup> This is what is important to her – the high ranking and the decision making that goes with it.

Moore has an eye for understanding a person’s motives. Of Schwarzkopf she wrote “He was one of those interview subjects who’s mastered the chameleon technique. He could, with the bat of an eye, transform himself into whoever he wanted me to believe he was.”<sup>117</sup> When she interviewed military leaders, such as Schwarzkopf and Boomer, she often asked them about their feelings and emotions – what they are worried about and scared of. She writes about the military as vulnerable and very human. When she introduces a main character, she gives as much background information as she can. For example, she gives over a page to describing Boomer’s experiences in Vietnam and how that affects his decision making in the Gulf War.

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<sup>114</sup> Moore, 295.

<sup>115</sup> Moore, 10.

<sup>116</sup> Moore, 12.

<sup>117</sup> Moore 58.

In her writing, Moore tries to show her subjects' personalities and feelings. She wanted to show how difficult it was to plan a war and to be a part of it. "It was a subject that had come to fascinate me: how commanders withstand the pressure of making war in an era of instant communications, presidential interventions and worldwide attention."<sup>118</sup>

Moore often begins her war reports with one person, illuminating the person's job and how the person feels about it, and then expanding upon that one emotion to capture a particular slice of the war. For example, her Feb. 19, 1991, article "Mind-blowing work" begins with 20-year old Marine Lance Cpl. Stephen Mitchell and his job as a mine clearer. In the first few paragraphs, Moore describes how he fingers the two crosses - one given to him by his mother and the other by his aunt - when he talks about the danger. He keeps a picture of his girlfriend inside the mine-breeching personnel carrier. He relieves the pressure by writing. She then expands upon this to describe what the Marines do to relieve stress on a daily basis and describes their lives. In reporting from the front line, Moore combines reporting on clearing mines after crossing the Kuwait border with the human side of it. In a Feb. 23, 1991, report, she begins by describing a Marine's nightly ritual of laying out his chemical suit, mask, boots and rifle before going to sleep. Then she describes the uncertainty of the troops to believe the war will end diplomatically. Moore also writes about women soldiers and how for the first time in American history they were deployed so close to the front lines.

Moore describes the military censorship, justified as not allowing troop information to be read by the enemy, as frustrating but also making her job easy. "I never

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<sup>118</sup> Moore, 113

had to check the spelling of a name or the identification of a military unit. I never had to muddle a good story with facts and figures.<sup>119</sup>”

Moore is comfortable without “stereotypical female accoutrements,” such as makeup, though she said going without a shower for five days was uncomfortable. Most of the time, she traveled with men though at one camp she stayed in the “women’s tent.” The public affairs officers told her, “We hope you don’t think it is insulting or anything to be in the women’s tent.”<sup>120</sup>

Like Lande suggests, one of the interesting angles to come from Moore’s book was her report of new technology and how it affected both war and reporting. She writes that despite the advances, “it seemed technology had reached – and exceeded – the limits of human ability.<sup>121</sup>” The night vision sights barely worked, the satellite with which to file her stories from the battlefield often didn’t work and the long-range everything didn’t work if the user couldn’t see anything.

## **Comparison**

Like Marguerite Higgins, Moore reports on events from the perspective of the U.S. military, including tactical coverage and problems from within the military. And like Higgins and many women in Vietnam, she is part of the battle.

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<sup>119</sup> Moore, 38.

<sup>120</sup> Moore, 168.

<sup>121</sup> Moore, 257.

However, unlike Higgins, Moore humanizes the players in her stories. She provides background information on the soldiers and branches into emotional topics that Higgins does not write about.

Moore does not take as many risks with her life, though the fact that she was the only one of six reporters that accepted Boomer's invitation is a testament to her courage. Before accompanying Boomer on his trip, she was part of the military pool system. While out with the troops, she was faced with the choice of staying on the front lines where the causality rate was expected to be 50 percent. Moore struggled with the decision, thinking of the effect her death would have on her family. She left the decision to her editor, who decided she shouldn't stay. Afterwards, she describes both the feelings of relief and anger at her decision not to tell her editor she wanted to stay.



## Chapter Five: Anne Garrels and the Iraq War

Anne Garrels was one of 16 American reporters that stayed in Baghdad when the Shock and Awe bombing began March 2003. A veteran journalist working for National Public Radio, she was the only broadcaster -- “the voice of Baghdad<sup>122</sup>” -- and one of a handful of female American and European reporters. Because the Iraq Information Ministry was the only legal place to file stories, reporters had to smuggle their satellite phones into their hotel rooms for easier access. Being caught with a satellite phone meant expulsion for the reporter, so the phones were hidden in ingenious places to avoid detection. Garrels would file her reports from her room at night – naked in the dark. Her theory was that if there was a phone sweep in the middle of the night, being an unclothed female would give her a few extra minutes to hide the phone. This story became the title of her book on the war: “Naked in Baghdad.”

### Background

Garrels graduated from Harvard University in 1972. She then worked for ABC News for 10 years, including a position as the Moscow bureau chief. She quit ABC to work for NBC and then joined NPR in 1988. Since working for NPR, she has reported

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<sup>122</sup> Anne Garrels, Interview with Robert Birnbaum: “Birnbaum v. Anne Garrels,” *The Morning News*, 18 November 2003, [http://www.themorningnews.org/archives/personalities/birnbaum\\_v\\_anne\\_garrels.php](http://www.themorningnews.org/archives/personalities/birnbaum_v_anne_garrels.php) (11 July 2005).

from areas of conflict such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, China, Israel, Kosovo, Pakistan and the West Bank.

In 1992, her NPR team won the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award; in 1996 she won the duPont-Columbia Award for her coverage of the Soviet Union; in 1999, In she received the Whitman Bassow Award from the Overseas Press Club for global water issues; she received the 2003 Courage in Journalism Award from the International Women's Media Foundation. Of her career, Garrels said in an interview that she didn't choose war as a career; instead, "the wars found me."<sup>123</sup>

Most recently Garrels earned the media spotlight when she chose to stay in the Palestine Hotel in the heart of Baghdad when the U.S. bombing campaign began. Fifty-two years old, Garrels was one of two American women to stay in the city – the other was Melinda Liu of Newsweek. Garrels also said that a handful of European female reporters were in the hotel as well.

Garrels kept a diary during her stay in Baghdad and used them, along with her husband's emails for structure and an outside perspective, to write her book, which she described as an "emotional burp."

## **Gender and Reporting**

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<sup>123</sup> J. Trout Lowen, "A woman of war," Minnesota Women's Press, 8 October 2003.

Garrels husband, Vint Lawrence, describes her as knowing how to “work the system,”<sup>124</sup> evident in the way she describes being an older female reporter as an advantage in the Middle East. “Men generally deal with me as a sexless professional, while women open up in ways that they would not with a man.”<sup>125</sup> She describes interviewing a mullah, an Islamic clergyman, that only agreed to an interview because she was “old” but then after meeting her made her wear a *burka* because she was too attractive.<sup>126</sup>

In reporting on the Iraq War, Garrels turns the few instances when her gender comes into play into a comedy, such as when a hotel guard tries to grope her and she scares him off with her laughter. “I have only benefited from my sex,”<sup>127</sup> she says.

### **Reporting and Writing Style**

Garrels’ mission was to report on the Iraqis’ world. “I am here to try to understand how Iraqis see themselves, their government and the world around them.”<sup>128</sup> She describes reporting as finding strings - a description her husband expands upon saying that journalists have to also find the right beads to fit the string. “So the choice may not be the most eye-catching bauble, but the one that connects and fits and fills out,”<sup>129</sup> he says. Garrels’ reporting reflects this search for the understanding of ordinary

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<sup>124</sup> Anne Garrels, *Naked in Baghdad*, (New York: Farrar, Straud and Girouz, 2003), 5.

<sup>125</sup> Garrels, 31

<sup>126</sup> Garrels, 31

<sup>127</sup> Garrels, 31

<sup>128</sup> Garrels, 17.

<sup>129</sup> Garrels, 28

Iraqi life. Her reports include topics such as how Iraqis are dealing with the fear that the fighting will advance into Baghdad, Iraqi perceptions of the United States and how Iraqis in different Baghdad neighborhoods deal with the looting.

Some of her daily reports from Baghdad during the bombing are less polished than her usual reporting. They are obviously less planned and as a result, more intimate and vivid. While struggling to meet deadlines from her illegal satellite phone in the Palestine Hotel, she often reports in first person in a storytelling voice that sounds like she's leaning forward from a living room couch to let you in on something important.

On April 9, 2003, Garrels begins her NPR report with, "It started off as eerie day. It was quiet, too quiet," she says describing the day the United States took Baghdad. "I mean I tripped on a cache of surface to air missiles that were just left unmanned," she says, her voice ending in a note of dramatic surprise. She uses her senses to describe Baghdad and stories to show examples of events happening, such as an exchange she had with a handsome Marine in the Palestine hotel over how bad they both smelled because there was no water. Her sentences are long, descriptive and full of stories and observations about people, moods and motives.

Garrels speaks Russian, which she used to her advantage when reporting from Russia in the 1970s. In Iraq and Afghanistan her Russian was useful because many Iraqis and Palestinian doctors studied in the former Soviet Union. Her Russian language skills also benefited her in Israel, because many Russian Jews immigrated to Israel and lived in neighborhoods where only Russian was spoken<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Garrels, 15

Garrels, as well as most foreign journalists, hired an interpreter that was also a guide. Amer, a pseudonym Garrels gives her Iraqi driver, becomes Garrels' closest friend in Iraq, negotiating her through dangerous situations, finding locals willing to be interviewed and even in one instance conducting interviews when Garrels was confined to her hotel. When she would roam the streets of Baghdad without Amer, she would record public conversations and have them translated later.

### **Comparison**

Garrels' age sets her apart from many of her female predecessors and contemporaries and this shows in her experienced reporting as well as her calm under stress. Like Gloria Emerson, Garrels also strove to show the human side of war – especially the effects on civilians – however, she is missing much of the angry and bitter edge Emerson wrote with. Also like Emerson, she relied heavily on her guide, who also became her trusted friend. She didn't push herself to take unnecessary risks like many of the young women before her – probably because as a senior reporter, an older woman and a modern reporter she didn't need to.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

Overall the number of women reporters has doubled from 20 percent in 1971<sup>131</sup> to 40 percent in 2005, though this number has not changed in at least 6 years.<sup>132</sup> About a third of foreign correspondents are women.<sup>133</sup> The numbers have come a long way in the last 200 years but women are still underrepresented among war correspondents. Women are still two times more likely than men to be freelancers,<sup>134</sup> like they were in Vietnam because there were fewer options. Freelancing, though having the advantage of mobility, lacks job security and safety support and can hinder the choice to have a family. This could also be one of the reasons women were underrepresented in the Gulf War and the Iraq War where working as a unilateral was difficult. And according to a 1995 study by the school of journalism at the University of North Carolina, women are more likely to report foreign news in broadcast than in print.<sup>135</sup>

Though there have been many changes in the evolution of the woman war correspondent, many of the same issues and problems have persisted through history. In 2005, Judith Matloff, a professor at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and a veteran war correspondent, participated in a debate about women war correspondents and

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<sup>131</sup> Hess, 16.

<sup>132</sup> American Society of Newspaper Editors, Newsroom employment census, 2005, <<http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?id=5660>>.

<sup>133</sup> Hess, 16.

<sup>134</sup> Hess, 18

<sup>135</sup> W. Joseph Campbell, Robert L. Stevenson and Stephen P. Jackson, "Women as Correspondents and Newsmakers in a 37-Nation Study of Foreign and International News Flow," School of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, August 1996.

brought up the same obstacles women face today that they also encountered nearly 100 years ago.

## **Discrimination**

Discrimination against women war correspondents from a number of fronts still exists but can be less apparent. Early correspondents faced blatant sexism all the way from military officers trying to ban women from war to editors refusing to send them to war zones and colleagues telling them to go home. In recent wars, women such as Molly Moore have reported equal treatment from many of the military officers. Robin Wright said that when in Afghanistan, she had access to many officials who treated her as an equal of her male peers.

In the past women had to be persistent in the face of those who didn't believe in sending women to war. Maggie Kilgore's boss of United Press International answered her request to go to Vietnam with "You don't want to go over there. What's a nice girl like you want to do in Saigon?"<sup>136</sup> Her persistence paid off and she finally got to Vietnam. However, until the recent era of embedding reporters with military, most women war reporters have been stringers or freelancers. Now, more women at influential papers are receiving foreign assignments, though they still hold fewer positions than men. Kay Mills wrote that reading female bylines in influential papers encourages women at second- and third-rank papers as well as female students to pursue foreign assignments. Moore also

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<sup>136</sup> Mills, 201

said that editors are still reluctant to send women to war and that “as far as Iraq is concerned, editors are so desperate to get any qualified reporters to take the jobs, they are being forced to be gender-neutral.”<sup>137</sup>

Now, discrimination often appears in women being taken less seriously. To go back to the example of Nathaniel Lande’s book used in the introduction, women just aren’t given as much credit for their work as their male counterparts. Joanne Omang reported getting an interview with Chilean President Pinochet because “they assumed I wasn’t going to be very political.”<sup>138</sup> In 1996 in Chechnya, a Chechen leader refused to shake hands with Turkish TV reporter Serif Turgut because she was a woman.<sup>139</sup>

The International News Safety Institute also addresses this problem in terms of safety. During their survey of women war correspondents’ safety, respondents complained that women in the field were not taken as seriously as male colleagues in terms of safety. “A woman would raise a safety concern and nothing was done about it until a male colleague raised exactly the same concern.”<sup>140</sup>

Many reporters have commented on the discrimination from male colleagues dying off as older correspondents retire. Younger male journalists are less inclined to be resentful or upset over the presence of women journalists. Moore also said that things are changing for female reporters because the generation of men running U.S. news

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<sup>137</sup> Molly Moore, Washington Post Reporter, email interview, 4 August 2005.

<sup>138</sup> Mills, 214.

<sup>139</sup> Heidi Dietrich, “Women who cover war,” International Women’s Media Foundation, <<http://www.iwfm.org/features/6831>>, (22 July 2005).

<sup>140</sup> Rodney Pinder, Debate over women reporting war survey, International News Safety, 20 January 2005.



organizations is changing – many of them have career wives. “More women are at the top of the organizations (though hardly enough). Women have proven themselves.”<sup>141</sup>

The advantages of being a woman journalist are something that hasn’t changed. Just like Gloria Emerson said as a woman she was less threatening and the Vietnamese were more willing to talk to her, Garrels reported that being a woman in the Middle East opened more doors for her than male reporters. BBC reporter Lyse Doucet, a correspondent in Jerusalem and Afghanistan, said that a military commander might break down and cry in front of a female reporter “of the motherly type,” that would never happen in front of a male reporter. In Latin America, rebels looked at men as part of American power, but women weren’t viewed the same as men.<sup>142</sup>

### **Self-perception**

The self-perception of female war correspondents is something that appears to have changed over time, though the drive to prove themselves still exists – though perhaps slightly mellowed.

The women that first elbowed their way into this men’s world stereotyped by the wanna-be soldier or the James Bond-cum-reporter not only lived up to this expectation but outshone it. Marguerite Higgins epitomizes this particular characterization: young, reckless, beautiful, daring, tough and an excellent reporter. She was not out to prove herself as a woman, but to prove herself as a woman that was as good as a man. These

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<sup>141</sup> Moore, email interview.

<sup>142</sup> Hannez, 95.

women were used to hearing soldiers and civilians whisper and point as they walked by – a strange sight in a war zone – and reveled in it. They built their self-image on their intelligence and rejection of the traditional female role – often resulting in the rejection of the women’s movement.

The Vietnam War emerged as a new playing field for reporters and a turning point for female journalists. It was a transition time between the women Higgins epitomized and the modern female war correspondent - women like Anne Garrels. Still tough and daring, these women took chances on the battle field as well as in their writing. Women like Emerson wrote on the human side of war. Women like Dickey Chapelle died getting their stories.

When comparing Higgins’s self-made place for herself as a man in the world of war correspondence with the role of the female war correspondent in more recent years, a significant change in the self-perception of the women has occurred. The tough reputation of Higgins, Martha Gellhorn and Margaret Bourke-White among others, is still a characterization still often used for war correspondents, but the modern female war correspondent is no longer regarded as a wayward exception to the rule. These women are still proving themselves - as Molly Moore described when covering the Pentagon beat or Matloff described of having to prove herself “tougher than the guys” - but they don’t have to push themselves to the extreme women like Higgins did. They look upon themselves as professionals, worthy of their jobs and deserving of the same respect and opportunities as men reporters. Many don’t think of their gender at all, often dismissing

the question of how their sex affects their work as irrelevant or not wanting to be treated any differently.

Georgie Ann Geyer, a correspondent in the 1960s, looks back and describes herself then as:

A creature between the harder, tougher and basically antifeminine generation of a few women journalists just before me and the fully more liberated and very female reporters of today.<sup>143</sup>

The tendency to work alone is still common, as evident by reports from women such as Garrels. However, a report by Heidi Dietrich shows this tendency to be loners might be changing. She wrote in 1992 Stacy Sullivan was so overwhelmed by the violence when she first arrived in Bosnia that Emma Daly of the Independent took her under her wing and even wrote her lead for her on a day she was too terrified to write.<sup>144</sup> Freelancer Edith Champagne also works in teams, often with other women.

## **Reporting style**

Subject matter and style varies greatly between personalities and publications. However, the acceptance of “soft news” as a valid subject matter has given both male and female reporters more leeway away from tactical coverage. In particular the rising

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<sup>143</sup> Hannerz., 93.

<sup>144</sup> Dietrich, “Women who cover war.”

number of civilians killed during war has warranted more coverage. In recent conflicts women and children have accounted for up to 90 percent of all casualties compared with 65 percent in World War II and 5 percent in 1900.<sup>145</sup> The women reporters themselves believe they are better reporters on these types of topics because they are better interviewers and able to empathize better. Some argue that the trend of women correspondents to spread war coverage to include these “women’s issues” is increasing as more women enter the field. Sylvia Poggioli, a Bosnian war correspondent suggested “there was more attention to the prevalence of rape in that war compared to earlier wars because a large proportion of the press corps was now female.”<sup>146</sup>

More examples of female foreign correspondents covering previously untouched issues include Christiane Amanpour, a reporter for CNN, who recently covered human rights violations in Sudan, including the rape of women and girls and death of children from preventable diseases.<sup>147</sup> Molly Moore writes about both – the tactical movement of troops and the human side of the decision making.

And one might suspect that a male correspondent would be less likely to do the feature story Marjorie Miller did, from Jerusalem, on Jewish women’s frenetic housecleaning before the Passover holiday.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Save the Children’s annual report, May 2002.

<sup>146</sup> Ulf Hannerz, *Foreign News Exploring the World of Foreign Correspondents* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2004), 94.

<sup>147</sup> Christiane Amanpour and Jonathan Mann, “Sudan’s Other Civil War,” *CNN International*, 17 May 2004, *Lexis-Nexis Database*, (27 November 2004).

<sup>148</sup> Hannerz, 94.

This is a big change from the time when women reporters, such as Denby Fawcett, shunned “women’s stories” so as not to be stereotyped. Jurate Kazickas said that she very much regretted never writing a story on the Vietnamese because “it was an American war and people wanted to read about their boys.”<sup>149</sup> Edith Lederer - a correspondent in Vietnam, Israel, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland and Bosnia - ran the Associated Press in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. She said that in the future she plans to “put forth the notion of the other side, the impact on ordinary people, or to delve more deeply, if possible, into what American soldiers really believe.”<sup>150</sup>

## **Family Life**

Robin Wright, a reporter for the Christian Science Monitor, divides the history of foreign correspondents into three sections: “First there were no women, then there were single women, finally there were married women.”<sup>151</sup>

Early women war correspondents were almost without exception young, unmarried, single and childless. This can be attributed to social norms, the tendency for many to be freelancers without steady income and the dangerous lifestyle. Geyer also wrote frequently of having to choose between career and family.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Sheila Gibbons, “Female correspondents changing war coverage,” *Alternet Women’s e-news*, 4 November 2002, <http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/1444> > ( 22 July 2005).

<sup>150</sup> Gibbons, “Female correspondents changing war coverage.”

<sup>151</sup> Hess, 19.

<sup>152</sup> Hannerz, 93.

Now, many women reporting on modern wars are older. This reflects editor assignments to respected, experienced reporters who are often women. The Gulf War and the Iraq War provided fewer opportunities for freelancers.

The modern female correspondent is also often married. A survey by the International News Safety Institute reports that just over 55 percent of female foreign correspondents are married. Moore, Garrels and numerous others write of the immense support of their husbands while away from home.

Many of these women are married to other journalists who can empathize with sudden dispatch to a war country and the perils that come with the job. In the 1960s and 1970s when foreign correspondents married, the woman often lost her job. When Anthony Astrachan and Susan Jacoby married and moved to Moscow, both Washington Post reporters, the paper would remove Jacoby's name from dual bylines.<sup>153</sup>

However, most women in the profession continue to be childless. Garrels said that she would never be doing what she does if she had children. But there are exceptions. Moore, who also said that her career had no impact on her family decisions, and her husband John Ward Anderson, also a Washington Post reporter, have a 5-year-old son.

As a result I worry a lot more now, but I do just as many of the dangerous assignments. We just ended three years in Jerusalem where not only mommy and daddy were at war, but the five year old saw a bus bombing outside our living room window. Even so, many of my journalists friends — especially men — say you should stop covering these wars. 'You're a mom now.' I have less interest

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<sup>153</sup> Mills, 208.

these days in war coverage, not because of motherhood, but because I've covered wars now for a decade and I worry that my luck will run out as I've been in way too many dangerous situations. But I still go when asked.<sup>154</sup>

Jennifer Griffin, a Fox News correspondent in Jerusalem, has a daughter. Christiane Amanpour has a son. Both were mentioned in a Columbia Journalism Review article called "On the Job: Mothers at War." In the article, several mothers said having children made them better reporters "with sharpened insight into human suffering."<sup>155</sup> But some, such as Barbara Demick, have given up assignments out of fear of orphaning their children.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the same persisting problems, as more and more women enter the profession, their influence is making an impact, especially as they take on more editorial positions of authority. Though the woman war reporters in U.S. history have covered different wars, sometimes with opposing perspectives and a wide range of personalities, all have collectively contributed to our media with a clear, unique and thoughtful voice. As a group they have written a chapter of American history that not only documents the history of war, but also chronicles the history of women in journalism. In some ways they have changed dramatically over the years; and in other ways, not at all.

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<sup>154</sup> Moore, email interview

<sup>155</sup> Judith Matlof, "On the job, Mothers at war," Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 2004.

In a profile of Canadian journalist Kathy Gannon posted on the International Women's Media Foundation wire, an anecdote of her struggle to get through customs in Afghanistan is a good example of the changes that women journalists have undergone. A Taliban passport control official remarked to Gannon during a heated discussion about her passport, "You're a strong person. We have a name for a person like you: a man."

Gannon replied that she didn't consider that a compliment.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> IWMF, "A reporter under the Taliban stays to cover the war," October 2002, <<http://www.iwmf.org/ewire/6916/iwmfwire1002/ch-6937>> (24 July 2005).



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