Beyond Combat
Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era

Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era investigates how the Vietnam War both reinforced and challenged the gender roles that were key components of American Cold War ideology. Although popular memory of the Vietnam War centers on the “combat moment,” refocusing attention onto women and gender paints a more complex and accurate picture of the war’s far-reaching impact beyond the battlefields. Encounters between Americans and Vietnamese were shaped by a cluster of intertwined images used to make sense of and justify American intervention and use of force in Vietnam. These images included the girl next door, a wholesome reminder of why the United States was committed to defeating communism; the treacherous and mysterious “dragon lady,” who served as a metaphor for Vietnamese women and South Vietnam; the John Wayne figure, entrusted with the duty of protecting civilization from savagery; and the gentle warrior, whose humanitarian efforts were intended to win the favor of the South Vietnamese. Heather Marie Stur also examines the ways in which ideas about masculinity shaped the American GI experience in Vietnam, and ultimately, how some American men and women returned from Vietnam to challenge home-front gender norms.

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HEATHER MARIE STUR

University of Southern Mississippi
To Jay, who provides the music.

And to Angus, who makes us want to dance.
Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction 1

1 Vietnamese Women in the American Mind: Gender, Race, and the Vietnam War 17

2 “She Could Be the Girl Next Door”: The Red Cross SRAO in Vietnam 64

3 “We Weren’t Called Soldiers, We Were Called Ladies”: WACs and Nurses in Vietnam 105

4 Gender and America’s “Faces of Domination” in Vietnam 142

5 Liberating Men and Women: Antiwar GIs Speak Out against the Warrior Myth 183

Conclusion: “You’ve Come a Long Way . . . Maybe”: Gender after Vietnam 215

Bibliography 243

Index 259
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