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978-0-521-76275-5 - Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era

Heather Marie Stur

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## 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.

Heather Marie Stur is an Assistant Professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Stur has won fellowships from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the Gerald R. Ford Foundation, the Doris G. Quinn Foundation, the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, the University of Wisconsin, and Marquette University. She has published in several journals and collections, including *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*; *America and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation*; *Highway 61 Revisited: Bob Dylan from Minnesota to the World*; *Soul Soldiers: African Americans and the Vietnam Era*; and *Milwaukee History*.

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*University of Southern Mississippi*



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*To Jay, who provides the music.  
And to Angus, who makes us want to dance.*

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## Acknowledgments

At the end of my dissertation defense, one of my committee members, Alfred W. McCoy, remarked that I seemed to have had a lot of fun in graduate school. Puzzled, I must have looked at him inquiringly because he continued by saying he had read my acknowledgments, in which I had mentioned Friday Night Music Club, the 5260 crew, and other groups of friends and family members who had clearly made my time in graduate school bearable, if not a downright blast. Professor McCoy's comments reminded me then – and still do now – that the journey of writing a book, like anything in life, is best made with fellow travelers who provide guidance, encouragement, comfort, love, and, yes, fun, along the way. Thanking them here is just a small gesture compared to how much my fellow travelers have enhanced my life and this book.

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