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ROUGH SEAS AT ANNAPOLIS

If prizes were given for investigative reporting on unpopular subjects, Carlton Sherwood would be in the running for his series of articles on sex discrimination at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. He asked some questions nobody else had asked, and he got some sensational answers.

Over the past several years, the national media have carried numerous stories conveying the impression that the decision to admit women has been a big success. Sherwood's series of articles for the Gannett News Service reveals that major moral, morale, disciplinary and legal problems have been concealed by whitewash, cover-ups, and sex discrimination against men and in favor of sexual misconduct.

Sherwood found that, since women were first admitted to the Naval Academy in 1976, one of its most frequently violated conduct regulations has been the one prohibiting on-base sexual activity. He discovered that 29 midshipmen have been prosecuted for sexual misconduct since 1977, and the routine result was harsh punishment for male offenders but none for the female offender. Midshipmen and academy officials say that another 100 cases have been handled informally, and that those cases are only a fraction of the sexual activity in the dormitory that houses 4,000 men and 400 women.

Only one case made nationwide news, the "sexathon" of Nov. 22, 1980 in which five males were charged with having sex with one female cadet who was allowing the acts to be filmed. Two of the men, months away from graduation, were expelled and ordered to spend three years as enlisted men at the lowest rank. The other three men were given demerits and placed on probation.

The woman, then in her third year, was permitted to resign and given a medical discharge relieving her of further duty. She gave a statement saying that she had "encouraged" the midshipmen to have sex with her, and that two of them were so drunk that they couldn't start their own stereo. This female cadet admitted to the reporter, "What I did was wrong. I was like a lot of women. I went to the Academy because it was free. ... One of the first things the Naval Academy did for me was to set up an examination and fit me for a diaphram."

(more)

During her final three months there, she said she engaged in sexual encounters "with about 20 midshipmen. ... Not really a lot for some women in the dormitory. ... One woman kept count of the guys she slept with -- 57 in one year. She got caught several times, but nothing much happened, some demerits."

The reporter discovered other Academy sex scandals that never made the general news. One involved a female cadet whose sexual escapades with enlisted men caused her to be "invited to leave" a Navy ship in San Diego, but she was then allowed to graduate and be commissioned an officer. Another involved a lesbian ring of a woman staff officer and 15 female midshipmen.

The obvious reason for the discrimination in favor of female sex offenders and against male sex offenders is that the career officers believe that their own career success is tied to making the sex integration of the military academies look like a success. So superintendent Vice Admiral William Laurence, toadying the Carter Administration party line, said, "There are no discernible differences between men's and women's performance in any areas of the Academy program." He didn't mention that the Academy's traditionally rigorous physical and psychological training has been watered down to the level women can tolerate or that women are promoted on a quota basis to give the illusion of equal ability.

One woman cadet admitted to the reporter, "What bothers me and most other guys is the cowardice and hypocrisy of the brass. They know it isn't working. So what do they do? Kick a couple of good men out, make us patrol the dormitory halls at night and promote a couple of women. It looks good in press releases."

The most outspoken critic of admitting women to the military academies has been James Webb, a 1968 Academy graduate, Vietnam war hero, and author of Fields of Fire. His article in the Nov. 1977 Washingtonian entitled "Women Can't Fight" concluded that "there is a place for women in our military," but not in "institutions dedicated to the preparation of men for combat command." "Webb was Right" became a popular slogan scrawled on walls, textbooks, and T-shirts at Annapolis by the men who agreed.

Last year a visiting Admiral lectured at the Academy. During the question period, a female cadet criticized the laws that exempt women from combat, which laws of course the admiral defended. The female, in exasperation, blurted out, "Maybe women shouldn't be here at all!" The male cadets burst into spontaneous and sustained applause. (end)