



The Few. The Proud.: Women Marines in HarM&Apos;s Way (Praeger Security International)

Sara Sheldon

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On a dark night in February 2005, Sara Sheldon arrived at Camp Fallujah, outside the dangerous ancient city for which it was named. Armed only with a camera, a laptop, and notepads, she was a spectator to the war who secured permission to embed with the 1st MEF and observe and interview Marines who happened to be women then posted at Camp Fallujah. In the time she spent there, Sheldon interviewed women who held ranks from corporal to colonel to gain a broad and varied perspective of the experiences representative of female Marines throughout Iraq. She reveals much about her subjects: the preconceived notions they possessed when they enlisted in the Corps, how the experience of serving in Iraq changed them, and what they ultimately took home from the battlefield.

Americans are aware that women are actively serving in the armed forces, but few understand what exactly is expected of women in the military, the duties they perform, and the limitations and restrictions placed on them, especially in a combat zone. Sheldon reveals much about her subjects. In some ways, they mirrored their male counterparts. Some enlisted only for four years to receive educational benefits or for an opportunity to escape their home environment. Others made the Corps their career, serving as commissioned officers. Still others were recalled to active duty to serve with their representative Guard units. Sheldon uncovers their stories: the preconceived notions they possessed when they enlisted in the Corps, how the experience of serving in Iraq has changed them, and what they ultimately took home from the battlefield. She also sheds light on the day-to-day grind all American service personnel face in Iraq. Yet, she never loses her main focus. Far removed from the Green Zone, Sheldon and her subjects spent their days in harm's way, but she avoids a running commentary on policy. Instead, she remains committed to examining how women tasked with field duties and various missions at the lower levels of command are impacted by their experiences.

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