

## ***Fair Faces of Combat: Women in War***

By Bob Wilson, Jr.

Dedicated to the women of American Legion Post 28

When this painting was first conceptualized, the thought was to do a parallel to the Norman Rockwell painting depicting soldiers in the American army through the annals of time. After starting the research, it was found that even though some women served in the revolutionary and Civil wars by disguising themselves as men, most women served by nursing the sick and wounded and performing menial tasks such as washing and cooking in the camps. WWI saw a great demand for women as nurses as did WWII, Korea and Vietnam. WWII also saw the formation of women's auxiliary groups such as the W.A.S.P.S (Women Airforce Service Pilots), WACS (Womens Army Corps), WAAFs (Women Auxiliary Air Force) and WAVES - [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service](#). These groups filled non-combatant billets to free up men to do the front-line fighting.

It wasn't until the end of the draft following the Vietnam War and the start of the all-volunteer army that more and more women were being accepted into the military to help fill quotas in billets other than medical and administrative. The admission of women to the military academies in 1976 further paved the way by expanding the areas in which women could be assigned. Ultimately the Clinton administration authorized women on combatant airplanes and ships and George W. Bush placed women in high risk areas in support of male ground troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. This latter action put women directly in harm's way. To date, 124 U. S. Military women have been killed in Operation Iraq Freedom and another 42 in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan).

Since never before have we deliberately subjected our military women to such high risks, the focus of this painting became a tribute to the modern day female warrior. Their sacrifices, isolation from family and children, hardships, and having to face the dangers of real combat require extraordinary courage. The women in this painting are truly "Fair Faces of Courage."