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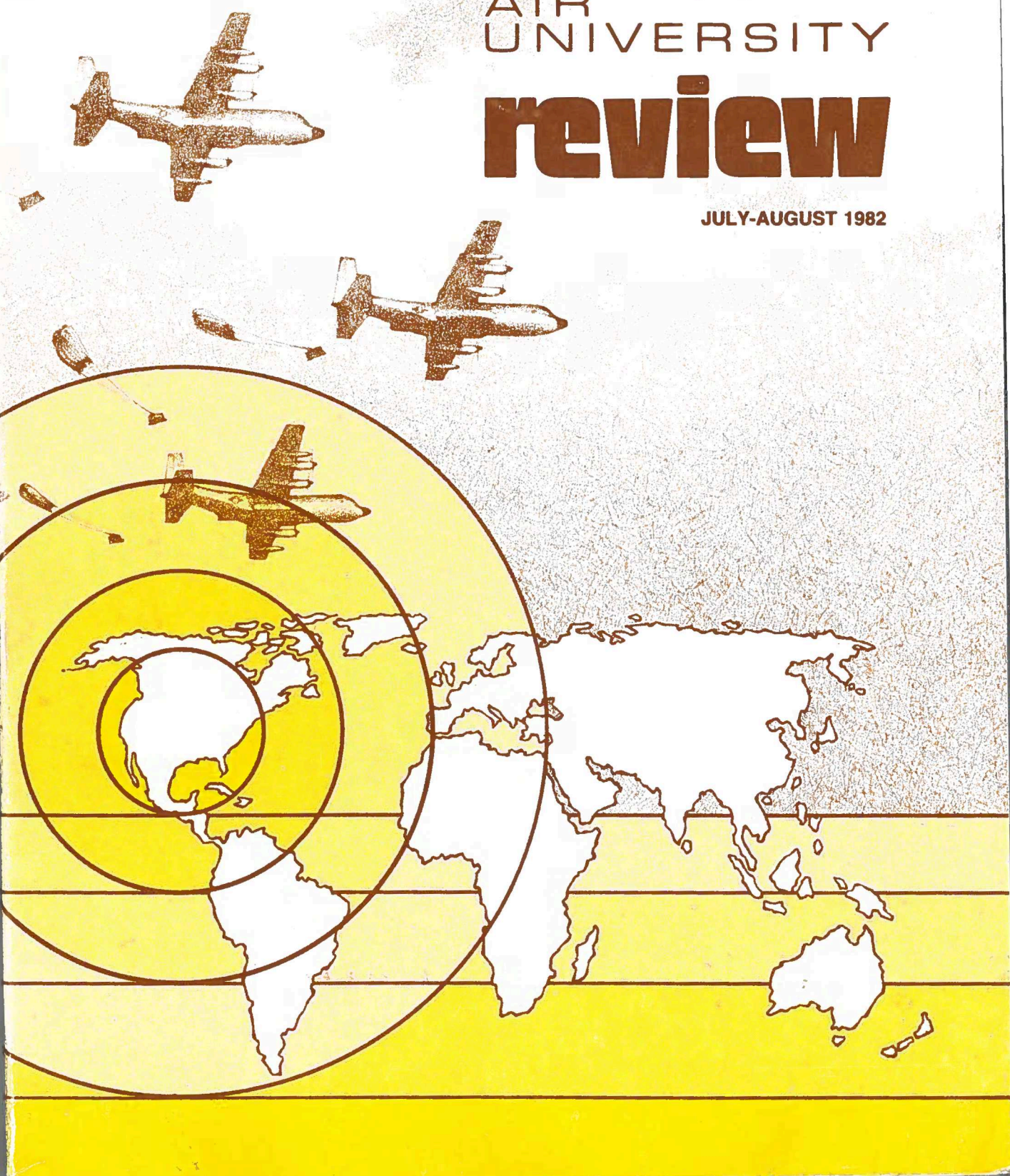

THE PINK PLAN: A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

MAJOR JAMES R. AUBREY

THE BOLD LETTERS above the portal leading into the Air Force Academy's cadet area read "Bring Me Men." One can hardly read this challenge today without thinking of the irony, that women also arrive. Six years have now passed since the first woman cadet walked under the sign, probably feeling like Dante when warned to "Abandon all hope . . ." at the gate of Hell. The women of the USAF Academy's first integrated class may not have experienced infernal tortures, but Judith Stiehm's book *Bring Me Men and Women* makes clear that their journey, in its own way, was as perilous as Dante's.†

Dr. Stiehm, a political science professor, also heads the Program for the Study of Women and Men in Society at the University of Southern California, and her book examines the Academy as an institution affected in particularly visible ways by social change. Her observations are reliable, but *Bring Me Men and Women* is not merely a fact-finding report. Indeed, the book's strength is her willingness to interpret what she sees, to hazard explanations, and to shape the materials around ideas, as she does in the chapter about the faculty, called "Immune Intellects." One of my male colleagues finds the feminist drift of her analysis and comments irritating, but Stiehm's approach is basically descriptive, not evaluative. Her descriptions may occasionally make Academy graduates feel like members of some lost tribe being watched by a curious anthropologist; for example, she describes basic cadet training as "shared jeopardy to unify the survivors of what is essentially an individual and group trial by ordeal." (p. 57) But to me her point of view—from the outside, both as a civilian and as a woman—

†**Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Bring Me Men and Women: Mandated Change at the U.S. Air Force Academy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981, $19.95), 343 pages.**

provides a fresh perspective, one not readily available in discussions at the officers' club. Indeed, a valuable sense of detachment might have been lost if a blue-suited "tribal member" had undertaken this study. *Bring Me Men and Women* is a stimulating book, responsibly written and interesting to read.

On one level, *Bring Me Men and Women* does serve as a factual report of a year at the Air Force Academy, 1976-77, complete with photographs, statistics, and even an appendix explaining Air Force ranks to uninitiated readers. The book is also history, an attempt to understand the separate forces, inside and outside the military, which intersected that year. I was surprised to learn, for example, that Jacqueline Cochran, now a premier role model for women cadets, strongly opposed admitting women to the academies.* She testified before Congress in 1974 that women graduates would—and should—leave the military to "get married, maintain a home and raise a family." The 1975 legislation opening the academies to women passed in spite of Jackie Cochran's efforts, not with the support one might have expected.

On another level, *Bring Me Men and Women* is like those perennial feature articles about the Academy in the Sunday supplement. Stiehm has a journalist's knack for eliciting candid statements from her interviewees, including the cadet who expressed resentment over the fact that women's uniforms had no belt buckles to keep polished, or the major who turned Jackie Cochran's worry on its head with the remark, "The kind of women we *want* in the Air Force are the kind who will get married and leave."

Bring Me Men and Women is also a case study in management psychology. The book's subtitle, *Mandated Change at the U.S. Air Force Academy*, suggests Stiehm's fascination with how an almost exclusively male institution went about solving problems that arose from external pressures, some of which ran counter to basic institutional assumptions. Some changes were minor adaptations to unanticipated problems, such as the discovery that women on the obstacle course, when they leaped for the rope over a pool of water, fell "in extremely hazardous ways, never before seen with men cadets." The solution: walk-through instruction about unfamiliar swing-and-release movements—and a deeper pool. Another unanticipated problem involved a need to change the procedures used in the athletic department for measuring fat to determine when a cadet is overweight. The most important developments and decisions, it turned out, were some of those made well before the women arrived, and the evolution of the Academy's "pink plan" from 1972-76 constitutes a considerable part of Stiehm's book.

Unlike West Point or Annapolis, the Air Force Academy was working on a contingency plan for admitting women four years before the plans were needed. I have always supposed that Air Force preparedness resulted in fewer problems, perhaps even in greater success, but it seems that I have supposed wrong. The Air Force sense of "enthusiastic purpose" (Stiehm's phrase) did have a certain public relations value: no doubt Air Force women received a warmer welcome than women at Annapolis or West Point, where compliance was sober. Why, then, would the cadets exchanged between the Air Force, Naval, and Military academies in 1976 seem to agree that "women's integration went least well at the Air Force Academy, where they perceived the greatest resentment and lack of acceptance by male cadets"? Stiehm points out that the Air Force women were more numerous and more highly visible in the skirts they were required to wear much of the time. Perhaps, too, she points out, the institutional support for the view that women had a right to be there may have led Air Force cadets to believe they faced a more serious demand for change in their institution than did their West Point and

*Jacqueline Cochran's Women's Airforce Service Pilot's memorabilia are on prominent display in the cadet social center, and her death occasioned a memorial retreat ceremony at the Academy, complete with jet flyby.

Annapolis counterparts. But the most important difference may have been that the Air Force women cadets lived in a separate wing of one cadet dormitory, segregated by privacy doors and unavailable for some of the most intense training in uniform wear and military knowledge, conducted by upperclassmen in the hallways of the various squadrons. At West Point and Annapolis, the women's rooms were scattered throughout the dormitories, leading women initially to feel isolated from one another but resulting in quick acceptance—or at least toleration—by the men. In the Air Force dorms, however, the isolation of women fed the males' initial resentment and led them to worry over possibly unequal standards behind the closed doors, to the point that a short-notice dispersal of the women to rooms in their squadrons had to take place at the end of the fall semester. The problems with a separate area for women had turned out to be worse than potential problems with coed dorms.

Air Force planners in 1972 seem to have agreed from the outset that "young women's and young men's bedrooms simply should not be side by side." Perhaps, Stiehm suggests, the Air Force emphasis on public relations had led to an overconcern with avoiding potentially embarrassing incidents. Possibly the nature of the change was so radical that the conservative, male planners had difficulty envisioning a truly integrated cadet wing. Anything less would turn out to be intolerable, but something less became inevitable with the 1975 decision to use 15 women lieutenants as surrogate upperclassmen, called Air Training Officers (ATOs). Even during the first semester, when the women lived together, the ATOs did not have command authority or primary responsibility for training over the women cadets. Once the women were dispersed, the ATOs became even more nearly superfluous and were phased out after the second semester.

The careful Academy planning, it seems, had perversely worked against success. Why? Stiehm has some ideas. The ATO concept had been used from 1954 to 1957 with the first male cadets, when the Air Force Academy had no upperclassmen. In 1972, planners had assumed that women cadets would be organized separately, as women in the Air Force then were, and would need their own upperclassmen. By 1976, however, the separate Women in the Air Force structure had become obsolete, yet there were the ATOs, trained and in place, waiting for a role that no longer had its counterpart in the "real" Air Force. "Had the Air Force *not* planned so early," Stiehm notes, "had it waited until Congress actually passed the legislation [admitting women], it would have had a more integrated force as its example, one which would probably have led planners to a more integrated program." (p. 113) The lesson here may be to reexamine, periodically, the assumptions that underlie plans and which, in some ways, are more important than the plans themselves.

Probably no amount of planning could have made the change smooth. I still remember the dozens of freshman English essays I received from male cadets in 1975, full of reasons why women should never be admitted to the Academy. I received almost none on their behalf. The thinking in those papers was often simplistic (the typical writer's vision blurred after he had unleashed the argument that redesigning latrines would be too expensive), but feelings ran quite deep. My straw polls showed that four out of five cadets were opposed to integrating women, and I suspect some of those not opposed wanted to appear tolerant (it was a humanities course, after all). One reason my students had trouble articulating their opposition may have been that they could not imagine that women might want to subject themselves to the training that the writers themselves were enduring only with difficulty. Another unspoken reason may have been a wish to keep the cadet wing as "exclusive" as possible. Getting an appointment is competitive, of course, and many applicants consider the Academy's exclusivity to be one of its attractions.

Basic cadet training nurtures the idea that

cadets belong to an elite group, and only those with "the right stuff" will graduate with distinction. The dark side to exclusivity, however, is that only by excluding someone else can it be maintained. The Army paratrooper needs the uninitiated footsoldier to point at and call a "straight leg" in order to feel a part of the airborne elite. That is harmless enough. But we use the unflattering term "ostracism" to describe the exclusion of a candidate from a fraternity with a black ball. And, while no one in the 1970s would have publicly endorsed exclusivity based on race, many were quick to defend exclusion of women from the academies based on their sex, arguing like the general quoted in *Bring Me Men and Women* that the legislation admitting them was "just another step taken for political reasons that will tend to weaken our combat capability." (p. 1) It is true that in 1975 the ratification drive for the Equal Rights Amendment was a steamroller, and some congressmen may have been merely stepping out of its way. But we need to examine how much of the widespread military skepticism about admitting women to the academies, like the continuing skepticism about using women in combat, may reflect a wish by males to maintain their own feeling of exclusivity, a feeling that may unconsciously help men define themselves in terms of what women are not capable of doing.

Whether women belong at the academies is by no means a dead issue. In mid-1981, the Defense Advisory Committee on the Status of Women in the Services announced its opposition to repeal of the legislation that admitted women to the academies; I infer that repeal has its advocates, too. Male cadets seem much more willing to accept female cadets as peers now than they did in 1976, but acceptance is not total. In spring of 1981, Lieutenant General Kenneth L. Tallman, then Superintendent, when asked what he saw as the Academy's biggest problem, replied, "sexual harassment." His concern was reassuring, but the prominence he gave the issue suggests that working with and living next door to women classmates does not necessarily reform male-chauvinist cadets. Stiehm points out that males in their late teens and early twenties seem to have special difficulty accepting women as truly equal, but one can observe easily enough that working alongside a woman officer does not necessarily raise the unleavened consciousness of a male colleague in his thirties or forties, either. One of the prevalent arguments against integrated billeting at the Academy before 1976 was that male chivalry would make training of women by men impossible. Training proved not to be impossible, after all, but any social problem involving chivalry—a value especially cherished in the military—is not going to disappear quickly and is not going to limit itself to cadets. Stiehm may be right to wonder about women's prospects for long-range success in an organization that generally approves their being denied routine access to the Air Force's most valued role—fighter pilot.

THE THOUGHT of using women routinely in combat is not new, nor is skepticism over the idea. Even in his vision of the ideal republic, Plato anticipated that men would laugh at women in physical training for guardianship of the state, yet Plato went on to advocate selection of guardians—and rulers, for that matter—strictly on the basis of merit, without regard to sex. Some two thousand years later, as we consider putting that ideal into practice, we still encounter fairly widespread insistence that combat is an exclusively male province. If "combat capability" were the only issue, and if only men were capable, probably no one would advocate using women in combat. The issues are more complicated, however. Sophisticated weapons make physical differences less and less important, while some psychological differences are changing along with society.

Those issues form the briar patch into which Stiehm throws herself in the last chapter,

which she describes as her "headiest speculation." She does not speculate about precisely what effect women may be having on the military, or even about whether Jackie Cochran may have been right to assume that women academy graduates will lack staying power. What Stiehm does is to reflect on reasons women have been excluded from combat, reasons varying from male need for an audience to fear that women combatants may inspire enemy males to superhuman efforts. To me, her most troubling observation has to do more with a general effect the combat exclusion may be having. As long as women are thought to be somehow incapable of fighting—and current laws give considerable status to that thought—women will not be taken seriously as contenders for public office or corporate management, for those leadership roles require assertive, combative instincts. Are women considered ineligible because they lack those instincts, or just thought to lack the instincts because they have always been ineligible? Stiehm believes it is no accident that women have not participated much in government since they received the vote some fifty years ago, since they have lacked the recognition of full citizenship implied by eligibility for combat, which she reminds us is "the state's unique function, the exercise of society's legitimate force." Before women can acquire equal social opportunity, then, they may have to acquire equal social responsibility. To the extent that military women accept this principle but remain ineligible to serve in combat, Air Force managers must be prepared to understand that Air Force women not only will lack certain crucial career opportunities, they also will have a fundamental social grievance.

USAF Academy

The Department of History at the U.S. Air Force Academy will host its Tenth Military History Symposium on 20-22 October 1982. The theme is "The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century," and session topics include: the task of forging national unity and mobilizing public opinion in total war; the mobilization of men, money, and materiel for total war; the social effects of war on civil liberties, civil rights, and the role of women; and the interplay between limited war and domestic politics.

The Twenty-fifth Harmon Memorial Lecture, the symposium keynote address, will be presented by Professor John Morton Blum of Yale University. Professor Blum will speak on the impact of World War II on American society.

For additional information please contact Major James R. W. Titus, Department of History, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado 80840.

Major John Hasek, The Royal Canadian Regiment (B.A., University of Ottawa; M.A., University of New Brunswick), is serving with the Central Regional Operations Staff in Toronto after a tour of duty as a member of The Skyhawks, the Canadian Forces parachute team. He has published articles on strategy, psychology of war, and perception. Major Hasek is a graduate of the Royal Military College of Canada, an Honor Foreign Graduate of the U.S. Army Special Forces Officers Course, and a Distinguished Graduate of the Canadian Forces Staff College.

Ronald D. Humble (B.A., University of Winnipeg; M.C.P., University of Manitoba) is a doctoral candidate and research assistant in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, University of Manitoba, Canada. His research specialty is technological forecasting, with emphasis on aerospace technology. Humble is a member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

First Lieutenant Marvin R. Franklin (B.A., Arkansas Technical University; M. A., Ph. A., University of Arkansas) is Military History Course Director for Hq AFROTC, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. He is coauthor of *The Old State House: Its Survival and Contributions, 1911-1947,* an architectural history of the former state capitol of Arkansas. Lieutenant Franklin is a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas.

Lieutenant Colonel William R. Liggett (B.S., Miami University, Ohio; M.A., State University of New York) is assigned to the Directorate of Plans, DCS Operation, Plans and Readiness, Hq USAF. He previously served as an instructor pilot in squadron and wing staff operations in the B-52 and FB-111, including Southeast Asia combat in the B-52. Colonel Liggett published an FB-111 pilot report in *Air Force.* He is a Distinguished Graduate of the Air War College and a graduate of Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College.

Captain Gary P. Cox (A.B., University of Georgia; M.A., University of Virginia) is an instructor in the Department of History at the USAF Academy. He has held wing intelligence positions for Strategic Air Command and Tactical Air Command and in squadron intelligence for USAFE. Captain Cox is a Distinguished Graduate of Squadron Officer School and a graduate of Air Command and Staff College.

Major James R. Aubrey (USAFA; M.A., Northwestern University; Ph.D., University of Washington) is an Associate Professor of English at the USAF Academy. He has been an intelligence officer in Thailand and with the Military Airlift Command. Major Aubrey has published articles in *Old English Newsletter* and *Bucknell Review.*