



As Thanksgiving nears, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on one of the many things I'm thankful for: my wife. She, like many other military wives, has shared in the hardship of deployments, the joys of homecomings, and the many highs and lows that come with this profession of ours. She is part of a special group of women that have kept warriors in check since the first man decided to pick up a stick to defend his homeland. Thucydides once wrote that we go to war out of *fear, honor, or interest*, and I would like to add that back home there is a wife that supports her soldier out of *love, courage, and sacrifice*. And it is their love, courage, and sacrifice that are so critical to our military profession.

One of our greatest military treatises would have never seen the light of day if it wasn't for the *love and courage* of a fallen Soldier's spouse. We know who Carl von Clausewitz is today because of his wife, Marie, who led the efforts to see *On War* published following his premature death. I encourage everyone to at least read the preface written by this remarkable woman. It stands as a testament to their relationship and one can't help but admire her as you read her words, "Those who knew of our happy marriage and knew that we shared *everything*, not only joy and pain but also every occupation, every concern of daily life, will realize that a task of this kind could not occupy my beloved husband without at the same time becoming thoroughly familiar to me."^[1] She goes on to write that it was this *love*, together with a desire to see the efforts of her husband not wasted, which led her to step out of her expected role as a woman in the 19th century and work towards the

publication of *On War*. “For twenty-one years I was profoundly happy at the side of such a man. Treasured memories, hopes, the rich inheritance of sympathy and friendship that I owe to the beloved departed, and the elevating sense that his rare distinction is so generally and nobly recognized sustain this happiness despite my irreplaceable loss.”[\[ii\]](#)

Marie von Clausewitz’s *love* and *courage* are only one example of the countless stories told throughout history. Historian Tacitus provided the story of Agripinna, wife of Germanicus, as another great historic illustration of how critically important military wives are to our profession.

In the first century A.D. the Romans marched into Germania to quell an increase of violence from the tribes. The general in charge, Germanicus, brought his wife Agripinna with him on this deployment. While he led invasions deep into Germany, she remained back in the garrison near the Rhine. As described by Tacitus, she took responsibility for many of the garrison activities, to include ensuring that the destitute and wounded had both food and medicine. When a false rumor spread that her husband’s elements had been defeated and that the Germanic tribes were marching in their direction, it was Agripinna who stood up to the cowardly soldiers and prevented the bridge over the Rhine from being destroyed, thus stranding Legions of Romans, including her husband[\[iii\]](#). Her *courage* saved an army.

Finally, while this last example is pure fiction, I think it does an excellent job of capturing the *sacrifice*, of our wives. In Steven Pressfield’s *Gates of Fire*, there is a scene where King Leonidas explains why he chose the specific 300 Spartans to defend the pass at Thermopylae. He chose them not because of their leadership, strength, or combat ability; he chose them because of their wives and mothers. King Leonidas knew these soldiers would not return from the battlefield, and a Greek victory over the invading Persians would only be achieved if the citizens of Sparta maintained their will to fight, despite their loss. This inspiration wouldn’t come from the front lines, it would come from the example set by the wives and mothers of the fallen. If these women lost their resolve, the Greek states would

fall. Clearly King Leonidas chose the correct 300 families, because a year after the Battle of Thermopylae, the Greek forces defeated the Persians at Salamis and Plataea. As Pressfield later wrote, “The West survived then, in no small measure because of her women.”^[iv]

I continue to witness *love, courage, and sacrifice* interwoven into my family’s story, as well as the stories of those who’ve had loved ones serving overseas. From the young new wife who steps up to lead the Family Readiness Group to the actions of wives who have received that dreadful knock at the door, it is in their *love, courage, and sacrifice* that we find our strength to do our professional duty. Words can’t express my gratitude for our heroic women.

^[i] Clausewitz, *On War* pg. 65

^[ii] Clausewitz, pg. 67

^[iii] Tacitus, *Annals* 1.51.3

^[iv] Pressfield, *The Warrior Ethos* pg. 6

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