

# THE HE-MAN WOMEN-HATERS CLUB



THIS 19-YEAR-OLD GIRL REFUSES TO GIVE UP HER BATTLE  
AGAINST A 152-YEAR-OLD SOUTHERN MALE TRADITION. BY DIANE



THE CAMPUS BUILDINGS LOOK LIKE CASTLES

**7 AM, Monday, August 15, 1994. Charleston, South Carolina.** The beautiful campus of the Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina, is like something straight out of a fairy tale. The wind causes the American flag in front of the administration building to blow steadily, as if to indicate a recent victory for the good ole boys.

Groups of young men wearing uniforms of gray pants, white shirts and sleek black patent leather shoes, scurry to and fro, looking like clones. Today 610 new cadets arrive. I watch as they are given instructions on how to salute, stand, walk, turn, brace (pull the chin in

and pull the shoulders up around the ears) and respond when they're spoken to. Called "knobs" because of the shaved heads they must sport, they're not allowed to talk unless it's to say, "Sir, yes, sir!" "Sir, no, sir!" or "Sir, no excuse, sir!" They have to sit on the first three inches of their seats during meals, and they can't look an upper-classman in the eye.

One guy, who's about 5'8" and very skinny, stands at attention. He gazes straight ahead. When he's asked his name, he begins to blink repeatedly. He takes a deep breath then shouts, "Sir, [he recites his last name], sir!"

"And how do you spell that?" the upper-classman inquires. The knob pauses, takes another deep breath and begins to shout out the letters. He stops midway as if he has forgotten the spelling, regains his composure and continues.

I'm here because Shannon Richey Faulkner's fight to become a member of the all-male Corps of Cadets, the uniformed regiment of students, was supposed to come to an end on this day. After applying and receiving provisional acceptance to the college in January 1993 and having it revoked because she is female, Shannon filed suit against the Citadel, claiming its males-only policy was a violation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. Her reasoning? The Citadel is a state-supported college that willfully practices sex discrimination. She has made some inroads in her fight. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist ruled on January 18, 1994, almost a year after she applied, that she could take classes with the young men until a final decision is reached in her case. Only she can't live there, march or take part in campus activities of the Corps of Cadets.

Then last July, a federal judge ruled that come August 15, Shannon would be the first woman admitted into the cadet program. And like all incoming cadets, she was to receive the traditional scalped haircut, don a daily uniform, and be put through an emotional, physical and psychological hell.

But on August 12, the Citadel received a stay. That means they are appealing the federal judge's decision and prolonging the court process. So Shannon wasn't going to be a full-fledged cadet after all.

I arrive at her family's two-story colonial home in Powdersville on the scorch-



ing Sunday afternoon before the first official day of the semester. The white columns out front were once spray-painted red with the words *bitch*, *dyke* and *lesbo*. The vandalism of Shannon's detractors. As I pull into the driveway, I notice a white four-door Toyota with a Citadel sticker posted on the back windshield. Shannon's.

Sunday is a special day in the Faulkner household. The family gets up, attends church services, then goes out to a local restaurant for brunch with some friends. "I guess I could actually say that I was really lucky because I had a *Leave It To Beaver* life," Shannon told me later. "Quite a few of my friends come from split families, and their parents got divorced and stuff like that. But my parents have been married 31 years now."

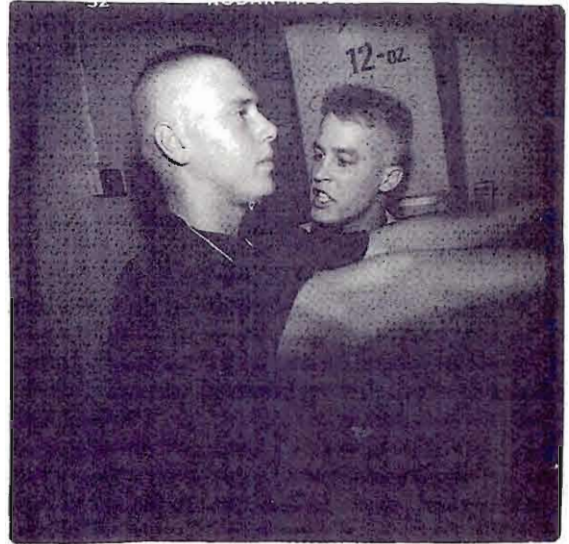
Shannon's mom, Sandy, who bears a resemblance to Mrs. Claus, immediately opens the side door. She's wearing blue shorts, sneakers and a T-shirt with the name of their church on it. She says, "Welcome! Come on in!" The Southern hospitality and warmth just ooze out of her voice. Pictures of both Shannon and her 23-year-

old brother, Todd, who is in the Navy, hang on the walls. Sandy explains that there's a friendly competition between brother and sister.

Shannon emerges a few moments later wearing khaki pants, Birkenstock-like sandals and a shirt made out of the likeness of the American flag. Her face shows no regrets. Her dad, Ed, traipses in behind her. His muscular chest shows off the gray Citadel T-shirt he's wearing. It was a Christmas gift to him from Shannon.

I ask Shannon if she's always been determined about pursuing the things she wants. She doesn't answer immediately. Sandy politely suggests that Shannon's nature may have a lot to do with the fact that she was a premature baby. "When she was a year old, she weighed 12 pounds," Sandy

says. "We almost lost her for a while. We didn't know until she was almost 3 whether she was gonna live or not." She adds, "She was 16 months old before she ever walked. But she didn't take toddling steps the way most children do. She got up and walked across the room. Her first sentence was 'Me want cookie.' She never did little things.

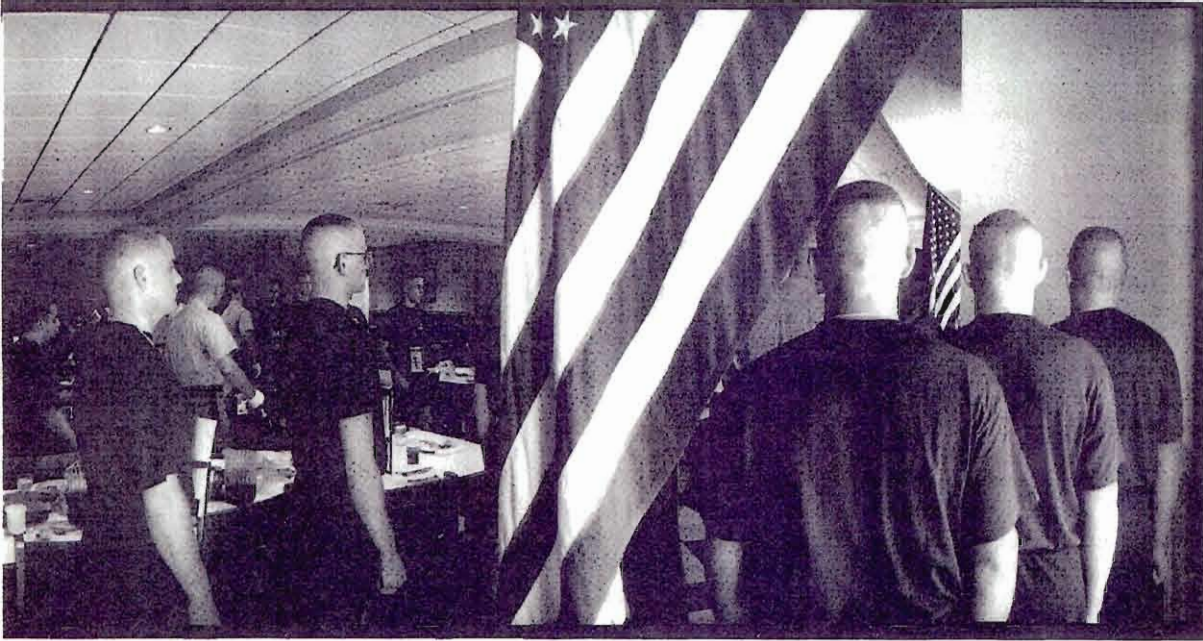


**SHANNON WOULD WEAR HER HAIR LIKE THIS**



**SHANNON RICHEY FAULKNER DOESN'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER**





ONCE THEY SIT DOWN, IT'LL ONLY BE ON THE FIRST THREE INCHES OF THEIR CHAIRS



ABOVE, THESE WOMEN KNOW THEIR PLACE; BELOW, SO DO THESE KNOBS



sylvia placidy



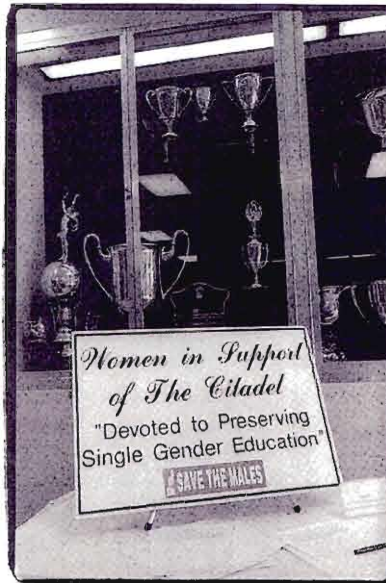
She waited and she watched and then she did the whole thing."

Shannon jumps in. "There were only two other girls in the neighborhood when I was growing up. The rest were guys. One of the girls was a little brat. She acted too weak and stuff like that. The other girl was a tomboy, just like me. So we always ran with the guys. I played little league sports, softball, basketball. I played backyard football with my brother and his friends." In high school she played varsity softball, was drum major, kept stats for varsity basketball teams and edited the yearbook.

Despite the rumors circulating that she's a lackey for leftist feminist and political groups, Shannon says the decision to apply to the Citadel was hers and hers alone. As she explains it, when you've lived in South Carolina, you can't help but know the history and reputation of the school. "[Citadel cadets] are credited with firing the first shots of the Civil War. It's the place for Southern gentlemen to go to school and all. It holds so much prestige," she says. "It's a great honor for a girl to date a Citadel cadet and to be given the miniature ring [a replica of the ring graduates receive]."

In her senior year of high school, Shannon read an article in *Sports Illustrated* called "What Is the Citadel?" It chronicled the terrifying experiences of six former freshman cadets and detailed how they were severely harassed and /or beaten by upperclassmen. "You talk to no one and salute everyone," the article says. "You ask permission to eat, leave, pass, cough, sneeze and scratch your nose....You try to make nice and be invisible because any sophomore half your size can drop you for 15 push-ups on a lark. For the first week you smell like three-day-old sweat socks, because all you get are 10-second showers....There was once an upperclassman, it is said, who would hold a pistol at freshmen's heads, asking them things they should have memorized from the school guidebook." The Citadel public relations department claims this article is "a complete work of fiction."

Shannon's class discussed the article. "We got off the hazing real quick and started talking about how the Citadel was state-supported yet women couldn't go there." (The school receives approximately \$12.4 million annually from the state and



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**OBSCENITIES WERE  
SPRAY-PAINTED  
ON THE COLUMNS  
IN FRONT OF  
HER HOUSE**

★ ★ ★

about \$1.2 million of federal money.)

About a month later, Shannon went down to her guidance counselor's office, picked up an application, which did not ask about gender or for a photo, and completed it. "I went back to my guidance counselor," she recalls, "with three other applications." She also applied to Erksine College in Due West, the University of South Carolina and the College of Charleston. All of the schools have good reputations and are in her home state, which she did not want to leave.

"I said, 'Here's the four colleges I'm applying to. I want transcripts sent with each of them.' And I said, on the Citadel application, I'd like any reference to my gender left off the transcript. She [the guidance counselor] said, 'Are you sure?' I said, 'Yes, ma'am, I am.'"

Still, Shannon says there were some things that should have

revealed her identity. "Apparently they didn't notice varsity softball. In South Carolina it's traditionally a female sport," she says.

Shannon contends, however, that she didn't have the slightest clue as to where she really wanted to go. "I was trying to see which schools would accept me before I made a decision. I was leaving my options open, and the Citadel was the first one I got back." She was also accepted by the other schools. Her class rank was 40 in a class of 234. Her grade point average was 3.35. Shannon scored a 1070 on the SAT. Citadel requirements for admission are at least a 2.0 and a minimum of 800 on the SAT.

Her acceptance letter was dated January 22, 1993, and addressed to Mr. Shannon Richey Faulkner: "It is my pleasure to inform you that the Fourth Class Admissions Advisory Committee of the Citadel has given you provisional acceptance for admission." The letter detailed that she would have to complete all designated academic courses, provide a final high school transcript, fill out the medical history and physical examination forms and sign and return the drug-testing consent form. Also, she had to submit a check for \$150 to reserve her space in the class. The letter closes by saying, "We are excited that you will be joining the Corps of Cadets." She sent in her check immediately.

Two weeks later, two letters came in the mail, one addressed to Shannon as Ms. Faulkner and the other to her mother. "The Citadel is a single-gender college program for males under the provisions of Title IX of the Federal Education Act of 1972," Shannon's letter stated. Furthermore, it said that her provisional acceptance was being withdrawn and her application rejected. Also enclosed was a check for \$175, returning her \$25 application and \$150 reservation fees. She says a guy who went to her high school and to the Citadel tipped them off.

"That check has never been cashed by me," Shannon says. That would mean she accepted their decision. "It made me mad that they accepted me but then rejected me just because I was a girl. That's basically when I decided that I was going to try and do something about it. I never thought that being a girl, female or woman was gonna hold me > page 79

◀ page 53 THE HE-MAN WOMEN-HATERS CLUB back. And when it did I started to retaliate." On March 2, 1993, she filed a complaint against the Citadel.

Major Rich Mill, the Citadel's public relations officer, defends the Citadel's actions against Shannon. "We realized a mistake and we corrected it by rescinding the provisional letter of acceptance. We had been purposefully deceived. It disturbed us greatly that an application was made to the college that was not authentic. But we don't dwell on it. We dwell on the fact that there is a challenge to our ability to have a single-gender program at the Citadel. If we're not allowed to do that, it affects every single-gender program in this country."

Robert Black, who is one of Shannon's attorneys, counters that she was within her rights to ask to have the information on her transcript omitted. "Under the Constitution you are protected from incriminating yourself," he says. "Thank God for the Fifth Amendment. That information would have been used to discriminate against her and not admit her."

Few people know that Shannon is not the first woman to sue the college. In 1992, three female Navy veterans were in the process of suing the Citadel. "What these women wanted to do was to sit side by side with the cadets," Mr. Black explains. "Male veterans had been doing that since the Second World War. If you were a male veteran, you could take classes, but if you were a female veteran you could only go at night."

Shannon's first lawyer talked to Mr. Black about Shannon's case, and they agreed to include her as a plaintiff in the female veterans' lawsuit. But to get around the veterans' request, the Citadel changed its policy, saying that neither male nor female veterans are allowed to take classes. (The Citadel says this was considered two years before a suit was ever filed.)

But Shannon's March '93 complaint was still in the courts. In her deposition she said that at first she hesitated about going there "because I knew that I would be the only girl. But now I am very strongly willed toward going there."

"At this time I hope to enter the teaching profession," she says in her affidavit. "Before applying to the Citadel, I learned that it has a highly respected program in education...I would benefit academically and personally from its Corps of Cadets program. I am aware

that the Citadel has one of the most active and influential alumni associations in the South. I would like very much to contribute to and benefit from that network."

Major Mill retorts that while it's great Shannon wants the Citadel education, "she could have gotten that from the College of Graduate and Professional Studies." Indeed, the Citadel does offer an undergraduate, coeducational night program. Mill says that 77 percent of the students in the other school are females. "We have more than 3,000 female Citadel graduates. They use the same facilities. They use the same curriculum. They use the same professors."

And there *are* female faculty, but it's been reported that some of them, along with the all-female black wait staff in the mess hall, have had harassment problems themselves. "They say at the Citadel that they're making gentlemen out of boys," Shannon says. "The way they look at a woman is very different than the way women are looked at in the real world. They put her up on a pedestal. It's like they won't pull you off that pedestal so you could work side by side with them." Shannon also points out that some of the gentlemen cadets yelled things at her from barracks windows. "That's not a real man," she says with an edge of attitude in her voice. "If you want to be a real man, come and say it to my face."

Shannon adds that other women have spoken to her about how poorly Citadel cadets have treated them. "One girl came up to me and told me she really believes in what I'm doing because they shouldn't be able to keep women out. She said her boyfriend went to another college his first year and then transferred into the Citadel with her brother. She said his respect for her and the way he treats her changed."

But not all women have been supportive. One time Shannon was in a Charleston restaurant with some friends, and a college-aged girl came up to her and started cussing her out. "I just continued eating and I was like, 'Well, thank you very much for coming over and expressing your opinion. But if you'll please excuse me, I'm trying to eat.'" There's even an organization called Women in Support of the Citadel, which sells bumper stickers and T-shirts with "Save the Males" written on them.

When Shannon leaves the room, her mom confesses that she really ad-

mires what her daughter is doing, but every day she prays for her safety. Death threats have come in the mail. Also, a sign surfaced on a major road in Charleston a few months ago saying, "Die Shannon."

The question remains, Why? Why put yourself through all of this? Her lawyer Valorie Vojdik says, "Shannon likes to be challenged. This is the sort of environment that's very appealing to someone who's interested in that type of challenge. She thinks she'll benefit." And does Shannon believe her actions make her a card-carrying feminist? "In some ways, yes," she responds. "But I will claim to you that I feel more like an individualist. Here [in the South] *feminist* is a bad word, almost."

Being in the South, and in the military environment of the Citadel, made me think about several things. Desegregation was the first. A lot of the arguments I heard against Shannon were strikingly similar to the ones used against African-Americans. "My rights are being denied if she's let into this school." "It'll change the whole scope of the school and its history." "If she wants to go to a school offering the same kind of liberal arts education with a military emphasis, then let her go to one of the academies." "This is our turf. No girls allowed!" If you simply substitute the word *black* for *girl*, *female* or *woman*, you'll realize how times really have not changed.

Another thing: Everything Shannon Faulkner stands for—being an independent thinker, a fighter or an individualist—is everything that the Citadel will destroy should she become a cadet. It's their way. The military way. You surrender your option to think for yourself. If you disagree, most likely you'll suffer. It's scary for me to think of what life would be like for Shannon should the courts finally admit her to the Citadel. The woman who sat across from me and unabashedly made no excuse for doing and being who she is will probably be a shadow of herself when the Citadel is through with her. How sad. But this is her decision and nobody tells Shannon what she can and cannot do.

Whatever the outcome of the case, Shannon's helped prove that young women aspire to be more than just cheerleaders and girlfriends. And if anyone tries to stop them from pursuing their goals, they won't just lie down and take it. They will fight as Shannon has. ✕