

PUBLIC WELCOME

Lessons in Leadership

SIRENS

HOW TO PEE STANDING UP
an **ALARMING MEMOIR of COMBAT**
and **COMING BACK HOME**

April 30, 2020—11:30-12:30 p.m.
ZOOM—Virtual Lunch 'n Learn



Paperback: 283 pages
Warriors Publishing Group
(2019)



Laura Naylor Colbert

Laura Colbert served in the Army National Guard from March 2001-2009 as a military police officer. She was on active duty and deployed to Baghdad, Iraq March 2003-July 2004. Laura graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Kinesiology from UW-Madison. She worked as a physical education teacher and Dean of Students at Madison West High School from 2008-2017. Laura received a Master's degree in Educational Leadership through Cardinal Stritch in 2011 and a Master's in Experimental Education from UW-LaCrosse in 2012. She has been an Administrator at Waupaca Middle School since the fall of 2017.

There's a steep learning curve for every American soldier who deploys to the Middle East war zone. Much of that involves culture shock, and the excitement and confusion also applies to female soldiers. And when that female soldier is also a Military Police Officer, the curve gets bent way out of shape. Laura was heartland-bred and tough enough when the Army sent her to an MP unit in Baghdad, but she quickly discovered soldering in Iraq involved a lot more than she expected. Laura lives near Waupaca with her husband and three children.

Signed autographed copies of Laura's book will be available from the Juneau County Extension office.

Topics

- ◆ **A chronological depiction of Laura's deployment, which includes the transition of liberating Iraq to occupying the country**
 - ◆ **The effects of PTSD**
 - ◆ **Insight into current warfare**
- ◆ **Challenges as a female MP in war zone**

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As part of the *Lunch 'n Learn* Educational Program Series
brought to you by Juneau County Extension

RSVP by Tuesday, April 28, 2020 4:00 p.m.

Pre-registration by email glkirking@wisc.edu

You will then receive connection information and a password. Zoom will walk you through how to access and/or download to your device.

Please call Gary Kirking (608-633-6278) or Mary Nuttall (608-847-9329) if you have any questions.

\$5 registration fee to help cover presentation and program costs.

Make checks payable to Juneau County Treasurer

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transition and shares many life-altering stories. Tragedies unfolded day after day, and our hard work seemed to be crumbling around us. Nothing could have prepared me for this portion of my deployment.

The last section of the book talks about how my life was overtaken by post-traumatic stress and moral injury. What is this newfangled term: moral injury? Imagine throwing aside your morals and values—what you innately know to be right and true—and doing the exact opposite while at war. No wonder soldiers return home unable to talk about their experiences. The shame and guilt of who they have become make it difficult to reintegrate into their old lifestyle.

My book was not only written as a therapeutic tool, but as a way to help others: other soldiers, other trauma victims, and those who want to support them. Many people suffer from mental health issues and are too afraid or too bull-headed to get the help they deserve. It took me longer to seek help than it should have because I believed I could fix this problem on my own. I was a trained soldier, after. I was wrong; I needed help.

Additionally, there are so many civilians who are disconnected from our two most current wars. The media stopped talking about Iraq and Afghanistan long ago, and soldiers are still there, risking their lives. Ask yourself: “What do I know about modern warfare?”

If anything, I hope this story helps others realize the importance of self-care—that life is short, so we need to make the most out of the time we have. It’s okay to not be okay. Do not be afraid to get the help that could tur your life around.

LAURA’S PERSONAL COMMENTS

The first section of the book talks about my life prior to war—how it’s hard to consider myself the same person. As a civilian, I was a pacifist who chose to communicate rather than fight. I was also a trained soldier who had found a new identity in which I wanted to retaliate against a non-existent enemy—thanks to Basic Training. I was forced to compartmentalize for self-preservation.

The second section outlines the beginning of the deployment when we were optimistic about our mission and seemed to be making positive changes. It felt like we were winning the hearts and minds and rebuilding a torn country. My college and military experience felt like enough preparation for this portion of this war.

Unfortunately, our deployment lasted much longer than we had anticipated, and the insurgents were multiplying exponentially, which meant that the latter part of our deployment felt more like an occupation than that of liberation. The third part of the book outlines that difficult

transition and shares many life-altering stories. Tragedies unfolded day after day, and our hard work seemed to be crumbling around us. Nothing could have prepared me for this portion of my deployment.