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## Saluting women warriors

*Parkite celebrates exemplary female West Point graduates in new book*

By ALISHA SELF  
*Of the Record staff*

Donna McAleer, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and former Army Officer, is a staunch proponent of discipline, rules, challenge and change.

In 2004, she signed on as coach of the Park City High School sophomore girls' volleyball team. On the first day of practice, many of the athletes showed up wearing spaghetti-strap midriff tank tops, jewelry and skate-inspired tennis shoes. McAleer immediately instituted a strict dress code: no butts, breasts or bellies.

She realized that the girls were dressing and acting based on images of women they saw in magazines and on TV. "These young women searching for role models weren't looking beyond what the media sells us," she explains.

She thought about her own role

models – women who graduated before her, with her and after her at West Point – and the idea for a book was born.

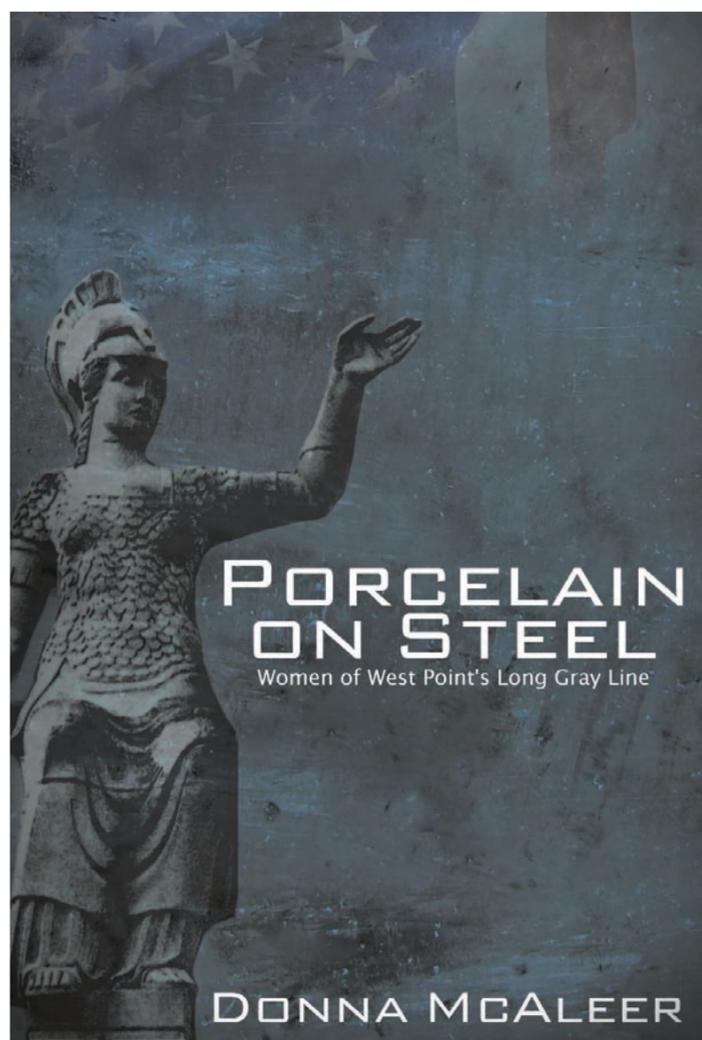
"Porcelain on Steel: Women of West Point's Long Gray Line," a collection of biographies about ordinary women with extraordinary stories, will be published on June 4.

Although it focuses solely on the women of West Point, the book is a universal testament to women who have overcome all types of challenges and who have prospered in the face of adversity.

"We know less about those who serve our nation than celebrities and athletes," McAleer says. "I want to change that."

The author graduated West Point in 1987 as class president of the eighth class to include women. She served in a variety of leadership positions in Germany before leaving the service in 1991 to pursue a master's degree in business.

After working in corporate logistics for several years, McAleer decided to pursue her dream of competing in the Olympics. At 34 years old, she finished fourth in the Olympic bob-



COVER DESIGN BY WHITNEY BRAZELL

Donna McAleer's new book, "Porcelain on Steel: Women of West Point's Long Gray Line," is a collection of biographies about ordinary women with extraordinary stories.

sled trials for the 2002 Winter Games. "I never wanted to be saying, 'Could've, would've, should've,'" she says.

McAleer served as the executive director of the People's Health Clinic

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### SUMMER CONCERT TIX

Tickets are on sale now for the St. Regis Big Stars, Bright Night Summer Concert Series at Deer Valley. The 2010 lineup includes One Republic on July 4; Wynonna Judd on July 20; Michael McDonald on Aug. 8; Earth, Wind & Fire on Aug. 30; and Ryan Bingham, Crooked Still and Sara Watkins on Sept. 6. For more information, call 655-3114 or visit [www.ecclescenter.org](http://www.ecclescenter.org).

### COMIC RELIEF RETURNS

Stand-up comedy will return to The Egyptian Theatre Friday and Saturday, June 4-5. Kathleen McCann will emcee with opening act Tim Chizmar and headliner Debbie Lockhart. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door, and \$20 for cabaret tables. The shows are rated R. For tickets, call 649-9371 or visit [www.parkcityshows.com](http://www.parkcityshows.com).

### KIDS' ARTSPARK CAMP

There are a few openings left for an ARTSPARK camp at Spiro Arts at Silver Star June 7-11 from 9 a.m. to noon. Young artists ages 8 to 12 will learn clay work, kite-making, painting, drawing and printmaking taught by state-certified art teachers and artists Susan Parker and Justin Parisi-Smith. The cost is \$200 and includes all supplies. For more information, call 802-878-7426. To register, log on to [www.spiroarts.org](http://www.spiroarts.org) and click on summer workshops.

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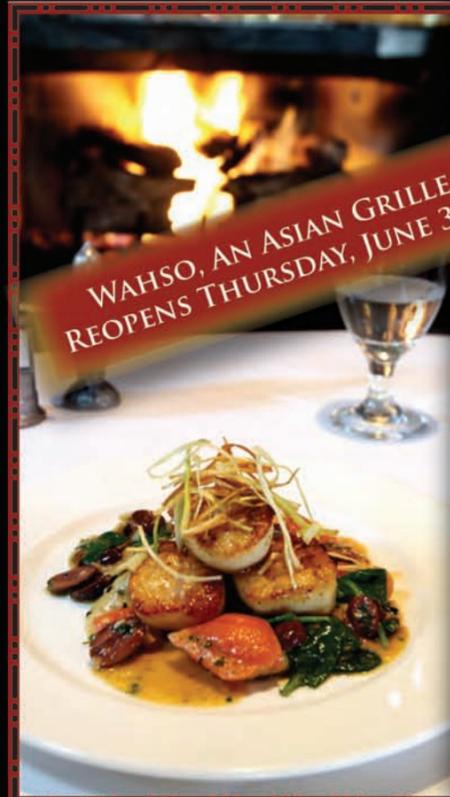
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• Continued from C-1

# Porcelain on Steel

from 2002 until 2004, when her experiences as a coach prompted her to begin collecting stories for "Porcelain on Steel."

"I would've never pictured myself writing a book," she says. Still, branching into writing fit McAleer's philosophy that it's important to get out of her comfort zone. "I have a huge passion for change. As Wayne Gretsky says, 'You miss 100 percent of shots you don't take,'" she adds.

She started the project by contacting West Point's women graduates with a synopsis of the book and a call for interested subjects. "I quickly had far more stories than I could possibly tell," she says.

She chose 14 women to profile based on the diversity of their experiences in army and civilian sectors and conducted interviews through various means. Each chapter provides a glimpse into one woman's personal and professional battles and achievements.

One chapter, for example, tells the story of Lillian Pfluke, who graduated in the first West Point co-ed class in 1980. "[Pfluke] spent 15 years on active duty consistently challenging the Army's combat exclusion rule prohibiting women from serving the infantry, armor and field artillery branches," McAleer writes. "After retiring, she turned to elite cycling. Competing in the 2002 World

Masters Cycling Championships. She was on the podium four times in various disciplines earning gold, silver and two bronze medals. Less than 24 hours after returning home and in the best shape of her life, she was diagnosed with breast cancer after a routine mammogram."

Another relays the journey of Lissa Young, who became a helicopter pilot qualified on three different aircraft. In 16 years on active duty, she was promoted to lieutenant colonel and selected to teach leadership studies at West Point. She was forced to resign her commission because of the Army's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

The title of the book, McAleer says, was inspired by a series of sculptures made by Tara Krause, a 1982 West Point graduate who created statues to honor fallen female warriors. Krause draped delicate porcelain over steel so that it would be strong enough to survive the intense heat of the kiln, mixing a symbol of beauty and refinement with the ultimate emblem of strength.

"I loved the metaphors involved in that," McAleer says. "West Point is a four-year leadership crucible with intense heat and pressure. Its mission is to produce leaders of character committed to the values of duty, honor, country, and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army. Porcelain is a strong, vitreous, translucent ceramic material often used in the making of fine china. Steel, the primary alloy in plowshares and swords, is suggestive of such character qualities as hard and unflinching. The two materials, porcelain and steel, honor the beauty and underlying strength of West Point women."

McAleer acknowledges that she could have written an entire book on each of the women she profiles. "This is really a foreword to books I

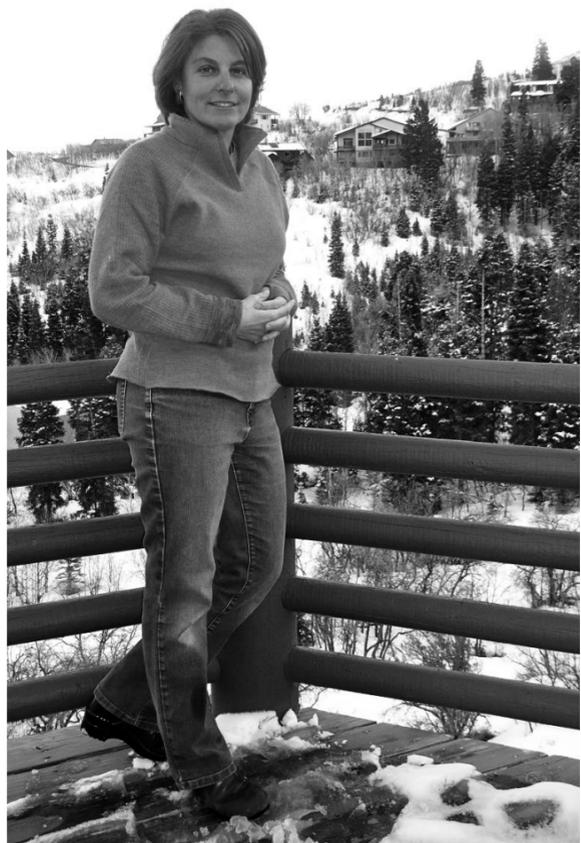


PHOTO BY MICHAEL P. FLAHERTY  
Local West Point graduate and former Army Officer Donna McAleer wants young women to look to more deserving role models, such as those who have met challenges and overcome obstacles to lead others with strength and courage.

hope these women will write," she says.

She also points out that the women in the book represent a mere sample of the total female graduate population. "West Point's women are making history," she says.

Last weekend marked 30 years since the first women joined "the long gray line" of West Point graduates. One hundred thirty-five women received diplomas, and for the first time, the school's top two awards were presented to women cadets.

To shine a spotlight on more women from the West Point community, McAleer

has launched Honored Role, a mini-series of stories about notable graduates, on the book's website.

"Porcelain on Steel" has already garnered accolades from a variety of public figures, including Andrea Jung, chairman and CEO of Avon, and Mike Krzyzewski, Duke men's basketball coach.

The target audience for readership encompasses high school- and college-aged girls, young career professionals, sons and daughters, anyone looking for stories of inspiration, and those interested in women's studies, gender studies or military history.

This Memorial Day, McAleer encourages Parkites to take a moment to remember all those who have served the country and fought for freedom. Seventy-nine West Point graduates have died while fighting the global war on terrorism, among them two women, 1st Lt. Laura Walker (2003 graduate) and 2nd Lt. Emily Perez (2005 graduate).

McAleer is in the process of planning a book tour and says she's already thinking about writing another book with a similar message but with a more global perspective.

Meanwhile, she continues to spend her winters as a ski instructor at Deer Valley and remains actively involved as a West Point alum. She serves on the Salt Lake Community College women's business advisory board as well as the boards of several local and national nonprofits.

"Porcelain on Steel" will be available at online book retailers including [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) starting on June 4. For more information, visit [www.porcelainonsteel.com](http://www.porcelainonsteel.com).

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