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Paula Broadwell, Grateful for the Journey

By [Inspired Woman Magazine](#) on February 3, 2012

General David Petraeus and Paula Broadwell

From Paula Broadwell's 2006 Century High School Hall of Fame Induction Bio:

In high school, Paula excelled in the classroom and beyond, fulfilling a variety of leadership roles from homecoming queen to CHS and state student council president, from all-state basketball player to orchestra concert mistress, from AAU-Mars Milky Way All-American to valedictorian.

This passion directed toward excellence and a well-rounded education served Paula well as she advanced to West Point where she earned Dean's List status and the honor of Class Secretary, all while graduating at the top of her class in physical fitness and with honors in leadership. With a degree in Political Geography and Systems Engineering, Paula pursued a military intelligence career abroad, serving with conventional and special operations units in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Since that induction, Broadwell has continued to add titles and accolades to her bio, the latest being author. Her focus for the past year has been "All In: The Education of General David Petraeus," which began as her Ph.D. dissertation three years ago. In a few weeks, after she is finished with the initial promoting of her book, she will again become a PhD student, a virtual research assistant at Harvard, and an Army Reservist assigned as an assistant teacher at West Point. "Yes, I wear a number of hats," said Broadwell. "But my most important title is mom and wife."

Finding a balance between her professional and personal life is something Broadwell seems to excel at, just like everything else she attempts. "I was driven when I was younger...driven at West Point where it was much more competitive in that women were competing with men on many levels, and I was driven in the military and at Harvard, both competitive environments," she explained. "But now, as a working mother of two, I realize it is more difficult to compete in certain areas. I think it is important for working moms to recognize family is the most important. It doesn't mean you have to put all of your dreams, hopes and ambitions on hold. Just find a way to find a balance and, if you can, outsource the non-essential work."

The following paragraph, written by Donna McAleer in *Role Models / Honored Role (part 15): Paula Broadwell – Arc of a Driver*, illustrates how the balance may come at a price:

"As a senior Army Captain, Broadwell cleared many of the hurdles to enter into the world of black

operations. But despite deep professional satisfaction and a unique opportunity, Paula traded her active duty commission for one in the Army reserves. "It was my own inability to balance work and family. I had just become engaged. Entering black ops was a lifelong dream and I questioned the choice for sometime but soon realized I would find my way via other professional outlets, which I truly have! And I am blessed to have an incredible family life, and a sense of work-life balance. The important lesson for me is that you can have it all, just not all at the same time."

Broadwell couldn't have accomplished all she has without extreme discipline and following her dreams. "I always wanted to be a public servant and work in international security," she said. "I was just following my passion, I found a way to do that through the military, and now through war correspondence and book writing."

THE BOOK

When Broadwell began to pursue a Ph.D. in 2008, her dissertation was to conduct a case study of Petraeus's leadership. After two years she realized there was a book in the making and spent another year embedded in Afghanistan observing Petraeus and his team.

What follows is an embed scenario and excerpt from the preface of "All In: The Education of General David Petraeus"

Broadwell spent quite a bit of time with this unit in the Arghandab, Kandahar Province:

An eerie calm fell over Bakersfield as the first of Flynn's soldiers arrived at first light. Flynn, accompanied by members of his battalion staff and his personal security detail, set out on foot toward Bakersfield shortly before 8:00 a.m., following a convoy of engineers who were clearing the route of IEDs. But as Flynn approached, an IED detonated and the Taliban opened up with a barrage of small-arms fire. Then another IED went off and Flynn saw Specialist Michael L. Stansbery, 21, of Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, down on the road, injured by the blast. It had ripped his torso in half. A huge cloud of smoke hung in the air. Captain Andrew Shaffer, one of Flynn's commanders, remembered how, at that moment, time seemed to slow to an agonizing crawl. "Medic!" he heard someone shout. Radios crackled with reports of small-arms firing coming from the south.

Minutes later, yet another IED exploded, leaving two of Flynn's sergeants bloodied and dazed. Then he saw Sergeant Kyle B. Stout, 25, of Texarkana, Texas, in the choking black smoke, gravely wounded on the road. His face was frozen, mouth open. There was a blank look on his face. Three limbs were gone. Shaffer knelt beside him and forced a tourniquet over exposed bone and pulled it tight on flaps of skin and muscle. He remembered thinking how strange it was that Stout wasn't bleeding—his body was "shunting," instinctively cutting off blood flow to its extremities in a last-ditch effort to protect its vital organs. Flynn knelt by his side and tried to talk him back to consciousness. A call went out for medevac. A Black Hawk helicopter soon landed in a field fifty meters to the northeast and evacuated Stansbery and Stout from the battlefield...

Flynn learned later, as the fighting raged and they maneuvered soldiers across the battlefield, that Stansbery, Stout and Pittman had died of the wounds they suffered in the opening moments of the battle. It soon became clear to them how important this simple crossing was to the enemy. The fighting continued for five days before Flynn's soldiers finally cleared the objective.

(from Preface)

I first met General David H. Petraeus in the spring of 2006, when I was a graduate student at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. After two tours in Iraq, including command of the 101st Airborne Division during the 2003 invasion, he was visiting Harvard to speak about his experiences and a new counterinsurgency manual he was developing as the three-star commander

of the Army's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. It would get its first real test run a year later, during the surge in Iraq, with Petraeus himself in command.

I was among the students invited by the school to meet with the general at a dinner afterward, because of my military background. I, too, was a West Point graduate, and I had been recalled to active duty three times to work on counterterrorism issues in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. I had since joined the Army Reserve and begun graduate studies with the intent of returning either to active duty or to the policy world. I introduced myself to then-Lieutenant General Petraeus and told him about my research interests; he gave me his card and offered to put me in touch with other researchers and service members working on the same issues. I later discovered that he was famous for this type of mentoring and networking, especially with aspiring soldierscholars.

In 2008, I began to pursue a Ph.D. in public policy and to conduct a case study of Petraeus's leadership. A few months into my research, General Petraeus, who was then leading Central Command, invited me to go for a run with him and his team along the Potomac River during one of his visits to Washington. I figured I could interview him while we ran. Soon I learned what Petraeus means when he says, "The only thing better than a little competition is a lot of competition!" My intent was to test him. I'd earned varsity letters in cross-country and indoor and outdoor track and finished at the top of my class for athletics at West Point; I wanted to see if he could keep stride during an interview. Instead it became a test for me. As we talked during the run from the Pentagon to the Washington Monument and back, Petraeus progressively increased the pace until the talk turned to heavy breathing and we reached a six-minute-per-mile pace. It was a signature Petraeus move. I think I passed the test, but I didn't bother to transcribe the interview. I later learned that, at the time, he was nearing the end of eight and a half weeks of radiation treatments for prostate cancer.

I intended for my dissertation to trace the key themes—education, experience and the role of key mentors—of Petraeus's intellectual development and to examine these principles in action over his career. But when President Obama put him in charge of the war in Afghanistan in the summer of 2010, I decided to meld my research with an on-the-ground account of his command in Kabul—his last military command, as it turned out. He would again become the face of a highly unpopular war, with a surge of 33,000 U.S. troops deploying.

Petraeus had a year to make the gains in Afghanistan that the president would need in order to begin his promised drawdown of forces in July 2011. Every minute counted. He commanded from his fourteen-hundred-person headquarters in Kabul and traveled frequently throughout Afghanistan, visiting the more than 150,000 soldiers from forty-nine nations, of which 100,000 were from the United States. By the fall he seemed to hit his stride. But every day in Afghanistan was hard, and no one was certain how it would end.

Broadwell in Zabul with school boys

This was the story I would report across several months in Afghanistan, observing Petraeus and his team, embedding with combat units, and interviewing dozens of senior officials, officers, soldiers and Afghans. I spent time with infantry, artillery, Special Operations Forces and other military and civilian elements. I reported from the headquarters of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and the U.S. Embassy. I flew by helicopter to the sandy desert of Helmand Province, the jagged mountains of the Hindu Kush in eastern Afghanistan and Kandahar's lush Arghandab River Valley. I broke bread with Afghan ministers,

