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***The League of Wives* follows the wives of five Vietnam POWs through their transformation from rule-bound wives to national lobbyists, international human rights figures, spies, & rescuers.**

"Speaking up took enormous courage, but [the League of Wives] did it, and now, thanks to Lee's impressive research, their voices can be heard by those who embraced titles like *Hidden Figures* (2016) and *The Glass Universe* (2016)." —**Booklist, starred review**

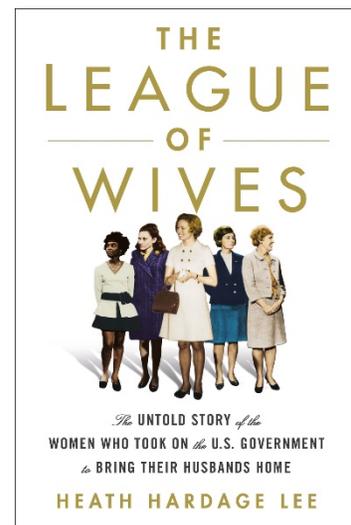
"This unputdownable story of strength and determination is a must-read." —**Library Journal, starred review**

"Girls with grit, these wives deserve the supreme salute, and Heath Hardage Lee honors them with grace and humanity." —**Kitty Kelley, author of His Way, Oprah, The Family, and many other**

THE LEAGUE OF WIVES

The Untold Story of the Women who Took On the
U.S. Government to Bring Their Husbands Home
By Heath Hardage Lee

***THE LEAGUE OF WIVES: The Untold Story of the Women Who Took on the U.S. Government to Bring Their Husbands Home* (St. Martin's Press; April 2, 2019; \$28.99)** unearths the forgotten history of the POW wives from across the country and political spectrum who came together to fight the U.S. government to bring their husbands home from Vietnam. These women succeeded against all odds and "thanks to Lee's impressive research, their voices can be heard by those who embraced titles like *Hidden Figures* (2016) and *The Glass Universe* (2016)." (*Booklist*, starred review) Reese Witherspoon preempted film rights for Hello Sunshine, saying "we strive to showcase brave, brilliant female



characters, and the women of *League of Wives* are all of that and more."

On February 12, 1973, one hundred and sixteen men who, just six years earlier, had been high flying Navy and Air Force pilots, shuffled, limped, or were carried off a huge military transport plane at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. These American servicemen had endured years of brutal torture, kept shackled and starving in solitary confinement, in rat-infested, mosquito-laden prisons, the worst of which was The Hanoi Hilton.

Months later, the first Vietnam POWs to return home would learn that their rescuers were their wives, a group of women that included Jane Denton, Sybil Stockdale, Louise Mulligan, Andrea Rander, Phyllis Galanti, and Helene Knapp. These women, who formed The National League of Families, would never have called themselves "feminists," but they had become the POW and MIAs most fervent advocates, going to extraordinary lengths to facilitate their husbands' freedom—and to account for missing military men—by relentlessly lobbying government leaders, conducting a savvy media campaign, conducting covert meetings with antiwar activists, and most astonishingly, helping to code secret letters to their imprisoned husbands.

After years of "Keeping Quiet" under the Johnson administration, the women finally "Went Public" with the support of the Nixon administration, revealing the inhumane treatment their husbands had suffered at the hands of their North Vietnamese captors. Due in large part to the activism of these wives, treatment of the prisoners improved measurably and prisoner torture diminished. And the women's tireless lobbying ultimately produced the greatest prize of all: between February and March 1973, 591 prisoners of war were finally sent home.

In a page-turning work of narrative non-fiction, Heath Hardage Lee tells the story of these remarkable women for the first time. Everyone who was moved by *Hidden Figures* will revel in Lee's accounting of the fierce band of women who battled Washington and brought their husbands home from the jungles of Vietnam.

About Heath Hardage Lee

Heath Hardage Lee comes from a museum education and curatorial background, and she has worked at history museums across the country. She holds a B.A. in History with Honors from Davidson College, and an M.A. in French Language and Literature from the University of Virginia. Heath served as the 2017 Robert J. Dole Curatorial Fellow: her exhibition entitled *The League of Wives: Vietnam POW MIA Advocates & Allies* about Vietnam POW MIA wives premiered at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics in May of 2017 and is now travelling to museums throughout the U.S. Potomac Books, a division of the University of Nebraska Press, published Heath's first book, *Winnie Davis: Daughter of the Lost Cause*, in 2014. *Winnie* won the 2015 Colonial Dames of America Annual Book Award as well as a 2015 Gold Medal for Nonfiction from the Independent Publisher Book Awards. Heath lives in Roanoke, Virginia, with her husband Chris and her two children, Anne Alston and James.



About the league of wives exhibit:

In her role as the 2017 Dole Archives Curatorial Fellow, Heath Hardage Lee conceived of and curated a museum exhibit titled *The League of Wives: Vietnam's POW MIA Allies & Advocates* based on her research for *The League of Wives: The Untold Story of the Women Who Took on the U.S. Government to Bring Their Husbands Home from Vietnam* book. The Dole Institute's Assistant Director and Senior Archivist Audrey McKanna Coleman led the exhibit team, which also included Assistant Curator Minda Stockdale, and filmmaker Kristine Bartley. The exhibit premiered at The Robert and Elizabeth Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas, on May 7, 2017 and ran through December 31 of that year.

Now at The Virginia Museum of History and Culture (VMHC) until September 3, 2019.

Publishing Details:

THE LEAGUE OF WIVES

**The Untold Story of the Women Who Took on the U.S. Government to Bring Their Husbands Home
By Heath Hardage Lee**

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More praise for Heath Hardage Lee and *The League of Wives*

“At Hello Sunshine, we strive to showcase brave, brilliant female characters, and the women of *League of Wives* are all of that and more. From the minute I heard about this inspiring true story, I knew it was a perfect fit for us. I’m excited to be partnering with the team at Fox 2000 to bring this special book to life onscreen, and to be giving audiences a glimpse at this meaningful moment in American history.”

—**Reese Witherspoon, in a statement about pre-empting film rights**

“Although many stories of the brave men held as POWs during the Vietnam War have been shared over the years (most famously, Senator John McCain’s), the battles fought by their wives on the home front have largely been glossed over, if not totally ignored. Lee (*Winnie Davis*, 2014) uncovered **an amazing forgotten history.**”

—**Booklist, starred review**

“Inspirational...In this **beautifully told history**, Lee unearths the contributions of everyday women who not only saved their husbands but influenced military culture.”

—**Publishers Weekly**

“In addition to the wrenching personal stories, **the author handles context gracefully**, especially regarding the wives and their ability to find their voices amid the continuing saga of an unjust war...A book both educational and emotional.”

—**Kirkus Reviews**

"With astonishing verve, *The League of Wives* persisted to speak truth to power to bring their POW/MIA husbands home from Vietnam. And with astonishing verve, Heath Hardage Lee has chronicled their little-known story — a profile of courage that spotlights 1960s-era military wives who forge secret codes with bravery,chutzpah and style. **Honestly, I couldn't put it down.**"

—**Beth Macy, author of *Dopesick* and *Factory Man***

“A remarkable true story of love, war, courage, constancy and change—as a group of naval housewives transformed themselves into powerful advocates for their missing husbands. Drawing strength from one another, the women took on not one but two governments—the enemy’s and their own, to seek a safe return for the men. Their bravery will inspire you. **I love this book!**”

—**Liza Mundy, Author of the *New York Times* Bestseller *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II***

“A stirring, dramatic tale of the incredible women who changed American culture. *The League of Wives* is a book much needed today. **Heath Hardage Lee tells this inspiring story with verve and a sharp eye for detail.** Highly recommended!”

—**Jonathan Eig, author of *Ali: A Life* and *The Birth of the Pill***

“You’ll put hand to heart after reading *The League of Wives* about Americans who epitomize heroism in high heels. From white gloves to boxing gloves these military wives, once quiet and subservient, became warriors to save their POW MIA husbands shot down in Vietnam. They battled their government—challenged the State Department, the Pentagon, even the White House—to stand up and make the enemy accountable to the accords of the Geneva Convention. Girls with grit, these wives deserve the supreme salute, and Heath Hardage Lee honors them with grace and humanity.”

—**Kitty Kelley, author of *His Way*, *Oprah*, *The Family* and many others**

“Heath Hardage Lee’s *The League of Wives* recounts the powerful story of how a cabal of indomitable POWs’ wives relentlessly campaigned to free their captive husbands during the Vietnam War. Duty, honor, country, and love of family prevail. A must read!”

—**Douglas Brinkley, the Katherine Tsanoff Brown Chair in Humanities and Professor of History at Rice University and author of *Cronkite*.**

Reese Witherspoon, Fox 2000 Tackling Vietnam Drama 'League of Wives' (Exclusive)



Fox 2000 preemptively acquired the rights to the non-fiction book by women's history author Heath Lee.

Fox 2000 and Reese Witherspoon are tackling the story of a little-known but key part of the Vietnam War.

The studio has preemptively acquired *The League of Wives*, an upcoming non-fiction book by Heath Lee, for Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine banner to produce an adaptation.

The book, which is to be published by St. Martin's Press in April 2019, tells of a group of women — wives of military men who would never describe themselves as feminists — that banded together to save their husbands. When their fighter pilot husbands were shot down, captured and imprisoned for years under deplorable conditions during the Vietnam War, the group of well-educated military wives transformed into a league of take-charge lobbyists, human rights activists and even spies determined to do everything in their power to bring their POW and MIA spouses home. By 1973, the group had brought back 115 men.

“At Hello Sunshine, we strive to showcase brave, brilliant female characters, and the women of *League of Wives* are all of that and more,” Witherspoon, who will produce with [Hello Sunshine](#) exec Lauren Levy Neustadter, said Wednesday in a statement. “From the minute I heard about this inspiring true story, I knew it was a perfect fit for us. I’m excited to be partnering with the team at Fox 2000 to bring this special book to life onscreen, and to be giving audiences a glimpse at this meaningful moment in American history.”

Marisa Paiva and Molly Saffron will oversee for Fox 2000.

Lee is a museum curator and writer of women's history and her book, whose complete title is *The League of Wives: The Untold Story of the Women Who Took on the President, the Pentagon and the Rest of the US Government to Bring Their Husbands Home*, is partially based on her museum exhibition on the same subject. She is repped by UTA and Katherine Flynn at Kneerim & Williams.

