

Rookie

She's our county's first lady sheriff

A West Bloomfield woman who has desired a career in law enforcement as long as she can remember becomes the first female Oakland County Sheriff's deputy Dec. 20.

"There's definitely going to be resistance. It's a male field," said Sue Tobin on a recent day off from her training at the Royal Oak Police Academy.

"We only have matrons in the department. How can you blame those guys for their attitude? But I don't want it because I'm a woman."

A big stumbling block for women applicants for police jobs has been the night testing, but a superior officer said she passed the test easily along with four other women applicants. But the other four women failed further testing.

The oral interview was the hardest. Ms. Tobin said of the last testing step, which up until now no woman has been able to overcome.

Vaulting over a six-foot chain link fence and dragging a 170-pound dummy around is something girls aren't expected to do as part of growing up.

"Women are not taught to be aggressive. I don't carry a woman's lib sign."

"I don't pose a threat to men. If I don't get it on my own merits, it's no deal. I don't want it because I'm a woman and I'll take myself out if I can't do it," she said.

WHEN HER two-year-old brother runs into the room for a toy, she pauses, softly smiling at him, saying, "I like being treated like a woman. I don't even like gang Dutch."

Engaged to marry a sheriff's deputy next September, she manages to see him between their rotating shift schedules which will continue after their wedding.

Believing her three years work with the department as a paraprofessional is an advantage, she also admitted a disadvantage in that her father is Hollin Tobin, former West Bloomfield and later Birmingham police chief. Tobin now heads Southfield's public safety department.

Tobin has encouraged her as she worked for a degree in business administration with a special certificate in law enforcement from Mercy College.

At the police academy, there is more academic competition than she found in college, she said.

Ms. Tobin said that although a barroom fight might be difficult for a woman to handle, she can compensate by better handling of juveniles and family situations.

The 34-officer class meets daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. working in physical and academic training, report writing, note taking, search and seizure, ethics, court functioning, street arrests and human relations.

After graduation, she will "just have to get in there and ride with a patrolman for six months on probation. You can tell those with road experience in class," she said.

"I thought I would have a better chance in a large department. You have to sue to get into a local police force," she said of the classical resistance of small municipalities to hiring women.



Rigorous training, physical stamina and tough classroom preparation marks the ladder to success for a law enforcement officer at the Oak Park police academy. Sue Tobin of West Bloomfield shows that police work isn't only a man's job anymore. Ms. Tobin

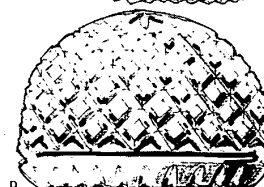
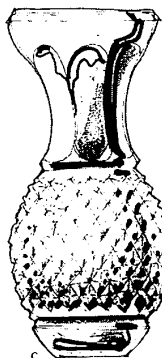
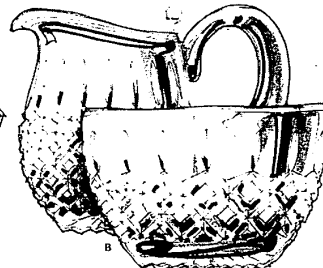
will become the first Oakland County Sheriff next week. But to attain that goal, she first had to experience the grueling physical training and combat-like drills to pass the agility and physical testing required of a sheriff.

Staff photos by Charlie Kidd



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