

First woman appointed

Conservationists go coed

Story: SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN
Staff photo: ED BAS

Kathryn Bezotte was following in her family's footsteps when she became a conservation officer with the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) last year.

She also broke a barrier in the formerly male-dominated agency. Ms. Bezotte is the first woman conservation officer for the DNR. It was a male who suggested she apply for the position.

"My father, John, is with the DNR as area supervisor in Marquette. He told me the department was going to hire a new officer and that I should apply," she said. One of her brothers, John, is an equipment operator for the DNR forestry division at Sault Ste. Marie.

Even though Ms. Bezotte was familiar with the work involved, it was no easy task for her to get the job. She and 6,000 others took a civil service test. Only after scoring high on that and going through interviews and

background investigations for a year was she hired.

Then her training involved eight weeks in police work and 12 weeks in the field, working with other conservation officers around the state.

MARCH 5 WAS when Ms. Bezotte came to Oakland County where she's responsible for state-owned land south of M-59 (north of South Boulevard or Twenty Mile Road). She works out of the DNR district headquarters for Oakland, Wayne, Macomb, St. Clair and Monroe counties.

She wears conservation officer badge 157 and a uniform identical to the men's, just tailored more.

She said she applied for the job because of her love of the outdoors.

The five-foot, eight-inch tall woman is from Marquette in the Upper Peninsula. She's a camping and bicycling enthusiast and has a lasting interest in art.

In fact, she spent 4½ years at Northern Michigan University in Marquette majoring in art. "Now it's a hobby," said the 25-year-old Ms. Bezotte. "I do three dimensional ceramics, metal

work and jewelry making." She never graduated from college.

"What would I have done with a bachelor's in fine arts?" she asked. Instead, she left school and became a branch manager for a hardware store even though, she knew nothing about hardware and lumber. "I learned about the business from the bottom up," she adds.

Her life changed again when she went on a two week vacation that extended into a three month sailing trip in the Bahamas. While crewing the sailboat with friends, she received her application for the civil service test. Her life has never been the same.

NOW, INSTEAD of working 9 to 5 in a lumber store up north, she's on call 24 hours a day to help citizens and park supervisors maintain DNR regulations.

"I'm responsible with enforcing all the Michigan natural resources laws. I, and the other three officers in Oakland County, can make arrests and issue tickets. I help parks enforce the rules if they need my help."

Ms. Bezotte mostly works at parks in Highland and at Pontiac and Proud lakes.

Her busiest season, she said, is from "January to December."

"I was told things let off after deer season but that hasn't been true. There are certain regulations for each season that have to be checked out. Now I check to make sure people have fishing licenses and aren't catching endangered species."

Paper work also takes up a large portion of her working hours. She fills out reports and prosecutions out of her Waterford Township home. She has to read to keep up with the laws that change every few months.

Ms. Bezotte does find time for lei-



KATHRYN BEZOTTE

sure. She dabbles with her art, reads "Audubon" and "National Wildlife," and explores her new home grounds.

Though she's an Upper Peninsula lover, she's beginning to enjoy her life in the "south."

"It's different here. There's a lot more to do," she said.

She is amused by some natural differences in the land, however.

"The lakes here are much different from Marquette. People here live all over the lakes. In Marquette which is on Lake Superior you find lots of beach with few people. Here it's just the opposite."

Ms. Bezotte doesn't think her being a woman conservation officer is unusual. It's the type of job, she said, any qualified person could handle. But her working in the lower peninsula, where people are familiar with women law enforcement officials, is a slight benefit.

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Cassidy-Weber

Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Cassidy, formerly of Southfield, now living in Japan, announce the engagement of their daughter Catherine Ann to Robert Michael Weber, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Weber of Saginaw.

The bride-elect, a resident of Ann Arbor was graduated from Southfield High School in 1973 and from the University of Michigan in 1977. She is employed at the graduate library at U-M.

Her fiancé was graduated from Michigan State University in 1975 and is employed as an English teacher at Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor. A July wedding is planned.



Naser-Massab

Mr. and Mrs. George A. Naser of Arden Park Street, Farmington, announce the engagement of their daughter, Helen Ann, to Charles George Massab, son of Mr. and Mrs. George B. Massab of Mark Lane, Livonia.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of Harrison High School and her fiancé graduated from Stevenson High School. They plan a June wedding in St. Mary Orthodox Church of Livonia.

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