

Franks graduates from Mobile Police Academy

County native is first woman to finish at the top of the class

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

MOBILE — “Mom always told me I could do whatever I wanted to do,” says Cassie Franks, new graduate of the Mobile Police Academy.

At only 23, when she walks down the streets of Mobile in her uniform, people notice. They notice her small frame. They notice her young age. And they notice that she's female.

But for Franks, all three of those characteristics are irrelevant. They are irrelevant to her chosen career, and irrelevant to her ability to do the job.

What is relevant, she says, is her ability, her passion for her job, and the training that gave her the tools to do it.

A native of Choctaw County, Franks was one of 40 graduates to receive their diplomas last Friday from the Mobile Police Academy. But she didn't merely finish as one of the graduates. She finished at the top of her class.

“I graduated first out of 40 members of the class,” says Franks, who is the daughter of Southern Choctaw High School teacher Judy Franks. “I've been told that there was not another female who has done that. If there has been, it's been a long time.”

Today, she is a patrol officer for the 2nd Precinct in Mobile — a role that, she says, is what she has longed to do for a long



Submitted photo
Cassie Franks is pictured after her graduation from the Mobile Police Academy last Friday. Standing beside her is her grandfather, M.L. Coody of Toxey.

time. Franks' desire to go into police work began a few years ago while she was working to complete her education in a different field.

I went to college thinking I'd go into pre-med, but I decided I didn't care for it,” she says. “I decided to go into criminal justice, thinking I might go to law school.”

But during her junior year, she had to complete an internship with the police department.

“I fell in love with it,” she says. “Once I got involved with it, I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I like to have as many experiences as I can

have, and I knew that if I went into this no two days would ever be exactly the same.”

Franks admits that there were those who had reservations about her getting involved with such a dangerous profession. Their reservations, she says, were mainly out of fear for her safety because she is female.

Although their numbers are still small, there has been a steady growth in the number of women entering police work over the past 3 decades. In 1970, only 2% of all police officers in the United States were women. But today, their numbers make up about 9.5%, with

some large departments in major U.S. cities employing more and more women in recent years.

Today in the New York Police Department, for example, 15% of all uniformed officers are women.

In addition to her gender, Franks says that her size may also be a concern to those who questioned her decision to be a police officer. But, to her, it's not a problem.

“I'm not a big person at all,” she says. “But I refuse to let my size get in the way. It doesn't stop me from doing my job.”

For Franks, one of the most important concerns about her new position

was garnering the acceptance and respect of her peers on the police force. But, she says, that has not been a problem either.

Although research has shown that women police officers are not easily accepted by their male counterparts, Franks says that the men in her department have been more than accepting of her as one of their peers.

“I'll admit that, going into it, I was a little nervous about being a female with so many males,” she recalls. “But I work with a great bunch of guys. They respect me, and they are like family to me. I have no doubt that they give me the same respect that they give to each other.”

That respect, she says, does not come automatically. It is something she has worked hard to earn.

“They've seen that I've gone through same training,” she explains, “and I feel just as capable as the others.”

Her education at the Mobile Police Academy included the same rigorous physical training as her male counterparts, as well as the whole gamut of exercises designed to ready her for her job on the streets.

“I got tasered, pepper-sprayed — you name it,” she says. “The physical training was pretty tough, but I've always been active, and I did well.”

Franks says that her physical ability came naturally, from years of playing sports as a youth — sports that were not necessarily designed just for girls.

“I played ball growing up,” she says. “I grew up playing baseball with the boys. I would always catch a little flack, but that would just make me more determined to do it.”

That determination to do what others thought she couldn't, was still evident in her training with the police academy. And it

helped her overcome her fear as she began her new role with the Mobile Police Department.

“I can't say I don't get scared, but it's something I can deal with,” says Franks. “There's an old saying that the person who is bravest is not the one who is not afraid, but the one who is afraid but does it anyway.”

“It takes common sense, determination, and a pit-bull heart,” she adds.

Although women police officers are gaining more and more acceptance by the public, there are still those who question their abilities, in part because of their typically smaller, less muscular frames. But according to Cassie, gaining respect as a police officer has little to do with physical appearance and much to do with how you handle yourself.

“Some people respect the badge. Some don't,” she says. “You have to be assertive enough to earn respect. It's not given. Nobody's going to give it to you. You have to earn it.”

As a new graduate of the Academy, Franks will spend the next 3 months patrolling with another officer as part of her training. After that time, she will be a solo patrol officer.

Her new role has already cast her into one of the busiest times of year for the Mobile Police Department.

“I've been patrolling during Mardi Gras this week,” says Franks. “It's been an experience. It's usually one of the more dangerous times. But it's been a great experience for me.”

“Walking down the street with a parade, the kids would look up to me and give me a high-five,” she says. “It's an awesome feeling for little girls to look up to you. It's awesome for them to see you in a uniform as a female, and know that they could do it, too.”

Historical Society to meet at 150-year-old Watters home

By Ann Gay
Contributing columnist

LAVACA — The first quarterly meeting in 2007 of the Choctaw Co. Historical Society will be held on Sunday, Feb. 18 at 2:30 p.m. at “Down the River”, a house owned by Patricia Watters Ezell.

The 150-year old house on the Tombigbee River still has the original fireplace, and some walls and floors constructed of 18 inch-wide timbers.

To reach the house

from Butler, take Ala. 10 east; just before the Nanafalia Bridge, turn towards Ezell's Fish Camp, then take Sail Lane to the South (the road under the bridge that parallels the river.) The house is about 1-1/2 miles down Sail Lane and will be marked for visitors.

Mrs. Ezell will give a history of the house and some information on the Allen Grimes Watters and Julian A. Watters family who had a large cotton plantation in the area. “Down the River” at Wat-

ters Landing was the location from which the family shipped cotton down the river to Mobile.

The Watters also built other houses in the area, the first one near where the Red House African American cemetery is located. After that one burned, a second was built on County Road 36 just East of Lavaca and near Hopewell Church.

James D. Evans is President of the Society and the public is invited to attend.

Lisman center gets visit from mayor

By Lillian Hodge
Lisman center

LISMAN -- The center is saddened by the death of our sister and mother, Georgia Mitchell.

Bro. Adlore Smith is sick and in the hospital in Meridian. Let us pray for him, and also Dr. Horace Howard, Fannie Mae Smith, Fred Johnson, Richard Brown, Josephine Chaney, and Charlie Ruffin. Keep all these people in your prayers.

Some time ago I forgot to say thanks to Bro.

Riley, Richard and Georgia for the paper they are giving the center, again many thanks.

The Greater First Baptist Church is doing fine. Rev. Joseph Patterson is doing a real good job. Come and hear him on the first, third or fifth Sundays, or come to Sunday school every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

We do hope and pray that all of Sis. Mitchell's children have returned home safe and with no trouble. Our good friend Mamie Jones is home and

that is very good news.

Please come to Sunday School Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. and the Wednesday Bible Study at 10 a.m. with Bishop Johnny B. Payton and Bro. Thomas Horn.

Tuesday of this week we were surprised to have our Mayor visit the center. We were very glad to have him. He stated he would try to come over every two weeks and that is very good. My time is about gone ... be nice to everyone if they let you!

Three tips for quilting

Things have been very busy around here lately. I attended an overnight quilting retreat in Picayune, Miss., in January and had a great time. I enjoyed it so much that I would like to know if any other quilters would be interested in a day retreat that would be held here? If you do, let me know and perhaps we can have one this year.

Don't forget, March 17 is National Quilt Day. The P's & Q's are making plans to be at the Choctaw Co. Historical Museum in Gilbertown on that day. Come by and see us.

Here are some tips for machine-piecing and quilting:

Tip #1 — If you pre-wash your fabrics before making your quilt, spray with a spray starch or sizing before you press them and the crispness



Quilting
Tips
By
Lavon "Shorty"
Bonner

will make them much easier to handle when

rotary cutting and sewing on the machine.

Tip #2 — When cutting your fabric, precision is very important. Use accurate rulers. I prefer Omnigrid® rulers with their yellow and black ruled lines which can be seen on light or dark fabrics and their many rulers can be used interchangeably.

Tip #3 — When machine piecing your quilts, use a 'scant' quarter inch seam. Learn your sewing machine and know what makes an accurate quarter inch seam. Then when you press your block pieces they will be the expected size.

If you have tips to share or just want to “talk” quilting, call me at 251-843-5734 or email me at jamsbonr@millry.net.

Selah Joy Goldman



Selah Joy Goldman

Neil and Susan Goldman announce the birth of their daughter, Selah Joy Goldman. Mrs. Goldman is the former Susan McIlwain of Gilbertown.

Selah was welcomed home by her big sister, Sierra, and her big brother, Noah.

Selah was born at Rush Foundation Hospital on Wednesday, January 17, 2007 at 5:04 a.m. and she weighed 7 lbs. 13 oz. and was 20 1/2 inches long.

Maternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Danny McIlwain of Gilbertown.

Paternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Don Goldman of Pennington

Great grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Frank Chandler of Linden, Mr. and Mrs. Leon McIlwain of Gilbertown, Mr. and Mrs. Hayward Dixon of Millry, and Mr. and Mrs. George Goldman of Millry.

Got a big announcement?
Share it in the Sun!