

Women say police work looking up

Settlement of lawsuit viewed as positive step

BY M.C. MOEWE
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

FORT WORTH — On the heels of a \$500,000 settlement in a gender discrimination suit, only 14 percent of the Fort Worth Police Department is female, but women on the force talk optimistically about their future.

"This is a great job for women," said Capt. Debbie Husberg, the highest-ranking female in the department and the only female captain. "The time for brute force has passed. We've gone to things like neighborhood policing."

Last month, saying they would lose the case in a trial, city officials decided to settle a 1987 lawsuit filed by Earline Kennedy, a 23-year veteran and at the time the highest-ranking woman in the Police Department. Her \$3.5 million suit against Fort Worth and Police Chief Thomas Windham said Kennedy was

"I really feel like that the fact that I filed the lawsuit really made the department take a look at the way they handle women."

— Earline Kennedy
formerly Fort Worth's highest-ranking policewoman

Police

From Page 9

"And when it does happen, I'll be pleased to accept a great deal of the credit for the promotion having occurred," Kennedy said.

Windham said he has been contemplating that possibility.

"I consider the person that best fulfills the needs for the department at whatever time the vacancy occurs," he said, adding that he doesn't have any vacancies now but could envision a female deputy chief in the future.

Of the 52,763 police officers statewide, about 9 percent are female, said Truman Lewis, assistant director of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education in Austin. About 14 percent of Fort Worth's department is female.

Since Windham took command of the department in 1985, the number of female officers in Fort Worth has risen from 80 to 147 — out of 1,041 officers. And although the number of women in the upper ranks has nearly doubled, it re-



Earline Kennedy: Ex-officer believes she made a difference

mains low — 34 women.

The deputy chief's position, which a woman has never held, is the only rank besides chief that is appointed. The ranks of captain and below are filled through a civil service testing system. Whoever scores the highest is promoted first, the second-highest is next and so on.

It's a system that can be frustrating, Windham said. "It makes af-

Fort Worth Police Department

Commissioned officers as of April 1988

Rank	Women	Men	Total
Deputy chief	0	4	4
Captain	1	12	13
Lieutenant	3	40	43
Sergeant	8	92	100
Cpl./Det.	15	147	172
Officer	94	544	638
All ranks	121	849	970

Percentage 12.5 87.5

Note: 9 percent of all municipal police statewide are women
SOURCE: Fort Worth Police Department

Commissioned officers as of June 1994

Rank	Women	Men	Total
Deputy chief	0	5	5
Captain	1	11	12
Lieutenant	2	41	43
Sergeant	10	102	112
Cpl./Det.	21	145	166
Officer	113	590	703
All ranks	147	894	1,041

Percentage 14.1 85.9

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firmative action almost impossible."

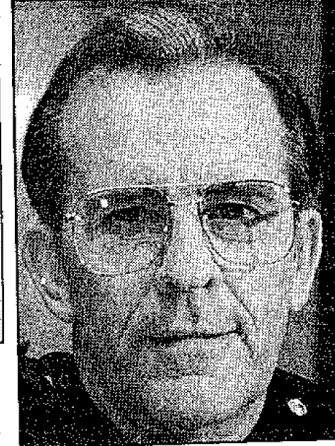
Bob Hasty, the local attorney for the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, said that although the No. 1 complaint from female officers statewide concerns sexual harassment, the women in the Fort Worth Police Department have reported few cases. Female officers statewide "get hit on and often by people in authoritative positions," Hasty said. "Any calls we get from Fort Worth have slowed down to a trickle. I think Fort Worth has changed."

In 1992, Windham promoted Husberg to captain even though

two men had scored higher than she did on the promotional exam. An arbitrator ruled that the promotion violated the Civil Service Act. Husberg was bumped back down to lieutenant and was promoted again after retaking the test.

"We were attempting to do something in our great need of affirmative action and we were slapped down," Windham said. "We went back to the drawing board and were able to re-promote" Husberg.

Windham said the sheer number of men vs. the number of women in the department makes affirmative action plans more difficult.



Thomas Windham: Envisions a female deputy chief someday

"We've got 10 women who are eligible to take the lieutenant's exam," Windham said. "We've got somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 men eligible to take it."

Although no statistics are available on the gender of officers taking the test, Lt. Alice Adams, an 18-year veteran on the force, said she believes that women have more difficulties in taking the tests because they have more responsibil-

ity at home.

"Generally speaking, I think the wife tends to have more of the household responsibility," Adams said. "You can only spread yourself so thin."

Although critics say the numbers of female police aren't high enough, they concede that they are probably in line with other historically male-dominated fields.

"I don't think the city is much different than any other place," said Art Brender, Kennedy's Fort Worth attorney.

According to the Women's Research and Education Institute in Washington, D.C., 2.3 percent of airplane pilots and navigators in the United States are women, 8.5 percent of dentists are female and fewer than 1 percent of auto mechanics are women.

Officer Alana Reed, who graduated from the Fort Worth police academy almost two years ago, said she has never felt discriminated against. "I haven't had any obstacles because I'm female," Reed said. "I can remember when I first applied that everybody was pretty much wanting females."