

## **Cpl. Nicole Parton '01 is first female Del. State Police helicopter pilot**

A graduate of the DSU Aviation Program has made history with the Delaware State Police.

Cpl. Nicole Carol Parton, who under her maiden name Dimon graduated from DSU in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Airways Management (now called Aviation Management), has become the first female helicopter pilot in the history of the state law enforcement agency.



**Cpl. Nicole Parton of the Delaware State Police graduated from DSU in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in Airways Management.**

The accomplishment returns Parton to her original aspiration to fly, which began when she first enrolled in the then-DSU Airway Science Program in 1992.

Parton — who grew up in a rural area outside of Tunkhannock, Pa. — attended DSU full-time only during her freshman year, but then became a part-time student so she could work full-time.

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From 1993 to 1998, she worked for Summit Aviation in Middletown, Del., where at that time the DSU Airway Science Program maintained its planes. She then shifted her professional pursuit to law enforcement when she was hired in 1998 as a trooper by the State Police.

After successfully completing the DSP Academy, Parton worked the highways and byways of Central Delaware as a trooper. With the State Police, she found a professional niche that she really enjoys.

“It is a noble profession, although it can sometimes be a thankless job,” she said. “I know it sounds like a cliché, but just about everyone comes into (police work) because they want to help people.”

Parton said she tries to make any contact she has with the public a positive experience — whether it is responding to a complaint, providing assistance, working with victims or even writing a traffic ticket.

Yet she never stopped her part-time journey toward a degree. However, she was forced after 1998 to revise her degree emphasis. Although she had earned her private pilot license in 1993, family matters led her to change her degree pursuit from flying (Airway Systems) to Airway Management.

“My dad died in 1998,” said Parton, the adopted daughter of Robert and Kelly Dimon. “I switched over to the management side, because it cost less and it was less pressure on my mom.”

She would complete that degree at DSU in 2001, and a couple of years later she was promoted to detective in the Domestic Violence and Major Crimes sections of the DSP Troop 3 in Camden. She also began teaching a section at the DSP Police Academy on “Crimes Against Persons.”

As she progressed in law enforcement, she also enhanced that career by continuing her progression in aviation. While working as a trooper, she earned her commercial, instrument and helicopter flying ratings.

By 2011, a full-time position as a line pilot (helicopter) opened up, and Parton broke a DSP gender line by becoming the first female trooper to fill that post. She has been in career heaven ever since.

“I love it,” she said. “I can’t believe I get paid to go to work every day.”

The helicopter pilot says that it is an exciting job in which every day is different.

“We provide a unique service. We fly the injured to the hospital and we can give them the best chance for survival by getting them there during what we call that ‘golden hour’,” Parton said. “We get to chase bad guys in pursuits from the air.”

Through it all, Parton has found time to raise a family. She is married to Alfred Parton, a retired DSP SWAT commander who is currently in Afghanistan as a contractor. Their union has produced one 9-year-old daughter, and Parton is a stepmother to two boys.

-- *Story and photo by Carlos Holmes*

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