

# She nailed down a job, and a first

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Breaking ground has its rewards.

Three years ago, Marcia Braundy emerged from Northern Lights College in Dawson Creek as the institution's first female pre-apprentice carpenter.

On April 17, Local 2458 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America voted Braundy into their union, making her the first female carpenter in the carpenters' union in British Columbia.

And two weeks ago the fourth year apprentice joined a previously all-male construction crew at the Chahko-Mica Mall in Nelson.

For her co-workers, as well as for Braundy herself, the experience is unique.

For her co-workers, it's unique because many of them have never worked with a female carpenter worker.

For Braundy it's unique because her last experience in a large group of male carpenters was not so positive.

That was at school in Dawson Creek, during a training period that takes on nightmare qualities in her telling of it, a time when the young men taunted her with well-aimed expletion on the tool room door and drew and labeled parts of her anatomy on the classroom blackboard.

## DIFFERENT HERE

With the help of college administrators, Braundy said she was able to fight that type of sexual harassment, and the ground she broke made the way easier for women who later took the course.

But after an experience like that, you could expect a bit of trepidation on her part when she once again stepped into "male territory."

So far, there's been no reason to warrant it.

Her co-workers at the mall, who of course realize there is a woman in their midst, form a sharp contrast to the pre-apprentice schooling in Dawson Creek.

Having a woman on the job is "kind of a novelty at first," said Braundy's job partner Alex Chernoff.

"But when it comes down to it, you work and you forget who's who."

"People stop to think—'How about that, there's a woman working here, but then they treat her as a worker. She doesn't have to look for our acceptance—she can just relax and do her work,'" said the unionist.

As for her performance, foreman George Perepolkin and carpenters' business representative Len Embree agree there's been no complaint about Braundy's work.

Embree says he'll judge it after six months' work on three different sites.

As with any apprentice, said Perepolkin, Braundy's work was at first slow but immediately picked up as she learned the particular work.

## LIGHTER SIDE

The question of acceptance and judgement has its silly moments.

Braundy, who has until now worked on renovations and finishing work pulls around a massive wheel-mounted tool box which carries power saws, drills, and a 100-foot extension cord.

"At first I was apprehensive because I had a different kind of tool chest. All the guys have the small kind you carry hand tools in. Mine had wheels and I felt like it should have a leash on it to pull it around the mall," she grinned.

"But nobody laughed at me and one guy even asked me for the plans," so he could make one for himself.



**IF I WERE A CARPENTER** — Alex Chernoff of Krestova takes a stretch while building cement forms with co-worker Marcia Braundy at Nelson's Chahko-Mika mall. Chernoff's union, Local 2458 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, recently voted Braundy in as the first unionized woman carpenter in B.C.

Daily News photo

"They're taking this all in their stride. It's a little quieter in the lunchroom, and I think the guys I work with are somewhat protective of me, but they're proud to see me getting along."

If the male carpenters are going through some changes in their attitudes toward women, is the woman going through some changes in her attitude toward construction workers?

"Yes, I know the stereotype of the construction workers who whistle at women as they pass. But I see construction workers differently than I used to. Many of the men I work with are Doukhobors—maybe their concept of life is a quieter one, but then again, maybe these guys are "typical" and I

always had the wrong idea about all construction workers."

"It's a very good working situation. I'm really pleased," said Braundy.

Asked if the publicity—which included a CBC Radio interview Friday—will put more pressure on her at the job, Braundy said, "It might polarize people in their attitudes, but I think it might give people heart.

It might put some pressure on me, but I've been under pressure before and I've come through," said the 32 year old woman.

Braundy, became interested in carpentry as a volunteer in 1974 at the Vallican Whole Community Centre in the Slokan Valley.