

## The Girl In The Park

Debbie Schnack did not set out to break down any sex barriers. She just likes to work outdoors and her job as an assistant superintendent at Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks state park fulfills this desire. Although she is the first woman ever hired in a supervisory capacity in a Missouri state park, "It is not a token job," Sam Grobe, park superintendent, explains.

The petite blonde graduate of the University's Columbia Campus is being trained in all facets of park administration. So far lessons have dealt with everything from stopped-up drains to setting up group camps, repairing hot water heaters, collecting camp fees, answering campers' questions and just routine building maintenance. She also supervises work and cleanup crews.

Debbie drives a half-ton truck on her daily rounds of the 17,000-acre park to check if rest rooms are cleaned, grass mowed, trash and garbage removed, and if water faucets and plumbing facilities are working. The park has 221 overnight camp sites, five group camps and two public beaches.

For two hours a day, she sells wood to campers out of a woodlot near her house at Public Beach No. 2. The three-bedroom, brown, cinder-block house comes with the job and is located in an isolated wooded area about a half mile from M-24 and the bustling resort area. Although she does have a seven-month-old black Labrador Retriever, named Dax, for companionship, the solitude appeals to her.

"I'm too busy to be lonely," she says, "I work from eight to six, six days a week and I'm on call in the evening in case of vandalism or illegal entry into my area of the park after 10 p.m." She also keeps busy on her days off with swimming, water skiing, and fishing at the lake.



Above: Debbie and associate superintendent, George Stalfer, survey the land and shoreline at McCubbins Point, Lake Ozark. The area is being developed for picnicking, swimming and boating. Below: Debbie relaxes at home with Dax, a seven-month-old Labrador Retriever.

Debbie's love of nature led her to major in zoology at UMC. "I concentrated on wildlife and ecology." The summer after graduation in 1971 she worked as a seasonal naturalist at Montauk State Park, near Salem, Mo., where she laid out a nature trail and gave evening nature talks to campers. "I saw what a park superintendent's work entailed then and thought I would like it."

For many, an assistant superintendent's post serves as a training ground for future promotions as administrators or full park superintendents. "Some day, I might like to run a park on my own or work in the planning division helping to develop new parks." Or she would like to be a permanent naturalist at a state or national park. "Naturalists work in the parks during the summer months," she explains. "Then during the winter they give educational programs to schools and civic groups."

For now, she is happy with her job at Lake Ozark. "Not only does this job offer me an opportunity to do something tangible about the environment, it also enables me to work with people who are enjoying themselves while enjoying a portion of our outdoor heritage." She also feels that being a woman will not be a handicap. The only problem so far has been getting uniforms that fit. □

