Coed seen as leading force in ROTC winning squad

The Maine Campus
"Ten-hut!" This high stepping young lady wears combat boots and it's no joke, especially to the all-male squad of ROTC cadets she led to first place in UMO drill competition. You will turn to page seven on the double and read how this young lady makes male cadets do an about-face and then some.
Suzanne Johnson, 20-year-old sophomore ROTC Cadet, is completing two years of duty in one year. She enrolled in the military program this year, along with seven other women, and let her squad to top place in ROTC drill competition.

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A sophomore coed was the driving force behind the ROTC cadet squad that placed highest in the recent ROTC drill competition.

Suzanne Johnson, a 20-year-old Lincoln native, thinks her squad’s victory in the competition may have been part of the “novelty” aura that follows a female cadet leader. “They may have overrated me because of seeing a woman so forceful out on the field—which isn’t seen too often,” she said.

Johnson has been in ROTC since the third week of this semester, and she is fitting into the mold fairly well, say her charges.

“It seemed kind of strange at first, and I didn’t think it would work out,” said Robert Kent, a member of her squad. “After the first night when she told us she wouldn’t take any hassles from us, we reacted to her just like anyone else as a squad leader.”

Phil Daigle, another member of Johnson’s squad, added things have run smoothly since she got established. “She’s qualified, she’s got to know what she’s doing.”

Kent said serving under a female may have improved the squad’s performance in the competition. “We felt a little nervous, and so did she. We learned our stuff more thoroughly, and I think because of her position, she did too. So we went out and did well,” he explained.

“It feels kind of funny,” says Johnson, referring to her position of leading an all-male squad. “They do respect me and follow orders, but some hesitation comes out through their actions. I don’t mind it though.”

ROTIC allowed women to enter the cadet training program for the first time this year. Lt. Col. Anton Mayer says the women are equal to the males academically.

Johnson is carrying extra duty, since she is trying to complete two years of study in one year.

This is the first year that women have been admitted to enroll in UMO’s ROTIC program. Forty freshmen enrolled in the program this year, and eight of them are women.