

Profile

Zapotosky's career as USAir mechanic is taking off

When Michelle Zapotosky was knee high to a grasshopper, she loved to tag alongside her brother, Richard, as he tinkered with old cars in the yard of their home in New Salem, Fayette County.

By the time she was in her teens, she was helping him rebuild engines, transmissions and master cylinders.

As fate would have it, Zapotosky, 42, is a coal miner at USX's Maple Creek Mine and Michelle is a mechanic and a supervisor for USAir's heavy maintenance department.

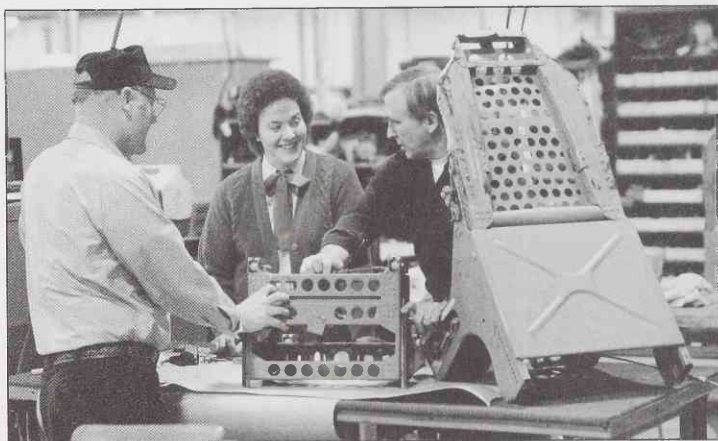
More specifically, Ms. Zapotosky supervises a 14-man crew in the seat and trim shop in Hangar No. 5.

"Richard is the one who really got me interested in being a mechanic. I used to be with him all the time. I was the little sister, always hanging around, probably getting in the way a lot, but..." her voice trails as she laughs at the memory.



Zapotosky, (center), confers with PIT mechanics Jim Whelan (right) and Ron Stetzer on the repair of a cockpit crew-seat.

Ms. Zapotosky joined USAir in August 1985. Her first assignment then was structure modification on DC-9 airplanes. For the next three years, she did just about every job pertaining to aircraft maintenance—sheet metal work, engine repair, electrical, hydraulic and refurbishing jobs as well as the changing of major flight components



Zapotosky, supervisor-seat/trim shop, points out an area of wear on a passenger seat floor-mount that needs attention by PIT mechanic Wally Sevcik.

such as flight controls, landing gears, etc.

She is now a supervisor in a shop for repair and modification of crew and passenger seats to the latest USAir standards.

Before joining USAir, Ms. Zapotosky worked for Rockwell International's aircraft operations facility in Ohio, where she achieved the position of lead-structural installations mechanic in its B1-B program. She also is a 1981 graduate of Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics.

"I always wanted to work for an airline," she said. "When I was in grade school, I liked science. I kept up with the Apollo missions and I built model rockets in my bedroom. I wanted to go to the moon."

In Hangar No. 5, five DC-9s sit on supports, 20-feet high, their insides completely gutted. Before they leave the hangar, they will be thoroughly overhauled by Ms. Zapotosky's second shift crew and the first and third crews as well.

As supervisor, Ms. Zapotosky oversees the work of her crew, makes sure all jobs are assigned and that neces-

sary parts are delivered as needed to maintain her production schedule.

Jack Naughton, manager-aircraft heavy maintenance (PIT), said Ms. Zapotosky's flawless work resulted in her promotion as the company's first female maintenance supervisor.

"None of her work was rejected by our inspection department, which led us to look at her even more closely. So we gave her more challenging jobs and more responsibilities."

Naughton said that, after Ms. Zapotosky indicated that she was interested in a supervisor's position, she was given the position "at the first opportunity."

But no one is more happy for Ms. Zapotosky than her brother, Richard.

"I'm proud of Michelle," Zapotosky said. "She was always around me, learning about cars. I didn't pursue it as a career, but I encouraged her to go for it. I'm proud of her." *✍*

This story (written by Jean Bryant, December 14, 1988) was reprinted with permission from The Pittsburgh Press.