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### **Oceanside's Barbara Pentoney cast in role of fly-fishing pioneer**

By: DAVID HAMMEL - Staff Writer

On those family vacations in Jackson Hole, Wyo., where the picturesque Grand Teton mountains provide the backdrop, Barbara Pentoney would cast her fly-fishing line and notice her uniqueness.

Others noticed it too. Their surprised looks and double takes made that obvious to Pentoney. Wading hip deep into secluded trout streams, reeling fish after fish from the water, it was impossible not to recognize that the young girl with the long brown hair was the only female out there.

At the world fly-fishing championships last summer, Jack Dennis, coach of the American team, noticed much the same thing about a Japanese woman casting her line amidst a sea of male competitors.

That's part of the reason Pentoney, a 39-year-old Oceanside resident who has fished since those family vacations dating back three decades, last month became the first woman named to Fly Fishing Team USA, a 17-year-old organization that picks a national team annually.

"Barbara got on because we need her," Dennis said. "I have two daughters who fly fish and we need someone to inspire women. And Barbara is a great person to do that."

That Pentoney was often the only female with a line in the water never seemed strange to her then, nor did it make her uncomfortable. She still, on occasion, is greeted with apprehensive looks, most of which she dismisses by displaying her skill and knowledge of the sport.

At a time when women are slowly finding their way toward America's secluded rivers and streams, fly-fishing gear in tow, Pentoney's refusal to take offense and willingness to lend her expertise have made her an invaluable asset to Team USA's cause.

She has won casting tournaments, stunned male teammates with her proficiency and helped dismiss the stereotype that fishing is a sport dominated by men.

"I've seen (women) out there," Dennis said. "I've seen a girl who was 17, and she was so good it's scary. Well, that kind of person looks on the team and sees only men, is she going to try out? No.

"One of the very important parts of this is our youth team, and Barbara is the type of person that could stand there and give a casting lesson. She's got that kind of personality."

For a time, Pentoney tried to make a living doing just that.

It's been four years since Pentoney quit her job as a paralegal in San Diego and made a well-publicized move to Mammoth Lakes, hoping a summer as a fly-fishing instructor would lead to a career in the business. The plan proved financially unrealistic. And Pentoney returned to a more traditional job a year later.

Still, fly-fishing would never again be just a hobby.

In early 2002, she entered her first distance casting competition. That summer, having qualified for the International Sporting Expedition's national championship in Salt Lake City, she placed third among seven women.

"The women I was competing against, I was reading about in guidebooks," Pentoney said.

Two years later, in March 2004, she beat all those big names at the same tournament. Today, 15 months removed from that weekend, Pentoney's blue eyes still glisten at the recollection.

That summer, she was invited to train with Team USA. In late May, she was officially named to the team, becoming the first women since 1997 to occupy a spot on the squad, and the first not to get there as an alternate.

Though she now works full-time as an outside sales representative for the San Diego Community Newspaper Group, a chain of small newspapers, Pentoney is fully addressing her fishing aspirations.

She lives steps from the beach in Oceanside and can often be seen casting her line in the surf. She also makes frequent trips to Mammoth, loading up her Miata with fishing equipment and the like ---- just as she did four summers ago ---- for a weekend getaway.

And in her quest to raise enough money to attend the world championships this summer in Swedish Lapland, Pentoney continues to offer casting lessons through the Golden State Flycasters, a North County-based club.

She speaks enthusiastically of a group she instructed at Lake Cuyamaca some time ago that was attended by several boys and one teenage girl.

"As the years go on, I see younger women out there and girls. It's neat," Pentoney said. "You don't need to be super strong or fast to do it. With the casting technique, a girl should be able to do it just as well as a man."