

Dec-2002

## Faculty Profile: Veronica Côté

Barbara Apstein  
*Bridgewater State College*

---

### Recommended Citation

Apstein, Barbara (2002). Faculty Profile: Veronica Côté. *Bridgewater Review*, 21(2), 31.  
Available at: [http://vc.bridgew.edu/br\\_rev/vol21/iss2/14](http://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol21/iss2/14)

# Faculty Profile

## Veronica Côté

by Barbara Apstein



Photograph by Greg Thomas

Why does a young woman choose to become an airplane pilot? Veronica Côté, Assistant Professor of Aviation Science, confesses that as a girl she had no special interest in flying. When she was a Brockton High School junior, her father, the late Peter A. Bizinkauskas, who was at the time a professor of Elementary Education at BSC, told her that the College had started an Aviation Program and suggested that she might want to consider becoming a pilot. Something clicked: "I'd always had an interest in space exploration and in my wildest dreams I was an astronaut," says Professor Côté, who grew up watching the space shuttle flights of the early 1980's. Although she had never been inside an airplane, she applied to BSC, was accepted, and started flight training during her freshman year.

As soon as she began flying, Professor Côté was convinced that she had made the right decision. "Pushing up the throttle in my little Piper Tomahawk at the Norwood Airport, I felt as though I belonged in the air," she recalls. "I flew three days a week, I soloed on November 22, 1982 in Piper Tomahawk N23222 (most pilots remember the day and plane of their first solo flight in the same way people remember their birthdays), passed my Private Pilot license the following June and commercial license and instrument rating in August, 1985 and became a certified flight instructor by November of the same year."

After graduating from BSC, Professor Côté worked as a flight instructor and charter pilot and later for Brockway Airlines (a regional partner for Piedmont), flying a Beech 1900, a 19-passenger commuter plane. Although many passengers disliked the cramped seats of the Beech 1900, Professor Côté recalls, she loved it. "It's a great airplane—fast, powerful for its size and a joy to fly," she says. "I learned as much about flying in my first month for the airline as I had in all my experience up to that point." Professor Côté also recalls that it was a hectic, exciting time to be involved in the industry. "Deregulation was less than ten years old and the airlines were making up the rules as they went along. Executives were trying to figure out how to run an airline when the old rules no longer applied. I considered it post graduate education at its finest."

After a brief teaching stint at BSC, Professor Côté returned to Brockway, where she received a promotion: she now flew a larger aircraft, the SAB 340, "a revolutionary regional airliner at the time," which carried 34 passengers as well as a flight attendant. A year later, she was upgraded from First Officer and became the youngest Captain at Brockway Airlines.

Unfortunately, the Persian Gulf War of 1991 and the spike in fuel prices, along with decreased demand, forced Brockway into bankruptcy. "I like to say that I was forced into early retirement," says Professor Côté. Sadly, thousands of other experienced pilots lost their jobs at the same time.

Forced to re-think her future, Professor Côté remembered how much she had enjoyed teaching. Members of the BSC Aviation faculty, with whom she had maintained contact, urged her to work on a Masters degree, and the following year Professor Côté—now married to a fellow pilot—applied to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. She was accepted and moved to Florida for a year. In 1995, on her daughter's first birthday, she defended her Master's thesis and was awarded the Master of Aeronautical Science degree. The following fall, she accepted a full-time position at BSC as Aviation Coordinator, and when the new School of Management and Aviation Science was founded a few years later, she became Chair of the Aviation Science Department. Teaching aviation, she discovered, was in its own way just as enjoyable as flying: "I loved to help students discover the joy of flight and to share my experiences and insight with them."

Professor Côté strongly believes in the value of a liberal arts degree for aviation students. "The well rounded education offered by BSC's liberal arts curriculum," she notes, "helps shape the students' ideas and provides them with the opportunity to look inward to discover something about themselves and outward to discover something new about their world." She points out that