

2016 Heritage Award Recipient Delores Most

Delores Most was employed in the private sector as a bookkeeper when she was attracted by the promise of steady employment and benefits when she learned of the entrance exam for the Paterson Police Department. Delores took the exam and topped the list of the women applicants, and was appointed to the Paterson Police Department, June 1958 at the age of twenty eight. Delores was a divorced, single mom with two children who were six and five years of age. Delores joined three other women in an office located outside the Detective Bureau. Their duties consisted of investigations involving women and children, ranging from sexual assaults, child abuse, domestic violence, neglect of minors and juvenile crime.

Those women didn't wear a uniform as such but were required to wear navy or black skirts, white blouses and black necktie (no slacks back then). The women worked with the Detectives,



accompanying them on assignments when a woman was involved. They were also called out by the Patrol Division on incidents of sexual assaults or children left alone and unattended. They also responded to the Emergency Room in a sexual assaults. These female officers worked daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but two were on night call every other week and subjected to be called out.

Since in 1958 there was no Police Academy, Delores learned from the Detectives or the other women with whom she worked. She purchased her own revolver and a friend took her to an empty lot where he taught her how to handle the weapon and to shoot it. Delores learned interviewing techniques, interrogation from more experienced detectives.

Delores was made Detective in the seventies. A promotional exam was never accorded to the female officers, until a woman from another county in New Jersey sued her department and the Department of Civil Service charging discrimination and she won. The men were given Sergeant Exams through the years. New Jersey Civil Service had a classification for Sergeant of Policewomen, with the stipulation three or more women were needed to qualify for it. Delores' department did not have that number so in 1975, seventeen years after her joining the department, she took her first exam. Although she passed the exam, veterans had preference on the list so they went to the top of the list (although she scored higher), and were appointed first.

Delores learned of the International Association of Women Police through a small article she read in *The Chief's* magazine about a seminar being held at Springfield College. Delores drove to that seminar in a hurricane. At the seminar Delores met Theresa Melchione, Director of Policewomen in New York City, and shared with her that she never had any direct training. As a result of this conversation, Director Melchione contacted Delores' department and Delores was sent to New York City Police Academy for academic and firearms training. Delores became a member of International Association at that time and a lifetime member in 1980's.

Delores has attended many conferences and counted 20 plus while she was in Cardiff, Wales. Delores held the position Sergeant of Arms in the 80's when women from New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, joined together and formed the Northeast Association of Women Police (NEAWP). In 1985 those women petitioned IAWP to hold the 1987 conference in New York City. Captain Dorothy Schultz and Delores co-chaired the conference which was the first to have 500 participants. Unfortunately NEAWP disbanded in the 90's.

Delores became certified as an instructor by the New Jersey Training Commission and taught classes at Paterson Police academy on sex crimes and child abuse. Delores has held seminars for women employed by local banks and city department workers on protecting themselves.

IN 1977 Delores enrolled at William Paterson College and received her Bachelor degree in May 1983. While attending, she

participated in a two week seminar of Criminal Justice, in January 1983 in London and Kent County Constabulary. Delores met with their officers in their departments, who shared their expertise for a very educational experience. During this encounter, Delores learned about the International Police Association, and the opportunities it offered to travel to other countries.

Delores retired from the Paterson Police Department in February 1984, and went into a new career of insurance sales and obtained a Para-Financial Planner certification to assist her in this field. While she was doing very well, she missed police work and the officers with whom she worked. In 1988 Delores was asked by Passaic County Prosecutor if she would consider joining his department in the Scrims and Child Abuse. While employed with this office, Delores was able to attend the Somerset Police Academy and earned state certification. Delores left the Prosecutor's office 2003, having served in the Court Squad and Domestic Violence also.

IAWP opened another door to Delores. In 1994 at the IAWP conference in Pittsburgh, the US Olympic Committee had a table set up looking for female officers to participate as security at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Delores and another detective from Paterson filled out the application, never expecting to be chosen. Chosen they were and stationed at Athens about forty minutes out of Atlanta. Their venue covered the tennis, soccer and the equestrian trials. The night of the bombing in Atlanta, staff woke all for a bed count. Two young ladies in Delores' section were not in and there was much apprehension until they came in safe and sound. As a result, security at the venue and around the campus was heightened.

Delores experienced firsthand how it was not easy being a woman on the department. The men with whom she served with



resented the female officers receiving the same pay as them, and that the women didn't work shifts. The other women on Delores' department had young children too. Delores' superiors all came out of World War II and Korea and never let the women forget they were a necessary evil, as they put it. Even with all this negativity, Delores never regretted one minute of her career.

Proof of the service Delores performed came to her at a social of Soroptimist International of Wayne Valley. Delores was approached by a woman with another behind her. When woman asked if Delores remembered her, Delores replied "No." The woman recounted how it was because of Delores she adopted a girl who was left alone by her mother. Delores had responded to the call and placed the child, then about six years of age, in the Children's Shelter until a family member could be contacted. A woman called Delores the next day and inquired what she would have to do to be foster parent to this child. Delores gave her the information, and never heard anything more till that evening at the social. Even after all the years Delores has been out of Paterson Police Department, it is not unusual for someone to recognize her, stop and thank her for something she did many years ago to help them or a member of their family.

Delores has always been involved with her city of Paterson and St. Paul's Episcopal Church where she has been a member for eight decades. St. Paul's is to celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2017. Delores was the first woman to be elected to the Vestry and Warden, where she performed for seventeen years. Delores also served as Chair to the Altar Guild, Parish Life Commission, and the Human Relations Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. Through St. Paul's they have a Men's Shelter, which provides a place to sleep for forty men per night all year. Two years ago a shelter was formed with a capacity for five women who have either been released from prison or rehab. Delores has also served on the Board of Father English Social Service agency in the Roman Catholic Diocese.

Delores was appointed Church Historian several years ago. As such she conducts Church tours, showcasing the prize in the inner city of Paterson, with twelve Tiffany windows and two by La Farge. Delores searches Church records for families wanting to know birth, marriages or deaths in tracing their family genealogy.

In addition to the prestigious IAWP Heritage Award, Delores is the recipient of several other awards including Law Enforcement of the Year 1979, Passaic County American Legion, Bernard Armitage Post, Paterson, NJ; William Paterson University Lifetime Achievement Award- 2003; New Jersey General Assembly Award during Women's History month- celebration for service in the Department and the City of Paterson; Resolution, City of Paterson for numerous years of service to the community- 2004; Distinguished Service Award- New Jersey Women in Law Enforcement- 2006; Entered into Eastside High of Fame-2006

Delores is affiliated with several organizations including: Lifetime member - Gold Card Member P.B.A Local 1; Treasures of the New Jersey State Police & Fire Retirees of Passaic County Local # 5; President, Soroptimist International of Passaic Valley; and the International Police Association.

Delores says she has many good memories of IAWP conferences and the women she has met through the years. Delores has albums of pictures, but says, "Unfortunately, the names have been lost through the years but not the faces and memories." Delores plans in time to give these to the IAWP to help preserve the history of this organization. Delores plans to keep attending IAWP conferences as long as she is physically able.

Delores said, "Today when I see and hear what our women have accomplished I am so proud. They have opened doors and achieved what I could never have." To which we all respond, "Thank you, Delores, for your service as a pioneer for women in law enforcement, blazing the trail for so many of us to follow!"