

# ANN BETH VINETZ: AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGE

BY BUREAU CHIEF PAUL VINETZ

My mom, Ann Beth Vinetz, joined the Probation Department in 1968 as a trainee and was assigned to Sylmar Juvenile Hall, now known as Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall. She was a single mom who was assigned to the overnight shift. Her mentor was a DPO named Mary Reader who had been with Probation for 40 years. My memory of Mary was a kind lady who truly loved the kids under her charge. She was a great positive influence on my mom who carried this care with her for her entire career.



SDPO Ann Beth Vinetz  
First Probation ID Photo, 1968

Fifty years ago, my mom was working at Sylmar on February 9, 1971, the day the 6.5 magnitude earthquake struck at 6:01 am. By this time, she was on the morning 6 am to 2 pm shift. She was late for work that day. As she told the story, she was standing on the railroad tracks on the south side of the facility (apparently, the parking was on the other side of the tracks back then) when the quake hit. The tracks swayed and bent under her feet.

By the time she made it into the facility, there was significant damage. Walls had collapsed and doors would not open. It seemed fortunate being late because she was on the outside rather than being trapped in her building and she was able to help free kids and staff from the damaged buildings. The present-day Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall is built on the demolished remains of the old facility.

With Sylmar Juvenile Hall damaged as it was, she was reassigned to Central and Los Padrinos where she worked for the next couple of years. As she told it, in 1972, she received a call from Maury Kessler, then the Director at Camp David Gonzalez in Malibu. He wanted women to work in camp because he felt they would have a positive effect on the kids. At the time, women were about 2% of the DPOs in the Department, all of them in the halls or in the field. Just following my mom were two other women who also joined the team at CDG. She worked there as a DPO I for several years before being promoted to DPO II at the old West San Fernando Valley Office - actually, a store-front sub-office in the old Girl Scout building on Sherman Way in Reseda. Noteworthy folks who worked there included Mary Ridgway and Richard Shumsky. I got my first "job" the West SFV sub-office when I was 15 years old as an afterschool tutor at the teen drop-in center they had at the back of the building.



Damage to Sylmar/San Fernando Juvenile Hall following the 1971 earthquake

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Ann Beth went on to work at the Foothill Area Office where she became one of the first women to work on a specialized juvenile gang caseload. She also became a certified narcotic evaluator while at Foothill. She worked there until 1986 when she became an SDPO at the old Centinela Area Office where she stayed for several years before transferring to the East San Fernando Valley Area Office where she worked until her retirement in 2005.



Damage to Sylmar/San Fernando Juvenile Hall following the 1971 earthquake



Bureau Chief Paul Vinetz

**During her 37-year career, she fought for women’s equality – and just as fiercely advocated for equity in the workplace and in the community.**

During her 37-year career, she fought for women’s equality – and just as fiercely advocated for equity in the workplace and in the community. She was a founder of the Department’s Women Empowered professional association. Through Women Empowered the hiring women into the sworn ranks was built into the AFSCME MOU. In 1968, women comprised about a miniscule fraction of the Department’s sworn personnel, now that figure is nearly 50%.

She was one of the first women elected to the AFSCME Local 685 Executive Board. At the time of her retirement, she was the Treasurer of the Association of Probation Supervisors. Ann Beth was dedicated to professional development through her belief that through her commitment to mentoring and nurturing her staff, she would leave the Department stronger than how she found it. Aside from being a frontierswoman for our Department, she was a teacher, trainer, and a servant leader – but above all else, she was dedicated to improving the lives of the community she served. She passed away in December 2014 but she certainly leaves behind an important legacy.

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