



Celebrating the Women of the Massachusetts Probation Service

As Women's History Month 2018 came to a close, the Probation Update celebrated the longest tenured female Probation employees in four employment categories—Chief Probation Officer, Assistant Chief Probation Officer, Probation Officer, and Clerical/Administrative staff—who have worked at MPS for four decades or longer. These employees include Worcester District Probation Office Manager Lois Ciuffredo, who joined MPS in 1969; Framingham District Assistant Chief Probation Officer Ann Schneider, 1974; South Boston District Probation Officer Barbara Loftus, 1979; and Wrentham District Court Chief Probation Officer Lillian Amaru, 1978.

These four women, who helped pave the way for female Probation employees, were asked the following questions and their experiences are an interesting representation of the history of women in what was once a male-dominated profession to one where women have advanced to leadership roles across the Commonwealth.

5 QUESTIONS:

What was it like to work in Probation 40 years or more ago, particularly as a woman?

- 1) What position did you start as?
- 2) What were the more common issues among probationers then?
- 3) What is it about working in Probation that you like the most?
- 4) After working in Probation for nearly 40 years or more, what sort of advice do you have for the women who are coming up behind you or are just joining the service?

MPS's longest tenured female Probation employees

First year on the job



Lois Ciuffredo—1969



Ann Schneider—1974



Barbara Loftus—1979



Lillian Amaru—1978

Lois Ciuffredo, Worcester District Probation Office Manager



Circa 1969



2018

In 1969, I started as a Junior Clerk in Probation. You could not wear pants outfits and I was the new kid and the youngest so my opportunities were endless. We handled juveniles at the time so when Child Services needed a babysitter they knew where to go. When the murder of a law enforcement officer devastated our court world, we didn't have access to triple III's at that time. Everything was done on the phone. Therefore, it was the new person who spent days in a room with a guard and translation book trying to get a record from out of the country or US territory. We have made amazing advances over the years and there is so much more to come.

I think the issues were the same drugs, alcohol, and mental health. However, back then I think anger was directed individually. Now, it seems to be a society of angry people. Attitudes and negativity seem to be more now than then. The thing I like about working in Probation most is the people. I am a people person and I love to help and get involved. I try to make a difference.

I would tell the next generation to give 110% and go that extra mile, be professional and respectful, take pride in what you are doing and what you have accomplished. You have great learning opportunities here and benefits, a chance to grow and move forward. Never stop asking questions and learn all you can. Don't be afraid to speak up if you have something worthwhile to contribute. Be a team player and always offer to help.

I have made life-long friendships. From all that I have learned and all that I have taught, I have been able to give back to the community. I have enjoyed working on our 15- year Christmas program for underprivileged kids and Hope's Closet, which clothes those in need in our community. This has included court clients, foster care children, and so many more.

I have also had the opportunity to work with an amazing Chief Probation Officer who lets you take an idea and run with it. It has been a wonderful career.

Ann Schneider, Framingham District Assistant Chief Probation Officer



Circa 1974



2018

The atmosphere in probation in 1974 was a “boys club” mentality. There were many nights I went home and thought about quitting. It took awhile to feel the playing field could be wide open for females.

I started as a probation officer but my “Chief” at the time did not know what to do with me in that capacity. He literally had me sit with the “all female” clerical staff and they trained me. This went on for a couple of months until I got the courage to call him on it. The common issues for probationers in the early 70's was OUI and at the time there was no program. I believe Salem Court might have been the first to offer a program and then Framingham started a program. Some years later this would go statewide and today known as the 24D Program for 1st offenders.

The hope of changing a client’s negative path to positive is what I’m sure keeps us all working in the Probation Service. The field today is wide open for women to the point I now hear some of my male colleagues complain the service today is all women and they need more males. “Wow, what a difference 40+ years make.”



Do you have a Career Day or Probation-related speaking engagement coming up?

The Massachusetts Probation Service (MPS) now has new brochures. Please contact the Communications Department no less than two weeks in advance of your event. A limited quantity of Probation banners, always in high demand during the Spring, are available by requesting them a month in advance. If you are in possession of a banner, please remember to return them as soon as possible to give your colleagues the opportunity to use it.

Barbara Loftus, South Boston-BMC Probation Officer



Circa 1979



Left to right: South Boston Probation Officer Shelly Dunner, Barbara Loftus, Boston Police Commissioner Bob Evans, and South Boston ACPO MaryNel Sanchez.



2018

Probation was a predominantly male-dominated field, there was only one female Department Supervisor/ prior to Regional Administrators: Marge Brown of the Research Department. I have worked under eight Commissioners of Probation: Elliot Sands, Joseph Foley, Angelo Musto, Don Cochran, John O'Brien, Ron Corbett, Ellen Slaney, and Edward Dolan. I have worked closely with six of them in the Commissioners Office.

As a young woman, I started working on May 15, 1979, three weeks prior to my high school graduation. I was 18. I worked as a record clerk in OCP pulling records when there was an arrest, sorting arrest slips in chronological order and reading them back to courts and police. There were no computers. Women were in the roles of support staff and knew their place. The only department comprised of mostly females was the updating CORI Records Department. There was very little upward mobility for women in the early 80's. I was young and went for every job posted and must have had seven jobs my first five years at OCP, and maybe four jobs after that.

After doing an internship at South Boston Court in 1984 while employed at OCP, I decided I wanted to be a Probation Officer. I worked my way up the ranks and went to college at night to get my degree. It was not always easy and I was told 'not to challenge things little girl.' This did not stop me from reaching my goals as a PO. I treated all with respect and hoped they would see what I could do and respect me back.

The female clients of South Boston during the 1980's-1990's were mostly larceny, drug-related crimes, domestic, and Assault and Battery (A&B). South Boston was a blue collar community. My parents raised me to believe I could do anything, respect yourself as well as those you serve, and to be a person of your word.

These would become words to live by for women in the Probation field, where you needed to show what you could do, develop a positive reputation, and make a difference. My female role models were Chief Probation Officer Regina Gibbons who was a PO, Assistant Chief and Chief in South Boston. She supervised all of the females through the 1970 and 1980's and Rita McCarthy who started in South Boston and worked her way from clerical to PO and became Chief in Dedham. Chief PO Robert Manion and ACPO Jack Leary were also my mentors and gave me my love for my job and the ability to make things happen.

Lillian Amaru, Wrentham District Chief Probation Officer



Circa 1978



2018

I began my career at Wrentham District Court as an adult Probation Officer in 1978. I was a little apprehensive walking in the first day knowing I would be joining a staff of all male Probation Officers. At the time, probation was a male-dominated field. The Probation officers I worked with treated me as an equal and accepted me as part of the team.

At the time for the most part we were supervising probationers dealing with alcohol-related issues.

I believe we all share the same goal, trying to make a difference in probationers' lives through guidance, encouragement and support. There are many more resources and court specialty programs available today than in the past which strengthens our ability to affect and promote positive change.

The advice I would give to anyone joining the service today would be the advice I received on my first day from my ACPO (Assistant Chief Probation officer). When I told him I wanted to make a difference in people's lives, he replied, "That's great, know there will be disappointments and if you help just one person in your career you have made a difference."

During the past 40 years, I feel fortunate to have witnessed the many contributions women have made to the MPS and also the advances and promotion of women in leadership roles throughout the service.