1
ENOUGH!

The words CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY caught my attention. I picked up the paper and read: *A Survey to Justify Why Men Do Not Want to Work with Policewomen*. I loved the LAPD. But I sure didn't love the way they treated the women on the force. Were things about to get worse?

I looked around the LAPD squad room, where I worked as a detective investigating forgery, but no one was paying attention to me. I gazed again at the paper I held. It was from the chief's office, complete with an authenticated signature. For years, I had protested the fact that no new women officers were being hired, and that a substantial number of female sworn officers had already been reassigned to desk jobs. Now it seemed that management was setting up a justification to eliminate women from the job altogether.

Surely, the chief had more brains than to try to circulate something as bizarre as this survey, but nobody else would dare take that kind of action without his knowledge. I couldn't let this go unchallenged. I would have to flush it out into the open, which meant confronting the chief. I couldn't do that alone. He would crucify me.

I convinced the president of the Los Angeles Policewomen's Association to ask the chief to explain the blatantly anti-female survey to his female officers. Surprisingly, he agreed to meet with us on January 10, 1971.

"It's been brought to my attention that the men do not want to work with women," he announced after taking the stage in the police auditorium in front of about one hundred of us. "The survey confirms this allegation."

The fact that he didn't deny the survey seemed to confirm what we had suspected all along. He'd had a hand in the survey from the beginning.

"As you know," he continued, "I'm in the process of re-evaluating the entire structure of the police department."

He proceeded to explain that he planned to reduce the number of women officers from some one hundred eighty down to no more than twelve. Perhaps female reserve officers could be used for those situations where the handling of a female required a woman to be present, he hypothesized.

My God! I could feel my blood pressure rise. I gripped the arms of my seat and tightened my lips to keep from saying anything.

He whispered a few words to Deputy Chief Dale Speck, who stood beside him, and then turned back to us. "And, ladies, if you have questions, I'll answer what I can."

I could feel the shared anger as I heard the women mutter.

"The bastard!"

"How dare he?"

"What can we do?"

I could also sense how scared they were to challenge the chief. Unable to stand it any longer, I rose to be recognized. "Chief Davis," I said.

He peered out from under his hand, shading his eyes. "Fanchon. That you, Fanchon?"

"Yes, sir."

"I was a little nervous," he said. "I thought you'd never speak up." He and Speck laughed.

"Sir, I find it difficult to believe what I've heard from you today. Do you mean to tell me and the rest of these women who have been screened, trained, and worked as police officers that we're not qualified? There's Sergeant Leola Vess with her master's degree in psychology. Sergeant Marie Thomas with her law degree. Sergeant Jerry Lambert with her bio-scientific degree. Sergeant Marjorie Cramer who speaks, reads, and writes seven foreign languages fluently. That's just to name a few. Myself with a major's military commission. All the women have graduated from the police academy. And you're standing here, telling us that we can't be assigned to police responsibilities?"

He nodded. "I knew you'd get my meaning. I believe street detail is beneath the dignity of a woman. You have no business playing cops like the men."

"That's your opinion, sir. Every corporation in this city would gladly recruit this caliber of women to work for them. We're one hundred and eighty educated, intelligent women capable of far more than we've been allowed to demonstrate." I sat down.

"The idea of a woman becoming a lieutenant is ridiculous," he countered. "You know you can't handle the pressures of the job." He stepped away from the podium to the edge of the stage. "You know what I mean. You have your little monthlies and go through the change of life."

Our little monthlies! Was he kidding? He had actually just said out loud that a woman's period was reason enough to deny her advancement?

Davis' insulting comments shocked the other policewomen as much as me. He had become so cocksure of himself since the city council had passed his recent reorganization ordinance that he couldn't resist boasting about his intentions to phase most of us off the department. He clearly felt there wasn't a damned thing I or anybody could do to stop him.

Not since marching in unison with a battalion of WACs (Women's Army Corps) at Fort Des Moines in the '40s had I felt more in step with my fellow female officers. The department's refusal to let us promote had been as irrational as it was infuriating. And now this.

I stared at the chief and clenched my teeth. I wouldn't let him get away with eliminating women from the job just because of our sex.

You don't know it, Chief, I thought, *but war has just been declared between us. I'll not be your pawn. A queen checkmates a king.*

He had already established his position, but by raising a stink, I could take his chessmen. I would appear at every commission and council hearing I could when the subject of policewomen was on their agendas. He would come to know I was not afraid to fight.

Determination is fine, but strategy wins the war. I figured if I were going to step into the waters, I would stand a better chance if I found highly positioned women to back me. I knew just who I needed to approach. Through my work in the bunco-forgery division, I had gotten the opportunity to deal with Judge Joan Dempsey Klein, an appeals judge who would become California's senior presiding justice, in court. A woman judge on our side would add clout to my mission.

Judge Klein was as smart as she was down to earth. "Just a minute," she had once remarked when a policeman was on the stand. "Are you wearing a black shoe and a brown shoe?" That just tickled me. I figured she would take my call, and I was right.

"I have a matter to discuss with you," I said. "I'd like an appointment."

"Fine," she answered. "Let's go to lunch."

Over burgers at the Hamburger Hamlet, I explained the pattern of discrimination that the women on the LAPD, myself included, had been subjected to. As a pioneer in the legal arena and one of the few women on the bench, she, too, had battled to push her way into a male-dominated profession. Along the way, she had met, in her words, a huge headwind of opposition. So she understood all too well what we women on the LAPD were up against. She didn't mince words.

"Sue the bastards, Fanchon," she said. "You women have been waiting years for the chief to bestow rank. It will never happen. They have no intention of elevating women. You'll have to fight for equality or accept what you've always been given—token positions."

That was assuming we stayed on the force at all since the chief wanted to get rid of us. Someone had to have enough guts to take this fight to the courts. I wondered whether that someone would be me.

2
JUMPING INTO POLICE WORK

I knew nothing about the Los Angeles Police Department in 1947 when I began the civil service written, oral, physical agility, and physical examinations, each designed to weed out candidates. At age twenty-six, after a successful five-year Army career, which included serving in World War II and being promoted to captain, I had left to get married. The happy union—my second—lasted just six months.

I could have been sucked into that vortex of self-pity, but that's just not the type of person I am. Instead, I sat up in bed one morning, threw the covers off, and bounced out of bed as I recounted my blessings. How lucky that I had my sister Jean's love, support, and hospitality. My high school diploma would be worth something. And surely the rank of captain wouldn't be ignored. Change my attitude, and I would change my life. I would take what I had accomplished and find a job.

Eventually, I relocated to Los Angeles after landing a temporary three-month contract as a county deputy sheriff overseeing women inmates in one of the local jails. But I wanted fieldwork, and the LAPD was offering downtown beat assignments and higher pay. Besides, being a cop just felt right to me. In middle school, I was a hall guard. I joined the Army after high school and became a captain. It was as if this kind of work was in my blood.

All the LAPD had to do was show me how to perform. I stood up straight and grinned. *We'll clean up Main Street,* I thought. *I can*

take care of myself. I felt my formed muscle underneath my shirt sleeve. *If I have to, I can fight dirty*.

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I could already see myself in LAPD blues, having passed the written examination, when I learned the physical agility test to be held at the police academy required scaling a six-foot wall. Not even in the WAC officer's class did I have to do more than twenty mandatory push-ups. But this was the vaunted LAPD pre-hire physical agility test, which would dramatically cut the list of female applicants.

I knew I would do well in the shooting portion of the trial. When I was eight and living in California's isolated Tehachapi Mountains, my dad had taught me to shoot so I could protect myself from snakes. Oh, yes, I could accurately hit my prey. But I was less confident about the rest of the test.

I needed to practice. So I headed out to the police academy in Elysian Park. I wasn't prepared for the scenic view as I drove under the filigreed black-iron police academy sign. The early morning sun rose through the eucalyptus treetops that hugged the sloping ravine. Then I saw the six-foot wall standing by itself on the athletic field across the road from the academy building. I froze. I wasn't about to find out if I could get over it in plain view, especially since I hadn't engaged in that type of physical activity since climbing live oak trees as a seven-year-old.

I returned well after hours a few days later, determined to learn how to get over that wall. No luck. For the next three weeks, I spent many moonlit hours trying to figure out the technique of running, jumping, and vaulting over the wall. Night after night, I went home battered and bruised, but I persisted. Then, just forty-eight hours before the scheduled test, having watched how the men used leverage, I found the rhythm and coordination that put me over that infernal wall. It was a miracle how easy it was. After

several more flyovers, I landed on my feet. I couldn't control the victory yell that erupted. I was ready.

It wasn't easy waiting my turn as I watched one woman after another struggle to pull their hanging bodies over the top and fail. "On your mark," the timer barked. "Get ready, go." My gym shoes dug into the dirt path as I ran. I timed my lead. My feet slammed the wall waist-high, as my hands grabbed the top. I used my momentum to swing my big butt, which felt like it weighed a hundred pounds, up and over. I had beaten the wall, the one significant elimination for most failed applicants! I landed in a crouch and took off through a maze of flat tires, pumping my knees and hoping I wouldn't fall on my rear end. Thankfully, running the tires, which hadn't shown up until today, proved less challenging than mastering the technique of vaulting the wall. I completed the test at a full-speed run around the oval field. A thumbs-up from the male officer sent my spirits soaring. Now I just had to get through my orals, having already passed the written portion.

To help prepare for the oral and written exams, at the first of the year I had enrolled in the University of Southern California's criminal law class on penal code. On the last day of the semester, I raced to class, anxious to learn how I had fared on the final test. At five o'clock, the downtown, second-floor classroom felt like a sauna. As the only woman, I chose to sit in the rear behind twenty male police officers. Our instructor from the Los Angeles Police Department leaned against the blackboard with his hands in his pockets. When he pushed away from the wall, his tweed jacket flapped open, showing his .38 detective special and the badge on his belt. *Where would I wear a gun*? I wondered. Under my armpits, I would run into trouble with a thirty-eight-inch bust. Around my waist, it would be bulky in women's clothing.

He looked around the room at each of us. When his black eyes reached mine, I looked away. "The final exam was a surprise, gentlemen. The lady in this class takes the honors."

My hands flew to my mouth—he was talking about me.

Every head turned to stare. "Excuse me, gentlemen," the handsome instructor said. "I need to have a word with Fanchon. It'll only take a few seconds."

After a whole semester, I had finally caught his attention, but I couldn't imagine what he wanted to talk to me about. He bent over until his lips were close to my ear. A whiff of sweet-smelling aftershave sent a thrill up my back.

"Would you mind leaving early?" he whispered, his voice raspy as usual.

That thrill in my back vanished as I shut my notebook and reached for my purse. He touched my arm and moved to look directly into my eyes. "I'm not used to a woman in my class," he said. "On the last day of a semester, I tell off-color jokes. It helps the men loosen up, especially if they're disappointed."

He straightened and turned from me. I gathered my belongings and was pulling the door shut when I heard, "There goes another Dickless Tracy." The men roared with laughter. What a bastard! Angry but undaunted, I tucked away the put-down for future ammunition and focused on qualifying to become a cadet at the police academy. I knew I would have to place in the upper 10 percent to qualify.

When the letter with the city seal arrived several weeks after my oral exam, I poured a scotch and soda, sat on the couch, and tore it open. I whooped when I saw the words *You are directed to report to the police academy on May 17th, 1948, at 8:00 a.m*. Thank God.

I had struggled to make this happen. Three months of experience as a county jailer had convinced me I didn't want to be a turnkey on the thirteenth floor of the women's jail at the Hall of Justice. Recently divorced, I was emotionally depleted, broke, and terrified

that I couldn't take care of myself. With this call to report to the Los Angeles Police Academy, I could change my life.

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On May 17, 1948, two days after my 27th birthday, the bright morning with blue skies matched my optimism. I strode up the winding road in Elysian Park, passed male trustees from the city jail cleaning the street gutters, and entered the police academy through the brick gates. The grounds spread out on both sides of the arroyo nestled in a pocket of the foothills. Despite my high heels, I swung my shoulders as I walked, a habit I had retained from marching in the Army. I turned right to pass the small-arms firing range with its black silhouetted targets held at the ready, passed under the tree-covered walkway that bordered the Olympic-size swimming pool, and joined other women candidates gathered in the shade of the gymnasium. Across the road on the elevated oval athletic field, male recruits in gray sweats did push-ups. Further to the east and out of sight, I heard the rapid-fire of another combat range.

Waiting with the other candidates, I caught my first glimpse of Sergeant Mary Galton as she hurried from the gymnasium. Despite the heat, she wore a small, white hat over her short blonde hair. She moved with ease in her blue and white seersucker suit. Her white-gloved hand clasped a clipboard to her bosom. She stopped next to me and didn't smile as she waited for quiet. Her flushed face couldn't hide the aging lines of an older woman. "Ladies, quiet, please!" Her high-pitched voice made me flinch. If she had been in the Army, she would have been required to drop down an octave. "There'll be no more talking," she said. "Listen to directions. Ask questions."

"How can I ask questions if I can't talk?" I blurted.

Her steel-blue eyes cut through me. My blood iced. She held her gaze, and then her eyes swept my body from head to toe. "Your name?" she snapped, her pencil poised to write.

From years of military discipline, I snapped to attention, rendered a stiff military salute, and bellowed, "Prichard, ma'am" (my married name at the time). My military response startled me, as well as the other candidates.

In a loud voice, she said, "Smart alecks are washed out. Do as you're told."

I lowered my voice. "Yes, ma'am." Red-faced, I silently vowed I would mind my tongue.

She escorted us to the corner classroom, over the Revolver Club offices on the second floor of the vast gymnasium, where we were seated alphabetically. Galton adjusted her glasses, wrote her name on the blackboard, and waited for us to quiet.

"I'm your six-week academy supervisor. Take the badge on your desk and pin it over your heart. Wear it every day. If you lose it, you'll be washed out."

The oblong shield covered the palm of my hand and felt surprisingly heavy. At the top of this emblem of power, in blue letters, the word *Policewoman*, made a crescent over the image of City Hall embossed in gold. The number eighty-six at the bottom, slang for being kicked out, made me smile.

"You're the second class of women to receive academy training," Sergeant Galton said. "You're making history as the first class to be trained on the gun range. You'll be the first to graduate in full dress uniform and walk a beat." She paused. "It won't be easy, ladies. What you do and how you perform will be closely monitored. The

men will be watching you. And, I might add, they'll be waiting for you to fail.

"Buy your handcuffs and revolvers downstairs. I'll tell you where to purchase your uniforms. The police credit union will advance you a loan of $350 to cover your initial costs. And ladies, bad debts are cause for immediate termination even after your twelve months of probation."

Everything she said ended with the threat of being sacked. Without a word, just a nod, Galton picked up her papers from the rostrum and left. Just then, the male recruits thundered up the stairs, running double-time past our classroom, and the same lieutenant who had taught the preparatory class I had taken before my exams stepped through the door. I hadn't realized he taught here.

He looked at his notes. "You, you," he shouted as he pointed to two women in the front row. "Take your belongings and report to Sergeant Galton in her office."

A tall, lithe woman with a mannish haircut and a smaller woman next to her eased from their chairs. They bumped into each other and hurried out the door. The lieutenant followed them with his eyes and then turned to face us. "They didn't last long," he said. "That's the last of those queer bitches!"

I was aghast. Those women hadn't done anything wrong. Besides, how did the department know those women were gay? Was *I* tainted because I had been in the military?

The lieutenant hooked his thumbs in his pockets and smiled. "Some of you will be gone by graduation," he said. "Half of you will be terminated by the end of the year. Face it, ladies. You broads will never be the cops that men are."

I could barely breathe; my internal pressure gauge was sitting on red. How dare he talk to us like that? At 5'9" with a robust and healthy body, I could hold my own on the LAPD or the street. I wanted to explode, but I didn't dare open my mouth, or I would be the next wash-out. Galton had done me a favor by disciplining me in front of the other cadets. I would not get a second chance if I made a mistake. But he sure wasn't making it easy for me to keep quiet.

"It's a man's world, ladies," he continued as he leaned on the lectern and pointed his finger at us. "You dames are more trouble than you're worth. You belong at home."

Almost five decades later, a secretive, all-male "club" within the LAPD, formed in the 1980s but still operating under the same bias, would be exposed. The mission of Men Against Women (MAW) as it was known to some or White Anglo Saxon Police (WASP) as it was known to others: To harass and drive from the force women officers and other minority group officers, and to intimidate male officers who fraternized with their non-white male counterparts.

While I had no way of knowing how entrenched this bigoted attitude was on the LAPD, the lieutenant had made it clear that we women weren't exactly welcome here. I looked away. I knew he was trying to bait us, but I wasn't biting.