

2008 Recipient of the Dr. Lois-Higgins Grote Heritage Award CAROLYN WILLIAMSON



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Carolyn Williamson is the 2008 recipient of the International Association of Women Police Lois Grote Heritage Honor. She is recognized for her sustained commitment to diversity over the last twenty years through her work with the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) and the British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP). Her contributions to the mission of IAWP and BAWP have assisted women in police service to maximize their potential and thus their contribution to policing. This year is also marked with the Queen of England's recognition for Carolyn's work when she was awarded Member of the British Empire (MBE) in May, 2008.

Between 1979 and 2003 Carolyn served with the West Midlands Police, UK. Prior to joining the Police Service, she worked as a mathematics teacher at a boarding school where she subsequently became interested in sailing. While at a sailing centre, she volunteered as a "Special Constable" (unpaid sworn officer) where, as Carolyn puts it, she "got sucked into the police family at the venerable age of 31". As a patrol officer, a sergeant, a police trainer, and a projects coordinator, Carolyn maintained her interest in the development and mentoring of others by passing on her skills and knowledge. In the latter part of her service, she spent time working at the Police Staff college, Bramshill. It was Carolyn and Tina Martin who later introduced IAWP to Bramshill. "Only Carolyn Williamson and Tina Martin could orchestrate our first IAWP Spring Board meeting outside North America by hosting us at beautiful Bramshill in 1993. Only Tina and Carolyn could grease the arrival of 25 women police officers (and a nursing four month old) to a traditional male bastion of police command and staffand pull it off", says Julie Brunzell, IAWP Board member and

mother to the baby. From there, IAWP was introduced firsthand to the excellence and hospitality of the United Kingdom.

In 1986 there was a half inch 'column' in Police Review about an IAWP conference in Alaska. Tina Martin attended this conference with the intention of talking to the Vice President about setting up a similar organization in the UK. She returned from the conference and set up a meeting in Chesterfield, advertising it in Police Review, a national policing publication in the UK. About 10 women turned up to this first meeting, one of whom was Carolyn. In true form, Carolyn volunteered to be secretary. Everyone threw £5 into the kitty and BAWP was founded, today one of the strongest and most successful affiliates to IAWP. During the next twenty years Carolyn championed women's issues locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Within her force as a constable and then as a uniformed sergeant from 1989, she positively influenced other women by providing support, encouragement and mentoring - always striving for others not to be restricted by cultural and more overt barriers. She was a visible role model to others.

Carolyn has been the driving force and key co-coordinator for a number of national and international conferences/ seminars. In 1996 Carolyn secured Birmingham as the venue for the 1996 IAWP annual conference. She organised the committee to secure relevant speakers, venues and accommodation. Most people would not want the burden and stress of organizing more than one IAWP conference, but not Carolyn. When asked by Jane Townsley if she would consider becoming involved in securing the 2005 conference in Leeds, Carolyn did not hesitate, in fact she welcomed the opportunity to put the 'lessons learned' from Birmingham into practice to create an even more successful conference. Remember, she "retired" from police service in 2003. Jane Townsley, Leeds Conference Co-ordinator says, "The fact that the 2005 IAWP conference came to Leeds was due to Carolyn's willingness and ability to support my ambition to host the conference. Had she not agreed to take on the role of Conference Director, we would never have made the bid. Carolyn's vast experience in running conferences for BAWP and the successful IAWP conference in 1996 resulted in the Leeds conference being one of the most successful IAWP conferences. A diverse range of training was delivered by over 70 speakers, and it became the most successful conference in financial terms, challenging future conference committees to achieve similar success".

Carolyn's attendance at IAWP Conferences began in 1987 in New York; She has attended 15 conferences and will make Darwin 2008 her 16th. Others she has attended are: 1992 Miami; 1993 Vancouver; 1994 Pittsburgh ; 1995 Milwaukee; 1996 Birmingham; 1997 Dallas; 1999 Philadelphia; 2000 Toronto; 2001 Edmonton; 2002 Canberra; 2003 San Francisco; 2004 Boston; 2005 Leeds; 2006 Saskatoon; Carolyn has also been involved in supporting the UK's national senior women's conferences as well as numerous conferences and seminars for BAWP, notably the bi-annual Professional Development Days. She contributed to the development of Gender Agenda (a practical document outlining key issues for women and good practices that enable women to contribute to policing effectively.) For many years Carolyn has turned part of her home into office-space to accommodate the requirements of the growing BAWP organization as well as the two IAWP conferences.

BAWP has developed from a small group of like-minded women in 1986 to an organization that is properly considered to be the voice of women in policing - influential at ministerial level in the UK, with the Home Office and other relevant stakeholders. In October 2006 Gender Agenda II was launched in partnership with the Home Office. Without Carolyn's dedication and commitment to diversity over the last twenty years BAWP probably would not have survived nor would it have achieved so much for women in policing.

To date, BAWP stands out as a flagship affiliate to IAWP. Carolyn's work for BAWP translates equally to her dedication and devotion for IAWP. Carolyn reflects, "The benefits of IAWP are that you immediately become part of a world-wide sisterhood of like-minded people with a lot in common. From the time I have spent in the IAWP family, I have realized that policing is basically the same the world over, and that the people who perform the policing function

have more in common than differences - they all want to do a good job for the public, catch the 'bad guys', and go home safely at the end of their shift."

When asked to reflect upon memorable moments, Carolyn asserts, "My memories in IAWP are many - obviously being Conference Director of two conferences is pretty high up, along with leading the International Scholarship committee for a few years and meeting such lovely people. [But I am especially] impressed with the organizers of the 1992 Miami conference, which took place four weeks after Hurricane Andrew had obliterated most of the area. Those who attended the Miami Conference rallied round to help not only the conference to progress, but also did various pieces of work on hurricane relief. This same spirit of wanting to help has prevailed time and time again with IAWP- whether it to hold fund raising events for the families of hurricane victims, for families of fallen officers, for someone needing medical treatment, for Hellen Alyek to build her women's shelter in Africa, or donating supplies for officers after the New Orleans disaster. Where there is a need within the global [police] family, IAWP members stand together to help alleviate it."

When asked about her proudest moments, she regales about the acknowledgment bestowed upon her, the investiture by Prince Charles into The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (to give it the full title that she deserves). Not far behind, Carolyn recalls her participation in arranging BAWP members to march in the Queen's Jubilee Parade down the Mall in London and past Buckingham Palace in 2002. And now, in good company, is the International Association of Women Police Lois Grote Heritage Award in recognition and high regard for her contributions to the mission and vision of the IAWP.

"Carolyn has done so much for so many people. It is wonderful that in 2008 she is receiving the recognition she deserves", says Jane Townsley.

Congratulations, Carolyn. A "bloody" good show.