

= Sybil Plumlee =

Sybil Virginia Plumlee (née Burgess ; April 29 , 1911 ? January 6 , 2012) was an American teacher , caseworker , and police officer who served in Portland , Oregon 's Women 's Protective Division , a special unit of the Portland Police Bureau , from 1947 to 1967 . She is recognized as a pioneer in the law enforcement field , which has historically been dominated by men .

Born in Seattle in 1911 , Plumlee attended high school in Portland and then graduated from Oregon Normal School , now known as Western Oregon University . She became a school teacher in Clarno , Oregon , but later returned to Portland , where she married and had a son . Following a divorce in 1943 , she worked as an educator with the Ellis Mining Company in Bourne , Oregon . In 1945 , she married Virgil " Paul " Plumlee , who died in 2010 .

Plumlee wrote an unpublished memoir of her experiences on the police force , called Badge 357 . At age 96 , she published Stories of Hester Ann Bolin Harvey and Her Family , a collection of family stories and history . Plumlee was the oldest living former member of the city 's police force prior to her death in 2012 .

= = Early life , education , and teaching career = =

Sybil Virginia Burgess was born on April 29 , 1911 , in Seattle , Washington . She was the daughter of Charles and Stella Burgess . The family moved to Portland , where she attended both Lincoln High School and Jefferson High School , graduating from Jefferson in 1930 . After graduating from Oregon Normal School (now known as Western Oregon University) in 1932 , she spent some time working as a teacher in a single @-@ room school located in Clarno , Oregon . She returned to Portland , married Lloyd Barker (who was also an instructor) , and had a son , Louis Barker . The couple divorced in 1943 .

After the divorce , Sybil worked during World War II as a teacher for the Ellis Mining Company in Bourne , Oregon , and buying a \$ 150 house in nearby Sumpter for herself and her son . Plumlee also occasionally worked as a soda fountain clerk at a drugstore in northeast Portland , and as a cab driver . In 1945 , she married Virgil P. " Paul " Plumlee . She survived the 1948 flood that destroyed Vanport , Oregon .

= = Police career = =

While Plumlee was working as a caseworker for the welfare department of Clackamas County , a woman police officer encouraged her to take a civil service test . She passed the test , and was selected from a pool of 300 applicants to fill the Portland Police Bureau 's only open position . According to Louis Barker , his mother became a police officer " for the money " rather than to " make the world safe " . The family needed her income : Paul , a World War II veteran , suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder and had difficulty holding steady jobs , and Plumlee was also contributing to the support of her aging mother . She served in the unit known as the known as the Women 's Protective Division from 1947 to 1967 . Policewomen in that division did not work with male officers other than those assigned to the Juvenile Division , and did not wear uniforms . Their work focused on crimes like child abuse , domestic violence , and rape .

Plumlee often responded to cases involving child abuse or abandonment . Records show that she also participated in undercover investigations , including an anti @-@ homosexual campaign organized by Mayor of Portland Dorothy McCullough Lee . In 1949 , the Women 's Protective Division sent Plumlee and Edna Trout to Music Hall , which was known at the time for catering to gay men and lesbians , with the intention to " apprehend lesbians who might approach them and solicit attentions " . Plumlee also helped educate women on how to avoid victimization . In a 1955 article by The Oregonian called " Pickpockets Beware " , she was photographed illustrating how a woman might be susceptible to pickpocketing by opening her billfold in public . In 1957 , the paper published a photograph of Plumlee and five other women at a shooting range , with the caption : " Feminine pistol team makes good showing in contest with all @-@ male team from North precinct

as interdivisional tournament gets under way " . In 1959 , two brothers were charged with disorderly conduct and destroying city property after tearing the speaker system from a police car occupied by Plumlee and another female officer . Plumlee also participated in civic events such as luncheons . At a 1964 Portland Yacht Club luncheon called " Women with the Badge " , she told female attendees how they should protect themselves and their children . In 1967 , she presented slides depicting dangers to women on urban streets to the Women 's Council of the Portland Board of Realtors at the Hoyt Hotel .

Plumlee later said of the unit : " In some ways , the old Women 's Protective Division was archaic , but on balance we did a lot of good . " She is recognized as a pioneer in the largely male @-@ dominated law enforcement field . As of 2006 , women doing police work in the United States were about 14 percent of the total number of police .

= = Later life , writing , and other interests = =

Plumlee purchased her first computer when she was in her eighties , and continued driving until age 98 . Plumlee wrote an unpublished memoir of her experiences on the police force , which was called Badge 357 . At age 96 , she published the book Stories of Hester Ann Bolin Harvey and Her Family . The collection of stories , including one of her grandmother 's journey across the Oregon Trail in 1850 , included photographs and more than a century of her family history . Plumlee also enjoyed camping , fishing , genealogy , and traveling .

Her husband Paul died in 2010 . In 2011 , she celebrated her centennial birthday at her residence in Lake Oswego , Oregon . Guests included Multnomah County Sheriff Daniel Staton , her great @-@ niece Lieutenant Mary Lindstrand , also from the Multnomah County Sheriff 's Office , and Frank Springer , then age 99 and the oldest living male retiree of the Portland Police Bureau . Birthday wishes and certificates of appreciation were also presented to her from President Barack Obama and Mayor of Portland Sam Adams .

Plumlee died in 2012 , and was survived by her son , three grandchildren , and four great @-@ grandchildren . Before her death , Plumlee was the oldest surviving former member of the Portland Police Bureau .