



VILLAGER BACKSTORY



You may know Sue Ann Baker for her love of photography and astronomy, but what you may not know is that the Village of Duval resident was one of the first five women hired to join the U.S. Secret Service.



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THE VILLAGES
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Earlier this month, Sue Ann Baker posted a special message on Facebook.

"Thank you to the U.S. Secret Service for sending all of the first five women flowers to celebrate our 50th anniversary of being sworn in as special agents," the Village of Duval resident wrote. "There are 520+ women agents now. We are all so proud to have served."

Baker was one of the first five women to serve as members of the U.S. Secret Service, the federal law enforcement agency that, among other duties, protects U.S. political leaders, their families and foreign dignitaries. But when she moved to the Washington, D.C., area after graduating from Ohio University, the Secret Service was far from her mind.

"I worked as an adult conference coordinator for the University of Maryland," she

said. "One conference I was involved with was attended by senior members of the Cleveland Police Department. A few of the officers recommended that I should look into becoming a police officer. I'm not sure why they did, but I heeded their advice."

She eventually became part of D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department. Her police work started at a time when women had very specific roles.

"With the exception of one colleague, all of the police-women in D.C. were assigned to the youth division," Baker noted. "We didn't have police cars, sirens and the like. And we all wore skirts."

After two years with D.C. Metropolitan Police, a colleague recommended she should apply for the Secret Service. On Dec. 15, 1971, Baker and four others were formally

local news

**GETTING TO KNOW
SUE ANN BAKER****Age:** 75**Village:** Duval**Family:** Nieces and nephews**Moved Here:** September 2016**Moved From:** Roseburg, Oregon**Favorite Villages Activities:** Book Club, Astronomy Club, Intermediate Photo Club, Digital Photo Club, water walking and working out with strength training*Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun*

sworn into the community of special agents during a special ceremony at the U.S. Treasury Department.

"For its first 106 years of existence, the Secret Service employed no women," Baker said. "Today, almost one-fourth of all Secret Service employees are women."

When Baker began her Secret Service tenure, she worked in the Executive Protective Service, known today as the Uniformed Division.

"I would be involved in protecting the White House grounds, as well as the vice president's home, the Treasury Department building and foreign embassies," she said. "I'd also travel in support of government missions."

After about a year with the Executive Protective Service, Baker began investigating intelligence matters and

financial fraud. While the Secret Service is known for protecting the president, it was originally founded to combat counterfeiting, which it still does today.

"I enjoyed working the intelligence side of the Secret Service," she said. "From time to time, I would be pulled into detail work if needed."

After leaving the Secret Service in the mid-1970s, she worked several interesting jobs, spending a year as a private detective for attorneys in Los Angeles, as well as several years running a private investigation business in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"I lived on a boat for five years in the Virgin Islands, and I had no idea how to operate it," she said with a laugh. "I would work with the famed insurer Lloyd's of London to investigate boat sinkings and other insurance cases."

Baker moved to The Villages in 2016. She's still involved in security, leading the volunteer security team at North Lake Presbyterian Church in Lady Lake. She's also involved with the church's handbell choir.

"I played the handbells at a church in Oregon before moving to The Villages," she said. "When I discovered that North Lake Presbyterian had a handbell choir, I had to join."

Baker also is active with various photography and astronomy clubs in The Villages. And she wrote a book, "Behind the Shades: A Female Secret Service Agent's True Story," which is available on Amazon.

"There are over 3,500 clubs in The Villages and plenty of things to do and see," she said. "You'll never get bored here unless you decide to."