

28 years in law enforcement and this gal loved 'em all

By Karen Zach, Around the County

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This peppy 'lil gal spent 28 years in law enforcement, including four years in what is currently the old jail museum. Her four daughters agree it was the best place they lived while growing up. She loved being the matron there, especially cooking for everyone. Prisoners and everyone ate the same thing, and it had to be something they could eat with a spoon, as forks and knives could be used as weapons. Casseroles and soups were always good to do (homemade of course) – she said the grocery store owners were wonderful letting her know about sales and on Saturday night (not open on Sunday) they'd call and tell her to come get the left-over bread.

Going into the job was one wild evening. The job (appointed after Sheriff Clarence Demoret went on to a position in Indiana Criminal Justice) began for (Elizabeth) Liz and her husband, Bob Shull at midnight on 8-1-1970 and a few minutes afterwards, there was a drowning at the nearby bridge. She was up all night feeding the workers, making sandwiches and drinks for them. There were occasional crazy times after that, but that was the worst and saddest. One jail break was a bit odd as they overpowered the old turnkey but it didn't take but a bit to hunt 'em down and put 'em right back in jail.

Seriously, I could have listened to her all day about the jail years but let me just give a couple more quick stories. There were 10-15 prisoners usually, she always fed the turnkey (who had not been fed before but her philosophy if they are there working, they needed to feed them and she bought all the food and was paid a certain amount for each meal) and six in their family plus often another visitor or two so she literally never knew who she would be feeding. Laughed so hard when she noted, "I didn't throw an extra potato in the pot like we were taught, but I'd throw in five or six!" Every Sunday was homemade fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, a veggie and dessert. One old sweet alcoholic who was in often told her, "I just love your chicken dinners!" She said there really wasn't a great deal of trouble, and Dr. Millis always said, "It's because they are so well fed!"

Being in charge of the females, if there was just one nice one, she'd let her come down to the kitchen, watch a little television, or help make a salad. One Liz got to know fairly well, she even had a picture taken with the gal on the prisoner's last day. Later C.T. Taylor asked Liz if she knew anything about that gal. She told him some things and then said, "Well, I do have a photo of us together." Sadly, that photo ID'd the gal (from tattoos) who was found dead on Interstate 74. She praised her assistant, Genevieve Wethington and the turnkeys whom she said, "They took good care of us, and protected us with their lives!"

With her four girls and a batch of neighbor kids playing ping pong, eating popcorn and drinking Kool-Aid in the basement of the old jail (almost every day), she said there was lots of fun and good lessons for them all. Upon leaving the jail, she applied for a job in the city police department and worked there for eight years. She enjoyed it immensely too and then a new department with the state was being created, and she went to work in Bloomington ("I loved that town") for the Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement which she worked for (later, moving back home and finishing up her career in West Lafayette). Loved that she got the one in West Lafayette over the telephone (because of bad weather). Well, she's a sweetie; guess that rings true even over wires!

Liz spent much of her early years in the Beckville/New Ross area, with her parents, Carl (Kelly) and Evelyn (Burk) Leonard and a great deal of time at her gma' and gpa's (Jack and Essie) farm, milking, butchering, doing everything on the place, riding the school bus there to help, along with her uncles and neighbors. "They were wild and crazy men, always teasing and joking, but never did even one say anything off color to me!"

A 1954 Alamo graduate (her dad's Alma Matre), she was cheerleader three years. She loved that school and the wonderful school lunches. Oddly, she lived about two blocks away and could have gone home but she just enjoyed the food and camaraderie. It was the heyday of Alamo with three groceries and "the best ice cream ever at Smiley's." Upon graduation, she married and they were off to the service, living in Elizabethtown, Kentucky (she felt like a queen living in "her"- Elizabethtown) and Chicago which was an awakening experience for a young gal having grown-up in Alamo, Indiana.

Quite interestingly, Liz says she comes from a "family of girls." Her four daughters (all born in the old Culver Union hospital) are Kim (husband Dave) Dolph who are retired and living in Crawfordsville; Jacki (John Hatke) also retired and live in the Cox addition; Carla (Martin Thompson) who are farmers and Kelly her youngest who had the Amish build her the cutest little metal house in Hillsboro. Liz is known as Meme (yep, as she didn't want the grands to see "me" in their early school years and be confused if spelled MiMi as she had enough trouble writing Elizabeth Leonard as a youngster) to five granddaughters, three great granddaughters but finally also three great grandsons. Plus six nieces and two nephews.

A wide variety of interests, Liz loves to do jigsaw puzzles; church (Rockpoint); Facebook (recently discovering Private Messenger and loves it); fish; play euchre; cook (still cans chicken and pork for Christmas for the girls); bake and read (nothing gory though). She is one energetic, interesting lady who loves life. Thanks so much Liz for hanging with the hubs and I at Pizza Hut as this week's ATC guest!



Liz Shull