

Jennifer Smith Love, FBI Special Agent in Charge of Keeping the Commonwealth Safe

by Annie **Tobey**

It doesn't require an investigative mind to see that Jennifer Smith Love has spent nearly 25 years in a job that is an excellent fit for her goals, her skills, and her personality. Perhaps it's because of SAC Love's investigative mind, however, that she ended up in a perfect job—one that rewards a Type A personality who is good with people, has an analytical mind, and appreciates benefiting the community.

As Special Agent in Charge of the Richmond Division of the U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation, SAC Love is responsible for investigations of federal law violations in 81 Virginia counties, including national security such as counterterrorism and counterintelligence investigations, cyber-crime, white collar crime, gangs, and organized crimes.

"I always say that we do God's work," she says. "We protect and keep the citizens of the Commonwealth safe."

Discovering an ideal job was a journey for Jennifer, one that required paying attention to the signs along the way.

The journey started in a small Mississippi town. As an African American growing up in the segregated South in the 60s and 70s, she recalls the Ku Klux Klan, her segregated dentist's office, and death threats against her father. "I understand nastiness. I grew up in it, I lived it," she explains. "Growing up in Mississippi prepared me for the bumps in the road.... If someone has an issue with me, I pick up on that."

Jennifer started her career path as an accountant. In college, she remembers, "I loved accounting. I thought that I'd be a CPA and work in an accounting firm and make a ton of money and be very happy."

Her first accounting job was for the FBI, where she became intrigued by the possibility of working as a special agent. She began the training process, but a hiring freeze foiled those plans, so she went to work for McDonnell Douglass as a cost accountant. There she realized that accounting wasn't the career for her. "I soon learned that I would be very bored; it didn't suit my personality. I like people and while I enjoyed the accounting work and I was making a very good living for myself, it was not something that I could see myself doing in 20 or 30 years."

Jennifer had another realization that helped steer her career. "Unbeknownst to me, my parents, both being schoolteachers, just really had instilled a sense of service to the community in us." Parents, she notes, can make all the difference in a person's life. "They are great parents. They instilled moral values into all of us—do your best, speak your mind, disagree but don't be disagreeable. It's okay to stand alone if you stand for the right things." From those parental lessons, she realized she didn't want just a paycheck, but rewarding work. In 1987, the FBI called her back and she became a special agent.

Jennifer's accounting background and her analytical skills were immediately useful to her in the criminal branch of the FBI, examining financial documents, finding inaccuracies and fudged figures. "My first office was in New Orleans," she explains, "public corruption, where I had a grand old time in a target-rich environment. From New Orleans I went to Chicago where I worked public corruption again." She laughs, and adds, "Imagine that, in Chicago!" She was pleased to be uncovering corrupt officials and politicians.



(Top) SAC Love in front of the Martyr Board of agents killed in the line of duty. (Above) SAC Love trying out a Thompson sub-machine gun (a.k.a., Tommy gun) at a National Academy Shoot. (Photos by Paul Arasim.)

Later, she moved into the FBI's national security branch, in counterterrorism and counterintelligence. She learned a lot from working with the intelligence community, seeing how agencies like the CIA and the NSA operate. "I worked some very significant cases, got to work with foreign intelligence agencies.... It was very different but very insightful and rewarding because you understood that there is a national security threat, whether it's spies, foreign governments wanting to steal our trade secrets, or whether it is terrorists wanting to do harm to the citizens in the U.S."

Agent Love worked in counterterrorism for two years, then became

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Special Agent in Charge of the Washington, D.C. FBI field office—the third largest in the country. "Then I got this plum assignment here in Richmond," she says, "where I am very happy to be, both professionally and personally."

Along the way, Jennifer Smith Love also overcame challenges—including being an African-American female in a male-dominated profession. "I won't say [my identity] hasn't been an issue—I will tell you I have prevailed in spite of it. Where I saw it I confronted it."

She recalls surprised looks when she showed up as the FBI special agent in charge—or the people who assumed that the male she was with was in charge. Her youthful appearance undoubtedly contributed to some cases of mistaken identity.

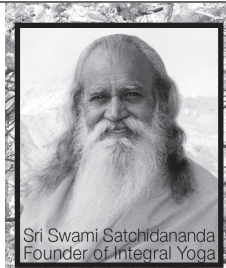
Here in Virginia, she is not only the first female special agent in charge, but the first African American as well. Despite that, she says, "People here have really embraced me."

As she looks back on the road she's traveled, SAC Love is pleased. "It's been a wonderful career. The best thing about it has been the people that I've met along the way," within the FBI and in the community. She appreciates the fact that no two days are ever the same. "It's sometimes chaotic, and I never get tired of it."

Perhaps most of all, she likes the results. "The work is great when you know you can make a difference in the lives of citizens." **V**

V editor Annie Tobey has great respect and admiration for SAC Love & others in law enforcement who work for justice and help keep citizens safe. Annie also admits to a bit of career envy!

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Feeling Good

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— — — — —	— — □ —	MOMSPITI
— — — — —	— □ — — —	MYFILE
— — — — —	— □ — — — —	ISENDRF
— — — — —	— □ — — — — —	ECATREBLE
— — — — —	— □ —	TREUHAGL

Puzzler: This is a "magic" mood lifter.

Answers on page 12.

Next issue: "Positive Influences" crossword puzzle.