

**Elizabeth Lamb de la Vega**  
**Assistant**  
**United States Attorney**  
**Class of 1969**



A Needham native, Betsy Lamb is one of five children, all of whom graduated from Needham High. A National Merit Scholar and editor-in-chief of *The Advocate*, Betsy volunteered at the North End Community Center, played tennis, and, probably not unlike today's students, spent an inordinate amount of time talking on the telephone. She and her friends were subject to uncontrollable episodes of hysterical laughter, dramatic changes of mind, personal emotional upheavals, and stressful worries. (Even now, Betsy has the occasional nightmare about being unable to get her gym locker open!)

But, unlike today, students in the late 60's were growing up in a decade of unprecedented great debates, protests, and impending change. At NHS, students threatened to strike against a dress code that required skirts for girls, shirts with collars for boys, and no jeans for either sex. Public debate over civil rights and the Vietnam War prompted previously unheard of passionate vocal protests during school assemblies. At the same time, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy cast a sober shadow over the class of 1969 as they left a protective school environment to enter a volatile world of challenges and risks.

Betsy credits teachers at NHS with preparing students to deal with their evolving environment by demonstrating the value of ideas and knowledge and providing them the tools and confidence needed to reach goals. Affirming the school's unusually rigorous standards of academic excellence, and remembering that most teachers respected students' ideas and welcomed dissent, Betsy acknowledges: "I now recognize that Needham High provided an extraordinary education. We were not taught;

we were educated." She recalls lively debates in Mr. Cullinane's history class, Mr. Friend's chemistry class, and Mr. Muir's Latin class that "helped us learn to think critically and present our viewpoints logically and persuasively." She gives high grades to Miss Burke, Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Allen, the English teachers who honed her writing skills and instilled in her a love of language.

Following graduation, Betsy earned a BA from the University of Michigan and then a JD, *cum laude*, from William Mitchell College of Law, in St. Paul. After a stint as a judicial law clerk, Betsy was appointed Assistant United States Attorney in Minneapolis, where she handled federal prosecutions of crimes including drug conspiracies, money laundering, mail fraud, tax fraud, kidnapping, and arson. Her work earned her awards from the US Department of Treasury and the US Department of Justice.

In 1994 she transferred to San Jose, California, to head up the Organized Crime Strike Force in the Office of the United States Attorney and to spearhead WESTCHIPS, a federal and state investigation that resulted in the conviction of more than 100 defendants charged with armed robbery, interstate transportation of stolen property, and money laundering. Her successes in this job earned her the Department of Justice Director's Award for Superior Performance and the Silicon Valley High-Tech Criminal Investigation Association Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Investigation of Computer Industry-related Crime.

A barrister in the Inns of Court and a member of the Board of Directors of Minnesota Women Lawyers, Betsy also has been an adjunct faculty member at the University of Minnesota Law School, William Mitchell College of Law, the University of Santa Clara Law School, and the University of San Francisco Law School.

Betsy has volunteered with the Family Violence Network Adopt-a-Family Program, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Literacy Alliance, and she is active in the music and drama programs at her two sons' schools. An inveterate reader, Betsy also loves bicycling, tennis, gardening, travel, writing, and social dancing. And here's a surprise: fitting right into the California life-style, she has become a certified hypnotherapist.