

Aileen Louise MILLER

NOMINEE: Aileen Louise MILLER

MEMBER SPOUSE: Robert W. MILLER, #2705

DETACHMENT: Minaki 1957 – 1961

NOMINATOR: Spouse

SILENT PARTNER STORY

In 1957, we were transferred to Minaki from Red Lake Detachment. Minaki was a small hamlet of about 100 people located on the CNR mainline along the Winnipeg River, 30 miles north of Kenora.

As I was the only married OPP member assigned to the detachment, I was allowed to live in the detachment/residence. The building was really a small cottage on the shore of the Winnipeg River. We had three bedrooms (not all on the same floor), a small kitchen and a living room. It was comfortable. There was no other accommodation available, so the other OPP member, Provincial Constable Albert Sveinsson (who was single), had to live with us. The small detachment office was in the foyer between the entrance to the house and the living room.

Besides Minaki, we were also responsible for policing four First Nation settlements and reserves. There was a major hydro-electric project north of Minaki at Whitedog and Caribou Falls that had a work camp of about 400 men.

The road to the hamlet was very poor. Being of gravel construction, it was largely out of service during the spring and fall. I can recall when the movers brought our belongings to the residence that they had to use wooden planks to cross the CNR tracks to access our home. Our family consisted of two young children at the time we were in Minaki.

There was no police radio at the detachment. If the police were needed, my wife Aileen would telephone the local operator who would in turn contact the police who were out on patrol. This occurred quite regularly, as we didn't sit in the office waiting for calls. Really, it was the only way to contact us. Without my wife transferring the calls to the local operator, no one would ever get the police.

It was very common for my wife to answer the door to the detachment/residence to unknown individuals who wished to contact the OPP. One of the small First Nation settlements was across the river and people would canoe over to the detachment to report incidents. My wife would have to record all the information then call the telephone operator to relay the information to us. Quite frequently, the people canoeing across the river would come to the door injured, some bleeding badly. Aileen on many occasions had to apply first aid while looking after our two small children.

When we were out in the police boat, which was not equipped with a police radio, my wife would have to resolve the situation at the door of the police office or record the information so we could handle it when we returned. Sometimes this could be several hours.

My wife provided meals for any prisoners locked up in the small building situated steps from the office. On several occasions, she was required to search female prisoners and guard them, as well as look after our two children. Housecleaning was another of her chores, including the small office.

From time to time court was held in Minaki. It was a major event. Our living room became the court house. My wife and kids would have to relocate for a couple of hours while court was in session, remembering to keep very quiet. After court, my wife would feed Judge Frageau and the court party who had come from Kenora. At times, she was also expected to feed visiting OPP members from district headquarters.

There was only one phone in the detachment/residence. My wife was restricted in the amount of time she could talk, as there could be a call coming in that required police attention.

There is so much more that could be said for what my wife did to support me, my police partner and the OPP, as well as the community, during our five-year stay in Minaki.

About Minaki

Minaki is a small, unincorporated community in northern Ontario, about a 55 kilometer drive north of Kenora. Minaki is gateway to lakes and rivers of the Ontario portion of the Winnipeg River system, including Gun, Sand, Pistol and Roughrock lakes. Fly-in service is available to the English River and lakes farther north.