

Alexandra (Alex) CROZIER

NOMINEE: Alexandra (Alex) CROZIER

MEMBER SPOUSE: Ralph CROZIER, # 328

DETACHMENTS: Kirkland Lake, 1933 – 1935, Hearst 1935 – 1938, Temagami 1938 – 1942, Sturgeon Falls 1938 – 1942, Englehart 1948 – 1950

NOMINATOR: J.P. (Joseph) CROZIER (son), # 2872

SILENT PARTNER STORY

When I read the criteria for Silent Partner Award, it became so obvious that no one deserves this recognition more than my mother, Alexandra “Alex” Crozier. Mom was born in Isle Verte, Quebec, and followed her family to Grant, Ontario (north of Cochrane) at the age of three. At age seven, she lost her father and along with her three siblings moved to Hearst. Upon completion of Grade 10, she got a job as a telephone operator with the Ontario Northland Railway in Kapuskasing. A year later, she was transferred to Cochrane.

My father, Ralph Crozier, was born in Burks Falls. He grew up on a farm and joined the OPP on the 15th of February 1930. He was posted to Cobalt.

On the 15th of April 1930, he was transferred to Temagami, then on the 7th of November 1930, to Coral Rapids. While stationed there, he had to attend court proceedings in Cochrane and on a cold and blustery evening while walking across Lake Commando to the train station he stepped off the trail to give way to a young lady who was on her way home from work. It was a chance meeting that obviously led to a long and happy relationship.

Dad was transferred from Coral Rapids to Fraserdale Canyon on the 5th of September 1931, and mom and dad were married shortly thereafter. Mom stayed in Cochrane, while dad lived in a boxcar at “the Canyon.” On the 9th of February 1933, he was transferred to Kirkland Lake and they were finally able to

move into their own apartment, which also served as the detachment. They were in Kirkland Lake from February 1933 until they were transferred to Hearst two years later. During their stay in Kirkland Lake, mom took calls and acted as a matron, as well as a French/English court interpreter. They always had either another OPP officer who was travelling somewhere or an RCMP officer sleeping on the couch. Mom's hospitality and cooking expertise soon became well known among the serving officers in the north, which only led to more company!

Expanded volunteer duties for mom

On the 22nd of February 1935, they were transferred to Hearst. This time, they had their own accommodation with the office attached to the residence. There was no cell, per se, just a secured room with a heavy door and two locks. Mom became the "official warden." There was a second officer who was single. His name was Howard Gaul and basically lived with mom and dad. Mom was the dispatcher, occurrence taker (receiving all the complaints), cook for the prisoners, and cleaner of the office and lock-up. She tended to the injured parties who would arrive on the doorstep seeking help, including battered wives with young children in need of shelter and assistance. Again, she was the court translator.

During these years known as the "Hungry Thirties" there was a large transient population moving via railway westward through Hearst. Mom never turned anyone away. In fact, she would invite into the office those who were unruly and intoxicated demanding to see an officer. She would tell them to wait in the waiting room, which was actually the cell, and lock them in for the night. Upon the return of either my dad or the other officer, it was not unusual to find someone cooling his heels in the cell. During their stay in Hearst, mom and dad were very active in the community and made lifelong friends. In fact, this was the case in every posting "they" served in. This was obvious to us as children when we would accompany them for visits. We witnessed the positive impact they had in the community and the respect they had earned.

On Nov. 3, 1938, my parents were transferred to Temagami. The detachment consisted of a two-room log cabin on the shore of Lake Temagami. There was no running water or indoor facilities. They were stationed there for almost five years. In the winter, mom would have to chop holes in the ice to access water when dad was away on a call, sometimes for two or three days. The only choices of transportation were a canoe, a small boat, snowshoes, a dog team or the railway. The roads were poor – all gravel. It was a full day to North Bay or Haileybury.

Again, mom was the matron, the giver of care to people requiring first aid and a source of help to those who were stranded in Temagami for one reason or another. As the office was in the living room, she quickly became known in the community as “the Corporal.”

On April 10, 1942, they were transferred to Sturgeon Falls. Again, the office was next to the living quarters, which were located on the second floor of the fire hall. There was a second officer stationed with dad. His name was Harold Walter Scott and became a lifelong friend. Mom resumed the role of call taker, dispatcher, matron, interpreter, cleaner, etc. This is where I came into the picture. I was born in December 1943. Shortly thereafter, in March 1945, my sister Patricia was born and we outgrew the detachment apartment. Dad was able to secure a house from the Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company and mom was given a brief reprieve from her “police duties” to tend to the family.

On Nov. 1, 1948, shortly after my second sister Laurette was born, dad was promoted to corporal and transferred to Englehart Detachment. The building was so small you could *not change your mind* in the living quarters, which were attached to the office. One bathroom served both the office and the residence. There were two other officers stationed there and someone was always coming and going waking up us kids. We three children shared a small room next to the office.

On Jan. 1, 1949, they started construction of a new building. It was being built around the old one and the mess was unbelievable! Mom persevered taking calls, acting as the matron, cooking prisoner meals and cleaning the office. The cells were located in the basement and I can recall many nights being awakened by a drunk acting up down there in the cells. Needless to say, when dad was around it did not last long.

In the spring of 1949 there was a major riot at the prison in Burwash. Dad was assigned to supervise the OPP contingent that had been directed to restore order. He was assigned there for six months and only got home occasionally. Mom was the rock – coping with three young children, one bathroom, construction all around, no room to move, no place to sit, no place to cook and on top of it all taking calls, dispatching, dealing with the public and providing for the needs of the prisoners.

A home truly our own

On the 28th of November 1949, dad was promoted to Sergeant and transferred to Haileybury District Headquarters (DHQ) as the District Sergeant. We stayed in Englehart until the end of March 1950. The construction was finished. We all had a bath in the new bathroom and the following day we moved to Haileybury - to a new home! Mom and dad had purchased their first residence just three blocks from the DHQ. Mom finally had a house that was not part of a detachment! Now, we thought, she could give up some of her former duties. It didn't last long. Every Thursday was court day and, yes, dad would show up with three or four of "the boys" who were in town for court proceedings.

On Sept. 7th, 1952, the infamous Boyd Gang escaped from the Don Jail in Toronto. On Sept. 10th, 1952, the OPP took over the Don Jail. Dad was again dispatched to supervise an OPP contingent, this time to police "the Don." Mom kept the home fires burning, running everything including the usual Thursday luncheon for visiting officers who arrived for court.

On July 1, 1953, dad was again promoted and transferred to Timmins at the rank of District Inspector. We lived there for 12 wonderful years and during this period mom became a school teacher with the Catholic Separate School Board. She was also appointed to the Timmins Library Board. While these activities did not directly support the OPP, they certainly went a long way to support the community and show the abilities and determination she possessed.

Dad was transferred to North Bay on the 25th of February, 1965, and he retired from the rank of District Superintendent on April 1st, 1970. He passed away at age 80 in 1985. Mom joined him four years later at the age of 79, in 1989.

Throughout my dad's 40-year career with the OPP, mom was always at his side. She supported him through thick and thin, good times and bad, and never wavered. She raised three children, all of whom had a connection to the Force. I know of no other person who is more deserving of this recognition than my mom, Alexandra (Alex) Crozier. She devoted 40 years to the OPP (or should I say *donated* 40 years to the OPP).

In closing, I would like to express my family's thanks and appreciation for recognizing my mom with a Silent Partner Award.

About Temagami

Although Temagami has been home to the Anishnabai people for thousands of years, modern Temagami began in the 1890s as a tourist hub. Located 100 kilometers north of North Bay, the Municipality of Temagami was incorporated in 1990.