

Alice Mary O'SULLIVAN

NOMINEE: Alice Mary O'SULLIVAN

MEMBER SPOUSE: Dennis O'SULLIVAN, # 4354

DETACHMENT(S): Central Patricia Detachment 1972 – 1976

NOMINATOR: Spouse

SILENT PARTER STORY

Alice arrived in Central Patricia as a young bride. She worked at the Ministry of Natural Resources base in Pickle Lake and through her work became very familiar with the Indigenous people locally and from Osnaburgh First Nation.

Alice and I lived in Pickle Lake, three miles from the community of Central Patricia where the OPP detachment/residence was located. Because of this distance and the lack of personal communication, as this was before cellular telephones, people would come to our home to report incidents or request police assistance. Alice would have to contact the OPP member on patrol usually by calling the detachment or waiting for me to check in with her during my shift.

As the communities of Central Patricia and Pickle Lake were experiencing a boom with the construction and opening of a new base metal mine nearby, everything had to be trucked into the site. For over six months, most of the equipment for the mine had to be brought in on a trailer and this required a police escort due its oversize width and length. Usually, the escorts would arrive after both of the area's two restaurants had closed for the day. Alice would volunteer to feed the OPP members who were involved on these details, which usually occurred three times a week.

The construction boom also meant the officers sometimes could not find overnight accommodations and on numerous occasions, Alice would open up our home for them to sleep, so they did not have to spend the night in their cruisers before leaving the next day.

During my tenure, the staff at Central Patricia Detachment consisted of three members, but with court, training, vacation or days off, officers were often left working alone for days at a time. On one such occasion, I was the only officer on-duty when I received a call one night from Osnaburgh First Nation about youths terrorizing an elder on the reserve. Alice volunteered to accompany me so that I did not have to respond alone and we travelled to the scene 20 miles south of Central Patricia on Highway 599.

As we arrived at the reserve in the police vehicle, a four-wheel drive Suburban with standard transmission, I positioned the vehicle on the road in front of the residence and told Alice that if something should happen she would have to drive down the road to the school teacher's residence and get help.

Problem was, Alice had never driven a standard transmission vehicle before. I gave her a short lesson on how to move the vehicle by releasing the parking brake and letting the vehicle roll down the road. I also told her to try and call someone on the police radio. Although there were no other police officers in the community, the radio was shared with the Ministry of Transportation and their personnel could possibly hear her calls for assistance if something happened.

I left Alice in the police vehicle with all the doors locked, vehicle running and lights on. As I walked up to the residence and looked in the front door, I saw an older woman sitting in front of the partially open door with a shotgun pointed at me. I motioned and yelled to Alice to get help.

Alice released the parking brake and let the police vehicle coast down the road approximately a quarter of a mile to the teacher's residence. She then informed the principal, who lived there, what I had told her to do. He got his personal rifle and proceeded to assist as backup. Once he arrived at the scene to help, we successfully entered the house through a side window to find the woman sitting in the chair at the front door prepared to shoot anyone who entered. The youth had been targeting her house throwing rocks at the windows and door. Once the situation was stabilized, it was determined the woman was protecting her house from the youth using a 20-gauge shotgun with a 12-gauge shotgun shell in the chamber.

Alice spent many evenings at the office typing reports for the officers as there was no secretary at the detachment. Prisoner escorts to Kenora or Dryden were a common practice. This provided two things, a trip out of the community plus a second person to guard the prisoners on the trip south.

When the Detachment Commander's wife was out of town, Alice provided the prisoners with meals.

In July 1991, following the fatal on-duty shooting of OPP Sergeant Tom Cooper at Grassy Narrows, 50 miles north of Kenora, over 125 police personnel were involved in an extensive three-day manhunt. Then an Inspector, I was the OPP Incident Commander at the scene. On Sunday morning after a sighting of the suspect, he was apprehended with the assistance of canine and Tactics and Rescue Unit personnel.

How do you wind down from the fatal shooting of a fellow officer and a three-day manhunt?

Alice and I opened our home to everyone involved for supper. Yes, all of the 125 police personnel attended. Alice had the task of preparing the supper, ordering and arranging food on a Sunday when grocery stores were closed. She phoned managers of local stores to explain the situation and they graciously opened their doors so she could obtain the supplies she needed. Through her tireless efforts, she arranged and fed the crowd with only three hours of preparation time.

About Central Patricia

Central Patricia dates back to the discovery of gold on the Crow River and at Pickle Crow in 1928. By 1935, mines had also been established in Pickle Lake. From 1928 to 1995, over 2.5 million ounces of gold were produced in the area. While Central Patricia still has a few buildings and residents, Pickle Crow has been almost entirely abandoned. The Township of Pickle Lake now encompasses both of these communities and listed a total population of 425 people in 2011.