

Alice WOOD

NOMINEE: Alice WOOD

MEMBER SPOUSE: Richard A. WOOD, # 1314 (D)

DETACHMENT(S): Warren Detachment February. 1, 1958 – June 1, 1969

NOMINATOR: Patricia WOOD (daughter)

SILENT PARTNER STORY

Richard Wood was hired by the OPP on August 8th, 1951 and served at detachments in Sudbury, Warren and Huntsville. He retired as a staff sergeant at Huntsville Detachment on August 31st, 1985. He died on June 4, 2000.

Alice Wood (née Sinclair) was born on February 19th, 1933 in Timmins, Ontario. Alice married Provincial Constable Richard Wood on August 21st, 1954 in Timmins and they moved to Sudbury. Their first child was born on August 11th, 1956.

In 1958, Richard was transferred to Warren. Richard, Alice and children moved there to begin life at the detachment. They resided there until 1969. Over that 11-year period the detachment strength grew to a corporal and four constables.

The following are some of the recollections that Patricia Wood had of her mother, Alice. Patricia's memories directly relate to life in the community of Warren during the time her father was posted there.

"My dad was transferred to Warren in 1958. It started as a one-man detachment with the OPP station and our home being all in one.

"I was born in November 1958. If I remember the story right, it was shortly after my birth that the staff increased by two more constables - Ben and Bob. Mom doesn't remember their last names.

“The OPP in this village did everything that emergency services personnel were expected to do, and more. Mom remembers dad rushing a pregnant woman to hospital in Sudbury. The woman ended up having the baby right in the cruiser.

“Whenever dad was out on patrol mom answered the phones and dealt with walk-ins to the office. There were no cells. All detainees had to be transported to Sudbury leaving mom and us children alone a lot at the station.

“Being right in the middle of the village and just off Highway 17, it was a beacon to all those who needed help or thought they did or tried to prove how tough they were. One night dad and another constable were out on patrol and the third officer was on vacation. A man tried to break into our house and attack mom by attempting to kick down the back door. Our German Shepherd was tied up outside and he injured himself trying to get at the man.

“As there was no radio, mom telephoned Sudbury and asked them to radio dad to come home. She had gone upstairs and had retrieved the vacationing officer’s revolver. She informed Sudbury that she had it. Their answer to her was not to shoot until he got through the door. Mom came down out of the house and she did shoot but missed him. He ran off just as dad got there. They released the dog and he caught up to the guy, who was then arrested.

“It’s sad to say that this wasn’t the last incident of this type. Another time, three men tried to push their way in our door. Mom had learned her lesson when we were alone and this time the dog was in readiness in the house. Generally, people don’t like to take on a full-grown King Shepherd who is determined to protect his family.

“Mom never has been easily rattled. It must be the mixture of her Scottish roots and coming from a mining town. One amusing story was about a man who would drink too much at the St. Charles Hotel and then (every Friday night) he would call the police to curse and swear. The last time it happened dad got mom to keep the guy on the phone. Mom said the last thing she heard was the door of the phone booth opening and my dad’s voice. She hung up. The guy never called again.

“Mom and dad tried to give us as much of a normal life as possible at Christmas. Dad would come home in uniform while we opened our presents and then go back out on patrol. That was normal for our family.

“The original Warren community was a lumber town located between North Bay and Sudbury on the Trans-Canada Highway (Highway 17). Today, Warren is part of the town of Markstay-Warren, having been incorporated on January 1, 1999. Markstay-Warren is home to 2,566 residents (2016). The presence of the OPP has always been very important to the community.

“Dad told me that there were a lot of hermits and old lumberjacks that lived in the area. They would come to town each month for supplies. If one didn't show, the operator of the Red & White Food Store would let the police know and they would go out and check on them. Sadly, they were usually found passed away of natural causes.

“One particular night they found a gentleman had passed and he had been there for a while. He was covered in maggots. When they got home, mom had dinner waiting for dad. It was Spanish rice. Dad swore the rice was moving.

“A lot of the time these men had elderly dogs and instead of taking the deceased man's dog to the pound dad brought them home to spend the rest of their lives with us. Mom never minded.

“The only time my mom admitted to being flustered was once on a hot summer's day. She had my sister and me out in our kiddie pool. Mom was in a bathing suit when there was a surprise office inspection. The commissioner, the attorney general and a staff superintendent showed up. Mom made a run for the house to put a cover on. Dad didn't keep a good enough eye on us as my sister, who was five, handed me, a three-year-old, the garden hose. I, in turn, sprayed the visitors. Dad was sure he was going to be transferred to Moosonee!

“It wasn't, as I said, a normal life, but it wasn't boring. There's so much more but you tend to remember the funny stories. I remember some of the men there with dad. John Rowe lived with us. As the detachment grew, they hired a secretary. I don't know if mom was happy about that or not. She never said anything.

“Women like my mom were made of strong stuff, which also influenced my cousins. One cousin always said she was going to be a policeman like Uncle Dick. She went on to be one of the first female officers for Peel Region. Another cousin joined the RCMP. My sister became a 911 operator and later a supervisor for Toronto Police. Now, my 22-year-old son, who barely remembers my father, wants to follow in his footsteps. We are very proud of the service and sacrifice of both of our parents.”

Alice stepped forward many times to complete police-related tasks during the time her husband was posted to Warren. She was frequently left alone with the kids while Richard was on patrol with limited means of communication. She was expected to answer the detachment door when people knocked, and to deal with undesirable types at times, even shooting a firearm at one of them.

In conclusion, Richard Wood spent about a third of his career at Warren Detachment while Alice raised their two children, including Patricia, who nominated her. For the many services performed, she received no compensation. Indeed, Alice Wood was a Silent Partner.

About Warren

Located between North Bay and Sudbury on the Trans-Canada Highway (Highway 17) Warren is now part of the town of Markstay-Warren, which was incorporated on January 1, 1999. Starting as a lumber town in the late 19th century, Markstay-Warren is now home to 2,566 residents (2016).

Photos:

1. Alice Wood, circa 1960.
2. Patricia Wood, daughter of Richard and Alice Wood, by OPP vehicle outside Warren detachment.

