

Elsie BROMILOW

NOMINEE: Elsie BROMILOW

MEMBER SPOUSE: John BROMILOW, # 1674

DETACHMENT(S): Central Patricia, 1963 – 1966

NOMINATOR: Spouse

SILENT PARTNER STORY

I and my wife Elsie and our four children were transferred from Emo Detachment in late October 1963. We travelled to Kenora, stayed overnight and then went on to the Minaki CNR station the next day. We boarded the train and travelled east to Savant Lake. We were met at the station by Constable John Scott and from Savant Lake we travelled the bumpy gravel road 170 kilometres north to the village of Central Patricia. The detachment consisted of living quarters, office, four jail cells and two outside prisoner areas. The detachment was located near the local hotel, post officer, church and public school, which were pretty much the extent of the community.

After settling into our new surroundings, I quickly learned that things here were going to be different from other detachments where I had worked. The area population was mostly Indigenous as well as miners and their families from the nearby Pickle Crow Gold Mine. Within an eight-kilometre radius there were three main villages; Pickle Crow, Central Patricia and Pickle Lake, with a total population of about 1500. Most of our work consisted of liquor offences, drunkenness, assaults and domestic disturbances.

We also learned that we would be responsible for the maintenance and care of the detachment building and property. This meant janitorial services for the office, cell block and later a small court room in the basement. We would also be responsible for supplying meals for the approximately 300 to 400 prisoners per year. Elsie cleaned the floors, desks and windows of both the office and court room. She also made all the prisoner meals as there was no other means of obtaining meals in the area.

She also prepared meals for visitors, such as senior OPP officers doing visits or inspections and Crown attorneys and judges who would be in town for court or inquests.

However, the courtroom was seldom used during the winter months. As a result, both constables were required to travel by vehicle and train with prisoners to court in Sioux Lookout. This meant there was no police officer in the area for up to three days at a time. During our absences, Elsie would take phone calls and make notes for our attention when we returned. In emergencies, she would contact the Pickle Crow Gold Mine security officer who was a retired RCMP officer. He would come up and settle the problem until we returned. If medical aid was required by a member of the Indigenous community, she would call or refer them to the local Indian Affairs male nurse or to the mine doctor at Pickle Crow.

During one of our infrequent trips out of Central Patricia on holidays, we took two male prisoners and a mentally ill Indigenous lady to Sioux Lookout and Elsie acted as escort for the lady.

Throughout our stay in Central Patricia she maintained a good relationship with the other constables' wives and families as well as being active in community events.

In retrospect, her help and efforts made the duration posting most enjoyable and contributed greatly to the successful operation of the detachment for both the OPP and myself.

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.