

Emily Theodora (Teddy) SANGSTER

NOMINEE: Emily Theodora (Teddy) SANGSTER

MEMBER SPOUSE: George Alexander SANGSTER, # 963

DETACHMENT(S): Central Patricia 1950 – 1955

NOMINATOR: Mari Jane WILLIS

SILENT PARTNER STORY

George and Teddy married in October 1947 in Fort Frances, ON, and set up their home in Kenora, ON, where George was stationed. She fully understood that as a wife of an OPP officer, her husband would work when needed and, sometimes, under trying conditions. After nearly 3 years in Kenora she had settled into a lifestyle that she was comfortable with and actually thought it was a lasting thing. It was not to be! George was transferred! To Central Patricia! A one man detachment accessible only by air. In June or July of 1950, with a 22 month old toddler and a newborn baby, the Sangsters arrived. Their home was a three bedroom bungalow with an office, jail cells, and a small fenced in exercise courtyard all under the same roof. She was no longer wife and mother, she was wife, mother and “partner with no pay” to an OPP constable in a remote northwestern Ontario mining community.

Her duties were vast. George was often away as his detachment area was very large. She was very much alone because there was no radio contact. She looked after the office, answered the phone, cooked for the prisoners (no bread and water for these bad boys), guarded the prisoners, and kept the home fire burning. It was a very hungry wood furnace. Did I mention that Emily was a petite 5’2” and slight of build?

When Magistrate Cox would arrive for court in Central Pat (as it was fondly referred to) Emily was the court reporter. After court, she stepped into her hostess shoes and served supper and spent the evening entertaining!

Central Pat was one of three small communities. Pickle Lake (aka the Landing) and Pickle Crow (aka the Crow) were the other two. They were all fairly close together. Two were mining towns and one was the water base for planes. The mine at Pickle Crow was still operating at full capacity with many single men and so – a house of ill repute was kept busy!

A blind eye was turned as it was deemed a necessity for the safety of the ladies of the town. George was ordered to shut it down. Emily approached Inspector Tom Corsie to voice the concerns of “How the whore house helped keep the women of the town safe!” Inspector Corsie liked how she presented her case. It was decided that the “girls” would go out (to Sioux Lookout) for regular checkups and it could stay open if monitored. Every so often George would be told that an old washing machine was going out and a new one was on her way in.

Over the five years that Emily was in Central Patricia she got to know a lot of the “regular prisoners”. They became friendly acquaintances that were there until they could get back home again or until court day. She would sit in the office and chat over tea with them.

One regular was Phillip Turtle. She saved the Readers Digest magazines for him. After Phillip “slept if off” his cell door was left open so that the little girls could go in with story books for him to read to them. George once commented that “that in itself should encourage a man to stay sober!” We were all very sad when Phillip dies in a house fire.

There were times when Emily would have to harbor an assault victim until George arrived home. She was a person that had a way with words and could send many a bully away without ever raising her voice. She said that those were frightening times.

Emily shared the custodial duties with George. When he was out on patrol it was her turn. There was always something to be done. Even with a life as busy as theirs was, they had time to make many lifelong friends. Central Pat, the Landing and the Crow – it was like one big family. She always talked about those days with fondness but said the lifestyle could tire out quickly.

When they got on the Lands and Forest plane to leave for their new home in Red Lake they were now five. Yes, as busy as she was, Emily had found time to deliver their third daughter. They had kept the

Central Patricia hospital open for her so she could give birth to the last baby born in it. She was back to her role as wife of an OPP officer with no extra duties.

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.