

Francoise SHANNON

NOMINEE: Francoise SHANNON

MEMBER SPOUSE: Pat Shannon, # 963

DETACHMENT(S): Mattawa 1973 – 1988

NOMINATOR: Mary Shannon, # 8654 & Mark Shannon, # 6555

SILENT PARTNER STORY

In July 1973, Pat Shannon became the Detachment Commander of the Mattawa detachment located on Highway 17 in the town. Pat, his wife Fran and their five children moved into the government house located adjacent to the detachment. Pat and Fran remained in the house until Pat's retirement in 1988, after 37 years of service.

During Pat's tenure in Mattawa, the detachment was not staffed twenty-four hours, so it was not uncommon for Pat, Fran or their children to be awoken in the middle of the night by a member of the public seeking police assistance. On some occasions, the members of the public were distraught, in shock, and Fran would provide reassurance to comfort the individuals, and even a meal. This was a practice the family accepted as normal as the result of living adjacent to the Detachment.

Fran was fluently bilingual and was often called upon by uniform members to attend the detachment and assist with translation of French-speaking civilians.

Fran was often the host to new officers posted to Mattawa – all were welcome for a home cooked meal. During the manhunt for Donald Kelly in 1975, an escapee from the North Bay Jail who, before recapture, shot and killed an OPP police dog, Fran worked quietly behind the scene preparing meals for officers who were working long hours in the search for this individual who had been spotted in the Mattawa area.

A few incidents that we, her children, recall Mom being asked to assist with are as follows:

One incident involved a local female resident who was known to our family as hard working and law abiding citizen. She was living common-law with her partner and one evening they had been drinking. The male had his hunting rifles out to clean them and he told his wife the one gun was having issues. The male turned the gun over to his wife and asked her to point the sights at him and try the trigger – he reassured her the gun was not loaded.

The female reluctantly did what she was asked and pulled the trigger and the gun discharged. The male was fatally wounded and the distraught female called police and she was arrested for murder and transported to the Mattawa Detachment. Mom was called by our dad to attend the detachment and search the female and then she was asked to spend the night guarding her.

The female was obviously distraught over the events of the evening. Mom spent the entire evening sitting with her and trying to provide some comfort to her. The following day, a CIB inspector showed up at the detachment and Mom was directed to prepare a witness statement regarding all the conversations she'd had the previous evening with the female accused.

On another occasion, a prominent local couple who owned two businesses in the town were involved in a domestic assault incident. The male had physically assaulted the female. The female was brought to the Mattawa detachment. The female's mother tongue was French and her English was non-existent. Mom was called upon by the local officers to attend the detachment and assist with obtaining a statement from the victim as well as documenting her injuries.

On another occasion, there were three teenagers hitchhiking on Highway 17 when one of the three was struck and killed by a passing vehicle. The 2 remaining youths (one male, one female) were brought back to the detachment. The male's parents were contacted and they attended Mattawa to pick up their son. The female youth was estranged from her parents and had no one to contact. Not having any money, Mom prepared a bed for the female to spend the night at our house, so that arrangements could be made the following day to assist this youth.

Our Mom was an extension of our Dad – although he was the sworn officer, his commitment to serve his community extended to our Mom who, without hesitation, often attended the Mattawa detachment to assist the public in times of tragedy. She demonstrated a caring and compassionate demeanour to all

those she assisted. This caring for people in need, did not go unnoticed by their children. As children of Pat and Fran, we learned to open our homes to anyone who needed assistance, comfort them, listen to them and feed them.

About Mattawa

In Ojibwa, Mattawa means “Meeting of the Waters.” Located where the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers meet, this town of just under 2,000 people is located 60 kilometers east of North Bay. The oldest settlement in the Nipissing District, Mattawa was officially incorporated as a village in 1883 and then a town in 1892.