

Lila C. EDWARDS

NOMINEE: Lila C. EDWARDS

MEMBER SPOUSE: George Vincent (Vin) EDWARDS, # 1526

DETACHMENT(S): Minaki 1965 – 1970

NOMINATOR: Shelley DFAULT (daughter)

SILENT PARTNER STORY

In the spring of 1965, just prior to my ninth birthday, my dad, Vin Edwards was transferred from Kenora to Minaki, a tiny community 50 kilometers to the northwest. Little did I know that I would be living at that two-man detachment for the next five years of my young life.

Dad was in charge at the detachment so we were able to move into the recently vacated former summer cottage that served as both residence and detachment. There was only one bedroom downstairs, which my parents used and I had one of the two upstairs bedrooms. The other bedroom was occupied by the single, second constable named Andy Maksymchuk. With no other accommodation available in the community and much to his delight, Mom was kind enough to permit Andy (and his future replacements) to continue using the bedroom as well as providing his meals.

The tiny detachment office was actually the foyer between the main entrance and living room. In the interest of privacy and silence, whenever someone came to the office, I had to be sure to close the door and turn down the television.

As well as policing Minaki, the detachment was responsible for two nearby First Nations settlement and two reserves, the latter being several miles away along a gravel road. It was very busy and mom had to answer the door and telephone whenever the two officers were away on calls or at court in Kenora, which was quite often. She also provided meals for prisoners in the jail in a building a short walking

distance away from the detachment. Mom was also expected to keep the detachment and jail clean and to search female prisoners.

The detachment did not have a police radio. If an officer was needed by someone on the telephone or at the door and none were present, mom would have to telephone Kenora Headquarters, give the details to the radio dispatcher and have them relay the message to the officer(s) in the cruiser. The police telephone number was 4 and was the only phone line into our home.

Mom and I were restricted to the amount of time permitted on the telephone, in case an emergency call may be coming in. If we phoned relatives or friends outside the community, it would be a long-distance call and the number had to be recorded and personally paid for every month. Mom was pretty well housebound and restricted in her leisure activities. She could not leave me home alone and leave dad to babysit in case he got a call requiring the police.

I can recall times when mom performed duties as a matron to escort female prisoners to the jail in Kenora. She would also look after the children of arrested females when family members were nowhere to be found, while waiting for a representative from Children's Aid to come up from Kenora to take custody of the offspring. This was not always only a few hours but sometimes days during long weekends and holidays.

I remember when she made diapers out of towels or sheets (blankets) cut to fit, and rubber pants out of a shower cap. On at least one after-hours occasion, mom had to call the manager (Con Warren) of the Hudson's Bay Company store to open early so she could purchase baby food and milk.

At the risk of being accused of eavesdropping, my childhood memories include that of mom playing mother/psychologist to the officers after they were faced with some of the grim tasks that came with the job. One such incident involved dragging the Winnipeg River for a baby that had crawled out of a tent, fell in the water and drowned while the parents were sleeping off the effects of alcohol.

About Minaki

Minaki is a small, unincorporated community in northern Ontario, about a 55 kilometer drive north of Kenora. Minaki is gateway to lakes and rivers of the Ontario portion of the Winnipeg River system, including Gun, Sand, Pistol and Roughrock lakes. Fly-in service is available to the English River and lakes farther north.