

Norma Lorraine CORBETT

NOMINEE: Norma Lorraine CORBETT

MEMBER SPOUSE: Osborne Dalton CORBETT, # 1223

DETACHMENT(S): Red Lake 1952 – 1956 & 1965 – 1967, Geraldton 1969 – 1974

NOMINATOR: Garry CORBETT (son)
(Garry, Peggy and family; David, Kristen and family; Cathy, Terry and family)

SILENT PARTNER STORY

I am the oldest of the three Corbett siblings. It was in the earlier years of Dad's career that we spent a lot of our lives in the small, semi-isolated detachments. Understandably, we were very young then. Much of what I am about to recount was learned from listening to Mom and Dad reminiscing about the old days later in our lives.

Most certainly, one of the most traumatic times in their lives, when Dad needed Mom's strongest support to keep him on track, occurred on Christmas Day of 1958 when a horrific tragedy took place in Ear Falls, when Constable Cal Fulford and four civilians were brutally murdered. We were stationed in Red Lake at the time, the nearest detachment 75 kilometres north. I was five years old and my brother was three. Mom and Dad were well acquainted with the Fulfords and their young family. Dad was devastated; he was a young constable as well with just eight years' service. Had he made the right career choice? With Mom's support and encouragement, he got through this terrible event, but it would take time.

After a posting to Atikokan and then to Kenora for five years, we found ourselves back in Red Lake in 1966. We were now three siblings as my sister was born in Kenora in 1960. Dad was now the Corporal at Red Lake Detachment and we lived upstairs in the same building in one of the apartments. It was quite a place. Mom had to put several hockey pucks under the television to keep it level. Here she performed a

variety of tasks outside of her busy role as wife and mother. She cooked prisoner meals, performed matron duty for female prisoners and, on a couple of occasions, acted as best she could as an interpreter for Indigenous prisoners. Mom had picked up some of the Indigenous language over the years and it came in handy once in a while.

Now and then Dad would bring home a senior officer that would be visiting the Detachment. Mom would set another place at the table and he would be fed well. Then, one day, Public Works came to the door and told us we had to get out of the building right away as it had been condemned. And they meant right away - no time to pack much. Mom quickly threw together a few things and we were ushered out the door and down the street to the Red Lake Inn where we occupied a couple of upstairs rooms for a few months until they found us a suitable duplex to live in Balmertown. This had been a challenging test for a mother with three young kids.

After leaving Red Lake we went to Dryden for a couple of years and in 1969 Dad was promoted to Sergeant and we were off to Geraldton where once again we lived in the residence at the detachment. Here again, Mom cooked prisoner meals, did matron duty and the occasional escort of a female prisoner to Thunder Bay. Dad still invited visiting officers for supper and I recall him bringing home a transient traveller or two that was down on his luck and needed a square meal.

Like many other OPP spouses in remote locations during that period, Mom had a broad but unofficial job description. The pay was lousy and sometimes working conditions were not the best but, through it all, she remained a rock. She was very proud of Dad and the OPP, as we all are. She never hesitated to let it show either. She was an awesome wife, mother and grandmother.

She is greatly missed.

About Red Lake

Located 535 kilometers northwest of Thunder Bay and less than 100 kilometers from the Manitoba border, Redlake consists of 6 small communities, with a total population of 4,107 in 2016. The site of a Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post 1790-1822, it's modern existence can be traced back to gold mining in the early 20th century.

