

Olean Pearl JONES

NOMINEE: Olean Pearl JONES

MEMBER SPOUSE: Donald (Don) G. JONES, # 2745

DETACHMENT(S): Central Patricia 1971 – 1974

NOMINATOR: Spouse

SILENT PARTNER STORY

During our three years in Central Patricia, my wife Olean was a full time mother to our infant son, a qualified teacher at the Central Patricia elementary school and in her spare time she voluntarily assisted with the “police administration” duties of the detachment where we lived in the attached apartment.

Those voluntary duties included sharing the janitorial services for the offices and cellblocks, answering the telephone and taking messages for requests for police services. She prepared meals for prisoners when required, as there were no restaurant services on a reliable basis. As “Den Mother” so to speak, Olean frequently provided meals for our two single members. Olean was also the resident volunteer matron to perform searches and check on female prisoners.

Due to the isolation of Central Patricia from the normal police communication, the radio system in use at the time was connected to the Ministry of Transport system for as far as it reached within the area. Olean acted as our radio dispatcher when officers were in the field and relayed information through the MTO patrol.

Olean answered the phone and the office door at all hours of the day and night. She often dealt with semi-intoxicated individuals in circumstances of distress, and/or needing shelter.

Olean kept the flowerbeds in the detachment yard during the summer months. When District Superintendents, Inspectors, or GHQ Staff Superintendents visited for detachment inspections, she provided hospitality (usually fresh caught walleye or moose roast in season).

In addition to cleaning services, she did the laundry for the prisoners as there were no laundromats or dry cleaners in the community.

Olean, on occasion, assisted in providing First Aid to victims of violence prior to taking them to the nursing station 20 miles south of the community at Osnaburgh First Nations.

Olean provided volunteer support services on a 24/7 basis to OPP members and to the community during the three years we lived and served in Central Patricia/Pickle Lake Detachment.

And now for the rest of the story as told by Olean herself.

While it is true that I took messages, answered the phone and called the guys on the radio, Don had no sense of humour the day I radioed him to request that he pick up some milk at Hudson's Bay store on the way back to the office. Nor did he appreciate that some community members were using the office as a checkpoint during their scavenger hunt. And how come, when the night doorbell rang (which was located in the hall right outside our bedroom) I was the one who heard it and had to nudge him awake?

Dealing with people who came for shelter or first aid was not a challenge, but having the door pushed in by folks whose liquor-induced breath was enough to make me unsteady, was a different story. About mid way through our stay, I learned that most inebriated beings were fearful of our black lab, Java. So I would have him sit in the opening of the door and growl. He did not like their smell either.

We had been married for three years when we arrived at Central Patricia and while my cooking skills had improved over those years, I was always eager to try new creations on willing victims such as single Constables like Joe Beitz and Clay Paults, who never uttered a word of disapproval. I suspect that anything was better than having to fend for themselves. Besides, how could I go wrong with bacon, eggs and coffee while the guys perused through the morning mail at the kitchen table? Feeding visiting staff was easy. Everyone enjoys fresh fish and wild game was a treat. I was really put out when a prisoner

refused breaded chicken, mashed potatoes and vegetables because he was on a hunger strike objecting to being taken in. And to think that I felt sorry for him as he was escorted by train from Winnipeg and then driven up that long road from Savant Lake to Central Patricia. It was around ten at night before the tired and hungry officers pulled into the office. Don and Joe devoured the meal and Java, the dog, enjoyed the prisoner's portion. I had to wrestle with the conscience concerning a cell breakfast in the morning.

Don is correct when he mentions that during the summers, I tried hard to improve the landscape around the detachment by planting flowers in those short summers while our young son wanted to play with his cars in the flowerbeds and waddled around the yard. He was an outdoors kid who, as his balance developed, loved to run along the paved walkway to the garage to check to see if daddy was doing anything interesting in there.

Now how do you explain to a two year old that he cannot wander into the garage at will, because it became the town morgue? Four times! This small community lacked a safe place to store victims if the weather was bad and a plane could not land. To be fair, the officers did want to place poor old Mr. M., who had a heart attack in the post office, on the pool table in the basement but this wife had no sense of humour on that issue. So the garage it was. How was I ever going to explain to our young son why some lady was frozen in a squat position, with her pants down? Even I did not want to see that!

Life in Central Patricia was interesting, educational and in many ways, fun. I introduced the community children to their first taste of school at the Kindergarten level and filled in when needed at the restaurant, liquor store and the Hudson's Bay. I soon discovered that everyone pitches in and helps each other in these isolated communities. We snow machined, fished, went to the movies twice a week and made wonderful everlasting friends. The best part was learning what life as a police officer entailed. One needs to walk in their shoes to truly, appreciate everything they go through. Being able to understand my husband's work made me a better policeman's wife, and I will always be thankful for those years in Central Patricia and area.

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.