

Pearl Lillian Hollinger LAPP

NOMINIEE: Pearl Lillian Hollinger LAPP

MEMBER SPOUSE: Harvey G. LAPP, # 663

DETACHMENT(S): Chapleau 1941 – 1949

NOMINATOR: Carol LAPP and Joan WAGNER (daughters)

SILENT PARTNER STORY

These are the recollections of my mother's years as a silent partner of Constable Harvey Grant Lapp in Chapleau, Ontario during the years from 1941 to 1949.

How much of the following is family lore, childish recollections and/or actual fact, is hard to discern.

Pearl Lillian Hollinger Lapp was born on an isolated ranch/farm that her parents had homesteaded near Melfort, Saskatchewan. My grandmother died when my mother was relatively young, leaving a husband and four children behind. The Great Depression had a profound effect on the family. We learned from a distant relative that one day they let out the livestock, walked to town and scattered geographically. We were told years later that the house is still standing but was never again occupied. It must have been a very upsetting experience for my mother, as she never mentioned it.

With very little education, my mother somehow found a job with Eaton's and moved to Toronto where she met her future husband, Harvey Lapp.

My parents were married on December 2, 1939, in Toronto. As many of their generation, by the time they celebrated their first wedding anniversary, they were already experiencing the loss of friends and the hardship of war.

Harvey Lapp was transferred to Sudbury, Ontario followed by a transfer to Chapleau, Ontario where our family settled. At the time the only way into Chapleau was by train (CPR).

In May of 1941, eight months pregnant with no family nearby and in a new community, it was expected that she would “cope” in her new surroundings. That is exactly what she did.

My parents lived in the Crichton house for an unknown period of time where my mother began to use what I refer to as her “coping skills.” In this timeframe, she learned about a new baby, dealing with day-to-day life with a husband that was frequently out on call and her biggest challenge was an old coal burning furnace that produced “clinkers” and needed constant tending.

Our family moved to a small house on Aberdeen Street in Chapleau, that we owned and it became both our home and the police station. The layout of the house is diagramed below to the best of my recollection. I do remember that an OPP sign was posted on the front of the house a little later on.

With the sign on the house, people were thinking that our home was a “public facility” and often entered without knocking. There were times when we did not know who was in the house. This had its interesting aspects too. An elderly Indian lady came to the house wanting a “license” to go out on the trap line with her husband as she felt he was too old to go alone. The lady “tut tutted” over the cranky baby my mother had and suggested that she get a cradle board. We called it a “tecca noggin.” In later years, my mother regretted that she did not take her up on her offer.

Other “guests” were a little more intimidating. Apparently, an escaped German prisoner-of-war showed up in her kitchen early one evening when my father was away. She was home alone with my younger sister and me. My mother told him she would have to turn him in to the authorities. She made a call to someone who initially thought she was joking, but they eventually came to the house. In the meantime, she asked the prisoner, who was very polite to her, if he was hungry and feed him something. After the incident was resolved, there was a bit of a joke, people asking my father, “What do you do Harvey? Cook the beans?”

Answering the phone was part of daily activity. There was only one phone in the house so it was used for both official and personal matters. There was an implicit understanding that personal calls were to

be brief as you never know when their might be a real police emergency or other police business. Police business might include, for example, someone in the outlying area needing medicine, a critical part or an urgent message, even small treats for children during the holiday season. The OPP officers often provided delivery services, even altering patrol direction to accommodate the situation if there was perceived to be a sufficient need.

Our living room was used as a lobby for court officials and police officers from various forces. How long they sat/sprawled in our living room depended of course on the train schedules and court times. Layovers, which were usually spent at our house, varied greatly in length. My mother served tea, sandwiches and home-made cookies frequently. I think that at meal-time people sat at the table with us and ate whatever was put before them. If my mother had to make an unexpected trip to the grocery store those police officers would also do a short stint of babysitting.

I feel a special section of silent partners life belongs to food preparation.

You must remember in the early years in the house on Aberdeen Street, all food was cooked over a wood-burning stove supplemented in the summer by a Coleman gas stove to heat up things quickly. Frozen food in the winter was removed from a wooden cabinet nailed to the house at the back door high enough to keep the animals out. Pickles were made, fruit canned, jam and jellies put by.

It was a source of anxiety for my mother if her cookie tins were empty. She never know who might drop by. Hospitality was always offered to one and all. Rationing and war time shortages added another dimension to the situation. I have reason to speculate that the single officers in particular were generous with their ration coupons when my mother fed them during their layovers.

More food preparation fell to my mother when there were prisoners in the jail. As I recall, the jail was in another location in Chapleau and the OPP officer was responsible for feeding them so my mother sent food over to them.

In many ways the years in Chapleau were good years. My parents made friends in the community that lasted a lifetime. There were bridge parties, community dances to attend, fish & chip events and trips to

people's cottages. My mother also had the time and energy to sew and knit for her family and participate in church activities and the Red Cross.

My mother was widowed at age 44 and was left with two young children to raise. Her financial resources were meager, her education was very limited yet she found employment and somehow she managed to raise and educate my sister Carol and myself. These, at times, were the hard years. Ill health haunted her later years. This very complex, hardworking, talented and determined woman died in 1993 at the age of 83 in Kingston, Ontario.

About Chapleau

The Township of Chapleau is located approximately 190 kilometers northeast of Sault Ste Mare and is home to 1,964 residents, according to the 2016 census. Founded in 1885 as a division point for the Canadian Pacific Railway, Chapleau was named after Sir Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau, Secretary of State to Sir John A. McDonald. Chapleau serves as the gateway to the 700,000 hectre Chapleau Crown Game Preserve, the largest in the world and was name World Fishing Network's Ultimate Fishing Town contest winner in 2011.