

Sharon Marie LANGNER

NOMINEE: Sharon Marie LANGNER

MEMBER SPOUSE: G.A.R. (Butch) LANGNER, # 2558

DETACHMENT(S): Moosonee, 1975 – 1977
Ear Falls, 1977 - 1979

NOMINATOR: Spouse

SILENT PARTNER STORY:

My wife and I were subject to six transfers during my OPP career, five of which were duration postings. Sharon was a lab technician and each time we transferred she lost her job with no option to carry accumulated time or benefits if she found subsequent employment. For the purpose of this submission, I will focus on my posting to Moosonee Detachment from 1975 to 1977 as it was the one that had the most impact on Sharon as an OPP spouse.

In 1975, I was promoted to Corporal and transferred to Moosonee. At the time of this transfer, I was on vacation and had no intention of going; we had a 2½ year old son, my wife had a good job and I was already serving in a duration posting. It was Sharon who suggested that perhaps we should go and give it a try after a trip to view the location. I had been assured that the posting was voluntary and would have no bearing on my promotion. With that understanding and my wife's approval, we agreed to the two-year posting.

Moosonee Detachment had a complement of eight personnel; six on the mainland and two on Moose Factory Island. I was the sole NCO and Detachment Commander. Moosonee is only accessible by a 10-to-12-hour train ride from Cochrane or by air from Timmins. The Detachment was never at full complement and, being a two-year posting, there was a constant turnover of personnel.

The community consisted of approximately 3,000 Indigenous residents as well as a small number of mainly government or medical personnel and their families. It was the only time I lived as a minority and it was a real 'wake up.'

The Detachment residence was attached to the office, court room and cell area by a door that was never locked. It was not uncommon to have people enter our residence at all hours looking for the police as the locks on the office door were also broken. There was virtually little or no privacy. On at least one occasion we found an intoxicated female sitting in our living room and my son talking to her.

On another occasion while we had family visiting, a young Indigenous girl burst into our residence chased by a person wielding a shotgun. I can remember my sister's comments and reprimand about subjecting my wife and family to such appalling conditions. My young son would often escape via the unlocked front door into the main office and court area chased by Sharon in her housecoat. As I mentioned, there was virtually no privacy.

Court days were hectic. Court was only held twice a month and the office and grounds were filled to capacity with prisoners, accused persons plus police and court personnel. Our lockups exceeded 1,200 people a year and so it was often noisy and chaotic with many sleepless nights.

There were only two local eating establishments and they closed early right after supper. Sharon was generally responsible for picking up the slack; feeding prisoners, court officials and OPP personnel after hours including headquarters personnel who were often conducting internal investigations on myself and others. She also often fed the single members on holidays and special events with no remuneration. On numerous occasions she fed the Northeast Patrol personnel who often arrived late at night after hours and had to overnight.

During the summer, the few married members' spouses and children would often leave to stay with family and friends. My wife would always stay behind which often included feeding and entertaining the personnel left behind.

Moosonee was a very violent community and during the two-year duration we had 12 homicides as well as other deaths. There was no morgue on the mainland which meant we lacked a storage place for

bodies. We often had to temporarily store bodies in our garage or storage shed in the back yard until arrangements could be made to transport them to Cochrane or Timmins.

It was not uncommon for all detachment personnel to be on shift at the same time and sometimes for 24 hours or more. I can remember such an incident when we all worked all night and Sharon prepared breakfast for all of us after which we all ended up sleeping on the living room floor.

I was the only NCO and often away at meetings or court which left my wife and son alone in the residence having to field calls for service and contend with people coming to the residence looking for the police at all hours.

Sharon was able to find temporary employment at the federal hospital on Moose Factory Island. Transportation to and from work was by helicopter during ice breakup/freeze-up, ice road during the winter months and freighter canoe in summer. She had to take our son to a local babysitter while at work and, on one occasion, she was confronted by a knife wielding woman threatening them harm. She managed to run for safety with our son.

I can remember another occasion during the middle of the night when one of our young officers ended up standing at the foot of our bed after bursting into our residence. He was hyperventilating and unable to speak after attending a local fatal stabbing incident. He later resigned.

There was the time when Sharon had flown to Timmins then to Winnipeg with our son to arrange babysitting at the in-laws and then flew to Toronto to await my arrival for a vacation in St. Lucia. In the meantime, before I was able to leave we had three homicides in two days. CIB personnel were on scene and I had to prepare my statements before leaving. I can remember arriving in Toronto for our vacation still wearing my uniform parka.

These are only some of the incidents in which I feel Sharon played a vital and largely unrecognized role during some very difficult times.

Sharon's support and dedication to me and the job are worthy of consideration and I would never have survived without her by my side. Never once did she burden me with her complaints or criticize the OPP and I would be remiss to say the least if I did not put her name forward.

About Moosonee

Moosonee sits on the shores of the Moose River, approximately 19 kilometres south of James Bay. It is considered to be "the Gateway to the Arctic" and has Ontario's only saltwater port. Incorporated as a town January 1, 2001, Moosonee is home to 1,725 residents (2011).