

Stress and the RCMP or The Night I had a Baby

by S/S/Cst. Anthony E. McCusker

Many psychologists define stress as being an activity requiring a concerted effort or a demand upon energy. Obviously, they have never worked with a police force, because if they had, their definition would be somewhat different. A few weeks ago, while on a night shift with the RCMP, I discovered the true meaning of the word "stress".

It was 1:00 a.m. when Cst. Siddall and I were conducting a routine check on a truck just outside of St. George, N.B. While doing so, a sports car raced up the road behind us and stopped next to our patrol car. I ran over to the driver and asked him what his problem was. He said his wife was going to have a baby and asked us for an escort to the Saint John hospital. Cst. Siddall intervened and told the man that because an ambulance was not available, we would take his wife in our car.

We placed the pregnant woman in our car and began our journey. It was to be the most memorable 32 mile car ride I have ever had. The fog was so dense I can only recall seeing one sign post on our trip to Saint John and consequently, Cst. Siddall could not drive as fast as he might have wanted.

As we travelled, the woman said she was ready to have her baby. Cst. Siddall told her to hang on, but if it was impossible, we would pull over to the shoulder of the road and deliver the baby ourselves and try to do the best we could.

At this time, I reached for her hand in order to comfort her and she gripped my hand like a vice and my knuckles turned purple. She sat in pain, telling us once more that the baby was getting ready to come out. We were twenty miles from our

destination and I had visions of having to deliver the baby in the car.

Cst. Siddall increased his speed and called the Saint John hospital to send an ambulance to meet us at the toll bridge. Meanwhile the woman continued to have pains, her contractions only 30 seconds apart. I sat in the back seat, quietly watching and so tense that I thought I was going to have the baby. I held onto the back of the front seat and swear I left my fingerprints in the vinyl.

In twenty minutes we were nearly in Saint John. Cst. Siddall had performed a piece of driving that would have put Mario Andretti to shame. Through the dense fog with a wailing woman next to him, he had managed to call and meet the ambulance at the toll bridge just as they arrived. We transferred the woman into the waiting ambulance and followed it to the hospital. When we arrived, my seat was moist from perspiration, I thought, but I checked anyway just to make sure.

The hospital attendants took the woman from the ambulance and rushed her to the elevator on a stretcher. Having placed her on the elevator, she had her baby as the doors closed. We waited for fifteen minutes until she came out of the surgery room; she congratulated us and said that she would never forget this night. I had to agree with her.

With our task completed, we climbed into the patrol car and headed back to St. George. On the way back, Cst. Siddall asked me if I had learned anything from what had just happened. I told him I had and he asked me to elaborate. I said I now knew what the word stress meant. "What is its meaning," he asked. I replied that stress, RCMP style, meant not having to take a laxative for a month, because of a concerted effort.