

Goodbye to one of ours

by Staff Sergeant Gilles Parent, "A" Division, EDPS, Ottawa



After years of loyal service with the RCMP, many employees leave to happy farewells and celebrations, while others leave without much fuss or fanfare. Line Côté is one of those dedicated employees who left quietly, without ceremony. She was proud of the fact that she was one of the fortunate few who got to work in the same place — in the Tailor Shop — for 17 years. On Friday, October 11, 1996, after having devoted 21 years of her life to the RCMP, Line Côté passed away in Gatineau, Quebec, following a long and brave fight against cancer. Predeceased by her husband, Richard Lafontaine, Line is survived by her mother, daughter Linda Lafontaine, grandson Shayne as well as four brothers and sisters.

Line Côté was born in 1944, in Bois Franc, a small village near Maniwaki, Quebec, but she spent most of her life in the National Capital Region. After working at the Ottawa General Hospital for 17 years, Line joined the RCMP as a Public Service Employee in 1975. Initially, she worked in the Print Shop but was transferred to the Tailor Shop in 1979.

When RCMP members needed alterations made to their uniforms, Line Côté was the first person they met at the Tailor Shop, located at RCMP Headquarters in Ottawa. As a 17-year Tailor Shop veteran, Line spent so much time working on RCMP uniforms that she became renowned for quickly pointing out to members, regardless of rank, any of their shortcomings in dress and deportment. This pride in the RCMP uniform had earned her the nickname "Sergeant Major".

Daily contact with RCMP members is what Line liked best. It certainly was a contributing factor in her remaining with the Tailor Shop for so many years. On average, about eight or nine members passed through her office every day, but in the days and weeks preceding special events (such as the Papal Visit, which she always fondly remembered) this number would rise to more than 25. Given that members sometimes had to wait 15 to 30 minutes for their garments, Line got to know many of them because, as she said, "They had no choice but to talk to me!" A very spirited and humorous person, Line would always greet her visitors at the Tailor Shop with one of her famous sayings — and for years, with the ever present cigarette.

Line also liked to jokingly say that in order to save money, the Force should consider using stretch material for the uniforms because so many members gain weight. Seeing newly promoted, sharply attired officers leave the Tailor Shop was something that brought particular joy to her. From her perspective, she applauded the improvements made to the officers' uniform and often said that they were starting to look more like Regular Members — in that the Force would save a lot of money because as they were promoted, officers only have to change the insignia. The fact that the female members' uniforms were starting to resemble those of the male members' also got her seal of approval.

But even in difficult times, Line's pride in her work never waned. As a result of persisting ailments, Line undertook a series of tests which led to a diagnosis of terminal cancer in November 1995. This past summer, she agreed to this interview as a way of saying goodbye to her numerous friends among the retired and serving RCMP members, and Public Servants whom she met over the years. She wanted to share a few of her work experiences with the Force and to extend her thanks for everyone's contribution which in one way or another enriched her life.

Before her death, Line stated "I have enjoyed the many tasks I have accomplished for RCMP members and the Force, and I am pleased to be recognized with such pride. I am sure that there are other employees across the Force, who aspire to the same privilege I have been given, to have my thoughts and feelings expressed in the *RCMP Quarterly* magazine. I hope we will meet again in heaven, where I expect to be."

Accepting such a cruel diagnosis was certainly difficult for her, and Line credits her faith in God as giving her the strength to face her final battle. The attention she received from co-workers and many RCMP members was particularly touching to her. She will be sadly missed. Hopefully, her family will get some solace in knowing that everyone lucky enough to have known Line, feels that their life is richer for having had this privilege.

Goodbye to you Line, one of ours.

At the time of printing, on December 10, 1996, we were advised of the death of Mr. Adalbert Reiter, retired Master Tailor, after 30 years of service at the RCMP. The funeral service was held at St-René Goupil church in Gatineau (Quebec), with many RCMP employees and members in dress uniform. Our condolences to the Reiter family. — Ed.