

Leanne Latter leaving twp.

Cramahe Township's Bylaw Enforcement Officer Leanne Latter is leaving. Her last day with the Township is Friday, June 10.

Mrs. Latter preferred not to discuss her future plans, but commented that she had enjoyed working with the staff in the Cramahe Township offices.

New business



Lindy's:
a new alternative for lunch and ice cream in Colborne. See page 8



Victims of mistaken identity in police search

COLBORNE CHRONICLE

By BOB OWEN

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It was something that Sue Scott has never experienced before - and never wants to again.

At 6 a.m. on June 2, she was awakened by a loud knock at the door. She was resting on the couch after having let the puppy out for its morning exercise.

On her doorstep was an OPP swat team with a warrant to search the home in Dundonald where she and Chris Morewood and her son, Steven, live.

If she had been awake, or perhaps if she had thought about it, she would have realized the police were at the wrong house. A check of the warrant nearly three hours later revealed that they were at the wrong address.

Instead, when the police asked to come in, she offered them coffee. She roused Chris and Steven and the three spent most of the next three hours sitting outside.

Now that the ordeal of mistaken identity is over, Sue can look back. She recounts that the officers were always polite, but very stern. They declined the offer of coffee, but suggested she could make some for herself before she went outside.

But the whole experience was difficult and it has left her worried about the rumours that might result from the morning mistake by the police.

What she saw when she opened the door



Sue Scott and Chris Morewood had time to relax with their dogs last Saturday, now that it was clear they were victims of a false search.

PHOTO BY BOB OWEN

were at least two OPP cruisers and five unmarked cars blocking the entrance to her drive. A uniformed officer in a flack jacket asked her if she was Susan Scott, then told her they had a warrant to search the premises.

He didn't show her the warrant at the time and she wonders now if she would have avoided most of the distress if he had. When she looked later, she didn't recognize any of the other names on the paper.

After asking who else was at home, the officer escorted her upstairs to wake them. Sue was supervised by a female officer as she got dressed to go outside.

And while they waited, a team of officers from Ottawa, Sault Saint Marie and head office in Orillia began their search. Sue says it was part of a sting operation being conducted at more than one location across the province.

The Dundonald family might never have known what the search was about if Steven and Chris weren't licenced hunters.

After about two hours the police came out and said they were going to arrest 16-year-old Steven for failing to have the security trigger lock on his rifle. It was there; he had neglected to fasten it. He was read his rights.

The word "arrest" stirred the protective side of the mother, and made her angry. Sue asked to see the warrant. She told them they had the wrong Susan Scott and she knew none of the other people named on it. It had her address but called it City Rd. She lives on a County road.

That provoked a series of calls by the police.

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Victims of mistaken identity in search

While police took an hour checking the validity of the warrant, they continued photographing and tagging everything in the house, as well as searching the out buildings. They had torn Steven's room apart. They were preparing to read all of correspondence to find connections with the others on their list.

Friends and relatives concerned about the welfare of the family weren't allowed access.

Meanwhile, Sue was asked how long she had lived in the house. She has lived in the neighbourhood since she was 12 and in this house 27 years.

Sue was clearly upset. She lives within the law. She says her friends chide her for watching her recycling before she puts it out. She thinks perhaps her demeanour was a factor in their rechecking their warrant.

Afterthoughts

In retrospect, she says it was just a case of the police not doing their homework well enough.

Chris is less charitable. If he'd made that kind of mistake at his work, there would have been big problems he says.

Thinking more broadly, Chris says the experience has driven home how delicate our freedom is. The police could have done anything, and for three hours the family had no work, no life; the police owned their world.

Both Chris and Sue are definite that the police should have done more research before upturning their lives. Sue worries rumours may affect her new business, Do Right Home Improvement. She's not sleeping well these days, either. She heard a siren on the TV the other night and thought it was at their home. It made her hair stand on end.

And the experience has done nothing to give Steven a more positive attitude about the police.

He was taken to Cobourg and remained there for the day, but no charges were laid. He will have to take in a lecture about proper storage of firearms.

There's no question in Sue's mind the trigger locks will be on in the future.

Chris agrees. It's the law.

If their gun isn't stored properly and someone steals it, they could be liable.

The wrong Sue

At 8:45, the family got the word. Sergeant Mike Plannery from the Orillia OPP sat down and said he was sorry about the incorrect identification. He said they couldn't ignore the problem with Steven. He hoped this would be a learning experience. The police discovered there was another "Susan Scott".

The police packed up and left but, before they did, every single officer stopped by and apologized. Some even noted they thought they had the wrong place from the start. This was an established family with a cat and a couple of dogs - they didn't fit the mold.