

Cst. Pearson G.D.



PEARSON, GORDON D. - CST. Regimental No. 23018

November 22, 1966 - Winterburn, Alberta Age: 23

Cst. Pearson was expecting trouble. It was 2:15 in the morning and he'd heard that they'd all been drinking. But, by the time he got to the Holly Esso Café, five miles west of Edmonton, everything had cooled off and the fight was obviously over. He had taken statements from a few people in the restaurant and was finished with his investigation. He was satisfied that it had just been a fight and no one had been hurt. As he stood at the counter in front of the cash register, he spotted a native Canadian coming into the café who fit the description of the man who had been causing the trouble. The constable also thought the suspect was carrying a rifle at his side.

Cst. Pearson was very composed as he turned to face the man but, before he could say a word, the stranger raised his .303 rifle. The RCMP officer tried to reach for it, but the suspect fired and hit him in the wrist and the stomach. Cst. Pearson fell to the floor and lapsed into unconscious-ness.

While he lay there, there was a mad clamour in the restaurant as the other patrons dove for cover. The gunman moved among the scattered chairs and tables, shot two more defenceless people and then fled the café.

One of the customers in the restaurant, Shirley Parrish, knew Cst. Pearson's were the most serious of the three who had been shot. With some help, she got him into her car and roared away to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton. Cst. Pearson died there a few hours later.

At 4:40 that same morning, the RCMP arrested the gunman, a 22 year old by the name of Charles Wilfred Hill. Hill had been born and raised on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario. He was a gentle and decent person and the father of two small children. In Ontario, Hill had experienced several run-ins with the law, all related to alcohol. After graduating from Hamilton Teachers' College, he moved away from Brantford to start a new life in Alberta as a teacher/counsellor.

The morning of Cst. Pearson's death, police found Hill hiding out behind his apartment building. Only when the police began to interrogate him were they able to unravel the tragic events that led up to Cst. Pearson's death.

Apparently Hill had been drinking heavily and was mouthy and swearing in the café. He got into a fist fight with another man, Adolph Savard, who had also been drinking. As the fight erupted, the café manager called the RCMP and asked for some help. By the time the manager got off the phone, Hill had won the fight inside the restaurant. But then Savard's friend, Howard Callioux, invited Hill to step outside and proceeded to beat Hill up out there. That's when Hill went home and got his rifle. He was determined to kill Callioux.

But, when Charles Wilfred Hill came back to the café, the first person he saw was a police officer who was obviously going to obstruct his plans. So, in his drunken state, he killed him and then wounded Savard and another man, Donald L'Hirondelle. Ironically Howard Callioux was not hit.

Hill pleaded guilty by reason of insanity, but was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged on June 27, 1967. A higher court overturned that conviction and ruled there should be a new trial. In the second trial, Hill pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of non-capital murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Cst. Donald Pearson was buried in the cemetery at Neerlandia, Alberta, outside Edmonton. He is survived by his wife, Amy, to whom he had been married for just over three months.