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Women in SECURITY



HOW five women started on the frontlines of the industry and found rewarding careers.

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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Christina Duffey (Paragon),
Judy Shulga (TTC), Mieke Clarke (G4S),
Silvia Fraser (City of Toronto), Lina Tsakiris (RBC).



PHOTOS BY SANDRA STRANGEMORE

Women in SECURITY

By Jennifer Brown

HOW five women started on the frontlines of the industry and found rewarding careers.

Some might argue that the idea of examining the role of women in any profession is outdated. Discrimination doesn't exist, right? The sexes treat each other as equals and there are equal opportunities for all, right? Perhaps, but the fact remains that on average women make up just a small portion of the staff in any security organization. At the City of Toronto, for example, in a unit of 167 people, 19 per cent are women. In the management team, 22 per cent are female in what is considered a progressive organization. Many women in the industry will tell you it's a terrific career with many growth opportunities.

Recently, *Canadian Security* talked to five women in the industry about how they worked their way up through the ranks, the opportunities they found and the need for mentors.

Canadian Security: Why do you think so few women enter the field of security?

Lina Tsakiris: I don't think anybody dreams of a career in security, regardless of gender. They look at policing or justice studies or the criminal justice industry, but the industry has such immense opportunities and a fantastic level of education to support it all at both the college and university level. The infrastructure is there and definitely growing.

Mieke Clarke: I didn't plan on getting into security — I wanted to go into corrections, but once I got into security I loved it. I think it's still male dominated in the industry and could be why women are still not as interested in getting into it. It is completely different from 15 years ago to today though. There are more females getting into the industry.

Judy Shulga: I think because I started in corrections in the 1970s there was a big push to break into the male-dominated jobs so they encouraged

the college programs and encouraged women to apply. When I started I thought I would be helping people as a corrections officer and it certainly didn't turn out that way — it was a turn key operation with Toronto West detention centre and I found it was tougher than I thought it would be. One of the things I quickly discovered is you have to have that core sense of courage as a woman to jump into a male-dominated environment. There are certain traits that are fundamental and if there aren't those inherent traits you will not make it in this industry. It's important that people understand you can encourage women to go into the industry but they have to be aware of the realities in the industry.

Silvia Fraser: More and more women have become very prominent in positions in the security industry and it's inspiring for people to join the industry. The industry has changed a lot over the years — right now we have 22 per cent females on the management team at the City (of Toronto). We try and inspire our staff to move up and learn more — the security field is so wide and there are so many different streams you can go into.

PARTICIPANTS:



Lina Tsakiris, CPP
Physical Security Manager,
RBC

Primary responsibilities:

Developing security master plans to mitigate risks for RBC in Canada, Europe and Asia.

- Four years in the role.
- Background in private sector – guard and investigative firms.



Mieke Clarke: Client service manager, G4S Secure Solutions (Canada)

- Three years in the role; 15 years in the security industry.
- Started as a security guard and worked her way up.



Silvia Fraser, CPP, PMP, CSPM, CPO
Supervisor, Buildings Security, Union Station, City of Toronto.

- Nine years with the City of Toronto, her career in security started 13 years ago with a Law Enforcement and Security diploma and her goal was to become a police officer. Six years ago she became a supervisor and worked on the Union Station security enhancement worth \$60 million.



Judy Shulga, CPP
Staff Sgt. System Security
Special Constable Services
Toronto Transit Commission.

- With the TTC for 30 years, Shulga started as a plainclothes investigator in a frontline position. Gradually the department evolved to sworn officers with constable services. Her current job is managing the protective services unit.



Christina Duffey, CPP
Director, Customer Service
Paragon Security

- Two years in the position.
- Started as security officer in Chicago and Phoenix.
- Always worked on operations/client management.

Christina Duffey: When I entered the field there was an image of security and what made people feel safe and I didn't fit that profile. I think the turning point in the early 1990s was technology and systems and cameras and not having to be out in the dark parking lot by yourself. I saw my skills start to be used a little more in terms of administration and customer service became a value as opposed to just the size and image of an individual wearing a uniform. On the contract side I think it's been so rewarding because of the variety of assignments I've had. I've been able to experience small and large complex operations.

Fraser: We had our first Women in Security workshop at the City and there was a lot of interest on the risk assessment side and looking at courses they could take.

Duffey: Even after 9/11 there was more of an exposure to the opportunities in the industry. It became a profession. The education has always been there for criminal justice, but now you can get a Master's degree in security administration and that's come a long way in 10 years. Definitely there is now the reward of applying business skills and management skills and not just the hard-core security vocation that the industry has been focused on before.

CSM: Would you say equality or discrimination is still an issue?

Shulga: I think that no matter what we do as far as promoting ourselves and no matter what management tries to do to encourage women to get into the industry there will always be the issue of what men think about women (in the role) until they have their own experience with women being able to step up to the plate and how well they can perform in the job. If someone has always been surrounded by men who do the top job and have never experienced women in that role I think it will take a while for them to change their minds about women's capabilities in this industry. We can say you can't discriminate and you can put it into policy but it takes tried and true experiences with women before you know the mind set has really changed.

CSM: Would you say when a team of men and women work together it creates a great dynamic?

Tsakiris: Definitely. A symbiotic dynamic is extremely important. No matter the strengths and weaknesses, you end up balancing each

other out. We certainly see that and there are things I'm at a loss for and if it weren't for my colleague Jason (Caissie) I would be at a loss and vice versa. To pull it back on a macro level, we have evolved and are stepping into roles that are traditionally male-oriented. When I look at it on a global level, women have claimed and championed senior security roles. That was evident to me in attending ASIS Europe last year in Switzerland and having had the honour of lecturing with a colleague, Tracy Montgomery, to subject matter that may have traditionally been spoken to by men. At that conference and looking at the list of individuals speaking it was a 50/50 split of men and women. This is an industry that supports women's evolution.

CSM: Mieke, you and Christina work primarily on the client side, which is probably male-dominated? Do you see it changing?

Clarke: Yes, and discrimination still exists, depending on the environment or the sector you're in. But more and more clients in certain environments are asking for a female presence to bring a nurturing or customer service base to balance things out.

Duffey: On the contract side we are still very much perception/client driven. One of the biggest hurdles on the contract side is that we are a 24-hour operation, so shift work continues to be a challenge for balancing life and other responsibilities. A lot of women we see on the contract side are in our organization on the day shift for a lot of different reasons because they have the ability to do the administrative work when the client is there. I think it's also still a stepping stone to law enforcement, so on the frontline you have a larger number of women there than on the managerial side because the frontline is where the recruiting happens for law enforcement — they look to the industry for their work pool.

CSM: What about the ability to move up? Are there limitations because women often have to take time out of their career path for family?

Tsakiris: I'm a firm believer that the limitations that exist are the limitations people put on themselves. I think the infrastructure is there at this point in time for work-life balance depending on what you're balancing. It's a question of how hungry you are to succeed in your pursuits. Also, as an advocate of designations I say find the niches that will put you forward.



Clarke: You have to work hard. My organization promotes from within — it doesn't matter whether female or male, but you do have to work hard.

Duffey: To move to the next level in my career I've often had to move to another organization. When you're young and growing and gaining certifications you're still perceived as that young individual who came into the organization. For me, having the experience and education when I jumped from one company to another meant I came in at that next level because they didn't see me growing up in front of their eyes. So sometimes, if you want to be promoted or have different experiences you have to look outside of your organization. Although a lot of organizations do want to promote from within, in order to really get to that next level I needed to apply those skills to another organization.

Shulga: I agree with that. I've been with the TTC for 30 years — I started at age 22 and was hardly grown up. At that time women were very much in the minority and it was a male dominated environment and still is. Having stayed at the TTC my whole career they still think I'm the same person as when I was 22.

As far as a woman trying to have a family and have a career, yes, it can be tough. It's especially tough with shift work — my baby had to stay at the baby sitters for sometimes four days

in a row because I was on night shift and that was a tough go, but it's one of those things you get through. I knew I wanted to be independent and I toughed it out and made sacrifices. I apologized to my daughter who is 24 now and she told me, "It's OK mom". You have to work really hard to move up in rank.

CSM: Silvia, you started on the front line with social services. Recently one of your younger staff members working in that same role asked you about how she could move forward. How did that make you feel?

Fraser: It made me feel good that she was asking the questions about what to do and what courses to take. I started as a security officer at social services at Wellesley and Jarvis for three years. I worked to get my CPP (Certified Protection Professional) and CSPM (Certified Security Project Manager) and worked to better my skills. The City really invests in its people and focuses on the professional development and it worked for me. When I moved up to supervisor I was the first female supervisor at the City and now five other women join me in holding supervisor positions.

Duffey: The thing about moving up is that if you were to chart it, everyone thinks it's going to be a horizontal line moving up to the right of a graph, but in this profession you limit yourself if you believe that to be true. Sometimes you have

to move laterally or in a different direction in terms of an industry or market to get that experience. The key thing is asking yourself how am I going to contribute and where is it going to take me as opposed to what the actual title is?

CSM: Do you think certification is becoming more important for competing in the job market, whether you're a man or woman?

Duffey: I think it's the professionalization of the industry that is happening. Certification and education comes with taking the industry to the next level. Less than one per cent of those certified with ASIS International are women. It's definitely growing but we have realized we sometimes need to bring some extra things to the table when competing for some positions and it definitely gives you an edge.

Fraser: At the City we also have to justify how we came up with a solution and it helps us as professionals to speak the same language. I recently presented to the Canadian Security Association on the Certified Security Project Manager certification and how important it is that we all understand what is being discussed when handling a project.

Duffey: It gave me instant credibility when I earned my CPP in 2009. Certainly at a peer level and client level because it set the benchmark of where I was in terms of my education and knowledge of the industry so it was a critical turning point for me career-wise.

Shulga: I agree, the CPP was instrumental in justifying certain measures at the TTC. I knew that our Chief was fully aware of the accreditation and knew that with it I was getting well-rounded knowledge and standardized knowledge. It was a big deal when I got my CPP a couple of years ago — I'm almost at the end of my career and I wish I had got it earlier because when you can go to the head of your organization and say, "This is what the standard is in the industry and we're not meeting that standard," they will believe you because you have that CPP beside your name.

Tsakiris: I think the designations are building a momentum in the industry. I've had many phone calls from colleagues who are interested in the designations so we are seeing that now and I think it's a question of awareness and getting the word out that it's nothing to be intimidated by. Like anything else, it takes hard work and dedication but if you sit down and say,

“If I can do it, you can do it.” It offers great encouragement.

Duffey: It’s a great networking opportunity too when you can see another woman has their CPP and pick up the phone and call them.

CSM: What is the ratio of men to women in your organization?

Clarke: I think 70 per cent male including our office and guard staff and 30 per cent women — those are rough numbers.

Tsakiris: Within our organization I would say we are almost equal. We have a large female membership in our executive level.

Duffey: On our frontline we are seeing 10 per cent women and 90 per cent male but much higher in the management area — about 30 per cent. It’s definitely come a long way.

Shulga: Out of seven management people in my section four of them are women. Our Chief is a woman and our superintendent is a woman.

CSM: Is compensation an issue?

Clarke: I don’t think so — it’s what you bring to the table and what you negotiate.

Fraser: No, it’s all based on skills and experience.

Shulga: The TTC runs it by scale — it doesn’t matter who you are, if you’re in that position that’s what you get.

Duffey: At the officer level our pay is driven by clients so the rates are set, and in managerial positions I think it’s experience and based partly based on negotiation skills — when you have those extra things to bring to the table you’re rewarded for that.

CSM: Do you think the industry does enough to bring new people into the industry?

Tsakiris: The ASIS chapter in Toronto is reaching out to the colleges and giving incentives to students. Is there an opportunity to do more? Absolutely. Just as we say that security is everybody’s responsibility I think it’s everybody’s responsibility

to bring awareness forward and reach out to these groups and educate him or her as to what is available.

Clarke: I think organizations need to do more to get females to apply to security positions. I don’t think enough is being done. There’s definitely more we can do such as getting out to the colleges and being a voice for them to encourage them to join the profession.

Fraser: When I held the Women in Security workshop at the City recently it helped to open the discussion and it was focused on professional development. It left them with some ideas about what options are out there. I also volunteer as a mentor for female security staff.

Shulga: I was at Fleming College recently speaking to their Security and Risk Management course. Nancy Newton coordinates that program and works hard to pull women into the profession. Out of 20 people, seven were males and the rest were females. She gets people to talk about their career path and I think students were amazed that security can have such a wide range of areas they work in. When women speak to these classes the female students see that we manage to have our careers and have our children. It helps to open the security field to young female minds who thought, as I originally did, that to get into security you had to be pretty tough.

Duffey: Part of the responsibility is on the industry, but really, it’s those of us in this room that have to spearhead taking on those leadership roles to promote opportunities. Women today are now coming into the industry in a different way than we did. We came in at the ground level and fought our way up. Women are now coming in through other areas of education and are not having to do those other steps — they’re doing it more through business networking. A lot of the skills I have learned to be successful came from other business executives and women business executives.

I think the next generation is coming in with different expectations of where they will start with their career. I still think there is value in having experience at the frontline to help connect and manage people — there’s value in getting your hands dirty and wearing a uniform.

CSM: Who have been the most important mentors in your careers?

Tsakiris: For me, I have two. For sure, my mother is one of my mentors. She perseveres in life. She lost a husband and a son early in life and survived cancer. For me she is the fuel to my fire and epitomizes really what it’s like to put your best foot forward and stay positive. She’s 74-years-old and still going. Also, my current boss, Ric Handren, who has taught me a lot about the interpersonal part of security and importance of honing soft skills, managing by objective and really looking at the bigger picture before executing a plan.

Clarke: I’ve had a number of mentors over the years but we’re so team-focused we mentor each other and learn from each other. My team is really my mentoring system.

Fraser: I am very fortunate to have had a number of very good mentors as well as getting support from peers and leaders. My husband believes I can fly if I put my mind to it, he’s very supportive and he is a security professional. In the professional world, my boss Dwaine Nichol is really helpful in helping me to focus and my former boss Walter Chan, now my colleague — he has always been a great leader. These are people who really believe in the saying that a candle doesn’t lose anything by lighting another.

Shulga: I’ve been fortunate in that my management my superintendent is a woman and chief is a woman and they have allowed me the flexibility. It was my chief who said why don’t you take the CPP and see if it’s worthwhile for others to take it? That was all funded by the TTC, which is very helpful. My husband has always taught me the more diplomatic way to approach things whereas I had always been the pit bull charging in — so having my husband to bounce things off has been great. He’s also in the industry so he understands the whole business and type of management or situation I’m dealing with.

Duffey: Family and friends definitely get you through, but I had that one boss who saw the potential in me even when I didn’t see it and at the time you may hate them for it but they keep raising the bar for you. I’ve also met some incredible women in the industry. Sometimes it feels like we are standing alone and fighting the charge alone but with some of these women we have become dear personal friends and we push each other. There is a confidentiality among you and sometimes we need to be aggressive but sometimes you also need to know when to stand back. Sometimes there’s no better sounding board than to call someone who has been in my footsteps before and say, ‘How do I move forward?’