

# The twists and turns in the life of a RCMP officer fascinates CFUW audience

By Melanie Hennessey  
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"Life can change permanently or end in an instant, without warning, no second chances," Barbara Redford told a packed audience at Halton Hills Public Library.

If anyone should know the truth behind this sentiment, it's Redford, considering she's almost died twice in the line of duty.

The RCMP veteran shared her riveting tales and words of wisdom last week with local residents brought together by the Canadian Federation of University Women.

Redford, who's also the president of the Halton Hills Camera Club, took the crowd on a journey through her career with the RCMP that has spanned almost two decades, including crime scene investigation and her more recent move into anti-terrorism.

She got her start in the field in Manitoba, where RCMP officers

are contracted to perform general duties. It was there that she realized she didn't want to be a front-line officer.

"I started at the age of 30, and by 35 I'd almost died twice," she said.

Her first brush with death came on a spousal assault call, which she said are one of the most dangerous types of calls an officer can respond to.

As she was trying to arrest the male at the scene, the female involved in the situation turned on Redford and hit her over the head with a cast iron frying pan.

"I thought that was close, maybe I don't want to do this anymore," she said.

But she persevered and ended up in another scary situation, this time with an impaired driver.

"I pulled him over and realized this was his fifth impaired driving charge," she said. "He was determined that he was not going to jail, and I ended up fighting with this

fellow on the side of the road for 15 minutes waiting for my back up."

The altercation landed Redford in the hospital for two weeks as she recovered from numerous injuries.

Fortunately for Redford, she soon discovered her passion for crime scene investigation and photography, which opened up a safer avenue of policing.

"I really like figuring out the puzzles of how things work, and in forensics that's what you're doing," she said.

Following three months of intensive training in Ottawa, Redford was able to become a forensics officer and foster her skills in technical photography.

"I have to tell the story of what happened at a crime scene, and the photos I take are going to tell that story," she said. "And really, that's what photography is all about is telling a story."

But a big part of that story in the forensics field is death. In her third



Halton Hills Camera Club president Barbara Redford speaks about her extensive work with the RCMP at a recent Canadian Federation of University Women gathering at the Halton Hills Public Library.

Photo by Melanie Hennessey

year on the job, Manitoba was faced with the most homicides it had ever experienced.

"In my file load alone I had 36 homicides that year. Unfortunately all of them were aboriginal reserve calls," she said. "I went to a lot of calls where there were deaths for no reason. I went to calls where sons killed fathers over the last beer. I couldn't wrap my

head around a lot of them. They're senseless deaths that didn't need to happen."

As she struggled to cope, another call came in that pushed Redford over the edge. It involved the death of a young child who passed away after being chained in her basement, abused and starved by her mother and boyfriend.

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