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Posted by [Brenda DalGLISH](#) on March 3rd, 2009 [No Comments](#) [Printer-Friendly](#)

The most revealing and essential information session of PDAC 2009 took place Tuesday morning at the Women's Association of Mining Industry of Canada (WAMIC) gathering in the Royal York Hotel.

Three women, a homemaker with children, a career woman and mother and the CEO of a junior mining company, told moving stories about they survived and thrived in mining careers that came and went with the boom-bust cycle of the industry that resulted in the average length of a geologist's job being about two and a half years.

"The whole industry seems to be in little bites," said Florence Mannard, whose husband George died in his fifties but who now has two children in the industry.

Despite the hardships and uncertainty, however, none of the women said they would choose another path if they could do it over.

However, they and the WAMIC gathering agreed that the fact there is only one woman in the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame shows a lack of understanding and acknowledgement of the role women play in the mining industry.

Lynda Bloom, CEO of Halo Resources, said she realized that the mining industry was going to be a difficult one after she was laid off three times in the first six years after graduating as a geologist.

But she developed determination to help withstand the downturns at the end of each cycle.

She also developed special assay analysis skills that she developed into a consulting career before she opened her own junior company that is in development in the Flin Flon area, Bloom said.

The current financial crisis, however, is difficult. "My coping skills are at an all-time low and my resiliency is wearing a little thin," she said.

"There are big ups and downs in this industry," said Sally Hooper, the wife of mining engineer and who is herself a long time teacher who is now instructing at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

"In the first eight years of our marriage we had three children and we moved nine times," Hooper said, including flying from her family home in South Africa to Uranium City, a fly-in camp in northern Saskatchewan.

Nor did the situation improve as her husband's career advanced. Twelve years ago they moved to Toronto to take the job that they'd been assured he'd hold until retirement. "Eighteen months later it was gone," she said.

"They tell you not to take it personally but . . .," Bloom said.

"The ups and downs come along about every eight years," Mannard agreed. "Mining and moving are somewhat synonymous."

However she suggested one alternative to the boom-bust cycle "is to go and get lost in very isolated places."

Mannard described one of her most heartfelt moments after her husband returned to the family after

international field work and they and their children were driving across the country in a Volkswagen Beetle to British Columbia.

On a long stretch across Saskatchewan, they'd stop the car and have the children run circles around it until they'd run off enough energy that they were able to withstand more driving. On one occasion after her son had exhausted himself running, he looked up at her and said quietly "Mum, I want to go home."

"I got him back into the car but I started thinking, 'What is he really thinking? With the type of life we've had, what is 'home' and how long is it going to last?'"

The comment reminded Hooper of a time her son said to her as they were traveling to their next posting, "What world are we in now, Mum?"

Hooper, who came from a privileged background, said that after she first moved to Canada from South Africa, she had to cope with significant cultural differences.

"I didn't know what kind of clothes to buy," she said. "I'd never cleaned the house. I cried whenever I did the ironing."

Bloom, who has traveled extensively in her consulting career, said that no matter what the level of development in the country, she, herself, was treated with respect. Yet she remembers that once, as a woman brought in the tea, "they said 'See we have women geologists, too.'"

Yet the women each found that the mining life, even with its uncertainty and frugality, was rich.

"I don't know how to explain it," said Bloom, "but when you live in a tent with people for four months, you learn stuff that you probably wouldn't learn anywhere else."

Added Hooper: "You learn to deal with adversity. It made our children resilient."

She said she didn't regret another marriage opportunity she gave up to choose her husband.

"I get bored easily," she said with a smile, "and it's been a challenge."

It seems that the main problem with adding more women to the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame would be where to stop.