



News

CANADIAN NAVAL TECHNICAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Obituary:
**Hal Smith a Moving Force
 in the CNTHA**

H.W. Smith, DSc MIT, F.C.A.E., Professor Emeritus Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering U of T, Commander, RCN (retired), left us on November 16 when he was in full stride in his fourth career. After twenty years in the RCN, he became a professor of engineering at the University of Toronto. He soon rose to head the Faculty of Engineering, and then to the most senior administrative posts in the university. His training as a divisional officer, he claimed half seriously, prepared him for the worst that academic politics could throw at him.

Hal’s retirement did not last long. In the early 1990s, Captain Rolfe Monteith (retired) and Rear Admiral S.M. Davis (retired) drew him into a group studying the history of the hydrofoil project. In the 1960s, Hal had headed sonar development for the hydrofoil under the leadership of these distinguished officers. I met Hal about seven years ago when he approached the Directorate of History where I was working as the naval team leader. He was seeking guidance in the techniques of historical research and writing, but there wasn’t a great deal I could teach him. He and the rest of the hydrofoil history team were already, through their old service connections, pulling invaluable documents out of the woodwork and producing groundbreaking drafts.

Our meetings soon turned into seminars in which Hal educated DHist staff about how the history of the navy’s technical achievements could and should be done. Before long, Hal himself was spearheading the effort, undertaking a series of studies for DHist on sonar development in the RCN. In many respects it was a work of autobiography, for Hal had been a player in so many aspects of the story. Ever the professional skeptic, however, he never trusted his memory, and travelled from his home in Victoria, BC to Ottawa and Halifax and the U.K. for many weeks of concentrated research each year.

The magnificent studies he produced, like those for the hydrofoil project, set a new standard for military technical history in this country. Moreover, his enthusiasm and brilliant work provided inspiration to the naval community, not least to DHist, at a time of deep cutbacks. In particular, it was Hal’s commitment and industry that did much to bring about the establishment of the Canadian Naval Technical History project, and he was a moving force until a few short weeks before his death. Only about 18 months ago did I learn, and then only by a chance remark, that Hal had been driving himself at this pace in the face of grave medical problems.

Over dinner one bleak winter evening in Ottawa, I asked Hal what the key to leadership was in times of diminishing budgets and layoffs. He answered that a leader always has the same role: “part coach, part cheerleader.” This, I think, was Hal’s view of himself. He was too modest to add that he was always in the trenches slogging with the troops.

— Roger Sarty
 Director Historical Research
 Canadian War Museum



Messdeck Lighting in HMCS *Haida*

Article by P.D.C. Barnhouse



“Cabinet” Approval

The Directorate of History and Heritage has gained a veritable windfall of information from the offices of the Director General Maritime Equipment Program Management in Hull. The information, contained in 44 filing cabinets of technical files no longer required on site by DGMEPM, will be of great help to DHH historians in their research into Canada’s post-war navy.

The files cover a wide scope of technical material, from details on the workings of individual pieces of kit to the layout of full engineering systems. The daunting task of assessing the contents of the files was made easier thanks to the expert assistance of life-cycle material manager Fred Glover (DMSS 7-4-4) who volunteered to do this work on behalf of all DGMEPM LCMMs. It couldn’t have been a better experience.

DHH was alerted to the availability of the files through the close co-operation of DGMEPM and the Canadian Naval Technical History Association. It is a fine example of how everything can go right when people work together to preserve the record of Canada’s naval technical history.

The files will be transferred to DHH’s Holly Lane facility in Gloucester sometime early in the new year. Once the information has been catalogued, the public will be given access to the unclassified portion of the collection.

Michael Whitby
Chief of the Naval History Team
Directorate of History and Heritage



Sometime during my tenure as Electrical Officer in HMCS *Haida* (December 1959 to June 1961), the messdeck lighting was changed from DC-supplied incandescent bulbs to AC-supplied fluorescent lights. I believe this was done in just the four main messdecks — forward and after, upper and lower (although it could have been extended to some of the others). This was not an authorized A&A (i.e. alteration & addition, the forerunner of the shipalt) for the Tribals. Rather it was a “unique” fit in *Haida* only. Impetus for the lighting change stemmed from two factors — a shortage of jetty DC shore power in Halifax, and oddly enough a fleet-wide ship cleanup campaign being pushed by the CANCOMFLT of the time, Cmdre James Plomer.

The shortage of DC power on the jetties was sorely felt by *Haida*. As junior ship in the squadron (a function of the captain’s seniority vis-à-vis that of the other captains in the squadron), we always occupied the outboard position in the trot, which meant having to run our diesel generator to provide sufficient power for domestics. This also meant we required the services of a stoker as a diesel watchkeeper. At the same time, all of the jetties were now amply supplied with AC power to support the *St. Laurent* and follow-on classes that were just coming into service. *Haida*, along with the other Tribals, had two large AC systems (usually driven by DC primary power) to supply mainly the 3-inch-50 gun and associated fire-control system. Fortunately, the Tribals had also been supplied with an AC shore connection, no doubt to allow system testing while alongside.

At some point in the proceedings I was put in charge of freshening-up the ship’s interior in keeping with the fleet cleanup campaign. Naturally, I involved the electrical department in this endeavour, and it was my chief electrician who suggested that we kill two birds with one stone. By taking advantage of the readily available AC shore power and rewiring the messdecks for fluorescent lighting, we could brighten up the messdecks and at the same time reduce our dependency on the limited DC shore supply. I gave the chief permission to get on with it, which he did by acquiring the required bits and pieces from naval stores, including light fixtures and a considerable amount of cabtire (rubber-covered) wire cable. He subsequently carried out the complete installation.

We eventually did get caught in this unauthorized A&A when Cmdre Plomer came on board with his staff to evaluate our progress in the cleanup program. As the captain proudly showed off our bright, new fluorescent lighting to the commodore, the Staff Officer (Electrical), Cdr Bev Miles, inquired of me the number of the A&A for this fit. I mumbled something about it being a “*Haida* special,” and even though he did not seem satisfied with this response he said nothing further.

I never heard another thing about it.



Pat Barnhouse is a staff officer in the Directorate of Science and Technology Maritime in Ottawa.

Book Review: Salty Dips Vol. 5 — “Up Spirits!”

Reviewed by Pat Barnhouse

Published by the Ottawa Branch, Naval Officers Association of Canada, P.O. Box 505, Station B, Ottawa Ontario, K1P 5P6, 1998. ISBN 9691342-5-8. www.naval.ca/saltydips

The idea for *Salty Dips* came from the late Hal Lawrence, author of *A Bloody War* and *Tales of the North Atlantic*. Hal was dedicated to the conviction that the personal recollections of Canadian participants in the wars at sea and in naval operations between the wars were valuable to an understanding of Canadian history. As the years pass, however, we lose more and more of those very people and their interesting memories.

Thus, in 1979, the Ottawa Branch of the Naval Officers Association of Canada (NOAC) decided to support Hal Lawrence's cause by regularly gathering small groups of naval veterans in the HMCS *Bytown* officers mess to tape-record the reminiscences of a principal narrator. The recordings were to be made available to the Directorate of History (now DHH).

Participants with considerable service experience expressed amazement at the range and scope of the incidents that were recounted. Because of the interest shown by those in attendance, transcripts of the recordings were typed up and circulated. Before long, the idea came to publish, starting with Volume 1 in 1983 and continuing through to the recently issued Volume 6 (I can hardly keep up). It should be noted that Volume 4 is a bit of an oddity in that it is a special edition featuring the World War II newsletters of the shore-based U.K. establishment, HMCS *Niobe*. Also, unlike the earlier volumes, Volume 5 draws from manuscripts as much as



Carrier operations in the 1950s (RCN photo)

from transcribed interviews. In addition, the contribution base is wider now, with material being provided by other branches of the NOAC.

Leading off the articles in Vol. 5 is an interview with RAdm Dick Leir, recounting his years as a POW of the Japanese during the Second World War. The ongoing publicity concerning Hong Kong veterans and their quest for compensation takes on new light when one reads of the horrendous conditions and abuse faced by those who fell into Japanese hands during the war.

Closing out the narratives is one that covers the complete naval career of Capt Alex Fox, a pioneer in Canadian naval aviation. All things considered, one gets the feeling he must have been as lucky as he was competent to be able to survive to tell the tale. Canadian competence with fixed-wing naval aviation was hard-won in the face of scarce resources, and lives were lost. (Canada's experience with

The Collection: 396 Items to date

The principal addition to our collection of naval technical information is a group of unrelated but relevant articles from the *Crowsnest* magazine. These have come to us through a diligent effort by the late Hal Smith who reviewed the complete set (Nov. 1948 to June 1965). Not content with this, he also reviewed *Sentinel* magazine and produced some additional items.

More data is stowed in boxes waiting to be sorted and itemized. Much of this material came from the estate of Sam Davis who was known to be a meticulous record-keeper. More about this in a future report.

We are continually on the lookout for new material. If you have something you think we can use, send it along even if you think someone else *must* have already sent it in. It's better that we receive something twice than not at all.

You can contact me by mail at: 673 Farmington Ave., Ottawa, Ont., K1V 7H4, or by fax at (613) 738-3894, and by e-mail at: phil@ncf.ca.

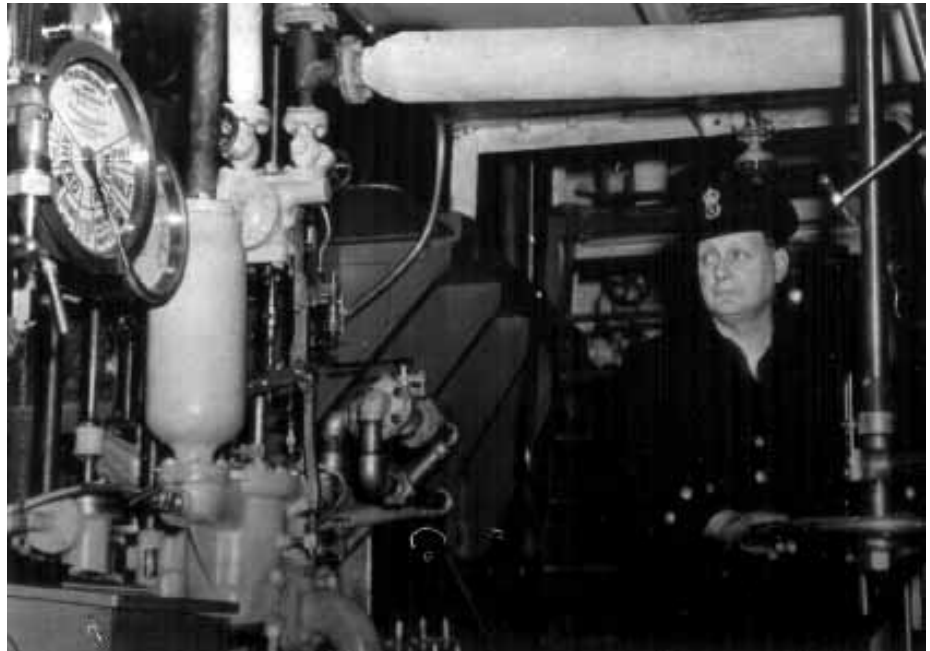
Phil Munro
Executive Director
CNTHA



About the CNTHA

The Canadian Naval Technical History Association is a volunteer organization working in support of the Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) effort to preserve our country's naval technical history. Interested persons may become members of the CNTHA by contacting DHH.

A prime purpose of the CNTHA is to make its information available to researchers and casual readers alike. For the moment there is only one copy of the Collection, situated at the Directorate of History and Heritage located at 2429 Holly Lane (near the intersection of Heron and Walkley Roads) in Ottawa. DHH is open to the public every Tuesday and Wednesday 8:30-4:30. Staff is on hand to retrieve the information you request and to help in any way. Photocopy facilities are available on a self-serve basis. Access to the building requires a visitor's pass, easily obtained from the commissionaire at the front door. Copies of the index to the Collection may be obtained by writing to DHH.



The engine-room of the minesweeper HMCS *Fundy* in 1938.

fixed-wing naval aircraft came to an abrupt end in 1970 with the decommissioning of the carrier HMCS *Bonaventure*. It is worth noting, however, that prior to Unification naval pilots were naval officers first. Consequently many of them went on to command surface ships and reach high rank in non-aviation positions.)

In between these "book-end" articles there is much more for the naval enthusiast, including an account of the wartime experiences of a WRCN, stories of naval personnel finding themselves in exotic locales with strange taskings, and reminis-

cences of the tedium and terror of convoy escort duty. Volume 5 rounds out with tales of the early days of the RCN, and a recounting of the story of HMCS *Haida's* last trip on passage to her retirement berth in Toronto harbour.

Because of the short length of the articles, this is a book that one should be able to pick up and read at odd intervals. Once begun, though, I found it almost impossible to put down.



"Sailors, with their built-in sense of order, service and discipline, should be running the world."

— W.S. Churchill

We'd love to hear from you...

If you have information, documents or questions you'd like to pass along to the Canadian Naval Technical History Association, please contact the Directorate of History and Heritage, NDHQ, MGen George R. Pearkes Bldg., Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K2 Tel.: (613) 998-7045/Fax: (613) 990-8579

