



News

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Special Issue:



The Navy's Technical Apprentices

CNTHA News

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The Navy's Technical Apprentice Training Plan

It has been more than 50 years since the first entry of naval technical apprentices enrolled in the Royal Canadian Navy. Now, as the last serving graduate of the plan nears retirement (CPO1 Jim Reece, MMM, CD is the formation general safety officer for Maritime Forces Pacific) it seems appropriate to look back at an apprentice training program that served the navy's post-war technical needs.

The navy's Technical Apprentice Training Plan was created during the economic boom following the Second World War. At the time civilian-trained tradesmen were difficult to recruit, so in 1951 the Naval Board approved the establishment of an RCN trades school with an apprenticeship training scheme for young men. Of the nearly 650 men who commenced apprentice training, roughly half went on to complete the program.

After new entry training at HMCS *Cornwallis* and two years of basic trades training, apprentices were selected for the branches for which they showed aptitude. Thus would begin two years of branch training at naval schools, at sea and at a trades training centre. A permanent Naval Trades Training Centre would eventually be built at HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt in 1958, but in the meantime the 10,000-ton maintenance ship HMS *Flamborough Head* was re-commissioned as HMCS *Cape Breton* and se-

cured at HMC Dockyard Halifax to provide living quarters, workshops and classrooms.

A target entry of 100 apprentices was set for the first two years. By May 1952 a program was running to recruit men 16 to 19 years of age who had completed Grade 10, and who had passed both a mechanical aptitude test and an interview board. That fall, limited space in the scheme was offered to men already enlisted in any branch who could meet the requirements. Apprentices who successfully completed training would be qualified to trade group level three and hold the rank of petty officer second class. The length of their initial engagement was seven years.

The first entry of 66 ordinary seaman apprentices (OSAPs) commenced training in *Cape Breton* on Feb. 2, 1953 in five trades: engineering, shipwright, air, ordnance and electrical. By mid-1955 it was found that training 50 students as one group overwhelmed the facilities, so for 1956 and 1957 there were two intakes of 30 candidates each.

In 1958 a decision was made to move the training to the West Coast and to discontinue the program in trades other than engineering and shipwright. The last apprentices of the other trades joined in January 1959 and graduated in April 1962.

(Cont'd on p. 4)

Naval Apprentices: *Then...*



Duffel bag and hammock — basic kit for an apprentice. (DND photo 46086)



Able seamen Doug Harding, Cliff Chamberlain, Dick Newman and Earl Dawson enjoy shore leave in Tijuana, Mexico in early 1960.



Naval apprentices on board the fleet maintenance ship HMCS *Cape Breton* in the mid-1950s. (DND photo 0-5328)



"Measure twice..." CPO Perry instructs an apprentice on board HMCS *Cape Scott*. (DND photo 68104)

...and Now



Hugh Millman (Entry 2, autumn 1954), co-chair of the reunion committee; 27 years of naval service – 45 including civilian service with the CPF Project. Longest serving member of PMO CPF as Quality Assurance and Trials Manager, 1978-1998.

Third Naval Technical Apprentice Reunion Ottawa September 2002



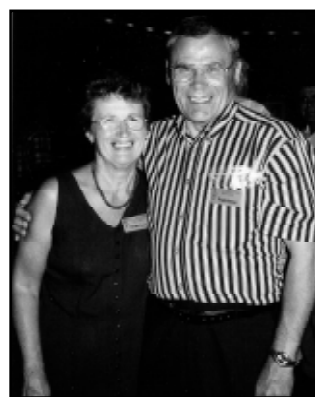
Vic Chan (Entry 17, fleet entry July 1963, 35 years' service, oldest apprentice inductee three days shy of his 22nd birthday) with **Laura Ozimek**.



Doug Harding (Entry 9, summer 1958) Chairman of the 2002 Apprentice Reunion Committee: 450 letters went out, 191 responses said 'yes,' 110 actually paid. "The guys really did good work" getting things ready.



Rick Cappell (Entry 17, 1963) and wife **Carole**. In charge of the reunion database. Back in Rick's trainee days Carole helped transcribe Rick's notes, causing his instructor to comment, "Do I detect feminine handwriting?" *Busted!* (Photo by **Laura Ozimek**)



A life of service – **Fred Keizer** (Entry 12, 1960, 36 years of service) and wife **Doreen**. Active these days visiting the poor, the imprisoned and the sick on Vancouver Island.

(2002 photos by **Brian McCullough** unless otherwise noted)

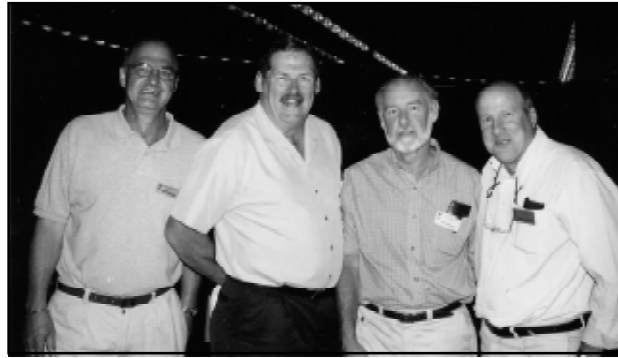
We'd love to hear from you...

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

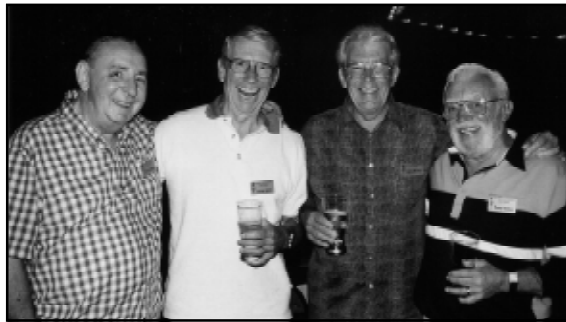
For the Record

In our last issue we forgot to credit CANDIB member and former MIL Systems Engineering Inc. President Jim Williams for his sidebar information relating to the DDH-280 TRUMP conversion program. MIL was the TRUMP Design Contractor first to Litton Systems, then later to the Department of Supply and Services when the project was reorganized. Our apologies.

In the CANDIB article on page four, our reference to "Defence Design Production" should have read, "the Department of Defence Production." Thanks to Pat Barnhouse for the correction.



(Entry 22, August 1965): Bob Smith joined at age 16, the youngest seaman in the RCN; David Valentine is the superintendent of the BC Ambulance Service; CPO1 Jim Reece is the MARPAC Formation General Safety Officer – the navy's last serving technical apprentice, now in his 39th year of service; Larry Clark got out of the navy after his 1969 graduation and joined BC Rail — "After a few years in the naval apprentice program I knew this wasn't for me."



Years and years of service: Bronte (Spook) Spanik (Entry 1 – 39 years in the navy), Clive Pattison (Entry 1 – 35 years), Jerry Perron (Entry 1 – 28 years) and Denny Gordon (Entry 2 – 32 years of service).

(Cont'd from p. 1)

In 1960 the apprenticeship program reverted to single annual entries limited to 34 candidates who would graduate as leading seamen rather than petty officers second class. The last apprentices to graduate as PO2s completed training in April 1963.

The summer of 1963 saw the plan move to biannual intakes, this time consisting of a civilian entry beginning in January and a fleet entry commencing in July. The 39-month course was made up of six terms of 22 weeks each, including a sea phase and a final term of 15 weeks. Candidates graduated either as Leading Seaman Engineering Technician Trade Group 3 with a machinist subspecialty, or as Leading Seaman Hull Technician Trade Group 3. The last apprenticeship entry,

number 24, began in January 1967 and graduated in April 1970.

Most graduates who made the navy a career went on to become chief petty officers or commissioned officers. Most prominent when the DDH-280s were introduced in the mid-1970s, the naval technical apprentices formed the nucleus of the technicians who led the transition from steam to a gas turbine fleet.

— Luc Tetrault
(Entry 22, January 1966)



[Note: Information for the period 1952 to 1964 was extracted in large part from an article by Lt. D.W. Wilson, RCN, in the September 1964 issue of *The Crowsnest*.]