

HMCS *Huron* Farewell Gathering

by Don Wilson

Approximately 30 stalwarts assembled in the HMCS *Bytown* Naval Officers Mess in Ottawa on Monday, May 14 to bid farewell to a ship many of us had come to know and love. On that day the decommissioned Tribal-class destroyer HMCS *Huron* (DDH-281) was sunk off the west coast of Vancouver Island during a live-fire naval event as part of Exercise Trident Fury 2007. (See the News Briefs in this issue of the *Maritime Engineering Journal*.) The *Bytown* gathering was organized by former *Huron* CSE Grant Ralph, who was commended for bringing us together on this day.

With us were, among others, *Huron*'s commissioning executive officer — Cdr (ret.) Jim Sine, the commissioning engineering officer — Capt(N) (ret.) Don Wilson, and Gordon Smith — the marine engineer contracted by Marine Industries Ltd. to be responsible for contractor's set-to-work and sea trials for both *Iroquois* (DDH-280, lead ship of the four-vessel class) and *Huron*. We also had with us many other officers who had been part of *Huron*'s ship's company at different times in the life of that great ship.



***Huron* key turnover from Gordon Smith of Marine Industries to Don Wilson, the commissioning engineering officer.**

In raising a glass to our old ship, we also paid tribute to the late Capt(N) (ret.) Dick Hitesman, the commissioning commanding officer of *Huron* in 1972. Dick had dedicated much of his naval career to the new Tribal-class DDHs, and we shared many recollections of his association with the ship, including this one: *Huron* was at sea off St. Margaret's

Bay conducting first-of-class helicopter trials. During the trial, *Huron* had two Sea Kings in her hangar and took a third on board to demonstrate the ship's ability to provide an emergency landing pad for a helicopter in distress. Dick was said to have sent a message to MARCOM which read, "My cup runneth over." With all that top weight, we were all pleased to have calm seas that day.

The Tribal DDHs made their mark as effective platforms for a variety of important deployments and trials over the years. *Huron*, for example, conducted the first at-sea vertical launch firings of the NATO Seasparrow missile. Unfortunately, in later years the ship fell victim to crew shortages and funding considerations and was decommissioned in 2005, having served the navy well for more than 34 years. *Huron*'s motto was "Ready the Brave," a code she lived up to right until the moment she slipped stern first below the surface of the Pacific Ocean at 1:27 p.m. on May 14, 2007. At HMCS *Bytown* that afternoon, those of us present bid our own quiet farewell to our *Huron*.

