



# News

CANADIAN NAVAL TECHNICAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

## Ten years of *CNTHA News*!

Since its beginnings ten years ago, the Canadian Naval Technical History Association newsletter *CNTHA News* has served as the CNTHA's flagship communication vehicle for spreading the word on our efforts to preserve Canada's naval technical history. At the same time, the newsletter has given you the opportunity to respond to our various enterprises and contribute in a meaningful way. And respond you have, with your letters and historical documents, with your suggestions for key people to interview, and with your most welcome offers to assist our core team of directors, researchers and interviewers.

Today the CNTHA's Canadian Naval Defence Industrial Base project is at the forefront of our historical preservation effort. Under the chairmanship of Tony Thatcher, CANDIB has made enormous progress in capturing the industrial perspective on naval ship construction and naval equipment development in this country. In this regard the newsletter has played a key role in keeping the momentum up by charting the significant progress of this activity for those who care to follow it.

On this note, a word of thanks to Commodore Richard Greenwood, Director General for Maritime Equipment Program Management at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. Shortly after *CNTHA News* was launched, his office made us the very generous offer to bundle our newsletter as a regular insert in the navy's engineering branch publication, the

*Maritime Engineering Journal* (itself now 25 years old). More than anything else, this synergistic publishing opportunity has widened our horizon in terms of getting our message "out there," especially to the serving naval community.

As Capt(N) Roger Westwood wrote in his editorial when we joined the *Journal* in 1998, *CNTHA News* serves as a "reminder to everyone serving in Canada's naval technical support community that the present soon becomes the past." It was his way of asking that people in the naval technical community do their best to maintain an accurate historical record of their work "to ensure that the story of Canada's ongoing naval technical effort will be faithfully preserved for generations to come."

We couldn't wish for better than that. So thank you to everyone who continues to support *CNTHA News* because, ultimately, it makes the task of our volunteer organization a world easier.  
— **RAdm (ret.) Mike Saker, Chairman, Canadian Naval Technical History Association.**



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# 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.



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*.



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

**“A Century of Achievement” —  
A technical history  
writing project**

A project to write the 1910-2010 history of engineering and technical innovation in the Canadian navy, including the parallel development of Canada’s related defence industries, is well underway. Mike Young spent much of last winter in Library and Archives Canada, the archives at DND’s Directorate of History and Heritage, and the Canadian War Museum conducting research and discovering some fascinating information. He is now writing the draft of the pre-World War II history. The target is to publish in 2010, the navy’s centennial year.

The working title is “A Century of Achievement,” and represents the logical progression of the work of the CNTHA in identifying, gathering and assembling key technical historical documentation — especially the Hal Smith documents — and of the activity being conducted by the CANDIB subcommittee. The book project developed from an article written in 2000 by Mike Young and Pat Barnhouse for *Maritime Affairs*, the journal of the Naval Officers Association of Canada (“A Timeline of Canadian Achievement in Naval Technology,” *Maritime Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2000).

No publishing arrangement is yet in place, but future updates will be posted on the CNTHA web site.



## CANDIB Oral History Project — Background and Project Update

by Douglas Hearnshaw,  
CANDIB Oral History Project Manager

In 2004 a group of CANDIB volunteers began voice-recording people’s reminiscences of the historical effects of Canadian naval contracting activity on the Canadian industrial base. The group benefited initially from a small contractual arrangement with the Directorate of History and Heritage which funded the purchase of recording equipment and other start-up expenses. CANDIB used the Oral History Program developed by the Canadian War Museum as a model in developing its own techniques for interviewing and managing an oral history project.

The project’s first recorded interview was conducted in 2004 with Tom Bennett, a former member of the navy’s hydrofoil vessel design team. The original audio tape, with its transcription and synopsis of Tom’s commentary relating to the design development and contractual activity associated with building and testing HMCS *Bras d’Or*, now resides in the Directorate of History and Heritage archives and is readily available to any researcher seeking details of this remarkable naval innovation. Subsequent interviews with high-ranking members of the navy and Canadian industry have related to the concept, design development, building and trialling of the DDH steam destroyers, the Canadian Patrol Frigate program, and particular aspects of naval contracting activity such as quality control, contract management and refit activity. All are on file at the Directorate of History and Heritage, with transcriptions of certain interviews also appearing in the CANDIB section of the CNTHA website at [www.cntha.ca](http://www.cntha.ca).

Outstanding achievements have included interviews with retired naval officers Admiral Bob Welland, Rear Admiral Bill Christie, Rear Admiral Jock Allan, Commodore Bill Broughton,

Captain(N) Roger Chiasson and Commander Bob Mustard. Highlights of industrially based interviewees include Donald Kerr of Halifax Shipyard and Joseph Struthers of Saint John Shipbuilding Ltd.

Fifteen interviews have so far been recorded. While the continuity of the program is assured by the active participation of volunteer interviewers in Ottawa and on our east and west coasts, we are always on the lookout for new interviewers and interviewees. Anyone interested in taking part in the Oral History Project should contact CANDIB Chairman Tony Thatcher at (613) 567-7004 ([tthatcher@snclavalinprofac.com](mailto:tthatcher@snclavalinprofac.com)), or CANDIB Oral History Project Manager Douglas Hearnshaw at (613) 824-7521 ([dhearnshaw@trytel.com](mailto:dhearnshaw@trytel.com)).

