

# NEWS

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## Remembering Captain(N) (Ret'd) Donald W. Wilson, P.Eng., CD

June 8, 1937-January 19, 2026

By LCdr (Ret'd) Brian McCullough, CD

The Canadian Naval Technical History Association (CNTHA) regrets to announce the passing of longtime member Captain(N) (Ret'd) Don Wilson in Ottawa on January 19, 2026, at the age of 88. Following his retirement from the Navy and the Department of National Defence as a public servant, Don became a driving force in the CNTHA and was responsible for the establishment of the association's website. He brought great wisdom and knowledge to the group, and authored several articles of historical importance.

Don Wilson was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia, and joined the Canadian Navy in 1954 with the first class of naval cadets at HMCS *Venture*, the newly commissioned Junior Officer Training Establishment in Esquimalt, BC. While training as a Marine Systems Engineer, he met Verna Niblock in Victoria. They married in 1960, beginning a partnership that would span more than six decades and produce four children.

During more than 30 years of naval service, which included degree-level studies at the Royal Naval Engineering College (RNEC) Manadon, Plymouth, United Kingdom, Don enjoyed a broad range of employment. His career took him from shipboard engineering roles to senior technical and leadership positions, supporting the construction, refit, and maintenance of major naval vessels on both coasts and in central Canada. Don's work on the *Iroquois*-class destroyers was unique in spanning design, approval, construction, acceptance, commissioning, refit and maintenance. A highlight of this period was overseeing the construction and commissioning of HMCS *Huron* (DDH 281), as well as serving as the ship's first Marine Engineering Officer from 1972 to 1974.

Don would go on to serve in senior appointments in Ottawa, contributing to long-term engineering planning, quality assurance, and fleet readiness. From late 1982 to 1985, he



Photo courtesy Wilson family

served as Commanding Officer of 2 Canadian Forces Technical Services Agency in Montreal, before retiring from the Canadian Armed Forces in 1986.

Following his naval retirement, Don joined the Public Service of Canada with the Department of National Defence as Director General of Quality Assurance, overseeing the acceptance and maintenance of military equipment nationwide. He went on to lead the Canadian General Standards Board as Chief Executive Officer and later held senior roles with the Standards Council of Canada, where he helped advance national programs in quality management, conformity assessment, and environmental standards. He retired from the Public Service in 1994, with 40 years of combined naval and civil service to his credit.

Even in retirement, Don remained engaged. He founded a consulting practice, served in leadership roles with national quality organizations, and was a frequent speaker and mentor on engineering, standards, and organizational excellence. He was also an active and sometimes founding member of several professional, naval, and historical associations.

In his personal life, Don Wilson was an avid photographer and enthusiastic website developer who took particular pride in preserving the shared history of his HMCS *Venture* classmates. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, with a life that was marked by service, integrity, curiosity, and quiet dedication to his country, community, and above all his family.

