



NEWS

Canadian Naval Technical History Association

Former CANDIB Project Underpins CNTHA's Ongoing Mission

By Tony Thatcher



Rolfe Monteith was CANDIB's first chairman, and at age 91 continues to be an active and inspirational figure in the CNTHA.

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The CNTHA's former Canadian Naval Defence Industrial Base (CANDIB) subcommittee was established in 2001 under the chairmanship of Rolfe Monteith to gather and document as much historical information as possible on Canadian naval construction programs, and the effect they had on Canadian industry. The CANDIB subcommittee was absorbed into the larger mandate of the CNTHA in 2008, but its original aim "to describe the development of the Canadian industrial base as it evolved in support of warship construction and naval equipment programs between 1930 and 2000" continues to be a significant driver underpinning the CNTHA's overall mission today.

When CANDIB entered into a contract with DND's Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) in 2004 to run an oral history program (to be headed by Douglas Hearnshaw), the minor funding we received then and through to today has allowed us to produce nearly 50 taped and transcribed interviews made with key players involved in Canada's naval research, design, construction and engineering activity. These transcripts have been instrumental in helping DHH meet a key priority in writing Volume IV (1968-1990) of the official naval history, and are available through the Technical History section of the CNTHA website.

To date, the CNTHA's collection of oral history transcripts and other naval technical history material contains in excess of 500 items, including about 100 that specifically concern the naval industrial base. One of these is the late Jim Williams' 2005 *tour de force* study of the development of Canadian naval design capability from immediately after the Second World War, through the build of the DDE-205 *St. Laurent* class in the late 1950s and early sixties, to 2002 by which time it all had essentially dispersed. Another standout item is our 2004 interview with Tom Bennett, a member of the De Havilland engineering team that looked at the feasibility of designing the ocean-going naval hydrofoil that became HMCS *Bras d'Or* (FHE-400).

The point of all of this effort, of course, is to capture the essence of Canada's naval technical experience as reference information for successive generations of engineers and researchers. Where else would one go to understand the challenges of switching from British-based equipment to American technology to meet the requirements for the Canadian-designed and built *St. Laurent* class? Or to learn how the knowledge gained from the Canadian Patrol Frigate program was used to upgrade Halifax Shipyard, thereby producing an excellent production learning curve for the later Maritime Coastal Defence Vessel project?

We at the CNTHA trust there will always be procedures in place to allow the RCN to preserve a clear picture of our technical history for future generations. On this note we are extremely grateful for the support offered to us by Cmdre Marcel Hallé, DGMEPM, both through his encouragement of our endeavours, and through his most generous offer of space in Canada's pre-eminent naval technical forum – the *Maritime Engineering Journal*.

The *Journal's* 32-year publishing history is a testament to the value that the Royal Canadian Navy's technical branch places in remembering the lessons of the past as it manages the challenges of the day and anticipates the needs of the future. The CNTHA is proud to play a small, but we think important, role in this effort through our Oral History interview program on behalf of DHH, and by maintaining the complete back catalogue of the *Journal* on our website. We offer our thanks and congratulations to the *Maritime Engineering Journal* on achieving the remarkable milestone of Issue No. 75. *Bravo Zulu!*

