



NEWS

Canadian Naval Technical History Association

End users key part of CANTASS success

CNTHA News

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Retired CSE **Cdr Gordon Graham**, project manager for the development of the Navy's CANTASS towed array sonar system in the 1980s, felt it was critically important to involve end users in evaluating development models of the equipment at sea. In this edited excerpt from a CNTHA Oral History interview from Nov. 26, 2011, Graham told interviewer Cdr (Ret.) Sid Jorna how Navy sonarmen were involved in the refinement of the RCN's towed array sonar system aboard the Defence Research vessel CFAV *Quest*.

The first time we took something that looked like an operational towed array system to sea was the fall of 1982 when we put the first version of an experimental towed array sonar system – ETASS – on board *Quest*. We had taken early systems to sea before, where we put the array in the water, collected data on tape, and then brought it back to the lab for analysis. But this was the first time we took sonar operators with us who could say, okay this works, that doesn't.

The Navy was going through a period then from a data poor environment to a data rich environment, so incorporating the operator into the detection and classification function was a key design advantage of the CANTASS system over its contemporaries. The US designed their towed array without this kind of trial and ended up automating functions that were better done by people. A trained operator could detect much more subtle signals, much earlier than any computer algorithm at the time, and perhaps even now. When we went on exercise with the Navy off Bermuda we invariably had contact on the submarine when nobody else did. We had credibility.

By involving the end users – the sonarmen who would be using the equipment – every step of the way, we refined the system and made it better.



Photo by Helen Guy-Bray

CNTHA's website is in very good hands.

Jeff Wilson, son of CNTHA webmaster and member Don Wilson, and recent masters graduate in computer science, has been providing superb website support services to us for some years. He has organized a secure hosting service for us, and is currently building a new static website that will do an even better job of blocking unwanted intrusions. In addition, the new site will have features to improve search opportunities for researchers wishing to access our archived materials more fully. Bravo Zulu, Jeff!

The real 'Spam' on YouTube

James Monteith, grandson of CNTHA founding member **Rolfe Monteith**, has posted a video of his grandfather's eloquent message to younger generations to remember the Battle of the Atlantic: "If this video motivates even some of you...to embrace the enormity of what it was and what it achieved, then I have executed my duty in honour of the men I served with and who died there," Rolfe said. Word has it that Rolfe, who lives in Wales, has a film company that is considering producing a documentary on this great naval battle of the Second World War. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpZd0Nev6MA>)

