



PRESERVING CANADA'S NAVAL TECHNICAL HERITAGE

# NEWS

Canadian Naval Technical History Association

**CNTHA News**  
*Est. 1997*

**CNTHA Chairman**  
Pat Barnhouse

**CNTHA Executive Director**  
Tony Thatcher

**Directorate of History and  
Heritage Liaison**  
Michael Whitby

**Maritime Engineering  
Journal Liaison**  
Brian McCullough

**Webmaster**  
Peter MacGillivray

**Webmaster Emeritus**  
Don Wilson

*CNTHA News* is the unofficial newsletter of the Canadian Naval Technical History Association. Please address all correspondence to the publisher, attention Michael Whitby, Chief of the Naval Team, Directorate of History and Heritage, NDHQ, 101 Colonel By Dr, Ottawa, ON K1A 0K2  
Tel. (613) 998-7045  
Fax (613) 990-8579

Views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect official DND opinion or policy. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject any editorial material.

[www.cntha.ca](http://www.cntha.ca)

## The records we keep

*By Pat Barnhouse*

When Vice-Admiral Bob Stephens and Rear-Admiral Bill Christie died one day apart in April, they each left behind personalized accounts of their interesting and impressive careers. The CNTHA was fortunate in being able to interview both gentlemen, and to also receive a written submission from Bob. The resulting documents can be found on the CNTHA website.

When RAdm Christie was interviewed in October 2006, the discussion covered a wide range of major naval projects over a considerable period of time, and mainly from a senior officer's perspective. Bill spoke about his experiences during the early days of Naval Headquarters' concept development work on the DDH-280 destroyers, overseeing the *Oberon*-class submarine build and outfit at Chatham Dockyard, and fitting-out the aircraft carrier HMCS *Bonaventure* in Belfast.

Bill Christie also discussed a specific aspect of the armed forces unification of the mid-1960s — that being the Pennyfather Committee that studied the reorganization of National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. The committee also delved into the manner in which the Navy managed major procurement projects, resulting in a complete change in the way of doing business. A final aspect of the interview covered Bill's secondment to the Department of Supply and Services as head of the Shipbuilding Branch.



RAdm Christie (right) being interviewed by Gord Smith in 2006.

VAdm Stephens' written submission from January 2006 was in response to questions submitted to him by the CNTHA. It covers, first, his views on the success/failure of various Canadian shipbuilding programs, in which he observes that in general while they were "fraught with difficulties," they were successful in the end. In addition, he commented at length about the relationships between DND and the Department of Defence Production, and on the relations between industry and DND. He also offered considerable insight into Canada's first attempt to initiate a nuclear submarine program, including his take on the overwhelming influence of Admiral (USN)



VAdm Bob Stephens (centre) shared aspects of his career with members of the CNTHA in 2008.

Hyman G. Rickover. He closed by discussing the role of his father, Engineer Rear Admiral George Leslie Stephens, as head of the Special Advisory Committee to the Minister of National Defence on the role of naval dockyards, a task that involved both high-level government and industry personages.

Bob Stephens' interview in April 2008 covered some of the same ground as his written note, but generally from a different perspective. He touched on his experiences as a junior officer, about bringing industry up to speed on the boiler requirements for the *St. Laurent*-class destroyer escorts, and

on the important roles of the Naval Engineering Design Investigation Team (NEDIT), the Naval Engineering Test Establishment (NETE), and the Naval Central Drawing Office (NCDO), and the pivotal role of Constructor-in-Chief Cmdre Rowland Baker, the naval architect on loan from the RN. Bob also spoke about his involvement with nuclear engineering at the British nuclear research establishment, Harwell, and with the Nuclear Submarine Survey Team. Of interest is his time as Manager Ship Repair in the Halifax Dockyard, and the initiation of a much-needed update and modernization. The interview closed with some observations on the introduction of gas-turbine propulsion.



Canada 