



# NEWS

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Canadian Naval Technical History Association

**CNTHA News**  
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## CNTHA Online — Insight through Hindsight

By Capt(N) Don Wilson (Ret'd), Webmaster Emeritus

**C**NTHA is pleased to report that **Jeff Wilson**, our stalwart volunteer website architect whose technical expertise and boundless energy have been so very much appreciated, is working on a long-term update to apply ever more advanced software and internet design features to enhance the functionality, usability, and security features of this key element of the CNTHA's "face to the world."

A major aspect of the proposed new website is the migration to a completely Cloud-based virtual platform to improve the robustness of the architecture and bolster security. As new features are added, people looking to research aspects of Canada's naval technical history can expect to find state-of-the-art search capabilities such as advanced data mining and object relationship mapping.

The Executive offers its gratitude to Jeff, as even now visitors to the CNTHA website will find improved access to what we have to offer, including links to the Oral History Project interviews we conduct in support of DND's Directorate of History and Heritage. The interview excerpt that follows gives a sense of the "Insight through Hindsight" that continues to be so generously offered by retired members of the naval technical support community who were once involved in Canada's naval ship and equipment development programs.

For naval technical professionals in active career mode today, there is much to be learned from their insights. We encourage all of you, young and old alike, to take an active role in contributing to the discussion through the CNTHA's oral and written history program, and through your letters to the publication you are reading now. We look forward to hearing from you at [info@cntha.ca](mailto:info@cntha.ca).



HMCS *Algonquin* (DDH-283)  
DND photo

### Oral History Project:

[An edited excerpt from a 2009 CNTHA interview with **RAdm (Ret'd) Eldon J. (Ed) Healey**, RCN Marine Systems Engineer, 1953-1985, Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel), 1985-1990. He was overseer for the DDH-280 prime mover testing at NAVSec Philadelphia that provided confidence in the "revolution" from steam to gas turbine propulsion and electrical generation.]

### On the subject of Technological Revolution vs. Evolution...

I just wanted to say a few words about technological evolution over my period in naval procurement. I think it goes without saying that procurement of new ships was a pretty intermittent type affair for Canada, so unlike other navies — the USN in particular — that could slowly *evolutionize* because they were building many more ships, we tended to *revolutionize*.

Let's just take one example: We went from steam destroyers on the *Saint Laurent* class, to follow-on classes which were an *evolution* of that first design and not much radically changed in terms of the basic ship and the basic systems, even when we added flight decks and hangars later. But the DDH-280 Project was a *revolution*. Even in design, we had a ship that depended totally on gas turbines for its propulsion, and almost totally for its electrical generation. We had nine gas turbines in that ship, and not many navies at that stage — if any — had that much reliance on gas-turbine technology.

Most other navies had at least propulsion diesels, and fairly significant power-generation diesels as well. We made that revolutionary step to have minimal manning for our propulsion systems, even though we didn't have the electronic controls and digital capability we have today. We used a combination of pneumatics and electronics to control the propulsion system, and somehow made it work.

Full interview available at: <http://cntha.ca/tech-hist/oral-written-hist/histories/edhealey.html>