



CAPTAIN STEVE FOLDESI, RCN, RAN, CD

A HALF CENTURY SERVING

HER MAJESTY IN TWO NAVIES



FOREWORD

This booklet of memoirs traces its origins to a suggestion by Lieutenant Commander David Freeman, RCN ret'd to share my experiences with the wider naval community.

It was eventually serialised in the Lead and Line, the NOA-VI online journal, in its 2014 September, October and November (Part 2) editions.

It was eventually expanded and printed as a booklet in limited copies to friends and family in 2020.

It has now been brought up to date and reprinted again in limited numbers.

*Beachmere
Queensland Australia
2025*

PHOTO COLLAGE



Growing my beard back - RIMPAC 78



HMCS Qu'Appelle Wardroom beach party – Curaçao 1980



***1985 oil by Elizabeth Wilcox
Birthday present from Margaret***



***Naval Reserve Division COs'gift
upon relinquishing COND – 1990***



Back from SNFL the second time - 1985



***HMCS Skeena Ship's Company photo on SNFL – 1985
berthed outboard German frigate Rhineland Phaltz
somewhere in Europe***



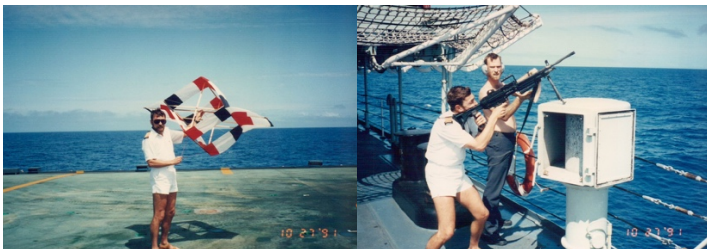
Enroute Tahiti, Tonga, New Zealand and Australia – 1991



HMCS Provider Ship's Company photo – 1990



Margaret joining me for lunch at anchor off Ammo Jetty – 1991



My hobby at sea – build them for target practice



Norfolk Island enroute Tonga – 1991



My Task Group – SOPLOY 1991



Papeete arrival – 1991



Garden Island, Sydney Australia - 1991



***Another hobby – cooking a Hungarian meal for my 300
somewhere in the South Pacific - 1991***



At sea photos



46th Birthday – San Diego 1992



Skeena – 1985

Provider - 1992

United Appeal raffle prizes - \$50 each



Over the years – 1979 to 2024





Steve was born in 1946 in Hungary. The family emigrated from Budapest during the 1956 revolution and settled in Montreal. "In early 1964 as I was approaching high school graduation I happened to walk by HMCS Donnacona on Drummond Street. A large colour poster depicting a dashing naval officer on the open bridge of a Tribal caught my eye. He was a Commander, sporting silver sideburns, scanning the horizon with Pusser binoculars. I had found my vocation, not realising that this serendipitous event would lead to an association with two navies that would last over half a century."

In 1964 the RCN's ROTP programme accepted him as a McGill University undergraduate and enrolled him as an officer cadet. Thanks to his father's vision all his earlier education was in French schools. As he suggested, I would learn French in school and English on the streets of Montreal. As a result, becoming one of the RCN's few bilingual officers in those days was to have a considerable impact on his future naval career.

Armed with a BSc in 1968, in May Steve arrived in Halifax for pre-fleet training as a brand new Sub-Lieutenant. Upon course completion he joined HMCS Ottawa, then the first French Language Unit (FLU), and sailed shortly thereafter as part of the HMCS Bonaventure Task Group for exercises with NATO forces. "I vividly recall coming to the bridge to take over as ZOOW for the middle watch to find us alongside HMCS Provider. Little did I know then that the chap with the white goatee (Captain Bill Stewart) on the starboard wing would, 22 years later, be me."

These were exciting but difficult times for the Navy. Paul Hellyer had already placed the three Services on an integration and unification path that would last until the government of the day gave the Navy back the curl along with its name, traditions and self-respect in the late 1980s. "I recall that first trip to Portsmouth with Bonnie in 1968. I blew my \$200 green uniform allowance on a 48 in London and did not shift to garbage bag green until the last minute in 1971."

Steve recalls a critical shortage of manpower was to mark the next few years. He was half way through his Sea Requirements (SeaReqs) vying for a bridge Watchkeeping Certificate (BWK) when he was abruptly sent off on the Destroyer Navigating Officer's Course. He returned as Ottawa's Nav O and it was a further six months before he completed his SeaReqs and

qualified to challenge the BWK board chaired by Captain Jim Cutts, Bonnie's CO. His Captain, Pierre Simard, promptly issued Steve his ticket. Shortly thereafter Steve chose a different career path and moved over to Weapons and ASW Air Control (ASAC).

The manpower situation was not improving. "Chris Haines, Marty Middleton and I were the only three bridge watchkeepers with Chris and I also pulling ASAC duties while also acting as Nav O and Deputy Weapons Officer respectively. It was not any better below decks. The ship's company, excluding the zoomies, was fixed at 162. Later I carried 285 when in command of Skeena. One of the great mysteries of the day was the disappearance of Bonnie's 1,200 or so personnel when she was paid off in 1970. They seem to have vaporised almost overnight."

Steve had found his niche in weapons and attended the 14th (and last) Long Weapons Course 1971-72 only to return as Ottawa's Weapons Officer (WO) . When the FLU was moved from Ottawa to Skeena he also transferred as her WO until early 1975 when he was appointed MARCOM SSO Sea Operations upon promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. This brief appointment was followed by two years as a Squadron Commander at CMR St Jean.

In 1977 he finally escaped FLU postings and was appointed Deputy Commandant Naval Reserve Training Centre (NRTC) in Esquimalt. This lasted for the summer training period and subsequently he was appointed CANCOMDESRON TWO Squadron Operations Officer under Captain Stan Riddell. The highlight of this appointment was the planning and execution of D2's participation in RIMPAC 78 including a recce visit to Australia and New Zealand where he met his future wife Margaret. A direct outcome of this visit was the chop of HMNZS Waikato to D2 for six months. This New Zealand frigate even sported the squadron's maple leaf badge with a red "2" in the centre on her funnel for the duration.

Staff College followed and upon graduation Steve returned to the West Coast as HMCS Qu'Appelle's Executive Officer. Two very rewarding and busy years followed, first under Jan Drent's command and later Bob Luke's. When Jan left the ship as a newly promoted Captain, Steve was appointed in command at CTGP/CCD4's (Capt Frank Hope) insistence until Bob joined some three months later.

Two years at NDHQ followed as Senior Staff Officer to the Chief of the Defence Staff (Gen Ramsey Withers) and in 1983 Steve was appointed to command HMCS Skeena.



Jan Drent in his John Roche lookalike kit



Qu'Appelle whaler crew in their John Roche lookalike kit

(John was the Ops O and bore an uncanny resemblance to Graucho Marx)

Command turned out to be everything he expected it to be. As it turned out, Skeena did

everything in "twos": two tours with the Standing Naval Force Atlantic (SNFL), two MARCOTs, two January/February fisheries patrols off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, two COMBATEX, two DNO sea phases and two visits to Quebec City. At times Steve thought that MARCOM's force generator was stuck on 207, Skeena's pennant number but "I wasn't complaining. After all this is what I joined for with the added advantage of an enclosed, climate controlled bridge and my sideburns were yet to turn silver. Unfortunately my Pusser binoculars were the same heavy ones I first saw in the recruiting poster."



Off Bermuda – a hard day at the office



Skeena's band the 'Croaking Frogs' performing on the hangar top somewhere in the Carribbean

As anyone who has ever experienced the privilege of command knows, one can always count on Murphy to spoil the day. "I was most fortunate as I always had help when in a tight spot. My early experience as a navigator certainly got me out of a few jams but most importantly I owe a large measure of my success to two of the finest officers I ever had the pleasure to serve: Neil Boivin who taught me the importance of knowing and looking after your troops and Bob Luke who taught me the art of seamanship."



Neil and Bob at the Luke home in Sooke
during a 1989 West Coast visit as part of the
NDC tour of the Arctic and Western provinces

The fun could not last forever, so it was off to Staff College as a Director for two years. Promoted to the rank of Captain in 1987, Steve attended the National Defence College in Kingston.

It was quite the year; intellectually challenging, with classmates from all Services, the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand, and six trips covering the world. Herewith a small sample.



Petra, Jordan



Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall



Berlin
before the wall fell



Japan



Dubrovnik



NDC Graduation – 1988
Receiving my diploma from Richard Hatfield,
ex – Premier of New Brunswick

Next stop – Appointed Commanding Officer Naval Divisions (COND) in Quebec City 1988 – 1990.

As Steve recalls, these were very exciting times for the Naval Reserve. The Mulroney government had recently published a new Defence White Paper announcing nuclear submarines and money for the Naval Reserve. For the first time it was to have its own mission: Naval Control of Shipping (NCS), Coastal Defence and Route Survey. New Naval Reserve Divisions were to be commissioned to increase their number to 24.

There was also money for bricks and mortar to build and replace inadequate quarters. The Kingston Class vessels were under construction. Captain J.A.Y. Plante (Director Maritime Requirements at NDHQ at the time) and Steve were negotiating the purchase of prime Quebec City water front real estate as the future home of

Naval Reserve Headquarters (NRHQ) and Fleet School Quebec.

The property in question was at Pointe-à-Carcy directly under the Chateau Frontenac, the quarters Captain David Pollard leased some years earlier in his role as Project Manager Naval Presence in Quebec (NPIQ). The submarines did not materialise but all Naval Reserve programmes did.

Once again, Steve escaped FLU related appointments in 1990 when he went back to the West Coast to take command of HMCS Provider "and my beard was yet to emulate Bill Stuart's." Two more busy years followed. 1991 was the year of Desert Shield and Desert Storm resulting in five taskings of which three were sadly cancelled.

Initially, Provider was to replace Protecteur in the Gulf. The decision was later made to send Preserver's ship's company instead. Provider was then tasked to deliver as many 500 pound bombs and CRV 7 rockets for the deployed CF 18s as could be safely stowed in the ship. Half way to Prince Rupert to pick up the ammo the Gulf War ended. Next came a tasking to pick up the Army's gear in Qatar and deliver it to Gagetown and Valcartier. Sadly a commercial RoRo lease proved more economical.

All was not lost. When HMCS Huron was tasked to proceed to the Gulf Provider sailed as

her private gas station as far as Panama Bay. The night before her last RAS and proceeding into the canal, Rick Melnick was dining with Steve in the AOR when someone stuck his head through the curtain to inform them that the first Tomahawks had just landed in Baghdad. "After the last RAS the following morning, with Huron guide and Provider doing the station keeping, I played Roger Whittaker's 'Last Farewell' on breakaway. I was later told there was not a dry eye in the house next door."

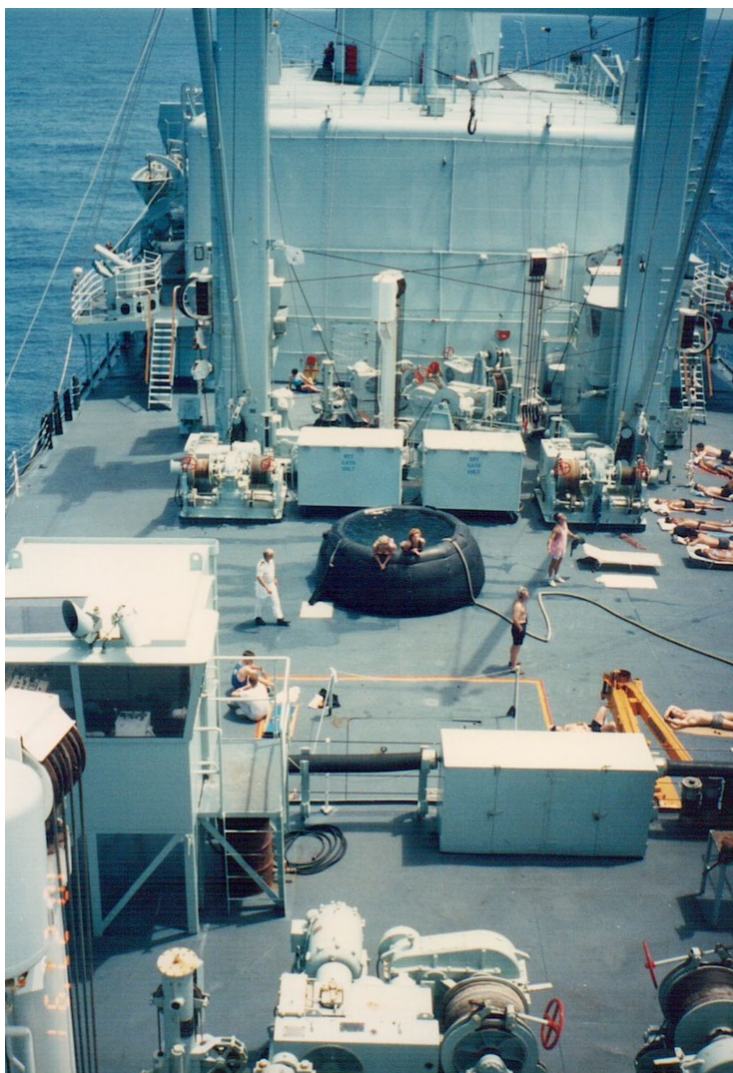


Last RAS – Panama Bay 1991

Provider got to repeat this trip soon thereafter, this time to escort HMCS Restigouche enroute the East Coast as the first 'Westcoaster' to join STANAVFORLANT. After a 'shave and a haircut' work period upon her return to Esquimalt she was off again, this time to Guam, to provide AOR support to Huron on her way back from the Gulf. "This time I played Rod Stewart's 'Sailing' on rendezvous, with the upper decks festooned with bedsheets displaying family greetings. Once again tissues were in short supply."

1991 was still far from over. As Task Group Commander (CTG) with Provider, Yukon, Saskatchewan and MacKenzie under his command, the ships were off to Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia and Tonga. The main element of the deployment was attendance at the Royal New Zealand Navy's 50th Anniversary celebrations. "My Kiwi wife joined me in the Bay of Islands to witness Maori arrival ceremonies at the Waitangi Treaty House. It was the highlight of the deployment, and of my naval career, to steam the next morning into her native city Auckland with Margaret sitting in my chair."





Between RAS sessions – steel beach

1992 was to be just as exciting. It started with the Portland Rose Festival. "You just haven't lived until you have taken a single screw, single hulled tanker with no bow thruster up the Columbia River averaging a foot and a half of water under your keel for the better part of the 100 nautical mile journey. Moreover, as we left Portland, the last 50 nautical miles to Astoria were completed in zero visibility. Provider was not equipped nor manned to conduct blind pilotage as practiced in destroyers. This shortcoming was more than offset by the competence of what constituted my Blind Pilotage Team: the Navigator LCdr Haydn Edmundson and LSRP Randy Wilson."

The year ended with RIMPAC 92 and a change of command to Bruce McLean in July. After a brief year as MARPAC Chief of Staff Readiness (COSREAD) Margaret and Steve arrived in Canberra, Australia in July 1993.



Ex- COSREADs: Neil Boivin, Jim Steele, Sylvia, our long suffering Secretary, myself, Dick Okros and Jan Drent

His appointment as Canadian Defence Advisor (CDA) to Australia and New Zealand did not happen by accident. While in Portland for the Rose Festival COMMARPAC joined the festivities. "On the Sunday RAdm Peter Cairns invited me to call on him in his hotel's foyer for a debrief of my annual performance assessment. Despite the fact that I made every promotion up to that point in minimum time, it was a "kiss of death" assessment. It seemed that at age 41 I had peaked. We agreed on a plan. When the CDA Canberra position became vacant in 1993, he would endeavour to secure the appointment for me with the understanding that upon its completion I would resign after 33 years of naval service. This tallied with long term aims as he and Margaret were planning on building their retirement home on the one acre ocean front lot they owned North of Auckland.

Before leaving Provider, one more issue deserves mention. Steve had the privilege of training and influencing the career of two very fine junior officers who earned their BWK under his command. One is Sub Lieutenant Josée Boisclair. "I had the occasion to tell her parents that in my opinion their daughter was born with a Captain's chair strapped to her bum." As a Commander she was the first woman to command a frigate (HMCS Halifax), to command STANAVFORLANT's follow-on, SNMG2, and the Royal Military College Kingston. At the time of this update Rear Admiral Josée Kurtz is Commander MARLANT.

If I am as good a judge of character as I think I am, Josée will be promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral and appointed the next Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy. En passant, some years ago she was also named one of Canada's most powerful women.



Slt Boisclair as Provider's OOW at anchor in Auckland NZ during the Governor General's
Sail Past marking the RNZN's 50th Anniversary

The other is Sub Lieutenant Jonathan Sadleir. He later qualified as a deep draught navigator and eventually emigrated to Australia and joined the RAN. He commanded HMAS Parramatta, an ANZAC (Meko) class frigate and later commissioned HMAS Adelaide as her first CO, the first of two LHDs and the largest ships

ever to be commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy.



4 December 2015
HMAS Adelaide commissioning



Adelaide at sea

Four years later, on 31 August 1997, on completion of his four year tour as CDA Canberra, Steve delivered on the Portland agreement. He resigned from the RCN after 33 years of service and 'mailed in his ID card'. In the meantime he and Margaret came to the conclusion that they would be happier there in Canberra than living on the beach at Mangawhai Head North of Auckland. "After all, we had made lots of friends in the previous four years, our neighbours were actually talking to us and even the supermarket check-out staff recognised us. In other words, we had grown roots, something we never managed in Canada due to postings, none of which lasting more than two years."

At a reception shortly after this change of plans, VAdm Rod Taylor, RAN Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), suggested that Steve may wish to join the RAN Reserve (RANR). Hoping for part time or part year work to keep him 'off the street', he saw this as fitting in with his aims very well. "After all, at age 51 I was far too young to fully retire and felt that I can make a useful contribution somewhere in some capacity."

The RANR welcomed him and immediately enrolled him at his retirement rank of Captain with full seniority back to 1 January 1987. "It was quite humorous at first as I was immediately the senior RANR Captain in the Officers' List, yet while I was well known by the brass for my tenure as

CDA Canberra, most of my peers and juniors never heard of me.”

According to Steve, the RAN was undergoing its own personnel shortage problems and, as CNS had predicted, it was not long before offers of employment started to arrive. As an economy measure, the RAN created Naval Systems Command (NAVSYSCOM), amalgamating all personnel and training agencies, all engineering functions, trial and test establishments, and all other shore facilities from radio stations to dockyards and naval bases. In other words, Maritime Commander Australia (MCAUST) owned the ships; COMNAVSYSCOM owned everything else.

In typical bureaucratic fashion, the CNS directive created the new command and laid out its responsibilities, yet failed to allocate the staff resources to carry them out. This is where the RANR came in to play and for the next two years Steve was appointed NAVSYSCOM's Director of Strategic Change Management, largely responsible for the creation of order out of chaos. Once a steady state was achieved, he turned over the appointment to a Permanent Force Commander.

Another serendipitous event put him back on the RANR payroll almost immediately. Successive Senate inquiries were extremely critical of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for

excessive delays in the staffing of administrative inquiry recommendations (BOIs, COIs, etc.) and follow-on actions stemming from disciplinary proceedings such as Summary Trials, Defence Force Magistrate Trials (DFM) and Courts Martial (CM). As part of the promised fix, the ADF created the position of Registrar of Military Justice (RMJ). Steve was promptly appointed as the first RMJ. Some years later, when the Australian Government decided to abolish the DFM/CM system in favour of an independent and fully transparent Military Court of Australia under the Federal Court of Australia, the RMJ position was amended to require a Permanent Force officer of the Legal (JAG) Branch.

Among other duties, as RMJ for over five years, Steve designed, implemented and managed two data bases, deployed across the entire ADF and accessible in real time anywhere in the world. The new RMJ however, wanted nothing to do with them. Consequently, the buck was passed to the Inspector General ADF (IGADF) charged with the responsibility of oversight of military justice in its broadest sense. Steve then applied for the newly created position of Director, Standards and Analysis (DSA) and became a Public Servant for the next six years. Retaining his RANR commission throughout, he occasionally acted as Team Leader of IGADF Unit Military Justice audits. When he reached age 65, he resigned from the DSA position but continued to

serve in the RANR on post-CRA extensions in two year increments. The last one will expire in 2015.

The RANR continued to keep Steve off the street. After giving up full time employment in 2011, he chaired the CPO2 to CPO1 promotion board and worked as part of the Navy's 'Rizzo' team, a government directed project aimed at improving materiel acquisition and maintenance processes. Later, he was spliced to the Defence White Paper drafting team. He will then chair one more CP2 to CP1 promotion board and hand in his ID card for the second and last time.

This will end a most successful, rewarding and amazing career, spanning a total in excess of 51 years serving Her Majesty in two Navies.



Our pool in Canberra
Old sailors never die! They just get a little ding(h)y

ADDENDUM 1

JACQUES CARTIER 450TH ANNIVERSARY

In 1984 I was CO Skeena. This was the year of the 450th Anniversary of Jacques Cartier's discovery of Nouvelle France and the founding of Ville Marie, the future Montreal. Although Quebec City was not founded until 1608 by Samuel de Champlain, Quebec City was the designated host city.

Events included a tall ship race from there to St Malo via North Sidney Cape Breton. As the FLU, Skeena was the natural selection for the job of official host ship. More so, because Her Excellency the Governor General Jeanne Sauvé was at her summer residence at 'La Citadelle'. So here I was, berthed in Quebec City, after a high speed run from Bermuda after the disastrous SAR mission looking for the Barque 'Marques'.

At the official reception held onboard Skeena a few days earlier, Commander 5 BDE told me that on the day of the official race start to St Malo I must leave harbour early as the presence of my ship at this juncture was politically undesirable. I politely informed him that with the Commander-in-Chief in residence at 'La Citadelle' this was simply not on and that it was my intention to sail after 0800, proceed West to the Quebec Bridge, come about and as I passed Her Excellency's summer residence I would be firing a 21 gun salute.

As it happened, LtCol Roméo D'Allaire, CO 5 RALC (later MGen commanding UN forces in Rwanda, promoted LtGen and eventually a federal Senator) was also at the reception. I informed him of my exchange with Brigadier Terry Liston, his Commander, stating that I expected his reply of 21 guns on behalf of our Commander in Chief. And this is how it went down. By the time I was East of 'La Citadelle', I heard the 42nd gun.

If one can imagine, despite being the designated official host ship, I had to vacate the premier jetty a few days earlier so that the grain carrier MV Prairie Harvest may be berthed there. Upon which were erected four huge candy striped marquis tents, one for the GG, one for the Premier, one for the Mayor of Quebec City and one for the CEO of the Anniversary Celebrations Corporation, and their entourage. I was compelled to move into Bassin St Charles, eventually part of the Naval Reserve HQ/CFFS Quebec complex.





My role after sailing was to act as escort and SAR primary response down the St Lawrence to North Sydney Cape Breton where, after a two day port visit I was to officiate over the formal race start to St Malo. It was a great event on a beautiful summer day. My guests included RAdm Freddie Mifflin, Deputy COMMARCOM, several politicians, both federal and provincial, and a host of hangers on enjoying Naval hospitality.

Herewith a photo of the event.



My escort duties ended 200 nautical miles off the Canadian coast and I returned to Halifax.

The trip down river was uneventful. I even snuck in a three day port visit to Sept Isles and caught up with the boats in North Sidney. They ranged from the big ones like the USCGC Eagle, the German Gorch Foch, the Soviet Kruzenshtern, the Polish Dar Mlodzienzy, Columbia's Gloria and Portugal's Sagres among others, and many thirty footers.

The Admiral joined me on arrival in North Sidney and asked me to make sure I had a tape of 'Song of the Myra', apparently almost an anthem to the locals. I promptly dispatched a Sub to find a copy and consequently it was played on the upper deck broadcast sung by Catherine McKinnon throughout the day to everyone's delight.

As an aside, the Admiral was an ex-CO of Skeena and the youngest officer to command a Cadillac. The day I took command he asked me to call on him. We had a great chat and I will never forget his advice when he said "Steve, by taking command you have the instant and complete loyalty of your ship's company. And only you, through your actions, could ever lose it." The next day I sailed on my first STANAVFORLANT deployment with HMS Glasgow, USS Dewey, HMNLS Piet Heyn and FRG Schleswig Holstein.

As a postscript there is a tragic beginning to this story.

CCD1(Skeena, Margaree, Assiniboine) with Preserver in company were in Bermuda when the Class C race to Halifax was started. The barque 'Marques' went down with all 19 lives lost. Assiniboine under Wilf Lund's command was the first one CCD1 (Captain Charles Westropp) sailed for the SAR mission. Eventually we all joined in. After a few days I was detached to make my Quebec City commitment, but not before I was tasked to return to Bermuda to pick up the 100 or so sailors we left behind and all the groceries ordered but yet to be delivered.



The barque 'Marques' in all her glory
before the 11 June 1984 tragedy

ADDENDUM 2

A NEAR DISASTER

In April 1985 I sailed single ship to Portsmouth to relieve HMCS Iroquois in STANAVFORLANT. With a fuel stop in the Azores my SOA was a fast 16 knots with the track shaped just South enough to be ahead of the annual ice berg migration line for that time of year.

The pre-sail weather brief revealed that a strong westerly has been blowing for weeks so I expected following seas all the way across the pond. Upon rounding Sable Island I estimated the sea running at near sixteen knots. Having briefed all concerned that we can expect sloppy steering and an uncomfortable ride, the ship settled down to a light routine. My one fear was that should current wind conditions persist, sea speed will increase to match our SOA resulting in the rudders in still water, hence loss of steering. This is exactly what happened.

I was a firm believer in the practice of flying the embarked Sea King as near daily as possible lest things will start going wrong. (three months later the bird flew off to Shearwater still CAT 1 – Full ASW Day and Night dipper). Now to what happened next.

The bird was approaching Charlie time when the weather took a drastic turn for the

worst. The wind veered to the South at 70 knots gusting to 80; sea state increased to five + and visibility dropped to zero.

With the need of a flying course putting the wind on the nose, recovery would be in a high beam sea with rolls far exceeding 30 degrees and pitch in excess of 20 degrees. I spoke directly to the pilot, a young Captain whose name regrettably escapes me, offering him HIFR while I ran South seeking warmer air and better visibility. He replied "Sir, if I can HIFR I can land". So I wound up the ship to full power approaching 30 knots to give him a wide wake to home in on and a green light to land. At this speed landing conditions were exactly as expected with a relative wind speed of 100 knots and gusting. With his superb flying skills and great work by the LSO, the landing was quick and uneventful.

Once the bird was folded, fuelled and tucked in the barn I resumed our easterly course at 16 knots. This is when the expected happened. Sea speed increased to 16 knots, I took a greenie on the starboard quarter and rolled good old Skeena 57 degrees to port. Fortunately, by this time there was no one on the upper decks.

At full heel the motor cutter on the port side davits was under water. Damage was limited to the loss of a few guardrail stanchions, the fuelling hoses secured under the flight deck overhang and one lifeboat cannister

ADDENDUM 3

2nd STANAVFORLANT DEPLOYMENT - 1985

With the Sea King recovery drama safely and successfully behind me, Skeena arrived in Portsmouth to relieve Iroquois (Bear Brown). This was to be my last trip in command and my second tour with STANAVFORLANT (SNFL).

At this time SNFL swelled to eight ships: the USS Richard E. Byrd, HMS Brilliant, HMNLS Pieter Florisz, the German Rhineland Phaltz, the Norwegian Stavanger, the Portuguese Roberto Ivens, the Belgian Wielingen and good old 207.

Upon departure from Portsmouth the squadron conducted port visits to Lorient in France, Esbjerg in Denmark and Christiansand in Norway, participated in ASW exercises in the Skagerrak, and ended up in Leixoes, Portugal. With tug assistance we were berthed two abreast, starboard side to and facing West for a quick unassisted departure. Just as well for what followed. On the photo below the eight ships, berthed two abreast, covered the entire jetty between the elevated highway and the marina.



Even before the boiler room crew secured, Skeena and Rhineland Phaltz were ordered to sail immediately to intercept a Soviet TG about to exit Gibraltar enroute Murmansk. The TG consisted of the first Soviet aircraft carrier Kiev, one Kresta II, one Kynda, one Kashin and an oiler. Kiev just underwent her first major refit and conversion and CINCEASTLANT was keen to obtain up to date photos, ELINT and ACINT on her.

Skeena was detached off Scotland when relieved by the USS Virginia, CGN 38. The trek North was rather uneventful. There were no attempts at RAS or flying operations. All aircraft were stowed below the flight deck. Occasionally a Helix helicopter (later described as 'farm machinery' by an RAN pilot friend) would be raised on the port side elevator and promptly returned below. The only excitement was when I went ahead to sow a sonobuoy barrier ahead of the TG.

On completion I conducted a classic joining from ahead, falling in on Kiev's port beam at 250 yards. As we closed head on with a relative speed approaching 50 knots and a mere 2,000 yards between us, as I put the helm hard over to starboard I told myself "Steve, if she alters to port you are done for", or words to that effect.





It so happened that over forty wives had joined the ship in Leixoes for brief family reunion visits and I was determined to give the couples some time together before the squadron was scheduled to sail for Cadiz, Spain. A quarterly full power trial lasting in excess of 24 hours did the job. Arriving back in Leixoes on a Sunday with no tugs on duty provided a unique berthing challenge whereby upon entering the mole I had to twist the ship about 90 degrees and back her up well over half a mile to regain my berth outboard Pieter Florisz.

The next stop after Cadiz was Halifax for our Navy's 75th Anniversary Celebrations via a fuel stop in the Azores. As an aside, at its core SNFL consists of only five ships: Canadian, US, UK, Netherlands and Germany. This is the first time in my recollection that the smaller, low freeboard frigates of the Belgian, Norwegian and Portuguese navies crossed the Atlantic.

A much enjoyed SNFL tradition is the 'cross-pollination' of sailors between ships. The CO of Stavanger, Cdr Kanut Flathen, and I decided to partake in this tradition. So we traded ships mid-ocean. After two days we rejoined our respective commands via jackstay with HMS Brilliant.

Eight more weeks with SNFL in the Carribbean followed and I eventually turned over command to Pierre Yans in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



Halifax arrival



Reunion



Margaret and Kanut in my cabin in Halifax

ADDENDUM 4

IBERIAN AIREVAC

It is still 1985. Back in Leixoes, SNFL is about to sail for Cadiz, Spain. This was to be a historical port visit as it was to be the first time SNFL called into a Spanish port since joining NATO in 1982.

Still well North of Cape St Vincent, the sickbay tiffy reported one of our sailors developed acute appendicitis requiring immediate surgery. As Murphy would have it, my Sea King is in pieces undergoing a 16 hour maintenance routine called a 'SUPP 8'.

My request for for an AirEvac to the other two helicopter carriers, HMS Brilliant with one Lynx and the German frigate Rheinland Phaltz with two, being refused, I laid out the problem to my Air Boss Wally Sweetman and the Deck Chief WO1 Scott. Their response was immediate "Give us two hours".

The nearest medical facility was the USN hospital in Rota, Spain. The Sea King's endurance required a straight line track cutting across Portugal's territory and airspace.



While the bird was buttoned up two OP IMMEDIATE messages were dispatched: a NOVA(Notice of Visiting Aircraft) to Rota and a request for overflight permission to Portuguese authorities. Everything went according to plan. The operation was a success; the sailor had a full recovery and returned to the ship during the port visit to Cadiz, just across the Bay.

It was anticipated that the aircraft will require fuel at some stage, hence the crew was armed with US dollars, an AMEX card and a USAF fuel card to cover all eventualities. How wrong we were.

Considering the time-speed-distance problem with an allowance for patient transfer, admin, fuel stop and 'J factor', the aircraft's ETA was calculated. At ETA + 1 hour I became worried, at +2 concerned, at +3 alarmed. As there was no means to establish communications with the aircraft all we could do was wait and hope. No one can imagine our joy when the silent vigil in the Ops Room was interrupted by Wally's voice requesting pigeons.

The post-flight debrief revealed that when they landed at some small airport in Portugal in the middle of the night they were told that they cannot get fuel because the company providing fuel has just one customer and they work only on an invoice basis. Ergo cash nor credit cards were acceptable. After difficult negotiations in French, English, Portuguese and hand signals the local guy agreed to call the airline's boss with the suggestion that he could come to the airport, accept cash or credit card in payment and deal with the fuel supplier later. Success! Being in the middle of the night, this took some time, hence the long delay in the aircraft's return.

Sadly, Wally was killed in a Sea King crash off New Brunswick on 28 April 1994. He was just 40 years old.

ADDENDUM 5

MARATHON HEAVY JACKSTAY

So three months later SNFL is crossing the Atlantic to participate in the RCN's 75th Anniversary celebrations and sail again after six or seven days for the Carriibbean. The brief Halifax stop included three days at anchor in Bedford basin including the Fleet Review.

As part of pre-sail planning it was estimated that after three month away our logistics requirements would be such that the available alongside time would be insufficient to embark all the stores prior to our departure South, certainly not when one considered the civilian manned dockyard's work tempo. The obvious solution was to get the AOR to R/V with us at sea for a heavy jackstay.

So I called on Basil Moore, CO Preserver, to present my problem. He was keen but had his own problem – fuel was tight in those days and such an unplanned trip could not be accommodated within his fuel allocation. It so happened that Spook Spanik, his Liquid Cargo Officer (LCO), overheard our conversation and barged into Basil's cabin to announce that he had fuel to spare.

Now anyone who knew Basil would know that he ran a very tight ship, hence he was taken aback by Spook's statement. When asked to

explain, Spook told him that the last few times Preserver topped up in Halifax it was in cold weather and that most RAS since then have been in warmer weather. Given that fuel is accounted for by volume and that fuel expands with increasing ambient temperature, he had 6,000 barrels of fuel nobody knew about. Basil called on Commodore John Harwood, CANCOMFLT, laid out his case and received approval to R/V with SNFL in mid-ocean for the transfer of accumulated stores.

As it turned out, the load was to be 153 pallets. The problem was how to get rid of one pallet at the quarter deck king post before the next one arrived. A plan was worked out whereby Preserver sent across the pallets in the directed order and the XO's human chain as an all ship evolution looked after the rest. The entire operation took 4 hours and 20 minutes. Another record for Skeena.

As an aside, Spook Spanik achieved notoriety by being the instigator of the RPC for Xaviera Hollander, the Happy Hooker, that cost the then CO, Peter Traves, his command. There is a classic TRIDENT front page photo of Preserver's brow, complete with ceremonial Kisby ring and stand in the background, with Peter Traves presenting a mounted ship's crest to Xaviera. Ouch!! His main problem was that COMMARCOM at the time was none other than Douglas Seaman Boyle.

ADDENDUM 6

MEMORIAL SERVICE - HMCS ATHABASKAN

As recounted earlier, in 1985 Skeena replaced HMCS Iroquois in STANAVFORLANT. After the turnover in Portsmouth the Squadron sailed for WorkUps off Portland to be followed by a port visit to Lorient in France.

I knew that after her sinking by German torpedo boats in April 1944, over 50 members of Athabaskan's ship's company, including the CO, LCdr John Hamilton Stubbs, washed up ashore and were eventually buried in the Plouescat cemetery in Brittany. There is now a small Commonwealth War Graves section to it with some 60 allied graves, mostly Athabaskans.

A mere 160 kilometres by road, I arranged a memorial service through our embassy in Paris. LCdr Roger Drolet, one of my earlier subordinates and then the Naval Attaché, tackled the task with great enthusiasm and panache. As an aside, I had to inform CSNFL of my intentions as a courtesy. As luck would have it, it was a German Captain at the time, but that is another story...By the time of the event CSNFL was Commodore Bruce Richardson, RN.

The French Navy designated the destroyer Du Chayla as host ship for the event, including a 100 man honour guard and a naval band. Buses

for Skeena's 100 man guard were also provided. As an aside, when HMCS Ottawa, Skeena's predecessor as the FLU, was so designated in 1968, she was twinned with Du Chayla for several years, leading to more French port visits than was the norm at the time, a process that led to several trans-Atlantic deployments to Brest, Toulon, Marseille and Nice.

Prior to departure from Halifax I requested a letter from the then CO of Athabaskan, Dave Cogdon, to be read at the memorial service. A few photos of the event below.





A reception at 'La Mairie', City Hall, followed the ceremony. With drink in hand, I was approached by a lady, circa middle age. She recounted that at the time of the sinking Plouescat was under the Nazi's yoke. When the locals discover Athabaskan's dead washed up on the beach, they were ordered not to bury them lest they will be shot. A number, including this lady's father, disobeyed the order, resulting in the headstones we just visited, and she witnessed her own father being executed by the Germans.

The entire Skeena contingent was then bused to the naval base in Brest for a late lunch in Du Chayla and eventually returned to Lorient.

Before the Squadron sailed for Denmark, Margaret and I took the opportunity to visit Mont Saint Michel. Spectacular, to say the least.



ADDENDUM 7

A BIT OF NAVAL RESERVE HISTORY

The 1980s were watershed years for Canada's Naval Reserve. For obviously political reasons the decision was made to establish a permanent naval presence in the Province of Quebec. Captain David Pollard, ex-CO Skeena and Algonquin, was appointed to head the Naval Presence in Quebec (NPIQ) Project.

Phase one involved the creation of Naval Reserve Headquarters (NRHQ) to be followed by the establishment of Fleet School Quebec. The aim of the latter was to create a school dedicated mostly, but not exclusively, to the training of naval reservists. Captain Pollard settled on Pointe-à-Carcy, the premier piece of real estate on Quebec City's magnificent and historic harbour.





Aerial photos of Pointe-à-Carcy and the NRHQ/CFFS complex

The completion of Commander Naval Divisions (COND)'s relocation from Halifax to Quebec City could not have been more timely. Promulgation of the 1987 Defence White Paper was the most significant event in the Naval Reserve's history in modern times. For the first time, it was assigned specific missions: Coastal Defence, Route Survey and Naval Control of Shipping(NCS). This meant that if the Naval Reserve could not deliver, these missions would

simply not be done. The impact of this on morale was incalculable. No longer were reservists simply recruiting props across the country, parading on Battle of the Atlantic Sunday. They actually had a real job to do. Moreover, the Defence budget allocated funds for new ships, the Kingston Class, overdue replacement quarters for many long established Naval Reserve Divisions, and the creation of new ones. Eventually, the rented quarters at Pointe-à-Carcy were purchased to create the current NRHQ/CFFS Quebec complex.

Captain Jim Steele as COND (1985-88) set in motion a number of projects aimed at turning the White Paper's commitments to the Naval Reserve into reality. With Cdr André Nadeau(ex-CO HMCS Algonquin) as his deputy, things had already achieved a significant level of maturity by the time I succeeded him in 1988. HMC Ships Radisson (Trois Rivières) and d'Iberville (Rimouski) were in commission, soon to be followed by Champlain (Chicoutimi), Joliet ((Sept-Isles) and Prevost (London). The Kingston class were in contract and negotiations to purchase the Pointe-à-Carcy precinct were well advanced.

The main focus of my two years as COND (1988-990) revolved heavily on rebuilding the Naval Reserve's complement to recruit, train and retain the right number of people, at the right rank, and with the required skills to deliver on the newly assigned missions. Although already quite

well advanced by my predecessor, there was a lot that remained to be done.

In essence this involved identifying the number, size and capability of ships, in commission or taken up from trade (STUFT), to execute the coastal defence and route survey missions, and the number and composition of identified NCS teams. These then had to be translated into ship's companies and assigned to Naval Reserve Divisions, responsible for their generation.

As one would expect, an audit of the Naval Reserve complement quickly revealed a severe mismatch between the people we had in uniform and what the White Paper missions required. Since personnel policies and funding levels imposed certain constraints on what was 'doable', it quickly became evident that some hard decisions had to be made. Put simply, we had far too many square pegs in round holes. As a result, a number of reservists who gave us long and loyal service had to be invited to resign or transfer to the Supplementary List.

This reminded me of a somewhat amusing event. One evening I received a telephone call at home from COMMARCOM himself asking me why I am firing a Captain with a long and distinguished career in the Naval Reserve. I responded by saying essentially that I did not fire anyone, that I do not have the authority to do so and that I

simply asked the officer in question to consider transferring to the Supp List. When the Admiral added that what we need is captains of industry and pillars of society from coast to coast to spread the gospel and maintain the Navy's visibility in the eyes of the public, I retorted that for the first time in its history the Naval Reserve has a clear mission and that what was needed are professional, well trained sailors, not Ken and Barbie dolls in blue suits. At his 'invitation' I was on a plane to Halifax the next morning.

After two very busy and rewarding years, I turned COND over to Pierre Yans and assumed command of HMCS Provider.



Annual NRD COs' conference – Esquimalt 1989





Our home in Quebec City
4 Côte de la Citadelle
Under the trees between Porte St Louis and the Citadelle entrance



Summer and winter in Quebec City

ADDENDUM 8

HOSTING THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF

In 1991, amid Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, trips to Panama and back, etc. as described elsewhere in this booklet, I was tasked by COMMARPAC to host a unique dinner.

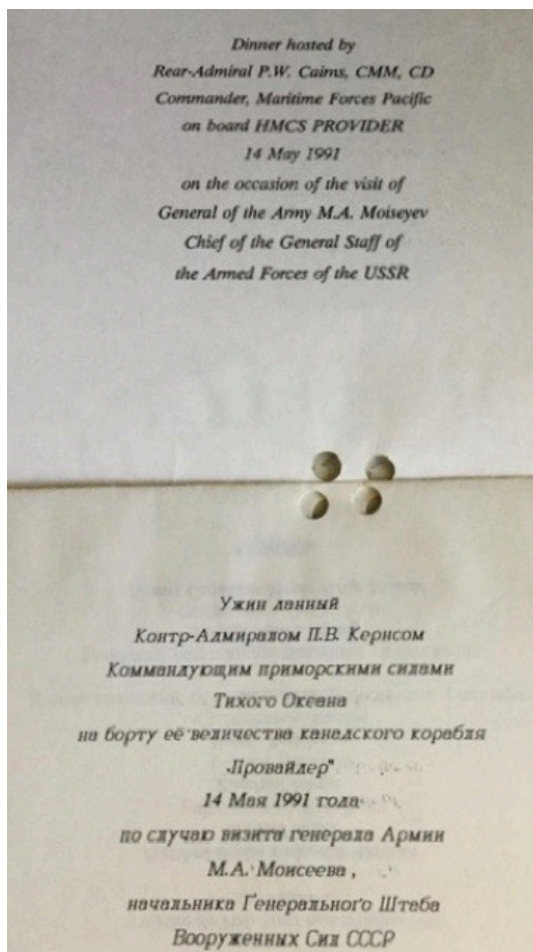
It seemed that our CDS, General John DeChastelain, invited his Soviet opposite number for a visit. Remember, this was 1991, soon after the Berlin Wall came down and the USSR disintegrated. Suddenly we were all friends.

The invitation involved visits by the General and his Heads of Service to Ottawa and one base from each of the three Services. The West Coast drew the short straw and Provider, with the largest wardroom, was chosen to host the official dinner.

Diners numbered in excess of two dozen including the Soviet/Russian delegation, their wives, the Attaché from Washington (a MGen suspected to be KGB), several translators, CDS, COMMARPAC, Jim Boutilier (MARPAAC Advisor), Margaret and myself.

Provider's wardroom is wide yet quite narrow. Squeezing all these people in was not easy and the seating plan was quite a challenge. At the last moment a wrinkle arose when I was informed by the Admiral that General Moiseyev is

an amateur magician and therefore I must add retired Brigadier Don Bell, also a magician, to the table and, moreover, allocate floor space for his act in an already crowded space.



As you would expect, the evening went off without a hitch. P2CK Patterson's team cooked up a most excellent meal and the stewards did us proud.

Provider's ship's company, some 300, included 36 women. I made the command decision that I will not ignore the Duty Watch roster as promulgate in Routine Orders and stack the brow with the burliest Bosuns. As it turned out, the on duty Quarter Master when the guests arrived was a female Corporal Admin Clerk in Air Force blue, as was the Bosun's mate. I did get a few quizzical looks from CDS and the Soviets and a telephone call from the Admiral the next day, but I replied that it would have been improper and an insult to our women crew members to 'stack the team'.

As part of the traditional 'hardware exchange', I presented the General with a mounted ship's crest. He reciprocated with a Navy Commander's wind up watch, complete with a paper a strap. The next day I had the shipwrights craft a teak stand for the watch and ordered a brass plaque to describe its provenance. It was added to the ship's trophy case. Where it ended up after the ship paid off is anyone's guess.

As an aside, the watch never did work. I thought at the time that if this is representative of Russian military hardware quality we had nothing to fear.



General Moiseyev, RADm Peter Cairns, Jim Boutilier and myself



ADDENDUM 9

PROVIDER AND THE GULF WAR – 1991



This photo, my favourite and unrelated to this narrative, was taken off Tahiti when as CO Provider I commanded the Training Squadron Task Group as a consolation prize for missing out on the Gulf War.

In fact I was tasked five times to take part in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Planning had progressed as far as the drawing up of plans to convert my cabin into an Operations Room and finding real estate on the upper decks for one or two Phalax systems. As envisaged, my quarters would be limited to the pantry with

direct access to the bathroom and sleeping quarters.

Mission # 1 was cancelled when the decision was made to send Preserver's crew to replace Protecteur's in lieu of send in Provider to relieve Doug McClean and his mob.

I was at sea on local operations when I was asked "How many 500lb iron bombs and CRV 7 rockets can I take to Qatar to support CF18 operations?" It was the only FLASH message I ever received. My reply, based on a number of assumptions (no helos, magazines empty, ammo palletised, stacked two high, spread between the hangar, flight deck, magazines, the space between the house and breakwater, and C130 style tie down straps in good supply) resulted in a number sufficiently high to be directed to return to Esquimalt, deammo, store ship and proceed to Prince Rupert to embark the ammo. Apparently the ammo was already on its way in a convoy of eighteen wheelers from CFAD Dundurn because Vancouver would not authorise its transit through the city. Mission # 2.

When I briefed the troops, the plan was a 79 day round trip with a Singapore port visit on the way back. The only glitch would be transiting a mine field prior to the anchorage off Qatar. When I saw the long faces I had basically two things to say: that on a good day we are sitting on tons of ammo and 119,000 barrels of fuel, so

a few thousand tons of bombs here and there would not be much change and, upon sailing from Prince Rupert, we will, all 300 of us, including the 36 women, shave our heads bald, and take the 'mother of all ship's company photographs' on the focs'l.

This did it as I had hoped. The worried looks disappeared and all the troops could focus on was the historic photograph. So off we went after deammunitioning at Rocky Point and picking up groceries for the trip.

Unfortunately, two days later and the day prior to our arrival in Prince Rupert, the war ended and the mission was cancelled. We returned to Esquimalt. Just as well that my plan called for the massive SHAVEX after departure from Prince Rupert and not before. No one can believe my disappointment in this outcome. Less for missing the war but more for missing out on the greatest photograph ever.

Mission # 3 involved picking up the Army's gear in the Middle east and bringing it back to Gagetown or Valcartier. A RoRo lease proved cheaper so this mission was also scrubbed.

Even so, 1991 was a very busy year. Two trips to Panama to escort Huron on her way to Iraq and later Restigouche on her way East to join STANAVFORLANT and a trip to Guam followed to

meet Huron on her way home. – Missions # 4 and #5.

The crowning event was a 15 week deployment as CTG with Provider, Yukon, Saskatchewan and MacKenzie under my command to Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia and Tonga.



What a tired Captain looks like

ADDENDUM 10

THE VICE ADMIRAL EDMUNDSON SAGA

AND VIDICATION

In 2021 Vice Admiral Haydn Edmundson was accused of allegedly raping a young steward onboard HMCS Provider in 1991 while the ship was in Hawaii. Haydn was a Lieutenant Commander and the ship's Navigator. I was Provider's Commanding Officer at the time.



Haydn and I at sea in better times

In media interviews she made a number of comments and allegations in relation to the culture of the ship under my command.

I abstained from making specific comments on the accusations levied against the Admiral as I thought it would be inappropriate under the circumstances, yet indirectly I had hoped to cast a shadow over the credibility of the accuser when the matter came before the courts.

I did, however, voice my refutation of allegations levied against the ship. These were provided to the Admiral and his legal team, the CAF Judge Advocate General, the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service (CFNIS) and Ms Ashley Burke, the CBC journalist who wrote extensively of this matter. These are summarised below.

The accuser described a pervasive culture of silence surrounding sexual misconduct, a lack of support from the chain of command and fear of career reprisals. She wrote in her application that there was an underlying culture of misogyny onboard HMCS Provider in the early 1990s.

As the CO, Captain Russell Moore (later Rear Admiral and Commander Maritimer Forces Pacific) received the first woman in Provider . He put in place a very robust and well promulgated non-fraternisation policy. It was maintained by his successor and my predecessor Captain Ken

Scotten, then by me. It can honestly be claimed that by 1991 there was an over four years period under three COs demanding and accepting nothing less than absolute respect for and discipline between sailors of both sexes.

In July while the ship was in San Diego after RIMPAC 92, the Officer of the Day called me aside during the flight deck reception stating that a female reserve sailor wished to speak to me urgently. I immediately saw the lady in question in the presence of the Divisional Petty Officer for women. Eventually all she volunteered was that she was raped in the ship's laundry the night before by a sailor from the Australian naval ship HMAS Canberra (or was it Darwin?) She would not divulge more and said she will not take the matter any further. As far as I know she kept her word. I immediately sought out COMAUSFLOT, the RAN Commodore in command of Australian ships, and told him all I knew. I also sent a confidential exclusive message to COMMARPAC outlining these facts. It must therefore be concluded that any suggestion of silence and lack of support is simply not true.

On two separate occasions couples came to see me to report that they met onboard, fell in love, are getting married, and felt I had a right to know. In each case I told them that henceforth only one of each couple would be allowed to sail in Provider and in all fairness the one I will leave behind is the one I can 'trade' with CFB Esquimalt

or, should this not be possible, it will be the one "I can most easily do without". This approach was welcomed and accepted by both couples.

The accuser claimed that she was later reprimanded by the chain of command and given a recorded warning in her file for speaking French onboard rather than English.

Between 1983 and 1985 I commanded HMCS Skeena, DDH 207, the Navy's French Language Unit (FLU). Provider's Second in Command at the time (XO) was Commander Serge Bertrand, a Quebecois. To suggest that either of us would allow such action to be taken is ludicrous and insulting.

It was also claimed that "the military culture at the time would not have supported the accuser reporting the alleged sexual assault...the chain of command would have brushed it off".

While in Sydney Australia in 1991, Sub Lieutenant Marcelle Tremblay reported to me that while at Manly Beach, a topless beach, with other junior officers, the Task Group Padre suggested to her that she should remove her top also. She added that earlier on the cruise, at sea, the Padre offered to "suck Sub Lieutenant Joanna Davies' toes". I immediately placed him on a flight back to Esquimalt and so informed COMMARPAC. The Padre was met in Hawaii by the Command Chaplain and escorted the rest of the way. How

the 'system' ultimately dealt with this case I do not know to this date but whatever the outcome, it had no bearing on the offensive allegations levied against me and my ship.

It was further claimed that "She had nobody that she could trust to talk about it, or to make a complaint...she had nobody...you couldn't trust anybody".

The Medical Officer onboard at the time was Lieutenant Bonnie Henry, now the Chief Health Officer of the Province of British Columbia.



Bonnie and I observing a RAS

It was ship's policy, though the Divisional system, that the female members of the ship's

company must have a female Divisional Petty Officer. In this case it was the P2 Pay Clerk (her name escapes me). Also, there were four junior female officers onboard. One is now a Rear Admiral and Commander of our Atlantic Fleet. I therefore cannot place any credibility in her claim that "there was nobody she could trust".

The accuser claimed that men barged in on her while in the shower.

Toilets and showers were accessed through the flats (corridor) throughout the ship with one exception. The female messdeck with 36 bunks was the only one with only internal access to the ablution unit, and the very reason for this allocation of living quarters. With 36 junior NCOs in the ship, the messdeck was seldom if ever entirely vacant. It is suggested that it would take a very brave and stupid sailor to enter the showers as claimed.

POSTSCRIPT

As reported, inter alia, by Mark Gollom, CBC News reporter on 16 September 2024, retired Vice Admiral Haydn Edmundson was found not guilty on all counts.

Excerpts from Judge Matthew C. Webber of the Ontario Court of Justice:

"It just seems highly improbable and implausible to me that the facts as outlined by the complainant could have conceivably occurred."

"The Crown's evidence simply cannot satisfy the lofty threshold that is proof beyond a reasonable doubt. There are just too many problems here."

The judge also referred to the Captain's night order book which suggested that Edmundson, based on his shifts then, would not have needed to be woken up during the time (the accuser) said she had her outburst.

In his verdict, the judge said that he agreed with the senior officers who testified that it was a welcoming atmosphere for women.

In summary the judge rejected the accuser's evidence that it was a culture that was hostile to women. His observations also suggested that "it seemed improbable that Edmundson, who was set to be promoted to commander during these missions, and whose career was rising, would, during this time, engage in such criminal conduct."

As the Commanding Officer at the time, this is all the vindication I needed.



*This updated booklet of memories spanning 51 year
of Naval Service in the Royal Canadian and Royal Australian Navies
is rededicated to my beautiful wife Margaret*

*Captain Steve Foldesi
RCN ret'd RAN ret'd
2025*