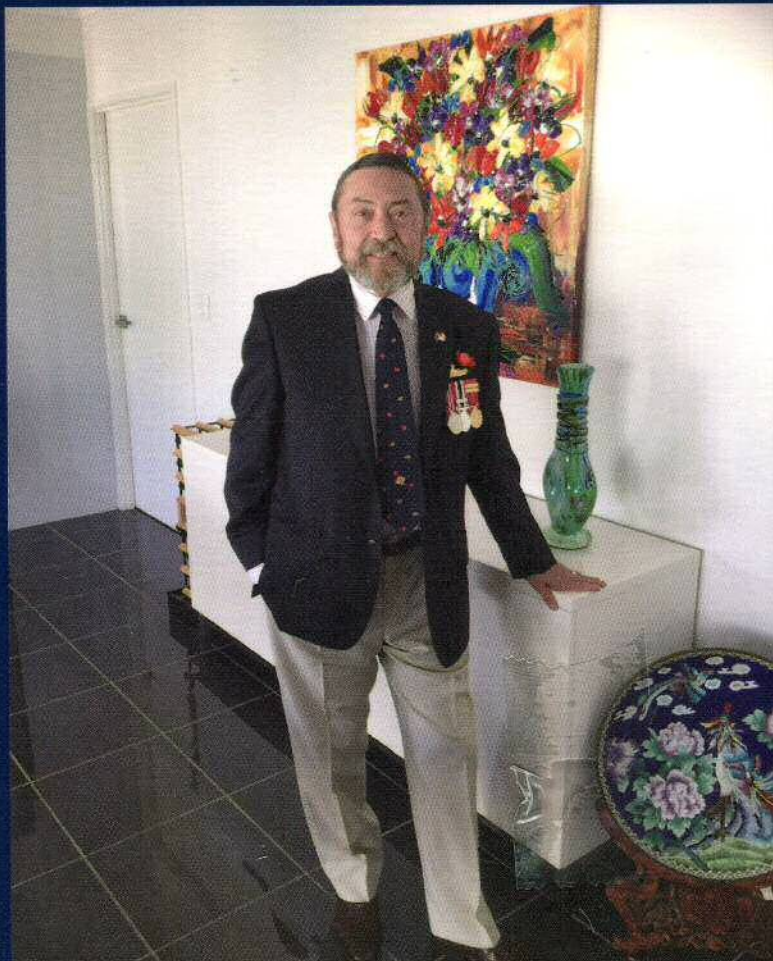




***CAPTAIN STEVE FOLDESI, RCN, RAN, CD  
HALF CENTURY SERVING  
HER MAJESTY***







# **LEGEND**

***Back in Halifax - 1985***

***Provider in the South Pacific - 1991***

***Launching my hobby - box kites***

***Shooting down my box kite – 1991***

***Back from a spin – 1985***

***Attachés' Mess Dinner - Canberra 1994***

***In my RAN uniform – 1997***

***Margaret in LCVP joining me for lunch off the Ammo Jetty***

***My cabin in Skeena - 1985***

***My TG off Tahiti - 1991***

***Hallow'een at sea in Provider - 1991***

***At sea in Provider – just for fun 1990***

***Subbies' 46<sup>th</sup> birthday surprise – Provider 1992***

***Back from SNFL - 1985***

***Growing my beard back – RIMPAC 78***

***Cooking a Hungarian dinner for the troops - Provider 1991***

***Oil painting of Skeena after an oil by Elizabeth Wilcox commissioned by Margaret for my birthday – 1985***

***Provider Department Heads - Russell, New Zealand***

***Tahiti welcome - 1991***

***A drop in visit on Norfolk Island enroute Tonga – 1991***

***Provider ships' company photograph – 1991***

***Margaret and I in Quebec City - 1989***

***Qu'Appelle Wardroom beach party – Curacao 1981***



**Captain Steve Foldesi, RCN Ret'd, RANR**  
**A unique career - half century of naval service**

(as serialised in the September, October and November (Part 2) 2014 editions of Lead and Line, the NOAC-VI online journal)



Steve was born in 1946 in Hungary, his family emigrating from Budapest during the 1956 revolution and settling 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 this serendipitous event would lead to an association with two navies that would last over a half century."

ROTP McGill accepted him and thanks to his father's vision, all his early education was in French schools. Becoming the Navy's one of relatively few bilingual officers at the time was to have a considerable impact on his future naval career.

Armed with a BSc from McGill, in May 1968 Steve arrived in Halifax for pre-fleet training as a brand new Subbie. Upon course completion he joined HMCS OTTAWA and sailed for Europe shortly thereafter as part of the BONAVENTURE task group for exercises with NATO forces. "I vividly recall coming to the bridge to take over as 200W for the middle watch to find us alongside HMCS PROVIDER. Little did I know that the chap with the white goatee (Captain Bill Stuart) on the starboard wing would, 22 years later, be me."

These were exciting but difficult times for the Navy. Paul Hellyer had already put the CF on an integration and unification path that would last until recently when the current government gave the Navy back the curl and along with it its name, traditions and self-



respect. "I recall that first trip to Portsmouth with Bonnie. I blew my \$200 green uniform allowance on a 48 in London and didn't 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 halfway through his Sea Requirements vying for a Bridge Watchkeeping Ticket (BWK) when he was abruptly sent off on the Nav O course. He returned as OTTAWA's navigator and it was a further six months before he could challenge the board, chaired by Captain Jim Cutts, then commanding the carrier. Pierre Simard, the CO of OTTAWA, promptly issued Steve his ticket. Shortly thereafter he moved over to weapons and air control. At this time, OTTAWA was the French Language Unit (FLU).

The manpower situation was not improving. "Chris Haines, Marty Middleton and I were the only watchkeepers with Chris and I also pulling ASAC duties while also acting as Navigator and Deputy Weapons respectively. It wasn't any better below decks. The ship's company, excluding the zoomies, was fixed at 162 seamen. Later I carried 285 in SKEENA. One of the great mysteries was the disappearance of Bonnie's 1200 or so personnel when she paid off in 1970. They seem to have vaporised almost overnight."

Steve had found his niche in weapons and attended the 14<sup>th</sup> (and last) Long Weapons Course 1971-72 only to return to OTTAWA as her Weapons Officer (WO). After the FLU moved from OTTAWA to SKEENA, he also transferred to the latter ship and remained her WO until early 1975 when he was appointed MARCOM Staff Officer Sea Operations. This 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 of the Naval Reserve Training Centre (NRTC) in Esquimalt. This lasted for the summer training period and subsequently he went to DESRON TWO under Captain Stan Riddell's command as Squadron Ops Officer. 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 red maple leaf with the bold number 2 in the centre mounted on her funnel for the time she was with D2.

Staff College followed and upon graduation Steve returned to the West as XO HMCS QU'APPELLE. Two very rewarding and satisfying years followed. When Jan Drent completed his tour in command, at Captain Frank Hope's insistence (as D4 and Commander Training Group Pacific), Steve was appointed in command until Cdr Bob Luke joined some three months later. His XO appointment was followed by two years as Senior Staff Officer to CDS (General Ramsey Withers). In 1983 he was appointed in command of HMCS SKEENA.





Jan Drent as a brand new Captain in his John Roche lookalike kit



Qu'Appelle whaler crew in their John Roche lookalike kit



Command turned out to be everything he expected it to be. As it turned out, SKEENA did everything in 'two's': two tours in STANAVFORLANT, two MARCOTs, two January/February fisheries patrols off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, two COMBATEX, two DNO course 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 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 Carribean

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 navigator certainly got me out of a few jams but most importantly I owe my success in large part to two of the finest officers I ever had the



privilege 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.”

The fun could not last forever, so it was off to Staff College as a director for two years. Promoted Captain in 1987, he attended the National Defence College in Kingston and in 1988 was sent to Quebec City as CO Naval Divisions (COND).

As Steve recalls, these were very exciting times for the Naval Reserve. The Mulroney government had recently published a new White Paper announcing nuclear subs and money for the Naval Reserve. For the first time the Naval Reserve was to have its own mission: NCS, coastal defence and route survey. New Naval Reserve Divisions were being commissioned to increase the number to 24. There was money for bricks and mortar to build and replace inadequate quarters. The Kingston class were under construction. Captain J.A.Y. Plante (Director Maritime Requirements at NDHQ at the time) and he were negotiating to purchase prime waterfront real estate in Quebec City as the future home of Naval Reserve Headquarters and Fleet School Quebec. The submarines did not materialise but all Reserve programs did.

Once again Steve escaped FLU related appointments in 1990 when he went back West 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 regrettably cancelled.

Initially, PROVIDER was to replace PROTECTEUR in the Gulf. The decision was later made to send HMCS PRESERVER’s crew instead. PROVIDER was then tasked to deliver as many 500 lb bombs and CRV 7 rockets for the deployed CF18s as could be fitted into the ship. Halfway to Prince Rupert to pick up the ammo, the war ended. Next came a tasking to pick up the Army’s gear in Qatar and deliver it to Gagetown or Quebec City. Unfortunately, a commercial RoRo proved cheaper.

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, the CO was dining with Steve in his cabin when someone stuck his head through the curtain to inform them that the first Tomahawks had just landed in Baghdad.

Curiously, at this point PROVIDER was closer to Halifax than Esquimalt and therefore he expected something from MARPACHQ to either reroute the ship or confirm the mission and return to home port. Not a word, so Steve called Margaret on INMARSAT and told her to pass the word through the Family Support network that the following day PROVIDER was turning North and heading for home. “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.”



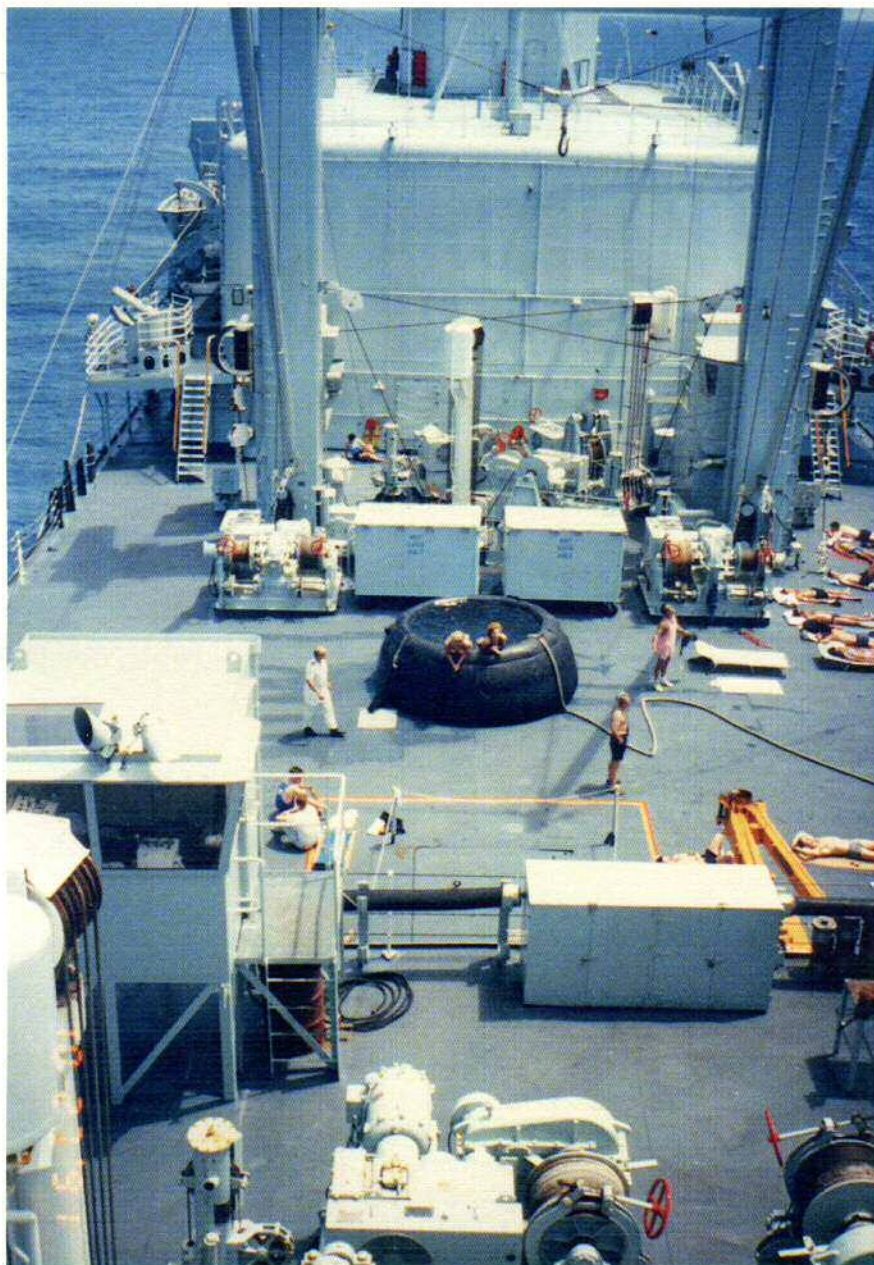


Panama Bay Farewell



PROVIDER got to repeat this trip soon thereafter, this time to escort HMCS RESTIGOUCHE enroute East as the first Westcoaster to join STANAVFORLANT. A 'shave and a haircut' short work period after the ship's returned to Esquimalt and PROVIDER 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, bedecked with bed sheets 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 Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia. The main element of the deployment was attendance at the Royal New Zealand Navy's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. "My kiwi wife joined me in the Bay of Islands to attend 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 just as exciting. It started with the Portland Rose Festival. "You just haven't lived until you have taken a single screw, single bottom 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 plus nautical mile journey. Moreover, as we left Portland, the last 50 nautical miles to Astoria were completed in zero visibility. PROVIDER was not equipped for blind pilotage as commonly practiced in destroyers. This lack of equipment was more than offset by the competence of what constituted my blind pilotage team: the Navigator, Lt Haydn Edmudson, 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 COS Readiness, Margaret and Steve arrived in Australia in July 1993. 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 he invited me to meet him in his hotel's foyer for a debrief of my annual PER. The Navy chose to promote me to the rank of Captain before my 41<sup>st</sup> birthday but now it seemed that 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 termination I would retire early and thus open up the promotion list for one more Captain's promotion four years early." This tallied with long term aims as he and Margaret were planning on building their retirement home on the three quarter acre of ocean front 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 was SLt Josee Boisclair. "I had occasion to tell her parents that in my opinion she was born with a captain's chair strapped to her bum. She is now Captain Josee Kurtz. As a Commander she was the first woman to command a frigate (HMCS HALIFAX) and a few years ago named one of Canada's 100 most powerful women." The other is SLt Jonathan Sadleir. He later qualified as a deep draught navigator, eventually emigrating to Australia and joining the RAN. After commanding HMAS PARRAMATTA, a Meko class frigate, he is about to commission HMAS ADELAIDE as the first CO. ADELAIDE and her sister ship CANBERRA are Spanish designed LHDs and the largest ships ever to be commissioned into the RAN."

Four years later on 31 August 1997, on completion of his tour as CDA Canberra, Steve delivered on the Portland agreement. He resigned from the Navy 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 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 checkout 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, suggested that Steve may wish to join the RANR. Hoping for part time or part year work as a second career, Steve saw this as fitting in with his aims very well. "After all, at 51 years of age I was far too young to fully retire."

The RANR welcomed him and immediately enrolled him as a Captain with full seniority back to 1 January 1987. "It was quite humorous at first as I was immediately the



third most senior RANR Captain in the officers list, yet while I was known by all the brass for my tenure as CDA Canberra, most of my peers and juniors had never heard of me.”

According to Steve, the RAN was undergoing its own personnel shortage problems and, as CNS had predicted, it wasn't 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 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 naval fashion, however, the CNS directive creating the new command laid out the Commander's responsibilities yet failed to assign him staff resources to carry them out. This is where the RANR came in and for the next two years Steve became NAVSYSCOM's Director of Change Management, largely responsible for creating order out of chaos. He eventually turned over the appointment to a permanent force commander.

Another serendipitous event put him back on the RANR payroll almost immediately. Successive Senate inquiries had been raking the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) over the coals for years of long delays in the staffing of administrative inquiries and the completion of summary trials and courts martial. Moreover, there was a total lack of documentary follow-up on inquiry recommendations and disciplinary outcomes. As part of the promised fix, the ADF created the position of Registrar of Military Justice (RMJ). Steve was appointed the first RMJ. When the Australian Government decided to abolish the court martial system in favour of an independent and fully transparent Military Court of Australia, the RMJ position was amended requiring a permanent force officer of the legal (JAG) branch.

Among his other duties, as RMJ for over five years, Steve had to design, implement and manage two data bases deployed across the entire ADF, 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 (IG ADF) who held responsibility for the oversight of military justice in its broadest sense. Steve then applied for a newly created position and for the next six years became a Defence public servant in the position of Director Standards and Analysis. Retaining his RANR commission throughout, he occasionally acted as team leader of IG ADF military justice audits of ADF units. When he reached age 65, he resigned from this position but continued to serve in the RANR on post CRA extensions in two year increments. The current one will expire on 25 July 2015.

The RANR continues to keep Steve off the street. Since giving up full time employment in 2011, he chaired the CPO2 to CPO1 promotion board and worked as part of Navy's "Rizzo" team, a government directed project aimed at improving material acquisition and maintenance processes. As this is being written, he is about to become a member of the Defence White Paper drafting team. Upon its completion in May 2015, he will chair one more CPO2 to CPO1 promotion board and then 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 dingy!



Off to yet another Attaché function - Canberra 1996



## JACQUES CARTIER 450th ANNIVERSARY

In 1984 I was CO Skeena. It was the year of the Jacques Cartier 450th anniversary. The events included a tall ship assembly in Quebec City, a quasi-race to North Sidney NS to be followed by the official race from there to St Malo. As the FLU I was the natural selection for the job as official host. So here I was, berthed in Quebec City.

At the reception held onboard my war canoe a few days before, the Cdr of 5 Bde (Valcartier) told me that I need to leave harbour early as the presence of my ship at the start of the departure was politically undesirable. I politely informed him that with the Governor General in residence at the 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 pass Her Excellency's Summer Residence I would be firing a 21 gun salute.

As it happened, the CO of 5 RALC at the time was LCol Romeo D'Allaire, later LtGen, UN Cdr in Rwanda, Senator, etc.. I told him of this stating that I expect 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 the Citadelle I heard the 42nd gun.

If it can be imagined, despite being the designated official host ship, I had to vacate the premier jetty a few days before 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 Jacques Cartier 450ième Corp and their entourage. (I moved into Basin St Charles now Fleet School Quebec's private jetty)





My role after sailing was to act as escort and SAR primary response down the St Lawrence to North Sidney where, after a two day port visit I officially started the race to St Malo. It was a great event on a beautiful summer day. My guests included RAdm Freddie Mifflin, several politicians, federal and provincial, and a host of hangers on enjoying the Navy's hospitality.

Herewith a photo of the event.



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

The trip down river was uneventful. I even conducted a three day port visit in Sept Illes and caught up with all the boats in North Sidney. They ranged from the big ones like the USCG Eagle, the German Gorch Fock, the Soviet Kruzenshtern, the Polish Dar Mlodziezy, Columbia's Gloria, Portugal's Sagres, etc. and down to thirty footers.

The Admiral joined me on arrival in North Sidney, gave me a handful of Dunhill Monte Cristo cigars (I later gave them to Charles Westropp, D1, a cigar connoisseur). He 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 one 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. He was Deputy MarCom when 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 through your actions can it be lost." The next day I sailed with STANAVFORLANT.



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

D1(Skeena, Assiniboine, Margaree) with Preserver in company were in Bermuda when the class C race to Halifax was started. The Barque Marques with 19 on board went down with all lives lost. We all sailed for the SAR mission. After a few days I was detached to sail independently to make my Quebec City commitment. Assiniboine under Wilf Lund did most of the work until the fleet arrived in Halifax.



The Barque Marques in her glory



## SECOND STANAVFORLANT DEPLOYMENT -1985

In April 1985 I sailed single ship to Portsmouth to relieve HMCS Iroquois (Bear Brown) in STANAVFORLANT (SNFL). This was to be my last trip in command and my second tour with SNFL.

The crossing involved a high SOA (16 knots) which necessitated a fuel stop in the Azores. Moreover, given the time of year, the annual ice berg migration South was also a factor in shaping my course. The crossing included two harrowing events: a helo recovery in zero visibility with a relative wind on the nose in excess of 100 knots and a not unexpected 57 degree roll to port. Despite the fact that the motor cutter davit was briefly under water, damage was limited to the loss of one spare life jacket canister, a few guard rail stanchions and the fuelling hoses secured under the flight deck overhang.



Memorial service for HMCS Athabaskan at Plouescat cemetery  
with Margaret by my side

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



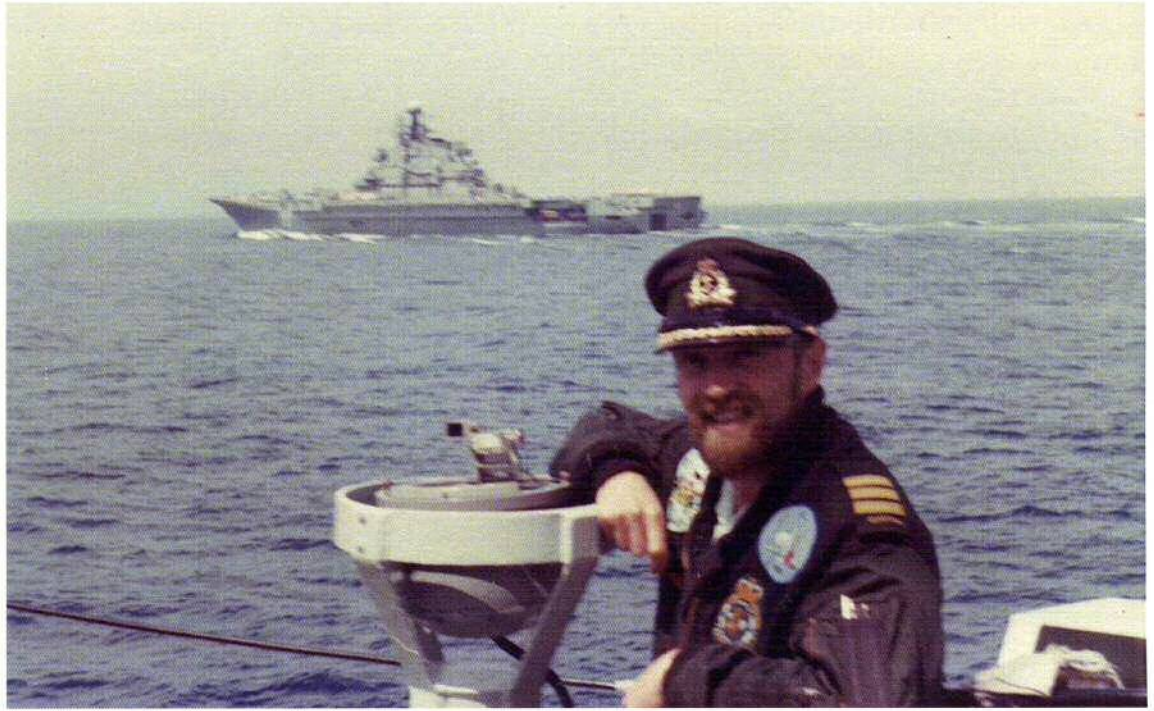
Upon departure from Portsmouth the squadron conducted port visits to Lorient in France, Esbjerg in Denmark and Christiansand in Norway, participated in ASW exercises in the Skagerrak, and ended up in Leixoes, Portugal. With tug assistance we were berthed two abreast, starboard side to and facing West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



Even before the boiler room crew secured, Skeena and Rhineland Pfaltz were ordered to sail immediately to intercept a Soviet TG exiting Gibraltar enroute Murmansk, consisting of their first aircraft carrier Kiev, one Kresta II, one Kynda, one Kashin and an oiler. Kiev just underwent her first and major update and CinCEastLant was keen to obtain up to date ACINT and ELINT on her.

Skeena was detached off Scotland when relieved by the USS Virginia, CGN 38. The trek North was rather uneventful. There was no attempt at RAS or flying operations at all. Occasionally a Helix helicopter 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 500 yards. As we closed head on with a relative speed of 40 knots, 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 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 challenging berthing situation whereby upon entering the mole I had to twist the ship about 90 degrees and back her up for a half a mile or so to regain my berth outboard the Pieter Florisz. As the saying goes nothing succeeds like success.

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



Homecoming - Halifax 1985

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 Carribean followed and I eventually turned over the ship to Pierre Yans in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



## MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR HMCS ATHABASKAN, G07

In 1985 Skeena replaced 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. This is where this story begins.

I knew that after her sinking by German torpedo boats in April 1944, over 50 members of Athabaskan's crew, 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 160km by road, I arranged for a memorial service through our embassy in Paris. LCdr Roger Drolet, a Subbie I served with years earlier and then the Naval Attaché tackled the task with great enthusiasm and panache. As an aside, I had to inform ComStaNavForLant 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 Ottawa, Skeena's predecessor as the FLU, was first 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 and Nice .- a hard life, n'est-ce pas?

Prior to departure from Halifax I requested a letter, written by Commander Dave Cogden, CO of the current Athabaskan, to be read at the memorial service. A few photos of the event are below.



Arrival at the Plouescat cemetery





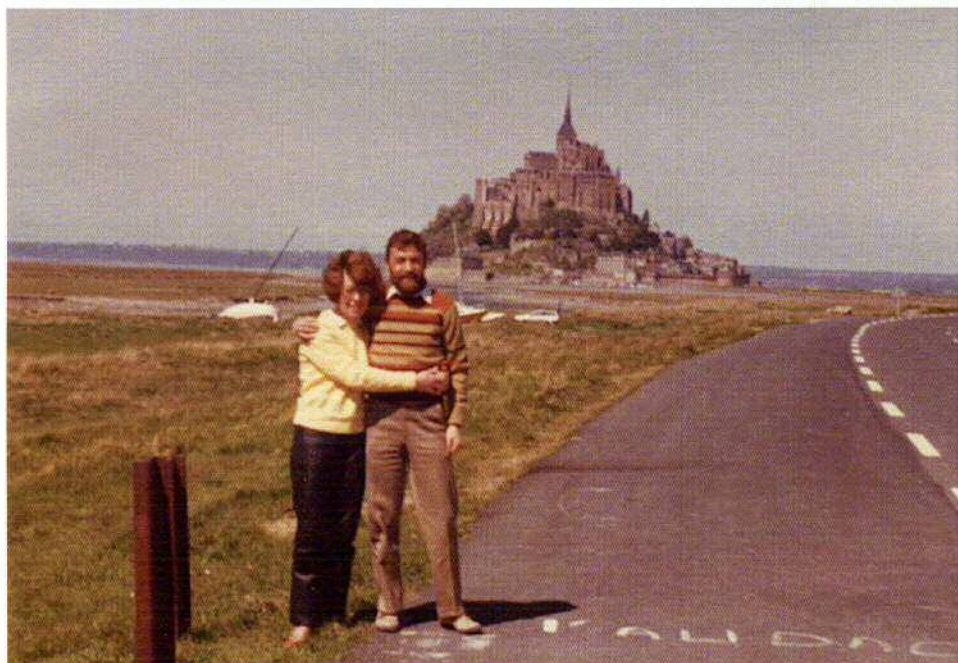




A reception at 'La Mairie', City Hall, followed the ceremony. Herewith the real purpose behind this anecdote. With drink in hand, I was approached by a lady, circa middle age. She told me that at the time of the sinking Plouescat was under the Nazis' yoke. When the locals discovered Athabaskan's dead 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 witnessing 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 departed for Denmark Margaret and I took the opportunity to visit Mont Saint Michel. Spectacular, to say the least

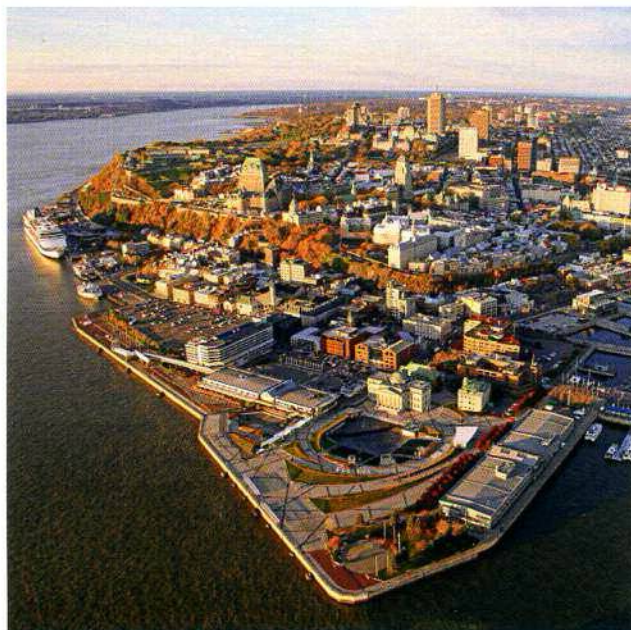




## A BIT OF NAVAL RESERVE HISTORY

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 HMC Ships 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 later 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 a Carcy, the premier piece of real estate on Quebec's magnificent and historic harbour.



The completion of Commander of 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 Day. They actually had a real job to do. Moreover the defence budget allocated funds for new ships, the Kingston Class, long overdue replacement quarters for many long established naval divisions and the creation of new divisions. Eventually rented quarters at Pointe a Carcy were purchased and redeveloped to what it is today.

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 Andre Nadeau (ex-CO Algonquin) as his deputy, things had already reached a significant level of maturity by the time I succeeded him in 1988. HMC Ships Radisson (Trois Rivieres) and d'Iberville (Rimouski) were in commission, to be soon followed by Champlain (Chicoutimi), Jolliet (Sept-Iles) and Prevost (London). The Kingston Class were in contract and negotiations to purchase the Pointe a Carcy precinct were well advanced.

The main focus of my two years as COND (1988-90) revolved heavily on rebuilding the Naval Reserve's complement to recruit, train and hopefully 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 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 funding levels and personnel policies exacted significant limits on what was possible and achievable, it quickly became evident that some hard decisions had to be made. Put simply, we had far too many square pegs in round holes. In order not to distort and unbalance the rank ratios, a number of reservists, who gave us long and loyal service, had to be invited to resign or transfer to the supplementary list.

This reminds 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 responded that for the first time in its history the Naval Reserve has a clear mission and what we need is professional, well trained sailors, not Ken and Barbie Dolls in blue suits. At his invitation I was on a plane to Halifax the next day.

After what I would characterise as probably the two busiest and most rewarding years of my naval career I turned COND over to Pierre Yans and assumed command of HMCS Provider.





At home at our Quebec City residence - 4 Côte de la Citadelle  
Under the trees between Porte St Louis and the Citadel entrance



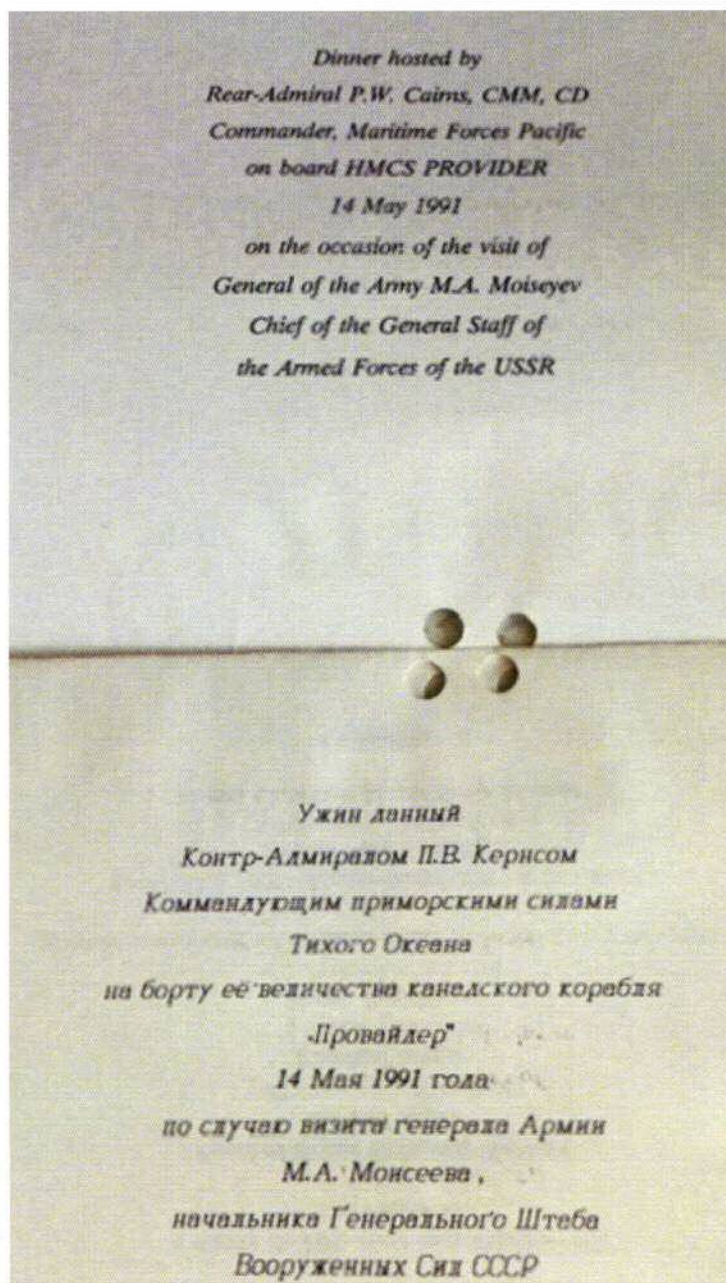


## HOSTING THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF

In 1991, amid Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, trips to Panama and back, etc. as described elsewhere, 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. This was 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 operational commands. The West Coast drew the short straw. Provider, with the biggest Wardroom, was chosen to host the official dinner.

Diners numbered in excess of two dozen including the Soviet(Russian?) delegation and their wives, their Attaché from Washington, a presumed KGB Major General, several translators, CDS, COMMARPAC, Jim Bouthilier (MARPAC Advisor) my wife Margaret and myself. The seating plan, putting it mildly, was a challenge and required approval by CDS himself.





Provider's Wardroom is wide yet quite narrow. Squeezing all these people in was not easy. Yet a last minute wrinkle arose when I was informed by COMMARPAC that General Moiseyev is an amateur magician and therefore I must add retired Brigadier Don Bell, a kindred spirit, to the table and, moreover, allocate floor space for his act in an already crowded Wardroom.

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.

A few interesting incidents formed part of the evening as summarised below.

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

As one would expect, such events involve the traditional exchange of gifts. I presented the General with a mounted Provider Crest. He presented me with a Soviet Navy Commander's wind up watch. 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 then 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 came in a cardboard box and it lacked a proper wrist strap. It did sport a cheap and partial cardboard strap emulating the real thing. Before the brass plaque was even ready, the watch stopped running. I thought at the time that if this is representative of Russian military hardware quality, we have nothing to fear.





## PROVIDER AND THE GULF WAR - 1991

This photo (unrelated and my favourite) was taken off Tahiti when as CO Provider I commanded the Training Squadron Task Group as a consolation prize for missing out on the 1991 Gulf War.



In fact I was tasked five times to take part in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. They were all cancelled because things just moved too fast.

I was at sea on local ops when I was asked "How many 500lbs iron bombs and CRV 7 rockets can you take to Qatar to support F18 operations". It was the only FLASH message I ever received. My reply, based on a number of assumptions (no helos, magazines empty, ammo palletised, two pallets high in the hangar, flight deck and magazines, C130 style tie down straps in good supply), produced a number significantly high resulting in a tasking to return to Esquimalt, deammo, store ship and proceed to Prince Rupert to load. (apparently the ammo was on its way already in a fleet of eighteen wheelers from CFAD Dundurn and Vancouver did not authorise a transit through the city).

When I briefed the troops, the plan was a 79 day round trip with a Singapore port visit on the way back with the slight glitch of a mine field just before my anchorage off Qatar. When I saw the long faces I had basically two things to say: that on any good day we are sitting on tons of ammo and 119,000 barrels of fuel, so adding a few bombs here and there is not much of a change; and upon sailing from Prince Rupert we will all (300) shave our heads bald (including the 36 women in the ship's company) 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. I did tell them that upon our return to Esquimalt after 79 days we should all have our hair back in any event. 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 how disappointed I was in this outcome. Less for missing the war, but more for missing out on the greatest photograph ever.

Even so, 1991 was a busy year. Two trips to Panama to escort HURON on her way to Iraq and later RESTIGOUCHE, on her way East to be the first West Coaster to join STANAVFORLANT, a trip to Guam to meet HURON on her way home and a 15 week deployment with the Training Squadron to Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia and Tonga.



What a tired Captain looks like



## THE VADM EDMUNDSON SAGA

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 at the time and the ship's navigator. I was Provider's captain at the time.



Me and Haydn in happier days

In media interviews she made a number of comments and allegations in relation to the culture of the ship under my command. I have abstained from making specific comments on the accusations levied at the Admiral. I did, however, voice my refutation of some of the things alleged. These were provided to the Admiral, JAG, the CFNIS and Ms Ashley Burke, a CBC News journalist who wrote extensively about this matter. The thrust of my refutation was to cast a shadow over the credibility of the accuser when the matter came before the courts. These are summarised below.

1. 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.



Captain Russell Moore (later Rear Admiral and Commander Maritime Forces Pacific) received the first women in Provider. He put in place a very robust non-fraternisation policy. It was maintained by his successor and my predecessor Captain Ken Scotten, then by me. I can honestly claim that by 1991 there was a minimum four year period under three COs demanding and accepting nothing less than absolute respect for and discipline between sailors. I am not aware of a single lapse during my two years in command.

In July 1992 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 wishes 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 participating Australian ships, and told him all I knew. I also sent a confidential exclusive message to COMMARPAC outlining these facts. These are all verifiable facts, and all to say 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 go to sea and in all fairness the one I will leave behind is the one I can 'trade' with the base 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.

2. The accuser said she was later reprimanded by the chain of command and given a recorded warning in her file for speaking French aboard ship 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 of the allegation was Commander Serge Bertrand, a Quebecois. To suggest that either of us would allow such action to be taken is ludicrous.

3. "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, 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.

4. "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 LT Bonnie Henry, now the Chief Health Officer of BC. It was ship policy, through 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



(with one now Commodore Josee Kurtz and the Commandant of RMC Kingston). I therefore cannot attach any credibility to her claim that "there was nobody she could trust.

5. 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 mess deck with 36 bunks was the only one with only internal access to the ablution unit. (and the reason for this allocation of living quarters).

With 36 junior NCOs in the ship, the mess deck was seldom if ever totally vacant. It would take a very brave and stupid sailor to enter the showers as claimed.



Taking a pie in the face from whom I believe to be the accuser.

She paid \$50 for the privilege. The stunt was a raffle prize to raise money for United Appeal.





*This little booklet of memories spanning 51 years of naval service in the Royal Canadian and Royal Australian Navies is dedicated to my beautiful wife Margaret*

*Captain Steve Foldesi, CD  
RCN ret'd, RAN ret'd*