



# News

CANADIAN NAVAL TECHNICAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

**CNTHA News**

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## Canadian Naval Defence Industrial Base Project

The CANDIB committee actively continues its mission to gather and document as much historical information as possible on naval ship and equipment programs since 1930, and the effect they had on Canadian industry. We are trying to find people who were part of this developmental activity, calling on the experience and recollections of as many people as possible.

As we reported in our last issue of *CNTHA News*, CANDIB has established an oral history project with the generous support of the Directorate of History & Heritage. The committee has now acquired audio recording equipment, and has already begun conducting interviews in the Ottawa area. Plans are to continue interviewing in Ottawa and on the two coasts over the next few months. We are very interested in hearing from persons who may have appropriate experience in Canadian naval-industrial relations and would like to be considered for interview. We are also eager to hear from people who might wish to conduct interviews on behalf of the CANDIB committee.

We were honoured recently to receive a number of FHE-400 manuals, photographs, reports and drawings from **Tom Armstrong Bennett**. During the 1960s Tom was a key member of the 11-man engineering team at de Havilland Aircraft in Toronto that designed the ocean-going hydrofoil HMCS *Bras D'Or*. Tom and his wife **Joan** met with the CANDIB committee on October 14 to donate the docu-

ments to the Canadian Naval Technical History Association archive collection. Tom kindly agreed to speak about his experiences with the hydrofoil project, and to allow us to record his story for posterity. He was the first person to be interviewed for the CANDIB oral history project. (See article next page.) A verified transcript of the interview will soon be available on the website indicated below.

Please visit us at <http://www.cntha.ca/CANDIB.html>. We will be posting our progress on it periodically and will be expanding the website on a continuing basis. Anyone who would like to learn more about CANDIB is invited to contact Tony Thatcher by phone at (613) 567-7004 ext 227 or email:

[tony.thatcher@snclavalin.com](mailto:tony.thatcher@snclavalin.com)

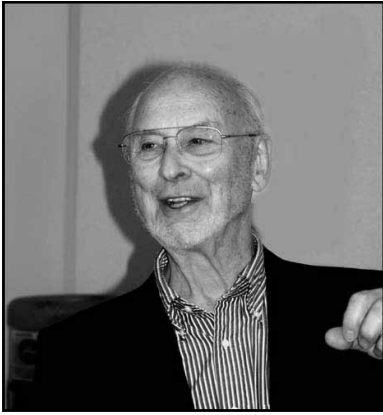
— **Tony Thatcher,**  
**CANDIB Committee Chairman**



CANDIB's First Oral History Interview:

## Tom Armstrong Bennett remembers the Anti-Submarine Hydrofoil Vessel, HMCS *Bras d'Or*

by Don Cruickshank



Tom Armstrong Bennett

The CANDIB historical research project moved a further step ahead in mid-October 2004 as Tom Armstrong Bennett, one of the 11 members of the former de Havilland Aircraft hydrofoil development project, became the first volunteer to participate in the recently launched oral history interview program.

Tom and his wife Joan met with the committee at the request of CANDIB Chairman Tony Thatcher. Tom brought with him not just a wealth of his own recollections, but also a treasure trove of documents and photographs illustrating many of the fascinating aspects of the FHE-400 design. Using his papers, he illustrated many of the challenges that were encountered as the operating envelope for this first-of-type vessel was pushed beyond the limits of previous experience.

Interview chief Douglas Hearnshaw and his CANDIB colleagues had prepared a set of questions, the answers to many of which were found in the boxes of literature Tom salvaged when the program was abandoned in 1972. He generously turned this material over to the CANDIB team for deposit with the DND Directorate of History and Heritage, where it will be catalogued, stored, and made available to historians of the future.

The CANDIB committee could have spent hours delving into the *Bras d'Or* program and its unique design and fabrication peculiarities. A comprehensive record of the lessons learned and experience gained in the sometimes frustrating battlegrounds of design, testing and building this unique vessel will now be on record and available for reference by engineers and historians.

That is the central objective of the oral history project, and there could hardly be a better example of its value than this first interview. To all of you readers who have old materials in your basement, or valuable memories that could add to the storehouse of information about interesting aspects of Canadian naval design and development activities: please get in touch and make arrangements to pass it on, either in writing or by participating in the oral history interview program. The particular focus of the CANDIB committee's research is, of course, on activities that have had an impact on Canadian industry.

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