

BANKS, Robert John (Bob) [UNTD DISCOVERY '43] (1923 - 2009) Age: 86



BANKS Robert John "Bob," CD Flight Lieutenant RCAF (Ret.) of North Vancouver, B.C. born March 2, 1923, passed away peacefully the evening of May 17, 2009. He is predeceased by his parents, sister Peggy, brother Bill, wife Elma, grandson Robbie and special friend Jean Scull. Bob is survived by his sister Dandy, sons Rory (Teri), Jeffrey (Donna), grandchildren Alana, Jennine and Jeremy, along with numerous nieces and nephews. Bob had many good friends, including his Northlands neighbours', his Aircrew Association friends, his fellow volunteers at the Vancouver Naval Museum and Heritage Society at HMCS Discovery, the "Black Gang", his friends from the Seaforth Highlanders Officers' Mess, the UNTD Association, everyone at the Royal Canadian Legion, West Vancouver Branch 60 and the West Vancouver Fire Service Museum as well as his fellow members of the West Vancouver Adult Pops Band. He will also be missed by his friends at the Transitional Care Unit at Evergreen House. A special thanks to the staff there, who helped care for him and brighten his days these last few months. Born on West 6th Avenue in the house his father built, a true Grandview boy, Bob was a Seaforth Highlanders cadet and went on to graduate from Vancouver Tech in 1941. He then attended UBC where he joined the COTC in 1942. In 1943 Bob joined the RCNVR, then the RCAF, serving until discharged as a Pilot Officer, Bomb Aimer in December 1944. Rejoining the RCAF Primary Reserve in 1954, he served until retiring in 1966 as a Flight Lieutenant. After the war, Bob attended the Vancouver School of Art, where he met, then married Elma in 1947. A 62 year career in commercial art followed, where he did work for such firms as Crown Zellerbach, Domtar, Macmillan Bloedel, CANFOR, CP Air, Air Canada, BC Rail and BC Transit, where he achieved some measure of fame with the cartoons he did for the "Buzzer", viewed by thousands of bus commuters from 1955 until 1975. Bob illustrated textbooks for J.M. Dent in the beginning of his career and covers for the Law Society of British Columbia's "Advocate" journal from 1977 until 1999. Bob also worked on three centennials for the provincial government, creating Century Sam and Centennial Sue, well known cartoon figures. He also produced calendars and paintings for the RCMP and art work for Pacific Yachting magazine. In his later years, Bob was bitten by the travel bug, cruising to various world ports and flying to Europe, Las Vegas and L.A. As he started to slow down, he embraced computers. He also loved cars, evident in his many paintings and the 1930 Model A Ford Sport Coupe he owned until recently. All family and friends are invited to a celebration of Bob's life and career to be held Saturday, May 30, 2009 at 10:00 am at the Boal Chapel, 1505 Lillooet Road, North Vancouver, refreshments to follow.

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From Robert Williamson's "Untidy Tales" and "Spindrift"

JOINING THE UNTD IN 1943

Robert Banks

This is a rare story of the officer training program in its infancy! In September of 1942, the Federal Government passed the National Selection Service Act, making military training compul-



Robert Banks UNTD 1943

sory, for all fit males attending university. What follows are the exciting adventures of a Vancouver University student, Bob Banks and his efforts to join the armed forces in 1943.

In the fall of 1942 I was a second year student at the University of British Columbia. I was a member of the rowing club, the boxing club and a sergeant in the Canadian Officer Training Corps (COTC) under Colonel (Professor) Gordon Shrum Ph.D. At that time I was having trouble keeping my mind on my BA studies and had signed up to join the Canadian Scottish Regiment at the end of the term. However, in December I heard about the new UNTD plan for university students and I decided to give the RCNVR a try. In March of 1943 about twenty-five of us joined the navy at *HMCS Discovery* as Ordinary Seamen (UNTD).

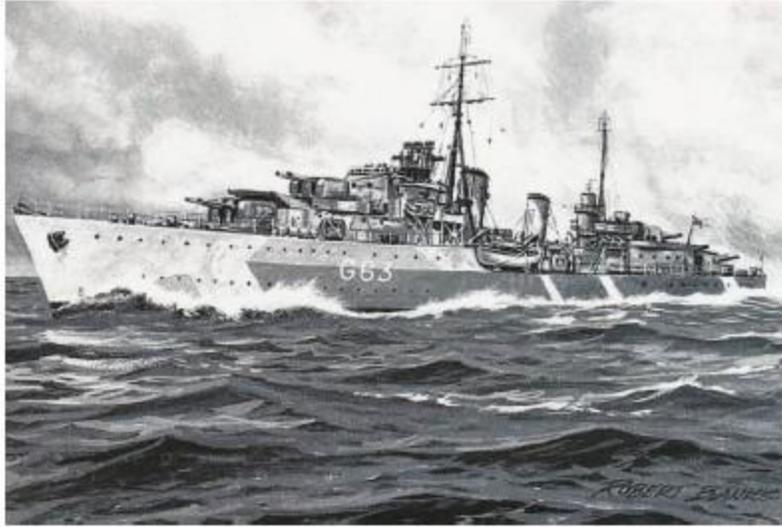
Some of my classmates were: John Rickaby, Keith Lightbody, Tom Grant, Ray Cullinane, Jim Miller, Don Johnston, Don McKay, Ted Pratt, D.J. Hopkins, Q.R. Robertson, Gerry Birch, John Livingstone, Grant Robinson, Don Mann and Hal Burke. We received our basic training at *Discovery* until May when we entrained for Toronto and more training at *HMCS York*. We were assigned to Assiniboine Division.

On June 16, 1943, after picking up more UNTD types on our way across Canada, we arrived at the large new base, *HMCS Cornwallis*, at Deep Brook, Nova Scotia. I believe *Cornwallis* was at that time only a month or so old – the ground was either red dust or red mud depending on the weather.



UNTD recruits arrive at *HMCS Cornwallis* 1943

Our training consisted of three weeks of gunnery, three weeks of seamanship and two of torpedo. Drill was done on the highway, as there was still no parade ground. Part of the program included a little sea time. Most of the ships received two or three cadets, but I was sent alone to *HMCS Red Deer*, a Bangor class mine sweeper. Within thirty seconds of saluting the quarterdeck, it was all over the ship that a "green" timid cadet was on board.



The painting of *HMCS Haida* by Robert Banks that appeared on the commemorative plate series for the 75th Anniversary of the RCN in 1985 *Photo courtesy Robert Banks*

In 1954 I joined the RCAF Mobilization Assignment Training Plan (Reserve) as a Manning Support Officer, retiring in 1966 as a Flight Lieutenant. Today I am an associate member of the NOAC and a volunteer with the Vancouver Naval Museum.

All in all, I enjoyed my short association with the UNTD and the RCNVR. I have very fond memories and no regrets whatsoever. I still keep in touch with old mates from the RCNVR and the RCAF, but a lot of us are beginning to fall off the perch.

Editor's Note. FLt. Bob Banks CD came to our attention when he inquired about obtaining a UNTD lapel pin. Bit by bit we drew his story from him and when shown his photographs and painting, we were overwhelmed. His last known address is #22 – 1001 Northlands Drive, North Vancouver, BC.

UNTD'S COMMEMORATIVE NAVY ART

Michael G. Thompson, Halifax

As a former UNTD cadet 1945 to 1949, I read Bob Banks story about joining the UNTD in Chapter II (see page 39) with great interest. But what really excited me is the fact that now I know about the artist whose painting of the *Sackville* adorns the top of my fireplace.

I came into the possession of that painting in 1985. I was employed at the head office of Domtar in Montreal when the head of the Fine Papers division, Roger Maltby, asked me to come up to his office. He knew that I had a naval background and informed me of a poster that Domtar was putting out in honor of the Canadian Navy's 75th anniversary. He then gave me a copy of the poster and my choice of a print of one of the 5 paintings commissioned by Domtar for the poster. I chose one of the numbered copies of *Sackville*. That copy, one of 100, is now on *Sackville* and is just above the Book of Remembrance in the forward upper mess deck.

Upon my retirement in 1989, Domtar graciously presented me with the original painting of *Sackville*. Mind you I had made it quite clear that I would really treasure such a painting if it ever came into my possession! In the meantime, I had managed to obtain a few more copies of the poster as well as a few numbered copies of the other paintings for some of my old veteran Navy friends I believe that the 5 paintings done for Domtar were: *Sackville*, *Waskesiu*, *Haida*, *Ontario* and *Bonaventure*.

After retirement from Domtar, I wondered about the fate of the remaining paintings still in Domtar's possession. I moved from Montreal to Halifax in 1990 and decided to pursue the matter. After a call or two, I found out that the Company was quite prepared to part with them, but only to an appropriate and meaningful archive. I then got in touch with Marilyn Gurney, Director of the Maritime Command Museum. I drafted a letter, which she edited to suit her style and, lo and behold, shortly thereafter 3 of the 5 paintings were sent to the Museum. The only 2 missing are those of the *Sackville*, which I have, and that of *Haida* which, I presume, may be with the *Haida* people in

Hamilton. The Museum also has a copy of the poster, which is now quite a collector's item.

Domtar used the prints of the limited edition paintings as an advertising medium for its Fine Paper Division. All prints were accompanied with a nice little pamphlet, describing the history of the ship and a brief resume of its painter, namely Robert Banks. In case anyone is wondering about my painting of the *Sackville*, I have already included it in my will. It is to be donated to the *Sackville* Trust, and I might do it whilst still living. Should Robert Banks ever come to Halifax, it might be a nice occasion to do a presentation.

Bob Banks replied.

"I'm flattered that Mike Thompson has a painting of mine over his fireplace! His story of Domtar and the poster is fascinating. So often, after the art is finished, nothing is heard of what the client did with the originals.

The story of the poster began in 1985. Being an ex-navy person, I decided to create a poster of ships of the RCN from its inception. I then wrote letters to various large companies across Canada, hoping that one of them would help me finance the project. Domtar said yes, they were interested. When they saw the poster, they suggested I do paintings of five of the ships. If you look far down to the lower right-hand corner of the poster, you should see my name. In other words, I painted all of the ships on the poster, and am adding more in my golden (rusty) years. After some years, Domtar gave me permission to make copies of the poster, which I did with some success."

AUBREY'S ODYSSEY

LCdr. Aubrey Millard RCNR (Ret'd.)

After an incredible three and a half-year odyssey in a 32-foot sailboat, LCDR Aubrey and his wife, Dr. Judy Millard (dentistry), recently took a breather in Toronto to visit their family and friends. Aubrey is a member of the UNTD Association and attributes his sailing enthusiasm to his UNTD training. The Millards have been showing slides of their sailing adventures at NOAC luncheons and various Yacht Clubs.