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The YAG Era Draws to an End

By LCdr Richard Moller



YAG 306 exiting Ganges Harbour, 1998.

Long before anyone currently serving joined the Navy—and before all but a handful were born—the YAGs commenced their service to Her Majesty—well, actually, Her father. At the end of August 2008 the last YAG sailed her last voyage. My first experience on a YAG was back in 19... well let's just say back when I was a 14 year old Sea Cadet and I was invited to participate on a "Christmas Cruise" with HMCS CATARAQUI. While at the time I had decided that the Navy would play a role in my life, I never considered that I would be one of the captains on the last YAG trip organized by the Central Region Naval Reserve Divisions. A duty I eagerly performed.

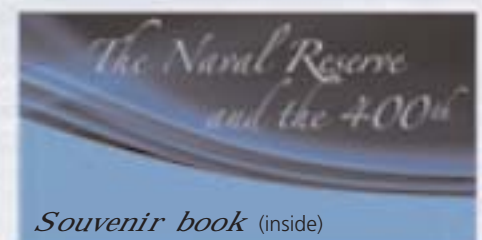
The ending of an era gives us an opportunity to reflect on our service to date. The YAGs, and those that served in them, have seen monumental changes over the years. The development of new weapons systems,

the creation of the Canadian Armed Forces, the integration of women into all parts of our Navy, the end of the Cold War, the introduction of several new classes of ships, and changes in YAG employment from yard ferries, to training platforms, to a test bed for route survey equipment. Not all these changes came without pain, but through all of them our Navy seems to have remembered the words of Prime Minister Arthur Meighen, who in 1926 declared, "Difficulties do not crush men, they make them." The YAGs and their crews can look back with pride at their accomplishments.

When an era ends it also gives us an opportunity to look forward to what the future holds in store. Like the past, our future will not be without challenges. Our Naval Reserve can look forward to the leadership of our new Commodore, while our Navy and our nation can look forward to an even greater asset—us. We are the ones who can

make a difference to our Navy. We, as individuals, divisions, ship's companies and units, are the ones who will put our Navy on track for the future. The introduction of the ORCA class, a new Joint Support Ship, the announced Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ships, HALIFAX and KINGSTON class replacements, a change in strategic focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all of these things will make up only a part of what will be required to transform our Navy, our Canadian Forces, and our nation. If we fail to re-create ourselves, we risk being nothing but a footnote on the pages of History.

Continued on page 6



The YAG Era Draws to an End (continued)

By LCdr Richard Moller

Looking back to what is perhaps the greatest organizational transformation in history we see that the story of the Magna Carta is not the history of a document, but the history of an argument. The barons who wrote the Magna Carta had in mind only the stabilization of their rights and privileges, and limiting those of the king, but the charter has taken on an enduring legacy in popular history. The Magna Carta embarked Britons, and eventually Western civilization, on a bold new adventure. The dramatic restructuring underway will require our Canadian Forces, our Navy, and ourselves, to embrace bold new adventures. Reorganization does not result in transformation unless it is rooted in an equally dramatic change in organizational culture. The Magna Carta is enduring because after its creation it was forged by leaders and honed by public will. Does our Navy have the leaders and the will to make our change charter a Magna Carta? Time will tell. The more demanding and pertinent question is: What part will you play in shaping the future?



Navigating on paper because the B & # \$ CO wouldn't let us use the laptop, February 2008.*

When the YAGs came into service only a handful of people in the world had heard of a computer, radio aids to navigation were in nascent development, and wireless voice communication was an expensive novelty with limited range. Today, we put a laptop computer on the chart table and let it fix the ship's position using GPS satellites, and take for granted that it will plot our position accurately on an electronic chart while we use mobile devices to send emails around the world in seconds, and call our friends and families to tell them we will be home soon. These advances in scientific knowledge and technology have not changed the fundamental requirement for a naval service, or for our continued duty to maintain the maritime security of our nation.

Perhaps it is all the new technology that drives us to study everything scientifically, but how many of us are studying ourselves? Too often we let passion and affiliation blind us, but if we are to improve our Navy, we must take no dogmas for granted, nor satisfy our doubts by ceasing to think. We may have the Internet, and spacecraft landing on Mars, but human nature is, I imagine, much the same this moment, as it was some five thousand years ago when Scorpion first united Upper Egypt. Whether we are in this world as a state of probation for another, or whether we cease altogether when we exhale our last breath, we have duties to perform: duties to our fellow humans, to our friends, and to ourselves.

Fulfilling our duties has never been easy, but our continued existence demands our continued diligence. As we say goodbye to the YAGs, let us bask in the memories they gave us, and strengthen our resolve to create new ones in the vessels of our future Navy. My most recent crew helped to create some enduring final memories of my service in YAGs, and once again reminded me that no matter how many classes of ships we create and discard, dedication to duty will always be a core competency of an effective Navy. 🇨🇦

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(Photos by P.R. Moller)



YAG 312 follows 4 Squadron in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.