

matters of OPINION

Navy wife no more :o(- retirement loss

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Penny Rogers Contributor

The room was filled to capacity that afternoon in May when my husband and his good friend held a dual retirement function at the Chiefs and Petty Officers' Mess in Esquimalt. Between the two of them they had served the navy for more than 70 years.

Listening to the speeches and watching the presentations given to each of them on this, their last day in the Canadian Forces, unexpectedly stirred many emotions in me. It was here I realized that not just my husband was leaving behind the life in blue that day.

I never donned a uniform or served a day aboard ship, yet the navy weaved its way through my life as surely as it did his.

Our first date was at the Junior Ranks mess. A year later, on that same dance floor, he asked me to marry him. That was over 30 years ago.

Back then, before Internet and cell phones, before Skype and Expedia, when the ship slipped from the jetty and set sail for places unknown, it meant waiting weeks for a shore call or, worse yet, a call from aboard the ship at sea. I never warmed to the ship-to-shore calls that required me to say "over" after completing a thought and "over and out" after saying "I love you" at the end of the conversation. A conversation you never really knew how many other ears were privy to.

Part of the thrill was waiting for a letter to make its way half way around the world by mail, but that was also one of the downfalls. Days could turn into weeks, and the anticipation would often turn to anger or frustration at the sight of yet another empty mailbox.

I remember sitting in the Wurtele Arena, too often the only spectator, watching my husband dance around with the puck as he played on one ship's team or another. My hands, feet and nose seemed perpetually



photo courtesy Penny Rogers

After 35 years of military service CPO2 Reg Roger retired from the navy. Also leaving the military family is his wife Penny. Above CPO1 Dexter Goulding presents CPO2 Rogers with a shadowbox in honour of his retirement.

frozen some years, especially when the team made it into the base play downs or did well during the Cock of the Walk tournament.

Years later, as his dance on ice slowed and he turned to coaching the old-timers team instead of playing, I still sat alone in the stands watching the game through watering eyes and dripping nose.

During the early years of our marriage I keenly ironed creases into slacks and wrinkles out of shirts. As years turned into decades, the thrill faded and I often passed the iron to a reluctant husband, or hoped that no one would notice the lack of iron on fabric when I pulled uniforms from a hot dryer and hung them quickly onto hangers before stuffing them into the closet and slamming the door.

Conversations over our evening meals more often than not revolved around the latest activity onboard ship or the latest plans for an upcoming trip.

Friends of his became friends of mine. Couples became parents and we watched as their children grew into young adults. When some of those children began joining the military, it simply reinforced the fact that retirement was mandatory.

So, as he leaves 35 years of military life behind, I know these things: I will always be proud of him for his service to this country. I am grateful that he chose me to take along on the ride of a lifetime.

And, I will miss calling myself a navy wife.

Head of navy gives a strategic perspective

Lt(N) Haley Mooney Navy PA

VAdm Dean McFadden didn't hold back when he presented a full strategic perspective on the navy today and what he envisions for it in the future at three town halls this past Monday, July 11.

The Pacific Fleet Club was filled for both the Ordinary Seaman to Petty Officer First Class, and the Chief Petty Officer Second Class to Lieutenant(Navy) briefs, and in the afternoon the Admiral had the same energy and gusto in

his presentation to a full house of Lieutenant Commanders and above.

The Chief of the Maritime Staff conveyed several messages during his enthusiastic and frank discussion with navy personnel. He talked about the great things this navy is accomplishing and how the Canadian Navy is "an incredibly innovative bunch" to accomplish so much with a smaller fleet relative to many other countries. He also pointed out that maritime forces are back to doing the business they were

doing 2000 years ago, more so than at any other time in modern naval history.

The Canadian Navy is involved in sea control, protection of international interests and dealing with the rising sense of lawlessness that is pervading the seas and destabilizing the waters around East Africa.

The Admiral then discussed the binary relationship the two coasts currently hold - an "us versus them" attitude when it comes to accomplishments, and spoke about his vision of a future joint-

operationally focused navy, where missions will not be reserved for the navy of only one coast. This has already come to fruition in the case of HMCS Vancouver replacing HMCS Charlottetown off the coast of Libya.

There was a lot to learn from our current head of the navy, and unfortunately limited time to impart his views. It was easy however, to be infected by his enthusiasm and optimism for the future of our flexible and innovative fleet.

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