

Eulogy for Commander Roger Cyr

by Admiral (Ret'd) Ken Summers

As we say in the Navy, early on the 2nd April, Commander Roger Cyr crossed the bar and entered into God's safe harbour.

Good afternoon, thank you for joining us to honour a man whose life defied expectation, whose service shaped the Navy we know today, and whose friendship enriched the lives of everyone fortunate enough to be in his orbit. My name is Ken Summers, and for more than half a century Roger Cyr was one of my closest friends.

Roger's story began in Montreal on 2 September 1940. He grew up alongside his brothers Richard and Réjean, and like many young men of his generation, he tested boundaries — sometimes a little too boldly. At seventeen, when most of us were still trying to figure out who we were, Roger found himself standing before a juvenile court judge after stealing a car. The judge gave him a choice: a youth detention centre, or the Royal Canadian Navy.

Roger chose the Navy. And thank God he did — because that decision didn't just change his life. It shaped the lives of countless sailors, officers, engineers, and friends who would come to rely on his steadiness, his intellect, and his unwavering sense of duty.

He began as a seaman radio operator, serving in ships like HMCS *Cayuga*, *Terra Nova*, and *Restigouche*, and at Naval Radio Station Newport Corner. Back then, he stood out — not because he sought attention, but because he worked harder, learned faster, and cared more deeply than anyone expected from a young man who had arrived in uniform by way of a judge's ultimatum. That effort and dedication paid dividends.

In 1970, Roger was commissioned from the ranks and became a naval officer — a milestone that spoke volumes about his character and capability. After training he served aboard HMCS *Miramichi* and *Margaree*. But Roger was never content to stay still. He transferred to the naval engineering branch, earned an engineering degree from the Royal Military College in Kingston, and became, as I saw firsthand, one of the Navy's foremost combat systems engineers.

His fingerprints are on the Canadian Patrol Frigate program — a legacy that will outlast all of us. At National Defence Headquarters, he became the go-to expert on data links and combat systems, the person people called when the problems were complex and the answers mattered. He graduated from the NATO Defence College in Rome and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Military Merit — honours he wore with humility, but which reflected the respect he commanded across the Navy.

After 36 years of service, Roger retired from the Navy in 1993 as a Commander. But retirement never suited him. He moved to Luxembourg to serve with NATO as a civilian, and deployed to the former Yugoslavia as a NATO Liaison Officer. His work there earned him the Canadian Peacekeeping Medal, the NATO Service Medal, the NATO Yugoslavia Medal, and even a U.S. Commendation Medal.

And when he finally returned to Canada, he continued serving — this time in aviation security, ensuring the safety of Canadians travelling through our airports. In his so-called retirement, Roger remained a prolific writer, contributing to naval and engineering publications with the same clarity and precision he brought to every part of his life. You may have read his letters to the editor in the Times Colonist, National Post, Globe and Mail and the Hill Times.

But beyond the medals, the degrees, the deployments, and the decades of service, there was the man himself.

Roger was steady. He was loyal. He was wickedly funny in that dry, understated way that only sailors truly master. He was the kind of friend who showed up — every time, without hesitation. And he never forgot where he came from, always the “tigar de Montreal,” even as he rose to become one of the most respected engineering officers in the Canadian Navy. Now Roger wasn’t perfect – none of us are but I’m sure confessionals to Father John and Father Dean were interesting but unrecorded.

For me, Roger was a constant. Through storms literal and figurative, through promotions and postings, through the long nights at sea and the long years ashore, he was the person I could count on. We shared triumphs, frustrations, and more than a few glasses raised in celebration or consolation. So, losing him feels like losing a part of my own history. For the last number of years Roger and I lunched together at least once per week. After, I always asked Roger if it was my turn to pay or his. Being an engineer he started to list our outings. I looked at his list this week, there were over 300 pubs and restaurants recorded, all with who paid!

I take comfort in this: Roger lived a life of purpose. A life of service. A life transformed not by circumstance, but by choice — the choice to rise, to serve, to lead, and to give more than he ever took.

Commander Roger Cyr stood his watch with pride and honour. And now, at last, he can rest.

Fair winds and following seas, my friend. We have the watch.