

# Chief Petty Officer First Class Robert “Red” Larsen

## Royal Canadian Navy

### Family Life:

Born Robert Burton Hart to Ethel and James Hart on July 2, 1933, he was placed in the Children’s Aid Society’s Toronto Infants Home in March 1934. In 1936, Robert was placed in the foster care of Lawrence and Amelia Larsen. He left the Larsen home in May of 1945 and moved to the Brampton farm of Jim and Isabelle Carney. After working as a farmhand for four years, he moved to Canada’s West Coast.

In May 1956, Robert married Joan Mitchell of Sidney, BC. They had three sons: Lawrence Wayne, Randall Miles and Kerry Roy. Robert enjoyed physical sports and played Canadian Football for navy teams on the east and west coasts. He played Senior B lacrosse in Victoria for 18 years. A fan of hockey, he played for most of his life including leagues in Victoria, Brampton, and Tiverton. In 1982, he took up curling at the Brampton Curling Club. After moving to Kincardine, he joined the executive of the curling club and was the iceman for four years. Robert was a proud member of Royal Canadian Legion and served two terms as President of Kincardine Branch 183. He was an active member in several other associations including the Canadian Naval Divers Association, Korean Veterans Association, Royal Canadian Naval Association, Kincardine Probus Club and the Underwater Medicine Society. In January of 1991, Joan passed away. Robert met Emma Greco the same year and the two married in 2011. He passed away on April 23, 2020, at age 86.



### Service History:

Chief Petty Officer First Class Larsen enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy on March 19, 1951, in Vancouver. After serving on the east coast aboard HMCS *Crescent*, he departed for the Korean War aboard HMCS *Athabaskan* as a gunner in October 1952. During his 14-month tour in Korea, he was trained as a diver. Upon return to Canada in January 1954, he commenced a full-time deep sea naval diving career, eventually becoming a Clearance Diver where he dealt with explosive disposal assignments. In 1970, he trained as a submersible submarine pilot for the navy’s first submersible SDL-1. In 1976, he was appointed the chief of the military bomb disposal team for the water events of the Montreal Olympics, held in Kingston, Ontario. That same year, he was posted as the chief diver to the Experimental Diving Unit at the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine (DCIEM) in CFB Toronto.

In 1980, he retired from the military taking a position as the civilian manager of the navy’s saturation diving complex at DCIEM. Robert took a year off to work with Simon Fraser University, operating their new hyperbolic facility. He returned to DCIEM as the Hyperbaric Operations Officer in 1982. From 1976 to 1993, Robert operated Toronto General Hospital’s hyperbaric chamber on a as required call-out basis during nights and weekends. He officially retired in 1993, at age 60.



### Decorations:

- United Nations Service Medal
- Korean War Medal
- Canadian Forces Decoration
- Centennial Medal

**Service History:** Over the course of his career, Chief Petty Officer Larsen served on numerous ships of the Royal Canadian Navy including the HMCS *Discovery*, *Cornwallis*, *Stadacona*, *Crescent*, *Naden*, *Athabaskan*, *Malahat*, *Granby* and *Niagara*.