

Chief Warrant Officer Arthur E. Rest, MMM, CD (Retired)

Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Arthur Rest has always embodied the skill, esprit de corps and values that define the Corps of RCEME, and his military career and continued contributions to the Corps are the story of a soldier who grew from a young transport driver into one of the most respected technical and professional leaders of the Canadian Forces in the Cold War era.

1. Military Career – Technical and Soldiering Excellence

CWO Rest enrolled in the Canadian Army in 1960, serving first with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps in Canada and Germany before transferring to the Corps of RCEME as a Vehicle Technician in 1966. This decision marked the beginning of a lifetime devoted to technical excellence and to the soldiers of the Corps of RCEME.

Fresh from Group 1 training in Kingston, Craftsman Rest was posted to the 2nd Battalion, The Canadian Guards in Petawawa, where his talent and work ethic quickly distinguished him. Supervisors observed early that he could be trusted with the most difficult jobs – a reputation that followed him throughout his career.

The following decades saw Arthur Rest posted to Kingston, Borden, Beijing (Canadian Embassy), Calgary, Lahr, Comox and Ottawa, during which he took on increasingly demanding roles within the RCEME domain: mechanic, technician, supervisor, technical instructor at the schools in Kingston and Borden, Equipment Technical Quartermaster Sergeant (ETQMS), Base Maintenance Officer at CFB Comox and later as a technical expert working in Life Cycle Material Management in Ottawa. His supervisors, peers and subordinates noted his diligence, keen willingness to learn, adaptability, strong abilities to plan for and solve problems and overall excellence as a soldier and technician.

While posted to field force units, he consistently demonstrated an exceptional ability to diagnose, repair, and sustain equipment under austere conditions and time/resource pressure, while ensuring the motivation, mentoring and morale of the RCEME soldiers in his care through firm leadership and exemplary performance.

With 1 Service Battalion during Exercise RAPIER THRUST in 1977, WO Rest led maintenance operations in extreme winter conditions. Working long hours under canvas in sub-zero temperatures, his platoon sustained the vehicles, snowmobiles, and support equipment vital to the brigade's success. His technical leadership was credited by the Maintenance Company Sergeant-Major as a key factor in building teamwork and operational effectiveness across the company.

His subsequent service with the Royal Canadian Dragoons in Germany, where he managed the regiment's Control Office, further highlighted his mastery of technical administration and operational accountability. Later, as ETQMS at 4 Combat Engineer Regiment, he focused on the delicate balance between field engineering operations and maintenance support, strengthening trust between operators and technicians and elevating technical standards across the unit.

As he rose through the Non-Commissioned Member (NCM) leadership ranks, CWO Rest continuously expanded his technical expertise through advanced qualifications – including the

Leopard specialty, Aircraft / Airfield Ground Support Equipment, and Maintenance Manager courses. These achievements ultimately led to his assignment as senior technician on the Life Cycle Material Manager team in the Directorate for Combat Mobility at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ), in time, to the most senior non-commissioned appointment in the Corps of RCEME.

2. The Corps of RCEME Pride and Esprit de Corps

Wherever he served, Arthur Rest carried the Corps with him. From workshop floors to NDHQ, he was a natural builder of RCEME pride, cohesion, and identity. He believed deeply that technical excellence was inseparable from esprit de corps, and he lived that belief daily – by reinforcing the dignity of the trades, celebrating competence, and ensuring RCEME soldiers knew their value to the Army.

In field units, he became known for bridging the longstanding divide between operators and maintainers, fostering mutual respect through clear standards, personal example, and steady encouragement. His efforts in 1 Service Battalion, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and 4 Combat Engineer Regiment reshaped relationships between maintainers and operators, ensuring partnerships built on trust.

This lifelong devotion to the Corps reached its fullest expression with his appointment as EME Branch Chief Warrant Officer from 1991 to 1995. It was a time of rapid technical and digital evolution of land forces equipment, geopolitical challenges and the active deployments of RCEME soldiers to combat zones in Europe, Africa and elsewhere.

Amid uncertainty, he became a unifying presence for the Corps – visible, accessible, and steadfast. He ensured that RCEME's voice remained strong at senior Army and tri-service levels and that soldiers at every rank understood where the Corps was heading, why and the importance of their role.

During this period, he was also instrumental in the national and overseas celebrations of RCEME's 50th Anniversary, a milestone that rekindled pride across the Corps and reaffirmed its shared history and future purpose. By the time he retired, he was known to RCEME soldiers across Canada as "our" Branch Chief – a reputation earned through loyalty, presence, and unwavering commitment.

3. Leadership During Service and After Retirement

His leadership broadened in scope when he was assigned as the Career Manager for vehicle technicians, initially up to Master Corporal, a responsibility that placed the professional futures of nearly 2,000 soldiers in his hands. Later he was responsible for those who had reached the rank of Sergeant and above. He balanced the needs of the institution with the realities of family life, posting pressures, and personal development. Officers valued his analytical rigor; soldiers valued his fairness, accessibility, and compassion. To many young tradespeople, he was both mentor and shield – an advocate who ensured their talents were seen and their futures secured.

In 1991, his appointment as EME Branch CWO placed him at the highest level of non-commissioned leadership in the Corps. There, he served as principal advisor to multiple Directors General and senior Army leadership. His performance drew exceptional praise – as a tower of strength, an exemplary role model, and a source of invaluable counsel. In 1994, his service was formally recognized with his appointment as a Member of the Order of Military Merit.

Retirement in 1995 did not mark the end of his leadership. It merely changed its form. He went on to serve ten years on the RCEME Association Board, including four years as President, helping modernize the organization and strengthen bonds between serving members and retirees across Canada.

During his time leading the RCEME Association, CWO Rest recognized and worked hard to grow a common ethos and bond between the fragmented RCEME elements of regular/reserve/retired members, and of officers/technicians. His dedicated and tireless efforts helped unite our RCEME family together, working with the Colonel Commandants, Branch Council, and the various associations to create one RCEME Guild.

4. Canadian Forces and Public Interest

In retirement, CWO Rest continued to serve the public good by strengthening the institutions that preserve and support the Corps of RCEME. In 2001, he joined a national consulting team that conducted the Corps of RCEME Reserve Study, travelling across the country to assess reserve units and help shape the future of the RCEME Reserve through a comprehensive strategic report to senior leadership.

From 2016 to 2019, he served as Co-Chair of the RCEME Guild, representing the interests of retirees during a period of significant organizational change. For this work, he was awarded the Director RCEME Coin of Excellence, recognizing the depth of his contribution to the welfare of the extended RCEME family.

He also became a founding Director of the RCEME Foundation, supporting the RCEME Museum in Kingston and helping to safeguard the Corps' history and public legacy. Even after stepping down as a Director in 2022, he has remained a visible and committed supporter of museum, remembrance, and community initiatives linked to RCEME and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Conclusion

More than sixty years after he first donned a uniform, CWO Rest's influence continues to echo throughout the Corps of RCEME – in the soldiers he mentored, the standards he elevated, the organizations he strengthened, and the pride he helped sustain. His life of service reflects not only technical mastery and professional excellence, but also a rare constancy of character, compassion, and devotion to others.

CWO Arthur Rest embodies the very spirit of a RCEME Leader and Trailblazer. He has and continues to deliver exemplary service and leadership to the Corps both during an impressive military career and through an equally impressive legacy post-retirement as a volunteer leader championing the Corps, our people and our best values.