In the chilly, gray morning air on April 9th 2008, the Vancouver Police Department’s Marine Squad officially launched its new patrol boat with a formal naming ceremony.

The sophisticated 33-foot Eaglecraft vessel cost $500,000, and was built by Daigle Welding & Marine of Campbell River in eight months. It is powered by twin Volvo D6 330-horsepower drive packages delivering 660 horsepower, good for a top speed during sea trials of 38.8 knots at 3,575rpm and a fully-laden cruising speed of 32.5 knots at 3,100rpm. Equipped to make patrol duty as comfortable and effective as possible, it has a towing bitt for assisting vessels, a boarding system for police divers, and a special stretcher for scooping persons in distress — or bodies — out of the water. State-of-the-art electronics include a Raymarine C120 GPS/plotter/radar/depthfinder combo, Raymarine loudhailer, two Raymarine 54 VHF radios, and various police-supplied computers and electronics.

The name given to the new patrol boat follows a tradition in which the VPD remembers one of its own: 23-year-old constable Robert Gordon McBeath, a decorated First World War hero (see sidebar), was shot dead on his beat at Granville and Davie St. on October 9th, 1922, while arresting Fred Deal for impaired driving. Deal, an American from Florida, had been carrying a concealed hand gun. He served twenty-one years in a Canadian prison for his crime.

The name given to the new patrol boat follows a tradition in which the VPD remembers one of its own: 23-year-old constable Robert Gordon McBeath, a decorated First World War hero (see sidebar), was shot dead on his beat at Granville and Davie St. on October 9th, 1922, while arresting Fred Deal for impaired driving. Deal, an American from Florida, had been carrying a concealed hand gun. He served twenty-one years in a Canadian prison for his crime.

An Emotional Ceremony
The Christening ceremony of the new R.G. McBeath was held at the Main St. Pier adjacent to the Police Marine and Waterfront Unit Office on Waterfront Road. The march in of Scottish drummers in full regalia, with bagpipes playing a Scottish lament, set the tone for the inauguration. The patrol boat circled in front of the assembled dignitaries, led by the Waterfront Team’s other vessel, a well-used a 5.9 meter Zodiac, under the command of Constable Barbara Bluschke. The National Anthem was sung, and Patti Marfleet of the Police Board performed the Christening with a bottle of Champagne.

Vancouver’s chief of police, Jim Chu, spoke about the contribution that the Marine Unit makes in crime prevention and detection in the Port of Vancouver, while mayor Sam Sullivan acknowledged the contribution that the Marine Unit makes to policing services in the City. Sergeant Neil Gillespie of the Waterfront and Marine Team paid tribute to Robert G. McBeath. The service was concluded by VPD Chaplain Jim Turner who gave the prayer and blessing.

A Policing Challenge
Observing the new vessel’s official launch, I was reminded of the unique policing duties the Waterfront Team has to perform in
In Honour of a Hero

Four years prior to being shot on the streets of Vancouver, Robert Gordon McBeath was a 19-year-old Lance Corporal in the Seaforth Highlanders of the British Army. On November 20th 1917, during the battle of Cambrai in France, he volunteered to deal with a nest of machine gunners that checked the advance of his unit and which had caused heavy casualties. He moved off alone, armed with a Lewis gun and a revolver. Finding that several other machine guns were in action, McBeath attacked them with the assistance of a tank and drove the gunners to the ground in a deep dugout. McBeath rushed in after them, shot the first man who opposed him and then drove the remainder of the garrison out of the dugout. He captured three officers and thirty men. There were in all five machine guns mounted round the dugout, and by putting them out of action he cleared the way for advance of the British Army. For this demonstration of bravery McBeath was awarded the highest decoration for bravery in the British Empire, the Victoria Cross.

Tim Lynch is a public policy analyst living in Steveston. All articles referred to above can be seen at www.infolynk.ca/bcmaritimepolicy.html. Send comments to tim@infolynk.ca.