

**Robert Gordon Teather** (1947–2004) was a 28-year veteran of the [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#) (R.C.M.P.) who was awarded the [Cross of Valour](#), Canada's highest award for bravery, for a rescue he performed in 1981.

Cpl. Teather was born in [Hamilton, Ontario](#) where he joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in September 1967. Upon graduation he began and ended his service in British Columbia RCMP "E" Division. During Cpl. Teather's 30 year career with the RCMP he worked in Uniform Patrol and as a Hostage Taker-Barricaded Person Negotiator. He was also a RCMP Diver and Diving Instructor who lectured to police officers, firefighters, doctors and others throughout Canada and the U.S.A., on diving techniques, underwater crime scene photography, ice diving procedures and many other topics that are diving related. Cpl Teather was also the driving force behind getting a dive team up and operational within "E" Division. It was as a result of his persistence and dedication that the "E" Division Dive Team (known today as the Underwater Recovery Team) was formally recognized on April 1, 1977.

Cpl. Teather died at the age of 57, on November 15, 2004 at [Surrey Memorial Hospital](#) of natural causes after a battle with [diabetes](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

## The rescue<sup>[edit]</sup>

On 26 September 1981, [Corporal](#) Robert Teather, a member of the Surrey Detachment Diving Team of the R.C.M.P., rescued two fishermen trapped in the overturned hull of a boat. Early that morning, the boat *Respond* collided with a [freighter](#) near the mouth of the [Fraser River](#), in [British Columbia](#). The boat [capsized](#) with the two crewmen stranded on board. Cpl. Teather and a colleague arrived on the scene and an exploratory dive proved that only one could enter the [hull](#) at a time. Teather was inexperienced in this type of rescue, but was aware that the boat was sinking and that qualified help was miles away. Despite the lack of personnel support and unaware if the two crew members were alive he entered the [companionway](#). As visibility was limited to a few centimetres inside as he made his way into the engine room. Most of the way through the ship was done by touch. When he reached the [galley](#), he opened the door, and made his way to front of the vessel. In an air pocket fouled by [diesel](#) fumes he found the two men, one of them a non-swimmer, and their pet dog.

He instructed both on the use of underwater breathing equipment, and then took the non-swimmer on his back to safety. The door to the galley that Teather had opened shut on him, and he managed to feel his way around to the handle to open it. During that time, the seaman panicked and knocked his rescuer's mask off, but Teather managed to pin the man against the wall of the galley, put the man's goggles and [rebreather](#) back on, get the man to the surface where the other diver took over. Teather then retrieved the other survivor.

While at the surface, Teather strongly suggested that he go back down to the vessel with a bucket filled with air, put the dog's head in the bucket, and assist the dog in reaching the surface. Senior officials frowned upon the idea, stating the dog's life is not worth his own with the possibility of being trapped in the vessel. Consequently, he was relieved to find the next day when the ship was towed to shore and up onto the dock, the dog somehow managed to stay alive and came out of the ship.

Had Teather not undertaken the rescue, the two fishermen would likely have [drowned](#) or succumbed to [asphyxiation](#). For his efforts he was awarded the Cross of Valour, the highest ranking of the [Canadian Bravery Decorations](#). Currently, there have been only 20 recipients of this award; he was Canada's 13th recipient.