JSU, AMOSUP launch new lodging facility for seafarers
MARITIME ACADEMY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

KAMAYA POINT BRGY. ALAS-ASIN, MARIVELES, BATAAN, PHILIPPINES

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MAAP Profile

Geographic destiny has given the Filipino the innate talent to be an excellent seafarer. To enhance this natural skill, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) was established on January 14, 1998. The Academy stands on a 103-hectare property in Kamaya Point, Mariveles, Bataan.

The Associated Marine Officer’s and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) founded by the late Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, capitalized and developed the Academy. The new AMOSUP President, Dr. Conrado F. Oca, heads the Academy’s board of governors. The board is comprised of representatives from the private sector, the International Transport Workers Federation, the Filipino Association of Maritime Employers, the International Mariners Management Association of Japan, the Norwegian Seafarers’ Union, the International Maritime Employers’ Committee, the Danish Shipowners’ Association, the Norwegian Shipowners’ Association, and the Japan Shipowners’ Association.

MAAP conducts shipboard training aboard T/S Kapitan Felix Oca, a 5020 DWT dedicated training ship capable of accommodating 180 midshipmen and 9 instructors in 30 air-conditioned cabins and six berths.
Seafaring as a profession has truly brought the careers of our mariners to fruition into the standings many have aspired for. With the sea career, it has also accomplished dreams and wishes most seafarers wanted to achieve in establishing and bringing their families to the good life.

In this issue, we've taken a look at some of the instances of how Filipino seafarers perform and climb the professional ladder and the motivating factors behind the goals of achieving them. Their stories run similar with those of many others serving the world merchant fleet.

Some of their struggles and successes even jive with specks of similarities to our brothers and sisters working in other industries ashore. Some of the similarities are instances in their choice of courses and professions.

However, no job comparison can match the hazards and longing associated with a career at sea. Seafaring is a hidden life and a hard one. The threats of piracy and criminalisation and other marine incidents have also added to the dangers seafarers face. Suffice it to say, a life at sea is not like any other job.

We admire the mindset of the Filipino ship officers in their desire for career development. And it is good for the shipping industry that surely needs seafarers. The young cadet wishing to ascend from the rank of Third Mate or Fourth Engineer to Master or Chief Engineer, will strive to navigate the high seas to clamber the summit of the career ladder. This rank progression not only levels up roles on board, but also calls for better pay and increased remittances to families back home. Seafarers spend long periods of time away from their families. Access to basic welfare and benefits help as they need them most both afloat and ashore. At AMOSUP, the Union has always abided by the priorities of extending welfare provisions that are necessarily due among our members and their qualified dependants.

One of the latest initiatives that we've made is our collaboration with the All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU) in launching and opening of a new accommodation facilities for Filipino seafarers in Manila. The Mariners' Home Annex II can provide capacity for some 360 beds for AMOSUP-JSU availing members working on board Japanese-owned and managed ships.

This latest welfare provision is the third in a series of transient accommodation that AMOSUP and JSU have built for seafarers since we began to offer it in 2006. The eight-storey project is in response to members' call to have Filipino seafarers - mostly from the provinces - availed themselves of clean, decent, secure and comfortable accommodation facilities in Manila.

We also count the recent expansion of the Union's grocery section - the Slop Chest - as part of our welfare initiatives. Slop Chest now provides more items in store and makes shopping more convenient for union members and their families. It now allows Slop Chest to take in more items that normally run out of stocks, which members usually request in their shopping list like sardines, coffee, milk and biscuits.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado F Oca

Sailing Forward
10 Celebrating Maritime Week
12 Nautical Olympiad makes debut
14 The trifecta of becoming a skillful Filipino seafarer
15 Union’s Slop Chest expands
24 Start ‘em young at dockers front
32 Mistreatment of crew leads to detention
33 Hats don’t help seafarers - but you can
35 Leadership workshop for Cabu maritime schools
36 MAAP goes farther away with e-learning
37 Bagong Bayani Foundation board takes oath
38 Quote in action

About the cover
AMOSUP President Dr Conrado Oca, Transport Department Secretary Arthur Tugade and JSU President Yasumi Morita lead the opening ceremonies of the Mariners’ Home Annex II in Manila.
Photo: Ricky Gaviola
26 Seamen’s Hospital Pathology: Modern, well-equipped dept

The department showcases the hospital’s sincerity and determination in the treatment of illnesses and delivery of medical laboratory services of patients.

16 Seafaring makes career, family better

Sailing Forward talks to some AMOSUP members at random and shares some of their stories.

6 Mariners Home II inauguration

The completions of the project and the first two Mariners’ Homes are in response to the shortage of transient inns for Filipino seafarers in Manila.
New accommodation facilities for Filipino seafarers have opened in Manila, courtesy of the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) and AMOSUP.

The Mariners’ Home Annex II, which is located on Leon Gilmore St in Malate, Manila, provides a capacity for some 360 beds for the two unions’ availing members who work on Japanese-owned and managed vessels.

This latest welfare provision is the third in a series of transient dorm facilities the joint Japanese and Filipino maritime unions have built for seafarers that started in 2006. Another upcoming facility nearby is being constructed that will be opened next year.

JSU and AMOSUP Mariners’ Home project is in response to members’ call to have Filipino seafarers availed themselves of clean, decent, secure and comfortable accommodations in Manila.

**Generous assistance, continuing trust**

The success of such transient accommodation project over the last 10 years would not be possible without the generous assistance and the continuing trust and confidence of the JSU, said AMOSUP president Dr Conrado F. Oca.

Dr Oca also thanked employers from the International Mariners Management Association of Japan.
(IMMAJ) and the Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC) for their “genuine concern for our seafarers and their constant support to the union.”

In turn, he said AMOSUP will “renew our efforts to maintain the high quality and standards of maritime education and training of our seafarers working on board Japanese-owned and controlled vessels.”

Likewise, JSU president Yasumi Morita said he was honored as the Japanese union enabled to implement such a project, thereby contributing to the welfare of Filipino seafarers who work on board Japanese merchant fleet.

The completion of the third Mariners’ Home and the first two accommodation facilities in 2006 and 2011 comes in response to the shortage of accommodation facilities in Manila for Filipino seafarers.

To cope with the growing requirement for facilities, Morita stressed: “We’d like to consider to build the fifth and sixth Mariners’ Home while confirming future demand for accommodations.”

IMMAJ chair Masami Sasaki and PJMCC chair Eduardo Manese also delivered their respective messages in the ceremony, lauding the importance of the new facilities.

Praises from transport secretary

Department of Transport secretary Arthur Tugade took time out from the rigours of work at the department for the inauguration of the eight-storey Mariners’ Home as he led the ceremonial ribbon cutting and thereafter delivered his congratulatory message.

AMOSUP sees Secretary Tugade’s presence as a clear signal of how the new national leadership gives such a high importance to the maritime sector and the role being played by Filipino seafarers in national development.

The transport secretary praised the significant partnership between JSU and AMOSUP in building such facilities for the benefit of Filipino seafarers as they work side by side with their Japanese counterpart amidst the dangers of the seagoing profession.

And in recognition of this significance, a marker on the building’s ground floor entrance has inscribed statements that read: “The Mariners’ Home Annex II salutes the efforts and sacrifices of the highly skilled, competent, capable, disciplined, loyal and world-class Filipino seafarers, who are true heroes of the Philippines.”

The marker stresses the bond that ties between the two nationals within the maritime profession, declaring: “It embodies the strong brotherhood and solidarity between Japanese and Filipino seafarers, as they face the challenges and difficulties of the ever-changing maritime environment.”
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*The computations are based on previous year's dividends. Actual dividends will be based on the yearly income of the Fund.

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Sample Computation of MP2 Savings:

Monthly Remittance:

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*The dividends are based on previous year's dividends. Actual dividends will be based on the yearly income of the Fund.

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Sa Pag-IBIG, ang pinaghirapan may katuparan
Celebrating
NATIONAL
MARI
TIME
WEEK
Activities AMOSUP sponsored and supported consist of art contest, oratorical contest and quiz bee for the marine cadets of various schools

A

MOSUP officers, members and employees took time off for the National Maritime Week, with a series of activities that marked the celebration last September.

The Union, for its part, led the kick-off ceremonies at the Seafarer’s Monument on Baywalk along Roxas Blvd in Malate, Manila, with holy mass, wreath laying and fluvial parade at the Manila Bay.

The holy mass, which has been traditionally concelebrated in front of the Seafarer’s Monument, offers to remember seafarers who have joined the Almighty Creator. The industry celebrates Maritime Week on last week of September and the National Seafarers Day every 25th September.

AMOSUP officers led by Capt Felix Rebustos, Mr Johnny Oca and Atty Jesus Sale Jr and special guest from the All Japan Seamen’s Union, Country Manager Masahiro Kondo, participated in the wreath laying on the monument. Some union members, namely Capt Martin Bonbon, Capt Carlos Nisola, Capt Carmelo Murillo and Chief Eng’r Edgar Caliso joined in the solemn ceremony.

The commemoration also marked the offering of flowers tossed into the Bay while lifeboats of TS Kapitan Felix Oca with their crews parading before the cheering crowd released balloons into the air.

The activities AMOSUP sponsored and supported consisted of poster making or art contest, oratorical contest and quiz bee. Marine cadets from various schools across the country competed at the Union’s Convention Hall during the week.

Some 29 cadets representing each of the institutions showed “the artist in them” at on-the-spot poster making as they buckled down for three hours to paint for the contest theme “Marinong Pilipino: Tatak ng Kahusayan.”

Lyceum International Maritime Academy (Batangas City) grabbed the top spot, followed by JB Lacsen Maritime Foundation University (Iloilo) as first runner-up, and Technological Institute of the Philippines (Quezon City) as second runner-up.
In the oratorical contest, Southwestern University (Cebu City) took the first prize, with JB Lacson Maritime Foundation University as first runner-up and Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (Bataan) as second runner-up.

Apart from the art and oration competitions, this year saw the holding of the first quiz bee for maritime institutions. Dubbed the National Nautical Olympiad 2016, 11 maritime institutions showed up to compete for their stocked knowledge.

In the end, John B Lacson Maritime Foundation University took the championship prize after three rounds of questionings, followed by MAAP in second place and Baliwag Maritime Academy in third.

**Oration Contest Winners.** Southwestern University’s (Cebu City) John Kristian Carpio (middle) takes the top prize for the oratorical contest as part of the Maritime Week’s activities held at the AMOSUP Convention Hall. JB Lacson Maritime Foundation University’s Mikkel Areno (right) came in at second place, and Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific’s (MAAP) Andre Chad Acosta at third.

**Art Contest Winners.** Lyceum International Maritime Academy’s (Batangas City) Manuel Louie Villanueva’s work (below right) is judged as the first winning ‘obra’ in the recent poster making contest as part of the Maritime Week celebration held at the AMOSUP Convention Hall. He received a prize of PHP 10,000 for the on-the-spot art contest, followed by JB Lacson Maritime Foundation University’s (Iloilo City) Kristian Barmego as first runner-up, and Technological Institute of the Philippines’ (Quezon City) Jericho Alluigan as second runner-up.
Nautical Olympiad makes its debut in Maritime Week

It’s the maritime institutions own version of “Battle of the Brains” that aims to test the marine cadets’ mastery of the different topics of navigation and how they’ve amassed ample knowledge in the field of maritime transport.

For the first time since the yearly week-long celebration launched 20 years ago, organisers of the National Nautical Olympiad 2016 successfully staged the maritime quiz bee. Unlike the art contest, oratorical and other featured activities of the Maritime Week, the Nautical Olympiad has just made its debut this year.

Thanks to organisers from the Society of Filipino Ship Captains (FILSCAPTS) and Masters and Mates of the Philippines (MMAP), with the backings of Nautical Institute-Philippines and AMOSUP.

Some 11 institutions across the Philippines vied for the mind Olympiad, with school representatives composed of four members each mostly in their senior academic year.

Questions covered the subjects of nautical transport and marine engineering in areas of navigation, cargo handling and stowage and control in the operation of ships and care for persons on board.

The contest underwent three rounds: the qualifying, intermediate and the championship rounds.

As the contest moved on, Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) and JB Lacson Maritime Foundation University advanced to the third, qualifying round. The third qualifier had to break the tie consisted of three other institutions: Technological Institute of the Philippines, Mariners Polytechnic Foundation-Canaman (Camarines Sur) and Baliwag Maritime Academy. Baliwag broke the tie and advanced for the final qualifying match in the finale.

Finally, JB Lacson Maritime Foundation emerged with the highest score in the final round, followed by MAAP at second place and Baliwag Maritime at third place during the full day contest.

MMAP VP Capt Rodolfo Aspillaga, who served as the quizmaster, said the event could be repeated next year’s Maritime Week celebration. He was assisted by FILSCAPTS president Capt Jaime Quiñones at the event.
The Trifecta of Becoming a SKILLFUL FILIPINO SEAFARER

Jan Christian Carpio of Southwestern University delivered this winning piece for the 21st National Seafarers’ Day Oratorical Contest as part of the recent Maritime Week Celebration with the theme “Marining Pilipino: Tatay ng Kahusayan”. Written by Southwestern’s English instructor Jay Anthony Cavales, the oration asserts the Filipino seafarer deserves more than his current place in the industry.

In 2015, the Baltic and International Maritime Council and the International Chamber of Shipping, the worldwide population of seafarers is estimated to be around 774,000 officers and 873,500 ratings.

But the same report has revealed that China is now the overall top supplier of seafarers. Lo and behold, men and women of the maritime industry, China is also ranked as the number one supplier of officers while the Philippines is still the top source for, well, ratings.

Esteemed board of judges, worthy opponents, supporters and champions of the maritime industry, ladies and gentlemen, the Filipino seafarer deserves more than his current place in today’s maritime industry.

So if Filipino seafarers are considered the best in low-ranking ship personnel in the world, do we take pride in such an achievement? Yes and no. Yes, because at the very least, that is still something to celebrate, and no, because the Filipino seafarer deserves more than this mediocrity acclaim.

So how, you may ask, can we ultimately become better, nope, the best in the seafaring industry? Rebranding our technical expertise is the first order of business.

And how do we do this? Two things: One, we look at what needs to be supplied—officers for deck and engine management. And two, we re-channel the curriculum and training standards of maritime institutions to meet the requirements for specialised ships, a growing industry demand as implicated in the 2015 report.

But the crusade for rebranding doesn’t end there, my dear friends. Reclaiming the Philippines’ position will mean reinforcing our proven supremacy in the lingua franca of the maritime industry—the English language.

It doesn’t hurt for maritime institutions to create language proficiency programs, which in the long run will make graduates a cut above the rest in terms of English proficiency, one of the top 2 reasons why the Philippines is favoured over the other countries.

But think about this, technical expertise and language proficiency can only get us to a certain point. At the end of the day, attitude is, and will always be the prime determiner of one’s attitude.

It can be argued that attitude and work ethics don’t have anything to do with skills, but when we are talking about reclaiming our position as the world’s largest supplier of shipboard manpower, we must passionately embrace the maritime field by staying in the profession for quite a time and by supporting the cause for a better Philippine maritime industry.

Bottom line: rebranding technical expertise and reinforcing language proficiency alone, if not coupled with maintaining the right attitude, doesn’t create a competent mariner. These three attributes altogether form a trifecta of characteristics that make a skillful Filipino seafarer.

I’m a certified aspiring mariner. I’m a mighty proud bearer of the white-and-blue banner. And I will become a skilled seafarer by bringing with me these three qualities as we usher in a new era of seafaring Filipinos endowed with skill and competence. After all, we cannot spell “husay” without “U” and “galang” without “I:” Pun intended.

My dear future seafarers, it is high time that we sail above the quagmire of mediocrity as we carry on with us the seal of international standards. We must rise to the occasion and take this by heart: “I am a Filipino, and I am a globally competent seafarer.” Can we say it altogether? “I am a Filipino, and I am a globally competent seafarer.”

Men and women of the maritime industry, lo and behold, China doesn’t own the best and most skillful seafarers as much as it doesn’t own any part of the Philippines. But in both cases, we do.

God bless the Philippines. Long live the Filipino seafarer.

Thank you.
AMOSUP’s grocery section now serves a monthly average of 1,090 availing members for their shopping privilege.

AMOSUP’s Slop Chest, the union’s grocery section, has expanded to provide more items in store and make shopping more convenient for union members and their families.

The extension gave way to availability of additional product lines on display by as much as 30-40%.

In 2015, the vending division disposed of a total of PhP15.23 million in groceries and PhP5.26 million in appliances to 8,772 availing members and employees.

Union members or their dependants availing of the shopping privilege for groceries can be done within the seafarer’s date of embarkation up to two months before the date when the contract ends. It’s just for a month payroll deduction.

For appliances that include furniture, cellphones, computers, availing of credit have been limited up to six months from the members’ date of embarkation. Members should sign application form before embarkation.

And purchase order is limited to accredited stores in which AMOSUP has standing credit arrangement.

Slop Chest still maintains its purchase credit limit for members since AMOSUP approved a 2011 revised guidelines on continued availing of the shopping privileges as follows: For officers groceries at PhP6,000 on groceries and PhP36,000 on appliances; For petty officers at PhP5,000 on groceries and PhP30,000 on appliances; and Ratings at PhP4,000 on groceries and PhP24,000 on appliances.

Manila
AMOSUP Seamen’s Center Annex
Cabildo cor. Sta. Potenciana Sts., Intramuros, Manila

Cebu
Camino Vicenal St., Mandaue City, Cebu

PROMOS AND DISCOUNTS. In response to inquiries, availing members and allottees can now go to their nearest Western Marketing Appliances Corporation for canvassing of their appliances request. Just like in other existing affiliates store (Abenson and Electroworld), Western Marketing also offers exciting promos and discounts for members and allottees to experience much better Slop Chest appliances purchase privilege.
Seafaring makes career, family better

Amidst the hazards and sacrifices of working away from families and friends, seafarers have achieved their career goals including the realisation of dreams for their next of kin. Sailing Forward talks to some AMOSUP members at random and shares some of their stories.

They professed to have the common experiences many a seafarer has endured working on board ships; the loneliness and dangers entailed by a career at sea. But certain things most seafarers do thankful for in the choice of their career: the professional growth and financial rewards.

Once an enticer for the youth to pursue and “see the world for free”, the job has lured many into maritime studies and eventually landed into seafaring. The massive influx has made inroads into the country’s maritime education and training system, let alone a large surplus of ratings and a shortage of competent officers. But that’s another story.

Today the Philippines has not been called the world’s crewing capital for nothing. In 2015, the industry processed 358,898 officers and ratings and a contribution of more than $5.8 billion in remittances to the economy.

Filipino seafarers love their jobs. Amidst the hazards and sacrifices of working away from families and friends, thousands of seafarers continue to work hard for the sake of careers and support for families:
Santiago Montebon, OS: ‘Ship is our second home’

Santiago Montebon began working on his first ship in 2006 after finishing a B.S Marine Transportation course at the University of Cebu. “Gusto kong umangat ang buhay namin, kasi mahirap lang kami. Kaya naisip kong mag seaman,” he says. (I wanted our life to improve as we were just poor. That’s why I thought to become a seaman.)

Montebon recently disembarked from the containership OOCL Beijing after finishing a nine-month contract. When he started on the job, problems at home such as money matters needed for the daily needs by the family had haunted him. “Sa barto kailangan mahaba ang pasensya mo upang hindi maapektuhan ng mga probleman inisip sa bahay. Kailangan rin ang pagpapakumbaba at pakisama upang hindi mapasaway sa mga kasama.” (On board you need to have a lot of patience so you won’t get affected by problems at home. You also need to be humble and cooperative to maintain good working relationship with your shipmates).

He has experienced to be maltreated and bullied on board, when his Taiwanese superior, a Bosun, had enforced a habit of hitting him and another crewmember whenever receiving command to the nearest coastguard. Officers of the Canadian Coast Guard immediately went on board and heard their complaint. He opted not to finish his contract by requesting the manning agent for his replacement. Thanks to MLC (Maritime Labour Convention), they can’t just do that now to subordinates, he says, referring to the seafarers’ bill of rights.

“Sa pangalawang barko, hindi naman ganun. Sumisigaw lang ang senior officer sa mga crew, pero walang body contact. Kahit sumisigaw sa trabaho, pagkatapos normal na ‘ang trato sayo.” (It wasn’t like that in my next ship. You can be shouted at by a senior officer, but there’s no body contact. Even if the superior scolds you, they can get along well after work.)

Married from Cebu, Montebon has three kids, one in college, one in high school and another in grade school. “Dahil sa pagiging marino natupad ko mga pangarap ko at patuloy na natutulungan ko ang aking pamilya sa araw-araw na pangangailian tulad ng edukasyon ng mga bata at iba pa.” (Because of seafaring I fulfilled my dreams, and continuously help in my family’s daily needs such as sending my children to school and other expenses.)

Montebon stresses that the higher the position, the higher you get compensated. “What is important is to save while working. Pag lumalaki na ang mga anak mo lumalaki na rin ang gastos. Mas kailangan lang kumayod. At least dapat mapagtapos sila ng pag aaral. Pangalawa, wala pa akong sariling bahay at kailangan ng humukod sa mga magulang. Kelangan lang tulong sa pasensya on board para magtuluy-tuloy sa propesyong. Maganda at masarap sa barto kung wala kang kaaway o walang inaaral. Eto na yun second home namin.” (As your kids grow up, expenses also go up. Though I need to work more. At least I can let my children finish their studies. Secondly, I still have to have our own house as we want to separately live from our parents. One only needs patience on board so that you could go on continuously in this profession. It’s nice to work on board when you have no enemy. This is our second home.)

He wants to prepare for his next contract for an upgraded officer role, but he also has to finish a number of trainings, longest of which is 10 days. He will also sit for the marine board exam for his third mate ticket.
Cirilo Bedra Jr, Bosun: ‘Big change in our life’

When Cirilo Bedra Jr finished high school, he had intended to pursue an engineering course, either Civil or Mechanical. However, as some of his uncles were all in the marine profession, they convinced him to take up the Marine Transportation course at the Visayan Maritime Academy in Bacolod, his hometown. When he graduated, he began work as a “utility” staff doing some errands in a crewing agency in Manila. His cousin who was a ship captain helped him to apply for a job on his first ship as an Ordinary Seaman in 2001.

He got married before he boarded his first ship. Homesickness became one of the problems while working on board, but he says he had overcome it after three months as he was excited with his expectant wife. “Normal na yata sa unang sakay ang kalungkutan dulot ng pag-aalala sa pamilya.”

Becoming a seafarer, he says has been a “big change in our life. We’re able to build our own house and invest in another real estate property. “Pero rasa tao din yun kung papaano nyo hahawakan ang pera nya upang mapekipo. Para sa akin pinursige ko na magkaroon ng sariling bahay, kahit na utang pa yan. At least nahanapulugan.” (But it’s up to the person how he handles finances to save. For me, I strived to have our own house, even if its from a loan. At least we can pay the amortisation.) He started paying for their own house after finishing his two contracts. He also helped for the education of some nephews and nieces.

Bedra has one son in grade school. At 39, he plans to stop sailing once he reaches his 50th year. Maybe by then he may have saved enough and proceeded to do something else, like set up a business, he says.

Professionally, he wants to improve his role on board by taking the marine board exam for Third Mate. It’s been a while before his first attempt to climb the professional ladder since he prioritised his financial obligations such as the new house and family. He has been encouraged by some senior officers from the ship to sit for the marine board exam as they are offering help to level up his role.
Antonio Abalajen, Ship Cook: ‘Long vacation’ to do business

Antonio Abalajen can be considered a "returnee" to the marine profession. He first sailed as an AB in 1988 after finishing his B S Marine Transportation degree from Visayan Maritime Academy. He also performed other roles like Bosun and Cook over a period of 10 years since he signed on as a seafarer for his first ship. He almost shunned vacations and did not even have time to sit for the marine board exam.

But Abalajen decided to stop working at sea in 1998, which he dubbed as "a long vacation." He says he wanted to be with his family as the kids were growing up. Using some of his savings, he set up a small fast-food restaurant type of business in his Bacolod hometown. His forays as an entrepreneur became profitable. Not until the entry of malls in their town that took away many of his customers and dwindled the daily earnings. The business went on well for nine years before he decided to give up.

He returned to his former profession, working in various vessels. Last August he disembarked from a Dutch general cargo ship, the Zuidvliet. He says "seafaring is a tough job, especially for ratings as they are more exposed to risks." Though he admits he had not experienced any accident and bullying in the ships he worked on.

As a cook on board, he says: "You cannot always please everyone. Hindi maiwasan sa kusina na sumama ang loob mo sa ipinapakita ng mga kasama minsan sa pagkain. Hindi kasi lagi naiba ang gusto nila at kung ano lang ang nasa provision on board ang puede mong ihanda." (You can’t avoid to feel bad on what others show up towards prepared food in the kitchen. You can’t always give them what they want during mealtime especially if it’s the only provision available on board we can prepare.)

Becoming a seafarer is Abalajen’s second choice. He originally wanted to be an aviation pilot. But he thought then that the course was much costlier than taking up Marine Transportation. He says he later realised in the midst of his studies that both courses have almost the same cost.

"Hindi naman ako nagsisi na marino ang naging propesyong ko, says Abalajen. (I never regretted that seafaring became my profession). It has helped me a lot to support my family, the children’s education and other needs."

He admits that he is thankful for his profession. "I earn my monthly salary that I could not have earned ashore. Pag on board, wala kang gastos. Pag-uwí mo, mabibilí mo ang mga gusto mo para sa pamilya. Yun nga ng mga mas bata at opisyal na, mas mabilis umason no pagkatapos lang ng ilang kontrata."

(When on board, you don’t have to spend for your personal needs. When you go home you can buy what you liked for the family. Those still younger and already attained the officer role has the greater chance to prosper after serving lesser time contracts.)

Now in his early 50s, three of his four children are now working while the other one is still in college. Abalajen awaits for the result of his medical exam, and wants to resume work for the next vessel he has lined up for.
Jessie Imperial, OIC-Eng’g Watch: There’s no easy job

Jessie Imperial apparently followed his brother’s footsteps when he chose to study Marine Engineering and eventually embarked on a career at sea. He dropped out from Civil Engineering as he no longer wanted to study. But his older brother, who was also a seafarer, persuaded him to continue into Marine Engineering.

“I saw it was the practical thing to do as my brother did. Seamen were then earning many times higher compared with their counterpart ashore. That’s why I followed him to be a seafarer,” he says.

Imperial boarded his first vessel as a cadet on a Wallem ship in 2011 and continued on a regular job on board after finishing college at the Technological Institute of the Philippines. He recently disembarked from the container ship Jost of the German shipowner Dohle Schiffahrts. “Wala yatang madaling trabaho. Nasa tao na kung paano sasay isagawa, paano maktoto, maka cope sa pangungulit sa barko,” he says, referring to how he adapted on his job. (There seems to be no easy job. It’s up to the person, how he or she can adjust, cooperate, and cope with longing on board.)

“I was lucky that I never had any problem or issues with my shipmates. I went along well with them even with the mixed-nationality crewed ship. We had good working relationships. Kaya lagi kong sinasabi na sweerte ako sa mga nasakyan kong barko dahil wala kaming naging problema.” (That’s why I always say that I’ve been lucky with all the ships I have worked on since we encountered no such problems.)

Imperial admits seafaring has greatly contributed to his development both with career and family. Financially, “I can send my only child to school and continuously support my family. I’m also starting to fund the acquisition of my dream house. I’m saving for our future and willing to go on a new business venture once I saved enough. It’s hard to continue working when you’re away from your loved ones.”

He just passed his marine board exam for his OIC ticket, although he still has to spend sea time for the role, probably in the next contract.

“Seafaring is a challenging career as you find your way up to fit in the position that you have aspired for. My plan is to climb up the professional ladder, probably aspired for up to Chief Engineer. And I’m doing my best to achieve it. If I’m lucky, that’s it.”
Brix Liwat, Chief Mate:
‘Seafaring is our bread and butter’

Brix Liwat has formed this lily-pad mind-set, in which he foresees a career that links in between opportunities for further growth. At 46, he sees himself to be an instructor in a maritime academy or perhaps an officer in a shipping firm when he retires from his sea career after the next five years or so.

Liwat now holds a Master licence, though he has yet to serve his sea time for it next year. He just came ashore from his last vessel, the container ship Ambassador Bridge. He says he has applied to another company, and has been notified for the next ship as its Chief Mate.

Up to his last role, he could be likened to a battle-worn, veteran soldier who has fought various wars. “At sea, I’ve experienced to have our ship colliding with another vessel in Korea when I was a Third Mate. In another ship, I found myself running out from my cabin in the middle of the night only in my underwear after surviving an incident, when our ship was rammed by another vessel in a Chinese port,” he recalls. Once during a storm, in another ship whilst on anchor their ship suffered similar accident when strong current dragged the carrier along, thereby crashing it into another anchored vessel.

“There were good and bad times on board, but worse during rough seas. Ashore, port state control inspections vary in terms of enforcing safety rules as they differ in their standards from lax to stringent ones,” Liwat notes. London and Singapore, he cites impose strictest rules.

Liwat began reaching the officer role after passing the marine board exam for Third Mate in 1998. He finished B.S Marine Transportation at the Philippine Maritime Institute in Bohol in 1992. The following year he initially worked on domestic ships for several years before moving away to ships overseas.

Seafaring, he says, “is our bread and butter.” And he’s too thankful for it because he succeeded to send his three siblings to college—two are taking up maritime courses, too—and another in Computer Science. He’s also providing medical assistance to his ailing mother who is on dialysis treatment for over the last four years now.

He has three children. The eldest is in college also taking up BS Marine Transportation, while the other two girls, ten and seven years, in elementary both in private schools. He has bought their house in 2012. Liwat says, he could not have comfortably supported his family had he not made his own choice of a career. His father had wanted him to be an architect, but he defied the old man’s wish. “It could have been different had I followed him.”

Liwat hopes to continue working on board for another five years. He must be in his 50s by then. He says, he can have an option to do an instructor job once he retires from seafaring. By that time he could enjoy to be with his young children as they grow up. And he must have saved to assure them of their college education and other obligations.
Catalino Casio, Chief Mate: Investing for an assured retirement

Catalino Casio has already invested in some properties that he thinks will support them upon his retirement. And his career is at its peak now, as he just jumped from Second Mate to Chief Mate since middle of 2016 after completing a number of trainings for the required Management Level Course.

Casio’s fate accidentally drifted to a maritime career because of his cousin whilst in college, where he initially went to Mindanao State University as a Marine Biology student. He says he got “attracted” by his cousin’s marine-cadet white uniform at a nautical school when they would meet up each other in Cagayan de Oro. “I loved him in his neatly sailor’s attire, so I thought I could be like him. Parang gayaga lang ba. Hindi ko pangarap yun, sabi ko sa sarili”. (As if I just wanted to imitate him, you know. It was not really my dream to be one, I told to myself),” he says.

He did change course and went to Iligan Capitol College, where he completed a BS in Maritime Transportation in 1989. He then went to Manila to look for a job, but landed as a “utility” boy in a ship manning agency. He spent more than a year doing errands work in the office before the company hired him straight as an Ordinary Seaman (OS) in 1991.

It was a complete turnaround in terms of living environment and role from his errand boy job at the manning offices to the high seas. For a young man like him, he was expecting the company to give some sort of job transitions, perhaps an apprentice mate or a mess man as starter, and not an outright hardcore OS. “I used to cry at night in my cabin and I would request our ‘Maestro Amo’ (Rosun) to send me home after my first month on the job. But the Maestro would not let me, since I signed for a year-long contract otherwise ‘shall I pay the rest of it’. I was then on the verge of changing job once I finished my contract,” Casio recalls.

He says it took almost three months before he got adjusted in the shipboard environment and the difficulties entailed by a newfound job. It was also in his first ship, a log carrier, where he met an accident. It occurred when they were fixing the lashings on the cargo of falcata logs from Malaysia to Japan. Whilst he was summoned to constrict a lashing, the crane operator went on his way working the timbre pile, thereby loosening the cable and shifted one of the mounds.

When Casio hastily turned away to evade his foot from being hit by a lost piece, he tripped and banged his head on a deadwood. He got knocked down on impact and was rushed by fellow crewmen to the ship’s hospital. They discovered his hard hat broken, but found no injury on his head. “Buti na lang naka helmet ako. Kung hindi, ewan na lang kung ano na ranyari sa akin noon,” he says. (Glad that I was wearing my helmet. If not, I didn’t know what could have happened to me at that instance.)

Casio succeeded in finishing his first contract and went ahead to work on a number of succeeding vessels, until he rose to Second Mate. Last May, he signed off from a Lauritzen vessel, the Emilie Bulker, after an eight-month contract.

Now at 51, his two children have graduated from Pre-med and Medical Technology. The family owns a house, and he has pursued some investment ventures that would assure them of financial support once he retires from seafaring. He has set up other businesses
like a grocery engaged in wholesales being run by his wife and a string of retail stores being rented out in the city market in Cagayan de Oro. He has also acquired a 12-hectare rice farm and similar property planted with coconuts and bananas. Another product of his seafaring career is a 10-door apartment. He also plans to put up a poultry farm, which he wants to make himself busy with once he retires from sailing the high seas.

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**I used to cry at night in my cabin and I would request our ‘Maestro Amo’ (Bosun) to send me home after my first month on the job.**

Casio admits he’s late in rising above senior management role, unlike other contemporaries, who in their late 30s or early 40s had already become Shipmasters or Captains. And it took a while before he sat again in marine board exam for his Second Mate ticket as he had continuously worked for succeeding contracts to earn for his growing family. He says there was a time when he would only spend three weeks ashore, then signed on again for the next ship.

When Sailing Forward met him last October, Casio was reviewing for a marine board exam to earn his Master licence. He plans to work on board for another five years. He says by the time he retires, there will also be a doctor in the family through his son, who has resumed studies in Cebu City for a Medicine degree.
Start ‘em young at dockers front

Some of the key issues young dock workers face in the workplace are fatigue management and automation.

The International Transport Workers’ Federation has organised the youth arm of its dockers’ section as part of a goal to develop new leaders in the waterfront.

Delegates of the ITF Young Dockers’ International, which held its first meeting in Manila last 13-14 November, enabled to connect and relate quickly with leaders and representatives from other young dockers’ unions in various countries. More than 20 delegates from 12 countries in various parts of the globe attended the convention held at the Manila Diamond Hotel.

Host union country Port Workers Union of the Philippines (PWUP) welcomed the foreign delegates. PWUP’s Jose Eduardo Oca delivered a brief history of the country’s waterfront unionism and some of its struggles with work issues including PWUP’s programs in developing the youth for its advocacies.

The meeting provided the opportunity for the young dock workers understand the various issues and situations of their brothers and sisters in the stevedoring or cargo handling industry. Introductions and “getting to know” exercises presented a range of skills among delegates who also found common grounds and issues faced by the unions in their workplaces.

Social media as vital tool

The use of social media is one of the issues elaborately tackled as a vital tool by the youth now in spreading their messages. Many of them have found podcast, Facebook and twitter to commit themselves to improving the lives of union members.

Whilst stevedoring companies in other countries have restricted employees into posting messages inimical to employers and job-related policies, delegates brought up and supported the advantage of utilizing the social media as a major tool to bring out their goals and advance unionism. One example is the
International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Canada, which encourages members and casual ILWU workers to use social media to “promote useful and respectful discussions and debate, share information and solidarity.”

Dan Kask and Mike Mayer of ILWU Vancouver presented a social media policy that their union had adopted in December 2014. “Things you say or do online can damage reputations: yours, Union’s, employers and others,” according to Mayer, referring to one of ILWU’s basic policies. Mayer said the member is responsible for his online actions. “If your actions are inappropriate or unlawful and related to employment or union membership he or she may be disciplined,” he said.

Kask and Mayer cited some do’s and don’ts related to online postings in social media that might be inappropriate. Some of the don’ts could be related to confidential union matters, impersonating others, discriminatory or derogatory statements, among others.

Campaigning on issues

Some of the key issues young dock workers face in workplaces are fatigue management and automation. From these issues, the Young Dockers chose to launch their platform in building a campaign that could be carried out by their unions.

Some “campaigning exercises” on these issues, in which delegates grouped themselves to pick an issue they wanted to launch, were also carried out. A campaign plan and its components guided each group in delivering the issue they campaigned for as they reported back following the exercise session.

The Young Dockers also learned the dynamics of the media in relation to unionism, which is crucial in bringing their messages across the industry and the community they work in. They also gained knowledge and experience on the basics of “new communications” like short-film making that they could capitalise on in campaigning on issues. Thanks to Gemma Walker of the ITF Dockers Section for the teaching part and technical assistance in facilitating the New Communications segment.

Nigel Venes, lead organiser of the ITF Dockers Section, chaired and presided over the meeting, with Rico Tortolano, lead campaigner of the section, assisted in the conduct of the conference.
Seamen’s Hospital Pathology: Modern, well-equipped dep’t

The department is the showcase of the hospital’s sincerity and determination in the treatment of illnesses and delivery of medical laboratory services to patients.

It is one of the most modern and well-equipped departments at Seamen’s Hospital that renders diagnostics tests of illnesses of AMOSUP members and their qualified dependants.

Since all tests are being carried out at the hospital’s Pathology Department to assist the physicians in treating their patients, the Union has invested in equipment and technology for their anatomical and clinical units. The department now consists of six pathologists and 19 medical technologists.

Department chairman Dr. Gilbert Gonzales says the Hospital has the “best lab equipment compared with about 95% of the country’s medical centres and hospitals, both government and private.” Under his chairmanship comes the competence of its chief medical technologist Fraince C. Anoro in the delivery of laboratory services to patients.

Dr. Gonzales says pathology is the showcase of a hospital’s sincerity and determination in the treatment of illnesses and delivery of medical laboratory services to its clients. Some of which include the process of identification and characterisation of bacterial species, blood extraction, clinical and biochemical mechanisms of the body in relation to disease, microscopy and other modern diagnostic pathology.

Anatomical and clinical pathology

The department is divided into anatomical and clinical pathology. The Anatomical Section processes body tissues and fluids for gross, cytological and histological (microscopic) examination and diagnosis. It also provides special
and immune-histochemical stains as additional tools in diagnosis. Frozen section services are offered for intra-operative diagnosis.

The clinical/laboratory medicine section utilises high end state of the art and top of the line laboratory analysers and reagents for the laboratory tests and analysis that allow fast and accurate diagnostic results in the hospital.

Special areas of clinical pathology that are carried out by the department include Clinical Chemistry, Hematology, Clinical Microscopy, Bacteriology, Immunology and Serology, Blood Bank, Drug & Alcohol Screening Test is also available. Pre-Employment Medical Examination is also offered only for seafarers.

**Bacteriology**

Equipped to perform bacteriology, the Pathology Department does not perform it manually. Unlike more than 90% of hospitals in the Philippines, it can identify the bacteria as well as its sensitivity to a certain drug with minimal inhibitory concentration (MIC) by using a Vitek 2 machine. This machine works economically that can release results in as little as five to eight hours. Its most common specimens are urine, exudates, stool and respiratory specimen.

**Blood extraction**

As an essential part of the department, the Blood Extraction Unit plays a major role when it comes to pathology and laboratory testing and procedures. It offers a wide variety of quality laboratory services to both
HIGH QUALITY RESULT ANALYSER. This analyser provides high-quality results and rapid STAT turnaround time. Designed with advanced technology, the Architect c4000 enhances laboratory productivity and provides users high confidence in clinical results. It has a capacity of 100 samples and maximum throughput up to 800 tests per hour.

Seamen’s Hospital pathologists play an integral role in the care of cancer patients by analyzing tumour samples to make precise diagnoses and to stage cancers.

easily accessible from the ER Department, OPD (Out-Patient Department), Radiology, EENT and other hospital departments.

Phlebotomy, or the drawing of blood sample, is one of the major functions of this unit. All the staffs rotating in this division have undergone training in phlebotomy and are licensed Medical Technologists. It is a clean, well-lit and well-ventilated room with three extraction chairs with armrest, to accommodate multiple number of patients at a time and reduce the waiting time for other patients to be attended for, especially those who are in their fasting state.

Clinical chemistry

The Clinical Chemistry section determines the chemical and biochemical mechanisms of the body in relation to disease, mostly through the analysis of body fluids such as blood or urine. The section provides a high quality laboratory services to union members and dependents through the help of front liners clinical staff.
**GROSS EXAM.** Gross examination or "grossing" is the process by which pathology specimens are inspected with the bare eye to obtain diagnostic information, while being processed for further microscopic examination.

**SAMPLE PREPARATION.** A medical technologist utilises the microtome, a tool used to cut extremely thin slices of a sample, known as sections. Microtomes are used in microscopy, allowing for the preparation of samples for observation.

**NEEDLE ASPIRATION.** Fine needle aspiration biopsy (FNAB) plays a crucial role in the diagnosis of thyroid nodules and enables the number of surgical operations to be reduced. Theoretically, FNAB should be carried out on all nodules, though currently only those displaying certain characteristics are biopsied.

**LAB CENTRIFUGE.** A medical technologist does the laboratory centrifuge which isolates and separates solids from whole cells.

**VARIOUS TESTS AVAILABLE.** Tests available through the Selectra analyser with specialised trained medical technologists are: blood urea nitrogen, creatinine, blood uric acid, glucose, triglycerides, total cholesterol, SGPT, SGOT, GGT, lipase, amylase, LDH, CKMB, creatinine kinase, total bilirubin, direct bilirubin, indirect bilirubin, total protein, phosphorus, magnesium, alkaline phosphatase, albumin, calcium.
Pathology chair Dr. Gilbert Gonzales (sitting right) with Dr. Ronald Cobrion, Associate pathologist; Dr. Ricardo Victor Quinico, Consultant, DPSP (back from left) and Dr. Godofredo Rainer Manera, DPSP (Consultant).

Seamen’s Hospital has the best lab equipment compared with about 95% of the country’s medical centres and hospitals, both government and private.

The section performs wide variety of quantitative analysis of body fluids such as routine chemistry, lipid profile, kidney function test, hemoglobin, A1C, amylase, lipase, creatinine kinase, electrolytes, lactate dehydrogenase, CKMB, Trop-I and arterial blood gas determinations.

FULLY INTEGRATED IPU. The Sysmex XN-350 offers single sample analysis in open mode. It has a fully integrated IPU (information-processing unit) including an LCD colour touchscreen - so you do not need a separate computer to operate the analyser.
REPRODUCIBLE RESULT QUALITY. This is a standalone, benchtop instrument. In its Rerun & Reflex configuration, the Sysmex XN-1000 offers reproducible result quality in the shortest possible time. By automatically re-analysing samples for which results are considered unreliable, it significantly reduces manual interventions and frees up time and resources. With no compromise on turnaround time.

Clinical Microscopy deals with the scientific analysis of body fluids such as urine, stool and semen. The physical, chemical and microscopic examinations of urine provide initial diagnostic information concerning metabolic dysfunctions both renal and non-renal in origin. A skilled medical technologist performs the manual preparation and reading of the sample.

It also provides urinalysis, fecalysis and seminalysis among union members and their dependants.

Immunopathology

Immunohistochemistry and most recently in situ hybridisation has contributed greatly to modern diagnostic pathology due to its specificity and sensitivity. For the last decade, the hospital has developed a comprehensive range of antibody markers and probes for immunohistochemical diagnostic services for its patients and acquired new antibody tests regularly. The hospital actually has more immunohistochemistry markers than the more than 95% of medical facilities in the Philippines.

In particular, Seamen’s Hospital pathologists play an integral role in the care of cancer patients by analyzing tumour samples to make precise diagnoses and to stage cancers. The expertise of its pathologists is essential in determining the best course of treatment. Reports from pathologists also help gauge a tumor’s response to therapy to determine its effectiveness and plot a new course of treatment if necessary. The ever increasing role of theranostics or therapeutic diagnostics cannot be overemphasized.
Mistreatment of crew on sub-standard ship leads to detention

The company responded by accusing the inspector of acting illegally, of blackmail and by insisting they would only pay what was written on contracts, however low.

A vessel which had already been detained following a Port State Control inspection by MCA (Maritime and Coastguard Agency) surveyors in Cardiff, Wales, has been issued with a further detainable deficiency notice after it was discovered the crew had not been paid for many months.

"The state of the vessel is bad enough from a maintenance point of view," explained International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) inspector Tommy Molloy. "It is self-evident that no money is being spent on the basics and, as is usual with such shipowners, the crew are also not being paid."

The Malta-registered Svetlana, operated by Victoria Maritime Trading Ltd of Bulgaria, has been in Cardiff since 8 October 2016. The MCA had suspended their inspection and detained the vessel for a number of deficiencies and returned when the owner claimed to have rectified matters. However, it was then discovered that the Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian crew had not been paid wages and a further deficiency notice was issued.

The MCA made a request for the ITF to attend in order to aid the crew and assist with the calculation for owed wages. Mr Molloy then discovered that since the crew had joined, only small, infrequent cash payments had been received. "One man had not been paid since he transferred to the ship in June and had not been paid the three months wages he was owed from his employment on the ship he was transferred from."

Mr Molloy also discovered that wages were the lowest he had seen for a long time and were certainly below the International Labour Office (ILO) minimum referred to in the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC). He calculated the wages owed at the ILO minimum level and submitted the claim to the company, along with other amounts for additional work for which payment had been promised but never materialised. The crew had also been forced to purchase their own personal protective equipment such as safety footwear and overalls, before joining, which is totally unacceptable. The owners were invited to enter into discussions to sign an ITF agreement which would provide acceptable minimum employment standards for the crew.

The company responded by accusing the inspector of acting illegally, of blackmail and by insisting they would only pay what was written on contracts, however low.

Unfortunately the MCA have appeared reluctant to push for payment of ILO minimum wages and the flag state, Malta, has declined to respond.

"To me it is clear," said Mr Molloy. "The MLC requires member states that have ratified to establish procedures for determining minimum wages for seafarers and that when doing so they should give consideration to those set by ILO. I have asked how low wages can be set before it becomes an issue for the Malta shipping register."

Worse still, he has learnt from maritime welfare organisations in Cardiff that the third officer has now been sacked. "It seems the company has determined that as he is the only claimant who speaks fluent English it must have been him who called the ITF to complain about not getting paid. This is his reward. In fact he did not call us. The request to visit came from the MCA."

"We have had similar dealings with this operator before. They have been described as being at the very low end of the industry, and the MLC was designed to give seafarers protection against exactly this kind of sub-standard outfit."
Hats don’t help seafarers - but you can

Maritime journalist Holly Birkett cites the need for public relations in promoting the welfare of shipboard personnel

If you want to help seafarers, don’t patronise them by knitting a hat. Intermanager’s secretary-general (and former seafarer) Kuba Szymański told the first annual International Maritime Human Rights conference in London recently.

“What would help seafarers? Bring back the dignity of being a seafarer,” Szymański said.

“What would we help seafarers? Stop criminalising us.”

I was in the audience, live-tweeting Szymański’s comments, and suddenly my Twitter feed went ablaze with approbation - much of which came from seafarers themselves.

“A qualified master earns more than a British Airways pilot,” Szymański said, acknowledging that the ‘knit a hat’ charity campaign had its ‘heart in the right place’. But it’s not like seafarers are living in a gulag (unless they’ve been abandoned, of course - which is happening more and more often in these financially straitened times).

So how can we restore the dignity of being a seafarer?

A couple of years ago, veteran maritime journalist Richard Clayton wrote a brilliant column that said that by working in the shipping industry, we must all become its PR agents if we want to increase its visibility.

If you’re at dinner with someone who’s unfamiliar with the fact that shipping brings us 90% of everything, tell them.

Tell them that shipping was the first industry to agree a global carbon dioxide reduction strategy. Make them as proud of our industry as we are.

But most importantly, you need to tell your friends and family about seafarers. The bananas you are eating in the west were grown thousands of miles away and brought here thanks to our seafaring friends (you can say). The steel in the cutlery you are using was probably milled in China using iron ore from Australia or Brazil, imported with the help of - guess who.

Seafaring is a tough job, even when the working conditions are good (you can tell your friends). Seafarers spend long periods of time away from their families with poor access to communications. They may feel compelled to spend more time working away from home in order to make more money for those at home.

Seafarers also have an increased likelihood of developing mental illness - and the suicide rate is high. A 2012 study showed that of the 17,026 seafarer deaths between 1960 and 2009, some 1,011 seafarers died as a result of suicide (5.9%). Compared to deaths of 4,487 seafarers due to illness, 590 seafarers died as a result of suicide (13.1%).

These percentages would be higher if 50% of deaths due to seafarers disappearing at sea were included, the study said.

Sometimes seafarers do not receive their wages at all and may even be abandoned by their owners and managers. They may be forced to live onboard their vessel for many months, often surviving on donations from local missions - like the crew of the Five Stars Fujian in August.

People need to know about all this. They need to become as familiar with this problem as Western consumers are with the plight of coffee and cocoa bean farmers in developing countries, thanks to the Fair Trade movement. Once there was widespread understanding among consumers that corporations were basically naming their price for produce and cheating farmers out of a fair cut, the Fair Trade campaign fundamentally shifted the marketplace because it shifted consumer demand to ensure that producers were paid fairly.

Perhaps we can invent Fair Trade Shipping. Questions were raised at the conference as to how shippers can ensure that crews are treated fairly onboard the vessels that carry their goods. David Hammond, founder of Human Rights At Sea, hinted that his organisation is working on a scheme that would help do just that.

In the meantime, you and I can be doing the groundwork in getting the word out as to why seafarer welfare matters to the world. By doing this, we can make any mainstream campaign on seafarer welfare instantly more effective.

As a journalist, I’d also implore you to kick up a stink if you know of seafarers being abandoned or treated badly. Send us photos (preferably ones that can be verified, such as with an ingenious app), put us in touch with eyewitnesses and those who can corroborate your story. (Hell, give me the phone number of the shipping company’s CEO - I’ll ring him up!)

The press has a vital role to play in all this too - help us ensure we can do it accurately and effectively and we can help build the case as to why there’s still work to be done on seafarer welfare.

We can restore the dignity of being a seafarer by making them into real people who exist in our lives and who are around us all the time. We need to build a sense of gratitude among the general public for the sacrifices seafarers make in their personal lives in order to bring us goods.

No more knitted hats.

(Holly Birkett is a London-based freelance maritime journalist. This article was originally published on Splash24/7.com last 16 September 2016)
As you are aware the ITF and its affiliated unions work together to fight for the rights and standards for all seafarers from around the world. To support seafarers the ITF has a global network of inspectors who are on the spot to go on board and deal with any problems that seafarers may have. For those areas of the world where we do not have inspectors available the Maritime Operations team (MOPs), based in the ITF office in London, will deal with the seafarers problems.

In the past a seafarer may not have known the contact details of the local ITF inspector or they may have tried contacting the ITF out of office hours and found no one was available. However, since July 2012 the ITF has operated a 24-hour Helpline service for seafarers, but it seems that some seafarers are not aware of it.

When you contact the Helpline the operators will ask you a number of questions including your contact details, the ship’s IMO number, name, type, and the flag it is registered under. They will ask about your location where the ship is going, your nationality and they will need a brief explanation as to what the problem or problems you have.

The Helpline Operators will then either refer your case directly to an inspector or to the MOPs team and they will contact you back as quickly as they can.

The ITF Inspectors, MOPs team and the ITF Helpline are all here to help protect seafarers’ rights and standards worldwide, please feel free to contact them whenever you need to.

The ITF Helpline operates a 24-hours per day, 365-day per-year, multi-lingual service and can be contacted by telephone, email or SMS text.

Contact details are:

Telephone +44 207 940 9280
Email help@itf.org.uk
SMS Text line +44 7950 081 459

Please make a note of these contact details in case you need them at some time.
Leadership workshop for Cebu maritime schools

AMOSUP in cooperation with the ITF Youth Women carried out a seminar-workshop on leadership and management last September 10 at the University of Cebu Lapu Lapu and Mandaue Campus in Cebu City. More than 70 female cadets from four maritime schools, namely the University of Cebu METC, Lapu-lapu and Mandaue Campus, Cebu Technological University and the University of the Visayas participated in the workshop.

As an active young seafarer, he elaborated that as a lady officer or engineer, one must lead and show her crew that she is competent and capable of the job to earn the respect of her men on board.

Ms. Jane Magallon, senior lecturer and academy assessor of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific, talked about developing the students’ goals among themselves that would prompt them to make a decision. After the group had deliberated on their answers, representatives from the groups presented their work before the audience.

Chief Engineer Nina Sue Da Silva facilitated in managing conflict and issues on power and influence on board. She shared different real-life experiences and examples of conflicts on board that every female cadet will encounter. She also gave tips on how to manage these conflicts as a woman. She further expounded on many other issues on power and influence from being a junior engineer/officer up to being a senior management level engineer/officer, for instance, when she experienced on how to lead men during critical operations and during other occupational risks on board.

Atty Daily Ondate cited the issues among women working in the seafaring industry and some of the drawbacks on board over their male counterparts in the merchant ships. In passenger vessels, where women’s role is not an issue, provided her an overall advocacy of encouraging female cadets to continue on their chosen field.

Understanding yourself as a leader and a manager, delivered by Chief Engineer Delf Luke Ramirez, an alumnus of the University of Cebu of Class 2005, provided key pointers for a good follower to be a leader. He gave tips on how to work hard as a cadet who should ask questions to the officers and do the assigned job diligently. He encouraged the participants to read or study while on board and take the initiative to learn.
MAAP goes farther away with e-learning launch

The project is the first of its kind developed in the field of maritime higher education in the Philippines

The AMOSUP Seamen’s Training Center (ASTC) of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) recently launched its Learning Management System for the Management Level Course distance and e-learning program.

Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) administrator Marcial Amaro and MAAP president Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos led the program launch, showcasing the real-time demonstration of the learning management system platform. Featured during the demonstration were sample lessons and assessments in Module 1 of Function 3 for Marine Deck Management Level Officers on the “Fundamental Principles of Ship Construction and the Theories and Factors Affecting Trim, Stability and Stress.”

This project is the first of its kind developed in the field of maritime higher education in the Philippines.

The e-learning mode of delivery for the New Management Level Course (NMLC) via distance learning of MAAP utilises the latest Moodle Learning Management System Platform, an open-source software designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environment.

Collaboration from Canada

The project was originally initiated by MAAP-MARINA in collaboration with the Marine Institute (MI) of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. The collaborative team was tasked to develop the course policies, guidelines, technical standard and specification to ensure compliance to the national and international requirements of the course.

Subsequently, MAAP developed an independent distance learning program for its MLC program. The MAAP LMS project team was composed of Capt. Abelardo M. Pacheco, the MLC Course Director, and Engr. Gerardo Ramon Galang, supported by a group of IT/Programmers. Following the launching of the LMS, the MLC Distance Learning Course Manual and Modules have been submitted to MARINA for inspection and approval.

Years before the competency-based learning had become a buzzword in Philippine maritime education and training, MAAP through the initiative of its president VAdm Santos had already harnessed the expertise of a reputable provider of maritime training programs, DNV Seaskills, in developing its enhanced competency-based curriculum. As the first among maritime institutions in the country to adopt such curricular change, the Mariveles-based academy already explored ways to provide training via the internet.

This also means MAAP has gone farther ahead even before MARINA could finalise its guidelines on Distance Learning or e-Learning.

Simulating the groundbreaking approach

MAAP’s pioneering efforts in e-Learning scored significant success as indicated in the unveiling of the distance learning module last September 12. During the launching, Administrator Amaro together with officials from the STCW Office watched the demonstration of the groundbreaking learning-instruction approach in maritime training.

In the brief demonstration of the simulated learning exercise, Capt. Ace Gonzales, acted as the trainee, with veteran master mariner, Capt. Abelardo Pacheco, as the instructor.

As first step, Capt Gonzales logged on into the MAAP’s Learning Management System (LMS) using his personal username and keyed in his password.
The LMS dashboard appeared right away on his computer monitor, showing among others the list of courses he is currently enrolled in.

A trainee may only access the first lessons. Prior to completion of the lesson, he has restricted access to succeeding topics, especially the assessments as these links are disabled at this point.

For demonstration purposes, Capt Gonzales chose the lesson on water plane area. A 38-second video animation about the topic “the introduction to water plane area” appeared on his monitor.

Capt Gonzales thanked his instructor who assured him that MAAP is ready to provide the trainee his required training services while onboard.

Apparently impressed with the demonstration, Administrator Amaro commended Vice Admiral Santos and his officials at LMS, which handles MAAP’s Distance Learning program, for trailblazing in the area of e-Learning.

“I would like to assure MAAP that MARINA, as long as I’m here, will fully support your initiatives,” Administrator Amaro told MAAP officials who witnessed the exercise.

Launched in a simple ceremony, the project, without doubt, has historic significance for the entire PMET.

This will certainly set in motion a shift to internet-aided training - a revolutionary change, no less - in the area of maritime education and training in the country.

BBF TRUSTEES TAKE OATH

Labour and Employment Secretary Silvestre Bello III swears in to office the Board of Trustees and Officers of the Bagong Bayani Foundation (BBF) in a recent oath-taking ceremonies at AMOSUP Convention Hall in Intramuros. BBF Board of Trustees and Officers (from left after Secretary Bello) are: Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos (President), Rene Cristobal (Vice President), Marlou Rono (Trustee), Eduardo Manese (Trustee), Levi De Mesa (Trustee), Capt Oscar Orbeta (Trustee), Alicia Devulgado (Internal Auditor), Hans Leo Cacdac (Honorrary Trustee). Not in photo are: Edwina Beech (Treasurer), Elsa Villa (Corporate Secretary), Leonardo De Ocampo (Trustee) and Rebecca Calzado (Honorrary Trustee). BBF hands over the annual Bagong Bayani Awards, a world-wide search for the country’s outstanding and exemplary Overseas Filipino Workers in recognition and paying tribute to OFWs for their significant efforts in fostering goodwill among the peoples of the world, enhancing and promoting the image of the Filipino as a competent, responsible and dignified worker, and for greatly contributing to the socio-economic development of their communities and our country as a whole.
"We'd like to consider to build the fifth and sixth Mariners' Home while confirming future demand for accommodations."

All Japan Seamen's Union president Yasumi Morita, On coping with the growing requirement for transient facilities for Filipino seafarers working on board Japanese-owned and managed ships

"You cannot please everyone... especially at mealtime if it's the only provision available on board we can prepare."

Ship Cook Antonio Abalajan, On the complaint the crew sometimes showed towards food prepared and served on board

"My dear future seafarers, it is high time that we sail above the quagmire of mediocrity as we carry on with us the seal of international standards."

Southwestern University cadet Jan Christian Carpio, On ushering into a new era of becoming a good Filipino seafarer

"There were good and bad times on board, but worse during rough seas."

Chief Officer Brix Liwat, Recounting his overall experience on various ships over the years

"The Hospital has the best lab equipment compared with about 95% of the country's medical centres and hospitals, both government and private."

Seamen's Hospital's Pathology Department chair Dr Gilbert Gonzales, On the delivery of the hospital's medical laboratory services to AMOSUP members and their qualified dependants

"If your actions are inappropriate or unlawful and related to employment or union membership he or she may be disciplined."

International Longshore and Warehouse Union's (Canada) Michael Meyer, On one of the basic policies encouraging members and casual ILWU workers in the use of social media
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