SEAFARING MAKES CAREER, FAMILY BETTER
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 Seafarer's 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.
The dawn of the drone shipping era has sailed closer to our shore. As stakeholders grapple with automation and robotics in ship operations there is no denying that the seafaring sector is heading towards autonomous or remote-controlled ships.

Our cadets in the academy and the developers of shore-based and onboard tech apparatus are either preparing for or have successfully tested maneuvering and navigating autonomous ships. We take a look at this early stage of the emerging technology that is dawning upon the maritime industry.

Our report on a study on the health conditions of working seafarers provides some interesting facts about your lifestyle and eating habits on board. This study makes a comparative analysis of our seafarers’ health conditions over a five-year span, in which you will find a set of recommended measures to alleviate our crews’ discomforts and disorders on board.

The study also focuses on the essential elements of good mental and physical health of seafarers on merchant ships. And in case you think you need to be guided with coping strategies in dealing with stress, we can point you to a self-help guide courtesy of ISWAN that complements its 24/7 Seafarers Helpline.

We highlight the annual activities of the Gregorio S Oca Summer Camp at AMOSUP-Cebu. It’s now on the fifth year of the summer camp. For those of our members in Cebu, you can encourage your sons and daughters to join the sports clinic by letting them choose the skills and sports they want to learn or improve on.

Our regular feature on the Union’s medical and healthcare services puts the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine on spotlight. You will come to know how our specially trained physical therapists and physiatrists provide short and long term rehab medicine services to our members and their dependents.

We bring you back the different experiences of our members who have succeeded in their career as merchant seafarers. While many of their experiences vary when they embarked on their first ships, you’ll find that they do have something in common when they chose to pursue seafaring as a profession.

You will also find our report about the recent reconciliation between the two Korean unions. AMOSUP, along with other Asian maritime union leaders who mediated for consolidation process between FKSU and KMSU, can look forward to a grand congress of a new federation to be called “Korean Seafarers’ Unions”.

Finally, we thank the Marinerong Pilipino team for visiting us to show gratitude to their many supporters in the union. The new squad’s exemplification of the profession in the hard court tremendously boosts the morale of our seafarers.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado F Oca
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This section of the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital provides short and long term rehab medicine services by specially trained physical therapists and physiatrists for union members and their dependents.

6 Remote-controlled ships: The way forward for maritime industry
Remote-controlled ships: The way forward for maritime industry

As developers and regulators tackle the technological advancement in international shipping, PH begins to call for ‘wider social and humanitarian consciousness’ for its development, writes Andy Dalisay

Seems that remote or autonomous shipping is the way forward for the maritime industry.
To prepare for it, cadets at the AMOSUP-run Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) are beginning to acquaint themselves with remote-controlled tasks such as by a drone, for instance.

MAAP is beginning to strengthen its automation subjects because the academy believes that “automation is good if we are good enough for it.” The academy expects to have an elective this semester on ship automation and robotics to prepare its graduates for the more advanced thing.

MAAP president VAmd Eduardo Ma R Santos (AFP, ret) said the academy’s automation and robotics classes would fill in the gaps between theoretical and practical applications of things by the cadets. It will enable them to catch up in the future – afloat or ashore – once they engage with autonomous ships.

“We now even have a Robotics Club in the academy,” stressed Vice Admiral Santos. He said this is not only for the fun of it, but to appreciate their theories and applications outside the four walls of the classrooms.

Likewise, it’s getting more progressive within the service providers and the shipping companies themselves. As progress among the developers of remotely operated ships revs up, the industry may find autonomous surface ships sailing the seas in the next three to five years.

Developer and regulatory levels

Its development has taken a headway both in the private sector and at state regulatory levels. Though it may initially happen
towage and salvage operator Svitzer, safely carried out a number of remotely controlled manoeuvres, utilising one of its tugs, the 28m long Svitzer Hermod.

Rolls Royce has described in a statement how the manoeuvring went on: “From the quayside in Copenhagen harbour the vessel’s Captain, stationed at the vessel’s remote base at Svitzer headquarters, berthed the vessel alongside the quay, undocked, turned 360°, and piloted it to the Svitzer HO, before docking again.”

The Hermod – built in Turkey at the Sanmar yard in 2016 – is equipped with a Rolls-Royce Dynamic Positioning System (DPS), which is the key link to the remote controlled system. RR explains that the vessel also features a range of sensors that combine different data inputs using advanced software to give the Captain an enhanced understanding of the vessel and its surroundings. The data is transmitted reliably and securely to a Remote Operating Centre (ROC) from where the Captain controls the vessel.

Autonomous navigation, situational awareness, remote control centre and communication were involved in the process, RR explained. It is understood the two companies’ co-operations have continued into testing the remote and autonomous vessel operations through the signing of an agreement.

RR also has prepared a paper titled “Autonomous ships: The next step.” The paper tackles critical perspectives in the areas of technology, safety and security, legalities and economies of autonomous ships to become a reality.

“As disruptive as the smartphone, the smart ship will revolutionise the landscape of ship design and operations. Autonomous shipping is the future of the maritime industry,” commented Mikael Måkinnen, the president of Rolls Royce (Marine).

Likewise, Japan’s container shipping giant NYK has its own plan to test a remotely controlled ship in the Pacific in 2019. Bloomberg reported that the Japanese shipowner is “considering using a large container ship for the test from Japan to North America and a crew will be on standby for safe operations.”

“... The academy’s automation and robotics classes would fill in the gaps between theoretical and practical applications of things by the cadets”
NYK last year tied up with radar manufacturer Furuno Electric Co and communication equipment-makers Japan Radio Co and Tokyo Keiki to study crash avoidance techniques using autonomous ships. The Japanese government is said to be backing research into data transmission and setting domestic and international standards for automated ships.

In the US, the Finnish technology group Wartsila took a step further when it successfully tested the remote control operation of a platform supply vessel (PSV) last August. The testing, the company said, involved driving the vessel through a sequence of manoeuvres using a combination of Dynamic Positioning (DP) and manual joystick on the 80m PSV Highland Chieftain off the North Sea coast of Scotland.

Although the vessel was in the North Sea, the remote control navigating was carried out from the Wartsila office in San Diego, California, 8,000 km away in collaboration with the US-based Gulfmark Offshore, which provided the Chieftain for the project. Wartsila said it temporarily added additional software to the DP system to route data over the vessel’s satellite link to onshore work station in San Diego. The company stressed the use of standard bandwidth on board satellite communication in carrying out the test.

**Vessel level**

At the vessel level, many in the industry have identified that in remote and autonomous system, the most efficient use of crew and their skills would be one of the cost-reducing benefits. Labour supplying countries like the Philippines finds no doubt about the usefulness of improved technology for international shipping.

Automation is an emerging technology that is dawning upon the shipping industry, especially for seafarers’ worldwide, said MARINA administrator Dr Marcial Amaro III, who led the Philippine delegation to an IMO meeting last June. “The seafaring industry should welcome this and pave the way for its further development,” he said.

Dr Amaro indicated that automated surface ships raise the potential of a reduction of five to six highly technical crews for every cargo ship within the next 10 years.

IMO member states that provide seafarers and seafaring organisations and unions are for the technological advancement of the shipping industry, but not at the cost of employment for seafarers and port workers. “We need to put a humanitarian and social consciousness component in the regulatory framework” that could be developed for autonomous surface ships to complement the objective for the safe, secure and environmental operation of such vessels within the existing IMO instruments,” Dr Amaro told delegates to the IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee.

**Engaging the stakeholders**

The IMO must engage with manufacturers, shipowners and stakeholders, especially the seafaring member states – as they’ll be the first sector to be affected due to loss of employment opportunities.

The UN body has placed huge importance to the human element or the seafarer as one of its main pillars of shipping component in its work programme and strategic goal. For this reason, Dr Amaro maintains that “seafarers should be viewed in a positive light as enabler for technological advancement and as being cost effective.”

Apart from the humanitarian activities that seafarers perform for the industry, the MARINA administrator pointed out that seafarers along with their families contribute to the betterment of societies in developing countries.

On the matter of safe operation of autonomous surface ships, the (Maritime Safety) committee may wish to consider more redundant systems from the main propulsion, auxiliary machineries, control systems and communications facilities, among others. Moreover, the shore-based controllers should have seafaring experience and if possible, be categorised as seafarers,” stressed the head of Philippine delegation.

8  Sailing Forward
Health conditions of seafarers working on board merchant ships, including their eating practices and related behaviours, have improved over the last five years, according to a study carried out by a Cardiff-based research centre in Wales.

“Seafarers smoke and drink less and seem to follow eating practices with increased consumption of vegetables and decreased consumption of fried food at sea and at home,” said the Cardiff University’s Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC). Released last July, the study was carried out and written by Helen Sampson, Neil Ellis, Iris Acejo and Nelson Turgau.

The study also reported fewer conditions that have been diagnosed by doctors and seemed to suffer from fewer specific self-diagnosed problems. It is presumably one reason why seafarers’ use of both prescribed painkillers and self-prescribed medications appears to have fallen, said the paper titled, “Changes in Seafarers Health, 2011-16”.

**Fatigue and mental health**

But such improving lifestyle on board appeared “somewhat contradictory” to the study’s findings in relation to work factors like fatigue and mental health of the shipboard personnel. “Sleep quality has reduced in the period 2011-16 and this appears to be primarily related to work and environmental factors rather than reported levels of anxiety,” it said.

For example, it cites the increase in the proportion of seafarers in 2016 who reported being unable to screen natural daylight out of their cabin that caused sleeping disturbance. When it comes to fatigue, which has risen over the review period, “is a matter of some concern for both long-term health of the seafarer population and for their operational safety,” the study warned.

Likewise, the SIRC report has seen a “deterioration in some aspects of seafarers’ mental health.” It says scores relating to questions drawn from the validated ‘General Health Questionnaire’ suggest that there has been an increase in psychiatric disorders among serving seafarers.

This might explain, in part, why more seafarers in 2016 (than 2011) felt that their health was less robust than that enjoyed by other people around them.

**Recommendations**

To alleviate the discomforts and disorders the study recommends a number of measures that ship operators must do for the benefit of the seafarers. These include:
Sleep quality at sea

An issue of concern the recent Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) study has focused on the essential element of good mental and physical health of seafarers working on board merchant ships.

Rest and sleep, which account for the elements of good mental and physical health, showed a “very consistent pattern” with seafarers in 2016 reporting “more difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep and an increased tendency to wake up during sleep hours.”

Researchers have found surveyed seafarers having “increased difficulty getting up at the appropriate time, increased restless/difficulty getting up at the appropriate time, increased restless/disturbed sleep, an increased tendency to wake up disoriented or confused, and an increased perception of inadequate sleep.”

When these results were aggregated to create a ‘fatigue score’, the study showed that the mean score for 2016 was significantly greater than for 2011. It said the scores indicated that the experience of ‘severe’ fatigue has increased from 24% of the sample in 2011 to 36% in 2016.

They asked the seafarers who did not get enough sleep why this was so. The percentage who suggested it was due to working hours increased in 2016 to 32% (up from 28% in 2011). They also found an increase in the numbers of seafarers who suggested that lack of sleep was caused by motion.

In 2011, 18% of seafarers suggested that their lack of sleep was a consequence of ship motion and in 2016 the percentage increased to 23%. The remaining factors were stable when comparing the two samples with no further differences of statistical significance.

When the factors being considered were grouped into ‘work’ (hours, patterns, port duties), ‘environment’ (motion, noise, light, temperature) and ‘anxiety’ (general, work-related, homesickness and ‘other’), it found that the mean scores had significantly increased for work and environment related to sleep deprivation, but that there was no statistically significant difference which related to sleep disruption due to anxiety. SF
The study suggests ship operators to find ways of providing better access to those facilities and amenities on board that serve to allow seafarers to relax and to achieve a degree of mental restoration.

- Pay more attention to the protection of seafarers’ mental health.

In addition to taking steps to reduce fatigue, the study suggests ship operators to find ways of providing better access to those facilities and amenities on board that serve to allow seafarers to relax and to achieve a degree of mental restoration.

These are likely to include: games, sports facilities provided in properly designated, spaces; spacious, comfortable, communal areas where collective entertainment for the whole crew can be enjoyed; Wi-Fi access in cabins, views of the natural environment from cabins; access to regular shore leave; clean and well-maintained living spaces; flexible lighting; heating/air conditioning that can be regulated within cabins.

‘Remarkably consistent’

The SIRC study used the survey method by administering questionnaires to active seafarers visiting welfare centres (from their ships). The questionnaire was distributed and collected by port chaplains and by researchers in the UK, Philippines, and China.

In 2011, some 1,026 completed questionnaires were collected and in 2016 they expanded the sample size to 1,513.

In the recent report the analysis focuses on the significant differences identified between the findings for 2011 and 2016. They also report on areas of consistency where findings relate to important behaviours and health issues.

“The sample for phase one (2011) and phase two (2016) is remarkably consistent in terms of age profile, department (deck/engine/galley) and marital status. The mean age was 33.87 in 2011 and 33.78 in 2016,” the study noted.

The study’s nationality profile was markedly different in relation to the two samples with significantly more Filipinos, fewer Eastern Europeans and fewer ‘others’ included in phase 2 (2016) than in phase one.

The job profile also differs but less significantly than nationality. In 2016, it included slightly more ratings in the sample (54% as opposed to 50% in 2011). There were very similar numbers of junior officers in both samples but fewer senior officers in phase two than in phase one (16% phase two and 22% phase one).

There were no significant differences between the samples in relation to the departments where seafarers worked, with just over half working in the deck department, and just over a third working in the engine department. The remainder worked in the galley.

New emotional support guidance for seafarers

ISWAN has produced a self-help guide for seafarers’ mental health to complement its free, 24/7 helpline, SeafarerHelp.

Working away at sea with limited means of communication and little or no shore leave means that it can be difficult for seafarers to access the emotional support they might need.

Forming part of ISWAN’s Seafarers’ Health Information Programme (SHIP) and overseen by Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Dr Pennie Blackburn, the new self-help guide is entitled Steps to Positive Mental Health and intended to be the first in a series of ‘Good Mental Health Guides for Seafarers’. It contains skills, exercises and coping strategies to help seafarers deal with their emotions when they are experiencing stress or feeling low, including examples of positive coping statements and guidance on using mindfulness to deal with stressful situations.

The guide also includes contact details for SeafarerHelp, ISWAN’s free and confidential helpline for seafarers in need. As well as dealing with issues such as unpaid wages and abandonment, the SeafarerHelp team is also there to listen and provide emotional support to any seafarer feeling depressed, lonely or unhappy.

Steps to Positive Mental Health will be translated into Filipino, Hindi, Russian, Arabic and Spanish in due course. The English version can be downloaded for free. For further information on the guide or ISWAN’s SHIP materials, please contact Caitlin Vaughan.
Enjoying summer camp at AMOSUP-Cebu

Now on its fifth year, the Capt Gregorio S Oca Summer Clinic offers sports and skills pursuits to the sons and daughters of union members in the region. Normaine Nilaine Garate recounts how participants of the latest season also achieved fun, friends and fulfilment.

You may have attended summer camps as a kid. Though you feel like enjoying it then, you still wanted more time to spend for it. But today’s summer camps are not the same as the old ones you enjoyed with your best of chums.

Summer camps now aim to expose young boys and girls to learning activities they don’t tackle during their normal school days. While out from school for a summer vacation for a couple of months or so, one has a lot of activities to choose from. Apart from summer classes and the usual relaxing vacation somewhere else, summer camp has been a popular option.

Sports camps that also offer dancing or guitar lessons, for instance, are a good choice for kids and teens because they can be kept physically and mentally active and learn good skills about teamwork. If you decide to send your child to a summer camp, you will have to choose the right one.

Choosing a sport or skill, one has to consider the child’s age, interest and the skill level and availability. However, as parents want their children’s minds enriched, they surely would love them to learn the new pastime or just keep their minds busy. For this reason, summer camp is a great option for both parents and children.

In a camp setting, a coach will make sure that every student is included in the activity and that each child interacts with the others in a positive way. They learn the give and take of a group reality and learn how to work with each other as a team.

AMOSUP-Cebu’s Captain Gregorio S Oca Summer Camp is such an example. Now on its fifth year, the sports clinic is usually held during the months of April and May. The event is intended for all the children of our dear seafarers of the union.

Started April 17 and culminated last 30 May 2017, the recent summer camp offered five types of sports and teams for both kids and teens. They include basketball, dancing, swimming, badminton and guitar. The summer camp AMOSUP conducts can keep the kids busy, learn new skills, meet new friends, and it’s for free.

Some of the important reasons of sending your kids to summer camp can include the following:

1. Make them stay both physically and socially active during summer camp. There are many activities to participate in and things to do. Summer camp ensures that the children will be a part of a group and make new friends instead of whining about being bored or getting into trouble at home.

2. Learn to have fun without technology. Kids will have to put down the iPads and smart phones, and have fun without technology, mostly by...
participating in their respective teams. Children will see how much fun taking a break from the screen can really be.

3. Learn to be independent. Kids in summer camp will learn to listen to new adults like their coaches, make new friends and enter into an unfamiliar environment especially for the first timers. This is a skill every child should learn, making them more socially and emotionally confident.

At the AMOSUP Cebu summer camp major event happened too. The Marinerong Pilipino teamster Koy Banal (former FEU coach) along with Mark Isip (former UAAP champ, PBA player) visited the camp and shared their best experiences to the basketball team for kids and teens. Everyone felt so grateful for having them on that day. Both kids and teens learned a lot of the ballgame’s basic plays and breath taking warm-ups to get their body system ready for the game.

Parents and students at the culminating activity had lots of fun that included basketball shooting with parents and skills challenge from the top three Marinero players. They also played the “planting rice” game composed of students with a coach per team and the “newspaper dance” by pair. They had delightful bunch of lunch and snacks prepared by the dear parents and everyone was full. The program resumed in the afternoon which started with a presentation from the guitar team, followed by the opening remarks of Seamen’s Hospital Cebu director, Dr Teodosio Alcantara.

Students and parents delivered thoughtful messages that would melt every coach’s heart. The best participant of each team received a special award from the hospital director and coaches, including certificates of participation to everyone who joined the Captain Gregorio S Oca Summer Camp 2017.

The activities also provided strong bond between students and coaches, students to students and parents to parents, too. Indeed, learning skills at each activity can benefit every student. Being exposed to different activities also develops self-esteem. They also learn skills that they can pursue and enjoy for the rest of their lives. Summer camp does give kids and teens fun, friends and fulfillment.
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<th>Savings in 20 years (PhP)</th>
<th>Total savings with 4%* Dividend Rate (PhP)</th>
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*The dividend rate is based on previous years’ dividends. Actual dividends will be based on the yearly income of the Fund.

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Monthly Remittance:

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*The dividend rate is based on previous years’ dividends. Actual dividends will be based on the yearly income of the Fund.

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Sa Pag-IBIG, ang pinaghirapan may katuparan
Amidst the hazards and sacrifices of working away from families and friends, many seafarers have succeeded in their careers including the realisation of dreams for their next of kin. Sailing Forward talks to some AMOSUP members in a series of interviews as they share segments 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 are thankful for in the choice of their career: the professional growth and financial rewards.

Once a siren’s call for the youth to pursue and “see the world for free”, the job has lured many into maritime studies and eventually landed into seafaring. Their massive influx fooded the country’s maritime education and training system, yielding 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 POEA processed 358,898 officers and ratings that recorded 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.
To a new crewmember who has just been serving his first merchant ship, seeing his vessel sinking in the middle of the ocean must truly be a traumatic experience.

That’s how Edwin Gomez received the proverbial baptism of fire when he joined his first ship after completing a BS Marine Transportation degree in 1980. He thought he could never work at sea again after surviving in a ship sinking accident.

The incident began when their ship encountered a typhoon on the way to Japan from Malaysia. They’d been ferrying logs from Malaysia on the ship’s regular trade when the unexpected happened.

When their vessel met the typhoon on that day the Captain had the ship anchored in Lingayen Gulf to seek shelter and let the stormy weather pass. They resumed sailing a day after the storm passed through and calm waters reigned.

On the way to the next port, however, the typhoon came back as it was supposed to be heading on its path to Japan. Edwin and company’s vessel, which was then carrying logs, struggled with strong winds and high waves. It’s like having a collision with the storm head on, he recalls, referring as to how the strong wind and high waves battered the ship.

Thinking that the vessel was about to sink, all the deck hands prepared their lifesaving equipment and got ready to abandon ship. Edwin saw how their ship quickly sank after abandoning it.

No one died in the incident and they were all ferried to safety. But it left a terrifying experience for Edwin. He promised himself not to sail in an open sea again. “Sobra ang takot ko noon na sumakay muli pagkatapos ng insidente. Parang nagka phobia ako bang magbaro,” recounts Edwin. (I feared so much to go on board again after the incident. It seemed I had acquired this phobia of embarking on a merchant ship.)

He really stopped sailing on an ocean-going vessel for a while as an apparent result of their ordeal. But he knew he needed to work and had a dream to pursue. What he did was to try to overcome his fear. He applied for a job in the country’s interisland shipping.

Edwin met some of his classmates from their marine school on the domestic ship he had worked on. It took him three months working on board a coastal ship. He felt this period of enduring sea encounter had his trauma completely vanished.

At the same time, he says the pay difference left him no alternative...
contract on board another general cargo ship, the 13,604 DWT Cosmic Ace. The Chief Mate has his Master’s ticket in possession, but still needs to spend for sea time to be in command.

Edwin got the inspiration to be a seafarer from his folks in Zamboanga del Sur, where his family once lived when he was a young boy. “I saw some of our neighbours whose fathers chose a career in shipping. I saw how they’d gotten to have their own houses and new cars,” he says.

Also it so happened that his father’s friend, a former radio operator (RO) at a local telegraph company, went on to be a ship RO. He had observed how his father’s friend who used to pay them a visit “had changed since the guy shifted from his old (telegraphy) job.”

The curious boy queried their guest all about a seaman’s job, which ignited his enthusiasm to pursue what his future job should be. And when Edwin finished secondary school in Zamboanga City High, he decided to pursue a course in Marine Transportation at the University of Cebu.

“Malaki ang kontribusyon sa akin at sa pamilya ng pagiging marino ko. Una, dahil mahirap lang kami, natulungan ko sa kolehiyo ang mga kapatid ko at nakapagpundar ng sarili naming bahay. Pangalawa, ngayong may asawa na ako, meron na rin kaming sariling bahay at sasakyan. Napatatapos ko na rin ang panganay ko sa college,” according to Edwin. (“My seafaring career has contributed a lot to me and my family. First, since we came from a poor family, I was able to help my siblings to finish college and built our house. Second, now that I have my own family, we already have our own home and a car. I already had my eldest child finished college.”)

Edwin plans to work further on board over the next several years. Though he says he wouldn’t want to spend “much longer as I’ve already worked for too long. I want to spend quality time with my family too.” If he will be given the chance to take the helm as a Master over his next contract, he says “three years will be my time table to be away. Perhaps I can find a new job ashore thereafter that is related to my profession.”

He points out he could be “willing to return to an interisland ship or into a teaching job in a training school and enjoy the remaining years of my life with my family.”

Sailing Forward 17
Aft the last 25 years of his maritime career he is now facing the most challenging part following a recent accident.

But Boatswain Noel Cabrera hopes everything will turn out alright once the shipping company releases his disability claims. Noel expects to have a scheduled settlement from his employer soon, which will apparently leave him with a comfortable retirement.

Noel was forced to disembark from his last ship, the 11,300-TEU CMA CGM Lyra, due to an accident in June 2016. The Lyra had just discharged its container loads at the port of Long Beach in California when one of his crew accidentally dropped a bucket with scraped oil down the docks. He says the grease in the can was taken from the ship’s winches and other auxiliaries intended for disposal.

The sludge could be a burden for possible marine pollution offence that might put the ship for thousands of dollars in fine. The tumbled pail prompted a ship officer to summon Noel to report the incident to the Chief Officer (C/O).

To prevent a transgression, they rushed down the quayside to search for the fallen bucket. He did find it as the object was on the verge of sinking. But as he was about to pull the bucket up, Noel says the sea current caused the ship to move, jamming his right hand stuck in between the ship and the fender. He says the nervous C/O had to exert so much force to help loosen Noel’s arm in the midst of the hull below and the fender.

The accident sent the Bosun to a two-day confinement in a LA hospital. His medical treatment went on continually upon his return to Manila on 22 June last year. The company doctor has declared him “unfit for sea duty” as shown by damages to the muscles and nerves during an EMG (electromyography) tests. As a result he lost his normal grip in the affected arm.

Like many seafarers, Noel also plunged into the profession wishing for a better education for his children and better life for the family. “Hindi ko kikitain ang sweldo ko ngayon kung dito sa Pilipinas ako magatrabaho. Kaya pinili kong kumuha ng nautical course noon,” he says. (I won’t earn my current salary if I will sweat it out here. That’s why I chose to take up a nautical course in college.)
Noel studied BS in Marine Transportation at the University of the Visayas and graduated in 1987. He did his apprenticeship in a coastal ship, Gothong Lines, for more than a year. He says he continued to work in another domestic ship operator William Lines to further support his studies.

He has worked in various rating’s duties when he began in ships overseas in the next seven years after college. He did the fixed role of a Boatswain over the last 18 years in various ships up to the last tonnage of his contract.

Noel, 53, has two sons, whom he says would want to follow their father’s footsteps in the choice of a profession. The first is taking up a Maritime Transportation course at the Misamis Institute of Technology and the other, who is finishing his senior year in a private secondary school, also wishes to go into a marine school.

Apart from giving his children the privilege to choose their career, Noel has a lot to thank seafaring for. He has put up capital for his wife’s business venture that is in the wholesale of women’s wear. They’ve also owned a new house and a family car, he says.

Once he receives his disable claims that is underway, he plans to expand his wife’s wholesale business and for him to go into commercial fishing. Noel stressed that he was once a pescador in the province before he became a seafarer.

“Balak kong bumili ng ilang banca sa probinsya para magkarga ng mga isda. Pag napagbuti namin ni misis itong negosyo nya at ako sa isdaan, seguro pude na yun para sa mga pangangailangan namin kahit hindi na ako makapagbarko”. (I want to buy motor boats to haul fish in the province. Once my wife’s business grows and me in the fish trade, I think that will be enough to sustain our needs even if I can’t work as a seafarer anymore.) SF
Reacon Buguis, Second Officer: The stranger in them finds difficult to cope on board.

He found it hard to get along with fellow crew when he joined his first merchant ship to work. Reacon Buguis thought something was wrong with him or with his fellow crewmen towards him, with what he called “their strange manners.”

Though he admits he had no experience on how to deal with people – much more mingling with mixed nationality crews – when he first worked overseas. It’s kind of a culture shock for Reacon that always left him uneasy and uncomfortable at work. “Minsan wala ka namang sinasabing masama o ginagawa sa kanila pero ang tingin sayo parang galit lagi,” he says. (Sometimes even if you don’t say or do something with them, they seemed to be always mad).

He found the unfriendliness and unsociability of the crews “toxic” as he felt the awkwardness of his situation on board. “Wala talaga ako lamang kung papaano makisama sa ibang lahi kaya naging na hirap ako kayo naka nagpa pag adjust sa unang barko ko,” he says. (I didn’t have the knack on how to co-operate with other nationals that’s why I had difficulty adjusting myself in my first ship.)

But when Reacon attended some in-house company trainings after he signed off from his ship, he realized it was just “a normal thing. Kelangan mo lang maging transparent sa iyong pakikitungo sa kabaro sa trabaho. Hindi mo kelangan dalhin yung pagiging estrangero sa kapwa marino kahit sa barko pa lang kayo nagkita.” (You only need to be transparent with your professional relationship towards your co-workers. You don’t have to harbour this feeling of a stranger towards crewmembers even if you just met them on the ship.)

Having adjusted himself to get along with the crews, Reacon believes that he underwent the same sentimentality other seafarers went through when they moved for the first time away from family and friends. Now he considers he has personally and professionally matured over the last two decades of his career.

Last July, he disembarked from the 112,723 DWT crude oil tanker United Journey, an Aframax that is operated by the Hellenic-based Marine Management Services in Piraeus. In September he got on the oil tanker Transocean of the Hamburg-based Transocean Shipmanagement. It will be his third vessel to work on as a Second Officer since he attained the role in 2009.

Reacon, 43, has sailed very far since he left MATS College of Technology in Davao City, where he finished his BS Marine
Transportation degree in 1994. He signed on to his first ship, the VLCC Stena Queen as a repairman in 1997. His tour of duty followed a number of different roles as rating in other ships like OS, AB and Pumpman before he became an officer.

He says his ambition then was to "earn a good salary and have a good life" when he chose to take up his course. He says the seafaring profession has put him and his family into a much better position in terms of their pecuniary and social status. "Seafaring has given us the comfort in life, maybe not in luxury, but having the necessities such as affording our children a good education, our own home and other essentials in life," Recson says.

To be a Master Mariner is in his plan, and Recson reckons he can reach it in the next several years. In the company where he works, Recson explains, "there have always been better chances of promotion once you step up into management level, especially those in full Filipino-crewed vessels."

He says to be a Master of his ship is the ultimate goal of many officers in the profession. He has observed that no one gets satisfied in their current roles once the junior officers levelled up to management. The Captain's post is just nautical miles away. He adds that apart from salary the Master's title surely means a ticket to fame and the privilege to perform lucrative posts upon retirement.
Whether it's a coincidence or a destiny, Davey Jones Jabungan believes he's fated to work at sea.

Davey Jones, or Dave to friends, says an American missionary who also became his godfather gave him his name when he was baptised. As told by his father, Dave was foresighted to become a sailor or a seaman when his godfather lent him the name of an old sea legend.

His first name Davey (sans the letter 'e') Jones was borrowed from a legendary sea Captain of the famous 'Flying Dutchman', supposedly a ghost ship that wandered the seas forever because it could not make port. Jones' famous locker has become a euphemism for the ocean floor, or resting place for sailors in the bottom of the sea.

But Dave Jabungan embarked not on a ghost ship when he started on a voyage as a deck cadet in 1995. He continued to work on regular rating's jobs after his stint from an apprenticeship.

How has Dave's fate gone into the seafaring world? His reply is that when he was in secondary school, Dave got fascinated with the marine cadets in smart uniform along with their snappy martial drill when he used to meet and see them in their hometown.

"This made me curious about their jobs that made me interested too to pursue a maritime course in college," he explains. Dave finished BS Marine Transportation at Agro-Industrial College Foundation of the Philippines in Davao City in 1994.

Unlike the incredible story of his namesake in the Flying Dutchman, Dave's many days on his first ship were replete with boredom and bouts of homesickness. "Ang hirap matulog at kumain lao na kung may bagyo. At lao na kung mas malit ang barko n'yo," he says. (It's difficult to fall asleep and eat meals especially when the weather.."
was bad. Worse when your ship was smaller.)

Dave says he had adapted to the worst sea condition over the succeeding vessels. “Nang magtagal nasanay din ako sa malalakas na alon, yun bang para ka laging nasa Ferris wheel,” he points out. (As days passed by I became used to the heaviest of sea currents as if you’re in a Ferris wheel.)

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You really have to be interested to grow professionally to succeed

Dave says he started sailing on a small 14,000 DWT vessel on the US-Japan trade, which is a frequent typhoon path.

You try to go through the same sea condition on a VLOC (very large ore carrier) of more than 104,000 DWT in which he has worked on too, he compares, “you will see the obvious difference.”

Last August he came home after finishing his contract on board a Japanese bulk carrier, the 206,291 DWT Kachidoki that is owned by the Tokyo-based Doun Kisen Company.

Dave, 42, says he is now taking a number of trainings and in-house company workshops in preparation for his next rank on board. Career improvement, he believes, needs some focus and full interest for continuous professional development. “You really have to be interested to grow professionally to succeed,” he points out.

Being a seafarer has given him a lot of improvement in life. He says: “You can save for the future through your earnings, you can buy what you want or invest in business.”

He credits the farm ventures to his mother, whom he calls his “great adviser” “She was my former “allottee” (designated salary receiver) when I was still unmarried.” He says his mother saved from his wages to acquire the farms. He is now married and has a daughter of 11 years.

Dave plans to join in another bulk carrier probably in his Second Officer role after completing the training requirements for an upcoming contract. He is confident he can climb his way to the top of the career ladder as sure as his American missionary godfather’s prophesy that he would become a sailor. SF

He has invested in farmlands from his savings by acquiring an 11-hectare coconut farms and another two-hectares planted with mango trees in Davao. He acquired the properties after a three-year stint on the job. He is now planning to buy a vehicle that he could use in the farm, which he thinks a priority to hasten work to generate income.

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Sailing Forward
Manuel Cuenco, Chief Steward and Ship Cook: Age is the limit
He had the chance to work on a ship after gaining some experience in a hotel overseas.

Still young and looking for some adventures many years ago, Manuel Guenno heeded the advice of some colleagues in Dubai, where he spent three years in land-based related hospitality jobs, to shift into a sea-based career where pay was better. He heard that many of his friends who left their hotel posts had succeeded to find new jobs in cruise lines and passenger ferries in Europe.

Armed with his job experiences, Manuel made his own decision to follow suit the career moves of co-workers. What role awaits an applicant of a job on board a ship like him who has no college degree, he then asked himself. Though he has the skills needed in the hotel’s kitchen that most merchant ships also required.

Soon enough Manuel landed a job as a General Purpose Steward in one of the ro-ro ferries of the defunct P&O Nedlloyd. He continuously worked on a number of oceangoing passenger ships in various rating’s roles mainly in the galley.

He got back to cargo ships after the 9/11 terror attack in the US in 2001 when international travels and tourism slumped to their lowest ebb. The 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon gave a temporary loss of business to the cruise industry as some companies panicked and pulled their fleet from the Mediterranean and repositioned somewhere else.

Manuel encountered no problem when he started work on any of the ships. “Kelangan mo lang ay pasensya at sipag sa trabaho,” he says. (You only need to have patience and hard work.)

Though he says some shipowners and crew managers have been allegedly discriminating crews who have reached their “age limit.” And this Manuel has encountered as he left his latest ship.

Manuel just disembarked from the 54,368 DWT BW Princess, an LPG carrier owned and operated by the BW Group, the company he served for more than 10 years. He notes that while management promised to promote him to Chief Cook, an assessment carried out by the company showed that he was not on the list.

He says the Chief Stewards in the fleet were promoted to Chief Cooks and the Second Cooks below 50 years became Mess-men. Those who have reached above the age of 50, like Manuel, will reportedly have to go regardless of their performance. “Seems we’ve reached our age limit to force us to resign,” he laments.

In spite of what happened Manuel says he has a lot to thank for in having the job of a seafarer. He has counted his blessings such as enabling his only daughter to finish her college and improved the family’s status of living. “We are now planning to have our own home, of course, little by little on an installment basis.”

Manuel is awaiting for a new contract after applying for a job as a Ship Cook at a new company. He says now that her daughter has finished college, his savings and income from succeeding contracts will do well to pay for a new house.

“Hindi naman kami magastos o mabisyo, kaya palagay ko sapat na ang kita ko. Ang problema nga lang sa marino ay hindi tuluy-tuloy ang trabaho. Contractual kami depende sa haba ng kontrata kada taon,” he says. (We don’t spend too much or in luxury, that’s why I think my income is already enough. The problem with a mariner is that the job is not that regular. We work on a contractual basis depending on the length each year.)

Manuel looks forward to his upcoming contract to work further and to his retirement days, which he says is one of the most important stage in anyone’s life.
Menillo Calderon, OIC: The long AB years and heavy weather

He has spent working for many years as an Able (AB) Seaman that led him too late to sit for the Marine Board exam to level up his rank as a ship officer.

But Menillo Calderon never regretted it as he enjoyed being an AB or just a plain seafarer. “I’ve enjoyed my AB seaman’s days for too long even if I knew that I could go up in this profession,” he says.

Calderon, 45, climbed up to a Third Officer level only in May last year. “Now it’s a challenge for me to handle new responsibilities even if I got my licence late. I was really not in a hurry to go higher as long as there’s a suitable job offer.”

He came back to Manila from the 30,420 DWT container ship Nexoe Maersk last 30 July. Calderon plans to find a new employer so he could probably have his promotion on board. It’s been a continuous learning experience and a career move, according to Calderon.

He believes there’ll be better chances for promotion in other companies since the one he left behind has other priorities when it comes to the advancement of their crews for both cadets and junior officers.

Calderon began his maritime career when he first sailed on an interisland ship of Allison Shipping Lines as a cadet in 1997. He says seafaring “runs in my blood” in the sense that he really liked the job. “It’s a challenging job and I enjoy being a seafarer,” he says.

Calderon went to drop or shift courses in Liberal Arts courses like History and Mass Communication in college before he decided to pursue a BS Marine Transportation course at Misamis Institute of Technology in 1998. “I finally shifted to BSMT simply because I really wanted to be a sailor.”

Stormy weather on board is most challenging and that is the dreadful experience I’ve encountered so far. And you have to be brave to fight it.
He says the only hard part he encountered since he started sailing was the weather. "Fighting heavy weather is my most challenging experience on board. I used to stay vigilant, always monitor the weather condition and stand by on channel 16 on the radio on the bridge during stormy sea."

Calderon says he’s always on alert to have the lifeboat, life raft and life jacket ready in case of an ‘abandon ship.’ "Stormy weather on board is most challenging and that is the dreadful experience I’ve encountered so far. And you have to be brave to fight it," he warns.

Except for the rough seas, everything has been fine for the new OIC. He boasts of his good ability on dealing with people. "I have this instinct in anticipating what people think as to the way they behave when I am with them," concedes Calderon.

Though he has not imbibed the idea of making it to the top ranks that many officers do, he plans to work for a few more years and then go on to set up his own business when he retires. He sees himself to get a notch higher in rank before retiring as a seafarer.

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A man named Gory
By Doris Magsaysay Ho

There is a man named Gory
Whose life is an incredible story
So many men and women he led
To fulfilling careers it is said.

He has a great and loving heart
Thinking of ways to give people a good start
Bridging owners with JSU
And unions abroad with a different view.

Idemoto Fujisawa has become our brothers
With Steve Cotton of ITF among others
For in the end we all want the same things
To give Filipino seafarers a chance to find their wings.

Only a man like Captain Oca
Can bring people to work together
Thank you so much for taking that difficult role
Making everyone work with great spirit and soul.

*Doris Magsaysay Ho wrote the poem years ago as a tribute by the Magsaysay Group to Capt Gregorio S Oca, the AMOSUP founder and former president. Ms Magsaysay Ho is the President of Magsaysay Group of Companies which is involved in shipping, logistics, human resources, marine travel and tourism. Ms. Ho was recognized as the Global Filipino Executive of the Year at the Asia CEO Awards in 2012. In 2011, Ms. Ho received the Lloyd's List Asia 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award for her outstanding contribution in the shipping industry. In 2010, she ranked 94th in the Lloyd's List of 100 Most Influential People in the Shipping Industry. Ms. Ho also received the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for Social Responsibility in 2004.
Hanafi Rustandi: Warrior for seafarers’ rights

‘The Indonesian union leader’s unwavering dedication to fight for workers’ rights will surely be missed by all of us in the ITF family’

AMOSUP has paid tribute to the Indonesian seafaring union leader, Hanafi Rustandi, for his genuine concern and compassion for the greater good of his fellow seafarers.

“We were saddened by the news of the early demise of a dear friend and comrade and a true and committed trade unionist, Brother Hanafi Rustandi,” said AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca.

Hanafi was the president of the Indonesian seafarers’ union KPI (Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia) and chair of the Asia Pacific Regional Committee of the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF).

In his message to the KPI head’s family and its union members, Dr Oca said: “Brother Hanafi showed genuine concern and compassion for the greater good of his fellow Indonesian seafarers, as well as transport workers around the globe.”

Because of his stance the Indonesian labour leader has become a well-respected figure in the international seafaring unions for being a “warrior for seafarers’ rights.”

Hanafi’s “unwavering dedication to fight for workers’ rights will surely be missed by all of us in the ITF family,” Dr Oca stressed.

AMOSUP expressed “our deepest sympathies and condolences to Brother Hanafi’s family and to the leaders and members of KPI in this time of great sadness, as we reflect on how he lived his life in the service of others.”

Asian unions mourn

Some fellow union brothers in Asia, which met in Manila last 03-04 August, a month after Hanafi’s demise, also joined to pay tribute.

They convened for the continuance of a reconciliation course, where Hanafi also had valuable efforts in mending the rifts between two Korean maritime unions over organisational issues.

“He left us for good even before putting our two federations together into a unity,” said a Korean delegate to the unification process between the Korean Federation of Seafarers’ Unions (KFSU) and Korean Maritime Seafarers’ Unions (KMSU). This has been handled by a committee called Korean Interim Seafarers’ Steering (KISS) group.

The KISS group observed a minute of silence in honour of Hanafi before the two-day negotiations began at the AMOSUP Convention Hall. As the ITF Asia Pacific’s regional committee chair, Hanafi served as the leading light in mediating the organisational conflicts between FKSU and KMSU, which the recent meeting has succeeded to reconcile.

“We’re sure Brother Hanafi is very happy now that the two federations have agreed to a reconciliation,” Dr Oca told the members of the KISS group following the signing of the memorandum of agreement for the unification process by the two parties.
Apart from Dr Oca, the KISS group is composed of other Asian union leaders led by Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU) president Thomas Tay as lead moderator, and members from Ali Japan Seamen’s Union president Yasumi Morita, Mary Liew of SMOU, and Singapore Organisation of Seamen president Kam Soon Huat. They all extended deepest sympathies to Hanafi’s family and KPI members for their loss.

The KISS panel had surely missed Hanafi’s usual witty remarks over the process. A man of humour, he had mixed them with his wit to battle countless other negotiations for seafarers’ rights.

Hanafi, 72, lost his battle with cancer last 04 July in Tokyo, where he was part of the ITF’s dockers’ and seafarers’ team for the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) negotiating with shipowners to finalise an agreement.

He was married, with four children. Hanafi became a KPI branch chair in 1980, then an ITF labour education officer two years later. In 1987 he was elected general secretary of the KPI, the Indonesian seafarers’ union, in which he served until his death. One of the early recipients of his advocacies was the Timor Leste youth in Jakarta, which Hanafi helped train with ITF fund for the Timorese to find jobs on ships back home.

**ITF grieves**

ITF general secretary Steve Cotton in a statement described the Hanafi he knew: “It feels unbelievable that such a vibrant and ever-fighting personality is no longer with us. We grieve for him, and for his family, friends and union members.

“Hanafi was a battler for what he believed in. He never deviated from that path, even during the many regime changes in Indonesia, and often at personal risk. His visit to Iran to find out the situation for bus driver unionists there is just one example of his courage and sense of duty.”

Hanafi’s “daring forays into Iran to hold clandestine meetings with another imprisoned union leader,” according to a journalist friend at the UK-based Fairplay magazine, “caught the attention of the US embassy in Jakarta and starred in Wikileaks classified US Embassy cables as the ‘Captain Jack Sparrow of the Indonesian labour movement’.” But for Hanafi the real pirates in international shipping were the owners of substandard ships that exploit their crew, wrote Fairplay’s Australian correspondent Zoe Reynolds in her Linked in tribute to the labour leader friend.

“Hanafi has died as he lived, a strong and outspoken advocate for trade unionists, and a defender to the last of seafarers’ rights. The world has today lost a tireless and irreplaceable campaigner. We mourn his loss and remember his example,” ITF’s Cotton added.

A joint statement from the ITF president Paddy Crumlin and Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ) general secretary Joe Fleetwood, said Hanafi was a “fierce supporter of Australian and New Zealand seafarers’ right to work. Hanafi particularly intervened on several occasions to ensure offshore vessels working out of Indonesia in Australian waters were manned by Australian crews. He firmly rejected any attempt by offshore operators to replace Australian crews with his or any other nations’ seafarers.

The Indonesian union leader also worked closely with Fleetwood and MUNZ in fighting the wage slavery in the international fishing industry, particularly in New Zealand, the ITF statement said.

Crumlin described Hanafi as “small in stature” but “giant at heart”. He was a “seafarer, trade unionist, labour leader and internationalist. Much loved. Man of humour, deep faith and family.”

Hanafitus Rustandicus. A man of humour, Hanafi Rustandi (left) must have told Dr Conrad Oca the scientific name of the young tree he planted as the Hanafitus Rustandicus during a tree planting ceremony at the AMOSUP Seamen’s Village. The ceremony was part of the village tour of the two-day Asian Seafarers Summit delegates AMOSUP hosted in Manila on June 2014. (Image: Sailing Forward file photo)
Burying the hatchet

Andy Dalisay takes a look at how the much awaited reconciliation between the two Korean federations came into fruition under the leadership of brothers from Asian seafaring unions who brokered the unification.

Peace at the maritime labour front in the Korean peninsula has been achieved. The two Korean maritime unions have decided to bury the hatchet to pave the way for a unification process.

The creation of a new organisation – provisionally called the Korean Seafarers’ Unions (KSU) – involves the formation of a working group that will carry over and finish the work started by the committee in-charge of the process.

This committee, known as the Korean Interim Seafarers’ Steering (KISS) group, had begun its job in Singapore in September 2016 to monitor and evaluate the reconciliation course. Since then a plethora of meetings had followed to achieve the prospect of unity.

KISS with MOA

The KISS group convened a meeting in Manila last 03-04 August that culminated with the signing of the memorandum of agreement (MOA) between KFSU and KMSU chairmen for the consolidation accord. Under the agreement the two unions expect to come up with the specific details such as the new federation’s Constitution and other organisational rules by end October 2017.
The much awaited reconciliation between the two parties came into fruition under the leadership of other Asian seafarers’ unions, which brokered the unification hosted by AMOSUP at its Convention Hall in Manila. The KISS panel included Thomas Tay as lead moderator and Mary Liew of Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU), Kam Soon Huat of Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), Yasumi Morita of the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) and Conrado Oca of AMOSUP.

The KISS panel expressed joy over the signing of the MOA on the unification after two days of heated but constructive discussions between the two groups. Issues include power sharing, financial matter and decision making. The committee congratulated the two unions whose furor over some organisational issues led the KMSU to break away from KFSU in 2014.

The unity will now be followed by a planned grand congress in Korea for the full merger in the third quarter of this year.
The much awaited reconciliation between the two parties came into fruition under the leadership of other Asian seafarers unions, which brokered the unification hosted by AMOSUP at its Convention Hall in Manila.
The unity will now be followed by a planned grand congress in Korea for the full merger in the third quarter of this year.

**Narrow gaps to unity**

KMSU chairman Ha Sung-Min expressed “deep appreciation” from their Asian brothers for “continuously paying keen attention to the Korean seafarers’ union issue and sending active support on resolving our daunting problem.”

He said KMSU had been actively participating in the KISS committee to discuss and seek the potential of establishing a new federation. Mr Ha particularly cited the committees meeting last February where the two federations produced each other’s proposals on “how to consolidating documents.”

“Since then we have held 11 rounds of meetings and this whole process was the very opportunity for the two sides to start to understand each other’s situation and to restore our trust,” he said. As a result KMSU suggested that the two sides gave each other proposals on how to consolidate and work towards reconciliation. And last 18th May, Mr Ha noted that KMSU brought up “a very concrete measure on how the two federations can become a ‘new one single federation’, and actively worked on the discussion towards consolidation.”

While he admits that the two sides have a “number of controversial issues and having difficulties narrowing the gap between the two federations on these issues, we are nonetheless trying to listen to each other and actively find ways to resolve those problems.”

For FKSU, its decision to open more engaging dialogs had further narrowed these gaps from the breakaway group to achieve the “ultimate unity.” FKSU chairman Chung Tae-kil said: “We decided to open our arms more widely to bring back the separated organisation to the FKSU” by convening its central committee and adopting a special resolution to revise the rules.

Mr Chung said this effort led to re-affiliation of six other Korean unions to the FKSU without any conditions attached. “We are fully committed to unity and unification. We will have more dialogs with KMSU with open arms and open minds.”
Rehabilitation Medicine Department: Bringing you back into motion

This section of the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital provides short and long term rehab medicine services by specially trained physical therapists and physiatrists for union members and their dependents.

Equipped with knowledge, skills and expertise, the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital’s Rehabilitation Medicine Department can bring you back into motion.

The Department believes in the concept that the patient is in itself the most important factor in the setup of carrying out a clinical healthcare program. The care being provided to the patients has to be customised to meet their individual needs and goals. It needs a strong emphasis on detailed evaluation and education as it is important that the patient understands the cause, treatment and prevention of his or her condition.

Dedicated to provide AMOSUP union members and their dependents with excellent rehabilitation services, the Department also envisions to be an internationally accredited facility. Apart from its well-trained and dedicated professionals, the department is complete with its own healthcare program and equipment.

With the leadership of department chair Dr. Editha A. Tuason, along with other consultants namely, Dr. Rodolfo R. Rosales, Dr. Narciso T. Diokno, and Dr. Michael Jeremy B. Roque, the department is on track with its goal to serve patients and clients with the care they deserve.

The hospital provides short term and long term acute rehabilitation medicine services.
The Rehabilitation Medicine Department is subdivided into four sections: Out-Patient, Acute Care Setting, EMG-NCV and EEG Section, and Weight Management Unit. Consultants and physical therapists work together with the different sections of the department for a holistic approach of treatment for the patients and clients.

Acute Care Setting

The hospital provides short term and long term acute rehabilitation medicine services offered by specially trained physical therapists and physiatrists to patients who will benefit from an intensive care rehabilitation program.

In general, patients admitted in this setting are those with debilitating disease and traumatic injury following certain types of surgery or multiple medical issues who are having difficulty or inability performing Activities of Daily Living (ADL) as a result of their illnesses.

Rehabilitation programs are, but not limited to, pre and post amputation, brain and spinal cord injury, stroke and other neurological, cardiopulmonary, orthopedic conditions. Patients receive a minimum of an hour of physical therapy per day, up to six days a week depending on their needs and expected to make functional gains and medical improvement within a reasonable time frame.

Out-Patient

Continuity of care is essential for patients who had undergone acute care rehabilitation. Bulk of patients of the department came from OPD referrals and discharged acute care rehabilitation patients.

The nature of cases handled in the Rehabilitation Medicine deals more on the industrialise type which primarily affects the seafarers. And as part of their benefits, the dependents of the seafarer are also entitled to their physical therapy services. OPD patients are accommodated if referral for physical therapy treatment is given.

The common conditions handled in the department include orthopedic cases such as fractures, scoliosis, back pain, musculoskeletal cases such as shoulder pain, tendinitis, sports-related conditions such as ankle sprain, muscle strain, neurologic conditions. Such conditions also include cerebrovascular disease, spinal cord injury, pediatric conditions such as cerebral palsy, developmental delay, post-operative conditions such as total hip replacement, amputation, ligament reconstruction, cardiopulmonary conditions and oncologic conditions.

An average of 30-40 patients a day are handled in the rehab facility which includes outpatient and inpatient. The Rehabilitation Medicine Department's treatment areas are well equipped with hydrotherapy modalities, electrotherapy, gym area and gait training equipment. To assure that all patients from different areas are properly referred to the department, the department follows a specific procedure for outpatient, inpatient and walk-in patients.

EMG-NCV and EEG Section

Treatment isn’t possible without a proper diagnosis. And to properly come up with a diagnosis, patients are also being accommodated for Electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction velocity (NCV) and electroencephalogram (EEG) tests once referred to Rehabilitation Medicine Department.

Electromyogram (EMG) is a test used to record the electrical activity of the muscles and frequently performed when patients have unexplained muscle weakness. It is composed of nerve conduction study (NCV) which measures how well and how fast a nerve can send electrical signals.

These tests function as important diagnostic tools and provide vital information about the conditions of patient’s nerve and muscles. It can also detect some cause of problems such as muscle weakness, numbness, spasms, paralysis or pain. It can also determine if the problem involves the muscle, nerve, spinal cord or brain. In addition, these tests can be used to isolate the level of nerve irritation or injury.

Electroencephalogram (EEG) test is used to measure the electrical activity of the brain via electrode applied to the scalp. This procedure is safe and painless. It can be performed without the need of shaving your hair. This
brain wave test can help diagnose a number of conditions such as epilepsy, sleep disorders or brain tumors. The EEG recordings are interpreted by a neurologist.

**Weight Management Unit**

Following the trend for wellness, weight management unit was added in the department. This particular section provides program for cardio-respiratory training, weight loss and weight gain.

The department’s clients, seafarer members in particular, are required to maintain a fit body before boarding. This is the section that caters to their needs to lose or gain some weights and provides advice to maintain their shape while on board.

Not limited to the members, this section is also open for dependents, employees and pay patients who opted to be fit and healthy. With a wide range of program specifically tailored for the needs of the clients, their goals

Keeping up with the trends

The Rehabilitation Department team ensures up-to-date evidence-based practice to help the patients back into motion. This is through continuing professional education by attending seminars and workshops and subscription to latest international journals. The department ensures to provide the best available services, and achieve the optimal level of symptoms-free and functional recovery of the patients. The rehabilitation facility and the gym are fully-equipped to provide individualised programs on maintaining, restoring, and improving flexibility, strength, and endurance that are specific to the physical conditions of each patient.

**Individualised exercise program**

The staff of physical therapists provides more than just application of modalities. Movement experts as they are known, PTs of this department are specially trained in designing individualised therapeutic exercise program.
World family doctors day in Cebu

For seven years now, family physicians have been celebrating the Family Doctors Day all over the world every 19th of May. Since its declaration in 2010, themes have evolved to emphasize the significance of Family Doctors in promoting and sustaining health. This year’s theme is ‘depression.’

Child neglect or abuse fortifies adult depression. Any child who receives maltreatment or gets inadequate age-appropriate care is prone to suffer depression, low self-esteem and helplessness. Thus, being one with the world of Family Doctors, and in line with this year’s theme, the Philippine Academy of Family Physicians (Cebu Chapter), along with the Cebu Family Residents Association, chose to commemorate the day at St. Mary Euphrosasia Training Center, run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

This center provides shelter for girls who lived in market sheds or indigent parents. They are girls aged five to 18 years old, who are either ignored or abandoned, maltreated, exploited or abused and in need of special care and protection. It is laudable that the institution provides for all the necessities of these children including education up to college, through the help of charitable donors. It is providential for these girls to be looked after by such a dedicated congregation to save them from the adverse effects of neglect and abuse; one of which is depression. When asked by the author how the center sustains for all their needs, Sister Felice Maringo RGS, the Directress simply replied: “God provides for us, and He is probably the one that led you Doctors to this place.” In this institution, we have seen that they are like true family.

The day started with acquaintance with the girls, talking about their ambitions in life and showcasing their talents. Short lectures followed and demonstrations on basic health practices, such as proper hygiene as preventive measure of sickness. Free consultations and wellness check up were also conducted for each of them. The fun games produced a resounding laughter in the place. A modest meal with the girls was one of the highlights of the visit, as well as giving of gifts. AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital-Cebu provided the dental hygiene kits for the girls. Dr. Mylin Lorin Cabuenas, a resident physician in the Department of Family Medicine of the hospital, carried out a lecture on dental hygiene.
AMOSUP Cebu marks 20th year

AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Cebu celebrated its 20th anniversary, honouring the people who have set the foundations of service and excellence in the Visayas service branch two decades ago.

AMOSUP president Dr Conrado F Oca reminisced how the late founder Capt Gregorio S Oca along with a few others started building the institution in Cebu. How a vast rice field was turned into a fully operational tertiary level hospital which now includes a Sailor’s Home, Slope chest and Sports Complex that serve the union members and employees.

Dr Oca also recalled its start-ups of roughly 10 employees, and as years went by, ballooned to roughly 300 competent workforce at present. The AMOSUP president was more than happy and proud in recognising the employees who have been working their way through various challenges 10 years and beyond.

Hospital chief radiologist Dr Romero Villar and Mr Jerry Cobarde of Engineering Maintenance and General Services Department represented the awardees and gave their words of gratitude to colleagues, the management and mostly to our Heavenly Father for the chance to work in the institution for 20 memorable years.

A whole mix of smiles, laughter, tears of joy and cheers among employees and guests interlaced the celebration with warm congratulations and wishes. Everyone sang ‘Through to their hearts delight at the end of the program the song titled ‘Through the Years’ as AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Cebu set sail for another 20 years and beyond. (By Marvin Lao)
Navigating issues on maritime health

AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital’s Department of Family and Community Medicine’s first postgraduate course places the medical institution in the forefront of advancement and improvement of seafarers and their families’ health in the country.

Unlike occupations in land-based industries, maritime occupational health has remained unexplored. Yet the Philippines that is the world’s leading source of maritime manpower calls for its medical and healthcare practitioners to delve into maritime health education and research.

AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, through its Department of Family and Community Medicine, recently held its first postgraduate course to advance the education and preparedness of medical professionals on maritime health and seafarers’ family wellbeing in the country.

Organising the three-day course, aptly named as ‘Navigating Issues on Maritime Health’, has placed AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital in the “forefront for the advancement and improvement of maritime and seafarer’s family health in the country,” said Hospital Director Dr George Pile. The 7-9 September workshop was held at the Luneta Hotel on T M Kalaw, Manila.

The first two days of the course catered to physicians and healthcare practitioners from Seamen’s Hospital and residency alumni assigned in various hospitals in the metropolis. The third day saw the presence and participation of seafarers and their wives for topics and issues focused on their wellness and vitality.

AMOSUP’s advocacy to ensure the welfare of active union members and their dependents is part of the hospital services that are given for free in the provision of equitable and accessible medical care.

But this advocacy to ensure the welfare of seafarers and their families is “something that we have little knowledge of in the medical field,” stressed the chairman of SH Family and Community Medicine Department, Dr Leilanie A Nicodemus.

The department’s advocacy, known as WAVES (Wellness and Vitality for Every Filipino Seafarer’s Family), took its inspiration from the mission of AMOSUP. She said the WAVES goal also is to “advance the health and wellness of seafarer’s family using the strength of our discipline.”

Dr Nicodemus says medical and psychosocial issues that are linked to the kind of work in the maritime industry are seldom tackled in scientific discussion in medicine, noting that “research publications on maritime medicine are not common in the country too.”

She hopes the department’s recent initiative would progress to further development of Maritime Occupational Health and Safety in the country through short courses, fellowship programme and research.
The Marinerong Pilipino Skippers have extended their gratitude to hundreds of cheering AMOSUP members who supported and rooted for the seafaring industry’s team in the 2017 PBA D-League Foundation Conference.

The Skippers team through coach Koy Banal and his brother Joel thanked the Union for the applause and cheers during their ballgames at the Ynares Sports Arena in Pasig City.

The squad’s entry into the league marked the first time the maritime profession is being represented in the Foundation Cup of the country’s premiere basketball developmental profession.

“We are very proud to represent you all, ang mga Pilipinong magdaragat!” (the Filipino seafarers),” Banal told AMOSUP members who attended a ‘Pasasalamat’ programme the organisation prepared for the Skippers at the Union’s Convention Hall in Intramuros last 30 August.

All members of the team including their two new imports and the coaching staff came in for the thanksgiving.

The gathering gave the seafarers the chance to ask questions – from the naughty to the serious – to their favourite players. Mark Isip, the team’s skipper, emphasised the discipline and hard work their trainers and coaches imposed on them that have guided the members of the team. “It was tough and hard to follow,” he said.

Banal, who introduced each of the players, said they did their best in most of the plays. The Marinerong Pilipino squad earlier vowed to get into the finals, but met formidable opposition from Cignal HD who grounded their dream voyage in the semifinal series.

Will the Skippers be ready to set sail in the next season’s competition? Team manager Manolet Olayza assured the team’s fans and supporters that he has given the go signal for the Skippers to get ready come January 2018 when the PBA D-League opens its next season.
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MARINO

814 J. Nakpil corner P. Hidalgo Lim Streets, Malate, Manila
Telephone: +632 353 8180  E-Mail: museomarino@yahoo.com