THE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL HUB SEN’IN NO 1E

NEW SEAFARERS’ HOUSE OPENS
MARITIME ACADEMY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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

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BSMARE  BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE ENGINEERING

BSMTE  BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION AND ENGINEERING

CENTER FOR ADVANCE MARITIME STUDIES

COURSES OFFERED:

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION (MARINE SUPERINTENDENT)

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MARINE ENGINEERING (TECHNICAL SUPERINTENDENT)

TESTING ASSESSMENT CENTER OF TESDA

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.
Welcome. The delivery of welfare and benefits to our seafaring members nationwide is the hallmark of AMOSUP’s advocacy as a national trade union.

We are proud to report to you our latest milestone in the welfare provision to our mariners - the launching and opening of our new seafarers’ house. This multi-functional hub, which is just a mooring line away from our two Sailor’s Homes in Intramuros, will serve the documentation requirements of AMOSUP members and their dependents. It will also provide the venue for their health and fitness, recreational needs, and social events and gatherings.

We’re taking a look at the state of seafarers’ mental health which is considered the hardest part that social workers have dealt with because of a lot of stigma that is attached to the condition. And in the stressful environment seafarers work in, most of our members – at some point of their working experiences - have suffered some sort of mental health conditions.

Relative to health, you’ll also find our report on how a study on the HIV vulnerability of seafarers’ pregnant wives has led to their upkeep before and after giving birth. This study conducted in 2016 determines their knowledge of HIV and the extent of their vulnerability to infection. We also delve on the industry’s problem against piracy that not only took away ships, but held seafarers as well for ransom. The operations of a collective naval force have suppressed pirate attacks on ships after nearly 10 years in the infamous sea lane.

We highlight our brother union from the Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS) with its family fiesta treat for their Filipino union members and their families during their annual celebration in Manila. You’ll find the gathering as one of the venues for SOS to get to know their members and look for ways to improve their lives. Our feature on the “smart” ship survey shows how another fellow union provides a voice to seafarers in the debate over automated shipping. The survey gives you key findings of important social and human issues that need to be reconsidered by manufacturers and authorities as the introduction of autonomous ships comes closer.

We highlight the recent agreement in the unions’ negotiations with employers at the International Bargaining Forum. The parties in the Forum have agreed for a 2.5% increase in salary beginning January next year and a host of other changes related to seafarers work contract.

Finally, our series of interviews with AMOSUP members continues to inspire those in the seafaring profession. This fourth installment resumes with the stories of how our seafarers loved their jobs amidst the hazards and sacrifices of working away from families and friends.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado F Oca
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THE STATE OF SEAFARERS MENTAL HEALTH

There have been distinct factors that affect the mind and wellbeing of most shipboard personnel as they embark on their next ships. Australia-based Gavin Kelso tells Sailing Forward's Andy Dalisay the importance of their work in relation to the crew's better psychological wellbeing.

Filipino seafarers have been known by nature to be the resilient and happy type of workers on board ships. But in the stressful environment they work in, most of them at some point of their working experiences have suffered some sort of mental health conditions. Such a unique workplace where health issues of seafarers such as stress management and other psychological wellbeing need to be addressed.

Gavin recently came to Manila to conduct training among local maritime trainers to incorporate wellbeing and mental health workshops into the Pre-departure Orientation Seminar (PDS) that crew managers and manning agencies carry on for their crews. His group also works with AMOSUP and the manning agents for the purpose of better seafarers’ health.

Mental health is considered the hardest part that social health workers have come across. Gavin says it's because of a lot of stigma that is attached to the condition. And the stigma, he says, stops them from seeking and giving help. One example is depression, which is the number one cause of mental health problem. "Just because you have depression doesn't make you crazy which a lot of people think. It's a health issue we need to address," he points out.

Gavin explains how the shipping environment plays a very big part in someone's wellbeing. "We can have a happy, healthy and mentally stable seafarer who got on board the vessel. But if factors like poor working conditions and multicultural issues, crews not getting paid properly and not getting the right amount of food [are not addressed] - all those things can affect someone's health problems."

He says if shipowners want less money on wages and less manning altogether that would mean long hours of work or short rest period. "Ten years ago there were more people on board the vessel. Now they're cutting down on manpower that can make the job unsafe and can also make other people working on board on longer hours of shift," stressed Gavin.

Benchmarking for crews mental health varies from country to country depending on the infrastructure. By infrastructure this includes the context of promotion and advertising, creating an early intervention model, setting up the initial physical structure to adapt to ongoing demands, training workers and ensuring appropriate qualifications in that order.

There's a lot of infrastructure that Gavin's group is building up so...
that the country, the Philippines for instance, can create its own benchmark. But he cautions: “We still have to be careful holding everything towards that benchmark because some people might have a mental health problem and it will be unsafe for them to go to sea. Others might have symptoms of mental health condition where they are able to go to sea but learned how to manage those symptoms.”

In relation to this, Gavin reveals that they are in the process of tendering a study on the mental health of seafarers on a much wider scale. The study that can take a year to finish centres on issues of social isolation, suicide and depression on a global basis. Labour supplying countries will be sampled by the study such as the Philippines, India, Ukraine, among others, in coordination with maritime unions, shipping companies and manning agents.

As a social worker, Gavin has met many seafarers with mental issues. In his profession, he says, it is easy to see the symptoms. “It’s not surprising though. Some of the mental health condition is someone having a flu or common cold, sore back. But we don’t put any judgment.”

He emphasised that a mental health condition is another health condition. “It has to be treated appropriately. If not, there are those who commit suicide. It’s an ongoing thing. That’s why we’re compelled to do better.”

The Newcastle-based CEO of the employee assistance provider has specialised in mental health, drugs and alcohol issues. He has worked with the seafarers over the last seven years where 90% of their work is directly psychologically related to merchant mariners. Gavin says “everything we’re doing – whether counselling, training, seminars – all of which is for the seafarers family too. We acknowledge the role of the seafarers family and work with them as well.” SFF
Steps to positive mental health

Several factors can impact seafarers’ mental health, such as job stress, family pressures, limited shore leave and more. Being away at sea can also make it difficult to access support. ISWAN (International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network), through its Seafarers’ Health Information Programme self help guide below, details some skills, exercises and coping strategies to help you deal with your emotions when life becomes stressful or your mood is low.

**BODY: SELF-CARE**

Taking good care of our physical body means we will be better able to cope with emotional problems.

- Take steps to ensure you get as much sleep as you need.
- Eat healthily and regularly.
- Exercise regularly, preferably in an outside natural space.
- Plan how to make best use of rest times.
- Beware of how things like drink, drugs, smoking and caffeine affect you.

**ACHIEVE**

Our brain gets a boost when we achieve things during the day. Achievement increases the neurotransmitter dopamine and purposeful activity increases serotonin.

It is helpful to plan realistic and achievable goals every day, such as those concerning work, chores and study, but we can also set goals and achieve activities relating to connecting to others, enjoyment and exercise.

**CONNECT**

You may have limited opportunities to communicate with friends and family back home but it’s important to keep connected to loved ones when you can.

Different shift patterns and other reasons may make difficult to connect with other crew on board, but making an effort to socialise could help.

Are there opportunities on board to get involved in a film or games night? If not, why not plan a range of regular activities to enjoy with crew mates such as: deck BBQs, game evenings, team sports, movie nights, and karaoke contests.

**IS THIS THOUGHT A FACT OR OPINION?**

We can learn to react and think differently. The skills and exercises on the following might be helpful, try practising them so you’re ready to use when your mood drops.

**Fact:**
- Evidence to support its truth
- Undisputed
- Driven by rational thought
- Head

**Opinion:**
- Personal view
- Arguable
- Driven and reinforced by emotion
- Heart

Facts are what we need to focus on in order to make helpful changes. Reacting to our opinions is pointless and upsetting. Asking “is this fact or opinion?” helps us to pull back from our distress and defuse from the unhelpful thinking.
Enjoy

When our mood is pretty good, we tend to do a large variety of enjoyable activities, in addition to the things we have to do. As our mood and energy levels drop, we do less and less, until we eventually struggle to even do the necessary daily chores.

Aim to do more enjoyable activities you can enjoy now and plan ahead for your next voyage/contract – what can you take with you that you can enjoy doing on board. Try to get a balance between time on your own and time with others. Individual hobbies can help when social activities aren’t possible:

- Exercise can really lift your mood. Try www.trainingonboard.org for inspiration.
- Want a challenge? Learn new skills at your own pace. There are many free online courses which may introduce you to new interests and activities, try www.lynda.com.
- Feeling creative? Keep a written or photographic journal of your time on board.

Step Back

When we have a problem we can get caught up in the emotion (anger, frustration, sadness) – it is difficult to think clearly and see the bigger picture at those times and we can react by doing things that are unhelpful. At stressful times, we tend to be driven by our emotions and opinions, which create a vicious cycle by fuelling each other.

Our emotions strengthen our opinions, which in turn, intensify our emotions. This leads to impulsive acts and unhelpful longer term consequences, which helps to maintain the overall problem. It might seem like doing those things helps at the time, but by reacting impulsively or the same way all the time, we just keep the problem going.

It is often the meaning or opinions that we attach to facts that cause us distress, rather than the fact itself.

Imagine reading a newspaper that is different to your usual one. You might look at the headlines and wonder whether they might be biased in some way. It may be the journalist’s opinion rather than just the facts. So we might ask ourselves whether this headline is “fact or opinion”. We can do the same with our thoughts.

If we identify our thought as an opinion, then we can look at the facts - what we KNOW about the situation. Then we can make choices about what we can or cannot do.

So ask yourself:
- Is this thought a fact or opinion?
- What is a more reasonable explanation?
- How important is this? How important will it be in 6 months’ time?
- Remind yourself that the thought will pass.
Positive coping statements

Positive coping statements encourage us and help us cope through distressing times. You only have to watch a tennis match to see the power of positive self-talk. The player who looks despondent is probably criticising themselves whilst making lots of mistakes.

The other player may look very confident, using lots of positive self-talk to encourage and push themselves, and they play like a master. This process might swap from player to player during the match - but the one who is using and believing positive self-talk will be the better player at that time.

We can say these encouraging words to ourselves, and be our own personal coach. We have all survived some very distressing times, and we can use those experiences to encourage us through current difficulties.

Examples of coping statements
Choose words that work for you. Write down a coping thought or positive statement for each difficult or distressing situation. Tell yourself something that will help you get through. Write them down on a piece of card and carry it in your pocket to help remind you.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice which is very relevant for life today. It is a very simple concept. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This increases awareness, clarity and acceptance of our present-moment reality.

Mindfulness does not conflict with any beliefs or tradition, religious, cultural or scientific. It is simply a practical way to notice thoughts, physical sensations, sights, sounds, smell - anything we might not normally notice. The actual skills might be simple, but because it is so different to how our minds normally behave, it takes a lot of practice.

Being mindful helps us to train our attention. Our minds wander about 50% of the time, but every time we practise being mindful, we are exercising our attention “muscle” and becoming mentally fitter. We can take more control over our focus of attention instead of passively allowing our attention to be dominated by distressing thoughts.

Mindfulness might simply be described as choosing and learning to control our focus of attention, and being open, curious and flexible

Distress Reaction:

- Judging
- Based on opinion
- Thoughts as real
- Believe and engage with thoughts
- Attention on past and future
- Avoid (situations, thoughts, emotions)
- Struggle
- Automatic pilot
- Distress and pain
- Fog of upsetting thoughts
- Reactive impulsive behaviours
- Overwhelming, catastrophic
- Lost in reaction

Multiple Response

- Non-judging, accepting
- Based on fact
- Thoughts as mental events
- Distance/disengage from thoughts
- Awareness of this moment
- Approach
- Let go
- Interested, focused, attentive
- Reduced distress and pain
- Clear and alert
- Considered wise choices
- Calm, effective
- Clear awareness

Consider the most distress you have experienced or are ever likely to experience. Is that time in the past? Is it perhaps in the future?

Right now, at this very moment, are you the most distressed you have ever been or are likely to be?

If not, then perhaps that’s a good reason to learn to be mindful - to put your attention to this very moment.
Mindful breathing

We can focus our attention on our breathing when we feel distressed, which will help calm our mind and our body.

The primary goal of mindful breathing is simply a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them. Take 10 minutes each day to practise mindful breathing:

- Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
- Bring your attention to your breathing.
- Imagine that you have a balloon in your stomach. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates.
- Each time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as the balloon inflates and deflates. Your abdomen rising with the in-breath, and falling with the out-breath.
- Thoughts will come into your mind, and that’s okay, because that’s just what the human mind does. Simply notice those thoughts, then bring your attention back to your breathing. Likewise, you can notice sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, and again, just bring your attention back to your breathing.
- You don’t have to follow those thoughts or feelings, don’t judge yourself for having them, or analyse them in any way. It’s okay for the thoughts to be there. Just notice those thoughts, and let them drift away, bringing your attention back to your breathing.
- Whenever you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing.
- It’s okay and natural for thoughts to enter into your awareness, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.
Study helps union improve HIV prenatal, antenatal care

AMOSUP’s Maria Flores Jayme and ITF’s Dr Syed Asif Altaf report how a study on the HIV vulnerability of seafarers’ pregnant wives has led to their upkeep before and after giving birth.

The AMOSUP study showed the need for:

- Early detection for women, especially pregnant women, to prevent the transmission of HIV to their unborn child, and enable them to get the necessary treatment to lower their viral count and prevent complications.
- Education about HIV and STIs prevention during antenatal check-ups and hospital visits.
- Stronger infection controls in hospitals because seafarers’ wives who do not know they are HIV positive may be attending antenatal care and giving birth.

As a result, in 2017 AMOSUP has improved its prenatal and antenatal programmes and policies, and introduced several new ones. These include:

- Encouraging pregnant women attending antenatal classes in AMOSUP hospitals to be tested for HIV – this has seen a rise in testing.
- More active campaigns on HIV, including partnership with the Positibong Marino programmes, in the waiting areas of AMOSUP hospitals.
- Stronger collaboration between AMOSUP, the national health department and other non-government organisations.
- Better follow up treatment for any pregnant seafarers’ wife who is tested positive.
- Stricter implementation of infection control protocols during delivery.

My husband is responsible and knows what is good for him and for us. I know that my husband loves me, and if he does something that is unfaithful, I don’t know if I will blame him directly, but whatever it might be, I really don’t know and I don’t want to ask him because it will seem like I am doubting him. Just trust and be faithful. - A study participant.

HIV infection in the Philippines is prevalent and steadily increasing. Overseas Filipino workers and seafarers are identified as particularly at risk.

It is difficult to discuss with someone’s wife how much she trusts her husband and believes in their marriage. But AMOSUP conducted a study in 2016 among pregnant wives of seafarers to determine their knowledge of HIV and the extent of their vulnerability to infection. A hundred women who sought antenatal consultations in AMOSUP Hospitals responded.

The study found that most of the pregnant wives were young, with high educational attainment. They had access to, and used, means of contraception, but their level of knowledge of HIV was low.

Their vulnerability to infection was significantly high, based on their partner’s perceived – and self-reported – behaviour.

A 2013 ITF survey of Filipino seafarers had found that 78% of men believed a woman was safe as long as she remained faithful, taking no account of her husband’s behaviour. And it revealed that while away from home, 43% of Filipino seafarers had regular sexual partners and 23% had casual ones. Their rate of condom use was just 40%.

There are numerous programmes to make seafarers aware of how to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but few for their wives. During prenatal checks, pregnant seafarers’ wives are tested for Hepatitis B, among other STIs, but they are not encouraged to request HIV testing, even though the risk factors of acquiring both diseases are similar.
AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca receives a cheque worth $300,000 (PhP15.6 million) as donation from the All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU) and International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ) to fund the equipment acquisition and operation of the newly-opened Seamen's Hospital extension, the South Wing Building (below photos). JSU president Yasumi Morita (left) and IMMAJ vice chairman Shunsuke Iimada (third, left) together with Philippine Japan Manning Consultative Council chairman Eduardo Manese handed over the mock cheque to Dr Oca at the ground floor lobby of the AMOSUP Seamen's Centre last 18 February 2018. The four-storey facility in Intramuros, Manila is now in full operation following its opening in January.
Seafarers House opens

The four-storey facility is dedicated to all hard-working seafarers in need of quality downtime.

The partnership between AMOSUP and the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) has opened a new building that is devoted to the activities of Filipino seafarers serving on Japanese-owned and controlled merchant vessels.

The four-storey Sen’in No Ie, which is the Japanese words for “Seafarer House”, is a multi-functional hub that will serve AMOSUP members and their dependents documentation requirements. It will also service their health and fitness, recreational needs, and as a venue for social events and gatherings.

The facility, located just opposite the union’s Sailor’s Home Annex in Intramuros, is dedicated to all hard-working seafarers especially those serving on board Japanese-owned merchant fleet.

AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca said the first floor will occupy the records section, where seafarers can get their IDs, and other document requirements. He said government agencies can be invited to set up windows for the documentation and facilitation of the seafarers’ working papers.

The second floor will be set up as a gymnasium, while the third floor can be converted into offices and lecture area. It is the floor area where the bar or watering hole can be found as the union can hold some function for its members socialising activities.

During an opening ceremony last 18 January 2018, Dr Oca extended his gratitude to the Japanese benefactors led by JSU president Yasumi Morita for the construction of the Seafarer House.

Mr Morita said JSU and AMOSUP have deepened their solidarity as union brothers through various activities for many years, and he expected it to grow further. “We want to continue our activities with Filipino seafarers who have supported the Japanese merchant fleet,” he said.

The two unions have collaborated in a number of projects devoted to Filipino seafarers’ welfare such as in the area of transient accommodations and recreational needs.
We at IMMAJ are thankful to AMOSUP in ensuring that our Filipino seafarers have a decent, safe and comfortable place whenever they take ashore and in between shipboard assignment.
The three JSU-AMOSUP Mariners Home in Malate, the JSU-AMOSUP Maritime Museum & Sports Complex also in Malate, and the JSU-AMOSUP Davao Activity Centre are some of the joint endeavours that are now being enjoyed by the members.

The International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ) vice chairman Shunsuke Imada, who represented the employers at the ceremony, lauded the latest venture in the growing number of facilities made possible by the two maritime unions.

"With this, we at IMMAJ are thankful to AMOSUP in ensuring that our Filipino seafarers have a decent, safe and comfortable place whenever they take ashore and in between shipboard assignment," Mr. Imada said.

He commended AMOSUP for this milestone, hoping that the union will continue to build new facilities in the years to come.

The chair of the Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council, Mr. Eduardo Manese, was very impressed at the inaugural opening, saying “this will also provide a one-stop shop in the documentation of our seafarers.”

The Seafare’s House opening follows the inaugural service launch of the union’s expanded medical and healthcare facilities through the South Wing Building, the new four-storey hospital right beside the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, also in Intramuros.
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’s Andy Dalisay talks to AMOSUP members in a series of interviews as they share segments of their stories.
Mary Jane Dumbrigue, Cruise Ship Security Staff: Fulfillment of a dream job

She joined cruise shipping as she wanted to explore and see the world for some adventure. However, Mary Jane Dumbrigue could have fulfilled such a wish long time ago had she able to pursue her dream course and job in marine transportation.

But being a Ship Security Staff now at Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL), her recent career in international cruising has become a fulfillment of sorts. Mary Jane started working with Carnival Cruise Line as a security guard on board the 70,538 GT Sensation in 2008. It was followed by a series of working contracts with different cruises, such as with Holland America Line, Costa Cruises and more recently with RCCL.

As a security staff, Mary Jane keeps watch over the points of the ship’s entry while in port. Screening of guests, ship crews as well as their luggage are also some of her and other security staff’s usual duties. They also perform several security related tasks once the ship leaves port for the voyage.

“We are on the frontline when it comes to enforcing security measures as in controlling access to the ship at port. We have to be vigilant as to ship access for the sake of safety and security once passengers and crew start to come on board,” she says.

If there’s a breach in security - even if it's caused by a crew or passenger - she explains, “security personnel will always be at fault.” As the vessel’s gatekeepers, they are at the receiving end of criticisms in any of the breaches. “Kasi bagong pumasok ng barko ang crew at pasahero, sa aming unang dumadaan.” (Even before they enter the ship, we are the one who screen them.)

Prior to getting on board cruise line, Mary Jane worked as a secretary in a security agency and at Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a Security Officer for a year. She finished a military science course at the Isabela State University, where she also completed a degree in Business Administration major in Business Management courtesy of the Army Reserve Command (ARESCOM) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. She says she tapped her military science service to obtain a scholarship in college.

Apart from her degree course, she obtained the rank of a 2nd Lieutenant after graduation in which she had the duty to teach military science among ROTC cadets of her alma mater. She chose not to push to become a commissioned officer in the army, but went on to take a related path in the field of security job in private firms.

Mary Jane says she really wanted to enroll in a maritime academy when she started college. But due
to financial constraint she ended up on a free army training course, which she used as “a stepping stone for my future.” So when she got the chance, the former army reservist grabbed the opportunity.

“Gusto ko lang mag-explore noon at makita ang ibang parte ng mundo. Kaya nang makaroon ako ng pagkakataon, pinili ko ang magamit ang propesyong ko para makasakayan at makepagtrabaho sa barko,” she says of her first opportunity for the job. (I just wanted to explore and see the other parts of the world. That’s why when I got the opportunity, I pushed it to use my profession for a job on board ship).

She points out that she could have been a ship officer by now had her parents abled to fund the course of her choice in college in BS Marine Transportation. Mary Jane, 36, also insists she should have joined cruising through her experience in the security field a long time ago. “I joined the ship late,” she says.

It wasn’t just for money, she claims on her pursuit of the job. Though she doesn’t give a qualm on wages, she knew that “I could use what I’d learned in the area of safety and security on board ships,” Mary Jane asserts.

She had tried changing other jobs on board cruises as she also underwent training into bartending, photography and dispatcher/concierge on board. But after all the trainings she took, she relates that she felt unhappy to start in one.

“I feel that I want to stick in the field of security. Kahit mahirap ang trabaho cito, masaya naman ako at magaan para sa akin magtrabaho.” (Even if the job is hard I’m happy and at ease at work.)

Mary Jane continues: “Here you have the authority in the whole ship. Kaya maging ipatupad yung mga policies and procedures. Puede kung mag-utos para sa seguridad ng barko at mga tao. Sa ibang department parang wala kang power magmamando. (You can enforce policies and procedures. You are in command for the sake of security of the ship and the people. In other department it seems like you don’t have the power to be in command.)

Having undergone some of the toughest military training when it comes to physical and emotional challenges during her army years, Mary Jane got easily acquainted to the life at sea when she worked on her first ship. She came home last November after completing her contract from the 168,466 GT cruise ship, Anthem of the Seas, and spent the holidays with her family.

She says she has learned to save for the future in the course of working on ships. “Di katulad sa lupa, kahit malaki ang sehod mo kundi pa rin. Ngayon nakakapoon na ako, napa renovate ko yung parents house namin at hababayaran ang mga obligasyon tulad ng insurance at iba pang pangangailangan. (Unlike on jobs ashore, even if you earn big, you’ve got to work for more. Now I can save, have paid renovating our parents’ house and can pay obligations such as life insurance and other needs.) She plans to buy a two-hectare farm in Isabela and go on a business of rice milling.

She also sees a possible promotion in the future. Even though, she says it will be of full of challenges once promoted as she had gone through the handling of people in the reserve corps.

“I’m satisfied even if I won’t get promoted as long as I am ok with my current job,” she says. Mary Jane has resumed her tour of duty when she joined in one of the world’s biggest cruise ship, the RCCL’s 226,963 GT Harmony of the Seas in Fort Lauderdale, Florida last January. 86
Marieto Galaroza, Chief Engineer: The ship officer in God's service

From the sea to the seminary and to the sea again, he chose not to look back to pursue his previous calling into priesthood.

But something went awry when Marieto Galaroza decided on a career at sea where he also began to despise the profession that gave him job and money. "Actually I hate this job, but it seems this is my destiny. I did not choose to be in this profession. I wanted to be a priest," says Marieto, or Mau to friends, of his first job as a seafarer.

Mau started his seafaring career when he joined a Gothong Lines ship in the domestic trade as an apprentice mate. However, he was forced to disembark from the ship when he contracted a skin allergy. Due to the eczema that spread over his arms, he promised himself not to work on a ship again.

However, his brother who was working at the time in overseas shipping, recommended Mau to a manning agency for work. Since he had no job, Mau was forced to accept it to work again. But this time in an oceangoing ship as an oiler.

Mau’s entry to overseas job got into a disastrous venture as the first ship he worked on sank in the Mediterranean Sea. Luckily, he survived. He and four of his bunkmates were picked up by a helicopter, 17 hours after their lifeboat darted onto the waters to escape their sinking ship. "Kaya sabi ko: kasumpa-sumpa ang pagbabarko." (That’s why I said: seafaring is unbearable.)

Since he wanted to be the “servant of God,” Mau stopped to go on board ships for a while, and decided to pursue his calling. "Na discourage na ako ng magpatuloy sa unang barko ko pa lang dahil sa takot ko sa lakas ng alon," Mau confides. (I’d been discouraged to continue working since I embarked on my first ship due to the strong waves.)

He insists: "It was not my choice to work as a seafarer. My dream was to be a priest." So, when Mau came home, he enrolled in a seminary school. His stay, however, lasted just for over a year as his parents had no money or found no benefactor to continue and support the cost of his expenses to study. Thus the theological institution forced to eject him.

But since he had no other job to run to, Mau returned to his former crewing agency. He got a job as a Motorman and after a while got promoted to a Fourth Engineer. He sat in the Marine Board Exam for his Third Engineer ticket and succeeded to perform the role on various ships.

Mau went into the phases of his seafaring career, sometimes oblivious to the passing months that nary a job had been found. Despite the slackening of ships at times, he had no choice but to continue to earn for the family. But once a ship job comes around, he says, “you get paid really high.”

However, he says it takes time to find your next employment too. Although there came a time when he got employed continuously for years. "Kaya nang makatsamba ako ng sunud-sunod na magandang sahod, napapag-aral ko ang dalawa kong anak, nagkabahay na rin at seseekyan," he says. (That’s why when I got the chance to earn big in succession, I was able to put my two children to college, had a house and a car.)

In 1992, when he already had some savings, Mau plunged into a series of businesses such as money lending, jewellery sales and piggery farm, which none of it he claims had never prospered. There were times
he would spend 10 to 12 months ashore waiting to be called for his next vessel.

Despite the challenges he worked his way up in subsequent roles in the engine department to reach the peak of the professional ladder. This despite his admission that he has no ambition to reach the top rank of the Chief Engineer. Since his life is in the church, Mau concedes: “I did not acquire a lot of material wealth in my possession.”

Indeed, the former seminarian has not abandoned his faith, and continued his religious devotion to God especially to the Virgin Mary. He always prays the rosary when he wakes up in the morning and wears it on his neck whether at work or anywhere he goes. “It symbolizes my love to our mother in heaven. It’s easier for me to hold the rosary anytime than to find it somewhere when you neglect it.”

He also joins several pilgrimages in Luzon, such as to the Lady of Peña Francia, Manaoag and the Lady of Antipolo of Good Voyage. He used to visit Baguio Shrine and countless other churches all over Luzon. Such religious duties provide Mau “fulfillment of my faith: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,” he says, quoting a command passage in Matthew’s verse in the King James Version of the Bible.

**Worry is a waste of time. All it does is steal your joy and keep you very busy doing nothing**

Mau claims “magastos din [ang mga pilgrimage]. Pero para sa akin magaan ang mga dumadating na problema dahil focus ako sa paglilingkod sa Panginoon. Kahit may mga utang ako parang magic lang ang buhay na nakaratang ako doon.” (It can be costly to join the pilgrimage.)

But for me, problems easily get solved as I’ve focused myself in serving the Lord. Even if I have arrears, it’s like magic that I’ve been to those places.)

Did he ever regret getting evicted from the seminary? In the beginning, he says there was some form of repentance. He was then in Brazil, already a Fourth Engineer, when he received a letter from the theological school inviting him to return and continue his studies for the priesthood.

“Pero nagtampo na ako ng tanggali nila ako. At sa dami ng distraction sa kabataan ko noon, hindi ko na binigyang pansin ang inibitasyon para magpatuloy sa pagpapari.” (But I already had my resentment when they kicked me out. And with many distractions in my youth then, I did not give the invitation any importance to continue my studies to become a priest.)

Mau recently disembarked from the Dutch utility vessel Anna B after a couple of months of contract with the Netherlands-based Sternet Marine Services. He says he plans to retire after two more years of work at sea.

He believes “this life is already done. It’s like a movie that’s being shot for our own role. We’ve just been acting based on the script that’s given to us,” he says about his plans after seafaring, pointing out that “based on my experience a major episode of my life has been done.”

He says one need not to worry of what’s about to come. As they say in one of the wisdom that Mau fondly parrots: “Worry is a waste of time. All it does is steal your joy and keep you very busy doing nothing.”
Margie Daniot, Cabin Stewardess: The workaholic on board cruises

She claims to be a workaholic lot. Thus, it is not unusual for the kind of job Margie Daniot does to get more accommodative, who is willing to extend the extra mile to serve guests on board cruises. She believes it makes her guests feel their importance as they get what is beyond expected.

Life on board a cruise vessel is not easy, she says. But since she became used to it, living and working at sea have been worry-free for Margie. “One thing I just put in mind is that I need to work hard for a better future.”

Margie started to work in cruise shipping on the luxury liner Nautica, the 30,277 GT vessel of Oceania Cruises as a Hotel Utility crew in the middle of 2008. “My first experience was very challenging. You need to work hard for long hours, with no day off, 10 hours a day seven days a week,” she says.

But the hard work paid off. She received an award just three months after joining the ship as the “employee of the month.” Margie recalls the experience in her first vessel where she would sleep in body pain, with both hands getting numb, driving her to rub them down constantly by herself.

Despite that she would look forward to do her best the next day - and if time allowed - she would join in on a guest tour, assisting or accompanying the old ones in the trip. Some of Margie’s duties when she joined her first ship included maintaining the cleanliness of public area, taking care of the plants around and attending to guest requests during night shift. She would also assist the front desk in paper works, including sorting out mails destined for each cabin.

Margie says she decided to join cruise shipping not only to earn, but to pursue her dream to see the beauty of God’s creation. She has loved to travel. Visiting historical places such as the Holy Land, and the places that she had only seen in photos and visited in dreams became a reality.

However, she also had encountered some issues at work. In her second contract when she was a newbie in the ship, she complains that her Filipino supervisor nitpicked on her, by discriminating Margie before other employees at work. “Maybe because I was new on the ship. That’s why he wants my life miserable every day, nagging at me in public,” she laments.

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One thing I just put in mind is that I need to work hard for a better future

She and another colleague, who was trapped in the same shoes, could not do anything except to keep their mouth shut. This supervisor even prevented her from conversing with guests as she also received nasty words from him, she says.

In spite of that, she did not back, finished her nine-month contract and signed the evaluation report.
before she disembarked. She was given a “poor evaluation” despite her good performance, prompting her to speak to the hotel manager as she was unfairly treated.

Through the help of the hotel manager, who knew her work since she began to work on board, her dilemma got solved. The unmerited evaluation report was cancelled and the hotel manager himself did his own fair evaluation. She was consoled not to worry, telling her that it would be dealt with by the cruise department concerned.

As a cabin stewardess she has the main duties to lead guests to their cabins upon their embarkation, communicate any problems and complaints on services to the supervisor in a timely manner. She also has to ensure and maintain the cleanliness of the room, bedding and other room-related tasks. During disembarkation it’s her task to check the cabins for belongings that passengers might have left behind, which should be turned over to the reception desk or to guests themselves.

Margie continued to work with other Miami-based cruise lines thereafter and in other hospitality-related services ashore, such as in a hotel and beach resort in Dubai as a Front Desk Assistant. A graduate of Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) at the University of Cebu, she started work in local hospitality industry at her hometown Cebu City prior to embarking on cruises in 1998.

Does she think gender issues affect the professional advancement of a career on board a cruise ship? She believes there is a difference between how male and female staff’s progress in their careers. Part of it, she says is the priority for women to bring up a family that normally hinders their patterns of career growth and confidence.

Confidence in Margie, who is a mother of two boys, thrives. “I believe I can do everything that is important to the company. And if you ensure that your opinion is heard, you gain an impact in your department that will lead you to move up,” she explains, stressing that it is “important that your voice is being heard.”

Cruise shipping has done a lot for this Cebuana professional both for career and family. Career wise, she says it enabled her to go where she wanted to be. In terms of financial standing, it really helped her in paying off all the obligations from the children’s matriculations to housing loans.

She sees herself to be a better skilled professional who could be admired by people for her work in the company and a respected leader to her subordinates.
Jaime Aguila, Cruise Fireman (Safety Attendant): The willpower to be a seafarer

A stint on the job on board Japanese and British passenger ships and in the shipyards in Subic Bay have considerably honed Jaime Aguila's skills to make a comeback and continue working on cruises.

But apart from his working experiences, seafaring seems to run in his blood. Jim, who is half Spanish and half Filipino, initially got acquainted to the life at sea through his Spanish father who was a former Customs agent in Manila port for 38 years.

He says his old man used to take him on board ships during inspections of arriving vessels on the dock when he was young. Then he opted to take a basic seaman's course at the Philippine Maritime Institute in Manila in 1993. Since then Jim acquired the “willpower” to be a seafarer, saying "if you really want to work on the ship you will do everything to pursue your plan."

That willpower led him to his first job on NYK's passenger ship, the 50,142 GT Crystal Harmony, in 1995. He served as the “pantry piccolo” on the Harmony where he acted as one of the food runners in the kitchen. Cabin stewardess would relay to Jim if a passenger, for instance, wanted to have breakfast while in bed. He would run to the galley for the order and bring the food to the guest's cabin while it's hot. "You need presence of mind and swiftness in action as delivery needs to be completed by no more than 10 minutes so it won't get cold," he says.

Jim reveals that he had suffered the usual bouts of seasick coupled with homesickness during his first few days of work. It was worse during the first few days when he joined the ship as his mother had just died, he recalls. He could be even seen in a galley corner, oblivious to other co-workers that he's concealing, shedding tears.

To relieve himself of the longing from his family, he tried to focus on the job. For example, he says: "When we have a task on hand to clean up for the next day, I would plan ahead at night for the best thing to do, such as coordination with the concerned staff so that it won't take me too long in that portion of the pantry. It gives me something to look forward to the following day, which eventually stops me from thinking about home."

Other issues he encountered on board his first ship was a sort of envy by co-workers. It happened one day while he had this bout of seasickness that got severed with diarrhea. His stomach threw up everything until it cried up along with the green-like substance. The vomiting fits prompted a trip to the ship's infirmary where he got an anti-seasick injection with a doctor's advice of rest for the next 24 hours.

While in their cabin he heard his three bunkmates arguing of Jim's getting the rest privilege while other crewmembers who had previously suffered the same nauseous spells had to continue working. That's unfair, he overheard from the crew as having said.

"Sumama ang loob ko sa kapwa ko Filipino noon. Bakit sila ganun. Yun ang advise sa akin. Anong magagawa ko," he laments. (I've got this resentment to my fellow Filipino crew at the time. Why could they be so, uncaring. That's the doctor's advice, what can I do?)"

But as soon as Jim got well, he did bid to catch up for their chore. "Sinabi ko sa kanila na kung ano ang gagawin ninyo mula nang
wala ako, gagawin ko ang parte ng trabahong nawaala ako,” Jim suggested to his bunkmates. (I volunteered with them that I could do portion of their work that day to pay for my lost time.) To maintain their harmonious relationship, he even made the remedy to open up to his bunkmates about what kind of a person he is – both on the job and as a friend thereof.

Jim finished first job with NYK. It was followed by a couple of contracts in Sun Cruises as a galley utility, but later promoted to Dining Room Assistant, where his cruising job tentatively halted. While in search for work after disembarking from his last passenger ship in 2001, he went on to do odd jobs, shipyard – which specialised in yacht repairs.

Guided by his instinct in pursuit of newly acquired skills, Jim chanced upon a requirement for a Fire Safety Attendant role from a Manila-based manning agency during one of the job fairs at the Olongapo City Hall in April 2011. The job recruiter had quizzed the cruise-pantry-runner-turned-yard-fire-safety specialist on fireman’s related job. They included sprinkler inspection, resetting fire alarm, fire extinguisher maintenance, among others. The fire extinguisher, Jim proudly says is “my wife that is always with me day and night at work while doing the rounds on hot works on board the ship.”

vessel, the 39,051 GT Prinsendam, for a 10-month contract in August 2013. When he disembarked for a vacation, it took a bit longer than normal as he awaited for his US visa.

As a fireman (safety attendant) on board the cruise line, Jim’s main duties include monthly checking of fire extinguishers, fire dampers and section valves. They also do weekly fire drills in which used BA (breathing apparatus) bottles have to be refilled, monthly check of fire hydrants, testing of fire hoses and checking of sprinklers that used to get dusty and greasy from cooking in the galley. They also have to check fire suits, much more the audible detectors and the optical type detectors.

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**If you really want to work on the ship you will do everything to pursue your plan**

including as a personal body guard of the town mayor in Olongapo City. But his luck came along that would determine his future career for a return to cruises. That’s when he took a job in the allied marine service of ship repair.

Jim opted to apply as a fire watchman at Subic Drydock, the shipyard formerly owned by the US Navy at its naval base near Jim’s Olongapo hometown in Zambales. When he applied, the former luxury ship’s pantry runner’s SOLAS training certificate became his edge over many hopefuls who vied for work at the shipyard. As a fire watchman his main role was to oversee the safety of equipment while welders and cutters do the hot works on the ship. He lasted for three years that would be followed by a similar job in the Drydock’s neighbor – the Harbour Yacht.

Jim considered that his knowledge and experience acquired at the shipyards gave him the passport for his next prospect in cruise job as a fireman safety attendant. He passed the interview with flying colours and eventually signed the contract for his ship with the manning agent of Holland America Line (HAL) in Manila.

However, a problem occurred when processing his US visa application due to inconsistency in his civil status, brought about by separation from his first wife. So he got denied of a US visa, and Jim returned to his shipyard job.

It took a year before his likely employer called him up again to process his papers anew in the manning agency. Without a hitch this time, Jim boarded his first HAL.

It will be his fifth ship with HAL when he starts to work for his next contract on another ship of HAL’s fleet of “cruises,” the 55,575 GT Maasdam in April. He has had smooth sailing since he boarded his first ship of the Dutch cruise shipping operator.

Jim says apart from easing his financial problem, he could not have reached places without his job. Jim, 55, plans to continue working as long as he can. Lately he undertook some OWWA-offered training for electrical technician, which he chose since he has acquired an initial experience from the shipyard. [7]
Joselito Gatchalian, Third Engineer: Some points to ponder

He wants to impart a few lessons among senior ship officers who have managed and assessed junior officers for their job performance. Joselito Gatchalian seems concerned about the seeming loss of objectivity at times that gets in the way during an evaluation of their subordinates.

Joselito, or Lito for short, cites an instance to prove his point, and he has a piece of advice to state his point. He says ship engineers tackle technical problems on board such as engine trouble. Sometimes they argue on the technical side of the problem.

This is because the majority of auxiliary engine damage occurring onboard ships happens as a result of human error, according to a new warning from a marine insurer. “Yan ang problema minsan, lalo na pag nagkaronon ng human error sa technical side – pag intan ka na. Kailangan makisama ka. Humingi ng paumanhin kung nagkamali,” he suggests. (That’s the problem sometimes, especially if human error occurs on the technical side – they will carp on you. You have to go along with them. Make amend if you commit a mistake.)

An investigation into auxiliary engine damage by The Swedish Club, one of the leading marine mutual, has revealed that the majority of all damage takes place immediately after maintenance work. In most cases the damage occurs only a few hours after start up.

Lito believes one could receive unfavourable assessment if a crewmember is not doing any improvement or incidentally having troubled engine after the start up. “Mababa ang appraisal mo kung may kahinaan ka sa trabaho kahit kahihi kan mo ang chief engineer.

Kung mahina ang appraisal mo, mabiihi kan na nang binalik sa trabaho,” Lito explains. (You’ve got a low appraisal if you’re a weakling in your line of duty even if the chief engineer is a friend. If you receive low appraisal, it will be difficult to get back to your next job).

For him this should not be the right thing to do, referencing to the failed grading from the senior officer. “Kung mahina yung tao mo, huwag mo ng ibagsak. Kasi pag ibiagsak mo sya, papaano ang pamilya nya” (If your subordinate is not that well versed yet, don’t give him a failed mark right away. Because if you do it, what will happen to him and his family.)

So, Lito has this job coach: “If he’s not that good, you have to teach him. Give him the proper way how to handle the difficult side of the work.” He says sometimes the senior officer gets to the extent of being biased, sometimes resorting to character denigration. Senior officers have enough power as superiors to protect their men, he insists, adding that discriminating a worker is not proper in running a team.

“Bagsak na nga yung tao sa trabaho, sisiraan mo pa para umangat ka sa kumpanya,” Lito says. (The guy is already down in job performance, yet you will slander him in order for you as the senior officer to look
good in the shipping company.)
This is the reality on board ships,
he declares. “The Filipino seamen
are to blame themselves. Instead
of co-operating with each other,
they themselves are finding their
faults instead of enhancing their
knowledge. There should be
sharing of ideas and teamwork.
Sometimes they don’t have
sympathy to those they’ve run
down.”

Fourth Engineer post the following
year and continued to sail on for the
role to various ships.
Lito became a Third Engineer in
2008. For him, a seafarer can go
on with the normal phase of his
daily work. “What we can’t stand
is the misunderstanding and
discrimination at work.
That’s why, Lito advises, “yung mga
ratings hindi dapat pinapalaki ang
ulo, kasi may tendency na lumaban
sa junior officer.” (those ratings
should not be allowed to let their
head swell, as they’ve got the
tendency to fight the junior officer.)
Lito has a lot to thank for the
seafaring profession has given him.

__________________________
You have to go
along with them.
Make amend if
you commit a
mistake

Every Filipino seafarer only
wants to succeed, he says. “We
expect nothing but to achieve
a good life, good future. Kaya
lang nang kinalaunan, matapos
makapagpundar, taghirap naman
ang sakay”. (All along after saving
money for some time, hard time
comes in finding work for the next
ship.)

Lito finished an associate course in
Marine Engineering at Cebu Central
Colleges (now University of Cebu)
in 1985. He had sailed for two years
in the domestic ship my Sweet
Home of the defunct Sweet Lines
before heading on to oceangoing
ships.

He started to embark on the deep-
sea on board the bulker Chemi
Sun in 1994. He had suffered from
seasick and homesickness similar
to other mariners who joined their
first voyage. He sat for the Board of
Marine Engineering exam for his

This infighting which sometimes
lead to physical [contact] is its worst
form,” he claims.

Has he ever gone through with such
an experience? Lito says he was
once attacked by his oiler with a
knife, though he parried the assault
and enabled to disarm the attacker.
“Pinakialaman nya kasi yung
trabaho ko, tapos idinin pala ng
maga [engine] trouble,” he points
out. (He intruded in my work, then
he imputed the blame on me when
(engine) trouble erupted).

Apart from having a house, a car
and sending his children to college,
he has acquired a lot of knowledge
in marine engineering.

While he says he’s ready to clamber
the highest role of a Chief Engineer,
time and money are of the
essence. “Time and money are the
hindrances why a lot of us can’t go
up as we want in our shipboard
profession, especially now that
there have been a lot of costly
trainings,” he says.

Lito came home last July 2017
from the Amil Eva, the 62,234 DWT
bulker, which is operated by the
Italian company Augustea Group.
He resumed work for his next
contract last December on another
bulker carrier, Theodoros P of a Greek
ship operator. SF

Sailing Forward 27
He went through the usual start as a cadet on board an oceangoing ship. But Marty Pastor never expected to undergo the hard labour veteran seamen performed right after joining his first ship as a cadet.

He says he was stunned by the hard working condition. “Pagsampa ko pa lang, pinagpala na ako ng trigo sa loob halos ng 24 oras hanggang sa sumakit na yung katawan ko at hindi ko na mabuhay yung pala.” (Right after I embarked on the ship, I began to muck wheat out for almost 24 hours until my body stood in pain and I couldn’t even lift the shovel).

The restless Marty clambered from the bulker Kimulos 4’s cargo hold and looked for cooler place to lie down as he was tinkering whether to pursue seafaring anymore. Cleaning up the hold with its remnants of wheat was his usual daily routine.

Compounded with strong current while the ship was underway to the next port, Marty says he would vomit on the bilge that he had cleaned up. “Parang gusto mo nang umuwii sa hirap ng trabaho,” he relates. (It’s like you wanted to go home due to the tough job).

However, Marty persisted as he got used to the difficult job on board. He even became a part of the regular crew members as an Ordinary Seaman after four months, entitling him to receive a regular wage rate. He even ramped up to 18 months of full service contract without a vacation.

The thought of having his family back home awaiting for the good news on him enabled Marty to get adjusted to the working environment that he was in. As mobile phone was not yet available, he says he would just look for a telephone booth to call his family as soon as their ship reached port.

Marty got inspired to take up a maritime course in college from their neighbours at his Palompon home town in Leyte, which abounds with seafarers. With stories of high earnings and upgraded lifestyle, their success enthused Marty to take up Marine Transportation at the University of Cebu where he left in 1997.

His grandfather, who was also a seafarer, also influenced his choice of what he wanted to do in the future. Marty says his Lolo also told him stories about the old man’s seafaring adventures whenever he would be taken on a boat ride in Leyte when he was a young boy.

Now at work, he has seen the “real thing” behind the stories he has wanted to emulate. For him, he thought it was the beginning. Marty says he once witnessed a physical confrontation on board
when another crewmember, who happened to be his cousin, was vigorously kicked by their Egyptian Bosun due to an apparent argument. Marty saw his cousin got knocked down by the strong jolt, prompting him to intervene into the spat. He says the two men were both drunk and had settled their row the next day.

He also experienced to have back wages gone unsettled. He says it happened in one of the ships when their salaries got delayed, leaving the crew to rely mainly on the so-called "cash advance". That means they only received a small portion of their salary each month that the company supposed to have paid.

Such problem prodded some agitated crewmembers to call the ITF for help in pressing the shipowner to pay their back wages. But it sent the Leyteño into a dilemma. The manning agency implicated him of leading the ITF inspector to board the ship while in a Romanian port for the delayed wages.

So when his contract ended and signed off the ship, the crew manager in Manila scolded Marty over the incident. He denied the accusation. The problem with the Romanian port incident, he says, was that nobody among the crew wanted to give testimonies when the ITF got on board the ship.

"Dahil sa takot na mapawí, walang nagsalita. Hindi namín nakuhá ang back wages namin. Naakusahan pa ako," laments Marty. (Due to fear of repatriation, nobody wanted to talk. We did not receive our back wages. Yet I was accused).

Later on, the manning agency found out the truth that he wasn’t the culprit. He says the agency called him back to work again, but he refused the offer as he had found a new employer. However, he lost eight months of employment due to the complaint levelled against him.

He resumed work on his succeeding contracts for various ships with other owners without major hitches.

He recently disembarked from the 4,571 TEU OOCL Houston in November 2017.

Marty has a lot to thank for in his chosen profession. The 42-year-old Senior AB Seafarer, who is a father of one child, has just bought a house in Tanza, Cavite. He has acquired a 1.5 hectare of farmland in his home province. And if plans get into fruition, he says he might venture into his first business like a water station.

He has no plan to stop working yet as he wants to save further for the family’s future. As a proof he readies himself to sit for the Marine Board exam to level up professionally. Since he started as a seafarer, Marty has worked on some 18 merchant ships over the last years of his career.

He has been lined up for his next vessel, the 24,391 GT passenger ship Olympic Voyager of the Greek operator Royal Olympic Cruise Lines.
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SOS treats Filipino members and their families to fiesta

The gathering gives the Singaporean maritime union a platform to get to know each other better and the time to meet their colleagues from the shipping companies and manning agencies.

Filipino seafarers serving on Singapore-flagged merchant fleets got a share of fun and dinner treats when the maritime union Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS) organised and held its recent annual family fiesta in Manila.

The event, which saw the presence of some 250 SOS members in the Philippines, was also attended by crew managers, other members of the Philippine maritime circle and officers of AMOSUP, the SOS union brother in the ITF family.

The SOS New Year and Family Fun Day 2018 celebration is part of the union’s continuous membership engagement with the objective of strengthening familial bonds, promote work-life balance and foster cohesion among members, employers, manning agencies and the Filipino shipping community at large.

Strong PH membership base

“A gathering like this is one of our efforts to reach out to our members. It gives us the platform to get to know each other better and it is the time to meet our colleagues from the shipping companies and many manning agencies,” said SOS assistant secretary David Shoo in his message at the celebration held at the Blue Leaf Filipinas in Parañaque City last 02 February.

He said the Singapore union has been blessed with a strong Filipino membership base who are highly skilled and hardworking as the Philippines provides the largest number of seafarers in the world. “This is why we have been constantly looking for ways to improve the life of our Filipino members by providing training opportunities, medical services, accommodations and this yearly event,” Shoo said.

SOS started holding in 2006 a dinner reception in Manila for SOS Filipino members and manning agency representatives. Since then it has organised such event yearly. It has expanded the scope to include the spouses and children of their Filipino members.

About 15,000 Filipino seafarers are now in SOS list. The increase in number has been gradual over the past many years.
SOS believes that the number of its Filipino members, which are mainly in collective agreements from majority of ships under the Singapore flag — and some others flying foreign flags — will continue to increase steadily for the next few years. Shoo said there has been a continuous supply and demand for Filipino seafarers in the maritime industry.

As the world’s fifth shipowning nation by value, Singapore’s owned tonnage is worth almost $45 billion, a third of which is concentrated in the tanker sector, according to data from VesselsValue as of January 2018.

Close family ties

AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca, who graced the celebration as its guest-of-honour, said the SOS family fiesta was “truly worthy of praise and admiration especially that the Filipinos are known to have close family ties because the family is the centre of every Filipino’s life.”

He stressed the importance of how sea-based workers have consistently helped the country’s economy afloat. “Our mariners risk their lives, leave their loved ones and go out of their comfort zones to provide for their families’ needs.” With the 20% share in sea-based remittance from Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) sector, he cited the contribution of OFW in the improvement of the nation’s economy.

However, with such benefits, Dr Oca also pointed out the social cost effects of family separation, changing family dynamics, evolving espousal relationships and shifting of parental roles as among the issues that OFW families continue to face.

And this is especially true for seafarers than land-based workers as mariners are out at sea most of the time and seldom able to regularly communicate with their families. This is where welfare services become all the more relevant for migrant workers in which currently unions like SOS and AMOSUP and PSU can satisfy such needs, he said.

Dr Oca recalled the many years of co-operation between SOS and AMOSUP that made the AMOSUP president aware of the efforts and accomplishments of Seacare, the
Our mariners risk their lives, leave their loved ones and go out of their comfort zones to provide for their families’ needs.

“Certainly the SOS is on the right track as it has shown genuine concern for the real needs of its members and dependents by institutionalising a number of membership benefit schemes both for its nationals and foreign members,” he said.

Today the SOS has the Seacare medical system, Seacare maritime training scheme and the Seacare Sailor’s Home Scheme. It also operates the Seacare Drop-in Centre for international seafarers at the Pasir Panjang Terminal Building in Singapore.

Dr Oca commended SOS for its efforts in looking after the needs of their seafarers and their families. He “sincerely wishes the services they provide will be sustained and further improved in terms of mode, coverage and application.” He also is hoping that the SOS leadership will find time to implement more social programmes in the Philippines that will benefit the members and their families.
ENT/Ophthalmology Dept: A strategy to cope with increasing patients

In the newly opened South Wing building, it has a dedicated operating theater that speeds up the scheduling of surgical cases.

As the unit with the largest number of patients at the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, the Eyes, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)/Ophthalmology Department has adopted a strategy to cope with increasing clients from union members and their dependents.

The strategy of providing for more consultants whose availability is arranged on a weekly schedule now enables the department to cover the required number of patients. Consisting of three ophthalmologists and four ENT specialists, the department can attend to all referred patients and emergency cases.

The department has seen an average of 60 patients monthly in the outpatient clinic and a total of 1,003 admissions in 2017. Thanks to the management for its untiring support especially in equipment modernisation, it now possesses different types of diagnostic equipment that it can be considered already as an eye centre on a par with other major hospitals in the country.

In the newly opened South Wing building, it has a dedicated operating theater that speeds up the scheduling of ENT surgical cases.

**Vital in hospital operation**

From the inception of the Family Medical and Dental Plan (FMDP) of AMOSUP, the ENT Department was one of the services established by the Union for the medical needs of its members and dependents. When the clinic was transferred to Intramuros, Manila and became a hospital that provides tertiary care, the ENT service had become more vital in the hospital operation.

The department provides diagnostic procedures that are essential in the management of patient, regardless of age and gender. It is one of the primary reasons why the department continuously embarks with the modernisation of equipment and staff training.

The hospital also offers medical examination for seafarers prior to embarkation wherein the hearing and visual acuity tests are among the basic examinations required in obtaining a fitness clearance.

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It should be recalled that ENT evolved as a small out-patient clinic in the Manila port area in the 1960s and eventually transferred to Intramuros. However, adapting to changes such as technology and increase of patients has become inevitable. The primary objective of the department is aligned with the hospital’s mission of providing the best available quality healthcare to AMOSUP members and their dependents.

To sustain its objective, given the availability of the state-of-the-art equipment and staffing complement, it would be nice if there is a bigger space to accommodate the equipment and patients as well.
...As ENT-HNS Dept extends clinic hours

As the fourth busiest in the out-patient clinic, the Department handles approximately 1,200 patients a month or an average of 50 patients per day.

The Department of ENT-HNS of the Seamen’s Hospital provides union members and their dependents with comprehensive diagnosis and management of diseases of the ears, nose and throat, and of the head and neck. This includes management of common ENT problems, surgery for benign and malignant neoplasms, facial plastic and reconstructive surgery, craniomaxillofacial trauma, screening and treatment for congenital disorders of the head and neck, diagnostic and surgical endoscopy services, speech and swallowing evaluation, audiologic diagnostic procedures, as well as day (out-patient basis) surgeries. The Department also serves as a tertiary referral centre for other AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospitals in the entire archipelago.

The Department has an adequate number of otolaryngologists to man the out-patient clinic. At present, the available time for consulting at the OPD are filled-up with those specialists. The Out-Patient clinic may benefit from a modernisation project, focusing on improving the clinic area and upgrading of the diagnostic and therapeutic equipment.

The staff cope with the increasing number of patient load by diligently manning the clinic and on occasion, extending their length of stay to accommodate the daily influx of patients.

Renovation plan

Plans to renovate the out-patient clinic to make it more conducive and patient-friendly are being considered. Upgrading the out-patient clinic and operating room equipment will not only broaden the scope of the services being offered, but will also improve the efficiency of patient care.

ENT-HNS doctors are more than competent to provide the latest standard of care in medical and surgical services to our patients. However, some of the equipment are already dated and there is plenty of room for improvement in this aspect. Although some of the out-patient clinic and surgical equipment are outmoded, it remains to be in excellent working condition due to its superior quality.

The Department handles approximately 1,200 patients a month or an average of 50 patients per day. The Department is the fourth busiest section in the Out-Patient Clinic for the year 2017.

The Department is composed of Board-Certified specialists and are Fellows of the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery: Franklin C. Ang, MD, MBA, FPSOHNs (Section Head); Ramon Juan H. Ongsiako, MD, FPSOHNs; Dennis Eusebio A. Baladiang, MD, FPSOHNs, Dominador Enrique E. Gomez, MD, FPSOHNs.
Facilities and equipment

ENT Treatment Unit. The treatment unit is the workhorse of the otolaryngologist in the out-patient clinic. It has a suction and irrigation system, compressed air system for various atomizers, and instrument storage while maintaining an ergonomic workstation. The small footprint of the treatment unit also maximizes the use of space in the out-patient clinic, making it more conducive for patient care.

Operating Microscope

Operating microscope. The operating microscope provides the otolaryngologist with a clear and precise field of vision for otologic and laryngeal procedures. The equipment also gives fine focus and illumination in both routine diagnosis and in the operating room setting.

Rigid Fiberoptic Nasal & Laryngeal Endoscopes and Flexible Fiberoptic Nasopharyngolaryngoscope. The fiberoptic endoscope system is a valuable tool in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the upper aerodigestive tract. It provides the physician with direct visualisation of the disease process and is complementary with that of imaging techniques. The system gives the surgeon access to hard to reach recesses of the body while making the procedures minimally invasive and with relatively minor discomfort.

Otoacoustic Emission Machine. The OAE Machine is the instrument of choice for hearing screening in the newborn. It measures the organ of hearing by providing stimulus via an earpiece and then measures the reflected sound waves coming from the inner ear. This procedure is performed prior to sending the newborn home and is a fast and convenient way to evaluate congenital hearing loss.

The Department of ENT-HNS also maintains various instrument sets both for diagnostics and surgery, which includes: Otology (Ear surgery) set, Rhinology (Sinus surgery) set, Laryngology (including microlaryngeal instruments) and Bronchoesophagology set, Head & Neck and Reconstructive surgery set and Facial Plastic Surgery and Craniomaxillofacial Trauma set.
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.

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.

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.
Union’s smart ship survey draws social, human issues

The 21 unions in the Nautilus Federation have come together to give a voice to seafarers in the debate over automated shipping. Andrew Linington, director of communications at Nautilus, reports.

The potential for ‘smart’ ships to improve working lives and safety in the maritime industry could be wasted if the human factor is ignored in the drive to introduce new technologies, a new report from Nautilus Federation has warned.

Drawing on a survey of almost 1,000 maritime professionals from more than a dozen different countries, the report argues that important social and human issues have so far been neglected by manufacturers and authorities as the introduction of autonomous ships comes closer.

The Nautilus Federation – which is composed of 21 unions in 16 countries, together representing more than 90,000 maritime professionals – conducted the research in an attempt to shift attention to the impact of “the fourth industrial revolution” upon seafarers.

The report points out that some major maritime nations and leading technology equipment manufacturers are investing huge amounts of time, energy and money into researching and developing products and systems to enable the deployment of autonomous or remote-controlled vessels. The first fully autonomous ship is expected to be brought into commercial service by 2020, and the Federation argues that it is essential that the human perspective on these developments is taken into consideration before radical changes to shipping operations take place.

Nautilus International general secretary Mark Dickinson commented: “Properly introduced, automation and digital technologies could transform shipping in a positive way – eliminating some dirty and dangerous tasks, cutting paperwork and bureaucracy, and generating significant productivity gains. Managed poorly, however, it could undermine safety and dangerously erode the essential base of maritime skills, knowledge and experience.”

Mr Dickinson said he hoped the survey would “help to shape a future in which new technologies are used not simply as a crude substitute for seafarers, but as a tool to improve the safety and efficiency of the shipping industry and the working lives of all within it.”

Key findings in the survey include:

- 84% of maritime professionals see automation as a threat to their jobs
- More than 85% consider that unmanned, remotely-controlled ships present a threat to safety at sea
- 83% consider that new technologies have the potential to improve the quality of life at sea and more than 60% believe they have the potential to improve safety
- 90% believe that radical changes in training and certification are required as a result of the rapid advances in shipping technology
- More than 60% believe seafaring unions should resist automation
- Fewer than 40% believe that commercially viable unmanned ships will be in widespread service within the next 20 years
- Almost 90% believe that shipowners will only introduce autonomous ships if they are cheaper than using seafarers

Respondents said the introduction of autonomous shipping operations was most likely to be made in deep sea services and least likely within ports and pilotage areas.

Many questioned the economic viability of autonomous ships – pointing out that crew costs have been driven down to very low levels through increased recruitment of seafarers from low-cost labour supplying countries and through sustained reductions in crewing levels. Other obstacles to the adoption of autonomous ships were felt to be cyber-security, the reliability of communications, legal and liability issues, software quality, risk assessment and public acceptance, opposition from seafarers and their unions, regulatory issues, and training and reskilling.

The survey revealed significant concerns about the safety of autonomous or remotely-controlled ships, such as pump and pipe failures leading to unpredictable and complex chains of failures.

Respondents warned of:

- Problems in conducting routine and corrective maintenance
- Equipment and system failures
- Redundancy and reliability of shipboard equipment
- Software bugs
- IT and communication problems
- Sensor failures as a result of heat and vibration
- Piracy and cyber attacks
- Cargo security
- Unpredictable sea conditions
- On-the-spot decision-making in dynamic environments
- The relationship between autonomous ships and...
conventional vessels during the transition period.

However, the survey also showed that very few maritime professionals are completely opposed to automation at sea. A substantial proportion consider that new technologies could improve safety and working conditions by reducing workloads, easing administrative burdens, improving predictive and preventive maintenance, and providing improved standards of information to officers.

There was significant support for a more "hybrid" approach to operations - in which "smart" systems work in a supporting capacity alongside trained seafarers who remain in control.

There was also strong support for improved training to ensure that seafarers are able to take full advantage of the benefits that new technology could bring, and to ensure the safe operation of onboard electronic and IT systems. Respondents expressed mixed views over the development of shore-based fleet operations centres. There were many calls for the International Maritime Organisation to urgently develop training and operating standards for personnel working in such facilities. Many of the survey participants also called for the shipping industry to pay appropriate attention to the experiences of other industries - such as aviation - which have already embraced high levels of automation and IT.

Much greater focus should be placed on the way in which seafarers will be expected to interact with new technology, the report adds, warning that accidents linked to Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) demonstrate the dangers presented by inadequate training and poor ergonomics.

The report says seafarers should be given a proper say in the introduction of new technologies - at shipboard, company and regulatory levels. There should be a strong commitment to finding ways to use new technologies to improve the working lives of seafarers by eliminating dirty, dangerous or tedious tasks, and by ending excessive hours and fatigue - as well as enabling earlier retirement for those who want it. Retraining and up-skilling programmes should be introduced for those who face redundancy as a result of technological change, it adds.

Work should also be carried out to examine ways in which new technology can be used to enhance maritime skills and to create new roles in operational oversight and control, analysis, and research and development.

"People are - and will continue to be - critical to the safe and efficient operation of the shipping industry," the report concludes. "Maritime skills and experience should remain an essential component of the way in which shipping works, regardless of the scale of technological change."
Seafarers granted 2.5%

Maritime employers and unions conceded the negotiations as challenging due to “profit instabilities” given the poor performance of other sectors in international shipping.

Shipping’s largest industrial relations collective has agreed to increase seafarers’ salary of 2.5% beginning January 2019.

The raise was part of a “framework agreement” concluded in Manila last February following months of collective bargaining negotiations between maritime employers and maritime unions under the backings of the International Bargaining Forum (IBF).

The increase will be valid for four years, with a review of the wages after 2020, according to the agreement signed between the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF).

JNG comprised the shipowners and shipmanagers that allow maritime employers to present to the ITF, which represents 684 unions in 140 countries including maritime affiliates, a coordinated view of employers from across the world.

The collective agreements in IBF, which was formed in May 2003, covers in excess of 200,000 seafarers working on foreign flag ships.

The agreement also provides 16% in rebate among JNG members from the ITF Welfare Fund, with an additional 2% available based on an incentive system.

Employers and unions conceded the negotiations as challenging due to “profit instabilities” given the the poor performance of other sectors in international shipping, such as in boxed and wet bulk trades.

“Both parties acknowledged the need to support the growth of the market, but also the need to maintain sustainable and fair employment for the seafarers employed on JNG vessels worldwide,” the IBF said in a joint statement following a week-long negotiations last 19-22 February.

The IBF relegated the Somali piracy threat off the coast of Somalia from its “warlike area” to “high risk” level. Although it put to add the 12nm off the mainland coast of Yemen as a “warlike area.” The downgrading follows the success of counter piracy operations that disrupted groups of Somali pirates from launching attacks on ships since the last few years.

IBF also implemented changes to various contractual clauses, including a revision to the article covering non-seafarers’ work effective 1st March 2018. It also included enhanced welfare support for seafarers.
hike in wages next year

We are committed to ensuring we gain and maintain fair wages and safe working conditions for seafarers and dockers across the world.

ITF Seafarers’ Section chair Dave Heindel said: “We are committed to ensuring we gain and maintain fair wages and safe working conditions for seafarers and dockers across the world. It is important that we use this opportunity to draw on experience from the existing agreement, to re-think its organisation, to clarify and simplify the language and to secure a solid, usable agreement that will form the base in the coming years of our relationship.”

“Seafarers and dockers face serious challenges on a daily basis and it is absolutely essential that their needs are at the forefront of these negotiations, added ITF president Paddy Crumlin. He said “these are undoubtedly challenging times, yet with mutual respect and collegiality, together we have come to terms on a new agreement.”

The JNG Spokesperson, Capt. Rajesh Tandon, who chaired the talks, stressed that the past 14 months have been particularly tough as the forum originally met in Tokyo last July, with the full intention to conclude.

However, he said, it quickly became apparent that neither party was in a position to move at that stage. “A lot of work has gone on in the interim, including concessions to address the dockers’ concerns, which has allowed the forum to re-negotiate and conclude a mutually acceptable agreement.”

Following the conclusion of the negotiations, JNG chairman, Capt. Koichi Akamine, said: “The fact that we’ve been able to renegotiate and conclude on a new agreement, with the current challenging market conditions, is testament to the IBF process and the members representing both the unions and the employers. This reinforces the trust and mutual respect that both sides have gained over the past 15 years.”

Established in 2003, the IBF negotiations include both central and local negotiations which allow for development of core principles which can then be incorporated into specific local arrangements. This unique approach to pay negotiations is the only example of international collective bargaining.
MAAP CELEBRATES 20TH YEAR

The festivity saw the street dancing competition with four groups of cadets who partake in the contest depicting local festival dances, namely the Sinulog, Maskara, Ati-Atihan and Dinagyang.

The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) has celebrated its 20th founding anniversary with a chain of activities at its Mariveles campus in Bataan.

The two-day celebration began with the opening of a photo exhibit highlighting MAAP accomplishments that featured VIPs and other high ranking personalities in government and private maritime circles who graced the academy’s various milestones over the last two decades. FAME president Michael Estaniel, AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca and a representative from the International Mariners Management of Japan (IMMAJ) did the customary ribbon cutting of the photo exhibits.

Guests and MAAP officials led by its president, Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos (AFP, ret.), proceeded next to visit the adjoining booths manned by the cadets showcasing their various interests, from academic endeavors including robotics and 3-D printing to food delights.

The first day of festivity saw the street dancing competition that the cadets participated in. Four groups of cadets vied for the competition that depicted the local festival dances such as the Sinulog, Maskara, Ati-Atihan and Dinagyang.

The Delta Company, in bright coloured costumes, rocked the Sinulog gracefully to rhythm of drums, native gongs and modern music. The Bravo Company in their masked features, gyrated the Maskara to the rhythm of musical beats in a display of mastery, gaiety, coordination and stamina.

The Dinagyang contingent from the Charlie Company depicted a richness in culture of the Iloilo province where the festival dance originated through moves that were swift and unpredictable to the delight of the crowd. The Alpha Company of the Ati-Atihan group swayed their way to the sounds of drums and gongs in modern tribal dance music accompanied by indigenous costumes and weapons.

For the first time, it conducted a seamanship skills contest for Deck cadets and a workshop skills contest for Engine cadets.

The day ended with a gala dinner, consisting of presentation of service awards, special awards and ballroom dancing.

The second day of the foundation anniversary, saw the academy celebrating with a fun run, boodle fight, show down of street dancing competition winners, raffle and parlour games. It was followed by a concert and fireworks display at night.
Academy graduates
2nd batch of 2017 Class

As the latest group of finishers, the senior cadets have been cautioned “not to exchange a moment of fun to a lifetime of happiness” and to be “careful with everything you deal with.”

The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) held the commencement exercises for the second batch of Class 2017 at its campus in Mariveles, Bataan last December.

In his customary message to the graduates, MAAP chair and AMOSUP president Dr. Conrado F. Oca exhorted the senior cadets to “proudly bear the country’s banner and show the world that we are indeed one of the best breeds of maritime professionals in the world.”

He said this was the vision of the academy’s late founder, Capt. Gregorio Oca, as his lasting legacy to the future generation of seafarers like the new graduates. “As you enter the maritime world outside the academy, we are confident that you will make your alma mater proud and continue the legacy of our founder. Filipino seafarers are well known for their professionalism and competence.”

This second batch of the 2017 class consisted of 255 graduates: 108 from the Deck Department and 117 from the Engine Department.

Upon their graduation, the Class of 2017 will be admitted into the chosen company of more than 3,000 MAAP alumni who are presently making waves in the seven seas. Dr. Oca has been gratified that MAAP, in its young history, has concretely contributed to the growing number of Filipino maritime professionals who are much preferred by employers because of their skills and professional ethics.

The academy has just undergone the rigid process of the PACUCCOA (Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation) Level 3 accreditation for its academic programmes.

This achievement, according to Dr. Oca, “affirms that our educational operations are carried out with strict adherence to excellent standards in maritime higher education and in the local and international maritime industry.”

Department of Transport (DOTr) assistant secretary Lino Davi, who spoke to the graduates as the commencement exercise guest-of-honour, said “your addition to the seafaring community would be a contribution to our unwitting march into sustaining the status as the world provider of competent and proficient seafarers.”

Asec Davi gave some words of caution to the new breed of seafarers as they embark on their first ships to work. “Do not exchange a moment of fun for a lifetime of happiness. You are young, you are vibrant, full of opportunities. And in everything you deal with, be careful,” he told the graduates.

He also reminded them to use their judgment to the best of their ability. “You did not come to school to memorise the things your professors have taught you. You had come to school for you to be taught how to think, how to process, how to evaluate.”

MAAP has equipped you with such knowledge so that you could stand alone amidst the unending challenges of life, he said, stressing that seafaring is a good, rewarding career.
How forces defeat piracy in notorious sea lanes

EU NAVFOR cites a number of achievements that have led to suppressing attacks on ships after nearly 10 years since launching operations in 2008

The counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean have become highly effective in preventing attacks on ships, according to a collective European Union naval effort.

Going into its 10th year of operation this 2018, the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) has cited a number of achievements that have led to suppressing the success rates of pirate attacks in the adjoining sea lanes.

EU NAVFOR said its operation Atalanta’s “intelligence-led operations, a robust and proactive stance, as well as the continued effort to impress upon the maritime industry and the merchant marine community the importance of self-protection measures” were taken together as the contributing features that led to the effective prevention of piracy attacks in the region.

At the height of Somali piracy in 2011, the pirates held 736 hostages and 32 ships. By October 2016 that number has dropped to no hostages and ships being held, according to EU NAVFOR in its website.

The establishment of the International Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden that protects vulnerable shipping has been one of its notable achievements.

Since the launch of the campaign in 2008, in cooperation with its counter-piracy partners, EU NAVFOR operation has:

- Had a 100% success rate in providing protection to WFP (World Food Programme) vessels delivering food aid to the Somali people and to AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) shipments critical to the success of the African Union operation in Somalia.
- Ensured the protection of other vulnerable shipping within the IRTC and the High Risk Area.
- Contributed to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia.
- Transferred suspected pirates to competent authorities with a view to their prosecution and conviction as a result of its close co-operation with regional governments such as those of The Republic of the Seychelles, Mauritius and Kenya.

Moreover, EU NAVFOR has conducted and supported numerous Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) rescue missions in the area, helping local, regional and international trading and fishing vessels in distress, it said.

EU NAVFOR operates in an area covering the Southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and a large part of the Indian Ocean, including the Seychelles, Mauritius and Comoros. The area of operations also includes the Somali coastal territory, as well as its territorial and internal waters. This represents an area of about 4.7M sq nm (approx 8.7 sq km).

The naval force’s objective is the deterrence and disruption of acts
of piracy and robbery on the high seas, where warships apprehend suspected pirates following intelligence reports of pirate activity or sightings of merchant vessels and Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA).

By disruption of piracy, it means "an action that renders a pirate group incapable of further pirate operation." EU NAVFOR disrupted a total of 134 groups, with the highest cases of 65 in 2010, followed by 28 in 2011, 16 in 2012, and 14 in 2009.

Since 2009, EU NAVFOR reported to have protected 431 WFP vessels and 139 Amisom ships.

It said that when EU NAVFOR assets locate suspicious vessels, and further investigation confirms the suspicion, the pirate groups will be disrupted. This means action will be taken in order to render a suspected group incapable of further pirate operations. Suspected pirates may be detained with the aim to transfer them to competent national authorities for prosecution. Their equipment is often confiscated for evidence purposes. A disruption of a pirate logistics dump was also carried out on the Somali coastline as part of a focused and deliberate operation in May 2012.

Participation in EU NAVFOR goes beyond EU member states. Norway was the first non-EU country to contribute to the operation, with a warship in 2009. Thereafter, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine have provided staff officers to the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) and Force Headquarters (FHQ). Ukraine contributed a warship early in 2014, and New Zealand contributed an MPRA asset later the same year.

Means of contributing to EU NAVFOR varies from navy vessels to military and civilian staff. To wit: Navy vessels (surface combat vessels and auxiliary ships, including embarked helicopters); Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA); Vessel Protection Detachment (VPD) teams; and provision of military and civilian staff to work at the OHQ in Northwood, United Kingdom, or on board units.

The composition of EU NAVFOR changes constantly due to the frequent rotation of units and varies according to the monsoon seasons in the Indian Ocean. However, it typically comprises approximately 1,200 personnel, 4-6 Surface Combat Vessels and 2-3 MPRA.

In addition to EU NAVFOR units, a considerable international military maritime presence is deployed in the area, comprising the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and independent national units from countries such as China, India, Japan, Korea, Russia and others - all committed to counter-piracy, but with varying mandates and mission objectives.

EU NAVFOR maintains close liaison with these forces to de-conflict and co-ordinate activities within the area of operations. (Information supplied by eunavfor.eu)

### KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

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<th>Currently held by pirates</th>
<th>Vessels Held</th>
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<th>Since 2009</th>
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<td>WFP Vessels Protected</td>
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<td>AMISOM Vessels Protected</td>
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<td>Tonnes of Food/Aid Delivered by WFP</td>
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<td>Pirates transferred to competent authorities</td>
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<td>Remanded 5</td>
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<td>Suspected events</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Total attacks</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>174</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>of which pirated</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>disruptions²</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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1. Plus an unknown number of unreported/unconfirmed dhow and smaller vessels.
2. Estimated.
3. Reported metric tonnes of food/aid delivered to Somali ports by World Food Programme vessels protected by EU NAVFOR.
4. Total attack is the combined number of all attacks mounted by suspected pirates; those repelled/aborted and those leading to ships being in pirate hands and crews taken hostage.
5. An action that renders a pirate group incapable of further pirate operation.

Sailing Forward 47
The reporting of the incident to UKMTO/ EU NAVFOR was exemplary in both speed and detail, including the damage to the ship from the skiffs' gunfire.

Employing the full range of Best Management Practices (BMP4) remains the best protection against piracy attack off the coast of Somalia.

The EU NAVFOR indicated that such defence eventually averted a recent pirate attack on the Singapore-flagged oil/chem tanker Leopard Sun last 23rd February, the first of such assault in the area this year.

The 50,000 DWT ship was en-route from Sohar Sultanate of Oman to Cape Town, South Africa when two skiffs (attack craft) 160 nm off the coast of Somalia attacked the Leopard Sun.

The EU NAVFOR said on its website that two skiffs approached the oil/chem vessel from the stern and fired upon it, after which the on-board Private Armed Security Team (PAST) returned fire with warning shots. The incident lasted approximately 20 minutes before the skiffs eventually turned away.

“The crew employed the full range of BMP4 as well as the actions of the embarked PAST,” it said in a statement.

BMP4 employs an application of three fundamental requirements. These are:

1. Register at MSCHOA (Maritime Security Centre - Horn of Africa). Ensure that a Vessel Registration Form has been submitted, which can be done online, to enter the High Risk Area (an area bounded by Suez and the Strait of Hormuz to the North 10°S and 78°E).

2. Report to UKMTO. On entering the UKMTO Voluntary Reporting Area, vessels are strongly encouraged to report daily to the UKMTO by email at 08:00 hours GMT while operating within the High Risk Area. The UKMTO Vessel Position Reporting Form - Daily Position Report should be used. UKMTO acts as the primary point of contact for merchant vessels and liaison with military forces in the region and it is the primary point of contact during an attack. For this reason they should be aware that the vessel is transiting the High Risk Area.
The crew employed the full range of BMP4 as well as the actions of the embarked PAST.

The reporting of the incident to UKMTO/EU NAVFOR MSCHOA was exemplary in both speed and detail, including the damage to the ship from gunfire from the skiffs,” the EU NAVFOR statement said.

EU NAVFOR MSCHOA issued navigation warnings and alerts to inform both mariners and merchant vessels in the High Risk Area, and the wider shipping industry of the attack. Merchant vessels in the proximity of the location where the incident took place have been warned directly of the existence of a potential Pirate Action Group (PAG).

The attack was the first of such incident this 2018 since a similar assault on Evergreen Marine’s container ship Ever Dynamic in November 2017.

3. Implement SPMs. The Ship Protection Measures described in BMP are the most basic that are likely to be effective.

During the Leopard Sun incident, EU NAVFOR had been in contact with the shipping company and the ship's master.

"It is clear the ship, crew and the security team demonstrated a very high standard of self-protection protocols in line with BMP4.
Skippers squad sails to more wins

The maritime industry’s heavy favourite in the PBA D-League Aspirants’ Cup, the Marinerong Pilipino, has smoothly sailed for more wins as the squad made a return bout for its second season.

Its victory against Jose Rizal University (JRU) marked the Skippers fifth straight conquest with a comfortable 84-62 when Sailing Forward went to press. Prior to JRU’s defeat, the Skippers had just emerged in triumph from fellow contender Go for Gold-CSB. The Skippers sank the Scratchers in a fantastic display of salvaging the game after fighting back from a 10-point-down rally in the second half that ended in 86-80.

With a 6-2 win-loss count, the Marineros tied for second place along with Akari-Adamson. It was Akari-Adamson University that gave the Skippers its first taste of loss during that thrilling collision with the Falcons.

That first grounding of the Skippers came as a bit of a surprise, leaving the college team’s coach into sort of guessing whether they had been underestimated. Likewise, the Skippers second straight loss came from another college team Centro Escolar University (CEU) in the early elimination part.

However, the Skippers returned to a winning venture as it grounded Batangas-EAC at 92-78. Its recovery after a two-game losing skid came after a back-to-back losses, thereby improving its 2-2 standing.

Thus far, the Skippers performance has improved compared with its debut in the league with a 1-4 losing streak last year. Although team coach Koy Banal still grappled over blending the chemistry of his players that he nagged about since day one.

Day one of the action saw its first win over Zark’s Burger-Lyceum, from which the Skippers pushed to get better since they knew their opponents were on lookout preparing for upcoming encounters.

Coach Banal admitted they need to shape up as he has been concerned about his crew’s cohesiveness. He earlier wished they could have more time to practice as a team since it takes time to fine tune the play.

This is because some of the teammates such as Alvin Pasaoal and Abu Tratter only joined in practice a few days before the team’s 18th January opening game. But veterans like Renzo Subido, Rian Ayonayon, Philip Paredes took turns carrying the offence for the Skippers in the opening game with Zark’s burger-Lyceum.

Marinerong Pilipino also has demolished Batangas-EAC and AMA Online Education in its third and fourth victory, respectively. Since then everything seems to have fallen into place as the veteran coach Banal observed. “The key here is understanding what we want to do, what we want to achieve,” said Banal.

Despite propelling to second place along with another contender at 6-2 winning streak, Banal considered that “we haven’t achieved anything yet.” He stressed that the team wanted to be in the Top 2 to be in the semis. “The important thing here is we need to take care of ourselves” and not to be complacent, he said. SF
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