ITF ship inspectors’ team
Performing crucial role that supports seafarers
MARITIME ACADEMY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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COURSES OFFERED:

BSMT  BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION

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 Seafarer’s Union, the International Maritime Employers’ Committee, the Danish Shipowners’ Association, the Norwegian Shipowners’ Association, and the Japan Shipowners’ Association.

MAAP conducts shipboard training aboard T/S Kapitan Felix Oca, a 5020 DWT dedicated training ship capable of accommodating 180 midshipmen and 9 instructors in 30 air-conditioned cabins and six berths.
Welcome. Union inspectors and coordinators have played a unique and crucial role in support of seafarers at major ports of various countries. They visit vessels to police existing agreements, to check and to report on working conditions and help crews secure their rights.

They’ve tackled cases of abandonment and unpaid wages of seafarers that normally involved crews from developing countries. Recently, AMOSUP hosted the ITF Asia Pacific Inspectors Meeting in Manila in July. The two-day meeting provided an opportunity to discuss a number of issues - from inspectors’ performance, sharing of experiences in handling cases in the midst of changes in international shipping such as the Maritime Labour Convention, cooperation with Port State Control, and increase in basic wages.

We’re also featuring a tribute to a former ship inspector from our Norwegian Union partner who touched the lives of countless seafarers by dedicating a section of our Seamen’s Hospital in her memory. This posthumous dedication honors the life of a notable woman who created a positive and lasting impact to the lives of seafarers around the world.

We’re bringing you the celebration of the first year anniversary of the organisation committed to helping seafarers face the challenges of having a severe health disorder. It’s their vision to see the world without HIV/AIDS-infected seafarers and a maritime industry free from the stigma and discrimination after having been diagnosed with the ailment. Members of this year-old network of HIV positive seafarers now have a strong voice to fight for their rights for equal opportunity for all at sea.

We’re presenting the achievement of our Seamen’s Hospital Director who has finished the recent full-distance Ironman 70.3. This triathlon race, which is being held in the country yearly, is an ultimate test of physical endurance, stamina and mental toughness that hundreds of triathletes had to endure.

Our story on the Bagong Bayani Awards grants the prize and honor to one of the pillars of the Philippine manning and shipping industry. His leadership geared towards manpower development in upgrading skills and competencies of Filipino seafarers through proper education and training.

We’re taking a look at a European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) statistical seafarers’ review, where the Philippines leads the list of non-European Union members with the most number of officer certificates recognised by EU member states. The EMSA review notes that the Philippines has shot to the top of the list with 29,655 masters and officers, followed by Ukraine with 19,459, and the Russian Federation at third with 14,395 masters and officers CoC (Certificate of Competency) holders.

Lastly, we continue our series of stories among our members. Now on its sixth part, the segment comes with narratives that vary with specks of shortcomings, struggles and successes of our ship officers in the pursuit of more feats in their profession.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado F Oca

Sailing Forward
PH tops list of non-EU members with most officer certificates recognised by member states

The doctor is out, gets in for Ironman Triathlon race

Inspectors’ team: Unique and crucial role that supports seafarers

Maritime profession drives seafarers career, family better

Augusto Buenaventura
Monique Arrojo
Fernando Quiroy
Mary Ai Gomera
Michaelangelo Alvarez
Lauro Pacite

SMOU DONATION

RESCUED FISHERS

BBF’s Capt Gregorio Oca’s Achievement Award goes to pillar in PH manning, seafaring

Positibong Marino Phils: A year of education, employment concerns

Quote in Action
10 AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital dedicates its Oncology Section in Nina Espeli Allen’s memory

39 AMOSUP Cebu’s summer clinic gets their dependents’ children inspired

Cover: ITF Manila Inspector Rodrigo Aguinaldo (middle) joins with Filipino officers and crew in one of the ships he has visited. Photo: Rod Aguinaldo
PH TOPS LIST OF NON-EU MEMBERS WITH MOST OFFICER CERTIFICATES RECOGNISED BY MEMBER STATES

This data collection hopes to provide in future a trend analysis that should contribute to a better understanding of the maritime labour force in Europe.

The Philippines has had the most number of masters and officers among non-European Union (EU) members holding their CoCs (Certificate of Competency) that are recognised by EU Member States.

In a latest review by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the Philippines shot to the top of the list with 29,695 masters and officers, followed by Ukraine with 19,459, and the Russian Federation at third with 14,395 masters and officers CoC holders. India and Turkey came in at fourth and fifth, with 6,795 and 4,784 masters and officers, respectively.

EMSA said the five EU member states that had more masters and officers holding CoCs issued by them in 2016 were the United Kingdom (24,375), Poland (19,518), Greece (17,048), France (14,362) and Italy (14,068).

In addition, the five EU member states that had more masters and officers holding EaRs (Endorsement attesting Recognition of a foreign CoC) were Malta (66,715), Cyprus (29,935), the United Kingdom (12,544), the Netherlands (11,260) and Portugal (6,594).

Many EU registered ships are manned by seafarers who are not EU nationals. And EMSA has carried out inspections of the maritime education, training and certification systems of their country of origin.

Compliance is assessed on the basis of the IMO’s Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention. Apart from the Philippines, it carried out inspections in Morocco, Senegal and Africa last year. It has evaluated the corrective action plans submitted by the five non-EU countries in response to the inspection reports and the European Commission’s subsequent assessments.
As part of the follow up process, EMSA said in a separate report: “Encouragingly, the action taken by the inspected countries show significant improvements to their system.”

EMSA’s “Seafarers’ Statistics in the EU” report, which it released last 18 July 2018, was based on data extracted from certificates and endorsements registered by EU member states until 31 December 2016 and recorded in the EMSA-hosted and managed STCW Information System (STCW-IS).

It represents a snapshot of the European labour market in terms of the number of seafarers holding valid certificates and endorsements in 2016, the agency said, stressing that it’s the third year in respect of which such data is available.

Through this data collection, it hopes to provide in future a “trend analysis that should contribute to a better understanding of the maritime labour force in Europe.”

According to EMSA, the data included now in its STCW-IS shows that 174,780 masters and officers hold valid CoC issued by EU member states while another 87,802 masters and officers hold original CoCs issued by non-EU countries with endorsements issued by EU member states attesting their recognition (EuR).

Overall, the end of 2016 shows slightly above a quarter of a million masters and officers as potential manpower to serve on board EU member states flagged vessels.”

(SF)
The doctor is out, gets in for Ironman Triathlon race

AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Director Dr George Pile recently completed one of the toughest individual endurance races in the world. He recounts with Sailing Forward’s Andy Dalisay the journey from his first training session to crossing the finish line.

He’s heading the AMOSUP key service unit taking charge of the medical and healthcare needs of thousands of its union members and their dependents.

Yet, AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Director Dr George Pile could also be touted as the shining model of what the hospital preaches, as well as the practices of having physically and mentally fit seafarers. He’s not just the ordinary athlete the seafarers must look up to, but someone who has followed his own training regime.

Dr Pile recently finished his first full Ironman race, which took place in Subic Bay last June 2018. The triathlon consisted of a 3.8km swim in open-water, 180km bike from Subic Bay to SCTEX and back, and a full marathon run of 42km within Subic. Each of these legs has certain cutoff time that the athlete must finish or be disqualified to continue. The Ironman brand-race has been organised in key areas around the Philippines, like Camarines Sur, Cebu, Davao and Subic Bay.

Prior to his first full Ironman, Dr. Pile has been competing as one of the regular triathletes for quite some time now. He started out as a runner and biker, but decided to learn how to swim properly for the first time. After gaining his confidence, he decided to join his first triathlon as a beginner in 2009. The race consisted of only 350m swim, 12km bike, and 3km run.

Consistent training enabled him to build up endurance, allowing him to compete in races much longer than the ones he started. He was able to join his first half Ironman just after a year, a race consisted of 1.9km swim, 90km bike and 21km run in Camarines Sur. He consistently competed in similar races for a few years around the Philippines. However, after his last half Ironman in 2015, he decided to call it quits, as he got busy in hospital supervision and as an eye doctor.

THE COMEBACK

After two years of completely halting training, Dr. Pile saw his fitness getting deteriorated. He became overweight and easily got tired from physical activities. He decided to train again and went back to join a medium-distance triathlon in the Tri-United in July 2017, a series of triathlons scattered throughout the year. It was a 2km swim, 60km bike, and 15km run. He has loved the sport, so he kept on training to compete in the race he ever dreamt of finishing.

"Before you can join an Ironman you need to train regularly. Whether it’s weekly, or daily, whatever it takes," he says. In his case, he swims every Monday, Wednesday and Friday; bikes and runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays; and a long distance run session on Saturdays. He wakes up to start training at 5 or 6am and finishes by 8:30am.

He spends swim training at Celebrity Sports Plaza, bike ride in Clark Field or Nuvalli in Sta. Rosa. He also does a few hours of bike training at home during weekdays and long runs around their subdivision or around the UP Diliman Academic Oval.

Though there were times that he could skip to train as hospital work and patients are a priority, he says that he follows his schedule most of the time. He just makes up for any lost training sessions. He only needs a full-day rest for each week, which he calls as an "active recovery." With his strict training routine, Dr
Pile built up the confidence he needed to finally sign up for his first full Ironman on 03 June 2018 in Subic Bay. Unfortunately, there was a strict requirement that each triathlete must have competed in a half or full Ironman from at least 2016 onwards. Since he stopped in 2015, Dr. Pile was not yet eligible to race. But he had been firm in his decision to compete in his dream event. So he signed up and finished an Ironman 70.3 that was held in Davao last March.

**PHYSICAL ENDURANCE AND MENTAL TOUGHNESS**

The full Ironman is the ultimate physical challenge of strength, endurance and stamina, while having to maintain an incredible amount of mental toughness. It’s not a joke to finish the race for the allotted time of 17 hours, he says. The professional triathletes can do it in about eight hours. As a regular triathlete, it would be hard for him to finish the race without proper training, diet and exercise.

However, it’s not all about a person’s physical capabilities. Participants have to be mentally prepared, too. “No matter how much you train for the race, without any sort of confidence and mental toughness, you may crack under the pressure and immense pain you will suffer throughout the race. The race can really be long, so without the patience and discipline, you might not finish the race,” explains Dr. Pile. The arduous training provides the discipline and confidence one needs to pursue his goal. “With this, there is no way you would want to quit in the middle of the race,” he notes.

Being a doctor, is an advantage. He could understand the process of how the body needs fuel. “We take gels, solid food like sandwiches, electrolyte drinks and of course, water during the race.” He points out how important it is to maintain a specific diet during training and prior to the event and even during the race.

He says it is what ultimately fuels your body and gives you energy to continue and finish. Besides having to maintain a proper diet, he asserts that one must also stay away from any vice that could harm the body. One needs enough sleep as well. When it comes to preparing and taking part of the race, he cites the importance of the moral support from family and friends. Without this, he says, it would have been a lot more difficult to finish the Ironman.

**AFTER-EFFECT**

Dr. Pile said that he was quite overweight before he took up triathlon sport. But now he feels “much fitter and stronger” than he was 20 years ago. His triumph in the field of athletics has set the best example for his family to follow suit. His three kids have all turned into sports at such a young age. His 20-year-old eldest son started swimming at nine and eventually followed the footsteps of his dad. At 11, his son started training for triathlons and even became an IronKids champion at age 14. His two other kids are also active swimmers, while his wife, who is also a physician, is into running and biking as well.

Towards the end of his Ironman race, he was touched when his sons ran beside him all the way to the finish line to help keep up his pace. When he finished the race, he recalls how happy and inspired his family was. “Ang galing daw ng daddy nila (Their dad is so good)” he exclaims, remembering his kids in merriment when he was crossing the finish line.

Dr. Pile says finishing the race is unimaginable. “You know you can do it if you put your mind to it. The best part of crossing the finish line is the validation and fulfilment you feel within yourself. It’s really a feeling like no other.”

He has finally reached one of his dreams, he said, adding that “with the support of our president, Dr. Conrado Oca, an AMOSUP triathlon team can be formed to further highlight the importance of keeping oneself fit and healthy at any age.” As what Ironman finishers say: “Anything is possible!”

> **Before you can join an Ironman (race) you need to train regularly. Whether it’s weekly, or daily, whatever it takes**
AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital dedicates its Oncology Section in Nina Espeli Allen’s memory

Nina served the Norwegian Seafarers Union and created a positive and lasting impact to the lives of seafarers around the world.

AMOSUP has paid tribute to a member of its union partner in Norway who helped and touched the lives of countless seafarers worldwide by naming one of the sections of Seamen’s Hospital Manila in her memory.

The posthumous dedication of the Hospital’s Oncology Unit and Ward to the life of Nina Espeli Allen reminisced “a notable and noble woman” who served the Norwegian Seafarers Union (NSU), said AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca.

Nina served the NSU and created a positive and lasting impact to the lives of seafarers around the world, Dr Oca told friends and guests at the dedication ceremony held at the hospital last 23 July 2018. She succumbed to Cholangiocarcinoma or bile duct cancer in November 2016.

Born on 26 July 1976 in Norway, Nina later on moved to the United States where she met her husband, Walt Allen. Their marriage was blessed with two children, Hannah

1. Dr Conrad Oca (right) alongside Nina E Allen’s family members led by husband Walt Allen (second from left), her parents and two children at the Oncology Ward dedication ceremony of AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Manila
2. Nina Espeli Allen
3. Nina with Filipino and foreign staff during one of her inspections of the cruise ship Norwegian Sky on winter of 2015 in Miami
4. During one of her vacations
Oncology Section: Upgraded facilities, benefits for members

Cancer knows no age, status, gender or nationality. At AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, the medical facility treats an average of over a hundred oncology outpatients per month. It also has recorded a total of 139 oncology admissions in the first six months of this year.

According to the most recent Philippine Cancer Registry Facts and Figures, cancer incidence has increased dramatically in the last decade, with breast, lung and colorectal cancers leading by incidence.

Recognising the need to address this relevant health problem among its members, their families and staff, Dr Conrado Oca said the hospital has worked hard by bringing the following improvements and benefits:

1. In 2007, the hospital added a Cancer Specialist (Medical Oncologist) in its roster of medical specialists to treat our adult members and their family who are diagnosed with cancer;

2. Since 2012, cancer drugs were included in the hospital pharmacy and became available to cancer patients for free. In the past, patients had to buy all chemo drugs out of pocket, but now its 100% free for basic chemotherapy;

3. It has a new, recently opened, spacious outpatient anti-neoplastic treatment unit which became operational early this year in the Southwing. The unit can accommodate seven to eight patients on outpatient chemo. This significantly decreased its in-patient occupancy rate and this also made the patients’ cancer treatment journey more comfortable, bearable and safer as they do not have to be admitted and be exposed to possible hospital acquired infections;

4. Through the help of its nursing service, it has provided and trained a dedicated oncology nurse and a compounding area for the cancer patients’ outpatient treatment;

5. It has constantly updated and upgraded its radiologic diagnostic services like Ultrasound, CT Scan, Bone Scan and the latest addition, the MRI. They are all very essential in the diagnosis and management of cancer patients. These diagnostics allow the doctors to do minimally invasive procedures like image guided biopsies to diagnose cancer;

6. It has an up-to-date and modern Pathology Department that possesses state-of-the-art immunostains and in-situ-hybridization techniques, which form the core of cancer diagnosis.”

and Oliver. She began her work for NSU in 2000 and started to advocate the rights and wellbeing of seafarers.

AMOSUP opened the newly-constructed Nina Espeli Allen Oncology Ward with five beds, an isolation room and four cubicles, solely for patients who are needing in-patient cancer treatment.

Dr Oca stressed the Unit and Ward will be “a hallmark of courage and hope for our beloved seafarers and their families who are battling cancer.”

Cancer knows no age, status, gender or nationality, he said. The AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital treats an average of over a hundred oncology outpatients per month. It also has recorded a total of 139 oncology admissions in the first half of 2018.

Seamen’s Hospital director Dr George Aile, who delivered the
welcome remarks at the dedication ceremonies, said Nina may “not be with us anymore and is deeply missed by everyone, especially her family and close friends.”

However, Dr Pile said, “Nina is happy and smiling in heaven because she knows that we have not forgotten her.” She had touched the lives of many seafarers, was full of energy and passionate about her work, he added.

The hospital also has provided and trained a dedicated oncology nurse and a compounding area for the cancer patients’ outpatient treatment. It also brought in a medical oncologist (cancer specialist) in its roster of specialists to treat adult members and their family who are diagnosed with cancer.

“Putting up a cancer ward dedicated in memory of a cancer patient herself as Nina is an admirable effort of the hospital,” said Dr Agnes Gorospe, who heads the Oncology Section. She stressed that this dedication “sends a message of confidence and continued commitment to all our seafarers and their loved ones.”

AMOSUP hopes the facilities to be a timeless testament to Nina’s valuable contribution in the industry, where she has left an indelible mark.

1. Nina Allen file photo.
2. Nina’s immediate family members.
3. ITF inspectorate team.
4. Seamen’s Hospital’s doctors.
5. SH medical staff
The long and difficult journey

Dr Agnes Gorospe, Oncology Section chair at the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, shares the culture of service, empathy and boundless love for family, which are the very values that Nina Espeli Allen showed towards her fellow seafarers.

It's been almost 12 years since I joined Seamen's Hospital as its in-house medical oncologist. Talking and interviewing patients week after week, I have learned many things about the Union, seafaring, the seafarers and their experiences. I have made many friends and forged many connections. So I'm glad I saw the light and grabbed the opportunity of joining the medical staff because the experience has been richly rewarding.

Patience, courage, and a positive attitude. These are some of the essential characteristics a patient must possess in order to emotionally, mentally and physically survive the long and difficult journey after a cancer diagnosis. "It takes on a deeper meaning to see blessings behind the thick clouds suddenly cast in one's horizon, but it is vital, even life-saving to see the light in the middle of darkness", a friend once wrote to me.

Taking care of cancer patients every day for the last 18 years, I know how devastating it is to be diagnosed with an incurable disease.

Fortunately for all of us, there's the AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital, its supportive administration in the leadership of our President Dr. Conrad Oca, our Hospital Director Dr. George Pile, and our Medical Director Dr. Alejandro Ortizas, as well as the confidence and generosity of the International Transport Workers Federation, the Norwegian Seafarers Union and the All Japan Seamen's Union.

The incidence of cancer is increasing nationwide and based on our pathology tumour registry, the top three cancers we have here are: breast cancer, colorectal and lung cancer.

There are still many things that need to be done, and research to improve clinical outcomes is the way to go. Putting up a cancer ward dedicated in memory of a cancer patient herself Nina Espeli Allen is an admirable effort of the hospital that sends a message of confidence and continued commitment to all our seafarers and their loved ones.

On behalf of all the cancer patients, I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you and congratulations to AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital administration, the Unions and all the hospital staff for nurturing a culture of service, empathy and boundless love for family—the very values that Nina Espeli Allen showed towards her fellow seafarers.
Inspectors’ team: Unique and crucial role that supports seafarers

Their contributions are making the ITF stronger, maintaining the current number of collectives that have soared to more than 10,000 agreements, writes Andy Dalisay

It’s a workforce that performs the primary role of support to seafarers, which includes wage concern and other social and employment conditions.

These men and women of the ITF’s team of inspectors and coordinators have faced and tackled cases of abandonment of crews, who are left to fend for themselves in foreign ports and unpaid wages that normally take months to recover.

Last year, the International Transport Workers’ Federation recovered about $40 million in owed wages to seafarers, $6 million short of the amount regained in 2016. “These are wages that were denied to seafarers by some shipowners who consider them to be no more than modern days’ slaves,” said ITF inspectorate coordinator Steve Trowsdale.

The number of ships and seafarers cases the inspectors dealt with have significantly increased between 25-28%, he said. Trowsdale attributed the spike to their presence in social media as the ITF tried to promote the activities of its inspectorate network.

The inspectorate system is a powerful tool against FOC (Flag of Convenience), which half of the world’s shipping tonnage is registered under, meaning in states other than the real countries of the vessel’s ownership.

Challenge of rising cases

However, the ITF has come to get through the challenge of handling rising cases being run by its secretariat in London. “It’s now looking to increase the number of staff in the support team in London to catch up with the rise of inspectorate activities,” stressed Trowsdale.

Last 26-27 July 2018, some 30 of its inspectors in Asia Pacific sat down for a meeting at the AMOSUP Convention Hall in Manila. The two-day conference dwelled on a number of issues related to inspectors performance, including sharing of experiences in handling cases in the midst of changes in international shipping regulations such as the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), along with cooperation from Port State Control and the ILO minimum wage for national flag vessels.

In the FOC campaign, the mere existence of inspectorate around the world is contributing to any agreement that has been signed with shipowners. “Without them, ITF probably won’t have 13,000 agreements,” said John Canias, the ITF head of Maritime Operations.

The inspector’s job is to make sure that the seafarers are being paid based on that agreement. “Their (inspectors) contributions are making the ITF stronger, maintaining the current number of
Inspectors’ performance

The ITF has been working on quality and quantity of inspections, requiring inspectors to improve their performance. And they’ve been quite successful on it.

“Their (inspectors) contributions are making the ITF stronger, maintaining the current number of agreements it holds.”

The secretariat has noted the “no problem” cases that have accounted on ships inspected, which has occurred more often than any other issues on board.

With such instances, it now monitors every “no-problem inspection” that is getting into the system. And if there is not enough information, there ought to be a need to send it back to the inspector for completion and accuracy of the report.

The ITF team of inspectors and contacts in 57 countries and 125 ports play a unique and crucial role of support to seafarers. They visit vessels to police existing agreements, check and report on working conditions and help crews secure their rights.

In the last 10 years, the ITF inspectorate has recovered some $1 billion in owed wages to seafarers. “This is phenomenal which is a good testament for what the inspectors are doing,” according to Dean Summers, ITF coordinator from Maritime Union of Australia. Summers, who moderated the Aspac inspectors’ meet, said: “To retrieve a third of $1 billion, which is effectively stolen dollars from the seafarers over a 10-year period, calls for celebration. And congratulations to us!”
But he insisted: “We all do know that we don’t get every dollar of stolen wages back, which is just a drop in the bucket. It’s an indictment of the industry and the bad features of the FOC system that is still very active even with the MLC.”

Lately, the ITF has started recruiting new inspectors to address the increase of their activities. Trowsdale, the inspectorate coordinator, said they just “don’t take what the unions give them, but we encourage (local) unions to put up as many candidates as they can.”

Trowsdale noted the probable addition of women inspectors. There’s been only 10% of women that comprised the number of ITF inspectors, and it is encouraging to have more from the female gender in the team.

The 2016 and 2017 operations saw the number of inspections rising to more than 10,000 for each year. That’s been a record for the team, and the ITF would like this number to be the benchmark for the annual inspection rate.
The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and its affiliated unions work together to fight for the rights of all seafarers around the world.

To support seafarers the ITF has a global network of more than 130 inspectors and contacts in 57 countries, who can be called upon to deal with any problems seafarers face. For those areas of the world where no inspector is available, the ITF Seafarers Support team based in the ITF Head Office in London can be contacted.

The Contact details are:

Email seafsupport@itf.org.uk
SMS +44 7984 356 573
WhatsApp/Viber +44 7523 515 097
Facebook www.facebook.com/itfseafarerssupport

Please remember that when contacting the ITF Seafarers Support team or the ITF Inspectors, you should provide the Name and Flag of the vessel, the IMO number, your current location and full details of the problem or problems you have.

In addition to those contact details the ITF has developed a FREE iOS and Android app called ITF Seafarers. Using this app you can look up vessel details taken directly from the ITF system, find and contact an ITF Inspector or ITF Maritime affiliated union plus much, much more.
Maritime profession drives seafarers career, family better

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. AMOSUP members share segments of their experiences in a series of interviews with Sailing Forward's Andy Dalisay.
Augusto Buenaventura, Shipmaster: The achievement of saving lives

he has worked under one shipowner and operator throughout his career, climbed the top rank of Master Mariner and saw the shipping company’s fleet grow or trim its numbers down for larger tonnage.

Yet, these milestones in Captain Augusto Buenaventura’s career of more than two decades may not be complete without his recent achievement that earned him both international and local recognitions. The K Line Ship Management (Singapore) and Venti Maritime shipmaster, along with his officers and crew, rescued more than 300 migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and sheltered them on board the containership Hamburg Bridge sometime in April 2016.

August says the rescue of migrants in distress was the toughest challenge he has faced in his 20-year long career at sea. The migrants were composed of Somalis and Egyptians. And on the peak hour after salvaging the drifters, the restless migrants began demanding the Captain to discharge them in an Italian port and be received by Red Cross personnel. He feared that the Hamburg Bridge could easily be taken over, which prompted him to call for a naval escort from the nearest coastguard station.

While the fully-laden vessel was taking its course to discharge the migrants, August’s fear of overrunning the ship continued to persist. Worse, the naval escort was nowhere to be seen. “Had the refugees attempted, they could have easily done so,” the Master stressed.

He says his constant contact in updating their situation with his company ashore and RCC Malta, the search and rescue contact that instructed his ship to pursue the rescue, assuaged his worst fear. “They had at least lent moral support from constant communication through some form of advice about our situation,” August explains.

Luckily, nothing untoward occurred. The next day, the Bridge reported to RCC Malta that the migrants had settled down to sleep. The vessel arrived at the Italian port of Taranto, just as the migrants had finished their breakfast. But August says it was a “tiring and stressful incident” as he did not sleep for three days. Nevertheless, he’s proud of having saved 310 souls.

It wasn’t August’s dream to be a maritime professional. He originally wanted to study Computer Science in college. But when his elder sister

“... It was all question marks for me about the reality [at work] when I started on board. Since we all had only theories, life on board was all blank...”
EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA, PROFESSIONALISM AND COMPASSION

Captain Augusto Buenaventura received the 2018 Bagong Bayani Awards under its Community and Social Service (Sea-based) category in an award ceremony held at the Philippine International Convention Centre last June. Prior to that, the IMO awarded Capt Buenaventura and his Hamburg Bridge crew with a special recognition for their “exceptional bravery at sea, professionalism and compassion in the face of disastrous situation” in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea.

In its tribute to the ‘K’ Line Shipmanagement and Venitis Maritime Shipmaster for such an achievement, the Bagong Bayani Awards cited the following statement:

"Captain Augusto Buenaventura is a veteran maritime professional for 22 years, rising through the ranks until he reached his present post of Shipmaster or Captain at ‘K’ Line Shipmanagement (Singapore).

On the night of 24 April 2016, Capt Buenaventura, on a routine voyage while at the helm of the containership Hamburg Bridge, received a message from RCC Malta instructing his ship which was sailing on Mediterranean Sea to render assistance to a boat carrying migrants in distress. To ensure the safety of the migrants upon locating the boat, it was decided to wait for daylight before proceeding to the rescue operation.

Capt Buenaventura along with his crew rescued a total of 310 refugees and sheltered them on board their ship, the Hamburg Bridge. The crew administered medical treatment and provided food and other necessities for the migrants.

While on board the ship, the migrants demanded to be discharged in Italy and be received by Red Cross personnel. They warned the crew of unrest if their demands were not met. To address the increasingly intense situation, Capt Buenaventura assured them that they will be safely discharged in Italy. He showed the migrants photos of the ship’s course along with email correspondence with RCC Rome confirming that Red Cross personnel were ready to receive the drifters.

On the morning of 26 April 2016, the Hamburg Bridge arrived safely at the port of Taranto in Italy and completed disembarking of the migrants.

The Maritime Industry Authority also presented awards to the officers and crew of mv Hamburg Bridge for their exemplary deed of rescuing refugees and going beyond the call of duty.

August hurdled the entrance exam and started college at the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) in 1991. However, he fell gravely ill in the course of his study and had to take a leave of absence from the state-owned academy. When he tried to resume the following year, his parents disallowed him to return to PMMA, fearing he might get sick again. But August was driven to become a seafarer - so he moved and continued his studies in the...
private-run Philippine Maritime Institute (PMI) to finish his BS in Maritime Transportation.

During his senior year at PMI, August chanced upon a scholarship tender to study in Japan through the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA). He took the exam and succeeded as one of the 60 shortlisted candidates. They were cut down further to 30 entrants – August included – that MARINA sent to Japan for a two-month course. The study grant was a joint project between the Philippines and Japan to develop Filipino crew for Japanese merchant fleet’s mixed-manning arrangement.

In 1994, August was dispatched as a cadet to his first vessel owned by Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha or “K” Line, one of the three major Japanese ship operators. “It was all question marks for me about the reality [at work] when I started on board. Since we all had only theories, life on board was all blank,” August said of his first merchant ship experience.

“The hardest part was when you need to extend time to study even if you’ve finished with your task,” he recalled. After a year, he sat down at the Marine Board for his Third Mate exam. He spent five years in ratings’ roles as an Ordinary Seaman and as an Able (AB) Seafarer each for two contracts. During that time, he stressed that promotion to be an officer was not easy - “Even if you’re qualified as [in my case] I’d always been told that I was yet new on the job,” he shared.

August professionally grew up in container shipping in the ‘K’ Line fleet and saw how the company’s ships expand and re-fleet into larger vessels. “The Maritime profession has changed me a lot, not only in the financial aspect but also in my personality and leadership ability,” he said. When he assumed as a shipmaster, he said it was as if he were in-charge of a community.

“Ikaw ang barangay captain na lahat ng problema kailangan mong i-manage at i-solve. Mas naging mature ako. Kung sa lupa lang mas madali lang eh. Pero sa dagat 24 oras on-call ka. (You are the leader of the community who is in-charge to manage and solve its problem. I became more mature. It could have been easier ashore, but at sea you’re 24 hours on call.) You can’t even drink liquor because anything can happen on the safety of the ship, the crew and the cargo.”

The 45-year-old captain and his wife have three children, who are 18, 13 and seven years old. August plans to retire from his job at sea at the age of 50. But according to him, he considers to continue working at Ventis or K Line offices or in its training centre when he permanently signs off from the ship.

He wants to continue the business that he already started, which is a trading company supplying various products to a barangay. He said it hasn’t been as busy as he has not given full attention to it yet. He also built a 12-room condo-type flat that opened last June.

August commanded mixed-nationality crewed ships. But he said it is easier to handle full-Filipino crewed vessel because not only are the Pinoy’s hard-working, but also obedient when it comes to their tasks.

Last July, the Master Mariner took the helm of another "K" Lineship, following a vacation with his family. **SF**
Monique Arrojado, 2nd Engineer: Every ship comes with new challenge

She ended up in a profession that’s far too unrelated from her dream career. In the academy, neither did she have any prior knowledge of the maritime profession nor the idea of what it’s like to pursue a career at sea, and as a woman at that.

Today, however, Monique Arrojado holds the post that’s just a breath away of being in command of her next ship’s engine department. As a second engineer, Monique has come a long way since forsaking her dream in exchange of a career at sea.

She recalls she was readying to enroll for Accountancy in her chosen Catholic university when her father persuaded her to take the entrance exam at the AMOSUP-run Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). Monique notes that her father, a PMA graduate of Class ’85 and now a retired army general, learned of MAAP during a working visit at the school and got impressed of its education and training standard.

Such impression led Monique’s father to ask his daughter to try the entrance test at MAAP, which she passed. She also hurdled the interview that pushed her dad more to convince Monique that “it’s the right course and school” for her. Gaining words of assertions and assurances for her future, the girl heeded her father’s advice. She even had to undergo lasik surgery after failing the eye exam— to ditch the glasses and get her vision back to 20-20.

During the first several days at MAAP, Monique said she found herself in the most awful situation. “I just cried in the first two weeks as I missed classes on subjects that I really would have liked in the university. I didn’t even have any idea what will I end up to be,” she lamented.

The lady shared she had a difficult time adapting to the new learning environment, but said some encouraging factors prompted her to do the right thing. She recanted the instances when she would be jeered at by the training director, who would remind her of the embarrassment she would face if she quits.

Monique always wanted her father to be proud of her. She said the cadets, who treat each other as brothers and sisters, gave her the motivation to go ahead and strive hard to finish her course.

Nine females, including Monique, were among more than 200 cadets of her batch who marched up the stage to receive their diplomas at MAAP in 2010. Monique and two other women finished with dual courses in BS Marine Transportation and Engineering (BSMTE). She opted to take the Board Exam in Marine Engineering.

As a Maersk Line-sponsored student at the academy, Monique boarded one of the company’s containerships, the George Maersk, as a trainee Fourth Engineer upon graduation. On board, she said she
sensed the gap in interaction at work due to apparent differences in nationality and gender.

"The higher the rank, the more challenging it gets."

She said foreign officers would rather let her work without guidance, making it a part of her challenge on the job. However, she observed the foreign officers wouldn’t give the same treatment to their junior compatriots. “You are here to work and learn,” a Danish officer once told her.

Monique felt discriminated. But she wanted to learn further – so she set about her work without guidance a trainee needs and managed to grow on her own. She said she carefully reviewed all systems to familiarise herself with the duties and responsibilities prior to her actual duty as a Fourth Engineer.

After three months, she was deployed to another Maersk ship, the 8,680 TEU Svendborg Maersk, as a Fourth Engineer where she became fully adjusted to her role. “I would talk to myself: Kalangan matapos ko ito [contract] kasi nakakahiya kung hindi. ‘I need to finish this contract, if not it will be an embarrassment,’ she told herself.

She sailed up to her Third Engineer position at Maersk Line, and moved up a rank higher when she joined on board the ship belonging to a German shipowner for two succeeding contracts. Monique is the eldest in the family of six siblings. As the first-born, she said it became a challenge for her to pursue the job even if it’s emotionally hard. “Wala kang kasamang babae so wala kang makausap sa problema mo. (You’re the only woman on board so there’s no one to share your problem with.) I only did pray and always talked to God,” she recalled.

As a woman, Monique did not escape verbal harassment on board. One particular incident that she could not forget was when a Danish Captain, who’s more than twice her age, opened up his feeling for her. She said the shipmaster came up to her and said, “I really like you.”

She felt uncomfortable with the way he approached her, but managed to respond. “I’m not here to find a boyfriend but to work,” she replied as she quickly walked away. She shared the incident to two of her Filipino shipmates and prompted her to ask them to always be on the lookout for her and to find her when she gets out of their sight while at work.

She experienced a similar incident on another ship when a crewmember suddenly expressed his feeling towards her. She said, the rating told her that such an affection developed after many months of working together on board.

Every vessel she works on is a challenge, shares Monique, who disembarked lately from the 41,108 DWT Calidris, a containership belonging to the German shipowner Buss Shipping. “Habang tumatagas ang ranggo mas lalong nagkaka challenge. (The higher the rank, the more challenging it gets.) Because every vessel comes with a completely new set of personnel,” Monique continued.

But, she said her profession brings out the best in her. “Seafaring molded me as a better person and developed my character and how to deal with people. It’s a fine job where you can work at offices and on ships,” she said. Monique adds the maritime profession has given her a lot of opportunities to work here and abroad both ashore and at sea.

The 28-year-old wants to use her chief engineer license before she quits seafaring. “The first Filipina has yet to act or perform her C/E role on ship overseas,” she declared.
Fernando Quiray Jr, 3rd Officer: Of sailors extraordinary tales and the green bucks

He was a teenage boy, got lured by the stories of returning sailors and their extraordinary tales after visiting various ports and earning the green bucks. Even after he entered college, Fernando Quiray Jr was never taught of how rough and lonely a mariner’s life at sea is. So all he knew of was the adventures the profession brings about, he says.

But when Fernando, aka “Jun” from his junior’s suffix, embarked on a journey to join their ranks, that’s when he realized the toughness of the seafaring job.

Jun started sailing as a Steward on board the Arnold Maersk of A P Moller-Maersk in 2005. Prior to that, he served as one of the “utility boys” in the Danish company’s manning agency in Manila for 11 months. He recalled his awful experiences where he was shouted at and bullied at work in his first ship that hurt and affected him deeply. Jun was crying within, but he couldn’t show it.

According to Jun, even on ships, a toughie exists. “May mga nagtatapang-tapangan talaga na akala mo kung sinong siga na namбу-bully pa. Papakitaan ka ng laki ng katawan na akala mo nanghahamon. (There are really braggarts who thought they’re the toughie who would bully anyone. They would display their muscled arms that’s intimidating to the bone.)

Jun said he ignored them and just let it pass. “It’s not worthy of his time,” he told himself. “Sagilt lang ang gali. Pag pinatulan mo, pareho lang kayong uwu. Kaya pag alam mong nakakapikon iwasan mo na lang,” he says. (Anger is just momentary. If you bite into it, both of you will be sent home. So, if you think he’s annoying, just avoid him.)

To adapt to his new working environment on board, Jun sought an outlet to relieve him from the toxic atmosphere. He found it in the ship’s gym, where he did regular workouts. He says there was no internet yet at the time, making the gym his favourite hangout to release the tension and stress in his mind and body.

He lasted for 10 years in his first shipping company in rating’s roles both in container and tanker shipping. When he signed up to a new employer, Jun moved up to Third Mate where he began his journey as a merchant ship officer.

Furthermore, the Junior Officer finished two contracts on passenger Ro-Ro ships. He followed it up with a decision to shift into chemical tanker tonnage which he began to like.

Jun believes he can still go further in the maritime profession in the next 10 years. He continues: “Buhay barko ay hindi macani. Andyan ang kawalan ng sapat na tulog dahil walang pinipiling oras kung kelan ka gigisingin ng trabaho. Hindi ka puedeng humindi dahil kailangan.” (Life at sea is not that easy. There are sleepless nights since work chooses no time when you have to get up)
but he said the profession has contributed greatly to his family. He can provide for the family’s financial needs – from buying their own homes in Negros and in Cavite, to sending his two grade-school kids to private schools. Jun said he is also able to provide financial help to his siblings.

Life at sea is not that easy. There are sleepless nights since work chooses no time when you have to get up and do the job. You can’t say ‘no’ because you need to do it.

Seafaring has developed his knowledge and skills in the profession. From ratings, he became an officer in 2016. He already possesses his Second Officer ticket and ready to get promoted in his next ship.

The 37-year-old plans to sit for his Chief Officer exam after disembarking from his upcoming contract. He believes he can ascend to the C/O role by the age of 50.

“Huwag lang tiligil sa pag-aaral para maabot ang gusto mo,” (Just don’t stop learning to get what you want), reminding himself of his plan.

Jun wants to save further for the future. “Mas mabuti kung makakapag retro ako ng mas and do the job. You can’t say ‘no’ because you need to do it.)

It’s his dream to be a maritime professional. Jun finished his BS Marine Transportation at Midway Maritime Transportation in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Viscaya in 2002.

“Pero nang nasa maritime school pa ako hindi sumagi sa isip ko na mahirap ang buhay barko. Ang alam ko lang malaki ang kita at dolyar. Pero mahirap pala,” he admitted. (But when I was still at school it didn’t enter my mind that life on board was hard. All I knew is that I would earn big bucks.)

maaga para makasama kung mili ang pamilya ko. Para na ring masabi ng mga anak ko na may tatay pala sila. Napakahirap talaga ng palaging malayo sa kanila,” Jun concludes. (It’s better if I could retire early on, so I can be with my family again. So my children can say that they really have a father. It’s really hard to be away from them.)
As a starting marine engine officer, Mary-Ai Gomera is full of expectations in her career—afloat and ashore.

Yet, she seems to have prepared for all of its eventualities especially for a woman wishing to put a mark in the profession that is dominated by men. Mary-Ai, or “Ai-Ai” as friends call her, appears to be doing well after finishing the first few contracts with her current shipowner.

Just after a recent vacation from an Italian-owned ship, Ai-Ai flew to Japan to join her next ship last July. This time she sailed on another bulk carrier, the 76,596 DWT Federica Prima that belongs to Naples-based owner Augustea Techno-ships.

Ai-Ai started in the shipping company as an engine cadet and got promoted to become a Wiper after six months during her 10-months on board one of its Capesize vessels. She said she easily adjusted to the work onboard after familiarising herself with her role in the engine department, especially among generator sets as a watch officer.

Prior to working overseas, Ai-Ai started sailing as a cadet for a year in 2009 in the domestic trade on board the general cargo ship Lake Sampaloc, while finishing her BS Marine Engineering course at the Zamboanga State College of Marine Science and Technology.

“It was difficult but exciting to have the first taste of working at sea,” Ai-Ai said. Their ship was loading coal from Semirara mines in Antique and discharging them to Batangas for the power generation project of the DMCI group, which also owned the vessel.

She did not quickly land on an oceangoing ship after completing her cadetship in college. However, Ai-Ai initially found an office job in a manning agency as a recruitment officer, where she would do the primary screenings such as checking of documents submitted by applicants. She stayed in her shore job for three years and decided to sit for the Marine Board exam for OIC Fourth Engineer license.

Ai-Ai shares it was her dream to be a maritime professional. She chose a maritime course in college and got excited when she learned that she would be boarding a ship. Though nobody motivated her
to become a seafarer – whether a 
close relative or someone else who 
pushed her to pursue the career 
at sea – she could imagine herself 
being one of the engineers on 
board. “I just made up my mind for 
it and prepared whatever tough job 
is in store for me,” Ai-Ai said.

On board, Ai-Ai said she set her 
limitations between professional 
and personal matters while at work 
to keep away from any problem. “So 
far wala namang nagpapasaya 
on problema (I haven’t encountered 
any issue or problem) while at work. 
Aam na kung hanggang saan lang 
sila at ako sa kanila (I know the 
confines of what they are to me 
and I to them) when it comes to 
interacting with my co-workers.”

She also shared that she never 
experienced getting bullied or 
harassed at work that normally 
happens among female officers. 
Ai-Ai continued, “Sometimes, for 
instance, when somebody tells a 
“green joke” (lewd and sex-related 
joke) as a prelude to something 
else, I would just ride on the joke,” 
she quipped.

Ai-Ai said there were some who 
attempted to make fun of her, but 
she was always able to put them 
in their place. “Even if they start to 
bully me, nasasakyan ko agad ang 
gusto nila. Ibinabalik ko kaagad sa

Ai-Ai has been 
working with full 
Filipino crew since 
she started work 
on Augusteas’s fleet. 
She points out that 
“pakisama” or going 
along is the key to 
a good working 
relationship even if 
she’s always the only 
female on board.

As a female officer, 
gender was never 
a hindrance for Ai- 
Ai’s goal to move 
up in her career. 
“They’ve been more threatened or 
intimidated by me than I am,” Ai-Ai 
relates, saying she’s been more 
aggressive to push a male co- 
worker to complete their tasks while 
working alongside with them.

As a bread winner, Ai-Ai is able 
to provide for the family well. She 
sent her two siblings to school and 
started to save. “Seafaring has made 
me strong too,” she said.

Next year she plans to take the 
Marine Board exam for her Second 
Engineer ticket. She has secured 
an IMO 6.09 training course for 
instructors training that will be a 
step to an alternative job to teach in 
a maritime training school.

She said she was invited by her 
alma mater in Zamboanga State to 
teach at its Maritime Department. 
But Ai-Ai thinks it is not yet the 
right time to engage in any assignment 
ashore. “(I) still set my sea service 
priorities to achieve my goal before 
anything else,” she said.

According to Ai-Ai, she plans to 
reach the peak of her career to be a 
Chief Engineer. She is giving herself 
five years to achieve it. The 27-year-
old has never had a boyfriend since 
she started working. It is not her 
priority as of now, since she wants 
to invest more time and experience 
in the job that she has chosen.
Michaelangelo Alvarez, 2nd Officer: Done with the pain of longing for loved ones

He can still work on board ships for a few more years, but Michaelangelo Alvarez opted to be with his family and to help his wife manage their business.

Though the 55-year-old Second Officer admits that working on oceangoing ships is a financially rewarding job, the pain of separation from his loved ones is what he can’t stand any longer. Michaelangelo, or “Miko” for short, said he is done with all the longing for his family. “Since I’ve been on the job for almost 30 years, I now want to be with them,” he said.

Since I’ve been on the job for almost 30 years, I now want to be with them.

The truth is, his employer is still trying to convince him to work, but Mike is firm with his decision to retire from seafaring for good. “Dito kahit hindi ganun kalaki ang kita, kasabay ko naman ang pamilya ko sa pagkain. Nakakapamasayai kami kahit kelan. Iba ang happiness kung kasama mo sila,” he says. (Although I don’t earn that much here, I can join with my family over dinner. We can stroll around anytime. I feel a different kind of happiness being with them.)

Mike missed his family a lot. He said he did not see his kids grow up over the years. “Yung unang gapang nito; pag-uwi ko, nagsalita na. Yung mga wonderful moments na wala ako,” he relates, referring to the stages that he missed out while his children were growing up. “Their first crawling over; and when I came home they’re already talking. In those wonderful moments, I was not around.”

He continued, if he will join his next ship, he might not even witness his children’s wedding. His three children are now in college and in secondary school.

Mike has been a veteran maritime professional. He started sailing in 1987 when he joined in one of the ships of the now-defunct AP Madrigal Steamship Company. He drifted to the maritime profession after college when he finished a nautical science course at the Philippine Maritime Institute (PMI) in Manila.

When he was younger, he wanted to take architecture, but his father dissuaded him since they could not afford the tuition fee. Mike found a much cheaper course, which was the BS in Maritime Transportation at PMI where he graduated in 1985. Upon graduation, he spent his apprenticeship in the domestic trade on board an Abottiz Concarrier vessel for a year.

Prior to embarking aboard overseas ship, Mike worked first in a land-based Japanese agri-industrial supplier company, Kubota Philippines, as a helper mechanic.
He became one of those in the assembly line that unwrapped and released packed machineries like tractors from bulky crates before they get ready to operate.

Mike said the Gulf War in the early 1990s left many seafarers jobless, where he moved up from Cadet to Ordinary Seaman. What followed was a continuous working contracts with different marine employers. He stayed longer with Swedish shipowners such as Wallenius and Transwood where he specialised on Ro-Ro ships. As a Junior Officer, he learned a lot among Swedish officers who, he says, are friendly to work with. "They are one of the best people to work with. They are not suspicious, they know your capability and have trust in your job," he says.

Mike climbed to Second Officer in 1996. Three years thereafter while in Swedish-flagged ships, Mike stayed in the same role as it was the highest rank obtainable to most of the fleet’s foreign nationals. Senior management posts belong to the Swedes, he said.

Seafaring brought a lot of help to Mike. "First of all, it has uplifted our status of living. Financially, it has supported my children for their studies in private schools. We were able to have our own house,"

He admired his Swedish co-workers for their helpfulness. In his 18 years of good working relationships with them, Mike only has praises for his Swedish colleagues: "They will even teach you the best way [on the job]. You only need to ask if you don’t know how to do it. They’re always open to accommodate your questions on the job."

Swedish owners provide them with benefits, such as social security. "Mealingayo ka mag-ingat at magsumikap sa trabaho. (You’ll get to entice to work safely and hardly as well). And most owners were very fair in dealing with their employees," he said.

Mike got employed in one of the AP Maersk ships on a regular Philippines-United States run, including himself. "Taghirap ang sakay noon dahil sa Gulf War kaya ang tagal kong tambay. Pero nakatulong ang experience ko sa lupa, gaya ng hirap at iba pang aspeto sa pagtatrabaho. (It was difficult to find work overseas due to the Gulf War so I was left hanging around for a while.)"

He has also acquired a small farm with fruit-bearing trees like rambutan and lanzones in Laguna, where his family settled in. He now raises turkey, pig, duck and chicken at the farm.

According to Mike, the Maritime profession is one of the best careers. "You only have to develop yourself through continuous education. Despite [the existence of] different types of ships with different system, one has to deal with the same procedure.”
Lauro Pacite, Chief Officer: Diverting his course from a planned career path

He planned a career path that would guide him to the course of a successful maritime professional. The plan had projected him to be a Master Mariner by the age of 35, at least, and to retire at 50.

But when the young Lauro Pacite started sailing on board, the twist and turn in his story accidentally diverted and derailed his journey from his planned career path. Lauro, or “Larry” to friends, conceded to having untimely lowered his sails and blown them to bloody rags in a nearby shore where distractions abound. He seemed to have run aground gripping the rope onto clambering his way up the professional ladder.

“Bata pa ako nang maging opisyal pero nai-delay sa pag akyat patungo sa pagtaas ng ranggo,” Larry says. (I was still young when I started as a ship officer, but got delayed hitting up the ranks.) When he became a Third Officer that’s when the plan apparently snapped.

Larry admits he used to spend most of his time with friends whenever he disembarked for a vacation. He would go out with them on a drinking spree. “May grupo ako noon. Pagbaba ko ng baryo, good time lang kami, pasok. sa mga beer house, minsan magdamagang inuman,” relates Larry. (I had a group then. Whenever I disembarked, we would go to beer joints to drink, sometimes till sunup.)

He said he didn’t know any better. Before he knew it, Larry had squandered all his time and money ashore like a “one-day millionaire” and splurged on the wrong things. As time went by, he almost forgot that he needed to review and sit for the Marine Board exam to upgrade his rank as a merchant ship officer.

He performed and stayed in his Third Mate role for nine years before deciding again to take the Marine Board exam for his Second Mate ticket. After 11 long years as Second Officer, he sought to level up to a Chief Officer that he is now. But Larry says he doesn’t regret what happened because his experience led him he’s been in the company to people he considers his “true friends”. He confides: “Hindi ko naman pinagsisihan ang mga nangyari, dahil nang nangangailangan ako, sila rin ang tumulong sa akin. Hanggang ngayon nagsasamasama pa rin kami at nagtutulungan.” (I did not regret what happened since they were the ones who helped me when I was running for help.)

Larry started sailing in December of 1978 on board a domestic ship as a cadet for nine months. He recalls getting on an oceangoing ship of Northern Lines, a Philippine-based
company, which had a ship on a regular run to the Philippines and United States that traded sugar as its main cargo for two years.

"I did not regret what happened since they were the ones who helped me when I was running for help."

Larry was very excited when he boarded his first ship overseas. "You would really feel like a true seaman. It means the start of my stable life. Hindi na aasa sa magulang na makakapagbigay pa. (I no longer have to rely on my parents and I can even provide for them too.)"

Though he never found it physically difficult working on board any ship, the hard part he encountered was loneliness, especially when his father died in 1992.

Larry’s ship was sailing from Singapore to Nova Scotia in Canada when the bad news about his father came. However, his Indian captain did not inform him. He later learned of his father’s passing on the ship’s return voyage from that Atlantic Maritime region to Singapore when he called up to hear something from home.

Larry got devastated and could not perform his tasks when he heard of the bad news. Right then and there he confronted the Captain for hiding the information on his father. He learned that the Captain intentionally kept the bad news from him as it would cripple the ship’s complement once Larry, then the ship’s Third Officer, went home.

While their ship was about to depart for its next port, he asked the help of a Singaporean harbour pilot, who had just boarded their ship, about his problem. And upon learning his dilemma, the pilot refused to go up the bridge to undock, and instead summoned the Captain down to tackle the problem facing Larry, who was then shedding tears.

Through the pilot meddling, Larry was allowed to disembark after some discussion on his problem. He dashed his way to the airport for a flight to Manila to pay his last respect to his beloved father whose funeral had to be delayed in wait for him.

The maritime profession was not in Larry’s job roadmap. He says Civil Engineering was the way forward for his choice of a career when he entered college. However, the high cost of tuition fees, which his parents couldn’t afford, prevented Larry to pursue what he wanted.

The freshman found a cheaper one in Nautical Science at Visayas Maritime Academy (VMA) at his hometown in Bacolod where he graduated in the mid-1970s. Seamanship then was the course of role any further as he has rather tinkered on the road to retirement. "Hindi ko na minimithing magamit ang Master's licence ko, pero at least naabot ko ang [maging] Master. (I don’t hope for my sea service as a Master Mariner anymore, but at least I fulfilled my goal to be one).

Larry plans to board his last ship, perhaps from his current owner where he has been tentatively scheduled to sign-on in August this year.
IKAW NA KAYA ANG SUSUNOD NA MILYONARYO?

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JOIN NOW!
SMOU DONATION. AMOSUP President Dr Conrado Oca receives a donation worth $100,000 (PhP5.3 million) from the Singapore Maritime Officers Union (SMOU) to support the operation of the union’s newly-built hospital extension, the South Wing Building. SMOU general secretary Mary Lieu handed the mock cheque (pictured) to Dr Oca at the AMOSP Seamen’s Centre last 27 July 2018.

RESCUED FISHERS. A team aboard a Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) vessel assists one of the six fishermen disembarking (pictured right) from the ship that rescued them after their fishing boat was hit by a passing ship. The incident occurred due to restricted visibility caused by heavy rain along Mindoro Strait last 09 June. The Hongkong-flagged bulk carrier KSL Seoul, skippered by Capt Oliver Wendell Capuli, was transiting the strait when it sighted and eventually rescued the distressed fishermen. After the bulker’s coordination with PCG, its BRP Cape San Agustin (pictured left) was immediately dispatched to the area, 12 nm off Bayacas, Lubang Island to ferry the fishermen. The PCG team provided medical attention to the rescued fishermen while underway back to Manila HQ for proper disposition. (Photo: PCG and KSL Seoul)
BBF’s Capt Gregorio Oca’s Achievement Award goes to pillar in PH manning, seafaring

Eduardo Manese’s leadership spearheaded initiatives towards manpower development to upgrade skills and competencies of Filipino seafarers through proper education and training in the manning and seafaring industry. An outstanding and respectable leader, his efforts, passion and dedication to promote, protect and constantly improve the industry, echoed across all organisations engaged in the overseas shipping trade or maritime-related business both in the Philippines and abroad.

Mr Manese’s leadership spearheaded initiatives towards manpower development to upgrade skills and competencies and ensured that their interests are well represented and protected. His 57 years (and counting) in the manning and shipping industry was dedicated to managing and leading organisations such as the Magsaysay Inc and Affiliates, Joint Ship Manning Group (JSMG), Filipino Association for Mariners’ Employment (FAME), Filipino Shipowners’ Association (FSA), Federation of Asean Shipowners’ Association (FASA) and Asean Shipowners’ Association (ASA).

“An outstanding and respectable leader, his efforts, passion and dedication to promote, protect and constantly improve the industry, echoed across all organisations engaged in the overseas shipping trade or maritime-related business both in the Philippines and abroad.”

In the awarding ceremonies held last 07 June 2018 at the Philippine International Convention Centre, the BBF Awards body cited the following tribute to Mr Manese:

“Mr Eduardo U Manese is one of the pillars of the Philippine manning and seafaring industry. He took active participation in international maritime regulations and collective agreements as well as government affairs that affect the welfare of Filipino seafarers and the industry. He founded the Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC) that is composed of 60 manning companies that provide over 30,000 Filipino officers and ratings every year to Japanese-controlled vessels. His leadership...”

Ed-Manese with immediate members of his family
united the industry to promote a common goal: protect and promote the Filipino seafarers that steered the industry to where it is now, a major source of competent maritime manpower.

His leadership extends beyond management prowess. His selfless efforts include securing necessary support and finding for the following: a) Computerized walk-in examination system of the Philippines’ Professional Regulation Commission, which established on-line licensure examination for seafarers; b) Maritime assessment programme for nationwide simultaneous examination for maritime students; c) Campus expansion for the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific; d) Acquisition of state-of-the-art cargo bridge and engine simulations for diesel, crude, chemical type of vessel accessible to all seafarers joining a Japanese-controlled vessel. He organised events to unite all the organisations to discuss the status, plans and on-going efforts of the leaders of the Philippine and manning industry.

Despite all the successes and accolades, EUM as he is fondly called by colleagues and staff, stayed humble, down to earth and very approachable. He often chose to mix with employees during company events and made sure to initiate personal conversations promoting the sense of ‘family’ relationship within the organisation.

A leader, colleague a visionary... truly worthy of recognition and emulation.”

Manese’s acceptance piece: OFW’s stories of praise, success, bravery and resilience

I humbly accept this award on behalf of the thousands of OFWs. I also share this award with my colleagues in the industry who tirelessly work for the advancement of the welfare and the well-being of our OFWs. Thank you for your support.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Bagong Bayani Foundation Board of Trustees for this honor. They have been in the forefront in pushing for the primary purposes for which the Foundation was established - to promote recognition and appreciation of the role of the Filipino overseas workers in the Philippine society and economy, to foster high standards of responsibility, efficiency and integrity among the overseas workers and to promote the welfare of OFWs.

This award is doubly meaningful to me personally being one of the late Capt Gregorio Oca’s initiatives to protect the interests of our OFWs. He had devoted most of his efforts for them – they are now recognized to be competent, hardworking and honorable in their work abroad on various vessels trading worldwide and the numerous countries they are deployed to.

Throughout my work in the industry, I witnessed quite a lot in our OFWs – there were stories of praise, success, bravery and resilience, all of which made our OFWs worthy of the title “Bagong Bayani.”

I look forward to more accomplishments and success in our industry for the benefit of our country as a whole. Thank you very much. Mabuhay tayong lahat!" SE
Positibong Marino Phils: A year of education, employment concerns

It’s quite a busy year for a newly-founded organisation struggling for its advocacies to educate seafarers and arrest the rise of HIV AIDS cases among their ranks. PMPI president Jebsen Rederri Gamido gives an assessment of the NGO’s accomplishments in celebration of its first founding anniversary.

Sending a number of HIV/AIDS-positive seafarers back to work on board ships, helping many of their kind to open up about their HIV condition, educating maritime cadets on the hazards of the disease, and gradually put shipping employers to end discrimination in employing shipboard personnel who have been tested HIV positive.

These are some of the major accomplishments that a group of Filipino seafarers made for their cause just over a year in the prevention of, if not arresting, the spread of HIV AIDS in their ranks.

Celebrating its first year anniversary last 23 July 2018, Positibong Marino Philippines Inc (PMPI) recounted the efforts to expand its reach to various ship manning companies for HIV AIDS education among officers and crewmembers. PMPI president Jebsen Rederri Gamido said the NGO initially focused on education, as it anchors his belief on the idea that "an ounce of prevention is better than cure."

PMPI initially partnered with one of the leading manning and training entities Magsaysay Maritime Corp and Magsaysay Institute of Shipping for the HIV education of their seafarers and cadets, respectively.

Spreading the advocacy

A torrent of exposures concerning HIV awareness also came in. Part of spreading the advocacy’s reach included Jebsen’s TV and press interviews. He also had to meet anti-HIV advocate, former Miss Universe Pia Wurtzbach, whose encounter also led to a publicity in one of the major dailies.

In maritime events such as the international Day of the Seafarer, PMPI had to bring forth and implant the NGO’s presence, putting up booth and distributing fliers to reach out with fellow seafarers. Such exposures have resulted in inquiries for help-seekers among seafarers having HIV AIDS.

On the education side, Jebsen said he had to go back to his alma mater, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific, carrying out talks with the cadets about the dreaded disease. He began teaching students of other schools too, who are embarking on their training on board the local ferries of 2GO Shipping.

He also has been invited in cruise seminar that had integrated a session on HIV AIDS education.

Jebsen said he is proud that each time an HIV seminar was held, participants would find the session to be their “favourite part. It’s a good sign, whereas before, many would not even talk about condoms and other things associated with HIV AIDS,” he said, stressing that these things are now being tackled in public.

“We just have to keep on spreading the word. The more we talk about HIV, the more we normalise to put it under the light. The subject has long been wrapped in darkness that it robs people [of their existence] the wrong way,” according to Jebsen.

The PMPI chief and his army of volunteers are looking forward to expand their PDOS (pre-departure orientation seminar) about HIV.
As we are aware, Positibong Marino Philippines Inc (PMPI) is dedicated and committed to help seafarers face the challenges of having a severe health disorder - it is its vision to see the world without HIV/AIDS infected seafarers and a maritime industry free from the stigma and discrimination after having been diagnosed with the ailment. So in behalf of the general membership of AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF, I extend our sincerest congratulations to PMPI and its prime movers.

Members of this year-old network of HIV positive seafarers now have a strong voice to fight for their rights for equal opportunity for all at sea.

AMOSUP has always been a champion of fair and equal opportunities for our seafarers and such spirit has always been in the core of our existence as a union.

As social partners, it is good to have a unified voice in addressing the attendant concerns and face the challenges together with our seafarers suffering from the ailment. Several treatment hubs were also visited to create links with individuals who want to avail of assistance from the organisation. I am hopeful that PMPI will continuously expand its nationwide reach for the coming years with the help of all industry social partners.

I have been informed that as of July this year, 39 PLHIV seafarers were directly or indirectly assisted by Positibong Marino to find employment onboard. The HIV and AIDS stigma still remain as a hindrance for continuous employment for those infected seafarers. However, with a strong and committed stand to remove the stigma and discrimination, employment opportunities for those seafarers are now provided by several manning agencies.

To name a few, the companies with good non-discriminatory and work accommodation policies for PLHIV seafarers include Magsaysay, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, OSM, Sea Power, Marlow Navigation, Maersk Line and Ultra Ship.

May I also extol PMPI for successfully partnering with Magsaysay Maritime for the conduct of Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars under the Occupational Health Module 4 on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. Future PDOS agreements with RCCL, Maersk, CF Sharp are in the pipeline and expected to commence once training for volunteers is completed. PMPI has been successful in gathering a number of individuals from various industries to participate and volunteer for the organisation’s cause. To date, it has more than a hundred willing volunteers.

The union finds PMPI’s efforts to be very inspiring, laudable and perfect examples to emulate.
AIDS, which they want to carry out to more shipping and manning companies.

This NGO has a large vision. It has recognised the importance of support and partnership from major players such as the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and AMOSUP through its Seamen's hospital and the union's legal department. The legal department has made those HIV-positive seafarers to pursue their rights to resume shipboard employment, he said.

**Having their jobs back**

Employment has been one of the leading highlights of PMPI's first year of operation. It has directly or indirectly secured 39 HIV-positive seafarers to have their jobs back. Seafarers who are in HIV condition have suffered the stigma and discrimination brought about by the disease.

And the campaign has somewhat helped employers reverse such an unwanted hiring policy. Shipmanagers and crewing agencies that admitted crewmembers with HIV condition include Magsaysay Maritime, Maersk Line, Marlow Navigation, OSM, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, Sea Power and Ultra Ship. These companies are said to have maintained a firm policy against discrimination when it comes to seafarers who have the HIV condition but fit to work.

PMPI's first year also saw about 500 mariners who have approached for help about their HIV-related concerns.

Jebson said PMPI can be likened to a community. Those who need help can go to their place where they can voice out their concerns about their condition. “It is a safe space for those people. It is important that they can be empowered so that they can still pursue their career” as maritime professionals, he said.

During the anniversary celebration at the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, PMPI received messages of support from various leaders of the seafaring community. They include those of ITF inspectorate coordinator Steve Trowsdale, ITF global coordinator for health and wellness, Dr Asif Altaf, AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca, Seamen’s Hospital Manila director Dr Alejandro Ortigas, Marlon Ronco of Magsaysay Maritime, and AMOSUP legal department head Emmanuel Pertido.

Government officials who also delivered message of support were OWWA administrator Hans Cadac, MARINA Planning and Policy chief Lui Delos Santos (representing administrator Leonardo Guerrero), and DOH head of the National AIDS/STI Prevention and Control Program Dr Gerard Bolisay.

**Proud of facilitating its formation**

ITF inspectorate coordinator Steve Trowsdale recalls Positibong Marino’s rise

I recall that it was three years ago that we received an email into the ITF seafarers support team from a young Filipino seafarer looking for support and assistance. And it was perfect timing because shortly after receiving the email, my colleague Asif Altaf and I were in Manila.

So, we decided to meet him and show him just what the ITF is all about. I think we impressed him as we splashed out on a glass of mango juice in the lobby of our hotel.

The young seafarer was of course our very good friend Jebson, who is now the president of Positibong Marino Philippines Inc or better known to us as PMPI. Well done Jebson.

The ITF exists to defend the rights of transport workers globally, whether they work on road, rail, air or sea, trying to ensure that they have decent working conditions. But working in the transport industry is often dangerous and stressful, and the ITF is also committed to trying to ensure workers wellbeing and that ultimately, they lead healthy and happy lives.

There is still a great deal of stigma and discrimination around HIV/AIDS, and many seafarers are denied jobs on board because they are HIV positive, although they look fit and healthy. The ITF is committed to breaking the silence, the taboos and the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS, which with the good quality anti retro viral drugs is like any other chronic disease.

The ITF believes the best way to challenge stigma and discrimination is to raise the voice of the people who are facing this, especially when looking for jobs. From the humble beginning of meeting Jebson, we now have PMPI, the only organisation in the global ITF family who are dedicated to defend the rights of HIV positive Filipino seafarers.

The ITF is proud to have facilitated the formation of PMPI, but I would also like to acknowledge, the technical, legal and logistical support of Dr Conrado Oca and AMOSUP.

Finally, I want to extend the ITF’s thanks and respect to everyone concerned at PMPI for having the courage and determination to stand up and raise their voices. The ITF is with you.
AMOSUP Cebu’s summer clinic gets their dependents’ children inspired

Apart from providing physical improvement for the participants, this yearly clinic also enhances their behaviour through the integration of values in the sports they’ve chosen. Summer clinic students Isabel Luard and Kent Dominique Fernandez, shares key highlights of their activities at the Sixth Capt Gregorio Oca’s Summer Camp.

It’s that time of the year again where union members’ dependents in Cebu showcase their hidden talents in athletics and music through workshops, which AMOSUP held yearly in the past. The Sixth Captain Gregorio S Oca’s Summer Clinic unsurprisingly witnessed the display of such skills and abilities during the event, which opened last 10 April 2018.

The opening of the summer clinic, which consisted of various activities, did not only reunite old friends, but also formed new bonds among the participants. The blast of laughter and smiles on their faces filled the AMOSUP Cebu Sports Complex, the summer clinic’s venue of activities like basketball, badminton, guitar lessons and swimming class. Dance lessons for children were also held for them to enjoy.

Apart from providing physical improvement for the participants, this yearly clinic also aims to enhance their behaviour through the integration of values in the sports they’ve chosen.

Some of the advantages the summer clinic provides to the members’ children include:

- Improvement in social skills. It lets the kids talk to each other personally - not on mobile phones - to keep them away from their gadgets for videogames and Facebook. There were meets-up of session classes that allow the kids to know each other. The team dance class and their counterparts in basketball lesson held their warm-ups together, allowing the two groups share their exercises and socialise with each other before proceeding to their respective session classes.
- Making students diligent and hardworking. With dedicated coaches, the kids being trained can fully understand the lessons being instructed of them, letting them perform diligently and work on their assigned tasks. For that, parents never worry about their child getting disobedient.
- Enhancing their mental and physical abilities. They are challenged by the tasks the coaches want them to learn, improving the skill they’ve been focussing on.
- Lastly, learning to be self-reliant. With this, campers get to be independent and their self-confidence enhanced.

Inspiration and performances

During the opening ceremony, the summer campers gathered to meet and greet with their coaches. Former camper Aldrin John Prudencio, who is now a varsity basketball player at Don Bosco Technical College, delivered...
an inspirational talk. He said his coaches inspired and never gave up on him in times he needed them most.

“They were like my angels when I was at the rock bottom of my life. They taught me to always aim high but keep your feet on the ground,” said Aldrin. This seems to have touched the heart of the summer campers to strive hard like Aldrin as they worked out through the aid of their second parents at the camp. The camp introduced the house rules called COACH, which stands for courtesy, observe, assertive, cleanliness, coachable at all times, and humility. And the campers listened intently throughout their sessions.

Members of the guitar class performed a recital at the AMOSUP Cebu Seamen’s Hospital. The crowd enjoyed and jammed with the songs played by the class, with singers from the summer camp who made the atmosphere livelier. The teens and kids from the dancing classes also performed their own numbers at the hospital. Doctors, nurses and patients from different floors went out of their rooms to watch. Overall, the two classes left the building with joy and made the crowd asking for more.

**Culminating part**

The summer clinic had its closing activity in the morning of 02 June 2018. Everyone had a great time with the games they played especially the skills showed by the top three basketball players whose parents joined along to shoot. Kids and parents enjoyed the sack race and hula hoop too. So much fun and entertainment filled the atmosphere of the camp that had been matched with delectable food for lunch prepared by the dear parents. The food did make everyone delighted.

In the afternoon, the AMOSUP dance class hosted the culminating programme. The Union’s Cebu Hospital Director, Dr Teodosio Alcantara, delivered his closing remarks that inspired the students who undeniably did their best in the summer camp. The guitar class performed a special number while members of the basketball class cheered them on.

The summer campers received their certificates after finishing their memorable experiences in the summer camp. [5]
C.O.A.C.H.
Courtesy, Observe, Assertive, Cleanliness, Coachable at all times, and Humility
“With it, there is no way you would want to quit in the middle of the race.”

AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Director Dr. George File, on the arduous training regime one goes through for the discipline and confidence to achieve his Ironman goal.

“These are wages that were denied to seafarers by some shipowners who consider them to be no more than modern day’s slaves.”

ITF Inspectorate Coordinator Steve Trovstale, on millions of dollars of unpaid earnings to seafarers the International Transport Workers Federation recovers yearly.

“There are still many things that need to be done, and research to improve clinical outcomes is the way to go.”

Seamen’s Hospital Oncology Section Chair Dr. Agnes Gorgias, on the need to arrest the increasing incidence of cancer nationwide during her section’s dedication in memory of a cancer patient herself.

“Had the refugees attempted, they could have easily done so.”

KC Line Shipmaster Augusto Buena Ventura, on his “fear of migrating” possible takeover of the ship while underway to discharge them.

“It will be a hallmark of courage and hope for our beloved seafarers and their families who are battling cancer.”

AMOSUP President Dr. Conrado Oca, on the newly-opened Nipa Espejo Allen Oncology Ward at Seamen’s Hospital.

“Seafaring molded me as a better person and developed my character and how to deal with people.”

Second Engineer Monique Arellado, on the profession’s impact to her life.
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