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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.
Seafarers face a lot of risks once they embark on their journey at sea. Apart from the usual bouts of distress and loneliness due to long separation from family and friends, they encounter severe issues that threaten their health. They constantly face risks of disability and even death.

But the type of risk many seafarers dread the most has nothing to do with the actual job they do or the environment they work in. Surprisingly, neither pirate attacks nor seafarers' criminalization reached the top two risks seafarers fear most. In this edition, we present a recent study on the risks and vulnerability seafarers face in their profession.

You will also find how our social partners and maritime unions reacted to the tensions brewing in one of the vital waterways in the Gulf following recent incidents in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. Though the discussions between employers and unions were not easy, they took the time to designate the risk area and identify ways to address the concerns of our seafarers whose ships transit in the Strait.

In light of the tensions in that region, we take a look into an analysis of a computer-based simulation that modelled credible anti-ship missiles and other weapons. You will learn the vulnerability of a generic tanker including blast-related fatalities and injuries that crews can possibly sustain as analyzed in the study through tech-simulations.

Another issue confronted by seafarers is fair job opportunity for those with HIV, which we support. A recent outdoor exhibit intends to help spread awareness and information about the medical condition and how the maritime community can contribute to lessen the stigma and discrimination.

Likewise, we tackle a new 24-hour counselling service that aims to improve the mental health of seafarers. This newly launched service hopes to reduce seafarer suicides, raise awareness of mental health and gender, and equip participants with self-help coping mechanisms to address their own distress and/or help them offer support to others on board.

At sea, we highlight the occurrence of frequently sounding bridge warnings, especially the false ones. You will know how this affects the watchkeepers and what stakeholders can do to address seafarers' concerns in developing better ways of communicating bridge warnings.

Moreover, we focus on ship berthing incidents that have been common at ports worldwide. A risk assessment director reveals how human interaction and many incidents have their root cause and how most accidents happen when ships come calling at ports.

Finally, we continue our series of stories among our members. Now in its 10th part, the segment comes with narratives that vary with specks of shortcomings, struggles and successes of our ship officers in pursuit of triumph in their profession.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado F Oca

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Seafarers sailing far and wide have surely seen some seabird species that can stay all across the open sea for months without ever touching land. Yet unlike sailing ships, the albatross can maintain its course whether on cloudy or clear weather on their journey. Scientists believe it has some kind of magnetic reckoning system that allows it to fix its positions in accord to the earth’s magnetic fields.

For albatrosses, the land is just an inconvenient necessity for breeding, according to conservationist and author Carl Safina. Albatrosses comb the oceans for breakfast and touch shore only when it involves sex, Safina once wrote in the National Geographic. For the shy ones, the avian creatures annually migrate 10,000km between Australia and Africa. The British Antarctic Survey has monitored by GPS loggers a pack of grey-headed albatross, finding three going around the world twice all in an easterly direction and one flying 22,000km in 46 days.

Those who have sailed into the southern hemisphere could find the albatross breeding colonies. Many of them are in the Crozet Islands in the Indian Ocean, on South Georgia in the South Atlantic Ocean and in New Zealand’s Campbell, Chatham and Snares islands. In the northern hemisphere, the largest colonies can be seen on a series of an uninhabited island near Midway west of Hawaii, a few islands near Japan, the Galapagos and some islands in the North Pacific.

Albatrosses have followed fishing vessels and whaling ships for food. In harbours or at mid-ocean, many sailors on merchant ships have come across the birds both in pesky and friendly encounters. The wandering seabirds, which used to drop by the ship for handouts, can serve the much-needed stress-reliever for bird-watching. On good days while at anchor, seafarers who have acquired the addictive pastime of bird-watching enjoy the birds’ presence by either feeding them on deck or admiring their unending roller-coaster glide to a nearby island or port.

For travellers ashore, the visits to albatross colonies have become a popular tourist attraction. The Dunedin colony in New Zealand, for instance, attracts 40,000 visitors a year, where the Royal Albatross Centre operates viewing tours.
Being followed by an albatross at sea is generally a sign of good luck, according to some. However, the flock’s prolonged presence could also mean bad news. A shipmaster, whose vessel stayed for days on anchor, lamented he found his main deck splattered with the seabirds white poop when his ship got stuck in the harbour frequented by the birds. The poop-dirt sticks, which takes time to remove. His crew had to use fire hydrants along with soap and brush to wash and purge the pungent fishy odour. But the captain warned his crew not to harm an albatross.

In the olden days, though, sailors usually killed and ate the albatross. British explorer and navigator Captain James Cook reported shooting a bird swimming at sea when he went out with another captain. In Cook’s Log, “We winged it and it got shot into the neck so that we got the bird alive. It proved to be the Quakerbird, which I found to be a kind of Albatross,” the navy captain wrote. “Some of the seamen call them Quaker Birds from their grave colour, the dusky grey ones,” Cook added.

Many seafarers still believe the albatrosses are not supposed to be killed. Today’s mariners subscribe to the notion that killing one would bring a stroke of bad luck. Exalted by the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his Rime of the Ancient Mariner, he said they are the birds of legend. In the Rime, an albatross was shot from a ship and the crew blamed it for the bad change in weather and lack of water to drink. It led the vessel out of the ice jam after being driven out by a storm and eventually reached Antarctic waters: “And a good southerly wind sprung up behind; / The Albatross did follow; / And every day, for food or play, Came to the mariner’s holo!”

But when the weather cleared up and the fog disappeared, the sailors changed their minds. “Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, / That brings the fog and mist.” And so, even if the ship’s crew praised the albatross, the mariner killed the bird. After shooting it, the ship suffered from strong winds and lack of water. The mariner went on to lament: “Ah! Well-a-day! What evil looks / Had from old and young! / Instead of the cross, the Albatross / About my neck was hung.”

So goes the idiom an “albatross around one’s neck,” which refers to a heavy burden someone carries, especially a problem that continually puts one in torment.
Bracing for danger sailing through Hormuz

Seafarers who are subject to an attack in the zone, are entitled to a bonus and doubled death and disability compensation, according to the International Bargaining Forum (IBF)

It's the only sea route to transport cargo from the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf to the rest of the world. Yet the Strait of Hormuz remains at the centre of rising tension in the region that has affected the oil trade.

Shipowners and seafarers concerned have consequently braced for the danger their ships face while in transit to the narrow shipping route, which has been designated a "temporary extended risk zone." This means that seafarers who are subject to an attack in the zone, according to the International Bargaining Forum (IBF), "are entitled to a bonus and doubled death and disability compensation."

The waterway gained the designation following tanker attacks in the Gulf of Oman, including Iran's seizure of the UK-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero in July. The IBF's Warlike Operations Areas Committee (WOAC) came up with the designation as it monitors the risk to shipping in the region. The Swedish-owned Impero, which has a multinational crew, appears to have been detained illegally while transiting the Strait.

The IBF brings together the ITF and maritime employers, including ship owners and managers. The forum was launched with the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC) and International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ), and later expanded by adding Korean Shipowners' Association (KSA).

Speaking at the conclusion of the talks, the Joint Negotiating Group's (JNG) Chairman Captain Koichi Akamine said, "These discussions were never going to be easy. After the initial attacks in the Gulf of Oman in May and June, one may feel the need to act quickly to designate a risk area. However, it is important in such events to step back and assess the real threat to shipping and the most appropriate measures to take. The JNG is confident that it has now introduced a designation which properly addresses concerns by seafarers transiting the Strait."

The IMEC Chairman Capt. Belal Ahmed added, "The Strait of Hormuz is a key shipping route, not just for the oil tankers in the forefront of current media focus, but also, for example, container ships on transit to Jebel Ali and beyond. As an employers' association, it was important for us to reassure seafarers who may be at additional risk in the area. We would urge the responsible parties to expedite the release of the held seafarers."

The ITF Seafarers' Section Chair David Heindel said, "These are trying times for the industry and seafarers in particular, who are simply trying to provide income for their families. While this is a sensitive political issue and today has only affected tankers and potentially British flagged vessels, it was our desire that the IBF show leadership and move quickly to reflect the concerns of the seafarers transiting this region."

"I am pleased that our partners have responded positively to our request to reflect the potential risks that exist for all ships and all seafarers transiting the Strait of Hormuz at this time," Heindel said, adding that "We continue to call for calm in the area and the release of the crew."

The new Extended Risk Zone is defined by the following coordinates but excludes three nautical miles off the main coastlines of the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Iran:

- On the West: A line joining Ra's-e-Dastakan (26°33′N - 55°17′E) to Jazdal Hamra lighthouse (25°44′N - 55°48′E), in the United Arab Emirates (the common limit with the Persian Gulf).

- On the East: A line joining Ra's Limah (25°57′N - 56°29′E), in Oman, eastward to Ra's al Küh (25°48′N - 57°18′E), in Iran (the common limit with the Arabian Sea).

About 25% of the world's oil, nearly 21 million barrels a day, passed through the Strait of Hormuz last year. The US Energy Information Agency says the Strait of Hormuz was the world's busiest sea route for oil in 2016, carrying about 19 million barrels a day - more than the 16 million bpd that went through the Strait of Malacca.
Shipping reacts to Strait of Hormuz tensions

"The seizure of the Stena Impero marks a dramatic intensification in the turmoil in the region. This is the latest in a series of alarming episodes, and again we call for a de-escalation of the heightening tensions in the region. We call on all nations to promote stability, ensure safe passage, and freedom of navigation in international waters throughout the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Oman.”

ITF Seafarers’ Section Chair David Haindel

"Merchant vessels engaged in international trade should not be subject to unlawful seizures or armed attacks. The Strait of Hormuz is an important route for European merchant vessels and we strongly urge EU member states to work with Iranian authorities to de-escalate the situation in order to safeguard this vital passageway.”

European Community Shipowners Association (ECSA) Secretary General Martin Dorsman

"The Strait of Hormuz is the only route in and out of the Gulf, and one of the critical shipping lanes for Asian countries that also connects Europe and Asia. We therefore urge all countries to completely secure the safe passage by respecting the freedom of navigation and the right of innocent passage as enshrined in the UNCLOS, and to push for a complete de-escalation of tensions in the region.”

Asian Shipowners’ Association (ASA) Secretary General Ang Chin Eng

"We are shocked but not surprised by the developments in the Gulf. We have been raising our security concerns with the UK Chamber of Shipping repeatedly over recent weeks. I wrote to the Minister of Defence supporting and encouraging joint naval interventions in response to the heightening tensions in the Gulf. We call on the UK government to urgently engage in diplomatic efforts for the release of the vessel and crew.”

Nautilus International general secretary Mark Dickinson

"Freedom of navigation is vital for global trade and is a fundamental principle of international maritime law. Seafarers and ships must be allowed to operate in safety, and it is simply not acceptable for them to be used as bargaining counters in any way.”

International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Secretary General Guy Platten

"It is both sad and frustrating that once again our seafarers are unwitting participants at the centre of a geo-political situation. The need for all sides to attempt to reconcile any differences is vital to prevent further escalation. We urge everybody to remember that the seafarers on board these vessels are simply innocent civilians of various nationalities, regardless of the flag the ship sails, who are going about their daily duties to keep the world's economy turning. We have people of every nationality and vessels of every flag transiting that crucial sea-lane every day - they are not in any way of a military persuasion and should not be treated as such.”

INTERTANKO Chairman Dr Paolo d’Amico

Sailing Forward
Assessing tanker’s vulnerability to missile attack, other weapons

Through a computer-based simulation, the OCIMF modelled credible anti-ship weaponry that analyses the impact of the violent act on the carrier and crews.

Concerned about increasing attacks against ships from missiles and other weapons, a study has shown the vulnerability of a generic tanker to blast-related fatalities and injuries to seafarers.

An analysis of recent incidents also showed that the stern of the hull is a likely target area of missile attacks, crafts carrying improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and handheld anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs) due to regional conflict, according to the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF). To protect their ships and crew, OCIMF commissioned a study that produced an “information paper” that can be applied to both existing and newbuild tankers.

The study, made in collaboration with the multinational defence company QinetiQ, assessed the vulnerability of a hull of an Aframax (80,000 to 119,000 DWT) tanker to threats such as those experienced in the Red Sea in 2018. This type of vessel was chosen for the study because its hull construction is a common tanker form, the study said.

Through a computer-based simulation, the study modelled credible anti-ship weapons, including an anti-ship missile (ASM) with a fragmenting warhead containing 55kg of explosive, a 300kg TNT WBIED (waterborne improvised explosive device) and a common ATGW.

The ASM and ATGW modelled can cause damage that is considerably more localised. It says that crew injuries are likely and, if the weapon hits an occupied space, such as the bridge, multiple serious injuries and fatalities can be expected.

“The 300kg WBIED modelled can cause widespread damage to hull plates and superstructure due to blast and shock. This is predicted to result in extensive flooding of the internal machinery spaces, particularly the engine room,” the study concluded, adding that it expected blast and shock damage to the propulsion and steering systems and to the electrical power system.

For the crew, risk of minor blast injuries, but no incapacitating injuries or fatalities are expected for the distribution profile modelled. Though, individual escape routes and survival craft are susceptible to blast.

Simulation results

Modelling procedures were set up to explore several locations where a simulated weapon might hit a vessel and the effects of the hit, obtaining the impact on the ship and crew. Some points of impact modelled for anti-ship missiles resulted in fatalities, such as a direct hit to the bridge. For other points of impact, and given the crew distribution profile adopted, the average results showed few casualties.
Crewmembers located in the central stairwell (the secondary muster point for the study) were largely unaffected by the weapon. Blast pressures in the stairwell were approximately 30 to 40 kPa, which is enough to cause injuries.

The study suggests that effective training and awareness of alternative escape routes are vital to crew safety. The simulations predicted few crew casualties from a WBIED attack. However, crewmembers in the machinery control room or even those in the stairwell can experience blast pressures severe enough to cause eardrum rupture. No serious injuries or deaths were predicted for any of the cases assessed.

Experience shows that the crew positioned near doors can also be injured if doors are blown open, but this was not assessed in this study. No crew was modelled below the waterline, but anyone can be considered at risk from flooding. Similarly, no crew was modelled at the waterline, close to the hull on the attack side.

However, blast overpressures of up to 1000 kPa were recorded in the smaller compartments adjacent to the detonation point and any personnel subjected to these levels would be susceptible to severe blast injuries, potentially including death. The study advises to minimise the number of people in the engine room when the vessel is in a high-risk area.

On average, the simulated ATGW caused low levels of casualties. In some cases, such as if the warhead detonates on the bridge wing, fatalities are likely.


What to do for the crew

When operating in areas where threats of anti-ship missiles, anti-tank guided weapons and WBIEDs have been identified, the Oil Companies International Marine Forum study highlights the following points for consideration:

- Mustering the crew at a point other than the citadel (if in the engine room) and providing ballistic protection at this alternative point.
- Securing or removing potentially hazardous material and equipment from crew muster points.
- Providing the crew with additional or specialist firefighting equipment and training.
- Ensuring the crew is familiar with all escape routes.
- Providing body armour and ear defenders.
- Adding structural armouring to high-value exposed locations, such as the bridge.
- Providing additional protection to critical equipment and escape route doors against blast and shock damage against weapon effects.
- Enhancing firefighting and blast suppression systems. For new build vessels, this study highlights:
- Duplacting critical systems as a consideration for future design, including the vessel’s main engine and electrical power generators. This is similar to the duplication of navigational tools and systems that is often already in place on vessels.
- Installing Side Protection Systems (SPSs) to limit hull damage from IED explosions. Future design is influenced by many factors, and this possibility is included as innovative research and development idea for vessel designers to explore feasibility and cost-risk assessment.
Past and present challenges of merchant seafarers transiting warlike areas

This year's attacks on civilian tankers in the Gulf of Oman have brought back memories for many merchant seafarers of working under fire in the Middle East. Thanks to a collaborative life-story project at the Nautilus Mariners' Park retirement estate, we can still learn from the conflict-zone recollections of a late supertanker master. Deborah McPherson reports.

Photo: Norbert Schiller, AFP

Captain David McCaffrey was sleeping on his bunk during a Gulf passage off Qatar when the telephone rang, and a junior's voice said: 'I think we've got visitors, sir.'

The master rushed up to the bridge just before an Iranian Exocet missile hit the Liberian-flagged 236,907-tonne vessel during the height of the Iran-Iraq war in 1985. 'Captain McCaffrey lay for two days injecting himself with morphine before he could be rescued - amazing man,' says Roger Cliffe-Thompson, the man's activities coordinator who helped compile a memoir for Capt McCaffrey at the Mariners' Park Care Home.

The Wirral-born master was 51 at the time of the attack while in anchorage off Qatar, and he vowed never to return to the war zone after that - advising other merchant seafarers to stay away as well, according to a report published in the Glasgow Herald on 19 March 1985.

'I've had enough. I'm bloody well going to retire now. I'm a congenital coward,' Capt McCaffrey told reporters. His discharge book tells a different story, however, and he continued the seafaring life in and out of the Gulf.

Four-and-a-half years later, he suffered injuries to his left elbow, scalp and chest, when the wheelhouse he was in collapsed after being hit by a rocket from an Iranian aircraft. Ten of the crew of 34 were injured and a watchman killed, illustrating some of the dangers of transiting war zones for seafarers in any era.

The incident occurred as the warring sides' targeting of tankers reached a new intensity during a mission of Gulf states to Baghdad to try and end the then 53-month-old conflict.

The Caribbean Breeze was one of three Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) chartered by Kuwait Oil to transfer crude oil from Kuwait to Khor Fakkan in the UAE, where they would transship to Kuwait Oil's own tankers.

Capt McCaffrey told Mr Cliffe-Thompson that during the war the Iranian tactic was to target any oil tanker with a connection to Kuwait that entered the Persian Gulf (also known as the Arabian Gulf).

As the missile struck the bridge, Capt McCaffrey, the second mate and watchman were all severely injured, and a watchman was killed. They were eventually rescued by an American ship, the USS Arthur W Radford, which was operating as a radar picket in the Gulf at the time. Get well cards during his recovery included one from the British Embassy's vice consul at the time which read: 'Sir, many congratulations on surviving the lunacy.'

In later life, Capt McCaffrey came to live at Nautilus Mariners' Park, where Mr Cliffe-Thompson has a role in helping many residents come to terms with depression and isolation after swallowing the anchor. The activities coordinator had the idea of compiling a book commemorating Capt McCaffrey's life after he saw that the former master was becoming depressed.

Officers at the time were mainly from Britain or Pakistan, with Filipino crew. The vessel was used as floating storage for about four months before discharging its first cargo and sailing to Kuwait to unload. That was done without incident, but on its return the vessel was targeted by the Iranian air force using French-built Exocet anti-ship missiles.

As tensions increase again in the Middle East in a different era, the timely reminder of Capt McCaffrey's experiences has been shared in one of the regular newsletters to residents on the estate.

HIV positive: ‘Rising against injustice’

PMPI’s outdoor exhibit serves as a campaign to help spread awareness and information about the disease and how the maritime community can contribute to lessening the stigma and discrimination.

Seafarers in HIV condition have yet again stepped forward through an exhibit as they voiced out their advocacy for fair job opportunities for all.

The campaign entitled ‘Rising Against Injustice,’ was a week-long exhibit Positibong Marino Philippines (PMPI) staged at the AMOSUP premises in July. It was put up to spread awareness on the struggle of HIV-positive seafarers applying for work onboard ships, and how the maritime community can work hand-in-hand to address this issue.

PMPI executive director Jobson Gamido said the group wants to shed light on the reality of injustice to some seafarers. “We want people to get a better understanding on dealing with issues on HIV and their rights and how the general maritime community can contribute to lessening the stigma and discrimination,”

Facilitated by volunteers who interacted with seafarers in the area, the exhibit was joined by models and influencers who aim to help promote the campaign and to educate the audience about HIV/AIDS.

Stakeholders who have actively supported the cause sent their messages during the event.

“Being HIV positive is not a crime, still many seafarers are denied of employment opportunities just because they are HIV positive. HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination is very much around us,” according to Asif Altaf, the ITF Health and Wellbeing Global Coordinator.

Dr Altaf encouraged HIV positive individuals. “I urge them to be strong and work collectively against this injustice and violation of both national and international laws and provisions. The ITF is with PMPI and will be with PMPI along other relevant stakeholders to make sure all seafarers are healthy and happy either onboard ships or onshore,” he said.

AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca in his message said that HIV
positive seafarers work hard to provide for their families. “They have to live their dreams and to have a sense of self-worth and dignity by pursuing their passion, while courageously dealing with the condition,” he stressed.

Dr Oca also emphasized the importance of the maritime community’s support for the cause. “Now, more than ever, is the time for us to rise up in solidarity to support the health and wellbeing of our seafarers. We must empower them and acknowledge that they have rights - rights that must be upheld, protected and respected by all,” Dr Oca added.

ITF maritime coordinator Jacqueline Smith proudly supported PMPI’s determination to eliminate HIV stigma. “Stigma is based on misinformation, fear and denial and creates discrimination and inequality. Together we can help remove the stigma so that all people are treated with dignity and without fear of discrimination,” Ms Smith asserted.

For Steve Trowsdale, the ITF inspectorate coordinator, the denial of a job for a seafarer, because they are HIV positive, is a denial of their basic human right. “It is a denial of a career, the denial to live a decent life and the denial of being able to provide stability for their families. This denial is heartache and huge burden for the seafarers’ family,” he said.

Trowsdale added, that the ITF is committed to working with PMPI to fight all types of injustice in relation to the employment of HIV positive seafarers.

During the exhibit, volunteers distributed condoms, lubes, info materials and sheets as well as raffle t-shirt prizes. A freedom wall was also put up to express the message of support from seafarers. SF
How gay seafarer Dyosa Makinista proved she’s ‘queen of the seas’

Dyosa talks about what it’s like to be a gay seafarer, writes Don Kevin Hapal
On their ship, she's the "queen of the seas" who sits on a literal iron throne. She holds a wrench for a scepter and wears a hard hat for a crown. You'll see her walking around the ship's hallways - head high, hips swaying like the waves.

They call her "Dyosa Makinista," the "machinist goddess." But before that, she was called many things: angel, demon, that-good-for-nothing gay seafarer.

Dyosa grew up in a small town in Laguna as Aljon Buquid Asusano, the youngest of five children, raised by a single mother.

bisekual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ+) community.

"Sa banyan namin, maraming bakla. Sa kabilang banyan, maraming tomboy (In our town, there are a lot of gay men. In the other town, there are a lot of lesbians)," she joked. Unlike many Filipino LGBTQ+, she had a happy childhood in her small town and home, where she never had to hide her queer self.

The start of a journey

Dyosa had to leave her sanctuary when she pursued higher education. She decided to enroll in the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), a seafaring school in Batangas.

Since she was a kid, all Dyosa ever wanted was to travel the world. Her mother told her that there were only two jobs that would let her do that: working as a seafarer or flight attendant. Dyosa wanted to be the latter but she was told they didn't have the money for it. Fortunately, one of her older brothers was a seafarer and was willing to finance her studies so she can follow his path.

Her first year in maritime school was the first time Dyosa had to be "discreet" about being gay. There was no rule against gay men in MAAP but with its regimented training program, Dyosa assumed it would be better to keep a low profile to avoid discrimination.

This is the sad reality for LGBT folks, Dyosa said. By default, you assume the world would be cruel to you so you hide your true self just to be safe.

"Ang takot ko noong una ay baka bawal ang bakla, kasi ang training pangalakan. Akala ko kailangan ko maghigas-tigasan ako (I was afraid at first that they may not allow gay men, because the training was for men. I thought I had to pretend to be tough)," she said.

She eventually proved herself wrong as she later found out that MAAP doesn't discriminate against anyone. After hearing the school's executives say so themselves, Dyosa started coming out to her friends in school. To her surprise, they embraced her being gay, and they often protected her from other naysayers.

Little did Dyosa know that her coming out as gay in school had some unintended benefit: some of her queer juniors, after seeing her being openly gay, had the courage to come out as well.

Waves of discrimination

Life has been fair to Dyosa until maritime school, having been surrounded by people who accepted her. She did not prepare her for her first taste of discrimination on board a ship.

Months after graduating from MAAP, a company finally hired Dyosa as an engine cadet. Engine cadets are like understudies for ships - they go onboard as trainees before they become full-fledged officers.

It wasn't the job itself that made life difficult for Dyosa, but some of the officers she worked with.

These officers would shamelessly judge Dyosa for being gay. Often, they would make her feel worthless, insinuating to her that openly gay people had no place on the ship.

Dyosa felt isolated. Oftentimes, she was excluded from gatherings.

During breaks, Dyosa would find herself eating in her room because they wouldn't stop hurling insults if she ate in the mess rooms. "Pag kasama ko sila, ako'y yung ginagawa nilang meryenda - sa pangalakair, pangtatakiw! (When I'm with them, I become fodder for insults, ostracism)," she said.
On the walls of the engine room, Dyosa would also often find graffiti of their offensive nicknames for her. ‘Angel bakla (gay)’ or ‘Angel demon’ were just some of the scribbles she saw on the walls. They used to call her “Angel” on her first ship after one of her bosses said she looked like Filipino celebrity Angel Locsin.

As if those weren’t enough, Dyosa later found out that one of the officers complained to their company that she was “incompetent and gay.”


(They said I didn’t know anything about my work, that all I know was being gay, soft. They said I should just walk the runway or become a makeup artist. They said I didn’t know what I was doing.) Dyosa and her company knew the report was largely just anchored on her being gay. She, after all, received a gleaming recommendation letter from her chief engineer – proof of her hard work and determination.

Faith in humanity restored
The discrimination Dyosa experienced on her first time on board traumatized her so much that she considered not returning to work. Fortunately, she was able to get over this slump and decided to give seafaring another chance. This time around, Dyosa pledged to use that experience as inspiration and work many times harder to prove her worth.

“Hindi ito ako, akala ‘nyo walang magagawa ang bakla sa barko aha? Sige, tingnan natin.” Pinatunayan ko na kahit bakla ako, kaya ko! (I worked hard. You think a gay person can’t do anything on the ship? Fine, just watch, I proved that even though I’m gay, I can do it),” she said.

Eventually, her hard work paid off and she was recognized by her colleagues. Dyosa eventually made friends onboard who treasured and protected her. She realised that most seafarers were not like the officers who discriminated her before.

In fact, Dyosa, now on her fifth ship, said that her colleagues often treated her “like a real woman.” She said that it’s very rare to have an openly gay person on board, and so they tend to take care of them.

“Inaalagaan nilya ‘yung bakla [Sabi nila], ‘hinili natin siya tingnan bilong bakla. Kung ano ang tingin niya sa sarili niya, ‘yun ang trato sa ‘yo (They take care of the gays. They said that they won’t just look at them as gays. Instead, they’d see them the way they’d want to be seen),” she said. Her colleagues treasured Dyosa so much that on her birthday in 2018, they surprised her with a birthday party that’s similar to a Filipino debut. She was asked to wear a dress and was taken to a fully-decorated room with a spread. Inside were her colleagues in decent clothing, who each danced with her and gave her 20 cakes and 20 wishes.

Queen on a mission
Now on her fifth ship, Dyosa finds herself in a happy place. Dyosa used her hard-earned money to pay her dues. Dyosa regularly sends money to her mom, her number one supporter. She willingly took this responsibility from her brothers, who now have families of their own. She said it was only fair as she was “gay and single.”

“May mga pamilya na sila. May pinagkakagastusan. Since bakla naman ako at lumikha ng mga baon, sinusuportahan ko na mama ko. (They have their own families already. They have their own expenses. Since I’m gay and earning well, I’m supporting my mom),” she said.

Dyosa admitted that her job remained hard and, as any seafarer, she’d get sad and yearn for home often. There was also still a lot of work needed to make seafaring truly inclusive, but for her, “LGBT folks are always born ready” and are able to overcome and improve from challenges at sea.

Today, if you’re lucky to get an audience with the queen of the sea and ask why she chose her iron throne, Dyosa has one thing to say: “Because I can! If others can, why can’t I?”

(This article first appeared in Rappler.com)
Filipino seafarers are more scared about being idle for months than facing pirate attacks in any part of the world, according to a survey carried out among the shipboard personnel.

A study on the risks and vulnerability of seafarers titled, “Hierarchies and Risks: Towards an Inclusive Social Protection for Filipino Seafarers” surveyed a total of 232 male and female ship officers and crews from August 2017 to January 2018. The results of the survey were validated with three focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 55 participants. The surveys and FGDs were all done in various areas in Metro Manila including the Seafarers’ Market in Luneta, AMOSUP offices, United Filipino Seafarers and Integrated Seafarers of the Philippines.

Based on the survey of 232 seafarers from various categories - officers, ratings and non-marines - almost 41% said that economic difficulty due to long stay by period is the top risk they face. The fact that economic difficulty due to long stay by period is the top concern of seafarers shows that many of them are not prepared for such a risk.

Not having enough savings at the end of a contract is the second major risk which is also quite high at 32% or about a third of the participants. Health risks and death risks due to environmental problems are the third and fourth major concerns of seafarers. This shows that seafarers are now becoming more aware about the possible risks they face with the environmental degradation.

Death and disability due to natural disasters are fifth and sixth among the top risks perceived by seafarers. This reflects how seafarers are also more vigilant about natural disasters. One in every four seafarers (25.23%) said that they are at risk due to accidents. This reflects that there is high awareness among seafarers regarding occupational safety.

Loneliness and depression continue to be a concern among seafarers with 23%. Majority, however, are now more adjusted to the life on board and have found more coping mechanisms to avoid loneliness when they are away from their loved ones.

Most of the seafarers communicate with their families and friends either by texting or through social media. Health and death risks due to natural causes rank ninth and 10th in the survey. This shows that one out of five seafarers (21%) are concerned about their health.

The result of the survey also debunks the decades-old belief on “seamanlolo” or seafarers as womanizers. The survey shows that only 10 see the risk of separation. In fact only seven or 3.5% of the research participants are separated at the time of research.

Given the findings in the survey, this study is recommending the government, trade unions and crewing agencies to provide more literacy programmes and trainings for seafarers. Such financial literacy must start in maritime school.

Although at present, seafarers can avail of the livelihood programmes of the state-run CWWA, the amount granted may not be enough. It is also important to include the spouse and family members in the financial literacy to encourage them to invest the seafarers’ earnings in productive investments instead of splurging them on gadgets, travels and unnecessary things.

It is also imperative for stakeholders to provide more education and training to seafarers regarding the impact of environmental degradation and natural disasters on seafarers. Compliance to laws against dumping waste at sea must be strictly implemented and seafarers must be encouraged to follow these international maritime conventions.

Although ships have their regular fire and disaster drills, no one can really prepare enough for a disaster. Perhaps, conducting more realistic drills would help seafarers in facing real disasters. The families of seafarers should also be prepared for any disaster given the risks of the life at sea. In most cases, shipping companies and CWWA give financial assistance and help the families in their emotional and psychological needs.

Loneliness and depression continue to be a major concern among seafarers. Shipowners and shipmanagers must make sure that their crewmembers are in touch with their families and friends. Promoting camaraderie and support system among crew members will be of great help in preventing loneliness especially at times when there are no phone signals or internet connection. Reducing telecommunication costs will also be appreciated by the crew.

Providing a balanced diet in every meal should be a priority in every ship. Many seafarers complained about the lack of fresh food especially vegetables during meals. Encouraging crew members to do regular exercise should also be required by shipowners. There is of course no way to stop any risk, but its impact can be mitigated or managed. Every Filipino seafarer deserves to return home safe and sound to his port of origin.
## Top 10 risks considered by Filipino seafarers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RISKS Considered</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Economic difficulty due to long standby period</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>132 (59.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No savings after finished contract</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>150 (67.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Health risks due to environmental problems such as water pollution/oil spill</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>154 (69.87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Accidents due to environment and natural disasters</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>157 (70.72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Death due to environment disasters</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>164 (73.87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Disability due to environment and natural disasters</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>164 (73.87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Disability due to accidents</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>166 (74.77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Loneliness and depression due to separation from family/loved ones</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>170 (76.58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Health risks due to natural causes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>175 (78.83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Death due to natural causes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>175 (78.83%)</td>
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Cleaning up the ship’s cargo holds

Depending on the commodity previously discharged, rinsing a bulker’s cargo hold can be as simple as sweeping and washing. But the condition in which the crew’s menial task is done and the time needed to finish sometimes get complicated, recounts C/E Mark Philip Laurilla.

Onboard the bulk carrier Belgrano – “A cargo ship’s primary purpose is to transport goods across the sea, from one port to another. And over the centuries, ships have evolved into different designs. Some of them are specialised to carry a specific type of cargo. In a bulk carrier, for instance, it is pretty common and easy on the modern ship.

But even the most common and simple things have a way of becoming complicated. A bulk carrier, as the name implies, is designed to transport solid cargoes in bulk. Out of all the other ship types, its cargo-holds have the simplest design – practically empty spaces that can hold thousands of tonnes of solid materials.

There are different cargo types that can be loaded on a bulk carrier, ranging from food grade cargo such as grains like corn, wheat and beans, to minerals such as coal, ores, salt and sand. Bulk carriers can even carry steel products and scrap metals – practically, any solid materials that can fit inside the cargo hold.

But no matter what the next cargo to be loaded is, the one thing that will always be required is for the cargo holds to be clean. Our ship has finished discharging operation. It has left for Japan and heads to a loading port in the U.S. and we were tasked to cleaning the cargo holds in preparation for the next loading operation.
Cargo hold cleaning is assigned to the deck department. For the next few days, they will undertake this often grueling task. They are always required to clean the cargo hold up to food-grade standard before they are allowed to proceed with the loading operation.

The concept is simple: remove all the residue, wash with seawater, rinse with fresh water to remove the salt and then let it dry. Depending on the previous cargo, cleaning the holds could be as simple as sweeping and water washing. But sometimes for dirty cargo, using chemicals might be necessary for cleaning. Since our previous cargo was coal, it makes easier for the crew to clean the residues from using the fire hydrant. We can say that we are lucky this time.

But there are some instances when the crew gets unlucky if they previously loaded dirty cargo such as coal, and the next commodity will be grains. So, they are going to have it clean of dirt residue from the coal and make it up to food grade standard, which takes a lot of effort. It might look quite easy to use the fire hose to clean the cargo hold, but what makes it a little bit complex is the ship location, especially when crossing the Pacific during winter. When the vessel passes the lower region and it’s not yet very cold, the crew needs to finish the clean up as quickly as possible before it gets to freezing temperature when it’s difficult to work.

When the ship reaches the loading port, inspectors will come aboard to check if the cargo holds will pass the standards. If the holds pass, the ship will commence with the cargo loading. If the holds fail, the ship will need to have its holds cleaned again and schedule another round of inspection. When this happens, the ship will be on off-hire status, meaning the charterer will not pay the shipowner within this period until the holds pass the inspection. In simple terms, the shipowner will lose money.

Cargo hold cleaning is just one of the routine tasks seafarers carry out for the ship to continue plying its trade. The task may be menial and the concept simple, but the conditions in which this job is done and the time needed to complete oftentimes require the crew to go above and beyond their working limits.

At the end, that’s how things are in the job, no matter how difficult or uncomfortable it needs to get done. “Someone has gotten to do it. Those who choose a life at sea knew what they are signing up for. A job like this is just another day in the office.” SP

The dirty cargo hold inspectors

There’s actually this port that is very notorious when it comes to cargo hold inspections not only for bulk carriers but for tankers as well. I actually had first-hand experience a few years ago when our ship went to load at this port in that country. Before we arrived we made sure that our cargo holds were very clean.

But we already expected that even though our hold was pristine, it was going to fail. When our ship got berthed and the inspectors came aboard, they did the inspections. Predictably, they declared that it failed. Immediately thereafter, they asked the captain to go with them for a “closed-door meeting”. In that meeting, they informed the captain that they needed $5,000 for the inspection to be approved.

Naturally, the captain called up the office and the charterer to inform them of the situation. Of course, the office and the charterer already know that this is commonly the situation whenever a ship calls in ports in this country for loading operation. They just requested the captain to bargain with the inspectors at a lower price,” he recounted.

Long story short, the captain succeeded to lower the price to $3,000. After handing over the money, the cargo holds miraculously passed with flying colours. Though this is part of commercial pressures, the charterer knows that it’s included in the cost of doing business in that country.” (By C/E Mark Philip Laurilla)
IKAW NA KAYA ANG SUSUNOD NA MILYONARYO?

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JOIN NOW!
Maritime profession drives seafarer’s 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.
Michael John Canaya, Chief Officer: Counting challenges to career peak

He’s well equipped with knowledge and experience and more than ready to take the helm as soon as his ship manager gives the command into his next ship. Yet with the challenges he faced in his career, Michael John Canaya is determined more than ever, to transform his shipmaster’s dream into reality.

Michael John, or Mike as friends call him, shared major challenges he went through that tested his leadership on board. Those experiences are unforgettable, he says, as they taught him invaluable lessons onboard.

The first was in 2015, two months after he got promoted as a chief officer. Their ship was en-route from the U.S. to Japan. “The ship’s captain suffered an emergency health problem that requires immediate medical attention to save his life,” Mike shared. As the next officer, Mike had to assume command of the ship. The vessel, which left its loading port in New Orleans, was found in dilemma at mid-ocean two days after transiting Panama Canal while en-route to discharge cargo in Hokkaido.

“As a newly promoted chief officer just only two months and without complete knowledge of this kind of emergency, I was able to contact all the nearest Coastguard stations by satellite phone asking for a piece of advice and possible rescue operation,” Mike recalled.

After receiving details of the rescue operation, he immediately decided to have his captain airlifted from the ship to the hospital. The company ashore approved his request and ordered that the vessel must be diverted to the nearest port, which was San Diego. The captain got ferried and transported to the hospital where he survived. The ship reached San Diego after three days.

Mike’s baptism of fire in the interim at the helm did not end there. While heading for the next port, the ship encountered a low-pressure area that developed into a much stronger typhoon. For 10 days the ship struggled in strong winds and big waves that affected their voyage. They’d almost lost speed to a single knot as strong waves constantly impelled the ship backward. Though worried, the acting shipmaster had no choice but to continue the voyage. Cruising on stormy waters, the vessel got delayed for five days at the destination port city of Tomakomai, Hokkaido.

But four hours at the anchorage, another storm approached the area. Mike had to pull the ship out to seek shelter away as per the pilot’s advice. So, after a stormy clay, it was their only turn for a berth as the company sent a new captain on board.
Mike may have kept the challenges in his profession at bay, but no one really knows when the next one will come. He faced the next hurdle in another tour of duty on a bulk carrier at the port of Itaguaí in Brazil. It’s a fast-loading port where those with business with the ship rush aboard even before you’ve completely manoeuvred at berth.

As the chief officer, Mike was the one who would attend the port authority’s ship inspection and draft survey as the loading had to start ASAP. He communicated to the engine department that he needed to de-ballast and use the ballast pumps to compensate for the loading operation since it already started. “The duty oiler informed me that it was not a problem. But a few minutes later, an alarm was heard at the ship’s office panel,” he said. The chief officer called the engine department inquiring what the alarm was about and they informed him it was the flooded engine room.

The company had carried out an investigation blaming a miscommunication from the engine department and the chief officer. Mike says other management officers such as the master, the chief and first engineers had been dragged into the problem. But because of their wrong approach to solving the problem such as hiding of the evidence on board, Mike said some of those were blacklisted by the company. “It has become a stressful situation and a sensitive matter. A sad story and a bad memory that has ruined a working relationship with some colleagues and the loss of the company’s trust,” he shared. He said he was even blamed for the incident.

Though he was able to hurdle big challenges at sea, Mike’s career would’ve been a different story had he followed his heart when he was younger. When he entered college, he really wanted to take a course in the sciences leading to medicine, but his parents could not afford to send him to a medical school. His parents believed he would have a better future in maritime. “So I had no choice at the time but to follow. Despite that, I knew there’s nothing better than to have a college degree,” Mike pointed out.

Mike went to VMA Global College in Bacolod and became a scholar in BS Marine Transportation. He obtained a scholarship when he became one of the editors of the college publication which he retained until he graduated in 2005. When he started his career at sea, the young cadet began to train with the ship managed or owned by the Japanese firm Santoku Senpaku.

He has been working in its fleet for nearly 15 years now.

The youngest of three brothers and three sisters, Mike swore to his parents not to tie the knot until he built the dream house he has promised them in Bacolod – a promise he has already fulfilled. He plans to invest some of his earnings in a mutual fund or, perhaps, in real estate.

Now that he is a management officer, he says he wants to help manage the younger generation of seafarers who are joining the company’s ships. “I want to motivate them in the best way I can. Even if I had a bad experience in the early days of my career, I want to see to it that they will not suffer the same by helping to guide them to become ship officers.”

Sailing Forward 25
Wendelyn Caneo: 3rd Engineer: As in faulty machinery, life’s problem needs troubleshooting for solutions

She may have been shaken by attempts of sexual harassment and fits of discrimination in her career at sea. But the shock from such offences definitely drove this female seafarer to have a strong determination and a firm outlook in life.

Wendelyn Caneo concedes to have had “miserable experiences” in the earliest part of her career when she boarded her first oceangoing ship as a cadet in 2007. “It seems the crew was not used to have a female on board. They didn’t know how to handle such a situation,” says Wendelyn, or Wendy for short.

Wendy claimed nobody guided her in the apprenticeship programme. According to her, the absence of assigned tasks or an officer to work with made her feel uneasy. “There were officers willing to assist but they would not treat me as a cadet, but a wiper. It was like the nature on board that went on through the whole contract,” she said. Wendy shared it became difficult at first because she didn’t know how to start.

Wendy had to help herself minding to assist an officer for tasks as much as possible. “I didn’t really learn much from it as the officers won’t go the extra mile of explaining things to me,” she admitted. There was no internet at the time, so she never had an immediate recourse on how and whom to reach out for her concerns. She just kept the problem to herself and thought of just finishing her first contract that lasted for six months.

“"There were officers willing to assist but they would not treat me as a cadet, but a wiper."

But an even more intense problem emerged when a crewmember attempted to harass her. She was at the pantry preparing her meal when an A/B blocked her way, held her up and almost kissed her. The acts were interrupted when another crewmember came in as she was resisting his advances, pleading to let her go. “Nakawala ako pero sinundan pa rin nya ako,” she said. (I’ve escaped, but he still followed me.) As she hurriedly walked on the deck, her aggressor followed her with a warning not to tell the incident to anyone.

A few weeks later, a similar incident occurred on the same tanker. Wendy found herself at the brink of another sexual assault. She just got to her cabin to rest, but to her surprise, there’s someone inside. She begged him to leave but the guy started to grab and hug her from behind as she resists, asking him to stop. She was frantically crying when her assailant stopped, loosened her from his grip and hastily exited her room.

She still kept mum about what happened as she didn’t know who to approach or if anyone would even bother to listen. Wendy said she felt alone with no one to run to for help. “Hanggang pagbaba ko ng...”
barko ang dami kong kinikikimik. (Until I disembarked, there were so many things I kept to myself.) Wendy informed her crewing agency in Manila about what happened, but the crew manager whom she approached made no action and had the gall of blaming her for being reckless. "You know you're with men," was the rebuke she received.

Since disembarking as a cadet and finishing her BS Marine Engineering course in 2009, Wendy has worked in some 13 ships overseas. She says she took a maritime course just to assure herself of a college degree since her mother had no money for her education.

So she opted to take the entrance exam and finished the course at the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). Now, the third engineer only needs to fulfill some tasks on board before climbing up the next rank. She says she is ready for it after dealing with the jobs on machinery mainly on tankers with her current shipowner.

As a female shipboard staff, Wendy had also gone through a spate of discriminations. When she was a motorman she found out that her chief engineer requested the manning agency in Manila to replace her upon knowing her gender. The agency, she said, didn't accede to the C/E's replacing request.

In another instance onboard, her second engineer would assign light tasks to another male engineer such as testing the water or oil. The job given to her were always tougher—she would lift stocks of chemicals in 25-litre containers stored in a room needed to be vacated for cleanup, then put them back after.

Wendy has hurdled a number of difficult experiences before reaching her current rank. She has been working with the French-based tanker operator Socatra since 2015. Most of the company's vessels trade in European ports. She enjoys going on shore leave travelling to various cities after each voyage. She says she is comfortable with her present company. "Here, I felt the difference as our ship is completely manned. While the company places importance on the time you spend at work as much as they value your rest period," she shared.

In her previous owner, the company would let the ship be undermanned leaving the crew working doubly hard. "Kulang na nga sa tao defective pa ang mga makina. Sobrang hirap. Meron mga oras na hindi ka na makatulong, Meron mga time na hindi ka makapagpahinga dahil kelangan tapusin ang trabaho kasi kulang nga sa tao," she lamented. (Aside from being undermanned the machinery is defective. It was hard. There were times that you just can’t rest or sleep because you have to finish the job to cope with the lack of manpower.)

Wendy says seafaring has rendered her to be a strong person and to have an established disposition in life. In the process, she liken's life to trouble-shooting defective machinery, "It makes one fulfilled once you solve it. As in life, trouble arises, though there is a different approach for each [to solve them]. And so learning must continue to seek all possible solutions," she concluded.
Rogelio Berangel Jr, 2nd Officer: When new owner means notch higher

It’s always a déjà vu each time his chance arrives for that promotion finding the next ship manager or ship owner that would place him to the next rank. But Roger Berangel Jr has always been confident that he could find one.

Starting as a galley utility on board the luxury ship of Regent Seven Seas Cruises in 2003, Rogelio or Roger for short, was extremely excited when he joined his first ship. He was one of the pioneer crews when the vessel sailed from the shipyard in Italy for its maiden voyage. He would wash giant pots and stacks of plates as part of his main duties in the ship galley.

To complete his apprenticeship, Roger did cross-training during breaks from his duties to qualify for the marine board exam. The following year, he became an O/S upon his return to their ship, the 42,363 GT Seven Seas Voyager. From the galley he was sent to the deck department to perform more challenging tasks. He said hard work paid off as he moved up further to an A/B seafarer role.

Working in the cruise line became one of his best life experiences. “Sa dami ng kasama mo sa barko hindi ka basta maho-homesick.”

“Though the work was hard, it’s just like you’re cleaning the house.”

Perang namamasyal ka lang. At kahit mahirap ang trabaho parang naglilinis lang ng bahay. (Since you have a lot of companions on the ship, you won’t get homesick. It’s just like you’re on tour. Though the work was hard, it’s just like you’re cleaning the house.)

Readying himself to be a third mate, he had always itched for his officer’s debut. But he can’t seem to find the right timing as the company’s manpower pool has always taken the primacy for promotion. Five contracts in ratings roles, Roger pondered on his next course. “Since there was no chance for me to be promoted I had to find a new employer,” he said. He moved to cargo shipping after five years in passenger trade.

After settling in an Italian shipping company, Roger obtained his promotion as a third officer in one of D’Amato Navigazione’s bulk carriers on his second contract. By that time, however,
the Naples-based shipowner had been mired in debt resulting in bankruptcy filing for protection under Italian law. Consequently, Roger and the rest of the crew met delayed salaries by up to three months. The company's bankruptcy aborted his hope of rising to the next rank, forcing him to find a new employer yet again.

He found his next job in another Italian line where Roger currently navigates. He has been sailing on Grimaldi Lines ro-ro ships after leaving the bulk fleet of D'Amato. "Mas mahirap ang trabaho sa ro-ro (It's more difficult to work on a ro-ro vessel) compared with container and bulk vessels. It's more complex in ro-ro as it loads mixed set of cargoes that you have to be observant with," said Roger.

He explains what a deck officer does when something happens to the cargoes: "Otras na magka damage sa sasakyan tatawag in ka para gumawa ng report. Kung container naman at may na-damage sa ibang deck kalangan mo ring aksyonan." (Once a vehicle gets damaged, you will be called to file a report. If a container in another deck bears the same, you have to work on it as well.)

He says when you manage cargo operation, you have to do multiple tasks. "For instance, if you have timber in deck 1 and deck 2, vehicles and containers on the upper decks, you must be wary of the stability shift of your ship," he added.

"Once the ship lists to more than a degree, it will be difficult to shoot the container on weather deck as you'd be prompted by the foreman to upright the ship. At the same time loading and discharging are simultaneous in ro-ro. Unlike in bulk carriers where you can oversee the entire hold during cargo operation. It's almost the same in container type," Roger explained.

Roger has dreamt to be a maritime professional since he was a kid. The attraction of the profession was common among town folk including the young boy from Butuan. He also has an uncle and neighbours who were seafarers. "I was then fascinated with their white uniforms as maritime cadets abound in our place. Sabi ko balang araw maciging seaman din ako," recalled Roger. "I told myself I will also be a seaman someday.

Roger went to St Joseph Institute of Technology in Butuan City, where he completed his BS in Marine Transportation in 2000. He observed that most seafarers in town had nice houses or well to do in life. But he confessed he wasn't told of the hard and sad part of the profession. "I only heard of the good things. Puro magaganda lang ang nairing ko sa kanila tungkol sa buhay ng seaman, pero in reality pagdating sa barko mahirap pala. Homesick at lungkot ang kalaban mo sa barks lalo na nang mag asawa at magka anak ako. (I only heard the good things about a seaman's life, but I realised the job is really hard. Homesick and loneliness were my enemies onboard especially when I got married and had children.)"

He now has two kids - one in secondary education and the other in grade school. "Hindi mo nakkitang lumalaki na pala ang mga anak mo. Iniwan mo hindi pa lumalalad. Pagbalik mo tumatalikbo na. Lalo na nang nasa cruise ship pa ako, isang buwan lang na bakasyon at balik barks na multi. Mas mabili ang rotation namin sa paglampya." (You don't see your children grow up. You leave them as babies - when you came back they're already running around. It was much worse when I worked on the cruise line. The job turnaround was faster in cruise lines.)

Financially, seafaring has allowed Roger to abundantly provide for his family. He sent the kids to private schools. He says he could not have put his family in a gated village where they chose to settle five years ago if it weren't for his profession. He plans to save up to invest in a new property where he could build apartment units or dormitories near the school in their province.

Roger went up to second officer on the 26,195 GT ro-ro Grande Argentina of Grimaldi Lines in 2017. But Filipino officers have been limited up to this rank, he says. So Roger thinks of moving again to level him up to senior management. He's yet again in search of a new employer where he could advance in his career.
Gary Garnet Badayos, 2nd Engineer: Bridging training from shore-based to shipboard career

He came from a land-based job overseas before embarking on his first ship as a wiper. But his shift into a career at sea wasn't easy even if he had performed almost the same role and handled similar machinery ashore.

Gary Garnet Badayos took up units in marine engineering and a number of training courses to pursue his dream job to be a marine engineer. A mechanical engineering graduate, Gary admits he has a little bit of regret—he said he should have taken the maritime course right away after high school.

But the uncertainty about his future in the marine profession kept him having second thoughts. “I thought you have to know someone up there in the office to find a job on the ship,” Gary said, recollecting the notion that one needs to back him up to get employed by a shipping company. So he opted to enroll in a field he thought was close enough—mechanical engineering at the University of Mindanao in Davao, where he graduated in 2000.

Gary was working in the oil refining firm, Saudi Aramco in Saudi Arabia as a fabricator/welder for more than two years when he pushed the idea of working on a ship. Apart from welding NC1 and NC2 (National Certificate 1-2), he also has knowledge in pipelining, refrigeration and air-conditioning, and industrial electricity that he had obtained from TESDA. He said he armed himself with those skills as he once planned to work in Australia after his contract in Saudi Aramco ended.

But Gary’s heart seemed to be at sea. So after meeting the basic requirements, he applied in a crewing agency and landed a job in 2006 on the general cargo ship Nedloyd Adelaide, one of the old tonnage of the defunct Royal P&O Nedloyd. As a wiper, Gary found his job on board nearly the same as his role in Aramco.

“I’ve been doing almost the same type of work and routine in the machinery. The only difference is that we are moving from point A to point B,” Gary explained. This difference made his life and work a bit more complex because he had to adjust to the new marine environment. Since he never experienced to be a cadet or joined in an interisland vessel as an apprentice, working on a ship proved to be challenging.

“Since it was my first time to work on board a ship, it took a while for me to adjust especially during rough sea condition. When you’re not used to living and working at sea it’s terrible,” he shared. But as days and months passed by, Gary has adapted to his new environment. He continued with a couple of contracts with P&O Nedloyd.

When the company was sold to AP Moller, Gary and his shipmates...
retained their jobs. He became an oiler in succeeding contracts with AP Moller-Maersk vessels. He then moved to Stena Line and became a fitter with its ro-ro ferries.

However, he wasn’t content as a rating after striving in a number of vessels. He said he heeded the advice of a former co-worker to pursue further studies to be a ship officer. Gary decided to enroll at Davao Merchant Marine Academy (DMMA) in 2010 in search of his goal to go up a notch in his maritime career. He completed some 17 units of the required subjects leading to a BS Marine Engineering diploma at DMMA. As he had taken enough time of sea service experience from his wiper and oiler roles, the cadetship requirement was not an issue. He got qualified to sit in for the marine board exam.

Since it was my first time to work on board a ship, it took a while for me to adjust especially during rough sea condition.

Gary debuted to be an officer as a fourth marine engineer in 2013 through the bridging education programme. The bridging scheme was once used by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to encourage electrical and mechanical engineering graduates like Gary to fill up the shortage of qualified officers in international maritime professional. Though it is a tough job, it is better than other professions,” Gary confidently remarked. “Health-wise, you can always monitor your health as one needs the discipline in lifestyle to maintain fitness to work,” he added.

Diligence and dedication at work brought the former land-based OFW to climb up the marine profession ladder. “The important thing is you need to know your job. So even if there was pressure from your superior you could do the job well and gain the merits,” he noted. Though he admits of some instances where committed some mistakes at work especially when multitasking, which he considers as “memorable” lessons. “You really have to go by the procedure, not to cut corners if you don’t want to have an accident,” he said.

He has high regard for the seafaring profession. “If I have a third engineer in his next contract, he continued his tour of duties on three oceangoing ships under the role. Then he took the next board exam for his second engineer ticket in 2015, which he used on board the following year.

Gary grew up in General Santos City. He wants to settle in neighbouring Davao where he has invested in a house and lot. In 2017, he also acquired a 2,000 sq m of agricultural land in Davao teeming with fruit-bearing trees such as durian, mangosteen and avocado.

The 40-year-old wants to excel in his job further. “This is my only job and I want to be more competent. It’s difficult to stop at the peak of your career. And I have no reason to do so.” As a second engineer, he hopes to climb the highest rank as he has already received a recommendation for his upcoming contract.
Constant bridge warnings create ‘alarm fatigue’

A survey largely responded by shipmasters and senior officers present a recurring theme regarding the grading of alarms to assist the watchkeeper.

Frequently sounding bridge warnings, especially false ones, can create “alarm fatigue” and hinder watchkeepers in carrying out their vital role, according to a study.

Now, in response to the study supported by the shipmanagers group InterManager—there has been calls for manufacturers to work with ship operators to address the seafarers’ concern and develop better ways to communicate bridge warnings.

“There is a problem with too many similar-sounding alarms and revealed a need for such distress signals to be easily identifiable so that urgent warnings can be recognised over simple notification bells,” the InterManager said, referring to the findings’ highlight in a survey.

The findings were released last July by the P&I club, Shipowners Club, which conducted the survey in cooperation with the Department of Psychology at Royal Holloway, University of London, ISWAN and InterManager, to investigate whether alarms on the bridge may affect the attention and focus of bridge watchkeepers.

The survey was largely responded to by shipmasters and senior officers—a indication that the concerns are apparent to experienced and well-qualified seafarers. Respondents came from a wide variety of vessel types.

Key findings include:

- 89% of participants thought false alarms were a problem.
- 66% said the alarms were not easily detectable.
- 57% of respondents disagreed that alarms are graded by sound.

50% of participants reported some frustration with the format of the alarms themselves. Of particular concern was the fact that sounds are frequently the same tone for all alarms with no distinguishing factors between alarm systems.

- 77% of crew do not want to be disturbed from their watch keeping duties.
- 24% of participants reported that they never or seldom engaged the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System due to their concerns at frequent false alarms.

The main issue raised was frequent alarm fatigue, followed by the fact that alarms are hard to identify, and then concerns over the design of the alarm system or the bridge itself. The results present a recurring theme regarding the grading of alarms to assist the watch keeper.

Another factor that emerged from the answers was the crew’s readiness to silence alarms without investigation due to ‘alarm fatigue’ caused by repeated alarm sounding for no apparent reason. Some 85% of participants reported they were aware of the alarms, the systems they represent and their location. However, 45% of the respondents agreed that frequent alarms are often silenced, and when this was analysed by the level of role, 44% of Masters, 41% of Chief Officers, 48% of Second Officers and 60% of Third Officers agreed, showing that this practice was prevalent among all ranks.

The report concludes: It is evident from the feedback of these seafarers that the current regulations and arrangements relating to bridge alarm monitoring and systems can be improved.

Doing so will also improve the working environment of seafarers and assist with the reduction of related claims.

Captain Kuba Szymanski, InterManager Secretary General, said: “As present, as an industry, we are creating an environment for failure and then we are surprised when our seafarers fail.”

“We can and must break this vicious circle. Look at the findings – fifty percent of our seafarers are frustrated by frequent alarms! Seventy seven percent want alarms to be useful alarms and not a nuisance. They are extremely busy people because we ask them to be ‘jacks of many trades’. Therefore, in my opinion, quite rightly they expect alarms to be useful and effective,” Captain Szymanski added.

Welcoming the report, he said: “This is brilliant—I cannot praise Shipowners enough for undertaking this ground-breaking research and drawing excellent conclusions. In particular, I am pleased that they checked with the end-users—that is very proactive and, I would say, pioneering. Honestly, this is one of the very few surveys which actually asks seafarers themselves.”

Mr Szymanski said the next step is taking action to address the seafarers concerns and called on manufacturers to work with ship operators and crew representatives to identify which alarms are particularly problematic and to produce more effective methods of alert.

“Seafarers are tired of being blamed for everything,” he said. “It is important that we take a human-centric approach to this and find...
solutions that benefit our crews in the workplace rather than hinder them when carrying out vital tasks.”

The Shipowners’ Club weighed in: “As vessels and the equipment on board become increasingly smarter, seafarers are required to learn additional skills for the ongoing operation and maintenance of these pieces of technology and equipment. However, where more equipment is fitted it naturally increases the possibility of a higher number of alarms. From a Club perspective, we believe that when fitting additional and new technology onboard it should always be done with the intention to enhance the seafarer’s ability to safely and efficiently navigate and operate the vessel.”

“It is evident from the feedback of these seafarers that the current regulations and arrangements relating to bridge alarm monitoring and systems can be improved upon, which will allow for crew to fully utilise the benefits of the technology being made available to them.”

“Doing so will improve the working environment of seafarers and may assist with the reduction of related claims experienced by Members and the wider maritime industry.

The Club is sharing this information to help facilitate further discussion of the topic in the industry with the hope of finding a method to provide a solution which improves bridge alarm management on board,” the Shipowners’ Club added.

The survey was conducted during 2017 and 2018 by a questionnaire, which was circulated widely throughout many maritime sectors, via InterManager, ISWAN and UK Chamber of Shipping. After careful collation, the findings are now being made available to Club Members, the survey participants and the wider industry.
MAAP graduates batch of 2019 Class

The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) has graduated more than 130 senior cadets at its campus in Kamaya Point, Brgy. Alas-asin in Mariveles, Bataan. The 134-strong class composed of 58 deck and 76 marine engine officers from the first batch of the graduating candidates of the 2019 Class marched up on stage to receive their diplomas last May.

Senator Richard Gordon, the commencement rites guest speaker, extolled the upcoming marine entrants in their career as the advertising partners of Filipino professionals. “You will promote the country throughout the whole world,” Gordon told the senior cadets.

Gordon said he is rooting for their competence. “Pagka kayo'y masa bariko maasahan kayong lahat na hind niyo sana babanggani. When you’re manning the ship they expect that you won’t cause any mishap.”

He said. The senator also encouraged the new maritime professionals to practice their profession as they leave the academy. “You want to be the best captains and chief engineers,” Senator Gordon said.

Aside from competency, Senator Gordon advised them to be creative, competitive, caring and compassionate. He urged the cadets to write what they want to do in the next 20 years and review it from time to time just like a navigator. This way, he says, the midshipmen will be able to determine whether or not they have achieved their dream through the years of their career. “If you are on course or whether you take a different route,” the senator said.

“Be the great sailors and officers of the maritime fleet in the world. That must be your intention in your career. Remember who you are, define yourself and make sure you enhance that definition as you go day by day. Follow the lead of the people here in this institution,” the senator told the future deck and engine officers.

“You have a duty not only to your country, but also to your families and the institution,” Senator Gordon added. He also encouraged them to be men and women for others. “The compassion you talk about must put yourselves in the position of empathy,” he said.

The senator noted that most of the finishers have come from humble homes. According to him, “It is now a great step forward that you can be sure for you and your families to attaining a better life.” But he said that it is just the beginning.

“Comforth, education of your children will come in the future. But above all you must have that compassion.” Senator Gordon concluded.

First batch of finishers since outcomes-based education

This year’s graduates compose the academy’s first batch under the outcomes-based education (OBE), a guided curriculum that MAAP vigorously pursued in its teaching and learning programmes of discipline.

Developed in pursuit of the educational reforms the Commission on Higher Education has enforced among maritime institutions, aligned policies under OBE serve the purpose of making the BS in Maritime Transport and BS in Maritime Engineering programmes responsive to the needs of the industry and to ensure the global competitiveness of the BSMT and BSMarE graduates.

According to MAAP chairman Dr. Conrado F. Oca, the academy implemented several adjustments because of this new direction. “This is to bring about the desired learning outcomes for students,” he said. He noted that MAAP is poised to meet the challenges of maritime education amidst the rapid technological advancements in the shipping industry.

To accomplish its purpose as the premier maritime school of the country, Dr. Oca disclosed several innovations are underway that will benefit graduates from all the investments and trailblazing programmes at the academy.

Competition for good placements in shipping companies has been fierce for thousands of cadets who graduate from various maritime institutions. But Dr. Oca told the senior cadets during his opening remarks should be confident about their education. MAAP has not only taught you the knowledge and skills but also developed in you the desired qualities as well.”

He said: “It’s now the time to remember and to affirm that you are indeed scholars of MAAP.” Dr. Oca reminded them that “you are unique not only because you have been trained in the best maritime institution of the country but because you are duty-bound to make the Philippines and all Filipinos proud.”

Sailing Forward
The shipmaster or captain is the highest rank that any navigator can reach on board a merchant ship. With a very defined chain of command, reaching the highest position means rising through the ranks. It takes years of study, training and experience to accumulate the knowledge and skills required in this career. Everyone has to start somewhere. Once upon a time, the captain of the ship began his seafaring career as a deck cadet.

The Deck Cadet

The deck cadet is the trainee rank towards the deck officer track. The year a cadet graduates from a maritime school, he/she boards for the first time for the apprenticeship training.

Being first timers on board the ship is a big challenge for cadets not only professionally, but also mentally and emotionally.

Every company has different procedures for career advancement. In some companies, deck cadets are groomed to become officers and therefore trained in all aspects of their future career.

Mentorship is a very important factor in the success of any training programme. Officers who are willing to teach are essential in continuously generating a pool of highly trained officers in the company’s fleet.

Success always comes with a price and requires hard work and sacrifice. Like superheroes in the movies, everyone has a story.

The deck cadet story is only the beginning. His success or failure will depend entirely on the choices that he makes in the years to come. A wise lady once said: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” It is undeniable that each person has a different taste when it comes to beauty. Now whether the universe will conspire to make one’s dream a reality, as long as the dreamer believes that it is beautiful, it should give him enough motivation to make the right choices that will lead him to the right path.
“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

Deck cadet Kevin story as told to Mark Philip Laurilla on board the bulk carrier Belgrido

“My name is Kevin. I have been on board this vessel as deck cadet for seven months. I joined the merchant marine at the suggestion of my parents. So I took the exam in the academy and I passed.

So on my third year I went on board my first ship as a deck cadet. And it was okay, so I continued.

My biggest challenge was adjusting with the new environment away from home. I had to deal with homesickness. So I cope by making friends with other crew members. I tried to have fun wherever I could and I have to make myself busy with my studies.

As a deck cadet I have to work and study at the same time because a trainee on board ship is basically on-the-job training. I am here to do different jobs expected of me in the future and there is no better way of learning than to actually do them.

When the vessel is loaded with cargo my task is daily sounding of bilge wells and ballast tanks, then after that I proceed to work on deck with bosun and other deck guys. At night and whenever I have free time I go to the bridge to learn as much as I could about the third officer’s duties.

The officers I have sailed with have been very supportive and generous with their time to teach me. This is my second time as deck cadet on board, and the focus of my training is to gain as much proficiency and confidence in performing an officer’s duties. Hopefully I will get promoted to third mate on my next contract.

I have already completed 12 months of sea time from my first ship as deck cadet which made me qualified to take the licensure exam. I passed the exam last year so I already have the OIC license, which is a requirement for the company to advance for the officer training.

My ambition of course is to become a captain someday.”
The Engine Cadet

Like the ship captain, the career path to becoming a chief engineer is not an easy one. It takes years of study, training, hard work and the right experience to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to reach the top position.

But as in all professions, everyone has to start from somewhere. Likewise, the chief engineer began his life at sea as an engine cadet. The engine cadet is the trainee rank for those pursuing a career in marine engineering. They are the least experienced among all the engine crew. Usually on board for their first or second shipboard assignment.

Working onboard the ship is already difficult as it is. But working in the engine room is a little more inconvenient as the jobs get dirty almost all the time and the workplace gets very hot in tropical climates. It doesn’t matter what rank you are. If you do a job in the engine room, more often than not, you will be dirty and smell like grease or diesel by the end of the day.

People who have no idea about what the marine engineers do often think they are the same as auto mechanics, but just on a larger scale. That might be true for the lower ranks, but marine engineering is a complicated profession, which involves operation, maintenance, trouble shooting and management. The higher the rank the more complicated the responsibility becomes.

Mentorship is one of the most effective tools to mold the future officers and engineers of any company’s fleet. Not only does it provide knowledge and enhance skills of trainees, but it also develops the confidence to perform the actual work they are expected to do in the future.

In my honest opinion, a career in seafaring is one of the most seven-playing fields once you have managed to enter into it. Now, a lot of people might react negatively about this: Your academic records don’t mean anything once you start working onboard the ship. There have been many seafarers who graduated at the top of their class who never even came close to reach the top position on board the ship even after decades of seafaring.

Don’t get me wrong. It is quite impressive to get good grades in school, but oftentimes it doesn’t translate to job performance especially on board a ship. Now while it is true that one needs sufficient knowledge, skills and expertise to advance in the maritime profession, the most important assets that one needs to have is a good attitude and correct mindset in order to learn what they need to learn and keep their eyes on the prize.

Ultimately, well-rounded individuals who can make plans and critical decisions even in the face of adversity not only on the job at hand but also on that career path are the ones likely to succeed in this profession.

The engine cadet has only begun his story and whether he succeeds or fails, it will all depend on the plans and decisions he will make in the years to come.

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Engine cadet Dietrich story as told to Mark Philip Laurilla

"My name is Dietrich, I have been on board the ship for four months now. This is my second time as an engine cadet. I completed seven months on my previous ship. Since I was a child, I have always wanted to be a seafarer. I chose marine engineering because I was always interested in machinery. I used to think that working on board the ship was easy. But I found out that the life of a seafarer was difficult, especially in the engine department where it is usually very hot and the jobs are very dirty.

At first I felt overwhelmed. I thought I won’t be able to last very long. But as time passed by, I got used to it. As an engine cadet, I was usually assigned to assist the engineers. I need to learn about the different machinery, how to operate them and carry out maintenance.

I also need to learn some calculations like fuel consumption and dumped something. I am very lucky because the engineers I am on board with are very much willing to teach and train me. It’s because of them that I am gaining confidence every day.

I am aspiring to become a marine engineer someday. I am planning to take the licensure exams after finishing my contract. Hopefully I’ll pass.

Of course I hope to become a chief engineer in the future. I know I still have a very long way to go before I reach that goal. But if I work hard for it, I believe it is not impossible."
Seafarer’s practical tips and advice to newcomers onboard

On signing on. Embrace your ship. This is your home for the whole contract. Familiarise yourself especially your safety all throughout the ship and during emergency. Read the procedure for launching the lifeboat.

On your colleague. Smile! It could be a sign for them to like you instantly. They might even invite you to their drinking spree. You cannot please everyone. You have your own temperaments. But it’s better that you understand them.

On your duty. Be on your duty 15 minutes before your watch/duty so you can catch up on any changes. Surely, you will be glad to be relieved and a few minutes of exchanging notes can be next to building a bridge.

On port inspection/PSC/internal audit. Enjoy the inspections and don’t be afraid to face the authority and receive questions and inquiries. You’ll learn a lot from them as the inspectors look for faults and deficiencies on board. Remember, they will look for the same thing when they come on board.

On reprimand/shout/corrections by your superior. Don’t get too emotional when reprimanded. It only means you made a mistake or had shortcomings. Accept it, embrace it and learn from it. You have plenty of room for improvement. Be thankful if someone corrects you. Admit your mistakes, even on a personal level.

On family matters. If you don’t have internet access onboard, just think that your ship will still reach its port. The SIM for your smart phone will still be on hand and you can chat with your loved ones. Remind your family that the internet may not always be accessible at sea. For the family members ashore, let them realise that you are on board the ship to work and to support them back home. Don’t forget to pray for them.

On love life. For those in a relationship, understanding and respect to your partner is the key to prove your love. You’re busy and have your priorities, so does your loved one. If you are really serious, respect each other and be faithful even when you’re thousands of miles apart and seldom in contact. If you commit to make your relationship work, nobody could stop that connection and the loving relationship you both share.
Helpline for seafarers’ wellbeing launched

iCALL currently has 14 counsellors all located at Tata Institute in Mumbai to ensure peer support, supervision and standard professional counselling services.

A new 24-hour counselling service that is aimed at improving the mental health of seafarers has been launched. The service hopes to reduce seafarer suicides, raise awareness on mental health and gender, and equip participants with self-help coping mechanisms to address their own distress and/or help them offer support to others at sea.

Synergy Marine Group opened the psychological helpline iCall in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai. iCall is free of charge and is available in nine different languages via phone, email and the chat-based ULTA App.

CEO and founder of the Singapore-headquartered Synergy Group, Captain Rajesh Unni, said during the launch that they are addressing a crucial issue through the helpline. “A large numbers of seafarers suffer from obvious manifestations of impaired psychological wellbeing such as social isolation and depression,” Captain Unni noted. The counselling centre is also available to shore-based personnel anywhere in English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Sindhi and Kutchi.

iCALL currently has 14 counsellors all located at Tata Institute in Mumbai to ensure peer support, supervision and standard professional counselling services. The counsellors have at least a master’s degree in Clinical or Counselling Psychology.

Capt Unni asserted that the maritime industry should do far more to address mental health issues. About 6% of all deaths at sea are proven suicides, he said. “If the suspicious cases of probable suicides - seafarers that went missing at sea - are considered, then this figure jumps to 18.3% which means almost one in five deaths at sea is a suicide.”

“By any standards, that is terrible. Compare this to deaths ashore, where only 1% of deaths are attributable to suicide. There is no disputing we have a genuine problem here,” he added.

The launch of iCall also stressed an increased need for gender sensitivity in discussions about seafarer wellness and the maritime industry as a whole. With the recent appointments of the first female master mariner to the Synergy fleet, first woman marine superintendent ashore, and the first Filipino female cadet on board Synergy’s LPG carrier, the programme is a game-changer as it also addresses the unique challenges women face in the shipping industry and the toil this may take on the mental health of women seafarers.

The counsellors received three months of specialist training to help treat issues such as emotional distress, relationship and family concerns, suicidal thoughts, sexual and reproductive health, as well as other issues such as LGBT, violence against women, body image concerns and work-life anxieties.

To put the iCALL endeavour in place, Synergy Group signed a memorandum of understanding with TISS in Mumbai, India, in August with all the parties that committed to establish the new service.
How to minimise ship berthing incidents

Laurence Jones, risk assessment director at the TT Club, identifies how most accidents happen when ships come calling at ports

Ship berthing incidents are all too common at ports globally. The berthing operation is highly dependent on human interaction and many incidents have their root cause in this fact. Damage to the ship itself, the berth and quay cranes often result, as well as the potential for pollution and, of greater concern, bodily injuries to ship crew and port personnel. The advent of larger tonnage and the consequent ‘cascading’ affect to smaller ports mean that the risk is real in most locations. This article attempts to identify and address the issues that can mitigate the occurrence of ship berthing incidents.

The two key areas of heightened risk are ship manoeuvring in the port and the process of mooring. Manoeuvring exposes the ship to collisions, while mooring can result in injuries or fatalities to crew or mooring line personnel. All the factors contributing to such incidents can be classified as either ship issues or port/terminal issues.

Ship Issues

1. Master

Qualified and experienced masters and pilots are essential to the safe berthing of a ship. The pilot, master and bridge personnel clearly need good communications and mutual understanding of the other’s role for the safe conduct of the ship in pilotage waters. It is important to achieve clarity so that the pilot may be successfully integrated into the bridge management team. The pilot’s primary duty is to provide accurate information to ensure safe navigation, while the master retains ultimate responsibility for the safety of the ship. The master and his/her bridge personnel have a duty to support the pilot. Good communication between the master and the pilot is essential for safe berthing, and the entire bridge management team bear responsibility to ensure that all actions are consistent with the passage plan and the safety of the ship. There has been evidence of incidents occurring because the master was new to the port and/or the pilot not previously experiencing the size or type of ship call at the port.

2. Engine and propulsion equipment

Engine and/or propulsion equipment failure is a common cause of ship collisions. Proper
maintenance systems and procedures should be established and followed, including strict adherence to the ship’s Safety Management System.

3. Mooring lines

Where ropes are in poor or damaged condition, they should be replaced with spares. It is important that all ropes, wires and links used for mooring have a certificate, and it is good practice for these certificates to be clearly labelled and kept in an easily accessible file ready for inspection. Spare mooring ropes, wires and links should not be stowed with paint, chemicals, or any other shipboard or general cleaning items. Adequate spare mooring lines should be kept on the ship.

4. Winches

It is important that all greasing points are free, working correctly and have not been painted over, in order that equipment can be maintained to the suitable standard. All winches should be included in ship’s Planned Maintenance System.

5. Ship’s mooring crew

A number of incidents occur when non-deck crew are deployed during mooring operations. It is important to have sufficient personnel to be able to moor the ship safely and effectively. All crew should be trained and be familiar with the physical environment and the hazards associated with mooring operations. It is vital that time is taken to ensure that procedures are both understood and followed by the crew. A number of familiar factors recur in mooring incidents: seafarers stand in areas exposed to injury should ropes part. When crew with insufficient training take part in mooring operations, it is often these people who are seriously injured when something goes wrong. The ship and its equipment must be maintained to a high standard to reduce the risk of mooring incidents; all personnel should be adequately trained in the use of the correct personal protective equipment; adequate procedures should be in place, including supervision by a competent person. Training in mooring operations should be incorporated into the ship’s regular training schedule and include all personnel who may be involved.

“monitoring and addressing the issues will help mitigate the occurrence of ship berthing incidents.”

6. Weather

Adverse weather can be significant for a ship in a port environment. Wind may cause heading changes and leeway, failure to compensate correctly for wind during berthing is a significant cause of berthing incidents. The difficulty in allowing for wind arises from the variable effect it can have due to changes in a ship’s heeding and speed. Tides, currents and the swell also have significant effects on a ship preparing to moor or sail and must be considered by the master and the pilot in their calculations.

7. New technologies

Modern, more reliable ships’ engines and the addition of thrusters have improved the level of safety in ship manoeuvring. Furthermore, certain ports are installing vacuum and magnetic mooring systems that can improve safety by removing personnel from the risks inherent in mooring lines.

Port/Terminal Issues

1. Pilots

In most ports pilots are essential for assisting the master to manoeuvre his ship safely in the port. Port Authorities and pilots must ensure that appropriate training, systems and procedures are in place to manage the berthing and unberthing of the ships that they may be handling, especially taking account of new services or larger ships.

2. Tugs

Similarly, Port Authorities need to plan for new services or larger ships, including ensuring that there are a sufficient number of tugs with enough power.

3. Bollards

In many ports bollards may have been in place and potentially unchecked for decades. There is currently no international standard to ensure that bollards are sufficient in number, quality and capacity, as well as suitably located for the tonnage likely to call at each berth. Ships need to have appropriate dialogues with the ports.

4. Mooring personnel

It is important to have sufficient personnel to be able to moor the ship safely and effectively. All
mooring personnel should be trained and familiar with bights, snap-back zones and the hazards associated with mooring operations.

5. Parking location of quay cranes

When a ship is berthing the safest location to park quay cranes is well away from the allocated berth. However this is generally impossible due to the length of the berth and location of other operations. Furthermore, repositioning the cranes after berthing would present unacceptable delays. Therefore, the least risky location to park quay cranes during a ship’s berthing is in the centre of the intended berth. As it is often the bow or the stern which impacts the berth, a quay crane parked near to the ends of the allocated berth will have an increased risk of collision. Unfortunately wherever quay cranes are parked along the quay they can be impacted by an out-of-control ship.

6. Weather

Most Port Authorities have procedures to only allow berthing and unberthing when the wind speed is below a certain level, generally between 20 and 30 knots – and also dependent on wind direction, tides, currents and swell. These procedures are to prevent damage to equipment and infrastructure in the port and ensure the safety of personnel. Ports in regions prone to hurricanes, typhoons or cyclones generally have additional procedures to send ships out to sea when severe weather is forecast. Emergency procedure for severe weather may be less advanced in locations that historically have never had to deal with such conditions. Recent experience evidences that unfamiliar and erratic weather conditions are becoming more prevalent. Therefore all ports should implement emergency procedures to send ships to sea in advance of severe weather; do not wait for an incident before developing an emergency plan. The risks of ships’ mooring lines breaking during severe weather conditions are substantial, and only partially mitigated by the availability of additional mooring lines or tugs on standby, albeit these should form part of the emergency response plan.

7. New technologies

Emerging technologies offering vacuum and magnetic mooring systems may improve safety and the securing of ships. These technologies do negate the need for mooring lines and therefore remove port and ship personnel from potentially dangerous situations. Once more, while these systems are not cheap, the improved safety benefits may justify their installation.

In summary, monitoring and addressing the above issues will help mitigate the occurrence of ship berthing incidents. The stakeholders on both the ship and port/terminal sides of the interface need to focus on their own issues, but also work together to manage the safety of people, assets and the environment.

AMOSUP joins Day of the Seafarer fete

AMOSUP joined the international shipping community in celebrating the Day of the Seafarer under the theme “I Am On Board with Gender Equality”. Members of the maritime union celebrated the occasion as they gathered at the union’s convention centre in Intramuros, Manila for an entertainment prepared for them on 25th June. The programme consisted of parlour games participated by the seafarers themselves, line-up of live bands for entertainment, and more food and drinks.

This year’s campaign puts a strong emphasis on the maritime world on the importance and value of women within the professional ranks. AMOSUP recognised the unique contribution made by seafarers, and also women seafarers to international shipping. It provides an opportunity to highlight a wide range of careers and profession for women in maritime industry as it focuses on the important aspects of seafaring.
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 these 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.
PH-Japan ventures in seafarer welfare, education and training cited

The Times points out a number of projects AMOSUP initiated with Japanese shipowners and union

The Philippines and Japan have enjoyed a robust bilateral relationship over the years. With this link comes joint endeavours that have been realised in the areas of seafarer welfare and maritime education and training between the two countries.

In a special feature on the Philippines and Japan relations, The Manila Times on 14 August 2019 has cited a number of accomplishments between AMOSUP and their Japanese special partners.

The Times said that in partnership with the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU), AMOSUP has maintained a long-term cooperation with the employer group International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ) through collective agreements for the employment of thousands of Filipino seafarers working on Japanese beneficially-owned or controlled ships. It is estimated that around 75% of the more than 45,000 non-domiciled officers and crew working on these ships are Filipino seafarers.

AMOSUP president Dr. Conrad Oca relates how this strong bond of cooperation has propelled Philippine maritime education and training to continuously aspire for excellence. He said, “The Japanese social partners are significantly invested in the education and training of Filipino cadets at the union’s Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP).”

“There is a JSU-IMMAJ Campus in MAAP that is equipped with simulators, laboratories and other training facilities. MAAP has graduated and sent many Japanese-sponsored Filipino cadets for employment in the Japanese merchant fleet over the years,” he added.

The Times also cited the latest project involving education and training, which was the delivery of the dedicated training ship M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca last December 2018, so named in honor of the Founding President of AMOSUP. “In donating the training ship, IMMAJ aims to fulfill its vision for MAAP to continue being among the best maritime institutions in the world,” according to Dr. Oca.

Similarly, there are other joint union activities for enhancing seafarers’ welfare that go beyond maritime education and training.

“In partnership with JSU, our joint initiative has led to the construction of 36 school buildings with 72 fully furnished classrooms that have been built and turned over to public elementary and high schools in Regions 6 and 7 which were severely affected by natural calamities in recent years,” Dr. Oca explained.

He added, “Part of our social responsibility as a national trade union of seafarers has been to promote the education of young Filipinos, a basic aspiration which is shared by our members for their own children.”

Having members who mostly reside from distant provinces throughout the Philippines, JSU and AMOSUP have continued to provide living accommodations in Manila for seafarers in transit from their provincial residences to join their vessels abroad and vice versa, or for those undergoing training or taking their licensure examinations. This is being done through the three (3) Mariners’ Home dormitory facilities in Manila that has a combined total capacity of about 1,200 beds.”"
AMOSUP Seamen’s Center
Hub of Operations
1983

ASSOCIATED MARINE OFFICERS'
and SEAMEN’S UNION
of the PHILIPPINES

Seamen’s Hospital Manila
1987

Seafarer’s House
2018

Sailor’s Home - Manila
1994

Sailor’s Home Annex
Manila - 2013

Seamen’s Village - Cavite
1993

8 Anchors Cultural Center
Seamen’s Village Cavite
2013

Stop Chest - Manila
2006

Professional Career Development Center
Manila - 2006

Maritime Academy of the Asia and the Pacific
1998

T/S Kapitan Oca
MAAP Pier - Batan
1997

Seamen’s Training Center
MAAP Campus - Batan
2000

AJSU - AMOSUP Campus
MAAP - Batan
2009

Seamen’s Hospital - Cebu
2005

Sailor’s Home and Stop Chest - Cebu
2003

Cebu Sports Complex
2012

Seamen’s Hospital - Iloilo
2005

G.O.R. Seamen’s Hospital
Davao - 2008

JSU - AMOSUP
Davao Activity Center - 2013

Deva Sports Complex
Davao City

Iloilo Multi-Purpose Centre
Iloilo City

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- Professional Career Development Center (+63 2) 527 2110 / 528 0064 / Seamen’s Hospital (+63 2) 527 8116-20
- Sailor’s Home Manila (+63 2) 527 3605
- Stop Chest - Manila (+63 2) 527 2109
- Seamen’s Village (+63 46) 973 0370
- JSU-AMOSUP Mariners’ Home - Manila (+63 32) 521 5180 / 400 0461 / 400 0463 64
- Seamen’s Hospital - Cebu (+63 32) 346 2598
- Sailor’s Home - Cebu (+63 32) 236 9928
- Stop Chest - Cebu (+63 32) 236 9928
- Seamen’s Hospital - Iloilo (+63 33) 327 3523
- AMOSUP JSU Multi-Purpose Center - Davao (+63 82) 234 7185
- G.O.R. Seamen’s Hospital - Davao (+63 82) 234 7184

Other welfare facilities in partnership with Affiliated Union
- JSU-AMOSUP Mariners’ Home Annex
- JSU-AMOSUP Maritime Museum & Sports Complex
LEGAL LOOKOUT

Negligence vs Incompetence

Assume a ship with only two valves (No 1 and No 2). Valve No 1 is the one that should be handled, the correct valve. Valve No 2 is the wrong valve and should be kept closed during cargo operations because, if handled, there will be cargo contamination. Both valves are properly marked and labelled and located in the same room at a distance from each other.

Whilst cargo operations are in progress at the port, the Chief Officer instructs, over the walkie-talkie, a deck cadet (who is for the first time at sea) to go into the valve room and open valve No 1. The deck cadet does so but, instead of opening valve No 1 as instructed by the Chief Officer, he opens valve No 2 resulting in cargo contamination and a huge cargo claim. Will the shipowner be required to satisfy the cargo claim? Or, will he manage to escape liability by relying on the cadet's negligence? In other words, was it negligence or incompetence?

If it was the former, the shipowner might be able to rely on the 'crew negligence' defence, but if it was the latter, the ship would be held unseaworthy due to having an incompetent crew. Such unseaworthiness would be causative and the shipowner, then, should pay for the cargo claim.

Therefore, in the above factual context, the crucial question is: negligence or incompetence? The answer is simple: it can be either negligence or incompetence. On an ultimate analysis, the starting point is the mental state of the cadet at the time of his mistake. If he opened valve No 2 believing, at that very moment, he opened valve No 1 then we are entering the path of negligence. If, however, he opens valve No 2 believing, at that very moment, that the valve he opened was the valve he should open, i.e. the correct valve, then we are led to the path of incompetence.

This is, however, the starting point only and a whole range of inquiries would be required to establish the cadet's negligence or incompetence. Do not rush to conclude that it was incompetence from the mere fact that it was his first time at sea.

All those who have served on board merchant ships are well aware that handling valves are a daily routine for cadets. Otherwise, a master in command for the first time would be, by definition, incompetent as would anybody else holding a post for the first time and such an outcome would violate common sense.

The distinction between 'crew negligence' and 'crew incompetence' is of crucial importance in shipping. Depending on the legal and factual context, the answer as to whether a shipowner will be answerable to another party (e.g. a cargo interest) or deprived of some of its rights against another party (e.g. the insurer) may be determined by whether the vessel was, at the material time, seaworthy or whether the shipowner exercised due diligence to make the vessel seaworthy.

In this context, when a crew member's actions or lack of actions are involved, the seaworthiness of the ship may be dependent upon whether those actions or lack thereof resulted from the crew's negligence or incompetence; a 'negligent crew' may not render the vessel unseaworthy whereas an 'incompetent crew' almost certainly will. (By Reed Smith)
"The fact that economic difficulty due to long stand-by period is the top concern of seafarers shows that many of them are not prepared for such a risk." 
UP Department of Journalism Professor Lucia Tangi, on her doctoral study on the risks and vulnerability of Filipino seafarers which rank their fears in the profession including the need for social protection.

"These are trying times for the industry and seafarers in particular, who are simply trying to provide income for their families."
ITF Seafarers' Section Chair David Heindel, on reflecting the concerns of the unions following the designation of the Strait of Hormuz a "temporary extended risk zone" by the leadership of the bargaining forum.

"You think a gay person can't do anything on the ship? I proved that even though I'm gay, I can do it."
Aljon Buquid Asusano, on her hard work that paid off, which gave the realization that most seafarers were not like the officers who discriminated her before.

"It has become a stressful situation and a sensitive matter. A sad story and a bad memory that has ruined a working relationship with some colleagues."
Chief Officer Michael John Carayta, on an incident onboard one of his ships that he got involved in.

"You will promote the country throughout the whole world."
Senator Richard Gordon, on extolling the upcoming marine entrants from M&PE as the "pre-leadership partners of Filipino professionals" at the academy's commencement rites for the first batch of Class 2013.

"It seems the crew was not used to have a female on board. They didn't know how to handle such a situation."
Third Engineer Wandelyn Cano, on her experience when she embarked on her first ongoing ship as a cadet.
JSU - AMOSUP
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Seamen’s Hospital
Sailors Home
Seafarers House
PCDC
Slop Chest
Seamen’s Center
MAAP
Provision Fund