

Being Tried and Tested on Anro Temasek

Anro Temasek was a nightmare to me for my 1st year as a cadet at sea. Why was it a nightmare? The 2nd Engineer was Tan Seng Kong, he and Cho Cho were two of the famous four in NOL during that time for giving their subordinates a hard time! I was treated worse than a “Bangla” for the first 4 months and working 12-hour days. Being fresh out of the polytechnic, it seemed like I was subjected to torture and being exploited. How I pulled through was amazing.

I joined the ship when she was being “jumborised” in Jurong Shipyard. The whole engine room was in a mess. Tan Seng Kong made me crawl the whole double bottom to remove all the sludge with the help of a fireman. The worst was after cleaning; I had to paint the whole double bottom. At one stage, both my hands were badly cut and my arms were burnt in several places from accidentally touching the steam pipes. While removing the sludge and metal pieces, I had no protection for my hands.

However, after enduring the 4 months of mostly cleaning chores, Tan Seng Kong started to like me because I never utter a word of complaint to him. That was how from thereon, he started to get me to do all the engine room maintenance work, from servicing the purifiers to the repair of all the motors, pumps, etc. The result is that my experience of applying practically everything we learned from text book was invaluable.



Kelvin and another cadet in the engine room of Anro Temasek overhauling a unit of the main engine.

My most memorable experience was while at sea and on our way to Brisbane. The port-side main engine caught fire due to a choked pilot valve. The injection and exhaust valves broke to pieces. These we later found in the exhaust trunk when we climbed in to inspect the damage. Each of the metal pieces had to be removed one piece at a time. The whole pipe connected to the exhaust was red hot and “lucky” for us, did not melt. I guess the back fired temperature must have been above 900 deg C. All 9 units of the main engine cylinder head had to remove and repaired while our ship tossed and turned in the big sea for

3 days. We worked without sleep to complete the repairs and managed to get the main engine started again. I must accord all credit to our crazy Tan Seng Kong – I would claim that no one can match him when it comes to repairing the main engine, from trouble shooting to machining spares. However, he certainly lacked the human touch. On the 3rd day of repair work I fell asleep, got one of my finger cut accidentally. The cut was deep and bled profusely. There was no care or concern shown by the Chief and 2nd Engineer. I had to clean the wound, apply ointment and improvise my own bandage. I felt like dirt at that moment.

While the experience at sea was invaluable, I felt that I had enough and told myself that it would be better for me to get a degree and do other things. The experience on Anro Temasek taught me that if we persevere we can survive despite adverse conditions. And being tried and tested, I gained the confidence that I could undertake any project. With this confidence I ventured into marine and offshore business after obtaining my degree.

Kelvin Tan Keng Hock
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Kelvin graduated in 1982 with a Diploma in Marine Engineering from the Singapore Polytechnic. He went on to obtain his degree in Mechanical Engineering from University Of Strathclyde in 1987 and a MBA the following year. He returned to work for his family business for about 8 years before venturing into Bayswater Shipping. He helped grow the company to what it is today with a staff strength of close to 130 operating 10 tugs and barges, harbour mobile cranes and cargo handling equipment. Kelvin takes pride in acquiring their assets with cash in compliance with his company policy of achieving zero gearing.

Kelvin's sport is water polo and swimming. He represented his school, poly and club in swimming and water polo. Today, he still swims 3 times a week, each time covering 1.5 km in 30 minutes. He also works out 2 to 3 times in the gym and golfing once a week to keep fit. Unbelievers are welcome to examine the 6 packs on his body. He devotes a lot of his energy and time to helping others on their entrepreneurial ventures at the Singapore Graduates' Guild and the less fortunate.

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