

Incidents on Anro Temasek

My one year at sea as a cadet was filled with incidents that change my life and thinking.

On one of the voyages Anro Temasek was caught in the storm at night near Melbourne. The waves tossed our ship such that the stern was exposed at least 3 times causing our propellers to over speed. During this time all of us were in engine room praying hard that our ship would not sink. Credit should go to Captain George Fung who asked for full speed ahead (21 knots) to ride through the wave. I found out later from my Dad that this was the right decision. A ship has a better chance of staying upright afloat if it faces a huge wave with its bow and at full speed.

This narrow escape from death at the age of 21 led me to think hard of my life ahead. Other incidents on board the same ship like these also shaped my life:

- One engine cylinder head caught fire during my watch. I was lucky that it did not explode.
- The main engines were suddenly cut off causing a black out. This happened while we were being piloted out from Brisbane Port. Tan Seng Kong saved our ship for he managed to restart the engine in time for the Captain to avoid a collision with a jetty.
- A crack developed on ship side starboard side forward of mid-ship. This could be due to poor workmanship for it happened not long after our ship was jumborized. Welders had to come on board to weld up the crack while we continued our voyage.
- The main sea water pipe had a puncture. We formed a squad in the double bottom to support the pipe while the 2nd Engineer (forgot his name and he is not Tan Seng Kong this time) welded up the hole.
- A crack developed in a steam pipe and again our 2nd Engineer Tan Seng Kong did the welding repair.
- The turbocharger mal-functioned causing what sounded like an explosion in the engine room.
- We had a few black outs in the Engine Room. On one occasion, the Chief Engineer (a Mr. Singh) panicked and asked me to hold his hand and guide him to the Engine Control Room.
- My worst experience was being made responsible by Tan Seng Kong for preparing the engine room for inspection on arrival in Singapore by the Superintendent Mr. Chia Che Kiang. To clean the floor I had to use diesel oil to remove stains. Next I had to remove the oil with detergent before giving the floor a coat of paint. Finally, I had to make sure that no one dirties the floor with their safety boots. All were ordered to wear socks to walk. For the Engine Control Room, I had to wax the floor to give a shine.
- My other unpleasant chore as a cadet was to make coffee every morning for 2nd Engineer Tan Seng Kong which he expected to see waiting for him on his table in the Engine Control Room.

I was relieved when Tan Seng Kong signed off after 6 months. The saving grace is that by that time I became a champion cadet – I could almost do everything from servicing the cylinder head to the pumps all by myself! And as I have said in “Being Tried and Tested on Anro Temasek”, my experience at sea made me switch to a land-based career and gave me the confidence to embark on almost any project.

Kelvin Tan Keng Hock
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Kelvin graduated in 1982 with a Diploma in Marine Engineering from the Singapore Polytechnic, 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 which has grown to a company that employs close to 130 operating 10 tugs and barges, harbour mobile cranes and cargo handling equipment.

Kelvin was a water polo player and swimmer in his younger days. These days, he keeps fit swimming 3 times a week, works out in the gym and golf. He also 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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