

Why Do Marine Engineering ?

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Ng Kian Meng - who graduated with a Diploma in Marine Engineering in 1974

I took up Marine Engineering for the following reasons:

- 1) To see the world
- 2) To earn good money
- 3) To get indefinite deferment from National Service

I was in the class of 1970/74, which is the first batch under the 4-year course, reduced from 5 year, and as a result, we graduated at the same time as our seniors.

I did my cadetship on board Neptune Jasper and Jade. I had a life threatening experience on board Neptune Jasper in Dec 1972 when I was downed with acute appendicitis, 2 days from Sydney. I was unable to work and in pains. Upon reaching port, I was rushed to the hospital where an operation was immediately done. My appendix has just started to burst, and this resulted in post-operative complications. Consequently, I stayed 3 weeks in a Sydney hospital and spent my Christmas there. I thanked God that I was saved just in time and was subsequently discharged and recuperated on board as a passenger on the journey back to Singapore.

I found that I didn't quite like sea farer's life and after I graduated in 1974, managed to get a job in Vosper Thornycroft as a Design Draughtsman for 3 months before calling up for National Service. It was in Vosper that I discovered my flair for design and decided to pursue this as my career thereafter. At the same time, the long arm of the Law has caught up with all the Poly Marine boys and we were all drafted to serve in the Army / Navy. 1974 was the first year that Poly Marine boys were drafted.

Marine Engineering course is actually Mechanical based with Marine subjects. The academic subjects that we covered in our studies like Electronics, Maths, Mechanics, Chemistry, and Thermodynamics were useful when I started to work as EA (Mech Design) in Philips (Audio) in 1977, after I completed my N.S. All in all, I spent about 18 years in Product Design (Consumer Electronics and Commercial products), before I switched career to Service, Supply Chain and Quality. I worked mostly in big MNC like Philips, Smith Corona, Motorola, Dell and Apple, rising thru the ranks into senior management. I was very fortunate to have worked under many good bosses who have influenced and moulded me into what I am today.

Marine Engineers often have to work under very harsh conditions & limitations on board and my 1-year cadetship has helped to "toughen" me with a "can-do" attitude.

Though I pursue a different career path, I was grateful that Marine Engineering course has well prepared its students to take on various & different challenges in the working world, as evidenced by the various shore-based professions held by former marine engineers.

I also fondly remembered Mr. Cheng, who taught Automation & Control in our final year. He is well known for his no-nonsense approach for inattentiveness in his class and his zero tolerance for non-punctuality made his students fear and respect him. Despite that, he is also both firm and fair.
