

## Why Go To Sea (III) ?

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I was from the last batch that did the 4 years programme with 1 year full time at sea and six months yard plus some weeks during the earlier years. Nothing to be proud of but may be worth mentioning.

Marine engineering was my first choice in Poly. From my 3A class, besides myself, Gan Kee Giap, Leong Kok Chee and Siow Hung Meng got their Chief's ticket. There could be others from the other classes. The total intake for that year was 80+ students.

Why stay on at sea? For me : passion for the job , a good attitude in work, perseverance and not afraid of getting my hands dirty.

Before signing on with 2 others as engine cadets with Straits Steamships, we were briefed by one senior gentleman, Capt Ho if I recollect. He asked us why we want to go to sea. Two of my batch mates replied that they want to see the world. For me, my answer is straight on that I want to earn money. At that time, marine engineers were not that highly paid as compared to shore guys. Cadets got between \$200 and \$400. Not a lot but good enough for me to start with.

There were 3 cadets on my ship. We sailed on a RORO vessel called Anro Asia with 2 sets of Dutch Chief Engineers and Second Engineers. They were on a very short contract and it was a good life for them. I remembered one crazy Dutch Second Engineer working like a bull and we used to call him a "Ah Gu". Calling us to work like dogs and pulling out pumps, turbo chargers, ME units works, purifiers, AE overhauling , ME bearing surveys etc and replacing parts like anything (some parts were not even necessary but replaced to comply with requirements set in the PMS system). My God, he was an expensive engineer! Maybe Straits Steamships had lesser say than Nedloyd – one of the part owners of the vessel.

All of us cadets got along well and somehow one year did not seem long. However, my cadet mates lost interest in seeing the world after seeing Australia. They did not continue after this. As for me, I remembered enjoying the work. I was told by the Dutch Engineers, "the more you sweat the more you learn". It was a good training base for me. We were treated well and was told also that if we, "take care of your men they will take care of you!" This is among some of the core principles that I am applying in my work.

As for the Poly boys now a days, how many of them or Singaporeans are really passionate about this job and love to sweat and be away home for some time? It's a dying breed.

I got my Chief's ticket in 1995 and sailed on for 2 contracts. I came ashore in 1997 and have been in ship management ever since. I did not make as much money as I wished, but I am happy with what life has for me.

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