

Working Life Ashore

After spending a fairly long period of my life sailing across the 7 seas, I decided that it was high time I quit the sea for good. So on 13th December 1979, I signed off my last vessel, the “Neptune lolite”, at Singapore.

Before stepping ashore I had already decided to try my hand at Marine Surveying. So after completing my leave, accumulated from my last ship, I joined Techmar Marine Consultants & Surveyors Pte Ltd, as a Marine Engineer Surveyor. The Managing Director of this Company was my brother, Ronald Pereira, but don't for even one second be mistaken that he went easy on me. In fact he made me go a mile longer, just to prove to the other staff that he was not favoring me.

As I got used to the job and working ashore, I began to like the work of a Surveyor, no doubt there was a fair bit of paper work following each assignment, but I found the work challenging and personally rewarding, after a job well done. Also I was not desk bound as all surveys were conducted out of the Office. Quite often I had to travel overseas and sometimes to remote places in Indonesia and other third world countries. Quite often I had to travel by a small light plane/helicopter; to reach my destination.

In one of my early surveys, I was assigned to accompany Capt Phillips (a company Director), on a survey of a tug boat. We had been informed that the tug boat was moored at a timber yard off Sungei Kadut, Singapore. Upon arrival at the destination, we discovered that the subject tug boat was moored 8 vessels abreast away from the shore. We then proceeded to the tug boat without encountering any problems. Upon completing our survey, we slowly made our way back to shore however, upon arriving at the last barge moored next to the wharf, we found that the barge had drifted some distance away from the wharf, making it impossible for us to cross to shore. After asking around, we managed to get some of the vessels' crew to lay two wooden planks across the barge and the wharf. Being younger and the junior surveyor, I volunteered to test the make-shift gang plank, I then cautiously walked across and as I reached about mid-way, there was a loud splintering crack, the two planks gave way and I was sent hurtling into the murky waters below. I hurriedly surfaced and made a quick recce of the surrounding area. I noted that I had fallen from a height of about 15 feet and was fortunate that there were no pylons or spikes below where I had fallen. I was togged out in my high survey boots and overalls at the time, so with some difficulty I managed to slowly dog paddle to the side of the wharf where, I then climbed up onto the wharf, using the steel rungs fitted on the wharf pillar.

Moral of the story: “Don't try to play the Hero”

In another assignment I was instructed to carry out a survey at the shipyard premises of Keppel Tuas Shipyard Limited, Singapore. We had received very vague instructions to carry out survey of damage to a wharf at the shipyard. Upon arriving at the shipyard, I proceeded to meet the Ship Repair Manager in-charge. Upon enquiring, he informed me that on the previous night at approx 11pm, the shipyard had encountered a strong wind (tropical squall), which gusted to approx 70 km/hr. At the time, an oil tanker had been moored alongside the wharf outside a dry dock, after being undocked. The vessel had a very high free-board as all her cargo and ballast tanks had been pumped dry, prior to her being dry docked. Subsequently the strong gusting wind descended upon the vessel and began to buffet the vessel's hull. The high free-board of the vessel's hull acted like a great big sail, thus causing excessive loading on the vessel's moorings. In a short while, the winch brakes began to slip (the vessel's mooring lines had been secured to the winch drums) and the release of the mooring lines began to gain momentum, with the strong gusting wind continuing to buffet the vessel's hull. Consequently the vessel swung around to towards the

opposite wharf and her portside stern contacted heavily with the wharf. Major damage was sustained by the shipyard's wharf and a wharf crane located in the vicinity. The subject vessel sustained only minor damage.

The SRM then summoned his foreman and instructed him to show me the wharf damage. Together with the foreman, we proceeded to the damage location. Upon arriving at the location I was shocked to see the devastation that had occurred, the area resembled a war zone. The complete wharf capping had collapsed and crumbled into rubble and large slabs of concrete were strewn all over the affected area. Some of the wharf support pillars had also suffered major damage. The damaged wharf area measured approx 100 metres length and extended approx 70 metres inwards, from the wharf edge.

In addition a tall wharf crane located in the vicinity of the Incident, had sustained major damage. All 4 base support legs of the crane had been heavily buckled at mid height (vee shaped) and the whole crane was precariously tilted inwards. Each of the steel girder base support legs measured approx 1.2m W x 0.5m flange.

We subsequently boarded the subject vessel and ascertained that at the time of the reported Incident, the vessel had been made fast to the shore by 16 mooring lines. All the mooring lines had reportedly been secured to the vessel's winch drums, which in turn had been held fast by their respective winch brakes. I then carried out inspection of all the winches that had been utilized for the mooring of the vessel. No apparent damage was found on the winches, however, the winch brake linings of all the winches used for mooring the vessel were found heavily abraded/worn down. It was evident that the provisions for mooring the vessel were inadequate for holding the vessel secure, in the reported circumstances. Upon the vessel's arrival at the shipyard, the relevant Shipyard personnel should have advised the vessel's Master of the ever present danger of a violent tropical squall (Sumatra wind) descending upon the shipyard. The Master could then have taken the necessary measures to ensure that the vessel's moorings were more than adequate to withstand the strong wind forces that the vessel had been subjected to.

Reinstatement of the subject damage sustained entailed reconstruction of the damaged section of the wharf and replacement of the entire base support section of the wharf crane.

On one of my assignments, I was requested to survey a damaged 90ft fiberglass yacht, at Phuket, Thailand. She had been en-voyage from an island off the east coast of West Malaysia to Phuket, when she ran smack into a large drift fishing net; consequently her auxiliary drive engine was torn off its mountings. The Master subsequently informed the Owner of the mishap but assured him that he would complete the voyage, using the vessel's sails. Shortly after the vessel set sail for Phuket. However, early next morning the Master went on deck and upon checking the main mast was alarmed to discover that the main mast was wobbling in the wind. Hurriedly with the help of his sailor, they lowered all the main mast sails and carried out some temporary lashing repairs. The Owner was subsequently informed of the latest development and he promptly dispatched a tug boat to tow the stricken yacht to Phuket.

On the morning after my arrival at Phuket, the Yacht's Agent brought me to the vessel, which was moored at a boat yard. I then boarded the vessel and carried out my survey. I first interviewed the vessel's Skipper, to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the incident and I then proceeded to inspect the damage sustained by the auxiliary drive engine. Subsequently I made my way to the main deck to inspect the damage sustained by the wooden main mast. Upon inspecting the main mast, I noted that most of the damage were located at a considerable height above the main deck; making proper inspection of the damage impractical. At this juncture, I requested the vessel's Skipper to arrange for the mast

to be dismantled and lifted ashore, to facilitate proper inspection. Subsequently the wooden main mast was lifted off its mounting, utilizing the boatyard's shore crane. The crane boom was then slewed around to facilitate lowering of the mast onto the wharf. Suddenly the main mast collapsed into several pieces, whereupon the mast was hurriedly lowered onto the wharf and laid out for inspection. I was promptly summoned and together with the vessel's Skipper we proceeded to the wharf to inspect the mast. Upon inspection, I noted that the wooden mast had collapsed/broken at several locations and the broken /collapsed areas were noted to be whitish in colour. The wooden material was found to be spongy and soft like cork and was easily broken off with the hand. During the course of our inspection, the vessel's Skipper exclaimed, "If had known, I would have thrown the mast over the side". The Skipper informed me that the vessel was only a few years old and had been built in Hong Kong. It was evident that the wooden mast had not been properly treated and protected at the time of construction. Consequently this led to rapid deterioration/decay of the mast, leading to the damage as noted. Reinstatement of the mast would not have been covered by the Underwriters as the damage sustained was considered not connected with the reported Incident.

From the time I arrived at Phuket for my assignment, I had been checking around, especially with the "tuk-tuk" drivers, concerning 'Deep Sea Fishing' at Phuket. In fact on the very first "tuk-tuk" I hailed to go to the boatyard, I chatted with the driver and upon enquiry he retorted, 'You come to the right man I like to go fishing....blah...blah...blah' and he pulled out several photo albums showing his prize catches. So I told him, lets wait and see, you standby, the moment that I know that I am free, I will call you. As luck would have it, I completed my survey on the 6th day....there was no flight back to Singapore on the 7th day, so I promptly contacted the "tuk-tuk" man and told him, "we go fishing tomorrow, please".

Early next morning, the "tuk-tuk" man picked me up and we proceeded to the market to buy some bait, we then motored straight to the location where the boat was moored (40ft. fiber-glass hull fishing boat, propelled by an inboard diesel engine). I was then handed a drum reel mounted on a medium action hollow fiber-glass rod (both rod & reel having no brand name), also only one raffia skirted lure was handed to me. Shortly after we set off for the fishing grounds, when we were some distance from shore, the boat boy set the drag on the fishing reel and then launched the lure some distance away before locking the reel and placing the rod back in the holder. (In Thailand you are treated like a King, the boat boy will see to everything, even when the fish strikes, he will spring up, lift the rod out of the rod holder and place it into your hands, only then are you invited to do battle with the fish). About 15 minutes later the rod bent over and the line raced out, before I could spring into action, the boat boy yanked the rod from its holder and handed the rod to me. I then had a small tussle before landing the fish - a 6kg tuna. Shortly after I landed a barracuda and then a "wahoo" (each weighing around 5kg), at this time the Skipper decided to drop anchor as it was approaching 12 noon. We did some bottom fishing, but only caught small fishes, after some time I started chatting with the Skipper and asked him whether there were any spots where I could catch 'Marlin', he quickly retorted, "No! No! your fishing rod and reel no good, cannot catch Marlin". I continued to pester the Skipper and finally he relented, he said, "3 o'clock we go". When 3pm arrived, the anchor was heaved up and the vessel headed towards the fishing grounds. After about 20 minutes the skipper started shouting loudly, "Marlin! Marlin! Marlin", I immediately looked forward and sighted 2 huge fish springing out of the sea, about 500 meters away. The skipper steadily steered his boat towards the direction where the fish were springing out of the sea. On the first maneuver around the area where the fish had been sighted, nothing happened, so the Skipper circled the area again, suddenly my rod bent right over and the line began to race out. I grabbed hold of the rod and in a short while the line went slack. I was very disappointed at losing the fish, but the Skipper remarked that the fish had not been properly hooked. The Skipper then continued to steer his boat around the fishing area. In less than 20 minutes the 2 fishes were again sighted springing out of the sea. The Skipper immediately steered his boat towards the location,

whilst circling the area, I suddenly had a strike, I excitedly battled the fish for about 30 minutes before landing it on deck, however, the fish started jumping and flapping around on deck, we all stood well clear of it's menacing sword and allowed it to jump back into the sea, I continued to fight the fish until it grew tired, it was then again landed on deck. The fish that I caught was a beautiful 'Sailfish', weighing 27.5 kg and approx 9 ft in length. Shortly after, the Skipper informed me that it was time to head back for shore, I protested, "No let me catch another big one", the Skipper replied "No you already catch a big fish, if you catch another big fish, your hand will hurt too much for you to pull it up", that night I had to get someone to massage my aching arms. Next day I flew back to Singapore, I was still bubbling over with my recent 'Fishing Escapade', my poor wife was kept awake throughout the night with my constant babbling about my 'fishy adventure'.

On another assignment, I was instructed to carry out survey on an Indian flagged oil tanker; the vessel had run aground and had sustained major damage in way of her bow. The vessel had been dry docked at Jurong Shipyard and a joint survey had been called to ascertain the damage sustained and to determine the necessary repairs to be carried out. As the lower section of the bow had sustained severe damage and was hanging precariously, it was deemed necessary to prop up/secure the lower section of the bow, before any survey could be carried out. Subsequently a joint survey was carried out with the Shipowner's Consultant, vessel's Captain, the Lloyds Classification surveyor and myself representing vessel's Underwriters, in attendance. From the onset of our survey, the vessel's Consultant kept dropping the names of so the called prominent figures in the Marine Industry, he went on to relate his marine experiences and highlighted that he had been a senior surveyor with American Bureau of Shipping, Sri Lanka. Throughout the survey the vessel's Consultant was very loud and demanding, he kept disputing the repairs proposed by the Class surveyor. There was a whole lot of argument between the Consultant and the Class Surveyor before agreement was made on the extent of the repairs. That was not the end, after we had completed our survey, the vessel's Consultant headed back to the vessel's bow and began to instruct the shipyard staff to alter the proposed repairs earlier indicated by the Class surveyor. The Class Surveyor (British) happened to notice this, stormed back to the vessel and after having a shouting match with the Consultant, put a stop to the counter orders given by the Consultant.

Following our survey, the vessel's Consultant informed me that he would be submitting a list of additional damage claims in connection with the vessel's grounding, namely:

- a) Straining of the main engine during operation; when attempting to free the vessel from the grounding. Allegedly the main engine cylinder liners, pistons, piston rings and other items had sustained damage.
- b) Ballast and salt water cooling pumps had sustained damage due to heavy ingress of sand, due to vessel's grounding.

I informed the Consultant that I would take note of his alleged claims, 'Without Prejudice To Underwriters Liability'. Also he was to inform me when the alleged damaged components were disassembled and made available for inspection. I then continued to attend the vessel at the shipyard, to monitor the repairs being carried out. I also attended at the vessel's engine-room and the shipyard workshop to inspect the disassembled components from the vessel's main engine and pumps. During this time I also visited the 2nd Engineer at his cabin, whereupon I requested to sight the Engine Log book. After a cursory glance through the log book, I asked the 2nd Engineer for permission to bring the log book back to the Office for a few days, to allow me some time to peruse the log book. The 2nd Engineer obliged. At the Office I carefully leafed through the pages of the log book and took note of the pertinent entries. Then bingo! I discovered that on the last few pages of the log book, provision had been made for recording the daily work carried out. The Second Engineer had painstakingly recorded all the daily work/inspections/repairs that had been

carried out. He even recorded the inspection/condition of the main engine cylinder liners and piston rings (numerous piston rings were reported broken), made through the cylinder liner ports. From the Second Engineer's log entries, it was clearly evident that the vessel's main engine and machinery had been poorly maintained. After noting down the important points recorded in the log book, I photo copied all the work report pages, before I returned the log book to the 2nd Engineer.

Some time later, the subject repair claim bills were forwarded to me. I perused the repair bills and noted that there were about 15 repair items on claim. In reply to the claim letter, I stated that only the repair bills pertaining to the repair of the vessel's damaged bow were connected with the reported Incident and considered fair and reasonable. I refuted the remaining claim items, stating that the items were not connected with the reported Incident. Shortly after, I received a harsh letter from the vessel's Adjusters, demanding to know why the numerous claim items had been rejected. I promptly replied to his letter, requesting the Adjuster to refer to the daily engine room work report recorded by the vessel's 2nd Engineer, in the last few pages of the engine log book. I then gave my comments on the claim Bills I had refuted, one Bill at time, each time referring to the relevant incriminating evidence religiously recorded by the 2nd Engineer, in the last few pages of the engine log book. I then concluded that in view of the incriminating evidence found in the 2nd Engineer's daily work report, it was very evident that the rejected damage repair claim Bills were not connected with the reported Incident, therefore all the repair costs should correctly be solely for the Ship-owners account. There was no further correspondence from the Adjuster.

One survey that stands out very clearly in my memory to date was the survey of a 300,000 ton supertanker, "Jasper". She had departed from a shipyard in Japan after completing her dry docking and scheduled repairs and was on ballast passage to a port in Indonesia. Half way on her voyage, the vessel's engine-room caught fire and when the fire got out of control, the Master gave the order to 'Abandon Ship', he also sent out a distress call requesting for Help! At this juncture, the vessel's Officers and crew boarded the vessel's life-boats and the life-boats were then launched. When the life-boats had moved some distance away from the vessel, two successive loud explosions were heard, emanating from the vessel's engine-room. The Salvage tug boats eventually arrived on the scene and began to fight the Fire, after some time they managed to put out the fire on the vessel. Subsequently the vessel was towed by the Salvage tug boats, bound for Singapore. Upon arrival, she was anchored at the West Jurong Anchorage, Singapore; whereupon surveys and investigations were carried out to determine the cause/s of the fire and to ascertain the reinstatement costs for returning the vessel to pre-damage condition.

Subsequently, I was assigned to survey the MT "Jasper", on behalf of the vessel's Underwriters. Together with my Managing Director, we boarded a launch and headed for the vessel. Upon arrival at the vessel we noted that a Salvor's tug boat was standing by the vessel. We then boarded the vessel and were met by a security guard, stationed on the vessel. We then showed him our identification documents and stated the purpose for our attendance onboard the vessel, whereupon we were granted permission to carry out survey onboard the vessel. The guard advised us to exercise extreme caution when carrying out our survey in the engine-room as the engine room was in a perilous condition. The guard then accompanied us to the engine-room entrance. As soon as we stepped into the engine-room, we stopped dead in our tracks. We were shocked to behold the devastation caused by the fire. The entire engine-room and all its machinery had been gutted. All the engine-room bulkheads, compartments and storage tanks were severely burnt and blackened. Also all the engine-room steel floor plates had broken away from their support brackets and fallen down to the bottom platform. To facilitate inspection of the engine-room, temporary wooden walkways had to be erected by the Salvors.

We then carefully made our way around the engine room. Everything that we sighted had been badly burnt/gutted. We finally arrived at the bottom platform and upon walking around to the back of the main-engine, we noted that all the engine crank-case doors were heavily buckled and had been blown out. They were all positioned at an angle of 90 degrees to the engine and resembled open sardine cans. We continued to carefully walk around the engine-room, inspecting all the damage that had been sustained in the engine-room as well as searching for evidence that would assist us in ascertaining the cause/s of the subject 'Inferno'. We finally decided to call it a day. Upon exiting the engine-room we briefly, from a distance inspected the weather decks located immediately forward and aft of the accommodation. Where seen the weather decks were noted heavily bulged/buckled.

I attended onboard the vessel for the next 2 days. On my second attendance, I was informed that 9 personnel, consisting of Fire Consultants, Marine Consultants, and Shipowners' representatives had attended onboard the vessel, over 3 days prior to our attendance. Also I was informed that 3 persons had perished in the engine-room fire, the vessel's 2nd Engineer (found dead at the main engine controls), the duty greaser (found dead in the vicinity of the Heavy Fuel Oil service tank) and 1 riding crew (found dead in a cabin). I then proceeded to the engine-room and was informed that the Main Engine Manufacturer's representative was in the main-engine crank-case carrying out inspection. I promptly climbed into the engine crank-case and together with the engine Manufacturer's we carried out inspection of the crank-case. Several major cracks/fractures were found at scattered locations, in way of the main engine bedplate. Following discussion with the Engine Manufacturer's representative, I then resumed my survey in the engine-room. At this juncture I was informed that two Fire Consultants were carrying out inspection in the engine-room. As I had not been able to determine the cause/s of the subject Fire, I decided to eaves-drop on their conversation. So I sidled up close to them, pretending to survey the damage, whilst my ears were cocked wide open to pick up the conversation transpiring between the Fire Consultants. From the conversation picked up from the Consultants, I gathered that a high pressure fuel oil pipe had leaked, in the vicinity of the main engine controls. Consequently the high pressure fine oil mist impinged on a hot surface (e.g. electric bulb) and was set alight, the fire then swiftly spread down the engine crank-case doors, where the oil leakage had flowed. In a short space of time there was a raging fire, which spread rapidly throughout the engine-room. When it was ascertained that the fire was out of control, the Order was given to 'Abandon Ship'. The two successive explosions which were heard when the life-boats were some distance away from the vessel, were attributed to the intense heat of the fire generating oil mist within the crank-case, consequently leading to the reported explosions within the engine crank-case and the resultant damage. Later when the two Fire Consultants had moved away, I carefully inspected the area indicated by them. From the scorched fire path noted and the condition of the resultant fire damage, it was evident that the Fire had initiated from this location; matching up with the Fire Consultants deductions.

Subsequently I surveyed the vessel's accommodation and Navigational Bridge. The accommodation and Navigational Bridge spaces were found variously damaged. Numerous Bridge equipments were noted to have apparently sustained damage due to the intense heat from the fire.

Several days later, we were informed that a meeting had been held among all the parties concerned. After some discussion, it was decided that it was economically unfeasible to carry out repairs on the subject vessel. The vessel was declared a 'Total Constructive Loss'.

Some time later the financial crisis began to set in, the Marine Industry was badly hit and Shipping Companies began to lay up their vessels and to lay off their staff, likewise Survey Companies started to feel the effects, they were receiving very few job assignments.

With this in view, I decided to leave Tech-mar in early 1993. I promptly sent out scores of job applications, searching for a job. Approximately 3 months later I was offered a job as a Facilities & New Buildings Manager, with Atlantis Shipyard; with the job market looking fairly bleak, I decided to accept the offer.

Upon joining the shipyard, I gradually settled into the daily work routine. However, a few months later, in the early morning, I received a phone call from the New Buildings Department Engineer, informing me that they were waiting for clearance from the Facilities Department, to proceed with the Heavy Lifting and Installation of a 'Building Block'. I then informed him that my Crane Engineer was in charge and that he should summon the Crane Engineer to carry out the necessary. The New Buildings Engineer retorted that the Crane Engineer had taken leave and could not be contacted. He also mentioned that I was wasting precious time as a 400 ton crane had been hired for the Lifting and Installation operation, costing S\$4000.00 an hour. Having no other alternative, I proceeded to the New Buildings work-site to meet the New Buildings Engineer. He then informed me that a 'Building Block' weighing approx 300 tons was to be lifted, shifted and installed on the vessel under construction. The 400 ton crane had been hired to assist the shipyard cranes in the exercise. At this juncture I requested to inspect the 'Lifting Spreader Bar' that would be used for the subject 'Building Block' installation, upon completing the inspection, I then requested to sight the 'Lifting Spreader Bar' test certificate. I then carried out inspection of the lifting pads fitted on the 'Building Block', one of the lifting pads was found in a shockingly poor condition. Several large gashes/deep cavities were noted in way of the lifting pad/'Building Block' weldment. I questioned the New Buildings Engineer, concerning the extremely poor condition of the subject welding and whether the installation of the lifting pads had been inspected by an Inspector from the Shipyard's NDT Department, he had no answer to this. Upon completion of my inspection, I again requested the Engineer to produce the 'Lifting Spreader Bar' test certificate, for inspection, he was unable to comply. I then informed him that the following had to be carried out before clearance for the Lifting operation would be granted:-

- a) 'Lifting Spreader Bar' valid test certificate to be produced for inspection.
- b) The defective welding in way of the lifting pad/'Building Block' to be inspected and repaired in keeping with the shipyard's NDT Inspector's instructions.

At this juncture the New Buildings Engineer decided to report the matter to his Manager, whereupon both of them promptly proceeded to the CEO's Office. Upon meeting the CEO, they reported the matter to him. After some discussion, the CEO advised them that the ball was in their court, they had to make a decision on how to conduct the lifting operation. After much discussion, it was decided to lift the subject 'Building Block' without the use of the 'Lifting Spreader Bar'. Shortly after the lifting/installation operation commenced, the 'Building Block' was carefully lifted and maneuvered to the installation site. Everybody watched with bated breath until the Block was safely lowered into position. Apart from some minor deformations in way of the lifting wire slings, no other damage was sustained.

Next morning the shipyard's Chief Executive Officer summoned us for a meeting, the following personnel were present:- The New Buildings Manager, the New Buildings Engineer, the Facilities & New Buildings Manager (myself), the Crane Engineer, the General Manager and the Chief Executive Officer.

At the start of the meeting all was quiet. Then the CEO suddenly threw a tirade, accusing me of wasting the Company's money. He stated that the hire of the 400 ton crane was \$4000/hour and I had caused a long delay during the New Buildings department 'Heavy Lift' Operation. I was aghast at the stand that the CEO had taken, so I stood up and in a raised voice shot back that I was following Safety procedures. At this point the GM

exclaimed, "How can you talk to the CEO in this way", I retorted, "Of course I can, he is accusing me of acting incorrectly". The CEO continued to reprimand me on the matter and I continued to defend myself, the heated argument was getting real furious, so much so that my Crane Engineer got alarmed, he began to kick me under the table, but I ignored him. Suddenly the CEO called the meeting to a close; however, the two of us were still trading words until we exited from the meeting room. I was still furious that I had been wrongly accused, so when I got home I made a search and managed to find some Heavy Lift and Crane Safety brochures. I placed the brochures into a folder and 2 days later I paid the CEO a visit. I handed him the various Safety brochures, whereupon he leafed through the brochures and then said to me, "You must be careful of those crafty old Chinese men (referring to the Crane Engineer), they can make use of you for their own purposes". From that day on we never had any more differences.

Some time later, the CEO and GM from Neptune's were posted elsewhere, it was a sad day for Atlantis Shipyard. Their positions were promptly taken up by personnel from Jurong Shipyard. Shortly after, the newly appointed GM began to victimize the shipyard personnel and one by one, the senior staff began to tender their resignations from the shipyard. Before long he began to find fault with me, all because I spoke up against some of his proposals. After a while it became a daily routine, we would do our morning exercise and then a pep-talk would be given. As soon as the pep-talk ended, the GM would walk straight up to me and start shouting his head off over some trivial matter. I of course could not tolerate his nonsense, so I would yell back at him and counter his accusations. There were times when I would get so disgusted that I would turn around and walk away, if he wanted to continue his tirade he would have had to hurry after me. This went on for quite a while, at times he would meet me somewhere in the yard and for no reason at all he would start bawling at me. I reckon that had I been younger I would have fisted him in the face and suffered the consequences, but I was getting on in age and I had a family to support. All I could do was to grit my teeth and bear it. In fact many a time after having a shouting match with the GM, I would storm to my Office and pummel my steel filing cabinet. I would have run amok if I had just bottled up all the anger in me. Things were getting from bad to worse, I could see the writing on the wall, if I did not tender my resignation, the GM would eventually sack me, and so in early 1996 I tendered my resignation from the Shipyard. In the mean time I started to compose my 'Farewell Letter' and managed to complete it just in time. On my last day, just before I stepped out of the Shipyard, I clicked 'Send' on my PC and e-mailed my farewell letter to everyone in Atlantis Shipyard, certain personnel in the NOL Office and Jurong Shipyard. Certain gentlemen from Jurong were not too pleased to receive the e-mail, as in narrative form I had poked fun and ridiculed them. I was informed that practically the whole of Atlantis Shipyard were tickled pink at my jibes towards certain gentlemen. I had taken special care not to mention names, so they had second thoughts about pressing charges against me.

Once again I was left to pace the streets in search of a job; with scarcely any savings in my 'piggy bank', I was quite desperate. I started calling on colleagues and sending out scores of job applications, but to no avail. After several months hunting for work, I suddenly received a call from a former colleague, informing me that my former Company, Tech-mar Marine Services, had a vacancy for a part-time Consultant Engineer. I promptly contacted the Company Director and after some discussion, secured the job. The job entailed vetting the survey reports of all the Surveyors and carrying out marine surveys whenever required. I found the job challenging as well as lucrative as I was allowed to carry out survey work allotted by other external Survey companies. However, things were not to be, shortly after Tech-mar was acquired by a Hong Kong company and she was subsequently consolidated with the other Singapore companies which had been earlier purchased. Consequently Tech-mar was ordered to trim down her staff, without a doubt I was the first one out. Fortunately I had just clinched a job to superintend the construction of a product tanker; for an Indonesian Company, P.T. Lajuprakarsa Indah Shipping Company. I later casually informed the Boss

that I had lost my job with Tech-mar, whereupon he told me not to worry as there was a strong possibility that he would have something for me. About a month before the vessel departed from the shipyard, he approached me and asked me to sail with his new vessel for 2 months, as a New Buildings Superintendent. I pondered on the matter for a few days before accepting the offer; provided that my salary was increased to 1½ times my current monthly wages. My Boss agreed to my terms.

Subsequently in early March, 1998 the vessel, "Lajuprakarsa V" departed from the shipyard with me onboard, I sailed with the vessel for 2 months and she called at various Indonesian ports, loaded with her product cargo. Generally the vessel operated smoothly, however, I noted that the Indonesian Engineers were reluctant to follow instructions concerning operating the main engine and the other ancillary equipment. For one I had to repeatedly remind the Engineers to operate the marine diesel oil and the lubricating oil separators (which were fully automatic). Also there were strict instructions from the Engine Manufacturers, to regularly clean the main engine turbo-charger turbine blades using ground grain husks. I discovered that this was not carried out for some time. I eventually completed my tenure onboard the vessel, around mid-April 1998, and I subsequently departed from the vessel at Merak, the Pertamina Oil Terminal. Together with the vessel's Master, we traveled to the company's Jakarta Head Office. During this time the Boss requested that I continue to work with the Company as a Superintendent, based at Jakarta. As I had no other job in hand, I decided to accept the offer. At the time a Company's vessel was due to call at Jakarta for dry docking and carrying out general maintenance. At this juncture, I returned to Singapore for some leave, before returning back to Jakarta to commence work as a Superintendent.

Upon returning to Jakarta, I commenced work on the Company's product tanker, "Lajuprakarsa III", berthed at the Tanjong Priok Shipyard, she was scheduled for major steelwork and machinery repairs. Major sections of the vessel's hull plating, structural members, tank tops and fittings required renewal. Also overall of the main engine was being carried out by the Chief Engineer and his engineers. The steelwork repairs and the main engine overhaul had commenced and were progressing steadily. However, on the Jakarta streets unrest began to build up, protests demonstrations by the students and the general public became a daily affair. On May 12th 1998, students from the Trisakti University planned to march to Parliament House to present their demands, they were halted by the Police and at about 5pm shots were fired at the students, 4 students were killed. In the meantime, we continued to commute to the shipyard, to follow up with the ongoing ship repairs, returning to our lodgings in the evening upon completion of our work. On 11/5/98 when we left the shipyard at 4pm, we found that there were massive traffic jams in all the connecting roads. We were informed that huge protests demonstrations were being staged in the city. We finally managed to reach our motel at around 7pm. On the next day we left the shipyard at 3pm, hoping to avoid the traffic snarls, we managed to get back to our motel at around 4pm. Shortly after, whilst I was having a drink in the cafeteria, located at the rear of the motel, a mob went pass and pelted the front of the motel with stones. This alerted us that trouble was brewing, as my room was located at the front of the motel, I requested for my room to be switched to the rear. My colleague (Singapore Chinese) and I then went searching for some lengths of steel pipes, for defending ourselves in case the mobs stormed the motel. That night after watching the news on TV, I fell asleep. On 13/5/98, I woke up at around 10am and switched on the Australian TV News, I was shocked to discover that massive rioting had broken out all over Jakarta. Rampant fighting and murdering was taking place on TV right before my eyes. Shopping malls, buildings and scores of vehicles had been set alight/gutted. I opened my room door and was shocked to see hordes of people lounging around the motel's corridors and landings. They had fled from the rioting mobs and had taken refuge in the motel. I then ordered some breakfast and shortly after telephoned the Singapore Embassy in Jakarta, asking them whether there were any news concerning the evacuation of Singaporeans. They replied that currently there was no news, but we were to wait for further orders, I thought to my self, wait!!.....wait for them to come and get us....No Way!!!

So I sought out my Singaporean colleague and related to him my conversation with the Singapore Embassy, his response was, "You also want to flee from this place", I replied "Of course". We then began to make plans for exiting from the motel and making a dash for the airport. I stated that the best time to make our escape was at 3am in the morning, at that time all the 'rioters' would be half asleep and less vigilant. For transport we decided to use the company's van, so we high-jacked the company's driver and that night made him sleep in my Chinese colleague's cabin. On 14/5/98 we woke up at about 2am and after completing our morning rituals, we quietly crept to the van and crouched behind the front seats. The driver then started the van's engine and slowly drove the van towards the motel gate. Upon reaching the gate, the driver gave the security guard some false information about his destination, the guard then opened the gate and let the van through. Once the coast was clear, both of us sat up in our seats. As we drove through the city, we sighted gutted vehicles and buildings, some of them still smoldering. Subsequently on our journey to the airport we did not come across any rioting mobs, the streets were quiet and deserted, only at one guard post some unidentified persons tried to wave us down, without stopping the driver barked out some words and continued to drive on. We finally arrived at the airport and after tipping and thanking the driver we proceeded to the airport departure terminal, the place was really packed and there was only standing room. As soon as we entered the airport terminal, we felt a huge load being lifted off our shoulders, we felt very safe and secure. My colleague went his separate way as he had already purchased his air ticket. As for myself I only had 100,000 Indonesian Rupiahs in my pocket (worth only about S\$15.00 at the time, borrowed from my colleague), I did not have any air ticket, but I figured that I could purchase an air ticket, using my credit card. I decided to purchase an air ticket from Singapore Airlines as I figured that when it came to a crunch, SIA would dispatch additional planes to cope with the influx of passengers and I was proved right, SIA sent out 7 extra flights to cope with the surge of passengers fleeing from Indonesia. On the other hand, Garuda Airlines planes did not take off that day, none of their pilots reported for duty. In the meantime I had joined the queue for the SIA ticket counter. After some hours queuing, we were suddenly informed that Singapore Airlines was not accepting credit cards for the purchase of airline tickets. Now I was in a fix, so I hurried up to the group of Singaporeans that I had earlier chatted with and asked whether they could help me. A lady in the group spoke up and said, "Why don't you speak to the guy in the queue at the departure gate, he might be able to help you" (this person had earlier been with the group, I had chatted with him and learnt that he had done his studies in Singapore, during his younger days). I then rushed up to him and informed him of my plight, whereupon he pulled out his wife's unused air ticket and asked me to try to use it. I immediately checked with the SIA Ticketing Officer and she replied that it was not acceptable. I promptly hurried back to the gentleman and told him what had transpired. He then whipped out US\$200/- and told me to go buy yourself an air ticket. Before I could thank him and take down his contact particulars, he disappeared through the departure gate. I then rejoined the queue, to purchase my ticket. Food and beverages had run out early in the day, so I approached the information counter and asked whether it was possible to purchase some mineral water, the person replied, we ourselves have not had any water for over 20 hours. Fortunately at about 3pm, Singapore Airlines brought in loads of green apples and bottles of mineral water, this served as our breakfast cum lunch. I only managed to purchase my air ticket at about 7pm, boarding was at 9pm. As soon as I went through to the boarding room, I found that I could help myself to small packets of peanuts, as much as we wanted and complemented with unlimited supply of mineral water.....that was our dinner. My plane was only available for boarding at around 1am on 15/5/98 and I did not arrive at Singapore till past 3am, about 24 hours had gone by since I departed from the motel in Jakarta. My wife and kids were at the airport to greet me, "Boy! Was I glad to be Home, safe and solid Home". From enquiries made with my associates in Singapore, I managed to obtain the contact number for the Indonesian Chinese gentleman who had loaned me the money to purchase my air ticket, he happened to be the Agent for Yanmar Diesel engines at Jakarta. I subsequently contacted the gentleman and made arrangements to meet him to repay my loan. In the meantime I decided take a short holiday with my wife, at Koh Samui,

Thailand....to distress. After a few days, I decided to phone my Boss, he was quite surprised to hear from me, he then asked when I would be returning to Jakarta, whereupon I told him, "Not for some time, not until the situation in Jakarta returns to normal". When I ascertained that the situation in Jakarta had returned to normal, I contacted my Boss and informed him that I was returning to Jakarta. Upon arriving at Jakarta the company driver picked me up from the airport, on our way to the motel, I saw many gutted buildings, shopping malls and burnt out vehicles. On the next day I met up with my Boss and he made the necessary arrangements for the repairers to resume work at the shipyard. I then proceeded to the shipyard and found that work had come to a stand still, from the time I had last attended the shipyard. The vessel was subsequently dry docked and the necessary inspections and surveys were carried out. The vessel was then undocked and the remaining repairs were completed. Shortly after the vessel departed from the shipyard, I was sent to various parts of Indonesia, to trouble shoot various problems arising on the Company's vessels as well as to carry out inspections on the vessels. Upon completion of my assignments I would then return to the Jakarta Office. During one of my stays at Jakarta, the Boss asked me to accompany his sister to a meeting with the Adjuster and the Underwriter's Surveyor. Before setting off for the meeting I was handed a copy of the survey report, concerning the main engine casualty on the Company's product tanker, "Lajuprakarsa II", I read the report and recalled that I had sighted the damage when I was sailing with the "Lajuprakarsa V". At the time both vessels were berthed at an oil tanker terminal at Aceh, Sumatra and the Company's Supervisor had requested me to inspect the main engine damage and to advise the Chief Engineer and him accordingly. We then proceeded to the meeting, after the necessary introductions were made, the Adjuster stood up and talked at length on the subject case, 'Breakdown of the main in way of unit X', on the vessel "Lajuprakarsa II", at times he referred to the Underwriter's Surveyor, to give his comments. This was all conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, which I just managed to understand, the Adjuster finally concluded that the damage sustained by the subject vessel's main engine was due to 'Wear and Tear'. When the Adjuster had completed his comments, the Boss's sister informed the Adjuster that I wished to speak. I then stood up and asked whether I could speak in English, I was given the nod, so straight away I addressed the Adjuster. And asked him, "You say that the cause of the damage was due to wear and tear. Who has given the 'Attribution' for the cause of damage?" The Adjuster haltingly said that he had given the 'Attribution' for the cause of damage. I then retorted, "Who gave you the authority to give the 'Attribution' for the cause of damage, you are only certified to adjust the claim, you have no engineering experience to give any technical comments on the case. What has happened to the Underwriter's surveyor, correctly he should be the person giving the 'Attribution' for the cause of damage". I then turned to the Underwriter's Surveyor and asked him why he had not given the 'Attribution' for the cause of damage, he mumbled incoherently, I then asked him to refer to the subject damage survey report submitted by him and asked him to refer to the enclosed damage photographs. I then requested him to closely examine the severe damage sustained by the subject cylinder liner and piston, I then remarked, "Can you see the heat discoloration in way of the cracks/fractures on the cylinder liner. Also notice that the subject piston rings are heat discolored and that most of the piston rings are jammed in their grooves". I then addressed the meeting and highlighted that the major damage sustained by the subject unit arose from excessive 'blow-by'. The hot gases from the engine cylinder blowing past the piston and cylinder liner would have caused the burning away of the lubricating oil between the piston and the cylinder liner, leading to metal to metal contact and heavy abrading between the piston and cylinder liner. The combination of the excessive heat generated by the exhaust gas blow-by and the heavy abrading between the piston and cylinder liner, would have caused the lubricating oil in way of the piston ring grooves to burn and carbonize, causing the piston rings to jam within their grooves. The resultant increased exhaust gas blow-by and the deteriorated condition of the subject engine unit would have eventually culminated in the main engine damage as reported. I summed up by asking, "Now do you still conclude that the subject damage sustained by the main engine cylinder liner and piston was due to wear and tear?" there was complete silence, no one responded with

any opposing views. At the end of the meeting, the Adjuster came up to me and with a shaky voice said, "I will remember you all my life", evidently he was impressed with my knowledge of insurance claims as well my in depth technical knowledge.

I had been working in Indonesia for about 3 years, living conditions were very poor and the Company lodgings were squalid. It was also unsafe to venture out alone at night. Working conditions were getting from bad to worse, the Boss dragged his heels whenever I requested for engine spare parts and urgent repairs to be carried out on the vessels. Hence whenever an engine breakdown occurred and spare-parts were required, as a stop gap we would utilize 'scrap parts' which were hoarded at an open space next to the Office (these parts had previously been condemned). Several times I informed the Boss that machinery on several vessels required repairs/renewals, he would acknowledge my advice and state that he would look into the matter but nothing happened. When a major breakdown occurred, he would dispatch me to the vessel and later would question me and try to blame the Engineers for causing the breakdown. Most of the time, I would defend the Engineers as invariably the cause of the breakdowns would be due to poor and lack of preventive maintenance. So in early 2000, with the above factors in mind, I decided to quit my job and seek employment in Singapore.

Upon returning to the job scene in Singapore, I met up with a few of my former work colleagues and learnt that the survey market was pretty good, so I decided to take on survey work, on a free-lance basis. As a free-lance surveyor I found that I was getting a steady stream of survey work from my former colleagues who had set up their own companies. Furthermore I had more free time to pursue my other interests. I carried out several interesting surveys and one of them was the survey of the present Sultan of Johore's 90ft yacht (at the time he was the crown Prince). Surveys on the Sultan's yacht had to be carried out very discreetly, the Adjuster from the Principal Company had to accompany me on all surveys onboard the vessel as well at meetings held with the Insured's Adjusters. My Adjuster constantly kept reminding to be discreet and to be very careful when making any enquiries concerning the reported casualty. Even at the meetings with the Insured's Adjuster concerning the damage claim Invoices, I was restrained by my Adjuster from making any comments.

Alas, time had caught up with me, I was no more a 'Spring Chicken'. I began to feel the strain when carrying out lengthy surveys as well when there was lots of climbing to do. My joints had become very stiff with old age, hence boarding vessels in the roads, especially during rough weather became very hazardous. To further aggravate matters, I had developed a heart condition. In early 2010, I decided to hang up my surveyor's boots and spend 'Quality Time' with my two grandsons, however, I still manage to go 'Deep Sea' fishing from time to time (my first love.....please don't let my wife know).

Gerard Pereira
September 2013