Cadetship

My name is Jason Lim. I like to share my experience as an engineer cadet officer back then in 1977.

Yes, I was posted to MV Neptune Agate together with one of my classmates for our 1 year sea training. This vessel was one of NOL's oldest (20+ yrs at that time). It was on a charter run from Sri Lanka-Hong Kong-Japan-Sri Lanka for one whole year. The officers cabins were at mid-ship and the crews cabins were at the aft. Only the officers' cabins were air-conditioned. As cadets, we were assigned to the aft cabins together with the crew. Imagine the heat and stuffiness that we had to endure. On top of this, we had to bear with the propeller noise whenever the ship was sailing. At times, we had to sleep on the open deck just to catch some cool breeze and sleep.

The only time we were treated like officers was during meal times. Our meals were served by the ship's stewards. We had to put on our cadet officer's uniform (white shirt with epaulette and shorts).

However, life in the engine room was tougher. The main engine was a B&W model 850 VTBF 110/40 2-stroke, opposed piston, single acting BHP 5540 at 150 rpm. This was the first time we had seen a "dancing" engine because of the up and down movements of the top pistons.

Yes, we had to work like slaves at the mercy of the 2nd Engineer. By default, we were required to work overtime for 2 hours each day mopping the engine room floor plates, manual cleaning (by hand) of LO and DO purifiers and wiping out oil leakages from the main engine's crankcase doors. In port, we were the ones to clean up the scavenge spaces and help in the overhauling of the main and auxiliary engines.

There was no engine control room, just an engine control stand by the side of the main engine for the duty engineer/cadet to keep watch. The heat from the main engine was unbearable especially when the ship was sailing between Sri Lanka and Hong Kong. As such, most of the time, both the duty engineer and cadet had to stand below the engine room ventilation fan just to keep ourselves cool.

The good thing about MV Neptune Agate was that it was a general cargo vessel. The vessel's stay in port was usually 3 to 5 days. This gave us enough time to step ashore and visit places of interest in those 3 countries. Our hard times in the engine room were soon forgotten whenever we were at shore.

So, that was the life I had more than 30 years ago. Do I have any regrets? The answer is no! Why? Because enduring the hardship during the one year cadet training at sea had taught me how to survive and keep my current job with MWM Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. for the last 27 years!

Jason Lim Joo Song
29 May 2010

Jason Lim graduated in 1978 with a Diploma in Marine Engineering. After leaving the sea, he joined MWM where he held various responsibilities till his retirement in 2013.