

Reflections

At the beginning of Ocean Church, Father gave some speeches and talked about the possibility of losing a boat at sea because of engine failure. If that happens in a storm, there is a possibility that the crew on board might die. When he talked about engine failure at such a critical moment, he looked at me as if he spoke those words especially for me, because in those early days I had absolutely no idea, how to take care of an engine. But when I felt, that Father was saying those words to me, I instantly thought, I shall really do my best to maintain the engine to keep it running, even under those extreme conditions. I definitely didn't like the idea, to end my life at sea on a sinking boat. I promised God and myself at that moment, that I would do my absolute best to keep the engine, in fact the entire boat, in good condition, fixing instantly what needs to be repaired. Keeping my promise absolutely kept me alive in dangerous situations at sea.

I always felt the necessity, that all the parts on the boat have to be in working order and reliable. No one should ever attempt to go out on a defective boat as it would be an opening for Satan to attack. If however the boat is taken care of nicely, neatly and correctly, this condition for Satan does not exist. It is dangerous enough, to be out at sea in a properly functioning boat. Engine trouble could become a huge problem out at sea, especially under severe weather conditions.

During my several decades at sea working a commercial fishing boat, I can count the numbers I was in need of assistance or had to be towed in, on one hand. In hindsight, each of these situations could have been prevented, if I would have done a better job. So, a nice and neat boat, well maintained and free of mechanical defects is a necessity for survival at sea.

I also would like to talk about one situation, when I got caught in bad weather at sea during the night, while I was out catching conch. I knew a cold front was expected in our area with a drop in temperature of almost 20 degrees, as announced on radio and TV. In that case, the cold front would be rather strong, causing wind gusts of 30 to 40 knots, affecting the entire Chesapeake Bay and causing high waves. On this specific day the cold front brought northerly winds of at least 35 knots and hit all of a sudden. I was just on deck, setting out the dredges, when a gust of wind touched my face. I immediately hauled in my equipment and ran for home in a hurry. I also informed a buddy of mine, to head home, as unfavorable conditions would unfold in a jiffy. I had to steam for a little over two hours to reach land, while the waves were building up to 8 feet in height in the entire Chesapeake Bay.

The height of waves depends on the strength of the wind and the depth of the water. The Chesapeake Bay is rather shallow, in many places just about 30 feet deep, meaning, the waves don't get really high, but develop very quickly, making driving conditions extremely difficult. I experienced the roughest seas that night at the Thimble Shoal Channel and was really concerned, that something might happen to my boat. All I could do was pray to God for my safe return. I prayed, that the boat would not sink, as it was a boat, Father himself partly designed and therefore would be blamed for any mishap. He surely didn't need any more negativity coming towards him. Somehow, God listened to my prayer and led me home safely. However, this trip home really wore me out, and I had to recuperate for three days. I had several close calls at sea and I always prayed to God, reminding him, that Father was the origin of my boat, and God protected me every single time.

Since I am talking about bad conditions at sea I would like to recall my encounter with a really big wave. Many times I have heard and seen reports about a rogue wave on TV and then

I experienced one myself, a single wave in the complete darkness of night. As I was dredging for conch that night, unable to see anything, the boat suddenly was hit broadside by one incredibly huge wave. I was sitting in the helmsmen seat, and when the wave hit, I was thrown off the seat, landing on the floor. The impact was so strong, that I was out of commission for about three minutes, just sitting on the floor. Of course the boat engine continued to run and the boat was heading straight forward. When I was able to get up, I checked on my mate. Before the wave hit, he was on the platform, picking up conch, and I was worried, that he might have been swept overboard. Since he was working on his knees when the wave hit, he was able to quickly grab the roller and dredge catcher, keeping him safely on board, no matter how violently the boat was rolling. During my three decades of working on the ocean, this was a onetime experience. It was only a single wave, but extremely powerful.

I also remember a special experience while tuna fishing. The New Hope had a break down, and the engines had to be rebuilt. Father therefore took the Sea Hope 2 out for tuna fishing. The Loran of the Sea Hope 2 was not very reliable and Father anchored outside the fleet. I was on the Flying Phoenix at that time, when Father asked me to come closer to his boat, check on the fleet and find out, whether tuna had been caught there. After a while I called back on the radio, but at that time his boat had moved already and was on her way, to join the fleet. He drove around the fleet to check on an anchor spot. Finally he found a spot, but it was in the chum line of another boat, the Samana. The Samana came up from New York, and Father virtually anchored among their fishing lines and their chum line, which of course caused those people on the Samana to absolutely go nuts. They yelled and screamed at Father, they cussed, they swore at him, but Father paid no attention to them, just continued fishing, blocking them to have a strike. After a

while, those people from the Samana were so fed up with the situation, that they eventually pulled up their anchor, picked up their gear and left, but not without harassing the Sea Hope by driving by really close with high speed, causing a big wake. The Sea Hope 2 was just sitting there at anchor, rolling in those big seas back and forth. Eventually the Samana moved on, anchored someplace else and continued fishing, however without success. Father on the other hand was very successful that day, catching a tuna, where minutes earlier the Samana had anchored. Of course the crew of the Samana was furious when they saw the Sea Hope 2 catching a fish. On top of that, Father went back to the anchor ball and continued fishing. As a result Father's boat caught a second fish very late in the day, just before going home. Father knew exactly, where the tuna would bite and wouldn't give up that spot, no matter what. If he would have tried at another spot, he would have never caught those two fish.

Later, at my center, I told this story many times. One of my members, Mike, a Canadian, returned to Canada during the Hometown Providence, and when Father visited Canada, Mike took him out on a lake for fishing. He then told Father the story he had heard from Gerhard, that Father caught two tuna after chasing another boat from its anchor spot. When Father heard that story, he burst out laughing and laughing. Mike told me about this experience with Father later on.

I also had another experience while tuna fishing with Father on the Flying Phoenix. The New Hope broke down, but Father wanted to go out fishing and he took the Flying Phoenix instead. Daikan was driving the boat at that time, and I was his mate. We were just three people on board, going down to the Southwest corner. The boat has no toilet, and consequently Father had to use the bucket like the rest of us.

During the day Father constantly talked to Daikan in Japanese and I had absolutely no idea, what they were talking

about. He directed only one sentence at me, saying: "You can sit down while chumming, if you so desire. Sometimes use brain."

During the course of that particular day, we had one strike, and as the lines went out, Father and Diakan both grabbed the tuna line to keep the lines tight, slow the fish down, set the hook and started fighting the fish. After a very short time the tuna spit out the hook and was lost. When I saw that, I remarked, that there was too much tension on the fishing line, that's why we lost the fish. Father and Daikan looked at each other, not saying anything, but Father knew, I was right. We continued fishing and after a while we had another strike. When that happened, I grabbed the tuna line right away and never let anybody else touch it or fight the fish. I fought the fish by myself until it was right next to the boat. Then Father threw the harpoon into the fish and we tied it up.

A day earlier Father saw one boat pulling a tuna over the side into the boat and wanted to do that too. All of us stood on one side, causing the boat to list heavily. Then we pulled on the lines. One line was going into the tuna's mouth and coming out through the gills. Father and I succeeded in pulling the tuna into the boat, head first, bumping my head against Father's in the process. To me it felt like I had just bumped into a steel ball, as Father's head seemed to be much harder than mine, and Father just laughed. With the tuna securely in the boat, we were able to reach Gloucester much faster than by towing it outside the boat.

At another time, when Father was on the Flying Phoenix again, a tuna came to the surface and he wanted to harpoon the fish. However, since the Flying Phoenix is so small, it's not safe, to stand on the bow, trying to harpoon the fish. So I ended up sitting on my knees on the bow, holding onto the railing, with my head and back down. Father would sit on my back, like on a horse, with the harpoon in his hand, ready to harpoon the fish. However, when the tuna came close, it took a dive out of

range of the harpoon. Another time though Father caught a fish, harpooning it that way. At that time it was Jerry's turn, to be the 'horse', and Father successfully caught a tuna with the harpoon. Years later I asked Daikan, what Father talk to him about while tuna fishing, since he was talking all day long. Daikan responded by saying, that he talked a lot about the Washington Monument Rally, which was supposed to take place soon, and the success of the rally weight heavily on Father's mind.

Finally, here are some thoughts about the future, actually about the future of the Peemoeller generations. Do you believe that they will love the ocean? You bet. Let me tell you a story about my youngest son Bhae-Jin. He had to be with me on the boat every time I went out, ever since he was two years old. I remembered, having changed so many diapers on the boat, and in the evenings, before going to sleep, I had to hold Bhae-Jin in my arms, while my mate was driving the boat.

Once I had a hard time catching crabs in the Chesapeake Bay. Asking God in prayer was not very productive, when I suddenly remembered Father's words: "You have to be successful with the good fortune of the second generation". When I was out that time and could not catch anything, I remembered, that in the past I sometimes came back to the dock several times, finding some excuse to take Bhae-Jin out of school, to go out dredging crabs with me. The second generation for sure has a better fortune than the first. I tried it out several times, and it worked every single time.

I also remember Father advising us one time, saying: "There were so many Captains and fishermen in the past. You have to let them help you to increase your catch. I thought to myself, well, St. Peter used to be a fisherman. I might as well pray for his help in catching crabs. Lo and behold, I saw this person, dressed in white, in my wheel house. I am 6 foot 6 inches in height and he was almost a head shorter. He looked at my color fish finder in awe and was fascinated by what the fish

finder could do. I got rather impatient thinking, man, if this guy just stands there, watching the fish finder, how can we catch more crabs. This was not very productive. Maybe I should have asked for somebody else to help me.

I remember many times going out at night conch dredging with my youngest son, before he was ten years old. He often stayed up during the night, working the platform until about 3 o'clock in the morning, or even later. I especially remember this one time, when around 3 o'clock in the morning the wind picked up and started to blow ever stronger. As I hauled in my gear, we had a 6 foot shark in the dredge. When he landed on the platform, he moved left to right, trying to get off the platform, and during that process he came rather close to Bhae-Jin. This little boy got very scared of the shark and I took over, protecting him.

Bhae-Jin kind of grew up on the water and developed an incredible love for fishing and boating. Before the age of twenty he could already run the boat by himself. He captained the boat many times, producing good results, while I became more and more unable to run a boat due to physical problems.

My second son Frederick also learned to drive the boat at a very young age, when he was than ten years old. I remember one time, when he took the helm on our way home from the fishing grounds. The tide was so strange, causing the boat to drift into a high flyer. Afterwards I made some jokes about him running over a high flyer. However, he never forgot this experience, and when he joined the Merchant Marine Academy, he chose engineering over helmsman ship. He actually jokes about the people, who run the boat, calling them "deckies". However as an engineer, he is really superb. He became 1st Engineer on a ship, 995 foot in length, the size of an aircraft carrier, in his twenties.

Bhae-Jin asked me recently: "Do you want to come out fishing with me?" I said "yes", and he helped me to get on

board. As we were drifting at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, I gazed into the distance, remembering dredging in the area. I knew the entire Bay by heart, the bottom, its shape, and it felt like my home. This area, where I worked so many, many years really became my home. As Bhae-Jin started to return to shore, I was still gazing into the distance of the Bay, and as the boat moved forward, I felt like screaming: “No, no, this is my home, don’t take me away!” I held on to the gunwale, trying to stop the scene from changing and felt, as if I was being moved further and further away from my home. It was quite an emotional experience, just the sea and I.

In a dream I had some time ago, I had the key to the ocean in my drawer, and I remember, telling Father about it. Sometime later on, Father spoke to the members of Ocean Church and said: “All of you have a key to the ocean”.

As my thoughts are again progressing to a higher level, seeing the planet Earth from a distance, it appears as a blue planet, because a larger part of its surface is covered by water than by land. I surely would not be the only one, who would like to name this planet “Water Planet” instead of Earth. Life on this planet depends on water. It is crucial for the development of all species, including men, and needs to be protected by all means. I remember Father’s words: “Among all pollutions on this earth, the pollution of water is the most dangerous one”. We need to protect the water, the oceans, rivers and streams. As I am writing this down, my wife and I are going out regularly, side scanning the Chesapeake Bay with sonar, liberating it from Marine debris. In his speeches Father talked about the ocean many times, because it’s very dear to his heart. The Son of God really loves the creation, and especially the sea, as it is the most vital element for life on this planet. Just stop and think about all the creatures which came forth from the ocean, from the tiniest to the largest, glorifying God.