



A MODEL FOR SELF FULFILMENT AND MATRIMONIAL BLISS

By: Ir. Chin Mee Poon, Standing Committee on Publications



The Battleship USS New Jersey

I have never visited Ir. Low Guan Tui in his house in Bandar Sri Damansara before, although we both belong to the Rotary Club of Shah Alam and we have enjoyed each other's fellowship in meetings and projects for several years.

It was a Sunday evening when my wife and I stopped at a traffic light junction in Bandar Sri Damansara. For a moment I hesitated and was not sure whether to turn left or right. I turned right, came to a petrol station and asked for directions. The road I was looking for was just a short distance away from the petrol station. How lucky we were to be able to locate Ir. Low in an unfamiliar place without much effort.

Comfortably seated in the living room in Ir. Low's house and sipping the drink served by his elder daughter,

my attention was quickly drawn to two model boats displayed on a cabinet in front of a wall with glass block infill. There were not tiny toys for children. They were large-scale radio-controlled models measuring more than one metre long.

And they were the very reasons for my visit!

When Ir. Low confided in me his passion for making model ships, I immediately became fascinated. I am one of those who don't believe in just work and work and work. I believe life without some form of healthy indulgence is incomplete. I enjoy a number of hobbies myself, and I am always fascinated by those with uncommon pursuits.

And so while the two ladies were exchanging gossip over a cup of tea, Ir. Low gave me a conducted tour of

his house, showing me his studies, his attic and more of his model ships.

A mechanical engineer by training and a member of IEM since the mid 80s, Ir. Low became a shareholder in a company specialising in making pressure vessels in 1999, after working in the Department of Occupational Safety & Health (DOSH) for 9 years and in several other companies for a number of years. He works very hard to make sure his family is well taken care of. Despite his extremely tight work schedule, he still finds time to enjoy his hobby. In fact a few years ago he even decided to work for a PhD in management on part-time basis, having obtained his MBA in 1991. His loving wife Wah Lean gives him full support by making sure he comes home after work to enjoy a good meal



Ir. Low Guan Tui with one of his model ships



Detail of the sailing battleship *Wasa*

and great warmth, even though she has a career of her own. Their two daughters, Ying Zhen and Ying Hwei, give him a lot of happiness, especially the 6-year-old Ying Hwei who is extremely lively and can talk very well.

Ir. Low started his hobby of making large-scale radio-controlled model ships more than 15 years ago because he had great admiration for the engineering progress in the development of marine vessels and aeroplanes. In fact, when he decided to make his first warship, he decided to make a jet fighter at the same time. Of course to his hobby he could only devote whatever little spare time he had after taking care of his business and family, and it took him 5 years to complete his first warship and jet fighter.

Ir. Low did not buy the parts of a model ship and just assemble them. That's what most people do. Instead, he bought a small scaled model of the ship he intended to build, dismantled it completely, and, basing on the shape and measurements of the parts so obtained, made his own components to a scale he had chosen. Only a few components, such as the engines and propellers, were bought. The hull was

made of balsa wood by what's called plank-on-frame method. It was then lined with fibre glass.

His first warship is a battleship, the *USS New Jersey*. He spent about RM1,500 on it. It's fully equipped to sail at a speed that's reduced from that of its full-sized counterpart by the same ratio as its size. Even its guns can simulate firing.

His jet fighter, an F16, was made in a similar manner.

Ir. Low subsequently spent 3 years to make another warship, a sailing battleship called *Wasa*. It's equipped with sails that can be hoisted and adjusted just like the real ones.

Once in a while Ir. Low will take one of his ships to the lake in Shah Alam to do some exercises. Some scenes in war movies are shot with model ships in a small pool of water like this.

To-date Ir. Low has three ships and one jet fighter to his credit. He has many more model ships in boxes waiting to be turned into larger scaled models. Now that he has submitted his final dissertation for his PhD, he should have a little more time to pursue his hobby.

Asked whether he's prepared to part with any of his ships or plane for a

reasonable sum, he gave a definite no without hesitation, for, as he confessed, he had put in so much effort in their birth that they were almost like members of his family.

To those who are contemplating on taking up model ship making as a hobby, Ir. Low has this advice to offer: make sure you really have a very keen interest in it, then start off with something simple. Don't set yourself a deadline, for that will create a lot of pressure on yourself. After all, hobbies are meant to be enjoyed. You will derive a great deal of satisfaction from this hobby, although you may also experience severe frustration when, for example, you suddenly realise that you have made a mistake in your measurements and all the progress you have achieved on the model goes down the drain!

Yes, engineers need not only be good as a workhorse. When it comes to playing, engineers can be equally adept at it. Cultivating a hobby or two when we are still young not only adds spice to our working life, it provides a very healthy alternative arena to channel our time and energy when we retire from our work in future. ■

IEM-WAI DAN GONG CLASS

All IEM members and spouses are cordially invited to join the regular **IEM-WAI DAN GONG** classes (free) at IEM penthouse every **Monday and Wednesday at 8:00 to 9:00 p.m.** Those who are interested please contact:

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