

PRIDE IN DOING THINGS PROPERLY

When large double-hull tankers were on the drawing board in the early 1990s in the aftermath of *Exxon Valdez* pollution and the U.S. OPA 90 double hull legislation, many saw them as a necessary regulatory requirement that would bring its own long-term problems in terms of structural complexity and maintenance. A number of incidents involving coatings damaged before even the hull sections had been put together, and serious microbial corrosion on uncoated inner plating insulated from the cold seawater, caused some concern and reservations.

One company had the foresight, courage and dynamism to embrace the concept of double hull tanker design and to proceed with such a project to build the first ever double hull VLCC. The *Arosa* was delivered in February 1993 from Hitachi in Japan. The project was managed by Neda Maritime Agency, which is as proud of this ship today as she celebrates her fifteenth birthday in Dubai Drydock as it was when she performed her maiden voyage in 1993.

In fact Neda was ahead of the game. This vessel was ordered in 1989 as a single hull tanker with an option to build as double hull – declarable in 1991. As the option deadline approached, there was still no clear signal from the IMO. Neda took the decision to go for double hull anyway. In fact, the vessel complies with, and sometimes exceeds the double hull regulations which were eventually enacted.

Building a vessel ahead of the regulations was a demanding task. But thorough design and material



preparation, painstaking supervision and meticulous maintenance has meant that the vessel now is in superb condition as she comes up to her third special survey – the result of this operator's pride in its work right from the start.

Behind the success of the Arosa there are some clear signs of a commitment to safety by owners, operating managers, technical staff, officers and crew. One notes their pride in having a ship in good order, pride of belonging to a winning team, pride in doing things the right way.
Gard P&I Club

The success of such a project starts with the design. "The building of a good ship starts with putting a lot of work into a detailed specification," says Gerry Vagliano, Director with Neda Maritime's London agents Lykiardopulo & Co. "Then in the building yard you need a good, experienced team to follow up the

work." In fact Neda put a team of 6-8 specialists onto this particular supervision job.

This kind of committed approach on what was a new design helped forge a trust between owner and yard that

allowed Neda to incorporate a number of its ideas – for instance avoiding built-in stresses and cracking by inserting longitudinals into precisely cut openings in transverse web frames and bulkheads – which avoided the welding of lugs across the larger openings.

It also meant a hull specification in excess of class requirements – with extra steel added to deck (1mm) and side and bottom

plating (1.5mm), with reinforcement of the forward structure to withstand slamming forces, and with the hull capable of withstanding raking damage over 75% of the length.

A surveyor from Gard P&I Club visited this ship in 2006. He found a vessel that, in his words, looked like a

newbuilding, without one spot of rust on deck, deck fittings, pipes, valves or deck equipment. Advanced hull measurements by the vessel's class society Lloyd's Register had found no diminution of steel, no fractures, no weaknesses whatsoever. In fact over the whole life of the ship only two insignificant cracks have ever been found, and both were dealt with a long time ago.

Inside a ballast tank it was the same story: no unpainted areas, not even a rusty edge. Of course there had been paint touch-ups as a result of regular maintenance, but there was no accumulation of mud and even the ladders were corrosion-free.

And at Arosa's 15 year drydock in March this year, no steelwork whatsoever was required, and there were no cost-related surprises – that is the payback for fifteen years of pride and a good and expensive maintenance regime.

Apart from an evident pride in its operation, what lies behind achieving such a result?

Gard comments, "Behind the success of the *Arosa* there are some clear signs of a commitment to safety by owners, operating managers, technical staff, officers and crew. One notes their pride in having a ship in good order, pride of belonging to a winning team, pride in doing things the right way."

What does this mean specifically?

Manpower

The *Arosa* has a crew of 35 – three times the requirement of the Minimum Safe Manning List. That means reinforcements in both bridge and engine room as well as extra staff such as three Second Officers and a cargo engineer, as well as no fewer than four paint inspectors devoted to inspection and maintenance of paint systems.

Budget

Neda believes that there is no requirement to stay within budgetary boundaries if safety, efficiency and preparedness are at stake – there is a saying in its office that "budget is what it costs". Money is certainly not wasted but it is there if it is demonstrably required. And it is there up front to take away known risks as a preference to paying out larger sums when problems are thrust into the open.

Staff

Neda has grown from a medium sized company into a 31-ship operator, but it still has a detailed knowledge of all its staff, allowing good communication and motivation as a team, which engenders pride and responsibility. The officers of its Greek-flag fleet are Greeks employed directly by Neda. Its crew are mostly Filipinos recruited on a long-term basis. These people have a pride in their company's name, a pride in their ship and a loyalty to their employer.

Conditions

Conditions on board are such that the

crew appreciate them and want to come back. They feel well-treated and are proud of the company that they work for, some of them remaining with Neda for years.

Visits

Senior management visit their ships at every opportunity, demonstrating a hands-on, caring approach.

Care over detail

Coating application – well-prepared steel (uneven surfaces properly ground), good quality tar epoxy coating, favourable application conditions.

Coating maintenance – full-time paint inspectors searching for blisters and continuously maintaining and upgrading coatings.

Pipe coupling protection – using Denso tape to wrap all important valves and pipe couplings in ballast tanks as well as on deck.

And the payback?

- ✓ Market reputation enhances employment prospects
- ✓ Fewer charter party disputes
- ✓ Fewer accidents and claims
- ✓ Good record means lower insurance rates
- ✓ Fewer off-hire days
- ✓ Good working environment helps manpower retention
- ✓ No maintenance surprises means quick maintenance turnaround
- ✓ Enhanced sale prospects.



Inside *Arosa*'s cargo oil tank (left), engine room (centre), and water ballast tank (right) at 13 years of age.