

“Personal Reflections on Ocean Engineering at the U. S. Naval Academy”

by Michael E. McCormick, Ph. D., Sc. D., P. E., Professor *Emeritus* of Ocean Engineering.

In the mid-1960's, a rather turbulent time in our country's history, I was a member of the engineering faculty of Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. During the 1967-68 academic year, many of the college and university campuses around the country, including Trinity College, were in turmoil due to Viet Nam War protests. A day or so after a sit-in demonstration at Trinity, I was having a discussion with a colleague from the Chemistry Department about the need for tranquility and order for a good educational atmosphere. In his opinion, the only academic institutions where that atmosphere existed were the service academies. At that time, my six-year history as a faculty member included positions at Catholic University and Swarthmore College; so, teaching at a service academy seemed a little foreign to me. After our talk, however, I went to my office and phoned Prof. Richard D. Mathieu, the Senior Professor of Engineering (Dean of Engineering) at the U. S. Naval Academy, about the possibility my joining the engineering faculty. Prof. Mathieu told me of the Academy's intention to advance the academic programs, and invited me to visit the Academy to discuss a possible role in attaining this goal. My faculty host during my visit was Dr. Bruce Johnson, who told me of ambitious plans to create quality programs in Naval Architecture, Marine Engineering and Ocean Engineering. I was favorably impressed by Dr. Johnson's background, ideas and enthusiasm. In addition, since I had been employed as a hydrodynamicist at the David Taylor Model Basin for about five years early in my career, the availability of the Academy's wave/towing tank for research and teaching was most appealing. Subsequently, an offer of a faculty position was made, and I accepted.

I arrived at the Academy in July 1968, as was allowed to introduce courses titled Introduction to Ocean Engineering and Ocean Engineering Mechanics. In 1970, I was asked to form the Department of Naval Systems Engineering and to create baccalaureate programs in Naval Architecture, Marine Engineering and Ocean Engineering. I was fortunate to have Drs. Bruce Johnson and Neil T. Monney in the Department to work with to create the Ocean Engineering Program, Drs. Rameswar Bhattacharyya, Roger Compton and Paul Van Mater to create the Naval Architecture Program and Drs. Bruce Rankin and Peter F. Wiggins to create the Marine Engineering Program. Because of the excellent work of these faculty members, all three programs received ECPD accreditation in 1972.

After I stepped down from the chair of the Department in 1972, the Coast Guard asked that I perform an experimental study of a wave energy conversion technique of Yoshio Masuda, a Japanese engineering. This technique later was called the “oscillating water column”, and is now one of the focus technologies in ocean wave energy conversion. Thanks to the Office of Naval Research and, later, to Dr. Robert Cohen of the Energy Research and Development Administration and the U. S. Department of Energy, the Naval Academy became a center for experimental wave energy conversion in the U. S.

All of the original Ocean Engineering faculty members have either retired or departed from the Academy. The faculty members that joined or replaced the original members have proven to be both well qualified and highly motivated, assuring the continued and future success of the Program.

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