

don't

LOOK BACK

A wise and profound motto for life, isn't it? Still, with the 30th anniversary of Vuyk Engineering Rotterdam coming up, this old guy is asked to do just that! Because, wouldn't it be quite nice to go back and see how work in engineering has changed over the years?

Well, in my case it started even earlier, as a shipbuilding engineer with the Vuyk Shipyards in 1970. Nine years later the shipbuilding activities ended and, initially, a few ambitious young men stayed on to develop a bureau for consultancy in shipbuilding.

Well, what is there to tell about those early days? It will certainly be difficult in this age of CAD for the younger colleagues to imagine that making a drawing was indeed done by taking a blank sheet of paper, then getting yourself a pencil or pen and actually drawing lines on it! In my first years we even used rice paper to draw on -in ink- and this meant that with any mistake or change to the drawing, the old had to be erased with a small knife and the new drawn right over it. Needless to say, this could cause big problems when this had to be repeated a number of times.

My personal favourite has always been preparing lines plans. Come to think of it, the way I was taught to do it had remained the same for ages. I will never forget delicately playing with the weights and really enjoying the effect on the shape of waterlines, buttocks and frames. Of course, this also changed through the years and fairing has moved from the drawing board to the PC. To tell you the truth, the joy was never the same, and maybe for this reason I never mastered the art completely as the younger guys do.



While thinking about the "old days" another thing comes to mind. When producing drawings in CAD nowadays we have established a Vuyk standard in styles, line widths, etc. This in fact should result in drawings made by different people to being coherent to these standards and thus "look-alikes". However efficient, one cannot help but remember the days that everyone had a different style and handwriting which revealed the author by one glance at the drawing.

Calculating tools are another matter that developed dramatically over this period of time. Not very long after the start of Vuyk Engineering, the first (Apple II) computer with a matrix printer and plotter was bought to carry out hydrostatic calculations and simple 2D beam-strength calculations. These programs, however, were quite basic at this time. The complexity of problems that can be addressed nowadays cannot be compared. Realizing that "multi-tasking" in the early days was not yet introduced, my mind goes back to those cherished moments behind the computer when the running of a relatively simple job could take hours (and sometimes days) and having a second cup of coffee was no problem at all!

Over the 30 years, we can roughly distinguish two periods in the development of Vuyk, along with the available software on the market. In the first years, you could say that the aim was to deliver the same product more efficiently. Also the industry expressed certain demands, for instance hull section drawings containing all necessary manufacturing information. The last ten years, however, showed a greater diversity of projects, growing skills among the staff, and a growing investment in specialized software.

Of course, this was also dictated by the simple fact that Rules and Regulations in our industry increasingly take for granted that a greater complexity of problems can be managed in the design. Calculations for subjects like probabilistic damage stability, FEM analyses, ship motions, etc., simply would not be possible without the help of powerful software.

Come to think of it, sometimes I tell my younger colleagues that there used to be a time (I'm talking about the sixties now) that all you had to do to construct a vessel was to take a Classification Society's Rule book, use some basic parameters such as vessel's length, breadth, draft, etc., then simply look up the required shell thickness, framing and so on!

Another thing which comes to mind is the correspondence with clients. Nowadays it is quite normal for anyone to use mail and the telephone for this. This was somewhat different in the past. Letters - hand written most of the times - had to be delivered to the secretary, and until faxing was possible, telex was the solution for speed messages. However, this required some elementary knowledge about this contraption and I remember sweating for hours - when faced with a rush job during the Christmas period - before I got things right!

To round off, as we all know, it is quite common nowadays to have machines for everything, including tea and coffee. Certainly, we now have a choice between all the different varieties we can think of, but I'll tell you I still really miss the old coffee lady!

*Rob van Krieken
(our only employee left with experience from the Vuyk Shipyards days)*

