

# Surveying Seascapes

Taking full advantage of Hong Kong's coastal topography, sailing enthusiasts Sr Ben Chong and Sr Joseph Wong often leave the urban hustle and bustle to head for the high seas for a sport they find both relaxing and challenging.

Wilson Lau



Sr Ben Chong (R) and Sr Joseph Wong (L) share their passion for sailing

Photo: SCMP and interviewees

As a young boy, Sr Ben Chong remembers being mesmerised by the sailing boats gliding across the harbour at Hung Hom. At the time, Chong, a building surveying specialist working for the West Kowloon Cultural District, thought that sailing was mainly for expatriates. But after discovering the joys of the sport himself, there was little that could hold him back.

"Sailing is environmentally friendly, as it harnesses wind power to progress," he says. "It also brings us closer to nature. I once encountered Chinese white dolphins – they playfully chased after our boat en route to Macau."

For Sr Joseph Wong, who recalls Chinese sailboats being featured on old HK\$10 banknotes, sailing is an icon of Hong Kong's heritage. "On boat cruises in the old days, we had to put up with a strong smell of diesel, and the noisy engines did not stop until they were turned off after docking. But the sailing experience is different. When we sail in the sea propelled by the wind, we are enveloped by nothing but the pleasant sounds of sea breeze and waves."

Wong, who runs his own consultancy, Land Marker (1980) HK Co Ltd, is a land surveyor specialising in cadastral, topographic, geodetic and hydrographic surveys. He also takes up expert witness assignments and advises on small housing developments in the New Territories. Sporting a healthy tan, he says he has always been an enthusiast of water sports, including windsurfing, canoeing and dragon boats. "I was wondering what sport I could still do when in my 80s ... and I got hooked on sailing after competing for the first time with Sr Ben Chong in a 10-hour Hong Kong-Macau sailboat race in 2008."

Both Chong and Wong hold the Pleasure Vessel Operator Certificate of Competence (Grade 2) issued by the marine department. They mainly sail in Hong Kong waters, but also take part in

onshore and offshore races in Southeast Asia.

Driven by his fascination with sailing, Chong enrolled in training courses on operational theories organised by a government water sports centre in Tai Po almost 30 years ago. Some colleagues later nominated him to join the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club on Kellett Island, Causeway Bay. "I then became more active and have competed in races from time to time."

Chong recalls how he capsized in his very first sailing lesson. "It was a winter's day and 12 degrees Celsius in December. I was at the helm when a gust overturned the boat, and threw the three of us into the freezing water. We quickly learned to overturn the boat, as capsizing was only meant to be taught at the course's end."

As a team sport, sailing requires meticulous coordination between crew members. "It requires physical fitness to a certain extent, but team collaboration is the most vital," Chong says. "Each crew member has their assigned duties and the division of labour is based on the specific strengths of individuals."

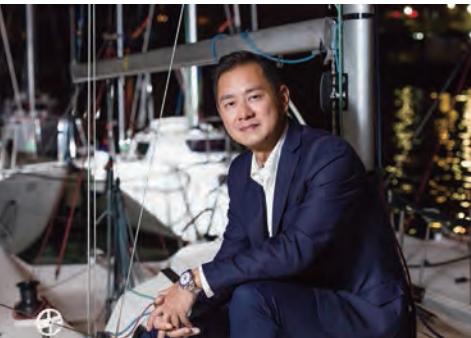
Wong also emphasises the value of working together while sailing. "Being out at sea is a test for precise teamwork because we all have to return ashore together. Effective communication among crew members is essential as we all make a concerted effort towards a shared goal. Every member is assigned a role and is expected to do his utmost in accomplishing their duties. The division of labour is based on the

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Sr Ben Chong

# LIFE ON ALL LEVELS



Sr Joseph Wong

specific strengths of each member. The same applies in the workplace."

Wong says his passion for map reading and surveying aids his sailing abilities. "I enjoy studying navigational maps, applying GPS

theories and surveying knowledge, and doing analysis based on the many variables, such as water current and direction, wind speed and direction, and underwater topography. I observe islands to determine wind direction."

As such, sailing inspires Wong in both life and work. "Like my engagement as an expert witness, I totally rely on myself while appearing in court. When sailing in the ocean, we have to find solutions to every problem and there is no other recourse. I have learned to be calm and focused to find solutions in the face of challenges."

Chong echoes Wong's view that sailing helps cultivate fortitude. "We compete in races not to win. We derive immense satisfaction from completing races and not being the last one. Races are challenging because they involve many variables and unknown elements. These include the courses,

weather and sea conditions, the composition of the team, and the other competing teams. The challenge is to tackle these unknown elements under pressure. Fortitude among the crew is needed when we encounter adversity. We need to get back ashore no matter what."

outside Hong Kong waters. "It is a different challenge because we spend several days in the open sea. It requires meticulous preparation and sufficient supplies like water and food for days of non-stop, round-the-clock sailing. Crew members take turns to be in charge of various duties."

Wong has particularly vivid memories of a time sailing in turbulent waters and dealing with the challenges being thrown at him. "We returned from the China Cup 2014 race between Hong Kong and Taiya Bay, Shenzhen. We started sailing back at around 4pm and the weather suddenly turned. The wind speed accelerated to over 30 knots very quickly; it was equivalent to typhoon signal number 3. Waves as high as five metres were battering our boat and some crew members got frightened about the water gushing into the cabin, while others threw up," he recalls.

"We struggled for more than five hours before returning to the relatively calmer waters of Victoria Harbour. This was a great experience. As a result, I have become more adept at handling the adversity encountered in sailing."

Chong explains that for those who are interested in getting into sailing, basic sailing training courses are organised by local yacht clubs and the government's water sports centres. "Members of HKIS can also join our Sailing Team. Age is not a barrier as there is division of labour in the crew based on individuals' fitness levels," Chong notes.

For Wong, he would like to see more local people taking to the seas and explains that it's not as expensive as people might think. "More Hongkongers should go sailing," he says. "It is not costly at all. For example, the government's water sports centres provide boat rental services."

*This article is published courtesy of Classified post.*

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Chong has competed in several offshore races

「在海上乘風而行時，周圍只有舒服宜人的海風及海浪聲。」

# 乘帆觀海

莊永康測量師和黃耀祖測量師熱愛航帆，經常揚帆出海，藉著香港得天獨厚的沿海地勢，遠離都市塵囂，在運動中放鬆身心，挑戰自我。

Wilson Lau

莊永康測量師記得年幼時，曾看見一艘艘帆船駛過紅磡港口，對這片景象深深著迷。莊永康於西九文化區擔任建築測量顧問，他原以為帆船一般是外籍人士的玩意，但自從發現了航帆的樂趣，便投身這項運動，陶醉其中。

他說：「帆船運用風力行駛，不但環保，亦讓我們親近大自然。有一次去澳門的途中，還遇到中華白海豚追著我們的船玩耍。」

黃耀祖測量師憶述舊版十元的鈔票上印有中式帆船的圖樣，對他而言，帆船是香港的文化象徵。「舊時坐遊船時，要忍受強烈的柴油氣味，還有吵雜的引擎聲，直到船靠岸後，關掉引擎，聲音才會停止。坐帆船的感覺卻不一樣。在海上乘風而行時，周圍只有舒服宜人的海風及海浪聲。」

黃耀祖自營一家顧問公司，名為「標誌測量（1980）香港有限公司」，專門從事地籍、地形、大地及水文測量。他亦有出任專家證人，為新界小型屋宇發展項目提供意見。黃耀祖有著一身健康膚色，自言素來熱愛水上運動，包括滑浪風帆、獨木舟及龍舟。「那時我常想，我到八十歲時還能從事甚麼運動呢……後來，我於2008年首次參賽，在港澳帆船賽中與莊永康測量師比賽了10小時，從此愛上帆船運動。」

莊永康及黃耀祖都持有海事處發出的遊樂船隻操作人合格證明書（二級），他們多於香港水域內航行，但亦會參加東南亞各項近岸和離岸比賽。

莊永康醉心航帆，在約三十年前報名參加大埔某政府水上活動中心舉辦的操作理論培訓課程後，獲同事推薦加入位於銅鑼灣奇力島的香港遊艇會。「從此我就更加投入帆船運動，不時參加比賽。」

莊永康回憶起他在第一堂帆船課中翻船的經歷：「當時是十二月，正值寒冬，氣溫只有攝氏12度。我掌舵時，一陣強風將船吹翻，我們三人落入冰冷的水中。我們馬上學會了把船翻回來，翻船本來是課程後期才教的。」

帆船運動是團隊運動，需要成員彼此合作無間。莊永康說：「帆船運動需要一定的體能，但團隊合作才是關鍵。每位船員都各有分工，各司所長。」

黃耀祖亦強調團隊合作是駕駛帆船的關鍵。「大家要一起回到岸上，所以說，出海是團隊合作的考驗。船員間必須溝通無間，才能齊心協力達成同一目標。每位船員各有分工，每人都要全力以赴，各司其職。分工是根據每人的強項而定。這原則同樣適用於工作當中。」

黃耀祖表示，他對地圖及測量的興趣，對他的航帆技術甚有助益。「我喜歡研究導航地圖、運用全球定位系統理論及測量知識，以及根據水流和方向、風速和風向、水底地形等多項變數進行分析。我亦會觀察島嶼來判斷風向。」

因此，黃耀祖的航船經驗對其生活和工作皆有啟發。「我擔任專家證人時，在法庭上全靠自己，同樣地，我們乘帆出海時，只能自己設法解決問題，沒法向旁人求助。我因此學會了在面對困難時冷靜以對，專心找出解決方法。」

莊永康同意黃耀祖所說，航帆經驗可培養堅毅不屈的精神。「我們參加比賽並非純為取勝，只要完成賽事，不落在最後一名，已經無比滿足了。比賽充滿許多變數及未知數，包括比賽場地、天氣、海面情況、隊員和其他參賽隊伍，因此極具挑戰。在壓力下應對這些未知數，正是挑戰所在。當面臨困境時，成員必須有不屈不撓的精神，無論發生甚麼情況，我們都要回到岸上。」

莊永康曾數赴外地，參加海上比賽。「在海上競賽是另一種挑戰，因為我們要在外海待上數天，需要周全的準備、充足的食水和食物等必需品，應對連續數日數夜不停的航行。船員需要輪流分工。」

有一次，黃耀祖要在湍急的海流上航船，解決接踵而來的困難，至今記憶猶新。「在2014年中國盃帆船賽，我們來回香港與深圳大亞灣，在下午四時左右返航，豈料天氣驟變，風速迅即超過30節，有如三號強風信號。五米高的浪不斷拍打我們的船，海水湧進船中，有些船員害怕不已，其他人紛紛嘔吐。」

「我們掙扎了五個多小時後，才回到相對風平浪靜的維多利亞港，這次經驗十分寶貴。經過這次比賽，我出海遇到困難時更懂得應對。」

莊永康表示，若有興趣一嘗航帆滋味，可參加遊艇會及政府水上活動中心開辦的基礎帆船培訓課程。「香港測量師學會會員亦可加入我們的帆船隊。船員分工是視乎每人體能而定，所以年齡絕不是問題。」

黃耀祖期待見到更多港人一嘗揚帆之樂，他解釋，出海並非一般人所想的昂貴。「港人應該多玩帆船。玩帆船其實一點都不貴，比如說，政府的水上運動中心就有帆船出租服務。」

本文由《Classified Post》撰文。

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