

RICH MERHIGE

Founder & President, Advanced Mechanical Enterprises/AME

By Jack O'Connell

VIBRATION ANALYSTS ARE A RARE BREED. MERHIGE IS ONE OF THE BEST.

WHAT IS VIBRATION ANALYSIS? All rotating parts vibrate to some extent. But when the vibration – and resultant noise – become excessive, it means there's a problem with the equipment. Vibration analysis detects the source of the problem and fixes it before there's a catastrophic failure of an engine or rotor or compressor or whatever part it is.

HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE "MERHIGE"? It's pronounced "MERR-idge," like marriage.

WHAT SERVICES DOES AME PROVIDE? Vibration and noise surveys, laser, optical and strain gage alignment, precision hull deflection measurements, field balancing, thermal imaging, machining, fabrication, welding and line boring.

WHO ARE YOUR MAIN CUSTOMERS? The yachting community along with commercial and industrial clients.

WHAT IS THE MIX BETWEEN MARINE AND INDUSTRIAL? Seventy-five percent marine and 25 percent industrial.

WHAT KIND OF INDUSTRIAL WORK DO YOU DO? We service power plants and manufacturing facilities, among others. We recently had to fix a power station in the Caribbean that had blown generators. We try to convince people to use condition monitoring so it doesn't get to the point of catastrophic failure.

WHAT KIND OF MARINE WORK DO YOU DO? We work with shipyards to conduct vibration analyses and other diagnostic procedures on a vessel before it is delivered to the customer. But mainly we work on repairs on yachts and bigger vessels, whose owners call on us when they have a problem.

WHAT IS AME'S RELATIONSHIP WITH WÄRTSILÄ AND WINDROCK? ARE THERE OTHER FAVORED SUPPLIERS? We are the authorized distributor for Wärtsilä in Florida and the East Coast. We are also an authorized representative for Windrock condition-monitoring systems for the marine industry. Windrock is an industry leader in condition monitoring for the oil and gas industry, and they wanted to expand into the marine business. They chose us as their partner.

YOU HAVE BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING YOU HAVE A "PASSION FOR FIXING THINGS." IS "FIXING THINGS" WHAT AME IS ALL ABOUT? Our customers come to us with the most complex problems in the world, and we are able to solve them. However, through our push for condition monitoring, we strive to provide our clients with more predictive maintenance services. That way we are assisting them with their machinery before it actually needs to be fixed.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF? I'm a procrastinator. I have the stereotypical engineering mind where I have to slowly and methodically analyze everything.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THUS FAR? Educating our customers on the value of our services and their application to their mechanical issues has been our biggest challenge. The ROI isn't always immediate.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME? I love traveling every chance I get. I'm also an avid boater and enjoy any activity that's on the water.

MarEx

Jack O'Connell is Senior Editor of *The Maritime Executive*.

