

The Master's Mariner

Winter 2012



Caring for seafarers
around the world

From Sussex St to Hickson Rd

When I last wrote, our new property at 24 Hickson Rd had just been purchased and the Mission was still operating as per usual from 320 Sussex St.



A 360° panorama of the Sussex St interior. The Principal Chaplain's office is behind the three phone booths on the left.

Now, as I write, we have moved from Sussex St., most of our goods are in storage and we are awaiting DA approval for the Hickson Rd property. Sydney Ports Corporation have, very



A 180° view of the 'guttered' MtS interior – taken from the remains of the PC's Office.

kindly, offered me a desk in their offices, which are only a few hundred metres from our new location!

During this interim period we have reconfigured our rosters to cope with our 'homelessness'. You will be very pleased to know that our ministries of crew visitation and free transport to and from the City are continuing at 100% operational effectiveness. Although we are unable to provide them with free internet etc. until we occupy our new premises, seafarers are feeling well

compensated in that our (temporary) city drop-off / pick-up point is at the Opera House!

Because our new premises is significantly smaller than our former Sussex St site, we have been unable to take many of the historical items kept at Sussex St. However, our predicament was joy to the Australian National Maritime Museum and to the Royal Australian Navy Heritage Centre, into whose care we were able to entrust many historical items that we would be unable to display at Hickson Road.

Among these items are numerous historical plaques. Although the ANMM took a large number of plaques, there are a number of other memorial plaques for which we have no available space to display. These will be stored at the Mission, but if you have a relative whose plaque you would like to retrieve, please contact the PC after we move into 24 Hickson Road.

Chaplain Jong Nam Jo

During the last month I continued to see some of the difficulties seafarers face. I met seafarers who were concerned that their payments from their Company were a few months behind schedule; a chief officer who had no chance to get shore leave for 7 months; and a Filipino officer who could not go home even though he had finished his contract two months ago. Sadly, seafarers often return home to confront difficult circumstances and in many cases broken families.

I would like to share two events. One event shown in the pictures below was a Kiribati crew, I met them in our Centre and the meeting flowed easily as a small group Bible study, with them opening up the Bible following verse by verse. As they came to realise who Jesus is, I encouraged them to have faith in Jesus as their 'Master & Commander'.



Two crew gave me their e-mail address and I sent the photos to them. Soon after sending the photos, one of the men who received the photo replied saying, *'Thank you very much Jong. I got the photo, so I wish you the best for you and your wife. Now I'm at the airport. I have to go home to settle my two kids (girls) because my wife left me to stay with another man, so please pray for me to be strong.'* It's a very sad story and this is what some seafarers go through.

On the 22nd of September, the crew from RENA, the ship now grounded in New Zealand waters, came to Port Botany. I was the driver of the bus that day and got to know the crew a little on the way back to the port. It was an unusual trip as a number of other seafarers were quite stressed because their ships were due to depart very soon and they were concerned about the travelling time from the city to the port. However, we made the trip on time and everybody was very grateful. I also had one person who came from RENA saying to me *'Thank you, not just for the bus service, but also for sharing the word God. This kind of wonderful service I have never seen before, I am going to tell this to the other crew members.'*

It was very good to hear positive feedback from the seafarer.

Chaplain George Gayagay

Recently we have had some problems gaining access to some of the vessels in port. An 'incident' involving a contractor meant that all 'contractors' (which includes us) were denied access to the Terminal. However, although the situation has not been fully resolved, common sense has prevailed and our access has been unofficially restored. The Security Officer on duty will ask his Supervisor for permission to grant access to 'a Chaplain of Flying Angel requesting to enter the port to visit ships'. Each time, the Supervisor has returned to me with a smile, sometimes with an apology, then opened the gate and called the shuttle bus driver to take me to the ship. Although the disruption has been an

inconvenience, it has provided opportunities to get to know the Security Officers and gain some rapport with them, letting them know and understand what we do and why we visit ships. Now, when I arrive, the Security Officers usually just let me in.

During the past few months, there were a number of crew changes on vessels that regularly visit Sydney. Many of these seafarers were in Sydney for the first time and were excited to see the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge, Sydney Tower, etc. They did quite a bit of shopping but some were very disappointed at the high cost of goods, almost all of which were made in China.

In early September there was a 'quiet' week when few ships were in port and, consequently, there were not many seafarers available to come into the city. But then Saturday came and everything changed! Suddenly, there were thirty-one seafarers at the PATRICK terminal who all wanted to come into the city. I explained that I was able to take only twenty-one in our bus, and that the remainder would have to go to the nearby Sydney Seafarers Centre and wait there until I returned to collect them.

But the remaining ten pleaded with me to take them to the city for reasons of urgency e.g. to send money, buy medicines/vitamins, modem, laptop, etc. A staff member of the SSC and his wife had also hoped to get a lift into the city, and I was very happy and relieved when, in a great gesture of co-operation, he offered to drive the ten into the city on the SSC bus.

But there's more! After I left PATRICK, I drove around to DP World and found another six seafarers who also wanted to come into the city. I called Jong Jo, on duty at the Mission, who drove out to Botany in our reserve bus and brought them into the city. We were glad to have transported a total of thirty-seven seafarers into the city in one go. They were very grateful that no-one (especially themselves) was left behind!

On a crew visit I met James, a Second Engineer, from Ghana, who asked if we had wi-fi internet capability. We do – for up to fifty computers at a time! He said how helpful it was for him to use to talk with his wife and young daughter. However, it created a problem because his daughter could not understand what it meant to be at sea for weeks at a time and why he did not speak to her more often. He and his wife decided to tape his conversations with 'his girls' and each morning to play it to their daughter as she wakes up. This worked well for a time, but as she grew to the wise old age of two, she wondered why her daddy does not hug her or

have her sit on his lap. She wanted to know why he was hiding inside the computer!



James was very keen to sign off in Melbourne and return home for two months with his wife and daughter. Hopefully he will be able to help make up for his absence from them and help his daughter understand why he will soon leave them again.

Being away from their young families when they are needed most is one of the most profound problems seafarers face. We are eager to provide (for free) the technology that enables the impact of that separation to be eased, because we know that relationships between seafarers and their families can easily be casualties of their quest to provide for their family's material welfare.

Chaplain Jack Starmans

In mid October Ian, Un, and I headed down to Tassie for the MtS National Conference. It was a valuable time meeting other workers and volunteers with MtS. We spent a lot of time learning about piracy and how to assist seafarers who have experienced its trauma. We are already making use of these new skills when we meet seafarers whose vessels have been threatened or attacked or who are fearful as they face the prospect of sailing in waters where pirates could attack.

In early October I was on the shuttle bus at Patrick Terminal, on my way to visit one of the ships' crews. There were two Stevedores on the bus with me. We began talking and soon came alongside the ship. As we talked, one man spoke about his recent trip to Israel. He was blown away by it, and said he planned to go again. One thing led to another and we began to talk about Israel as God's people, and the Dome of The Rock sitting on top of the Wailing Wall. With that the other man told us that he took his kids to Church every Sunday. I spent some fifteen minutes with these men. Before I got out to visit the crew, I was able to leave a copy of Luke's Gospel with first man. I encouraged him to read it and then I prayed for both of them. When we visit the crews we are often able to minister to other port-workers. We get to speak God's word to crews, agents, container owners, and stevedores.

I am privileged to minister through MtS Sydney.

Chaplain Un Hui Tay

Sometime in June, I received a phone call: the caller asked me to guess who he was. In this case I couldn't, so he identified himself as the Chief Officer from one of the OOCL vessels. He and his family were in Sydney on a holiday. I had first met him on his ship and subsequently visited him at Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick when he was admitted there for a week.

I arranged to meet him and his family at FAH on Sunday morning and brought them to our church. After church, we invited them to our home for lunch and fellowship. It was lovely surprise and encouragement to meet up with seafarers who had visited us at FAH and still remember us!

Previously, I shared my interesting and exciting interaction with the Captain of one of the OOCL vessels. Subsequently, he requested a copy of the Bible. I gave him a copy of 'The Story' and a DVD to him on his previous voyage in September. His vessel arrived again in October. One afternoon, I came in an hour early to meet up with him. Thank God that we had very good sharing and I sense that he has a greater hunger to know more of God and His truth. Please remember him in your prayers that he may complete reading 'The Story' and that I may establish a good rapport to minister more effectively to him.

Chaplain Toshi Yano

In comparison with the 1980's and the 1990's many things have dramatically changed. One of these changes is the telecommunications service. Currently we have three beautiful phone booths, and it is rare to see any one of them not occupied by eager seafarers. It gives the impression of one being for Jesus, the second for Moses, and the other for Elijah.

When we were located at Macquarie Place, there was a constant line for use of the telephone service. This was especially apparent when Japanese tuna boats were at port. We would end up with a queue from the reception desk out the front door, resulting in instances of impatience and frustration. To make matters worse, at the time we were not able to dial directly overseas, but had to go through an international operator and it was procedure for our receptionist to prepare the line service. There were also forms that were to be filled out in order to use the service, and being in English, was difficult for seafarers to complete. Therefore, we

would fill out the forms for them, much like celebrities signing autographs for all their fans.

Nowadays, I would say 95% of seafarers have either a mobile phone or personal computer making it much easier to communicate with friends and family.

I recall an event in the 1980's when a Japanese seafarer suffered a heart attack. He was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital and stayed there for a period of 2 weeks. I remember visiting him everyday while his condition improved, and how happy he was awaiting his time to return to Japan. However, during one night, it was required for him to be transferred to St. Vincent's Hospital by ambulance. Being around midnight, he became very upset and worried that there were complications. When I arrived home after the last bus service around 12:30a.m. that night, I received a phone call from the St Luke's Hospital asking me to explain to him the situation of the matter, also relaying that he was distressed. The fact of the matter was that he was quite fine and was well to leave. The reason for the transfer was in order to complete a medical report requested by a Japanese doctor, which required a specific machine not available at the St. Luke's Hospital. It was very late and I had only just finished my shift and was required to start the next day at 9:00a.m., so I was feeling very tired. God talked to me, 'the man is from a foreign country and does not understand English. He is scared. He is in need. Go forth and help him'. So, I decided to go out to see him in person as I felt it was more appropriate than by phone.

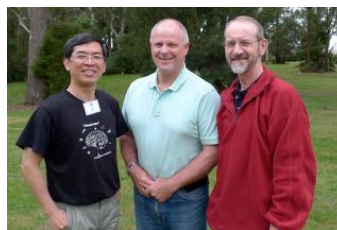
When I did see him, he was a sad sight indeed. His mood changed almost instantly after I was able to explain the whole situation to him. He had a great big smile and thanked me gratefully. I stayed with him for an hour or so and returned home 2:30 in the morning extremely tired and very sleepy. In spite of that, the thought of the joy on the gentleman's face was very satisfying. These days, I stay very alert about any such instances. It is very easy for us to fall into habit of using modern day conveniences such as SMS, e-mail, mobile phone. When we had Japanese tuna boats regularly travelling through, I would visit several seafarers with injuries in hospital every year. Due to the lack of Japanese tuna boats coming to dock at Sydney ports, I may not have any such opportunities again.

It is always good to remember not to rely on modern conveniences but to adhere to human interaction as a main source of communication. The added effect of these practices can be never underestimated and should not be forgotten.

The MtS Australian Conference 2011



The Australian Conference had a difficult 'labour' when the main speaker, Dr Marion Gibson from the UK, withdrew at rather short notice due to health concerns. At Central Office's strong recommendation and urging, the MtS Australian Council had invited Dr Gibson to speak on the subject of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in seafarers, particularly in those impacted by piracy. Unfortunately, despite her cancellation, Dr Gibson would not allow non-accredited personnel to present her material. Although a Salvation Army worker in Canberra was accredited to do so, he had no experience with seafarers or piracy and it was decided that this was an insurmountable disadvantage.



In view of this, the organisers decided to promote 'home grown talent' and invited Newcastle Chaplain Garry

Dodd - who has a

Un, Ian & Jack at the Conference

Certificate in Psychology - and Dave Ellis, Brisbane Centre Chairman - who has extensive maritime / security experience - to take the sessions. Despite the last-minute 'call', I am pleased to say that the addresses were informative and helpful and that all went well. The Conference was well-organised, there were good amounts of time to get to know the newer Chaplains & other workers, the site (The Australian Maritime College at Beauty Point) was very attractive and we all enjoyed a trip to Launceston for the Conference dinner. Un, Jack & I each felt that it was a very worthwhile week.



Beauty Point lived up to its name!

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Donations over \$2 to the Welfare Fund are tax-deductible.

Doreen has Retired

In 1980, an 'even younger' Doreen Barr commenced work in 'The Flying Angel Restaurant' in the Mission's premises in Macquarie Place, Sydney. A friend had rung to ask if she could help out for a function there, as the Mission was short staffed. She must have had a good time, because she continued working in the Restaurant until the building was sold in 1985. When The Mission moved to its new premises in Kent St., they no longer had a restaurant, but Doreen continued working - in a new role as a Receptionist.



At the time of her retirement, Doreen helped look after the seafarers' needs, i.e. assisting them with phone calls, changing money, receiving shop sales, and dispensing 'tourist' advice. She also maintained our shop and kept

statistics and other logs, and oversaw our mail-outs and other correspondence.

It goes without saying that someone like Doreen made many friendships during her time at The Mission, but one of her greatest pleasures at work was getting to know the crews from all over the world who regularly visited the Mission.



Doreen is unflappable

It wasn't all joy, however! There were some real frustrations – most involving communication difficulties – especially when the seafarers' telephone calls could not get through. Some seafarers always blame the operator and it was very frustrating when language difficulties made it hard for her to explain why the call didn't go through.

On the family front, Doreen has two daughters, Lisa and Kerry. Tragically, her son Jimmy was killed in 1987. Lisa is married to Rodney, but they have no children. Kerry is married to Paul and they have three daughters – twins Emma & Lara and Hanna. As any self-respecting grandmother would say 'They are just beautiful', so she is Nanna to three gorgeous girls - and loving it. She says that one of the best things about her retirement is greater freedom



to be more actively involved as a Nanna in their lives!

She will also have more time to walk, especially near the water. Doreen also likes reading, music and doing crossword puzzles and coffee therapy. Today she sent me a text message, saying how she was enjoying a coffee by the water at Brooklyn - reading her latest book in between sips of coffee and gazes at the sparkling water. She sure knows how to hurt a guy!

Her farewell on 16th November was a very happy time in that many people expressed a great deal of affection, appreciation and respect for Doreen for the way in which she served The Mission over so many years.

Doreen is coy We are really pleased that Doreen has offered to come back next year as a volunteer. You can take the girl out of the Mission, but you can't take the mission out of the girl!

Doreen & Joan Fyffe – a dynamic duo!

The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW

Winner

of the Lloyd's List Australia 2011 Seafarers' Welfare Award!

On the evening of Thursday 24th November, Australia's shipping, ports and maritime industry gathered to celebrate excellence and achievement at the 16th Annual Lloyd's List Australia Shipping and Maritime Industry Awards.



Held at the Sofitel Ballroom in Melbourne, more than 400 senior industry executives were in attendance, making this one of the premier events in the Shipping calendar. Delegates came from across the nation to learn the nominees and winners in sixteen categories determined by the judging panel and two awards selected by Lloyd's List Australia.

In the Seafarers' Welfare category, we were one of ten nominees, each of whom had been '*deemed to have made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of seafarers.*' The Mission to Seafarers was represented in the category by Fremantle Flying Angel Seafarers' Centre, Mr Jack Tomes (with over 65 years of service to The Mission in Hobart and elsewhere!) and ourselves. The award could have gone to any one of the nominees, so I was thrilled when our name was the one read out as the winner. As you know, we have an outstanding staff so, when I accepted the award, I wanted to do so on their behalf, for they are the ones 'at the coal face' of ministry as they care for crew wherever they are.

Jack Tomes received a much-deserved 'Lifetime Achievement Award', honouring his magnificent service to seafarers via The Mission to Seafarers, Hobart.

At the conclusion of the Dinner, we gathered outside the Ballroom for a very happy MtS photograph.



Left to right: The Rev. Dennis Claughton (Fremantle MtS), The Rev. Ian Porter (Sydney MtS), The Rev. Jed Crispin (Melbourne MtS), Mr Colin Brown (MtS Nat. Co-ordinator of Ministry), Mr Jack Tomes (Hobart MtS), The Rev. Bruce Mitchell (Hobart MtS).