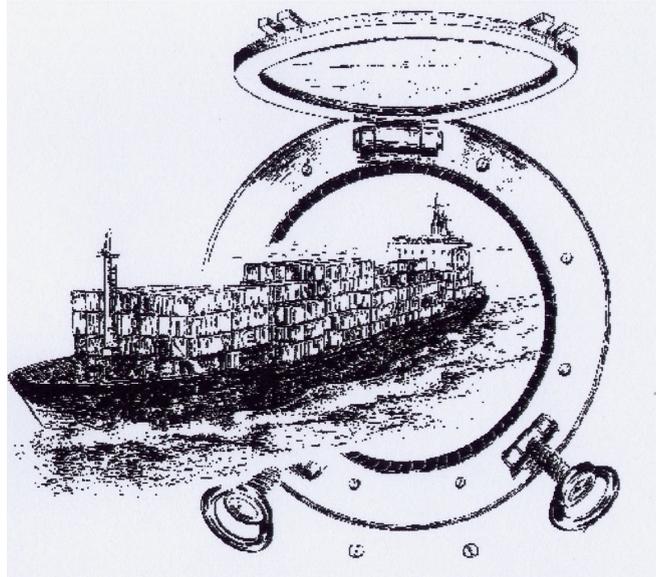


Through the Porthole

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Then (they) took Jesus. [John 18:12](#)

This newsletter comes to you as an interim between the June '19 and January '20 newsletter. It is prompted by a daily calendar text

Over the last three months I have visited or spoken to crew members on approximately 20 ships each month. Some for just a few minutes and others for considerably longer. For each person - the Lord died. For each person He gave His life that they might have eternal life. Here is the story of a few of those I have met. Perhaps one day, you will meet them too.

Suntis the timber ship continues to come to Ipswich every two weeks. I visit as often as possible. The German Captain and Mate think that I have come to visit just one man called Wilfredo, but all the Filipinos are on my 'radar'. They all need encouragement. It doesn't come naturally for them to talk about Christian things and their relationship with the Lord.

A younger lad - just 24 years old, on a different ship said without hesitation, when I asked him if he loved the Lord Jesus - Oh Yes I do.

On yet another ship a 24 year old Filipino Girl told how a Ukrainian believer on a previous ship had witnessed to her. This man Constantine has been in our home. She and another sailor described him as being very religious. His English was very good and he would have left them in no doubt about the Way of Salvation. Her life as a seafarer hasn't been easy but she isn't going to be bullied into giving up.

Henry, mentioned in my previous newsletter came back to Ipswich again. His brother directed me to the bow of the ship where he was waiting to close the hatch covers as rain was imminent. As always he was happy to see me, as I was him. This time I suggested that he has a go at a Bible course. Without hesitation he accepted. I'm now waiting for him to return to Ipswich again, hopefully before the end of the year.

Gilson from Cape Verde talked about his loneliness on board a ship with Russians. He had a long contract on board and Russian is the predominant spoken language. When I offered him a Portuguese Bible he said that his wife also read the Bible. Back in my car I could see him holding up the Bible to his phone - I think he was showing it to his wife.

When I met an Indonesian believer called Tete he told me how he witnesses to muslims in his neighbourhood back at home. As the Chief Engineer on board his ship his rank is comparable to the Captains. The Captain had come into the office as we talked and listened and occasionally joined in our conversation.

Sometimes there is only opportunity to give out a tract. One day two Russians loitered by the gangway. A young lad and an older man. Neither would accept a Bible or Christian books. The older man's excuse was that he was an atheist and that he had lived in the Soviet era. My car was next to the ship. I fetched a mirror with John 3:16 on it written in Russian. It has nearly always caught the person's attention. I handed it over to the young Cadet who read it - "Turn it over to see who God so loves"! A moment later the "atheist" wanted to have one too.

A Georgian sailor declared that he didn't believe in God and that he wasn't interested. But he was curious enough to come to my car to see what I had for him in his own language. I suggested that I should keep it then, if he wasn't interested, but he held onto it and said he would keep it anyway.

Many Filipino's put more emphasis on their Rosary than on having a Bible. Richard's English was very good but because his wife had given him a Rosary that was all he needed. He did accept Bible story books for his children though.

A ship with a crew of 19 is generally one of the biggest that would come into Ipswich. The Cadet called Roman looked 'cool' in his reflective sunglasses standing by the gangway. He called the duty officer and so the 3rd officer joined us. I explained to them the purpose of my visit and after replying that the whole crew were Ukrainian said, as I showed him my Russian language scriptures that no one was interested. No one? How could he be sure? Did he know none of the crew would be interested. His walky talky was going off constantly and I began to realise that it was to do with my visit. It was the

Captain who didn't think the crew needed scriptures, and perhaps he thought I was going to stop them from working. But if that was the case then he could have suggested that I come back another time. I think he was on the bridge and had seen me come on board. So I had no choice but to back off and go away. Roman accepted a large Dollar tract before I left. His English was good enough to understand it but the other lad wouldn't take anything.

It is not unusual for someone to turn their back on me or think my visit an unnecessary inconvenience. So it's really nice when one complains that I haven't come sooner. One Russian Captain did just that. He said that the ship was going to sail in a few hours time, so why hadn't I come sooner. He said it with a smile on his face and then offered me coffee so I still felt welcome.

Then there was the Polish Engineer - still sailing at 72 years old. He accepted a children's Bible story book in Polish for his Grandchild.

A Dutch Captain who welcomed me onto the bridge one Sunday morning said that his wife attended church too, but it wasn't for him. He encouraged his crew to come if they wanted to.

When I was fetching a Bible from my car for a sailor called Tito, the Captain appeared at my shoulder wanting a lift out of the port. It gave me the opening to return the following day for another visit, and the Captain himself accepted literature when I came on board again.

One day a Filipino opened his heart to me and told the story of his 7 year old son who is undergoing treatment for leukemia. This sailor has been on board for 4 months and I am the first person he has shared it with. I shouldn't be too surprised. His crew mates probably have their own cares and anxieties.

Then a few weeks later a Filipino Captain spoke about his teenage daughter's ill health. She too had had cancer but was in remission.

What a burden seamen have to carry.
If only they take it to the Lord in prayer. They assured me they do.

*'What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer
Thou wilt find a solace there'*

Yours in His service

Keith Oliver