



Summer 2008

St. Nicholas' Bag

The Newsletter of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center

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All in a Week's Work —Yes, the following happened all in one week last winter! (We omit dates and some details to preserve privacy.)

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center brought friendly conversation, free multi-lingual reading matter, and low-cost phone cards to crews hailing from the Philippines, the Netherlands, Norway, India, Canada, China, the United States, Japan, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. Even with our Monday evening volunteer out sick and our Saturday volunteer's day cut short by a need at his salaried job, we were able to serve **16 crews** from Curtis Bay to Dundalk.

Agents phoned us for service in 6 cases, and the crew contacted us with the help of friendly guards or stevedores in 7 other instances. 11 crews were **transported**—5 of them more than once—to destinations as far away as Golden Ring Mall and Glen Burnie. 2 crews who could not go ashore received cell phone loans. A couple of crews had time to come to the **Seafarers' Center** and select free warm clothing.

But that's not all. Our Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor and Wednesday volunteer Wayne Dornbirer offered a **listening ear**, prayer, and financial assistance to a crew member who was being flown home for health reasons. Both Allene and Darrell Dempster, our Thursday evening volunteer (who worked till midnight that week!), also offered supportive listening to another crew who had been part of a traumatic rescue experience.

And Allene and Director Mary Davisson began visiting a hospitalized member of yet another crew. Eventually they would visit and pray with him eight times, and as soon as he was flown home, an agent requested visits for another hospitalized seafarer. Free phone cards and varied reading matter are included in our **hospital visits**.

Meanwhile, **back at the office**, some of us also kept busy interviewing potential new ship visitors and office assistants, planning a mailing day for the previous issue of this newsletter, receipting some welcome donations—and, of course, activating phone cards, updating records, and assembling those ever-popular magazine bags for upcoming ship visits!



Darrell Dempster (see 3d par.) of St. Martin Lutheran Church, Annapolis, volunteers long hours every Thursday evening. Here, he is shown at the Center with visiting seafarers, holding an award received in 1971 from Barrio Dila Dila, Santa Rita, Pampanga, The Philippines, to Cdr. Darrell Dempster, in appreciation for assistance given to the Dila Dila School by members of the Supply Department, *USS Ranger*.

NETWORKING, NETWORKING, NETWORKING

Many problems of seafarers are too large to be addressed by a single ship visitor or even by our Center alone. Networking is essential!

This spring, a bulk ship had to stay in Baltimore for months because of **safety and financial issues**. Baltimore International Seafarers' Center representatives were invited to attend meetings with the Coast Guard, International Transport Workers' Federation, owner, captain, agent, and others. Director Mary Davisson, Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor, former Director Ed Munro, new Lutheran volunteer Bob Garske, and Baptist Pastor Don Bryant totaled about twenty visits by press time. We brought cell phones to the crew, none of whom were allowed off the vessel, provided Russian and Spanish reading matter and DVD's, wired money home and did numerous other errands for several crew members, researched air fares, brought interpreters on board, and simply listened during their lengthy stay.

We also network with seafarers' centers in other ports. This winter, a New York chaplain met a container ship crew member who **alleged assault** by an officer. She contacted our Center because the vessel was headed our way. Unfortunately, this vessel was docked in Baltimore only in the middle of the night, at which time the captain (who had been unrecptive in New York) was unlikely to allow a chaplain on board. In the following port, the ship once more was docked only a few hours in the middle of the night. But a call to a chaplain in the vessel's last U.S. port

Networking with churches overseas: Past Director Ed Munro volunteers at the Center once a week and also stays in touch with old friends from around the world. Here, he poses (seated) with Barbara Munro, seminarian Lendehl Sallidao (next to Barbara) from the The Episcopal Church of the Phillipines, and crew members from the *Genca*.



resulted in a Coast Guard investigation on board the vessel.

A week later, the same New York chaplain called Baltimore about **provisions and medical issues** on another vessel. We arranged a visit by our local International Transport Workers' Federation representative, Arthur Petitpas, who made sure that both needs were taken care of. Arthur even followed up on two other Seafarers' Center referrals during his extensive work on the detained vessel described above!

On a yet another vessel, a crew member visited by the Director mentioned that his crewmate's sister had

died following childbirth. The **bereaved seafarer** was not available for conversation at that point, but we phoned an experienced chaplain in his next U.S. port, who promised to visit him.

And the day after the **cyclone struck Myanmar** (Burma), we visited a container ship whose crew came mostly from that area. They had less than 8 hours in port, and were anxious to phone home. Besides bringing them a cell phone and the morning paper, we contacted the Center at the next port and were assured that they would receive additional service there.



Networking with the Port community: Director Mary Davisson participates regularly in Port events. On National Maritime Day, May 22, Mary offered the invocation as part of observances on board the *Savannah*, launched fifty years ago to demonstrate peaceful uses of nuclear power. After the memorial wreath was placed in the Harbor, she took this picture of a fireboat and a McAllister tug joining in the observances.

To learn more about volunteering,
please call 410.685.1240 or write baltseafarers@aol.com.

Christmas at Sea 2008

Dear friends:

It's hard to imagine Christmas in this weather, but we know that many of our Christmas at Sea donors begin work over the summer. We are deeply grateful to all the churches and individuals who have participated in our annual gift distribution to ships' crews of all nationalities and faiths. Many crew members earn less than \$1,000 a month, so a box of sundries makes a big difference in their lives. Even those earning more are moved to know that others are thinking of them and praying for them. Crews returning to Baltimore years later sometimes thank us all over again for these gifts. Also, due to new U.S. security regulations and tighter work schedules, many seafarers can't leave the ships to do their own shopping or even to telephone. Your gifts brighten their lonely lives.

A few reminders, should you choose to participate in 2008: please use a medium shoebox or something comparable (such as a tightly closed shirt box). It's awkward to bring a crew 10 large boxes and 10 smaller boxes! So please, make them all medium shoebox size. If you make cloth bags, be sure that they are securely shut, so that items aren't spilling out as we carry them up steep gangways.

In addition, please wrap gifts as neatly as possible, since we don't have enough volunteers to re-wrap. Greetings or cards made by children or a note such as "with love from Mrs. Smith's 6-year-old class" are very meaningful. Most seafarers are fathers, so they will appreciate the joy of a child-wrapped package and card.

Please use our Christmas at Sea Wishlist below to help with filling the boxes.

To schedule delivery, please call 410-685-1240. Due to lease and security considerations, packages cannot be left when the Center is closed. When you deliver your packages, please leave complete contact information with the volunteer on duty.

Again, we deeply appreciate your joining us in this important ministry. Thank you and God bless!

Mary Davisson
(The Rev.) Mary Davisson
MaryHTDavisson@aol.com



at top: Christmas boxes must be transferred from our back room to our vans, driven to terminals, lugged past busy truck traffic, and carried up steep gangways. (Security regulations often prevent seafarers from coming out to help us.) Unfortunately, these two generous gifts are **too big to be practical**.

at bottom: These five boxes are **sized just right!** Five trips up the gangway will provide enough boxes to warm the hearts of an entire crew.

CHRISTMAS AT SEA WISH LIST 2008

PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IN EACH BOX:

 A paperback Bible or New Testament, in a modern translation (readable by those whose first language is not English).

 Toiletries, sealed (no unwrapped soap or toothbrushes etc.; and please remember that almost all our seafarers are male).

 A greeting or a piece of paper with the name and address of your church, in case the seafarer is able to send a thank-you note. (Most can't, but a few do.)

 A warm hat or a warm scarf

 And some of the following: pens and pads, warm socks or gloves, playing cards, post cards of Baltimore, etc.

Please do not use anything larger than a medium size shoebox and wrap as carefully as possible. The seafarers appreciate your generosity, but we do not have enough space or volunteers to handle oversized packages. PLEASE CALL 410-685-1240 TO ARRANGE DELIVERY.

A Ditty Bag of Photos

NEW VESSELS: It's a special blessing for us to welcome new vessels to the Port of Baltimore. Allene Taylor enjoyed lengthy visits with the crew of the *Fedora* (Wallenius Wilhelmsen), and Mary Davisson took this picture on the day of their naming ceremony. Is this crew member glowing because he's serving on a new vessel? The *Fedora* is more comfortable than most, but the glow actually comes from his reflective clothing — safety first! Other impressive new vessels whose crews we visited and transported this spring included the *Safmarine Ngami*, the *Hoegh Oslo*, and the *Genca* (see p. 2).



WELCOMING CREWS TO THE CENTER: Volunteer Bob Garske, from Christ Church Inner Harbor (Lutheran), welcomes two seafarers from the vessel *Balsa 71* in April. While much of our ministry happens on vessels or in vans, the first week of April alone saw members of seven crews visit our Center! On April 2, four seafarers (not shown) from the *Ingolstadt* relaxed here for two hours after flying in to Baltimore from the Philippines (four flights over 24 hours!). They appreciated the use of phones, free clothes, Bibles, snacks, and naps, before beginning nine months' work on their vessel.



NEW COMPUTERS: Thanks to Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics and Mike Derby (General Manager, North American Operations), the Center's antique computers were replaced with five much faster machines. Posing here are Ed St. John, who installed the new computers, Director Mary Davisson, and Tina Jordan, whose work at the Center includes keeping our computers healthy and busy. [note--I can't remember whether I'm next to Ed or Tina is--please check.]



PLEASE POST - THANKS!



Please join the Volunteers and Supporters of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center for an evening cruise of the Port of Baltimore aboard the

Duchess of Pintail

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

Learn about the inner workings of the Port of Baltimore & hear how this ministry to the Seafarers' reaches out to those who work on board the ships that come here.



Bishop John Rabb and 115 other guests enjoying themselves on our 2007 cruise.

The Port of Baltimore is the cornerstone from which the City was built and now thrives. Indeed it remains one of Maryland's most significant industries today.

The Director and volunteers of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center visit many of the over 2,000 ships that dock in Baltimore each year to provide seafarers a friendly welcome, a listening ear, telephone access, free reading material, and transportation.

Here is an opportunity to enjoy a waterside tour of Baltimore's port in luxurious surroundings, to hear guests from the maritime community explain how the Port works, and to help raise funds for the vital work of the Seafarers' Center.

Evening Schedule & Events

Starting: 4:45 pm - *promptly!* — Finishing: at about 7:00 pm. — Boarding: from Pier 5 (Baltimore's Inner Harbor).

Cost: \$50.00 per person — Included: Soft drinks, beer, wine, and 'Happy Hour' snacks.

Also available: Cash bar for premium spirits.

RSVP by Friday, September 12, 2008

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU ABOARD!!!

~ RESERVATIONS for the 2-hour Harbor Cruise ~
may be made directly with Baltimore International Seafarers' Center.
Your name will be placed on our passenger list upon receipt of your check,
which must be received by September 12, 2008.

Checks (\$50.00 per person) should be made payable to
"The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center"
and mailed to 1430 Wallace Street, Baltimore MD 21230.

If you would like to receive a written confirmation of your reservation,
please provide an e-mail address or stamped self-addressed envelope with your remittance.

Questions may be directed to:
<MaryHTDavisson@aol.com>, or phone (410) 685-1240.

About the 124' Yacht *Duchess of Pintail* ~

Elegant and stately, the *Duchess of Pintail* is Baltimore's newest luxury yacht and is U.S. Coast Guard certified to carry up to 149 passengers. Amenities on board include a 1,500 sq. ft. main dining salon, granite topped bar, atrium dance floor, grand staircase, richly appointed lounge, galley, and four open air decks.



About Baltimore International Seafarers' Center, Inc.



The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center is an inter-faith ministry rooted in the tradition of Christian hospitality. We believe in the unconditional love of God for all people, and we demonstrate this love through our commitment to serving the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of the seafarers who visit the Port of Baltimore, regardless of their race, gender, religion, or nationality.

The seafarers we serve are men and women in a demanding industry which keeps them away from home, family, and friends for as much as ten months of the year! Their work is often tedious, dangerous, and lonely, with little compensation. They are from many different lands, cultures, and traditions. They welcome us as readily and easily as we welcome them. Meeting them in their isolated world of international cargo ships makes their world and ours much bigger and better.

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center is an independent non-profit corporation which depends upon contributions and other donations to fulfill its mission. The Center is recognized by the IRS as an exempt organization under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, and all contributions are deductible in accordance with the law. The Center files IRS form 990, which is available for inspection at the Center or at www.guidestar.org. Your contribution will help us to serve seafarers visiting the Port of Baltimore.

We can also use donations of good men's work clothing, recent magazines (news, sports, popular culture, consumers, *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*), and Chinese and Russian publications.

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center, The Rev. Mary H. T. Davisson - Chaplain
1430 Wallace Street, Baltimore, MD 21230
FAX: (410) 685-1241 Voice: (410) 685-1240 Cell: 443-610-1553

KEEPING FIT — Keeping fit can be a challenge on board vessels. Center founder Bro. Ed Munro, who now volunteers as a ship visitor, and Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor, spent several hours helping the *Star Juventas* purchase trophies for their basketball program. The captain e-mailed these photos along with his “delighted” thanks for our “excellent assistance.”



Baltimore International Seafarers' Center

Director: The Rev. Mary H.T. Davisson

Associate Chaplain: Allene Taylor

Office Assistants: Tina Jordan, John Thompson, Jim Johnstone, Jackie Nagel, Tony Hollis

Ship Visitors: Suresh Ahluwalia, Lew Bradford, Don Bryant, Pamela Cady, Darrell Dempster, Wayne Dornbirer, Bob Garske, Linda Hollis, Michael Johnston, Ed Munro, Dick Nagel, Peter Randrup, John Smith

St. Nicholas' Bag Newsletter — writing & editing: Mary Davisson; design & production: Anne Clewell

Happy to support the important work of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center



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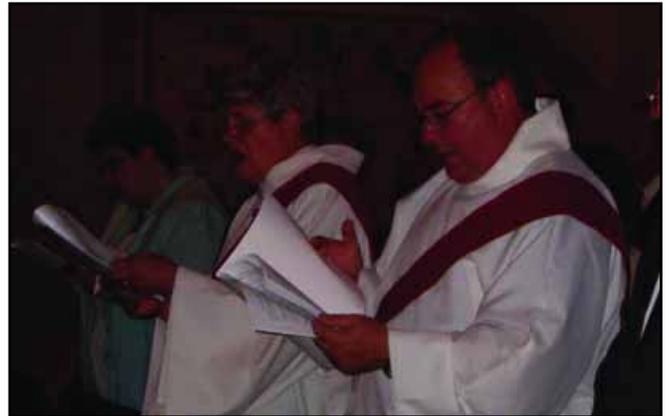


The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center
1430 Wallace Street | Baltimore, MD 21230
410.685.1240 | baltseafarers@aol.com | www.baltseafarers.ang-md.org

WITH GRATITUDE: We are grateful for very special donations from St. James (Solomons Island) and the Association of Maryland Pilots. With this issue, we also welcome a new corporate sponsor, Western Fumigation (see page 7), whose support funds our mailing costs. The following have also donated since the publication of our last newsletter: John Thomsen, Sherwood Episcopal Church, Michele Dorsey, Women's Club of Glyndon, Dr. Matthew Rogers, Michon Semon, Brenda Kovacs, Col. Sheldon and Anne Slater, Mary Emily Spilman Davisson, Susan Lynn, the Revs. Tony and Linda Hollis, Reformation Lutheran Church, Alice and Stuart Bockman, the Rev. Mary Davisson.

The following donated to the Center after presentations or sermons by the Director: Church of the Redemption, St. David's, St. George Society, Southeast Cluster of the Women of the Delaware-Maryland Synod (Evangelical Lutheran). If we have omitted or misspelled your name, please contact us.

VOLUNTEER SNAPSHOT:



Many of our volunteers come to us as interns preparing for ordination. The Rev. Linda Hollis and the Rev. Lewis Bradford were ordained as Episcopal deacons on June 7.

Would you like to explore the possibility of becoming a ship visitor?

Training is self-paced under the guidance of an experienced ship visitor. Basic requirements include being able to volunteer 4-6 hours per week, ability to climb stairs and enjoy meeting seafarers from around the world.

To learn more about volunteering, please call 410.685.1240 or write baltseafarers@aol.com.