

The Master's Mariner

Spring 2008



**Caring for seafarers
around the world**

A Message From The Principal Chaplain

When the telephone rang at home on the night of Friday 27th June, I answered it and was pleased to hear the voice of Tim Hopwood, crew visitor for Bunbury MtS, on the line. Automatically, I asked "How are you?". I did not expect the news he gave me.

That morning, as Tim entered the Mission premises, he had found the body of their Manager, John Wong, lying where he had been savagely murdered in the early hours. The shock was enormous. How could such a dreadful thing have happened? Who could have been responsible for such an appalling crime against a diminutive, gentle, man whose life was committed to serving the many seafarers who visited Bunbury each year?

Although there was a sense of relief that no seafarers were involved, the arrest soon afterwards of a family member in connection with the crime brought with it an even deeper sense of tragedy.

I did not have the pleasure of knowing John, but Tim has allowed me to share some of his eulogy at John's funeral:

"Compared with some of you here today, I didn't know John very long. We meet a couple of years ago through the Bunbury Mission to Seafarers. John, being the Mission Manager and me, becoming the Mission Chairman, we needed to have a good working relationship – and we did - the friendship that developed was a bonus and one that I will not forget.

Last year John encouraged me to join his competition pool team and we spent many hours "in training". That is until my game improved and I started beating him – funny how he always needed to be somewhere else when I won more than two in a row!

John had a fascinating concept of time. He could ring you up at 7am or 10pm and never refer to the time at all - but if you had the audacity to ring him during his "Nap-Nap" time you got a very grumpy reception!



John about to call Tim during a quiet moment at Bunbury MtS!

I read somewhere that while Western languages have many words to describe different meanings, Asian languages alter the pitch of a word to change its meaning. This was certainly true in John's case. He must have had at least thirty different ways to say 'Tim' at the beginning of a phone call. Eventually, I

learned to distinguish between the “Tiim, you know whaaaaat” that meant, “I need you to come down to the Mission right now.” and the “Tim, you know what” that meant, “I have a problem and I’m hoping you can fix it.” and the Tiiiim, you know whaaaaaaaat” that meant, “I’m bored. Do you feel like a chat?”, plus all the different meanings in between.

John had a habit of losing his car keys. Many a time we had to turn his office and flat upside down to find them. One particular time stands out in my memory. We hunted everywhere - in the safe, under the pool table, out the front, out the back, in the store room, under the kitchen sink, but we couldn’t find them anywhere. About a half hour later I heard John call, “Tim, you know whaaaaat”. The meaning was clear - “Please don’t laugh at me, I feel silly enough.” I tried to control myself and asked, “Where were they?” “In the car ignition!” It took some effort but I held it in. I said “Not to worry mate. It could have been worse.” John said “It was. I left the car running as well!” I’m sorry to report that I lost it completely!

To say to you gathered here today that John had a heart of gold, would do anything for anyone and was generous to a fault is not telling you anything new. He was a talented man who had a great memory for figures and languages and was involved in many areas of different communities. But some of you may not be aware that his work with the seafarers was a true calling – his Mission if you like. He would go the extra mile for the seafarers over and over again and never counted the personal cost. For the seafarer, he was on call 24/7. It did not matter if he was exhausted, in the middle of a meal, or driving down the road, if it was for the seafarer he would put all things on hold to do their bidding. I will always hear him saying, “Who are we here for? Who are we serving, if not them, in the name of Christ?”

Why?

In such times it is common for people to think that God had reneged on an obligation to give Christians a long and comfortable life. If God had promised us such a thing, then we might indeed protest, but in fact the opposite is true – He doesn’t owe us anything. Although we are oriented to think the opposite and to wonder ‘Why does God allow bad things happen to

good people?’, Jesus’ orientation is to marvel ‘Why does God allow good things to happen to bad people?’. But isn’t this unduly harsh and negative? Perhaps not - Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to ‘*love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength*’ and the next greatest is to ‘*love your neighbour as yourself*’. If we break – wilfully and repeatedly - the greatest and second-greatest commandments, how can we delude ourselves to think that we are not the greatest of sinners and do not deserve God’s righteous judgement and condemnation?

Although people focus on God’s love, we usually do so at the cost of denying God’s perfection and justice. This causes us to think that God’s only ‘job’ is to love us in a way that makes our lives easy and long in a universe with ourselves at the centre and with God revolving around us like a waiter at tables.

Thankfully, the LORD reveals Himself as very, very different and much, much more than the image most people have of Him. Human self-centredness is the ultimate idolatry and it rightly arouses God’s anger against us. This is mankind’s deepest problem and it is only against this horrific backdrop of God’s condemnation that the astonishing wonder of God’s solution is most clearly seen! As the Bible says, ‘*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*’ Knowing we are totally unable to save ourselves, God Himself – in perfect love – paid our death penalty for us! When Jesus – God incarnate – died in our place, He perfectly expressed God’s perfect love and – simultaneously - perfectly satisfied God’s perfect justice. Instead of God being in our debt, we are infinitely so in His! As Wesley sang ‘Amazing love! How can this be, that thou my God, shouldst die for me?’

It is this sense of indebtedness and gratitude that is the well-spring of Christian love and service. As the Bible says, ‘*We love because He first loved us*’.

Because he had experienced the immensity of God’s love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, John served as he did. Because of Jesus, John died assured of Jesus’ promise, ‘*For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have*

eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.’ (John 6:40).

Disabled Bulk-Carrier rides out Hurricane Ike



THE US Coast Guard was forced to tell the crew of a stricken bulk-carrier that they would have to weather Hurricane Ike as it bore down on them off Texas. The Coast Guard identified the bulk-carrier as the *Antalina* and said the Cypriot-flagged 28,082dwt ship, operated by Polaris Shipping, was carrying a crew of 22 and a cargo of petroleum coke, a petroleum by-product.

The vessel suffered a broken fuel pump and lost power 90 n-miles southeast of Galveston, Texas before radioing for help.

On shore, ports had already shut and refineries had closed in Port Arthur and from Texas City to Houston. The closed refineries in the Houston area alone account for 22.2M barrels a day, or 13% of the total US refining capacity.

Although the Coast Guard had already relocated most of its helicopters inland, aircraft from the Coast Guard and Air Force were sent Friday afternoon to try to rescue the crew of the freighter. However the high winds forced the military to abort the rescue, deeming conditions to be too dangerous to send rescuers into Hurricane Ike's path.

The Coast Guard then instructed the freighter to contact it each hour. It also told the crew to turn on the ship's emergency radio beacon so its position could be monitored.

On Saturday 13th, hours after the worst of the storm had passed, the tug *Rotterdam* reached

the disabled vessel freighter after it had endured the worst of Hurricane Ike.

Repairs to the fuel pump were made while the *Antalina* was still at sea. Although the freighter suffered no major damage from the storm, it was towed to Port Arthur, Texas, where it underwent additional repairs and eventually offloaded more of its cargo.

The crew members aboard the *Antalina*, remained in good health. Undoubtedly they were better able to identify with the thanksgiving of Psalm 107:23-32!

Welcome, Gary!

We are very pleased to announce the appointment of Gary King as our new Accountant, following the resignation of Colin Johnston (who took up a position with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship).

Because Colin's move to OMF was so clearly God's leading for him, I was confident that God would also lead us to an ideal replacement for Colin. But I never envisaged how easy and clear that leading would be! Gary had been of assistance to us following the retirement of Colin's predecessor, Laurie Parker, and we asked him if he might be able to work in a temporary capacity until we were able to secure a permanent replacement for Colin. While he was fulfilling this need, he expressed an interest in applying for the position itself, which he did with our encouragement.

Gary is well known to both our Treasurer and me because of our common membership of Christ Church, St Ives (and we still employed him!). He is married to Wendy and they have two adult children. He is a keen sailor and tennis-player, but more importantly for this position, he is a very competent accountant and is a wonderful answer to prayer!



Stained Glass Windows Restored.

In 1976 The Missions to Seamen relocated from its premises at 100 George St. Nth. into the former Wool Exchange Building at 12 Macquarie Pl., which was subsequently named 'Flying Angel House'. When the Mission left 100 George St. Nth, they took with them four stained glass windows from the Chapel. These windows were placed in storage until The Mission moved into our present Sussex St. location in 1990, where they were brought together into a steel frame and placed in the new Chapel area.



The two smaller windows were originally sited behind the Lord's Table and the two larger windows (in memory of the Rev. Allan Franklin Pain, Chaplain 1906-19) formed a side window in the chapel.

As part of their restoration plans for 100 George St. Nth, The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority approached The Mission with a request to return the windows to their original locations. Following a number of

discussions between The SHFA The Sydney Bethel Union and The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney it was agreed to allow the windows to be removed, cleaned and returned to their 'birthplace'.

Naturally we were concerned that a suitable replacement be secured for our current Chapel and it was agreed that the original windows would, after their cleaning, be photographed and that high quality 'duratrans' reproductions would be made and inserted into the three existing window spaces. Because four windows into three spaces doesn't go very well, we were impressed with the SHFA's



solution to this problem, which involves all four panels being grouped together in each

window, with the panel groupings repeated for each window. The effect ought to be very impressive and we trust that this solution will provide a 'win-win' outcome for the SHFA, the Mission, and for all who use our Chapel.

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*Passengers in 'Ferry Class' hail Cunard's 'Victoria' on
its first visit to Sydney in February 2008.*

