

SHIP AHOY!

Newsletter of the Seafarers Ministry of the Golden Gate
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Shoreline Stroll & Korean BBQ Saturday, October 6, 2007

By chaplain Jim Lindgren

Saturday, October 6, is the date for this year's Shoreline Stroll and Korean BBQ. The schedule is as follows:

9:30 a.m. Registration and Stroll
11:00 a.m. Music and Drawing
11:30 a.m. Korean BBQ - \$15.00

The purpose of the Stroll is for each of the agencies working at the International Maritime Center to raise support for its ministries. You can help the Seafarers Ministry of the Golden Gate in one of two ways. First, you can walk in the Stroll and solicit sponsors to support you. Or, you can sponsor someone who is walking in the Stroll. The first option can be the most enjoyable. The 5 kilometer walk along the Middle Harbor Shoreline Park provides an opportunity to see the Port of Oakland in action as well as enjoy a beautiful view of the San Francisco skyline. The Stroll begins and ends at the International Maritime Center where the seafarers come for relaxation and recreation.

Registration for the Stroll is available on our website: www.seafarersministry.com, or you can call for more information at 510-893-3104.

Come and join in the festivities!

Lighthouse Award Presented



On Sunday, March 25, Chaplain Jim went to the First Baptist Church in Orland to present the Lighthouse Award given to the church in late December. It was an opportunity to personally thank the congregation for its strong and faithful support to the Seafarers Ministry. Over the years the First Baptist Church in Orland has regularly given a monthly contribution as well as participates in Christmas at Sea.

The Individual Lighthouse award was given to Douglas Butler of First Baptist Church in San Francisco. Doug had been a longtime board member, volunteer ship visitor and continues as a regular contributor. Thank you Doug for many years of faithful service!

Seafarers Ministry Receives Gift from American Baptist Women

During the Annual American Baptist Women's Retreat in Mt. Hermon, the Seafarers Ministry was presented with a gift of \$6,907.00 for the purpose of creating a video to distribute to churches, church groups and other interested organizations.



Pictured above is Penny Hill of First Baptist Church, Fresno, who presented the check to Chaplain Jim Lindgren at the Saturday morning business meeting of the Women's Retreat. We are extremely grateful to the American Baptist Women and the individual groups which contributed to this project.

Chaplain Lindgren pointed out to the women that this media presentation will only be helpful in spreading the word about the Seafarers Ministry if churches and organizations use it when it becomes available. "If it isn't shown in your church, it will not be helpful to us. So I ask each of you to encourage your Missions Committee, Women's Group and your whole congregation to see it."

We make the same plea to all of you. We will keep you abreast of when the video will be available and we will send a copy to your church. Please encourage your congregation and church groups to show it.

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Living Aboard the New York Express

By Chaplain Jim Lindgren

The New York Express has been coming to Oakland for many years. It is manned by Greek officers and a Filipino Crew. I had an opportunity to sit and visit with two of the AB's (Able Bodied Seafarers) for a few minutes recently. I asked them questions about their family and life at sea so that I could share this with you.



Alex has been a seafarer for more than 17 years. He has 2 boys ages 19 and 13. He and his family live in Manila where his wife runs a small store out of their home. The New York Express is a large container ship with a round trip of 91 days. It calls in ports in Europe, Halifax Canada, the East Coast, and comes through the Panama Canal to Los Angeles and Oakland. Then it calls on Japan, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. It returns to the United States and calls on Seattle, Oakland, Los Angeles, goes through the Panama Canal to the East Coast and Canada and returns to Europe. His contract is 9 months long. He has already been on board for 9 months and plans to stay for 14 months. I asked him why he was extending his contract. "I need the money. My sons are in college and high school, I need to work for my family."

Jim: "How long will you stay home?"

Alex: "Depends. I hope to stay home for two or three months. But if the company calls me back in a month I must go."

Jim: "Can't you delay going back?"

Alex: "No, I must go. If I say no I may have to wait too long."

Jim: "How often do you talk to your family?"

Alex: "In Asia, there is only time to call in Taiwan. I call from almost every port in the United States because it's easy. In Europe, I can only do it from Rotterdam. I call from the ship about three times a month, but only for five minutes at a time. It's very expensive."

Jim: "I know many Filipinos have a cell phone that can be used only for text messaging. Do you have one? Do you use it?"

Alex: "All the time. It's very cheap for my wife to text me (about 2 cents), but it costs me more (50 cents) so she writes a lot more than I do."

Jim: "Years ago I remember mail call on ships was a very important time. Do you write to your wife, does she write to you?"

Alex (laughing): She only sends me a birthday card. Once in a while I send her a post card.

I noted how much communication has changed in the last 25 years. I very seldom am asked to mail a letter, nor do I see mail call on ships anymore.

Jim: "What's the hardest part about being a seafarer?"

Alex: "Sometimes the job is really hard, but the hardest is being away from family. I think about them all the time. I would quit being a seafarer if I could support my family with a job at home. But they couldn't go to school if I didn't work on a ship."



Pablo, the other Filipino AB's joined us in our conversation. Pablo has three children who live with him in Manila. He's been a seafarer for 15 years. He has been on board for over a year now and plans to stay for at least another three months. "I need the money for myself and my family. I am recently separated from my wife who was unfaithful to me. I lost my house that was built on land owned by her family. Now I have a apartment in Manila for myself and my children. My oldest is 21 and the youngest is 14. My sister lives very near to my apartment so she looks after my children while I am gone."

Jim: "I have noticed a large shift in currency. Two years ago there were 54 pesos to the dollar. Now there are 45 pesos to the dollar. I know that you get paid in dollars, how does this affect you?"

Pablo: "Is about a 20% pay cut for us. At the same time, everything is getting more expensive in the Philippines. It makes it really hard."

Jim: "What did you do before you worked on a ship?"

Pablo: "I installed glass windows in new buildings. I make about three dollars a day and worked seven days a week. That's why I became a seafarer."

Jim: "Have you ever had any bad experiences on ships?"

Pablo: "Sometimes the officers aren't very good to us. They treat us like animals - work, work, work, work. They don't think we have any feelings. They don't care about us. It's not like that on every ship, but sometimes we just want to go home."

I had visited the ship in the late morning. I offered to take those who were not working to the Center or Shopping, but they declined. "We need to go back to work in four hours. Then we sail tonight at midnight. We need to get some rest so that we will be ready for our shift and for sailing." Alex and Pablo both began their duty at noon. Pablo was the watchman at the gangway when I left. Since the ship came in last night, he worked from midnight to four in the morning. He also works the noon to 4:00 p.m. shift. Since the ship is leaving at midnight, he will need to start again before midnight to make preparations for leaving. He will try to make a phone call to his children after his 4:00 p.m. shift finishes. However, they will probably be in school at that time and the ship will sail before his children come home. At least he will be able to send his love in a text message and let them know when he will contact them again.