

Greetings from a seafarer...

Hello there!

Approximately four years ago around Christmas time, I was in a Baytown container terminal on a vessel called the *Saxonia Express* (pictured at right). It was my first time away from home and I was at sea training as a deck officer in the British Merchant Navy, essentially what you folks would call the Merchant Marine.



While on board at Christmas, we were given some items by the local seaman's mission chaplain as a gift on the run up to Christmas. Since I was away from my family, it was nice to think that someone cared enough that far away from home to take the time to put together this little gift. On that trip I spent almost five months away from my family, and it was without a doubt the toughest time I have ever spent at sea simply because of its duration.

There is a real difficulty in being a Christian and a seafarer, and yet it is difficult for a seafarer not to have religion. We face God's greatest power on a daily basis. On a number of occasions my number should have been called. I have been in typhoons, the Gulf of Aden, around the world and back. I have been on a container ship that was battered by weather so badly one time that we had cracks in the cargo hold. I have even been on a ship that was inspected by a surveyor who noticed that our ship did not have water tight integrity but passed her right to sail anyway. Soon after that we sailed into a typhoon and both myself and the chief officer spent most hours in the ballast control room, constantly pumping out the sea water getting into the forward hold. I have been lucky as a skeptic would say, but I would say I was within God's grace.

I thank you from deep down inside me for the generosity you showed me four years ago and wish you the very best in the future!

Darryl

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