

**Narrator:** Edward Swayze (ES)

**Company Affiliations:** Mission to Seafarers

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**Interviewer:** Ernie Epp (EE)

**Recorder:** Owen Marks (OM)

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**Summary:** Anglican reverend Edward Swayze discusses the Mission to Seafarers organization in Thunder Bay and the work that is done to aid the foreign ship crews during their time in port. He details the major services provided, including telecommunications, internet access, mail services, land transportation, church directories, injury- and sick-leave support, religious services, and warm clothing. Swayze describes the different crew nationalities that appear in Thunder Bay, the frequency of ocean-going ships in the port, common trade routes for these ships, and the small window of time that seafarers have to receive services on land in each port. Other topics discussed include his own path to the Mission to Seafarers, flags of convenience on foreign ships, volunteer workers at the Mission, the history of Mission to Seafarers in Thunder Bay, relationships to ship’s agents, seafarers’ unions, Thunder Bay’s “maritime blindness”, and other services provided to local sailors. Swayze ends the interview with a verse from the Gospel of Matthew that encapsulates the Mission to Seafarers’ purpose.

**Keywords:** Mission to Seafarers; Anglican Church; Anglican ministries; Roman Catholic Church; Ocean-going vessels; Salties; Grain transportation—ships; Seafarers; Ocean sailors; Thunder Bay terminal grain elevators; Grain loading; Export port; Container shipping; Grain loading; Canada Steamship Lines (CSL); Ship’s agents; Keefer Terminal; International Transport Workers Federation; Seafarers International Union; Labour unions; Labour organization; Technological advancements

Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Well, it’s a very great pleasure to be here with you, Edward Swayze, to get this started. And since I’ve given your name, I don’t suppose you need to repeat it, but if you could tell us where you were born and when as part of the record.
ES: I was born in St. Catherines on the 25 <sup>th</sup> of February, ’61. 1961.

EE: Okay. And the next question is how you came to work in the grain industry, but that isn't exactly apropos here. So we did talk earlier about your, well, not about your education—. Perhaps you can tell us something about what took you to the Anglican priesthood.

ES: Well, I was attending Lakehead University in the Faculty of Forestry, and I felt the call to the ministry, and I made a decision to join the Anglican Church at that time. Once I graduated in '83, I went to London to Huron College, University of Western Ontario, and I completed a Master of Divinity. Then from there, I did an assistant at the cathedral in Sault Ste. Marie for two years, Saint Luke's, and then I was five years in Marathon. And actually, maybe apropos of how I got here, I said to my bishop, "I think I'm ready for a move." And he said, "Okay." And he said, "Any preferences?" And I said, "No, I'd just like to be near a port because I have a sailboat." Small parish at St. Steven's came open at the time, and also the part-time position of chaplain at the Mission to Seafarers came open as well. And the bishop decided to put the two positions together and offer them to me. Only after I started did I find out the first person he offered the position to said that the job was impossible and couldn't be done.

EE: [Laughs] And you spent the last couple of--. When did--.

ES: I've been here 17 years at this point.

EE: The last 17 years demonstrating that it is possible.

ES: Yeah, yeah. When I first started, I remember the first day I went aboard a ship. Visited Dave Bradford, who was the retired chaplain. Took me out and did that. I did that a couple times, and I waited for seafarers to show up at the centre. And nobody showed up. So I thought, "I'm not going to sit around a twiddle my thumbs." So instead, I went aboard in the afternoons, and I started to make appointments for the crews to come ashore. That was much more successful in terms of getting seafarers to shore.

EE: Right. Now, is the Mission primarily to crews on the salties, the ocean-going ships, or do you also minister to people on the lakers?

ES: Well, we're here for the whole port, but we focus our Mission on the ocean-going ships. The crews--. The ocean-going ships are crewed by foreign sailors, and they have special circumstances because of their low rate of pay. It's the Canadian sailors on lakers, for instance, in our present time, they have access to cell phones, and they have internet on the ships, and in many of the ports the call in, they've got family and friends. So their social needs are much different than the crews on the foreign ships. The crews on the foreign ships have limited access to cell phones and email, and without our help, they couldn't contact their family back home—or it would be very difficult for them to contact their family back home.

EE: So the first mission, in a sense, to the seafarers here is this offering of communications facilities for members of the crew.

ES: Yes. It's like we look at the Church providing pastoral care to people, and part of the way to provide pastoral care to people is to keep them in touch with their loved ones. It's like any one of us. We go on a business trip, and when we get to a hotel, we would call home or maybe turn our laptop on and connect to the internet and check our email so that we can check in with home. You know, their needs are no different than our needs in that respect.

EE: But I expect far more poorly provided for. Well, as you've said, they don't have the means in most cases. Do the captains of these ships provide opportunities for members of their crews to communicate with home? It would be by, what, I guess radio?

**[0:05:05]**

ES: No. This is--. Before we started the interview, you mentioned you'd want me to talk about changes, and this is where changes have happened is in technology and how they communicate. When I first started, they had radio operator on ships. Well, radio operators have been phased out. They used to--. When I first came, they would come here, and we would make direct-dial phone calls for them, and they would come here and dial home, and we would estimate the charge and bill them on the estimate for the charge. Well, the first change that was introduced was long-distance telephone cards, like prepaid cards, and that was the first change. That change was introduced in the late 1990s, and that change is still being used. People still phone home, and it's still one of the best ways to call home.

EE: Do sailors commonly have the means then on these ocean-going ships to acquire cards and use them?

ES: Sometimes. Some of the agents sell the cards. Seamen's Missions like ours sell them. There's about 800 Seamen's Missions in ports around the world and providing phone service is one of the common services that we all provide. Another change that's happening recently is with cell phones being introduced, payphones are being discontinued, so it's becoming a little harder for them to call home. And again, we're a provider for them.

EE: You do have the phones here and additional facilities you were showing us in the way of a means to communicate.

ES: Yes. We have three phone lines that they can use to phone home from our centre, and we also have wireless internet as well as three computers that they can use. And we find that that is becoming much more popular. It's like we leave our wireless router on,

and last summer there had been occasions where nobody has been in the centre, but somebody's sitting outside at the picnic table with their laptop talking to home.

EE: [Laughs] Yeah, that would be quite marvellous. If my Wi-Fi possibilities were to break down completely, I could just whip out here and settle down at the picnic table, I guess, eh?

ES: Yeah. And the Wi-Fi access in Thunder Bay is rather limited for outsiders. There's only like--.

EE: As you're saying, the ones that aren't locked, is what you're saying.

ES: Yeah. Yeah. It's like, I think, Chapters is about the only place in the city. There's a few places like Chapters or Starbucks where you can go to connect, but internet connectivity is really limited. And when you have somebody like a seafarer who doesn't have a local email account, it's more challenging.

EE: Right. It would be. Yeah. What would be a good line of further discussion? The ships come from many countries. They have many places of registry. Is there any commonality amongst the crew members? Do they come from many countries as well?

ES: Yeah. It roughly breaks out into thirds. There's a third who would be Eastern European—this would be Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania.

EE: Former Soviet Union.

ES: Yeah. These countries are really poor, and it's worth their while for people to go to sea. Another third would be India, with a smattering from Myanmar. And then another third would be Filipino and Indonesian, and we get a handful from China and Honduras. But those are where they come from. The way it works is the companies are owned--. Sometimes they're Canadian or American shipowners, sometimes other nationalities own them, but they're flagged in another country.

EE: Panama, Liberia, and other places.

ES: Exactly. And they follow the labour regulations of the country that they're flagged in, and then the crew nationality could be from the places I just described.

EE: Are captains commonly from the same areas or are they distinctly different people from your experience?

ES: It's about half and half. Quite often we would see European captains and a Filipino crew. That's quite common. Depends on the nationality. Quite often the Indians are crewed by Indians. It goes back to also when there's a ship owner and then they would have a management company that would man the ship. It would just depend on what management company they're working with.

**[0:10:23]**

EE: Sure. I said captain, but I suppose that could involve the officers onboard, a number of them.

ES: Well--.

EE: Or is captain and then the rest even up to the first mate or whatever the ranks are would all be from India or the Philippines or what have you?

ES: Well, the officers would include the captain—which is also called a master—the chief engineer would be the next highest ranking. And then you'd have for the deck crew, you'd have the chief officer who would be responsible for loading the ship, you'd have two or three other deck officers—possibly a trainee—and then you'd have a couple of engineering officers. Then you would have oilers and so on to help with the engines, and then you would have a deck crew. The crew sizes vary. That's one of the things that's changing. A typical crew size is 22, but we've had some ships in, like the Wagenborg ships, which a crew size of nine is common.

EE: Whose ships are these?

ES: Wagenborg ships. The European line. They have smaller ships that--.

EE: Oh, they are actually smaller?

ES: Yeah.

EE: Manpower per tonne of capacity would be more fixed, I suppose, would it?

ES: Yeah. You don't need a lot of manpower for these ships because you hire local labour to load or unload a ship, and so you need more manpower for navigation and watch keeping.

EE: I see. And I suppose in the grain trade, the equivalent of the longshoremen or whatever the title might be are the grain trimmers here that--.

ES: No, the longshoremen would be quite often the people that would tie the ship up, the line handlers.

EE: Okay.

ES: And the stevedores and the grain trimmers would be loading the ship.

EE: Okay, right. I'm learning the jargon of the port.

ES: Yeah. I actually should correct it. The stevedores are more for other cargo, whereas the grain trimmers are more for grain.

EE: Well, that's what I was thinking of the analogous positions. Our interest is in the grain trade, but there are, of course, different ships that arrive.

ES: Yes.

EE: With wind turbine blades and what have you coming into port. You've sailed yourself—you mentioned that earlier—but has the Mission to Seafarers been a real learning experience as far as what happens on the oceans, on ships, shipping trade?

ES: Well, I guess I would start by--. It's more of a simple thing I learned. I've learned that seafarers are human beings just like us. What they're concerned about is is their wife okay? Are the kids getting an education? Are they going to have a retirement? That's what they're concerned about, and that's our concern as well.

EE: Yes. Yes, really elemental concerns, aren't they?

ES: Yeah. And they go to sea because going to sea gives them wages that allow them to do that, and this is also where the economies of the world are different. It's like a naval seaman right now gets \$1000 US a month, which in our economy is below poverty. But in the Philippine economy, that's a middle-class wage. And so back home, if your husband is a seaman, that's got a little higher status because he's providing a higher level of living for his family.

EE: Sure. Yeah, I can well understand that. And that would be true of all the countries from which—more or less—from which the sailors come then, I guess.

ES: Yeah. And it changes. When I first started, I saw the tail end of Korea. And what happened—this is in the 1980s—the country Korea provided a lot of the manpower for the ships, but its economy grew such that they had better jobs than going to sea. So South Korea stopped providing a lot of manpower to the shipping industry as a result of its economy improving.

**[0:15:08]**

EE: So it's a matter of the choices one has. Can one arrive at any conclusions about the quality of the manpower that arrives then? They obviously have to be enterprising enough to go to sea, but they still have limited opportunities at home, I guess.

ES: Yeah. But also, to go to sea, they have to get their qualifications.

EE: Mmhm. You mentioned the Mission to Seafarers around the globe. Is it a network, a system, in any way? Or is it distinctive to each country and each place?

ES: Well, in the case of Mission to Seafarers, it started out as the Missions to Seamen, and it was founded in 1856 or '57 in England. Like with a lot of missionary societies from England, they got planted in the different countries they went to. Here in Canada, we have 14 missions that are Mission to Seafarers, and they're all independently operated and run and funded. They vary such as-- Vancouver is the largest one in Canada, and it's staffed. The buildings are owned by the Mission to Seafarers, but you would have Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Reform Church chaplains working out of those facilities. Halifax is also a large operation. Montreal, it's a Mariner's House. That's a secular organization, but in Montreal you've got Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Reform chaplains working out of there. Hamilton is like us, it's a part-time mission with a centre. And some of the other ones that are smaller such as Sarnia or Windsor, they would have an honorary chaplain and some volunteers, and they would be run out of a church. It's just tailored to the size of the port and how much work there is to do.

EE: Yes. With the origin in England, the fact that the Church of England, the Anglican Church, is well represented around the globe, I presume, in these missions is not at all surprising.

ES: Yeah. It also makes sense because up until the flags of convenience were introduced in the 1960s, most of the seamen were British as well.

EE: Oh, yes. Is the flags of convenience business as late as the '60s?

ES: That's my understanding.

EE: Right. It certainly is a post-World War II phenomenon, I guess.

ES: Yes.

EE: That's a history of its own, of course, why the shipping lines found it convenient to flag their ships, to register them in Panama, Liberia, and so on in order to take advantage of local laws. I don't suppose you have any further thoughts about that particular phenomenon, or do you?

ES: Well, we need to remember that 95 percent of global trade goes by sea. Even at the present day and age. And it doesn't add any value to the goods that are shipped, so all it does is get them from the producer to the buyer or who will consume the goods. So in order to make as much money as they can, they want to keep the shipping cost to a minimum.

EE: Yeah. We could have a debate about exactly how to--. [Laughs] I'm tempted to debate that with the proposition that it doesn't add any value. But certainly, you're right that shipping makes it possible to place cargos in places they wouldn't otherwise be.

ES: Yes.

EE: Because the cost of getting them there would be too high, and ocean transport—transport on water—is certainly the cheapest way of doing so. And of course, reducing the expense further makes it possible to move more, doesn't it?

ES: Yeah, and also--. This is one of the emphasises that is going on in the shipping industry now because labour costs are going to go up as the global economy improves. The seafarers are going to need to be paid more to go to sea, and people don't want to be away from home for long periods of time. The foreign seafarers could be away at sea as much as 13 months before they get to go home, and that's--.

EE: Yeah. Because much of this business is, we use the old phrase "tramp steamer," I guess. It's not off the mark necessarily. Cargo ships don't necessarily apply a set route between South Hampton and New York, for example, or something like that. Or what proportion of them do have a fairly fixed itinerary?



**[0:20:16]**

ES: Well, they do have a certain--. There's a couple things that go on. If they're bringing steel in the Great Lakes, grain is their backhaul cargo. So steel is what they're primarily shipping.

EE: Steel or iron ore? Steel?

ES: Steel.

EE: Steel.

ES: Yeah.

EE: So that comes from various places.

ES: Like Brazil and also Europe. The lakers would be bringing iron ore in from North American ports. But the ocean-going boats would bring in steel, which would be partially processed.

EE: Right. And leaving it at Montreal or Toronto or Hamilton or--. Does much of it come all the way up the lake to Thunder Bay, or are they coming in ballast up the lake?

ES: Well, discharge ports in like Burns Harbor, Hamilton, that's quite often where they're discharging steel in those places. But to further answer your question--.

EE: So these ships are coming in from those ports with the steel and heading back to the same ports?

ES: Yeah. Well, they're on a trade route.

EE: Triangular trade, I guess, in some cases.

ES: Yeah. Because they would take their grain. From Thunder Bay, grain goes to South America, North Africa, and Europe.

EE: yeah, what's of interest here, your service has been during the time of decline of our ocean-going trade, hasn't it?

ES: Yes.

EE: In grain. And so, it's been to those places—South America, North Africa, and Europe—still to some extent that the grain moves from here, does it?

ES: Yes.

EE: Yeah. We don't tend to think of South America or North Africa as particular ports for grain.

ES: Yeah. Well, the thing is, Vancouver can service the Pacific, and also through the Panama Canal it can service quite a bit of area as well.

EE: Yes. Certainly, into the Caribbean or South America would be quite feasible, I guess, beyond that.

ES: Yeah, but also it has to do with ships because it's like these--. I mentioned earlier the Wagenborg ships, they're building new little ships every year. There's a couple new ones every year from that company. And obviously they have a market for those ships in terms of what they could ship.

EE: Yeah. They wouldn't be building if they didn't have a market.

ES: Yeah.

EE: You're quite right.

ES: Because that's one way to go, and the other way that shipping has gone is with the super ships that are even bigger than the Panama Canal.

EE: Yes, those enormous container vessels being built these days and supertankers for oil would be two examples, would they, of what's happening on the oceans?

ES: Yes.

EE: And you don't see any of that here, obviously.

ES: No, no. The lock system would limit them coming into the Great Lakes.

EE: Well, we probably should focus on the activity in regard to the ships coming in here. So you began making appointments or arranging to visit the ships, did you?

ES: Yeah. When I took over, it was a transition. David Bradford had done the Mission to Seafarers work for about 10 years, and then Ernie Schriever followed him, and he worked about six months and then died of a heart attack.

EE: Not because of the work, I hope.

ES: Could be the stress. [Laughs]

EE: There is stress?

ES: Yeah. The stress of the seafaring work is that it's so unpredictable.

EE: I can well imagine.

ES: Because, you know, you get an ETA for a ship, and it's never on time, and then when it gets here, there could be delays in it getting loaded, and then the loading plan changes. You need to be adaptable in order to minister to these ships and the crews on the ships. That's part of the stress of the job. But when I took it over, we were changing the model of ministry. When David Bradford did it, he was full time in the shipping season, and so he was available to the ships all the time.

EE: And around the clock, I suppose, to some extent? [Laughs]

ES: Yeah. And there were some volunteers involved when he started his ministry, but when I took the ministry over, there was only one or two volunteers. Bishop Peters instructed me that I would have to run the Mission with volunteers in order to make it work.

EE: Yes, because you were here, did you say earlier, for two days?

ES: Yeah. The agreement is that I'm three-eighths time with the Mission and five-eighths time with St. Stevens, which works out roughly to two days a week for the Mission. That's spread out over a seven-day period.

**[0:25:19]**

EE: Yes. Why would anyone do it in eighths, simply because it's easy division? [Laughs]

ES: I don't know.

EE: Because there's seven days to a week, so if anyone could come up with an eighth, wouldn't we all be happy.

ES: Yeah. So--.

EE: So anyway, it's something over two days then.

ES: Yeah. And part of the work that I did is I've had to do things like set up the governance for the organization. There was no constitution, develop a newsletter and build the funding for it. Right now, we have about 25--. Well, I have 20 volunteers, and it's been as high as 25 volunteers. We've developed a handbook as a resource for the volunteers. We've had to think through how we train them. And the way that the Mission now operates is I primarily visit the ships, although I have two volunteers who will visit ships on Wednesdays and on Fridays—Fridays being my day off. And then we have teams of volunteers who will come in in the evenings. We have drivers and watchkeepers. The drivers drive our 14-passenger van, and then our watchkeepers staff the seafarers centre and offer the services of the centre. That model of ministry has worked pretty good. We service about 85 percent of the ships that get into port—the ocean-going ships that get into port. The ones that we miss are in for less than eight hours. We also are challenged to service ships over long weekend because there's nothing for the crew to do and because our volunteers tend to want to go out to camp.

EE: Yeah. The weekends would be a real problem. This is during the shipping season, of course, but that's sort of April 1<sup>st</sup> give or take, I guess, to about the New Year's, I guess.

ES: Well, the St. Lawrence opens around the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of May.

EE: Of May?

ES: Sorry, of March.

EE: Yeah.

ES: The ships don't really start moving through until the ice is moved out mid-April.

EE: Right. Yes.

ES: The St. Lawrence Seaway closes the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, which means ships have to clear Thunder Bay by the 19<sup>th</sup> of December.

EE: So they're gone before Christmas, in fact?

ES: Yes.

EE: The ships we see in the newspaper still here at New Year's, let's say, are lakers or vessels settling on where they're going to tie up for the winter, then, I guess.

ES: Yes. Yeah, the locks at Sault Ste. Marie normally close around about the 15<sup>th</sup> of January.

EE: Right. So that's middle of April then through the middle of December roughly speaking.

ES: Yes.

EE: Which is, what, is that eight months or so? Is there any pattern to the arrival of ships in town in port?

ES: Yeah. Because they follow the grain trade, this year is not quite following the pattern. But normally April and May are busy months, and then it falls off through the summer and then picks up again in October through December. It's just following the grain harvest.

EE: Right. And it leaves our beautiful summer available for the volunteers to enjoy elsewhere, at their camps or whatever.

ES: Well, no. We would still have one or two ships per week in the summer.

EE: Is there a pattern within the week? Do ships tend to arrive on certain days, or can they arrive on any day of the week at all?  
[Laughs]

ES: They arrive--. Well, what drives the pattern is the wage charges at the elevators. So they tend to want to clear the elevators by Friday if they can, by Friday night.

EE: Get loaded and away.

ES: If they come in on a weekend, more often than not, they either go to anchor or alongside it. They don't start loading until Monday.

EE: How long is ship--.

ES: No, I'm not sure.

EE: There's no pattern to how long they're in port, I suppose.

ES: How long, as in length of the ship?

EE: No. No, no. How long they're in port.

ES: How long they're in port? It varies. For grain, the pattern is now--. The pattern is changing. We have elevators closing, and when I first came, it was not uncommon for a ship to go to four elevators to get a full load. They would load different grains. They would even have a separation. What a separation is is they would load two different types of grain in the same hold—a coarse grain such as wheat, and a fine grain such as poppyseed—and then they would put tarps and plywood on top of the first grain, and they would load the second grain on top of it.

**[0:30:33]**

EE: Right.

ES: But now with the--. You know, every year there's an elevator, it seems, that's closed. Viterra A and Richardson's and Mission Terminals are presently our busiest terminals. If they can get loaded at one elevator, they're in a day, day and a half.

EE: Are the crewmen busy while the ship is being loaded, or--?

ES: Yes, they're busy.

EE: Right.

ES: That's why we do our work in the evening because the crew are required to be onboard while the ship is loading, and the reason for that is the elevators in Thunder Bay, the spouts are fixed. So if they want to have a particular spout from the elevator in a particular hold on the ship, they'll have to move the ship along the berth. That's called shifting the ship. And they would warp it with their docking lines or their docking cables.

EE: Oh, they actually pull it to and fro? Warping, no that's--.

ES: Yeah. Using the winches on the ship to move the ship along the dock.

EE: On the ship. So they don't start the engines and start moving the ship that way.

ES: No.

EE: Right. Well, that would certainly require crewmen, I can well understand. And so they're free in the evening then to relax, I suppose.

ES: Yeah. Well, the other thing you've got to remember is we talked earlier about when they come in with steel and they backhaul grain, so a round-trip is roughly six weeks. In that discharge period or in that period of six weeks, there's two loading ports and there's two discharge ports—so that's four points—and if they spend two nights at each point, that's eight nights. But when the crew are free to go ashore, for safety reasons, a portion of the crew has to stay onboard. So for practical purposes, in a six week period, a crewmember may only have four nights that they can go ashore to buy their toiletries, to make their phone calls and so on.

EE: Yes.

**[Audio pauses]**

OM: I'll just be a little bit of a delay here. Let me see if this--.

EE: And so, if they're only ashore for four nights in a six-week period, it is pretty limited. The opportunities for amusement would be limited indeed.

ES: Yeah. And that's where something like the Mission to Seafarers is really important because what the Mission to Seafarers does is we help the crew to make efficient use of their time. They tell us what they want to do, and we can help them do it. We also are safe. It's like because we're from the church they know that we can be trusted, that we're not going to go scam them or rip them off. It's like I heard of one story when they were in a South African port. There was two rates for a taxi—there was a local rate and there was a rate for seafarers.

EE: Which was higher?

ES: Yeah.

EE: Yeah. And here you're providing transportation to some extent with the van and so on.

ES: Yeah. It's like for the Mission, our services are provided to everyone without charge. We do ask for people to donate if they're able to, but if they don't donate, we're still going to help them out. We do sell phone cards and stamps, but otherwise, everything is provided without cost to the seafarer.

EE: Is there any sort of explicitly religious element to the Mission?

ES: We offer bibles for them to take. We provide information on local churches. It's like when you look at the breakdown of the nationalities, seafarers are predominantly Roman Catholic. So I put a pamphlet with the information on the nearest Roman Catholic church aboard each ship. We certainly will, if we're requested to, we will make contact with local clergy and either take the seafarers to the local church or ensure somebody will do mass aboard the ship. The thing you've got to remember is—it's kind of funny—but you go, and you look at pictures on the ships, and so either the girly picture or you've got pictures of a religious nature. And so--.

**[0:35:54]**

EE: [Laughs] It's one or the other?



ES: Yeah. Yeah, it's one or the other, and it's almost about half, half and half.

EE: Are there any national links to this or do the girly pictures appear more commonly in ships of one particular kind of crew?

ES: I'm not going to comment on that. [Laughing]

EE: Oh, okay. Well, that's fair enough. What about the icons? The Russians and so on and so--. Well, not necessarily, eh?

ES: Not necessarily. There's not always a good pattern based on nationality, except to say that most of the nationalities have a high representation of Roman Catholics.

EE: Sure. Has that led to particular relationships here in the port with one or other of the Roman Catholic churches?

ES: Well, we had a closer—the Mission had a closer—relation with Roman Catholic church earlier in its history. The Roman Catholic seafarers mission is called the Apostles Ship of the Sea, and when St. Anthony's was located down on Secord Street, I believe, before it burned down, the priest there was heavily involved. And then it burned down in the mid-'90s, and since then, the involvement has not been as great, and part of that is because the number of ships is down, and part of that is because with the Roman Catholic church, they have a shortage of priests. But having said that, they're very happy with what we provide the Roman Catholics, and they do provide some financial support to us, and whenever we ask for help, they do help us.

EE: Yes. I suppose this would be an appropriate point for me to glance over at the picture of Bishop Jennings—of course, the late Bishop—and you indicated earlier that his passing had left a bequest that was of value to the Mission.

ES: Yeah. The bequest was used to purchase the trailer that is the seafarers centre and also our van. This happened around 1980.

EE: Oh, yes. As late as that. There was once upon a time a building on the Port Arthur waterfront that was a Mission to Seafarers, was there? I have a vague sense. I've read about it in *Papers & Records* of the Historical Museum Society, I think.

ES: Yes. That was the precursor to the Mission to Seafarers. The Mission to Seafarers was established in Thunder Bay in 1961 at a meeting of the Anglican clergy in December. 1962 was our first year of operation. And what got the Mission to Seafarers going was the Seaway opening and foreign ships coming into the Seaway. Now what you--.

EE: Sure. Now, that makes very good sense.

ES: Now what you're speaking of is the Seamens Church Institute, which Gron Morgan was the chaplain of in the 1950s. They had a building, and it was sold in the mid-1950s and subsequently torn down. Part--.

EE: So that would've been Baptist then, was it, when Gron Morgan was a Baptist?

ES: Gron Morgan was a Baptist, but I think it was an Ecumenical operation because I remember reading about in the 1920s, St. John's Anglican Church was supporting it. What caused the change--.

EE: Sure. Gron Morgan's father. We've interviewed Tal Morgan, so maybe we ought to go back for another round in regard to his father's work. [Laughs]

ES: Yes. What caused the change was the change in ship sizes. With the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, larger ships were possible, and it's like now on all of the lakers and the ocean-going ships, each seafarer has a private cabin, and it's fairly spacious. But back in earlier times, they would've slept in hammocks. So what was provided for the seafarers was a hostel.

**[0:40:19]**

EE: Oh, yes.

ES: Where they could sleep ashore. And that's one of the ministries that the Seamens Church Institute provided was hostel for seafarers.

EE: Right. I see. And that would've been entirely for the crews of the lakers at that time?

ES: Yes.

EE: Right. Interesting dimensions.

ES: The other technological change that has happened to the port is the introduction of shipping containers.

EE: Yes, I daresay.

ES: That's affected Keefer Terminal because Keefer Terminal was built as a small package shipper. [Coughs] Excuse me. And a lot of the little wharfs and whatnot that we see on the Kam River or that would've been where our Marina is presently, were consolidated and then were shipped out of Keefer Terminal. And then those operations ceased once shipping containers were introduced.

EE: Yes. When Canada Steamship Lines [CSL] gave up that business sometime in the early '70s, there were still workers in town in the 1990s who were very bitter about what Canada Steamship Lines did to them. I was at a demonstration once against Paul Martin when he came to town down at the Italian Centre.

ES: Yeah. But it's a global phenomenon.

EE: Well, yes, of course, the containers certainly have been.

ES: Yeah.

EE: They came out of New York City. The Danes did some, but it's a very interesting history. We won't get into that either here, although it changed the port so much.

ES: Yes.

EE: So the--. When a ship arrives, you get in touch with the captain then and--? Or does--.

ES: Well, actually, there's a ship's agent. There's presently three ships' agents operating in Thunder Bay, and they are a go-between for the ship and Thunder Bay. They would handle customs, loading arrangements, stevedores—those kinds of things—and I would relate to them. And what I do is I talk to the ships' agents to find out when the ships are coming because I plan my schedule accordingly. Then when the ship arrives, I would go aboard in the afternoon. And the reason I go aboard in the afternoon is because the ships can't make any commitment for their crew going ashore until the afternoon. I had one day where I thought I was pretty good. I had visited three ships by 1:30 and had made arrangements to take crew off of all the ships, and at 2:00 I was phoning and cancelling the volunteers because the arrangements had all changed and they were either shifting to another berth or going out to anchor.

EE: Right. Yeah, and when ships go out into the bay to tie up, everyone's committed to the ship, I suppose, for the length of time it's out there, are they?

ES: Well, once it goes out to anchor, there's not a lot of services. There's no taxi provided between shore and the ship. The only way that people can get out to the ship is if a tug is hired to take people out to the ship. And occasionally you hear instances of the crew using their lifeboats to come ashore.

EE: Row ashore, eh?

ES: Oh, they're motorized.

EE: Okay. That sounds more like it. Yeah. You mentioned girly pictures earlier, and of course, sailors are famous for understandable reasons. One of the things, "A wife in every port," is one of those old phrases the English language offers, isn't it?

ES: Mmhmm.

EE: Did you observe much such activity in the port of Thunder Bay?

ES: No. No, they're here for such a short time.

EE: And on their way again.

ES: Yeah. Because as we said, when they load for a day or two and they're only in in that day or two, they only have maybe one night they can go ashore.

EE: They're busy shopping.

ES: Yeah.

EE: Alcohol?

ES: Sometimes. There's different regulations depending on the shipping company. Some ships are dry. We would help them purchase alcohol if that's what they requested.

**[0:45:03]**

EE: Yeah. I mean, after all, it's perfectly legal. Other drugs?

ES: Other drugs? I don't know. I haven't seen that.

EE: The regulations become even stricter, I suppose, on various ships.

ES: Yeah.

EE: Yeah. Are there other services that the Mission to Seafarers can offer, then? I'm thinking of the telephones--.

ES: Oh, I mentioned telephones, the internet.

EE: Yes.

ES: As well as old fashioned snail mail. We do collect warm clothing so that they can get clothing. We started doing this when we realized that when they were coming to our port in April or November, it's still very cold, and they do need warm clothing. We get Christmas bags where we put them on ships in December. Connection with religious service. We have bibles here that we give away. We will also—it doesn't happen too often—but if a seafarer was to get hurt, we would visit the seafarer in hospital or a hotel. The way medical services are provided is the shipping company is responsible for providing for medical care, and they would be treated until they're well enough to be flown home. And so, we would provide some support until they're flown home.

EE: In your time of responsibility, has there been any case of a ship company going bankrupt, men being marooned here? There was in the news in the last 18 months, whatever it was, out of St. John's, I think it was.

ES: Yeah.

EE: What were they, Russian fellows who were stranded there? East European?

ES: Yes. Russian. Yeah. You see, what you're talking about is a ship getting arrested.

EE: Yeah. I guess you're right.

ES: A ship can be arrested for different things. Infractions on regulations, also if wages are not paid. The International Transport Workers Federation is the union, and they can have a court order to have the ship arrested, and the ship is arrested until the wages are paid. We've only had one incident of that in 17 years, and that's the *Pamela*, and it was loading a paper machine for China at Keefer Terminal, and the crew hadn't been paid.

EE: Do all seafarers belong to this particular organization? What, the International--.

ES: International Transport Workers Federation.

EE: Transport Workers Federation.

ES: This is for foreign. It's affiliated with the SIU [Seafarers International Union].

EE: Okay.

ES: That's the Seafarers International--. Okay.

**[Audio pauses]**

OM: Second opportunity.

ES: Sure.

OM: So I'll start that, Ernie, and--. Okay, good.

EE: Not quite sure where we were when we interrupted this.

ES: Can you play it back? No?

EE: Are there other aspects of your work with seafarers that people might be interested in knowing about?

ES: That's--.

EE: Well, maybe--. You haven't said very much about the volunteers, actually.

ES: Well, as I said, we have about 20 volunteers acting in various capacities from administration to actually being the watchkeeper and driver that I mentioned. I find that the volunteers have some connection to the Church and some connection to the port, you know? We have one fellow whose dad had been an engineer on a laker. Another fellow is a former engineer with the Canadian Navy. Other people have worked at the elevators.

EE: Are any of your volunteers former laker seafarers?

ES: No. No, they're not.

EE: Because we would be very interested in talking to any of them about their experiences.

ES: Yeah.

EE: Right. And they're, I suppose, from various religious persuasions for that matter, or are they mostly Anglicans or Catholic?

ES: They're largely Anglicans, but I've got a Baptist, a Roman Catholic, you know? It's like I will even take a person without a faith background just as long as they're supportive of what we're trying to do.

EE: Sure. Yeah. Assisting the seafarers. But I interrupted you when you were on the brink of saying something about what people would find interesting.

**[0:50:06]**

ES: Yeah, well, the other aspect of us is our public relations part because we're a little-known operation in the port and we have to make our presence felt in order for people to support us. But that's also, I find, it's part of a larger problem of maritime blindness in Thunder Bay. It's like so many people live in Thunder Bay without an awareness that we have one of the largest exporter ports in the Great Lakes.

EE: Why do you think that is? I had a student 20 years ago who was on the ships and rose in rank—officer level of the lakers—and she was, I suppose, a bit bitter about the fact that people in Thunder Bay really didn't appreciate what you just said. They didn't really think about this as a port.

ES: There's a couple things that are going on. One is it's because of changes in the way the port is run. There are fewer people being employed in the port. Another factor is our geography in Thunder Bay with the railway cutting the port off from the city. I think that's another factor. Another factor is education. You know, people need to become aware of what maritime issues are. Another factor is that the way our goods are shipped. For instance, you can get a piece of electronics from Thailand. Obviously, it came by ship, but to come to the local Walmart store, it would come by truck. This is where the containers come into play.

EE: The railways may be a large part of it—the railway lines in cutting us off from the port—because anyone who has lived in Port Arthur for years, and I got here in '78, there were lots of ships out in the harbour in days past or years past out on the bay and so on and so forth. There's no question this was a port. But one tended to be removed from that reality, and Keefer Terminal too is across the railway track. So it's a lot difficult to get to. People don't get beyond the gate out there if they even get that far, do they?

ES: Yeah. And yet when we have ships visiting Thunder Bay such as *HMS Halifax* or the *Bluenose* or the *USS Samuel Eliot Morison*, there are five to ten thousand people visiting each ship.

EE: Yeah.

ES: So there is a definite interest.

EE: Yes, it's an odd thing. And so, in publicizing the work of the Mission and involving people in it in your church--. Is St. Steven the Martyr significantly represented amongst the volunteer, or do they come from other churches?

ES: They come from--. Like I say, primarily they're Anglican, but from other churches as well.

EE: Right. Would there be anything else that is of significance in what you're doing that people might be interested in knowing about? Because I gather the moral of what we've just been talking about is that simply to know that this building, this trailer is here, that it serves people practically every day of an eight-month period each year.

ES: Another thing that we've started was the blessing of the fleet down at Marina Park, and this was primarily for government and recreational vessels. It was a way to help people make a connection between using their vessels and faith in God. It also is another way just to have the Mission to Seafarers have a public face as well.

EE: Do the local sailors represent a different part of the population? Since you yourself sail, I gather.



ES: Well, I think the local sailors are aware that the Lake Superior can be a tough place.

EE: Yeah.

ES: And they share that with the foreign seafarers.

EE: I suppose that some of this is class, of course. Most of those who own these sailing vessels and whatever in port are people of some means, and so that removes them from seafaring realities as well, does it? Or is that unfair?

ES: That's a little unfair, [laughing] because my boat you can buy for \$7,000, and there are a lot of people like myself who don't have a lot of means and we still go and enjoy our boats. But you are right, there are people who own expensive boats there and who are of good means as well.

**[0:55:05]**

EE: Well, I think this does give us--. Do you have any concluding questions? You asked one earlier about immigration. I don't know whether there's any substance there that might be put on the tape.

OM: Just two questions. Do you offer services here, religious services? I noticed what appears to be an altar on the table there.

ES: Yeah. We offer one once a month on the first Wednesday of the month, and that is primarily for our volunteers. A lot of the work we do—that the volunteers and I do—is service work, and it's good just to make the connection of why we're offering the service work. There's a saying of Teresa of Ávila of how we are Jesus' hands and feet, and we need to remember that.

EE: Yes. We might recognize the fact that we are sitting here in what is a small chapel in a sense that this is—would it be appropriate to say—an altar, or should one say communion table depending on the tradition, isn't it?

ES: Yes.

EE: And I look up at the wall behind you and I see both, well, a couple of crosses as a matter of fact, and then I see a copper, what would it be? What would be the right noun to use for the Last Supper up there?

ES: Copper, yeah. And then we also have Orthodox--.

EE: Then there are things above me.

ES: Icons.

EE: Oh, yes. So they are.

ES: Religious pictures from different faith traditions. Part of it is is seafarers give us things. It's part of the way that they can say, "I've been here, and this is part of who I am."

EE: Are many of the Indians Hindu then?

ES: When you have Indian crews, you can have—on a given ship—you can have Hindu, Muslim.

EE: Sikh, I suppose.

ES: Sikh, Roman Catholic. The reason they have Roman Catholic is because there are some ports that were settled by the Portuguese and operated--.

EE: Goa.

ES: Goa, exactly.

EE: Right off.

ES: And that's what we do. I just want to mention one thing, just a scripture verse. This is from Matthew 25, and it's verse 34. It's about the judgement of the nations, and it says, "'Come, you that are blessed by my Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' And the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was

it that we saw you sick or imprisoned and visited you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, truly, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” And that’s why we do what we do.

EE: It is indeed a powerful statement from Matthew’s Gospel.

ES: Mmhmm.

OM: So one more question.

EE: By all means.

OM: To be consistent in my request here. What do you see happening in the next couple of years then with the Mission?

ES: Some of that’s going to be where technology goes. It’s like on the lakers--.

OM: I was thinking Skype and--.

ES: Yeah. On the lakers, they have cell phones, and they have wireless internet, and that’s because their wireless internet is based on cel lphones. On the ocean-going ships, they have to depend on satellite, which is much more expensive. There was one ship just in port where the seafarers had email access, but they still wanted to come here and use our services. I think these ocean-going ships are going to be slow to adopt some of this technology because it’s expensive. And as long as the owners can get the seafarers without these services, they will. But I think nonetheless, that’s the trend that’s coming. And then we’ll just have to see.

EE: Now you said two years rather than say two decades or whatever. [Laughing] Focusing it right down.

OM: That was pretty extensive given the rapidity of change these days.

EE: Yeah, well that’s--. The last handful of years—and that may be expanding it too much—has been an incredible time for change in communications. The internet is an incredible phenomenon.

ES: Yeah.

EE: Well, thank you very much, Ed, for giving us this time this afternoon, to have one of the seafarers appear here in need of some services was a good touch. Would it be wrong of me to inquire what country he's from?

ES: Ukraine.

EE: He's from Ukraine?

ES: Yeah.

EE: Right. My father's family, German-speaking Mennonites, left the Ukraine in '26, so. Well, we won't get into that. Well, thank you again so much. We can pack up and--.

ES: Thank you.

EE: Is there someone else here?

ES: Oh, I'll just wait for you to go. I'll just go--.

**End of interview.**