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# THE LOOKOUT

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The winter holidays are my favorite time of year. From the lead-up to Thanksgiving through the celebration of the New Year, these are the occasions that often bring families and friends together. Recently, while attending a conference in Norway, I found myself walking through the outdoor Christmas market in Oslo. Carols were playing, locals and tourists were shopping, and children and adults were playing arcade games. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. These festive Christmas markets—with their hot chocolate, warm drinks, specially baked treats, and holiday shopping—provide some “hygge,” a Norwegian word that describes a mood of coziness or conviviality, friendliness, and good cheer.

For the past two centuries, the Seamen’s Church Institute has endeavored to provide this sense of hygge to international seafarers—and more recently, domestic mariners—who are away from home during the holiday season. It began with Christmas at Sea, with our chaplains delivering handmade gifts and treats to the crews of ships in port. But this warmth, care, and support for mariners has grown substantially and manifests itself in other tangible ways as well. Chaplaincy and pastoral care have always been the heart and soul of SCI’s mission and, as Chaplain Cora DiDomenico observes, it begins with building trust.

This fall issue of The Lookout is filled with stories describing how our chaplains engage with seafarers and mariners in ways that value their service, respect their dignity, and address their needs. Whether it is responding to emergencies and crises on vessels on the inland river system, focusing on the needs of cadets at sea during their summer sea term, or making ship visits in the Port of New York & New Jersey, SCI’s mission is to improve the daily lives of all mariners that we meet. In

addition to chaplaincy, you’ll read more about our maritime education programs—especially e-Learning and our Towing Officer Assessment Records training. And our archivist, Stefan Dreisbach-Williams, provides some contextual history to our mariner training with a piece on SCI’s pioneering work during World War I.

SCI has always been a place for hospitality, and that extends to our special guests, as you’ll note in reports on our Tulane Law School summer intern and our Pilot Boat Cruise. Lastly, we hear from maritime executive and former SCI Trustee Bob Burke in At the Helm.

While many of my colleagues will spend the next few weeks delivering Christmas at Sea packages to mariners in ports and on the inland river system, it is not lost on me that the holiday season here at home begins with Thanksgiving Day. As I reflect upon the many blessings for which I give thanks—my family, my friends, and my SCI colleagues and trustees—I also give thanks to you, our supporters, donors, and friends. Without your generous support, SCI would be unable to continue to provide for the men and women in the maritime workforce who are away from their families during these holidays in order to bring us the ninety percent of goods and materials upon which we depend. So, thank you, and happy holidays!



The Rev. Mark S. Nestlehutt  
President & Executive Director

The Seamen’s Church Institute is grateful to the following sponsors for their support. Together, these corporate sponsors provide the resources necessary to strengthen our pastoral care, advocacy, and education programs, and help us fulfill our mission to seafarers and mariners.

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# Building Trust with Seafarers

**Cora DiDomenico**  
Chaplain

The first few moments on board a vessel often determine the outcome of a ship visit. As chaplains, we have just a few minutes to establish trust with the gangway watch. If we miss this opportunity, it's unlikely we will be able to provide much-needed services on board. If we are successful, personal pastoral care, essential practical services, and connections to legal and medical assistance can all take place in a short period of time. In that window, we strive for successful encounters as they can alleviate seafarer suffering and support the global trade.

While SCI is a leader in the maritime community, we could not do this work alone. We are connected to a network of institutions like the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA), and International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), allowing our chaplaincy to have a global presence within the maritime community, aligned with a common goal. If a seafarer is facing a crisis across the globe, but their vessel is sailing with short notice, we can receive referrals to the seafarer's vessel and await their arrival in the U.S. This goes both ways. Should we encounter a seafarer in distress in Port Newark, we have a network of other trustworthy organizations that can follow up in their next port of call. Our reputation within this network precedes us: seafarer centers around the world are well known to reliably offer comfort and assistance to seafarers upon boarding their vessels. They know we're here, at their next destination, ready to help them.

SCI's International Seafarers' Center (ISC) in Port Newark has a solid reputation of its own. We often field requests from seafarers who we do not know, but they had perhaps received our contact information from a seafarer from another vessel or of a different nationality. I'm often amazed, for example, when I get to assist with money-transferring services. Think about it: a seafarer (whom I've never met) will trust me with large sums of money to complete a funds transfer for them to make a house payment, pay for family medical care, or their children's tuition. While many companies allow seafarers to directly deposit their salaries into their local accounts, emergencies and unplanned expenses always arise, and this is a vital service that all of us at the ISC are proud to offer. We are equally honored to confidentially assist with documentation and legal matters, or medical matters and vaccinations. These services underscore an important point. For seafarers, we chaplains are the only

entities on board that do not require anything from seafarers—we have no demands, we're there to meet their needs, and we always aim to help. They know this, and we do all we can to keep their respect and uphold the trust they place in us.

Throughout my years as an SCI chaplain, seafarers often approach me with their hearts on their sleeves—and with a need for someone to listen to them on their best and worst days. It is this trust that I most revere. I have listened to many seafarers talk of the war in Ukraine, and I've heard the stories of seafarers who have lost their children to the bombings. During typhoon season in the Philippines, I've learned of entire villages without power and homes that have been destroyed. I have heard stories of miscarriages, deaths of loved ones, broken relationships, and heartbreaking life events. But there are also stories of joy and accomplishment. Seafarers have shared videos of their firstborn or their children riding a bike for the first time. Or a chief officer passing his captain's exams and waiting for his first appointment as captain. Or celebrations of marriages that have survived the time and distance apart that going to sea demands of couples.

While there's a global network of trusted seafarer support, and the ISC's reputation for chaplaincy is renowned, I am most amazed by how much can be accomplished in a short period of time when a seafarer is seeking a compassionate ear. Trust is critical. And those first few moments on deck are essential to building meaningful and often long-lasting connections that I hope are as rewarding for the mariners as they are for me. Trust between a chaplain and a seafarer might just come down to our mutual respect. Their work and lives are challenging, and it's important that they understand I am there for them. I am there to help. Their service is vital, and ours is too, and I'm honored every day that I get to put on my work boots, safety vest, and helmet and meet seafarers in Ports Newark and Elizabeth.

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## MEETING MARINERS AND SEAFARERS WHERE THEY ARE...

### Photos—next page

Three SCI chaplains are stationed at the International Seafarers' Center in the Port of New York and New Jersey: Cora DiDomenico (*top*), The Reverend James Kollin (*middle*), and Michelle McWilliams (*bottom*).

### Photos—following page

Chaplaincy on the Rivers: The Reverend David Shirk (*top*) is stationed in Paducah, KY, and meets with mariners on the Upper Mississippi and Ohio Rivers; The Reverend Thomas Rhoades (*middle*) is stationed in Baton Rouge, LA, and covers the Lower Mississippi River and Intracoastal waterways. The Reverend Mark Nestlehutt (*bottom*)—SCI President and Executive Director—also counts chaplaincy among his duties and will occasionally make ship or boat visits.





# Flying Forward Into Turmoil

**Evan Brown**

*Director, Communications*

I have been with The Seamen's Church Institute for a few months now and have had the opportunity to attend many fundraising events where we've hosted leaders within the inland, Intracoastal, and Gulf maritime communities. In conversations and presentations, when asked to talk about their recollections of SCI, their immediate impression has always been pastoral care, our chaplaincy, and our Ministry on the River.

This is not surprising. All of us realize—even me as a newcomer to the industry—that the work mariners do is exacting, demanding, and dangerous. Inland and Gulf Coast maritime is a tight and connected community, so when we experience a loss on the water, we all feel it. And yet, it's quite another experience entirely to fly forward into the turmoil that exists after an accident or a death. SCI Chaplains do this without hesitation.

SCI Chaplain David Shirk recalls: "The things I think about first as I am heading to an accident scene are: Who were they? What's their life story? I prepare myself for who I am about to meet and the coming situation." Chaplain Shirk and Chaplain Thomas Rhoades often have hours on the road when they are called to a crisis and arrive at the scene. En route is a time when they can frame the initial details of the incident and rehearse their Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) checklist.

"I run down the information I need immediately: location, boat name, crew's names, phone numbers, port captain and their contact, company name, and the company contact of who'll be working the incident, among other items," recalls Chaplain Rhoades. All the details he will need later for follow-up calls. He remarked that such details and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training are important to keep in mind but also that a certain sensitivity is required upon arrival. "Each location has its own context, and I have to keep that in perspective going in," he says.

At every scene, emotions and tensions are high. But, in the midst of any situation, Chaplains know that investigation is also starting. Facts are being gathered to determine what

While I am retired from my leadership role, all of my peers within the industry agree: what stands out for us when we think about SCI is its ministry. It's the heart of SCI, and all of us can recall difficult times within our companies when we have been thankful an SCI chaplain was there to connect on a compassionate level with our people.

**Mark Knoy**

*SCI trustee and former President and CEO  
of American Commercial Barge Line—  
Waterways Journal, 9/26/22*

happened, so mariners are not only distressed, they may be slightly on the defensive. "Such situations can be frustrating," Chaplain Shirk says, "When meeting with individuals who have gone through trauma, I do much more compassionate and empathetic listening. I try to stay clear of any questions that could come off as judgmental."

"You never want to impose within those conversations," continued Chaplain Rhoades. "You want to embody compassion not as a choice but as a nature: CISM training gives you the language, but compassion helps create a space for trust and dialogue, for healing."

Chaplains know they are not trying to reframe thinking when they meet with mariners and their families after tragedies. They know it's important to process grief, which is not an easy request in such circumstances. "The standard things that are said, like 'he or she is in a better place' or 'you have to get on with life,' are normally said because of our own discomfort with suffering and pain—our tendency is to encourage avoidance," says Chaplain Rhoades. "My relationship at that moment focuses on creating a safe space for expression—sometimes that may mean leading a dialogue that asks a mariner to remember the person or recall the love they had for their friend; sometimes it's saying little and just letting that person open up." Chaplaincy, he says, is training and empathy, but it's also an art; "creatively" guiding the flow of these initial critical conversations.

Post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a common psychological euphemism, but Chaplain Rhoades reminded me that PTSS makes more sense: the "I" stands for injury. "Mariners who've experienced trauma have experienced an injury. They do not have a disorder. Their grief is real, it's normal, and healing that injury takes time and patience, much like any physical injury."

"I remind them (mariners) when moving forward," says Chaplain Shirk, "if you feel you can't make it through the day, make it through the hour. If that doesn't work, make it through each minute. Most important: reach out to family and loved ones for support; they are there for you." And so, too, are SCI's chaplains and chaplain associates: mariners can always expect check-ins and follow-up calls down the road.

# Sailing Chaplains: Summer Sea Term with SUNY Maritime



## The Rev. Mark Nestlehutt

*SCI President and Executive Director*

On a warm August day, Chaplain John Drymon stepped off the ship's gangway and back onto terra firma. After 75 days at sea, the TS EMPIRE STATE—the Maritime College of New York's training vessel—the Maritime College of New York's training vessel—was back in its home port of Fort Schuyler, New York. Drymon, a SCI Chaplain Associate, had spent the past two-plus weeks on the ship's final leg making the crossing from Belfast, Northern Ireland, to SUNY Maritime's campus under the Throgs Neck Bridge in the Bronx. Drymon stepping off the gangway marked the conclusion of another successful Summer Sea Term (SST) partnership between the Seamen's Church Institute and SUNY Maritime.

Since the earliest days of America's independence, professional seafarers and mariners have been essential to our national security and for moving goods and cargo from U.S. port to port. Most U.S.-licensed deck officers and engineers are products of America's maritime colleges: either as graduates from one of the six state colleges or from the United States Merchant Marine Academy. This professionally licensed corps of mariners provide a highly trained, well-educated maritime workforce that moves our economy forward and directly strengthens our national defense through military sealift command support. Over the course of their undergraduate studies, cadets are required to accrue 360 days at sea in order to sit for the United States Coast Guard third mate's licensing exam. This sea time is acquired during summer sea term journeys after the cadet's freshman, sophomore, and junior years.

It was in May of 2021 that Rear Admiral Michael Alfultis, President of SUNY Maritime, had initially asked SCI for assistance. After a year's hiatus in 2020 due to COVID, the EMPIRE STATE was back at sea and many cadets were exhibiting signs of trauma. Alfultis asked if SCI offered mental health and pastoral support. Within a week, SCI had deployed a chaplain to catch up with the ship while it was in port in Charleston, South Carolina, and SCI continued to provide a chaplain throughout the remainder of the cruise. Once the decision was made to continue the partnership, Chaplain Thomas Rhoades, who'd sailed on the EMPIRE STATE during 2021, began recruiting a team of SCI Chaplain Associates to serve aboard the ship for the 2022 summer sea term.

While SCI had not experimented with putting chaplains on these types of vessels since World War II, the request seemed like an opportunity to make a tangible contribution and one in keeping with SCI's strategic plan of supporting cadets at maritime colleges and academies. Dating to our founding in 1834, SCI's mission has focused on meeting the material, professional, emotional, and spiritual needs of mariners at all stages of their careers. What began as floating chapels and boarding houses grew into medical clinics, hotels, and seafarer training, before expanding into mariner advocacy and seafarer rights, simulator training for inland mariners, and pastoral care and crisis response on the rivers and intracoastal waterways. Throughout its history, current events and crises have shaped SCI's mission with the recent pandemic serving as one more challenge demanding an innovative response. As such, putting trained chaplains aboard ship to support mariner wellness was one more example of "leaning in" to meet the emerging needs of mariners.

So, in late May, the Reverend Anne Reed, an Episcopal deacon based at Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati, Ohio, boarded the EMPIRE STATE for the beginning of the 2022 cruise. She settled in and immediately began working in partnership with the mental health counselor, Ann Kelly, who was also billeted on the ship. Anne established a rota of morning and evening prayer times and made rounds on the ship to get to know the cadets, especially while they were standing watch. Much of her time and energy was spent with the crew, many of whom were graduates of SUNY Maritime and now sailing professionally. After Anne disembarked in Philadelphia, she was followed by Captain Marsha Morse, a Lutheran who had spent her career as a professional mariner and ferry boat captain in the Pacific Northwest before joining SCI's Chaplain Associate program. Marsha brought on board a keyboard and her musicianship, which added to the devotional life of the cruise.

Once the EMPIRE STATE made port in Porto, Portugal, Marsha was relieved by the Reverend Canon Jay Geisler, an Episcopal priest from Pittsburgh, who specialized in substance abuse ministry and working with people with addictions. Jay spent much of his time visiting those cadets and crew in the sick bay and in the classroom with cadets discussing addiction and trauma. In a follow-up conversation, Jay confided that the



cadets and crew missed Marsha’s music and that Anne had been most consistent with honoring times for prayer. Once Jay and the ship reached Belfast, Northern Ireland, the Reverend John Drymon, an Episcopal priest and Rector of a parish in Ohio, came aboard for the final leg home. John worked with Ann Kelly to alternate office hours between the watches and noted that 75% of the time, cadets would ask to meet jointly with him and Ann. And, while the primary mission for SCI’s Chaplains is for pastoral care and mental health support, John had the privilege of conducting a baptism aboard the ship during the crossing back home to New York.

In late September, while attending the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) annual meeting held in Rome, representatives from the Norwegian Seafarers’ Mission spoke of their new ministry of “sailing chaplains”—putting chaplains aboard ship. As I listened, I realized that is exactly what SCI has done to meet the needs of the cadets and crew of SUNY Maritime. This embedded chaplain model, while challenging to staff, is an intensive way to support mariners by helping them to better understand their available resources and to develop resilience and wellness skills that will sustain them during their careers at sea or on shore.

2022 marked the final cruise of the EMPIRE STATE VI, a break bulk cargo freighter whose keel was laid in 1961 and, after a full conversion to a training ship, that was delivered to SUNY Maritime in 1989. Next year, in time for Summer Sea Term 2023, SUNY will take possession of a brand-new National Security Multi-Mission Vessel to be named the EMPIRE STATE VII, and SCI plans to provide chaplains for the inaugural summer cruise.

In the aftermath of these successful deployments of sailing chaplains, other maritime colleges are exploring having SCI staff their sea terms, and we remain excited by the possibility. Of course, the success of this effort is dependent upon our ability to recruit and train a corps of SCI Chaplain Associates who give of their time and energy to help SCI fulfill its mission of providing crucial support to mariners. Like all of SCI’s endeavors, donor support is critical to expanding our mission to meet new and emerging needs within the maritime workforce. That said, SCI is already looking forward to Summer Sea Term 2023 with SUNY Maritime and, perhaps, elsewhere as well.



**Opposite Page:** A piper and service reader from the 2022 Summer Sea Term—photo sent by CA Marsha Morse. **Above:** The TS EMPIRE STATE VI on the East River. **Below:** The Rev. Anne Reed in the TS EMPIRE STATE engineering room with SUNY-Maritime cadets on the 2022 cruise.



# A Day in the Life of a SCI Chaplain Associate

## The Rev. Richard Sloan

SCI Chaplain Associate,  
Port of New York and New Jersey

Family, friends, and colleagues always want to know what I'm up to as I visit Port Newark, weekly. So, I figured I would give everyone a detailed account of what my day looks like as a volunteer Chaplain Associate at the International Seafarers' Center.

What's it like visiting a commercial ship in port? Let's start by getting to the gangway in one piece. Driving and walking amongst the massive equipment inside the port involves a commitment to safety. Climbing the gangway often involves anywhere from 70 to 100 steps to reach the main deck—and that's where we meet the vessel's security guard. I introduce myself by saying, "Seamen's Center," which is always followed by a warm greeting and a smile from the crew.

The crews are often busy with Coast Guard and Immigration, loading and unloading containers, bunkering fuel, getting stores onboard, doing ship maintenance, saying goodbye to departing crew members, or welcoming new ones. All this in their short port stay of 24 to 48 hours.

Once on deck, chaplains never know who they'll meet. The ships I've boarded recently have had crews from Denmark, Montenegro, Peru, Philippines, Greece, Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine, Panama, and beyond. Talking about their home countries is always an icebreaker. Current events or cultural history are good beginnings. My go-to conversation starters of late are the new Filipino president, Machu Picchu, as well as building and expanding the Panama Canal. Ancient history also works wonders—thus, the Peloponnesian War was the topic with two Greek cadets. The cadets were also quick to comment on the *New York Times* piece that day about Greek party islands—they had lots of recommendations on places to party and were pleased with the American press coverage.

Very often, crew members ask about the services provided by SCI. Common questions are: Do you have SIM cards? Can you take us to the Jersey Gardens mall? How do we get to New York City? What do you have at the center? Can you help me send money home?

As a volunteer SCI chaplain, my "job" is to serve the mariners, assist them in getting the things they need, and be there for them during difficult times.



When the seafarers don't have specific questions, talking about their families is always welcome. Whether they're newly onboard with a nine-month contract or are soon going home, asking about family encourages crewmembers to share what's most important to them. On one ship, I was with the captain when he was informed his daughter, who he hadn't seen in eight months, was at the security gate. He wanted to talk with her but didn't have his phone, so I gave him mine. A small step that quickly got them together.

I enjoy learning about where a seafarer comes from as well as learning about anything maritime. As a volunteer SCI chaplain, my "job" is to serve the mariners, assist them in getting the things they need, and be there for them during difficult times. Often seafarers are on ships for months at a time with only 20 to 25 crew members, so being greeted with a smile, talking with them, making a Christmas at Sea delivery, offering SIM cards, or transporting them helps them feel welcome and supported.

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# Reflections upon “Vriedelandt”

**The Rev. Kempton Baldrige**  
*SCI Chaplain, Retired*

“Did you go to Fort Schuyler?”

I was asked that question often as SCI’s chaplain at ‘Fort Schuyler,’ as SUNY Maritime College is often called. So frequently, in fact, I began to wonder myself.

“No, I didn’t go to Fort Schuyler,” I’d reply, adding, “but I get Fort Schuyler.” And Fort Schuyler certainly got me.

I spent ten incredible days living and working as “Vicar of the Village” on this historic and beautiful 55-acre campus at the spot where Long Island Sound meets the East River in Throggs Neck, New York. Fort Schuyler, in its various iterations since 1874, is regarded as one of the true cradles of the American merchant marine.

Rear Admiral Michael A. Alfultis, Ph.D., USMS, SUNY Maritime’s president, came to SCI seeking a chaplain-in-residence for its annual MUG (Mariners Under Guidance) Indoctrination, which was held in late August 2022. This was the first MUG “Indoc” with an SCI chaplain, but it seemed as if we’d been there all along. From the Admiral’s full-throated ‘welcome aboard’ the day I arrived to view the graduation parade seated behind him ten days on, I was treated like family.

Six years as a chaplain at a state university proved less relevant than my four years as a Citadel cadet. I know how stressful, frightening, and overwhelming it is as a “4<sup>th</sup> Classman.” No matter what freshmen are called—Plebes, Knobs, Rats, Doolies, Youngies, or MUGs—Indoctrination, or “Indoc,” at a maritime/military college is by turns dynamic and dramatic, variegated yet formulaic, demanding but ultimately gratifying and doubly so in a chaplaincy role.

To outsiders, all maritime or military colleges look pretty much the same. The uniforms, marching in formation, “squared corners,” salutes rendered, etc. But beneath the pomp, polished brass, and spit shines lies the spirit and ethos of a cadet corps. They aren’t all the same. Sometimes a “system” can turn cruel, mean, intolerant, or worse.

This was the first MUG Indoc with an SCI chaplain, but it seemed as if we’d been there all along. From the Admiral’s full-throated ‘welcome aboard’ the day I arrived to view the graduation parade seated behind him ten days on, I was treated like family.



At SUNY Maritime, IDOs (Indoctrination Officers) are 2<sup>nd</sup> class cadets (college juniors) working directly with MUGs in one of six sections. IDOs are selected by the commandant for their leadership, maturity, sound judgment, and good character. They serve as the MUG’s drill instructors, tour guides, hall and lunchroom monitors, wardrobe matrons, marching coaches, safety escorts, personal mentors, and older sibling ‘stand-ins.’ There’s no room for cruelty or meanness in all that.

After I interact with IDOs on campus, not one of them spoke of “weeding out,” “culling the herd,” “weakest link,” or “running off” any of “their MUGs.” Quite the opposite. Conscientiousness, compassion, and empathy are the common traits of leadership here. Observing and working alongside Maritime’s cadre at Indoc, I was immensely proud of them, what they stood for, and genuinely encouraged about the future world they themselves are helping to shape.

What did I do? MBWA—Ministry By Wandering About. Wherever MUGs were or were going, I would follow along. There were exceptions:

From one to two each afternoon, “Anchor Chains” was held for an hour of ethical, practical, or professional instruction for

*continued on the next page...*

Reflections upon "Vriedelandt" continued...

MUGs by section (35 to 40 cadets). After lunch every day, I'd be in the chapel, ready to lead discussions on 2 to 3 topics. One day two sections of MUGs (75 cadets) were waiting outside the chapel. The air conditioning was off, so it was already uncomfortable inside, worsened by cramming into a chapel with only 51 seats. But we kept the discussions lively and relevant, ending with time to spare. I thanked them and then gathered my materials. The MUGs all stood and applauded, many coming forward to shake my hand as they left. That sort of thing doesn't happen to clergy very often.

Two-thirds of MUGs—166 out of 235—attended worship at the cadet chapel. Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, '81, and I decided to split the MUGs into three groups: one in the chapel, a second on the roof, and a third in the courtyard. And using internet resources and guided by a former SCI colleague, I tried to approximate Shabbas in the chapel on Friday and Saturday for an observant Orthodox Jewish MUG. While this was not what he was accustomed to, he nonetheless appreciated the effort, if not the execution. And the dining hall chef was happy to procure kosher grape juice for Kaddish on the following Friday.

On day five, while taking photos of drill practice at the football field, an IDO ran up seeking pastoral counseling for a MUG verging on a panic attack. On Thursday, an IDO stopped me in the dining hall to schedule counseling for a MUG. An hour later, the IDO walked the MUG to chapel. The MUG was doing well as a cadet, but the IDO sensed the chaplain could help the MUG deal with his parents' issues. (Both cadets made it through Indoc and are doing fine the last we heard.) Each day brought similar pastoral encounters with good outcomes.

Toward the end of Indoc, I was sad to be leaving. I loved being at Maritime and developed a deep resonance with the place—emotionally, culturally, philosophically, and spiritually. There's a peace there I have found in few other places. Small wonder the first Dutch settlers called Throggs Neck, Vriedelandt, literally "Land of Peace." That's the way I'll think of it from now on.



# SEE YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN!

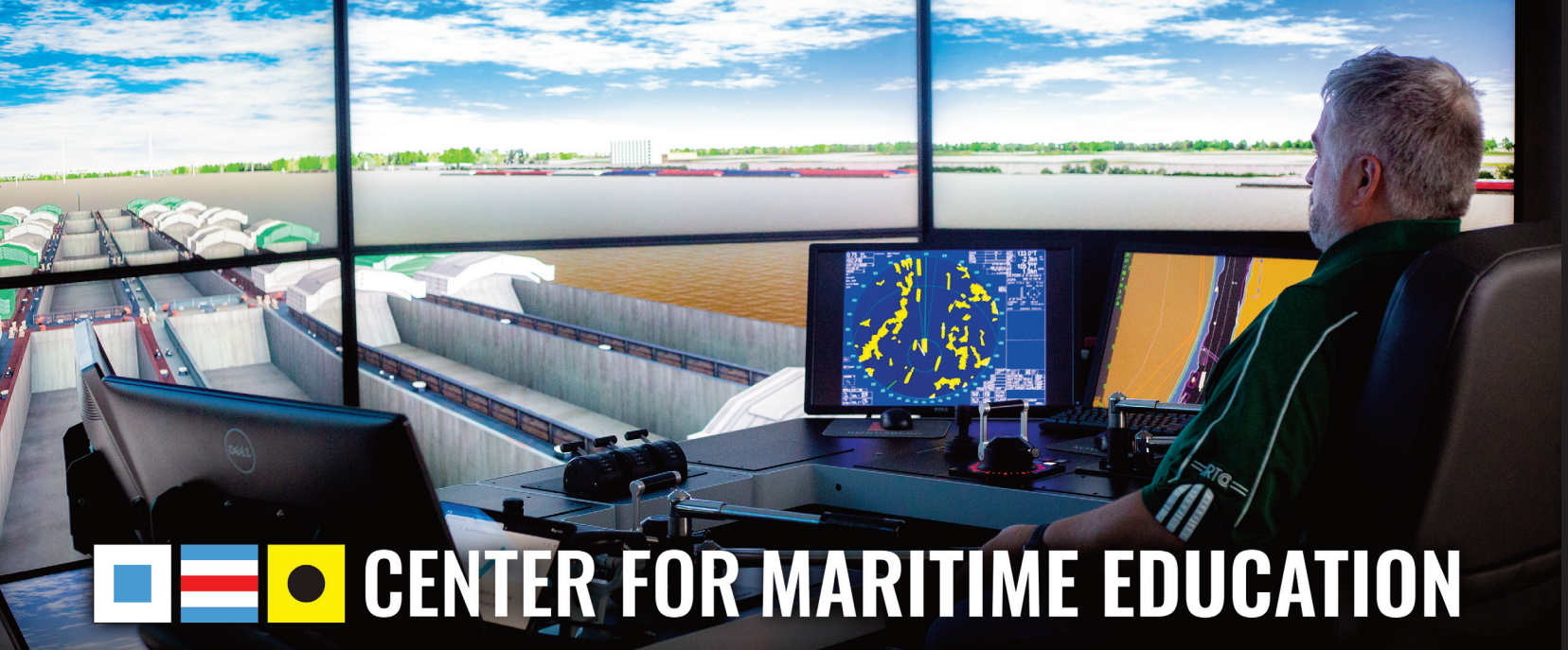
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# CENTER FOR MARITIME EDUCATION

## E-Learning: Looking Ahead

### Discussing the Advantages of Maritime e-Learning with Jonathan Burson

By **Evan Brown**  
*Director, Communications*

When Jonathan Burson joined SCI’s Center for Maritime Education in 2018, he knew immediate changes were needed within e-Learning. Jonathan upgraded all of our sites to Moodle 3.0 and ensured e-Learning courses were user-friendly, meaning they could be accessed anywhere, on any device. “My mandate was to grow our customer base,” he notes, “and user experience was our initial focus: ease of use, easy to manage, and easy to customize.”

The task since then for e-Learning has been oriented toward building operational capacity and the customer base. As such, currently, e-Learning offers 70-plus off-the-shelf courses that range from nutrition to distinct technical skills. Burson notes, however, that e-Learning must also be responsive: “I am seeing that the industry needs more company-specific training to meet Subchapter M and safety management system requirements.” To that point, all of our e-Learning stock courses can be modified or new content created to meet client requests. Beyond content, e-Learning is also improving ways to simplify integration with company databases, such as billing, HR information, or staff certifications. As of August 2022, e-Learning currently supports the e-Learning and certification needs of 37 companies representing over 9,000 users.

CME itself is among e-Learning’s biggest “clients” of sorts, supporting over 1,800 users a year. Some of e-Learning’s modules, such as the “Rules of the Road” series—teaching navigational essentials—are designed to go together with CME simulator training. In turn, e-Learning is looking to integrate

more simulator content and scenarios into the learning architecture, especially as CME starts to switch over to K-Sim systems. As well, e-Learning plays a role in sharing and storing data and optimizing reporting for CME feasibility studies.



*Jonathan Burson*  
*Manager, e-Learning*

The future is promising, but it’s not without its challenges. “We are reaching our maximum bandwidth,” notes Burson, “systems development, content development, and customization take time, and with only two on our (e-Learning) staff, we need to meet growing demand through contracted labor.” Asynchronous learning was the goal at the outset—having courses online allowed mariners the prospect of education anytime, anywhere. But e-Learning is potentially more than that now. New technology, new fuels, and the possibilities of new construction, coupled with the updated requirements of sub-M regulations and certifications, speak of an advancing industry. E-Learning and CME are looking to advance with it. Burson concludes: “We have updated our goals, and in meeting demand, I want to rise to the challenges of increased scale and integration we currently face.”

### Learn More:

Scan here for SCI’s complete listing of customizable e-Learning solutions and courses or visit [seamenschurch.org/elearning](https://seamenschurch.org/elearning)



# Passing Along Knowledge

## A Conversation with CME's Captain David Howell

**Evan Brown**  
*Director, Communications*

Captain David Howell joined the Seamen's Church Institute Center for Maritime Education about nine-and-a-half years ago (he'll be at ten years on his birthday next July). He currently serves as CME's Assistant Director in Houston, but before his current role, he was on the water for 32 years with several companies and experiences on his resume. He started his career in 1983, was licensed two years later in 1985, and has been leading and mentoring mariners ever since. He discussed the changes he's observed in guiding and training mariners. "Maritime training when I started was just about the basic 'Rules of the Road.' While we still do that, we are becoming more involved, sight- and rule-specific. We now build specific simulations for mariners to understand the rules and how to apply them in exact situations."

Why has training become more detailed? Captain Howell notes that stressors upon mariners have increased, especially inland, where there is so much more traffic than there was ten years ago, and operations are within tighter quarters. While Captain Howell's training knowledge is broad, his expertise is offshore. "It's a little less stressful than inland, but there's still traffic, and separation schemes mariners must learn." As wind farms ramp up offshore, CME may be doing more in this area and possibly adding DP, or dynamic positioning, to the simulator capabilities (necessary in keeping boats in accurate proximity to offshore structures like oil rigs or wind turbines).

Captain Howell, as a Coast Guard credentialed Designated Examiner, also administers Towing Officer Assessment Records, or TOARS, for CME. TOARS are relatively new to Maritime, starting in 2004. "Twenty years ago, anybody could get a license," he recalls. "You could walk into a Coast Guard station, take the test, and you could get a license to run a tow boat. But the industry as a whole wanted a way to make sure that those seeking a towing license were properly trained, not just anybody walking in."

As I was coming up in the ranks, I had captains take me under their wing, teach me a certain way to do things. They gave me time and let me learn from my mistakes. And that's what I am doing here...

The process is straightforward but comprehensive. "First, a person gets their steersman license (which takes time coming up the ranks), then they get their TOARS, which outlines what they need to be assessed on," he notes. There are four TOARS—Inland, Western Rivers, Great Lakes, and Offshore—and they all share common elements within the assessments. Non-common elements are specific to each territory. As a Designated Examiner, Captain Howell can sign off on all four regions and has processed TOARS at both our CME families in Houston and Paducah.



*Capt. David Howell*  
*Assistant Director-CME, Houston*

Also, Captain Howell specializes in running training on CME's only Wärtsilä simulator in Houston. The difference, he noted, is functionality. "I am able to do certain things that we can't do on other simulators, like docking, connecting a tow, or building a tow." Wärtsilä is more advanced, currently, in these particular simulations.

"I come up through the school of hard knocks," recalls Captain Howell. "As I was coming up in the ranks, I had captains take me under their wing, teach me a certain way to do things. They gave me time and let me learn from my mistakes. And that's what I am doing here, that's what I enjoy, passing along to others the knowledge I was given."

The difference, of course, is that Captain Howell is training mariners on simulators. "There are no consequences," he says, "something can happen, a mistake can be made, and we can talk about it. Then we press a button, and we can run it again and show them how to do it the right way. It's definitely a different learning curve from when I was learning, but we're still passing along the same knowledge; it's just a different environment."



## WORKING ON THE WATER

Life as a mariner or seafarer has constant challenges. Long contracts or shift work can lead to extended periods of loneliness and isolation from loved ones. At the same time, ships and boats require expertise and exacting attention from their crews. Even without considering the effects of severe weather, working on the water is dangerous and demanding.

At SCI, we understand the difficulties mariners and seafarers face. We aim to be a beacon of support, service, and meaningful connection for mariners and seafarers. We are committed to meeting them wherever they may be, standing shoulder-to-shoulder on their best and worst days.



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# SCI Education Programs and World War I

**Stefan Dreisbach-Williams**  
SCI Archivist

When the Seamen's Church Institute was founded, maritime professional training was nearly all on the job. In 1910, SCI Executive Superintendent Archibald R. Mansfield introduced curricula that would set SCI on a path toward direct, practical care for seafarers' bodies and minds, along with their souls. America's entry into World War I cemented professional training as a cornerstone of SCI's work.

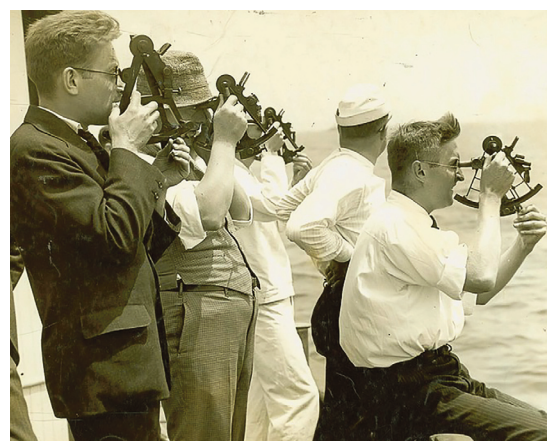
Industrialization increased the ease of travel and the scale of warfare in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A merchant class motivated to act toward reform became increasingly aware of a new brutality on the battlefield. The first groups to promote first aid education focused on soldiers and battlefield wounds. England's St. John's Society brought first aid education programs to railway workers and miners, noting that they suffered medical trauma like that experienced on the battlefield. Later, British regulations required English ship officers to be members of the St. John's Association, effectively first aid certified.

In May of 1910, Superintendent Mansfield launched first aid classes at SCI in cooperation with Dr. W.S. Pugh P.S.A. of the U.S. Navy and Major Charles Lynch of the U.S. Army First Aid Department, who organized volunteer instructors. This was years before Mansfield's vision of a centralized services complex for seafarers took shape at SCI's 25 South Street building. SCI still had its floating church on the East River beside the newly opened Manhattan Bridge and maintained small chapels and reading rooms over much of the New York City Waterfront from Houston Street to the Battery to Brooklyn. First Aid classes were held at the Breakwater, a 100-bed hotel for seafarers that SCI ran at Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn in a building a block from the waterfront that was later demolished for the Brooklyn Queens Expressway.

SCI embraced first aid certification enthusiastically but centered on professional development for seafarers tentatively. In July 1911, *The Lookout* announced an intent to teach professional skills noting that "so far as we can learn, no effort is made anywhere to instruct the seaman for the work in which he is engaged, and that is a part of work we have planned."

The American and Ward steamship lines had cadet programs, but nothing to compare with those instituted in Britain, and there was one small navigation school run by Captain Pugsley. Additionally, the New York City Board of Education had run a nautical school since 1873. With legislation spearheaded by Stephen B. Luce, it acquired a retired U.S. Navy vessel, the *St. Mary*, soon replaced by the gunboat *Newport*. However, *The Lookout* of August 1911 claimed that graduates of this school rarely went into maritime careers.

On the other hand, *The Lookout* noted in 1911 that there was little need for maritime education since there wasn't much of an American Merchant Marine.



**Top:** SCI's Merchant Marine School. **Middle:** Taking sights on the Hammersley stern. **Below:** Merchant Marine School classroom crowded with cadets.



Most seafarers entering U.S. ports were from other countries, so training must come after they had gone to sea. In response, SCI focused on attracting seafarers to their anti-vice programs with reading rooms and music. Even the first aid classes were sweetened with music, which SCI called on volunteers to provide.

The build-up to America's entry into World War I would shift priorities making ships and seafarers suddenly vitally important and isolationism unsustainable. The problem of seafarer education turned out to be our problem, no matter which allied nation the seafarer came from.

In the months before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, SCI began offering courses for the ambitious seafarer. Under the West Side YMCA's management, Captain Patterson's Swedish successor Fritz E. Uttmark joined with SCI to offer classes in the auditorium at 25 South Street from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every weekday beginning in March 1914.

Still, the growing conflict remained far away for America, and a kind of neutrality persisted at 25 South Street. SCI navigated the complexities of serving British seafarers and apprentices and men from other countries who went to the front lines as volunteers or by conscription alongside German seafarers idled by impounded ships and a public increasingly reluctant to hire them for shore work. SCI concentrated on its moral tasks, improving the English language skills and character of the foreign-born fo'c'sle seafarer by offering edifying lectures.

In November 1915, SCI announced a series of lectures on good citizenship and civics in partnership with the YMCA. "Good music" was central to SCI's entertainment. SCI also embraced popular song, but ragtime was allowed sparingly and carefully on the occasional piano roll and never in the chapel. Meanwhile, the U-boats steadily increased the number of seafarers arriving at SCI with nothing but the trauma of lifeboat navigation after their ships were torpedoed. A major SCI donor had gone down with the Lusitania, but mentions of torpedo survivors at 25 South Street didn't appear regularly in *The Lookout* until September 1915.

In April 1916, SCI announced plans to enclose its roof, creating a 13<sup>th</sup> story, or "a roof on the roof," with space for staff quarters, medical care, and some classroom space, a lecture room for maybe 50 students. Before the end of the year, SCI hired Captain Robert Huntington from Boston, where he had been teaching at a navigation school since 1912 after a career at sea that began in 1873 when he was nine years old. By June 1917, 80 to 90 students were enrolled, and the expanded school facilities were stretched to their limit once more.

In April 1917, as the U.S. officially entered the conflict, SCI launched an aggressive education program while providing space for Naval Reserve training and examinations. The *Lookout* of May 1917 published a letter from Mansfield to Rear Admiral Usher, Commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, across the East River from SCI, offering all the conveniences of the new building at 25 South Street. Usher accepted the offer. The Navy Yard was feeling pressed for space. Usher moved the three-man Board for

the examination of candidates for commissions in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force to SCI along with the 40 or 50 men taking the examination at any given time. Captain Huntington moved his classes from the fourth floor back into the auditorium to make room for them.

During a Board of Managers Luncheon, Capt. E. T. Weatherspoon, U. S. Navy, Retired, suggested that Huntington launch a correspondence school to help prepare seafarers and petty officers for their merchant marine commissions. He noted that SCI was teaching lawyers, bankers, stockbrokers, and businessmen navigation, signaling, and all the other necessary skills to join the coast patrol.

As "roof on the roof" construction neared completion, the auditorium filled with students learning semaphore. Calls went out for donations of sextants, octants, and signal flags.

The *Lookout* of July 1917 included a log of a Navigation and Engineering School cruise from The Battery to the Lower Bay of New York Harbor aboard SCI's steam launch J. Hooker Hamersley. The log doesn't record the numerous passes and security regulations for each of the three weekly cruises required. Since the Black Tom explosions in 1916 that leveled the railyards south of Jersey City, shattered windows in lower Manhattan—including 25 South Street—and battered the Statue of Liberty with shrapnel, New York Harbor had become increasingly barred and regulated. With the outbreak of war, the waters were divided into sections, and access was closely restricted. Still, SCI's determination and reputation cut through the red tape to get the proper documents and help meet the need for trained officers.

Classes in navigation or marine engineering ran from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. six days a week. Courses continued to grow even as the stream of torpedoed seafarers became a torrent, filling every corner of the institute with cots and scraping the shelves of the Slop Chest for every shred of clothing available for seafarers whose possessions had gone to the bottom with their ships.

In October 1918, amid growing anticipation of the Armistice, the Navigation and Marine Engineering School was in top form with an average attendance of 110 students and a complete flying bridge and chart room on the added 13<sup>th</sup> floor, "roof of the roof." That month's issue of *The Lookout* also references the radio equipment that SCI used to train seafarers in radiotelegraphy and would briefly use to launch KDKF, the world's first telemedical service.

SCI wasn't alone in expanding its maritime education programs for the war effort. The rising tide of interest in nautical education during WWI floated all boats. The navigation school run by the NYC Board of Education—of which *The Lookout* had been so dismissive in 1911—nearly closed under city management. It almost closed again after the state took over its operations. But, its vitality increased steadily during the war and eventually grew into SUNY-Maritime College, which just marked the launch of its newest training ship in September, Empire State VII.

## MEETING MARINERS AND SEAFARERS WHERE THEY ARE...

Director for SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy, Philip Schifflin, Esq., is always on the go. While stationed in New Orleans, LA—and pictured here (at left) visiting a mariner in Houston, TX—Phil represented CMA at numerous panels in the United States and Europe on behalf of mariner and seafarer wellness and advocacy.



Scan here to learn more about SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy or visit [seamenschurch.org/cma](https://seamenschurch.org/cma)





# Ministry on the River Hosts CMA Summer Intern



**The Rev. Thomas Rhoades**  
Senior Chaplain

We love working collaboratively across our various programs at Seamen’s Church Insitute. As a Ministry on the River chaplain, I was pleased to coordinate a boat visit this past summer for our Center for Mariner Advocacy intern, Ashleigh Higgs.

Ashleigh and I met at a fleet on the west shore of the Mississippi near New Orleans. That day we were heading out on a tow boat, a “shuttle” that moves barges locally within a specific region. Before we walked to the dock, we donned our life vests, gloves, hats, and sunglasses. We already had our safety boots on our feet. The captain touched up to the pier and waited. Before we stepped from the dock to the boat, I explained that workboats do not accommodate passengers for getting on and off like some vessels. Sometimes, the most challenging moment in our work is when we step across the water onto (or between) boats and barges. After we safely boarded, I pointed out the trip, slip, and fall potentials—tumbling down steep stairs is a common accident on such boats.

**Top:** Marquette Transportation Company’s MV Dennis Fromenthal.  
**Above:** Daily Safety Meeting at 11:45 am in the wheelhouse of the MV Dennis Fromenthal during watch change. Pictured here, from left to right: Brandon Ellis, Lamorris Smith, Ashleigh Higgs, Trevor Choplin, Captain Todd Buquet, Jonathon Ogonowski, and Virgil Roche.  
**Below:** Ashleigh pictured with SCI Center for Mariner Advocacy Director, Philip Schifflin, Esq. at our office in New Orleans, LA.



After the mate gave us the safety briefing, I volunteered to cook for the crew. They heartily agreed, and since lunch was to be ready at 11:15 am, I quickly got to work. Ashleigh and I headed down to the galley. When we got there, a couple of the crew were playing dominos, which was good to see. I shared with Ashleigh that playing games or cards improves mental health by building rapport, fostering bonding among crewmembers, generating laughter that releases stress, and enhancing the quality of life in isolating situations. Happy crews are safer and more productive. Our habit of playing on our phones alone with others in our presence increases our sense of isolation and disconnection from our crew mates. During lunch, Ashleigh learned to play dominoes, and we

*continued on the next page...*

Ministry on the River hosted  
CMA Summer Intern, continued...

also had a chance to talk to the captain—about Hurricane Ida, his family life, and his French bulldog (which, for him, was also part of the family). Afterward, we headed up to the wheelhouse to meet with the pilot for the rest of our visit.

I sensed from the crew that our appearance on board broke up the usual pattern of their day, going back and forth shuttling barges on the same stretch of river. I am glad we made a difference in their day. Sharing this experience with Ashleigh and others like her who are called to maritime work is deeply important to me. For Ashleigh, as she studies maritime law at Tulane University, the goal of this visit was to connect with the mariners and perhaps better understand the job of a seafarer. I hope it also gave her some perspective into the work of our chaplaincy; we are there for mariners on difficult days, but we're also ready to listen, support, and connect. That could mean making a meal when on board, playing dominoes, or just having a conversation. For me, our visit underscored the strong ties between chaplaincy and advocacy.

## CMA Internship Projects, 2022

For twenty-seven years, SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy has welcomed students from Tulane University School of Law to work as interns during their 1L summer. This summer, CMA welcomed Ashleigh Higgs to the longstanding program, where she was able to observe and learn from the meaningful work that CMA does. Here are a few of the projects in which Ashleigh participated:

- A long-term research project about the repatriation rights of U.S. mariners upon the completion of their contract. In light of the ongoing labor crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, Ashleigh's research will provide CMA with more tools to assist mariners forced to overstay their contracts.
- Along with CMA Director Phil Schifflin, Ashleigh connected with Ally Cedeno, the Founder and CEO of Women Offshore. Through this introduction, Ashleigh has begun research projects about enforcement and penalties for sexual assault/sexual harassment cases on ships and increased representation of women in maritime.
- Assisted CMA with two cases in Spanish, translating emails, newspaper articles from 1973, medical reports, and communications with mariners to understand the cases and find solutions.
- Visited New York City, where Ashleigh met with attorneys from two large law firms, the Liberian Ship Registry, SCI Chaplains at the International Seafarers' Center, seafarers at Port Newark (while on ship visits), and officials at the U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York Port State Control Division.
- Helped to coordinate the organization and collaboration of a Mariner Wellness Steering Committee—work that extends from our Paducah roundtable in July 2021, where leaders and experts in the maritime field met to discuss the wellness issues mariners face and how to best address them.



The World Depends on Mariners.  
Mariners Depend on SCI.  
And SCI Depends on You.

# SUPPORT SCI

Your contribution to SCI provides the vital support that allows us to respond to mariner and seafarer needs without hesitation. Your gift makes a difference. Scan the QR code to make an online donation or follow [seamenschurch.org/giving](https://seamenschurch.org/giving) to learn more.



## Robert Burke

### CEO, Ridgebury Tankers

Westbury, Connecticut

#### What is the most important life lesson you have learned?

I was honored recently with an award from my alma mater, Kings Point, and had to give an acceptance speech. This award was particularly meaningful as it signified acceptance from my peers and classmates. As I thought about what to say, I reflected on my years at Kings Point.

I arrived on the last day of indoctrination, having been the last one admitted from the waitlist that year, and I didn't get off to a great start. Suffice it to say I was not a model student. I had more than my share of demerits, and I failed calculus (not with a D but with an F!). I was a "2.0 and go" guy that year. But, despite the academics, I loved the place. I loved the camaraderie. I loved sea year. I loved colors on a clear, crisp morning. And I even loved preparing for inspections with my classmates.

Sometime in the second year, things clicked for me, and I sped ahead. I wasn't in the running for valedictorian (mostly because of the aforementioned calculus experience), but by graduation, I had good grades, I was a company commander, and I had solid career prospects.

From teetering on the edge to graduating (respectably, if not with honors), I had made a big move. It can be done! That is the lesson for those who have been or will be "on the edge." Remember that when you hear about the success, achievements, and recognition of those around you who appear to have the world on a string, think about what you are not hearing. Think about the "I almost didn't get in" stories. Or think about the family and financial challenges, the near misses, the personal tragedies, and the things in life you never expect, deserve or anticipate. How we confront those issues is what defines us.

As a person, as a classmate, as a partner, as a father or mother, as a spouse, and as a leader—don't give up. Just do the next right thing, and success and recognition will come about in due course.

A great leader doesn't need to know how to perform every role, but they make sure to hire the best of the best for every discipline.

#### Do you remember your first leadership role? How has your view of leadership evolved over time?

Early in my career, I ran a small business.

"Business" may be an overstatement—it was a restaurant/bar. I learned more from that experience, the business itself, than I ever learned in business school. I had

to raise capital and learn to distinguish which investors I wanted to partner with (believe it or not, some investors can be so burdensome that you just don't want their money—I never learned that lesson in school). I had to set and manage a budget, monitor inventory, track and collect receivables, deal with patrons, and manage and motivate a team of employees with diverse backgrounds, skill sets, and different points of view. I dealt with bankers, lawyers, regulations, local political officials, and law enforcement. I realized the importance of hiring the best talent and trusting them to do their jobs while also striking an appropriate balance between being fair and respectful and being decisive when a change needs to be made. You can't always be the nice guy.

So how have I evolved? I can now draw on my experience in each of these areas and better assess how they interact and what the most likely outcome will be in a dynamic world. I can make decisions faster with the full knowledge that I may be wrong, but I have used my best tools and those of my partners to move on to the next issue.



Robert Burke

*continued on the next page...*

At The Helm: Robert Burke, continued...

The biggest thing I have learned (which is still a work in progress) is acceptance—acceptance of my ability as a human to control every outcome. Still, I have also learned that I can only be at peace with this “acceptance” if I have done my absolute best to stack the odds in my favor. Otherwise, it’s just a fancy excuse!

**What advice would you give someone who is beginning a career in the maritime industry? What do you seek in a candidate?**

Most of us finish college with a specific destination or goal in mind. I would encourage the next generation of maritime professionals to be open-minded and embrace every opportunity to learn about as many industry aspects as possible before settling on a specific path. Sample, learn, and (most of all) listen. Don’t just wait to talk. Given a choice to join a smaller operation vs. a larger one, consider that a smaller operation at the beginning of a career might afford more opportunities for greater exposure to a wide range of disciplines. When you start out, everyone can teach you something, no matter their role. As you grow and develop, surround yourself with smart people, or, as I like to say, “get in the right study group.” A great leader doesn’t need to know how to perform every role, but they make sure to hire the best of the best for every discipline.

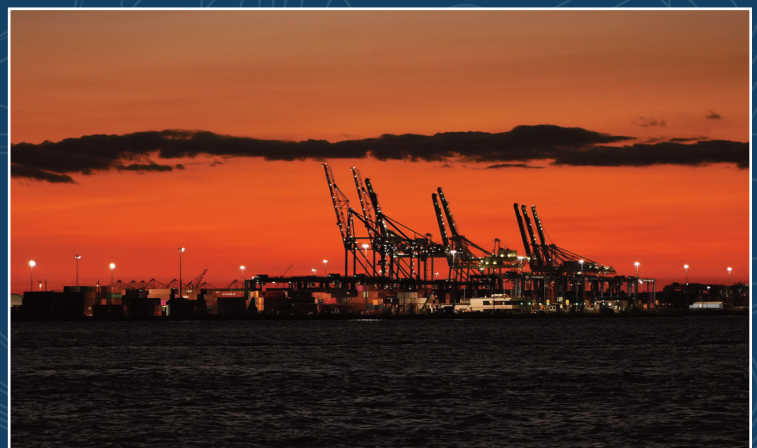
**What inspires you?**

Speaking only to the inspiration of business (because the inspiration of family and relationships have no equal), success inspires me. The definition of success can vary, but for me, success means having a nice home and car, paying your bills, supporting yourself and your family comfortably, and taking a nice vacation every year. Once you have reached that plateau, what motivates anybody to come to work every day? For me, it’s the competition and the challenge—I want to win! I still want to learn something every day. I am inspired when I succeed and see people on my team working together to succeed. Watching a team of smart, motivated people working together to achieve a common goal is exciting and rewarding. I guess, from that perspective, even when we lose, it’s inspiring. So it is the challenge, the human process, the *esprit de corps* that really gets me going. I loved team sports when I was younger, and it’s the same feeling. But winning is still better: back in the day, they didn’t hand out trophies to the losing teams.

# Pilot Boat Cruise

09-08-22

In September, The Seamen's Church Institute hosted a gathering for shipping industry leaders on the Pilot Boat New York for a three-hour cruise in New York Harbor. After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, this year's event was made possible thanks to the Sandy Hook Pilots Association. For more images from this wonderful evening, visit [seamenschurch.org/nypb2022](http://seamenschurch.org/nypb2022).







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#### OUR MISSION

The Seamen's Church Institute is the largest, most comprehensive mariners' service agency in North America. Through our Center for Maritime Education, Center for Mariner Advocacy, Port Newark International Seafarers' Center, and Ministry on the River, SCI advocates for the personal, professional, and spiritual well-being of mariners and seafarers around the world.