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THE LOOKOUT

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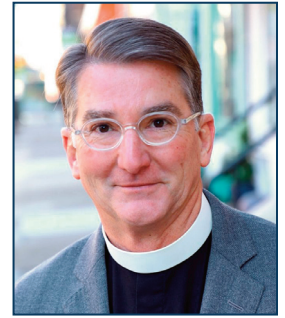
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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



As this edition of The Lookout arrives in your physical mailbox or electronic inbox, the country of Ukraine is fending off an invasion by Russia that has left thousands dead, tens of thousands wounded, and millions of Ukrainians displaced and living as refugees. More specific to the Seamen's Church Institute's mission, the disruption to the mariner community we serve has also been palpable. The invasion caused more than 100 vessels and 1,000 seafarers in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea to be stranded, many in the port city of Mariupol, for weeks. These seafarers have endured the stress and dread over friends and family back home, and the utter disruption of the life and privileges they once knew. At the same time, the Omicron BA.2 variant has meant that COVID-19 remains a serious concern for international seafarers and U.S. domestic mariners as it has intensified labor challenges, which in turn negatively impact safety, shore leave opportunities, mental health, and suicide rates. Current events are exacerbating the longtime challenges to overall mariner wellness, and this has become a growing area of mission for SCI.

And yet, SCI is no stranger to difficult times and conflict. In this issue of The Lookout, you will discover how SCI was a pioneer in addressing mariner physical and mental health dating to the 1920s. We also report on the state of Ukrainian seafarers impacted by the war today. Of course, SCI continues its crucial mission supporting all mariners, including new training models at our Center for Maritime Education, as well as through an expanding scope of e-learning modules, while our chaplains in the ports and on the rivers work to address the immediate needs of mariners on a daily basis. We've recently welcomed a few new faces to SCI, some of whom are profiled herein. Finally, in our At the Helm feature story, we hear from Clark Todd, President and CEO of Blessey Marine.

As always, The Lookout serves as a snapshot of our mission in action. Promoting the safety, dignity, and an improved working environment for all mariners is a 24/7 commitment and one that we have maintained for nearly 200 years. That the Seamen's Church Institute can respond effectively to critical needs, even in times of great crisis, is because of you. Thank you for your support, and for making SCI and the world's mariners a priority in your own life.

The world depends on mariners. Mariners depend on SCI. And SCI depends on you.

Most faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark'.

The Reverend Mark S. Nestelhatt
President and Executive Director

Supporting Ukrainian Seafarers in Troubled Times

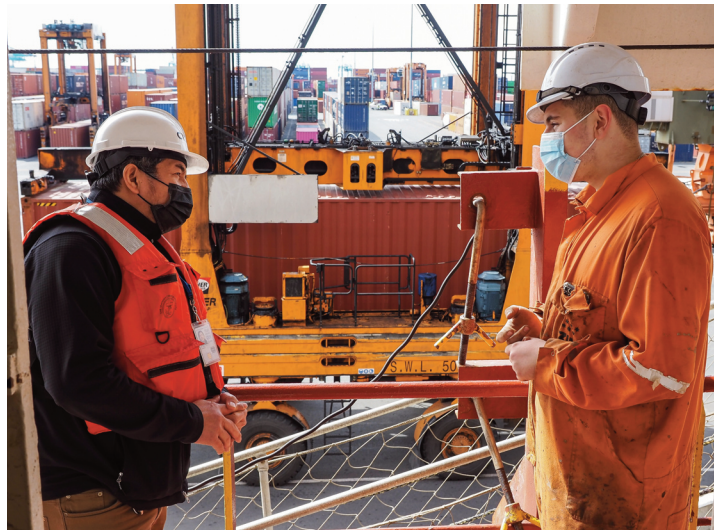
Philip C. Schifflin, Jr., Esq.
Director, Center for Mariner Advocacy

The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine reminded the world about the true brutality of war, upended the lives of the Ukrainian people, and changed the geopolitical dynamics of Europe—and potentially the world—in ways still to be determined. While we all wait to see how this terrible conflict plays out, and Ukraine struggles to survive as a country, another less visible conflict is occurring on vessels around the globe.

Ukrainian seafarers currently on ships are faced with the difficult decision of how to respond to this crisis. Do they seek to return to Ukraine at the earliest opportunity to pick up arms in defense of their country? Do they try to depart as soon as possible to meet up with their families who have fled Ukraine as war time refugees? Do they remain working on their ship, maybe even extending their current contract, to wait and see what happens? Do they seek asylum or refugee status in another country in order to avoid potential persecution if they return home?

While contemplating these choices, Ukrainian seafarers also face significant challenges as they work aboard their ships. Due to the conflict, our government agencies—particularly Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Naturalization Services—view Ukrainian seafarers as being at a heightened risk of absconding or deserting their vessels while in U.S. Ports. To mitigate the perceived risk, officials frequently deny them shore leave. Additionally, the banking system in Ukraine has been disrupted by the war, making it challenging for ship operators to pay their Ukrainian crewmembers. Even when the seafarers are paid, it is often very difficult to get funds back to their families. Finally, communication with certain parts of Ukraine is challenging, making it hard for Ukrainian crews to check in on their families. The combination of these difficulties creates additional mental stress and hardship for Ukrainian seafarers already bearing the worries of a war-torn homeland.

SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy (CMA) has been broadly engaged in supporting Ukrainian seafarers since the invasion started. One aspect is our collaboration with other seafarer welfare organizations through the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA) and the International Christian



SCI Chaplain James Kollin visiting a Ukrainian seafarer in Port Newark

Maritime Association (ICMA). Similarly, SCI has been working with industry organizations like the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) to assist Ukrainian seafarers. This partnership approach has resulted in a host of initiatives coming to fruition in short order. For example: creating a new emergency relief fund to provide financial support to Ukrainian seafarers; distributing free SIM cards to facilitate their communications with family back home; establishing new ways to pay Ukrainian seafarers as the Ukrainian banking system faces severe challenges; assisting with repatriation for those Ukrainian seafarers who seek to return home or to a nearby country. As each challenge arises, our collaborative of seafarer welfare groups comes together, and we seek out solutions.

On a more definitive level, SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy (CMA) has been actively participating in International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) meetings that directly address the maritime challenges of the Ukrainian crisis, helping to ensure seafarer issues are brought forward and considered. For our part, CMA has been providing advice to Ukrainian seafarers and port chaplains regarding the U.S. asylum and refugee processes. We have also established contact with a network of immigration attorneys who are willing to provide pro bono legal assistance to Ukrainian seafarers when required. Additionally, CMA has provided guidance on how best to support shore leave requests with local U.S. government officials. In these trying times, CMA stands ready to assist and advocate for Ukrainian seafarers in need, and to collaborate with other organizations also seeking to help them.

Learn More:

Scan here to learn more about SCI's
Center for Mariner Advocacy or visit
seamenschurch.org/cma



SCI's History of Support in Wartime

Stefan Dreisbach-Williams
Archivist

At the outbreak of the First World War, SCI's centralized services at 25 South Street hosted seafarers from all sides of the conflict, including a significant number of German and British seafarers who lived alongside inland mariners from canals, rivers, and (in winter) the Great Lakes. Many British seafarers left the sea to serve in the army. British apprentice boys, too young to carry a gun, worked on ships that delivered horses to Brest to feed the troops, while their older brothers fought in the trenches. German seafarers, meanwhile, struggled to find work as German ships were held in port, seafarer unemployment climbed (as demand for passenger service plummeted), and anti-German sentiment rose. SCI worked hard to serve and engage with seafarers of both sides, with special German entertainments some nights, while many other events capped with God Save the Queen or an American anthem.

At right, we see the auditorium in the 1910s full of mariners and seafarers from around the world with women and children (likely including canal boat families) in the balcony.



At The Port: SCI Chaplains engage with Ukrainian Seafarers

Cora DiDomenico, M. Div.
Chaplain

As the war in Ukraine continues, the stress and toll on Ukrainian seafarers is apparent. Here are a few notes on recent conversations I've had at Port Newark.

On the morning of February 24, 2022, I received a message from a 3rd Officer of a bulk orange juice vessel that was recently in port. He had arrived home to Ukraine one day prior and reported bombing in his city beginning around 5:00 a.m. local time. He said he was preparing travel for his wife and five-month-old baby. He would stay to fight.

Later that morning, I met with a captain and chief officer on board a car carrier. On top of their duties, both had been working tirelessly with their companies to arrange van travel for their families to get them to safety in neighboring countries. The captain's family was headed to Bulgaria and the chief's family to Moldova.

In March, the 3rd Engineer on a small container ship was distraught over the death of his brother in occupied Kherson. Shortly after his brother died in the war, his wife was beaten by opposing forces in front of their two children. He contemplated leaving the vessel but feared he would be unable to get back into his city and find his family.



SCI Chaplain Cora DiDomenico visits with a Ukrainian seafarer in Port Newark

In early April, I met a chief engineer from Mariupol who shared that he had not communicated with his family since the first week of March. Tears welled in his eyes.

Prior to this conflict, I had never counseled someone in a war. Every day I'm met with a new story of immense suffering and uncertainty. And yet, I'm also met with an incredible resilience. Upon leaving these conversations, I'm almost always told, "We have to win. There is no other choice." There are no winners in war. But I would be lying if I said I wasn't compelled by the strength of Ukrainian seafarers on a daily basis.



From the archives: SCI doctors on call and using the radio station KDKF in the 1920s

SCI and the Birth of Telemedicine

By Stefan Dreisbach-Williams and John Thayer

The Seamen's Church Institute has long been an early adopter of innovation, constantly adjusting to seafarers' changing needs. One notable example that SCI developed on its own proved so important that it was quickly adopted by the federal government and copied by others around the world. This is the story of how SCI created the world's first telemedicine service. SCI spent its first 79 years bringing religious services closer to mariners through floating churches and reading rooms along the waterfront of lower Manhattan. These served as outposts for temperance campaigns and efforts to combat coercive hiring practices.

By the end of the 19th century, SCI had added education to its services. The notion that civilians should receive formal basic medical training had been accepted broadly in the 1870s, and SCI aggressively sought to teach first aid to sailors beginning in 1910. The goal was to ensure that all officers had enough training to provide on-the-spot care and assist a ship's doctor. SCI ultimately succeeded in its efforts to ensure that all ships had a medical chest available. Getting doctors

aboard cargo ships was a harder sell. In 1921, more than 75% of ships at sea had no doctor on board, but more than 80% did have radios.

In 1913, SCI centralized its operations in a 13-story mariner services headquarters at 25 South Street on Coenties Slip, where canal boats and steamers from inland waterways moored beside ocean-going freighters just a few blocks from the Staten Island Ferry. The South Street location offered mariners cheap rooms and a cafeteria, employment services, tailor and barber shops, a chapel, a soda fountain, and more.

During WWI the education programs housed in the top floors at 25 South Street expanded significantly with the increased need for seafarers as they were called into the war effort. SCI's navigation school added such topics as knot tying, navigation, lifeboat handling, and semaphore to the first aid training already provided. Captain Robert Huntington, Principal of SCI's Navigation, Marine Engineering, and Radio School, is credited with the idea of connecting ships at sea with doctors on land via radio.

Radio telegraphy was an attractive addition to SCI's education offerings but required substantial financing to acquire the necessary equipment and power the signal. A gift of \$5,000 from steel magnate Henry A. Laughlin fitted out a small room in 25 South Street's tower with all that was required to produce a radio telegraphic signal and receive transmissions.

In 1920, SCI launched what arguably remains to this day its most innovative and influential program: a radio service that connected doctors on land to ships at sea. This service was so successful that it was soon adopted by the federal government in cooperation with the Radio Corporation of America, and similar operations sprang up around the world. Maritime Telemedical Assistance Services (TMAS) throughout Europe and North America trace their roots to this project.

Radiotelegraphy, which transmits beep tones rather than articulated sounds or speech, was first demonstrated in 1901. During the following two decades, radio exploded in application. The Wireless Ship Act of 1910 required all ships carrying more than 50 passengers more than 200 miles off the coast to carry radio equipment with a range of one-hundred miles. The Radio Act of 1912 required all seafaring vessels to maintain a 24-hour radio watch. Under these circumstances, SCI's radio medical services seem both innovative and inevitable.

Henry A. Laughlin's check for SCI's radio equipment, viewable on a lantern slide in SCI's archives, has a date of December 1920 but SCI applied for a radio license when the U.S. government initially made them available. The first radio station license in America was issued on October 27, 1920. One week later, SCI received license no. 176. The service was assigned the call letters KDKF, and this call sign was given priority over every other call except SOS. If a ship couldn't reach KDKF directly it could reach out to a ship located closer to New York in case that ship had a doctor on board. If it didn't, it could pass the message on to additional ships as necessary until a chain of radio operators had connected the ship in need of medical attention to either a doctor on board another ship or the doctor on call through KDKF. SCI provided the service free to ships regardless of nationality.

Initially KDKF's license only allowed it to operate from nine to five, which is when SCI's doctor was on duty in the clinic. In short order, the Hudson Street Hospital (located about 1.3 miles north of 25 South Street) offered to have a doctor available to SCI by phone at any hour, and SCI's license was expanded to 24 hours of operation in April 1921 with service beginning in May. By 1922 KDKF radio operators were contacting doctors at the Public Health Service Hospital No. 70 on the other side of the harbor at Staten Island for responses to medical and surgical requests.

KDKF's success relied not only on connecting doctors with ships' crews, but also requiring those crews to have training to properly implement that advice. SCI required the young officers enrolled at its Navigation and Marine Engineering School to learn how to care for the sick and wounded before receiving their certificate.

SCI augmented the radio service with its Manual on Ship Sanitation and First-Aid for Merchant Seamen, first published in 1922, to provide much-needed medical resources for merchant ships. Devoted to care of the ship and self, SCI's Manual served "to meet one of the greatest humanitarian needs on board our Merchant Vessels" with a quick reference for medical and surgical conditions risked at sea as well as directions for disease treatment.

KDKF contributed to SCI's education work in other ways, as the radio equipment gave sailors the opportunity to learn radio operation; however, SCI's involvement with radio medicine was short-lived. By 1922, the Radio Corporation of America had offered to take over and expand the service, coordinating its operation with the U.S. government. The signal moved from 25 South Street to a tower at Bush Terminal in Brooklyn, and by March 1922 KDKF was offline. By 1923, as reports reached 25 South Street of new radio telemedical services in Norway and Sweden, SCI declared its intention to preserve the KDKF radio equipment, which was no longer in use.

25 South Street was demolished in 1967, and it is unknown what became of that equipment, but radio medicine remains a vital service to ships at sea. Today's Maritime Telemedical Assistance Service organizations continue the work started with KDKF.

In late 2020, the Centro Internazionale Medico (International Center of Medical Radiocommunications) hosted a virtual roundtable commemorating "100 Years of Radio/Tele Medical Assistance at Sea," with presentations on the modern applications that trace their roots to KDKF. These applications use all the current groundbreaking technologies with digital databases accessible via satellite to reduce the isolation that can be a risk to seafarers.

In the intervening century, SCI has built on its success in improving medical conditions at sea by addressing mental health concerns unique to mariners. SCI has led the effort to understand the effects of piracy on seafarers, publishing "Guidelines on Post-Piracy Care for Seafarers." The Institute regularly conducted shore leave studies in order to survey seafarers' access to resources and services off ship in U.S. ports, and has most recently met the challenges posed by COVID-19-related restrictions to mobility in port. Maritime ministry organizations on an international level have run information needs assessment studies to gauge seafarers' priorities in combating the effects of isolation at sea through communication technologies.

The isolation that defines seafaring life became a part of everyday life ashore during the pandemic, and many of us now have first-hand experience with telemedicine. SCI's early health and wellness initiatives, marked by the innovative extension of services to the high seas through emerging radio technologies more than a century ago, continue to the present day.

SCI and the Birth of Telemedicine

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Welcome to the River

Onboarding SCI's New Chaplain, The Reverend David Shirk

In a simple ceremony on February 28, 2022, at SCI's Center for Maritime Education in Paducah, Kentucky, the Reverend Kempton Baldrige passed the torch of chaplaincy to the Reverend David Shirk as SCI's new chaplain serving the Upper Mississippi and the Ohio River Valley. Chaplain Baldrige, now retired, offered Chaplain Shirk three gifts: mementos to serve as reminders of the challenging job ahead, guiding and supporting mariners.



First was a floating two-way/weather radio to symbolize the importance of communication and to be always aware of the "storms" ahead in life. The second was a road atlas to assist in finding his way. And third, a shofar, a ram's horn used in Jewish religious ceremonies that, when sounded, awakens the soul to its spiritual calling.

With Chaplain Tom Rhoades presiding over the ceremony (and cooking—he made gumbo!), a small group, including David's wife Bonny, came together in Paducah as well as via Zoom to mark this significant occasion. Chaplain Shirk, however, had already hit the ground running. On his first day, a week before his onboarding ceremony, he went out with Chaplain Baldrige to provide grief counseling on board a vessel that had lost a mariner the day before.

Stationed and now residing in Paducah with his family, Chaplain Shirk has already covered many miles since his arrival, traveling with Chaplain Rhoades to various locations from Louisville to Houston, Texas, stopping in to visit company leaders, river mariners, and SCI chaplain associates. "David has an easy-going nature," notes Chaplain Rhoades. "He has common-sense, emotional intelligence, and is a comfort to others. His welcoming spirit will do him well out on the river."

Remarks from Chaplain David Shirk

It is truly an honor to have been selected to serve as a chaplain for the Seamen's Church Institute (SCI). From the first time I saw the job description and list of qualifications on the Navy Chief of



Right: Chaplain David Shirk meeting with deckhand trainees at Ingram Marine's Houston Fleeting Service in Channelview, TX.

On the Cover: Chaplain Shirk talking with Captain William West aboard Ingram's M/V Kendall Alyse at the Houston Fleeting Service in Channelview.

Chaplains' Facebook page, I knew it was a perfect fit. As a retired Navy Chaplain, especially having served with the Coast Guard, all the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes of critical incident stress management, suicide intervention, and crisis response transferred perfectly. And the thought of serving mariners again was especially meaningful for me. I am so proud to be a part of the mission of training and serving our mariners, whether in Newark Harbor or all along our nation's rivers.

Growing up in the Midwest, it was not unusual to see boats pushing barges along the river, but I never realized the skill, support, and logistics it took to make the mission happen. I look forward to building on the amazing work and legacy of my predecessor, Chaplain Kempton Baldrige, and working with our Senior Chaplain, Tom Rhoades. I am also excited about developing relationships with our amazing chaplain associates and the river mariners who fulfill this impressive and demanding occupation every day. As they serve this great nation's thriving economy, I know serving them will bring the highest of rewards. I am humbled to be part of SCI and such a noble calling.

Biographical Notes

- The Reverend David Shirk joins the Seamen's Church Institute as Ministry on the River (MOR) Chaplain for the Upper Mississippi & Ohio River Region.
- Chaplain Shirk enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served as a cryptologist. Using the GI Bill, he earned his B.A. degree, and later an M.Div. degree, and joined the U.S. Navy's Chaplain Corps serving for 28 years with the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard.
- David completed his military service as Supervisory Chaplain (senior chaplain) for U.S. Coast Guard District One in Boston and retired at the rank of Commander.
- David has extensive training and experience in crisis intervention, family and marriage counseling, PTSD, substance abuse response, professional teaching, curriculum development, public speaking, and executive advisement.

Evan Brown joins SCI-HQ as Communications Director

The Seamen's Church Institute welcomed Evan Brown to the team in March 2022. Previously, he was the Communications Director for six years at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, leading strategic initiatives and revitalizing tactical channels for the historic temple. Before Temple Emanu-El, Evan led marketing and communications efforts for 11 years within various NYC independent schools.

While new to the maritime industry, Evan does boast a familial connection through his grandfather, who was a laker captaining the *Texaco Brave* in the 1960s and 1970s on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. He can recall visiting his grandfather during the summer months when the ship was docked in the Cherry Street slips of Toronto Harbour.



Evan currently lives in Queens with his wife and two sons, ages 11 and 13. We are glad to have him on the SCI team!



Associated Federal Pilots of Louisiana and mariners from Martin Marine had a unique opportunity to train together on the simulators at Houston's Center for Maritime Education.

Integrated Simulator Training

Bringing Pilots and Inland Tug & Barge Masters Together

Capt. Stephen Polk | *Director, Center for Maritime Education*

Last April, the Seamen’s Church Institute’s Center for Maritime Education in Houston, with assistance from Captain Jay Rivera of Riben Marine, took advantage of a unique opportunity to merge classes: Advanced Pilothouse Management (APM) Course for Martin Marine and Bridge Resource Management for Pilots (BRM-P) Class. It is common for ship crews, pilots, and harbor tug masters to train together, but extremely rare for ship pilots to conduct coordinated training with inland tug and barge mariners because of logistical and scheduling difficulties. This is why we jumped at the chance to offer integrated simulator training, because it offers a complexity of challenges to mariners that is consistent and realistic to actual scenarios, but assets are never put at risk. Perhaps best of all, pilots and tug masters can step out of the simulators and into the classroom to discuss what they’ve learned, and gain better understanding of the issues the “other vessel” faces.

Bringing together Associated Federal Pilots of Louisiana and mariners from Martin Marine, April’s integrated training utilized CME Houston’s four tug bridges and ship bridge simulators to run through risk management, rules of the road, use of resources, situational awareness, and emergencies. Reception to this unique integrated learning was positive:

“SCI instructors were able to merge the two class schedules and provide time for participants to share perspectives and challenges they face on the job. Getting the opportunity to participate in integrated simulations with inland vessels was a first for me.”

Capt. Chris Brown, Pilot – *Associated Federal Pilots of Louisiana*

“I learned a lot from the simulations—it was interesting to

see what the ships must deal with in emergency situations. It was also great to be able to debrief in the same room and communicate with each other.”

Capt. Brad Rogers, *Martin Marine*

Bringing together mariners who operate in the same waterways and interact regularly is a “win/win” says CME Director, Captain Stephen Polk. He notes: “Often, the ship pilots do not know what it is like to operate a towboat with a heavy tow, and often towboat and barge captains do not know about ship operations—engines, fuel issues, and the challenges they face (bank effect, squat, vessel to vessel interaction).” Taking classes together allows both groups to ask questions of each other that they don’t get the chance to ask when underway.

For CME, this isn’t a “one-and-done” scenario, according to Director Polk. “In my experience this kind of training hasn’t been done before, but it’s clear that integrated simulator work adds value and benefit for mariners and their companies, and we are now evaluating future opportunities to merge classes as much as possible from now on, providing that course objectives align.” He continued: “SCI and the CME team is honored to do this work and we look forward to future events where it will be possible to maximize learning while mariners are at our facilities.”

Learn More:

Scan here to learn more about SCI’s Center for Maritime Education or visit seamenschurch.org/cme





Asynchronous Classroom

Discussing the Advantages of Maritime e-learning with Jonathan Burson

Evan Brown | *Director, Communications*

With giant screens, CGI animation, and sleek pilot-house classrooms, the cameras always point toward the simulators when featuring SCI's Center for Maritime Education. Of course, the tech on-site in Paducah and Houston is state-of-the-art and immersive, serving a critical need within the inland maritime community. But, it is important to remember that the CME stands on two legs. Although it may be a little less flashy, our e-learning component is also cutting edge and every bit as integral to the mariners, clients, and industry we serve.

For SCI, e-learning isn't new. According to e-learning Business Relations Manager Jonathan Burson, SCI started with online/digital learning modules around ten years ago. But, as Coast Guard Subchapter M compliance regulations came to the fore in 2017, the advantages of e-learning became even more apparent. "Whereas simulators are for wheelhouse skills development, e-learning is about compliance," Burson noted. "With regulatory training requirements and the growing need for company-specific training, the need to consolidate an online library of learning modules, build capability to quickly create that training, and deliver it to mariners and clients was increasingly essential for the industry." With e-learning having the advantage of being asynchronous, the required instruction for mariners could be engaged easily anytime, anywhere, and on any device.

Beyond convenience and ease of use, e-learning also improves efficiency and accountability. Burson recalled a time before SCI, at Kirby, where an audit of synchronous compliance training (where instructors meet mariners at an appointed place and time) revealed that despite best efforts, as many as 35% were not receiving the necessary instruction. "On the other hand," he said, "e-learning quickly pushed us over 90% completion rates. We also had a record of who had completed the required training and who hadn't, allowing us to focus our efforts to achieve 100% completion." Moreover, SCI's learning management system (LMS) has been developed to offer remediation, provide testing, and guide mariners back to content to reinforce essential learning when necessary.

Burson, in collaboration with CME Director Capt. Stephen Polk and his team, create e-learning experiences with guidance from industry professionals—always designing content with the client's goals in mind. And while there are learning modules that are standard or "off-the-shelf," Burson often finds they are creating coursework quickly to meet specific needs. "Recently, ARTCO asked us for five off-the-shelf courses with modifications, plus updates to four partially developed courses they had on file. From the graphics, PowerPoint, and copy they provided, we added question mitigation, updated script, narration, remediation, and some graphic animation, and were able to turn around

“There’s always a lot going on with learning, but we’ve accomplished much, and it’s been so good to see how we’ve grown and how we are helping the industry at large.”

their request in two-and-a-half weeks,” Burson said. “While we can start from scratch, we’re often called by companies to jump into the development process at any point.” To this, he credits the expertise of the CME e-learning team being able to create courses, engagements, and in-house graphics, to help keep costs down but value and responsiveness high.

While simulator training gets more life-like, experiential, and immersive, e-learning (according to Burson) has clear dividends for the near future. “E-learning collects input, and input means data.” So, as SCI expands its work with feasibility studies, using the LMS to collect input from engineers and mariners will build our database, generating accurate reporting. Additionally, Burson feels that industry-wide demand for competency assurance is growing: data collected from the breadth of our e-learning engagement will help create reliable occupational standards for maritime companies, helping them identify risk within their operation. He also notes the potential of blended learning or distance learning, where at some point, SCI might provide simulation experiences to mariners remotely, furthering CME’s capability to identify and mitigate operational risks.

For Burson, a systems development professional with comprehensive experience within the inland marine industry, guiding the CME’s e-learning program has been a remarkable experience. “It’s been a blur,” he said. “I have never worked as hard at a job, but I have never had as much fun, either.” He points out that SCI’s e-learning, to date, has served 40 client companies and over 9,500 mariners. “There’s always a lot going on with learning, but we’ve accomplished much, and it’s been so good to see how we’ve grown and how we are helping the industry at large.”

Learn More:

Scan here for SCI’s complete listing of customizable e-learning solutions and courses or visit seamenschurch.org/elearning



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RIVER BELL AWARDS LUNCHEON

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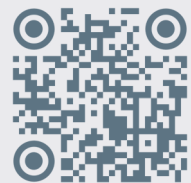
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At The Helm | Conversations with Maritime Industry Leaders

Clark Todd

President & CEO
Blessey Marine

Who were some important mentors or role models for you?

When I think of role models in my professional career, I have several. Of course, my father is my ultimate role model. As a private business owner, he taught me at a very young age that working hard and showing respect is a key component to professional success. I was fortunate to watch him build a business over several decades, and saw firsthand the ups and downs of being a private business owner. Having a front row seat such as I did was a special and informative experience. Another vital role model for me has been my father-in-law Walter Blessey, who happens to be my boss of 20-plus years! I am incredibly grateful for his tutelage as I learned the ropes of the maritime transportation business. From day one he taught me that success in the organization was not based on profits, but rather built on the relationships we have with our employees, our customers, and our vendors. From him I learned that we hire for character and we can ultimately teach the job. It is our people who are the biggest assets to our company.

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

I absolutely remember my first leadership role. I can remember being quite anxious but I had an assuredness instilled in me from my career as a baseball player. According to my mother, I was never lacking in confidence! Obviously, that has carried over into my professional career. My view of leadership has changed dramatically over the years and along the way I've learned a lot—what to do and what not to do—by watching others and looking to my mentors for guidance and feedback. I can honestly say that I am a much better listener today than I was 20 years ago.

What is your view on the impact of organizational culture in individual and company performance?

Our culture is everything to us here at Blessey Marine. We work very hard to ensure that our employees feel like family. It takes a lot of time, energy, and resources to accomplish that. But there is no greater asset to our organization than our employees and the relationship I have with them.

“...there is no greater asset in our organization than our employees and the relationship I have with them.”

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

The best advice I can give to anyone entering the maritime industry is to start your career on the water. I was fortunate to spend nine months working as a deckhand on our vessels. There I learned the true challenges of the job and gained an incredible appreciation for our mariners and the work that they do every day. Today, our priority is to hire for character and teach on the job. We look for potential employees who are collaborators and who want to build lasting relationships with their coworkers. It's important that each of our team members embrace the high ethical and moral standards we have at our company.

What is the role of innovation in your work?

Thanks to the recent improvements in technology over the last ten years, our industry has seen incredible innovation and advancement. While I believe we still have a long way to go, I look to our team members to stay at the forefront of the latest technology. The generation of employees we are hiring today are the most technologically savvy we have had and I will continue to look to them to help us improve processes so that we remain a leader in our industry.

What inspires you?

First and foremost, I'm inspired by my family. My wife and three children motivate me to be the best I can be. I'm also incredibly honored to work with more than 750 employees at Blessey Marine. I admire and appreciate the work ethic and the commitment they display every day. I am always conscious that the decisions I make affect more than 3,500 of our extended Blessey family members. The fact that I can help the company continue to grow in a socially connected and responsible way drives me to work as hard as I can while being fully engaged every step of the way.

2022 Maritime Training Benefit Luncheon

Houston, Texas

The Seamen’s Church Institute hosted Gulf and inland maritime leaders for the Maritime Training Benefit Luncheon in Houston on April 28, 2022. The luncheon, returning after a two-year pause due to Covid-19 and Hurricane Ida, saw more than 450 in attendance gathering in support and recognition of SCI’s Center for Maritime Education and pastoral mission to mariners.

This year’s MTBL honored Walter E. Blessey, Jr., Chairman of Blessey Marine, with the Lifetime Achievement Award and

featured reflections by Captain Serafin Madrigal (Blessey Marine), Steve Golding (Chairman, Golding Barge Line), David Lane (VP Marketing, Canal Barge Company), Christian O’Neil (President, Kirby Marine Transportation) and Walter’s son-in-law Clark Todd (President and CEO, Blessey Marine).

The event was opened by SCI President and Executive Director Mark Nestlehatt, with a blessing by Senior Chaplain Thomas Rhoades and brief remarks by Center for Maritime Education Director Captain Stephen Polk.



Above (from left): SCI Board of Trustees Chair Bruce G. Paulsen, Esq., SCI President & Executive Director The Reverend Mark Nestlehatt, Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Walter E. Blessey, Jr., and Blessey Marine Services President & CEO Clark Todd.



Top Right: Steve Golding—Chairman, Golding Barge Line.

Above: Over 450 guests in attendance for the 2022 Maritime Benefit Training Luncheon in Houston.

Left: Walter E. Blessey, Jr. and family.



Above: Christian O’Neil—President, Kirby Marine Transportation, and David Lane—VP Marketing, Canal Barge Company.



Right: Captain Serafin Madrigal—Blessey Marine





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OUR MISSION

The Seamen's Church Institute advocates for the personal, professional, and spiritual well-being of merchant mariners around the world. Through our Center for Maritime Education, Center for Mariner Advocacy, Port Newark International Seafarers' Center, and Ministry on the River, SCI promotes safety, dignity, and improved working and living

conditions for the men and women serving in the maritime workplace. Founded in 1834 and affiliated with the Episcopal Church, though nondenominational in terms of its trustees, staff, and service to mariners, the Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey (SCI) is the largest, most comprehensive mariners' service agency in North America.