



## BELIEF ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Name:** Rev Ian Porter

**Date:** 21 February 2011

**Place:** Sussex St, Sydney

**Interviewer:** Sue Andersen

### TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SA:** This is Sue Anderson interviewing Reverend Ian Porter at the Mission to Seafarers in Sussex Street, Sydney on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2011 for the City of Sydney's Oral History Project, Belief.

Thanks, Ian, for doing the interview with me this morning. I'm wondering whether we could first begin by you saying your full name and when and where you were born?

**IP:** O.K. My full name's Ian \_\_\_\_\_ Porter. I was born \_\_\_\_\_ up in the Northern Tablelands on \_\_\_\_\_ 1956.

**SA:** Right, so you grew up in the country?

**IP:** Only until I was about five. My father was a teacher and when I was five we moved down to Sydney where my parents had come from and I grew up at Lindfield and mum's still in the family home there, so she's been there for fifty years now.

**SA: Right.**

IP: So I grew up at Lindfield.

**SA: And you did your schooling then in Lindfield?**

IP: Yes, I went to Lindfield Public School and I then went to Chatswood High School and after leaving school I did a bit of engineering but that really wasn't, you know, my scene. A little while after that I became a Christian and then went to Moore Theological College from 1978 for four years.

**SA: O.K, so being a minister wasn't something that you'd always thought about?**

IP: Oh, no. No, I wanted to be a racing driver where I'd design, build and race cars; that was what I wanted to do.

**SA: Right.**

IP: It didn't really happen.

**SA: Why was that?**

1.55 IP: I just loved motor racing, I really enjoyed it. I liked the engineering side of things and like Jack Brabham, you know, designed and built his own cars and then drove them and won with them and so that was something that I was really interested in and so any form of like engineering; you know, I was buying books on racing car design and all this sort of thing. But it was sort of really impractical or one could say that my yearning for it wasn't strong enough, probably, to make the sacrifices at the time and it would have been disheartening then to have perhaps found out that I wasn't good enough. But on the other hand I've got the thing of knowing what might have been, I don't know, but I still enjoy motor racing or, you know, interested in it.

**SA: You do?**

IP: Oh, yes, I still like – I'm reading books on it now and I really enjoy reading books on motor racing, the history of it and everything like that and, yes, it's still something that I really like.

**SA: So you said before that you became a Christian. You were not?**

IP: No. I grew up in a nominal Anglican home or Church of England as it was then and we went to Sunday school and things like that and I suppose like a lot of people you might think, well, you know, "God exists and Jesus was someone" but it tends to be a little bit of a gulf between, you know, sort of out there and affecting your daily life but it

was actually to do with motor racing that got me thinking because when I was doing engineering we used to have lectures up at Gore Hill Tech, just near where the ABC was and I'd have to walk up past Gore Hill Cemetery and I'd often a bit early and just see these forlorn graves and obviously, you know, you'd see things like a husband and wife next to each other and, you know, they lived often long lives but the graves were overgrown and you think, well, you know "What did their life count for?"

4.16 And so I just started, I suppose, thinking more about what things are about – I was nineteen or so at that time and often you start asking those sorts of questions – and I started to think, well – some friends of mine invited me to go to a [phone rings – break in recording] - - -

**SA: Yes, you were saying that you were walking past these graves - - -**

IP: Yes.

**SA: - - - and you just began thinking about - - -**

IP: Yes. I mean, I was also playing rugby at the time and the usual thing with rugby was – although I enjoyed that – you sort of go to the pub afterwards and that struck me as being rather futile and so I suppose there was a sense of looking to think "Well, what's life about?" And so friends of mine invited me to go to a youth group, a Christian youth group and I enjoyed that, I mean, I was welcomed, but the thing that I found most impressive was that they were serious about Christian things and I saw that they had something that I knew I didn't and I didn't really know what that was but I found it appealing. And so I started reading the bible and started off from Genesis and went through and found it really difficult getting in amongst all the old Jewish laws and what have you but then someone there said "Look, why don't you start looking at the New Testament about Jesus", because Christianity's about Jesus. And so I started to do that and it was interesting going through and thinking "Oh, that's where this comes from"; from Sunday school I'd remembered some of the stories and things like that but I hadn't actually read it and so it was interesting going across that.

6.03 But there was a book that I – well, I suppose I realised that Christianity stood or fell on whether Jesus literally rose from the dead or not and to me that was the core question and so I started reading books about that, about the evidence for the resurrection. There was one book that I found particularly compelling called 'Who Moved the Stone?' by a guy called Frank Morrison who was an American litigation lawyer. Really, his forte was in a court room, examining witnesses and finding out whether their witness was cooked up or whether it was authentic and he realised that there were hallmarks of eyewitness, things where you'd say "This is a trustworthy witness".

And so he wasn't a Christian, he said although sometimes he admired Christians he thought they were admirably deluded and that he would actually be doing a kindness if he said "Look, I'll bring my skills and I'll look at their gospels and I will expose them for being fabrications" but the more he looked the more he saw all the hallmarks of eyewitness testimony, including what might be apparent contradictions, because people had exactly the same story – you know, no one believes that – but the differences which weren't contradictions necessarily but you could see that they were different perspectives on looking at it. And he himself actually in the end, although he set out to disprove the resurrection became convinced of it himself and became a Christian – he died probably about five, ten years ago. Now, I read that book and at the end of it I too thought "This happened", I found - not just that book but with other evidence as well but I just couldn't deny that Jesus died and that he rose again and that that really marked him as the unique person in history but I really didn't know what to do with that.

8.10 I thought "Well" – I realised in a sense life had come to a fork and so Jesus was at that fork and one way would be to ignore it, the other way would be to respond, I think, with integrity and go with him but I didn't really know how to do that. And I thought "Well, probably you need to become good" so I became pretty good but it was a real effort and I couldn't maintain it. It was like an exponential graph where for every little bit of improvement it took an enormous amount of effort. And you'd know that with microphones and things here: you might be able to get better gear but a little bit of improvement costs twice the price; it was that sort of thing and in the end I just knew that I couldn't, yes, maintain that strain of being so good and I didn't really know what to expect. I was hoping for some form of breakthrough but nothing was happening and I didn't really know. One of the books that I read was of this guy who was a gang leader in New York, a fellow called Nicky Cruz and he had come from a really appalling background and was the leader of one of the most fearsome gangs in New York and he had a very spectacular conversion and he'd written about this; the book was called 'The Cross and the Switchblade' or there's another book called 'Run Baby Run' that he was in. And I read this book and although I didn't disbelieve what he was saying it was just I thought "Oh, you know", it just seemed – I enjoyed the gang warfare stuff and all his early life but when he talked about how he became a Christian I thought "Well", you know, I just couldn't relate to that.

9.59 But anyway he was coming to speak at a thing at the Hordern Pavilion and we went to hear him and I was bored silly, to be honest. It was basically he talked about what he was in the book and I had already read that and when it came time, he had an appeal at the end for people to come forward. I thought "No", I actually thought "Ah, good, it's over", you know, "I can go home now". But then he prayed and I can't remember all that he prayed but the words that really cut

through is “Don’t try building yourself up to God, he’s already come down to you” and the penny dropped and I’d realised that, you know – probably bits and pieces just suddenly all came together and I realised that’s what I’d been trying to do and, you know, the bible talks about Jesus being the door. Well, I’d been trying to come through the brick wall so to speak.

**SA: So we’ve just changed rooms now - - -**

IP: Room, yes.

**SA: - - - because the cleaners came. So you were talking about your inspiration to become a priest.**

IP: Well, just to say I realised in effect that I’d been bashing my head against a brick wall in Jesus as the door was there. And it just all made sense and he wanted people to come forward and I didn’t want to do that. I’m reasonably shy and I thought “This is a bit embarrassing” but it was quite extraordinary because the more I resisted the more I felt a pressure to go forward and in the end it seemed that the more I upped my resistance the pressure effortlessly increased; it was almost like a physical pressure, it was strange, and in the end I sort of just relented and nearly fell over the chair in front; it was quite odd.

12.12 So I went down and I think someone just led me through things and you normally what you call pray the prayer and which I did. And I was more puzzled because I knew it had happened, I knew somehow that what I didn’t have before I now had but rather than being necessarily jubilant, I suppose as my nature is more curious and thinking, you know, I knew I’d sort of gone over, you know, crossed the line in a good sense. So thereafter people said how much I changed; I wasn’t aware of that, I thought I was the same person, but everyone else said that I’d changed a lot. I knew, though, that I was really wanting to devour the New Testament and I read through that and just everything just was different; it’s hard to describe. But I found I really enjoyed doing ministry, however amateurishly it was and other people started wondering about whether I might go, you know, to do this more full time. I’d been thinking and at that time the engineering that I was in sort of faded – it would have faded anyway - so this certainly was a different direction which I’d never expected. And I’d never heard of Moore College and someone said “Oh, you have to learn Greek at Moore College” and I went “Oh, well, that’s the end of that” but in the end I found I quite like Greek.

13.58 And so I enrolled, I applied. I was still quite young, I was only twenty two, and only been a Christian at this stage for about just over two years so really going there was really being like thrown in the deep end but managed to keep my head above water. It was a very difficult year, it was very turbulent in the sense of that but also my

father died suddenly when I was in first year and so that was the added difficulty of that. So I think in many ways, although I'm very grateful for what I learned there and the impact it had on me, it still was a difficult number of years. But I really enjoyed Christian ministry, I enjoyed learning the things that I was learning at the college and so I never really had any doubts that, you know, this was sort of where I wanted to be.

**SA: And so you were ordained in what year?**

IP: 1983. I had a year off after finishing Moore College. My final year there was at the end of '81 so I had '82 off and it was good to have done that because it allowed the things of college to sort of settle in a bit more and I think it had been such a sort of an intense time that it was good for me just to relax and I went and I worked at Grace Bros for twelve months, selling cameras because I like photography and so did that and then I was – I'd been accepted for ordination but deferred it and was accepted again and was ordained in – actually, it was today, 21<sup>st</sup> of February – didn't realise that – 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1983, so up at St Andrew's Cathedral here – I remember it was mum's birthday, so yes.

16.07 **SA: O.K. Well, do you say congratulations at the anniversary of - - -**

IP: Oh, well, it's not that much of one if I've only just remembered it. Usually birthdays you're aware of them coming up but that one, if you hadn't have had this conversation it would have passed unnoticed.

**SA: Yes.**

IP: So, yes.

**SA: O.K, so then in '83 you became a parish pastor?**

IP: No, the way our system works is that they don't unleash you on a poor congregation when you're straight out; it's like doing a bit of an apprenticeship. The diocese, and rightly, I think, says that – in Moore College you can't teach everyone all those things so it's almost they have an emphasis on, I suppose the academic and understanding, etcetera, on the theological part of it but then you have the practical theology of being under a minister working in a parish as an assistant, so it's that sort of apprenticeship, mentoring type of thing. And normally - although I think it's probably a little different now – you'd spend four years in Moore College and then you'd spend four years as an assistant, learning, I suppose, the pastoral skills and all of those things to complement what you've learned in the theological college and then you're able to be invited to be the minister of a parish. So you're doing much the same things. I mean, you do everything as an assistant that you would do in full parish but you're

just spared the responsibility and, you know, the idea is normally you'd work in two different places just to get a slightly broader perspective on things. So I found that worked pretty well, so from the time you go in to the time in effect that you might become the minister of a parish is normally about eight years.

18.09 **SA: Oh, really a while?**

IP: So it's fairly long, yes, so.

**SA: Because you have a very particular kind of – I don't know what you call it - - -**

IP: Quirky.

**SA: - - - you have a very particular kind of a way that you minister.**

IP: Here?

**SA: Is that how you say it?**

IP: Yes, no, that's exactly right, that's how I describe it. There are a lot of places similar to this. I mean, in a parish it's a little bit like being a GP in general practice, where you get all sorts of different things. Here is much more specific but in a sense what you bring to it, I suppose it's like the same message but it's more your focus is more narrow and it is more specific. So there are significant differences between being in a parish and working here but in effect what I want to do here is really to try and bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Seafarers who probably may not have opportunity to hear it elsewhere. And we do that both, well verbally but very practically in terms of the care that we show them because the Mission's been around in Sydney for well over, you know, coming up to two hundred years and so the things that we do for them really show loving care and it's in that context that we say "Well, O.K, we do all these things for your physical needs but you're more than that" and so we say "How are things with you spiritually?"

19.57 And it's not aggressive or an assault, it's done in that sense of proven kindness. And I mean there are these very emotive terms like "bible bashing" and, you know "shoving it down your throat", I mean they're really ridiculous terms, really, but if someone doesn't want to talk about spiritual things then they say so and we heed that. But normally in terms of exercising a ministry of care to ask seafarers about how things are on board, how are things at home with their families, you're asking, you know, I'm going to say personal questions and they are very glad. They know who we are and they know that wherever they go there's someone to care for them so those questions are deemed to be someone who "Well, thank you for asking", you know, "no one else does" and so it's very easy then to

say “Well, you know, how are things spiritually with you?” And if someone wants to say “Don’t bother asking”, well, we heed that but most people, you know, are O.K. to talk about it and I think sometimes our western mindset is you just don’t talk, it’s a very private thing and it is personal but it doesn’t have to be private and I think that’s actually a very unbiblical thing. In other cultures it’s the most natural thing to talk about, what you believe and why you believe it and, you know, we sometimes fear conflict and people getting irate, etcetera, but there’s no need for that and we find that there’s very, very few people who have any form of objection to being asked about their spiritual situation.

**SA: I’m just wondering when you actually started here at the Mission.**

22.02 IP: Rushed ahead a bit, haven’t I, yes?

**SA: Yes, no, that’s O.K. When did you begin here?**

IP: I started here on 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2003.

**SA: O.K, so it’s relatively recent.**

IP: Oh, yes, yes.

**SA: And you were head counsellor of - - -**

IP: I’d been parish ministry, well, from 1983 to 2003 so I left and then, well, began here, so.

**SA: And how did that happen?**

IP: Well, it wasn’t under ideal circumstances, to be honest. There was conflict in my last parish and although I had the support of the diocese and everyone like that, it was clear that as long as I was there certain people were going to be unhappy and that caused problems. So I was finding it all very stressful, it had been going on for a while, so in the end the only logical thing was for me to resign, which I did and it was then – I didn’t realise, though, that at that time my predecessor here at the Mission to Seafarers had been looking to retire and they weren’t able to find a replacement and so he stayed on for a bit and one of the supporters in the parish was on the board here of the Mission and suggested I might like to think about that. So it hadn’t been something that I’d been yearning for or anything like that so initially I didn’t consider it, I was still thinking in a parish mindset but then the more I did start to think about it the more I thought it could be a helpful thing. And so I applied and served here as a chaplain for six months to see, you know, whether they thought I was suitable and whether I thought it was suitable and so we agreed that it would be O.K. and I’m still here nearly eight years later.

24.06 Yes, so it was a wonderful provision in that sense and I think there are things that I brought which people found very helpful and also the Mission was good for me personally too. But it's quite different; I mean in a parish ministry because you're so intimately involved in people's lives you have the best of times at times but also you can have the worst and, yes, in the last parish we did have both of those but in any people situation, you know, you're going to have potential difficulties and we did in that one. So, yes, it's unfortunate but anyway there's a promise in the scriptures that God works all things to the good of those who love him and it was honoured in here, so.

**SA: So no regrets?**

IP: Oh, no. I mean there are times I wouldn't mind going back to a parish; I don't know if I ever will but I certainly try in my current situation to be supportive of parish ministers because I know what it's like, you know, the good times and the bad times that they have and so I understand that, so.

**SA: Could you tell me a little bit about the history of the Mission to the Seafarers?**

IP: It began in the Bristol Channel when a minister, the name of John Ashley, was on holiday with his family and he was a keen sailor and at that stage I think there were a lot of ships, the old hulks almost in the Bristol Channel and the son said to him "Dad, who cares for the men on the ships?" and he had never considered that.

26.00 It was at the time, I think, of a lot of revival in England with Wesley, George Whitfield and people and the church was really rediscovering its social obligations and there were revivals breaking out everywhere all through England and Wales and Scotland, all over the place and this was a neglected area. And so John Ashley, who had his own sloop which was called the 'The Irene' [or "Eirine"], which is Greek for peace, would then go to the various ships and offer ministry there; that was usually done in the form of a service. And so they would then fly a blue flag which had the Hebrew word 'Bethel' on it and Hebrew, 'Bethel' means "house of God" and so seafarers who wanted some Christian ministry would then go to that ship and have a ministry there. And that was great but the thing was there were other issues that seafarers were facing as well, very much of a practical nature, like being very vulnerable to exploitation. Part of that is because they didn't receive any pay until the cargo had been sold, which could take quite a while and of course the ships were in, you know, for quite a long time while that all happened and what do the seafarers do? So they become really, you know, bored mindless and hence a lot of the problems of people who are bored. Some of the innkeepers ashore were rather unscrupulous and would offer them accommodation and everything on credit but the rates were rather

extortionate and often these fellows would – you know, hence the drunken sailor because they basically had free grog which of course was then taken out of their wages and so they often had nothing and of course for families and things who may be there, dependent upon the them, there was nothing to go for them. So there were all these other, you know, contingent problems that were associated with it.

28.05 So people then realised that this was a really much needed ministry so they then set about saying, “Well, we’ll provide accommodation for the people and we won’t cheat you”, you know, there’ll be dry areas for instance and various legislation came into play where a certain amount of the seafarers’ wages had to be sent to family so they couldn’t all be squandered. So there were all these really important social things there and as they realised this in England – and, of course, being an island nation or, you know, Britain being an island nation all the ports often developed similar ministries around the Empire. So today there’s over three hundred Mission to Seafarers’ places around the world and there’s twenty of so of them around Australia, so effectively if a seafarer enters a major port there’ll be a Mission to Seafarers. We’re not the only seafaring ministry; a lot of the other European countries have seafarers, the Danish Seamans’ Institute, Seamans’ Church and a lot of the Christians in those countries then developed similar ministries for their seafarers. The Roman Catholics also developed one called ‘The Apostle of the Ship of the Sea’, so it really did become a great catalyst for ministry there. So basically if a seafarer comes and sees the flying angel logo they know they’re going to be safeguarded and protected. Even today here in Sydney things are very different from what they were years ago. The ships have a much shorter turnaround because they’re containerised and everything and just a day in port costs the ship owners a lot of money, so the quicker the turnaround the better for them but that’s less expense for downtime for the seafarers.

30.03 So we provide free transport for them from Botany; we have shuttle buses going throughout the day, every day of the year. We collect them, we bring them in here, we provide means for them to contact home and modern technology with internet and everything like that; phone cards make that really easy, with Skype and everything coming on now. So the seafarers when they come in, one of the first things they want to do is contact home, so they’ll get on the computers or by phone cards to ring home and contact there. They, of course, being in a new city will often want to go and have a look so there’s things that we kind of fund, discounted things for them to go and see the sights and all of that. And if seafarers want to talk to someone here, they’re able to do that; we go and visit them on board their ships. So although we just don’t have the means to visit each and every ship that comes in we try and visit as many as we can, just to see how they are and what we can do for them and so that’s what we exist for. But the logo of the Mission, the flying angel, is a really good logo. It comes from the Revelation to John in chapter fourteen

as the judgement is imminent. These three angels come – an angel means a messenger – and basically urging people, saying “Look, you know, things are happening. You need to put your trust in the risen Jesus” and so you’ve got these angels who are flying over things, calling on people before it’s too late and it describes in the text how from every nation and tribe and language and people and that’s what we minister to here.

32.00 In any week we could have twenty-odd different nationalities coming in and we don’t discriminate for them or on any religious background; I mean, there’s certainly no screening form, you know, to see if you qualify for a bus. So it’s very noteworthy from people who might come from, say, a Hindu or a Buddhist or an Islamic background, that wherever they go the only ones who care for them are the Christians and we do that free; we don’t accept any money from the seafarers for the services we provide. We have a small shop, etcetera, where they buy things but - - -

**SA: So there’s no other organisation sort of for people who are of, say, Muslim or Hindu faith?**

IP: No. Not that I know of anyway. Yes, nothing.

**SA: And what about ministering to those people?**

IP: You can get some different reactions. I mean mostly, though, they are appreciative because say for Muslims, a lot of them are quite curious about Christianity but their environment is such that if they express any interest within their culture they really are subject to, you know, difficulties – and that’s understatement. So often they can get a bible here and we have gospels in Arabic, which are just very discreet so they can take one and put it in their pocket. Sometimes we don’t know if they’ve taken them; they’re free for people to take so there are many that we notice that they go. So people take them and it’s up to the Lord what he does with that. But there have been plenty of Muslims who’ve been converted because they see what we do and what the others don’t do and it just draws into question the difference between Jesus and whoever founded their other one.

34.17 **SA: Can we just get back to just a little bit of the history of the Mission in Sydney?**

IP: Yes, the Mission in Sydney, yep.

**SA: So it first started out in George Street, is that right?**

IP: No, no, there was actually one before then. The Mission to Seafarers was in George Street [central Sydney] but the Seafaring Ministry came in the guise of this Bethel group - as I mentioned off, they started off with a Bethel flag. They then became known as the Bethel

Union and although there were Anglicans involved, it wasn't an Anglican thing. When it came out to Australia in about 1820 it wasn't the Church of England that was involved at all. They were called Non-Conformist churches, like the Congregationals and Methodists, etcetera; they often had a much more evangelistic and social concern. So they started up and it was down at the bottom of Erskine Street [central Sydney, near wharves] - I think the foundation stone of the place is out there. The building's no longer there but that was there for quite a while and then they had another move and then in about mid 1800s there were some difficulties and so the Church of England and they in effect merged. And the Bethel group continues to this day. It's known as the Sydney Bethel Union and they are charged by an act of parliament from 1851 to provide funding for seafarers' welfare in Sydney but Sydney meant basically the east coast of Australia then, I think, so the act was changed to be New South Wales. So they're our chief benefactor and the arrangement basically was that they would provide the funding and the chapel and the Church of England would provide the personnel and in effect that's continued through to today.

36.13 **SA: Right.**

IP: Yes, so the only stipulation in terms of being Anglican – we are an Anglican organisation, the Mission to Seafarers – but our funding is from this Sydney Bethel Union, the bulk of it and the only stipulation in terms of being Anglican is that the principal chaplain has to be someone who is licensed by the Archbishop of Sydney, the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney. But on our staff we've got people from quite diverse Christian backgrounds, you know, Baptists, Presbyterians, Church of Christ and some other Korean congregations, a couple of Anglicans and, yes, that's about it, so.

**SA: So you were originally in Erskine Street and then - - -**

IP: I think there was another location that I can't quite recall - may have been two in Erskine Street – then they built the place at 100 George Street. There was also the Sydney Sailors' Home next door to that and the two worked together. There was another group called the Australian Mariners' Welfare Society – I'm not sure what they were called then but it was known as the 'Seamans' Rest' and the 'Sailors' Home'. So those buildings are still there, being restored and I think Cadman's Cottage [historic Sydney residence] was the superintendant of the Sailors' Home for – it was his residence for quite a while.

37.58 So that was where the bulk of the ministry was for a long, long time, a hundred and something years, until it was resumed by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and the mission then purchased a place in Macquarie Place [central Sydney]; it was, I think the old wool stores or somewhere around there. They were there for a number of

years and then they moved up - I think there were three separate locations, two or three, in Kent Street [central Sydney] or around there while they looked for somewhere of a more permanent nature and in about 1990 the Sydney Bethel Union purchased 320 Sussex Street and we're here, been here for twenty-odd years but the building's going to be up for sale soon and we won't be here next year, probably, so.

**SA: Really?**

M'mm.

**SA: So where will you be going?**

IP: We don't know. There's a bit of a search on at the moment for alternative premises but somewhere adjacent to the CBD, one hopes.

**SA: I was going to ask you about it. Why is it important to be in the city?**

IP: Because seafarers want to come into the city. There is another seafaring centre run by one of the maritime unions out at Port Botany. At the moment we complement each other but if we were to go out to Port Botany I think we'd be seen to be in competition and we want to avoid that. So at the moment the union one, called the Sydney Seafarers Centre, is great for people who only have a short time ashore and who can't afford the time to get into the city, so it provides a place for them just to have a change of scenery; they can do similar things to what they might do here but most seafarers want to come in; they want to see the Opera House, they want to see the aquarium, you know, and all the other things of being in a different city; as attractive as Port 'Botany can be it doesn't quite compare with the harbour, so they want to see that, so.

40.10 **SA: That's why it's important that you're within the city of Sydney area?**

IP: Well, now it is. I mean, historically all the shipping was at Circular Quay. That's why the buildings were down The Rocks area because literally the seafarers would get off the ship and walk a short way and then there'd be, you know, the Missions to Seamen, so that was very, very important. And it was only until a few years ago that there was still a good amount of shipping in Sydney, albeit over around the Barangaroo area and now it's more cruise ships but we still feel it's important for us to be in the city and we provide the free shuttles to the seafarers to come in.

**SA: And you just mentioned the Mission to Seamen. Now, there was a change of name at some point to "seafarers". What was that background on that?**

IP: Well, I'm not sure exactly. It may have just been trying to be a little bit more inclusive, you know, in terms of gender but I mean we still get called "sea fairies" and stuff like that and a lot of people say "What's a seafarer?" whereas they would have known, you know, "sailor" or something. So I suspect that was the main reason and the old logo probably could do with a bit of a spruce up too so that was changed.

**SA: To the flying angel?**

IP: Oh, it was flying angel always from the beginning but the old logo which had been around for a long time – and I could show you a copy of one; I can't do that on tape, unfortunately – but they just updated it a little bit. I suppose like Qantas with the flying kangaroo; yes, it's the same logo but it's been updated over the years.

**SA: Over the years, yes. So also before you were talking about – I think before we started recording you were talking about there's quite a number of lay people that actually are chaplains - - -**

42.10 IP: Yes.

**SA: - - - within the Mission to Seafarers. Could you talk about those?**

IP: A lot of people have an interest in - you know, maybe former seafarers and they in a sense want to perhaps help to repay what they've received, so there are people like that. But one of the things about Christianity is that you don't have to be ordained as a minister in order to minister and we have a belief that all Christians are called to minister and I think sometimes the existence of clergy could really stifle that, as though somehow people might think "Oh, I can't contribute because I'm not ordained" and that really is contrary to the New Testament, you know, quite significantly.

So it's an opportunity where people can exercise a ministry in a specific area to Seafarers and our chaplains here, we've got a mixture of people who have been ordained and those who have not but they do the same things and our most effective chaplains are people who are not ordained, certainly committed Christian people, and they've got gifts and talents which they want to use. They just haven't had a ceremony, you know, to authorise them to do certain things and a piece of paper that gives them the title 'Reverend', so but what they do is exactly the same and often better.

**SA: Where do the lay chaplains come from – do they live around the city of Sydney area or they come from .....**

44.03 IP: Well - I'm sorry, I interrupted you. In Sydney, yes, they do. Our chaplains, the one who lives furthest away is out at Campbelltown, so

it's a bit of a trip, but others tend to live the inner west – I live on the north side – some are more inner city, so they vary but certainly in the Sydney metropolitan area. Likewise, if someone – the New South Wales missions, one at Newcastle and the people there would, you know, come from Newcastle. Port Kembla, they come from Port Kembla. Then there's a new one down at Eden and that would be a local one as well. So it's very much a support thing from within, an expression of ministry from that community, and that really does apply all around Australia. Often it's the local churches who are the ones who see this as a mission exercise and so they are the ones who get behind it.

**SA: And these lay chaplains, are they interfaith? You were saying before that there are quite a few, like say Baptists.**

IP: Yes.

**SA: Is that what you - - -**

IP: Generally, yes, yes. I mean, normally – well, there are some places where the Roman Catholics have got their centre and what might be called the Mission to Seafarers has got theirs as well and I would imagine that if people are Roman Catholic that they would probably go and support that one and those who are Protestant would probably support the Mission to Seafarers. There is another ministry in Sydney called the Seamans Christian Friends Society which is run from the open brethren, not the closed but the open brethren and he has an excellent ministry there but it's very small but he actually comes under the auspices of Mission to Seafarers for security purposes because we have the name.

46.06 Well, after September 11 security increased an awful lot and so he came under us in order to continue his ministry to seafarers. So that was one – although he's not the Mission to Seafarers – may be, might be.

**SA: So you've seen – well, maybe not you so much because you've been here for eight years but I guess the Mission to Seafarers has seen a lot of changes - - -**

IP: Oh, yes.

**SA: - - - in the issues and the challenges for seafarers - - -**

IP: Yes, yes.

**SA: - - - over those times. Can you talk a little bit about that?**

IP: Well, not from first hand experience but my understanding is that, well, in a sense seafarers have always been a group of people who

have been vulnerable to exploitation and that's happened right through history – it still happens today. In Australia we don't see the worst of it because if a ship is really substandard that comes into an Australian port it won't be given a seaworthy certificate so the bad ships don't come here because they wouldn't be leaving.

Likewise, we've got a fairly strong union presence and if there are abuses and things there can be fairly significant consequences. So I think in terms of the maritime scene Australia is a good place to be but I expect that if I was in a Mission to Seafarers in some ports of the world I would see all forms of bad things and that's been typical through the years. It's just, I suppose, I mean greed has always been a factor; seafarers are seen to be a commodity.

48.01

There used to be a time where captains had to account for loss of cargo but not loss of sailors and they were virtually laws unto themselves on a ship. So they actually were given, seafarers were given the serf status – s-e-r-f status – and they basically had very little rights and that continued through till quite recent times. So, yes, but in Australia we don't see the worst of it but you hear some horror stories elsewhere. I mean, even the east coast with piracy, etcetera, the way that seafarers are taken for ransom, people are often more concerned about recovering their cargo than the seafarers and that is a mindset that still persists at times.

And, I mean understandably if someone wants to charter a vessel to move their cargo from one country to another, I mean they're entitled to make a profit, that's the way business works, but very often the greedy ones will say "Well, O.K, who can I get to work for the least? How can I cut down on expenses for the seafarers? So we'll feed them less, you know, we won't provide things like medical care and others. Rather than get specialists we'll try and get them to multitask" perhaps for areas that they're not really trained and so there's all those sorts of things and because the seafarers are often at sea for nine months at a time before they go home and they are often at the beck and call, they know that if they cause a ruckus very often they could be blacklisted and never be employed again and that has big consequences, of course, for their families at home.

50.00

So there's a lot of difficulties there and one of the things that the Mission to Seafarers can be is an advocate. So if a seafarer is having some form of issue on board that he feels he can't – he can speak to us and we can take steps to see that that issue is dealt with without the seafarer being seen to be the one who complains. So there's that role as well, very much a protective role and that's been the way things – I mean, in a sense human nature hasn't really changed; the circumstances have. It does mean whereas before containerisation ships would be in for a week or so, now they're not, but on the other hand ships are probably safer at sea and so there's good and bad for both of it.

**SA: You were talking before about quite a lot of different nationalities that you see. Can you talk about some of the people that come, the nationalities that come through?**

IP: In Sydney here at the Mission we generally see about twelve thousand seafarers a year who would come into our centre. That doesn't include people that we might visit on board but when they come in they sign with their name, their nationality and their ship and so we get about twelve thousand of those. Now, about thirty, forty per cent would be Filipinos, the second most significant nationality is mainland Chinese and then Indians and then Myanmar, Burma, and then some of the Europeans - probably the Ukrainians would be the largest single one – but certainly the Asia and Southeast Asia are the ones that are the most significant for us here.

52.04 Overseas, around Europe, it may reflect a more European one although generally I think their crew would tend to be more Filipinos but we are seeing an increasing number of mainland Chinese come and that just reflects the growth of China and particularly their shipbuilding prowess where often they will have ships sold on the condition that they be crewed by Chinese, so.

**SA: And what faith? You were talking about different faiths.**

IP: Well, Filipinos tend to be predominantly Roman Catholic but there are quite a few people who might come from a Pentecostal background. Then the Chinese, well very often they don't have anything because of the way they've been raised but often they're curious about Christian things as there's a large and very active, vibrant church in China but most of the seafarers that we see I wouldn't know what their – often there's language difficulties as well, so it's hard to communicate there. Indians would be predominantly Hindu but down the southern part of India there's a fairly strong, historic Christian presence so we do get Indian Christians but generally I'd say they were Hindu although we do get some from Pakistan who would be Muslim or Bangladesh. So we don't get that many from Middle Eastern countries but we do get quite a few Indonesians and they would be predominantly Muslim but there's very few that would be dressed in what you might call traditional Islamic garb; occasionally we get some.

53.59 Actually, we had a funny incident where one of our chaplains who is good at English but he's not Australian born and he went aboard a ship that was crewed mainly by Turkish Muslims and they didn't treat him very well at all unfortunately but he didn't really know what you called people from Turkey and so in his report of it he said "I went aboard this Turkey ship and these Turkeys were doing this to me and these Turkeys did that" and he just didn't know really what he was saying, the double entendre; so because they treated him so

rudely it was sort of an apt comment in a way. But, yes, that's one of the great exceptions that we have. Normally, our chaplains are welcomed on board; they know who we are, they know we're seeking their best interests and it's very rare for us to be not welcomed but that was a ship that was. And it may be that just the person who was the greeter was a Muslim by conviction rather than birth in the same way that, you know, we have people who might be Christian by birth but not by conviction and so hence his reaction was probably a little bit less pleasant.

**SA: I was actually going to ask you about, you know, whether you were allowed on board boats. Did you ever get refused?**

55.52 IP: It's up to the will of the captain whether anyone goes on board and there are some times when we may not be allowed on but they're very, very rare. Security has increased a lot now and so sometimes there are even gates at the bottom of the gangway so you can't go up and it may be for whatever reason - often we're just not told - but sometimes you say "Well, no, we couldn't get on". We don't know why; it may not just be convenient or whatever. There used to be a problem with the Chinese ships because they were so suspicious of any western influence but they would not let anyone on who they didn't have to so that was a problem but I think that's been reduced a lot now, particularly with familiarity, that they know Mission to Seafarers, yes, we're not political, we're not out there to try and undermine the government or anything like that. And particularly since one or two of our chaplains are conversant with Chinese languages they are able to communicate and also when they experience the benefits that we have because we're the ones who bring them into town, we're the ones who take them back.

**SA: Can you describe what you offer here?**

IP: We try to have like what might be called a home away from home and that's in the broadest sense of it, we offer the means for people to make their time off the ship as beneficial as possible to them. So when someone comes in what we offer is - well, the normal thing would be they come and they'd just sign in, then normally they might want to change money because they're usually paid in US dollars and we change their money for them at the best rates that we can. Even the Chinese now are starting to realise that it's better off changing money with us than going down to Chinatown and so we change money for that.

58.00 We have a small shop where they can buy some souvenirs or little foreign foods like, you know, Korean noodles and things that you can only get - well, things that they're used to getting in, say, the Philippines, like an Australian seafarer going to China and there's a little jar of Vegemite on the shelf. So we have that. There are games that they came have, ping-pong, billiards - well really pool, not

billiards – even things like that hand soccer where you’ve got like table soccer and then we have free computers for them to use and we provide computers but we provide outlets for them because a lot of them have laptops and use their own. We also have a large screen TV for them to sit and watch programs if they wish, there’s a courtyard where they can just go and read and sit and be quiet and just get away from everything and then of course there’s a lot of the tourist stuff that we have, just brochures and things for them if they want to go.

And often they say “How do I get to such and such? How do I get to the Opera House, how do I get to here, there or whatever?” Some of them seem to think that we know every little shop in Sydney, you know, but we do our best to try and find what they might need and I think sometimes if we had shares in JB Hi-Fi or got a commission we’d be doing rather nicely, so.

**SA: And because you’ve also got some – what are the booths outside, there’s three - - -**

IP: They’re phone booths.

**SA: They’re phone booths.**

IP: So, sorry, one thing I had forgotten is that they would often want to ring home and so we have phone cards which would provide the best rates for them to ring home and the booths are basically just where they can talk privately and have some peace and quiet. And then of course we do have the chapel here which isn’t really used except for interviews such as this.

60.02

It used to be that there would be regular services and things like that but we’ve sort of moved away from that a bit now and having more ministry on a one to one basis, whereas years ago I suppose you would say “O.K, ministry time is now such and such” and there’d be a service conducted but that, as we talked about, was probably more the difference between religion and, I suppose, personal ministry and one on one ministry I think is far more effective. We will conduct things if people specifically ask us but at Christmas and things like that more often than not it’s easier for them to go to, say, St Andrew’s Cathedral or if they want to go to St Mary’s, you know. What they get there is probably going to be more substantial and we provide more like the more intimate type of one on one ministry which we find more effective.

**SA: For seafarers more effective - - -**

IP: Yes.

**SA: - - - or just generally?**

IP: I think generally. Even at church for instance most people, although they're encouraged to attend the Sunday meeting, most of the benefit comes from home groups where there are smaller groups where people can interact with a lot more and I think it's pretty true that most Christians would receive greater benefit in terms of their understanding and commitment from being in a small group in terms of being able to share different issues, discuss different things, that's a far more effective way. And, I mean, if someone's got something on their heart and they come into like a formal chapel service, well it's as though you go through the form and then they may think "Well, I didn't really – I wasn't able to ask what I wanted to ask" whereas on a one on one basis that's up to them to talk and have their questions answered.

62.06 I mean, they can have the larger form if they want. Some people feel that, you know, that's what they need and we can provide that but generally I think needs are more, you know – generalising, of course – are better met and the seafarers have a greater sense, I think, of being cared for if the chaplain's just talking to them rather than them as being part of a larger group.

**SA: Right.**

IP: And that's the case, I think, with a lot of today's churches.

**SA: And is that something that you particularly have brought into the Seafarers or was that in place before you got here?**

IP: Well, I think it's probably always been there. I mean, when chaplains have gone on board they've not always gone on board with a view to taking a service. Some have but I think generally it's up to seafarers there but I think when they came in here probably the focus on ministry was more formal via a service whereas I think for me, both in terms of ministry to staff as well as well as to seafarers has become much less formal and I think more effective because it's been more casual and open for discussions. So I think that's certainly in the Anglican side that's been much more of a trend over the years.

**SA: Yes, because we were talking again also before we started recording, your particular style of ministry in that you're not so into ritual.**

IP: Mm.

**SA: Is that part of it?**

63.50 IP: Oh, well, it's an expression, I think. I mean, I see that as a more effective way in parish. I mean, in a sense in parishes you tend to be locked into the Sunday service type thing and I'm not trying to

diminish that, it's got a place, and sometimes people will want to have their first little nibble; if they're asking questions they might want to go along and see "What are these people like?" But I think for them it can be more threatening for some but I think most people would feel more comfortable in someone's home than in a building, you know, particularly if it's an old gothic style place. You know, I mean a lot of modern churches are almost like simple auditoriums but homes, you know, if you have people over for dinner, you know, it's always nicer to be at someone's home; it's more relaxed so we try to provide a sort of a home for them here. I mean, we can't replicate that but we try and provide a relaxed, positive environment where they can say "Oh, that was good, I enjoyed going there and I feel that I'm going back to the ship refreshed and unburdened".

**SA: That's what you find that they experience?**

IP: Yes, yes. I mean, I think really it's – this is an adjunct but I think because of the financial mindset that I mentioned earlier shipping companies' support for the Mission to Seafarers has diminished significantly over the last decade and it's a shame because they ought to see what we do as an investment in their seafarers and there's sort of like a motherhood statement that a happy seafarer is going to be a more productive seafarer, a more healthy seafarer and a safer seafarer.

66.00

Now, I can't show an accountant how every dollar that they might give to us would be seeing, you know, so a dollar fifty, two dollar or whatever return to them in productivity for the seafarer. Everyone knows it's there but because I can't actually quantify that there's no interest from the shipping companies. In effect they say – and it's been said to me – "Well, why should we pay you? We're getting it for free at the moment, you know, and why pay for it?" and that's, you know, very sad but unfortunately that's the way it is. It used to be that shipping companies were run by people who spent their life at sea; you know, they'd started as a cabin boy or whatever and gone up to be master and then when they retired from the sea they went to be management on shore and so when the issue of the Mission's coming up and support it was a no-brainer; you know, they knew the benefits. But now it's run by accountants who've never been to sea and the bottom line is the dividend to shareholders and they say "Well, why should we pay to this lot? You know, it's going to affect our bottom line a little" and consequently our support from them has diminished and so significantly had that impacted us that this year we've had to reduce our opening hours and also some of the services that we offer in terms of frequency of buses and things like that. So we do the best we can but we're not able to do what we did before because we just can't afford it and, yes, if we want to keep going we've got to keep our heads above water financially, so.

**SA: So do you work with any other unions, other than the Bethel?**

68.04 IP: You mean the maritime unions?

**SA: Maritime unions.**

IP: Not so much with – well, we work alongside them. We're not a union and we don't want to sort of get involved with union politics or things like that but there are times when if push comes to shove we might refer something to a union, for instance if someone says that they haven't been paid their wages or that the company's done a dirty on them in some way. Now, in a sense we act as a liaison, so if someone was to ring me up and say "Look, I haven't been paid" or whatever "we've got this issue, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah", I would then ring the union and say "Look, there's a problem on this ship. Can you go and deal with that?" Now, in a way unions don't care about being seen the bad guy, I mean they have a rather different ethos from us. So we operate more in terms of the personal but in terms of getting things done, you know, they will stop a ship from sailing, so there's that aspect of it whereas if we were to do that then we would be unwelcome on board the ships and a lot of masters wouldn't let their seafarers come to us. So we try to have that line whereby we might be the informant and maintain our ongoing ability to minister to seafarers because we refer such things rather than actually try to do it ourselves.

**SA: O.K. I'm just wondering if you can recall any memorable or stand-out stories or, you know, things with seamen.**

69.58 IP: Well, two that come to mind particularly. One was a fellow who was on a cruise ship named Jim; he was an Indonesian Muslim. He had a significant heart attack about two or three days out of port and they basically, you know, put him on ice in a good sense until they got to shore. He was taken to RPA and I visited him there and he was quite happy for me to pray with him in the name of Jesus. He then was moved for surgery out to Strathfield Private Hospital and had a quadruple bypass, I think, out there, so it was a big bit of surgery. One of our chaplains lives nearby and visited him every day; he had no contact from any Islamic organisation. The consulate knew he was there and I think there was one consular visit or something like that but that was about it, so our chaplain was the main one. When he was well, the chaplain brought him in to an Indonesian restaurant and shouted him dinner and in that time – he was there about, I think four or five weeks or something, might have been six but quite a time – he received a wonderful ministry from this chaplain. And, of course, during that time I mean there were conversations about the gospel, you know, not trying to attack Islam or anything like that - that's not the way that you go about doing things – but this fellow just saw – well, he went home understanding what Christianity was about, who Jesus is and seeing that given practical application. Now, we don't know what happened to him when he returned home but I think if

people were going to defame the gospel this guy would know that, you know, what they were saying was not correct.

71.54

So that was one ministry that I thought was outstanding from a lay chaplain, right, so there's what I'm saying about having a ministry that I was just, you know, really impressed by, not just the quality of it but the duration and the generosity of the chaplain who frequently in other instances will in his own time with contacts – he might have some days off and someone might come into Sydney, they might ring him so he'll go and have golf with them. So this is really going above and beyond the call of duty and a lot of our guys are like that, so that's very, very impressive. The second one was really sad, probably one of the saddest. A young fellow, twenty five, a Filipino seafarer, had his daughter a two year old – no, she was three at that stage – died of dengue fever in the Philippines. Now, the real tragedy: he hadn't seen her for a year. He'd had opportunity to but they decided to extend his nine month contract by three months because they wanted some extensions to the house. So he stayed and it was during that three month period that she contracted the disease and died. Now, had he been home, you know, she still may have died, we don't know. I think dengue fever's something that can easily be misdiagnosed; people can think it's a severe flu and then, bang, it suddenly gets awfully nasty. But the thing was that he then was to fly home but the only clip that he had of his little daughter was on his phone and here was this gorgeous little two year old – basically, I think it was taken on the day that he was going to sea – and she was dancing in front of him, you know, and it was quite a long clip and I'm not trying to be soppy in this but the really moving thing was just the last bit was she looked up and smiled and said "Daddy".

74.03

And so she died without him really ever knowing her and I think that was heartbreaking and so we cared for him for the time he was here before he flew home. But a lot of seafarers go to sea, you know, and very sacrificially because they get paid a lot more at sea than they would at home and so it's for the material benefits for their families but often children grow up without seeing their fathers and that's a really high cost to pay. And I just really felt for this fellow because he paid a very high price, yes, even for the time that he'd been at sea. You know, a little two year old whose father's away for nine months of the year wouldn't really even remember him except by pictures and – I mean, Skype is helpful in that they can actually see the person and talk to them but there's a lot of anguish there, I think, and, you know, sometimes we feel we need to say to someone "Do you think it's worth it?" You know, I mean at the end of the day, you know, would a child rather have daddy home to play with them or to have a nice extension? Yes, and so they're the – but there's a lot of pressure on them to bring home the money and that's the price they pay, so.

**SA: I'm just thinking that when you talk about chaplaincy or ministry, all those social support that you give the seafarers, it's kind of like an extension of spirituality as well, is it?**

76.05 IP: Well, it's an application. I mean, the gospel, the Christian gospel is not an academic thing. On the back of our bus there's a verse from the New Testament that says "We love because he first loved us" and so for us that seems to sum it up; you know, we've been blessed and we try to pass that forward. And love in the New Testament is not a romance type thing, it's a really practical, sacrificial giving and it's the most practical thing. I mean, the idea of affection without expression is – well, it's foreign in anyone's language. I mean, you know, I've got a wife and two daughters and if I was stingy with them but saying how much I loved them it really, you know, would seem to be a bit of a contrast. Now if you care for someone you do things for them and that's what comes across. I remember once driving a bus and we had some guys on board and I remember saying to them "Why do you come to the Mission to Seafarers?" and the guy looked at me as if I was silly and he said "Well, you care for us". And so he saw that; his impression of what we do for them is we care for them; we do all these things for them, we provide all these things for them, we talk to them and it's in that context, as I mentioned before, that we talk to them about Jesus. And from our perspective that's probably the best thing we can do for them, it's the most caring thing, and they see it in that context. That's why I think so few people - they don't see us as, you know, your so-called bible-bashers, you know, in that way as though we're an assault on them or something that's offensive.

78.03 And so we do that. I mean, I think that's one of the reasons why the Salvation Army – no one says ill of the Salvos because they're known for their good works. The good works won't get them to heaven but it's an expression of what God has done for them in Christ. So that's why they do what they do and that's why we do what we do.

**SA: Women. Do women become seafarers?**

IP: Some do.

**SA: So do you have women that come here?**

IP: Yes, not very many. I haven't got figures but my guesstimate would be if we have a thousand men come in we might get one woman; sometimes they would be cadets. There are around – we've not had it here but there are, I think, around Australia I think there's one woman who is the master of a ship but women are becoming a little bit more prominent but certainly I think it's a very male life and for sometimes, you know, in the bad ways as well as the good ways. And I did a voyage in 2004. I hadn't been to sea and our board wanted me to enjoy seasickness so I did a ten day voyage around – I flew to Fiji and then sailed from Fiji to Tonga and then down to New

Zealand and so it was only a small vessel and I was seasick for a lot of it which I obviously didn't enjoy.

79.52

But the third mate was a woman on that ship who was actually married to a captain on a sister vessel and she was a very talented girl, really, you know, a lovely, lovely girl but then they wanted to start a family and so she gave up going to sea but I think was involved in some form of work ashore. So there's just those logistics, I think. It can be a lonely life and I think, you know, men probably tend to do that more for their families but I probably think where a woman for her family would probably feel the need to be much more at home with them. I'm sure there are exceptions to that but it is, I think, a difficult life but then in the navy a lot more women are involved in the navy, so.

**SA: Because I was going to ask like what kind of ships do you sort of see. You obviously see cargo ships.**

IP: Yes.

**SA: And then do you see naval ships?**

IP: Not many; we did have some in the other day. The navy has got their own chaplaincy set up. The vessel we had in the other day was an American naval ship that had come back from Antarctica and so they probably would have had a chaplain on board, I'm not sure, but certainly they were keen to come up and, you know, avail themselves of the Mission to Seafarers. So we tried to help out in what way we could. Unfortunately, they were down at Garden Island and our bus schedules are very much geared for the other but we did pick some up and take some back from there and a few came in here but it wasn't a big thing and we don't see too many naval people at all. But the type of ships we see generally you're right, I mean, they are by and large container ships.

81.59

We used to have more car carriers when they were down at Garden – not Garden Island, White Bay and – goodness, I've gone blank, isn't it terrible – White Bay and Glebe Island – I keep thinking Glebe and Garden – so we used to see a lot of those. We do have oil tankers out at Port Botany or gas ships and also at Gore Bay on the north side, so they're the main types of vessels that we see; we occasionally see people from the cruise ships but not too many, although P&Os Pacific Jewel, in October/November needed an engine replacement and they were in here for about five weeks and our internet bill went from about a thousand a month to seven thousand. And I'll say this about P&O: we asked if they might help us with that because we didn't think we could afford to pay the seven thousand dollars, which was incurred – we had nine hundred of the crew in here over those five weeks and the letter that we asked wasn't even acknowledged, so that was very disappointing. So if

P&O's listening to this there's still time to repent. You'll probably delete that bit, won't you?

**SA: No, this is completely unedited, this will be.**

IP: Oh, dear.

**SA: I wanted to also ask you about your interaction with local community, like city of Sydney community and businesses and so on. I mean, do you have much?**

IP: No. No, really – occasionally the main interaction is people who might come in off the street who want the Department of Housing because they're 200 or 230 and we're 320 and so they come in here and, you know, say "Are you the Department of Housing?" "No, mate", so we say where we are down there.

84.08 And occasionally you get some homeless people coming in, wanting a cup of coffee and that but it's difficult because although we might say "Well, have a cuppa" but I mean we're here for seafarers and there are times when it can be the thin edge of the wedge. Sometimes even where we've had some of the people who might be local residents - we found one time for instance someone came in and we let them use the toilet and then we found that word had got 'round so everyone's wanting to come in. So it's a difficult one. We have to say "Look" - you don't want to be, you know, but in the end we had to sort of say "Look, sorry, no, there's one elsewhere. We're for seafarers" and the seafarers were starting to get a little bit disenfranchised and sometimes the generosity can be abused, so, but apart from that we don't have any other real interaction.

**SA: You were saying before about, you know, the importance of you being in the city of Sydney area to kind of service the seafarers and, you know, the location's important but would it also be, like down this end of the city, you're quite close to a lot of the Asian kind of restaurants and supermarkets – is that important do you think?**

IP: Well, important to the Chinese. Mind you, you could be at Chatswood or Epping or anywhere and you'd have a similar benefit for them. But it's funny - we've had some Chinese complain about the number of Chinese in Sydney which is not what you'd expect because I think they're expecting a foreign experience and it'd be like us going to Shanghai and seeing it full of westerners, thinking "Hang on, what's going on here?"

86.03 But I think the rest of them tend to think it's great and often the Chinese will just get off the bus and race off down to Chinatown and, yes, that's an unfortunate thing. The others will seem to put something back into the Mission, perhaps by, you know, making

some purchases or even spending time but we find that the Chinese tend to be more the ones who will just use the facilities, use the internet and any purchases they make are down at Chinatown which they expect us to take back for them, things like that. So we've had to try and address a few of those problems but, yes, I'm sure a lot of them think that it's terrific being down there.

**SA: Now, you were saying before that your funding's getting a lot less but are there any other organisations within the city of Sydney that kind of support?**

IP: Not really. There's the Sydney Bethel Union is our chief benefactor. There are some other places that we can apply to for specific grants and the Australian Mariners Welfare Society as such but we don't get any other regular grant. The public are often quite generous to us and particularly people who have, you know, family who've been at sea and so they are often very grateful for what we've done and will continue to support us. But the financial times are often hard for people and I think generally the age whereby those who were, say, seafarers, Australian seafarers, are very few and far between now; they're getting older and dying and so there's not that local support base that there was, say twenty years ago.

88.07 So, yes, that affects us and that's one of the reasons why we've had to reduce our hours, because our income diminished significantly and not just from shipping companies.

**SA: I'm just also too reading some of the material that you sent me, that there was an award that you got presented that was Mission to Seafarers, is that right?**

IP: No.

**SA: No, O.K.**

IP:

**SA: Australian Maritime Safety Authority Award?**

IP: Oh, I think that was Mission to Seafarers Australia, not Sydney.

**SA: I see.**

IP: Yes. The Mission to Seafarers has a central council and oversees the Mission to Seafarers all 'round Australia and AMSA gave an award to the Mission to Seafarers Australia for that; it wasn't one specific station; that's why I didn't – I was thinking Sydney.

**SA: Yes, O.K.**

IP: Yes.

**SA: Look, I've probably come to almost the end of my questions.**

IP: Better that than your tether.

**SA: Well, I'm just a bit concerned too about time because it's clear for you?**

IP: Oh, actually, yes, that electrician should be in soon.

**SA: I'll just pause the tape for just one tick.**

IP: - - - reflect some of the changes that have – actually, before you do that - - -

**SA: O.K, so you just had to deal with the electrician just in that moment.**

IP: Yes. I mean just to point out what we needed but I'd already told them that but then the message he got was something rather different, so.

**SA: It's best that you attended to it.**

IP: Yes.

**SA: Now, in this booklet that you sent me it was talking about - - -**

90.02 IP: Socially.

**SA: - - - the many stories that this building's kind of witnessed over the years and there was one about a romance that you said could be historically relevant and important.**

IP: I'm not sure about one particular one, I'm not aware of individual ones but I know that a number of couples met via the Mission to Seafarers.

**SA: Really?**

IP: Yes, and particularly when we were down at George Street because seafarers used to be in for a week or so and they used to organise dances and outings and things like that for them. So every couple of nights there'd be dances and a lot of girls from different places would come in to dance with the seafarers there, just to spend some time with them and I think it was all quite chaperoned and what have you but that was the way it was and there are a number of relationships blossomed from that. Actually, one of our volunteers who will be in in about an hour, I think – oh, no, probably not in today – she met her husband in New Zealand at a Mission to Seafarers' function and our

fellow who's our treasurer here met his wife because they were both volunteers.

And so there are those contacts which happen but I don't know how many they are but I do know of a few, so.

**SA: Yes, just also too I've just picked up one of your brochures while you were seeing the electrician and it says specifically here "In the heart" – as in red – "of the city" so I guess that kind of highlights the importance of - - -**

91.51 IP: Yes. Well, we want to communicate that we have a heart for seafarers and, you know, obviously it's a pun being – if we move out of the CBD we'll probably still keep it, just the heart will be removed, transplanted – but we want to convey a sense of warmth and affection and care and heart is a good way of doing that. So hopefully we practice what we preach.

**SA: I'll just switch off the tape for one tick.**

IP: Question. So, no.

**SA: I've just got one more question and it really refers to very early in the interview when you were talking about only being a Christian two years before you went to study theology and yet you've been to Sunday school and church and so on all of your life, so I guess, you know, if this project's about belief it's kind of like I don't quite understand it.**

IP: That's O.K. I think – well, I didn't at the time either, can I say. I can recall someone asking me if I was a Christian and I've thought "Well, I must be. I sort of try to live the Christian life" and I think the idea of Christian was synonymous with being respectable and moral and those sorts of things. And I think because I had gone to Sunday school and because I hadn't consciously rejected, you know, a belief in that God exists or that Jesus was but the thing was it just didn't really matter, it was almost irrelevant except in tough times, of course, when you might get down and decide "I'd better pray" or something. So it wasn't so much a disbelief and that's why I thought because I wasn't doing really appalling, you know, things that I was O.K, yes, but when I started to realise who Jesus is I knew that things were rather different and although I knew about him I didn't know him.

94.10 One example, I suppose – now this is reflected in my motor racing interests – but like a lot of people my age and perhaps those who are older, the epitome of motor racing was Stirling Moss and I was too young to ever have seen him race in his prime but in 1976 he and Jack Brabham were to race at Bathurst and I went up there because I just wanted to be able to say "I've seen Stirling Moss race" and I was able to get into the pits. And I'd read - everything I could read about

Stirling Moss over the years I'd read and I knew an awful lot about him, I'd read his sort of autobiography and all of this, and I remember walking into the pits and there he was and I sort of looked at him and he looked at me and just looked straight past me and it hit me and I remember thinking "I know about Stirling Moss but I don't know him". You know, if you'd asked me about Stirling Moss I could have told you lots of things. If you'd asked Stirling Moss about Ian Porter he couldn't have told you anything and that was the difference there. With Jesus I knew about him but didn't know him, there wasn't that relationship, and I knew that I didn't belong to him in that sense. And I suppose it's sometimes harder to appreciate that until you have that sense of belonging and that happened, I suppose, firstly when I really appreciated who he was, that he had risen from the – and as I said I didn't know.

95.59 And, I mean, there are a lot of expressions that are used. You know, the traditional one which isn't a biblical one is asking Jesus into your heart sort of thing. But I think it was just a recognition and a matter of saying "I know you died for me and that I might be adopted into God's family" and it was when I asked him to do that, which I'd never really done before, that's when things happened. Now, I'll say what happened but I don't want to try and make it as though what happened with me ought to happen with everyone. When I relayed earlier that I was reluctant to go forward and felt this pressure, when I did so I felt something like whoosh in my feet and go out of my head, it was like a cleansing from within, and I remember thinking "What was that?" but I can only say that I think it was God's spirit, God's breath, his life sort of somehow sweeping through me and it changed me, I've never been the same since.

I don't have that same sense of that happening, it's never really happened again but it happened then and it turned me. Now, I can only say the bible uses the expression "born again" or "born anew" – the word "again" can also mean "anew" or "above" – and so in a sense to describe the word it would be "born again from above" and that's the only way I can describe it. It was a new beginning, I was able honestly to confess "Jesus is Lord" and not just in an objective sense but to know that my life was now different and in relation with him.

97.54 It's a little bit, I suppose, similar to people who might know each other as acquaintances but then the difference between knowing each other in a marriage and that's probably the closest parallel that I can draw, where there is that closeness. And that's been something that I've never doubted before. Beforehand I didn't – after I started to realise who Jesus was I didn't think I was a Christian because I suppose I saw what others had that I didn't and I knew that there was – but afterwards that was never, never at issue and it wasn't something that I did, it was something that was in kindness done for me. That's why I used that analogy earlier, I think before we went on

tape, you know, religion is man's answer to God, Jesus is God's answer to religion and also don't try and build yourself up to God, he's come down to you. And like most people I'd had that sense of trying to earn God's acceptance and thinking that I was good enough whereas you can never be good enough and so it was only a matter of realising "Look, I can't do it, it's an impossible task. Please do it for me". And that's why Jesus came, he came down to do for us what we could never do for ourselves and I'd been trying almost through me trying to be really good, trying to say "Well, I will do it my way, thanks" and I realised that was just a dead end so and then but there was an open door there and not so much me walking through it but I think being pushed through it as I described. So after that things were different. I mean I certainly didn't go to become perfect or anything like that; there's a lot of baggage that still is there and, you know, the New Testament describes that as "the old man versus the new man" and so there are a lot of things about me that aren't what they should be, there are some things that are good, needing to be worked on, you know, as a work in progress.

100.13 But at least I can say, you know, because of Jesus I know that God has accepted me and that I belong to him whereas before I didn't have that sense and that's something that we – for us to share that with other people isn't sort of trying to impose anything upon them. Evangelism has been described as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread and, you know, I'm still a beggar and seafarers are too. So, yes, that's.

**SA: Well that seems a very appropriate place to finalise the interview, I think, unless there's something that you feel that you'd like to say before we finish.**

IP: No. What about you? Well, I mean you're just as much in need of it as me and so it's important for you to have it. I mean, I sense that you're keen to know more and to have a sense – see, assurance isn't smugness or anything like that. Some people say – oh, because I might say "Look, I know that I'm going to heaven", you know, that "Oh, you must think you're so good". Not at all, you know, the whole thing of Jesus is because I know I can't do it but, you know, if someone gives you something you've got it and I just sort of sensed that you were looking for that and he's the one who can give it to you. All you have to do is ask – you can't be good enough.

**SA: Thank you. I think that's a very interesting thought.**

IP: Well, yes.

102.00 **SA: And thanks so much for doing the interview.**

IP: That's O.K. Well, I've put you on the spot at the end, isn't it?

**Interview ends**