

Day 65, (Saturday, 11/22/08) At Sea, Bags Out, Farewell, Explorations Speakers Q&A

This was the fourth day at sea since leaving Lahaina. Wind and sea were fairly calm with air temperature in the mid 60s. In the noon navigation report the captain said we had 14200 feet of water under the keel. In his last navigation report for this cruise he said that by the time we dock in San Diego we will have traveled over 20,400 nautical miles since leaving Seattle, Washington on 19 September.

With a minimum of domestic strife we managed to get eight pieces of luggage packed and identified with FedEx shipping tags. We placed them outside our cabin door. Here they are lined up in the hallway with Acep wondering how heavy they are. It didn't take long for Acep to take them down to the storage bin. If we are lucky, the next time we see them will be on our front porch at home. With the small amount of luggage we kept, it will be possible to walk off the ship tomorrow carrying all our own bags. With that arrangement we hope to be meeting our San Diego friends, Dave and Elsie, by 9 or 10am tomorrow.



With the luggage taken care of we could relax a little bit. We went to the Farewell Show put on the Queen's Lounge at 11am. Bruce Scudder the cruise director was the MC. He had some heartwarming thoughts about the memories that are created by cruising with old and new friends. Here is Bruce in the picture on the right charming the audience on this last day of the cruise. He is a good cruise director but he is also an accomplished pianist and used to be the music director on the Amsterdam. During his upcoming vacation after this cruise he has a piano performance engagement. He will return to the Amsterdam in January 2009 to be cruise director for the Grand World Voyage.



After describing all the things we should do to prepare for tomorrow's departure, Bruce had the band strike up the rousing tune of "Anchors Away" and the ship's crew strode on to the stage. People from all the service, navigation and entertainment areas of the Amsterdam took their places on the stage as the audience clapped in rhythm with the band. Finally they were all assembled and there was not an inch to spare on stage.



We feel that the crew of the Amsterdam is truly dedicated to delivering a good experience for the guests so we cheered them on with the rest of the audience.

After lunch, there was an interesting presentation in the Queen's Lounge where the three Exploration Speakers answered questions from the audience.

The speakers are shown in the photo on the right sitting on the stage. These gentlemen are really well informed in



their areas of expertise and have provided many hours of entertainment during the cruise. Going left to right in the picture the three men are Dr. John Palmisano (sea life microbiologist), Melvin Foster (Ocean Liner Historian), Dr. Jay Wolff (Historian-Story Teller).

They answered a wide variety of questions from the audience. About a week ago Dr. Wolff had given a lecture about modern pirates and defense tactics used by ships. He had said the use of fire hoses directed at the pirates was the best defense. He had not mentioned the audio sound blasters used as an anti pirate weapon by the Amsterdam. Orlin had wondered why Dr. Wolff

did not mention these sound devices so took this opportunity to ask Dr. Wolff about his reasoning. He said the reason for not talking about the sound equipment was that there wasn't enough time to mention all devices so only the most effective technique was discussed. Dr. Wolff said that the problem with the sound blasters was that everyone, including the ship's crew, would be damaged and/or disabled by the sound put out by the sound blasters. He maintained that a well trained ship's crew using fire hoses is the best non-lethal defense against pirates. There is a tendency to use non-lethal defense because in most cases the pirates have not killed the crew's on stolen ships. There is concern that if more deadly defense were used then the pirates would become more violent in their takeover of target ships.

Dinner in the dining room with our table mates for the last time on this cruise was both a happy and sad time. Wistful may be the right word for it. We have always looked forward to the dinner hour and meeting up with our friends for some light hearted chatting and sampling of the wonderful meals that are offered each evening. We were happy about how the cruise had allowed us to get back together with Bob and Esther and make a new friend in Joan.

However, it would be a long time before the five of us would be sharing a table again. That was sad. We consoled ourselves by talk of the possibility of planning another cruise in the months and years ahead. That was a happy thought and we ended the evening meal with that. Before we left the table Joan got together with her long time friends, Bob and Esther, for a little hug.



As we left the dining room there were hugs and hand shaking with the stewards. We exchanged friendly waves to passengers at adjacent tables whom we had grown familiar with over the last 65 days.

There has been some interest in how much time we have used on the Amsterdam's Internet Café system. At the beginning of the cruise we didn't know how much time we would need to do the blog and the email messaging. We pre-purchased 1000 Internet minutes for \$250 and then our travel agent gifted us with 1000 minutes so we had 2000 minutes to spend. For these 1000 minute packages the time costs \$0.25 per minute. We tried to be frugal with the minutes but we didn't really deny ourselves Internet surfing or email time when we wanted to do that. The manipulations to put the daily blog entry on the Internet usually took up about 5 to 10 minutes

and then email and Internet surfing would take another 10 or 12 minutes on the average. We have burned through about 1200 minutes by this last day of the cruise. We are leaving about 800 minutes on the Amsterdam books which we will lose but frankly we just didn't have the inclination or time to spend more minutes on the Internet. The 250 minute packages cost \$0.40 per minute so a 1000 minute package and one 250 minute package would have provided our 1200 minutes at less total cost. Some approach like that would be more sensible and we will try that in the future. While we enjoy sharing our experiences on the blog we have some self interest that drives the effort. We now have our 2008 Asia & Australia Cruise fully documented with pictures and text in .doc and also in .pdf format. Those files can be used to easily create a hard copy bookshelf version that we will be printing.

Tomorrow we will be sailing into San Diego Harbor at about daybreak. We will be up early to see Point Loma. Back in Orlin's Navy days Point Loma was a welcome sight from the USS PICKAWAY (APA-222) after a couple long deployments in the Western Pacific (WESTPAC). However, we have never seen it together from the perspective of a cruise liner. It has been a marvelous cruise and we look forward to more in the future. For the next week we will be visiting friends and family in San Diego so there will be no blog entries. We plan to make one or two more entries when we return to Oak Ridge and then leave the blog unchanged on the Internet for about a year.