

Day 60, (Monday, 11/17/08) Honolulu, Maui Divers, Hawaii Culture, Crew Show

The day started with the Amsterdam firmly tied up at Pier 10 in Honolulu, Hawaii, temperatures in the low 70s and intermittent light rain falling.

On a previous trip to Hawaii Barbara had purchased a ring with black coral and opal settings from a jewelry store called Maui Divers. Twice the ring has needed some repair work but each time it has been possible to return the ring to Maui Divers and have the repair accomplished (replaced missing stone) promptly at no charge. The main factory for Maui Divers is in Honolulu, close to the Ala Moana Shopping Center, and they provided a free shuttle bus from Pier 10 so this morning we decided to visit their factory.

When we joined the people waiting for the shuttle we found our table mates, Bob, Esther, and Joan waiting for the same bus. Soon the shuttle arrived and we were on our way with a very informative bus driver filling us in on Honolulu factoids and also extracting information about us in a very pleasant way. After a 10 or 15 minute ride we arrived at Maui Divers and were whisked up to the third floor

Visitor's Center where we were first shown a 10 minute video about the techniques for harvesting the black, red, and gold coral used in their jewelry. The coral they use has the same basic biological features as common coral found along the island shorelines but it grows in the shape of a small shrub and has a much higher density. Because of the higher density the surface can be polished to produce shiny jewelry stones. An example of the tree-like growth is shown on the right.



The coral material only grows at extreme depths in tropical waters, such as those around the Hawaiian Islands. While black and red coral has been harvested since about 1958 they said a gold variety has just recently been discovered and added to their line of jewelry. After the video we were led along a corridor lined with windows where we could see workers performing various jewelry fabrication tasks similar to the ones we had just seen in the video.

We were then taken to an elegant sales floor where all the jewelry they make was on display and the most gracious sales people were there to help you examine the product and hopefully make a purchase. We were inclined to do some serious browsing because we like the company and the product. We didn't particularly like the new gold colored coral jewelry but we ended up making some purchases.

One of the cleverest marketing tools was employed by a sales lady, Maria, who caught our eye and asked if we would like to see if we could win a free pearl. We said, "Sure" so she proceeded to open an oyster shell right before our eyes. There was a pearl inside. In fact, there were two large black pearls as shown in this picture we took. These were obviously cultured pearls made for this purpose but we were happy to be the proud owners of these "free" pearls. However, Maria had a suggestion.



Her suggestion was that we consider mounting the pearls in some ear rings or a pendant that Barbara might like. Wellto make a long story short the "free" pearls ended up attached to a couple gold pendants that we are taking home with us. Both ladies posed happily for this picture on the left.

We enjoyed our visit to Maui Divers and recommend it to others. However, sort of like a trip to Las Vegas, you should have an idea of what you might like to do and how much you can afford to spend before stepping in the door for the "free" tour.

We walked from the Maui Divers jewelry factory a few blocks to the Ala Moana Shopping Center. We did a little shopping and then we caught the "free" Maui Divers shuttle bus that swings by the shopping center and it took us back to the ship at Pier 10. We took the Maui Divers shuttle because it was convenient but there are many options for low cost bus transportation between the tourist centers in Honolulu. The city buses and a fun open air trolley run frequently and cost only a couple bucks or for seniors only a dollar to most destinations.

The shuttle dropped us off at the Aloha Tower Market Place outside of Pier 10. Barbara spied a decorative statue of a hula girl in the mall area and a long suppressed passion welled to the surface. While still a child she had lived in Hawaii and must have been imprinted with the sensuous moves of the native hula dancers. Before she drew a crowd we took this picture on the right and beat a hasty retreat to the Amsterdam.



In the afternoon we ventured forth again to check out the nearby city area that included the state capitol building and the Queen Iolani Palace. We walked along the attractive pedestrian mall that leads from Pier 10 into the business district near the State Capitol Buildings and Palace.

The state library building has an attractive mosaic in the lobby depicting important events in the history of Hawaii, as shown on the right. The arrival of the first Hawaiians, subsequent migrations, and finally the arrival of the missionaries are depicted.



The state capital building where the legislature meets has a very attractive architecture. Taking a lesson from ancient Hawaiian building practice, the structure has a large opening at the base that allows the breezes to blow through from the mountains or from the ocean. Here are a couple photos of the building.



We found a stature of Queen Liliuokalani in front of a huge banyan tree near the State Capital Building. She was the last Royal person who ruled Hawaii.

The banyan tree near the capital building was a thing of beauty. The large banyan tree in Lahaina has received much publicity over the years but this tree on the capital grounds in Honolulu is taller and in its own way is at least as magnificent as the famous one in Lahaina. The picture below attempts to convey what a wonderful specimen this tree is.



We proceeded on to the Queen Iolani Palace which was covered with decorations in celebration of King Kalakaua's birthday. We were ignorant of the royal heritage of the Hawaiians but the tourist literature we read stressed the importance of the royalty to the Hawaiians in the 1800s.

The colorful bunting in honor of King Kalakaua suggests that many Hawaiians still think the history of royalty in Hawaii is important. A picture of the decorated Palace is shown on the right. In this picture a large Hawaii state flag is hanging down on the front portico.



The design of the flag originated with King Kamehameha the Great who commissioned the flag in 1816. It has eight alternating white, red and blue stripes representing the eight islands of Hawaii. The British Union Jack represents Hawaii's historical relationship with Great Britain as its protectorate. The connection with Great Britain goes back to Captain Cook who gave the islands the name of Sandwich Islands in honor of Lord Sandwich who sponsored part of Cook's expedition.

Speaking of King Kamehameha the Great, his magnificent statue stands proudly in front of one of the government buildings near the state capital, as shown on the right.



In the evening on the Amsterdam there was a Hawaiian cultural show in the Queen's lounge. A band and students from a hula dancing school in Honolulu came on board and gave us a great show. The students were in the 6 to 13 age range and except for 3 boys were all girls. The announcer was the head instructor and she was accompanied by her husband and father who provided the guitar and mandolin music. Here are some photos to show the students performing.



We thoroughly enjoyed the display of traditional dances and appreciated the effort of the students and instructors in keeping the ancient culture alive in modern times.

Later in the evening the Filipino and Indonesian crew put on a show for the passengers in the Queen's Lounge. These shows are a tradition on the Amsterdam and represent a lot of extra work for the staff in organization and rehearsals. We are always grateful for the cheerful and dedicated service staff that we have on board. The shows they put on are just another dimension of what they do for us. The service staff can be broadly divided into people from the Philippine Islands (Filipinos) and people from the Indonesian Islands. Based on their religions the Filipinos (Catholic) are in jobs that involve serving liquor while the Indonesians (Hindu or Muslim) tend to be in the housekeeping staff where handling liquor is not required.

During dinner this evening we were given programs of the Crew Show identifying the performers we would be seeing on stage. Our headwaiter, Janar, from Bali, Indonesia had a part in organizing the show for tonight. In a playful way he said that after the show he would be so famous and surrounded by admirers that he would be unreachable. However, he had not yet been discovered so he could autograph our show programs at the dinner table tonight. Here he is on the right autographing Orlin's program. We joked with him about putting the autographed program on Ebay when we got home.



Most of the performers don't get off their regular service duties until 10pm so the show didn't start until 10:30pm. The Filipinos were on stage first in native costume. They put on demonstrations of three intricate and formal dances for us (Castanet Dance, Harana and Tinikling). The picture on the right shows a scene from one of the dances.

There was a bit of audience participation as two ladies were brought on stage to be serenaded with a love song by



two Filipino men. When the ladies were chosen we got a big kick out of the fact that our Cruise Critic friends, MaryLou and Diana (lusyrsgirl) from Ohio were the favored recipients. The picture below shows the lucky ladies and the men doing the serenading.



Next came the Indonesians who put on a show that included the Saman Dance (Welcome Dance) and the Kecak Ramayana Dance. The Kecak Ramayana Dance was the main event and told a story about conflict between good and evil with monkey troops representing mankind in-general. We got a couple pictures, as shown below, that give the flavor of what we saw.



In the scene above the monkeys are bowing down to a visiting king.



In the scene above the "Good King" saves the day.

At the end of the show the crew got a standing ovation with shouts and whistles. We really appreciated the performance they put on.

The Amsterdam got underway about 11pm headed for Lahaina on Maui. That will be our last stop before the cruise ends with our arrival in San Diego on November 23.