

## **Day 53, (First - Tuesday, 11/11/08) At Sea, The Southern Cross, Chocolate Extravaganza**

At daybreak there was an overcast sky, calm sea and temperature in the high 70s. We were cruising northeast toward Western Samoa and the island of Upolu. Our destination on Upolu was the capital city of Apia. At the noon navigation report by the captain we were 92 miles from the island of Tonga with 8300 feet of water under the keel. We had 350 miles to go before we reach Apia tomorrow.

**Southern Cross:** The day started early when Orlin got up about 2am and discovered the sky at that time was clear and stars were shining brightly. We had wanted to see the Southern Cross (Crux) constellation at least once while we were south of the equator and this looked like a good time to go out on deck and try to find it. . In another day or two of cruising northward it would not be possible to see the Southern Cross which would be below the horizon. The time for this sighting was growing short. Barbara could not be coaxed out of bed so Orlin went on his own. The ship has most of the common deck areas well lighted 24 hours a day which hinders star gazing. The only place that is dark enough at night to see the stars clearly is the highest deck of the ship which is on the roof of the Crow's Nest Lounge. From that vantage point the Southern Cross was successfully seen by looking to the south off the starboard side of the ship. It was not possible to photograph the Southern Cross with the digital camera but many images are available on the internet and we copied this one on the right to show what the constellation looks like. One way to help find the constellation in the sky among several possible star combinations is to compare it with the crucifixion cross. In the Southern Cross the vertical part of the cross is about 1.5 times the length of the slightly tilted horizontal bar of a cross. With some satisfaction we could "cross" off another item on our cruise to-do list.



**Veteran's Day:** About 10am, Bruce, the cruise director came on the PA system to remind the passengers and crew that today was Veteran's Day and the need to keep the sacrifice of our military forces firmly in our minds. He then had the entire ship observe a minute of complete silence as a memorial to fallen service personnel. There are many former military people on board and this moment was appreciated by all.

**Deck 3 Cocktails:** Diana (lusyrsgirl) called about 4pm and invited us to an impromptu cocktail hour on the Promenade Deck at the stern of the ship. Some of the same people were there who were at her Halloween Party. It was a good chance to get together with friends and make some new acquaintances. Everyone enjoyed Diana's Deck 3 Happy Hour. Here are the circle of friends anchored by MaryAnn (front left), Barbara (front right) and Diana (blue blouse & dark glasses) leading the cheers.



**Chocolate Extravaganza:** This evening there was what was called "The Chocolate Extravaganza". This is a night time show of sweets in all imaginable shapes and sizes arranged on tables set up around the pool on the Lido Deck. The chefs and dining room stewards worked many hours preparing all the ice sculptures, pastry and candies that were put on display to the enjoyment of the passengers. We took our camera to the Chocolate Extravaganza to record the wonderful scenes but, mustering all the restraint possible, we carefully avoided indulging in the fattening fare. There was a nice crowd of people happily working their way around the tables with the chefs and cooks standing to the side enjoying the scene.





The following are a selection of photos we took of the displays that had been laid out for us to enjoy.



Here on the left is Janar, our dining room head waiter, getting ready to prepare one of his special flambé dishes for tonight's extravaganza.

As we browsed around the tables there were magnificent displays of chocolate and other goodies too numerous to mention. However, we attempted to give an impression of the event with these following pictures.



We tore ourselves away from the table and made our way back to our stateroom before we gave in to the temptation of all that chocolate.

We really appreciate all the cooking artistry that goes into the preparation of the pastries and candies. There is also a lot of pure manual labor that is needed just to set up the tables and other decorations that go with this event.

The staff worked late into the night clearing the Lido Pool Deck for the usual day time activities that would follow tomorrow.

Another event of the day was the crossing of the International Date Line. This is always a confusing event but the bottom line is that at midnight tonight the clocks go back 24 hours and we repeat Tuesday, November 11 once more. This gains back the day we lost (September 24) when we were traveling west across the Northern Pacific near the start of the cruise. Several people celebrated birthdays in the dining room earlier this evening and we are wondering if on the second November 11, tomorrow, we will see them celebrating again.