

Day 51, (Sunday, 11/09/08) At Sea, Church Services, Amsterdam Bridge Tour

The day started with a clear sky, temperature of 75F, and calm sea. In the noon navigation report by Captain van Zaane he said that we had 10,900 feet of water under the keel. We were cruising in a northwest direction towards Fiji at a speed of about 21 knots which is near top speed for the Amsterdam.

Church Services On-board: This was Sunday and we attended the Interdenominational Protestant Church services which lasted about one half hour. The chaplain, Rev. Dick Huber, took note of the serious fall of a passenger that he witnessed in the Noumea cruise ship terminal yesterday. We had also witnessed the accident and mentioned it in the blog yesterday because it seems quite severe. In Rev. Huber's prayers he asked for healing of all the people who have suffered accidents and injuries on the cruise. On this cruise the protestant chaplain has been conducting interdenominational services on all sea days for passengers and crew. A Catholic priest holds mass every morning for passengers and crew except when we are in port. When we are in port mass is held in the evening. There are Jewish Sabbath Eve services held on Friday evenings. There may be other Jewish services but we are not aware of them.

Amsterdam Bridge Tour: About two weeks ago we heard about the possibility of having a tour of the Amsterdam bridge. The bridge is the control center for steering the ship and a place of real interest for us but it is not open to casual visitors. We were eager to take the bridge tour so we asked the front office to put our names on the tour list. Within a few days we had an invitation for a tour on November 9.

Today our friends, Ray and Ann joined with us and 8 other passengers invited to meet in the Crow's Nest Lounge at 1:00pm for today's tour of the Amsterdam Bridge. The Third Officer, Mr. Philip Spence, collected us and we went through two key-pad locked doors on the forward end of Deck 7. We entered into a wide space that makes up the bridge of the Amsterdam as shown on the right. The bridge is enclosed in glass across the front for forward viewing.





The bridge is located high up on the ship superstructure to afford a good view of traffic or obstacles in the path of the ship. The bridge also has protrusions of about 8 feet on each side with windows both high and low on the wall to provide unobstructed view forwards and backwards and down along both sides of the ship. This configuration is illustrated in the picture on the right which shows the protrusion of the bridge on the port side with a search light mounted below for night use.

Mr. Spence, on the extreme left in the photo below, started his tour by gathering his eager students around the propulsion control console on the port side of the ship. Barbara wasn't missing a word.



He explained that all the navigation communication and steering of the ship under normal and emergency conditions is controlled from the bridge. The Amsterdam has two main propellers at the stern of the ship. The propellers are attached to an AC electric motor that is housed on a feature called a "pod". The pod is positioned so the propellers face forward and the motor is behind the propellers. The propellers turn and push water out the back of the ship so they pull the ship through the water. This design with the propellers pulling the ship instead of pushing it may have some efficiency benefits because the water is not disturbed by a drive train or motor housing before it enters the propellers. On the propulsion control console there were handles that could be rotated to rotate the propeller pods to move the stern of the ship one way or the

other. This control could also be done with a simple "joy" stick in the control panel. The propellers are driven by 21000 HP AC electric motors and the diesel electric motor generators on board burn about 150 tons of fuel per day. The maximum speed of the Amsterdam is 22 knots.

In addition to the two main propulsion propellers on the stern, the Amsterdam has propellers mounted in tunnels below the water line that pass through the bow perpendicular to the axis of the ship. These propellers in the cross tunnels are called thrusters. They can push water through the tunnels to the port side or to the starboard side depending on which direction the bow of the ship needs to go. The propulsion control console is used to precisely control the main propellers at the stern and the thrusters in the bow in order to provide unusually good maneuverability for the Amsterdam. Port regulations may require that a tugboat be present during docking and leaving the harbor but usually the Amsterdam main propulsion and bow thrusters provide all the control that is needed to dock or leave a pier. There are duplicate main propulsion control consoles on each side of the bridge so that the person controlling the ship can be in the optimum position at all times. Here is a picture of the control console on the right.



Mr. Spence next described the stabilizers that the Amsterdam has for minimizing roll of the ship in the interest of passenger comfort. The stabilizers are 12 foot long steel "fins" that can be swung out from both sides



of the ship below the water line at midships. The fins can be tilted up or down independently as the ship moves through the water. By alternately driving one side of the ship down and the other side up in opposition to the natural motion caused by wave action, the amount of roll experienced by the ship can be reduced. There is a control console near the center of the bridge that is dedicated to the stabilizer function. A picture of the

fin stabilizer control console is shown on the left. A system of computers, gyros and servos control the machinery that runs the stabilizers.

While Mr. Spence was talking it was possible to browse around the bridge at any piece of equipment that was of interest. Here we find Ray and Ann inspecting some instruments that weren't on the agenda. As former owners of a serious sail boat they probably had more appreciation for the instrumentation on the bridge than some of the rest of us.



Mr. Spence frequently asked if we had any questions. Here on the left it appears that Ray has responded with an inquiry. Mr. Spence gladly answered any questions that we might have about what we found on the bridge or general maritime issues.

For those of us who daily walk around

the ship on the Lower Promenade Deck (Deck 3) it was comforting to find that there is a security camera focused on that deck with a monitor display on the bridge. Here, on the right, is a live camera image of a lady doing her walk on the Lower Promenade Portside Forward (LWRPRMPORFWD). Our table mate, Esther, has been known to walk the Promenade deck at 3 in the morning so we were comforted to know that someone was watching her.



After about an hour Mr. Spence had described most of the larger pieces of equipment on the bridge and we had pretty much run out of questions for him. The tour was brought to a close with our thanks to Mr. Spence for a job well done.

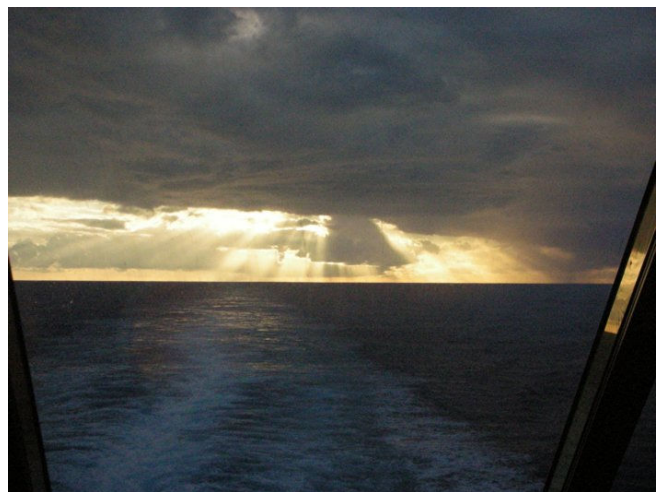
We were in the process of leaving the bridge when there was a disturbing emergency announcement over the public address system. The alarm was "Bright Star – Bright Star" followed by instructions for special teams to report to a specific cabin on deck 3. Later that evening we learned from Joan, our table mate, that the gentleman who had fallen in the passenger terminal in Noumea yesterday had deteriorating vital signs and this was indeed an emergency.

Frank Buckingham gave a port lecture about the upcoming port of Apia in Samoa. His description left the impression that we should expect a pretty laid back population and the most interesting attraction may be the home of the late Robert Lois Stevenson. We'll look in to that.

Dr. Jay Wolff gave a lecture about modern day pirates. He described a piracy industry that is thriving in an area off the coast of Somalia but may be decreasing in activity off the coast of Southeast Asia. There is a paradox in the situation faced by the shipping industry. They lose fortunes when pirates attack their ships but they hesitate to defend their ships more aggressively for fear that the pirates will become even more heartless in the treatment of captured crew and hostages. In addition, when ships are recovered from pirates the shipper doesn't want the expensive asset tied up in legal limbo for months or years so they typically just retrieve their ship and forget about prosecution. Also nation states like China and Somalia may actually be working with the pirates so formal legal action is not likely to pay off. On a more positive note, Dr. Wolff pointed out that the use of fire hoses by trained crews have been effective in fending off some of the smaller and less determined pirate attacks. Strangely he didn't mention the sound blaster defense system that is posted on the Amsterdam with watchmen when sailing in pirate waters.

During dinner we were able to view a beautiful scene as the sun was low in the west with light streaming down through the clouds.

Barbara captured this scene through the back window of the dining room on her trusty camera which is always at hand.



Tomorrow we will visit the city of Suva in Fiji. That was cannibal country at one time. Hopefully the natives will be friendly.