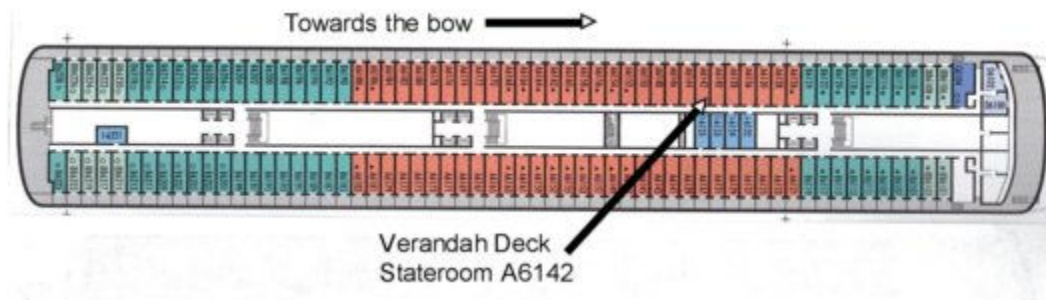


Final Cruise Preparation: We kicked off final preparation for the cruise when the shipping tags for our luggage arrived and our travel agent, Wanda, told us that our cabin number, A 6142, had finally been assigned. Our cabin will be portside on deck 6 and a little forward from the middle of the ship as shown below.



As part of the standard cruise price for our cabin Holland America included unlimited luggage shipment from our home to Seattle and then back home from San Diego at the end of the cruise. With our room number now established we faced up to the challenge of getting 5 suitcases packed and ready for pickup by FedEx on September 10. For this 65 day cruise through both cold and tropical waters we knew that a wide range of clothes types would be required. For that reason unlike prior cruises, we decided to number each piece of luggage and create a detailed inventory list for what each suitcase contained. As the shipment day approaches we can check our inventory to give our failing memories some assurance that we know what was packed. We kept the inventory on our laptop computer so when we find ourselves wondering if some specific item has already been packed we can search the WORD table and find which suitcase it is in. Some extra thought was required to avoid packing the clothes and other articles we want to take with us when we fly to Seattle on September 18. We'll find out later if we were successful in that effort.

After the 5 bags destined for the FedEx truck were packed we compared our inventory with the "Cruise Survival Kit" list that Lyle (70 +) posted on Cruise Critic back on August 9. This exercise led to inclusion of two pronged extension cords for laptop computer and digital camera recharging. Lyle had brought up the possibility that there would be no three pronged electrical sockets in our room so taking three pronged electric extension cords might not be useful. We also added the recommended spare prescription eyeglasses and a few blank CDs for safely storing our picture files as they accumulate during the cruise. Friend, Jean (ausieoz), cautioned that in some cases the only electric socket in the living room is three pronged and used by the refrigerator. With that suggestion we also packed a three pronged "power strip" so we could keep the refrigerator going and still charge our batteries. With Cruise Critic contacts like this there should be a minimum of unexpected problems. A quick check of the luggage weight showed that the loaded bags ranged from 21 to 60 pounds for a total of 195 pounds.

On September 10, 2008 the long anticipated day of the luggage pickup finally arrived. With all the effort we had put in to packing we were really looking forward to saying goodbye to those bags. At 2pm the FedEx lady backed her truck down our driveway. In



short order the paper work was taken care of and the luggage was whisked out the door. Before the truck disappeared up the driveway we took a quick picture of our driver and the load of luggage she was taking off our hands. This concept of shipping the luggage ahead is

surely one of the great travel convenience innovations of recent years.

One unintended consequence of our decision to take the cruise was that we will be gone from home on the birthdays of three special people in our family. First there is the September birthday of grandson, Andrew, and then Barbara's sister, Joyce, in October and shortly before we get back our son, Scott, has a birthday in November. During the summer a conspiracy theory was hatched that we purposely chose this cruise to avoid being home on their birthdays. To ensure that we would be welcomed back home at the end of November we decided to have a combined



birthday party for the three of them before we left town. The celebration took place on 14 September, the last Sunday before catching our plane to Seattle. Here we are gathered around the family table for the birthday dinner. Finally it was time for the birthday cake and the celebrants joined forces to blow out their candle.

There was one other item that needed attention before we packed our bags for the flight to Seattle. At Christmas time each year we have an open house and invite our friends to help us celebrate Christmas. This year we scheduled the event for 13 December which is only two weeks after we return from the 65 day cruise. We decided to get a jump-start on the open house preparation by putting up a few Christmas decorations before the trip started. The snowmen playing in the family room were complaining that the Christmas tree was not decorated so Barbara added some poinsettias to



keep them happy while we are gone.

Now we will concentrate on getting our luggage packed for the plane trip to Seattle on 18 September.