

**Day 67 –At Sea–Friends–Guest Talent Show–Internet Time–Luggage-1 Dec 09:** The day started with overcast sky and calm sea. The temperature was in the low 60s as we approached Long Beach on this last day of the 2009 Grand Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific Voyage.

The sky showed a little color for a few minutes with sunrise and Barbara was able to capture the scene. It wasn't spectacular but since this was the last day of the cruise we thought it should be included in the photo album, as shown on the right.



We took note of some other Last Day moments that we want to



remember. One event was the receipt of the last piece of underwear from the laundry, carefully wrapped in tissue paper, as shown on the left.

**Friends:** Other events were much more memorable as we said our goodbyes to friends we had only known before on the Internet. Now we had shared 63 days with them on the ship and on tours of beautiful ports of call. We squeezed Karen in between us in this picture on the right.



Next we got a photo of Bud and Dawn.



Then we got a picture of Bonnie and Neville with Karen in between, as shown on the right...



Later we found friends Janice and Jeff in the photo department and got their photo, shown below.



Rosemary came by for a quick goodbye while we were in the photo department so we got her picture also, as shown on the right.



**The Guest Talent Show & HAL Chorale Presentation:** At 3pm there was a Guest Talent Show & HAL Chorale presentation in the Queen's Lounge.



The guest talent shows can be quite good so there was a large turnout of passengers in the Queen's Lounge seats waiting for the show, as shown on the left.

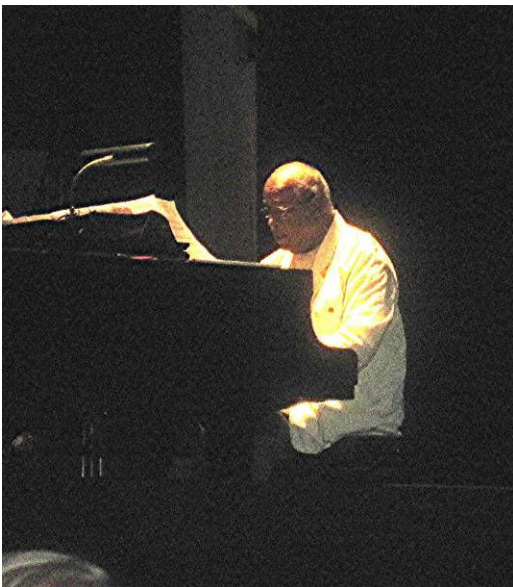


Steve, the Assistant Cruise Director came on stage as shown on the left and introduced the acts.

The first act was a repeat performance brought back by popular demand. It was Cathy, delivering a humorous contrived prayer from a Grand Cruise person on the last day of the cruise. For example, it asked for help in surviving without stewards and that you have at least one shirt you can still button over your well fed stomach for the trip home. She



touched a lot of points that got laughs.



Next was Bill who played some classical music on the piano, as shown on the left.

Allison was the next brave talent to show her stuff. She performed a hula dance with vocal music to accompany the Hawaiian guitars, as shown on the right. She did a good job of showing the fluid movements of the classic Hawaiian dance with her hands making the signs that represented the words being sung.



There was a slightly ribald act called "The Tai Cheekies". This was a group of men who went on stage in their



bathrobes and danced around to some lively music while pretending to be flashing each other, as shown below. At the end they turned and gave us a full flash revealing that they actually were wearing colorful boxer shorts.

There were several other people who entertained us for about an hour and we appreciated their efforts on this last day of the cruise.

As a final talent act Bruce brought on the HAL Chorale singers to present what they had been rehearsing since early in the cruise. We had heard the rehearsal sessions were non-stop giggling and laughing, but they sang a medley of songs that got us all clapping and in a buoyant mood. The group assembled on the stage and sang with Bruce conducting, as shown below.

This was probably the best act of the afternoon.



At the end of their presentation and after Bruce complimented everyone for a job well done, the Chorale Group gave him surprise recognition in the form of a banner reading “**Bruce UR D Best!**” as shown below.



We all enjoyed the effort that went in to the talent show. It left a nice feeling of community and demonstrated that the time we have spent together had given us the ability to “let our hair down” and have fun with friends.

**The Dreaded Luggage Issue:** After dinner it was time to put our luggage out in the hallway so the stewards could haul it down to the storage room. Tomorrow, after docking the luggage will be transferred to a large room in the terminal building where we can retrieve the luggage we are taking on the plane and FedEx can pick up the luggage they are taking directly to our home.



Shown below are a couple hard working stewards preparing to move some other passenger's luggage down on the elevator.



Some of the passengers have exhausted their supply of suitcases and have resorted to cardboard boxes as shown on the right.



We had four large suitcases with FedEx tags and one with a “Pink 2” tag on it indicating we would pick it up in the terminal building. The line-up of our bags in the hallway outside our stateroom is shown on the right. Soon the stewards would whisk them away and we will spend the next few days hoping to be reunited with the FedEx four after we get home.



Later in the evening the collection of suitcases in the hallway grew until it extended all the way to the end, as shown below.



**Internet Café Expense:** At the beginning of the cruise we thought that it might require 1000 Internet minutes to handle all the blog and email time that we would need. Our TA, Wanda at AAA East Tennessee, bought a 500 minute package (\$175) to start with. We had intended to add another 500 minute package but we found that the first 500 minutes was just enough to do the whole cruise.

There are two primary reasons for the reduced time need. The Amsterdam Internet transmission rate turned out to be higher than our prior experience. The most important contributor to reduced time was that we adopted a new procedure for uploading the blog each day. On prior cruises we would upload the blog entry and then go in to the Internet and download that daily entry just to be sure it had been properly posted and would work. With this cruise we changed the procedure. We simply uploaded the blog and then relied on our son, Steve, to check it daily. If there was a problem in downloading the blog entry he would either fix it or email us about the problem and we would fix it. Fortunately, there was only one instance of a problem in uploading the blog entry. That change in procedure cut in half the time spent on the Internet. The other reason for reduced time requirement was that data transmission rate was faster than our prior experience. The transmission rate was typically 35 to 45 kilobytes per second although at busy times of day, like right after dinner, the rate could drop down to 20 kilobytes per second. We avoided using the internet during slow transmission rate times. Our blog entries were typically 5 to 8 MB and a typical time on the Internet for the blog upload and email transmission was on the order of 5 to 7 minutes.

We have enjoyed publishing the blog of the cruise and hope that readers may have enjoyed it also. We plan to leave the blog on the Internet for at least a year. The 2009 Grand Australia, New Zealand & South Sea Cruise was everything we had hoped for. We had not been to New Zealand before and now we have at least a little notion of what that wonderful nation is like. We see many elderly people on the ship with handicaps related to age and that convinces us more than ever that we must do things like this while we are able.

After this entry there will be several days without a blog entry as we stay overnight in Los Angeles and then fly home on December 3. It will take a few more days for our luggage to arrive by way of Federal Express. Hopefully we'll be able to report good news that everything arrived in good shape.