

Day 66 –At Sea–Crew Farewell–Cruise Critic–Tipping–Cruise Quilt-30 Nov 09: The day started with overcast sky, calm sea and temperature in the mid 60s.

At 10am there was a Champagne Disembarkation Presentation and Crew Farewell for all passengers in the Queen's Lounge. Bruce Scudder, the Cruise Director, opened the event by having us all raise our Champagne glasses and sharing a toast to all the good times we have shared together on this cruise. He then went through a detailed description of the procedure that will be in place for debarkation on Long Beach on December 2. It all seemed very familiar and like other debarkations we have participated in. We are staying overnight on December 2nd in the Crown Plaza Hotel near the Los Angeles airport so we don't have an airline flight schedule to worry about on debarkation day.



The main event this morning was the Farewell from the Crew. Bruce first used the two huge screens at the front of the Queen's Lounge to show members of various departments waving their hands and wishing us well on our departure. After two months on board we could recognize a good number of the people on the screen. After the video show Bruce called on the actual crew members to file into the Queen's Lounge and assemble on the stage. The band played as the different departments filed in, all waving their hands and having a good time. We got a few pictures as shown below.

The various specialty chefs were put in the front and then the dining room staff assembled on the stage while the passengers in the audience cheered them on.





When this passenger in the green shirt saw her favorite Indonesian guys from the restaurants around the ship she couldn't stop herself from standing up and waving.

The Filipino bar stewards shown below in maroon colored jackets were also a popular group.



The Front Office and Hotel people shown below, in white, may not be as popular as the people serving food but we have found them pleasant and competent people to deal with.



The Room Stewards made up a large contingent on the stage and they brought their signature Towel Animals with them to show off. It's hard to make out in this photo but one man in front is holding the famous towel monkey swinging from a clothes hanger.



Finally Bruce introduced Captain Fred Eversen, shown on the right. Captain Eversen gave a short speech. He said that in the 14 years that he has been sailing with Holland America this was his most enjoyable cruise. He gave most of the credit to a crew that



was enthusiastic to do whatever was needed to improve the experience of the passengers.

In the photo above, Captain Eversen is flanked by the male and female lead singers in the Amsterdam Singers and Dancers. After the Captain's speech the lead singers and the rest of the cast on stage sang the song, "Love in many Languages". In view of the many countries represented by the passengers and crew, and the memorable relationships that have formed during the cruise, this song seemed very fitting for a concluding statement.

Karen has been organizing Cruise Critic luncheons during the cruise and today was designated a Cruise Critic Luncheon Day. Shortly after noon we went down to the dining room for our last lunch with the people we have gotten know through Cruise Critic get together.

More than 20 people attended and we filled 3 tables in the lower dining room. We got pictures of most of the assembled Cruise Critic fans as shown below.



Left to right:
Dick, Ann and
Karen



Left to right: Michael, Jean, Doug and Bonnie



Left to right: Bud, Dawn, John, Eris, Karen, Brad, Pauline and Mike



Left to right: Geoff, Barbara, Orlin and Robert



Neville and Bonnie

Tipping: We had a lot of fun with fellow Cruise Critic folks talking about events that took place during the cruise. Another relevant subject that came up was the gratuity (tip) that is often given at the end of a cruise to the stewards who serve us food and take care of our rooms. Holland America has a system of automatically adding \$11 per day as the Hotel Service Charge and that money goes into a common fund that is divided up among

the members of the service crew. Every passenger guest has the option of not contributing the \$11 per day to the Hotel Service Charge pool and some people do that by signing an opt-out form at the Front Office. As part of the Cruise Critic conversation today we learned that Holland America has a policy that requires stewards who receive gratuities to put that money into a common pool if they receive it from someone who has opted out of the \$11 per day Hotel Service Charge. On the other hand, if they receive the gratuity from someone who participates in the system that puts in the \$11 per day into the Hotel Service Charge then the steward can keep the tip. In today's conversation it was recommended that people participating in the automatic Hotel Service Charge system should include a note to that effect with any additional tip given to a steward. The steward could then use the note to justify not giving his tip to the common tip pool. If we were hearing this thing correctly it seems that the administration of it would be a nightmare and we wanted to know if this system really existed.

We went to the Amsterdam Front Desk and asked one of the attendants about this gratuity system that hinged on the passenger participation in the automatic Hotel Service Charge. She did not hesitate in explaining the system which we had heard correctly. She did add some additional information when we asked how the steward or his boss was supposed to know whether or not the passenger giving the tip had opted out of the automatic Hotel Service Charge system. She said a list of passengers is compiled showing who has signed papers opting out of the automatic Hotel Service Charge system. That list, or a relevant part of it is provided to the stewards who are then honor bound to check the list when they get a tip and turn it over to the community tip pool if the passenger who gave the tip had opted out of the automatic Hotel Service Charge system.

This still seems like a nightmare system to administer fairly and we probably haven't heard the whole story. However, the additional tips are traditionally given on the last day of the cruise and that is coming soon. We plan to include a note with our tips saying we participate in the automatic Hotel Service Charge System. Whether or not the steward has the master list, he can use our note to help justify holding it back if queried by his supervisor. Tipping is always a delicate subject and this system is something we would like to know more about.

Time Change: At 2pm the announcement was made that all ship's clocks were being moved ahead one hour to 3pm because we had moved in to the Pacific Time Zone of the US. Now we are at the same time as our destination, Long Beach, California.

Quilting: Jean Watson is a passenger who boarded the Amsterdam in Long Beach and has been on this cruise for 63 days. Early in the cruise Jean was featured in a "Fifteen Minutes of Fame" interview with Cruise Director, Bruce Scudder. We learned that she is an avid quilter and she had taken on a quilting project that was shaped around the 2009 Grand Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific Voyage. She was creating an approximate 6 inch by 6 inch block of quilt each day with a quilted image showing a highlight of the cruise for that day. Her plan was to assemble the blocks into a full sized quilt by the end of the cruise. Well, here we are near the end of the cruise and Jean has

completed the quilt which she had titled, "Grand Voyage Block-A-Day". Today in the Daily Program it was announced that Jean's quilt creation could be viewed in the Rembrandt Lounge at 2pm. We went down to see the quilt and along with a bevy of other interested passengers we thought Jean had produced an imaginative piece of art. Her intention is to hang the quilt on a wall space she has already prepared in her home.

It was difficult to get a good picture of the quilt but we did our best. Below are some photos of Jean's creation.

Jean is standing here in front of her quilt wearing her whimsical hat from the South Pacific. For each port we visited she had an individual square showing some major attraction for that port.

For example, in Brisbane there are zoos where you can find lots



of Koala Bears. Accordingly, she used a Koala Bear to decorate the Brisbane, Australia square of the quilt, as shown on the left.

For the Tauranga, New Zealand port Jean used the New Zealand Kiwi bird to represent that place as shown on the right. The Apia, West Samoa square was just below the Tauranga square.



For sea days she would usually have a block just showing an ocean horizon with an occasional flying fish.



Some of us, like Bonnie, here on the left, risked life and limb to get an overall picture of the quilt in the restricted space of the Rembrandt Lounge.

The best overall picture of the quilt that we got is shown below. The quilt is 7 blocks wide and 9 blocks long so each of the 63 days of her cruise are accounted for. Jean has really got something to be proud of and a great memento of the cruise. We appreciated her taking the time to show us her creation today.



The sea tonight is calm and the Amsterdam has a gentle rocking motion. We continue to sail on our northeasterly course toward Long Beach and our appointment with disembarkation on December 2nd.