

Day 58 – At Sea – Crossing the Equator Ceremony – 22 Nov. 09: The day started with a moderate sea, partly cloudy and temperatures in the mid 80s.

This was a momentous day because we crossed the equator headed north at about 11:30am. As pointed out in the Daily Program the Amsterdam was in a lot of trouble because we didn't ask the permission of King Neptune to cross the equator when we sailed southward over a month ago. Then we violated that cardinal rule again this morning as we sailed northward. Now we had to face this ancient God of the Sea and seek his forgiveness in an attempt to assure our safe passage for the rest of the cruise. In the finest tradition of the sea, some of the ship's staff were rounded up and sacrificed to placate King Neptune as well as entertain us passengers.

At 2pm there was the Crossing of the Equator Ceremony on the Lido Pool Deck. People started gathering an hour in advance in order to have a good seat. At first sighting of King Neptune riding across the waves in his chariot there was a mighty blast from the ship's horn to give him proper recognition. Very soon he showed up on the Lido deck with his attractive mermaid consort. The crowd lining the rails and sitting on the deck, as shown in the photo on the right, cheered wildly in an attempt to gain his favor.



King Neptune then recited the charges against the Amsterdam and asked what the ship was going to offer in order to prevent severe retribution. A white wigged and black robed prosecutor, who looked a lot like Bruce, the Cruise Director, then proceeded to explain that we recognized our violation of King Neptune's realm. He begged for King Neptune's forgiveness and said we were ready to punish offending shipboard personnel and offer sacrifices. King Neptune said he was willing to listen to our story and we should proceed. The prosecutor then called in the members of the ship's crew who had been rounded up to serve as sacrifices for the ship.

The captured people were brought in, chain-gang style, roped together. They were placed in a crowded jail cell that had been rigged up on the Lido Deck as shown on the right.



Once the prisoners were safely in jail the ship's officers paraded in and took their seats, as shown on the left. They would serve as a jury to decide the ultimate fate of the captured people. Captain Eversen was sitting in the middle. He is an avid photographer and usually has a camera when we see him at the gangway or elsewhere. Today was no exception and he was

ready to record this ceremony with the serious looking camera he was holding.



At the opposite end of the Lido Pool from the officers was a huge fish on a pedestal as shown on the left.

In between were some of King Neptune's energetic helpers who would soon go in to action.

With all the players in place it was time to start the kangaroo court session.

The prosecutor called out individuals or small groups of individuals and read off trumped up charges that usually involved playing tricks on the passengers. Of course that got the assembled passengers riled up and they hooted and called for severe punishment of the prisoner. A team of King Neptune's helpers dressed in scrubs would then apply some

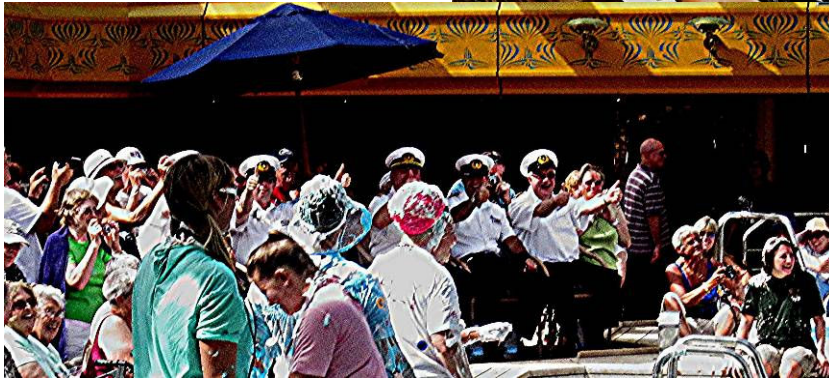


noxious green goo as pre-punishment torture. King Neptune would then say the prisoner should either be sacrificed into the pool or they could go sit quietly and contemplate their sins on the edge of the pool. However, before judgment could be passed they had to "Kiss the Fish". At the urging of the prosecutor the passengers would all start chanting "Kiss the Fish". This scurvy looking group shown on the right was typical of the scoundrels who stood quivering in front of King listening to the "Kiss the Fish" chant.

There was great hilarity as each of the captives was forced to “Kiss the Fish”. There were various forms of kissing, from the fake “no touch”, to this enthusiastic “tongue lashing” by the Singers and Dancers lead singer, shown on the right.



After the ritualistic Kissing of the Fish, King Neptune asked the ship's officers to decide whether the captive should be sacrificed into the pool or granted a pardon.



The ship's officers would reply with a thumbs up or thumbs down, as shown on the left.

Needless to say, a good number of the prisoners were also subjected to additional slathering with goo in a process shown vividly below.



On the other side of the pool some of the victims were being given an additional treatment with buckets of flour before the slime treatment. The mist rising in the air above the “treatment center” in the photo on the right is some of the flour that escaped.



The survivors of this ordeal collected at the far in of the swimming pool, as shown below, hoping that they could escape notice from King Neptune.



After an hour or so of these high jinks the last of the prisoners was convicted and punished. King Neptune granted us a pardon so we could proceed on to Honolulu. In addition, we all got certificates in our stateroom attesting to our having found favor in the eyes of King Neptune and we were now honorary members of the Ancient Order of Shellbacks.

After the crowd had thinned out there were some people who weren't quite ready to call a halt to the festivities. They were prolonging the show by having their picture taken while, of all things, kissing the fish. There's no explaining this but it did happen. Our friend Rosemary indulged in this ritual as shown on the right. Her husband, Bob, had done his thing before we could get a camera on him.



Barbara puckered up and delivered a fake kiss.

Finally, Orlin had to join the crowd or be labeled a "cold fish".



We enjoyed the Crossing of the Equator Ceremony and especially appreciate the effort put in to the show by the ship's crew. The age of the "prisoners" who got sacrificed today was not much more than that of our grandchildren. Without that good humor and physical ability of youth this custom would soon perish from this earth.

The good ship Amsterdam continues to plow through the deep Pacific Ocean on the way to Honolulu. After today there will be two more sea days and then we arrive back in the Good Old USA!