

Day 25 – At Sea – Mariner’s Lunch – Jean & Carol - 21 Oct. 09: The day started with overcast sky, moderate sea and comfortable temperatures. The morning was spent finishing the blog input for Suva and going through the process of signing up for some land tours in upcoming ports. Otherwise it was the typical kickback time that we love about sea days.

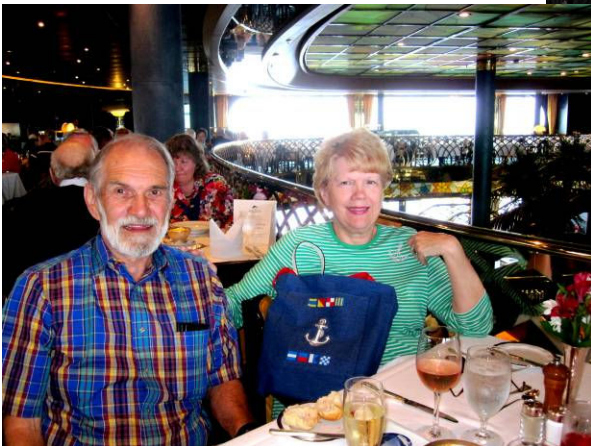
At 11am we went down to the dining room where there was a special champagne lunch for long-time Holland American cruisers called “Mariners”. This was an event to recognize passengers who had sailed with Holland America for 200 or more days. Those passengers were designated Four Star Mariners. Four Star Mariner status entitles members to some special perks like free laundry and pressing services and reduced prices on some other services while on a cruise. We qualified for the Four Star Status on this cruise and have particularly enjoyed the free laundry and pressing service.

Captain Eversen gave a short speech in appreciation of the loyalty of the passengers in the room to Holland America. He promised even harder work in the future to justify our allegiance to Holland America Line. He was too far away for our camera to get a good photo but here is our best effort as he is shown with microphone in hand on the left.



The luncheon was very nice. Barbara got up and circulated around the dining room to get photos of some other people shown in the following pictures. Many of our friends are Cruise Critic fans with Internet nicknames so those names are also shown.

Here are Ron and Adele (Ronvoell) at their table, on the right.



Doug and Jean (aussieoz) were also there. It was good to see that Doug had survived his Zip Line tour of the rain forest in Fiji yesterday.

Flora and Carl, shown on the right, are both over 90 years old but obviously staying active. We often see them around the Amsterdam decks. Flora is known for her attractive hats and enjoys dancing at the Ocean Bar in the evening.



We sat at a table with Valerie who is a loyal Cruise Critic fan and also our table mate for the evening meal. Valerie (SDHALFAN) doesn't like to have her picture taken so we can't show her in this photo on the left of us (TENNCruisers) at the luncheon table.



Just for the "Foodies" we show the sea food cocktail that was the appetizer for the luncheon today. We thought it was particularly colorful and delicious.



On the way out of the luncheon we were fortunate to meet up with Dick and Ann (ANSalberg). They are friends from the 2007 World Cruise when we had adjacent rooms



and had many conversations over our "backyard" verandah enclosure. In the picture on the left they are proudly displaying their Gold Medallion awards received today for having sailed over 500 days with Holland America.

The day promised to have more good times in store for us as our next door neighbors, Jean and Carol, invited us to drop in before dinner for champagne. About 4:30 we took the short walk to their cabin and popped the cork on their bottle of champagne. Here on the right we are toasting our good fortune for sharing this wonderful cruise in the South Pacific. These two lovely ladies are sisters with Jean, next to Orlin in the photo, living in Hawaii while Carol lives in our neighbor state, Kentucky. The hour passed too quickly and then it was time to go to dinner. Fortunately, we will be seeing these good neighbors frequently during the rest of the cruise.



After dinner we went to the evening show in the Queen's Lounge featuring the Amsterdam Singers and Dancers. They put on a great show under the title of "Tribute" which was a celebration of Las Vegas entertainers of the "Rat Pack" era. The fabulous sets and costumes matched the talent of the Singers and Dancers.

After the show we turned in early so that we could rest up for tomorrow's visit to Port Vila, in the Melanesian Archipelago of Vanuatu.