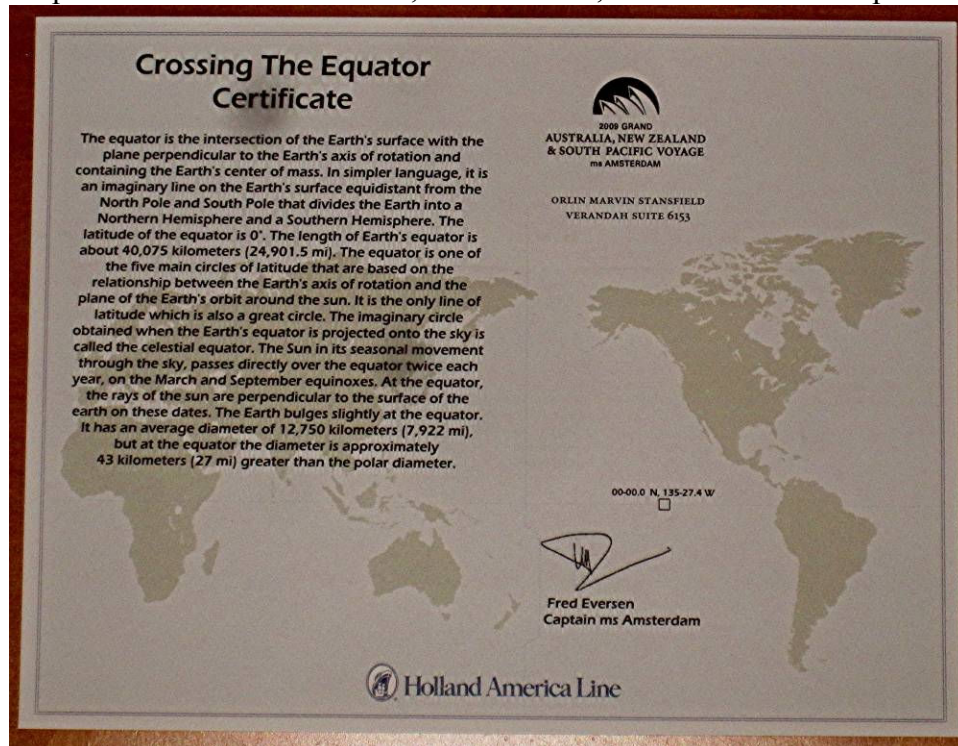


Day 11 At Sea – Cruise Critic Lunch–Benefit Concert–Doug & Jean-6 Oct 09: The day started with a moderate sea and some white caps visible on the ocean. However, with the stabilizers working the Amsterdam did not roll significantly. There were broken clouds in the sky and sunshine with temperature in the mid 70s.

Crossing the Equator: In our mailbox this morning we found certificates for both of us in recognition of the fact that we had crossed over the equator during the night. The certificates were not very elaborate but they duly described the significance of the Equator and the fact that we had crossed this important geographic feature of the globe. We took a picture of Orlin's certificate, shown below, to record this accomplishment.



Port Talk: At 10am we attended a port lecture by travel guide Barbara who told us about the things to see and do in Moorea, Bora Bora and Raiatea, the French Polynesian islands we will visit after Nuka Hiva and Tahiti. Barbara emphasized that the island population is pretty relaxed and we should expect a slow pace during our visit. However, there will be plenty of beautiful scenery and native handicrafts to examine. She gave a hint that some typical tourist costs may be high. The price of a nice meal in a restaurant can be about \$80 per person, a Bloody Mary drink may cost \$20 USD and taxis cost about \$75 USD per hour.

Foreign Money Exchange: We purchased 3000 Francs (XPF) or Currency of French Polynesia (CFP) for \$39.71 USD. We can use this currency on the next four islands for small purchases and tips that we give the tour guides. For the cost of tours and any heavy duty purchases we expect to use a credit card.

Cruise Critic Luncheon: A little after noon today we went down to the dining room where a luncheon for Cruise Critic Contributors was scheduled. Karen (KweenKaren) had arranged with the dining room manager for a group of tables to be reserved just for Cruise Critic people. The group assembled and the stewards did their usual excellent job of serving the selected dishes. There were about 30 of our hardy Cruise Critic fans at six tables and we got pictures of each table



as shown below.





Karen went around and greeted the people at each table as shown on the left.

Nothing in the rules says you can't have a little dancing during the lunch hour!



Hopefully, blog readers will find some of their friends or relatives among the Cruise Critic folks shown in these pictures.



Benefit Concert: Just as the cruise was starting about a week ago there were reports of natural disasters in the form of earthquakes and a Tsunami in Indonesia and torrential rain with flooding in the Philippine Islands. Many of the ship's crew came from those two countries and they had family members whose lives were disrupted by these terrible events. There were multiple inquiries by passengers about how they could help the affected Amsterdam workers. In response to those questions a collection box was set up at the Front Office on Deck 4 and people were making donations. In recognition of the concern and generosity of the passengers some talented Indonesian and Filipino crew members gave a Benefit Concert at 2 pm in the Queen's Lounge today. The Cruise Director, Bruce Scudder, shown on the right, welcomed everyone to the Queen's Lounge and explained about how the natural disasters had impacted some of the families. He said the crew wanted to give the Benefit Concert as a way of saying "Thank you" to the passengers for their concern and financial help.



A wonderful concert then followed with individual and group performances of Indonesian and Philippine musicians and dancers. We didn't get the names of the performers but some of the acts are shown in the following pictures.



This group of Filipino musicians, shown on the left, is known as the Rosario Strings and entertains daily in the Explorer's Lounge. Today they played a rendition of "The Orange Blossom Express" that rivaled anything we have heard in the hills of East Tennessee.

These Indonesian men in full costume, as shown below, gave a performance of the traditional "Salmon Dance".



We were treated to a beautiful ballad called "Hope" by the performers shown below.



Even Cruise Director Bruce Scudder, an accomplished pianist, contributed a beautiful performance to the afternoon's concert. Bruce is shown at the piano in this rather grainy photo on the right.



After the concert was over, many of the passengers filed by the contribution box at the Ship's Office where they deposited more money. We are hopeful that the families that have suffered so much as a result of these recent events can quickly return to their normal lives.

Doug and Jean: A couple years ago we met Doug and Jean (aussieoz) by way of the Cruise Critic (www.CruiseCritic.com) message board. They live not far from us in East Tennessee so we got together and formed a friendship even before taking the Asia

Australia Grand Voyage together in 2008. We were happy when we learned they were also taking this cruise to Australia and New Zealand. We have enjoyed meeting about the ship from time to time since embarking in Long Beach and today they dropped by our cabin for a drink before dinner. They have lived in Australia and are experienced cruisers so there was a lot to talk about. We got a photo of our happy little group before we had to break for dinner.



Tomorrow we arrive at the island of Nuka Hiva and drop anchor in Taiohae Bay about 7am. We have a full day of touring scheduled to see some of the volcanic interior of the island and the beautiful shoreline we have been hearing about.