

Hollywood – Amsterdam Check-in, 30 Sept. 09: Before checking in to the Amsterdam for the cruise we thought it would be fun to spend part of the day at the site where famous movie stars and other entertainers are commemorated by placing their names on stars that are embedded in the sidewalk along Hollywood Boulevard. An even more famous attraction is at the nearby Grauman’s Chinese Theatre. At that site important movie stars have imprinted their hand and foot prints in fresh concrete pavement at the entrance of the theater. The imprints, along with greetings to Sid Grauman, serve to provide a permanent recognition of the person’s accomplishments in the entertainment industry.

With our tourist plans in mind we checked out of our hotel and headed north from San Pedro to Hollywood about 9am. It took about an hour to reach Hollywood where we got off the 101 Freeway and drove down Hollywood Boulevard. When we passed the intersection of Hollywood and Vine we knew we were getting close. Sure enough, Grauman’s Chinese Theatre appeared on the right hand side of the street and we started to see the stars, outlined with brass borders, embedded in the sidewalk. We parked the car and started walking down the sidewalk reading the names on each of the stars. Here are some pictures we took of the stars we recognized.



The sidewalks containing the embedded stars continued for several blocks along Hollywood Boulevard leaving the appearance as shown on the right.

We continued following the stars along the sidewalk until we came to the crowd of tourists in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre. That's where the real action seemed to be. It was a busy scene as people were exclaiming happily when they discovered the feet and hand prints of a movie star they liked. It was difficult to get clear pictures of the imprints but a few examples are shown below to provide some notion of what we were seeing.



The photo on the left shows Bob Hope's hand and feet prints.

Sid Grauman started this practice when he opened the Chinese theme theater in

1927. It has continued by invitation to the stars up to the current day. We suspected that the younger tourists milling around didn't recognize most of the movie stars that we could remember from our child and your adulthood. This colorful one by Jack Benny probably fell into that category.



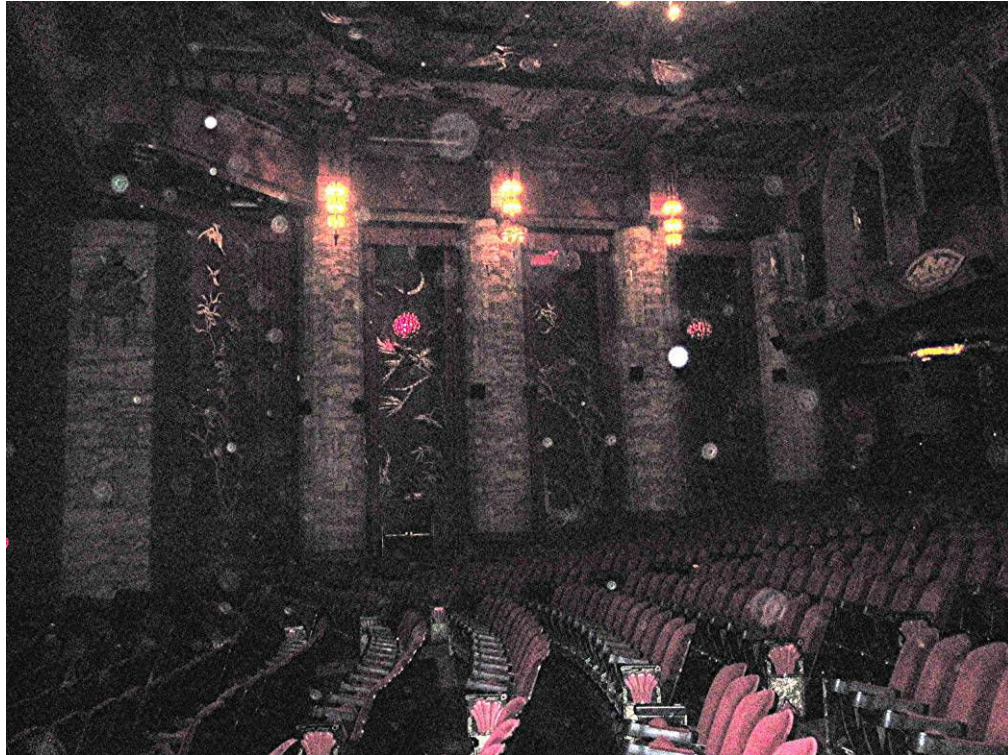
Barbara has always liked Margaret O'Brien whose feet and handprints were there to see.



This photo shows some of the crowd milling around the imprinted pavement in front of the ornate entrance to Grauman's Chinese Theatre.



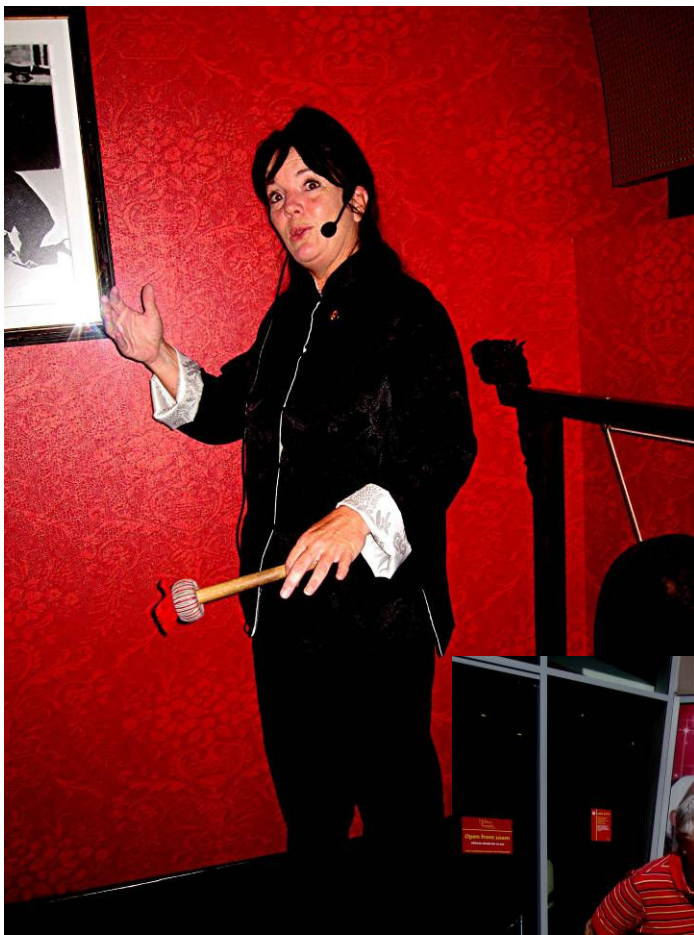
Before we left we bought tickets and took a 30 minute guided tour of the inside of Grauman's theater. Our tour leader, Beverly, was quite dramatic as she told us of the marvelous history of the theater and how Sid Grauman started it back in 1927. She took us into the huge, high ceiling theater where they were preparing to show an afternoon movie. We took this picture with marginal lighting but the grandeur of the place still shows through.



One person was sitting in one of the seats waiting for the movie to start. We were hoping the survival of the theater didn't depend on this sparse attendance.

Our guide then took us upstairs where we were shown the VIP lounge and theater seats. This picture shows the attractive lounge area where people could congregate before and after seeing a movie.

In the picture below, Beverly is showing us a collection of photographs of famous movie stars of yesteryear. Beverly's style and presentation was more fun than the substance of what she was saying. She carried on like she was performing on stage and could well have been an actress just doing this as a fill-in job.



We finished the tour and headed back to the car hoping the parking meter time hadn't expired while we were gone. Dave and Orlin paused briefly at nearby Madame Trousseau's Wax Museum display to say hello to Marylyn Monroe.



Leaving the Hollywood scene we retraced our path on the freeway back to the Los Angeles Harbor area. After a couple wrong turns in the confusing tangle of highway interchanges serving the port area we found our way to the Long Beach cruise terminal where the Amsterdam had docked early this morning. We said our farewells with our good friends Dave and Elsie after making plans to get together next January. They were then on their way home to San Diego while a porter took our luggage and we made our way in to the Cruise Terminal for the check-in procedure.

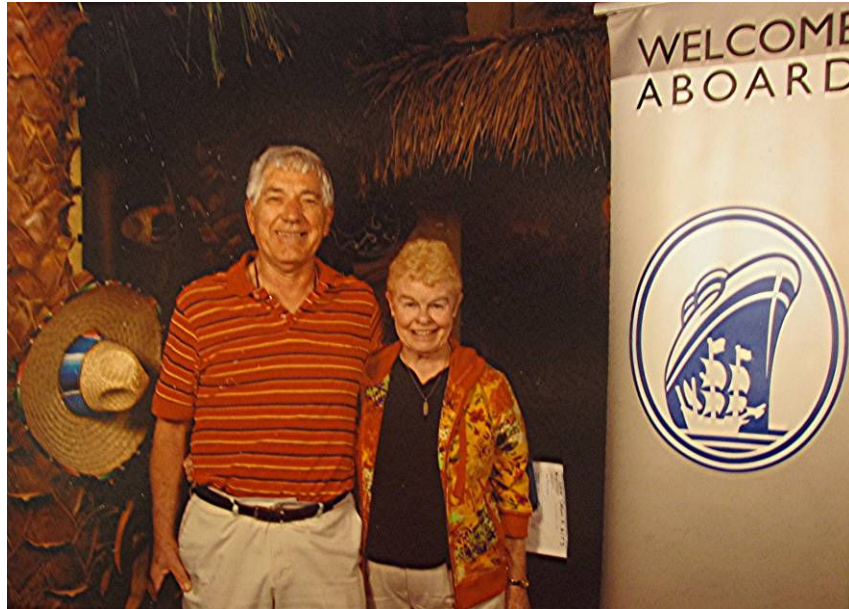
Cruise Check-in on Day 5 of 67 Day Grand Voyage from Seattle: The Grand Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific Voyage of the ms Amsterdam started in Seattle Washington 5 days ago. The Amsterdam arrived in Long Beach, California this morning. Therefore, our check-in and participation in the voyage started on Day 5. The Daily Program that we receive from the ship each day will count the cruise days beginning with Seattle. In order to avoid confusion when comparing events discussed on the blog with cruise activity described on the Daily Program the blog will report our first day on board as Day 5 of the voyage with cruise days increasing from there.

In the Cruise Terminal we received one of the best perks possible as a result of our status as four star Mariner Society Members. We received the four star status as a result of sailing over 200 days as passengers on Holland America ships. As a result we



could use the empty check-in line reserved for four star members rather than the other check-in line that was very crowded and appeared to be hours long. It was difficult to be discrete about this privilege of going ahead of other folks who had been waiting a long time and we probably made matters worse by taking this flash picture of Barbara waiting the few minutes it took to be called to the check-in counter. However, we weren't big enough people to turn down the opportunity.

There are so many things that can go wrong in making the long range plans necessary for a cruise. After checking in and getting our room keys we were feeling a great sense of relief. There was an opportunity to have our picture taken to celebrate the moment and we jumped at the chance.



Once we got to our room we quickly took a look around and shot a few pictures from the verandah. The Queen Mary Hotel could be seen close by and the walkway we had just passed over from the Cruise Terminal Building was also visible.



We took a quick tour around the deck and found Jeff along with his friend Vicky lounging in the sun on the back Lido deck. Both of these friends were on the Voyage of the Vikings cruise with us in July. It was good to see them again.



Even before the ship got underway we had a lifeboat drill to acquaint people with their lifeboat station and the proper way to put on a life jacket. We took some traditional photos of this routine.



After the lifeboat drill we returned to the Lido Pool Deck where we were chatting with other passengers when the ship pulled away from the Long Beach dock. We were finally on our way to the South Pacific!

Looking around we noticed that even the friendly Long Beach sea gulls were joining the passengers in celebrating the festive mood of the moment.



At 5:30pm it was time for early seating in the main dining room so we wound our way down to Table 53 on the upper deck (5). There we finally met Karen whom we had been corresponding with for the last 18 months as we shared ideas about blogging and getting ready for the cruise. It was great to meet Karen as well as our other table mates, George, Judy, and Sandy. This is shaping up to be a memorable cruise. During the meal the waiters, Romli and Didi brought long stemmed red roses and gave one to each of the ladies at the table. It was a very nice gesture on the part of the ship to kick off the Grand Voyage for us. All the ladies were very pleased.

One sad note came on the evening news that reported major earthquakes near the islands of Samoa and also near Padang, Sumatra in Indonesia. The resulting tsunami tidal wave caused major damage and loss of life in Samoa where we were scheduled to visit Pago Pago on October 17 and Apia on November 20. Many of the Indonesian crew on the Amsterdam have family members on Sumatra and are no doubt extremely concerned about the conditions there. We will be watching the news closely as the magnitude of these two disasters becomes better known.