

### **At Sea – Grand Show Buffet - Day 68 Dec. 03:**

It was still dark when we got up at 6am. The Amsterdam continued to bounce along at a moderate level over choppy sea.

At 9am we went to the “Good Morning Amsterdam” TV show. Gene and Adele had the two dancers from last night’s Queen’s Lounge show as guests.

They introduced Ryan and Ashleigh Di Lello, a married couple engaged in competitive dancing. They were finalists on FOX’s “So You Think You Can Dance” and guest



performers on ABC’s “Dancing with the Stars”. Near the end of last night’s performance in the Queen’s Lounge Ryan had suddenly had to stop dancing and they left the stage. This morning everyone was eager to learn what had happened to Ryan last night. He was walking and moving normally as he and Ashleigh took their seats on the TV set. It turned out that last night Ryan had become dehydrated and suffered muscle cramps in his legs. They started out mild but got worse and he was concerned that when he lifted Ashleigh in the dance he might drop her. There was some mild pitching and rolling of the ship that added to his concern for keeping his balance with his leg muscles painfully cramped. Anyway, he was completely recovered now and ready to put on another performance if the opportunity comes up before we reach Long Beach Port. Ryan and Ashleigh gave a brief history revealing that they met through mutual friends participating in competitive dance. They instantly liked each other but were actually competitors for a few years of their friendship. They finally formed a dance team and eventually married.

At 10am we attended the lecture given by Astronaut Tom Jones. Today he was talking about the future of space exploration. He said that in the US there will be more private company participation in view of the shrinking support from the federal government. He emphasized that for private industry to get involved there would have to be some sort of financial incentive. He didn’t emphasize the tourist business aspect of space travel but instead suggested that space could be mined to bring back to earth expensive metals used in industry. His idea was to take advantage of the asteroid belt that circles the sun in an orbit between mars and Jupiter. Some asteroids contain large amounts of nickel which is a relatively scarce metal on earth that is used in production of important alloys in modern industry. Using current technology a round trip to the asteroid belt would take about 6

months. Apparently plans exist for government and private industry to collaborate and prove the feasibility of bringing asteroid material to earth by 2025. The idea of bringing back useful amounts of nickel or any other material from asteroids at a competitive price seemed preposterous to us but perhaps we are too firmly anchored in the last century.

At 11am we went to the Grand Show Buffet photo opportunity. This is a Holland America tradition on Grand cruises. The kitchen staff puts together an extravaganza of breads, desserts and all manner of foods you would find at a fine buffet. We browsed between the rows of delectable foods they had prepared and took pictures of the things that really caught our eye. Shown here are a few of the pictures we got.



Bread of all kinds and in all shapes --



Watermelon with rind carved to form a fanciful fish ---



There were lots of creations made out of dark and white chocolate but the white chocolate Eiffel Tower shown on the left was our favorite.

Henk Mensink, the Hotel Manager, was looking on with justified pride.





We attended the regular Cruise Specialists International (CSI) Chat Time that takes place at 11am when the Amsterdam is at sea. The CSI on board ambassadors, Lucia and Henk Barnhoorn, organize these daily get-togethers and we have found them very useful for gathering information and forming new friendships. Today the trials and tribulations of getting ready to leave the ship was a topic of conversation. There was a good sized group at Chat Time today. Lucia drafted a bystander to take our picture so most of the “CSI Chatters” could be included.



At noon Captain Eversen came on the PA system and gave us the ship's position. We were 1550 miles from Honolulu and we had 730 miles to go before we reached the port of Long Beach.

In the afternoon at 3pm there was a Guest Talent Show organized by Mark, the Assistant Cruise Director. There were several people who sang solos; one person read a poem and another person told a humorous story. Those acts were entertaining but we didn't get any good pictures. The best performance was put on by the Holland America Lines (HAL) Chorale, made up of passengers and organized by Larry, the orchestra director. They had practiced one hour on each day we spent at sea. In the picture on the right Larry is at the piano and the HAL Chorale is singing one of a medley of songs written by Irving Berlin.



Most of the passengers are now taking the luggage packing issue seriously. There was a noticeable drop in population in the public areas of the ship as people worked in their staterooms. Toward evening there were even a few suitcases out in the hallway and ready for pickup a day ahead of schedule.

The sea continued moderately bouncy but not uncomfortable through the day and into the night. The outside temperature was in the mid 60s. It was possible to walk the deck wearing a good jacket but the wind was a little too strong for comfort.