

At Sea –Day 67 Dec. 02:

We woke this morning at 7am before sunrise. The sea was smooth but after our tropical exposure the outside deck temperatures, in the high 60s, seemed too cool for comfort.

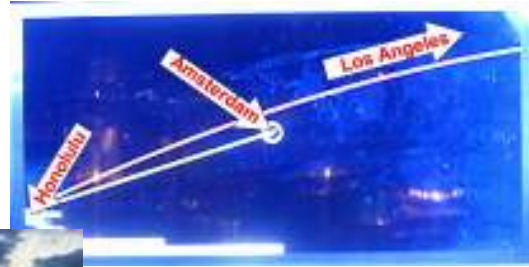
We went to the Cruise Critic farewell meeting in the Crow's Nest Lounge. There were on the order of 110 Cruise Critic followers on board and this morning at least half of them attended the meeting called by Ray (JORAY) who had meeting invitations sent out a few days ago. This was a meeting between friends who had a lot of good times to share. Champagne was served around the room and the conversations rolled along spontaneously. We sat by Norm and Sue from a town just south of Cairns in Australia. We had all been at Tisa's Barefoot Bar in Pago Pago on the great tour organized by Pauline. Like us, they thought the gathering of friends at Tisa's Bar was a magic moment and place. The conversation level was rising to a roar when Ray called the meeting to order, as shown in the picture on the right. He thanked everyone for participation and he gave particular recognition to the Amsterdam staff for the strong support they have given our organization. Ray repeated the comment he has made before that the name "Cruise Critic" should more accurately be "Cruise Lovers". We all agreed but the brand is already well established so probably won't be changed. Ray invited comments from the others in the room and several people gave their thanks to specific people, particularly those folks who had organized the independent tours. The tours



organized by Cruise Critic folks were excellent and significantly less expensive than other options that were offered. In addition, we all thanked Ray for taking the lead in organizing the Cruise Critic meetings, luncheons and several tours.

Gene Young, shown on the left, then thanked us for cruising with Holland America and expressed his gratitude for the friendliness shown by Cruise Critic folks during the cruise. We understand that this Grand Asia and Australia Voyage was his first assignment as Cruise Director and he has done a great job.

The noon position of the Amsterdam was about 1000 miles from Honolulu. As shown in the picture on the right. We are on a northwesterly course on the way to the Long Beach Port in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.



The dress for the evening was formal. This will be the last formal night of the cruise. We didn't have any officer host at our table tonight but we got a picture of the five of us, as shown on the left (from the left: Barbara, Orlin, Esther, Bob, and Fred).

The traditional parade of baked Alaska around the dining room took place tonight. There was a pause for the well deserved recognition of the chefs and dining room staff that has served all this wonderful food during the cruise. However, we were disappointed that even the sparklers had been eliminated from the baked Alaska carried around the room. Traditionally the electric lights were lowered and the lighted baked Alaska could be seen dancing along above the heads of the waiters carrying it. Tonight the electric lighting stayed at the normal level as the simple white plates of baked Alaska were carried around the room. It appears the essence of that tradition has passed. The explanation for the change is that automatic fire alarms and sprinkler systems can be triggered by the traditional flames and sparklers have been known to set ladies' hair on fire.

After dinner, Lucia and Henk Barnhoorn, the Cruise Specialists International (CSI) ambassadors for this cruise held a farewell reception for CSI clients in the Crow's Nest Lounge. Champagne and other drinks were served all around by the stewards. Early in the event Lucia gave a toast to the participants of this cruise but instead of saying goodbye she said, "Tot Siens", Dutch for "until we meet again". Very nice. After all these days on the cruise the many people who were strangers at the start of the voyage were now friends. Conversations among the different groups were lively and animated. Henk and Lucia circulated among the guests joining the conversations and giving good wishes for future travels. We were able to catch the elegantly dressed Lucia and Henk together for this picture on the right.



The entertainment tonight in the Queen's Lounge was the dancing of Ryan and Ashleigh Di Lello. They are a married couple who have been finalists on FOX's "So You Think You Can Dance" and guest performers on ABC's "Dancing with the Stars". The ship was pitching and rolling slightly and unfortunately, near the end of the performance Ryan had to stop dancing and the show was brought to an end. We hope to learn how serious his problem may be.

We returned to our stateroom and found that Holland America had given us a pillow gift in the form of four luggage straps and two nice leather luggage tags, as shown in the picture on the right. This was a very timely gift since we have just finished cramming 6 bags worth of stuff into 5 pieces of luggage. Those straps will give us a little confidence our luggage won't burst open in transit. Thanks Holland America!

