

Honolulu, Hawaii – Day 64 Nov. 29:

At 5:30am it was still dark as the Amsterdam was approaching Honolulu and the lights of city could be seen in the distance. About 6am the Amsterdam was tied up at the Pier 2, cruise terminal on Channel Street. We were docked a few blocks south of Piers 10 & 11 where cruise ships frequently tie up next to the Aloha Tower. An early morning view of Honolulu from the Amsterdam, with Diamond Head in the background can be seen in the picture below.

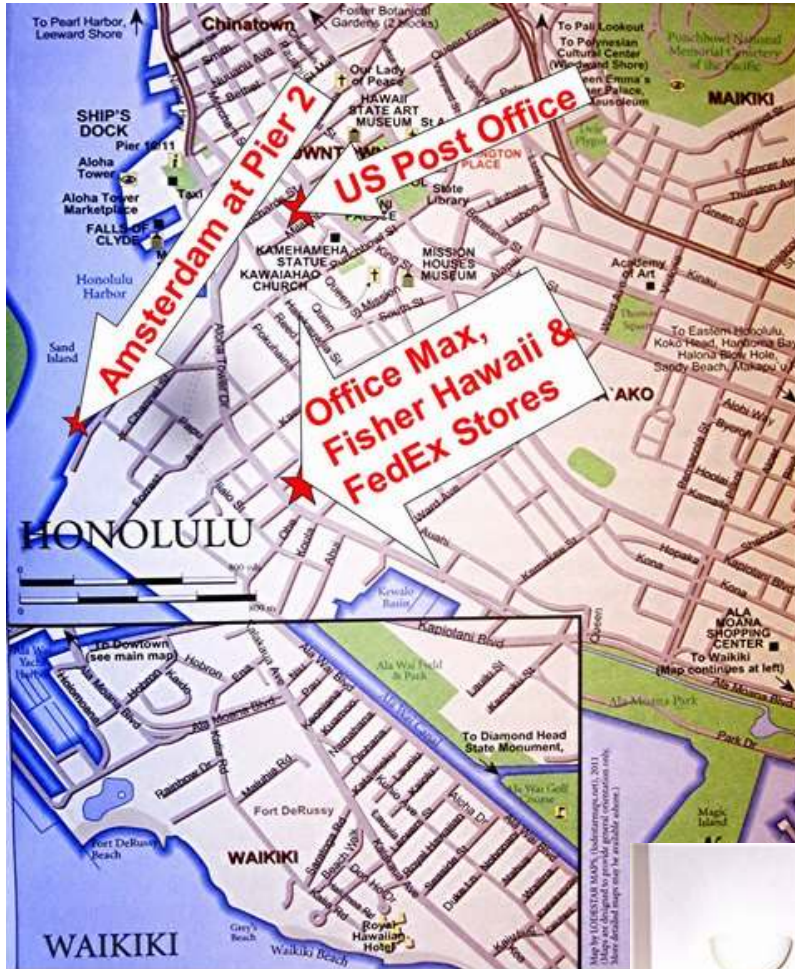


We have been to the Hawaiian Islands many times and have visited most of the popular tourist spots. Consequently, we didn't have any real sight seeing on our agenda for today. Instead, our objective today was to mail our awkwardly shaped didgeridoo home from here and pick up some odds and ends from the shopping centers here in Honolulu. The high point of our day would be a visit to the Amsterdam this evening by our young home town friends Philip and Erica who now live in Honolulu.

The location of Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands is shown in the map on the right.



The place where the Amsterdam tied up at Pier 2 is shown on the map of Honolulu below. Also shown in the Honolulu map are the locations of the post office and FedEx store which are good to know about if there is a need to send things out when the ship reaches port.



US border and customs people came on board shortly after docking. Everyone on board then took their turn going past the agent with passport page open to the picture so the passport and the actual person could be compared. In about an hour the immigration and customs inspection was completed and the ship was cleared so we could go ashore.

About 9am we left the ship headed for the US Post Office looking for a cardboard mailing tube big enough for our didgeridoo.

The didgeridoo we got in Sydney, shown on the right, was one of the more ridiculous things we bought on this cruise. We were beginning to think of what was involved with getting our luggage sent home. The didgeridoo was at 4.5 feet long and maximum 4 inches in diameter didn't really fit in well with our other baggage. We anticipated shipping problems might pop up in Los Angeles at the last moment. We decided to package the didgeridoo ourselves and send it home while in Honolulu.



It was a marvelous day and we felt energetic so we decided to walk to the Post Office. The US Post Office was 4 or 5 blocks from the Amsterdam, as shown in the map of Honolulu, above. At the Post Office we did not find a useable shipping tube but the clerk provided helpful advice that we check out some stores on Cooke Street. We hiked down Cooke Street until we spotted an OfficeMax store near the intersection with Ala Moana Blvd. In the OfficeMax store we found a Federal Express office which was useful information but they didn't have the shipping tube we needed. A clerk in the OfficeMax store suggested we go about a block back on Cooke Street to the Fisher Hawaii Office Product Warehouse to find a shipping tube. We found a good shipping tube at Fisher Hawaii along with some tape and bubble wrap.



Back on the Amsterdam we carefully wrapped our didgeridoo and taped it up securely, as shown on the right. We carried it back to the Federal Express office in the OfficeMax store and shipped it safely home.

The next item on our agenda was a visit to the Ala Moana Shopping Center which is one of the biggest malls we have seen.



We took a taxi the mile or two down Ala Moana Blvd. to the shopping center. We got out of the taxi and were greeted by the huge Santa they had mounted there for the Christmas Season.

The Christmas hustle and bustle was in full swing at the Ala Moana Shopping Center. We got some tee shirts at Barbara's favorite tee shirt shop, Crazy Shirts. She likes the fact that they carry really high quality shirts with tasteful artwork and long sleeves. It's usually hard to find that combination.

We walked around the shopping center on several floors. The shops looked busy with a general upbeat look to the place. We found the Wal-Mart store a couple blocks north of the shopping center. The side entrance to the store that we came to was unusually hard to recognize. However, an ordinary citizen, who appeared to be just casually lounging in front of the store, spotted us immediately as non-locals and pointed her finger in the direction of the entrance. It was necessary to make a right angle turn at one point and another helpful citizen was there to point his finger in the right direction. We finally made our way into the store so we could have our first "Wal-Mart fix" since leaving Tennessee. In addition to the Amsterdam with about 900 passengers, there was another cruise ship, the Golden Princess, that came in to port this morning with several thousand passengers. We wondered later if the "ordinary citizens" who helped us get in were really paid employees helping the surge of cruise ship passengers find their way to the entrance. When we finished browsing around Wal-Mart we left by the main entrance. We made our way to a nearby free shuttle bus arranged by Wal-Mart to get cruise ship passengers to and from their store.

We went to the Aloha Tower area at Pier 10 and 11. The Golden Princess cruise ship was tied up there. A picture of the Golden Princess taken this morning from the Amsterdam is shown on the right with the Aloha Tower



standing proudly in the middle of the picture. The Golden Princess is large, with up to 2600 passengers, as compared with the Amsterdam's 1300 passenger capacity. While we were walking around the area we came upon the beautiful ship "Star of Honolulu" and some big Aloha signs. We took this opportunity for Barbara to document her library card's visit to Honolulu, as shown in the picture on the left.

We had made arrangements for our friends, Philip and Erica to visit us on the Amsterdam. Before they arrived we checked out the preparations being made for a luau on the Lido Pool deck. We thought they would enjoy taking part in that festive event. We took a picture of the feast being laid out by the stewards, as shown on the right and below.

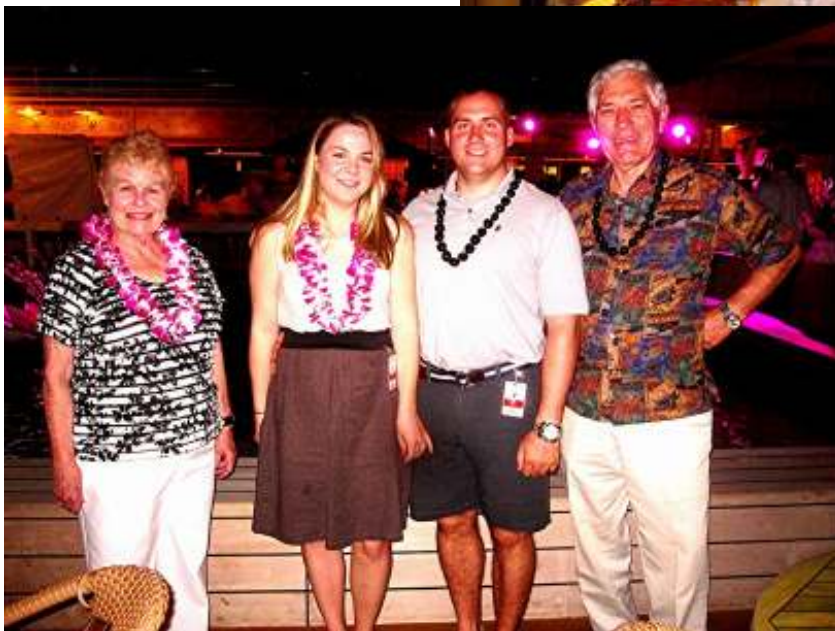


About 7pm Philip and Erica arrived and we got them processed through the security system on the Amsterdam. They received white "Visitor's" badges to wear while on board, as shown on the right.



We toured the ship with Phil and Erica from stem to stern. The Amsterdam decorated for the Honolulu stay and we were proud to show it off. A piano had been put out by the pool on the back Lido deck under open sky. Stryker was playing the piano and getting audience participation just like he does every night in the Piano Bar below. It was a wonderful scene but we soon passed on to join the luau taking place on the Lido Pool deck.

We loaded up our plates at the buffet and sat down to an enjoyable meal with friends at our table and all around us. Before it was over we got a picture of Phil and Erica, who were recently married. Phil is serving with the US Army and is stationed in Hawaii.



Later we got a picture of the four of us standing by the pool on the Lido deck, as shown on the left.

Earlier while we were touring the ship, we had looked down on the bow area of the Amsterdam. The view reminded Erica of one of her favorite romantic scenes which was in the movie Titanic. In that scene the lead lady had stood on the prow of the Titanic and spread her arm as she faced into the brisk wind. The Amsterdam was scheduled to get underway from Honolulu at 11pm and visiting hours were coming to an end but before Phil and Erica left we thought it would be fun to go out on bow of the ship and recreate the scene that was in the movie Titanic.

Later, while writing this blog entry and courtesy of the Internet and Google we were able to find the scene that Erica was recalling. Shown on the right is the famous scene with Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet in the movie "Titanic". It turns out that many people think it was the most romantic movie scene ever created.



Welllllllllll --- without benefit of professional direction or equipment here is what we came up with as a reenactment of that famous scene.



Maybe what's missing is the wind??

Thanks to our "incurable romantic" friend, Erica, we will never be able to see the bow deck of the Amsterdam without thinking about our visit with them today and this flight of fantasy.

After that exhilarating experience we collected our thoughts for a while in the Explorer's Lounge and then we had to say goodbye to Philip and Erica. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting with them here in Honolulu and hope to see them again soon, in Oak Ridge, Honolulu or wherever our trails may cross.

When we returned to the Amsterdam from saying goodbye to Phil and Erica, the Polynesian Cultural show in the Queen's Lounge was wrapping up. We caught the last few dances with great drums and dancers, as shown in the picture on the right.



They invited people from the audience to come up on stage for an impromptu lesson in Polynesian dancing. After some hesitation a



few brave souls came up on stage, as shown in the picture on the left. We were delighted to see our friend, Mike – second man from the left side, had taken the plunge. With a little help from the Hawaiian dancers he soon was dancing like a pro and seemed to be a natural for this art form. We can add this to the list of talents in the Mike and Pauline household.

About 11pm the Amsterdam got underway and set a course for Los Angeles where we expect to arrive on December 5. The sea was a bit rocky but soon lulled us to sleep.