

At Sea –Crossing the Equator - Day 61 Nov. 26:

The day started with a clear sky and calm sea. We are on a northeasterly course bound for Honolulu, Hawaii. The Captain came on the PA system and said we crossed the equator last night about 11pm. We were expecting a visit from King Neptune today to extract retribution from those folks who have never been across the equator before. When we crossed the equator going south from Singapore we slipped by King Neptune but now he is on to us and will apply maximum pain as we cross over again headed north.

The stewards first got a workout as they placed several hundred folding chairs on the Lido Pool Deck facing the pool. These were for the anticipated crowd that would show up to watch King Neptune arrive and mete out the punishment to pollywog people who for the first time had crossed over the equator on this cruise. Using some skill in the marketing department the Amsterdam management was careful to negotiate a deal with King Neptune that exempted paying passengers from any pollywog punishment. Unfair as it might be, only pollywog crew members were to be held accountable for their failure to have crossed the equator before this cruise.

At 10am we assembled on the Lido Pool Deck and the festivities began. The sun was shining brightly but fortunately the roof to the Lido Deck was pulled back and a nice breeze kept us cool. There were also the complimentary “Equator Sling” drinks that were dispensed to the passengers to ease our anxiety over the arrival of King Neptune.



Soon there was an announcement that King Neptune had been sighted riding over the waves on his way to the Amsterdam. In response to this announcement the ship’s officers, led by Captain Eversen marched in as the band played “Anchors Away”, as shown on the left.



They made their way around the pool and took their seats next to the speaker's platform, as shown below. Captain Eversen is the third officer from the left and the Hotel Manager, Henk Mensink is the fourth officer from the left.



Then there was some excitement at the far end of the Pool Deck. Suddenly King Neptune and his mermaid queen strode past us on the way to the platform where the pollywogs would be prosecuted for their offenses. Of course, King Neptune was bearing his fearsome trident that he uses to stir up storms or destroy ships of errant sailors.

The pollywogs among the crew had been rounded up. That motley group, bound up with heavy rope was led to the poolside by men dressed in pirate's costumes and brandishing cutlasses.



One by one ridiculous and funny charges against the pollywogs were read. After each set



of charges were read King Neptune would shout that the victim must take the first step in his punishment by kissing a large fish, shown on the left. The audience would reinforce the command by shouting repeatedly, “Kiss the fish!”

The convicted pollywogs showed some imagination in their kissing techniques. Some would try to avoid contact while others would engage in a “French” kissing approach with tongue extended. That always got an increased volume of yelling and cheering from the audience.

After the fish was duly kissed the condemned person would be stretched out on a platform mounted at the side of the pool. People dressed in hospital scrubs would then administer a slimy concoction of goop all over the poor pollywog, as shown in these pictures.



After being slathered with the slimy stuff (made primarily with egg whites, Jell-O and food color) the victims would be either thrown in the pool or forced to sit in the sun while the stuff dried on their skin. The ship’s officers decided this fate with thumbs up or thumb down gestures for each victim.

The big catch of the day was our Cruise Director, Gene Young, who had never crossed the equator. He was the last victim to be led in to King Neptune's court. He came in wearing a bright orange shirt and with a flourish managed to push one of the pirates into the pool, as shown below. The surprised ship's officers were looking on.



Eventually Gene was quelled and his sentence of kissing the fish was read. We caught his kissing routine a little prematurely in this photo on the right. He eventually made contact.



After the kissing exercise Gene was subjected to the slime application just like all the rest, or maybe a little worse, as shown on the right.



For Gene there was even a filleted fish added to the insult. It was placed on his head like a crown, as shown on the left.

Ohhhh the joys of being a Cruise Director!

Finally after this last indignity, King Neptune declared that the pollywogs of the

Amsterdam had paid their dues and the ship could proceed safely on its way through his domain. We noted that the officers beat a quick disappearance act at that point before any of the celebrating slimy people in the pool could get any funny ideas.

As the crowd broke up we were able to get this photo of Barbara Haenni, the Travel Guide who provides the vital info for each port. She hosted our dinner table just a couple days ago dressed in her finery. Today she was dressed quite differently. She played the part of a downtrodden cleaning lady with an apron, mop and bucket who came behind and tidied up after all the slime throwing and other messy activity. She played the perfect humorous part.



There was a photo opportunity set up for people who wanted a picture with this famous King of the deep. Barbara was quick to get in line, as shown on the right. Our friend Carol was there also so we snapped a picture of her, as shown below.



The person who played King Neptune remained a mystery but we recognized his queen mermaid as Hostess, Adele, one of our favorite staff members and host on the Good Morning Amsterdam TV show.

Thus the visit from King Neptune was ended. All that was left behind was a terrible mess around the Lido Deck Swimming Pool. The pool was quickly drained and some good folks went to work and had it pretty much restored to its former luxurious glory by the afternoon.

The Crossing of the Equator ceremony ended just in time for us to go to the usual Cruise Specialist International (CSI) Chat Time session at 11am in the Explorer's Lounge. We arrived to the announcement that Alex, one of the regular attendees, was celebrating his birthday today. Lucia led us all in a rousing version of "Happy Birthday" while Alex and his wife Judy enjoyed the moment, as shown on the right.



At noontime the Captain came on the PA system and informed us that we were about halfway from Pago Pago, American Samoa to Honolulu, Hawaii. We had traveled about 1200 miles from Pago Pago and had 1100 miles to go.

In the afternoon Barbara went to the Culinary Arts Center for a demonstration of making a shrimp cocktail shooter. Adele had transformed herself back into her usual role and put on a good show as illustrated by the picture on the right.



In the evening, after dinner, we went to the entertainment in the Queen's Lounge. Tonight David Pengelly put on a great show with his 4 string ukulele, light hearted songs and stage patter targeted at the typical Amsterdam passenger. The coordination with the Amsterdam band and lighting on stage was sensational and another tribute to how that talented team can put a show together with less than an hour's practice and make it look like a seasoned concert.

When we returned to our stateroom, our room stewards had turned it into a neat and comfy nest for the night. They also left us two nicely done certificates from the Captain showing that we had crossed the equator and achieved a new higher plane in life. We turned in for the night for a good rest after an exciting day.

