

4/30/07 Day 105 Post Cruise – Fort Lauderdale - Monday, 30, April, 2007: The Amsterdam docked in Fort Lauderdale before daylight on 30 April and unloaded all the luggage of departing passengers before we got up. Fortunately this was a sunny day and the temperature was at a comfortable level.

Here are some views of the Fort Lauderdale harbor from the Amsterdam.





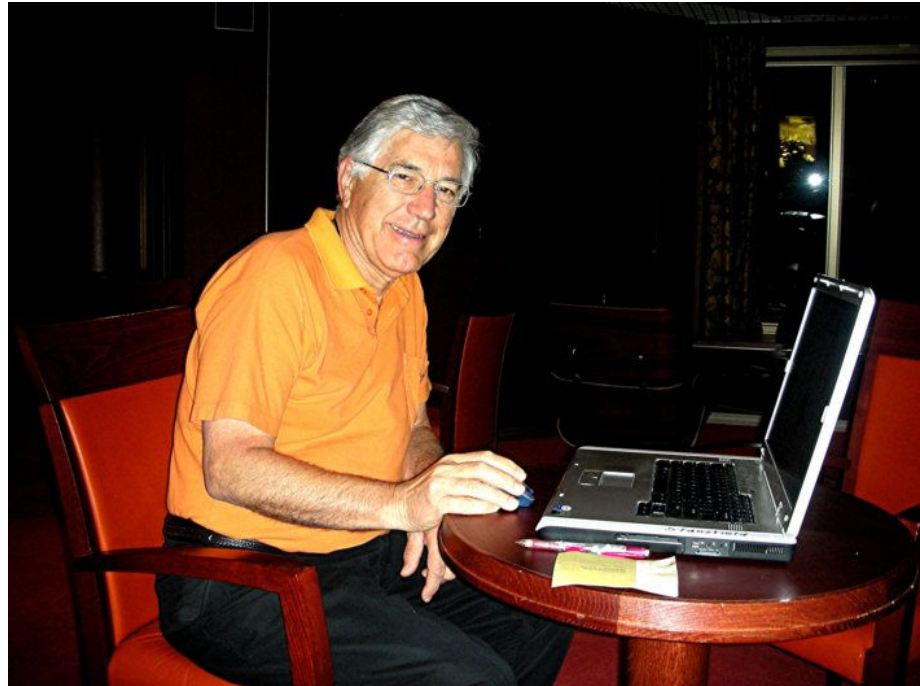
A Regency Cruise Line ship was docked nearby. The red and white striped smoke stacks above the ship in the background belong to a Fort Lauderdale power plant.

Looking over the Amsterdam bow revealed some Navy ships in the background left side.



The open Atlantic lies beyond the narrow strip of land protecting the harbor where the Amsterdam was docked.

The Internet connection on the Amsterdam is provided by way of the Maritime Telecommunication Network (MTN) Company. At the beginning of the cruise we had purchased a block of minutes on the Internet from the Amsterdam Internet Cafe. Any minutes we don't use we lose. We had about one hour's worth of time left on our account so we went down to the Explorer's



Lounge and sent in the last blog entry made from the Amsterdam. It was the write-up for 29 April, Day 104. Here is Orlin putting in that blog entry.

We skipped breakfast and went down to the Wajang Theater about 7am where we got in line behind 55 other people waiting to see the US Customs Agents to determine if duty payment was due on our purchases exceeding \$800 per passenger or \$1600 per couple. We waited about an hour and a half and finally had a conversation with the agents. We showed our claims and they decided we owed \$30 in duty which we paid by check.

Nobody could leave the ship until the US Customs Agents had finished their interviews. We were near the end of the line so we figured the disembarkation would begin soon. We went back to our room and picked up the luggage we planned to carry off the ship. We finally got the call to disembark and proceeded with about 1000 other folks to trudge off the Amsterdam. We filed into a cavernous cruise terminal building next to the ship where we saw a sea of baggage laid out with the various tags that had been distributed a few days before we got to Fort Lauderdale. We were Red 1 and a red coated attendant pointed us in the direction of the Red 1 luggage.

What followed was a frantic search for our bags. We needed to collect them in one place and have a porter haul them through the US Customs gate and on to an IPS truck that was parked outside. We found most of the bags and boxes quickly but there was a 15 minute period of panic when we couldn't find the suitcase that contained one of the carpets we had purchased in Turkey.

Visions of someone mistaking our luggage for theirs and wheeling it off increased our anxiety. Suddenly we spied the missing bag nestled in among a pile of other luggage and we thankfully pulled it into our pile. It was now time to get a porter. Orlin stood in line for 20 minutes waiting his turn for a porter to come back into the baggage area with an empty cart for carrying the luggage. Finally our turn came and a very husky man loaded 11 of our bags onto a dolly and with the two of us carrying 4 pieces we opened a pathway through the crowd of milling people out to the IPS truck on the loading dock. At the IPS truck there were men who quickly took our bags and laid them in the truck. Without a shred of paperwork to verify that we had delivered the bags, we turned and walked away. This was the same thing that happened when the IPS truck picked up our bags in early January. Only this time we were so much happier to be rid of that huge pile of stuff. We will just hope and pray that our bags show up in Oak Ridge in a week or two. The chaos of the claiming your bags during the disembarkation process is absolutely the worst part of cruising and after accumulating things for 104 days it was much worse than we had experienced before. We don't have any practical suggestions for improvement; it is just something that must be endured in order to get the job done within a reasonable time period and cost.

After dumping off 10 bags with the IPS truck we took our other five bags and caught a taxi to the Fort Lauderdale Airport. At the airport the sidewalk check in was open for business so we were able to check in two of the larger bags and we kept the computer and two other bags with us. The flight back to Knoxville went smoothly with only an hour or so schedule slip during the stop in Atlanta. Our arrival on Knoxville was late enough for the grandkids, Andrew and Emily, to be out of school and early enough for dinner at Steve and Becky's home before making the inevitable trek to our home. When we got to Knoxville, Steve, Becky and grandkids were waiting for us at the airport. It was a classic Norman Rockwell type of greeting we got from the family.



We got a very pleasant surprise when our AAA Travel Agent friend, Wanda Moretz, also met us at the airport along with our kids. Wanda presented us with a beautiful bouquet of roses which Barbara happily clasped like a returning queen. A few days ago Wanda had averted an impending disaster when Delta moved our flight schedule for departure from Fort Lauderdale to an impossible early hour. While we were isolated on the Amsterdam in the middle of the Atlantic, she negotiated the perfect flight leaving Fort Lauderdale at 12:30pm which got us to Knoxville at 6pm. She's a jewel! Wanda (on the left) joined us for a family picture taken by Becky.



On the way from the Knoxville airport to Oak Ridge we noted that the gasoline prices had gone up from the \$2.07 we paid for a gallon of regular gas in January to \$2.80 a gallon now. This was a painful sight but it's still a lot cheaper than in most of the countries we visited.

We had dinner at Steve's home and then he took us to our place about 5 minutes away. The condition of our home was somewhere between the best and worst that we expected. The spring had brought the usual downpour of oak tree tassels and then there had been a late freeze that killed some fresh leaves. This produced a fall-like drop of dead leaves in the driveway. Oak Ridge also had plenty of rain and lately warm weather so weeds flourished. Needless to say the yard was in kind of a mess.



The effect the late frost had on the Japanese Maple that was sad to see.

We took this photo showing Barbara throwing up her hands at the sight of all the weeds and debris in the yard.



We decided to forget the chaos in the yard and take a breather on the back deck. Here we lifted a toast to our family and friends in Oak Ridge whom we look forward to seeing again, and also to our many new friends we met on the 2007 Grand World Voyage.



Our plan is to put in a couple more blog entries after the luggage arrives by way of the International Port Services (IPS) shipping process. At that time we wanted give some suggestions, based on our experience, for people planning a cruise. Soooooooooo there won't be any more blog entries for a week or so until the IPS shipment arrives.