

3/30-31/07 Days 74 and 75 – At Sea - Friday and Saturday, 30, 31 March 2007: The Amsterdam is cruising through the calm Arabian Sea with a hazy sky and a warm humid breeze. We got back into our walking routine by doing about 2 miles (7 laps) around the Promenade Deck before breakfast.

After breakfast on Friday we sat in on Christine's interview of, Fekko Ebbens, the Hotel Manager. He is approaching 42 years of service for Holland America and will be retiring after this World Cruise. In his opinion there is no such thing as a perfect hotel no matter what you pay. There is always slight imperfection in service or facilities but he is always trying for the best conditions. He gave great credit for the good conditions on the Amsterdam to the Indonesian and Filipino service crew that works in the Hotel Department. He would never try to run a hotel in Europe or the US because of the difficulty of getting good service people.

At 11am the author, Bill Bryson, gave a 30 minute talk in the Queen's Lounge with the title "An Even Shorter History of Nearly Everything". He is a good speaker and kept us chuckling as he described how lucky we were to be in existence. He pointed out the low statistical probability of the earth coming together out of the cosmos and of any one of us individuals being born at the end of a long series of living things mating down through the ages.

We joined Carl, our next door neighbor, for lunch on the Lido Pool Deck, while Trudy and Joan frolicked in the swimming pool. It was a great day!

At 2pm Dr. Howard Clarke gave a presentation on construction of the Pyramids of Egypt. Huge ramps for moving the stone blocks up on the pyramids were probably not used. The most likely technique, in his opinion, was for the base of the Pyramid to be finished with the final smooth limestone surface and then stone blocks for higher up on the Pyramid were dragged

up over the sloping surface that had been lubricated with oil or rollers put in place. The Pyramid construction went on for about 500 years (2500 to 2000 BC) and then came to an end as the political institutions became unstable.



The entertainment in the Queen's Lounge at 8pm was superb, probably the best we have had on the cruise. It was a cabaret act by two brothers, Constantine and Yuri Mavridis and their wives, cellist Sue and pianist Valerie. They call themselves "Black Tie", and the wives give solo performances with the men providing comic monologues and singing opera and humorous songs with great bass voices.

During Friday night the Amsterdam left the Arabian Sea and passed into the Red Sea through the narrow strait between Saudi Arabia and Africa. During our walk around the Promenade Deck on Saturday morning we saw some Islands off the coast of Eritrea in Africa. The sound blaster equipment and security guards have been put back in place on the Promenade Deck presumably because of increased risk of pirate attack on the Amsterdam (see the Feb. 24-25 and Feb. 27 blog entries for sound blaster info).

We turned our clocks back one hour on Saturday night. After that change we are only 6 hours later in the day than the US Eastern Time Zone and Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

4/1/07 Day 76 – At Sea - Sunday, 1 April, 2007: **Rescue at Sea Update:** Back on February 14 there was an Amsterdam passenger named Joy who was evacuated from the ship by helicopter before we reached Sydney, Australia. Barbara has periodically checked with her ex-dinner table mates to see what the latest word is about Joy's health. Last night at dinner one of the men from the dinner table where she used to eat came over to our table and told us that Joy had recovered sufficiently to return to the ship. The current plan is for Joy and her husband to rejoin the Amsterdam while we are stopped at Alexandria on 4 April. That's what you call a determined cruiser. She appreciates all those who have kept her in your prayers.

Today was another day at sea with sunny sky and calm water here in the Red Sea. We have been traveling northwest in the Red Sea at about 20 knots for the last two days and we have one more day to go before we reach Sharm El Sheikh on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. We had not realized how long the Red Sea was until we found out it takes three days to make the run from one end to the other. During our walk around the Promenade Deck this morning we noticed the sound blasters are still ready for use but the security guards are no longer posted on deck. Apparently the pirate threat has abated as we make our way north in the Red Sea.

We attended the Palm Sunday church service on board with Pastor Doug van Gessel. The Wajang Theater, where services are held, was packed with standing room only. After church we went to a port lecture by Barbara, the Amsterdam port specialist. She told us about what to see and do during our visit to Greece. We will be spending our time in Athens.

The big news around here the past few days is that the Holland America president Stein Kruse is joining the ship in Dubrovnik for a few days visit. He will be in a stateroom a few doors down the hall from us. They are working day and night to revamp the room. All kinds of little things are being done to get ready for his visit. We have had a broken curtain next to our window in the dining room which they insisted couldn't be fixed until we got to Italy. Lo and behold last night when we went to dinner it was working!!!! The Prinsendam and Amsterdam cruise ships are

meeting in Dubrovnik and all kinds of special events are planned. We will have a chance to visit the Prinsendam during the joint visit so we will check it out.