

3/1/07 Day 45 – At Sea - Thursday, 1 March 2007: Today was a day at sea with overcast sky and fairly calm ocean. We are headed north to Hong Kong. We did our normal 30 minute hike around the Promenade deck about 7am. We then went to a presentation by Chris Rainier who showed a series of photos he has taken of people in various cultures who go to extremes of tattooing their bodies or ritualized mutilation. It was mildly disturbing in places.

The highlight of our day was the Behind the Scenes tour of the MS Amsterdam in what they call the Back-of-the-House Operations. The tour was followed by a luncheon.

We gathered with about 100 other folks from our floor and were welcomed to the service area by Captain Edward van Zaane and Hotel Manager, Fekko Ebbens. The back-of-the-house operations take place mainly on Decks A and B that are below Deck 1 of passenger cabins. On Deck A provisions area is a long corridor about 15 feet wide that runs the length of the ship and is called the I-95 by the crew. Tables had been set up in the corridor for the luncheon that followed the behind the scenes tour.

We started with a look around the Engine Control Room. One of the officers gave us a description of how the engines, important valves and other engineering operations are monitored and controlled. The ship has 5 large diesel engines, below Deck B, that generate electricity needed to run the ship including the electric motors that drive the propellers.





we found on A Deck. This first room was the vegetable and fruit refrigerator, with a mosquito eradicator device glowing on the wall beside the door.

Ice cream and ice is stored in the freezer on Deck A.



Anton helped the ladies down the ladder to Deck B where we found the carpenter shop, upholstery shop, tailor shop and the laundry.



This is the Carpenter Shop

Most provision storage facilities are on Deck A. On an average loading day the ship receives about 300 pallets from suppliers. The supplies are either stored in the dairy room, the meat room, the vegetable room, the fish room or the ice cream room. Any food that does not need refrigeration is stored in the dry or general provision room on the B Deck. Here are some provision rooms



This is the Tailor's Shop



Fixing a chair in the upholstery shop.

Laundry room



We love the beds made with sheets that are pressed on this machine.





Fekko Ebbens, the Hotel Manager, graciously accompanied us on the tour.

Not included in the tour was the sanitation plant that processes the sewage created from all operations. The plant removes solids from the sewage water by a filtering process. The solids are then mulched and dried and then burned while the ship is underway. Glass is crushed and metals cans

are turned into bricks for recycling purposes. Waste material that cannot be burned or recycled is compacted and off loaded at the next port. Water reclaimed by this filtering process has the appearance of a weak tea. After inspection for clarity and treated to kill harmful biological life it is dumped in the ocean. At one time they used the reclaimed water for laundry purposes and washing windows but they found that the white uniforms took on a subtle off-white appearance and the windows were slightly streaked so they stopped using the reclaimed water. In the future, further treatment of the water may make it suitable for recycle uses such as water for laundry or flushing toilets and washing the decks. Fresh water to make up for that lost overboard is obtained from city water supplies or made by distilling sea water.

After the tour of the provisions storage, laundry, and carpentry shops we were treated to a luncheon served in the I-95 corridor. The steel walls and deck of our dining room were extremely functional but the elegant banquet that was served made us all appreciate the fine culinary artists preparing food for us on the Amsterdam.

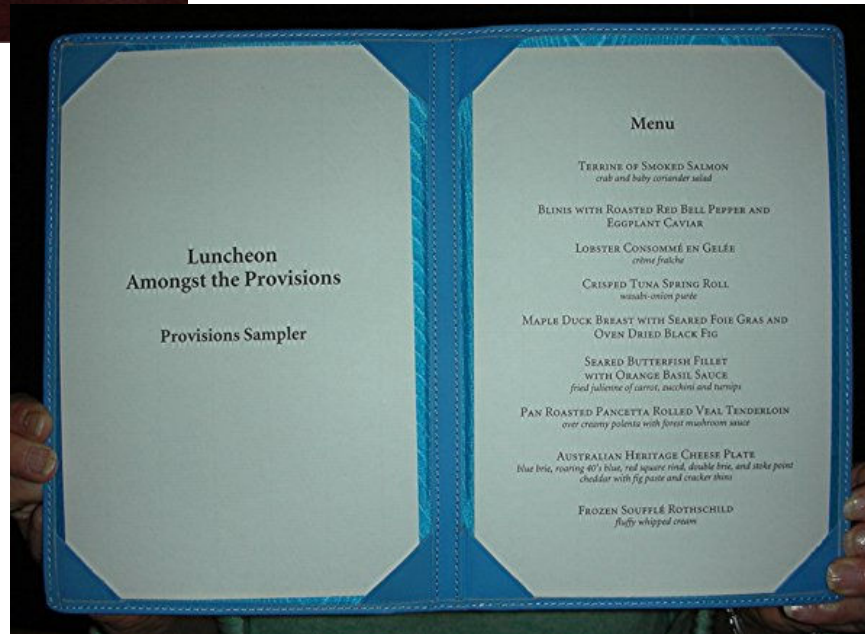
Murat Kaya, the beverage manager, met us at the entrance to the dining area. Cases of various beverages had been stacked to decorate and create what he called his Great Wall of China.





About 100 of us were seated at tables and the dining room stewards did a marvelous job of bringing the food and drink to us in fine style.

Here is the menu for the nine course meal entitled 'Luncheon Amongst the Provisions' that was served.



**Luncheon
Amongst the Provisions**
Provisions Sampler

Menu

- TERRINE OF SMOKED SALMON
crab and baby romander salad
- BLINIS WITH ROASTED RED BELL PEPPER AND
EGGPLANT CAVIAR
- LOBSTER CONSOMMÉ EN GELÉE
crème fraîche
- CRISPED TUNA SPRING ROLL
wasabi-onion puree
- MAPLE DUCK BREAST WITH SEARED FOIE GRAS AND
OVEN DRIED BLACK FIG
- SEARED BUTTERFISH FILLET
WITH ORANGE BASIL SAUCE
fried julienne of carrot, zucchini and turnips
- PAN ROASTED PANCETTA ROLLED VEAL TENDERLOIN
over creamy polenta with forest mushroom sauce
- AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE CHEESE PLATE
*blue brie, roasting 40's brie, red square rind, double brie, and smoke peccot
cheddar with fig paste and cracker chips*
- FROZEN SOUFFLÉ ROTHSCHILD
fluffy whipped cream



Here is a photo of our table.

Left to right: Empty chair-Orlin, Susana Beleo – Guest Relations Manager, Gene, Leslie, Handler, Phyllis, Barbara.

It was good to meet with Susana again after our meal with her in the Crew's Mess Hall back on 13 February. We had not previously met

the other passengers at our table but we soon got to know them and the conversation was delightful. We all were impressed when Phyllis told us that to ensure maximum comfort she had her favorite Lazy Boy chair shipped on board with her luggage. Next cruise they will have two chairs shipped in to replace the standard chairs.



Leslie quickly got into the spirit of the moment and with each course of the meal we would all pause while she read the formal description of that course from the menu. Her reading was followed by the other five of us applauding. Silly but fun!

The stewards did a wonderful job of serving the tables by bobbing and weaving along the crowded corridor balancing plates of food.

The Executive Chef, Ed Sayomac, came out to talk with us and we all thanked him profusely for the treat he had prepared for us.



Too soon the meal was over and it was time to leave. We had stretched it out as long as we could. We finally took pity on Susana and brought the festivities to a close so that she could return to more formal ship's business. We bid a fond farewell to our table mates.



3/2-3/07 Days 46 and 47 – At Sea – Friday - Saturday, 2 - 3 March 2007: These were days at sea under overcast sky for most of the time and there was not much wave action. On Friday we were cruising over fairly shallow ocean. Sometimes it was only 1000 feet deep. By Saturday we had moved into deeper water of the South China Sea where the depth is 1 to 2 miles.

Since there was no real highlight activity these days it seemed like a good time to write about the Holland America Lines program to combat the spread of germs like the Norwalk Virus among passengers. The outbreak of Norwalk Virus and the associated diarrhea has been the cause of much distress among cruise passengers on many cruise ships in the past. The problem of disease passing between passengers in the close quarters of a cruise ship has been the focus of preventative medicine on the Amsterdam. The following are some positive steps that have been taken to avoid spread of disease.

A commercial germ killing gel with the trade name of Purell is made available to all passengers as they come aboard the ship at every port. Purell is made by GOJO Industries Incorporated and the active ingredient is simply ethyl alcohol. The Purell dispensers are located in the public areas throughout the ship so that it is convenient to frequently put a dollop of the gel on your hands and rub it over your skin. The ethyl alcohol soon evaporates with the smell a lot like a martini cocktail. Any bacteria or virus carried on the skin of the hands should be killed by contact with the Purell gel. In this way germs picked up from stairwell banisters, door knobs or other surfaces can be eradicated from your skin so that you minimize the probability of ingesting the disease organism.



Here is an example of a Purell dispenser.

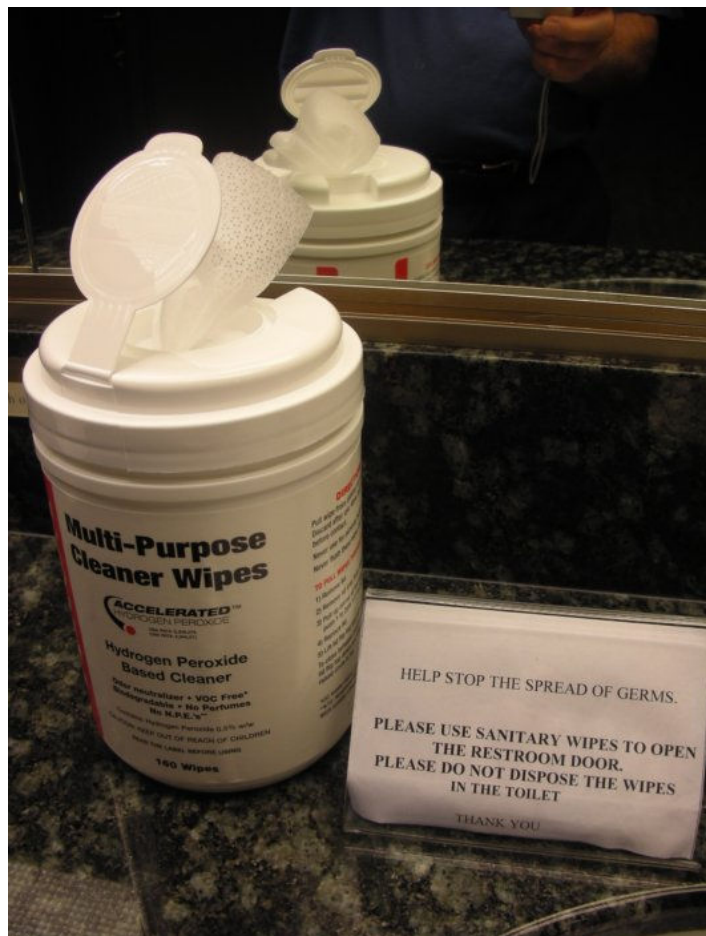
With this dispenser you put the palm of your hand under the container and press with the heel of your hand on the dark grey plastic trigger. A dollop of gel is then deposited in the palm of your hand and you can rub your hands together to spread the gel evenly over your skin. After a few days on board the social pressure to observe good hygiene results

in most passengers using the dispensers frequently, particularly in the dining areas.



In the main dining rooms there is even a head waiter with a Purell dispenser to personally give you a squirt of the gel as you enter the Restaurant.

Another innovation that we noticed on the Amsterdam is disinfectant sanitary wipe dispensers in the toilet and wash rooms. The disinfectant wipes are located next to the door and there is a sign asking that you use one of the wipes to cover your fingers when you use the restroom door handle to exit.



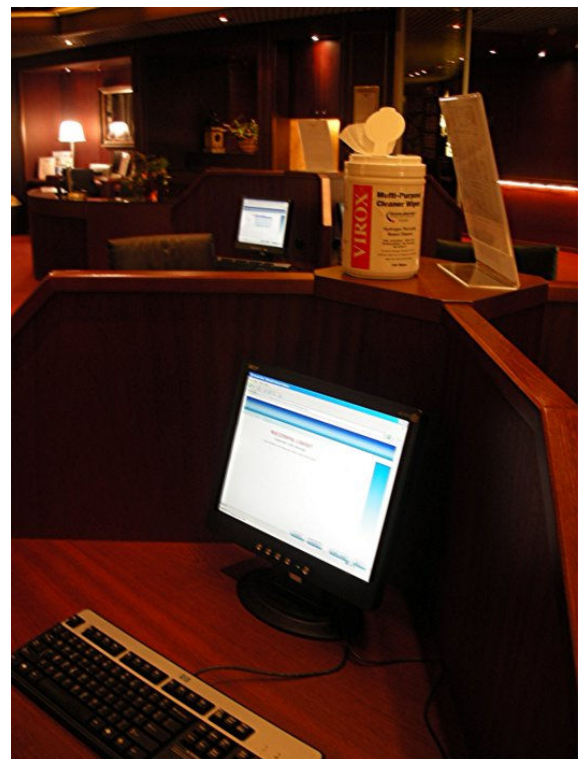


The same kind of sanitary wipes are available at various locations, like restaurant counters, and the Internet computer terminals where transfer of germs from one person to another is possible.

This same kind of preventative medicine is being used in some stores now where sanitary wipes are made available to sanitize the handles of shopping carts.

Another proactive step being carried out on the Amsterdam provides an incentive for passengers to report cases of diarrhea. In this program a passenger reporting his case of diarrhea to the medical staff will be placed in voluntary quarantine. The quarantined passenger receives an incentive of \$150 credit for each day spent in quarantine. Of course, the usual room service at no additional cost and entertainment via television in the room is always available to the quarantined person. This kind of quarantine would probably only be practical during days at sea but it seems like a step in the right direction to encourage an infected person to avoid spreading his illness.

On Saturday was attended the last presentations of photography by Chris Rainier. He showed photography from various war zone and travel destinations where he has been. He has written a book called Ancient Marks that contains much of his work. We liked the photography he showed in his presentations and the passion he showed for his work. His web site is www.chrisrainier.com.



We dock at 2pm in Hong Kong tomorrow. Barbara put her credit cards in the refrigerator today in preparation for hot Hong Kong action.

