



2/20/07 Day 36 – At Sea – Tuesday: This was a mostly overcast day with smooth seas on the way to Darwin. We walked around the Promenade deck for about 30 minutes. We had a following wind so the breeze across the deck was not very strong. The ocean was calm and temperature pretty high so we worked up a sweat before the walking was done. There were a few rain squalls in the area so when the sun peaked through we got a nice rainbow.

At 11am we went to a presentation by Warren Salinger on the history and status of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN nations include the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and seven other nations. These 10 nations are getting

ready to celebrate 40 years of existence for ASEAN which is pledged to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner. The total population of these nations is about the same as the total population of all of Europe and in the globalization of trade the association is a significant player.

Today the ship's staff put up decorations in the public areas for celebration of Mardi gras as we work our way up to Easter.



Our next door neighbors, Carl and Trudy celebrated their twenty fifth wedding anniversary today and held a party in their stateroom. Carl and Trudy's dinner table mates and some friends from down the hall came by. Here are some photos from the celebration.

On the left - Barbara, Joan, Anna, Carl



On the right - Carl and Trudy celebrate 25 years together.



On the left - Their cabin was decorated with balloons and flowers along with greeting cards and grandkids pictures that travel along with them.

Left to right
Anna, Carl,
Moon, and
Carol.



Orlin and John served the Champaign for the anniversary toast.



John, Trudy and Barbara

Gloria, Anna and Don





Here's the whole happy crowd.

Standing: Don, John, and John,
Back row left to right: Jean, Joan,
Trudy, Carl, Moon, And Carol,
middle row: Barbara, Gloria,
And Orlin on the deck.

Congratulations Carl and Trudy
on your twenty fifth wedding
anniversary, and thanks for

letting us share the festivities with you!

We made our way down to the dining room that was decorated with shiny garlands and streamers in the purple, gold and green colors of the traditional Mardi gras. The waiters were dressed in costumes for a Mardi gras parade in New Orleans.



Barbara had on her mask and boa so she fit right in.



Denny brings the water pitcher.



Even the ship's officers joined in the revelry. This masked gentleman on the right we called Melon Head.



Zain in costume and the ladies of Table 119.

Fellow Tennesseans from Nashville, Dan and Jean in full costume for the Mardi gras.



The evening meal was capped off with a grand parade of all the serving and kitchen staff marching through the dining room in our own miniature Mari Gras parade.



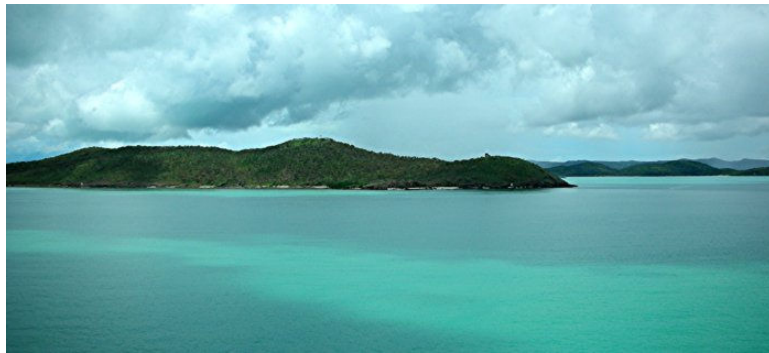
The evening's after dinner entertainment was by the singer Annie Frances, The Girl from Oz (Australia). She has a marvelous voice and pronounced so clearly as she sang that we understood every word. She had a wide range of song types that she sang. That's unusual so with her great voice we think she is destined for a great career. We hope to see and hear her again.

2/21 - 22/07 Days 37 and 38 – At Sea – Wednesday and Thursday: The ocean was like a calm lake this morning when we got up. During the night we had completed our northern course up through the Coral Sea that covers the eastern coast of Australia.



The ship then turned west through the Torres Strait between Papua New Guinea and Australia. The Coral Sea contains the Great Barrier Reef and has many shallow regions that ships must avoid. For that reason while we were in Cairns the ship took on board Captain Wallace Cray, who is a licensed Great Barrier Reef pilot. They are called Reef Pilots for short. From their familiarity with the charts, navigational aids, and landmarks they provide the Captain of the ship with advice and additional safety as he navigates these shallow and narrow passages. He stayed with the ship and guided the course up through the Coral Sea and through the Torres Strait.

By the time we woke up the ship was headed due south and threading its way through many small low islands that passed on both sides of the ship. Here are some examples of the small islands that passed close by the ship.



One of the lectures we have heard indicated that during the last ice age the ocean level dropped so much that there was dry land most of the way between South East Asia and Australia. The theory is that humans migrated across the dry land and short stretches of water to Australia at that time.

Even today the Torres Strait is only 80 miles wide at the narrowest point with many small islands sprinkled across those 80 miles of ocean. The main channel is only 200 feet deep in some places and the sea has a light green color of a shallow depths rather than the deep dark blue of the open Pacific. The many islands and shallow channel in the Torres Strait today suggests that this is where there was dry land during the last ice age.

On a long voyage like we are on we like to keep track of the time back in Oak Ridge where our friends and family are going about their business of the day. The Amsterdam gave all the passengers a nice gift that consists of two battery driven clocks so that you can set one clock at the home time and one clock at our current local time. There are also two little frames where you can insert photos. The picture frames fold over and cover the clocks when packed away. We set our clock so that Oak Ridge time is on the right and ship's time is on the left. Then Bob, our table mate, made copies of the grandkids photos that were just the right size and we inserted them into our clock frames. We use this clock all the time when trying to figure out the best time to telephone back to Oak Ridge. You still have to go through the mental gymnastics with the International Date Line to know the day of the week but the time of day is pretty easy to get this way. Here is how the clock looks. At the time this photo was taken it was about 1:25pm



Wednesday on the ship and 10:25pm Tuesday in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, probably too late for a phone call.

Regarding clocks and time, we are continuing a westward course so during the night of 21 February 2007 the Amsterdam set the clocks back. This time we set the clocks back 30 minutes and not the usual one hour. This will bring us to the time indicated on the clocks in Darwin, Australia. There will be another 30 minute adjustment after we leave Darwin to restore the usual one hour incremental difference between world time zones.

Chris Rainier, documentary photographer for the National Geographic Society, gave another in a series of lectures about experiences he has had on assignments. Today he talked about his contacts with primitive natives in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. He said their ceremonial masks and body decorations were part of a reverence for nature and desire to invoke those spirit forces. He related an interesting experience that took place years ago while he was working for TIME Magazine. He was engaged in photographing two warring native tribes locked in a fight carried out with rocks, sticks, arrows and spears. He got a call from TIME with orders to pack up immediately and go to Bosnia where he was to document some events in the war that was progressing there at that time. He said he was saddened by the irony of how Stone Age men and modern men with great technological differences still resolved disputes in basically similar ways.

We had lunch in the main dining room with Dick and Jan Yetke who are neighbors on our deck. Dick and Jan live in Chicago and are avid sailors. They told us about fascinating tours they have had of Iwo Jima, Normandy and the WWII allied command center in England.

