

1/19/07 Day 5, Today was spent at sea. The highlight of the day was crossing the equator. This was a first for Barbara and a repeat for Orlin who had that honor as a midshipman in the US Navy in 1957. The ship's staff put on a show of King Neptune and his retinue bringing some unfortunate Pollywogs (people who have never crossed the equator) to trial.

These were people selected from the staff and of course they were all found guilty. They were slathered with various colored slimy concoctions. Then the Captain and senior officers gave thumbs up or thumb down on the sentence to be given. Thumbs down resulted in an unceremonious dumping the swimming pool after kissing a large grouper fish that was mounted on a pedestal. Thumbs up allowed the Pollywogs to avoid being dumped in the swimming pool. At the end the Pollywogs revolted and some of King Neptune's helpers were tossed in the pool.



Three of King Neptune's helpers slathered noxious slime onto the hapless pollywogs.

Afterwards King Neptune and his court posed for pictures.



In addition, the fish was made available for disturbed people who wanted to kiss it.

We were all awarded an official certificate designating us as Shellbacks now that we have crossed the equator.



Later we attended another reception hosted by the AAA and CAA representatives, Marvin and Marilyn Onstott. Now, after a few days of cruising, many of the people attending were familiar friends. Many of the ship's staff also attended and mingled with the guests. After dinner we attended a tribute to John Denver by John and Ann Curry in the Queen's Lounge. It was a very good show.

1/20/07 Day 6 - When we got up today the ship was already docked in Manta, Ecuador. There were several good sized fishing boats and an Ecuadorian Navy vessel docked near us. The fishing boats were in the process of unloading truck loads of large tuna fish.



It was raining early in the morning but when we were ready to go ashore at 9am the rain had stopped. A small local band was playing at the foot of the gangway and young girls in native costume were dancing a folk dance involving bowls of fruit.



We took the shuttle bus that the ship had arranged to take us in to the town of Manta. The bus ride was only 15 minutes and we were dropped off in Manta at Plaza Civica. This market place was packed with displays of native handicrafts and eager Ecuadorian vendors. A band was playing regional music on a stage area which set a nice South American mood for the occasion.



The first order of business was to get a picture of Barbara's Oak Ridge Public Library card in the city of Manta, Ecuador. Here is the photo. If you read carefully you may see the word Manta on the wall in the background.

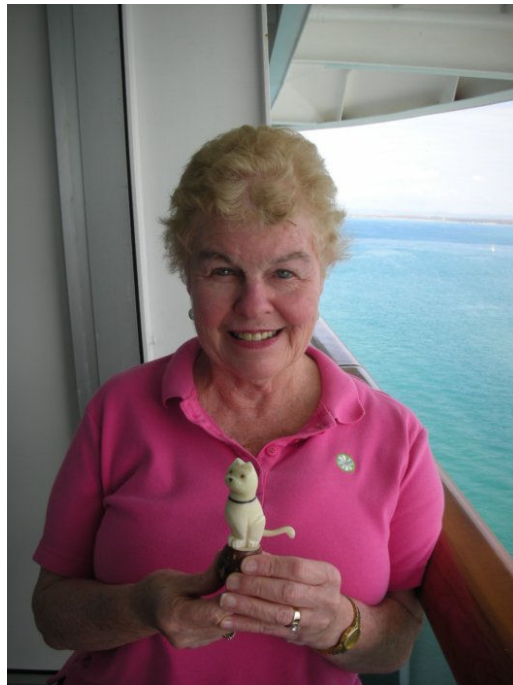
Here are some photos showing typical vendor displays.



These ladies, shown below, were making and selling Panama Hats.



Another item for sale was small carvings that looked like ivory. These fake ivory carvings were made from the tagua tree nut. The claim is made that the use of this South American plant material in place of true ivory may save the African elephant from extinction resulting from poaching to support the ivory trade. The tagua seed is about the size of a hen's egg. The thick shell has a thin layer of brown material on the outside but the inside has the texture and color of ivory. The part of the seed that germinates and makes a new tree takes up a small portion of the nut at one end and the rest of the nut is solid white ivory like material. The thickness and size of the shell is sufficient that little figurines several inches long and wide can be made from the material. Several nuts are joined together to make up large carvings. We were fascinated by this beautiful material and the craftsmanship so Barbara bought a cat carving for \$5 USD.



We also got some Ecuador souvenir tee shirts which cost \$5 to \$6 USD each. We caught a taxi for a 3 or 4 mile ride to a shopping center in Manta. The taxi service for the short trips we took cost \$3 USD. In spite of the rather shoddy appearance of Manta city, we were favorably impressed with the small two level shopping center we visited. The stores were well stocked, air conditioned and the inside appearance was attractive. Here is a picture taken from the second level of the mall.



Returning to the Plaza Civica market area we purchased a few souvenir tee shirts for \$5 or \$6 USD each. The temperature had been climbing all morning and by noon we were hot and sweaty so we returned to the ship. Back at the Amsterdam we found a flock of frigate birds soaring in the updraft of breeze above the ship. These are beautiful birds that look like a high-end sea gull. Here is picture of one.



1/21/07 Day 7 – At sea – We sailed all day on the way to Callao, Peru. This morning we got up early and walked for about forty five minutes around the Promenade Deck. We had breakfast and then went to the church service led by Pastor Douglas (Doug) Gessel. Then we went to a lecture about Christopher Columbus given by Mike Millwood. Mike was very polished and gave an entertaining lecture packed with facts about the context in which Columbus grew up and eventually led the expedition to the New World. Most of the time we use the stairs but this morning we were rushing to catch an elevator when a gentleman held the door for us. It turned out we were sharing the elevator with the Captain of the Amsterdam in full uniform. The captain of the ship was in the elevator and held the door for us. He asked what floor we wanted and punched in our floor number. We joked about how it was nice that the Amsterdam provided such full service and we all got a chuckle. Orlin wore his University of Tennessee white and orange shirt today. An unanticipated benefit was that several couples from Tennessee came up to us and introduced themselves. It seems that the majority of the people on board are from Florida or California so it was nice to meet some home folks. At dinner we all went formal and so it was a good time to take a picture of the friends we are dining with each evening. Here is the picture.

Roy and Gayle Brown (from Cincinnati, OH) are sitting across from each other at the head of the table with Bob and Esther Robbins (from Rancho Mirage, CA) sitting across from us.

