

Day 31 August 24, At Sea – Mariner’s Day – Liz Whitney Quisgard – Show Buffet – HAL History – Dan Bernbach

The Maasdam was headed southwest towards St. Anthony, Newfoundland, our next port of call. The day started bright and sunny but the sea was a little bumpy. We were apparently getting some minor input from what was left of hurricane Bill.

Mariners Day: The Maasdam had designated today as “Mariner’s Day” to thank all the passengers for cruising with Holland America Line. There were three events to mark the day. One event was the Breakfast Special in the Lido where Strawberries and Champagne was being served. We had breakfast with bright sunlight streaming into the Lido Restaurant. The champagne was poured and ready for the Mariner’s to enjoy.

We picked up our glass of champagne with a strawberry or two floating in it. It has been a great cruise so we quietly toasted the Maasdam staff and fellow passengers with whom we have taken the Voyage of the Vikings.



Liz Whitney Quisgard: The cruise director Moyra had scheduled an interview later in the morning with one of the passengers. The passenger was Liz Whitney Quisgard, who is an accomplished artist living in New York City. We had met Liz in the Lido

previously and had written about her talent and accomplishments in the blog on Day 9, August 2. We thought she was an exceptional person and apparently Moyra did also. We were eager to hear more about her and were not disappointed. At 9am we went to the Wajang Theater and took our seat along with about 50 other people who attended the interview. We took this picture of Liz, with the microphone on the left, and Moyra during the interview.



Liz specializes in paintings which are primarily acrylic on various substrates and emphasize architectural patterns and structure. In the last month she has nearly filled a 400 page notebook with a personal journal of her Voyage of the Vikings. The journal contains text and beautiful hand sketches she has done directly on the notebook pages. Moyra guided the discussion and Liz answered in a good humored, breezy manner. The interview was ended by using a projector to show the audience some of the work Liz has done that is on display in art museums. Liz provided commentary on each item. It's been a pleasure to get to know Liz and we hope to hear more about her as her work becomes better known.

Show Buffet: As part of the Mariner's Day celebration the Maasdam kitchen staff put on an incredible show of specially prepared foods, called the Show Buffet, in the lower Rotterdam Dining Room at 12:00 noon today. They must have worked for days to prepare all the different food items as well as many large ice sculptures that decorated the dinning room. There was a 15 minute photo opportunity that we attended just before the line was opened for the hungry passengers. For our "foodie" friends we will show a few photos of the visual and culinary feast below in an attempt to convey some idea of the marvelous presentation.



The stewards, who put the show together, were there to look over their creations and enjoy the compliments that were showered on them by the passengers.



The shrimp cocktails that we have with dinner are made with the largest shrimp we have ever seen. They used these same huge shrimp to make this fantastic large shrimp cocktail on the left.



Some finger good on a checkerboard made a nice display, as shown on the right.

The Eiffel tower made out of white chocolate is a classic favorite at these culinary events. The chocolate turtle tree and carved melon spheres along with the Eiffel tower of white chocolate, as shown below, made a wonderful centerpiece.



They had created a basket made of ice, as shown on the right, to carry the champagne used to celebrate the Mariner Day event.

One of the signature features of cruising is the fine food that is served. While all the extravagant foods presented here today posed a huge temptation for overindulgent eating, most people can admire the skill and artistry while maintaining a reasonable level of self control.

We enjoyed this Mariner's Day event.



HAL History: As a final event on Mariner's Day the cruise director, Moyra, interviewed Captain Andre van Schoonhoven and the Hotel Manager Firmin Van Walle on the subject of the history of Holland American Line. They assembled on the stage of the Rembrandt Theater at 3:30pm. In this picture, Captain van Schoonhoven is on the left and Firmin Van Walle is on the right.

Moyra started the interview by asking the Captain if he could tell us about one of the most significant things that has happened to him while working for Holland America. After thinking for a minute he told about how he was given the job of breaking the champagne bottle on the bow of the Eurodam ship when it was christened a couple years ago. The plan was to have the bottle, suspended on a ribbon, swing down and crash into the ship right in the center of the "O" in EURODAM. He was nervous but carried out the task flawlessly. Queen Beatrix, of The Netherlands, personally complimented him for the good job afterwards, adding that she was an expert because of witnessing so many launches over the years.. He said she might have put a good word in for him with Holland America because he was promoted to Captain 4 months later.



The Captain and Firmin gave a rather informal description of the history of Holland America Line. One significant factoid was that Holland America Line can trace its roots back to 1872 when the ship Rotterdam made its maiden voyage to New York. The company has been in the maritime business of running ships ever since 1872.

Dan Bernbach: We had put in a standing request with the head waiter in the Rotterdam Dining Room to have an officer dine at our table whenever that could be arranged on a formal dress night. A few weeks ago (Day 14, Aug. 7) we were happy to have Barbara Haenni, the Maasdam tour guide, join us for dinner. The head waiter couldn't promise that we would be able to host another officer because other tables had made requests also. The dress for tonight was formal and we got a nice surprise when we came to the table and it was set for six people rather than the usual five. Dan Bernbach, the lead singer with the Maasdam Singers and Dancers, soon arrived and introduced himself as our officer guest for the night. We can now attest to the fact that he is a wonderful conversationalist as well as a great singer.

Dan started out as a teacher of 4th and 5th grade kids in a public school. After a few years of teaching he decided to complete his musical training. His current job on the Maasdam is his first shipboard assignment. He had been working for a talent booking company called Stiletto as a department manager when the opportunity to join a shipboard singing group came up. The group needed a manager while on board so he volunteered for the manager job as well as qualifying for the job as lead male singer. He said that the Maasdam Singers will stay as a group without personnel changes until next February when they all will take new assignments. We have enjoyed the Maasdam Singers performance and song selection tremendously while on board so we were overjoyed to personally meet Dan and have the opportunity for a lengthy conversation over a meal. We got Mike, our steward, to take this picture of us with Dan.



Left to right: Caroline, Mary, Lee, Dan, Barbara, Orlin

We will continue cruising through the night and arrive at the town of St. Anthony about 7:30 tomorrow morning when we will anchor in the harbor. We have a four hour tour scheduled that will take us out to the Viking settlement site at L'Anse aux Meadows. While we have been in ports that have a Viking heritage, this will be our first contact with Viking settlement ruins and we are looking forward to it.