

From the Bridge Room – A Cruise Diary – #2

Bali High

by John Arblaster



Slide back your suite's curtains and step onto the balcony in the early morning light, and some days rush at you right out of the brochure... wispy clouds, the soft tropical breeze, the ship gliding along as it pushes aside little wavelets, and a complete 180 degrees of deep blue sea as far as the horizon.

With a nod to waning physical fitness, I jump into the exercise clothes and head for the Eurodam's spa and fitness centre. The spa is very well-equipped and perfectly capable of massaging away any remaining memories from your shore-side psyche. The fitness centre, on the other hand, is committed to exertion machines. So I pick a treadmill, watch the water, and look at the news on the TV built into the machine. The combination of daily news and sweating is not tolerable for very long, so a cup of coffee helps, along with a delicious fresh pastry or two...just to balance off the calories recently deleted in the fitness centre.

By 9:30 Audrey is teaching to a full house of 24 tables in the bridge room, and they have come to work.

Audrey is a master teacher, and recognized as such. Probably everyone who is reading this at one time or another has had experience(s) with bridge teachers, and if you have ever wondered what the difference is between most of them and Audrey, it is this: She has always recognized that effective learning happens when the learner learns, not when the teacher teaches. The process she employs engages the learner with a bridge problem or decision. Instead of a blackboard or screen, they are looking at an actual deal on the table, in group of four people—often of varying abilities. They are led through a series of steps, sharing their opinions and decisions in a non-competitive environment. In the education trade, that is called good andragogy, and builds little neural pathways that hopefully will still be open the next time a similar problem comes up at the table. And she mixes up this process with humor and care for her group.

A two-hour duplicate game in the afternoon, and then it's formal night at sea—no shorts allowed, a few tuxedos, and best frocks. It was Oscar night, so the Better Bridge award for Most Stunning Necklace Jewelry went to Fran and Ann, sisters-in-law from South Carolina who, in addition to being a dentist and therapist—all bridge cruises should bring their own therapists—, also hand-make (Fran) beautiful and intricate necklaces.

Audrey graciously hosted an up-market cocktail party in the stunning Crow's Nest of the Eurodam for the thirsty 100-strong Better Bridge contingent. The white-jacketed waiters plied the group with drinks and tasty hors d'oeuvres, and it was obvious that all were having good fun. The conversation, as so often it does with bridge players, jumps around from the small-talk of our lives to the more animated 'woudda', 'couda', 'shoudda', but didn't...tales of triumph and woe from the afternoon game.

After the party, we found our way to dinner at Tamarind, the new beautifully appointed pan-Asian restaurant whose cuisine is a marvellous potpourri of very tasty fare from several countries. There was a brief lull before we everyone arrived, and I spoke to one of our night's servers, a beautiful young woman named Dayu. So very often we never ask for more than service from a ship's crew, but Dayu and I chatted a bit and it turns out she is from Bali—if you ever get a chance, go. Amazingly, she is a highly- trained Balinese temple dancer. Not only that, as it was early and the restaurant was not yet busy, she danced for us, demonstrating skills and technique she began to learn at age six.

Another duplicate session to close out the day. Tomorrow we hit the beach at Turks and Caicos.

Life is a beach out here.....more to come.