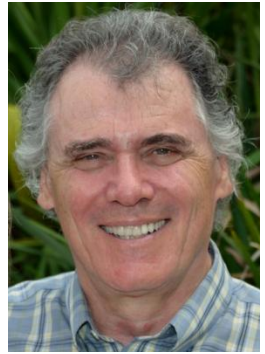


From the Bridge Room – A Cruise Diary – #5

A Private Party

by John Arblaster



Well...maybe we should just say, “Until we meet again,” because that seems to be the general sentiment across the 100-odd group of Better Bridge enthusiasts who have shared this past week together.

Last night was another moveable feast...a duplicate game, this time with Audrey herself playing at table 16 and having fun. She believes you know that duplicate bridge should be fun, and we need to get back to that. She was recently interviewed for, and quoted in, the *Wall Street Journal* on the subject. Much of her life's work has been devoted not just to improving your bridge game, but also—as the first great book put it a long time ago—getting joy from bridge.

Then, after the game, the ship's singers and dancers staged another very good show on the main stage. I followed that with an hour in the Piano Bar, listening to Elton John and Billy Joel songs. And then I made a small contribution to the fiscal health of the casino. In the time I have been on the ships, the showroom entertainment has moved a generation ahead to the 60's and 70's...and the great music and shows of that era.

Did you ever fancy a private island in the Bahamas? Or even to visit one? Because that's what we are doing on this last day of the cruise.

As I write this following a lovely breakfast topside of fruit and fresh-cooked waffles, I am looking out of the veranda of the suite as an orange and yellow parasail floats by with two people dangling off the bottom, towed by a boat. About a mile away, a string of horses wade through the water, again with people hanging on. The beach, about a mile long I would say, has walkers everywhere. You can sidle up to stingrays in the lagoon, do meditation, Tai Chi or Yoga on the beach, visit the straw market, or have your hair braided. Or, for the less energetic, you can find a chaise under a tree and sip something from the 'I Wish I Could Stay Here Forever' bar.

Holland America owns Half Moon Cay, and its ships stop here for a day of beach and sun, complete with a splendid shore feast at lunchtime. The island is very well organized for Holland America's guests, and wins awards from Porthole magazine as the “Best Private Island in the Caribbean.”

Audrey has a full house, though, for this morning's last teaching workshop. But there's plenty of time for the group to hit the beach after that. On the other hand, for those who have been through here a few times, a half-empty ship is a so-nice way to spend the day.

Two more duplicate games are available for the group this afternoon and evening, in between which Audrey and the team are hosting a splashy farewell cocktail party in the Crow's Nest.

What a week! Six major workshops, led by one of the world's recognized great bridge teachers; Twelve duplicate bridge games; Two hosted cocktail parties; And all that before sampling the charms and pleasures of Holland America's Eurodam.

This Better Bridge cruise was sold out....and there was a waiting list that could not be accommodated because the bridge room could only cope with 24 tables.

If you enjoyed the diary and reading about the lucky 100 that travelled this week, please send a note to Better Bridge. And better yet, if you think a similar experience would be fun for you, there are more cruise opportunities coming. Raid the loose-change jar, run away from home for a week, and jump aboard!