

S61 47th Reunion 2014 Cruise - Eastern Caribbean - Report of Proceedings



Mike, me, Eddy and Phil; the boys!

Episode 1 - Arrival

It was Friday 7 September. Me and Carolyn, Mike Deveria and Toos (pronounced Toes, as in those things on the end of your feet!) and Phil Mair and Shirley met up at Waxy O'Connors Irish Bar, which was just over the road from where we were all staying, in Fort Lauderdale.

It had been quite a journey for me and Carolyn, from the bonny banks of Loch Lomond. After leaving Glasgow, we travelled East across the North Sea to Amsterdam, where we caught a flight to Detroit, which is still well over a thousand miles North of Fort Lauderdale. A raging thunderstorm struck the airport while we were there, and the ensuing deluge and lightning delayed our flight for two hours. A few hours later, we were in the brace position, with our heads on our knees, and our hearts in our mouths, while the Captain executed an emergency landing at Fort Lauderdale. After an almighty thump onto the runway, and a few swerves, the plane was brought to a halt and the cabin erupted into loud clapping and cheering. The Captain thanked everyone for staying calm and told us to 'go home to our loved ones'. Unbelievably cheesy, but only me and Carolyn laughed! Yanks; don't you just love 'em!

Meanwhile, Mike DeVeria and Toos had taken a much more sensible route from their home in Holland to Florida. However, they then had to battle with the conundrum of how to get from Miami to Fort Lauderdale in the cheapest way possible. Their solution was to hire a car for two hours; a brave choice. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall in that car if they'd hit heavy traffic! With Mike being a Scotsman, and Toos being a well hard Dutchwoman, I wouldn't like to predict who would have snapped first! There would have been blood, sweat and tears aplenty!

Phil and Shirley breezed into Waxy's without a care in the world, after a perfectly executed journey, like the seasoned travellers and cruise goers they are. Our little group was complete, and we had a really enjoyable night, filling in the details of what we'd been up to since we last met, making a few friends, and impressing the locals with our capacity for eating and drinking. Yeah, we were really going for it! In hindsight, we were like Dad's Army, carrying out manoeuvres in Walmington on Sea during the Phoney War; the next day, the Panzers would come crashing through the Bocage; Calvert and Marisa!



Our long suffering companions: Toos, Shirley, Marisa and Carolyn

Joining Routine

The next morning, the whole group, including Eddy and Marisa, met at Waxy O'Connors, in blazing sunshine, for a fortifying swally prior to embarkation. It turned out that Eddy had also had an interesting journey to the States. His Norweigan Airways, (yes, you heard that correctly!), plane had been forced to divert to Bermuda, to land a sick passenger, adding several hours to the journey, and almost causing a riot amongst the rest of the passengers! It seems that some of them hadn't realised that, on Noggy Airlines, if you don't pay extra for food, you don't get fed - no matter how long the flight takes! Eddy and Marisa could afford a chuckle as they tucked into their pickled herrings and rancid red cabbage, while the man in the seat behind them went into apoplexy and came close to having to being restrained.

After a tearful farewell from a bunch of Ed's ex-pat & colonial pals, who'd come to see him off, we made our way to the ship, to begin the embarkation process. I fully expected this to be tedious; how right I was! Luckily, of the 3000 passengers embarking that day, only one person had failed to check in online beforehand. Unfortunately, that person was Carolyn! I did laugh when she told me! Still, we got to know about 500 other couples who briefly chatted to us as they carried out their check-in routine either side of us, in quick succession!



The Carnival Freedom; beats travelling in the grey funnel line anyday!

Then it was up to the cabin, sorry, stateroom, to drop off our gear, and then down to the lifeboats for emergency stations. A farce, but it had to be done! Our cabin, which was 8 decks above the waterline, on the transom, was huge, with a Queen bed, en-suite bathroom, and a balcony, complete with 2 sun loungers, two deck chairs, and a table. Cushty!



Back a bit, Dave; back a bit! Our balcony.

Finding Phil and Ed and their other halves proved to be very easy. As we passed the Lido, they appeared on the big screen, sitting at the pool bar, drinks in hand, looking very merry! You could immediately tell that, whilst Eddy, Marisa and Shirley had quickly got into the spirit of things, mainly rum, they were sensibly pacing themselves for a week of over indulgence. Phil, on the other hand, had opted for a different strategy.

An hour into the cruise, and he'd already scuppered a 4 man 'Bucket of Beer' and was displaying all the symptoms of nerve agent poisoning; slurring of speech, loss of muscle control, blurred vision etc. Shirley merely rolled her eyes; apparently his kids think his rapid transformation from sober to drunk at family social occasions is hilarious. It's just a pity that the regulating staff of her majesty's navy were incapable of such an enlightened view, eh, boys!

Try as we might, though, we couldn't find Mike and Toos. Small wonder! Captain Hurricane and GI Jane had made a beeline for the gym, and had already completed a strenuous workout by the time Phil was halfway through his first gallon. None of the rest of us ever did find out where the gym was! Nor where the boxes of Cadbury's Milk Tray kept coming from!

Next episode; Sea Time!



Happy Days!