

**Air Force Reunion
Carnival Dream
September 17 – 24, 2017
New Orleans Roundtrip**

Thursday Sep 14, 2017 Drive to Salt Lake

Went by Signpro in Logan to deliver some things to Matt and Julie. Saw Taylor before he departs in a few days for New Zealand, and his job. Toured the new Signpro location. It has tons of space, and is a nice visible location for new business opportunity.

Julie took us to Al's Sporting Goods, as they were having half off on all Nike shoes. I got a pair of dark blue with light blue, and green trim ,Nike Zoom Wild Horse 3 shoes for \$55. Pretty racy for an old guy.

Hit a gully washer of a rainstorm at Ogden, and could barely see the freeway. It was white concrete with white stripes that you could not see. White knuckles for a while. GPS took us to our hotel in downtown Salt Lake ,and checked in. Did a dry run to the University of Utah Moran Eye Center to make sure we could find it in the morning for my exam for wet macular degeneration in my right eye. GPS had it on the wrong side of the street, and we ended up at Primary Children's Hospital. We then saw the Moran building across the street, which is a new six story building.

Had dinner at the Legends Sports Bar across the street from the hotel. Watched some of the boring Boise State game. Larue had fish and chips, and the fish was over done. They brought out a nice properly cooked piece. I had a smothered chicken chili verde burrito that was fairly decent.

Friday Sep 15

Made it to my 9am appointment with Dr. Bernstein at the Moran Eye Center. After a lengthy evaluation he did a laser treatment on my right eye, and said to come back in three months. Also, avoid the direct sun for three days.

We had a light lunch in the cafeteria. I was able to drive to our hotel near the airport. Piece of cake.

Saturday Sep 16. Fly to New Orleans

Decent three hour flight to New Orleans, arriving around 2:30pm. The Airbus 319 was newly refurbished, clean, and nice, but the seats were small. I had an aisle row seat, so had a lot of leg room. Since Larue used wheel chair assistance she was a row

behind me. The restrooms were so small that a fat person would have to back in if they wanted to sit down on the seat. It warrants a letter to Delta.

The hotel shuttle picked us up. The hotel was just across the street from the airport entrance. For a Days Inn it was decent, but the only place to eat dinner was an IHOP with just us and a few black people. Food was nothing to brag about, but all we needed with a cruise coming up.

The tap water in our room was very warm, so went to a vending machine to get bottled water. The two vending machines were empty, so gave up and drank hot water.

Sunday Sep 17. Board the Carnival Dream

The front desk called a taxi for us to go to the cruise ship. A congenial black guy picked us up in a big van, and said the fare would be a fixed price of \$36. It was about half of what we had been told for a 30 minute drive to the cruise port. Heck of a deal for New Orleans. The signage on the van was "Amazing Grace - We Pick Up Everything". He had a bottle of wine, and a bottle of beer in his cup holders. He said he was an alcoholic. I think he was pulling our leg. He then opened the beer and handed it to us. We did not want any, but did not want to offend him either. So, took a swig of warm beer.

We needed 2 bottles of wine that the cruise ship allows in your carryon, so he stopped at convenience store for us.

We went by the SuperDome, and luckily the Saint's game was at noon. So, most of the traffic had subsided. It was a traffic jam to unload at the cruise port, but the traffic directors knew our driver. They waved us into a nice spot to let us off, and the porter took our luggage. We got his card for when we get back and need a taxi to the airport.

There were people lined up everywhere. We had priority boarding, and marched straight through check in, security, boarding, and were taken directly to our cabin. From our hotel to our cabin was less than 90 minutes. The mini bottles we scattered in our luggage went through ok. They examined the wine that we were allowed in our carryon to make sure the bottles were sealed. Talked to a friend at dinner. He had an expensive bottle of something in his luggage. It was confiscated, even though he told them it was wine. He has told me in the past that he empties the wine and fills the bottle with expensive scotch whiskey. It didn't work for him on this cruise.

Very scenic departing New Orleans, and cruising south on the Mississippi River. It takes about five hours to get to the Gulf of Mexico. It was enjoyable watching the scenery go by.

We are with our Air Force group, and have early seating at 6pm for dinner. It is early for us. The menu was good, the food was good, but the service was slow. I had a shrimp cocktail, steak, baked potato, and strawberry mousse for desert. Larue had shrimp cocktail, tempura shrimp, and melted chocolate on chocolate cake for dessert. The 2nd seating was waiting to get in when we departed the dining room. After dinner most of us went to a lounge where a lady singer was entertaining.

We have 17 people attending the reunion. Just 7 of us are old comrades. Me, Marvin Strahan, Ray Shoemaker, Stan Harris, and Dick Littlefield were morse intercept operators, and Joe Mullican and Dick Selway were Russian linguists. Me, Joe, and Dick Selway were there at the same time, worked together, and bunked in the same 10 bunk bay in the barracks. Stan's wife died a few years ago and he brought his new wife that he married September 2. Joe lost his wife a few years ago. and brought a lady friend. We were somewhat shocked, since neither one of them showed any inclination of that at the reunion last year. Stan also brought two daughters, and the Littlefields brought a daughter.

Monday Sep 18 At Sea

Smooth as glass last night and this morning. Had coffee and muffins in the room and went to late breakfast. I had eggs benedict and Larue had filet mignon and fried eggs. Shared a table for 10, and the service was slow. Will ask for a table no larger than 6 next time.

Dining room was closed by the time we were ready to lunch. Went to the Lido buffet and snacked on salads, and I had a slice of pizza. Wanted to have a Guy's burger, but the line was too long.

Formal night for dinner and most people were dressed fairly well. I wore my blue blazer and shirt with no tie. I had the shrimp cocktail, Maine lobster tail with shrimp, and a coffee cake for dessert. Larue had fried oysters, Maine lobster tail with shrimp, and crème brulee. All in all a nice dinner. After dinner we all went to a quiet lounge, discussed future reunion options, and visited. Called it a night fairly early.

Quite different group of people on this cruise. Mostly southerners and about 40% black. Amazed at how many obese people, and scooter or wheelchair bound people. We are about the oldest people on the ship. Heavy duty action around the pools, bars, and casino. Not rowdy though, and very polite. The casino is one of the largest we have seen, and really busy. Looks like Las Vegas.

Tuesday Sep 19 At Sea

Seas are calm but quite windy on the upper decks. Did a couple of laps, and not many people out. Nice sunny day, and I can be out in the sun today.,

Shared a table at breakfast with a couple from Chattanooga, TN, and a couple from North Texas. Had a good conversation. I had huevos rancheros that were good and Larue had eggs, bacon, sausage, and toast. Service was much better at the smaller table.

At 12:45 we went to a veteran's recognition function put on by the Cruise Director, who is from Scotland. We had all of our group there. When it was over he posed with us in his kilt for pictures. Dick Selway said to the Cruise Director, "I probably knew your mother". Each service was recognized by standing while the song was played for that branch of service. We had a lot of comraderie with the other services and we were all buddies. The Air Force had the largest group. It was a nice gathering.

The dining room was closed after that, so we went to the Lido buffet. I was getting a Guy's hamburger by the outdoor pool when a downpour suddenly hit. People were scattering everywhere to get under cover. I got my hamburger though.

For dinner I had beef and barley soup, a shrimp cocktail, penne mariscos (clams, calamari, shrimp, salmon, mussels, and scallops in a lobster sauce), and peach pie a la mode for dessert. Larue had escargot, beef short ribs, and chocolate panna cotta for dessert. The food was all good, and the service lousy. I think it is because there are 18 of us at two tables. The people around us were tables of 10.

Went to the evening entertainment at 9pm that was a singing and dancing production with the theme being Motor City. I stayed awake

Wed Sep 20 Roatan, Honduras

Docked in Roatan this morning. Not much to see. It is a low island with small hills covered with trees and jungle. Space for two ships at the little pier, and a small shopping area built to accommodate cruise ship visits. The most visible store is Diamonds International. We docked and another Carnival ship came in. I saw another cruise ship follow us in and anchor quite a ways away. Looks like a lot of walking with little to see nearby, and Larue is not walking well today. Warnings about thieves, so do not wander out by yourself. Also, warnings about mosquitoes. So we will not do much.

Went to breakfast in the main dining room, and hardly anyone there. We had a table to share for 6 people, but nobody showed up. The menu was new and really eclectic. Things I have never seen on a menu. Larue had avocado toast, and I had a Spanish omelette that was really a frittata. The service was practically non-existent. When we departed we gave the maitre'd at the front a briefing on the state of his dining room. He said this is the first trip trying out new menu's, and concepts. So maybe they will get it all worked out. I will say the food is good and the menu is good. They need to work on an old concept called "service".

Decided to stay on board since it is over 90 degrees, sunshine, and humid. No close place to walk to, as the town is far away. All that is at the pier area is new shops and no need for that. Had a late lunch in the Lido buffet and took it easy. A lot of people stayed aboard.

Went to dinner and I had minestrone soup, linguine with Italian sausage, and rhubarb pie a-la-mode for dessert. LaRue had a shrimp cocktail, then ox tongue with caramelized onions, bbq ribs, and the pie a-la-mode. Service was better and the food was good.

After dinner we all went to the small "Songs" lounge, visited and listened to a honky tonk duo called "Whiskey and Wine". This ship has small lounges with entertainment all over, and you are not hassled for drinks. When they took a break we got up to leave and the gal who was "Wine" came over and said "oh you're the Scotland group". None of us had anything on that identified us. She said she recognized me as I was wearing my RAF Kirknewton Scotland cap at the veteran's function the other day. Rather observant lady.

Thu Sep 21 Belize City, Belize

Seas smooth as glass all night and this morning. You hardly know you are moving. Will eat breakfast late, and catch the tender after the mob clears out. Got a table for 2 in the main dining room for breakfast. It was well away from the big tables of 8 and 10 people. Seemed to be the older experienced waiters. The service was great, and the food good also. LaRue had fruits, and an egg white frittata. I had French toast with fried bananas, and a side of bacon. It restored my faith in the Carnival Dream service.

I am reading a great book, "Mission - Jimmy Stewart and the Fight in Europe". With WW2 imminent he already had an Oscar, and was a leading actor but wanted to fly in combat. MGM wanted him to do recruiting films, and the Air Corp wanted that also. However, he held out and became a B-24 bomber pilot at age 32 when all other pilots were around 22. He was first assigned as an instructor at Gowen Field in Boise. He trained most of the pilots he flew later with in combat. His base in England was 7 miles from Hethel where Keith Redd flew out of with the 389th. Stewart's 455th Bomb Group would take off and form up with the 389th Hethel group as well a couple of other groups, then head for the target.

While he was a senior command officer, and too valuable to lose, he insisted on flying every 5th mission as the commander in the lead bomber. The lead bomber was the most vulnerable as the Luftwaffe went after that one first. They would come in on a frontal attack aiming for the cockpit as well as the number 3 engine that powered the hydraulics. He tells of a mission or two with the 389th that I know Keith Redd was on. I

recognize it from the transcript I did of Keith's diary. Jimmy Stewart's description is a very graphic and detailed of what they encountered, and the bombers and crews that were lost. Crews liked him leading a mission because he was considered good and lucky. If he had to break radio silence to issue instructions he could be easily understood because of his relaxed manner and clear annunciation learned from being an actor. Another of my heros.

Caught the tender around 11am and it was a long 5 mile ride. Had a couple of local Beliken beers at the Wet Lizard with some young newlyweds and came back.

Fri Sep 22 Cozumel, Mexico

Sat Sep 23 At Sea

Sun Sep 24 Debark New Orleans

DL 2834 depart New Orleans 6:49pm and arrive 9:20pm Salt Lake
Rodeway Inn airport in Salt Lake

Mon Sep 25 Drive Home

End