

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

Episode 5 - the Reunion Dinner

You had a choice for dinner on the Carnival Freedom. Either you could eat entirely casually at any of the many scattered eateries, or you could enjoy silver service in either of two large restaurants; the Chic or the Posh, to which you were allocated upon boarding. Me and Phil were allocated to the Chic restaurant, and Eddy and Mike to the Posh. We all chose to eat 'silver service' every night, other than one, when we scrubbed dinner and sat at our favourite quarterdeck water hole, drinking and eating pizza. For the reunion dinner we had to persuade the Maitre'de to let us all gather at one table, at one venue. Initial approaches were met with foot shuffling, staring down of nostrils and mutterings of 'more than my jobs worth' - in Italian. Until Eddy played his Joker that is; his Celebrity Cruise Members Gold Card, the reward for multiple cruising and the sign of a high roller - and a big tipper too, probably. Yeah, right!

We duly gathered at the Red Frog pub, before being escorted down to the Posh restaurant, to be met by beaming waiters. Within five minutes, I'd exchanged a hundred dollars for a special steak and two bottles of Twisted Zinfandel; at this rate I too could become a Gold Card Rating!



Me, Phil, Eddy and Mike, ready for the off. Booted and, er, suited!
Note the headgear: win 'em and wear 'em!



The Gals! They obviously misunderstood me when I said
we should take some shots before the meal!

In no time at all, we were walloping into our platefuls of food; six of us carving into great heaving piles consisting mainly of the remains of once living creatures, whilst Mike and Toos ploughed into great stacks of butternut squash, lentils, beans, courgettes, aubergines and zucchini, topped off by wheels of melted cheese; or, as Eddy disparagingly referred to it; platefuls of Pumpkin shit! We were in fine fettle, all hale and hearty, and thoroughly enjoying our meal and the great company and surroundings. The wine, conversation and laughter were flowing in floods. Formal speeches were replaced by brief mumbled utterances from each of us in turn, and the obligatory, though heartfelt, clinking of glasses to 'absent friends'. Nothing memorable was spoken, but I clearly remember thinking that there was no place else I'd rather be at that time, and no other group of people I'd rather be with. Every single person had contributed uniquely toward making it a

very special and unforgettable occasion.

It wasn't long before Phil became 'tired and emotional'; his kids would have delighted at the speed of his deterioration! And then, almost before the speeches had ended, he was gone; staggering off to find the men's room with that uniquely slow, intense concentration, that only the truly inebriated possess. An hour or so later, and we'd exhausted both the wine and the patience of the waiting staff, who had already mopped up all the spillages, cleared the table, and laid for breakfast. Time to go, and still no sign of Phil. Assuming that he'd gone and got his head down, we retired to the Red Frog Pub without him, to enjoy the second half of our reunion.

No sooner had we arrived at the Red Frog when Phil reappeared, in a completely different outfit, and looking much reinvigorated. The mystery of Phil's resurrection, however, was only deepened by his explanation for his absence. Apparently, when he was in the Gent's, he was accosted by an eight year old black midget, who stood behind him and urinated all over his jacket and trousers, thus necessitating the change of rig! This revelation naturally raised a number of practical and philosophical questions, such as:

How did Phil ascertain the age of the midget?

What criteria does one use when classifying an eight year old as a midget?

How had said midget developed the brute strength to restrain an adult with one hand, whilst directing a stream of urine toward him with the other?

What was the motive?

Where were the parents, for God's sake?

etc., etc..

Try as we did, we just couldn't get a coherent explanation from Phil. We'll just have to accept that we'll never know the truth behind 'Midgetgate'!

We were truly fortunate that Phil reappeared, as what followed was one of those 'once in a lifetime' experiences. Phil, accompanied by Shirley, treated us to a spectacular exhibition of 'free movement to the sound of music'. Phil slewed across the floor, his body contorting and twitching in jerky, uncoordinated movement, controlled by, but not in time with, the music. His face a leering, grinning, slobbering mask, as he pawed and grabbed at the bobbing, spinning, glittering Shirley, a picture of twirling loveliness, as she taunted and teased the beast! Priceless! They were King and Queen of the dance floor; the impromptu stars of the show.

But from across the dance floor, they were being watched by a sullen mob of Eastern Europeans, grown jealous of the attention that our shimmering twosome were attracting. Suddenly, from amongst them, came a terrible shrieking sound, and the Alpha male leapt forward and onto the stage, continuing all the while to assail the audience with ear splitting whistling - Percy Thrower on steroids! A fecking big Percy Thrower, at that! Next thing, he's got hold of the singer's guitar, and has gone back to his by now ecstatic group of followers, and is leading them in a frenzied and highly emotional rendition of what seemed to be some sort of tribute to the blood-soaked martyrs of their godforsaken homeland. And then, it was over, as suddenly as it began. A crescendo of vocals, guitar and loud applause, then a brief silence, followed by a few stuttering bars, an aborted verse, and then another, longer, silence. Ivan had exhausted his repertoire! Exultation withered into embarrassment, and the whole troupe rose as one, and shuffled across the dance floor and out of the venue, with their crestfallen leader muttering apologies as they went.

And there, alone on the dance floor, still twitching and swaying, stood Phil; still the King! Only now his lecherous grin had been replaced by a look worn only by the truly great, possessed of the certain knowledge that genuine talent will always prevail!

We passed the rest of the night and into the early hours in the enjoyment and splendour of our own company until, one by one, and long after the bar was closed, we made our way back to our welcoming beds. Eddy and Phil were the last men standing, and went off to the casino to get a nightcap. When it was time even for those two stalwarts to call it a night, they headed for the lifts, where they went their separate ways. During the next 10 minutes or so, they bumped into each other several times, as they stumbled drunkenly around the passageways, and rode the lifts up and down, trying to find their cabins!

CHEERS!!!



Thus endeth the 47th reunion of us Caley boys, and what a brilliant, unforgettable experience the whole thing was, in the true tradition of all our reunions. S61 entry may well have been branded as the worst bunch of ne'er do wells ever to take the Queen's shilling, but the Caledonia element has certainly got something special, which holds us all together more tightly, and gives us a greater sense of belonging, than any other class of Apprentices; and long may it continue!