

2013 South Pacific Rort Cruise

Saturday. Seventy Seven Rorters, including Bruce and Sue from 41 Club New Zealand, and guests boarded the “Pacific Dawn” on a fine and sunny Saturday Brisbane afternoon for the first Rort Cruise. After settling in to their cabin and a brief orientation of the ship, most Rorters congregated on the back deck for the sail away. The crowd swelled and the boisterousness grew to herald in the beginning of a week’s fellowship and enjoyment. Phyl & Mary met with Admin Director Martina to discuss the special Rort pre arrangements. Martina’s home base was in Northern Italy, near to Mary’s family origins. After discussing the fine tuning of the Apex 40 programme to meld with the ship’s programme, it was time to make ready for the ‘Welcome Social’.

A very light breeze accompanied the trip down the Brisbane River across Moreton Bay and into a very peaceful Pacific Ocean. Rorters met in the “Dome” for the ‘Welcome Social’ and pre dinner fellowship. Martina and the Maitre D’, Kyystof, were ever so helpful in accommodating Apex 40 and making the voyage a very special occasion for all. Most had dinner at 6.00pm and enjoyed the theatre, music and entertainment in the other bars. Some stayed back in one of the bars, some adjourned to bed after a big day, while others settled in for the late night club atmosphere of the “Dome”.

Sunday. Another bright sunny day with very smooth sailing; there was hardly a ripple in sight. First up, the most difficult decision was to decide when and where to dine for breakfast. Rorters met in a reserved section of the Dome for morning Fellowship. It seems that by now all Rorters had become proficient in operating the coffee machines, including Rex L. from Tassie. Seems his first few attempts ended in disaster before outwitting the machine. It was rumoured that Rex was measuring the thing up to put it in a box. The ship’s Maitre D’, Krystof, reserved a section of the Waterfront Restaurant for Apex 40. This allowed Rorters a quick access to the early sitting. Many saw the evening show in the theatre while others went to the “Dome” dancing or enjoying listening to the beat of the Canadian Band ‘Soulfire’. After the music, comedian Steady Eddie entertained in the “Dome” before midnight.

Monday. The weather remained perfect as we continued our daily relaxation. Apex 40 was already gaining a reputation for cleaning up at the Daily Trivia. A section of the “Dome” was again set aside for our morning group fellowship. After docking in Noumea at 3.00 pm., Rorters were quickly ashore to soak up the cultural atmosphere and meet Patrick, Santi, and Thierry our 41 Club Francais, Noumea Tour Guides.

Two buses took us on a Tour of Sights and Sounds of the New Caledonian capital. The drive along the shoreline passed by the Port Moselle and Port Sud Marina’s the popular Baie de Citrons and Anse Vata Beach before climbing the steep hill to the Ouen Toro Lookout. Great views of the city and surrounds, the islands and reefs were afforded the group as the sun began to disappear and create a spectacular evening kaleidoscope.

Next stop on the agenda was on top of Mont Coffyn beneath the Croix de Lorraine (Lorraine Cross). The view from here afforded Rorters an appreciation of the picturesque city welcoming the night. The Nickel Refinery, the City, the Harbour, the Bays and the “Pacific Dawn” illuminated to add to the evening splendour. It was then back to town, to the 41 Club Clubhouse for ‘Fine Food and Fellowship’.

By the time the clubhouse was reached a very popular attraction was the single toilet. The bulb in the toilet had blown, probably from initial shock, but ever prepared Rita produced 3 torches from her trusty Mary Poppin's Bag to save the day. A night of fabulous fellowship, fantastic hospitality and tasty treats of fresh French breads, gourmet cheeses and select meats followed. Thanks to Eric, the beverages and foods were delicious. The French/English banter was quite amusing. The New Caledonian's were trying to describe the meats to the Aussies. The 'English' did not understand the word 'cerf' and the 'French' did not know the word 'deer' so descriptions such as 'Moose' (Mousse) and 'Horse with Horns' was tried to no avail. One Rorter said that even if it was 'mouse' it tasted beautiful. To Patrick and Eric and his Merry Men (and Ladies) we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. The occasion in Noumea will be frequently reiterated when Apex 40 members meet and, will always be referred to in glorious terms. The tour, the fellowship and the hospitality will be remembered, by those who attended, for the rest of their living days. By the time the second bus load of Rorters returned to the ship, there were plenty of people hanging over their balconies to see what all of the commotion was about.

Tuesday. Some of last night's revellers arose a tad dehydrated but soon sprang to life after some water, a strong coffee and a hearty breakfast. An early morning cloud burst had soaked the decks and the Sun was trying to break through the grey sky. At breakfast a number indicated that they had planned to spend the day partaking in the on board activities. From 7.30am the ship's tender ferried people ashore to the jetty on the island of Lifou. Lifou is the largest island in the French Loyalty Islands. In the local language is known as Drehu. The early explorers ashore were met with heavy showers for their Lifou welcome.

Many went on the informative tour of the Vanilla Plantation. Most of those who went ashore early were back on board for lunch. A large contingent watched the James Bond movie matinee 'Skyfall' in the theatre after lunch. The weather cleared in the afternoon and fine and sunny conditions prevailed for the rest of the day. Another big noisy get together of Rorters in the restaurant was followed by more entertainment in the theatre. The authorities on board discovered some impurities in Kevin and Liz's medicinal cold tea (prepared before going on board) and quarantined the brew for the remainder of the journey.

Wednesday Port Vila, Vanuatu – Most Rorters had a busy day taking in the sights and sounds of Port Vila and surrounds. Some spent their time ashore visiting the waterfall, the cascades, the hilltop views back to the Port and the "Dawn" in the distance. Others spent their time at the coffee plantation and the various markets. The local Taxi and mini bus operators were quick to strike up a deal for a local tour. By lunchtime all of the duty free shops were crowded with Rorters adding to the brisk trade, many bargains were realised. After a morning busy schedule many could be found relaxing at the pubs or in the local brewery. With the last Port of call visited the ship sailed again for Brisbane just before sunset. Some Rorters forsake their 'spot' in the restaurant to attend the Tropical Island Night Party and Bar-B-Que around the pool. A few Rorters mastered the 'Gangman Style' dance class, part of the night's entertainment while many just watched, somewhat amazed. While all this was going on, Bill from Mackay was relaxing alone in the "Dome" wondering where everyone was. Later, the throng found him, just in time for the late night gig.

Thursday. The AGM was held in the “Dome” at 9.00am. Rorters were grateful as the meeting passed full of hilarity and without any last minute dramatics or unwanted surprises. Brian Fulmer was elected President and Col Ramsay was elected as Secretary Treasurer for a second term. The previous board was thanked for its effort and the new board was wished well. Tom Dumbleton and Wyong won the “Penultimate”. Bernie Kenny collected the Brian Cunliffe Trophy for Melbourne Norwesters. Nepean Valley was successful in their bid for the 2015 Rort planned for the New South Wales Coast around Coffs harbour. Outgoing President Alan closed the meeting and asked that we all meet again in Adelaide for the next Rort and AGM.

Bingo, pictionary, scrabble, knitting, eating, drinking, trivia, music and dancing were some of the events attended before the evening Apex 40 Cocktail Hour in the “Dome”. This was followed by an ‘Apex 40’ Group Photo Session in the Atrium, thanks again to Martina and the photographers. Then to the Formal Dinner in the Waterfront Dining Room (Some joined the Captain’s Dinner). To Brisbane, King Neptune had afforded us very smooth sailing. Late in the evening the ‘Dawn’ began to gently pitch and roll as it cut through the Pacific swell. Rorters were entertained by the Motor City production in the theatre and the ‘Transformers’ Trapeze and balancing acts to stirring music in the Atrium. Rorters poured sparkly wine into the champagne waterfall with 637 balancing glasses then Darren Sanders performed his ‘Sit Down Comedy’ show in the “Dome” until midnight,

Friday. Early morning found the sun appearing for brief periods through the clouds behind the ship. The sea had calmed again. Ian & John from Western Australia conducted the fines session on the final pre lunch meeting in the “Dome”. It was voted that the proceeds go to the Pacific Dawn’s ‘Save the Children Fund’ charity of assisting the island children. Alan and Mary presented Martina with the \$100.00 collected and deposited it in the ship’s charity box. Alan and Mary wished Martina all the best for her summer holiday visiting family and boating around the Venetian Islands. Sandra and Michael from Moree had been in nearly every winning trivia team since the start of the cruise. By today they had more stock of caps, bags and water bottles than the ship’s duty free shop. In the final trivia contest, Michael was deemed by the host as a very naughty boy. For penance the host required him to do some mimes and demonstrations. Michael brought the house down imitating gorillas and Englishmen and all the other participants in the trivia sang along and cheered while he enacted the ‘Chicken Dance’. With the help of Geraldine from Launceston, a record number of squares were knitted on the cruise to sew into charity blankets.

Saturday. At 5.00am the Hotel Manager, over the ship’s public address system, announced that the “Pacific Dawn” was in a holding position and we could all sleep in today. The Brisbane River was blanketed in fog and the cruise had to wait until the Port Authorities cleared the ship for entry. With speakers in every cabin all on board were wide awake after the announcement. Breakfast was consumed at a leisurely pace. The disembarkation delay finished up being three hours late. None seemed worried about this. Few, if any, wished the experience to come to an end. Everyone enjoyed the extended fellowship and each was reluctant to leave the “Pacific Dawn”.

The biggest question on everyone’s lips, “When do we Cruise Again?”
Until Next Time, Adelaide Here We Come!

TOODLE PIP! The Rort Committee.