

SCRIBBLINGS



From Bill Miller

May 2022

Above: The Nieuw Amsterdam at Hoboken in 1953

Sun May 29th Amsterdam: This current *Rotterdam* is, I find, beautifully decorated, exceptionally spacious in some areas, capped with lots of artwork and altogether highlighted by the warm, friendly, always attentive Indonesian/Filipino hotel staff. The ship is also, as expected of the Dutch, immaculate – and even smells very fresh and clean. The number of specialty restaurants is notable and the décor of the main dining room is especially inviting: white, light and with touches of vivid color only in the Murano chandeliers. The food stations up in buffet restaurant (on Deck 9) are quite diverse – from roast beef sandwiches to Italian lasagna to Asian specialties (and afterward, throw in items like Dutch chocolate pie and orange cream cupcakes). The staterooms are very pleasant, comfortable, well planned and include good-sized walk-in showers. Holland-America has long been noted for their linens and mattresses – and here on the *Rotterdam* there is no disappointment. Expectedly, there have been some Company changes – the daily program is now much reduced in size (to a small foldout), lifeboat drills now require a mere appearance at a station and altogether there is much greater emphasis on using apps. But yes, a beautiful, highly recommendable ship – and proud addition to the HAL fleet!



Above: The spectacular main dining room; and below – the cavernous midships pool & lido area; I counted 4 or 5 large Stephen Card paintings of bygone Holland-America ships; friendly & very attentive service; and inside the elevators you might say Art Deco Meets Star Wars!





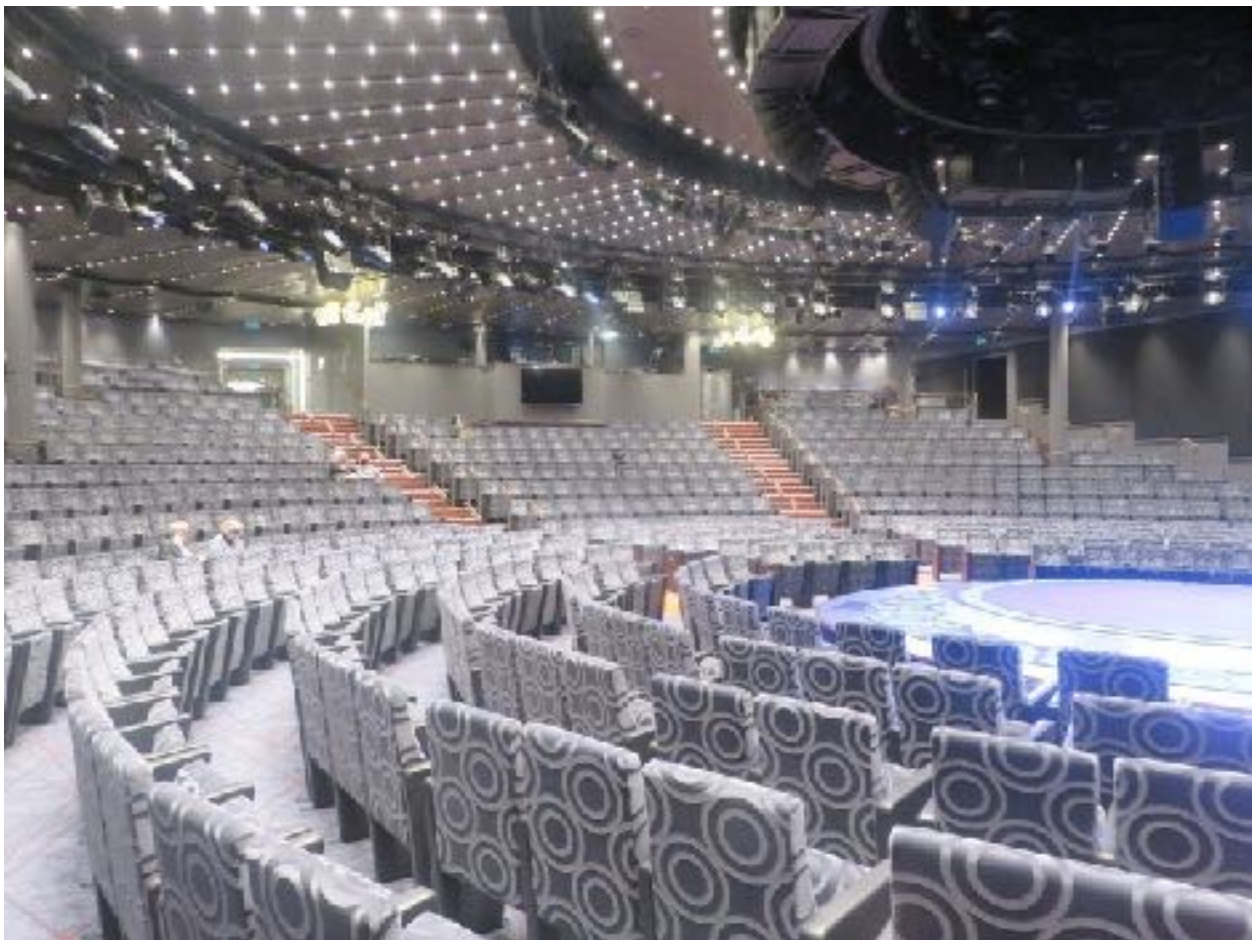




Dim the lights! At 9:30 this evening, in the huge World Stage (the ship's main showroom), Holland-America's *Origin Story* is shown. I am proud to appear in it (filmed in Jun 2019) and covering the story of Holland-America, its roots and progress in 150 years. It is a highlighted event to begin this special voyage & aboard the Company's new flagship. Like a Vatican conclave, all of the Company management are in attendance. "And yes, I'm ready for my close-up!"

Tom Cruise might be jealous! I was expecting to sit quietly in the dark, but Bill Prince, the head of HAL Entertainment, ushered me to the center seat with, as he said, "the best view". The lights went down and the charming Entertainments Director hosted & narrated – and then as the new, better-than-ever footage rolled. Exquisite! What a

production – nearly an hour in all of the Company, its ships, immigrants and early voyages, soldiers in wartime and movie stars shuttling to & from Europe, beautiful liners and Dutch royalty. Yes, absolutely superb! But then came the Hollywood part – the Entertainments Director turned the “spotlight” on me at the very end and then great applause from the seemingly delighted audience in that 1,000-seat showroom. I stood, waved – and then shook hands & posed for lots of selfies. Even the former Dutch ambassador to the US stepped up. Yes, Tom Cruise, it was my Academy Award! And yes, it was one of those unexpected special moments. (PS: We all need these special, even spontaneous moments.)





With a slowly fading magenta sky off in the distance, on the North Sea horizon, I went to bed with a big smile – thinking of that little boy almost 70 years ago who watched those wonderful Holland-America Line ships along the Hoboken waterfront.