

# FRIDAY WRAP

#2.2

'A Glimpse of Humour'

28 January 2011



Cape Town Adieu

## Wrap

- ~ Rap -- to talk., *conversation.*
- ~ a piece of thin, flat bread *that can contain anything* eaten as a sandwich.
- ~ Signaling *the end (ie of a week)*
- ~ *Under wraps – secret.*

## Anchors Away! ~ Boat Trip 2011.

### Day 1 ~ 17 January 2011

It was with great trepidation we set foot on the MSC Melody, *all shipshape and Bristol fashion*, for a four night three day trip to Walvis Bay Namibia.

This was actually a ship not a boat, I'm *all at sea* about this terminology.

We were on our first boat trip and as a family nogal, we did not go on holiday together in ages.

It was going to be only my wife and me but we included the children as it was my daughter's birthday on the 20 January 2011 so we were *by and large* killing two birds with one stone.

Our children turned out to be quite excited about this trip and could not wait to *get underway*.

So it all started in early afternoon on 17 January 2011. I was still working and was picked up by a friend ferrying the whole family to A Berth Cape Town Harbour to board the MSC Melody.

It was first hand in your luggage, check your tickets then the first photos. I first refused but my wife said I was rude and should *go by the board* and just pose when they ask us to. This was going to bite us in the #ss later.



There's a party going on right here

Then up to the ship, more ticket checks, more photos on the gangplank. Then security scan, a standard these days anywhere. Then onto get our Cruise Card, this is a card that is used to identify you and that you use to pay for anything on the ship. You pay up front into this account with either cash or credit card, your own personal slush fund so to speak.

Then we had our passports stamped by immigration then we were shown to our cabin ~ 7018 and 7020 ~ Lounge Deck. Here we met the stewards, Rajesh (from Mauritius) and Mark (from Gawdnouswhe), real friendly guys.

The room was tiny with two single beds, a chair, dressing table and cupboard. The bathroom was the size of a LCD screen. The shower stall was so tiny you could barely touch your toes. But the water was hot and strong which is something that was appreciated.

Then we went on to the Universal Lounge

where we were welcomed onto the ship and briefed on all the procedures and entertainment. By the Cruise Director, Derrick. We were then invited to the Pool Deck where the 'Leaving the Harbour' Party was in progress. And, [shiver my timbers](#) was it a party. We were [taken aback](#) by the size of the party. We were [between the Devil and the deep blue sea](#) but we managed to avoid being dragged in to the melee.

We had missed lunch and now there was nothing until dinner at 2045.

#### Meal times

Room Service, Buffet or Formal Breakfast 0600-1000

Tea time at 1100

Buffet Lunch from 1200-1400/1430,

Tea time from 1600-1700,

Formal Dinner at 1745 and 2045 (2 sittings)

Late night snacks at 2345-0030.

So there is enough food through out the day except when you miss a meal and have to go hungry. And there is no vending machine selling snacks. Only room service which could be pricey.

So later, after scouring our bags for snacks and finding only an inch of biltong, which left us **high and dry** where food was concerned, we resorted to room service for tea and a cheese platter. It relieved the hunger pangs somewhat.

With the ship now on the high sea my daughter found herself **all at sea**. Even though we took our seasick tablets 24 hours before sailing she was still feeling a little queasy. But a quick nap before dinner really **tides things over**.

Dinner was a formal affair. Our table number and sitting was on our Cruise Card so every night we had dinner at the same table in the Galaxy Restaurant.

We were at Table 108 just to illustrate how big this restaurant is. Here we met our waiter for the trip ~ Yudiastrawan from Indonesia and Marco from Honduras who we nicknamed 'Sing-Song' because he was always humming a tune.



Supper Day 1

We also had our photo taken with an officer of the ship while wearing an officer's cap. Little did we know that this was just one of the photographers playing dress up.

The menu had two starters, an appetizer, a soup, three main course and three desserts. You could order either or. The portions looked small though and the full meal looked as if it wouldn't fill you.

Then it was on the Galaxy Lounge for our nightly entertainment. The first night it was 'Gauchos del Plata' the gaucho, which is South American for cowboy. This guy really **knows the ropes** and did some amazing tricks with his eh, gaucho balls and eh, how to pull some strings.

The food was delicious and the service fast. It takes less than an hour to get from your bread to your dessert.

But after the meal we were **full to the gunwales** and were giving **everything a wide berth** as we made our way out of the restaurant as we were really **wide in the berth**.

I was too bushed and fell asleep early only to hear my wife and daughter missed the 'Late night snacks' and ordered toasted tuna sandwiches at 0200.

They were really taking the 24 hour availability of food too far.



Namibia bound ~ Day 2



MSC Melody Olympics

### Day 2 ~ 18 January 2011

The day dawned bright and early with breakfast in the Sunrise Terrace. This is right in front of the ship just under the bridge so the view was fantastic. The breakfast buffet, for all its variance and a guarantee that everything is halaal, contain no halaal meat but there were three variances of pork.

All the serving trays were **chock-a-block** with food. We filled up on fried eggs, grilled tomatoes, Lyonnais potatoes, toast, fresh fruit and yoghurt washed down with some excellent lukewarm coffee. Nothing on the ship is burning hot, everything is lukewarm.

The food, like the piped music in the Sunrise Terrace was quickly gotten use to and by the last day quite disenchanting. But, though everything wasn't **plain sailing**, there were no panic stations and we 'brave' enough to last till **the bitter end**.

We went to see our photos as all the

photos were on display. The photos were classy and of high quality and very expensive. \$17 each. That is R119 each. Buy two get one free. Buy three get two free. Wow. It was really not cheap. Everything was expensive, Internet ~ \$20 an hour.

We spent some time on the Pool Deck where there were acres of skin to meet the eye. This skin should never have been uncovered. But what the hell, everybody was on holiday and there were a lot of overweight and/or old people having a ball in the sun. There were some hot bodies too, both male and female. Bow Wow!

but left it to the people requiring some sun and rather opted to have a pre-lunch nap. This was one of the benefits of the cruise, nothing to do and plenty of time to nap. You even got to take a pre-nap nap and a post-nap nap. With a full stomach this was an excellent way to relax and recharge the batteries.



The Galaxy Restaurant

Lunch was again in the Sunrise Terrace with the same piped music. Food was yet again plentiful with a huge variety.

The afternoon was spent watching South Africa vs India in cricket and my wife and daughter going for a workout in the gym. The weather in Cape Town was hot and sunny as per the TV, here 50 miles off the coast of Southern Africa in the Atlantic it was misty and cool.

We also watched the 'Olympics' on the Pool Deck. Funny and lots of fun.

Tea time was had as everybody prepared for the Gala Ball the evening. We almost missed it because the event started at 1945 instead of 2045 in the Junkaroo Room then on to the Universal Lounge for a 'drink' with the Captain and his senior crew. But first it was photo time, each couple then had a photo taken with the captain then more photos inside of the couples and singles. I was going to spend my entire pension on photos at this rate.

The show for the evening was a Claudio de Negri ~ ventriloquist/magician/pick pocketer extraordinaire . Excellent entertainment.

Then it was on to the Junkaroo Room for the 'Miss Melody' Competition. Excellent entertainment yet again - let just say that the final three were chosen more for their size, age and zeal, so we had a couple of overweight, middle age ladies providing us with a lot of amusement. The less said the better.

Sleep was blissful.

### **Day 3 ~ 19 January 2011**

At 0700 we were edging down from the north to Walvis Bay. (I had a compass in my cabin so we always knew what direction we were travelling in. This was not just a North/South Journey; we travelled in all directions on this trip. We were going in the opposite direction to what we were thinking sometimes).

Walvis Bay was a tiny town surrounded by huge sand dunes. Bellville is bigger than Walvis Bay. But it had a quaint charm, something you say when there is nothing else to say. Like saying 'he/she has a great personality' where you don't have words to describe him/her.



The Raft, Walvis Bay

After breakfast and a shower we were off the ship heading into town. The ship offered a couple of tours but it was real pricey ~ \$69 for a 2/3 hour trip to Swakopmund or a quad-bike ride in the desert or a discovery walk in the desert. That's R490. To us it was really not value for money.

Outside the gate we were greeted by an array of different taxi drivers each with something different to offer ready to do **close quarter's battle**. These guys were **hard and fast**. A taxi driver convinced me that to Swakopmund it's 30km + 30km = 70km: R400 per person. And the Guide book said it was just 10km. So wherever you go in the world there is a taxi driver ready to con you. They must probably all be related.

Until a 'coloured' taxi driver with a van and a **copper-bottom** (he looked more trusting) **fathom out** the problem and **took a shot across the bows** and gave us a special price and he took us to the

'Waterfront'. Don't get excited, it was just a couple of restaurants and souvenir shop on the Swakopmund Estuary. A real tourist attraction.

Further down was 'The Raft' which was a restaurant on stilts out on the water. Beautiful.

Another reasonable taxi took us back to the centre of town. There was A Shoprite, Spar, Pick 'n Pay, Spur, Kentucky and Nandos. We must have gotten here on a quiet day because the town was dead quiet.

We bought some eatables and water and some souvenirs and had a walk around the town. But each and everyone in the town knew, **by the cut of our jib**, that we were tourist and were out to make a quick buck and was ready to **cut and run**.

And souvenirs to me is something made in that country by the people of that country with some significance on the



Happy Family

souvenir as to where it originated from. We found exactly the same West African Curios that can be found in all the major cities of Southern Africa. We found some bags 'direct from the maker' which was exactly like the bag we saw in Lesotho two weeks ago. So much for originality.

We were having none of that. We bought caps emblazoned with 'Namibia' and the Namibian flag. It was made in China though. Yup laugh. And some original key rings ~ rusted by the Namibian sea, wind and sand.

Took some photos at the Civic Centre then took a long slow walk back to the harbour with a taxi ride to ship just in time for lunch. And a nap. I was on the deck again at 1600 to witness the ship leaving the harbour. It is a pleasure to witness all the procedures to get the ship back on the high seas.

And soon we were heading north then west out into the Atlantic.

Only when the ship turned south did the trouble start. The ship was heading into some rough water and was being

rolled around quite badly. This in turn led to some serious seasickness and we were all [three sheets to the wind](#). We took some tablets but this was bad and very soon the ship had gone quiet as everyone had to fight their own personal demons.

Not only does the nausea hit you but headaches as well. And if you are nauseous even the most wonderful food does not look appealing.

So dinner time was an effort with all of us at the table not doing justice to their meal. The water and fruit went down well and the Galaxy Restaurant was less claustrophobic with plenty of air to breath.

So later, it was [batten down the hatches](#), we are in for a rough ride. We were [on beams end](#). Tablets were taken and early to bed for all of us.

We unfortunately had to give Steve Hofmeyr show a miss. Damn, I didn't want to miss it. I'm being facetious people. And there is nothing wrong if you like his music, it's an acquired taste though.



Sunset Day 4

#### Day 4 ~ 20 January 2011

The wind did not abate.

We had breakfast with a blustering force 7 wind. If you watch the horizon you can actually see how much the ship moves up and down and rolls with the waves.

Then it was more photo time. There were plenty of photos of us on display but we resisted and kindly left all the Gala Ball photos for the MSC Melody.

We then spent some time in the lounge watching the waves and catching up on the reading.

You know how you plan to do things on your holiday? I always take a stack of magazines and a book or two. I took the Sunday Times, Weekend Argus, The Times (Monday) and the Cape Times. I manage to read all the newspapers on the trip and managed a couple of pages of a book but it was mostly read a few pages then you get drowsy and need to nap.



Post-Nap-pre-lunch Nap



So it did not take long for my wife to fall asleep in her armchair and was gently snoring. I lie. No snoring. Just some heavy, heavy breathing.

Then it was time for lunch. Sunrise Terrace again

Food was going down with some difficulty as there was still a lot of movement on the ship. We even had mass audience participation, as the ship took a serious dip all the people in the XXX Room went 'Oooooohhh!!!' and 'Aaahhh!!!' Funny if we didn't feel so [green around the gills](#).

And still we were [edging forward](#). We passed the Tropic of Capricorn then the Orange River Mouth but being 50 miles off the coast we did not see a thing.

It was quite on occasion if anything is sighted from the ship. I saw two ships, one at night, black seagulls, white seagulls (What? There are no black seagulls. How must I know? I'm no ornithologist. And I thought an ornithologist test your hearing. Anyway.), and lot of seals way out to sea. We were always on the look out for whales and dolphins and I only saw a fin way [off to starboard](#) once.

Dinner was going to be special this night, it was my daughter's birthday and we had arranged for cake to be delivered to our table after dinner as a surprise.

So we sat down for our final dinner on the MSC Melody.

Again we could not do our food any justice.

My daughter figured out we ordered a cake (plain cream sponge cake with 'Happy Birthday' ~\$11 plus service charge) so there was not much of a surprise.

But Yudiastrawan from Indonesia made it very special for her. The waiters tinkle a spoon against the metal butter dishes or a glass and very soon all around everybody is tinkling on the glasses. Then Yudiastrawan from Indonesia came with the lit cake to the table from behind my daughter followed by a dozen other waiters singing 'Happy Birthday' in Indonesian or whatever

with a lot of clapping and noise. Better than Spur! Well done Yudiastrawan from Indonesia! I appreciate it very much. This was a birthday my daughter would remember for the rest of her life.



Lead singer ~ Yudiastrawan from Indonesia

Then it was time for the Assistant Cruise Director to [shake a leg](#) and introduce the Chefs and management of the restaurant. Then even more special, all the waiters. This was done in an Italian way with everybody singing 'Volare' and waving their serviettes in a circle in the air.



'Volare'

A real special moment for us passengers. You really get to like your waiters. And you feel it for them too as they do the same job almost every day and night for up to seven months until the MSC Melody docks in Italy at the end of April.

Then it was on the 'Universal Lounge' for a show called 'Dra jou hart op jou tong' with Alistair Izobell, Grant Peres and Jakkie Louw. Good solid



Alistair ~ giving his all'

entertainment, and I am not talking about the size of Alistair and Grant. But I still can't fathom why the audience got excited for the tune 'n Hoender wat nie kekkel nie se vleis proe nie lekker nie'. Go figure.

There was a poignant moment too when Grant Peres sang a song by Steve Hofmeyr and Steve Hofmeyr came onto the stage to do backup singing much to Grant's surprise. Alistair called him Uncle Steve afterwards.

With the ship still heaving I took a long walk around the ship for the last time.

Then to cabin for our last sleep.

Our stomachs were really upset now and we had to pack our bags and have it outside our door by 0200. So it was pack a little then lie down a little but we managed to get everything packed, bags labeled and outside the door.

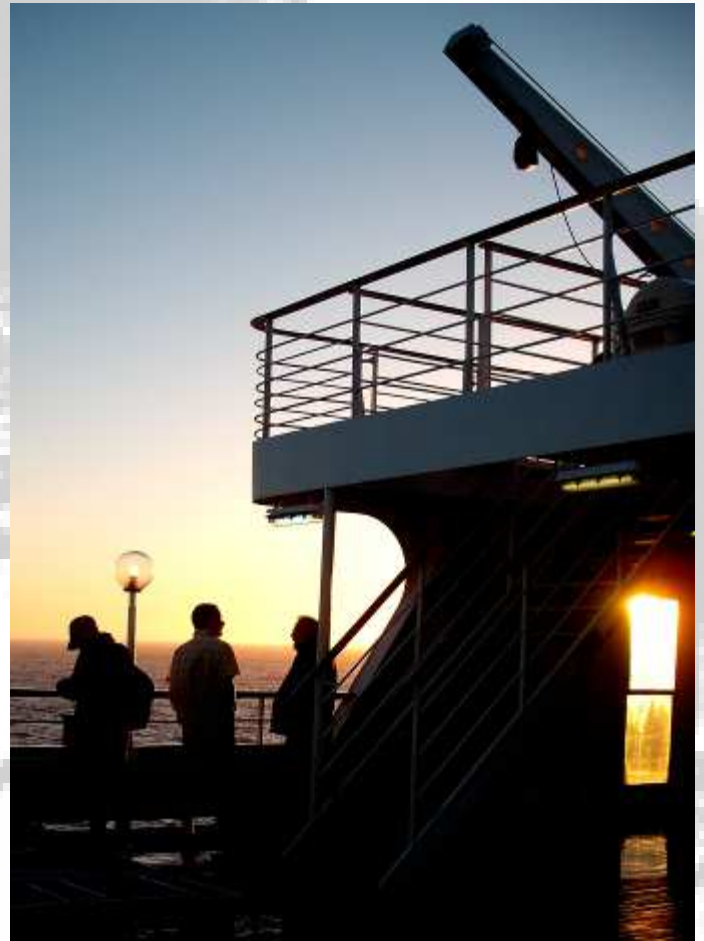
Slept like a log.

**Day 5 ~ 21 January 2011**

And still the wind blew.

I was up early to take photos of the sunrise but missed it by a few minutes. The coast was in sight though.

We had to vacate our cabin by 0730 then on to breakfast. A fourth morning of scrambled eggs, grilled tomatoes, Lyonnais potatoes, toast,



Sunrise ~ Day 5

fresh fruit and yoghurt washed down with some excellent lukewarm coffee was a little too much and I had a tough time swallowing.

But Table Mountain was in sight now and we made our way to the foc'sle above the bridge.

What a beautiful sight.

The sea was getting calmer now as we headed straight for Sea Point. We were now sighting whales, seals and a whole lot of birds. The whales had everyone excited. I did not even know there was whales this far north this time of the year. Beautiful.

Cape Town from the sea was exquisite. The sea was calm and not a cloud in the sky or covering Table Mountain. Every Capetonian should get to witness this sight at least once in their lives. It was really a heart in your throat moment and you could see everybody else on the deck enjoying the moment. Cameras were clicking furiously. I had always dreamt of this moment.

We got to see a school of dolphins as we entered Cape Town Harbour, brilliant!



Picture by MSK



Picture by MSK



Lifeboats with sliding roof



Entering the Harbour

Picture by EJ

I got one of my work mates to take some photos as we entered the harbour from the Naspers Building.

Docked.

All the passengers were colour coded and we were the pink group, fifth on the list. The Cruise Director calls the colour and you make your way down past reception to have your passport stamped by immigration then down two floors to exit the ship onto dry land. What a wonderful feeling.

Picked up our bags and we went to meet our friend who came to pick us up.

And I went straight back to work.

We had some sea legs for a few days with some lack of appetite and headaches but all in all we had a good time on review.

Did we have a good time? Yes, absolutely, seasick and all.

Will we do it again? Yes, yes, yes. But not soon and not from Cape Town Harbour rather from Durban with MSC Sinfonia to go north into the tropics.

A really great trip and I would recommend it to anybody but not to the old and frail.

And remember to take you seasick tablets 24 hours before the time and take it regularly even if the sea is calm.



Captain Cool

Picture by MSK



Hallelujah! dry land

All nautical phrases in blue from :  
<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/nautical-phrases.html>

To read about MSC Melody  
<http://www.startlightcruises.co.za>