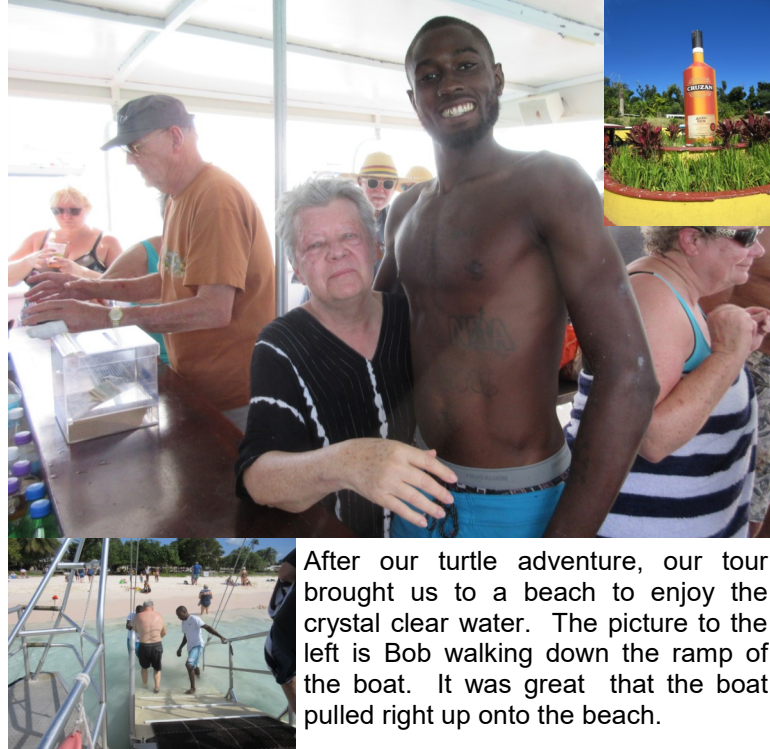
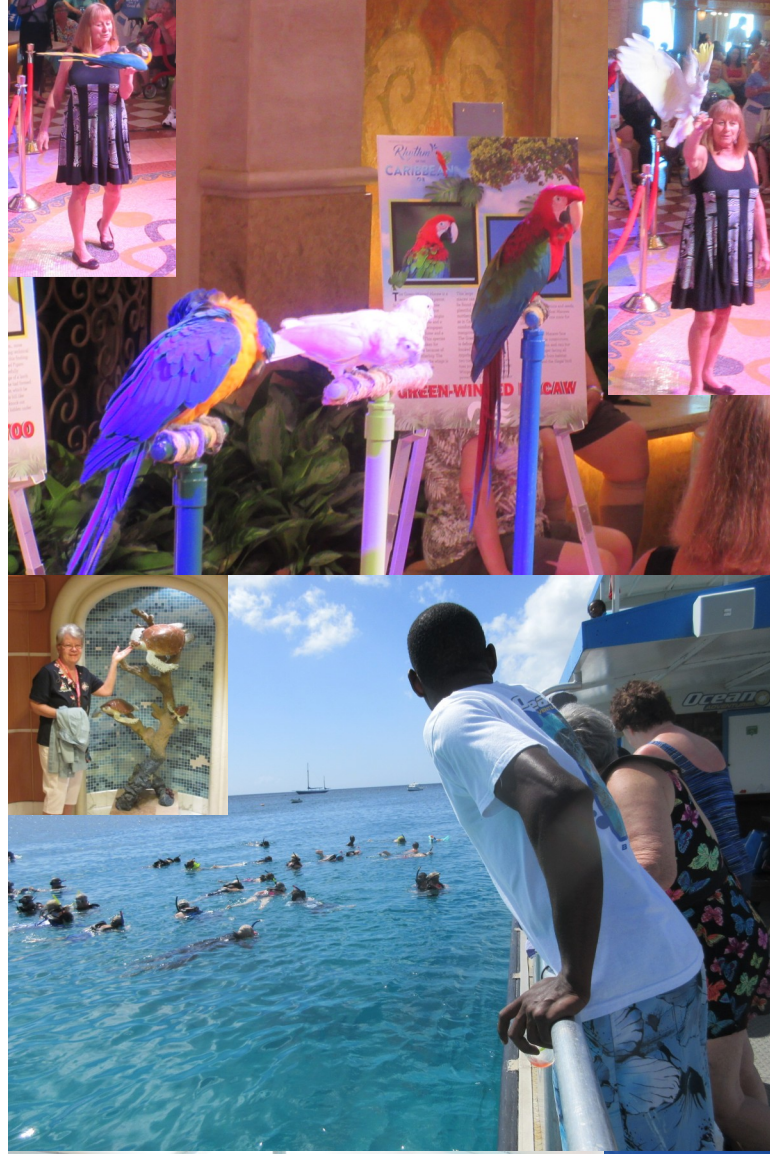


Well, here we are in January 2019!!!! Bob & I spent a quiet evening at home, in front of our TV, watching the New Year come in. Otherwise, I guess you could say we started the year off with a 'bang'!! Mid month we boarded the 'Crown Princess' cruise ship for two back to back 10 day cruises. This is the longest time on a cruise ship for us, so far. We had a great time, made new friends on board, and had some new fun experiences. We left Fort Lauderdale, FL on the 16th of January and returned home the 5th of February. There is no way, I can use all the wonderful pictures we took, so I will try to select the ones I think you will enjoy the most. The first 10 days involved the Islands in the Eastern Caribbean and the second 10 days were Islands in the Southern Caribbean, with Fort Lauderdale in the middle. Back to back Cruises have become quite popular and some people even did three back to back cruises.

The picture of our ship below was taken from the top of the mountain in St Thomas during the first 10 days. While at the top of the mountain, Bob *had* to taste the world Famous Banana Daiquiri!!! Yum!! Princess will sometimes contract with entertainers to come on board from Ports we dock in such as St Thomas. We were able to experience Parrots in the Piazza with Shawn Carcelli, who brought 5 of her rescued birds with her. These birds frequently outlive their owners as they can live to be 80. They are very social and need the companion of a human or another bird to keep them from becoming frustrated. Note how they let her hold them!

Then there is Barbados with one of our two great adventures! We went snorkeling, which I found somewhat difficult. The picture of the giant Rum Bottle is there for a reason!!! We had a great time!!! We were snorkeling to get close to the sea turtles. You see me standing next to the turtle sculptor on the ship? That is about as close to the turtles as I got! In the picture of me with a crew member, I am feeling *great* thanks to the rum we were all drinking on board!! I *usually* don't drink at all any more??? Everyone was dancing too...



After our turtle adventure, our tour brought us to a beach to enjoy the crystal clear water. The picture to the left is Bob walking down the ramp of the boat. It was great that the boat pulled right up onto the beach.

The on board ship entertainment is always excellent, with a wide variety of shows. The cast of ship performers demonstrate tremendous talent. This year Bob and I took a guided tour of the back stage area, including the dressing room, which helped us understand how they do what they do. The next picture is of John Christopher Fine, who gave several talks on his adventures involving old, historical ship wrecks. We attended them all! He is a very down to earth interesting person, who has produced photographs and about 15 books on the subject. Following his talks, he came down closer to the audience to answer questions. Then on the right, there is a picture of a Ventriloquist, Kevin Johnson, who was absolutely fantastic. The best one I have ever heard.



Another fun experience when sailing is the people we meet while living on the ship. We chose traditional dining during the cruise. On the first 10 days of this cruise, we had dinner with Tom and Karen from California. On the second 10 day cruise we had a full table of six. We enjoyed all our dinner companions very much and have very positive memories of the whole experience. I am sure they will be reading this Newsletter at some point. If I ever get it done??? We had a group picture taken of the table of six. On the left is Marcia and her husband Rick from Boston & then Ann and her husband Tom from Ohio, with us in the Middle.



This next section should really give you reason to smile at the pictures. The last excursion was on the island of Grand Turk. This Island was hit quite hard by recent hurricanes and the damage is quite visible. We took a tour of the Island, which included a 150 yr old light house, as well as a site commemorating John Glenn, the American astronaut who splashed down right near Grand Turk, in 1962. We had a Tour Guide who was very informative and pleasant. The Island is about seven miles long and about 4 miles wide and flat. At one point our Guide stopped the van, where we got out and we learned about the local shell fish, such as the conch, star fish, jelly fish and more. We learned how to identify the male conch (plain white) from the (pink) female. He also invited us to hold them while he spoke. I got a chance to hold the starfish on my hand while he talked! Fun!! We stopped at another place to view dozens of flamingos standing in the water...a beautiful sight. Then at almost all our stops, we were greeted by numerous donkeys!! Could not believe it. They are supposed to be "wild" and yet they walked right up to us for attention!



Towards the end of the second ten day cruise, Bob & I participated in an organized fun activity in St. Thomas that allowed us to play with the porpoises!!! That was a lot of fun!! The porpoises are mammals and very social and fun to be around. Our group stood in a straight line in the water following the directions of the trainer, the results of which you can see above. Then later that evening, there was the Crown Princess Balloon Drop in the Piazza as we inch toward our final destinations.