

Paul & Edward's Stories from Celebrity

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Introduction

My friend Michael sent me a link to a woman who wrote a book about living on a cruise ship as I was on my 14th cruise. I did not buy it right away but plan to do so as soon as I get home. I'm currently on a flight from Rome back to Chicago after a transatlantic cruise aboard the Celebrity Reflection. I've been blogging about my cruise travels for the past few years, however, my blogs have mainly focused on the service on the ship, the food, the drink, and the entertainment. The focus has not been on what I really enjoy most about cruising, and that is the people. Therefore, I thought I would take this time to share my most memorable stories of all the people, guests and crew alike, that I have met while cruising. I'd like to share their stories, what I've learned from them, and how they made my cruise better....or worse!

I want to express how lucky I am that I am able to share these stories with you. As I type this, in 2018, I am only 31 years old but have cruised more than 14 times on Celebrity, in excess of 130 days and have met some wonderful people and enjoyed beautiful experiences. For many these times at sea may feel like an unreachable goal but I am grateful for me they've become reality. I'm blessed with a career and a loving partner that allows this all to happen and I truly realize how lucky I am.

I believe that who I am today is a sum of all the interactions I've had with people throughout my entire life. Many people I've met on cruises have had a much larger impact on my life than you may think; hell a bigger impact than I thought. When you spend 7, 10, or 14 days with the same people they are bound to have some sort of an influence on you whether it is good or bad. The experiences I've had aboard Celebrity Cruises while meeting people and even hanging

out with the crew have been almost entirely great and influential only in the positive sense. I am here to share with you each story I can remember. I will be raw and honest and do my best not to hold anything back. I'll write as if I were telling you these stories at a party or in a bar. I want you to experience them in the way I did. I hope you enjoy.

The wine dinner and the german couple

About four years ago Edward and I were on a cruise that, if my memory serves correctly, was the Celebrity Eclipse in the mediterranean. I could be wrong, but I think I'm right. The rest of the story I remember as if it were yesterday.

Our sommelier at dinner noticed we enjoyed our wine and we enjoyed pairing different wine with different courses. After a few nights he came up to us and asked us if we would be interested in a

wine dinner that was held in Tuscan Grill, the specialty Italian restaurant. The wines served would be wines not offered by the glass on Celebrity and they would be expertly paired with items that are not traditionally on the Tuscan Menu. I forgot the exact price but it was around \$85 or \$95 a person. We had some onboard credit to use and the concept of a wine dinner (which we used to attend a lot of at home) seemed like fun. We said “sure!” and we signed up.

During this cruise we spent some time in Cellar Masters. If you're not familiar with Cellar Masters they have (used to have) wine machines that would dispense wine by the ounce. You simply load money onto a card and then use it to get wine in small pours. The great thing about this was the ability to try different wines. While it seemed to fall apart for Celebrity, the concept itself I believe holds great merit. The execution by Celebrity not so much. However,

we wandered into Cellar Masters on this cruise and the sommelier in Cellar Masters couldn't have been nicer. He showed us around and before we knew it we both had cards with hefty balances. We told him we signed up for the wine dinner and he let us know that we would get our invitations in our room, but that we would be meeting in Cellar Masters for a champagne reception at 6:30pm on the night of dinner. We'd enjoy some champagne and small appetizers and then at 7pm we would be escorted to the Tuscan Grill. This sounded like fun I thought. We'd have a fun mix and mingle with everyone else who signed up and get to know them before dinner. Sounds great.

On the night of dinner Edward and I get ready. Despite what you may think of me, I'm actually a very shy person. I actually have social anxiety. I cope with that in various ways which is sometimes acting more extrovert than I really want to. Other ways is by having a cocktail.

Edward is similar. So at roughly 6:00pm we went to the Martini Bar for a small drink before the wine dinner. The Martini Bar is directly across from Cellar Masters so we figured we'd hang out there until we saw some people go in for the dinner and then we'd head over. We sip our drinks and keep an eye on Cellar Masters. 6:15 rolls around and no one yet, but it is still early. 6:20 comes. Surely, someone might stop by early. 6:25....don't think we saw anyone enter yet except one couple. Maybe they're just looking at wines. 6:30 rolls around....we haven't seen anyone. 6:35...OK we better get in there. Maybe they changed the meeting place and we didn't get the memo.

We gulp down our drink at the martini bar and head into Cellar Masters. As soon as we walk in the sommelier who sold us our cards for cellar masters sees us and welcomes us. I remember he always had a huge smile and treated his bar as if it were his only child. He says to us "I have

you set up right over here” and he escorts us to two couches facing each other with a coffee table in the middle. On one of the couches sat a young couple in their mid 30s. On the other couch....no one. That was meant for us. So we sit down and think to ourselves, surely, more people must be coming. At this point we’re informed it will only be the four of us. We say hello to the other couple and introduce ourselves. They were only speaking german to each other. I tried to spark up a conversation and ask where they are from.....their response? “Germany.” They then went back to only talking to themselves. At first I’m worried, thinking maybe they have a problem talking to a same sex couple? But they’re from Germany I think to myself, a fairly progressive country.

Our sommelier comes over with the champagne and some small watermelon bites with creme fresh. We all eat those rather quickly. The german couple seemed very hungry and the

wife finally said something in English “I’m starving, I hope they’re serving more than this later.” But then went right back to speaking German. Dear lord, I’m thinking to myself, this will be a long dinner. So for roughly 25 minutes we sat there and the only thing they said in English (perfect English mind you) was their names, “we’re from Germany,” and “I’m starving, I hope they’re serving more than this later.” Clearly, we’re off to a fabulous start. Finally, the waiter from Tuscan came down to escort us to Tuscan Grill. We walked up one flight of stairs to the 5th floor and then started walking through Ensemble on 5. Edward and I trailed a bit behind and we said to each other, maybe since there is only 2 of us they’ll just seat us separately.....yeah that was wishful thinking.

We enter Tuscan Grill and I see a large circular table set up just for us. It looked beautiful, but I couldn’t help thinking to myself this will be a long dinner. They’re not talking to us! We grab our

seats. Edward is to my right. To my left is the wife and her husband is to her left. Forgive me for using the term husband and wife but I cannot remember their names. The waiter comes over to the table and says “Oh I see you have a small group. You can dictate how fast this goes. We can take our time or we can move it along quickly, your choice.” I quickly breathe a sigh of relief thinking, “OK, we can just all agree to get through this quickly” but that relief was quickly taken away when the German couple spoke up and said “We have no plans, we can take it slow if its OK with you.” Really? Take it slow? I’m going to die at this table. This is how my life will end. At this point I can’t say “No, we have to get out of here.” So instead I just nod in agreement and say that sounds good to us.

The waiter brings out the first bottle of wine and pours our glasses. I’m drinking this stuff like its water on a 100 degree day in the desert. I need it to get through this dinner. We all finished the

first bottle in a matter of minutes. It was quite good. At this point the german couple starts to talk to us more. Inquiring about work and where we live. Then another bottle comes out with the second course and we down that right away. Now, they're talking even more. After the third bottle of wine we're discussing everything from their home town in Germany to how she grew up in Venezuela and moved to Germany at 12. We loved the 3rd bottle so much we asked for more of the same. We ended up sitting with them and going through 6 bottles of wine and talking until 11:30pm. We sat down at 7pm. We were literally asked to leave the restaurant because they were closing. At the end of this incredible meal we shared contact information including their home address incase we ever want to spend time in Germany. We gave them ours in Chicago. By then end of dinner they knew how we met, who we dated before each other and we knew their family history, how they got married, the struggles their parents went through and

everything in between. This was probably one of the most memorable meals I've had on a cruise.

What is the moral of this story? Well, I walked into this dinner dreading it. That was my first mistake. A mistake I won't make ever again. While I may not be thrilled with the situation, I walk in trying to keep an open mind. Had they offered us two separate tables we probably would have said yes and we would have missed out on meeting two wonderful people. So now, I try to enjoy putting myself in situations like this. Situations that make me a little uncomfortable, but at the end of the day, turn out better than I could have ever imagined. I may have forgotten their names, but I did not forget their faces or their stories.

Joyce

We took our first Transatlantic cruise in 2016 on the Celebrity Silhouette. This cruise would prove

to be very special as we surprised an old friend and met some wonderful new ones that we have cruised with since. You'll notice several stories from this cruise, but the one that stood out the most to me was a woman named Joyce.

If you have read any of my "live" cruise blogs you know that I have a fairly standard morning routine which includes a drink (usually multiple) at the pool bar (or sometime Sunset Bar depending on the cruise) just after 9am. This cruise was no different and each morning I found myself at the bar in the morning. This cruise was an east bound transatlantic crossing so we started out of Ft. Lauderdale and were ending in Southampton after a few stops. The beginning days of the cruise were very warm and then the weather started to get cooler as we came close to our first stop which was Lisbon Portugal. In the mornings I would sit at the bar and have my morning Ketel One Vodka and Orange juice. I noticed there was a woman that

would come up to the bar around the same time and order a bloody cesar (vodka with clamato juice). She would sometimes stay and chat for a moment but then she'd leave. She would then come back and maybe order another or switch to Budweiser. I even remember seeing her order shots! Now, this may seem like nothing out of the ordinary, but it was the combination of her relentless energy, drinking, and her age that made me take notice. She didn't look like she was THAT old, but she didn't look like a spring chicken either. My guess was to say she was in her late 70s even though she acted like she was in her 20s.

I noticed she was with a man who was also by the pool every day drinking. They'd sit with each other and join in the pool activities. He'd get a round of drinks and then she would. Eventually either I or the man she was with initiated a conversation. I found out that he was from Canada but she was now living in Florida but

originally from Canada. Her husband had passed away and his wife did not like to cruise so they became vacation friends. I believe him and his wife owned a vacation home in Florida near her. He seemed like a very nice guy and he explained they'd been friends for quite some time and they travel very well together. But what shocked me was when he said their ages. He said he was in his mid mid 70s, even though he could've passed for early 60s. Then he told me how old Joyce was. 94. Yes, that is right, 94. Little Joyce who was up every morning drinking at the pool bar, laying by the pool, joining in on activities by the pool was 94. Wow, I thought, I want to be like her when I grow up. I wasn't even 30 at the time and I didn't have the energy she did.

The cruise went on and as the weather started to turn a little cooler I still made it out to the pool bar each morning but I didn't see Joyce. This cruise proved to be a medical nightmare for the

med staff on board the ship as we heard well over 8 “Star Code Star Code Star Code” callings. This is the call for a medical emergency. Each time I heard it I’d always say to Edward, I hope that isn’t for Joyce!

One night a bunch of us decided to visit the “night club” on the ship called Quasar. At this point I hadn’t seen Joyce for a few days, but low and behold as I walked into the night club at nearly midnight there was Joyce on the dance floor by herself having a grand old time! She was thrilled to see more people come into the bar. Eventually she had a seat at the bar and ordered another Budweiser. I had the opportunity to talk to her for a few moments. She had so much energy and was so happy and extremely proud of the fact that she was 94. Hell, I would be too especially in her shape! The night went on and she was having a great time. The bartender eventually had to close the bar, but he was very nice. Since we all had drink

packages he said he'd make us each multiple drinks and we could hang out there as long as we wanted just as long as we didn't make a mess. Well, I look over and I see the bartender giving Joyce 3 beers! One she opens and starts drinking and the other two she puts in her purse and walks off. Here is this little sweet older woman looking like a young college girl putting beer in her purse and walking off like its nothing.

I love telling the story of Joyce because it is something for us all to aspire to. Here was a woman who had lost her husband, but had found another person to travel with. Here was a woman that despite the fact the dance floor was practically empty she still was up there dancing and having a great time. And despite the fact she was 94 she had more energy than all of us in the room combined. The way she smiled, the way she spoke...the way she carried herself couldn't help but make you smile.

A stroke and people who needed chairs

I believe we were on the Reflection for a west bound TA when this event occurred. Edward and I had gotten ready for our pre-dinner drinks and headed to the Martini Bar. I remember it was still pretty light outside and would have likely been around 6:15pm as that is the time we typically head to the martini bar. We sat down at the bar, on the side of the bar with the windows and we were facing the atrium. We sat near the corner of the bar, a seat in from where the bartenders enter and exit. We were sitting at the seat that has its view partially obstructed by the tall glass shelving that holds liquor bottles. I see our bartender Putu behind the bar but instead of saying hi as he usually does he rushes past me, out of the bar, and over to the phone on the wall to the left. A moment later I hear over the PA “Star Code Star Code Star Code” the ships medical emergency call. I think to myself, uh oh,

I hope whoever it is, is OK. After the they give the star code call they always announce the location on the ship starting with the deck and so on, so the medical staff wherever they are can quickly rush there. After the Star Code I hear “Location, Deck 4, Mid Ship, Martini Bar.” I’m stunned. I look around and I don’t see any commotion. I didn’t see anyone fall or laying on the ground. Then Edward told me to look across the bar....

I look across the bar and there is a woman dressed in a nice evening blouse with pearls around her neck sitting on a bar stool. However, instead of sitting upright her head was fallen back and her eyes clearly rolled into the back of her head. I was not expecting to see that and I instantly felt as if I saw a ghost (for the lack of a better way to describe it). Thankfully there was a gentleman standing behind her that was able to hold her up and keep her from falling. It appeared her husband was next to her. Quickly

the medical staff arrived, literally within 10/15 seconds of the call. Then a stretcher arrived and they put her on the stretcher while the guest relations manager spoke to her husband. Throughout all this I didn't see her move at all. She looked completely limp with only the whites of her eyes showing and her mouth slightly ajar.

It was a very strange feeling I had watching this. It was like a wave of depression entered my body. I was no longer hungry. I didn't want to drink. I was just a bit shocked seeing this. We've had deaths on board on several other cruises, but seeing this woman sitting in front of me was not a usual sight. I looked at her and the drink that was in front of her. It looked like a gin and tonic with lime in a tall glass. Her husband had a drink too. Interestingly, he was still drinking it as the medical staff was there. All I could think is she likely had the same process I had before getting to the bar. Her and her husband probably looked at the time like Edward and I do and said

“well we should start getting ready. Let’s have a drink before dinner.” She took a shower. Got dressed. Did her hair, put on makeup (well that I don’t do), put on her jewelry. Maybe she debated what shoes to wear or what watch to wear like I do all the time. Her and her husband came down and she sat, while he stood, and they ordered drinks. Nothing different than Edward and I. I think that is why seeing her felt so surreal? It was very relatable to us despite the obvious age difference.

Watching all this unfold I noticed the husband looked very calm. He was just talking to the guest relations manager who it looked like he knew well. He was sipping his drink and honestly didn’t seem too concerned. But then again, I figured, he could easily be in shock too. Neither were very young, but they didn’t look that old either. Maybe mid to late 70s perhaps? Neither had a walker there or a cane. Both

looked as though they could've been in perfect health.

Now don't worry, I'm not telling you a terrible story here. There is a good part and even a slightly funny part. The good part is she was actually OK! The husband kept coming back to the bar each night to update the bar staff. It turns out she had a condition which caused, for the lack of a better way for me to describe it as "mini strokes." According to her husband this has happened before. Word has it she was even back her in stateroom later that evening and even made it out to dinner on the last night of the cruise. When arriving in Florida they had their doctor scheduled to meet them at the pier and they were heading to the hospital for tests but according to her husband she was doing very well. So that is the good news but we didn't find this out until the next day. So let me tell you the shocking...somewhat amusing...somewhat morbid part to this story.

Again I'd like to mention, at the time of this happening we didn't know she was going to be OK and neither did anyone else at the bar. From the look of it she could've been gone right there. We didn't know. While her husband didn't seem concerned her friend sitting next to her looked pretty worried. As the medical staff was tending to her and putting her on the stretcher I saw this couple, probably in their late 40s, start to hover near the medical staff by the bar. At first I thought maybe they were just overly curious to the situation. But then I quickly realized what they were doing...they wanted their seats! This couple kept inching closer and closer to the bar as the medical staff tended to this woman. Their eyes were glued to the seats and the empty part of the bar just waiting for them to leave so they could swoop in and sit. Sure enough, they had barely started to wheel the stretcher away when they swooped right in and grabbed those seats. Now I am all for being aggressive to get bar chairs. In Chicago sometimes we have to be!

But this took it to a whole new level! I could not believe what I was seeing.

The next day when I came to the bar it wasn't too busy. Usually I sit where that woman was sitting but this day I chose another seat. It just felt strange. That was until I heard she was OK. Then from that point on I didn't mind that seat. I still have to chuckle a bit and shake my head when I think of that couple grabbing those chairs. Thankfully the woman was OK and I hope is still doing well today and enjoying cruising with her husband.

Nenad

Nenad is a Maitre d for Luminae (the suite only restaurant) that we met a couple years ago. He is a very good looking, well dressed Serbian man with salt and pepper hair. His clothing is

tailored to perfection and he carries himself proud, with each action he makes looking deliberate and choreographed.

As I mentioned we first met him a couple years ago when we cruised with friends. He ran a great restaurant and was known for “fixing” problem staff and restaurants on the ships that were not operating up to the standards that they should be. We met him on the Reflection when he was helping run Luminae. The Reflection has more suites than any other ship yet Luminae is the same size. Often Luminae on the Reflection is crowded and sometimes the staff can be overwhelmed at peak times. Nenad was always great at stopping at each table multiple times to check on the meal. He’d make conversation throughout the evening and we got to know him.

Last November / December, we were sailing on the Eclipse for a 14 night cruise to the Southern Caribbean. We were lucky enough to be staying

in a Royal Suite and were excited to be back in Luminae. On Embarkation day we decided to go to Luminae to make dinner reservations for that evening. Approaching the restaurant I saw someone who looked familiar, it was Nenad! As we walk in he gives us a double take look and then he smiles, he surely remembered us. We shook hands and slightly hugged and he welcomed us to the ship. He asked for our cabin number to make note of it and told us to not even worry about reservations. He will always have a great table for us. As this restaurant was not as busy as the one on the Reflection (less suites on this ship) Nenad was able to spend more time talking with us when he was in the restaurant. Though they also had him managing Ocean View Cafe as there were a few things there that needed “fixing.”

One evening, as we had just ordered dessert, Nenad came by and we started chatting. He started to tell us a story and asked if he could

just pull up a chair and sit for a moment. Of course, we said yes. I would say this was probably around 9:45pm since we typically arrive to dinner around 8:15/8:30. I'm not sure exactly which story he started with, but I remember all the others he told that evening. He discussed his start at Celebrity how he applied to work with guests (wait staff) but he barely spoke English so he started as a dishwasher and worked his way up. He spoke of how he tries to learn guests personalities so he can serve them better. He understands which ones want him to stop by a few times each evening and which others just want to be left alone. He talks about how some guests will never tell you there is a problem with their food (when there actually is) so he has learned over the years how to spot this and make corrections. He talked about training his staff and helping them learn, especially from their mistakes. He asked about our jobs and we discussed overlaps between our work and his work.

One thing he talked about is energy. I'm not a religious person at all but the one thing I do believe in and seem to feel is energy. The energy of a room or of someones personality. It is amazing how a negative person can seem to attract so many negative things, yet a positive person with positive energy can help things move smoothly. I'm a very facts based person, but this is one area of life where I've put some faith into, positive energy. Nenad had a very similar philosophy and it showed. His positive energy, his smile, his excitement for his work seemed to energize his staff and we had some of the best service and food in this Luminae experience than in others.

We simply kept talking. We ate our dessert, we drank our coffees and he kept insisting on bringing us more. Eventually I looked around and everyone was gone, even the staff had come up to him and asked permission to leave

(which he said yes). We sat with him until well past 11pm if memory serves correctly; just talking. When I left dinner that night I felt energized. I felt very happy. I felt like I almost wanted to go to work! Haha...he does have that affect on people. His energy and his excitement is contagious.

On a most recent cruise, a 9 night voyage on the Equinox in August of 2018, we decided to purchase the 9 night dining package as we were staying in a standard balcony cabin. We purchased the package on board and then went to Murano to make reservations. There is always someone there on embarkation day to help with specialty reservations. There was a couple in front of us making reservations for the entire cruise as well so we just waited patiently. We already had a couple drinks in us so we were feeling perfectly relaxed. Then, out of the corner of my eye I see Nenad walking in! Edward and I couldn't believe it and he was thrilled to see us.

We exchanged hugs instantly and quickly caught up with each others lives. We found out that he was the head Maitri d for all the specialty restaurants, but his primary focus appeared to be Murano. Once we found that out we decided to book every evening in Murano. He asked what time we'd like to eat each night and simply said, do not worry we will have a great table ready for you each night. We continued to chat a little more and we found out his family was on board (and had been on board for a few weeks). I could tell there was a little extra "pep in his step" and that was definitely the reason why.

We consider Nenad a good friend. Even though we haven't known him for all that long, we've spent plenty of time with him and a lot of the conversations we've had are more meaningful than your typical "how is your cruise going" sort of conversations. They're chats about personal ambitions, life goals, future plans...the list goes on. So if you're on a Celebrity Cruise and you

happen to stumble across Nenad be sure to say hello, introduce yourself, and get to know him. I promise you won't be disappointed.

Booking our first Transatlantic & surprising a friend

We took our first transatlantic cruise in April of 2016 aboard the Silhouette. Many people plan long cruises like this in advance. We planned this 30 days in advance while drinking at a champagne bar here in Chicago. Let me explain.

In December of 2014 we took a 14night holiday cruise on the Eclipse. We met a couple from Sweden, Johan and Henry. They were very nice and a pleasure to talk to each night. We ended up visiting some ports together and had a couple port mishaps, but that made us all the better

friends and we really seemed to enjoy each others company. We became Facebook friends and kept in touch. We noticed Johan posted that he booked the transatlantic on the Silhouette. Edward and I had been talking about a transatlantic cruise for some time. We realized what we loved most about cruising were the sea days and this would be a perfect opportunity to not have to worry about getting off the ship and enjoy a more relaxed cruise. So when we saw Johan booked this we thought we would check the pricing. We were sitting at Pops for Champagne in Chicago working on a bottle of prosecco (after having martinis and dinner) and we were shocked by the pricing! We were able to book our **BEST DEAL YET AND STILL TO DATE** on Celebrity. \$599 per person for a Verandah cabin for a 13night transatlantic from Florida to Southampton.

Edward and I looked at each other and thought no way, this can't be for real. There has to be a

catch. What about airfare back to the states? It must be ridiculous for a one way. Maybe that is why it is so cheap? Well, we checked airfare through Choice Air...and it was cheap! I forgot the exact price but it was under \$500 per person to return to the US. So, after a few moments of deliberation we booked it. Edward had the vacation time and it was a slow time of the year for him. I'm self-employed so I can typically travel at anytime. We couldn't believe we got this deal. Now we still had to purchase the drink package, and ended up purchasing the dining package too, but overall it was still an amazing amazing deal.

We decided to keep it a secret and not tell Johan. We thought it would be a fun surprise when we show up on the ship. I posted one photo in the morning on Facebook and Instagram in the morning from our hotel and then another when we were on the ship. It didn't take Johan long to check social media and see

the photos. It was so much fun to see him and to know another person on this 13night journey.

Ever since then we've been hooked on transatlantic cruises. We just sailed our third a few this past April and might plan one for next year as well. There is something about being in the middle of the ocean, so far away from land, that is highly appealing to me.

The Transatlantic Customs Line

Waiting in a customs line is never fun. Traveling into parts of the EU, such as Italy for example, there is nothing to worry about. If you're coming from the states they don't even care. However, our first transatlantic cruise was a little different. While we had already stopped in EU countries prior to arriving in Southampton we still needed to have our passports checked by British customs officers. The good thing was at our last port of call prior to arriving in Southampton, a

few customs agents boarded the ship and we were told that we needed to clear customs during the following sea day.

Each stateroom received a suggested time of when to arrive to clear customs. However, it really was a free for all. The customs officers were set up on deck 3 in the MDR. When I went in the morning to check on the line (figuring maybe it wasn't too long) the line wrapped all the way around deck 3. So I decided to wait a little while. Edward was still sleeping off his hangover anyway. So as the day went on the line just grew and grew and grew. It looked like it wasn't getting any better and it appeared most people had the same idea I did; lets just wait and see. Well, in the early afternoon I knew it wasn't going to get better so Edward and I grabbed a drink and waited in line. Sure it was a hassle, but I'd rather be waiting in line on the ship with a drink in my hand than dealing with this the following morning.

Edward and I waited in line and made small talk with the people around us. We then saw Anka, the suite concierge (we were NOT staying in a suite this cruise) escorting suite passengers to the front of the line. I thought to myself “I wish we had booked a suite!” This was our first transatlantic cruise and if you remember from the previous story we had gotten a steal on this cabin, \$599 per person for a balcony cabin for 13 nights! The cheapest suite was going for roughly \$3,500 per person. Doing the math in my head that means we saved almost \$6,000 compared to being in a suite. This line was a little over an hour long. I don’t make \$6,000 per hour, so I’m happy to wait in line. Well, others apparently couldn’t do basic math or maybe they did make \$6,000 per hour, or perhaps they were just bitter at someone in a suite. Either way, as suite passengers were escorted to the front, people in the line were yelling at them! Swearing at them. One even shouted “You better eat in

your suite tonight if you know what is good for you!” I simply said, “I paid \$599 per person for this cruise and got a steal of a deal I don’t mind standing in line. If I paid what they paid, you bet your ass I’d expect to be escorted to the front.” Now I didn’t say this to anyone particular person except for Edward. But I said it loud enough for people to hear. Hopefully it knocked some sense into the fellow passengers around me that someone like myself (much younger) had some basic sense of civility and common sense in this situation. I just could not believe the rudeness of these people.

Now should the suite manager have escorted them by for everyone to see? Maybe we can have that debate. Perhaps they could have set up a couple small windows where the customs officer would be in Michael’s club for suite passengers. That might have been more discreet and the smarter thing to do. But that is

neither here nor there. The attitude by some of these people was egregious.

But what I thought was really sad were the complaints I heard while in line aside from the yelling at the suite guests. People would say “This ruined my vacation” “I can’t believe they’re ruining my last sea day.” All I can think is, “really? You’re letting one hour ruin your last sea day or your entire cruise for that matter?” Sure, it could've been handled better but to let it “ruin” your entire vacation, that is pretty sad.

I mention this story not to be negative, but I think it just goes to show you that in any environment peoples’ true personalities come out even at the slightest sign of adversity. It is very easy for us to succumb to people like this and let them dictate how we react. Instead we need to be stronger than them and not let them rain on our parade.

Chairul

I could not write this compilation of stories without mentioning one of my absolute favorites, and that is bartender Chairul who is now a butler. We first met Chairul on our 14night Eclipse holiday cruise in 2014. Chairul was working the martini bar at the time. He is a skinnier guy, tall compared to others from his country, Indonesia. But unlike most who work on the ship from Indonesia, he is from Jakarta not Bali. The first time at the martini bar on this cruise was during the day and we ordered a martini. For some reason he made a mistake and gave us a chocolate martini and I quickly corrected him. From then on he never forgot our drink. More importantly, he was just a great guy. He always talked to us at the bar, asked how things were going. He'd go out of his way to get us seats if we needed them or to get me sparkling water if they were out of it (I always

drink sparkling water on the side when I order a Martini on the ship).

As I mentioned this was a holiday cruise, but the cool thing about this cruise was that it went over both Christmas and New Years. A few days before New Years all the sommeliers passed out cards stating that we could order a bottle of champagne and have it delivered to any bar on the ship for us. We thought this was a cool idea and we asked Chairul if we could have it delivered to the Martini Bar. He was very excited about this and he said “yes, have it delivered here. I’d really like to spend new years with you guys.” So we had the bottle delivered there and had one glass just before midnight. We then went up to the pool deck for the new years eve party and Chairul saved our seats. The pool deck was packed! They were handing out free glasses of champagne to everyone and there was a giant ice sculpture on the walk way between the two pools. The sculpture was 2013,

but at midnight they pushed the 3 into the water and replaced it with a giant 4 made out of ice. We were close enough to islands so we could see fireworks in the distance and the band played and then so did the DJ. It was great fun and even the staff was sneaking some champagne and hugging everyone! It was a pretty cool moment. Anyway, back to Chairul.

A bunch of us went back to the Martini Bar and we finished the champagne with Chairul. I remember that night giving him at least a couple \$20 bills. He had talked about wanting to call his daughter for her birthday (I think that was it, her birthday was on new years if I'm not mistaken) and I told him that was only for him and he was to call her or get some internet and Skype her.

So a year goes by and we're booked on the Celebrity Reflection for a back to back 7 day cruises. Edward and I get on the elevator and head up to walk around the pool deck. As we're

on the elevator I made a comment to Edward “Wouldn’t it be cool if Chairul was on this ship?” Well, I get off the elevator and turn the corner and I hear someone yell my name. I turn around and it is Chairul! He came over and gave us hugs. He not only remembered our names, but also where we were from, what we did for a living, and most importantly, our drink order. He told us he was working the molecular bar but that he would bring some Ketel One there for us and he would take care of us. So naturally each night we sat at the bar and were served our martinis that no one else could get there. Thankfully we did, because from that cruise we actually met several other great people including Dawn and Lisa who you will hear about later. Each night he’d tell us stories about working on the ship and crazy passengers. His favorite story to tell would be about guests trying to use elite coupons that were years old. He said each cruise people would try that. He would need to

explain to them “I’m sorry this coupon is from 2013 and it is now almost 2015.”

After that cruise we stayed in touch and have seen him on another cruise. The last time we saw him things were not going well for him and his wife, but his children were doing great. I could tell he wasn’t too happy and I really wished there was something I could do for him. He took a small break from Celebrity but now he is back working for Celebrity again and he really seems to be enjoying himself and back to his usual craziness that we enjoyed.

I mention Chairul because I attribute a lot of the great service I receive across the ship to him. Even when we were not sailing on his ship, he knew when we were sailing and what ship and he would send a message to his friends on the ship to take good care of us. It was shocking how someone we hadn’t met before would be able to say to us once we sat down at the

martini bar “Ketel One up with a twist right? And pellegrino on the side?” And it is because of something simple like this which is why we have increased our cruising in recent years. Through him we’ve gotten to know so many other wonderful wonderful bartenders and staff that continue to look out for us and make sure that no matter which ship we are on we are very well taken care of.

Our First time on Celebrity

Our first time on Celebrity was in December of 2010. I had just started dating Edward that August and we decided to take a trip together. We both had just gotten out of relationships that were difficult to end and winter in Chicago was coming in full force so it made for a perfect time to get away. We had only been dating a short while but we both felt (at least I know I felt) that

how a couple travels together is very important. You learn a lot about someone when you're confined to less than a 300sf cabin for 7 nights. Before this cruise I had only been on 3 cruises, all of which were with Carnival. I wanted something nicer than Carnival and so did Edward. Also, I had sorta dated a production singer for Carnival so Edward said Carnival was out of the question. We ended up on the Celebrity Eclipse for a couple reasons. First off at the time it was almost a brand new ship. Secondly, at the time they were one of the few main stream cruise lines to offer a drink package. I remember from my time with Carnival what my bar bill was so I was happy to purchase a drink package to help limit my spending.

The night before the cruise we stayed at the Loews South Beach. Ironically we now live in the Loews Chicago; funny how things come full circle. We arrived a day early and enjoyed South Beach. We had fun on the beach exploring,

enjoyed a nice dinner, and then visited a few bars. The next morning we were up early and ready to join the ship. What I remember distinctly the first time walking onto a Celebrity ship was receiving a glass of bubbly and looking around at the beautiful decor. I felt like I was walking into a hotel and not a cruise ship. What a difference from Carnival! I wasn't sure how to dress and knowing I'd be one of the younger paying passengers (I was only 23 at the time) I wanted to make sure I did not under dress. I had on a pair of dark designer jeans and a white button up with the sleeves rolled up of course due to the heat. I think I may have been wearing loafers...possibly some sandals. I remember sitting on a lounge by the pool and calling my dad to check in. I remember telling him how beautiful everything was. How clean, crisp, and modern everything looked.

We stayed in a standard balcony cabin. I believe we were on the 7th floor if memory serves

correctly. I remember being surprised at how modern everything looked in the room, at least compared to Carnival. The modern granite on the desk. The swivel flat screen TV. I was so easily impressed back then!

I remember this cruise we had standard set dining in the evening, late seating. We had a nice group. Specifically I remember a man traveling by himself who said he had taught at Harvard. There was a couple from Canada who skipped out on a few meals and then I believe there was a couple from Portugal. We were seated roughly toward the front to middle of the dining room. I do remember we had a wonderful sommelier that was extraordinary. She took great care of us. While I did not know a great deal about wines back then I knew enough to know what I liked and she would always bring out great recommendations and was overly attentive. I drank more wine at dinner back then than I do now. Perhaps because now I have so

many “pre-dinner” drinks! Back then the sommeliers had their tasting “cup” they wore around their necks. I haven’t seen that since then. I always thought that was a classy look though I’m sure they’re glad to not have to wear that any longer.

I remember a martini bartender named Roland and I also believe Putu (bald Putu, one of the originals) was also on that cruise being his crazy self!

But what do I remember most about that cruise? How welcomed I felt. I was worried traveling as a gay couple. It was only 8 years ago but I was still young and didn’t have the social strength that I do now. I could not believe how friendly everyone from the staff to the passengers were on the ship. We met this wonderful couple, Joe and George, who we saw multiple nights at the Martini Bar but eventually toward the middle of cruise we ended up speaking. They had been

together for at least a couple decades and they said that we reminded them of when they first got together. They seemed so happy and made a great couple so I took that as a wonderful compliment. We also met a gentleman named John who was traveling by himself. He was retired from the hospitality industry and now cruises almost 180 days a year.

I did not know it then, but this cruise changed my life. It was a trip that helped me truly fall in love with Edward and it was a trip that helped me fall in love with cruising. Now I'm not saying these changes were for the better. Had I not truly fallen in love with Edward on this cruise I could easily be dating a trust fund guy from Manhattan and living between the Hamptons and his family's private island...but life throws you curveballs (just kidding on this one. Can you tell I've had a drink before writing this portion?). In all seriousness, it is funny how first experiences can change us, for the better or for

the worse. We could have chosen to take a different cruise and maybe a series of events would have led to a terrible experience. Maybe we would have never cruised again. Maybe we would have never met all the wonderful people we did meet on this trip. Though, perhaps maybe we would have chosen land based travel. Maybe we would have met just as many equally wonderful folk. Though I do think the people we've met on Celebrity are much better than we would have met elsewhere! But it is interesting to think about right? I think these thoughts help keep our minds open. Whenever I have a bad experience, whether it be at a dinner, a walk home, a trip, or purchasing a product, I try to think of the good. Maybe someone I met through the process or perhaps a lesson I learned. There is something good everywhere you walk and in each experience you have. Sometimes we just have to dig it out. But at the end of the day I could not be happier that Edward and I made our first cruise together a Celebrity cruise. It

brought us together and it has helped us meet hundreds of people, dozens upon dozens we are proud to call friends today.

Bryan

We met Bryan on our first cruise in Europe, a mediterranean cruise. At least I believe that is where we met him. I also believe that is when I first started using Cruise Critic. Bryan was a very friendly gentleman with a unique voice you could pick out of a crowd of a thousand. Bryan was an African American man, with a big head of hair and when he walked around the ship he seemed to know everyone, and everyone knew him. They knew him in a good way, a way in which as soon as they saw him their eyes lit up and they couldn't wait to say hello. Bryan had a personality as unique and quirky as his voice. He'd joke about anything but always good natured. He was a genuinely good guy. He kept

a home in London and Manhattan. I knew he had money but he'd never be one to flaunt it, but discussing his travels you knew he had to have it.

Bryan was traveling with friends, but traveling solo. He had lost his partner not too long before we met him. I don't remember his partner's name but he spoke of him fondly. I'm only telling you about Bryan because of one thing he said to me when we were discussing cruising and he said "My partner and I loved to cruise together... cruising was our passion." He said the word 'passion' with...such passion that it made me shiver. I remember feeling so bad for him that he lost his partner; he wasn't that old. Him and his partner had been on more than 100 cruises and I remember thinking, how can you cruise by yourself after all that time with him? Wouldn't that be hard? Wouldn't you see something that reminded you of him and you would break down? But Bryan never did, at least not in

public. Perhaps in private he had his moments. Bryan was full of life. Always smiling, always the life of the party. Now don't get me wrong, he had a strong personality and if he didn't like something he would definitely let it be known, but he never let it affect his mood.

I often wonder if I lost Edward could I continue cruising. I don't know. While we're both still very young I realize that does not mean anything. Things can change in an instant.

After the cruise we were on the same British Airways flight connecting through Heathrow with Bryan. Even though he was tired from being out late the night before and having to be up early he was still his quirky fun self. He was catching the QE2 back to NYC. He seemed to live a good life though I'm sure he'd give it all up to have his partner back.

Walking the deck at night

Usually toward the end of a cruise we leave the bar, maybe it's the sky lounge or maybe it's the martini bar. I'm a little tipsy, but not drunk, but I'm still wide awake. We take the elevator up to the top deck and walk around. The pool is covered in netting. The decks have been recently washed. The deck chairs are stacked. The lighting of the pool is beautiful in the middle of the night. The wind blowing muffles sounds of anything else. It is so peaceful. So quiet. We usually will walk around the top deck and continue walking around the entire ship. Sometimes we will see another couple out and about. Sometimes someone just napping or sleeping peacefully in a deck chair. Occasionally we are a little silly and play some basketball. Ever tried playing basketball in suede loafers and a blazer? It's not easy. Usually I'll just lean against the railing and look out into the black ocean. Listen to the waves. It's such a relaxing

time. You don't want the sun to come up the next morning because that means you are simply one day closer to getting off the ship.

What's this guy looking for?

On one of our most recent cruises Edward and I went to the main theater to see the show Elysium on the Reflection. The theater was pretty crowded and our usual favorite seats (first level, 3rd row on the left) were taken. As a matter of fact almost all the end seats were taken. We walked down the left aisle and between the stage and front row. We spotted some seats in the middle of the 5th row, only a few people in from the end. We walked over and grabbed those seats. We were nearing the end of our 14 day cruise and the "cruise blues" were starting to sink in. However, when I find myself starting to feel this I try to just slow down, step back, and do my best to appreciate everything around me. I found myself looking around at the

theater. Listening to the background music that was playing as more people filed in. I then started looking at the people and wondering how many were lucky enough to stay on for the next cruise.

I noticed there was a man in front of me, probably in his late sixties, with a head of white hair and a short beard. He kept turning around looking behind us, up the stairs. Every thirty seconds or so he would turn around and look. He had a somewhat anxious look on his face but eventually after roughly 15 times of turning around the anxiety went away from his face and his face lit up with a smile as if he were a child on Christmas morning. I couldn't help but turn around and look too (at this point I had to see who or what in the world this guy was waiting for). A woman about his age was walking down the stairs and making her way to him. She shuffled past the people at the end and she too had the same look of Christmas morning on her

face. She sat down next to him, they kissed, and they held hands waiting for the show to begin. Now, every thirty seconds, instead of looking behind us, he looked at her smiling. I wasn't sure if they'd been married for 50 years or just started dating, but whatever their relationship I can't say I've ever seen someone so happy.

There was something about his smile that struck a cord with me. It was genuine. It was sincere. It made me happy to see. Even though the cruise was a little while ago I can still see his smile as plain as day in my mind.

Our first Royal Suite

We cruised in our first Royal Suite in November / December of 2017 for a 14 night southern caribbean cruise aboard the Eclipse. We didn't book the Royal Suite from the start, instead we started with a concierge guarantee and worked our way up after final payment as we saw prices

drop. One Sunday (or maybe Saturday?) morning Edward was checking prices and a royal suite dropped to \$12,200....TOTAL. Not per person, but total. We were already in a Sky suite at this point and were paying around \$7,800. Keep in mind this is a 14 night cruise. Usually we've seen royal suites sell for that price PER PERSON for a 14 night cruise. We thought about it for around 30 minutes and then called our travel agent for probably the 6th time regarding this cruise and upgraded.. Edward and I make a decent living but no where near what is needed to travel in Royal suites all the time so this was going to be a treat for us. Up until this point our best suite we stayed in was a sky suite and even that we considered a great treat.

We spent a day in Miami at the Four Seasons before and then the next morning jumped in our uber and headed to the port. We got caught by the bridge raising on Brickell ave so we weren't

the first at the port but we were still early. There was no line in the suite check in so we were helped right away. There was some computer issue we were told, but I don't think that was the case. I think they were delaying a bit so an officer could come escort us onto the ship. At the date of writing this Celebrity currently has an officer meet you curbside for Royal and Penthouse suites. After we get our cards, we turn around and are greeted by Solomon the head of shore excursions. He introduces himself and says he is there to escort us. He offers to take our carryon bags, but we decline though the offer was nice. He starts walking us toward the ship. I assumed he would just take us the short way to get in line and leave us there. We get onto the gangway and there is roughly 80 people or so in front of us. Solomon politely asks people to step aside to make way for us so we could cut the line. Now I'd be lying if I said I *didn't* love this. I did. I ate it up. But, I did feel a little guilty. Not only was everyone in line older

than us, most were considerably older so I did feel a little guilty. Guilty enough to say “It’s OK, we can wait” ? No, definitely not that guilty! Though I was concerned some of these guests might shank me at the bar later that night!

Ironically our suite was almost the size of our home in Chicago. We live in a one bedroom in downtown Chicago that is roughly 860 square feet and the size of this suite was in the 700s (including the balcony I believe) so I thought that was a little amusing. We loved the extra bathroom space in the Royal. That was fantastic. Having a separate living area so one can watch TV while another naps was great. A separate area so the butler can deliver breakfast and not disturb us we loved.

What did I love most? We got the impression from the Michael’s club staff and from our butler that we could pretty much ask for anything and it would be taken care of. In all the restaurants

whether it was Luminae or specialty, we always had one of the best tables. I would say it was the comfort of knowing that if we needed anything at all it could probably be done for us. We didn't take advantage of this as we're pretty low maintenance. But it was nice to have that assurance.

What was the BEST part of staying in a Royal suite? The curiosity has been satisfied. I know what it is like. I loved it and so did Edward, but we both realized we don't need it. On our recent cruise in April we stayed in a regular balcony cabin and thoroughly enjoyed the cruise. As a matter of fact we considered our recent cruise in a regular balcony cabin one of our best yet. What we enjoyed most about the Royal was the service associated with it. Given our relationships with so many staff members we can achieve that in a regular cabin. However, we still book sky suites as much as we can. We like the extra space and we love Luminae and

knowing we have a butler available if we need anything. We have 4 cruises currently booked for the future and all of them are in suites.

Demanding Woman at the Pool Bar

Once we got on board we usually try to stalk out a bar that will become our regular morning bar. It will either be the Pool Bar or the Sunset Bar as these are the bars that open the earliest and typically will have a staff member that we remember from a previous sailing. On this certain cruise we decided to sit at the pool bar on the right hand side. This was a 14 night sailing and therefore had plenty of time to solidify our morning routine, however, we were anxious to make some new friends and decided to stay at this bar for a couple drinks. We were on our second drink when a tall blonde woman and her husband showed up to order drinks. The woman was dressed as if she was going to a charity event in Manhattan and needed to

impress every millionaire in the room. She was in a sleek silver designer dress and dripping in diamonds from her ears to her rings, watch, and bracelets. Now I can appreciate dressing well but this seemed a little over the top, but to each their own, right? I never try to judge people on how they dress or how they look, but deep down inside we all do a little. One thing I will judge people on, always, is how someone treats wait staff or service staff. I feel you can tell a lot of someone by how they treat those who serve them.

This woman ordered a grey goose and club soda with a splash of cranberry juice and a lime. Well, she was informed that they did not have any limes at the moment. The woman was outraged “ Well this is a bar isn’t it? How do you not have limes? This is a bar right?” The bartender was very nice and apologized and explained that it was embarkation day (and also a coast guard inspection) and that they would

have limes later on in the day. The woman was not thrilled with this and she continued to complain under her breath, but loud enough so people around her could hear...as if she was trying to garner some support from fellow passengers. The bartender then poured her drink but it had too much cranberry juice. Uh Oh, she was now livd “Don’t you know how to make a drink? I said a splash, that isn’t a splash? Do you need me to come on the other side of the bar and teach you how to make a drink?” This simply pissed me off. I was so close to saying something to this woman, but I didn’t want to start a confrontation on the first day of the cruise. The ship isn’t that big. I also assumed she was in a suite (as were we staying in a Royal) and I figured I’d have to deal with her in Michael’s Club, Luminae, and possibly helipad sail away, etc. so I didn’t want to make things awkward. So I kept my mouth shut and simply shot the bartender a look of compassion.

The bartender apologized again and made her a new drink with the proper couple droplets of cranberry juice. Then she pulled out her sea pass card for the bartender to swipe and I noticed she was in concierge class. I had a small chuckle to myself. When she walked away I told the bartender if she gives him any issues or anything during the cruise to just let me know. We will stick up for him. It also quickly became a running joke with him. Each time we'd see him we'd joke that he now only knows how to make drinks because this woman showed him. I think sometimes in situations like this it is just best to empathize with the staff and to let them know you saw how terrible they were treated. If it had escalated any further I'm sure I would have said something, but I think saying something in this instance would have probably upset the woman more and thus cause more issues for the bartender. We definitely did not want that.

Do you wonder what I wanted to say to this woman? Well, when I saw her concierge class card the first thing that popped into my head to say to her was “You know what, I have three times the square footage as you on this ship and I would never even dream of talking to a crew member like that.” I wonder how that would have went over? I’m not one to gloat about cabin size, money, the car I drive, etc. but I do enjoy doing it to people who act like assholes or think they’re “all that” because sometimes it is the only thing they understand and they need to be put in their place.

Elizabeth “E” from Chicago and her son Michael

Several years ago we took our first holiday cruise. It was a great deal; a steal actually compared to the price of holiday cruises now. Celebrity made the mistake of doing a 14 day cruise over Christmas and New Years and while

it is an amazing cruise I think the demand for such a cruise is simply not there so it did not sell all that well so we were able to snag a wonderful price in Aqua Class. On this cruise, like many others we spend our evenings before dinner at the Martini Bar. One night at the end of the bar we noticed a very well dressed woman who looked to be in her late 50s with a young man. They seemed to be having a great time together and he treated her very well. I noticed them later on during the day together by the pool and again the following night at the martini bar. Edward and I didn't know if they were a couple or not. He looked to be in his mid 20s at the oldest. Around night three I believe it was, they sat right next to us at the Martini Bar. I noticed her diamonds and a beautiful diamond encrusted Cartier watch. The young man however was wearing simple a timex. Now there is nothing wrong with that! However, if he was dating her and on a cruise with her I would've assumed that she would have bought him at least a slightly upgraded

watch. A Movado maybe? Anyway, they struck up conversation very quickly with us and we chatted throughout the night. However, their relationship never came up! Finally, he called her mom. OK, now we knew! So when he goes to the washroom drunk me of course has to tell the woman, who is named Elizabeth in case you couldn't tell from the title of this story, that we initially thought they were a couple. She LOVED hearing that and thought it was hysterical. She couldn't wait for her son to come back from the restroom to tell him that story. Though he didn't share the same enthusiasm she did.

We got to know them very well throughout the cruise. It turned out that Elizabeth was from the Chicago area and had a second home downtown right by my office (and now right by our current home). She was very brilliant and was an engineer by trade and owned a company that manufactured parts for rockets and aircraft. Her son was actually in a similar field and I

believe going for his PhD in mathematics. Or she may have had her PhD in mathematics. Either way, they were both brilliant but some of the most laid back people you could ever ask to hang out with. Elizabeth, who went by E, loved to dance, loved to stay up late and could talk for hours. She traveled as often as she could in life and never wasted a minute. Each night she had a new dress and beautiful jewelry and lipstick to match.

We exchanged cards but I misplaced hers. The hope was to meet up for happy hour in Chicago but we never got back into contact. Hopefully one day we run into each other at some point or I find her card in my multiple boxes of cruise moments that I keep.

Irena

One of our first bartenders that truly encouraged us to come back was a bartender by the name

of Irena. Irena worked at the Molecular Bar when it was in existence (now known as the world class bar). She was also there when they used to have the liquid nitrogen at the bar to use in specialty cocktails. Each time we ordered a drink with liquid nitrogen she had a little disclaimer she had to repeat and no matter how many times we ordered it she would always say it. It went something like this “Please wait for the drink to stop bubbling before you take your first sip for your own safety.” I believe we first met her on the Celebrity Reflection in February of 2013. She was a fantastic bartender and ended up taking care of us each evening. She had a wonderful attitude that, even if she had an extremely difficult and long day, you would never know.

Toward the end of this cruise we decided to book another cruise on board but we weren't sure what to book. We knew we wanted something different so we decided to ask Irena

what her favorite itinerary was. She told us that we had to book a mediterranean cruise with an overnight in Istanbul and the way her contract was working she was going to be on that ship too at that time. It sounded like a great idea. The next day we went to the future cruise sales desk (it was just a couple of desks back then, not a separate office like it is now) and booked that itinerary for October of 2013.

Sadly, as crew member contracts can always change, Irena was not on this cruise. While we never ran into her again as a bartender, we have cruised with her many times as a bar manager. About two years had passed by since we saw her for the first time. We were sitting in Ensemble lounge and we had heard that she was an assistant manager. We saw her walk by and I went up to her. She definitely recognized us but I could tell couldn't place us exactly in her mind. When we told her our names and how we met her she then said "Ah yes, I remember, you

liked the Lucky Cat and you (pointing to Edward) like the Black Mamba but without the peppercorns in the drink.” Talk about a crazy memory. From that point on I think we’ve sailed with her 4 or 5 times. One of the last times we sailed with her we were sitting at the Martini Bar enjoying our evening as we usually do and she stops by. She says hello, asks about our day, etc. and then asks how long we would be at the bar. It was still early in the night and we had plenty of time before dinner so we told her it would be at least another hour or so. She told us she’d be right back. About 10 minutes later she comes out with two martini glasses with a red liquor inside. It was the Lucky Cat! One of our favorite drinks she used to make us. Now, it didn’t have the liquid nitrogen in it (of course that’s no longer on Celebrity; I’m sure their insurance company is happy with that) but besides that it was exactly how I remembered it.

As simple of a gesture as that was, it really meant a lot and brought one of the biggest smiles to my face that I think I've ever had on a cruise. It meant that she went out her way, took time out of her day to bring back a memory we had many cruises ago. And a gesture like that doesn't just start and end with us. People at the martini bar asked us what we were drinking and we explained the story. They loved it and it helped them love Celebrity more.

When the time came to fill out our comment cards and the survey, I took the time to explain that story in detail and I'm very happy to share it with you here.

End of Volume 1

I hope you've enjoyed these few stories from our travels on Celebrity. I'm currently working on putting together more stories and the next

volume will focus on specific people we've met that have become friends as well as discuss advice we've received from passengers and crew alike. We're very lucky....well, maybe fortunate is a better word to use; we're very fortunate to be able to travel but even more so to meet and interact with so many wonderful people.