I started this upbeat newsletter before the terrible fires began to devastate our area, destroy the homes and lives of people we know and love, take away forever some of our favorite places, and change the character of many of the towns we cherish. It is hard to be cheery in the light of so much devastation so close to home, not to mention the hurricanes, earthquakes, and mass shootings that have dominated headlines in recent weeks. Please do whatever you can to help our friends and neighbors in need, volunteer your services, give to the Red Cross or the organization of your choice, hug a first responder. I found the following quotation in a message I received this morning. For some reason, it spoke to me, so I am passing it along to you.

“many many friends have lost everything
community spirit is strong and caring
life is short, life is precious
we are positive”

2017 UWA CRUISE REVIEWS

One bright spot in these past few months was the UWA Scholarship Cruise from Rome to Venice. The 2017 twelve-day cruise from Rome to Venice ended a month ago. But many of us extended our stay in Europe beyond the cruise—and my husband and I just returned home last week. So I wanted to share some of our memories and photos while the cruise was still fresh in our minds. We began with 16 in our group: Lily Gee (UWA President) and Nancy Noble, Elogeanne and Gene Grossman, Carole Hockaday and Camele Wanat, Lin and Bob Ivory, Jim and Elaine Kohn, Betty and Cecilia Lam, Sheila McClear and Sam Zaif, Arline & Jim Van Ness.

This was probably the most exhausting cruise we have ever been on -- but we knew that from the get-go because we were in a different port every day except one. So we were constantly on the go, on excursions, exploring on our own, walking, walking, walking. And at the end of every day we rushed back to the ship. If we were lucky, we got back in time to dash to the nightly Team Trivia game, something of a tradition for our group, still fun after all these years. In the ports, we all went our separate ways seeking out what was of

“We got to enjoy spectacular scenery in Amalfi, Kotor, beautiful mosaics in Ravenna, fascinating Roman ruins in Ostia Antica near Rome, and the unique and artistic attractions of Venice.”

— Jim Van Ness
most interest to each of us. In the evenings, we met for cocktails or dinner, with some or all of the group nearly every night.

And even tho there was no rest for the weary on this particularly energetic cruise, each port was fascinating, or beautiful, or historic, and sometimes all of the above.

The Amalfi Coast is always stunning -- and even tho we have been there many times on our cruises, it never disappoints.

Wine tasting on Sicily was fun, and they gave us a spread of local meats, cheeses and olives that was every bit as generous as the pours of six local wines, all good. Cecilia Lam loved the Sicilian wine trip, too. Her sister Betty told her, “At the wineries, when Bob buys, you buy.” She did, and Betty says they did not run out of wine the whole cruise.

The Island of Gozo (Malta) was an unexpected highlight for me. We visited the ruins of an ancient megalithic temple, the Temple of Ggantija, which is one of the oldest free-standing stone monuments on earth--older than the Pyramids of Egypt, older than Stonehenge, and just as impressive.

Albania was a total surprise for me, and I was fascinated to hear what they have been doing in the way of restoration after many years of political instability and warfare. Betty Lam said “My best tour was to Berat, City of a Thousand Windows [Albania].” The tour included a hike to a 13th century stone castle, where the views were spectacular.

The sail into Kotor, Montenegro is probably one of the most beautiful sea passageways in the world. Everyone seemed to agree that Montenegro was a cruise highlight, even tho we all took off in different directions from the ship. Jim and Elaine Kohn took a “delightful trip up a river to a luncheon outside Kotor.” Several of our group took shore excursions in Montenegro, up a wild and winding road with a fantastic view of Kotor and its harbor below, and then on to some of the nearby smaller villages. Kotor itself is one of the best preserved medieval towns in the Adriatic. Bob and I just meandered through the old town, with it’s charming narrow streets, shops, and many cats. Jim Van Ness, Nancy Noble, and Lily Gee did a much more energetic hike
on a portion of the ancient city walls, with 1355 steep steps leading up to St. John’s Fortress that sits high above the town. In my opinion, it’s a long way to go for a good view.

I loved the fabulous Byzantine mosaics at Ravenna, but I knew I would. Several of our group mentioned these mosaics as a highlight of the trip as well, including the two Jims, Kohn and Van Ness. Betty Lam said that “The Ravenna mosaics were the best for Cecilia.” Nancy Noble led Cecilia, Betty, and Camele on an informal whirlwind tour, visiting all four historic mausoleums and basilicas in one afternoon and catching the last bus back to the ship.

Rijeka, Croatia, was one of our best days. Jim Van Ness had arranged a private tour for six of us, Sheila and Sam, Jim and Arline, and Bob and me. We visited several lovely towns and enjoyed a wonderful pasta dish with truffles – they are famous for their truffles in this part of Croatia. The guide suggested that we make a stop in Groznjan, a hilltop village of artists known as the Town of Arts. We had fun strolling through the streets and shopping in the artists boutiques, and all three women bought beautiful scarfs in the same shop.

It rained on us in Venice, but there is probably nowhere I would rather be in the rain than Venice. Jim and Elaine apparently share my feelings – Jim says one of his highlights was strolling through rainy Venice and a wonderful lunch on the Grand Canal. On the other hand, I realized that, as much as I love Venice, it was a lot easier to tour it when I was 20 than it is now, decades later, when every bridge presents a challenge -- and there is a different bridge every hundred yards.

My favorite part of every UWA cruise is always the interaction with friends, both on the shore excursions and at dinner. Dinners lasted hours, and we were often the last people to leave the dining room. Morning excursions came very early. Sleep was rare and precious.

The only complaint I heard from anyone on the cruise was that the staterooms were smaller than expected – guess that is one disadvantage of being on a smaller ship. But Betty added “the staff and services at the stateroom, the bars and dining rooms were fantastic.”
Overall, the cruise got a lot of “thumbs up”.

- “It was a wonderful trip.” – Betty & Cecilia Lam.
- “The food and ambience on the cruise ship were comforting and relaxing, especially in the company of our UWA Members.” – Jim Kohn.
- “This was a very friendly group; we joined each other for many activities: shore excursions, walks through that day’s “old town”, cocktail hour, dinners, Team Trivia, etc….. Oceania Cruise Line provided its usual excellent meals and service including the BEST SEAFOOD DISH EVER, the sea bass in Red Ginger [the specialty Asian cuisine restaurant on the ship].” – Jim Van Ness.
- “Enjoyed getting to know the group from SFSU. Very friendly.” – Camele Wanat.
- “ABC – Absolutely Beautiful Cruise.” – Lily Gee.

We began the cruise on a sad note. After only one day Elogeanne and Gene Grossman had to drop out when they learned that their son Nick had been hospitalized in San Diego with a serious ear infection, resulting in Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS). He underwent acute rehab and a painful healing process, but Elo updated us recently with good news: Nick has now resumed most of his normal activities in San Diego and is expected to make a full recovery. Our thoughts and well wishes were with them constantly, but we did miss their good company on our cruise.

Our cruises generate funding for Gloria Spencer UWA Scholarships, awarded to SFSU students each fall. To be honest, I don’t think many of us go on the cruises just for scholarships. (Tom Spencer used to say that it would be cheaper to take the cruise fare and deposit it directly into the scholarship fund than it is to go on the cruises!) But, as you can see from the comments above, we do all seem to enjoy traveling with our very congenial group.

Unfortunately, this cruise was one participant short of generating a scholarship rebate from Oceania.

But, Fell Travel came through with a contribution of $1,500 of their own money for the scholarship fund!

We are sincerely indebted to Tom Fell, Jr., for his generosity and for all the help both he and his father have provided to our group since we began “cruising for scholarships” in 1992 – a total of 22 cruises in all.
IN MEMORY OF GLORIA TSENG

We learned early in the cruise that our dear friend Gloria Tseng had passed away on August 27 -- which came as a total shock because none of us knew that she had been struggling with cancer. She was always cheerful and upbeat, gracious, and charming, and she certainly didn’t betray her illness by her looks or disposition. Her memorial services were while we were on the cruise, and we were saddened by that as well because we didn’t have the opportunity to extend our sympathies to the family in person. Gloria was born in Ecuador in 1930. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1956, to New York City. She met Maurice Tseng, a Chinese language professor at Yale in 1957, and they were married a year later. In 1962 Maurice was recruited at SFSU to help establish the Chinese language and literature program, and they moved to San Francisco with their two young sons, David and Steven. Gloria returned to school in 1970 and graduated from SFSU with a BA in Business Administration. She worked for 30 years in management positions at Bank of America. She had two grandchildren, Molly (8) and William (3). Gloria enjoyed traveling and went on several of the UWA cruises over the years. She was a constant supporter of the Women’s Association and attended many of our events – always coming up to me afterward to tell me how much she had enjoyed herself. As an indication of her dedication to the UWA, her family suggests that “Donations may be made to SFSU Women’s Association.” If you wish to make a contribution to the scholarship fund in Gloria’s name, please send a check payable to “UWA”, to Connie Tallerico, 280 Dundee Drive, South San Francisco, CA 94080, and indicate on the check that your contribution is in memory of Gloria Tseng.