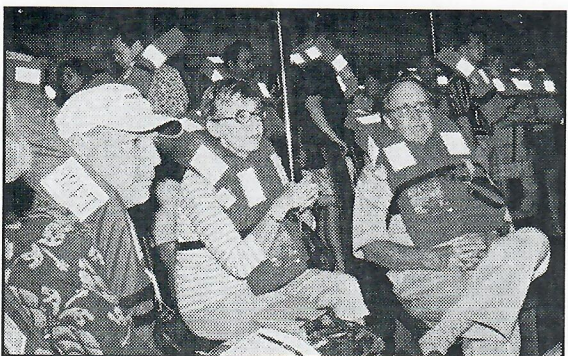


We had a ball ... how could we miss with a great crew of SCSC voyagers; huge hospitality aboard the good ship *Celebration*, and fabulous ports of



call on the Mayan Riviera. With a world-class cruise ship based in Galveston, and the Memorial Day holiday, minimal vacation time was wasted during our five-day cruise.

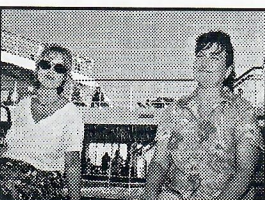
Mid-day Saturday found one friendly group gathered at Fuddruckers on the Strand for a bon voyage luncheon. **Connie Mason** delivered her San Antonio-based parents, **Al** and **Concepcion Thoma**, and (Aunt and Uncle) **Billy** and **Rosemund Thoma** to the cruise terminal, only to be



OK in an Emergency, but not really our style!

“shanghaied”, seconds before sailing, to fill a vacancy. She boarded with only the clothes on her back to take the cruise of a lifetime.

The hospitality started before we left port: When **Al** discovered his ticket was still in San Antonio, **Al** and **Connie** were quickly accommodated and on board in time for the Life Boat Drill. The crew, meanwhile, delivered 4000 pieces of luggage to the various 180 sqft cabins. We found our cabins had been upgraded from Main Deck to Upper Deck, and that our requests for late seating, and aft dining room were met. All of this proved that Carnival’s staff is dedicated to customer service and hospitality.



That evening, SCSC

cruisers enjoyed the first of our fabulous gourmet dinners. Over the next 5 evenings, we also sampled the cocktail parties, Las Vegas-caliber stage shows, casino, and other nightlife. Great breakfasts began each day, and between meals there was a complimentary, 24-hour pizza bar just steps away from on-board activities.

It took the whole of Sunday, a full day at sea, to explore the ship and locate the three swimming pools, tanning decks (including one bathing-suit-optional), sushi bar, other bars, dining rooms, and the best places to just watch the ship knife smoothly through the blue sea. **Jim** and **Sally Ryan** and **Ed** and **Pat Menville**, new to SCSC and new to cruising, jumped right into the swing of things as they were often seen exploring the ship.

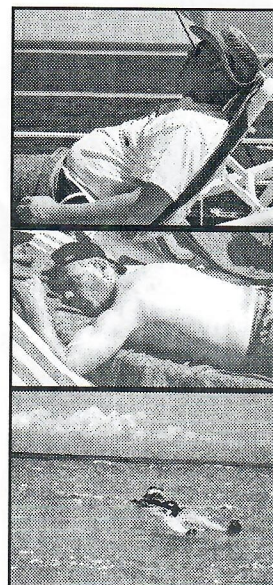
Bob Olsen, TC, relieved to get everyone on board, made an exercise morning of the days at sea: 3 miles on the jogging track. **Kim Page** and **Lisa Smith** were often caught cruising the Upper Decks enjoying the blue seas and salt sea air. **Billy Thoma** and big brother **Al** held forth most mornings on the rear deck after a scrumptious breakfast buffet

Our first port of call, Monday morning, was Cozumel, where we spent a full day plus the evening. **Ron** and **Roberta Rambin** rented bikes and toured; others hit the beach and shopping in San Miguel. **Rosemund Thoma** enjoyed seeing the world-famous reefs from a glass bottom boat, while **Bob Olsen** enjoyed the reefs from 90 feet below the surface, joining scuba buddies and ex-ski clubbers **Bob** and **Doretta Marwin**, **Jim** and **Tami Plummer**, and **Charles Goodrich** and **Tania Andrasko**. He reports the reefs near Cozumel are still the best in the world.

Many of our group took the *Fury* catamaran for some snorkeling and a beach party, then a mini-Fiesta on the separate Sunset Cruise. Booze, dance, pinatas, Riata Man,



Hasta la Vista, Texas!



Party at night and ...



Queen of Latin Rhythms & Her Subjects

music, flying fish, and back in time for a late dinner aboard *Celebration*. **Sharon and Merrel Smith** enjoyed the sunset and **Concepcion Thomae** won the ladies dance contest, beating out much younger competition on her octagenarian legs ... proof that Latin rhythms never leave your soul. A bottle of tequilla was her prize.

On Tuesday, our second landfall was Calica/Playa del Carmen, 15 miles south of Cancun. **Rod and Linda Seto** toured the Mayan coast around Playa Blanca and found a great resort for a return visit. The biggest contingent went to see the ancient ruins in Tulum and then to Xel Ha, a lagoon/water park, for more snorkeling or just some shopping and lazy beach-time.

We proved that you can have a party for 28 in a single spacious cabin ... if you allow some spillage into the passageway. We had an impromptu party to use up the extra beverages we "smuggled" on board. The rules prevent bringing alcohol on board,

but we found a loophole in the fine print regarding a 'special occasion'. Anywhere SCSC goes is, of course, a special occasion!

Wednesday evening at dinner, **Sue Edwards** and **Jeff Sarff** were birthday celebrities. **Jim Edwards** surprised his party girl with some gorgeous

earrings from an elegant jewelry factory we visited near Tulum. Jim and **Nancy Sarff** provided champagne for all participants to toast the birthdays and our wonderful cruise experience.

The memories are endless .. the Kitchen tour, daily towel animals in the cabins, ice carving, nightly singing and dancing by the dinner waitstaff, golf with the added handicap of a gently rolling deck, meeting new friends, Captain Marchetti's cocktail party, the "repeat cruisers" party, flying fish, midnight buffets, a rainforest of plants and animals made of fruit and vegetables. **Debbie Bergeron, Kim Page, and Sue Edwards** experienced some of the spa and massage treatments. After their reports, the rest of us will look for that for the next cruise. The casino did no lasting damage to blackjack players **Ron Rambin** and **Bob Olsen**. However, the mystical, magical **Ted Bergeron** felt a slot machine calling, and covered the trip cost for wife **Debbie** and himself within 24 hours of sailing. One lucky non-SCSC passenger hit the slots JackPot for a cool \$79,000. What luck!!!!



Thursday morning found us back at the Port of Galveston. Disembarking 1,500 passengers does take some time ... but clearing passengers from a cruise ship is easier than in an airport. They collected bags on the last evening, and checked them while we slept. Customs boarded and collected declarations before disembarkation. Security was tight, and discreet security staff were always within calling distance. Digital photo systems positively identified passengers leaving or returning to the ship at each port. These systems were fast and efficient.

Finally – **Ed Menville** and I shared this vision about 5 am Thursday as we neared Galveston; daredevil dolphins, cutting across the the water at the bow of our ship, as if to say, "enjoyed your company, come back again." We hope to see you all again cruising the high seas.

PPS It is reassuring that, in these troubled times, an enterprise such as Carnival Cruise Lines can bring together a crew of nearly 600 people of virtually every race, nationality, and religion, to work in



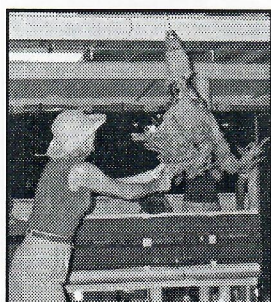
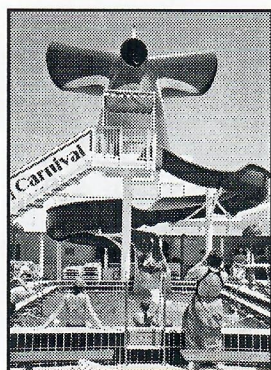
Wanna twirl my lariat?!



Our Waitstaff serves up La Macarena



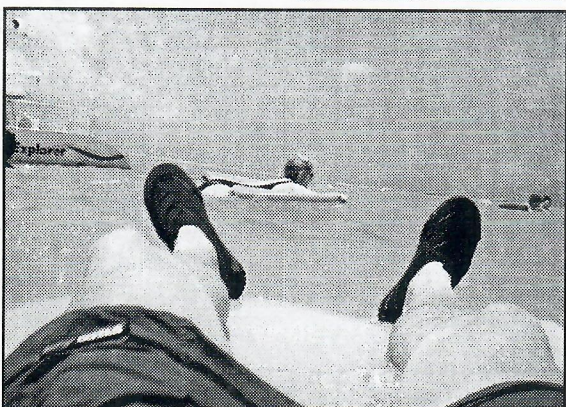
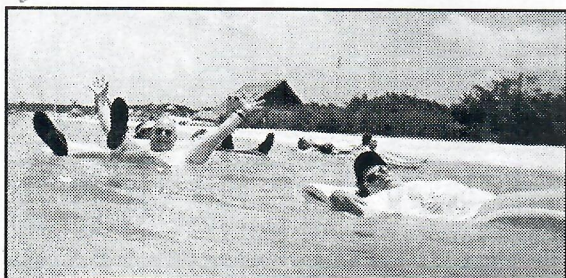
Tulum Mayan Ruins



More Cruising



Margaritas, Cozumel-Style!



close quarters and consistently deliver a high quality travel service. It is something to contemplate when discouraged by the negative events reported in the news media.