

## SAN FRANCISCO – part 1

DAY 42 – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2008

Today was our final Sunday away from the UK. As usual Mass was offered “For the Parishioners” – my duty as parish priest, wherever I am, to pray for all parishioners, living and dead!

We then had breakfast in the main restaurant, and while Dominic went “swimming with giant turtles” off Waikiki beach, I packed and re-packed my luggage. After all the travelling, the cost is beginning to show on our luggage – a few gaps have appeared in the zipper, but nothing too much to worry about at this stage.

Dominic reappeared at 10.15 am, and after showering to get the salt off, he threw everything into his bag, and we took a taxi to the airport. This time we were flying American Airlines. I was a little concerned, since they had introduced a charge per checked-in bag due to the increase in the price of fuel. However, since we were on a round-the-world ticket, we had an allowance of 2 bags each, provided neither was weighing more than 70 pounds.

My bags weighed in OK (I had repacked them, of course), but Dominic’s bag weighed in at 76 pounds. For this six pounds excess (which is probably made up of rocks and other samples that he has slipped in), American were going to charge us \$300.00. I thought that the only solution was to let Dominic pay his own excess luggage!!

He quickly decided to repack in the airport, using the Pilgrim Back-pack bag that he was given in Sydney. All that he had to do was to move a little over 6 pounds into this bag, and both his bags were under the required 70 pounds! And no cost to pay at all!!

As usual we went into one of the airport lounges to wait until our flight was called, and then boarded. The flight was pretty unadventurous, but my first time on American was also one that I was not particularly impressed with! We had to pay for the headphones, pay for the sandwich, pay for the crisps (chips) but fortunately we did not have to pay for the soft drinks!! The four and a half hours passed quickly, simply because I dozed for most of the way.

We landed at San Francisco airport around 9.00 pm and took one of the shuttle buses into the city, which dropped us off at our hotel. Having checked in, we found that most places round about had closed from serving meals – it was Sunday evening, after all. We were told that there was a diner serving about 8 blocks away, so we set off. The diner was full of people – all eating from a well-stocked menu. Dominic and I had a good meal, and then by midnight we had returned to the hotel.

However, being on “Hawaiian Time”, we read and talked until 1.00 am before finally turning in for the night.

DAY 43 – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2008

Dominic has reminded me about one point of interest that we discovered on Kauai that I forgot to mention. It concerns “Puff the Magic Dragon”, who came from “Honah Lee”. As we flew over the island, “Puff” was pointed out to us. Actually, “Puff” is a line of hills, which has the outline of a dragon – the tail is at the sea’s edge, and the jagged outline of the tail stretches up to the back, while the head of the dragon leads down to the sea again – in a place that is called Hanalei (well almost Honah Lee)!! Incidentally Hanalei has long been associated with the smoking of marijuana, which might explain things in the song made popular by Peter, Paul and Mary!! Elsewhere on the island the outline of a “sleeping giant” can be seen (with a little imagination) in the hills. But the tale of “Puff the Magic Dragon” has its origin in the folklore of Kauai!

Anyway, back to today. It was a little difficult getting up earlier than usual, but we did make it in time for the breakfast provided by the hotel. However, it seemed everyone wanted breakfast at the same time, and the breakfast room was inundated with hungry people. We had enough to keep us going, but decided that we might go out for breakfast on the remaining days.

After breakfast we headed for the famous Fisherman’s Wharf, which is the main tourist area in San Francisco. It is in walking distance, and we were there ahead of the crowds of tourists who arrived later in the morning. Our task was to get over to Alcatraz Island. However, we were told that there were no tickets for at least another week – they had been booked over the internet – something that I didn’t think of doing!! As a result, we decided to take a tour around the island later in the day, which would take us near enough.

One peculiarity about San Francisco which I should have remembered from previous visits is the temperature. Due to the cold water in the bay, coming straight in from the Pacific Ocean, there is nearly always a covering of fog over San Francisco. Although I remembered the fog, I forgot that the temperature rarely gets about 70° at any time, including summer. Travelling just 10 miles in any direction, however, would mean temperatures in the 90°s! As a result, it felt as though we were back in Australia, and put on several layers of clothing to keep warm again. Added to everything, the wind is blowing – both strong and cold!!

Having booked out tour around Alcatraz for the afternoon, we then booked a tour on a motorised cable car – a bus that looks like a cable car – to help in orientating us by taking us around the city and showing us the main sights, along with something of the history. Our guide/driver was Ygor, a Russian, who moved here seven years ago. Not only was his English extremely good, but so was his knowledge of San Francisco.



Of course many of the places in San Francisco are familiar to anyone who has watched the TV series “Ironside”, “The Streets of San Francisco” or movies such as “The Rock”, “Escape from Alcatraz” or “Bullitt”.



We went up the hills and down the hills, and eventually found ourselves under the Golden Gate Bridge – though the fog meant that the top of the bridge was not visible. We then ascended the hill and were given the opportunity to walk on the bridge for a little while.



And my sick sense of humour could not help taking the following photo:-



Next, we returned to downtown and after the tour we spent some time wandering around Pier 39 – this was never really a pier, but has been built out of old pier timbers to form a “tourist pier” with eating places, shops and boutiques, as well as an opportunity to see the residents who took over the yachting marina before it could be opened as such – some 600 sea-lions!

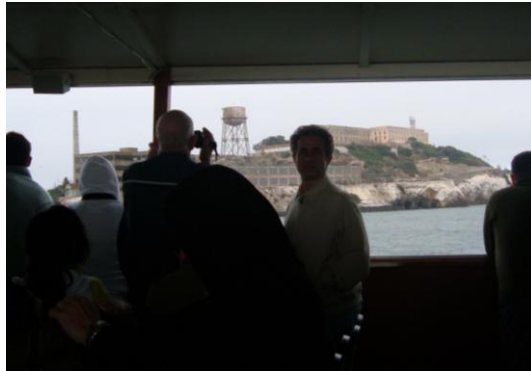


We stopped for a quick bite to eat – including the famous San Francisco Clam Chowder, but just a small bowl and not the usual bread bowl – a hollowed out loaf of bread filled with the soup!



Finally we boarded our boat that was going to take us round the “Guardians of the Bay” – the guardians being the various forts that had been built to protect the bay and the city. While on board, it seemed as though the temperature dropped a further couple of degrees, and it really felt cold with the wind blowing across the deck. Nevertheless we were able to sail right under the Golden Gate Bridge, before

returning to circle the island of Alcatraz several times, with commentaries on the various inmates (including Al Capone) and the various escape attempts.



The only one successful escape involved an individual who covered himself in fat and oil to combat the freezing cold of the waters. He made it to the mainland, just next to the Golden Gate Bridge, where he collapsed. Some children found him, and called a policeman to help him – and he helped him straight back to Alcatraz.

As soon as we returned to the shore, we headed back to the hotel, where we had arranged to meet Father Dorian Llywelyn. Dorian is usually in Los Angeles, but just happens to be in San Jose – about an hour away. Although Dorian returns to visit his mother in Gendros from time to time, I have missed him on the last few occasions. So we took him out for a meal and caught up on old times and on what is going on both in Menevia and in his life! He is looking well and sends his regards to everyone who remembers him. Of course, he was saddened over Father John Dermody's death – he had been his assistant for a few years, and they kept in close touch. We got back to the hotel at about 10.30 pm, where we said goodbye to Dorian, who drove off in his combined electric and petrol car.