

# Chipper's Cruise 2004

by David Harber



I remember my first thought that Thursday morning... is this thing gonna' come off or will it be the biggest disaster in chipping history? I guess the bigger question, can chippers vacation together? After all I had put the plans in motion close to a year previously when I picked the destinations, the ship and blocked the group of cabins with a several thousand dollar deposit. A lot of time and energy had been put into this upcoming week but had we thought of everything? With that it was off to the airport to catch our flight to Miami.

Due to a delay we barely caught our connection in Phoenix but thanks to a full out sprint from one terminal to another we made it. It was on this flight that we hooked up with our "partners in crime", the Quinlivans. Back in January we convinced (OK, coerced) Mike and Corni that they should help us plan "Chippers Cruise 2004". They thought it was a great idea and thankfully were right there for every bit of planning and executing the event.

About 7:30 PM the seven of us (the Quinlivan & ourselves) were

catching a shuttle for the world famous South Beach. We had blocked a group of rooms at the Whitelaw Hotel. One of a small group of refurbished art deco hotels from the 30's. It was there that we first met up with fellow chippers and there that the vacation really started. It was also there that the first crisis hit... some of the reservations were not correct for the eight rooms we had blocked. After a few phone calls and a fair amount of stress, everything was straightened out.

It wasn't soon after that the next problem arose... Bob Orme didn't get the e-mail about bringing either a passport or a birth certificate and had neither with him. After a few more phone calls we got the word that if we vouched for him and he didn't get off the boat in the Bahamas than he "may" be allowed to embark.

The next morning we met up with all of our group for breakfast. It was a relief to see that everyone that was supposed to be there did in fact show up. The Masseys, the Hollibaugh's, the Hixon's, the Follis', Sunday Silverman, Bob Orme, the Quinlivans and us. So far so good, the west coast travelers all made it... This led to the third and final crisis of the cruise.

We had planned for a bus to take us from the hotel in South Beach to the port of Miami but somehow our reservation got lost. It looked like we



Standing: (left to right) Harold Kohrt, Bruce Massey, Mike Custodio Jacqui Custodio, Debbie Harber, Mike Quinlivan Corni Quinlivan Bob Orme, Larry Hollibaugh, Pam Focazio, Gene Lonstein and Philip Hixon

Sitting: (left to right) Iona Kohrt, Mary Ann Massey, David Harber, Casey Focazio-Follis, Sunday Silverman, Jim Follis, Diane Hollibaugh and Belinda Hixon.

would be getting taxi's till Jim Follis stepped in to save the day. Turned out he had a rental van that he got when he flew into Fort Lauderdale the night before. Jim graciously offered to ferry all of us and our luggage over to the port. After three port runs and then returning the car Jim almost missed the cruise. Talk about taking one for the team... we all owe Jim a huge thanks for stepping up and diverting crisis number three.

From the moment we got on the beautiful Carnival ship, the Fascination everything was smooth sailing. There were no further problems and everything went smoother than I ever imagined or expected.

First and foremost, Bob DID get on the boat. We were given a beautiful room for our trading sessions that was exclusively ours for the three trading times that we had scheduled. Our three tables at dinner were all next to each other. Because of the way we structured our group we were allowed to switch tables and sit at a different table each night getting a chance to really get to know each other. As with every Carnival cruise I've ever been on the crew was just fabulous with the level of service they give you. From our room stewards to our waiters I did not hear a single complaint from any of our fellow cruising chippers.

Our day in the Bahamas found us each exploring the island in different ways but I think almost all of us found our way over to Paradise Island to see the beautiful Atlantis Hotel. Between the aquarium, the beach, the backyard with the water slides (including a tube that goes through the shark tank), the archeological area and the casino itself it is truly a spectacular property. Others went to the beach or toured the island or went shopping at all the duty free shops and the renowned straw market.



Standing in front (left to right): Sarah Quinlivan, Belinda Hixon, Corni Quinlivan, Sean Quinlivan, Pam Focazio, Alexi Harber Sunday Silverman, Morris Sussman, Diane Hollibaugh, Debbie Harber and Mary Ann Massey

Standing on stairs (bottom to top): Bruce Massey, Jim Follis Mike Custodio, Dave Harber, Casey Focazio-Follis, Philip Hixon, Larry Hollibaugh and Mike Quinlivan

Saturday night was the formal Captain's Dinner. Fashion sense has never really played a big factor into our hobby so seeing everyone dressed up was quite a new experience for all of us. So much that we had to take a formal photo on the atrium staircase after dinner. This was much to the chagrined of everyone else in line behind us while the photographer painstakingly posed each of us. What a great result though... living proof that you really can dress a bunch of chippers up to look presentable!



Larry Hollibaugh

Sunday was our "fun day at sea". Sounds boring but there is really so much to do. We had the third of our trading sessions as well as a one hour open bar party provided by the cruise line. The second of our group photos (see photo page 62) was taken here in the Passage to India lounge. Sunday's filet mignon dinner was as enjoyable as every other meal onboard.

Monday morning found us meeting for our farewell breakfast before we lost half our group who debarked the ship. Their vacation now over. Thirteen of us stayed on for the second part of the cruise. We left Monday afternoon and arrived in Key West the next morning. After an afternoon in the keys we were off to Cozumel, Mexico. Wednesday was spent in beautiful Cozumel where just about everyone took an excursion whether it was snorkeling, sailing, horseback riding, kayaking or travel-

ing by jeep to some Mayan Ruins. At dinner that night everyone had reports of a great day off the ship. Thursday was another “fun day at sea” as we traveled back to Miami. Traveling so close to Cuba and seeing it’s silhouetted mountains on the horizon was definitely one of the more memorable moments from the cruise for me.

There were lots of people we’d like to thank for helping make this inaugural cruise a most successful event. First and foremost the 24 chippers that attended. We realize it was a leap of faith to trust that a couple of guys who knew nothing about the travel industry could actually pull it off. We had so many cancellations leading up to the day of the cruise that at one point we seriously thought it would be just the seven of us going. Next in line would be Captain Lou Edwards from the Little Shop of Cruises in Brooklyn ([www.littleshopofcruises.com](http://www.littleshopofcruises.com)). I can’t begin to list the many ways that Lou helped us out. From arranging everything on board, to hosting two teleseminars, to getting us all a three category upgrade, to the open bar party, to the champagne and chocolates that were waiting in our cabins. He truly “went overboard for us” and very much lived up to his catch phrase. I’d also like to thank Tyrus Mulkey for helping us get the polo shirts made as well as these dealers and fellow chippers for their donations to our surprise “goody bag”:

- Gene Trimble
- Allan Myers
- James Campiglia
- Ralph Myers
- John Chamberlain
- Andy Hughes
- Terry Lazarus
- Archie Black
- Chris Colangelo
- Tyrus Mulkey

The chips, slot cards, playing cards



From left to right: Sean Quinlivan, Corni Quinlivan, Mike Quinlivan, Gene Lonstein, Dave Harber, Debbie Harber

and coupons delivered in a fanny pack had a significant value and were very appreciated by each person in our group that received them.

All in all it was such a success that we’re going to do it again, bigger and better! Look for details in the next few months at [ChippersCruise.com](http://ChippersCruise.com) when we will announce the details of Chippers Cruise 2005. Hope you’ll make plans to join us for a truly wonderful vacation. Don’t miss the boat or you very well may miss the premier chipping event of 2005!

Thought it would be fun to share some thoughts of several of our cruising chippers....

“Jacqui and I had never been on a cruise before so we were a little unsure what to expect so we only booked the three day cruise, saying to ourselves if we like it we’ll do it again, if we hate it we will never cruise again. What a big mistake we made by not booking the seven day cruise. We loved every minute on and off the ship. It was a great time from the excellent food to the entertainment to the service on the ship not to mention our trade session. I put eight new chips into my collection. It was the best three day vacation we ever had!”

Mike Custodio



Mike and Jacqui Custodio

“It was wonderful to be away from telephones, computers and the outside world for a few days. I think my favorite part was dinner. The food was great (I still didn’t make the midnight buffet) but I enjoyed the fellowship with friends. It is so hard to get to sit and really talk at the convention - this gave us opportunity to get to know one another better. We’re definitely interested in next year’s trip.”

Belinda Hixon

“Just got home from the Inaugural Chippers Cruise with some of the most wonderful chippers in the world! It was my first cruise, but surely won’t be my last. Anyone who considered cruising and didn’t get to go should make a serious effort to be able to attend the next one!”

Sunday Silverman

“What a fabulous time, food, fun, friends and gaming. Did I mention food?!”

We all had a really good time. There were several scheduled get togethers, but no one was compelled to attend and it was rather free form and fluid. Some of us brought traders, while everyone brought stories. We had plenty of opportunities to be together and many more to do our own things! Young, old and otherwise, there was plenty to do and plenty not to do.

My many thanks to those I traded with, those whom we broke bread with and in-general, had a very nice time. The Welcome Aboard Grab Bag was great!!

I hope to be there next year.”

Jim Follis

And here are a few of the trip that are so good I want to include them in full...

“The inaugural Chippers’ Cruise was a fun and successful trip on many levels. The Carnival Cruise Line staff went out of their way to make everyone comfortable. Activities for all ages - all day and night long, excellent food and service, personable employees, and’round the clock room service are but a few of the things that stand out with my family.

Our kids (13 and 15 years old) were thrilled that they had their own “teen crowd” to hang with, complete with THE best “Camp Carnival” counselor. They played video games, rode down the pool’s slide, danced a special “Cha Cha” line-dance on the Lido deck, had a blackjack tournament, and best of all – got to roam the ship with their new found friends till all hours!

The ports of call were beautiful! Any hurricane damage had been cleared away, and every port was ready for the cruise ship crowds. Having kids with us, we avoided the numerous watering holes Key West is famous for (we’ll leave that for another visit). Instead, we

“schvitzed and schlepped” all the way to the far end of the island to a butterfly conservancy. You haven’t lived till a huge neon-blue butterfly has landed on your shoulder! What a beautiful island – one which we will want to revisit with and without our kids!

Nassau had tons of shops for those looking for a deal in jewelry or souvenirs, as well as an awesome casino and hotel -- The Atlantis Resort. We brought back some Bahamian money for souvenirs (their coins are lovely), and my husband made a donation to the Atlantis’ casino tables. The Bahamian people were very friendly ... But watch out for the hair braiders!

Cozumel was an adventure destination for our family. There were so many day-trips available in Cozumel, it made my head spin! My son and I took a clear kayak and snorkeling trip, viewing outrageous coral and fish; the “good dad” took his daughter on a horse-back ride through the jungle. Both excursions were exciting, safe, and a good value.

The only things we missed out on really stand out. Our son was never able to do what he had really



Pam Focazio and Jim Follis

looked forward to – order room service at 2 a.m. He was usually snoring by that time of night. And, we never were able to talk my husband, Mike, into joining the Hairy Chest contest on the Lido deck. Seems you have to impress the two female judges with not only a hairy chest (check, he’s got that), but with a little dance as well. We hadn’t liquored him up in time, and he wouldn’t budge out of his chair. As far as I’m concerned, he was a shoe-in!

One of the best things about the Chippers’Cruise was getting to know some wonderful people that had a hobby in common. People from all walks of life and all around the country were represented. We loved hearing about their careers, families and experiences, as well as what types of casino collectibles were of interest to them. This was one of the grandest successes of the Chippers’Cruise!”

Corni Quinlivan

“The inaugural Chippers Cruise was great! We really enjoyed getting to know our fellow chippers better. They’re a great bunch of people. Our “floating hotel” was super. The food was wonderful and plentiful. The ship’s staff was friendly, helpful and provided top notch service. All in all, an awesome experience.”

Mary Ann Massey

“Some folks think everybody should go on a cruise at least once. I agree. Some folks think everybody should go on a cruise once a year. I agree to that too, now!

The Carnival ships aren’t known as “The Fun Ships” for nothing... It’d be about impossible to not have fun on one of these cruises! I know



Bruce and Mary Ann Massey

what fun is, I had a bunch of it this past weekend, and lemme tell ya, fun is my favorite thing to have!

You like to eat? Feel like eating 7 times a day? No problem. Can’t decide if you want the Cornish gaming hen, the prime rib or the lobster tail (or anything else on the menu) for dinner? No problem. Order them all! All of your food is included in the price of your room. No looking at the prices on menus, they don’t exist.

You like to shop? There’s plenty of duty free shopping available both on board the ship and in your port of call. Gems, jewelry and watches (bought a very nice watch myself), artwork, liquor (some amazing prices on liquor when you can buy it before our government taxes it), you are allowed \$800 in purchases brought into the country per family member before you have to start paying duty. I had to have a Cuban cigar. Bought one in Nassau, a Romeo Y Julieta Churchill for \$15. Talk about a great stogey! One thing about them though, while you can bring them onto the ship, you can’t take them home with you when you get back to Miami, some problem we have with Castro... You like to gamble? The

Fascination has a casino that is larger than I was expecting. Maybe 8 blackjack tables, Caribbean Stud, Let It Ride, Three Card Poker, 2 roulette wheels, a craps table and I probably left out a table game or two. They have blackjack and slot tournaments (I just missed the cut for the finals in the BJ tourney). They have a good assortment of slot machines, and about a dozen video poker machines. The odds aren’t good on the VP machines, but the progressive jackpot on the bank of 25 cent Jacks or Better was well over \$1700 when we boarded the ship Friday. It was at exactly \$1838.72 when I hit the royal Friday night. Not a bad way to start a vacation!!!

You got kids? Bring’em along! The ship has special activities for kids of every age. Camp Carnival keeps the young ones busy all day, leaving mom and dad plenty of free time to spend together. Teens have their own activities so they don’t have to spend the days and nights (they even have their own disco!) being embarrassed by their parents!

The Harbers and Quinlivans want to make this an annual event, and I’m all for it. Spouses and other family members who wouldn’t find

interest in a chip show or convention would (and did) have a great time at an event like this. While there was some chipping and chip chat, it didn't consume very much of the weekend like a show or the convention can. We had three scheduled meetings but none were required attendance. The ship set aside the Passage To India lounge for us to have these meetings, it was a very nice room.

I hope to see everyone again, on the ship next year, as well as a whole bunch more of the good folks within this hobby. IT REALLY WAS FUN!"

Bob Orme

author's note:

Just make sure you bring your passport next year Bob... remember, you promised!

editor's note:

Well, I missed this one but I won't miss the next. What a great way to spend time chipping not to mention seeing Larry Hollibaugh in a tie.



Your cruise hosts, Mike and Dave



Sean and Alexi



Swimming lessons?



Harold and Iona Kohrt



Belinda and Philip Hixon