

## **CRUISING THE CANAL**

GARY FUNKHOUSER spoke to Club members about the recent trip on the Oosterdam cruise ship that he and Julie went on from Florida through the Panama Canal to California. They were among 1800 passengers and 600 crew on the largest cruise ship that can navigate the canal. GARY explained that there was only 2 ft of space between the canal locks and each side of the ship. Locks, which operated with fresh water, are used to raise the ship from the ocean level about 80 ft to Gatun Lake, which is one of the worlds largest man made lakes. About 36 ships pass through the canal each day. GARY said their ship paid \$30,000 to use the canal. Much of the traffic is from containerized cargo ships going both ways. The canal has been operated by the Panamanian country since 2000 and is in a constant state of improvement to meet the traffic demand. Panama is a cruise destination with many tourist attractions in addition to the canal.