



Log Entry #12 – Where's Dudley Do Right when you need him?

Having escaped with their lives in Acapulco, last we heard from our intrepid crew, they had made it across the Gulf of Tehuantepec in record time and were heading for the last spot available to clear out of Mexico...Puerto Madero. As it turned out this is mostly a fishing village and a army base. Charlie's Charts said to look for the Port Captain's Headquarters as we entered harbor...it being the 'modern' building on our left. Well let me tell ya, it may have been 30 years ago since that it has seen a coat of white wash. Sadly this regional port of Chiapas is the entry point for the poorest province in Mexico and the water and beaches were filthy. Suzan and I sent a shore at 3 PM hoping to get see the Port Captain before closing time, reportedly at 4 but as it turned out he had left the office early (2:30)...Suzan using a combination of english, spanish and italian learned we would be advised to hire an agent to arrange for proper documentation. Suzan negotiated him down from \$150 to \$100 USD which was to include all fees for official stamps, papers, etc. She surrendered all ships papers and our three passports to our newest best 'paid' friend with his promise to return manyana 10:30 AM. This was definitely a good decision.



Chiapas - Trash is everywhere

Arthur Murray would be proud



Sunset over the Port Captain's office

We are discovering the interesting world of the "Paperwork Cha Cha"... named that as in the dance of Cha Cha, you take 2 steps forward, 2 steps backwards, 2 steps to the right and then 2 steps to the left and finally end up back in the same spot only to do it all over again. The phrase was trademarked by a delivery captain plying the waters of the US and Caribbean and writes guide books for the rest of us. She (yes, it is wonderful to have a very experienced woman provide the details on how to navigate the process) has written a chapter on the whole process and starts out by explaining that the process for yachties is different than

what we have all likely experienced at the airport! I hadn't read this chapter prior to clearing into Mexico (I have now) and was very surprised at all of the hoops we had to jump (had to import the boat and then had to get a US notarized letter saying that I had the authority to operate the boat, even though I own the LLC that owns the boat, local officials required a US notary, which normally would mean that we would have to go back to the US and get... fortunately we found someone who would notarize a letter I e-mailed... it wasn't an original, but the copy had a notary seal and officials like seals!) ... and every single port is different. There is a couple of points that the writer was very insistent on, 1 - you must have a proper "zarpe" from each country to get into the next and 2. Port Captains have fiefdoms and all you can do is try and be prepared to provide any documentation he wants. Well I discover in Puerto Madero that there was one piece of paper, the single most important one - the cruising permit, that we didn't get when in Ensenada. Oops... this was going to be difficult to get out of the country.

Do you bake? Crew Needs cake with file...

Next morning we arose and our fearless captain went ashore to meet our agent and the Port Captain. In her absence Linda and I were visited by the Mexican Army (not to be confused with the Navy) with 5 men and a black labrador to do an inspection, but as we had no papers, no inspection,... and if it had be found that we didn't have the proper cruising documents, it would be off to the pokey. We were admonished not to leave port without inspection which I supposed was to include the dog sniffing everyone's crotch, I know that's my first place of choice to hide things. Our captain returned about noon with 'all required documents' to leave port and was told by the Port Captain that there was no requirement to be boarded and searched by the Army. Free to go!



We weighed anchor and headed out of the harbor and once again set a course nearly due east with a light westerly on our starboard quarter and raised sails...see ya Mexico! Or so we thought. As we were approaching the Guatemala border, we spot a Mexican coastal patrol boat who comes within hailing distance to ask questions. When an official boat approaches it is usually best to drop sail and prepare to be boarded. Suzan scurried below and put "official" greeting clothes on and returned to deck to answer the Armada's questions over the VHF. When the patrol boat's captain was satisfied with our answers, he bids us good sailing and we raise sail.

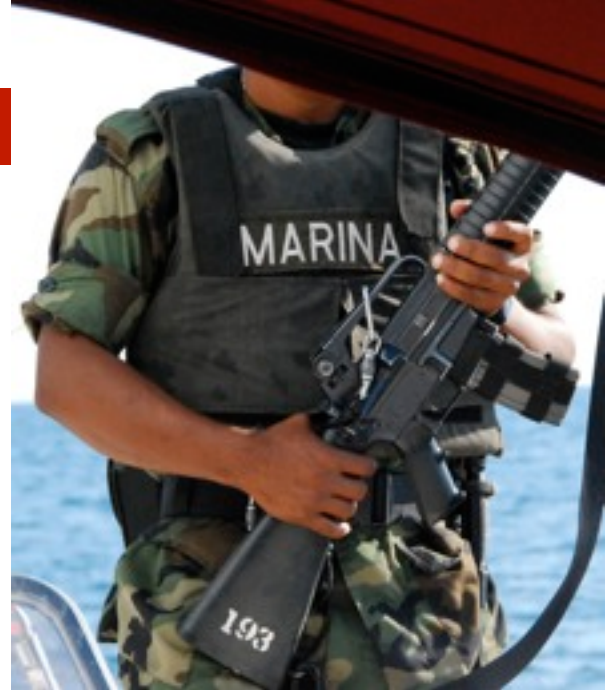
Naked Woman arouses Mexican Navy

Forty five minutes later, settling back into "at sea" routine, Linda disappeared to the aft deck to take a shower and then to begin dinner preparations. Just as she got into the 'buff' Linda spotted a high speed boat about a mile off our stern and closing fast. Quickly hiking up bra and panties, she reported that the chase was on. What Me Worry? I was at the helm and decided to kept course.... we were so close to the border. The patrol boat's high speed tender came along side with 8 men and it is obvious they intend to board this time. Rolling up the head sail, but keeping course they come along side where we have placed fenders. Five of the eight come on board MaaMa, all armed with either 9-mm hand guns or M16's USA issue sub-machine gun, dressed in full battle gear, flack jackets, black boots, camouflage uniforms and wearing wool watch caps...the temperature is at least 90 degrees and 87% humidity. Suzan escorts the two senior officers below to examine ships documents and our Zarpa. Lots of talk, fractured english, spanish, italian and hand gestures. I told Suzan to compliment the Lieutenant on his command of English...she sucked it up and did so and you could see a slight softening. As the talk went on, one of the armed men or



The Marines along side - looking rather pleased with themselves

boys not over 18 years of age with 'Marina' which I think translates to Marines, gestured that I was to turn the yacht around. Now normally I would have held course but he has a singular advantage...his M16 where I could view his finger just in front of its trigger guard which he moved back and fourth...got the message and reluctantly changed course as instructed. Suzan later suggested that I could have consulted her as Captain before making the move...but there was the guy with the gun. Suzan I could deal with later, an M16 there is little room for negotiations.



View from the cockpit - you'd probably follow his instructions too



Suzan with the 2 officers below



Linda celebrating leaving Mexico

As the inspection progressed in flailing hands and god awful spanish-italian-english the patrol boat again came along side. Linda and I counted another 12 officers and men all armed with crew members standing by 20-mm and 40-mm caliber machine guns. Suzan being the ever gracious hostess offered the two guys below cold Cervesa's or water, they declined. With more spanglish I was instructed by Suzan to come below and to affix my signature to several documents which I could not read...this I did thinking I had just signed myself in their brig, but Suzan informed me I was only signing as a witness. With that the officer in-charge called his boat along side and he and crew left MaMma. Phewwwwwwwww...we set sail and did the next best thing... made cocktails!

So recapping our adventure so far:

Incidents: 2 officials encounters with US Coast Guard, Encounters with 2 arms of the Mexican Government... so, US 2; Mexico 2. Two thefts, no groundings, just one adrift, no insurance filings...yet.

Repairs: 9 Ports, 8 repairs

Fishing: Two Bonita, one Yellow Tail

Expense: More than we want to discuss

Waaaa hooooo!!! Good as it gets? Oh... on our way into Los Suenos Costa Rica the fuel filters clog from some sort of containment. So, stay tune for more exciting adventures with the "Crew from Frostbite Falls" - Where a little frostbite would be really welcomed... or, will they escape the algae?

Fair Winds _/) Suzan and Michael