20) M.V. E.W. Beatty (ZCAN) 69904 GRT (123,000 DWT)
Gijon France 10/5/76 - 31/5/76 Tubarao Brasil.
21) M.V. E.W. Beatty Re-signed on articles.
Tubarao Brasil 31/5/76 - 24/6/76 Rotterdam.

This was basically a sister ship to the DC Coleman, so there was nothing really new for me on the ship. Having said that, it is always a bit of an adventure joining a new ship. One never really knows if she has been fitted out exactly like her sister. There can sometimes be unexpected surprises! I first flew out to Madrid, then another one hour flight to Oviedo. Finally, an hour's drive brought me to the Spanish port of Gijon where I joined the ship.

This was a sister ship to the DC Coleman, and used to have exactly the same long boring voyages with bulk coal, iron ore (a very heavy cargo which made us roll like a pig), or a mixture of various other bulk cargoes. These ships were sometimes a headache to load. The heavy cargo sat at the bottom of the hold and acted like the weight on the end of a pendulum. It had to be very carefully distributed not to cause undue stresses. The amount of cargo in each hold and the order in which the holds are loaded and discharged must be rigidly observed. The Chief Officer is responsible for calculating the cargo loading and discharging.

He had an analogue computer called a "Lodicator" which helped him to work out the quantities and the load/discharge order. He would demonstrate how he could "break the boat" by putting the wrong amounts in. Red lights would flash, and it gave a most unhappy beeping sound. The shear and bending stresses involved on these big bulkers could snap them like an old stick if the calculations and cargo work was wrongly done. It is possible that some unexplained ship losses could have been caused this way. With the ship moving in a rough sea, excess stresses can cause metal fatigue. As the metal becomes brittle, cracks start to open up in the hull. Once a crack has opened, it tends to spread quickly, leading to major fractures, destroying the longitudinal strength of the ship. The process is cumulative, and can be quite rapid. If such a thing did occur at sea, a loaded ship could just fold up and sink almost within seconds. On one ship, the Devonshire, this is thought to have happened when she sailed into a Pacific typhoon, and never came out again.

Whilst in Tubarao (Brazil), I came across a guy selling minerals. He had some wonderful examples, but even here, the prices were not that cheap. I very nearly bought a rough stone nodule in which a section had been cut away and polished. Through this translucent window, one could clearly see the original water, now condensed, from the steam which had formed the hollow nodule many millions of years ago. I was very tempted, but the price was just a little high. I have since found out that such things are somewhat rare, and quite valuable. I wish I had bought it now.

I met Christine (my wife) on the Radio while on this vessel. We were on our way back from Brazil to Europe. (I was licensed as VP9HX/mm with an FT101 amateur transceiver and a home made 3 band vertical dipole strung from the main mast). She was studying in Freiburg in Germany, and her landlord Erich, DL9DW, used to let her speak to people and listen on the radio. She had previously spent some time in South Africa, and was tryjing to use Amateur Radio as a means for reaching some of the friends she had made there. Strangely enough, Christine recorded the very first contact we had, and we still have it! At that time I had no intention of visiting Germany, as I had a French girl friend I was going to see. The effects of a friendly young female voice on a lonely seaman however can be very strong!

I also found I could "bend" the main transmitter frequency to cover the 80 meter amateur band. This was not strictly legal, but with the ship's huge vertical antenna, and 1500 watts of power, I could put a super signal into Europe and America from all over the North and South Atlantic. I seemed to be a very popular station!