

51) M.V. G.A. Walker
Tampico Florida 6/11/86 - 12/2/87 Salina Cruz Mexico.



Some of the product tankers were on time charter to PEMEX, the state owned Mexican oil company. They were engaged in carrying PEMEX products up and down the Mexican coast, supplying various local storage depots on the East and West coasts of Mexico with petrol, diesel and paraffin. We used to transit through the Panama Canal, and often had relatively long stays in port. In Mexico, the "Manana" factor was very strong. Although the literal translation from Spanish means "Tomorrow", the Mexican interpretation of it is basically "not today, maybe tomorrow...maybe not". It was frequently "maybe not". Apart from the timber runs on the forest product ships, this was probably one of the best runs we had. The weather was mostly good and the seas calm. The main negative point being, that frequently the ports had very little of interest in or near them. Most of the coastline was rocky, with lots of bays and inlets, but not really suitable for swimming. It was certainly hardly ever a high pressure run. We sometimes used to just drift off shore, or anchor off a port waiting to get in. Painting and chipping was a never ending job. It was also a good opportunity to test the lifeboats. These would be lowered into the water, sometimes with a case of beer, and off we would go maybe for only half an hour, or sometimes for half a day.

On one occasion I remember how we went fishing and swimming off the Mexican coast. It was wonderfully quiet, the ship being about a mile away. We were drifting in flat calm conditions, when we heard splashing sounds getting rapidly louder. It was a large school of porpoises swimming directly towards us. There must have been at least 50 animals all leaping clear of the water and splashing down. They passed around us and under us, some actually nudging the boat with their backs. We could clearly hear them breathing as they surfaced, and could almost touch them. They seemed to stop about a quarter of a mile away, and appeared to be busy catching their lunch, milling around, jumping high and chasing around under the water. We could clearly see them under water, and hear them breathing and sometimes whistling to each other. For me, it was an experience I will never forget.