

SUN

Manzanillo's Lifestyle E-Magazine

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Cover Photo courtesy of Howard Platt



Day trippin'.... "Heading for the Border ..."



Recently on a typically bright sunny Mexican morning, the kind that crackles with expectation; I was driving my Nissan Pathfinder on the second leg of a journey from Manzanillo to visit an old friend in West Texas. Having enjoyed a leisurely breakfast in the company of fellow American travelers, I had departed Saltillo, on what was expected to be a three hour drive to the border between Nuevo Laredo, MX and Laredo Texas. The sun reflected off the stunningly magnificent hills that mark the center of Saltillo, the shimmering waves of heat creating a near ephemeral scene. I noticed the time, it was 8:30 a.m., "hmmm," I sighed laughingly, "running a little late. "

(At this point being almost totally acclimated to my adopted country's special relationship with all that is temporal, I had all but completely weaned myself from the obsession with time that marks most productive peoples of western cultures.. am I ever late, not if I can help it, it is a matter of courtesy, but do I lose track, of course).

Just past the hills of Saltillo, the Autopista, (toll road) winds into the mountains south of Nuevo Laredo. The mountains were spectacular as the morning mists wafted in and out of every crevice, valley and crag. My

mind wandered, provoked by Jimmy Buffett's "Changes in latitude, Changes in attitude", I was pondering and arranging the orts and jewels of a future article about the unfair treatment of Mexico, my adopted country, by the American media. Mexico, was of late being unfairly portrayed, even , God forbid, by the likes of Bill " fair and balanced " O'Reilly. After all Manzanillo, my home, was considered safe, according to the real Estate agent who sold me my condo. She touted it proudly as in a "safe zone", and as she had explained it, "the drug people and the Governor have an understanding that foreign visitors are safe here....". How dare those fools in the U.S. make so much about so little. After all, I should know having driven back and forth between Manzanillo and the U.S. five times in the last three years.

My friend Chicken Leo, yes the infamous "Chicken Man of Ajijic", and I even drove to the Guatemala border and spent several weeks in Oaxaca. We also spent several nights in a couple of "dangerous" states....nobody got shot, killed maimed or abducted.. the only excitement except for the fresh Atun for breakfast, and the rollers and tubes of Puerto Escondido is detailed in my previous Manzanillo Sun article " Perilous Journey". **Danger INDEED !!!**



Clueless....

North of Monterrey, after the mountains, the road is basically straight and could be mistaken for many four lane divided roads in the U.S. and Canada. There are a few villages but no major cities of note. Is it desolate, not really when compared to prairies or deserts in Canada and the U.S. We were travelling, Jimmy Buffet and I, at about 70 mph, kind of slow but the scenery was amazing. I spent at least an hour counting the many different species of cactus.

A small black car, possibly a Dodge Neon with the right rear bumper hanging askew passed us and then slowed down, its smiling rear seat passengers waving and laughing.. I waved back and took up the challenge , as any red blooded male raised in the muscle car culture would and immediately passed them, waving and smiling. I pushed the pathfinder up to 90 mph and lost in my previous ruminations continued on my way, never gave it a second thought.

The Free Zone which extends 26 kilometers south of Nuevo Laredo is a free travel area in which foreign plated vehicles are not stopped with expired tags, and travel within this zone is unrestricted either to foreigners or Mexicanos. This area has many problems and hardships, too numerous to go into here, suffice to say it is considered very dangerous by those who traffic here, be they legal or not. Poverty juxtaposed by opulence is everywhere, one only has to see the crosses on the chain link fence that skirts the Rio Grande(Rio Bravo to indigenous peoples) marking the deaths of those who drowned trying to get to the U.S. I barreled down the Autopista with not a care in the world, life was great and my article was forming. I would really unleash my satirical scalpel on the ignorance of the media. The owner of Schooners Restaurant, in Manzanillo, suggested that the Columbia Bridge crossing, west of Nuevo Laredo, as the most expedient way to travel. As

the turn off approached, I went back and forth in my mind as to which route to take... I chose Columbia.

The Big Surprise...

The Columbia Bridge road is not desolate. Traffic that morning was steady with trucks or other vehicles every 50 to 100 meters apart. It was 11:15 a.m., and we were approx 20 kilometers west of the Autopista when they struck. The small black car passed me and immediately attempted to slow me down... travelling at over 80 mph we were locked in a battle, they wanted me to stop and I wanted them to #\$ ^^#\$@* ... suffice to say I was having none of this. They were deadly serious and determined to stop us. It may have been minutes or even just a few seconds, time was not a concern, suddenly I noticed **a second vehicle**, a white Ford F-150 on my tail, they now had me sandwiched between them. We were locked together careening, no, flying down the highway. The three vehicles locked together swerved back and forth across the road. We jockeyed for position passing each other again and again. Each time they got in front they slammed on their brakes in an attempt to stop their prize. We were dangerously close to disaster.

Approximately 30-35 kilometers travelling westerly, unable to corral us, the pick up pulled alongside on the right just as the black car slammed on its brakes in front of us.. all I saw was smiles, and tire smoke, maybe my instincts took over, because I immediately slammed on the brakes, (thanks for great ABS), and made a u-turn to the left, crossing to the lanes in the opposite direction... off we sped, J.B., my trusty Nissan and I .. **at speeds over 115 mph**, several times the governor shut down the engine... soon, I was steady at 115+mph, they seemed to have faded back, the white truck was fading.. whew!! I turned the radio up as J.B. sang "I know enough about ammunition to know when to duck".

We raced back towards the autopista and the relative safety of the Pemex station there. I was honking my horn and flashing the lights at the traffic travelling in the other direction, my pursuers, were still fading, getting further and further behind **safety was close, only five or six Kilometers ahead**. There are those that believe when it is your time there is nothing you can do about it, I on the other hand believe that luck comes to those who woo her, but she is a whimsical mistress, sometimes even a bitch, she takes our best with such untimely and merciless abandon, tearing at parts of our being for no reason we can fathom. Of course we have no real control, but if you want me be prepared for a tussle of epic proportions... right !!... the fact is, we are powerless in the face of disaster, so we might as well face it with all the dignity we can muster. To be sure that dignity is as subjectively individual as fingerprints.





It turns out my freedom was an illusion. Sometime later I remembered thinking as I was walking towards the Pemex, "the friggin' **traffic going west had stopped**". It was around 11:20 that morning, the trucks, busses and cars just disappeared. Did my pursuers call ahead, and if so who helped them? I guess we will never know the answer.

Back to careening down the highway. All of a sudden the black car appeared from behind the truck and quickly closed the gap between us. After several attempts they managed to pass. He slammed on his brakes in front of us and at that moment the white truck pulled even, this time on my left. That is when smiling clean shaved passenger in a NY baseball cap brandished "**the canon**". I think it was an AK - 47, but who's quibbling over technicalities... We shut 'er down JB, my Nissan and me. I don't think they ever actually pointed the weapon at me, but no matter, they opened my door and indicated I should "passale" and with no roughness at all had me raise my hands and lay face first against the side of their truck. They smiled the whole time, one of them jumped in my Pathfinder, and as I exhorted, no, no, no, they all sped off in the direction of the main highway. The traffic going westbound resumed, almost immediately. Imagine my chagrin when I realized as I walked towards the autopista I was within one, that's right **one kilometer of the Pemex and safety**.

A True Caballero.. Buena Gente

The rest of the day was a blur of reports, with the Federal Policia and **the Ministerio de Publico**. **Roberto Maldonado Siller**, the Ministry director, a 40ish English speaking "**Buena Gente**", (one of the good guys), took care of me. He called my daughter in Las Vegas the only really emotional moment that day, the insurance company, and put most of his enormous staff to work preparing the multitude of documents which are a part of the many agency reports required. When their copy machine broke down Roberto gave up his lunch hour to personally take said documents to another building and make the 13 copies required. Roberto even had the Federal Police escort me to the border. He instructed me to go thru the back door and get an immigration permit to use to exit the free zone on my return to Manzanillo.

There is much more to this story, many problems were created by the loss of my FM-3, and of course the theft of my vehicle and its import permit. The good news, I still can't find any bullet holes in my person.

Of course there are many opinions as to the wisdom of travelling to the border by personal vehicle. Some with more cojones than brains want to carry weapons, some use the "you were in the wrong place at the wrong time" rationalization, some have even left Mexico never to return, some just wonder at the wisdom and some just blame it all on drugs ... is it worth it? That is your decision, but before you go I have some suggestions:

- 1. Read the warnings.** Not just US Consular warnings but Texas has some pretty explicit warnings as do Arizona and California.
(http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_4755.html)
- 2. DO NOT travel alone**, especially with an SUV or truck.
- 3. If stopped cooperate completely..** There is a case where a person sometime after my robbery ran from his pursuers, wrecked his SUV, and was shot in the head, probably as retaliation for wrecking the vehicle, they left the passenger unharmed.
- 4. Quit blaming just drugs**, it is much more complicated, in the last two years attacks have increased partly because of poverty and a terrible economy. Don't flaunt your possessions, to some less fortunate they are worth stealing. You have but to spend some time as I did in Nuevo Laredo, it will bring tears to your eyes, or scare the hell out of you .. Maybe both.

Above all **be aware of your surroundings**, for example, I for one won't be frequenting the Kiosko behind my condo here in Manzanillo at 4 a.m. to have coffee with my buddies in the police department. Just last week I awoke to the sound of ricocheting AK-47 fire, as several hit men attempted to extract vengeance on members the local police. Finally, **talk to people**, listen to their experiences. In a conversation just last Friday at Schooners some very nice folks from up North told me stories of how every time they have crossed the border recently they have been propositioned for Mordida. Just yesterday, a long time friend related how she and her travelling companion were stopped on the Periferico Sud in Guadalajara; the policeman took all their money and sent them on their way.

As for me, First Class air machine rides are far cheaper, and so far Alaska Airlines hasn't been pulled over by bandidos brandishing "Canon Grande". If you have questions regarding the rest of the story contact me:

Jim Evans, at skyking1_98@yahoo.com



Crested Caracara

The crested or northern caracara is a bird of legend and mystery.

Legend has it that about a thousand years or so ago, a tribe called the Mexica, were drawn by a vision to migrate south and eastwards, to the valleys of central Mexico. They found a new home where they saw the sacred eagle perched on a cactus growing from a rocky outcrop. Nobody knows where the trek started, though it could have been from what is now Arizona or even Colorado. It ended in the Valley of Mexico in the present federal district, and that is where the tribe, called Aztec by the Spanish conquistadors, made their home.

The caracara ranges from the south of Arizona and Texas down throughout Mexico. The ornithologist Martin del Campo identified it as the sacred eagle in pre-Columbian Aztec codices. This is thought to be the bird that appears on the original war flag of Morelos from the war of independence, with its prominent crest clearly shown. The flag is faithful to the old legend, with the bird perched on a cactus.

Caracaras are raptors, hunters of the skies, and often feed on lizards, snakes and other live prey. They are not eagles but falcons and they like open or semi-open country with scattered trees and bushes. You may well see one or two in the trees leading to Manzanillo airport. However they are also comfortable walking around behind the plow enjoying whatever wildlife has been turned up, and it is not unusual to see small groups of them on the ground when farmers are plowing.

When young, they hang out with the vultures and feast on carrion – road kill usually – which is why you will often see them along the highways. Go where the food is – and in our society dead animals are usually littered along the roads. Although caracara are almost as tall as vultures, they are very much lighter and can get pushed aside by the bigger birds.

By Howard Platt



Caracaras are mainly dark brown to black, with white necks and faces, and white tails with a black tip. The crests are black, beaks orange-red, and they have long, yellow-colored legs. Their wingspans are usually less than four feet, and adults weigh about 2.2 lbs on average.



When they mature, they pair into monogamous relationships, and aggressively defend their territory. The build nests of sticks in the trees and raise a small number of chicks.

It is a mystery how the legendary caracara changed into a golden eagle, when the painting was done for the image of the bird for the modern Mexican flag. No matter that this bird only lives in the more northern or highland states and is rarely seen. The law now governing the Mexican Coat of Arms and Flag, specify an 'águila real', which is the golden eagle.

However, the legend continues and a Google search in English will reveal many site that proclaim (incorrectly) the Caracara is the national bird of Mexico.



These wonderful photographs were taken by Howard Platt, and all shots were taken near Manzanillo Airport and Barra de Navidad

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Moving the Border

David Fitzpatrick

Part 1: Texas

When Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1810, its territory was more than twice what it is today. Stretching from Guatemala in the south to the Oregon Territory in the North, it included the present day US States of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as well as parts of Colorado, Wyoming, and Oklahoma. In a series of disastrous events during the 1830s and 1840s, including wars, colonization, settlements, and purchases, Mexico was to lose more than half of its original territory.

Following Independence, the Government of Mexico adopted a sort of homestead policy to attract settlers to its under populated northwestern provinces. In particular, land grants were made in the Province of Texas to anyone who would swear allegiance to Mexico and adopt Catholicism. Many Americans answered the call. As early as 1810, Moses Austin, a Missouri banker and his son Stephen received a large land grant and eventually settled more than 300 American families on their land. Other Americans followed and by the 1830s, Americans in Texas outnumbered Mexicans.

Inevitably, difficulties arose, due in large part, to the differences in mentality of the two peoples and the unfamiliarity of the new American colonists with Mexican Government procedures. The question of *Manifest Destiny*¹ was also very much on the horizon.

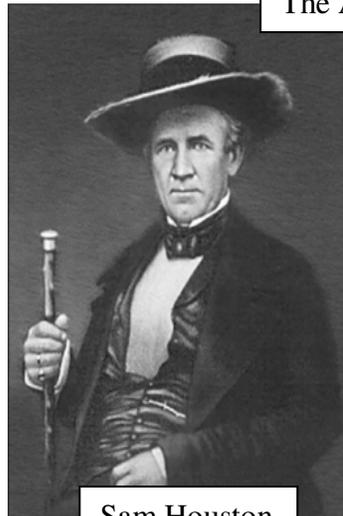
In 1836, following a series of unpopular measures by President Santa Anna, the American majority in Texas declared independence. Sam Houston, a former Governor of Tennessee was named Commander-in-Chief of the exas militia and subsequently elected President of the Republic of Texas.

Santa Anna reacted with immediate military action: within days of the declaration of independence, he attacked the Alamo, a mission and fortress near San Antonio, killing all but two of the American defenders. But shortly thereafter, Santa Anna was defeated; and taken prisoner by Sam Houston at the battle of San Jacinto. He then signed the Treaty of Velasco, officially granting

independence to Texas. The Mexican Congress refused to ratify this treaty, maintaining that it was coerced when



The Alamo



Sam Houston



Gen. Antonio de Santa Anna

Santa Anna was a prisoner.

But as they had no means of reclaiming Texas, it was *de facto* independent. The new Republic was immediately recognized by Britain, France, and the United States.

The question of annexation to the United States, naturally enough, was soon on the table, but it encountered resistance in.....the United States Congress. The issue of western expansionism divided the Congress between the Southern Democrats, who favored extension of America's frontiers, on the one hand; and the Northern Whigs (precursors of the "Anti-Slavery Republicans") who suspected the Southerners of trying to tip the balance of power between free and slave-holding states. Certain Congressmen, including John Quincy Adams and Abraham Lincoln, opposed Manifest Destiny on principle. Texas, therefore, remained an independent republic for another 11 years.

It was not until the mid 1840s that the political climate radically changed and the future of Texas – and other parts of Mexico – was once more in question.

to be continued

¹ Manifest Destiny: an idea current in the 19th century which held that the United States, with its high ideals and Protestant ethics had a god-given right (if not a duty) to occupy and bring « civilization » and democracy to the entire continent of North America.



Letter from the Editor

We have just completed our first year in "The Sun". It has been a great year working with so many talented writers and we look forward to the next year with anticipation.

It has been a difficult year for many as the press continues to pound Mexico. That there are problems to be resolved in this country is not questioned but it seems at times that perhaps Mexico is becoming a red herring. Something for governments to hide behind whilst deteriorating home conditions are ignored for as long as possible.

Many scandals have erupted of unscrupulous "intelligentsia" picking the pockets of those who have saved their entire lives to have a comfortable retirement. Many more are still struggling to make ends meet in falling economies and watch in horror as their livelihoods vanish. Those of us who have escaped to the warmth of Mexico in our twilight years, thank our lucky stars to be here and out of the rat race. At least we don't have to keep up with the Joneses because, for the most part where we live, there are no Joneses.

In Manzanillo, we have a warm and friendly foreign society, where people care for their neighbours and friends and lend a helping hand when ever they are able. In recent months we have had an almost continual call for blood donors as elderly members of our community have fallen sick and needed transfusions. Without question, those able to donate have done so willingly and frequently.

Anyone spoken to here is so thankful to have found a part of the world that is still relatively safe and are also thankful for the warmth and hospitality of the Mexican people within whose country we have been welcomed.

Ask anyone why they came to Manzanillo and there will be a hundred different answers.

Ask anyone why they stay, the answer is always the same, **because of the people.**

Freda Rumford - Editor

Replies welcome, send emails to freda@manzanillosun.com

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The Streets of Manzanillo

Terry Sovil

Jose María Morelos y Pavón



accountant. He was able to enroll at San Nicolás College in Valladolid in 1790 at age 25.

He had saved some money and had a very basic education. The rector at the college was Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. Morelos was Hidalgo's junior by 12 years. He entered the Tridentine Seminary in 1795 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Royal and Pontifical University. He became a Roman Catholic Priest in 1798 at the age of 33.

There are similarities between José Morelos and Miguel Hidalgo: Roman Catholic priests; fathered illegitimate children; political activists and charismatic leaders but there are also differences. Hidalgo surpassed Morelos in intellectual attainments. Hidalgo was of white middle-class Creole while Morelos came from the working class and was of mixed blood. Morelos was far more skilled as a military leader and organizer.

Jose María Morelos y Pavón 1765-1815

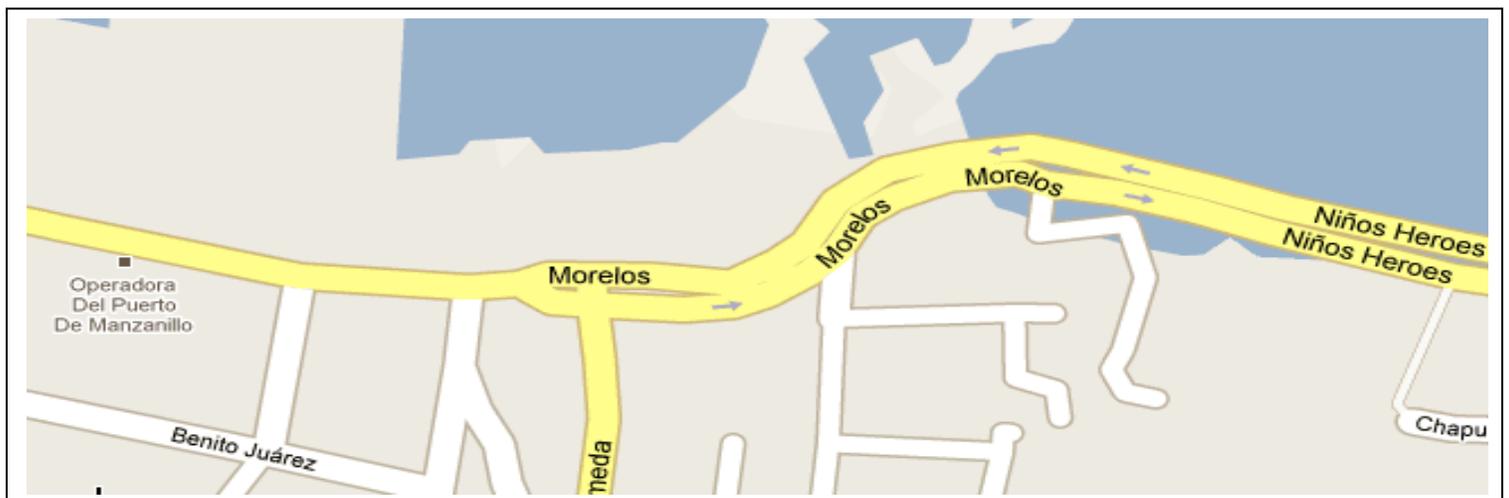
- **Born:** September 30, 1765
- **Birthplace:** Valladolid, Michoacán, Mexico
- **Died:** December 22, 1815, (executed)
- **Place of Death:** San Cristóbal Ecatépec, Mexico

Jose María Morelos y Pavón has a recognizable face. You'll see him every time you hold a 50 peso note. He was born September 30, 1765 in Valladolid, Michoacán; a mestizo (mix of Spanish and Aztec Indian blood) and in a lower class of the Spanish colonial social scale. His parents were respectable, his father a carpenter, but poor. He started work at an early age as a mule driver and eventually became a priest, a military commander and a head of state.

From 1779-1790 Morelos worked on a sugar cane hacienda where he rose to a white-collar position as a scribe and

Morelos labored long and hard as a priest and may have remained an historical unknown had he not been ordered to announce the ban of excommunication against Hidalgo in his church. He was appalled at taking such a step against his old mentor. In a conference Hidalgo convinced Morelos that the revolt was in defense of country and religion since Spanish officials in Mexico were about to surrender the country to Napoleon Bonaparte. Morelos joined and Hidalgo gave him a military commission to capture the port of Acapulco and move the revolution to the south.

Morelos displayed his brilliant military leadership. For the next three years he showed skills in campaigns, instilling discipline, boosting morale,



training armies, selecting commanders. He conquered an area south of Mexico City from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec on the east to Valladolid on the west. He took the province of Oaxaca and defended Cuautla withstanding a 2 ½ month siege. He captured Acapulco in 1813 but this gave Spanish forces elsewhere an opportunity to gain an upper hand. The taking of Acapulco marked the start of his decline. He became leader of the revolution after the execution of Hidalgo.

Morelos had formulated a political and social program for a new government while conquering southern Mexico. He called himself the "Servant of the Nation". That same year he called the first congress of free states which resulted in a Declaration of Independence and he was made the head of the executive triumvirate. He wanted the abolition of all class distinctions (Indian, mulatto, mestizo) in favor of "American" for all native-born persons. Sovereignty was vested in the people by a representative government. In the end the congress didn't accomplish much because military victories were also needed but that was not to be.



Morelos was captured by Spanish forces led by Matías Carrasco, an ex-follower, on November 5, 1815, while escorting the congress to a location near the east coast of Mexico. He was tried in the Viceroy's military court and the Inquisition. He mounted a brilliant defence but eventually broke down in fear for his soul and revealed military information and even analysis on strategy. Morelos stood trial before three separate tribunals. The first was a civil-ecclesiastical process where he was sentenced to be degraded from the priesthood for heresy. The Inquisition carried out the degradation (The Rite of Degradation) in a painful ceremony where holy oils were scraped from his hands by a knife blade. It is reported that some watching openly cried but he endured with courage.

Finally a civil court sentenced him to be executed for treason.

On December 22, 1815 in the village of San Cristóbal Ecatépec, a short distance from Mexico City, he was executed by firing squad. This left only a few leaders, including Vicente Guerrero and Guadalupe Victoria, to continue the revolution.

While his death left him in official disgrace change was coming. In 1828 Valladolid was re-named Morelia in his honor and a large monument now stands where he was executed. He is buried in Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City. He is also immortalized in a 130' statue on the island of Janitzio in Lake Patzcuaro, Michocan.



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A Trip On The Wild Side!!

Freda Rumford

So we are back from 12 days in Colima! Not a pleasure trip but one which in some circumstances became pleasurable. We went a little fearfully because Nigel (my husband of 54 years) had been sick on and off for the past almost two years and was not gaining any ground, quite the opposite in fact.

I do not intend to have an expose of health problems in this narrative but wish to tell only of the treatment we had whilst in the Colima IMSS hospital. IMSS is the National Health Care system of Mexico, similar in fashion to the British National Health care and Canada's Health Care system. Others may have had different experiences but this is ours.

There had been initial problems in getting in to see Dr Morales, possibly because I did not follow all of the prescribed steps. As is well known to any person having to deal with "the system" here, there are prescribed steps necessary to visit each and all of the various offices and have all of the different pieces of paper, signed, sealed and stamped!! Because I had decided that we didn't want the free bus pass as we were going by car, I hadn't had a vital stamp which meant that our original visit to the Oncologist was negated. It was only by a little (?) foot stamping and a kindly passing Mexican gentleman who objected to the office clerks tone in dealing with me that got us in to see the doctor. But at last we were in the stream.

Arriving at the hospital after having had our operation and admittance date confirmed two days prior, we had to wait for four hours for a bed to become vacant, but eventually he was in the hospital and in the ward. To our surprise, he was placed in the gynaecological unit which had another couple of gentlemen in the same ward along with three ladies and mothers with babies in two of the other three wards. The only toilet was for ladies and absolutely he was not permitted to use that.

Good grief, he had a very short warning time so I had to scope out the area to which he had to dash when occasion arose. The Gents toilet was two wards over! Good luck!!

As fortune had it, a friendly nurse fashioned a makeshift out of an empty drip bottle and all was well.

It was two days before the scheduled operation and he



IMSS Hospital Colima

was prepared for a boring time. Not a bit of it, there was a constant stream of nurses, doctors and technicians, pulling, poking, jabbing and stabbing all parts normally in view and those usually remaining undercover. Every two hours throughout the night and day, they were there, collecting all of the pertinent data required before Dr. Heriberto Morales Blake could begin to get rid of the pesky cancer intrusion. All of a sudden, on Monday afternoon, without more ado, conversations were cut off midstream and the team were there to cart him away. No time to say "goodbye, good luck", he was gone. What now??

Time for Chinese!

Many hours later and with still no news, we were advised that the hospital was closing for the night, visitors hours were over and we would have to wait outside. Not knowing that as spouse I was entitled to wage a lonely vigil at the still empty bedside, I decided I was not sitting outside a hospital in the middle of the night and in the middle of a strange city and went back to the hotel to bed.

This was just the beginning of several days of highs and lows and of being scolded for leaving my poor husband unattended. He must have someone with him at all times. If I couldn't do it myself, then I would have to pay someone else to do so. Thank goodness it was easy to convince our son, to do the other shift, by promising him buffet breakfasts to die for at our hotel. We were saved.

This is customary in Mexican Hospitals; the family is fully expected to be in the hospital at all times and quite unlike our northern practice of having to adhere to definite

visiting hours, so as to allow doctors and nurses to work without interference. Other friends and family not in the rota are time limited but the favoured few have round the clock duty.

They are the Florence Nightingales. They feed their loved ones, assist with bed baths and alert the constantly busy nurses (who spend hours on medications and IV's) of any problems surrounding the patient. They fetch and carry bed pans, act as escort when the patient is able to go to the shower and pace the halls of the hospital on exercise duty.

Every person visiting has to leave a piece of acceptable picture ID (a driver's licence or Security card is OK) with security at the door and retrieve it upon leaving. No more than 2 patients allowed at any time. Occasionally we saw that last rule broken but security personnel are constantly checking who is there and offenders required to leave immediately. There seemed to be no exceptions.

On one occasion we saw a young couple with their newborn baby refused permission to leave the hospital with the infant because the mother had removed her security tag in her excitement to go home with the new baby. They had to go back and get the nurses to rectify that situation as no baby was leaving with the wrong people. It seemed hard and the young folk were a little dismayed but it was a good thing for us to see in this land where kidnapping is frequent.

I don't know what all of the checking was for, but continually, people were walking around and checking names of people in beds against those on sheets of paper. Security, social workers, administrators, nursing staff, dieticians, all had their list.

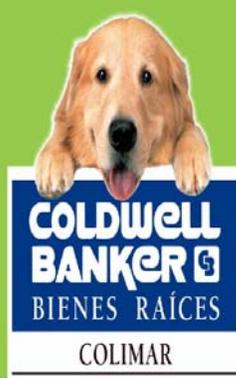
Meals in Colima Hospital seemed to be much advanced over the meals produced in Guadalajara. I say seemed because with a five day IV diet and then jello & juice for three, it was hard to form a correct opinion of the culinary expertise but very little seemed to go back. I did happen to see the kitchens on one occasion when on the hunt for a jug of water. They were very reminiscent of the kitchen on a Carnival Cruise line ship that we were on once, absolutely spotless and gleaming with stainless steel.

Too our great surprise, three of the nurses from the first ward came to visit after he was moved to a different ward (because they missed him) as well as another specialist whom we had been seeing for a

different problem and his nurse. In a foreign land and with a foreign tongue, it was nice to be treated as a friend. As Nigel said, "This shows the power of a please, a thank you and a smile." No language necessary.

The nursing staff were very professional, in pristine white uniforms with caps denoting their seniority, like days of yore back home. Beds were changed frequently, as often as required and bed baths given several times whilst there. For some reason a beard is just calling out to the Mexican nurses to be taken off and it was only strong warnings of displeasure that allowed it to stay. The cleaners were around constantly, mopping, swabbing, wiping down surfaces and emptying buckets. The place was extremely clean, certainly in comparison to our only other guide of Centro Medico in Guadalajara, where, we were not surprised to hear after we left that fair city, there were rumblings of a potential major bacterial problem.

Come time to leave, to our astonishment (as I had been fearing and dreading the homeward journey) we were advised that we would be transported back to Manzanillo, by ambulance!! . That is indeed what happened. The fact that we did not arrive home until after 1 a.m. is neither here nor there. We are now home, recuperation is underway and we look forward to our next episode to be played out, where else but in Guadalajara.



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FROM T'S GALLEY AT SCHOONERS RESTAURANT

Pastel de Tres Leches (Three Milk Cake)

Ingredients

For the Batter:

3/4 cup butter
1 3/4 cups sugar
8 egg yolks
2 1/2 cups flour, sifted
2 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 cup milk
6 egg whites

For the 3 Milk:

2 cups Carnation Evaporated Milk (Leche Clavel)
1 1/2 cups sweetened condensed milk
3 1/2 cups table cream
6 egg yolks

For the Meringue:

6 egg whites
2 cups sugar
1 3/4 cups light corn syrup or honey
2 limes, juice

Recipe Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 12 by 8 inch cake pan.

Prepare the batter:

Cream butter. Gradually mix in sugar, and continue beating until mixture is light and creamy. Add egg yolks. Slowly mix in flour, baking powder, and salt. Add vanilla extract, and slowly mix in milk until batter is thick. In another bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Fold into batter. Pour batter into cake pan. Bake for 40 minutes or until edges are golden brown. Remove from oven and cool on rack.

Prepare the Milks:

Blend evaporated and condensed milks and table cream with egg yolks in a blender or food processor. Bring half this mixture to a boil in a saucepan, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in remaining mixture. Pour over cake.



Prepare the Meringue:

In a double boiler, mix egg whites and sugar. Beat until stiff. Slowly add corn syrup or honey, and continue beating until stiff peaks form. Add lime juice and continue beating until shiny. Remove from heat. Invert

Garnish/Decorate the cake with your favorite fruit



Manzanillo's Hidden Culinary Delights

RANCHO DON ANDRÉS

Terry Sovil

Rancho Don Andrés isn't exactly hidden. It has been a favorite spot for many diners. There was a recent change in ownership and "The Ranch" is open again. I had the distinct pleasure of dining there during their first week's opening. Their grounds are beautiful.

While we were entering a very friendly gentleman named Pablo greeted us and showed us around. He pointed out the children's play area with swings, slides and climbing areas. He pointed out a large tree across the yard with a concrete bench beneath it. This tree grows a little fruit that attracts HUGE green iguanas. We walked over and saw them.

Pablo grabbed a big handful of tortillas and "called" the birds (a huge flock of geese and two turkeys) to dinner. Four peacocks eventually showed up as well. It was awesome to watch the birds hear the call and respond like hungry dogs. The Turkeys were first followed by the geese squawking, alternately flying and waddling to cover the distance. It was awesome to watch these birds come to dinner. A must see if you get the chance.

We ordered basic menu options, no appetizers, salads or dessert, just entrees and beers. I had one of the specialties of the house, the Chamorro (pork leg) with beans and rice. It was delicious! My co-diner had a rib eye done medium rare; it came with a dark pepper sauce that was especially good, baked potato and grilled vegetables. All their beef is imported from the USA. They made flour tortillas to order. Chips and salsas were served with a great pico de gallo and a mild green pepper salsa. They also served a House Salsa that came in a stone mortar with pestle. Inside was some salt, seasoning, a fresh, warm tomato and a pepper. Our server asked if we wanted it hot and if you decline he won't crush the pepper, just the tomato. This was warm and one of the nicer salsas I've had and something I've never seen here before. Cost was \$302 pesos including 4 beers and we were stuffed!

I'm sure many of you know more details than I do but from what I gathered there were original owners who built a fantastic reputation on service and quality followed by renters that didn't. The current owners seem genuinely dedicated to quality and service and we were asked to

specifically provide any "negative" comments we had, to Pablo. We really didn't have any! It was a great dining experience.

Pablo mentioned the Sunday brunch and our server, Raoul, gave us a flyer when we left. It is a **traditional buffet** for the whole family, **Sundays from 8:00am to 2:00pm**. Eggs, cereals, hot cakes, chilaquiles, menudo and various other dishes for \$85.00 pesos per person. Call **314 334-6667** for reservations. Currently open daily but they may close Mondays and Tuesdays so best to call to make sure.





THIS 'N' THAT...

by Vivian Molick

CHOCOLATE

"What is the meaning of life? All evidence to date suggests it's chocolate." ~Author Unknown

There is something so special about chocolate that the average person in the United States eats 10 pounds (4.5 kg) of it every year!

Chocolate has its beginning with a tree called the cacao tree (*Theobroma cacao*). This tree was discovered about 2,000 years ago in the tropical rainforest regions of Mexico, Central and South America, climates within 20 degrees north or south of the equator. In the rainforest the tallest trees can grow up to 150 feet and form an upper canopy, which shades smaller trees like the cacao beneath them in what is called the 'understory'. The tree produces a fruit (pod) about the size of a small pineapple throughout the year. The pod contains 20-50 almond-sized seeds, sometimes called *cocoa beans*, which are very bitter, embedded in a sweet pulp. These pods have very thick exteriors and don't open naturally to release their own seeds and must rely on the sweet pulp to lure birds and mammals to pierce this tough skin. When they do, they spit out the bitter-tasting seeds, which fall to the ground and are then able to sprout new cacao trees.



Cacao trees flower continuously once they reach maturity (approximately 5 years). The delicate, waxy pink or white five-petaled blossoms are found in small clusters on the trunks and lower branches of the tree. This phenomenon is called *cauliflory*, and is quite different from other trees that produce their flowers and fruit only on the tips of the smallest branches.

The earliest known people to have discovered the secret of cacao were the Classic Period Maya (250-900AD) by evidence of chocolate in glyphs and actual remains in ancient vessels... and so the history of chocolate begins.

The Maya and their ancestors in Mesoamerica harvested the fruit (pods), fermented the seeds, roasted them and ground them into a paste. When mixed with water, chili peppers, cornmeal, and other ingredients, this paste made a frothy, spicy chocolate drink by pouring it back and forth between two containers. Chocolate was a treasured Maya treat and many artifacts are painted with scenes of people pouring and enjoying it. Although it has been used as a drink throughout history, the beans were also used as currency. The beans were still used as currency in parts of Latin America until the 19th century.

The Aztecs conquered the Maya and Cortez conquered the Aztecs, but kept using cacao as currency. Europe's first contact with chocolate came during the conquest of Mexico in 1521. The Spaniards recognized the value attached to cacao and observed the Aztec custom of drinking chocolate. (It is believed that the word "chocolate" came from the Eastern Nahuatl word "chicolatl" meaning *beaten drink*.) The Spanish began to ship cacao seeds back home and as an expensive import, chocolate remained an elite beverage and status symbol for Europe's upper classes for approximately 300 years. When the Spanish drank it, they doctored up the bitter brew with cinnamon and other spices, began sweetening it with sugar, and also started to heat it (... sweet hot chocolate was born). Other than adding sugar, little had changed in the preparation of chocolate,



although the Spaniards made frothing easier by using a little stick called a *molinillo* (you would place it between your palms and whirl to create the froth... sounds suspiciously close to our café mochas of today).



Eventually, the rest of Europe discovered what they were missing. As chocolate spread throughout Europe, the demand became greater. To keep up with the demand, plantations sprung up, and thousands of people were enslaved to produce the cacao. Instead of relying on the Spanish, the British, the Dutch, and the French started their own plantations, taking cacao out of Central America and planting it in their own territories. Up to this point, most chocolate was made from the variety of cacao called *criollo*. But because *forastero* beans are easier to grow (though they don't taste as good), they were the ones shipped around the globe, marking another turning point in chocolate history. Today, 90% of cacao is of the *forastero* type.

As prices went down, chocolate became increasingly available to the common person. In the early 1800s, a Dutchman named Coenrad Van Houten, created the cocoa press, which smashed the beans and expelled the cocoa butter (fat), leaving just the cocoa behind. He also came up with a way to wash the cocoa in an alkali solution (hence "Dutch" cocoa) to make it easier to mix with water. In the 1850s, Englishman Joseph Fry changed the consistency of chocolate by adding more cocoa butter, instead of hot water, to cocoa powder and sugar.... the world's first **solid** chocolate made its debut. In 1875 Daniel Peter and Henri Nestle added condensed milk to solid chocolate, creating a milk chocolate bar. In 1879 Swiss man Rudolphe Lindt invented the conch, a machine that rotated and mixed chocolate to a perfectly smooth consistency. By 1907 Milton Hershey's factory was putting out 33 million kisses per day. The popularity of candy bars really skyrocketed after World War I, when chocolate was part of every U.S. soldier's rations.

For many years chocolate has been more than a food; it

has served as a health and beauty aid also. *Theobromine*, a chemical found in chocolate, enlarges blood vessels and is used to treat high blood pressure. In addition, cocoa butter is used in cosmetics and ointments – even as a coating for pills. Although it has many health benefits for humans, the *theobromine* can be toxic to some animals, especially dogs and cats.

Chocolate still plays a part in festive celebrations; like Hanukkah, Christmas, and Easter. In Mexico particularly, chocolate is used to make offerings during the 'Day of the Dead' festival, a time for remembering loved ones who have died.

"Chocolate doesn't make the world go 'round, but it sure makes the trip worthwhile!" ~Author Unknown

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Not to my taste!

by Tommy Clarkson

In the words of an experienced wine connoisseur, they might “present well” and have “a subtle, earthy, bouquet” but these are definitely not delights for human consumption. Of what do we speak? Well, interestingly these are well known plants and flowers (as well as fruits and vegetables) of our households and gardens. In this but brief venue – and at the risk of taking on the nickname “Toxicity Tom” – we’ll discuss but a few that are now growing in my gardens!

Starting with the ubiquitous **Dieffenbachia**, many are surprised to learn that all of its parts are poisonous and can cause intense burning, irritation, and immobility of the tongue, mouth, and throat thwarting the ability to speak - hence its other name “Dumb Cane” - with swelling so severe as to block breathing and even leading to death.

How beautiful are those flowers of the **Allamanda** or **Golden Trumpet**, but a salad thereof would not be wise as the milky sap that oozes out when the broken stems can irritate the skin.

A clarification. Cycasin is not “a comment made as a mocking or deriding remark.” It is a substance found in cycads. The **Sago Palm** is such a plant. No surprise here but Cycasin is not in any of our major food groups! If you or your pet munches on any part (most specifically the seeds) of this plant Palm expect vomiting, increased thirst, hemorrhagic gastroenteritis, bruising, melena, icterus, coagulopathy (definitely a trio to avoid), liver damage and/or failure and - perhaps the biggest injury of them all – death!

What of the **Desert Rose**? Regular readers of my column “Planting Roots in Mexico” will remember that natives from the areas where this plant originated - arid areas of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Madagascar - sometimes dip their weapons points in its highly toxic sap so as to make fast work of killing their game. Suffice it to say that a lunch of this plant ain’t good for ya’!

Many of we southern ex-pats have at least one **Ficus Tree** of one kind or another All of its 800 varieties have a toxic, milky sap in its leaves and stems that makes your skin itch and puff up. One might one say that the “Ficus can **** us!” I certainly wouldn’t - but someone might!



Golden Trumpet

I’ve a number of varieties of **Caladium** and **Elephant Ear** plants – two of my favorites. But, every part of all varieties of both of these common tropical plants can cause intense burning and irritation of the mouth and tongue. Death can occur if the base of the tongue swells enough to block the air passage of the throat.



Sago Palm

Lots of folks first came across **Anthurium** when visiting Hawaii. Though very pretty, ingestion of any part of these unique looking tropical plants could cause a painful burning, swelling and blistering sensation in one's mouth with the voice becoming hoarse and strained with a difficulty in swallowing.

We certainly use it. Many folks do in fact. That would be the natural gel of **Aloe** for sun or kitchen burns. However, this plant's gel, skin and other inner layers can irritate intestines upon ingestion. (And even for topical use, ensure that the plant's skin and yellow layer are fully cut away before using.)

What about **Amaryllis**? By now you well know the drill . . . eat 'em and suffer diarrhea, nausea, vomiting – but, actually, large quantities of the bulb must be eaten to fully bring on these symptoms.

Swiss-cheese plant or **Split-leaf Philodendron** are certainly neat looking tropical plants. Though, interestingly, the ripe fruit is edible, consumption of the leaves is not good! (In fact, laboratory mice died after being fed plant extracts.) Symptoms are immediate with loss of voice, blistering, hoarseness, irritation of the mouth.

By now, probably perceived as a “sour apple” by some, I next address a few of our common fruits and vegetables. Sticking to that just mentioned fruit, I'll be rather “hard core” relating that the seeds of **apples** actually contain small amounts of cyanide. And while a person won't die from eating the seeds of a single apple, they could certainly kill you if you ate enough of them.

While I appear to be picking on favorites, the pits of **cherries** are also poisonous and can cause gasping and prostration. However, their hardness make them hard to digest, so if a person accidentally swallows one, it could be found in the individual's stool the next day . . . but I'm not looking for it! The same goes for **peaches** and **plums**, though the pits are really too big to make swallowing them easy, with a person more apt to choke to death than die from poisoning!

Tomatoes. U'mmmmmm, I love 'em – ripe red or fried green! But if you've an inclination to eat them raw while still green you are likely to get stomach ache. Particularly poisonous are the leaves. In fact, I've read that in feudal Japan some slipped a tomato leaf into the salad of their enemies as a quick resolution of how to eliminate an enemy.

Another favorite of mine – and yes, I even love it raw –

is **rhubarb**. While the stems area a spectacular ingredient in one of the very best of pies, don't ☀️ the leaves as they contain oxalic acid salts and large amounts of is – consumed either raw or cooked - can lead to kidney problems, convulsions and coma, followed rapidly by death. We'll leave the negative aspects of Asparagus, Avocado, Black Walnut, Buckwheat, Kidney/ Lima/Butter Beans, Potatoes and several others for another day.

Bon appetit. But like your Mom warned, don't put everything you come across in your mouth!



Amaryllis



Anthurium



The Day of the Dead – El Día Los Muertos or Día de los Muertos

Terry Sovil

Aqui la eternidad empieza y es polvo aqui la mundanal grandeza. (Here the eternity begins and the worldly grandeur is dust.) - Sign over a cemetery entrance in Oaxaca City.

Oh boy!! An opportunity to learn about the culture and celebrations of my new home! From delighted to deflated as research brought a collision of “other” days and comparisons between them. What other days? Well: Halloween, All Saints Day, All Souls Day and Thanksgiving. All were mentioned as similar to The Day of the Dead. Some I rejected out of hand but there is significance in their varied origins and celebration dates.

Halloween. October 31. Roots in the Celtic festival of Samhain (“sow” – like a female pig and – “en”). There are connections in dates and themes. This celebration was moved by Western Christians (Catholic Church) to coincide with “All Saints Day”. Eastern Christians still celebrate it in the spring. The Celts started their day at sunset the night before so Samhain was the “Eve of All Hallows”. It marked the dark half of the year and a time when the dead walked among the living with the veil between them thin. Although rooted in Druid traditions, Halloween today is largely a secular event with nothing to tie it to The Day of the Dead. Mexico seems to like Halloween but probably more as an economic incentive.

All Saints Day. November 1, this is the Catholic Church “Solemnity of All Saints” also called “All Hallows” or “Hallowmas”. It is observed on November 1 in Western churches and the first Sunday after Pentecost in Eastern churches. It commemorates all the saints who have attained “beatific vision” in Heaven. There is a fundamental belief in a connection between those that have died that watch over and intercede with God on behalf of the living via their prayers.

All Souls Day. November 2, to commemorate the faithful departed. It is observed principally in the Catholic Church and the doctrine that a when a person dies and has not yet attained full sanctification and



perfection, required to enter Heaven, the sanctification is done in Purgatory. Officially “The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed”.

What about **Thanksgiving**? Unrelated year end harvest feast first celebrated with Native Americans. It was common among the Pueblo, Cherokee, Creek and others with ceremonial dances and celebrations of thanks long before they had a white immigrant problem.

Right, the headline does say **Day of the Dead**. Now you know what it’s not! Celebrated October 31 and November 2 this too was a celebration common in many Latin American countries. In Mexico it was celebrated in July/August but the Spaniards (Catholic Church) changed to the date to November 2 to coincide with All Souls Day. The indigenous people had been celebrating this for at least 3,000 years before the Spaniards arrived. Today it is called Día de los Muertos or Day of the Dead.

People don skull masks (calacas) and honor their deceased relatives. Sugar skulls, with the name of a dead person, are eaten by a relative or friend. The tradition of skulls comes from the Aztecs who kept skulls as trophies and displayed them during rituals. The skulls symbolize death and rebirth. They were used to honor the dead whom the Aztecs believed came back to visit during the month-long ritual.

Originally celebrated on the ninth month of the Aztec Solar



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Day of the Dead • October 31 - November 2



was celebrated the entire month. Festivities were presided over by Mictecacihuatl, the goddess known as “Lady of the Dead” believed to have died at birth.

The Spaniards viewed death as the end of life but the natives viewed it as a continuation. Instead of fearing it, they embraced it. To them, life was a dream and only in death did they truly become awake. They honored duality as dynamic, not separating death from pain or wealth from poverty as in Western cultures. The Spaniards considered the ritual sacrilegious, barbaric and pagan and they tried to kill it. The tradition refused to die so it was moved to coincide with All Saints Day and All Souls Day (Nov 1 and 2).

The celebrations can vary depending on where you are. In rural Mexican people visit the cemetery where loved ones are buried. They decorate the sites with marigold flowers and candles. They bring toys for dead children and tequila for adults. They picnic by the gravesite with favorite foods of the deceased. Many build altars in their homes or places of work and dedicate them to their dead. The altars will contain photos, flowers, food and lit candles.

You get a reward for reading this far: DAY OF THE DEAD BREAD. It’s no joke! Get out and get some from a street vendor. Excellent!!



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We all have met 'em. . . 6

(Continued from the last issue, the following is the sixth installment of a slightly embellished and bit fictionalized account of an almost real event!:) by **Tommy Clarkson**

We all have met 'em. . .

. . . you know the sort, it may be a brother-in-law, next door neighbor or that particularly irritating high school bully badly who has gone badly to seed. Recently while flying home, trapped at an altitude of 39,000 feet, one such person sat next to me. The following is a continuation of this experience.

Hoping to steer our (rather one-sided) conversation to more equitable grounds I said that I'd brought aboard a nice sized submarine sandwich and, should he get hungry, he was welcome to part of it.

With a disdainful "harumpf", my seatmate responded, "Never touch wheat flour products. I prefer the 'Grain of the Gods', the staple in the pre-Columbian Aztecs' diets - amaranth. I grow my own, of course. Well, rather, my man Raul Suarez hand tills, plants, irrigates and harvests the amaranth grain from my rather remote, 100 hectare Mexican mountain fields. His wife Juanita grinds them in juatimata and then stores them in bags woven from hemp we also grow there.

With somewhat of an inferred self-deprecating guffaw, he continued, "Whereas the Aztec women made a mixture of ground amaranth, honey or human blood and fashioned the mixture into idols that were eaten as part of a ritualistic ceremony, I merely prepare my own haute cuisine with it." He added, as if by afterthought, "I'm, of course, a visiting culinary professor at the Sorbonne in Paris."

In virtually the same breath he continued, "But speaking of submarines, did I tell you of the time I commanded a Russian Akula Class nuclear sub, on an under the Arctic polar icecap mission?" But before I could respond he went on. "Yes, when my seven foot tall step brother Sergey Egorov (I quietly observed that, large egos must run in the family) who normally Captained the boat came down with a bad bout of Dengue fever they ask me if I'd mind taking the con for him."

On it went. "Indeed, after some eight months of being submerged, we surfaced 450 kilometers from the north pole. I went topside and, observing a pair of polar bears, went onto the ice floe to study them. The *Ursus*

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maritimus is, I'm sure you know, the world's largest land carnivore. And, while extremely ferocious to most of the human species, I telepathically communicated with them and we spent a most enjoyable couple of hours frolicking together before - ya' know - duty called." He paused, in apparent fond reflection of the purported event. . . but I caught him sneak a peek at me out of the corner of his eye as if to gauge my state of belief.

With my best poker face I strenuously strove to suppress my face from showing any manner of my thoughts.

He must have taken my silence as supportive endorsement in that he went on, "but that was nothing compared to the month I lived with a Sasquatch family in the Pacific Northwest. The dominant male - I called him Bertram - was much as you have heard. He was

large, dark reddish hair, somewhat ape-like, around 9 ½ feet tall and weighed well in excess of 500 pounds and thoroughly loved to arm wrestle with me . . . which was pretty much an even draw between us as I recall."

I looked at him to see if there was any sense of jocularly in this story, but his manner of pompous pontification indicated no. He continued, "He had wonderful large, expressive eyes below a somewhat pronounced brow ridge and a large, low-set forehead; with the top of the head rather rounded and crested like the sagittal crest of a male gorilla. He did not, as I have often heard claimed, exude any strong, unpleasant smell. To me his musk was more that of a combination of wild bayberries, sautéed Chanterelle Mushrooms, and Old Spice After Shave.

Noncommittally, I responded, "Interesting."

"Of course," he answered, "but let me tell you about my little girl, Lionora. She's my pet Liger - a cross between a male lion and a female tiger, weighs a little under 2,000 pounds and is over 10 feet in length. As docile as your grandmother's kitty she sleeps in my bed but is a bit of a hog of it as she snuggles next to me."

Once again, I was speechless.

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Speak Nautical?

Bet you do!

by Terry Sovil

Do you **make way**? This means the ship is moving. Making **headway** means forward movement and **sternway** means backing up. So if you are **making headway** you are making forward progress on that big project. You are also probably **full steam ahead** or perhaps even experiencing **smooth sailing**.

My mother used to say "there is always something to take the joy out of life". So if you see problems ahead you may have to **weather a storm**. If it's really rough you will look for **safe harbor** where you can anchor so you don't end up **on the rocks**. Sometimes you are simply at the **end of your rope** (no more anchor line). While in that safe harbor you hope that no other boats get to close or drag their anchor. If they do you could well end up **running afoul** of them meaning your anchor lines have tangled and you may possibly collide. If that happens you may have **run afoul of the law** and hopefully have insurance.

If you can't get your anchors and anchor line untangled and the tide starts to go out you could well be left **high and dry** on the mud flats or perhaps a reef. If your stress level is high enough or you work too hard you may need to see your doctor and hopefully get a **clean bill of health**. During the age of sail this certified that the crew and their previous port were free from plague, cholera and epidemics.

One of my favorite expressions is that the "between the dream and deed lie **the doldrums**" which are stretches of ocean infamous for light winds so you can't sail. You could lie for days or even weeks waiting for the wind to pick up. If you had a good supply of rum aboard the Captain may provide an extra ration and some of the crew could end up **three sheets to the wind**. A sheet is a nautical term for the lines that control tension on the big square sails on old sailing ships. On a 3-masted ship if all the sheets are loose the sails flap uselessly in the wind. The ship drifts out of control until it is under control again.

Being **three sheets to the wind** could also mean you quietly saved several days ration of rum and drank them all at once leaving you feeling **groggy**. You weren't supposed to do this so it was insubordination. British Admiral Edward Vernon had daily rum rations

diluted with water to help avoid drunken sailors. He was called "Old Grog" because of a coat he always wore made of program. Sailors ended up drinking **grog** and if they drank too much they felt **groggy**. Today, overly tired or lightheaded like you just woke up.

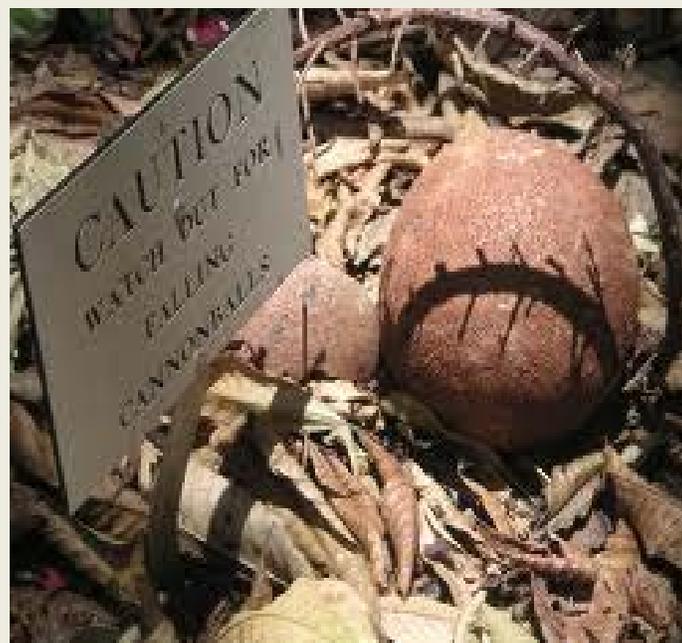
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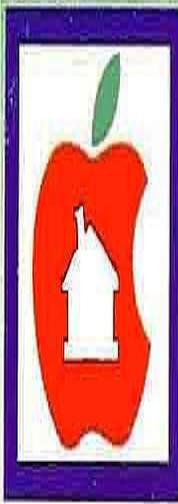
If you wake up feeling more than **groggy** it could be that you hadn't had too much rum but were sincerely **under the weather** or ill and feeling sick. A sailor assigned to keep watch on the windward bow (the front of the ship facing into the wind) would be subjected to all the wind and the waves crashing over the bow. This unpleasant duty was called being **under the weather** as sometimes sailors would fall ill and die from this duty.





If you were to die on duty your family and fellow crewmembers could **be taken aback**. Today this means surprised in a bad way. During the days of sail you expected the wind to be at an angle that kept the boat moving forward. If you got headed too much in the direction of the wind it would could strike the front of the sails instead of the rear. If the wind were strong enough it could STOP your ship like good brakes but it could also break the entire mast that the sail was on. This was dangerous and startling. You don't want to be taken **aback**.

Nor do you want to be in a cold climate where it's cold enough to **freeze the balls off a brass monkey**. This is NOT what you imagine it is. During the age of sail cannon balls were stacked in a brass tray. If cold enough the brass tray would contract and the balls would roll free.



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MANFRED AND THE WINNING HAND



Tommy Clarkson

The hands had been dealt. All but one of the eight players stayed in the hand after the down cards had been dealt and initial bets made. The flop hit the board. I peered at my "Pocket Queens" - one of clubs the other of spades. Maintaining my best poker face - I "checked" to see who might bet. At that moment, unexpected help arrived. It came as in the form of Manfred - a mantis of the praying nature. (But I was to learn his name later.)

He landed on my left hand, clearly so as to best view my hand. I looked at him in amazement. He eyed the cards calmly, causally and then swiveled his head to whisper - so only I could hear - "Good hole cards. Good check. Let's consider our options, wait until the flop and then, if all looks good, we'll set a trap."

Clearly here was a knowledgeable, cool player of Texas Hold 'em! And - lo and behold - his counsel was prophetic as with the flop came a Queen of clubs, a nine of hearts and a ten of clubs. My new found partner, still perched on my left forefinger, casually, turned his head a full 180 degrees and murmured, "Good. We got a set (meaning three of a kind) Let's play the line out a bit."

So we checked, the guy, two players to my left, bet the amount of the pot, two people folded while the four others and I called. Six players left now, and the pot was building.

The board paired with the "turn" as a nine of clubs hit. I'd hit a full house. My new found partner quietly

counseled, "First round, let's let 'em bet. Lie in the weeds. Then we'll hook 'em." This round of bets brought about a bet, a raise, and a re-raise. All six stayed in. Then the river - that last card in the hand that has made and destroyed so many "potentials." It was a Jack of hearts.

The ensuing betting indicated that, probably, there was, at least, a couple straights and/or flushes in play. This last round opened with a healthy bet, a raise, a re-raise and "all in" bet followed for three more, two players folded and I called the "all in" bet. My buddy flew up to my shoulder and in barely concealed glee quietly chortled, "We got 'em."

Show down and sure enough, there were two flushes - one King high and the other Queen high with "pocket cards" of a three and four of clubs. The other two both had straights - one ace high the other Queen high. The fifth player meekly showed her meager - compared to the other hands - set of nines. . . normally a great hand!

My full house won! Manfred leapt high and flew around the table several times, buzzing the other players heads, then returned to land on my shoulder again and, burbling with excitement, exclaimed, "Good job Man. Way to play those cards!" It was at this point that he introduced himself and - me folding a three/six off suit with the next hand, we entered into a conversation when I opened it up by inquiring "So, tell me about yourself."



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