



PART QUATRO NEW STUFF N MAZATLAN

Hey, great news! There's internet in Mazatlan. Oops, bad news. It doesn't work. In keeping with virtually every other important social or political development here, there are rusted Ford Pintos and Chevy Vegas roaring up and down the streets with big black 60" loudspeakers mounted on the roofs (with nails) announcing that so-and-so store at so-and-so address has WIRELESS HIGH SPEED INTERNET ACCESS!

No one seems to notice. They are all busy bumping into each other and pretending there are no other people but them here on earth. Even though it's the Christmas shopping season it seems to me like every single person truly believes that they are the only person on the planet. I think the loudspeaker car guys believe they are actually broadcasting their important messages to Mars.

So of course I sign up. Then I do a little 'due diligence'. Wireless? OF COURSE it's wireless. Why would they use wires? Wires cost money. Wires rust. Wires take... wires. Wireless is cool! The fact that the term 'wireless' actually means that there's some sort of implied radio signal being transmitted through the atmosphere into some sort of electronic receiver has totally alluded the organizers of this new system. Or perhaps not. In any event, the system is certainly wireless. I can attest to this. No wires anywhere. No service anywhere. Brilliant!

I go into the Marina The Cid office to inquire about the possible reason that my new 'wireless' internet connection is not working. Gladys, the somewhat confused looking secretary, shrugs. "Not working.," she says.

"Really? Why not.?" I ask.

"Not working," she replies. And shrugs again.

"When do you think it will be working?" I ask with a smile.

Another shrug. "Maybe later. Siesta."

"When does siesta end?" I ask, noticing that it is already 4:30pm.

She shrugs. "When it ends. Maybe later."

But the good part is that I now have a wireless internet connection. No wires, no internet. I think I like this. I think I'll bring this concept back to the states with me. Less spam to deal with. No internet, no spam. Maybe they aren't so dumb after all.

Hey more great news: I discovered a dedicated bike path today. Really! Best of all there's not much chance that someone in a car will try to use it as a shortcut (at least until Sunday when the Tequila worship ceremony begins anew). So that's the good news. Perhaps the less-than-good news is that it is only 14" wide (I don't know what that is in centigrade) and lined with rusty barbed wire on either side. To keep out the cars, I suppose. And perhaps bikes too.

It certainly makes for quite an interesting challenge, I'll tell you, especially in light of the fact that the 'bike path' ends occasionally. Quite abruptly, in fact. Here I am cruising along at a reasonable pace (okay, perhaps a bit fast but my theory is that the faster you get through these kinds of things, the sooner you can begin drinking heavily in order to forget that you have just been riding a bicycle through a 14" wide maze of rusty barbed wire for several miles) when suddenly there is no more bike path. It ends in a drop of around 28 inches (I don't know what that is in liters) for several feet, then begins again with another 28 inch step—this time up rather than down.

Now if I was Mexican I would either, 1) not notice this; 2) not care about this; or, 3) not notice this. But being not Mexican, I notice. I care. I go flying over the drop and crash headlong into the two-foot high concrete wall at the other side of the abyss. Good clean fun.

I'm sure that a 'good' rider with a 'good' bike and a 'suit of armor' made of 'kevlar' wouldn't mind this situation. But I, in my 't-shirt' and 'flip-flops', am not made of 'kevlar'. So I decide that it is perhaps less dangerous to ride out in the highway than on the 'bike path'. But I like their attitude. Forward thinking. Environmentally conscious. Even if they would notice. Or care. Which they don't.

And more good news! The fine drivers here in Mazatlan have discovered the horn! The car, horn, that is. But not just *any* car horn, oh no. Actually, it isn't a car horn at all. Car horns are, after all, so..... usual. So the ingenious and musical people of Mazatlan have instead adapted the car alarm as their horn. But wait—there's more!

You know how those car horns have all sorts of different noises they make? First there's the beep-beep-beep, then the wah-wah-wah, then the heehaw-heehaw, then, of course, the obligatory World War II Nazi death siren that, thanks to the Doppler effect, drops an octave when the ambulance goes by. Well those clever Mexicans have found a way to separate those sounds and hook them up to different switches somewhere in their car. So depending on how many girls are standing on the street corner, the can play a

different serenade of various car alarm sounds to indicate their level of enthusiasm for the women.

Now I don't know about you, but in my somewhat limited experience, women I have seen around the world are not generally very impressed by this sort of behavior (or noise). I mean, what sort of women would think, "Wow, that's a really cool noise coming from that rusty 1981 Plymouth Valiant. I think I'd like to sleep with that guy."

But just as the Mexicans seem to be totally unaware that there is anyone else around but them, so too is the average 18-25 year-old male driver absolutely convinced that by having his car emanate all sorts of loud, obnoxious sounds (and lights) that this will surely attract women. Perhaps it's just an evolutionary thing. Or maybe it actually works; how the hell do I know. I mean, the population here is growing 10% a year so these people must be doing *some* messing around!

And, if you can believe this, there's even *more* good news! Here in Mazatlan there's a WalMart! Not only that (I can hardly hold back my excitement), there's also a Sam's Club, an Office Depot, Radio Shack, Burger King, Subway and a Pollo Loco. A Pollo Loco is similar to a Kentucky Fried Chicken except that there is actually chicken in the food. I know this because when I picked my way through a plate of 'chicken' I found a foot. And a beak. Both were quite tasty, by the way.

There is also a Senior Froggs here. Actually, there are at least a dozen Senior Froggs, each one claiming to be the 'official' Senior Frogg store. Now just what the heck is a Senior Frogg? I hear you asking. Good question. One I asked myself several times. So I went inside one to find out. And I still have no idea. I think it is a brand looking for a product.

The logo is a strange looking mutated frog creature that would seem to appeal to the under-eight-year-old crowd. Like that big pink dinosaur, what's his name. But inside the store are all sorts of...t-shirts and things. Flip-flops. Shorts. Towels. Other junk. There seems to be a lot of excitement surrounding these stores; at least it would appear that way if you heard the screeching, blaring 'music' coming from inside them. But I never really saw anyone going inside. So my theory is that it's a drug smuggling, money laundering, child porn operation! What a perfect cover: a big, green, smiling frog. Who would ever suspect that this was the base for a world-wide crime syndicate? Either that or they sell one hell of a pile of t-shirts. Either way, it's still a mystery to me.

Speaking of oblivion, now that my bike is 'up-and-running', I've been cruising the streets of Mazatlan daily, making ever wider circles into the countryside. Cruising back into town the other day after making a far-and-wide tour to the east of town, I was riding down the main beach road through town when I struck upon an idea for an experiment. Would, I pondered, a 'Policia' care if I rode with wild abandon through town?

Coming to the first stop light, I noticed a couple of policemen standing on the corner. Ha! Perfect. I weaved my way between the cars that were stopped at the light and flew out into the intersection without looking, slowing down, signaling.... or caring. I rode within a foot (I'm not sure what this is in kilometers) of the cop who was in charge of this particular intersection without him taking the slightest notice of me. Nothing. Nada. Not a blink. I was totally invisible. Even if he had seen me (which he didn't) and even if he cared (which he didn't), it was another one of those interesting situations where things were happening all around but no one seemed to care.

I tried the same stunt at another intersection... and another. Rules? We don't need no stinking rules! In one intersection I went flying out into the middle, barely avoiding the oncoming traffic (that never saw me, of course), and then did a 360 right around the cop just to get a tiny rise out of him. Nothing. Me, the invisible guy. Maybe that's it—anyone riding my bike is invisible! Cool!

Just then I heard another of those 'horns' blow. But this time it was coming from a real police car. Thinking that there was some real action about to happen, I immediately gave chase to the police car. As I slammed on my brakes to avoid piling into the back bumper of the cop-car, I realized that it wasn't moving. Then I saw the three rather well-endowed women crossing the street in front of the police car. Siren blaring. Lights flashing. Badges shining. Tooth showing.

Man, these guys have it made! Tomorrow I'm going straight down to the bike shop and see if Fernando can rig me up one of these alarms on my bike. Maybe then someone will notice me.

PART SINKO BACK TO SEA

I think I have had enough of land for a while. It's just so.... hard. And dirty. Out at sea the wind makes my boat go forward (assuming it's not coming right straight onto my nose—which, of course, it is most of the time). Here on land the wind does nothing but transport dirt from one place to another. In Mazatlan it seems to transport it directly from the giant foundation hole that a big backhoe is digging for yet another high-rise time-share just on the other side of the marina, to my boat. Every fifteen minutes there is a fine layer of red dirt covering everything.

Out on the ocean the fine layer covering everything is called salt. It is similar to dirt but it is highly corrosive and you can't see it. It's God's way of suckering seemingly normal, reasonable people (such as myself) into buying a boat: it's so.... *clean* out there!

I load my new crew, two hundred tacos, five cases of beer, ten bottles of tequila, five kilos of limes (I don't know what that is in fathoms) and a banana on board and on a still, sunny afternoon we head to sea.

As I'm stowing our provisions (known on land as putting the groceries away but on a boat you always have to say things in a different and more confusing way so that land lubbers (land people) will think you are very special and cool because you can speak in 'boat talk'), the fellow on the next dock waves to me. "Heading out?" he asks.

"Sure am, a bit later this afternoon."

"Really? It's Friday...."

"Why yes, now that I think of it, it is Friday."

"But that's.... unlucky...."

"Well yes, I've heard that it is, but don't worry, I've got it covered. I have a banana on board."

"But that's even more unlucky," he said incredulously.

"Well, the way I look at it, two pieces of bad luck should equal one piece of good luck. The 'new' math, you know. Calculus. I've been studying these things."

"Well I hope it all goes okay." He shook his head and disappeared inside his small, wooden sailboat, presumably to send an all-points-bulletin radio announcement to all the

other *real* sailors in Mazatlan that there was a crazy guy who was heading out for an overnight passage *on a FRIDAY*. Geesh—how scary is THAT!

We fire up the motors and head out into the ocean. Of course the wind that has been transporting several tons of red dirt onto my boat for the past week has now dissipated. Completely. The sea is a rolling mirror and we are forced to motor and start drinking beer. It is a law, of course, that you have to drink beer on a motor boat. The fact that I have sails is irrelevant in Section 6, Chapter 14 of the M.A.C. (Mariners Alcohol Code); if I am motoring, I must drink. Since I'm in a foreign country I don't want to disobey the rules, so I start right in.

We weave our way through a couple dozen giant, rusting shrimp boats that are wandering around just off the Mazatlan coast. What the hell will we do if we run into a maze of these tonight, I ponder. Since I don't have an answer, I decide not to think about it and the problem will go away. Poof!

By 6pm we're in total darkness. Ink black. An hour later the sky is dotted with a billion twinkling stars which are mirrored on the sea. There is no clear definition between the ocean and the sky and as we travel into the void the good ship Jangada resembles the starship Enterprise, boldly going where no man has gone before.

At eight o'clock we turn on the radar, set the autopilot, cook a big dinner and sit outside watching the sky scorched every few minutes with a blazing shooting star. Private fireworks. At nine we discuss who will take which watch. When no clear consensus is arrived at, we decide to drink tequila and watch a few episodes of Seinfeld instead: Art and Chris brought the entire 'Season Five' DVD collection. We sit inside and giggle as Kramer comes flying through the apartment door with a different facial expression episode after episode.

Finally everyone drifts off to their cabins to nap and I am left in the saloon to watch the radar, chartplotter and several other important instruments and gauges that I'm not sure what they do. But as long as there aren't any sirens going off everything seems fine. Truly, ignorance is bliss. I am blissful. I doze occasionally, waking every twenty minutes to make sure we're still moving and not about to impale Jangada into an obstacle such as a 600' cruise ship or sixty ton whale.

At 6am it starts getting light and we are all still alive. HA! Cheated death again! And we're still moving and actually still going in the right direction. I have figured out how to use my new chartplotter software and it says that we'll be arriving at Isla Isabel, ninety-five miles from where we started, in a few hours. Cool! Slowly everyone gets up and we wrangle up a big breakfast as Jangada dances along in ten knots of wind off our stern (sailing term meaning small brown bird.... no wait, that's *tern*. Stern has an 's' in front of it. I don't know what the hell it means).

Around two o'clock we drop anchor behind a big rock blob that juts out of the water a couple hundred yards (434 kilograms) east of the island. There's another big cat anchored there and I figure we're in good company. I pull up in front of them just to be sure they understand who's in charge here. In yachting there is a very important anchoring hierarchy that establishes your importance in the anchorage. You always want to be the boat at the front of the pack so that if your anchor drags at 3am and you go slamming into the boat behind you'll be able to grab on and stop yourself before you drift into anything hard, like land. Better to say "Oops, sorry," rather than "Hey – you hit my boat!!" I always say.

A quick dinghy ride to shore where we explore Isla Isabel National Park (a one-acre preserve of a thousand squawking, stinking frigate birds, five hundred huge iguanas, and a

crumbling, half-built concrete 'Park Headquarters' building that the local fishermen have been using for cleaning fish and storing nets for the past decade).

I wander over to one of the dilapidated fishing huts and peek inside where I find two guys cooking tortillas on the side of a big tin can that they have filled with burning....

Something. I can't tell if it is wet leaves or birdshit, but it stinks. "Pescado?" I inquire.

They look at me quizzically. "No, tortilla."

"Ha ha. No amigos, vende pescado?"

"Ohhhh... si, si, si!"

We negotiate for three big fish—he tells me the name but I can't understand it and who cares anyway—and he fillets them. Price? A t-shirt, two beers, a fishing lure and a hat. Everyone is happy. Whenever I show up with fresh fish someone is bound to ask me what I use for bait. T-shirts, I always tell them. Best bait there is. Never fails to catch a fish.

Back at Jangada we mix up a big jug of margaritas and watch the sunset. Finally we are sufficiently lubricated and we decided to hop into Tonto (the dinghy) and pay a Christmas eve visit to our neighbors in the big 54' cat anchored behind us. We pull up beside them and yell. "Ahoy maties. Are ye swabs on board?" I feel that a proper nautical greeting is always the best way to get things rolling.

We're invited on board for drinks and we tour their big boat which has all the trimmings: air conditioning, washer/dryer, bath tub, and enough electronics to run the space shuttle. I have boat envy, but only for the electronics. I could throw all that other stuff overboard. In fact, I rarely use the head on Jangada, preferring to hang my butt off the stern in the open air. That's what going to sea is all about: pollution! They have three bathrooms: no waiting.

We exchange tales and lies and after a few shots of Christmas tequila (guaranteeing you'll feel green and have red eyes in the morning) we weave our way back to Jangada, grill our fish and pass out.

We 'weigh anchor' (why, I don't really know—the guy at the anchor store said it weighed 44 pounds) and we're off heading southeast at 7am with a very light wind from our tail once again. Otto the Pilot takes over and we read, nap and relax (life is, obviously, very hard down here). Soon we are into a thick fog bank and I turn on the radar so that we can know in advanced that a big shrimp boat is about to mow us down. There are blips all over the screen but we never actually see a thing. I ready my airhorn and flippers.

An hour later we're out of the fog and the wind picks up to 15 knots. We're flying along under full main, surfing down the pacific swells at 8-10 knots, heading for San Blas. At 2pm we spot land and an hour later we're cruising down the coast heading for Matanchen Bay where we'll anchor. The bay is known for it's shallow sand bottom, a long sandy beach studded with palapas selling shrimp, oysters and beer, and no-see-ums. No-See-Ums are little flies that you can't see—thus the name. By this theory, I guess all other flies should be called See-Ums. We anchor out a mile from shore to be sure that the No-See-Ums can't see us, and we take Tonto to shore.

We land at the first bar we see, order beers and sit to watch the sunset, a giant red ball sinking into the horizon like a dying campfire. I chat with Pepé, the owner, sprinkling my non-existent Spanish liberally with "Buena Vista!" Soon Pepé and I are old friends (since we are both old).

We arrive back at Jangada just at dark, but something is different. As we approach I notice lots of flies around the back of the boom. Lots. Millions. Since I can clearly see

them I know at once that they are not No-See-Ums. These are definitely See-Ums. "Oh my God," Chris screams. "Bees!"

Sure enough, a wayward queen bee had decided, in our absence, to take her flock on vacation and move them from Mexico to inside Jangada's big blue sail cover. Although we had only been gone a couple hours they were already firmly established on board. A full-on swarm the size of a cat was massed in and around the end of the boom, rapidly building a home inside the folds of the sail. A few thousand more were moving their luggage and supplies on board as we watched (Chris in horror, me in amazement).

I climbed on board and got a big mop out of the forward locker and poised myself for the onslaught. WHAM! I gave the sail cover a violent whack with the mop and all hell broke loose. WHAM! I hit it again. SWOOSH! I gave the still swarming mass a big sweep and this seething mass of bees went sailing through the air and landed with a thud right in Tonto. The other ten thousand bees were in a frenzy and they were on a mission to find the guy with the mop who just annihilated their new seaside resort. I ran inside, grabbed my trusty (rusty with a 't' in front of it) can of RAID and prepared to do battle. Everyone else locked themselves in their cabins and prayed.

Leaping onto the boom I filled the air with the toxic mist as the airborne enemy came at me. Between the light wind and my pinpoint accuracy with an aerosol can, the bees didn't stand a chance. Soon there were a thousand dead bees in the cockpit, writhing in stunned convulsions. VICTORY! VICTORY WAS MINE!

Well, not totally. Soon the reinforcements arrived from land and began looking for the Jangada Queen Mother Bee. They poured into the sail cover and immediately began swarming. Every thirty seconds I'd smack it with the mop and a blob of bees would come flying out like pellets from a shotgun. But the main battle was over and as the breeze picked up they retreated to find a new home. Back in Mexico. I am, of course, expecting a Letter of Praise and Thanks from George Bush for my tireless efforts in protecting the sovereignty of United States property.

After a life-threatening battle like that, sleep comes easily I'll tell you.

Next day we take Tonto around the point and several miles up the San Cristoval River which proves to be rather salty the entire way. Local fishermen sitting in narrow wooden pongas wave as we pass them, our small wake rocking their unstable boats. I can't help but think of the same scenario in the U.S. where we would probably be chased, admonished and severely castigated by the Power Squadron (a quazi-para-military group of self-appointed guardians of the sacred 'Rules and Regulations' of boating who patrol the inland waterways of New Hampshire, Nebraska and other republican states) for endangering lives (as well as *not wearing life jackets!*). Here the only response is a friendly wave.

There are lots and lots of birds lining the river and if I was an ornithologist (someone who chases chickens, not to be confused with a pornithologist, who also chases chickens) I would have had the best day of my life. Since I am not one of those, I had more fun dodging the shallow sandbars that lay just inches beneath the surface so that the occupants of Tonto wouldn't go careening over the bow into the mud.

We tie Tonto at the military dock and I climb the ladder to greet two stern faced eighteen-year-olds clutching machine guns. "Buena vista!" I greet them. Then I hand each one a Snickers bar and tell them to guard Tonto with their lives (and rifles). They look at me blankly. "Buena vista!" I repeat, and we head into town. I feel secure.

San Blas is yet another dusty yet energetic Mexican town with a crumbling church and a lively town-square lined with vendors selling everything from fish to ceramic platters

in the center. Christmas week is in full swing and everyone is strolling around the square in their finest attire. Me too: I have a clean t-shirt.

We take a taxi up to yet another crumbling ruin at the top of a hill overlooking town. It is very famous, I am told. It was built long ago (hard to tell: everything I see looks like it was built long ago, even things that are perhaps five years old) and guarded the city from Iraqi insurgents. No wait, that's another old fort. It probably looks the same. Now maybe it's just me, but after I've seen one old, crumbling fort I feel like I've seen them all. I mean, what's the big deal? I can pretty much see the same thing anywhere on earth: Beirut, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Rome, Newark. Sorry, they all look the same to me. Now show me a thousand year old building that's still intact and I'm impressed! Heck, show me an apartment building that was built in 1970 and isn't a crumbling slum and I'll be impressed!

Next day we're up at 6am since we've decided to go all the way to Punta Mita in a day: 54 miles (at six grams per jibsheet). All along the way we're treated to a National Geographic Special of leaping whales, cavorting dolphins and manta rays, and huge sea turtles basking in the sun. I don't know why National Geographic gets all the credit for this stuff whenever it happens. Why isn't it a Pee Wee Herman Wildlife Special or Wayne Newton Ocean Spectacular? In any event, it's pretty cool—everywhere we look something is gong on.

Unfortunately the wind is light so we are motorsailing, with the big main occasionally catching big, soft, warm puffs of Pacific air. It's 88° and sunny, as always down here. Life is good. We arrive just before sunset and watch as the perfect waves peel onto the beach. Pretty big waves, perhaps eight foot faces. From the back they look large anyway. There's a narrow cut through a rock jetty where all the fishing boats are tied up. I watch as one, in perfectly oblivious Mexican style, heads in for the cut, gets caught from behind by a nice fat wave, goes careening into the rocks and flips, throwing the driver into the wash as the boat is driven onto the shore. All around are the other fishermen. No one seems to notice. I decide not to try to land Tonto and we enjoy dinner on board instead. Smart move, for once. Very unlike me.

In the morning the surf is still huge and we head off down into Bandaras Bay towards Puerto Vallarta. There are three large marinas in 'PV'; two just north in 'Nuevo Vallarta' and one big one right in the city. Of course I have not bothered to make a reservation; I mean come on—over 600 slips, surely there's one for me. Wrong. Christmas in PV is like the Super Bowl. Mardigras. Labor Day at the Hamptons. Packed. Overflowing. Chaos. The Mexicans fill it to capacity and then they keep on accepting reservations. Gotta make it while the making is good.

A nice 45' sailboat with a Canadian flag leaves the anchorage fifteen minutes before us heading south. I smell competition. We put up full sails and give chase. Twelve knots of wind; beam reach; cat vs. mono. No contest. We pull along side within twenty minutes and soon they are history. Yeah baby! USA! USA! USA! So what that I'm on a French boat in Mexico. USA! USA! USA! That's what I'm tawking about!

After pulling off that rousing show of superiority I get on the VHF radio to find us a slip. "Marina Vallarta, Marina Vallarta, this is Jangada."

"Yes Jangada, this is Marina Vallarta."

"Buena Vista, Marina Vallarta. We need a slip for a few days for a 42' catamaran. What can you offer us?"

"You want *what?*" [Sound of laughter in the background.]

"A dock. Do you have any docks available?"

“Ha ha, that is very funny Jangada. We have been booked up for six months. Try again in June.”

The same scenario at the other two marinas. We are now under full sail, ripping along at 8 knots.... going nowhere in particular. Ahhh... the sailing life. I decide that at least we should sail into the PV harbor, check it out, get some fuel and see what we can find.

Two hours later we approach the breakwater. Anchored just outside is the 8 million ton, 6,000 passenger cruise ship ‘Princess Royal’. Anchored just inside is the 9 million ton, 7,000 passenger cruise ship ‘Princess Even Royaler’. These boats are bigger than most cities in Vermont. Their shadow alone spans two time zones. [This, for once, is actually true since one side of PV is in Mountain time zone and the other side is in Central time zone. Where else but Mexico....]

Just around the corner the entrance to the 450 boat marina narrows. Considerably. In fact, it is barely wide enough for two jet skis to pass. This is amazing. There are at least 500 boats in here and if more than three or four want to get in or out there’s a complete traffic jam. At 21 feet wide we create our own traffic jam.

Around the corner comes a fishing boat, filled with all his family (several dozen), radio blaring at full volume, complete with enough whip antennas and rod holders that it resembles the space station, driven by—what else—a Mexican. He is coming straight at us with not the slightest indication that he sees us, will make any attempt to avoid us, or in any way cares. Totally oblivious. We start yelling. No reaction. I blow my airhorn which is loud enough to shatter windows. No reaction. Finally someone on shore yells at him in Spanish: “Hey José! There’s a 42’ sailboat in front of you.”

At the last possible instant José’s brain actually comprehends the situation and he turns, very slightly, just enough to miss Jangada by oh.... a few millimeters. We watch in amazement as the boat roars past us.

The inner harbor is sheer chaos. Picture rush hour in Manhattan with everyone driving boats. Jet skis, skiffs, dinghies, fishing pongas, sailboats from 20’-50’, powerboats from 20’ to 150’. Total, absolute, utter, complete chaos. We mull around in circles in the middle of all the madness for fifteen minutes while waiting for an opening at the fuel dock, finally squeeze in at the crumbling (surprise....) concrete pier, fill the tanks, and get the hell out of there.

Back out on the ocean we all breath a sigh of relief that we’re not staying in there. We hoist sails in the freshening breeze and head back north towards La Cruz, a pretty little bay just ten miles north that we had passed on the way to PV. On a whim I call to Marina Nuevo Vallarta as we pass by: “Hello, this is Jangada. Do you have any slips?”

“No, we are full. But you can tie up at the pilings along side the marina.”

“Really?”

“Sure. I will meet you at the end of dock ‘C’ and show you where.”

This is certainly a turn of events, and one that both surprises me.... and doesn’t surprise me. Things always seem to work out. We drop the sails and head in through the narrow, shallow channel. In front of us is a large fishing boat and just as he reaches the entrance a big swell turns into a breaking wave, picks him up, throws him sideways, and only the fact that he had two BIG motors saved his ass from a real thomping. We watch all this from just behind him. Oh shit!

But he had picked up the ‘set’ wave and we snuck in with no problem. Getting back out... now that might be a problem. Worry about that later.

We pull into the end of a big, crumbling (really?) concrete dock and are met by Juan, the friendly dockmaster. "Hey Juan, why can't we just stay here at the end of this dock? There's no one here.."

"It is reserved, senior."

"But there's no one here. When are they arriving?"

"I don't know, senior. Maybe in a few days."

"Well then why don't you let us stay here until they come, and then we'll move. I promise." This idea hadn't occurred to Juan and he had to think about it for a minute.

"Come on Juan, we'll move the minute someone comes. I *promise!*"

"Well....okay....if you will move I guess there is no problem..."

That's what I like about Mexicans: they *respect* the 'promise'. No wonder there are so many pregnant women here.

So here we are in Puerto Vallarta, a big bustling city of 250,000 people, along with another 5 million cruise ship tourists, 5 million hotel and condo tourists, and a few wayward yachties who are sailing around in circles looking for a slip. We're in one time zone and a hundred yards away is another one. No one has any idea what time it is. But then again, no one really cares. I know I sure don't. What time is it? Time for another cold cervésa!

New Year's eve is coming right up. I'm sure there will be tales to tell. Oh yeah.