

Fish Story – Part II

The sequel to Fish Story Part I, by Russ Sherwin, Copyright 2003

Who'da thunk it? After years of telling everyone we don't fish, we've turned into fisherpersons! Marty Goldsmith, owner of our sister Nordhavn *Gold Eagle*, asked us one day if we fished, and when I said no, he said, "How do you eat?" We always used to quip that we didn't fish because we were afraid we'd catch one. That was actually fairly close to the mark. I really had no idea what I might catch, or what to do with it once I did catch it. In the dim dark past of my childhood, I remember cleaning trout that my father and uncle had caught, but they were on the order of 2 to 3 pounds. Imagine my surprise and consternation when I found myself in possession of a 36-inch, 30-pound Yellowfin Tuna, my first "real" fish!

I'm getting a little ahead of the story though. Those of you who read the first "Fish Story" will remember our abortive attempt at fishing last year in the Sea of Cortez. That first (and last) attempt resulted in one Tuna-shaped fish that turned out to be a skipjack and was inedible. It was near the end of our season in Mexico, and for one reason or another, I didn't try again. This year, I was determined to do better. I had picked up a battered copy of "The Baja Catch", by Neil Kelly and Gene Kira, at a swap meet in Alameda. This is the definitive book about fishing inside and outside the Baja peninsula. It describes all the fish that are possible to catch, where they can be caught, and which ones are edible. I read the book cover to cover and narrowed it down to Tuna and Dorado. Those were the ones I wanted and were willing to catch.

So when we left Ensenada last December 2, I had my fishing line out with my trusty cedar plug and a number six hook dragging about 100 feet behind the boat. Eric on *Kiva* had assured me the year before that that's all you need to catch Tuna. I dragged it 450 miles and caught – nothing! At Isla San Benito, we stopped and visited with Jane and Jim aboard *Anticipation*. Jane spent time with me teaching me her fishing tricks and rigging a hand line for me out of clothesline, with a plastic squiddy thing on the end. Throw away the pole, Jane said, this is better. Jane gave me two of her favorite "lucky" lures and guaranteed – GUARANTEED! -- me that I would catch fish with this rig. Another 450 miles passed gently under the keel with no fish. Well, there was one very unfortunate, and very dead, mackerel that was found at the end of one day being dragged along on the end of the hand line, too small to even be noticed, but that doesn't count. Meantime, our buddy boat, *Cabaret*, had caught an Albacore. An Albacore! This is like finding diamonds! This is the top of the fishing mountain!

Anyway, *Four Seasons* successfully avoided any encounters with fish all the way to Los Frailes anchorage, about 45 miles up the inside of the Sea of Cortez from Cabo San Lucas, our jumping off point for the 160 mile crossing to Mazatlan. By this time, though, my armament had grown. I had my trusty (rusty?) cedar plug, the pole, 300 yards of new 20# test line, the hand line, two of Jane's lures and undaunted enthusiasm. On the morning of December 15, we set out from Los Frailes 250 miles to Mazatlan in sloppy seas and 15 to 20 knot winds. I was fishing. Fishing, it turns out, is easy. You just put out a line, and when it gets dark, you pull it in. Next morning, you put it out again. There's no work to it because nothing ever bites it. I had given up on the hand line and reverted to the pole. I had one of Jane's lucky lures on. Suddenly, the sea behind the boat exploded and the line began screaming off the reel at a

blistering pace. There was a fish, a very large fish, jumping six feet in the air on the end of the line. I had never seen a Dorado in my life, but according to the picture in my book, this was unmistakably a Dorado, also called Mahi-mahi.

Now, first of all, there are no Dorado in the Sea of Cortez in December. Every fisherman knows that; the water's too cold. But I had one, and these things are a thrill! They spin, they turn somersaults, they hula-hoop, they tail-walk, they dive, and the colors! Man, they are a neon display of green, blue and yellow that is unbelievable. Did I also mention they are big? They are big. I got this monster up to the back of the boat, but, having no net or gaff, I couldn't figure out how to get it ON the boat. I tried to just horse it up on the swim platform, and we did get a picture of it, but it gave one last, frantic shake and was gone. Sigh! Well, Jane's lucky lure sure works, I thought. So I threw it back out and in less than half an hour I had caught another Dorado. This one got away before I even started to reel it in, and then, right after that, another one bit and when I tried to reel him in, he too departed, this time with Jane's lucky lure.

The End