

## Counting pallets – by Jorgen Berg



"Peruvian Reefer"

"Peruvian Reefer" from ship owner J. Lauritzen in Denmark was sister ship to "Brazilian Reefer" and "Mexican Reefer" all built before 1960. They had 5 hatches, union purchase and were about 3700 dwt. They were beautiful looking ships running up to 23 knots. Crew 44.

In 1963 I was a 20 year old deck apprentice (navigation cadet) onboard the Danish ship "Peruvian Reefer" and we called Adelaide in South Australia to load a full load (almost 3.700 tons) of Apples to North Europe. It was my first conventional reefership out of many, so also my first loading of palletized fruit. But more importantly it was also my first call in an Australian port. We were lying alongside the wharf in Adelaide loading the pallets of apples into our 5 holds and tween decks with our union purchase cargo gear. I was on duty on the deck during loading and one of my tasks was to check with the onboard stevedore tally clerks and foremen to find how out many pallets we had loaded in any given time. At one early stage I stood beside the tally clerk for one of the hatches and heard him counting the many pallets coming in over the side in each lift ..."twenty f\*\*\*\*ing one"...."twenty f\*\*\*\*ing two".... twenty f\*\*\*\*ing three...and so on. I did not know what the word "f\*\*\*\*ing" meant and was too embarrassed to ask the tally clerk. But when I came into the deck office and had to tell also the stevedore foreman the result, I had to admit that there could be a problem because I did not know what "f\*\*\*\*ing" meant in the tally. The older stevedore foreman looked at this young obviously inexperienced cadet working with the Australian waterfront and said - well you are probably too young to know, but it seems that I need to tell and explain that to you anyway. You see, he said, the wharfies, the Australian waterside workers, have a very limited vocabulary about 600 words, so they need some other extra words in between what they say, and need them often, to make them not looking stupid and out of place with their mates. One of these word is "f\*\*\*\*ing", (which is also used in the red light district but ask your sailors about that), but here "f\*\*\*\*ing" is just such a filling word, adding no meaning to the word "twenty one" pallets, which are still just twenty one pallets of fruit! But it makes the wharfies feeling better!

It took us 32 days to load the ship in Adelaide without a strike. We ordered the pm shift every day, but when the stevedore supervisors for these pm shifts came out and looked up into the blue sky, they always found a little white cumulus cloud. That resulted in the condition "threatening rain" being declared for the pm shift and all the wharfies went back into the pubs for the rest of the day. We sailors, used to a similar loading of apples, in Montevideo, where it took maximum 5 days, had of course used all our money on the book in the red light district within the first 4 days. The only

place we then could go for the remaining 28 days, was to Crossroad Bowling in Adelaide to enjoy ourselves, if not the Seaman's Church had arranged football matches against other ships or entertained us in other ways. There were many days for such activities. It took many years before I occasionally used the work "f\*\*\*\*ing" myself and that was usually when telling mates at the back yard BBQ about this waterside event in Adelaide!