



# ***Our Banana Source***

## ***( A 2016 Costa Rica trip bookend )***

*by Carl Helmers*

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The next weekend, after our trip to Costa Rica in February 2016, we went to “our” Wegman's in Pittsford, NY to get our weekly supply of bananas (and other groceries.) We found a final bookend for our trip when we noticed all these years, our bananas come from a source in Costa Rica:



I did a small amount of Google research after writing my article about our 2016 trip to Costa Rica to conclude that our Wegmans Dole bananas in Western New York probably come by way of the [Dole Fresh Fruit Wilmington Container Terminal](#) from Costa Rica. Hence I just had to add this bookend!

This image from our typical current bunch of bananas brought back memories of an earlier trip that Jean and I had taken to San Diego in June 2013. I had accompanied Jean on her trip to San Diego California for that year's “*College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD)*” meeting.

That CPDD meeting was at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront hotel, which just happens to be immediately adjacent to the Dole San Diego Container Terminal docking slip, warehouse and quay side trailer parking lot in Diego. On Sunday June 13 Jean captured this image of me against the quay-side railing outside the Hilton San Diego Bayfront hotel with an obvious Dole container ship to my back on the other side of the slip:



Carl outside hotel opposite [Dole-California](#) at dock, 2013.06.13 @ 12:31:04 PDT

We had a room on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the Hilton San Diego Bayfront with a good view of the ship. I watched an incredibly busy port call from our “bird’s eye” view. Our room was directly above where I am standing in the above image captured just outside a hotel door. Here is what I could see when working at the desk in our room:



(GIMP processed to bring out dark foreground at bottom )

While working at *Hermes*, my *Mac Airbook* travel computer with its Apple variant of BSD Unix running Libre Office, I watched a fascinating aspect of commercial life in these United States. The [Dole California](#) had apparently just arrived about the same time we did. As I watched, the built in traveling crane on the ship first unloaded a full set of containers one by one onto bare trailer frames placed at a loading point on the dock by one of several port tractors.

The port tractor drivers would then park the (I assume) full trailer-containers of fresh cargo from the ship back in neat rows in the parking lot pending customs clearance:



The trailer staging area captured from elsewhere on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, off to the left of our view of the Dole California at the quay seen from our room.

After the in-bound containers individually cleared customs paperwork, long haul tractors and drivers would drive the containers to destinations elsewhere via the road network. The long haul truck drivers arrived at the quay with their presumably empty containers on trailer frames from their previous deliveries. They also parked the empty containers in separate neat rows. It took a day or so for the incoming full containers to be off-loaded onto road frames and parked one by one. I then watched the same process in reverse. The full set of presumably empty outbound containers parked on their trailer frames as neat rows in the terminal's lot were packed one by one aboard the ship.

I captured this next view to show the container unpacking/packing operation. For context I intentionally did not crop out the corner of an outdoor observation deck with guard rail on top of a lower floor wing of the hotel in the foreground of this image.



View from our Hilton 10th floor room

***For emphasis I used GIMP to enlarge the an ellipsoidal region around a port tractor & frame near the center of this image. The driver of this particular port tractor & road trailer frame was getting set to back the frame to a vacant temporary storage location with the other empty frames.***

After the ship's crane picked up an outgoing empty container, the a port tractor driver would store the now empty road frame in the frame parking area to the right in our in this scene.

The port tractors with drivers hitched then moved the empty outbound containers to the ship-side loading spot. The ship's crane lifted each container aboard the ship for stowing in below deck holds then later in three layers of containers above deck. After each container was moved onto the ship, its port tractor and driver would trundle the empty trailer frame back to its parking spot. Its driver unhitched the empty trailer frame, drove the port tractor to the next outbound empty container to load. This process continued as I worked in our room with desk overlooking the container terminal. By the end of Jean's time at the CPDD meeting, the Dole California had apparently been re-loaded with the outbound empty containers sans trailer frames which were parked awaiting the next ship.



To cap off the experience, we were able to watch this [Dole California](#) “banana boat” leave on Tuesday June 18, 2013, the last day of our trip to San Diego, from a totally different perspective:



Waiting for Water Taxi as the [Dole-California](#) leaves, 2013.06.18 @ 19:43:10 PDT.

I used GIMP to place “Hilton / San Diego / Bayfront” letters above and left our hotel's tower in this image. The [Dole California](#) had departed the Dole San Diego container terminal dock area on the right side of the hotel tower in the background of this scene. After backing out from its docking slip near the hotel into this harbor channel (probably with the aid of a harbor tugboat) the [Dole California](#) was , then turned ~90° to head under its own power sans tugboat out along the channel to the position where we captured this image. How did we arrange this sighting? Not by intention.

Seeing the [Dole California](#) in the harbor channel was a total surprise. Because we had a long trip back home from San Diego to Rochester NY via Chicago we decided to wait until the next day for a mid day travel rather than departing immediately on West coast to East coast “red-eye” flights overnight. Since Jean was finished with her CPDD business at about noon we had an afternoon and evening to ourselves.

Both Jean and I separately knew of the [Hotel Del Coronado](#) on Coronado Island. On that June 2013 trip we had perfect sunny weather in San Diego. We had no rental car on this simple trip to the Hilton San Diego Bayfront hotel on the mainland. Knowing that we wanted a two hour window for a leisurely dinner, would we be able to watch the sun set over the Pacific from dinner at the famed [1500 Ocean](#) restaurant in the [Hotel Del Coronado](#)? If we were to do so sans rental car we would take the Water Taxi to Coronado Island and back. We would have to allow time for the Water Taxi trips, then time for walking both ways across Coronado Island to the [Hotel Del Coronado](#) on the Pacific Ocean side of the island. Knowing that the last Water Taxi return trip was at 20:00, we would have to allow the time to walk back to the Water Taxi Landing after our sunset dinner before that last trip.

With sometimes evanescent WWW research from our hotel we managed to find that the distance from the Water Taxi Landing to the [Hotel Del Coronado](#) is 1.4 miles, an easy 28 minute 3 miles per hour walk through the residential neighborhood of Coronado Island before and after dinner:

[Walking distance, Hotel Del Coronado to Water Taxi Landing](#)

Since Jean and I typically walk at 3¼ mph or greater, the time would be even less. After making our dinner reservation, we headed to the Coronado Island via the Water Taxi at an appropriate time and began our dinner adventure.

Using such ad hoc early afternoon planning given the Water Taxi schedules and allowing time for dinner, we ended up back at the Water Taxi Landing that evening at about 19:35 PDT. Our conservative error margins certainly worked! We had arrived at the landing nearly a half hour ahead of that last departure.

While waiting for that day's last scheduled 20:00 PDT water taxi to take us back to the vicinity of our hotel, we all of a sudden realized that the *Dole California* had set sail for its source of Dole west coast bananas and probably other tropical fruit – perhaps to a harbor on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, given our recent discovery of the source of Dole east coast bananas. Before our 2016 Costa Rica trip and writing these articles, I had never recently looked at the banana labels to figure out their tropical origins. I somehow had the idea that our bananas came from Ecuador, a bit further South than Costa Rica. This trip certainly straightened me out.

With that the bookend is complete!

***Hyperlinks Caveat***

At and after the *epoch* of publishing the latest update of this article on my site, to the best of my knowledge all hyperlinks still point to the WWW pages I intend.

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