



## **Jailbreak**

### **(From Bus to Busted and Out Again)**

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“...see the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, I see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young Americans wandering around with rucksacks, going up to mountains to pray, making children laugh and old men glad, making young girls happy and old girls happier, all of ‘em Zen Lunatics who go about writing poems that happen to appear in their heads for no reason and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living creatures. “

Jack Kerouac – Dharma Bums”

### **Border Crossing**

I had no map, few directions, just an address for some medical students in Guadalajara when I boarded the Greyhound Bus at the dingy downtown Los Angeles terminal, headed for Nogales, AZ and the Mexico border. It was 1974 and the world was still burning, with the flames of Vietnam, inner city riots, counter- culture rebellion, international student protests, liberation movements, Nixon Empire, political assassinations and personal tumult (‘What’s it all mean Big Daddy? If you don’t know by now, then I can’t help

you'). I didn't need a Weatherman to know which way the wind blows. I had a Jack Kerouac tract packed in a sack on my back. That was the only compass

I needed at the time

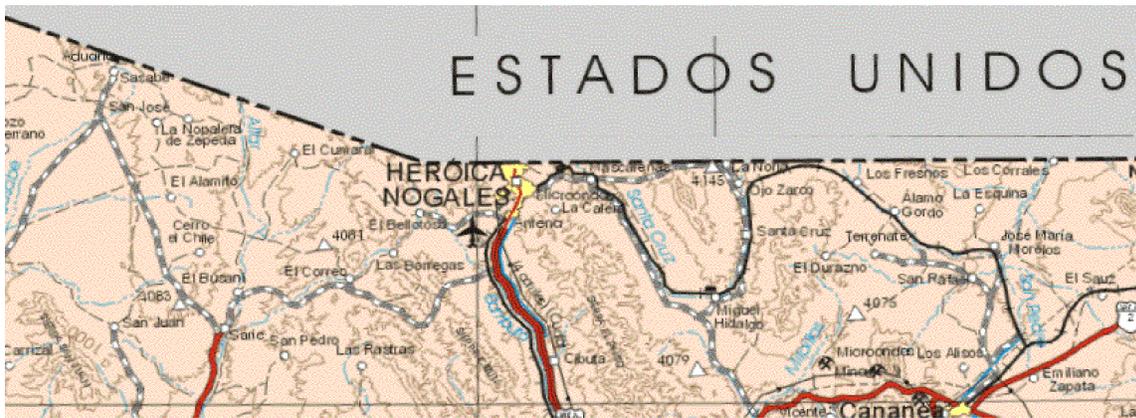
Through San Berdoo, Indio, Blythe, Phoenix, Mesa and Tucson this 12-hour bus trip offered a scenic highway tour complete with a soporific series of roadside signs along the way. To keep it all lively there were 4 guys singing some soulful doo-wop in the back of the bus –

Bo, bo (Doo doot, doo doo, doo, doo) There she goes (Doo doot, doo doo, doo, doo) There she goes (Doo doot, doo doo, doo, doo) Bo, bo (Doo doot, doo doo, doo, doo) Bo, bo (Doo doot, doo doo, doo, doo) - There goes my baby....<sup>1</sup>

At some way station before Phoenix I asked these brothers where they learned to sing so fine. "Man, we're the Drifters and we're performing in concert at Holloman AFB in Alamogordo, NM." Hey, I was drifting with the Drifters! After the singers transferred buses in Phoenix the Greyhound pushed on into the night and I was speaking Spanish (hablando Espanol) with a man (con un hombre) who would later guide me across the border (la frontera) at the Nogales, MX crossing (el crucero). "Just wave at the custom inspectors (los oficiales) and follow me he said". With my long hair, Kelty pack and guitar I crossed the border into Mexico Onwards and Upwards (Arriba y Adelante).

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<sup>1</sup> [THE DRIFTERS - THERE GOES MY BABY LYRICS](#)

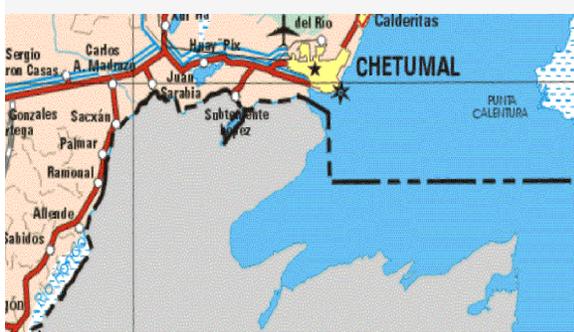


## Out of the Park

Two months later I was on another bus ride, this time with Zapatistas, campesinos, small children, farm animals and my travelling partner Tomas, over the Sierra Madres in southern Mexico en route from San Cristobal Las Casas (in Chiapas) to the mythical state of Yucatan (where ruins and magic awaited us). At a routine customs stop, I was greeted by a new group of oficiales with a different message. “Senor, you have no stamp on your visa. You are traveling in the country illegally. You need to go back to the customs office in Chetumal and have your papers put in order”. So much for the footloose, foolish and feckless drifter. Tomas and I agreed to meet up at the hotel in Palenque the next day and so I headed for the downtown area to get these travel papers fixed. Unfortunately, it was only 8:30am on Friday morning and the customs office was closed until 10am. At this cosmic crossroads 2 choices arose – breakfast or a round of Tai Chi Chuan in the city park. Fitness over food prevailed and I set my worldly goods down by yonder

tree to begin the Chinese calisthenics.

Somewhere between Cloud Hands and Grasp the Sparrows tail I caught sight of another official at some distance away in the park. He had decorations on his uniform like an army officer and he was staring me down. Two more thoughts drifted thru my clueless mind – “should I stop my Tai Chi or finish the 36 moves of the form. That decision was not mine to make. In a flash, an arm was locked around my throat and many hands were grabbing me on either side. In a backwards dragging motion (not a Tai Chi move) I was hauled into the local police car with backpack, guitar, and my travel papers. I had reached an unscheduled stop on my itinerary. In my heart of hearts I hoped that these bad guys would kick my ass and throw me out of town. No such luck. After traversing the city streets the police car came to a halt on a dusty city road and I was looking at a scene from Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid – a Mexican jail with a manned machine gun turret on the roof. This was not the 4-star hotel I had in mind. “Mota, mota, fume mota” (stoned hippy) growled the unsavory desk sergeant who took all my possessions and walked me into my weekend accommodation. The barred doors slammed shut and I’d reached my full-stop, dead end, you’re- not-leaving-any-time-soon destination.



## **Incomunicado**

Concrete floors, several inmates, and an awful smell greeted me in the cell. No furniture, just floors. No plumbing, just a bucket. A barred window with a view to nowhere. There were no people in the world who knew my whereabouts. My name was Lonesome. Welcome to Friday night in Chetumal.

Once there was a morning in my teenage surfing years that felt like this. I had just bought a new Makaha shortboard (7') and the swell was hitting the Malibu beach just right. I went out to chase the 4-5' waves when the big set hit.

Paddling until my arms fell off I cleared the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 breakers, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> and still another wave further out was rolling in. With all my strength I crested the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave, the nose of my board punching thru the height of the curl. And then...

backwards, backwards, backwards, over the falls I was carried into Mother Nature's washing machine. In that desperate instant I went limp, and tumbled with the white water churn. Disoriented and short of breath, I crawled to the

surface leaving my contact lenses in the depths of the sea. I was alive. That's all that mattered.

In this god-forsaken jail, the new enemy was boredom. By all rights, no one would talk to me through the weekend. My inmate companions were not the conversational types. To pass the time, I spoke with a guard and was given a marker and cardboard to craft a makeshift chess board and pieces.

With the little persuasion and few pesos I could afford, the jail keeper agreed to buy me a tin of sardines from across the street. Waiting on this food supplement I stared out of the cell gazing at what seemed to be the prison arsenal – a rack of breach-loading Carbine rifles left over from some bygone Mexican wars<sup>2</sup>. When dinner had passed and darkness rolled in, I curled up to sleep for the night.



### **Me Pusieron in Carcel Pero Tengo El Llave (They Put Me in Jail, But I Have the Key)**

With daybreak's first light my mind turned to other thoughts. I had

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.carbinesforcollectors.com/mex.html>

committed no crime to be put here and I should put on my 'Zen Thinking Cap' to dwell on this predicament. Propped upright on the concrete wall in a half-lotus position I meditated on Great Kanzeon (the Bodhisattva of Compassion)<sup>3</sup> from the

### **THE SCRIPTURE OF AVALOKITESHWARA BODHISATTVA**

When people hear His name, and see His form,  
And think of Him not vainly in their hearts,  
All forms of ill, in all the worlds, shall cease.  
If, wishing harm, an enemy should try to push  
another in a fiery pit,  
The victim should, on Kanzeon's great power, think, -  
and straightway that fiery pit shall be transformed  
into a cool and silver lake.



At least I would start the day with a braver heart. I thought of Steve McQueen, 'The Cooler King' in The Great Escape. That defiant American POW spent many days in solitary confinement with his grit, baseball glove and ball, bouncing his frustrations off the walls of his prison cell. In my reverie

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<sup>3</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guanyin>

I heard these words -

"There must be some kind of way out of here,"  
Said the joker to the thief,  
"There's too much confusion,  
I can't get no relief.

Imagine my surprise when later in the morning this apparition appeared.

Standing at the jail cell door a smattering of conversation came to me –

“Gringo, Yoga, Gringo, Yoga?” and around the corner from the sergeant’s desk

station came a man I had never met before. “Are you the Gringo who was

doing Yoga in the Park and got arrested”. “Sure,” I said”, “that was me”.

“Don’t worry” this stranger said, “I’ll have you out of here in an hour”. With

that I went back into the meditation posture and reached again for Great

Kanzeon’s life preserving power –

When tyrants persecute a man - and he stands at the place of execution  
Let him only think on Kanzeon's great power,- the  
executioner's sword will broken be.  
If, bound in chains, in prison, - let a man just  
think on Kanzeon's great holy power,  
At once the shackles will then set him free.

An hour later, the door opened, I was given my possessions (backpack, guitar, papers and Kerouac). The sergeant grumbled a gruff apology and I walked into the sunlight, accompanied by my new-found friend.

## **Freedom**

“My name is Mike. This is my girlfriend, Brenda” he said, climbing into the

cab of his pickup truck”. “Hop in and we’ll buy you breakfast” So off we went to a local restaurant for a meal and an explanation”. “So how did you find me” I asked? “Well I’m an Albanian building contractor here in the city and one of my workmen saw you get jumped in the park. He said you put up a pretty good fight but were overpowered by the police who grabbed you. Now I’d been in that jail before and it’s not a fit place for a person to be. So Brenda and I thought we should get you out of there”. He later cashed my traveler’s check, helped clear my papers at the Customs Office and got me on a bus out of town. I thought for a minute about helping the other inmates in that jail but knew that it was best if I kept on going. On the Road.....Again.

REFRAIN –

**Me Pusieron in Carcel Pero Tengo El Llave (They Put Me in Jail, But I Have the Key)**



He, being wise and full of mystic power, -  
will save him from all worldly grief and care.  
With all miraculous powers well endowed  
And widely skilled in knowledge of all things,  
In all the world, in all the quarters,  
There is not a place where Kannon does not go.  
Hells, evil spirits, - beastly creatures, - all the evil  
ways of living, - all the pain that comes  
from birth, old age, disease and death  
Will, for eternity, all pass away.  
Great Kanzeon views all the world in Truth,  
Free from defilement, loving, knowing all,  
Full of compassion;

He must always be prayed to, adored for all  
eternity