

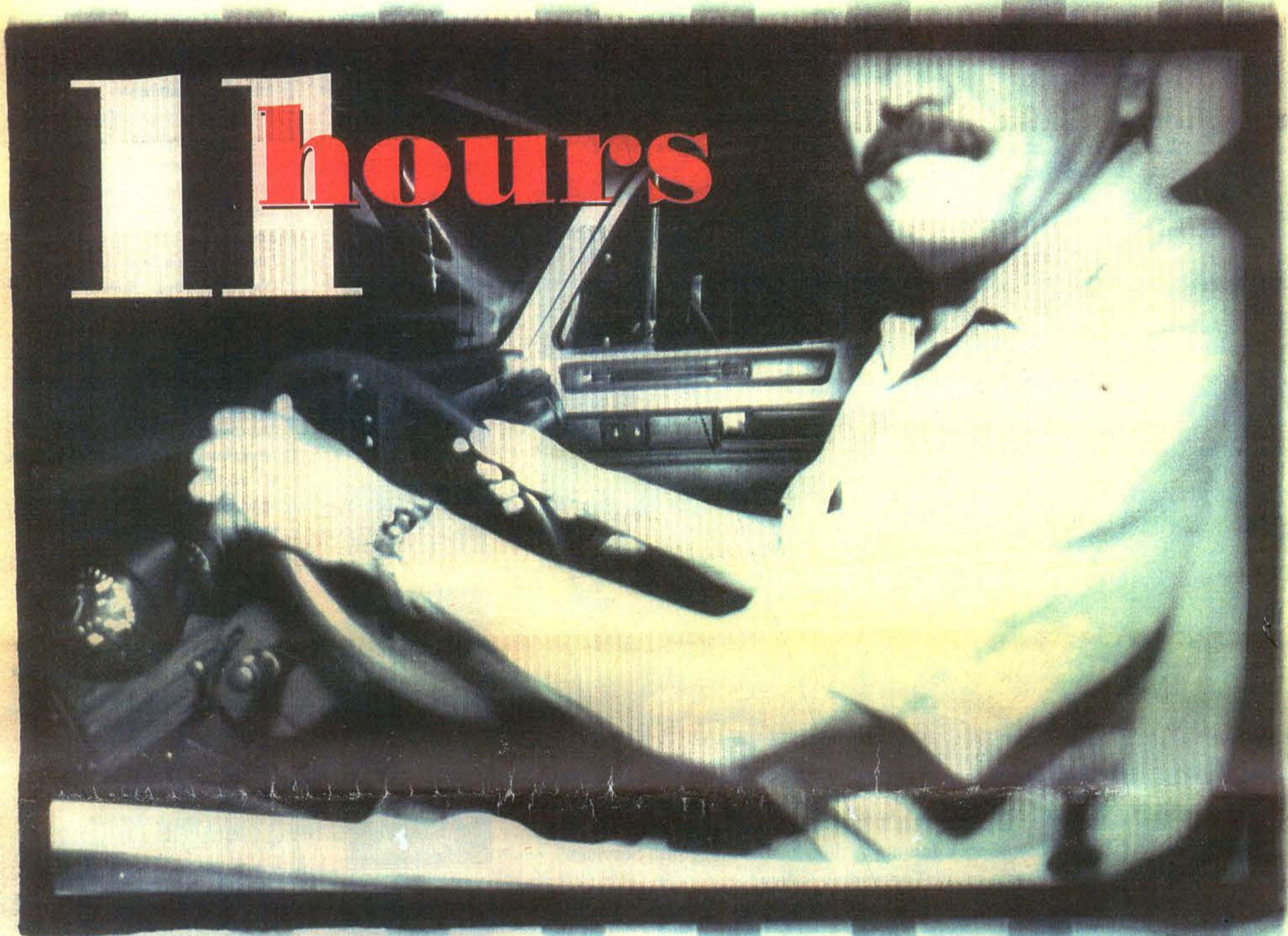
Perhaps anyone could have done this, but I had to
enter Mexico without a permit.

DALLAS June 24 - June 30, 1993

Observer

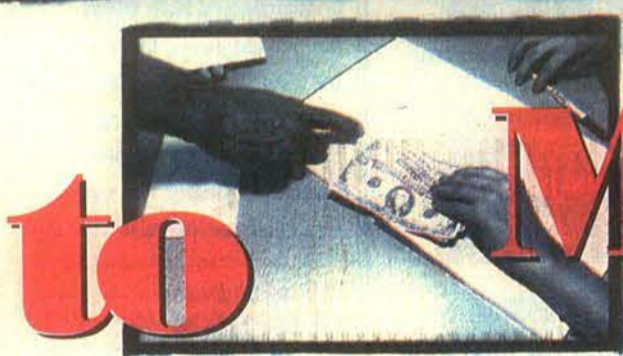
The Brawl at City Hall, Part II:
Laura Miller explains why
it's time for Jan Hart to go

Issue 538 FREE



11 hours

Ride along on Dallas' midnight express to Mexico



to Monterrey

By Dick J. Reavis

Tasty trend: Dish loves Puck-ish pizza at Orleans

Muscle among the missteps: Seitz finds the punch in *Last Action Hero*



Can Dallas program for troubled kids survive its director's tragic death?

The promised land: Feds launch probe of Polish therapists' pay

11



Leaving the driver Don D: A camion offers friendly personnel (left) a cheap way to ship cargoes of many kinds, including Mexican return bottles.

Hours

By Dick J. Rea



to

Monterrey

Just north of Laredo, the short-necked man in the seat ahead shakes me, then gently shakes Pedal Pushers, the young woman sitting next to me.

We open our eyes.
"We need money for the bridge. Are you going to kick in?" the van driver is telling us.
"Everybody needs to give me \$15," says Don D, a thin, light-skinned man in his 50s. With a drooping moustache, faded jeans, and pointy-toed boots, he looks every bit the part of an aging *vaquero*. But in truth, he's a *camioneta* operator riding herd over six passengers who are risking an illegal border crossing as part of a cheap ride from Dallas into Mexico. The money he's asking for isn't for the fare, tolls, or even gas. It's bribe money for the Mexican customs inspectors. Nearly everyone on the bus is bringing household goods and appliances that, they believe, are subject to import taxes. If the taxes aren't paid, those belongings become contraband when they enter Mexico.
Everyone begins counting out bills, except for Pedal Pushers.
"I've only got some clothes," she whines to the *Don*.

"Are you going to contribute?" he shoots back. "Come on, all of you have to kick in."
Pedal Pushers reluctantly reaches to the floor, picks up her purse and slowly begins pulling out bills. She passes her share to the front of the van. She puts her purse away and begins removing the rollers from her hair, presumably to look her best when facing the Mexican border guards ahead.
We stop on the Mexican side of the international bridge that sits at the foot of I-35, the bridge known locally as the New Bridge. It's about 4 a.m., still dark outside.
"We're just going into Nuevo Laredo," the driver tells a border guard (we're really going to Monterrey, 150 miles into the interior). The first lie has been told, but nobody seems nervous: this is business as usual for *Don D*, and the rest of us are so sleepy that we hardly
Continued on next page



About two dozen camioneta services crowded with passengers, mail, and freight shuttle vans between Dallas and Mexico.

11 hours

Continued from last page
know what's going on.

The border guard waves us into a parking lot a few yards away. A half-dozen uniformed inspectors, mere shadows, appear from the darkness. They open a rear door of the van. Don D gets out. Inside, we catch snatches of what's being said.

"Fifty dollars a passenger? No way!" Don D says. "Why, that would be \$250 for the van."

Don D sighs, looks up at the heavens and says something about customers who are "aprovechados," advantage-takers. He sticks out his hand. The passenger lays the money in it without another word.

The agents continue speaking in low voices.

"But I'm not bringing the trailer," Don D says angrily.

The driver gets out. The beam of a flashlight sweeps the rear of the van.

The driver and the customs agent begin unloading at the back door. Another customs agent opens the front door and paws the television sets.

"I've only got some clothes, but they're new," Pedal Pushers whispers to me. Most personal effects—clothing, a purse, that sort of thing—aren't taxable, but new goods are regarded as merchandise and are subject to import duties. But I don't believe for a minute that Pedal Pushers has boarded this uncomfortable van to smuggle a few blouses.

Soon after, we hear the sound of Don D and the driver repacking the back of the van. With each box thrown in, the van rocks on its springs. Don D and the driver begin pushing, pushing, to make everything fit again.

Don D takes the driver's seat.

"Is everybody's papers in order?" he asks, referring to the documents that will be needed to re-enter the United States.

Nobody says a word. "What about you?" he says, turning to an

engaged couple from Tampico sitting in the middle seat.

"We came with a visa, but it has expired," the groom-to-be says, offering Don D his passport.

Don D waves it away.

"Don't worry about it. There's a slip of paper stapled in there that says how much time you had. Throw it away and we'll be all right."

The young man rips the slips of paper from his and his fiancée's passports.

"We're going back across," Don D declares, confirming the obvious. The haggling with the Mexican customs agents hadn't gone well.

"If it doesn't work there, we'll try Miguel Alemán," he adds, naming a border town 50 miles south. He makes a U-turn with the van. In seconds, we're back in the United States, facing the immigration and customs agents, this time on the north side of the bridge. They have us file into a room and present our papers at a counter. Everyone is allowed to return, even the couple from Tampico. The Don, relaxed, is obviously savvy to the ins and outs of the border. Outside, U.S. customs agents make a perfunctory search. In less than 10 minutes, our crowded van is rolling again, in search of a place to cross into Mexico.

The journey had begun in Dallas some six hours earlier after a long spell of loading—with smuggling in mind—and of haggling—also with smuggling in mind—that was sometimes acrid, sometimes nearly laughable. Our point of departure was the yard of a rundown Oak Cliff house that serves as a bus station for a camioneta, the long-distance analogue of a jitney.

Don D's service is one of two dozen operations that shuttle back and forth to Mexico from Dallas. Some go no farther than border towns like Matamoros and Reynosa, a few advertise trips as far south as Mexico City and Acapulco, but almost all of them make the nearly 600-mile Monterrey-Dallas run, because many Dallas immigrants come from Monterrey, and the rest can catch buses from there to wherever they call home. A couple of the bigger companies run Greyhound-sized buses—a few run the circuit five times a week. But the smaller outfits, like Don D's, limit themselves to vans and two trips per week, usually departing on Friday and again on Tuesday or Wednesday night.

Just inside the living room door, a thin, young Mexican-American woman in a T-shirt and jeans counts the fares and scribbles on the index cards that serve as tickets. People go in and out of the house carrying boxes and bags, taking care not to stumble over the household's two dogs, a Chow and a Shar-Pei. On the sidewalk between the chain link fence and the curb, people are stacking their baggage—including boxes of food, even a lawn mower—ready for loading into the van, a nondescript 10-year-old model with cream-colored paint. Don D and an assistant scurry around, barking and jostling passengers as they prepare for the twice-weekly run from Dallas to Monterrey.

"¿Trajiste tantas chingadas bicicletas?"

Continued on page 20.

11 hours

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(Why did you bring so damn many bicycles?) Don D snaps at a passenger.

The man shrugs. Three sons, three bicycles, he says.

"You'll have to leave one behind," Don D tells him, adjusting his straw cowboy hat.

"No, I can't do that," says the passenger, a short-necked, bronze-skinned man.

"Then I'm charging you \$75," Don D says.

"No, that's not fair," Short Neck retorts, flexing his shoulders like a wrestler entering a ring. "I always ride with you. I send you plenty of business. Don't you remember the time that I helped you fix the water pump, when we broke down in Waco?"

Short Neck says he won't pay more than \$50 for his cargo. He and Don D begin bickering. Insults are exchanged. Short Neck says that Don D is an ingrate, Don D says Short Neck is trying to take advantage of friendship. The men look away from each other, waiting for the other to give in.

Don D says that he'll accept \$60. Sensing a deal, Short Neck offers \$55. Don D sighs, looks up at the heavens, and says something about customers who are "aprovechados," advantage-takers. He sticks out his hand. The passenger lays the money in it without another word.

Short Neck is a busboy and dishwasher at an East Dallas restaurant, where he's worked for years.

"They know I'm good," he brags. "I'm so good, the other day I told my boss,

'Look at my shoes, I need some new shoes,' and you know what? The company bought me a new pair of shoes, yessir!"

For about 10 years, the busboy has split his life between Monterrey and Dallas, a few months here, a few months there. His family—a wife and three sons—lives in a house on Monterrey's western fringe. When in Dallas, he shares an apartment with buddies. He was going home after this stint with not just the bikes, but, also squeezed into the van, the equipment to start his own business: a lawn mower, a lawn trimmer, a rake, and a 5-foot box of garden tools. His plans are to get into Mexico without paying import duties and to start a lawn-care company in Monterrey. If things go well, he intends to stay for good. If the gardening enterprise doesn't go as he

hoped, well, at least he'll have five or six weeks in Mexico with his family.

The Don's assistant, a corpulent 30ish man with a gold tooth, sweats over the van's third bench seat.

Don D stares into the van. Besides the driver and front passenger seat, it has four-passenger bench seats. But Don D and his assistant have removed the rear-most bench and piled cargo on the third seat. In the hands of an artist like the Don, who is pushing and shoving baggage around the rear area, the van is an incredibly versatile beast of burden.

"Here, take that box out, bring me that one over there," he grunts at his assistant, signaling first a box of canned corn, then a box that, according to its markings, contains stereo speakers, all of it bound for Mexico as contraband.

Don D is fighting a space shortage he created when he decided not to bring the trailer that he usually tows behind the van.

"If I take the trailer, they'll just charge me \$100 more," Don D says. Don D didn't specify who "they" might be or for what services they might be charging him.

With the bikes, gardening equipment, and more conventional baggage precariously in place, the van is ready to depart and Don's role of purser and baggage handler transforms into that of captain.

"Let the women and children get in first," Don D tells the knot of people who have gathered around the van.

A woman in pedal pushers and her 3-year-old son climb in. The child is light-skinned, with blue eyes; his mother is bronze, with dark eyes, shoulder-length black hair, and a mole on her upper lip.

Then a white-skinned young woman from Tampico steps in, her chunky fiancé behind. Mexican provincials on vacation, both are wearing freshly starched, Sunday-best attire. Their Texas relatives and soon-to-be in-laws stand at the curbside, waving goodbye. The two *comprometidos* take seats on the first bench.

"But aren't you women going to sit together?" Don D suggests. "You know, to avoid problems with the men."

"Ah, send me one! I might just like him!" Pedal Pushers exclaims.

The throng on the curb bursts into laughter. Pedal Pushers is obviously not a typical Mexican housewife.

In fact, she's married to a Dallas *bolillo*, or gringo. Now that, by her marriage, she's regularized her status in the United States, she's beginning to have doubts about the place. Though she is ostensibly making a short visit to her mother in Monterrey, like Short Neck she's also toying with the idea of making this return to Mexico her last.

Short Neck crawls onto the bus, seating himself next to the couple from Tampico and cradling a guitar wrapped in a garbage bag.

Don D and his assistant push a grimy spare tire into the space between the passenger benches and the doors of the van.

Seconds before departure, Don D's stout and wrinkled wife, who had been sitting on the front porch, appears on the sidewalk holding a portable telephone. The Don takes it and begins to harangue whoever it is on the other end. It turns out to be the operator of another *camioneta* who wants to send two excess passengers to Don D.

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Dr. F. Kevin Murphy has practiced medicine for over a decade in Dallas, where he was one of the first physicians to treat HIV/AIDS. Prior to entering private practice in 1983, he was engaged in research and teaching as an academic clinical virologist. His commitment to patients and community is evident from his voluntary service to many local service organizations and clinics.

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"Hah, you call too late!" *Don D* growls. "Give me four and I'll put the trailer on my van and take them all. But two, who do you think I am?" While *Don D* and the caller dispute, a car pulls up at curbside. Its driver has a pasteboard box and a small, used television he wants to send to Monterrey. *Don D* hands off the phone to his wife and negotiates with the new arrival. There is banging and shoving and more banging and shoving. Then the rear door slams. Apparently, *Don D* managed to get the box inside. He stacks the small television on top of a larger set, between the front bucket seats. The phone call is apparently forgotten.

Don D slides into the shotgun seat, his assistant at the wheel. A radar detector glows from the sun visor. Slowly we roll onto I-35, gain speed, and head south in the darkness for Monterrey. It's 10 o'clock. As chaotic as it seemed, our departure has been timed to put us at the border in the early morning hours, when prying inspectors might not be on duty and friends of *Don D* might be.

Most of the *camionetas* do their business outside the law. Federal regulations require bus lines to post proof of insurance and meet other standards set by the federal Interstate Commerce Commission, but less than a half-dozen of the Dallas *camioneta* operators have complied. They're not likely to, either, which leads them to try to avoid notice, at least from prying English-speakers. Many, however, advertise in Spanish-language newspapers. Though a couple of companies keep offices in public places,



A trailer increases a *camioneta's* payload, but can become a liability when dealing with border officials.

most make their headquarters in somebody's yard. They operate on the margins of established commerce, catering to a marginal clientele.

The *camionetas* undercut Greyhound's \$52 one-way rate for the

Dallas-Monterrey haul with fares as low as \$35. Their cargo rates are harder to compare to licensed carriers, but that's not exactly the point, either. They will deliver a letter or a packet of documents for \$10—about half the Federal Express

rate for Monterrey—and that, too, helps them stay afloat. Some of them are trusted to deliver cash to people in Mexico.

Although they have found a market

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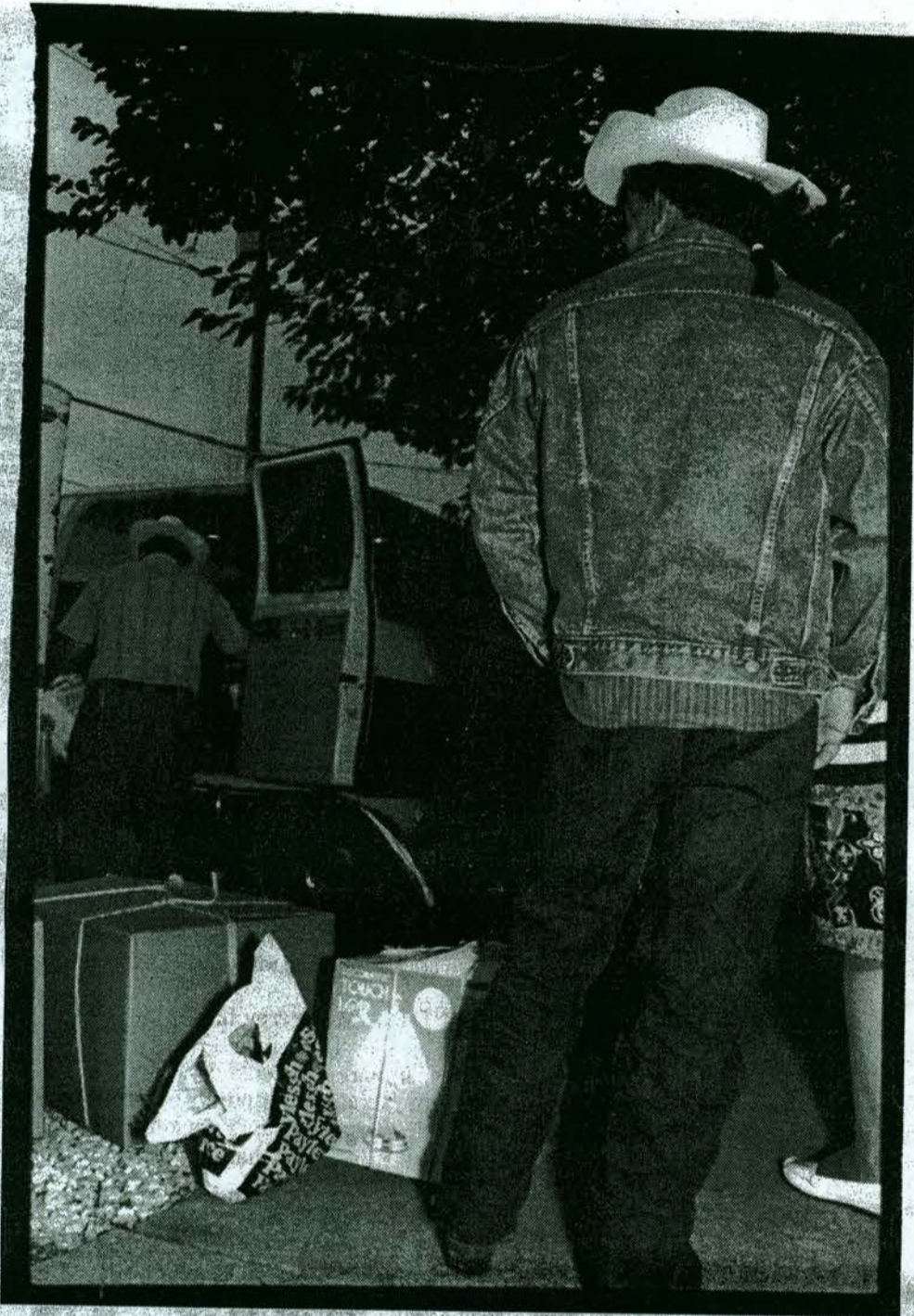
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The cost of squeezing extra packages into the van can vary wildly, depending on your haggling skills.

11 hours

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niche in offering what is arguably better service for passengers, baggage, and letters—the *camioneta* companies prosper because, like *Don D*, their operators know how to deal with the Mexican customs service. Despite reams of publicity about free trade, Mexico still places heavy duties on most imported consumer goods. Household appliances, small hand and power tools, perfumes,

percent—have been lowered almost by half. It would seem that *Don D*'s business is in jeopardy.

But Mexican officials know that the law can fetter as easily as it can liberate. After all, before they can determine whether or not a passenger owes import duties, customs agents must examine what the passenger is bringing. Making that determination can take hours, as inspectors scrutinize every item a visitor brings, counting out the number of

aspirin in a bottle, for example. On top of that, they can claim that huge taxes are owed—triggering hours of debate over what the law really says, and what is the true value of a used sewing machine, for instance. Rather than wait and wrangle, most people are willing to offer a deal: if the customs inspector

will act speedily, they'll show their gratitude with a "tip." It may be extortion, but it's an old practice and new laws haven't been able to root it out.

Don D, most Mexicans would say, saves trouble for everybody by representing his passengers as any customs broker would.

The din of the music makes sleep difficult; it's as if we're already in Mexico, where noise is a constant of working-class life.

and sporting equipment are their trade. When import taxes aren't paid on these goods, Mexicans call them "white contraband."

It's not certain that there's much need anymore for ordinary Mexicans to smuggle their household goods home. Recent changes in customs law allow them to take \$300 in merchandise into Mexico, and import duties—once as high as 40

turned on the radio, blaring loud. *Don D* chooses not a Dallas Spanish-language station, but one at the end of the dial, XEG, "La ranchera de Monterrey." The din of the music makes sleep difficult; it's as if we're already in Mexico, where noise is a constant of working-class life.

Dallas is too soon too far behind. In an hour, we're in Waco, 90 miles south. Austin, 192 miles from Dallas, comes into view in just over two hours' time. I can't see the speedometer, but obviously we're flying, probably at a speed in excess of 90 mph. The driver mumbles something about how the van moves faster without its trailer, and the other passengers, half-dozing, keep to themselves.

As we pass through New Braunfels, a flashing red light fills the van. There's a Texas Highway Patrolman behind us. His radar, judging by the silence of the *Don*'s detector, is apparently not in use. The driver pulls over, steps out of the van, and goes toward the back to meet the trooper. A few minutes later, the driver returns to ask *Don D* for papers proving that the van is insured. *Don D* turns on the dome light, rifles through the glove compartment, and hands a colored sheet of paper over to the driver, who goes off, and then returns, the trooper at his shoulder. "He says that this one is expired," the driver tells *Don D*.

Don D shuffles through other papers, staring hard at the numbers on their faces. "I must not have brought it. I can't find it anywhere," he says in a casual way.

The driver and the trooper go to the back of the van for a while. Then the driver remounts, a sheet of paper wadded in his right hand.

"He only gave me a warning," he mutters. "But he says that if he catches me again, to jail I'll go."

Don D slumps down in the shotgun seat; we passengers slump against the backrests. *Pedal Pushers* pulls her sleeping son over her abdomen and props her legs on the back of the seat ahead; her toenails are perfectly trimmed. The van moves on, flying again.

Then the bicycle wheel falls onto my head. I push it back to its place at the ceiling. The motion disturbs *Pedal Pushers*. Sleepily, she reaches for her purse—then begins setting her hair in foam rollers. Then she drops her feet from the seat back, and places them across my legs. We yawn and roll on.

There are two international bridges in downtown Laredo. Our attempt was frustrated at the New Bridge. We've still got a shot at the Old Bridge, just blocks away.

Don D crosses the Old Bridge, and when a Mexican agent halts him, the *Don* declares, "We're just a family from Nuevo Laredo and we've got \$50 for you."

"Ah, so that's how it is," the guard says, pointing us to the east side of the *garita*, or customs station. He's already playing our game, it seems. At the Old Bridge, traffic to the interior is supposed to pass to the west side of the customs house.

Again a half-dozen customs agents swarm onto the van, opening the rear doors, pawing the television sets, both of which show obvious use. One of them

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11 hours

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points at me, and grunts at *Don D* outside. "Who is that?" he asks.

"That's a man, his wife, and their son," the *Don* lies without missing a beat. "They're just friends of ours. We're all friends who have been visiting in Dallas."

The agents want to look over the televisions, so *Don D* and the driver place them on a table outside. Short Neck and I crawl out to stretch. It's not yet dawn outside, and the interior of the border station has a deserted look. The only vehicle on hand is ours. All of the customs agents are at the rear of the van, pulling out boxes, opening a few of them. They peer inside, consult with *Don D*, and resume unloading.

"Bring me one of the televisions. We'll have to list it," one of the uniformed men says. *Don D* picks up the smaller set and follows the customs man inside the station.

Back in the van, Pedal Pushers begins to chat. "I have four sisters and two brothers in Monterrey. Our family is very strong," she says. "My husband has a brother and a sister who live near Dallas, but do you know what? We hardly see them twice a year."

"In the United States, nobody seems to have families anymore. And in Dallas, there's so much crime and that sort of thing, things like kids taking drugs. I'm afraid of what might happen when my son starts school."

It's a typical Mexican rap, meritorious and entirely predictable.

From a vial in her purse, she extracts several small pieces of jewelry, which she begins showing to her son.

"This one is for your grandmother, this one, for your aunt Jasmine..."

Inside the customs house, a deal is being struck, one whose purpose is to satisfy the bureaucracy. *Don D* is going to pay import duties on the small television and on one of the bicycles; that way, the station's records will show that an inspection was made and our cargo dutifully taxed. The customs agent collects \$20 for the import taxes—and gives *Don D* a receipt—then takes \$80 as a bribe.

Everything has been arranged—including the illegal entry of the Mexicans into the country of their birth. Because we are going to Monterrey, in the interior, the Mexicans are supposed to present themselves and their passports at the immigration desk inside the station. Those who are residing in the United States—all but the couple from Tampico—are supposed to show that they're registered with a Mexican consulate, too.

Their problem is solved; mine remains. I'm supposed to get what's called a tourist card from the immigration desk. The document's purpose is to show my nationality, and my destination, and that I've been legally admitted to Mexico. Americans don't need tourist cards to visit Mexican border towns, but they do need them to go into the interior, and there's a second checkpoint, 26 kilometers south of the bridge. Without a tourist card, I'm likely to be pulled off the van at *la garita de 26*, as it's called.

I jump out of the van. *Don D* is on the pavement, preparing to reload.

"Listen, I've got to go inside to get a tourist card," I say, pointing to the sta-

Continued on next page

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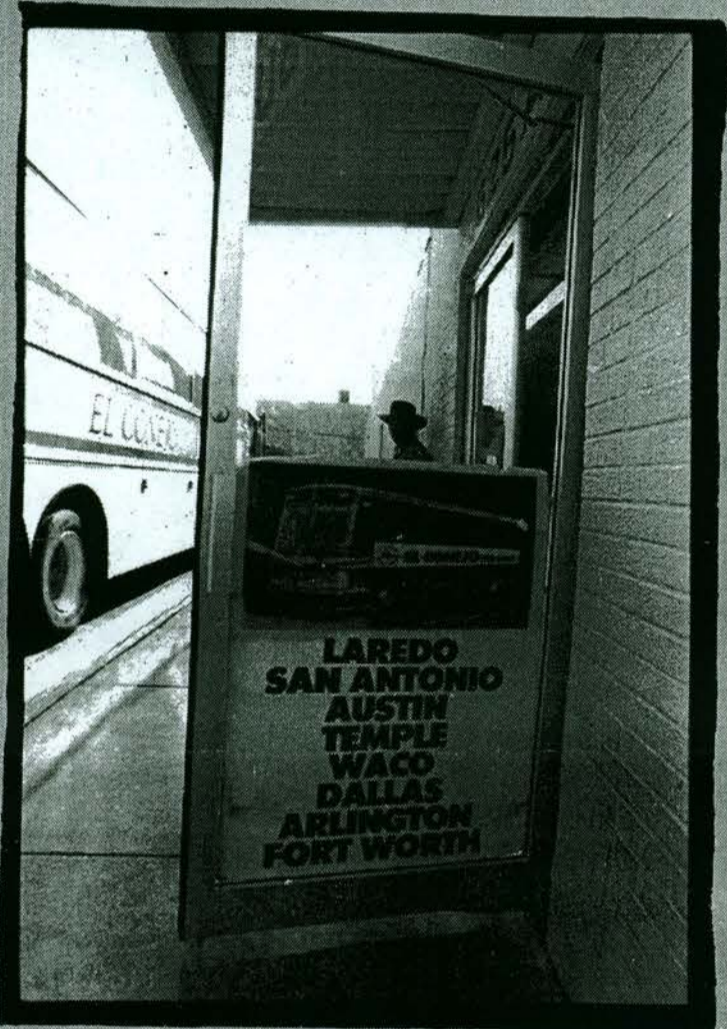
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Follow the rabbit

Greyhound gets some cheeky competition and a lesson in service from El Conejo

If you're looking for quick, safe, and comfortable transportation to Mexico, *camioneta* services probably aren't your best choice. But a Greyhound competitor, the Dallas-based El Conejo bus line, is definitely worth consideration. Founded two years ago, El Conejo is the



Catering to a working-class clientele, El Conejo offers luxury bus service from Chicago to Mexico with stops in between.

Hispanic alternative on the I-35, or Chicago-to-Laredo run.

El Conejo makes four trips south from Dallas each day, from its central station at the Bargain City Bazaar at Westmoreland and Davis avenues in north Oak Cliff, and from two supermarket locations, one in East Dallas, the other on Harry Hines. El Conejo's fares are on a par with Greyhound's, and although it doesn't make scheduled stops along the route, if your destination is Waco or Austin or anywhere along the way, Conejo's drivers will drop you at roadside at a pro-rated fare.

What makes El Conejo a different experience is its quaint concept of service. Like drivers on Mexican luxury bus lines, El Conejo's bus pilots are aided by an assistant, the earth-bound equivalent of a flight attendant. The job of the assistant is to welcome passengers—in Spanish—and to dispense complimentary soft drinks and packaged Mexican snacks. On six of Conejo's fleet of 13 buses, television monitors screen movies—from Mexico—an attraction that Greyhound hasn't discovered yet.

There's no hassle for seating either: as on airlines, El Conejo tickets are numbered by aisle and seat, and you can pick your place before you travel. "About 99 percent of our passengers are Mexican, and I know what my people want," says company president Jesús Vaquez, a Laredo native.

The best thing about El Conejo's buses, however, is the quiet and order that prevails within. Rowdies and teen-agers with boom boxes are as rare as hen's teeth, because most of the line's riders are either working people or retirees—not the kind of crowd that raises a ruckus.

El Conejo carried a mere 281 passengers during its first month of business, in May 1991. This past May, some 9,500 travelers bought tickets on the line.

"We're the fastest growing bus company in the United States," Vaquez says. Even the company's name is a competitive boast. Vaquez and majority owner Ray Sena of New Mexico chose El Conejo—which means rabbit—as a moniker because, as



Vaquez points out, "if you've ever been to a dog race, you've seen that the rabbit always runs ahead of the greyhound."

—Dick J. Reavis



11 hours

Continued from last page

tion house with my head. "You can't do that. That's for people who are going into the interior [the fiction, of course, is that we are not]."

"But I have to do that."

"No, you Americans don't have to. For more than a year now," he lies, "you don't need any documents at all."

"How do I know that's true?" I ask him.

"Just look at the station house," Don D draws, turning his face in that direction. Then he gestures broadly. "Don't you see, there's nobody in there. The immigration guys don't work here anymore."

I've seen Mexican customs houses before at night, and I know, as he must know, that the officials who work inside sleep when they can. They're probably laid out on their desks. But there's no sense in arguing, unless I'm ready to spoil the plan for everybody. I crawl back into the van to ask my "wife" for advice.

Pedal Pushers doesn't want to confirm that Don D is lying.

"Well, if anybody bothers you, why

don't you just say that you were visiting friends in Monterrey?" she says in an evasive way. "You Americans, they're not going to really demand anything of you. You can do as you please."

It's becoming clear to me just what the story is. The Mexicans are going to enter their own country illegally, because what's foremost in their minds is evading customs laws. They're afraid that tariffs, real or extortionary, will make their televisions, lawn mowers, and clothes prohibitively expensive. Because I'm with them, I've either got to blow their cover by announcing our true destination—or enter their country illegally, too.

I decide to stay silent, enter Mexico illegally, and take my chances at the checkpoint. I'm a little unsettled: if I get caught, anything could happen. Instant forgiveness, a bribe, weeks in jail—you name it. On the other hand, the situation is amusing. Don D has become my coyote, and I might become the only gringo illegal alien in Mexico.

The van pulls out of the customs parking lot and begins snaking through Nuevo Laredo's residential streets. After a few minutes we head south on the

highway to Monterrey, toward the 26-kilometer checkpoint. But the Don has no intention of reaching it. Just outside town, we turn off. One sharp turn follows another over the course of maybe 10 miles—we're flying so fast that I can't tell—until we find ourselves on the highway that runs from a third international bridge, at Colombia, about 25 miles

isn't the price!" howls the agent.

"Hey, but I'm not pulling the trailer," Don D says.

The agent, who's no fool, walks to the back of the van to see if it's true. Then he returns to the driver's door of the van.

"How many passengers do you have?" he asks.

"I told you, five. Fifty, \$10 a head," Don D says.

The agent peers inside. "You've got six. There's a child," the agent says.

"Alright, so it's \$60," Don D mutters in seeming consternation. He reaches back into his

pocket, extracts his billfold, and pulls out \$10 more. Then he hands the money over to the guard.

"No guns, uh? If you've got guns, we'll all go to jail," the guard says.

"Naw, just a television," Don D flashes the paper from the customs house, "and a bicycle and some household stuff."

"Well, have a good trip," the agent says as he steps aside. As we drive away, he executes a quick salute.

At the town of Villa Aldama, half an

"We're just a family from Nuevo Laredo and we've got \$50 for you."

northwest of Laredo. It's the back route to Monterrey—but it has a *garita*, too.

Quickly, as the *garita* is coming into sight, Don D demands an additional \$10 from each one of us. There's a flurry of change being made and arguments—Pedal Pushers is resisting again. But Don D has the cash in hand as we pull up to *la garita*.

"We've got \$50 for you," the Don tells the agent who stops us.

"Fifty dollars? Hah, you know that