



## 28 HRS IN SPAIN

If you ever have the opportunity to hitch-hike from Barcelona, Spain into France and along the Riviera - don't do it, unless of course you have a couple extra days and unlimited patience.

Barbara and I sat in the smokey fourth-class lounge of a large Spanish ferry. It and its sister-ship make one daily trip from the ports of Barcelona and Valencia carrying hundreds of young travellers to Ibiza, one of the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean. These two ferries, the only commercial means of getting to Ibiza (unless, of course you're a jet-setter), are packed, from June to September, with young travellers (a suspicious number North Americans) who inevitably travel fourth-class, sleeping on the deck or in the smokey lounge provided. Tonight it was rainy.

"Can we join you?" Jon and Clark sat down opposite us. We soon were through with name, nationality, occupation syndrome, and on to the more personal stuff. It seems that Jon and Clark had been stuck in Barcelona on their way home to Britain and had gone to Ibiza to fill in time. Now they were in a hurry. Clark posed the question. "What we really need is a couple of chicks to hitch-hike into France with." Were we taking a chance? Ah, to hell, we said - this is Europe.

By one pm the four of us were lined up along one of the many small streets that exit Barcelona. We had four ruck-sacks, three Ibizan straw baskets, two loaves of hard Spanish bread, and two bottles of wine. The maze eventually conglomerates and merges into one super-highway which divided again about twelve miles on the countryside. Here you can stay on the bread road which leads northwest into the interior, or exit right to follow the coastal route. Within an hour a car stopped ahead of us to pick up Barbara and Clark. We saw them lean in and point to us, making fantastic gestures. They repeated the procedure a few times until finally Barbara motioned for us to come along too. This ride took us onto the highway and four or five miles along it, until we were slowed down by traffic. The driver was not healthy and he could not take five of us much further. Perhaps the two girls would come along with him? Jon and I opted out. There were lots of cars.

"See you at supertime!" Barb yelled. We had decided to spend a night in Sète, a small French port town, not far into France, and we

had about 100 miles to go. We were there an hour and had walked a mile before we were picked up by four happy Spaniards having their lunch. We offered a bottle of wine. That made four. They took us to the division of the highway. The coastal route was narrow and hilly, with cars travelling, mainly for the scenery. The broad road was fast, and we had a deadline. We crossed onto the median, the first one I'd seen in two months. Already there was a line of hikers, some sitting, other leaning sorrowfully to the road, one arm extended. Most had a smile, some the peace-sign, no one spoke English. We walked past them to take our place at the end.

Next to us was a young French woman, maybe 25. She was crying. We asked her if we could help, but she said we couldn't, her husband had left her. She wasn't hungry and finally asked us to leave her alone. Within a few minutes she was picked up in a jeep going the other way. Others had similar luck. In two hours we were sharing the long grassy strip only with two German girls, but soon a grey Mercedes stopped for them, and we were alone. We were hungry, but there was no store nearby. The only building was a house directly across the road but set back from it. Jon said he could make tea if we had some water. Six or seven children were playing in the yard by the house.

"Por favor", I yelled to them. "Por favor, agua?" They ran to the side of the road, delighted.

"Si! Si! Agua, si!" they cried. One of the older girls pulled a little boy off the road. I ran to meet them and each reached for my hand. "Rubia!" the little boy said, almost in a whisper. "Qui?" I didn't understand. "Rubia! Rubia!" one of the girls said, eagerly pointing at her own rich brown hair. They had seen very few blondes. By the time we had some tea and the bread with some English jam Jon had in his pack, it was 6 p.m. We had come twelve miles in five hours. Jon had some English taffy. We shared it and the Spanish sunset with the children.

At nine o'clock, two policemen on bikes, coming from the other direction, stopped and asked if I was the girl who had been crying. They explained the husband would be here in half an hour. Within twenty minutes we saw a lone figure coming towards us in the dusk. It looked like he was out jogging. When he

reached us he collapsed at our feet, crying into the grass, his back soaked with sweat. He explained to us that he and his wife had had a fight and he had gone off expecting she would follow and meet him at a spot they had decided. Now he couldn't find her. Besides, he cried, she had their money and papers. This was Spain, and he had no passport. We could only tell him what we knew. He gave Jon a note for his wife, and told us about the friend they had been on their way to meet. He was tall, with a pink shirt and jeans, carried an accordion, and was travelling this road. There was a note for him, too, but there was little chance we would see him. When, a half-hour later, a car finally stopped, we wished the man luck. The children waved to us as we got in the car; they had not gone in for supper.

The driver was not much older than us and smiled brilliant white teeth. He was going to the "frontier" so we were on our way. "But I must turn right up here and go through Port-Bou," he said. Port Bou was on the coastal road, and B. and Clark were somewhere on the highway. By now it was dark and ten; we were sleepy. We would not get another drive and Port-Bou seemed as good as Le Perthes, the border we would have gone through on the other road. It was cold and windy outside and we settled into the friendly warmth of the car.

When I awoke it was 1 a.m. We had come perhaps 80 miles from the median. I knew I would be sick, for I felt the car swerve from left to right with no discretion. In French, the driver said we were almost to Port-Bou; we were just coming down through the Pyrenees and Port-Bou was in the valley below. He left us on a narrow street under the light of the only lamp there. He pointed to the end of the street where it veered right, and lost itself in the hills. "That," he said, "is the only way out." I couldn't believe it. Port-Bou hugs the sea and is only accessible through the mountains that surround it. The border was four miles on the other side, it was 1:30, and we had not seen a moving car in the town. I got out and Jon thanked him. I sat down on the curb, for we could only wait.

Another hour passed and we had not seen a car. Neither did we speak, for we had little energy. Finally we saw light, but they were coming down through the mountain. The car was going the other way. The wind was tugging