

## Other Books In The “Listening” Trilogy

### **No Delusions – a faith filtered through the meanness of this world**

As a teenager Roger Dewey began to explore the differences between Christianity and Jesus. He put himself outside his comfort zone, where he “didn’t even know the rules,” to see if God would show up, to see if he could hear the still, small voice of Jesus. On the day of the funeral of Martin Luther King, Roger felt impelled to leave grad school and commit his life to justice for the excluded and combating racism in the church. He “shut up and listened” for the counsel of God. Never really liking prayer, he learned simply to talk with Jesus about everything and to be silent and listen for a response. Yet slowly he realized he was becoming as self-righteous as those he was criticizing. So he took a three month “hermitage,” fasting from everything conceptual to listen more effectively. He received again the affirmation of God’s unconditional love for all of us, exactly as we are, not as we ought to be. This trilogy of books is the result.

### **The Bible They Never Told Me About**

Ray and Elsie Dewey raised their son to see differences as intriguing. Differences of ethnicity, religion, culture and nationality were fascinating and to be explored, never feared. So every prejudice he discovered within himself became a request for God to heal him. This open exploration challenged Roger’s view of the Bible. Brought up to trust it as God’s Word, he went to it for clarification when preachers claimed it promoted something he questioned from personal experience, especially about poor people and justice. He discovered that many who quote the Bible use invisible scissors to cut away huge parts they want to ignore or deny. He concludes that the “non-Christian” Jesus exemplifies a reality far more beautiful and transcendent than what we usually hear from Christianity’s apologists. Genuine spirituality is accessible to those lacking discipline and literacy skills or else God is not loving and just.

# THE HITCHHIKING DIARIES



A young man's adventure  
through Latin America in 1965



Roger Dewey

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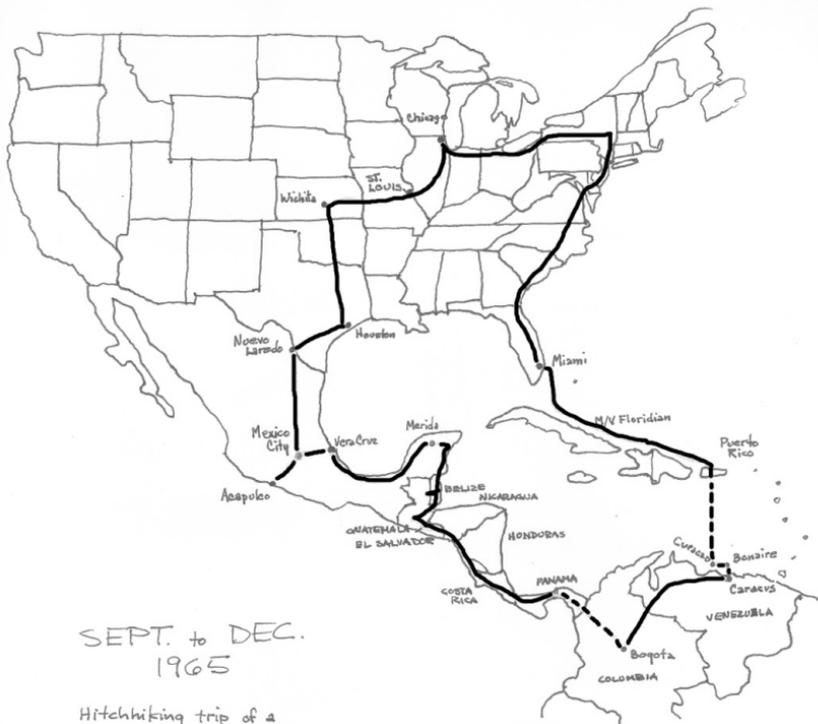
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*To Stephen and Eliza,  
the deepest joys of my life  
who continue to inspire  
and fill me with anticipation  
for the future  
I love you*

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SEPT. to DEC.  
1965

Hitchhiking trip of a  
lifetime!

# Preface

This is a totally true story, basically as it was written back in 1965. Even the names are real.

Each day, for 10,000 miles, I recorded that day's events and conversations in all their detail. I mailed the sheets home two at a time, eventually three hundred pages of small handwriting, crammed to the edge on light weight stationery, with no wasted space to cost me more in postage.

I didn't take a camera. I didn't want to look like a tourist. People would treat me differently, and I wanted to discover the "real" Latin America. Blending in was important. Back in 1965 most Mexicans thought that most Americans were tall, blond and rich. I obviously was none of those—I fully expected \$450 to last me four months—so I felt I could go anywhere unnoticed, until I opened my mouth, that is.

My friends were surprised that I enjoyed sharing all this with my parents. But they were pretty remarkable people. They encouraged my curiosity and my hitchhiking, and they enjoyed the resulting stories. They weren't trying to live vicariously through my adventures; they had had their own—back in the 1930's my mother had gone alone to Europe as a single woman, astonishing her relatives and friends.

And my parents lived out a simple, honest faith—I had often seen my dad talk with people I would have dismissed because he knew they were just as important to Jesus as we were. My parents certainly weren't trying to force me into their mold; we had argued honestly about nearly everything in life and knew each other well. We respected each other. Over time I have adopted many of their

values as my own, so it was natural to include them in these experiences.

As you might guess, though I pretty much grew up in church I began to question a lot of the things I was being told. By high school I had become less interested in religion, but my respect for Jesus had grown until he became my primary confidant. It impressed me that in the Bible Jesus seemed to really *enjoy* people, people of all kinds, especially those who did not fit in. He seemed to invite everyone and anyone to walk with him. So that's what I wanted to do on this trip. I wanted to try to walk with Jesus all through Latin America, to see if I really could count on him to be with me even when I had no idea of where I was or what the local rules were.

But I did not write this to prove anything. It was just my private journal. I recorded it all, the thoughts I agreed with and those I didn't. Even now, to maintain the same spirit I have added little to those original notes, almost nothing. My editing has largely been by subtraction. So this book honestly reflects the spirit of a twenty-four year old during the mid-Sixties, coming to terms with a world that was very different from what he at first believed.

With all the changes since then, in me as well as in Mexico, it was encouraging to find on those yellowing papers this stable truth that despite my sexist language remains a theme of my life today:

Everyone is equal in the sight of God. Given the same background, upbringing and temptations, we all could be in the shoes of any other man.

—Roger L. Dewey

# Chapter 1

## JOE AND TONY

I had been standing in the sun for nearly two hours. The shirt stuck to my back like cellophane and my face tingled with the expectation of sunburn. The air was dead. I opened my suitcase right there on the side of the highway, took out a tube of suntan lotion, mixed it with the sweat on my face and arms, and put the tube back. I zipped the case closed and stood up again, hoping to see something coming.

Not a chance. I could see a couple miles down that flat and straight highway and there was nothing in sight. Nothing except the town, and that did not count for much. A few houses, a couple of stores, a gas station, and a large grain elevator. But no trees, no people, no cars moving.

Not that I blamed them. If I'd had a choice I wouldn't have been there either. But every time I crossed the macadam for the shade of the gas station, a car would come along and I had missed another chance. If I ever wanted to get out of that tiny Texas town, I'd just have to stay there with my thumb out and sweat.

Then, something would shimmer in the distant crazy air and my hopes would gather. Each time it turned out to be another truckload of Mexicans heading for the fields. If I had known Spanish it would have been tempting to go with them. Oh well, plenty of time for that, even if I never did get all the way to Panama.

Plenty of people never expected me to get this far—except my parents, that is, who by this time would believe almost anything. And why not? Only four days earlier I was at a going away party in

my town of West Sand Lake, in upstate New York. (How many times had I added “west of nothing, no sand, and no lake”?) That was a good two thousand miles ago and I wasn't even pushing it. I had quit my job in an architect's office to return for my last year of college, but I had saved four months in between for a Latin American Adventure. And here in the Texas desert it was about to begin.

An old heap of a Hudson pulled in at the gas station and died. It was one of those cars from the early fifties that was shaped like an upside down bathtub, but this one looked like it had been through a forest fire, and then maybe a swamp.

The two guys inside weren't in much better shape. They looked to be in their twenties, tired, dirty, and sort of banged up. But I thought they might be traveling a good distance, and any ride out of there would be better than none, so I walked over to give it a try.

“Where're you going?” I asked.

“Huh?”

“I said, where are you going?”

“Looks like nowhere. How 'bout you?”

“Mexico.”

“Well, I'll tell you what. If we can get this thing movin' again, you got yourself a ride. That is, if you'll drive. You see, my buddy and me ain't really had no sleep for five days, an' we just can't keep going. But if you'll drive, we'll take you anyplace you want to go.”

“All right. It's a deal. How about the border? Nuevo Laredo?”

“Any place is the same to us. We're just sorta bummin' around anyway. We work when we run outta money, then we move on.”

His name was Tony. He had on a light sweatshirt with the sleeves ripped off, blue jeans, and moccasins as light as bedroom slippers. He tossed his hat on the ground and began to fish around under the hood for a broken electrical connection. As soon as he

found it and got it fixed, he crawled back to the car's rear seat and went to sleep.

They must have been living in that car for quite some time. The entire rear space was filled to the top of the seats with a tangled pile of dirty clothes, old boots, open luggage and several battered hats. And Tony, sprawled out on top of the heap.

The other one was Joe. He wore a Stetson, large and dirty, and cowboy boots. His hair was long and curly blond. At first I had a hard time believing it when he said he was born and raised in New York City, and that he simply had worked hard to adopt a Texan accent. But as I drove toward Laredo, Joe talked and I began to believe him.

He was extremely nearsighted too, and he had broken his contact lenses. New ones were on order in Houston, but until he could get them he had to hold a map right up to his nose to be able to read it.

Joe loved to talk. "Even now you're learning from me," he said. "Not that I ain't smart or anything, but perhaps different from others you've met. Everyone learns from everyone. I don't really know you; all I know, you could be a highway patrolman or something—but I don't care."

Eventually Joe too fell asleep. A couple of hours later we reached a small town where he hoped to borrow some money from a friend. He said the man was part of his family, but we left town without the cash. Nothing seemed to work out for Joe. We drove off across the desert. Tony was still asleep.

I was surprised when Joe brought up the subject of religion. It was about the last thing I expected. He must have been hearing the words for years, I guess, because he kept talking about "leading a sinful life." He sounded like one of those TV evangelist's stories. He felt stuck in life, constantly battered by his conscience. A big part of him wanted a totally different life.

And he had a dream: “You know what I really want? I want to finally go straight. I want to give up my alcohol and smoking and women and dope and everything. I wanna be like a Billy Graham. That's right; that's what I really want. I know I could never speak good enough to draw crowds, but I might get to talk to bums and other harder people, 'cause I could talk a language they'd understand.”

It seems strange to say, but Joe actually was concerned that if his dream really happened that he would have to do lots of traveling, and that would conflict with his other dream of finding a nice woman, marrying, and having the responsibility help settle him down.

“I've gone straight in the past. I've stopped drinking and dope, but every time I begin to get righteous somebody comes along and ruins it. You see, I've been in trouble since I was 13, in jail and out. Always for small things but they get bigger and pile up. Once I stole a car and I was driving it, lights out, at night, down a back alley with four others. They kept hollering about going faster, and all of a sudden I ran right under a tractor trailer parked there. It cut off the heads of three guys, and the other one died three days later. Their parents were real nice, even visited me in the hospital. I must have seen it just before we hit 'cause I didn't even get any broken ribs. Well, the police sent me up for stealing the car.

“There were other times too. But finally I couldn't take that reform school any more, and two others went over the wall with me. Now every time I get a good job somebody comes along and says, ‘Hi ya Joe,’ and so I've got to quit and run off. ‘Cause if he knows me, he'll start talking, and soon somebody will tell the police, and if they catch me now I'd get three years and who could stand that? I could take it for a day or a week or two. But three years... why man, I'd go crazy. I just couldn't stand those bars, and they know it, and since I've escaped once, they know I'd try again, so