

# Foreign jails really bad, inmates say

WASHINGTON, D.C. — When Hank Larsen was arrested on a drug charge in Mexico he thought he could pay a fine ("at the most spend 24 hours in the slammer") and be on his way. That was three years ago, and Hank is still in jail in Mexico. He has four years left to serve of his seven-year sentence. His "fine" was pocketed by his lawyer.

Hank Larsen is not his real name, but his plight is fairly typical of the thousands of young Americans imprisoned overseas on drug charges. Many are serving lengthy sentences for what would be misdemeanors or less under U.S. law. Some have been victims of torture, extortion, systematic harassment or other forms of abuse. Whatever their guilt or innocence, it's a bad trip, and there's only so much the United States can do to help them.

The State Department sees the problem as worldwide — and growing. According to official consular records, some 2,500 U.S. citizens were serving sentences in foreign jails at the end of 1975, about three-quarters of them for narcotics offenses. This is more than double the number in 1973.

On average the American detainees are young — the typical age is 25 or 26 — college-educated and from middle-class backgrounds. Virtually all of them are well versed in their "constitutional rights" and believe that somehow the American embassy can get them out of prison. But these are just two more misconceptions in a whole string of misconceptions and misjudgments that probably landed them in their predicament in the first place.

The lure of easy money is a major snare and delusion. For, contrary to what many young Americans believe, most countries have much stiffer drug laws than the United States.

"There's nothing easy about this business. It's rough and the risks are enormous. You're being had the minute you decide to get involved," says Loren Lawrence, deputy administrator of the State Department's Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, which is charged with assisting and protecting Americans overseas.

Even doing your own thing, if that includes carrying around a few joints for personal use, can turn into an awfully uncomfortable and costly

cross-cultural experience.

"It was such a little amount. We never dreamed it would get so heavy," says Deborah Friedman, whose half-ounce of marijuana cost her \$7,000 and 37 days in a Mexican jail. "And it could have cost a whole lot more. There are people still down there who didn't have any more grass than we did," Friedman told a San Francisco newspaper earlier this year. "And some were arrested and didn't have any, who have been in jail for years."

While a lucky few of those arrested manage to be acquitted after only a few months in jail, the average sentence around the world for "possession and trafficking" of marijuana is seven years and some months. For hard drugs like heroin and cocaine, jail terms skyrocket, with 30-year sentences not being unheard of. Three countries — Iran, Algeria and Turkey — allow the death penalty in narcotics cases.

"We just didn't take it all that seriously at first," Margaret Engle said in a newspaper interview after being released from a Turkish prison in 1973. "We were so used to the American system of justice we

thought it would only take a few hours to clear up."

It took almost a year to clear up, however. Eight anxious months with a life sentence hanging over her head. Eight months spent in a tiny concrete cell, 15 by 20 feet, which she shared with two dozen other female convicts. An open sewer ran along one wall. The prison was 300 years old, infested with large rats, lice and bedbugs.

"The thing people seem to forget is that the American system of justice stops at our borders," says consular officer Roy Davis, who spends most of his time at the State Department working on prisoner problems. "Laws are different, judicial systems are different, prison systems are different."

Piled in his in-box are cables from Manila, Nassau, Bangkok, Sydney, Calgary, Casablanca, Bogota and Guadalajara detailing new arrests. About 20-25 new cases come in every day, Davis says.

The new arrestees shouldn't count necessarily on bail, the right to remain silent, trial by jury, the right of appeal or other rights provided by

the American legal system. Americans abroad are subject to the same legal procedures and penalties as the citizens in whatever country they find themselves. In four of the ten countries where the large majority of Americans are confined, this means they are "guilty until proven innocent," the law being based on the Napoleonic Code rather than English common law. Pre-trial detention of up to one year is common and in some places the prisoner need not even be present at his trial.

What can the U.S. government do? Overseas the fact of national sovereignty poses special problems and constraints. Apart from protesting to the appropriate authorities any illegal and inhumane treatment of American prisoners, the legal role of U.S. consular officers is limited. They can't use government funds to pay bail, legal fees or other expenses, as some prisoners seem to expect.

They can make every effort to see that the prisoner's rights under local law are fully observed and that treatment meets internationally accepted standards. They can visit the prisoner as soon as possible after the arrest is known and provide him with a list of reputable local attorneys from which he may select his defense counsel. They also can contact family and friends, but only if the prisoner requests it.

Many young and enterprising consular officers, despite staggering workloads, go beyond these legal responsibilities. In Mexico, Peter Wood and Donna Hrinac, who together were responsible for some 185 Americans in 13 widely scattered jails, wrote articles in English-language magazines and newspapers to enlist the support and interest of the American community in the plight of the American prisoners. They also wrote to U.S. pharmaceutical companies for contributions of vitamins.

"I was tending to push the department to do more for prisoners or anyone in trouble," recalls Wood, a former Peace Corps volunteer and psychiatric counselor. "That seems to be the direction of the Department is leaning in."

Still, there are definite limits to what consular officers can do. Hrinac points out. And all their efforts aren't going to change the basic differences between American and foreign penal systems.

# Spring is at best in Hill Country

AUSTIN — Springtime in the Texas Hill Country has everything to entice a person outdoors. The weather is delightful. Wildflowers are like a rainbow spilled all over the rolling hills and valleys. Lakes and streams beckon the boater or fisherman. There are older-world communities and historic sites to discover. The best way to sample it all is to follow the Texas Hill Country Trail.

This trail, which loops through a large, scenic area of South-Central Texas, here is described clockwise, starting in San Antonio. The 650-mile route is marked clearly with blue and white signs, avoiding major highways when possible.

Linked by the trail, or within easy reach of it, are a dozen state parks. Many enjoyable hours or days can be spent in the romantic City of San Antonio, whose history goes back several hundred years. Besides the Alamo, renowned in Texas history, there are four other Franciscan missions. San Jose, "Queen of the Missions," is a State Historic Site, as is the Jose Antonio Navarro house, which recently was acquired by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The trail leads on through neat farmland to Castrolville, an Alsatian settlement of the 1940's, strong in tradition. Landmark Inn, now a State Historic Site, still has its stagecoach-stop atmosphere.

Scenic vistas of hills and prairies unfold on the way to Bandera, heart of the dude ranch country, and through the Sabinal River Valley on the way to Garner State Park, which spans 630 acres along the Frio River. This is an excellent place to camp, picnic and swim among abundant birds and wildlife.

Next, the trail dips south, crossing the Rio Grande Plain to the town of Uvalde. The Memorial Museum here was the home of the former Vice President John Nance Garner.

Before continuing his journey, the visitor might want to picnic, take a swim in the park's large pool, or play a game of tennis on one of the courts.

Johnston City, just along the road, is named for ancestors of Lyndon B. Johnson. The family home there is maintained by the National Park Service.

Not on the trail, but within easy reach of Johnston City, are two notable state parks. Blanco State Recreation Area, about 14 miles south, is a scenic delight for camping, picnicking and nature study. This area was much used as a campsite by explorers and settlers of old, because of a spring that gave water even when the Blanco River was dry.

Pedernales Falls State Park, about seven miles east of Johnston City, stretches along both banks of the river for six miles and three miles along a rugged gorge. It is a wilderness area with abundant wildlife and

camping facilities designed so as not to encroach on the natural beauty.

Back on the trail, the road approaches Llano. This is the Central Mineral Region of Texas, where some of the oldest rocks in the Western Hemisphere are found. The County Museum at Llano displays many mineral specimens.

The beautiful Highland Lakes next are in store. For 80 miles east to Austin, a chain of six major lakes winds between hills and edged by docks, camps, resorts and parks. Inks Lake State Park, considered to be in one of the most beautiful areas of Texas, has the recreational facilities with which to enjoy it. The park now is closed pending completion of extensive renovation and is scheduled to reopen July 1976.

Just to the south, a short, worthwhile side trip is Longhorn Cavern State Park. Rich in history and legend, this is one of the largest caverns in operation in Texas, with guided tours, museum, gift shop, restaurant.

On the way north to Leaky, the vistas are breathtaking as the winds among cliffs and gorges blanketed at this time of year with pale, fragrant mountain laurel.

For several miles the trail follows the panoramic East Frio River, then rises to a high plateau and descends to the upper reaches of the Guadalupe. Below the dam to Canyon Lake, the P&WD has stocked the river with rainbow trout.

The community of Hunt and nearby Ingram are resort centers with antique shops, the well-known Hill Country Arts Foundation and summer Point Theatre.

The pleasant town of Kerrville comes next, noted for its water sports, and frequent recreational events. Just southeast, Kerrville State Recreation Area offers facilities for camping, swimming, fishing, picnicking and hiking.

The country flattens through fields and orchards, on the way to Fredericksburg. This is an old German town rich in history and culture.

Nearing Stonewall, the drive parallels the Pedernales River, so named due to the late President Lyndon B. Johnson. Across the river can be seen the LBJ Ranch and the two-story home of the former president.

Adjacent Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park is a must for visitors. Created to honor the nation's Texan who became a world leader, the park primarily is a historic facility, but with fine opportunities for recreation. The Visitor Center has displays about the late president and the surrounding region. The National Park Service daily conducts tours of the LBJ Ranch, starting from this park.

Within the park area, a typical farm-house settled by German immigrants in the late 1800s has been restored and is brought to life by a theatically dressed park ranger busy with the daily chores of a turn-of-the-century farm.

The next leg of the trail, along the Highland Lakes, is at its best in April. Masses of bluebonnets are a light, accented by myriad other wildflowers.

The state capital, Austin, next welcomes the traveler — a major city with unique historic and political significance. Tours are conducted around the Capitol building and Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Here are excellent museums and the huge University of Texas

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