

- Observations of a Filipino who comes back to his country after a long absence.

FILIPINO LIFE TODAY

Filipinos switch languages in any one conversation as frequently and easily as you may change gears in a Volkswagen during a drive from one end of town to the other. The function of their linguistic gear-changing is to communicate with exquisite precision, the several different moods, postures, attitudes and relationships that are normally exchanged in a normal conversation between any two people.

In such conversation Tagalog will reappear as a bass note from time to time, to indicate sincerity and personal closeness; English may indicate a practical tenor; Spanish always indicates the high class or good family of its user.

But the Filipino's linguistic schizophrenia is only a surface manifestation of deeper currents: the Filipino bears a confusing multiplicity of identities. The country as a

whole reflects this individual, internal tug-of-war. While their achievements may spring from their mixture of talents, many of the Filipinos' frustrations are rooted in not yet knowing who they want to be.

Today Manila jangles, honks, shuffles and roars with bustle, pressure, tangle and dust. Manila is the heart-beat of the Philippines, just as Honolulu is the pulse of Hawaii.

It is a large flat city covering an area roughly between one-third and one half of the Island of Oahu.

Most of this city looks like a mixture of Honolulu's Chinatown, Kaimuki and Pearl City, in the height of its buildings, size of streets and general appearance.

Now imagine Kaimuki stretching from Diamond Head through Waikiki and all of Moiliili and Manoa, ala Moana, downtown, through Aiea, past Pearl City into Waipahu and Ewa, then

wandering north in dusty confusion across all the cane and pineapple fields between the Koolau and Waianae ranges and then sprawling out through the entire Waialua district to the ocean again, jam-packed all the way from Diamond Head to here.

This is just the setting. Now crowd in almost three million people. Add 15,000 taxis, maybe 20,000 jeepneys, the juggernauts of six bus lines, and about 9,000 private cars. Put all of these in constant sound and motion all day and on into the night and you have a fair idea of the continual roaring, swarming, tangle, clatter, and sheer crowdedness that is Manila.

Imagine all the stores and all the sidewalks buzzing with these herds of peoples for miles and miles; imagine normal traffic as being perpetually bumper-to-bumper from Pearl Harbor to Waialae IN ALL STREETS, and you're beginning to get the picture.

Movie houses open at 9:00 a.m. (8:00 a.m. on Sunday). Many stores close for the noon hour. The "official" business-lunch time is 12:30 (it takes that long to get there). The city is bombard-

ed by eight television channels, a dozen radio stations, eight daily newspapers and ten weekly magazines. There are "day clubs" for those who want to dine and dance while the sun is up.

A very handsome business district is rising out of the swamps of Makati with broad streets and beautiful buildings. Luneta Park., that once looked like a littered fairgrounds at the end of a busy day, now rolls a green and spotless carpet of welcome to the edge of Manila Bay. Well-groomed, new residential subdivisions are proliferating. A big new Hilton Hotel is nearly ready for operation and a Sheraton Hotel is very close behind.

The giant cockpits — good-size stadiums that on sleepy Sunday afternoons still rock the countryside for miles around with the roars from thousands of throats — are on the wane as television takes over. And on three of Manila's TV channels that television is in color (the Philippines is the third country in the world to use commercial color TV).

Television sets and large appliances are assembled by skilled craftsmen. San Miguel

Beer now comes in cans. Lucky Strike, Kent and other cigarettes are manufactured locally under franchises from the parent plants. Buicks and Pontiacs, Datsuns and Volkswagen are among the cars the Filipinos assemble.

And another vehicle, known to Americans for its comfortable ride, is there: the installment plan. It applies on clothing, furniture, all kinds of things. (The Filipinos call it "pa-iyak" . . . meaning "by squawks and squeaks.")

The occasion for my visit to Manila was to share in the ceremonies of the 25th anniversary of the Fall of Bataan beneath the Japanese invasion forces in World War II, but my strongest impression at the end of my visit was that the Filipino bravery of April 9, 1942, has been surpassed by the bravery they are showing in April, 1967. Now they are at grips with an enemy far more patient and cunning.

With desperate courage, Filipinos today are fighting against time for the education that will open their potential, for the land reforms that will heal over old and festering social ills, for the health and stamina to keep themselves going, for the commerce and industry that will pay a man more for a day's work and finance the government's operations, for the stabilization and enforcement of systems that will give the common man a confidence in law and order and faith in the future.

Today's brand of Filipino courage is something Hawaii could know more about, so the following reports will attempt to describe these struggles, and this visitor's kaleidoscopic impressions of this richly integrated society, culture, and country, and the grace of its people under fire. — *By Norman Reyes, abstracted from Manila Times, July 20, 1967.*