

RAMBLING EXPERIENCES OF A SUPERVISOR

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My job as traveling supervisor has sent me to the remotest corners of the Archipelago. I say remotest because the inconveniences of travel have never discouraged me. True, I have flown in brand new *de luxe* planes with soft cushioned seats. I have lolled in the air-conditioned cabin of a coast-wise luxury steamer. But I have also sunburned myself to exhaustion on a trip for days on end in a frail open sailboat. To reach the schools in out-of-the-way barrios, I have ridden in cargo trucks, in bulcarts, and carabao sleds. I have hung onto unmanageable ponies, forged swollen rivers, dragged my feet across muddy rice fields, all in a day's work.

I have an incurable weakness for life outdoors. Between travel assignments, I have to spend brief periods at a desk at the General Office supposedly to rest from the rigors of a trip just finished. But such rests make me a restless person. I am myself again only when the boss calls me into his sanctum and tells me to hit the road once more.

The "ups" and "downs" I meet in the course of my travels are a series of thrill-experiences that one tied down to a desk job could only dream of. I remember one instance in Lanao when the late Superintendent J. Scott McCormick took me with him to comb the whole province for brick clay. He wanted to build brick cottages in Lumbatan Agricultural School. Accompanied by Dato Sa Raman and several Maranao school teachers, we rode in a car from Dansalan to a place called Bubung. Then we proceeded afoot to the interior, through muddy rice fields, up slippery hills, and down into small

swift streams until we reached our objective, the base of a forest-covered hill.

Before starting to dig up the precious clay, we sat down to eat and rest on a flat rock beside a clear stream. I was opening my package of sandwiches when I noticed that my calves were bleeding. I bent down to scrape off the tiny forest leeches already fat with blood from my legs, and was about to call my companions' attention to my predicament when I noticed that they too were busy to commiserate with me — busy removing hordes of the blood-thirsty suckers from their own anatomies. Being familiar with the thorough habits of the slimy creatures, I removed my shoes to find several lodged between my toes. Then, feeling an itchiness around my buttocks, I took off my pants to discover a few more feeding on fatter pastures.

After digging up the clay, we hiked back about 15 kilometers through rough terrain to the main road where we had parked our car. The clay was tested in an improvised kiln in Lumbatan and it proved to be of first-class quality for brick making. The war came, however, before Superintendent McCormick could realize his dreams of constructing brick cottages in Lumbatan. He met death at the hands of a Jap landing force at Jolo. (God bless him!)

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Once I was strolling along in a remote barrio on the seacoast of Oriental Misamis. I was depressed by the looks of the barrio. The small run-down nipa huts told me, too evidently,

the story of a community barely eking out a living from the sea. I was about to turn my footsteps away when soft piano music suddenly issued forth from one of the huts a few yards ahead. I listened closely. It was an aria from *Madame Butterfly*. I said to myself, "Well, they may be poor fishermen but one of them has a radio." I walked toward the hut and peeped in through the low open window. In the little sala, a girl was running her fingers over the keyboard of a *Steinway*.

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Hunting is a favorite pastime of mine on week-ends. I was once coming back from a hunting trip without having had any luck all day. All the way hordes of monkeys seemed to be following me from tree to tree. Annoyed, perhaps less by their shrieks than by my luckless day, I let go at them with my .22-caliber rifle. When the noise subsided, all the creatures had disappeared except one which kept on shrieking. I looked up and saw a mother monkey hanging from a branch with her baby clinging fast to her side. She had been hit through the abdomen and was plugging the bullet hole with the palm of her hand. When her strength gave way, she and her baby came down with a thud. Before she expired she gave me a long mournful look. So human-like was the expression in her eyes that I felt guilty of murder. I took the baby monkey home. For years she was our pet until she got sick and died.

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When the war broke out I was visiting schools in Malaybalay, Bukidnon. The genial superintendent, whizzed me in a car to Cagayan to catch the *S.S. Luzon* for Manila. At Dumaguete, the captain of the boat refused to proceed any further and dumped all the passengers at that port.

So there I was, stranded in Dumaguete with my funds going fast. On Christmas Eve I was roaming the town penniless and downhearted. For the first time in my married life I was away from home on a Christmas Day — away from my wife and children. My bosses in the General Office seemed to have forgotten all about me. The school superintendent would not stretch a regulation to let me have an advance on my salary from the local school funds. I was despondent!

On Christmas morning, however, Miss Stewart, who was with me on the trip, called at my place, bringing with her something to eat and some pocket money for me. She gave me fifty pesos which at that moment felt 50 thousand in my pocket.

(Miss Stewart and I are still working in the same Bureau and her office room is just next to mine. One day soon after liberation I mentioned to her the money she had loaned me. She simply placed her hand on my shoulder, refused to talk of what she had done for me, and then sent me away with, "Go and buy some toys for the kids.")

When Manila fell I was still marooned in Dumaguete. Professor Bell of Silliman University gave me a job as guard at the Jap civilian concentration camp. When Dumaguete was occupied I ran to the hills. I had felt secure at my evacuation place until July of 1942, when word reached me that I was wanted by the Jap authorities because of a little over-zealousness in the discharge of my duties at the concentration camp. As guard at the camp I had shouted at a few arrogant Jap civilian prisoners. They had probably told on me.

I escaped from Dumaguete in a sailboat in company with some school teachers. We sailed northward along

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