

**PERIOD**

(Continued from page 16)

"I find this phonograph a very useful thing to have around," Miguel remarked, glancing at the machine sideward. "Just think of it. I switch it on and there goes Sinatra singing." He laughed dryly and senselessly. "I bought this phonograph for Celia. I would not have bought it, but that girl insisted. We had a sort of a quarrel and I had to buy this finally. Women have their way of persuading you. Imagine your wife whimpering around, my God!" He sighed, and his eyes glistened; he levelled them at me and lowered them again.

I left at ten o'clock in the evening and went home, thanking him for the pleasurable reception I had in his house. I assured him I would come as often as I could, and he said he would be glad of that. We shook hands and I left. I was still thinking of Miguel, the brown dog, the flower and the machine as I lay in my bed in the darkness. For it was altogether tragic: a lonely man seeking happiness in a brown dog, a phonograph, and a red rose, and missing completely what he sought.

When I went to his house again, he asked me to do something for him. "I'm going to die soon," he said flatly, matter-of-factly, "and I would like to ask you a big favor."

It gave me a gentle shock. "That's foolishness," I tried to quip jovially. "Why, you have enough flesh on you to knock out a horse!"

Miguel smiled. "No. It's true. You know when you've had it, when you're done for good. So I would like you to do something for me."

I thought it was some joke. "Well, then say it," I said.

"You see, I am all alone in this world. Got no relative. Got nobody to look after me when I die." He was grave. "I thought I would ask you to handle my funeral, if you're not too busy to do it. I'll leave some money that should cover all the expenses. Is that all right with you?"

I could not answer at once.

"Are you going to do it for me?" he repeated.

"Of course I will," I replied. "But you're not really going to die?"

"I am. That's why I'm asking you this."

(Continued on page 29)

*A Ride* **TO REALISM** by J. C.



Junne Cañizares (second from left) and B. C. Cabanatan (extreme right), as shown with friends after "slumming".

I FOUND OUT that there's a whole lot more to photography than posing the camera and clicking the shutter when I went shooting slum pictures with fast-learning photo-artist Ben Cabanatan. Before we entered the dirty district, I had this in mind: Go about the place, and seek in the corners thereof, if you find things peculiar, take them. Anyway, I had already drafted my text in anticipation.

But, shucks, kid! Ben proved me wrong. No, it was not as simple as that. While I was dishing up a yarn on our supposed objects and was being peppy, Ben was silent and seemed passing through pressure. I soon realized that all he was trying to do was to take a picture that in itself would communicate an emotion, a thought, or an observation; he took so many medium close-ups of an old woman as if she was Sandra Dee; he breathed life into the disordered walling of a "barong-barong."

We wanted true realism, but not the exaggerated and overwrought and egregious kind most photographers occupy themselves with; we did not like to make the slum-people appear happier or sadder than they actually are; we did not desire to portray them as the most contented nor as the miserablest. We roamed around surprising children at their play, and men at their work. A husky man confronted us and asked us a tirade of questions. I stayed at Ben's side ready to protect, if something happened to his Voigtlander. We took a double of a man standing, and the ungrateful fellow chased us around the block. But we also had friendly talks with many people there; they even confided to us their hardships, as if we were some visiting arm wavers or politicians.

The pictures you have seen (Pictorial Section) reveal Ben's selectivity of mind and eye. They convey movement as well as rigidity. Some of them are vividly self-explanatory; they tell you about neediness, the innocent felicity of children, the melancholy of an old woman, the resoluteness of a working man, etc. Some of them look motionless, expressionless; but it doesn't mean that they do not have life or power. Don't we, living beings, sometimes feel flat; don't we sometimes mistake life for mere existence? These photographs push Ben to the threshold of photo-journalism; they may not be faultless, but they spell a good start. I shall not endeavor to interpret them; for, I think, they possess both the "thought" and the "feel". The "thought" can be transcribed by language, but not the "feel". Readers: if you have eyes, see; if you have hearts, feel. «»