

# Americans in the Philippines

By ONE OF THEM  
(From "Bamboo Breezes")

THERE are only a few of us, 20,000 at most, in that group of towns known as Greater Manila. We may be classified into more or less overlapping social and professional groups as military, old-timers, business and professional people, school teachers, missionaries, beach combers, etc.

Some of us live in comparative opulence in such residential suburbs as Pasay and Santa Mesa, or in suites in the larger hotels, have summer cottages in Baguio, and expensive motor cars driven by liveried chauffeurs. We feel that at least six servants are indispensable—chauffeur, cook, amah (children's nurse), gardener; and two houseboys.

But the majority of us live in moderately priced homes and apartments. We do with a cook and a houseboy, or even a "combination" who performs the duties of cook, houseboy, nursemaid, interior decorator, butler, mechanical engineer, messenger boy, gardener, interpreter, guide, counsellor, philosopher, and friend. In an emergency he can always pinch hit as barber.

When our children reach the age of twelve they grow at an astonishing rate, due to living in the tropics. Alarmed by their inclination to snobbishness and general helplessness, we then send them to the States to learn to do things for themselves and to have some of the conceit taken out of them.

Between intervals of entertaining bridge clubs and taking frequent trips home to the states we find time for quite a variety of activities. We worry about our jobs, go to the Union Protestant church, the Post chapel, or one of the dozen Catholic churches on Sunday, go motoring or

to the ball game or races in the afternoon, play golf to reduce, and partake copiously of free lunch and beer at the nineteenth hole immediately after. We go to mid-week Rotary luncheons with Filipino and Spanish business men. We haunt the piers for the thrill of watching the liners dock and depart. We go to the theater, and have a dance and a drink at the hotel or at Tom's before turning in. We support a Community Players organization, a Symphony Orchestra, and attend frequent recitals by visiting artists. The old-timers sigh for the day when visiting grand opera companies made provincial tours.

We live among 12,000,000 people of a different language and culture and make them learn our language instead of bothering to learn theirs. A few of us learn a little Spanish, view native villages from speeding motor cars, and thank our stars for the broadening influence of travel which has been denied to our stay-at-home friends.

We all go to mass on Christmas eve, because everybody else is there. The mingling of service uniforms, formal evening attire, gold braid, colorful *mestiza* dresses, white drill business suits, devotional black, and beggar's rags appeals to the poet in us. We go to Santa Ana cabaret or to Tom's or the Manila Hotel on New Year's eve. We celebrate April Fool's day twice a year, on April 1 and on December 31. We go to Baguio during the hot season. The Chinese groceries on Echague Street and the soda fountain on the Escolta are our village post office and town pump. Here we meet for a few minutes and gossip about the affairs of our community.

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"MANHOCO"

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We speak casually of dropping up to Hongkong or Shanghai, or down to Singapore or Java for a few days.

We belong to clubs, lodges, and societies of all descriptions. Our wives are on Red Cross and municipal project committees with Filipino, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and European matrons. We meet their husbands at Rotary Club luncheons and call them by their first names.

We celebrate on the slightest provocation. With a truly cosmopolitan spirit we help the Spanish, Germans, and Swiss celebrate the founding of their respective republics, drink the health of the King of England at the Manila Club on his birthday, help the Filipinos celebrate the birthday of the Filipino martyr, Jose Rizal, and celebrate Saint Andrew's day, Saint Patrick's day and the Fourth of July, to mention only a few of our special days. We give Sanguinetti parties and Nights in Reno. We have Gridiron Club roasts. We welcome visiting royalty and round-the-world flyers with characteristic hospitality.

We collect oriental bric-a-brac, and after a few years look at our collections and say what fools we were the first year.

The Chicago and New York papers which we get from the news stands a month late are read none the less avidly for their lateness. At the news stands we can get our favorite American and British magazines, no matter what our reading tastes may be.

After two years we feel ourselves entitled to be called old-timers. Then we assume an attitude of superiority based on our indifference to house lizards and estero smells. According to our folk lore, the first year you push your soup plate away when you see ants in it; the second year you pick out the ants and eat the soup; the third year you abuse the waiter if there are no ants in your soup.

We speak a language which to us and our Filipino friends is English, but which late arrivals assume to be a Spanish patois. We speak of *soles*, *aparadors*, *camisas*, *abaca*, *buntal*, *quedans*, *estafa*, *barrios*, *chow*, *cocheros*, *colorums*, and *lavanderas*. It is most natural for us to speak of Chinese as *chinos*, of shops as *tiendas*, of drug stores as *boticas*. We refer to mess jackets as "monkey jackets," to Corregidor Island as "the Rock," to Zamboanga as "Zambo." The governor-general is familiarly referred to as the "G. G."

We gossip about our neighbors, but unite in a common feeling of superiority toward the newcomer, born of mutual experiences with giant cockroaches, typhoons, prickly heat, ants in the cupboard, the servant problem, "squeeze," the high cost of groceries, mosquitoes, wet season and dry, algae, the high cost of playing cards, dengue fever, boiled water, chits, Chinese music, and envelopes with flaps that won't stick.

We rejoice in the beauty of Dewey Boulevard at night, of the Christmas eve mass, of sunset on Manila Bay, of the swift and sturdy little destroyer flotilla at anchor in the bay, of the Sierra Madre range back of the city, of the Pasig as seen from the bridge at Fort McKinley, of the native dances, of the fire trees in bloom, and of the tropic nights.

We learn to ignore sights that, in the words of Podsnap, would bring the blush of shame to cheek of youth. We accustom ourselves to maintaining our *sang froid* in

the face of startlingly frank conversations.

We learn to distrust vegetables that are not cooked. We who would flatly refuse to ride behind a horse in the States do so here along with the best of them.

We take pleasure in the convenient custom known as "chits" — until pay day comes.

Every few years we get haggard-looking, begin to talk about "God's country," snap at our families and servants, read the "pink sheet," as we call the shipping page of the Manila Bulletin, and compare steamship fares. The items "one dz. Isuan soda water" and "1qt. White Label" appear more frequently on our grocery bills. People begin to say "John's missed too many boats," which is a polite way of saying that he's beginning to hit the skids. Friends begin to give *despedida* parties. We take a "business trip" to the States, from which we return a few months later, saying, "Boy, it's great be back."

Thanks to modern science, common sense, and fairly careful living our average life span is as long as that in America.

We promote real estate, build business blocks, and make investments in defiance of all rules of common sense. We read the monthly "old-timer" supplements in the Bulletin in which obituary notices of old-timers, pillars of the American community, are increasingly frequent. We minimize the probability of ultimate independence. Occasionally we realize with regret the decreasing size of the American

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*(Travelers Guide and Oriented Topics, April, 1937)*

TRAVEL NEWS

(Continued from page 3)

next month will be a big boon to business men. The hop to China from Manila will require about six hours.

Planes will leave Manila in the morning and arrive in Hongkong at noon, giving passengers a half-day's business in Hongkong. They can leave Hongkong the following morning and arrive in Manila in time for lunch. This service will provide businessmen with the opportunity of keeping a business engagement at either port and be back at their own offices in an elapsed time of 36 hours.

According to present plans, passengers will be carried beginning with the second or third flight after the inaugural mail flight scheduled to start from Manila on May 5.

Third big cruise ship to call at Manila this season is the *Franconia* which will dock on April 2, continuing on her world tour the same day.

The *S. S. Reliance*, cruising liner of the Hamburg-American was in port March 26th. The itinerary of the *Reliance* cruise includes thirty-seven ports in twenty-nine countries. Distinguished for its completeness the *Reliance* cruise features two countries not included in any other world cruise — Somaliland and Turkey. An unusual feature of the big ship is its beautiful Winter Garden Ballroom with its aviary.

On her sixth annual world cruise the *Empress of Britain* arrived in Manila March 20 with 425 tourists.