

THE PEOPLE

The Military: Apart from, but a Part of, the Community

The military has of necessity in some ways always constituted a separate community, separate both from the host community and any local American civilian community. Its mission is special, its members are highly transient, and it usually lives on bases which to some extent isolate it from the life around it. Nonetheless, it has contact with those other communities, and depending on historical circumstance, indoctrination, and the personalities of commanding officers, its degree of isolation can vary from almost absolute to minimal. The U.S. military community in the Philippines has since about 1909 and through 1964 been both high status and in Manila, well integrated into the Filipino and American civilian communities.

In 1901, the military was of course strongly hostile toward both these other communities. They saw no virtue in breaking bread or speaking well of those on the other side of a Mauser or a bolo, and it felt that the civilian representatives of the U.S. government were naive and even semi-traitorous in practicing the policy of "attraction," as it meant trusting and being friendly with elements of the population which, even in those instances when they had forsworn armed rebellion, were

²⁰JACC, July, 1941.

still unreconciled to U.S. rule. The consequence was that there was little mixing between the American military and official civilian communities, and none between the military and Filipino communities except for a minimum formal contact at official functions of the Governor General. This phase, however, did not last much beyond Taft's departure.

Taft was followed by Luke Wright, who was more friendly toward the American civilians, and then, after Governor General Ide's brief tenure, by Governor General Smith, a former Brigadier General of volunteers. By this time, all but the Moros had accepted U.S. sovereignty, and pacification, however bitter a pill for the military, had justified itself politically. Moreover, a former soldier, even if a non-professional, was now the head of the civil government. In the meantime, the Army's living arrangements had improved immensely: troops were still stationed at Fort Santiago and in the old Spanish barracks (Cuartel de España) inside the walled city, but the bulk of the forces were at the new Fort McKinley—out beyond Pasay—and at Fort Mills on Corregidor, the island at the entrance to Manila Bay. These two camps would soon be known as two of the finest army posts in the world, and there is nothing like comfortable living arrangements to reconcile the soldiers and their families to garrison duty and to promote community relations.

Fort McKinley was built on 1,800 acres lying on the right bank of the Pasig, six miles southeast of Manila. The site was selected because it was high and dry, and one of the healthiest spots in the Philippines. Purchased in 1902 from the hacienda Maricabon, it was said in 1905 to be, after Aldershot in England, the biggest military cantonment in the world. Though not larger than Kansas' Fort Riley, it had more housing. Altogether, there were 198 buildings and living quarters for 5,000. Its Memorial Building, financed by the D.A.R., was for the enlisted men. It included facilities for billiards and bowling, a gymnasium, library and amusement hall seemingly justifying a journalist's observation that the G.I., even in 1905, was "never forgotten nor neglected, no matter if he be 8,000 miles away, by the good people under whose flag he serves."²¹ B. W. Cadwallader Co. had constructed the building, the Commanding General's quarters, and ten miles of sidewalks and roads out of Green Island Cement supplied by William H. Anderson and Co. The Post Assembly Building, the most attractive building esthetically, had a main assembly hall measuring 45 by 105

²¹Far Eastern Review, August, 1905.

feet, a small park and fountain in the rear, and a porch twelve feet wide which surrounded the entire building. Built by O. F. Campbell, the best known contractor of this early day, it was the site of the Commanding General's reception for Secretary of War Taft and Mrs. Alice Roosevelt in 1907. Hospital pavilions, a brigade headquarters and eight large barracks were also built by Campbell.

Construction at Corregidor began in July 1904. The first garrison of Coast Artillery arrived in May of 1908, and within a few years, Fort Mills could boast of facilities comparable in comfort with those of Fort McKinley. There were seventy-two miles of roads on the island. Street cars ran every half-hour during most of the day. Temperatures ranged from five to ten degrees cooler than on the mainland. Though somewhat isolated by its position far out in the bay, a daily boat left Corregidor for Manila every morning and returned in the evening. The very completeness of facilities at the base, however, encouraged the isolation of the military community stationed there from Manila and the outside world.

Military personnel stationed inside the city, however, and to a considerable extent those residing at Fort McKinley, were of course in closer contact with the Manila American community. Apart from reciprocal attendance at official functions, there was polo and baseball, particularly, which brought military and civilians together. Contact with the Filipinos was greatly increased through the Army's promotion of sports, particularly boxing and baseball, while the ladies of the garrison were brought into touch with Filipino families of high status through extensive charity activities. As we have seen, the McKinley ladies were chiefly responsible for getting the nursing school at St. Luke's Hospital in Tondo under way in 1907. Resistance to boxing between Filipinos and Americans, at first, had to be overcome in both communities. The Manila municipal Councilors approved Eddie Tait's first proposal for such matches in 1908, and far from leading to increased racial antagonism between the two communities, as feared by some parties, the courage and skill of the Filipinos and the good sportsmanship of the Americans actually facilitated understanding and mutual appreciation between the two communities, as did the initiative taken by McKinley in 1917 to form the first Boy Scout troop, which was followed by the YMCA in Manila.

Harrison's regime, however, split the American community, as we have seen. The service families were nearly all anti-Harrison, and although his lurid descriptions of intrigue at the

Army and Navy Club are certainly overdrawn, there is no doubt that few of the service representatives sympathized with Harrison or his policies. The inevitable result was their withdrawal into their own circles and voluntary abstention from all but strictly official life until 1917.

World War I, of course, had great effects on the two communities. Most of the local professional forces were shipped overseas to France, drastically reducing personnel, and almost eliminating American participation in polo, boxing and baseball. When local troops were sent to Vladivostok and along the Siberian Railroad during the U.S. intervention in 1919, they were organized into the Thirty-First Infantry, which on its return in 1920 was assigned first to Fort McKinley and then to the Cuartel de España in Manila for eleven years of garrison duty before being sent to Shanghai in 1932. Under the circumstances, this regiment inevitably became "Manila's own" and the integration of the military and civilian communities was as complete as the limited number of service families stationed in Manila or the self-contained life at Fort McKinley and Fort Mills would permit. All along, a good many American children from service families, despite schools on the bases, had been attending Central School, or the parents had been going to the local Episcopal, Union and Catholic churches, and there were intimate contacts between both children and parents.

When General Wood was appointed to the post of Governor General, the military, of course, as was to be expected, moved back *en masse* into civilian community enterprises. Wood was one of their own, and his policies were as congenial as Harrison's had been unpopular. Moreover, he brought considerable numbers of professional Army officers directly into Malacañang on assignment — to the point, in fact, that a good many American civilians felt that he was overdoing it. The community as a whole, however, basically Republican and Conservative, welcomed the change, and some of its members, as we have seen, were encouraged to try to set the clock back. The aggressive Chamber of Commerce had close contacts with both Malacañang and the highest service officers during this period.

By the time of the Davis regime, however, the military and civilian communities were well integrated. Past differences with the Filipinos and their aspirations faded as the Japanese menace loomed larger both to Americans and Filipinos. Life at McKinley, now called the "most beautiful U.S. Army post under the American flag," was pleasant and very active socially. The officer's club, scene of most of the activity, had a mem-

bership of about 175, and socializing back and forth with the local community continued briskly down to the war. Officers' living quarters were probably the finest at any U.S. post, and the station was "equipped with every essential of work, recreation and field maneuvers." The post had been commanded by distinguished General officers, and in 1933, its Commander was Brigadier Casper H. Conrad, Jr.

Corregidor now had by far the largest number of Americans (just under 2,000 in 1933) compared with 1,477 stationed at the Cuartel de España and only 330 at McKinley, where the troops were now Filipino Scouts (2,736). Fort Mills was a completely self-sufficient community, with housing, hospitals, churches, schools, a library, stores, clubs, a golf course, tennis courts, street cars and servants who would usually be passed along from one service family to its successor. For entertainment, apart from golf and tennis, there were movie houses, boxing, bowling and basketball and beach bathing. Temperatures were mild, mosquitoes had been eradicated and it was probably the best assignment in the Army.

In December 1932, the Post of Manila, which was garrisoned by the 31st Infantry, had its headquarters at the Cuartel de España, though some of its troops were still at the old Estado Mayor just south of the Pasig. The officers' quarters were limited. The Commanding General, who had his headquarters staff at Fort Santiago, was housed at the beautiful old Spanish residence at Plaza Militar (alongside of which the Magsaysay center would rise in the Sixties), where there were also quarters for a few other senior officers, but many officers were on a commutation basis and lived in clubs. Sternberg General Hospital (named after a Brigadier who was Surgeon General of the Army from 1893 to 1902) lay close to the Cuartel. A modern facility, it was staffed by five American doctors and a detachment of nurses. The regiment carried on all the normal activities of an urban garrison, in closer contact with the civilian community because it lived among them. It too had its boxers and baseball team, its dances and its diversions.

The closest contact at the top of the two communities probably occurred through polo and in the Episcopal Church, with which many of the higher officers and some of the Army's lower echelons were identified. Since many of the ladies of the civilian community were also members of the Polo Club and of the Episcopalian Church, increased social contact followed from both polo and churchgoing. Early in 1932, the regiment had been sent to Shanghai for five months to protect American

citizens and property, but this was the only action it saw until it was practically destroyed in Bataan in the early days of World War II.

The Navy had bases at Olongapo and at Cavite, only a short distance across the bay from Manila. The small Asiatic Fleet wintered each year in the Philippines, but the Cavite Naval base was small, secretive and relatively little involved in community affairs before the war.