

seemed cheap in the P.I. Life was of a low value and these people seemed to make their whole living servicing us. There were rattan and wood bowls and t-shirts belts and jewelry to buy, but it was mostly souvenir type stuff. Decent furniture could be had for half-price from some merchants, but was just as costly if shipped, or a hassle if loaded on to the military ship. Some of the guys thought motorcycles were a bargain and we shipped a couple back. Someone picked up a Honda Civic. I imagine the bargain lay in the bragging points of the deal mostly. But who wants to service what they didn't sell once back in the states.

One day I followed a cock fighter to the ring outside of town. Cock fighting is an organized sport and at least a hundred matches are held daily. I ran into a postal clerk from my first ship who sponsored a few cocks. He didn't clear much money he said but had his periods of victory sporting cocks. He also sponsored a gal in a shop as the P.I. can be very free market and an industrious Filipino will latch on to an American and make him a little profit. If she is a woman it can be a nice setup for a sailor. Needless to say assignments to the P.I. are prized. Even with low wages we could live like kings. Still tied down by my note even my small funds provided a decent time.

Filipinos are very festival orientated. They love to congregate in the streets and hold parades. I watched one Cinco de Mayo sort of thing that included a stage presentation, with comics, they like a two man dialogue, musical groups and a beauty contest. The show was held in the street and was free. Talk about packing them in. One religious parade was a sight to behold. Electric lights were strung in a outline of canopy on poles held by some of the participants. One man pushed a noisy gas motor electrical generator to light the lights. a five piece band, sort of Slavation Army style, made clunky hymnlike march music. The girls being confirmed were all dolled up and looked angelic, and a chosen neighborhood queen lead the way. I found beer was 25¢ in the sari-sari stores.

When we pulled out of P.I. I got news that my motorhome was sold. I couldn't believe it for a month, but I had even cleared a couple of hundred bucks which got banked, but I had even cleared a couple of eventually it dawned on me I was out of debt. I reduced my allotments and put it in my bank and doubled what I had to live on and was able to spend a hundred bucks a week while putting some away for a rainy day and a car for bombing around California. We left the tropic climes to do an amphibious operation in Okinawa. We never pulled into a port on these operations. We would float set up, send out the frogmen, SEALs, check the beach, and launch the marines or beach the ship and run jeeps off the bow ramp with or without a causeway bridge. We splashed the causeways once and left them some damn place. We moved around some gear, none of my business, and left some big track guns some damn place for the full time ground forces. We always had a squadron of Trax with us. About twenty marines with gear would jump in these amphibious tanks with closed tops and go out camping for up to three days. We liked to see the grunts go as the chow improved and did not have to wait to eat. Marines are funny in a way. They get no training at anything other than field manuevers. There intellectuals are mechanics and the track aquadron. The grunts are kept in a pitiful frame of mind. The grunts get into a martial arts and Charles Atlas sort of mentality through physical trianing and rank and file discipline. Not a real inspiring sort of existence but not a real strain on the old gray matter either. I saw that these guys moved up from packing light automatic weapons to large cal and even Stinger nad gun and a ships security force will hand out shotguns, M14s, and train gunners mates on 50 cal heavy machine guns. The engineers hold empty .45 for watch and break out M-14s if on the security force. I fooled around with the guns but no real interest developed in them for me. I did not feel a great personal need to gain any authority by playing with the weapons. It wasn't part of my job.