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Odyssey of a Philippine Scout, by Whitehead

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Odyssey of a Philippine Scout. By Arthur Kendal Whitehead. Tucson, Arizona: Arizona Lithographers, 1989. 315 pages.

Not merely a chronicle of a young American soldier's chance encounters in the Philippines during the early years of World War II, Arthur Kendal Whitehead's memoir portrays vividly the islands' physical and human diversity, as well as the feeble resistance put up by Fil-American forces quickly overrun by Japanese invaders after Pearl Harbor. Chronologically structured across four sections entitled "Before The War," "The Japs Invade," "Derelects," and "The Long Sail," Whitehead's well-paced narrative is remarkably informative without the aid of any acknowledged secondary and primary sources. Despite the author's keen eye for detail, however, his work is blemished by an unapologetic ethnocentrism that taints his perceptions, even as it flays contemporary sensibilities.

Whitehead debarks amid much celebration in prewar Manila and is immediately thrust into the cultural ambience of his new surroundings. Although taken aback momentarily by the Filipino penchant for eating dog and the dangers of the capital's disordered traffic with its swirl of taxis, buses, and *calesas*, he notes the repeated turns of *bienvenidas* and *despedidas* and is "overwhelmed by the show of friendliness" (p. 14), later conceding that the "Filipinos' finest trait is hospitality" (p. 92). Yet a fellow-officer forewarns that all his hosts might not be cordial because "our presence is resented by the hierarchy of the bureaucracy, made up mostly of the well-to-do" who "seem to go out of their way to persecute the American" (p. 5).

Once assigned to the Twenty-sixth U.S. Cavalry Regiment, a Philippine Scouts unit stationed at Fort Stotsenburg in Pampanga Province, Whitehead develops an admiration for what he calls these "little brown men" (p. 3) officered by Americans with their "alertness, courtesy and . . . excellent appearance" (p. 11). But notwithstanding the Scouts' élan and intensified training, when Imperial Japan attacks in 1941 Gen. Douglas MacArthur and his United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) waver and fall back. Even as Whitehead is harried by Japanese aircraft at the time his unit deploys northward to Pangasinan's Lingayen Gulf, he remains convinced that "eventually the United States would bring in sufficient strength to hold the Philippines" (p. 51). However, he soon becomes engulfed in the whirlwind of combat and is separated from the Scouts.

Caught in the wake of the invaders' southward advance, Whitehead treks south, paralleling the foothills of the Sierra Mountains, and with the help of friendly Filipinos along the way, hopes to rejoin General MacArthur's retreating army. He soon realizes MacArthur has reverted to the prewar War Plan Orange strategy, calling for a delayed withdrawal into Bataan and a protracted defense of the peninsula until reinforcements arrive from the United States. Still, Whitehead at once recognizes the futility of attempting to break through Japanese lines in order to reach the besieged garrison and

despairs "as to how long it would be before America would become strong enough to retake the Philippine Islands" (p. 93). "I still felt it could be years," he writes (p. 96).

Early on Whitehead disparages the Filipino capability for organized guerrilla activity on Luzon and decides to make off to the Visayas, expecting to locate a surviving USAFFE unit. Despite a favorable impression of the Scouts and the many risks brave civilians had taken to succor him and other stranded Americans, he believes the poor combat showing of the Philippine Army typified Filipino prowess. Almost as important in discouraging a broad-based resistance movement in the archipelago, according to Whitehead, was the population's parochialism. The author bemoans what he perceives as a lack of national patriotism, inherent in the native culture's *sakop* orientation and *kami* exclusiveness, observing, for example, that Filipinos "reportedly from Leyte . . . expected no hospitality or help from the civilians on Luzon" (p. 90). Since "an individual's interest or concern usually went no further than himself and his immediate family, sometimes his barrio," the author laments, "I had not yet heard any feeling of nationalism expressed" (p. 93).

Upon his arrival in Panay, Whitehead's suspicions about Filipino guerrillas are confirmed. In fact, he becomes as much preoccupied with their threat to his survival as he is with the Japanese enemy. Whitehead's obsessive mistrust for his *bete noire*, Col. Macario L. Peralta of the Philippine Army who led guerrillas on the island, is undisguised; for instance, he "did not put it past him or any of the others around him, to attempt to turn me in for [a] reward" (p. 225). The author has nothing but utter contempt for Peralta's men. The Sixty-fourth Regiment's headquarters, he complains, was "swarming with officers, most of whom were doing nothing" (p. 231). Indeed, they demonstrated little military demeanor and instead were predisposed to mistreatment of civilians and prattle about "women," and "pay from Uncle Sam" (p. 231). Disenchanted and offended since "little thought was being given to killing Japs but much to pretty uniforms and women" (p. 226), Whitehead readily forsakes Panay's guerrillas and, eluding the Japanese, ultimately escapes the Philippines in a lengthy and daring voyage, aided by a few companions.

Whitehead's adventure complements other books of the same genre. Both *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerrilla in the Philippines* by Ray C. Hunt and Bernard Norling and *Lieutenant Ramsey's War* by Edwin Price Ramsey and Stephan J. Rivele depict USAFFE fighting men who, unlike Whitehead, tarried in the islands and commanded Fil-American guerrillas. Preston John Hubbard's *Apocalypse Undone: My Survival of Japanese Imprisonment During World War II* and John S. Coleman, Jr.'s, *Bataan and Beyond: Memories of an American POW* recall the horrors of the Bataan death march and Japanese captivity, experiences avoided by Whitehead.

To their credit, the above authors have shunned the flagrant racism found throughout Whitehead's work, a prejudice that insults and demeans Filipinos and Japanese alike some forty-five years after hostilities ceased. At one point Whitehead pens, for example, that the "girls in Cuyo were very pretty, of lighter complexion and with finer features" (p. 245), and when Jurado "asked me if I would approve of my sister marrying a Filipino . . . my answer did not improve our relationship" (p. 259). From beginning to end, the Japanese are "Japs" and stereotyped negatively as "slant-eyes" (p. 102) and "sadistic fiends" (p. 173) that "had a somewhat apish walk" (p. 160), an image most recently analyzed in John W. Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*.

Nevertheless, Whitehead has succeeded in writing an insightful and readable account about his wartime experiences. Both the general reader and specialist, once alerted to the author's prejudice, should benefit from reading his study while this reviewer recommends *Odyssey of a Philippine Scout*, ironically, for its cross-cultural perspective.

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E.J. Halsema: Colonial Engineer. A Biography. By James J. Halsema. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1991. xiii, 413 pages, pictures.

We seldom imagine how life would be if we did not have houses complete with furniture and facilities like running water and electricity. True of individuals, this is also true of institutions and political entities, like the Philippines. And yet hardly any attention has been given to this element of our national life. Philippine historians spend hours studying various aspects of our past, but research into infrastructure has not been a priority.

This is the merit of this brief biography, a son's work of love, that seeks to fathom the man his father was. It is the story of one of the first successful American engineers who cast their lot with the new American colony in the Far East and helped improve the physical conditions that were an integral element in the growth of the Philippine nation. Fortunately, the story did not degenerate into an emotional caricature, but is a dignified, respectful, and sober picture of a man Filipinos would do well to know.

Three things impress the reader of this book: Eusebius J. Halsema himself, his career in prewar Philippines, and his significance in the total context of Philippine history. Born in 1882 in Ohio, of Danish ancestors who had migrated to the United States, Halsema came to the Philippines as a