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The MacArthur Highway And Other Relics Of American Empire In The Philippines

THE MACARTHUR HIGHWAY &
OTHER RELICS OF AMERICAN
EMPIRE IN THE PHILIPPINES

JOSEPH P. MCCALLUS



Synopsis

It has been more than a century since the American conquest and subsequent annexation of the Philippines. Although the nation was given its independence in 1946, American cultural authority remains. In order to locate and lend significance to the relics of American empire, Joseph McCallus retraces the route Gen. Douglas MacArthur took during his liberation of the country from the Japanese in 1944 and 1945. While following MacArthur's footsteps, he provides a historical and geographical account of this iconic soldier's military career, accompanied by a description of the contemporary Philippine landscape. McCallus uses the past and the present to explore how America influenced the country's political and educational systems and language, as well as the ramifications of the continued U.S. military presence and the effects of globalization on traditional Filipino society. He examines the American influence on its architecture and introduces to the reader the American expatriate business community—people who have lived in the Philippines for decades and continue to help shape the nation. The MacArthur Highway and Other Relics of American Empire in the Philippines is an absorbing look at how American military intervention and colonial rule have indelibly shaped a nation decades after the fact.

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Customer Reviews

I have just completed reading "The MacArthur Highway and Other Relics of American Empire in the Philippines" by Joseph Mccallus. I am simply amazed to have discovered such a book devoted to my insatiable appetite for any careful study of the Philippine-American experience. While there are other outstanding books that address the more academic nature of the political/social/military relations between the United States and the Philippines, this is the only book of which I am aware that includes a recount of personal travels throughout this archipelago describing observations on the "artifacts" (to include ex-pats) of the "American Era" that slowly fade from the landscape. As Dr. Mccallus travels through significant parts of the Philippines where action occurred during World War II, he presents enough history that the reader understands the importance of the location and then describes what he finds there today. For my interest, such descriptions were enough reason to read the book. As my father-in-law was a survivor of the Bataan Death March, I was especially touched by his description of places related to that tragedy. However, my favorite parts of "The MacArthur Highway and Other Relics of American Empire in the Philippines" occur when Dr. Mccallus describes the people and events that occur along his journey, much like Evelyn Waugh ("Niney-two Days", travel in British Guiana) and other travel writers did in the past. Dr. Mccallus' observations are quite detailed and accurate and are also filled with understated wit that reminds me of Susan Orlean's descriptions in the "Orchid Thief". Unlike another reviewer, it is my feeling from this book that Dr. Mccallus is indeed tremendously respectful and appreciative of the Philippines and the Filipino people. In fact, he is often critical of the impact that the American presence has had on the people there. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in the history of the United States and the Philippines, anyone who has an interest in the relics of World War II, and especially for anyone who shares interest, as I do, in personal accounts of travel in the Philippines. I enjoyed Dr. Mccallus' writing style; at times I laughed at his misfortunes during his travel; at other times I felt tears in my eyes as he carefully recounted the horrible suffering of the people in Manila during the destruction of that city. My only reason for a "4" rating rather than a "5" is that I wish that Dr. Mccallus could have spent a few more pages on his actual travel observations and a few less on history lessons that could be found in other sources. I am now anxious to travel to many of the sites he so vividly discussed to see them for myself. It is with regret that I realize that many of the true characters he described will no longer be around to meet on my future journeys to the wonderful

nation of the Philippines.

GREAT piece of work!

Aside from the many annoying typos that plague the work, the author, a professor at an unremarkable state university in the American South, seems to lose the plot and instead of providing an account of the America's role in the Philippines, he engages in a number of outrageous insults of the Philippines and Filipino people. Rather than portraying the Philippines as the proud emerging market that it has become and the role that the US has played in that remarkable story, the author states that the Filipino people are largely dishonest and that an entire generation of women between the ages of 18 to 24 are prostitutes. There can simply be no excuse for such writings. Thousands of the women who he wrongfully claims are working on their backs are actually working in call centers throughout the country. The Philippines is the number one outsourcing destination in the world and it has surpassed India as the number one location for call center work. Remarkably, his poorly researched book does not even mention this billion dollar industry or the American companies that are locating in the Philippines to support this industry. Somehow the author must have missed the tens of millions of square feet of class A office space that is currently under construction in the city to expand this industry. While he claims to be a friend of the Philippines, with friends like this I would hate to see the country's enemies.

Dr. McCallus takes the reader on a long, rambling first-hand journey across the Philippines as he seeks to retrace Douglas MacArthur's footsteps during the re-conquest of the Philippines, and along the way visit historical sites related to his journey. The book compares the prewar and postwar views of each location with the contemporary picture. The first-person perspective allows the reader to feel every step of the journey through hot, muggy forests and down muddy roads while traveling to each locale. In many places he finds that the local population has little idea of the significance of the monuments and memorials in their towns, much as the U.S. has forgotten its own Civil War monuments. The author has created an honest and unflinching portrait of a country that in many ways is still struggling to create its own identity after hundreds of years of Spanish rule, decades of American governance, the brutal occupation by the Japanese military during the war, and then decades of dictatorial rule by former President Ferdinand Marcos. Overall an interesting and insightful journey and well worth reading.

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