

What follows is an excerpt from a first and third person memoir, *Fear of Success*, by Don Anderson who was stationed at Tarumpitao Point LORAN Station in the Philippines during 1956.

On January 4<sup>th</sup> Don and a load of foodstuff were flown in a two-engine Grumman Albatross amphibian from the Sangley Point Air Station to the LORAN station at Tarumpitao Point on the southern west coast of Palawan Island. Where did that name, Tarumpitao, come from. Don never knew. He could never find it on a map or in a geographical dictionary. Maybe the Coast Guard made it up from how some native appellation sounded. Regardless, the users of Loran needed a name for their equipment to hone in on. Don liked it—thought it was jungly sort of name. LORAN stood for LOng RAnge Navigation: a high power, low frequency radio beacon that ship and aircraft navigators used to help determine their location. (Mostly Don didn't use acronyms, like LA in place of Los Angeles, but LORAN was OK because it stood in place of such a mouthful and sounded like a word.)

The Tarumpitao Point LORAN station consisted of a grassy air strip, two large round wooden water tanks and seven Quonset huts: three for quarters, a mess hall, a recreation room, an engine room to generate electricity and, a hundred yards off by itself, the LORAN transmitter shack with its adjacent antenna field of wires strung among several telephone poles. Twelve Coast Guardsmen maintained the station: four Electronics Technicians, a Radioman, two Enginemen, a Seaman, a Cook, a Boatswains Mate, a Hospital Corpsman and a Captain —an Ivy League ninety-day wonder Lieutenant JG. Commanding officers, no matter how small their vessel or establishment or how low their actual rank, were always called Captain.

A quarter mile north of the LORAN station, at the mouth of a wide creek, there was a “barrio” where three-dozen maybe Moro natives lived in five or six thatch and bamboo huts on stilts. Maybe the Barrio was Tarumpitao. Barrio? What language did he “natives” speak? Some mash of Spanish and Arabic? Further north Filipinos used many different languages. Was *barrio* common to all? Don had little curiosity about it. None of the Coast Guardsmen ever learned any Tarumpitao speak. Maybe a few words for handicraft items they wanted to buy. And, but for Chan’s wife (more later) sex was not for sale so there was no reason to develop any vocabulary around its procurement. Half a mile on up the coast from “Tarump” an East Indian traded cloth, thread, notions and warm soda pop for copra, dried coconut meat, over a bamboo Dutch door at the front of his tiny hut. Stuff he got from coastal traders who stopped by from time to time—not often. There were no roads of any kind in Southwestern Palawan. Only jungle trails. Just beyond the Indian store a slender wispy-haired young American missionary lived with his with his willowy blond wife and their pale infant in a rude thatch *manse*. In addition to his efforts to save souls, he tended a little garden to demonstrate modern cultivation techniques to the natives. With what success? The missionary took little interest in the Coast Guardsmen, nor they in him except to covet his willowy blond wife (Don at least). Whom he kept well out of sight. Shortly after Don’s arrival at Tarumpitao Point the man of God and his family abandoned their outpost and were not replaced. Did God leave with them?

The whole extent of Palawan Island, over two hundred miles north to south, was very sparsely populated and had only one real town, Puerto Princessa, on the east coast. To the west of the central mountains, dense jungle ranged everywhere down to the margin of the South China Sea. There were no roads, only foot trails. No settlements other than the little barrio of “Tarumpitao”, which probably existed where it did because the Coastguardsmen were there to enhance its economy. Here and there, very sparsely, a family lived alone in a simple stilted hut

at the center of a small clearing. Perhaps the natives' ancestors had been converted to Islam during some long past Muslim permeation. They were thought to be Moros, but none seemed to practice any worship. No religious leader or elder was evident. None were literate. Both men and women wore skirts and blouses. They cultivated rice, grown in dry ground rather than paddies, and several root vegetables. The men hunted birds with poison-dart (curare, the Coastguardsmen believed—based only on romantic hearsay) blowguns and caught large lizards and wild pigs in traps. The women cooked on spits and in clay pots out of doors over open fires. Some older men tended coconut groves and their harvested nuts sat split and drying on the beach. Their only cash crop. When a coastwise lugger came under sail to trade several men gathered together to ensure the copra was paid for and not stolen by pirates.

“Doc,” the Chief Medical Corpsman who tended the Coastguardsmen's complaints and ills, opened his clinic every weekday morning to a dozen or so infections, and malaria. He treated them all, even setting and splinting an occasional broken bone. One clinic caller had been bitten on the heel by a green hooded cobra—not as deadly as an India cobra, but still dangerous. A friend had carried him a long way. He was in bad shape. Blue lines running up his calf. Doc cut X's into his veins, just like the pictures in a Boy Scout Handbook, and drew blood into a glass bulb attached to a red rubber suction cup. The snakebite man stayed several nights and went home bandaged and feeling better. Doc said his jungle clinic was almost like a physician's practice and he was proud of his freewheeling approach to treatment.

Once a month, to control mosquitoes, the Coastguardsmen sprayed their garbage dump, several nearby swampy jungle depressions, and the local barrio with DDT. Doc said it cut down on malaria for both natives and sailors. No one considered what harm the DDT might cause to the human constitution. Doc also convinced the barrio dwellers to move their common toilet, a

long plank reaching out over the creek with several vertical poles to steady one while squatting, to a site downstream from where they bathed and washed their clothes. Probably it didn't make much difference because there were so few people and the water was swift but Doc was pleased that they followed his recommendation. Quite inconsistent with these naive but well intended public health measures, the Coast Guardsmen supplied the natives with a large quantity of cigarettes. Don and the others were each allowed to order from the Cavite PX, for next to nothing, four cartons a month. Each traded half or more for native crafts: bolo knives with carved wooden handles and scabbards, baskets, blowguns with darts (not poison dipped), spears, and ebony bowls. Cigarettes were the medium of exchange among the locals.

The four Electronics Technicians, and Sparks, the Radioman, stood a rotating LORAN watch—six hours on, inside a grounded wire-cage room that served to isolate the LORAN timer equipment from unwanted electrical interference, and twenty-four off. In addition, on weekdays, they did maintenance work—excepting the midnight to six watch who got to sleep until lunch time. “Tropical Hours:” lunch from eleven to noon and quit for the day at two o'clock. Mostly there was little maintenance to be done unless something went wrong, which mostly it didn't.

One of the rewards for standing the midnight to six a.m. LORAN watch was to witness the sunrise—always about the same time because Palawan was close to the equator. Daylight arrived suddenly over the mountains to the east and the jungly details of the nearer hills almost jumped out of darkness. Like Kipling's Burmese thunder. Later Don saw on a map that Mandalay was nowhere near a bay and wondered how Kipling could have confused his geography. Later still he came to understand that the “road” to Mandalay was the shipping lane to Rangoon, not a highway inland from the coast. So Kipling was correct and Don was still learning.

The lead Electronics Technician was a brainy guy named McDermott. Small and wiry, almost bird-like, and despite his occasional impatience with others relatively slow witted, Don liked him OK. McDermott did more than his share of work and had a sense of humor. He had become a first class petty officer in fewer than four years and would be surely be offered Chief to encourage him to reenlist—which he wouldn't because he was set on going to college to study engineering.

Tarumpitao Point was a master station: it's LORAN signal was the reference for two slave stations, one two hundred miles north, and the other to the south. Don never clearly understood to what extent, or even how, ships and aircraft actually depended on Tarumpitao's steady signal but it was not to be off the air or out of sync with either slave station for more than two minutes a day. It was seldom even off for even one minute but no one wanted to log any down time on his watch. Syncing was mainly a slave responsibility. If the timer or transmitter failed the ET on duty switched to stand-by equipment that was always on and humming in a sort of sleep mode. Then he then tried to fix the problem. If he couldn't he called in the other ET's and someone, as often as not McDermott, discovered the cause of the failure—often pretty simple—an embarrassment to the man on watch who should have seen it himself. If everything went down and Tarumpitao was off the air for half a minute an alarm sounded all over the station. Day or night. All the ET's came on the run from whatever else they were doing. Even sleeping. For years, Don suffered nightmares about the LORAN alarm: was it ringing? yes, no, how long had it been ringing? couldn't turn it off, couldn't wake up, panic, what to do, he wanted help but dreaded help, caught asleep on watch ... wide awake!

It was rumored that the “slave” station to the north was better duty because it was very close to an island leper colony. Quarter of an hour paddling. The Coast Guardsmen were free to visit the colony and the lepers welcomed them and their cigarettes. Lepers, it was alleged, were very casual about sex. Lots of the younger girls were pretty and some not even lepers at all. Living-with relatives. And besides, it was believed that you couldn’t catch leprosy from an occasional short-time. Even with an active one. Don was never certain how much of this was true. He was inclined to think it was too good to be true. But he sometimes fancied having been assigned to the slave instead of the master. Sex might be pretty exciting with a leper girl. Probably they started young and wanted to get everything they could out of it before they couldn’t do it anymore. Don imagined imaginary encounters.

§

At Tarumpitao Point LORAN Station there was no sex for anyone except the Captain, who one evening a week had a screw with Chan’s Wife. Chan was the leader in the barrio. The “Mayor.” Chan’s wife was the most attractive, to us, woman in the barrio. There was a prettier girl, maybe fifteen or so, but she was seldom seen by any sailor. Off limits. Chan was paid in cigarettes for each time he escorted his wife to the Captain’s Quonset quarters. He waited outside and then walked her home. Kept her safe. The Captain didn’t share Chan’s wife with anyone, except presumably Chan, because he needed to maintain the proper separation between officer and enlisted men. And because one of the men might bring her, and then him, a dose of the clap from a mid-year Rest and Recreation visit to Cavite City. Doc, who confided more in Don than the others, told with some pride that he, unknown to the Captain, several times slipped out at night and rendezvoused with Chan’s Wife at a nesty trail side sort of place half way to the

barrio. And that Chan didn't even charge him because Doc was so generous with medicine and attention to all the natives. None of the other Moro men made their wives available to anyone.

During the night, while one of the ET's was on duty in the LORAN hut, another enlisted man stood security watch in the mess hall and made hourly rounds of the entire station. At the door of the LORAN hut he was supposed to ring a buzzer before coming inside so as not to startle the ET on duty. Being alone inside the hut, inside the wire cage timer room and inside the hum and glow of the equipment was very isolating and surprises were unsettling. During a midnight to six watch Don sat at the timer room desk and traced with pencil and paper a picture of Xavier Cugat's wife Charo from a *Forum* magazine. If you read Part 1 of this memoir you will recall that Don learned to draw as a Cub Scout by tracing pictures of bathing beauties from women's magazines. In the *Forum* photo Charo lay on her side wearing only a baby-doll negligee and her pretty face. The photo was taken from the foot of the bed to make the most of her curvy calves and plump lace-pantied bottom. Actually, Don discovered many years later, it was not Charo's bottom he traced—but the bottom of Abby Lane, who was Cugat's second wife. Charo was his third. Third of five. Surely at the time Don knew it was Abby's bottom but as time passed his memory got befuddled by years of exposure to newspaper ads for Charo's Las Vegas casino shows. When this confusion was pointed out to him he was astounded. How could he have supposed that his "Charo" of the early nineteen fifties could still look so voluptuous almost half a century later? (But then, how did the real Charo remain so young and sexy for so very very long? Still performing the *cuchi-cuchi* as of 2005.) Maybe all the Cugat wives looked alike? Well, regardless of such bewilderment, Don's *Mrs. Cugat* pictured in the early '50's *Forum* magazine made a very sexy subject for him to trace. What did he intend to add or subtract from her already seductive likeness? Maybe just fiddling with her image was stimulation enough—as when he had traced beauties with his Cub Scout friend in Ferndale.

Anyway, on that night in the Philippine tropics, Don's concentration on the task at hand, tracing *Charo*, was very great when suddenly: the security watch! Seaman Landgraff! Warning bell never rung—or perhaps never heard. Already almost at Don's shoulder! Almost caught! Don leaped, an animal reflex, from his chair blurting some involuntary incoherence and slammed the magazine shut. Slammed it with such vehemence as to imprint that image of Abby Lane's lovely bottom, if not her name, on his brain forever. Perhaps even on the synapses of his palm. He could, for ages after, anytime he wanted, recall Abby's innocent inviting gaze over her divine bare shoulder and picture perfect rump. Landgraff laughed at his alarm. Don laughed too—though nearly dizzy with panic. Neither acknowledged what Don had been doing—or might have been doing had Landgraff arrived five minutes later when Abby's sweet semblance had gotten the better of Don's caution. Landgraff stood there with a queer smile that said he knew Don knew he knew ..., probably, and after a few minutes of idle talk, he wandered off to continue his rounds—to assure Tarumpitao Point LORAN Station security. Don was too flummoxed to return to his creative endeavor.

Landgraff was an oddball: a career sailor on his second four-year hitch but still a Seaman. Not because he was a shirker or got into trouble. He did his job and behaved. No, he was just different. Liked being different. He required of himself, or pretended to, some higher standard of performance to merit promotion than was wanted of others. A standard known only to himself. Yet he liked to be told that already he more than deserved a higher rating. Landgraff was an odd duck. Not very social. One on one he encouraged talk about girls and sex. In the shower room, he said he wished his dick was as long as Don's. The girls must really love it. He seemed to relish unexpected remarks that put others off balance. To stump them. Don was uncomfortable. There was nothing remarkable about the size of his apparatus. Average.



However, he didn't deny the honor bestowed. Landgraff's own penis was also adequate size wise but had a bend in the middle. Which twist, he boasted, gave girls an extra thrill. Something special. Don doubted it. Landgraff just wanted to cause further unease. Besides, there were no girls at Tarumpitao Point for either stud to thrill with length or twist or even both. Masturbation was the only release. Maybe that was why Landgraff's was crooked— too much jerking off and always using the same hand.

Don supposed Landgraff was a homo. At least latent. Several years earlier he had married a Filipina who lived in Cebu with her family but he seldom mentioned her. Except to explain that she was why he didn't visit prostitutes when he was in Cavite City. It all sounded fishy to me. I figured the wife some kind of tricky who had snagged Landgraff for the family allowance and then went back home. Probably some kind of religious nut. Regardless of his peculiarities and my suspicions, Landgraff and I were fairly good friends. I encouraged him to give up whatever imagined shortcoming held him back and to seek promotion. Talk to the Captain. He did and was promptly advanced to Third Class Boatswains Mate. I gave myself some of the credit for having encouraged him.

## §

Mostly the Electronics Technicians got out of doing grubby station chores because they needed, or pretended the need, to tend the LORAN equipment. Some of the others resented this privilege and Don, not liking to be thought aloof, sometimes preferred to join in doing general grunt work—like digging a new drainage field for the station septic tank. He also volunteered to spend part of each Saturday morning cleaning and oiling the little cache of small arms. Guns were more interesting than LORAN equipment. The weaponry, kept in a closet magazine,

wanted regular attention because, despite being kept dry by the heat of several light bulbs, it fell prey to the tropical grunge that appeared where ever it found neglect. And certainly an important US aid to navigation on foreign soil ought to be prepared to protect itself from menace—as unlikely as that might be. And once peril did threaten.

A suspicious looking (how?) lugger sailed into the cove just beyond the airstrip. It was rumored that Moro pirates sometimes cruised the coast so the Captain called General Quarters. Because Don was responsible for maintaining the armory, his GQ assignment was to hand out the guns and ammunition. Unluckily, he was on LORAN watch when the pirates approached and thus denied the role of arming the crew and himself taking up a position of defense. However, the pirates turned out to be peaceful copra traders. Coincidentally the Coast Guard supply ship Nettle arrived next morning with fuel oil and dropped anchor next to the copra lugger. That afternoon a mix of pirates and Coast Guardsmen from both ship and shore played a softball game on the air strip. Don surprised the left fielder, playing short for a lightweight, by hitting a line drive over his head for a triple. A good feeling.

Anytime anyone left the LORAN station for a hike he was issued a rifle or handgun—just in case. (Of what?) Don had a revolver of his own—also kept in the armory. A .38 caliber Colt Cobra with a lightweight aluminum frame and a two-inch barrel. It was made for flyers and Don had bought it from a Coast Guard pilot. In part so he wouldn't have to hike with a bulky .45 on his hip—more because he thought it was cool. The .38 special came with a detective like shoulder holster and a supply of tracer bullets that made bright orange trails through the shadowy jungle. They even sizzled under water.

Mostly hikes were in twos and threes and there was often a lot of indiscriminate shooting. What were guns with unlimited ammo for? It was seldom that any one hit anything he intended and the natives were careful to steer clear of these idle expeditions. The most vexing wild creatures in the jungle were leaches. They lurked hidden on the underside of leaves from where they got swept onto one's clothing and then worked their way inside. After some time there was an itch, often about the ankle or the shirt cuff. Then scratching fingers discovered a two or three inch leach: ugly blue-brown and gorged with human blood. Doc said not to pull them off because some penetrating sucker part might remain under the skin and fester. Instead, use salt or burn them off with a match. The Chief Boatswains Mate uncovered a full fat leach sucking blood from his penis. The Chief was a burley gruff career man but the sight of this repulsive swelling fellow traveler, by then half the size of its uncircumcised host, nearly paralyzed him with dread. Don lit his Zippo and held the flame close to the greedy sucker, careful not to singe the Chief's pecker, and the loathsome creature recoiled and dropped away. Ugh! It was a moment before anyone could laugh about it.

Alone on the beach at the end of the air strip Don took a pot shot at a gliding sea gull. From the hip with an M-1 rifle. The bird plopped dead into the ocean and he felt a momentary thrill. Good luck. Then regret. Bad luck. Sorry for the graceful victim of his itchy finger. He remembered the bleeding blue jay he had killed as a boy. Same good/bad luck. When a loaded gun was in his hands and a target appeared it was hard to not to take aim and shoot. Hard for most young men. Americans anyway. Pointless.

On a Sunday afternoon, Don sat alone and quiet beside a jungle pool and listened to the raucous cacophony of bird, bug and beast noise makers. He fired one round from a Colt .45 semi-automatic pistol into the water and its loud report silenced them all. An eerie hush. Then,

from one tiny chirp, the tropical din grew up around him and he was awed by the loudness of its resurrection. Don liked to venture out alone but seldom went far or for very long. After an hour or so he felt a chill of isolation—cut off from his own kind—uneasy. Despite that getting truly lost was a very remote risk. The coast was close by and led back to Tarumpitao Point.

Engineman Aaronson and Don contracted with Curly's Brother to make them an outrigger canoe. Curly, the "Barracks Boy" who was paid in cigarettes to make beds and sweep the Quonset floor, older by many years than any Coastguardsman, recommended him. The brother hollowed a split log by burning its core with coals, finished the job with a primitive adz, and attached a single bamboo outrigger with vine ropes. Aaronson and Don fitted a rudder, stepped a mast at the log's middle, sewed a sail from pieces of bed sheets that Cook found for them and rigged a boom. Don wrote a partnership agreement to rule the ownership, use, and ultimate disposition of their mutual maritime property. Cook witnessed their signatures, and the document was deposited in the station strong box. The craft was christened Tarumpitao at a small launching ceremony. The canoe sailed fairly well inside the outlying reef although sometimes it capsized when we brought it in to shore through the surf. The Captain, who claimed to own a small sailboat at home on Cape Cod, went out with each of the Tarumpitao's owners and taught them tacking and how to come about with some finesse. He was a pretty good sailor.

Aaronson claimed his was the first family listed in the Philadelphia phone directory. His body was almost entirely covered with wooly black hair. He returned from his mid-year two weeks of Rest and Recreation in Cavite City with an extreme infestation of crabs. Doc had to shave him head to toe to exterminate them. Aaronson claimed to have screwed a Cavite City prostitute six times in one night. The one with crabs? Don didn't believe him. Don was sure he

couldn't screw six in a row. Twice, maybe three times under special circumstances, but then he would want to sleep. When Aaronson's assignment to Tarumpitao Point came to its end the outrigger, not often used, was traded back to Curly's Brother for two bamboo blowgun, quiver and dart outfits and two cock fighting knives, which all together were worth considerably less than the two cartons of cigarettes he had been paid to hollow its hull only a few months before.

§

After six months of isolated duty at Tarumpitao Point LORAN station, Don got his two weeks Rest and Recreation break at the Cavite City Air Station. With luck, R and R would include being taken along as "crew" on an overnight "training flight" to Hong Kong or Bangkok. Hong Kong meant bargain shopping for girls and clothes—Bangkok for girls and gems. Don was not lucky and spent his entire two weeks at the Air Station. However, he was assigned only to light duty and got lots of overnight liberty.

In Cavite City there were uncountable young and pretty prostitutes. And not so young and not so pretty ones who cost less to engage. At a back-alley bar, Don found and bought a short-time with a tiny waif who seemed hardly a teenager. Pretty. She took him to her "crib", a rude little stall with nothing inside but a cot and a washstand. Don found her wondrously skinny, encouraging, and supple. Her grip was as if she had pelvic fingers. For years afterwards she remained in memory as his benchmark of sexual satisfaction. Don paid his tab. He and she went on with their evenings.

At the "Coast Guard" bar near the edge of town, Don made a pass at the tall flashy long-time girlfriend of an Aviation ET who was away overnight—away, no doubt on a "training

flight.” But he was rebuffed. She said her man, to whom she was, or pretended to be, very devoted, would be angry. He, however, later told Don he would be happy to be rid of her because she was so green-eyed and constantly accusing him of infidelities. He said that every time he returned from an overnight trip, she smelled his underwear for the scent of another woman. Could she? Would vigilance enhance her sense of smell? Don didn’t believe it but had to suppose it might be so.

With a week of R and R remaining Don found a long-time girlfriend for himself and spent most of his liberty with her. Long time didn’t really mean more than no interlopers for the duration. Faithfulness on her part but not for certain on his. Camilla was perhaps a bit older than Don and not especially showy but she was pretty enough and easy to be with. Nice. Don liked her. He spent several nights in her tiny house and she indulged him in warm and cozy copulation—more comfy and rewarding, to Don at least, than wham-bang-thank-you-ma’am sex with short-timers. His masculine hunger after variety abated for a bit. Don and Camilla were like a couple on honeymoon. He woke in her bed to the summons of early morning arousal and the calls of an egg and balut peddler and there was Camilla already up and about. After a quickie, which she seemed pleased to bestow, Camilla served fresh-fried easy-over eggs from her kerosene-fired her hot plate. And little rolls with butter. She clarified that the balut man carried two heavy baskets, one with new eggs and one with baluts, hung from a long pole across his shoulder. One paid for whichever and then self-selected from the basket, which hung beyond the reach of the merchant. They ate their breakfast in the little patio that Camilla shared with her neighbor. Don wondered about her. Not about, conferring seclusion, didn’t have a long-time right now. Clean swept earth, big-leafed banana trees, bright feathered noisy birds. The sunlight had a bracing clarity that seemed peculiar to tropical mornings.

Afterwards they undertook little domestic errands together, shopping for supper, thread, and mailing a money order to her family in Cebu. Money Camilla earned with her body. Camilla made Don a flowery loose-fitting shirt with her foot-treadle Singer sewing machine. Together they attended Sunday morning Mass in a large church that had no pews. Everyone, as directed from the pulpit, stood or knelt on the tiled floor. Don tried to follow along but made the mistake of kneeling during a special prayer for prostitutes. Several people smiled and afterwards Camilla laughed that he was the only man so blessed.

Despite enjoying her domestic and carnal attentions, Don was not entirely faithful to Camilla. During that same week of R and R he also took up, at least tried to, with a pretty golden-brown girl who worked in the club across the road from the Coast Guard bar. Lucinda was not a prostitute. Her family owned the establishment: a bar, restaurant, and dance hall with an expensive upstairs brothel—very pretty girls, mostly patronized by Navy junior officers. Lucy lived there with her aunt and tended the restaurant cash register most afternoons. Don sat across the counter from Lucy, ate his lunch and made idle conversation, interrupted by other customers paying their tabs. Lucy seemed to enjoy Don's attention. They watched the pretty upstairs girls dance with each other and few afternoon customers. One of the girls, very slim in clingy satin, dragged Don onto the dance floor just for fun. Lucy and the others laughed at his embarrassed clumsy footwork. The following day her aunt let Don take Lucy to an afternoon movie in Manila. They held hands coming home in a jitney—though Lucy wouldn't allow touching in the dark theater. Lucy made their supper, which Don should have been sharing with Lucinda, and they ate across the restaurant counter. Don got tipsy-mushy and asked if Lucy would take him upstairs. Of course not—she wasn't like that. He apologized and she forgave his indiscretion. Their friendship cooled a bit. Don was disappointed even though he had known he would be.

Another afternoon Don left the Air Station on overnight liberty and went alone on a bus to Manila. An old woman sat next to him and peeled a balut. He had never before seen one opened: the chick (did ducks have chicks, or something else?) was pretty well formed and the smell almost staggering. Afraid to move for fear of embarrassing both the woman and himself (being laughed at?) he turned to the open window while she ate. In Manila he strolled about the city center. Not much to see. There were a lot of hissing noises back and forth among the pedestrians—odd salutations from one person to another. After a supper alone in an outdoor restaurant Don hailed a cab and asked the driver to find him a young girl. He did. Pretty. She seemed to be a relative of the cabbie. He picked her up at home and some of her family waved goodbye as they drove off. Don took her to a movie, in English, where he kissed and petted her in the dark. What he had hoped to experience with Lucy. She had tiny sexy-firm breasts and was tolerant of his attentions, which no doubt interfered with her enjoyment of the movie. Afterwards he took her to a hotel. She wanted him to go to her place but he wasn't comfortable with the idea of having her family around. Don wanted her alone, not her and hers. He was already very fond of her. Don fell in love with every woman he enjoyed sex with, no matter how brief their encounter. Kissing and petting and loving each girl was every bit as important as the ejaculation it all led up to. And he imagined that each girl returned his cuddling and kisses just as lovingly. Well, he didn't really imagine she did, he didn't give it much thought. It just seemed natural. Embarrassing to acknowledge in recall.

In the Manila hotel room Don paid his new sweetheart upfront, made love, and slept. Next morning she was gone. His wallet was on the nightstand where he had left it and nothing was missing. An honest girl, just as she had seemed.



Two days later Don had gonorrhea symptoms. He didn't report to the infirmary because, as had happened in Hawaii, he would be restricted to the base. He would just endure a few days of bighting pee and when he got back to Tarumpitao Point Doc would fix him up. Don confessed his disease to Camilla. She was angry about his infidelity but didn't much worry about him having surely given her the clap. He took her to a clinic in Cavite City. The doctor invited them both into his examining room. Don was uncomfortable but Camilla wanted him there. Maybe she had some misgivings about the doctor, but surely she had endured such treatment before. Camilla lay on her back with her heels in stirrups and the doctor took a smear. Don didn't like seeing her like that. She looked used and old. The image would persist and taint their lovemaking. Tarnish his fancy. He should have stayed in the waiting room. They waited while the doctor examined the smear. The clinic seemed professional enough. Spare but clean. Except in a by the door corner where there was a bucket containing a quantity of blood and slippery looking stuff. A charwoman came in and took it away. The doctor returned. Positive for gonorrhea. He gave Camilla a shot in the behind. Another not so pretty picture. He doctor offered to give Don a shot for his own infection but Don declined. He didn't want to spend the money and maybe didn't fully trust Philippine medicine men. He paid the bill. Not much at all. As he and Camilla left the clinic, another young woman was also leaving: barely able to walk and leaning heavily on her man's arm. Not an American. Camilla said the woman had just had an abortion—hadn't Don seen the mess in the bucket? What the char woman had fetched? Yes. Don was appalled. How casual it seemed—how could she be walking away so soon after—shouldn't she be resting in bed?

Don made no connections between his own sexual philandering, or that of thousands of other American soldiers and sailors, and the plague of venereal disease, unwanted pregnancy, and abortion that the local prostitutes endured. Nor did he concern himself with how young

many of the girls seemed to be or why they had become prostitutes. And continued. There didn't seem to be any organization behind it. No gangsters and pimps. Economics. Don was nice to each of them and generous but asked no troubling questions. He just loved them. He loved loving them. He chose each because she seemed young, attractive and nice. Nice was important. None ever refused him on account of himself—but then it was her business not to.

Having paid the doctor to cure Camilla of his gift Don felt rather chivalrous. He took her home and said goodbye. The next morning he would return to Tarumpitao Point. Then he hurried over to say goodbye to Lucinda, for whom he continued to harbor tender feelings. His two weeks of Rest and Recreation were over.

§

Back at the LORAN station Doc gave Don a penicillin cure. He said Don's was one of the worst cases of gonorrhoea he had ever seen. He had let it go too long and should have quit drinking as soon as he got symptoms. His mistake. He had thought it was only while taking the penicillin cure that one were not supposed to drink. Uninformed because he didn't inquire. Not asking about things he would be embarrassed to be thought ignorant of was his inclination. Well, now he knew. But it was empty knowledge as he would not ever get another dose of the clap.

Soon afterwards, the amiable and compassionate Tarumpitao Point "Doc" was replaced by a stuffy and stingy new medic who dispensed admonishments with his gonorrhoea cures and ended the practice of ministering to the local's various complaints and ills. He said it was against Coast Guard policy to treat natives. That the old Doc had been out of line. Too bad,

because the only other medical attention the locals received was from a Philippine public health nurse who twice a year passed through on foot and gave out quinine pills to malaria sufferers. The Captain was also replaced. By an ensign, now Captain Weinstein, who, like the new medic, was somewhat prissy. Neither Captain Weinstein nor the new medic showed an interest in screwing Chan's wife so Chan retired her. Weinstein soon lost Don's honorific because he seemed so disdainful of the natives. Didn't like them hanging around. An attitude encouraged by the prig medic as medically sound.

McDermott, the lead Electronics Technician, returned to the States for his discharge and the Second Class ET named Quick became the team leader. Don didn't like Quick. He was not nearly so smart as McDermott and was arrogant and pushy to boot. Big. Probably he had been shunned in grade school, become a bully and never moved on. One morning Quick and Don undertook some transmitter maintenance and Quick's disdain for caution almost did Don in. Adjusting an air gap high voltage capacitor plate they followed a routine: Quick turned the power off, "Off." Don, sitting hot and sweaty on top of the six foot tall transmitter housing, adjusted the capacitor gap and said, "OK." Quick turned the power on and examined the shape of the output pulse with an oscilloscope. They repeated this routine over and over, patiently configuring a perfect cosine-squared wave. But then Quick wasn't listening and turned the power on before Don said, "OK." Several thousand volts went through the long nose pliers in Don's right hand. Only because one handle of the pliers was grounded, by chance, against the transmitter housing was Don spared being knocked for a loop. The pliers were welded to the capacitor plate and had to be twisted free. Quick made light of his carelessness and Don didn't fuss but they both knew Quick had screwed up. It might have turned out otherwise. Don gained a step up in their relationship. He generally got along OK with misfits like Quick. He didn't like them but was civil because he wanted them to like him. And generally they more or less did.

A month later Quick broke his wrist and was evacuated to the Air Station at Sangle Point for two weeks. Don, who had the most time on the job, was left in charge of the ET group. He enjoyed the prestige but the not the worry. What if? And *if* seemed always to lurk just around the corner. On a Saturday morning Williams, a Sonarman who had been assigned to shore duty as an ET substitute, worked with Don to replace a faulty component in the stand-by LORAN timer. Don accidentally touched the chassis of the other, the on-line, timer with the tip of his soldering gun. There was a snappy little spark and sudden silence. Everything had quit. No hum. The alarm went off. We were down. Off the air. Don was stunned—rattled—couldn't think what to do—couldn't think at all. The alarm squawked. The other Electronics Technician and Sparks, the Radioman, arrived to help. The alarm was riveting. Out came the schematics and maintenance manuals. Don got panicky and called Captain Weinstein. In a moment, everyone was there. Everyone was talking. Schematics and manual instructions were hard for Don to follow even in quiet. He asked everyone but Willy and the other ET to leave. Surprised by his audacity. He felt like a mutineer. Captain Weinstein saw some wisdom in letting the three “experts” be undistracted and ushered the others away. Willy silenced the alarm. Don sat down on the floor with the maintenance manual. He hoped he might solve the mystery following text and logic rather than experience and intuition. However—instead of the words and diagrams he held in his hands he saw, right in front of him, from that low but fortuitous vantage point that the main-fuse alert lamp was lit. Bright red. Of course! Eureka! As his mother would say. Touching the soldering gun to the frame of the on-line timer had blown its fuse. And wasn't a blown fuse the first thing to look for? Always! They replaced the little, so obvious, fuse and everything came right up—in order—just right—almost in sync. So simply. What a relief. Don's stomach relaxed its churning. Desperation turned to almost hilarious relief. Pause—stand up—shoulders back. A job well done!

Don's explanation to the Captain emphasized problem solving rather than bungling. Modest. And despite the tumult, Tarumpitao Point had been off the air for only eleven minutes. Captain Weinstein took it all in stride. He was "Captain" again. Don felt foolish to have been so quick to panic. Quick to relinquish authority. As if his claim was not legitimate. Why hadn't he just kept cool? Why in distress did he need a *parent*? Questions he then barely recognized. Bothersome, for years after. No answers then either. To take the spotlight off himself? Deflect criticism? Don never truly thought it through and since such panics became fewer and fewer over time he lost interest. Trying to solve his psychological quirks was too taxing. When Quick returned with a plaster cast on his arm he said that he wouldn't have called the Captain. What did officers know? Nothing. Maybe Quick was right. In retrospect it did all seem silly. Did anyone really care? Don didn't know. Probably not. However, his recurring nightmares of screeching LORAN alarms and not knowing what to do became more frequent.

## §

The rest of Don's year at Tarumpitao Point went along fairly well. Willy and he refurbished an abandoned photo dark room at the back of the recreation hut and fiddled with developing film and making prints. The chemicals they found were aged beyond their expiration dates and it was difficult to keep them cool but they managed to produce a few passing prints. Don's Argus C-3 camera fell overboard from his and Aaronson's outrigger canoe but he recovered it. Willy took a picture of the disassembled parts laid out in the sunshine to dry. Don put it back together and the camera worked just fine. He enrolled in an English composition correspondence course through USAFI, the US Armed Forces Institute and passed. Captain Weinstein, who had become more of a regular guy, encouraged Don. He arranged for and

administered an armed forces high school equivalency. Don passed and got a certificate. When Don met the time-in-grade requirement Captain Weinstein approved his promotion to Second Class Petty Officer.

Because Don had attended movie operator school in San Diego, it was his job to requisition movies and to show them one evening a week. He did the ordering and maintained the 16mm equipment but he didn't much like watching films. Instead, he generally set up the show and then took over the LORAN watch for two hours so another ET could be the projectionist—and think Don had done him a favor. Captain Weinstein wouldn't let the natives sit at the back of the recreation hut as the previous Captain had done. The priggish medic claimed it was an unhealthy practice. So twenty or thirty men, women and children came in from wherever in the Barrio or jungle they lived and stood outside to watch through the mosquito screened windows. Don wondered what they thought about the black and white moving pictures of people, places and events they had never see the likes of. Did they believe they were images of a real world? A world they most certainly would never see.

Don made friends with a new Electronics Technician named Bill Dillon who was a reader and liked to talk about books. He gave Don *Look Homeward Angel*, which he enjoyed. But *The Web and the Rock*, Dillon's favorite, was too opaque. Don's mother wrote that she had bought a Volkswagen Beetle, which no one at Tarumpitao Point had ever heard of. She enclosed a photo and a brochure that claimed the car was so tightly built it would float for two hours if it fell into a lake! Dillon said it looked like a toy, but Don defended its aerodynamic shape.

There were a few minor excitements. Don almost put his almost bare foot down on a green cobra as he came out from the barracks Quonset hut. It had been sunning on the warm

concrete slab and Don's near misstep startled them both. Watching him slither away, Don marveled at the sinuous nonchalance of the serpent. And his own sudden reaction—something deep in the evolutionary past concerning snakes. Most of crew most of the time wore plastic shower shoes that called go-aheads. Go-aheads, because if you stepped backwards they came off. It seemed surprising that something or other didn't bite more of them more often. Don did get a tropical fungus under his toenails and it never went away. Years later a doctor told him that toe nail fungi were very difficult to cure. Why did he think it was tropical. Wasn't it as likely he caught it in the shower from one of his mates who brought it from the horse latitudes? Sleeping late after a midnight to six watch, Don woke to the smell of smoke. Each of the crew clothes lockers had a light bulb inside to prevent mildew. Dillon was a slob. Didn't stow his clothes properly and they had caught fire from the hot bulb. Don opened the smoky locker. Flames. He sprayed the flames with a water filled fire extinguisher. Dumb..Shorted out the electric power. Not for the LORAN equipment—but all the rest of the station. Very dumb to use water on an electrical fire. Don thought he was Johnny on the spot. Instead, he spent two hot sweaty greasy hours with Quick in the engine room trying to flash the generator into phase. Don couldn't get a mental grip on *flash* and *phase*, but Quick seemed to know what needed to be done and ultimately it was.

## §

The station cook, Lou Bryant, told Don stories about growing up as a Negro in St Louis and serving as a black sailor in the Coast Guard. He was resentful of discrimination but not bitter. Blacks were finding their voice back home and Lou enjoyed Don's audience to his occasional rants. They agreed to correspond after Lou returned to the states. Don wrote once but Lou didn't answer. Disappointing. Maybe Lou wasn't a letter writer.

§

Don more often went for walks alone. Despite the prig medic's disapproval but having Captain Weinstein's blessing. On an afternoon wandering he came across Curly's brother's house a mile or so south of the LORAN station: a bamboo and thatch hut on stilts. Chickens scratching underneath in the shade. Situated on the crest of a cleared hill with a sweeping view of mountains, jungle and the South China Sea. Beautiful. Curly's brother's wife was an attractive woman. An infant in a sling hung from her shoulder. She acknowledged Don but directly went inside and out of sight. Brother wasn't around. Don could see from the refuse near their outdoor cooking fire, a circle of stones and a rude hanger for pots, that they had recently eaten a lizard. Their life, except for eating lizards, seemed idyllic. There was a rumor of a Coast Guardsman who had been stationed at Tarumpitao Point several years before and who, after being discharged from service, returned to Palawan and was now living somewhere in the jungle with a native bride. Don imagined the same for himself. There was a pretty teenage girl in the Tarumpitao barrio he could love. She would be his bride and companion.

§

Willie was replaced by an ET named Roy Larson, a handsome fellow from Cucamonga, California. Don thought Cucamonga was just a funny made up name in a popular song. No, the song was, "*How Are Things in Glocca Morra? Is that little brook still leaping there? ...*" Don remembered it as, "*Are the mocking birds still mocking there? ....*" But maybe that was yet another song. Roy showed Don photos of his beautiful blond Cucamonga bride. He told Don about the games they



played in bed. He said he blew air into her vagina and then squeezed her tummy to make a cute little fart noise. Don was giddy with envy. He too wanted to smooch the no doubt button cute snatches of beautiful blond Cucamonga girls. But even more than wanting to satisfy his carnal hunger he longed for the tender intimacy that must encourage and accompany such frisky play. An adult intimacy. Shared, open, confident ... even accompanied by giggling. Don hadn't experienced that.

An Engineman named Hagermister, who's tour of duty ended six months before Don's own, had arranged to take his accumulated leave starting from Manila so he could return to the States by traveling alone, west to east, around the rest of the world. Don thought it was a great idea, an out of the ordinary adventure, and asked permission to do the same. Captain Weinstein approved and got his request approved and in January, 1957 Don packed up his belongings and souvenirs and prepared to leave Tarumpitao Point for good. He sold his .38 caliber Colt Cobra revolver to another Coast Guardsman—ever cautious, he had the buyer give him a detailed receipt—just in case the gun might ever be used in a crime and traced to its one time, short time owner. The JATO assisted takeoff left the air strip behind with great suddenness, but there were many fond memories Tarumpitao Point that traveled with Don for many years after.