



"Hey Joe" - Poems and Stories from the Peace Corps

Robert Nicholas

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Read review by former Peace Corps Deputy Director P. David Searles at peacecorpsworldwide.org/pc-writers/2013/06/04/review-of-robert/

June, 1968. Twenty-two years old, 5' 11" 155 pounds; red-haired, blue-eyed, fair-skinned, freckled and fresh out of college, I found myself flying out of Logan airport in Boston heading for a two-year stint in the Peace Corps in the Philippines teaching modern mathematics. It was the era of the Vietnam War - Woodstock - the first man landing on the moon. Everything I took as a given was challenged. My pre-conceived ideas of life, community, family and friendship were turned inside out, shaken apart, dismantled and reassembled. I was advantaged and was going to live with those who were less so. First hand in the "third world" was going to be a shocker.

"Hey Joe" was a greeting of affection Filipinos had for Americans. I am not going to spend 100 pages telling you what my teaching experience was like. That will be covered in one brief section. I devote myself to life outside the classroom, for this is where the Peace Corps experience really shines. The talents we brought with us were important, but the interaction with those we lived and worked with was what really made a difference. I showed them skills they could go forward with, and they gave me a lifetime of warm memories. This is a collection of poems and stories about my experience. You will be learning some of the local dialect along with me as you read. I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed living it.

Come larga (sail) with me on a banca (outrigger canoe) across the Sibuyan Sea to the malayo (remote) isla (island) of Romblon in the Philippines. Take your siya (chair) at the lamisa (table) as my new panimalay (family) and I enjoy our panyaga (lunch) of kanon (cooked rice), isda (fish), utanon (vegetables), fried saging (banana) and tubig (water). Meet my host Nana Lola. Lakat (walk) down the dalan (street) with me as I join my migas (friends) Manny, Louie and Popeye to drink tuba (fermented coconut milk). And learn how I got my nickname, "Puti Iboy".

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