

VP40 returns to Cavite City

Three former shipmates from VP-40 made a month long trip to Cavite City Philippine recently. I, (MIKE KANE), JACK FISHER, GEORGE PERKINS and his lovely wife KAREN met at the house we rented there for the duration. From the time we stepped off the plane in Manila it felt like we were home. It was a very interesting trip which we all really enjoyed. Some details are below for those interested. We will be returning in October so if anyone is interested, keep reading.

From the airport we went to Cavite city. The drive there which used to take quite a long time by Jeepney was now cut in half thanks to the Cavite Express which is a multi-lane highway. You still have to travel through smaller towns which have congested streets. In a short time it became very apparent we were in a different society. There was no display of anger on any philipino's face although traffic was horrendous. They all seemed to give and take very well, no verbal threats, no profanity. It was a joy to see them respect each other, although this is the nature of the people of the Philippines. They take their religion out of the church and practice it in their every day lives. Our next surprise was going through the checkpoint; same place, - looks exactly as it did back in the day. Traffic just flows through, no stopping. They don't stop you anymore and questioning you.

We were to live in a beautiful 4 bedroom home, shower and bathroom in each room. It was very comfortable with plenty of closet space and a queen size bed in each room. We in conjunction with our contact person from Cavite were able to hire a live in cook/housekeeper. We also retained a van & driver who was available 8hrs each day. The days were very hot and hard to get used to for me coming from QUEENS NY. The day we arrived I ventured by motorcycle side car to SAN ANTONIO which leads to the MAIN GATE of the SANGLEY POINT PHIL NAVY BASE. I attempted to get on base using my retired military id card. No luck... base is locked down tight. It was still a thrill to see the main gate. It also is in the same place and looks pretty much as it did back then.

One thing that I found funny was seeing a 7-11 store immediately on the left if you stand with your back to the gate. No ADELINES on the right where we would load up on hot rolls and cheese with vienna sausage after a nite out drinking and carousing around. Bars used to litter both sides of the street as we used to walk out the gate. Places such as the TOP HAT, LUCKY STARS, CORAS UPSCOPE... all gone - but buildings are still there. It surprised me how much it had not changed. It is still very old and impoverished looking. Redevelopment has not touched this area. It is really like stepping back into the twilight zone. On the other hand the people of CAVITE CITY have not changed either. They are still the same wonderful gracious people who somehow tolerated our out of control misbehavior way back then.

I cannot tell you how receptive they were to finding out who I was and what I was

doing there . As I explained to them how we used to be stationed there, a smile came over the older faces. They asked my name and reached out to shake hands. I felt like MAC ARTHUR . Each and every person I met had that same wonderful friendly way about them . Some older men shared stories of working on the US NAVY base in the chow hall, laundry club or base supply. They showed a genuine fondness towards AMERICANS. Going up the main drag I stopped and chatted with people. I also diverted to the side streets and was invited to sit and chat with folks who where outside. I was overcome with the fact most of these people were very poor but you could feel a sense of family within them.

The children appeared happy and were outside playing. Each one not knowing my name echoed a pleasant Hello JOE! It made me feel so humble. I came upon a group of children peering out from the spaces in a wooden slat fence all yelling hello. I went around to the other side of the fence and came upon about 30 children and their MOMS living in a very impoverished looking situation, cooking god knows what on open fires . Each child on approached me took my hand and touched it to their forehead as a sign of respect. They won me over on the spot. I gave one of the elderly ladies 1,000 pesos which is about \$ 40.00 dollars and asked her to buy food for the children which she immediately did. I remember how happy they were .

This became one of my regular stops in SAN ANTONIO always buying them something ...candy, cakes, cookies etc... or money for food . Each day I walked and walked, experiencing good feelings as I went . We as a group VP- 40 also visited the local orphanage and were able to feed the children , play games and dance with them. We also provided cash prizes and a gift bag containing a toy and candy.

We documented this event with still photos and video . We went upstairs in the orphanage to visit with children who were confined there for one reason or the other. Some were confined to keep them out of the hands of sex traffickers. We were able to come back, feed them a special meal and provide them with much needed stand up fans and cabinets for clothes storage . We were invited to meet with the mayor of CAVITE CITY MR OHMEE RAMOS who thanked us for our efforts. It was very nice of him to recognize us and was totally unsolicited on our part .

Our next stop later in the week was a fishing village where we encountered more than 600 children. We provided them with a cup of GOTO with a boiled egg in, a roll and a bag of juice. Goto as explained to me is a chicken stew with corn in it along with a boiled egg . We hired clowns to entertain the children along with cash prizes for the older kids for shooting baskets and making the shot . They were all very grateful but not as grateful as we were to be allowed to help them if for only one day. Once again the children showed us respect by touching our hands to their foreheads. I very nearly cried. It was a very overwhelming experience. We over the next days all went to Manila shopping and site seeing.

We took a few day trips to Bacoor 40 minutes from Cavity and 20 from Manila. It is a huge shopping mall about a mile long according to Jack Fisher. We got some

souveneers there. We also took a daytrip to Tagaytay. That is an old volcano rim, and we went up on the hill to oversee the old volcano and had dinner up in the restaurant there. It was a good meal. Had American and phil. food, beautiful setting...see photos on facebook.

Today MANILA is a very large modern beautiful city. All the store clerks were polite and curious about where we were from. Our photos reflect where we were and what we did, but I know I can speak for both myself, JACK FISHER and GEORGE PERKINS. Photos can not show what we all had in our hearts and feelings we had towards these people. They showed us how love and family could survive poverty. I continued to wonder " why could AMERICA not help these people who were our loyal allies in WW II" until finally I realized they did not need our help. I realized that if LOVE ,RESPECT and FAMILY were Gold they were already millionaires and anything we could do for them would probably ruin them. I would love to return and probably will GOD willing. \

I would be remiss if I did not give special thanks to the following individuals: Ms. Joy Mendoza who was the main organizer of the events. She assumed the responsibility for all logistics and scheduling. Joy lives in Cavite city on the base. Her son in law is assigned to the base as a major in the Philippine air force and is a helicopter pilot. Joy was assisted by her 2 beautiful daughters, Badet Sambrano and Jean Solis. All 3 of these ladies worked tirelessly to help make the feeding programs a success. Joy is very well known and respected in Cavite city.. Without her ability to know who to contact and schedule the events it could not have happened. Also a special thank you to Ms. Jeany Lee, our cook/housekeeper. She eagerly jumped in to assist with anything she was asked to do. She is also from Cavite city and is a good friend of Joy. She is the mother of an eight year old son named Ralph who also participated in the feeding events helping out where he was needed. Jeany is one of the sweetest young ladies you will ever meet. Thanks Jeany and Ralph for your help.

We were transported daily by van. The 2 van drivers, Rhey and Dang alternated driving days for us. Both were very nice gentlemen. They did a great job. Rhey in particular was given our squadron tee shirt and was very enthusiastic about meeting our needs where ever and whenever. They were a great team. Rhey was a very funny guy and quite the dancer. He danced for the children at the seaport and at the orphanage. We thank them for their contribution.

Let us not forget Karen Perkins, George Perkin's wife. She proved to be a very hard worker with a great sense of humor. While we were feeding the kids she was laughing and patting their heads and joking with them, which they thoroughly enjoyed. George and I meanwhile were handing out the food along with Jack, Joy, her daughters and even the drivers. We fed over 600 kids that day over a period of about 4 hours. There was a local organization in seaport that help maintain order, a civil order of elected officials that organized this along with the many adults in the community (whose kids attended)who helped keep things flowing smoothly on the day. It turned out to be a highly successful event. There was clowns to entertain the kids. There were games and prizes as I said before, so all the children had fun.

Last but not least was our neighbors and now good friends Mr Pablo Estor and his wonderful family. Pablo and his family went out of his way to make us feel comfortable. We became so close we had an open door walk-in policy for his home and ours. They have a number of children who are all very polite and respectful. One of his sons is disabled and needs help walking but his spirits are great and he proved to be a real character. The love between the members of this family to each other was something to behold. Wonderful people. Thanks for allowing us into your life. We will never forget you.

Upon return to NY, I received a Skype message from a woman in that group of "behind the fence kids:" They had nicknamed me "Daddy Mike" while I was there. So, when they appeared on Skype they all said in unison.... Daddy Mike we miss you, when are you coming back! I said behave yourselves, listen to your mothers. I'll be back Sept/oct. I'm not promising. But if I do, I'll come to see you. They said "ok, daddy mike, ok... and ended the conversation with "we love you daddy mike"....

I am wondering if any of you would like to join me on a return trip that I will be taking about October, for a period of about 3 months or less if you want to do that. I'll be there for the 3 months anyway. I'll be taking an apartment, so if you are at all interested let me know. My photos of the trip are on my facebook site... go to Mike Kane.. and go to photos ... I am in Queens, NY. There are lots of photos there, not so many on the timeline but in the photo section itself. I would love for any or some of you to join me. No definite plans have been made yet, but it should be happening about that time. You have my email, and you can facebook me from facebook, Mike Kane, Queens, NY. I know this will be going out to about 200 people total from Guy Fisk.. so you'll see our emails in the header... You can see most of the photos mentioned on my facebook page. If you dont have facebook, its simple to setup. Its free. Just go to facebook.com and signup. If you are looking at a picture you want on my page, click the button on the right on your laptop below the mouse pad and it will allow you to click download to your computer and save if you highlight those features shown. Myself and Jack are only recently facebook users, but now we go on there daily. Its not hard, done once and your a pro. Great for keeping in touch with everyone and knowing how they are doing... without being there.

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kane

Date: 4/24/2013

Note: We gave away approximately 25 VP teeshirts along with hats to all the people that helped, including the Mayor of Cavite City, Homee Ramos, who we met at the orphanage. See my pictures on facebook. Now visually VP40 will be well represented there due to people wearing those teeshirts. All the organizers and support people got them.

An interesting note. Joy Mendoza and our shipmate Jack Fisher are very fond of one another, and are making plans to marry. Congratulations to them both.

