

● The difference between a sea story and a fairy tale is that a fairy tale begins with "Once upon a time," and a sea story begins with "Now this is no bullshit..."

Now this is no bullshit. Once upon a time four ROTC midshipmen from USC set out on a quest to an enchanted land in hopes of proving their manhood. What ensued was something of a cross between a day at Disneyland and a porno movie.

The enchanted land was the Philippines, and the reason the Navy sent them on a six-week summer cruise was so they would hopefully become better officers. The site of their cruising was Olongapo, strictly a liberty port whose economy rises and falls depending on how many U.S. ships are in port. When the aircraft carrier Enterprise is in, all the prices double.

As soon as liberty is granted, the "middies" head toward the entrance of Olongapo, which lies just outside the fenced-in naval base at Subic Bay.

"It's just like Disneyland. You walk up to this gate and they've got this money changer in a small booth. You change your money over to Filipino pesos...it's like funny money, it's like getting E coupons. They give you this huge stack of pesos, and then you walk across this moat, just like at Disneyland going over to the castle."

The moat was built by American Sea Bees to stop the Filipinos from breaking onto the base. All the sewage in Olongapo drains into the canal. Children in small wooden canoes paddle in the canal yelling at Americans crossing the bridge to throw them a coin. Americans pitch coins, but always just a little out of reach

of the children so that they'll fall into the murk. Other children wearing goggles swim through the filth to retrieve the

(Editor's note: This is the true story of how four students spent their summer vacation... as in English 101 essays... Their names have been left out to insure their candor).

coins that fall to the bottom.

The competition for the American's pesos becomes even fiercer as they enter the smoke-filled streets of Olongapo. The smoke comes from the barbecue stands that line the streets and feature a Filipino delicacy — monkey meat.

If you're thirsty you can duck into one of the hundreds of bars that offer more than just San Miguel beer.

"You walk into the bar and the girls are lined up in chairs along the walls. You don't



have to worry about starting a conversation, they come up and start to talk to you, three or four at a time. 'Harrow Joe, what ship you on?'"

"In Olongapo prostitution is a very respectable business; they are the money winners in the community."

If everything goes right prostitutes take their customers to small shacks built around the edge of Olongapo. Breakfast is included in the deal, which costs about \$7. But sometimes not everything goes as imagined.

"I'll tell you what it was like when I f--ked one of them. I think, 'This is going to be very romantic.' I walk in the door of the shack and her mother is sitting there. Mom gets up and starts to walk out. Here's this girl's mother walking out and she says, 'Harrow, how are you?' In a minute I'm going to be having sex with her daughter, for a price. Oh my God!"

For those more into spectator sports, the Old Florida Club has some entertainment that will really grab you. A very talented girl walks out a long stage onto your table where she proceeds to pick up your beer bottle and the seven coins you have stacked on it. Trick is she doesn't use her hands or feet or teeth.

It should be emphasized that Olongapo is the Tijuana of the Philippines and the rest of the country isn't a bad place to live if you don't mind a little martial law.

"There was this middie (midshipman) from USC and his watch got stolen; someone just tore it off his wrist and started running. So he called to a cop, 'Hey, that guy just stole my watch!' The cop turned and shot the guy dead. Then he went over, pulled the watch off the body, and returned it to the guy."

Curt Bormann

