

DS
Davao City -
Water Supply
P - 4

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Davao City's No. 1 Problem: Water

Davao Water Smells So Putrid You Smell Worse After A Bath, And Davaoños Depend On For Drinking Water Or Stand In Line All Night To Get Water From A Well Outside To



This artesian well in Bagó, 10 kilometers from the center of Davao City, supplies the residents with good, fresh drinking water during droughts.

IF you enjoy bathing morning and afternoon and love to use lots of water when you wash your hands and face and brush your teeth, do not go to Davao City. That its people are friendly and hospitable cannot be denied, but how friendly can one remain if baths are infrequent and unsatisfactory and you smell worse after a bath? In Davao City there are four sources of water: (1) privately owned wells with pumps; (2) open wells; (3) rain water; and (4) the Davao waterworks system.

If you live in a place where the water is supplied by a privately owned well with pump, you will be unhappy when you turn on the shower. I know because I stayed in one such place. The water was so foul that the boarders never used it for bathing purposes. I saw each one of them every morning patiently carrying two small basins of rain water into the bathroom, although I never found out what kind of baths they took. Being used to morning and evening showers, I dared the foul odor and soon emerged from the bathroom gasping for fresh air.

The next time, I tried breathing through my mouth but it didn't work. I still could smell the foul water. The

third time I used a clothespin on my nose. It worked fine except that it hurt and the boarders were suspicious about my red nose. That and the putrid smell which clung to my skin must have been why I was stood up twice by a date.

Open wells, as everyone knows, are easily polluted and so are not popular. Rain water is mainly for drinking purposes. Every house in Davao City has one or two large water tanks at the back which hold the rain water

that falls on the roof. "The first thing a housebuilder plans for in this city is a water tank platform," said Mrs. Armand Braun. "To us a water tank is more important than the house itself."

And what do they do if it does not rain for many days and the tanks are empty?

"We run to Bagó which is ten kilometers from here," said Mrs. Braun. "People line up until three o'clock in the morning at Bagó to get drinking

water."

So inadequate is the waterworks system in Davao City with its six-inch main pipes (for a population of 231,833) that many of those who depend on it are said to have grown prematurely gray hair and developed perpetual frowns. Mothers with babies, like Mrs. Nilda de los Reyes, and laundry women, like Juanita Niceo, suffer the most. Faucets do not yield water when it is most needed. Some residents have even installed their faucets at ground level, but this arrangement has been of little help. And when a fire breaks out, the papers invariably report that "the work (of the firemen) was hampered by lack of water."

"This waterworks system was completed in 1934 and was adequate for the population then," explained Mayor Carmelo Porras of Davao City when I asked him about the water problem.

In the meantime a three-cornered fight is being waged over the waterworks system by the city government, the provincial government and NWSA. The story dates back to the year 1937 when the municipality of Guianga became Davao City. The waterworks system which was owned by the two municipalities was then administered by the provincial board. This was in accordance with an executive order promulgated in 1925.

by EMMA ARCE

With the merging of the two into a city, the city government felt that it rightfully should administer the system.

Since then the city government has been asking the provincial government to turn over the administration of the waterworks system to it. Before the issue could be resolved, NWSA, which was created in 1955, entered the picture. It also wanted to take over the waterworks system (the construction and improvement of

which had already cost P473,600 by 1941) in exchange for a vague promise to improve it further.

Among the principal protagonists no one seems as frustrated as highway district engineer (in charge of the waterworks system) insists on collecting charges for 400 hydrants at P20 a hydrant a quarter. On February 10, 1960, sent the city treasurer a bill for P457.60 representing "water supply water service and fire hydrants which have been long overdue." The engineer seems determined not to pay, especially since the chief of the fire department has stated that some hydrants had been out of order for the rest did not have enough pressure to be of value.

Governor Vicente G. Duterte of Davao has kept a level head for a while. He has worked for a release of P1,700,000 (first request was for P1,200,000) for the improvement of the system. However,

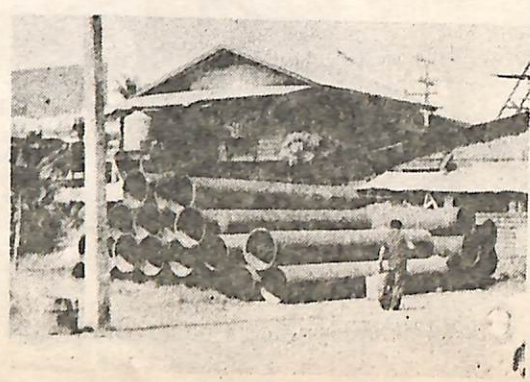
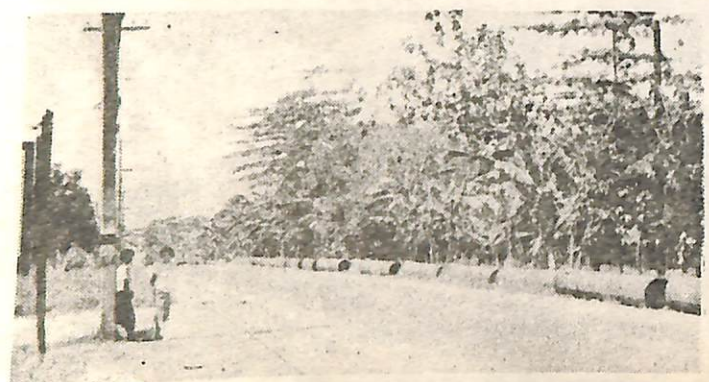


GOV. VICENTE G. DUTERTE

on the project has been hamstrung by the delivery of substandard materials. For instance, elbows and pipes delivered did not match, and the 18-inch pipes that would cover a distance of 14 kilometers were not as thick as set forth in the specifications. For several months now the road from the center of the city to Sibulan Dam has been lined with these pipes, and the city residents have been wondering when the work will be resumed.

It is estimated that between P5 and P6 million is needed to improve the system. "It is easier for the provincial government than for the city government to get the money for the improvement of the waterworks," said Governor Duterte. "I shall see to it that our waterworks project is completed before I turn over the system to anyone."

(Continued on page 46)



Pipes delivered to Davao City were not according to specification as to thickness or had elbows that did not match. For several months now pipes piled on vacant lots and along Davao City streets have not been installed.

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Davao City's No. 1 ...

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President Garcia has already authorized a bond issue so that NWSA may be able to buy local waterworks systems from their owners. Victor Recio, chief of the service department of NWSA, has pointed out one benefit that will result from the administration of the local waterworks system by NWSA: "When NWSA takes over the administration of the Davao waterworks system, it

will make all the improvements needed, and it is the people, not NWSA, who will be benefited."

The residents of Davao City, especially the homemakers, do not care who administers their waterworks system. All they ask is that there should be water — plenty of water, not trickles — when they turn on the faucets. They have been told that the contractor will have to finish the job in 120 working days, but the long years of unsatisfactory water service have made them very skeptical. One

night while I was riding along one of the pipe-lined roads with some friends, one of them, Dr. Eufrazio de Jesus, Jr., said, "I hope these pipes will have been installed by 1965."

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Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes.

—FRANCIS BACON

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