



Everyone is shocked about how the poor guy was pulled out of his seat and dragged off the airplane. It reminded me of my first commercial flight way, way back in 1945.

World War 2 had ended a month previously, and one of my assignments was to fly from the fleet HQ in Manila to Mindanau, the southernmost island of the Philippines. My task was to do an inventory of Navy equipment and supplies there for shipping back to the States. Instead of waiting several days for a U.S. military flight, I opted to go by the newly-reestablished Philippine Airlines. It had just resumed daily service throughout the island nation. As I boarded at the now-named Manila Ninoy Aquino International Airport, I should have had a clue as to what I was in for.

With the civilian airline yet to receive new aircraft, the flight was on a beat-up two-engine plane that had spent ragged, stained and the aisles full of trash.

That was the best of it. Most of the passengers were farmers returning to their newly-liberated homes, and many brought animals with them. My two-hour flight companions included bleating sheep, calves, pigs and chickens.

The aisles were full of running, jumping, coupling and other animal sounds, smells and sights. Several times I had to fight off some pecking roosters, and four or five hungry goats when I was attempting to eat a candy bar.

After two days on Mindanau, I was lucky to snag a ride on a Navy PBY Catalina bomber returning to Manila. Instead of sharing my seat with goats and pigs, I spent the entire flight curled up alone in one of the machine gun mounts.

For info about today's very modern airline service in the Philippines, go to www.philippineairlines.com