



*“The pen is mightier than the sword.”*

**Ben Emata Jr.**

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## **THE WEALTHY KAGAYANONS**

**By: Ben Emata**

**CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY - - Could you believe people in this fast-growing metropolis 350 miles south of Manila carry as much as thousands of pesos in cash every minute of day?**

**It is something for Ripley's Believe It Or Not but believe you me, yes people carry thousands of pesos just in their wallet or their pockets. I saw them walk into stores, shopping centers and into restaurants and after the transactions, they pull out huge thick bundle of bills that I estimate to run to several thousands of pesos. Sometimes it is hard to believe if you think of Cagayan de Oro as the city of the yesteryears say ten years ago. Yup that was when the small city's motorelas charge only a pesos for a ride from one point of origin to any point of destination. And that was the rate of the jeepneys too - - just a peso and you can lord it out anywhere in the city. And further, that was the moment when pancit at Bagong Lipunan Restaurant was only P5.00 that is P95 now and the jeepney and relas rate are now P7.00 for a short distance. Yeah I took a taxicab from Plaza Divisoria to Limketkai Mall then back and it cost my pocket P115.00.**

**Gone are those days when you go out of the house with just P20.00 and when you get home, you still can buy the favorite candies of your young girls. Now you buy a bottle of water will rob you already of P15 then buy one bibingka for P5.00 and you money is gone. And I know people carry huge amount of money every single day because I saw them and I too carry from P5,000 to P10,000.00. In my first week of stay in the city, I carry only a thousand pesos plus some loose change. I swore not to commit the same mistake because I got short when I**



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invited a friend to two bottles of beer plus "pulutan" and I was charged P1,500.00. It was good I still have some green bucks and gave the cashier the amount to cover up my shortage.

I went to the Limketkai Mall to window shop and saw people paying the cashiers for their purchased items with one-thousand-bills. I went up to the SM mall for the first time try their food court and I saw customers pull out one or two thousands bills. Bills in P20s, P50s, P100s are almost nothing now. The effective bills are the P500 and the P1,000. Beggars shun away people who give them a peso. To them you gave them nothing but headache because your pesos has no more value much less power. I have not seen quarters, ten cent or dimes or pennies. I surmised they are now in museums or in the archives of oblivions.

I am happy to have a first impression about the city that is truly rich. Now I realized that the people are also very rich. A housemaid of my sister is paid nearly two thousand bucks for the usual cook-laundry-wash kitchen tools, etc. job.

A lot of city residents have adopted the life of Manila folks and even those in the United States of America. I mean they eat outside of home. They rush to fast food like Jollibe, McDonald, Kentucky and the usual turo-turo carinderia. Every lunchtime finds a long line of customers waiting at the cashiers for their order. The image of Cagayan de Oro has metamorphosed into what I think is the appearance of big cities in the West.

I am just wondering because I know for a fact that not so many people are employed. I talked to them the jobless and told of their difficulties yet I saw the same people whose pockets are bulging with cash bills. They don't rob banks. They don't steal homes. They are just moneyed and to know more of their sources, of course, is none of my business. (BEN EMATA)



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Mangoes are sold at P30 per kilo when you eat and it gives breakingn sour smile. Sweater ones are sold at P40. My favorite bibinga of long ago is now P5.00 each. Kinilaw is pegged at P120 per kilo plus all the checheboreche that includes tabontabon. I am a stateside fella but I feel poor against the gigantic cost of commodities.

Many things had changed the city of my dream. Many things had disappeared. There is one thing that did not change and it is the warm temperature that is every about 90 degrees or a little less. I perspire a lot and I had to take a bath three times a day to breath much easier and enjoy the atmosphere that is Cagayan de Oro.