The Pedicab Grows Up!

June 11, 2010 By GenSan Chris

When I first arrived in General Santos in 1992 it was not really what you could call a city in fact in reality the same can be said today, its more of a Town than a City.

![Pedicab With Sun Shade.](image1)

In the area where I live, Purok Malakas there was no market place so whatever we needed to buy we had to go into Gen San itself in order to get what we wanted.

![How Many Passengers Can You Carry? Just 1 More!](image2)

The problem started there, if my vehicle was out then at first it was a 2 km walk to Dadiangas Heights where you could catch a Jeep or a Tricycle in to the town. We later used radio to make life easier and radio for transport. On the way back from these trips the Jeep or Tricycle would usually drop you only in Dadiangas heights as they did not like to go further as there were no real roads so you then had the choice of walking home the 2 km carrying your load or getting a Pedicab to convey you to your destination. A pedicab was a small man powered Tricycle which could carry one or two people on the journey to your house. The drivers would always charge me double as I am a big guy and to be honest, I did not blame them at all. The bicycle was usually a BMX type, usually locally made with only the fixed wheel gear so it was really hard work for the driver to propel someone of my size, 120 kg up hill for the 2km. Yes, they really earned their money but I was always good to them especially after a few beers.

![The Basic Pedicab.](image3)

In the later years of the 1990's these small man powered vehicles were plenty and they did a very good job taking people on short journeys to and from their home to where ever they wanted to go. Even building materials including bags of cement could be transported, nothing seemed to be too much for them and if it was, you just hired 2 or more or however many it took in order to move the required materials from point A to point B. As I say, these small vehicles were the main stay of the
local rural transport network for several years until one day, I saw a new initiative with this form of transport, one owner had the idea to mount a small petrol powered 5 hp Honda pump engine on his vehicle and the drive to the wheels was a simple fan belt which when a lever was pressed by the foot of the driver, the tension would be put on the fan belt, tightening the fan belt onto the drive pulley on the rear wheel and away you went! Primitive but very effective. Very soon most of the Pedicabs were motorized in this or a similar manner and suddenly the whole area got very noisy and more smelly as a lot of these engines had no muffler and many were old and gave out lots of fumes.

Modern Step Over Trike.

Now that the rural areas had joined the Industrial Revolution The Pedicab became a Tricycab and soon there were not only passenger carrying models but also special ones which carried livestock like goats and pigs and there was the one called the Top Down which was special for the hardware and feed stores to carry their goods, these usually had a larger engine and suspension than the people carriers as they could carry up to 10 bags of cement at a time.

Then came the time when one owner got himself a new Honda 50cc motorbike, the step through kind and attached a side car to it, wow, this was the next stage in the development. Just a few years ago there were so many brand new motorcycles in the country that the finance companies would and still do just about anything to sell them. Most of the new bikes which were turned into Tricycles could be purchased over a 2 year period for just 85 peso’s a day, 6 days a week and every day a collector from the finance company would come and collect the payment. This made easy finance and so suddenly, the Pump Engine powered vehicle was a thing of the past and the new, proper small Tricycle came of age.

Trike in very good condition, it must be new.

Now, all through this period, there were always the regular type of passenger Tricycles but they preferred the longer journeys rather than the short hauls as the smaller vehicles do. All of the Tricycles are actually licensed and are allowed to go to different areas for instance, the Larger ones can go to most areas of the City while the smaller ones are limited to the outskirts and are not allowed on the National Highway by rights but many here do run on the highway as the laws are not very strictly implemented.

Now, the smaller Tricycles are all powered by the step through type of 50 to 90 cc motorcycle, the bigger ones are usually around the standard type of 150 cc step over bike and there are thousands of
them in every town and city. One big problem with such a transport fleet is that all the engines are 2
stroke so the pollution can be pretty bad in the areas like the marketplace where they gather in large
numbers waiting passengers.

A Heavy Duty Transport Carrier.

You can hire the complete machine for your journey which for me costs about 30 pesos from my
house to anywhere in the City or you can get just a seat on one for 8 pesos. Whichever way you
look at it, this is a cheap means of transport but unfortunately this form of transport is now under
threat because with the cheap and easy to get motorbikes, many people just use them as what is
called Hable Hable which in reality is an unregistered for carrying passengers motorbike so really
now anyone with a motorbike can carry passengers and take money away from the registered
transport vehicles. This is causing a problem and I am sure that it will go before the new City
Council once it is voted in!

Say what you want to but these small and cheap ways to transport people are very necessary and
will be with us for a long time to come.

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