



Fan-atic
Page 2

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Philippine Fiesta™

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New Year Revelers at
Magellan Hall -Page 10



24th Ati-Atihan Festival Page 11

Photo by Dave San Pedro

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Pope Francis

Fan-atic

By Dean Andy Bautista

The fact that many are still recovering from a lingering Papal hangover provides a license to continue reminiscing about his visit. In this regard, let me relate the story of my 81-year-old mother which probably resonates with your own and that of people you know. She asked me and my eldest sister to make arrangements so that she can view the Pope. In 1970, 1981 and 1995, she had patiently lined up along the streets of Metro Manila to catch a glimpse of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II.

It was therefore imperative that she see Francis as well. Fortunately, I was able to secure tickets to the event at UST last Sunday. Unfortunately, we underestimated the traffic and misjudged the crowd. By 7 a.m., Espana,

starting from the Welcome rotunda, was already closed and one needed to walk several kilometers to get to the venue. Unable to walk that far, my mother decided that we should just pick a spot along Governor Forbes Street (now Lacson Avenue) where the papal entourage was supposed to pass.

Considering that his UST appointment was scheduled at 9:45, the estimated time of arrival of the papal convoy was 9:30. It was 7:15 and the crowd was beginning to grow. We found a so-so place near a canal that was already three person deep but it was the best we could find. Given the more than two-hour wait, my sister looked around for a chair where my mother could sit. She noticed a small boy assisted by his father standing on one. Appealing to emotion (and commercial sense), she tried to convince the father to rent out the chair. The latter just smiled and politely declined. Undeterred, she entered a nearby upholstery shop and asked

the owner if he would be willing to lease one of his chairs for an elderly woman. The man not only agreed to lend a chair but also refused to take any compensation for it. That good samaritan turned out to be Rene Boy Preselda of RCP Auto Interior and General Upholstery located along Lacson Avenue.

The idea of standing for two hours made me feel angsty. Fortunately, the sky was overcast (but no rain) and the weather was comfortably cool. When the thought of complaining entered my head, I immediately focused on those who stood in line for hours (some even camped out overnight) amidst the sun and/or the rain. I started counting my blessings instead.

The crowd began to thicken. There were a few false alarms as motorcycle-escorted vehicles would zoom towards UST, which would first generate excitement but would then turn into disappointment. Since my mother no longer had a clear view,

she unexpectedly did a “Zacchaeus.” In the Bible, the latter is a tax collector who wanted to see Jesus who was passing through Jericho. Since he was short and could not see through the crowd, Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore-fig tree to view Him.

My mother did not climb any tree but with the help of her yaya, she forced her arthritic legs to stand up on the chair. Some in the crowd were amazed while others were aghast. My sister and I were scared %#@*. I was already contemplating Plan B in case we needed to rush her to the emergency room. Yet she was dead set in catching a glimpse of Francis. Later on she remarked that she felt like Zacchaeus and the biblical foolish virgin rolled into one.

At around 9:33, the papal convoy began to arrive. Unfortunately, it was traveling at a relatively fast pace. Worse, the Pope was riding the Volkswagen sedan rather than the pope mobile. It was a good thing he was seated on the right passenger seat and his window was rolled down. We were standing at the right side of the road and my mother caught a split second glimpse of him. The Pope supposedly smiled at her and she smiled back — that momentary connection made her day and cemented a fan-atical admiration for the man. My sister and I did not get to catch the Pope but seeing our mother content was enough. I left the street thinking that these random acts of faith together with the millions of similar acts make our country special.

Confusingly amusing:

I found the report that Manila street kids were “forcibly removed and hidden” during the five-day Papal visit as confusingly amusing. This Pope is different. Before he arrived, it was widely reported that he had expressed a preference to meet not with the rich and the mighty but with the poor and the lowly. So this is probably why he broke protocol after the mass at Manila Cathedral as he exited through a side door and walked towards the ANAK-Tnk home where over 300 street children awaited him. So if this report about the disappearance of street kids is true, it is as if we did not want to show our “best foot forward” to a guest who views the world from a different perspective.



Editor's Note

Time flies when we are having fun. We just have eleven months to go for this year! At this time, let's continue on working to fulfill our goals that we set for the new year. It could be anything from finishing school, losing weight, reviewing for some certifications, or training for a marathon. As I have learned, along with setting goals, we have to set some measurable and achievable objectives. We have to arrange our environment and recruit our supporters that would cheer us up along the way. And most importantly, treat ourselves each time we get closer to achieving that goal. I say it all the time. It's never too late to make a change!

This month of January is a bit exciting for our community in Sacramento and back home in the Philippines. How about the uplifting visit by Pope Francis in the Philippines? MJ Lastimosa our delegate for the Miss Universe pageant in Florida just last week, made it to top 10! And rumors that Mayweather is somewhat agreeing to fight our world champ Manny Pacquiao. These are just some of the things that make us feel hopeful and excited.

In this issue of Philippine Fiesta are more exciting events and celebrations that have happened in our community in Sacramento. Read on and enjoy!

With love always,
Dinnah San Pedro

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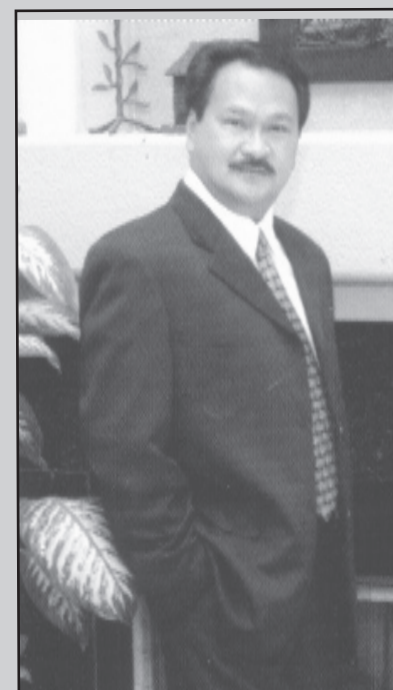
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PNP recovers 49 bodies of slain cops

The Philippine National Police recovered 49 bodies of slain members of the Special Action Force (SAF) in Maguindanao, according to the regional police headquarters of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

In a text message sent to reporters Monday, January 26, the operations center of the PNP-ARMM said that as of 11:54 am on Monday, the "actual body count of PNP SAF [killed] is 49."

The report added: "The cadavers were brought to 6th ID, PA headquarters, for proper disposition," referring to the headquarters of the Army's 6th infantry division in Cotatato City.

Military sources said that 10 more SAF members were reported missing and that at least one civilian was killed.

American soldiers based in Cotabato under a Philippine-US defense agreement assisted Philippine troops in carrying the dead and the wounded.

The Sunday, January 25, clashes in Mamasapano town, Maguindanao, tested a nearly one-year-old peace accord between the Aquino government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). An MILF spokesman earlier said they suffered 5 casualties.

The SAF's target was alleged Malaysian bomb maker Zulkifli Ab-dhir, better known as "Marwan," who survived a 2012 military air-strike that was meant to kill him in Sulu. (READ: Dead or alive? Top terrorist was cops' target)

But Mamasapano is an MILF bailiwick, and the MILF said the SAF attacked the area without co-



BLOODY SUNDAY. Philippine police commandos unload body bags containing the remains of their comrades killed in a clash with Muslim rebels in Maguindanao on Sunday, January 25. Photo by Mark Navales/AFP

ordinating with them.

It is the first major encounter between the MILF and government troops since the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro last year. Advocates are hoping that the incident will not affect the talks.

The cops sought for reinforcement but the military did not get involved, based on reports, until it has coordinated with the Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and the Adhoc

Joint Action Group (AHJAG). These are the bodies that help maintain the ceasefire between the government and the MILF.

The MILF area is also difficult to penetrate. It is a marshy area that is some 15 kilometers away from the highway.

The carnage happened on the eve of the 24th founding anniversary of the PNP on Monday. – with reports from Karlos Manlupig and Carmela Fonbuena



ENCOUNTER. Muslim rebels line up in their headquarters in Maguindanao.



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Did Binay use Boy Scout funds for 2010 bid?

After a hiatus, Vice President Jejomar Binay's demons continue to haunt him. He is accused of getting close to P200 million in 2010 from a deal between Alphaland and BSP, of which he is national president.

By Bea Cupin

MANILA, Philippines – There is a “rule” that Vice President Jejomar Binay follows when speaking to the media: whenever he’s wearing his Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) uniform, he prefers not to discuss politics or recent allegations of corruption.

It appears that Binay, national president of the BSP for nearly two decades, would rather keep the BSP away from the dirty world of politics.

But if Ernesto Mercado, Binay’s estranged bosom body, former Makati vice mayor, and former BSP vice president is to be believed, the vice president does not have the organization’s best interests in mind.

On Thursday, January 22, Mercado is set to reveal during a Senate Blue Ribbon subcommittee hearing that Binay negotiated for the BSP a deal that resulted in millions of losses for the organization and millions in gains for him.

Unaccounted for cash from the deal allegedly turned into kickbacks for those involved, and in Binay’s case, supposedly went to his piggy bank for his 2010 vice presidential campaign.

As early as 2008, Binay declared on his birthday that he wanted the presidency but chose to slide down when survey numbers indicated he had a better chance at the vice presidency.

Binay supposedly pocketed around P188.98 million (US\$4.23 million), according to Mercado, the star whistleblower in the subcommittee’s probe into allegations that Binay, during his stint as Makati mayor, also earned from city coffers.

But in an interview with dzRH on Wednesday January 21, Binay’s spokesman for political affairs lawyer Rico Quicho downplayed Mercado’s scheduled testimony, accusing him of being the one who wanted to profit from the deal.

“On record sinabi ng Alphaland na ang transaksyon po nila with Boy Scouts of the Philippines ay maayos, above board at wala hong anomalya. Institusyon po kasi ang Alphaland. Hindi po ‘yan magpapagamit sa kalokohan po ni [former] vice mayor Mercado. Ito nga pong si [former] vice mayor Mercado, parang nanghihingi nga po siya, pero hindi po siya pinagbigyan ng Alphaland,” Quicho said.

(Alphaland has said on record that their transaction with the BSP is clean and above board, free from anomaly. Alphaland is an institution. They won’t allow themselves to be used in Mercado’s foolishness. Turns out it was Mercado who was asking for kickbacks but Alphaland said



Vice President Jejomar Binay

no.)

In another interview with Rappler on Thursday, Quicho challenged Mercado to come out with documents to prove his “lies” and not to rely on hazy conclusions. All transactions and deals were approved by the BSP’s national board, not just Binay.

“That’s what they (Binay’s accusers) do – Vice President Binay builds and they destroy,” said Quicho, who also emphasized that the BSP was an apologetic organization that should be not dragged into the “circus-like” Senate probe.

It was also Mercado who accused Binay of hiding his wealth through dummies and secret bank accounts.

The January 22 “revelation” is a first in the subcommittee’s 4-month-long history: it’s the first time a whistleblower has accused Binay of corruption beyond his nearly 20-year stay as Makati mayor.

Land, money lost

Mercado said Binay sourced the money through a web of deals and negotiations between the BSP and private companies – all of which were done under his reign.

In 2004, Binay stepped in negotiations between BF Goodrich Philippines (now called Sime Darby) and the BSP over a one-hectare Makati property that was “donated” by the former back in 1976.

Based on the deal sealed by Binay in 2005, the BSP would get 60% of the property, while Sime Darby would get the remaining 40%. By this time, the land was already worth a whopping P1 billion.

With the division of the property settled, the BSP moved into talks to develop the land. In 2007, the BSP began negotiations with former Marcos crony Roberto “Bobby” Ongpin of Alphaland Corporation for the project. (READ: Ongpin vs Ashmore: The real deal)

Alphaland, a controversial luxury property developer, was delisted by the Philippine Stock Exchange in September 2014 due to, among

others, its repeated failure to submit full, fair, accurate and timely disclosures of material information.

At the time of the BSP deal, Alphaland owned Silvertown (later renamed Alphaland Makati Place Inc), the local arm of Sime Darby, and along with it, the company’s shares in the BSP property. As a foreign company, Sime Darby was not allowed to own land, that is why it needed Silvertown.

Who is Mario Oreta?

President and CEO of Constrant Builders and Development Corporation Allegedly bought a Tagaytay property from Binay in 2008 Donated some P2M to Senator Nancy Binay’s 2013 campaign Close friend of Binay’s; the vice president was a principal sponsor during his 40th wedding anniversary

According to Mercado, Binay, the BSP’s Jose Rizal Pangilinan, and Silvertown/Alphaland Makati Place Inc (AMPI) President Mario Oreta were part of the negotiating panel.

Based on the deal forged between BSP and AMPI, the former would still own the land while the latter would be the “developer/investor” for a 15%-85% split between BSP and AMPI.

Mercado, then senior vice president of the BSP, said he opposed the deal because he wanted 20% for the BSP.

It was Binay’s finance whiz and alleged bagman Gerry Limlingan who convinced Mercado to accept the deal. Limlingan, who has also been subpoenaed to the Senate, allegedly told Mercado 20% really went to the BSP but that 5% would “be for Binay” – in particular to fund his presidential campaign in 2010.

Benigno Aquino III, son of slain democracy icon Ninoy Aquino and Binay’s close ally former president Corazon Aquino, eventually ran and won as president in 2010.

AMLC: Jinggoy has hidden multi-million dollar account

By Aries Rufo

AT A GLANCE: Estrada withdrew P76 million as the DOJ readied plunder charges against him AMLC noted an abnormal rise in Estrada’s investments which was not supported by his SALN

Dollar time deposits and life insurance policies totalling more than \$3 million were absent in his SALN

31 bank accounts of Estrada were examined by the AMLC; in 9 bank accounts alone, total credits amounted to P629 million

First, the mansion being constructed in the gated Wack-Wack subdivision. Now, there are indications he also did not declare multi-million peso and dollar bank deposits in his asset statements.

What else is Senator Jinggoy Estrada not saying in his Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN)?

A report submitted by the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) to the anti-graft court Sandiganbayan showed that Estrada underdeclared his cash assets from 2006 to 2012 and did not include in his SALN dollar time deposits and life insurance policies amounting to millions.

He also withdrew a total of P76.446 million in 4 bank accounts in September 2013, at the height of the exposé on the pork barrel scandal.

The scion of the Estrada political family, under trial for plunder and graft over the alleged misuse of his Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or pork barrel, might as well add violation of Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees for failing to be truthful in his SALN.

SALN declarations are made under oath, and giving false information has led to several government officials in jail or meted with penalty.

Cash in SALN and actual cash in banks

With the green light of the Court of Appeals, the AMLC began looking into Estrada’s bank accounts in May 2014, a month before the senator was ordered arrested by the Sandiganbayan over the pork barrel scam. Thirty-one accounts under his name in different banks were examined for coverage.

Using multiple account analysis, the AMLC probers analyzed



Senator Jinggoy Estrada has violated SALN law with hidden peso and dollar deposits, according to the Anti-Money Laundering Council

Estrada’s bank records vis-a-vis his SALNs from 2004 to 2012. They also looked into significant transactions in 9 of his active bank accounts and related accounts.

On the SALN analysis, the probers stated the following observations:

There is “absence of indications” that the “significant investments” which Estrada declared in his SALN “were sourced from his assets/liabilities declared in previous years.”

Estrada underdeclared his cash in his SALNs for the years 2006 to 2012. “Cumulative under declaration amounted to P238.6 million.”

Estrada did not declare in his SALN a foreign currency deposit unit (FCDU) time deposit in Chinabank amounting to \$280,000.

“Dollar denominated life policies totalling \$75,000 for the years 2005 to 2010 and \$134,000 for the years 2011 to 2014 were not declared in his SALN.”

Questionable investments

The AMLC, in its report, observed that Estrada’s net worth (assets minus liabilities) jumped by 138% from 2004 to 2012 while his total cash on hand and in banks polevaulted by 330%, from P3.7 million to P15.87 million.

Notably, from zero investment since 2007, his SALN-declared investments surged to P92.305 million in 2011. This climbed to P119.305 million in 2012.

The increase in Estrada’s investments perplexed the AMLC.

“Despite the huge leap of investment, it would not show that it came from his other assets since the cash balances are increasing; the unloading of real estate in 2011 and 2012 are not substantial and there is no significant change in the balances of liabilities,” the report said.

One possible explanation for the growth of Estrada’s investments could be due to the fact that Estrada expanded his business interests, from only one company in 2008 to 7 companies by 2011, the AMLC said.

“Ironically, his 2012 investments based on his SALN increased, yet the listed businesses decreased from 7 to 4,” the report said.

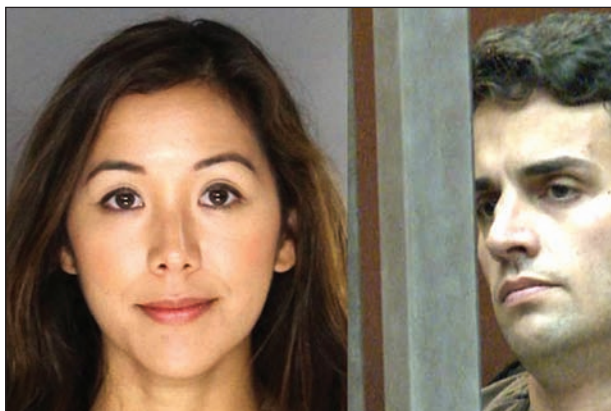
Former Fox40 reporter Sabrina Rodriguez sentenced in theft case

Former Fox40 reporter Sabrina Rodriguez entered a plea in Sacramento Superior Court to a misdemeanor grand theft charge.

Former Fox40 reporter Sabrina Rodriguez pleaded no contest Friday to a misdemeanor grand theft charge for her role in the March 2013 theft of ten wallets from the Coach outlet store in Folsom.

She entered the plea in Sacramento Superior Court to avoid a trial on three felony charges.

Rodriguez was sentenced to 60 days in the county jail but is expected to serve only half that time in home detention. She will also participate in three public speaking engagements as community



Sabrina Rodriguez and Nicholas Gray

service and pay \$2,484 in restitution to the Coach store.

Shortly after the sentencing, Rodriguez proclaimed her innocence in an interview with News10. She said she only accepted the plea deal to avoid risking prison time if a jury refused to believe that she had nothing to do with the planning and execution of the crime.

Fox40's Sabrina Rodriguez resigns, dumps fiance Rodriguez' ex-fiance Nicholas Gray still faces charges related to the shoplifting spree and a drug-related fire last year at the South Sacramento home the couple shared.

Rodriguez resigned from Fox40 in August. (News10.net)

Sacramento County approves tax breaks to bring Macy's to Campbell Soup plant

Bee Metro Staff

The Campbell Soup Co. plan in south Sacramento before it closed in 2013. Retailer Macy's says it plans to use part of the plant as a distribution center for online purchases.

The Campbell Soup Co. plan in south Sacramento before it closed in 2013. Retailer Macy's says it plans to use part of the plant as a distribution center for online



purchases. Hector Amezcua hamezcua@sacbee.com
The Sacramento County

Board of Supervisors Tuesday morning approved a package of tax and fee

breaks to persuade Macy's to move into part of the shuttered Campbell Soup factory on Franklin Boulevard in south Sacramento.

The county is offering Macy's a sales-tax reimbursement of up to 50 percent, depending on employment levels and the volume of sales generated out of the facility. The reimbursement can't exceed a total of \$5 million over the 10-year life of the lease, said Lori Moss, the county's director of com-

munity development. The county would waive another \$112,650 in permit fees. The board voted 4-1 in favor of the plan Tuesday. Supervisor Roberta MacGlashan, who represents the north and east parts of the county, including Folsom, said she voted against the incentives because she opposes sales tax rebates.

Macy's says it plans to occupy about a third of the sprawling Campbell complex with a distribution hub

for shipping orders to online customers. The retailer says the new center would employ about 175 people, but 72 of those jobs would replace existing positions at a Macy's distribution center in West Sacramento that would close.

Campbell's closure in 2013 after 66 years of soup-making dealt a blow to the working-class neighborhood, where the factory offered relatively high-wage, blue-collar jobs.

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Miss Colombia Paulina Vega crowned Miss Universe, full list of winners



TOP 5. Ladies from Colombia, Jamaica, Ukraine, the Netherlands, and the USA. Photo by Timothy A. Clary/AFP

The 63rd Miss Universe pageant aired Sunday, January 25 (January 26 in Manila). Miss Universe 2013 Gabriela Isler crowned her successor, Paulina Vega of Colombia.

This is the full list of winners.
Miss Universe: Colombia
1st runner-up: USA
2nd runner-up: Ukraine
3rd runner-up: Netherlands

4th runner-up: Jamaica

National Costume: Indonesia
Miss Congeniality: Nigeria
Miss Photogenic: Puerto Rico

The Philippine delegate, Mary Jean Lastimososa, made it to the top 10, but did not progress to the question and answer portion. —

Despite Miss Universe loss, Miss PH MJ Lastimososa grateful, 'filled with love'

Former beauty queens also congratulate MJ for representing the country

Despite failing to win the Miss Universe crown, Miss Philippines Mary Jean Lastimososa said she is grateful for the love and support given to her during the competition.

MJ posted a short message on Instagram minutes after the coronation night in Doral, Miami.

"So proud to be a Filipino! Man, cant express how grateful I am to everyone! Im filled with love right now! Love you all! Godbless us! Mabuhay!" MJ wrote.

MJ made it to the Top 15 and Top 10 of the competition, but failed to enter the Top 5. Colombia's Paulina Vega was crowned as Miss Universe 2014.

Meanwhile, past beauty queens congratulated MJ for representing the country. Miss Universe 2012 first runner up Janine Tugonon said that MJ did the country



Mary Jean Lastimososa

proud.

Miss Universe first runner up Miriam Quiambao also congratulated MJ for making it to the Top 10.

"Congratulations @mj_lastimososa for making it to the Top 10 at 63rd Annual #MissUniverse Pageant! We're still proud of you!"

Actress and 1993 Miss World second princess Ruffa Gutierrez did not hide her sadness that MJ failed to make it. In fact, she said many of them watching were shocked.

MJ's fellow beauty queens – Bb. Pilipinas International Bianca Guidotti, Bb. Pilipinas Intercontinental Kris Tiffany Janson, Bb. Pilipinas Supranational Yvethe Santiago, Bb. Pilipinas Tourism Parul Shah, and Bb. Pilipinas 1st runner up Laura Lehmann shared a video message for MJ.

In a statement, Bb. Pilipinas Charities, Inc. said they are proud of MJ's run in the pageant.

"The Binibining Pilipinas Charities, Incorporated would like to congratulate Ms. Mary Jean Lastimososa for her performance in the 63rd Miss Universe Pageant held in Doral, Miami USA. Title or no title, her participation in the pageant's global discussions on peace, cultural exchange and other charity initiatives has beautifully showcased the Filipina's beauty, intellect and compassion."

MJ was thought by many to have a great chance of placing in the pageant, given her lively performance at the preliminaries.

The Philippines has been in the Top 5 for the past 4 years. Venus Raj placed 4th runner up in 2010, Shamcey Supsup 3rd runner up in 2011, Janine Tugonon 1st runner up in 2012, and Ariella Arida 3rd runner up in 2013.



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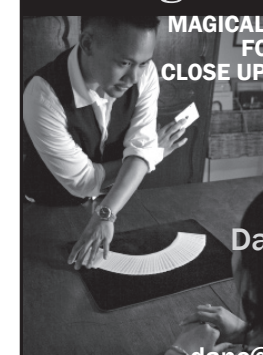


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Holiday Vacation in the Philippines

By Gabriel Ortigoza

It was rainy afternoon of Friday, December 19, 2014, when I drove my family to San Francisco International Airport (SFO) for our holiday vacation to the Philippines.

I was supposed to work that day but thanks to my fellow RN who allowed to switch schedule with me so I can leave early to SFO and to avoid monstrous afternoon traffic in the bay Area. I would, likewise, want to extend my thanks those good-hearted nurses who helped and worked for me and my wife so we enjoy our Christmas and New Year's vacation to the Philippines. Upon arrival at SFO I parked my car at the airport parking lot with a plan to drive it home on our return from vacation.

It is always good to have preferred airline seats for comfort especially when traveling with the whole family. It costs extra \$50 per person on top of the holiday ticket price which was already twice the price of a regular flight nonetheless the travel convenience it offers always overshadows the expensive airline ticket. It took Philippine Airlines (PAL) 12 straight flight hours from SFO to Manila International Airport (MIA). We arrived at Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal II (NAIA II) at 3:00a Sunday, December 21st. Philippines is 16 hours ahead of California Pacific Standard Time (PST).

There were two flights from SFO to Manila (MNL) on holidays. We were on the first flight scheduled that night.

From NAIA II, we proceeded and checked in to my sons' favorite hotel - EDSA Shangri-La. Because it was Sunday, our priority was to attend church at SM Mega Mall which is about 100 meters away from the hotel. I loved the sermon. I heard from the grapevine that tycoon Henry See, owner of SM commercial chains, constructed chapels to all his malls. After church we spent the day strolling around the huge mall until the Christmas sale ended at 11:00p.

The following day, Monday, we walked from Shangri-La hotel passing its adjacent sister building the Shangri-La Mall then we exited to Light Rail Transit (LRT) station. We bought LRT tickets heading to Santolan station, instead of taking a taxi, to avoid horrific traffic that demonized commuters in EDSA. It was our children's first ride to LRT and they adored it. "It's better than taxi, Papa." My son Gamiel commented. "There is no traffic."

From LRT Santolan we walk to Gate 2 of Camp Emilio Aguinaldo and then to the Armed Forces of the Philippines Savings and Loan,

Inc. (AFPSLAI) for an important mission. The purpose was to open another account to accommodate the overflowing interest due to fifteen percent (15%) interest rate AFPSLAI offers to its members. Where in the world can you find a savings agency that offers such huge interest? Rural Bank? Nope. Credit Union? Nah. Commercial Bank? Uh-uh. Only at AFPSLAI. Looking forward five to 10 years from now, the interests coming out from these savings can be used to pay future family expenses or even school tuition for our growing kids. I always believe the seeds planted now can bear fruit or produce in the future.

At exactly 3:00p we left Shangri-La using hotel's van to the airport for our flight to Davao City. Because it was already December 22nd people were already on Christmas vacation and were traveling to different destinations in the country. Due to airport traffic congestion our PAL flight was delayed. We arrived Davao International Airport at 11:00p. It was almost midnight when we got out of the airport but it's OK, I told my family, we were already in Davao - the safest city in the Philippines. Thanks to the iron-fist no nonsense leadership of Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, the man behind the transformation of the city to what it is right now. Half past 12, we arrived at Marco Polo Hotel.

Wednesday morning my brother and his son arrived in Davao from Manila and joined us for breakfast in the hotel restaurant. Another cousin also came. My original plan was to have sunrise breakfast in Samal Island but due to weather condition I aborted my plan. After breakfast, we quickly packed up, left the hotel, and proceeded to S & R in Ma-a district to buy goods as Christmas presents to be distributed to relatives who are attending our family reunion on December 24th in my hometown of Mlang in the province of Cotabato.

We left S & R quarter past 2:00p and proceeded to Mlang, another three hours straight drive from Davao. On our way to my hometown, we stopped by Digos to buy bebingka and an hour after we passed by Mt. Carmel in Bansalan, Davao Del Sur to buy my all-time favorite fresh goat's milk. Finally, we arrived in Mlang at around 6:30p, an hour and a half late due to several stop over as mentioned.

After a quick dinner with my parents at home, I went out my-



The Ortigoza family

self, leaving my family home, and to meet my high school classmates who have been waiting for me for our class reunion at Papalong's Resto-Bar, the only restaurant in my hometown that offers free WiFi connection. I went back home midnight.

Wednesday, December 24, 2014, was our family reunion day scheduled to start at 10:00a and to end at 2:00p. It was the 3rd Celestial-Celeste Reunion. This time the reunion was held at my rubber farm in Calunasan, the last village of Mlang towards the provincial capital city of Kidapawan. The purpose of our reunion is to strengthen camaraderie amongst members of the clan and to meet and greet relatives who have been away or were not able to attend the previous two family gatherings due to several reasons. It was also aimed to promote communication within family circle.

This time our numbers surpassed the previous record and the head count significantly increased. It was my parent's first time to attend in this clan reunion which I initiated and sponsored. I made sure my mother, who is the most senior among the relatives present, could deliver her Christmas message to all. Welcome remarks from Barangay Captain Triniah Canizares was read by one of the counselors present. Pastoral message was delivered by my cousin Davy. The program was prepared by cousin Liezle. Security personnel were provided by Captain Canizares.

Relatives whose names were picked during raffle draws were lucky to bring home some Christmas goodies and home appliances. Everybody went home happy and reinvigorated with additional stories to tell in the next couple of days, weeks, and even months.

Thanks to Lilibeth Pornel, my ever available caterer, who is not only flexible but has the will to bring her edible products and good services to our reunion.

December 25, 2014 was my children's first Christmas in Mlang. After lunch, we headed back to Davao and stayed overnight at Marco Polo Hotel. While in Davao, I want my children to experience eating food served in the street. I inquired from my cousin, who is based in the city, where to find Kambingan Restaurant. He guided us to Buhangin. Lo and behold, we found a good one. Can you believe it? The price of one plate in Marco Polo Hotel is equivalent to the total price of the food good for seven persons in Kambingan. It was the kids first time but they loved the food, especially the native chicken barbecue. We left Davao for Manila at 5:00a via PAL that smoothly landed at NAIA II couples of minutes ahead of scheduled arrival time on Friday, December 26th.

We pre-booked and bought Victory Liner tickets from Pasay to Baguio but we arrived at the airport four hours early for our scheduled bus trip. Based on the airport taxi fare bracket, the Airport to Baguio, a six hours drive, is six thousand pesos (P6,000) or US\$150. My wife and I decided to take the taxi van.

We left the airport early, instead of waiting for our 12 noon commercial bus trip to Baguio City. The airport taxi driver was nice and told us the freeway going north has been completed up to Urdaneta in Pangasinan. The driver predicted it will be a quick and fast trip. We expected to arrive Baguio by noontime. But we arrived Baguio 12 hours after. Yes, 12 long hours on the road.

December 26, 2014 was one of the nightmares in the history of Philippines commuters, may it be in land, water, or air travel. Volumes of travelers congested the roads, freeways, seaports, and airports. Toll gates were the major choke points that day. It took us one hour to pass a single toll gate because of heavy traffic that accumulated at toll gates. There were four toll gates to conquer up north to the Summer Capital of the Philippines. Upon arrival at Crown Legacy Hotel in Legarda Street, Baguio City, we went directly to our beds and snored.

It was beautiful sunny morning of Saturday, December 27th, when we went out of the hotel to stroll in the city. We spent quality time biking at the iconic Burnham Park and experienced boating at the lagoon. Walking around the park and at the football field made me appreciate the beauty of the nature.

It has been my routine to meet up with my former colleagues from PMA for a dinner every-time I'm on vacation and in Baguio. That night was our 4th reunion at Rose Bowl, a restaurant where my favorite Pata Tim with Water Crest is served.

At the same night my family and I were able to meet my

graduate school classmates from the University of the Philippines in Baguio for another reunion. It was our first ever UP grad school gathering since we parted ways after graduation. I was glad one of my grad school professor attended that dinner at the ELEMENTS located at the roof deck of Newtown Plaza Hotel near Navy Base.

The following day, Sunday, I brought my family to PMA Evangelical Church supposedly to attend the service but the schedule was changed one hour earlier. When we arrived, the service was just concluded. I was able to partake pan de sal which has been served every after church service even when I was still assigned at PMA in mid 90s until 2003. From PMAEC, I brought my family to my former quarters and then we proceeded to ride around Fort Del Pilar. Thanks to my soldier relative who volunteered his van for our use.

Noontime of the same day, my wife's brother Xavier picked us up at the hotel and brought us home to Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya via Ambuclao Road. It took us three hours to Bayombong. The trip used to be six hours drive using the old route via San Jose in Nueva Vizcaya. Thanks to DPWH for making the road passable to all kinds of traffic.

Monday, December 29, my family and I drove to Bonifacio Global City (BCG) in Taguig to attend a birthday party of a friend at the Officers' Club in Fort Bonifacio. Thanks to an app called Waze that helped us navigate using shortest route. Glad to meet our former classmates in the Nurse Corps and extra happy to be recognized by the birthday celebrant Colonel Arwel Oropesa PA (MNSA) (PMA 86), during his birthday speech at the O' Club, as one of the persons who helped him with his master's thesis as required in Master of National Security Administration (MNSA). We stayed overnight at the beautiful Seda Hotel located at the heart of BCG.

The following day, Tuesday, Dec. 30th, I drove my family back to Bayombong for another six hours drive. Thanks to my wife's brother Leo for lending us his car.

Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2014. We spent the last day of the year in Bayombong. In the afternoon, we went to the cemetery to visit tombs of my wife's parents and relatives who went ahead of us. We rode tricycle to traverse from one point to another. The children loved this ride.

Midnight came and the kids were excited to light fountains and firecrackers. We bought several firecrackers openly sold in the streets such as Judas Belts, Whistle Bombs, Baby Rockets, Mini Baby Rockets, Watuzi Sticks, several fountains, etc. Everybody en-

Continued on page 16



PerryScope

Police corruption and torture chambers

By Perry Diaz

Once respected for its professionalism and dedicated service to the country, the Philippine National Police (PNP) is faced with the biggest challenge in its existence. Formed in 1991 when the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Act was enacted, it merged the Philippine Constabulary and the Integrated National Police into national law enforcement force under one command, the PNP Director General (DG) who reports to the DILG Secretary. However, the appointing authority is the President of the Philippines. A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, the DG carries the rank of a four-star general.

Currently, PNP has about 150,000 personnel, which makes the DG one of the most powerful officials in the country. Although, the PNP is under the administrative control of the DILG Secretary, the DG exercises great amount of autonomy and discretion in running the PNP.

Since its creation, the PNP had been beset with charges of anomalies and irregularities including allegations of protecting gambling lords, smuggling syndicates, and other criminal activities. There are also allegations of police officers involved in extortion and kidnapping for ransom, which is colloquially called "hulidap." It was coined from "huli" (arrest) and "dap" (kidnap). Typically, a hu-



PNP-police-officers

lidap operation involves a police officer arresting someone on bogus charges and then keeping him or her for ransom.

One of the police's most brutal methods used in extortion or to extract confessions for crimes is the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Above the law

AI-Above-The-Law Last December 4, 2014, Amnesty International (AI) released a 120-page report titled "Above the Law: Police Torture in the Philippines." According to the report, the police use an array of torture methods, including: electric shocks; beatings, punching

stress positions; stripping detainees naked and tying and pulling genitalia with a string; hanging detainees upside down; mock executions; shooting; and rape.

Recently, AI's Secretary General, Salil Shetty, was in Manila to launch the "Stop Torture" campaign. He said that although the Philippines had enacted the Anti-Torture Act five years ago, not a single official has been convicted. "The single, most important reason why there is torture in the Philippines is they [police] get away with it," he said.



"Hulidap" cop surrenders.

and kicking; striking with wooden batons or metal bars; burning skin with cigarettes; waterboarding; near-asphyxiation with plastic bags; forcing detainees to assume

According to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the secret torture chamber was not an official detention center. At the time it was exposed, about 40 prisoners were illegally detained there.

AI said the torture of suspected criminals by the police has thrived under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III. Shetty accused Aquino of not doing enough to reform the PNP. According to CHR records, there were 457 torture cases reported from 2001 to the middle of 2014. In 2013 alone, there were 75 cases reported, the highest in a single year.

Attempts by AI to establish dialogue with Aquino, the DILG, and the PNP to discuss the report were ignored. However, presidential spokesman, Herminio Coloma, told the media: "The government is pursuing its efforts to prosecute those violating the anti-torture



"Wheel of Torture"

One method of torture that AI exposed was the "Wheel of Torture" game, which the police used for fun. The wheel is divided into sections like a pizza pie. Each section is labeled with the kind of torture to use. One section is labeled "20 seconds Manny Pacquiao." If the wheel landed there, the officers would punch the detainees — mostly suspected drug traffickers — for 20 seconds. Another section is labeled "3 minutes Zombies" and another "30 seconds Duck Walk."

The "wheel of torture" was allegedly stationed at a secret torture chamber in Binan, Laguna.

"Wheel of Torture"

has never been a single conviction for torture, to which Shetty said, "If you don't acknowledge the problem, there can be no solution."

Preventive suspension

On the same day the AI report came out, Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales coincidentally issued a six-month preventive suspension order against PNP Chief DG Alan Purisima over an allegedly anomalous contract the PNP had entered into with a courier service in 2011. The graft complaint against Purisima and 11 other PNP officers — including three generals — involved in the transaction stemmed from a contract with WERFAST Documentary Agency for the delivery of firearms licenses even without proper accreditation.

Initially, Purisima refused to comply and turned to his friend President Aquino for guidance.

He sought a meeting with Aquino; however, Aquino told him that he had to comply with the suspension order." Meanwhile, the search is on for the next PNP chief. Purisima is due to retire in November 2015.

With the police torture scandal and the suspension of the PNP's top honcho, the PNP's image may have been irreparably damaged. Indeed, it would be virtually impossible to restore its good name.

Gone were the days when the PC was looked upon as the defender of the people. But as it turned out, it's quite the opposite — the people fear that it has become a predator preying on those they were sworn to protect. Surmise it to say, a majority of police officers are honest and incorruptible. However, many see them as a band of hoodlums in uniform.

Disbanding PNP

What is sad is that Purisima, who is one of Aquino's trusted friends, has digressed from the "daang matuwid" (straight path) that Aquino set to follow when he assumed the presidency. And Aquino's initial reluctance to enforce the Ombudsman's suspension order gave the impression that Aquino was too protective of his friends in government.

Police torture and the Purisima scandal have brought to the fore the issue of disbanding the PNP. Many are of the opinion that the PNP has outlived its usefulness and something should — nay, must! — be done about it. Either it is reformed, overhauled or disbanded. Some people even suggested that it should be surgically bisected into its original components — the Philippine Constabulary and the Integrated National Police — with some modifications to improve their performance.

But restructuring or dividing the monolithic PNP just to improve its performance wouldn't achieve the ultimate goal, which is to stop police corruption. You can tell the police officers to follow a "daang matuwid" and rest assured it would still be "business as usual." It takes more than sound bites to stop corruption. It takes leadership and the political will to take politics out of politics, which begs the question: Does President Aquino have what it takes to stop police corruption? (PerryDiaz@gmail.com)



PNP Chief Alan Purisima

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Hiding the poor

The main facts are uncontested, and uncomfortable. From Jan. 14, the day before Pope Francis arrived in the Philippines, to Jan. 19, the day he left, some 100 poor families were treated to an “outing” by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. In all, there were 490 men, women and children who took part in the DSWD “training camp” in Chateau Royale, a resort in Nasugbu, Batangas, and they had one thing in common: They were homeless people who lived on Roxas Boulevard.

Since Roxas Boulevard was one of the thoroughfares used by the papal motorcade, and since the schedule of the outing coincided exactly with the papal visit, the social welfare department has been asked the obvious question: Were they hiding the poor from the Pope?

A DSWD official said the timing was pure luck. “It was only a coincidence,” Assistant Secretary Javier Jimenez told Radyo Inquirer. “This has been planned even before [the papal visit].”

And Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman categorically denied there was any attempt to hide poor families. In the first place, she said,

“You cannot hide poverty. When the Pope landed, the first thing he saw were the shanties by the river.”

From Malacañang, deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte said no attempt to hide the poor would have even worked. “It would be an insult to our visitor to say that [if] we hide [the poor], he would not know about them.”

It does in fact seem unreasonable to expect that a government hosting the state and pastoral visit of a religious leader coming to the country precisely to be in solidarity with the poor, especially those victimized by Super typhoon “Yolanda,” would launch an initiative to sweep the homeless under the rug, so to speak.

The main argument in the DSWD’s favor is that from simple arithmetic. To quote Jimenez: “I mean, there are more than that number of street families in Metro Manila.” If the government really wanted to “whitewash poverty,” as a familiar and strident critic immediately alleged, why stop at 100 families?

But the arguments against the DSWD are numerous, and many of them proceed from basic questions.

First, timing. It may be that the department scheduled the activity beforehand, and that at least two such orientation outings had previously been conducted. Still: Why time the training program for Jan. 14 to 19? The schedule of the Pope’s visit was set several months ago; when did the DSWD decide to set the third outing for January? There’s also a little detail that nags at the conscience, even of those who would like to give Soliman and her hardworking crew the benefit of the doubt.

According to some of the homeless themselves who went on the outing, they received the invitation to take part only one or two days before the activity was scheduled to start. This detail



Land pollution: garbage dump near Manila, Philippines



A woman and her children sleep on a street in Manila.

adds to the growing perception that the outing was in fact a clearing operation.

Second, venue. While it is unreasonable to classify a resort or a hotel based on the price of its most expensive room (apparently, as much as P24,000 in the case of Chateau Royale), it is only logical to ask where the first two outings were conducted. Even if the gov-

ernment did not pay full price on the standard room rate of about P4,500, the DSWD must explain whether the rate it did pay was more or less the same as those it paid in the first two sessions. Participants have volunteered information that they ate as much as five times per day during their stay in the Nasugbu resort. “They also fed us frequently. It some-

times felt a bit too much,” one of them told the Inquirer. Again, we must ask: Did the government pay more this time around?

Third, program. According to one participant, the government-paid vacation followed a regular schedule, including group exercises plus a talk per day. On the face of it, however, this seems like rather a loose schedule, not enough to meet the objective of the outing, if that objective were, as officials said, to “assess” the homeless’ suitability for the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer Program. If the objective, however, were to remove those “vulnerable to the influx of people coming to witness the Pope” (Soliman’s words) out of harm’s way, then the program would have more than sufficed.

There are more questions needing to be asked. A congressional investigation is called for. (Inquirer.net-Editorial)



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NEW YEAR REVELERS AT MAGELLAN HALL

By Dale Esperante

Guests of the American Legion Magellan Post and Unit 604 started arriving at the historic veterans' hall on Gerber Road at 6 p.m. on 31 December 2014. Once inside, they were welcomed by the ambient warmth of the occasion. It was one of the community's must places to be on the eve of 2015. It also helped that the arriving guests came ready to party!

To start the evening, the master of ceremony (MC), yours truly, introduced Ms. Apoll Ross Reyes to sing the national anthems of the United States and the Philippines. Apoll rendered a proper and respectful rendition of the anthems. Well done young lady! The invocation was delivered by Chaplain Glenn Carrasca. To complete the welcoming rituals and commentaries, the MC called on Commander Tom Amaba to give a brief welcome address. The commander who was occupied at the time asked 1st Vice Commander Will Williams to do the honors.

The music provided by "Hi-Tech Sound System – The Cordero's" filled the hall and enhanced the ambiance of the dinner hour. Seeing that some guests had already finished dinner, the MC invited them to take advantage of the great music being played by opening the ballroom floor for dancing. At first, there was only a couple who swayed to the music but gradually others followed and quickly filled the whole dance floor from end to end with dancers of various styles and ages. 12 year old Apoll was requested to sing a number again before the start of the evening's Ms. New Year Contest. Apoll's song was much appreciated as evidenced by the dancers who swayed to the rhythm of her music.

The transition from dancing to the Ms. New Year Contest was started by the MC's introduction of Ms. New Year 2014 Nanette Nerona. The 2014 beauty was escorted by her handsome son-in-law Jeremy Whitlock and they were met by the guests with a resounding round of applause. The presentation of the 2015 candidates was also met with cheers and applause. The three beautiful ladies vying for Ms. New Year 2015 were: Lita Calindas escorted by her husband Fred, Nora Basco escorted by Manny Ramos, and Edna Villanueva escorted by



Photos by Dale Esperante

Jesse Velasco. After their individual introductions and fashion walks, the candidates danced with their voters. Fred Amper, the Official Timer, ensured that each candidate was given exactly 5 minutes to dance with her fans and supporters. After the candidates' danced with their fan base, Contest Chairman Bill Versoza invited the guests to take over the dance floor again while the votes were counted in the accounting office.

Generous minutes passed before Chairman Bill emerged from the voting room and asked for an official intermission to announce the winners of the contest. The crowns, sashes, and bouquets were readied. The bouquets were donated by Aida Calindas, Letty O'Quinn, and Lerma Amaba.

Congratulations and appreciations were once again lavished upon all the candidates before the official announcement of the results!

Nora Basco was crowned Ms. Hope 2015 and presentations to her were: Bouquet by Ms. Hope 2014 Susan Kelly and Joe Gonzales; Sash by Ms. New Year 2007 Placida Butcher and escort; Crown by Ms. New Year 2012 Frennie Williams and husband Will. Edna Villanueva was crowned Ms. Faith 2015 and presentations



she received were: Bouquet by Ms. Faith 2013 Rosalie Crandall and husband Ricky; Sash by Ms. New Year 2010 Warnita Avillanosa and Howard Williams; Crown by Ms. New Year 2011 Marilou Amper and husband Fred.

Finally, hail to Ms. New Year 2015 Lita Calindas! Presented to her: Bouquet by Ms. Faith 2014 Olivia Jackson and Tommy Jackson; Sash by Auxiliary President Letty O'Quinn and Commander Tom Amaba; Crown by Ms. New Year 2014 Nanette Nerona and Jeremy Whitlock. After a few paparazzi breaks, the MC introduced one of the community's respected leaders, Ms. Remy Solomon of the Bayanihan of Sacramento, to perform a special serenade. Ms. Remy's voice filled the entire hall with her powerful vibrato and was appreciated by sporadic applauds during her song. After her performance, the hall resonated with the

sound of thunderous ovation from the appreciative audience!

To finalize the official program of the contest, Auxiliary Unit 604 President Letty O'Quinn thanked everyone's participation in this annual event. Allow me to paraphrase a line by the president who said, "We must continue to have this FUN-raising event to help support the maintenance of this old historic building, Magellan Hall." Well said Madame President!

The next two and a half hours before midnight were spent jittersbugging, waltzing, line dancing, and name it, we've danced it! 5 minutes before midnight, the MC called time out from the dancing and asked everyone to retrieve their glass of toast for the coming New Year. Minutes then seconds passed. The MC and Official Timer Fred Amper counted down. At ten seconds before, the crowd chimed in on the countdown. ...5-4-3-2-1!

Balloons dropped from the ceiling, the New Year's anthem Auld Lang Syne filled the air, sounds from balloons bursting and corks popping were heard, husbands kissed their wives, then everyone greeted everyone appropriately with Hope, Faith, and a Happy New Year! A lady in red holding a glass of apple cider summed up the face of the evening with an unrestrained picture of joy. Thank you to all especially the organizers starting from Commander Tom Amaba and President Letty O'Quinn. A special mention goes to "MOBL" (pronounced mobile) – Malou Amper, Olive Jackson, Bella Nido, and Lerma Amaba for being so actively involved in the process of this operation! Congratulations MOBL because it was INDEED a successful FUN-raising! To Ms. Hope Nora Basco, Ms. Faith Edna Villanueva, and Ms. New Year Lita Calindas, thank you ladies for accepting the honors bestowed upon you on the eve of year 2015! MABUHAY!

The Aklan Association of Sacramento & Vicinity, Inc.

24th Ati-Atihan Festival



Hala Bira time again! The Aklan Association of Sacramento and Vicinity, Inc. led by Frank Zabal, as president, along with the Filipino community and the Aklanons celebrated their 24th Ati-Atihan festival in Honor of the Infant Jesus on January 17, 2015 at the Jose Rizal Community Center, Sacramento.

After the mass and dinner, Juby Osit and Danny YapDiango invited all the "tribes" and participants to join the parade and dance to the beat of the drums and lyre by the Aklan drummers led by Tony Solidum.

It has been their 24th year and the only Ati-Atihan in Sacramento to celebrate this kind of endless dancing to the continuous, rhythmic beat of the drums while countless Sto. Nino statues are carried by parading participants.

Photos by Dave San Pedro



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Henry Bambao Assumes 2nd Term UNLUCAI Leadership

By Faina E. Abaya

In a simple yet solemn oath taking ceremony, the new set of officers of the United Naguilian La Union Circle of America, Inc. for the 2015-16 terms were officially installed into office on January 10, 2015. The oath taking ceremony was held at the spacious residence of Dick and Marilyn Bernal in Vallejo, California. The officers took their respective oaths of office before Oswald Joven, the President of Vallejo Fairfield Suisun Filipino Organization of California.

The members have unanimous adapted a resolution to make the Induction Ceremony for the new set of officers to be just simple and without fanfare to avoid further expenses on the part of the members, majority of whom are attending the February 2015 Naguilian Global Reunion in the Philippines.

The Naguilian Global reunion has two phases, the first part is billed to be a dinner dance affair to be held at Manila Hotel, a historical landmark right in the capital of the Philippines. The final phase of the reunion will be moved to Naguilian, La Union where most of the members have originated. The Municipal government has lined up many relaxing and enjoyable entertainment for all the attendees coming from different parts of the world and also the local residents themselves.

The new set of officers was led by Henry Bambao who was unani-



The new elected officers and members of the United Naguilian La Union Circle of America for 2015-2016.



With the inducting officer Oswald Joven.

ously reelected for his second term as President of UNLUCAI. The first term of Henry Bambao has remarkable achievements in Sacramento, California where the organization was founded 33 years ago and other places, especially, in the town of Naguilian, La Union where most of the members traced their roots.

Under his leadership, the UNLUCAI has successfully held the Grand Fiesta on June 21, 2014 at the Double Tree Hotel on Ar-

den Way, Sacramento. The affair was a fund raising Dinner Dance participated by different Filipino American organizations in Sacramento. During the event ten deserving students of the community were given modest Scholarship Grants.

Most of the members have actively participated in various community activities in Sacramento and Vicinity by different organizations to implement their respective meritorious missions such as the Filipino Community of Sacramento and Vicinity, Filipino American Veterans Association, Consulate on Wheels by the Bayanihan, USA, UP Alumni Association of Sacramento and Vicinity, American Legion Magellan Post 604 and the Induction of the new set of Officers of



UNLUCAI Pres. Henry Bambao

the Vallejo Fairfield and Suisun Filipino Organization.

Majority of the officers and members also attended the 2014 Naguilian Global Reunion held in Hawaii and became instrumental for the overwhelming success of the reunion. Some of the Officers and members of UNLUCAI also attended the Anniversary Dinner Dance of the Naguilian Association of Pacific Northwest held in Seattle, Washington and the United Naguilian La Union of Southern California held in Los Angeles, California.

During the first term of Henry Bambao, the membership of the organization has increased to 75 active members. Likewise, the UNLUCAI finally received the approval from the USA Internal Revenue as a Tax Exempt organization under 501 (C) (3). The

UNLUCAI has supported and financed the pew project of St. Augustine Church in Naguilian until its completion in March 2013 and many other improvements for the town church including the ongoing renovation of its Rectory.

Henry Bambao leads the officers and members of UNLUCAI to attend the Naguilian Global Reunion and as always he sends a strong message to the event for everyone to ponder. He said in his message that " We fervently hope that our time honored reunion will not only be a social gathering but will achieve something to unite us for the betterment of our communities where we come from and for the best interest of our beloved town of Naguilian. Thus, we are continuing our commitments to our community and town in the fields of education, charity, civic and religious activities that deeply concerned not only ourselves but for the greater good of others." He also said that "As we all know, there are many productive activities that we can extend for our town mates that can better alleviate their lives and augment whatever projects the municipal government is obligated to do".

Elected officers for 2015- 2016 terms are; Henry Bambao, President, Rudy Delizo, Vice President, Cristina Bambao, Secretary, Jane Rillera Bambao, Asst. Secretary, Charity Avena, Treasurer, Cora Ojascastro, Asst. Treasurer, Letty Cheng, Auditor; Eligio Floresca, Asst. Auditor, Dick Bernal, Teddy Cheng, Charlie Delizo and Manuel Ojascastro, Sgt. At Arms; Board of Directors Sonia Vilorio, Chairman; Sonia Delizo, Fely Esplana, Tino Floresca and Jack Tillman.

The Naguilian Global Reunion schedules; February 11, 2015- Welcome Dinner and Dance, Manila Hotel, Philippines (6 PM); February 13, Grand parade/basi inspired street dancing and Drum & Lyre Competition (7AM); February 14, Senior Citizen's Day (9AM-3 PM) [Variety Show/Acrobatic Show, Town Plaza Auditorium (4PM); Global Reunion-Ball, Barangay Nite, Town Plaza Auditorium (7 PM).



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Filipino Women's Club



Installation and induction of officers of the Filipino Women's Club of Sacramento. Memie Weitzenberg officially installed as the incoming president of the FWC 2015-2016.

Feast Day Celebration at St. Paul Catholic Parish



"Fundraising and early Feast Day Celebration at St. Paul's Catholic Parish on 17 Jan 2015. Thanks to Ms. St Paul 2015, Beth Velasco, who invited us. She was one of the main organizers of this event. (Photo of FAVA friends by Fred and Malou Amper)."

Anniversary



ALBERTA and LEONARDO PENA
52th Wedding Anniversary
January 18

Crisanta Galinato's Retirement Celebration



The family of Crisanta Galinato



Crisanta and husband John

A graduate of Baguio General Hospital School of Nursing in the Philippines, Crisanta "Santi" Galinato retires from Roseville Kaiser Hospital, where she worked for more than 20 years as a pediatric RN. A lovely retirement celebration joined by her husband John and her 3 children, friends, and coworkers was held at the beautiful Catta Verdera Country Club in Lincoln, California on January 24, 2015.

The evening included dancing and moments of reminiscence of the past by her friends and coworkers, where she was most praised for her generosity and above all, for her caring and compassionate qualities. Crisanta in her message, also gracefully acknowledged her family, friends in the Filipino community, her prayer group, and friends from St. Ignatius Parish School where her children attended primary school for their continued love, caring, and friendship.



Friends, relatives and colleagues of Crisanta

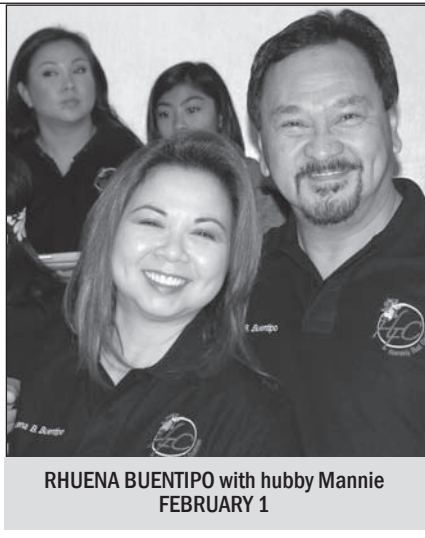


JUN and FAINA ABAYA
51th Wedding Anniversary
January 26

■ Birthdays



ANTHONY S. MERCADO
DANAMER S. MERCADO
JANUARY 24 & JANUARY 28



RHUENA BUENTIPO with hubby Mannie
FEBRUARY 1



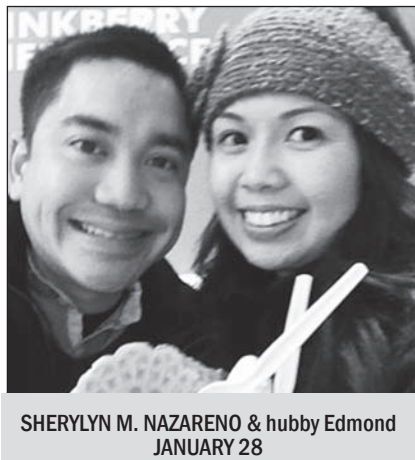
TRISTAN REY DE JESUS JIMENEZ
JANUARY 26



NES BAUTISTA with Susan
FEBRUARY 26



ARIA SANTIAGUEL ARGUELLES
JANUARY 23



SHERYLYN M. NAZARENO & hubby Edmond
JANUARY 28



HOMER L. DE ALA
JANUARY 28



REMY SOLOMON and LEILA PEREIRA
FEBRUARY 17
JANUARY 29

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 13, 2015, FRIDAY

Golden State Lions Club
VALENTINE DINNER & DANCE
"Love is in the Air"
6 PM Dinner Donation \$45
Hilton Garden Inn Elk Grove
9241 Laguna Springs Drive, E.G.
Music by Juliet Suarez
Call Julie - 916.397.1071
Eddie - 916.690.5324



MARCH 7, 2015, SATURDAY

Maharlika Lions Club
CRAB & SHRIMP FEED
6 pm - 11pm
St. Anthony Parish Community Center
660 Florin Road, Sacramento CA
Carle & Sarah - 916.769.8601



MARCH 28, 2015, SATURDAY

PANGASINAN ASSOCIATION
of NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
65TH Anniversary Dinner & Dance
6 pm - 11pm
Jose Rizal Community Center
7230 Florin Mall Dr. Sacramento, Ca
Aida - 916.686.9886
Mercy - 916.266.1923



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Pet Loss Center & Sierra Hills Pet Cemetery
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Sacramento, CA 95841
Tel 916.732.2037 | EAST LAWN
Albert Brown Mortuary
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Oakland, CA 94611
Lic. #FD-242
Tel 800.652.1873 | EAST LAWN
Elk Grove Memorial Park & Mortuary
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Elk Grove, CA 95624
Lic. #FD-1455
Tel 916.732.2031 | EAST LAWN
Andrews & Greilich Funeral Home
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Lic. #FD-136
Tel 916.732.2026 |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|

In Memoriam

By Dale Esperante



Dominador Agregado

May 19, 1921 – December 15, 2014

by Historian Fred Amper and the Adjutant, this writer. It also included 1st Vice Commander Will Williams reading and presenting The Legion's Post Everlasting Resolution and Certificate of Appreciation to Manang Coring and family.

Manong Doming was also a lifetime member of the Filipino American Veterans Association (FAVA). FAVA conducted the Veterans' Final Roll Call. Two vet-

able to respond." The Bell tolled 21 times followed by Taps. Veterans Ato Delacruz and Joe Zaragoza played Taps on their bugles. During Taps, the veterans as a group rendered their final salute.

On 3 Jan 2015, the Agregado family and friends gathered at Magellan Hall after the final memorial services. Paraphrasing the commander, "When we are asked by the family

Manong Doming joined the U.S. Navy in 1945, and then six years later he transferred to the United States Air Force. In 1966, he retired from the military. He then became a highly appreciated member of the Sacramento Filipino-American community because of his contributions and volunteer efforts.

As a veteran, he was a "Paid Up for Life" member of the American Legion for 23 years. On 2 Jan 2015, after the religious services, Commander Tom Amaba officiated the American Legion ceremony with Chaplain Glenn Carrasca.

The ceremony included the posting of colors (National and Air Force Flags)



Photos by Dale Esperante

erans at a time saluted the reposed Manong Doming as they were called. A long line of veterans were called and saluted.

The name of Dominador Agregado was called last. After the third call, veteran Arnold Mayo responded, "Sir he is present but is un-

of our departed member, we must make ourselves available."

The friends and veterans express their condolences, thoughts, and prayers to the Agregado family, especially to Manang Coring and son Jimmy.

Melchor De Jesus Mangosing

December 6, 1923 – December 27, 2014

ARosary, Mass, and The American Legion memorial service for Manong Melchor was held at East Lawn Mortuary on 15 Jan 2015. Photos on the wide screen showed a young and handsome Melchor in his navy uniform.

Carrasca read the prayers, the flags were posted, Taps resonated, legionnaires saluted, and 1st Vice Commander Will Williams presented Manang Meding

The American Legion Resolution and Certificate of Appreciation. Legion-



His patriotism as a WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War veteran obviously inspired the younger members of the family. Seated on the first pew next to Manang Meding were four gentlemen in military uniforms. Air Force MSgt Arthur and SMSgt Charles Mangosing are sons who retired from the military but still look sharp in their air force uniforms. Navy Lieutenant Aimar Mangosing is a grandson (his rank is equivalent to a Captain in the Air Force and the Army). Last but not least, A J Mangosing, a grandson who is an Army 1st

Lieutenant. After the religious services, the Legionnaires conducted their Post Everlasting ceremony. Commander Tom Amaba of Post 604 officiated, Chaplain Glenn

naire Melchor was a 16 year "Paid Up for Life" American Legion member. The funeral mass was held at St. Paul's Catholic Church at 10 a.m. on 16 Jan 2015 followed by a procession to St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery

for Manong Melchor Mangosing's final resting place. The American Legion Magellan Post 604 on Gerber Road opened its doors to receive their fallen comrade's family and friends after the final services.



Bebien Hataka

March 22, 1944 – November 16, 2014

We thought we would have more time together to enjoy your friendship. We miss your hospitality ministry in church every Sunday before mass. During the last Feast Day of San Lorenzo Ruiz, you encouraged us to be active organizers and participants. Your constant guidance assured the success of the celebration. Your parish friends will never forget you. Although you are no longer with us, you will always have a special place in our hearts, your St. Charles Borromeo church family.



"A contingent of Sacramento Post and Unit 604 legionnaires gathered at Millbrae's Chapel of the Highlands on 25 Jan 2015. The friends of Tom and Lerma Amaba travelled from Sacramento to pay their respect at the memorial service of Bienvenida Posadas Sebastian, the mother of Lerma Amaba."

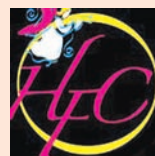


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By Nancy Cristi Bautista

Love & Destiny

Is there really a truth about destiny, especially concerning a true love? Probably, not many do believe. However, I do, as I do believe in Santa Claus. That, somehow, is when the awesome gifts and wishes are granted, one longs for more destiny stories time after time, and just like kids who are waiting for more toys to come. There are few personal stories that I could share to support my belief in love and destiny.

Once, there was a young man at work who kept on hinting that he was seriously looking for a woman to call his own. One day, as he mentioned his desire again, in one corner of the room, there was a pretty single co-worker who was quietly doing some paper works. To make the story short, I introduced them to each other, dated each other, and now married for twenty years. Happily? Must be.

In another incident, a young lady was distraught on the break up with his boyfriend. I advised her to go out with some friends who had been inviting her.

She finally decided that it was time to move on, and she agreed to go out with a group of friends. Her friends introduced her to a very nice single guy, in which, after dating for a while, ended up marrying each other, and now, still happily married and have a six year old son, our own grandson.

At another wedding, a friend's daughter just broke up with her ex-boy friend. In the meantime, there was also a young guest who became available to date. They were introduced and they had fun dancing with each other. After a few dates, they fell in love and got married and now have two sons.

Still think that these were just coincidence? Maybe, but, here are some more love and destiny true stories, that I, myself had witnessed.

There was a co-worker of mine who wanted to visit England with another co-worker. Upon learning this, I mentioned to her about my frequent flyer airline ticket and sold it to her for only a couple of hundred dollars, which, she grabbed right away. While taking pictures of each other during their vacation, they met a tall English man who offered to take pictures of both of them. He became their companion and friend. My co-worker and this young man continued their communication after she arrived back here in the United States, he came here to visit, got married to each other, and now, still happily married and have a ten year old

daughter.

Another love story was about a young woman who had been single for a while. It was almost Christmas and she hesitated to join our party because she had to leave the country for a family reason. However, she would be back on time for our Christmas party. For our Kris Kringle exchange gift, there was a young available guy who was known for his being nice, a gentleman, and good looking. Since I was in charge of the list of names joining, I cheated a bit. I asked her if she would like to have him as her pick, and when she agreed, I gave her his name and I gave him her name. We did a little pushing for both during the party, since both were still shy of each other. Finally, they dated, fell in love, and got married and now living happily together with a six year old daughter.



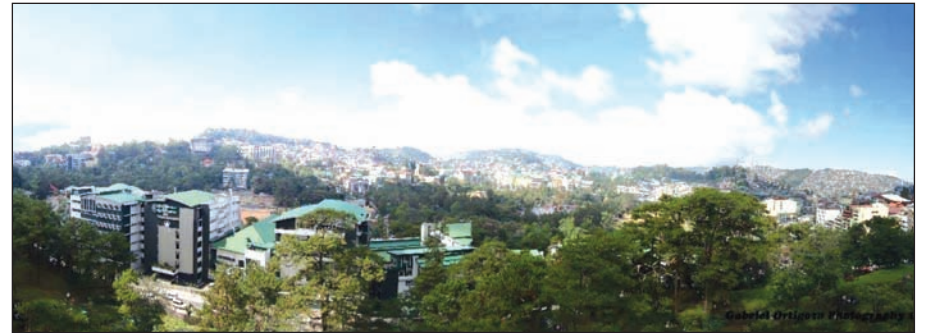
Illustration by Dave San Pedro

There was also this pretty woman who seemed happy being single, in spite of meeting a lot of single men. She went on vacation in Hawaii, which, she constantly had been doing. But this time, while in Hawaii, she met this handsome guy who became her good friend. He decided to visit her here in the main land. When we all met him for the first time, I told them that they looked so compatible and told her that he seemed she found the right man. Now, they will be married in Hawaii in January.

About seven years ago, my youngest daughter was happily unattached. One day, I was talking to a co-worker and I happened to ask her if she has a nice cousin who I could introduce to my daughter. She said, yes, so I told my hesitant daughter, and agreed to meet my co-worker first. The incident never happened, and my daughter had just found a boyfriend already. When I saw my co-worker again, she asked about my daughter, but, I apologized to her and told her that she had a serious boyfriend already whom we liked also. My co-worker said that she thought her cousin was dating somebody, too. Upon talking about them, we were so shocked to find out that her cousin and my daughter were the same people we were trying to match! We were jumping with joy and she exclaimed that we would be seeing a lot of each other on holidays, which became true. Now, my daughter and my co-worker's cousin got married to each other and have a five year old girl and a three year old son, and I might say, happily married.

Ahh, love is still in the air.

Holiday Vacation in the Philippines



Panoramic view of Baguio City

Photo by Gabby Ortigoza

From page 7

joyed igniting those fireworks and the kids were so excited to see it explode in the air. A baby rocket changed course while in flight and went to the neighbors' rooftop and there it exploded. Thank God the roof was made up of GI sheet. No fire was created. Another baby rocket did not ascend as expected and exploded right in front of us. The kids clapped their hands in jubilation as they watched those fireworks explode.

After lunch of Thursday, January 1, 2015, I drove my family together with my brother-in-law Leo to Microtel Hotel in Pasay City to spend our last night in the Philippines.

The whole morning of Friday, Jan. 2, was a free day until our flight back to SFO. Had plenty of time catch up with my relatives in Pasay. I took that opportunity to have lunch with them at

The Food Club near SM MOA. At 5:00p we left the hotel and proceeded to the airport for our flight back to SFO via PAL.

Airbus A340-300 landed at SFO at exactly 3:45p PST. Exactly 11 hours and 45 minutes straight flight from Manila. Overall weather condition on the duration of the flight was fair with some minor air pockets. Temperature at SFO was 11 degrees Centigrade or 52 degrees Fahrenheit. Air traffic at SFO that day was 30 minutes. Like Gamiel on our flight to Manila, Gamiel was able to sleep literally flat on the plane's floor for eight undisturbed hours while Gamiel made cat nap on his designated seat.

I thank the Lord for granting us safety as we explore the beauty of the Philippines and reunited with our loved ones during the holiday season.

(gabbyortigo@yahoo.com)

Every year, the Sisters of Kappa Psi Epsilon holds their event, Pinay Symposium, where we choose a topic regarding issues we face and sometimes are afraid to speak up about. This year, the topic will be sexual harassment, something we must all be aware of.

Come learn about sexual harassment, the different types that exist, its effects, and prevention. This event is free, and is held at CSU Sacramento's Redwood Room in the Union from 7pm - 9pm. Any questions or concerns, please contact any sister of Kappa Psi Epsilon or the sister stated on the flyer. We hope to see you all there!

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Floyd Mayweather: Is the 'Money' man's stock free-fallin' faster than a Tom Petty melody?

By Lee Cleveland

And while interpretations of the song's meaning vary, I think it describes Petty's changing feelings about an ex-girlfriend he broke up with awhile back.



Floyd Mayweather: Is the 'Money' man's stock free-fallin' faster than a Tom Petty melody?

At first, perhaps too consumed by his burgeoning success, he felt no remorse. But now, years later, he realizes he made a mistake and is lamenting decision, knowing he'll never get her back.

If Floyd Mayweather doesn't fight Manny Pacquiao this summer, will he, like rocker Tom Petty in the above scenario, regret his decision years later?

His reputation is already beginning to 'free fall' (pun intended) pretty quickly.

In addition to the \$50-80 million he'd be turning down for not agreeing to partake in what would be the biggest fight in history, Mayweather stands to lose the respect and credibility he's work so long and hard to attain.

The public has been clamoring for Mayweather vs Pacquiao since 2009 and, regardless of who is to blame, the masses view Floyd as the biggest deterrent to this fight happening. And in their defense, Mayweather continues to make demands and excuses.

Yesterday, the consensus pound-for-pound champ hinted Pacquiao wasn't pay-per-view worthy, insisting two of Manny's last three fights have woefully under-performed at the box office, perhaps suggesting Manny wasn't a large enough draw to receive 40 percent (or perhaps even 30 percent) of the purse split.

But fight fans, including many of Floyd's supporters, are getting tired of the 'old song and dance' routine. As a matter of fact, Floyd Mayweather's reputation is even taking a beating among non-fans of the sport.

Several of my friends who don't follow boxing or have any affinity for the sport, have called or sent emails, chastising Mayweather for his apparent refusal to fight Pacquiao.

Even my doctor, who doesn't know who

Manny Pacquiao is and has probably never seen a boxing match in his life, recently asked me, "What's up with this guy, Mayweather? Why won't he fight the other guy?"

And several days ago, Floyd was heckled while attending an NBA game. The crowd chanted, "We want Pacquiao. We want Pacquiao."

If Mayweather doesn't fight Manny Pacquiao he should use some of his millions to hire a firm to perform damage control. His stock in boxing and professional sports in general is falling faster than a Tom Petty melody and he's risking his legacy and credibility by presumably attempting to swindle his way out of the biggest fight in history.

The public has a selective memory, doesn't it?

When the topic of Evander Holyfield vs Mike Tyson is discussed, everyone mentions the infamous ear bite but few talk about how Holyfield, as a massive underdog, masterfully outboxed and outslugged the menacing Tyson before the referee mercifully saved Iron Mike from further punishment in Round 10 in their first match.

Will people, 10 or 20 years from now, remember Floyd more for his sidestepping of Manny Pacquiao than for the illustrious career he's had?

Few in boxing history are as accomplished as Floyd Mayweather and it would be shame for him to live in the shadow of his denial to face Pacquiao.

Like Petty's heartbreak over an ex-girlfriend, the 'free-fallin' Mayweather will surely be heartbroken one day if he refuses to fight Manny.

... But it'll be too late to do anything about it by then.

Carlsen Wins Tata Steel Chess 2015; Wesley So tied for 2nd place

By Jose "joeyj" Jereos Jr.

The 77th edition of Tata Steel Chess Tournament also popularly known as Wijk aan Zee in chess that took place in 3-locations for the Master's Group (A-Group): Wijk aan Zee (R1-R4,R6-R9,R11-R13), Rotterdam (R5) and The Hague (R10) from 10-25 January 2015 was won as expected by the reigning World Champion(WC) Magnus Carlsen of Norway. But it was not a walk in the park for the World Champion as he has to at least draw his final round (R13) to win the championship which he did after some tense moments against his 2014 Olympiad tormentor GM Ivan Saric of Croatia. WC Carlsen completed a clear first with 9.0/13 score from his 6-wins, 6-draws & 1-loss record, a half point lead to four others who tied for 2nd place namely GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave(FRA), Anish Giri(NED), Wesley So(USA) and Liren Ding(CHN) who all scored 8.5/13.

Carlsen had a slow start, drawing with Giri(R1) & So(R2). He lost to Wojtaszek in R3. But starting R4 he made a fantastic 6-win streak until R9 against Van Wely, Aronian, Caruana, Hou, Jobava & Radjabov respectively. He had drawn the last 4 rounds (R10-R13) versus Ivanchuk, Vachier-Lagrave, Ding and finally Saric to score +6=6-1 equivalent to 9/13 points with a Tournament Performance Rating (TPR) of 2878 and had gained +3.2 in FIDE rating points to bring his Live Rating to 2865.2 or 2865 come Feb 2014 FIDE rating publication.

It was the 4th time that Carlsen won "A-Group" in Wijk aan Zee. The other three were in 2013, 2010 and 2008 (tied with Aronian).

The 14-Participants @ Tata Steel Chess 2015 'Masters' (Grp-A)

The average rating of the 14 participants @ Tata Steel Chess 2015 'Masters' (Grp-A) based on FIDE-ratings of January 2015 was 2746 (Category 20). The Top 11 seed players had ratings of 2800+/2700+.

Wesley So tied for 2nd place (4th overall).

Filipino GM Wesley So who now represents U.S. Chess Federation (USCF) since 28 October 2014, a second timer in this prestigious, strong Category 20 (2726-2750 ELO/rating range)] tournament, this time submitted a very much improved results than last year with his +5win=7draw-1loss (+5=7-1) scoring 8.5/13 points had a 4-way tie for 2nd place but after tiebreak GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave(FRA) @ 2nd place, Anish Giri(NED) @ 3rd place, Wesley So(USA) @ 4th place and Liren Ding(CHN) @ 5th place overall. As for the prizes the four shared the 2nd-5th prizes equally.

Wesley So's Tournament Performance Rating (TPR) was 2854, and had gained a +16.8 in rating points. Summing this



up with his Total ELO gained a +8.7 rating points @ North American Open 2014: resulted to a Live Rating of 2787.5 that propelled him to #7 in the World Chess rating list. Come February 2015 FIDE ratings his rating in Standard/Classical would be 2788 just 1.7 points shy of Bobby Fischer's highest rating of 2789.7 (4 August 1972) and 12 points away from breaching the 2800 mark. He will also be listed as USCF #1 player ahead of GM Nakamura.

GM Wesley So Tata Steel 2015 'Masters Grp' Results:

In R11, Wesley So registered his highest ever Live Rating of 2788.5 (Jan 23, 2015) when he defeated 2014 Tata Steel Chess challenger("B-Group") champion GM Ivan Saric in the 28th move.

Wesley So started on a high note on the earlier rounds (R1-R4), when in R2 he drew with black pieces with the top seed & World Champion Magnus Carlsen(2862). In R2, he surprised everyone by defeating the Nr-3 seed & defending champion GM Levon Aronian(2797). R4 was another high profile draw with the Nr-2 seed Fabiano Caruana(2820). After only 4 rounds, Wesley So registered an amazing TPR of 2901.

His R8 win versus Vasily Ivanchuk produced another milestone when he registered a live rating of 2785.3 that ranked #6 in the World's Live Rating List on 18-19 January 2015.

Wesley So's only loss in the tournament was at the hands of his nemesis GM Anish Giri in the penultimate round (R12), in 111 moves that practically denied his shot for the title. It also ended his streak of 54 No-Loss record in Standard or Classical chess that started in R4 @ 2014 Bill Wright St. Louis Open dtd 13 April 2014 until R11 @ 77th Tata Steel Chess dtd 23 January 2015.

Overall, it was a very successful event for HGM Wesley So and a BIG START for CY-2015.. His goal for 2015 of reaching 2800+ is just a few blocks away. With more invites in elite tournaments in the coming days & months ... that goal shall come to pass !

Next stop for GM Wesley So
1. Bunnatty Chess Festival
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R11: 23-Jan: So, Wesley (2762) - Saric, Ivan (2666): 1-0.

Komiks by Dave San Pedro



Why the Philippines suits me

Since booking a trip to the Philippines in 2009, American traveler Bob Bales has been back 7 times. Here, he shares what he loves about the Philippines.

By Bob Bales

My first visit to the Philippines occurred in 2009. I was working in the Middle East and had a 3-week break. Having always been intrigued about the possibilities of visiting the Philippines, I took the plunge and booked a ticket.

Since that time, I have been back an additional 7 times. My trips have lasted anywhere from two weeks in length to two months. I guess you can say I have adopted the Philippines as a second home. During my travels I have spent a lot of time in Manila but also traveled to other parts of the country as well. I have been to Puerto Galera, Bohol, Cebu, Palawan, and spent 10 days on Bantayan Island. In all my travels I have discovered one thing. The Philippines suits me, from the many friendly people I have met to the beautiful beaches, small towns and big city activities.

There were a few things to get adjusted to – one being Filipino time. Having spent time in the military, I am used to being on time. I learned long ago that when someone says to be somewhere at a certain time, I show up 10 minutes early. Not so in the Philippines. When someone in the Philippines says they will meet you at 6 pm, that might mean anywhere in a 4-hour window, or not at all. When you're told something will be done on Tuesday that might mean this week or next. Things are a little more laid-back.

Traveling in the Philippines, like some other countries, might mean the electricity may be working and it may not. Or in some places the electricity might only work a few hours in the day. There are also some very beautiful island getaways where there is no hot water at all. I really need hot water for showers – I just can't get used to cold showers; I don't care what the outside temperature is.

I have overheard, on more than a few occasions, tourists complaining about the service, or the fact that things are not as efficient as it is in their country. To them I say, stay home. I mean, come on – you're traveling in a foreign country to see and experience new things. If you want things to be the same, then stay home.

Some people say the food in



MANILA SKYLINE. Back 7 times since my first trip in 2009.



READY TO EAT. The scene at one of Manila's many food markets

the Philippines is disappointing. Nothing like the extraordinary and diversified food you get in Thailand, Singapore and other parts of Asia. For me that just isn't true. One thing I like to do when traveling is to eat where the locals eat.

Sometimes that means the food doesn't particularly suit me, but in a lot of cases I find great examples of local cuisine.

I love the various nighttime food markets in Manila. Something I wish we had back in Texas, where I am from. When I am in Manila, I always look up the food markets that are scheduled for the week and make plans to visit them.

The Midnight Mercado in Bonifacio Global City is one of my favorites, along with the Banchetto and the Sunday market in Legazpi Village. I get to sample a wide range of foods and meet some great people.

I was warned to be careful as a foreigner walking around at night in Manila. Well maybe because I'm a big guy, 6'1, or maybe because I don't get drunk and wander down dark alleys, I have never had any problems. The people I

have met for the most part have all been friendly and helpful.

Maybe some of that is because I don't treat everyone as inferior and as if they need to cater to me, like so many tourists expect. I try to speak to everyone I meet, say hi to the waiters, please and thank you, just normal manners I was brought up with. I figure, I am a guest in your house.

The beaches are my favorite place. I have visited a few, and there are many more I want to see. I enjoy seeing the all the tourist sites but what I really enjoy is a laid-back beach where there are few tourists and I can sample the culture. The Philippines offers many beaches just like that.

There are many more places in the Philippines I want to visit and experience, and it seems I just never have enough time. I guess that means more trips in the future.

All in all I would say my decision in 2009 to visit the Philippines was a good idea. I seemed to have found a place that suits me.

9 Plant-Based Foods that Lower Blood Sugar

By Jill Ettinger

Millions of Americans are diabetic or pre-diabetic. It's an epidemic that's not only treatable, but preventable. What we eat helps. These foods that lower blood sugar are plant-based, effective and just also happen to be delicious.



Enjoy them fresh or frozen, but never canned.

Apples — An apple a day may not only keep the doctor away but also the insulin. Another quercetin-loaded fruit, apples can reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Cinnamon — This may just be the blood sugar miracle food. Studies have shown that eating just a ½ teaspoon of cinnamon a day can make cells more sensitive to insulin and convert blood sugar into energy more easily.

Bell Peppers — With more vitamin C than an orange, studies have pointed to a correlation between low vitamin C levels and diabetes.

Citrus — For the same reason as bell peppers—adding C rich citrus fruits can aid in reducing blood sugar levels.

Chocolate — This may seem counterintuitive—chocolate is often associated with being sweet—but research shows that cacao (raw chocolate, unsweetened) improves insulin sensitivity. And that is pretty sweet. Look for raw cacao beans, nibs or powder. Blend in a smoothie with fruits like berries for a natural sweetness that will help you keep your blood sugar goals.

9 Foods that Lower Blood Sugar

Beans — They may just be the best plant-based food ever: protein, fiber, amino acids, vitamins, even healthy fats. And get this: beans and legumes slow the release of glucose (thanks to all the fiber), making them excellent in preventing blood sugar spikes.

Tomatoes — Nothing tastes as scrumptious as a fresh, vine-ripened-right-in-your-garden tomato, right? And it turns out, it's also one of the healthiest foods that lower blood sugar too. Gazpacho, anyone?

Vinegar — It's not just for salad dressing (or cleaning your house!). Vinegar has been shown to reduce blood sugar levels, particularly if consumed just before a meal. Mix 1-2 tablespoons with warm water and drink 30 minutes before a meal.

Berries — As sweet as they are, berries are an excellent source of quercetin, which has been shown to reduce blood sugar levels. They're also loaded with lots of other delicious nutrients.

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Padilla siblings bond tighter than ever

By Mikee Delizo

In 2006, Rustom Padilla came out of the closet as BB Gandanghari on “Pinoy Big Brother.” Of course, it raised a huge ruckus, but especially within his family.

Action star Robin Padilla said he even made a scene outside the “Pinoy Big Brother” house after hearing the news and watching the episode.

“Muntik ko nang sinunog ‘yung ‘PBB’ (house) no’n,” Robin recalled, half-jesting.

Rommel Padilla, on the other hand, thought BB’s coming out was just a gimmick for the ratings. He only took the matter more seriously when people started texting him, “Pare, anong nangyari sa kapatid mo? Bakit ganon, ganyan?”

After all that has been said and done, though, BB’s decision eventually brought the siblings closer to each other. In a recent media gathering, the trio were seen bantering with each other just like old times.

The key is respect.

“Ang masasabi ko lang, wala namang may gusto siguro na maging isang transgender or tomboy or bakla. So, kung kadugo mo ‘yan, wala kang ibang gagawin kung hindi ituloy ang pagmamamahala at tanggapin (siya),” Rommel said.

BB is happy his brothers



BB Gandanghari, Rommel Padilla and Robin Padilla

feel this way.

“Kailangan lang naman talaga i-maintain ‘yung basic respect – irespeto kung ano ‘yung pagkatao ng bawat isa sa pamilya para matanggap kung ano man siya regardless of the orientation, regardless of anything.”

BB revealed his brothers now treat him just like they would a woman, even discussing with him how he maintains his svelte figure.

“Hanga nga kami. Lagi nga naming tinitignan ‘yung balakang niyan eh – ‘Paano niya nagawa iyan?’” shared Robin. “Ang problema lang po namin sa kanya, ‘yung mga damit niya, masyadong maiiksi.”

Back in action

Rommel and Robin have only good words for BB as he returns to acting via TV5’s “2 ½ Daddies,” their first sitcom together that started airing on Jan. 24. Robin said the show is a must-watch as it teaches viewers how to handle family problems.

“Kasi kami, drinama (pa namin (‘yung sitwasyon) kaya kung anu-anong masasakit pang inabot. Siguro ‘yung dinaanan namin na ‘yun, hindi na kailangang

daanin pa ng iba,” he explained.

An additional treat is seeing BB’s improvement as actor, particularly in doing fight scenes.

“Nu’ng ginawa kasi namin ‘yung (movie na) ‘Mistah’ nu’ng araw, marami du’ng camera tricks. Pero dito (sa sitcom), nu’ng nag-action si BB, aba’y naninibago kami ni Kuya Rommel dahil kami ang may camera trick, siya wala,” Robin revealed, laughing.

BB credits his improvement to his newfound freedom as transgender.

“Now that I’m BB, I can express more. Wala na akong takot na mag-express ng sarili ko,” he said. “I can express myself na hindi kasing tigas ng titanium ang likod ko at balikat ko.”

He is now mulling the possibility of doing an action flick. “Yung parang Lara Croft ang peg,” he said, laughing.

BB didn’t discuss rumors about him planning to get married, but he does want to be a parent. (With reports from Jojo P. Panaligan)

Xian Lim on his childhood, Kim, and ‘Paddington’

By Tiffany Jillian Go

Xian Lim may be the brooding alpha male with a soft heart onscreen, but taking on the voice role of the lovable bear Paddington on film revealed the actor’s inner child. “People tell me nga eh, ‘Parang you look like a bear,’” he told reporters at a press conference for the film.



XIAN AND PADDINGTON. Photo by Tiffany Jillian Go

Based on a children’s book series, the film Paddington narrates the adventures of the eponymous Peruvian bear in the city of London. Xian Lim voiced Paddington for the Philippine release, set to premiere in cinemas February 11.

He still found it so surreal that he accomplished such a role. “Grabe lang na yung series na pinapanood ko dati as a child, ako na yung nagtatake-on.”

(It’s amazing how the series I used to watch as a child, I’m now part of it.) Animatedly telling reporters stories about his childhood, Xian said he related so much to his character. “People used to tell me I was cu—

“No, no! I wasn’t gonna say I was cute,” he laughed. “I was going to say curious, pero sige, pwede na rin. Thank you!”

He said that he was interested in film early on.

“When I was a little kid, I liked those stop motion stuff – I like to edit videos, basically. In my computer, vinovoice-over ko ‘yung mga ginagawa kong projects.”

(When I was a little kid, I liked that stop motion stuff – I liked to edit videos, basically. In my computer, I did voice-overs for my projects.)

While he considered Paddington to be one of his biggest achievements, he also shared some things to look forward to this year.

“As you probably heard, may bagong Kim-Xi [referring to his onscreen love tandem name with actress Kim Chiu] teleserye, tsaka may bagong film na rin ako pero wala pang details.” (I have a new film too, but no details yet.)

In Paddington, Xian is top-billed along with in-

ternational actors Nicole Kidman, Hugh Bonneville, Imelda Staunton, to name a few. “I’m very proud – that was my initial reaction – because this is something different. We can show the Filipino audience something new.”

He also is very keen on meeting some of the cast, saying, “Sana makapunta na rin sila dito para sa premiere.”

(Hopefully, they can come to the premiere.)

And as for his rumored girlfriend, Kim Chiu, he plans to surprise the actress with his performance in the movie. “Gugulatin ko talaga siya. Feel ko magugulat siya eh.”

(I will surprise her. I think she will be surprised, too.)

The Philippine release of Paddington will open in cinemas on February 11, 2015, with Xian as Paddington.



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