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PHILIPPINE Fiesta

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Was Bonifacio the first President?
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YEARENDER: Less bloody, more humane drug war

BY EMMANUEL TUPAS

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) is hoping for a less bloody and more humane war on illegal drugs next year.

When PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde took over leadership of the 190,000-strong police force last April, he vowed to press

killed in alleged armed encounters when Dela Rosa retired from the police service early this year. The death toll is now at 5,050 based on latest data from Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA).

Albayalde said the crackdown on narcotics would continue with the same vigor but within the limits of the law. "It will be



From about 109 fatalities a week at the start of the drug war in 2016, it went down to an average of 29 to 39 deaths a week, he added. "It's less bloody with the introduction of transparency and internal cleansing by the chief PNP."

ahead with President Duterte's war on illegal drugs, but with reforms to prevent abuses.

Albayalde's predecessor, former Bureau of Corrections director and senatorial candidate Ronald dela Rosa, spearheaded the anti-illegal drugs campaign which started in July 2016.

At least 4,100 suspected drug pushers and users were

relentless and chilling as ever but without abuses," he vowed.

The reforms, according to PNP spokesman Chief Supt. Benigno Durana Jr., include the procurement of body cameras to ensure transparency in law enforcement operations and strict vetting of anti-narcotics personnel.

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Duterte: Hope, peace to the nation

BY EDITH REGALADO



President Rodrigo Roa Duterte

President Duterte is calling on every Filipino to bring hope and peace to the country this Christmas season.

"Together let us bring hope and peace in our nation this yuletide season and we welcome the coming year with much hope and optimism," the President said in his televised Christmas message aired the other night.

The President said he is extending his heartfelt and sincerest greetings to all Filipinos, including those abroad, as the Christian world celebrates Christmas.

"Let the ideas of compassion, kindness and reconciliation guide us as we embrace our countrymen in this spirit of shared humanity," the President said.

Duterte cited the holidays as that time of the year when families and friends alike gather to celebrate the nativity of Jesus.

FCSV Christmas celebration

BY FAINA ABAYA & AIDA AZURIN

Christmas celebration of FCSV was held at Jose Rizal Center on December 2, 2018 from 2-6 PM. There were 21 sponsors from the Community organizations and friends to make this event possible. The overall Chairman was Mercy Guerrero. Co-chaired by Aida Azurin and Ling Avera. The Mass was officiated by Father Joyle Martinez, Pastor of St. Paul Catholic Church, assisted by Billie Monteagudo.

The hymnal and Christmas songs were rendered by the choir of the Bayanihan of Sacramento led by Remy Solomon together with the RVM Sisters. Fellowship followed



The Filipino Community of Sacramento and Vicinity with Santa at Jose Rizal Community Center.

the Mass under the leadership of Leila Pereira and Maria Bahoric. The usual presence of Santa Clause was personified by Melchor Munar and Mrs. Santa Claus by Auring Ramos which added to the celebratory spirit of the occasion. As expected, the event was full of Joy, togetherness and friendship.

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Is Big Brother Xi watching us?

PerryScope
By PERRY DIAZ

Recently, a news report said that the Philippines and state-owned China International Telecommunications and Construction Corp. (CITCC) entered into a loan agreement to fund the installation of a vast network of security cameras. The P20-billion deal would initially install the security cameras in Metro Manila and Davao.

Xi Jinping's state visit last November 2018. Reportedly, an initial 12,000 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras – also known as video surveillance -- will be installed in 30 months. They'll be located at crossings, roads, public squares, business districts, science and technology parks, residential areas and stadiums, among others. Chinese nationals will install and maintain the CCTV cameras.

According to a CITCC briefer, the project's ultimate outcome is a "Safe Philippines" that would guarantee the citizens' good living and social economic stability for growth. It also said, "It aims to reduce crime by at least 15 percent and improve response time by 24 percent." The system includes a national command center with backup data center to be located in Clark, Pampanga with facial and vehicle recognition software. It will also be linked to disaster response agencies in all regions once the entire project is in place.

Big Brother

This reminds me of "Big Brother," a fictional character in George Orwell's novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four." He is ostensibly the leader of Oceania, a totalitarian state wherein the ruling party Ingsoc wields total power "for its own sake" over the inhabitants. In the society that Orwell described, every citizen is under constant surveillance by the authorities, mainly by "telescopes" (devices that operate as television, security camera, and microphones). It keeps its subjects under constant surveillance, thus eliminating the chance of



secret conspiracies against Oceania. The people are constantly reminded of this by the slogan "Big Brother is watching you": a maxim that is ubiquitously on display. In modern culture, the term "Big Brother" has entered the lexicon as a synonym for abuse of government power, particularly in respect to civil liberties, often specifically related to mass surveillance. [Source: Wikipedia]

Orwell published the Nineteen Eighty-Four novel in 1949 as a warning against totalitarianism. It was at a time when communism and dictators used surveillance methods to keep the people under control. The Soviet Union and her satellite states were in a constant state paranoia. Fearful of conspiracies against the dictators, they used "secret police" to monitor their citizens' activities. In the Soviet Union, Stalin put to death 20 million people. In China, Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward killed 45 million in four years – from 1958 to 1962.

The earliest video surveillance systems involved constant monitoring because there was no way to record and store information. VCR technology became available in the 1970s, making it easier to record and erase information. Use of video surveillance became more common then. In the 1990s,

digital multiplexing digital was developed, allowing several cameras to record at once, which led to an increase in the use of CCTV.

Today, CCTVs are now in use in many large cities, such as Washington DC, New York, London, Moscow, and Beijing.

There are more than 350 million CCTV cameras worldwide of which about 65% are installed in Asia. With facial and vehicle recognition technology, it makes the system a very powerful method of tracking movements of people and vehicles.

CCTV disadvantages

While there are advantages in the use of CCTV, there are disadvantages as well. It can be abused. CCTV can be used to monitor political activities, anti-government activities, and "people of interest."

And it is for this reason that Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto had raised alarm over the contract and pushed that it be removed from the budget or at least put on hold until it is thoroughly reviewed. "Don't you think there is a security threat when China telecoms and Huawei will do surveillance system in Metro Manila?" Recto reportedly asked officials of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) during the agency's recent budget hearing at the Senate.

It's interesting to note that the project was bid-out, with two other state-owned Chinese firms participating: China Machinery Engineering Corp.

Continued on next page

Bullying Someone

Most everyone has probably been bullied or has known someone who has been victimized by bullies. Survival of the fittest and human's animal instinct are maybe the main reasons why this behavior thrives in spite of thousands of years since the first existence of animals and men.

Even with all of the intelligence that men possess, letting oneself to be a victim of a bully is also one of the reasons why bullying continues to devastate our society. It takes two to tango, and it would be safe to say that in most cases, both sides are victims at the end...nobody leaves the fight a winner.

Observing the behavior of even the smallest of children, one stronger child shows that this little person could make the weaker one cries easily, and this kind of attitude is displayed over and over again. This battle continues through their childhood and carries out through their adulthood, if, no intervention happens either from within or from outside influences.

Through parental or caretaker guidance, a child should be taught that such manner creates hurtful consequences to the other child and eventually, to

themselves, to their parents and to the people around them. A child mimics a grown up by the way they perceive power, meaning taking advantage of the situation and how vulnerable the other person is.

Children's emotion has the ability to mold their personality, their attitude towards other human being, and their confidence that could be manifested until maturity. It could make somebody hateful and vengeful that would even become a vicious cycle towards other people or even towards their own family.

Some are successful in breaking the pattern and



would choose a different path to better themselves and the life of others. However, there should be a block to the urge of doing the destructive feeling that is created by nefarious bullying. I don't remember bullying someone intentionally, but, I must have done something beyond my understanding that I had hurt someone, but, did not realize the pain it caused to somebody with such behavior.

A famous personality said in a television interview that he used to join the others in laughing at and picking on other kids in order to fit in, to be cool and didn't want to be an outsider. These reasons must be somewhat



By NANCY CRISTI BAUTISTA

true to most of the teen bullies—taunting other kids, and although it might not seem serious, the young victims might feel that they are at the end of their ropes and might affect their lives up to their adulthood. The feeling of being defenseless, in solitude, and insecure could result in an adverse effect on any human being, most especially on the teens.

However, adults mostly show signs of bullying in a more destructive manner. Adults tend to program evil attacks that normal minds with conscience could ever conceive of. Unfortunately, adult bullying could even result in taking their own or other people's lives.

Recently, even the considered most elite of our society, the elected officials do their bullying by various ways. One effective way was using money from donations or using the tax dollars via ads. The candidates or their campaign teams can bully their opponents by repetitive lies, despite of being corrected with facts. The bully has the connotation that repeating a lie would viciously able to convince someone the truth, but, of course, not everyone is a fool.

No bully would be successful if there is no one to bully. Standing for one's right without violence would definitely discourage and defeat a bully.



Editor's Note

This issue of PF news sums up our community's events and activities for the month, ending the year 2018, and welcoming the year 2019, with a lot of good vibes and best wishes for another year to come for ourselves and for everyone around us.

It has been some wonderful acts of dedication by our contributing writers to take notes of events about achieving significant accomplishments and milestones of our

friends and acquaintances in our community. PF News has always been grateful for that. The same goes to our contributing writer that writes about the government and about the political conditions here in the U. S. and back home in the Philippines. It has been somehow and somewhat enlightening to know and guess, what the future holds for us, as dutiful citizens of the best of both world.

On a personal level, we have gone through another year, where we started off with lots of "to do" and promises for ourselves and our families. I have to say that it has been a whirl-

wind of emotions and challenges for me, as they have always been. I'm not here to list and suggest what has to been done to better ourselves for this year coming. Better yet, I have just to remind that we continue to do what has always worked for us, and to make changes to better our conditions to make our life worth living. Remember that it's all in our hands, we have options and choices, and we have our faith to hold on to prepare ourselves for the best that has yet to come.

Greetings to those who have achieved important milestones in this issue: Mrs. Erlinda Aglubat as this

year's Mrs. Philippines of the Filipino Community of Sacramento and Vicinity and to Sylvia Fortis for turning 50 with a big and colorful birthday celebrations. And the same goes to everyone celebrating their birthdays, anniversaries, and other occasions that our meaningful to them.

I want to share that our family is elated to be able to feel and celebrate with all of you the joys of the holidays with this publication. Most importantly, is to finally celebrate the first family wedding occasion of our middle child, Dane to Amanda Newsum on the 30th of this month at Arden

Hills Club in Sacramento, California. It is our pride and joy to wish them forever happiness as married couple. Please help us pray and celebrate, even in thoughts, with pure joy and excitement for both of them.

We will also share our plans for Philippines Fiesta news publication next month.

Cheers to everyone's accomplishments and celebrations and to welcome a safe and prosperous New Year!

With love always,
Dinnah S. San Pedro

Duterte's order to destroy Reds opposed

BY EVELYN MACAIRAN

Manila, Philippines — The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) yesterday expressed concern over President Duterte's order to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to destroy the communist rebels.



The PEPP said the President should reciprocate the unilateral truce of the New People's Army (NPA).

"As leaders of churches in the country, we are troubled by this announcement and the escalation of violence and violation of human rights that will surely ensue," the PEPP said in a statement.

The PEPP said the President should reciprocate the unilateral truce of the New People's Army (NPA).

"We also appeal to the NPA for the peaceful turnover of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAF-GU) personnel and enlisted soldiers detained recently in Sibagat and other parts of Caraga region in order for them to be with their families this holiday season," the PEPP said.

The religious leaders expressed their support for House Resolution 2339 principally authored by Tawi-Tawi Rep. Ruby Sahali urging the President to return to the negotiating table with the communist National Democratic Front.

"As we celebrate the day of birth of Jesus Christ, the bearer of hope, we affirm our belief that peace is possible

through principled dialogue and that the peace talks are still the most viable option to attain a just and enduring peace in the country," they said.

"We thus call on President Duterte to heed House Resolution 2339 and continue the peace negotiations... and resume the formal peace talks."

The religious leaders also appealed for the release of Rey Casambre, executive director of the Philippine Peace Center, and his wife along with other NDF peace consultants.

Another troubling development was the resignation of Secretary Jesus Dureza of the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process (OPAPP) and the appointment of former AFP chief Carlito Galvez as his replacement, they said.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR), on the other hand, cautioned the government over Duterte's plan to hamlet or isolate indigenous peoples to prevent them from being influenced by communist rebels.

CHR spokesperson Jacqueline de Guia said the government should critically study this move and establish a strong need to hamlet indigenous peoples before it is implemented.

"The government is well within its obligation to protect the welfare of its people. However, hamletting as an approach to public safety may result in a number of human rights violations due to the enforced displacement of communities and individuals," De Guia said.

"Such proposal challenges the people's constitutional right to liberty and property, among others, and will inevitably disrupt a community's cultural life," she added.

De Guia said the international humanitarian law, as well as its implementing law in the country (Republic Act 9851), prohibits arbitrary deportation or forcible transfer of population or unlawful confinement.

Philippines ready to protest China's actions in West Philippine Sea - Lorenzana

BY PATRICIA LOURDES VIRAY

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the government would protest any action of China that would be deemed inconsistent with the Philippines' national interest.

"If we see Chinese actions that are not consistent with our national interest, we are going to protest China," Lorenzana said in a press conference Thursday.

The Philippine Navy will also continue to maintain its presence in the West Philippine Sea amid China's aggressive actions in the disputed waters.

Lorenzana said the crew of BRP Sierra Madre, a Navy ship that ran aground on Ayungin Shoal in 1999, would stay in the area.

"We will still continue with our activities there. We will patrol regularly... [and] continue strengthening our islands. We have nine islands," Lorenzana said.

The secretary added that



Delfin Lorenzana

the Armed Forces of the Philippines would continue its resupply missions to the crew of Sierra Madre.

In the past months, there have been reports that the Chinese Coast Guard has been harassing Filipino troops conducting resupply missions to Ayungin Shoal.

The government also intends to provide housing for troops on Pag-asa Island, one of the largest features in the Spratly Islands in the West Philippine Sea.

"We have allotted funds for the shelter of our troops

because right now, they only have huts there. We should give them good shelters, barracks, especially in Pag-asa," he said.

The repairs of the dilapidated runway on Pag-asa Island is expected to be completed by next year. A beaching ramp is also being constructed on the island to enable the military to bring in materials and equipment to repair the runway.

Lorenzana earlier bared that Beijing tried to block the government's plan to rehabilitate structures on Pag-asa Island.

The secretary said Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua approached him upon learning that the Philippine government is going to repair the runway.

"When he learned that we're going to repair our runway in Pag-asa, he came to me and said, 'No,'" Lorenzana said in a maritime forum last month.

Is Big Brother Xi watching us?

and a consortium of Huawei Technologies and some local firms. China Machinery Engineering Corp. did not qualify and the consortium failed to submit documents.

Also of interest is Huawei that is blacklisted in many countries, including the U.S. One of Huawei's top officials was recently arrested in Canada at the behest of the U.S. on national security charges.

Since CITCC is state-owned, the contract is between the Philippine and Chinese governments. This is also true with Huawei and ZTE. Recently, Australia

banned them from providing 5G technologies. The reasons given were national security concerns. The U.S. and U.K. intelligence communities have both raised fears about doing business with Huawei and ZTE.

In the final analysis, the fact that CITCC is state-owned – and state-controlled – is it fair to presume that China's government or the Communist Party apparatus could or would use the CCTV to monitor the political situation in the Philippines? Which reminds me when Xi Jinping promised to protect Duterte from any plan to re-

move him from office.

In particular, China could use the CCTV to gather information to exert political, military, and economic pressure to protect China's interests in the Philippines, particularly the West Philippine Sea territorial disputes. What does it take to link the CCTV's in Metro Manila and Davao to the China's intelligence agencies?

At the end of the day, the question that eerily lingers in most people's mind is: "Is Big Brother Xi watching us?"

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Sison calls Duterte a 'maniac,' says CPP remains 'relevant'

BY KRISTINE JOY PATAG

MANILA, Philippines — Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Maria Sison called President Rodrigo Duterte a “maniac” whose rise to power showed the “deterioration of the ruling class.”

“Duterte has become president someone who is not fit even by...standards [and] has managed to sneak into power and this shows very much the degradation...the state of decomposition of ruling system,” Sison on Wednesday told ANC’s Early Edition.

He added: “If a mediocre student like Duterte and someone who is only good for being mayor and even, bad as he was, engage in extra-judicial killing. Now you have a maniac, a modern maniac in power trying to put on a national scale his blood-thirsty kind of character.”

Several communications alleging crimes against humanity against Duterte and his government over the thousands killed in his drug war have been filed before the International Criminal Court.

Sison added that Duterte is a manifestation of oligarchy that is “much worse from the Marcos phenomenon.”

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo, however, dismissed Sison’s pronouncement, saying that it was made by some-



Jose Maria Sison

The CPP, meanwhile, is commemorating its 50th anniversary on December 26. In the same TV interview, Sison said that the movement remains “relevant” as it “has...described correctly the kind of situation there is in the Philippines.”

But Panelo said: “The winds of change will sweep this incorrigible rebel, who is living in comfort and luxury while his comrades are in the hills, as well as those who follow him to oblivion and will be buried in the dustbin of history.”

The Duterte administration moved to declare members of the CPP and its armed wing, the New People’s Army as terrorists. The government’s list included more than 600 names.

But the Manila court dropped the names of the following from the list: United Nations Special Rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, former Bayan Muna representative Satur Ocampo, Rafael Baylosis and Jose Melencio Molintas.

one whose “long exile has dulled his senses, put him out of touch of reality and in constant state of hallucination.”

Panelo said that the movement’s 50 years “is a failure that brought only the loss of lives and destruction of property and fear to the very people he is supposed to have fought for.”

The presidential spokesperson added that between Sison and Duterte, the “choice is obvious,” as the president is one who rose to the presidency by an overwhelming majority and has launched change.

Duterte won the presidency with 16 million votes, which comprised 39 percent of the total votes.

Sison, meanwhile, serves as the chief political adviser siya ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

Less bloody, more humane drug war

From page 1

“We are hoping for a less bloody and more humane anti-illegal drugs campaign,” he said in an interview.

Durana claimed the recalibration of the anti-illegal drugs campaign has paid off as there has been less bloodshed in the law enforcement operations against drug pushers and users.

From about 109 fatalities a week at the start of the drug war in 2016, it went down to an average of 29 to 39 deaths a week, he added. “It’s less bloody with the introduction of transparency and internal cleansing by the chief PNP.”

While the police force welcomes comments from critics, Durana urged them to contribute to improving the PNP’s anti-illegal drugs campaign, saying “the government is open-

ing platforms or avenues where they can contribute all their smarts.”

For Albayalde, they fared quite well in 2018 in terms of weeding out misfits within the PNP as well as maintaining peace and order.

He spearheaded an internal cleansing campaign when he assumed office – one that led to the dismissal of at least 417 police officers for drug-related offenses. Some 1,700 other lawmen involved in illegal drugs and other irregularities are also being monitored.

The PNP has taken steps to prevent abuses following allegations of irregularities in the conduct of anti-illegal drugs operations by police scalawags. Its Counter-Intelligence Task Force (CITF), the unit composed of elite Special Action Force (SAF) commandos formed to run after scalawags, has killed seven rogue police

officers and arrested at least 100 others since its creation in 2017.

While Duterte has backed them in their law enforcement operations, Albayalde stressed the President did not give them the green light to commit murder.

He cited the case of Kian Loyd delos Santos, a 17-year-old suspected drug courier who was killed by three policemen in Caloocan City in 2017, which led to a public outrage and the conviction of three officers for murder – each gaining a sentence of life imprisonment.

Duterte vowed to never pardon the policemen responsible for the youth’s death.

For Albayalde, this case should serve as a reminder to police officers to always operate within the bounds of the law.

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Senators Binay, Pangilinan urge netizens: 'Don't bully the bully'

BY HANNAH TORREGOZA

Two senators on Friday appealed to netizens and the public not to verbally attack the young "bully" who is now viral on social media.

An alleged bullying incident caught on video inside the Ateneo de Manila Junior High School campus continued being shared on social media despite the school's appeal for sobriety amid an investigation.

Senator Nancy Binay said she is dismayed at how netizens are tormenting the teenager who was caught bullying other high school students, saying it would only worsen the culture of hate.

"We must condemn all forms of bullying. But what's bothersome, though, is the vicious cycle of bullying. Bullying does not end by bullying the bully. It only worsens the culture of hate," Binay said in a statement.

"As a parent, I completely agree that a strong message must be sent that bullying is unacceptable and must not be condoned. Nakakalungkot lang dahil ang (It's sad because) social media has become infected by hatred. Instead of being an instrument of healing, it has become a place of torment," she said.

"Bullying will continue to grow if we behave like bullies. Shaming the bully is not the solution. Let's strive to heal even the tormentors, and work for a bully-free society," said the senator.

Sen. Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, on his Twitter account, wrote: "Galit tayo sa isang bully at dapat lang pero sa galit natin 'binubully' naman natin siya sa Facebook? So kung ganun ano ang pinagkaiba natin sa kanya?"



Senators Nancy Binay ang Francis Pangilinan

"We should never, never become the monster we seek to defeat," Pangilinan said.

In a separate statement, the senator said bullying should never be tolerated and left unpunished but the punishment should be child-appropriate and consistent with RA 10627 or the Anti-Bullying Act.

"I saw the video and it made me recall my own high school days wherein very similar incidents took place and yes also in restrooms amongst schoolmates. This is not to say it is acceptable," Pangilinan said.

"Bullying is totally unacceptable and is a sad reality as old as time so to speak that needs to be addressed hopefully in a much better way by this generation of parents and teachers," he added.

Sen. Paolo "Bam" Aquino echoed Pangilinan's call and said school authorities should ensure that universities and all other learning institutions should be free of any form of violence and abuse.

"At napakasakit sa ating puso kapag nakikita na sinasaktan ng isang bata ang isang kapwa bata.

Mahalaga na seryosohin ito ng eskwelahan, ng mga magulang at mga youth leader (It's heartbreaking to see a child hurting another child. It's very important that schools, parents and

youth leaders look into this situation seriously)," said Aquino.

"Tungkulin natin na gawing ligtas ang ating mga paaralan at mga komunidad. Tila nagkukulang tayo bilang mga gabay sa mga bata – sa pagtrato ng may respeto, dignidad at pagmamahal sa isa't-isa (We have the responsibility to make our schools and community safe and free from violence. I think we were somehow remiss in guiding children in terms of showing respect, dignity and love towards other people)," he added.

He said it is important that policies are in place and are working to ensure that this would not happen again in the near future.

"Mahalaga na masunod ang mga nakaakdang patakaran pagdating sa ganitong pangyayari ngunit mas mahalagang mapag-usapan at maaksyunan kung paano proprotektahan ang ating mga anak at paano natin paiiralin ang isang lipunang may respeto at pagmamahal sa kapwa (It's necessary to pursue policies that deal with this kind of incident but its equally important to discuss and take action on how we are going to protect our children and how we can raise them in a community that teaches respect and love for others)," Aquino said.

Indonesia Tsunami: 429 dead, toll likely to continue rising as bodies washing up on outer islands

BY IAN

The toll was likely to continue rising as rescue teams were still finding bodies in the water and washed up on small outer islands, National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB) spokesperson Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told a press conference.

Indonesian authorities on Tuesday raised the death toll in the deadly tsunami triggered by a volcanic eruption in Sunda Strait to 429, with search and rescue teams struggling to find survivors and bodies due to heavy rain.

The toll was likely to continue rising as rescue teams were still finding bodies in the water and washed up on small outer islands, National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB) spokesperson Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told a press conference.

According to the latest figures on Tuesday, 1,485 people were injured, 154 remained missing, while 16,082 people sought safety and shelter away from their houses, the Jakarta Post reported.

The tsunami struck the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra almost without warning late Saturday, shortly after the Anak Krakatau volcano erupted in the Sunda Strait dividing the islands.

The data will change as the joint search team was scouring Pandeglang, Serang, South Lampung, Penawaran and Tenggara (regencies) — hardest hit by the disaster, said Sutopo.

The BNPB's records showed that 883 houses, 73 hotels and villas, 60



Residents search for belongings from their collapsed homes in Rajabasa in Lampung province on December 25, 2018, three days after a tsunami - caused by activity at a volcano.

shops and stalls, 434 boats and 41 motor vehicles were damaged in the Sunda Strait tsunami.

Pandeglang regency in northern Java's Banten province had recorded the highest death toll of 290.

"The absence and failure of early tsunami warning systems have contributed to the huge casualties because people have no opportunity to be evacuated," Sutopo said.

Helped by dogs and heavy machinery, troops were combing through every pile of iron and wood that were once homes and market stalls. Still, modern equipment, tents and other necessities were badly needed in the emergency relief, said the BNPB spokesperson.

Humanitarian workers warned that clean water and medicine supplies were dwindling as thousands crammed makeshift evacuation centres.

According to Sutopo, the Indonesian Navy discovered several bodies in the water and on small offshore islands of Java. He added that overland access was disrupted to seven villages on Java's southwestern tip. "Even under normal conditions, the roads in that area

are poor," he said.

In a video published on social media, a rescue group managed to find a five-year-old boy alive after being trapped for more than 12 hours.

The authorities blamed the tsunami on the collapse of part of Anak Krakatau volcano after it erupted in the Sunda Strait. Many people were celebrating the holiday period when they were hit by waves 4 to 5 metres high.

The BNPB said that Indonesia does not have tsunami warning systems that are triggered by volcanic activity and that buoys in place to detect a sudden rise in wave height after earthquakes do not work due to vandalism, lack of maintenance and funding.

Wednesday marks the anniversary of the Boxing Day tsunami that hit northern Sumatra and another 14 countries on December 26, 2004, leaving 226,500 dead and missing, mostly in Indonesia.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, an area of great seismic and volcanic activity that is shaken every year by some 7,000 earthquakes, most of them moderate.

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Realtor Accused of Taking Part in International Crime Ring that Bought Houses to Grow Pot

BY STEVE LARGE

An Elk Grove real estate agent is now accused of being involved in an international crime ring.

The U.S. Attorney's Office says Heidi Phong helped Chinese national crime organizations buy homes in the Sacramento region, and convert them into illegal pot grows.

Phong owns HP Real Estate. The company has a retail store in an Elk Grove strip mall. CBS13 went to the office where employees said they were unaware of Phong's arrest.

Federal agents arrested Phong in a traffic stop after she left her home Thursday morning.

Pictures on her website promote her as being a top seller in the area, including selling 15 times more homes than the average real estate agent.

Now the U.S. Attorney's office is identifying Phong as the most prolific realtor in the area, connected to its criminal forfeitures of grow houses.

"Eighty-five percent of these 100 homes we're going to forfeit were sold by one real estate agent," U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott told reporters back in April during a press



Heidi Phong

conference about their investigation.

The U.S. Attorney's office now confirms that one real estate agent is Phong.

The indictment against Phong shows she not only represented buyers who intended to convert homes into indoor marijuana cultivation sites but Phong and her co-conspirators also "took steps to avoid detection of the ongoing conspiracy including by creating false lease and rental agreements."

Investigators found money from grow houses connected to Phong would then re-circulate in a vast money laundering scheme.

"The marijuana grown in those houses was distributed all over the United States, but particularly to major cities, on the eastern seaboard, such as New York City, and Atlanta, Georgia," Scott said.

An international crime ring stretching from China to New York. Now federal investigators say this Elk Grove home seller, was the key to unlocking the whole case.

Heidi Phong remains in custody Thursday night. She is set to appear before a judge for the first time Friday. If convicted, she could get up to 40 years in prison.



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'The toughest year': US immigration changes dominated 2018

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York — Children torn from their parents, refugees turned away, tear gas fired on asylum-seekers, and a president who says he's making good on promises to protect the nation's borders. In a breathless 2018, they were just a handful of headlines on immigration, one of the year's most dominant issues.

Combined with a relentless stream of administrative memos and changes in regulation and enforcement, it represented a government bombardment on virtually every type of immigration — a bold follow-up to the opening salvo of President Donald Trump's first year in office.

For those who champion Trump and believe that cracking down on immigration translates to better lives for Americans, it has been a year of fulfillment of campaign promises.

For those who've watched in horror, it harkened back to other points in the country's history, when fear of new arrivals led the U.S. to refuse entry to various groups and when open discrimination of certain ethnicities prevailed.

"This is our generation's sort of existential moment," said Frank Sharry, head of pro-immigration group America's Voice. "Are we going to continue to be a nation that practices 'e pluribus unum' and welcomes people from around the world to make this country better? Or are we going to shut the door?"

Throughout 2018, the answer has largely been the latter.

Even as roundups and deportations persist in targeting those who enter the U.S. illegally, the Trump administration has pushed beyond that to redefine what legal immigration looks like, too.

It has slowed down or altogether halted many seeking to come to the country for a job offer or through their relationship to a citizen, and narrowed the chances of finding a home here as a refugee or asylum seeker. Jarring visuals of children in detention centers and other enforcement actions have dissuaded some from seeking to come here at all.

"There has been this constant chip, chip, chipping away at the legal immigration system using every tool of the executive branch," said Doug Rand, who worked in the Obama

administration before helping found Boundless Immigration, which helps people navigate the immigration system.

The year neared its close with the administration saying those seeking asylum would be forced to wait in Mexico, a major shift that immediately spurred questions of legality from opponents. Meantime, the possibility of a government shutdown loomed as Trump and Democrats once again butted heads over funding to build a wall along the border with Mexico.

Even without it, though, the policies he's pursued have effectively put up a virtual wall.

"That is far more effective than a border wall ever would be," said Sarah Pierce, a policy analyst with the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute.

Even top-tier computer programmers, architects, engineers and other professionals with job offers in the U.S. saw their applications for H1-B visas under much more scrutiny; a means of expediting processing of those visas was ended under Trump, and bids for work authorization have been met by what employers and immigration attorneys say seem like endless requests for evidence to prove seemingly straightforward facts.

Still, the odds of those professionals eventually gaining clearance to enter the U.S. are better than for many others.

Trump's so-called "travel ban," the first iteration of which was unveiled in the president's first week in office, was upheld in June by the U.S. Supreme Court, stopping most visas for residents of mostly Muslim Libya, Iran, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, as well as North Korea and Venezuela. Though the policy allows for waivers, initial data showed few such applications were actually approved, effectively shutting the door to most from those nations.

It's had very real consequences for people like Soolmaz Dadgari, an Iranian who came to the U.S. in 2017 so her 4-year-old daughter, Arina, could take part in an experimental study to treat a rare genetic disorder. Dadgari's husband has been unable to get a visa to join them, and sanctions make it hard for him to send money. She alone cares for a child who can't walk or talk and requires 24-hour

help, as well as another 11-year-old daughter.

Dadgari has considered returning home but knows she needs to remain for her daughter's treatment. Still, the situation has affected the way she views the U.S., which she had always regarded as the best place in the world.

"I have no hope," she said.

Even as wars, persecution and famine have continued around the world, the U.S. capped refugee admissions at 45,000 for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the lowest ceiling since the State Department began tracking the figure in 1980.

Far fewer were actually admitted in that time frame: about 21,000 refugees. The number is likely to fall further, with the cap for the current fiscal year set at 30,000.

Meantime, tens of thousands fleeing violence in Central America sought asylum in the U.S. this year. The Trump administration responded by narrowing who is eligible, declaring that neither those escaping gang violence or domestic abuse nor those who cross the border illegally qualify. Both changes have been blocked by federal courts.

Some seeking refuge in the U.S. are stuck in untenable positions.

Ivis Muñoz, 26, decided to join a caravan leaving Honduras in mid-October. A gang member had shot him in the thigh and threatened to kill him. Muñoz planned to seek asylum in the U.S. but learned along his journey that he was unlikely to be accepted.

His first night in Tijuana, Mexico, he slept on the beach until rocks rained down on him and other migrants and a man shouted in the darkness: "Go back to your country!" Now he's a few hours east in Mexicali, his aching leg full of bullet fragments, overwhelmed and scared by his reality.

"I don't know what to do," said Munoz, a coffee farmer from the Honduran town of Atima. "I want to go to the United States, though I'm scared they'll send me back. I'm afraid to be in Honduras, but I don't feel safe here either."

At every turn, there were policy changes. One proposed rule would restrict visas or legal permanent residence for those receiving certain government benefits for low-income people, such



In this photo, taken Dec. 10, 2018, people look on from the Mexican side, left, as U.S. Border Patrol agents on the other side of the U.S. border wall in San Diego prepare for the arrival of hundreds of pro-migration protestors, seen from Tijuana, Mexico (Photo by

as food stamps. Hundreds of immigrant enlistees in the Army were discharged or had their contracts cancelled, though some were later reinstated. Even some U.S. citizens were targeted by a "denaturalization task force" looking for naturalized Americans with past infractions.

More than any other shifts in policy, the Trump administration's move to separate apprehended migrant children from their parents shook people around the world. Though Trump eventually ended widespread use of the practice, the scars remain for those affected.

Evelin Roxana Meyer of La Union, Honduras, thought 2018 would be the year things turned around for her family. They've struggled to pay off a loan for the grocery store they run out of their home, so her husband, Douglas, and son, Eduardo, set off for the United States in hopes of finding work. Instead, the two were picked up by Border Patrol agents and separated.

The father was deported, but it took weeks before the parents knew where Eduardo was taken. He spent four months in detention, turning 12 alone at a facility in Brownsville, Texas.

The once-affectionate boy returned home angry in September. He rarely goes out, spending most of his time in his room watching TV. He's refused to go to school and will have to repeat the sixth grade. He talks back to his parents and hits his little sister, whom he used to be close to. The family doesn't know what to do to help him.

"This was the toughest year of all," said 38-year-old Meyer.

Polling finds a big majority of Americans still view the country's openness to immigrants as essential to the nation's identity. But the profound shift in government policies on the subject threatens that idea of the U.S. as a welcoming land of opportunity for all.

Christina Greer, a po-

litical science professor at Fordham University, sees Trump's immigration overhaul as the continuation of a tug-of-war that's played out since the nation's founding, between what many see as bedrock American ideals and a pattern of nevertheless being hostile to newcomers.

"The country, unfortunately, has had an incongruence with the myth of America versus the reality of America," said Greer, who authored "Black Ethnicity: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream." "Trump's really fine with blowing up the myth."

Sharry thinks the country's reputation suffers when its leaders close the doors to others: "They've put a million people on the road to deportation. They've ripped thousands of kids from their parents. They've gutted refugee protection at our border. They're building and expanding detention centers. They're trying to scare low-income immigrants from using health and other services. They've taken aim at legal immigration. They've slashed refugee admissions. That's a pretty relentless assault on a core principal of the American experiment."

Others see it far differently.

Neil Gouveia came to the U.S. from Guyana as a 7-year-old. His family waited years to earn visas, then waited again to become citizens. His parents made the difficult choice to leave behind his 9-year-old sister, who had cerebral palsy and wasn't granted a visa.

Gouveia considered himself a typical "liberal New Yorker" until 2016, when he was drawn to Trump for what he believed was his strength on national security. Gouveia is gay and said the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, particularly shook him.

He wasn't offended when Trump referred to parts of the world as "shithole countries," and doesn't see anything inherently wrong in separating immigrant children from the adults

they arrive with. He thinks, ultimately, it will all lead to greater dialogue and better policies. And he still believes America stands as a beacon for much of the world.

"At the end of the day, people will say what they want to say about America, but there's hardly anyone who still wouldn't want to come here," said Gouveia, 39, a collegiate fundraiser. "They still know it's like winning the lottery."

Daniel Stein heads the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which supports restrictive immigration measures. He agrees the year's immigration imagery has had "a huge political impact on the psyche of the nation," but argues it has moved more people to his side of the debate. And to those who see the year as an extended assault on a cornerstone American value, he's unmoved.

"They have a vivid imagination," Stein said. "We have one of the world's most generous immigration programs."

That's little comfort to Buena Ventura Martin Godinez, a 29-year-old mother of two who carried her 9-month-old son across the border in May, fleeing threats from violent gangsters in her hometown of San Juan Atitan, Guatemala. She was caught in Arizona and held for a week at a detention center with her baby. When her husband followed two weeks later with their 7-year-old daughter, they weren't so lucky.

The girl was sent to a facility in Michigan and kept there for six weeks; the father went to an Atlanta jail, where he still awaits deportation. Her family fractured, Godinez now regrets the day she ever headed to the U.S.

"I came looking for a better life ... and everything went wrong," she said from the five-room house in Homestead, Florida, that she and her two children share with nine others. "I thought that it was true that it is a country that gives opportunities. But it is not."

Godinez notices changes in her children. Her daughter, always so sweet and obedient, cries incessantly and struggles in school. Her son keeps falling ill, his temperament now trademarked by screaming, crying and sighing.

"This is the worst year I ever had," she said.



PerryScope

BY PERRY DIAZ

A prayer for Pax Mundi

Every year, people around the world, regardless of their religious beliefs or affiliation, celebrate Christmas. For one day of the year, December 25, people reach out to each other and to friends they haven't seen or heard from since last year or many years ago. Oftentimes, they send Christmas cards with family pictures and short notes.

Christmas is a day that Christians renew their faith in Jesus Christ. On Christmas Day, families gather and have a feast and enjoy each other's company and exchange gifts. The festivity lasts till late at night singing their favorite karaoke songs and line dancing until they're exhausted. And then it's time to say goodbye, hug each other and say, "Peace be with you."

Christmas Truce

Which reminds me of the "Christmas Truce" during the First World War 104 years ago. On Christmas Eve, the British and French armies were manning the 27-mile Western Front fiercely defending French territory from the advancing German Army. Across the British and French trenches, as near as 200 feet away, the Germans were dug in. What separated the opposing armies was a place called "No Man's Land."

On Christmas Eve, one of the most incredible -- and unusual -- events in human history took place: the Germans started placing candles on trees on "No Man's Land." Lit with candles, the "Christmas" trees looked awesome. The Germans began singing Christmas songs and the British and French troops responded by singing too. Soon the entire "No Man's Land" turned into a symphonic Christmas celebration. The Germans proposed a "Christmas truce" and the French and British troops accepted.

By Christmas morning, "No Man's Land" was filled with fraternizing soldiers, sharing rations and gifts, singing and more solemnly burying their dead. Soon they were even playing soccer, mostly with improvised balls. Ac-

ording to one account, "proper burials took place as soldiers from both sides mourned together and paid their respect."

When the generals heard about the "Christmas truce," they were aghast and ordered their soldiers to start shooting at each other. The soldiers resumed shooting but most of them -- for several days -- aimed their rifles at the sky and the stars. In some sectors, the truce continued until New Year's Day. After all, how can "friends" shoot at each other?

It happened again in the Korean Peninsula in 1953 when China and North Korea signed the Korean War Truce with the United Na-



Friends for a day? Why not friends forever?

tions and South Korea, which begs the question: Why can't it happen in the Philippines today? What is so difficult that we Filipinos cannot settle our own differences? We need a truce with the communist insurgents and Muslim separatists. It's brother against brother and nobody is winning. What's keeping us apart?



Pax Mongolica.

Periods of peace in history

The Pax Romana (Roman Peace) was the first period of peace that endured for 206 years from 27 BC to AD 180. During this period, the Roman Empire achieved its



Christmas Truce in 1914 during the First World War.

greatest territorial expansion and its population reached 70 million people -- a third of the world's population at that time. The decline of the empire began during the dictatorial reign of Commodus. It marked the descent "from the kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust."

The Pax Mongolica (Mongol Peace) was the relative peace that followed the conquests of Genghis Khan and his successors in the 13th and 14th centuries. It stabilized the social, cultural, and economic life of the people of the vast Eurasian territory under the Mongol Empire. It spanned from Southeast Asia to Eastern Europe, effectively connecting the Eastern World with the Western World. The famous Silk Road that linked the trade centers in Asia and Europe came under the rule of the Mongols. The end of Pax Mongolica was marked with the outbreak of the Black Death, which was spread along the Silk Road in the mid-14th century.

The Pax

Britannica (British Peace) was the longest period of peace during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries when the British Empire became the sole global power. The empire's navy controlled most of the trade routes and enjoyed unchallenged sea domination. The outbreak of World War I marked the end of Pax Britannica; however, some historians said that it was the Suez Canal crisis in 1956 that ended Pax Britannica.

Pax Americana (American Peace) refers to the period after the end of the Cold War in 1989 with the fall of the Soviet Empire. However, some historians pegged the beginning of Pax Americana at the end of World War II at which time the United States gained military and economic power unmatched by other nations. With the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the end of the Cold War, the US became

the sole superpower. The US navy ruled the seas with 11 supercarrier battle groups and around 70 nuclear-powered submarines.

The U.S. has airbases around the



Pax Americana.

world and large numbers of troops deployed to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries as well as Japan and South Korea.

Today, America's two geopolitical rivals -- Russia and China -- are jockeying for position to become the next world hegemon. Indeed, China is vying to be the next world empire, Pax Sinica (Chinese Peace). Currently, China is building the new Silk Road known as "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) that would link Asia, Europe, and Africa. OBOR is the answer to Chinese President Xi Jinping's "China Dream," which is to reshape global trade with Beijing at its core. China would then become the world's new imperial power.

Meanwhile, Russia is competing for world dominance, too. Although not considered an economic power, Russia's military prowess is catching up with the U.S.'s military capability. Would a Pax Russica (Russian Peace) period emerge in the future? In a post-Putin era, the U.S. and Rus-

sia could become strategic allies to counter Pax Sinica. Then what?

But why not Pax Mundi (World Peace)? The foundation for world peace was laid down when 51 countries established the United Nations (UN) in 1945 for the purpose of maintaining international peace. The UN and its 15-member Security Council operated with the goal of resolving conflicts without wars or declarations of war. But oftentimes, the Security Council failed to pass resolutions that would resolve conflicts because of the veto power vested on each of the five permanent members, to wit: United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union exercised its veto power 107 times out of the total number of 220 vetoes cast. Needless to say, a Security Council permanent member can cast a veto whenever the "national interest" of that country is threatened.

With any one of the five permanent members casting a "No" vote against a peace resolution in the Security Council, world peace is imperiled. And that's the reason why we will never achieve Pax

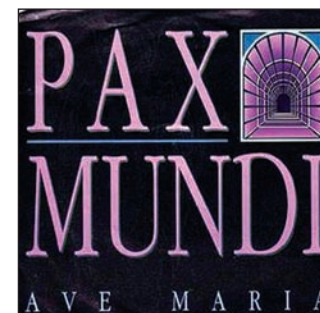


U.S. vs. China.

Mundi, which makes one wonder: While there are pros and cons about it, shouldn't the five permanent members be stripped of their "veto" power to make the UN a truly democratic institution for world peace? Or would it lead to more global conflicts?

At the end of the day, as we celebrate Christmas, let's give a prayer for Pax Mundi. Merry Christmas. May peace be with you all.

(PerryDiaz@gmail.com)



Pax Mundi.

PerryScope
By Perry Diaz

Duterte Death Squad

President Rodrigo Duterte has a plan that would counter communist assassins. It's going to be violence vs. violence. It's going to be an armed civilian group called the "Duterte Death Squad." And it's going to kill killers! Instantly, his plan sparked controversy and drew a cautious reaction from his own Defense Secretary, Gen. Delfin Lorenzana who admitted that the plan could lead to cases of abuse.

Duterte was referring to the Sparrow units of the New People's Army (NPA) that specialize in assassinations. "Now what I don't have is my own Sparrow," Duterte said. "So I will create my own Sparrow. Duterte Death Squad against the Sparrow... I will match their talent also for assassinating people. They will have firearms for sure. That's my plan," he added. "They will do nothing but look for idlers who are prospective New People's Army members and take them out," he said. Kill them!

It must have shocked a lot of people including his allies. The idea was immediately shot down by Duterte's own political ally, Senator Aquilino Pimentel III, president of the President's ruling party, PDP-Laban. "That cannot be done. I'm sure the President will not create such a squad," Pi-

mentel said.

Even Jose Ma. Sison, the founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines, has misgivings about the idea. "I think



Col. Napoleon Valeriano and the Nenita Unit's "Skull and Bones" insignia.

that Duterte is citing them [Sparrow units] as a pretext for organizing more death squads of the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] and PNP [Philippine National Police] for the mass murder of mere suspects who are not even the target of any court warrant of arrest," Sison said. He added, "Sparrow units, active during the martial law years, have not been operational since the 1980s."



Col. Napoleon Valeriano and then-Secretary of Defense Ramon Magsaysay.

Nenita Unit

The use of death squads has its beginning in 1946 after World War II ended. One of the largest anti-Japanese guerrilla groups was the communist Hukbo Ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon

or Hukbalahap (Huks for short). With no more wars or enemies to fight, the Huks took to the hills under the leadership of Huk Supremo Luis Taruc to wage war against the fledgling government.

Under the command of then-

Secretary of Defense Ramon Magsaysay, the dreaded Nenita Unit was created under Col. Napoleon Valeriano, whose main mission was to eliminate the Huks. Unconventional tactics were developed with the advisory role of U.S. Major Edward Landsdale, who was then working for the CIA. Working together with Valeriano and Magsaysay, they broke the back of the Huks in two years. With the Huks gone, the Nenita Unit was disbanded in 1950. The anti-Huk campaign propelled Magsaysay to national fame. In 1953 he ran for president against his former boss, President Elpidio Quirino, and won with the support of 68.9% of the voters.

Alex Boncayao Brigade

But that was not the end of the communist movement in the Philippines. In 1968, Jose Ma. Sison founded the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The following year, Sison and Bernabe Buscayno (commonly known as "Commander Dante") organized the NPA, the guerilla arm of the CPP. In 1984, after serving time in prison, Sison fled to exile in The Netherlands. He's been there since.

The Sparrow units have their beginning when NPA's Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB) was created in 1984 during the martial law era. It was the urban assassination unit of the NPA. In the 1990, ABB broke away from the NPA over ideological differences.

After the ouster of Marcos in 1986, the ABB became more active in assassinating government officials. The ABB was credited with the assassinations of about 200 police officers between 1984 and 1993. The ABB acquired a reputation for viciousness and its hit men were called "Sparrow Squads" for their swiftness and skill in fleeing from the crime scenes. Typically, they operate in tandems using a motorcycle with the second man as the shooter. Due to the traffic jams that inundate the streets of Manila, a motorcycle could zig zag its way around the city; thus, avoiding



CAFGU members in formation.

capture.

In the early 1990's the ABB was disbanded. In its place, a Sparrow-like unit was created. Known as the Special Partisan Unit (Sparu) under the NPA, it is different from the notorious "Sparrow Squad" of the defunct ABB.

According to PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde, over the last three years, there have been 136 hits on soldiers, police officers, rebel returnees, local government officials, and tribal leaders attributed to the present-day Sparu or Sparrow Unit. He said that they are usually based in rural areas, unlike the former Sparrow Squad who were based in urban areas. [Source: INQUIRER.net, Dec. 3, 2018]



Communist Party of the Philippines Founding Chairman Jose Ma. Sison in exile in The Netherlands.

Davao Death Squad

Duterte's plan has similarity to the Alta Masa and Davao Death Squad, two vigilante groups that were active in fighting lawless elements in Davao City when Duterte served as mayor for two decades ago.

In the 1980s, Davao was known as the "Murder Capital of the Philippines." Alta Masa was credited for fighting the NPA while the Davao Death Squad was responsible for fighting illegal drugs and criminality. Duterte took credit for cleaning up the city of crime. More than 1,000 were killed as a result of his anti-crime crusade.

bat operations conducted by regular units of the AFP. The CAFGU units are armed with weapons and receive monthly stipends. They seem to be effective in keeping the villages safe.

Last February 2018, Duterte reportedly cautioned rebel returnees against going back to their hometowns. Instead he suggested they should join the CAFGU. "I suggest that you stay with the

Armed Forces and be a CAFGU. You should be given that first so that you can go back to your hometown. You can't go back to the mountains anymore unless you kill them all," Duterte told 238 rebel returnees at a merienda he hosted in Malacanang. He also promised to provide them and their children free education and training, especially since "there is a scarcity of skilled workers even in Manila" for the government's massive infrastructure program.

And this begs the question: Why doesn't Duterte expand the CAFGU to integrate the "Duterte Death Squad" mission that he had in mind? By doing so, he'll avail of the nationwide network and



Davao Death Squad.

operational structure of CAFGU, which are already in existence since 1987. CAFGU works. Why reinvent the wheel when all Duterte has to do is make it stronger?

Simply put, there is no reason to create the "Duterte Death Squad." President Duterte has enough firepower to fight the communists. Unless, he was only joking when he said he would create the "Duterte Death Squad." Like they say in the streets of Manila, "Dyok only."

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The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Erlinda Aglubat 1 FCSV Mrs. Philippines 2019-2020

BY FAINA E. ABAYA

The Filipino Community of Sacramento and Vicinity is our premier organization and with its dynamic leadership currently led by the always amiable President Mercedes Guerrero, the elite and prominent residents are usually invited in one place for the betterment of our community.

We all know that the FCSV is in the forefront to raise funds for its many projects foremost of which is the construction of our own Filipino Cultural Center where we can possibly showcase our great tradition and cultural heritage just like any other ethnicities that we have frequently interlinked in our diverse community.

One such fund raising is our biennial popularity contest for the FCSV Mrs. Philippines and the winner is crowned as the Queen for a period. Such friendly competition culminated on December 15, 2018, at the Grand Ballroom of the Double Tree Hotel on West Way Street, Sacramento, the coronation night of the winner her Majesty Queen Erlinda Aglubat I who will reign as such for the years 2019-2020.

As expected, the Grand Ballroom of the hotel was majestically decorated suited for royal gathering with 20 round tables fully covered with pink and white linen cloth as well as chairs that could accommodate at least 200 guests including the entourage of the Royal Court. And each table as a center piece with freshly cut varieties of multicolored flowers placed in a crystal vase.

At the center corner of the Ballroom is a well decorated elevated stage with four royal chairs where the Queen and her Royal Court will be seated as they will be crowned with their respective titles. At the end corner of the Ballroom is a giant Christmas Tree, well lighted with miniature multicolored bulbs to show and feel the celebratory spirit of the much-awaited Christmas season of the year.

As soon as the Ballroom was filled up to capacity and the colors were in placed, the National Anthems of both the United States and Philippines were played by the Double Vision Band of Michele Devol and MC Paradela. Thereafter, Mercedes Guerrero and Laila Pereira who jointly emceed the night programs called up Maria Bahoric to deliver the invocation. She invoked the blessing of the Divine Providence for everyone especially those who were involved and devoted their precious time for the success of tonight's event. Likewise, she also prayed for the divine intervention to lessen the pains and sufferings of the victims of the calamities in Califor-



Queen Erlinda Aglubat I



Queen dancing with escort



Queen Erlinda and family



Queen Erlindas court



(R) FCSV President Mercy Guerrero and members



FCSV past Mrs. Philippines

Photos by Faina Abaya

nia and Philippines as she blessed the food about to be served.

We found out that this writer and husband Jun were seated with the movers and shakers in our community such as Mercedes Guerrero, Josie Patria, Carle and Sarah Enloe, Remy Solomon, Zenny Yagen, Dick Weitzenberg and Derek Ledda. Dick and Derek showed their usual chivalry by bringing with them red and white bottles of wine to drink with the group and even offered a toast for everyone's health. And seated at the next table were equally prominent community leaders such as Aida Azurin, Ling Avera, Dick Mason, Lilia Rivera, Nick Catudan and Rose Basos.

At this juncture, the ever-energetic

Mercedes Guerrero, the President of FCSV delivers her Welcome Address stating among other things, her profound gratitude to the candidates of Mrs. Philippines contest for their enthusiasm and immense efforts to raise funds for a good cause. She assured all the participants, donors and advertisers that their contributions will be used for the best interest of the Filipino community such as the building of a Cultural Center, Scholarship Program, Health and Youth Program and other related projects. Likewise, she also thanked Mina Guerra, the Chairperson of the Contest with her Co-chairs Carol Munar, Edna Villanueva and Margie Pasalo who were able to energize the candidates, believe in themselves and

keep them always in good spirit until the final stages of the contest.

Immediately thereafter, dinner was served with a choice of pork or chicken, mash potatoes and variety of veggies. And while everyone was enjoying their sumptuous food, entertainment was made by the Kapitbahay dance group who regaled their audience with their colorful red and blue outfit as they gracefully performed their well-choreographed dance number.

Prominent community leader Josie Patria takes the honor to introduce the Guest Speaker, Sarah Enloe, the First District Governor District 4 C5, Multiple District 4 of California Lions Clubs International. Josie

referred to the guest speaker as "a remarkable Filipina of great achievements not only her government career but most importantly her service to community and Lionism". Indeed, Sarah is a giant among her peers having been the president of Aklan Association, Filipino Women's Club and Maharlika Lions Club. The Speaker has received many awards and accolades for her community works and humanity, including the most prestigious Lions Club, the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award.

Sarah Enloe in her speech said that she acknowledges and thanks the reigning 2017-18 FCSV Mrs. Philippines, Queen Carol Munar I and her Royal Court with their predecessors for their unwavering support and contributions to the success of the FCSV. The speaker also added that "becoming Mrs. FCSV Mrs. Philippines has a lot of hard work, perseverance and sometimes frustrations but always consoled by the thought that they are being rewarded by meeting new friends and have good feelings for knowing that they are helping our community through the objectives and goals of the FCSV". Lastly, the speaker hurled a friendly challenge to the reigning

Queen and those who will follow her footsteps to realize their dreams, be bold and fearless in setting and pursuing their goals for community service.

The night's program continues with the presentation of the past FCSV Mrs. Philippines with their Royal Courts who were called to walk around the center of the ballroom. Their royal appearances at the time of their reigns have been recreated with their formal elaborate designers' gowns showing the elegance at the time of their reigns.

Undoubtedly, they were the ladies who unselfishly contributed much for our community and to bring out proudly the grace, beauty and elegance of our great tradition and cultural heritage. They are aging gracefully but traces of their beauty both in appearance and sincerity of purpose are, without doubt, always in themselves. Indeed, their indefatigable efforts and being kind hearted for the good of their community will always remember and surely stand the test of time.

The past Mrs. Philippines with their Royal Courts who were present and who received a standing ovation from their admiring subjects were; Carol Munar, Mercury Acosta, Edna Villanueva, Mina Guerra, Maria Bahoric, Imelda del Rosario, Luzviminda Molina, Esmeralda Maguire, Susie Gossett, Vilma Overton and Cynthia Guenter.

Continued on page 12

UNLUCAI Christmas Party and Induction of Incoming Officers for 2019-20 Term

BY FAINA E. ABAYA

Christmas season is the most awaited period of the year by most Christians simply because it is the time to enjoy and feel the love, bonding and celebratory spirit of close friends, relatives and most of all our immediate family members.

Traditionally, Christmas culminates on the birth of Jesus Christ when family members and loved ones are gathered on one place to pray together and enjoy sumptuous midnight dinner. It is also the time when we bring out gifts for each other especially for children who are eager and thrilled to receive their gifts from their "Santa Claus". Yet to a lot of many people, Christmas is also the time of the year to bring out their natural innate generosity to make other people who are in need to enjoy and be happy likewise to feel the true essence of Christmas.

The countless number of Filipinos who left their country to seek better lives and opportunities in other lands and who have bravely sailed vast oceans and crisscrossed continents all over the world, they too like to recreate the merry making of Christmas season just like in the places they have



UNLUCAI Induction of new officers with Jun Abaya as the inducting officer.



UNLUCAI members

left behind.

Such nostalgic feeling of the Filipinos about how they usually spent the joy and

happiness of the Christmas season in their country made the members of UNLUCAI to always hold their an-



President Dickie Bernal

nual friends and family Christmas gathering.

Longtime member Erna Bambao was unanimously elected to Chair the committee for the preparation of the organization's tradi-

tional yearly Christmas Party. The members also agreed that the gathering will also coincide with the oath taking for the incoming officers who were recently elected and to assume their two-year term on January 1, 2019.

This is the kind of gathering envisioned by the founders to enhance greater unity, camaraderie and friendship by the members who hailed mostly from the town of Naguilian and now residing in the diverse community where they have found comfort to live with their loved ones. As expected, the Wackford social hall was well decorated showing the glitter and color of the Christmas season with traditional Christmas tree. There were well-placed round tables covered with red and white linen cloth which had enough chairs to accommodate at least 120 revelers. The UNLUCAI banner was conspicuously displayed on the middle wall of the hall while at the left corner was the space where assorted trays of food, variety of fruits and mostly sweet flavored pastries to be served buffet style of Filipino, American and Chinese cuisines both catered and homecooked brought by some members.

The spacious Wackford community and Aquatic Center complex on Bruceville Blvd., Elk Grove has been chosen to be the venue of the UNLUCAI Christmas party. The chilly cold night on December 2, 2018 has not discouraged a bit any member with some of their family members as well as their invited guests to come out and be counted to enjoy the merry making of Christmas.

When the hall was filled up with expected number of people attending, UNLUCAI president Cristina Bambao took the occasion to express her profound gratitude to all the members who unselfishly shared their

Continued on page 13

International Philippines Association (IPA) Induction of Officers/Christmas Event

BY DALE ESPERANTE

On 15 Dec 2018 starting at 5:00 pm, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Ann Viernes greeted the arriving guests by inviting them to pose for a photo next to the life-size rocking Santa Clause. The kids, young and old, loved it!

Upon time to start the official program, Ann called on the Parliamentarian/Reverend Feliciano Ursos for the invocation. After the reverent prayer by the reverend, guests queued up to the bountiful buffet line. An array of international cuisine, salads, desserts, and various sweet native rice cakes guaranteed a gastronomic uplifting for everyone.

The Sac of Soul Band with vocalist Brian Jumawan provided some sweet mellow music around dinnertime. The band's sound touched a mood to start dancing but no one was ready yet, so this dancer stayed put. After dinner though, Sac of Soul switched up to some lively music that cut the reins of the dance holdouts. The

dance floor got busy.

After a few numbers the music stopped to complete one of the primary agendas of the evening—for the newly elected officers to be installed. PRO Ann took over as emcee again to call Outgoing President Brian Jumawan for his outgoing address.

Followed by the summoning of the new officers to come forward:

- President - Josie Canlas
- Vice President - Betty Lai
- Secretary - Beullah Peterson
- Assistant Secretary - Lilia Dahili
- Treasurer - Nida Spalding
- Assistant Treasurer - Eppie Jandoquile
- Parliamentarian - Feliciano Ursos
- Sergeants-at-Arms - Ben Lai
- Ken Gonzalez
- Manuel Viernes
- Custodian - Lucille Gonzalez
- Public Relations Officer - Ann Viernes

Outgoing President Ju-

mawan installed the new officers. The Installation completed, this writer received the honor to take the official photo of the newly installed officers. Newly installed President Josie Canlas delivered a speech thanking the outgoing president, her nephew Brian, for the accomplishments during his term in office. She also asked for every member to be actively involved in the progress and projects of the organization. The IPA has always been an organizational family. No doubt they can, and they will, accomplish more to reach new heights for the morale and benefit of each and every member of the organization.

After the official installation ceremonies, the celebration ensued with more Sac of Soul sounds inviting more ballroom and line dance participation. The mood, music, movements lit up the night within the historic Magellan Hall. More power to the officers and members of The International Philip-



International Philippines Association newly elected officers



Ann and Manuel Viernes



President Josie Canlas

International Philippines Association. Congratulations, Merriest Christmas, and A Happy New Year To All!

BY DALE ESPERANTE

The wintry feel of December stayed outside of the rollicking hot confines of Jose Rizal Community Center on the first day of the month, thanks to Sylvia's yellow themed birthday celebration. Guests arrived relaxed and comfortable selecting their seating arrangements amongst family and/or friends. The celebrant spent some time posing with friends for photographs before Mistress of Ceremonies (MC) Anne Viernes started the program. After the invocation, Filipino cuisine was served including a party favorite, lechon. A cornucopia of "kakanin" and "turon" for dessert complemented the dining experience.

Performances came next with the birthday celebrant participating in all. The Dream Girls (DG) started with every performer wearing Sylvia's favorite color, yellow. The synchronicity of the moves with Sylvia keeping up with the regular DG dancers was amazing. Almost immediately after the Dream Girls, Sylvia changed to another yellow outfit to dance with the Kapitbahay Troupe (KT). The smile never wavered as Sylvia cha-cha-cha'd to complete KT's routine. Outstanding display of grace, technique, and stamina. After the dance, Sylvia lifted her head up with hands meeting together as if praying and thanking God for this blessed ecstatic feeling of living joyfully in the company of her



Sylvia Fortis



Sylvia with dance instructor Benj Hisoler

family and friends.

Sylvia's youth group came next to render their version of hip hop to the thrill of the younger members of the crowd. Sylvia's children and their friends performed a special number for their super

special mom. Mom watched so proudly and gratefully for having such loving children with great supportive friends.

Between performances, the guests were given a chance to release their own moves on the dance



Sylvia's children



Birthday celebrant with the Dream Girls

Photos by Dale Esperante

floor. Inspired by the dances displayed by the performers, the guests excitedly swayed and rocked to the music. The huge dance floor of the Rizal Center accommodated all ages, dance types, and dance experienc-

es. The heat level of the yellow themed party lived up to expectations.

Benj Hisoler, the community's dance instructor extraordinaire, invited Sylvia and everyone in attendance to join a group Paso

Doble number. With Maestro Benj and Sylvia's lead, everyone followed to the delight of all the participants and observers! Paso Doble proved to be a dance of life, drama, release, and fun as exhibited this evening. From here on out, there should be a group Paso Doble number at every community dance event...just a humble recommendation by this writer of course.

To Sylvia, thank you for inviting Philippine Fiesta to be a part of your exceptional birthday celebration! On behalf of Dave and Dinnah San Pedro and the staff of Philippine Fiesta aka PF News newspaper, I wish you a Happy New Year and many more birthday celebrations to come! Thank you Ms. Sylvia Fortis!

The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Erlinda Aglubat 1

From page 10

To the tune of Royal March, the reigning FCSV Mrs. Philippines with her Royal Court entered the Ballroom with their respective escorts projecting as usual the elegance of their appearance in their formal royal designers' attires. First to enter was Imelda Del Rosario, Mrs. Mindanao followed by Luzviminda Molina, Mrs. Visayas and Mrs. Luzon Esmeralda Maguire. Spontaneous standing ovation and thunderous applause from the audience when Her Majesty Queen Carol Nisperos Munar 1 appeared escorted by her husband Melchor as she and her Royal Court made their farewell walk around the middle of the Ballroom as they proceeded to their reserved seats on the Royal platform. Each received fresh bouquet of flowers from Mercy Guererro and Aida Azurin.

Queen Carol Munar 1 said in her final message "I joined the contest to help FCSV on their pursuit of its dream to build a Filipino Cultural Center. I know that my children as well as the children of other Filipino families will benefit from it". She also added, another reason why I joined the contest was to support the FCSV Scholarship Award Program given to children with high scholastic standing, this will encourage our youth to study well to qualify for the program". Moreover, she also said, I always treasure the friendship established among us with the members of my Royal court. Above all, Queen Carol Munar said to her loving husband "My big supporter and love of

my life, Melchor Munar, thank you very much for being always there for me no matter what. Thank you and I love you so much".

Finally, the pomp and grandeur of the Coronation of the 2019-20 Her Majesty Queen Erlinda Aglubat 1 started with the entrance of her Royal Court led by Mrs. Mindanao Mindanao Susie Gossett elegantly wearing a beautiful multicolored body fit designer's attire matched with her sparkling necklace and earrings as she proceeded with her escort to her reserved seat at the stage where she received her Sash, Tiara and fresh bouquet of flowers. Following was Mrs. Visayas, Vilma Overton slender and elegantly graceful in her elaborate sleeveless silver and dark gray couture dress matched with her silver earrings. She was escorted by Donell Buford who showed his stylist elegance with his elaborately designed dark suit matched with red shirt and necktie, matching dark eyeglasses and red hat as they likewise proceeded to the stage where she received her Sash, Tiara and a fresh bouquet of Flowers. Equally, elegant in her couture designed dress was Mrs. Luzon Cynthia Guenter wearing a purple length floor body fit with sparkling bedded gown and ruffled chiffon at the bottom. She was escorted by her handsome husband Corky Gorden Guenter who was wearing a black tuxedo as they proceeded to the Royal stage to receive her Sash, Tiara and fresh Bouquet of flowers.

A special entertainment was provided by the community favorite

dancers D' Dreamgirls for their graceful elegance not only in their choice of choreographed dance but also their colorful outfit that simply elevated their performance to a professional like show. And as usual, their gracefulness on the dancing floor with their golden shiny outfit mesmerized and charmed their audience receiving thunderous and deafening repeated applause.

The highlight of the night coronation was announced with the entrance of Her Royal Majesty Mrs. Philippines 2019-2020, the incoming Queen Erlinda Aglubat 1 with her escort Benedict Angel Velasquez proceeding to her reserved seat on the platform. Leading her Royal entourage were flower girls Kimiko Munar Sanjo and Camarin Alvarez who scattered fresh petals of flowers on the way followed by the Scepter bearer Emmalyn Alvarez and the crown bearer Eli Munar Sanjo.

Indeed, her majesty is stunningly beautiful in her sleeveless elaborately hand embroidered white queenly attire with extended long train held by Elyse and Nylah Acosta. Undoubtedly, the Queen's wardrobe projects her amiable personality and impeccable complexion as she was escorted by her equally handsome escort showing his sartorial elegance in white suit with bowtie and matching black pants.

Before the actual coronation, Sash was presented by Dra. Luz Corpuz and Alex Baruga, the Bouquet was presented by Christine Acosta and Angelyn Veloria while the Scepter was presented by Bobby and Elma

Aglubat. At this majestically glorious moment just like the many years that we have witnessed, the chosen one Her Majesty Erlinda Aglubat 1 gleaming with pride received her bejeweled crown from no less than the outgoing Queen Carol Nisperos Munar 1 accompanied by the guest Speaker Sarah Enloe.

All the title holders received their respective trophies including FCSV Mrs. Philippines Erlinda Aglubat from Emilia Caoagas Cones and Rodrigo Dones.

Moments later, MC Parabela entertained and enchanted his audience when he serenaded the queen and her royal court, singing in his own version a powerful melodious song by our very own Diva Pilita Corrales entitled "A Million Thanks to you" Thereafter, the reigning queen said to her audience "To all Filipino organizations, let us make the Pilipino Community Center building a reality and not just a dream. We must pool all our talents and resources to build it. Let us bury all our differences and come together as one to make this dream come true. It will benefit not only this generation but the future generations to come".

The glorious night ended with continues music and dancing joyfully participated in by all including the newly crowned Queen and her escort with Her Royal Court.

FCSV Mrs. Philippines Erlinda Aglubat was born in Agoon, La Union, Philippines where she spent the best years of her young life with her family, however, at a very young age the family transferred to several

places within the country. For such situation, Erlinda became proficient to write and speak aside from Pilipino and English such dialects as Ilocano, Ilongo, Tausog and Cebuano.

Erlinda is holder of Bachelor of Science in Commerce, major in Accounting from the Far Eastern University. She is also a Certified Public Accountant. She also finished her master's degree in public administration from the Mindanao State University. When she was still in the Philippines, she worked in various kind of jobs both in the government and private sector in her field of educational interest. When she arrived in the United States, she worked with the State of California and retired after 20 years of service from the Department of Managed Health Care as Senior Accounting Officer.

Erlinda is an active participant in community activities having been an officer of various community organizations as well as other international groupings such as; Toastmasters International having been President several times, Area and Division Governor. A member of the Fraternal Temple Chapter of Sacramento, Order of the Amaranth, Beehive Chapter of Sacramento and Elk Onisbo Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. She will become a Royal Matron and Worthy Matron in 2020.

Our FCSV Mrs. Philippines is blessed with three successful children, Angelyn, Benedict and Christine with five grandchildren. WE WISH ONE AND ALL HAPPY, PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!!

Kapitbahay Christmas Party



A very successful party by the Kapitbahay well attended by members and friends at Bistro Restaurant in Sacramento, CA.

UNLUCAI Christmas Party and Induction of Incoming Officers

personal time to contribute in whatever capacity for the organization's annual Christmas gathering. Likewise, she also thanks members of their families, especially, their young children and invited friends in the community who accepted their invitations to join the celebratory spirit of the UNLUCAI annual Christmas party.

The president also announced through draw lots the selection of Barangays Daranangan and Baraoas Sur as the recipients of several boxes of clothing, can goods, vitamins and school items for the residents. She also reported that all the 37 Barangays of the town will receive substantial number of vitamins for the wellbeing of the recipient residents. These items will be distributed in the early part of the year 2019 when many of officers and members of UNLUCAI will be in Naguilian to help in the distribution of

the said donated goods for the residents of the town.

Immediately thereafter, the newly elected officers for the 2019-20 term were called to take their oaths for their respective offices with Jun Abaya as the Inducting Officer. The inducted incoming officers who will assume office on January 1, 2019 were; President, Dickie Bernal; Vice President, Erna Bambao; Secretary, Josie Pabros; Asst. Secretary, Estenelle Dumaguing; Treasurer, Edgar Avena; Asst. Treasurer, Gina De Ynchausti; Auditor, Fely Esplana; Asst. Auditor, Eli Floresca; Sergeant-At-Arms, Jun Pabros, Zaldy Estepa, Rudy Delizo and Charlie Delizo; Board of Directors: Chairman, Cristino Floresca; Sonia Delizo, Charity Avena. Tina Bambao, Henry Bambao, Erna Bambao, Josie Pabros, Edgar Avena and Dickie Bernal.

While all the attendees were enjoying their sumptuous dinner, entertainment was provided by Jason Bambao who thrilled his audience with his professional like performance of the difficult body movements of break dancing. Likewise, another young performer Jayda Bermudo was called who also enthralled and regaled her listeners with her repertoire of songs.

And just after dinner, Christmas music and songs were played continuously with current craze tunes in between that easily enticed everyone to dance with their partner or formed a line dancing gracefully participated in by both males and females. The joyful night ended in the usual celebratory atmosphere just like the many years that the members spent together in that time of the year.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL. AS ALWAYS, WE WISH YOU PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL 2019 NEW YEAR.



A Jolly Christmas Party

It was a jolly Christmas party among friends including Judy Mendoza, Aida Mejia Garrucho, Hilda Bobier, Marilyn Lopez, Vissia Ellis Valencia, Nancy Bautista, Ida Alvarez, Marita Rayala Huggard, Helen Enriquez, Mariflor Ong, Elna Discipulo, Edgar Morales, Gigi Martin, Elvie Casswell, Laurie Ligsay, Dinnah San Pedro, and others.

The party was gracefully hosted by Judy Mendoza at her beautiful home held on December 18, 2018 in Elk Grove, CA.



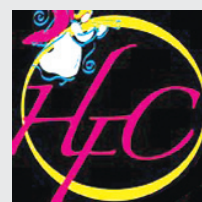
FCSV Xmas at Jose Rizal Community Center



FCSV president wishes to extend her heartfelt gratitude to all sponsoring organizations for making the Christmas community get together the merriest.



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BY DALE ESPERANTE

Filipino American Veterans Association (FAVA) Christmas Party 2018

Would Santa find FAVA this year? That became one of the main concerns. The question rose because, traditionally, FAVA's Christmas party is normally held at historic Magellan Hall on Gerber Road. This year, on December 14, the members decided to gather at the Wackford Community and Aquatic Complex on Bruceville Road in Elk Grove. The huge hall was quite empty except for the tables and chairs when the members arrived at 5:30 pm to decorate. By 6 p.m., because of all hands-on-deck to help out, the Christmas Tree with lights and ornaments has been fully assembled, the disc jockey table arranged and equipment hooked up, banners and wall hangings t-pinned on the wall per the community complex's requirements.

By 6:30 pm, it was time to queue up the buffet line. After dinner, some line dancers burned off the consumed hearty holiday fare. By 7:20 pm, the children's children, "apos," started the traditional caroling. Of course, the grandparents and parents of the children took the prime paparazzi's positions to record the singing of the precious carolers.

The children sang their hearts out hoping that Jolly St. Nick could find his way to the new Christmas Party location of FAVA. Louder, someone said, hoping the volume would attract Santa's primary GPS reindeer, Rudolph. A little after 8 pm, the lights of the huge hall started to flicker, as the children gave their best rendition of, "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." Then all of a sudden, the huge double doors in the back leading to the kitchen opened widely revealing a red suited man sporting a bushy white beard and his head topped with a red and white tasseled cap.



It's Santa Clause aka Santa Richard Weitzenberg! The children's choir disciplined themselves not to disrupt their caroling, but their faces definitely showed signs of glee, excitement, and mirth seeing Santa has landed.

A special chair appeared for Santa to complete the evening's task,

to ask the boys and girls whether they have been good or bad. He had two lists, one is topped with the word NICE and the other is topped with the word NAUGHTY. FAVA's children must have behaved themselves or tried their best to do good all year long, because the NAUGHTY list did not

have a single FAVA name on it. Congratulations FAVA boys and girls! So every child received a special gift from Santa.

I overheard one child asked Santa, "Isn't it too early for you to show up Santa, it's not Christmas Eve, and yet here you are?" Santa answered, "Well young precious

one, Christmas Eve for Santa is anytime and anywhere where there are children still believing in Santa Clause." Somewhere in Santa's Universe, at this very moment, it is now Christmas Eve. What a wonderful planet Earth it would be, if it were always Santa's Christmas Eve!

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BY OSCAR APOSTOL

Remembering Christmas



frail. Mom hardly came to visit us. But Dad would come and stay with us a week at a time. After the opening of the presents and cleaning up that follows a lull takes place.

As we finished our Christmas dinner that year everyone retreated as usual to the family or living room to find a cozy place to relax and listen to family conversations going on. My children nephews and nieces ran upstairs to do their own thing. My precocious daughter Leila who was ten then reminded us before disappearing to call them when we were ready to distribute their presents. We had an open stairway to the second floor since our living room is cathedral ceiling. Christmas Eve was held in our house in South San Francisco ever since the family moved from Anchorage, Alaska in 1969. While in Anchorage our family Christmas Eve gathering was held at Mom and Dad's house.

Every Christmas Eve, predictably as always my sister Fe and husband Kuya Tino with Jay and Floyd arrived early followed by Ed and Cecile and five siblings Ray, Tina, Eddie, Dayna and James. Our sister Letty and niece Dea visited with husband Joe from Phoenix. Dad and Mom lived in an in-law set up with my sister Fe in San Jose. By the time everyone has arrived our table was loaded with holiday food perfuming the house.

After dinner you'll find Dad as usual would be at the piano playing Christmas carols. That signals it is time for our family's impromptu Christmas singing. It became a family tradition that Christmas carols be sang before presents are distributed. This results with the children, reacting, groaning and fussing with the word no. However, it does not last. We were so used to this that we readily went along with the sing-along. We'd call the youngsters to come down and join us. Sister Fe's older son Jay was willing to play first since he loved playing the piano. He was more advanced than his brother Floyd, Glenn and Leila. Then Floyd would follow with coaching and encouragement from his Mom and Dad. They are usually suggesting their favorite pieces than the kid prefers. When the kids refuse to sing or play they are reminded Santa would be disappointed. Expect no present.

Even my mother enjoyed the singing and she was all into the goings on. She would demand for the next song and insists we siblings sing with her. After an hour of entertainment close to 10:30 the kids are antsy and fit to be tied. They begin begging their parents to open their presents. The magic hour to go home is 11:30 PM. The kids would like to linger a bit to enjoy each other and their new toys.

Papa plays Santa Claus but with losing eyesight needs assistance from one of the older kids to read the names. After a while all the kids are overly excited and impatient. Soon everyone checks out the names of the presents under the tree, collect their own and stack them close to Santa's helper-reader's side.

During this period we were all beginning to realize Mom and Dad appear to be so much older. And they were signs of fading memories. We were negating their worsening condition. It became obvious that after 1984 when they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary they were becoming more

The kids went upstairs again and were busy playing and enjoying their new toys. Clothes and outfits were generally ignored with a ho hum attitude. While the parents are putting things away and packing food to go from leftovers. Filipinos by nature or practice love to cook more than enough and find it sacrilegious to prepare food based on number of people. Having extra food does not hurt anyone. Food taste better after a few days with freshly steamed rice.

I decided to chat and stay with Mom in the living room. We were left there alone. I hugged and kissed her and flattered her she still could sing. And tonight she seemed so happy. I asked her if she was happy and she held my hand and nodded, "Yes. I am very happy because we are all together except Ben, Junior and Raul. (Ben in Hawaii and Jun and Raul in Alaska). She added, "It is really hard. I just never foresaw we won't be all together." I reassured her that it was okay because we remain so close and loving family. And we will always be. She did not acknowledge what I said. She seemed lost in her own world. "What is it Mom?" As I put my arms around her with a gentle reassurance. "We'll always be with you" She then stared at me with a hollow look. I found myself staring at her deep set beautiful graying eyes. I always thought she had very pretty eyes. "You know, sometimes I feel very sad even if you are all with me". I was shocked and somewhat perplexed. I could not fathom what she meant. "Do you know why Mom?" "I don't know" as she shook her head. When they left that evening I felt that old feeling when I was a kid. That if God were to take my Mom or Dad, I would be willing to go for them.

In the ensuing weeks and months her Alzheimer's disease had taken over. It was exacerbated with the passing of my Dad. She made a comment at one time when she realized Dad had left her "I am all alone now". When she suffered a second stroke she could not talk and her memory faded. She was looking at us as total strangers with a frown attempting to fathom who we were. Since she needed a 24 hour care we had to reluctantly place her in a care home. That was a devastating cultural and personal assault to all of us siblings. Here we grew up promising we would care for them when they grew old. We could not and did not. It was the most confounding and lasting guilt trip to bear...even now.

Some events leave a lasting impression in our life. That Christmas one and one talk with my Mom was priceless. It remains fresh in my heart. She knew how to not make me forget. I love you Mom and Dad. Time does not really diminishes our love because it was built so solidly. Merry Christmas to our departed family.

CPU International Balik-Turo Program



BY GABRIEL ORTIGOZA, PHD

Central Philippine University is the first baptist university in Asia. It was founded by the American baptist missionaries in 1905. A famous American business magnate and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, through the auspices of American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, gave a grant in 1901 to Northern Baptist Churches to purchase a 24-hectare lot in Jaro, Iloilo City for this Christian school to be constructed. The institution started as Jaro Industrial School for Boys then it became Central Philippine College and finally Central Philippine University. Graduates of CPU are called Centralians.

CPU established the first and the oldest existing student government body in the Philippines in 1905, the Central Philippine University Republic (CPUR). Yours truly was elected CPUR senator in academic year 1990-1991.

CPU established the first nursing school in the Philippines in 1906, the Union Mission Hospital Training School for Nurses, now Central Philippine University College of Nursing.

My Family's Three Generation of Centralians

My maternal grandfather, Macario Plaga Celestial, went to Jaro Industrial School in the 1920s. My mother, Daisy Celestial-Ortigoza, went to CPU in 1960s. My sister and I graduated from CPU College of Nursing in 1989 and 1991, respectively. We are a family of a true-blooded of Centralians.

CPU President Asked Alumni to Teach CPR

During the 10th CPU Global Reunion in Chicago in July 2018, CPU president Dr. Ted Robles shared an incident at the campus tennis court where one player had cardiac arrest. The sad thing, nobody knows how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) at that time. In this connection, the president asked alumni to help teach CPR at CPU.

Alumni Association Responded to the Call

Central Philippine University Alumni Association of Central California (CPUAACC), the youngest alumni association composed of alumni residing in Central Valley and Sacramento, responded to the call of the university president. On its regular quarterly meeting in August, the association decided to donate CPR mannequins to CPU. My college classmate and member of CPUAACC, Jones Buensuceso, donated

his personal AED (Automated External Defibrillator) to CPU. Julie Lycksell, CPU Nursing 1970, coordinated her friend in California to donate battery for AED. (She also donated another AED to be delivered to CPU on my next visit). This writer, who is also a member of CPUAACC, volunteered to personally bring these donations to CPU and to teach clinical instructors on BLS and on how to use the mannequins and the AED.

Realization of the Plan

On 11 November 2018, Tuesday, my wife and I brought a Prestan Family Pack Manikins to CPU. The pack contains two adult manikins, two infant manikins, one child manikin, and instruction booklets, airways, bag, CPR accessories, and an AED. Through communication with CPU president Dr. Ted Robles and CPU College of Nursing Dean Atty. Salex Alibogha, I was able to participate in the college of nursing International Balik-Turo Program to teach Basic Life Support (BLS) following the latest protocols prescribed by the American Heart Association to 51 clinical instructors of the college. Balik-Turo is a new program offered by the college of nursing to alumni abroad to teach on special topics to keep CPU nursing faculty and students abreast with the current trends in nursing. The four hours lecture and skills training was very productive. Some of the participants were my instructors during my college years about three decades ago. On my interaction with some instructors, I learned that BLS is not mandated to nurses in the Philippines. I proposed the college shall spearhead the training on BLS in the university and to lobby city legislators to create Emergency Task Force which shall provide medical assistance to the community.

Turn-Over of Donation

A formal turn-over of CPUAACC donation was done at the 2nd floor of university administration building with CPU President Dr. Ted Robles receiving the items and witnessed by CPUCN Dean Atty. Salex Alibogha and clinical instructors Leizl Bretana and Cynthia Mendoza present.

That Others May Live

CPUAACC planted a seed at the university with the hope it will grow across the fertile land of the campus and spread to the progressive city of Iloilo and to the entire Panay Island with a main purpose: That Others May Live.



CPU Alumni Association of Central California Meeting and Christmas Party.

Was Bonifacio the First President?

BY PERRY DIAZ

Recently, there has been a great deal of interest on one of our heroes and founder of the Katipunan, Andres Bonifacio. Indeed, many are now of the belief that he had been denied the recognition he deserved.

A decade ago, I wrote a column, “Was Bonifacio the First President?” that revisited the turbulent times when the revolutionary movement was in disarray; divided into two factions, one led by Andres Bonifacio, the Supremo of the Katipunan, and the other, Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of the Magdalo faction.

Although Aguinaldo succeeded in wresting control of the Katipunan from Bonifacio in a power struggle that cost Bonifacio his life, Aguinaldo never had a chance to establish his rule over the archipelago. The coming of the Americans weakened his fledgling government. He fled to Palanan, Isabela in Northern Luzon where he made his last stand.

On March 23, 1901 – exactly four years after Aguinaldo took his oath of office as president at the Tejeros convention — the Americans, led by Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, captured Aguinaldo in his camp in the mountains of Palanan. Caught by surprise, Aguinaldo was subdued without a shot fired.

Thus ended the aspirations of the Filipino people to establish their own nation, sovereign and independent from foreign powers, which makes one wonder: If Bonifacio wasn't murdered and Aguinaldo had joined his government, would the revolution have succeeded under the leadership of Bonifacio? And this begs the question:

On July 7, 1892, Andres Bonifacio — upon hearing the news that Dr. Jose Rizal was arrested and de-



Andres Bonifacio

ported to Dapitan the day before — called for a meeting with five of his friends, to wit: Jose Dizon, Valentin Diaz, Deodato Arellano, Ladislao Diwa, and Teodoro Plata. That night, they organized a secret society called Kataastaasang Kagalanggalangan na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (Highest and Most Respected Society of the Sons and Daughters of the Nation) — in short, Katipunan. Bonifacio was named their Supremo.

They recruited people to join and by 1896, on the eve of the revolution, the Katipunan had more than 400,000 members. During the revolution, two dominant leaders emerged — Bonifacio and Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo. By 1897, to the detriment of the revolution, their rivalry had divided the revolutionary forces into Bonifacio's Magdiwang faction and Aguinaldo's Magdalo faction.

Attempts were made to reconcile the two leaders. On March 22, 1897, the two factions held a convention in Tejeros, a barrio of San Francisco de Malabon in Cavite, Aguinaldo's bailiwick. Aguinaldo did not attend the gathering. Jacinto Lumbreras, a Magdiwang, presided over the assembly. The

agenda of the convention was to adopt a plan for the defense of Cavite. However, the subject was not even discussed as the meeting became tumultuous. Instead, those in attendance decided to elect the officers of the revolutionary government. In essence, the participants threw out the Supreme Council of the Katipunan under which all the revolutionary forces had been fighting for. Bonifacio reluctantly agreed to preside over the election. Aguinaldo was elected President; Mariano Trias as Vice President; Artemio Ricarte as Captain-General; Emiliano Riego de Dios as Director of War; and Bonifacio as Director of the Interior. The following day, March 23, Aguinaldo and the other elected officials, with the exception of Bonifacio, took their oath of office in the new revolutionary government.

Meanwhile, on the same day the Aguinaldo took his oath of office, Bonifacio and his followers — numbering forty-five — met again at the same venue of the convention held the day before. They were furious. They felt bad about the results of the election. They believed that the Magdalo faction committed anomalies during the

balloting. Consequently, they decided to invalidate the election. They drew up a document — Acta de Tejeros — giving their reasons for nullifying the results of the convention.

Bonifacio and his supporters believed that Aguinaldo's men were responsible for the chaos at the Tejeros convention. He believed that Aguinaldo's men had maneuvered him out of power. Indeed, it was a

rude awakening for him because even the Magdiwangs, his followers, did not vote for him either for President or Vice-President.

Adding insult to an injury, Daniel Tirona, a Magdalo, protested Bonifacio's election as Director of the Interior saying that a person with a lawyer's diploma should hold the post. Bonifacio, outraged by Tirona's insult, angrily declared: “I, as chairman of this assembly and as President of the Supreme Council of the Katipunan, as all of you do not deny, declare this assembly dissolved, and I annul all that has been approved and resolved.”

At Naik, where Bonifacio subsequently moved his Magdiwang forces after the failed Tejeros convention, Bonifacio and his supporters drew up another document — known as the Naik Military Agreement — in which they resolved to establish a government independent and separate from the one established at Tejeros.

Bonifacio and his supporters proceeded in forming a government. The government was called Haring Bayang Katagalugan (Sovereign Country of the Tagalog Nation).

They printed its Cartilla, a small handbook containing the rules, the 14-point code of ethics, and the recruitment process. In it, the Katipunan declared that the word “Tagalog” stood for “all who were born in this archipelago... hence Visayans, Ilocanos and Pampangos were all Tagalogs” (“Filipino” during the Spanish regime was a Spaniard born in the Philippines and the natives were called “indios”). The following were elected as officers of the de facto government of Haring Bayang Katagalugan: Andres

Bonifacio — President; Emilio Jacinto — Minister of State; Teodoro Plata — Minister of War; Aguedo del Rosario — Minister of the Interior; Briccio Pantas — Minister of Justice; Enrique Pacheco — Minister Finance; Silvestre Baltazar — Treasurer General; Daniel Tirona — Secretary General. Unfortunately, the Bonifacio government was never recognized because they were all busy fighting the Spanish colonial forces.

Upon learning of the Naik Military Agreement, Aguinaldo sent a contingent of soldiers to arrest Bonifacio and his brothers Procopio and Ciriaco. The confrontation became deadly. Ciriaco was killed and Bonifacio and Procopio were wounded. They were brought to Naik to face a military tribunal. Albeit the absence of evidence, the Bonifacio brothers were found guilty of treason and sedition. They were recommended for execution. Aguinaldo commuted the sentence to deportation. However, Generals Mariano Noriel and Pio del Pilar, both former allies of Bonifacio, convinced Aguinaldo to withdraw his order and proceed with the execution. They believed that as long as Bonifacio were alive, there would be no unity. On May 10, 1897, Aguinaldo's soldiers executed the Bonifacio brothers at the foot of Mt. Tala. They were buried in shallow graves without markers.

On June 12, 1898, Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines and installed a “Dictatorial Government” that would be temporary in nature until peace is achieved at which time it may be “modified by the nation, in which rests the principle of authority.”

On March 23, 1901, exactly four years after he took his first oath of office, American forces captured Aguinaldo in Palanan, Isabela. Thus ended the Philippine revolution started by Bonifacio.

Today, Andres Bonifacio's admirers believe that he was the first president of the Philippines. He organized the Katipunan and led the revolution against Spain. They believed that not only was he the first president of the country, he should be accorded the title of “National Hero” of the Philippines.

Had the historians robbed Andres Bonifacio of his rightful place in Philippine history? Shouldn't Bonifacio precede Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo as the acknowledged Father of the Philippines? And shouldn't his stature as “National Hero” supersede Dr. Jose Rizal? (PerryDiaz@gmail.com)



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Pope Francis Calls Nurses, “Experts In Humanity” - Thanks Nurse Who Saved His Life

BY ANGELINA GIBSON

VATICAN CITY, Mar 3, 2018 - “I thank her and I want you to know her name: Sister Cornelia Caraglio,” said Pope Francis as he remembered the nurse who saved his life at 20 years old.

“When, at the age of 20, I was on the verge of death, she was the one who told the doctors, even arguing with them, ‘No, this isn’t working. You must give more,’” the Pope said during a meeting with thousands of nurses - members of Italy’s national association of nursing professionals.

“And thanks to those things [her suggestions], I survived,” recalled the Pope.

The Pope Thanks Nurses

Pope Francis thanked all nurses in attendance, “you are there all day and you see what happens to the patient. Thank you for that!” he continued, “many lives, so many lives are saved thanks to you!”

He spoke about the importance of the nursing profession and the unique relationships nurses form with all members of the health-care team - patients, families, and colleagues. Pope Francis stated that nurses are at “the crossroads” of all these relationships.

Furthermore, Pope Francis acknowledged the “truly irreplaceable” role nurses play in the lives of their patients. “Like no other, the nurse has a direct and continuous relationship with patients, takes care of them every day, listens to their

needs and comes into contact with their very body, that he tends to,” stated Pope Francis.

The Pope called nurses, “promoters of the life and dignity of the persons.”

He spoke about the sensitivity they acquire from “being in contact with patients all day,” and addressed the healing power of listening and touch. Calling touch an important factor for demonstrating respect for the dignity of the person.

He praised nurse’s continuous and tiring commitment to their individual patients despite the patient’s societal status. Calling a nurse’s care particularly important in a society which often leaves weaker people on the margin, only giving worth to people who meet certain criteria or level of wealth. Pope Francis called the

nursing profession “a real mission,” and referred to nurses as, “experts in humanity.”

When speaking of touch, Pope Francis told the story of when Jesus healed the Leper through touch. Encouraging the nurses, “we must recognize the importance of this simple gesture,” Pope Francis said. “Mosaic law forbid touching lepers and banned them from approaching inhabited places. But Jesus went to the heart of the law, which is summarized in love for one’s neighbor,” stated Pope Francis.

While acknowledging the difficulty of the nursing profession, Pope Francis encouraged patients to have patience with nurses, to not demand things from nurses and to smile more at their



Pope Francis

nurses.

The Pope reminded nurses, “a caress, a smile, is full of meaning for one who is sick. It is a simple gesture,

but encouraging, he or she feels accompanied, feels closer to being healed, feels like a person, not a number.”

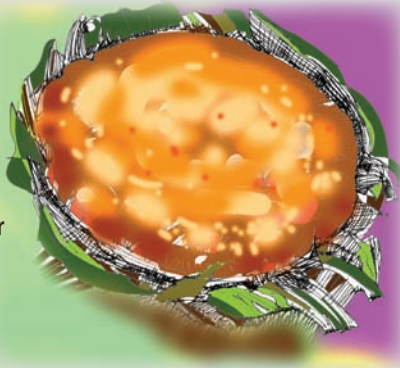
Lasang Pinoy

Bibingka

- 4 eggs, well beaten
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup melted margarine
- 2 cups rice flour
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup coco cream
- 1/4 cup sugar for topping

Instructions

- 1) Add sugar to beaten eggs.
 - 2) Combine salt and flour; add to egg mixture.
 - 3) Add melted margarine, coconut milk, and baking powder.
 - 4) Pour into banana leaf-lined mold.
 - 5) Bake in 375 degrees Fahrenheit oven.
 - 6) When half-done, take it out from the oven and brush
 - 7) top with coconut cream and sugar and bake until golden crust is formed.
- Yield: 3 large bibingkas.



Salabat Ginger Tea

- Ingredients
- 2-3 cups of water
- 8-10 thin slices of fresh ginger
- 1/2 cup brown sugar

Simmer ginger and sugar in water for about 30 minutes. Serve hot. You can adjust the strength of the tea by adding more ginger or more water depending on your preference. You can also use white sugar resulting to a weak color. Or you can also add a teabag into the pot to add a different flavoring.



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Buhay Pinoy by Dave San Pedro



Mutya ng Pilipinas crowned Dream Girl of the Year International

BY ARMIN P. ADINA



Dream Girl of the Year International Aya Fernandez, second from left, with the other winners of the 2018 Miss Tourism International held in Malaysia on Friday, Dec. 21, 2018.

Mutya ng Pilipinas Aya Fernandez was proclaimed Dream Girl of the Year International at the culmination of the 2018 Miss Tourism International pageant held at the Sunway Resort Hotel and Spa in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Friday night.

The University of the Philippines Broadcast Communication student failed to score a back-to-back victory for the Philippines, as the

top title went to Indonesia's Astari Indah Vernideani. Last year's winner, Jannie Loudette Alipo-on, was the fourth Filipino woman to be proclaimed Miss Tourism International.

Three more winners were proclaimed in the pageant — Miss Tourism Metropolitan Sylvia from Kenya, Miss Tourism Global Sandra Callahan from Australia, and Miss Tourism Cosmopolitan International Laura Scuchare

from Latvia. The host delegate received the special title Miss Southeast Asia Tourism Ambassador, while Fernandez also got the special award Miss Dazzling.

The Philippines is the most successful country in the pageant, with four crowns. Aside from Alipo-on, the other winners are Peachy Manzano, the late Rizzini Alexis Gomez, and Angeli Dione Gomez.

Laoag fitness trainer is new Mister Model Worldwide

BY ARMIN P. ADINA

A 22-year-old fitness trainer from Laoag, Ilocos Norte, who was about to give up on participating in pageants, won as Mister Model Worldwide 2018 in a contest held in India last Saturday night.

Carlo Pasion waited for one year and three months before he could compete in an international pageant. Normally, a Filipino contestant would compete within the year the delegate won in the local search. The pageant in India focuses on modeling and physique.

Other winners for Mister Model Worldwide 2018 were Thailand (first runner-up), India (second runner-up), Bolivia (third runner-up), and Nigeria (fourth runner-up). Pasion won the Mister of Filipinas contest in September 2017, earning him the right to compete abroad. He was supposed to join the Mister Ocean 2018 contest in China in August but it was can-



Carlo Pasion in his national costume.

called. "After that, I was ready to give up (on) pageants. I told myself I will pursue aviation this time. Maybe pageant is not for me. Then one day I received a call from Carlo Morris Galang that I will be competing in India in December," Pasion says.

Galang is the president of Prime Event Productions Philippines Foundation, Inc. (PEPPS), organizer of the annual Mister of Filipinas pageant.

Pasion, who graduated with

a degree in information technology, had only two weeks to prepare for the contest.

"Carlo (Pasion) promised us that he could enter the Top 5. Instead he gave us a title," said an emotional Aski Pascual, PEPPS Director for Licensing and Expansion.

Pasion, who took odd jobs before he rose to fame, is the last Filipino to compete in an international pageant for 2018. He also won Best Fashion Model special award. Continental winners were: Tibet, Asia and Oceania; Ethiopia, Africa; Azerbaijan, Europe; and Bolivia, Americas.

Other winners of special awards were: Ethiopia, Photogenic; National Costume, Thailand; Tibet, Talent; India, Mr. Perfect Body; Bhutan, People's Choice; Formal Wear, Nigeria; Runway Model, South Korea; Sri Lanka, Mister Intellectual; Bolivia, Commercial Model; Congeniality, Ghana; Charming Smile, Nepal; Azerbaijan, Face of the Year; Lebanon, Mr. Personality; Icon Style, Armenia; and Myanmar, Charming Gentleman.

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What are Catriona's winning points?

BY RICKY LO

Three days from now, we will find out if Catriona Gray will beat 93 other aspirants for the Miss Universe crown and raise the Philippines' ranking in the roster of countries with the most number of Misses U to a secured fourth place behind the USA, Venezuela and Puerto Rico (check out the list as you read on). Currently, the Philippines ties with Sweden on the fourth spot (with Sweden moved to fifth place, if and when).

Until the grand finals on Monday, Dec. 17, when the 67th Miss U pageant unfolds in Pattaya, Thailand (aired live on ABS-CBN starting at 8 a.m.), "beauty experts" can only make their usual predictions, hoping against hope that Catriona will be "it" and create a record as the country's fourth Miss U (after Gloria Diaz, 1969; Margie Moran, 1973; and Pia Wurtzbach, 2015).

So what are Catriona's winning points?

- Her friendliness and natural charm, marked by a sweet smile that never leaves her face...and that makes her stand out in a wide field of beauties;
- Her heart for poor children. Unlike some beauty queens who reveal their advocacies only after winning a title, Catriona (through her advocacy called Paraiso) has been helping raise funds for the renovation of a three-storey building in Tondo, Manila, and turning it into a pre-school (should be hopefully done by this time because Catriona talked about it in 2016 when she won Miss World Philippines in the first pageant she ever joined); and
- Her independent-mindedness. She told The STAR in 2016, "I've had a very beautiful childhood. My parents taught me independence early on. They let me explore; they let me travel by myself to America when I was nine years old to visit our relatives..."(Catriona is an only child. Her mom is from Oas, Albay, and her Australian dad used to own a mining corporation in the Philippines where he met Catriona's mom.)

According to Funfare's "other beauty expert" Celso de Guzman Caparas, "Catriona is reported to be one of the front runners among the 94 beauties by international beauty queens, pageant websites and even betting companies. As of Monday, Dec. 10, Catriona is No. 1 in Australia's Sportsbet and USA's Odds Shark (tie with Puerto Rico). She's in the second spot in UK's Nicer Odds and Oddschecker (tie with Thailand)."

For the record, Catriona is competing with her 2016 Miss World batchmates Helena Heuser of Denmark and Emma Strandberg Winkel of Sweden.

Here's the roster of the countries with their number of Miss U winners (compiled by Celso):

- USA — Miriam Stevenson (1954), Carol Morris (1956), Linda Bement (1960), Sylvia Hitchcock (1967), Shawn Weatherly



2018 Miss Universe Philippines Catriona Gray

- (1980), Chelsi Smith (1995), Brook Lee (1997) and Olivia Culpo (2012);
- Venezuela — Maritza Sayalero (1979), Irene Saez (1981), Barbara Palacios (1986), Alicia Machado (1996), Dayana Mendoza (2008), Stefania Fernandez (2009) and Gabriela Isler (2013);
- Puerto Rico — Marisol Malaret (1970), Deborah Carthy-Deu (1985), Dayanara Torres (1993), Denise Quiñones (2001) and Zuleyka Rivera (2006);
- Sweden — Hillevi Rombin (1955), Margareta Arvidsson (1966) and Yvonne Ryding (1984);
- Philippines — Gloria Diaz (1969), Margarita Moran (1973, also Miss Photogenic) and Pia Wurtzbach (2015);
- Finland — Armi Kuusela (1952) and Anne Marie Pohtamo (1975);
- France — Christiane Martel (1953) and Iris Mittenaere (2016);
- Colombia — Luz Zuluaga (1958) and Paulina Vega (2014);
- Japan — Akiko Kojima (1959) and Riyo Mori (2007);
- Brazil — Ieda Vargas (1963) and Martha Vasconcellos (1968);
- Thailand — Apasra Hongsakula (1965) and Pornthip Nakhirunkanok;
- Australia — Kerry Anne Wells (1972) and Jennifer Hawkins (2004);
- Trinidad & Tobago — Janelle Commissiong (1977) and Wendy Fitzwilliam (1998);
- South Africa — Margaret Gardiner (1978) and Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters (2017)
- Canada — Karen Baldwin (1982) and Natalie Glebova (2005);
- Mexico — Lupita Jones (1991) and Ximena Navarrete (2010);
- India — Sushmita Sen (1994) and Lara Dutta (2000); and one winner each from
- Peru, Gladys Zender (1957); Germany, Marlene Schmidt (1961); Argentina, Norma Nolan (1962); Greece, Corinna Tsopeli (1964); Lebanon, Georgina Rizk (1971); Spain, Amparo Muñoz (1974); Israel, Rina Messinger (1976); New Zealand, Lorraine Downes (1983); Chile, Cecilia Bolocco (1987); Holland, Angela Visser (1989); Norway, Mona Grudt (1990); Namibia, Michelle McLean (1992); Botswana, Mpule Kwelagobe (1999); Panama, Justine Pasek (2002); Dominican Republic, Amelia Vega (2003); and Angola, Leila Lopes (2011).

Xian Lim: Bullies 'made my life hell'

BY CONSUELO MARQUEZ

MANILA, Philippines — In the wake of a viral video of a bullying incident in Ateneo Junior High School (AJHS), actor Xian Lim has come out to admit that he too was a victim of bullies.

On Friday, Lim confessed on Instagram that he did not have an easy childhood because other kids would beat him up then.

"I had no friends. I was called a loser for being an introvert and not knowing how to talk to other kids. I was called a FOB for having really strong accent. Kids would beat me up and spit on me and made my life hell," Lim wrote.

Lim also recalled that when he finally tried to speak up, he was beaten up some more.

"I spoke up one time and snitched which resulted in me getting beat up some more, kicked in the face and have a knife pointed in my neck. So I stayed quiet," he said.

Lim further confessed he cried in front of his class as other kids would laugh and



Xian Lim

say bad things about him.

He likewise said he was also forced to "eat his lunch in the bathroom" and had "kept his lunch money in his underwear" in case his bullies would check his pockets.

He also admitted fearing about going to school, and at one point, he said even lied to his mother about being sick just to skip classes.

"I didn't want to go to school. I made up excuses and told my mom I felt sick. I did not feel safe," he said.

Lim then encouraged victims of bullying to "speak up" and not be like him, who regretted not having told his parents and authorities about being bullied.

"Huge mistake I made was I kept quiet because I was scared. I did not tell my parents. I did not tell the authorities," he said. "If you're being bullied right now, please speak up. We are here for you. There are others like you who feel scared and defeated."

Eddie Garcia on being gay: 'God created you that way, there's nothing wrong with it'

Veteran actor Eddie Garcia's turn as an elderly gay man in Rainbow's Sunset is already being talked about, and the film hasn't even premiered yet.

In the film, Garcia plays an ex-senator who comes out to his grown children when his lover falls ill.

It isn't the first time Garcia delved into LGBT experiences for a role. In his younger years, he portrayed a closeted gay man in Lino Brocka's Tubog sa Ginto (1971).

Garcia reiterated his acceptance of the LGBT community, saying "Everybody was created by God."

"If you are a homosexual, God created you that way. There's nothing wrong with it," he said in an interview with Rappler on December 23, just a few moments before the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) Parade of Stars 2018 kicked off.

In the interview, he also said that Rain-



The actor portrays an elderly gay man in the upcoming film 'Rainbow's Sunset'

bow's Sunset has "all the ingredients for a very good film."

"I'm sure people when they see it they will enjoy it, because it's a very well-directed film, very well-acted. It's enjoyable."

The film, which also stars Tony Mabesa and Gloria Romero, will hit theaters during the Metro Manila Film Festival on December 25. — Rappler.com

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& entertainment to your
satisfaction.

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Season's Greetings!

From the Publisher and Contributors of Philippine Fiesta Newspaper



As always, we are thankful to our readership and the Editorial Staff of the Philippine Fiesta News, especially, Dave and Dinnah San Pedro for the privilege of writing articles that deeply concerned our community. As such we were able to chronicle many events both mournful and celebratory that enable us to become strong, vibrant and united in our endeavors to do for the good of the place where we enjoy and comfortably love to live. HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL WISHING YOU PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS 2019 YEAR!!



Happy Holidays everyone!
Dave and Dinnah San Pedro



Time passes but memorable moments will stay forever especially those that we value closest to our hearts. We are grateful to be part of Philippine Fiesta News for giving us the opportunity to contribute in the recording of our community's important events with family, family of friends, old friends, new friends, friends to be, and friends of friends. In other words, our Sacramento Fil-Am community is One Big family. We wish our Community Family the Best of the Holidays. We Hope All of You Experienced a Very Merry 2018 Christmas and the Most Joyful Start of the 2019 New Year! May we all Be Blessed with More Happy Moments Ahead of Us! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
From Dale and Melita Esperante and Family



MALIGAYANG PASKO at MANIGONG BAGONG TAON sa Lahat! Pagpalain nawa tayong Lahat ng Panginoon. Bumabati, mula kina Nancy at Francis Bautista, mga anak, manugang, at mga apo, kagaya ng mga nakalarawan na sina Barrett 7, Casey 10, at si Chloe 9.



To all our wonderful friends and family, we wish you a joy filled Christmas and Prosperous New Year!
Carle and Sarah Enloe



Wishing you All a BLESSED and GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS and a HEALTHY, SAFE and PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.
-+Cynthia Garcia



Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to ALL!
Gabriel and Gemma Ortigoza and family



Merriest CHRISTMAS
THE DIAZ FAMILY
Perry, Dolores & Family - 2018