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Nigerian kidnappers release 24 Filipino hostages



Nigerian kidnappers have released all 24 Filipino seamen they had been holding captive in the creeks of the oil-producing Niger Delta since January 20

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Filipino family represents NWT at citizenship ceremony



The Pangilinan family was chosen to represent the Northwest Territory and to participate in the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of citizenship.

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Parents and children invited to Scouts Fun Night

The First Filipino-Canadian Scouts group is inviting parents and their children to attend its first Fun Night which will be held on Saturday, February 24, at 6767 Cote Des Neiges, 6th floor dining hall of the Intercultural Library building opposite Plaza Cote des Neiges., starting at 3:30 p.m. Admission is free. Members and volunteers are bringing potluck dishes for the supper to be served to all who will attend. Please call 514-485-7861 to let Laging Handa Scouts know how many people will attend this Fun Night. A lineup of activities, games, and video presentations will surely entertain the parents and their children. The Area Commissioner, Mr. Mark Brencley and other Scout leaders will be moderating the games and they will also be happy to explain to the parents what Scouting can offer to the development of our youth's leadership and survival skills. There will be demonstrations of typical Scouting activities, ceremonies, games, and songs. The parents can watch their children participate in the games and be convinced that Scouting can offer a



The Laging Handa Scouts pose for souvenir with La Union Governor Victor F. Ortega who was the guest speaker of FAMAS during the 108th Independence Day Anniversary Celebration, June 10, 2006

better alternative to watching TV or playing video games. Mr. Claro Bermudez, Head Scout Leader, will be assisted by Scout Volunteers Romy Valenzuela, Anna May Tappan, Richard San Miguel, Giovanni Ortiz, and parent volunteers, Joselito Sarto, Riza Esmeralda, Arnold Ortiz, Bob and Helen Araneta, Cristina

Paac, and Mary Joy Lizarondo. With the increasing number of youth, there is also an increasing demand for adult volunteers. We are making an appeal to those who can devote two hours weekly to help in the implementation of the Scouting program to Filipino-

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Scouts

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EDITORIAL

Let the world be inspired by the Scouting spirit

Everyone agrees that our future lies in our youth. Yet, it would seem that we render lip service to the task of making sure that our youth is prepared to take over the leadership roles that will surely be left vacant by the natural process of attrition. There are many organizations, all of different orientations but it seems that there are a few that are devoted to youth development. Needless to say, it will be worthwhile considering Scouting as a good choice for our community to support if we want our young people, both boys and girls to develop their leadership and survival skills. They will also acquire ideal personality traits such as courtesy, respect of their elders. Knowing all these benefits of Scouting for the young, why is it then that there are only a few families taking advantage of the services offered by devoted Scout volunteers? It seems that everyone is opting to be involved only in basketball or hockey. What could be the reasons for this lack of interest? Do they know that there is a variety of activities that boys and girls can learn?

We urge parents to consider finding out more about Scouting and what it means to the world at large. If they become aware of how this movement spread around the world and the reasons behind its popularity everywhere, perhaps more parents will be interested in enrolling their children with the Laging Handa Scout Group.

As we reflect on what is going on around us, perhaps we can appreciate the fact that there is too much violence, conflict, and wars in several areas of the world. Do we ever wonder what each one of us can do to make a difference? The vision of one man, 100 years ago in England, made it possible to make this difference for our young people thus enabling them to contribute to the betterment of society. This man's pioneering spirit lives on until this day. Lord Baden-Powell, was a 50-year-old retired army general when he founded Scouting, and his revolutionary ideas inspired thousands of young people, from all parts of society, to get involved in activities that most had never

contemplated.

Scouting is a type of informal education with an emphasis on practical outdoor activities, including camping, woodcraft, aquatics, hiking, backpacking, and sports. It is learning by doing. It is also an excellent way of promoting awareness of the environment and encouraging the conservation of our natural resources. Would it not be a wonderful project if all young Filipino boys get involved in cleaning up our neighborhood, and beautifying our parks? They would certainly grow up to be caring and responsible adults. Instead of spending their time in Metro stations, shopping centers, and playing video games, they can be mobilized to use their excess energies for the good of our community.

It is of great interest to see how many parents show up at the Scouts Fun Night. It will serve as an indicator of how much interest our parents can give to the development of their own children. The more parents get involved in Scouting, the better it will be for all of us for it will surely have a lasting impact on the improvement of our society in general, and of the family in particular.

As we all know, the modern family is often dysfunctional because of the pressures of having both mother and father work to earn a living. Children are often left to fend for themselves, or in the extreme, are often spoiled and become stubborn. Parents become helpless and do not seem to know where to turn. Scouting may offer an alternative to some families who are in this difficult situation. There are resources available that can help, if only these parents will check out the services offered by the Scouts organization.

We hope parents will heed our call to celebrate the centennial year of Scouting by joining in the movement for the sake of our children.

We hope to count you all and join us on Saturday, February 24, at 3:30 p.m. at 6767 Cote des neiges. You will be glad you did!

Zenaida Kharroubi

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Columnists

Riza Esmeralda
Lina V. Fernandez
Dr. Victor Gavino
Prof. Isaac Goodine
Esther Stansfield
Anna May Tappan
Alvin D. Veloso

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi
Chief Editor & Publisher

Sam Ferry
Assistant Editor
News & Tourism

Bert Abiera
Founder

Lourdes Fabia
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Sales Representatives

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Nigerian kidnappers release 24 Filipino hostages

February 13, 2006

Nigerian kidnappers have released all 24 Filipino seamen they had been holding captive in the creeks of the oil-producing Niger Delta since January 20, the men's employer, German shipping firm Baco-Liner, said on Tuesday.

The kidnappers said they had freed the men "on humanitarian grounds" without receiving any ransom, following the intervention of local elders and authorities. Most abductions in the anarchic Niger Delta are resolved after money changes hands.

"The Nigerian authorities have handed the vessel and its crew to us in Warri," a spokesman for the company said, referring to the main city in the western delta.

He said the men were tired, but in good health. A replacement crew will be hired to sail the ship out of the Niger Delta, he added.

Another seven foreign hostages seized by different armed groups are still in captivity in the delta, where violence against expatriates and against the oil industry is on the rise. The remaining hostages are two Italians, one Lebanese, one American, two Filipinos and one Frenchman.

The kidnappers of the 24 Filipinos said they had seized the Baco-Liner 2 because it was "suspected to have been conveying arms and ammunition imported by top politicians in the

country, to destabilize the 2007 general elections in the region."

Nigeria is due to hold elections in April that should mark the first democratic transition from one civilian government to the next in Africa's top oil producer.

The Baco-Liner spokesman said there were explosives on board the cargo ship but these were destined for oil companies that use them for exploration and had nothing to do with politics.

"We are not engaged in any smuggling whatsoever," said the spokesman.

Divisions among rebels

The kidnappers said they would take unspecified "further actions" unless Nigerian authorities met a series of demands including the release of two jailed leaders from the delta and the payment of compensation to local villages for oil spills.

The abduction of the 24 Filipinos exposed divisions among rebel groups in the delta.

The kidnappers said they were from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), whose attacks a year ago forced the closure of 500,000 barrels per day in oil output, a fifth of Nigeria's capacity. That production has not resumed.

But Jomo Gbomo, who has always

spoken for MEND since the group emerged in late 2005, has repeatedly denied his group was involved in the abduction. He says a separate group was responsible and MEND does not share that group's objectives.

Activist sources in the region say the group who kidnapped the Filipinos used to have links with Gbomo's MEND about a year ago, but they had fallen out. MEND has sometimes worked with pre-existing militias whose agendas are based on local issues.

Poverty, lawlessness and a collapse in public services due to rampant corruption among government officials lie at the root of the problems in the Niger Delta, where the lines are blurred between political militancy and crime.

Most residents of the vast wetlands region live without clean water, electricity, roads or functional clinics and this fuels resentment toward the multibillion-dollar oil industry.

Attacks on oil facilities, kidnappings for ransom, smuggling of stolen oil, armed robberies and assaults on the security forces are all common. Many fear the situation will worsen ahead of April's elections as armed thugs hired by politicians to intimidate their opponents spring into action.

■

Emotional homecoming for Filipino kidnap victims

February 17, 2007

Twenty-four Filipino seamen recently released after being held captive at gunpoint for 24 days in Nigeria flew home to an emotional reunion with loved ones.

Looking haggard after their ordeal but smiling and waving, the men were met by government officials and a throng of journalists after disembarking from a commercial flight.

"We are very happy. Thank you very much President (Gloria) Arroyo," they said in unison to an explosion of camera flashes.

They were quickly taken to the presidential Malacanang palace in the capital and tearfully reunited with family and friends.

"I couldn't sleep. I was just crying and crying," said Jocelyn Arcangel as she waited at the palace for her husband, Roberto Arcangel, to arrive.

"My sons don't want him to leave anymore. It was very traumatic. We have not heard from them for a long time and there are fears that they were harmed."

The men declined to comment on negotiations that led to their freedom on February 13, for fear of jeopardizing the safety of two other Filipinos seized separately. Filipino diplomats are in Nigeria working to free them.

See Page 18 HOMECOMING

I made a different kind of New Year's resolution ... and it brought me the best year yet! "

The holidays have come and gone and what is usually left is a New Year's resolution on how to make this year a healthier and better year. That all starts with making healthier choices. Albert Einstein said "You cannot do the same thing over and over and expect a different result". If for any reason you are suffering from pain in any part of your body, just maybe you have not taken care of the problem.

There are so many people who have given up on their health, not knowing that there may be a better way that what they've already tried. They need a second chance with their health, like I once had. I want to share with you a true story of a patient that is still under my regular chiropractic care.

Last year Ralf came to my office after the holidays. He had spent a week with his family in the Caribbean and for a majority of the time there, he spent on his back not able to move due to debilitating back and neck pain. As well, both of his knees were so swollen they looked like two balloons in the middle of his legs. He promised himself that as soon as he got home he would find the reason for his pain and fix it. That is when he scheduled his consultation with me. Ralf explained to me during that visit that "He had too much water in his knee and that he needed to have it removed." However, when I examined him I knew that the swelling was a protection mechanism for the subluxations that were present in his lower back. Ralf understood the underlying cause for his pain and agreed to have an adjustment. One week later he was able to move around without pain. A few weeks later his neighbor asked what he was doing that was so different because he looks so much healthier and happier! Ralf simply listened to his body. He took care of his subluxations so his body was able to heal naturally.

So you see when you have subluxation, the nerves are choked and the natural energy cannot flow properly to the rest of your body. Several times a day patients thank me for helping them with their health problems. But I

can't really take the credit. I've never healed anyone of anything. What I do is make a specific spinal adjustment to remove the subluxation, and the body responds by healing itself. Subluxation is at a pandemic because of our lifestyle. Sitting is the major cause of subluxation, an average person sits for 32 years. Sitting is as devastating on the spine as sugar is to the teeth. Subluxation also caused by stress, accidents, slips, falls and even the birthing process. But we get tremendous results it's as simple as that.

Many people of all ages come to see me with their health problems. Such as ... headaches, migraines, chronic pain, neck pain, shoulder/arm pain, insomnia backaches, ear infections, asthma, allergies, numbness in limbs, fatigued, depression, arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, attention deficit disorder, lack of concentration. Just to name a few. You don't have to be in pain to get your spine checked either. If you're one of millions of people suffering from pain and have not yet seen the light at the end of the tunnel.... Then this offer is just for you!

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Canadian youth. Please apply now by calling 514-485-7861, attention of Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi, Group Commissioner. Parents are also urged to join the Group Committee in order to share the workload involved in the administration - secretarial-clerical duties, fundraising solicitors, and other tasks necessary to make the group function more smoothly.

The Laging Handa Scouts Group 0592 was first chartered during a Corn Roast sponsored by Gilmore College on August 24, 2003 upon the suggestion of Col. Camilo Tiqui, a retired Philippine Airforce pilot who encouraged Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi to sponsor the formation of the first Filipino Scout group. Scouts Canada, Quebec Council Commissioner Ross Miller presented the crest to Consul Medardo Macaraig at MacKenzie King Park, signifying the approval of the charter to the First Filipino Scout Group to be named "Laging Handa 0592". Mr. Sterling Lambert, the then Membership Development Representative and Michael Belanger, Area Commissioner, provided help and support in planning for the recruitment of adult volunteers and children which only started the following year. A rechartering ceremony was held on September 8, 2004 when the then Ambassador Francisco Benedicto was invested as an honorary member. Col. Camilo Tiqui assisted by Area Commissioner Brent Hussey did the honors of placing the Scout neckerchief on Ambassador Benedicto. Other dignitaries present at the ceremony were Borough Mayor Michael Applebaum, Mr. Marc Leiter who represented Hon. Irwin Cotler, the former Secretary of Justice and Attorney General during the Liberal government, Honorary Consul Salvador Cabugao, School Commissioner Khokom Maniruz-zaman, Prof. Isaac Goodine who delivered the inspirational message, and other Filipino community leaders. To celebrate Independence Day in 2005, Laging Handa held a tree planting ceremony in front of the monument to Dr. Jose Rizal. It was also during this time that Borough Mayor Michael Applebaum was invested as an honorary member. The Group also joined the first GK walk in Montreal on September 9, 2005.

Although there were many adult volunteers who filed applications with Scouts Canada and received police clearances, not all of them confirmed their appointments. The only volunteers who decided to pioneer the

Scouting movement in the community are: Claro Bermudez, Romeo Valenzuela, Danilo Corpuz, Richard San Miguel (all members of APO) and Nida Butaran. All of these people have been with Laging Handa since 2004 until the present time, except Mr. Corpuz and Ms. Butaran because of their busy schedules. Mr. Corpuz stayed for one year, Ms. Butaran stayed for two years. Miss Anna May Tappan joined the group last September 2006. Some of the first prospective volunteers backed out or did not show any firm commitment for a variety of reasons, some of them financial, others for lack of time. An obstacle to recruiting more adults is the membership fee which has to be paid by each Scout volunteer. Laging Handa is therefore trying to solicit more sponsors in order to offer volunteers and parents some financial assistance whenever possible. The first significant amount received was solicited by Riza Esmeralda who approached Mr. Yuri Fatawo who works for the ICAO office in Montreal. He gave a donation of \$700 last year. This was used in buying uniforms for the children and some Scouts paraphernalia. Mr. Salvador Cabugao also gave a cash donation to the Laging Hand Scouts while they were participating in the GK walk for the poor. This was used to buy snacks for the kids. Recently, the following people who received solicitation letters from the Group Commissioner, Zenaida Kharroubi, last December 2005, sent in their cheques, namely, Hon. Lawrence Bergman, Borough Mayor Michael Applebaum and Councilor Marvin Rotrand. A thank you letter is on the way to them. Mrs. Kharroubi also approached Mr. Sly El-Hachem, the bank manager of the Scotiabank branch at 4681 Van Horne. She was delighted to receive a quick positive response. A cheque will be forwarded to Scouts Canada on behalf of Laging Handa and will be earmarked for the Scouts Fun Night this coming Saturday, February 24, at 3:30 p.m. However, more donors are needed in order to send at least six members to the Scout Jamboree being held in Camp Tamaracouta, Quebec this summer which will cost around \$5000. It would be a rare experience for the youth to participate in this jamboree as it is the centennial year of Scouting.

Most of the Scout leaders spend their own money in buying food and materials for the weekly activities. Some parents help out by bringing additional food for snacks. If more sponsors are willing to help support a worthy cause, Laging Handa Scout

Group will also be able to help the adult volunteers and parents in terms of subsidizing the costs of membership fees and other activities, particularly camping which is an important part of Scouting. So far, the Group has been camping every season since winter 2005. It is required to have a minimum of four camping trips in a year.

It is hoped that parents will take advantage of the opportunity being offered by Laging Handa in developing the future leaders of the Filipino-Canadian community. This year, being the Centennial Year of the Scouting movement, we should celebrate it by being active in promoting the Scouting movement. It will encourage the Scout volunteers of Laging Handa if more people come to attend the Fun Night, which is designed to show examples of what the youth can learn from Scouting.

Background notes on the Scouts Centennial Year

The year 2007 will mark 100 years of Scouting worldwide. In 1907, Lord Baden-Powell ran his experimental camp, on Brownsea Island on the South coast of England, for 20 young London boys from different social backgrounds.

By 2007 over 500,000,000 women and men from most of the world's countries and cultures will have promised to live by the Scout Promise and Law.

Our Centenary is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the unique value of Scouting to the world and to celebrate the achievements of 100 years of Scouting.

It's a time to celebrate the future of Scouting and look to how we can improve it to meet the needs of even more young people, their families and communities worldwide.

Our Centenary year also marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of our founder, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, who was born on February 22, 1857. Why should we mark the Centenary?

In 2007, Scouting worldwide celebrates its Centenary. As they have done for one hundred years, millions of Scouts will help to change the world for good. What a great opportunity for us to demonstrate the value of Scouting to the world.

Not only will we celebrate the achievements of the past; but we'll plan a course for the future development of Scouting. We'll actively seek to offer better and bigger Scouting programs worldwide. There will be a lot happening in the next year! The Centenary provides us with an opportunity to promote Scouting to a

national and world audience. As our preparations get underway, we'll share our achievements and successes in all fields with the public. We'll aim to bring Scouting to more young people and countries in the world and improve the quality and delivery of our programs.

The 100th anniversary of Scouting may create among Scouts and former Scouts a sense of belonging to a world-wide Movement (WOSM). What a great forum for them to communicate with each other and establish or reestablish contacts both nationally and internationally. This is the unity of World Scouting.

The Centenary is also an opportunity to obtain greater recognition of our success in the field of non-formal education, in particular the work that we do towards promoting a culture of peace throughout the world and our commitment to nature and the environment. We will also use the occasion of the Centenary to procure more support for Scouting in the future from parents, community groups, authorities and the news media.

Who will celebrate?

The year 2007 marks 100 years from the date that Scouting was founded. This Centenary belongs to every Scout from every WOSM country and territory. As such, all activities, projects and work done in the name of 2007 will involve all Scouts and take place on a local, national, regional and international level. It is so important that this Centenary is promoted as a celebration for all, and not just the date of the next World Scout Jamboree.

The International Jamboree and Canadian Jamboree are the major world and national events included in the Centenary, but we will promote 2007 as a national and worldwide celebration. We have already begun our planning and developing to ensure that 2007 is a resounding success.

When should we start?

The 2007 Resolution in Thessaloniki recognized the need to plan well in advance for the maximum benefit. The worldwide Centenary project for all National Scouting Organizations, entitled Gifts for Peace, began in 2005.

In Canada, planning is already well underway at a national level, and many groups will begin their own plans at the start of the 2006/2007 Scouting year. It will be amazing to see the unique ways each group plans to celebrate as they set their imaginations free. The year 2007 will truly be a golden year for Scouting. ■



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Filipino Family chosen to represent Northwest Territory to commemorate 60th anniversary of Canadian citizenship

Ottawa, February 16, 2007

The Honorable Diane Finley, minister of Citizenship and Immigration, welcomed today 17 families who are new Canadian citizens, representing each province and territories, on the occasion of a swearing in ceremony for a special commemoration which was held at the Supreme Court of Canada. The ceremony marked the 60th anniversary of Canadian citizenship. Among the dignitaries present were Her Excellency, the Very Honorable Michaëlle Jean, governor-general of Canada, the Very Honorable Beverly McLachlin, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the chief principal judge of Citizenship, Michel Simard.

"I am very proud to participate in this commemoration of the 60th anniversary. Our Canadian values make us an example for the planet," said Minister Finley. "Each day, we show that our numerous differences should not divide us. A society that can be diversified and harmonious. Each time that we decide to become a Canadian citizen, it means to say that this country is formidable."

In 2006, 259 267 people took the oath of Canadian citizenship. Today, 17 families, among them a Filipino family,

chosen to represent each province and territory of Canada took their oath of citizenship in the ceremony held at the Supreme Court, at the same as those being held in other places around the country to commemorate the six decades of Canadian citizenship. Mr. Gilbert Pangilinan arrived from Pampanga, Philippines with his family on July 20, 2001 and chose to settle down in the Northwest Territory. He is an electronics engineer and works for a telecommunication company.

Canadian citizenship was established legally and officially on January 1, 1947, when the first citizenship law was enacted. Until then, persons who lived in Canada were considered British subjects residing in Canada.

"I arrived very young in Canada, in search of liberty and hope, and this is why the value of Canadian citizenship for me is profoundly personal," declared the governor general, Michaëlle Jean, to the people present at the ceremony. "Now, that each one of you is entering the big Canadian family, I hope that you will take an active part in the permanent task of edifying our country."

"I am honored to welcome some

recent Canadian citizens in this building as well as to the first ceremony of Canadian citizenship which took place in 1947," declared the Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin "The ceremony today marks a great step for our new citizens as well as for our country. We must all be proud that

Canada continues to be a place where immigrants find reasons to hope for their future."

This 60th anniversary of citizenship will continue to be celebrated throughout the year 2007.



Governor General Michaëlle Jean and the Supreme Court Justice Beverly McLachlin listen intently to the speech of Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Diane Finley.

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Viva Kay Sr. Santo Nino! Aklan Association of Montreal Celebrates 6th Annual Ati-Atihan Festival

By Jennifer Fernandez

Painted faces, colourful costumes and elaborate headdresses were plentiful as the Aklan Association of Montreal held their 6th Annual Ati-Atihan Festival. Over five hundred association members and guests joined in the merriment at St. Kevin's in Cote-des-Neiges, Saturday, January 27th, to honour Santo Nino.

The celebration began with a mass at 5pm. Guests then moved downstairs, where they were treated to the sight of a brightly decorated hall, with picture displays of past Montreal Ati-Atihan festivals and videos of the 2006 Ati-Atihan from Aklan.

The evening festivities started with the Welcome Address from outgoing president, Winston Derequito. He dedicated the evening's celebration to his wife, Emily, who had worked hard on festivals in the past. She passed away last May.

The invocation was given by Fr. Francisco Alvarez. Fr. Artemio Calaycay was also on hand to perform the blessing over the food. Guests then served themselves to a buffet dinner of traditional Filipino dishes. As they dined, an impressive demonstration was put on by the martial arts students from the Cacoy Doce Pares World Federation, followed by a belly dance by the young and talented Sacha Nicole Almanon Tamayo. Sacha was one of the finalists in the Little Miss Philbecan 2006 Beauty Pageant.

The entertainment was followed by the induction of the officers, by Fely Rosales Carino. Larry Panado, president elect, gave his acceptance speech, especially thanking his family for their support. The Turn Over of the "Saruk" was performed and, with the words "Viva Kay Sr. Santo Nino!", the parade began. The

drummers and other percussionists beat out an infectious rhythm that no one could resist. The dance floor quickly filled up with costumed Aklanons and guests, parading and dancing to the beat of the drums.

The party continued long into the night, with music, dancing, raffles and more parading to the drums. Although it was only one night, instead of the week long festival like in Aklan, it truly captured the spirit and revelry of any of the Ati-Atihan festivals back home.

Brief History of the Ati-Atihan

The Ati-Atihan festival originated on the island of Panay, home of the Ati, who have dark skin and curly hair. In the 13th century, the Atis sold land to a group of people from Borneo, who later became known as the Maraynon. A friendship grew between these two groups, after a particularly bad harvest for the Atis. Having no food one year, they came down to visit the new island settlers and ask for food. The Atis danced and sang to show their gratitude. This visit grew into an annual celebration. The Maraynon eventually began painting their faces with black soot, in honour of the Atis, and joined in the dancing and singing. The festival became a feast day for the Santo Nino, after the Spanish arrived and Ferdinand Magellan presented the Santo Nino to the Queen of Cebu. Since then, the Ati-Atihan has become the largest and wildest of the Philippine fiestas.



Guests celebrate the 2007 Ati-Atihan, parading to the rhythm of the drums.

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COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Bigger than what you think

By Jerry Estrada
Philippine Correspondent

Editor's Note: Mr. Estrada is a coop volunteer worker/leader in the Philippines and presently working with Atty. Mordino R. Cua (Cooperatives Man of Asia 2004, awarded in Seoul, Korea). Together, they are continually organizing cooperatives and at the same time writing Atty. Cua's books on cooperatives entitled: "My Cooperative Journey (53 years), An Autobiography" and "How the Cooperative Code of the Philippines (RA 6938) and the Cooperative Development Authority Law (RA 6939) were crafted by the Cooperative Movement in the Philippines." Congressman Guillermo P. Cua, the incumbent Co-op Representative in the Philippine Congress, is the son of Atty. Cua.

The Beginnings, Nature, Principles and Practices of Economic Cooperation

The Early Origins of Cooperatives

Cooperative efforts have occurred throughout history. Since early man cooperated with others to help kill large animals for survival, people have been cooperating to achieve objectives that they could not reach if they acted individually. Cooperation has emerged throughout the world.

Ancient records show that Babylonians practiced cooperative farming and that the Chinese developed savings and loan associations similar to those in use today. In response to the

depressed economic conditions brought forth by industrialization, some people began to form cooperative businesses to meet their needs.

The Prime Movers of Cooperativism: Robert Owen (1771-1858), Great Britain.

Fathered the cooperative movement. A factory manager and one of the partners of the Chorlton Twist Company at Manchester, who made his fortune in the cotton trade, saw that people needed help. He wanted to give the people in his factory better lives. He helped them by paying higher wages

and making his factory safe. Owen believed in putting his workers in a good environment with access to education for themselves and their children. These ideas were put into effect successfully in the cotton mills of New Lanark, Scotland. It was here that the first co-operative store was opened where the workers themselves owned and ran. Spurred by the success of this, he had the idea of forming "villages of co-operation" where workers would drag themselves out of poverty by growing their own food, making their own clothes and ultimately becoming self-governing. He tried to form such communities in Orbiston in Scotland and in New Harmony, Indiana in the United States of America, but both communities failed.

Dr. William King (1786-1865), England.

He was a physician and philanthropist from Brighton. Although Owen inspired the co-operative movement, Dr. King took his ideas and made them more workable and practical. King believed in starting small, and realized that the working classes would need to set up co-operatives for themselves, so he saw his role as one of instruction. He founded a monthly periodical (newspaper) called The Cooperator, the first edition of which appeared on May 1, 1828. The Cooperator had a wide circulation and a great influence in the emerging movement. The paper served to educate and unify otherwise scattered groups.

King's articles in the paper gave the movement some philosophical and practical basis that it had lacked before. This gave a mixture of co-operative philosophy and practical advice about running a shop using cooperative principles. King advised people not to cut themselves off from society, but rather to form a society within a society, and to start with a shop because, "We must go to a shop every day to buy food and necessities - why then should we not go to our own shop?" He proposed sensible rules, such as having a weekly account audit, having 3 trustees, and

not having meetings in pubs/beerhouses (to avoid the temptation of drinking profits).

The First Cooperatives

The earliest cooperatives appeared in Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries, during the Industrial Revolution. As people moved from farms into the growing cities, they had to rely on stores to feed their families because they could no longer grow their own food.

Working people had very little control over the quality of their food or living conditions. Those with money gained more and more power over those without. Early co-ops were set up as a way to protect the interests of the less powerful members of society - workers, consumers, farmers, and producers.

The Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society

In 1843, a few poor weaver-workers in the textile mills of Rochdale, England went on strike. When the strike failed, the mill workers began to look for other ways to improve their lives. Instead of calling for another strike or asking charitable groups for help, some of these people decided to take control of one of the most immediate and pressing areas of their lives.

At that time, consumers were frustrated and dissatisfied by the abuses of the merchants and storeowners in their community, many of whom adulterated products to increase their profits. In many cases, workers' wages were paid in company "chits" - credit that could only be used at the company's stores. The average consumer had very few choices and little control.

They believed they needed their own food store as an alternative to the company store. Twenty-eight (28) people joined together and formed a consumer cooperative known as the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society. Groups of these people began experimenting with various methods of providing for their needs themselves.

They decided to pool their money. After

See Page 19

Cooperatives



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Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk: What are the fast-food chains doing to cut back on—or at least recycle—the huge amount of paper, plastic and foam they use daily? Are there any laws or regulations to force them to be good environmental citizens?

-- Carol Endres, Stroud Township, PA

Currently there are no federal laws or regulations in the U.S. specifically aimed at getting fast food chains to reduce, reuse or recycle their waste. Businesses of all kinds must always obey local laws pertaining to what must be recycled versus what can be discarded. And a small number of cities and towns have local laws specifically designed to force businesses to do the



North America's fast food industry is a huge generator of waste. Some strides have been made in recycling and reducing packaging and serving materials, but it has all been voluntary and usually only under intense pressure from environmental groups. (Getty Images)

right thing, but they are few and far between.

There have been some strides in the fast food business with regard to packaging materials and waste reduction, but it has all been voluntary and usually under pressure from green groups. McDonald's made headlines back in 1989 when, at the urging of environmentalists, it switched its hamburger packaging from non-recyclable Styrofoam to recyclable paper wraps and cardboard boxes. The company also replaced its bleached paper carryout bags with unbleached bags and made other green-friendly packaging advances.

Both McDonald's and PepsiCo (owner of KFC and Taco Bell) have crafted internal policies to address environmental

concerns. PepsiCo states that it encourages "conservation of natural resources, recycling, source reduction and pollution control to ensure cleaner air and water and to reduce landfill wastes," but does not elaborate on specific actions it takes. McDonald's makes similar general statements and claims to be "actively pursuing the conversion of used cooking oil into biofuels for transportation vehicles, heating, and other purposes," and pursuing various in-store paper, cardboard, delivery container and pallet recycling programs in Australia, Sweden, Japan and Britain. In Canada the company claims to be the "largest user of recycled paper in our industry" for trays, boxes, carry out bags and drink holders.

Some smaller fast food chains have garnered accolades for their recycling efforts. Arizona-based eegee's, for instance, earned an Administrator's Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for recycling all paper, cardboard and polystyrene across its 21-store chain. Besides the positive attention it has generated, the company's recycling effort also saves it money in garbage disposal fees every month.

Despite such efforts, though, the fast food industry is still a large generator of waste. Some communities are responding by passing local regulations requiring recycling where applicable. Seattle, Washington, for example, passed an ordinance in 2005 prohibiting businesses (all businesses, not just restaurants) from disposing of recyclable paper or cardboard, though violators only pay a nominal \$50 fine.

Perhaps policymakers in the U.S. and elsewhere could take a lead from Taiwan, which since 2004 has required its 600 fast-food restaurants, including McDonald's, Burger King and KFC, to maintain facilities for proper disposal of recyclables by customers. Diners are obliged to deposit their garbage in four separate containers for leftover food, recyclable paper, regular waste and liquids. "Customers only have to spend under a minute to finish the trash-classification assignment," said environmental protection administrator Hau Lung-bin in announcing the program. Restaurants that don't comply face fines of up to \$8,700 (U.S.).

CONTACTS: eegee's, www.eegees.com; Taipei Times, "Restaurants set the new recycling trend," www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archive/s/2004/01/02/2003086025.

Dear EarthTalk: What are the environmental pros and cons of switching to plant-based "bio-fuels" to reduce our reliance on oil?

--Jim Dand, Somerville, MA

There are many eco-benefits to replacing oil with bio-fuels like ethanol and biodiesel. For one, since such fuels are derived from agricultural crops, they are inherently renewable—and our own farmers typically produce them domestically, reducing our dependence on unstable foreign sources of oil. Additionally, ethanol and biodiesel emit less particulate

pollution than traditional petroleum-based gasoline and diesel fuels. They also do not contribute to global warming, since they only emit back to the environment the carbon dioxide (CO2) that their source plants absorbed out of the atmosphere in the first place.

And unlike other forms of renewable energy (like hydrogen, solar or wind), biofuels are easy for people and businesses to transition to without special apparatus or a change in vehicle or home heating infrastructure—you can just fill your existing car, truck or home oil tank with it. Those looking to replace gasoline with ethanol in their car, however, must have a "flex-fuel" model that can run on either fuel. Otherwise, most regular diesel engines can handle biodiesel as readily as regular diesel.

Despite the upsides, however, experts point out that biofuels are far from a cure



A major hurdle for biofuels is the challenge of growing enough crops to meet demand, something skeptics say might well require converting just about all of the world's remaining forests and open spaces over to agricultural land. (Getty Images)

for our addiction to petroleum. A wholesale societal shift from gasoline to biofuels, given the number of gas-only cars already on the road and the lack of ethanol or biodiesel pumps at existing filling stations, would take some time.

Another major hurdle for widespread adoption of biofuels is the challenge of growing enough crops to meet demand, something skeptics say might well require converting just about all of the world's remaining forests and open spaces over to

agricultural land. "Replacing only five percent of the nation's diesel consumption with biodiesel would require diverting approximately 60 percent of today's soy crops to biodiesel production," says Matthew Brown, an energy consultant and former energy program director at the National Conference of State Legislatures. "That's bad news for tofu lovers."

Another dark cloud looming over biofuels is whether producing them actually requires more energy than they can generate. After factoring in the energy needed to grow crops and then convert them into biofuels, Cornell University researcher David Pimental concludes that the numbers just don't add up. His 2005 study found that producing ethanol from corn required 29 percent more energy than the end product itself is capable of generating. He found similarly troubling numbers in making biodiesel from soybeans. "There is just no energy benefit to using plant biomass for liquid fuel," says Pimental.

There is no one quick-fix for weaning ourselves off of fossil fuels and the future will likely see a combination of sources—from wind and ocean currents to hydrogen, solar and, yes, some use of biofuels—powering our energy needs. The "elephant in the living room," however, that is often ignored when considering energy options is the hard reality that we must reduce our consumption, not just replace it with something else. Indeed, conservation is probably the largest single "alternative fuel" available to us. CONTACTS:

Ecology Center Biofuel Fact sheet, www.ecologycenter.org/factsheets/biodiesel.html; Earth911 Energy Conservatio, factsheet www.earth911.org/master.asp?s=lib&a=Ene rgy/energy.asp.

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- * 100 grams cheddar cheese in strips
- * 100 grams grated cheddar cheese
- * 2 onions, chopped
- * 5 bay leaf (laurel)
- * 1/2 teaspoon of ground black pepper

- * 1/2 cup vinegar
- * 2 teaspoon salt
- * 2 cups of water
- * 2 meters thread or string (for tying)

Beef Morcon Cooking Instructions:

- * Spread and stretch the sliced beef on your working table.
 - * Arrange the filling on the sliced beef: sausage strips, cheese strips, sliced eggs, pork fat and some ground liver.
 - * Roll the sliced beef with all the filling inside and secure with a thread or string.
 - * Repeat the procedure for the two remaining beef slices.
 - * On a pot, place the beef rolls and put the water, the remaining ground liver, grated cheese, chopped onions, bay leaves, ground black pepper and salt.
 - * Cover the pot and bring to a boil. Simmer for one hour.
 - * Add the vinegar and continue to simmer for another hour or until beef is tender.
 - * Slice the beef morcon, arrange on a platter and top with the sauce/ gravy poured on top.
- Cooking Tips:**
- * A spoon or two of flour can be added to water to thicken the sauce.
 - * Instead of boiling in a pot, you can use a pressure cooker for faster cooking.
 - * Optional: Garnish with olives before serving.

Mass swamp wedding marks Valentine's Day in Palawan

February 14, 2007

Standing ankle-deep in swamp mud, couples have wed in an unusual Valentines Day' ceremony on this western Philippine island, that marked their commitment to the environment.

The 100 barefoot couples, dressed in white, stood in the swamp facing the sea and exchanged vows in a ceremony officiated by the city mayor.

"You will be an example of true love not just to your partner but to the environment," Mayor Edward Hagedorn said in a short speech after marrying the mostly poor couples from Palawan island's capital of Puerto Princesa.

The official ceremony was free of

embarrassed to approach officials to arrange a traditional wedding because he is illiterate and could not sign the marriage license.

"It would be embarrassing if they passed away without getting married. At least now we know that their union would be recognized in heaven," said their daughter Leonora Apolinario, 58, who witnessed the mass wedding along with her daughter and some 3,000 other guests.

Josephine Rodriguez, 27, wearing a dress she borrowed from her partner's aunt, said she was thankful for the ceremony as she and her construction worker husband could not afford a



Newly-wed couples walk to the shore passed new mangrove saplings they planted in the swamp after a mass wedding to mark Valentine's Day on the western Philippine island of Palawan.

charge for the couples in exchange for planting mangrove saplings in the swamp and helping further to protect their island.

This strange combination of environmentalism, romance and aid to the poor has become an annual event in Puerto Princesa which has been pushing an image of cleanliness and ecological activism to attract tourists to Palawan.

For seventy-two year old farmer Protacio de Ocampo, the free ceremony was a chance to make official his relationship with 67-year-old partner Teofela Apolinario.

The pair have been together since 1958 but de Ocampo has been too

private one. "Maybe later when we have money we can have a private wedding," said the mother-of-one who spent most of the ceremony trying to keep her dress out of the mud. She said she understood the importance of the mangrove swamp, which serves as a nursery and habitat for small fish and anchors the fragile soil on the shore to prevent erosion.

"It's a lot of fun. And this is good because this is where the smaller fish can live," she told AFP.

Afterwards the newlyweds celebrated with wedding cake and a shoreline banquet of omelets and fried noodles, courtesy of the city government. ■

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Innumerable hot springs abound in the province, including the famous **Hidden Valley Springs** which is located in a secluded part of Alaminos

town. A trip to Dalitwan River, located in Botocan, Majayjay, is an exciting adventure because the terrain is rugged, as mountain lands go, and the cool water or river gushes through the rocks and boulders along the watercourse in sweeping currents. The mystical **Mt. Makiling in Los Baños** is an inactive volcano, rising to about 1,109 meters above sea level. It is indeed endowed with nature's beauty, making it ideal for all types of nature tripping, from trekking to bird and butterfly watching and even camping.

Laguna is not only endowed with natural wonders. It also plays an important role in the country's history as the birthplace of Dr. Jose Rizal, the country's national hero, whose infancy and early manhood were spent in the towns of Calamba and Biñan. A number of churches of Spanish-influenced architecture in intricate Romanesque and Baroque design, mostly restored to their original elegance, are also found in the province.

The province is one huge showcase of Southern Tagalog craftsmanship. The town of Paete is famous for its woodcarvings, papier mache, and handmade paper



Buruwisan Falls in Famy Sinoloan, Laguna



A row of the sturdy, rustic Nipa Huts, famous in the tropics because its structure allowing the interior to remain breezy and cool even during the hottest months of the year. It is made of dried coconut leaves, woven together by abaca. 8 such Nipa Huts line the lakefront of Villa Escudero



Lake Caliraya - The man-made lake was built by American engineers in the 1930s in order to provide hydroelectric power in the region. Lake Caliraya is situated at 1,200 feet above sea level. It is endowed with cool winds, clear water, and the surrounding greenery.



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Hidden Valley Springs, a popular family outing & picnic spot



The Nagcarlan Church was built during the mid 1800s, and is one of Nagcarlan's historical structures. The other famous structure in town is the Underground Cemetery.

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products. Tree seedlings, sampaguita flowers, orchids, and exotic plants are big business. Cut flower farms are found mostly in towns of Calamba, Los Baños, and Bay. Sweet tropical fruits abound, such as the lanzones from Paete, pineapple from Calauan, chico, banana, mango, rambutan, and avocado. Add to these Laguna's embroidered garments. Jusi cloth made from banana fiber is painstakingly, albeit deftly, transformed into beautiful pieces of clothing worthy

of being tailored into the Philippine national costume, the Barong Tagalog. Shoes made from abaca hemp is a growing industry in the town of Liliw.

Owing to its nearness to Manila, Laguna is presently becoming the center of economic activity in the Southern Tagalog Region and the Calabarzon area. Business in the area is bustling as shown by the presence of several industrial estates designed for handling large scale firms engaged in textile manufacturing, electronics,

food processing, industrial machines, and car assembly. Today, Laguna is a thriving province. Its fertile lands produce millions of pesos' worth of coconuts, rice, sugar, citrus fruits, lanzones, and other agricultural products. Its tourist spots attract a multitude of foreign and domestic tourists. Other spots not to miss include:

- **Pagsanjan:** The town of Pagsanjan is blessed with natural wonders – the awe-inspiring gorges, the roaring

rapids, and the Pagsanjan Falls, a plus factor that made Pagsanjan one of the premiere tourist attractions of the country.

- **Mount Makiling:** The mystical Mount Makiling is an inactive volcano rising to about 1,109 meters above sea level

- **Enchanted Kingdom:** Linger in one of the Philippines' finest theme parks, located in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, where you can indulge in themed activities and fun rides for hours at affordable rates. ■



Built in the 18th century by the Franciscan Missionaries, the Underground Cemetery is enclosed by a circular structure. A red-tiled walk leads straight to the small chapel, where an altar-like structure is located. The tombstones are embedded on the brick walls of the cemetery and the basement. At the crypt of the cemetery, is where the local Katipuneros, plotted against Spanish rule.



The province owes its name to this body of water that forms its northern boundary which, in turn, was named after the first provincial capital, the town of Bay. Laguna de Bay is known to be Southeast Asia's largest fresh water lake. It stays pristine throughout the year as the area is blessed with regular rain showers.

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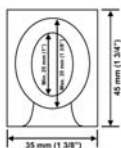
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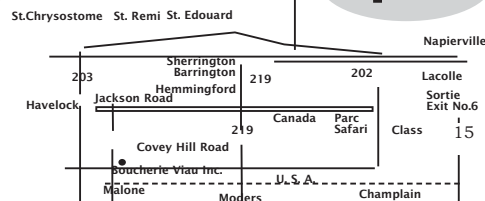
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The Pangilinan family poses with Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin, Feb. 16, 2007.



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Is Ogie Regine's mystery lover?



Will Ogie Alcasid finally sing? The talented composer-singer-comedian has promised to make a "surprise" announcement in June when he said

would make an admission about something private or personal. But even without any clue, showbiz insiders believe Ogie's forthcoming

confession has something to do with his reported "secret romance" (some say it's an open secret) with the Asia's Songbird, Regine Velasquez. The two "best of friends" were caught on television hugging during the Cheers to '07 New Year countdown of GMA-7 at Rajah Sulayman Park along Roxas Blvd. in Manila. In an interview Ogie explained that it was just a "friendly" hug. There are speculations that Ogie's marriage to Australian Michelle van Eimeren is on the rocks. Michelle and her two daughters by Ogie live in Sydney. Regine stoked the fire of controversy when she declared late last year that she has a boyfriend of four years, whom she called George. She denied Ogie is her secret boyfriend but Ogie later volunteered that he is the George being referred to by Regine. Regine topbilled in a series of concerts in January at Klownz Angeles in Pampanga, with Ogie Alcasid as her special guest. In December she started shooting a movie with Piolo Pascual, tentatively titled 'Fallin', a co-production of Viva Films and Star Cinema and directed by Joyce Bernal. ■

Lea Returns to Broadway



Lea Salonga will return to Broadway as Fantine in Cameron Mackintosh's new production of Les Misérables beginning March 6 at The Broadhurst Theatre. Lea played Eponine in 1993 in the original Broadway run of Les Misérables. Due to strong box-office and enthusiastic audiences, Les Miz recently announced an extension through at least the summer of 2007, and Lea will stay with the production through the entire period.

Lea, who has been staying in the Philippines since giving birth last May 16 to firstborn Nicole Beverly, is bringing her daughter to the US. Even if she's already a proven Broadway talent, still Lea had to audition for the role of Fantine in April last year. She was eight months pregnant then when she sang for composer Claude-Michel Schönberg, who was the same man who tested her for the role of Kim, heroine of "Miss Saigon," in 1988. Lea, who is turning 36 on Feb. 22, catapulted to international stage stardom when she was chosen to star as Kim in the 1989 London world premiere of Boubllil and Schönberg's Miss Saigon, produced by Cameron Mackintosh. Only 17 at the time, Lea received critical acclaim and went on to

win the Olivier Award as Best Actress in a Musical. In 1991 she reprised her performance on Broadway, again earning rave reviews and winning the Tony Award as Best Actress in a Musical, along with Best Actress honors from the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics' Circle. She returned to Broadway in 2002, starring in the revival of Rodgers & Hammerstein's Flower Drum Song. ■

Angel & Oyo call it quits



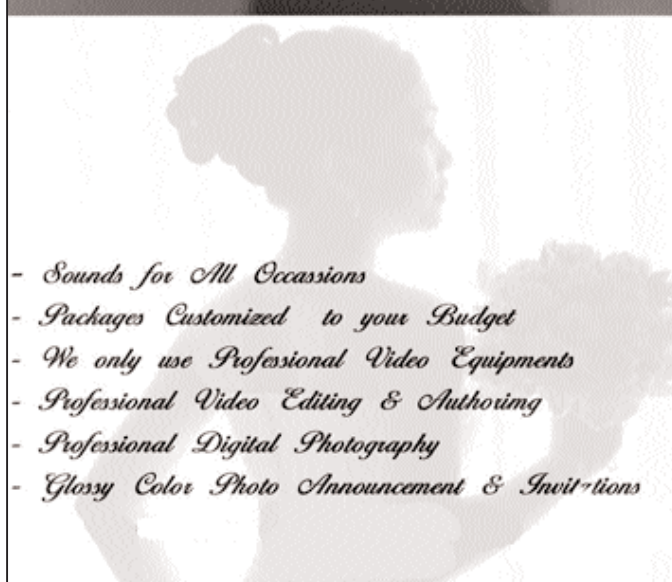
Angel Locsin dropped a bombshell with her admission that she and boyfriend Oyo Boy Sotto have broken up during the Christmas holidays after barely two years of going steady. She confirmed the separation in an interview with Butch Francisco on Startalk last Dec. 28. "Cool-off ba?" asked Butch. A teary-eyed Angel shook her head, then Butch asked, "Tapos na nga ba?" Angel nodded and quipped, "Ang hirap sagutin." According to speculations, there are two possible reasons for the break-up. First, Oyo is allegedly "getting along fine" with Bing Loyzaga, estranged wife of Janno Gibbs. But Bing dismissed the rumor. "They are barking at the wrong tree. . . Pareho ko silang kaibigan kaya nalungkot ako nang malaman ko na totoo na palang nag-break sila." She said she considers Oyo as a "kid brother" because "matagal na kaming magkabarkada. . . At 36 [years old], tita na ako ni Oyo who's only 22. Kaya para pag-isipan ako na girlfriend niya. . ."

The second reason for the break-up is the love angle in the team-up of Angel and Robin Padilla in the new GMA-7 show Asian Treasures. But Angel assured "Oyo has nothing to be jealous of Robin," adding that her ex-boyfriend trusts her. insiders say the real reason for the break-up is the lack of time for each other, especially on the part of Angel, who is one of the most in-demand actresses today. Lately she has been frequently traveling for her new TV show with Robin.

Angel and Oyo had planned to leave for Bantayan Island in Cebu on Dec. 26 for a brief vacation but it never pushed through.

As of press time, Angel and Oyo have not issued any more information about their break-up. ■

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Are KC and TV Director now an Item?



First, KC Concepcion-Pangilinan and TV director Lino Cayetano were reported to be just friends. Then there were rumors that they were dating. Latest reports say the two are now an item!

KC, 21, and Lino, 29, reportedly spent a brief vacation with a few friends in Boracay after Christmas. Paris-based KC was in the country during the Christmas holidays. Rumors about a blossoming romance between the pretty daughter of Sharon Cuneta and Lino swirled following the break-up of the son of the late Senator Rene Cayetano and Blog host and former Pinoy Big Brother housemate Bianca Gonzalez. One report said, "Bianca is really hurting and is still texting Lino."

Bianca and Lino had a lover's quarrel after Bianca joined the reality TV show Pinoy Big Brother, where she became extra close to PBB housemate Zanjoe Marudo. But after Bianca left the PBB house, she cut all ties with Zanjoe. KC and Lino were reportedly spotted having lunch last Dec. 22 at Sonya's Garden in Tagaytay. KC was said to be shooting a commercial that day in Tagaytay. But as the two left Sonya's Garden, they were holding hands. Asked about the budding romance with KC, this was all Lino would say, "'I like her a lot, and I think napakaganda, napakatalino, and talented niyang tao.'" The two reportedly hit it off instantly when they met in Paris, where KC is enrolled at the American University. ■

Magiging Lolo na si Willie



Buntis na si Meryll Soriano! Nakadalawang beses na siyang nag pregnancy test at panay positive ang lumabas na resulta. Sobrang happy ang mag-asawang Meryll at Bernard Palanca sa unang blessing na binigay sa kanila ngayong taon. Nakakaranas na si Meryll ng paglilihi at ang nakakahiligan niya ay ang pagkain ng kamias. Masungit na nga raw siya ngayon dahil madali siyang mairita. Isa pa sa labis na natutuwa sa pagdadalang-tao ni Meryll ay ang ama niyang si Willie Revillame. Natutuwa ang popular TV host para sa mag-asawang Bernard at Meryll dahil mabubuo na talaga ang pamilya ng kanyang anak. Nang matanong si Willie tungkol sa pagbubuntis ng kanyang anak, ito ang sabi niya, "Magiging lolo na ako sa ayaw ko't sa gusto, maaga akong magiging lolo, pero a baby is always a blessing,



masaya ako for Bernard and Meryll. Dagdag pa ni Willie: "Maganda yun, mas magiging masikap pa sila dahil meron na silang paglalaanang responsabilidad, mas maaga silang matututo, mas maganda para sa kanila." Ang anak ni Meryll at Bernard ang siyang unag apo sa bawa't partido kaya't tiyak na puno nang pagmamahal ang makukuha ng sanggol paglabas niya. At siguradong spoiled ang baby sa kanyang mga lolo at lola. Kaso, nung nakaraang lingo lang, nababalitang nagkakalabuan daw itong si Bernard at Meryll. Nagpadala pa ng text message itong si Meryll sa the Buzz, na kung ano man ang mangyari sa kanila ni Bernard, bubuhayin niyang mag-isa ang anak at di aasa ng anumang tulong kay Bernard. At ito naming si Bernard ay napabalitang nagpahayag sa mga kaibigan nya ng "Im Free...I'm Single again..."! ■

Bossing's playboy days are numbered



Left to right: Tito, Vic & Joey

Avid showbiz observers believe that Vic "Bossing" Sotto has finally met his match - for the second time -- in Eat Bulaga co-host Pia Guanio. Vic, who has been one of showbiz's most eligible bachelors since the break-up of his marriage to Dina Bonnevie, had been romantically involved with a number of his co-hosts in the popular noontime TV show, including Coney Reyes, Angela Luz and Christine Jacob.

Incidentally, Pia's previous boyfriend of seven years, Mike Jacob, is the brother of Christine. But despite his playboy image, Bossing does not talk publicly about his love life. That is until he fell for Pia. Now, the erstwhile

tight-lipped Romeo has suddenly become very open about his feelings for his current girlfriend. In an interview with Yes! Magazine, Bossing unabashedly and uncharacteristically declared, "Kung hindi rin lang siya ang mapapangasawa ko, hindi na ako mag-aasawa." The lovebirds seem so sure of each other that the altar date is just a matter of time, say knowledgeable showbiz insiders. Their formal union, they add, should have been held this year if not for the previously set wedding of Bossing's and Dina's daughter, Danica, to basketball player Marc Pingris this year. So Bossing gets a one-year lease on his bachelor life. ■

It's Gretchen vs Lani this time

After her feud with Dawn Zulueta, Gretchen Barretto now finds herself embroiled in a word war with Lani Mercado. The two have a history of bad blood due to the brief romantic liaison in 1992 between Gretchen Lani's husband, Senator Bong Revilla. Their affair ended after four months when Bong decided to return to his wife, who at that time had already three children with the actor.

wedding, di ba? What I have with Tony is a marriage. A marriage is a commitment between two people who love each other." She continued: "I proudly can say that I have Tony's love, attention. I am his priority in life. He comes home to me and me alone. Of course, I have Tony's loyalty. I can only truly wish, with all my heart, that Lani has got Bong's loyalty."

The feisty "prima donna" isn't finished. "Lani says 'I have six beautiful children with Bong'. This is the first time I'm going to say this. . . If Lani has six beautiful children with Bong, I hope that she hasn't forgotten that Bong has seven beautiful children. . . Sabi niya, 'What I have with Bong is a marriage and it's beautiful.' Lani, I didn't know that Bong's infidelity is something beautiful. It's obviously not beautiful. You don't have to pretend, you don't have to hit me. We all know that Bong has somebody else, and it's not me. So hindi ako ang dapat niyang tirahin." (In her Inquirer column, Dolly Carvajal wrote that Bong has a teenage son named Luigi with a certain L.G.) Afterwards nothing more was heard from Lani, and Bong had to request the showbiz press not to blow up the issue.



The old wound was reopened by a seemingly innocent (?) Christmas wish that Lani had expressed for Gretchen. "I hope that she will have a marriage with Tony (millionaire businessman Tonyboy Cojuangco, Gretchen's live-in partner)," Lani said when asked in a TV interview in December what she wanted to say to Gretchen. The remark did not sit well with Gretchen, who promptly dished out a mouthful. "What Lani has with Bong is what you call a

But the couple's manager, Lolit Solis, warned that she would spill the beans on Gretchen's alleged role in the 1994 Manila filmfest scam if the actress would not stop her tirade against Lani. Before things could get any worse, Tonyboy reportedly phoned the irrepressible Lolit to make a peace offering, after which she passed on the phone to Gretchen, who told Manay Lolit the issue is now a closed case. ■



Ask the Video Guy Al Abdon

Plasma or LCD: What to buy - Part 2

We have gone through the technical aspect of an LCD & Plasma, let go on with the difference and advantages of these technologies.

1. Plasma and LCD technology - what's the difference?

Plasma and LCD panels may look similar, but the flat screen and thin profile is where the similarities end. Plasma screens, as its name suggests, uses a matrix of tiny gas plasma cells charged by precise electrical voltages to create a picture. LCD screens (liquid crystal display) are made up of liquid crystal pushed in the space between two glass plates. Images are created by varying the amount electrical charge applied to the crystals.

2. Is there a difference in picture quality between plasma and LCD screens and normal CRT TVs?

It's not what's happening behind the screen that's important - it's how the screen performs as a television that matters the most. In that regard, both plasma and LCD sets produce excellent pictures, although many home entertainment specialists and gamers still say CRTs produce the best overall images (although plasmas and LCD sets are quickly catching up in terms of quality).

Those same home entertainment specialists will tell you that for basic home

theatre-like usage, plasma screens have a slight edge over LCDs. This is because plasma screens can display blacks more accurately than LCDs can, which means better contrast and detail in dark-coloured television or movie scenes. The nature of LCD technology, where a backlight shines through the LCD layer, means it's hard for it to achieve true blacks because there's always some light leakage from between pixels. This is steadily improving with every new generation of LCD, however.

3. What advantages does plasma have over LCD?

Apart from better contrast due to its ability to show deeper blacks, plasma screens typically have better viewing angles than LCD. Viewing angles are how far you can sit on either side of a screen before the picture's quality is affected. You tend to see some brightness and colour shift when you're on too far of an angle with LCDs, while a plasma's picture remains fairly solid. This is steadily changing, however, with more and more LCDs entering the market with viewing angles equal to or greater than some plasmas. Plasmas can also produce a brighter colour, once again due to light leakage on an LCD affecting its colour saturation.

Technicians will also tell you that some LCD screens have a tendency to blur

images, particularly during fast moving scenes in movies or in sports. While that was true for older generation LCD screens, newer models have improved significantly - so much so that the differences in performance between LCDs and plasmas in this regard is almost negligible (here's a tip -- if you're shopping for LCDs, check the refresh rate. The lower it is, the better the image quality in fast moving scenes).

Perhaps the biggest advantage plasmas have now over their LCD cousins is price, particularly in the large screen end of the market. Plasmas typically come in larger sizes than LCDs at a cheaper price. Plasmas being sold in Compusmart between 42-inches and 63-inches wide, with the cheapest 42-inch selling for approximately CDN\$3,000 (although you can expect to find sets cheaper than CDN \$3,000 in real world prices). 60-inch and above plasmas can go for as much as \$20,000. LCDs, on the other hand, top out around the mid 40-inch mark, and are more expensive than similar-sized plasmas.

4. What advantages does LCD have over plasma?

It's not all doom and gloom for LCD though, as it has the edge over plasma in several key areas. LCDs tend to have higher native resolution than plasmas of similar size, which means more pixels on a screen. If you're a true high-def junkie who's keen to see every pixel of a high-res 1080i/p image reproduced pixel-by-pixel (providing you have a source that high, of course), then LCDs are the way to go.

LCDs also tend to consume less power than plasma screens, with some estimates ranging that power saving at up to 30 per cent less than plasma. LCDs are also generally lighter than similar sized plasmas, making it easier to move around or wall mount.

LCD pundits also point to the fact that LCDs have a longer lifespan than plasma

screens. This was true of earlier plasma models, which would lose half of their brightness after more than 20,000 hours of viewing. Later plasma generations have bumped that up to anything between 30,000 and 60,000 hours. LCDs, on the other hand, are guaranteed for 60,000 hours.

You might have also heard that plasmas suffer from screen burn in, an affliction not as commonly associated with LCDs. Screen burn in occurs when an image is left too long on a screen, resulting in a ghost of that image burned in permanently. Newer plasmas are less susceptible to this thanks to improved technology and other features such built-in screen savers, but we still hear anecdotal reports here of burn-in with new plasmas.

5. Which is better value for me right now: plasma or LCD?

If you're in the market for a big screen television -- and we're talking 42-inches and above -- then I suggest Plasmas give you more bang for your buck at the big end of town, and while LCDs can give you better resolution, the price difference is currently too wide. However, if money's not an issue and you want the sharpest image in town, then a large LCD is for you. At the smaller end of things (15" to 36" TVs), LCD is the only way to go if you want something slim and tasteful. And the best thing is that LCDs are getting cheaper all the time.

Just a quick note when buying electronics, it is wiser to get their extended warranty because technology is not perfect. It could save you money and hassle down the road. But before signing up ask a lot of questions and make sure you write them down.

Happy shopping folks. ■

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Reading you your rights

By Atty. Lito I. Domingo

Second article:

Coming to Canada!

In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that tear nations apart, Canada stands as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity, and mutual respect.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton

Canada is a place where immigrants can provide their families with a quality of life and a brighter future while maintaining their culture and heritage. It is a country recognized worldwide as a model multicultural society that embraces ethnic diversity.

Having visited my cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents in the Philippines, I understand the blessings I was afforded by my parents' decision to immigrate to Canada.

As a Filipino-Canadian, I have experienced first hand the benefits and opportunities of growing up in Canada. When I was born into this world, I was an infant requiring extensive medical attention. I was very fortunate to be born into a country with such a strong

healthcare system. For without it, I would not have the health and quality of life I have today.

I have also had the opportunity of obtaining a great education in a province which boasts one of the lowest tuition costs for university in North America. Again, without such a program I may not have completed law school.

Therefore, it is no surprise that many immigrants, such as those of our Filipino community, have chosen Canada as their new home.

This year, our nation is opening its arms to thousands more to welcome them as new residents. In Ottawa, the Minister of CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) recently tabled the 2006 "Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration". In tabling its annual report, CIC said it plans to accept between 240,000 and 265,000 newcomers as permanent residents in 2007.

Taking the decision to leave your native country, a place that has

always been your home, can be a difficult decision. However, the decision alone is only the beginning of the many challenges one encounters when deciding to immigrate to Canada.

For many potential newcomers, the decision to immigrate is usually the easy part. It is the immigration process that can prove to be quite challenging.

Before beginning the process, you must be aware that Canada offers an array of options to choose from when applying for permanent residence status. Each option must be studied in order to determine the application program that best suits you and your family.

One of the most commonly used options in our community is the process which falls under "family class immigration". Through this particular program, you may help your loved ones become permanent residents of Canada by sponsoring them. They must however be one of the relatives or family members listed as eligible applicants for sponsorship under the family class.

In addition, you, as the sponsor, as well as the person you are sponsoring must satisfy specific requirements. In light of the fact that immigration is a shared jurisdiction between the governments of Québec and Canada, a person exercising the option under "family class immigration" must therefore satisfy the requirements of both governments.

In terms of Québec, those intending to sponsor a close relative or family member abroad, may sponsor:

- their spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner
- their dependent child
- their father, mother, grandfather or grandmother
- their orphaned brother, sister, nephew, niece, grandson or granddaughter, who is under the age of 18, and not married or in a common-law relationship
- a child they plan to adopt

As a sponsor, you must be aware that you will have to sign an undertaking agreement. This agreement should not be taken lightly. You will have to accept certain responsibilities and obligations with regard to not only the person you are sponsoring but also toward the Québec government. By signing an agreement, you are promising to financially support the person you are sponsoring for a number of years to ensure that they will not have to apply for social assistance once they arrive.

By sponsoring your loved ones, you must commit yourself to providing them with their basic needs such as food, clothing and other necessities for the entire period of the agreement. This undertaking allows the government to ensure that the new

See Page Coming to Canada



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Palace won't take opposition bait

February 20, 2007

It's not a proxy war between President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and former President Joseph Estrada, Malacañang insisted yesterday on the ongoing election campaign that pits administration and opposition senatorial candidates against each other.

"We are not taking the bait of the opposition of making the campaign a fight between the Palace and former President Estrada," said Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye.

Bunye also debunked the opposition's assertion that it is within the power of Malacañang to allow Mr. Estrada to be temporarily freed or to be placed under house arrest in his residence on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan.

The former president has asked the Sandiganbayan to be released from detention so that he could campaign for opposition candidates in the May 14 elections. "We leave the matter to the court," Bunye said.

Over the weekend, Senate President Manuel Villar, a guest senatorial bet adopted by the "Genuine Opposition," said he felt bad that Estrada remains under detention six years after he was toppled from power and after he was charged with the non-bailable plunder case for allegedly amassing more than P4 billion in "tainted wealth."

It was Villar, as speaker of House of Representatives, who railroaded the transmittal of the Estrada impeachment resolution to the Senate in November 2000.

Bunye said that the campaign "is not about personalities but issues, not about the past but about the future."

President Arroyo and Team Unity are campaigning under a platform of continuing growth and reform and will not get bogged down by controversies that are being handled by the courts," Bunye said. "We are for unity and reconciliation but under the rule of law."

Dodging restrictions on his movements imposed by the Sandiganbayan and National Police, Mr. Estrada was able to meet with the opposition senatorial candidates when he visited her sickly mother, Doña Mary Ejercito, in their paternal house on another street in Greenhills, San Juan. The candidates had themselves photographed with Estrada as part of their publicity campaign.

But opposition campaign spokesman Adel Tamano said they would ask the anti-graft court to lift the travel and media ban against Estrada. He said they would also ask the court to transfer the former president from his resthouse and farm in Tanay, Rizal to his home in Greenhills.

Bunye also justified the President's decision to limit her appearances in campaign rallies and sorties of Team Unity to allow her to concentrate on the economy.

"President Arroyo has vowed not to let politics get in the way of the economy, but to reinforce the economy with firm political stability," the Palace spokesman said.

"We see the political campaign taking its course in a manner reflecting a full-pledged Philippine democracy; and this should convince one and all that freedom reigns beside a free market in our country. We call on the opposition not to hurt, but to help grow, the economy. ■

Peso surges to new 6-year high of 48.03

February 20, 2007

Heavy remittances from Filipino migrant workers and foreign investment flows into the stock market pushed the peso to as high of 48.03 against the US dollar yesterday, trader said.

"Portfolio inflows as well as remittances [from migrant workers] more than met the scant corporate demand. The overall sentiment for the peso continues to be positive," he said.

The peso edged at 48.10, unchanged from Friday's close. Traders said suspected intervention from the central bank capped the peso's gain.

The peso opened at 48.05 and traded within a seven-centavo range. It averaged at 48.062 against the dollar

on a volume of \$364.5 million, down from Friday's \$439 million.

BDO Private Bank vice president Jose Emmanuel Hilado said the peso traded at a tight range in the absence of significant news. He said the market was quiet due to the Chinese New Year holiday.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. vice president Marcelo Ayes said he expected the peso to continue its rise, adding that the market would test the 48:\$1 level this week on positive news and with the continued strength of regional currencies.

University of Asia and the Pacific professor Victor Abola said the steady flow of remittances from Filipino migrant workers had been supporting the strength of the peso. ■

From Page 3

HOME COMING

A Filipina woman was abducted on February 7 in Port Harcourt in Rivers State. Gunmen abducted the woman from the centre of the city, at the heart of Nigeria's oil industry.

Roberto, chief engineer of the seized vessel, said he just wanted to be with his family before declining to talk further with reporters.

Glenda Cagas said her husband, Herculano Cagas, would probably ship out again after resting in Manila, despite



President Gloria Arroyo greets twenty-four of 26 Filipino seamen who were seized last month by gunmen in Nigeria, after a thanksgiving dinner at Malacañang presidential palace in Manila.

A day earlier a Filipino employee of Netco Dietsmann -- the Nigerian arm of a Monaco-based oil services company -- was seized from a company car heading for the airport in Owerri, the capital of Imo State.

Late Saturday, the 24 men and their families met with President Arroyo who hosted a dinner at the palace in their honour.

Jocelyn Arcangel said she and her family would take a holiday before deciding on their future.

"We will have a very long family vacation after this incident and we'll decide after whether he (Roberto) should leave again," she said.

his traumatic ordeal.

"It is difficult, but we don't have any other choice. We need the livelihood for the family," Cagas said, noting that their two children aged six and four have yet to enter primary school.

"The hardest part for us was when we saw them on cable television being threatened with guns by their captors in masks," she said.

Nigeria is one of the biggest employers of Filipino workers in Africa, with some 3,900 Filipinos employed there at the end of 2006.

President Arroyo has banned further deployments to Nigeria in the wake of the kidnappings. ■



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From Page 7

Cooperatives

saving money for over a year, these pioneers opened their co-op store together at 31 Toad Lane on a cold December evening in 1844. Although the founders agreed to sell just butter, sugar, flour, and oatmeal to members, they also offered tallow candles for sale that night. They were forced to buy candles because the gas company refused to supply gas for the new group's lights. They bought candles in bulk and sold what they didn't use to their members.

When they purchased goods from a wholesale dealer and then divided them equally among themselves, they were surprised at the savings and higher quality of products they were able to obtain.

The Pioneers agreed to work together to provide members with places to live. They ran a factory so members could have jobs, bought land to grow food for each other, and opened a school for their children.

Each member of the group provided some money. Everyone owned an equal part of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers' different activities. And all took turns working for the group and helping make decisions on what it should do.

The Rochdale Pioneers weren't the first group to try forming a co-op but they were the first to make their co-op succeed and endure. To avoid the mistakes made by earlier co-op

societies and to help others, they developed a unique combination of written policies that governed the affairs of the cooperative in 1844, which have been highly influential throughout the cooperative movement until today. Among these rules were: Democratic control of members, Payment of limited interest on capital, and Net margins distributed to members according to level of patronage.

Based on its success, the Rochdale set of policies soon became a model for other cooperative endeavors, and became known as the cooperative principles that make a cooperative unique from other business structures. The Society quickly grew to include other enterprises and businesses. Rochdale is still considered the birthplace of the modern cooperative movement.

Franz Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (August 29, 1808 - April 29, 1883), Germany.

A German economist was born at Delitzsch, in Prussian Saxony. The place-name Delitzsch was added in 1848 to distinguish him from other Schulzes in the National Assembly. He studied law at Leipzig and Halle universities and, when thirty, he became an assessor in the court of justice at Berlin, and three years later was appointed patrimonial-richter at Delitzsch. Entering the parliament of 1848, he joined the Left Centre, and,

acting as president of the commission of inquiry into the condition of the labourers and artisans, became impressed with the necessity of co-operation to enable the smaller tradespeople to hold their own against the capitalists.

He was a member of the Second Chamber in 1848-1849; but as matters ceased to run smoothly between himself and the high legal officials, he threw up his public appointments in October 1851, and withdrew to Delitzsch. Here he devoted himself to the organization and development of co-operation in Germany, and to the foundation of Vorschussvereine (peoples' banks), of which he had established the first at Delitzsch in 1850.

In 1859 he promoted the first Genossenschaftstag, a co-operative meeting, in Weimar, and founded a central bureau of co-operative societies. In 1863 he devoted the chief portion of a testimonial, amounting to £7500, to the maintenance of his co-operative institutions and offices. This, however, was only to meet an exceptional outlay, for he always insisted that they must be self-supporting.

The spread of these organizations naturally led to legislation on the subject, and this too was chiefly the work of Schulze-Delitzsch. As a member of the Chamber in 1867 he was mainly instrumental in passing the Prussian law of association, which was extended to the North German Confederation in 1868, and later to the empire.

His life-work was now complete; he had placed the advantages of capital and co-operation within the reach of struggling tradesmen throughout Germany. His remaining years were spent in consolidating this work. Both as a writer and a member of the Reichstag his industry was incessant, and he died in harness on the 29th of April 1883 at Potsdam, leaving the reputation of a benefactor to the smaller tradesmen and artisans, in which light he must be regarded rather than as the founder of

true co-operative principles in Germany.

Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen (May 3, 1818 - May 11, 1888), Germany.

A German cooperative leader. He was mayor of several towns: from 1845 he was mayor of Weyerbusch/Westerwald; from 1848 he was mayor of Flammersfeld-/Westerwald; and finally he was mayor of Heddendorf from 1852 until 1865.

Raiffeisen conceived of the idea of cooperative self-help during his tenure as the young mayor of Flammersfeld. He was inspired by observing the suffering of the farmers who were often in the grip of loansharks. And being a countryside mayor he was confronted with the miserable poverty of the farmers and their families. He tried to alleviate this need through a variety of charitable activities. He soon realized, however, that self-reliance had more potential in the long run than charitable aid. He therefore converted his charitable foundations into a farmers' cooperative lending bank in Germany, in effect the first credit union in 1864. In doing so he created the Darlehnskassen-Verein, it collected the savings of the countryside dwellers and provided the enterprising but needy farmers with loans.

In the year 2006, the RZB Group posted the following results: Total assets at around 110 billion euros, operating income of 1.8 billion, Net income 1.6 billion, an equivalent of full-time employees of 55,400 distributed in 2,850 outlets, serving over 11.7 million clients and a return on equity of 38%.

The Raiffeisen International offers the following products: Commercial banking, Investment banking, Private banking, and Asset Management, mostly owned by RZB (whose share is 70%), which operates banking subsidiaries in 15 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, namely Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia (including

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Cooperatives

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From Page 19 Cooperatives

Kosovo), Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The Rabobank, a Dutch cooperative banking institution with offices all over the world, although primarily in the Netherlands is rooted in the ideas of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen.

There are many independent Raiffeisen co-operative organizations in other countries, most of them specialized in agribusiness or banking. Gabriel-Alphonse Desjardins (November 5, 1854 - October 31, 1920), Canada.

He was born in Lévis, Quebec, Canada. He was the co-founder of the Caisses Populaires Desjardins (today Desjardins Group) and the forerunner of North American credit unions. Gabriel-Alphonse Desjardins was a journalist at L'écho and Le Canadien until 1879. He was publisher of Débats de la législature du Québec from 1879 to 1890, and French-language parliamentary stenographer at the House of Commons from 1892 to 1917.

In 1897, Desjardins became increasingly concerned with the problem of usury and undertook three years of careful research and correspondence with the founders of cooperative savings and credit movements in Europe. On December 6, 1900, Desjardins and his wife, Dorimène Roy Desjardins, co-founded the first Caisse d'épargne Desjardins in Lévis and opened for business the following month. Later, it was renamed Caisses populaires Desjardins.

Caisse populaire is a synthesis (combination) of four popular savings and credit systems established in Germany, Italy and France: the caisse d'épargne, the Schulze-Delitzsch bank, the Raiffeisen credit co-operative and the Luzzatti popular bank. Desjardins stayed in close contact with many of the founders of the European co-operative movement throughout his life.

From 1900 to 1906, Desjardins founded just three other caisses populaires: Lauzon (1902), Hull (1903), and Saint-Malo, Québec (1905). After failing to get a federal law passed in Ottawa that would provide a Canadian-wide framework for more such organizations, Desjardins turned his efforts, with the collaboration of journalists and priests, to founding more caisses. During the 1907-1914 period, Desjardins personally founded 146 caisses.

At the time of his death in 1920, there were 187 caisses populaires in Québec (30,000 members and total assets of nearly \$6 million), 24 in Ontario and 9 in the United States.

Alphonse and Dorimène Desjardins' home, where the first caisse populaire was launched, is now a center dedicated to his memory and has been visited by over 178,000 people from 115 countries since its opening in 1982.

Total assets at Desjardins Group currently reach C\$118.068 billion. This ranks it as the sixth-largest financial institution in Canada and the largest in Québec, ahead of National Bank of Canada, which had assets of C\$77 billion as of October 2003. It has 39,294 employees and 7,184 elected

and volunteer officers. In 2005, it gave its members C\$408 million in patronage allocations and C\$58 million in donations, sponsorships and academic scholarships. Most of this latter sum went to regional economic development and health purposes.

Today, the cooperative movement in Quebec is more than 3,500 cooperative organizations and mutuals, 80,000 jobs, \$20 billion in sales, \$130 billion in assets and owned by over 7.5 million members.

There are over 10,000 cooperative businesses in Canada, generating nearly 160,000 jobs, holding combined assets of \$167 billion and owned by 15 million members. Cooperative Movement Around the World.

Co-operative communities such as food retail, insurance, banking, funeral services, transport, housing, agriculture, insurance and the travel industry are now widespread in many parts of the world.

Mondragón in the Basque Country of Spain is one of the largest and most successful coop examples. In many European countries, cooperative institutions have a predominant market share in the retail banking and insurance businesses. In the UK, co-operatives formed the Co-operative Party in the early 20th century to represent members of co-ops in Parliament. The Co-operative Party now has a permanent electoral pact with the Labour Party, and some Labour MPs are Co-operative Party members.

Credit unions, insurance cooperatives and Housing cooperatives, which they call "Market-Rate Housing Coops", are very common in New York City. Social Cooperatives are prominent in Italy. The well-known Best Western Hotel Chain (Building or Workers' Coops) is a large coop in Great Britain. France, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, and Scandinavia have giant cooperatives, like consumers' coops, insurance coops and credit unions owned and ran by their coop members.

The passenger buses in Israel, managed and owned by driver-members, are carrying more than 80% of daily travelers. Japan has a very large and well-developed consumer coop movement with over 14 million members. Their retail coops alone had a combined turnover of US\$21 billion, as well as coops on medical, housing, insurance, and coops for teachers and university-based.

Today, there are big cooperatives and credit unions widely spread in Asian countries like South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Singapore, Nepal, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines.

The worldwide cooperative movement counts nearly 750,000 cooperatives in more than 100 countries and creates jobs for 100 million people.

(The Prime Movers and History of Coop Movement in the Philippines will be tackled next issue.)

Filipino Solidarity Cooperative on the way to recovery, slowly but surely

By Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi

Montreal, February 20, 2007 - From the previous report which is quite detailed, there are still outstanding issues which were not completely resolved. The exact amount of the missing cash was not determined as the volunteer bookkeeper, Lourdes Fagsao, was still reviewing all the source documents. She prepared an interim financial statement for banking purposes, but since the results were dismal, the bank actually did not find the Coop to be a good credit risk at the moment. Hence, there are other steps that need to be taken by the new management team to find other solutions.

One of the needed changes is the splitting of duties or responsibilities. Rhoda Tremocha has been taking a lot of the burden because she was not only the treasurer but she also did most of the purchasing and dealt with the members who were claiming refunds. Needless to say, it was quite stressful to be in her position. Hence, she requested to be replaced. With the blessing of the board of directors, Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi became the new treasurer. Since January 21, 2007. Being in this position, she has been dealing with most of the people who are still waiting for reimbursement of their savings plan. Mrs. Kharroubi has tried to refund the most urgent ones whenever possible. Those who can wait, she appealed to them to give the Coop more time to find the needed funds which are expected to come from the membership drive. Some directors, including Mrs. Kharroubi, had to lend money to the Coop just to pay the rent, and other bills that need to be paid right away. Cash is also required to pay for purchases upon delivery. A couple of suppliers agreed to receive postdated cheques but they are only for two or three weeks delay.

Although CDEC gave its word

that it will give a grant of \$40 000 if the Coop gets a business loan, they have decided to take some more time before releasing the funds and they want a guaranty that it will not be used for anything else than what it was originally intended for. Mr. Jason Prince promised to work for the protection of the Coop and he asked that Mrs. Kharroubi communicate with him regularly and to answer questions that need to be answered in order to present a clear report of what is going on. The committee that will finally decide the release of the grant will meet only on March 15, 2007. For the coming weeks, it is critical that the Coop receives more support from its own members. They should try to buy as often as possible to generate more sales, and to make a fast turnover of the merchandise inventory. They should also try to participate in the membership drive announced in the January issue of the North American Filipino Star. The deadline to participate has been extended to March 15 (formerly, it was supposed to be February 22, 2007). The contest will end on November 15, 2007, and the winners will be announced in the December 2007 issue of the Star.

Ben Bade, president of the Coop plans to travel to Toronto to meet with suppliers who import directly from the Philippines in order to get better prices. It is also planned that in the near future, if the Coop receives sufficient capital funds, to deal directly with producers and manufacturers in the Philippines. Perhaps, a shipping company or balik-bayan box outfit can collaborate with the Coop in the shipment of merchandise. When this happens, it will no longer be a problem to compete with the other stores as the Coop will definitely attract more people who are looking for lower prices and better service.

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Isaac T. Goodine

Global Perspectives



The choice of where to retire is now yours

"The choice of when to retire will soon be yours": was the heading for the previous issue of this Column, and now, I am pleased to be able to inform you, Dear Readers, that; the choice of

Where to retire is now yours". The statement on when to retire refers to the announcement that the Province of Ontario abolished the compulsory retirement age last December and the statement on choice of where to retire refers to options created by the globalization process.

The meeting on managing transitions in the ageing society that I attended in Manila last December included a special visit to the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) that is designed specifically to promote the Philippines as Asia's Retirement Haven. The program caters to foreign nationals and former Filipino citizens and offers similar benefits to all participants through a Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRVisa). The Philippines is one of about a dozen countries that offer special residency conditions for retirees and the PRS's conditions are among the most generous available. One's place of residence is the controlling factor in taxation including income tax on pensions and annuities. In that regard, the Philippines does not tax pensions or income from outside sources for retirees under this program, making it very attractive for tax avoidance in planning for retirement.

Tax avoidance, which is legal and in conformity to tax treaties, should not be confused with tax evasion, which is not legal and is offered by

some, so called, tax havens, that operate in secret. In short, it is possible to establish residency in the Philippines, as a retiree, and avoid paying income tax on payments received from pensions abroad. The concept is not new, but the Philippines has in place the appropriate authority to implement international agreements with several countries. This can be particularly attractive to Canadians, and especially for Canadians of Filipino origin. As far back as 1986, Canadians were informed that the Government of the day, then under the Progressive Conservative party, was implementing pension reforms while seeking to balance a responsibility "to ensure basic levels of income for needy elderly with the equally important responsibility of Canadians to provide for their own retirement through the exercise of initiative and self-reliance". That policy statement by the Finance Minister, Michael Wilson, was considered by many Canadians as a sharp turn to the right in social policy with its new emphasis on self-reliance. Now we know that many of the elderly are seeking to remain self-reliant as long as possible; some supplement their pensions by working; others cut living expenses by various means including tax avoidance. Therefore, the options offered by the Philippine Retirement Authority offer additional means to achieve self-reliance after retirement.

The benefits offered by the PRA are: 1) Option of permanent residency, multiple-entry, and indefinite stay in the Philippines; 2) Exemption from exit clearance and re-entry permits; 3) Exemption from Custom

Duties and Taxes for importation of personal effects up to US\$ 7,000.00; 4) Exemption from travel tax if stay in the Philippines is less than a year from the last entry date; 5) Option of including dependents to the Program; 6) Exemption from obtaining special study permit; 7) Assistance in obtaining an Alien Employment Permit; Tax-free remittance of Annuities and Pensions; 8) Exemption from the Bureau of Immigration's Annual Registration Requirement; and 10) Guaranteed repatriation of the deposit/investment.

SSRVisa provisions are:

Citizenship: Foreign nationals and former Filipino citizens

Requirements: Principal Applicant-- Foreign nationals and former Filipino citizens who are at least 35 years old; Dependent Applicant--Spouse and Children below 21 years old

Deposit Requirements: Foreign Nationals, 35—49 yrs. old = US\$ 75,000.00, 50 yrs old and above = US\$ 50,000.00; Former Filipino Citizens = US\$1,500.00

One-time processing fees: Principal = US\$ 1,500.00; Dependent/Spouse = US\$ 300.00

Documentary Requirements: 1) Accomplished PRA application form; 2) Original passport with valid entry; 3) Medical Certificate; 4) Police or National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Clearance; 5) Time Deposit Certification from any PRA approved accredited bank of the Inward US\$ Remittance; and 6) Photographs (six each) 1"x1" & 2"x2"

NOTES:

--Spouse and dependents are required to submit Medical Certificate and Police/National Bureau of Investigation Clearance

--Marriage Contract or any similar proof

of relationship for joining spouse --Birth certificate or any similar proof of relationship of relationship for joining children --All documents obtained abroad must be authenticated by the Philippine Embassy/Consular Office, and translated into English if necessary.

N.B. Above all else, anyone who decides to live and retire in the Philippines can expect to: experience hospitality, friendliness and innate respect & love for the elderly.

For further information please visit the Philippine Retirement Authority Website: www.pra.gov.ph Tel: (632) 848 1412, Fax No: (632) 848 1411

From Page 17 Coming to Canada

residents will make every effort to become self-supporting and contribute to our nation instead of becoming a burden to it.

In the event the person you sponsored does prove to become a burden on our society, as they turn to financial assistance via government social programs, you will be legally required to reimburse the amounts provided by the government to support them.

Taking the decision to immigrate to Canada is an important one. For many, the decision to immigrate to Canada has been a life long dream. Therefore, you should consider consulting a lawyer or a government representative in order to ensure that the process will be as smooth and successful as possible.

You may contact Attorney Domingo of DG Attorneys at (514) 823-8464

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APO new president Arnold Ortiz poses with the members of Laging Handa Scout group

From Page 20 Filipino Cooperative

In spite of the length of the previous report on the Coop, not everything was included because it was not possible to get the exact amount of the missing cash, and the accounting work was not completed yet. As of this time, only an interim or tentative report is available. This report will be audited and the final figures determined before the next general assembly scheduled to be held in April. Nevertheless, to keep the affairs of the Coop an open book, some of the missing information is provided in this status report.

According to the interim income statement, there was a terminal loss of 42,042.13 consisting of the following:

Leased equipment repossessed	\$6 943.20
Basement improvements	12 062.50
Unreceipted cash spent:	
for year 2005	12 062.50
for year 2006	11 325.94
Total terminal loss	\$42 042.13
Add: Operating loss	22 274.98
Total Net Loss 2006	\$64 317.11

Another data omitted is the discovery of Loto tickets in an envelope which Ben Bade found lying around in the basement. The tickets purchased from cash and cheque totalled \$4 982. Only \$682 was purchased by cheque, the rest in cash. Considering the total cash unaccounted for is \$23 388.54 (both years 2005 and 2006), and the amount of unnecessary purchases, rent of the basement and repairs totalling about \$18 000, it seems to provide an idea of the reason why the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative is in a big financial bind. Unfortunately, there is no written proof to accuse anyone

of cash pilferage. Knowing that there is more than one person handling cash, and that Rhoda Tremocha was away for a month in May 2006 for a holiday, and that she said that she did not handle the savings plan anymore upon her return after a month, it would seem unfair to put the blame on her, as what the former president was trying to do. Perhaps, his sudden decision to quit was a way to avoid the issue altogether. It would have been easier for everyone to find out the truth if he did not leave and if he turned over all documents for proper scrutiny. Now that he and his wife are gone, there is no way to make a definitive conclusion to this affair. Obviously, the lack of tight accounting procedures made the situation complicated.

In view of this, how do people regain trust in the Cooperative? What are the steps that the new management team need to take? How do they make sure that anomalies of this nature do not happen again? Will members consider this a lesson learned and not take it against the people who are left behind to continue the business? Only time will provide the answers. However, most of us behind the Coop are optimistic that in due time, we will be able to overcome all these problems. If all members buy their Filipino groceries from the Coop, and if they also recruit their friends, family and associates to become members, there is no reason for failure. The Filipino Cooperative must rise again and become a valuable tool for

the community's economic prosperity.

As a final word, the point of this whole report is to underscore the importance of making all Filipino-Canadians in Cote des Neiges become more involved. Instead of walking straightforward to the other stores on the corner of the street, they should at least take a few more steps toward the direction of their own cooperative. The more people who care and who do not begrudge a 5-cent difference at all, the easier it will be for us to build up our own business. It is not even true that prices at the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative are higher than in the other stores. Most of the prices are comparable, and sometimes even lower. But the advantage of the bigger stores is their purchasing power which is greater. Hopefully, this will not last long. We can look forward to having the means to buy in bigger quantities and pass on the savings to all the members.

Let's take our numbers to our own advantage. Let's create jobs, and improve our economic conditions. It's in everyone's power to make these things happen and to make a difference.

UPDATE ON THE COOP'S MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Most of the details announced in the January issue are still valid. The only change is the deadline which is moved to March 15, 2007 for organizational reasons.

We started collecting data to

get the most important businesses as our sponsors. A proposal has been sent to Air Canada through the website. Letters will be sent to decision makers in companies that can donate either cash or goods.

If any one has a suggestion concerning prospective donors, please send us your feedback through the North American Filipino Star website or e-mail: filipinostar2@yahoo.com, or www.filipinostar.org.

Membership application forms and contest entry forms will be available shortly. Please call for more information at 514-733-8915, or at the Star's offices at 514-485-7861.

Target is to have a minimum of 1000 members. The more the better. If we succeed in having at least 5 000 members in a year or two, we will be the next "Cooperative of the Year". Every year, CDR is holding a gala dinner to recognize cooperatives for their accomplishments. We should be all motivated enough to work towards this goal of winning the title and the honor. We have enough population to make our dream a reality.

On Thursday, March 15, 2006, CDR is holding a gala dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Tickets are: \$80 for cooperative members, and \$85 for non-members.

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Mixed reactions to Philippine government's new policies for domestic helpers

February 20, 2007

The Philippines wants to uplift the status of Filipinos working as domestic helpers outside the country, with a new minimum wage.

However, the new policies are a double-edged sword for Filipinos who cannot find work at home.

Under the government's new hiring policy for domestic helpers bound overseas, a Language and Culture Certificate of Competence is just one of the certificates that they now have to acquire before they can leave.

Consuelo Canozza, Assessor, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, said, "We have to be globally competitive. We have to learn first of all, communication skills, not only skills in household chores but skills also in communicating."

With the government's new reform package, they will not just be known as plain domestic helpers but upgraded to household service workers. This is a term that the government feels should enable them to double their salary to as much as US\$400 a month.

Arturo Brion, Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment, said, "(The) bottomline here is, we must protect our women. Number two, we must enhance our level of participation overseas even at the level of domestic helpers. We must be at that higher end of domestic helpers. Let us leave the US\$200

market. Let us leave them to other countries. Let us concentrate on the higher paying level of domestic helpers and go to the countries that can pay this minimum wage."

To justify the higher minimum wage, the Philippine government is promising better equipped workers. All domestic helper applicants will now have to undergo a month's training on household chores. It is based on the belief that better wages will mean better self esteem. But for some, the new requirements could prevent them from having a better future.

Starting March 1, only those aged 25 years and above will be allowed to work as household service workers. That is why some women have been working double time to finish their training and beat the deadline. Leeneth Appalza, a trainee, said, "It doesn't depend on age. I can work. We do this because here in the Philippines, the salary is low even if you've graduated from college."

Another trainee, Janet Bisera, said, "I really want to leave so I can help my parents. I'm the eldest child and my siblings are depending on me to pay for their studies."

With such sentiments, it looks like a tough balancing act for the Philippine government, even as it tries to protect its citizens pushed to leave family and country in order to find work. ■

Philippines to appeal U.S. nurse ban

February 26, 2007

The Philippine government is to appeal a move by the US to ban some 17,000 nurses who passed the 2006 nursing examination amid allegations of mass cheating.

The United States Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) issued the temporary ban this week insisting that Filipino nurses retake sections of the 2006 examination where mass cheating took place.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday ordered Labor Secretary Arturo Brion to appeal the decision.

The order comes after a nursing review centre disclosed it had leaked answers to some students who took the examinations.

The scandal rocked the country's medical profession and cast a shadow over the quality of its nurses, who are in high demand overseas, especially in the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Some 42,000 students sat the nursing examination but only 17,000 passed.

Arroyo in a statement Saturday said she had ordered the appeal to "uphold the prestige of the country's nursing profession and continue the deployment of Filipino nurses abroad."

She said the government has already provided financial assistance to the 2006 nurses who passed to retake

the exams.

The president said all officials of the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC), which oversees the examinations, found involved in scandal will be dismissed and criminally charged.

"All officials involved in the nursing exam leakage should be dismissed without benefits and criminally charged," she stressed.

The CGFNS said on its website on Thursday that "Philippine nurses who were sworn in as licensed nurses in the Philippines following their passing the compromised licensure exam of June 2006 are not eligible for a VisaScreen Certificate."

The Philadelphia-based CGFNS said that it sent a fact-finding mission to the Philippines in September 2006 to investigate the reports of irregularities in the nursing licensure exam.

The CGFNS investigation concluded that "those who received their license as a result of passing the compromised June 2006 licensure examination raises significant questions about the accurate assessment of the competencies of many of those individuals."

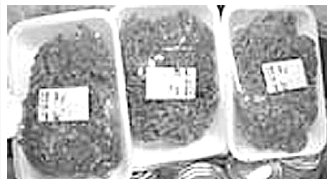
All foreign nurses must have a CGFNS-issued VisaScreen Certificate before being allowed to work in the US.

■



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