

ARE WE A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY?
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of *ninangs* and *ninongs* for Eamon and Isa. After each of our children's births, Tita Mitos, Tito Randy, Paolo, and Jeff were there to welcome the new arrival, with a delicious Chinese banquet! Having lived in New Jersey for a lengthy time, we also welcomed other relatives passing through during certain stages in their careers: Marnie Elizaga, Andrew Elizaga, Gina David, Jondi and Mayleen Laico, Mike David, Rey David, Gina Villanueva. They all took refuge at Tita Mitos and Tito Randy's comfortable Laico Center. Since we moved to the West Coast, we've sadly missed out on the sumptuous Thanksgiving dinners there, complete with *kare-kare* and *pansit luglug*. But not to worry, because we now have an executive membership to a Laico Center here in the Northwest--Nini's House!

LL



GROUND ZERO

by Pee wee Laico-Villanueva

Joedie, my eldest son, was going to celebrate his 24th birthday on Oct. 3. And Walter Hautzig, my former piano professor at Peabody Conservatory, had invited me to a concert he was giving to celebrate his 80th birthday. Since everybody in the States was on alert due to the Sept. 11 disaster, I figured that it was one of the safest times to travel. Plane fares too were at bargain prices. Because of these two factors, I decided to travel to celebrate those two occasions mentioned.

After a direct flight via PAL from Manila to Los Angeles, I spent a few days with Joedie whom I felt like I hadn't seen in ages, even though I had just visited him a year ago. It also gave me a chance to get over my jet lag. Then I proceeded across the country to the East Coast via the now-notorious American Airlines. The LA airport was very strict about passengers carrying metal objects. They even confiscated my tweezers. Cars were not allowed by the terminal so we had to take a shuttle bus from the parking lot to the terminal. Surprisingly, Newark airport was more lenient than LAX because Mitos drove right by the curb to pick me up. On Oct. 29, the day of Walter Hautzig's concert, Randy, Mitos, and I went on a smooth drive in their new Jaguar from New Jersey to Manhattan. It was the first time I had seen Manhattan without traffic. I expected Manhattan to have some smoke from the smoldering disaster site but instead; it was clear skies and a smog-free atmosphere that greeted us. That rains that had fallen a few days after the disaster had cleaned out the smoldering ashes and smoky atmosphere. The efficiency of the New Yorkers was evident from the speedy clearing out of all signs of the disaster except for the cordoned-off area.

We parked the car and walked towards the Ground Zero site, which had been cordoned off. However, one could get a glimpse of the red steel girders, which used to be the core of the World Trade Towers, and the gaping vacant space where the buildings used to be. Assigned New York cops made sure a reverent attitude was maintained by the numerous passers-by. No one could linger around and chat or even take snapshots. You could just pause for a while, long enough to say a prayer, then move on. One of the remaining buildings was all black from the flames and it looked as though its insides had been yanked out because of all the damaged and bent steel bars jutting out from it. All the portalets being used by the debris workers were lined up by the entire frontage of one of the structures, which happened to be an Episcopalian church. (Talk about reverence!) The Merrill Lynch building on Wall Street was still covered with ashes, which remained untouched due to reverence for the cremated remains. Seeing the



Eamon in his astronaut suit.

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CNN video clip with the plane crashing into the second tower was almost surreal. But going to the site and seeing Ground Zero for myself actually confirmed the barbarism of the whole event. While walking away from the site, we passed by the wall with all the homemade posters and notices as well as remembrances of the missing persons. It was a sight that almost made my tears flow.

It has been almost two months since that fateful day. So far, the persons responsible for this cold-blooded destruction have managed to get away with it. Meanwhile, the Age of Paranoia has set in. The silver lining, however, has been shown through the reawakening of a fervent American patriotism, the display of civic pride, the concern and generosity of seemingly jaded New Yorkers, the superior quality of American efficiency, and the New Yorker's resilient spirit. Personally, however, this event seems to call for forces beyond the human in order to battle the destruction and evil that has been opened up like a Pandora's box. Is it a reminder from above that we have a spiritual nature that needs tending? Our senior citizens who have experienced the previous World War probably have a sense of foreboding from this event, of which baby-boomers, the younger generation and we don't have an inkling. Although life goes on and we try to go on with our lives as before, we all know that now, life will never be as innocent and carefree as pre-Ground Zero days.

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Many thanks to all who contributed!

Laico Lines is an equal opportunity employer: If have some great ideas and would like to become involved in the creation of the next issue of *Laico Lines* we really want to hear from you! Contact Mitos Villasenor at: mitoslv@msn.com

VIEWS ON SEPTEMBER 11TH

Rory:

I think it effected a major change in the world, especially in how people will now view world peace. It seems like it will be a long time in coming. I just hope that this doesn't graduate to a third World War. Things in life seem more uncertain, I feel like it's a little harder to plan for long term. That's why having Faith is really important.

Popoy:

The Twin Towers World Trade Center were so high, massive structures that could never crumble. My imagination was wrong again, I just cannot imagine. I am in disbelief, the same disbelief as when I saw what was left in my mutual funds. I just cannot imagine. I see my picture before and I see my picture now and again, I just cannot imagine, how much hair I have lost. On the brighter side, better to have pictures and memories than no picture or memories at all. With this I count my blessings.

Nonon:

I was on the school playground with my class, when a teacher who was just coming in reported to us the shocking and tragic event. After feeling disbelief, a few thoughts quickly ran through my mind: how life can be gone in an instant--as Jesus said, no one knows the day nor the hour. I thought of how many years it took to plan and build the twin towers, but they were gone in an instant. I thought of how we always believed this country to be a superpower--wrong, only God is invincible.

Mitos:

We were in Manhattan four days after the attack. The city was a ghost town and it felt so eerie. We couldn't get ourselves to go to Ground Zero. It just didn't feel right to go there to gawk. I'll never forget the sight of the people gathered in Union Square holding leaflets with pictures of their loved ones saying "Missing" or "Have You Seen..." It was a cemetery without tombstones, just people of all faiths gathered together with candles, flowers...quietly waiting and still hoping.

LL



Left: Who would have thought? Popoy, Mitos, Malu, and Rory with the World Trade Center in the background, 1987.

Laico Lines 2001 can be found online at:

<<http://faculty.washington.edu/aelizaga/laico2001/index.html>>