

new memories of asia

One can find ample time to play hopping through the high-tech world of the Far East in a wool business suit.

BY PAOLO VILLASEÑOR



This past July, I was finally able to achieve the one experience that I missed out on in college--studying abroad. Three years after my college graduation, I find myself working as an Investment Operations Associate in the International Passive Equities Department for State Street Global Advisors in Boston, while attending the part-time MBA program at Boston University. Sounds cool, but it basically means that I'm a whipping boy for our portfolio managers, one of which I aspire to become after graduation. It's been a lot of work, but the company's paying for it, so Randy and Mitos are pretty happy about that. And for 2 weeks in July, my classroom was moved from the friendly confines of BU's state of the art Management Building, to the exotic landscapes of Japan, Korea, and Thailand.

The class was an examination and contrast between different business practices in Asia. During our 2-week tour, we visited 16 different companies in 3 different countries, met with presidents and CEOs, rode the Daewoo Chairman's helicopters from plant to plant, lunched with the future President of Korea, rode riverboats with the "Regis Philbin of Thailand", and still had time to buy custom tailored suits made of fine Gabardine and Cashmere wool, all hand made within 3 days. In the 90-degree heat, we wore full business suits and were greeted as esteemed representatives of our school and our companies. It was all very cool.



THE JAPANESE LANDSCAPE WAS NOT AS I expected because Kyoto is far smaller and more historic than Tokyo. On our first day, we visited the Shogun Palaces, Buddhist Temples, and Shinto Shrines. During the course of our stay, we visited major multinationals such as Toyota, Asahi Breweries, and Sanyo Electronics, while also meeting with smaller start-up companies. At Toyota, we test-drove their new "Eco-cars" which run on either electricity or a hybrid of electricity and gasoline. Asahi Breweries provided us with a buffet feast complete with samples of all of their beers (my face was very red there), and special turquoise waist coats which are to be used only when drinking Asahi...or as a Halloween costume. At Sanyo Soft Cell, the CEO, who is a Boston University MBA as well, gave us pocket electric razors as a *pasalubong*. The highlight was a sake-induced stint at a karaoke bar where I was able to make the girls in the group swoon. (continued page 7)



Men in black by day. FROM TOP: Paolo debarks from the Daewoo helicopter; Welcome to Toyota! (Paolo at far right); Paolo loves reading balance sheets (second from left).



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I think I had the most fun in Korea because of the posh accommodations and the beautiful women...I mean...interesting companies. Our host for most of the stay in Korea was yet another BU MBA, who happened to be the son of the Daewoo Chairman. As a result, we stayed at the Daewoo-owned Hiltons in Seoul and Kyongju, and met with several officials at Daewoo subsidiaries. We danced to funky Korean Techno music (which sounded like monk chants mixed in with techno beats) at nightclubs with Egyptian themes (why Egyptian? I have no clue). We also met the future president of Korea, who just happened to be the father of one of the students in my class. It was odd, because on the Asiana Airlines flight home, they showed a clip of him addressing Korean Congress while his son was sitting in front of me. Overall, BU's strong presence in Korea resulted in a terrific experience.

THAILAND WAS VERY ODD. BANGKOK WAS VERY similar to Manila, except that everyone is Buddhist. The streets of Patpong, a bustling commercial section of Bangkok were littered with food vendors selling fried locusts, fresh octopus, and other indescribable confections. Merchants hocked knock-off designer clothing (I bought six "Polo" shirts for \$18) and accessories (the women bought full "Fendi" luggage sets for next to nothing) at every corner, and to our surprise, an elephant was seen walking along the sidewalk. Surprisingly, the companies, including Telecom Asia, were very modern, and the night clubs...well...let's just say that on many a night, we would stop and toast to "the best four credits of my life".

THE FINAL TALLY INCLUDED 9 PLANE TRIPS, 3 helicopter rides, spotless Japanese subways, a high speed boat in Osaka, *tuk-tuks* in Thailand, one dollar cab rides in Korea, and a seemingly endless number of bus excursions. The experience was everything I had hoped for, and I met many new friends along the way. After my trip, I struggled to think of ways to create a multinational conglomerate based in the Philippines, in the model of Daewoo (which has since fallen on hard times), but haven't yet been able to create a feasible plan. At any rate, after my graduation in 2 years, I was thinking of potentially spending a few months working in Asia (hint, hint, Tito Edwin), but that's still a bit down the road.



LEFT: Karaoke crooners by night (Paolo second from left)
RIGHT: Yet another bus stop in a whirlwind tour (Paolo at far right).

the highest moment in my life

BY CARLO SANTAYANA

I had gotten on life's fast lane. I went to university and earned a Computer Science degree, got a job at the computer department of a large bank, and a better job at the world's second largest software company. I rose up the ranks, learned lots of stuff, and enjoyed quite a few perks while I held my job for almost 4 years. Then I got "tired", got "fired", and went to the States to try and get "hired."

The US was terrific. I had experienced so much in so little time. But I did not get hired. Six months since I had set foot in America, I found myself at the same airport, packed and ready to go home to the Philippines like a dog with its tail between its legs and its head bowed in submission. I felt broken, worthless, and ashamed.

The next month or so proved equally fruitless. Christmas was drawing near and I didn't have much money to buy gifts because I had no job. I was free to party every night and wake up late the following morning...but what for? Pretty soon, the gas gauge in my car had stopped moving. I wasn't driving anywhere, either on public roads or on my road of life.

So I decided to set a schedule for myself. Forget credentials or qualifications -- just do something. I took the old copying machine at my father's office, had it repaired, and went into business for myself -- making copies in a quiet corner of the big city. I had gone from the wood-and-leather boardrooms of the country's largest corporations to a small desk beside a single copying machine, from

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shuffling million-dollar contracts to charging a buck-and-a-half per page. I realized, however, that the people who walked through the door to have their papers copied were not very different from the presidents and CEOs with whom I used to do business. Most of them were more interesting: the messenger from the bank next door would talk about his family, the security chief from the other building was always bossy and difficult to get along with, the lawyer from a nearby insurance firm often spoke about property insurance and courtroom disputes, and many hopeful immigrants lining the Australian embassy across the street would come to have their passports, letters, or diplomas photocopied. All these people had hands with which to work, faces to interact, plans to implement, and aspirations to fulfill. And so did I. I woke up and realized that being proud of your work was not so you could brag about it to other people. It was for me alone to feel good about what I did, no matter how modest.

It may be hard to believe, but this is what I consider the highest moment of my life. It wasn't closing a large deal or delivering a presentation in front of an audience of three hundred. It was being able to deal with it all -- financial wizards and manual laborers, three-piece suits and tattered jeans, the extravagant and the mundane, reaching the peak and falling down hard -- and still coming out of it alive, strong, proud.

A few months later, I was hired by a local consulting firm. It was a good-sized company considering the number of employees, but I now saw all of them in a different light, not as titles and ranks, but as people. From there, it was easy to see who among them were hiding insecurity and ineptitude behind the executive veneer of their titles and so-called achievements, and who among them transcended their titles and achievements and showed their true worth without plaques or trophies. Who were truly competent and capable as co-workers, and truly valuable as friends and fellow human beings. Were it not for the time I spent down on low ground, I would never have learned what I was failing to see up on high. That's why I consider the lowest point in my career to be the highest moment in my life.



Is there life after Commencement?

FROM LEFT: Paolo, Tita Mitos, Jeff, and Tito Randy.

what can you buy with a diploma?

BY JEFF VILLASEÑOR

To be honest, when I was asked to write an article for this year's *Laico Lines*, I wasn't interested. I was dreading it. What did I have to say? I am hovering somewhere around number thirty-five in relation to all the grandchildren, what news could I possibly say that hadn't already been said at least twenty times already? I had graduated college, but surely I wasn't the only one.

I traveled to France -- one of four trips within the family in this year alone. I had a serious case of the "been-there-done-that"s. What else is there to say? My life growing up was the picture of stability. In my high school it was expected that you would go on to some form of higher education. It was understood. I had done all that and succeeded, probably because I never expected anything less. For that reason, I also didn't feel very accomplished in what I had achieved.

Frustrated, I turn to my new life. My work, my other source of frustration. Every day I come home and turn off my brain for fear that it might explode in a frenzy of New Jersey curriculum standards, workplace readiness indicators, lesson plans and homework (yes, all you little Laicos out there, teachers still have homework). Mom teases me that it's the exact same thing that I used to do in high school: school, TV, eat, sleep.

I leave my work at school because sometimes I don't want to think about how many students of mine don't have any expectations of life and work only hard enough to prove how little they can get. But that's why I love my job. Many of my students feel that they are working towards no end. I show them that their expectations must be higher. I show them that Shakespeare isn't just about Gwyneth Paltrow or Leonardo "Di Crappio"; it's about them and people that they know. I work hard to show them that you will seldom get something that you don't expect. The emotionally disabled students that I teach are sometimes too far-gone to believe in anything. I love my job for the rare moments that I see them find something to believe in.

I didn't want to have a graduation party. I didn't feel I deserved any gifts or cards. When I graduated, I was as lost as a drop of rain in a monsoon. At my job, however, I reap my rewards every day.

