



Basking on Boracay

by Gina David

First of all, I'd like to say that this was another awesome year of blessings for our family. I didn't travel as much this year except for a Las Vegas trip to meet up with friends. But a trip to the Philippines was on my agenda once again. For some reason, this vacation seemed very special to me. It felt so good to see our adorable and charming nephew, Joshua, and the two darling nieces, Nicole and Lizzie Girl. They've grown big so quickly and are now so much fun to play with. As for Dad, he seemed to have gone back to a healthier weight. I remembered him last year to be all puffy from lack of exercise. He's back in his golf circle now, thereby keeping more fit than before. And as for mom, I know we can't expect much from her in her state but she just felt so there. Despite her being unable to talk, her eyes and gestures said it all. It seemed like she recognized my presence and she seemed to reach out in her own way to let us feel her joy. I got to pray over her and I felt the warmth of the Holy Spirit envelope her as I experienced her cry of pain, and at the same time the joy of her love. I thank God that through our prayers, she's presently free of complications.

In my short stay in the Philippines, I got to attend two weddings. One was my good friend's wedding in which I was a part of the entourage, and the other was Tita Mely and Tito Pedrito's diamond wedding anniversary. I also got to visit the breathtaking island of Boracay with Sarah. Indeed, it was a relaxing and welcoming vacation. Despite it being off-season and with some rain on and off, the water was still warm and welcoming. I had never before seen such powdery white sand. It was awesome. We got to do so many activities for such a small price: island-hopping with snorkeling for only \$7; home service massage for \$5; jet skiing, buffet lunch, and dinner with lechon for only \$4. Boy, did I feel rich (temporarily). Now, doesn't that make you want to visit home, too? In addition, I went to a very enjoyable gathering organized by our very thoughtful aunties, Tita Peewee and Tita Bibot. Thank you so much. We had so much good food, and most importantly I got the chance to see all the relatives at Tita Peewee's beautiful home before I left. It was really cool, especially since we also celebrated Dickie's birthday at the same time. So, that was my great adventure to the Philippines. As for my other adventures of the year, I guess the only other thing that excites me is when I play tennis with Tita Rory. Yup, we've tried to play once a week. And to this day, she still gets victory over me. Maybe some day I could be like Martina Hingis. Dream on, huh? Any other players around? You're welcome to join us anytime. So, here's to the year ahead--cheers!

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BARANGAY HAWAII

by Lia Juarez-Silva

We recently took a one-week vacation in the islands of Hawaii. The home of Mai-Tais, POG (Passion Orange Guava juice), luaus and out of sight relatives.

It was our great pleasure to see Auntie Bea & Uncle San Ranis plus Uncle Jun Los Banos. I had not seen Auntie Bea and Uncle San for 18 years. We arranged to meet in a restaurant fairly close to our hotel. When we got there, I recognized them from a distance, however they had to look twice to check if it was really me. It was amusing because they were expecting to see the typical well-dressed skinny *Pinay* (Filipina) with well-coiffed long hair. Instead she noted I looked Americana with my shorts, *tsinelas* (floppy sandals), barely any make-up and I was obviously no longer the 60-pound, 12 year old girl.

On another note we had a great dinner and Uncle Jun shared one of the best stories we had heard about WWII--how he discovered his family roots, heritage and the good times he spent with Lolo Jim, Lola Luz and the Los Banos clan during those years. Listening to him was like watching a documentary segment from PBS. In fact he told us that he is involved in producing a documentary about WWII Filipino-American veterans. He sent home with us a sample video and pictures that will be included so I can in turn show these to the Laico family. He also informed us that we have a good number of family members in the islands which I thought was amazing.

I was pleased that we met them and I assured them that this wasn't the last time we would be there, because now I know there is another place where there is literally a warm family presence.

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