



Rey in the Thai Royal Grand Palace courtyard.



Rey bungee jumping in Chiang Mai, Thailand

BUDDHA BRIEFS

By Rey David

JOVITS AND I WERE IN THE PHILIPPINES FOR TWO weeks, in Manila and Baguio. We played with the kids--Lizzie, Joshua and Nicole. We visited Mother, still bedridden with Parkinson's Disease. Jovits and I rode horses and boats with Sarah, Nicole, Dad, and Jovits' brother's family. We went bowling and played pingpong, billiards and golf at luxury resorts. Jovits and I went to malls and fancy restaurants with Paul, Joy, Sarah, Dad and the kids. We had ourselves pampered all day at Ricky Reyes, at David's Salon, and at Premiere City Club. We ate like royalty every day, enjoying the native culinary fare.

With Jovits' generous blessing, I proceeded with the rest of my itinerary. I was in Thailand for seven days, in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. I went to dozens of Buddhist, Muslim, Taoist, and Hindu temples with Burmese and Chinese architecture. I walked around the Thai Royal Grand Palace and its three golden pagodas. I saw all kinds of Buddhas--golden Buddha, jade Buddha, smiling Buddha, reclining Buddha, tiny Buddha, giant Buddha, etc. I ate at a street restaurant with the locals, rode an adult elephant through the wild jungles of Chiang Mai, and stepped off a platform 50 meters high above a lake for my first Bungee jump. I had a python and a cobra wrapped around my neck in a snake show, shot 30 rounds from a 45 Magnum in a firing range, and watched Thai cultural dances, live music concerts, and ringside Thai Boxing. I had half a dozen traditional Thai massages and reflexology treatments. I rode motor boats through a maze of city canals, and rafts down jungle rivers. I shopped like there was no tomorrow, and I ate like a king every day.

I was in Malaysia for 7 days, in Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Cameron Heights, and Penang. I explored limestone cave temples, and sat inside an Orang Asli aboriginal family's bamboo hut. I blew poison darts from an aboriginal man's blowpipe, shot quivers of arrows from a 25-pound bow in an archery range, and played pingpong by the poolside of the Shangri-

La luxury resort. I was in Singapore for 3 days. I spent a whole day on the Sentosa Resort Island and crossed the breathtaking span between Mount Faber and Sentosa Island in a cable car.

And that, in a nutshell, was my 6-week sabbatical.

LL

BAHA!

By Nonon Flores

SISTER, SISTERS . . . THERE WERE NEVER SUCH DEVOTED SISTERS. REMEMBER THAT SONG? WELL, THOSE WORDS WERE DEMONSTRATED IN A TRUE LIFE SITUATION WHEN 6 LAICO SISTERS (WITH 5 HUSBANDS) WENT ON A 10-DAY BALTIC SEA CRUISE LAST JUNE:

About half an hour after the ship started on its voyage, Jun decided to take a shower. As he stepped out of the tiny bathroom, we noticed water on the carpeted floor. "What did you do?" was my first reaction, and the poor guy was flabbergasted. Then we noticed that the water was practically flowing in from the hallway. It turned out that a pipe had burst in one of the rooms down the hallway. So for a couple of days the carpeting in our cabin was soaking wet. Malu and Irma's was, too, since their room was right next to ours. The housekeeping crew tried hard to dry out the carpeting and the cruise management gave us a \$125 voucher each. But by the third day the carpeting started smelling really musty and the odor was starting to be unbearable. We requested that we be relocated to a different cabin but were told that the ship was fully booked. We had also suggested that the carpeting be changed but were told that it was too difficult to

(continued on page 16)

do that unless the ship was at port for at least two days. That night, after dinner, the Laicos had a conference in one of the hallways, brainstorming on how we could convince the staff to relocate us (Malu, Irma, Jun and me), into other cabins until the carpeting was changed. While we were still discussing this, the Hotel Captain happened to be hurriedly walking by. Tough luck for him because Nini recognized him and practically pulled him back by the collar to the Laico arena and made him listen to the sisters voice their concerns regarding the unpleasant situation.

Malu stirred up his conscience and explained how her friend Irma had just had throat surgery and how breathing in the bacteria from the damp carpeting could cause her to have medical complications.

PeeWee tried a different approach by pleading in a very sweet, childlike voice for him to have pity on us and give us a different room.

Nini and Mitos pitched in by telling him how disappointed we were, since this was our first cruise.

Rory suggested, in front of him, that we each sleep in each of the other sisters' rooms.

With this offer, I requested the Captain to at least provide us with folding beds and we could squeeze in and stay in our other sisters' cabins. I guess this got the Hotel Captain convinced that we were not just playing games; and he knew that to allow us to do such a thing would be violating the fire safety rules. So he excused himself for a minute and conferred with the Housekeeping Manager. When he came back he announced that they were giving Malu and Irma a new cabin, and Jun and I were given, to our surprise, a suite to occupy for the night. Both these accommodations were just for one night because they were allegedly reserved for people embarking at the next port.

So you see the power of such devoted sisters.

Lord, help the mister who comes between us and our sisters

(Someone told me that if you wanted your children to be strongly bonded, you should save their umbilical cords in one jar. Did Mama maybe do that?) LL

ASAWA KO PINAY

by Bill Packwood

THE "GLOBE TROTTING" PACKWOODS WERE OFF ON THEIR SECOND CRUISE IN 2001, ONLY EIGHT WEEKS AFTER RETURNING FROM THE BALTIC ON BOARD THE MS NOORDAM.

This time it was off toward warmer climes in the eastern Mediterranean aboard the MS Rotterdam--the grandest of the "damn" ships of Holland America. Thanks to Doctor Dan, the ship's doctor, and his acknowledging us as legit relatives, doing another cruise was still affordable.

We started our journey in Venice with a two-night stay before we boarded the floating hotel. Hardly respectful to the grandeur of the place, the Doges of Venice would have been shaking their heads if they had seen us dragging our luggage across the cobblestones of St. Mark's Square to get to our hotel. But this seemed to be the only way into this city with no cars.

Nevertheless, it was charming. In the evening, we wandered around the square and listened to 3 different orchestras performing all at the same time in different sections.

After hooking up with Dan and Nini, who had just finished one cruise around Europe, we proceeded across the Adriatic to Dubrovnik, Croatia. This was a very well preserved medieval walled city that had streets of limestone, which now looks like shiny marble, due to years of shuffling feet or galloping horses. We then proceeded south to Navplion and Athens, both in Greece.

I'm never sure whether it's the itinerary or the ever present sumptuous cuisine in the Lido that attracts my asawa to join these cruises. I really think it's the latter. I'd forgotten how much I myself enjoy Greek food, especially the salads. The 999 steps in Navplion are still waiting for Peewee and Edwin's next attempt. (Four years ago, Peewee and Edwin climbed these steps and Peewee was never the sane, I mean, the same, again). Nini also proudly showed us the book Mike Ford wrote, "The Ten Thousand," which is about ancient Greece. If you haven't read it yet, put it on your Christmas list.

From the ruins of ancient Greece we headed East through the Bosphorous straits with Europe on the portside and Asia on the starboard side of the ship. It was fascinating to see it separated by a bridge very similar to our Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. We entered the Black Sea (which is really very blue) and hit the ports of Yalta and Odessa in the Ukraine. Beautiful country, beautiful people! The women are a real fashion parade walking with their spiked heels on cobblestone streets.

Our final stop in the Black Sea was Nessebur, Bulgaria. This was a resort area for the former Soviets. A waterfront, large home can be had for \$165,000. Any interested retirees?

The final stop was Istanbul - truly one of the most interesting cities in the world--a real blend of East and West with a very intriguing history and magnificent architecture. Rory would love to go back because she left many rugs behind. We flew out of Muslim Turkey on Sept 9, and in retrospect, it was just the right time to head home and conclude another great trip with my *asawa ko pinay*. (This was a phrase Nini taught me to say to the ice cream waiter on the cruise, so I could get an extra helping of ice cream). LL

ANG LINIS!

by Nini Elizaga

A highlight of this year for me was Bibot's visit to my house in Morton. "How cle-e-ean!" Those were her actual words. Honest! Coming from Bibot, that beats the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. So there.

Rory says it's only because mine was the first house she came to in her visit to the United States. *Ito talaga si Rory* . . .

LL