



LAICO LINES

ISSUE NUMBER 7

DECEMBER 2001

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RIGHT: (from left) Nicole Fortez, Lizzie David and Joshua David getting some sun on the terrace at the David residence.

ANG ASAWA KONG TALIBAN

by Marnie Elizaga
(*Biro lang yoon.*)

THIS IS THE TAGALOG ISSUE, INTENDED TO BE *BADUY*. This was difficult to put together since your editors are rather challenged in Tagalog literacy. *Baduy* is an important part of Filipino pop culture as well as being a central force to Filipino politics. It is even recognized among Filipinos raised in the States, who might cultivate *baduy* as a form of personal expression--a popular Christmas program act in the '80s was the song, "Peelings-nothing more than peelings." And ask to see the Aloha shirts my brother Rick bought in Hawaii.

We are all very fortunate and blessed with abundance in our family and our clan; not just in material things, but in family cohesiveness, love, faith, health, impressive individual strengths and diverse talents. We enjoy so much the news that you share. We hope that you enjoy this issue and that you will continue to keep in touch with *Laico* (Life) *Lines*, a vital connection to the rest of the *Pamilya*. It has been many years since we met at Dasma, the family seat for many years, but a virtual Dasma is right in your hands. *Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon sa inyong lahat.* Hope to see you soon.

LL





THE HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH

by Lia Silva

Disneyland is supposed to be every kid's "happy place" however when I was a little girl we never were able to go there -- but then there was Dasma. The huge house with the Olympic size pool where all of Lola Luz' grand kids back in the 70's would come together every weekend, holiday and summer vacation. I always bragged about having a wonderful childhood because of this house. I'd like to share some of the memories:

- One time school was called off because of a storm, so my dad dropped off Bambi and me at the Dasma house. He felt guilty about not taking us home. Little did he know when we got there Bambi and I jumped for joy because we saw the Music Room was packed with cousins pillow fighting, screaming, and laughing. Kids were literally bouncing off the walls with the music turned up louder than a siren.

- Each summer was always a blast because at least half a dozen cousins spent their vacation there. We swam all day until the only thing visible was the whites of our eyes. Sometimes we even forgot our swimsuits but that didn't matter -- the water was warm and the sun was out. We always managed to get in trouble when we swam because our favorite dressing room was Tito Popoy's room which had an entrance to the pool -- we always got the hardwood floors soaked, his bed all wet and when we took a bath in his bathtub I don't know how but each time we used one bottle of Herbal Essence shampoo and somehow his shaving cream also managed to get into the tub. So once, he was fed up and he literally put a street sign on the door that said, "Keep Out." I think we were too little to read it because that never stopped us. Oh, except for the legend of the human skull inside his closet.

- Another group of people was stressed out by our presence --

the maids. Lola's house was a land of milk and honey and the pantry was the place to find it. There was an unlimited supply of coke, *barquillos*, cookies, candy and ice cream. The maids tried to keep us out of the kitchen because we were worse than a hungry pack of wolves. The maids tried to hide the keys for the fridge and the pantry but we always found them. One time Tita Malu intervened and locked us inside the pantry to teach us a lesson. When she opened it she thought we'd be in tears -- *yun pala nagpiesta kami* (only to find we were partying in there). On each shelf of the pantry there was a kid sitting with a bag of goodies in hand.

- We also use to harass the maids each time on the intercom wherever we were in the house and say "*Pahinging* (Could you give us) juice, *brojas* and coke float!" "*Pahinging* towels," and so on.



- Our games in that house were the best. Our favorite game of all was called Hiding in the Dark and the perfect place for it was the Library. It had many shelves to hide

in, desk spaces and an air conditioner! The Library was also a favorite hangout because there were lots of gadgets and two phones. Sometimes we would even pick up one of the phones and start laughing *yun pala* (only to discover) Tita Malu was at the extension then she'd say "*P_n_ta* put the phone down!" At the end of each summer I think Lola had to call a repair man for the air conditioner, the typewriter with the missing keys and buy a new set of rubber stamps, office supplies and shampoo the carpet *kasi amoy pawis* (because it smelled of sweat).

- We also had outdoor games. One of the best was playing in the dirt. We always built dams and bridges from dirt. The gardener Mang Juan always had a fit because you'd think a gopher was digging holes in the ground. Another outdoor game we loved was dropping dry ice into the pool because we thought it was so cool, like boiling lava.

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- Christmas was also memorable because we always had to perform a program complete with costumes so we could earn money from Lola. One time I remember my mom forced me to dance "*Magtanim ay di biro*" (Planting Rice is Never Fun) and if I look back my prize was to receive 20 pesos from Lola. So today that's equivalent to 40 cents! Wow, talk about child exploitation!

I have a multitude of memories to share that really shaped a special bond between all of the cousins of my generation. Lola's vision for that house, to make it a family gathering place, was a tradition I cherish and try to practice even here in the US so my kids can create their own "happy thoughts."

LL

DASMARINAS DAYS

by Sarah David Fortez

My childhood was made up of memories of the Dasma house. I can still remember occasionally being dropped off by my mom at Dasma on the weekends. Lia, Jovim, Bambi, Bubbles, Aisa, Carlo, Paul, and Gina were great playmates. It was Lia and Jovim who would sleep over with me at Lola's house. They were really fun to be with.

Lolo would go around in his white boxer shorts and white T-shirt. We would ask him, Lolo, *pahinge ng pera* (Could you give us money)? And he would take out his purse and bring out some coins. He made it a habit to count the grandchildren surrounding him "One, two, three. . ." as he pointed at us. We nicknamed him Mr. Count (as on Sesame Street). He seemed pleased with so many kids running around.

I also remember the house gardener. He was an old man, who would always chew a type of tobacco and spit it out. I am not sure if his name was Mang Juan. He would fondly call me "*Kulot*" (curly) since my hair at that young age was curly. He stayed in his room which was below the library near the garage.

When we would sleep over, we would stay in the green guest room upstairs. It had a view overlooking the pool and the neighbor's pool beside it. Each of us had a bed with matching green comforters. We would pretend we were in a hotel room as guests and use the intercom phone occasionally for some room service. I recall one time when I saw some *camote cue* (fried sweet potato w/ sugar) in that guest room growing mold a week after I had eaten some of it. I suppose it was ignored since the house was too big for the staff to handle.

There was a time when we eagerly discovered a whole closet full of costumes. They were these balloon-type dresses with fancy trimmings. We would twirl around in these costumes and pretend we were Cinderella, transformed into a princess. We would take turns being Cinderella's mother and pretend to kick Cinderella as she bowed down before us.

But of course, who could forget the pool? I had the impression that the swimming pool was almost as big as an ocean. Of course, I was pretty small back then. That was where I learned how to swim. I stood close to the deepest part of the pool and asked Arthur how to swim and he immediately shoved me in



the pool. But after gulping in some water and flailing my arms violently, I eventually got the hang of it.

We would always bring toys to the house. The Barbie dolls would always have a new house depending on which closet in the bedrooms we would use. We learned to use our creativity to make their furniture. Sometimes the bed was made out of a shoebox, or sometimes we would use a regular pillow for their mattress.

The Barbie dolls would also have their leisure time at the beach. Of course, the beach would have to be Lola's swimming pool. The dolls would stay on the top step of the pool and enjoy themselves. I can't forget Bambi's beautiful Barbie doll which was called the Ballerina. She had a white ballerina outfit with a floating short tutu and a tiny gold crown on top of her head. She was beautiful.

If we got hungry, we would head for the kitchen and eat hot-cakes, spaghetti, banana fritters, etc. and drink the ever present Dole or Del Monte juice. I can still remember the taste of frozen sliced bread stocked in the freezer.

The library was also a favorite hangout. We would scan the photos of Lolo's patients with the cleft chins and deformities in their before and after pictures. There was a time when we scared each other and the door suddenly closed which left us children petrified. There were also giant pillows and we would pillow-fight one another.

Christmas was also a day of fun and fear. I really enjoyed the reunions with all the food and *lechon* spread on the table, and especially the opening of gifts. However, I would dread the time after lunch when the program would begin. All the kids were required to dance and sing. I would pray that I wouldn't get called to do a number. Luckily, George, Aisa, Lia and the others were always confident and ready to do their thing. No wonder, up to this day, going onstage is not something I look forward to.

We would also visit Lola's room. It had a king sized bed and a huge bathroom with numerous mirrors. Lola would always go to church. We were all required to go to Mass with her and with some luck, eat in a restaurant after.

Right now, I am busy making sure that my baby will have a happy childhood. I just hope her childhood will be as good as mine!

LL



CASA ACACIA

by Marnie Elizaga

I remember Dasma as it was being built. A carpenter named Roger gave us rides in his wheelbarrow as the workers dug out the swimming pool. We played downstairs on fine new wooden bunkbeds. I once spent the night with an accommodating Tita upstairs in the green room. She brought out a nightlight for me, a little statue that glowed. The rehearsals for the Christmas pageant for 1968 were still in C. Ayala, but the party was at Dasma. Cristina played Mary, Arthur was Joseph, Alfie (who was Ponchit in those days) lay on a pillow as Baby Jesus. I wore paper angel wings from my nursery school and also had a birthday cake that day. Shortly afterward, my family left for America.

The next time I saw Dasma was when I was about ten, when Cristina, Peppy and I accompanied our mother on a monthlong trip to the Philippines. We were awed by the scale and luxury of the place, the swimming pool, the pantries full of snacks and Coke, the two kitchens, the household help, and the surrounding mansions and embassies. Not to mention the parade of

enthusiastic Titas that had to be kissed (never had to kiss anyone in the States) and the bright talented bilingual cousins who swam like fish and danced like pop stars. We enjoyed finding little *butiki* (lizards) on the screens—we would send them flying with a quick tap against the mesh. We congregated with other cousins in the ultramodern Music Room to take advantage of the air conditioning. Cristina had a birthday while we were there and Lola threw a spectacular party with an ice cream cart, cotton candy man, and other amusements, and gave her a diamond ring. At the airport I felt I was leaving my homeland and my people and I wept. I spent the next year begging my parents to let me go back to this paradise to see more, learn more, try St. Scholastica's, and spend more time with Tita Malu, whom I adored.

I got my wish and I lived in Dasma for an entire school year when I was twelve. I remember having breakfast in the kitchen and thinking that the pineapple juice sometimes tasted odd. It took a while before I realized that this was because I kissed Lola on the cheek in the mornings and her night cream with its peculiar fragrance was still on my lips.

Lola loved to go to restaurants. In Spanish restaurants one could predict she would order *callos*. I thought she could probably think of something more glamorous to eat in a fancy restaurant than boiled beef stomach in tomato sauce. But since then I have boiled tripe myself several times with the windows open and the kitchen fan blowing during severe *callos*-craving emergencies no doubt inspired by my memories.

Staying in Dasma, it seemed I came upon new rooms and closets every few months. I opened one door, and there was an

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Chandelier from Italy not Spain.
Arms are of gold plated brass
unlike the Spanish glass that
easily breaks like our old ones
in C. Ayala.

CASA ACACIA
(continued from page 3)

American-style bathroom with floral wallpaper. It was so disorienting I thought if I closed the door I might be lost. That was the powder room. One day, Lola found me walking upstairs to take a shower after swimming, and suggested I

use the poolhouse shower. She showed me the way to the little outbuilding with two bathrooms, one for men and one for women. Tita Malu showed me Tita Mitos' abandoned darkroom, tucked into a corner of the house. One night a maid was leaving and I went with Lola Luz for my first look at the servants' quarters, and there espied the bunkbeds I had played on so many years earlier. I was quite appalled to see that there were just *banigs* (straw mats) over the wooden platforms, no mattresses. I was told that the maids preferred it that way; they wouldn't want to get used to mattresses and then sleep on a *banig* back home.

The closets and cupboards in Dasma were crammed full of stuff: old photography magazines, *Time*, *LIFE*, Christmas decorations, souvenirs, Lolo Jim's old ivory shark-skin suits. The dresser in the guest room was bursting with old report cards. Of course I read them. They were not all A's let me tell you, never mind what your parents claim. At one point Lola had Tita Malu take an inventory of the household furnishings. Lola remembered the provenance of each piece -- the silver light fixtures on the walls from Italy, the chairs from Spain. Tita Malu once pointed out to me the shop in Mabini where the custom wooden furniture had been ordered. When we took some pictures of Dasma out of the family albums in Morton recently, we found Lola had written on the back of each photo details about the furnishings that were special to her. How precious those comments are now.

Grand as it was, 1253 Acacia Road was only emblematic of Lola's greatest achievement, which was raising eleven children and forming the core of the family ties that continue to sustain us.

LL



MEMORIES OF DASMA

JOVIM LAICO:

LOLA HAD THE MOST HUGEST OF EVERYTHING IN THAT HOUSE:

- the biggest pantry (best hiding place).
- the biggest pillows in the music room (you could make a mansion out of them).
- the biggest master bathroom (we'd get there with Lola still in her corset getting powdered).
- the biggest playground (the house itself).
- the biggest half bath (the powder room).
- the biggest cars (huge finned *chedeng*).
- the biggest servants' quarters.
- the biggest parties (hey, it's a big house).

- We (the boys) used to race our Matchbox Cars down the sides of the driveway.
- Lia and I would wet and mix different leaves on the rocks and boulders.
- When the pool wasn't taken care of, it was TADPOLE season!!
- Tito Popoy's room invasions (since it was by the pool).
- THE POOL!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Playing with the intercoms.
- There were always a lot of snackies in the huge pantry.
- The Dasma House was where all the cousins ended up when school was cancelled due to a typhoon.
- Swimming naked in the pool (everyone under 5 that is).
- Lolo's personal stash of toothpicks (new and used).
- The library with Lolo's pictures of his patients.
- Playing "hiding in the dark" in the library, etc.

LL

TERESA (FLORES) DAMOCLES:

Before I sat down to write this article for the annual *Laico Lines* newsletter, I put a lot of thought into my memories of visiting Lola Luz. Since I only returned to the Philippines twice after moving to the USA when I was only a toddler, there are a few occasions I can bring to mind.

Those two visits took place during the Christmas seasons of 1975 and 1983. I still remember how the house in Dasma looked, and how huge the family room was. Of course, I remember the swimming pool and watching the gardener tend to the yard

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TERESA DAMOCLES: MEMORIES OF DASMA
continued from page 4

as I swam around in the pool with Aisa, Lia, and Bambi. I also recall how each phone in the rooms of the house could be used to call someone in another room. Whenever I think of those phones, I remember the time Lola Luz became quite irate with me because I kept calling her in the living room, where she was entertaining some guests at the time. I think I remember one of those guests being a nun.

I still remember how exciting and fun it was on Christmas Day, when the house was filled with lots of Titas, Titos, cousins, food, laughter, dancing, singing, and skits. I had never been around so many relatives as there were that day. After all, I was only 8 years old and had never been around any other cousins or relatives during Christmas. No other Laico relatives live near Bolingbrook, Illinois, even to this day.

I remember much more of my visit in 1983. I turned 16 that year and Lola and Tita Malu were living in the house in BF Homes. I traveled to the Philippines alone that time. My mom followed about two weeks after my arrival. The house was smaller in size, but just as beautiful. Lola Luz was much less active than the last time I had seen her, and all of the cousins, Titos, and Titas were older. Christmas Day saw that house filled with family members, food, laughter, and the Christmas entertainment of skits, singing, and dancing. Just as I had remembered it, back in the Christmas of 1975.

LL



JORGE LAICO

THAT PLACE WAS MAGICAL EVERY DAY. One of my favorite things there was the big rock by the swimming pool. My sister Aisa and I would dunk a whole box of "Skyflakes" crackers into the pool, then mush the crackers into dough, make patties and put them on the big rock which acted as a natural grill. Afterward, when the patties were "cooked," we would ask a younger cousin like Lia or Paul to try them. They were delicious.

Another good memory is of the Matchbox car races down the driveway. They were such short races, but it seemed at that time they went on for miles. Every little boy got into it, so there were always new cars being shown off by different cousins. Always an exciting scene.

There were no snowball fights growing up in Dasma, because of the tropical climate, but we adapted. Although Chong Juan, the old monster gardener, hated it, we didn't care. My brothers and cousins would wet patches of dirt in the backyard and make mud balls, then throw them at each other. Then the gardener would chase us. The best way to get away and clean up was to jump into the pool. On a hot summer day it was the best.

LL



ARTHUR DAVID

I HAVE A BUNDLE OF GOOD MEMORIES of Dasma. As a young lad, to me it seemed like the grandest and biggest house in the world. It was a house fit for a king complete with all the modern amenities in life. Dasma is where the Laico cousins and the Davids got permanently sunburned by swimming every day in the summer. Lolo Jim could be seen doing breaststroke laps every day like clockwork. We would dive to the bottom of the pool to retrieve a one centavo coin much like a dolphin would a dead fish. We would spend many weekends raiding the fridge and giving the maids hissy fits with our mess. It was also our hangout after school where instead of doing our homework, we would race our Matchbox cars on the sloping bank of the driveway. I'm sure some of the scars I have on my knees are from slipping after running up and down the driveway countless times. I remember Lola's cars of which she always had a pair. The finned Benzes, the skinny-tired Renaults and the vinyl upholstered Toyota Coronas. Now that I think of it, I now know where I got my obsession for flies. I remember Lolo Jim chasing flies during outdoor parties in the basketball court. I remember Tito Popoy's really cool bedroom facing the pool and how we tracked water on his parquet floor day in and day out as we used his bathroom instead of the one outside. He was always very understanding, though. I remember the countless hours we spent sprawled all over the floor in front of the living room TV watching Combat in black and white. I remember Lolo Jim's rattan rocking chair as he sat gazing into the garden. I remember Lola Luz's really soft cheeks as I bussed her which felt just like my mom's. Most of all, I remember all the people that lived there that made Dasma a special place.

LL

“BUBBLES, HUWAG MO AKO IIWAN!”

By: Bubbles Juarez-Ponce

EDSEL AND I MET EACH OTHER AT THE RIGHT TIME and the right place. We met each other last year, at the wedding of Alex Silva's brother (Alex is my brother-in-law, Lia's husband), who happens to be Edsel's cousin. This was in June of 2000, only my second month here in the US. I had not met many guys, yet. So it was perfect timing. We were constantly being set up with each other by his cousin. And with that constant push, we would go out frequently with his group. Eventually, it was just the two of us going out. I guess by that time, the attraction between us grew.

Both of us had never thought of getting married yet, especially me. When I got to the US, my main focus was to get a job and earn money. Little did I know that when I got here I would find someone and get married. Friends ask me the same question every time, "Did you ever think that when you got to the U.S. you'd get married?" And my answer every time is a big "NO!" It just goes to show that you never know until it hits you. Here's one big example--ME!

Edsel has proven himself well to me. He would constantly travel all the way from San Jose to Pittsburg just to see me.

He is really *masipag* (hard-working) and *matiyaga* (patient). I guess those two characteristics made me think hard about him. Besides, he is a very good person.

After a few months of going out, and after all the trials and problems we encountered, the more it became clear that he really was serious about me and committed to me. The final moment was when he proposed to me by surprise. He didn't want me to go back to the Philippines and leave him behind. He wanted me to stay and just be with him. That is why he decided to ask me to marry him and it was a big surprise for me. Actually, it was a happy surprise. You know when you watch movies and the girl is teary-eyed and shows a big happiness within her? That was truly how I was. "*Parang sine бага!*" (just like in the movies) I know it sounds corny, but that's how I felt.

So we were off to Vegas after a month and we got married there. No one knew about it because we wanted to keep it between just the two of us, a very solemn secret. Then, later on, we told everybody about it. We plan to have a small celebration with the family next year on February 16, 2002, at the church this time. Don't worry, we still want to share our exchange of vows with you and we hope to see you next year! LL

BAGONG BAHAY, HINIHINTAY “BABES”

by Jorge Laico

ELEVEN YEARS AGO, I CAME WITH 2 SUITCASES, 2 BALLET shoes, \$1400 in my pocket and a determination not to ask my folks, half way around the world, for money. I almost did, when it was gone in 3 months. *Kapit sa patalim!* (Hold on to the blade!) was my motto. Jumping from city to city, one ballet company to another--living as an artist is hard. Starving artist is not just a figure of speech. After 300 different ballets, performing in 40 states, and chasing a dream, I stumbled upon Kansas City. The big town in the middle of nowhere as I call it.

I joined the Kansas City Ballet. I figured that if I was staying here long enough, I should buy a house and not pay rent. So I did. I was so overwhelmed the first 3 weeks. The house needs a lot of cosmetic work. The first month I was so happy I didn't work on it, but just partied and crashed in different rooms. When I woke up, I couldn't believe that I was sleeping in my own place. Never in my life did I expect to be able to do this on my own. Especially after I had fired Erin because she passed the age of 26 (just kidding!!!), I didn't think it was possible. Now, when I wake up, I have a song in my heart and a dance of joy in my body. I always have the music pumping because I can, and jam to it a lot, alone or with friends. I have renovated 6 rooms in 6 months and there's more to do. It's an old house, built in 1919. So I'm trying a mix of the old and the new style. Every day a little fix here and there, but I take time to enjoy it. It's not complete by far because I am busy with the Nutcracker now but it's fully functional, a fully functional babe lair.

I also have the most beautiful tree on the block. That's what my neighbors say. My neighbor's little kids love playing with its leaves. Wish they'd pick them up and bag it for me. The tree is so colorful this autumn. I see it every morning from my window when I wake up, and say to myself, "I am so lucky!" LL

A Tagalog Lesson for an English Teacher

Jeff Villasenor, English teacher: Carlo, what's the root word and conjugation for "to be nervous" in Tagalog?

Carlo Santayana, Tagalog speaker: *Kaba**. To conjugate: *kinaba, kinakaba, kakaba*.

Jeff: What's the root word for "to go down"?

Carlo: *Baba*. To conjugate: *bumaba, bumababa, bababa*.

Jeff: What's the root word for "surprised" or "amazed"?

Carlo: *Taka*.

Jeff: So how do you say "I'm surprised you're nervous because you're going down"?

Carlo: *Kata-kataka na kakaba-kaba ka kasi bababa ka*.

Jeff: Wow! I'll stick to Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

Carlo: In the Philippines, if you're from Famfanga province, you would say: Feter Fifer ficked a feck of fick-led feffers.

Jeff: That's crazy. Carlo, is this your car?

Carlo: *Auto mo ba 'to?*

Jeff: So, now you're teaching me Japanese?

*Real Filipinos never say *a* as in gay but *á* as in abracadabra LL



AN INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN JUDE (JJ) LAICO FLORES

BUHAY ARTISTA

By Corey Damocles

Birth date: December 18, 1971

Nickname: J.J.

Corey: What do you do for a living?

JJ: My career job titles would be: Entertainment Artist Management, Music Producer, Composer, Songwriter, Music Publisher, Recording Engineer and Programmer, Video Editor, and Graphic Designer.

In addition to that, I own a production / management company called Another Level Productions, Inc. Theresa Danet and I started it about 3 years ago. Together we have discovered and developed the careers of many wishing to start a career in the music business.

Corey: How did you get started?

JJ: I guess you can say it all started when I was born with the ability to hear. Throughout my childhood I grew up listening to my mother teaching piano in the living room. Waking up to scales every weekend morning as Mom taught piano to her students, and listening to different students playing the same songs, I couldn't help but figure out when a wrong key was hit. So I can thank her for correcting all those mistakes, for I had no idea that would subliminally be my musical theory lessons. Dad always had the best stereo equipment; you know, the BIG rack of stereo stuff and BIG speakers. Basically, it was the stuff that I wasn't old enough to play with. I never did listen to them very well. I was about 9 years old when I found this one cassette tape, which music was recorded on at the time before CD's came around. I'll never forget that tape. It was a black tape with a white label on it that said "HOT MIX." I put that tape on

and heard this music, which I later found out, was disco music. It was great! The coolest thing was that this song kept going. It had a pounding beat that wouldn't stop. I later learned it was a mix tape--several songs mixed together by a DJ. That was what started my whole DJ fascination. A few years later, music started to become very electronic-sounding. I needed to know how it was done. I found out it was made with a keyboard called a "synthesizer". That word soon became part of my Christmas wish list. I then turned the basement into my electronic playroom. At 11 years old, most kids were using their Commodore 64 (64kb memory) computers for games, but I was using mine to program my synthesizers in order to make music. When I was 17 years old, I had an opportunity to produce my first song in a recording studio. That very first record, "Forever Amor," was released and ended up on Atlantic Records, hitting the pop charts. That's when I knew what I wanted to do.

Corey: Which famous people in the business have you met and worked with?

JJ: Some internationally famous people I've worked with are: Vanessa Williams, Jocelyn Enriquez, and George Lamond. I've also worked on projects for *NSYNC, P.M. Dawn, Brian McKnight, Jordan Knight (New Kids On The Block), El DeBarge and Mariah Carey, as well as every successful artist from Chicago. However, the people whom I am proud of meeting are not the people you would see in the spotlight or the press or the TV. I'm more excited to meet the people behind the scenes, who created the careers of these famous people--the people who started them out, or who own the record labels they are signed to.

LL

MY SWEET LITTLE '69 CADDY.

By: Chris Elizaga

ON SEPTEMBER 29 I PURCHASED A 1969 CADILLAC Calais, for \$750. It had 68000 original miles on it and had spectacular interior and chrome, with very few "bruises." I saw it on the side of the highway about a year ago, and made it a goal to have it in my possession. You're probably wondering how a worthless skate rat, like myself, scrounged up 750 big ones. Well, if Grandma told you that I worked and saved for a long period of time, it's not true. I did it the old fashioned way. I sold something that I never knew I actually owned. The truth is, my brother Brandon and I owned halves of his Chevy Blazer. Immediately after I found this out, I sold my half to him for \$850.

On the test drive, the 472cui, 350 horsepower engine, ran surprisingly quietly. It also had an extremely smooth ride. It accelerated without hesitation, or any "dead" spots. In other words, it can light up the tires like nobody's business.

Now I am in the process of restoring this beautiful piece of machinery. I am only fifteen now, so I have until my sixteenth birthday, when I receive my license, to finish.

LL



Boy Medalla

AKO SI BOY MEDALLA

by Boy Medalla

In 1989, I was hired by Ma'am Bingbing Juarez to drive for *balikbayans* who had arrived for their Laico Family Reunion. I was only 23 years old, and very unsure of the direction of my life. My job was simple... to drive back and forth from BF Homes to Ayala Alabang, and sometimes Makati. The salary and the food were *puede na* (good enough) but I got to see the tourist places.

I wanted to show the *Balikbayans* I was *astig* (macho) so I would drive twice the speed limit, without them knowing. This was especially enjoyable for me as we drove to the resort in Punta Baluarte, where I raced through the narrow, winding highways of Tagaytay averaging 120 km/hr. The looks on the faces of the frightened Fil-Ams were priceless! *Nakakapit sila sa pinto!* (They were hanging on to the doors!) Also on that trip, I was able to see one of Imelda's former homes, which had been converted into a movie set for my idol, Chuck Norris. After visiting that mecca of martial arts movies, I took up Kung Fu, and even earned a green belt.



My idol: JJ Flores

One of the Amboys (American boys) became my idol. He was from Chicago and his name was JJ. His hair had heavy gel and stood perfectly straight up, forming a flat top of stiff, sharp spikes. Like a porcupine. Then he had a long thin ponytail that grew from his nape. *Walastik, pare.* (Cool, man.) When they were walking in Quiapo, *si tin-derang Tasya* saw JJ's hair-style and exclaimed: *Naku, pagnahulugan ng butiki yan, siguradong patay!* (If a lizard fell on his head, he'd surely die!) Shortly after, I began to grow a "tail" out of my hair. I wanted to spike it like JJ,

but the cost of gel was too much.

Another Amboy was a very *payat* (skinny) 14 year old kid called Paolo from New Jersey. His voice was *alanganin* (in between) and he liked reading all the billboards, especially the ones for the Tagalog movies like "*Kung Kasalanan Man*" (If It Were a Sin), *Impaktita* (Impaktita), and "*Ako Ang Jujusga*" (I Will Be The Judge). He read signs like *Bawal Magtapon ng Basura Dito* (Do Not Throw Garbage Here), *Bawal Umihi Dito* (Do Not Pee Here) *Bawal Umistambay Dito* (No Standing By (Loitering) Here). In Quiapo church, he asked why the people were walking on their knees to the altar.

I also really enjoyed driving the Juarez girls, Bambi, Lia, and Bubbles, and their cousins to the discos of Makati. While waiting in the parking lots, I was the envy of all of the other drivers, who would comment on how sexying-sexy and *sosyal* (glamorous) my passengers were. They were jealous because they would be stuck driving Japanese tourists, and *matatabang mga donyas* (fat matrons).

I remember the car breaking down. We were on the outskirts of BF Homes, and the streets were dark. The Laico *balikbayans* decided to take a tricycle home from the gate. Oddly enough, I was able to fix the car and drove home before they got there. They were quite impressed with my mechanical abilities...but in actuality, we were just out of gas.

I especially enjoyed the reunion itself. After sneaking in, I was able to catch the Laico band perform songs by the Cure and the Ventures. There was a game of Laico trivia emceed by Lia and Paolo. The show-stopper, of course, was the big musical number by Pedrito Los Banos. The slick crooner's rendition of "I don't know why I love you like I do" captivated the audience (as well as himself).

Since that month so long ago, I there have been many changes in my life. After driving for several families, dabbling in martial arts, and *bold* films (semi-porno), I decided to clean my act up and run for Congress. I lost, just barely, and decided that politics was not for me. I ended up stowing away on an oil tanker and landing in Los Angeles. There, after dabbling in martial arts and bolder films, I finally pursued my true love, and became – you guessed it – a driver for Snoop Dogg.

Thank you to the Laico family for providing such inspiration! My life would have never been the same without you.

(translated by Paolo Villaseñor)

LL



Mga Sosyal – Disco-bound Paolo, Lia, JJ, and Bambi



KAYANG KAYAK

by Carlo Santayana

I first took to kayaking in January of 2001. I was beginning to get a bad case of cabin fever and needed a diversion – some physical activity to get me outside my apartment. Although I biked extensively when I was a kid, the thought of huffing and puffing on a bicycle really didn't appeal to me now. Besides, I thought, everybody has a road in front of their home on which to bike, but not many people have a river on which to paddle. Might as well make use of it.

So I found a nearby canoe and kayak store that offered lessons, and signed up for a beginner's sea kayaking class. It was mid-January and the climate was heading straight into winter. Only after I signed up and paid the fee in advance did the instructor say that learning how to kayak in the dead of winter was actually better than learning it in the summer, if only because students aren't misled into thinking that the water will be nice and warm. "NOW he tells me," was the thought running through my mind.

Sea kayaking is quite relaxing compared to whitewater kayaking. It is not an activity wherein you are shoehorned into a short, round boat while shooting down the rapid water currents, jumping down waterfalls, and using your skull to destroy boulders that get in your way. Instead sea kayaking involves a longer, narrower boat and paddling out to where the whales and dolphins swim right next to you. The kayak and the canoe are the most ecologically friendly types of watercraft, since gentle paddling hardly disturbs wildlife and does not burn fossil fuel. It does, however, require energy in the form of food. Relaxing as it may seem, paddling is a tiring activity!

It was a brisk but sunny Saturday morning and I drove to the kayak store to attend the five-hour class. We started with the usual safety basics and went to put on drysuits, since it was still too cold to paddle in normal exercise clothes or even scuba wetsuits. Drysuits keep you completely dry except for your feet,

your hands, and your head. They are so air-tight that you will need to "burp" your suit once you put it on, much like what's done to a Tupperware container before being stored in the fridge.

My instructor, my classmates, and I started walking down to the dock. Six Tupperware containers burped and ready to be put into the frigid waters of the formidable Columbia River. We got into our kayaks and followed our instructor out to open water. Maneuvering was tricky with such long, narrow boats (about 16 feet long and 2½ feet wide) but we all got the hang of it. We found a cove and the instructor began to teach us some of his techniques. And then it happened! As we were practicing our turns, I got a little out of balance and in a split-second found myself upside-down, immersed in icy cold water.

The "Eskimo Roll" is a technique invented and perfected by Native Alaskans who would paddle their kayaks out in arctic waters during their hunting trips. Rolling allows them to quickly turn a capsized boat right side up again without having to climb out. Climbing out of their kayaks in freezing temperatures would usually lead to death by hypothermia... or a very bad case of the sniffles at best. Unfortunately, I didn't have any Eskimo blood in me to perform a roll, and therefore needed to bail out in order to get a now badly needed breath of air. The instructor helped me empty the water from the boat, and held it steady so I could climb back in. Later, the instructor made everyone do the same thing in order to practice.

This whole capsizing incident didn't faze me, though. At the end of the class I found that I had thoroughly enjoyed kayaking, and therefore proceeded to the next step: owning my own boat. This proved to be a bit of a dilemma. Because the car I drive is a top-down (ain't life grand?), there was no practical way I could put a 30+ pound kayak on top of it. On the other hand, I didn't want to own an inflatable kayak – those things probably don't last very long. My solution lay in a line of folding kayaks – boats that adhere to the centuries-old, tried and tested, skin-on-frame approach of traditional Alaskan kayaks. These boats were strong, seaworthy, and foldable! I could put an entire boat in the trunk of my car, or take it with me on a plane (although I haven't done this yet).

Apparently, the US Marines use the same boats when certain covert operations or "surprise attacks" need to be carried out. Some of them even practice assembling the boats in total darkness and silence. To achieve this, the parts of the frame in military models are engraved with their part numbers, so a soldier can "feel" and identify one piece of the frame from another, much like experienced Mahjong players can identify tiles without having to look at them. After lots of practice and countless nicks and scratches to my hands and knees, I can now build my boat in nearly the same amount of time it would take a trained soldier to do so. However, I'd need lights and would make a lot more noise than a soldier would.

I usually paddle during the day, sometimes up to 10 miles all in all, on the Tualatin River. This river runs less than 15 yards from the deck of my apartment, and it's a calm, gentle river with

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KAYANG KAYAK

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lots of aquatic and riparian wildlife. Since that cold dunk in January, I've convinced two of my friends to buy their own kayaks, paddled through downtown Portland (Willamette River), downtown Seattle (Lake Union and Lake Washington), and up in the mountains (Trillium Lake near Mt Hood, Mayfield Lake near Morton WA, Haag Lake just outside Portland). And never again have I cap-sized. I've learned to keep my balance; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Paddling at night is an experience all its own. I once joined a few people on a trip down a rural stretch of the Willamette River. It was scheduled during the full moon, which gave us a chance to be in a setting that many will never get to experience. As the river meandered gently through its course, the glorious round moon gave off enough light to reflect off the water and soak either bank in a soft, surreal glow, and the stars seemed to float just above the surface of the water. I paddled in a slow rhythm, and with every glide launched myself into outer space, yet with every subsequent stroke of the paddle brought myself back down to Earth.

Kayaking is something I'd recommend to anyone who is not completely afraid of water. It's a good way to get in touch with nature again, and makes for great exercise, too. It's safe and easy to learn and, if you're renting a kayak for an afternoon or a day, quite affordable. So the next time you find yourself looking for something to do after eating too much lunch at a summer picnic by the lake, see if there are any kayaks or canoes for rent. Don't worry, just keep your balance and it's *kayang kayak*. LL



Maligayang Pasko!

-- from Jimboy, Justin, and MaryAnn Laico.

SMART MONEY

WE'RE PROUD OF NICOLE TANTOCO, 12 YEARS OLD, WHO WON \$12,001 AT JUNIOR JEOPARDY LAST AUGUST. She lagged in the beginning while a bespectacled nerdy-looking guy aced most of the questions. But Nicole caught up when she answered the double jeopardy questions and the math and literature questions. She stayed calm and focused throughout the show.

Nicole is the granddaughter of Coty Tantoco of the Bolinas clan. Nicole's great-grandmother, Lola Nene (Irene) Bolinas, was Lola Luz's sister. Nicole is in 8th grade at Iron Horse Middle School in San Ramon, CA.

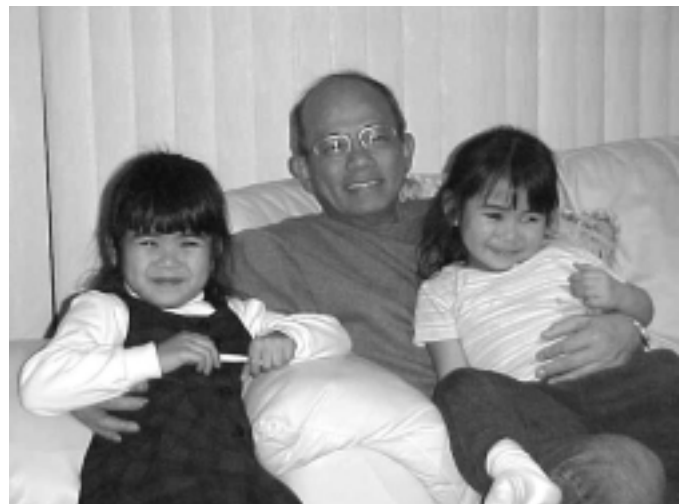
Nicole felt compelled to get the answer to the first question, about religion, because her mother teaches CCD. Then there was a computer question, and she told herself "I need to get this one or I will never hear the end of it from Papa," because her father, Quitin, works for a software company. Nicole's mother is Marilou Vicente, whose family owned a famous religious statue shop in Malate. Nicole has a sister, Isabelle, who is 4.

According to Quitin, the family has always watched Jeopardy, even when Nicole was in the womb! When she fretted as an infant, she would suddenly pacify when the Jeopardy theme played. At age of three, she got her first correct Jeopardy question--a video double, the category was "Chip" and the picture was a chair. Nicole blurted out "Chip and Dale" referring to the cartoon and that was the right answer. From that time on, they knew she would make it on the show one day.

Right: Nicole with Jeopardy host Alex Trebec.



LL



...at Manigong Bagong Taon!

-- from Isabelle, Lolo Chicho, and Kathleen



From left: Paul, Lizzie, Joshua and Joy enjoying the November holidays in Holiday Inn Mimosa hotel.

DIARIO DAVID

By Paul David

On Easter Sunday, Pop Vic treated everyone in the House of David to a sumptuous lunch in Kusina Victoria at the newest mall in Makati -- the Power Plant, Rockwell, Makati. Everyone enjoyed their meal and was stuffed. Thanks, Pop!

- Bunny Town in the House of David. On Easter Sunday when we were at the Power Plant mall, we bought three Easter bunny rabbits for Lizzie, Joshua, and Nicole. At home, under the chico tree in the terrace, I made a very spacious home for them called the Bunny Town. May you bunny rabbits live long and proliferate!

- Massacre in Bunny Town! Just two nights later, the hungry cat got through the screen walls I built. The white with brown spotted bunny rabbit was attacked. I caught the cat still inside Bunny Town but the bunny was already seriously injured. It was alive until the next day but I just had it put to sleep in the veterinary clinic to end its suffering. May you rest in peace, bunny rabbit. Sob!

- On the last weekend of April, Joy and Paul had a blast spending their 4th wedding anniversary on the powdery white sand beaches of Boracay. They did so much -- boating around the island, snorkeling while feeding fish from their hands, swimming in the super clear waters of Club Panoly beach, banana boat riding, sunset sailing, beachwalking from end to end on the 3.8km beachfront, and every meal a banquet. It was incredible, but it may be the last in the Philippines, *di ba?*

- On the first and second week of May, another pleasant surprise, when Rey and Jovits came for a vacation. We all had fun,

fun, fun! First activities were spending time with mother and the kids, then the tireless malling, then the Canyon Woods affair, then a lot of eat-outs, then came the activity-loaded Baguio (wherein Pop played golf and Sarah and Nicole came along too), then came more eat-outs, and then total burn out. They gave up going to Riviera Country Club on the last day because they were all burned out from too much fun. But it was all worth it, thanks to Rey and Jovits' treats. Come back again, guys!

- On the third week of May came another grand reunion of the Los Banos clan. (Though every reunion is always grand). The reunion was the celebration of Lola Ting's 60 years in God's service. Imagine that? The culmination of the event was the launching of the *Los Banos Times*, which was patterned after the *Laico Lines* of course. And guess who made it? Yup, it was Sarah and Paul. They did a great job and everyone was impressed! Each Los Banos representative submitted articles, but the Laicos still contributed the most. Watch out for it because it should be coming your way. Congratulations, Lola Ting, and a job well done by Sarah and Paul.

- On the fourth week of May, someone got an MBA! Hooray! Paul made it to become the first David to follow in Pop's footsteps as a master's degree holder. Paul is a Master of Business Administration. In his Oral Comprehensive Exam, he passed by a unanimous decision of the three-panel members. Special thanks to Joy for her full support, and to everyone who convinced him to finish it. Graduation rites are on June 16. Congratulations, Paul, but where's your job?

- June 13 was the first day of school of the three little ones--Lizzie, Nicole, and Joshua. Lizzie is in senior nursery, Nicole is in junior nursery, and Joshua is in toddler class. What a riot that would be in their school, wouldn't it? Congratulations to the new students and good luck to your teachers!

- I got it! My approved INS papers finally arrived. They looked like gold to me. We (Joy, Lizzie, Joshi-boy, and myself) are all scheduled for the H Visa interview on July 5, 2001. My

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From left: Mr. North Korea (Joshua D.), Ms. Vietnam (Lizzie D.) and Ms. China (Nicole F.) joining forces to fight terrorism? Nope, just parading on U.N. day celebration in school.

DIARIO DAVID

(continued from page 11)

tentative flight to SF is on July 18. Joy and the kids would follow sometime October or November. Watch out, I'm coming your way, Art. Things are really moving now. BTW, my petition is good for three years, the maximum possible. Yippee!

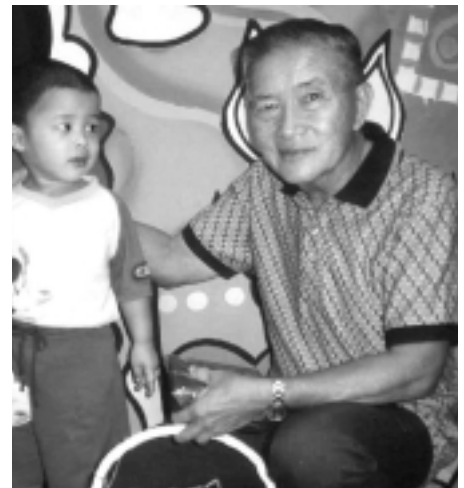
- We were all interviewed by the US Consular Officer on July 5. I got my H1 Visa while Joy, Lizzie and Joshua got their H4 (or dependents) Visas. We were elated!
- I was supposed to go to the States on July 20 because my start date with Clarent Corporation in Redwood City would be July 23. On July 19, the day before my departure, when I had everything ready, I got a call from the company in California telling me that my start date was postponed. A week later, I got a call from them telling me that they had had a mass layoff in which my position was affected. My world just crumbled. I was dismayed, back to square one in my career goals, demoralized, and disoriented. And that's that!
- Free gas! Thanks to Joy, the House of David gets free gasoline every month. On top of the service car (1999 Nissan Sentra) she got from her new job in Kenny Rogers, she also gets an allowance of 200 liters of gasoline every month, and it is not car-specific. Perfect timing for the rising gasoline prices here at P18.6/liter now. Therefore, all the cars here get at least a full tank of gas free every month. Thanks, sweetheart.
- Lizzie, Nicole, and Joshua are off to a good start in school. They have each been awarded a few shining stars, placed on the back of their hands with a color marker pen at the end of the day, since they started school. Ask them why they got shining stars, and they will answer, "Because I'm very good!" Way to go kids. I like your confidence.
- Sarah kicks off an early Christmas bazaar. With her persistent entrepreneurial skills, she joins a weekend bazaar in the Better Living Church on weekends. Not a bad beginning before she joins more serious markets--in Greenhills *tiangge* perhaps? BTW, Nicey too has a store in BF Homes selling RTWs everyday. She's been pretty lucky so far too. Good luck to you future Henry Sy's.
- The family is in business! With the economy struggling for so long now, we are all hoping to make some money. Believe it or not, we are all in multilevel marketing (MLM) schemes. Pop just invested P30k for an MLM that sells health drinks. Sarah invested P2k for the WMA that sells financial plans. (You can ask Gina and Phil about that). I invested P13k for my own fortune in MLM. I call this a rat race now. Whoever makes the most money wins!! The green flag is waved and we are off to the races! Good luck, wannabes.
- It's LIZZIE day tomorrow, October 5! She wants her fourth birthday celebration in school, so that is what she will get.

Hamburgers, spaghetti, loot bags and more await Lizzie's birthday bash in school! Hooray for Lizzie! But there's more because she will have another joint celebration the next day, Oct. 6, in Asha and Henry's place in Makati. Henry is also celebrating his birthday and he wants it with Lizzie-girl too. That's how famous Lizzie is. We love you Liz!

- Joshua has new teeth! That's right. He had his four front teeth repaired with strip-off crowns before they could fall off. He was treated at the Pedia Dentistry Center by one of about only 5 practicing pediatric dentists in the PI. It was agonizing to watch Joshua's treatment but he was sedated and it had an amnesic effect on him. He's happy again now and doesn't remember a thing. Until your next treatment Josh...
- Fun overnight stay at Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel by the bay. That's what Lizzie, Joshua, Joy, and I did last week. Thanks to Joy's Kenny Rogers sales rally, which she organized successfully, we had our own hotel room. (Joy is the Head of Marketing nationwide for Kenny Rogers Roasters, a chicken house. A very busy job.) The kids had so much fun swimming--in the hotel room's bathtub that is. Joy and I enjoyed the gardens of Westin by the bay. Lizzie enjoyed it so much that she really wants to go back again. Could this be the start of her formation for good taste?
- Mommy Ching is fine! She just got the results of her routine blood tests and everything seems normal. Stay strong, Mommy, we love you!
- Last but not least, someone is getting a new job!! That's right, I just got an interview yesterday with the numero uno cellular company in PI--Globe Telecom, owned by the Ayalas. Manager position, pa! It turns out that my old boss from Islacom is there now looking for a few good men. And he says I'm one of 'em. My papers should be processed with HR within the week. But as you know, it ain't over till the fat lady sings. So this time, I'll wait for my first pay check before I throw out a party.

- I am doing project management for wireless data services at Globe-Telecom. I am happy here and doing well. Thank the Lord for that.

- Sarah adds to Diario David that Nicole, her daughter, can sing the whole Barney Song. (I love you, you love me, we're a happy family...)



Joshua and Lolo Vic bonding on Easter Sunday celebration in The Plant Mall, Makati.



Rey, Jovits (with Mother's Day bouquet) Lizzie, Joshua, Ching, Vic.

LIFE IS A ROUND OF GOLF

by Vic David

Since 1998 when the health condition of my wife, Ching, deteriorated from bad to worse, leaving her bedridden, our children and their respective wives in the States decided that every year they would visit their Mom back home staying about 2 weeks.

Nineteen ninety-nine was the most memorable when all our 6 children, 3 of whom have been in the States, were reunited after almost a decade of separation. To commemorate the event, our U.S.-based children hosted a grand party inviting all the P.I.-based Laico families, my only sister's family, our close neighbors and CFM members of Sun Valley. A Mass for the sick celebrated by our parish priest, Fr. Bernard McEachern, highlighted the affair.

This year, 2001, Rey and Jovits were the first to visit us from May 3 to 14. It was definitely a fun-filled and memorable vacation. Our first outing was a whole day enjoyment of most of the amenities of Canyon Woods Resort, the newest 5-star resort in Tagaytay. After touring the 2 modern clubhouses and taking a hearty native lunch, adults and children went to their desires--swimming, jacuzzi, billiards, pingpong, table hockey, movie, and toyland. Everybody so enjoyed the games that we were the only ones left in the game rooms staying up to past 9 in the evening. Rey and Jovits wanted to stay for another day but unfortunately the furnished houses were fully booked. Since it was the peak of summer, they selected Baguio as the ideal place to spend 3 days of their vacation. As in Canyon Woods, the couple invited Toto and Luz and their 4 children, Sarah and her daughter, Nicole, and me. This time Paul and Joy and their 2 children decided not to go.

We arrived in Baguio in the early morning, and immediately checked into a 3-bedroom cottage at Camp John Hay. We had a hearty lunch at Barrio Fiesta restaurant. Then proceeded to Burnham Park spending the time boating, riding bicycles and tri-cycles. We spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying horse-riding at Wright Park. Our dinner was in an American restaurant at Camp John Hay, Lone Star, which proved to be the most expensive in town. For me, Thursday was the best day of my visit to

Baguio. Early in the morning, our driver brought me to Baguio Golf & Country Club to play golf through the kind generosity of Edwin Villanueva. The golf course is first class, comparable to those in the States, reminding me of courses I played in Walnut Creek, Concord and Pittsburg. It is a short course, though, with a par of 61 but with very difficult fairways--very narrow openings and steep up and down terrain. In spite of the fact that I was a total stranger to the course and a high handicapper at that (26 - my PNGC handicap), I had a creditable score of 89 or a net score of 63, just 2 shots over par. Rey's entourage arrived by noon but we played bowling, billiard and pingpong in the game room of the Club for about 3 hours. Then we had an appetizing lunch at a first class Chinese restaurant downtown on Session road. Later, we bought quite a lot of cheap CDs and VCDs while others proceeded to go shopping in the public market. At night, we had a very sumptuous dinner at a native restaurant near Burnham Park. Friday, I woke up very early to play golf again at Camp John Hay golf course. But Mother Nature was against me. A depression started to hit Baguio so the golf course was no longer enjoyable to play. I just toured the newly built Ifugao designed clubhouse and invited our entourage to do the same. Then we spent the rest of the morning playing billiards and mini golf at the game area of the camp. After lunch, we proceeded to return home.

Everybody had just so much of everything that we were so exhausted and lost the appetite for more fun. Toto's daughter even caught flu. I believe all enjoyed gloriously our many adventures. I, for one, consider it as a very heart-warming, beautiful and memorable experience.

Gina and her boy friend, Phil Paras, were the second to come. They stayed with us from August 25 to September 8. A day after their arrival, I invited them together with Paul and Sarah and their families to a 2-day stay at the 5-star Canyon Woods Resort at Tagaytay. On the way to the resort, we stopped and dined at the most popular restaurant in Tagaytay, Josephine, well-known for its mouth-watering native cuisine. Tourists have been attracted to this place not only for its food but also for its breathtaking view of the world renowned Taal volcano within a lake. Phil, who hosted the lunch, ordered too many viands so we had to bring home a number of leftovers. Upon arrival in Canyon Woods, I managed to arrange for a first class 2-bedroom duplex with 4 levels. Most of us enjoyed the heated indoor swimming pool and jacuzzi. After taking our *merienda-sena*, Paul's family left for home leaving only Gina, Phil, Sarah and myself for another day of enjoyment. In the main clubhouse, we enjoyed with gusto the table hockey, billiard and pingpong games. But the top event of the day was our organic lunch deliciously prepared by Sonia's Garden. The bill was a little stiff but the set recipes of appetizer, fresh home-grown salad, and Italian pasta with 6 or 7 side dressings to give us the option to select any mixture that suits our individual taste induced us to eat to the full. For dessert, we were served sweetened fried sweet potato slices, fried saba and other native sweets. To help us digest, we were served Japanese tea mixed with aromatic leaves. On September 7, the eve of Phil's departure, I brought

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Gina, Phil and Sarah to Riviera Golf & Country Club, Silang, Cavite. While Gina and Phil went swimming, I played golf. We enjoyed the new 5-star clubhouse, the scenic golf course layout, and its surrounding thick vegetation as well as its rolling terrain similar to Tagaytay and Baguio. That evening, the Villanuevas invited all of us as well as all the Laico relatives to a sumptuous dinner at the new 5-level National Sports restaurant in Greenbelt, Makati. We relished not only the food but also the lively band and its singers.

The 3rd to arrive was Art & Grace. They arrived near midnight November 15. Their first five days were spent with Grace's family in Urdaneta Village, Makati. During the weekend, Art & Grace's family enjoyed the white sand beach & 1st class resort in Ternate, Cavite, Caylabne Bay Resort. The last four days with us were just too short to give them more fun-filled adventures at a leisurely phase. On Wednesday, November 23, Art & I left early for a whole day of golf at the Riviera Golf & Country Club. Being a weekday, I thought we could play immediately upon arrival at the easier more forgiving golf course designed by Fred Couples. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Our only option was to play on the most challenging course, by Bernard Langer, and to wait for more than an hour before we could start. This course with a par of 72 was studded with big & deep bunkers; most fairways were rolling & slanted at the sides; the roughs were very thick; & there was a good sprinkling of ravines & water hazards. As if adding insult

to injury, the wind was abnormally strong that day which probably added about 10 points to our scores. After 18 holes, I had a bloated score of 117 but Art even surpassed my score by 3 points. The next day, Art & Grace had a hair workout at David's Salon & later went shopping at

"Don't you know that playing golf is actually your life in capsule form? All through our lives, we try to conquer ourselves & experience defeats, frustrations & victories along the way. After all, our greatest challenge is not others but ourselves..."

Alabang Town Center. In the evening, most of the Laico relatives attended the buffet dinner hosted by the Villanuevas at their Alabang residence in honor of Art & Grace. On Friday, November 23, Art & I again played golf with two village friends at the easier Philippine Navy golf course in Fort Bonifacio. This time Art exacted his sweet revenge by defeating me at my home golf course where I've been playing at least once a week. That's golf. Don't you know that playing golf is actually your life in capsule form? All through our lives, we try to conquer ourselves & experience defeats, frustrations & victories along the way. After all, our greatest challenge is not others but ourselves. In the evening, Art & Grace treated the David family & Grace's mom to a well-known Thai restaurant in Glorietta, Makati. Later we proceeded to Malate to listen to a live band in one of the newest disco clubs. They were kidding me that at my age I could still enjoy the loud & wild music of the young. On their last day, Art & Grace together with all members of the David household went to Tagaytay. Our trip was punctuated by an overheated car which forced us to stop at a car service station in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. We had a preset lunch at Sonia's Garden, well-known for their expertly prepared organic food. We left the place fully satisfied & happy. For the rest of the afternoon, we went swimming in the heated pool at Canyon Woods Resort. Paul & I also enjoyed the massaging effect of the jacuzzi adjacent to the pool. In the evening, we had the full company of Grace's family in our house exchanging pleasantries & handing over our pasalubong to relatives living near Silicon Valley.

Last but not least, all our children & their respective partners, who visited us, were happy to see that their Mom's health has never been better than at present. Ching has added some weight; her face has become pinkish; her skin, smooth & clean; & it appears that her recurring cold & loud groaning have left her. Her taking of Intra, an herbal food supplement, might have helped her.

Happy holidays to one & all!

LIHIM NI ALING CRISTI

Bibingka Galapong de Nonon

by Nonon Flores

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups self-rising flour
1 cup evaporated milk
1/2 cup water
1 1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
Slices of cream cheese (your preference)
2 salted eggs
grated coconut

Prepare 2 aluminum pie pans: Line with wax paper and banana leaf -- trim around the edges to fit the pan. Mix the first five ingredients together till well blended. (By hand! Use your muscles, not the electric mixer.) Pour into the prepared pans. Top with the slices of cream cheese and slices of salted egg.

Optional: Beat 2 more eggs and pour on top to get a golden brown color. (I don't do this--need to cut down on cholesterol.)

Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until lightly brown.

Optional: After baking, immediately spread 1/4 stick of butter on the top while still hot, and sprinkle with sugar. Broil in the oven if you want a little burnt (*sunog*) effect, but this step is very delicate because it could easily burn if you forget about it just because the phone rings, or you suddenly have an Alzheimer's attack, you know? Should be in the oven for just about 2 minutes, or keep checking until you get the desired appearance.

When done, (*sa wakas*) remove the wax paper liner from the bottom, how to do it is up to you--use your imagination and originality--too challenging!

Sprinkle grated coconut on top before serving.





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

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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



Edwin and Peewee

Copenhagen, Denmark, June 9, 2001

Edwin: I was ambivalent about leaving because we are going through a merger process and it is not a good time to be away. But I have been looking forward to this cruise all year long. We had such a great time on the Mediterranean cruise that the sisters planned on doing it again with a larger group. We're a group of 16, meeting in Copenhagen from 7 different points of the world. We coordinated by email for arrival times and hotels and surprisingly, it all worked out.



Rick

Copenhagen, Denmark, June 10, 2001,

Rick: OK, let's join in—everyone's doing it—take a picture with the famous Mermaid. Boy, Tito Randy loves snapping photos with that miniDV. Cool, the smokestacks and storage tanks will make this picture a little different from everyone else's. Reality is not as picturesque as the postcards, but usually more interesting. I should rent The Little Mermaid on DVD sometime. OK, check that off the list. Let's get back before we miss the boat.



Malu

Talinn, Estonia, June 12, 2001

Malu: This is our first stop. They're selling all sorts of military paraphernalia, like uniforms and binoculars, in this flea market. I feel like I'm in a military camp and am about to be annihilated. It also reminds me of James Bond movies with Russian spies. Imagine, I'm in a country I'd never even heard of. I can't believe they have the cheapest internet cafe.

BALTIC CRUISE Hanggang Dulo ng Daigdig



Dr. Dan

St. Petersburg, Russia, June 13, 2001

Dr. Dan: Some Russian person similar to Julius Caesar was stabbed here. This is my 7th year with Holland America and I've lost count of the cruises. The walls and ceiling of this church are covered with millions of colorful mosaic tile. The flea market behind the church has all sorts of Russian Army stuff. I bought a Lenin bust and old Russian hammer and sickle flag and now I am at a loss as to where to put them.



Paolo

**Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg, Russia, June 14, 2001**

Paolo: I'm lagging behind the group but I have to take a longer look at this priceless da Vinci painting. This has got to be the most overlooked museum in the world. I am actually in the heart of the former Soviet Union, taking in a breathtaking treasure that has survived centuries. Before this cruise, I knew nothing of this magnanimous collection of valuable art.



Mitos and Randy

Helsinki, Finland, June 15, 2001

Mitos: This was at Sibelius Park and that hideous sculpture behind us is a monument to who else? Sibelius, the famous Finnish composer. From the looks of the monument, was he Hideous Sibelius? Helsinki is the land of Nokia, Marrimeko, Gevalia coffee. Their language is totally incomprehensible. It was a glorious summer day and people were all smiles and basking in the sun. They had a farmers market and I found chanterelle and morrel mushrooms which got all crushed in my suitcase.



Bill and Rory

Talinn, Estonia, June 12, 2001

Bill: Oh no, don't tell me Nini is escorting another tour! There goes another group of lost tourists. Bahala na. On our way downhill, some guys in black leather jackets were crowding me in the alley and I almost got pick pocketed. I told the thieves *asawa ko Pinay* (My wife is Pinay—a Filipina) and they ran away.



Bob and Lily

Dutch Dinner aboard the ms Noordam, June 16, 2001

Lily: I look like a Dutch woman (*Amis*) or a French maid, but never mind, it's fun! We've gone dancing every night and the Piet Hein lounge has become our favorite hang-out. This is my first cruise (though not Bob's) and I'm really enjoying it! Among the places we've seen, Finland is my favorite. I hope I look skinny in this picture even after all the fabulous dinners.



Nini

St. Petersburg, Russia, June 13, 2001

Nini: The museum curator took us around for a personal tour and was very happy with my one dollar tip. Just before we went aboard, there was a Navy band playing and a group of about 100 young cadet sailors, in their uniforms, and mostly about 15 years old, were leaving. This is a Russian Naval flag which is still being used. We're not supposed to be wandering around St. Petersburg on our own without a visa, but we just took a taxi and the taxi driver is our guide.

Till the Ends of the Earth



Group in bus

On the bus to Berlin, Germany, June 18, 2001

Nonon: I'm glad I sat here. I'm sure to be in the picture.
 Malu: This is awesome! We dock in Warnemunde, Germany and a private tourist bus is waiting for us Laico cruisers to take us around Berlin. This is the Laico style!
 Rory: Boy am I glad I'm now sitting here with my sisters while that lady we picked up to join our private tour of Berlin, is in the front of the bus. She talked my ear off for 2 hours, while I enviously watched everyone else sleep. Poor Edwin got an earful too. Wonder if it was worth the discount we got cuz she joined us.
 Paolo: Major hang-over. I feel sick.



Jun and Nonon

Visby, Sweden, June 17, 2001

Nonon: I'm glad Jun and I decided to just enjoy the day on board and hang around by the deck. We were getting quite exhausted and felt we needed a break from all the sightseeing. Today, we were able to catch up with our sleep and we savored the different activities on board. I feel fresh and relaxed!!



Irma

On the bus to Berlin, Germany, June 18, 2001

Irma: What a life!! *Kain, pasyal, exercise ng kaunti, tulog—bakasyon grande talaga.* (Eat, sightsee, exercise a little, sleep—a real grand vacation) It's really nice to go on vacation with the Laicos. They know how to travel first class. Private bus, our own tour guide, no rushing, and the price is unbeatable! *Magaling magtawad si Tita Rory, bilib na ako.* (Rory drives a hard bargain.) *Sayang* (Too bad), I wish my throat felt better so I could join them *sa daldalan* (gossiping) up front. Anyway, I might as well sleep since I have this whole row to myself. Zzzzzzzzzzzzz!!!

NAPABAYAAN SA KUSINA

EATING ACROSS AMERICA

by Bibot Santayana

Visiting family in the States is always a pleasure. Last summer, the main purpose of our visit was, of course, to see Carlo whom we had not seen since November 01, 1999. But half of the time that we spent in the US, we were with the rest of the family, meaning everybody down the line from Ching's children to Malu. While we visited with Alfie and Helena, the only ones we missed were the rest of the Jun and Nonon Flores family, they being way out in Chicago. We had a great time and, as usual, they brought us to fine restaurants and cooked their *pambato* dishes. That's not surprising as we Laicos are "good *chowun*" as Lola Luz would say. This is what I will talk about -- the fabulous food we were served and the gorgeous kitchens that I got to see.

Mariel and I arrived in Seattle in April and right after we checked through customs, there was Nini with the biggest smile and the warmest hugs. Nini toured us around Tacoma and Seattle which gave us a chance to visit the charming homes of Gumby and Marnie. One very interesting place she showed us was the Pike Place Market in Seattle. It had lots of fresh produce, the most colorful flowers and a wide variety of seafood. One seafood shop had very entertaining fishmongers who would pass the fish like a football, catching everyone's attention. They had the ugliest fish on display, an enormous monkfish, which they had fixed in such a way that the mouth would snap when someone takes a closer look. After watching their little show, we left with our dinner in tow -- a huge cut of fresh salmon.

NINI'S KITCHEN

Back in Morton, Nini set about preparing the salmon in her cheerful open kitchen. Nini's kitchen is newly refurbished with cabinets done in a subtle rosy peach color and halogen lights that can make the most harried cook look like a queen. She had her old kitchen dismantled and brought down to the lower level of the house. She's the only one with 2 kitchens, both clean kitchens; "dirty kitchen" is not found in her vocabulary. In the new kitchen, I was most impressed with her range. The surface was like white glass which would glow red hot when turned on. No problems in cleaning out drippings that get in between coils or gas burners. Remove a portion of the top and attach a grill and it's an indoor barbecue. Just before the salmon was ready, Carlo arrived (from Portland) and we all sat down to a most delicious dinner. Nini cooked the salmon in a light soy sauce, some ginger and green onions. It looked very simple but the combination of flavors was excellent, so that not one flavor overpowered another. At one other time, she served a perfectly grilled steak. That's when I saw how her range can be an indoor grill. The steak was grilled just so that the juices were locked in and the seasoning brought out the flavor of the meat itself. No need for expensive Black Angus beef.

IN NEW YORK, MITOS BROUGHT US TO Carnegie Deli for the famous Pastrami Sandwiches. There's nothing like it. It's hundreds of pastrami slices between rye bread, enough to sustain you through one week of walking in Manhattan. She also brought us to

a new restaurant named Union Pacific for haute cuisine. Mito and Randy are the gourmets in the family. Being so close to New York, they can indulge in this luxury and try a couple of restaurants whenever they are in New York. In Union Pacific, we started with an appetizer of *foie gras*, followed by asparagus with porcini mushrooms, grilled sirloin with lemon grass and horseradish dressing and

fresh greens on the side, capped with creme brulee with grapefruit sorbet for dessert. Unforgettable! But equally delicious was the dinner that Mito fixed at home the night before we left for San Francisco.

THE GOURMET'S KITCHEN

Mito's kitchen is a gourmet cook's dream. Her pantry is so well-stocked. It's the only kitchen I know of with 4 different kinds of salt, 6 kinds of vinegar, several bottles of cooking wine, and herbs and spices that I would not know how to use. Thank goodness she didn't make me cook otherwise I would have ended up with "confusion cuisine" instead of "fusion cuisine". She even has a marble slab for preparing chocolates, which I presume, Jeff the chocoholic puts to good use. She recently upgraded her range and dishwasher. Her range is state of the art. One time I was going to heat up the oven for a few minutes to hold the food and keep it warm until serving time. I thought I had an ingenious idea. And then Mito told me that it wasn't necessary and showed me the holding section of her range. Was I impressed!

On our last night in New Jersey, Mito served a fantastic dinner for some guests and us. She cooked filet mignon, steak marinated in a tamarind/plum sauce, baked salmon with fresh dill, grilled peppers, steamed asparagus, calamari salad, and key lime pie, assorted cheeses and breads, including a delicious olive bread. It was a fantastic dinner, but what was amazing was how she prepared it with no fuss. I never saw her running around in the kitchen.

KUSINA NI AURORA

Rory's kitchen is one part of her house that she's very happy to be in. Rory loves to cook and while we stayed with her she was so enthusiastic about cooking because there were two other people to enjoy it. Her kitchen has an exhaust feature which comes up in front of the range or disappears under the counter at the touch of a button. You hear the James Bond theme in your mind as it does that. She also has a faucet with instant boiling water which saves a lot of time. Her kitchen's colors are very similar to Nini's, but she was very quick to point out that Nini was the one who copied her color scheme.

Out of Rory's kitchen came a variety of specialties for breakfast, lunch and dinner. To give you an idea: man-sized Spanish omelets, eggs Benedict, chicken almonidine, giant scallops grilled in that ubiquitous George Foreman grill, roast leg of lamb, lentil soup, salads created with the most imaginative combinations, tiramisu, profiterole clusters topped with ice cream and chocolate syrup. Bill was Rory's assistant when it came to grilling any



Nini's kitchen

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NAPABAYAAN SA KUSINA
continued from page 19

thing and he outdid himself when he grilled an enormous steak from Harry's Ranch perfectly. While with Rory, with whom we stayed the longest, I acquired the *napabayaan sa kusina* look.

As if her cooking were not enough, Rory also brought us to her favorite restaurants, among them The Steps of Rome, The Forge in the Forest and The Tuck Box (in Carmel), and Il Fornaio. When Via arrived from Spain, Malu used the occasion to treat Via, Mariel, Rory, Irma and me to a sumptuous crab dinner at The Crustacean. We pigged out on calamari salad with papaya, crab with tamarind sauce, crab with garlic and pepper and garlic noodles. We wiped out 4 gigantic crabs, just 6 of us, with no regrets. Good *chowun!*

I COULD GO ON AND ON TELLING YOU about the dinners and lunches we had with the rest of the family, but I would be remiss if I failed to mention our children's wedding anniversary treat. Carlo, Anton and Mariel treated Rene and me to a most memorable dinner in San Francisco which Carlo arranged -- from the transportation, to the menu, to the champagne. It was a belated treat because Carlo waited for Rene and me to be together in San Francisco.

On Saturday evening, June 09, a stretch limo picked us up from Orinda and took us downtown to the Embarcadero, to a restaurant named The Red Herring. I felt like the wife of a wealthy oil sheik riding in that limo which was big enough to hold a wedding party. We were led to a table right by the window looking out to the Bay Bridge and San Francisco Bay. We had an appetizer of mussels cooked in tomato, basil and jalapeño, a smoked tomato soup, Ahi Tuna with Daikon Radish Salad, and Roasted Maine Lobster with Yukon potatoes, washed down with a delicate bottle of Gewurtzraminer. The dinner scored a "10." The evening was capped with a bottle of champagne. The limo took us back to Orinda, both of us heady with the good food and wine, thrilled and overjoyed that our children gave us an evening that we will always treasure.

LL



Via and Mariel -- Giant Crabs



Rene and Bibot at The Red Herring

COLEGIO GASTOS *SHOPPING 101*

by Mariel Santayana

OUR PLANE LANDED IN THE STATES ON APRIL 19, 2001 at exactly 12 noon. By 4:00 PM I was already at the mall buying a pair of shoes. This is the story of my trip to America

The first time I set foot in TJ Maxx, I was overcome with so much emotion. Aisles and aisles of clothing beckoned me, calling out my name! I never felt so much pressure in my life. It was an hour 'til closing time, and there was no way I could go through all those tops, skirts, pants and bags in sixty minutes! It was just too much for a girl like me. I suddenly found myself in a daze in the men's section where Carlo was browsing. He looked at me sheepishly and asked, "Why are you in the men's section?" I raised my head and almost wept, "I don't know!" I was getting so confused! Carlo, being the good older brother that he is, agreed to take me back. The next day, I spent an entire afternoon in TJ Maxx and it was heaven! I couldn't believe I was shopping for clothes with a grocery cart. I was especially proud of myself for buying a bag for only \$50. I saw the exact same bag here in the Philippines and it cost \$160!

When I think of paradise, of nirvana, of utopia, I don't visualize images of lush, green forests with birds singing and angels dressed in white - dancing, laughing and twirling around. I see H&M. H&M, in all its glory, was the only thing that compelled me to wake up early during my entire stay in the US. By 9:00 AM, I was out of the hotel, walking by myself to 5th Avenue. My mom was astounded! Her incessant nagging could never get me up in the mornings, only H&M had the power to do that.

I also fell in love with the Meier and Frank store in Portland! Everything I bought was on sale. I bought a Nine West bowling bag for \$25.00. I saw a smaller version of the bag that I bought in the Nine

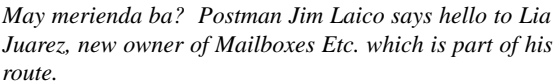


Mariel passed Shopping 101 with flying colors

West store here in the Philippines and it cost more than \$50. I was so happy!

So... 6 pairs of jeans, 27 tops, 11 belts, 4 pairs of shoes, 13 bags, 2 pairs of shades and a helluva lot of makeup later, my plane lands in Manila at 10 in the evening. After convincing customs officials that I really didn't buy more than \$200 worth of goods in the States and that there's nothing inside my huge balikbayan box but bubble wrap, I was back home by 12 midnight. The next day at 4 in the afternoon, I was... you guessed it... back at the mall!

LL



by Lia Silva

In my research I found that this was a good fit for my skills and experience--it was either this or making sandwiches. Subway is the No.1 franchise in the food service industry; this is No.1 in non-food. The interesting part is that we ended up purchasing a location in Pittsburg, CA right next to the subdivision that was formerly "Laicoville." I've been having a great time with this business although I haven't seen real dollars yet. Hopefully some of Lola Luz's genes are in my bloodstream and I can be as successful as her. By the way, we try to LL be anthrax-free!

by Jovim Laico

(continued on page 22)



Rejected package



Akala'y bomba, bagoong pala -- A bomb? No, it's bagoong!

GOING POSTAL

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exercise. Bosses do come out and check on you once in a great while. First of the month ambush (checks from welfare, SSI, unemployment, disability, etc). Twelve hour days. Anthrax scares. Etc.

Being a mailman benefits me now and much later. The beginning was really tough for me! But now, I get paid to exercise which is good for a diabetic like me. Sick leave hours accumulate rapidly for those postally needed stress leaves. Vacation hours pile up just as fast. Uniforms and stuff are free! Most of all, retirement will be SWEET!

Oh, yeah, lastly we don't get free stamps! (BUMMER!)

LL

NAKAGAT NG TAO, PAKAKAGAT SA ASO

by Malu Laico

I went postal (*nasiraan ng ulo*). I remember receiving a flyer in the mail one day that said the US Postal Service was hiring Temporary Casual Carriers -- meaning people to deliver letters for the upcoming holiday season. I thought, why not, seems like an easy job and easy money, right? Have fun reading my story and you tell me if it's a fun job.

Their requirement was a 5 year DMV driving record and to fill out the application form at the Concord Post Office. So very early that Monday morning, I applied for my DMV driving record, which took an hour and a half in line and just 10 minutes for them to process. They asked me if I wanted a 3-year record or a 10-year record. Of course I had to ask if there was a price difference and they said no. So I got the 10-year driving record and proceeded next door to the Post Office. I had to fill out the forms they gave me, and for me that was the very first time I've ever experienced filling out so many job application forms. It's like signing your life away! Usually it's like 1-2 forms only, but I filled out like 6 pages. Then they tell you that you'll receive a call from them. Yeah, right! Like they'd really call.

WORKING FOR THE FEDS

I got their call . . . oh my gosh . . . I could not believe what I was hearing over the phone. I was so excited! I got myself a job working for the Federal Government. I got an assignment in San Ramon, CA after another interview. And on another day, I went to the Main Post Office in Oakland for more forms to be filled out and some finger printing to be done. They scheduled us for a drug test and a physical examination. I started orientation on the 22nd of October. That was a whole day affair but that was all right because you get paid to attend. That was held in another Oakland Post Office. I'd never been to so many post

(continued on page 23)



Mele Kalikimaka! From left: Gumby, Joel, Kathleen, Marnie, Nini, Dan, and Rick Elizaga (with Hawaiian friends) celebrate the successful completion of yet another issue of Laico Lines at the Old Lahaina Luau in Maui.

NAKAGAT NG TAO, PAKAKAGAT SA ASO
continued from page 22

offices in my life. And to my surprise, the next day we were to report for Career Training in the San Ramon Post Office.

Here goes my Training Story: Our training was scheduled for only 3 days. But this Postmaster in San Ramon was just so happy to have 5 temporary trainees in his office. So it actually lasted for one whole week. The first day was all lectures about getting ready to be bitten by dogs. He kept stressing that dogs are very territorial inside the house and we should learn how to cover our neck and head when dogs attack. Then he talked about someone who might point a gun at you and take the van and all the mail--just give him the van and whatever else he asks of you including your jewelry. He also mentioned bomb threats, and that all the mail should be considered as suspicious mail. All day long I was asking myself, "What the heck am I doing, listening to this guy and scaring the heck out of myself?" But again I kept telling myself, it's just a temporary job, to keep me busy, and a new experience ... I can make it. By the way, that first morning we had coffee and donuts and they really gave so much attention to us. On my second day, they showed us around the post office and showed us how the mail was sorted out by the machine and manually. They showed us the vans and how they were loaded, and all the exciting things that the letter carriers do from the time they report to work. That day we could not wait to do hands-on training. This time no more donuts were being served. No more coffee. After lunch, which was for 30 minutes, the Postmaster said it was time for us to all experience how to deliver the mail. So, we thought we would get to drive the vans. Wow! How exciting!

YOUR MAIL'S READY – GET IT YOURSELF !

Yeah sure, enough of excitement and thrills! The Postmaster loaded all the mail and boxes into his pick-up truck and asked us to ride the other official car, a service car of the US Post Office; he dropped us all in one area and showed us how to carry the satchel (bag) and all the letters, fliers, magazines and what-have-you mail with one hand and use the other hand to get it all into the mail slots. Can you imagine, I was carrying on my shoulder this super heavily loaded satchel with tons of magazines, my hand holding a bunch of mail, wearing a USPS (United States Postal Service) cap on my head, sweating like crazy at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, temperature 88 degrees, and wearing a long sleeved shirt because who would have thought we would have an Indian Summer that day. I walked the whole block to get rid of all that mail as fast as I could. And when I finally did, here came the Postmaster telling me to get the other batch of mail from the back of the truck and to deliver it all to the respective addresses. Oh my gosh! I'd thought I was all done! I just felt like sitting down on the pavement and throwing all that mail or just shouting in the middle of the street, "Hey, you guys, your mail is ready, come and get it!" That whole load of mail was good for one person's deliveries for the day. But the Postmaster divided it between 5 people, and we finished delivering it in 3 1/2 hours. I delivered mail that day for 3 blocks and those were

not one street after another. It felt like one block after the other. When I got home that day, I had the best sleep ever. Good thing I had a lot of leftover food for dinner that night. I could not imagine preparing dinner after all that hard work. Oh, I forgot, there were like 5 houses with such fierce dogs, barking like they were ready to kill you.

On our third day, all of us were sharing stories and experiences and every one of us did agree on having such a good night's sleep. Just as we thought, the Postmaster told us we had to deliver mail again after lunch, that way we would get to feel how it is to be "good letter carriers." Actually, there was this one route, of one of the permanent employees, who was either sick or on vacation, that needed to be delivered. But instead of paying overtime to the other letter carriers, why not use the trainees, right? So that was what we were there for. I thought to myself, here goes another day with the dogs and the heavy satchel and the heavy magazines to be delivered to these houses and all they'll do is junk it down the garbage. I could not believe that to one of the houses I had to deliver 5 different kinds of magazines. Those were so heavy and that house didn't have just a regular mailbox, they had a basket that served as a mailbox hanging on their door. This day, I started asking myself, is this the kind of life I wanted for the next 6 months?

GIVE ME THE LAICO LIFE

We were back in the lecture room and the Postmaster started talking about being on time, coming to work whether you were sick or not, having no vacations and telling your friends and family not to bother you while you were in training for the next few months. THAT WAS IT! That really did it for me. No vacation, no late nights, no life. Ha! Excuse me! Then I started thinking of Jovim, who works for the Post Office as a Career Carrier (a permanent letter carrier). I thought he must not be a full-blooded Laico to be able to work at the Post Office. My gosh, it's all work and no play. I am a full-blooded Laico and I don't think I could work that hard without calling in sick or having a 30 minute lunch break.

I quit as soon as they finished the training because I was feeling so guilty. They started to take pictures for IDs and started to make schedules for our routes and for our days off. And I told myself, why should I give them a hard time and go through the driver's training with the right hand drive van when I would not even go through with this job for the next few days. I was told I probably joined just to be able to share this story with Laico Lines. Well, this is my story and it sure was an experience. My hat's off to Jovim! And please, to those of you with dogs, please keep them leashed or away from your front doors, especially during the time mail is being delivered. Your mail may not be delivered to your house or even to the your whole block. Believe me, that's part of the training.

As for me, it's back to dentistry and patients who bite. *Kakagatin pa ako ng aso, tao na lang.* (I'd rather have humans, instead of those dogs, biting me.)

LL

KODAKAN TAYO!

Carol Santos-Laico

I can't believe it is November again. The year went by so fast, our three kids are getting bigger, and I guess Popoy and I are both getting wider, shorter, and wiser. Jason has been a busy bee this year with Boy Scouts and art/music lessons. The highlight of his summer was going camping with his Dad and the other scouts. Leslie is another busy bee with ballet and lately with piano recitals. Timmy, our youngest computer geek has been busy playing with Daddy's old computer. Do you know that Timmy was doing CONTROL ALT DELETE every time the computer froze before he even turned three years old. I did not realize until recently that he knows words such as e-mail, click, and shut down.

There are so many things to write about but I thought sharing pictures from this year would be much more entertaining.

LL

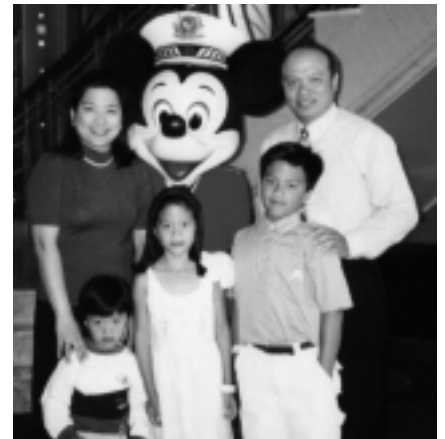


By Jason Laico

My family joined a Disney cruise to the Bahamas in May. We had so much fun. We even got to eat waffles and popsicles shaped like the head of Mickey Mouse. The worst part was when I had to skip some school. In the Disney cruise there was an Oceaneer's Club that had Nintendo 64, painting, science experiments, computer games, drums, and other musical instruments. Our room had three beds. Leslie and I got to sleep in the bunks beds while my mom and dad stayed in the big bed with Timmy.

I also went to DisneyWorld. I specially liked the 3D movie "It's Tough To Be A Bug." I liked the food there because they had pizza, cookies, and sodas.

I am now in 4th Grade. I like doing art projects. I also enjoy taking violin lessons on Thursdays at 8:00 in the morning. My violin teacher is Mr. Saxton. He is nice. There are only seven people in my violin class.



Dear Cousins,
I'm Leslie I go to CCD.
Now I have my own bible.
I go to St. Bonaventure Church
I am preparing for confession and
holy communion.





MGA BATA PA, LAYAS NA

by Teresa Damocles

THIS WAS A YEAR FULL OF TRAVEL FOR OUR FAMILY. No, we didn't take any exotic vacations to some far off tropical paradise island, nor did we go anywhere that required passports. We stayed pretty local here in the great USA, visiting just about all the Laicos who currently reside in Northern California earlier this spring, while Carlo was assigned to a project in Oakland. We also had the chance to fly off to Vail, Colorado on September 8 for a week of relaxing in the mountains. Unfortunately, we happened to be there during the week of the 9-11 "attack." We were due to fly back on Sept. 14, but with all the flight cancellations and delays, we decided to drive back home to Illinois with the rental car that we had. Nevertheless, Colorado is beautiful in the summer. The kids had a great time biking and going up in the gondola at Lion's Head Mountain. It even snowed the day we arrived. We were grateful to be home safe and sound in the end.

In December, we are off to Orlando, Florida. Now for some of you who travel the globe on an annual basis, this may not seem like much travel, but we middle class Midwesterners with kids consider this a jet-setting life!

I've been a stay-at-home mom for about a year now. With Carlo traveling during the week, taking care of the kids and tending to their activities have kept me busier than when I was working full time. Corey is still active in Shotokan Karate – he earned his orange and yellow belts this year. In addition, he joined Cub Scouts this fall and still takes piano lessons from Grandma. Charlotte is in kindergarten now and has joined Girl Scouts as a Daisy. She's still taking piano lessons, as well as ballet and tap dancing. She performed in her first dance recital last May, in front of about 500 people. Samantha is now a very active 2 year old who loves to do everything that Charlotte does. Her favorite activity is drawing, and not just on paper. She also likes to cut with scissors. She's already showing promise as a hairdresser. She can cut her own hair all by herself, much to the dismay of her parents.

This year has been full of blessings for us. It was quite an adjustment for us when I decided to leave my job last year, but it has been worth it to be there for the kids, and see their smiles as they walk into the house when they come home from school.

LL

Name: Charlotte Cristina Nemia Damocles
Parents: "Teresa and Carlo"
Nickname: Char
Date of Birth: November 8, 1995
Grade in School: Kindergarten at Builta Elementary
Favorite subject: Music
Least favorite subject: Gym, because I have to run around the WHOLE gym for a long time!
Favorite food: Macaroni and Cheese
Not-so-Favorite food: Apple Pie
Favorite color: Purple
When I come home after school, I like to: Eat a snack and play with my best friend, Morgan.
Extracurricular Activities: Girl scouts, and Tap Dance
Best vacation this year: Colorado
When I grow up: I want to be a doctor.

Name: Corey James Damocles
Nickname: Kids at school call me "Buzz" because of my haircut
Date of Birth: October 2, 1992
Grade in School: 3rd grade
Favorite subject: Gym
Least favorite subject: Spelling
Favorite food: Pizza
Not-so-Favorite food: Chinese cabbage
Favorite color: Red
When I come home after school, I like to: Play at my friend's house
Extracurricular Activities: Cub scouts, Karate
Best vacation this year: Colorado
When I grow up: I want to be a doctor

Name: Samantha Arnold Michelle Damocles
Nickname: Sam
Date of Birth: October 5, 1999
Favorite food: Chicken Nuggets
Not-so-Favorite food: Cheese
Favorite color: Purple ("poople")
Favorite Toy: Hush Lil Baby doll
Favorite Activities: Coloring with crayons, paint, and markers, (and not just on paper!) Doing whatever her older sister is doing.
My favorite sibling: Charlotte
Favorite saying: "Where's Charlotte?"

LL



MAKING THE TEAM

by Gregory Medina Laico

Antioch Wolverines #78

AFTER BEGGING MY PARENTS TO LET ME PLAY FOOTBALL FOR FOUR YEARS, they finally said, "YES!"

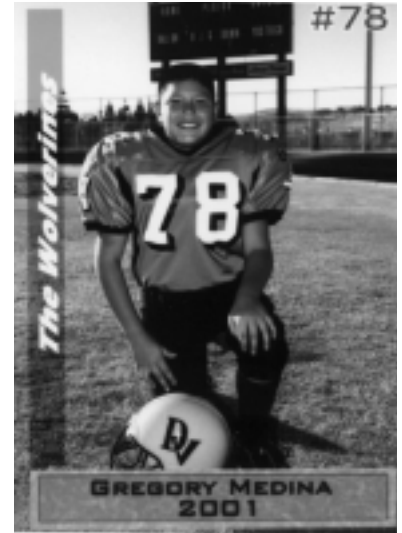
I thought that convincing them to let me play was my biggest obstacle. Then I found out that I had to go to practice 6 days a week, 3 hours a day for Boot Camp like training. We were told that out of 62 kids that were trying out, only 29 would make the team, and the weight limit was 110 lbs. That's when I knew I had to work very hard to be one of the 29 kids to make the team. I only had 3 weeks to lose 10 lbs.

This was a good experience for me because I learned, whatever my dream, if I work hard enough, I can accomplish it.

The season was a hard fight full of bruises and calls to 911...but we are one of the teams going to the playoffs!

PS.: GO WOLVERINES!!!

LL



Bunga ng aming pag-ibig.

PRESIDENT JACOB ALEXANDER LAICO

by Jovim Laico

HEY, C'MON, NOW TELL ME WHO WOULDN'T WANT THEIR NEW BORN TO END UP as the leader of a nation they were born in?! I am sure that thought comes to every mom and/or dad every time "Mr. Stork" makes a delivery. Anyway it's a thought and not ... *utot*.

For my wife and me, Jacob Alexander (Jay) was 7 years in the planning ... believe it or not. To *kuya* Gregory, Jay is more like 12 years in the waiting (He has always wanted to have a brother). So, on October the 4th (a day shy of my dad's B-day), 2001, Jacob made his grand entrance into the world at 7 lbs 5 oz sporting nothing but apple-red complexion and thick curly hair - lots of it, too!!!

The labor was an easy, oh, about 31 hours! Easy on my part that is -- I was having a picnic of chips and dips and sandwiches watching *Animal Planet* and *Behind the Music*. Sandra, on the other hand, hated it of course because Labor and Delivery told her that we'd have the baby before the end of the day ... of the next day as we found out. Her meals, in contrast, were just water and Jello. Hey, I was totally willing to share my hot pastrami but doctor's orders held me back! Don't worry, I later ate outside the room just to make things a little easier for my poor laboring wife.

When you're confined to a room for that long a time, you have about four shifts of nurses taking care of you. Surprisingly, those shifts felt really fast in a way -- before I knew it, there was a new nurse introducing herself to us. But with over 30 hours of continuous TV, those movies on the Lifetime Network (Sandra's favorite) took forever to finish!! I saw Shannen Doherty play in about 5 features!!!

Towards the end (which is really the beginning), reality set in like the oncoming tidal waves that hide the mighty Tsunami to follow. Emotions rose and so did the pains my wife was experiencing. It seemed the epidural's strength might also fade out. To me, the last moments of her pregnancy felt like forever, and the pain projected through her clutches on the bed rails. That expression of indescribable agony prompted me to be strong and supportive, just as she was showing strength even when the pain was unimaginably unbearable.

OH MY GOD! He finally came! "WE HAVE A BABY!"

After having a hard day, both mom and child rested in each others' warmth -- a portrait of tranquility after an intense day of strength and emotion. Me, I was just blown away staring at this little man who wore a one hour version of my face. Lots of thoughts came running. "So, you're the one who's been hiding in there!" "What next?" "How did he come to look like me...the poor thing...." Strange feeling, yet I enjoy every breath and every funny noise my baby makes. I'm still blown away... lots of thoughts still running. Who knows, 40 years down the line there may be a Laico sitting in the big chair at the White House.

Who knows?

LL



DALAWA NA!

by Maria Santayana

Wow! So much has happened this year, it's hard to know where to begin. Samantha has grown so fast and we've been catapulted with her into the infamous "terrible twos." Really, I don't think it's been so hard on her. Anton and I are finding it hard to keep up, though. One of her biggest milestones this year has been learning to talk -- incessantly. She started out having lengthy conversations with us or her dolls which seemed to consist almost solely of senseless prattle but, at the same time, made perfect sense to her. As the months went by she learned to speak more clearly and now is telling stories, singing songs--ok, sometimes it's one line from a song sung over and over again (as Mama Bibot found out on her birthday)--and keeping everyone entertained with all the new words she's learn-



Samantha

ing. We've quickly learned NOT to say anything we don't want to hear her parrot later on, probably at some awkward moment when we're having guests for dinner. It's such a pleasure to hear her chatting away happily though and all those times we've had to stop what we were doing, turn the TV up or off altogether are quickly forgotten when she comes up, sits on my knee, and says "I love you, Mommy," or "Yummy! Delicious!"

while eating dinner, after I've had a particularly long and tiring day. The second and biggest milestone this year has been the arrival of Jose Enrique Miguel Santayana. Okay, that was long --and you haven't even heard his whole name, hahaha! We call him Baby Ricky. Ricky was born on October 6th, 2001 at 3:27am. Why do babies always seem to be born early in the morning? If not at the crack of dawn, it seems most women end up going into full labor in the middle of the night. My midwife and I are still trying to figure that one out. My theory is that it's for the sheer pleasure of waking up a bleary-eyed husband with "Honey, we need to go NOW!" or "Honey, my water's broken," and watching them leap out of bed like a hornet stung them. Back to Ricky. Ricky weighed in at 3580 gm and measured 51 cm in length. He's a beautiful little boy with a perfect little oval



Jose Enrique Miguel (Ricky).

head, big eyes, nice ears and a lovely disposition. At three and a half weeks old he's already 4 kg and has grown 3 cm. For a newborn he's very alert and loves looking around at everything and everyone. I think the person for whom Ricky's arrival has changed things the most is Samantha. Anton still goes to work and I still stay home and care for the kids but little Sam's world has changed drastically. She first saw Ricky the day he was born. During the visit she was very excited and climbed up on the hospital bed with me to get a better look at her new sibling. Her first comment was, "Oh, yucky face!" At first I thought, oh, no, it's starting, but then realized that she was referring to the colostrum all over his face (he'd just been fed) and not the classic newborn look. The first sign of sibling rivalry showed up during that first visit. I started to nurse Ricky and Sam immediately burst into tears saying, "No, no, no." When asked why she was saying no, she just kept crying and said, "I don't know . . . no, no, no." Poor girl! This lasted for a few days and for the first two weeks she was quite moody. It just dawned on me this morning though that for the past week she's basically been her old self again; she's been much happier and seems to be enjoying her cute little baby brother much more. The other night I let her hold Ricky for a moment while sitting down and he immediately started pooping into his nappy. Sam looked extremely worried and held her leg out saying, "Oh, oh, oh." I took him off her knee and tried to assure her that he had a nappy on, but she was sure he'd done a poopy on her pants and insisted I

(continued on page 28)

DALAWA NA!

continued from page 27

change them. She also loves talking to him. She came running up yesterday asking, "What's your name, Ricky?" When Ricky wakes up from his nap and starts crying, Sam is usually the first one there and she keeps running back and forth between the living-room and Ricky, frantically saying, "Mama, you get the Ricky," and "I here, Ricky." So sweet! Today a midwife visited to weigh and measure Ricky and Sam took such an interest in everything that was happening. While the midwife was listening to his heartbeat she asked, "What she doing, Mommy?" When I explained that she was listening to his heart she asked, "He like it?" I said yes, to which she replied, "OK. He like it," and scampered off, happily satisfied that he was all right. All in all Sam is adjusting to her new role as "*Ate Sam*" very well. She's made it over that initial hump and is finding out that having a sibling can be fun! One of the things I wondered about throughout almost my entire pregnancy was, "How will I ever love another child as much as I love Sam?" I expressed this concern to my mom and she told me, "Honey, your love won't be divided. It'll be multiplied." In these past few weeks I've found that statement to be absolutely true and in addition to that I've found my happiness has been multiplied as well. "*A baby is a small member of the home that makes love stronger, days shorter, nights longer, the bankroll smaller, the home happier, clothes shabbier, the past forgotten and the future worth living for.*"

LL

TAYO NA SA SEMENTERYO

by Bingbing Juarez

NOVEMBER 2, 2001

BAMBI JUST CAME HOME FROM DUTY IN THE HOSPITAL AND GREETED her kids. "What did you do today?"

"We had a picnic in the cemetery!" Nico answered joyfully.

"Did you have fun?"

"We had pizza, drinks and ice-cream from the vendor who passed by. We sat on the benches of the tombs near Lolo Grande and Lola Grande Laico (Great-grandfather and great-grandmother Laico). Then we prayed the rosary and Grandpa let me light the candles with matches," (that was an exciting job for him).

That's the way we celebrate All Saints Day in the Philippines. It's a big picnic. Some people stay with their departed loved ones the whole day. They put up tents for the night or as shade for a day of hot sun. They bring chairs, tables, card games, stereos -- I even saw a rice cooker standing on the side of the street -- why? -- it was being used to reserve the space for her car, still stuck in traffic outside the gates of the cemetery. The wife probably walked ahead to get to their plot faster than the car which was going at a snail's pace in the traffic, and her job was to save a parking space for the car.

It's a yearly tradition here in the Philippines that we visit and pray for the dead on November 1 and 2, so traffic is a nightmare with all the cars going to the cemetery, but we still go as a sacrifice, a love offering for our dearly departed. Some people travel in from the provinces and others go from the city to the provinces. Those who come from faraway places camp out with the dead. There are some cemeteries that allow carnival rides like Ferris Wheels, the Octopus, etc. and games to entertain the visiting relatives. It's a great big fair.

As for the Laicos, we just stay a few hours to pray, bring flowers, light candles, have our snacks, our picnic, the way Mama taught us. We were never allowed to go to the rides or games. But she used to let Popoy collect the melted wax from the candles and shape it into a big ball. As soon as he had accomplished this we would pack up and go. I was told since childhood, we have to go every year because if we don't, the dead might haunt us.

I think it's a very good tradition (in spite of the dreadful traffic) because it keeps us thoughtful of the dead. I brought my grandchildren to teach them this, and if they ever decide to fly away from here, they will keep this tradition and practice it even in a foreign country.

LL

Lemon Bars: Ganado si Aling Cristi... Another Recipe

by Nonon Flores

Ingredients:

1 box yellow cake mix
2 eggs
1/3 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 - 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
1/3 c sugar
1 tsp lemon juice

Mix dry cake mix, 1 egg, 1/3 c. oil until crumbly. Reserve 1 cup of mixture--set aside. Pat remaining mixture lightly into an ungreased 13"x9"x2" pan, and bake 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Meanwhile, beat together cream cheese, sugar, lemon juice & 1 egg until light and smooth. Spread over baked layer. Sprinkle with reserved crumb mixture. Return to oven and bake 15 minutes longer. Allow to cool. Cut into bars.

LL



Mike signing copies of his book at Powell's City of Books, Portland Oregon.



The book has an interesting juxtaposition of formal literary language and modern vernacular. Tell us about that technique and the challenge of working with that tension to make viable dialogue.

Well, we don't really know how ancient Greeks talked among themselves in casual situations--soldiers on the march, family members, etc. Most of the extant historical writings are in very stylized, formal language, and therefore somewhat artificial. So I had to improvise a bit. For example, I have no doubt that in all eras and in all lands, soldiers swear, so the soldiers in my book swear, and they use modern swear words, otherwise it would sound comical, rather than soldier-like. It's kind of a tricky business, keeping the flavor of ancient Greece while simultaneously making soldiers sound like true soldiers, and I'm not sure if I'm always successful at it. It's just one of the challenges of writing an historical novel.

Tell us about the process of finding an agent and trying to get the book published.

Getting an agent is the hardest part of the process. After I wrote the manuscript, I bought a reference guide that listed hundreds of literary agents around the country. I sent out an embarrassingly large number of inquiries, and most of the agents wrote back to say they weren't taking any new clients, but I got a few positive responses. I checked their backgrounds on the Internet, selected one, and he sold the book to a New York publisher within a week. Since then it's been sold to four foreign publishers as well.

How many copies have sold so far?

About 20,000.

Have you received fan mail or any interesting feedback?

Well, I did get a nice reader review on the Amazon web site by Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House, as well as one from an equally famous financial consultant in Boston named Paolo Villasenor.

What are you writing now?

I've just completed my second novel, which is about the Roman Emperor Julian, who died in 361 A.D. He tried to force the whole Empire away from Christianity and back to the worship of the old Greek gods. It has a lot of major battle scenes, a murder mystery, religious conflict, and even a botched autopsy, for readers who are medically oriented. Incidentally, the main character and narrator is a physician. It will be published next October. In the meantime, I've started researching my third book, which is set in ancient Greece again, though it's not related to the others.

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LAICO LINES INTERVIEWS

MICHAEL FORD, NOVELIST

Congratulations on an astounding accomplishment. Tell us about how you decided to write a book and how you chose this subject.

Wow, I feel like I'm on Larry King! Actually I've always wanted to write an historical novel, but couldn't really find a topic--it seemed like everything had already been written. Then a couple of years ago, out of the blue, I came across the story of Xenophon and the march of the ten thousand. I thought it was a fabulous adventure, and when I started researching it I found that no one had ever done a fictionalized treatment of it. It was just what I had been looking for, so I started writing immediately, not even realizing how much work it was going to take.

What kind of research did you have to do to get the details right?

I was lucky, in that Xenophon was an historical figure and a very prolific writer. So I acquired all his works and read them, to try to get into his mind. I also read the works of many of his contemporaries, like Plato and Euripides, to get a feel for the times, as well as many later authors, both ancient and modern, who had written about the march. I did a lot of generic research on Greek warfare, tactics and religion, as well as tons of Internet research, which was fun. Finally, I had the whole manuscript reviewed by several Classics professors, who corrected some of my assumptions and gave me suggestions on where I could find additional detail. It all felt like a crash graduate course in Classics and history. So far, no critics or readers have tripped me up on anything, knock on wood!

How do you see your career as a writer evolving?

Ultimately I would like to make it my full-time job, and my publisher certainly thinks that's a possibility. Unfortunately, so much depends upon the whims of the reading public, New York publishing needs, Hollywood trends and whatnot, and those are very hard to predict. I'll just do the best I can for the next couple of books, and see how things turn out.

Who is your favorite author and which is your favorite book (top three)?

That's the toughest question so far--there are so many! I guess my number one author would have to be Robert Graves, with his "I, Claudius," but he wrote many more books that are well worth reading. I'm also a great fan of Vladimir Nabokov (to whom a young high-school student named Marnie Elizaga introduced me many years ago...), especially "Ada" and "Lolita." Gabriel Garcia Marquez ("One Hundred Years of Solitude") is a master, and for lighter reading, John Irving is a lot of fun. Marguerite Yourcenar ("Hadrian's Memoirs") is another great historical novelist, as is Steven Pressfield ("Gates of Fire"). How many did you ask for again?

When are you going to write an article for *Laico Lines*?

In our family, that job is already taken by Cristina. I don't think I could top her. Anyway, don't I get any credit for this interview?



NEWT HAS READ IT -- HAVE YOU?

NEWT GINGRICH:

Xenophon's *Anabasis* is one of the great historic adventures of the ancient world. It recounts the extraordinary epic of ten thousand Greek mercenaries abandoned around eastern Iraq who fought and marched across modern Turkey against overwhelming odds and returned to Greece by way of the Black Sea.

This novel is a sound first novel, openly based on Xenophon's work, and a good introduction to the challenges faced by Xenophon both in the failing Greece in which Athens had been defeated by the Peloponnesian Wars and the economy and society were both battered and in the long ordeal of first service and then a march of extraordinary endurance.

For anyone interested in thinking about the ancient world, the degree to which cultures have clashed, and the process of survival this is a thought-provoking book.



PAOLO VILLASENOR:

I don't like to read, but this was worth it! Although the backdrop of ancient Greece generally appeals only to academicians and intellectuals (of which I am neither), I found a refreshing universality in Ford's tale of Xenophon. Conflicts ranging from father-son relationships, patriotism, familial loyalty, friendship, cultural differences, and romantic love are all covered in this very well written novel. Ford has shown great ability in describing both the boorish behavior of soldiers-at-war one moment, and the high brow intellectualism of Socratic thought, the next. His adept use of language enhances the reader's ability to visualize the trials and tribulations of the novel's hero, and the situations at hand. This book can appeal to everyone. Hopefully Ford's next novel will come very soon.

IT'S NOT ALL GREEK TO ME REY DAVID:

Mike achieves a worthy life goal that some of us, myself included, only dream of achieving - to not only write a novel, but be published nationally.

The "Ten Thousand" is a fascinating story of the ill-fated campaign of a band of Greek mercenaries in the political chaos following the Peloponnesian War. After the Persian forces pillaged the Greek camp, the Greeks were stranded hundreds of miles from home without the provisions needed to return home. Xenophon, a junior officer who assumed command of the forces after most of the senior officers were treacherously slaughtered, leads his army in a perilous journey through hostile enemy terrain until they reach the Black Sea. Along the way, they were forced to face hostile forces, and barely survived starvation, frostbite, and disease.

The "Ten Thousand" was very interesting and fast-paced. Mike gives you a real feel for the horrific hardships that Xenophon and his army endured, and in my view, does a fine job with his character development. Mike weaves in colorfully drawn details of ancient Greek life which enrich the novel and the characters, but never feel overtly "historical" or forced. I finished this book feeling that I had received a layman's education in an area of history that I was previously only vaguely familiar with. That the author of this nationally published novel is your own relative should be more than enough reason for you to go out right now and buy the book. But if you need more reason, then consider the high marks that I (as one who has read it) give it. This is remarkable writing by any standard.

"YEAH, AND ROBERT DE NIRO IS YOUR COUSIN..." MITOS VILLASENOR:

I was so proud to see Mike's book prominently displayed at Barnes and Noble under New Authors. I bought two copies and as I was paying I told the lady at the register that I was actually related to the author! She just looked at me and smiled. I can't believe she didn't believe me!!

NEWT HAS READ IT -- HAVE YOU?
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CARLO SANTAYANA:

DISCLAIMER:

To comply with the Editor-in-Chief's chosen theme for this issue of Laico Lines, this book review was intentionally written in Taglish – a task that goes against the normal writing habits and principles of the author of this book review. On a lighter note, the author's initial dread at the thought of writing in Taglish was quickly replaced with enjoyment and fun. Although this will not become a habit, I have to admit: it's *nakaka-alIW* to write this way!

I was excited to read Mike's book *The Ten Thousand* so I stopped by the local bookstore to get a copy. I was *medyo busog* anyway, so I started reading during my lunch break. The opening chapters were an enthralling account of how Greek soldiers made *sugod* a fortress and how some of them got *ihaw* by an ancient flame thrower, a weapon I had once heard about on the Discovery Channel. So, not only was this book exciting, it was also historically accurate, offering an insightful look at what human life was like before the time of Christ.

The novel is about the adventures Xenophon, an Athenian *señorito* who became an officer in a mercenary army. It is narrated by his friend and *yayo*, Themistogenes, or Theo for short. Theo recounts the travels he made with his *alaga*, and how Xenophon got into a fight with his dad, how they made *luwas* to see a *manghuhula* who was *mahilig sumagot in bugtong*, and how they joined the army. Theo also writes about a girl he meets while traveling, and how the girl becomes his *syota*. While serving under Clearchus, a General who was *siga* and *basagulero*, Xenophon learns how to command his own troops. He even displays enough leadership and *pakisama* to get the bigger, more *mayabang* Spartan and Athenian soldiers to become *barkada* with the smaller, but equally *matinik* Rhodian soldiers who used *tirador* to fight the enemy instead of a sword or *pana*. The story traces the journey from Greece to Babylon and back again. It is fraught with the perils of traveling in hostile territory, and how remaining troops, merely a fraction of the original ten thousand, have to deal with making *tawid* the *ilog*, staying focused when they're *praning*, and entrusting their fate to the gods when faced with the impossible. This last tribulation is something I find rather difficult to explain... the words escape me when I try to write about it, but I know the feeling very well. *Ay nako, bahala na*, you know what I'm talking about.

GLOSSARY:

Nakaka-alIW –amusing

Medyo – rather, somewhat

Busog – full, not hungry
Sugod – to charge, to attack
Ihaw – barbecued
Señorito – pampered young boy
Yayo – male nanny, manservant
Alaga – ward, person under one's care/watch
Luwas – to leave town on a long journey
Manghuhula – fortuneteller
Mahilig – fond
Sumagot – to answer, to reply to a question
Bugtong – riddle
Syota – girlfriend
Siga – tough guy
Basagulero –skull crusher (literal)
Pakisama –camaraderie, ability to connect with others
Mayabang – arrogant, snobbish
Barkada –a group of buddies
Matinik – proficient, skilled
Tirador – slingshot
Pana –bow and arrow
Tawid – to cross, to traverse
Ilog – river
Praning – paranoid

Will Mike Ford's next book be The Ten Thousand Laicos?

RANDY VILLASENOR:

The first chapters hit me like the first battle scene of the movie *Gladiator*. The description was so vivid that I felt the scalding oil poured on the attackers in so enclosed a space. I could hear the arrows sing, I could feel the pain of sheared flesh,

I wished I could see through the smoke, but I could taste and smell the blooded attackers. Ford's book hits the senses. You ARE there and you wish you WERE NOT there. I was at first drawn by the historicity of Xenophon, the warrior scholar. With Mike's well chosen language and generous sprinkle of Greek words defined, my education is complete.

POPOY:

Is there a video? I'll just wait for the video.

NINI:

The best part about the book was the acknowledgments section in which he thanked Cristina.



Ford family at Salish Lodge, Snoqualmie Falls.

ARE WE A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY?

by Cristina Ford

Of course, everything is relative, heh-heh. But seriously, in the wake of Sept. 11, we would do well to shake off the shock and start appreciating each other as a family.

That fated morning, our phone rang at 7:30 am. I was up, but only because Sue, my running partner, would be knocking on the door soon. Mike, who is known to keep very late working hours, was enjoying the whole bed to himself, after I got up. Simultaneously checking his caller-ID and the clock, he said, Don't answer it, it's only Dad! But not comprehending his slur-

ry bed-voice, I picked up the phone and could not believe what my father-in-law was telling me. Most of our close family knows we've chosen not to connect our TV so as not to be bombarded with brain-numbing shows. So Mike's dad knows to call us whenever there's earth-shattering news



Isa's room.

like the Mariners winning a ballgame. However, Mike's foothold in the free-lancing world has imparted a hostile attitude toward answering the phone before morning coffee, which could be as late as 10am. The news squelched my energy for running that morning—my father-in-law made it sound like the world, or at least the country, was coming to an end. Of course, most of us did wonder about that at the time. I spent the morning watching the news at Sue's house next door. Ironically, the last time I sat in her living room, it was to watch the implosion of the Seattle Kingdome, which looked uncannily similar. Sue, having moved here from New Jersey, has no family close by, but luckily, running has brought us together as a common interest.

When my family settled in Morton, we had no relatives nearby either, though with my father being the young new doctor in town, making friends was not too big of a problem. My parents would tell us about having to make close friends to stand in for relatives, as a "support system". I was to keep this in mind whenever I complained about some quirks evident in Mom's friends.

When our family was finally able to visit the Philippines again, which, curiously, Nini still called "Home", I was fifteen. It was then I realized, mere friends could never substitute for family.

Lola Luz was still the reigning matriarch, and she welcomed us ceremoniously, to Dasmarinas. Back then, the whole family would show up at the airport to welcome *balikbayans*, and I clearly remember them doing that for us. The whole trip was so full of visiting, special meals, "going out", night-clubbing, "hotel-hopping", shopping for souvenirs, etc. Tita Malu, with her very sharp driving skills and *savoir faire*, did much running around for us, seemingly nonstop. Then when it was suddenly time to go home, I was truly depressed. I thought this was how everyone lived there every day. How could I go back to a culturally impoverished life in Morton? I vowed I would be back in the P.I. as soon as I could, even if I had to come alone. So, five years later, as a confident, proud, vain, sun-seeking college student, I returned. It was just as I remembered, all the aunts graciously inviting me to outings and into their homes. Energetic Tita Ching was the most enthusiastic hostess, revealing to me something I had not realized—how intimately close she and Mom must have been as almost-twin sisters. I was treated like a princess and made to feel very important, without having done anything to deserve it, and in spite of my rude shyness.

Now, with so many of the titas permanently settled in the States, we have, from coast to coast, Laico Centers, which I especially encourage all you single Laicos to visit occasionally. Having lived on the East Coast for 13 years, my nearest Laico Center there was Tita Mitos' house. I am eternally grateful for her warmth and generosity in hosting every Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving while Mike and I lived nearby. It was a veritable feast each time, and always something to look forward to. The Villasenor house was the headquarters for my graduation from college, and our wedding, which we couldn't have had there otherwise. Her family also provided a convenient source

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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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GROUND ZERO
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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.

LL

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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>](http://faculty.washington.edu/aelizaga/laico2001/index.html)

