

SAMANTHA, ANTON AND MARIA SANTAYANA



arrival, I had expressed some concern, wondering how Sam would take to them. I think she saw "Daddy Anton" (or herself, she looks unmistakably Laico) in them right away though and she took to Mom and Dad surprisingly fast. They only had a week to stay with us so our schedule was full of sightseeing (oh look, there's another sheep!), touring etc. but from what Anton and I could tell, the highlight of their stay (their reason for coming over) was definitely making the acquaintance of Samantha, their first grandchild.

The next few days saw us all making up for lost time, Mom & Dad getting to know Sam, Anton and I finally getting a much needed vacation, and all of us driving around Auckland and the surrounding areas. We went to the Waitomo caves to see the glow worms, soaked in the Waiwera hot springs (Mom was pushing for this to

which my Dad said, "Hay, yang Nanay mo Los Baños talaga. Ang hilig sa hot

springs!" ["That mom of yours is really a Los Baños. She really loves hot springs" - a pun on Los Baños, which means "the baths" or hot springs] to which Mom replied, "Ay ikaw city mouse ka kasi, eh." ["Well you, you're just being a city mouse!"]) toured and enjoyed wine tasting at a local winery and browsed around Auckland central.

Samantha was typically very clingy with me but was fine with Mom & Dad, whenever I wasn't around. So Anton and I each ended up getting shooed away (we know when we're not wanted ... sob ...) every now and then to give them time for a little one-on-one. All good things must come to an end though and our time together ended all too quickly but even now, when shown photos of Mom and Dad, Sam will still point and smile (I however, cry because they didn't bring us back home with them).

As for Anton and myself, we have been surprisingly busy during the past two years on this island with a land mass only slightly smaller than the Philippines but a population approximately 18 times smaller. Parenthood has been just as challenging and full of surprises for us as

SAMANTHA



our missionary work. No two days are ever the same and there is always so much to learn that it's hard to keep up. We've been blessed with a little angel who has totally changed our lifestyle - from how we spend, down to how many hours we sleep.

At the tender age of sixteen months, Samantha has already discovered how to open our front door, dance on the dining room table, climb into her own cot and "run a busy household." It never ceases to amaze me how she has this endless capacity for learning, as well as copying and mimicking whatever we do.

I walked out into the dining room the other day and saw that she had positioned herself on the computer stool and was happily typing away on the keyboard. Sometimes when Anton is playing his guitar, Sam will join in on her ukelele (she even mimics me when I talk in Tagalog ... that means no more P- - - words for me). When Anton gives me a hug, Sam always seems to be right there to wedge herself into the hug as well. One thing's for sure, no matter what's happening, she's got to be in on the action.

With Sam heading out of the cute little baby stage and into the terrible twos Anton and I look forward to the coming months with both excitement and trepidation (as Samantha stares at us defiantly, points her little finger and screams "No!!"). They say that "the perfect example of minority rule is a baby in the house" and that couldn't be more true in our household.

For all the sleepless nights, messy nappy changes, toys scattered everywhere, (Sam, please don't pull the tape out of that cassette), etc., we're very happy being parents and we just wouldn't trade that for anything. There isn't a day that goes by that we don't look up and say - Thank you!

LL

HELLO!! - FROM DOWN BELOW

by Maria Santayana ... (with comments from Anton in italics)

An advanced or belated, whenever this gets to you, Merry Christmas from the Santayana clan in New Zealand! After nearly two years of living down here (I now have an incredible tolerance for boredom), we had begun to feel like the rest of the world had completely forgotten about us. Surrounded by sheep, cows, pasture-land, (fish is more expensive than meat over here ... ibalik niyo na ako sa Pilipinas!!! [Take me back to the Philippines!!!]) and oh, did I forget to mention ... yes, a few people too, you tend to feel a little isolated from the rest of humanity.

Last March, Mom and Dad (Bibot and Rene) joined us down here for a brief visit and a break from their life in the fast lane. We looked forward to their arrival with eager anticipation. Anton was the one who planned an itinerary and had been phoning around for weeks.

The moment I opened the door of the apartment, Mom and Dad forgot all about their luggage and rushed over to Sam, who was caught at a rather awkward moment - in the middle of getting her nappy changed ... so much for first impressions. Prior to Mom and Dad's