VOL. 1 NO.1

PRO FILES MAGAZINE

Grand Mountain Media Services

DECEMBER 2007



Q.C. Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr.

Sincere & Brilliant Leadership



DR. VICTOR ENDRIGA
QC TREASURER

PROFILES

About Us

This publication is focused to promote developmental information on worthy **PROgrams, PROjects and PROspects** of enterprising individuals and/or corporate entities as well as of political and business personalities, sports and entertainment celebrities, and professionals in various fields of endeavors.

PROfiles Magazine is committed to make people better-informed, more knowledgeable and educated on both domestic and global issues and events of general interest including information on state-of-the-art technologies, trends in business and fashion, eco-tourism, cultural and historical preservation and enhancement, hobbies, sports, travels, health and medical welfare, among many others.

Our editorial staff includes a select group of professionals and veterans in print and broadcast media, public relations practitioners, creative writers and opinion makers as well as investigative journalists and expert photographers. Just to heighten the enthusiasm of our readers, joining us are the likes of multi-awarded City Treasurer Dr. Vic tor "Vic" Endriga of Quezon City, veteran reporter-journalist Antonio "Tonymac" Macapagal of *Manila Standard Today*, Presidential Consultant Against Graft and Corruption, Dr. Butch Belgica, veteran information man and public relations practitioner Aster B. Aquino, and PROfiles Magazine publisher Kenneth John Montegrande.

PROfiles Magazine was conceived and established by the abovementioned people and some professional friends in Philippine media, to provide people a better alternative medium to comprehend the news, views and opinions, issues and controversies that affect peoples' lives and interests, socio-political concerns, economics and politics, government policies, programs and projects, international affairs and bilateral agreements, and of course, entertainment, leisure and lifestyle, tourism and travel, children's care and welfare, and many others.

At the onset, PROfiles Magazine will be a quarterly publication of 50,000 copies with the maiden issue coming out on the first week of December 2007. The succeeding issues will be out in the market on the first week of every month. We guarantee our readers of better information, constructive criticism, objective views and opinions.

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INSIDE pages

20	Cover Story: SB Leadership
2	About us
5	Publisher's Note
6	Editor's Note
8	Tales of the City
9	People's say
10	Shopping at Meisic
12	Special Feature: The Man and his Craft
14	Profile: Dr. Victor B. Endriga
16	Bonjay reinvents self
17	Children's literature
18	Special Feature: EDSA Grand Residences
26	Unforgettable vacation
27	MAS Top Care
29	Best bargain in Divisoria
32	Criteria for elective public servant
34	Manila Oceanarium
35	Boxing is also for women
36	Airsoft: A Gentleman's Game
37	Sports develop lives
38	My Fun Food Depot

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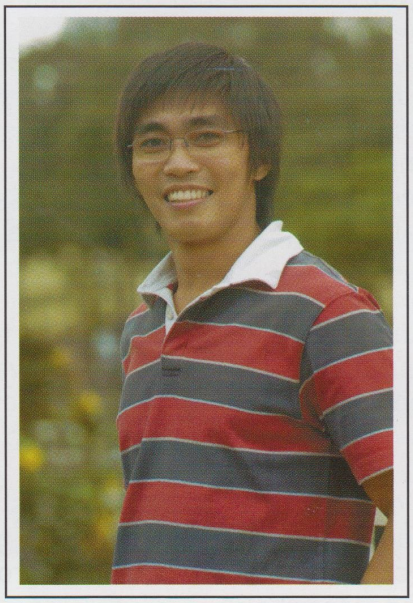
Publisher's Note



Sincerest greetings to everyone particularly, to our new sets of readers who have chosen to get a copy of this maiden issue of the **PROfiles Magazine**. Likewise, we extend our deepest gratitude to our sponsors and advertisers whose commitment to their social responsibilities remain unflinching as ever. Indeed, their invaluable support as well as their unwavering trust and confidence to the successful fruition of this publication in the future made possible the publication of **PROfiles Magazine**.

There's no gainsaying that the great enthusiasm and perseverance manifested by the officers and staff of this humble publication have been the unquantifiable factors behind the realization of this endeavor.

PROfiles Magazine was conceived and envisioned to provide our people a new medium where they can easily relate and comprehend issues behind controversies, the facts current events.

The primordial focus of this magazine is positivism. The opinions may sometimes be hard-hitting yet, with constructive and suggestive views, where our readers may develop their own, or better views and opinions.

PROfiles Magazine's position stands as an "alternative media" geared towards developmental information and designed to motivate people to achieve for the betterment.

PROfiles is about programs and projects, prospects and progress.

Spread the word to your friends and colleagues about PROfiles. We look forward to your full enjoyment and satisfaction on our future editions.

Again, thank you for your support.

Editor's Note

PROfiles Magazine is born! Thanks to the men and women behind its conception and realization.

This publication is envisioned to make people better-informed and more knowledgeable of the issues and events in the country, of the programs and projects to make life better and easier for the people, of the successes achieved by business, of the development of industries, among others.

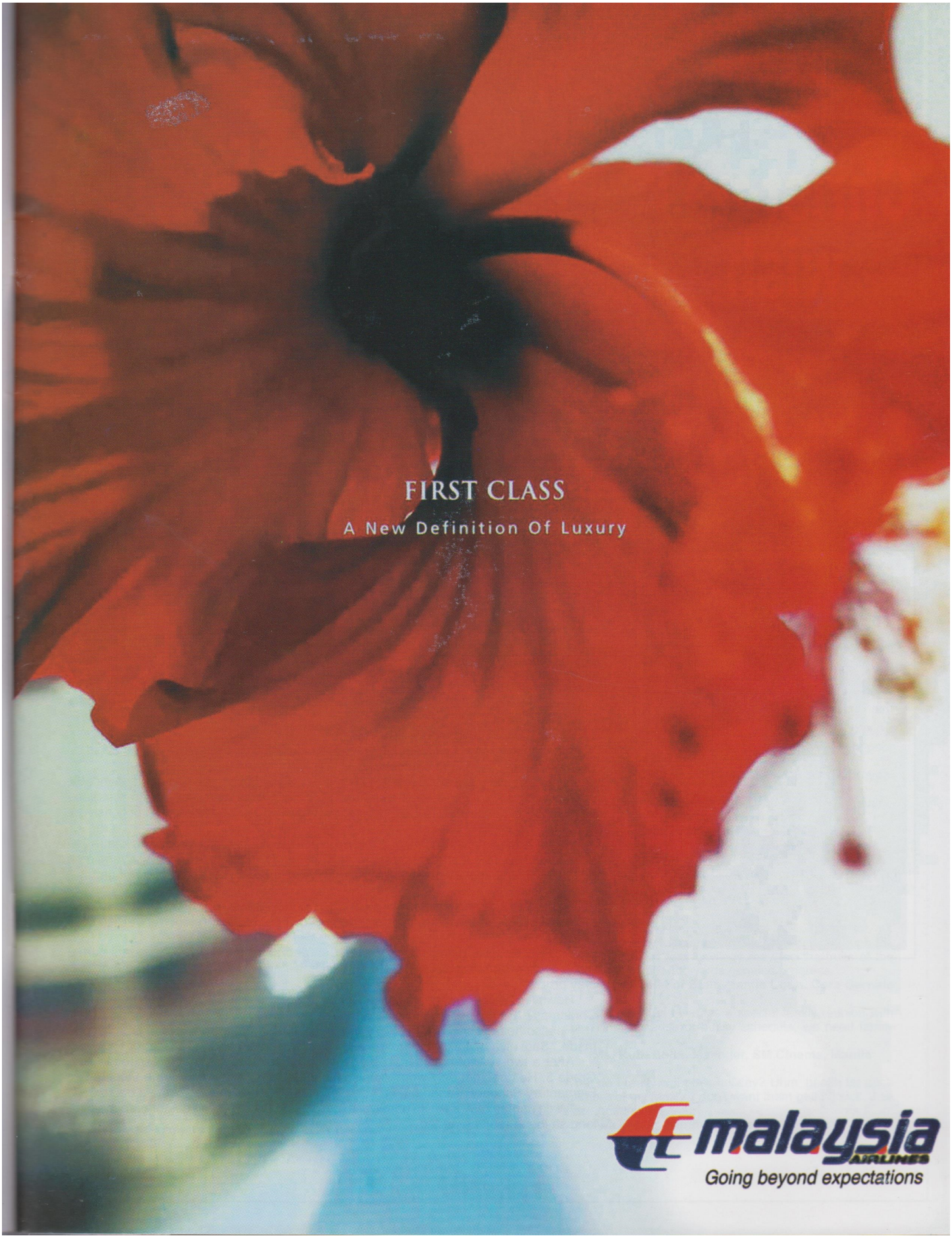
As conceived, PROfiles Magazine is designed to promote and project constructive and developmental information far different from other publications that highlights crime stories, scandals and corruption which seem to result in the deterioration of people's sense of values and responsibilities as well as in the degradation of the image and dignity of our one and only nation.

We do not mean that negative news should not find print in media. That would be a gross violation of press freedom that we strongly profess and recognize.

Instead, PROfiles Magazine has chosen to give emphasis and focus on programs and projects aimed for the benefit and welfare of the greatest number of our people and to feature achievements of "unsung and unheralded" personalities as well as human interest stories.

Like the others, PROfiles Magazine looks forward to achieve greater readership and patronage.

We wish your enjoyment in reading the PROfiles Magazine.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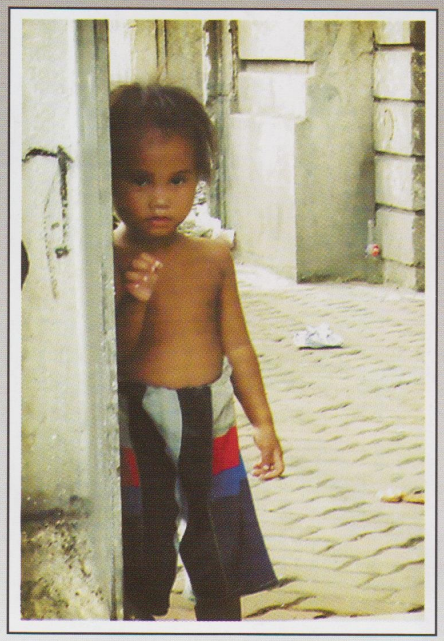
Christmas wish of a street kid





While FORTUNATE children would be fileed with in ex citement on Christmas eve in savoring the traditional Noche Buena with their family and opening their pre sents, some street children like the 12-year-old Wilbert Somoo would be out in the streets collecting left over foods, plastic bottles and scrap metal.

For Wilbert, Christmas starts not on the evening of Dec. 24, but in the morning the following day,

around 4 a.m. "Yun pa lang ang oras ng paguwi ko," said the shy, barefoot boy, who held on one of the sidecar's bars and twists his body left and right, as he answered questions from PROfiles during one rainy evening.

For the past three months, Wilbert has been going around the streets of Mabini in the Malate area of Manila to look for "treasures" or items that he could sell at junk shops. And on Christmas day, it would not be any different. For him, there is no holiday. Work is seven days a week.

"Hindi kami pwedeng tumigil sa pangangalakal ng mga bote at bakal, lalo na sa araw ng pasko kasi yun ang araw na madaming tao ang kumakain sa labas. Madaming basura ang mako-kolekta, mas malaking kita para sa amin," said 22-year-old Richard Migalano.

But Wilbert said that he was happy playing the "sidekick" of his friend Richard. He would ride in the

sidecar while Richard pushes on the pedal.

Their daily earnings average between P200 to P300, but on tough days it could go as low as P50. Every time, the duo would split the money fifty-fifty.

Everyday, at the strike of 5 p.m. they would set out on board their rusty but dependable open sidecar. They would stop at every restaurant and fast food store to rummage through the garbage and see if they could find any "treasure". They would only risk going home when the sun is up.

"Kung tutuusin, pwede kami makauwi ng mas maaga, kaso natatakot lang kami. Kasi may mga sira ulong taong tumatambay sa Tulay ng Delpan eh ninakaw nila yung mga sidecar na dumadaan. Kaya inaantay na lang naming lumiwanag bago kami umuwi," said Richard.

Once they are done with their night's work, they would find a cozy place to park their sidecar, get a few hours of sleep before they begin their trek home at Pier 18 in Tondo, Manila.

Wilbert, stopped going to school some three years ago when his parents parted ways. And he does not expect to see a feast in his elder sister's house. "Tama na ang may prutas."

However, like any other kid he expects to receive a gift. So what does he want for Christmas? "Bagong damit at sapatos po."

He also has a Christmas wish. He wants his mother Irene to fulfill the promise she made. "Sabi niya makakapag-aral na ako ulit sa susunod na taon."

After a two-year of hiatus from schoolwork, he said that he is now excited to start Grade 5. He does not only want to finish his elementary education at the Vicente Lim Elementary School in Tondo but he intends to fulfill his dream to become a doctor.

"Wala naman may sakit sa pamilya ko pero gusto kong maging doktor para makatulong sa ibang tao," he added.

What do you really want this coming holiday season?

- This holiday season I want my family to be together as one. A family that is happy, free of any illnesses and far from any harm with the help of God's blessings and sincere prayers.
  -P/Sup. Albert Juan Wines, Manila Police District

- What I want to receive this Christmas is my heart, yung girl that I love the most, kasi nasa Kuwait na siya. Thanks. Take care and more power to PROfiles magazine.
  - Allen Santos (Rustan employee)

- The peoples may come to the true knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and just as Jesus did may love, peace, forgiveness rain and everyones heart.
  - Greco Belgica (Former City Councilor, Manila)

- To be with my family including all my cousins, tito, tita's, inang and tatang. Then kain to the max ulit.
  - Meriam Gantes (Bayantel, Sales Agent)

- That we are created by God. The best is for us to know our purpose if our life we live to enjoy and accomplish our flesh desire. How about our obligation in thanking God for dying for us so we can live in heaven we die. Let everyone know their purpose in search the God Who created them.
  - Architect Cora Go

- I want a boyfriend for Christmas. Hahaha! No, seriously, I want a Canon EOS digital SLR Camera so I can capture all the memories of this holiday season for just a click away.
  - LennieBallicud, Wazup-Wazup

- A Ferarri.
  - Antoniette Sison

- What I want this holiday season is majority of the Filipino to be responsible, hard working and send their children to school. This scenario will lessen the burden of leader… frankly speaking, daming tamad.
  - Chairman Huang, San Miguel, Manila

- Peace in the country, particularly in governance so it can have direction towards economic development and real progress.
  - Ms. Remia _____, Editor, Tempo Newspaper

- Reconciliation and Unity among divided Filipinos and most of all may I win in Lotto.
  -Eusebio Barrientos, Former Barangay Chairman, Brgy.830, zone 90, Pandacan, Manila

- I know it's hard to achieve, but what I wanted is peace for all mankind.
  - Louie Umali, Bureau of Land employee

- A population whose votes cannot br bought, who will be brave enogh to speak up against injustice.
  - Yvette Lee, Writer and Diving Councultant

- I'd go for a Christmas vacation to Batanes for two.
  - Sugar Santiago, Government employee

- Peace to every Filipino heart and home.
  - Angelo Palmones. DZMM, Station Manager

- Well this holiday season, most likely isa lang ang hiling ng bawat isa: to be their loved ones, sa mga mahal nilang yumao na at sa mga mahal nilang nandiyan at buhay na buhay pa sa piling nila. That's what I really want… to be with my loved ones, living and non living.
  - Ms. Sherilyn Reyes, Entrepreneur

- I want real peace and joy in people's lives, especially this holiday season and for the people to know the real reason why we celebrate this season and for the people to feel the real peace and joy being brought by the God of all season.
  - Ms. Janeth, Pantalan Restaurant

- I really wish the majority of the people especially the poor to have atleast three meals a day.
  - Rading Tenorio, Retired Government employee

- Peace on earth, happiness and love in each and everyone, free from sickness and joyous holiday season.
  - Jam Lawan, Malate, Manila

- What I want for the holiday is to pamper my self, get a really good massage and spend quality time with my family.
  - Ms. Daisy Sabangan, PR practitioner

- Well, I just wish economic and political stability for our country not only these holiday season but all through the coming years so less privilege may fee the fruits of the government's effort towards genuine progress.
  - Benjie, Chief of Staff, Manila Coun. Cora Gernale

- For a holiday, all I want is a special family reunion with gift giving, because of bussy schedule, we need family bonding.
  - Ms. Ruth Bolla, Manager, SM Cinema, Manila

- What do I really want this holiday? Uhm, health for each member of my family, I don't want them getting sick. Just that…nothing material.
  - Ava Juson, Nursing student

FEATURE

Meisic mall offers convenient in safe shopping

By: JEAMMA E. SABATE

" Today, Meisic Mall is a one-stop-shop for bargain shopping and wholesome entertainment,"

FIRECRACKERS and pyrotechnics are commonly used during Christmas and New Year celebrations. But since these stuffs endanger the lives of people, the mana-gement of the Meisic Mall dissalows the presence of dangerous stuffs inside the mall.

The decision of the mall's management to ban the selling of fireworks and other pyrotechnic devices within the vicinity manifests their great concern for public safety and welfare. "It is not always all about money," said Meisic Administration Officer Ronald Tungol, adding that Meisic management supports the government's program "Iwas Paputok."

"Parents can be assured that their children are safe and happy and they can enjoy the holidays too even without firecrackers and pyrotechnics that can trigger a fire and, cause damage to property," Tungol said.

"The safety of the customers and mall goers isprimordial. This is the reason why we hired the services of a security agency which is well known in the field of mall security. They are honest, courteous and reliable. These security personnel make shopping at Meisic Mall safe and secured at all times. No pickpockets, no holdups and other petty crimes," he said.

The season's spirit drives people to the mall and when it comes to shopping, the Meisic Mall truly offers top quality clothing, furnishing, arts and accessories. "We offer an exiting citing range of unique fashions, household goods and gifts. Since many Filipino-Chinese are living near, we have Chinese goods and accessories to offer. We also cater to the needs of other nationalities," he said.

The Meisic Mall is a five-level structure built on a 4000 square-meter land area on lease from the Government for 25 years. It is bounded by Reina Regente St. on its frontage, Felipe II St. on the right, Jose Abad Santos High School on the left and Gen. La Chambre St. at the back. The total ground area of the building's five levels is approximately 18,000 square –meters.

Meisic Mall is located by away from the center of Divisoria which is at all times congested by vehicular and human traffic. The Meisic Mall is always accessible to transportation like buses, taxis, jeepneys and tricycles.

The mall is equipped with a centralized air-conditioning system that to ensure customers of convenient shopping every time. "The presence of escalators from ground floor to third floor in three strategic locations inside the mall (near the main entrances), plus a pair of passenger elevators make transferring from one floor to another easier and faster" he said.

In line with its slogan "Presyong Divisoria," customers can always save when shopping at Meisic Mall. Where prices of merchandise are always at wholesale rates.

The pride and edge of Meisic Mall is its clean and comfortable shopping ambiance. One can never see trash along passageways and cleanliness at the comfort rooms are always maintained by honest and courteous janitorial staffs.

After shopping , customers can always relax and dine at the Foodcourt located at the third level.

"We understand the importance of keeping kids entertained during holidays," Tungol said. "One can always watch shows and other activities at the Entertainment Area being held every Saturday and Sunday. A Holy MAss is being celebrated at the Entertainment Area every Sunday morning."

Tungol also cited another advantage of the mall.Last October 20, SE Hypermart, a Department Store and Supermarket, opened its facilities at the Second Level of Meisic Mall.

" Today, Meisic Mall is a one-stop-shop for bargain shopping and wholesome entertainment," Tungol emphasized.

Meisic Mall













Guarantees customer satisfaction







DR. VICTOR B. ENDRIGA

Dynamic and creative fiscal management breeds prosperity





"CORRUPTION in the system is still the biggest problem in tax collection," states Dr. Victor B. Endriga, City Treasurer of Quezon City. "Taxes are the life blood of a city, and we need to create a system by which they can be collected with minimum dissipation of revenue due to corruption."

To this extent, Endriga prefers to take a hands-on approach to ensure that the taxes paid by Quezon City's residents do indeed end up in the cities coffers and not in the pockets of fixers or other unscrupulous individuals.

Come tax time, Endriga can be found in the thick of things, often times staying on the job with his staff till 12 midnight.

"I sign all tax certificates myself." Every year, I use a different colored pen and have a different stamp with my photo on it. It's never the same photo – one year I was in a barong, the other year I was in short sleeves, the other long sleeves – am still trying to decide what to wear for the next stamp," the witty treasurer explained.

Endriga has a reputation for being a sharp dresser – he has been nominated for three consecutive years as the Best Dressed Man in the Philippines – but the reason behind his wardrobe change in his official stamp is more then just to show off his sense of style. "It's to make things difficult for the fixers and forgers," said Endriga. "If I keep changing things every year, they can not make fake copies because they don't know what it will be like in a particular year," he added.

Another Endriga strategy is requiring all casual and permanent employees at the City Treasury department to submit their photo's which are then placed in a carefully arraigned photo album with their corresponding assignments.

"If anyone approaches and claims that they were the subject of "funny business", I can show them this album and to identify if it was one of our employees so we can go after them," explained Endriga.

Endriga's zeal to clean up the system resulted in uncovering several groups of fixers who had been issuing fake receipts and certificates. They are the subjects of cases Endriga personally ensured were filed with the Ombudsman.

Quezon City has come a long way from 2001 when it was known as the most financially distressed local government unit in Metro Manila. When Mayor Sonny Belmonte won the post, one of the first things he wanted was Endriga as his City Treasurer.

According to Endriga, Belmonte first invited him made the offer when he was a congressman and the Speaker of the House who tended to run for Quezon City mayor.

Endriga was president of the Lyceum Alumni Association when he invited Belmonte to speak at their Foundation Day. When they were seated together, Belmonte asked Endriga where he is connected.

"I told him I was City Treasurer of Pasig." Endriga recalled s. "He looked at me and said, "If I win, I want you as my city treasurer." Belmonte did win and, two days before his oath taking, the elect-ed mayor called End-riga and re-peat-ed his of-fer.

"I then told him that, while I would like to, the position of city treasurer is appointed by the Secretary of Finance. He told me not to worry about it. An hour after my conversation with him, I received a fax telling me I was now to be City Treasurer of Quezon City and told to report the next day to Quezon City hall." Said Endriga.

When Belmonte assumed office, Q.C. was the most financially distressed local government unit in Metro Manila and probably nationwide in 2001.

The city inherited claims for payment amounting to 1.4 billion, a bank debt of 1.25 billion and a general fund of negative P10.35 billion.

"On first day, the Mayor asked me how much money we had. "To be honest, i told him we did not have a single centavo in the city general fund. We had no money or resources to implement any program and nothing for the city's upkeep. If we were a corporation, we would have no choice but to close down for bankruptcy," Endriga explained.

Instead of being dismayed or angry at Endriga's rather pessimistic assessment, Belmonte merely asked Endriga what he recommends they do.

Endriga's response was a seemingly "drastic remedy" in asking the banks not to honor the previous administration's last day transactions.

"We asked the banks to dishonor all checks written on the last day." "I told mayor that in my experience it's during the last day when "miracles" are done," he stressed.

Endriga explained that, by canceling all the checks, they could review the transactions. He was confident that they would find unnecessary transactions, which they could cancel, or change to keep more money in the city's coffers. All they would have to do was pay some penalties for bouncing checks but this would be minor compared to what they would lose by honoring the last day checks.

"True enough, we found many "erroneous" transactions." "There was one check written up to a computer supplier whre the city purchased 100 computers for P100,000 each! That was too much. A canvass showed that – for the same specifications – other suppliers can give them for at least P 30,000. We told the awarded supplier they were asking too big a mark up. They then sliced the price by half," Endriga explained.

By January of Belmonte's first year of term, Endriga's work paid off, from a zero balance, the city now had a 1.5 billion surplus budget and had paid 50% of its debts.

Currently, the city is considered the richest in Metro Manila beating out Makati and Manila. The current budget stands at 6,800,000,000 with the city having collected 6,106, 193, 528.89 pesos cash in hand and in the bank

"My family did not want me to take the job at first," Endriga recalled. "We were stable in Pasig which during my time was the 4th richest city and doing better than Quezon City. However, I have always been the person who likes challenges, that's why I took the post."

The recently widowed Endriga is very close to his three children and his grandchildren. Sunday is considered family day. The entire clan gathers together for breakfast before going to mass and visiting the tomb of their mother. After that is lunch and malling before gathering again for dinner.

Aside from his family and Quezon City, another of Endriga's pet project is the creation of the next generation of fiscal advisors to help guide the country out of the current quagmire of tax deficiency and deficits.

"A tax man must know the parameters of revenue generation or he will never meet world-class tax efficiency standards, balance the budget and create surplus funds," said Endriga. "We need to up the know-how of revenue agents in the areas of fiscal responsibility and public accountability thru proper education."

He laments that the Bureau of Internal Revenue has never managed to wriggle out of the quagmires of tax deficits while the Department of Finance had to resort to the sale of properties and other assets to meet this year's revenue targets.

"The national revenue agencies, unable to enforce tax compliance even had to surrender to tax cheats by giving them a tax amnesty. That is a practice frowned upon by more stable economies worldwide," noted Endriga. "We have to change this practice."

He shares his know-how by teaching International Taxation at the Graduate School of the Lyceum of the Philippines and the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Government.

Aside from UP and the Lyceum, Endriga – at his own time and expense – frequently conducts year-round seminar workshops nationwide to teach local revenue generators modern techniques on how to enhance tax collection efficiency, proper fiscal management and the dynamics of public speaking under the auspices of the Philippine Association of Local Treasurers and Assessors (PHALTRA).

The encouraging results of these lecture series has led to another Endriga brain child-the establishment of the country's first Tax Academy. In July this year, the PHALTRA program was integrated with the Masters in Public Administration (MPA) major in Taxation course offered by Lyceum.

The Tax Academy will be the first of its kind in the Philippines and the second in the world, with the first one established in Japan.

With new tax men following in his footsteps, Endriga's legacy is secure and maybe, just maybe, the miracles he wrought for Quezon City will be repeated elsewhere.

Special Feature

DR. VICTOR B. ENDRIGA

The man and his Craft

By: RAMON ROCES AREVALO, Phd

Spirella once wrote: "there is no thrill in easy sailing when skies are clear and blue; there is no joy in merely doing things which anyone can do. But there is some satisfaction that is mighty sweet to take – when you reach a destination you thought you'd never make."

Here's a man who wont stop creating opportunity for productivity no matter how unconventional it may be to enable the local government he serves to produce a life of dignity for its people.

Quezon City Treasurer Victor Bermejo Endriga, a Harvard-fellow specializing in taxation, fiscal administration and resource mobilization, had gained a reputation at breathing new life into staggering communities inflicted with financial hemorrhage. And his many exploits in this area is almost legendary!

ARCHITECT OF FINANCIAL RECOVERY

In 2001, Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte took over as City Mayor of QC. What greeted him was a wallop: claims for payment to the tune of P1.4-billion, outstanding bank debt of over P1.25-B and worse, an empty coffer to address the problems with. So he called on Vic endriga to assist him in settling the problems at bar.

A man with a formidable reputation for doing the impossible, Endriga went on to jack up tax collection by 160% that it didn't take long for him to wipe out all city debts. Before the end of Belmonte's first year in office, he balanced the budget. On the 2nd year he whipped up surplus funds of over P2.2. B.

And then, there was no stopping QC from generationg surplus money year after year to catapult the Premiere City into the stellar billing as Richest City in the Philippines five years in a row.

Everyone who knows Vic will swear that despite his swashbuckling image, he was a faithful, dedicated and devoted husband (38 years) who took care of his wife's daily needs for a good 16 years during which time his beloved Emma struggled with the Big C. he would wake up early in the morning to bathe her, dress her up, prepare her breakfast, feed her and then drive to the office ahead of the other city hall personnel.

It was daily ritual performed dutifully, religiously and with utmost pleasure. In between breaks, he would call up the missus and whisper sweet nothings to her on the phone. On Valentine's Day, he would buy ad space in a major daily and announce publicly his love message to her. He simply couldn't stop giving of himself.

As a rule, Sundays are reserved for the family. And no one dares intrude between Vic and his family. They would go to church together, dine together, go to the mall and watch movies with the young ones together. Sunday is a blessed day everyone – inside and outside the family – observed.

And even when emma had gone to meet her Creator, the Endriga family goes on with the tradition loyalty – they are not about to have their way of life reshaped.

THE TAX COLLECTOR

Vic Endriga, the only loyal treasurer with a Doctorate's Degree in Fiscal Administration, has rightfully etched his name as the Country's Top Tax Collector by skillfully blending his own wit and maverick style of revenue generation and resource mobilization.

He made his mark when, as treasurer of Pasig, he increased its tax haul from a measly P154-million to an all-time high of P2.54-billion within a period of one year. The staggering amount earned, Pasig City remains the 4th most economically robust LGU in the country.

In 2006, QC's gross collection perched up to an unprecedented P9.4-B level. At 5p.m. of August 2, 2007, Vic's tax take had reached 79% of his yearend target leaving him but 21% to overhaul with still 5 long months left to meet his goal.

Translated into money, total revenue collection had been pegged at P6,551, 472,065.54 up by P496,154,103.03 from last year's figures, while cash-on-hand and in bank had tipped the scale at P6,689,351,726,36. "if the trend continues, God willing, we might be able to breach the P12-billion gross collection level – an historic high that would be hard to duplicate or overtake by other LGU's for years to come," said Endriga.

But the prospect of greater wealth for the nation had been Vic's obsession that, using the leverage of his office as President of the Philippine Association of Local Treasurers and Assessors (PHALTRA)), he urged his members to pool their resources together so that the patina of prosperity will reach the most economically-depressed community and, thus, alleviate their plight.

Vic advocates a set of down-to-earth, close-to-heart strategies to deal with the serious, complex issue of collection shortfall using methods that had worked for LGUs that had made them more economically viable and politically stable ensuring for them a more just and sensible future.

"Fiscal responsibility that equates to tax collection efficiency and public accountability where people's money are

"We don't need new tax measures if revenue agents were diligent and determined enough to collect taxes from taxable entities and honest enough to declare every single centavo collected in favor of the government,"

deposited into the coffers rather than line up the pockets of those administering the fund are the only means to ensure a fat kitty," Vic stressed. "We don't need new tax measures if revenue agents were diligent and determined enough to collect taxes from taxable entities and honest enough to declare every single centavo collected in favor of the government," he further emphasized.

Vic believes that the tax deficit presents an economy in jeopardy and must be taken seriously as it can ultimately cripple the nation. "Those who insist that what we are passing thru is merely a long-needed *correction* ignore all the warnings signs," he cautioned.

Economic breakdown due to tax collection deficiency standards is a crisis that transcends the framework of conventional fiscal problem and is bound to tear up our revenue structures and financial system.

No doubt, for Vic, I any means to cure the tax deficit malady cannot be divorced from the idea of a stepped-up effort at tax collection efficiency in order to deal with issues of money supply, balanced budget and surplus funds to shape up the country into a desirable, highly developed, globally-competitive country.

ECONOMIC MIRACLE MAN

His rise to fame as the Economic Miracle Man is Philippine phenomenon.

Yet, if he is seen as a purposely-driven man, it is because he doesn't believe in making little plans. Like Daniel Burnham, he finds magic in them that would be enough to stir his blood and challenge him.

So he says, "make big plans, aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die.

Manila Councilor "Bonjay" reinvents self



"Somewhere along the way I have lost my compassion, nag harden ang heart ko. I told myself that I was doing public service because it was my job and that made me feel bad. Now my goal is to go back to the time when I started (as a Councilor) which is to do the things out of my love for my district and the people."

By: LENY FERBILLO

A few years ago, Manila City Councilor Ma. Lourdes "Bonjay" Isip-Garcia thought she lost something —her compassion. So last August, she started on a soul-searching quest on how to get it back.

Immediately her mind went overtime thinking of new plans and projects undertake for the benefit her constituents in the sixth district and help rediscover herself as well.

Parameters were set up for these new endeavors. Instead of the regular run-of-the-mill schemes, her up coming projects would be fresh and meaningful to mark the coming of the new Bonjay.

"I'm in the process of reinventing myself. These past few months, I have been doing a lot of thinking, searching, and I have made goals for myself both professional and personal," the four-time city councilor added.

The 38-year-old legislator wants to come out with novelty projects that would bear her trademark. "I just try to see politics in a different perspective. Aside from being a player, I try to look at it as an observer."

While being a city legislator may have its own share of perks, she admitted that there is a down side to this "good life". Being a public servant exposed to all types, and she is given the opportunity to extend assistance to those in need.

However, there are also unscrupulous individuals who merely want to take advantage of her good and trusting nature. This is the reason why she has become jaded and began to doubt the real intentions of other people.

When she realized that her passion for work is slowly diminishing, started asking herself why am I tired and why has my job suddenly become so taxing.



"Somewhere along the way I have lost my compassion, nag harden ang heart ko. I told myself that I was doing public service because it was my job and that made me feel bad. Now my goal is to go back to the time when I started (as a Councilor) which is to do the things out of my love for my district and the people." She added that "to serve again with love" became her guiding motto.

The doll-faced legislator told PROfiles Magazine that some of her projects would be in full swing by next year.

Traditionally during Christmas, she would open her house from 9 a.m. until noontime of Dec. 24 to children. From her mother's ancestral house located along General Solano Street near the Malacanang Palace, which has stood for more than a 100 years old, she would hand out "loot bags" to children that often contain apples, candies and other treats.

But come December 2008, she is planning to launch her excellence in leadership awards for deserving high school students in her district.

On Valentine's Day, she would offer retreats for married couples with the hope that the activity would bring them and their families closer. "I am looking for projects with long lasting effects, Bonjay said"

Being a mother of two children Liam and Iya, she also wants to pay tribute to fellow mothers in her own district. For most families, the mothers are left doing most of the household chores and attend to the needs of their husband and children.

Hence on, Mother's Day, she intends to give them "time outs" for themselves. She would launch a "make over" project to help them build their self-confidence and "make them feel that something magical could happen to them," the reinvented Bonjay emphasized.

Inspired by kids

Manila Councilor tries hand in Children's literature

"It is important that we teach children the proper values, the ones that we want them to grow up with as they become the leaders, movers and shakers of our society in the future. And the best time to teach them values is while young, and thru children's stories,"

INCUMBENT Manila Councilor Ma. Lourdes "Bonjay" Isip-Garcia takes the business of mothering seriously. The solon from the City's Sixth (6th) District, an advocate of breastfeeding childrens and women's issues, believes in a hands-on approach towards raising her children, spending as much quality time with them as possible — that is, such as can be possible given the myriad responsibilities of a public official.

And one of the rituals Bonjay wishes to institutionalize is storytelling time at night. This fervent wish led directly to the local legislator taking a very pro-active stand on the matter —— she recently finished a Children's Book entitled "Five Magic Words".

Wait!!! What do we have here, a Filipina J.K. Rowling (of Harry Potter fame) in the making ? Queried on this, Bonjay explained that "Five Magic Words" is actually a little book, more in the tradition of a fairy tale or fable rather than the British Rowling's globally superpopular magnum opus.

"Five Magic Words" is actually your typical children's book, 32 pages, illustrated with easy-to-read text, in color, bilingual in English and Filipino and, naturally, intended to teach some basic and valuable lessons in life.

Bonjay, a veteran but still youngish politician and mother of two small kids, explained that her own mother , the late Dr. Marietta Mendoza Isip, used to read to them fairy tales and children's stories. When her mother died in 2004, Bonjay – married by that time — became nostalgic for her childhood and vowed to read bedtime stories to her own children.

But the passion for literature goes much farther and even deeper than that.

Bonjay had always dreamed of becoming a writer, especially a writer of children's stories, a dream that was subsumed by her entry into politics. This desire became even more intensified when, in 2002, she got married to Atty. Edward Leandro Zoleta Garcia Jr. of Lucena City, Quezon Province and eventually became a mother, first giving birth to Leandro Manuel "Liam" two years ago, and last year, to Luccia Lourdes "Iya".

"Naturally, I wanted to read Pinoy stories to Liam and Iya, those that will give them an understanding of our country and culture. But there are few of these. Many of us grew up with Cinderella, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks, Sleeping Beauty, Thumbelina — all of which are Western fairy tales with typical western characters. Filipino children cannot completely identify with these western characters or if they do, they become alienated from their own culture and do not develop a distinctly Filipino identity", explains Bonjay.

Bonjay says "Five Magic Words" is her attempt to inculcate in Filipino children, the right values — those that we Filipinos cherish and always hold dear.

"It is important that we teach children the proper values, the ones that we want them to grow up with as they become the leaders, movers and shakers of our society in the future. And the best time to teach them values is while young, and thru children's stories," Bonjay emphasizes.

Bonjay insists that children's stories must teach values and life lessons, and develop character. "Ang Pagong at ang Matsing", for example, teaches us to be fair and not to be greedy. "Ang Usa At Ang Soso (snail)" warns us not to be arrogant and complacent. "Juan Tamad", of course, teaches us not to be lazy like the title character.

"Five Magic Words" or "Limang Mahiwagang Salita" in the vernacular —- Bonjay chose five words which are of great significance to Philippine culture and life.

And what are these five words (or phrases)?

1. "I love you". "Mahal kita" — One of the most beautiful words in the Filipino language; indeed, in any language. One of the greatest expressions of human feelings. A favorite of Filipinos, it is used for our family and friends, and for the romantic among us, for our partners.

2. "Thank you". Salamat. — An expression of gratitude, of humanity. A recognition that others have been of help to us. An acknowledgement of others' deeds. We are humbled if we realize that someone has done us a favor, and consciously acknowledge this.

3. "Please". "maari". paki.". — A word of respect for our fellowmen. Consideration for others. An acknowledgment that others are our equal, and not our inferiors. Others do not owe us anything; when we need their help, we must ask in humility.

4. "I'm sorry". "paumanhin". "patawad" — An expression of our fallibility, and thus, our humanity. A recognition that we are human, that we are imperfect. We make mistakes. Sometimes we hurt others. Sometimes we can be bad. And we need to humbly apologize to those we hurt.

5. "Opo" and "po". — Epitomizes respect for elders. Respect, not just for our parents, uncles and aunts and grandparents but all the elderly or senior citizens. "Opo" and "opo" are so uniquely Filipino. It is doubtful if there are counterpart words in other languages. It clearly manifests the esteem and love we have for our elderly. Our society puts high premium on wisdom which comes with age. Thus, the elderly are cherished for their profound knowledge of the ways of the world. Filipino society values the elderly and our young are taught to grant them the honor they deserve.

Bonjay chose these words which bring joy to people. "It is amazing to think that these are simple, everyday words — none of them are really fancy or high fallutin' — yet used sincerely, appropriately and often enough, they can have great effect. They make for good relationships, for harmonious interaction among friends, among strangers, for everyone."

Running as common themes inherent in the use and meaning of most of these five words are :

1) humanity; 2) humility; 3) respect, love and concern for others; 4) selflessness or the magnanimity to put others above self; and 5) civility or what the older generation would term as "good manners and right conduct".

Sadly, Bonjay notes, we sometimes forget to use these words. Like the Filipino custom of "pagmamano", these words are in danger of falling into disuse. Or even worse, of being used half-heartedly, mechanically, reflexively, perfunctorily; without passion or deep, genuine emotions; like throw-away lines. Spoken but not really meant.

Bonjay hopes "Five Magic Words" will teach young readers to internalize these words, to use them with respect and sincerity. "The children need to comprehend the power of words. And I hope these specific words will be used more frequently, and with the objective of giving importance to the addressee".

Five Magic Words' Editor is Christine Belen and Panch Alcarez is the Illustrator.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Fulfill a dream at EDSA Grand Residences

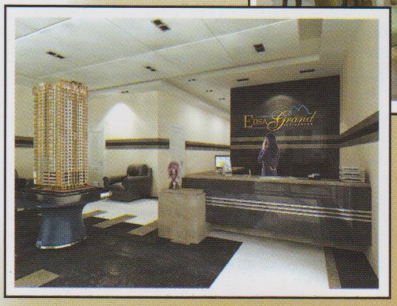
By:
ABBY INGALLA











"Dare to compare, we are not bare." With this slogan, potential investors of the Edsa Grand Residences, a 30-story condominium building currently being developed at the heart of Quezon City, are assured that they are getting their money's worth.

"All a unit owner has to do is just to move in and enjoy condominium lifestyle," said Cesar Tan, Vice President of Edsa Grand Realty and Development Corporation.

He added, "Unlike in other condominiums, we'll take care of everything, including the finishing touches. We don't want our clients to feel that they're being short-changed; we want them to get real value for their money."

Investors could easily secure a unit at Edsa Grand Residences—which construction is now in full blast and will be ready for occupancy in 2010—for as low as P10,000 a month for studio, and P15,000 a month for bi-level and three-bedroom units.

"Our units are very affordable, yet quality is not compromised," Tan said, adding that the rates they offer make Edsa Grand Residences an attractive option for the average working professionals or overseas Filipino workers looking for wise investment for their hard-earned savings.

Strategically located on Edsa corner Corregidor Street, Quezon City, Edsa Grand Residences is not only just within walking distance from the best lifestyle establishments in town, but also highly accessible to and from major hubs of the metropolis.

It boasts of various recreational facilities and amenities like a grand hotel lobby, commercial center, swimming and children's wading pools, fitness center, multi-purpose hall and function rooms, bar and lounge area and landscaped sky garden.

Edsa Grand Residences likewise takes into consideration its future tenants' safety and security by installing fire detection and alarm system, closed circuit TV monitoring system, house entry phone system, automated vehicular traffic system, individual fire-rated door and 24-hour security, among others.

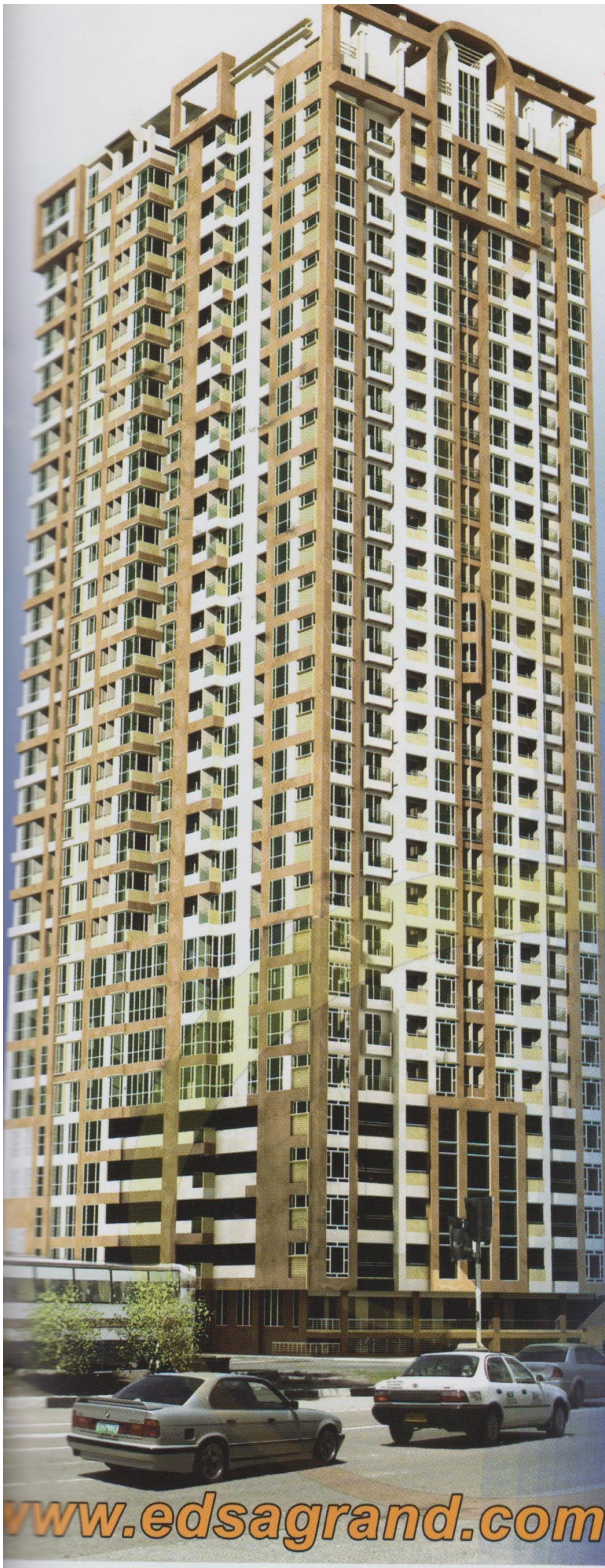
Also considered as another milestone project by Edsa Grand Realty and Development Corporation is the Adriatico Grand Residences, which is now on its final stage of construction and will be ready for occupancy by next year.

"We're almost two months ahead of our scheduled turn-over, it's now 98 percent complete," said Tan.

Each unit, he added, is uniquely designed into loft style to provide high ceiling, better natural lighting, good ventilation and ample space for living and dining areas.

An 18-story commercial and residential bi-level condominium, Adriatico Grand Residences is located at 1415 M. Adriatico Street, Ermita, Manila.

For inquiries, interested parties may call (632) 524-4102, (632) 524-2820 or 0917-5396888 and look for Elaine or Khadine.



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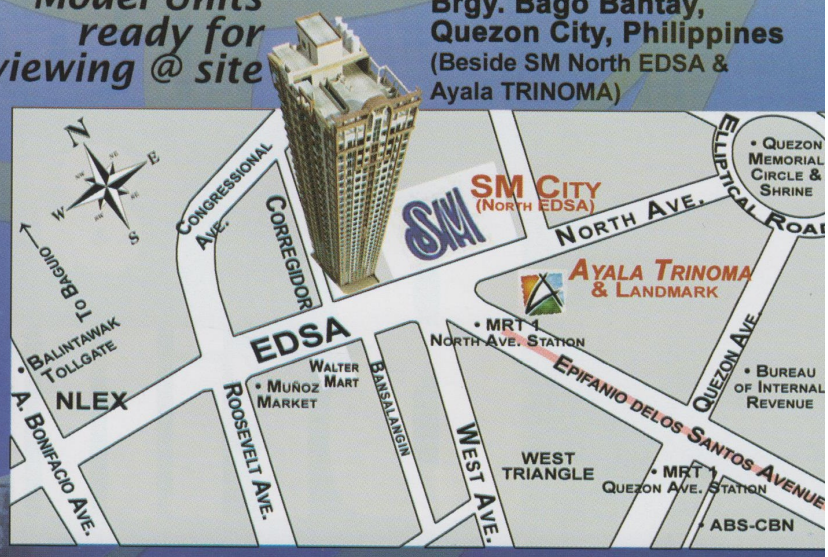

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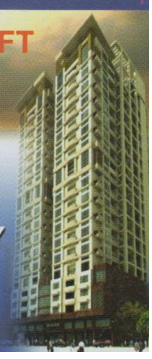

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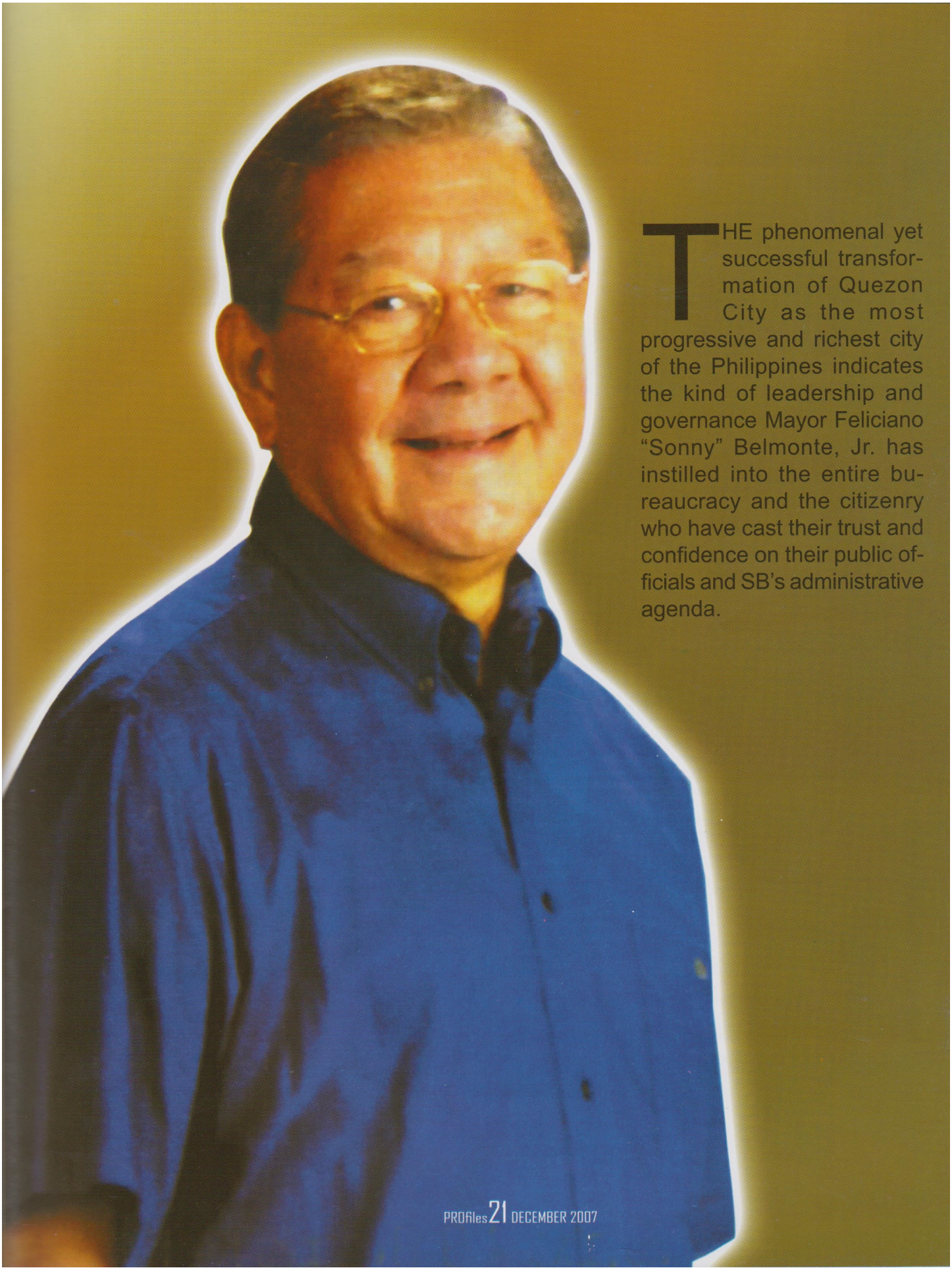
Cover Story

Mayor Feliciano 'Sonny' Belmonte, Jr.

Sincere & Brilliant Leadership



THE phenomenal yet successful transformation of Quezon City as the most progressive and richest city of the Philippines indicates the kind of leadership and governance Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte, Jr. has instilled into the entire bureaucracy and the citizenry who have cast their trust and confidence on their public officials and SB's administrative agenda.







SB

There's no gainsaying now that QC's sustained growth is a marvelous manifestation of (Sonny or SB) Belmonte's executive expertise endowed with sincerity and brilliancy "for the benefit and welfare of his beloved city and people in general."

Humbly, SB realized that in spite his management skills and political prowess, the reinvention of QC into a burgeoning metropolis and center for business growth and investment destination, could not been made possible by one mayor's vision and determination. "It took a lot of enthusiastic cooperation and active participation by my beloved constituents whose sense of responsibility and belonging to their city accelerated QC's testimonial triumph," Belmonte emphasized.

Today, the people of QC are proud of their city and grateful to their city mayor who restored their sense of community and togetherness in sharing the successful fruition of SB's programs and projects.

The city government succeeded in transforming QC's resources into essential services such as infrastructure, prompt delivery of basic public services, among others, for the people to enjoy the benefits they deserve from the vibrant economy.

QUEZON CITY

MISSION

A quality community
where people live,
work, do business in a hospitable,
progressive and peaceful environment.

VISION

Succeed as a model of effective governance
and responsible leadership,
working in partnership with the citizenry
in building a Quality Community.

Seven years ago, when SB assumed mayoralty, QC was in the brink of "bankruptcy" so to speak, with an awful debt of P1.25-billion to the Land Bank of the Philippines, and a huge payable of P1.4-billion to various contractors. Moreover, its general fund is overdrawn by P10-million.

The hands-on mayor did not waste time. He streamlined the bureaucracy, modernized tax collection, and improved the delivery of public services with dispatch and dedication.

In two years time, with the expertise of one of the best city treasurers in the country, QC was marching towards growth. Slowly but surely, investments began coming in including those who were once wary about doing business in the city.

SB introduced the policy of inclusion, where no one is a second-class citizen but everyone having a sense of responsibility—where the people are the ones responsible and must share in the city's development.

From 2003 to 2005, Belmonte's sincerity and brilliancy spelled QC's being adjudged as the most business-friendly city in the Philippines. This is a feat which no other city in Metro Manila has achieved or even get close to it.

Even President Gloria Arroyo was awed by the award in spite SB's decision to raise taxes. It was because the people learned to appreciate that their government works and that their taxes are going back to them in terms of basic services.

Mayor SB is not after fame nor glory. He knew that his term as mayor ends on 2010. Yet, he does not entertain second thoughts in serving and providing the needs of his constituents, most especially, in extending professional, competent, effective and efficient governance. "This is the legacy I want to leave to the people and government of QC," Mayor Belmonte emphasized.

Mayor SB is a very simple guy who can easily mix and mingle equally with the "common tao" or the elite group. He can empathize and sympathize with the different sectors of the population. SB can talk to all of them very casually in explaining anything because the people knew all the while that SB is a good listener and a gentle talker.

As much as possible, the mayor makes himself available, no matter how busy he may be. "It is my primary job to meet with my constituents, with or without an appointment," SB explained. Probably, the reason why, the first day of the week, Monday, is "people's day."

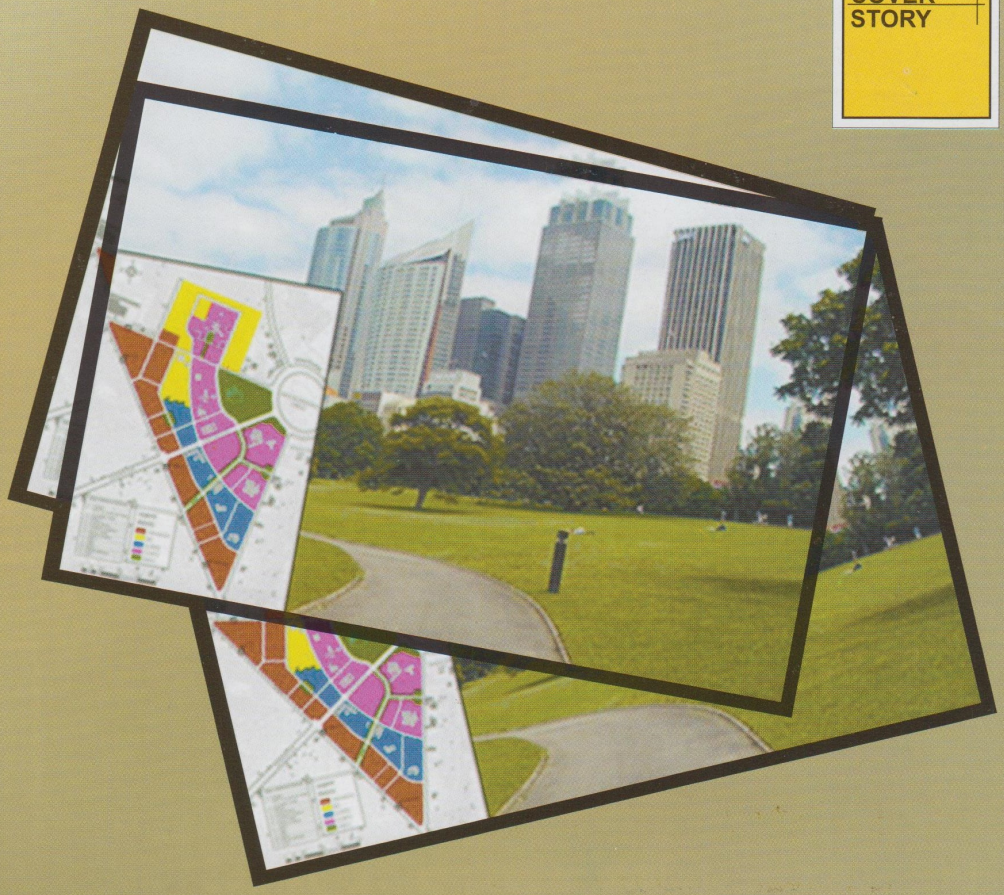
Certainly, what SB has done for QC is a high benchmark of public service and good governance to equal and surpass. Belmonte is more of an action man who seems to be irritated when things are being done or completed. When he meets with people, he resolves their problems with dispatch. According to SB, he is also quick in making decisions.











He doesn't want to leave a person "hanging in the air." SB gives straightforward answers to strengthen one's confidence in him. He is not fond of "double-speak." SB says what he means, and means what he says.

To confirm Belmonte's sincerity are the over 60,000 business establishments that have elected to locate in QC. These businesses range from giant malls, professional and skilled service providers, communication companies, banks, food chains and restaurants, entertainment centers, health facilities and amenities, to convenience stores and small sari-sari stores, among many others.

Business and community leaders actively participate in conceiving and enactment of city ordinances affecting business and industrial matters. This is the result of SB's regular consultations with entrepreneurs and traders in the formulation of programs, projects, and prospects to consistently improve and upgrade the city's economy.

The Quezon City Chamber of Commerce and Industry for instance, maintains a close working relationship with the city government. Under Ordinance No. SP-1429 of 2005, the QCCCI is mandated to promote and expand trade and investment in QC through electronic information networking and to facilitate business partnerships among the city entrepreneurs.

In return, Mayor Belmonte makes sure that the city government gives due recognition to the contributions of the business community, top businessmen and enterprises.

The sincere and brilliant leadership of Mayor Sonny Belmonte has served inspiration to business leaders not only in QC but throughout the country, to invest more, expand and diversify business operations in the city.

Today, QC has been proclaimed as the "Information and Communications Technology Capital of the Philippines because of the high concentration of ICT operators. QC is host to more than 95 business process outsourcing (BPO) companies.

The presence of various business enterprises and an elated population in QC are strong manifestations indeed, that Mayor Belmonte has achieve his vision and mission for his beloved city.

But still, the hardworking SB is looking forward to what QC can still endeavor to become the most progressive city that will lead the way in the 21st century.

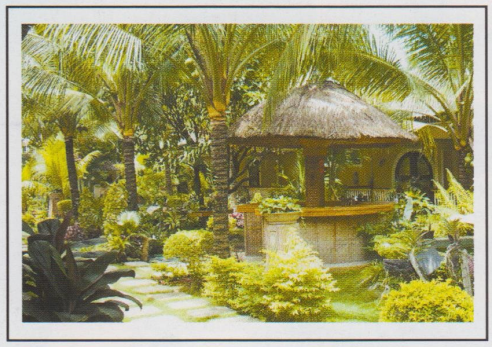
SB

An unforgettable vacation for you at Red Coconut Hotel

By: JILLIANE PAULINE JACELA







In what better way can you spend your long-awaited and hard-earned vacation than to have fun and loosen up in a place which caters to all your wants and needs? Catch the next flight to Boracay and experience your dream escapade at Red Coconut Hotel and Beach Resort, where you get the chance to unwind, chill out, and enjoy life.

Located at the center of the main white beach shoreline of the island of Boracay, Red Coconut awes Filipinos and foreigners alike with its exceptional view of the stunning beach. However, it's not just this striking spectacle which captures the hearts of tourists. It's the hospitality and unrelenting assistance that Red Coconut has to offer to its patrons that keep them coming back for more. Says Consuelo Helgen, President of Red Coconut Hotel and Beach Resort, "We make our services personalized, whatever the customer's affair may be. We make sure that they get their money's worth. We pay it forward."

Andrew Thorburn, a tourist from Canada, proves this by saying, "My fiancée and I had a magnificent time last summer, thanks to the warm and reliable staff of Red Coconut Resort. It was a great experience!" Truly, reliable service does take its toll.

Whether you're on a business trip or just for pleasure, Red Coconut provides everything that you'll need during your stay. Air-conditioned rooms complete with telephone lines, Cable TVs, mini-bars, refrigerators, and hot and cold showers are offered by the resort as your haven for rest and relaxation after a long day of adventure and fun at the beach. Fancy a swim? The enticing beach front swimming pool is the best place to spend the whole day. Surrounded with lush shrubbery and flourishing foliage, the pool helps relax the mind and ensnare the senses.

Want to go for a dive and experience wildlife under the sea? PADI professional instructors are there to ensure you'll get the hang of the sport. They're ready to assist you with educational dive courses to help you get the ultimate experience of diving. Hangout at Red Coconut's bar at the beach after a long afternoon and enjoy the company of your family and friends for the whole evening. Or better yet, experience fine dining at the Red Coconut Hotel and take pleasure in the local and international cuisines that they have for you. And if you ever have plans of exploring the island, Red Coconut offers transportation that can take you safely to your desired destinations. Computer shops are found all over the place, so you don't have to worry much about accessing the internet. And security was and will never be an issue at Red Coconut. You can always rely on the staff and the security group to ensure your safety during your stay.

So, what are you waiting for? This season, spend your holidays at Red Coconut Hotel and Beach Resort for as low as P14, 670 and be able to relax and enjoy Boracay for three days and two nights. This package is good for two adults, and contains the following benefits: room accommodation, buffet breakfast, roundtrip airport transfers via Caticlan ($10 US additional per person via Kalibo), and welcome drinks upon arrival of guests. For more information, email your questions and inquiries at info@redcoconut.com.ph or call (632) 523-8720-23 and look for Gwen.

Malaysia Airlines

Top in passenger Care

By: EMM YU

When the airline was established, the objective was clear: to provide air travel trans port service that ranks among the best in the world in terms of safety, comfort and punctuality. This simple commitment of Malaysia Airlines was key to reaching a higher ground that is truly far from its humble origin at the golden age of air travel in 1937. With a five-star status in the past few years coupled with various international awards can very well prove that Malaysia Airlines has been successful in these corporate goals.

Malaysia Airlines had its humble beginning in the golden age of travel. A joint initiative of the Ocean Steamship Company of Liverpool, the Straits Steamship of Singapore and Imperial Airways led to a proposal to the government of the Colonial Straits Settlement to run an air service between Penang and Singapore. The result was the incorporation of Malayan AirwaysLimited (MAL) on October 12, 1937.

The formation of Malaysia in 1963 was the catalyst for the change of its name to Malaysian Airlines Limited.

Within 20 years, MAL had grown from a single aircraft operator into a company with 2,400 employees and a fleet operator using the then latest Comet IV jet aircraft, six F27s, eight DCs and two Pioneers.

In 1967, a new branding exercise saw MAL changing its name to Malaysia-Singapore Airlines (MSA).

On 02 April 1947, Malaysia Airlines' predecessor took to the skies its first commercial flight as the national airline. Fuelled by a young and dynamic team of visionaries, the domestic carrier turned into an international airline in less than a decade.

Malaysia Airlines is now the national carrier of Malaysia and recognized as one of Asia's largest. Over 48,000 passengers flying the airline daily in over 100 destinations across six continents would agree that their experience - characterized by Malaysian warmth and hospitality - was simply extraordinary.

Goh Meng Kheng, the airline's area manager in the Philippines, believes it is their projection of superb hospitality, convenience and safety with competitive rates that puts them at an advantage with other international airlines.

"I think the greatest achievement of Malaysia Airlines so far is winning the trust of the people flying with us. We value our customer and we are serious in ensuring a hassle-free experience of our passengers from pre-departure to post-arrival," he tells PROfiles, magazine.

Goh says apart from hospitality, their technical staff and cabin crew are also competent in terms of safety and security as they all underwent extensive training on emergency response.

The airline also offers savory dishes, which range from low sodium to vegetarian meals, that will certainly cater to special dietary requirements. Its Malaysian dish satay was awarded Best Airline Signature Dish in 2003 by Skytrax Research in the United Kingdom.

Handling of luggage is also a priority in the airline's various services. All bags are properly bar coded to ensure convenience of passengers, especially after arrival at their respective destinations.

These prominent features of Malaysia Airlines are known and recognized in international air transport industry. Last year, the airline was voted the Best Economy Class in the World Airline Awards.

The airline also holds the recognition as Trusted Airline Brand given by Reader's Digest, On Board Service Excellence Economy Class by Skytrax Research's International Airline Survey, Silver Quill Awards by the International Association of Business Communications, and Best Airline in Asia at the Annual Globe Awards in the United Kingdom.

It also bagged last year five awards from Global Traveler Awards, including the Best New Business Class.

Malaysia Airlines has consistently won recognition over the years for its exemplary services. Among those were: Best Southeast Asian Airline in 2005 in the 16th Annual Travel Awards Survey, World's Best Cabin Staff from 2001 to 2004 by Skytrax Research, and Top 5 Best Short Haul First and Business Classes in the Aviation Awards of TravelQuality.com.

Currently, the airline's fleet has a total of 93 operational aircrafts, including 11 Boeing 747 – 400 planes that each can carry 386 passengers and 17 Boeing 777 – 200 with a capacity of 278.

With this success of Malaysia Airlines in achieving its initial goals, the airline hopes to even further improve its services for the benefit of its clients, Goh stressed.

He reveals that their company hopes to maintain and even improve its five-star status at a cost affordable to many.

"Twenty years from now, considering the liberalization and emergence of low-cost carriers, we hope to become the five-star airline at an LCC cost. This is possibly through use of information technology. With online ticketing, we provide convenience to our clients and even help them save cost and hassle of going to our offices and centers to reserve tickets," he explained.

The Business Turnaround Plan (BTP) charts the route for Malaysia Airlines to regain profitability and achieve excellence. In the past year, various measures have been taken to control cost and improve operational efficiency. In the next two years, the focus will be on building capabilities, enhancing services and improving revenue streams.

Among the improvement plans is the Project Omega, which was initiated in 2006 to radically improve the company's network and revenue management. Emphasis has been placed on three key areas – pricing, revenue management policies and procedures and network and scheduling tools.

The overall fare system has been restructured through a Fare Class Realignment exercise, resulting in a consistent pricing structure across the entire network that is both competitive and responsive to the market.

To widen its distribution reach, the company will increase the use of Airline Tariff Publishing Company (ATPCO) to distribute fares to the various agents and online website channels worldwide.

Revenue Management Policies and Procedures have been enhanced to strengthen inventory management. The existing Revenue Management system, Airmax, has also been recalibrated to ensure alignment between fare rate changes and the demand forecast from the system.

Network and Scheduling various network planning tools, together with traffic flow modelling and consumer preference modeling, have been employed to assist in the development of an optimal network to support the BTP.

Under this initiative, the airline has developed a network plan for implementation over the next five years This year, the airline implemented its Passenger Services System (PSS)that offers passengers a more convenient and efficient traveling experience.

Malaysia Airlines has also moved away from traditional paper tickets to electronic tickets (eTickets) before the end of 2007. This is in line with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) mandate that all airlines will have to be 100 percent e-Ticket capable by 31 December 2007.



The move is expected to bring savings of approximately RM19 per ticket sold, with the elimination of material costs and back-end processes.

With the PSS initiative, a significant improvement in business processes and customer service is expected.

Business-wise, there will be faster revenue recognition while the number of ticketing fraud cases will be reduced. In addition, the number of cancellations, no-shows and overbooking are also expected to drop substantially.

Goh has vowed that customers could look forward to a more convenient and efficient traveling experience, from the making of reservations to the boarding of flights. More efficient passenger movement at airports and reduced congestion are expected with the introduction of various passenger self-service options, such as web and kiosk check-in.

CHRISTMAS TIPS

Get the best bargain in Divisoria

By: Marian Domingo

Filipino shoppers have one thing in mind where they will go to buy their Christmas gifts for friends, "inaanak" and family relatives. Air-conditioned and premiere malls around the city traditionally have become a perfect destination for shopping sprees. And this includes the whole sale trade center known to many in the Philippines - Divisoria.

VENUE FOR BARGAIN HUNTERS

A variety of goods from clothing items, school and office supplies, toys, cellphones, sports apparels, body accessories and prospective gift products for Christmas can be found in Divisoria. Several shopping centers nationwide may likewise be selling these selections of goods but those in Divisoria make a difference for buyers looking for sold at very affordable prices.

Along the crowded streets of Divisoria, stalls are lined up in rows, displaying the goods of all sorts that can be bought in wholesale by shoppers ranging from as low as P5 to hundreds. "Just name it and you'll get it" as the saying goes, in Divisoria.

Ritchie Horario, a professor of Universidad de Manila (UdM), said those shoppers who are fond of a mesh hamper can get it for P35 each but it's cheaper at wholesale for P20 for at least six pieces.

"They can save as much as P90 with the kind of retail in the country's popular shopping center. Prices of button earrings, for instance, range from P30 each to P10 when bought by consumers in wholesale," he added.

Gary, a 42-year-old carpenter, recalled the day he bought a set of pliers for P20. "Mantakin mo, may nabibili pa pala mura sa panahon ngayon. Kung nagtitipid ka o naka-budget ang gastos mo, masabi ko na mas mabuti sa Divisoria pumunta para mamili," he said.

As Filipino shoppers visit Divisoria, their spending capability may appear relatively high because of the huge difference between buying only one to five pieces of Christmas gift items against purchasing six of the same.

TRANSFORMATION

Divisoria has its humble beginnings too before its reputation as a trading district turned into a phenomenal shopping Mecca where a lot of Filipinos go. It started occupying a smaller area until it grew to what it is today.

All kinds of dry goods, vegetable, fish, meat and other commodities were peddled on streets, public markets and makeshift stalls along Divisoria. Later on, Meisic Mall, 168, Diamond, Tutuban Mall, Ylaya shopping center and the New Divisoria mall were built. Thus a new district for bargain shopping has been known to shoppers.

Before long, the department stores here completed its landscape with the construction of food outlets, fancy restaurants, cafes, videoke bars and other establishments that indeed attracted several Filipinos to take a look and shop in Divisoria.

"Divisoria is looking better and better as time passes by. Filipinos, not to mention the Chinese retailers, are doing good businesss on their own. It's a great development to the country's economy," a business observer in Manila said.

STARTING THE BUSINESS

With enough capital then, several Filipinos took their chances in making money out of the shops and stalls they put up in Divisoria malls. They earn a few pesos from each product as they run their own business for years.

Those who want to engage in a retail business in Divisoria must get a store space either through contractual leasing or in a short-term lease basis. Entrepreneurs are also required to secure a business permit and mayor's permit at the Manila city government and a license and a certification from the market master.

A tenant of Meisic Mall, said he had paid P160,000 a square meter for a leasehold period of 15 years a few years ago when he put up his stall there. "You would have to pay so much more if your space is located in the malls in Divisoria," he said.

Meanwhile, Divisoria market's stalls are rented in a uniformed size to exercise fairness among stall owners. The space can be extended in a certain limit and its payable by cash daily.

Manpower requirements come next in starting a bazaar business. A stall owner needs either salesladies or reliable staff members who will attend to the needs of buyers when the operation starts. They make the necessary sales talk and give services to them.

RETAILERS AND BUYERS

War of attrition between retailers and buyers when it comes to prices of products may be way off in Divisoria. They have developed a good relationship for years. Customers flock to the retailers' stall as a result of their inexpensive products.

In Filipino parlance, shoppers are used to making the so-called "tawad" (bargaining) to reduce the original cost of the product to a lower and acceptable rate. Retailers may sometime agree but not all the time because they will appear "lugi" (losing) at the end of the day.

Maricor, owner of SSB underwear in Divisoria Mall, narrated that almost all of her customers, regular or not, plea to her for a much reasonable prices of her goods from briefs, panties to good-quality bras." I give discounts to them depending on the number of underwear they will buy from me," she said.

Shopping in Divisoria appears not to be tiring for buyers like in the case of 46-year-old Manila city hall employee who weekly takes a visit in the mall. Nanay Amelia has a bakery store and she gets baking supplies at the specialty in Divisoria.

Nanay Amelia said she had to look around for a store that fits her budget and needs, until she finally located one outlet. "Mula noon hanggang ngayon dito pa rin ako bumibili. Sa ilang taong lumipas, hindi na ako naghanap ng iba."

Both the retailers and buyers get the best deals. Retailers look for a good supplier who provides quality products at low prices while buyers are in search of store with low-priced quality items.

WATCH YOUR BACK

Around the stalls and markets in Divisoria where buyers hunt for quality Christmas items, pick pocketers and shop lifters are winding up as well during the shopping excursion. These unscrupulous individuals take advantage of the occasion when retailers are busy attending to the needs of their customers, who on the other hand, are looking for affordable goods.

Police officials from the Manila Police District (MPD), however, discounted the fact that theft is rampant in Divisoria as Christmas, approaches. Police visibility higthened in the area during the Christmas season.

"A few cases of theft have been reported but this doesn't mean it's not safe to go shopping in Divisoria especially now the police are on guard for the safety of both the customers and shop owners. There is nothing to worry about," a police official said.

He advised those visiting Divisoria to be extra careful when a stall is really crowded with shoppers because this is the time when pick pocketers or shop lifters come out and stage the heist.

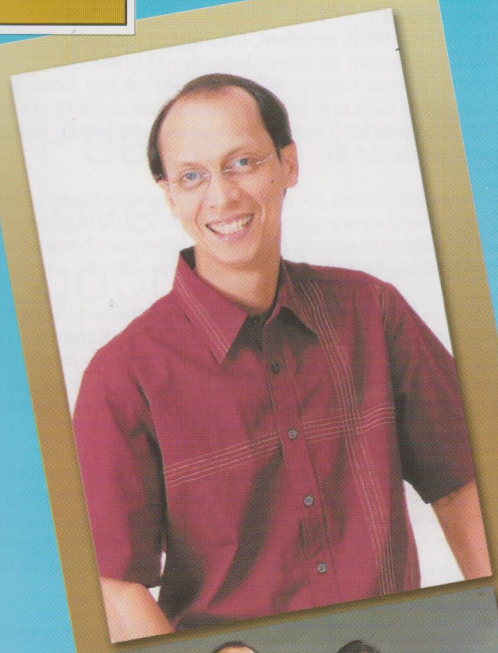
"Just be simple when you go there. Avoid wearing jewelries and just bring enough money for shopping so that no one would have an interest in your belongings. If theft still occurs, authorities are on the look out at all times including the security guards on duty," he said.

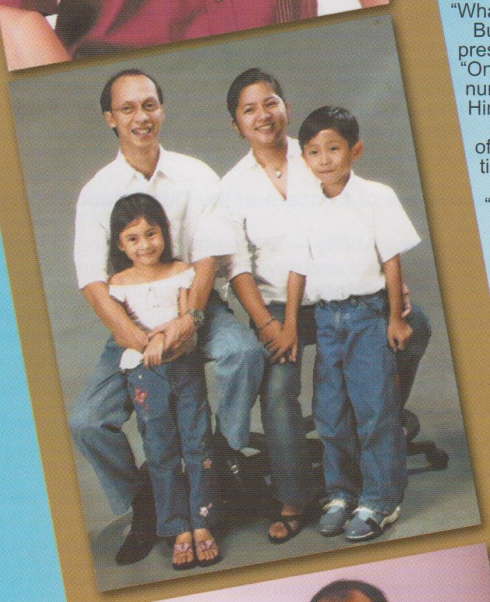


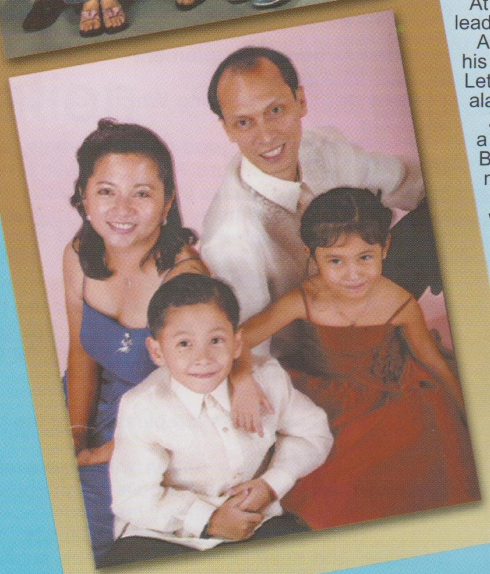
By: JEAMMA E. SABATE

"Politics is my dream"

Third District Manila Councilor Manuel "Letlet" M. Zarcal made no apologies as he denounced corruption and a "practice" in which ethics means nothing. "In my more than 15 years in public service since the days when I was the Kabataan Barangay Chairman until now, I am proud to say that I have never been corrupt, I never compromised my advocacy, my dignity in exchange for anything- not even money, power, fame can buy me," Zarcal told Profiles.







Zarcal has done his homework. Equipped with knowledge of political, governmental, public health, peace and order, social and cultural dimensions, Zarcal succeeded to make a difference. "I don't want to brag my accomplishments. My record speaks for itself. Iyong constituents na lang magpapatunay if I serve them well," said the 42-year-old son of the late decorated police Colonel Timoteo M. Zarcal.

The three-term councilor started his political career in 1980 after he won Sangguniang Kabataan chairman post. He joined the Liberal Party and was first elected as city councilor in 1992.

Attributing part of his success to his late father, Zarcal said "My idol is my father. He influenced me to enter public service and during my first election bid, majority of my votes are for my father, siya ang kilala hindi naman ako. Since childhood, my dream is to follow his footsteps but my mother discouraged me to enter the police service."

"Ayaw ng mother ko magpulis ako iyong pagaalala na pag-alis ng bahay baka hindi na bumalik ng buhay," said Zarcal who decided to take up Bachelor of Science in Commerce, major in Business Management at the De La Salle University.

Now on his 3rd term as a city councilor, Zarcal said politics is friendship but offered no formula. "What you see is what you get. Kung ano Letlet noon ganoon pa rin ngayon," he said

But his performance in the Manila City Council is a manifestation that he succeeded in presenting a clear picture of the argument and political realities on both sides of the debate. "One of my favorite ordinances is a regulation on theaters and cinemas not to accommodate number of moviegoers beyond sitting capacity. Dapat walang standing room (SRO) only. Hindi rin nasunod but now wala talagang SRO wala ng pera ang tao pangsine," he said.

Although he contributed a lot to the city council, he humbly admitted that he had share of failures and frustrations. "Before I was in the minority block, ang dami ordinances na sa tingin ko maganda na hindi napasa. This is the ugly side of politics," said Zarcal.

Saying his years of experience as a politician helped shaped his thinking, Zarcal said "each of these tasks and endeavors stimulated by concern, with respect to the causes I have been fighting for, I know that I have these imperfections but I am learning from mistakes and I am trying my best to give my best shot in every task or endeavor. In fact, I think the Manila city government has yet to maximize its resources to alleviate poverty but of course I believe public service is a continuing endeavor and it is evolving. Me kulang pa. I believe we can do more to alleviate poverty. And I recognize the fact that partisan politics somehow defeats public service," he said.

Zarcal preferred the present set up of the Manila City Council as the minority block no longer exists. "But now we are all majority and of course there is still check and balance as we also debate for issues and we serve as critics within the core. It is healthy and we are carefully screening all ordinances and resolutions," he said.

Reminding Profiles that he was an ally of the former Manila Mayor Lito Atienza whose son, Ali, ran but lost, during the recent election, Zarcal said his working relationship with the present Mayor Alfredo Lim is doing well. "The good thing is, it was former Mayor Atienza who told us (allies) who won the election to cooperate with Mayor Lim for the betterment of Manilans. Don't fight with him (Lim) and yes political affiliation start and end during campaign period," he said.

At the present set up, Zarcal averred "Guiding hand na lang ako as majority floor leader, and help scrutinize ordinances and resolutions."

Although there are ups and downs in his political journey, Zarcal expressed his gratitude to politics. "Politics made Letlet Zarcal. Kung walang pulitika, wala Letlet..My dream is to be a politician. I don't see myself doing outside politics at alam ko dito ako mapupunta."

Zarcal asserted "My spirits lives on in politics. Or course, after my third term as a city councilor I want to pursue for a higher position lahat naman may ambition. But I know my limitations and I still believe in destiny, let's see what will happen next," he said.

In contrast to the claim of some politicians, Zarcal stressed that his relationship with his family has not been ruined by politics. "I keep my private life as private as I can, for their privacy and protection. My relationship is not perfect but I will keep my promise to my wife to spend the rest of my life with her, spend time with our children especially on weekends and I want my children to have a normal life. But my wife is very supportive to me and she is exposed to politics. I would accompany my son who is doing great in baseball as player at the De La Salle, watching his games and practice," the proud father said.

"As a son and as a brother, okay naman siguro ako, hindi naman ako best. Since my father died, I became a source of strength of my family and I'm so happy close ang family namin,"

This coming Christmas, Zarcal said he would celebrate the Yuletide in a very traditional ways of Filipinos. "Like in the past Christmas days, I would spend it with my family, my wife, our children, my mother and siblings.. here in Manila .. I never go abroad during Christmas holiday," said Zarcal

As to his Christmas wish, "My eyes have been opened. Each of us can contribute for Manila , for the country, for the society and for the next generations," he ended.

Criteria for elective civil servants

By **Dr. BUTCH BELGICA**,
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• **Civil government** is one of the 3 God-ordained institutions established by God's providence for the **preservation of mankind** for His divine purpose. (**Family** and **Church governments**, other two).The **purpose** of civil government is to provide **order** and preserve **peace** among individuals, families and tribes in an established society, through laws and ordinances, to enjoy individual **liberty**, create opportunities for **prosperity**, and have freedom in the **pursuit of happiness**.

• **God**, the Supreme **Ruler of the nations**, commands governments to exercise **righteousness** and dispense **justice** in order to preserve man and the world. Without righteousness there will be chaos; without justice—bloodshed. (Isaiah. 5:7)

Agenda for Political Action:

1. To address the current lack of **Principled Leadership** among those aspiring for elected positions as civil magistrates.
2. To lift up the **Standard for Choosing** public (civil) servant-rulers (magistrates)

Principles for Political Action:

• **Pray** for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for wisdom and discernment.
• **Choose** (scrutinize) **good** and able men, and **go for** the **best**.
• **Act** and get involved—**organize**, **educate** and **campaign**.
• **Learn** from authoritative sources—**study** and **search** the most authoritative source of blueprint for political action, **the bible**.

Standards for One to be a Public (civil) Servant-Ruler (magistrate):

I. Exodus 18:21—...Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.

1. MEN WHO ARE ABLE —must be men of strength, not primarily physical but moral and spiritual as well; men of valor and virtue, of courage and character. A coward will not fulfill his duty to uphold God's righteous laws if doing so will be unpopular with the people. Men who have proven ability, courage, and integrity necessary to lead should be chosen as civil government leaders.

2. MEN WHO FEAR GOD —men who honor and reverence God and His Word-Law, who stand in covenant with God (Deut. 17:15). Men who fear God are wise and are understanding leaders, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov.1:7). Those who do not fear God are, according to Scriptures, "fools" who hate true wisdom.

3. MEN COMMITTED TO TRUTH —men who stand firmly and faithfully for the truth. Men of truth do not lie. They love truth and hate falsehood. Truthful men can be trusted. Liars and lovers of falsehood are scourges to those they lead.

4. MEN WHO HATE COVETOUSNESS —men who seek no unjust gain from their positions, hate (not just dislike) the thought of using his office to enrich himself through violence, fraud, bribes, etc., and must hate the covetousness in others. A covetous ruler will use the power of his office to seize for himself the wealth of those he governs or will dip his fingers into the government coffers, and will conspire with like-minded covetous men to do either or both. One who hates covetousness will not allow the use of civil government power to seize the wealth of another through unjust legislation or confiscatory taxation.

II. Deut. 1:13 —Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes...

Wise — means to be **skillful, prudent, intelligent, or able**, denotes both natural ability and wisdom attained through experience.

In biblical sense, it also begins with the fear of the Lord and proceeds to knowledge of God and His precepts. True wisdom comes from God as a man searches for it in his Word-Law as he would search for hidden treasures (Prov. 2:1-8).

Such a wise man will come to understand righteousness, and judgement, and equity, and every good path. (Prov. 2:9). Thus, he is a man of ability and intelligence who is skilled in judgement because of his fear of the Lord and his knowledge of God's Law-Word.

Understanding — means discerning, has the ability to make a proper judgement, primarily to **moral insight** and **ethical discernment**. He is able to discern the right course of action based on the moral law of God. In terms of civil law, he knows what is just and is able to judge righteously in disputes of criminal cases because he understands God's law.

Known — means one with a **good reputation** in his community, who has proven himself to be wise and understanding; whose character, ability, and wisdom have been **demonstrated** by his **service** in other spheres such as in family life, business, community service, church service, and etceteras. His family, relatives and friends attest to his character, ability, temperament and nature.

The biblical standards for civil servants given in Exodus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 1:13 give citizens a sure guide for determining which men among them are truly fit to serve as civil rulers. The qualifications given on these texts indicate three areas of concern.

Three Areas of Concern of the Qualifications Given:

1. Natural Ability —The demands of being a magistrate require men to be intelligent and have the skills necessary to lead others.
2. Personal Integrity — Magistrates must be men of the highest personal character, men of truth and virtue, lives an example of righteous living. Being charged with enforcing God's in the civil sphere, they should keep all aspects of God's moral law. They must be men who are in public service to serve God by leading men, and are not there to enrich or promote themselves.
3. Spiritual Maturity — As ministers of God, they should be men of spiritual attainment (a knowledge and fear of God) and biblical wisdom. They know that they are accountable to God and must someday give account to God. They are knowledgeable of God's law as revealed in the Scripture so that he can carry out his duty of establishing justice and righteousness in the courts and legislatures.

Other Actions to Implement

Deut. 1:22 — The Thing Which You Have Spoken Is **Good** For Us **To Do**

• In **choosing good** public servants, we **use** the **standards** set **by God** in the Scripture. As citizens who scrutinize, they **go for** the **best**. Voters must **exercise** their moral **persuasion** upon those aspiring to rule as public servants by **insisting** on the God-given **standards** as the **basis** for their **votes** to be given.

• Get involved in **organizing** forums, symposiums, conferences, caucuses, and other group dynamics for the purpose of **educating** the citizens, young and old alike, on this godly standards, and **campaigning**, individually and collectively, for the best choices.

Benefits:

• Good civil rulers are blessings to the people; bad civil rulers are scourges to them.
• God blesses a nation with peace and prosperity, whose righteous leaders lead their people to righteousness; and reproaches or punishes the people with evil leaders.
• God's blessings are on people who choose men of ability, character, and spiritual maturity as their public (civil) servant-rulers (magistrates). For this is obedience to His Law-Word.

Editorial

Peace, love and goodwill

The 2007th birth anniversary of Jesus Christ nears. The messages of His birth and coming to this world—of peace, love and goodwill to man—remain eternal since the first Christmas in Bethlehem.

It is elating indeed, that the whole Christian world always amplify these messages of Christmas, now added with gift-giving and sharing of blessings.

Truly, it is during the Christmas season that planet earth looks like the best place to live in, in the entire universe. We see people with smiles greeting everyone a merry Christmas with love and sincerity in heart. There is a feeling of joy in everyone. And with the festive atmosphere, the young children most especially, are the happiest.

Christmas indeed, brings happiness and joy to the world. Even for a short period of time, people never forget these messages of peace, love and goodwill.

But why are they forgotten after Christmas? Can't these messages of Christ's birth remain forever in the hearts and minds of the people? Are peace, love and goodwill to fellowmen so difficult to retain and sustain than making war and breeding hatred among men and nations?

Only we, the people, can really tell and make the difference. The decision is yours and mine. Can you make Christ's message of peace, love and goodwill remain an eternal flame in your heart?

Merry Christmas and best wishes to all!

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fyi

By:
Kenneth John Montegrande
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Move the nation forward with Christ

One day, a father was reading his favorite newspaper. Wishing that he would not be disturbed by his little daughter, the father cut up a map of the world and gave it to her beloved little girl for her to put together.

After a short time, his daughter returned to him with all the pieces of the world map in perfect order, every piece in its place.

The father was greatly surprised. "Why? How did you do it darling? You don't know anything about geography," the father asked.

The innocent girl replied: "There was a picture of Jesus Christ at the back and I knew that when I had Jesus in the right place, the whole world would be perfect."

This old story about the father and his daughter is something very inspiring and encouraging. Perhaps, the lesson of the story can move the leaders of nations and its people to seek guidance from heaven to make the whole world a perfect place to live in.

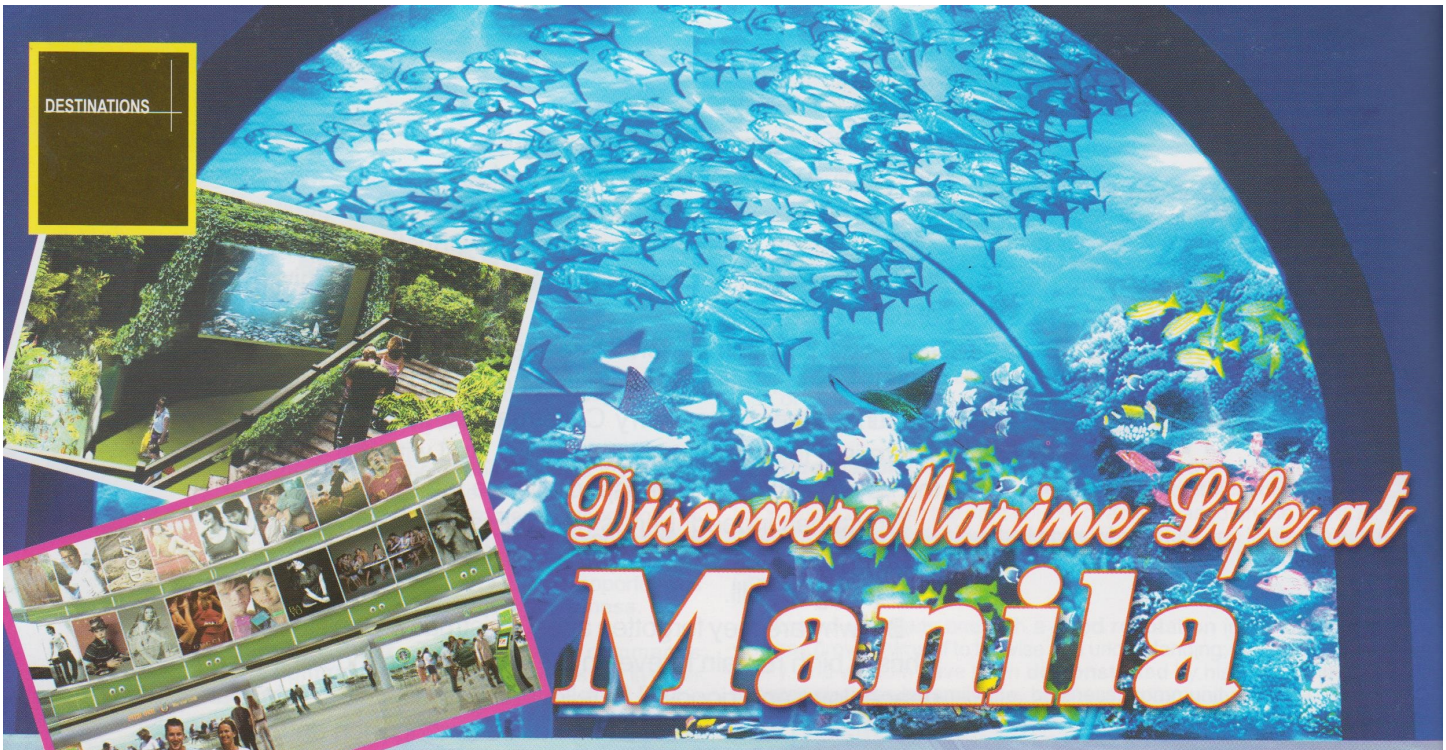
It's never late to pray for God's help. He replies when what is asked for is badly needed. And prayers can do a lot.

This Christmas season, let's seek Christ's mercy to bring peace and love amongst nations and enlightenment of our leaders, for them to work in finding ways and means to promote peace and love in every corner of the globe.

Instead of keeping busy fighting among themselves in the political arena, our leaders should busy themselves in making life easier, better and meaningful for our people.

The Filipino people are suffering from too much politics. It's destroying their enthusiasm to achieve improvement in life and maligning their sense of values and responsibility.

Let's seek Christ's help to let this nation to move forward. With the much talked-about improved economy, let's not waste this big opportunity to put those development projects to work.



Discover Marine Life at Manila Oceanarium

By **Sabine Wong**

FILIPINO families no longer have to rely on television to see live sharks, manta rays and other under the sea with the opening of Manila Ocean Park on Dec. 15.

Though only the first phase of the world-class marine-themed park behind Quirino Grandstand will be accessed by the public, it will feature an 8,000 sq m (oceanarium) containing around 300 species of marine animals mostly found in the country.

Being part of the Coral Triangle, the Philippines is considered as one of the few countries with the richest marine biodiversity. Lim Chee Yong, president of Manila Ocean Park, said the location along Manila Bay was chosen for its uniqueness. Through a series of filtration systems, the bay's water will be used for the oceanarium's 12,000 cubic meters of water.

In the oceanarium, touted as one of Asia's largest, a major attraction will be a 25-meter long, 220 degree-curved acrylic tunnel walkway in the main tank named Buhay na Karagatan. The tunnel is believed to provide the public a greater view of the fishes than those in other oceanariums which only have a 180-degree curve.

But before reaching the main tank, the journey begins at Agos (Flow), the only open-air portion in the oceanarium. Aside from an artificial waterfall exhibiting the flow of water into the oceans, everyone is sure to enjoy the touchpool where one can feel animals like starfishes and shrimps.

In the Bahura (Reef), there will be 48 tanks showing the colorful underwater rainforest—or the multiple hues and diverse life forms seen in Philippine coral reefs.

Afterward there's Laot (Fishing Grounds), where four large aquariums depicting a shipwreck features numerous fish in all sizes and colors. The exhibits are believed to be impressive and a sight to behold.

The star attraction, Buhay Na Karagatan (Living Ocean), will best portray how the marine species interact with one another in their natural habitat. And unlike other oceanarium tunnels that have walkalators to speed up one's journey, anyone is welcome to linger in this 25-meter tunnel, watch and take pictures or videos of what they see.

The intriguing barracuda, meanwhile, will be the focus of Ang Kalaliman (The Deep), where visitors will learn about their schooling habits. And as if to save the best for last, one will finally see the huge jaws and sharp teeth of the Pating (Sharks). Adults and kids alike come face-to-face with probably the most feared fish in the world"with only a glass panel separating them from the sharks.

At the end of the journey, families can still enjoy time together at the Al Fresco cafe with both the breeze of Manila Bay, and a view of the shark aquariums.

Aside from being an entertainment attraction, the Manila Ocean Park aims to be an educational and conservation facility where marine animals are assured of utmost care.

Lim also guaranteed that endangered species will not be housed in the aquariums.

By the middle of next year, expect more features to open at the Manila Ocean Park as the marine-inspired boutique hotel and mall open to the public in April, and the open water marine habitat in July.

While the hotel and mall will offer more recreation and shopping opportunities, the open water marine habitat will have two separate outdoor pools specially designed for swimming and diving classes. The state-of-the-art Manila Ocean Park is truly a dream come true for Filipinos who have long been waiting for another source of pride to the world.

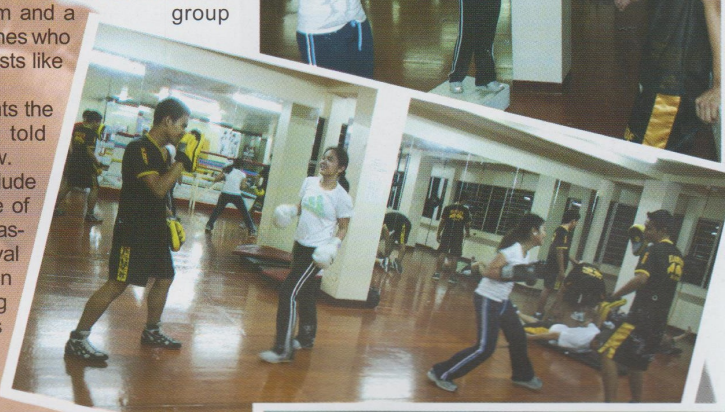
Boxing is also for women

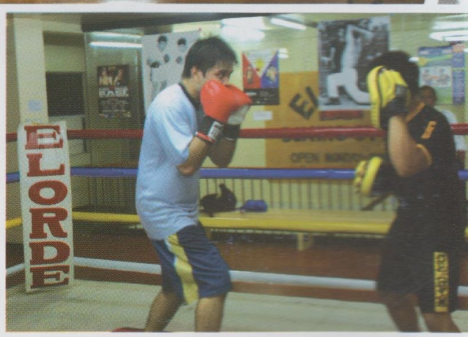
By ABBY INGALLA



GONE are the days when boxing was solely for men. These days, more and more women are getting into the sportwhich is now seen as a form of exercise and a self-defense skill as well. At the Elorde Boxing Gym, Taft Avenue Vito Cruz Malate branch for instance, at least 70 percent of its clients are women, according to owner Gabriel "Bebot" Elorde Jr., son and namesake of the late boxing legend "Da Flash," who earned the accolade as the greatest Filipino boxer of all time and the world's greatest in the junior lightweight division.







"Women are no longer intimidated by boxing," added Bebot, a former professional boxer who is now a boxing promoter and matchmaker.

While he believes that the popularity of boxing can be attributed to the success of the country's ring heroes like his father and People's Champ Manny Pacquiao, Bebot said the sport's appeal to women can be ascribed to several crucial approaches: It's a cardiovascular workout to most women wanting to lose weight.

Others do boxing to release stress or to protect themselves in a self-defense situation, he added.

"I used to think that boxing is just a guy thing," said Jen Abella, 22, who works as a financial analyst in a multinational firm. She admitted that she was first hesitant to try the sport but was delighted to find out that lots of women were into it as well.

A boxing enthusiast since 2005, Abella, along with her friends, now hits the boxing gym usually after work at least thrice a week "to keep fit."

Boxing may be considered an ultimate workout as it combines strength training and aerobic work, she added.

Established only in September, the newest branch of Elorde Boxing Gym located across De La Salle University on Taft Avenue has already grown to be a favorite haunt of boxing enthusiasts.

Elorde Boxing Gym boasts of an incredible group of certified boxing coaches who train the sport enthusiasts like real pros.

"We teach our clients the boxing training program and a art of boxing," Bebot told PROfiles in an interview.

The full session include jumping rope, a couple of speed ball rounds, the classic heavy bag for interval punching, combination punches for punching mitts together with lots of footwork, sparring, punch ball and ab exercises.

Their rate per session (one hour workout with a trainer) is P200 for members (plus P500 annual membership fee), and P350 for non-members. For boxing addicts, the gym offers a Gold Package (11 sessions, annual membership included) for P2,500.

Elorde Boxing Gym offers an attractive venue for everyone who loves to take up the sport but is averse to the braggadocio and machismo often associated with boxing.

Apart from women, out-of-school youths, students, young professionals and even the young at heart add to the gym's growing list of clientele.

Lawyer Rolando Villones, 59, a resident of Quezon City and considered the most "senior" among the branch's regular patrons, claimed that engaging in the sport makes him feel young.

"My work as a lawyer is too stressful, but boxing helps me relax. I forget about everything else when I'm here at the gym," added Villones, who visits the boxing gym at least three to four times a week.

But beyond fitness and self-defense techniques, the sport seems to give more tangible benefits to boxing aficionados, like the improvement of one's self-confidence and discipline, among others.

"Boxing helps me to manage my life more efficiently. It enhances my ability to relax, so it helps me keep calm and poised under pressure," said Elorde's daughter, Grachel Elorde-Castro, 23. "This is also a way of socializing for me, I meet more people and gain new friends at the gym."

Grachel has been into boxing since she was in high school. She has her father and grandfather to thank for excelling in stereotypically masculine endeavors such as boxing.

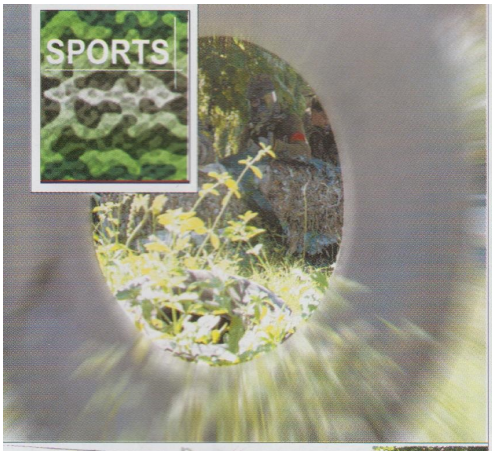
"My dad and my lolo really influenced my decision to try boxing. Me and my siblings practically grew up playing inside the boxing ring," shared Elorde-Castro, who hits the gym usually after her class at the adjacent DLSU-St. Benilde.

From the first Elorde Sports Complex in Sucat, Paranaque that "Da Flash" had built from his earnings at the height of his boxing career, the popular boxing gym now has several branches—mostly being managed by Bebot's other siblings—all over the metropolis.

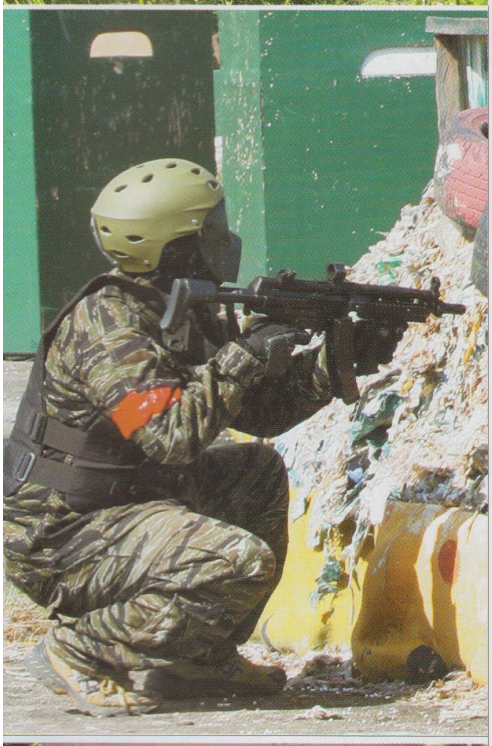
"This (business) is our way of paying homage to my father," Bebot said.

Elorde Boxing Gym, located at 2510 Taft Avenue, Vito Cruz, Malate, Manila, is open daily, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. For inquiries, call (02) 522-3727 or 0926-7203145.

SPORTS









Airsoft

A Gentleman's Game

Don't be alarmed the next time you find yourself under fire in a battlefield. Maybe you're experiencing something that's all real: the guns, gears and tactical operations flared by two armed groups in conflict. It may seemingly appear as a military exercise or a gunfight but it's not. You're in the middle of a war game between airsofters.

GEAR UP

There is a level of realism in playing airsoft whether it's a close quarter's combat or a war game held at a jungle terrain. Each airsofter brings out the tactics with the type of guns, battle dress uniforms (BDUs) and other gears they use during the war game.

Airsoft players engage in a gunfight with their airsoft electric guns (AEGs), exactly a one-to-one scale replica of real pistols and high-powered guns of military men. However, its ammunitions are ballistic balls (BBs) weighing commonly from .20 to .30 grams.

John Tovillo, a member of Team SWAK (Samahang Wargames Astig ng Kabite), arms himself with Classic Army (CA) M4 CQB and 1911 pistol. His BDU, Digital Marpat (marine pattern), is SWAK's official battle uniform that blends and camouflages the jungle terrain of Camp Madawig where his team calls together every weekend to take part in war games.

"I chose M4 CQB because it's an airsoft replication of the Colt M4 CQBR carbine which our modern combatant uses. It looks and behaves so authentically like a real rifle. The realistic weight is also a great feature because most parts are metal," he said.

GAME PROPER

In a competition or a regular airsoft game held in various venues nationwide, the foot per second (FPS) limit was commonly designated from 400 to 450 fps. The scenarios in the game - capture the flag, pilot down or skirmish and number of players would be determined by the organizer and host team.

To join the game, whether it's a big event or not, an airsoft player has to pay the game fee upon registration. It ranges from P100 in a regular game while P300 to P350 during a tournament that includes the fellowship night. The game lasts until the scenarios are officially declared over by the organizer or host team.

The presence of marshals matters a lot during the game. With the risk of being hit by BBs, they even step into the middle of actual battles to make sure that players stick to the airsoft creed of honesty: call hit when you're shot by rival airsofters. Marshals ensure that the flow of the game runs smoothly and there is no foul play.

HIT! COMING OUT

When a player gets shot by an opposition force, he voluntarily makes a confession that he's hit and comes out in the open as a rule in airsoft. He can no longer play because he is considered a casualty until the end of the scenario.

On the other hand, an airsofter can also pretend as if nothing happened or was not hit. Here where the zombies (a term by airsofters referring to players who consistently disregard multiple hits or known as hard targets) come.

Gian Velarde, also known as Geist in his team Sonic Strikers, narrated that whenever a tango connects a well placed shot, he always keeps himself on check and sees to it that he calls the hit to avoid further injury.

"When I happen to chance upon an undisciplined player, I won't hesitate to approach the player and tell him about his mistake. As a piece of advice, an airsofter should keep his cool and try to avoid that type of player and acquire a new target," Velarde said.

"As the airsoft community grows, the number of unruly players increases. It will be better to be the gentleman as you are and set an example to the newbies in the sport," he added.

A GIRL THING

Gender equality is even exercise in airsoft. Any team has female members that can be a threat to opposition forces. They can be leaders, assassins and defenders on their own way during the game.

A newbie (refers to beginner) like Melissa, a medical representative, decided to play airsoft to experience a real-life operation during the game. She doesn't mind being hurt or hit by BBs. She considers herself one of the boys and learns the ways how it should be played.

IT'S MORE THAN A GAME

Airsofters consider the hobby as a way of life, experience and a family thing. They make new friends and meet people coming from different backgrounds: businessman, retired military men, lawyers, government employee, medical experts and students. Others have developed love for the sport as if they don't know what their lives would be like without airsoft.

Dante Junata, a former Airsoft Commando (ASCOMM), said he has been in the sport since 1993 and continues to play airsoft until now as his way to reach out to his long-time dream to serve the country and his countrymen as a soldier.

"I have a frustration in joining the military so this is how I face it by playing as a soldier in airsoft. I enjoy the dressing up part most of all and handling guns," Junata, a.k.a. Wolfgang said.

For his part, Tovillo calls himself FAST (Father and Son Team) in airsoft because he plays this great hobby with his 10-year-old son Marc. His team up with Marc let them easily learn the ways of the game with utmost honesty and integrity; live by the airsoft principle to have fun.

Steve Realuyo, a senior planning officer by profession at Asian Terminal Inc. plays airsoft for one major reason - excitement.

"The main objective is for all to have fun! It's not an end of the world game; don't be afraid on admitting your hit. There's always a next game. It only means that you have to improve more," Realuyo, a Sonic Striker, said.

Sports develop lives

By: TRACY CABRERA

Throughout his life, Mayor Alfredo Lim's grandson, Niño Dela Cruz, has seen the power that sports can have in a young person's life.

Niño knows firsthand the lessons a child can learn from involvement in sports: lessons about self-disciplines, teamwork, confidence, physical fitness, sportsmanship, competition, leadership, respect, humility and many more.

He has also seen violence and abuse in sports and the negative impact these behaviors can have on the youth. Dela Cruz says that criticism, displays of temper and intense pressure are some of the negative behaviors often exhibited by adults, spectators and coaches that profoundly impact negatively on our youth.

Now as officer-in-charge of the Manila Sports Council, Dela Cruz has a firm respect for sports and its potentials to enrich a young person's life. He has vowed to further strengthen the city's sports program for the benefit of the people of Manila and in doing so, he is hopeful that he would surpass, the achievements of his predecessor.

"We will continue the sports development program of Masco in our objective to discover and develop new athletes in different sports here in the City of Manila," he stressed.

A former Letran junior basketball team member, Dela Cruz started implementing a three-month calendar sports program which includes the Alay Lakad Kontra Droga project every Saturday in various Manila barangays and the holding of the Manila City Hall Employee Sports Festival.

Also lined up for the remainder of the year are Federation of Schools Sports Association of the Philippines championships, the Palarong Maynila, recruitment from the barangay level in all sports discipline, basketball and coaching clinics, the Mayor Alfredo S. Lim Cup swimming competition, participation in the Philippine Full Contact Self-Defense Federation eliminations and in the Philippine Olympic Festival National competitions.

"We are introducing and implementing all possible sports, including the indigenous ones," the Masco chief announced. By next year, Masco has calendared sports clinics to be conducted in coo-peration with various national sports associations and the Manila Barangay Bureau under its director Rogelio Lim which will be participated by the different public schools in the city's six districts.

Through these activities, Dela Cruz believes he would be able to raise people's awareness about the importance of sports in their lives as well as the mission of providing role models for the country's youth.

The Masco chief also said he believes that adults must work at teaching kids the benefits of sports.

"If it's true that 'it takes an entire village to raise a child,' then each member of a community has a duty and responsibility to solve this challenge," he said.

Special Feature Story





My Fun Food Depot

By: RINA VILLANIA

IF one is on the lookout for food and fun at the same time, a unique lit with two dozen light bulbs decoration could just be the answer to food-loving souls in search for delicious and affordable snacks.

Such is the concept behind the "My Fun Food Depot" which lives up to its name of satisfying loyal customers by offering a variety of affordable burgers and sandwiches stuffed with meat and veggies plus condiments.

"The variety, and the originality of how the food choices were conceived injects fun to simple eating," says twenty-eight-year-old Sherilyn Reyes, now a proud owner of two outlets of the "My Fun Food Depot" since the business more than a year ago.

Sherilyn or simply Shey to family and friends said that at a glance, a mere passerby would not miss her food stall what with the large-sized footlong sandwich banner that seemed to have become an attraction apart from its lights, prompting onlookers to try any of what they offer.

Her jolly side combined with her interest in food brought Shey in the food kiosk business.

She said that even as a teener, she already knew the value of hard work. Hence she strived to earn money through her own little ways even at a young age.

"I grew up under the care of my Lola. During summer vacation, I would always ask her to allow me to sell *sago* and *gulaman* in front of the house. At an early age, I learned how to value money and therefore, be wise in spending," Shey pointed out.

Last May 2006, it was a dream come true for Shey after the first outlet of her "My Fun Food Depot" opened inside the Mapua-Makati campus.

"We opened there early since it is located inside the canteen together with other food kiosks. There are also students or teachers coming in there early for breakfast," Shey explained.

Six months after, she was finally able to put up a branch of the "My Fun Food Depot" inside the Meisic Mall in Binondo, Manila.

Shey emphasized that apart from being affordable, her food stall caters to what students or young professionals are looking for, refering to what they offer as "healthy" food.

"We are using grilled patties for the burger. They can actually see how we cook them. There is no need to put cooking oil since the patty or meat itself has oil already," Shey explains.

The food choices include: Mushy Mozarella Ham, Hearty Tuna Bacon, Veggy Roast Chicken, Beefy Mexicani Bacon, Monty Cristo, Hungary Sausage and Sweety Footlong.



Shey said she was also the one who thought of what kind of burger or sandwich will be put on display and sold in her stall.

"First, I conducted taste test in the house by combining for example tuna with bacon, or bacon with beef with the family members as my critic. So, when I thought that everything came out right already, I decided to launch these food choices of mine to the public."

Shey said she is happy with the outcome of her "food experiment."

The young entrepreneur added that her target is to open an additional one or two outlets next year. She pointed to another school campus in Makati as potential spot of her upcoming food stall.

She stressed that even if her business is not yet big and famous, she is already reaping some form of rewards. "I would say that my business is picking up strong as days pass by. Apart from the earnings, the fulfillment is drawn from what the customers have been saying about my product especially if they are satisfied with it."

Her advise for those who dream of putting up their own business but are hesitant: "No guts, No glory."

Shey said that for one to realize his or her dreams, he or she must not be afraid to start trying their hands on what they wanted all along but are just afraid they might fail.

"You must not be afraid to take risks. Nothing will happen if you will always keep on thinking that something negative might happen. Just believe in yourself and have faith in God and everything will turn out right."

It seemed everything turned out right for Shey who said she will not stop until she makes it big in the food business. But this, Shey stressed, she will achieve while still having fun at the same time.

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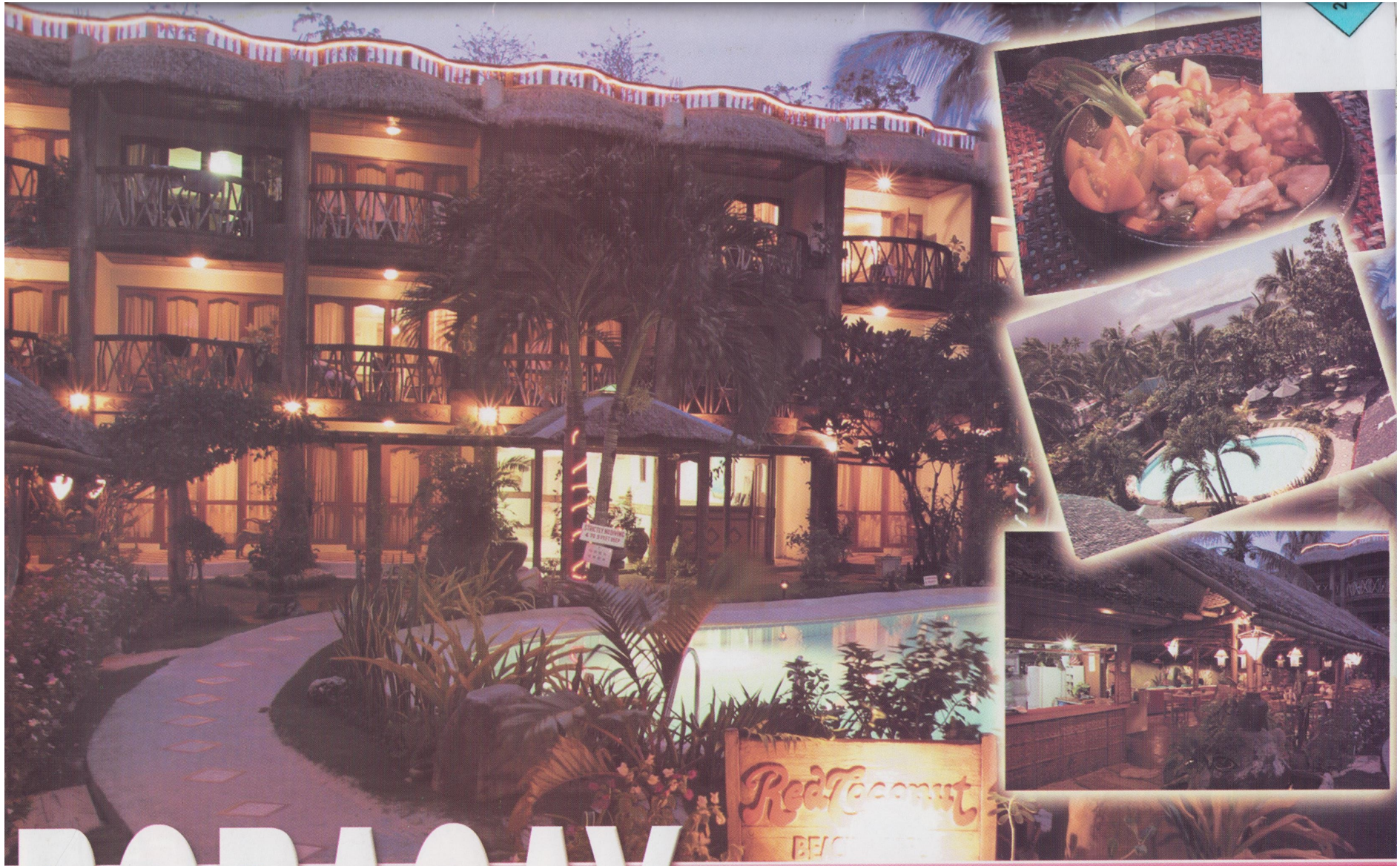

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