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FILIPINO RENAISSANCE

By: Dr. Romy Sinajon



Walang Kurakot sa matuwid na daan!—this is the battle cry of Philippine President Benigno Aquino III or PNoy, short for President Noynoy. For

most of us expatriate Filipinos, following our Philippine politics is very interesting, but one thing I am enjoying is seeing the definite crusade against corruption in our country. The headlines are tantalizing, such as 'Former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo Behind bars'. Yet this is hardly stirring our Filipino community here in Canada. There is very few mention of this in my face book sources; no demonstration by Arroyo loyalists; no twitter or you tube invitation to debate. It seems as if most of us expected this to happen! I remember distinctly when Senator Ninoy Aquino Jr. was assassinated by Marcos assassins in 1983. It seemed that the world was about to end! The future for our country looked bleak but we managed to survive hoping for a better tomorrow.

Many like us emigrated to the U.S. or Canada and watched from afar the drama being played out in the Philippines: the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino Jr.; the PEOPLES POWER revolution; the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship; the ascension of Corazon Aquino as president; the Constitutional Convention to rewrite our constitution; the election of a movie actor Joseph Estrada to the presidency and his removal from office for corruption. We seemed to be doing it right. Unfortunately the heirs of the Marcos dictatorship have rebounded from their stint in purgatory with the aid of their ill-gotten wealth and nobody from the public and government sectors seemed serious to get them to face justice. The heirs even have the gall to suggest that Marcos be declared a national hero and be buried in the *Libingan na mga Bayani* cemetery!

I read with joy that the Armed Forces of the Philippines has finally released to the Commission on Human Rights voluminous documents relating to the Marcos years and the legacy of

his dictatorship! Now historians and interested citizens can finally get a picture of how deep and systematic the plunder and violation of human rights under his rule. But now, the events in our homeland are about the regime of immediate past President Gloria Arroyo for disregarding justice and ruling with impunity as if the world belongs to them. To get at the bottom of her misrule, PNoy is justified in removing her midnight appointee for chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Renato Corona. This fellow is evidently protecting her with recent Supreme Court decisions. It is sad to realize that former President Arroyo betrayed our hopes and dreams. I remember when she came to Toronto in 2003. I had the opportunity of meeting her briefly together with other Filipinos at the time. Back then I thought she would be a great



president, with her PhD in Economics she has the training and expertise that could solve our economic woes and uplift the Pilipino people! However, she did not have the country's economic outlook in mind but her own self-preservation.

Most Filipinos can be forgiven for voting Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for president in 2004 over movie star Fernando Poe, Jr., because frankly in my opinion, they previously made a mistake when they voted for a movie star Joseph Estrada. I really felt at the time that she won that presidential election in 2004. But more and more evidence are emerging that she actually cheated! I give credit to GMA for passing in Congress the improved Value added tax law that is now the basis for the government for collecting more taxes from the people. This tax law I believed can help the government fund more infrastructure projects, if the money does not get pocketed by scrupulous politicians. Finally the wheels of justice is moving again in the Philippines, albeit

slowly. I say slowly because justice in the Philippines moves at a snail's pace as evidenced by the Ampatuan Massacre trial. This case is more than 2 years old now with no end in sight! Although the case is fully supported by the government, many experts predict that this trial will last a century to finish. How much more if only ordinary citizens are involved? Justice delayed is justice denied!

Something should be done about this and now that the Chief Justice of the Supreme court is on trial, this should put the Supreme Court on the spotlight and out of this reforms could be instituted! This will help our people feel that there are good men and women, after all that is trying to correct the injustices of the past. It will be hard as the 1% of the population or 185,000 families reportedly control the equivalent of the total income earned by the bottom 30% of the 100 million Philippine population or about 5.5 million of the poorest of the poor families. Twenty five years after EDSA, while poverty incidence went down from 35% (1988) to 29% (2009) the actual number of poor people because of unabated population growth, had increased from 21.3 million to 23.9 million. There are so many beggars, landless and hungry people. This 23.9 million Filipinos, per statistics, live with less than P46/day for a family of five of which 9.4 million of them are called food poor because they live with less than P32/day. Another problem is the decades old Muslim rebellion in Mindanao. I believe that peaceful negotiation is the way to go to solve this problem. On top of it all, climatic changes leading to floods and devastation and deaths like the recent typhoon Sendong that wrought death and destruction in Mindanao cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan are also part of the problem in our country.

Our country the Philippines is lucky to have a man leading the renaissance of our culture and values and beliefs. President Benigno Aquino III talks the talk and walks the walk. We have to support him. No other Filipino leader has instilled so much confidence, hope and respect for our people. He cannot solve everything but he leads the way. He is not perfect but he is the best at this time. This coming New Year is another year of changes in our country. I urge every Filipino to send messages of encouragement to our president to continue the fight against corruption and to change the culture of injustice and inequality. - §-

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Year End 2011

By: *Mama Ching Quejas*



The year 2011 is on its way out and 2012 is on the threshold. The days, weeks and months went by so fast but we were too busy to notice the pace. We can't stop the time so let's take a quick look into the past year before we say "hello" to the New Year.

Our blessings in 2011 are many, thank God for His continuing love. The year started with a great blessing. Our property (the Centre) was reassessed by the municipal government and reduced our property tax by 60 per cent retroactive from year 2008. We received a rebate that we reserved and used as counterpart amount for a community capital funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. And we had enough credit left to pay the property tax for 2011. It was a great relief indeed.

We had several activities year-round. We had our regular weekly programs for fitness (line dancing every Monday), our intergenerational ronaldalla and heritage classes (Pilipino language). A new program was organized - a children's choir under the tutelage of Mrs. Imelda Papa, noted music master/director. In line with recent developments in the community involving teen murder and suicide, an information session on Mental illness awareness was conducted by Dr. Mabelle Virey, noted Psychiatrist to help the community cope with problems such as these. Follow up sessions have been scheduled for next year.

We started the year with a fund-raising brunch to warm up from the cold January weather and for a chance to greet friends a happy new year. It was followed by a musical concert in February "Putting It Together" by Chiqui Pineda Azimi one of Mama Ching's angels, an artist - performer in her own right. The event was chaired by Tommy de Guia, board member. In March, we had our regu-

lar fund raising event, bowl-athon, chaired by Benny Cuevillas, auditor. Mortgage interest rates went up and Ed Frondoza, executive VP negotiated for the best deal available. He got a closed contract for a year at 4% which is only a quarter per cent above the original rate of 3.75 %. Not bad at all. Also in March, Service Canada through the New Horizons for Seniors Program, approved a grant to renovate our kitchen. We now have a completely new and furnished kitchen. Included among the new appliances is a dishwasher. The volunteers don't have to spend hours washing the dishes anymore.

We had another brunch fund raiser in May. We also received a cash gift from the Mississauga Cooksville Lions Club and a donation of 92 banquet chairs from the International Bingo Centre. In June, in collaboration with the Filipino Seniors of Mississauga, we celebrated the Declaration of Philippine Independence at the Centre. At the Independence Day picnic in the Mississauga Community Park, the early bird raffle was drawn. Ruffy Romano, director, was chairman of this project. The annual walkathon chaired by Resty del Rosario, VP for Programs administration and Ruffy Romano was held in July. A week after that, Kalayaan held the Fiesta Ng Kalayaan at the Mississauga Celebration Square in which we participated. We had our own booth and we did the final draw of the raffle on stage. A power point show about KCCC was also shown on the videotron. Handbills containing the KCCC activities were also distributed. Also in August, Canada Summer Jobs (Service Canada), approved two student positions for employment. These summer students are of great help in updating our files and doing research work for our programs. This summer, they researched and produced the KCCC volunteers' handbook and updated our membership and donors' data bases. The last and biggest of our major fundraising events, the annual golf tournament, was held at the Royal Ontario Golf Club in Hornby, Ontario on August 27. In its 4th year, the tournament generated more revenue than the previous years. Ed Frondoza, Executive Vice President

has chaired the project each year with the help of Mars Cebrero, former board member and the hardworking golf committee. In September, Ben Montada, director, chaired the Hawaiian Night, one of the warmest and happiest evenings of the year. Also in September, the Ontario Trillium Foundation approved our application for a community capital fund in the amount of \$90,600 half of which KCCC put in as counterpart to facelift the multi-purpose hall and the rest of the facility. We had the ceiling painted, changed the fluorescent tubes with bay lights, installed wall sconce lighting, installed laminated wood on the entire floor of the hall, tiled the reception area and the hallways. We have a new stage complete with sound system and drapery. Theatrical lighting will follow. The walls have been given a new coat of paint in time for the New Year's Eve Ball. Thanks to Director Chito Carbonell for donating his cash birthday gifts to purchase paint and to one of my angels, Edgar Arcon for doing the job. This renovation is the big highlight of the year. We will showcase the centre's new look on March 3rd next year with a cultural show on the new stage. Guests will have a preview on New Year's Eve Ball. The centre has greatly changed and we invite the community to come and visit us. You will feel proud having a place that is a symbol of our ethnicity.

In October, board member Minnie Bandayrel, chaired the Halloween Fright night. She had the facility transformed into a ghost house and graveyard site that catapulted the live ghosts to first place in the costume contest. In November, another concert was presented chaired by Ricky and Susan Tanpoco of RST Productions that featured popular singers Ivy Joy Maniquis and Rico Callao. It was another great show. In December, the board put off the volunteers' appreciation night to January to give children in the community a treat and held a children's Christmas party. The children had fun playing games with Santa's helpers and Yoyo the clown and they went home with more than one gift each from Santa Claus. For the transition, on New Year's Eve, Eula Rulloda, board secretary and executive VP Ed Frondoza are co-chairs. Eula is busy putting on

(Continued on page 6)

Christmas at Aringay

By: Gerry Rulloda



♪♪ Silver bells,
silver bells,
it's Christmas time
in Aringay!
Ring- a-ling, hear
them ring...

Right after Undas
(All Saints day),
Auntie will scour
the orchard for the

perfect Christmas tree. It may be a guava tree branch or a star apple. She'll get Mang Pedring to cut it down and leave it there for the leaves to fall, like it's autumn!

♪♪ The falling leaves ♪♪

Auntie is so American. She went to Philippine Normal School (now Philippine Normal College) of course ran by Americans and every summer (she calls it summer), (Philippines has two seasons, dry and wet!) she goes to Baguio for summer classes at the Teachers' College in Camp John Hay. Goes up on Sunday comes back on Saturday and we get Anchor butter for the pandesal! All week she is up there, we use matamis na bao.

About a month after, on the Saturday before the first Sunday of advent, we go and get the tree/branch. It is pretty dried right now. Auntie gets a big jar and sets the branch right on it, filling the jar with stones. She gets a wide mouth pan and soap and starts making lather. Once the lather gets a thick consistency, Auntie would cover the branches with lather then waits for it to dry out. Snow!! There's snow in

Aringay! It's Christmas!

♪♪ I'm dreaming of a white Christmas!
♪♪

We hang our socks by the window because that's where Santa comes in. Check it every day as you might find a white rabbit! (Actually, it's a candy). Manang Nellie being the favorite child gets an apple or a Sunkist orange on top of everything we get.

We start stretching our vocal chords for tonight's caroling. Danny with his low bombastic voice, me with a high pitch ala Boys of Vienna choir and Manang Tita and Nellie with their kitten like tweets. We go around town from house to house, only to those that we know or know us as we have better chance of getting a bigger pot. You see after the song/s the maid will come out and put a flashlight on each of our faces then goes back to the house to get the appropriate amount of money. We have a contra song for those stingy houses.

♪♪ Bulong ti apatot ♪♪

When we were in university, we figured that if we go during daylight then they don't need a flashlight and they can see every one of us. So, we formed an illustrious group (sons of doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers) and got a good lead guitarist and voila, there's your choir. It didn't matter if the voices are good. It's the faces that dictate how much you get. Big party after, everyday.

So for 8 days, we go around caroling. At that time, my share each night is around 5-6 cents. I keep the



KALAYAAN CENTRE
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2010-2012

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coins on an empty Vicks vaporub tin container. One cent or centavo (a centavo coin in size is as large as the Canadian loonie) at that time will buy you 2 big sugar coated candies. You can suck on one for about 2 hours. On the ninth day, we go to the midnight mass, and after church is the Noche Buena. When we were teenagers, we go from house to house to try their treats. Yummy! Try their chicken macaroni salad. It has diced apples! Their patupat is really good. Patupat is an Ilocano specialty with the rice cake inside a woven buri dipped in sugar cane hot melt and with ears for handling.

We do this until wee hours in the morning. If you look east, the sun will break soon and you can see Bubon Pusi, the smallest volcano in the world, it's top covered with the morning fog. Don't forget your sweater. It's kind of chilly in Aringay this time of the year. How does 14C grab you?

... ♪♪ Soon it will be Christmas day!

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

By: Judy Montenegro



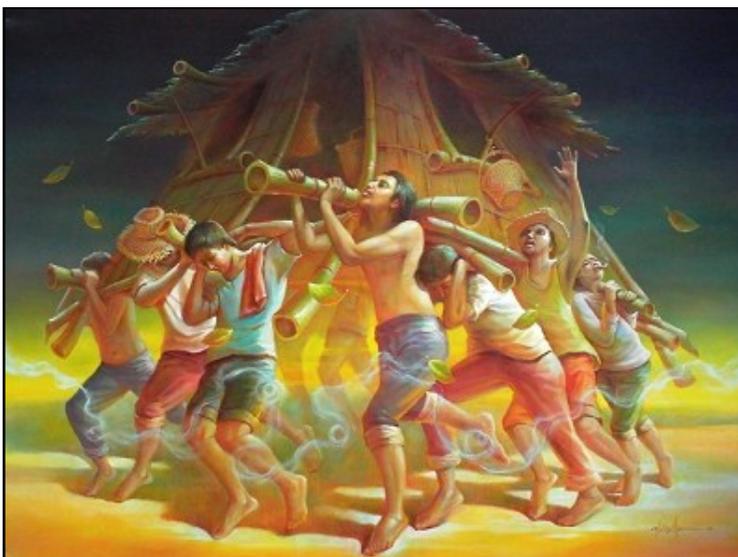
Do you wish to do something different or new this coming 2012? Do you want to get involved more in the Filipino community? Think about volunteering at KCCC or Kalayaan

Centre. Nobody's too young or old, new immigrant or old-timer in Canada, experienced or not, to be of service to the community or to KCCC. If you're a new immigrant, think of it as a networking opportunity and work experience in the Canadian setting or for someone who's lived in Canada for years, it's a way of giving back to the community.

In 2007, I was looking for volunteer opportunities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and in the process of looking for one, I saw a timely article in a Filipino newspaper about KCCC's Open House and that KCCC also welcomed volunteers. I kept that in mind and thought that if we were near the area, I would check it out and see what kind of volunteer opportunities were available. My first visit to KCCC was on the eve of the official Open House and inauguration. Everyone was busy trying to set up for the next day's event and when I said I would like to volunteer, the offer was willingly accepted. I started helping out with the preparations of the Grand Hall for the Open House that same day. Mama Ching,

with her indomitable spirit and work ethic, was right there with the other volunteers hammering away late at night and helping out with the stage preparation and I thought to myself, I want to help out here. I've been a volunteer since that time and have never looked back or regretted the decision to volunteer at KCCC.

Volunteers are the backbone of KCCC, including its officers and Board of Directors. I've seen officers and Board members who unselfishly serve and give their time, effort and services, albeit unpaid at that, to work for the Centre and for the community. Aside from the officers and Board members, there are also member



BAYANIHAN—the spirit of unity and cooperation

volunteers who also contribute their time and services to the Centre and who are always there to help out. Volunteers are "all-around" and needed help could range from administrative, clerical, accounting, housekeeping, carpentry, event planning and fund-raising activities.

You don't expect to get paid for the time, effort and service that you put into KCCC but the non-monetary rewards are priceless: meeting new friends and acquaintances, forging long lasting friendships and camaraderie with your

Kalayaan Centre 2012 Upcoming Activities

- Jan 14 Volunteer Appreciation
- Feb 19 AM—Brunch
PM—Lecture "Dementia"
- Mar 3 Cultural Presentation
- Mar 4 AGM
- Apr 14 Bake Sale
- May 13 Leander Mendoza
- May 25 Hawaiian Night
- Jun 9 Phil Independence Day Gala
- Jul Walkathon
- Aug Fiesta Ng Kalayaan
- Aug 25 Golf Classic
- Oct 26 Halloween Night
- Nov 28 Children's Christmas Party
- Dec 6 Volunteer Appreciation
- Dec 31 New Year Bash

Weekly / Monthly Activities

- Rondalla Class Thu 7:00pm
- Line Dancing Mon 6:30pm
- Philippine Tango Mon 7:30pm
- Conversational Tagalog Wed 6:30pm
- Ballroom Dancing Tue 7:00pm
- Board Meeting 3rd Friday
- KCCC Book Club Monthly

To sign-up for an activity, please contact the Centre:

fellow volunteers, the feeling of belonging that you get as part of the KCCC family, plus utilizing and enhancing your organizational, administrative and event management skills as an event volunteer (and if you're a new immigrant, maybe counting as "Canadian" experience).

As the saying from Mahatma Gandhi goes: I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

If you're open to new experiences and you're reading this, why not give some of your free time to KCCC to volunteer!

LOOKING OUT!

By: Edgar Frondoza

Do we really need KCCC?



"I wish I have never been born, the world would have been a better place," said despondent George Bailey played by James Stewart in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life". Faced with financial ruin, George decided to end it all on Christmas Eve. He is saved at the last moment by his guardian angel Clarence that showed him that *the world would actually be a terrible place without him*. A happy ending!

KCCC faces similar quandary – lack of funding, lack of volunteer resources, inadequate support from other Filipino organizations. Do we really need KCCC? What would the GTA Filipino community be if KCCC had never been born?

KCCC was founded by civic minded Filipinos who were also the leaders of the Kalayaan Filipino Cultural Organization known simply as KALAYAAN. KALAYAAN's mandate is to organize and hold the celebration of the Philippine Independence Day every year since 1983. Over the years the officers of KALAYAAN realized the need to promote the Filipino history, people and culture throughout the year not only during Philippine Independence day. In 1997, the Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre was established.

Actual operations started in the year 2000 housed temporarily at Timberlea Boulevard, rent-free, courtesy of Cascade Canada thru the initiative of Carlos Padilla. On December 15, 2005, KCCC purchased for \$975,000 the 3-unit condominium at Orbitor Drive where it is currently located. The purchase was made possible with the \$120,000 seed money from the Centennial celebration as approved by the participating organizations and community leaders as well as money raised by the KCCC in the five years after its establishment.

Generous donations and personal non-interest loans from many individuals helped KCCC pay the monthly mortgage and operating expenses.

Since the year 2000, KCCC has served the Filipino community. Last year alone over 150 events were held at the Centre and approximately 15,000 people used the Centre's facilities. KCCC provides many cultural and civic programs. It is also the forefront of Philippine disaster relief efforts. Yet despite its achievements, KCCC constantly scrounges to make the mortgage payments each month and the same over-worked volunteers organize and manage the many events and services that the Centre provides.

KCCC matters and the Filipino community is better because of it. But it needs the full support of its guardian angels, the volunteers, donors, sponsors and members.

Like George Bailey's guardian angel Clarence, will we earn our wings? Can we proudly say we helped build KCCC to be a free, active and self-sufficient Kalayaan Centre. *A happy ending?!*

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NAYON

Quarterly Newsletter of the
KALAYAAN CENTRE

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PRESIDENTS REPORT

(Continued from page 3)

the trimmings for the Masquerade Ball, the technician is busy testing the sound system, and the telephone wires are burning with the undecided finally calling in their reservations for the evening. It promises to be a really great gathering to welcome the new year.

Kalayaan Centre is an independent entity with no backing for its operational expenses so it holds a continuing fundraising campaign with the help of our many volunteers. I call them Mama Ching's Angels. Without them, KCCC can hardly survive. They help in every way they can not only in raising funds but in almost all other aspects. Hand in hand we have our untiring generous sponsors and donors. Last but not least are our fifteen directors who volunteer their time and pocketbooks to run the affairs of the Centre and the two-man staff Jojo and Frances. We salute

these men and women for what they do to keep the Centre alive. Each year in December, we hold a special evening to recognize them. This year we postponed the event for January 14, 2012. The charity bingo sessions that we hold two or three times a month provide funds for our services, programs and maintenance. The Electronic fund transfer (EFT) donations help augment our operating funds. We encourage our fellow community members to help thru this system and pitch in at least \$10 to be deducted from their bank account each month. This can be done by submitting a voided check from which the bank gets information in making the deduction. Ten dollars monthly is a negligible amount that is hardly noticed. At the end of the year, a tax deductible receipt is issued to each donor. To donate by EFT please call 905-602-0923 or send an e-mail to kccc@bellnet.ca.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

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