



CONNECTING . . .

KALAYAAN FILIPINO CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (KFCO)

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Maligayang Pasko from KFCO

Isang mainit at taos pusong pagbati ng Maligyang Pasko sa iyong lahat mula ito sa pang kasalukuyan at nakaraan na mga opisyaales ng Kalayaan Filipino Cultural Organization (KFCO). Patnubayan po kayo, ang inyong pamilya, at manga magulan sa matiwasay, makahulugan, at napagmahal na buhay. Sa karawan na ating ipinadiriwang ating isapuso ang ating pagmamahal at pagtulong sa ating mga nangangailangan na kapwa.



KFCO would like to take this opportunity to say “Thank You” to all those who in one way or another have supported various activities of Kalayaan be they undertaken under the banner of KCCC or KFCO, they ultimately end up with the same objectives and purpose. Regrets and apologies if we might have failed you in some areas or we did not meet your expectations. Be assured though that we will always take into account the feedbacks and lessons that we learned to improve our performance and delivery of services to the Community.

Let us try to bury “the crab mentality” that seems to be always lurking around and hopefully we can all work together in various roles that we are capable of towards common goals for the betterment of the majority members of the Community. Likewise, let us set higher goals for the Filipino Community to have a more visible representation in the various levels of public office where they will be in a position to initiate meaningful changes.



Planned Activities of KFCO for 2018

1. Feb. 17 - Valentine and Short Induction of New KFCO Officers
2. Apr. 28 - Dancing with the Stars
3. Jun. 8 - Kalayaan Gala Night (Filipiniana)
4. Jun. 17 - Annual Kalayaan Picnic at Mississauga Valley Park (potluck)
5. Jul. 7 & 8 - Philippine Festival Mississauga at Celebration Square

Volunteers Welcomed!

Inviting volunteers to participate in our various planned activities for the Community.

Let us have fun working and sharing our laughs and some heartaches, together with our friends.

Please, do not be shy and bring out your simmering energies to enjoy and have fun with us.



Merry Christmas is now Happy Holiday?

By Gerry Villareal

Yesterday I dropped by at the newly renovated, 2.2 million square foot shopping mall in my neighbourhood. The once simple mall is now the home of around 360 fashionable shops, gourmet groceries and of the trendiest health and beauty boutiques.

Inside the second largest mall in Canada, the place was bustling with activities; with Christmas shoppers everywhere, carrying bags of festive colours. A few feet away, standing tall was a giant Christmas tree, adorned with thousands of glittering and frosted bulbs, balls of varying colours, nutcrackers, Aspen honeycomb glasses, wreaths and thousands more of other shiny, festive trinkets.

At its base was a very busy Ho, Ho, Ho Santa, in jolly velvet suits. He was surrounded by his elves, in sassy elf dress, stockings and hats, attending to a long line of kids equally suitably dressed for the occasion. Looking around, I was searching for something that remained untouched by this blatant commercialism. Nothing it seemed. Where was St. Nicholas sliding down the chimney with his bags of goodies? Instead, this portly, perfect imitation of the real Kris Kringle was pointing to a camera and talking to a mom with a crying baby, saying, "You can sit on my lap, too; she may stop crying!"



Looking around, 'Happy Holiday' signs were everywhere. Where did they dump the old familiar signs, 'Merry Christmas?' What happened to the Christmas that my Lola was telling us before... that God sent His Son Jesus to bring great joy and salvation to humankind?

In the midst of it all, my mind wandered in the past, many, many years ago, when I was growing up, back home in the barrio.

In the Philippines, Christmas is the most anticipated holiday, celebrated the longest and merriest ever. We earned the distinction of celebrating the world's longest Christmas season, with Christmas Carols played as early as September and lasting until the Feast of Epiphany, or *Santo Niño*, on the 6th day of January.

In a small farming community where I grew up, we had nothing more to look forward to other than Christmas, after the harvest season but certainly long before the month of the actual celebration. For one, Christmas was the only time when our parents bought us new clothes or shoes. If the harvest was much better, we might even expect a toy or two.

Starting in the early morning of December 16th at around 4:00am or 5:00am, we jumped out of bed the moment we heard the bell from the local chapel, ushering *simbang-gabi* (Mass at Dawn). This 'novena' which lasts for 9 days, ending on December 24th reaffirms the devotees' faith and belief for continuous blessings. The last day of the mass is called *Misa de Gallo* (Mass of the Rooster), one of the most important Filipino Christmas traditions.

As we got closer to the chapel, nothing was more familiar than a few rows of local cake vendors along the side of the road. Thank God, the early morning mass was solemn but short and simple.



Following the mass and after kissing the hands of the elders for the umpteenth time, we all rushed to a plate of *puto-bumbong* (rice cake cooked in bamboo tube), with a mixture of brown sugar and coconut shavings; and of course, served with unlimited supply of free tea. Forget Tim Hortons or McCafe.

The most anticipated event was Christmas Eve or *Noche Buena*. Family members rushed back home from the midnight mass to feast on *lechón* (roast pig), smoked ham, *pansit* (rice noodle), *adobong manok* (spicy chicken stew) rice and a variety of local desserts. In more affluent homes, children were allowed to open their presents before they went to bed.

In the morning of December 25th, or Christmas day, in brand new clothes and shoes rushed out to attend the *Misa de Aguinaldo*. My grandmother said that this mass meant a lot more than anything else since it was our gift to a newborn Jesus.

Aguinaldo is a Spanish word for gift. *Misa de Aguinaldo* is often celebrated between sunrise and 10am, a schedule preferred by many Filipinos who stayed late on Christmas Eve for a night-long celebration of *Noche Buena*.

Filipino families visited the members of the extended family, the grandparents or elders, to pay respect. Called *Pagmamano*, this pre-colonial custom was done by bringing the elder's right hand to one's forehead while saying 'Mano po!' The elder then blessed the person offering respect by saying, 'May the Lord be with you, Merry Christmas!' Then Christmas lunch was served, followed by gift-giving or exchanges of gifts.

When I was growing up, just the thought of going to our grandparents' huge house at the crack of dawn on Christmas day was a big thrill. As kids, we looked forward to this occasion because our uncles and aunts from Manila, coming in their shiny cars, brought more gifts, crispy bills and even grapes or apples we never had in the farm. Our cousins even let us play with their toys.



At Christmas lunch, our grandfather, seated at the head table and with his imposing physique and booming voice, would tell some family anecdotes that happened during the year. Meanwhile, our grandmother, with her helpers, was busy waiting for everyone but paying more attention to younger grandchildren, skillfully allocating some imported apples and grapes from America so each one could taste even a small piece. This celebration and family gatherings would last until dark and into the wee hours of the following morning.

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Through the years, more symbols of Christmas emerged as several diverse cultures blended, all with spiritual meaning, knowing that in its absence, Christmas wouldn't last. Tradition had it that Jesus was born to poor parents, in a humble surrounding, in fact in a manger. Though He was the Son of God, He chose to come among us as a Son of a carpenter.

Meanwhile, we are often caught in the hassle and bustle of our daily grinds, oblivious that Christmas spirit should be forever present not only in the face of those we love but so in the face of the poor and less fortunate. Christmas should feel wonderful; after all when everything else appears dark, Christmas is a tradition that draws out the best of human nature- a tradition of love for the family, of giving, of joy in sharing.

This is the opportune time to recharge our spirits, a time to reflect on our blessings. Let us observe this festive season by remembering not only our families but also old friends, old times and even renewing old ones.

And No, it's not 'Happy Holiday;' it is 'Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas to all!!!'



Musika Mississauga Children's Chorus Christmas Concert

by Maricon Gomez-Bernasor



Indeed, the festive air is on!

The beautifully-blended voices of all the choristers under the directorship of Candace Santos, certainly made the 2nd Musika Mississauga Children's Chorus (MMCC) concert another night to remember. Classic Christmas carols and all-time favourite Christmas songs turned into medley were carefully chosen to fill the repertoire.

Themed **"We Need a Little Christmas"** and held at the Cooksville United Church last Dec. 16th, the night featured special guest performers, Ms. Belle Veneracion and the President and Founder of MMCC himself, Mr. Tommy De Guia. The choir, in their cute ugly Christmas sweater attire, wowed the audience with their over-all vocal as well as visual display of talent. The featured Filipino songs absolutely brought nostalgic feelings in everyone present. Who would have been untouched with the songs Pasko na Sintá Ko, Sa May Bahay, Payapang Daigdig, The Christmas Song, Silver Bells, and the like? A big thanks to all who have worked hard behind the curtain: Arranger and Pianist - Alberto Santos, Assistant Director and Cajun player– Anthony Trinidad, Assistant Director and Base player Jun Cabioc, and all the ladies, volunteers and parents with their enthusiasm, dedication and continuous support!

The Musika Mississauga Children's Chorus, now on its 5th season is open to all children from Grades 2 to 11. Rehearsals will start on January 14, 2018 and every Sunday thereafter from 2:30pm-4:00pm at the South Common Community Centre Youth Room, 2233 South Millway, Mississauga, ON L5L 3H7. For more information, visit the website www.musikamississauga.com or contact info@musikamississauga.com.



Philippine Airlines Milestone Flights

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines flew its milestone 1st ultra-long polar flight from Toronto, Canada nonstop to Manila - the first-ever crossing of the Polar region by a Filipino airline.

PAL flight PR119 took off from Toronto's Pearson International Airport at 12:53AM local time Dec. 17, arriving Manila the next day at 6:10AM December 18 Manila time, after a **16.16 hour journey across the Arctic Region**. The historical flight



was led by PAL Vice President for flight operations Captain Florendo Jose “Chuck” Aquino III, together with Captain Raymond “XP” Casambre, First Officer Paul “Boom” Domingo and Second Officer Jhonathanne “Jo” Hizon. The state-of-the-art 370-seater Boeing 777-300ER - with registry number RP-C7779 flew 7,200 nautical miles or 13,300 kilometers and traveled over Canada, Greenland, the Arctic Circle, Russia, Mongolia and parts of China. The flight was conducted at cruising altitudes ranging from 29,000 to 37,000 feet.

PAL President and COO Jaime J. Bautista proudly said, “This was the first non-stop direct flight from Toronto to Manila over the polar region (north pole). Kudos to the PAL team which made this flight a reality and most importantly, congratulations to our PAL flight deck crew under the leadership of Capt. Chuck. You make us proud.” For his part, Capt. Aquino said “I am truly honoured to have been given the privilege to lead this milestone flight. More than that, I was glad to be part of a journey that brought much happiness to passengers on board as they were given a rare treat of the Northern Lights.”



(part of a press release)



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Chaired by Eula Rulloda, KFCO Executive Council holds its first working monthly meeting last Nov. 21, 2017 to discuss some outstanding issues, plans and activities for the coming year.

Meet KFCO's Vice-Chairman: Val Mape

Val is the youngest of 4 siblings, all brothers, whose collective mentoring made him the best he could be as a person. He finished his high school at U.S.T., got his law degree from F.E.U. and passed the bar exam at 23, but learned his English mainly from his father, Valentin, Sr., a former elementary school principal, who returned all of Val's letters grammatically corrected.

He began his practice in his hometown of Polangui, Province of Albay, Philippines and became associated with a top labor lawyer in Manila and got to represent the labor unions from GSIS, the railroad and airline employees and Jai Alai prayers at one time or another. He also got involved in tort and liability claims and soon represented Car and liability insurance companies like Consolidated, Western and Empire plus set up corporations of which he sat in the board of directors.

He cut short is Manila practice when he decided to join his family and move to Canada where he

was fortunate enough to find instant employment with a big purely Canadian Auto, Property and Liability insurers, The Dominion and Canada General Insurance Company, and, as luck would



have it, became its Claims Manager. In his role as such, Val helped in the defence and settlement of the infamous aids claims against the CRC, the Indian School Residential sexual and cultural abuse claims against the churches, as well as being involved in liability and pollution claims against developers and contractors in North

America, sometimes appearing in court to testify on behalf of my employers. This allowed him to travel from province to province in Canada and in some parts of the United States, principally, California, to liaison with lawyers.

Val and his lovely wife of 56 years, Jean, have two wonderful children in son Warren and daughter Tess, the mother of their dotting only grandchild, Julian.

Val has never been part of any community organization partly because of what he perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be a painful and unfair and perhaps even unintended, reflection of the proud Filipino heritage and culture which brush is not intended to paint all. Val praises the Good Lord, his friends and Canada for his family's life of ease and comfort, and regards Kalayaan Filipino Community Organization (KFCO) and Kalayaan Cultural Community Center (KCCC) as great channels to pay them back!

Some more pictures from Musika Mississauga Children's Chorus Christmas Concert



Some Pictures from Philippine Airlines Milestone Flights



Some Pictures From KFCO X'mas Dinner at the Rulloda's Residence

