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InLife

OGIE ALCASID

TOUGH EIGHT INTERVIEW WITH OGIE ALCASID

WHO IS MR. JOHN LLOYD CRUZ? HERE'S A FIVE MINUTE INTERVIEW WITH THE ULTIMATE LEADING MAN!

BOAT PEOPLE EXPOSED

REAL LIFE STORIES OF ACTUAL BOAT PEOPLE

DROP DEAD GORGEOUS MANILA'S HOTTEST SOCIAL GROUP

MANNY PACQUIAO IS THE BOXING SUPERSTAR GONE FOR GOOD?

CEN AMORES

GET TO KNOW THE "PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA" AMBASSADOR

DREAM FULFILLED A FILIPINA REDISCOVERS HER ROOTS

VIA MARE A MUST-VISIT RESTAURANT IN THE PHILIPPINES



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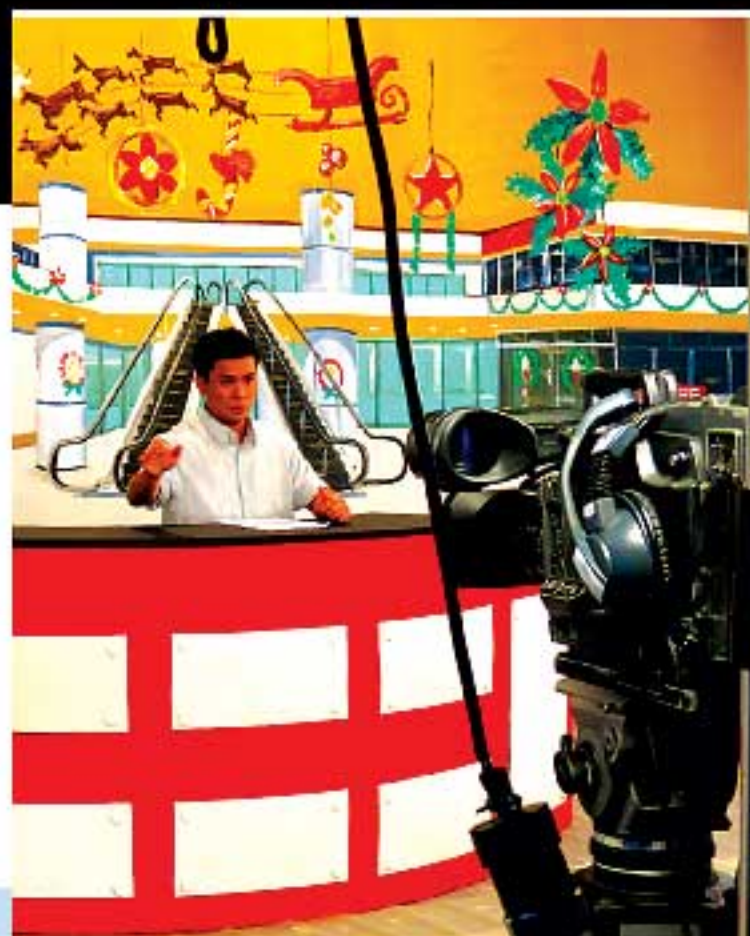
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Editor's Notes



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The end of another year is once again looming over our heads and as we celebrate this holiday season, let's all take a step back and reflect on the year that was As I reflect upon this past year, it seems that time just flies so fleetingly fast. I can honestly say that our first year of publication has been marked by a myriad of challenges; starting a new magazine from scratch is never easy because it requires a lot of time, money and resources. Through all the difficult times though, we have proven to ourselves that we are indeed resilient people. We've weathered the storm this year and demonstrated that we do have what it takes to be a publication that the Filipino Australians can be proud of. We are definitely here to stay and we believe that the best is yet to come!

On a final note, it's common knowledge that we Filipinos love celebrating Christmas. But let's not forget the real meaning of Christmas, let's make sure that we keep Christ in our hearts and our minds this holiday season. That said, may you all have a safe and happy festive season and a safe and prosperous new year.

Mike Ilagan

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By Albert Prias

For the next three issues of InLife Magazine we will be sharing real stories of 'boat people' who have fled their countries in search of greener pastures. Stay tuned as we share powerful stories of real people who I've come to know as friends and who have also left behind everything they knew and love in search of a better life here in Australia.

True confessions: Inside the lives of "Boat People"

Mohsen

I am 29 years old and I used to be a panel beater in the southern part of Iran. I initially went to Japan with a tourist Visa and luckily I found a job there so I decided to stay and become an illegal immigrant until I got caught two years later. I eventually got detained and deported to Thailand with no money in my pockets. In desperation, I begged a container ship captain to take me on board. I travelled with the ship for two months and worked without pay until the Captain of the ship offered to drop me off in Indonesia on a boat to Australia. I was hesitant at first but since I was extremely desperate I took the offer. A few weeks later I ended up in the middle of nowhere and the only thing that I could see in the middle of the sea was a small fisherman's boat and the container ship where I was supposed to be boarding. I joined other people in the small boat and I was actually with around 15-20 men, women and children on board that boat. We never spoke to each other and I didn't even know what nationality they were. We travelled for two days on very rough seas until the Australian Coast Guard found, rescued and brought us to Darwin.

Hadi

I am 23 years old and I used to be a Personal Trainer in Iran. My life was so easy back then in Tehran. I used to rent an apartment and I had a number of clients who I used to train at the gym at least 2 to 3 times a week. You might notice that I actually have a pretty toned body and a face with model features so I used to live like a celebrity - I used to even own the latest Peugeot car. On my 23rd birthday this year while I was having a drink at my relative's house, my uncle mentioned that if I wanted to further my career as a Personal Trainer then I should go to Australia because I will earn triple the money that I was earning in Iran. I would also have a lot more freedom in Australia so I will definitely enjoy living in the country, plus, he also talked about all the pretty blonde ladies that I can meet and possibly date over there. It sounded really attractive to me - I was sold to the ideal. As you know, after the revolution things changed in Iran. What used to be a free European style living country became a conservative country under a Muslim government ran by the Sha.

A week after my birthday I travelled to Asia and enjoyed a few weeks in various travel destinations until I eventually arrived in Indonesia. A few days later I went to see someone who happens to be a "people smuggler" and I inquired about how I could get to Australia. I asked what was involved and what consequences will I face if I get caught.

He told me nothing but good things. He bragged about the



benefits that I will get as soon as I arrive in the country as a refugee - I was definitely lured by the promise of great things ahead. Before I knew it I have already paid him \$5,000 dollars to get me on board the next ship to Australia. We had to leave the next day already but when I got to the ship, to my surprise - I just saw a small fishing boat waiting for us in a river in Indonesia! I was actually expecting a big ship. Well I initially thought it was just a vessel to get us into the sea to board a bigger vessel so I boarded with my expensive suitcase together with 70 other people, around 11 of us were Iranians. As we approached the big ocean, I couldn't see any other bigger ships at all so I asked the driver of the boat where he was taking us and he merely replied "to Australia". I immediately panicked and asked him to turn the boat around because I don't want to continue my journey anymore. But then he just turned around and responded with "too late, you either shut your mouth or I will throw you out in the water!"

Every passenger assumed that there will be a bigger boat so nobody was ready to travel and nobody brought any food or water on board the boat. We travelled day and night and braved massive waves, twice of these two waves even sunk us for a while but luckily the boat managed to comeback afloat after the ordeal. On board you will hear a number of people crying and praying all the time in different languages. The good life I used to have in Iran flashed on my mind every now and then throughout the whole perilous journey. I wasn't ready to die or take any of those challenges but then I also understood that there was simply no turning back. I realized that I took a big risk.

After six terrifying days out on the sea we were eventually rescued by the Australian Coast Guard and we were all brought to Christmas Island. I then felt a mixture of excitement, fear and disorientation at the time as we went on board the Coastguard vessel which eventually took us to the Detention centre.

To be continued

Cafe Via Mare



MUST-EAT: VIA MARE

If you are visiting the Philippines soon and you're looking for a restaurant that serves authentic and delicious Filipino food then Via Mare is definitely the place for you!

Via Mare has everything from good old fashioned authentic Filipino dishes such as Chicken Arroz Caldo and Dinuguan to merienda meals such as Halo Halo and Bibingka. The prices aren't too bad either especially if you're a Balikbayan and spending dollars rather than pesos.

My favourites would have to be Chicken

Arroz Caldo, Tocino (thinly sliced cured meat in pineapple marinade), Vigan Langanisa (Crispy fried pork meat sausage flavoured with black peppercorns), Crispy Tapa (Marinated beef sitoin), Pancit Molo (Soup and noodles topped with shrimp, pork, chicken and ham), Palabok and Sinigang na Tiyan ng Bangus (Milkfish bellies in sour broth). The Inasal na Manok in Skewers is also to die for and so are the Rellenong Talong, Crispy Binagoongan (Crispy pork bellies with bagoong), Inihaw na Liempo (Grilled pork belly), Kare-Kare and Tortang Alimasing.



Now if you have a sweet tooth and you usually crave for something sweet after your meals then you've definitely got to try the Bibingka – you can order it with either Salted Duck Egg or Kesong Puti. Their Bibingka is so soft and mouth-watering that it simply melts in your mouth as you chew on the crunchy shredded coconuts along its sides. Their Puto Bumbang and Palitaw are also lip-smacking and you can't leave without tasting their version of Halo Halo or Mais Con Yelo.

Via Mare is definitely a hot spot for balikbayan's craving for a taste of the Philippines so I highly recommend this restaurant – no doubt this is Filipino food at its best!



MUST-VISIT: GMA NETWORK

A few days later we met up with Innah Montes who then took us to the live taping of the popular gag show "Bubble Gang". I've always been a Bubble gang fan and so is the rest of the InLife crew so we found the live taping entertaining, hilarious and quite innovative. It's definitely a different approach to a typical gag show. After the show, we were also given the privilege of interviewing the stars of Bubble Gang. It was a great interview because not only were the stars gorgeous and thoroughly hilarious, they were genuinely friendly too. GMA also graciously provided lunch for all of us which we really appreciated and we definitely enjoyed our brief encounters with the likes of Ogie Alcasid, Michael V, Ruffa Mae Quinto, Ellen Adama, Gwen Zamora, Jackie Rice and many more.

Last stop Kusina Master.

Our tour drew to a close by meeting up with Innah again a few days later at the GMA lobby to watch the live taping of the popular TV show "Kusina Master". We got to watch the wacky host of the show as he cooked up a storm with the help of his special guest that day - Mr Ogie Alcasid. We were definitely in awe of this chef! He was "Bruce Lee fast" when it came to cutting up meat and vegetables, he was thoroughly flawless in his cooking style and he loves to sing and dance while cooking a dish as well! No wonder his TV show rates so high. After the show, we were also given the opportunity of interviewing Chef Boy himself and it was indeed a fantastic interview because we really got to know him well. We found out how he rose to

By: Mike Ilogan

Our GMA experience began at the GMA Network Centre lobby. Before the InLife team left Sydney, I was already corresponding with the ever reliable Jojo Aquino via email and he had given us specific instructions to wait for him at the lobby. With that in mind, the minute we arrived at the studio I immediately advised the security guards to call our GMA contact Jojo. A few minutes later Jojo arrives on the scene all geared up ready to take us to Party Pilipinas.

First stop noontime music/variety show Party Pilipinas.

"Party Pilipinas" is usually held in the new state-of-the-art studio building beside the old studio. This enormous building can easily hold an audience of more than 1000 people! Fortunately for us, the episode we watched was also a Christmas special so we expected a great show – and we were not disappointed. We were enthralled and captivated by a bevy of exhilarating song and dance numbers lead by stars such as Ogie Alcasid, Jaya, Bianca King, Heart Evangelista, Lovie Poe, Sam Pinto, Solenn Heussaff, Kyla and many more. Regine Velasquez also made a special appearance in the show as she promoted her upcoming concert which was also happening that same month. It was a thoroughly amazing and breathtaking experience.

Next stop Bubble Gang show.



our gratitude to the GMA Network Centre once again; specifically to Jojo and Innah for their friendliness and hospitality towards us. We would also like to thank the Bubble Gang crew and Chef Boy for welcoming us warm-heartedly to their respective shows. If ever you're in the Philippines, I strongly suggest that you take the time to inquire about the GMA Network Centre. We were in awe of not just the studio alone, but also with their staff's warm hospitality and friendliness.



By: Mike Ilagan

When we visited the GMA set last month I caught up with one of the most recognizable faces in Philippine showbiz – it was none other than Mr Boy Pick-up himself, Ogie Alcasid.

For those who aren't familiar with Ogie Alcasid, he is a well-know and very talented singer/songwriter, comedian, and actor. He first burst into the limelight as a singer back in 1989 when he released his self-titled album. His debut single, "Nandito Ako," reached gold record status in no time and for the next 25 years, has taken the Philippines by storm. He has since released 18 albums which includes a Christmas album (Larawan ng Pasko/ Images of Christmas), a live album (Oa sa Hits), and four greatest hits albums. According to Wikipedia he has received a total of five gold records, three platinum records, and three double platinum records.

Ogie has also appeared in a number of TV shows such as ABS-CBN's "Mana Mana", ABC's "Tropang Trampo", QTV's

Ay, Robot!, GMA's "Show Me Da Manny", "SOP" and "Party Pilipinas", and of course he is currently one of the main casts of GMA Network's mega successful gag show "Bubble Gang" which has now been around since 1995! He was also cast as one of the leads in a GMA Primetime drama "Hanggang Kailan" opposite Lorna Tolentino and Christopher de Leon. Ogie has also starred on the big screen. In his latest movie, "Boy Pick-Up," he stars alongside the ever gorgeous Solenn Heussaff and the ever talented Dennis Trillo.

For those that don't know, Ogie is also a successful entrepreneur. In fact he owns a chain of hot dog stalls called "Oggie Daggie." He is also the current CEO of popular website: www.opm2go.com, which is an online download site for OPM songs. Adding to that, he is the CEO of an events company called Starmedia Events.

Now that's enough introductions, let's meet the man behind the powerful voice and the gags. Presenting Mr Ogie Alcasid in the InLife Magazine hot seat.

1. Ogie in your 25 years in Showbizness what would you consider is your biggest blessing?

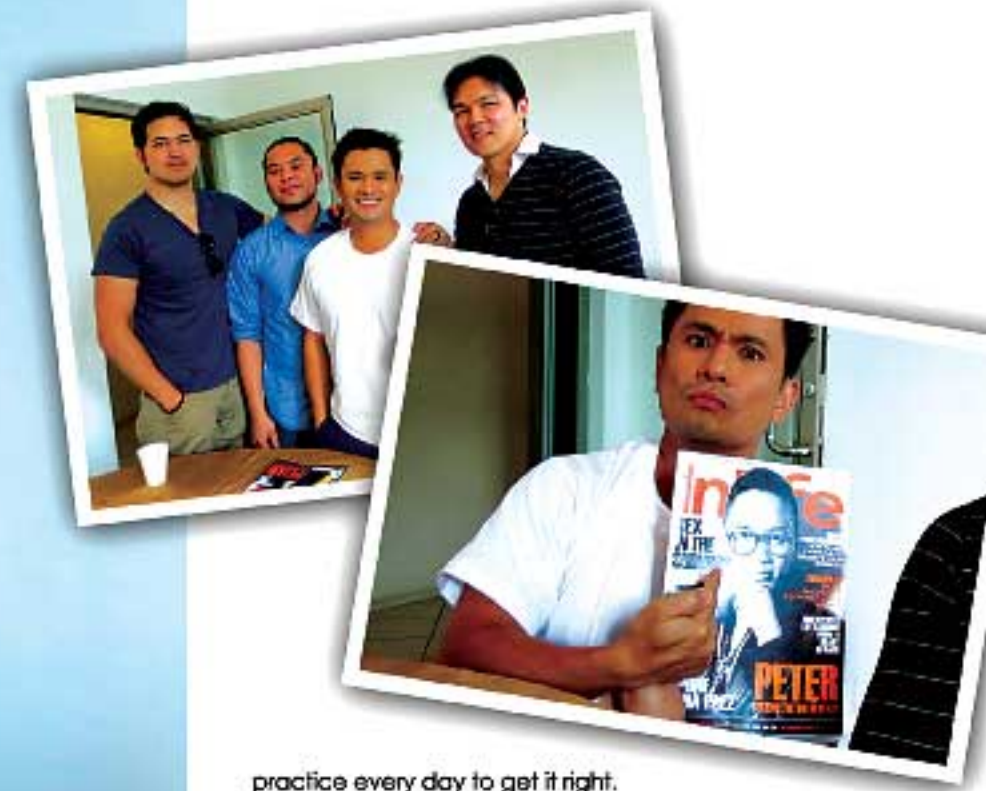
To be honest I consider everyday a blessing. But if I was going to pinpoint the biggest blessing in life – it wouldn't be related to my work. I would have to say it was when my children were born.

2. If there were no rules for just 1 day and you could do anything outrageous what would you do?

I'll probably just sleep. In this business sleep is a big deal because you rarely get some. I'm an old man so I don't want to risk anything – I want to preserve myself!

3. If you are to compare your love life to a sport what sport would it be and why?

I'd say Golf. Why? Because golf is hard! It can wear you down physically and mentally. With golf you can't just get lucky, you have to really work on your game, you have to



practice every day to get it right.

4. Rate your career from 1 to 10?

Definitely 10! Look, I'm always happy with what I have; I am definitely happy where I am at the moment. I've never actually tried to squeeze into a situation or career path where I'm not comfortable. God has given me a great career and I thank him for it. Whatever God gives me I'll just accept because he knows best.

5. What would you consider is your personal mission in life?

I believe it is my personal mission to always strive to be a better person for the love of Christ, this is life 101. In everything I do I have to ask myself, do I really please God? Is what I'm doing according to his will? I believe that if you don't have God in your life then you'll eventually fail.

6. What would you do differently in your life if you knew no one else would judge you?

Absolutely nothing. This is what showbizness is all about, you get judged with your every move so I'm used to being judged. But the thing is, I don't seek the approval of people, I only seek the approval of God.

7. Name two of your dreams, one tangible and one non tangible?

I have no tangible dreams because I believe I already have what I have ever dreamt about. But non tangible? Maybe me as a professional golfer? Because there are moments when it feels like 'yeah, maybe I could be one!' but probably not because I don't really practice enough!

8. Name the song title for the story of your life?

Well if you asked me before I would've said "My Way." But now I'd replace "My Way" with "God's Way." It would be like "I did it God's Way" And Ogie Alcasid ends the interview with a song.

By: Mike Ilagan

Let's face it; starting your new business is never easy because you're investing time, money and resources on a 'hunch'. In

Top 3 reasons why most businesses FAIL

a nutshell you're investing on something that may or may not actually work out in the end.

While most people would like to gladly work for themselves so that they can control their own time, not everyone has the will nor the patience to follow through with it though. Studies show that in average it actually takes around 5 years for any new business to just break even, basically you're more likely to see any profits on your new venture after 5 years have passed which of course sounds like a bloody long time for any budding entrepreneur!

Of course, this is not always the case because a lot of entrepreneurs do reap profits almost immediately after they put up a new business – especially those entrepreneurs that provide service rather than a product. But typically, you are supposed to be looking at 3-5 years before you can start seeing any real profits so you really need patience if you want your business to slick around.

Now if you're a budding entrepreneur who is interested in starting a new venture, then here are three crucial mistakes most people make that you should be aware of:

1. People don't do their homework

The biggest reason most entrepreneurs fail is because they don't do their homework.

The moment they come up with a good idea they want to get things going immediately without enough research or background work on this idea which of course is a big mistake! A good idea for a new business is a good start, but it is imperative that you do your homework though.

You should be asking yourself questions such as: Who's your target market? Why would people buy your stuff? What makes your business unique? How will you market your new business? What sort of capital and resources would you need to get things going? How will you make the business grow?

There is no possible way any new business can succeed without proper research and background work. Keep in mind that Rome wasn't built in a day; it takes time and perseverance for any business to grow. Just make sure you do your homework properly so that when hiccups start to show, you're more than ready to tackle it head on!

2. People are afraid to take a risk

It's quite simple really, no risk – no reward. The higher the risk – the higher the reward!

But in saying that though, keep in mind that you need to take "calculated risks". Make sure you won't get stuck at a point where you have zero dollars in your bank account because



you have invested everything in the new business. Remember, it may take a while before you start seeing any profits from the new venture, what if it takes years and years before you start seeing any profits? What then?? Are you going to live on virtually nothing until the new business "potentially" starts making any real money??

Don't be afraid to take any risks, but in saying that, just make sure they are calculated.

3. People don't network

Your business will never succeed if you don't know how to network and connect with others.

Start mingling with people who are actually successful in their businesses and learn from their experiences. Start going to functions and events and start connecting with potential sponsors and investors within your field. Networking is one of the key components in any new business, the more you network the bigger your database gets and the more people you attract to your business.

It's simple really; you have to prioritise building relationships rather than making money because if you focus on building relationships first then money will eventually follow.



By: Mike Ilagan

There is no denying that John Lloyd Cruz's career is sizzling hot right now! He is a three-time Box Office King with a string of blockbuster movies such as "A very special love", "My amnesia girl", "One more chance", "Now that I have you", "Dubai", "Close To You", "Miss you like crazy", "Unofficially yours" and "The mistress" under his belt. He is also an award-winning dramatic actor who has won a total of 19 Best Actor awards and 3 Best Supporting Actor awards for his notable roles on TV as well as the big screen – with all these achievements under his belt, I can say that he is without a doubt one of the most bankable leading man in Philippines at the moment.

So let's get down to the nitty gritty, let's get to know the man himself. Here's a quick-hit five minute interview with none other than Mr John Lloyd Cruz!

John Lloyd I've got three slum book questions for you: when's your birthday, what's your actual height and how did you get discovered?

My birthday is on June 24 1983, my height would be around 5'11 and I actually got discovered in a mall.

We all know that on screen you and Bea are sizzling hot, now have you and Bea ever been a real couple off cam?



FIVE MINUTES WITH JOHN LLOYD CRUZ

No, we're actually just the best of friends. Well if anything changes I'm pretty sure you guys will hear about it anyways. I'll just let you know if ever I change my mind about Bea's proposal! LOL

Everyone knows that the John Lloyd/Bea love team is a force to be reckoned with. Now were you at any point jealous of Bea's love team pairing with Sam Milby?

Well not really. . . Even though Bea thinks he's cute, I'm the one she actually loves though! LOL

John Lloyd given that you have so many fans in Australia, do you believe in long distance relationships?

Hmmmm... That's a really hard question. I believe that if the love is real then it can survive. At the moment I would say no, but I guess you'll never know right?

What were your first impressions of Bea?

Well I thought she was young . . . And quiet!

If you can describe Bea in one word what would it be and why?

I'd say pure because she looked very innocent.

What made you enter the world of Philippine Showbiz?

Well in the beginning I just wanted to help my family out, but then as time went by I've come to love my job.

Would you consider any other career besides acting?

No, not really. Acting is a passion of mine; it's great to be doing something you love and getting paid for it at the same time.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

In 5 years I still want to be in Showbiz of course. But I want to explore my craft further though, I want to get the opportunity to try my hand not just in Dramatic roles but also in comedic roles.

LIFE AND TIMES OF DOCTOR CEN AMORES

By: Jenny Aluring

It was her late father, Domingo Palomares, who provided the strong, early example that propelled Dr. Cen Amores on her road to community service. Growing up in a large family, "sharing was natural." Her father was a farmer and the barangay (village) captain who used to butcher carabaos (water buffalos) every weekend to sell. Many people would come to barter their own farm produce for the beef. But for those who had nothing to barter, Mr Palomares not only accepted their performing odd jobs for a share of the meat, but made sure that they "were fed as well." When she asked her father about his generosity, he simply replied, "because they have nothing so we have to share."

Since then, Dr Amores has not only followed her father's example, but has thrived in it and lived a life that would make any parent proud. After gaining her Doctorate in Education (Educational Management) from the University of Northern Philippines, she and her family moved to Australia in 1991 and settled in Auburn – considered a major hub of multiculturalism in New South Wales. She took her doctorate and became a teacher (with 13 years' experience) for the South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, Martin College, Metropolitan Business College and various other private companies as well as being an Employment Consultant helping job seekers, especially the highly disadvantaged and long-term employed, find their way back into the work environment. She considers this a "great achievement in life...being able to help others to change for the better and for them to be able to control their lives."

In her husband, Mr Ruben Amores, Cen has found a partner in her passion for community service. She has found a "...loving lifetime partner who shares the same values – social responsibility, human rights advocacy, respect for human dignity, a welcoming attitude and equality for all." She and Ruben work side-by-side on many community outreach projects not just for the Filipino community but for many other cultures as well. An example is the multi-award winning, Kapit-bahayan Co-operative Ltd (KCL). KCL aims to provide affordable, comfortable housing for low-to-middle income families from many cultural backgrounds. Beginning in Auburn, KCL has expanded to other suburbs such as Berala, Wentworthville, Merrylands and Conley Vale. Dr Amores explained that the housing cooperative model was not only economically sound but "...gives people a sense of security, an opportunity to practice grassroots democracy, assume social responsibility, practice effective leadership, promote mutual support, an exercise of empowerment and a great sense of ownership – all very important ingredients in building an ideal community!"

Their partnership has also led to the birth of other projects such as the Auburn Small Community Organisation Network (ASCION) and the Alliance of Philippine Community Organisations (APCO) for which Dr Amores is the founding president. The list of what they have achieved together is a long one. Many of their projects have received recognition from both local and state governments. Earlier this year, among 40 other distinguished Australians, Dr Amores was named by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, a 'People of Australia' Ambassador. Each individual was nominated for their work in promoting stronger ties between cultures in their own communities. Shortly thereafter, Dr Amores received another distinction. She was included in a select group of women who were bestowed the 'Women of the West' by the University of Western Sydney on March 2, 2012 in celebration of the International Women's Day.

From her humble beginnings in a small rural village in Barangay Sagneb, San Ildefonso, Ilocos Sur, Dr Cen Amores has become a life-changing force in the multicultural communities of Western Sydney. Working as a tireless champion for the "marginalised people in the community," she holds true to her tenet that "...nobody should stop you from pursuing what you think is right and just, especially for the weak and less fortunate." She believes that "every person is a unique individual," so, like her father, she is passionate about using one's talents to help others – "...the more you have, the more you share." It is no surprise to know that she will never cease her work. That "...I shall continue to contribute my share of building an ideal community... break down cultural barriers... and making people from across the world feel welcome regardless of their personal and social circumstances."





DREAM FULFILLED

REDISCOVERING MY ROOTS

By: Krisanne Alcantara

Having grown up in Australia, lived in America, and travelled around the globe since I was a child, I am constantly reminded how lucky I am to have "this life."

"Don't take for granted the blessings you have." I was always told – and rightly so. We Filipino-Australian youngsters seem to have it easy, with our stomachs always full, designer clothes on our back and our only worries being what club to attend this weekend and how to pay off our sky-high mobile phone bills.

But something deep down inside yearned to leave the daily grind and superficiality I lived and breathed on a daily basis. Part of me was always left unsatisfied, unfulfilled. I wanted something more. I yearned to explore my country of origin, the land my parents grew up in, the place my ancestors came from.

And most of all, I yearned to make an impact and to help, in some way, my fellow Pinoys back home.

After winning one of six coveted Myer and Australia Korea Foundation (AKF) scholarships to South-East Asian newspapers three years ago, I was finally given that rare chance.

Three years ago I was sent to work at the Philippine Daily Inquirer, all expenses paid. My task: to get on-the-job experience at the leading national newspaper, get articles published and explore my home country. My personal mission: to make some kind of impact and to help my *kapwa* in those five weeks.

As I stepped off that plane at NAIA and felt the thick, smoky Manila air enter my lungs, my heart filled with joy. As I stepped onto that turf, I knew deep inside my heart that this was home, and that I had a purpose for being here.

On my first day on the job, I was privileged enough to meet and converse with the legendary Isagani Yambot, now publisher of the Inquirer and a brilliant journalist from my parents' day, as well as Lefty Jimenez-Magsanoc, another highly respected journalist and now editor-in-chief of The Inquirer.

Mr. Yambot sent me to cover the Malacanang beat at the Inquirer, the most prestigious and coveted beat of all, covering the activities of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and therefore filled with press conferences, balls and presidential

visits. It was an absolute honour to be sent to Malacanang Palace on my first week.

On my third day, I was privileged enough to attend the jaw-droppingly stunning Vin D'Honneur, the Malacanang Diplomat's Ball for 2008. The opulence was overwhelming; Malacanang Palace literally took my breath away with its glittering crystal chandeliers, plush velvety carpet and its incredible artwork.

I was also lucky enough to travel all over Luzon on presidential trips and ride with the Presidential convoy which was so surreal. It was as if the whole city was put on pause while we rode through, sirens blaring.

The best part of my trip was meeting and befriending one of the Inquirer's brilliant journalists – my trainer and now very close friend for life Michael Lim Ubac, the youngest reporter on the Malacanang Palace beat. Michael is such an inspiring individual, having grown up poor in the provinces, and now traveling the world with President GMA and having his articles published on the front page of Philippines #1 newspaper every day. I also befriended Gil Cabacungan Jr., my mentor during my two week-long beat at the Philippine Senate and also a highly respected journalist, along with Roy Pelovello from The Manila Standard and Reymund Tinaza from Bombo Radyo. I was also privileged enough to work with Nadya Trinidad of ABS-CBN and Jove Francisco of ABC (see picture), all of whom took me under their wing during my stay at Malacanang Palace.

A great highlight of the trip was partying with countless media personalities. On my third night, I found myself partying with Michael Lim Ubac and ABS-CBN reporter Ruth Cabal, who I'd just seen reporting on television that day. Everyone I met during my stay was so down-to-earth and incredibly intelligent. Indeed, I truly made some close, life-long friends within the Philippine media industry.

All this isn't to say that I did not face challenges. Long, hot showers became a distant memory as I was presented with a big container where I was forced to collect water and subsequently bathe with a *tabo* (little bucket). Furthermore, Filipino mosquitoes could not get enough of my sweet foreign blood, and I suffered a short bout of food poisoning after eating from a street stall.

But, after a week or so of inward griping, I realised how shallow and superficial my complaints were when I got to see how blessed I was compared to so many of my fellow Filipinos.

Commuting to work every day, I was able to see the immense poverty our country is home to: the waterside shanties, the

children running around naked and barefoot, the roadside beggars. It truly opened my eyes, as a Filipina, and as a human: opened my eyes, and simultaneously broke my heart.

Being witness to such contrasts, I decided to write an article that I was passionate about – the pursuit of democracy by thousands of ordinary Filipinos during the EDSA 1 "People Power" Revolution, which my parents were active in, and just in time for the EDSA anniversary on February 22-25.

While I had numerous articles published in the previous weeks, this topic was closest to my heart, and I didn't care whether or not it got published – I just knew that I had to write it.

Little did I know, the article was to land on front page of the Inquirer – with me and my mother's picture on it.

This was probably the proudest moment of my entire life. To be 21 years old then, not yet a graduate, and the editors valuing my article enough to place it on front page.

The best part of it was that the next day, and for the week to come, I received countless calls and texts from people all around Philippines that I had met in the past five weeks, congratulating me for an article well done and for reminding them of the true meaning behind the People Power. One message brought me to tears:

"Your article brought back memories of my late father, who was involved in EDSA 1. I was just a kid then, so I couldn't join, but I was right there at EDSA 2. Thank you for writing this article, and for reminding me what it means to be Filipino."

I achieved my goal: to somehow, through my writing, make an impact on people's lives, and to help pursue democracy through my pen. The knowledge that I somehow impacted other people's lives changed mine. I will never forget my trip to the Philippines and my internship at the Philippine Daily Inquirer. The experience helped me grow as a Filipina, and as an individual.

I think if I had any advice to pass on to any FIOZ youth, journalists or otherwise, it would be to go for your dreams. Don't even second-guess yourself. We have been born into privilege; let us not waste it. As I said in my EDSA article: "The onus now lies on us...to stop talking and start doing. The torch has been passed. We have the responsibility to pick up where our parents left off."

Let our lives be useful and let us, using our own skills, serve others: the dividends are above and beyond what you could ever expect. Take my word for it.



DDG + Drop Dead Gorgeous



What started as simple Facebook page back in 2010 has now evolved into something much more - a global phenomenon!

DDG (Drop Dead Gorgeous) is a social group that is comprised of some of the most gorgeous models and celebrities in the Philippines. There is only one way to become a member

of the group - you basically just have to be drop dead gorgeous! Simple right? Last month when I visited the Philippines I had the pleasure of interviewing the creator of DDG as well as some of its more prominent members. Through a series of tough interview questions I got to know more of its creator Enz Occena and I also discovered how DDG actually started and where it is headed in the near future. Here's what went down:

Tell us your name and something about yourself.

My name is Enz Occena and I am the creator of the group DDG. I used to live in Antique 2 years ago; I used to be an undergrad before until I decided to permanently move here in Manila for good. I was only actually planning to stay here for a few days but then I liked it here so I ended up staying for good.

What is DDG and how did it all start?

DDG is a social group made up of some of the most beautiful models here in the Philippines; we also have a number of celebrity members too. See I've always been involved in social groups and social media even when I used to live in Antique. Back then when I used to live in Antique I formed this group which used to be made up of models, celebs and big names in the local scene. The group quickly became massive and famous over there but unfortunately something horrible happened - two of our active members died and one member got raped! For some strange reason a lot of people pointed the blame at the group so we had no choice but to disband it.

I ended up moving to Manila for good but I had no friends here at the time so I decided to create a social group via Facebook. After a month of creating the DDG page we immediately accumulated 50 members and within 2 months we had a 100 plus members. We used to hold go-see's every week to suss out who is eligible to join the group so it was pretty hectic at the time. But as DDG continued to flourish someone got jealous and reported our Facebook page for some unknown reason so it ended up being deleted! So we had to re-create the page, we basically had to start from scratch and we lost a lot of our contacts. We eventually managed to re-create the page and now we have 4 Facebook fan pages in total and the main page has accumulated more than 32,000 likes. Our social group has grown so big that we have been featured in various TV shows like TV5, QTV as well as Jessica Soho's TV show. I can say that throughout all these years we have been blessed.

What would you say is your personal mission in life?

I'd say help others. I've always been someone who wants to help others, that's the main reason why I started the DDG foundation in the first place so that I can lend a helping hand to those who are needy.

Where do you see DDG in 5 years time?

I'd say in an office. We'd have an office by then and the DDG members would be working for us in the form of a modelling agency. That's probably something that we are working on at the moment.

Meet some of the DDG members



Clarisse Bernice Del Rosario 'aka Koye' started her modeling career back in 2008. Her previous career as a stewardess meant that her modeling was on and off for a while. Koye is also a budding entrepreneur. She's currently working towards launching her own waxing studio in late December 2012.



Marianna Anderson is a Brazilian model who has been in the modeling world for the last three years. Beginning her career in Europe, Marianna is now based in Asia. She has appeared in various print ads and commercials. She is currently a model for L'Oreal and is the face of Levis Jeans in the Philippines.

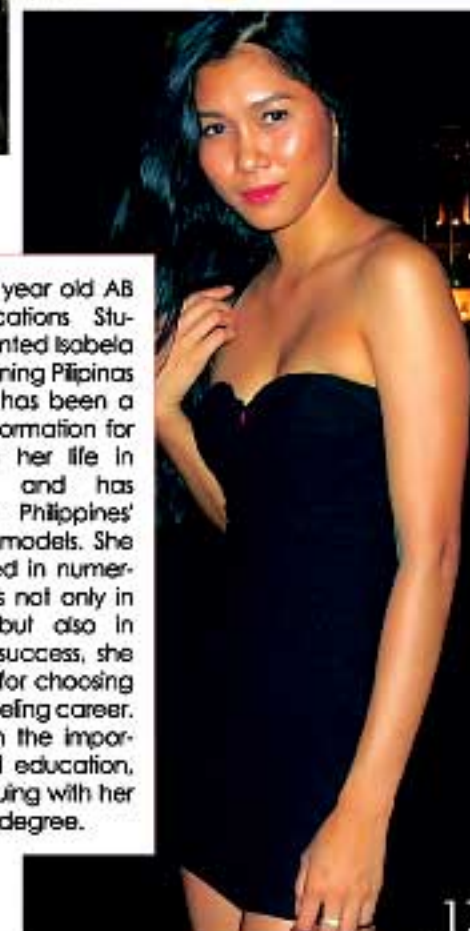


Multi-talented is definitely one word to describe **Patricia Erisado**. Not only is the 23-year old a successful part-time model, she is also a licensed interior designer. Last year, she made the choice of quitting her job in an architectural firm to enter in the 2012 Binibining Pilipinas Pageant. Her modeling career has seen her take on various jobs from catwalk modeling, print ads and commercials. She is currently playing one of the leads in the latest 'Jack and Jill' commercials.

Jennifer Andes is a full-time model who is currently being managed by Elite Manila. She has been involved in a number of Fashion shows and photo shoots but she believes that she's more into photo shoots rather than ramp modeling. She considers herself as sexy, charming, friendly and very respectful of others.



Jenny Jyrell Rose was working as a receptionist when the modeling world came calling. Bolstered by comments about her potential, Jenny took the risk and hasn't looked back. Now possessing a brimming portfolio, Jenny specializes in print photography and has done a number of open shoots during her career.



Jill Urbina is a 20 year old AB Mass Communications Student who represented Isabela at this year's Binibining Pilipinas 2012 Pageant. It has been a remarkable transformation for Jill. She began her life in abject poverty and has become of the Philippines' most sought-after models. She has been featured in numerous fashion shows not only in the Philippines, but also in Europe. For her success, she may be forgiven for choosing to rely on her modeling career. But Jill believes in the importance of a good education, hence her continuing with her Communications degree.



People and Faces

1. Remit staff pro InLife Magazine.

2. Pera Max staff pro InLife Magazine.

3. DDG Model Patricia pro InLife Magazine.

4. Celebrity chef Boy pro InLife Magazine.

5. Seriously Sexy models Cyen Lazam, Yassi Benitez and Mika Umali pro InLife magazine.

6. Fiesta Kultura 2012 guest pro InLife magazine.

7. StarCentral Covergirl finalist Rochelle pro InLife magazine.



Cyen, Yassi and Mika



Fiesta Kultura guest



"Get to know who's who in the social scene Down Under"



I-Remit staff



Pera Max staff



DDG Model Patricia



Rochelle



AussieBum.com





CHRISTMAS IN THE PHILIPPINES

By: Zesty

Christmas is a very important part of the Filipino culture, and the Philippines has one of the most interesting traditions in the world of observing the Christmas holiday. We are noted for having the longest Christmas holiday in the Christian world, sometimes beginning as early as September and not ending until the first Sunday in January, Three Kings' Day.

However, the official start of the Christmas holiday in the Philippines is December 16th, when the "Misas De Aguinaldo," or "Simbang Gabi," or "Gift Masses" begin. The masses run for nine consecutive days and are traditionally held at, or just before dawn. These masses are very important to millions of Filipinos. The devout are encouraged to attend every mass, not missing a day as a demonstration of their faith and devotion.

On December 24th, traditional Filipinos also celebrate "La Misa de Gallo", or the "Mass of the Rooster". The rooster is used to refer to the rooster crowing at the sun at dawn. The "La Misa de Gallo" is the final mass of the nine consecutive early morning masses, and is the official start of the Christmas day.

"La Noche Buena," the Christmas feast, is an integral part of the Philippines' Christmas celebrations. For those fortunate enough to be able to afford it, the star of the Christmas meal is the "Queso de Bola" (Edam cheese shaped into a giant ball and covered in red wax) and a juicy Christmas ham, but only for the few who can afford it. In many parts of the Philippines, in the run up to Christmas, children roam from house to house singing carols, just as children do in other parts of the world.

The Christmas celebration continues all the way through New Year's Eve and New Year's Day to January 6 - The Feast of the Three Kings. Filipinos celebrate New Year's Eve with fireworks and loud noises to bring in the New Year - according to superstition, the loud noises will deter any bad spirits trying to enter. Then families and friends gather in the New Year feast and at the stroke of midnight, children are encouraged to jump - following another superstition that jumping will help them grow taller in the New Year!

All in all there certainly is nothing like a Christmas holiday spent in the Philippines. Try it sometime you will surely love it!

BARGAIN BITES: MAD MEX



By: Jade Middleton

Are you a huge Mexican fan?

Do you love spicy burritos packed full of the trimmings?

Have you been wondering where you can get an authentic Mexican burrito?

Then look no further than Mad Mex!

All food in Mad Mex are made to order which ensures all the ingredients are fresh and made especially for you. For some strange reason I just can't get past the burrito no matter how much I want to try the nachos.

Just like Subway you have a choice of fillings to choose from but I usually stick to the basics and opt for rice,

black beans, lettuce, tomato, cheese and depending on my mood, I either choose chicken or shredded beef. They also offer quesadillas, soft and crispy tacos, tortilla chips and even the super healthy alternative- the naked burrito. You can also have some chocolate-dipped churros for desert- absolutely delicious!

A lot of Mad Mex restaurants usually give you the option to make an authentic dining experience, complete with Corona beers and tequila shots. The restaurant has a very homely feel with wood style booths and clever feature lighting made of old Corona bottles to create a traditional Mexican experience. All in all Mad Mex may look like a cheap 'take away' restaurant but then it sure beats any other Mexican food I have ever eaten - and the best thing is, they have affordable food too!



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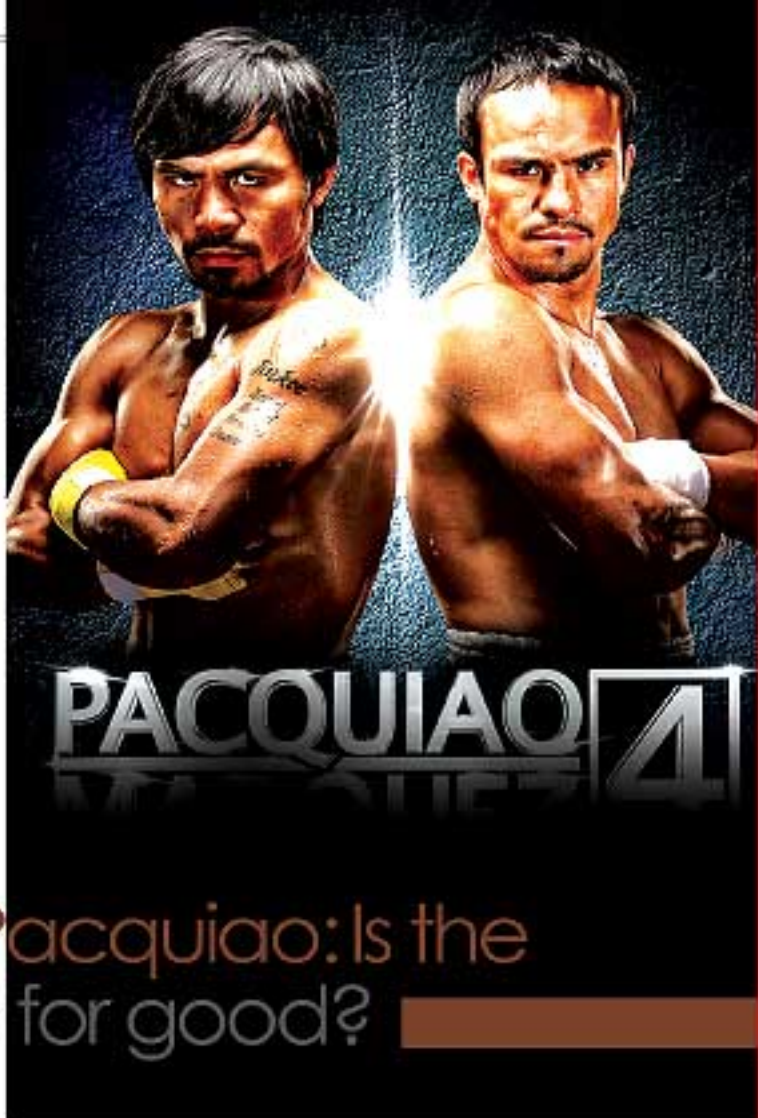
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There was only one second left on the sixth round of the much hyped up Manny Pacquiao and Juan Márquez showdown when the seemingly impossible occurred - Manny suffered a punch so forceful that he was knocked to the mat, unconscious. The former eight-division world champion who had claimed world titles at 112, 122, 130, 135, 147 and 154 pounds went down face-first on to the canvas in a dramatic and shocking ending to Pacquiao-Marquez rivalry.

What's even more shocking was that before the big knock-out Manny was very much in control of the match, he had been toying with Márquez with lightning-fast rapid punches that Márquez had no answer for. According to Time sports, Manny had actually connected with 94 punches compared to Márquez's 52, Márquez's face was also a bloody mess and he looked like he was on the verge of being knocked out at any second. All the three judges present at the night even had Manny ahead in their respective score sheets at 47-46 throughout five rounds.

Then the unimaginable happened as Round Six drew to a close. Marquez faked a left and then threw an earth-shattering right punch just as Manny charged forward. Marquez's right punch was so spot-on that Manny fell to the canvas hard - and lay still. It was a decisive knockout.



Manny Pacquiao: Is the boxing legend gone for good?

It was a terrifying moment not just for all the Filipinos present at the MGM Grand that night, but for all Filipinos watching their champion on TV screens all around the world. Manny lay motionless for several, heart-stopping seconds before finally regaining consciousness to everyone's relief. But no one could possibly fathom the terror that must have gone through Manny's wife, Jinkee as she hysterically rushed to her fallen husband's side. It was a shocking and unexpected defeat; our seemingly invincible hero is suddenly not so invincible anymore. The world's best pound-for-pound fighter has just been dethroned by his arch enemy.

So what really happened? How did Manny get knocked out like that??

As expected, speculation ran rife trying to justify Manny's shocking defeat to Marquez. Some people believed that Manny was just getting old; he's not as fast and efficient anymore so he can't move out of the range of his opponent's punches like what he used to do. Some people blamed Manny's lack of dedication to his strength and fitness training. While others believed that he lost because he didn't perform his usual pre-fight ritual of kneeling in a corner, making the sign of the cross and praying before the big fight.

So let's get down to the bottom of it, what was the main reason he lost?

Well according to Manny himself it was just overconfidence. He felt that Marquez was already on the verge of being knocked out and he just got careless.

Manny himself said that "I was fighting very well from the first to the sixth round. I was moving well. It was just that I got hit with a lucky punch on the last second of the round."

"The way the fight was going, there was no way it would have reached the 12th round," he continued.

Manny's very own trainer Freddie Roach also agreed with what he said. "Manny came back and he was in charge. He just got a little too careless but he was hurting Marquez," he quipped.

So the big question is, what's next for the boxing superstar? Will he resume fighting or is he finally hanging up the gloves?

"Don't worry, we will rise again," he told his fans as he arrived in Manila after the big fight. Based on this statement alone, it looks like the Pacquiao-Marquez rivalry is far from over.

When his trainer Freddie was asked if this is the end of Manny Pacquiao, he simply replied "I don't think this is the end of Manny Pacquiao, no. It was simply a mistake, he did not see the punch coming."

But in saying that, he also mentioned that if Manny can't keep up with his training then he will personally tell him to retire and hang up the gloves.

"If I see signs of him declining, I will tell him to retire," Freddie said.

Let's face facts though; Manny is an eight-division world champion so from a boxing point of view, he is a hall of famer and a living legend no matter what - there's nothing left for him to prove. Regardless if Manny fights again or not, his legacy is secure and his legend will always live on.

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