

# COMMUNITY JOURNAL

## A case for coming home ... for a visit, that is

*“Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world.”*

— Gustave Flaubert

### IMMIGRANT LIVING: 101 AND BEYOND



MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA

(Part 1 of 2)

*(A current radio promotion by The WAVE, which gives away trips as prizes to its listeners jogged my memory of a Philippine visit, just about a year ago during the Christmas holidays. I smiled to myself as I listened to one winner who sounded Filipino and who declared quite happily and proudly that he has chosen Manila, Philippines as his destination. This is in contrast to the majority of winners who routinely, predictably choose European destinations such as, Paris or Rome. Can't fault the guy for choosing well. In good times and bad, there's no Christmas quite like a Philippine Christmas.)*

**T**HINKING of coming home for a visit, kababayan?

In the best scenarios, a three-week whirlwind trip to the Philippines is what most Filipino expatriates living and working in the US or elsewhere in the world can shoot for. Aside from putting together the somewhat hefty logistical requirements (translation: money, whether in cash, debit cards or *kaskas* meaning credit cards), one truly needs to be a proactive tactician in mapping out how a Philippine trip pans out. So move over, Marco Polo. This is one of the ways it's done, Pinoy style.

How do you make a Philippine trip memorable? For the jaded traveler who routinely goes back and forth several times a year, either for business purposes or as a jet setting lifestyle choice, the question is moot and academic. But for the majority of expatriates who can only go on rare occasions because of personal circumstances affecting finances, workloads or family responsibilities, an expensive transcontinental time-out such as this merits thought—lots of it. A Philippine trip should result in a treasure trove of feel-good experiences and ultimately, memories—that make the journey worth all the effort and time spent in excruciating detail, worth all of the expense and maybe, more importantly, worth every nanosecond of one's hurried and harried

expatriate life. The trip must be so good that it must be worth doing all over again.

There's much to see and do, remembering all too well that we lose a day going there which we regain on the return trip. We have to make allowances for the effects of jet lag to settle in. How does one get the best homecoming experiences? In a word, PLANNING. Know that well-meaning friends and relatives already have first dibs on your limited time. So map out your itinerary (the places and experiences that you must see and do that are on the top rung of your priority list) and itemize your to-do list in detail, way in advance with the proviso that you must be open and flexible in your schedule. The fine art of travel is remembering that an itinerary is just a guide and not necessarily etched in stone. If need be, you must be able to revise on the fly when the occasion calls for it.

Going on a trip is like any other project. It needs a blueprint. It involves the mind-body-spirit connection. You have to be physically fit and mentally agile. Consult your doctor before going on a regular exercise and diet routine a month before leaving. Your immune system will be severely taxed, so a word to the wise—wash your hands often with a sanitizer you keep with you at all times in your travel purse. Get your flu shot. It's no guarantee but your layer of protection is better. Whether it was just the placebo effect or not, as some dubious studies claim, I can swear by the efficacy of Airborne effervescent tablets. Airborne, after all, seems just Vitamin C pumped up to the max and sold with a good, homey storyline. Do what works for you. Your immune system should be braced for the assault on your body particularly in self-contained, confined spaces like airplanes and waiting rooms where air is re-circulated. No one is totally immune from the cold and flu virus, so be on the defensive. If at all possible, stay away from the obviously afflicted. If you are down for the count, then

isolate yourself. And for heaven's sake, wear a mask. Hydrate always, well, maybe not during the 16-hour plane trip when holding your water in your bladder can be tricky.

You estimate and gather the money required. Fudge the figure twice as much and be warned. Your money will be as fluid as water gushing out of a broken water main. Have one or two credit cards with you for backup and call the 800 number and give them a heads-up to let them know that you will be in the country during a particular period. Fraud units of credit card companies study your spending patterns and much to your dismay, may put a hold on your credit card transaction if it registers you are buying far away from your place of residence. You will end up calling their number to prove your identity, which is not an 800 number, and for which you will pay for the long distance call. Make sure you bring dollars in near-mint condition because shopping mall moneychangers will refuse old, tattered currency with cuts or writing. A lot of non-mall shopping transactions will be in cash, so be prepared to bring cash on your person or in a zippered, discrete purse you keep with you at all times. Vigilance is the key when out in public. Thieves have trained eyes and can home in on a hapless victim. Keep your purse on the side of your body where your shopping companion walks. Beware of distractions and scripted street dramas designed to keep you off guard.

*(To be continued in next week's issue)*

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**Nota Bene:** Monette Adeva Maglaya is SVP of Asian Journal Publications, Inc. To ask questions, send feedback and requests as well as to inquire about advertising in any or all of the 6 print editions of Asian Journal in California, Nevada and New York/New Jersey and/or advertising in the Print Edition Online of Asian Journal, e-mail [monette.maglaya@asianjournalinc.com](mailto:monette.maglaya@asianjournalinc.com)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL READERS! MAY GOD'S GLORIOUS SEASON BRING YOU PEACE AND JOY.

### IMMIGRATION FACTS



ATTY. BRIAN LERNER

**Q**UESTION: We want to adopt, but are unclear of what to do.

We have heard that there some requirements we must follow through the Hague Convention. Can you elaborate?

Answer: On April 1, 2008, the Hague Adoption Convention went into effect for intercountry adoptions between the United States and other Hague Convention countries. If the country you want to adopt a child is not part of this agreement, you do not need to comply with its requirements. USCIS centralized all Hague processing and adjudication at the National Benefits Center (NBC) in Lee's Summit, Mo. The Hague process requires the filing of Form I-800A, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country, and then a Form I-800, Petition to Classify Convention Adoptee as an Immediate Relative.

Since April 1, 2008, the NBC has received more than 1,300 Hague applications and petitions. The NBC provides end-to-end

## The Hague Convention

processing for Hague applications and petitions, and USCIS has found that a majority of cases are incomplete, requiring prospective adoptive parents to submit additional information after they filed their initial application or petition.

**Question:** What must be included in the application that is normally left out of the petition?

Answer: The necessary requirements for an initial Hague application are as follows: It must ensure that your home study is no more than 6 months old at the time that it is filed with USCIS; you must have a Hague accredited agency complete your home study, or have a Hague accredited agency review and approve it, prior to submitting it, along with your Form I-800A to USCIS; and you must submit a Consent to Disclose Information supplement if you would like the NBC to communicate with your adoption service provider on issues related to your case as it moves through processing.

**Question:** When did the The Hague Adoption Convention become effective and what is the purpose?

Answer: It became effective for the United States on April 1, 2008, and is an agreement between signatory countries which are working together to ensure protections in intercountry adoptions. These protections include providing

adoptees with permanent loving homes; looking after children's best interests throughout the adoption process; and preventing the abduction, sale or illegal trafficking of children. If the adoptive child's country of origin is not a Hague Convention country, the Orphan procedures must be followed. This involves filing a Form I-600A, Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition, and/or Form I-600, Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative. The adoption can be a very emotional process and can take time. Be sure you get the immigration petition right the first time so there is not unnecessary delay.

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Brian D. Lerner is a Certified Specialist in Immigration and Nationality Law by the California State Bar Board of Legal Specialization. He is admitted to the US Supreme Court and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th Circuit Courts of Appeal. He is also admitted to the California Supreme Court. This firm handles cases both nationally and worldwide. This firm does every aspect of immigration law including family and employment based petitions, deportation defense and criminal related immigration issues, asylum, naturalization, citizenship, appeals, nonimmigrant visas, immigrant visas, and all other areas of immigration law. An appointment can be made by calling (866) 495-0554 or (562) 495-0554. The firm's website is [www.eimmigration.org](http://www.eimmigration.org).

(Advertising Supplement)

## 7 tips to make millions out of your real property

by STEVE DERODAR

**TIP #1: Start young.**

Start owning real properties while you are young. Real Estate is for the young. Honestly, however, it doesn't mean that when you are old, it's not wise to own one. What it simply implies is that the longer the property has been of use, the more profitable it is.

**TIP #2: Location, location, location**

That is the key. Location defines value and predicts revenue. When you decide on a property, choose the best location. The higher the zonal value, the better.

**TIP #3: Best property management**

For what is a property that is grand yet not well kept? Property management is an important key that makes or breaks property saleability. A property well-kept would yield greater profits for you.

**TIP #4: Rent it out.**

Think long-term. Let your property serve you and make money for you. Rent it out. But before you do, make sure that the unit is very appealing to the prospective tenants. Accessibility to major economic points like bus stops, malls, churches, etc. is the big-

gest factor. A walking-distance feature is a sure way to get it rented right away.

**TIP #5: Guarantee security.**

Give your buyers/renters a sense of protection. This is important. Use reliable common-sense security measures and real security system for your property. If locals are not confident with your place, how can you expect foreigners to be?

**TIP #6: Value appreciation.**

What's it worth for you? Make a graph of all your property expenses as well as its property valuation. When your property's scale is up compared to the neighboring properties, it indicates that your property is much better.

**TIP #7: Resaleability**

One truth that you need to know is that your property must have resale value. The greatest disappointment of property owners is the failure to sell the property when it is already ripe for disposal. Your property's best value is when you can easily attract buyers to go ahead and make offers.

(Advertising Supplement)

## Help hardworking families missing out on millions

United Way of Morris County, NORWESCAP and AARP seek volunteers to help Morris County residents get free tax preparation and additional refund dollars

**M**ORRISTOWN— Every year, thousands of hard working residents miss out on millions of dollars because they do not claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on their federal and state tax returns. Others lose much of their return to high commercial preparation fees because they simply do not know where to turn for reliable and affordable help with their tax returns. The answer? Free tax preparation programs like NORWESCAP's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance through their Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide Program.

NORWESCAP RSVP and AARP are currently recruiting volunteers to participate in next year's free tax preparation programs by working at one of the qualified tax preparation sites. No tax preparation experience is necessary; all volunteers will be trained. Training begins in December; tax preparation services begin in February.

United Way and a coalition of agencies, including NJ 2-1-1 First Call for Help, NORWESCAP, and AARP, are working together to make sure people claim the EITC tax credit. By taking advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit, working people can claim up to thousands of dollars in federal and state income tax benefits.

According to the federal government, the EITC lifts nearly four million people out of poverty each year. A low-income family in New Jersey with two or more children could qualify for as much as \$5,885 in federal and state tax credits for the 2008 tax year. The extra income from EITC could build the financial assets of a family, and move them on a path to self-sufficiency.

For more information, and to learn how you can help, contact Ellen Konwiser, NORWESCAP, at (973)784-4900, x103 or Nancy Niemann, AARP, at (973) 539-3195. ■

## Truly a great American Pinoy showcase

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most full-to-capacity venue when Dolphy and Zsa-Zsa blended voices in one of the most loved Tagalog songs, *Ikaw* which led to a fitting grand finale of a medley of nationalistic songs ardently performed with the Quizons and Mar Lopez—all elegantly attired in *Barong Tagalog*... and joined by Vandolph's real-life partner, Jenny. That touching sight inevitably sent the now sentimentally affected audience into a standing ovation as they felt an intense longing for their homeland. Through relentless clapping and spirited hand waves amid a

mixed emotion of nostalgia and homesickness, the crowd felt an instant relief even just for that one eventful moment.

“What a hell of a show! Too damn good and entertaining!” commented the head of security who seemed too grossly glued to watching the show more than overseeing his men.

“It's worth the trip. *At saka, ngayon lang ako talagang natuwana nang todo... dahil kay Dolphy!* Said Virgie Mayo, one of Jersey City's prominent businesswomen.

“It was long but I didn't notice it...they are world-class performers... and that makes me proud

to be *Pinoy!*” Uttered Bleu Ezra Latoja, a hip-hop looking Fil-Am teenager from Maryland.

The event was presented by Special Edition Press, Inc., ERJ Productions and the Trump Entertainment Resorts in cooperation with ABS-CBN Global, Western Union, Philippine Airlines, DirectTV, Garden State Travel Group of Companies, Northwest Airlines, Tancinco Law Offices, Asian Journal Publications, Perlas Ng Silangan, Tiketang Online-Counsel Pinoy, San Miguel Beer, Aryty.com and the Philippine Fiesta.com.

(Advertising Supplement)

## Simbang Gabi sa Konsulado with premier Filipino-American young professionals

**N**EW YORK— Friends, families and followers of Simbang Gabi are cordially invited to join the Filipino-American young professionals of the Tri-State area and the Philippine Consulate General New York as they celebrate their annual nine-evening *Simbang Gabi* masses at Kalayaan Hall of the Philippine Center on December 12 at 6:30 pm.

Sponsored by the premier Filipino-American young professional organizations in New York City, namely—Collaborative Opportunities for Raising Empowerment, Inc. (CORE), Filipino American Human Services, Inc. (FAHSI, a direct-service agency), and Philippine New York Junior Chamber (Jaycees), the mass will be officiated by Fr. Patrick Longalong and music provided by a local Fil-Am choir. In keeping with this unique tradition, the host organizations will recreate the nativity scene in a short play during the *Simbang Gabi*. A light *salu-salu* will be served after the mass.

*Simbang Gabi*, a Christmas Novena, is a Philippine tradition of celebrating Advent masses to heighten the preparation for the celebration of the birth of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Traditionally held at dawn, *Simbang Gabi* lasts for nine consecutive days and will end on December 24. To donate food or to volunteer, please contact one of the following: Christopher Arzadon (973) 801-0056; Johanna Martinez (718) 883-1295; Ted Martinez (571) 227-1691.

The Philippine-New York Jaycees, FAHSI, and CORE are ground-breaking organizations known for making positive contributions to society in their respective areas. They are bound by these common objectives: to foster working relations and camaraderie amongst their members while creating awareness in the community through unity and collaboration. For more information about services, membership and volunteer opportunities, visit: [www.philnyjaycees.org](http://www.philnyjaycees.org), [www.fahsi.org](http://www.fahsi.org), and [www.core-nyc.org](http://www.core-nyc.org). ■

### FREE WOMAN'S SELF DEFENSE WORKSHOP

## The evolution of the ‘Fight Like a Girl’ philosophy

**O**UR motto is “Fight Like a Girl.” Sure it can be seen as a clever play on words for the program, since most people fall into the semantic trap of thinking that “fighting like a girl” means being ineffective, weak or silly.

Our point is to highlight the difference between self defense courses for men and women. When a man attacks a man, he either wants his money or his life. When a man attacks a woman, he either wants her money, her life or her body. The nature of the conflict is, by definition, hugely different.

For us “fighting like a girl” means that a woman brings her particular strengths to the conflict while minimizing the strengths of a man. She should not attempt to fight directly into the “strengths” of the man who is attacking her. That's not silly or flawed reasoning; it is a smart strategy for any fighter.

The system is taught in reverse of how we are typically taught. Normally, programs are taught to avoid or evade the first contact. Then what to do if he grabs your wrist, then what to do when he grabs your shoulders, etc. The *Fight*

*Like a Girl* module starts with the sexual assault position and then backs out. Yes, we cover avoidance and evasion, but one of the core principles is that you always know you can escape the worst position possible, so any of the others are relatively simple to handle by comparison.

Most of the Women's Empowerment Series modules do not depend very much on

punches or pokes.

The thousands of women who trained in the program as it was evolving “showed” us what worked and what didn't. They began to be able to see sexual assault scenarios as problems that needed a solution. They began to be able to spontaneously respond to full power attacks with an appropriate and effective solution. They even began to solve problems that they had never encountered before. When playing the bad guy in the scenarios, I felt the difference. Women began to really respond in a way that was immediate and it was effective. I have actually been knocked unconscious in a class by one of the students. So much for those critics of teaching women to fight like a girl.

Register today! Be part of the event on Dec. 10 at 8:30 pm or Dec. 12 at 7:30 pm. Space is limited so reserve a spot now for yourself, your friends and your family. For more information call at (201) 387-1811. The event will be held at INFINITE/KRU Training camp located at 112 So. Washington Avenue Bergenfield, NJ 07621.

(Advertising Supplement)

