

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Pinoys mourn the loss of a pop icon

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ter at UCLA, she had to go and pay her last respects.

"I was just so sad parang it actually dawned on me that 'Oh my God not with such a talent like that' because I just feel so sad," said Villar-Poquiz, a 40-year-old Human Resource manager in Santa Monica. "I just kept telling my friends I have to be there, I have to be there. I know his body is still there."

Villar-Poquiz joined hundreds of fans at UCLA medical center mourning Jackson's death. Many stood in front of makeshift memorials. One woman sat on the ground and wept openly clutching a pink pillow with Jackson's face on it.

Standing in front of Jackson's Hollywood Walk of Fame star, Fil-Am Liza David paid her respects Thursday night.

"I think Michael Jackson's passing is kind of our generations Elvis passing," she said to the Asian Journal. "I grew up during the Thriller era and I remember the Motown concert when he first did the moonwalk. Everyone just went crazy and he just blew up after that."

Jackson, referred to as the King of Pop, passed away on June 25 after collapsing in his rented home in Holmby Hills.

According to a UCLA statement, it is believed that the 50-year-old Jackson suffered cardiac arrest in his home. However, the cause of his death is unknown until results of the autopsy are released.

"His personal physician, who was with him at the time, attempted to resuscitate Jackson, as did paramedics who transported him to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center," said the King of Pop's brother Jermaine Jackson during a press conference. "Upon arriving at the hospital at approximately 1:14 pm, a team of doctors, including emergency physicians and cardiologists, attempted to resuscitate him for a period of more than one hour but

were unsuccessful."

Doctors at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center pronounced the pop superstar dead at 2:26 pm. He was 50 years old.

RP mourns Jackson's death

Jackson was an extremely popular musician in the Philippines. More than 50,000 Filipinos attended Jackson's HISTORY concert tour in Manila in 1996. It was his only visit to the Philippines.

Former first lady of the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, cried when she heard the news.

"Michael Jackson enriched our lives, made us happy," Marcos said in a statement. "The accusations, the persecution caused him so much financial and mental anguish. He was vindicated in court, but the battle took his life. There is probably a lesson here for all of us."

Even Pinoy politicians reminisced about the influence Jackson had on them while they were growing up.

"I tried to dance like him but I just couldn't," said Senator Francis Escudero to the Inquirer.net.

According to ABS-CBN, TV host Jojo Alejar shed tears on nationwide TV as he shared his admiration for the late King of Pop.

"I guess pretty much yun talaga, ganun kailagi yung influence niya sa aking career," he said before imitating some of Jackson's patented dance moves.

Singer Gary Valenciano also cried when he heard the news.

"In some ways it's like part of me has died too. He was an inspiration to me. I still wonder if he ever read the letter I wrote him when he performed here. It was the least I could do for all the years that he inspired me," he said in a statement to ABS-CBN.

And the 1,400 Cebu inmates who made headlines worldwide with their reprisal of Jackson's *Thriller* video will recreate their

dance in tribute to the 13-time Grammy Award winner.

Officials from the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center officials said that the performance would be held this weekend inside the provincial jail in Cebu.

Jackson was a global icon who inspired a generation of musicians with his all-around unique style of performing.

The seventh of nine kids, Jackson began his music career at an early age. He was a member of the Jackson 5 when Motown Records signed the group in the 1960's.

But he became a star when he pursued a solo career.

His 1982 album *Thriller* remains the best-selling album of all time, selling more than one hundred million copies worldwide.

From the height of his success came a downward spiral.

In the 1990's, his popularity waned. Tabloids followed the king of pop constantly and nicknamed him, "Wacko Jacko" accusing him of child molestation, quirky behavior, questionable marriages, and children they say were not even his. Jackson had three children, Prince Michael I, Paris Michael and Prince Michael II.

He was also beset with legal lawsuits and deep in debt.

Before he passed away, he was attempting to make a comeback with his last world concert tour in London.

Although Jackson's personal behavior was questionable, his legacy in music will never be forgotten. Fans will always remember him as the King of Pop.

"No one can ever replace Michael Jackson. Michael Jackson will always be Michael Jackson. No matter what happens, no matter how long it will take, he will always be an icon in our hearts...no one can replace his talents," said Villar-Poquiz. ■

Fil-Am to sue RP Gov't for alleged torture

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ture and six-day ordeal by her torturers.

The UC San Diego alum said that she was in the Philippines to research on a writing project and help assist in a medical mission in La Paz, Tarlac.

After coming back from a recent survey trip on May 19, she claims that 15 armed military men wearing "ski masks" and holding "high powered rifles" barged through the door of the house where she was staying and abducted her and two companions - Juanito Carabeo and John Edward Jandoc.

"I kept shouting my name and was being punched repeatedly," said Roxas during the press conference held at the Echo Park Methodist Church and broadcast online simultaneously to the Philippines last Saturday. "They kept trying to tape my mouth but I kept taking it off and continued to say my name over and over again."

According to reports in the Philippines, neighbors recall hearing the commotion and told local authorities about what they witnessed.

Roxas said that she was held for six days in what she believes was a military base. She recalls hearing construction activities, gunfire as though from a firing range and planes taking off and landing.

She said she was blindfolded and handcuffed to the back. She said that interrogators "punched", choked and accused of her of being a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

She denied their accusations and repeatedly told her interrogators that she was a US citizen. She demanded a lawyer.

"They told me even if a year passes, I would never see a lawyer, that in there I had no rights," she said. "They told me that it was people like me that is costing the government so much money."

Her captors continued to interrogate her and questioned her about the location of other members of the CPP-NPA, she recalls.

After six days, her captors brought her to a nearby relative's home. They threatened her to keep her silence about her abduction.

Roxas said that one of her two companions - John Edward Jandoc - is still missing. Carabeo was brought home. However, he has not spoken about the events.

"I want the Philippine government and the military to be held accountable for what they did to me," said Roxas. "What they did has been happening and contin-

ues to happen. I want them to be held accountable so this does not happen to anyone else."

Staged abduction

The Philippine government and military officials have denied any responsibility for Roxas and her two friends disappearance claiming her story and abduction was "scripted."

"There are two possibilities here and one is that indeed government troops may have something to do with it," Brig. Gen. Gaudencio Pangilinan of the Civil Relations Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines said in a statement.

If military agents were involved in the torture and abduction of Roxas, Pangilinan vowed that he would personally make certain that they would be punished "with the full might of the law."

"If that is the case, we guarantee you that to this date, our intelligence and investigative outfit are searching for any lead to identify these human rights violators," he said to Inquirer.net.

Pangilinan said another possibility was that Roxas' allegations were "scripted" to make it appear that her abductors were members of the AFP.

"If you read through the revelations, the supposed abductors must be morons to allow those information to be heard by Ms. Roxas," he told Inquirer.net.

Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo said Roxas should come up with evidence to prove her allegations.

And Malacañang, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde was also not immediately buying Roxas' account. "We know that there are groups that do nothing but destroy the President," he said.

Roxas was surprised by the denials of the government and military officials.

"No amount of their lies or denials could ever deny the truth of what happened to me," she said.

"It is such an absurd argument," added Rhonda Ramiro of BAYAN-USA. "Anyone who sees Melissa or reads or listen to her testimony or any of the thousands of victims of human rights violations knows that this is real...It's time for the government to stop being in denial and start doing something to stop the human rights violations."

Roxas will meet with California Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Sanchez, according to Ramiro.

Roxas also said that she plans to pursue her legal action in the Philippines and the US. ■

Aquino 'happy over outpouring of prayers'

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Desierto visited the ailing former president morning and tried to avoid interviews as he left the hospital and boarded his car past 11 a.m.

"She's improving," Desierto said, without providing additional details.

No official update has been released on Aquino's condition Thursday. Sytangco has also not confirmed reports that Aquino has been transferred out of the intensive care unit to a regular room.

"I will have to confirm that," she said over the phone.

At noon Thursday, relatives, friends, and admirers of the 76-year-old former president will hear the second of nine healing masses at the Sto. Niño de Paz Chapel at Greenbelt 5, also in Makati City. ■

Easier US immigration filing fees urged

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channels for high volume filers to submit benefit requests, including traditional paper applications through a lockbox, a customer portal, kiosks at USCIS offices, and electronic submissions for batch submission.

"Although these operational enhancements will be implemented incrementally, we anticipate the batch filing to be deployed early during the life span of the contract," said USCIS.

It said it also plans to have an "online shopping cart," which was described by IBM as a "filing wizard," where customers will immediately get feedback to resolve shortfalls in their benefit requests and find alternative benefits for which the petitioner is eligible. The USCIS said it expects this to

be available by 2010.

USCIS will also deploy Paper Check Conversion and Credit Card Readers at all Field Offices to allow electronic deposit of funds through the Federal Reserve to US Treasury Department accounts.

"This functionality will enhance USCIS' ability to process payments more quickly and we believe that our customers will find this option more convenient," it said.

It also plans to expand the electronic payment filing that would be advantageous to applicants, petitioners, and their representatives. More information materials would also be released with instructions to ensure that payments are submitted correctly. ■

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