

## Bert de los Reyes, Our “Kuya” in Australia



By Pete Fuentecilla

One of OB’s longest serving nurses passed away February 1, 2008 in Sydney, Australia. Bert was 79 years old and had succumbed to bone cancer.

Bert belongs to our Australian Mekong Circle chapter roster– all nine of them – who called him Kuya (elder brother). Two of them – Helen and Narsing Erilla flew in from Brisbane and Pet Duruin planed from Melbourne to celebrate Bert and his wife Leony’s 50th wedding anniversary on September 10, 2006 in Sydney (see party photo January 2007 Newsletter). They have two children Emman and Grace and six grandchildren.

Bert had met Leony on a cruise ship where he had worked from 1955 to 1960. Also a nurse, Leony worked with Sewing Company in the Philippines. Bert served with Operation Brotherhood from 1962 till 1975 when it terminated its activities in Laos. During that period he served in various field teams – Vientiane, Paksong, Kengkok, Sayaboury, Houie Sai and Attopeu.

Bert worked with the late OB doctor Totoy Celes with the Philippine government’s Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (Panamin), a foundation created to protect cultural minorities. Panamin acquired anthropological notoriety in the 1970s when one of the remote “cave-dwelling, stone age” Tasaday tribe it “discovered” in South Cotobato province turned out to be a fraud orchestrated by Panamin head Manuel Elizalde Jr.

Bert and Leony immigrated to Australia in 1977 and worked as an orthopedic nurse at the Royal Price Alfred Hospital in Sydney until his retirement in 1993.

Burial was at the Worora cemetery in Sydney on February 9. Messages and cards can be sent to Leony de los Reyes at 18 Robert St., San Souci NSW 2219, Australia. E-mail to [graceconcepcion7@hotmail.com](mailto:graceconcepcion7@hotmail.com).



At the viewing:

First row (l to r) Petra Sismaet, Leonie de los Reyes; Second row: Vic Lagleva, Narsing Erilla, Lucy Limuaco; Third row: Cely Lagleva, Violeta Lopez, Jade Daza, Helen Hababag