

Remembering Puring



Our Laos adventure, lasting a year or less for some, stretching 18 years for others, holds a wealth of memories. And the things we remember stay as fresh as ever even as we move on to other places and other times. We remember Puring de Jesus because of how she helped our Reunion Organizing Committees put together two of our reunions -- the 2004 Chicago and 2008 Manila.

Sometime in the 1960s, we held a contest of some kind in Vientiane, and the winning price was a sedan. At that time, a car might as well be a magic flying carpet. Puring won it. And for the next days, she received incessant proposals for marriage.

Puring has a way of winning hearts. When she came late for a preparatory meeting of the 2004 Chicago Reunion, she was informed that she had been chosen to be the coordinator. "Would I accept?" she was asked. "I accepted...All I had to do was delegate, delegate, delegate, and besides we had 22 months to prepare." The role she willingly took on turned out to be "frustrating" and "difficult." But at the end, she "enjoyed coordinating the reunion and I would not trade the 'job' for anything else."

The Chicago reunion (our fifth biannual gathering) stands out as the most successful in terms of turnout -- 310 altogether -- an outstanding record as we mark our ninth in 2012. It had the most first-time attendees, most number of children, and most grandchildren. It took 16 stitches to pull it through -- the number on her forehead when she tripped in her high heels during the "welcome" baci ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Hence during the rest of the festivities, while dressed in a very stylish blue gown, she played it safe wearing tennis shoes. And, for that evening, she was no longer clutching her phone. Over the 22 months of enticing members to attend, that phone may as well have been surgically attached to her ear, calling members at all hours, from Manila to Russia. (She leaves one advice to future coordinators: "Don't call, write or email committee members during holidays and the winter hibernation. You will just get dead silence.") Another warning -- "At every Committee meeting, you had spent the previous night preparing an agenda .Everyone ignores it."

Our seventh 2008 reunion in Manila was historic --the first outside the USA where most members lived. Puring was appointed International Coordinator. Pulling in members a great distance from around the planet would take some doing. And once again, Puring delivered -- 84 members from the USA, Hawaii, Canada, Australia, and other places. No stitches this time, but a well-deserved plaque of appreciation from the Philippine Reunion Organizing Committee for another outstanding job.

Puring passed away July 7, 2012 after suffering a stroke in Hamilton, Ohio. She was 72 years old. An accountant, she served in Laos with Operation Brotherhood's (OB) Vientiane office. She is survived by her husband Raul, sons Anthony and Jij.