

CLASS '76 40TH REUNION, A PURE JOY!

BY DR. ED BANEZ

BALI BALI RESORT, SAMAL ISLAND, DAVAO; NOAH'S PARK, MONTALBAN; ILOCOS NORTE AND ILOCOS SUR PLUS SOFITEL AND UERM, FOR TEN DAYS FROM FEBRUARY 5 TO VALENTINES DAY, CLASS 76 REUNITED AND BONDED WITH ONE ANOTHER. IT WAS TOO SHORT, IT WAS LONG ENOUGH. IT WAS PURE JOY AND EXCITEMENT. SOMETIMES IT WAS SOLEMN, THERE WAS DISBELIEF BUT ABOUT NINETY OF US AND OUR FAMILIES CELEBRATED OUR RUBY JUBILEE IN THE GRANDEST WAY POSSIBLE.

FOR FORTY YEARS SINCE THAT SUMMER OF 1976, WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS AND HAVE NOT SEEN EACH OTHER EVER SINCE. FINALLY FACE TO FACE WITH ONE ANOTHER "WHO ARE YOU?" "WHO IS HE/SHE?" YOU TRY HARD TO REMEMBER, YOU SOMEWHAT RECOLLECT THEIR FACES, THEIR VOICES. SOME NEVER CHANGED, SOME GOT BIGGER LIKE ME, DEFINITELY OLDER. THEN NAMES WERE MENTIONED AND SUDDENLY MEMORIES COME BACK AND FORTY YEARS IS NOT THAT LONG AGO ANYMORE.

SOME OF US CAME DURING OUR SILVER JUBILEE, FEWER ON OUR 30TH AND 35TH. ON OUR 40TH OR RUBY CELEBRATION, WE ARE MANY AND YOU WONDER WHY. I HAVE BEEN TO UERM REUNIONS, BOTH IN THE PHILIPPINES AND IN THE USA ALMOST EVERY YEAR AND YOU NOTICE THAT THE RUBY CELEBRANTS HAVE THE MOST ATTENDEES EXCEPT FOR THE SILVER JUBILARIANS. THERE MUST BE A REASON WHY. MAYBE BECAUSE WE HAVE THAT FEAR THAT THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE, THAT YOU MAY NOT REACH OUR GOLDEN JUBILEE AND IT IS TIME TO SEE YOUR CLASSMATES ONE MORE TIME. IT MIGHT ALSO BE THAT AFTER FORTY YEARS OF HARD WORK, YOU HAVE DECIDED TO RETIRE AND SUDDENLY YOU HAVE MORE TIME. WHATEVER IT IS, CLASS 76 IS NO EXCEPTION.

CLASSMATES BOTH IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE USA JOINED TOGETHER AND WITH THE INTERNET, FACEBOOK AND VIBER, WE RECONNECTED, WE REACHED OUT AND AS WE GOT CLOSER TO THE REUNION, THE DESIRE AND ENERGY MULTIPLIED AND THE EXCITEMENT NEVER WAVERED AND THE RESULT WAS AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS.

DURING THOSE TEN DAYS, THE RESORTS AND PARKS WERE BEAUTIFUL, SCENERIES WERE SPECTACULAR BUT TO SPEND IT ALL WITH YOUR CLASSMATES IS PHENOMENAL! YOU TRY HARD TO REMEMBER SPECIAL MOMENTS FROM YOUR UERM DAYS AND WITH EVERY OTHER CLASSMATE IT IS ALWAYS DIFFERENT. YOU REMINISH AS A GROUP OR YOU JUST WHISPER TO ONE ANOTHER. IT IS AN INDESCRIBABLE FEELING. YOU TRY TO RECAPTURE FORTY YEARS IN A MINUTE, IN AN HOUR BUT THAT MOMENT IS SO SPECIAL, THAT A PART OF YOUR LIFE DORMANT FOR FORTY YEARS IS ALL COMING BACK IN AN INSTANT. IT IS OVERWHELMING BUT

IT IS PURE JOY AND HAPPINESS!

YOU CANNOT BELIEVE IT IS HAPPENING BUT IT IS FOR REAL. YOU DON'T WANT THAT MOMENT TO END. YOU THINK YOU ARE ONLY DREAMING BUT YOU ARE NOT. YES, THESE THINGS WILL END BUT YOU HAVE THE POWER TO KEEP IT GOING. YOU CAN PROMISE TO COME AGAIN WHENEVER YOU CAN, ON OUR 45TH, ON OUR 50TH . . .

WE CANNOT PREDICT THE FUTURE BUT WE CAN ALWAYS TRY AS LONG AS WE ARE ABLE TO. LET US KEEP THAT SPIRIT OF '76 ALIVE. TILL WE MEET AGAIN!