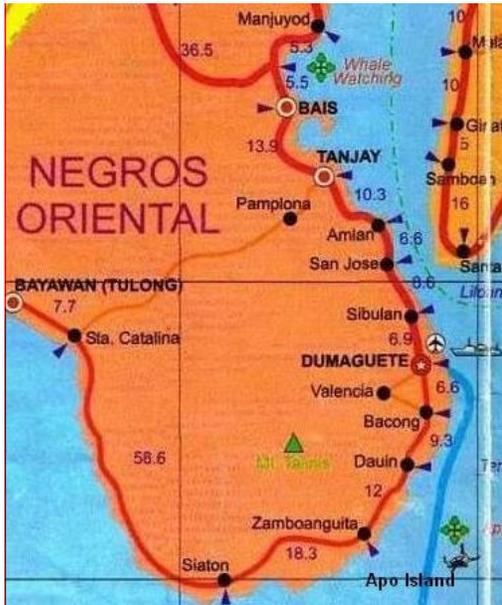


## RAMBLINGS - FIESTA TIME!!!

Three days ago, we hosted a party at our farm for some of our Tanjay friends and Balikbayan visitors. This seemed to be just another continuation of the month long series of celebrations, parties, and social activities as part of our retiree life here in the province. Lisa urged me to make a writeup of the these events so to be able to share with our kith and kin.

So here goes.

It all started early November when we hosted a cousin from the US. He and his nephew bussed in from Capiz where he had built his retirement house a few years ago. Now, he was building another one in Dagupan where his wife hails from. We showed them the sights in town, including the



weekly Friday park dance. We drove south of Dumaguete to savor the cuisine of one of the many beach resorts catering to the growing number of foreigners. Map inset shows the towns south of Dumaguete such as Bacong, Dauin and Zamboanguita where many resorts have out-trigger boats to bring



We ate lunch at the Pura Vida resort. Photo shows a out-trigger boat in the background, while some scantily dressed foreigners enjoy their lunch at the hut after stowing their scuba gear.

But a few days earlier, the city mayor celebrated his birthday, and similar to a fiesta, it is open season: people just drop by, and I mean hordes. Not just his political allies, but almost the entire City Hall population. Mayor Lawrence Teves' clan is large, and their hacienda is between Bais and Tanjay (see map). We trekked to their place together with two other Tanjayanons who also recently retired from the US. We've been attending the event the previous 2 years, and know the mayor well, especially his older siblings, who come and go between here and Los Angeles, CA



The traffic guards told us that due to congestion, we can't drive into the compound. The approach is a long tree-lined narrow road. Photo shows Lisa walking with Evalina and Braddock, our two companions.



Once inside, it was all eat, drink and be merry. Meaning, the meeting old friends and catching up with the latest gossip, especially for locals Lisa and company. That's the mayor on the left. We were entertained by a singing group, shown in the background, whom we'll be hiring in a few days.

After those two events in early November, we finally could schedule the long delayed bienvenida party with our immediate Dumaguete relatives. We had arrived from the US over a month before.



We invited the clan, and they literally came in as a truckload. See photo insets. That is cousin Eddie's truck.

The food was all organic. The litter of piglets which our sow birthed 4 months earlier were now getting to be lechon sized. We sent one to the local lechonero, culled a goat, a few more chickens, harvested more tilapia, then together with the veggies galore we have, made up an excellent feast. And no, we didn't do the culling and cooking, etc. The cooks and hired hands did it all.



Last few days of November was Fiesta time for Dumaguete. We were specifically invited by the Magbanuas, who are very close to the bishop. As a matter of fact, the bishop's residence (palace) sits partly on the land these two ladies donated some years back, and there is a private path and doorway between the two properties. Not surprisingly, many of the guests were mainly from the religious orders. Inset



shows our nephew Fr Jun Limbaga, chatting with one of the nuns. Fr Jun just recently finished advanced courses in Spain, then held temporary assignments in Israel and in the US. There were a number of other priests we were introduced to, including one based in Saipan, and another in California. Both were on vacation here.

The food was catered, and excellent.

But this fiesta dinner was not the first that day that we attended. It actually was the second of four!

Earlier, we were at a suburb of Dumaguete attending the fiesta of the relatives of some of our farm hands, who actually are also blood kin. Notable was that their house was one of those low cost Habitat houses built on donated tracts, and built partly by that international group headed by Jimmy Carter, who apparently wielded a hammer or so during the construction years back.



Inset shows the partly consumed lechon and other

dishes, which were just as delicious. Actually, they had 3 lechons.

The culture of throwing parties during fiestas apparently center around tradition. Not all families prepare food and open their doors during the patron saint's day of the locality. But some families do so religiously every year. And there are caveats. Some invite their guests exclusively. However, it is still proper to bring one's friends. For others, especially located in the outlying towns or barrios, it is a free-for-all. The fiesta we attended at our relative in Valencia a month earlier had hordes of people, and notably were poor families who just came in to eat, and bring home food in plastic bags.

The Dumaguete fiesta had other attractions, too. There was a carnival, parades, and a flea market by the Boulevard.



An acrobatic team performs on the main highway. Amazing. When I took this shot while driving, I almost ran into an on-coming bus.

The third dinner that day was with our cousin-in-law, Atty Bong Bustamante, a prominent lawyer in the city. This we really looked forward to, because unlike the usual lechon and meat fare prevalent in most fiesta dinners, he always has, additionally, great fish food in the form prawns, crabs (especially the female pregnant ones with lots of "alege"). And he always reserves some for us in case we are late, which we were. Needless to say, it was yummy.

There, we met another cousin who said that we also are expected by Pepe Tiongson, another lawyer, also known for musical wizardry, whose kin are mainly Tanjay based. So off we went again, and we barely touched even the dessert.

The next day, we found out that we also were expected at another place, whom we had erroneously thought had scheduled our visit as a "vesperas", or the night before.

Had we had known, and gone, it would have been five dinners in one day. I don't know if it would have Luculian for me - like the early Roman banquets where one is given a feather to tickle one's throat to make room for more.

Not all the recent activities were about eating or gustatory adventures. The fairly new Robinson's Mall in Dumaguete offers lots of activities, such as the singing contest as shown



in the left inset. We drive to Dumaguete at least once a week, and invariably spend some hours just hanging around (air con is terrific).

Starting December 1, Tanjay kicked off a parade to welcome the Christmas season, and will sponsor daily programs such as sports, cultural events, etc at the town plaza. See right inset above.

Coincidentally, right in front of the plaza is a newly opened restaurant and watering hole which seems to be taking off grandly, run by Marilou and Wolfgang Stuetzel. It is a favorite meeting place for Balikbayans, retirees, locals, and even the Bais Castillas who find their town lacking of a place with similar vibrance and ambiance. We go there at least 4 times a week. Who can beat P15 for a cup of good coffee, or P12 for a bowl of champorado and one bulad (dried fish). Yet, there's more snazzy dishes a la carte.

A few days later, it was fiesta time again, but for Amlan town. We don't know anybody well enough to just barge in, but our good friend Braddock, and his sidekick Doc Tino Cornelio (our doctor and relative) know quite a number. We all went for lunch and dinner. The lunch feast was at the Doc's former cook's house, now a caterer. Indeed, the food was excellent with arroz Valenciana and other goodies. Barely even touched the lechon.

Supper was at the house of one of the leading businessmen in town. Not surprisingly, we met other balikbayans, retirees or otherwise.

North of Tanjay at the barrio of Luca is the ancient pier where foreign ships used to dock to load sugar from the Bais mill. Even before that is Nangka, with extensive cane fields, and large ancestral houses. The Tabaloc clan hails from there and it was the barrio's fiesta last week.

And this time, even if the sky was threatening rain, we had to go because we feel close to that family, and we RSVP'd.

Besides, a number of other guests were riding with us in our van. No regrets, after all, we had been there twice in the past two years. Here, I had occasion to make a before and after shot of one of the main food tables. All within say 30 minutes. See



insets above. It rained a lot, but not before the other lechons had been cooked on the outdoor spit.



The rain also didn't prevent us from traipsing through the fence to the other house next door, where we had to refuse more main dishes but acceded to dessert and coffee. See left inset.

So now, it was our turn. As mentioned at the start of this writeup, we hosted a party at the farm three days ago. There were half a dozen of our friends from LA who were visiting. What better time than now to lechon another pig, butcher a goat, cull more chickens, harvest some fish, and have a feast. Which we did. One of the guests, a warden from the local jail, drove in with the towns paddy wagon, and helped ferry back some of the guests literally riding behind bars.

Photos show the event. Top photo shows Wolfgang on the left. Large photo below show those from LA, which our famed wit Braddock termed "**Former Americans Residing in Tanjay**", or the local equivalent "**Old Timers Of Tanjay**".

Smaller photo below shows our farm help making "lin-uyang", pounded green bananas.

My solution to all this overeating is shown on the other smaller photo: yours truly on the treadmill. My New Years resolution, as can be guessed, is to diet.

But wait, there still are two grand weddings, a couple of noche buenas, a Balikbayan Singing Tanjay party, and Dumaguete party - all scheduled before the year end.

Danny Gil <ferngil@aol> 12/17/10



Tita Lisa Jessie Evalyna Braddock Lito Benny Cente Sally Danny