



In the kitchen of the Abad home, Jess, Danny and Jun got their first glance of a “vakul”. They took pictures wearing it and we think that’s when they fell in love with the native raincoat made of the fiber “vuyavuy.” Later, Jess and Jun bought such raincoats and dubbed them as “Tina Turner”. None of the wives got jealous.

From there, we proceeded to her brother’s equally beautiful home.



Between the two homes are seated lovely life-size statues of Pacita’s parents dressed in barong and terno. We were told that is where Pacita’s ashes were scattered.

We first admired the gardens in the back, then soon found ourselves ushered into the terrace. Turns out Edna and Romy Manlapaz knew Butch and he graciously instructed the caretaker to serve us coffee. Rather luxurious and just the picker-upper.

We wound our way down to Basco to look at some handicrafts places and Lisa and Danny bought jackets because the weather had turned cold the very day we arrived. It was lovely for some people but freezing for some. Bernie who just came from her Kenya assignment wanted a jacket eventually, so pretty were the ones bought by the Gils.

It had been a long day so we headed home for an early dinner and an early bedtime. Tomorrow a boat ride awaits.



the stretch SS jeepney, our limo, manned by Ramon.

There are no gas stations on the island. The first one is under construction. Gasoline or diesel is brought in as barrels, and sold by retailers, often at sari-sari stores, in bottles such as two liter plastic containers. At left is

A BOAT RIDE TO SABTANG, from Cynthia’s write-up.

We were told by Luz and Roger that, if the weather was nice the next day, we would go to Sabtang, one of the three inhabited islands of Batanes Province. We were to be up and ready to go by 6 a.m. (which meant breakfast at 5:30 or so) because the earlier we went, the calmer the seas would be, the seas being South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Needless to say, we didn’t get going till past 7:30 which was probably an achievement, considering we were a group of 8 couples plus 1, all dealing with various sleep deprivation from the day before. Not to worry – it was only a mere 30 minutes to Sabtang.

We were driven to the dock by our stretch jeep limo. There we saw



two boats side by side. The captain of one boat was positioning big bags of flour on one end to balance, he said, the passengers who always sat aft and center. The baker who was getting them delivered would be happy to know that he or she was getting certified all-purpose flour. While the crew of two was getting the boat ready, we were glad to see that each of us was getting a bright orange life vest for the trip. They were obviously aware of safety measures. Very reassuring.

Roger blithely announced that, if anyone had seasickness, now was the time to take medicine. I really didn’t want Jun hearing this announcement because one, he does tend towards seasickness; two, it didn’t seem like a good idea to use the power of suggestion at this time; and three, he hadn’t brought any motion sickness medicine. After 39 years of marriage and without even looking at him, I knew Jun was starting to get apprehensive. Roger recommended going with the rhythm of the water – inhale with the rising wave and exhale with the falling one. Easier said than done. Jessie was not happy. Neither of the two boats tied to the dock had “katig” or outriggers. Not to worry, these are experienced boatmen and it’s only a 30-minute boat ride. Finally, we were ready to board. Turns out, the first boat closest to the dock was only a stepping stone to the second one which we soon saw was old, decrepit and not one to inspire confidence at all. Nevertheless, trusting in the Lord, our husbands, tour guide and the euphoria of our planned excursion, we gamely trooped onto and into the boat, helped aboard by our solicitous guide and respective hubbies and what did we see? Right smack in the center of a gaping hole on the bottom of the boat was an old, evil looking engine, which would, in a few minutes be emitting smelly, dizzying, probably toxic fumes for all of us who had to sit on the narrow benches around it to inhale.