

AGM 2010: President's Report

By Minnie Lau

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Dearest Vice Consul Rei, and friends - the Isko at Iska of UP who are now based in Singapore,

Today is the **7<sup>th</sup> AGM** of UPAAS. And in the past seven years, the last 12 months have been arguably the most exciting roller coaster ride the organisation has seen, with adrenalins pumping in all our veins as we prepared and conducted many major activities.

The world was suffering from a global financial crisis and Singapore was among the first Asian countries to declare itself in recession. We started 2009 with a practical outlook. An informative talk on CPF, just prior to the AGM last year, was conducted by Erik Ong in March. The room was full, and questions went galore. Erik has also now been invited to give a similar talk to a wider audience at the Bayanihan Centre.

Following the AGM last year, there was time to relax and chill. Ryan of the social and sports committee arranged a **Grand Tambayan** at the helipad in May. That night-out saw a record number of members, and many new ones, having a sip or two, and just chatting with old and new friends.

Then we went on high gear with the very first **Mutya ng Pilipinas - Singapore** pageant. It was the first time UPAAS organised such a major activity that involved the Filipino Community in Singapore. The venue, the atrium in front of Plaza Singapura, was packed with so many people, both Filipinos and Singaporeans alike, who enjoyed the event that can also be dubbed as a display of Filipina beauty and Filipiniana fashion as well.

Thank you to the scholarship team led by Marc Zara and Joni, assisted by Denise, who worked hard in bringing a very Filipino affair into the heart of Singapore. Despite the short preparation period, the tight budget, and frantic last minute practices, it was conducted seamlessly and concluded successfully. Following the successful event, the Manila-based Mutya ng Pilipinas Inc and UPAAS have signed a MOA, giving UPAAS the sole licence to conduct the pageant till July 2011.

We greatly appreciate the support from: Philippine National Bank, Phil DOT, Pinoy Village, Natasha, PLDT Smart, Fil-Air, 7107 Flavours, Kali Majapahit, Minister of Pictures, Pinoy SG, Pinoygraphers, Pinoy Star, Copy Lab and FAS.

During last year's **PIDC event** at Hong Lim CC, we not only had a stall selling food, which sold out so fast, but we also assisted the PIDC committee in producing the souvenir for the 111<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

And before we can take a breather, we were at it again.

This time, UPAAS made history by becoming a publisher, the publisher of a unique book, called **Metro Cuisine: Cosmopolitan Finger Foods**. The book was launched in August as part of the celebrations of the 40 years of diplomatic ties between Singapore and the Philippines. The proceeds will go into UPAAS endowment fund for education. We have about 500 books sold and paid, and thus our actual endowment fund is beginning to grow.

For those who are not aware, UPAAS has a scholarship committee that manages a scholarship programme administered by UP Office of Students and Scholarship Affairs in Diliman. We currently support four bright kids studying in UP, with one graduating this year with a BS Biology degree. More details on these later, but we are grateful to the Lee Foundation, Cardinal Porcelain

Philippines, Manny Baldemor, PNB, Singapore Art Museum, Bank Julius Baer, Mrs Josefina Pulido, Mr & Mrs Perdigon and Giovanni Odal.

To have funds to sustain this programme, the endowment fund was launched. This is also aimed to reduce the burden of conducting fundraisings every now & then for the scholarship, although, of course, we do have many many members who are generous and ever so supportive. We thank you all, and our scholars are grateful. The editorial team, who never gave up, comprises Portia, Loida, Kritz, Susan and Noel. We are blessed with support from Mr Goh Eck Kheng, a publisher in his own right and Mr Chris Tan, a food columnist in Straits Times. We have also been fortunate to have Dr Ricardo Soler contribute a foreword, and grace the book launch in Spore.

Besides education, UPAAS has its **outreach programmes** under the social and community welfare community. A visit to the Halfway House in November, led by Ka Tong, elicited some tears both from members and the housemates there. There was fun and there was food. There was singing and there was dancing as well. And as it was November, there were parols hanging at the place, a lovely way to start the Christmas season. However, we just wish their number will dwindle down to zero, eventually. We do this visit every year, so pls keep those toiletries in the hotels of your travels.

We also spent time with the less fortunate kids in the Philippines, and in December, we had a Pamaskong Pambata, coordinated by Thryza. We select a beneficiary every year, visit them, entertain them and provide gifts, to warm their hearts. Last year, because of the generous donations from members, we were able to visit two beneficiaries: The House of Refuge, QC and Redeemer's Home, Antipolo.

One serious disaster in the region also brought out the generosity and compassion in Filipinos here in Singapore. When Ondoy struck the Philippines in September last year, there was immediate and spontaneous desire to help and just do something. Thryza immediately sent out an email on cash donations. A total of S\$6,190 from members were received and sent to Philippine National Red Cross. In addition, a team comprising Guen, Jogo, Len, Roman and Joni led the call for donations for food, clothings, medicine and many others. They were inundated with calls from people all over the island, from many people they did not know- strangers just wanting to help. This was also a project where we worked with many Fil orgs such as Pinoy IT and coordinated with PNB for remittances and LBC, Jumbo, Joly-B, DHL, Robin Cargo and many others, for the shipping of 50 boxes.

**Sports** has become part of our lives, our social lives. There are ongoing regular badminton games every week, and our players have participated in tournaments, winning some of those trophies. We just need to work a little bit harder to get that much coveted Championship trophy! We also have participated in two bowling tournaments: one was an Ambassadors' Cup and the other was a PIDC tournament. Our basketball team, the Fighting Maroons, will again emerge this year, preparing to join a new tournament.

Our walkers, led by Ms Chi, Guen, Denise and Nanette, continue to walk and explore the many streets and alleys and sites of Singapore, every month. They also made history by having the first overseas UPAAS walk in Malacca, early this year. There were some 18 participants enjoying the sights and sounds of historical city, the place of Peranakan food.

Our **media and publicity** committee, led by Denise, is sometimes also referred to as infocom. She has been busy forwarding and churning out announcements and invitations to our activities and those of others; and relaying messages from the Philippine Embassy. We also continually improve our website, and indeed we would like to invite volunteers to contribute relevant news and write-ups.

On **membership**, we continue our efforts to increase our member base by active recruitment and introduction of various activities for the benefit of our members. To date, we have some 120 active members. As you can see, we have a newly designed ezlink membership card, indicating the diplomatic relations between Singapore and the Philippines. (40 yrs last year). Orders can be made thru [membership@upaas.org](mailto:membership@upaas.org).

Members were also the focus of our activities in the Merienda, Chikahan atbp, held in September at Balmoral Crescent. The informal gen meet generated great ideas on activities that were planned for the rest of the year. One result was the Perya Fair for the Barrio Fiesta.

In December, the **socials committee** was again busy. We had a very colourful reggae-themed Christmas party at Park Royal. The attendees had fun in their colourful yellow, green and red outfit.

And just when you thought it was all over, the New Year kept ManCom and the **scholarship committee** very busy again with the preparations for the Lovni night of Chopin music. We are sincerely grateful to the Phil Embassy and PNB for the big big support. We are also grateful to 7107 Flavours, Mang Kiko's Lechon and Tapa King, Loida, Olive, and the embassy staff for the wonderful spread of Filipino food.

Of course, not to forget is the artist herself, Ms Adolovni Acosta of Juilliard School, for without her, we could not have achieved funds for the 5<sup>th</sup> scholar and almost a big portion for the 6<sup>th</sup> scholar. We were initially happy with whatever amount we can raise, a modest S\$2-3k maybe, but then, we were overwhelmed with the great response. We are indeed very delighted to report that the Lovni concert raised about S\$12,000 for the scholarship programme.

Our efforts do not end there. There are plans to bring in Filipino movies to Singapore, and maybe some sports tournament. We hope you all will support all these endeavours.

And last but not least, I'd like to report that as of end of Dec 2009, UPAAS now has total assets of about S\$60,000. As of today, March 21, we have about US\$72,000 of assets, including receivables for the endowment fund. A large portion of this is from the book proceeds. So pls, we encourage you to buy a book or help sell the books, all for a good cause, to bring quality education to bright and deserving young kids.

And of course, our ever heartfelt thanks to the many friends, supporters and sponsors who inspire us to do what we are doing. And we hope for their continued support and cooperation in the future.

ManCom 2009 is a dedicated group and I am fortunate to be working with people with such commitment and passion, and who selflessly give their time and resources in achieving the goals of the organisation.

I thank you for your time and hope you will enjoy the rest of the afternoon.