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TERRAPINOISE

Putting the "know" back in Filipino.

Brown Christmas

For the past six years, I have had the privilege of spending Christmas and New Year's with my enormous family in Manila. With my brother, sister, mother, Lola, twelve aunts and uncles, and all sixteen of my cousins, year after year we celebrated our Christmas Puno-family style.

We have many Christmas traditions in the Philippines—some that may be unique to my family and some that I know are widely practiced. In our family, Christmas Eve is the gift-giving day. After piles of food, we spend the day under the tree exchanging the many gifts that have been brought from the US, from Australia (where two of my cousins are from), or from other parts of the Philippines. Another tradition of ours is what my cousins call "rounds." On Christmas Day, all sixteen of us pile into as many cars as we need to and visit all of our uncles and aunts on our Lola's side. Each house we visit means a handful of *pesos*. Rounds can last most of the day, which also means more spending money for the rest of my Philippines vacation.

The night of Christmas Eve we always get dressed up in our nicest attire and attend *Simbang Gabi* mass. Simbang gabi is actually celebrated everyday the nine days before Christmas Eve, but in our family Christmas Eve mass is the one we all attend together. After mass, I can always count on *media noche*, a meal eaten at midnight after simbang gabi. Our media noche always includes hot chocolate and pan de sal. The hot chocolate is always homemade, and though it may not be anywhere near snowing, it never fails to remind me of below freezing temperatures and piping and hot chocolate back home.

I remember once when I was about 15 years old one of my older cousins took me to a festival of lights at one of the local universities. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. *Parols* are Filipino Christmas lanterns shaped like stars. I walked down a street with what seemed to be a million different colors and the brightest lights that I've seen all in one place.

New Year's is also a fun time, seeing as fireworks are legal to have and can even be set off even in your own backyard in the Philippines. I've grown accustomed to running and ducking whenever I hear a loud bang because of all the New Year's celebrations I've spent in the backyard of our Manila home. However, I have to say, witnessing the fireworks so close up is definitely an experiment.

This December will be the first in six years that I will be spending Christmas and New Year's in the US. And while I have to say I am very excited about the possibility of having a white Christmas, I am going to really miss my family and the wonderful things that we do during the holidays.

-Jitter Garcia

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Philippine Culture Night: A Celebration of People

Every springtime, Filipino American student organizations across the country scramble to finalize costumes, squeeze in last-minute dance rehearsals, and memorize lines in preparation for an annual custom that has become tradition: the Philippine Culture Night. It has become an art form that is unique to the Filipino American experience. Other college ethnic groups have cultural nights and shows, but the Philippine Culture Night, or PCN, stands out as something that every Filipino cultural organization has in common. It has become a staple of Filipino American performance art, including recurring themes and ideas that link every Filipino American student organization together in their expressions of identity, cultural awareness, and Filipino pride.

Based on research done by Dr. Theodore S. Gonzalvez, there is an almost formulaic structure used by every Filipino American student organization in producing these events. Each PCN includes the singing of the American and Filipino national anthems, symbolizing the intertwined histories and democratic friendship that are manifest in Filipino Americans. Tagalog is often used as a reminder of the heritage that reaches back to the time before these families ever made it to the United States. Culture is also marked by indigenized Filipino traditional costume and dance that is interpreted by each organization's cultural researchers. Lastly, and most importantly, is the narrative that is played out by the organization's members and combines all of these elements together in order to convey some theme about the Filipino American experience as understood by the particular organization.

The Filipino Cultural Association has put on its own Philippine Culture Nights since it was created in 1981 (it was renamed "Filipino Cultural Association" in this year after being founded in 1978 as "Samahang Filipino"); this year's PCN, which will be hosted on Saturday, April 14, 2012, will be the 30th annual show. The PCN held in Spring 2011, was titled, "Alex and Taylor's Awesome Adventure: A Bite Out of History." This comedy followed the eccentric journey of two friends, one with the goal of destroying the Filipino heritage and the other trying to preserve it, who travel through time via a magical history book. By the end of the performance, both friends learn to appreciate the value of every culture. Past shows have included subjects like the untold story of Lapu Lapu and Ferdinand Magellan, Filipino folk tales, and the International Hotel in San Francisco, California.

PCN always features the talent of FCA's general body, including singing, dancing, acting, and more. The common theme that threads every PCN, year after year, and across every college campus, is the idea that the traditions, customs, and values that make up a culture are reflective of every individual's contribution to society, and that each one of those individuals is invaluable to humanity. The show is an expression of FCA's perspective on what it means to be Filipino American, and how its general body members understand their role as Americans who share a common heritage of being Filipino. PCN is a celebration of the universal ideals that unite every organization, every family, every community, every nation, and every generation.

-Andrew Aggabao

The Turkeybowl (Almost) Disaster

For many, George Mason University's annual Turkeybowl tournament has been a long standing tradition for the District VI schools. With each passing tournament, this flag football event has grown to Olympic proportions in the eyes of the participants. In this test of strength, endurance, and brotherhood, schools gather to prove their worth. Teams practice endlessly for this one-day tournament each year; much of the fall semester is dedicated to the preparation of Turkeybowl. But what if this tournament didn't happen? What if the tradition and legacy that is Turkeybowl came to sudden halt?

This unpleasant thought was almost a reality this past semester. As some of you may know, Turkeybowl is hosted and handled by George Mason University's Filipino Cultural Association. Any logistics involving the tournament is prepared by them, while the other District VI schools try to provide any sort of input. Preparations proceeded this semester like any other year; however, everything changed 4 weeks before Turkeybowl. At the monthly District VI meeting, the sports coordinators from each school assembled to discuss further logistics of the tournament. During their conversations, it was announced that a venue was not secure for the tournament. With this recent announcement, the District was now scrambling to find any sort of venue.

So let's break this down: the D6 schools were asked to help find a venue 4 weeks before the event, the venue must have a capacity suitable for 8 guys' teams and 7 girls' teams, and the location has to be useable from the early morning to evening. Keep in mind that events of this magnitude are usually scheduled a year in advance.

This major flop ended up adversely affecting members of the other District VI schools. Sports coordinators and fellow group members spent the next weeks calling every location imaginable. Frustrations mounted causing unnecessary stress for many people. A solution came 2 weeks before the event as George Washington University was able to secure Anne Arundel Community College as a venue.

Through the combined efforts of the D6 schools, the Turkeybowl Crisis of 2011 was adverted. Hopefully subsequent years will learn from this so we can focus on one thing: taking back the Men's trophy.

-Brandon Bartolome and Peter Tarectecan

Oh How Fun It Is To Dance

The 2011 District VI Semi Formal Dinner Dance was the highlight of my first semester here at College Park. It was an opportunity for the Filipino organizations across the DC, Maryland, and Virginia area to celebrate our culture together as a family. I had the opportunity to sing the Philippine National Anthem and although I was very nervous, there were many of my fellow FCA members there who cheered me on and encouraged me.

The event featured the Philippine American Cultural and Arts Society (PACAS), who performed Singkil before the Dance showcase began. I thought their performance was really impressive, and I'm pretty sure everyone was awed by their beautiful garments and by their props that they used during the performance.

Shortly after PACAS' performance, the Dance Challenge began, wherein all the schools in District VI performed the dance routines that their Filipino organization had prepared for the night. Each school had different Filipino cultural dance suites. The challenge was to incorporate as much of these folkdance suites as they could into their modern dance routine.

Everyone did a fantastic job, and although this was a challenge, it was not competitive. For me, it was an opportunity for us to get closer together, to dance, and to have fun while still presenting what our FCA family can offer. The whole night was filled with entertainment and laughs. Preparing for the performance and practicing for hours every day during that week was stressful, but it was worth it. I don't regret getting involved with Modern Dance group; it's made me more active and more involved. I didn't dance as much as I do now before joining Modern, but now I think that dancing will become one of my newfound hobbies. Having the chance to meet people from different schools was a great experience at Semi, but seeing everything that we've worked on from day one come together was the best thing out of the whole experience.

-Christine Oliveros

Giving Thanks, Post-Thanksgiving

I might have gone through several ups and downs this semester, but I've been told that the big guy upstairs does that purposely with my best interest in mind. The good always outweighs the bad, and the bad pushes me to be stronger and wiser. So I'm thankful to God for that, for all the challenges He brought my way because they were opportunities to learn and to better myself. After things have been said and done, one learns to appreciate the things he or she has. This year, I've got so much to be thankful for.

I'm thankful for finally receiving in-state tuition. I'm thankful for actually getting good grades this semester. I'm thankful for being able to help make so many successful events this past year. I'm thankful for winning Turkeybowl. I'm thankful for getting better at dancing. I'm thankful for my new on-campus job that makes me feel useful and pays for my rent each month. I'm thankful for hugs that squeeze me until I can't breathe and giant smiles on peoples' faces because they just make my day better. I'm thankful for finally buying my own smartphone and almost being able to keep up with the latest technology, and in an odd way, I'm thankful for losing that phone at Cultural Retreat because it made me realize how dependent I became on technology.

And I'm so thankful for all the people I've gotten to share these good and bad times with this year. I'm thankful for all my friends for keeping me sane, for keeping me grounded, for keeping things in perspective, and for giving me tons of strength and support. I'm thankful for the Elephanteers (past and present) who have somehow learned to live with me and my messiness; I'm thankful to them for not letting me take naps when I should be doing homework, for always making sure I'm fed, and for allowing me to be ridiculous at all times. I'm thankful for all the E-Board members I've worked with because working with them has taught me so much about working as a team and developing my own potential. I'm thankful for the LadyTerps, the Modern and Cultural Dancers, and all the new people I've met this year. I'm thankful for seeing their fire and passion because it reminds me of why I continue to do what I do and as much as I do. I'm thankful for my adings for giving me a reason to be a better person and a good role model. I'm thankful for FCA in general, for helping me grow as a person, for giving me tons of ~~challenges~~ opportunities to learn more about myself, and for allowing me to meet some of the best people I've ever met in my life. I'm especially thankful for my family, who I hardly see or talk to these days, and their continued support despite my indecisiveness with my future as well as our differences in opinions. I'm thankful for just about everyone in my life for not only being there, but for continually inspiring me to push for more and to do it with a smile. I'm thankful for each morning I wake up and for the chance to go to sleep at night. And lastly, I'm very thankful for this opportunity to show the world how secretly corny I am.

-Christine Bustamante

Upcoming Events:

December 11:
Cultural Dance Practice
4PM @ Chemistry Atrium

December 13:
Last Day of Classes

December 15-21:
Final Exams

December 22-January 24:
Winter Break

January 25:
Spring Semester Begins