

NewsLetter



WELCOME TO THE SHRINE



The 20th Annual Fiesta Celebration of Sto. Niño de Bobon
By Rene and Neneng Bautista

August 21, 2010 marked the 20th Annual Fiesta celebration of the Bobon USA Asso-

ciation. In striking contrast from previous celebrations, the fiesta was held in a very unique and a very special place, The Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. The Shrine which was founded in 1951 by the Missionary Ob-

lates of Mary Immaculate spread over 200 beautifully landscaped acres with full modern facilities, boasts of its own hotel, restaurant, banquet/meeting facilities, church and various devotional areas. We'll

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Paring Madeja-Bongalos will host Fiesta '11

As is customary and traditional, our 2010 fiesta sponsors, Rene and Neneng Bautista, turned over the image of the Sr. Sto. Niño to our 2011 sponsor, Paring Madeja-Bongalos, during our 2010 fiesta at the Shrine.

Initial plans by Manay Paring indicate that our next fiesta which she is co-hosting with Glo Emde will definitely be on August 20, 2011 in San Diego, California. So, there you are, folks! Go ahead and book your flights, prepare your driving trips and get ready for another exciting and fun-filled fiesta celebration—Bobon-USA style—in sunny San Diego.

Watch out for your mail or visit our website (www.bobon.us) for more fiesta information.



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Welcome to the Shrine (cont.)

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talk more about the Shrine as we move on. In the meantime, let's go back in time to muse over the happenings.

In 2005, when we volunteered to host the fiesta for 2010, we envisioned to have a fiesta—Bobon style—with the 9-day novena to be done on 9 consecutive days, the “aurora” (early morning procession), mass in the morning followed by the “sinulog” and the rigodon to be performed by all the past hermanas/hermanos and officers during the dinner dance. We started looking for a place where we could do all these activities. If the mamaratrons will be coming from different places, the “aurora” will be a big challenge because of the timing. Another big challenge was the rigodon. Will there be time to practice? How will we gather the participants to practice? We didn't even know at the time if anybody would be willing to join the dance.



Since we moved to Louisville in 1998, we visited the Shrine with Manay Tela and Manay Acit every year to attend the Holy Week Good Friday activities. So in 2006 after the holy week, Manay Tela saw a wedding held at one of the banquet halls and she called us right away if we would consider holding the fiesta at The Shrine. We did not have any second thoughts about having it there. We thought it was the perfect place. We did not waste any time and the very next day, we called the Shrine to know more about their facilities, etc. By early 2008, we had already made our reservations for Aug 14, 2010 because Aug 21 had already been reserved for another group. (It turned out later that this group backed out paving the way for our fiesta).

Little did we know that things would change drastically, for in June 2009, we moved back to California. What had already been set a couple of years ago had become a bit more complicated. We were now in California so we were split whether to hold the fiesta in St. Louis or California. Just about one year to go and we have to make a decision in order that we could announce the venue for the fiesta 2010. There was no time to waste as time was running out. We had already canceled our original reservation at the Shrine so we started looking for a venue here in California, a hotel or a decent clubhouse in Orange County, Riverside or San Diego. But most places we've seen, either they were too far away or were very, very expensive. We even looked at military bases (San Diego & Camp Pendleton) but the facilities did not suit the activities we planned. We were getting frustrated so on Aug. 3, 2009 we called The Shrine to see if there was still a date available for August 2010. August 21 got opened as if Señor Sto. Niño was saving it for us. We let go a very huge sigh of relief and right there and then we reserved the date. Hotel rooms were blocked for the mamaratrons. Food, facility arrangements, fiesta activities and other details were negotiated and we signed the contract. We started putting together the plan as well as the details, and the date and venue was announced during the 2009 Bobon Fiesta. Some questions were asked like: why in St. Louis? what is in St. Louis? is there a Bobonanon in St. Louis?

Preparation started with Mama getting some addresses of Bobonanons in the US so we can send them invitations. Thanks to Tita Cornillez for providing me that list. We put info of the fiesta at our website and sent email to everyone as well. Sched-

ule for the 9-day novena was made. We planned it in such a way that the novena was said in different states where there is a Bobonanon. Butch and Melinda helped us to print the novena prayers while Dick & Epay ordered the small Sto Niño statuettes from Cebu. All these were sent out to the novena sponsors. At the same time Manay Tela, Mana Acit and Lydee were helping us find a caterer for our traditional vespera dinner. Dick made video copies of the rigodon that we sent out to all 20 past hermanas and officers.

From the time the information was posted on the website and the newsletter was sent out, we frequently called the hotel to find out how many and who made their reservations assuming that all the mamaratrons will check-in at The Shrine hotel. This was where we based our reservation for the dinner party. A DJ was booked and the mass celebrant was contacted. Fr. Andrew Chalkey, OMI is a retired priest of the congregation and is very familiar with the Filipino traditions and customs. He was in the Philippines as a missionary for about 2 years and had been in Cebu quite a few times for the Sto. Niño celebration.

With the help of Butch, the format and lay out of the dinner ticket, the souvenir program, the mass misalette, the invitation outlining the program of activities and directions to The Shrine were finalized and printed. Thanks to Office Depot for giving us a good deal on the printing. Rene and myself designed a small “andas” that we reassembled at the hotel to be used during the “aurora” procession. Because our Sto Niño is a little child we planned that the andas will be carried by our grandchildren during the aurora procession.

The Novenario

The 9-day novena started on Aug. 12 in Chicago sponsored by Manay Acit/Manay Tela, Mana Nnette and Mana Precy Bolhayon in the Philippines. The Chan family (Manay Alice, Grace, and Maritess) in New York and Mana Nita Duarte in Michigan sponsored the 2nd day. The Arizona Bobonanons sponsored the 3rd day at Mydee's residence thru the initiative of Manay Lily and Jovina. Fourth day novena was in Los Angeles sponsored by Mana Terry, Filipinas, and the Gorgonias. Aug. 16 was the 5th day with Edna Unay, Dra. Myrna Escareal in New Jersey and Neria Garcia in LA as sponsors. Tita and Totoy Cornillez & Juvy Jao together with other Bobonanons in Maryland sponsored the 6th day novena, then Marlo & Elena Evangelista in Las Vegas & Bonita McFarland in Florida hosted the 7th day. 8th day was sponsored by Manay Paring Madeja Bongalos and Corazon Steven



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in San Diego. 9th day was hosted by the Paredes family followed by a thanksgiving mass at the Christ the King Chapel at The Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows.

In loving devotion to Señor Sto. Niño and unwavering desire to attend the fiesta, never mind the 4 to 5 hour flight and the sweltering heat & humidity in St. Louis, MO, Bobonanons came from different states across the country. From the East Coast; from New York, New Jersey & Maryland, from the West Coast; from California, Arizona & as far north as Montana, from the mid-west; from Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri, the mamaratrons started coming to the Lambert International Airport in St. Louis, MO on August 18. - destination: The Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL located just 10 miles east of St. Louis.

The early arrivals included Manoy Ber & Fatima Carpina, Mana Terry, Steve & Filipinas Tobes & daughter, Rene & Neneng Paredes Bautista with grand kids, Lane & Lydia, Butch & Melinda Paredes with grand daughters Mickey and Gabby. From the airport, the shrine was a good 30-40 minute ride by taxi or an hour ride via metro link. Upon entrance to the shrine, one will immediately notice the wide open campus and the well-manicured lush green lawn.

Lined up on both sides of the road are beautiful maples, oaks & ever greens. The hotel is located on the south side of the shrine. It is a two-story brick building with 100 rooms. This modest hotel caters mostly to devotees of the catholic faith and observes its peak season during Christmas and Holy Week. During Christmas, the Way of the Lights showing millions of glittering Christmas lights lined up on trees around the whole shrine lures thousands and causes traffic jams never seen before in this area of Belleville. The Way of the Cross during Good Fridays attracts devotees all across the country. The Lourdes Grotto is the most popular spot in the Shrine. It is the exact replica of the original Lourdes Grotto in Lourdes, France. Other devotional areas in the shrine include the Way of the Cross, the Church of Our Lady of the Snows, the Main Shrine/ Amphitheatre, the Millennium Square, the Resurrection Garden, and many more, which Bobonanons enjoyed sight-seeing.



The Vespera

Aug 20, just like the typical day in the Shrine started with the traditional continental breakfast. Bobonanons would start filling the dining area as early as 6 AM. At around 7:30 - 8 AM, the dining room would be buzzing with Waray. Breakfast was one of the most enjoyable moments. Never before had



Bobonanons got a chance to sit down with a cup of coffee, doughnuts, muffins, hard-boiled eggs, etc. *Kwentuhan at tawanan habang nag-almusal. Para bang hindi nagkakita-*

kita ng kung ilang taon. Alas nueve tapos na ang breakfast. Kanyang balikan na sa mga kwarto upang paghandaan ang susunod na happening. Others took the opportunity of touring downtown St.



Louis, while others went as far as Tennessee (ask Manoy Ber, Steve & Co. where they went). As the day wore on, more & more mamaratrons came in. In the meantime, some people already in there, took the opportunity to tour the place. Let's check it out.

There's a couple of ways to tour the shrine. Walking or via trolley. In front of the hotel across the street was the shrine's main pavilion housing the gift center, restaurant, conference center and meeting/banquet rooms. Outside the pavilion, a trolley was sitting waiting for visitors who wanted to go on tour around the shrine. The trolley tour took slightly over an hour. It started from the pavilion moving next to the stations of the cross, the main church, the millennium square, then down to the amphitheatre and the chapels, the Lourdes Grotto and various devotional areas inside the shrine. It also took visitors to other important sites & landmarks in the shrine like the senior citizen's apartment complex, the theatre, etc.

At 4:30PM everybody started to gather at the Christ the King chapel for the 9th day novena. The novena started promptly at 5PM and as soon as it ended a thanksgiving mass was celebrated by Father Chalkey in memory of the late Agustin Paredes. The mass ended at 6:30PM and everybody headed to the pavilion for the vespera celebration.



Food was catered by a Filipino caterer in the St. Louis area.who Manay Acit & Manay Tela happened to know during their previous visits to the shrine. The vespera was sponsored jointly by the Paredes' family (Mama, Lydee & Brian Hershey, Butch & Melinda Paredes, Dick & Epay Paredes, Tez Paredes, Rene & Neneng Bautista) and Manay Acit & Manay Tela Cornillez. Of course, there was the traditional lechon, carved by none other than our famous



chef from Baltimore, Totoy Cornillez with the help of Nonong & Neria. There was also pancit & a variety of Filipino food & delicacies.

The Rigodon & Grand March

From the outset, we thought about having the Rigodon and

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Grand March. It will include all past & current hermanos/hermanas plus the officers of the association. To prepare for this, as early as 2007, Mama helped us get the dance steps from Bobon and bought tapes for the music. She even gathered a video of a previous rigodon performance in Bobon. Copies of the video were mailed to all prospective participants. A few responded by asking what are we to wear for the dance & how are we going to practice.

As the day of the fiesta drew near, there was still no favorable indication that the rigodon will materialize. A few days before the fiesta in St. Louis, we spoke to each & every participant as they arrived at the shrine. On the evening of Aug. 18, we were able to convince 4 couples to practice. It was a pretty good session. Not too much dancing took place but with a lot of help from Nonong, Neria and the other participants, the steps were simplified and the choreography was fine tuned. The following evening as more people arrived, another practice session was held, this time with 8 couples. It was another fun practice and all of a sudden the prospect looked very bright.

The night of the vespera, with everybody all gathered in one room and with the excitement starting to build up, the rigodon roster was finalized. Altogether there were 14 pairs as follows:

- Rene & Neneng Bautista
- Butch & Melinda Paredes
- Dick & Epay Paredes
- Brian & Lydee Hershey
- Totoy & Tita Cornillez
- Ganie & Neria Garcia
- Ber & Fatima Carpina
- Eddie & Edna Unay
- Pacita Cornillez & Dan Weeks
- Estela Cornillez & Arpee Paredes
- Steve & Filipinas Tobes
- Myrna Escareal & Tony Abellar
- Terry Knoth & Ben Agus
- John & Elly Percy

Immediately after the vespera dinner, the tables and chairs were pulled to the sides to make room for the final rigodon practice. This was the moment of truth. Obviously, there was only one night to practice and some people were concerned if they will be able to learn all the steps let alone dance with the tempo and in unison. As the first few steps were being taught and as the participants were able to execute amid sounds of laughter and approval, slowly but surely, confidence started to build up. The lead pairs executed first then the side pairs followed and did the same thing over & over again. In a few moments, everyone was having a blast. Everyone was excited and could not believe they're dancing the rigodon. It was hard to imagine what seemed to be an impossibility a few nights ago was now almost a reality. Almost midnight and we were still grinding. Everybody was so determined and would not want to quit until all the steps were executed repeatedly without any mistakes. The "cadena" took the longest to prac-

tice but it was also the most fun. When the "cadena" was actually executed flawlessly after several tries, the room erupted with cheers & laughter. Wow, were they ready?

The Day of the Fiesta

Most people had a couple hours of sleep the night of the vespera and they have to wake up early in the morning for the "aurora". It was the day of the fiesta, August 21, 2010. At 4 in the morning, the hotel was already buzzing with activity. Even the kids were so excited that they did not mind waking up so early that morning. Even Lane Weeks commented "so this is what 'aurora' means". At around 4:30AM people started to fill up the hallway. Dressed in red t-shirt for ladies and white for men with the Sto. Niño logo, everybody was ready. At 5AM the procession began. The kids carried the Sto. Niño on their shoulders up to the entrance of the hotel just outside the lobby. It was a cool morning and light rain was falling outside. The plan was to have a candle procession to the Lourdes grotto but it kept on drizzling so it was decided to have the candles lit and soon we were



praying the rosary just outside the covered hotel lobby. When the rain stopped, we had a brief procession around the parking lot but decided not to proceed to the grotto concerned that it

would rain again. Even with the weather, everybody had a good time and had a taste of "aurora". The kids really enjoyed the experience. For some of the adults, it was their first time to experience the "aurora".



It was almost 6 in the morning and continental breakfast was being served. From the lobby, we proceeded to the dining hall and together we shared a hearty breakfast courtesy of the shrine hotel. Ganie Garcia assisted us with his expertise – waffle making. The kids enjoyed it. There was barely anytime to do anything else so

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after a quick breakfast, everybody went straight to the church for the 9 AM mass. Father Chalkey celebrated the mass with another Filipino priest who did the homily. The choir consisted of



Liza, Lydee, Tez, Epay, Melinda, Manay Alice, Manay Lily, Totoy and Dick with Arpee doing the organ and Butch the guitar. Christine & Olivia did the readings. Immediately after the



mass the "sinulog" followed just outside the lobby of the church entrance. The dancing to Sr. Sto. Niño lasted almost an hour. Young and adults and even the kids danced their hearts out to the tune of bongos and drums. Even Father Chalkey joined in the fun.

In the early afternoon, with a little break from the fiesta activities, some people who did not have yet the chance to see the Shrine, took a guided tour around via the trolley. Later in the day, the festivities resumed and by 5 PM the banquet hall was starting to fill up. Butch showed a slide show about our dear Bobon while waiting for everybody to be in the room for dinner. Grace before meal was led by Butch and dinner was served at around 6PM. The dinner buffet was provided by the shrine restaurant, a combination of salmon, chicken and roast beef with a variety of rolls and green salad. (We hope everybody enjoyed the food). Shortly after dinner, the program began. The mamaratrons were introduced by the states where they came from. Very heartwarming was the story of a couple (Narcisa & John Elsea) who drove all the way from Independence, MO to attend the fiesta. Here's their story: Narcisa, a young



girl who originally came from Bobon was on Facebook and came by an article about the Bobon fiesta that will be held in the suburbs of St. Louis. Upon reading this, she convinced her husband, John to drive to St. Louis to attend the fiesta. When they arrived at the shrine hotel they asked for any Bobonanon and were accompanied to our room. She introduced herself and after telling her story about her family, she paid membership fee and also paid for their dinner.

Our emcees for the night were Arpee Paredes & Christine Bautista-Weeks. They did a very good job. They had games prepared. Of course there was the duet from JC & Ervin Paredes, another song from Zeny Escareal's son, hip-hop dance performance from Julia Hershey, the Kuracha dance performances for fund raising, The Village People and the hep-hep hooray. The Paredes family together with Manay Acit and Manay Alice rendered a song entitled "Beneath" which was familiarized by our dear grandfather Calixto (Listoy) Paredes. Thanks to Ruby & Cynthia Paredes for helping us figure out the missing lyrics of the song. Of course, the party is not complete without the ballroom dancing, line dancing and cha-cha. The highlight of the night was the Rigodon which was perfectly executed. The rigodon ended with a Grand March led by Butch and Manoy Ber Carpina, president and vice-president of the association, respectively, after which the formal dancing begun.



The night ended with the turnover of the image of the Sr. Sto. Niño to the next hermana/hermano Amparo Madeja-Bongalos and of course the festivities were not complete without the traditional group picture taking—lots & lots of group picture taking which lasted almost forever. After all, nobody was driving home that night as the hotel was only across the street. And did you know that for the first time, nobody got lost along the way.

The day after the fiesta most of the mamaratrons went home. Some stayed for another day in the shrine while a few extended their vacation and traveled as far as Bronson, MO.

Acknowledgment

We would like to say a million thanks to all fellow Bobonanons and friends who joined us in St. Louis to celebrate the 20th Bobon USA fiesta. We know that it was not an easy trip to take with the cost of airfare, hotel and other related expenses. We will forever be grateful to you for not only making the trip but joining in the fun and lending a helping hand in whatever shape, manner or form. We hope that the experience had helped enrich and fulfill you spiritually and the opportunity of staying in the same hotel, sharing the same facilities and community had brought us closer to one another. Whatever shortcomings there had been and minor inconveniences you had experienced, our sincere apologies.

Special thanks to the following:

- The Rigodon participants – for turning in a most memorable performance with only one night practice. The 20th

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Fiesta 2010 Picture Gallery

NOTE: To view more pictures, log on to www.bobon.us



9-Day novena sponsors in Arizona and at the Shrine.



Breakfast time at the Shrine

NOTE: To view more pictures, log on to www.bobon.us



Vespera Dinner at the Shrine



Fiesta 2010 Picture Gallery



At the Aurora

NOTE: To view more pictures, log on to www.bobon.us



The Mass and the Sinulog



NOTE: To view more pictures, log on to www.bobon.us



At the Dinner/Dance



*We're on the web! At
www.bobon.us*

Fiesta 2012 and Beyond

Lou and Josh Keeler will be our fiesta sponsors for 2012 while John and Grace-Chan Adams will host the celebration in 2015!

Please mark your calendars and note that 2013 and 2014 are still open! If you have been thinking of hosting our fiesta, now is the time to consider it. Just give us a call.

Welcome to the Shrine (cont.)

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fiesta will always be remembered for your flawless execution of the rigodon. You made history that night!

- The 9-day novena Sponsors
- The “Kuracha” dancers – for raising close to \$1,000. This money all went to the association to help in funding future projects
- Salve & Fatima – for taking care of the collection for membership & dinner & the Kuracha
- Manay Acit & Manay Tela – for all the support and help specially for taking charge of the vespera dinner, etc.
- Totoy & Tita Cornillez, Nonong Abellar, Neria & Ganie Garcia – for helping out with the finishing touches of the andas and church decoration, the candles and also during the vespera dinner.
- John/Grace Adams & Liza Paredes - for capturing the rigodon on video.
- Mama & Tez – for your support & helping out with the Rigodon practice & music
- Brian & Lydee – for your support & help with the souvenir giveaways, etc.
- Dick & Epay – for your support & help in making the copies of the dance videos, Sto Niño statuettes, candles, etc.
- Butch & Melinda – for your support & help with the printing of the novena, preparation of the souvenir program/ticket, the slide show, etc.
- JC, Lane, Mickey, Lydia, Sammy & Gabby – “sa mga parag-bayaw” who have to wake up as early as 4am to join the “aurora procession” and carry on their shoulders the “andas” of the Sto. Niño.

The fiesta may be over but it was a fiesta that will stay forever in our hearts. Thank you very much to all those who attended and made the celebration a success. *Salamat sa iyo ngatanan.* But most of all we thank Sr. Sto. Niño for His presence in our humble home and giving us the opportunity to adore and serve Him for the whole year. Again *salamat nga daku ngan magkirigta kit utro sa masunod nga fiesta.*

Rene & Neneng Paredes Bautista
Fiesta 2010 Hermano/Hermana

A Wedding In Samar—an American love story by John Halloran

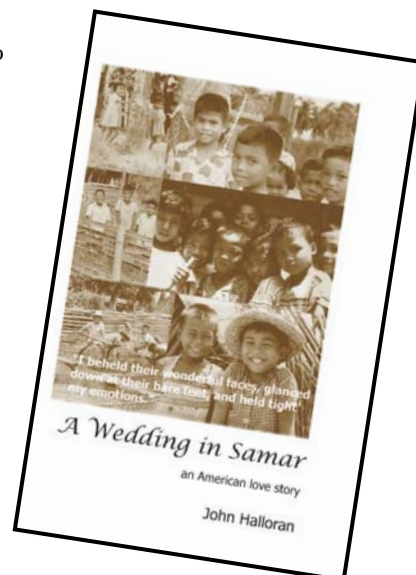
In this issue of the NewsLetter, we are featuring the late John Halloran's book “A Wedding in Samar—an American love story”.

The book is John's memoir, who, in 1962, stepped from the Neptuno onto the island of Samar in the Philippines. Thus began his two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Bobon, a place that became for him "the center of everything," home to people he would hold dear in his heart for the rest of his life.

The book was reviewed by a fellow Peace Corps Volunteer, Reilly Ridgell (Micronesia 1971–73) who said: *Looking at the title, one would expect Halloran to marry the pretty schoolteacher and bring a Filipina wife*

back with him. But it was not to be. His roommate marries the other pretty schoolteacher, but the wedding is in Manila after Halloran has left. Halloran explains that the “wedding” is a metaphor for the marriage of two cultures, Philippine and American. And indeed, through his book, we get a good look at early '60s Philippine culture through the eyes of a quite keen American observer.

Puzzlebox Press posthumously published the book and you can order your copy now at their website: www.puzzleboxpress.com for \$16.95 plus shipping and handling. Amazon (www.amazon.com) also sells a Kindle edition of the book for \$4.99.



Treasurer's Report by Bobbie Cornillez

BOBON-USA RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION		
Treasurer's Report as of August 31, 2010		
BEGINNING BALANCE (September 1, 2009)	\$14,495.50	
Petty Cash	\$153.50	
		\$14,649.00
Income		
Membership	\$330.00	
Dinner Dance Ticket Sales	\$2,495.00	
Fundraising Income from Curacha Dance	\$927.25	
Cash Donation from John & Teresa Larson	\$100.00	
Robert and Jovina Gladstein	\$35.00	
Interest Earned from Savings	\$7.39	
Total Income	\$3,894.64	
Expenses		
Dinner Dance Expenses	\$2,495.00	
Postage	\$66.00	
Bobon-USA Website Redesign	\$43.09	
Total Expenses	\$2,604.09	
Net Income		\$1,290.55
Petty Cash		\$87.50
ENDING BALANCE (August 31, 2010)		\$16,027.05