

Thirty-nine!

PLEASE bear with this shameless plug. On September 20, the APO Hiking Society will be onstage at the Araneta Coliseum to celebrate 39 years of friendship and music and we intend to perform our hearts out. Through all these years, Danny, Boboy and I have done a lot together, but performing as headliners at the Big Dome has not been one of them. Each time we inquired on its availability in the past, it was always booked. But this year, it will be ours to enjoy and celebrate in.

Humming in My Universe

Jim Paredes

done some remarkable things together. We have released 26 albums, done many TV shows, a few movies, performed all over the Philippines and many parts of the world. Our friendship is also rock solid and is something we relish as much as we do performing.

Today, I would like to enumerate 39 facts and stories you may find interesting about Danny, Boboy and me, and share a few insights I have learned from these two friends. These are culled from our experiences as friends, partners (in crime and in good things), co-workers, and as an entity known as the APO Hiking Society. If it seems like I am bragging at times, I am. You see, it took us all these years to learn them.

1. Boboy was born in Dipolog, Danny in Leyte and I in Manila, representing the three main islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

2. Striking a friendship is easy but keeping it is something one must work on. With us, it happened quite naturally and effortlessly, but we found out later that we had to learn patience and understanding to get over the differences that would crop up time and again.

3. Even while work may be needed to sustain them, friendships are still far easier to maintain than marriages or love affairs. APO's friendship is quite a low-maintenance one. We may not be together for sometime but have no problem picking up where we left off.

4. It is not only possible but necessary to develop a collective ego to succeed as a group. In APO, it is the only type of ego allowed. All other types must be suppressed if we are to retain our solid synergistic entity.

5. Truly great performances are the result of synergy. Synergy is when the whole is much more than the sum of its parts. It is when 1+1+1 can equal not just three but anywhere from six to 1,000 to infinity!

Synergy is like an accident. It just happens, seemingly without planning. The "accident" of synergy happens more often when as a group you are always practicing, rehearsing and are attuned and in tune with each other. Through the years, APO has become quite "accident-prone" to synergy so that we have learned to almost expect it.

6. A lot of people see APO as a "political" group. The truth is, we have only done about five songs that have any political content among hundreds that are primarily love songs. We see ourselves as musical artists who do speak out on political matters occasionally.

7. Between TV, movies and concerts, we like doing concerts the most. Why? Because we have 100-percent control over how we want to entertain an audience. We write our own stuff. It doesn't work out quite as well when other people write for us. We end up rewriting it to make it our own. When you work on TV, most everything you do is dictated by scriptwriters. Even the songs are chosen for you. It's not as creatively challenging as when you are totally answerable for everything.

8. In our entire recording career, Danny and I have only collaborated as songwriters

on two songs. With *Blue Jeans*, he wrote the opening slow part, while I did the fast part. We did not consult one another at all. We listened to what we individually had written the night before in the studio and just connected the two melodies together. *The other song is Over and Done*, a song written in 1971. Danny had just broken off with my sister, and I with my girlfriend. We wrote this over a bottle of beer. One bottle was enough.

9. Even though we have been doing APO for 39 years, the three of us look forward to every performance and still get excited. There is a Zen saying that "there is no such thing as repetition." This is one of our mantras. An APO show, even if we do the same songs or even the same spiels, is a different experience for us each time. We are totally present with each other and with our audience, which means we are not just going through the motions but coming from a present awareness. That's why it always feels new to us.

10. We truly appreciate each other's gifts and contributions and rely on each other.

11. The strategy we discovered early on, that of "surprise and delight," which we use when drawing up a repertoire or planning a show, has been a great one for us.

12. We do what we do to please a paying audience. But that is only secondary to the fact that APO continues to exist because we're having fun being ourselves.

13. The three of us have not quarreled, and will not ever quarrel, about money.

14. Coming from the '70s, we never imagined that a solid career could be built on being original and writing and singing OPM.

15. What we may have perceived as weaknesses in each other earlier in our career have by now become acceptable traits and in a sense, even comfortably familiar. We have used a lot of them to advantage, such as Boboy's perceived lack of height, Danny's promdi past, my "great dancing prowess," to name a few that have gotten us a few laughs. I would not exchange my friends for anyone else in the business who may be more talented, good-looking, perfect, etc. We have formed a working relationship that not only suits us but, in some ways, our audience as well.

16. At a certain point in our career, we discovered and fine-tuned our instinct to deliver high-impact shows even on a so-called "bad" night.

17. There are talented people in the business who choose to not go beyond their comfort zone and there are the less talented who work really hard and actually fly higher than even the outrageously talented. We in APO choose to be in this category of the hard-working "less talented." The best performers are not necessarily the most gifted. They are there because they are gutsy enough to show up and share what little they've got. And that is a big deal. Sometimes. It is 90 percent of the success formula.

18. Celebrity is power and must be used to great effect for worthy goals. We discovered this early and have lent our names to some worthy causes.

19. When the tribute albums "*Kami Na Po Muna*" by the young bands came out, we were happy that the young kids had discovered our songs. It was an even bigger thrill since, as it turned out, the band versions also coaxed the kids to seek out the original APO versions as well. Our audience complexion is changing again. These days, we have young kids watching our concerts with their parents.

20. Danny and Boboy really love golf — enough to wake up early almost every day even after a long show the night before to sink a few holes.

21. Danny is a man of many talents, one of which includes Bonsai cultivation.

22. Boboy is an excellent athlete of sports such as golf and tennis and has won many tournaments.

23. I wear red underwear every time we are on stage. It's a good luck charm for me.

24. The three of us spent about seven hours in a Honolulu detention center in the '80s because we supposedly had the "wrong" visa. It's a long story, but we were cleared and have not had the same problem since.

25. Right after EDSA, when Danny was asked what his occupation was by a Hong Kong immigration officer, he answered that he was a "hero" and opened the PAL in-flight magazine to show his picture among

a collection of photos entitled "Heroes of the Revolution." The immigration officer broke into a big smile.

25. Among the three of us, we have had four marriages. Boboy and I have one each!

26. Among the three of us, we have nine children. Boboy has two, I have three.

27. Among the three of us, there have been two annulled marriages. And it's neither Boboy's nor mine.

28. The very first time we performed at the Araneta Coliseum was traumatic for us. We were the front act for the Commodores, and we went through two nights of booing from the audience who had no patience with us because they so wanted the main stars to perform already. Those were moments when we seriously assessed our decision to be in showbiz!

29. Boboy loves Sudoku.

30. Because of his height, Boboy used to be a model for trophies! (No, that's not true!)

31. A few months ago, we sang (at the request of an estranged husband) for a woman in her office. It was a wanton act of love commissioned by the husband on Valentine's Day. With a boombox in hand, we approached her cubicle, gave her flowers and broke into *Panalangin*. The whole office went crazy! It was the husband's way of breaking the ice after being estranged from her and before asking her out for just a wee moment at the Starbucks in the building next door.

They have been seeing each other more frequently over dinners now, so we heard.

32. I am the only grandfather among the APO so far.

33. The best songs of APO were written in no time at all. I have seen Danny write songs in minutes, and I have done the same. When we put on our thinking caps, it does not happen as serendipitously. Creativity is an intuitive act and works best without intellectualizing. I have come to the conclusion that we do our best in most endeavors when we are awake to the moment and simply tap into the universe's gifts and perform effortlessly.

34. When we perform even for a largely foreign crowd, we represent ourselves best when we sing our own Filipino songs. It's scary but it works. During one World Expo in the '80s before a crowd of 20,000 foreigners in Brisbane, Australia, we did hour-long concerts for three straight nights singing our Tagalog songs to a crowd that simply loved it. We must have sounded exotic to them. I believe we are best appreciated when we show the world who we are, not how well we can fit in by imitating them.

35. We performed in Saudi Arabia in 1987 before a segregated crowd. Boboy was singing to the side of the aisle where the women were, I sang to the men, and Danny sang to the fence that separated the sexes!

36. Our first concert tour was in 1975. We were fresh out of college and we visited 57 cities in three months. We were a filler act to big names then like Eddie Mercado, Susan Salcedo, Merci Molina, Toto, etc. Since we were the most junior in stature and the most able-bodied, we were tasked with setting up the sound equipment before a show and putting it all back in the van after. We also drove the vehicles on many legs of the tour. For all this, we were paid the huge sum of US\$2,000 each (at seven pesos to a dollar then). The tour made us fall hopelessly in love with performing and was a great learning experience for three young men.

37. Yes, we do quarrel over some things, but have not done so in years. We used to quarrel about tardiness, perceived shabbiness in performances, repertoire, etc. We've learned to accept each other and have discovered that each of us has become sensitive to each other's personalities and quirks.

38. We are a highly democratic group, sometimes to a fault. We allow each one to grow in the direction that he wishes. I live in Sydney. Danny has his businesses. Boboy does acting. We believe that as each of us grows, we have more to contribute to APO in terms of the knowledge and wealth of experience we can share.

39. On September 20 at the Araneta Coliseum, you will see the culmination of our life's work of 39 years and the extraordinary friendship among three diverse people. We have had an amazing journey professionally and personally, and we are proud to share it with you.

See you at the Big Dome on September 20. (Philstar.com)



9/11 and the Filipino WW2 veterans

by RAMON MACALALAD

EVERY year since that dreadful incident happened in New York City, the Americans solemnly observe 9/11 as a symbol of supreme patriotism especially by those who risked and even sacrificed their lives. The incident was so engrained in almost every one's heart and mind maybe not only because it was not too long ago and the effect seems to ripple to the present time and who knows until when. Billions of dollars were spent since to recover from its impact. Memorials, citations, and financial assistance were accorded to those who suffered or were left behind. To top it all, billions of dollars a day is being spent in Iraq for our troops that were sent as an offshoot to allegedly hunt the perpetrators and ensure not only America's safety and security but the world's. Indeed, one may be quick to conclude that this is the true American spirit and code of honor.

But how strong and consistent is this resolve when the same honor and recognition is being denied to one sector of equally patriotic and valiant soldiers, the Filipino WW2 veterans who did

the same honorable thing that also contributed and made this America a great nation enjoying its freedom and democracy today. How can America strip and continue to deny these veterans the honor and dignity due them since 63 years ago. How can America renege and invalidate the very same recognition and promised made by its own president (Truman) to these Filipino soldiers who fought under the US flag and command to defend its cause? Was it because it was already too long ago and the same commitment from its president expired together with him? Was it because these groups of Filipino WW2 veterans were too old and weak to even raise their arms in protest? That they are too weak to cast their ballots and be counted? Or their color brown simply doesn't appeal and, therefore, the blood they sacrificed doesn't count?

The Filipino WW2 veterans are becoming extinct literally. The estimated 18,000 still living are figures gathered 3-4 years ago and have been dwindling every day since. These rare breed continue their death march and it is ironic that now, they are fighting for their honor and dignity against the very same people and county that they fought for before. I am sure that these soldiers albeit weakened by old age and everyday struggle will continue its battle until the last man is standing. They may eventually be gone forever but their children and those who recognize and value their sacrifices will continue the fight until justice is served here or in eternity.

America and its legislators now have the opportunity in their hands to rectify this grave injustice and stand by its commitment. We cannot achieve true freedom, democracy, equality and lasting peace if we fail to exercise and put action on these values we profess. Give due honor and recognition to these Filipino WW II veterans now! Pass and approve the Veterans Equity Bill HR760! ■

Dogs and do-gooders

MANILA — "Dog Day Afternoon" is the name given to an annual fund-raiser (now in its third year) that combines music, dogs and do-gooders in a soiree to raise funds for the Philippine K9 Search and Rescue Foundation (PHK9) and the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC).



AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

wife of the Asian Development Bank president and a musician herself. Joining Ms. Kuroda in the musicale are Filipino musicians and singers, some of whom gave a preview Thursday of the numbers to be performed on "Dog Day Afternoon."

Also present at the press launch were Rebelle and Piolo, a Belgian Malinois and a Boxer, and their handlers who showed everyone present what

skills the dogs possessed, effortlessly searching out and "rescuing" way across the Kuroda's garden another trainer whose scent they had been familiarized with.

It was in many ways, a strange yet harmonious mix of experiences: chamber music and Broadway songs; a chilling presentation by Toni Yulo-Loyzaga, executive director of the Manila Observatory, of the risks and vulnerabilities of Filipinos to natural disasters; a thrilling demonstration by a pair of frisky rescue dogs; and a filling vegetarian lunch prepared by Ms Kuroda herself.

Over a leisurely lunch on the terrace overlooking the lawn and pool, with meandering talk that veered from weekend homes to ballroom dancing to blood donation, it was easy to believe that all was all right with our world. And yet, as Loyzaga's brief presentation proved, we are living right now in a country that is threatened by climate change, including both the drought wrought by El Niño and the fiercer, more powerful tropical cyclones. With more disasters expected to visit these islands, it would seem like the work done by the Red Cross and the PHK9 would be more important (and deserving of support) than ever. ***

Loyzaga says that over the past decades, the Philippines has been receiving less and less rainfall, threatening areas of the country, especially in Mindanao, with drought. What's worse is that much of the rain that has fallen has been brought by typhoons or tropical cyclones. Tracking the "history" of cyclones in the West Pacific over the decades, experts have found the frequency and gravity of cyclones increasing. In the Philippines, though, notes Loyzaga, there has been a shift in the areas visited by these weather disturbances,

with more and more typhoons hitting Visayas and Northern Mindanao.

While climate change also threatens the country, especially Metro Manila, with rising sea levels, human activity also adds to our risks. The metropolis is also sinking, and indeed, says Loyzaga, experts say Metro Manila is sinking much faster than the sea level is rising. "Sinking" has many causes: unabated and uncontrolled siphoning of ground water, overdevelopment, and loss of forest cover and resulting erosion. No wonder it takes just a few hours (or minutes!) of rain to flood our streets and cripple traffic in the city. ***

While the Manila Observatory has been working with government agencies, multilateral bodies and local governments to ascertain risks and "map out" possible sites of the next disaster and the most vulnerable populations, when disaster strikes, the job of searching and recovering victims, responding to the needs of the homeless and starving, and helping communities rebuild and rehabilitate is just as urgent and important.

Search and rescue were very much on the mind of Renee Speltz, whose husband served as US representative to the ADB, when she helped found the PHK9. Now chairman emeritus of the group, Speltz brought civic-oriented people, as well as dog trainers and breeders together to "change Filipinos' outlook toward dogs: that dogs ought to be respected and their talents recognized, especially in the field of search and rescue."

Right now, PHK9 is the first and only organization in Asia that is a member of the US-based National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR), which certifies search and rescue dogs and their handlers, as well as conducts regular refresh-

er and training courses to improve the dogs' and handlers' skills.

Affiliated with numerous government agencies and nongovernmental organizations involved in disaster relief, PHK9 has worked in the Real, Quezon, mudslide; the Guinsaugon, St. Bernard, Southern Leyte, landslide; and the Guinobatan, Albay, mudslide. The dogs have also helped find missing mountaineers and can also be deployed to search for missing persons. ***

A PHK9 trainer bemoans that despite the record set by their dogs (Rebelle, Piolo and Chairman, who just gave birth and so was unable to make an appearance) in the different disaster sites, "we Filipinos still don't appreciate our local dogs' abilities." In Guinsaugon, he remembers, local disaster operations people were skeptical of the dogs' abilities and simply put flags in the areas where the dogs indicated they had smelled humans. When a foreign K9 SAR team visited a few days later, their dogs validated what the local dogs found. "If they had only begun digging where our dogs indicated, maybe they could have rescued someone who was still alive," he rues.

A Red Cross official also recalls that when the Spanish rescue team arrived with their dogs, they were met by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the airport "while our own dogs were working so hard in Guinsaugon, and receiving little, if any, recognition."

"Dog Day Afternoon," then, could be a way of paying rightful, if belated honors to the dogs and their handlers, as well as to everyone who works in the exhausting and yet unheralded field of disaster rescue, relief and mitigation. (Inquirer.net)