

MANNY'S 'OTHER WOMAN'

Bares Her Heart

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Mommy Dionesia with sons Roel and Bobby

The throngs of US reporters and paparazzi who track Jinkee Pacquiao around have recently been chasing another lady - Manny's "other woman", none other than his mother, Dionesia. Coming to America for the first time to support her son's legendary fight with Ricky Hatton, Dionesia Pacquiao has become a celebrity herself. The slim and lively almost-sixty lady has caught the interest of the media, having been featured on TV, doing aerobics, some boxing and a little bit of ballroom dancing.

In an exclusive interview with Asian Journal for the mother's day issue of its MDWK Magazine, Mommy Dionesia bares her mother's heart --- her joys and fears, her hardships and triumphs.

Dionesia looks like her son Manny and she said the resemblance is not only in the physical appearance. "Nagmana sa akin si Manny - matapang. Ako ay dugong waray.

(Warays refer to people from Leyte and Samar who have built up a reputation for courage or katapangan). Kaming lahat sa pamilya -- matatampang, maski na ang mga babae," she said.

Manny's mom admitted that her dream was to be a teacher but her parents could not afford to send her to school. She married at an early age but the marriage failed. Having separated from her husband when the children were young, Dionesia raised her six children - Lisa, Doming, Isidra, Manny, Bobby, and Roel-by herself. "Ako ang tatay at nanay ng mga anak ko. Nag-trabaho ako sa farm. Kahit yung trabahong pang-lalake, ginagawa ko. Umaakyat pa nga ako sa puno ng niyog," she said.

The children helped out their mother, including Manny, who sold bread and took in laundry. They lived in a shanty with dirt floors, in a squatters' area in General Santos City.

Dionesia shared how Manny got into boxing. "Nasa dugo na namin ang boxing. Dalawang lolo ni Manny, dalawang tiyuhin at isang pinsan ay puro boxers. Isang uncle niya ang talagang nag-inspire sa kanya. Actually, 12 years old pa lang siya nung napanasin ko na mahilig talaga mag-boxing. Tatakpan niya ng mga basahan o t-shirt ang kamay niya tapos aayain ang mga kalaro niya na makipag-boxing sa kanya," Mommy Dionesia remembers. "Ayoko sana siyang mag-boxing dahil ayoko silang masaktan. Pero nang hindi ko na mapigilan, pinagdasal ko na lang na tulungan siya lagi ng Diyos. Sinuportahan ko siya sa gusto niya," she added.

Through all the years that Pacquiao has been fighting in the ring, Mommy Dionesia has never watched her son fight. "Natatakot akong makita na masaktan ang anak ko. Ang ginagawa ko ay nagdadasal habang siya ay nakikipaglaban. Dun sa laban nila ni Hatton, nakadapa ako sa sahig ng kwarto ko sa Mandalay Bay at nananalangin ng ganito. 'Lord tulungan niyo po anak ko. Bigyan niyo po si Hatton ng respeto sa anak ko. Sport sana siya makipaglaban. Sana 1 or 2 rounds lang tapos na, para hindi mahirapan ang anak ko.' At talagang hindi nga Niya ako binigo. Kaya, masayang-masaya ako," she said.

Dionesia said her prayers have been her source of strength and she has taught her children to follow her example. She shared the important lessons she taught her children "Ang mga anak ko, tinuruan ko silang lahat na i-respeto ang kapwa tao nila. Maging mapagdasal at igalang nila ang kanilang magulang. Tinuruan ko silang magdasal lagi- tuwing umaga at gabi. At huwag makakalimot magsimba. Si Manny, tinuruan ko siya na bago umakyat ng ring, maging tahimik muna at magdasal, lumuhod sa ring at humingi ng tulong sa Panginoon. At pag nanalo, unahin ang pasasalamat sa Diyos. Sabi ko sa kanya, dapat humble siya lagi."

Asked to comment on Manny's plan to enter the political arena, Dionesia admitted that she was not for it. "Sabi ko ay mag-artista na lang siya, at isama niya ako," Mommy Dionesia jokingly said with a laugh. She said her favorite stars are Susan Roces, Fernando Poe Jr., Jericho Rosales and Kristine Hermosa while her favorite singer is Imelda Papin.



Dionesia praying to the Santo Niño before Manny's fight

"Ang gusto ko kay Manny ay ang kanyang pagmamahal, pag-alaga, at pagbigay ng tulong sa mga tao, lalo na sa kanyang mga kapatid. Pinagawan niya ng mga palasyo ang kanyang mga kapatid at kami ng lola niya." said Dionesia who lives in the house just beside Manny's home in GenSan, together with her mother, Nanay Tina, who is now 87 years old. They live near the same poor community where they have lived in Manny's pre-boxing days. In fact, Mommy Dionesia revealed that Manny still visits the squatters' area where he grew up. "Hindi ko kayo nalilimutan," Manny would often tell his childhood friends, according to his mom.

Asked how they keep themselves strong, Dionesia said, "Hindi kami mahilig kumain ng karne - madalas ay gulay lang. Paborito ko ay pinakbet. At ako ay nagbo-ballroom dancing at nage- aerobics sa gym para healthy."

During the interview, the other boxer in the family, Bobby Pacquiao, Manny's younger brother, dropped by with his wife, Lorelei, and children Gracielle and Alberto. He was excited upon learning that Mommy Dionesia will be featured in Asian Journal's Mother's Day issue. "Maalahanin

at mapagmahal ang mommy namin. Alam niya kaagad pag malungkot ka at asikasuhin ka talaga. Wala akong masasabi, the best siya para sa akin." Bobby proudly said of their mom.

For Mother's Day, Manny has gifted his mother with an expensive, diamond-studded Rolex watch, which she happily showed off during the interview. But the more exciting affair Dionesia is looking forward to is her grand 60th birthday bash which Manny will give her in GenSan on May 15. "Bumili na ako ng gown ko dito at ang ganda talaga. Mukha akong reyna sa birthday ko," Dionesia said happily.

Her birthday wish? "Pangarap ko makita ko pa ang mga apo ko sa tuhod. At ang panalangin ko para sa lahat ng anak ko --- na hindi sila magkaruon na kakulangan sa buhay," wished the farmer-turned-celebrity mom.

Seeing how God has magnificently been answering her prayers, Mommy Dionesia will most probably get her birthday wish and prayer too! 🙏

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Aunt Lily Lao, Roel Pacquiao, Mommy Dionesia, Lorelei and Bobby Pacquiao and kids, Gracielle and Alberto



Lily Lao, Mommy Dionesia's only relative in the US



Dionesia with Bernard



Dionesia with Jack Berghoudian, owner of Fiddler's Bistro

Publisher's Note

A Salute to Moms

With Manny Pacquiao's victory over Ricky Hatton in Las Vegas and Mother's Day just around the corner, The Asian Journal MDWK Magazine pays tribute to Mommy Dionesia, Manny's Mama Mia and his unwavering guardian of faith. Mommy Dionesia bares her heart in this poignant tale of a mother's enduring love and religious devotion in this Mother's day issue -- our offering to all the hardworking and loving mothers on this special occasion. 🙏