

Jose Nebrida Marathon Machine

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL / AJPress

67-year-old Fil-Am runs for victims and heroes of 9/11

THEY call him Captain America. Filipino-American Jose Nebrida will run his 166th marathon when he participates in the Los Angeles Marathon on Memorial Day, May 25.

The 67-year-old former social worker and school administrator from Chicago will be wearing his stars and stripes tights and "50 marathon and DC" t-shirt. And like years past, he'll be carrying the American flag while he runs the 26.2-mile race.

Nebrida, a short Filipino with sterling gray hair and dark eyebrows, started the tradition of carrying the American flag while he raced after the infamous September 11, 2001 attacks on America. His goal is to run carrying the flag in all 50 states.

"I'm still doing it," said Nebrida, now a track and field and Cross Country coach at Northside College Prep High School. "I've done 35 states now and hoping to finish it in two years."

Running with the flag and recognizing the victims and heroes of 9/11 were also his way of paying back for what the US has given him.

Nebrida is originally from San Juan, Rizal in the Philippines. He immigrated to the US in 1975 when he was accepted to pursue his Masters degree in Social Work at the Loyola University Chicago. After finishing that degree, he completed two more Masters degree in education, he said.

Working as a social worker and serving as a school administrator for the gifted, it seemed that all was well. He was living the American dream—married with children and owning a home.

However, inside he felt down and depressed.

He admits during that time he was living an unhealthy lifestyle. He smoked two packs of cigarettes a day, ate horribly, and was drunk every weekend. He



be happy I got to do something. I got to change my behavior. If I don't change my behavior, I don't think I'd last long."

Staying positive

He called a friend, seasoned marathon runner, Dr. Ernie Billups. Billups was firm in his approach.

"He told me, 'I'm going to help you out and I'm going to be your Master Sergeant in the Army. You're going to follow everything that I'm going to tell you to do. The first thing you need to do is the big D. Discipline,'" recalled Nebrida.

Nebrida's first tasks—wake up every morning at 4:30 and walk a block and back.

Nebrida was taken aback but desperate. He followed his friend's advice.

It was too easy, said Nebrida. "I called him back three days later, asking him what the heck was going on. This is too simple," said Nebrida.

Again, his friend reiterated – don't question, don't argue, just do it. He'd explain in due time.

After a month, his friend broke down the simple exercise to him.

"You have negative patterns of behavior, negative habits of smoking, drinking and anger inside of you. So I wanted to change that pattern to positive ones. We wanted you to get out of your negative addiction to a positive addiction."

Nebrida bought into it. At the age of 44, Nebrida became a runner.

Every week, Nebrida would increase the distance of his walk. Finally, he mustered up enough courage to run a 5k, that lead to running a 10k run before long he was completing his first-ever

knew his family had a history of heart disease. His marriage was collapsing and he was neglecting his children.

The final tipping point happened when Chicago police officers went to the home to escort Nebrida out. He had a heated verbal exchange with his former wife, which led the latter to call the police on him. As he was walking out, he remembered seeing his two young teenagers. "Both of their faces had a lot of pain and suffering," he said. He lived briefly in his car for nine days, brushing his teeth and washing up at a nearby McDonalds.

It was then he knew he had to change.

"I was already at the bottom of things," said Nebrida. "I felt that if I kept on living and wanted to



AJPress Photos by Joseoh Pimentel

marathon later that year.

"I ran it in 4 hours and 52 minutes," said Nebrida. "My mentor Dr. Ernie was at the end of the line. We were hugging each other, jumping up and down and I was crying like the dickens. I said this is fantastic."

After that first marathon, he continued to run.

He ran eight marathons the next year then he decided to run a marathon in all fifty states. He achieved that goal in 1997. By 1998, he had run 100 marathons. The most marathons he ran in a year were 19, in 2000, to "say good bye to the 1900's."

9/11

Nebrida remembers exactly where he was and what he was doing during that infamous 9/11 attack on America.

Escorting gifted children to a school bus, a friend approached him and brought him to watch the news.

"The building was collapsing already. My heart sank," he said.

After 9/11 happened, he wanted to give back and help in any way.

At first, he gave blood but there was only so much blood to can give, he said. He donated to charity but a school administrator's salary wasn't going to make a big difference.

So he decided to give back the best way he know how—by running in every state carrying the US flag to honor the victims and heroes of 9/11.

"It was one good way to pay back the generosity of Americans

who have helped me," said Nebrida. "They gave me a chance and an opportunity to get educated and gave me a chance in this country to prosper. I said to myself, 'I think I'm going to run a marathon in every state carrying a US flag.'"

The first time he carried the flag to a marathon, he was given a flag too big. For 26.2 miles in New Hampshire he carried an 8x5 foot flag, the flags that are usually in front of a school.

As he was approaching the finish line, a fire truck passed by and stopped to watch Nebrida. Local cadets saluted Nebrida. And when he crossed the finish line in last place, he was taken back the hall to meet the rest of the 173 marathoners where he received a standing ovation.

His motto "God Bless America. God Bless you."

Since he began running with the flag in 2001, he's received a lot of media attention. He's graced the cover of a number of newspapers including the Juneau Empire, St. Louis Post Dispatch, and Tompkinsville News in Kentucky, among others.

Setbacks

On his way towards his goal, Nebrida has had several setbacks. After an Oklahoma City marathon, he suffered his first heart attack that required an emergency triple bypass surgery.

"They found one artery 100 percent clogged," said Nebrida. "Two arteries had 95 percent blockage."



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit—the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, **Galing Pinoy** literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



His cardiologist urged him to stop running and to "stay in bed and rest." He couldn't do that. He fired the cardiologist and got a second opinion. His second doctor advised him to continue running so after a six-month rehab, he ran another marathon. He suffered his second heart attack a few years later. This time, doctors placed stents (a wire to prop open an artery) in his heart.

This time, doctors told him to keep running.

"I really believe when I stop running is when I pass on," he said.

Nebrida said that he only has a few more states left before accomplishing his goal of carrying the US flag while running the marathon in every state. He said because of his age, he knows he doesn't have a lot of time left. He said he has one dream.

"My dream is I see the more than 3,000 victims and heroes of 9/11 over there and shouting God Bless you Jose. God Bless America and then carry me on there shoulders and present me to God." ■

FREE 20 minutes

when you enroll with **TAWAG NA DIRECT NOW!**



The **No. 1** choice of Filipinos worldwide!



Call Philippines for as low as

10.9¢ a minute

- Sign up today and get 20 Minutes FREE instantly. This offer is limited and will expire soon. So Call Now!
- Customer Service-Oriented Company.
- Currently used by over 30,000 Filipinos in the U.S. and Canada.
- Over 9 years of service & growing to our Kababayans.
- 24/7 Customer Service

TAWAG NA DIRECT OFFERS THE LOWEST RATES IN LONG DISTANCE SERVICES. FOR AS LOW AS 11.9 CENTS PER MINUTE, YOU CAN CALL ANY LANDLINE IN THE PHILIPPINES FROM OUR TOLL-FREE ACCESS NUMBERS FROM THE U.S., CANADA AND HAWAII.

Call our toll free number **NOW!**

1-877-379-6439

PROMO CODE: **FASO**

Detach this card to get instant savings



INSTANT \$3 BONUS

PROMO CODE: **FASO**

Get \$3 or 20 minutes FREE CALLING TIME when you enroll visit www.mytawagnadirect.com or call 1-800-760-4748

Record Your Registered Number Here: Security Code

HOW TO USE THE SERVICE:

1. Dial: **1-800-680-5054**
Listen and follow instructions. To recharge press 2.
2. Enter your registered number. If dialing from unregistered location, then enter your personal security code.
3. Domestic Call: Dial 1+ Area Code + Telephone number
International Call from the U.S.: Dial 011+ Country Code + City Code + Local Number

Survey: Most economists see recession end in '09

by JEANNINE AVERSA
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON—More than 90 percent of economists predict the recession will end this year, although the recovery is likely to be bumpy.

That assessment came from leading forecasters in a survey by the National Association for Business Economics released Wednesday, May 28. It is generally in line with the outlook from Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and his colleagues.

About 74 percent of the forecasters expect the recession—which started in December 2007 and is the longest since World War II—to end in the third quarter. Another 19 percent predict the turning point will come in the final three months of this year, and the remaining 7 percent believe the recession will end in the first quarter of 2010.

"While the overall tone remains soft, there are emerging signs that the economy is stabilizing," said NABE president Chris Varvares, head of Macroeconomic Advisers. "The economic recovery is likely to be considerably more moderate than those typically experienced following steep declines."

One of the major forces that plunged the economy into a recession was the financial crisis that struck with force last fall and was the worst since the 1930s. Economists say recoveries after financial crises tend to be slower.

Against that backdrop, unemployment will climb this year even if the economy is rebounding, the NABE forecasters predict. Companies won't be in a rush to hire until they feel certain any recovery is firmly rooted.

For all of this year, the forecasters said the unemployment rate should average 9.1 percent, a big jump from 5.8 percent last year and up from its current quarter-century peak of 8.9 percent. If NABE forecasters are right, it would be the highest since a 9.6 percent rate in 1983, when the country was struggling to recover from a severe recession.



Contract worker Glen Anderson gets ready to hang a for sale sign for the Howard Hanna realty company outside a home in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Home prices fell at the fastest annual rate on record in the first quarter, but the pace of month-to-month declines continues to slow, a closely watched housing index showed Tuesday, May 26, 2009. AP Photo by Amy Sancetta

Some forecasters thought the unemployment rate could rise as high as 10.7 percent in the second quarter of next year. The NABE outlook from 45 economists was conducted April 27 through May 11.

General Motors Corp., chemical company DuPont and Clear Channel Communications Inc. were among the companies announcing mass layoffs during the survey period.

With joblessness rising, consumers—major shapers of overall economic activity—likely will stay cautious, making for a tepid turnaround. And given the big bite the recession has taken out of household wealth, notably the values of homes and investment portfolios, consumers probably will stay subdued for some time.

Seventy-one percent of the forecasters believe a more-thrifty consumer will be around for at least the next five years. Americans' personal savings rate edged up to 4.2 percent in March, marking the first time in a decade that the sav-

ings rate has been above 4 percent for three straight months.

Even as the NABE forecasters believe the country will emerge from recession later this year, they also predict the economy's overall performance in 2009 will be rotten.

The economy should contract by 2.8 percent this year, the forecasters said in updated projections. That's worse than the 1.9 percent drop they forecast in late February. If they are right, it would mark the worst annual contraction since 1946, when economic activity fell by 11 percent.

Still, the forecasters believe the worst is already behind the country in terms of lost economic activity.

President Barack Obama's \$787 billion stimulus package of increased government spending and tax cuts, near-zero interest rates ordered by the Fed and government programs to get banks to lend more freely again all factor into the expected economic revival. ■