

# Marie Pauline Gianzon Guiuan

## Highest Honors

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPress

LAST May 23, during the graduation of around 8,000 students from the San Francisco State University, one pretty Filipina stood out who graduated with the highest honors—summa cum laude. The next day during the Filipino Graduation, a ceremony for the Filipino SFSU 2009 graduates, Marie Pauline Gianzon Guiuan was again honored for being the only Filipina summa cum laude. With a 3.9 grade point average (GPA), Pauline received the highest academic distinction given to those with the highest honors, usually accorded to a very select few belonging to the top 1 percent of the graduates.



Born on Nov. 5, 1983 in Manila, Pauline has been a consistent honor student. She went to OB Montessori Greenhills and the International Christian Academy (ICA) in the Philippines for elementary, where she graduated valedictorian. Pauline went to high school at UP Integrated School (UPIS) where she also graduated with highest honors. Then, she took up Broadcast Communications at the University of the Philippines Diliman for two years. In 2003, Pauline joined her family in California. She went to Glendale Community College from 2004-2006, where she took up Mass Communications, and then went to SFSU from 2007-2009, taking up Bachelor of Arts, major in Journalism, with an emphasis in News/Editorial writing, and a minor in Humanities.

"I could not have done it without God's help," Pauline commented on her superior scholastic performance. "Whenever people ask me how I did it, considering that I was a working student and was involved in many extracurricular activities, all I can say is that God has given me the energy, the strength and the wisdom that I needed. While in college, I made sure that I was able to fully experience university life. I was a member of SF State's Gospel Choir; interned with one of the Filipino organizations on campus—the Pilipino-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE); performed in two Pilipino Cul-

tural Nights as an actress, singer and dancer; founded and led the first Fil-Am Christian group on campus (called KAPWA) and was the campus features editor for the school newspaper, the *IXpress*. On top of that, I remained active in church ministries and also worked as an English tutor 15 hours a week. I know it sounds like a lot, but it was all worth it because of the friendships and the experiences," the hard-working new graduate explained.

Pauline's parents, Paolo and Alma Guiuan, and siblings Paul, Debbie and Stephanie are all truly proud of her achievements. Alma, her mother, shared with Asian Journal her first reaction upon learning of Pauline's honor. "When I first learned that Pauline is Summa Cum Laude, I was overjoyed and cried. What a wonderful blessing of being a parent to one. In just a few seconds, memories of her childhood and my younger years as a mom flashed before my eyes and how Pauline had always brought joy and pride to our family by bringing excellence to every task entrusted to her," said Alma. "Parents can motivate their children to excel by providing them a nurturing environment for love and learning. When Pauline was a child, I would always buy her one book every time I got my paycheck. I read to her at bedtime and encouraged her to read aloud during family prayer devotions," Alma added.

As an advice to other parents, Alma Guiuan stated, "Dream with your child, grow with them. Give them what's in your heart. It is not much of the material things but teaching them the value of responsibility with excellence. Most of all, let them believe in themselves and in God who directs their paths if they acknowledge Him in all their ways."

Pauline admitted that she actually found studying in UP Diliman more challenging than in San Francisco State University. "UP was more challenging for me. It seemed like they gave me so much more work. And the environment was more competitive. But then again, maybe I felt it was

more difficult in UP because I was much younger then. What I like about SFSU, though, is that it exposed me to a more diverse environment. I learned a lot from the multi-cultural setting. And this diversity is the reason why I love California and hope to build a career here," said Pauline.

Painting a picture of her life as a student, Pauline shared that when it comes to academics, "I think what worked best for me is good time management and being organized. I would often use my planner, making detailed lists of things I had to do daily. I would take every opportunity to study even when I barely had time - i.e. on the bus, during breaks in rehearsals, during slow hours at work, etc. I would also study early in the morning (rather than at night) when my roommates are still asleep and my mind is fresh and rested. It also helped that I set high standards for myself. Of course, like most students, I also crammed and procrastinated many times, but even when I did, I always tried my best to not turn in mediocre work."

Proud of her Filipino culture and heritage, Pauline said she finds many young Filipinos excelling in campus. "Most of my Filipino friends in SFSU are working students. They value the importance of having a college degree and work hard towards that goal. *Masipag talaga ang Pinoy at matiisin*," she observed.

Asked about her future plans, the summa cum laude said, "I would like to work as a journalist and reporter for a print or online publication, but I'm open to exploring other writing jobs such as in the fields of broadcasting or business. Five years from now, I see myself writing as a journalist or an editor, hopefully for an established newspaper or magazine, focusing on news and features-type stories." Pauline then added with a grin, "I also see myself married then with kids, while still actively serving in a church ministry." ■



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