

SHOWBIZ & STYLE

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STARBYTES

Lucy, Lolit & loyalty

by BUTCH FRANCISCO
Philstar.com

THE death of Douglas Quijano opened a floodgate of memories among his closest of friends. Only hours after he died last June 13 in his rest house in Lucban, Quezon, Ricky Lo and Lolit Solis privately shared with me off-cam on the Startalk set their fond memories of the departed talent manager.

In her Love Lucy column, she devoted her entire space writing about Douglas' death and the beautiful memories she had of him. In one part of the article, I was elated to read that Lucy still recall her very first TV interview—and it was with this writer.

I remember that well. It was on Feb. 12, 1998. In two days, I was migrating to the US and was busy packing my belongings. In fact, I was just back on an errand (after buying pasalubong for my relatives in America) when I saw a cab parked in front of our house. *The Showbiz Lingo* staff

was there waiting for me—with an assignment to interview Lucy. Since they couldn't get hold of me on the phone (landline—there were very few mobile phones then) and I didn't have a pager anymore (because I was already leaving), they just camped out outside my home.

The truth was, I was up to my neck with chores that time (it's never easy to migrate) and could already afford to say no to any assignment since I had officially resigned from the show and only had one more episode to do. But I wasn't crazy to give up the chance to interview the future Mrs. Richard Gomez.

And so I hurriedly took a shower, dressed up and told the staff to get rid of the cab. We were using my car and I was driving. We braved rush hour traffic to get to the location at the Roper's Studio in P. Tuazon in Cubao. But



Lucy Torres stayed with Douglas Quijano till his last breath. Lolit Solis (right) is loyal to her friends.
Photos by Ver Paulino

it was all worth it when we got there. We had yet to get settled when Lucy came out of the changing room and before us stood a beautiful woman with ivory skin—looking so simple and yet elegant.

I noticed that she was a bit shy. But with Douglas around and throwing in his support, Lucy mustered the courage to face the camera. Never mind if she was stumbling with her Tagalog. That added to her charm. And she was so nice. Immediately, I walked over to Richard to tell him how lucky he was.

Lucy's first TV interview coincided with my farewell episode. I was later told that it rated very well. Now, I'm not sure if people watched because they wanted to see Lucy or they were just making sure I was leaving.

When I returned for a vacation a year later, Lucy had become a TV star. She had become even more beautiful, but still shy. But after 11 years, she had developed into a more confident TV host and is doing marvelously on screen. She credits Douglas for having stood by her all these years.

But now that Douglas is gone, who will manage her career? And Richard's, too? If you ask me, Lucy

and especially Richard (and even Janice and Gelli de Belen for that matter) can already afford to go sailing without a manager.

Actually, if they were bad people, they could all have dumped Douglas a long time ago. Douglas was so great a manager that he managed to chart the careers of his talents well. They've long been established stars. They don't have to go looking for projects. Projects will look for them. And especially now that nobody makes big movies anymore, Richard, Lucy, Gelli and Janice are concentrating on television, which is easy to handle because contracts are renewed annually. The TV executives are just there in their offices if these stars have concerns.

But Richard, Lucy and company didn't let go of Douglas—even if he had to get a commission off their talent fees (which was just proper)—maybe because they felt more comfortable having him around. But surely, it was the friendship and their loyalty to him (and vice versa) that made them stick with Douglas till his last breath.

And now that we're on the subject of loyalty, let's talk about Lolit Solis. People can actually accuse her of anything and everything, but you cannot question her loyalty to her friends. Of course, there are also cases when she goes to the side of those aggrieved. ■

[Showbitz!]

Piolo Pascual, ready to take on a producer's hat

THE successful screening of *Manila* directed by Raya Martin and Adolf Alix at the recently concluded Cannes Film Festival was something Piolo Pascual, who stars in the film, is extremely proud of, especially as the same film is also slated to become a part of the Moscow International Film Festival and has eight pending invitations to other filmfests abroad.

"Para sa akin, secondary na lang ang kumita, kasi nakuha na namin kung ano ang gusto namin mangyari. Malaking blessing na yung sa Cannes. Gusto ko sanang sumama sa Moscow, kaya lang nagkakapatung-patung na ang commitments ko dito. Dependeng rin sa schedule ko kung makakasama ako sa pagsali ng pelikula sa ibang festivals," he tells *Philippine Entertainment Portal (PEP)* at a recent interview.

His involvement with *Manila* inspired Piolo to produce *Kambal sa Kiyeme*, starring sought-after comedienne Eugene Domingo and Kimmy Dora, with Dingdong Dantes as Eugene's leading man. Piolo is also looking forward to produce more films in the near future.

"Walang duda, gusto ko makapag-produce ng iba't ibang klaseng pelikula," adds the actor.



Aiko Melendez, excited to be doing films again

Actress and politician Aiko Melendez has not exactly been out of the showbiz limelight after she was elected councilor at the 2nd District in Quezon City as despite her busy schedule, she still manages to appear as guest in TV shows and has even

produced shows and *teleseryes*. Now, Aiko is raring to go back to appearing in films again, and her comeback film is *Angelina, Spoiled Brat: The Movie* starring top comedians Ogie Alcasid and Michael V. and also pair her with her former flame, Jomari Yllana.

"Siguro yung fun na magkatabaho kaming muli. Kasi for so long, yung team-up namin talaga, hindi yun nakita nang matagal, e. Ang daming offer sa amin before to do a movie together. Kaya lang, parang natatapat kami sa script na parehong hindi namin gusto. Hindi naman natin maipagkakaila na kahit papaano, si Jomari masarap din namang katrabaho," she said.

Even if she's on the comeback trail, Aiko is not turning her back at her political career as she admits to having plans to run as Vice Mayor of Quezon City, and there is no stopping her. ■



Perfect for each other

by BOY ABUNDA
Philstar.com

ZOREN Legaspi and partner Carmina Villarroel make a handsome pair. Carmina and Zoren have been together for nine years. Carmina said that Zoren is an almost perfect partner. "I cannot ask for more. *Wala akong masasabi sa kanya.*"

A certified OC (obsessive-compulsive), Carmina's only complaint is that Zoren can't keep his used clothes in the right places. "*Nakakalat. Imbes na sa hamper, nasa sahig labahan niya. Sa banyo patong patong din pinagbihisan niya.*" She also cannot stand dirty imprints of shoes and sneakers. But theirs is a smooth relationship. There have not been any major disagreements in all their nine years of being together.

While not shooting or taping, Zoren, a stay-home dad, acts as father and mother to their children Mavi and Cassidy while Carmina is at work. "*Pinanindigan ko na,*" Zoren said. He is also the disciplinarian in the family. Carmina is not inclined to let her twins join showbiz while Zoren is open to the idea. "I want them to finish school," she said. But Carmina is all praises of how Zoren runs their home. "*Super bait si Zoren. Wala akong maipipintas sa kanya,*" she added.

There are people who are meant for each other. There are people who are soul mates like Carmina and Zoren.

(I truly love Mina. I always look forward to seeing her. She's real, funny, and smart. Of course, she's beautiful, while you cannot not like Zoren. He's kind and adorable. Lucky Mina, he's sooooo straight!)

John Lloyd not ready to love again
It was all over. It spread like wildfire. It had the makings of an explosive entertainment news. The box office king and one of the most beautiful girls in the country were supposedly an item. Hell broke loose. Until that dinner was held. It was a "diplomatic summit." Ruffa Gutierrez, John Lloyd Cruz, Ruffa's parents Annabelle Rama and Eddie Gutierrez together with Star Magic's big bosses Mariole Alberto and Johnny Manahan had dinner hoping to smoke the peace pipe. The rumor triggered a rift between Ruffa and Annabelle with the former walking out politely of their Dasmariñas Village abode.

But all's well that ends well: Annabelle and Ruffa have patched things up which happened during the wake of much-loved talent manager Douglas Quijano. During that dinner, Eddie noticed that there was a "strong friendship developing between Ruffa and John Lloyd."

Ruffa and John Lloyd, both born on June 24 but a few years apart, will be abroad on their birthdays. John Lloyd is touring with Star Magic and Ruffa will be in LA to celebrate her big day. No, they will not fly on the same plane. But if he bumps into Ruffa in LA, would he take her to dinner? "She has to take me out. Siya ang taga doon. Pero sana mag-enjoy siya on her birthday," said John Lloyd.

He admits to being emotional and sentimental when his birthday comes. "I am going through a phase right now. *Paparating pa birthday ko. Ayun*



parang hinahanap ang lugar mo sa lahat ng ito." He said that he cannot separate John Lloyd the actor and John Lloyd the person. "*Hindi ko maisip na magkahiwalay yon.*"

Everybody knows John Lloyd has broken up with longtime girlfriend Liz Uy. He says he is still "sensitive" when it comes to affairs of the heart. "I think as a person parang iba ang language of love ko." And the break-up was not a breeze, either. "Imagine saying goodbye to the most beautiful, the most influential—there are so many words to describe her or what we had. But saying goodbye to all of these things, *kahit sinong tao* will find it difficult."

The feeling of breaking up is beyond pain, he said. "Because it is something *na hindi mo naman ginusto or isang bagay na dapat mangyari.*"

John Lloyd also belied rumors that a third party caused the break-up. "*Yong pangalan ni Sarah, yong pangalan ni Ruffa, walang kinalaman ang mga yon. Alam namin kung ano ang totoong rason at mamamatay ako at mamamatay siya na alam namin ang totoong rason.*"

He also apologized to Sarah whose name has been dragged into the fracas. "Sarah's family was upset. *Alam natin ang family niya napaka intact ng values. Wala ako sa lugar kahit nakasama pa niya ako sa pelikula. Hiyang hiya ako doon sa tao.*"

John Lloyd admitted he likes Ruffa. "I have no reason not to like her. When I am being asked, '*may pag-asa ba*' or do you think you can be together? I would always say, when love happens to a person, *wala ka ng choice, wala na yan sa mga kamay mo. Kumbaga, mag-gigive-in ka na. So, wala ka ng magagawa.*"

But he is not about to enter into a relationship right now. "It is still fresh. There is no possibility of me jumping into another relationship."

John Lloyd says "right now". But what is going to happen in the future is anyone's guess. ■

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