



United News Philippines

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News of the United Church of God, an International Association - Philippines

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June 2003

Campers and Staff Live, Love, Learn, and Leave a Legacy at United Youth Camp

DAVAO CITY—Thirty-two campers and 25 staff members from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao (the three major island groups in the Philippines) gathered at Eden Nature Park, a peaceful and tranquil mountain resort 2,630 feet above the city, from May 18 to 25 for Part One of United Youth Camp 2003. Part Two (May 26-30) was optional and consisted of a climb to the summit of Mount Apo, the highest mountain in the Philippines, at 10,311 feet above sea level.

The 32 campers were divided equally into four teams or “dorms” (we actually stayed in tents)—two boys dorms (1B and 2B) and two girls dorms (1G and 2G)—of eight campers each. Two counselors served each dorm. Each camper dorm was divided into two tents of five people each, four campers plus one counselor per tent. With nine more tents for the staff, we had a total of 17 tents in our campsite.

Our theme this year was “On to the Highest!” It might be recalled that three years ago, we had a theme that was somewhat related, “A View from the Peak,” when 30 of us (17 campers and 13 staff) scaled Mt. Apo. For those who missed out, this year was the opportunity to go “on to the highest!”

The first activity of every day was the Christian living class. Each dorm met with a different member of the ministerial staff to learn the spiritual values revolving around our theme. This included an unflinching commitment to excellence and to seek God’s Kingdom and His righteousness first in our daily lives.

After the Christian living classes, our day activities consisted of basketball, confidence course, campus service, cycling, first aid, inline-skating, riflery, softball, swimming, table tennis, volleyball, and wilderness skills. We also had six workshops: art illustration, cooking and baking, electricity, flower arranging, journalism, and public speaking.

For the evenings, we all enjoyed a bonfire, a dance clinic, a speech banquet, a dance and variety show, and two evenings of Q&A on the Bible and Christian living.

On the Sabbath, we had a “Bible Bowl,” followed by more fellowship time. Selected campers rehearsed “How Good and How Pleasant” for the special music on the afternoon service.

After the service, we visited each other’s tents in the Open House activity. In the evening, the variety show, dance, and awarding ceremonies were held. Many



The campers and staff of UYC 2003 Philippines! UNP

campers stayed up late trying to make the most of their last few hours together.

Then, it was time to say goodbye. About half of the campers and staff went home after Part One. The other half stayed and prepared for the four-day mountain-climbing adventure to commence the next day. Fifteen campers and 13 staff members (plus one guest) participated in the challenging ascent to the highest peak of Mt. Apo. The journey was challenging, but the enthusiasm remained high.

On Wednesday, May 28, at around 3:30 a.m., we woke up and started to prepare for the final ascent to the peak from Lake Venado, our base camp. We started the climb at about 4:30 a.m. At 6:57 a.m., the first climber reached the summit. The last climber arrived at 8:54 a.m. We ate our pack lunches at the peak and enjoyed a most spectacular view!

On our way down the mountain, one of our 11 porters remarked that of all the groups that he had known all these years, we were the ones whom he had the most pleasure working with. We asked him why. He said because it was obvious that we had genuine care and love for each other. He could see it in the way we acted and the way we treated him, the other porters, and one another—something he said he hasn’t seen before. We also left the place better than we found it. We gathered all the trash we could find and brought down five huge sacks of empty bottles, cans, and candy wrapper that others had left. It served as a lesson for us: Don’t leave trash—leave a legacy by being a light, just as Jesus said.

God has certainly blessed our camp with good weather all throughout. Members of the Eden Nature Park staff remarked

See “Campers,” Page 7

What’s Inside?

- 3 Member Teaches in Livelihood Project
- 3 Member Couple Gets Awards
- 7 My Climb With God
- 8 Where Our GN Subscribers Are



Editorial

by David Baker, *Philippine Senior Pastor*

The Miracle of the Holy Spirit

By the time you read this article, we will have just observed the Feast of Pentecost. Each year at Pentecost we are reminded of the miracle that took place in Jerusalem in A.D. 31. God fulfilled a promise made in Joel 2:28. He gave His Holy Spirit to the disciples in Jerusalem and the New Testament Church began. As members of God's Church, we are thankful for the fact that God continues to give His Spirit to His Church. In Ephesians 1:13-14, the Apostle Paul tells us "...you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, [which] is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..." God's Spirit is the downpayment of our future inheritance. That future inheritance involves being born into His Kingdom as a glorified son of God, ruling and teaching under the leadership of Jesus Christ. We have an awesome destiny awaiting us!

During Pentecost we are also reminded that God has empowered us to live a life of righteousness through the Holy Spirit. In writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul reminded him, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind [self-control]" (2 Timothy 1:7). Through the power of God's Spirit, we can choose to do what is right and avoid that which is sinful.

God's Church is composed of individuals from around the world. We come from different ethnic backgrounds and different cultures; we speak different languages and we represent different generations. A member in one of my congregations in New York is 95 years old. The world that she grew up in was a world very different from our present age. How is it possible for the Church to experience and enjoy unity? Once again, it is a miracle that we experience through the gift of God's Spirit. In Acts 4:31-32, we learn that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and they were of one heart and one mind. They experienced unity through the power of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of unity and it binds God's people together. The Apostle Paul encouraged members of God's church in Ephesus, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:1-5). The people of God are unified and held together by the power of God's Spirit. Those that are led by God's Spirit are the sons of God (Romans 8:14).

How do we know if we are being led by God's Spirit? Christ said, "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). What type of fruit is produced by those led by the Holy Spirit? James describes it as the "fruit of righteousness" (James 3:18). The Apostle Paul further defines that fruit

See "Editorial," Page 4

Reflections

by Serizalnio Dizon

Greetings to all!


It is my pleasure to be able to participate in the *United News Philippines* of the United Church of God in the Philippines. Because of its resumption it could be likened to rebooting a computer.

The main purpose of the *United News Philippines* is to give news from different congregations for all to be informed. Of course, bigger congregations with more members normally have more news to share compared to smaller ones. Still, it is everyone's responsibility to share or impart news to the church as a whole. Many among us have discussed and desired to have a newspaper so that we'll know what is happening in other areas. Now, we have it—our own church newspaper. It's our task to support it not just by reading the newspaper but by also contributing articles to it.

Recently, I was given the opportunity to assist in the United Youth Camp in the Philippines which was held in Davao City at Eden Nature Park resort. Though we stayed in Davao for two years—and a total of five years in Mindanao—way back in 1987, I found the summer camp location very impressive. The setting was very much like Baguio with pine trees, giant ferns, and a cool climate. Of course, there are no Igorots there. And local durian and marang fruits give it the Davao touch. (For parents who have access to the Internet in their homes or at local internet cafés, you could go to the web site of Eden Nature Park at www.edennaturepark.com.ph to see the park virtually.)

I overheard from many of the campers and staff members that this year's camp was one of the best ever. Many of the campers were first-timers, and their impression was that of millennium-like conditions: cool weather, supportive staff, and exciting activities. Many ministers were there and conducted the Christian living classes. Edmond Macaraeg, the camp director has done a good job—a successful summer camp topped by an equally successful Mt. Apo climb. We could

See "Reflections," Page 7



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Dagupan Church Member Invited to Demo in Barangay Livelihood Program

Teresa P. Dizon, wife of Serizalinio Dizon (pastor of Dagupan City and Baguio City congregations), was invited by Mila Malbog, a church member in San Fabian, to do a demonstration on livelihood programs in Anonang, San Fabian, the latter's neighboring barangay. (Mr. Baker was able to visit their residence last March.)

The demonstration was held in the Anonang barangay hall last April 27 and was attended by the wife of the barangay captain and the female members in their barangay. A total of 55 attended the livelihood program demo.

The purpose of these demonstrations is to help and encourage the members of the program to earn extra income even while they are at home through baking and cooking.

This is the second time Mrs. Dizon was invited to do a demonstration.



Teresa Dizon (left) with female members of the Barangay Anonang Livelihood Program.

The first time was on August 2002 in another barangay. This time she taught the audience (mostly wives) how to bake loaf bread, cheese bread, Spanish bread, pizza crust, and on how to cook doughnuts and *siopao*. She used a gas oven for baking bread and a steamer for the *siopao*.

"This church activity may not be something we can call big-time but it still shows that the church is willing to serve others who are not part of the fold at this time," says Mr. Dizon. Incidentally, Benjamin Malbog, the husband of Mrs. Malbog, is considered a local leader in the area so they look up to him for advice and support.

After the demonstration, Mr. Dizon learned that the barangay captain's wife has teen-aged kids, so he gave her a copy of the *Youth United* magazine. **UNP**

Church Member Couple Gets Top Sales Awards

Members Adolfo "Bong" and Grace Remo received Top Rookie sales awards during Philam Plans' annual awards night, held on May 21 at the ballroom of the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

Both were featured together with the other top awardees of the company in two major newspapers of national circulation, *The Philippine Star* and *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

To quote the *Inquirer*, "Another family-oriented person, agency manager Grace Remo used to be a plain housewife before she was thrust into the colorful world of sales... She is joined by husband Adolfo Remo in her agency. Both are No. 1 awardees as agency manager and district manager in the Rookie Awards." The Rookie awards are given to the sales personnel who were promoted to their present positions within the preceding marketing year and who have achieved the highest sales.

Grace also received the National Quality Award as one of three awardees in her category. The award is given to those who have been with the company for at least two years and who have the best quality of businesses brought in. All awards consisted of glass trophies and cash prizes.

Philam Plans, Inc. is an affiliate of the Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company (Philamlife)

organized to handle the marketing of pre-need plans (pension, education and memorial plans). It is a member of the Philam Group of Companies and is part of the American International Group (AIG), a leading US-based international insurance organization.

Both Bong and Grace rose from the ranks of the company's sales force having started as sales counselors until they were promoted to managerial positions. They now manage their own sales agency with tens of active sales agents. They try to provide a nurturing environment for their agents, and their agency is like one big happy family with each one trying to contribute in achieving the agency's production target. They are part of the Manila North Sales Division and their operation is based at the Times Plaza in United Nations Avenue, Manila, close to the company's head office.

Their agency is barely a year old, having been inaugurated in March 2002, yet they have been consistent awardees even in the regional and divisional levels. They account their success primarily to God's guidance and blessings. They also give credit to their very supportive unit managers and sales counselors. Says the

couple, "We could not have achieved all these on our own. We made God our partner and He has been very gracious to us. He has prospered us even in economically difficult and trying times. To Him we give honor and glory and our deepest gratitude. We also acknowledge and thank our relatives, brethren, and friends for their prayers, support, and encouragement." Bong and Grace attend the Manila congregation of the UCGIA. **UNP**



Bong and Grace Remo (inset) with daughter Gracielle (3rd from left) during awards night at the Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City.



GCE 2003: Renewing Old Acquaintances

by Rey Evasco

I was privileged this year to be able to attend the UCGIA General Conference of Elders held at the Holiday Inn, Eastgate in Cincinnati, Ohio. I had my wife, Cynthia, join me on this trip.

We arrived Cincinnati on the 30th of April, just in time for the international meetings, to be held the next day. To start with, all the elders in the meeting were asked to introduce themselves and give a reason why their country is the best place to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

On top of being able to participate in the proceedings of the conference and receiving instructions on how to maximize our ministry, this conference gave us the opportunity to renew acquaintances and meet our fellow elders from other parts of the world. Mr. & Mrs. Earl Roemer, together with Mr. Roger Foster and Mr. Bob Dick, treated us to dinners in fine restaurants. We felt greatly honored to be invited by Mr. & Mrs. Dave Evans and Mr. & Mrs. Gary Antion for dinner in their own homes.

Our last stop was Seattle, Washington, where one of our brothers, Gilbert Javier, invited us to stay in his house while we were visiting. This gave us the opportunity to get to know many brethren in the Seattle area. We were also privileged to visit many interesting places in Washington like Leavenworth, where we were introduced to Scott and Louise Trew who invited us to their very lovely home overlooking the snow-capped mountains from their backyard. It was such a millennial setting!

Our thanks to Gilbert Javier and Jill Stefanin, who were so kind to drive us around beautiful places in Washington state and meet such wonderful brethren.

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Luker likewise were so kind to invite us for lunch, take us to the Museum of Flight, and invite us to have a Friday night dinner in their lovely home. Mr. Luker invited me to take the sermonette and sermon time to give an update on the work in the Philippines and to give the main message as well. After services, we were able to feel the warm hospitality of the Seattle brethren during the fellowship.

This was indeed a very fruitful and memorable trip. We are very grateful to God for having given us this wonderful opportunity to attend the GCE as well as meet with many wonderful brethren in this part of the world.

“Editorial,” *continued from Page 2*

as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). As we consider the fruit of God’s Spirit, we see how each aspect of that fruit contributes to unity and harmony within the body of Christ. I encourage you to spend some time and study each aspect of this fruit. I think you will find it a very profitable Bible study.

UYC 2003: A Blessing and a Success

by Florante Siopan

The United Youth Camp, held at Eden Nature Park in Davao City from May 18 to 25, 2003, was one of the year’s highlights for the teens in God’s church in the Philippines.

This year’s theme was “On to the Highest!” It symbolizes the Kingdom of God, the highest destiny man can aspire to. It gives the campers a picture that going to Mt. Apo, the highest mountain in the Philippines, would not be an easy climb; they should strive to reach the goal, to step on the summit of Mount Apo. Likewise, it shows us that the Kingdom of God is not an easy path to travel; there are a lot of obstacles to discourage a Christian to continue his or her journey to eternal life.

The camp is a blessing not only to God’s people, but also to those who live and work in the park and the surrounding areas because God gave us good weather—which was absent before we came, on account of the continuous rain.

Attended by 32 campers, eight counselors and a number of staff members, the camp kicked off on Sunday evening after a sumptuous dinner. Brought up in the orientation night were the activities that would take place for the duration of the camp such as Christian living classes, workshops, and different field and sports activities.

During the camp, every participant enjoyed various fun-filled activities. Cycling, wilderness skills, inline-skating, and swimming are just a few of the interesting things done at camp. The youth had so much excitement; they learned how to apply the lessons they got from those activities and to live God’s way, the experience of which is not available in many places in our society. The highlight of the camp came on Saturday evening during the giving of awards to those campers who have excelled in their dorms and in the various activities and workshops.

On Sunday, May 25, campers who chose not to participate in the Mt. Apo climb departed for home. Ed Macaraeg, the camp director, graciously brought us to the bus terminal very early so we could catch the bus to Cagayan de Oro. We arrived Cagayan de Oro at about 2:30 p.m., but we had to wait for the boat to leave for Iloilo at 7:00 in the evening. We reached Iloilo at 8:00 the following morning. Then we got another trip via fast craft to Bacolod.

The United Youth Camp had been a success. Many blessings were received and a lot of lessons were learned. As our campers from the Visayas gave their reports to their respective congregations, they unanimously hope to come back next year.

We very much appreciate the help of the church leadership from the Home Office, LifeNets foundation, Mr. David Baker, and the people of Davao, who tirelessly contributed to the success of the United Youth Camp this year.



Mr. Florante Siopan shares spiritual insights with Dorm 2G during Christian living class. **UNP**

Spiritual Lessons from Mountain Climbing

by Edmond Macaraeg

What is the relationship between mountain climbing and our Christian calling?

This year's United Youth Camp's theme was "On to the Highest!" It depicted the highest goals, the noblest human aspirations, and the ultimate ambition and destiny for the children of God. In the spiritual realm, this pictures our entering into God's spiritual kingdom. For our young people, it is good for them to aim for, and to focus on, this supreme goal early in their lives.

To illustrate and experience a real physical dimension to this goal, the second part of the United Youth Camp (for those who have prepared themselves) involved a climb to the highest peak in the Philippines—Mt. Apo, with an elevation of 10,311 feet above sea level.

Everything involved in achieving this goal provides many solid and valuable lessons which have parallels to our Christian calling. The spiritual are understood through physical things.

The following are some of these lessons:

When we talk of salvation and entering the Kingdom of God, modern-day Christianity has many popular but false assumptions and concepts about it. The lessons learned from mountain climbing clearly and logically debunks some of these common fallacies.

It is commonly taught and believed that without works or effort, we will be saved. But like in mountain climbing, those who get there will have to pass through many trials and difficulties for which we need to overcome. We all know that there is no one who will simply slide up to the mountaintop. Rather, it is more likely that if one is not careful, he or she will fall down into numerous ravines, mountainsides, or stumble over slippery mud or rocks, resulting in severe injury or even death. Therefore, it would not be an easy slide into God's Kingdom as some suppose. Acts 14:22 attests to this when it says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."



Also, there are several very narrow passes. One type is where one needs to stay as close to the mountainside with just a very narrow slippery rocky or soil-path for foothold. Beneath one's feet usually is a cliff or ravine where one can easily slide off. But there are even more dangerous passes where both sides of the narrow footpath have deep ravines. This reminds us of the words of Jesus Christ when He said, "Enter you in at the strait [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13-14).

Next, no one gets there "just as you are"—meaning without physical conditioning, nor wearing proper attire, nor having the right equipment. In the case of mountain climbing—because of the difficult terrain, cold environment, strong wind, and long distances traveled by foot—special shoes, clothing, bag, and other equipment are needed. Jesus Christ illustrated this when He gave a parable about entering the Kingdom wherein one did not have the proper garment. He was cast out. (Matthew 22:1-



14). In addition, the apostle Paul spoke about the equipment a Christian needs, starting with headgear to the footgear—apart from other personal equipment. These are detailed in Ephesians 6:10-17.

While there are various demands upon the climber, it is also imperative that one climbs as light and as simple as possible. Any excess load is detrimental to one's success. The apostle Paul illustrated this when he stated, "Wherefore... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Since the climb is very strenuous and difficult, there may be instances when—because of tiredness, fatigue, pains, coldness, difficulties, and possibly fear—one entertains the thought of quitting and going back. To reach the top, one should have a firm resolve to override all those tempting and discouraging thoughts and push on toward the goal. In the same way, Christ illustrated this when He said, "Strive to enter in at the strait [difficult] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). Furthermore He said, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12, emphasis added). It takes a very strong determination to enter the Kingdom of God.

It is important to always keep our final goal in mind so that no matter what the present difficulties are, it will give us help and strength to move on.

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The failure of many results from losing sight of their ultimate goal. It is important to always keep our final goal in mind so that no matter what the present difficulties are, it will give us help and strength to move on. Scriptures admonish us to follow the example of the "Captain of our salvation," Jesus Christ, who suffered more than any



See "Lessons," Page 7

“Sweet Potatoes! Anyone?”

by Audrey Ruth Angcos

May 29, 2003—It was a sunny Thursday morning in Davao City, Philippines—just another school vacation morning for our family. We had the usual extended breakfast where we shared more stories than food on the table. I never suspected that morning would bring to me one of the most profitable moments in my life.

I was about to start my dishwashing routine when I heard unfamiliar voices from outside our house—faint little voices. Unsure of the fact, I turned off the faucet only to realize that my father was already in a conversation with those who owned the voices—two little children.

“Please buy some sweet potatoes, Sir, it’s only ten pesos a kilo!” Knowing that my father was not interested in buying their stuff, I couldn’t see the point of engaging in a conversation with those two busy little vendors. My curiosity brought me to take a look at what was really happening outside. My heart sank as I took a glimpse on the appearance of those two little fellows—so young, so tattered, and evidently so unfed! Almost instantly, I saw my little brothers in them. I have one about their age who seems to have a “play-eat-sleep” routine, and in flip-flops of contrasts I was in front of those children, both smaller than him and both begging us to buy their sweet potatoes obviously for a living. I had no idea how many miles these little peddlers walked, each with his quarter-of-a-sack load under the humid heat of the late summer sun. My sorrow and deep compassion for these little ones were only distracted by the reassuring voice of my father, “I’ll buy a kilo of your goods.” The other kid without a slight hesitation replied, “Sir, please buy two kilos, one from me and one from my cousin so that we both can earn.” I was really amazed by the display of unconditional concern these little children had for each other. My father checked his wallet only to find the remaining family money just enough for his jeepney fare for the day’s work. The disappointment was evident from their eyes as I watched them leave. Almost frantically, I rushed inside the house telling mother to call these children back while I checked up to the last centavo our rooms could ever produce. I managed to raise just enough coins for another kilo of sweet potatoes. I was overwhelmed seeing the joy in their eyes as they received their ten pesos with their dirty little hands. As I watched them depart, I realized how blessed I was that amidst difficulties in life, I can still study, eat properly, enjoy good health, have a set of good friends, a supportive family, and most of all, just be given a chance to be a part of God’s future Kingdom.

I want to share this precious experience with all of you who, like me, are sometimes too disappointed about the things we get or don’t get, or too discouraged about the unwanted, seemingly irreversible situations we find ourselves in. We should realize though, that we pity ourselves because we are too interested in and focused on ourselves as we try to fit into worldly patterns of greater wealth, higher intellect, nicer looks,

See “Sweet,” Page 7



Comments from



Our Good News Readers

Deep in my heart, I want to say thank you for the two years of sending me a copy of your magazine. It really helped me to know more about the real world...

M.A., Baguio City

I thank the Lord that I accidentally read your magazine. I enjoyed all the Christian articles which is a help and guide to right Christian living.

E.S., Quezon City

I like your style in encouraging us youth to read your magazine. I hope that you can also send me your oldest copies of The Good News.

C.O., Davao del Sur

I am writing to thank you for the Good News magazines and other literatures I have been receiving from the past to present. It indeed has been a blessing to me spiritually. I am excited every time I receive the Good News magazine, especially with what is going on all over the world. What I read and see in the daily news has widened, and I am beginning to see a connection with world events to what I read in the Bible and in Revelation.

J.A., Nueva Ecija

First of all I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to you and all the members of your efficient staff for sending me the best magazine—The Good News.

Your magazine helps me a lot to face and solve challenging problems in life. It is therefore an honor to announce to the whole world that the Good News magazine is of great help to interested people like me.

I hope that this opportunity that you are sharing to us will continue, so that readers will be aware of what is happening in this world.

A.L., Pangasinan

Thank you for sending me a subscription to your magazine, The Good News free of charge. I appreciate and love reading it. My friend happened to read my copies and he would like to continue reading some more...

M.E., Sorsogon City

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“Campers,” *continued from Page 1*

that it had been raining almost continuously before we arrived. However, we were blessed with good weather the whole time we were there. Even on Part Two of our camp, some of our porters told us that it had been raining for days before we arrived. But suddenly, when we came, the rain just suddenly stopped. On the day of our ascent to the peak, it was sunny and almost just perfect!

The bottom line is this: We lived, we loved, we learned, and we left a legacy. We had fun, and no one suffered any serious injury the whole time there—thank God. We also wish to thank you, our brethren and our readers, for your prayers—and to the Home Office of the United Church of God and LifeNets International for all their support. But all the praise, glory, and honor go to our great God and Father in heaven for making it all possible!

Reported by Daniel Roy Macaraeg

“Reflections,” *continued from Page 2*

read more about the United Youth Camp in the upcoming *United Teens Philippines* magazine.

We hope that the *United News Philippines* will become a sought-after publication in our local congregations as months go by. This can be accomplished by reason that we should not only have to do it but also that we should love doing it too.

“Lessons,” *continued from Page 5*

of us. It says, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:2-4).

There are many more lessons which we can learn and draw from in this mountain climbing experience. But these few ones illustrated here should be able to help us understand what is required of us as potential children of God. Other experiences in life should also be able to provide lessons toward success in our Christian calling.

On to the highest!

“Sweet,” *continued from Page 6*

and popular fame. We are too focused on our own selfish interests, often blinding us to others’. In so doing, we fail to appreciate the blessings God so lavishly gives us. The world is showing us the prosperity we could get by adhering to worldly standards. All the treasures our carnal mind and flesh could ever imagine—the world can offer!

As Christians, we need to re-direct our focus, not on our own interests, but on following the example of Jesus Christ.

The next time we hear faint little voices from the outside, try to take a look. Our Great God and Savior once stooped down to listen to these little children teach us lessons!

My Climb With God

by Lorna Macaraeg

As a child, I had my share of falls—and sadly, also a fractured leg. Because of this and my fear of heights, I have always refused to climb mountains. Thus, when my husband with some church members first climbed the Philippines’ highest peak in 1984, I refused to go along; that’s the same case with many other climbs thereafter, including this recent one. So, what made me change my mind?

I made a final decision when our son, Daniel, gave a sermon in camp about living faith in God. Being a personal witness to some of my son’s and my own experiences, I said to myself, “Why not reinforce again and apply the lessons of living faith?” Knowing God is with me, I believe I will succeed.

When I finally mentioned my decision to climb Mt. Apo to my husband, he said, “Are you really serious? You did not even have regular exercise, nor joined the fitness test!”

I countered, “What if there is a sudden war, and we need to climb mountains to escape, will you still require those? I believe God will help me.” With those words, he was convinced about my strong faith and determination to climb this time. So that evening, my husband bought me a suitable pair of rubber shoes, and packed the things I needed.

The following morning, with everyone involved in Part Two in this UYC activity assembled, he organized us into four teams and gave a final briefing. My husband arranged for us to be among those in the last team—together with other older and married climbers.

By late afternoon, we arrived the jump-off point—Lake Agco campsite. Here we recruited porters for the following day, pitched tents for the night, and prepared dinner.

Rising early for breakfast with prepared packed lunches, little did I know what to expect. A big part of the trail that morning involved crossing the Marbel River about a dozen times, carefully jumping from rock to rock (without slipping), and in some cases using our poles as mini-bridges just to keep our shoes dry. But most simply waded the rushing waters.

Minute by minute, I had God in my mind, asking for His help. While my husband always lent his helping hand, and my eldest son David stayed behind me for support, I knew that even if there were threatening steep and deep ravines at both the right and left sides of many narrow paths we walked through, I was confident God was with me.

The climb from Marbel River campsite to Lake Venado campsite was so tiring such that on the steepest parts, we spent about five minutes climbing and about two minutes resting alternately. This trail segment took us about seven hours. Since we started at past 2 p.m. already, we of course had to negotiate the rest of the way with portable lights, arriving the Venado campsite at about 9 p.m. Thankfully, dinner was prepared by the advance group. All we had to do was to take our meal, pitch our tents in the cold dark night, and catch a few hours of rest.

We woke up at 3 a.m. (still very dark, cold, and windy) the following morning for the final climb to the peak. We had to do it that early so we could see the surrounding areas below before clouds form at the peak by mid-morning.

See “My Climb,” Page 8

“My Climb,” continued from Page 7

We reached the peak at about 9 that morning. All my children and the rest were there ahead to welcome us. One of my sons, Charles, remarked that I am now the oldest (almost age 58) UCG member to reach the peak.

I uttered a fervent prayer to God accompanied with tears thanking Him for making me realize my heretofore impossible dream.

I know it was not my own power nor strength that brought me up there, but God granted me my wish.

The descent the following day was not as difficult as the climb. But for every step on the way down, I kept wondering, how on earth did I ever manage to climb those same steps without God’s help!



Edmond and Lorna Macaraeg at the peak of Mt. Apo. **UNP**

From Top to Down

The following day at home, having finally conquered the highest mountain peak, I thought I could now do anything by myself. For a moment while beginning to take a shower, I seemed to have gotten a little carefree and careless with my steps on the slippery bath tub... and wham! The fall hurt me so much I was screaming in pain.

My husband had to break the lock of the bathroom door to get to me. Realizing the possibility of a spinal injury, he commanded that I do not twist my body but hold on to his neck while we very slowly stood up. He commanded my sons to detach a closet door, wrap it with a woolen blanket and strapped me to it. Then I was slowly laid on the bed. We prayed as a family and he anointed me.

The following day, we went to the hospital for check up. Thankfully, the x-rays showed no significant bone damage. The doctors commented favorably on how first aid was done. To prevent further complications, bed-rest for at least two weeks was prescribed, apart from the use of back braces for a few months.

Lessons

Like Peter, when his eyes were on Christ, he did the impossible by walking on water. But when he took his eyes off from Him, he started to sink. I could see a parallel lesson here.

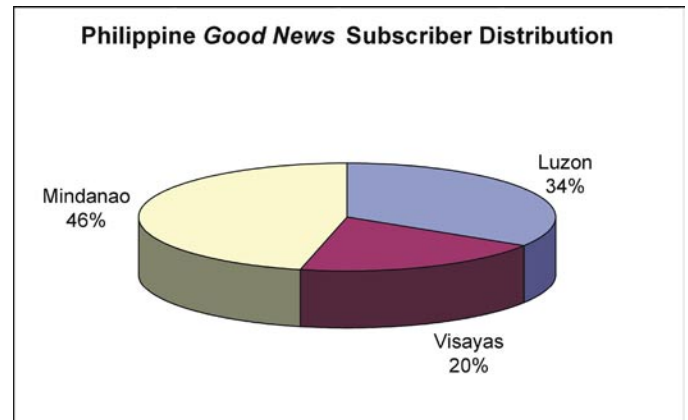
Having just conquered the highest Philippine peak, and now out of dangers and difficulties, I briefly lost my fervency. Thus, God brought me back to reality with that accident. While God was very generous to my wishes, He showed me that without Him, even in the supposed safety of our homes, we are still very vulnerable. Without Him, I could not have climbed that mountain. Therefore, that climb to Mt. Apo was indeed *my climb with God!*

I dictated this article to my husband while in bed, with the hope that it may help others.

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Data derived from the March-April 2003 issue of the *Good News* magazine. Reported by Charles Phillip Macaraeg