

## A SIMARANHON GREAT-GRANDSON...

Written by mila

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Journeys To Cornell University

An Ivy-League University

Ithaca, New York

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Education is a continuing process from maternity to destiny, naturally.

In the field of formal education, graduation rites, also known as commencement exercises, form part of such process coming our way annually.

Speaking of one, the graduation rite last June 28, 2009 at Ramapo High School, Spring Valley, New York, was not only eventful but historic as well.

Historic in the sense that among the 276 members of Class 2009, the top two -- Ramon Lorenzo Labitigan and Joseph Anthony Fallurin -- are of Filipino descent, first time to ever happen in their alma mater's existence. In recognition of this rare fate, the Rockland Journal News devoted an article about these two students; the local television channel featured both of them in its news segment; and, of course, the Ramapo High School paper proudly bannered both of them in the special interview section.

In that interview, Joseph Anthony was asked, ♦How it feels to be Salutatorian?♦ In part he replied, ♦Being Salutatorian is an amazing honor that will always tie me back to Ramapo High School and the Class of 2009, and it is something I am very grateful for.♦ He also gave an advice, ♦ Balance your time, and work hard at everything you want to do without getting stressed out, then you can end up accomplishing more than you thought you could.♦ Great manifestation of humility and -- at his young age -- maturity!

Moreover, it was mentioned in the interview that one of his greatest accomplishments at Ramapo High School was getting first place in the 2009 Science Olympiad Ecology Event in tandem with Ramon Lorenzo Labitigan against thirty (30) other high school teams, an honor that their alma mater believes to hold for many years to come.

As to scholastic awards, recognition, and scholarships, Joseph Anthony Fallurin has a number of them to his name:

- Awards and Scholarship - NYS Academic Scholarship, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; University of Pennsylvania; and, Cornell University. He chose Cornell University where he received scholarship cash award of no less than Thirty-three thousand dollars per year for four years.
- Scholastic Recognition - he belonged consistently to Principal's List and also one among eight National Scholars with distinction. Academic excellence was the major qualification for this recognition.
- Ramapo High School 2009 Senior Prize Awards
  - Salutatorian Medal
  - Dellwood Country Club Foundation Award - a scholarship given based on high academic achievement
  - The State Education Department and University, State of New York Award - Scholarship for Academic Excellence amounting to One thousand five hundred dollars
  - Excellence in Math & Science - an award presented by the The United States Air Force to outstanding students in the fields of Math, Science, and Technology
  - The Dorothy Lyman Shakespeare Award - an award for excellence in English Studies
  - Ella Coleman Award - an award for outstanding achievement in Math
  - Leo Dustman Award - an award for demonstrating deep appreciation of the challenge and discipline of Math. A book was given by the Mathematics Department for this award
  - Math Association of America - (Annual High School Contest) - for having earned a place on the honor roll and high achievement in the contest.
  - American Association of Physics Teachers Award - for participation in the 2009 Physicsbowl
  - The New York State Science Supervisors Association Chemistry Award - for exhibiting depth of understanding of the principles of Chemistry
  - The New York State Science Supervisors Association Science Award - for having demonstrated depth of

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understanding of the scientific principles of Science

- The Science Research Award - for Science, Inventions and Technology in the field of Health and Medicine
- The Ramapo High School Science Department Award - for being the PRESIDENT of the New York State Science Honor Society!
- Social Studies Award - for high achievement in the elective program -- AP Micro Economics -- exhibiting interest and active participation, and obtaining highest mark on the U. S. History and Government Regents Examination
- The Scholastic Excellence Award -- presented to the top twenty (20) senior students for Scholastic Excellence during their high school years
- Advanced Placement Scholars With Distinction - for having received an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken...
- Principal's Award - The Principal presents awards to seniors who have gone above and beyond the classroom in demonstrating outstanding commitment to Ramapo High School. Students who have devoted many hours to extracurricular activities and community service and, in the process, demonstrated leadership skills and outstanding citizenship traits.

In his address as Salutatorian, he described in vivid terms the achievements of Class 2009 both in scholastic and in extracurricular activities. These achievements earned honor for Ramapo High School: first place in Science competitions participated in by thirty other high schools, and first to top Math Exams in its history, among other sterling academic achievements. The Class of 2009 engaged also in various activities for community service and fund raising ventures for projects designed as avenues to give back to the community.

While Joseph Anthony showered his Class Year members with praises, he, at the same time, encouraged them to continue their perseverance with humility as each one of them chooses what course to take in post-secondary education and in life.

As a key player, being President of Honor Society and other clubs, I am amazed how Joseph Anthony did it. Undeniably, the energy, dedication, time, will to excel, and other resources invested to achieve his awards are, in my view, extraordinary.

Moreover, ask his father and he is proud to tell you that at home Joseph Anthony was busy too. I agree. Amiable, God-loving, industrious, respectful and responsible -- among his bounty of positive traits, I can fairly say that had his loving share caring for his beautiful triplet-sisters -- now a little bit more than four years old -- followed by the cute twin-sisters approximately a year-and -a half later, basically during his high school years, been part of academic credit or extracurricular merit, his grade would have been more than enough to bridge any gap between him and the first.

Speaking of first, Joseph Anthony's grandfather injected in him the irreversible meaning and significance of being first place. This inspirational gesture had been syringed to his young mind since childhood through examples of positive thinking complemented by proper action, and galvanized by face-to-face contact with family members/relatives who had achieved high scholastic and related honors during their formal education years. Among them is the root, his great-grandma whose forte was arithmetic, among other subjects in the elementary level during her days.

At this juncture, I realized its time to introduce to you who Joseph Anthony is. He is a great-grandson of Mamay Neva (Anioneva Falceso), grandson of Kuya Joe (Jose Falceso Fallurin) and Ate Lou (former Luisa Lero of Ilo-Ilo City), son of Joey (Joseph Lero Fallurin) and Mary Ann, an Italian-American.

At the celebration party that evening of June 28, attended by Joseph Anthony's family circle and circle of friends ushered by his ever-caring step-mom, the former Evaine Iral of Cebu, Marylou Lero Fallurin, wife of Dr. Glen Cabrera and younger sister of Joey, expressed testimonials of her genuine impression of Joseph Anthony since childhood. In essence, such awards did not come as a surprise to her. Many more hands took turns on the

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microphone echoing the same essence though not exactly by the same words -- plural messages, singular meaning!

When Joseph Anthony finally took turn on the microphone, he genuinely and humbly expressed thanks for the impressive remarks about him, for all who in one way or more ways than one shared caring hearts and loving hands for who he is thus far: family, relatives, friends, among others; I remembered Manang Daling (Adelaida Fallurin-Fajilago), elder sister of Kuya Joe, who, in 1991, had the chance doing so.

Joseph Anthony is an eloquent speaker, polished and sharpened by his leadership experiences. But the moment he mentioned his great-grandma, Mamay Neva, he was speechless, tongue-tied, and unable to utter more adjectives. He missed a lot Mamay's presence at his graduation rite and party; he failed to contain his emotion on how blessed and grateful he is for having Mamay at his side since childhood. In his own words, he described Mamay as transcending all generations, starting her own, doing anything good not only for herself but for so many in the family circle, and even outside of it, here and in the Philippines. Joseph Anthony knows it by his own experience as he related in 2006 during Mamay's 85th birthday celebration.

When his speech was cut short, I was teary-eyed because Mamay, despite being physically ill and recuperating at the Pine Valley Rehab Center & Nursing Home, wanted so much too to attend the graduation rite and party. Ambring/Rene and I spent some time with her before proceeding to the party, for which reason we arrived late. Had it not been for the advice of her doctor not to, after coordination by Mers, wife of my brother Billy, who works at the said Rehab Center, we should have had taken her to the rite and party.

Deeply touching was what Joseph Anthony said to the effect that the best gift he always prayed and wished for on his graduation is the full and immediate recovery of his great-grandma, Mamay Neva. May the good Lord hear his prayer and grant his special wish!

Few days after graduation, Joseph Anthony headed for Washington, D.C. for an internship at the Department of Energy. During high school years, he also underwent internship at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital where Evaine works as a Nurse.

Come last week of August, he will be within the four walls of Cornell University, New York, to pursue a course in Engineering or Medical field.

With his innate aptitude, plus positive attitude and sustained blessings from the Lord, I, like many others I know, am optimistic that Joseph Anthony can reach a high altitude.

Of course, with perseverance, humility, and what he calls balance in life.

Again, congratulations!

The journey continues. God bless!