

Through Our Lens And Senses!

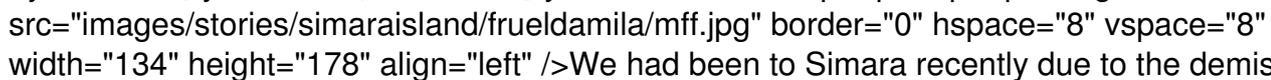
Written by Ambring & Mila Fajiculay-Fruelda

Sunday, 01 February 2009 10:07 - Last Updated Monday, 20 April 2009 14:50

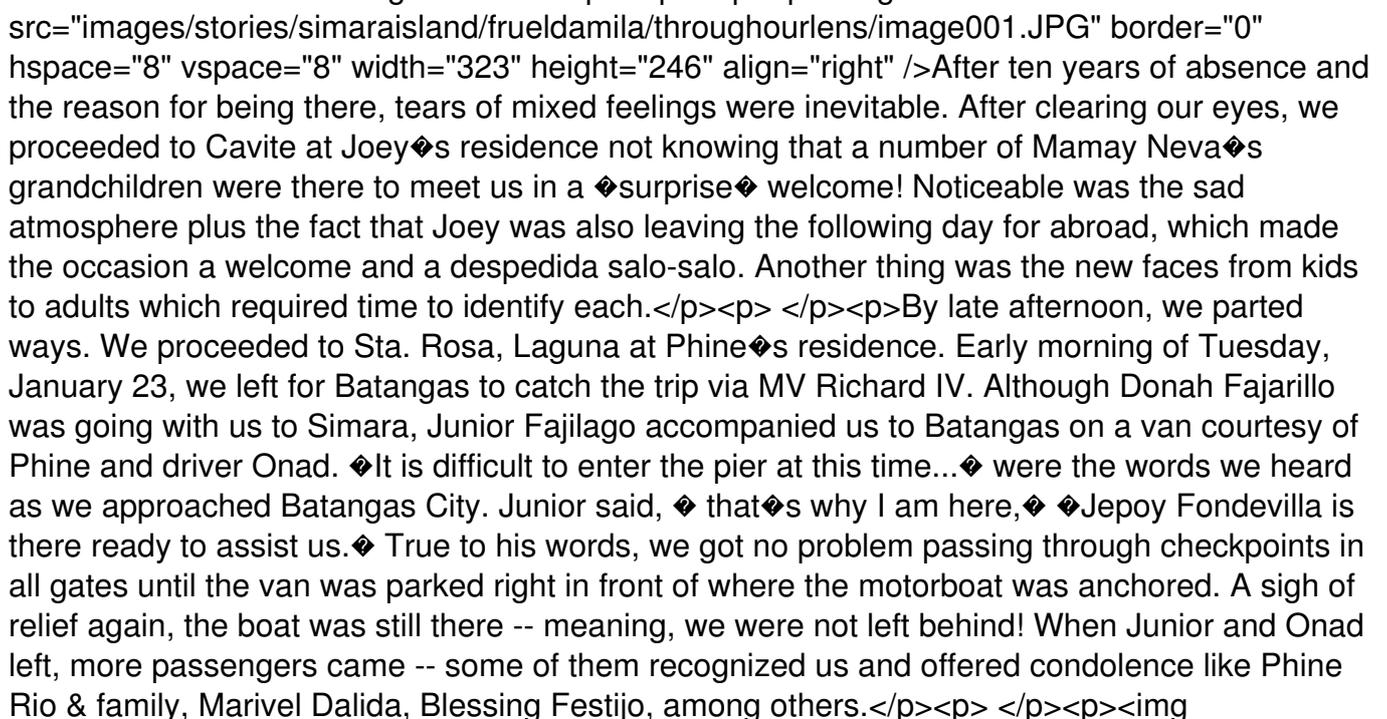
[Top](#) **THROUGH OUR LENS AND**

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by Ambring and Mila Fajiculay-Fruelda
E-mail:

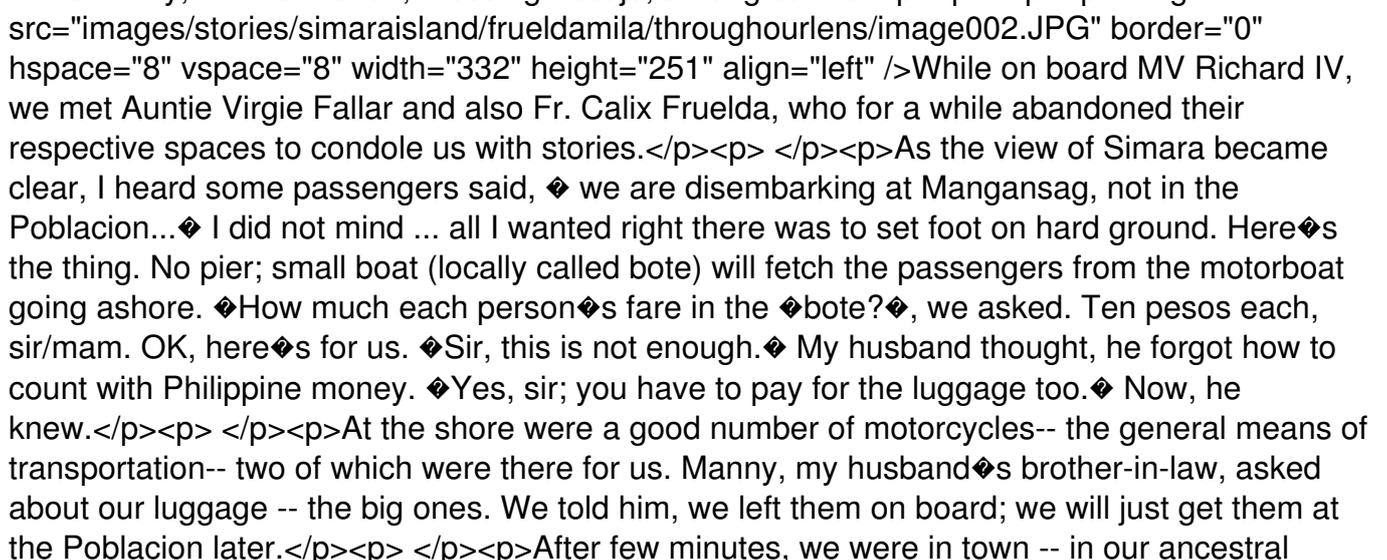
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We had been to Simara recently due to the demise of Manong Arol last January 16, 2007. The cause of our trip was melancholy, the preparation made possible through family collective efforts was in a hurry, and the stop-over at Seoul, South Korea seemed eternity due to the desire to reach Simara quickly. Upon reaching the Philippines, the atmosphere gradually changed due to mitigating circumstances. After clearing with Customs and the Immigration, we went in a hurry to claim our luggage. We could not find any and the rotating belt was clear; after a while, a gentleman approached us and after knowing who we were, told us that our luggage were all on a cart waiting for us, courtesy of Ely Advincula. What a relief! At the waiting area far down a ramp, the group of Phine Fajilago with a van had been waiting for us too!



After ten years of absence and the reason for being there, tears of mixed feelings were inevitable. After clearing our eyes, we proceeded to Cavite at Joey's residence not knowing that a number of Mamay Neva's grandchildren were there to meet us in a surprise welcome! Noticeable was the sad atmosphere plus the fact that Joey was also leaving the following day for abroad, which made the occasion a welcome and a despedida salo-salo. Another thing was the new faces from kids to adults which required time to identify each. By late afternoon, we parted ways. We proceeded to Sta. Rosa, Laguna at Phine's residence. Early morning of Tuesday, January 23, we left for Batangas to catch the trip via MV Richard IV. Although Donah Fajarillo was going with us to Simara, Junior Fajilago accompanied us to Batangas on a van courtesy of Phine and driver Onad. It is difficult to enter the pier at this time... were the words we heard as we approached Batangas City. Junior said, that's why I am here, Jepoy Fondevilla is there ready to assist us. True to his words, we got no problem passing through checkpoints in all gates until the van was parked right in front of where the motorboat was anchored. A sigh of relief again, the boat was still there -- meaning, we were not left behind! When Junior and Onad left, more passengers came -- some of them recognized us and offered condolence like Phine Rio & family, Marivel Dalida, Blessing Festijo, among others.



While on board MV Richard IV, we met Auntie Virgie Fallar and also Fr. Calix Fruelda, who for a while abandoned their respective spaces to condole us with stories. As the view of Simara became clear, I heard some passengers said, we are disembarking at Mangansag, not in the Poblacion... I did not mind ... all I wanted right there was to set foot on hard ground. Here's the thing. No pier; small boat (locally called bote) will fetch the passengers from the motorboat going ashore. How much each person's fare in the bote?, we asked. Ten pesos each, sir/mam. OK, here's for us. Sir, this is not enough. My husband thought, he forgot how to count with Philippine money. Yes, sir; you have to pay for the luggage too. Now, he knew. At the shore were a good number of motorcycles-- the general means of transportation-- two of which were there for us. Manny, my husband's brother-in-law, asked about our luggage -- the big ones. We told him, we left them on board; we will just get them at the Poblacion later. After few minutes, we were in town -- in our ancestral

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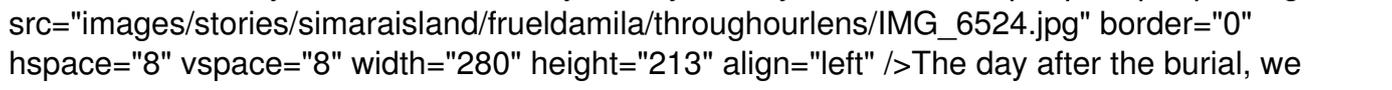
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home -- where Manong Arol and his family spent memorable years together, and where his remains rested in peace prior to burial.

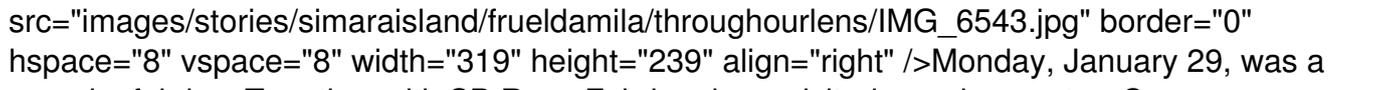
January 25th was Manong Arol's funeral rite. During the wake for almost one week, a good number of mourners came daily from the Fajiculays, Falcesos, Falogmes, Factors, and many more -- too many to mention each here. During the funeral mass, the Saint Joseph the Worker Parish Church could not accommodate all prompting Fr. Virgil to say days after, "... if the number of people would be like that every Sunday mass... -- being unfinished, we considered it to mean, the number was really extraordinary.

We believed Manong Arol lived a meaningful life, and he passed away in peace. For all those who, in one way or another, became part of Manong Arol's life and have positive memories, we thank you so much! For all those who mourned with his bereaved family and with us, thank you very much just the same!

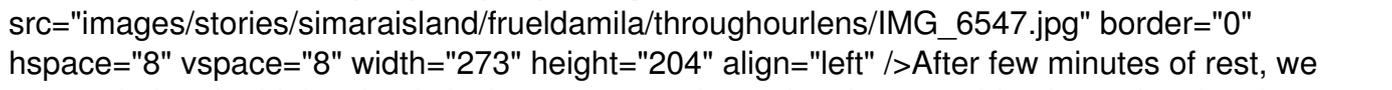


The day after the burial, we opted to visit relatives in Ilijan by way of Tanro-aw. Motorcycles could reach up to a certain point only since the road was still under construction. To walk was the only choice, but the trail my husband used during our high school days was nowhere in sight since not that many were using it anymore. We proceeded anyway using the highest peak of Tanro-aw as our guide point. We took pictures of this historic site requested through e-mail by Kuya Gilbert. After taking enough pictures from all angles, we moved on. Few meters down was the residence of the late Uncle Quintin and Auntie Daling, where the family of their son Roberto now lived. My husband could still remember most of them in the area since he was from there, so I knew who my relatives were through him. We visited Uncle Seri Fojas and the rest of the Fajiculays until we reached Bantadan, Ambring's ancestral place.

In every stop at every house, we felt at home. If only we could let every story went on, one day would surely not be enough. We spent the night at Ambring's home, where Manong Ancho and family now lived. The night was short there, because as long as there was electric light (until 11:00 in the evening) acquaintances kept coming in. The following morning, we maneuvered downhill going to Ricudo, the sitio along Ilijan beach, where some relatives also lived. We passed by Manang Rose (Ambring's sister-in-law), Manang Vita & family, Nida & family, Auntie Leslie/Uncle Uping, Manang Lyd, Manang Rose & husband, Fr. Virgil, among others. It was ten in the evening when Feret, Ambring's nephew motored us to Poblacion for tomorrow was Sunday, and we were requested beforehand to assist in the mass offering.



Monday, January 29, was a meaningful day. Together with SB Rose Fabriquel, we visited our alma mater, Corcuera Academy now Corcuera National High School. Going up was now through a cemented pathway starting from the vicinity of the Fajarillos and the Fetalinos--remember? On the way up, we passed by a new concrete building, obviously noticeable due to its size and modern architectural design. Manang Rose told us, "this is the cooperative building/business spearheaded by Ranie Fruelda, son of Manong Peking Fruelda and Manang Nayding Falceso--relatives too."



After few minutes of rest, we proceeded to the high school. At the gate, now situated at the east side almost fronting the Malipayon Hospital parking area, we saw our energetic Principal Ontoy Famorcan. He knew beforehand that we were coming because we met the day before at our ancestral home. So

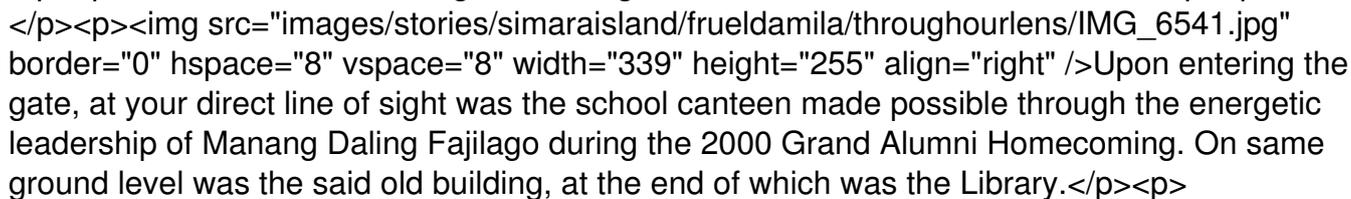
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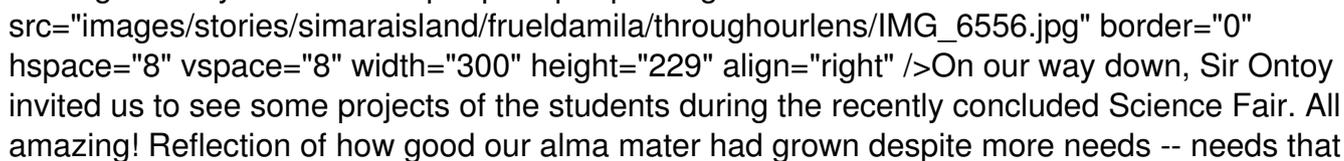
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right there at the gate, we started exchanging stories while digital shots kept clicking. As we walked around, we noticed that the clicks came not only from our camera but also from a student who we knew later on as staff member of their student publication Deep Limits. Really deep; just imagine, a student publication? We did not have that during our years, decades ago. Impressive! Noticeable right at the gate was the presence of new buildings. But the old building, used to be Corcuera Academy, was still there; we were informed though by Sir Ontoy that a two-story four classroom building will soon be constructed on the site near the Laboratory building, which would mean the demolition of the said old building. Once demolished, the space would be used for a multi-purpose structure for school activities/gatherings.

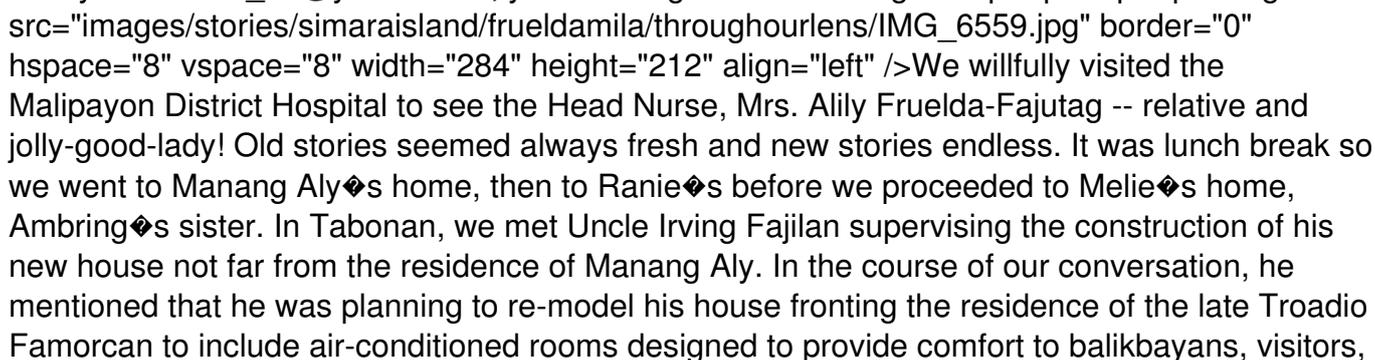
Even when that building would be gone, the memories are there forever!

 Upon entering the gate, at your direct line of sight was the school canteen made possible through the energetic leadership of Manang Daling Fajilago during the 2000 Grand Alumni Homecoming. On same ground level was the said old building, at the end of which was the Library.

Yes, library. One that served and continue to serve our student population; one that needed and still needs more books for research like Encyclopedia, not textbooks. With alumni donations, computer for research use is a welcome development. For those alumni who have not visited our alma mater for sometime, but could still visualize her location, uphill were two new classroom buildings, and a smaller one housing the Office of the Principal and the Faculty Room. It was on this smaller building that we felt the warm welcome of Principal Ontoy Famorcan together with the Faculty members. With a beautiful welcome song-- more likely than not to register 99 on karaoke-- from amiable female faculty members, group pictures, warm stories while partaking with delicious warm  pancit , what more we could ask for! Upon exiting the building, a sound of a generator caught our attention. Ambring took picture of the set for Sir Ontoy told us that the same was the donation of Johmy Fajilan. Great! Nice feeling to see it being used by the school!

 On our way down, Sir Ontoy invited us to see some projects of the students during the recently concluded Science Fair. All amazing! Reflection of how good our alma mater had grown despite more needs -- needs that our alumni could help mitigate, if given due course.

As we exchanged our parting words right at the concrete gate, we noticed that there were blocks donated by some alumni for the perimeter fence of the campus. This was another point to consider for the completion of the perimeter fence appeared vital for the protection of the assets/resources of the school -- human and material. For details of how you could donate one block, e-mail Sir Ontoy at mmfam_01@yahoo.com; you will be grateful for doing so.

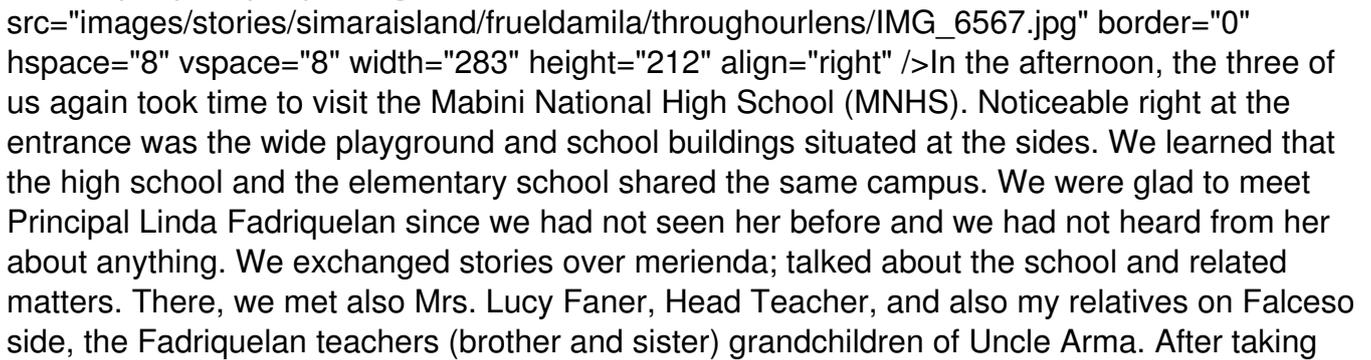
 We willfully visited the Malipayon District Hospital to see the Head Nurse, Mrs. Alily Fruelda-Fajutag -- relative and jolly-good-lady! Old stories seemed always fresh and new stories endless. It was lunch break so we went to Manang Aly's home, then to Ranie's before we proceeded to Melie's home, Ambring's sister. In Tabonan, we met Uncle Irving Fajilan supervising the construction of his new house not far from the residence of Manang Aly. In the course of our conversation, he mentioned that he was planning to re-model his house fronting the residence of the late Troadio Famorcan to include air-conditioned rooms designed to provide comfort to balikbayans, visitors,

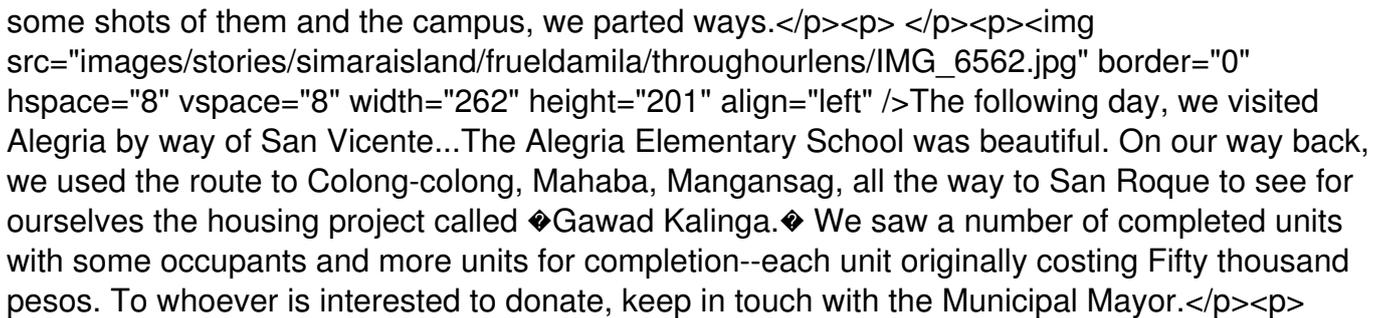
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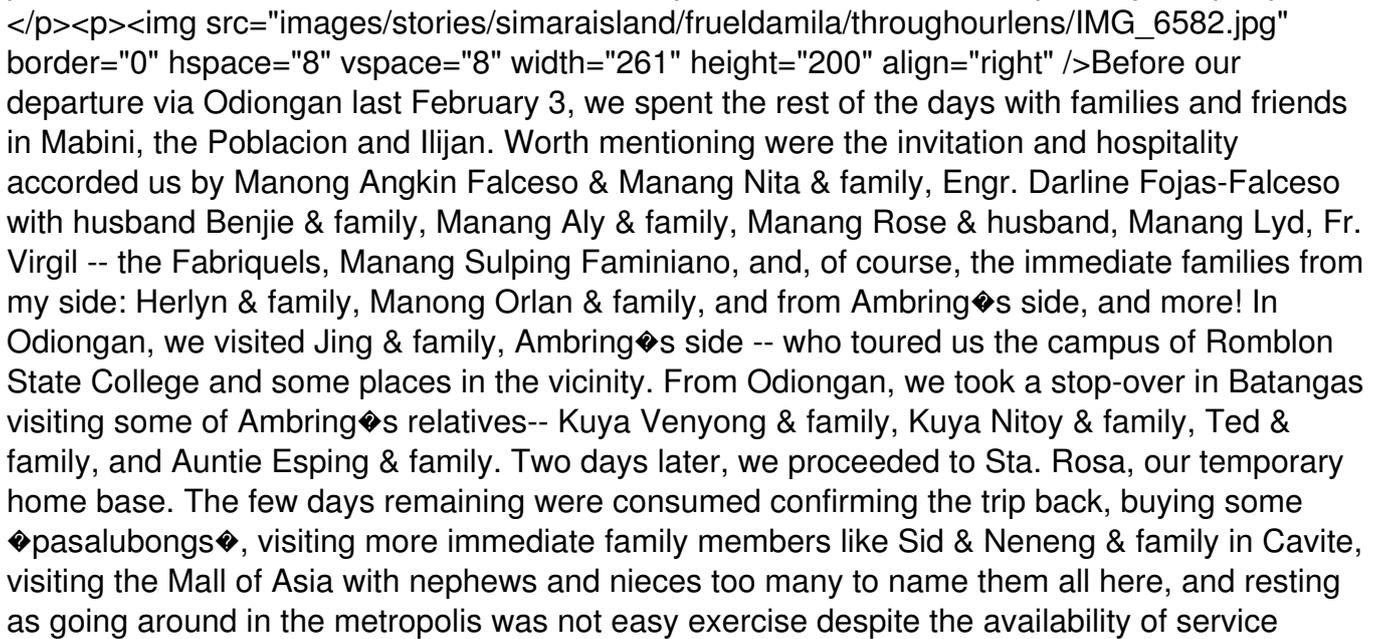
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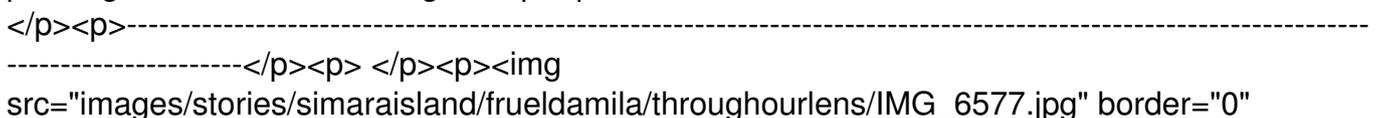
and anybody looking for comfortable room free from party-ing mosquitoes. This was great news!

In the afternoon, the three of us again took time to visit the Mabini National High School (MNHS). Noticeable right at the entrance was the wide playground and school buildings situated at the sides. We learned that the high school and the elementary school shared the same campus. We were glad to meet Principal Linda Fadriquelan since we had not seen her before and we had not heard from her about anything. We exchanged stories over merienda; talked about the school and related matters. There, we met also Mrs. Lucy Faner, Head Teacher, and also my relatives on Falceso side, the Fadriquelan teachers (brother and sister) grandchildren of Uncle Arma. After taking some shots of them and the campus, we parted ways.

The following day, we visited Alegria by way of San Vicente...The Alegria Elementary School was beautiful. On our way back, we used the route to Colong-colong, Mahaba, Mangansag, all the way to San Roque to see for ourselves the housing project called Gawad Kalinga. We saw a number of completed units with some occupants and more units for completion--each unit originally costing Fifty thousand pesos. To whoever is interested to donate, keep in touch with the Municipal Mayor.

Before our departure via Odiongan last February 3, we spent the rest of the days with families and friends in Mabini, the Poblacion and Ilijan. Worth mentioning were the invitation and hospitality accorded us by Manong Angkin Falceso & Manang Nita & family, Engr. Darline Fojas-Falceso with husband Benjie & family, Manang Aly & family, Manang Rose & husband, Manang Lyd, Fr. Virgil -- the Fabriquels, Manang Sulping Faminiano, and, of course, the immediate families from my side: Herlyn & family, Manong Orlan & family, and from Ambring's side, and more! In Odiongan, we visited Jing & family, Ambring's side -- who toured us the campus of Romblon State College and some places in the vicinity. From Odiongan, we took a stop-over in Batangas visiting some of Ambring's relatives-- Kuya Venyong & family, Kuya Nitoy & family, Ted & family, and Auntie Esping & family. Two days later, we proceeded to Sta. Rosa, our temporary home base. The few days remaining were consumed confirming the trip back, buying some pasalubongs, visiting more immediate family members like Sid & Neneng & family in Cavite, visiting the Mall of Asia with nephews and nieces too many to name them all here, and resting as going around in the metropolis was not easy exercise despite the availability of service vehicle courtesy of Phine Fajilago.

The day before our departure, Ed Fajilago and Nory with kid Ram invited us to spend the remaining night at their residence with a plus factor that being in Pasay means near to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Okay, we said. And the despedida with some of the family members and Ely Advincula around was more than okay! Few hours before departure, the group accompanied us to the airport with Ely as guide since he knew pretty well the area. Thank you! See you again, God willing!
The words that reverberated at the final moments
as we started pushing our cart towards the gate.

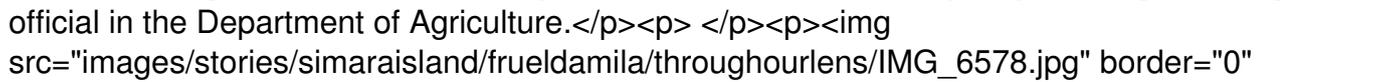


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hspace="8" vspace="8" width="351" height="262" align="right" />Afterglow: Simara, from our lens and senses, reflected a picture far different from that of ten years ago. From our front yard, fronting the town plaza -- thanks, the plaza remained an open space, which, of course, must--we can clearly see the renovated St. Joseph the Worker Parish church made possible through the leadership of Fr. Virgil Fabriquel; new buildings such as the Health Clinic, the Department of Social Services and Development (DSWD), and the Barangay Hall; the Multi-purpose covered-court was undergoing construction targeted for completion in time for the coming town fiesta this April-May. These projects were made possible during the time of then Mayor Bibiano Fanlo, and also the current administration under Mayor Marlon Fojas. More on-going projects pertained to the renovation of the Hall of Justice building, the construction of Bagsakan Center--a market utilizing the space of the old market with extension on the beach area; rain catchers (water tanks), school facilities, and more. The Bagsakan Center was realized through the assistance of Atty. Bernie Fondevilla in his capacity as a high-ranking official in the Department of Agriculture.

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We were glad about and thankful for the decision of the Sangguniang Bayan to look for another site to accommodate the construction of a PNP building, instead of the site, under consideration then, on the town plaza right in front of our ancestral home.

Our town plaza, as an open space, is naturally beautiful! To improve its aesthetic and historical value is a popular agendum to consider--a legacy to be proud of!

As to schools, the good news was the fact that out of the fifteen (15) barangays, only Guintigiban and San Agustin had no schools due in part to their proximity to Mabini and Mangansag, and to the Poblacion respectively. Some barangays had also their kindergarten.

As a whole, this picture manifests the status of education in our hometown. After the elementary level is, of course, the secondary level where we have the Corcuera National High School and the Mabini National High School. However, while these are national high schools, it is still a fact that not all elementary graduates proceed to high school for a lot of reasons --obvious one is financial, which is mitigated in a little way by the program Adopt-A-Student. Those who would like to know about this program and more, can e-mail Principal Ontoy Famorcan at mmfam_01@yahoo.com.

We were informed that in the Municipal Government, the Secondary Schools, the Elementary Schools, and other government agencies, most of those in the public service were alumni of CA/CNHS and the MNHS. Even outside of Simara, there were alumni in high positions. Eve Falejo-Fajutag, current Asst. Division Superintendent of Schools for Romblon graduated from Corcuera Academy. We did not have the luxury of time to say hello to all of them personally due to demands of travel schedule. Sir Ontoy knew about our campaign for Alumni Directory; hope you knew about it too!

As to means of transportation, there are outriggers plying directly from Simara to Batangas; Simara to Calatrava; Simara to Romblon proper; Simara to Mindoro; and, to other places. Inland, cemented roads of varying width and thickness connect the 15 barangays, except some portions of Ilijan and Labnig... fitted for bicycles, motorcycles, and tricycles, but not for four-wheel vehicles as our eyes can see it and our common sense can sense the same. Given these types of roads, motorcycles are the most common with drivers who could skillfully maneuver even the winding road on the hill going to Ilijan fully loaded -- passengerwise!

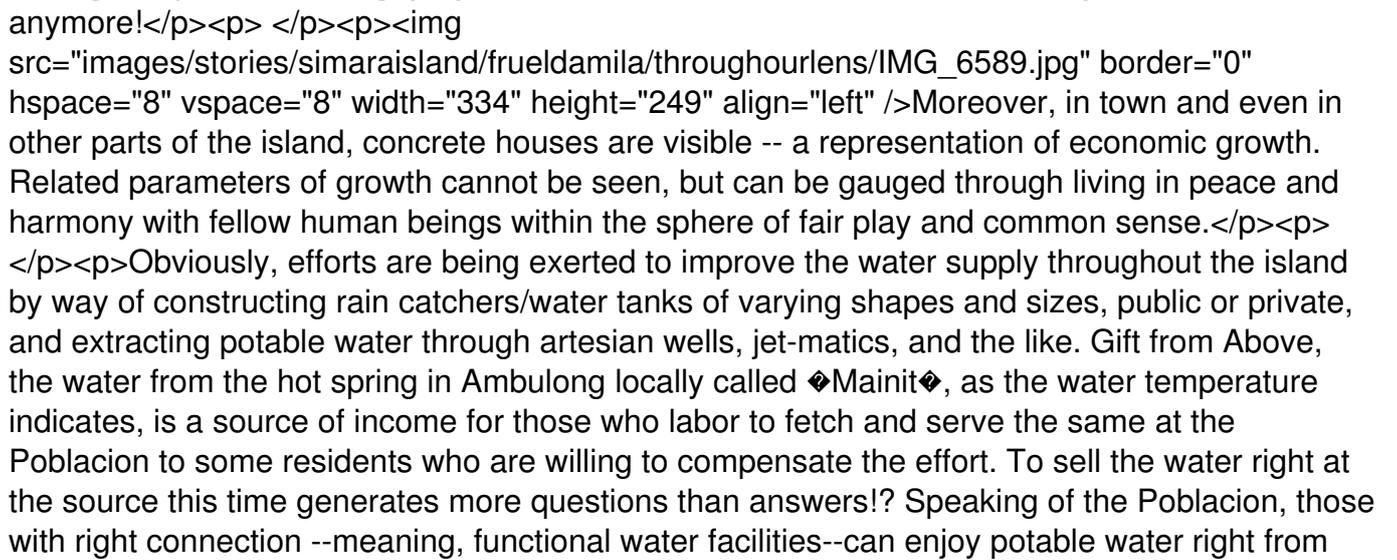
Another good news is the upgrade being undertaken by the NAPOCOR. Once completed, with target completion also prior to the coming town fiesta, it will mean additional number of hours with available electricity. Currently, the power comes on from

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5 pm - 11 pm; then from 4 am - 6 am. We are grateful for this because even in Sitio Bantadan, the highest peak in Barangay Ilijan, there is connection; we did not see **◆suyo◆** anymore!

Moreover, in town and even in other parts of the island, concrete houses are visible -- a representation of economic growth. Related parameters of growth cannot be seen, but can be gauged through living in peace and harmony with fellow human beings within the sphere of fair play and common sense.

Obviously, efforts are being exerted to improve the water supply throughout the island by way of constructing rain catchers/water tanks of varying shapes and sizes, public or private, and extracting potable water through artesian wells, jet-matics, and the like. Gift from Above, the water from the hot spring in Ambulong locally called **◆Mainit◆**, as the water temperature indicates, is a source of income for those who labor to fetch and serve the same at the Poblacion to some residents who are willing to compensate the effort. To sell the water right at the source this time generates more questions than answers!? Speaking of the Poblacion, those with right connection --meaning, functional water facilities--can enjoy potable water right from the kitchen faucet, and refreshing bath using **◆shower◆**, not the **◆tabo.◆**

In the political scene, topics about who are running for office particularly for Mayor sometimes overshadow other points of conversation over a bottle of **◆generoso◆** so much so that the May election is coming closer by each passing day. But we did not air our views relative to this topic as the situation did not warrant us to do so.

For our fellow alumni, how about 2010? Golden Foundation Year (1960-2010) of our alma mater, Corcuera Academy, now Corcuera National High School!

See you!

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