

Monthly Diary No 13

REGISTERED NAME: Edmund Rice Brothers, The Philippines, Inc.

CN200825020

(February 2008)

If you need to save ink then print only the first three pages of this document - enjoy



Monthly quote: "War does not determine who is right, war determine who is left"

Your Prayers: We start this February Diary on a sad note as we lost one our own Maryknoll Teachers last week and ask you to join us once again this time in praying for his gentle soul. He passed away after a brief illness and the suddenness of his parting surprised us all. Caesar was a born teacher and in the short time we got to know him he endeared himself to us with his dedication and professionalism. His willingness to affirm us for any small achievement and his way of assisting us when we had difficulties was well known and much appreciated. I had Caesar for many one to one drill and dialog encounters and I saw this as one of the highlights of my day. We will miss his smiling and happy disposition and our prayers go up to God for him and his family. I even plucked up the courage to say a few words at the graveside. Another cultural experience, though I could have done without this one happily enough.

Health: Only a brief word on this as my health has improved since the surgery and Frank is at the moment also being cared for by Doctor Del Monte as he has been struck down with this mystery infection which affects the whole body and not just the nose and throat. Once again antibiotics seem to have done the trick and he is well on the road to recovery. Carl stays healthy and of course he attributes this to his daily walks and advocates we join him. (He walks too fast for me) However he does have an appointment with a skin specialist just to check some possible skin cancers. The Davao's winter is nothing like our Australia winter and in fact is more like our spring but with a little more humidity and heat than we are use to. Throughout the year you never need much more than a sheet cover at night. Finally Fr Russell Hardiman is slowly improving and came out of hospital last week and has been put in the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Keep up those prayers.

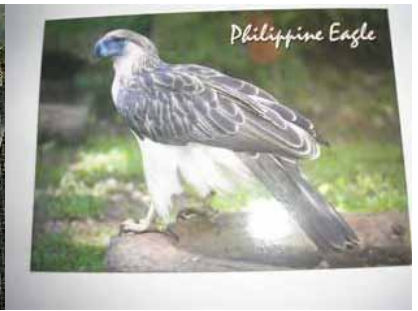
House Hunting: The hunt continues but we feel we are close to accepting a house for rent which is not far from the Hilongos School and Church (7 Min Walk) and with a little work could well serve our needs for the next twelve months. Our long term objective is of course to establish a permanent home



which we can call our own and by doing so show the local community that the Brothers are here to stay. We will keep you up to date on this project but feel assured we will have a home to go to when we complete our language course here in Davao City. Frank has just returned from a weekend visit to Hilongos. The house shown (3 bedrooms) seems the most

likely choice at this stage. Hilongos is getting quite excited about our arrival so Frank tells us. Welcome banners in the main street no less. Notice the (B) on the gate.

Our Sunday Outings: OK we have been to several places since we last shared our journey with you. Gap Farm is on the outskirts of the City and is not far from Jacks Ridge. A nice big swimming pool along with its Botanical gardens was a pleasure to visit. Carl had his obligatory swim with Marie's children but due to my recent hospitalisation I thought it wise to delay that particular enjoyment yet a little longer. The stroll through the gardens was delightful and the orchids were in full bloom. We saw a small local deer and surprised it by catching one on film. Man made displays such as the Galleries of the Presidents, Heroes and indigenous peoples of the Philippines as well as a collection of many of the animals of the country were most intriguing. We even saw another Japanese tunnel; a relic of the Second World War. They seem to be all over Davao. Eagle Park, our next excursion, was in a tropical forest environment in the foothills of Mt Apo. The Philippines is home of mighty monkey eating Eagle, a reference to its size rather than eating habits I would suggest.



They have a very vigorous breeding programme on the go and have assured the future of this raptor. An extra article can be found on the website if you're interested in reading about this wonderful bird. On display were some 20 other species of the Eagle family. A little amusing twist was the existence of the monkey's enclosure and I hope for their sake that it was not there as ready food source for the Eagles. We also saw a couple of Pythons and a Crocodile so we had a very enjoyable day. (Monkeys enclosure-Eagle Park Mt Apo)



The amazing bamboo tree caught my interest this month. I saw it growing in every Park we have visited so far and in some places it grows to amazing heights and just can not be penetrated as it grows in thickets or clumps. There are still areas where it is grown naturally but only in protected areas. It is still harvested and used as building material and even for making furniture but it is strictly controlled. I saw a worksite in the City using it for scaffolding and you can see it is amazingly strong. A length of over five metres is not uncommon. The furniture is a bit bulky for my taste but they do a good job and it's quite expensive. The children in the photo discovered a pile of cut and dried bamboo ready for the furniture makers and the second shows a small clump of bamboo.



used as building material and even for making furniture but it is strictly controlled. I saw a worksite in the City using it for scaffolding and you can see it is amazingly strong. A length of over five metres is not uncommon. The furniture is a bit bulky for my taste but they do a good job and it's quite expensive. The children in the photo discovered a pile of cut and dried bamboo ready for the furniture makers and the second shows a small clump of bamboo.

Ordination: Randi Racaldi, a young Deacon, who studied with us for some time, has just been ordained and Carl went up to Manila to represent us at the ceremony. I gave Carl my camera so was able to include a photo or three from the happy occasion. Carl also found time to do some site seeing while in

Manila. I will let him speak for himself. "On Friday 25th January I flew from Davao to Manila to attend the Ordination of a young Filipino who had been a student with us at Maryknoll Institute of language and culture. He was ordained as a Comboni Missionary Priest. I was accommodated in their Seminary in Quezon City and prayed, ate and lived with three Novices and their Novice *The newly ordained with friends* Master Fr Victor Dias from Portugal. Their hospitality was most generous. I travelled with them on the two hour journey for the Ordination on Saturday the 26th and Fr Randito's First Mass on Sunday 27th January. In the afternoon I arrived in Manila where one of the Novices accompanied me by jeepney to visit the Church of the Black Nazarene where the extraordinary faith is there for all to see and then on to the walled City built by the Spaniards at the end of the 16th century. I was surrounded by 400 years of Filipino history. The Cathedral I visited has actually been destroyed many times by earthquakes, fires and revolutions so in fact the present one is the sixth on this site. Manila is a city of 18 million people probably 4 or 5 cities in one. The traffic was horrendous and of course they have these huge billboards dominating all the main arteries in and out of the city. A noisy and polluted city full of life" (Carl - 2008)



Kabankalan News from Rod: The Philippines government supplies financial assistance on the basis of poverty to children in private high schools. This funding is administered through an agency called Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC). Funding is at the level of P5000 (A\$140) per year. It has been decided to ensure that schools accessing PEAC support be accredited as adequately supplying a sufficient standard of education. Some schools went through a preliminary process three years ago. Now all receiving schools will be assessed (or re-assessed) between August and November this year. Schools in Region VI, to which we belong, will be assessed in September.

In preparation for this event, Principals throughout the country are offered an in-service training package in the instrument of assessment. Region VI experienced it on January 21-23 and Rod joined in. The process was thorough and clear. PEAC officials were most helpful and both declared and displayed an attitude that said, 'We want to help you ensure you can accomplish what is needed'. Each Principal was invited to rate his/her own school on a five point scale under nine major headings, each with many sub-headings. Then each category was thoroughly explained and the Principals were invited to review their own assessment for that section. This continued over three days, at the end of which each Principal had a pretty clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses (or areas lacking) within their school.

Sound boring? Perhaps, but the experience was far from boring, as the presentations were professional, at times moving and sometimes very funny. Filipinos we are discovering have a great sense of humour, which often relies on plays on words. Much of this is in Tagalog or the local language – Ilonggo for us, so we miss much of it. But the general sense sometimes gets across and the ensuing hilarity certainly does.

The clear sense of direction and sense of purpose conveyed to the Principals was a very positive aspect in a sometimes gloomy outlook. The schools remain poor. Those with better facilities will score better than those with less, but improvisation can work wonders and expected improvements in classroom processes will mean a great deal.

Bye till next time from Peter Xavier Thrupp (cfc)