



# AQD Matters

Internal newsletter of the SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department

Volume 1, Number 3, 30 June 2004

The Office of the Chief  
15 June 2004

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 1  
Series of 2004-RRP

## STREAMLINING OF THE AQUACULTURE DEPARTMENT

Due to the severe budgetary constraints caused by the decreased Philippine contribution to SEAFDEC, the AQD operations shall be streamlined in accordance with the recommendations of the Philippine Technical and Administrative Committee for SEAFDEC/AQD based upon the organizational study made by the Development Academy of the Philippines. In this connection:

1. Certain positions have been determined redundant based on the study of the workloads and future needs. Functions of other positions need to be refocused towards the redefined thrust of the organization in the light of present and expected needs. Corresponding compensation packages will also be downwardly readjusted to conform to the financial realities. In this light, all existing positions are hereby abolished effective 16 July 2004.
2. The salary structure shall be adjusted accordingly. Government-mandated benefits and allowances will be retained. However, management-granted benefits will be limited to the Provident Fund, group life insurance and basic hospitalization benefits pending further study. After the study, management shall determine whether these benefits are still financially viable.
3. The guidelines for separation and filling of positions are as follows:
  - a. All employees shall be entitled to their separation benefits and other gratuities due them under the existing Administrative Rules and Regulations.
  - b. Present employees will be considered in filling newly created positions, provided that they are qualified in the light of new functions corresponding to these new positions. The list of newly created positions and functions to be filled effective 17 July 2004 and the specific instructions for filling them shall follow.
  - c. Employees should signify in writing their interest to be considered for the newly created positions by 30 June 2004.

This Order takes effect immediately.

(Signed) ROLANDO R. PLATON  
AQD Chief

## AQD Chief and DAP explain EO 1

AQD Chief Dr. Rolando Platon met with the employees of the Department at the Administration Building lobby on Wednesday, 16 June, to present and explain Executive Order No. 1 on the streamlining of AQD. Together with the Chief at the presentation was Ophelia Tongco of the Development Academy of the Philippines, the agency commissioned to review the AQD situation and recommend options for streamlining and reorganization.

Ms Tongco explained that four options were considered, but three proved to be not feasible. The option that was finally decided was "Declaring redundant positions based on productivity and impact on AQD operations considering the absorption capacity of the budget." The overriding consideration was to reduce costs in terms of personnel services, so that more of the limited funds can be used for projects in research, training, information dissemination, technology verification and commercialization.

EO 1 was issued in accordance with the recommendations of the Philippine Technical and Administrative Committee for SEAFDEC/AQD. EO 1 declares all existing positions at AQD abolished effective 16 July. New positions will be announced by end of June and employees who wish to be rehired must apply for the new positions by 30 June. The implementing guidelines for EO 1 in terms of clearances, separation benefits, length of service, and other concerns are detailed in Administrative Order No. 28 (next page).

AQD's budget has been severely reduced the last two years due to changes in the funding from the host Government of the Philippines and the donor Government of Japan. The GOP contribution to SEAFDEC fell from a high of P221.7 Million in 2001 to P112.5 M in 2003 and P100 M in 2004. The GOJ contribution to SEAFDEC has changed from core type to project type funding. All the SEAFDEC Departments used to receive GOJ contributions for operating expenses, equipment, and fellowships. Now, GOJ contributes to SEAFDEC through a Trust Fund administered by the Secretariat in Bangkok. This GOJ Trust Fund provides the budget for three regional programs implemented by AQD as the Lead Department.

The largest chunk of the AQD budget used to go to personnel services, especially for the research staff. AQD's streamlining is the last of a series of management interventions in response to the budget cuts. First to go last year were the management-granted employee benefits. Then AQD offered an attractive package for voluntary resignation and early retirement, and 82 employees left. This year, 19 employees, mostly scientists, resigned of their own accord before EO 1 was issued. The streamlining under EO 1 reduces to 130 the total number of permanent employees at all AQD stations.

— T Bagarinao

21 June 2004

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 28  
Series of 2004-RRP

**IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES  
FOR EARLY SEPARATION FROM SERVICE  
PER EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 1, SERIES OF 2004-RRP**

In order to ensure the systematic and orderly implementation of EO No. 1 Series of 2004-RRP, the following implementing guidelines for early separation from service shall be observed:

**A. Effectivity**

All existing positions shall be abolished effective 2400 hrs 16 July 2004 while new appointments or contracts of hired employees shall take effect 0000 hrs 17 July 2004.

**B. Clearance Requirement**

1. All employees are required to clear themselves of all accountabilities in order to be eligible to receive all separation benefits.
2. Clearance forms will be issued by the HRMS through the respective Division Heads' Office starting immediately.
3. Processing of clearances shall be prioritized as follows:
  - a. First priority will be given to employees who did not apply for a new position or who are not qualified for a new position.
  - b. Second priority will be given to employees who were accepted to fill new positions.

**C. Separation Benefits**

Separation benefits shall be computed as follows:

1. Employees whose length of service is less than 20 years and who are less than 50 years of age shall receive one-month gross pay for every year of service.
2. Employees who (a) are fifty (50) years of age or more with at least 10 years of service, or (b) have served the Department for 20 years or more regardless of age, shall have an automatic 2-step increase in their basic salary that shall be the basis for computing their gratuity pay as follows:
 

First 15 years: one (1) month gross pay for every year of service

16<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> years: one and a half (1½) month gross pay for every year of service

26<sup>th</sup> year and thereafter: two (2) months gross pay for every year of service

**D. Determination of Length of Service**

1. Probationary/contractual employment shall be included in the computation of the length of service of an employee.
2. Previous employment in AQD where separation benefits were not paid upon separation shall be included in the computation of the length of service of an employee.

**AQD Personnel Distribution  
(Permanent employees)**

	<u>Dec 03</u>	<u>Jan 04</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Office of the Chief (TMS, MO, DBS)	16	12	13
Administration and Finance Research (TMS, IMS, BFS)	77	44	40
	126	101	51
Training and Information	20	16	16
Technology Verification Commercialization	9	9	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>130</b>

**New Positions and Requirements**

<u>Position Categories</u>	<u>Required qualifications</u>
<i>Specialists / Officers</i>	MSc / PhD plus 7-10 years of related work experience
<i>Assistants</i>	BSc plus license for the profession plus 3-5 years of related work experience
<i>Technicians / Skilled</i>	High school, vocational, technical degree plus 3-5 years of related work experience

**C. Return Service**

All return service obligations to the Department shall be condoned.

**D. Cut-off Date for Financial Obligations**

The cut-off date of all financial obligations/balances of accountabilities such as incentive allowances, Multi-Purpose Loan (MPL), PAGIBIG, Provident Fund, Emergency Hospitalization Loans, Union dues, etc. shall be 30 June 2004.

This order takes effect immediately and accordingly modifies or supersedes other issuances contrary thereto.

(Signed) ROLANDO R. PLATON  
AQD Chief

## Filipinos bag top awards in Intel science fair

Alexander Villafania  
INQ7.net, 26 May 2004

Seven Filipino high school students bagged the top awards in the recent International Intel Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in Oregon, USA.

Joy Anne L. Aquino of E. Rodriguez Junior High School won first place in the awards given by the American Veterinary Medical Association for the project, "Biologically guided isolation of the antimicrobial component of the sea snake *Laticauda colubrina* Schieder venom." Aquino pocketed US\$1,500 for her project, which also won fourth place in the Grand Award for Medicine and Health.

Manila Science High School (MSHS) and Quezon City Science High School (QCSHS) won several awards in the group category with environmental science-related projects. MSHS won third place in the Grand Award and \$1,000 for the project, "Development of a chemically modified carbon paste electrode from green mussels (*Perna viridis*) for the analysis of lead (II) through voltammetry." The MSHS team included Alan Ray Gonzalez, Maria Katrina Rivera, and Ann Margarete Velesquez. The electrode made from 'tahong' can detect the heavy metal lead in bodies of water.

QCSHS, on the other hand, won fourth place and \$500 in the Grand Award for the project, "Simple, rapid, and inexpensive dissolved oxygen determination of wastewater samples using the tube bioluminescence extinction method of *Vibrio fischeri* USTCMS." The results of the QCSHS project, presented by students Trina Napasindayao, Melanie Melchor, and Jayson Reggie Obos, will have practical applications in wastewater treatment.

The ISEF is a world-renowned pre-college science exhibit solely sponsored by microprocessor manufacturer Intel Corporation. Over 1,200 students from over 40 countries have joined this event in six years, the Philippines participating in the last four.

## STAY YOUNG

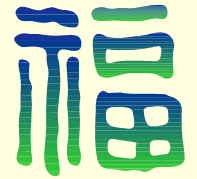
1. Throw out nonessential numbers. This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctor worry about them. That is why you pay him/her.
2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down
3. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." And the devil's name is Alzheimer's.
4. Enjoy the simple things.
5. Laugh often, long, and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.
6. The tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person, who is with us our entire life, is ourselves. Be ALIVE while you are alive.
7. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it is family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, and hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.
8. Cherish your health: If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.
9. Don't take guilt trips. Take a trip to the mall, to the next county, to a foreign country, but NOT to where guilt is.
10. Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity.

ALWAYS REMEMBER:  
Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

—George Carlin

## You are so blessed!

*If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who won't survive the week.*



*If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 20 million people around the world.*

*If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.*

*If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.*

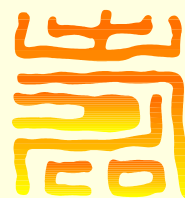
*If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish some place, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy. If your parents are still married and alive, you are very rare, especially in the United States.*

*If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.*

*If you can hold someone's hand, hug them, or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer God's healing touch.*

*If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read anything at all.*

**You are so blessed in ways  
you may never even know.**



*If you are feeling blessed, repay the blessings bestowed unto you and do something for others. Be the source of blessings to other people.*

## Gallardo is NAST Outstanding Young Scientist

AQD Scientist Wenresti Gallardo, PhD, 40, was chosen as the 2004 Outstanding Young Scientist in Marine Science by the National Academy of Science and Technology of the Philippines. The award carries a cash prize of PhP 30,000 and a Plaque of Recognition. The award ceremony will be on 15 July at the Manila Hotel.



Dr. Gallardo sees the NAST award as recognition and validation of his contributions to the scientific community over the past 15 years. He joined SEAFDEC/AQD in 1989 and worked on the hatchery and grow-out of mollusks (window pane shell, oyster, mussel, abalone and top shell). His recent focus has been on generating technologies in hatchery, grow-out, and stock enhancement of the donkey-ear abalone *Haliotis asinina*. In 2003, he was awarded a research grant by the International Foundation of Science (Stockholm, Sweden) to refine methods and strategies to improve survival, growth, and reproduction of abalone released into marine reserves.

Born and raised in Zamboanga del Norte and later in Eastern Samar, Dr. Gallardo graduated from the Leyte Research and Development High School, and then obtained his BSc Fisheries from the University of the Philippines-Diliman in 1985. He first worked as project evaluator at the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. He then studied for an MA Aquaculture from UP-Visayas in 1989. With a Monbusho scholarship from the Government of Japan, he earned his MSc Fisheries and PhD Marine Science from Nagasaki University.

In 2003, Dr. Gallardo was designated Head of the Farming Systems Section of the Research Division and served as leader of the Stock Enhancement Program. After several years at AQD, Dr. Gallardo resigned on 1 July 2004 to take up a two-year postdoctoral position at Nagasaki University.

— AP Surtida

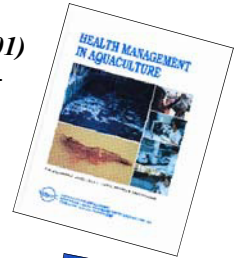
## AQD wins three NAST book awards

Even in times of uncertainty, AQD's winning tradition continues. Two textbooks and a monograph authored by AQD scientists won three Outstanding Book Awards 2004 from the National Academy of Science and Technology of the Philippines.

### *Health Management in Aquaculture (2001)*

Editors: GD Lio-Po, CR Lavilla, ER Cruz-Lacierda

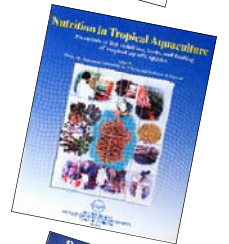
Chapter authors: CR Lavilla, GD Lio-Po, EV Alapide-Tendencia, LD de la Peña, EM Leño, ER Cruz-Lacierda, GE Pagador, JME Almendras, RD Caturao



### *Nutrition in Tropical Aquaculture (2002)*

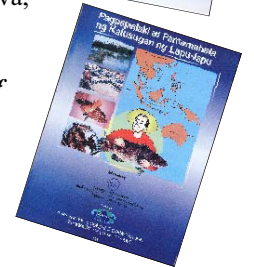
Editors: OM Millamena, RM Coloso, FP Pascual

Chapter authors: OM Millamena, IG Borlongan, RM Coloso, NV Golez, MR Catacutan, MB Teruel, VR Alava, RF Agbayani



### *Husbandry and Health Management of Grouper (2000)*

Authors: EC Lacierda, CR Lavilla, JD Toledo, NJ Ogburn, NV Golez



The two textbooks on health management and on nutrition were written based on lectures and laboratory practicals given during the yearly training courses conducted at AQD over so many years. They are the first two books produced under the Textbook Writing Project initiated by AQD Chief RR Platon and implemented by the Training and Information Division by the Heads RF Agbayani and Engr PL Torres Jr. and information specialists MT Castaños, MB Surtida, and RQ Gacutan. These textbooks are now used by fisheries schools in the Philippines. The monograph on grouper health management was prepared by AQD for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Fisheries Working Group and has been translated into several languages used in southeast Asia, including Filipino.

The award ceremony will be held at the Manila Hotel on July 15 during NAST's 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting. NAST's vision is a progressive Philippines anchored on science. The awards are part of NAST's mission to recognize exemplary science and technology achievements among the young and among peers.

— AP Surtida

**Honestly try to read this, you'll be amazed.**

Cduolt blveiee taht I cluod aulactly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdgnieg THE PAOMNNEHAL PWEOR OF THE HMUAN MNID Aoccdmig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Unervtisy, it deosn't mttair in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny ipmoantn thng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit plcae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihis is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey ltteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. **Amzanig huh?**

## MarFish in progress

Seven participants are currently enrolled in the Marine Fish Hatchery training course at AQD from 2 June to 16 July, with MTC Mallare as Course Officer and DR Chavez as Technical Lead Person.

The six-week course provides the trainees technical knowledge and skills for operating a commercial marine fish hatchery. The course covers various aspects of marine fish seed production, including design and construction of hatchery systems, broodstock management and spawning techniques, propagation of natural food organisms, larval rearing, and fry harvest, and packing. The trainees got to rear and harvest milkfish, grouper, sea bass, and rabbitfish larvae.

The MarFish participants are Phan Thanh Viet of Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam; Rodelio Eusebio of Pasig City; Ricardo Cruz of Las Pinas City; Dr. Erraldine Felix of Taytay, Rizal; Glenda Tiguistiguais of Surigao del Norte; and Jeremiah Buendia of AQD. Professor Weeny Tandang of Cavite State University, Naic Campus, attended the first week of MarFish, but quickly found her hatchery schedule in conflict with the reports required by her research supervisor. Rodel and Ric are young and progressive entrepreneurs interested in getting their hands wet. Dr. Felix is an orthopedic whose family owns fish pens in Laguna de Bay. Glenda is the shy but competent hatchery technician. Jeremiah took the course the better to prepare for his job as training assistant in future courses.

—AP Surtida

## Professors benefit from AQD training

Noraldito Hernandez, 43, Assistant Professor of Cavite State University, Naic Campus is beaming with a lot of confidence these days. He just concluded his recent training in freshwater fish hatchery and management at the facilities of ABCDEF (Aquaculture-Based Community Development Enterprises Foundation, a joint venture of SEAFDEC/AQD with Meralco Foundation) in Jalajala, Rizal. He conducted a study on the polyculture of tilapia and the freshwater prawn locally called *ulang*. His primary trainers were AQD researchers Ruel Eguia and Angelito Gonzal.

Mr. Hernandez said that the AQD training will certainly serve him in good stead when he returns to Naic campus on 1 July. He teaches courses in fish pond construction, fishpond management and fertilization, ecology of fishes, and aquatic invertebrates.

Mr. Hernandez is one of two faculty members of Cavite State U so far trained by AQD in aquaculture research under a Memorandum of Agreement inked last year. Weeny Tandang, Instructor III, has also completed her training in fish health at AQD Tigbauan and has gone back to Naic with boxes of books and laboratory supplies, ready to start her own microbiological research.

—AP Surtida

## RTC on fisheries statistics

The Second ASEAN-SEAFDEC Regional Technical Consultation (RTC) on Fishery Statistics was organized by the SEAFDEC Secretariat in Hua Hin City, Thailand, 15-18 June. The RTC was organized as part of the project, Capacity Building for the Improvement of Fishery Statistical System in the ASEAN Region. It was attended by delegates from the 11 Member Countries and representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat, FAO, and SIDA.

The RTC reviewed and evaluated the implementation of the Secretariat project, particularly at the pilot sites in Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. It discussed the guidebook *Collecting Fishery Statistics for Inland and Coastal Fisheries*, which, however, does not include aquaculture. There was a long discussion of the fisheries, aquaculture, and socioeconomic data to be included in the *Fishery Statistical Bulletin for the Southeast Asian Region*, to be produced by the SEAFDEC Secretariat. Everybody agreed that aquaculture statistics are important, but there was no talk on how to collect them properly.

FAO Representative S Sugiyama presented a proposal for collaboration with SEAFDEC to improve collection, reporting, and use of statistics in fisheries and aquaculture in SE Asia. The FAO initiative is ongoing, but now they deal directly with the national fisheries agencies. The Secretariat did not say what form of collaboration they will undertake with FAO. I told Mr. Sugiyama that AQD is very interested in helping countries gather accurate and reliable aquaculture stats, and that we would work with FAO in any way we can.

I got interested in fisheries statistics in 1986 when AQD Chief FJ Lacanilao asked me to do a paper with AS Camacho on 'the effect of aquaculture on mangroves', which topic I did not yet understand, and which I turned around into 'the effect of mangroves on fisheries', based on the BFAR statistics. Then in 1997, RD Head CL Marte asked me to do a book chapter on the status and trends in milkfish farming. I graphed BAS and BFAR statistics for aquaculture and fisheries, and saw some interesting or disturbing trends. One, I was bothered by the fact that the curves were mostly smooth, as if obtained by mere projection, rather than fluctuating as biological systems actually do. Two, the milkfish production data seemed erroneous, or did not measure up to the research output of AQD.

I wanted very much to get reassurance from BAS and BFAR that our stats are sound and useful for policy and decision-making. I suggested to Dr. Marte that AQD-RD should take initiatives in collecting good aquaculture statistics in the Philippines, similar to what IR Smith and KC Chong did in the late 70s and early 80s. I was told that there was such a project in the Fisheries Sector program, but to date no data are available. We need to 'ground-truth the BAS and BFAR stats.

AQD should make an effort to put in place a more or less standard but simple system of recording, reporting, and accessing aquaculture statistics in all the Member Countries. Of course, first we have to establish the objectives, methodologies, and uses of the statistics so that they are cost-effective. AQD should work with FAO if the Secretariat does not.

—T Bagarinao



## A World without Filipinos

*Ernestina Peralta [tina\_peralta@hotmail.com]*



Let's imagine the entire world waking up one day to discover Filipinos have disappeared. I'm talking here about the six or seven million Filipinos currently working overseas in countries with names that run the entire alphabet, from Angola to Zimbabwe. Let's not worry first about why or how the Filipinos disappeared; in fact, it becomes academic whether it's a day or a week. Just imagine a world without Filipinos.

Think of the homes that are dependent on Filipino housekeepers, nannies, caregivers. The homes would be chaotic as kids cry out for their nannies. Hong Kong and Singaporean and Taiwanese yuppie couples are now forced to stay home and realizing, goodness, there's so much of housework that has to be handled and how demanding their kids can be and hey, what's this strange language they're babbling in?

It's not just the children that are affected. The problems are even more serious with the elderly in homes and nursing institutions, because Filipino caregivers have provided so much of the critical services they need. When temporary contractual workers are brought in from among non-Filipinos, the elderly complain. They want their Filipino caregivers back because they have that special touch, that extra patience and willingness to stay an hour more when needed.

Hospitals, too, are adversely affected because so many of the disappeared Filipinos were physicians, nurses and other health professionals. All appointments for rehabilitation services, from children with speech problems to stroke survivors, are indefinitely postponed because of disappeared speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists.

Eventually, the hospital administrators announce they won't take in any more patients unless the conditions are serious. Patients are told to follow their doctors' written orders and, if they have questions, to seek advice on several Internet medical sites. But within two days, the hospitals are swamped with new complaints. The websites aren't working because of missing Filipino web designers and website managers.

Service establishments throughout the world—restaurants, supermarkets, hotels—all close down because of their missing key staff involved in management and maintenance. In Asia, hotels complain about the missing bands and singers.

In the United States, many commercial establishments have to close shop, not just because of the missing Filipino sales staff but because their suppliers have all been sending in notices about delays in shipments. Yup, the shipping industry has gone into a crisis because of missing Filipino seafarers. Shipping firms begin to look into the emergency recruitment of non-Filipino seafarers but then declare another crisis: they're running out of supplies of oil for their ships because the Middle Eastern countries have come to a standstill without their Filipino workers, including quite a few working for the oil industry.

Frantic presidents and prime ministers call on the United Nations to convene a special session of the Security Council but Kofi Annan says he can't do that because the UN system itself is on the edge, with so many of their secretarial and clerical staff, as well as translators, having disappeared from their main headquarters in New York and Geneva, as well as their regional offices throughout the world. Quite a number of UN services, especially refugee camps, are also in danger of closing down because of missing Filipino health professionals and teachers.

Annan also explains that he can't convene UN meetings because the airports in New York, Washington and other major US cities have been shut down. The reason? The disappeared Filipinos included quite a few airport security personnel who used to check passengers and their baggage.

Annan calls on the World Bank and international private foundations for assistance but they're crippled, too, because their Filipino consultants and staff are nowhere to be seen. Funds can't be remitted and projects can't run without the technical assistance provided by Filipinos.

An exasperated Annan calls on religious leaders to pray, and pray hard. But when he phones the Pope, he is told the Catholic Church, too, is in crisis because the disappeared include the many Filipino priests and nuns in Rome who help run day-to-day activities, as well as missionaries in the frontlines of remote posts, often the only ones providing basic social services.

As they converse, Annan and the Pope agree on one thing. The world has become a quieter place since the Filipinos disappeared. It isn't just the silencing of work and office equipment formerly handled by Filipinos, no. It seems there's much less laughter now that the Filipinos aren't around, both their laughter and that of those they served.

I know, I know, I'm exaggerating the contributions of Filipinos to the world, but I'm doing what the producers of "A Day Without Mexicans" had in mind: using a bit of hyperbole to shake people up. As their blurb for the film goes: "How do you make the invisible, visible? Make them invisible."

As I wrote this column, I did realize I was doing this not so much for the Hong Kong Chinese and Taiwanese and Singaporeans and Americans who don't appreciate us enough, than for us Filipinos, who are pretty good at putting ourselves down, at making ourselves invisible.

Just think. If we Filipinos actually made a global strike, what do you think will happen to the economies of the world, including our own?

So don't even think about it.



## Blonde and Blue Eyes

*Patricia Evangelista*

When I was little, I wanted what many Filipino children all over the country wanted. I wanted to be blond, blue-eyed, and white. I thought—if I just wished hard enough and was good enough, I'd wake upon Christmas morning with snow outside my window and freckles across my nose!

More than four centuries under western domination does that to you. I have sixteen cousins. In a couple of years, there will just be five of us left in the Philippines, the rest will have gone abroad in search of "greener pastures." It's not just an anomaly; it's a trend—the Filipino diaspora. Today about eight million Filipinos are scattered around the world.

There are those who disapprove of Filipinos who choose to leave. I used to. Maybe this is a natural reaction of someone who was left behind, smiling for family pictures that get emptier with each succeeding year. Desertion, I called it. My country is a land that has perpetually fought for the freedom to be itself. Our heroes offered their lives in the struggle against the Spanish, the Japanese, the Americans. To pack up and deny that identity is tantamount to spitting on that sacrifice.

Or is it? I don't think so, not anymore. True, there is no denying this phenomenon, aided by the fact that what was once the other side of the world is now a twelve-hour plane ride away. But this is a borderless world, where no individual can claim to be purely from where he is now. My mother is of Chinese descent, my father is a quarter Spanish, and I call myself a pure Filipino—a hybrid of sorts resulting from a combination of cultures.

Each square mile anywhere in the world is made up of people of different ethnicities, with national identities and individual personalities. Because of this, each square mile is already a microcosm of the world. In as much as this blessed spot that is England is the world, so is my neighborhood back home. Seen this way, the Filipino Diaspora, or any sort of dispersal of populations, is not as ominous as so many claim. It must be understood.

I come from a Third World country, one that is still trying mightily to get back on its feet after many years of dictatorship. But we shall make it, given more time. Especially now, when we have thousands of eager young minds who graduate from college every year. They have skills. They need jobs. We cannot absorb them all. A borderless world presents a bigger opportunity, yet one that is not so much abandonment but an extension of identity. Even as we take, we give back.

We are the 40,000 skilled nurses who support the UK's National Health Service. We are the quarter-of-a-million seafarers manning most of the world's commercial ships. We are your software engineers in Ireland, your construction workers in the Middle East, your doctors and caregivers in North America, and, your musical artists in London's West End.

Nationalism isn't bound by time or place. People from other nations migrate to create new nations, yet still remain essentially who they are. British society is itself an example of a multicultural nation, a melting pot of races, religions, arts and cultures. We are, indeed, in a borderless world!

## Our Biggest Natural Resource

*Ernestina Peralta*

We Filipinos must accept that the biggest natural resource of our country is its people. Whether our people work their butts off in Saudi Arabia, Manila or Pamurayan is really not the issue. The issue is they work and they bring in revenues for our country. We should start rethinking that our people is like our gold in Baguio, or bananas in Davao, or copra from Sorsogon.

We have to realize and accept that even if we have full employment in our country, our people will still go abroad because that is how we are—we are not parochial and we are a very curious lot. We all love to experience new things so much so that even the most simple person from the remotest barrio would like to go to Sorsogon, and then sets his sights on Manila, then eventually abroad. We have to be happy that we as a people do not just sit down, give up and die. We are resilient, resourceful, determined, hardworking, and we speak English. And that, just like the quality of our bananas, copra and gold, are the qualities that make a Filipino a product that is extremely in demand all over this planet.

So let's stop forever blaming our governments for the exodus of our people abroad. This has been going on since the early 1900s when many Ilocanos migrated to the islands of Hawaii to work the plantations. The Filipinos just love to exercise a right—freedom of movement. The Europeans and Americans do it a lot and they are called 'expatriates' or 'investors' or 'trailblazers.' In our country, we are labeled 'traidor' or 'unpatriotic' or a 'sell-out.' We have to do a major rethink in our mindset so that the very people who are propping up the Government of the Philippines are not ostracized.

Leaving sometimes isn't a matter of choice. It's coming back that is. The Hobbits of the shire traveled all over Middle Earth, but they chose to come home, richer in every sense of the word. We call people like these 'balikbayans' or returnees—those who followed their dream, yet chose to return and share their mature talents and good fortune.

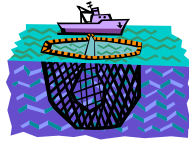
In a few years, I may take advantage of whatever opportunities come my way. But I will come home. A borderless world doesn't preclude the idea of a home. I'm a Filipino, and I'll always be one. It isn't just about geography; it isn't about boundaries. It's about giving back to the country that shaped me. And that's going to be more important to me than seeing snow outside my windows on a bright Christmas morning.

Mabuhay! Thank you.

*Patricia Evangelista is the 19-year-old Mass Comm sophomore of UP-Diliman, who did the country proud by besting 59 other students from 37 countries in the 2004 International Public Speaking competition in London conducted by the English Speaking Union.*

## A Message for World Environment Day

*UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan*



The marine environment is facing challenges that, if not addressed immediately and effectively, will have profound implications for sustainable development. The theme of World Environment Day 200— Wanted! Seas and Oceans: Dead or Alive? —emphasizes that society can no longer view the world's seas as a convenient dumping ground for our wastes, or as an unlimited source of plenty.

The facts are clear. The world's seas and oceans are becoming increasingly tainted by untreated waste water, airborne pollution, industrial effluents, and silt from inadequately managed watersheds. Nitrogen overload from fertilizers is creating a growing number of oxygen-starved 'dead zones' in coastal waters across the globe. Marine litter is killing up to a million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals and turtles each year. With more than 40 per cent of the human population already living within 60 kilometers of a coast, and the proportion growing, these problems are likely only to increase.

Moreover, despite the growing reach and intensity of commercial fishing operations, total global fish catch is declining. Nearly three quarters of world fish stocks are being harvested faster than they can reproduce.

There is an urgent need for concerted action, on land and sea, at the national, regional and international levels. Mechanisms already exist, including the Global Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization action plans for fisheries. Nevertheless, the continuing depletion of the world's fish stocks and the increasing degradation of the marine environment indicate that these and other instruments, binding or non-binding, are not being sufficiently implemented and enforced.

Less than two years ago, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, governments committed to time-bound goals to end unsustainable fishing practices, restore depleted fish stocks, establish a regular global assessment of the marine environment, and create a representative network of marine protected areas. This last goal, to be achieved by 2012, is particularly important. Less than 0.5 per cent of marine habitats are protected—compared with 11.5 per cent of global land area. Yet studies show that protecting critical marine habitats, such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangroves, can dramatically increase fish size and quantity, with obvious benefits to large-scale commercial as well as local fisheries.

On this World Environment Day, I urge governments, businesses, and individuals everywhere to show renewed respect for the seas and oceans from whence all life on earth originated. Let us all do our utmost to ensure that the world's most prolific natural resource is protected and sustainably managed for generations to come.

## The paradox of our times

We have taller buildings but shorter tempers,  
wider freeways but narrower viewpoints.  
We spend more, but have less.  
We buy more, but enjoy less.



We have bigger houses and smaller families,  
more conveniences, but less time.  
We have more degrees but less sense,  
more knowledge, but less judgment,  
more experts, yet more problems,  
more medicine, but less wellness.



We drink too much, smoke too much, drive too fast,  
spend too much, stay up too late, get up too tired,  
read too little, watch TV too much,  
get too angry, laugh too little, and pray too seldom.



We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.  
We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.  
We have learned how to make a living, but not a life.  
We have added years to life, not life to years.

We have been all the way to the moon and back,  
but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor.  
We conquered outer space but not inner space.  
We have done larger things, but not better things.

We have cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.  
We have conquered the atom, but not our prejudice.  
We write more, but learn less.  
We plan more, but accomplish less.



We have learned to rush, but not to wait.  
We build more computers to hold more information,  
to produce more copies than ever,  
but we communicate less and less.



These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion,  
big men and small character,  
steep profits and shallow relationships.  
These are the days of two incomes but more divorce,  
fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are the days of quick trips and disposable diapers,  
throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies,  
and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the showroom window  
and nothing in the stockroom.  
A time when technology can bring this letter to you,  
and a time when you can choose  
either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

