

Slain Journalist's Daughter Unites Community - MabuhayRadio

Written by

Wednesday, 06 October 2010 17:27 - Last Updated Thursday, 24 March 2011 20:08

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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Slain Journalist's Daughter Unites Community in Chicago

CHICAGO (jGLi) – Julia Mae P. Reblando came to Chicago, Illinois, to receive the \$1,000 scholarship award from the Chicago Journalists Association last Oct. 1 but she left the fractious two Filipino-American media organizations rallying behind her.

Ms. Reblando, 14, a junior high-school student of Holy Trinity College in General Santos City in the Philippines, is the daughter of Alejandro “Bong” M. Reblando, one of the 30 journalists slain during what has become known as Maguindanao Massacre that took place on Nov. 23, 2009.

She was accompanied by her mother, Mrs. Myrna P. Reblando, when she accepted the scholarship award from CJA President Allen Rafalson and CJA Charitable Fund President Karen Pettite during the Dinner award-giving event. Julia Mae was overwhelmed by emotion that she could not read her prepared message. She asked her Mom to read the message for

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her.

Gerry Alcantara, a member of National Press Club of the Philippines in the U.S. (NPC Phil.-U.S.A.), executive producer of Fil-Am TV Show upon hearing of Julia Mae's arrival, collected \$700 from his own and his own family and \$300 from his clients, Roland and Jasmine Sinio of ACS (Affordable Caregiving Solutions) Home Health Services, Inc., to match her \$1,000 CJA scholarship award and hosted them a dinner.

On the other hand, Ms. Veronica Leighton and Joe Mauricio, members of the Filipino-American Media Organization of the United States (FAMOUS) and executive producers of Chicago Philippine Reports TV, secured family-rate hotel discount for two days for the Reblandos and gave away more than \$100 cash from her personal pocket and designers bag, sweater and clothing as souvenirs to Julia Mae and her Mom.

Ms. Leighton and Mr. Mauricio also happened to talk to Doctors Nunilo and Elenita Rubio into sponsoring the scholarship of Julia Mae under the Philippine Medical Association in Chicago (PMAC) Foundation headed by Dr. Roger Cave. The Rubios, along with their other son, Dr. Noel Rubio, also gifted Mrs. Reblando with \$300 as their birthday gift to Mrs. Reblando.

Ms. Leighton also made a case for other officers of FAMOUS to give donations to the Reblandos from its coffer now that FAMOUS has established contacts with one of the Massacre surviving families in the Reblandos. She said other FAMOUS officers, Anong Santos of *Pinoy*

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Monthly

, and Orly Bernardino of

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have agreed to make the donation. One officer is a hold out and Ms. Leighton hopes that he changes his mind.

In the case of the NPC Phil.-U.S.A., some members namely Jun Delfin gave \$50, Elsie Niebar, \$30, Lourdes Ceballos, \$100, and Joseph G. Lariosa, \$200. The club is still collecting contributions from its members to balance the budget of more than \$500 spent by the club to pay for the expenses for the \$200 return round-trip tickets from Las Vegas and Chicago for two and for other expenses of the mother and daughter while they were in Chicago.

A community member, Ms. Perla G. Londres, financial adviser of Financial Consultant Group and an alumna of the Central Philippine University, hosted the two-day stay of the Reblandos in her home in Oak Park, Illinois, and toured them around the city Monday. Ms. Londres was recommended to Joseph G. Lariosa by Ms. Carmen "Menchu" Aquino Sarmiento, executive director of Philippine Airlines Foundation, which sponsored the round-trip tickets of the Reblandos from General Santos City to Las Vegas, Nevada.

At the CJA Dinner Award, the Julia Mae and her Mom thanked the CJA officers and the 131 guests who attended the dinner for making their trip to Chicago possible.

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In one of her stirring messages, the junior high school student said, “There’s no doubt the death of my father, Mr. Alejandro “Bong” M. Reblando, was the reason I am here. If I have my choice, I would rather have been in the Philippines with my father seeing me grow and guide me to be responsible adult individual.

“The absence of my father made me grow a little bit older because I am trying to find an answer why the powerful war lords and politicians would kill my father and 56 other people, including 30 journalists, who were just trying to do their job – write the biggest story of the day – the first time in our area that a politician would like to beat a well-entrenched Philippine Provincial Governor, who does not want to cede his office to anyone he does not like.”

As she ascended the stage, popular Filipino-American community torch singer Ellen Balmadrid crooned the haunting song, “You’ll Never Walk Alone.” At this point, Julia Mae broke down and summoned her mom to speak on her behalf.

Her presence in the ceremonies prompted the CJA to decorate the event with a Philippine flag for the first time and had Ms. Balmadrid sing the Philippine national anthem (Pambansang Awit) also for the first time. They even asked for the first time to be seated on the presidential table a Filipino newsman (Joseph G. Lariosa) and have him speak during the event to describe Lariosa’s previous association with the fallen Bong Reblando. Lariosa and Reblando were both former staff members of the *Manila Bulletin*.

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Retired broadcast journalist Dick Kay of WMAQ-NBC acted as the emcee.

The Reblandos arrived in the nick of time Friday afternoon in Chicago for the awards ceremonies.

They were met and will be sent off at their port of entry in Las Vegas, Nevada by Renato Avenido of the

www.usnewsลาสvegas.com

. Mr. Avenido met Bong Reblando, who visited

Las Vegas

in 2001.

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Editor's Note: To contact the author, please e-mail him at: (lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net)

{xtypo_quote} Please see for an update [NUJP Disowns Getting "Massacre" Donation](#)
{/xtypo_quote}

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