

JGL Eye

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

(Journal Group Link International)

Georgia (and Butanding and Abaca) On My Mind

A TLANTA (*jGLi*) – It was too-tempting an invitation to pass up. My sister, Dona L. Hernandez, a veterinarian, asked me to come with her as her guest at the 147th American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in Atlanta, Georgia, from July 31 to Aug. 3rd.

A distant relative, Angel E. Ramos, whom I have not yet met in person, has accepted my entreaties to meet him in Atlanta. I have only been connected with Angel through the e-mail and Facebook. But a few days before our arrival in Atlanta, he broke the bad news that his sister, Lorna, died in New York and this will require his presence at the Big Apple.

Written by

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{xtypo_quote} **Editor's Note:** Please read an article earlier published about Dona Lariosa-Hernandez, [Fil-Am Veterinarian from Sorsogon Pays Tribute to Military](#) {/xtypo_quote}

When we got to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the four-day pass worth \$27 each dangled to us by MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) became very attractive. This would give us an opportunity to explore the city with unlimited rides on board the trains and buses until midnight of the fourth day.

On the first night of the convention, the nearly 8,000 veterinarians, student veterinarians and their guests came in full force as they patiently walked in line towards a concert hall, where San Francisco rockers "Train" was going to welcome the delegates to the convention. The band led by front man Pat Monahan whose Grammy Award winning hits "Drops of Jupiter (Tell Me)," "Calling All Angels" and "Hey, Soul Sister" brought down the house.

The following day, a morning local TV broadcast announced that President Barack Obama would be speaking in Atlanta the next day before the Disabled American Veterans' annual convention, where he announced the reduction of U.S. Forces in Iraq by 50,000 at the end of this month.

THEY SHOULD HAVE INVITED THE FIRST PET OWNER

This led me to ask my sister, why the AVMA did not invite Mr. Obama to the convention, which was like shooting two birds with one stone for Mr. Obama, considering that Mr. Obama has his First Dog, "Bo," a Portuguese water dog.

Bo's veterinarian could have asked Mr. Obama to attend the convention. Mr. Obama could have updated the veterinarians about the health of Bo and his policies on veterinary shortages, small business, animal welfare and other issues that will benefit the profession.

If Bo's veterinarian could not pull off the invitation, perhaps, they can try to enlist the help of the incumbent Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, who is also a veterinarian, or Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader, who is the only member of the U.S. House of Representatives, who is a veterinarian.

But my sister said, the AVMA needs good "PR" handlers to convince Mr. Obama to attend the convention, which I agree.

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I told her maybe when Mr. Obama runs for re-election in 2012, he will accommodate an invitation from the doctors of man's best friend when they observe the 149th convention in San Diego

,
California

. The AVMA, which has 79,432 members, could be a potent voting and individual fund-raising block.

The AVMA includes several hundreds of Filipino Americans, about a couple of dozens of them, including my sister, were in attendance at the AVMA convention. The other members of the Philippine Veterinary Medical Association-U.S.A. I met were Doctors Nathaniel L. Tablante of the University of Maryland, Daniel Bautista of University of Delaware, Constante A. Tinaza of Salisbury

,
MD
, and Dave Fernandez of
Cary

,
North Carolina
, and Mark Dekich of
Salisbury
, whose wife is a Filipina, and Teresa Dormitorio, research associate of
Auburn
University
in
Alabama
.

My sister was also able to squeeze in a half-day tour of Georgia Aquarium, the biggest in the world. It houses several whale sharks (called by Filipinos as the "butanding"). In the Philippines,

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it could only be observed up close by the bay in my native town of Donsol, Sorsogon, Bicol Region

There were also the Red-Lion fishes that are natives to the Philippines.

Next thing up for me was my 55-minute tour of the CNN, which is the annex of hotel that we occupied – Omni Hotel – that was just across the AVMA convention center – Georgia World Congress Center

. I have no complaints against the hotel, as its convention services assistant, Douglas Pavey, let me charged my Ipod Touch in its Business Center even after I have checked out of the hotel.

The other half-day I spent in the beautiful city of Atlanta was in the museum of the World of Coca Cola, that turned Atlanta into the beverage capital of the world just as the indigenous Manila hemp (trade name for the abaca fiber) made the “Manila envelope” a household word.

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{xtypo_quote} **Editor's Note:** It may interest readers to know that this editor owns the domain name, www.manilahemp.com , and that he has proposed the setting up of an Abaca International Development and Research Institute in Sorsogon Province, per this article, [How the ReVOTElution Will "Reinvent" Education and Life in Sorsogon](#) {/xtypo_quote}

“DRINK OF HAPPINESS”

It was in 1940 when the “drink of happiness” was first introduced in the Philippines. It was distributed by

kalesa

, a horse-drawn vehicle of that era. It was also part of the inventory of drinks of the American soldiers during World War II.

On my way out of the Coca Cola museum, I met another Filipino guy, Joe Eigo, from Toronto, Canada

, who was also touring

Atlanta

. The Georgian city was possibly named after the daughter of a former

Georgia

governor Wilson Lumpkin, whose daughter's middle name was Atalanta, after the fleet-footed goddess. Mr. Eigo is a film-and-commercial actor known for his “multivelmoves.com”

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As my sister and I prepared to go back to the airport, we tried to visit the High Museum of Art where we chanced upon the tail end of the press conference on the first major exhibition of the late Spanish master Salvador Dali's works of art that will be on display at the High Museum from Aug. 7th to Jan. 9, 2011.

A member of the Museum staff even offered us to partake with cookies and coffee reserved for members of the press.

I have been to other arts museums, like Chicago's, but the High Museum of Art Atlanta is rich with European and American collections but it has a dearth of Asian art works.

Among its paintings was about the early American occupation of the Philippines, which spoke volumes of the era. I would have loved to view the complete collections but we have to hurry to the airport.

Although, my three-day visit to Atlanta was fleeting and almost a blur, I found the Atlantans courteous, hospitable and friendly. A side from my home province of Sorsogon and of course Chicago, Georgia will always be on my mind. # # #

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