

First Pinoy Ball in South Canterbury

By Ramon Acero



Pinoy Southies braved the cold winter night of August 7 to come together and stage their first-ever Filipino Ball in Timaru, South Canterbury. From the different walks and suasions of life, and the far reaches and the heart of the Mainland towns—Timaru, Temuka, Geraldine, Fairlie, Tekapo, Kurow, Waimate, Oamaru, and Ashburton—Filipinos, their friends and supporters converged in Scottish Hall to celebrate the Winter Feast—Philippine-style Fiesta! The night signified the formal inauguration of **THE SOUTH CANTERBURY FILIPINO ASSOCIATION, INC. (TSCFAI)**, with the induction of their officers: Ramon Acero, President; Mercy Reynolds, First Vice President; Ver de Guzman, Second Vice President; Belinda Dewe, Secretary; Inday Schuster, Treasurer and Directors: Trudy Clarkson, Mary Anne Bongay, Chato Westgarth, Susan Butler and Amy Burke.

On hand to welcome everyone, was the Hon. Mayor of Timaru Wynne Raymond, Philippine Consul Myla Macahilig, and Charge d' Affaires Lolita Capco to induct the officers, Rev. Fr. Earl Crotty to deliver the invocation and distinguished guests from Auckland Filipino Community to toast: Gil Domingo—General Manager of Forex-Umac, Gloria Hooker—Senior Travel Consultant of Holiday Shoppe, and Lorna Graham—one of the pillars of The Filipino Society, Inc. and The Kabayan Newspaper.

Showcasing pompous folk dances coming complete with authentic traditional Filipino costumes, the event generated big crowd, warm accolades, write-ups and reviews from the print and broadcast media—from The Timaru Herald, The High Country Community Herald, The Courier Times, 98 Port FM, and National Radio. *“It’s not everyday that the Mainland sees Tinikling, La Jota, Kuracha, Pandanggo sa ilaw, Pinoy Modern Ocho-ocho and Spaghetti dance mix, Vaudeville ala-Chicago dance, professional tap dances, and top calibre singing. The gastronomic cuisines and the warmth of Filipino hospitality are just icings on the cake,”* enthused by Mrs. Trudy Clarkson, iconic and considered as the first Filipino settler in South Canterbury—having been there for all of 29 years and counting. *“We were not expecting this big turn out but I suppose we can expect bigger crowd for our Christmas party dubbed as Paskong Pinoy in South Canterbury this coming December 18 when we step up the ante to bigger ensemble and production numbers,”* gamely predicted by Mrs. Mercy Reynolds. *“And more than merry-making, we want our Filipino community here to benefit from the Filipino businesses in and around NZ. We’re happy to see them come in—their balikbayan boxes, money remittance service, discount balikbayan travel packages, Filipino food products. I’ll never run out of bagoong, again,”* delightedly chorused by Mrs. Belinda Dewe who is also the Forex-Umac agent for South Canterbury.

“After leaving Auckland, my home and refuge for 7 odd years—moving to South Island was quite a big scare and a leap of faith. I have to bequeath the long association and friendships I’ve built in pursuit of career and lifestyle changes. For a time, the rigour of my job was what kept my sanity intact. Nineteen months later, here I am, in the thick of Filipino fraternisation again! I’m deeply heartened by the all-out

support of my newfound community, and with our Philippine Embassy who came in full throes and even obliged in the Tinikling showdown. Activities like these provide the hallmarks of a very proud race, the legacies that we would like to leave behind the next generation... and if I must tell you, there are more from where they came from, the innate talents best known as Orig na Pinoy," a fitting close by Mon Acero, former President of The Filipino Society, Inc. and Kabayan Newspaper Editor-in-Chief.

For all enquiries about TSCFAI, please email us on filipinocantabrians@yahoo.com or go to our website www.pinoy.co.nz. Our snail mail is 20 Le Cren St, Timaru, South Canterbury, NZ.



(L-R: Mercy Reynolds, Trudy Clarkson, Timaru Mayor Raymond, Ramon Acero, Charge d' Affaires Lolita Capco, & Belinda Dewe)



(L-R: Belinda Dewe, Gil Domingo, Trudy Clarkson, Consul Myla Macahilig, Charge d' Affaires Lolita Capco, Ramon Acero, Gloria Hooker, Elle Wilson, Lorna Graham & Glenda Weeks)



Location: Basilica of Sacred Heart in Timaru

(L-R: Forex-Umac Gen Mgr Gil Domingo, Christchurch Forex-Umac agent Connie, Charge d' Affaires Lolita Capco, Consul Myla Macahilig, & TSCFAI President Mon Acero)