

Twenty Outstanding Filipinos Abroad



HISTORY OF TOFA -

The current successful project, *Twenty Outstanding Filipino-Americans* (TOFA 1) in the United States and Canada, was first launched in July 4, 1990. *FIL-AM IMAGE*, the Filipino-American Magazine, established in 1987, is the initiator and founder of the TOFA project. Nonoy Mendoza, editor and publisher of the magazine conceived the idea with his wife, Aida Mendoza and two daughters, Rochelle and Rhonda, assisting.

The popular project is now known as *TOFA 2 - Twenty Outstanding Filipinos Abroad* and is slated every month of August. The planned venue is always at the prestigious J.W. Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., next door to the White House in a 3-day of scheduled memorable and fun-filled festivities.

SELECTION PROCESS -

In the first three years, the TOFA awardees were selected with advice and assistance from the Philippine Embassy and its consular offices as well as from the Filipino centers-of-influence residing in areas where they are concentrated. In the fourth year of the TOFA project, TOFA Past Awardees are mainly responsible for recommending prospective awardees. Names are submitted to a Panel of Judges headed by Nonoy and Aida Mendoza assisted by lawyers and former awardees.

CRITERIA OF AWARDEE -

The CRITERIA of selecting awardees is simplified to four: (1) One must highlight positive Filipino image. (2) One must be outstanding and visible in one's community or profession. (3) One must be visibly active in promoting things Philippines, and in assisting the Philippines. (4) One must be able to personally attend the all the planned functions in Washington, D.C. *Bio-data of awardee not able to attend the TOFA Gala Banquet and Ball Award Ceremony are permanently removed from the web site.*

MAIN PURPOSES OF TOFA PROJECT -

There are two simple reasons for the TOFA project. (1) To inform the powers-that-be in the world and specially from Washington, D.C. that there are Filipinos who are achievers and that Filipinos are composed of varied talents and abilities. This is primarily done by direct global press releases and announcements to: the mainstream media; to the U.S. Federal and State Officials, to the business associates, to friends and relatives of the awardees; and to a selected CEOs of the Fortune 500 corporations. Awardees are bestowed distinct honors and accolades at the Nation's Capital. (2) For the awardees to serve as role model and inspiration to others specially the Filipino youth abroad and in the Philippines - "*basta Pinoy, puede!*"

NO COST TO AWARDEE -

Except for transportation and hotel accommodations, present awardees are special VIP guests-of-honor are free of all charges to TOFA 2008 Planned Schedule of Activities numbering at least six (6) major social functions, including: VIP Get Together; National Press Club VIP Luncheon, VIP Dinner Reception at the Philippine Embassy, VIP Sight-seeing Tour with Dim Sum Luncheon, Gala Banquet and Ball Reception, and the traditional After-the-Ball Filipino Breakfast.

NUMBER OF CURRENT AWARDEES-

Including the 2008 awardees, there are a total of three hundred (300) Filipino centers-of-influence and high achievers. Awardee's bio-data and photo is available in the website: WWW.FILAMIMAGE.COM. Together in the web site are the awardees of the 2006 and 2007 Chicago Filipino Hall of Fame. Among the men and women awardees are physicians, nurses, dentists, architects, scientists, engineers, lawyers, accountants, politicians, business persons, professionals, civic leaders.... just to mention a few.

The elite "*Circle of Leaders*," as the awardees call themselves, come from several states including: Hawaii, Guam, Alaska, California, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Louisiana, Ohio, Michigan, Washington, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Delaware, Mississippi, Kentucky, Kansas, Georgia, Alabama, Arizona, Illinois, West Virginia, as well as from Canada and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Globally: from Middle East, Europe, Americas, Asia including the Philippines.

FINANCING THE TOFA -

Nonoy and Aida Mendoza are the major financial backers of the TOFA project from the first day of its inception in 1990. Additional financial assistance comes from the Roxanne Andrea Mendoza (RAM) Foundation based in Washington, D.C. Individual and Corporate Sponsors are now being solicited.

Net Proceeds of the TOFA project are donated to several charitable and worthy organizations in the Philippines.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION -

Nonoy Mendoza, Editor & Publisher
PINOY GLOBAL ONLINE NEWS
FILIPINO IMAGE Magazine
P.O. Box 40068 • Washington, D.C. 20016
FAX: (703) 465-8708 • (202) 370-6446
Email: filamimage@yahoo.com
Web site: WWW.FILAMIMAGE.COM

BIRTH OF FIL-AM IMAGE AND THE HONORING OF THE TWENTY OUTSTANDING FILIPINOS ABROAD (TOFA)

By Nonoy Mendoza
FILIPINO IMAGE
PINOYGLOBAL ONLINE NEWS

WASHINGTON, D.C., - As we celebrate the annual event honoring *Twenty Outstanding Filipinos Abroad* and celebrating our 21 years of publication, I cannot help but, foremost, praise the Lord for His kindness and guidance. Secondly, the people who were there when the going got tough. Indeed, it has been a difficult and challenging struggle -- one that well-meaning friends had time and again declared unreachable. Impossible. Illogical. Unattainable. But again, like the Lord says, if you believe in it, it could be done. With Christ, nothing is impossible... every thing is possible.

FIL-AM Image and now globally known as the *FILIPINO IMAGE Magazine (FILIM)*, joined last May 2006 by our 24/7 *PINOY GLOBAL ONLINE NEWS (PGON)*, has been in my mind since I first roamed around the continent, first, as a **Manila Chronicle** media man together with **Alex Esclamado** in the late fifties to the mid-sixties. Then, as a **Philippine Air Lines** executive whose main function was to meet Filipino community leaders and the **Filipino centers-of-influence** in North America promoting the services of the Philippine flag carrier. Then, as a travel industry executive whose main function was to convince the Filipinos to go back and see for themselves the many positive changes of the **Pearl of the Orient - the Philippines**. I was trying to encourage then our Filipino community journalists to produce a media whose main goal is to highlight the positive image of our people. My affiliation with PAL gave me the opportunity to meet the Filipino journalists of the time. **Vic Velasco, Julius Ruiz, Frank Bolima and Frank Bolusan of Seattle; Melecio H. Jacaban, Manuel Insigne and Celestino Alfafara of Sacramento and Los Angeles; Teddy de Nolasco and Luis Cecilio of New York; Carmelito Llapitan of Chicago; Alex Esclamado, Jesus Esteva, Joe Reyes, Delfin Cruz and Frank Perez of Salinas and San Francisco**. They were THE journalists of the era, and I was privy to most of their thoughts because we were all on first name basis and good friends. I represented the institution (PAL) that provided assistance and encouragement to journalists, community leaders, public relations people, influential individuals and a great cross-sections of the Filipinos in the United States and its territories plus the vast country of Canada.

The possibility of a Fil-Am image-builder publication had always dominated our discussions and my observation of the need to have one of such publication. My desire to spearhead such a project became a reality when my family and I finally made Washington, D.C. our home base. The timing was perfect. The place is definitely the right venue -- one that

makes the "icing on the cake." There is no substitute for Washington, D.C. as a base for such a project. No other place in the world than the Nation's Capital where history takes place, and where all the powers-that-be of this great country hold office.

The first issue of *Fil-Am Image* was not too impressive. We were "computerized" but not sophisticated. Friends thought I was just playing and not taking the publications seriously. But we persisted and were consistent. And as each issue was received by friends, respect started manifesting.

With my wife, **Aida** and my **3Rs: Rochelle, Roxanne and Rhonda** giving full support, we launched the first annual event honoring of the "**Twenty Outstanding Filipino-Americans (TOFA)**". The project was designed primarily to say "**thank you**" -- an honest-to-goodness straight from our heart to show our appreciations to the Filipino community leaders across the continent whose sincere efforts to highlight positive Filipino image to the mainstream community are sometimes misunderstood and even maligned. Highlighting the enormous reservoir of talents and expertise of the Filipinos, it will inspire our youth and compatriots to excel and be achievers. To network and thus, uplifting our compatriots ---- these are our driving forces that led to the honoring of the *Twenty Outstanding Filipino-Americans*. Its birth. Its start. Its existence.

In the midst of being tired of "every thing" because of annoying factors that naturally goes with it, due to its enormity, and sometimes thinking of abandoning the project, two things revitalized me. One, is from the book of the late **E. V. "Vic" Bacho**, one of the awardees of the first batch (1990), "*The Long Road, Memories of a Filipino Pioneer*." Vic wrote on the chapter entitled "**At Last, My Reward**" on page 67: "Honey, I think I have finally arrived. Can you believe it took them over 60 years to recognize the contribution I have made to our people in this country! **Nonoy Mendoza** deserves my everlasting gratitude for having made the first move, and **Consul General Jimmy Bautista** for having submitted my name to a list of 20 outstanding Filipino-Americans in the country."

Secondly, whenever "things" seem impossible, Our Lord Jesus reminds me: "**I am the vine. You are the branches. He who lives in Me and I in him, will produce abundantly. Without Me, you are nothing.**" Which means, of course, that with Him, one can do anything.

Welcome to the annual honoring of the Filipino achievers! Now with global participation from around the world. **Praise the Lord! Thank You, Lord!**