

Colorful, Vibrant Philippines at the Reston, Virginia Asian Fest

By the MHC News Team

The Migrant Heritage Commission (MHC) and the Philippine Embassy spearheaded the Fil-Am community's participation at the 2008 Asian Festival in Reston, Virginia and showcased the best of Filipino culture. The huge 5th Asian Festival is organized annually by the Thai Tennis Organization in America (TTOA), supported by many organizations and sponsored by SINGHA Beer.

The **Migrant Heritage Commission Tent (or Philippine Cultural Tent)**, considered one of the seven main attractions of the Asian Festival (based on the Asian Festival Pocket Guide), was a spacious U-shaped Cultural Interactive Tent that transformed **Zone A** into a mini Philippine Fiesta Village of colorful bantings and background cloths of *vinta* and the *sambulayan* plus *Ati-atihan* decors. It was a very busy tent of purely interactive activities combined with delectable Filipino cuisine which caught every guest's attention and made them stay no less than 15 minutes to have a glimpse and taste of the vibrant Filipino culture. The new location of the popular MHC Cultural Interactive Tent greeting visitors after alighting from the shuttle buses, provided a beautiful lasting impression about the Asian Festival.

The MHC cultural tent also offered the famous Philippine *ÓHalo-haloÓ*, a popular Filipino dessert of shaved ice and milk to which are added various boiled sweet beans and fruits, and served cold in a tall glass or bowl. The dessert exemplifies the "east-meets-west" culture of the Filipinos, with the ingredients used coming from a wide variety of influences (Chinese red *mung beans*, Indian *garbanzos*, Spanish leche *flan* and the American shaved ice).

The main interactive activity was the continuous demonstration of *ÓTiniklingÓ* or bamboo dance by MHC and other zealous volunteers (mostly young Fil-Ams) from different Fil-Am organizations encouraging visitors to try their skills and hop in gracefully in between the fast clicking of the bamboos.

Interspersed with the Tinikling were interactive demonstrations of folk and traditional arts representing the 5 diverse cultural suites of the Philippines, from Tribal, Cordillera, Barrio Fiesta, Southern Philippines and Maria Clara as well as interactive arts that best represent the Asian cultures, as follows: 1) Eskrima/Arnis (or



Kali in other Asian system) by Ultimate Eskrima Int'l Senior Master Instructor Wesley Crisostomo and his top students; 2) the *ÓKapamalong-malongÓ* (also common in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei) by MHC volunteers and Tribung Pinoy; 3) Mountain Province dance (also seen in some parts of Thailand and Nepal and the Himalayas); 4) The gongs and the agongs (traditional musical instruments which almost all Asian countries have) and 5) the *Ati-Atihan* drums and music.

Adding interest to the tent were the historical exhibits which allowed the visitors to learn more of interesting vignettes in Philippine history as well as the migrants to the U.S. Pictures of traditional and trendy Filipiniana costumes were also on display coupled with *Ati-atihan* masks, Mindanao *ÓApirÓ* fans, native baskets, Northern Philippine and Southern Philippines indigenous textiles and the Philippine mat or *ÓbanigÓ*. Traditional products from different MHC supporters placed some merchandise on display and on sale.

A DVD showing the dance origin/instructions and history was played at the tent. But nothing else was more enthralling than the actual demonstration of the dances themselves by the multi-talented MHC volunteers from various Fil-Am organizations (ISA's Miss Teenage Philippines-USA, Tribung Pinoy, Fil-Am Heritage Ensemble, Ultimate Eskrima, Fil-Am Ministry St. Michael, Mother Butler's Guild of St. Mary's, Sunflower Group, PACP, APODCAA, FilCom St. Rose, Global Peace Festival (Philippines) etc).

Filipino cuisine books were available for sale courtesy of **Mama Sita Foundation**. Paintings of notable Fil-Am artists **Julian Oteyza** and **Glen Brown** were also on exhibit. *En totale*, guests got an interesting glimpse covering every facet of the rich Filipino cultural heritage, from the Visual Arts to the Performing Arts.

Another vibrant Philippine tent was the Display tent in the **Destination Asia in Zone C** which required all booths in said area to compete in 4 categories: most colorful; most informative; most innovative; and most integrated. **Philippines won the ÓMost IntegratedÓ** Category. The tourism and heritage display tent was led by the **Embassy of the Philippines**, coordinated by **Consul Rico Fos**, current Cultural Officer of the Embassy, with the support volunteers from the PAFC and other Fil-Am organizations. *A sincere congratulations to the Philippine Embassy, PAFC and other groups for giving their best in showcasing Filipino culture to win the top award in one of the 4 categories.*

On top of these, the Philippines also performed on both days on the main stages of the festival: Main cultural stage - performing dance

groups namely MHC's Fil-Am Heritage Dance Ensemble, Pampango Youth Club of V.A. Beach, Bicol Youth Association and Mabuhay Inc.; Hip Hop Stage - the Blackbird Pond from Virginia Beach; Martial Arts Arena - the Ultimate Eskrima International Inc. There was also an interesting commercial booth of Philippine products **ÓMy BAYONGÓ** which displayed and sold native bags and hats made of traditional mats.

The Filipinos made their presence felt in every corner of the Festival and this augured well for the Philippines for it met the worthy objective of making the Philippines highly visible in the festival, promoting goodwill and image to the American mainstream society.

MHC is one of the patron partners of the Annual Asian Festival. Its participation is under the MHC's Cultural Resource and Support Program which is supported by the DC Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

MHC's Cultural Resource Program aims to preserve the cultural identity of the Filipinos amidst a diversified America. Under this program, MHC aims high visibility for the Philippines in high profile events that reach the American mainstream.

Spearheading MHC's Cultural Program is the former Cultural Officer and Attache' of the Philippine Embassy, Ms. Grace Valera-Jaramillo, currently MHC's Executive Director together with two other Executive Directors Jesse A. Gatchalian and Arnedo S. Valera Esq. Closely helping them are the multi-talented MHC Event Partner Advisers Walter and Wesley Crisostomo of Ultimate Eskrima Int'l, Fil-Am Heritage Dance Ensemble's Antonio Calaro with MHC's Programming Consultants Lani Travis, Jenny Hona, Sylvia Nera, Manny Lozada, Badet Ortaez, Milvy Murray and Cultural Adviser Nolly Ceballos of IPAG. Among the Cultural Program volunteers during the Asian Festival were Julie Quitoriano, Juliet Barredo, Eileen de Cesare, Lucy Mallam, Connie Valera, Didi Achmadi, John & Joy Therio, Edward Busque, Wendy Dayagon, Aireen Granada, Elmo dela Madrid, Thomas and Damian, Looie Po, Vicky, Miss Teenage Philippines-USA Hannah Cabrera Johnson, Alex Valera, Raymond Jaramillo, Paul Acedera Cabrera, Carylle and Lexi Crisostomo, Camille Comendador, Crystal, Jen & Cecile Therio, Wally Reyes and Judy Francia, Regina Reyes, Angie Calubaquib, Cess Lauchengco, Gina Inocencio and Joe Penano. Props and costumes were provided by MHC, IPAG, Aklan *Ati-atihan* of Virginia, New Jersey's Pintig and other MHC supporters. Halo Halo and Filipino cuisine experts came from the catering group of LIRIC LLC. #

