

PREPARATIONS & PLANNING

By Macrine J. Katague

I left Maryland for the Philippines early on February 2001 in order to avoid the harsh winter weather of the East Coast. Since I was in the Philippines early enough, I became the “advance person” for the organization. My first assignment was to write Dr. Fe del Mundo to invite her to join the mission. Unfortunately, she is unable to take the small plane that Asian Spirit Airline assigns to fly to Marinduque. Taking a boat via Lucena to Marinduque would also be too long of a travel at her age. It was disappointing to miss such an illustrious Marinduqueña in our mission. The second person that I contacted was Dr. Efren Labay, the Public Health Officer of Marinduque. He introduced me to the Hospital Administrator and other physicians in the hospital. I also went to see the Nursing Administrator, in the person of Mrs. Esphe Miciano. She gave me a tour of the hospital and introduced me to the various nurses present on that day. We had a long talk regarding the needs and equipments needed for such an endeavor as the Medical Mission. The last time I visited the provincial hospital was some ten years ago. Presently, it was a big change and improvement from the condition that I remembered while visiting an aunt who was sick then.

My interaction with the medical personnel of the hospital was good. They expressed concern that the provincial hospital would not be able to provide the needs of the medical professionals that are coming. I assured them that I would convey their concerns to our group. As early as March, I tried to contact and visit the office of the Governor to pay a courtesy call and inform her of our mission, but it was not until April that I was able to talk to her because of her busy schedule. Since it was hard to get in-touch with her, I continued to communicate with Dr. Efren Labay

regarding our plan to send a Medical Mission to Marinduque. Several visits to talk with the Provincial Hospital personnel were necessary to plan what is needed. I requested them to make a list of the needy patients based on their medical and financial necessity.

They informed me that there is an outstanding list of patients needing surgery, left over from the previous mission on February 1997. There were several patients needing cataract surgery. The concern of the hospital doctors was that patients would again be disappointed if they do not get the surgical need. They told me that the number of patients was not a problem and that there were plenty of them. Their concerns were – who is going to decide which one is a necessity.

While the above was their concern, the mission doctors feared that they would be wasting time in assessing surgical needs instead of spending their time in the operating room. We spent a lot of time ironing out what we consider as a medical necessity as well as financial necessity. That there should be an initial list of patients who would undergo surgery on the first day of the mission, to be decided by Dr. Efren Labay and Dr. Tano. The initial surgeon’s visit to examine pre-op patients will be done on May 20th in the afternoon, after the Medical Seminar. Equipment problems were conveyed to Dr. Rudy Jao and Dr. Hector Sulit. E-Mails were convenient communicating with Rudy in Chicago. AND SOMEBODY SENT A VIRUS TO MY COMPUTER. It took 2-five hour afternoons for Mr. Danny Monteagudo, our local computer whiz to fix my laptop. In the meantime, I kept myself busy with the preparations on how to feed and house the almost 70 medical missionaries coming from the United States and Canada. Estimated cost of feeding the group of 70 missionaries for seven days is about P151,900.00 pesos or an equivalent of \$3,165 dollars. This is not including people who would be helping in the hospitals, drivers, aid-de-camps, etc. I spent many sleepless nights (without ambien) in trying to think of – who

among my friends and relatives in the community, I could convince to host our group each night during the mission. I talked to Dr. Robbie Montelano earlier in February regarding the seminar that our Medical personnels will give to the local doctors and dentists. He has approximated that he is expecting about twenty (20) MD’S and twenty (20) dentists. He also requested me to find a hall and arrange for the food to be served to the attendees. As per Dr. Rudy Jao’s request, I also made a courtesy call to Most Rev. Bishop Jose Oliveros on April 6th.

Finally, I received a summon from Governor Carmencita O. Reyes. She received a letter from Dr. Jao. She was shocked at the number of missionaries and explained to me that the provincial government would not be able to feed and house such a big number of participants. I graciously retorted that the organization (Marinduque International, Inc.) does not expect the province to house and feed the missionaries.

April 18th: I sent Rudy an email regarding my visit with the hospital doctors and informed him about their concerns and needs. The doctors explained to me the needs for supplies of two microscopes, functional slit lamp for eye surgeries and also the supplies that the visiting MD’s would need. After working for days on assignment for board and lodging, the governor suggested that she could house 40 people in her cottages in Lupac. Rudy and Hector agreed that I could assign 30 people at the Governor’s beach cottages. The governor assigned her personal secretary and three aides to help me work out plans. Meetings with the secretary, Dr. Efren Labay and other hospital VIP’s to plan on how to handle the crowd of patients coming to the mission. The hospital ground was too small to accommodate an influx of people and could be wandering around the hospital compound. We discussed how are we going to feed the missionaries at each clinical site and one thousand pesos (P1000) was allocated to the personnel in-charge of each site to purchase and cook food.