

# Tropical news

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS  
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
AROUND THE WORLD

MAY 2007



# Editorial Ramblings



Made it! Home at last. After a long and, at times rather stressful journey, Alan is now at our new home in the Philippines (see map on back cover). As far as Alan was concerned, the welcome he received from our Little Lad was the greatest he could have ever had. John's face lit up when he saw his dad and he never stopped smiling and laughing for a very long time.

It was great to see that he hadn't forgotten his dad during the weeks of separation - something that Alan had been very concerned about. How lovely it was to see them together again. Alan was determined to be at John's 2nd birthday party and had told his employers that the 10 May was his deadline for being home - or for getting us to Kuwait.

As you will see from the contents of this edition, Alan's camera has been working overtime. We hope you like all the photographs. We didn't know whether or not to call this edition 'Desert News' or 'Tropical News' as it contains details about life in both Kuwait and in the Philippines. The decider was that Alan spent most of the month in the Philippines, so we called it 'Tropical News'. Once again, Alan is unemployed, so if any of you know of any good contracts for him, please let us know - as always, with the proviso that we can all be together, wherever he finds a job.

We would ask all of you to pray for Leopoldo, Grace's father, who is unwell at this time. As this is being written, he is on his way to hospital for further tests. Thank you for your prayers.

*Below:* 8 May 2007. After arriving at 2300hrs the previous evening, this was Alan's first full day at home. Alan with John Paul Alan, Grace and Nené in the restaurant by the sea at Sheaven's, Baloy Beach, just a few minutes walk from where we now live. There is a brightly coloured banca in the background, used for taking tourists on trips around Subic Bay.



*Cover photograph:* Winding its way to Manila Bay (in the distance) the dead Pasig River carries huge quantities of pollutants into Manila Bay (into which also goes 85% of the sewage generated by the cities 15 million inhabitants).

We hope you spotted our little April fool joke on page 3 of the last edition. It isn't really Alan's company car!

*Alan & Grace*

# *Home at last!*



Our new (rented) home in Sta. Monica - a bungalow with four bedrooms



# *Khalid Mutlaq Al-Tawari*

*married on 1 May 2007*



One of Alan's students held his wedding reception on 1 May 2007 and Alan and his colleague, Bill McLeod, were honoured to be invited to attend. Khalid, the bridegroom, is shown above - back row, third from left. Alan and Bill were honoured to wear robes normally only worn by wealthy, prominent people in Arab society (such as Sheiks) or on very special occasions. We were made extremely welcome by all the family and friends who attended this special event and we would like to thank Khalid and his family for the privilege of sharing this special time with them. It will remain in our memories as a very special event that has taken place in our lives.



*Some of Alan's students at the wedding - L to R: Ahmed, Odai, Rashed, Raed, Hamad, Eisa, Nawaf*



*Above and Below: Inside the wedding hall.*

*Right: Alan with Eisa and Saleh*



# *Farewell to my students*



Having to say goodbye (I prefer 'farewell') to my students was a particularly sad time for me. We had worked together for about ten weeks and it had been great to see how much progress they had made during that time - both in their academic and, particularly, their practical skills. A great deal had been achieved. On the day I left, one of my students said "I really admire your work ethic. That is something I really respect." He went on to say that it was something that the Arab world hadn't yet achieved and that it wouldn't happen overnight. I told him that this was how I had been brought up, as my family for many generations, had always been hard workers. Our conversation was something that made my short stay in Kuwait even more rewarding. During my time there I taught a group of 9 Kuwaiti young men who had between them a wide range of academic and practical skills; from those with M.Sc.'s in engineering and no previous practical skills

to technician's with good practical skills, but lower academic qualifications. Also, their English language skills ranged from elementary to near native users of the language. Some of them had studied in the USA for 6 years; some had had much less opportunity to work and study. As you can imagine, it was a considerable challenge to a teacher, and one that I enjoyed immensely. It was with great sadness that I bid them farewell.

Their touching gesture of giving me such a wonderful farewell party will always remain with me.



*Above:* Alan with his students - L to R: Rashed, Ahmed, Hamad, Raed, Eisa, Saleh, Odai, Nawaf.

*Below:* Rashed, Nawaf, Ahmed and Hamad watch Alan cut his cake.

*Below:* The delicious chocolate cakes made by Eisa's wife.





*Above: Raed, Rashed, Ahmed, Eisa, Odai, Hamad, Nawaf, Saleh.*

*Below: Class Captain, Eisa, with the lovely cakes made by his kind wife, that were so much appreciated.*

*Right: Hamad cutting and serving my very special cake.*

*Below right: Nawaf and Ahmed enjoying the party.*



*You will notice that there are only eight of my nine students present in these photographs. The one missing is Khalid, who was on wedding leave (see pages 4 and 5) when we had the party.*

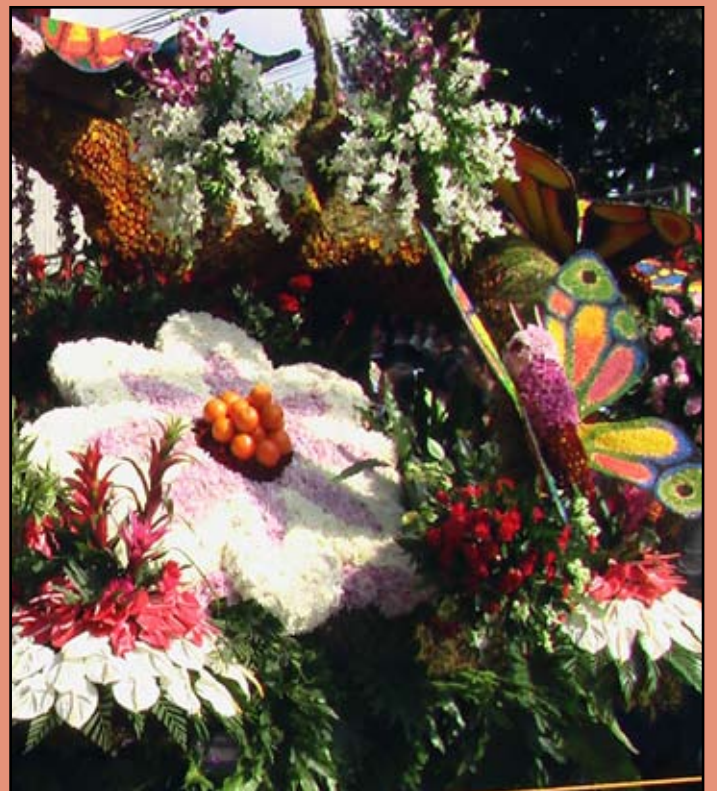


# *Flower Festival in Baguio*

These photographs depict a few scenes from the annual flower festival in Baguio, that was held on 25 February this year. Grace, Little Lad, Mother, Nené, Daryll and Michael were able to go and these are a few of Grace's photographs. Baguio is in the 'Mountain Province' and well known for it's much cooler climate at high altitude.







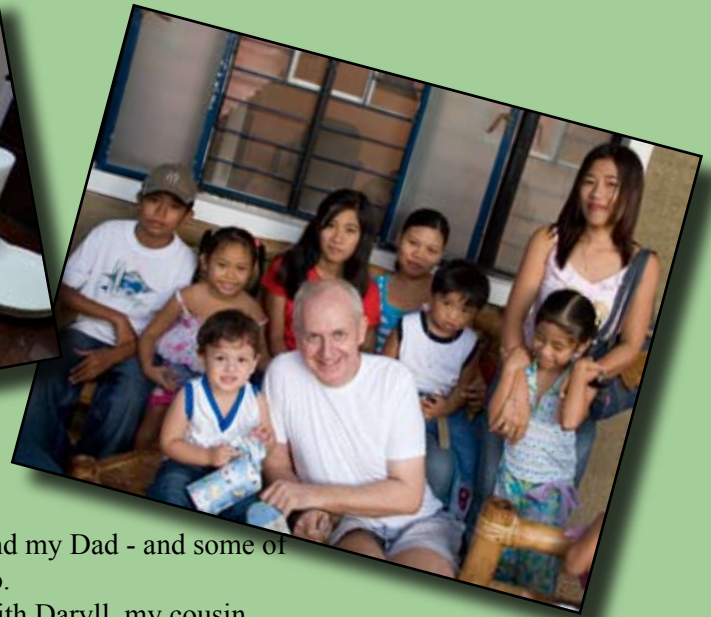


# Now I am

10 May 2007



*Here are some photographs taken at my birthday party in our new home in Sta. Monica in the Philippines. I wish all of you could have been here.*



*Above: Me and my Dad - and some of the family too.*

*Below: Me with Daryll, my cousin*





*Above right: My Mum, Grace and her Dad.  
Below left: My Grandad and Grandmother*







*The Avelino Family:* Above: Christine, Sharoll and Alvin. Below: Princess, Sharoll's daughter, and Mary Jane (Sharoll's cousin). Bottom: to right of photo is Auntie Puring, mother of Sharoll, sitting next to her niece, Christine. With back to camera is Chriztian, son of Sharoll. Darnell (on left) is Puring's son. His daughter is sitting next to Princess.





*It's a long walk in the sunshine for a little lad.....but I'll get there.....with a bit of help from my Dad.*

# Alan's Reflections

I got a text message today, from a close friend of ours who also lives overseas, saying, in effect, that he admired my ability to 'live for today' rather than getting into the 'expat' way of living where it could become an obsession to save as much as possible to provide for the future - mainly due to a lack of financial security in the past. This, of course, was a reference to my giving up the best paid job I've ever had in order to return to my family in the Philippines. This same person also said I had much more courage than he had as when I got married I hadn't got a penny to call my own and I had had to borrow \$200 to help me travel to Kuwait to take a job - two days after getting married in November 2000. Some folks, many perhaps, would call me irresponsible to leave such a job - particularly at my age where jobs of any sort are hard to come by. Of course, we've done some saving while we've been in the middle east or the decision would have been rather more complicated - the key, as our friend implied, is not being *obsessed* with saving.

I suppose if anyone should know about financial insecurity I should, as I've been almost in the gutter three times in my adult life and have only escaped by getting a job right at the last minute. I was also brought up in a somewhat less than affluent working class family; although we always had a roof over our heads and food on the table, thanks to my father who always worked hard to provide for us - a tradition I've always followed too, with the two families for which I've been responsible. As I write this, it is 42 years ago this week that I left school and started work. It sometimes seems like an eternity and yet in other ways it seems to have flown by so quickly.

However, my decision to come home to the family was made for a number of reasons, the prime one being that I didn't want my Little Lad to forget his dad. I had that experience with my first family when I was working aboard tankers at sea. In those days financial considerations were very important as we had problems just getting by from one month to the next and certainly had no reserves of funds at all. It was heartbreaking to come home and know that the children had largely forgotten me though. Another problem with being absent from the family for a long time is that, inevitably, both partners in the marriage start to live different lives and can easily grow apart from each other - something else I wanted to avoid. I had a good life in Kuwait; luxurious accommodation, friends old and new, good workmates, pleasant students, a good job and plenty of money. It would have been easy for me to stay there and live the good life, but what value has that when compared to

what I could easily lose; my family. We are by no means destitute or likely to end up in the gutter, so the money is of no real consequence. The job, whilst good to have, and very enjoyable and challenging, is nothing compared to taking my little boy for a walk on the beach (see photograph on previous page). It is true that at my age it is far harder to find a job than when I was a younger man. It is also true that I have fewer years left to enjoy being a father to my Little Lad and only God knows when my time on Earth is going to end. How tragic it would be if he never knew his dad because his dad was away making money instead of being at home to take him for walks along the beach and play games with him. What value has money when that is considered? Grace and I have always felt that life will work out well for us in the end. Although not greatly religious or "churchy" people, we do believe that God is taking care of us, and has been doing so since we've been together - whenever we look at our miracle baby we know that! I'm sure many of you would agree, as you know the story of that dramatic, and somewhat traumatic night two years ago when our little lad was brought into this world and I came close to losing both my wife and my son. I have no intention of nearly losing them again for a few extra pieces of silver.

So, dear friends, it was not a difficult decision - it was one made for me - by my Little Lad!



Alan



*Grace, 19 May 2007 - at Baloy Beach near our home*





*Fountains at Al-Kout Mall, Fahaheel, Kuwait*



The map above will give you some idea of our location in the Philippines.

We live near to the city of Olongapo which is located to the far west of the map (Manila is to the East).

If you look towards the North-West, you will see Subic. We live between these two cities.

*(Note: North is to the top of the map).*