

# Philippine Scouts Heritage Society



Preserving the history, heritage, and legacy of the Philippine Scouts for present and future generations



Winter/Spring 2006

## An Artillery Lieutenant Recalls the War

By Col. Mel Rosen

### Arriving in the Philippines

I was graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1940. My parents were poor immigrants from Russia. I was extremely proud to be a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army!

I suspected that we would be forced into a war with Japan. The only logical place for Japan to attack, in my opinion, was the Philippines. Since this was so obvious to me, I felt that it must be so obvious to everyone else that we would have the most and the best of everything—equipment, supplies, etc.—there.

I arrived in Manila aboard the old US ARMY Transport, U.S. Grant in January 1941. We were greeted with a fly by of our Far East Army Air Corps flying planes that were obsolete in the States—P-26, O-46, B-10. My close friend, classmate, and roommate who chose the Philippines for the same reasons as I was standing beside me on the deck of the Grant. I can remember turning to him and saying, “Murph, we’ve been had!”

### Fall of Bataan

It was very late at night on 8 April that I was told by my battalion commander that Bataan was being surrendered effective at 0600 the next day. . We were to destroy all our weapons and equipment except our vehicles because we would need them in which to ride out of Bataan to wherever the Japanese would be taking us. I destroyed all our



Plebe Photo: Col. Mel Rosen (Ret.)

- US Army Field Artillery, 2D Battalion, 88<sup>th</sup> FA (PS)  
- Bataan Death March, Oryoku Maru, Enoura Maru, Brazil Maru, Inchon POW camp (Korea)

weapons and equipment and left our vehicles. At 0600, from our position on a trail, I could still hear the Japanese shooting on the main road. I went up to make a personal reconnaissance. I saw Japanese tanks on the road shooting at Americans.

About 0900 I went back to the main road. Then I saw Americans in their trucks coming up the road with large white sheets that they were waving. The Japanese halted them made them get out of the trucks, loaded the trucks with Jap-

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## Reunion Keynote Speaker

American-educated Japanese journalist and author Kinue Tokudome will be the keynote speaker at our May 27-28 reunion. Living in California, Ms. Tokudome, who has dedicated her life to encouraging Japanese acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibility for the inhumane treatment of POWs during WWII, is founder and Executive Director of *U.S.-Japan Dialogue on POWs, Inc.* Her organization's website is at [www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/](http://www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/). She is highly recommended as a speaker by Col. Mel Rosen and has worked closely with him in attempting to achieve Japanese remuneration for POW slave labor during the war.



**Kinue Tokudome,**  
Executive Director  
and Writer

## Editor's Comments

Soon we will be gathering again near San Francisco for the twenty-second annual reunion of the Philippine Scouts Heritage Society. This gathering, to be held at the Burlingame Embassy Suites, will again celebrate the heroic heritage of the Philippine Scouts. The program will include internationally-known journalist, author and human rights activist Kinue Tokudome as keynote speaker and two panel discussions by former scouts. Both panels will take place Sunday afternoon, May 28. The first, from 2:00 to 3:25 p.m., will discuss combat in defense of Bataan and Corregidor and will be chaired by Col. Mel Rosen. The second, from 3:35 to 5:00 will describe three years of guerrilla warfare against the Japanese occupation following the official surrender of USAFFE troops in early May 1942 and will be chaired by Lt. Col. Ed Ramsey.

On Saturday afternoon, May 27, Col. Rosen will discuss attempts to gain compensation for POWs used by the Japanese as slave labor. This will be fol-

lowed by an information session on veterans' issues to be conducted by a Department of Veterans Affairs official.

We also will be voting on the following officer positions: First Vice President, Secretary, Public Relations Officer and Assistant Historian. Watch our website for the list of candidates which will be announced shortly by the Nominating Committee.

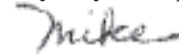
Since our last newsletter and thanks to the Herculean efforts of First Vice President John Patterson, the IRS has changed our status to 501(c)(3), thereby allowing donations to the Philippine Scouts Heritage Society to be tax deductible. This ruling took effect in time for the 2005 tax year. Thank you Senator Patterson!

In *The General's Corner* are three articles recounting the combat experiences of Filipino and American soldiers defending the Philippines against the Japanese. One is written by Col. Mel Rosen, at the time a young officer with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery (PS). The second is a retelling of the heroics of Lt.

Alexander Nininger, 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry (PS), who was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for his courage on Bataan. The final piece is the inspiring story of Dr. Adriano "Jake" Olivar, then a young Philippine Army sergeant, who survived the Bataan Death March after losing a leg in combat. Dr. Olivar, a retired physician from the Chicago area, is a member of the Philippine Scouts Heritage Society.

*The General's Corner*, dedicated to the memory of Brigadier General Royal Reynolds, is now a regular section of the newsletter and is intended to further educate our members and the public concerning the noble heritage of honor, sacrifice and bravery exemplifying those legendary warriors who proudly wore the U.S. Army uniform as Philippine Scouts.

Winnie and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in May.



Mike Houlahan, Editor

### Advertising Rates

Our newsletter advertising rates are as follows:

Full page: \$100  
 Half page: \$55  
 Quarter page: \$30  
 Business card: \$15

Our current circulation is slightly over 500 copies per issue. For advertising placement or additional information, please contact newsletter editor Mike Houlahan through our website or at:

J. M. Houlahan  
 Editor, PSHS Newsletter  
 6774 Lakeside Circle West  
 Worthington, OH 43085

## Newsletter and Library

Our Philippine Scouts Heritage Society newsletter and library funds continue to receive generous support from members and friends. The newsletter fund donations now total just over \$3,000. Since the last newsletter another \$100 has been received from **National President Fred Foz** and \$25 from **Israel Cariaga**. The library fund donations totaling \$150 is from Chris Schaefer and his wife, Coleen Webb. Our thanks go out to all of them for their generosity. (Additional funds for both projects also have been received from various fundraisers and other allocations.)

Annual newsletter subscription may be obtained by non-members for \$4.00 and overseas subscribers for \$5.50. Electronic subscriptions are available for \$2. Donation and subscription checks should be made out to the "PSHS" and mailed to:

J. M. Houlahan  
 Editor, PSHS Newsletter  
 6774 Lakeside Circle West  
 Worthington, OH 43085

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## National President's Letter

As we approach our 22<sup>nd</sup> annual reunion, I take this opportunity to thank the following officers for their accomplishments.

First and foremost, we thank Col. John Olson, our historian for his foresight and perseverance collecting stories from his fellow combat veterans in Camp O'Donnell and Cabanatuan concentration camps. Most of them died in captivity and perished at sea on their way to Japan. The books he wrote truly deserve credit to preserve our legacy and rich heritage of the Philippine Scouts.

We thank our First Vice President Sen. John Patterson for his great efforts in obtaining our tax exemption IRS Code 501©3. This is a milestone for the Society.

A special thank you goes to our Golden Gate Bay Area Chapter President, Cion Rael for her hard work finding a suitable place to hold our annual re-

union. Choosing the Burlingame Embassy Suites hotel, which is near the San Francisco Airport, is convenient to all of us who come from far away places.

I personally thank Dr. Isabelo Torio for taking my place to talk to the Filipino Veterans group in Los Angeles last July 27<sup>th</sup> commemorating the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of WW II in the Philippines.

From time to time I receive requests from other veterans by e-mail asking for my autograph obtained from our PSHS website. Our thanks go to our PRO Mike Houlahan and his daughter, Christa, for their initiative and expertise in this field.

We thank again our National Officers and Chapter Presidents and members for their hard work to make our annual reunion a success. A Happy and a Prosperous New Year to all of you! I'm looking forward to seeing you in May 2006.



Major Fred Foz, PSHS President

Mahalo and Mabuhay!

Sincerely,

Fred Foz  
National President  
PSHS

## First Vice-President's Letter

### FUTURE OF THE PHILIPPINE SCOUTS HERITAGE SOCIETY

#### PAST

The Philippine Scouts Heritage Society was formed at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas in April of 1989. Gatherings of the Scouts had been taking place since the early to mid-1980's.

The Mission of the Society is to preserve the history, heritage and legacy of the U.S. Army's Philippine Scouts. Their service over the years and valor in the early days of World War II are legendary and must not be forgotten.

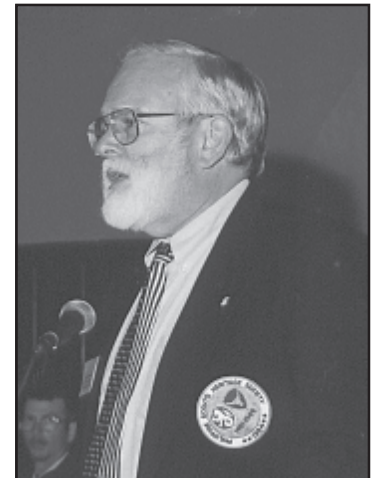
In the early days of the Society, our annual meetings were characterized primarily by reunions of the Scouts them-

selves in a social setting. They were wonderful events full of stories of danger and extraordinary heroism.

#### PRESENT

As more family members and others have become involved, the reunions/annual meetings have taken on new dimensions stressing not only camaraderie, but events that emphasize ongoing interest in the history of the Scouts. For example, there have been interesting speakers in the past, such as Generals Saint and Soriano whose fathers were Scouts.

See *First Vice-President* Page 4



John A. Patterson, 1st Vice-President  
Photo: David Rosen

*Philippine Scouts Heritage Society Newsletter*

*J. Michael Houlahan, Editor & Publisher*

*6774 Lakeside Circle W., Worthington, OH 43085*

*Winter/Spring 2006, Issue 12, Published twice annually*

*Annual Subscription: domestic \$4.00 and overseas \$5.50*

First Vice-President From Page 3

During the 2004 and 2005 annual meetings/reunions, the Society held a highly successful panel of Scouts discussing their World War II experiences and two authors presented their books and then held book signings. The 2006 gathering promises to be even more interesting.

In other words, today the Society's activities are marked by annual meetings/reunions, a strong connection with the U.S. Army Museum at Ft. Sam Houston which is the official U.S. Army repository for Scout artifacts and memorabilia, a library in the San Francisco area which is being formed, active chapters in the San Francisco Bay area; Tacoma, Washington; Monterey, California and El Paso, Texas. Also the Society has a popular website and twice-yearly newsletter.

FUTURE

How the Society evolves in the years ahead will be critical to its viability. Ideally, continuing to develop as the Society has over the years would be best in terms of its future. For example, our annual meetings could be characterized more and more by substantive discussions, panels, book presentations and the like concerning the Scouts and related activities. Elizabeth Norman, who has written extensively about the nurses on Bataan and Corregidor, and her husband Michael Norman, a Marine Vietnam Vet, who has written about his experiences,

have indicated a willingness to discuss their new book (to be published this year) on Bataan and Corregidor at our 2007 gathering.

At our next reunion/annual meeting this coming May, we plan to discuss further how we should evolve. The following are some of the strengths of the Society upon which we can build:

(1) The Society has the institutional home of the U.S. Army Museum at Ft. Sam Houston where the Scouts will be known and memorialized for all time. However, the Museum is not just a repository. There have been specific events and support over the years. Presentations have been organized and ceremonies held from time to time. It's possible, with the Museum Director's approval, of course, to envision partnerships between the Museum (with PSHS help) and local schools in furtherance of Scout history and Society activity.

(2) The Society has an excellent website and newsletter, both of which have received widespread acclaim for their usefulness and significance to the accomplishment of PSHS goals. By maintaining them we will have popular, and dynamic means to report on current events and historical highlights in order to keep alive the memory and legacy of the Philippine Scouts.

(3) There are plans to create a library in the San Francisco area which will focus on the Philippine Scouts. The family of former President Larry Pangan has

agreed that contributions made in his name will go to the development of such a library.

In summary, whatever the future holds for the Society, interested members should be able to sustain a level of activity that befits the Society's objectives. At the very least, the Society should be able to (1) maintain a positive and productive relationship with the Museum at Ft. Sam Houston; (2) maintain the website and newsletter which provide a powerful outreach in telling the Scout's story; and (3) support a library that provides a home for Scout manuscripts and literature.

In the years ahead, anything more than the three features noted above (e.g. continuing our annual meetings, active chapters, etc.) will be a terrific and befitting bonus. But, in any event, the Philippine Scouts Heritage Society should be able to preserve in a substantive fashion the history, heritage and legacy of the U.S. Army's Philippine Scouts—extraordinary warriors who must never be forgotten.



John Alexander Patterson  
First Vice President  
Philippine Scouts Heritage Society

**Capt. Vicente Ebol Gepte**

This posting is in response to a request for help in bringing the remains of Capt. Vicente Ebol Gepte to the U.S. for burial at West Point. Capt. Gepte, a Filipino graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Class of 1940, was Gen. Lim's Executive Officer during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. Although his father had been a sergeant in the Philippine Scouts, Capt. Gepte served with the Philippine Army. After release from

POW camp, he joined the resistance, eventually was arrested and finally beheaded. Prior to his arrest, he was instrumental in unmasking Franco Vera Reyes, the traitor whose infiltration of the Manila Intelligence Group led to the deaths of many prominent Filipinos.

Samuel B. (Samboyd) Stagg is coordinating this project at the behest of Gepte's daughter Linda. (Samboyd was imprisoned for a time with Capt.

Gepte and Samboyd's mother also was executed by the Japanese for work with the Resistance.) One of our members, Col. Bob Dwan, is actively interested in this case.

Samboyd, who lives at 832 Mesa Drive, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420-4406, can be contacted by telephone at (805) 481-1393 or by email at sambstagg@gmail.com. He will supply further details. *Editor*

## 22nd Annual Reunion May 27-28

We are very fortunate to have internationally-known Japanese journalist, author and human rights activist **Kinue Tokudome** as our keynote speaker. **Ms. Tokudome**, a long time California resident, has worked closely with **Col. Mel Rosen** in advocating that the Japanese pay compensation to POWs used as slave labor during WWII. In addition to writing and speaking on the subject, she has established a website promoting her cause at [www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/](http://www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/).

Other highlights of our upcoming twenty-second annual reunion and business meeting include the following: panel discussions on both the defense of Corregidor and Bataan and the guerrilla warfare against the Japanese; as

well as information sessions on veterans' issues and on Japanese compensation for POW slave labor. The Corregidor/Bataan panel will be chaired by **Col. Mel Rosen**, with **Capt. Menandro Parazo**, **Capt. Felipe Fernandez** and **Dr. Isabelo Torio** participating. The guerrilla panel will be chaired by **Lt. Col. Ed Ramsey**, with **Maj. Fred Foz**, **CWO4 Aniceto Bagley**, **Malcolm Decker** and **Chris Schaefer** as panelists. These panelists are mostly drawn from Philippine Scout infantry, cavalry and field artillery units, as well as three guerrilla organizations. Three participants also have written books on WWII in the Philippines. A representative of the **Department of Veterans Affairs**

will conduct the session on veterans' issues and **Col. Rosen** and **Kinue Tokudome** will conduct the session on slave labor reparations.

The keynote address and two panels will take place on *Sunday, May 28*. The reunion/business meeting will begin on *Saturday May 27* and the slave labor and veterans' issues sessions also will take place that day. The reunion venue will be the **Embassy Suites**, 150 Anza Boulevard, Burlingame, California, which is near the San Francisco airport. A registration form for this gathering, as well as information on placing ads or announcements in the official program are in this newsletter and on our website at [www.philippine-scouts.org](http://www.philippine-scouts.org).

## Website News

It has been three and a half years since our Philippine Scouts Heritage Society website was launched. The number of visitors now is above 16,000.

Even heavier usage can be observed on our message board, where at various times of the day you often find thirty-some visitors logged in. The board allows anyone to post information and opinion on various subjects relating to the Philippine Scouts. You are invited to visit the PSHS website [www.philippine-scouts.org](http://www.philippine-scouts.org) and share your own thoughts or questions.

Since our last newsletter, the photo section has been expanded and an excellent article by historian **Jim Nelson** entitled "The Bataan Death March Revisited" has been added.

We continue to welcome queries concerning former Scouts or answers to questions posted on the Message Board. We also will consider appropriate and original short articles or vignettes for posting on our website or including in our newsletter.

The website also is useful for research purposes. The exchanges page lists research projects and requests. The Resources page has linkages to other websites containing useful information and to U.S. government sources of information on former Scouts and on benefits available to them.

Thank you for your support!

Christa Houlahan  
Webmaster

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*Artillery Lieutenant From Page 1*

anese soldiers, turned them around and headed back south. I went quietly back to my battery and poured sugar in all the gas tanks. We then formed as a battery and marched up the trail to the main road where we turned in to a Japanese captain. He sent us up the road to a large open field already crowded with American and Filipino troops. The Japanese immediately separated the Filipinos from the Americans.

My introduction to the Japanese came soon when I saw an American soldier squat at a huge latrine pit to defecate. A Japanese guard ran his bayonet through this man's chest for no reason but for fun. When the bayonet did not immediately come out, the guard with his foot shoved the American off the bayonet and into the latrine pit where he disappeared into the feces. Another Japanese guard nearby was laughing during this whole episode.

The next morning the Japanese started us walking north on the main road and marched my group for 65 miles in four days with no food or water in severe tropical temperatures. None was allowed to help anyone. If anyone could not make it on his own, he was bayoneted, shot, beheaded or clubbed to death. Even Filipino civilians who tried to pass food or water to us were immediately beheaded as an example to other Filipino civilians. This became known as the BATAAN Death March. By the time it was over, the route was littered with hundreds of American dead and thousands of Filipino dead.

**Camp O'Donnell**

Camp O'Donnell was a temporary camp built for a mobilization division of the Philippine Army—some 10,000 men. It was not completed-lacking enough water and sanitary facilities for the 10,000 men. Now, suddenly, some 55,000 men—starved, exhausted, malaria and dysentery-ridden—descend on the camp.

Our doctors were in the same shape we were—yet they tried to establish a

“hospital”. There was a “zero” ward—so named because that was your chance of survival if you were ever in there. I walked out of there when I realized I could only get more diseases than I already had. We dug slit trenches for latrines, and people slept by them. The Japanese kept the Americans there from whatever day in April 1942 that we finished the “Death March” (April 14th for me) until the first week in June 1942. They then moved the Americans to Camp Cabanatuan. During the less than two months we were there, we buried some 1500 Americans there. The Japanese kept the Filipinos another two months before releasing most of them on their parole. During the less than four months they were there, there were buried at Camp O'Donnell 26,000 Filipinos.

**Hellships**

On December 13, 1944, 1,619 of us were put aboard the *Oryoku Maru* in Manila Harbor. The ship had three holds about 30' by 50'. I was in hold #1. Over 600 men crowded in a metal hold with no ventilation other than one hatch. There were NO sanitary facilities. We did use some empty food buckets, but they were soon overflowing.

Next morning, the unmarked *Oryoku Maru* was attacked by US Navy dive-bombers. By nightfall the hold was pitch black, and men went mad from lack of water and food. They were completely crazed and were drinking urine. Although I did not personally see any, I believe there were murders and drinking of blood. The conditions in the hold and of the people were beyond belief.

Next morning, 15 December, the planes came back and resumed their attacks. The Japanese abandoned the ship and us. Those of still alive decided it was preferable to be machine-gunned coming up out of the hold to going down in a burning sinking ship, so those of us who could climbed the ladder out of the hold. I saw no live Japanese, a lot of dead

Japanese, but no water. I went over the side. We were about a half mile from shore. I still recall how wonderful and how refreshing that water felt! I was raised in Gloucester, Massachusetts and could swim before I could walk. Several of us helped those who could not swim to get aboard hatch covers, etc that were floating around the ship, and we pushed them to the shore.

The Japanese rounded us up and kept us on the tennis court at the Olongapo Naval Station where we came ashore. In fact, the beach where I swam ashore was where I used to take Army nurses on picnics before the war. The Japanese kept the surviving Americans on the blistering hot tennis court for three days without food and only a trickle of water. Then they gave each of us one and a half teaspoons of RAW rice per day for the next two days. We were eventually moved to LINGAYEN GULF.

On December 27, we were loaded aboard the *Enoura Maru* after a hold full of horses were off loaded. The hold was filthy with manure all around. The food and water was still scarce to. Again, there were no sanitary facilities. Many men had dysentery, and soon there were feces and urine all over the hold. Since there was not even enough water to drink, certainly none could wash. This only led to more dysentery.

We arrived in Takao Harbor, Formosa on January 1, 1945. On January 9, US Navy dive-bombers found us again. I had a squad of ten officers at the rear of the hold. When it came our turn to draw water, I had another officer come with me to the distribution point. Although our ration for our whole squad was only one canteen cup, I wanted each of us to get a half so if one tripped or otherwise dropped the cup, we would not lose all of our ration. Just as we got our water, the anti-aircraft guns on deck opened up. I can remember yelling, “It's only a drill. Don't drop the water!”

When I came to, the hold was a sham-  
*See Artillery Lieutenant Page 7*

Artillery Lieutenant From Page 6

ble with dead and wounded all over. I looked back at my squad. A huge beam overhead had dropped on them—they were all dead. I was bleeding from fragment wounds in my right side and right ankle. The Japanese kept us in the hold with our dead and dying for some 48 hours, and then lowered nets into which we piled the many corpses. By the time we left the *Enoura Maru*, we had lost some 200 men.

We were put on a third ship, the *Brazil Maru*. We sailed from Takao on January 14. The daily death rate on the *Brazil Maru* escalated from about 20 to 40. Now we were sailing in the East China Sea with snow coming in our open hatch. Men froze to death, died of starvation, died of thirst, and died of a myriad of diseases. I had managed to keep my West Point class ring hidden, but now traded it to a Japanese guard for half a canteen of oily water. Again there were no sanitary facilities, and so the hold was ankle

deep in feces, urine, and vomit.

Of the 1,619 that left Manila on the *Oryoku Maru*, some 400 of us reached Moji, Japan somewhat alive on January 28, 1945. As the Japanese took the survivors off the ship, they weighed some of us. I was weighed at exactly 40 kilos (88 pounds). My normal weight should have been about 155.

**Liberation**

When I was liberated, I was in a Japanese POW camp in what the Japanese called Jinsen, but the Koreans called Incheon, Korea. Since few Americans had ever heard of Korea before 1950, our forces did not realize where we were. As a consequence, we did not even know the war was over American planes found us on about August 28, and American troops came in September 8. Words cannot describe the exhilaration and pride of learning that we had won the war! After that a feeling

of immense relief that we had survived—that we had made it!

I stayed on active duty in the Army until December 1970. I married in 1947 and have two wonderful children. I attended the Army's Command and General Staff College and was on its faculty for four years. I attended the Army War College. I earned an MA from GWU. My last assignment was in a MG slot. Before that, I commanded a group of some 14,500 people in Korea. I have had some pretty terrific assignments with few, if any, regrets.

**Reflections**

It was a war, after all and what I was trained for, but we had every right to assume we would be treated humanely and in accordance with international law. War or not, we could never imagine the racism, the cruelty, the torture, the brutality, the savagery we would and did experience.



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## THE GENERAL'S CORNER

**The General's Corner** is dedicated to the memory of **Brigadier General Royal Reynolds, Jr.** During the early days of World War II, General Reynolds commanded the First Battalion of the 57th Infantry Regiment (PS). He led his unit in the defense of Bataan and then, instead of surrendering, spent the remainder of the war as a guerrilla. As the first President of the Philippine Scouts Heritage Society, he was one of the Society's founders and a longtime staunch supporter.



Brigadier General Royal Reynolds, Jr.

**The Generals Corner** publishes historical accounts of World War II in the Philippines. This issue contains three such articles: the first, an account of Philippine Scout **Col. Mel Rosen's** reflections on his experiences as an artillery officer and POW, was previously published on the "U.S.-Japan Dialogue on POWs" website maintained by Japanese author, journalist and human rights activist **Ms. Kinue Tokudome**; the second, an article entitled "*The Greatest Gift: Alexander Nininger*" by **Jennifer Smith**, was published in the November 2005 issue of *Go Riverwalk Magazine*, published in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The final piece, is the saga of **Dr. Jake Olivar**, who as a young sergeant and battlefield amputee survived the Bataan Death March. A longer version of this piece was initially serialized in the *Philippine News* in April, 2003 under the title "*March of the Amputees*".

### The Greatest Gift

By Jennifer Smith

*As Veteran's Day (Nov. 12) quickly approaches, Americans reflect upon the impact United States service people have had throughout history. From Revolutionary War Capt. Nathan Hale's martyrdom on Sept. 22, 1776, to Pfc. Jessica Lynch's bravery as a prisoner of war in Iraq in March and April of 2003, take time to honor those who have so graciously given the greatest of all gifts: the sacrifice of time, safety and life for the pursuit of freedom.*

Since the fight for American liberty began in 1775, over 1,200,000 U.S. men and women have given their lives for their country. Although all were heroes, only a few have been awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor. Alexander "Sandy" Ramsey Nininger Jr. was the first to receive the Medal in World War II. Born in Georgia in 1918, Nininger and his family moved to Fort Lauderdale in 1926, where he then graduated from Fort Lauderdale High School in 1937.

John A. Patterson, former senator of Rhode Island, was Nininger's nephew. He recalled his only meeting with his uncle, as a child. "He visited us after graduation. All I remember is he opened up his suitcase, and

See *The Greatest Gift* Page 9

### On a Leg and a Prayer

By J. Michael Houlahan

*While not a Philippine Scout, Dr. Adriano "Jake" Olivar is a PSHS member and his story of courage in the face of adversity is well worth retelling. A longer version of this article ran initially in the Philippine News on 4/9/03 under the title "March of the Amputees".*

Eleven courageous and determined men stand out among the unrecognized heroes of the Bataan Death March. All lost legs in combat, then were forced to join the infamous sixty-mile march of death to the Camp O'Donnell prisoner of war compound. Sergeant Adriano "Jake" Olivar, now an eighty-three year old medical doctor living in the Chicago suburb of Flossmoor, was one of these men. This is his story.

Jake Olivar was born in a small town in rural Philippines. As part of a program to enlarge the Philippine Army, he took part in junior ROTC training during senior year of high school, and then had two months of basic training following graduation. Now he was a seventeen year old reservist.

In October 1941, Olivar registered for classes at the University of the Philippines (UP). His ambition upon

See *On a Leg and a Prayer* Page 10



*The Greatest Gift From Page 8*

his uniform was inside.” Patterson said he will never forget seeing the uniform. But he also knows from family and friends that Nininger “had a wicked sense of humor.” He would often play fun pranks on other West Point Academy cadets, a natural pastime given his brief theatrical training.

Known for his love of the arts—literature, art, theater and classical music—, Nininger had a quiet and gentle disposition that seemed at odds with his desire to attend West Point. But after watching a company of cadets march down his street as a child, Nininger knew his destiny was to join the ranks. His appointment came from U.S. Rep. Mark Wilcox, and after graduating near the top of his class from West Point in 1941, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Philippine Scouts on the Philippine Islands.

Upon his arrival in the Philippines, Nininger was immediately popular with his comrades. They recognized his bravery and enjoyed his company. In a letter to Col. Andrus regarding Nininger’s last patrol, Col. Frederick J. Yeager, Nininger’s company commanding officer, wrote: “On our left flank was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry (PS). It was this battalion that was hard hit by an enemy night attack. At dawn following the attack, it became apparent that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had suffered a severe setback, but it was unclear just what the present situation was. It seemed imperative to ascertain as soon as possible just what the situation was. It was at this point that Sandy said to me, ‘Fred, give me some good men for a reconnaissance patrol, and I’ll try to establish just what the situation is.’ That was the last time I saw Sandy. Members of his fateful patrol remarked with awe upon their return to the company, ‘Lieutenant Nininger—very brave, very brave.’”

Patterson reflected on his uncle’s actions and stated his belief that in Nininger’s mind, the defense of the country was very honorable, and he made a point of it by laying down his life for American freedom. “He fought for what he believed,” Patterson firmly stated. As to Nininger’s thoughts on warfare, he once told a friend, “I would not kill out of hate, but I would kill out of love for my country.” Through his heroic bravery, he proved his love for the United States.

In tribute to Nininger’s and other veterans’ and service people’s heroics, a statue of Nininger was erected on Riverwalk. Richard Winer, a Fort Lauderdale resident, felt that Nininger needed to be recognized, and thus began the process of procuring funds for the statue. It acknowledges Nininger’s valiant acts, but Winer said it also “represents all of the Broward County servicemen and women who went off to war. And those in service today would agree that Sandy Nininger is representative of them as well.” Today, Signature Bricks are laid at the Nininger Statue to commemorate those servicepeople who have lost their lives in various wars.

There is also a tribute to Nininger at Old Fort Lauderdale Village & Museum. And the West Point Museum has a special exhibit dedicated to Nininger. Exhibited items, including the Medal of Honor, were compiled and donated by Patterson and his family. Reflecting on the Medal and Nininger’s many memorials, Patterson said, “It means different things at different times. I don’t want him forgotten.” Through these tributes, he never will be.

**Republished courtesy of the *Go Riverwalk Magazine* from its November 2005 edition.**

**Alexander R. Nininger Jr.  
Medal of Honor Citation:**



For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy near Abucay, Bataan, Philippine Islands, on 12 January 1942. This officer, though assigned to another company not then engaged in combat, voluntarily attached himself to Company K, same regiment, while that unit was being attacked by enemy force superior in firepower. Enemy snipers in trees and foxholes had stopped a counterattack to regain part of position. In hand-to-hand fighting which followed, 2nd Lt. Nininger repeatedly forced his way to and into the hostile position. Though exposed to heavy enemy fire, he continued to attack with rifle and hand grenades and succeeded in destroying several enemy groups in foxholes and enemy snipers. Although wounded three times, he continued his attacks until he was killed after pushing alone far within the enemy position. When his body was found after recapture of the position, one enemy officer and two enemy soldiers lay dead around him.

*On a Leg and a Prayer From Page 8*

graduation was to become a fighter pilot. On Sunday, December 7 the Japanese staged their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. Upon hearing the news, Olivar and a classmate reported to the mobilization center. "They had orders not to take anybody below nineteen," he recalls. "So we left and then two days later came back and told them that we were nineteen." Eager for recruits, the duty officer accepted the boys.

The underage recruits were assigned to the 31<sup>st</sup> Division, 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment of the Philippine Army, which took up defensive positions on Bataan Peninsula. Japanese landings began later that month and Jake saw his first combat in early January when the Japanese infiltrated the area defended by his unit.

"Pandemonium broke out," he recalls. "We were firing at each other. We were firing at the Japanese. It was midnight. We didn't know what was happening. At the time, I was scared as hell, but it was funny in a way." Several days later Jake was hit by shrapnel and then ended up in a field hospital where his badly mangled right leg was amputated.

While recuperating, he was befriended by a young American Army nurse, Lieutenant Ethel "Sally" Blaine. Realizing that Olivar was highly intelligent and dependable, she made him her orderly.

Fitted with crutches, he played an active role assisting at the hospital until the surrender of the USAFFE forces on Bataan. Almost immediately a tragedy began to unfold as all Filipino patients were forced out of the hospital into what was to become infamous as the Bataan Death March. Included in this exodus were the eleven amputees.

"We padded the saddle of our crutches with cotton and bandages and decid-

ed to bring the woolen blanket from our bed so that we could have something to lie on."

"I remember five amputees who joined the march. I knew they weren't going to make it," Jake recalls. "They could hardly even move."

"We left the hospital without any provisions. Other than the woolen pajamas which were not changed for at least a week, we had no clothing. During the month of April, the temperature in the Philippines goes up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, so the woolen pajamas plus the woolen blanket slung diagonally across our bodies were not the recommended attire." Within two miles, pillaging Japanese soldiers looted their valuables.

On the second day, the amputees divided into two groups, the "toddlers" and the "slow walkers". "The 'toddlers' consisted of amputees who learned to use crutches on the day of the surrender and the 'slow walkers' those who had anywhere from a week to two months experience. The former group was composed virtually of bed-patients who were very weak and had bleeding stumps. I attached myself to the latter group."

That day Jake's group found discarded Japanese field rations consisting of cooked dried rice and powdered salted fish wrapped into small cellophane packages. These were partly soaked in oil, but edible. "In the condition we were in," he recalls, "this constituted a royal feast."

Now every step was an ordeal. A solid cloud of dust whipped up by the marchers enveloped the entire countryside and added to their misery. Occasionally, additional columns of prisoners guarded by bicycle pedaling guards would pass them. When prisoners

lagged behind, they were hit with rifle butts and bayonets.

"Japanese soldiers riding on trucks discovered a new game. They would stick a piece of wood or their rifle butts out of the trucks as they passed us. Marching prisoners of war were falling down by the roadside like dominoes. Strwn in a haphazard pattern along the roadside were lifeless bodies. More and more men were starting to give up. They were bayoneted or shot."

Late on the third day the amputees came to an artesian well. It was an unforgettable scene. "Everyone fully understood the clear warning posed by the mounted machine gun and the erratically strewn bodies near the well."

Towards the end of the fourth day, Jake felt he could go no further. Suddenly an empty Japanese truck stopped and allowed the amputees to climb aboard. They made the remainder of the trip to the POW compound by truck and train.

"Of the eleven amputees who started the march, only six reached the concentration camp. We found out much later that four of the boys who left the hospital with us on April 10, gave up the march on the second day. They were shot and left in the ditches." Civilians helped a fifth amputee escape.

Jake was held at Camp O'Donnell through July. There was little to eat or drink. Illness was widespread due to malnutrition and unsanitary conditions. The Filipinos were not as careful with sanitation as the Americans, so died at a much faster rate.

Finally the surviving amputees were moved to a makeshift hospital in Manila, where they remained until their release in March 1943 as part of a Japa-

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*On a Leg and a Prayer From Page 10*

nese pacification program. The Filipino soldiers were paroled to their provincial governors. Almost immediately Olivar began reporting information to the guerrillas that the governor received from the local Japanese commander. "It was a lot of fun," he recalls, "but also rather dangerous."

Jake worked with the guerrillas for about a year, then was evacuated by submarine to Australia along with a small group of Filipinos and downed American pilots. Returning to Manila after liberation, he was awarded the Prisoner of War and a Purple Heart Medals.

Thwarted in his ambition to become a fighter pilot, Jake studied medicine, graduating from the U.P. medical school in 1953. He then interned at a hospital in Hartford, Connecticut, followed by a residency at Northwestern University.

Dr. Olivar remained in the Chicago area, teaching part time at Northwestern and working in clinical pathology in Chicago Heights. He married an American, whom he met while interning in Hartford. They have two boys and a girl, as well as several grandchildren.

While attending a POW reunion in 1968, Dr. Olivar met an American survivor of Bataan who recognized him. "He saw us leave the hospital to join the Death March and remembered that he made a bet with one of his buddies that we would not make it. I told him that he lost the bet."

*Jake and Sally, now Ethel Blaine Millett, the nurse who befriended him in the Bataan field hospital, still correspond. She put the author in touch with Dr. Olivar.*

**Annual Meeting Program Advertising**

**The Philippine Scouts Heritage Society will have their 22nd Annual National Reunion and membership meeting on May 27 through May 28, 2006, to be held at the Embassy Suite San Francisco Airport, 150 Anza Blvd, Burlingame, CA 94010.**

**We would like to invite you and to support us by advertising in the Souvenir Program that will be printed for the occasion. Part of the net proceeds will benefit the PSHS NEWSLETTER and PSHS LIBRARY being planned in the San Francisco Bay Area.**

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P.O. Box 179  
Daly City, CA. 94016-0179  
Attention: Cion Rael,**

## In Memoriam

It is with considerable sadness that we report the passing of one of our oldest former Philippine Scouts:

**Col. William E. Chandler**, one of the last Regular officers to have fought mounted in war, died in San Antonio, Texas Oct. 7, 2005. He was 97. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on Dec. 15, 2005, carried to his gravesite on a gun carriage drawn by six horses, a riderless horse with boots reversed in the stirrups, following the coffin. It was a fitting end for a man who had been born into the 11th Cavalry at Fort Ethan Allen Vermont in 1908, the son of a cavalry officer and the grandson of Senator William E. Chandler who had largely been responsible for transforming the U.S. Navy from sail to steam in the post-Civil War period. As a boy, young Bill

accompanied his parents to Fort Stotsenburg, then the largest post in the pre-World War army. After graduating from West Point in 1931, Bill served with the 6th and 14th Cavalry regiments, and spent two years at the Cavalry School at Fort Riley. In 1939 he took command of Troop A, 26th Cavalry (PS) at Fort Stotsenburg. As war approached, he was promoted to captain and assigned as regimental operations and intelligence officer, in which he played a vital role in the successful action of the 26th holding the powerful left wing of the Japanese Army as it tried and failed to cut off the main body of our troops withdrawing into Bataan. Bill was seriously wounded the day before Bataan fell. The bullet still lay next to his heart when he died 63 years later. Bill spent most of

his POW years as a prisoner at Cabanatuan, and was part of a shipment of 1700 loaded on the hell ship Oryoko Maru in December 1944. This ship was sunk off Subic Bay; the survivors were loaded on a second ship later sunk in Formosa. A third ship with about 300 of the original 1700 finally made it to Japan. Bill retired in 1961.

Belatedly word has reached us that **Feliciano Figuracion**, former member of the **45th Infantry (PS)** and long-time supporter of our Capt. Jose Calugas, Sr. chapter, passed away in Tacoma in March, 2005. His wife's name is Althea and he is also thought to have several surviving children and grandchildren. Unfortunately no further information has been provided on him.



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## Chapter News

### Captain Jose Calugas, Sr. Chapter:

October 8-9, 2005, **Chapter President Joe Calugas, Jr.** spoke on Veterans issues to the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NAF-FAA) in Seattle, Washington. **Amador Montero**, President of Filipino Veterans of Washington, also spoke on this important issue. **Joe** described the **Philippine Scouts Heritage Society** and its mission statement, as well as the Filipino Veterans Equity campaign.

The PSHS Tacoma Chapter members attended the 46th anniversary recognition luncheon of the Bataan-Corregidor Survivors Association and Their Families (BCSA&TF) on October 22. The BCSA&TF is also a veterans' organization which has a membership consisting mostly of Philippine Scouts and their relatives. The organization was founded in 1959 in Seattle with the help of **Joe Calugas, Sr.**, a former Philippine Scout and Medal of Honor recipient, who became its first Commander.

November 11, 2005, **Joe** and his wife, **Goody**, were invited to the Annual "Tahanan" (Pilipino Multi-Service Agency) dinner and dance in Seattle, Washington to celebrate Veterans Day and to honor the Filipino Veterans. The guest speaker was **LTC. Frankie Manning (Ret.)**, Nurse Executive, VA Puget Sound Health Care System. **LTC. Manning** is also a member of the PSHS Tacoma Chapter.

The chapter recruited a new life member, **Edward Uhde** from Seattle.

The Tacoma Chapter will host the next PSHS annual reunion in May 2007 in Tacoma.

### Golden Gate-Bay Area Chapter:

Perhaps the highlight event for the chapter since our last newsletter was Thanksgiving picnic/barbeque held at Gellert Park, Daly City and attended by 52 members and friends. **Zosimo Guiang** donated eight turkeys as bingo

prizes, as well as donations of raffle prizes. Generous donations were also received from many other members, including **Nora Warren, Del and Antonio Pahed, Nita Guiang, Nilda Malvar, Lisa and Romeo Guiang, Lina Reyes and Lina Susbilla.**

In mid November a gathering of friends and family memorialized PSHS National President Emeritus **Larry Pangan's** passing, with a remembrance ceremony in Larry's garden. The highlight of this event was a video on Larry's life prepared by his daughter **Rose**. The family is donating Larry's uniform to the **Library Project**.

The chapter also added the following new annual members in 2005: **Carli Franch Cheng, Edwina (Winnie) S. Carreon, Andrew Guiang, Carli Frederick Organo, Liz Carla Organo, Donald A. Plata, Lillian C. Patterson and Robert Warren**. New lifetime members added are **Filma M. Foz, Gilda Foz Lee, Stuart Pryor, Evelyn Guiang, Concepcion Rael, Dr. Jenny L. Batongmalaque, Gary A. Hurd and Ralph A. Koch III.**

*The Chapter will host our 2006 reunion on Saturday and Sunday, May 27 and 28, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Burlingame.* Please see registration and program advertising information elsewhere in the newsletter.

### General John J. Pershing Chapter (El Paso):

**National Second Vice President and Chapter President Menandro Parazo** attended an Independence Day retreat parade at Fort Bliss. He was joined by Chapter members **Rod Booth, Julie Booth, Justice Parazo, Benny Lumba and Mrs. Parazo** at an ExPOWs Recognition Day ceremony in September. The guest speaker was **Weldon Hamilton**, who was with Pursuit Squadron at Clark Field on December 8, 1941. He praised the Philippine Scouts who fought on Bataan and Corregidor.

A historical review was held at the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the End of WWII and VJ Day held at the El Paso Memorial Park Center at which **Capt. Parazo** was introduced as an ExPOW.

The El Paso del Norte Chapter of the U.S. Cavalry Association celebrated the 229th birthday of the U.S. Cavalry at Ft. Bliss. At the banquet, **Capt. Parazo** was introduced as a member of the famed **26th Cavalry (PS)**.

**Capt. Parazo** also was guest speaker at an El Paso high school on Veterans Day and took part in that city's Veterans Day parade.

A new Deming, New Mexico school has been named in honor of WWII Veterans of Bataan and Corregidor. **Menandro Parazo's** two brothers' and a brother-in-law's name are etched into its bricks. Outside the front door of the school is a "Walk of Honor" honoring Bataan/Corregidor veterans. His brother-in-law, **Capt. Tony Pelayo**, a member of the **Marking's Guerillas**, was captured and beheaded by the Japanese at Ft. Santiago, Intramuros, Manila in March 1944. His brother **Capt. Procopio Parazo**, an intelligence officer with the **Central Luzon Guerilla Area**, is still carried as MIA by the US Army. **Antenor Parazo**, a younger brother, served with **Magsaysay's Guerilla Unit**. He was captured by the Japanese in Manila, but later escaped. After the war, he became the Psychological Warfare Officer and advisor to the late **President Ramon Magsaysay** and was an editor of the *Manila Chronicle*.

### Monterey County Chapter:

No activities reported.

### Lt. Alexander R. Nininger Chapter:

No activities reported.

### LTC Lloyd E. Mills Chapter:

No activities reported.

## Member Activities

An important objective of this newsletter is the encouragement of our members to raise public awareness of the proud patriotic legacy of the Philippine Scouts. Examples of member's efforts to accomplish this over the last six months follow:

After many months of hard work, **First Vice President John Patterson** succeeded in 2005 in obtaining a new nonprofit [501(c)(3)] status with the IRS enabling donations to the **PSHS** to be tax deductible. This arduous process was made much easier by the initial work of **Nicoll Galbraith** several years ago.

**Senator Patterson** continues to speak before groups such as Rotary and in local schools. He has visited West Point and Fort Lauderdale, Florida for a series of events commemorating his uncle, Philippine Scout Medal of Honor recipient **Lt. Alexander "Sandy" Nininger, 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry (PS)**. (See an article on **Lt. Nininger** in *The General's Corner* of this newsletter.)

**National Second Vice President Menandro Parazo** spoke at several events in the El Paso, Texas area. For a full recounting, visit his chapter report.

**Tacoma Chapter President Joe Calugas** and **GGBAC Chapter President Cion Rael**'s activities are detailed in their chapter reports. **Cion**'s excellent organizational skills have again come into play as she and other chapter members arrange our May 27-28 reunion at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Burlingame.

**Bob Capistrano** had an article on the Philippine Scouts published in the October-December issue of *The American Society of Military Insignia Collectors* "Trading Post."

**Malcolm Decker**'s excellent book [On a Mountainside: The 155<sup>th</sup> Provisional Guerrilla Battalion Against the Japanese on Luzon](#) continues to sell

well. A review of his book can be found on the PSHS website and autographed copies will be available for purchase at the reunion. He also reports that work on his next book is going well. It will be titled [Not Authorized to Save American Lives; The Story of Fassoth's Camps](#).

**Chris Schaefer** highly recommended new book [Bataan Diary: An American Family in World War II, 1941-1945](#) also is selling very well. He has delivered a series of about twenty talks to alumni groups and Rotary clubs in Texas and Utah. In each talk he covers the Battle of Bataan, the role of the Philippine Scouts, and the Japanese treatment of POWs. [Bataan Diary](#) is reviewed on our PSHS website and autographed copies will be on sale at the reunion. **Chris**'s website at [www.bataandiary.com](http://www.bataandiary.com) is interesting and worth a visit.

*The Huntsville Times* ran a 29 column inch feature story "Exhibit honors Filipinos for U.S. Army service" on the front page of its January 3 business section. The article, which included a large color photo, interviewed the exhibit's organizer, **Chief Warrant Officer Aniceto Bagley**, gave a brief history of the Philippine Scouts. The exhibit itself was provided by the [Fort Sam Houston Museum](#) through Museum Director **John Manguso** and now is on permanent loan to Huntsville's [Veterans Memorial Museum](#). The display was dedicated to the memory of **Major Eriberto Caranto, 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry (PS)**. His widow, **Socorro Caranto**, attended and also was interviewed.

**Lt. Col. Ed Ramsey**'s book, [Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier](#)

[to Guerrilla Commander](#), co-written with **Stephen J. Rivele** continues to sell well in paperback. Listed for \$9.95, it can be obtained through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com or ordered through their book stores.

At the request of visiting **Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto Romulo, Consul General Rowena Sanchez**, who heads that country's Consulate General in San Francisco, hosted a dinner so the Secretary could meet **Ed** and wife **Raqui**. **Secretary Romulo** is a nephew of legendary Filipino newspaperman, soldier and diplomat, **BG/Amb. Carlos Romulo**, whom **Lt. Col. Ramsey** came to know well during his time in the Philippines.

Between cruises, **National Historian Col. John Olson** continues to devote extensive time to organizing the [Fort Sam Houston Museum](#) archives on the Philippine Scouts and helping answer Scout-related questions coming to our website.

**Dr. Isabelo Torio** represented **President Fred Foz** and the **PSHS** as the keynote speaker at 64th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II in the Philippines held by the [Filipino Veterans Foundation \(FVF\)](#) last December 8, in Los Angeles. The main thrust of his speech was the need to preserve the legacy of those who served so bravely in the war. The event was heavily attended by WWII veterans and was organized by **Dr. Jenny Batongmalaque**, who heads the FVF. **Dr. Torio** reports that the FVF is the only Filipino veterans' organization, other than our own **PSHS**, which is active in California.

# Philippine Scouts Heritage Society

## 22<sup>nd</sup> National Annual Reunion

May 27 - 28, 2006

### REGISTRATION FORM

Name:

(Last Name)

(First Name)

Address:

(Street)

(City)

(State/Zip)

Phone No.

Number in Party:

#### DINNER MENU CHOICES : (indicate number of each)

Chicken Chasseur:

Grilled Rib Eye Steak:

Grilled Salmon:

Date of Arrival:

**REGISTRATION CHARGE: \$40.00** per person

Please make check payable and mail to:

**PSHS Golden Gate Bay Area Chapter (GGBAC)**

c/o Nilda Malvar, Registration Chairperson

**P. O. Box 179**

**Daly City, CA 94016-0179**

Notes:

1. Upon receipt of your payment, your registration will be confirmed.
2. **R.S.V.P. and payment must be received NO LATER THAN April 30, 2006.**
3. Groups / Party of 5 or 10, please list the names on the reverse side of the form so we may arrange your sitting accordingly.

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RATES:

One to four persons per room: **\$129.00 plus taxes.**

This is a group rate for the Philippine Scouts Heritage Society.

**CUT-OFF DATE: May 5, 2006**, after May 5, 2006, rooms will be provided on a space, rate and availability basis. It is important that you make your reservation early prior to the cut-off date. When making your reservation, **identify yourself as a Philippine Scouts member.**

**NOTE: We are guaranteed 40 Rooms/Suites up until May 5, 2006.**

# Philippine Scouts Heritage Society



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*The Museum is the official repository  
for Philippine Scout memorabilia*

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**If you would like to contact us  
via email, visit our website:  
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**Past issues of this newsletter  
are available on our website.**

**Please contact us if you  
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