

Manila June 24, 2008

The Miracle at Glorietta Mall

Staff Reporter

They came from near and far. Some had traveled on creaky Victory Liner buses for eight hours, other came in Jeepneys and rickety motorcycle taxis. They call it a miracle and for the last thirty six hours an estimated 6,000 of the 15,000 people who have queued here at Glorietta Mall have participated in the miracle. All have one thing in common, loved ones in the USA they have not seen for years.

They call it a miracle because installed at the Mall are 10 amazing terminals which can reunite these pilgrims with their loved ones. They are united through sound, vision and the physical transfer of money by a VideoKall terminal. VideoKall, an innovative US company, has installed public video payphone terminals with Electronic Fund Transfer capability in the Glorietta Mall, Metro Manila and several in Los Angeles and San Francisco. During the high profile launch of this service which was attended by Tourism Minister Dick Gordon, the company is offering free video calls between Glorietta Mall and two Malls in California for the next month. Callers in California and Manila have been issued with free SMART cards which can be used with the video payphone to transfer money from the USA to Manila instantly during the video call.

Marivic Di Gracio who had traveled three hours from Olonagapo said her sister had sent her a text message this morning to let her know she was going to be at the Sherman Oaks Mall in LA today and told her to get to Manila so she could have a video call and send her money. Marivic said "It's the closest thing I have ever seen to a miracle. I couldn't believe I could see her, it was so real I kept touching the screen and we, well we cried. I hadn't seen her since she had the operation and still she is looking after her little sister in Manila. Look I have this card



and she sent me money to this card. It's just unbelievable. God is looking after me."

There were similar stories all across the Mall and security staff had to prize people away from the video payphones after their allotted five minutes free call, people who simply wanted to hang on to these precious moments.

People brought their children and many babies were seen for the first time by husbands who had been away for months.

Senator Gordon was himself close to tears when he spoke to this newspaper. He said "God must have steered this American company to make the Philippines the first country in the world to have this technology. We are indeed blessed. Just look at them, I have never seen so many people with this joy"

Mr. Lucio Tan, president of Philippines Airlines announced today that VideoKall Inc and PAL had signed an agreement to provide a prize of one free Manila-USA flight every day to a VideoKall caller selected at random. He said that the airline saw VideoKall as a natural partner to help OFW's.

Ayala Development Corporation announced that they had entered into an agreement with

VideoKall to award a prize of an Ayala built house valued at \$50,000 every month to a VideoKall caller selected at random. Jose Cruz the director of marketing said “we are pleased to have been selected to partner with VideoKall and believe that this venture will endear both our companies to OFW’s everywhere.

When the free trial period ends callers will pay \$2.50 per minute to make a video call and that price includes the ability to be able to make a free of charge an instant remittance transfer.

Vince Waterson, VP of Business Development who was present at the launch said that his company had been overwhelmed by the co-operation they had received from the Philippines government, Mabuhay Satellite Corporation, PAL and Ayala who have all pledged to make this a part of every day life.

A producer at ABS-CBN television told this newspaper that he knew of at least one soap opera director who is already scripting VideoKall into their next season programming and they have arranged to get a couple of video payphones to the studio next week.

When the first month of free calls is over I for one will be using VideoKall to have a reunion with my daughter who is attending college in California. I can’t wait



The 3,000 recruits will replace some 2,900 men who retired from the service last year and those who are expected to retire during the first semester of the year.

As ordered by President Arroyo, at least 450 of the 3,000 new recruits will be women.

Each of the PNP regional offices is assigned a proportionate number of recruits for hiring based on the current police to population ratio in these areas. The national support units and the national headquarters are allocated 200 recruits each.

The NCRPO will hire 150 recruits in addition to the 250 it hired last year.◆

--Jeannette I. Andrade

PNP hiring 3,000 new police officers

THE Philippine National Police is hiring a total of 3,000 new policemen after Director General Arturo Lomibao, the PNP chief, was assured that there is enough money from its supplemental P1-billion allotment for 2006.

Lomibao has instructed the PNP Directorate for Personnel and Records Management to begin processing applicants for rookie police officers.

Sr. Supt. Samuel Pagdilao Jr., PNP spokesman, said the new recruits will reduce the disparity in police to population ratio to meet the ideal 1:500. “With the 3,000 additional manpower, the PNP will have a total personnel complement of 114,881 or a ratio of one policeman for every 715 persons, based on current population estimates,” Pagdilao said.