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AT THE LAUNCH OF RADYO PILIPINO
30 YEARS OF SERVICE IN ADELAIDE 1978-2008
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ADELAIDE CHRISTIAN CENTRE, ADELAIDE

Thank you for inviting me officially to launch *Radyo Pilipino: 30 Years of Service in Adelaide 1978-2008*.

The late 1970s were an uncertain, eventful and exciting period for Asian immigrants to South Australia.

For some – such as me and my wife, Lan – it was a time for finding our feet in a strange land after a long and perilous departure from our homeland.

For others – those who had been here a little longer and who had formed small, yet thriving ethnic communities – there were new challenges.

In the case of local Filipinos, the challenge was to step up to a new level by proudly announcing their presence in this State and by creating an even stronger sense of unity.

Naturally, they shared a longing for the people and places, the words and music, the food and drink, the faith and customs they had left behind in the Philippines.

This was manifested sometimes in loneliness and culture shock, sometimes in homesickness and mere nostalgia – emotions that Lan and I most certainly identify with.

But those people also understood that their efforts to preserve, maintain and develop Filipino culture crucially depended on language – on conveying the Filipino spirit, in the Filipino tongue, to as many people as possible.

So when the community was invited by the embryonic 5EBI – and the towering figure of its late founder, Walter de Veer – to join the local ethnic broadcasting “family”, things moved quickly.

Dante Juanta – equipped with a voice and delivery honed by years of teaching in the Philippines – teamed up with Ramon Cruz, whose skill at the control panel was the result of his experience in the music scene back home.

Around the time of Philippines Independence Day in 1978, the pair taped a 30-minute segment called *Oras Pilipino*.

In doing so, they made history by producing the first Filipino-language radio program broadcast anywhere in Australia.

It must be pointed out that that first program was no walk in the park.

Although it went to air on 5UV at 7 a.m. on Sunday, 28 June, it was actually taped the week before at 5EBI’s studio in a rented house on Parker Street in Mile End.

The house’s location directly under the flight path meant that the studio often vibrated badly when airliners came in low on their approach to Adelaide Airport.

This sometimes necessitated a short break in proceedings – or a “take two”, “three” or “four”.

Eventually the tape was delivered to 5UV’s underground studio nestled in the Adelaide University campus – a pokey little place often called the “air-raid shelter” – and the program went to air.

When the national anthem of the Philippines crackled out at the very start of the program, Filipinos all over Adelaide bent an ear to their radios – and a shiver went up their collective spine.

Ladies and gentlemen.

The spirit of 1978 – and the steady development of Ethnic Radyo Pilipino – is beautifully evoked in this brilliant, multimedia history.

We're introduced to the enthusiastic volunteer announcers, producers and officers who have put their heart and soul into this endeavour over the past 30 years.

We see how they put together excellent programs – even though they initially had very little training in radio, and they relied on records and tapes brought from home and on Philippine newspaper clippings provided by visiting Filipino tourists.

This, of course, was a period well before the arrival of the fax machine – let alone email and the Internet.

We're shown in this history how Radyo Pilipino has become central to the cultural life of the Filipino community.

We see why its organisation and programs became a model for Filipino-language broadcasters right around Australia – which today number about 10.

We gain a clear sense of how radio – through music and news and interviews and use of the mother tongue – can serve as a bridge between peoples and nations.

And we see how important a role ethnic broadcasting has played in the establishment of multiculturalism in this State – which is surely one of South Australia's greatest social achievements and assets.

Through the latest news from the Philippines, through interviews, through community announcements, through snippets of Philippine history and literature, and through messages about births, birthdays, marriages and bereavements, Radyo Pilipino has kept people in touch with their homeland and with one another.

For me, there is one, really striking thing revealed in this history.

And that is the huge range of activities undertaken by Radyo Pilipino outside the studio.

These dedicated volunteers have done so much for their community over the years that I wonder how they've ever found the time to actually put their three programs to air every week!

For example, they instigated public seminars on topics of interest to Filipinos – calling this occasional series the Philippine Forum.

They established strong links with Australian and Philippine government agencies and non-government groups – with the ultimate aim of improving the day-to-day welfare of Filipinos in Australia.

In 1986, they took part in a Prayer Rally and Mass in the centre of Adelaide to show their support for the then new government of Philippines President Corazon Aquino.

They've held many local Filipino music and cultural festivals.

They've hosted visits to Adelaide by a number of internationally acclaimed entertainers from the Philippines – including big stars like Pilita Corrales, The Reycards and Leo Valdez.

They've welcomed to our State several dignitaries, such as former Philippines President Fidel Ramos and various Philippines Ambassadors to Australia.

They've covered many of the major news events of interest to local Filipinos – some good news, some bad, some stories from home, some local.

And they've donned traditional Filipino clothing to take part in the annual Australia Day Parade through the centre of Adelaide.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Even if the future of Ethnic Radyo Pilipino is half as eventful as the past 30 years, we listeners are in for an exciting time.

Indeed, Radyo Pilipino has made an implicit promise to continue its outstanding service – one that is contained in the fantastic *Theme Song* written by “Butch” Juanta for this 30th anniversary.

The translation of the lyrics to that song reminds us that Radyo Pilipino has been “poignantly touching every emotion” for three decades – and that it’s still there for the Filipino community, “every Thursday, Friday and Sunday”.

The unending pride and dedication shown by these volunteers are captured in the *Theme Song*’s chorus, which reads:

“Wherever you may be
At these moments
Put your troubles away
We long to entertain you
In the programs that we offer
To you”

Please join me in warmly congratulating the wonderful women and men of Radyo Pilipino, and in celebrating the release of this inspired and inspiring work of history.

It’s now my great pleasure officially to launch *Radyo Pilipino: 30 Years of Service in Adelaide 1978-2008*.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat (Thank you very much to you all).