

Providing Dental Care for Philippines' Poor Was an Emotional Experience



Rose Sanchez, a supervising auditor in Internal Audit, and Jerry Ramos, an auditor in the Project Audit Group, look over an album of photos taken during their dental mission to the Philippines.

- [Photo Gallery](#)

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 6, 2001) Tears glisten in Rose Sanchez's eyes when she tells the story. Jerry Ramos also becomes emotional. When more than 500 poor people in their Philippine homeland crammed a one-day dental clinic the two helped set up in April, the experience was heartrending.

Ramos, Sanchez and Mel Rivera – all MTA auditors – worked with the Sorooptimist International service club to arrange the dental mission for indigent residents of Meycauayan, Balucan, a town some 40 miles north of Manila.

Although only one member of a family was entitled to attend the April 29 clinic, whole families came seeking treatment. Many required extensive dental care. Others, suffering from infections, were given antibiotics and promised free treatment later by the local dentists.

"I saw one patient who had nine teeth pulled that day," says Ramos, who lived as a child in a town on the northern tip of Luzon. "That's unbelievable to us."

A 'quasi-pharmacist'

Sanchez, a native of Bataan, was assigned as a "quasi-pharmacist" to work under the supervision of the medical doctors. "After the patients were treated and given prescriptions, they would come to my table where I had the medications, all marked and packaged."

Rivera, who hails from a town south of Manila, and Sanchez's husband, Ricky, were responsible for arranging and maintaining the clinic's equipment and facilities. They also handled crowd control,



Rose Sanchez explains a prescription to two young patients who came to the dental clinic for treatment.

Rose Sanchez Volunteered with a 'Servant's Heart'

By ROSE SANCHEZ

I would summarize my experience on the dental mission to the Philippines in a few words: overwhelming and inwardly gratifying.

Immediately after my husband, Ricky, and I decided that we would volunteer for the mission, we prepared our minds to go with a servant's heart. And as it turned out, it was an awesome experience that I will treasure for the rest of my earthly life.

I was able to serve the poor in a way that I would never have expected to by myself alone! I listened with patience, gave a lot of compassion and love, and shared with the children even the smallest stuff I had (gum, candies, anything fun).

The smiles and joy I received back from those around me became an unexpected blessing to me. I realized then that it is not about what you can or cannot do, but

helped with registration and made sure the area stayed clean.

Twenty U.S. dentists, including Ramos' wife, Editha, partnered with 10 Filipino dentists to operate the makeshift clinic, which was set up at a Meycauayan school. Thirty graduating dental students and two medical doctors joined the dentists, who are members of the Manila Central University Alumni Association.

what HE can do through you!
To top it all... we were blessed with the most wonderful host, Atty. Henry and Mrs. Linnabelle Ruth Villarica, who gave us their unconditional hospitality and kindness.

Ramos coordinated the event with his sister, Linnabelle Villarica, president of the Meycauayan Soroptimist International club, who brought along some 20 chapter members. Local dentists provided 20 dental chairs, drills and other equipment, although each dentist brought his or her own instruments.

Donations of cash, medicines

The U.S. group, who paid their own way to the Philippines, spent months before the dental mission receiving cash contributions and donations of medicine samples and other supplies.

"By the time we were ready to go, we had raised a minimum of \$7,000 to buy many of the things we needed for the mission," says Ramos.

The April event was the second mission to the Philippines for Ramos. In January, 2000, he participated in a medical mission to Meycauayan with a group of doctors and nurses who treated more than 3,000 patients in one day. He's now thinking about the fund-raising needed for what next year could be a joint medical-dental mission.

For Sanchez, the April mission was an unforgettable experience. "It was overwhelming," she says. "I was really touched to be able to help my poor countrymen. We were God-sent to them."



GALLERY



Clockwise from above left:

1. Some 500 residents of Meycauayan, Balucan, attended the Soroptimist International dental mission's volunteer clinic.
2. A Soroptimist volunteer takes a patient's blood pressure as the MTA's Rose Sanchez makes notes.
3. Working under less-than-ideal conditions, a dentist treats a patient as a volunteer holds the young man's head steady.
4. All lined up to assist patients at the dental clinic are MTA employees Jerry Ramos (third from left), Rose Sanchez (center, seated) and Mel Rivera (right).
5. A volunteer dentist works on a young patient in the makeshift dental clinic.

PHOTOS BY MEL RIVERA





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