

AN OPEN INVITATION TO FORMER ORION RESIDENTS

Written by: Fel Barcarse April 18, 2011

BALIKBAYANS and returning overseas Filipino workers (OFW) crowd the arrival area of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) terminal as they start coming home for the Holy Week and for the forthcoming Orion Fiesta. Even the locals have returned to the ancestral homes by bus, by ferry and domestic airlines to visit their relatives and many sightseeing places.

Come home for a visit, you may like it and live here just like many of us. You will not regret coming home. Many retired from the U.S. military service have decided to build their retirement home here. Your hard earned money pensions will be worth more with the current foreign exchange rate. The average house being built here by the retirees cost more than two million pesos. The latest custom built house by several of your retired friends cost four million pesos, more or less. How are they able to afford it, very simple. If you sell or refinance your home in the U.S. with tax exempt equity of, let us say, \$50,000.00, would you believe converted into pesos, you could have a custom house built within two to three months. Think about it seriously. House builders (architect) may draw a house plan and build the house for you with affordable promissory notes. Hardware stores here are more than willing to sell you construction materials you need on credit, knowing that retirees do get monthly pension.

If you should decide to live here, you will be contributing to the social and economy of Orion and the country. You are somebody here, take my word for it. The cost of building materials, purchases of groceries, electric appliances, telephone, cable, real property tax you pay will benefit the community. Your contribution to your church and charity and to the local people you employ are greatly appreciated. You don't have to bring your car here. There are brand new car dealers for the kind of car of your choice. You don't have to pay extra for your cable TV subscription for HBO, Cinemax and special sport pay-per-view shows here.

Why pay house mortgage for thirty years in the U. S. when it is possible you may not have to pay it here.

Unlike in the U. S., you are not compelled to have homeowner, earthquake, flood, fire and other insurance here. Groceries and fresh produce that are sold in the U. S. are available at the Duty Free supermarket in SBMA. Mangoes are now available in the market throughout the year. The local public market and SM hypermarket have plenty of fresh catch of the day.

There is a new St. Michael Medical Hospital affiliated or TRICARE approved medical facility here in Orion. There is a special floor for TRICARE beneficiaries. Hospital and professional cost may be submitted by the hospital or the patient pays the hospital and the beneficiary submits the claim to TRICARE. If the medical procedure is beyond the capability of the hospital doctor, the doctor makes the referral to a hospital in Manila. The hospital or municipal ambulance will then transport the patient to Manila.

Having dual citizenship, U. S. and Filipino, including other nationalities, is more advantageous to you. Your retirement and civil service pension earned outside the Philippines is not taxable here. There is no limit as to any property, real or business, you can own. As a matter of fact several of our shipmates have opened a grocery store, agricultural supply, residential apartments and tourist resort here in Orion. An OFW residing in Australia built a four-star fine dining restaurant you will enjoy dining.

You don't have to go into any business venture; but if you do, there are many areas you can invest in Orion. Here are some of the kind of investment you may participate, fast food and fine dining restaurant, with such ethnic restaurant, Chinese, Mexican, Indian and Japanese cuisine. Hotel and beach

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resort is good too. Orion Investment & Employment Incentive Board (OIEIB) welcomes your capital on new business enterprise to help the local economy and provide employment to the local residents. Pooling your money, let us say, \$5,000 to \$10,000 each, will provide valuable capitalization seed.

Bring your constructive ideas and be a part on the national building of this town under the administration of Mayor Jose S. Santos. Several of retired military were involved in the funding raising campaign to build houses on a donated land for the indigent families under the GAWAD KALINGA program, medical mission under the sponsorship of Rotary and Lions International to the needy poor families. There are many more civil projects that you could participate, such as building an Arellano Museum Garden Park on the birthplace site of Don Cayetano Arellano, the first Filipino Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court. Every year Filipino-American Military Retirees Association conduct charity program to the poor families – distribution of food items to the 230 indigent families in the 23 Barangays and school supplies.

JRI High School Class Reunions are being held out of town because there is no public or private social hall available here in Orion. The JRI Foundation (Pamana ng Lahi) Building was built more than a decade ago to provide a socialization venue for the membership. Unfortunately, the construction was abandoned and to this day the building has been weathering all thru these years, incomplete. For the meantime, high school class reunions were being held out of town, not contributing to our economy. You can help by writing to our Mayor (mayorpepesantos@orionbataan.com), the Chairperson of Orion Municipal Tourism Council and the President of the JRI Foundation to find ways to save and complete the building.

If you are 60 years old, Filipino citizen or with dual citizenship, you are entitled to 20% discount on domestic air fare, hotel, restaurant, all land and sea transportation, cinema house, concert hall and in the purchase of unbranded generic medicines. You may obtain an ID card from the OSCA office.

Are you still working? Survey the living condition here and decide if it suits your situation; build your retirement home and later ship your household effect; or if during your survey you found a house to your liking, negotiate and buy the house, then ship your household effect.

You will be happy here with the available domestic helper, casual laborer, gardener and driver, the one thing that you cannot afford in the U. S.

If you are retired from the military service and you are still on your second career, or getting close to your retirement age, or perhaps your youngest child is still at home, come for a visit, talk to us. For your information there is an association of retired military members named FILIPINO-AMERICAN MILITARY RETIRED ASSOCIATION (FILAMILRA) here. A retired U.S. Navy Chief, Jose (Pepe) S. Santos is the current Mayor of Orion. You may reach him thru his e-mail address: mayorpepesantos@orionbataan.com.

You may reach me at felbar01@yahoo.com for information you would like to know but afraid to ask. Thank you all for reading this unsolicited invitation, join in and be a part of the team, and participate in the public dialogue in the national building of Orion.

