

Full Text

THE PUBLIC'S SERVANT

Matt's from overseas although his parents were born and raised in the Philippines. He says that his vacation and experience in the City of Naga built his character! Let us all listen to this story and find out why and who he met!

The Public's Servant is part of the Modern Hero Stories, a series of stories under Sandaang Salaysay about the lives of great and honorable Filipinos. Brought to you by Arete and Ateneo de Manila Basic Education in partnership with The Bookmark, Inc. and Role Players, Inc. Written by Didith Tan Rodrigo and will be read to us by Bro. Joseph Patrick Echevarria, SJ and Bro Mamert Bancale Mañus, SJ.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 1

Chris: Hey, Matt.

Matt: Hi, Chris. Just woke up.

Chris: So Dude, how are things in . . . where are you?

Matt: Naga City, Philippines.

Chris: Yeah, that place. Your parents' hometown, right?

Matt: Yup. It's BOOORRINNNGGGGG! A small city, far far away from Manila. There's nothing to do here. We just keep attending all of my parents' reunions with relatives, schoolmates, etc. etc. etc. And I have to kiss all these people I don't even know! Or at least put their hand to my forehead for a blessing aaargh!

Chris: Whoo, sounds like heavy stuff, huh.

Matt: You said it! I wanna go home, you know, back to California. When we arrived I thought: omigosh, do they even have Internet here???

Chris: Well, looks like there's at least that - so you can stay in touch with this friend! By the way, it snowed here yesterday.

Matt: No way!

Chris: Way!

Matt: That, like, doesn't happen!

Chris: Global warming. How much longer before you come back?

Matt: 10 more days! That's, like, one long day for every year that I've been alive.

Chris: Torture, huh?

Matt: Yeah, I hate it here. I don't know why we couldn't have gone to Orlando or Las Vegas instead for the family vacation.

Chris: Yeah, or you could've come with me and my folks to New York! But didn't your mom say this visit to the country where you were born would "build character"?

Matt: Yeah, like that's gonna happen.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 2

Matt: Help! I'm drowning in BOOOREDDDDOOOMMM!

Chris: C'mon, it can't be that bad? Nothing interesting AT ALL?

Matt: Believe me, it is bad. Well..... I don't know if this would count as interesting to you? I met the city mayor yesterday - this guy named Jesse Robredo.

Chris: Dude, That sounds cool. . . are you important enough that the ity mayor wanted to meet you?

Matt: Nooo, Chris. I met the mayor because he was playing basketball on the street with my teenage cousins!

Chris: HUH???

Matt: Yeah, I mean, what's that about??? Isn't he supposed to be so busy doing "mayor-stuff"? Since when is a slam dunk mayor-stuff?

Chris: So were, like, his bodyguards on the court, too?

Matt: No, that's what was also weird there was no one surrounding him. I kept looking for the bodyguards, I wanted to see the guns and the walkie-talkies, and the dark glasses - you know, like it is back there in America.

But Mayor Jesse (that's what everyone in the city calls him) was this regular guy in a t-shirt and shorts ... out playing in the streets just like everyone else. And he looked like he really enjoyed it.

Chris: That guy does sound weird .. . but interesting! Get me his autograph on a basketball, or something.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 4

Matt: Hey, Chris. Remember I was telling you the other day about the Naga mayor and basketball?

Chris: Yeah. . . Mayor Jesse? So, has he played basketball with you yet? Did you get me his autograph?

Matt: No, but I saw him riding a bike today.

Chris: What?! Is the city that poor? He doesn't even have a car???

Matt: He does, he does, but here's the deal: there was this little girl who ran away from home.

Chris: Yeah, so. . . ?

Matt: She went like, into the rice fields somewhere outside the city, where there are no roads.

Chris: How did she get there???

Matt: Dunno. I guess she just kept on walking. Anyway, so Mayor Jesse goes to pick her up on his bike. He talks to her for, like, hours. And then brings her back to her parents!

Chris: On the bike?

Matt: On the bike!

Chris: Don't they have social services people to do that sort of thing?

Matt: Well, the mayor is a "hands-on" kind of leader, my mom said.

Chris: So he went after the little girl by himself?

Matt: Yeah...

Chris: Wow! He cares that much about the people? But I don't get it. Why would he go to all that trouble for one little girl?

Matt: Yeah, I was wondering that myself. My Uncle Charlie kidded that it might be an election gimmick - something to get votes, you know.

Chris: Aha! So I think the mayor is not for real, not a genuine person, after all.

Matt: Think again. Turns out this is Mayor Jesse's last year as Naga City's mayor. He's not allowed to run for office again.

Chris: Hey Matt, I gotta meet this Mayor Jesse.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 5

Chris: Hey, Matt. Mom says there's a big storm headed your way. She heard it on the world weather report just now. E-mail me when you get this.

Matt: Hi, Chris. The storm is bad... and the Internet's going on and off. Will catch you when things clear up.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 6

Chris: Matt, are you guys okay there in Naga? The weather report says this was the worst storm in 12 years, and the city was hit directly.

Chris: Is your internet down?

INTERNET CHAT DAY 8

Chris: Earth to Matt! Are you ok?

Chris: Dude, hope you get online soon. Am getting worried.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 11

Matt: Hey, Chris!

Chris: Dude! Glad you're back. Did you guys make it through the typhoon ok?

Matt: It was seriously unreal, Chris! We were, like, at Ground Zero!

Chris: So, tell me, what was it like?

Matt: Think: disaster movie! The wind was-howling! The rain was coming in sideways! You should have seen the stuff that was flying around. Coconut trees, parts of roofs, window glass. There was a telephone pole that crashed right outside my Uncle Charlie's house.

Chris: Whole. Did anyone get hurt?

Matt: Lucky for us, it landed on the street.

Chris: *sigh*

Matt: One of the worst parts was when the river overflowed! So hundreds of houses along the river banks got flooded! People had to stay on their roofs to wait for rescue!

Chris: *gasph*

Matt: I'm telling you - they had to use boats to get the people out - it was crazy! We just stayed indoors but my cousins went out to help.

Chris: Your cousins went out in that???

Matt: Yeah, they were part of this youth rescue team that Mayor Jesse has put together to deal with disasters in the city. They were supposed to help get people out of their flooded homes and bring them to the relief centers.

Chris: Wow, they're like, heroes. Amazing!

Matt: But Man, you know what was even more amazing?

Chris: More?!?!

Matt: The morning after the storm, my mom and I were driving around just to see what the storm had done to Uncle Charlie's house. After the rain, so the town was a huge MESS:
All sorts of garbage on the street.
Shattered glass.
Big tree branches.
Mud, mud, mud.
Plastic bags everywhere.
All of a sudden we see one man with a long broom, all by himself. He was sweeping away the mess in the town plaza. It was Mayor Jesse!

Chris: No way!

Matt: I kid you not!

Chris: So this mayor plays basketball with anyone, rides a bike to save a child, and sweeps the streets after a storm???
Dude, that's not a mayor! ~ ·
That's ...
I don't know what that is.

Matt: Well, that's Naga's mayor!
And the best part was this: when people saw their mayor sweeping away the mess, they came out of their homes and started sweeping too.

Chris: Wow. . .

Matt: Yeah, pretty neat, huh? We cleaned up the city in just three days. That's why I haven't been online for a while. Mom and Dad and I were out on the streets sweeping! Oh, and there were people passing around bottles of water and sandwiches for the volunteers. It was like this street party or something!

Chris: Those are amazing stories, Dude.

Matt: Yeah, gotta run, sorry. My shift is on - we're now checking for busted street lights with Mayor Jesse, on foot.

INTERNET CHAT DAY 12

Matt: Hi Chris! My Naga vacation is just about over, am packing for the flight back home. Well, it wasn't boring after all. Survived the storm, met many generous people, worked with Mayor Jesse. In my book, he's a real hero.

Chris: Yeah, you're one lucky Dude! But U gotta sayL that was so not a vacation!

Matt: No, but it sure built character!

Source: *The Public's Servant*. Didith Tan Rodrigo. The Bookmark, Inc. 2008.

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