

Business leader sends Filipino engineers to help rebuild flood-ravaged Louisiana

By AVE BASA
Publisher & Editor

HOUSTON, TX—Moved by the devastation and suffering wrought by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Dallas business and civic leader Gus Mercado mobilized a contingent of Filipino wireless engineers to New Orleans and surrounding cities to help rebuild communication facilities destroyed by the deadly hurricanes.

Mercado, chairman and CEO of Datalogix Texas, a thriving 12-year-old IT and telecom consulting company owned by him and his wife, Ethel, who serves as president and CEO, was one of the first telecom subcontractors to volunteer to help in the reconstruction of the flood-ravaged communities of southern Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi.

"We are blessed that the spirit of volunteerism is very strong among our employees, many of whom have experience rebuilding cell sites destroyed by strong typhoons and tsunamis that frequently visit the Philippine islands," Mercado proudly declared. "This is our small way of repaying this nation that has been good to Filipino immigrants like us and our Filipino engineers."

According to Mercado, working in and around New Orleans, even after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have subsided, remains an extremely difficult job. It requires not only very high-level technical trouble-

shooting skills, but also mental toughness and a strong resolve to help people in need. There was looting everywhere, and for a long time, food, potable water, gasoline and other supplies were very scarce. The companies that Datalogix employees work for (T-Mobile and Cingular Wireless) could not provide housing for them. There were no hotel rooms for hundreds of miles, especially with the government's recent decision to extend free hotel rent for 127,000 evacuees. "Our engineers had to sleep in trailers or in their SUVs, or rent very expensive hotel rooms many miles away, but our guys are tough and devoted to their mission," Mercado added.

Mercado and his family are not strangers to disaster relief. In the late 70s, when he was manager of MIS and Telecommunications with the Collins Radio division of Rockwell International, he was part of a Rapid Response Volunteer Task Force that provided emergency communication facilities to Wichita Falls, which was flattened by the biggest and deadliest tornado that ever visited the state of Texas.

In more than 30 years of community service, the Mercados have helped hundreds, perhaps thousands of Filipino families who were economically or politically disadvantaged. Gus became nationally known when he fearlessly spearheaded the "Save the Texas 10" cam-



CELL tower falls on submerged home.

aign to release the Filipino airline mechanics who were unfairly incarcerated for six months on false and trumped-up immigration charges following 9/11. He raised funds for their legal defense, gathered 1,000 signatures on a petition to President George W. Bush, and won an incredible victory against all odds in the Texas courts to secure the release of the 10 mechanics who are now back with their families.

The Mercados also actively supported the Houston-based Filipino Disaster Relief-Texas and housed six families in their new home in Lantana, Texas, during the hurricane Rita stampede. They recently sponsored a golf tournament that raised enough money to build homes for three homeless families among the poorest of the poor in the Philippines.

What motivates the Mer-

cados to keep helping their fellow men? A three-time "Jaycee of the Year" award-ee of the U.S. Jaycees organization, Mercado firmly believes in the Jaycee Creed, which says: "Service to Humanity is the Best Work of Life." He also has an unwavering faith in the Filipino—the Filipino's resiliency, devotion to family



MERCADO briefs Filipino engineers before sending them to the disaster sites.

and career, and impeccable work ethic—which are the hallmarks of his 70-strong workforce consisting mainly of topnotch and highly trained Filipino wireless engineers.

Mercado has received many awards from the national Jaycee organization, the *Dallas Morning News*, the City of Dallas, the Philippine government and the National Federation of Filipino American Associations for his dedication to community service. As a fitting tribute perhaps to Mercado's faith in his fellow Filipinos and his distinguished record of selfless service to others, he and his

family have been blessed with good fortune. Their company, Datalogix Texas, has experienced a meteoric rise the past several years, growing at a 400% annual rate, making it one of the fastest growing companies in the wireless industry.

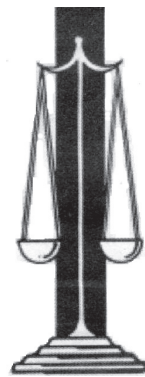
As Robert Miller, chief business columnist of the *Dallas Morning News*, said in his column that he devoted entirely to Gus Mercado: "While Mr. Mercado sums up his daily blessings in his mantra of 'Thank you, America,' perhaps *Dallas and America* should take a moment now and then to say 'thank you' to the Mr. Mercados everywhere."

FULGENCIO T. DUREMDES

Attorney & Counselor-At-Law

IMMIGRATION

- Naturalization
- Employment Visas
- Labor Certification
- Family Petition



PERSONAL INJURY

- Auto/Truck Accidents
- Workmen's Compensation
- Premises Liability
- Slip & Fall
- On-the-Job Injuries

2640 Fountainview, Suite 201
Houston, Texas 77057

Telephones 713-789-9501 • 713-789-6350
Fax 713-789-2620

NOT CERTIFIED BY TEXAS BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION

Mo.City scraps first responder EMS fees

WHEN Missouri City residents place a call for an emergency, a system that has been in place will continue to provide for the best patient care; however, the city fees formerly charged for the first responder service will no longer be in effect as per City Council action.

"It's not going to change our medical response. We will provide medical first responder service as we always have," Missouri City Acting Fire Chief Russell Sander, assuring residents that the city will continue its EMS first responder service.

The City Council approved a recommendation submitted by City Manager Frank Simpson which supports the provision of the EMS first responder services as a function of the city government in a "giving back" mode "as the city has committed to do and as commercial growth continues to

happen," said Simpson.

"We are moving the first responder calls to basic service provision," Simpson said, "just like when we get called to a house fire and don't send a bill to residents."

Missouri City recognizes that Fort Bend County currently provides EMS care and transport services to its residents, which includes those living in its municipalities. Fort Bend County also bills for these services. Typically in the community, when a call is placed for a medical emergency, both Missouri City Fire and Rescue Services and Fort Bend County EMS respond to provide the best patient care. This system for responding to calls for medical emergencies will remain in place.

However, Missouri City will not be charging residents for the service as authorized by City Council.