

THE MAN IN A CAGE

At first I thought the mother was hiding from us because we heard rustling of bushes. Joel spoke to us and said she was at the market. Turned out she was working in the field. She said Joel had a good education and 3 children, but a few years ago he had a mental breakdown. She said he had worked for Mr Ynoc at this beach resort previously.

My Rotarian friend and host Tony Ynoc was with us and went to talk to him and try for more info. Finally Tony remembered him but could not recognize Joel with a beard and long hair. Tony and I started to cry because it was a shock that hit close to home. Joel's mother said that his wife left with two of the children and the third child lives with them on this small remote farm location. Her husband is now gone and so she is the sole support for Joel and her grandson.

There is no easy way to take him from here for treatment and likely it is dangerous as well. We have met with the Mayor of the local municipality and they do not have any resources to deal with this kind of situation. He hopes we might do a project to build a proper mental treatment centre, as he thinks there are up to 16 others who are chained to trees or other such types of confinement.

In the meantime, we are working to find help for Joel and get him the proper medical treatment that he deserves. Please pray for his well-being and wish us well.

UPDATE on Joel - Man in the Cage - Through the power of Rotary . . .

Miracles do happen!

Imagine sitting in a restaurant a couple days later with your new host, a prominent lawyer in the community. After lunch he will be taking you to an out of town resort for some R&R. His cell phone rings and it is a client who wishes to see him ASAP. He advises the caller that he is not in the office, but if he comes to the restaurant, they can talk.

Soon, Air Force General Jose Reyes (ret'd) appears and introductions are made. After a few moments, your host says "Maybe the General can help you with your problem." You explain your dilemma of getting Joel transported from the remote and rugged location to Cebu. The General replies "I can help you with that" as he takes out his cell phone.

This was a day the angels were smiling down on Joel. Within minutes, the General called the Air Force division in Mactan and arranged for a helicopter and medical team to plan the evacuation of Joel from his prison. Thanks to my Rotary friend and RC Mactan President Rey Mangayao, for working out the final details these past few days. Tomorrow (Monday) JOEL WILL BE FREED FROM HIS PRISON.

Please continue to pray for the safe travel of Joel for his new journey of assessment and treatment. We hope and pray for a full return to good health and a rebuilt life for him and his family. This is truly a story of Rotary in Action!

We have arranged for a Psychiatric Hospital to assess and treat Joel if we can get him transported to Vincente Sotto Medical Centre in Cebu. Thanks to Director Dr Ann Alvez for agreeing to assist.

More GOOD NEWS UPDATE - Joel is Free from his Cage!

You cannot imagine how excited and happy I am, crying too!

I just got notification that our Philippine Air Force friends have helped release Joel from his cage and he is now being transported to the Vincente Sotto mental health medical

facility in Cebu. Thanks so much to my friend Ivan Nemenzo for introducing me to General Jose Reyes who made things happen.

Also thanks to Director of Psychiatry, Dr Ann Alvez for accepting him at her facility for assessment and treatment. Thanks to Reynante Mangayao, President RC Mactan, for supporting me to ensure logistics came together. I also appreciated those of you who shared your prayers, and health and wellness ideas for Joel, which I have passed on.

So proud to be a Rotarian today, with the support of many Rotary friends and the network to make this happen. May God continue to look over you with these Rotary angels, Joel.

LATEST UPDATE - Joel is expected to return to a normal life. Great News!

Here is the latest update and photos of Joel's release from the cage. Thanks to all who have provided wonderful comments and feedback on our efforts to free him.

Thanks also to Rotary friends who supported me in this effort, especially President Reynante Mangayao who spent much time and effort in coordinating the logistics to release Joel.

Before leaving the Philippines, I spoke with Dr Ann Alvez, Director of Psychiatry at Vincente Sotto hospital. She indicated that with treatment and medication, they hoped Joel would be able to return to a normal life. Apparently he was a former patient there a few years ago but did not return for his check-ups. How could he, when he was locked in a cage!

For those who have asked, yes we will be needing further help to assist Joel. He comes from a poor family and has no funds to pay for the medicine that will make a difference in his life. We are hoping to find a sponsor and source for these but in the meantime, funds will be required. We are also investigating if we might get him monthly injections rather than daily oral medication, to ensure he does not forget his daily routine and lapse back to his poor condition.

I also want to share a posting that I have made to a FB posting, which was not totally correct. A report with inaccurate information was posted regarding the Mayor's involvement in all of this, taking most of the credit and none to Rotary. I'm assuming this is part of the election campaign strategy that often takes place in the Philippines. Below is the rebuttal I just posted on that page, FYI.

I just want to set the record straight here

The Mayor did not "Negotiate the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center" or have anything to do with making arrangements for Joel to be accepted there. That was done by myself and other Rotary friends. It was also Rotary who coordinated assistance from the Air Force to evacuate him.

Due to maintenance issues on the helicopter, we had to revert to an ambulance and Mayor Mar was kind enough to agree that we could use that vehicle for the day. As far as I know, other than coming to visit when we took him, that is the extent of Mayor Mar's involvement. In fact when I met with the Mayor some days earlier, prior to arranging this through Rotary, he felt that there were no resources or assistance locally for Joel. That is why I and Rotary friends moved forward with this release of Joel.

It was Rotary who accomplished this, with assistance of the local emergency ambulance unit. Kudos to Reynante Mangayao, my Rotary friend and colleague for carrying through on the logistics of all this while I left for other duties.— in **Philippines**.