

The AACP Newsletter

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Traditional Christmas Stars Shine Bright in San Francisco

The following is an article by MC Canlas who is the small business assistance specialist and community strategist at the Filipino American Development Foundation. MC Canlas is also the founder and coordinator of the annual Parol Lantern Festival.

The 7th Annual Parol Lantern Festival will take place on December 12, 2009 at Jessie Square (east plaza of St. Patrick's Church) in San Francisco.

The Bayanihan Community Center in San Francisco holds free parol-making workshops and rehearsals on Fridays from 5-8pm. For more information go to bayanihanc.org or call 415.239.0249.

All are welcome to participate.

What We Should Know About Parol

By MC Canlas

Origin of the Word

Christmas lantern is the common translation for parol or parul which originated from the Spanish word farol which means lantern. (The other Spanish words for lantern are linterna, fanal, lampara and faro.) The P spelling instead of F is an appropriation of Spanish word to make it distinctly Filipino as in palda from falda (skirt), pista from fiesta (feast) and prutas from fruta (fruit).

In the Philippines not all parols are lantern. A lantern is a portable case with transparent or translucent sides for holding and protecting a light. And not all lanterns are parols. Filipinos do not refer to the popular Chinese and Japanese lanterns as parol. Although not all parols are lighted or illuminated they however symbolize light and brightness as in the five-point star parol.

The Christmas symbolism of parol is the bright lone star of Bethlehem that guided the Three Wise Men (Magi) to the manger of the newly-born King -Jesus Christ. The word for bright star in

Filipino (Tagalog) is bituin or tala, in Spanish it is estrella. I wonder why the Filipinos never refer to this Christmas symbol as tala or estrella, and parol became a generic term to refer for Christmas lantern (Christmas ornament case with light) and ornament with star-based design and variation.

Origin of the Parol Tradition

It is a common practice in the Philippines to hang parol to adorn houses, offices, stores, lampposts, and public places during the holiday season. The hanging of lighted parol according to some writers was originally designed and used to provide light and guide the local folks on their way to the church for the novena (nine days) of "Misa de Gallo" or Mass of the Rooster, dawn masses.

However, if we read the origin of Misa de Gallo or Simbang Gabi, as written in the Christmas program at St. Patrick's Church: "Introduced in the Philippines by the missionaries about the 16th century, these novena of masses from December 16th to 24th, were celebrated in the early morning hours, when the roosters crow to announce the coming of the new day (hence misa de gallo) for a very practical reason. Filipinos were farmers or fisherman who either began or ended their day at dawn." What is then the parol for church goes - the local folks, farmers and fishermen - who happened to be the most knowledgeable of their way in their locality even in the darkest night?

My version of the origin of the parol tradition is connected to the celebration of fiesta or feast of the town's or village's patron saint. Christmas is considered the feast of all feasts. The usual practice of local folks of hanging banderetas (i.e. small flags, banneret or bunting) to decorate the streets and houses during fiesta is similar to the hanging of parol in house windows to make known of the coming of baby Jesus Christ.

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Lightning Strikes Twice My Novel Experience Part II

By Leonard D. Chan

For you regular readers of the AACP newsletter that were wondering, I did complete my second novel last month. Those of you that don't regularly follow the AACP newsletter and just happened to come across this article online or are just getting the AACP emailed newsletter for the first time, I participated in National Novel Writing Month (<http://www.nanowrimo.org> - NaNoWriMo) this past November. NaNoWriMo is an event held each year, which is kind of a writers' marathon challenge. Instead

of running 26 miles, people that sign up for this challenge try to write 50,000 words of fiction in one month.

I re-read my article from November 2005 when I wrote my first novel and found the article to be pretty good. I encourage you to read the article if you haven't seen it already or just forgot about it like I did. (<http://asianamericanbooks.com/newslets/nl1105.htm>)

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Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions. You can contact us at -
aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com

Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Jan 16 2pm	6th Annual Poetry In San Mateo Day A Beginning of the Year Poetry Celebration Hiroshi Kashiwagi	AACP Store 529 E. 3rd Ave San Mateo, CA
Jan 31 1-5pm	Families with Children from China - N. CA 15th Between Two New Years Celebration!	Mill Valley Community Center Mill Valley, CA
Feb. 14 11am-2pm	Foster City Chinese New Year Celebration	Foster City, CA
Feb. 14 5:30pm	The 30th Annual San Jose Day of Remembrance 2010	Betsuin Bud. Church 640 N 5th St. San Jose, CA
Feb. 20	Day of Remembrance 2010	Merced, CA
Mar. 6 11am-5:30pm	Chinese New Year's Celebration	Stockton Civic Aud. 525 N. Center St. Stockton, CA
Other Event of Interest that AACP May Not Attend		
Dec. 12 3-8pm	7th Annual Parol Lantern Festival & Parade	Jessie Square San Francisco, CA
Jan. 13-15	Assoc. of CA School Administrators Every Child Counts Symposium	Portola Plaza Hotel Monterey, CA
Feb. 6-28	Chinese New Year Celebration Events in SF	Chinatown San Francisco, CA
Feb. 20-21	25th Annual Oregon Asian Celebration	Lane County Convention Center Eugene, OR
Feb. 27 5:30pm	Chinese New Year Parade	San Francisco, CA
Mar. 5-7	California Council for the Social Studies Conference	California Council for the Social Studies Conference
Mar. 6-7	Reading the World XII	USF San Francisco, CA

Traditional Christmas Stars

(Continued from page 1)

The Origin of the Parol Stroll or Lighting the Walkway

Another common practice in some towns and cities is a religious procession on the night following the nine-day early morning masses or *simbang gabi*, also known as *Misa de Gallo*. In that particular evening the local folks march around the town plaza,

Editor's Message

Hello Everyone,

Hope you're all having a good holiday season.

One of the events that we wish to highlight on our schedule is our up-coming 6th Annual Poetry In San Mateo Day. This year we are featuring the finish of our new poetry book written by our friend Hiroshi Kashiwagi. Come hear him read from his new book *Ocean Beach*.

The poetry event is returning to the cozy confines of our store. As always we welcome our audience to share their poetry too. So don't forget to write a poem for the new year and bring it to our event. If you email us your poem in advance we'll include it in our next newsletter.

Thank you MC Canlas for the use of your article. We wish you much success with your Parol Festival and other efforts.

It's the end of the year and time to thank all of you that helped with the newsletter in 2009. Thank you so much for your assistance. We get by with a little help from our friends.

For those of you that derived some value from our newsletter during this past year, we ask for your support too. Times are tough and we know it's hard for many of you to give at this time, but for those that can afford to donate, please remember AACP in your year-end giving. AACP is a non-profit organization that depends on its supporters.

You can make a donation by going to our online donation form at <https://aacpinc-best.securesites.com/secure/dform.htm> or by making out a check to AACP, Inc. and sending it to AACP, Inc.
529 East Third Ave.
San Mateo, CA 94401

Merry Christmas, Mele Kalikimaka, Happy Holidays Everyone!

Leonard Chan
Executive Editor

extending in nearby barrios, carrying candles and lighted parols and usually accompanied by *musikong bumbong* or local brass band. It starts and ends in front of the Church courtyard.

This particular tradition may have roots in Spanish Mexico when they do their *luminaria*; a votive candle set into a small, decorative paper bag weighted with sand and placed in a row with

others along a walkway, driveway, or rooftop as a holiday decoration. Luminaria is also called farolito or small lantern.

Parol Making as a Folk Arts and Craft

The basic parol design is a five-pointed star inside of a circle, usually made of bamboo stick, multi-colored crepe paper or papel de japon and cellophane. Through the years the parol making has become a folk craft, school art project, a cottage industry and now a Philippine export. There are many parol in the country of various forms, shapes, sizes and materials they are made-from. This Philippine folk art and craft, as we know it, has various roots and influences - native or indigenous, Spanish, American, religious, commercial, rural and urban.

The famous and spectacular giant parols, which range from 10 feet to 20 feet in diameter, are product of Pampanga folk arts tradition. San Fernando clans from different barrios are known for their parol artistry for generations that during Christmas the showcase "Ligligan ng Parul" awed tourists and visitors. The Philippine Department of Tourism has made this annual gigantic parol festival among the principal tourist destinations in the country. San Fernando Parols, which are made of paper, plastic and capiz, contribute to the country's ailing economy; parol are popular among balikbayan and are exported in many countries.

Ligligan Parol and Lantern Parade

There are two popular Christmas lantern festivals in the Philippines that has influenced the holding of this year San Francisco Parol Festival on the 5th of December in South of Market; the world renowned "Ligligang Parul" of San Fernando City in Pampanga and the University of the Philippines Lantern Parade which is held annually on the third week of December in UP's Diliman campus in Quezon City in the Philippines.

For more than half a century, since the transfer of UP Campus from Padre Faura to Diliman, this colorful U.P. Lantern Parade and Christmas tradition has enlivened the U.P. community. It aptly brightens Diliman (the word Diliman means to darken in Tagalog.). With the Christmas lantern or "parol" as its principal motif the Lantern Parade through the years has blossomed into a spectacular venue for creative expression, social criticism and political activism among the different members of the U.P. community.

The San Fernando Giant Lantern Festival has become a major tourist destination (see this year's calendar of activities) from a humble beginning of an inter-village (barangay) Parol showcase held in the town's poblacion on Christmas Eve.

Parol Making Promotes Bayanihan Spirit

The traditional image of bayanihan is a group of local folks carrying a house on their shoulder. For Filipinos it means working together, neighbors helping each other, a collective endeavor, and forging unity for a community project. In Pampanga and in Diliman, parol and lantern making is a collective endeavor of members of baranggay and organization. In America it is not easy to describe this image of Bayanihan to non-Filipinos and even among Filipino Americans. With the rehabilitation of the former Delta Hotel into a Bayanihan House and Bayanihan Community Center on Sixth Street and Mission Street in South of Market, the bigger challenge is how relate the ancient concept of Bayanihan

into contemporary experience in the South of Market Neighborhood. The Filipino American Development Foundation, the proponent of Bayanihan Community Center, is proud to sponsor and organize of parol-making workshops in October, November and early December in conjunction to the Christmas Lantern / Parol Festival. From this years' experience we can say that parol-making is indeed a bayanihan; it brings families, friends, relatives, neighbors, and people from all walks of life together for common project.

Parol the Quintessential Filipino Symbol

Parol is perhaps the quintessential Filipino symbol that distinguishes the Philippines with the rest of the world. Although it is associated with Christmas, the symbolism and significance of parol in Filipino culture is profoundly comparable to the so called national symbol or Pambansang Sagisag such as Barong Tagalog or even much greater than our ethnic group in America is popularly known for such as Tinikling (bamboo dance), lumpia (egg roll) and adobo.

The source of inspiration of the folk arts of parol is the liwanag at dilim, (the lightness and the darkness) which I think is also the inspiration of the Katipunan's revolutionary emblems and Philippine national flag. It is the radiating symbol of the sun and its rays, the enduring effect of the light to the dark. Hence, parol's five-pointed star inside of a circle, embellished with tassels (buntot or tails), the central figure is not a star but a sun and the message is to bring light to the gloomy surrounding. The parol is a fount of light, a sign of hope amidst the "darkness" in the world or in one's being or location.

"Darkness" in the Filipino context connotes tyranny, oppression, poverty, graft and corruption, discrimination, human rights violations, immorality, illness, and hardships in the family. Darkness in the family is when one member is sick or the family is fragmented, troubled or in pain as in "ang sakit ng kalingkingan ay damdam ng buong katawan" (The pain of the little finger is felt by the whole or entire body.) The problem of one becomes the problem of everyone. This is what we call malasakit or concern and care for each other.

The three stars in the Philippine national flag stand for the three island groups of the archipelago -Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao while sun and the eight rays symbolizes kalayaan, the light of liberty, and the regions who first rose and revolted against the enemy, principal source of darkness in the native land.

There is an historical account about the 1896 Philippine Revolution; Katipuneros were asked to put lighted oil lamp near the windows of their houses to convey "safe passage" or "refuge" to their other members who move from place to place in the wee hours of the night so as not to get the attention of their enemy.

The deeper meaning is shared identity and shared responsibility. Hindi ka nag-iisa. You are not alone and we are with you. Perhaps the hanging of parol in front windows during the holiday season encourages other people to feel upon seeing the parol that they are not alone "hindi ka nag-iisa" and "we are one in faith and identity."

Thus, when I assert that the Parol is the quintessential Filipino

symbol, I am actually illuminating a point: the parol is the embodiment of the sun, sunrays, and stars found in the Philippine flag which is the emblem of our people's historic and continuing struggle and redemption, the liwanag at dilim. Parol making upholds and rekindles bayanihan spirit which is an important ingredient in community building and empowerment.

For many of us in America, the hanging of parol in front windows, brightens our house, enlightens the world, brings hope and joy to all, and we're proud to be Filipinos. Parol Festival is distinctly Filipino that the entire Christian world can easily and without doubt relate with.

My Novel Experience Part II

(Continued from page 1)

Here are some new observations -

I find it difficult to jump up and down about the experience now that I've done it for a second time. The modest part of me finds that talking about it feels kind of like bragging. Maybe for those of you that regularly do marathons or some other rare things, you may know what I am feeling. You do something that most people don't normally do, something that's pretty amazing, but you can't really talk about it with the people that don't do it because you don't want to make them feel bad for not doing it too.

After writing my second novel - I truly believe that many more people can do it if they really gave it a good try. I'm really not a better writer than a lot of you out there and there really are a lot of you. In fact I would classify this second novel of mine as not being even one of my better writing efforts. That's part of the reason why I'm very reluctant to letting one of my friends see it. It's like one of those so so movies or books that you saw or read - you wouldn't recommend it to anyone.

On the other hand, what I said in my first article about the created book being a part of you still holds true. It's completely worth doing for that very reason. If the book should survive me, I wonder what people would think about me - will they think I'm really like my characters? I hope not, but you really can't help inserting many of your personal thought and ideas, a part of you,

into any creative venture that you should undertake. If you don't do that, then it's probably not very good.

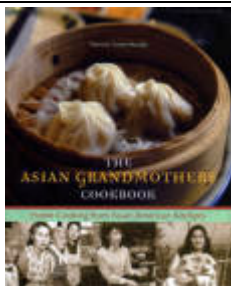
Using your own experiences even if there's just a small bit of it that gets in your fiction really helps a lot. All you have to do is use things that you remember and fictionalize it - change names, places, whole aspects of the original experience, but have some common basis that you can work from or with. Your experiences are like the paint palettes of painters. Mix your experiences and thoughts to create new worlds.

Novel writing in a month may not be right for a lot of you out there. The people that I recommend this for are those that love to tell stories - the ones that can go on and on about many subjects. If you can't find an audience for all of your urges to communicate to others, then do it in fiction. It's a great outlet, especially if your friends and family are tired of hearing the same things from you :). Here's your chance to tell your thoughts to imaginary characters and unwitting readers that should stumble across your so so writings. Let's hope you won't feel too embarrassed when they do read it.

Okay, I'm not trying to brag here, but I finished my novel in 26 days - three days faster than my novel in 2005. Plus I crossed the finish line in the top seven thousand out of 166,000 that started the effort. Yea!! I don't know if I'll ever do it again, but I sure hope that if I do, it'll be at least as good as Wuthering Heights (inside joke for my sister Sharon) and that I could share it with you all.

ADDITIONS TO OUR WEBSITE

The following books are discounted for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end December 31, 2009.



The Asian Grandmothers Cookbook **Home Cooking from Asian American Kitchens**

By Patricia Tanumihardja
2009, 347 pages, Hardback.

Looking for recipes, cooking tips and techniques that appear to be handed down from generations of Asian grandmothers, mothers, and aunts? Then *The Asian Grandmothers Cookbook* is just the book for you. Author Patricia Tanumihardja spent time with many different Asian grandmothers learning their cooking secrets. Her discoveries about these women and their cooking are lovingly shared with us in this marvelous book.

Patricia Tanumihardja concludes her Introduction with the following –
In lieu of a real, live, and kicking person, I hope this book by your side will be like spending the day cooking with your very own Asian grandmother.

Item #3583, Price \$35.00 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$28.00**



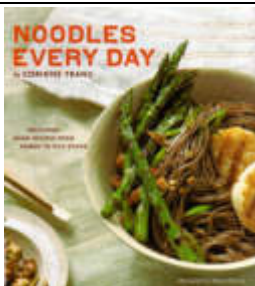
Cora Cooks Pancit

By Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore
Illustrated by Kristi Valiant
2009, 29 pages, Hardback.

When Cora, the youngest in the family, is left alone with her mother, she gets to become her mother's number one helper in the kitchen. They decide to make one of Cora's favorite Filipino dishes - a noodle dish called pancit.

Cora Cooks Pancit is a wonderful book that introduces kids to the joys of cooking and to Filipino food culture. This book includes a recipe for pancit.

Item #3586, Price \$17.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$14.36**



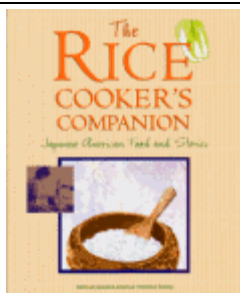
Noodles Every Day **Delicious Asian Recipes from Ramen to Rice Sticks**

By Corinne Trang
Photographs by Maura McEvoy
2009, 168 pages, Paperback.

Go to any Asian restaurant and you're likely to find a noodle dish on the menu. In *Noodles Every Day*, award-winning author and expert on Asian food culture, Corinne Trang shows readers the many different ways of making scrumptious noodle dishes.

Noodles Every Day includes a chapter on basic equipment and techniques and another two chapters on basic ingredients and soup stocks. The remaining chapters of recipes are organized by all the various kinds of noodles - including wheat, egg, buckwheat, rice, and more.

Item #3584, Price \$22.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$18.36**



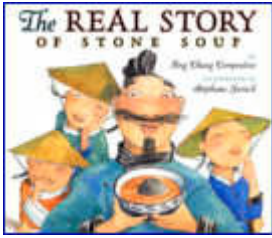
The Rice Cooker's Companion **Japanese American Food and Stories**

By National Japanese American Historical Society
2000, 188 pages, Paperback.

You may wonder why an historical society may wish to create a cookbook, but you won't wonder long when you read *The Rice Cooker's Companion: Japanese American Food and Stories*. This book is not only filled with recipes, but is also filled with stories, food culture, and history related to the dishes.

Many of the recipes are a true cross-pollination of food cultures that make them truly Japanese American.

Item #3585, Price \$20.00 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$16.00**



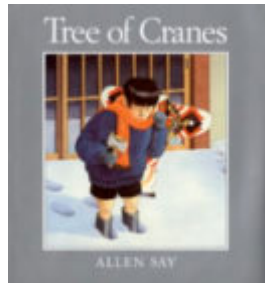
The Real Story of Stone Soup

By Ying Chang Compestine
Illustrated Stephane Jorisch
2007, 30 pages, Hardback.

When a fisherman and his three crewmembers stop to have a bite to eat, the fisherman discover that they did not bring a pot or any food supplies. What are they to do, make soup with stones? In this new retelling of the old folktale about stone soup, author Ying Chang Compestine gives this tale humor and the soup an Asian flavor.

The story includes a recipe for stone soup.

Item #3587, Price \$16.99 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$13.59**



Tree of Cranes

By Allen Say
1991, 29 pages, Hardback.

A mother living in Japan digs up a tree from her yard and decorates it with origami cranes and candles to show her son how to celebrate Christmas.

Trees of Crane is one of award winning children's author Allen Say's books that I did not get to read until recently. When I discovered that it was a Christmas story, I knew we just had to feature it for our December newsletter. If you have not yet read *Trees of Cranes*, we hope you take this chance to discover this wonderful book now.

Item #1894, Price \$17.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$14.36**