

Heddy Long: The First Lay Person and Filipina Family Life Director of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

by J. Richard (Dick) Long and Tessie J. Ordoña Greenfield

“Families are the foundation of our society.” This is the ministry to which Heddy Long has dedicated herself for over two decades. Alongside her late husband, Dick Long, they committed their lives to healing and strengthening families.

Heddy was born in Manila to Dr. and Mrs. Jesus Lopez Gonzalez. She was the youngest of nine, “a delightful accident to her parents.” She graduated from Holy Ghost College in Manila with a Bachelors degree in Sociology and continued to graduate school at the Ateneo de Manila University. As a graduate student, she assisted a professor by teaching Tagalog as a Second Language to diplomats, missionaries, and Peace Corp volunteers. She also taught classes in Sociology, Drama, and English/Spanish as a Second Language at the Immaculate Conception Academy in Manila.



Heddy with late husband and author Dick

In 1964, she came to America as a receptionist guide at the Philippine Pavilion of the New York’s World’s Fair with plans to stay so she could complete her Masters degree at Georgetown University. Instead, she met Dick Long, a man born in Brooklyn but had grown up in Queens. Heddy returned to the Philippines a year later with Dick where they married. The newlyweds stayed for another year-and-a-half in the Philippines while Dick held the position of Chairman of the Math Department at the American School in Makati.

Early in 1967, they returned to New York and lived there until the summer of 1973. Their two daughters, Lisa and Lori, were born in Flushing, New York. Dick and Heddy were volunteering in Marriage Encounter in New York when a priest invited them to start a program

in Brazil. In 1973, they moved to Brazil, where Dick taught Math at the Escola Americana de Campinas located in Campinas, Brazil. Their third child, Jack, was born there. As Dick once said, “I guess that makes Jack a ‘Filipino-Americano-Brasileiro!’” In 1994, the then 21-year-old Jack represented Brazil in Phoenix, Arizona, at the World Racquetball Championships.

It was not until 1975 that the family re-settled in the U.S. in New Mexico. It didn’t take long for Heddy to decide that the people in New Mexico were really nice and that prejudices seemed to be at a minimum. It was a novel thing to get to experience a four-season climate instead of the dry season/rainy season of the Philippines.

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Once in New Mexico, Heddy and Dick continued with the same type of ministry work they had begun in Brazil. This was the Marriage Encounter program that they had themselves sought in 1972. A program designed to enrich family life, Marriage Encounter teaches a particular technique of communication around four topics: Self, We as Husband and Wife, We and God, We and God and the World.

On September 1, 1990, Heddy became both the first Filipina and Layperson to become the Director of Family Life for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe by appointment of the Archbishop of Santa Fe. This was the culmination of efforts she and her husband had pursued while they were on the Board of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM), Region XIII (New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming). They also served on the Ecumenical Commission of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

Heddy with son Jack



“The Family Life Program ministers to traditional and non-traditional families,” explains Heddy. “We have various programs which are designed to re-engage couples who are in ‘hurting marriages.’ One thing I did was to help rewrite the DOVES manual that is used in a ministry for divorced, widowed, and separated couples. I also renewed a program called Beginning Ex-perience for divorced, widowed and separated individuals.

“Domestic violence awareness was increased in part by workshops which include Building Family Strengths. And a mother/daughter chastity program presented by Fertility Care of the Archdiocesan Natural Family Planning office is also being promoted by Family Life.” The programs are all Catholic-oriented but are open to other faiths and cultures.

Because Heddy is very proud of her Filipino culture, “Whenever possible, I invite the Fil-Am community to Archdiocesan events. I make it a point to have our culture promoted. We have included the history of the Philippines in Catholic materials. At the installation of Michael Sheehan as the Archbishop of Santa Fe, Philippine dances, music, and songs were performed. We showcased Filipinos at Archdiocesan ethnic fairs, Ministry Congress, Youth and Young Adult programs, and Family Life dinners.



From left, daughter Lisa Chesire, daughter-in-law Jen, Heddy, and daughter, Lori Long

“The Cultural Dancers, the Kulin-tang Ensemble and the Rondalla, all performed at Family Life Workshops. Mostly non-Filipinos attend them and the response has been positive and appreciative. The placemats we used had greetings in Tagalog, Spanish, and English. The invocation had been given in Tagalog, Native American, Spanish, and English, reminding all of us different cultures can co-exist. We all need to respect and embrace each other’s cultural values.”

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Heddy also makes it a point to provide support to founding members of the *Santa Cruz de Mayo* procession, Eugene and Consuelo Zafra. “This annual procession is one of the most visible Filipino events in New Mexico and it is held at the Old Town Plaza in Albuquerque. Begun in the mid-1970s, the event has grown in size. The Catholic Mass preceding the procession sometimes feature Filipino hymns. Filipino families around Albuquerque and Santa Fe congregate and choose individuals to depict the saints and angels. Afterwards, bystanders are treated to a free meal and Filipino dances.”

Heddy reminds us that families come in all different sizes, shapes, colors, and configurations. She feels their work has benefited many families of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and says

with quiet humility, “I continue to ask God to use me as an instrument in healing and strengthening families of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.”

Dick passed away in 2006. Heddy retired in 2012.

Based on an article about Heddy written by the same authors, in a Souvenir Program about the Pamana Awardees, FANHS RG, 2005.

Photos courtesy of the Long Family.