

## **Unforgettable GenSan Experience**

The plane trip to General Santos City took 3 hours trip, leaving Manila at 8:15 am with an hour stop-over at Mactan Airport, Cebu City to drop off and pick up passengers.

PAARL board was met at GenSan airport by a very warm welcome from the South Cotabato Library Association (SOCOLA) officers, complete with Welcome Banner and necklaces for each and everyone of us. St. Paul sisters also came and welcomed us. Serving as hosts on our first day were Sister Joselyn Wong, Sister Emma Jane, and Dina Icaualo (an aspirant). A very sumptuous lunch and dinner was served with grilled tuna belly, lumpiang sariwa, native chicken soup with different fruits, mangoes, banana, papaya, and durian ice cream.

The sisters arranged an afternoon tour to DOLE plantation plus a visit to the DOLE country clubhouse where we bought their products, fruit juices and souvenirs like bags, caps, mugs etc. We also visited the monastery located on a hilltop run by the Trapistine sisters and paid a visit to the chapel surrounded by beautiful scenery.

Another group of participants, led by President Verzosa, went on a sight-seeing trip to view Lake Sebu and visit a T'Boli museum, where they were treated to an exhibition of songs and dances, while the womenfolk continued their weaving. On the way back to Gensan, they passed by a durian fruit farm.

Early the following morning, some early bird participants, accompanied by the Board, went to the fishport where one can buy tuna, pink salmon, yellow pin, dayana, lapulapu etc. which is why GenSan is known as the tuna country. After the first day's session, those who missed the fishport went on their own to the famous Citra Mina Seafood market, to make their order for pasalubongs. In the evening, the participants and speakers were treated to a sumptuous fellowship dinner by the invigorating pool at Isla Parilla Resort, followed by games and laughter.

On the second day of the conference, at the crack of dawn, President Verzosa led a small group to a short trip to the historic town of Glan (Sarangani Province) to see some ancestral houses, and stopped by one of its famous beaches for a dip. That evening, the sessions continued until 8:30pm because of the lively discussion on the impact of the new law on Philippine librarianship and the implementation of the new CPE Guidelines. Because about 800 budget officers from the Dept of Budget came to the resort for their farewell dinner, some participants were unable to enjoy their night swim after our dinner.

The next day, after an early morning swim, we all trooped to the airport (right after breakfast and a short trip back to Citra Mina Seafood supermarket) to catch our flight back to Manila, only to be stranded in the airport until after 2pm, and then in Cebu until 8:30pm. We went back on our own separate ways after landing at the domestic airport, exhausted and weary, smelling of dead tuna and rotten durian. We never even got to know the real cause of the plane trouble. Actually all flights suffered some delays due to the influx of so many travelers to GenSan. It was only later that we found out, quite a number of participants who signified their participation in the conference were unable to get to Gensan. All flights and boat trips were booked, and many were still in the waiting lists. It was, however, a story of all's well that ends well. We all arrived safe, and in our minds, despite the harrowing experience at the airport, Gensan/Sarangani will remain unforgettable in PAARL's list of seminars.

