

Halo-Halo, I do, I do

Halo-halo, literally meaning mix mix, is a uniquely Filipino concoction of sweet preserved beans (red beans, chick peas), young coconut meat (*macapuno*), jackfruit (*langka*), pounded dried rice (*pinipig*), sweet yam (*ube*), cream custard (*leche flan*), shreds of sweetened plantain (*saba*), filled with crushed ice, milk (or coconut milk) and topped with ice cream in a big glass. It is not mixed but layered. (This recipe is from the internet and it has variations.) There is no province where you couldn't find it. One of the best I've had was from a little store near the Mayon Volcano in Bicol. There was a generous portion of *leche flan*. McDonald's Philippines is missing an opportunity by not creating their own version since their competitor Jollibee serves it. So what has halo-halo got to do with us? Well, the Orosas are now like *halo-halo*. Mix mix.

In their Diaspora, the Orosas have scattered all over the world. As a consequence they have experienced a significant degree of intermarriage. During what I sometimes call the halcyon days of the Orosas in the 1950's, I do not recall any intermarriage, not that I was looking. I define intermarriage as having a foreign born non-Filipino partner but we'll have more on that shortly. Sure, there was marriage between Orosas and other families having mixed Spanish, Chinese (the most common intermarriage in the Philippines) or other heritage. To give you an example, the maiden name of my sister-in-law's mother is Steigerwald. A cousin married a woman whose mother was Mexican/Spanish. But they were native born Filipinos and spoke Tagalog. Their complexions and facial features may be different but they were not "foreigners" in my definition. Filipinos love to use that word with sometimes ironic consequences. I'm getting ahead but let's digress. I married an American but some cousins might say "you married a foreigner." Well, I'm the foreigner in this case and so are the other Orosas abroad.

The first intermarriages were those of Sixto Jr.'s children starting with daughter Diding. She married a Scottish banker who was on assignment in Manila. I wonder if they have a family tartan; I'll have to ask their children sometime. Then her elder brother Sixto III married a lady from Spain whom he met while he was in Europe. I recall his father Sixto Jr. telling the family about it. Then it was my turn, marrying an American from Ohio while I was in Pittsburgh, PA. This was followed by my first cousin Cesar who married an Englishwoman of French heritage. This all happened in the 60's. It would take some research to get the chronological sequence right but intermarriage occurred regularly after that. But what matters is not really the timing but the various heritages we have merged with.

Going through an "inventory" is a lot of fun. Just starting with the above, we have Filipino-Spanish, Filipino-American, Filipino-Scottish and Filipino-English couples. We're just getting warmed up. Broadly speaking, we've intermarried with Americans, Canadians, Europeans and Australians. Though most are Caucasian, it is a polyglot group especially with the Americans. After all, America is the quintessential immigrant country. So let's start with the American spouses. My first wife was of German and English ancestry. On the English side (Lewis), her mother could trace her genealogy back to Elizabeth Washington, the full sister of George. My children can rightly call Mr. Washington, Uncle George. My second wife is third generation Polish-American. Here are the rest of the North American ethnicities that have gone into the Orosa stew – Chinese (Canadian and American born), Persian, African-American (my daughter-in-law), Greek, Irish, English, Italian, German, Slovak and Czech. If I missed anyone let me know. My grandchildren and great grandchildren have DNA from Africa, Europe and Asia.

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Outside of North America across the Atlantic we have Filipino-Swedish cousins compliments of the grandchildren of Dr. Sixto Y. Orosa. Their new surnames are Eriksson. In the United Kingdom, there's English (of course) and Scottish spouses. Two in the U.K. have spouses of Polish heritage, one in London and another in Edinburgh. So I am not alone anymore with a wife of Polish heritage.

Down under, we have Aussie spouses including English heritage and one of Indonesian ancestry. Back in the Philippines I have a nephew who has had Dutch and Japanese partners. There is a lone Orosa descendant in Japan.

Since we are inventorying, which Orosa family group has the most non-Filipino spouses? My vote goes to my first cousin Alice in California. Four of her daughters married Americans. I'm not sure exactly of the ancestry but from their names, they are English, German and one Irish/German heritage, with the last one confirmed by Alice's daughter.

This experience is mirrored on my mother's side with French, Japanese-American and Vietnamese-American to add to the mix. Alice's record is equaled by my Escobar cousin Lydia in North Dakota whose four children all married Americans. I'll have to get the Escobar inventory sometime. There was a very colorful character that is worth a separate essay.

Since it never occurred in her lifetime, I sometimes wonder what our grandmother Juliana could be thinking. She would not recognize some of her great grandchildren and great great grandchildren! She might even say "*hindi mukhang Filipino*" or they don't look like Filipinos. Well, we can't help it since some Orosa descendants are down to one fourth or even one eighth Filipino. There is a potential benefit that I'm looking forward to. We will not be as vertically challenged. We are truly *halo-halo*.