

[http://skunkeye.blogs.com/skunkeye/2005/02/i\\_was\\_dreading.html](http://skunkeye.blogs.com/skunkeye/2005/02/i_was_dreading.html)

**February 01, 2005**

I was dreading going back to the office today and returning to that bursting-at-the-seams frustration which has been overwhelming my work life lately. But this Monday turned out to have some positive challenges and I felt somewhat satisfyingly productive.

My weekend was *simpatico* – a perfect balance of social activity, catching up with things around the house, and rest. It hit me that I've been away from *Casa Skunkeye* a great deal since the holidays and the disorder is starting to creep in. The weekend's snow and stay-indoors mood was conducive to cleaning up the house. I finally got all the holiday decorations from my big party, which I had taken down some time ago and put in boxes on the living room floor, stored away and out of sight. I'm not sure how much progress I've made towards my goal of organizing my study, tossing miscellany, and weeding out my extraneous clothes and shoes but I did get a lot of laundry and dusting done. Recently I broke down and invested in a large, deep-dish cast-iron lidded pan. They need special care so I prepped and seasoned it finally and went ahead and got busy and made a week's worth of slow-cook chili (to freeze) and an amazing Austrian pancake for Sunday brunch (I use fruit yogurt instead of heavy cream, milk, and sugar for optimal succulence). Also I napped a bit which is a rare treat. I woke up late Saturday afternoon and looked out my window and saw that it was snowing picturesquely on my little street, perfect flakes drifting down through the street lamps' glow, the roofs and entryways of the rowhouses blanketed cozily by winter's white blanket – like a overweight and banal Thomas Kinkadee production come to life. Minus the Crackhead family of course. I normally despise snow but this was kinda pleasantly mellow. Maybe I'm not that good at really relaxing: these days I'm usually nearly comatose or highly stressed, except for when I'm at the beach or enjoying a day in the sun.

Friday night was a wonderful evening for my family. My father received the equivalent of the Legion of Honor from the Korean government at a beautiful ceremony at the Ambassador's Residence. The (outgoing) Ambassador and his wife are amazing, down-to-earth, and lovely couple – both are renowned academics, he is the former Prime Minister, and she is a highly regarded art historian. The ceremony was especially touching since my mother was honored as well. My parents are truly a team and I admire and respect them so much. When they aren't giving me a hard time, that is. (Several years ago, my father received a similar honor from the Philippine government at Malacanang Palace – this time it came with a title, "Datu." A popular regional condiment brand – like our Heinz or Hellmann's in the United States – is Datu Puti. My more flamboyant friends started calling me **Datu "Puti"**!)

Following the ceremony we were whisked away downtown via chauffeur and hosted for dinner in the private room at Taberna del Alabardero. My god that was the very best Spanish food I've had in a long, long time! Albarbero is really a sublimely top-rate experience – the service was stellar, the *sommelier* impressive and attentive, and, again, the cuisine was amazing! What a magical evening. I tried not let the spell break when I walked through the main part of the restaurant and saw plenty of young people my age (probably all lawyers) enjoying their meals casually on a Friday night – this kind of dining is out of my league given my salary these days, and actually the kind of excess I saw was something I've been quite effective at shielding myself from in recent years –

but it kind of hit me. But I played the poseur bit well methinks and the experience was thoroughly memorable and special nonetheless.

Saturday night, after my semi-productive day and that bizarro nap at *Casa Skunkeye*, was fantastic! Accompanied by two of the most amazing, attractive, intelligent and fun women in town, we did the Local 16 and Saint-Ex rounds and had blast! Honestly, if I went out more often I would grow tired of the two conveniently located venues, but the company was wonderful, it was refreshing to let some steam off, and its so nice knowing I can just slide safely back home within blocks in the snowy, slushy ice. Oh, and a much-needed Jumbo Slice pit-stop along the way.

Sunday night was *Chez Famille* Uptown for supper on Dad's birthday, but I felt like it was Christmas all over again for me. The folks just returned from Asia and brought back all sorts of gifts and cards for me from my friends "back home." I miss everyone and the Philippines but I know I need to be here in boring DC right now. I was so touched that my friends and "family" there continue to think of me as I do them. I'm now enjoying some crazily-cool Giacometti-like Bulols to add to my collection, some much needed sweat-rags from Bench, an awesome book by my old and respected friend, museum director Sonia Ner, Album: Islas Filipinas 1663-1888, and a retrospective volume/monograph about my dearest p(art)ner in crime and living life, the lovely and amazing Spanish Manila-based watercolorist Valeria Cavestany.

I also received a coffee-table photography book, Filipina: A Tribute to the Filipino Woman. *Machismo* is useless , the Philippines is truly a matrilineal society – the formidable, beautiful, brilliant, and awesome Pinays are what keeps the country and culture together. It's a through pictorial tribute covering all walks of life and society of women in contemporary Filipino society – from domestic workers, businesswomen, island beauties, agricultural and factory laborers, athletes, movie stars, to politicians, including the current President. Many of my friends are showcased in the tome, which is sweet and nostalgic for me, but they are mostly high profile and affluent personalities. Although I do believe that the handsome, glossy, hardbound volume is a thoughtful tribute to the Filipina as a whole, I worry that many of the subjects would never be able to afford the book. Vanity press, indeed.

The portrait of artist Pacita Abad just about broke my heart, however. My folks also brought me back one of her shirt designs from her recent show in Manila. She passed away recently after a brave battle with cancer. She was a valued family friend. As any one who has spent time with Pacita will attest, her spirit, vitality, humor, and talent was invigorating and infectious. That the world should lose someone so full of life and amazingly generous, wonderful energy is tragic. I'm very grateful and blessed to have known her.