

President's Report 2020

The Year of Covid-19

Well, we started off 2020 in good form and until March 16th, there was little change from a normal year. The Club then shut down and it was not until the beginning of September that we were permitted to venture out on the river. Activity slowly built up and we were also able to welcome back the Coastguards for their monthly meetings although they were constricted by the rules of gatherings.

Benny has unfortunately continued to have seizures and there is still no definitive diagnosis, although my personal feeling is that this is epilepsy related. It has been a concern of mine that he might have a seizure whilst rowing, but he showed no signs of doing so all year until he was rowing with me a few days before Christmas. As he lost bodily control, he overturned the double just below Guadalupe bridge and of course being disorientated did not remember to keep hold of the boat. Between keeping him aware and above water together with swimming the boat to the shore, we drifted down to the Guadalupe estero and hit fast water as well as sewage. Not a good breakfast recipe but we managed to get things sorted out, righted the boat and after much persuasion, got Benny back into the boat and we went slowly home. There was a healthy current, so it did not take too long. The problem we have now is what will Benny's future be as we can't risk him having a seizure in a boat again. Be assured your Board is monitoring everything very closely and looking at replacement coaches.

I am delighted to report that Membership has increased a little in spite of the conditions. Hopefully some of our new members will be taking on some responsibilities and applying their skills to the growth of the Club. Quintin Pastrana has introduced a Martial Arts Club which helps the finances, Wallyball has not been active since March but a local school, St. Mary's has been using the court for 4-a-side netball. We have had a few christenings and wedding receptions (all properly socially distanced of course) as it is very difficult for people to hire venues at the moment.

I must mention that without the tremendous support of some members and in particular our Lifetime Member, Dominik Keller who has generously supported the Club with donations, we would probably not have survived this long. Thank you Dominik on behalf of all the Members.

The 126th Squadron PCGA led by Capt. Barney Gomez PCGA arranged a socially distanced Gift Giving at the end of November for the local children in place of our usual Kids Xmas Party. We had 100 children, or at least their parents/guardians as children are not allowed out, come collect the gifts and enjoy a raffle. A small bit of relief in a very difficult year for everyone, especially the children and MBC were honoured to host it.

The Caliraya Boat Club project progresses and we look forward to an official opening later this year. MBC has sent a couple of boats there to add to the PRA boats and Quintin's own boat. This should make for a great 'away day' or weekend for MBC members and hopefully generate some publicity to attract new rowers.

On a closing note, 2020 was MBC's 125th Anniversary. Needless to say, we were not able to celebrate it in the style we would have wished, or at all in fact. I very much hope we can do something in 2021 but am not counting on it yet. But we were lucky to have a great write up on rowing in Grid magazine which you might enjoy.

<https://www.gridmagazine.ph/story/across-still-waters-philippine-rowing> Hopefully this will bring us some more rowers in 2021 which is another reason why we need to address the Benny conundrum asap as we cannot offer rowing lessons again until then.

Our battle with the over speeding ferries and fishing boats continues. The MMDA refusing to engage in discussion and the culprits ignoring instructions from the Philippine Coastguard. Again, we have suffered severe pontoon damage, a repair expense that really cannot be afforded right now. We also have had barges moored right in front of the Club, cutting off access to the river for the purposes of soil testing, ahead of the construction of the proposed 6-lane express way down the Ilog Pasig (PAREX) by San Miguel. This is likely to severely change the wonderful calm atmosphere of MBC but on the bright side, will give us a roof to row under when it is raining! Of course, it could also never happen with changes in political ambitions always taking new turns, but the Board will be monitoring it and trying to engage with the relevant parties.

Lastly, I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to Peter Gozar of Denver, Colorado, a guest rower in October 2010, who kindly donated a StrokeCoach and SpeedCoach to MBC. These will be of great use to members.

James Stratton
President
Jan 24th, 2021