

I AM CHAMORRO film on its way!

This column was published on February 8th, 2015.

February 21st will mark a major milestone for an important project known as I AM CHAMORRO. A crew will arrive to do two weeks of filming on Guam and the CNMI toward completing this effort.



It was just about two years ago that this project began. I remember an early conversation with the project lead, Joanne Carbullido Tabor Modic about what was barely more than an inspiration at the time. Based on the work of Capuchin Friar, Father Eric Forbes, plans were being laid for a full length Chamorro history documentary. She envisioned a widely distributed “Smithsonian quality” film to be shared with the world, and especially our dispersed Chamorros.

This project did not come about suddenly. Father Forbes has been researching and document-ing Chamorro history for more than 26 years. In 2011, he presented a full day history workshop to a Chamorro audience in Los Angeles. I was not able to make that workshop. In 2012, I at-attended two of his three workshops which were presented to capacity audiences in Los Angeles, San Diego and the San Francisco bay area. It was at these workshops that Father Forbes was asked to create a video

of his history teachings so it could be more widely shared.

The plan was commendable, but seemed overwhelming; the creation of a script, the shooting of a documentary, and a budget of at least \$150,000. The non-profit, Manhita Chamorro was formed to carry out the I AM CHAMORRO project. Volunteer board members are Rex Agagas, Rich Modic, Annette Ada, Denise Perez Agagas, John Agagas and Father Eric Forbes. They went forward with little more than faith and determination.

“It was the San Diego community that gave it the springboard it needed.” Joanne Modic shared. Early supporters at a fundraiser by the Chelu organization boosted the project financially and energetically.

One of the first steps was to create a movie trailer that gave a glimpse of the final concept, and then Joanne and her team set about raising funds and securing sponsors.

I AM CHAMORRO became a common sight at Chamorro events. They sold t-shirts and other gift items. They offered sponsorships of various levels. Chamorros in the US responded, as did Chamorros in the Marianas. While Father Forbes has worked on the scripting of the film, the Manhita Chamorro team worked with supporters in both California and the Marianas to complete the needed fundraising.

The project has received assistance from all over the world. Rosanne Meno distributed I AM CHAMORRO t-shirts in Washington DC. Heidi Ballendorf and Peter Ada and others organized the September 2014 fundraiser on Guam. “I was just talking with a woman in DeMoines, Iowa who wanted to buy a t-shirt,” said Joanne when I interviewed her. There have been many big and small supporters and many stories along the way. Sorry, I couldn’t begin to share Joanne’s extensive list here.

“None of this would be possible without the generous support of individual and family benefactors, business and government entities. We owe them, and our entire Chamorro people, the

best documentary that we can possibly create," said Father Eric Forbes.

Despite the amount of work, the Manhita Chamorro team is glad the fundraising is being done this way. "We could have done this with three big sponsors, but this is the people's project," Jo-anne Modic told me. They are grateful to have received an appropriation from the 32nd Guam Legislature and major sponsorship from the Bank of Guam. Many of their contributions, however, came one \$20 t-shirt at a time.

Now their initial goal to complete the filming has been met. They continue to need to fundraise, however, in hopes of including more material and features. Opportunities to be a supporter of the project are on their website, www.IAMCHAMORRO. The film will include names of its supporters starting at the \$1000 sponsorship level.

The final I AM CHAMORRO full length film is expected to be available in time for Christmas 2015.

In addition, this Guam history documentary will be featured at the Guam Festival of the Pacific Arts 2016, and the soon to be constructed Guam Museum.

Said Father Eric Forbes, "We are very excited about filming this unique documentary; unique in more than one way. We are trying to tell the story of a people, not the story of events that happened in this or that place. Instead, the people are front and center in this documentary. We will look at all the Chamorros, wherever they were and now are. We will look at events, but from a Chamorro perspective and at how these events affected the Chamorro people."

I can't help but be impressed by how true the vision for this project has proven to be. I AM CHAMORRO will not only be a Chamorro history documentary widely distributed for Chamorros everywhere, it will be included in the Guam collection at the Washington DC Smithsonian museum.

See the article as it was published, below.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHAMORRO FILM FESTIVAL

LIFESTYLE

'I Am Chamorro' crew to film in Guam, CNMI

By Sandy Flores Hernandez
The Daily Mirror Staff

Are you planning a trip to Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands? You might want to watch the movie "I Am Chamorro" before you go.



Sandy Flores Hernandez

The movie "I Am Chamorro" is a documentary film that tells the story of the Chamorro people of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. It is a story of resilience, hope, and the fight for justice. The film is a powerful reminder of the importance of our culture and the need to protect our rights.

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