



A festive swirl of colors welcomes visitors at the lobby of the Narda's complex in La Trinidad Valley. The displays include varied tapestries, apparel, bags, and more ikat-made items.

THE NARDA'S STORY



Secretary of Education Lourdes Quisumbing (left) observes the ikat-weaving process at Narda's during a Holy Week visit.

**'Native' weaving craft and IKAT
make world-wide waves**

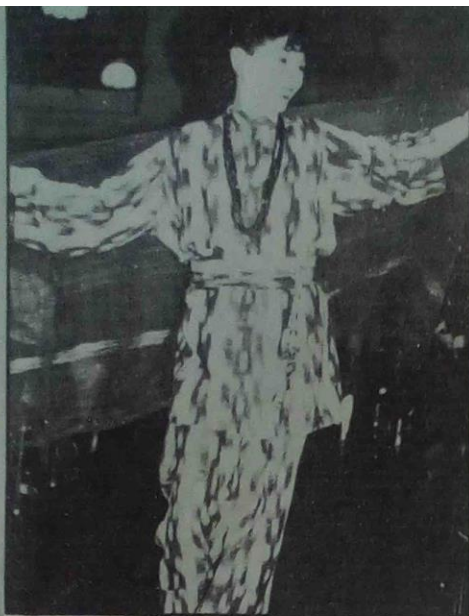
by David Baradas

THERE are many weavers in the country, both traditional and contemporary, but none have achieved international recognition and acclaim for their work, as much as Narda Capuyan of the firm that bears her name — the NARDA'S HANDWOVEN ARTS and CRAFTS in La Trinidad, Benguet.

Starting as a simple handweaving outfit some fourteen years ago, it has blossomed into a full store and several outlets in Baguio, Manila, and Guam. The few weavers that Narda started working with is now a work force of some 300 weavers. All this phenomenal growth achieved at a time when the Philippines was undergoing the most difficult economic reversals in its entire history.

The story of the emergence of Narda's as an enterprise is an inspiration for any beginning entrepreneur and particularly for those who think that only foreign assistance could make us progress as a country. In Narda's, we have a case where discipline, hardwork, a highly creative and innovative attitude could reverse the trend in our economy. In here lies their strength and a possible answer to economic recovery.

When Narda Capuyan started experimenting with IKAT* with a couple of friends in 1977 little did she realize that she was embarking on a major enterprise that was to totally re-orient her weaving direction and design concepts — resulting in what is now the only contemporary Ikat producer in the



Leonarda Capuyan glides through the runway, modelling one of her creations.

Philippines and emerging as one of the most unique weaving undertakings not only in the country but in the whole world.

A decade of Ikat ventures have produced a body of work now seen in a number of five-star hotels both here and abroad and carried by boutiques and special shops in four continents. All these was a far cry from the simple weaving cottage industry Narda started in 1973. And even a further cry from the nursing degree of which she is professionally trained.

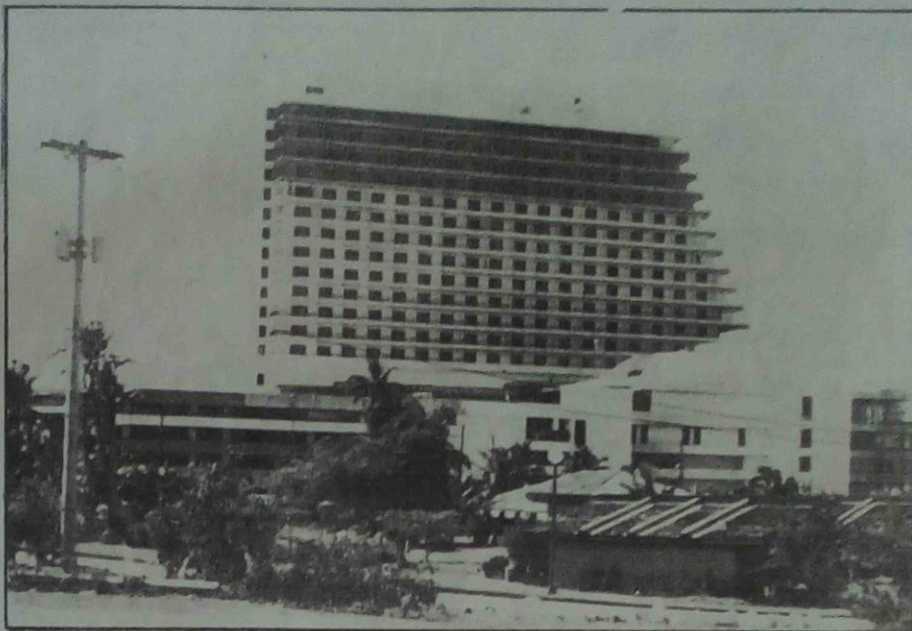
The initial link-up with the overseas market started with the designer Rafael Sanchez of New York, who initially ordered some handbags that were successfully marketed in New York. The big break came in 1982 when Bloomingdale department store in New York decided to centrally feature Narda's products in an all-Philippine sales-exhibition which subsequently traveled to Washington D.C. as well. The show which sold an entire six-month production popularized Narda's both here and abroad. Subsequent trips for shows followed bringing Narda to Germany, France, Japan, Hongkong, Canada and China.

The highly innovative direction that the work has taken garnered for Narda Capuyan in 1982 the GOLDEN SHELL AWARD — the most prestigious award given as a sign of excellence in any of the crafts by the then Ministry of Trade.

In 1983 the government sponsored Center for International Trade and Exposition Mission sent a fashion team to Europe and Australia and one of the products featured is Narda's. After these exposures it was time to re-evaluate and explore new areas for creative directions.

What followed was a series of wall hangings and tapestries both representational and slightly abstract forms that started to command a following. It was this interest in wall hanging that eventually brought them to the attention of interior designers looking for new ideas to fill huge expanses of space in new buildings.

She got an order to hang her tapestry creations at the 16-storey Pacific Star Hotel in Guam which will be inaugurated in May 1987. Through this link and contact with the artist Allan Cosio, a collaborative effort emerged that resulted in the production of



The newly build Pacific Star Hotel in Guam had Narda's furnish its interiors with her trademark products.



Larry and Mary Martin of Phillex Mines with Mrs. Diana Caleb of Brent School admire tapestries done by Allan Cosio and Narda hanging at the Valley Art Gallery.

a series of art work which they called COLLAGESTRY — a type of collage tapestry. It was through this product that some highly creative realizations were made and as a result further enriching their repertoire of weaving techniques and approaches.

What emerged from the meeting of the artist and the weaver working in a creative media has been one of the most successful collaborative work in the arts seen hereabouts. It dawns on every one the limitless possibilities of the weaving arts and how it could be explored in a range of directions. After this, it was clear that involvement with other Philippine artists could be attempted with highly rewarding results. This works from the initial collaboration now hangs in the newly opened THE VALLEY ART GALLERY at Narda's — a place that husband

Wilson generously supported to have the proper context to display the work to its full aesthetic advantage.

All these involvements would not have been possible and Narda may still be overseeing a group of traditional weavers doing traditional items today, if she does not possess a great sense of adventure and experimentation, an unusual instinct for the subtlety of colors, and a good sense of business. Supported by husband Wilson who efficiently looks after the administrative part of the venture, Narda and her creative team of some three hundred weavers, dyers, sewers, and finishers continue to create highly imaginative work that delight and excite even the most discriminating textile aficionada.

*Ikat — is a dye resist process that involves tie-dyeing on the thread.

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**MARKETING
FOR SUCCESS**

THE MAGAZINE FOR ACHIEVING EXECUTIVES

World Executive's Digest

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OCTOBER 1988

FROM MOUNTAINTOP TO MANHATTAN

Australia	AS\$3.50
Brunei	B\$6.00
Hong Kong	HK\$18.00
India	Rs25
Indonesia	Rp3,400
Japan	¥700
Korea	₩2,100
Malaysia	M\$7.00
Pakistan	Rs40
Philippines	P\$37.00
Singapore	S\$6.00
Sri Lanka	Rs75
Taiwan	NT\$120.00
Thailand	B\$75
Others	US\$3.00

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PROFILE

Narda Capuyan, the First Lady of Ikat, sees herself as an artist, not a businesswoman: "I'm not aware of the numbers. My mind is all colors," she

says modestly. And inaccurately: In fact, the Filipina nurse's progression from hobbyist to one of her country's most successful entrepreneurs is a tale of brilliantly profitable product innovation, enlightened use of labor and far-sighted marketing.

Of course, Narda's creative flair for ikat — a traditional process of tying and dyeing threads before they reach the weaving looms — is the flower which attracts all the attention. But at the root of her accomplishments is the traditional value system of her upbringing in the northern Philippines' Mountain Province: "Work hard," her blanket-peddling mother Ina Dam-Ay told little Leonarda as she was growing up in the remote village of Besao, deep in the heart of the Cordillera mountain range of Northern Luzon. "Enjoy your work. Be able to enjoy everything you do," said her Episcopal missionary father, Didaco Olat. Her parents' industrious example and the powerful influence of the Igorot culture (Igorot is a colonial Spanish term for the Philippines' various mountain tribes) have been carried forward and enhanced by the commercial and artistic triumph Narda has achieved by adapting ikat to meet contemporary tastes. Today, the traditional weaving which had fallen into disuse is resurgent, thanks to Narda's popularization of the painstaking craft, and no woman willing to operate a loom needs go without work in or near La Trinidad, where Narda's Handwoven Arts & Crafts employs more than 600 people.

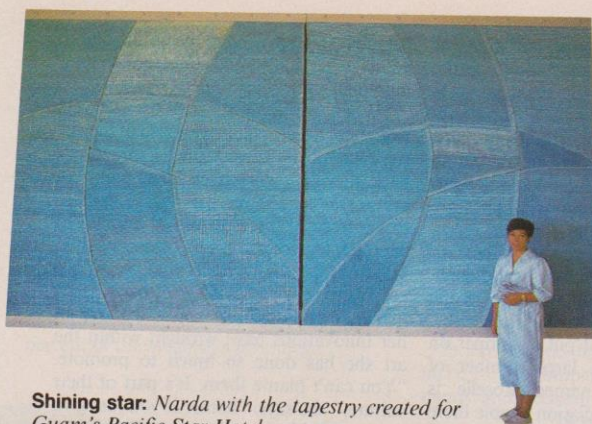
Compared to the tiny settlements in which Narda was raised and educated, La Trinidad is The Big Time, but in truth it is nothing more than a verdant agricultural

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*An enterprising Filipino
has not only kept a traditional
art alive but also brought
prosperity to its
mountain-dwelling
practitioners*

NARDA'S: Profits From An Ancient Art

Exclusive to World Executive's Digest by Chris Vaughan



Shining star: Narda with the tapestry created for Guam's Pacific Star Hotel

Photo: Narda's Handwoven Arts & Crafts, Inc.

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she says. "If we were going to compete as a business with other weaving, we had to start with upright loom weaving." It was Wilson Capuyan who suggested launching the business that has grown into such an enormous success. In May 1973, using 3,000 pesos from their personal savings, the Capuyans purchased five looms, hired five weavers and moved to La Trinidad to set about building on their initial success.

Upright looms allowed weavers to work in a more comfortable position and to produce continuous 72-inch stretches of cloth. With the narrower backstrap looms, 22-inch panels must be sewed together to make blankets or wider bolts of cloth. The weavers were "thrilled" with the easier, more durable, and artistically broadening new technology, Narda says. Output rose. So did orders: The first big break came in 1974, when the Hyatt Terraces, Baguio's new five-star hotel, commissioned Narda's to decorate its interior with a Cordillera ambience.

Though still working primarily in plain colors at her little factory, Narda seized the opportunity to display her artistic vision once more. Her design sensibilities were impeccable: More requests flowed in for thousands of yards of cloth. Baguio's other top hotels — the Pines, the Baguio Hilltop — wanted her "native" touch to enliven their interiors. An order came from the lowlands, in San Fernando. The business was growing fast. The far-flung network of Igorot subcontractors assembled by Wilson and Narda's families — 15 led by Wilson's mother in Sagada, plus others in Bontoc, Abra, Bauko, La Union and of course Besao — could no longer cope with the mass-production demands of the hotel upholstery trade.

With so many subcontractors, quality control was inconsistent. Weaving was becoming a full-time job rather than the supplementary activity it had once been for the tribeswomen. "When it is planting time, their priorities are still to plant," Narda says,

explaining her decision to reduce dependence on the mountain network in favor of increased facilities in La Trinidad. In 1975, a 438,000-peso loan was obtained for that purpose from the Development Bank of the Philippines. But just three months later, more than half of that was lost when postal swindlers stole more than 250,000 pesos worth of checks from the business. The crooks were captured, but the money was gone. "We were really paralyzed. We thought that was the end," Narda says. "But my husband was always strong. He would say, 'Don't cry. We can go back to the farm if DBP forecloses.'" To obtain the capital needed to keep Narda's going, Wilson sacrificed his gas station and most of his small trucking fleet. He became the finance manager, freeing Narda to become more serious about the experiments she was conducting with ikat, which she had learned as a child from her mother.

Ikat, the intricate art of hand-tying and dyeing threads, then weaving them into a pattern featuring blurred borders, survives in parts of Southeast Asia, most notably Indonesia, but had almost died out in the Philippine Cordillera following the first inroads of missionaries after the turn of the century. The fierce Igorots had successfully resisted Spanish colonial incursions for three centuries, but the more subtle approach of the Americans brought progress and some of its culture-eroding by-products. Missionaries, for example, insisted converts should wear Christian clothes. If that wasn't enough, most women lost interest in the long hours of toil needed to weave traditional garments when Chinese traders introduced the natives to cheap cloth from the outside world. A few women continued their traditions, however, and Narda's mother, though married to a missionary, was among them. Using cotton brought by Chinese traders from Ilocos Sur who were hiding from the Japanese during World War II, Irene Docallas dyed the thread with indigo and sold her ikat weaving at the



Advertising: With a touch of class.

Photo: Narda's Handwoven Arts & Crafts, Inc.

little store she ran.

By the time she was in the weaving business, Narda had long since forgotten the ikat techniques she had learned from her mother, however. Ironically, it took two Americans to re-introduce her to the art. Across the mountains in Ifugao Province, in a tiny spot along the road near Banaue called Amganad, an old woman known by the traditional spirit name Bogon had begun to revive Igorot ikat, using roots, flowers and bark to dye her threads. Her work stirred interest at the Design Center Philippines, and when a visiting American weaver, Ellen Schatsneider, was sent by DCP to Benguet to see if the technique could be advanced further. Schatsneider, fellow American Kim Panjanco and Narda began experimenting. Traditional dyes proved unreliable in terms of color-fastness and too muted in tone to excite much interest beyond a narrow spectrum of connoisseurs. New chemical dyes in striking bright tones and soft pastels captured their imagination, however, and soon Narda was bursting with new ideas.

"I was getting bored with upholstery — the same design all the time. Bedcovers are not the end-all," she says. "And I wanted to do something to preserve our culture." Panjanco died and Schatsneider returned to the United States, but Narda pressed on. At first, reactions to her private experiments were not encouraging. "Too wild," critics told her when she sprung the new color schemes on them. Unfazed, she looked further afield for encouragement. She found it in 1978 when New York designer Rafael Sanchez, following a tip, popped into her La Trinidad showroom and placed an order for some handbags. They were to be sold at the prestigious Lord & Taylor's in New York. It was only a small order, but it was a sign that the unlimited market of the world beyond the mountains would go for a new twist on a very old craft.

A few Japanese buyers followed and with more DBP support, expansion continued,

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valley outside the mountain city of Baguio. Narda's is La Trinidad's biggest employer with more than 300 full-time employees and a like number of independent subcontractors weaving at home to Narda's specifications. Narda's factory showroom in La Trinidad has the world's largest selection of contemporary ikat handbags, table linens, scarves, sashes, wall hangings, dresses, shirts, shoes and the like on sale for prices seen as bargains by foreign visitors and a fortune by most Filipinos. Narda's export ikat goes for four times as much and accounts for 70 percent of the business's revenues.

Narda Capuyan's success can be traced to many sources, but it is her knack for finding — or perhaps creating — a foreign market for ikat that is most responsible for propelling the business beyond the realm of cottage industry. "Ikat adapted for contemporary use has never been done before on this scale," says David Baradas, a Filipino anthropologist specializing in Asian weaving. "Narda has been not just accommodating foreign tastes, but forecasting them. You'll never see an outfit like this one anywhere else in the world."

Indeed, Narda has carved out her own niche in the competitive international garments and accessories with her ability to blend patterns handed down by mountain tribes with fashionable cuts and colors attractive to cosmopolitan aesthetes. Some of it can be laid to inspiration — "sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night with a pattern I have been dreaming about," Narda says — but first there was experimentation, and before that, a will to serve. Visions of profits never guided her hand.

"Money is not our motive. We were continuously forced to expand because people need work," she says, speaking also for her husband, Wilson, who gave up his own business to manage Narda's when a cash crunch forced him to choose. Dressed smartly in one of her own ikat creations, Narda, 44, recalls how a hobby intersected with the Philippines chronic lack of employment opportunities to alter her career path.

In 1972, while working as a nurse in a family planning clinic in the Mountain Province town of Sagada, Narda took up crocheting. "One of the mothers said 'It would be much easier to weave that.' I gave her some yarn and a week later she came back with a blanket which turned out to be so very beautiful," Narda remembers. "Soon, more and more of the mothers came in wanting something to do, so I had to go down to Manila."

In the lowland capital, where Narda had studied nursing for six years, she found an agent selling export-quality acrylic yarn rejected by a garment manufacturer after some experiments. "They were burning it," she says in disbelief at such profligacy in a land with so little. "So we bought it, very cheap, and unwound it. An agent left me 100 kilos and said, 'If you want more, call me.'" So when we finished with it, I did. The turnover was so fast. The whole community was weaving this yarn."

On the next trip to Manila, she took the plunge: "An agent sold me a whole bodega [warehouse]. It was almost 15 tons of thread. I didn't have enough money, but I had an auntie who was very brave. She said, 'We can buy that,' and we borrowed from everyone, 30,000 pesos. We started big right away." Back in the mountains, the Igorot women began knitting sweaters and blankets for sale to farmers. As the thread began arriving in huge loads — three to four tons a day arrived that March — it had to be left out in the open. "We had no bodega — I was so scared. I kept praying it would not rain," Narda recalls. "But the women kept coming. A whole village would go away with 30 kilos of thread." More than 150 women, most participating in their first informal experiment as producers in the region's growing cash economy, paid off their thread debts with the profits from the durable, colorful blankets they had created on their hammock-like backstrap looms. The first blankets sold for 15 pesos. A true cottage industry was born.

When she saw how popular the blankets were, and how happy the business made the village women, Narda knew she was onto something. "Suddenly, my eyes were open,"

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A tradition continues: Narda's mother Ina Dam-Ay still works at her loom.

Photo: Bernard Capuyan



NARDA CAPUYAN and her indigenous art

An ancient craft still finds meaning to Leonarda Capuyan. This is the tradition of "ikat" - an intricate process whereby segments of thread are tied and dyed by hand prior to weaving. And for Leonarda, "Narda" Capuyan, a very charming native of Besao, Mountain Province, her creative gift in weaving and designing, placed "ikat" in the world map of fashion.

Narda was a nurse, and since she was young, she has shown interest in needle work and weaving. Developing her creative

potential further, she came up with skills that produced such enticing hard work, which she sold locally. In 1978, Narda applied for an industrial loan with the Development Bank of the Philippines, that eventually grew into 71 operating looms, with 300 workers, including backstrappers, and weavers.

Luck and fate intervened when, Narda, otherwise known as the "Queen of Ikat" drew the attention and interest of foreign buyers. Rafael Sanchez, a noted

designer of New York, first took to marketing Narda's products abroad.

Then, in 1982, New York's Bloomingdale featured Narda's artworks in an all Philippine sales exhibit which eventually traveled to Washington, D.C., a show which sold an entire six-month production of Narda's handwoven products.

With the momentum generated, Narda eventually saw her products displayed and sold in big fashion centers of other countries as well, such as Germany, France, London, Canada and Australia.

In the same year, she was bestowed the Golden Shell Award by the Department of Trade and Industry, for her outstanding performance in building a pioneering export enterprise. This significantly meant "ikat" has captured the imagination of the outside world, and carved for itself true fame, fortune and glamor.



PILIPINAS NEGOSYO IS OUR TIME



By JOEY CONCEPCION

The Entrepreneur of the Year



EOY Awardees 2013

Last Wednesday, I was invited to present an award at the **Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year (EOY)**. EOY has been awarding the most outstanding Filipino entrepreneurs and showcasing their success as role models for other entrepreneurs. It was a milestone event since the EOY in the Philippines is now on its 10th year. We still remember when Jollibee's inspiring founder Tony Tan Caktiong won the first EOY, and eventually even the World Entrepreneur of the Year at Monaco. Such a proud moment for the Filipino entrepreneur community.

For the last five years, I have been invited to award the Small Business Entrepreneur Award category, an area where Go Negosyo has been focusing on over the past eight years. Today, Go Negosyo is supported by over 600 entrepreneurs, and many of them have been EOY winners as well, or finalists from the Ernst and Young entrepreneur search, or selected in PLDT SME Nation Bossings search and in our Go Negosyo recognitions in the different summits we do. The satisfaction in receiving an award in any of these recognitions in a way pays for the sacrifice each entrepreneur goes through as there are more failures that success. And even to those who have succeeded, many of them fail at different points in their journey, but through persistence, perseverance and passion and with the right business model, they eventually succeed.

In last week's EOY, I was moved by the inspiring messages given by Mark Weinberger, EY Global chairman and chief executive officer. SGV chairman and managing partner Vic Noel and his team did another great awarding ceremony, and as the 12 finalists were presented, their respective stories, words of wisdom and advice were true inspiration and learnings to everyone.

I was not feeling well that evening and told the organizers that I had a very bad cold, but through the help of my doctor, Dr. Celdran, who has been so patient with me through the

Small Business Entrepreneur



We are giving to Leonarda Capuyan the Small Business Entrepreneur Award.

years, I managed to arrive and award the Small Entrepreneur of the Year. I am glad I made it since the winner this year is the multi-awarded Leonarda Capuyan, more known for her Narda's Handwoven Arts and Crafts Inc. of La Trinidad, Benguet. She was mentored by my father during his DTI days as Secretary of Trade and Industry, and she was also a Go Negosyo awardee for Baguio some years back, as well as a Go Negosyo advocate.

Narda, who is probably in her 60s, is truly an inspiring story coming from Baguio. As a family planning nurse in Benguet, she used to provide counselling to indigenous women who came to the clinic. One day, a woman promised not to get pregnant if Narda would give her the yarn that she uses in her knitting. That woman eventually came back with a very beautiful blanket. The woman asked for more yarns and eventually other indigenous women were weaving very beautiful and uniquely woven products, so this gave Narda a great idea to help them by providing a steady supply of raw materials and eventually help them market the finished goods. Today Narda's woven handicrafts are marketed locally and abroad to Japan, Germany, Australia, Canada, France, Italy and Hong Kong. Narda's EOY recognition is well deserved. She has a very inspiring entrepreneurial journey that uplifts the spirit of every entrepreneur who knows her.

Narda came up the stage almost in tears, and she hugged me as she received the award from me, Erramon Aboitiz, and Tennyson Chen, both EOY past awardees in 2010 and 2011.

I was also happy to witness that our Go Negosyo advocate Juliet Herrera of Serenitea Cha Kitchen receive the Young Entrepreneur Award, as well as Dr. Milagros How of Universal Harvester, who bagged the Women Entrepreneur Award.

As the night progressed, Ben Chan of Suyen Corporation, maker of the famous brand Bench, receive the Master Entrepreneur Award and the most coveted Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines. He would be the country's representative to the World Entrepreneur of The Year 2014 in Monte Carlo, Monaco in June next year.

My admiration also goes to the other national finalists who everyone considers already as winners and leading entrepreneurs, namely: Santi Araneta (LBC Express Inc.), Alexander Bangsoy (Goshen Land Capital, Inc.), Maria Lorena Simeon-Florendo (LIFEDATA Systems Inc.), Alberto Lina (Airfreight 2100, Inc.), Cesar Mario Mamon (Enchanted Kingdom, Inc.), Manuel Osmena (Manny O. Group), Dr. Victor Perez (University of Cagayan Valley), and Rajan A Uttamchandani (Esquire Financing Inc.).

Congratulations to the awardees, finalists and organizers! You are the changemakers and leading nation-builders that help make this country move forward, giving hope and jobs to many Filipinos.

It is nice to see entrepreneurs succeed and eventually join the cause of Go Negosyo to inspire others. This is how we see our successful entrepreneurs paying back, and also by pushing for inclusive growth, but let me save that topic for my next column.

Talking about micro and small entrepreneur, just the other day, I took part in judging the Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards (CMA) together with BSP Governor Armando Tentangco Jr., Mr. Batara Sianturi (Citi country officer for the Philippines), Marixi Rufino-Prieto (*The Philippine Daily Inquirer*), Felipe Gozon (GMA Network Inc.), Antonino L. Alindogan Jr. (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas), Dr. Darwin D. Yu (Ateneo de Manila University - John Gokongwei School of Management, and Sec. Imelda Nicolas (Commission on Filipinos Overseas).

Narda Capuyan weaves her magic in the fashion world



A Narda Capuyan-designed shawl in rainbow-colored hues embellished with Coconut shell beads



Narda Capuyan welcomes the Chief Minister of Sarawak (center) and Edric Ong (left), the overall coordinator of the event, in her bazaar booth



Sarawak's Chief Minister, Dr. Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud wears a Narda scarf. Officially gifted to him by conference organizers. With Narda is Dr. David Baradas (extreme left) and her daughter Lucia Catanes (right), with Robert and Emiliana Tan



Narda with Datin Empiang Jabu, wife of the Deputy Prime Minister of Sarawak



A model shows off a Narda Capuyan shawl lined with minks for an animal print effect.



Narda Capuyan after the much-applauded fashion show

What began as an alternative family planning method—a very creative one at that—became this once upon-a-time-nurse's pride and passion. Leonarda "Narda" Capuyan, a family planning nurse in La Trinidad, Benguet, began hand-weaving blankets from recycled acrylic yarns. This hobby attracted mothers who kept them not only from "making more babies" but also gave them a chance to earn extra income for their families.

From simple blankets, she moved on weaving bedspreads, draperies and upholstery fabrics for Baguio City's famous hotels including the old Pines Hotel and Hyatt Terraces Hotel, as well as the Manila Hilton, Manila Hotel and the Philippine Village Hotel.

That was 30 years ago. Now, Narda Capuyan has captured the imagination of the textile and fashion world with numerous awards and recognition the world over the most recent of which was her participation in the World Eco-Fiber and Textile Forum 2003 in Malaysia.

Known for her experiments on *ikat* weaving—a very ancient technique of tying and dyeing segments of threads before actual weaving—Narda became famous for designing vibrantly colored bags, shawls, scarves, placemats and rugs. These products, from subtle pastels to vivid earth tones, created waves abroad and captured the export market. Japanese and American designers were her first buyers, with Narda's first bag featured in *Women's Wear Daily* in New York.

Narda's big break came in 1982 when Bloomingdale's department store in New York decided to centrally feature Narda's products in an all-Philippine sales exhibition, which subsequently traveled to Washington D.C. The show, which sold an entire six-month production, was followed by trips for shows to Germany, France, Hongkong, Canada and Australia. Neiman Marcus, Lord and Taylor, Marshall Fields, JC Penney in the US and Hudson's Bay in Canada were some of Narda's initial buyers.

Her innovative and entrepreneurial skills won for Narda in 1982 the Golden Shell Award, the most prestigious award given by the Ministry of Trade for excellence in exports and for reviving a dying indigenous art. Another highly significant award, among the many, was the Countryside Investor Award presented to Narda's Handwoven Arts and Crafts Inc., by then President Corazon C. Aquino in 1989.

The Philippine Market Association (PMA) also recognized Narda's very forward and uncomplicated network open for the indigenous entrepreneur and awarded her the Agora Award for her outstanding achievement in export marketing. In 1999, she was selected as one of the 100 Women of the Philippines who have excelled in their work efforts in reviving the traditional ancient art and skills of the tribe closest to her heart.

In the recently concluded World Eco-Fiber and Textile Forum 2003 in Kuching at the eastern Malaysian State of Sarawak in Borneo, Narda unveiled her new embellished fashion collection of shawls, ponchos and scarves. She was joined by fellow Baguio resident, Dr. David Baradas, a social anthropologist and former director of the Malacanang Palace Museum, who read a scientific paper on "Textile Embellishments of Southern Mindanao" in the conference part of the forum.

The international event brought together 12 textile and fashion designers from Canada, the US, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Thailand and South Korea. Kuching's social event of the year attracted local and foreign guests who shelled out 500 Malaysian Ringgit (P7,000) for the dinner cum fashion show held at the Grand Ballroom of the Crown Plaza Hotel where models paraded the exquisite creations of the 12 designers.

More than 300 delegates attended the textile forum at the ballroom, with the adjoining function rooms being occupied by a textile bazaar featuring textile arts and crafts from 15 countries. One exhibition hall featured the intricate silk and cotton *ikat* made by the Iban people of Borneo. Actual demonstrations of the different processes of Sarawak Crafts were also shown. Held every two years, the forum has become a focal event in the textile field in Southeast Asia since its inception in 1999. As expected, Narda's designs created quite a stir among the spectators. Her fashion accessories consisting of shawls and ponchos draped over plain black dresses were much applauded for their creative use of leather insets, mink, coconut beads and semi-precious stones on sparkling rainbow colored hues. Yes, sale was brisk for the Philippine delegation, another feather on Narda's creative cap. The nursing profession's loss, the fashion and textile worlds' gain. With her numerous accolades and awards, Narda indeed soars high with superhero-like talent and creative vision.



Narda escorted by one of the models at the end of the fashion event at the recently concluded World Eco-Fiber and Textile Forum 2003 in Sarawak, Borneo.

Red carpet welcome laid out for Miss Universe candidates in Vigan, Baguio

VIGAN CITY—At least 1,000 policemen have been assigned to secure 20 candidates of the Miss Universe pageant when they visit this heritage city on Sunday, as residents help clean up Calle Crisologo where Ilocanos will be given their best chance to watch the contestants up close.

Former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis “Chavit” Singson is one of the producers of the Philippine staging of the pageant at Mall of Asia Arena on Jan. 30. Singson is bringing the candidates to Baluarte, his sprawling vacation house and a private zoo, which will showcase the native industries of Ilocos Sur province, such as jar making and “abel Iloco” weaving.

Trucks have been ferrying Ilocano clay jars, which are manufactured in Barangay 7 here, as well as Ilocos woven fabrics made in Caoayan town.

At Calle Crisologo, where most of Vigan’s preserved Hispanic houses are located, work crews put up crowd control barriers and new signs with uniform designs in preparation for the visit.

The candidates will proceed to the city’s Plaza Burgos for a highly anticipated fashion show, where they will parade the clothes put together by fashion designers from the Ilocos and Metro Manila.

The classic kalesa (horse drawn carriages) of Calle Crisologo will be restricted to an area outside the fashion show venue.

“This is a big and momentous chance for Ilocos Sur to be featured to worldwide audience... That is why we really prepared for it,” said Ilocos Sur Gov. Ryan Luis Singson.



Miss Universe candidates visiting Baguio City on Jan. 18 will wear these ponchos and skirts designed and woven by Narda's Handwoven Arts and Crafts. —EV ESPIRITU

20 candidates

Expected to arrive here are candidates from Belgium, Brazil, British Virgin Island, Bulgaria, Colombia, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Guatemala, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Thailand, the United States, Uruguay, Venezuela and Vietnam. Miss Philippines Maxine Medina will join this batch of candidates.

In Baguio City, four floats are being built to carry 32 candidates when they visit the summer capital on Jan. 18 with reigning Miss Universe Pia Wurtzbach.

Narda's Handwoven Arts and Crafts is preparing 40 sets of individually woven ikat ponchos "sungkat" to be worn by the candidates when they join floats representing Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao and a grand float carrying Wurtzbach.

The floats have been commissioned by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Baguio, which is financing the Baguio leg of the Miss Universe candidates' Philippine tour. These have been fashioned after heavily decorated floats that participate in the annual Baguio Flower Festival in February.

The floats will be paraded from upper Session Road to the city's South Drive on the way to the Baguio Country Club, where several activities have been scheduled, including a meeting with local artists. —LEONCIO BALBIN JR.
WITH REPORTS FROM VINCENT CABREZA AND EV ESPIRITU