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Family set to bury Thomas Hunt today

Widow's photos betray 'I miss you, honey' claim

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RELATIVES of the widow of Thomas J. Hunt have claimed that they pawned pieces of jewelry, and then left a land ownership document to a hospital so they could give the dead American a decent burial here.

Grace Songcuya, a worker in a local court who has been serving as her family's spokesperson, said Hunt's remains would be laid to rest at the Cagayan de Oro Gardens cemetery today if plans don't miscarry.

Hunt's remains have been in one of the chapels of Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes since April 27. The American, who had brain tumor and diabetes, died at the Polymedic General Hospital last April 26. He was 72.

The announcement of the scheduled interment came after Songcuya received a call from Mayor Constantino Jaraula who has expressed concern about the Hunt case.

Songcuya confirmed that Jaraula called her up and asked about the family's plans. She did not elaborate.

Songcuya said her family had to raise over P500 thousand to pay the hospital where Hunt had been confined since Jan. 29, and Cosmopolitan for its services and facilities.

"He might have been penniless but he died full of love," claimed Songcuya, denying that the American was unattended.

Daisy Cline, who spearheaded a campaign for donations to help Hunt, said the American's mother-in-law Linda and sister-in-law Aurea had taken good care of the dying American.

The Songcuyas described Hunt as "like-



able" and they claimed to be close to the American.

Songcuya said her contribution was to pawn pieces of jewelry for some P50 thousand. The money, she said, was for Cosmopolitan.

She said her family didn't have enough money to pay the hospital so a land title was used as a guarantee for the debt of over half a million pesos.

Songcuya said these acts "only show how Thomas was loved" by her family.

She did not say what the American's widow, Janelaze Hunt née Songcuya, did to help give her man a decent burial. Janelaze hasn't returned from the US where she is reportedly working as a saleslady at a Macy's branch in Virginia.

But to show how much Mr. Hunt was "loved," a



WHICH 'HONEY'? On Thomas J. Hunt's coffin is a message supposedly coming from her widow Janelaze Hunt née Songcuya: "I miss you honey." But somewhere on the Internet are photos, cached, showing Mrs. Hunt with a man who's not 72 years old. The American septuagenarian, who had no money, suffered in a Cagayan de Oro hospital from Jan. 29 to April 26 and died without his "honey." Mayor Constantino Jaraula says the Hunt case is city hall's concern.

basket of flowers was conspicuously placed on top of his white coffin with this dedication: "I miss you honey... Fr: your wife Jane Laze."

"What an insult! What a farce!" snapped American Elmer Zink. "[It] makes me shiver."

Many expats have alleged that Janelaze has a lover and that the affair started long before Hunt was hospitalized.

"He loved her. But he was betrayed. He died with a broken heart," one of the expats told *The Gold Star Daily*.

They also alleged that Janelaze went to live with her lover in Virginia immediately after she talked Mr. Hunt into moving to Cagayan de Oro ahead of her last year. Janelaze, who could have passed off as Hunt's

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Vjandep owner apologizes to Chinoys

THE owner of Vjandep Pastels has issued a public apology for a remark taken to be a racial slur against the Chinese.

Virgilio Jose said his remarks during an April 22 meeting of businessmen here were made "purely in jest."

Jose was quoted by one executive who attended the meeting as saying that "the Chinese are not people... hayop (animal)!"

Jose bought a half-page advertising space in this paper today to apologize especially to the city's Chinese-Filipino community who were offended.

"With contrite heart, I would like to once again sincerely beg for forgiveness for my offensive remarks," Jose said. "I have realized that although my remarks were said purely in jest without intention to offend anyone, such meaningless expression unduly damaged our good relations as community."

He also said, "May I also take this opportunity to humbly request that my family and my family's business be spared from the trouble that my personal behavior has caused you."

Some Chinese-Filipino traders have called for a boycott of Vjandep's popular buns and other products.

MARK FRANCISCO

40 schools seek govt approval to hike tuition

MANY private elementary and high schools in the region are seeking tuition increases despite an appeal against it by Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

Department of Education assistant regional director Nona Estilo said 40 schools throughout northern Mindanao filed their applications for tuition increases since March.

Estilo assured that education officials in the region would scrutinize the application and other documents submitted by the schools.

She said a big question would be if the mandatory consultations were made

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Set

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granddaughter, never followed.

There were photos posted on the Internet showing Mrs. Hunt and her lover in compromising positions but these were quickly removed when the Hunt case became a hot topic in an Internet discussion group, expats alleged.

Coached by an “expert” who said deleted photos only stay hidden somewhere on the Internet, *The Gold Star Daily* found thumbnails on a cached page that was apparently created by Janelaze herself, and was able to enlarge them. The photos show Janelaze with a man much younger than Mr. Hunt.

One was captioned “mah love of mah life” and the photo showed the alleged lover with a dog.

Zink identified the man as Albert Dermott who has allegedly used Janelaze’s account in sending and replying to e-mails.

A dubious-looking website said to be that of the Federal Capture Consulting Consortium’s states that Dermott has been brought in as a special programs solutions consultant who provided critical counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism support mission out of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Armm) and Jolo against groups like the Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiyah and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“Mr. Dermott,” states the website, “was responsible for locating and tracking senior level operators...”

The Constitution is clear against foreign military intervention in the country.

The widow’s aunt Grace said Janelaze “is a good girl and she has never been involved with any other man in her life except Thomas.”

She also said, “It is normal for pictures to come out now.”

Songcuya said the groups that were against her niece have convinced many people.

And then she used the dead American as an example and claimed that Hunt’s laptop allegedly contained photos of himself striking poses closely with other women. She said she and her family didn’t mind that “because it is normal.”

What the photographs show is a stark contrast to the loving, concerned and worried wife Janelaze’s mother Linda described her daughter to be. She claimed her daughter made sure to always call and check on Hunt’s condition while the old man was in the hospital.

It was however a choice between a dying husband and a green card—and apparently for the “worried” wife, the latter had more weight and cannot wait. “She

really wanted to return but she needed to wait for her green card,” said Mrs. Hunt’s mother.

It was Mr. Hunt, said Linda, who really wanted to settle here for good.

She also claimed that it was Mr. Hunt who discouraged Janelaze from flying back to Cagayan de Oro.

Janelaze’s mother said her family took care of all of Hunt’s needs.

Linda claimed that everytime Hunt would get his pension, she was the one who accompanied him.

But, according to Linda, Hunt’s pension was not enough for the American’s food and medicines.

Ms. Cline of the Expats’ Ladies Charities said she doubted if Hunt had discouraged Janelaze from returning to the city.

“I don’t believe it,” said Cline, adding that the only lucid answer Hunt would give whenever he could speak was: “I want my wife to come back to PI and bring me back to the US.”

Because of this, said Cline, expat Mike Belter offered Janelaze a round-trip ticket and Tom Landry in California offered to pay for her immigration lawyer to take care of her green card concerns. She said Janelaze did not accept any of the offers.

The Songcuyas, meanwhile, continued to question the motive of the Expats’ Ladies Charities and maintained that the group was wrong in starting a fund-raising campaign for Hunt while he was in a hospital.

They claimed they found out about the solicitations through Google.

One family member, who requested anonymity, said the “ladies came to the hospital and the funeral parlor just to take pictures.”

There was a time, according to Ms Cline, that she and American Tom Landry offered to send Janelaze a video link so she could see her husband and in hopes that she would reply to e-mails.

At the wake, Cline said, pictures were taken so people who were concerned would know that Janelaze’s relatives were taking care of things “and that he never was alone!”

Expats in the city have been frowning over the claims made by the Songcuyas. Since last week, this paper has been receiving visits and e-mails from expats who all agreed on one thing: Thomas J. Hunt was betrayed by his wife and left without enough money in Cagayan de Oro.

They said members of the Expats’ Ladies Charities took it upon themselves to help Hunt after a doctor informed an expat that the septuagenarian was left unattended and “had no visitors for a month.”

One American said the group decided to help after being informed by nurses that Hunt became more ill because he was not being provided enough medication.

Ms. Cline said her group sought donations via the Internet “because that’s where the communication in our small community evolves. We are online 24/7.”

Cline said her group only worked to buy Hunt’s medicines.

All in all, the ladies’ group raised some P95 thousand and used the funds to provide Hunt his medications, said Cline.

She said her group, which is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission, had documentation. She showed this paper receipts of medicines that were bought by the group for Hunt.

“We are very transparent,” she said, “every centavo is accounted for.”

On Friday, expat Jil Wrinkle said the Songcuyas were not entrusted with money by the expats’ wives because it was widely speculated that money intended for Mr. Hunt was not being properly spent.

Another expat was blunt: “No one trusts them.”

At the Cosmopolitan on Thursday morning, an executive told *The Gold Star Daily* that Hunt’s remains were left unattended by his adopted family. He said the dead American was “abandoned, technically speaking.”

He also said on Thursday that he only saw Grace Songcuya once and that was when she signed documents at Cosmopolitan.

Landry said Songcuya’s claim that her family did not receive money was “incorrect.”

Landry said his wife Alicia sent US\$100 to her mother here. Alicia’s mother then hand-carried this first donation directly to Polymedic General Hospital and gave the money that was converted into pesos to a family member named Aurea Songcuya.

“I believe there was one other donation that was delivered to either Aurea or Linda Songcuya, in addition to our initial contribution,” Landry said. “As Aurea or Linda did not account for our donation (buy medicine with this money) we nor any other expat wanted any further donations given directly to the Songcuya family.”

He said his group asked the Songcuya family to account for Hunt’s US Social Security payments as the septuagenarian was hospitalized and had no way to access the money himself.

Janelaze, according to Landry, claimed that the money was obtained from her family here and used for medical expenses and medications.