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LOVETOLEAVE.COM: A WEBSITE ABOUT NICHE ONLINE DATING IN ANGELES CITY, PHILIPPINES

Marlei Martinez

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LOVETOLEAVE.COM:
A WEBSITE ABOUT
NICHE ONLINE DATING
IN ANGELES CITY, PHILIPPINES

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Marlei Martinez
Candidate for B.S. Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
April 2011

Honors Capstone Project in Broadcast Journalism

Capstone Project Advisor: __________________________
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(Professor John Nicholson)
Honors Director: __________________________
Eric Holzwarth, Deputy Director
Date: __________________________
ABSTRACT

The global community is quickly growing due to the constant advancement of telecommunications across the land and sea. No longer do people have to settle for dating within their hometowns; now, they can simply sign up online, create a dating profile and search for their soul mate with just the click of a mouse.

Niche online dating is a very personalized form of internet romance. Men and women can now sit in front of their computers, type the words, “I want to date an Asian girl/guy” in the Google search bar, and dozens of ‘Asian’ dating websites will appear. This phenomenon is known as niche online dating. It is a personalized form of dating where users can specify which ethnic, gender or identity pool they want to date in. FilipinoCupid.com, formerly known as Filipinaheart.com, is one such dating website.

There is something very different about the world of niche online dating in comparison to typical online dating- the reasons behind why people participate. For her Capstone project, Marlei Martinez, a senior broadcast journalism major at the Newhouse School, sought to investigate why women living in Angeles City, Philippines participate in international niche online dating.

In the Summer of 2010, Martinez and a fellow student ventured halfway across the world to Angeles City, Philippines. She was accompanied by Sam Disston, a senior Spanish and psychology major. After travelling for 22.5 hours across twelve different time zones, having touched down in Alaska, Japan and Manila, the duo arrived in the thick of it, in the hot, humid and traffic-congested region of Angeles City.

The mission was to investigate the world of international niche online dating in the Philippines by documenting the lives of six women who participate on dating websites and/or chat rooms. For eight days, the team travelled into the barrios, villages and neighborhoods of the sprawling third world to tell the stories of different Filipina women.

After travelling to the Philippines, Martinez spent a year sifting through and editing the video footage and still photographs. She then put them all onto her Capstone website, LovetoLeave.com. Throughout the website, you’ll see the stories of women who utilize online dating for a number of reasons, such as Margie Elevera, who is hoping to find a job, Katrina Umali, who is hoping to find a “better man,” and Adelyn Acosta, who is hoping to find a way out. The website also includes a Behind the Scenes photo gallery and Behind the Scenes interactive Google map of Angeles City where viewers can actually go behind the camera and watch the making of this series from the locations the team visited.

The most important thing this team discovered throughout the making of this series is that the advancement of telecommunications across the seas not only provides people the chance for love, but a chance to leave.
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**Renee Crown Honors Program**- First and foremost, I’d like to thank the Renee Crown Honors program for funding and motivating this project. Thanks to the generosity of the Honors program, I was able to travel to the Philippines to meet these women and document their stories by way of the Crown Wise Award program. Year after year, the Renee Crown Honors Program at Syracuse University motivates scores of students, such as myself, to push ourselves to learn, investigate and uncover new and eye-opening discoveries that will lead to a better tomorrow.

**Professor Seth Gitner**- I’d like to thank Professor Seth Gitner, professor of Newspaper and Online Journalism at the Newhouse School, for being my Capstone advisor and aiding me with this project every step of the way. From our initial planning meetings in the Fall of my Junior year to our completion of this website a few weeks before my graduation, your online expertise has single-handedly made this production possible. I can’t thank you enough for the endless amount of hours you’ve put into this project.

**Professor John Nicholson**- Thank you for being my Capstone Reader. More importantly, thank you for mentoring me throughout these past four years, and more specifically, for reviewing and critiquing my work. Either fortunately or unfortunately for you, most of what I’ve learned at the Newhouse School can be attributed to you.

**Sam Disston**- Thank you for your un-ending support with this project. From swatting the mosquitoes away from my legs during our interviews in the barrios to getting up extra early to de-fog the camera lenses, I couldn’t have done this project with you. Even though you won’t be getting class credit from the school for your contribution to this project, you funded your travels to the Philippines, and for that, I can’t thank you enough. Thank you for being my wingman.

**Augie Dizon**- Thank you for being so helpful. You completely rearranged your work schedule in anticipation of our arrival in the Philippines, and I can’t thank you enough. I really appreciate your time and constant assistance with showing us all across the city and really bringing us into the thick of things. Your geographic and language expertise were priceless.

**Rochl “Pie” Canlas**- Thank you for being the most wonderful host. You made the trip not only a learning experience, but an enjoyable experience. Thank you for keeping an eye on us and safely guiding us to each of our shoot destinations. I can’t thank you enough.
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Professor Frank Currier- Thank you for your constant script review. Your edits greatly enhanced my scripts.

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Adelyn Acosta, Margie Elevera, Gretchen Odi, Jerson & Mira Reyes, Aveline Santos, Cristina Tiamzon and Katrina Umali- Most importantly, thank you for sharing your stories. Thank you for opening our eyes and giving us this chance to learn.
SCREEN GRABS OF “LOVETOLEAVE.COM”

Home Screen:
“Contact” page:

“City Scenes” photo gallery:
Stories:

Searching for Hope

Mother tries to give her child a better life by leaving the city

A mother named Josefa left her hometown in the Philippines to give her child a better life. She left with her two children, ages 5 and 3, to find work in a nearby city. She found work as a domestic helper and was able to send money back to her family. However, she faced many challenges, including language barriers and isolation.

“Many times,” Josefa said, “I wish I could have stayed in my hometown. But I know that I can give my children a better life here.”

Josefa's story is just one of many. Many parents leave their homes to find work and better opportunities for their children. While they may face many challenges, they are willing to make sacrifices for their families.

Searching for Love

Mother hopes she will find love again after leaving her husband

A woman named Maria left her abusive husband to start a new life. She left with her two children, ages 8 and 5, and found work as a domestic helper. She was able to send money back to her family and was able to start a new life.

“I left my husband because he was violent,” Maria said. “I had to leave for my children’s sake.”

Maria’s story is just one of many. Many women leave their husbands to escape violence and abuse. While they may face many challenges, they are willing to make sacrifices for their families.

And they are not alone. Women all over the world are facing similar situations. It is important to support and empower women to make positive changes in their lives.
 Searching for a Career

1980s: Vegas was a city in transition, a place where dreams were made and broken. For some, it was a place of opportunity, while for others, it was a place of disappointment and struggle.

Finding a stable career can be a daunting task, especially in a city like Las Vegas, where the economy is constantly changing. For Gretchen Odi, finding a job was a challenge. She had been working in the entertainment industry for several years, but the recession had hit hard, and she found herself unemployed.

Gretchen decided to take matters into her own hands and start her own business. She had always been interested in photography and decided to open a studio. She worked tirelessly, taking photos for friends and family, and slowly but surely, her business began to thrive.

Gretchen's story is one of perseverance and determination. She learned that success is not just about having a talent, but also about never giving up.

In her own words, "I never thought I'd own my own business, but I did. It's been a long journey, but I wouldn't change a thing."

Gretchen's story is just one example of the many ways people can find success in Las Vegas. Whether it's through entrepreneurship or finding a stable job, the city offers endless opportunities for those willing to work hard and take risks.

For more stories like Gretchen's, visit our website and explore the stories of other Las Vegas residents.
“Behind the Scenes” photo gallery:

Interactive Google Map:
“About” page:
REFLECTIVE ESSAY

For my Honors Capstone project, I investigated the world of niche online dating in Angeles City, Philippines. Niche online dating is a specialized type of dating, a phenomenon in which men and women date within specific identity pools such as specialized racial, ethnic and interest groups.

I am a Filipina-American, born as an American citizen to Filipino parents on Clark Air Force Base in Angeles City, Philippines and later raised in the United States. As an Air Force brat, I have called more than four countries, five states and 11 houses home. And one thing that I have found in common in every place I’ve lived is a Filipina friend who met her husband online.

The most recent example of this was when I interviewed Sharon Luehring, a former co-worker of mine in Warner Robins, GA, during the summer of 2009. At the time that I interviewed her, Luehring had lived in the U.S. for a total of one year and three months. Before then, she lived in a barrio in the mountains of the Philippines. She met her husband, Steve Luehring, online through Filipinaheart.com. After two months of instant messaging and video chatting, he flew to the Philippines and put a ring on her finger. It happened just like that.¹

During the interview, I asked Luehring why she joined Filipinaheart.com. She told me the reason was because a friend had recommended it to her after she found an American husband. Luehring told me of her dream to come to America and to find a way to work in the States so that she could send money home to provide for her younger brothers’ education. After signing up on

Filipinaheart.com, she found her current husband and said she is in love and happily married.

Therefore, after speaking with Luehring, I was interested in finding out what other Filipina women’s objectives were on the dating website. For the purposes of this project, I decided to specifically focus on Filipinaheart.com, now known as FilipinoCupid.com, to further investigate the various reasons Filipina women in Angeles City use niche online dating.

In the Spring of 2010, I began my project by contacting women who used Filipinaheart.com. It was at this stage of the project where I made my first major decision. As a journalist, I had to decide how I was ethically going to proceed with making contact with these women. My first attempt at making contact with these women was contacting Filipinaheart.com directly via the telephone service and asking for the Media Relations Department to gather contact information. However, they quickly shot me down citing customer privacy rights. So my second strategy was setting up a profile for myself on Filipinaheart.com. In order
to make contact with women on Filipinaheart.com, you must sign up for an account as a man. So, I ended up signing up for an account as a man with the account name, “M Martinez.” Although it was deceitful to portray myself as a man, my following course of action added legitimacy to my project. I searched for various women on Filipinaheart.com who lived in Angeles City and sent messages to their personal email accounts, such as Yahoo Mail, and explained in my email that I was in fact a female journalism student putting together my Honors thesis and was interested in speaking with them. This is an example of an email thread between myself and one of the women:

“Hi Katrina,

This is M from filipinaheart. As I told you, I'm looking for a pen pal to help me with my school project for when I visit Angeles this August.

Before I proceed with my questions, I want to be honest with you and inform you that I am in fact a Filipina-American girl living in New York. Like I said, I'm traveling to Angeles this August, and the only way for me to find women pen pals was to sign up online as a "man."

Are you still willing to communicate with me?

Thank you,

M”
To which she responded:

“yeah its fine with me..just tell me what is it so i could help u then..”

In the Summer of 2010, I traveled to Angeles City, Philippines, and after travel time, had eight days to interview six women (Adelyn Acosta, Margie Elevera, Gretchen Odi, Aveline Santos, Cristina Tiamzon and Katrina Umali) on camera about their online dating lives. After meeting and interviewing these women, I traveled back to the United States and spent the following year sifting through and editing the video footage and still photographs. To finalize my project, I put all of the material I collected and edited onto my final Capstone website, LovetoLeave.com, which consists of six video stories, text stories, a photo gallery of scenes of the Philippines and an interactive Google map that is embedded with Behind the Scenes photos and videos.
While I am a broadcast journalism major and did employ many of the skills I learned throughout my broadcast journalism curriculum at the Newhouse School of Public Communications in the making of this series, this project was put together and showcased much differently than the traditional broadcast style. The most apparent example of this is the occasional personal reference in the writing of my scripts, such as the following from Margie Elevera’s script:

“The neighborhood’s security gate, the flat screen TV and the prepared lunch for us strangers said it all. Margie Elevera comes from a very different background than the other Filipinaheart members we met so far on the trip.”

In my day-to-day producing of broadcast television packages for class and my job with ABC News On Campus, I rarely employ personal references in my pieces, as that is seen an unprofessional and biased. However, as this was a project that I took on in many ways for myself based on my personal interest in the topic, I ended up utilizing more personal reference than I normally do for other broadcast platforms.

With regard to the number of stories I decided to showcase in this series, time was the main factor dictating this decision. During the summer of 2010, the summer after I received funding from the Renee Crown Honors program to go the Philippines, I was employed by ABC News On Campus and had to fulfill my summer tenure. Therefore, I only had about a two week period where I could travel to the Philippines to collect these interviews before school started. After travel time, that only left me with eight actual shooting days to collect footage.
Therefore, six women were the most people I was able to interview during my visit to Angeles City.

Another stylistic choice that I adopted in the making of this series was my extreme attention to detail, primarily with regard to the extreme amount of care I took in executing the interviews. As a journalist, I make sure to never “treat my interviewees as fodder” as the saying going in the industry. In other words, for all stories I maintain the understanding that we’re all human and acknowledge the fact that the people I’m speaking with are people and are sharing their personal stories that affect them. With most stories that I produce for class and ABC News On Campus, the story topics do not require such precision with how I execute the interviews and interact with interviewees.

With this series I had to be very careful with the women I was speaking with for a number of reasons. Firstly, I had to be wary of the fact that many of the women I met and interviewed were living in dire poverty. Actually, before I flew to the Philippines, Adelyn Acosta asked me to send her money before the interview. According to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, however, journalists do not pay for interviews. In the code of ethics, it states the following: “Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived,” and “Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.”\(^2\) So I had to explain to her that while I understand the position she is in, I was not ethically allowed to give her money as that would compromise my position as the journalist reporting on her story. As we drove to her shack in the Santa Lucia

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Resettlement Center, I picked up some groceries for her and her sick son just purely based on the acknowledgment that she is a human in dire need.

Another example of the way that I was particularly aware of the details of my production was in the way I presented many of the boyfriends of the women in my stories. In Gretchen Odi’s video story, for example, you’ll notice that I blurred out her boyfriend’s face. The reason I decided to do this was because I was not able to reach her boyfriend for a comment. While I did reach out to him via email, he never replied to my inquiries. Due to the sensitive nature of the information Gretchen Odi provided about him, specifically that he pays her to sleep with him, I decided that based on standards and practices policy, blurring out his face was the best option.

You’ll also notice in Katrina Umali’s video story, however, that I did not blur out her boyfriend’s face. The reason I chose to do so was because I was able to reach him via Facebook and over the phone and he confirmed that he is Katrina Umali’s ex-boyfriend and that he is also the father of Philandre Rodman.

Taking a further in-depth look at my stylistic choices for how I edited the video stories of each woman, you’ll notice that each woman is speaking in English. During the interviews, I considered interviewing each woman in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines, and then providing subtitles in the post-production phase. However, I noticed that many of the women preferred speaking to me in English and actually prided themselves in their ability to speak it, so I decided that was a more natural way to present them.
You’ll also notice that in most of the stories, there are quick pops of natural sound, such as the crowing of a hen, a beep of a jeepney (the Philippines’ version of a taxi cab) or the chug of a washing machine. The reason I chose to do this was to make the viewers feel like they were right there in the heart of Angeles City, Philippines, to try to enhance the understanding of what life is like halfway across the globe in the third world. I also framed the still photographs of each woman widely in a further effort to capture the environment of the area they’re living in to give viewers a heightened sense of how these women live their day-to-day lives.

Lastly, you’ll notice that many of my video stories are constructed with a good amount of my voice tracks. While I normally prefer short and concise voice tracks, the reason I decided to incorporate myself speaking a bit more is because I believe these stories and situations require more explanation for the viewers since these stories are of such a literally foreign nature. In addition, many of the stories were complicated with regard to the content of what the women were telling me, so I wanted to do my best with fairly portraying what they said in a way that was accurate and understandable to an American audience.
Taking a look at the photo gallery of the scenes from the Philippines, you’ll notice that I included a good amount of photos from Sitio Monicayo, the “baluga village” or black village as the locals call it. This area is where the indigenous Filipinos live, and while it doesn’t directly have anything to do with the stories the six main women who participate in niche online dating, I think the inclusion of these photos were vital in illustrating to viewers the general makeup of the Philippines.

Focusing on the interactive Google map, I decided to construct this and include this on my website to not only give my American audience an understanding of the layout of Angeles City, Philippines, but to also put them in my shoes of being behind the camera. While the focus of this project is on the women who told their stories, I believe the actual production is a vital and interesting perspective for viewers to observe.
The last stylistic element I’d like to discuss is the actual design of the website. Professor Seth Gitner and I sat down and constructed the wireframe for this website in January of 2011 and I completed all of the content that would be filling the website. You’ll notice that the website is fairly simple, with regard to the fact that there are not Flash elements. The logo, pink and grey color scheme and gray background photo are for the most part the only ‘jazzy’ elements of the website. I decided to stick with simplicity for two reasons. The first reason is because I want my audience to be able to easily navigate around the website. Too many tabs, too many Flash elements and too many graphics often confuse viewers and dissuade them from continuing to investigate what the website has to offer. The second and more important reason why I kept the website simple was because I want the videos and photographs to speak for themselves. The main attention-getters of this project are the women and their stories, so I didn’t want too many fancy website design techniques to dilute the power of what they had to say.
After viewing this website, I hope viewers will learn the effects of the advancement of telecommunications and what that means for impoverished women in the third world. As I was travelling throughout Angeles City, I found it very interesting that the same women who were struggling to pay for food also had cell phones and computers in their shacks to maintain outside communication. The overwhelming prevalence of this craving for communication really illustrated the power of telecommunications among the global community. I also hope viewers will see to what these women will do to survive and provide for their families.

Much of the inspiration and motivation behind this project can be attributed to my college mentor, Professor John Nicholson, and his past four years of teaching. The most important lesson that Professor Nicholson taught me was at the end of the day, I’m still a human. So while I am a journalist, it’s important to remember that I, and the people I am interviewing, are all humans. He was the one who taught me the importance of not treating your interviewees as “fodder for yourself,” but at the same time stressed the importance of doing my job as a journalist of telling the story accurately. It was this lesson that really formed my plan of execution throughout the entire production of this series.

In conclusion, after working on this project for almost two years, I have learned more than I could have imagined about the power of communication. As a broadcast journalism major, my entire purpose is sharing true, meaningful and newsworthy stories. And through every avenue of putting together this series, I have further honed my communications skills and learned the importance of the
craft all around. I hope viewers will discover this as well after visiting my website.

Before ending this reflection, I’d like to acknowledge those who contributed to this project. Without the following people and organization, the completion of my project would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I’d like to thank the Renee Crown Honors program for funding and motivating this project. Thanks to the generosity of the Honors program and their Crown Wise Award, I was able to travel to the Philippines to meet these women and document their stories. Year after year, the Renee Crown Honors Program at Syracuse University motivates scores of students, like myself, to push ourselves to learn, investigate and uncover new and eye-opening discoveries that will lead to a better tomorrow.

Secondly, I’d like to thank Professor Seth Gitner, professor of Newspaper and Online Journalism at the Newhouse School, for being my Capstone advisor and aiding me with this project every step of the way. From our initial planning meetings in the Fall of my Junior year to our completion of this website a few weeks before my graduation, his online expertise has single-handedly made this production possible.

I’d also like to thank Professor John Nicholson for being my Capstone Reader. More importantly, I’d like to thank him for mentoring me throughout these past four years, and more specifically, for reviewing and critiquing my work. Either fortunately or unfortunately, most of what I’ve learned at the Newhouse School can be attributed to him.
Next, I’d like to thank Sam Disston for accompanying me to the Philippines. I’d like to thank him for his un-ending support with this project. From swatting the mosquitoes away from my legs during our interviews in the barrios to getting up extra early to de-fog the camera lenses, I couldn’t have done this project with him. Even though he won’t be receiving class credit from the school for his contribution to this project, he funded his travels to the Philippines, and for that, I can’t thank him enough.

Also, I’d like to thank Augie Dizon for being so helpful. He completely rearranged his work schedule in anticipation of our arrival in the Philippines, so I can’t thank him enough. I really appreciate his time and constant assistance with showing us all across the city and really bringing us into the thick of things. His geographic and language expertise were priceless.

To Tito Roehl “Pie” Canlas, I’d like to thank him for being the most wonderful host. He made the trip not only a learning experience, but an enjoyable experience. He kept an eye on us and safely guided us to each of our shoot destinations.

To Tita Aimee Canlas, I’d like to thank her for also being the most wonderful host. Her constant words of encouragement kept us going. Even though the sun and humidity beat us up sometimes, her constant smile and supply of food gave us the energy to keep moving.

To Professor Frank Currier, I’d like to say thank you for the constant script review. His edits greatly enhanced my scripts.
To Professor Jon Glass, I’d like to say thank you for setting me up with all of the equipment I needed overseas and for reviewing the site. Without his contribution, documenting and telling these stories wouldn’t have been possible. Also, Vincent Cobb and David Lopez deserve a thank you for setting up the camera equipment for the trip as well.

I’d like to thank Kelly Sullan for the awesome website logo, and Emily Ann Brandstetter for the inspiration for the domain name. I’d also like to send a huge thank you to Professor Jeff Passetti for the web design assistance.

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To my parents, Mark and Leilani Martinez, I’d like to thank them for their assistance with travel plans and the constant background knowledge. To Jill and Jim Disston, I’d like to send a thank you their transportation to the airport.

And finally and most importantly, to Adelyn Acosta, Margie Elevera, Gretchen Odi, Jerson & Mira Reyes, Aylene Santos, Cristina Tiamzon and Katrina Umali thank you for sharing your stories. Thank you for opening our eyes and giving us this chance to learn.
**SOURCES CITED AND CONSULTED**


DVD OF VIDEO STORIES
CAPSTONE SUMMARY

The global community is quickly growing due to the constant advancement of telecommunications across the land and sea. No longer do people have to settle for dating within their hometowns; now, they can simply sign up online, create a dating profile and search for their soul mate with just a click of their mouse.

Niche online dating is a very personalized form of internet romance. Men and women can now sit in front of their computer, type the words, “I want to date an Asian girl/guy” in the Google search bar, and dozens of ‘Asian’ dating websites will appear. This phenomenon is known as niche online dating. It is a personalized form of dating where users can specify which ethnic, gender or identity pool they want to date in. FilipinoCupid.com, formerly known as Filipinaheart.com, is one such dating website.

There is something very different about the world of niche online dating in comparison to typical online dating. When comparing the homepages of FilipinoCupid.com to eHarmony.com for example, there is a stark difference in design. Filipinocupid.com displays a very attractive Filipina woman posing for the camera, whereas eHarmony.com displays a happy couple embracing one another. In addition, the sign-up process if very different. When signing up for a profile on eHarmony, users must fill out a 14 section survey before seeing their possible matches. Users then have to wait to see if eHarmony generates any potential matches before they can view those chosen profiles. When signing up on FilipinoCupid, however, the sign-up process consists of a measly three section
survey after which users are immediately directed to their account homepage where they can see a horizontal list of Filipina women’s pictures displayed along the bottom of the screen, often framed very seductively.

The world of niche online dating blurs the lines. With regard to FilipinoCupid, in particular, it brings up questions of what are the users’ intentions- Do users really want to find romance? Do they really want to find someone to marry? Do they really want to find love? After searching the Internet for more examples of niche online dating, I found websites such as blossoms.com and MeetFilipinagirls.com, websites that had the same general style as FilipinoCupid.com, but with obvious other forms of appeal, such as the giant “US Visa and Immigration Support” link at the bottom of the homepage for blossoms.com. Such a link showcases that there is the possibility that niche online daters are searching for more things than just love, like maybe U.S. citizenship for example.

Thus, this observation led me to the objective of my Capstone project, which was to find out- What are women in the Philippines using niche online dating for?

I actually began this project well before my Senior year. The effects of niche online dating among Filipina women were a phenomenon that I observed in my personal surroundings. I am a Filipina-American, born as an American citizen to Filipino parents on a Clark Air Force Base in the Angeles City, Philippines and later raised in the States. As an Air Force brat, I have called more than four countries, five states and 11 houses home. And one thing that I have found in
common in every place I’ve lived is a family Filipina friend who met her husband online. The most recent example of this was when I interviewed Sharon Luehring, a former co-worker of mine in Warner Robins, GA, during the summer of 2009. At the time that I interviewed her, Luehring had lived in the U.S. for a total of 1 year and 3 months. Before then, she lived in the mountains of the Philippines. She met her husband, Steve, online through Filipinaheart.com. After two months of instant messaging and video chatting, he flew to the Philippines and put a ring on her finger. It happened just like that. During the interview I asked her why she joined Filipinaheart.com and she told me the reason was because a friend had recommended it to her after she found an American husband. Luehring told me of her dream to come to America and to find a way to work in the States so that she could send home money to provide for her younger brothers’ education. After signing up on Filipinaheart.com, she found her current husband and said she is in love and happily married.

Therefore, after speaking with Luehring, I was interested in finding out what other Filipina women’s objectives were on the dating website. For the purposes of this project, I decided to specifically focus on Filipinaheart.com, now known as FilipinoCupid.com.

In the Spring of 2010, I began set up a profile on the then Filipinaheart.com to begin making contact with women in the Philippines. I decided to focus specifically on Angeles City since it was an area that I would be able to navigate around when I visited. During this time I also applied for a Crown Wise Award to get funding to travel to the Philippines. After submitting
my proposal and projected budget, the Renee Crown Honors Department generously provided me with a Crown Wise Award to travel to the Pacific.

In the Summer of 2010, I ventured halfway across the world to the Pearl of the Orient, a.k.a. the Philippines. I was accompanied by Sam Disston, a senior Spanish and psychology major, at Syracuse University. After travelling for 22.5 hours across twelve different time zones, having touched down in Alaska, Japan and Manila, we arrived in the thick of it, in the hot, humid and traffic-congested region of Angeles City.

The mission was to investigate the world of international niche online dating in the Philippines by documenting the lives of a six women who participate on dating websites and/or chat rooms. For seven days, we travelled into the barrios, villages and neighborhoods of the sprawling third world to tell the stories of different Filipina women. During our journey we met Adelyn Acosta, Cristina Tiamzon, Margie Elevera, Aveline Santos, Gretchen Odi and Katrina Umali who all told us their stories about why they date online or maintain online relationships. We documented all of their interviews on video and still cameras.

After travelling back to the United States, I spent the rest of the summer and my senior year, editing the footage and showcasing these women’s stories on my Capstone website, lovetoleave.com. Viewers can see the stories of these women and will find that they utilize online dating for a number of reasons, such as Margie Elevera, who is hoping to find a job, Katrina Umali, who is hoping to find a “better man,” and Adelyn Acosta, who is hoping to find a way out. The most important thing we discovered throughout the making of this series is that
the advancement of telecommunications across the seas not only provides people
the chance for love, but a chance to leave.