

A Triple Tragedy. Hard to Believe. Harder to Accept.

On Saturday late morning, 12th August, Aquilino Santos Caeiro, Ruth Klaase, Dan Groshong, Julio Da Cunha (the barista from Agora Cafe) and Ruth's partner Danny Tol were travelling by car to Laclubar. They were going to inspect the coffee processing facility Dan was supporting.

It was a brand new road, smooth, wide and safe. However the wind was so strong that a number of houses in the nearby village even lost their roofs.

Near Cribas about forty minutes past Manatuto, the car passed a large tree which had been partially burnt. The wind dislodged part of the tree and it fell on the passing car, instantly killing Aquilino, Ruth and Dan. Julio sustained injuries to his legs and Danny suffered a fractured neck.

Aquilino played an active and diligent role as Director General at the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture and at the time was assessing the promotion of the coffee industry.

Ruth had been a part time but dedicated resident of Timor Leste for years from 2003, returning regularly with energy and enthusiasm to teach English and performing other services.

Dan had similarly taken Timor Leste to his heart and from 1999 he had been a friend of Timor Leste, very active in promoting Timor Leste and helping its people.

While Danny and Julio were thankfully spared, Timor Leste will grieve the loss of Aquilino, Ruth and Dan.

This was a freak occurrence of nature that robbed three wonderful people of their lives and cheated Timor Leste of three of its best friends.



Aquilino Santos CAEIRO



24th September 1971 - 12th August 2017

Aquilino Santos Caeiro, was born in Leolima, Duaderok village, Balibo. In 2001 he was appointed, Tourism Promotion and Marketing Coordinator during the transitional UNTAET Government. In 2007, he became Head of Marketing at the National Directorate of Tourism then National Director of Marketing in 2014. In 2016, he was promoted to Director-General of Tourism. He leaves a widow, Catarina Kese Caeiro and three children: Celestino Alcino, Auxiliadora Elisabeth and Lucia Leoni, aged 15, 11 & 7 respectively. Throughout his life, Aquilino as a beloved father and friend to many, was always ready to help others. He was diligent in his professional career, a great motivator of his staff and appreciated for his honest approach to work, as well as his lively sense of humour. He was sensitive to staff morale and never failed to offer encouragement and inspiration to his team. One of his staff commented that in spite of his seniority in the Ministry, he did not stand on formality: "Director-General is just a title," he used to say, "but I am still Aquilino. I like to have a laugh with my colleagues so we can work happily together. It's important to focus on the team's results and the achievements that will benefit everyone in the country." A statement from the Directorate of Tourism summed it up: "We just want to say that we have lost a good person. Someone who put his heart into his work, who was gifted and dedicated in helping us all to support the tourism development process and make our contribution to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture activities. There are no words that we can say about our friend, other than to bid him farewell and to pray that he rest in peace, that he will always be loved by us, and treasured in our hearts".

Rest in Peace Aquilino.

Information from Jose Quintas and Ann Turner. Photo provided by Ann Turner.



Daniel Joel GROSHONG



30th November 1962 - 12th August 2017

Dan was a native of Portland, Oregon and the youngest of six siblings. He graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Dan became a professional photographer, initially working for Greenpeace then travelled the world covering news stories from Africa, Latin America, USA and Asia. During this time he developed an affinity for Asia. Husband of Menzi Dacuycuy Groshong, Father of Agos Patrick aged 15 and Anna May aged 12, Dan was a long time resident of Hong Kong. In 2010 Dan co-founded the Hummingfish Foundation established to preserve natural environments and promote sustainable tourism for Timor Leste as well as building successful community food and product projects. He was also making plans to move to Timor Leste permanently. While his most dominant success was the creation and growth of Maubere Mountain Coffee, he also established fruit production and soap manufacturing amongst other things. The facts are Dan was a warm-hearted humanitarian caring more for the well-being of others above himself. He was a selfless hard-working individual full of ideas and action who only knew how to give. His passing is such a loss to his friends, colleagues, his family and Timor Leste. He so loved this country, his family knew he would have wanted to be laid to rest here and he has been. On a final note of his character, we quote Dan himself. 'Often when facing a huge challenge, you don't know if you will be successful or not. You know it's a near impossible task and that it will take everything you have in you and more, but you have to try anyway.'

Rest in Peace Dan.

Photo and some information from The Hummingfish Foundation web page.



Ruth Elisabeth KLAASE



24th January 1976 - 12th August 2017

Ruth was a daughter of The Netherlands. Teaching and Language were her passions. She had an MA in English Language and Literature and an MSc in Psychology amongst other qualifications. From 2003 to 2015 she worked on numerous assignments as a copy editor /proof reader, translator, writer, coach, and trainer, both for organisations and individuals including the Hummingfish Foundation. She was a lover of motion pictures and on a local level, she wrote Guide Post Magazine's movie column 'My View' for around seven years much to everyone's delight. Ruth was also a staunch Dili Hash House Harrier for quite a few years where she made many friends. It seemed fitting she has her Dili Hash hat on in her photo above. To understand what Ruth was really like, here are comments gleaned from her friends ... "I will remember her as a kind person and one of the best listeners. When you had a conversation with Ruth, she had a special way of making you feel valued and really heard. Always a smile on her face, and always welcoming a newbie to Hash and Timor." 'I love that she lived life to the fullest and touched so many people with her light, laughter and love.' 'We lost a dear friend. Ruth was one of the first people I met in Dili and imparted what became my own deep appreciation for Timor-Leste.' 'Dear Ruth, you were one of our supporters, you had faith in Timor and a great understanding of film and cinema.' 'This is unbelievable, what a loss. We are heartbroken.' This was the real Ruth. Loving, friendly, helpful and kind. Everyone who met her liked and respected her. She will be missed dearly.

Rest in Peace Ruth.

Thanks to Danny Tol, Greg Duncan and also Ruth's friends for their comments. Photo provided by Edward Irvine.