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# Thomas Hunt who?

## Left penniless and stranded in Oro, American was alone even in death

By **HERBIE GOMEZ**  
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**T**HE poor American septuagenarian was alone even in death. Thomas J. Hunt's body has been at the Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes since April 27, and the people running the place say they do not know what to do with his remains.

Inside one of Cosmopolitan's "chapels" on Capistrano Street is Hunt's white casket. The coffin is a bit expensive but the "chapel" where Hunt's body lies in state is considered the cheapest facility Cosmopolitan can offer.

The dead American, who lost a lot of weight judging from his loose skin, is clad in a cheap white office *Barong*. Around the Baptist's hands, ironically, is a Catholic rosary.

Yesterday morning, the seats were all empty; there was literally no living thing inside that "chapel."

"They say the interment will be on Saturday," said a Cosmopolitan executive as he pointed to a whiteboard that showed that workers were supposed to bring Mr. Hunt's body to a cemetery tomorrow. "But quite frankly, I really don't know. Until now, no payment has been made... not a single centavo. And the wife is not here."

Workers at Cosmopolitan said the facility where the body of the



Thomas J. Hunt in this undated photo. There was a time only a few people in Cagayan de Oro knew he existed. PHOTO COURTESY OF ELMER ZINK

American lies in state has been unattended most of the time.

"It's like he was abandoned, technically speaking," said one executive.

Just outside the "chapel," a woman who identified herself only as

Inday was playing solitaire.

"I'm their neighbor and I was just asked to watch," Inday told *The Gold Star Daily* in the vernacular. "They just went out to buy something."

Asked if she knew

where Hunt's widow was, Inday replied: "She was here last night."

For some reason, the widow, unknown to Inday, is still in the US. Inday bumbled when she was asked if she knew that.

"It's because they know me but I don't

know them that well, really," she spoke haltingly.

Hunt, 72, was married to the former Janelaze Songcuya, a woman who could have passed off as his granddaughter.

Elmer Zink, who claims to be living about

30 miles from where the widow is living right now, said the Hunts had decided to move to Cagayan de Oro in May last year, a month after the American retired from an establishment called Hoppstetter's Office Products.

Zink said the Hunts went bankrupt and lost their home in Yuma, Arizona. Without elaborating, Zink blamed the woman for the bankruptcy.

"In May 2008, she convinced him to go on ahead of her to Cagayan de Oro, and she would follow as soon as she received her permanent green card or extension on her two-year green card," said Zink.

Mr. Hunt flew to Cagayan de Oro but his wife never came. Instead, according to Zink, Mrs. Hunt went to live in Fairfax, Virginia—allegedly with a boyfriend.

Hunt's widow, said to be working as a saleslady at a Macy's branch in Virginia, could not be reached for comment at presstime. But she told *YumaSun.com* earlier that she did not follow her husband here because "they could not afford two round trip tickets."

When *YumaSun* pressed for further explanation, she said the reason was between her and her husband. She also said she wanted to bring her husband back to the US but she had no money.

Expatriate Mike Farrell

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## Nova fights malnutrition problem in Ozamiz city

OZAMIZ City—Councilor Nova Princess Parojinog-Echavez and the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation here have joined hands in the implementation of a sustainable feeding program for malnourished children in the city.

Since January, Echavez and the SK Federation have been going from one barangay to another feeding malnourished children.

Presently, Ozamiz has a

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**FEEDING PROGRAM.** Ozamiz city Councilor Nova Princess Parojinog-Echavez gives a cup of congee to a girl during a feeding activity in Carmen. Nova and the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation have jointly implemented the feeding program starting last January. Some two thousand malnourished children have been fed.

ADVERTORIAL PHOTO BY REY REROCHO

## 'Cybersex women' sue NBI, DSWD

By **JIGGER JERUSALEM**  
Correspondent

THE 15 "cybersex women" who bolted from a government facility the other day have pressed charges against the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the social welfare department.

In a two-page affidavit, the women charged the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the NBI with unlawful arrest, serious illegal detention and/or grave coercion, grave threats and violation of human rights.

Two of the 15 women did not sign the affidavit-complaint.

The complainants said they were "detained and held against our will by the DSWD upon instruction of the

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## Tinnex: No to small-town lottery in Oro

By **LITO RULONA**  
Correspondent

MAYOR Constantino Jaraula has announced that he would reject proposals to allow small-town lottery operations in the city.

Jaraula told Radio Mindanao Network's station DxCC he would not allow the town lottery operations despite an endorsement made by the city council.

Even if legal and recognized by the Philippine

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## Stranded

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told *The Gold Star Daily* Hunt and Janelaze stumbled on each other via the Internet.

In 2005, the American brought his then fiancée, to Yuma, Arizona, said a relative of the widow's.

Janelaze's aunt, Grace Songcuya, said the couple had planned to settle here for good. "Thomas realized that he was only getting a pension that's a meager amount in the States so he decided to come here ahead of his wife."

Songcuya said Hunt stayed with her family in Barangay Consolacion for almost a year.

"We treated him like he was a member of the family. He told us, smiling, that he was very satisfied here unlike in Yuma where he had no family," Songcuya said.

While in Cagayan de Oro, Hunt had very little money because he entrusted his monthly social security pension of US\$1 thousand to Janelaze, Farrell said. "He was that in love with her."

Zink, who lives south of Baltimore, Maryland, corroborated this in an e-mail: "Mr. Hunt's (social security pension of) \$1000/month [was] deposited to his American bank account monthly... The wife had debit card and used some of his SS money for her while he was in Cagayan de Oro. She denies this, but he had very little money... and she has also never showed me the bank statements."

Janelaze confirmed to the *YumaSun* that Hunt was receiving a US\$1-thousand monthly pension that was deposited to their joint bank account. Because Hunt was ill, she said, her family members in Cagayan de

Oro were granted access to the account.

Zink said that when Hunt arrived in the city last year, he stayed at a hotel but later moved in with Janelaze's parents because he was running out of cash. Subsequently, he said, Hunt lived with the family of Janelaze's sister "who had a house with dirt floor."

Hunt, according to Zink, became ill when continuous heavy rains battered the city last January. The American was a diabetic and "[he] didn't have enough money for his insulin."

The *YumaSun* quoted Hunt's stepson Ted Hammon of Phoenix as saying that Hunt had brain tumor and suffered from complications due to diabetes.

The American became delirious and was rushed to the Polymedic General Hospital on Velez Street where he was confined since Jan. 29.

Songcuya, Janelaze's aunt, said the hospital bills reached P570,665.95. No payment has been made at presstime and that means no death certificate can be issued. Without a death certificate, Hunt cannot be laid to rest, legally.

Hunt's widow also owes Cosmopolitan some P45 thousand for its services, including a five-day use of its facilities. After five days, Cosmopolitan charges "overstaying customers" on a daily basis.

While in the hospital, very little was done for Hunt until a doctor informed expats in the city that there was an American in Polymedic who had no visitors for a month, according to Zink.

Farrell said the expats met and soon, their wives started raising funds for Hunt. He said the group spent

nearly P100 thousand for medicines.

"They were getting small donations. They were not much... some gave \$50, others gave \$200," said Farrell.

But Janelaze's aunt Grace, who works in a local court, was unhappy with the expats and their wives, said Farrell. He said the women were later accused of using Hunt for unauthorized solicitations, and the women were driven away when they went to Cosmopolitan for the wake.

Songcuya, according to Farrell, threatened to sue the group. He said she also "ordered" one of the expats to see her as if she had the authority.

"They helped a lot and that was what they got," said Farrell.

Now, said Farrell, the widow wants the expats and their wives to shoulder the medical and funeral expenses because "she says she doesn't have money."

Out of the blue, Songcuya said, came the group of Filipino women in Cagayan de Oro who are married to expats.

"I was surprised [and questioned] the motive of this group. Who are they to interfere with our affairs?" asked Songcuya.

She said the group called "Expats' Ladies Charities" solicited funds here and abroad supposedly to pay the hospital bills, and wake and burial expenses.

"But we or Polymedic or Cosmopolitan never received a single centavo from this group," Songcuya said.

She said the group needs to account for the funds.