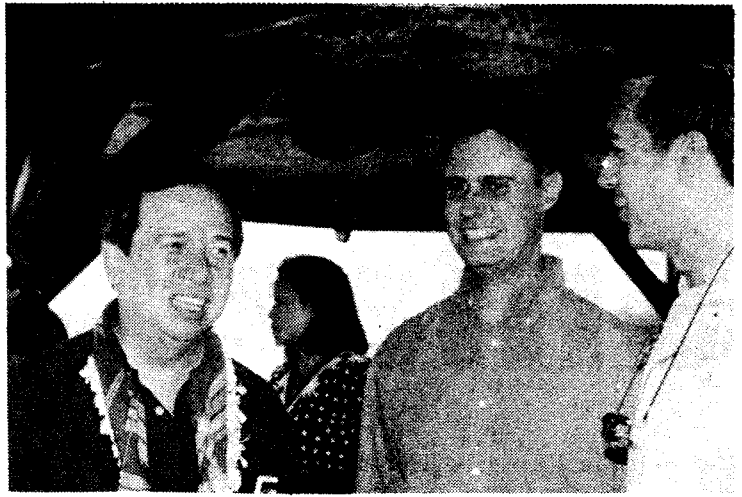


**W** ay 22, 2001. A group of armed men storm The Barceló Pearl Farm Island Resort in the Island Garden City of Samal, killing a mechanic and a guard and destroying some resort property before fleeing — fortunately without hostages. The resort's security force successfully warded off the attackers, but the damage to the resort's image as well as that of Mindanao's has been done.

Ever since that fateful day many have been wondering about the future of Pearl Farm — and of Mindanao tourism in general. Deemed the “benchmark” for Mindanao's tourism industry, many still feel that if Pearl

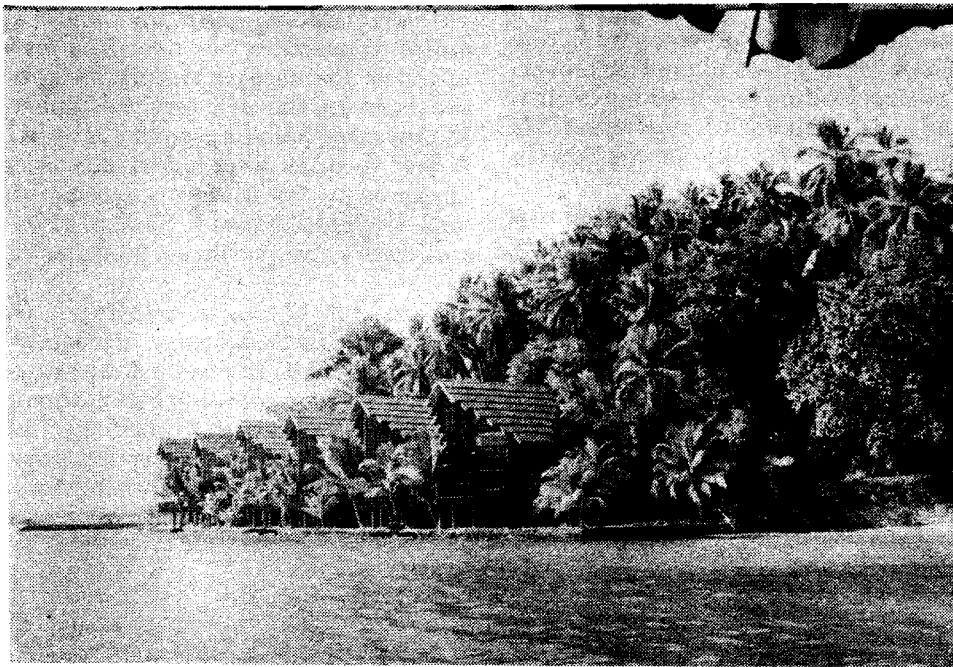
**General manager Alex Groizard (center) and F&B manager Alfredo Roca (right) with visiting Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon at Pearl Farm's Parola.**



Photos courtesy of Guy Longakit

# Restoring Glory

By JON JOAQUIN



**Pearl Farm is deemed the “benchmark” for Mindanao's tourism industry.**

Farm closes shop then there would be no hope for the island as a whole. Indeed, a lesser man would have packed up and left, but Alex Groizard has been in the hotel business long enough to know that such “incidents” have a way of resolving themselves.

Alex is the new general manager of The Barceló Pearl Farm Island Resort, which came under Barceló management only in March this year. In an interview with the *Mirror Magazine* Alex — who is only 30 years old — expressed his desire to build the resort to regain its former glory, something it was on its way to doing until “the incident” happened.

Born in Mallorca, Spain in 1971,

Alex practically grew up in the three hotels his father owned. Even at 5 years old he remembers wanting to be a hotelier, and at 16 he began working with his father during summer. After high school he studied at the Lausanne Hotel School in Switzerland, where the hands on training honed his knowledge of the business in all its aspects.

His first stint as a hotel worker was in the Caribbean, but his heart was in the United States where he wanted to learn to speak English fluently. It would take a few years, however, as he first worked in Thailand in 1994 to 1996; there, however, he met an executive of the Hyatt chain who offered him a

job in Chicago as assistant food and beverage manager.

In 1998 he moved to the Barceló Group and worked first in Spain and then in China. While there he knew he wanted to work in the Philippines since he had heard much about the country, but it was not until this year that he was offered the post as general manager of Pearl Farm; naturally he readily accepted. He started his stint on March 16.

And then “the incident” happened.

Alex said he was actually disappointed that the media — particularly the “national” ones — have been thinking nothing of destroying the country's image by constantly reporting on the Abu Sayyaf and how bad things are in Mindanao even though the truth is far from that. “They (media) are actually helping these bad people by constantly reporting on terrorism,” he said, adding this practice may sell newspapers but will ultimately destroy the country.

In his native Spain, Alex said, the media outlets report on terrorism (courtesy of their own bunch of bandits, the ETA) “for two days” and then quickly turn to more positive things. The reason is simple: Spain depends on tourism for its very survival, and the Spanish media know that destroying the country's image means destroying the country's tourism industry — thereby destroying the very industry that keeps them all alive. Alex said as recently as 30 years ago Spain had been known as a third world country,

 Page 22 please

AUGUST 29, 2001

**MIRROR 11**  
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