

No military rule as Jante takes office as PTAA's 22nd president

The Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) will not be under an ironclad fist administration when incoming President Marlene Jante takes office this month.

According to Jante, who has served in the Philippine Army in the past, there will be a cheerful environment and close working relationship within the association during her two-year term of office.

Picking up the second highest number of votes during the PTAA elections and then getting a huge majority of the votes during the newly installed board of trustees internal voting, Jante said she was both surprised and pleased with the results of the election.

"I did not expect it. Fellow members were telling me to run again for the association to be fun again. So I did. But it never entered my mind that I would become president. I dreamed about it but I did not believe it. But thankfully, people have given their support. They will be behind me in making the association better. It is a team effort all for the love of PTAA," Jante said.

The task at hand

As the new president of the most respected travel and tourism organization in the country, Jante said that leading the association is both a big challenge and an opportunity.

She said representing the PTAA within the country and abroad will be an honor and that she will do her best to concretize her vision for the association.

Jante said her plans for PTAA consists of continuing what her predecessor, Maria Michelle Reyes-Victoria has started and at the same time introducing new concepts.

"Aside from continuing projects like finding quality members, I want us to have a sort of new generation PTAA where we train the younger members of the association on the intricacies of the travel and tourism industry," Jante said.

She also said that this younger batch of members can also assist in handling events, functions, trainings, and seminars that are being done by the association.

"At some point we will all get old, so it would be nice if we could train them, let them help out in events, so we will no longer outsource while at the same time they will learn more about the industry. They already speak the language," Jante said. Her other plans for the association include having more business-to-business meetings during familiarization tours to allow members to expand their contacts in different regions.

"I want to have meetings in all the regions because I want to see more collaboration. It is all about connections. Give and take so we can grow our business," she said.

Jante promised that she will not bring her military background as president of the association because she said what they do is voluntary.

"You are not being paid in what you do for the association. We have no right to raise our voices against any other travel agent. We are all the same. The only difference



is that I am here to lead the association," Jante said.

However, she said that in whatever the direction the association goes, she wants to see everyone give their best effort and that everything they started gets done.

Jante also said that she would foster a welcoming atmosphere within the association as she recalled her experience as a long time member of the PTAA board of trustee.

"There is no need to micromanage and there is no need to try to solve a problem alone," Jante said.

Jante said that she is the association clown in the past especially during familiarization tours.

"That is how I wanted it. It has to be fun while working because I believe that a happy environment will give positive results," she said.

Aside from being the life of the party at events, Jante shared she is also the resident doctor during familiarization tours, going with a complete set of medicine from headaches to rheumatism. The perceptive habit, she developed during younger years having being the eldest of eight siblings.

Before joining the PTAA in 2001, Jante was also a member of the Network of Independent Travel Agencies.

Jante became a board member of the PTAA in 2006 and handled positions in the programs committee and as the assistant secretary general.

Never be deceived

However, one must not be fooled by Jante's bubbly personality and always-positive demeanor.

Before putting up Queenspoint Travel and Tours, Jante took up military training in 1977 and was already well-versed with the daily routine of a soldier, having grown up with a father in a military uniform.

"I was surrounded by military people -- relatives, cousins, and my father. So that was my influence. Being the

eldest, it was also a dream for my father that once he leaves the service, there will be someone from our family to replace him," Jante said.

Waking up at 5:00 in the morning and used to doing household chores, Jante said discipline and hard work was instilled in her early on by her family.

"We were a family of soldiers. You have to wake up at 5 a.m. and you have to start cleaning the backyard and then there are assignments for everyone the rest of the day," she said. Behind the outgoing personality, on-fleek hair, and fashion-forward outfits, Jante shared her tough side going through the training in the Philippine Army School Center in Fort Bonifacio then.

"It was tough. We have to pass all the examinations. We had our firing. So we used armalite and calibre 38 and then our physical activity was judo and karate," she said.

"My first course was actually industrial engineering in Mapua. But it was a five year course so I had to enroll in a two-year course so I can actually join the service and help my parents in sending my siblings to school," Jante said referring to the midwifery course she studied.

The call of the travel and tourism industry

Because of her time in the military, Jante already had the chance to travel around the Philippines. She started Queenspoint Travel and Tours in 1999 after a friend invited her to try her luck in the travel industry.

"I enjoyed it from the start. It is very challenging work especially when trying to build a client base," Jante said. "It was also a way for me to get back in the field and work because I had to stop for 10 years so I can take care of my children."

Jante also said that it was her days in the military that earned her first clients which were Armed Forces of the Philippines personnel.