

VICENTE Y. OROSA

ALAALA SA AKING AMA



My father, Vicente Ylagan Orosa, for whom this story is lovingly dedicated.

Foreword: In the files left by my father Vicente at the his office/library in Horseshoe are several cryptic biographies, born on such and such a date, educated at certain institutions, career progression in the civil service, some personal data, numerous awards, correspondence, scores of official photographs and newspaper articles, etc. (My mother Rosario did all the compilation.) But the “biographies” were probably written by one of dad’s government bureaucrats. They looked more like a curriculum vitae than anything else, complete with salary history. None of them really provide an insight to the essence of my dad Vicente. Since he didn’t keep a diary or journal or write his biography or talk much about his personal experience, it is up to us to garner from other accounts or simply speculate just what it is that made Vicente Y. Orosa tick. Dad did well in one of his subjects at the University of Illinois, getting a 92 in 19th century prose, so I assume he could’ve written if he so desired. There are lots of pictures of him delivering speeches so he must not have lacked for spoken words either.

For a very long time I, and other family members used the human capital my dad accumulated. His name would not bring awe or fear but respect, smiles, affection. There were many successful Orosas during the family’s halcyon days of the 1950’s, including my dad’s siblings and some of my cousins. But if one introduced himself as an Orosa, one of the very first questions would be – are you related to Mr. Vicente Y. Orosa? Sometimes it was Don Vicente. Very seldom were you asked if you were related to some other Orosa, it was mostly Vicente. And the result would be advantageous and you would be accorded more courtesy and hospitality. One of my former classmates, now retired in New Jersey, always tells me that my father gave him his very first job and start in life. He never fails although I’ve already heard it a dozen times. That’s OK, he then buys me dinner during the rare times we have been able to visit. A story was told to me by a first cousin, that his wife was traveling with some of her friends some distance outside of Manila. It seems their car broke down and they had nowhere to turn or stay. She mentioned that she was an Orosa and instantly they were rendered assistance. It turns out that the people helping her knew my father from their Masonic affiliation. There are countless stories. How did he get to this station in life?

So, this is an attempt to retrace his life and get an insight into the man I called “daddy.” A

few of the items in this tome are also in my Reminiscences I so please pardon the redundancy. At other times I may ask the reader to refer back to the same Reminiscences.

The Beginnings, Ancestral Home:

He was born in Taal, Batangas on Oct. 5, 1889, the second child and first son of Simplicio Agoncillo Orosa and Juliana de Castro Ylagan. Simplicio's parents were Guillermo Orosa and



Dad's parents, Simplicio Orosa and Juliana Ylagan

Hilaria Agoncillo while Juliana's parents were Pedro Ylagan and Micaela de Castro. The baptismal certificate, handwritten by the local friar, referred to everyone as "Indios." Baptismal certificates classified babies as "Indios," "Chinos (Chinese)," or in the case of my mother's parents, "mestizos" or mixed blood. There are many stories about Simplicio written by dad's younger brother Dr. Sixto, so we won't delve into that. Sometime before or around the turn of the century, Simplicio moved his family from Taal to Bauan, perhaps 25 kilometers away. The first five children (Simplicia, Vicente, Sixto, Maria, Felisa) were born in

Taal and the last three boys (Jose, Nicolas, Rafael,) were born in Bauan. At one time I was told that the family moved to escape the ravages of Taal volcano, but I checked the records and the big eruption of Taal occurred in 1911. It was a horrific eruption, akin to the Mt. Pinatubo eruption of 1991. But Taal was dormant in the years around 1900. It is possible that Simplicio moved as a result of the Filipino-American War. The Americans decided to stay after the battle of Manila Bay in May of 1898, even after General Emilio Aguinaldo had proclaimed the First Philippine Republic. (General Aguinaldo's wife was Maria Agoncillo, a niece of Guillermo's wife Hilaria Agoncillo.) Batangas must've been the location of some furious fighting since the last Filipino unit to surrender to the Americans was under the command of General Miguel Malvar, a Batangueño. During the Filipino-American war, Filipinos suffered casualties at a 10 to 1 ratio, ten Filipinos killed for every American. But we really don't know for certain what made Simplicio move.

Whatever the reason was, Bauan was to be ancestral home of the Orosas until the late 1980's with the passing of my youngest uncle Rafael or Tio Paito. Today none of the descendants of Simplicio and Juliana live in Bauan. The old home is decrepit and has been unoccupied for at least a decade. The records show that dad first went to a "private Spanish school." If I were to guess, this would've been the Taal parochial school run by friars since he would have started school around 1896. This was followed by the regular public schools. I first thought that my dad couldn't have been that proficient in English when he went to the United States in 1906. But looking at some old school records, it shows that the administrators of the schools in Batangas were all Americans. The elementary school principal was an H.C. Theobald. The principal at the Division of Batangas High School was L. Fuller and the Division Superintendent for all schools was Harrison or Hammond (?) Buck. These names come from signatures of the high school certificate earned by my dad so I'm not 100% certain of the names and spelling. The Americans had to sign the certificate that was necessary to move students up the grades. English must've been one of the subjects; the certificates were all in English. So that's how dad got to be trilingual at an early age, he could switch from Tagalog to English to Spanish without missing a beat. I'm getting ahead, but he never lost his fondness for Spanish and his favorite cuss words were all in Spanish.



The Orosa ancestral home in Aplaya, Bauan. The property has been in Orosa hands for almost 100 years but it sits empty today..

These education administrators were perhaps part of the Thomasites group that came to the

Philippines immediately after the cessation of hostilities in 1901. A steam ship called the Thomas came to Manila loaded with 500 or so American teachers, the first batch of idealistic young Americans that would spread throughout the archipelago, Batangas included. They would become teachers to the Filipinos and set up the first system of universal education, something the Spanish colonizers never attempted nor cared to do. Only a few elite got the education. The young Americans were called Thomasites and in another year, their numbers would double. Come to think of it, they were sixty years ahead of President John Kennedy's much more publicized Peace Corps.

We have no record or anyone's recollection of the early years of the Orosa family of Bauan, except the account given by Sixto, which only talked about him and Simplicio. I imagine my dad walking to school, going home, studying and maybe helping out at the store that Simplicio and Juliana ran to support their family. They had an "almacen" or variety store. A couple of accounts from outside the family used the word almacen instead of sari-sari. Maybe sari-sari wasn't yet popularized, just like almacen is no longer used today. But an almacen was a cut above the three-meter square stores that are ubiquitous to this day. They were described more as department stores. Apparently they did well and it might well have been Juliana that had a business streak, which will be borne out later. The house in Bauan is actually in the Aplaya district and only a short walk from the beach. Playa is Spanish for beach and a playa means to the beach, as in "vamos a playa." Maybe the kids did a lot of swimming, watched the fishermen or went fishing themselves. Dad and his brother Sixto were less than a couple of years apart and they could have been doing the usual boy activities. Aplaya is on Batangas Bay and immediately south of the Bay is the large island of Mindoro. A branch of the Orosas from the Basilio side (brother of Guillermo,) cousins to Simplicio, migrated to Mindoro from Taal. Could the family have exchanged visits? I remember going on Batangas Bay once and recall the dolphins following the boat. But there is nothing to indicate that my dad led anything but a mundane boyhood. This all changed in 1906.

The Pensionado:

The American administrators were vastly different from the English, French, Dutch, Belgian and German colonizers of Africa, the Americas and Asia. And of course nothing like the Spaniards who brutalized the Indians of the Americas, decimating the native population. (They actually treated us a lot better.) Americans went all out for universal education and were laying the foundation for democracy and eventual turning over of the keys to the Filipinos. (The Europeans, on the other hand, had to be displaced at the point of a gun, by wars of national liberation, inflicting unspeakable damage on the locals, and then only left their colonies grudgingly. Isn't it amazing that these same former European colonizers are lecturing the world about democracy and setting up tribunals? I would like to have these tribunals retroactive, to say 1750!) An American author, Stanley Karnow said America wanted to remake the Filipinos "In Our Image," the title of his book.

First started in 1903, a nationwide examination was given to high school seniors all around the country to pick the best and the brightest of Filipino boys. Sorry girls, but there was only one young woman chosen whose record I could find but I'm sure there were more. It would've been similar to an SAT or ACT test, modified for Filipinos. For the year 1906, supposedly only six were chosen from around the country. One of the six was my dad, the only one from the province of Batangas. The population of the country was estimated to be around six million at the time so my dad and his fellow "topnotchers" were one in a million literally. (Some web sites put the figure of pensionados in the hundred or so range during this period but there is no year-to-year census that I have been able to find.)

The winners were to be called pensionados and the American government would send them to schools around the United States to complete their education. The pensionados had full scholarships for the entire time they were in school including travel expenses to and from the Philippines. It is a long way from Batangas to Illinois where dad went. After completion of their studies the pensionados would return to the Philippines to work as civil servants. But my dad was only sixteen and hadn't completely finished his high school, at least not by American standards. But he had the moxie to take the test or maybe he was recommended by the American principal Mr. Fuller to take the exam. If the examination had been similar to a SAT, I bet dad would have scored at least 1500 out of 1600 and almost aced the math part. So that is the first indication of how different Vicente was from the others, with a God given talent and inspiration from his parents.

The appointment as a pensionado must've been very prestigious. The recipient, by definition a teenaged boy or the rare girl, received a letter signed by the Governor-General (GG) of the Philippines. The GG was the highest-ranking administrator, appointed by the President of the United States. There was no Commonwealth of the Philippines yet so the GG didn't have to work with a Filipino counterpart. The GG was in charge of an archipelago of 7,000 islands stretching north south for a thousand miles populated by six million or so Malay-Indo people who spoke 80 different languages and dialects. The pensionado appointment was renewed on an annual basis. We only have a copy of one of dad's appointment letter, signed by the then GG, W. Cameron Forbes, and attested to by the Secretary of Public Instruction, Lewton (?) W. Gilbert. When he received his first appointment in 1906 the Governor General was Henry Ide but unfortunately we don't have a copy of that appointment, a milestone in dad's life.

Since I presently live in the state of Ohio, it bears mentioning that the first civilian GG was William Howard Taft, the great grandfather of our present Governor Robert "Bob" Taft. During my dad's days in Cincinnati and Illinois, William Howard Taft had by then returned to the US to become the 27th President. Mr. Taft coined the term "my little brown brothers." Since he weighed over 300 pounds, double that of the average Filipino male, the term would have been physically appropriate. He had his picture taken astride a carabao and the poor beast looked like he was ready to collapse. But it was under William Howard Taft that the pensionado program was initiated. Bet you our governor Bob Taft doesn't know that. Thought you would enjoy all that information.

Cincinnati:

Before going off to universities, the pensionados, my father among them, were sent to prep schools. So he was off to Cincinnati, Ohio and the Cincinnati Technical School (CTS.) Picture a sixteen-year-old Filipino from a small town away from the "big city" of Manila. Aplaya was no more than a barrio. He must've taken a "carromata" or carriage from Bauan to Manila to the dock area where the world girding steamers would be docked. He would board, along with the other pensionados of 1906, and the ship would steam for perhaps Hong Kong, Tokyo, Hawaii and finally San Francisco. From the docks of San Francisco, they would transfer to the Union Terminal for the long train ride to the Midwest. Of course it could have been Seattle, one of these days I'll find out. Eventually, after several train transfers, he would make his final rail leg from St. Louis to Cincinnati. Why from St. Louis? I asked the Cincinnati railroad club which has their clubhouse at Cincinnati's Union Terminal and the lady president told me the trains going to Cincinnati during that period came from St. Louis. I would have thought Chicago, but she's the expert. I'm still thinking differently, since there was an Illinois Central line that went from Chicago all the way to New Orleans. A branch left the main line south of Chicago and went

southeast to Cincinnati via Indianapolis. The final leg in Cincinnati was from the Union Terminal to the Technical School area, only a few kilometers away. Today the Union Terminal is a museum with many attractions, where you can glean a picture of the past through the Cincinnati Historical Society. There are still railroad tracks there but they are only used sparingly by an Amtrak interstate passenger train.

A curator at the Historical Society, Ms. Laura Chace, helped me find information about the CTS. This was a prep school established to prepare boys for entry into universities for further studies, mostly in engineering, but with a small percentage going into medicine and law. So, my dad was a prep school boy! Some of the CTS graduates went no further, going straight into the manufacturing industries. The curriculum included industrial arts and students learned to use all manners of machine tools, building the bookcases for their library and working steam engines, so they would be highly valued based on this experience. Ms. Chace provided me with an article that showed old pictures of the boys in suits, yes suits, seated stiffly facing their instructor, or on drafting boards and in a machine shop. At the shops they still had their ties but wore aprons. They sure had a dress code. The CTS was in existence for only about twenty-five years, having been merged into the University of Cincinnati (UC) by the start of WW I. Ms. Chace then referred me to the UC archives library where a librarian found some old programs from my dad's days. He was on the "decorating committee" for a stage play in Feb. of 1907. CTS spelled his name Vincente. Thank you Ms. Chace, Historical Society and UC library for your help. Unfortunately I could not find any other mention of his name at CTS.



CTS boys in shop class. They kept their long sleeved white shirts on.

The first batch of Filipinos came to CTS in 1904 and I found the following names listed – Bernardo Agana, Jose Arboleda, Sebastian Formoso, Hernando Hipolito, Rufus Martinez and Angel Lopez. There you are, the first fabulous six that went to Cincinnati Technical School! Unfortunately, I have no names from dad's entering CTS class of 1906.

The pensionados were administered by the War Department in Washington DC. That seems strange from the prism of 100 years but there was no Department of Education then. There was an official in the War Department whose title was Superintendent of Filipino Students (SFS.) He corresponded regularly with the students and I have a stack of letters from the SFS to my dad from 1906 to 1907. One of the letters that dad received from the SFS gave his address as 114 Lyon St., Corryville. My sister Charito came to visit shortly after I was transferred by Procter and Gamble to Cincinnati in 1995 and she wanted to know where Corryville was, which of course I didn't know. It turns out to be a district of Cincinnati, in the UC area. So we had to look for 114 Lyon. And we found the address. The property was a three story wooden frame house and as I walked towards the front door, a young man came out. I asked who the owners were and he said they didn't reside there, that he was a boarder. 114 Lyon St. is still a boarding house occupied by students now going to the University of Cincinnati, whose campus took up much of the surrounding area. It seems that this was the same house that my father stayed in! And the house is still occupied by students! God had a plan in getting me to work for Procter & Gamble and then having the company transfer me to Cincinnati to walk where my father once walked. It was an awesome experience finding 114 Lyon St. And there is a further connection. Procter and Gamble was one of the benefactors who provided initial funding for the Cincinnati



The boarding-house at 114 Lyon where Dad stayed during the 1906-07 school year. Today, it still serves students at the Univ. of Cincinnati.

nati Technical School. To this day, P & G is a major source of support for education and the community in Cincinnati and elsewhere.

While at Cincinnati, dad's father Simplicio sent a letter (see appendix) dated July 26, 1907. This was a reply to my dad's letter of June 17 telling his parents that he had completed work in Cincinnati and was moving on to Illinois. From the dates, letters then took five weeks to traverse the 10,000 miles via rail and ship. During my last visit to Manila in early 2002, I sent post-cards to my grandkids and some cards took four weeks to arrive. So in almost 100 years, with jet planes replacing steamships and railcars, we have improved mail by exactly one week! I suppose that is progress.

Letter from Simplicio:

If any writing by my dad Vicente is rare, anything from his father Simplicio is rarer still. This is the only piece of writing of Simplicio that I have, just like the one and only picture that is now in the web page. The language of my grandfather's letter is different from the Tagalog of today. Of course there were no English words, but he used Spanish greetings, "a mi hijo" or to my son, "querido" for dear and ended with "tu padre" or your father. The letter must've been forwarded to Illinois since by the date Simplicio wrote the letter dad had already left Cincinnati.

The letter is instructive of the relationship between parents and children 100 years ago. That is another clue as to how the eight Orosa siblings turned out so well. Simplicio implored his son to "stay away from anything that would detract from your studies," "do not succumb to the temptation of fleeting pleasures," "remember that the greater the difficulty the greater the reward," and finally "leave it to God to grant our wishes." And in a beautiful Filipino custom that is still in practice today and hopefully forever, "give gifts as a token to those who have helped you." Dad's mom was going to send him finely embroidered napkins for this purpose. I remember my mother giving me nice hankies to pass on to friends sixty years later! And finally Simplicio gives his son a blessing and thanks the Lord. He used a phrase that I heard frequently as a kid but haven't heard lately – that we are fine thru the mercy of God (sa awa ng Dios.) Now the phrases in quotation marks are my translation but you are welcome to come up with your own. I must admit that I had a little difficulty with the archaic Tagalog.

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois:

From July of 1907 to early June of 1911, this campus town was my dad's home. The campus had a Cosmopolitan Club, which housed "foreign" students. He was admitted to the Cosmopolitan Club on Nov. 16, 1907. The Cosmopolitan Club was the American branch of the "Corda Fratres Federation Internationale des Etudiants." It is obviously of French origin but my dad never mentioned why he joined. Maybe the fraternities would not accept foreign students. The photograph at right shows my dad among 17 well-dressed young men. There appears to be two other Orientals besides dad, there were two that looked Indian or Middle Eastern and the rest were Caucasian, probably European.



In front of the Cosmopolitan Club. The sign is barely legible on the door. Dad is the second from the left, back row.

I have dad's full transcripts, which the university was kind enough to provide at my request. He must've had favorite and not so favorite subjects since the grades show quite a range. He got 95 in advanced algebra, 92 in prose, 89 in bacteriology, 86 in surveying, and 85 in steam engines. In the summer of 1910, dad went to the University of Wisconsin* to take a summer

course in meteorology and he received an 85. The University had the nerve to make him take Spanish composition and he received a 94 grade. I guess dad didn't feel up to the challenge of taking German. ☺ Apparently he did not like organic synthesis (that was one of my favorites in my chemical engineering days!) and bridge investigation, he got 70 in both of them. 70 was considered the passing grade at the time, 69 and you would have had to repeat the course. Who wants to make a living inspecting bridges anyway? (I remember having a similar experience with my grades at San Beda, excellent in math and sciences but on the very edge of having to repeat in religion.)

*Both the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin are state universities and today each has a campus with student populations of upwards of 45,000. UW is located in Madison, WI, 500 kilometers north from Champaign-Urbana. That trip must've taken dad a full day then, maybe even an overnight on the railroad.



University of Illinois graduation picture, June 1911. He received a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering

The War Department shepherded all the young Filipino men during the life of the pensionado program. They were the surrogate dorm counselors, even fathers perhaps, in spite of the distance between Washington and the U of I campus. But bureaucrats are bureaucrats, whether in 1909 or 1999. SFS had to approve even the smallest expenses. That would have unnerved me. One doctor's bill was rejected, implying that

dad should've known that he was going to get sick. That was in 1910 and the physician bill was \$2.00. Another time, dad wanted an extra pair of trousers during the spring of 1909, that wasn't approved either. Seguro ang iniisip nila kung may punit o butas, tahiin mo na lang. Apparently dad barraged the SFS with letters since they were either telling him no, you have already spent your allowance or sure, the check is in the mail. Wish I had his letters to the SFS. Even the smallest expenses had to be approved, like the \$1.50 rental for a cap and gown at graduation. An SFS named Edmund Enright was pretty strict but his successor George Briggs seemed less bureaucratic. Mr. Enright even questioned a couple of bills where item A was \$3 and item B was \$1, but some other pensionado had reversed it, \$3 for B and \$1 for A. Who cares, the total is still \$4. But the SFS wrote dad promptly, very politely and always addressed him as "my dear Orosa."

The Way Home:

To get to New York City, dad's first stopover was in Chicago, more than 200 kilometers to the north of Champaign-Urbana. He was told to contact a fellow Filipino named Conrado Benitez, who would help arrange for a place to stay. Benitez was one of the other pensionados** and they were both born in the same year, 1889. However, Benitez had just arrived in Chicago to take up graduate studies at the University of Chicago. (See paragraph on The Other Pensionados.)

Dad had requested the War Department to steam home by way of Europe and it was readily granted. It was dad's grand tour and he specially wanted to visit Spain. With his fluency in Spanish he would've been right at home in Spain, maybe meet some Spanish veterans pining for a return to the Islas Filipinas. He went on a Spanish steamer owned by a Barcelona company.

I am assuming that in going to the US in 1906, he went the Pacific route. By returning via the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, he would then have gone around the world with numerous stops along the way. I believe he would have been the first Orosa to do so.

After being out of the Philippines for five years, dad left New York City for Manila July 6, 1911, on board the s/s Montevideo. He was allowed 55 kilos of luggage from five years accumulation. He would not be back at the U of I campus for another 48 years to receive the award for Distinguished Alumnus. Mr. Briggs indicated in one of his letters that there were three other pensionados that should be joining dad – Federico Barrera, Daniel de la Paz and Adriano Cruz. We may have had one of the earliest Filipino TNT's (tago ng tago or always hiding, a humorous term used for illegal Filipinos) then. In a subsequent letter, Mr. Briggs wanted to know where Adriano Cruz was, missing in action. Perhaps young Adriano was just having too much fun in New York City and was late checking in with Mr. Briggs, but made it to the Montevideo later. In Barcelona dad stayed at the Hotel Peninsular, paying 12.50 pesetas for daily room and meals. Nothing else is known about his return trip or where the Montevideo made stops. Did the Montevideo dock in Lisbon, Naples, Alexandria Egypt (before entering the Suez Canal,) or Mumbai (Bombay?) What about Singapore, although it was probably just a mosquito infested island in 1911. I'm sure these 21 or 22 year-old Filipinos would want to see the sights wherever they went. And of course boys will be boys, right?

I make light of the War Department bureaucracy in scrutinizing all of dad's expenses. But factoring inflation in the United States from 1906 to the present, I estimate that a minimum of \$50,000 in today's dollars was spent by the American government, e.g. the American people, to pay for my dad's education during the five years he spent in Cincinnati and Champaign-Urbana. But it was actually worth more because back then there was no income tax, social security tax, sales tax, state tax, city tax, etc. Thank you Uncle Sam, I mean American taxpayer! Now I won't feel so bad paying all those taxes during my working years. Dear IRS, here is your check and pound of flesh, I'm returning the favor my dad received.

The American administrators were no nonsense. Dad carried with him instructions that upon arrival in Manila he was to report to the Director of Civil Service for immediate assignment. The office was on Calle Palacio and Victoria, both names are unfamiliar to me. I would think he would first be allowed to visit his family in Aplaya, whom he hadn't seen in five years. But I'm sure dad returned to his beloved "inang" (mother) before going out on his first assignment. The reason is that during his absence dad's own father passed away prematurely in 1910 at only age 45, leaving Juliana behind with eight children only two of whom were out of their teens. Those two were the eldest Simplicia, and my dad. Rafael the youngest was only seven years old.

The Young Civil Servant Engineer:

His first assignment was as a sanitary engineer in Manila, lasting only a year. Don't know what sanitary means, maybe he was in the sewer department. ☺ Being in Manila would at least lessen the culture shock after living in a developed country for five years where you could now travel across the North American continent on a train. But the assignment didn't last long. The country had to be surveyed, roads laid out, bridges built. Later in life he proudly pointed out to me the areas he surveyed and built roads for – from Cavite south of Manila to Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Zambales and all the way north to Baguio in the Mountain Province.

I'm including a map in the appendix tracing his assignments. From Manila, he was sent to Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija where he would remain for a couple of years, but made frequent forays to the province of Zambales. I remember my mother telling me about dad contracting malaria sometime during his service. He had been traveling from one province to another. One small town to another, surveying, supervising road and bridge construction and it was pretty much

raw frontier in the 1910's, 1920's and 1930's. Even today, some regions are malaria prone. If you donate blood in Cincinnati you are asked if you've traveled outside the US. Of course I always answer Philippines and they want to know exactly where. The blood bank people instantly look at a map where certain places are taboo and you are automatically disqualified from donating due to potential malaria exposure if you were in these places. And that is today! Picture 70 and 80 years ago, when there was no pesticide. I don't imagine they had quinine yet and antibiotics were twenty years away. Sometimes dad traveled on horseback to reach his destination and during his illness my mom said she had doubts about his making it. I guess acute malaria is terrible, but dad survived it. He obviously did, to 89 no less!

He was very highly valued. Other districts requested his services and his supervising administrators would only allow him to be gone so long. A letter from the Chief Constructing Engineer Mr. Newhouse (later Director of Public Works,) wanted his temporary assignment to Zambales province limited to two months since "Mr. Orosa's services are needed in Nueva Ecija." He



Rosario Venzon Escobar of Iba, in the center, the object of dad's affections. Picture is from 1916 when she was 19 years old.

must've known this and tried to leverage his situation, asking for more raises even though he was progressing steadily through the engineering ranks. I think he had an ulterior motive, which we'll get into shortly. He was politely told that the civil service rules couldn't allow it but he could take the examination for the next level. Mr. Newhouse, now the Director of Public Works, (a future job for dad) encouraged him in a January 1918 letter to take the test, calling his service "very satisfactory" and commending his loyalty "I appreciate your services to the Bureau." Ask Vicente Y. Orosa to take an examination? As we say in Tagalog – kayang-kaya yaan meaning no problem. He readily passed the next civil service test and got the raise. Now, this was in 1918 when he would've been courting and winning, twenty year-old lass from Iba Zambales named Rosario Venzon Escobar, the second daughter of a landed mestizo couple named Juan Escobar and Teresa Venzon. Rosario was the beauty of Iba, the belle of the ball. I found a postcard written to her by a suitor who was dressed in a military uniform, he had a handle bar mustache, boots the works. If I were my dad, that postcard and picture would be long gone. My mother told me that at one time she even had an American suitor. I assume the Yank would be one of the civilians posted in Iba, maybe a teacher. I didn't think to ask mom.

Before marrying his sweetheart from Iba, dad returned to Bauan to tell his mother and the rest of the family about his plans. So dad's younger sister Felisa (Tia Feling) went from Bauan to Iba to meet the future bride. Now, there was no expressway, train or anything and this kind of trip wasn't easy in 1918. Tia Feling went by boat. I looked at the map and the distance is over 200 kilometers (130 miles) along the China Sea and she may have had to transfer somewhere. Whether she went on her own or on the behest of their mother who was then 55 years old, we don't know. I bet my Lola said – check this lady out. Tignan mo nga kung anong uri ng babae ito at ang kanyang kamag-anak. Tia Feling reported back favorably on her beauty and her family. Then as now, it is not just the bride or groom themselves that matter but whether they come from a "good family."

When the raise was granted on Sept. 16, 1918 he had been married for four months and little Augusto was already on the way. Of course they didn't know it was going to be a boy. My mom and dad married on June 1, 1918. He received two civil service promotions that year. From March 1, 1918 to Sept. 1, his salary went from 2,000 pesos annually to 3,200 pesos, an increase of 60%! I am sure my mother Rosario gave him the extra nudge – if your services are

so valuable, and they are sending you all over the place, you should tell your American bosses to give you more money! I need furnishings for our home help isn't cheap, have you looked at the price of groceries at the palengke, we need baby clothes, you need a new suit, we have to make this place presentable when your mother visits, etc. etc. Those nice letters from Mr. Newhouse saying "I will do all in my power to secure further recognition for the efficient services you have rendered" don't buy anything! Guys, do those words sound familiar? ☺

The American administrators of the colonial era were very, very polite and always addressed my twenty something dad as sir. But maybe they were fellow Illini, graduates of the U. of Illinois or one of the Midwestern Big Ten schools. Filipinos were also taking over the reins at various levels in the Governor General's administration. The last salary raise to 3,000 pesos had to be signed by the Filipino Secretary of Commerce and Communications, Dionisio Jakosalem. Dad's career curve was beginning to take off.

3,000 pesos annually was then equivalent to \$1,500 at the 1918 exchange rate. I checked the US family income during 1918, in the waning days of World War I, and it was \$1,100. So this 28 year-old civil engineer was making more than the average American. And he was living in a rural area in the Philippines where the cost of living would have been lower. To make an analogy, the average family income in the US today is around \$40,000. Making this kind of salary in the Philippines would mean doing extremely well. At least one thing is evident the civil servants were well taken care of by the American administration. So that's another clue. My dad and his generation always spoke with nostalgia about "peacetime" or the days preceding World War II. Government ran efficiently, people were honest, crime was almost non-existent, they said. Peacetime was the best of times. Even my brother Toto said that several times. They didn't mind the presence of an American Governor General, who by the 1930's was less involved since we had become a Commonwealth with our own President (Quezon.) Filipinos were pretty much running their own affairs.



The young civil servant, taken in 1920's?

Assignments took him from Manila to Cabanatuan to Zambales. He stayed three years in Cabanatuan and three years in Zambales. But even before the birth of their first child, dad was now needed in another province. This appears to me as an American trait, whether it is the armed forces, government or corporations. The Yanks like to transfer managers and technical people around. Procter & Gamble does that too and I was transferred from Tennessee to Cincinnati, for which I am grateful. Dad was sent to Cavite, a province that borders his home province of Batangas and has a brief coastline along Manila Bay. (There was an American naval base called Sangley Point in Cavite when I was growing up but was closed.) Going from Zambales to Cavite would not have been an easy transfer. Mom was heavy with child, the roads were poor and with no rest stops. I imagine she had to take care of the household goods too. It is important to know that mom is a meticulous person, a stickler for cleanliness and organization. One story passed on was that one of the first things she did after marriage was throw out my dad's household wares and old clothes. They were all dirty, smelly, etc. Of course Val did the same thing for me al-



Mom & Dad with Vicente Jr., Augusto and Angelina around 1928. The young woman on the right is mom's sister Soledad. She still lives in Cabanatuan at age 94.

most fifty years later. My brother Augusto was born in Cavite. But before Augusto was out of diapers, dad was needed again in Cabanatuan. Now, you would have thought that the administrators could have kept him in Cabanatuan in the first place and avoided three transfers. That would be too simple and he would not have met my mother. Cavite would have been an ideal assignment, being in close proximity to Bauan. They could wrap up their new baby and visit Lola on weekends. Manila was nearby also. But duty calls elsewhere.

Our family stayed in Cabanatuan for ten years. My sister Angelina and brother Vicente Jr. were born there. It must have been an idyllic time. Staying in one location for a change. He had been moved four times in eight years. Mom and dad became well established socially, dad was Master of the Masonic Lodge. They were friends with the judge and governor. They even bought 70 acres of rice farmland, in a province that is sometimes referred to as the breadbasket of the Philippines. Dad received a commendation from Governor General Leonard Wood (no doubt from provincial official recommendation.) Mr. Wood was GG from 1921 to 1927. But of course it is time to move on again.

He was transferred closer to Manila, to Malolos in the province of Bulacan. There is one small benefit to the locations of his assignments. Except for Zambales, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Cavite and of course Manila are all Tagalog speaking. The language of Zambales is Sambali, which is of course my mother's language. Maybe dad needed a translator and she came along. I just love to speculate. ☺ They stayed in Malolos for several years and two daughters were born there, Alicia and Rosario but Alicia did not survive her first year. These were the early thirties and the world was in a deep depression. But I don't recall any stories about difficult times. Those were to come later. We must have been somewhat insulated from the 25% unemployment in the United States and the rest of the world. In Malolos, mom and dad rented a house that belonged to Don Jose Cojuangco, the father of Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, who became President in 1986. Like in Cabanatuan, they mingled with the prominent. Among them was Governor Jose Padilla Sr., whom my mother once described as the most debonair good looking Filipino she had ever met. Gov. Padilla's granddaughter Joena Padilla married my parents grandson Enrico Velez.

Manila at last:

In 1936, dad was transferred to Manila where he would spend the rest of his life and career. And of course I was born in Manila. So the five of us siblings were born in four different provinces. The period before 1941 was peacetime, and any adult who lived in that era would swear that it was Camelot. Mom and dad bought a two-story house not far from the Presidential Palace of Malacañan. If you didn't have a car, and most people didn't, there was an efficient streetcar system that ran through the city. (Unfortunately the streetcar system was not rebuilt after WWII but was replaced with the ubiquitous jeepney.)



The new home on Aviles. Notice the fender of the car on the lower left corner. I was born in this house in 1939. First picture is from 1936, the second about 25 years later, the trees have grown! Tree on left is mango and on the right a caimito or star apple.

The Pasig River that ran through Manila was clean and the boulevard (named Dewey but now Roxas) that ran along Manila Bay was lined with palm and coconut. The sunset was claimed to be the most beautiful in the world, which was later given a technical explanation. We kick up enough dust and dirt to filter the sun to give it that glorious orange red color. Sorry but it is the

dirt. Wonder where the name Tagalog comes from? It is actually a merger of two words. Most people lived near the river, which provided easy transportation, source of food, water, etc. So the people were “taga-ilog” or from the river, thus Tagalog.

The winds of war were blowing everywhere. Spain was in a bloody civil war and the German Nazi air force practiced bombing civilians in the town of Guernica. The Japanese were marching through China and had already carried out that infamous operation in Nanking. But President Quezon’s compadre General Douglas MacArthur, ensconced in the penthouse of the Manila Hotel, was in charge of the Philippine Army. He was given the title of Field Marshal. Everyone was confident. It couldn’t happen here, but we’re ready. The country and its leadership were in for a rude shock as in Dec. 7, 1941.

Rather than repeating or copying some of the sections, I refer you to the first few pages of my Reminiscence I that talks about the war years and post liberation.

In the Service of Presidents:



With Pres. Emilio Aguinaldo, who proclaimed the Philippine Republic on June 12, 1898

McArthur returned as promised, but to a devastated country. Dad was now 56 years old with 35 years of government service and increasing levels of responsibility. But he was yet to reach his peak. The President at Independence on July 4, 1946 (later changed to June 12 to recognize the Philippine Republic proclaimed by General Emilio Aguinaldo) was Manuel Roxas. Roxas appointed my dad Undersecretary of the Department of Public Works and Communications (DPWC.) The name of the department is misleading. To make an analogy with the US Federal system, the DPWC includes the Postal Service, the FCC (that’s the communications,) the



On Daddy’s left, Pres. Sergio Osmena Sr. Osmena became President after Quezon died. He waded ashore with McArthur in Leyte in Oct. 1944. Sergio Jr. is on the right.

Federal highway system and parts of the Department of the Interior. The DPWC was responsible for building dams and flood control projects as well. Our car got a new license plate, #12, for undersecretaries. The perks got better.

Manuel Roxas died in office and was succeeded by Elpidio Quirino. I remember the days of Roxas. Living in close proximity to Malacanan Palace, we could go into the grounds and run around. There were peacocks running around and we loved to see the big males spreading their wings and tail feathers. The guards never gave us a second glance. Try that today.

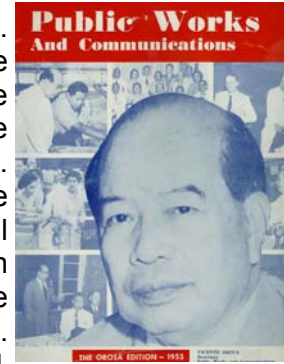
Without inhibition from the watchful eyes of the Americans during the Commonwealth period, Philippine politics was getting down and dirty. But dad stayed above the fray, doing the job he always did, with integrity, a faithful civil servant. During the 1953 elections, a bloody one even by Philippine standards, Quirino was ousted by Congressman Ramon Magsaysay of Zambales. Dad’s career would take another step up.



On the job with Pres. Ramon “Monching” Magsaysay, the most popular President ever.

Quirino belonged to the Liberal party and Magsaysay to the Nacionalistas and it was customary that officials at dad’s level submit their resignations with every new administration. Besides, by the time Magsaysay assumed office, dad was already 64. He could

have retired. Are you kidding? He would work for another twenty years. Magsaysay did not accept his resignation and instead appointed him the job of Secretary of the DPWC. Our license plate got bumped to #6. More perks too. He was entitled to have bodyguards. Dad waved them off – he didn't want to worry about a couple of armed guys following him around. Being the kind of people they were, my parents would always worry – are those guys comfortable and have they eaten yet? I joke that the national slogan of the Philippines should be “kumain ka na ba” or have you eaten yet? That's the first question asked even today. One nice perk was the use of a vacation mansion in Baguio. It was a very large two-story house. I'm sure they dated back to the Commonwealth era. Every cabinet official was entitled to one. I suppose they were the Philippine equivalent of the Russian dacha. Baguio was the summer capital, one mile up in Mountain Province. The Americans had an R & R camp nearby called Camp John Hay (since returned to the Filipinos.) When the heat in Manila got oppressive, the top level of the government retreated to Baguio. The President had the largest place called Mansion



A special issue to highlight my dad's tenure at DPWC

House. I don't know if the mansions are still available today, the number of cabinet positions has proliferated and don't forget the generals. Staying in Baguio during the mid 1950's was a nice way to spend the summer for us kids.



Dad talking while Pres. Carlos Garcia sits on the right.

As if being Secretary of DPWC wasn't enough, Magsaysay appointed him Chairman and General Manager of the People's Homesite and Housing Corporation (PHHC) or the Philippine equivalent of HUD. As he turned 65 and 66, dad held two cabinet level jobs simultaneously. And here I am, retiring at 61. Finally, he relinquished the DPWC spot and concentrated on PHHC from 1955 to 1958.

Departure and Recognition:

Dad's last days of government service was rather ignominious. The year was 1958, he had served faithfully for 47 years but there was a new administration in Malacañan. Ramon Magsaysay died tragically in the crash of his C-47 plane, which he named Mt. Pinatubo. There was a single survivor in the crash and everyone was killed, including several cabinet members. Dad was supposed to have been on the plane but I don't know for sure. This was stated by some of his associates and my mom too, but maybe they were being melodramatic. My dad was saddened of course but typically, he was unperturbed, not saying whether he was supposed to be on the plane with the presidential party or not. It just wasn't his time. Carlos Garcia succeeded Magsaysay and then won re-election himself in the Nov. 1957 elections. Garcia had a lot of political debts to pay after the election or as they say in Tagalog “utang na loob.” Political debts are sometimes paid by patronage so Garcia's #1 major domo (pimp is a better word) named Pajo came to my dad with a long list of people that were to be given employment and favors. Dad was then running the PHHC. Dad never curried to politicians and basically told Pajo to take a hike. He would have to remove civil servants and longer serving employees to accommodate Pajo's list. The budget would be blown. That was dad's undoing and he was replaced. No lunch, no roast, no gold watch, or plaque was given. To me, however, it was a golden moment, indicative of the man, of his family and of his generation. He held his head high. The lessons from Simplicio and Juliana, the values of the Orosas and the principles of Freemasonry stood firm, unbending. He was almost 68, and he could have just looked the other way but he stood on his principles. Dad's eldest son Augusto would be the same way and I have an illustration of actual events. (Political hack to Toto – when are you going to approve that nine-figure

loan for my vassal? Toto to hack – your vassal has no collateral and no business plan. Hack to Toto – you don't seem to understand, you are going to approve that loan. Toto to hack – I won't. Hack would then chew out Toto then click. The hack just went to a more obsequious officer. That is why Philippine banks have billions of pesos in non-performing loans.) And the subject of peacetime came up again. This kind of crap didn't happen then. The Americans would never have allowed it. When word got out, dad had his defenders. Editorials were written. Teodoro Valencia, a columnist of the leading newspaper Manila Times lashed out at Garcia. So did a radio host named Rafael Yabut, the country's foremost commentator in Tagalog. Garcia was pummeled.

My dad just came home, never showing bitterness, as un-imperturbable as ever. He even half facetiously said "magmamanukan na lang ako." Or he'll just raise some chickens. They family still had the 30 some hectare (about 70 acres) farmland* in the province of Nueva Ecija, which was rented out to a tenant farmer so going to retire in the country was not impossible. The farmland was located near the town of Cabanatuan where my dad had served 35 or so years before. With his above average salary, he was able to purchase this tract of rich farmland in the "breadbasket of the Philippines." (*The land was confiscated by the government in the 70's during the period of land reform. Our family received land bonds paying a nominal interest. Some of the bonds matured in the last few years and I think my share was about \$500. Since there were four of us surviving children, that comes out to a compensation of \$30 an acre. Wow! I would be willing to make a bet that the land is now in the hands of cronies of powerful politicians.)



Dad on the left next to Pres. Diosdado Macapagal. He is the father of the current President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

I contributed one vote to Diosdado Macapagal in 1961, my first year of eligibility, and DM handily beat Garcia in that presidential election. There were a lot of jokes about Garcia, who was very dark complexioned. The uninhibited mayor of Manila, Arsenio Lacson said during the campaign that Garcia is so black, dogs mistake him for a telephone pole and piss on his leg. That is my last parting shot.

Not long afterwards, dad received word that he had received the Distinguished Alumni Award of the University of Illinois. How distinguished is the award? Consider that other winners are also Nobel Prize laureates and US corporation chairmen and presidents. Another recipient was Avery Brundage, long time President of the International Olympic Committee. That is pretty lofty company, if you ask me. Go visit the University of Illinois website and find out.

Even though he was 68 years old, dad had no intention of going out to pasture. (My family is incredulous that I retired at 61!) He had almost twenty more years of meaningful work still ahead of him.

****The Other Pensionados:**

Recall that when dad left Champaign-Urbana to start his long journey home, he was asked to contact Conrado Benitez for lodging assistance during a stopover in Chicago. Conrado Benitez would likewise go on to have a distinguished career. But instead of the civil service, he became an educator, a Dean at the University of the Philippines (UP) and founder of the Philippine Women's University. Here is a sampling of what some other pensionados did. Francisco Benitez, a brother of Conrado, became an educator as well and Dean at UP. Vicente Lim graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1914, rising to the rank of

General. Gen. Lim was captured by the Japanese during World War II and executed for repeatedly trying to escape. Jose Abad Santos became Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court and was executed by the Japanese for refusing to take an oath of allegiance. Dr. Honara Acosta Sison received her medical degree from a women's medical college in Pennsylvania and became Professor Emeritus of Medicine at UP. She is the only woman I've been able to find among the pensionados. Leandro Hernandez was another educator and dean at UP. These are just a few. Whoever had the vision for the pensionado program was proved correct. The young Filipinos sent to be educated in the United States all returned to serve their country and serve her well.

Back to School:

Dad's friend Hermenegildo R. Reyes (sometimes called HR, sometimes Dean) Dean of Engineering at Far Eastern University left FEU to take control of then Polytechnic College of the Philippines (PCP.) Dean Reyes asked dad to become President of the college since the Dean was involved in a lot of other ventures. The Dean was quite a successful entrepreneur. Dean Reyes' three sons were my contemporaries, going to the same Catholic grade school (San Beda College,) and the eldest, Attorney Crispino "Babes" Reyes, is now the President of CCP (the Polytechnic was dropped and replaced with Central.)

Babes honored the past Presidents of CCP, including my father, by having dad's portrait displayed in the boardroom of CCP. Since dad had passed away years before, Babes hired an artist and used an old portrait from dad's library as a model. But we're getting ahead again.



Recognition from H.R. Reyes. Dad's portrait is in the school's boardroom.

Daddy didn't waste time feeling sorry for himself. Shortly after leaving government service, he resumed teaching at CCP at the tender age of sixty-nine. Recall that right after WW II, he taught at Mapua and FEU. Being a civil engineer, his subjects were Materials of Construction, Town Planning, Construction Methods and Highway Engineering. But he also taught Ethics. I can't think of a better human being in the whole archipelago more qualified to talk and teach ethics more than my dad. He was also Chairman of the Board of Directors twice, the first term from 1958 to 1963, getting recalled to serve again from 1967 to 1969. By this time he was approaching 80! Then he served as President of the school from 1970 to 1973 and Chancellor from 1973 to 1974. He was 85 by the time he "retired." In between all these terms he was always on the Board of Directors. Besides the appreciation demonstrated by Dean Reyes in the picture, Dean's son Atty. Babes Reyes has placed a portrait of dad in the school's boardroom. But hold on, he wasn't through yet, there was still another career working in real estate development.

The Manila Bay Reclamation Project:

The Manila area was congested and is even more so today. Politicians and developers have looked to the bay covetously as an answer. If the Netherlands can reclaim land from the wicked North Sea, reclaiming from Manila Bay should be a breeze. A consortium of American and Filipino businessman proposed this project in the late 1950's. Dad worked as a consultant for the consortium. The project never went anywhere since it got mired in the usual political morass. A project of this magnitude would require an act of Congress. Manila's Mayor Arsenio Lacson had his own vision for reclamation of the bay.

Years later, various reclamation projects were undertaken by the national government. The location of the Philippine Plaza, the Philippine National Bank and Cultural Center are all on reclaimed land. But none of these projects had the vision of a single strip that went from Manila

all the way to Cavite, replacing the beautiful Roxas Boulevard with a new road that followed the water's edge. Some of the reclaimed plots are now overrun with squatters and piled with garbage and you can no longer always see the bay as you drive along Roxas. Back then double-decker buses imported from London ran back and forth along the boulevard. You could sit on the top open-air deck and breathe the cool breeze.

The Real Estate Developer:

An old family friend, Severina "Binay" Lim asked dad to head up her real estate development venture in the town of Angeles in Pampanga province. Binay was the former Severina Rivera, an old friend from World War II days. Binay is quite a story, a Filipina Horatio Alger.

Let's digress for a moment and talk about Binay since her story and Dad's are intertwined. During WWII and immediately afterwards, conditions were harsh. The infrastructure was in shambles, farms were unproductive and there was hardly any fuel. (My cousin Apolinario or Naring, the eldest son of Tio Paito recounts that trucks were run on "uling" or charcoal.) Binay came from a very humble family in Binan, a town in the province of Laguna. They were dirt poor, with a thatched roof house and no indoor plumbing. But she was ambitious, hardworking, fearless and a visionary. As a child she sold "balut" at bus stations. You will still see these same waifs today trying to eke out a subsistence. She originally wanted to be a teacher but somehow



This is actually an Arabian dhow which still ply the waters of East Africa. A Batangas batel would be similar.

found herself in the town of Bauan where she met my dad's younger brother Rafael (Tio Paito.) Tio Paito was involved in inter-island trade and Bauan was the homeport serving a number of batels. Lolo Simplicio was a batel captain at the turn of the century but switched to owning an almacén to spend more time with his growing family. Now I have never seen a batel, which I'll have to look for if they are still around but Naring tells me they are sailboats used for cargo. I would imagine that the batels are similar to the Arabian dhow, completely wooden with a triangular sail.

These dhows are still in use today in the Persian Gulf and along the coast of East Africa. Tio Paito was the trusted broker and informal banker for the merchants. (Another demonstration of the Orosa trait of trustworthiness.) Binay would obtain merchandise from islands as far south as Negros, getting items like sugar for reselling. Sugar was a valued commodity. Goods from the Batangas area that weren't available in the southern islands were shipped for barter or sale. Some of the merchandise were taken to Divisoria, an old market section of Manila, where Binay did part of her trading. There she met a Chinese Filipino by the name of Marcelo "Marcing" Lim, who was a produce vendor. When Binay and Marcing were married, my parents were the ninong and ninang or godparents. Our close ties with the Lim family are maintained to this day. Their son Marc inherited the entrepreneurial streak and I see him during my trips.

Besides our family ties with the Lims, Binay knew that dad had been managing the PHHC and as a civil engineer, had the skills to deal with the various contractors and builders she needed. Binay was an entrepreneur and visionary, not an engineer. The company she organized was the Severina Realty Corp. and land was purchased for a private housing development called Diamond Balibago subdivision. Angeles is a town whose claim to fame is the proximity to Clark Air Base, at one time home to a US Air Force Tactical Wing. Unfortunately, one of the side effects of American military bases in the Philippines and elsewhere in Asia is the proliferation of bars, nightclubs, populated essentially by prostitutes "servicing" the Americans. But of course they are called "hostesses" or "guest relations officers." (Clark Air Base was closed after the

Philippine Senate refused to renew the lease with the United States but it was a Hobson's choice since the 1991 Pinatubo eruption rendered the base useless, covered by at a meter of lahar.) But Angeles was ripe for development and Binay sensed it. The Lim's primary business at the time was a taxicab company called Diamond. I do remember this cab company in the days of the 1950's before gridlock and pollution. Filipinos were still doing relatively well and some of Binay's cabs were actually Mercedes Benz sedans, if you can believe it. Yes, Filipinos were riding Mercedes Benz taxicabs back in the 1950's and even early 60's.

Unfortunately there was some dispute with the locals about the land under development. Details are sketchy with several versions but it may have been previous tenants, squatters, a contractor not awarded some desired contract, or simply the local hoodlums trying to extort from Binay. There is also the possibility that it was the local Communists. Pampanga was a hotbed during the 1950's and the home of the Hukbalahap, the Communist insurgents, now know as the NPA. Remember my using fearless as a descriptor for Binay? She didn't get to be successful by being easily intimidated. One day during business hours, someone barged into the office of Diamond Balibago, looked for Binay and gunned her down. It was a professional hit, none of the other employees were bothered by the assassin. One of my cousins, Godofredo Orosa, was the manager of a bank next door to the office. Godo along with Binay's husband Marcing took Binay to Marcing doctor brother-in-law but she was dead on arrival at the local hospital. Binay's husband Marcing went into seclusion, spending part of the time with my parents. As their practice, my parents provided succor to their godson. (The case, like hundreds of others in the Philippines, remains unsolved. The main suspect was assassinated himself.

Un-intimidated by the bandits, dad continued to work at Severina Realty almost until the last year of his life. The only concession he made to age was having his office at Severina's Quezon City office instead of in Angeles. And he still refused to have a bodyguard. The company is still around today, a testimony to vision and courage. One of the streets in the subdivision is named Orosa after my dad.

Generation to Generation:



Mom & Dad welcomes Carl & Mary Jane to Manila in March '65.

In my Reminiscence II, I wrote about Carl and Mary Jane Neer of Springfield, Illinois and later of Sarasota, Florida. They originally were friends of dad. They met through the University of Illinois Alumni but there was a generational difference between them and dad. Dad was from the class of 1911, while both Neers got their U of I degrees in 1933. But they remained close friends through the years, visiting mom & dad in Manila in the 1950's and in 1965. When mom and dad visited me in Painesville, Ohio in 1967, they stopped and stayed with the Neers in Springfield. After dad passed away, I maintained close contact with the Neers, reporting to them about mom, whose health began to fail and no longer kept correspondence. We visited the Neers often, first in Springfield and later taking our six children to Sarasota where the Neers had retired. So that was another legacy I inherited from dad, and mom too, a friendship that transcends generations, passed on like an heirloom.

A Man and a Mason:

It would be impossible to really understand my father without recognizing his lifelong Masonic affiliation and passion. Now, I am prejudiced since I've been a Mason for almost thirty years. But one of the biggest regrets of my life is that I never attended Lodge with my father. We Masons do not proselytize or solicit for members we have to wait until a man asks about our fra-

ternity. A man is only given a petition at his request, perhaps as a result of having favorable information from the public or getting educational materials from one of our brethren. I do not know what induced him to become a Mason. Because of the taboo against soliciting for membership, he wasn't even supposed to talk to his sons about it! So what impressed him to join this noble fraternity at the age of 22 shortly after his return from the United States? We can only speculate.

Masonry played a very important role in the Philippine independence movement. All the major Filipino revolutionaries were Masons, starting with Jose Rizal and Emilio Aguinaldo. Apolinario Mabini was a Mason. Leadership of the Katipunan was gleaned from Masonic Lodges. Now, I have to make you aware of the controversy surrounding some of the facets of Freemasonry and of the circumstances surrounding the execution of Jose Rizal. At that time, the Catholic Church had an unremitting hostility to the Masons. Late in the 19th century, Pope Leo XIII issued a papal encyclical attacking Masons. Masonry has been accused of being a "secret society," sometimes even a quasi-religious organization. I won't waste my time with those accusations other than to say we are not and have never been a secret society nor are we a religion. The Spanish authorities closed Filipino Masonic Lodges although Masons openly met in Spain itself. Perhaps it was because of the Masonic affiliation of Revolutionary leaders that the thought of being a secret society was advanced. Jose Rizal was indisputably a Mason but church officials have stated that Rizal recanted his writings (notably *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*) and his Masonic affiliation the night before he was executed and did so in writing. (He must have been a very busy man that evening, he wrote *Ultimo Adios*, got married to Josephine Bracken and allegedly recanted all his writings and Masonic ideals.) Regardless of whether there was or was not a recantation with an accompanying document, Rizal adhered to Masonic principles all his life and there isn't any way that his writings can be retracted. What has all this got to do with my father? With all this controversy, why would he join? You are twenty-two years old, starting out at the bottom rung of the civil service making 100 pesos a month, why go through the hassle?

I believe he was guided by a principle that was stronger than any of the prevailing controversy. Let us go through history and identify our Brother Masons. I've already mentioned the Filipino leaders of the revolution. Coming up were men like Manuel Quezon and Camilo Osias, Masons all. Let's go around the world. Among the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States were many Masons, starting with George Washington, John Hancock and Benjamin Franklin. A dozen US Presidents were Masons. Do you



Grandmaster in full regalia, 1957

know what the personal relationship was between Manuel Quezon and Douglas McArthur? MQ was godfather to Douglas' son Arthur. Gen. McArthur was also a Mason. Wolfgang Mozart was a Mason and his opera "The Magic Flute" has a Masonic theme. Those examples should be enough. I could fill this page.

My dad joined Sinukuan Lodge #16 in Manila in 1912. Since he started traveling and getting assigned to the provinces shortly thereafter, he joined local lodges or if there wasn't one, he helped organize them. Pinatubo Lodge in Zambales was founded by my dad. To organize a Masonic Lodge, you get permission from the



With his top hat, taken in our Aviles home living room.

Fun in Masonry and Appendant Bodies



Masons can join “appendant” bodies such as the Scottish Rite, York Rite and Shriners. Picture at left is of a Scottish Rite Group taken in 1925 while he was in Cabanatuan. Dad’s Masonic roots go deep. He in standing, second from the right.



Dad also joined the Shriners. Since there is no Shrine temple in the Philippines, they affiliated with Nile temple of Seattle. We Shriners are a fun group. Say, tell that American lady not to get too close to my dad.

Grand Lodge. He was a faithful member and assumed various offices, and was Master of the Lodge several times.



During installation as Grandmaster

The Grand Lodge has jurisdiction over all the Philippine lodges and during my dad's time it included Guam and Okinawa. He became a Grand Lodge officer and was elected Grand Master for the 1957 Masonic year. How he balanced being a cabinet level official, Grand Master duties, which required visiting lodges all over, and a full social calendar, I'll never know. He was already 67 years old!



Receiving the sash indicative of his office

There is an affiliate Masonic body called the Scottish Rite. No, it doesn't have anything to do with Scotland actually being French in origin. The Scottish Rite confers an honorary 33rd degree on men they consider outstanding, men who have served their community and their fraternities well, above and beyond the call. My dad received this honorary 33rd degree and I have kept his ring.

So what do the Masons and the other affiliate organizations do? We'll get right down to the facts. In Manila's Tondo district there is a Mary Johnston Hospital with a Masonic Ward for Crippled Children. We do not charge for any services to treat children with orthopedic problems. It may have been modeled after the Shriners Hospital for Children in North America. There are 22 Shriners hospitals in Canada, Mexico and the United States, treating crippled and burned children for free. Our operating budget is in excess of \$500,000,000 a year and that is not a typo. I am proud to have taken a role in getting children admitted (in Illinois and Tennessee) who otherwise couldn't have had the medical attention they so desperately needed.

A Mason could travel anywhere in the world, identify himself to a Brother Mason and have himself a trustworthy friend whom he could turn to for succor. There is no other organization like it. I have a short handwritten composition on Masonry that my dad must've delivered to a meeting or had published in a Masonic journal. I believe my father had all these in mind when he became a Mason.

The Final Days:

I was not able to attend the funeral of my father. He had been in failing health and became seriously ill early 1979. From our home in Crystal Lake, Illinois Val and I rushed over to visit him at Singian Clinic. At 89 his mind was lucid and we were able to converse. I proudly told him that I was becoming Master of my Masonic Lodge in Crystal Lake Illinois. An organization that was 100% American (Caucasian) had elected a Filipino to be the head of their organization, if only for one year. I thought dad was rather pleased. He said "mabuti, mabuti" or good, good. He was improving and was going back home to Horseshoe. Val and I were both working the children were not old enough to leave for a longer period so we returned to the US.

Barely a month later, we received a call from Charito that dad had passed away. His funeral Mass was presided by the Rev. Henry Byrne, the Bishop of Zambales. Bishop Byrne was a family friend and considered my mother the philanthropist of Iba. He wanted to preside at the

VICENTE Y. OROSA

Requiem. My sister Tita told me that Bishop Byrne delivered the best homily and eulogy to any man she had ever heard. Wish somebody had taped it. And he also received a Masonic funeral tribute. So just as we had always believed and espoused, Church and Fraternity never conflicted.



Mom & Dad's Golden Wedding Anniversary on June 1, 1968

I think I've finally understood my father's life. I wish he had written about his experience. But what I desired was really trivia, how was the train-ride from the west coast to Cincinnati and Illinois and then to New York. Even today the immensity of the American landscape exacts wonder. Hey, how about the American girls? ☺ How was Barcelona, weren't you there for feria (fiesta) time? But what counts is character and instead of words, he let his character and courage speak for themselves. Vicente Ylagan Orosa had lived his life as a Christian in his deeds as well as a just and upright Mason.



*January, 1970; the last time we were all together .
From left—Jing, Tita, Daddy, Toto, Charito, Mama
and me. Dad passed away in 1979, Mama in 1993,
Jing in 1994 and Toto in 2002.*

Below is the translation of **Simplicio's letter**, which follows on page 22:

To my son Vicente Orosa

Dear Vicente,

This morning we received your letter dated the 17th of June just past, and great is our thanksgiving to Almighty God that not only are you well, but that you finished the examination of the courses you have just completed. We have received the report sent to me by your school Principal.

You said in your letter that you are transferring to Illinois and I am taking the opportunity to answer you right away. But if perhaps the letter does not reach you in Cincinnati, then your landlord could send my letter to your new location.

If you are sending anything that is particularly heavy, send it certified to reduce the danger of getting lost and it will be easier to track with the certified numbers.

I do not wish to worry you regarding your studies except for you not to change your past effort, always taking advantage of and not wasting time on worthless pursuits. Accept the hardships because it is said that if something is difficult then the comfort is greater and worth waiting for. The greater the capital invested the greater the rewards you can hope for. Humility and forthrightness should characterize your behavior. Avoid anything that would make you stray from concentrating on your studies. You must wait until you have been successful while in the meantime entrust your hopes to the Almighty, that you are not tempted to waste your time succumbing to temptation.

Your beloved mother is having six finely embroidered pineapple fiber napkins that you are to give as presents to those you are indebted to for any assistance you may have been provided. We are told Americans fancy embroidered fabrics. We will not send these until you have given us your new location and we'll include them in our letter when you have settled.

We all are sending our greetings and give you our parental blessings. We are well here thru the mercy of God and have not had any misfortune and hope you are likewise.

*Your father,
Simplicio*

P.S. Your mother is presently selling in the market place and also selling in Batangan on Thursdays, substituting for your elder sister Simplicia.

VICENTE Y. OROSA

Letter from Simplicio to his son Vicente

Bauan, 26 de Julio 1907

A mi hijo Vicente Orosa

Querido Vicente: Ngayong umaga naming tinanggap and sulat mong may fecha 17 ng Juniong natalicdan, at daquila and aming ipagpapasalamat sa Panginoong Dios na bukod sa ikaw ay walang sakunang anoman, ay naka-examen ng malualhati dito sa cursong nag daan; at tinanggap naming ang report o palastasan napahatid sa akin ng iyong maestro principal.

Bagamat sinasabi mo sa iyong sulat na ikaw ay lilipat sa Illinois, ay sinamantala ko rin itong pagsagot at kung sakaling hindi ka nadatnan diyan sa Cincinnati ng sulat kong ito, ay haringang pagkalinagan ng iyong casera na maipadala sa iyong kinalalagayan.

Kung may papadala ka ng anoman at mabigat bigat ay iyong ipa-certificado na upang huag lumagay sa panganib sapagkat kung certificado ay hindi malilipol at mas dali ang pag habol sapagkat may recibo nanumerado pa na librado ng officinang tumangap.

Ako ay wala ng maipaalaala sa iyo tungkol sa iyong pagaral, kundi: huwag mong baba- guhin ang dating pagsisikap at sasamantalahanin mong lagi ang panahon at huwag sayang pararaanin ng ualang anomang magiging kahulugan. Aalintanahin mo ang lahat ng hirap at pagmalaki daw ang hirap ay malaki rin ginhawa ang dapat intayan, at paglaki ng puhunan at malaki rin, na mang pakinabang ang dapat asahan; kaya ang buong pag papakabait at papacababa ng loob ay siya mong hahangarin at gagawin. Yilagan mo mina at casuclaman ang mga mapang halinang pang alis loob na makakasira ng iyong pagaaral, hayaan niyo kung macatapos kang malualhati ng iyong mahalagang tungkol, ay haringang ipagka loob din sa ating Maykapal ang ating ninanasa, ay hindi sangilan ang mga katusan at dima toto ang kailan- gang nag aksaya man ng kaunting panahon sa ikakikita ng kaligayahan, lalo kung wala ng dapat alalahanin.

Ang iyong ina ay may ipinagawang anim na cervilletang pina bordado na maipag ka- loob mo sa iyong mga pinagkaka utangan ng loob at kaya yaan ang ipinagawa, ay siya daw gusto ng mga Americano, ay hindi muna ipadala ngayon diyan sapagkat naalaman niya na ikaw ay lilipat ng pagaralan, ay baka daw hindi dumating sa iyo, anopat segurong sa isa nam- ing pagsulat sa iyo kung alam naming ang iyong linipatan o kinalalagayan.

Nagkakamusta kami sa iyo tuloy tangapin ang iguinguad na bendicion nitong iyong mga magulang, at kami ay magaling naman dine sa awa ng Panginoong Dios at walang ano mang kasakunaan haringan sa boong panahon ay ikaw ay gayon din naman.

Tu padre
Simplicio

P.D. Ang iyong ina, ay makakpag barraca nangayon, at siya ring maglalako sa Batangan sa araw ng Jueves, silay halili ng iyong Ate Piciang.

VICENTE Y. OROSA

N.B. This letter was originally transcribed by my brother Augusto about twelve years ago when he and cousin Naring found some old letters that were in the possession of Naring's father Tio Paito, who had just passed away. The writing is quite different, for example the letter c is used where we would be using k today. I have edited the letter to change some words to incorporate some of the more contemporary Tagalog words and spelling, but without detracting from the heart and formality of the letter. For example he spelled icao instead of ikaw; uala instead of wala; I spelled out Panginoong Dios which he had written as P.Dios. There were quite a few words I couldn't completely understand although the meaning is obvious from the context. I asked for help from my sister Charito and she in turn from one of our Taal cousins, Milagros Orosa Aliling. Milagros said the words are old Batangas-Tagalog. Here are a few words for the Tagalog challenged:

Natalikdan – nakaraan

Sacuna -- accident

Malualhati -- without difficulty, successful; also used for "Glory to God." (Lualhati sa Diyos).

Malilipol -- mawawala, to be wiped out.

Papacababa -- humility, to humble one's self.

Casuclaman -- abhor

Sangilan -- will not take time

Barraca -- palengke, market

Got it??? Me, I need a dictionary!

Mario E. Orosa

VICENTE Y. OROSA

MASONRY

By Vicente Y. Orosa

According to one of the old charges, Masonry is declared to be an Ancient and Honorable institution. Ancient as having subsisted from time immemorial and honorable, it must be acknowledged to be as by natural tendency, it conduces to make them so who are obedient to its precepts. To so high and eminence has its credit been advanced that in every age Monarchs themselves have been projectors of the arts, have not thought it derogatory from their dignity to exchange the scepter for the trowel have patronized our mysteries and joined our assemblies.

A German handbook defines Masonry as follows "Masonry is the activity of closely United Men who, employing symbolical forms borrowed principally from the mason's trade and architecture, work for the welfare of mankind striving morally to ennoble themselves and others and thereby to bring about a universal league of mankind which they aspire to exhibit now on a small scale."

Forming one vast society of freemen held together by voluntary obligation, it covers the whole globe from Egypt to England, India to Italy, from America to Australia and the islands of the sea, from London to Sydney, from Chicago to Calcutta. Masonry is found everywhere. It implies all the ideals of harmony making all good things better by its presence. Wherever Masonry flourishes and is allowed to build freely after the Divine design, liberty, justice, education and true religion flourishes.

Small wonder that such an order has won to its fellowship men of the first order of intellect, men of action and thought as an insight in many lands and every walk of life. Soldiers like Wellington, Blucher and Garibaldi, philosophers like Rosseau, Fichte, patriots like Washington, Mazzini, writers like Walter Scott, Voltaire, Steele, Lising, Tolstoy, poets like Goethe, Boone, Byron, Kipling, Pike, musicians like Hayden and Mozart, who opera "The Magic Flute" has a Masonic motif. Masters of drama like Forest and Edwin Booth, editors such as Bowles, Prentice, Chiles, Grady, Ministers from Bishop Potters to Robert Collier. Statesmen, philosophers, educators, jurists, men of science, Masons many, whose names shine like stars in the great World on intellect and glory.

And in our country patriots like Jose Rizal, General and President Emilio Aguinaldo, Manuel Quezon, Manuel Roxas, Jose Laurel and Jose Abad Santos, Masons all. What other order has brought together such diverse type, temper, training and achievement uniting them at an altar of prayer in the worship of God and to the service of man.

Truth will triumph; justice will reign over the earth. Victorious over cruelty and evil. Finally love will reign the race. Casting out fear hatred and all unkindness and pity will heal the cold heart and heartache of humanity. Then the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic vision of Robert Burns, the poet laureate of Masonry:

Then let us pray, that come it may,
And come it will, for all that
man to man, the World over,
shall brothers be for all that

N.B. I found this among my father's papers. It was typewritten, but with it a handwritten version, with some corrections. Obviously he was writing it for a speech or an article. There was no date on the paper. But it may have been 1957, the year he became Grandmaster of the Philippines.