

## Naring Orosa Memories

Our cousin Apolinario N. “Naring” Orosa died peacefully in his sleep at their home in San Juan, Metro Manila, Saturday night August 28, 2021, at the age of 95.

He was married to Melinda Bartolome for more than 60 years, having one daughter, Diana. Diana and her husband Raymond Sarol have four children – Philip (Milwaukee WI), Heidi (Tokyo, Japan), Mikaela and Bianca. Except for Philip and Mikaela, all are in Metro Manila.

Naring lived in interesting times, experiencing in full the expression “*may you live in interesting times.*” Born in Bauan, Batangas in 1926, he was a teenager during the Japanese occupation, witnessing the horrors of war. At the end of the war, Naring and his cousin Augusto (Toto) were tasked to search the ruins of the destroyed Remedios Hospital for the remains of our aunt Maria Y. Orosa, who perished during the Liberation of Manila. Sadly, they could not locate Maria’s remains.

Naring moved to Manila, studying at the then Jose Rizal College (now university). After graduation in 1949 (cum laude of course), his career began its steady ascent. He worked for the Development Bank of the Phil. before attending Columbia University in New York, earning an MBA in 1953. This was followed by a short stint in Wall Street. He became a Fellow in Applied Economics at Balliol College, Oxford University, in England. To my knowledge, he is the only Orosa to have attended this millennia old institution, always rated among the best in the world. (The current UK Prime Minister is an alumnus.)

Joining the government as an economist, Naring served for more than 20 years, culminating in the position of Director General of the Presidential Economic Staff in 1970. Later in the 1970s, he was posted to New York City, where he served with the Philippine Mission to the UN, the Phil. National Bank and Phil. Center.

Bauan Colleges was co-founded by Naring’s father Rafael as Bauan High School. Naring served as its Chairman of the Board.

Naring belonged to the generation of older Orosa cousins, born during the 1910 and 1920 decades. The men were close, not just cousins but the best of friends. During the annual family reunions, they would be huddled together, some smoking, but all drinking Scotch. Known only by their nicknames, they were Saro, Miling, Dado, Ting, Boy, Jing, Carding, Jun, etc. The younger cousins, born in the 30s, 40s and 50s, had their own corners.

The last of his cohort of older cousins, Naring carried the Orosa torch well, high with pride. He personified the Orosa ethic and integrity, never having succumbed to the endemic corruption of our times.

*“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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**Mario's personal memories:** Before my brother Toto's passing in 2002, the three of us would always get together during my regular visits from whatever state I was living in (OH, TN, IL). Stops in Taal and our ancestral home in Aplaya, Bauan, Batangas were on always the agenda. The name of the *barangay* (neighborhood) comes from the Spanish "a *playa*" or to the beach, since Batangas Bay was only a block away from the Orosa house. Our grandmother Juliana Ylagan Orosa is buried in Bauan, so we would stop at her grave, located in the church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. After the passing of Naring's father Rafael, the home was unoccupied and fell into disrepair. Naring and his siblings sold the property, and the house was razed. We don't know what has been built on the property. Another stop would be a restaurant in Taal proper, where we indulged in local delicacies like *maliputo* and *tawilis*. These are fish found only in Lake Taal. *Maliputo* is now extremely rare and commands high prices. Another item Naring liked to buy at the *palengke* (wet market) was Taal *tapa* (marinated pork or beef).

I received many gifts from Naring. One time, an American coworker requested me to bring him a *balisong*, which is crafted in the eponymous town. He was in the U.S. Navy, stationed in Subic, but the knife was confiscated by his superiors. The *balisong* is a fan knife, ranging from a few inches to a foot or more. The craftsmen pass their skills from generation to generation. Naring gave me his own *balisong* and we bought another one for my friend. If you've ever heard of Angelina Jolie, she is a fan of *balisongs* and has a collection.

Toto and Naring both belonged to a "Jogging Club" in Quezon City. This group was comprised of retired successful executives or business owners who regularly met to walk or jog around the Greenhills Mall in San Juan. After the exercise, they would congregate at McDonald's, or a café, to partake of a hearty breakfast. Whatever calories they expended during exercise would be more than made up by the breakfast calories of *longaniza* (sausage), eggs and garlic fried rice. Occasionally they had lunch at a Chinese restaurant, a typical multi-course affair of half a dozen or more dishes. As the group aged or died off, only Naring kept his physical activity. He belonged to the nearby Club Filipino which had exercise facilities. Almost daily, Naring would use the treadmill, stationary bike and weights. If I were around on a Sunday, Naring and his family would invite me to Mass at Club Filipino, followed by a buffet.

There is an area in Greenhills where Muslim vendors sell replicas. You name it – Rolex, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, etc. They had it all. Our favorite vendor called himself "Marlon," who went around accompanied by his female retinue. After all, they are allowed four wives. That's how I bought my Rolexes. Of course, you were lucky if the watch lasted a few months. But I have a Cartier from Naring that is at least ten years old. It is still running. Whenever I have the battery changed at a watch shop, I'm always asked if it's real. I just smile. Naring, your Cartier still works!

Another section of the mall is devoted to pirated music and software. At the start, there were music CD's then movie DVD's. A movie would cost all of \$1 while selling in the U.S. for \$20. It is of course illegal to bring them in to the U.S., and there were frequent warnings that if caught, there would be penalties. But that never deterred the *balikbayans* (overseas Filipinos). Naring would take me there to buy the latest movies and software. Hollywood and Microsoft complained, but the practice went on. The advent of iTunes, streaming and downloading finally spelled the end of that piracy.

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Naring was a repository of stories. Yes, he headed the Presidential Economic Staff during part of the Ferdinand Marcos presidency, before martial law. Naring described Marcos as a brilliant man, with a photographic memory. They would be at a meeting discussing economic minutiae. Weeks later, Marcos would recall specific pages and paragraphs without referring to notes, asking for updates. The staff had to be well prepared. It was during this period that Naring demonstrated the Orosa integrity. National projects involving billions, guaranteed loans and licenses had to be approved by the President's Economic Staff. With a wink and a nod, Naring could have rubber stamped questionable applications. Gratuities would magically appear. Naring stood fast and stuck to his principles, never approving questionable projects.

Speaking of stories, I was able to persuade Naring to write about his experience. Although brief, it is enthralling. I only wish he had written more. We posted the story in our website 19 years ago. <http://orosa.org/Memories%20by%20Naring%20Orosa.htm>

We owe Naring the fact that we have a better understanding of the life of our aunt Maria Y. Orosa. Maria wrote letters to her mother in Bauan during the time she was in Seattle, WA (1916-1922). Lola (grandmother) kept those letters, along with letters from Maria's younger brother Jose. When Lola died in 1958, her personal items passed on to her youngest son Rafael. Rafael lived another 30 years, apparently not attempting to go over Lola's personal effects. Naring and my brother Toto finally went through Lola's belongings and voila, they found the letters. Naring promptly turned them over to me. This time we had digital cameras, so I copied every page and returned the letters to Naring. The rest is history. I was able to write about Maria's life in Seattle.

If my visit happened to be during the month of December, we never missed visiting Bauan College. This private school was co-founded by Rafael Y. Orosa and the Cordero family, as Bauan High School. This school is unique for two things – their dance troupe *Sining Kumintang ng Batangas* (Art of Music & Dance of Batangas) and the Christmas Lantern contest. Composed only of high school students, the *Sining* troupe has performed all over the world and won folk dance contests. They are not as famous as the older *Bayanihan*, but having seen both, I'd say they are on par. Lanterns are part of the Christmas season celebration throughout the Philippines. Bauan College lanterns are made of exotic or difficult to work with materials. Have you ever seen a lantern made of fish scales? Or grains of rice? Both the lanterns and *Sining* have had shows and exhibits at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila. For a time Naring was Chairman of the Board of Bauan College.

We will miss you, Naring. Who will introduce me to a place like Sonya's Garden in Tagaytay, with their organic vegetables grown in the backyard? Or recommend a bespoke tailor? Where do I find someone like Marlon, or the Muslim lady who sold me a golden pearl? But most of all, the country needed people like you and our other relatives who have previously served, who never wavered in their integrity. May the examples you all demonstrated live on through succeeding generations.

Mario E. Orosa  
Fairfield, OH  
August 29, 2021