

Getting to Know the Orosa Clan By Milagros O. Ailing

In 1976, Marina Salazar Leyran of the Basilio Orosa branch suggested the first reunion of the Basilio Clan. I was tasked with creating a family tree. At that time a few of the older relatives were still alive so they were very helpful when I inquired about our clan. But from “*Mamay*” (great grandfather) Basilio upwards, e.g. his parents, no information was available^a. From this family tree, I researched the relationship of “*Lolo Aton*” (my grandfather Agaton Orosa) to the Orosas of Bauan. Lolo Aton and Simplicio Orosa are first cousins. Simplicio is married to “*Lola Kanang*” (Juliana Ylagan). Simplicio’s father *Mamay* Guillermo Orosa is the brother of Basilio Orosa. Guillermo’s wife is Hilaria Agoncillo^b. It is from them that the Bauan Orosas are descended.

Basilio Orosa took as his wife Maria Buno of Balisong, a village of Taal. Balisong is famous for the eponymous fan knife^c and fine, intricate hand embroidery. The information about our ancestors, including Guillermo, is that they weren’t affluent. They weren’t farmers but they worked hard as merchants. Through their efforts they were able to travel widely around the province. Thus, “*Lolo Piciong*” (Simplicio) and *Lola Kanang* relocated to the nearby village of Aplaya in the town of Bauan^d.

Because I had limited time to construct the family tree of Basilio, I had to stop my research with the Basilio clan. Neither *Mamay* Basilio or *Nanang Angue* survived long enough for me to meet them^e. They had 6 children, the oldest of whom was Pio, who became “*Gobernadorcillo*”^f or Mayor of Taal. He married Maria Ylagan but they had no children. It was mentioned by the great Senator Lorenzo Tañada^g during a speech that his baptismal godfather was “*Kapitan*” (Captain) Pio Orosa. The other children of Basilio and Maria were Genoveva, Agaton, Olympia, Isabel and Paulino. Genoveva was married to Urbano Punzalan, also of Taal. They had 1 son, Dr. Celerino O. Punzalan.

Agaton had the most colorful life of all. He is my grandfather, his son Mariano was my father. We will return to Agaton later. Olympia was a lady and a beauty, which she maintained into her mature years. Her first husband was Mariano Salazar (grandfather of Marina Salazar) of Taal. She was widowed but being attractive, she was pursued and married Gregorio Martinez of the Mandanas clan and they relocated to Pola, Mindoro. They were able to accumulate property, prosper and live comfortably. The children of Lola Olympia are Dr. Felino Salazar, Leonarda Martinez and Elisa Martinez. Isabel became the wife of Pablo Aceron and followed Olympia to Pola where they too prospered^h. The Acerons had 8 children and one became “*Alkalde*” or Mayor of Pola. Paulino went to Alfonso, Cavite where he married Antonia Angeles, a beautiful lady who was famous in her town. They are the source of the Orosas of Cavite. Paulino and Antonia had 4 childrenⁱ.

The daughters of *Mamay* Basilio, especially Lola Olympia and Lola Abe, whom I both met, had the reputation of being domineering. They dominated their husbands but the boys occasionally sneaked through. That is probably why Marina and Ely (Ella, a daughter of Agaton) both married men they could dominate. Orosa women are characterized by their being always ladylike, problem solvers, forthright, loving and sacrificing for others.

Let us return to Lolo Aton. Agaton Orosa started out as a businessman. As pictured by our Tia Feling (a daughter of Simplicio) of Calauag, Quezon Agaton was a good looking

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man, well dressed and a “real man.” He fell in love with a pretty and well-heeled widow – Josefa Marella Villavicencio. She was the widow of Isabelo Villavicencio with whom she had 4 children. *Lola Ipay* is the sister of the famous lady *Lola Eriang* Marella Villavicencio. Agaton and Josefa had 3 children – Sofia (called *Ate Uping*) who married Attorney Jose Macatangay; Vicente (called *Inteng*) and Mariano (nicknamed *Nitoy*). Mariano is my father and also the father of Lilia, Reynaldo, Carolina, Cesar, Dan and Eden. After Lola Ipay passed away, Lolo Aton remarried. His new wife was the previously unmarried Teyang Sison, who became the mother of Rita and Ely. When Lola Teyang passed away, Lolo Aton married his sister-in-law Pepay Sison, the sister of Teyang. With Pepay, Lolo Aton had Evaristo and Roberto. Lolo Aton was widowed once again and remarried, to a widow from Manila named Estanislao “*viuda ni*” (widow of) Clarin. *Lola Awang* brought 4 children to the marriage. Lolo Aton and Lola Awang had a child named Elma^l. Elma was Agaton’s 8th and last child. Taking all the loved ones of Lolo Aton, he had 4 true wives, widows at the terminuses and snaring 2 maidens in the middle. The 2 in the middle were sisters! Besides these 4, it was rumored that Lolo Aton had other love interests. But he kept it to himself so details are sketchy. That is unlike some of you out there who have had affairs and we all know about it!

After his marriage, Lolo Aton’s pastimes were politics, women and cockfighting, but we couldn’t tell which was first and which was last. Agaton ran for Mayor^k twice but lost both times. But the third time was a charm and he won on the third try, becoming Mayor in 1934. During that era, the *alkaldes*^l and other government officials had integrity unlike today.

Besides his world of public office, Lolo Aton’s devotion was to his family and friends. He brought togetherness to his household, between his wife’s children (from previous marriage) and his own^m. He listened to the concerns of the citizens, especially those of the less fortunate. He was Mamay Aton to all, whether they are townspeople or farmers. During the Japanese occupation, he faced the Japanese authorities and the valiant anti-occupation guerillas whenever the cowardly officials couldn’t or wouldn’t do so. Towards the end of the war, the Japanese started committing atrocities, not sparing women and children. Lolo Aton accompanied the townspeople fleeing to Cavite. With the help of his younger brother Lolo Paulino in Alfonso, the people of Taal were housed in schools and homes of volunteers. They all stayed there until the end of the war. When the liberating Americans came, Agaton again became the Mayor of Taal. But he very shortly turned the reins of authority to the younger Juan K. Solis, retaining the position of councilor for Taal.

Lolo Aton passed peaceful on August 26, 1950 at the age of 76. To the day he died, he lived up to his principles and stood by the golden rule. One beautiful principle bequeathed by Lolo Aton to us and I would like to share with all of you is:
“When you are able to help others, help to the fullest.”

Thus ends my story of the origins of our clan and from this gathering on, begin to recognize each other and bring happiness to all.

Long Live the UNITY of the Orosa Clan!

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Reunion of the Orosa Clanⁿ
by the Taal lakeshore
San Nicolas (Old Taal), Batangas
April 28, 1990

Footnotes by Mario E. Orosa:

- a. A possible reason for this is that our name may have been changed from the Tagalog original following Governor General Claveria's decree in 1849 for the *Indios* to change the surnames. Orosa is on the list of Claveria's "*Catalogo de Apellidos*." Thus we wouldn't know which surname to search.
- b. Hilaria Agoncillo's great niece Maria Agoncillo became the wife of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, the first President of the Philippine Republic. One of her nephews was Felipe Agoncillo. The diplomat made trips to Paris and Washington to argue against the Treaty of Paris ceding the Philippines from Spain to the United States.
- c. The *balisong* or fan knife acts like a switchblade and can range from a couple of inches to over a foot. I had a police officer friend in Jackson, TN who asked me to procure one for him. He was with the U.S. Navy in the Philippines and had a *balisong*. But it was against Navy regulations to possess the *balisong* so it was confiscated.
- d. See my essay "Once Upon a Time in Bauan."
- e. Milagros Orosa was born in June of 1921.
- f. During the Spanish regime, the *Gobernadorcillo* was appointed by the Spanish authorities.
- g. Tañada served as a Senator for 24 years.
- h. One of their great grandchildren is Attorney Estee Aceron who is the Vice Governor of Mindoro.
- i. One of the 4 children of Paulino and Antonia was Ramon, who has a very interesting story. He married Aurora Montevirgen, the widow of Hammond Buck, an American officer from the Philippine American war who stayed and settled in Cavite. Hammond married several times and at the time of his death in World War II, was married to Aurora. During his lifetime Hammond became a big plantation landowner. Today the land is known as the Buck Estates. The land has been subdivided, developed and is no longer in the Buck family.
- j. Elma or Tita Elma as we call her is a medical doctor who is now 82. She lives in San Pablo City in the province of Laguna.
- k. The man who beat Agaton for Mayor was none other than Graciano Punzalan, the father-in-law of his son Mariano. Graciano served 3 terms as Mayor. His portrait hangs in the Taal City Hall, along with Agaton's.
- l. In the post World War II era, the Spanish term *alkalde* was no longer in vogue and was replaced by Mayor.
- m. It isn't clear how many children were in Agaton's household at any one time but the maximum would have been 16, 8 his own and 8 stepchildren.
- n. Our much decorated writer cousin Rosalinda L. Orosa wrote about this reunion in her May 6, 1990 column for the Philippine Star. She titled her column "Tracing Family Roots."

This story also reveals how the Batangas and the Cavite families are intertwined.