

Looking for Mr. Haygood

Every time I visit Manila, my sister Rosario, aka Charito, always has something she digs out of her cornucopia of heirlooms and mementos, that she passes on to me. One time it was postcards my father had kept, from his days at the University of Illinois 110 years ago. This time, during my December 2018 trip, it was a pocket watch^a with a long chain. A shorter side chain holds a medal with the Masonic square and compass symbol on one side, with the inscription "*Cab Lodge No. 53 F.&A.M. To Vicente Orosa for Meritorious Services*" on the other. (Cab is short for Cabanatuan, the provincial capital of Nueva Ecija, one of my father's postings as a District Engineer, during the 1920s.) On the back of the watch is inscribed "*To Vicente Orosa from Mr. & Mrs. C.E. Haygood In Appreciation of Kindness.*"

Thanks to the power of Google, a search instantly brought up some information about Mr. Haygood. Claude E. Haygood was an American executive, a member of the American Chamber of Commerce, who worked in the Philippines from 1902 to 1933. In 1918, he was the Manager of the Railway Department of the Manila Electric Railroad and Light Co. This name wouldn't ring a bell with Filipinos today, but its acronym, MERALCO, is definitely familiar. The company supplies electric power to the Metro Manila area, which has a population that exceeds that of Ohio. At one time Meralco was in the transportation business and my parents recalled the days when Manila was crisscrossed by the "tranvia" or streetcars operated by the company. Unfortunately, after its rolling stock was destroyed during WWII, the owners and the city government decided not to revive the streetcar system, with Meralco concentrating on power generation. The streetcars were replaced by the smoke belching diesel powered jeepneys, but that's another story. Meralco has a colorful history, a centerpiece in a political battle between modern day Filipino dynasties, the Lopez and Marcos clans. It would require a book to cover that story.

Mr. Haygood's career in the Philippines began humbly. His first job was "Street Inspector" in Manila starting in March, 1902. I don't know how many paved streets Manila had in 1902, but it must not have been that challenging. He was promoted to Superintendent of Rock Quarries during the governorship of William Cameron Forbes (1909-1913). Sometime between 1913 and 1918, he switched to Meralco. Being a private company, Meralco would have better compensation.

Mr. Haygood must have been committed to a long term relationship in Philippine business. In 1921, he and other American partners attempted to purchase 320,000 square meters (about 77 acres) of land in Cavite. Unfortunately, there was a dispute about the property, the deal fell through, and a lawsuit followed. Haygood and his partners won the case, the Filipino agent having misrepresented the boundaries of the property.

So the question remains, why did Mr. Haygood gift a nice gold watch to my father? During the period Mr. Haygood was with Meralco, and up until the time Mr. Haywood died (in 1934), my father led a peripatetic life, taking his growing family from the provinces of Zambales to Cavite, to Nueva Ecija and Bulacan. In the mid-1930s, he was promoted to Manila, where he stayed for

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the next 40 years. My dad was active in the Masonic fraternity, becoming Grandmaster in 1957. However, I couldn't find a record of Mr. Haygood among Masonic archives. (To make sure, I also sent a query to Manila Lodge No. 1, the lodge Americans belonged to during the colonial era^b.) Why was the Masonic medal attached to the chain? Where did they meet? Perhaps during my father's tenure in Cavite, when Haywood and his partners were attempting to purchase land? What did they have in common? What kindness did my father demonstrate?

So, other than the gift, the relationship between C.E.Haygood and Vicente Y. Orosa remains a mystery. But thank you, Mr. Haygood!

Claude Haygood's story, by itself, is an interesting one. He was born in Georgia in 1884^c but he was counted as being in the U.S. Army in the Philippines during the first census (1900) under the American regime. That meant he was in the Army at 16. Either the rules were different then or he lied about his age. He must have been discharged before taking employment as a Manila street inspector at 18. Haygood married an Australian born woman by the name of Annie Laurie, who was barely out of her teens by the time they had their first child in 1910. Mrs. Haygood remained in the Philippines after her husband's passing, but there's no further information about her or her children available at this time.

Footnote:

a - Our local jeweler described the watch as very unusual and rare. For one, the shape is oblong rather than round. There were no markings, but the quality of the watch indicated it was Swiss made. Remarkably, the watch was repairable, and is now ticking away. But don't ask what the jeweler charged.

b - Unfortunately, the Philippine grand lodge did not respond to my query.

c - taken from his passport application.

Mario E. Orosa
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