

A Precious Treasure Lost
By
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Late one night in March 1946 Mother woke everyone in the house because of an emergency–Papa Catalino, my father, was having difficulty breathing. We all scrambled to seek medical help and went our separate ways. I was with my big brother Benny so I just followed him. It was very dark. Ormoc did not have electricity because it was destroyed during the Second World War. It was my first time to be out in the dark that late. I was afraid, but not so much because I was with my big brother. So many times he had come to my aid, like when the bullies at school harassed me. When we fled to the mountains–to avoid being caught in crossfire during the liberation of the Philippines–I first noticed my big brother Benny carrying his *bolo* or dagger. On this night, though, I was unsure if he was carrying it. But when he told me to pick up some stones the size of my fist, and he did not pick up any stones himself, then I was sure he had his dagger.

We were going to the house of a male nurse. We knew that eldest brother, Romeo, was off to get a doctor–his wife's, Cecilia, uncle Gregorio. Other than the doctor, the male nurse was the only one with a medical background we could think of. When we arrived at his house it was very dark, like most of the houses during those times were. We tried to wake him up. We could not get close to the door to knock as there were barking guard dogs. We just stayed at the fence. The barking of the dogs drowned out our voices. We tried again and again to wake them up but to no avail. After a while we decided to head back home. When we were farther away from the male nurse's house and the barking of the dogs stopped, it was suddenly very quiet. We heard only our footsteps. When we turned on our street the house was already well lighted.

Then I heard noises coming from the house, sounds that still vividly come back whenever I reminisce on my boyhood days. I heard the sounds of sawing and hammering. *Oh my God, they were already making a coffin!!!* I had no doubt in my mind of who must have died. I had mixed feelings of anger, blame, concern, and most of all, fear for the future.

The first thought that came to my young mind was, *how can I become a lawyer now?* His own frustrated dream, Papa Catalino had always hoped that at least one of his children would become a lawyer. Eldest brother Romeo studied law at the University of the Philippines at Cebu—where our father also studied education and, later, law. But the Second World War had prevented Romeo from finishing. Besides, he was already married and had a son. And now, if Papa Catalino was truly dead, eldest brother would have to help the family by breadwinning for his stepmother and five younger siblings. Being a poor family now, we would have no chance to go to college. Papa Catalino's dream for us was lost forever. He had even attempted to become a lawyer himself. But there were circumstances beyond his control that prevented him from finishing. Namely, he had an appendectomy. During those primitive days it was a major surgical operation, and he experienced life threatening complications which took him months to recuperate from. I had always planned to comply with his wishes, though I kept this in my heart for people might think that becoming a lawyer was too ambitious for me. I was below average in school, but I envisioned that I could make it up for him. To be at peace with myself, if the plan did not come true, I was prepared to console myself with the thought, *anyway, it was only a dream.* But some dreams do come true.

During my boyhood days, when the church bells of town Ormoc rang at six in the evening almost all had to stop what they were doing to pray the Angelus. Then they could continue their other undertakings later with ease. Even the carpenters would stop their daily work. When hammering and sawing could still be heard after 6 pm the elders would discourage the work from continuing. For them, they believed that they would cause bad omens to happen. The only exception to this rule was for those making a coffin. Ormoc during those times did not yet have a funeral parlor, so the dead had to be buried as soon as the family could manage. When I heard those frightful sounds of coffin making that night I asked myself, *for whom is it being built? For sure, there are always those with broken hearts and broken dreams.* On that night, it was our turn to have broken hearts and broken dreams!!!

When Benny and I reached our house there were already a lot of people around, mostly neighbors. With the distinguishable sounds of a coffin being made they traced where it came from. With the silence of the night it was heard

from afar. Friends were shocked, as they knew no one in my family was sick unto death.

Before approaching Mother, I watched her from a distance. She was not crying. Her facial expression was more that of resignation. She was deeply religious, and I knew for her it was the divine will of God. When I approached she held my arm and squeezed it hard. She told me that it was our own turn to grieve. Since Mother and my siblings did not cry, I did not cry either.

At the time I wondered why Mother did not cry. My parents were a very loving couple. At home and in public, they would demonstrate their fondness for each other. When they took a walk they would always hold hands. Some friends jokingly asked me if my parents were afraid that a strong wind would blow them apart. During those days in our town very seldom would you see couples walking and holding hands. What message did Mother want to convey by not crying over the death of her beloved husband? Even now, in my adult life, I cannot figure it out. I had attended funerals before but they were different from the funeral of my father. At these other funerals there was screaming; on one occasion two men even had to restrain the dead man's wife because she tried to jump into the open grave.

Years passed by until one night I chanced upon Mother crying. By this time, I had grown up. I was hanging around with friends—talking about girls, the movies, and the like. At times I came home late. I would sneak in very quietly, not to disturb people who might be already asleep. One night my grieving mother was still up and crying. I asked her why and she told me she missed my father terribly. I was so relieved that I was not the cause of her crying. I had tried my best never to hurt her feelings. Though she cautioned me not to stay out late at night, at times, I ignored her. It turned out she had been crying in secret. Oftentimes I could sense she was crying alone. I dared not ask why she did not cry in public. When she was with others, her heart cried in secret. From the time of my father's death, with each passing year, she became more withdrawn and kept only to herself. I never asked if that was Papa Catalino's wish.

In April 1972 I received a large envelope at work from my big brother, Romeo. First thing when I got home from work—although I was so tired and

hungry—I opened the envelope. It was a local newspaper *The Reporter*, which was the leading and most widely distributed in our region. The front page was a picture of our beloved father with the caption "To the man who served." The story on the front page was about a street in our hometown of Ormoc being named after my father. At long last, his unselfish accomplishments in his hometown had been acknowledged. The article highlighted his being the fearless and respected mayor of Ormoc during the impossible times of the Second World War; noting that he saved many lives during the Japanese invasion—he led an evacuation to the mountains during the fierce liberation of the Philippines, which began when General McArthur landed in the Leyte Gulf.

Deep in my heart, I always hoped there would be something in honorable remembrance to his name. I was so touched by the honor our hometown had given our beloved father that I cried hard. Tears for a dream fulfilled. As an adult—actually, ever since Papa Catalino's death as a child—this was the first time I cried. There were times I really missed him so terribly. Also, I was very homesick. It had been years since my last visit to Ormoc. How I yearned to be with our family, especially Mother. I wanted also to pay a visit to his grave. Up to that point, I had to forgo many vacation leaves—I would have them converted into cash, as my wife and I were patiently preparing for our nine children's education. God willing, we wanted all of them to have college education. We had quite a bunch. My own dreams of becoming a professional had been lost with the death of my father.

Finally, I had to go home to Ormoc even though my leave was without pay. I had to bid goodbye to my beloved mother. The sad thing was that by then she could no longer hear me, since she already passed away before I reached home. Unlike the death of my father, this time I cried for her death. Nowadays, I easily and shamelessly shed tears, even in front of people, for just about anything that touches my feelings.

Before I slept that night I, again, read the newspaper. I wanted to absorb and understand the write-up. The first time I read it I was full of emotions. My eyes were cloudy with tears. According to Councilors C.S. Mendiola and B.T. Marquez, who sponsored the city ordinance with a joint petition of some 131 city residents, the naming of the street in honor of my father Catalino Hermosilla "*served as a tardy wreath of dried leaves over his tomb.*" It took

twenty-six years after his death before a tribute was, finally, given for his “*exemplary record of public service, most notably in the field of education and politics in war and peace.*” It also mentioned that, “*had it not been for his judicious tact and diplomacy,*” the Filipino guerillas would have likely recaptured the town. I think it was not difficult to convince the guerrillas that their plan was suicidal and would not hold up against the Japanese stranglehold on the civilian population. Even Bataan and Corrigidor, with their strategic importance for Manila, surrendered without a plan for their immediate recapture. The civilians would be caught on the losing end of the eventual crossfire against the Japanese.

The write-up included a statement from Mrs. Feliza Zamora Mejia that I respectfully disagreed with, that Papa Catalino “*can even be compared to Jose Rizal*” for his heroism. Maybe, she was just carried away when the writer interviewed her. She was my father’s contemporary in the field of education. With him, she was the co-founder of Ormoc Institute. Their mission and vision was to educate the poor Filipino youths of our hometown, liberating them from ignorance and poverty—especially by using the Bible as a resource of godly wisdom, something Papa Catalino had learned from his American missionary mentors.

There were other worthy tasks that he was deeply praised for, such as mediating the surrender of the Taner brothers, Ben and Fred, to the Japanese. The Taners were half American *mestizos*. The first casualty of the occupying Japanese force in Ormoc was killed by a sniper with good marksmanship. It was almost certainly the Taner brothers that did it. They were sharpshooters, daring, and elusive. The Japanese had a hard time capturing them and, if they were not captured, the Japanese would likely harass the civilian people. Eventually, Papa Catalino was able to mediate the surrender of the Taner brothers. He said to us one time that his job as mayor during the war was like waking on a tight rope—the slightest mistake would be deadly. It was a balancing act keeping the conflict between the Japanese and the guerrilla forces from escalating and detrimentally affecting the civilian population.

One night during the war everybody in our house was tense. Papa Catalino told us not to make noise as he was waiting for a knock at the door. The quietness was eerie and one could even hear a pin drop. There were times that

night when we heard a knock on the door. It was only Papa Catalino or eldest brother, Romeo, who was allowed to open the door. Sometimes they would just listen to the knocks and would not open the door. Correctly coded knocks gained entry in the house, and we were told to go to our room. I was already inside my room when I heard a knocking on the door. I heard the door open and the footsteps of someone entering. When I heard the door close I silently peered outside. I saw a bearded man carrying a rifle. I knew he was one of the famous Taner brothers as he was a mestizo. He and Papa Catalino were talking in whispers. Out of nowhere, he just sat in a *comer*. He was motionless. Moments later we heard footsteps outside our house. Mother said, "Japanese!!!" I jumped to the bed and wrapped a pillow around my ears. I was so afraid of what might happen next. Just days earlier, during our recess at school, my friends and I played a lot. We were tired and thirsty. We raced to the artesian well beside the Puericulture Center, which was opposite our school. The Japanese Kempetai commandeered it. While one of my friends was still drinking, he was shoved by a Japanese soldier. He filled a big tin can of water. Then we heard someone moaning and grasping for breath. A man was sprawled on the ground, face up, with tied hands and feet. The soldier was tortuously dumping water to the man's face. When the can was emptied, the Japanese man jumped on the drowning man's stomach. The screams were weird. The flashbacks of what I had witnessed were so tormenting that I could not tell anyone of the water torture we saw,

I tried to unwrap my ears from the pillow. It was so quiet. The door of the room was ajar. With caution, I peeped through. The man with the rifle and Papa Catalino were gone. Then I saw Mother light a candle at the altar. Every single day she would pray the rosary. This time she was holding her prayer book. It was her *novena*—used when in desperate need of help from God. She had it since her *colegiala* days at Santa Isabel in Manila. I could not understand the prayers as they were in Spanish, which I did not learn since; Papa Catalino being an educator, English was the language we learned at school and at home. I knew she was very concerned about what might happen. I overheard Mother asking him, "What if the Japanese do not honor their assurance?" I was wondering what assurance had they promised. He did not say a word. I fell asleep while Mother was still praying. When I woke up in the morning he was not yet home. When he arrived the first thing he told Mother was that he was not even slapped. The cruel Japanese were usually quick with their hands,

slapping even for insignificant mistakes. Papa Catalino had made very good diplomatic maneuvers to save the life of the captured sharpshooter.

How I wish my father was still around when I first entered the workforce. I needed his wise advice more than ever with so many tough decisions to make and cruel intrigues plaguing the workplace. To those circumstances he was no stranger. How was he so composed when his own dear life was at stake if he faltered? The Reporter article states he had “*judicious tact and diplomacy, coddling our brothers in the underground movement, while playing the ball with the foreign invaders.*” The same could not be said of me. I was easily alarmed, especially if my job was put in jeopardy!! And the worst possible thing that could happen would be getting demoted to a smaller sales office which eventually did happen to me, thanks to the cruel intrigues of my coworkers. Regrettably, unlike Papa Catalino, sometimes my irritability about the intrigues at my job would spill over to my family.

How I wished to have mastered his crafty techniques for handling risky and life threatening moves and for altering the evil plans of others. These skills were exhibited throughout his political career, both in times of war and peace. He used them to win a landslide victory becoming mayor of Ormoc as well as when dealing with the enemy occupying forces. For example, during the war the Japanese were preparing to execute prisoners in Ormoc. To put fear into the people, the executions were to take place at the town plaza. The main purpose was, of course, to deter those who were helping the guerrillas. As the mayor of Ormoc, my father was instructed by the Japanese invaders that the town's people—men, women, and children alike—should witness the executions. He was able to convince the Japanese to carry out the executions at the cemetery with only him and a few other witnesses. What trauma would it have created if the original Japanese plans were pushed through, especially to the women and children? I overheard him tell Mother about the executions—either by bayonet or by the sword. The beheadings were so swift with the use of very sharp sword. Kneeling while their heads were slashed off, the headless men stood up, took few steps, then fell into their graves. One of those beheaded was a leader of a religious cult. The ones he pitied most were those bayoneted, for theirs was a slow and painful death. As he said, he was walking a tight rope and a slight mistake would bring ruin. He said that in the event of something going wrong, if he was sentenced to be executed, he would ask to be beheaded by the sword

for the quicker death. For days he was restless for what he had witnessed. At this time he began to ponder over his very dangerous life.

Some people got the wrong idea about Papa Catalino's request to hasten the execution of the prisoners. What they could not understand was that he had noticed Lt. Hirrayama, Junior Officer of Capt. Abe, trying to delay the execution. He had a feeling that Lt. Hirrayama was waiting for the return of Capt. Abe, who was in route from Tacloban, Leyte with some visiting senior officers. Papa Catalino feared that his request to Capt. Abe to keep the executions private would be changed by the senior officers. Eventually Lt. Hirrayama gave in and the execution was done at the cemetery before Capt. Abe and the party arrived in Ormoc. This was a relief to my father because it was not carried out at the town plaza for all to witness.

There was a certain Master Sergeant Sinkai who sided with Papa Catalino on the executions. The madam of the only brothel in Ormoc was Sgt. Sinkai's mistress. She was locally known as *Bikang*. I tried to research her real name but came up empty. She was one of the main sources from which Papa Catalino gained information on the Japanese's activities. But multiple accounts from the town call *Bikang* a local hero for the community. The intel she provided was vital and undoubtedly saved lives. Although Papa Catalino was a religious man—he read the Bible daily, influenced by the American missionaries running the Sneed Dormitory for Men in Cebu—he did not discourage the brothel. Ormoc was among the few places in the Philippines where there were no "comfort women," who were sex slaves of the Japanese.

My father was a good "soldier." He was even close to joining the guerrillas. However, a messenger informed him that President Quizon's order was to retain official duties appearing to "play ball" with the Japanese while actually gathering valuable intel. I noticed that the lowest point of Papa Catalino's life during the war was when the guerrillas of Lt. Blas Meranda and Maj. Roberto Kangleon were butchering each other over of a personal grudge between the officers. But there were also successes, as when he convinced the half-American Taner brothers to surrender. With the aid of his distant cousin and local priest, Father Ismael Cata-ag, Papa Catalino persuaded other relatives and friends of the guerrillas to surrender when it was for the greater good of the community.

One of Papa Catalino's visions for Ormoc was to build an institution of higher learning. Before he was elected mayor, he was instrumental in establishing a private high school in Ormoc. He met an American Mr. Fred Warner who was visiting Ormoc. Mr. Warner was the owner of the Filipino-American High School in Jagna, Bohol. The concept of establishing a private high school was considered. Papa Catalino submitted his own proposal to the citizens of Ormoc. The town completely supported his initiative. The passion for a higher education institution sprung from his sense of compassion. There were so many gifted young men and women, but they could not develop their knowledge and skills to their fullest potential for lack of proper education. These unfortunates could not even go outside Ormoc to further their studies. Even if they could afford to pay the tuition, the high costs of board and lodging in other cities were great obstacles for them. Comparatively, since his own parents were well-to-do, Papa Catalino was sent to Cebu for his college education. He stayed at the Snead Dormitory run by American missionaries—a favorite boarding house of affluent out-of-town students. However, some parents were hesitant to let their sons stay there, as they were apprehensive that their sons might be converted by the American missionaries who were not Roman Catholic. Papa Catalino's younger brother, in fact, got converted in his stay there.

When the Americans started to retake the Philippines from the Japanese we ran to the hills to avoid being caught in the bloody crossfire. Some families could stealthily elude the Japanese and were safe in their hiding places. In our case, so many people followed Papa Catalino wherever we went, we had extra complications. People from all walks of life, even the rich families of our town, followed us in our flight. The parish priest was with our group. I also remember the nuns, who carried a wooden plank with them. Some laughed at them, but they were clever. When they walked in an open field they carried 'it over their heads, especially while the Japanese were firing their anti-aircraft guns. Many people were hurt from the falling shrapnel, but the plank protected the clever nuns.

Papa Catalino's plan was to not go very far from the town, making it easier to return home after the Americans came. Early in the morning of October 20, 1944 (I cannot forget that date, as it was my beloved mother's birthday) we heard huge explosions. They were coming from the eastern side of Leyte. He

was very keen at analyzing events. When it was dark, and the exploding sounds were fiercest, he told us that the explosions were coming from our American liberators. He was correct. A couple of days later a low flying airplane hurled leaflets. On it was written "*The Yanks have landed on your island.*" Everybody was very happy. The Americans would be in Ormoc soon. In late November there were sea battles in Ormoc Bay—some of the most decisive sea battles during the American liberation. One night Ormoc was attacked by very fast moving sea crafts. I later learned they were called PT Boats. There were no booming explosions, only the rattling sounds of heavy machine guns. Some were firing tracer bullets. It looked like fire work. Some of the people with us, particularly the elders, asked Papa Catalino if we should go farther from the town. They were very afraid as there was an increase in encounters between the American and Japanese ships at Ormoc Bay. He was hesitant but, in the end, gave in to their request. When we found a new spot to stay an improvised shelter was immediately made. Coconut palms would be weaved like mats. Then we plied them to be used for roofing and walls. While the shelter was being constructed, at the same time, a foxhole was dug.

When the victorious Americans landed in Ormoc a problem presented itself—one that Papa Catalino had foreseen. We were too far from the town. Worse yet, the retreating Japanese were coming directly our way, by the hundreds. Some were carried in improvised hammocks. Like the others that were weak, they went further into the mountains. Some bivouacked near where we stayed. This deeply concerned Papa Catalino. We were told to expect the worst. We would not merely be caught in crossfire but were now directly in the crosshairs of the Japanese heading our way. We had homemade backpacks for each of us in the family. In it were some provisions and money. The "genuine" money as it was called, since the Japanese occupation money was worthless. This was in case we got separated. Each one of us was also given tasks. One of them was to keep Papa Catalino's razor. After he used it, it was always placed in my backpack—even in the mountains, where we escaped and were on the run, Papa Catalino always kept clean shaven.

We went to the steep side of a ravine and looked down to the area of Deposito and Ipil nearby barrios south of Ormoc. It was clear the Americans had landed. There was a lot of movement—both ships and land vehicles. Appearing small, we could see vehicles plying between Deposito and Ormoc.

We were amazed at the smallest of them, which was so fast it could overtake all the other vehicles. We later learned that it was the Jeep—the precursor of the *Philippinized Jeepney*, usually used for public transportation. Despite these sightings, our deep eagerness to get back to Ormoc was all that mattered to us at that moment.

Papa Catalino had many misfortunes during the war. And our time in the hills during the liberation was particularly rich with misfortune. At the barrio Mahilaon, where we evacuated, some retreating Japanese passed through. And when they asked for directions, food, and supplies from the evacuees, the Japanese would, unfortunately, always be directed to Papa Catalino.

One morning I was with a group watching a woman prepare *landang* from scratch. *Landang* is a porridge made of cooked green gram beans and glutinous rice mixed with coconut cream and sweetened with red or brown sugar. While preparing it, she was explaining the process to us. Some in the group were from well-to-do families. Like me, I am sure they were not there to learn how to cook, but to eat, as we were all hungry. Before the war, although not a voracious eater, I just loved *landang*. I always asked our *muchacha* (housemaid) to cook *landang*. Suddenly a group of Japanese came to the house where we were gathered. Some of them were wounded. One was being carried in an improved stretcher. They asked us for directions to Valencia. Most in our group pointed to the house where we lived. The Japanese said, “No, where is Valencia?” Almost all (not me) were pointing to the house where we stayed. So they went to our house. Eventually the Japanese went on their way, but not before taking some of our food with them. As they left our house I witnessed one of the soldiers grabbing *cassava* from our yard.

Another time a different group of Japanese came to our evacuation place. Their uniforms were not those that we were used to seeing. I learned later that they were from the Navy. As usual, they were directed to the house where we stayed. An Officer approached Papa Catalino. I knew he was an officer as he was carrying a sword. He was wounded and had his arm in a sling. I forget now if it was his left or right arm, but I remember the sling and his shirt-back were soiled with fresh blood. We were surprised when he spoke to us in good English. Just like the others, he was asking Papa Catalino for directions. But he was different from the others. He did not ask for food. He was very courteous.

And before he left he gave a slight bow to all those around—even me, a small boy. When the officer left, Papa Catalino went to the clothesline, plucked some dried *carabao* (water buffalo) meat, and rushed to the Japanese offices to present it to him. When he came back to us he said, "once in a while you will chance upon a good man amongst them."

Even up to this day I can still picture that Naval Officer. Although wounded and in a bad predicament (the Japanese war efforts were not going well), he talked to Papa Catalino with a soft, kindly voice. He was an officer and a gentleman. I hope and pray he did not die or commit hara-kiri. Men like him are always desperately needed in this world.

We knew then that it would be disastrous for any the Filipinos caught in the path of the Japanese, who were in dire straits. So Papa Catalino made a desperate move. One morning he told us we were immediately leaving to go back to Ormoc. We were taken by surprise. When we started walking down the hills others followed. I thought that he had spread word of his plan to the heads of the families the night before, but he had not said a word and neither had we. We just kept on walking. All we could hear were the plopping sound of our feet. It was very muddy and slippery. Mother fell down and needed help in getting up. She was in severe pain but we kept on walking. Her groans almost made me cry. Papa Catalino told her to walk with her toes not pointed up but down for better traction on the muddy and slippery ground. I also did this after almost losing my balance twice.

For a while, everything seemed to be progressing as we were trekking down the hills. But suddenly, from the bamboo groves Japanese soldiers appeared. They cocked their firearms and aimed to an imaginary line before us. As we were leading the group, Papa Catalino slowed down. We stopped a few yards from the imaginary line where the Japanese were pointing their guns. I noticed there was a machine gun mounted to the left of us, along with their rifles with bayonets. The officers had their razor sharp swords drawn. The message was obvious. They would shoot us if we crossed the imaginary line. We stood there, still, for what felt like an eternity. It was a very tense moment. I was afraid and could hear the throbs of my heart. I thought he would decide to make a run for it. When you are a small child and scared, so many irrational thoughts come to your fearful mind. I remembered what the Benedictine

Sisters taught us in our school: when in danger of death, we should pray the Act of Contrition. It relieved me of my fear a little after praying. Finally, Papa Catalino decided we would go back to where we came from. As usual, everybody followed. When we were a short distance, cautiously, I looked back. The Japanese went back under the bamboo trees. Had we stayed nearer to the town, as earlier planned by Papa Catalino, we would not have encountered the Japanese here. But Papa Catalino never blamed those who had urged him to go further to the hills.

From then on, we were wondering how we could go back home to the now liberated Ormoc. One night, Joe Aguirre—a relative and a trusted “runner” or intelligence courier of Papa Catalino—visited our hut. As I later learned, Joe persuaded Papa Catalino that he would guide our family in escaping back to Ormoc. He knew how to evade the Japanese hiding in the hills. In fact, his family was already safe and sound in Ormoc with the American liberators. Joe came back again another night bringing American cigarettes as proof. Papa Catalino was very grateful for Joe's concern for the safety of our family. But he was hesitant and could not push through with the plan. He worried for those who would be left behind. He believed they were his responsibility since he was their leader. He did not want to lose the deep trust and faith of those who had followed him thus far. They respectfully looked up to him as their unselfish leader. He would not abandon them, especially in those critical times of danger.

One morning, we saw a small, slow-flying American airplane. We were accustomed to seeing it. However, this time, it was hovering where we were. The first time that we saw that kind of plane, we called them “sissy planes” because they did not engage in dogfights against the Japanese planes. Others were very excited as they thought it was General Douglas MacArthur observing us. Like the rest of us, I was also waving at the plane. But Papa Catalino explained to our family that the plane was an observation plane. They were also used as a long-range locator for artillery. A high ranking officer such as General MacArthur would be in his headquarters planning the war.

We heard an explosion, and curling upward was a white smoke. It was far from where we were. The second blast, however, was close—too close. It was a long-range locator shell. We were the dead targets. Papa Catalino had prepared us how to respond to the shelling, which required a different response than

bombing or strafing. I grabbed my homemade backpack. I also grabbed my younger brother Nonoy's backpack, too, as he was already out of our hut. Then, we heard a rumbling burst from the town. It was artillery firing in our direction. I dropped to the ground immediately before the artillery shells hit with a sound as if the sky was split apart. The ground shook. Sprawled on the ground, I closed my eyes. But I was afraid that I would be left behind, so I reluctantly opened them. I saw soil tossed up in the air. It was total chaos. When there was a lull in the shelling, we dashed towards the nearby ravine. We dropped ourselves and ran until we finally reached the next ravine. We were now somewhat safer as the shelling was centered on the plateau above. While crouching and running, I looked around and noticed big brother, Romeo, his wife, Cecilia, and their newborn baby, Roberto, were not with our group. But we just kept moving. The shelling was a blessing in disguise. It freed us from the Japanese. The Japanese were running for their lives, too. For some families, though, it was not a blessing, but a sad tragedy.

Finally, we reached the American side. We were so happy to see our liberators. Never in the years of war had I felt so safe as upon seeing them. As we passed by them, walking in the muddy field, some of them were whistling at the women in our group. The women were smiling. They were flattered. I noticed that some of them were trying to fix themselves, especially their hair, not with a comb but with their fingers. Most of us had nothing except what we were wearing. We waited for the others to come back. When it was already dark, we went our separate ways towards what might be left of our homes. That night we stayed in a *nipa* hut in a *barrio* called Cogan. But this was a sad night since Papa Catalino was not with us.

The next afternoon, while still waiting for our eldest brother and his family to arrive, Papa Catalino was picked up by an American soldier for questioning in front of the public school. Unlike during the Japanese occupation, when he was brought to their headquarters, I noticed Mother was not alarmed.

There were other families staying in the *nipa* hut that night. It was becoming crowded. One man had a couple of canned goods, from which he opened one and shared it with everybody. It was very tasty. I was so hungry after nearly starving through our running to the hills; I could have eaten the whole can all by my hungry self. In the mountains we only ate root crops, when available,

and even then we only ate twice a day. I craved for more, but there were too many of us and food so scarce. I was wondering what kind of food it was. I picked up the empty can and it was corned beef hash. As I tried to sleep that night, the heavenly tasting corned beef hash was still in my mind. My fantasy then was that, if I were to become rich, I would buy a lot of corned beef hash and eat it all by myself. Even nowadays, when I remember this fantasy, I just laugh. It was just a very hungry boy's ludicrous wish!!

Near noon the next day Papa Catalino finally arrived. We were to move back to Deposito. Our brother and his family were still gone. We learned that most of our group was, in fact, still in Deposito. We figured they were, too. Before leaving we first went to see our old house in town. I was disoriented as most of the houses of our town were destroyed by the shelling launched by the American liberators from the bay. Our house was no longer the home we knew. Only mangled galvanized roofing and ashes were left following the liberation. The family memorabilia and heirlooms all lost forever. I think what Mother really missed most of all was portrait of her beloved father and other keepsakes from in his younger days in Spain. She said, to no one in particular, that we should have brought these things to the hills, like the land titles and other important papers which were safe in our backpacks and assigned to Papa Catalino's half-brother. We appreciated what he did for our family. He never let go of the basket assigned to him to carry. The school opposite our house was gone. So was the church. But the huge acacia tree beside the church was still standing proudly—a witness of what had happened here. How I wished it was gone also, since kids in those times feared that an *agta* or *kapri* (tree demon) lived in big acacia trees. I was no exception. When coming home from the town plaza at night, I used to go out of my way and take a street farther from our house to avoid passing that acacia tree—for, on dark nights, an *agta* might snatch me. Although our parents told me that those superstitious stories were not true but products of fertile and fearful imaginations. I was more swayed to believe what my friends told me. We could only stand on the street and look out at our destroyed house for we were told there was still unexploded ammunition scattered around.

When we arrived at Deposito the first thing Papa Catalino did was to look for big brother Romeo and his family. Evening came and they were nowhere to be found. The next day, our fears only increased when a crowd gathered. I was

curious and joined them. A man was telling Papa Catalino a story that Father Ismael Cata-ag has been killed. When they found him, the priest's jaw was severed from his head. And as he lay dying, bleeding profusely, he tried to deliver his last words, but no one could understand him. Before we went to the hills I had occasionally served as an altar boy when Father Cata-ag said the Holy Mass. I admired his total trust in God. One day it was my turn to serve as an altar boy with him celebrating the Holy Mass. Just after Holy Communion we heard airplanes flying overhead. This was not unusual, as there were lots of them. I looked back to the church attendants and noticed most of them already leaving. Mother was still there, and I was sure she would wait for me. Then we heard explosions, though they were not near the church yet Father Cata-ag continued saying the Holy Mass, and I was obliged to stay, although it would take only a few minutes from that part of the Holy Mass to finish, it felt like the longest minutes of my life. Finally, when we went out of the church, for the first time I saw American planes flying overhead. The markings were stars. I had mixed feelings of fear and joy. That day people were already running to the hills, including our family.

When the Americans liberated our beloved country from the Japanese tyranny they socialized with the civilians. Some civilians were hired to help rebuild the city from the ashes of the war and became good friends with the Americans. Some became sweethearts. At this time Papa Catalino worked with the Philippine Civilian Administration Office (PCAO). A sudden sadness swept through the community when word spread that the Americans were moving out. With Ormoc already secured, they would move on to someplace else in the fight for liberation, which began when General McArthur landed in the Leyte Gulf, and had continued into Ormoc Bay.

Then the day for them to move out of our town finally came. People coming home from the American camp that day were carrying a lot of stuff. They had canned goods, k-rations, and various other goodies. No one was empty handed. It was already late in the afternoon and Papa Catalino was not yet home. Our brother jokingly said that he might have had a hard time carrying what his American friends had given him—most of his friends were officers. At last, we saw from a distance Papa Catalino coming. We laughed and were so excited. He really was having a hard time carrying a big sack. We huddled around him as he opened it I was expecting canned goods. To our great surprise and

disappointment, there were only books. Our parents never argued in front of their children but, this time, they did. He was trying to explain the importance of books. Mother argued that they needed something for their stomachs. I was puzzled when I heard Papa Catalino say that the books were dedicated to him and signed by his West Point graduate friends. He said that some of them would become great leaders in the United States. I thought that West Pointers were tailors since, at that time, West Point was a kind of fabric. I do not know what happened to those books or what came of his friends. But now that I am a citizen of the United States, I could track down his friends if I wanted to.

The day before Papa Catalino died (March 22, 1946), after months spent rebuilding our town, a couple of Americans visited our house. They informed Papa Catalino that he was cleared and acquitted of the charges against him leveled by his political enemies who accused him of being a Japanese collaborator. I later learned that those Americans were members of the OSS (Office of the Strategic Services), the precursor of the CIA. They were the ones who rounded up accused Japanese collaborators. As soon as we came down from the hills an American had picked up Papa Catalino. He thought then that he would be asked to give information about the Japanese straggling on the hills. He was shocked to discover that he was suspected and accused of being a Japanese collaborator. There was an investigation. Months passed by and Papa Catalino, as usual, planned ahead for the future. Meticulous in what he did, he became a different man after the accusation. For one, he never spoke of politics, which was his skill. And he gave up his plans to develop our family farm. He had wanted to plant sugar cane, which was lucrative then, and was eager to be among the first in our town to harvest. However, after the accusation, his plans and a lot more – faded away.

Eventually, he was sent to a stockade in Tacloban. One day I was playing on the street in front of our house when Papa Catalino came to me. He pointed to a building that could be seen from where we stood. I learned later that it was the OSS Headquarters. He told me to go there and beg the Americans not to send him to prison. I was stunned and could not say a word. I could not look at him straight in the eyes. Our family upbringing was to look deep into the eyes of the person we were talking with—especially our elders. As he was Papa Catalino, I felt guilty for not looking him in the eyes. I was wondering *Why me? Why not ask one of my five siblings?* However, he did ask them but, like me, they

told nobody of Papa Catalino's request of them—maybe it was fear, maybe guilt. Not even attempting this seemingly impossible task, and abandoning him in his great time of need, seem unimaginable to me now.

He was temporarily released with no explanation—possibly it was for humanitarian reasons. We figured they would send him back to the stockade after Christmas day. Nonetheless, he spent the most of his time with us. He went to the market (which he helped develop as the town mayor before the war; he also built the dikes that protected our town from floods) to buy foodstuffs, from which he lovingly cooked a meal for us. I also noticed a change in his religious life. He heard the Holy Mass every day. On Saturdays we would gather around our dining table while he read the Bible to us and led family devotions. Then he made each one of us share our reflections on the passages. Always an educator, he made us explain them in English. How I wished the Bible was in our dialect. But he was trying to hit two birds with one stone. He was fond of using the Proverbs as practical wisdom on living. By this, we would gain insights into the Bible, all while our English improved. He was very good with words and an orator who deeply moved crowds as well as an unbeaten debater since his student days studying law at the University of the Philippines. These were skills that, before the war, helped him win the Ormoc mayoralty in a landslide victory. If it were up to me, though, Papa Catalino would have never entered into politics. In the Philippines, politics is a very expensive venture—full of intrigues and double dealings.

As a vice mayor, he ran for town mayor but lost the election to Atty. Victorio Laurente. Supporters of the winning party converged in front of our rented house. They carried a black coffin. At the time they approached, I was on the sidewalk playing marbles. I was terrified when the group started chanting, “*Si Cata na lata.*” *Cata* was Papa Catalino's nickname, and *lata* means decomposed. I really believed that my father was inside the coffin. I ran upstairs to look for Mother. I was so relieved when I saw him peeping through a gap in the window down at the madness in the street.

After this defeat I thought he was done with politics. We moved to Cebu City. It was one of the best days of my young life. No more would people be coming to our house, sometimes late at night. No more negative slogans and jingles about Papa Catalino.

At the Zapatera Elementary School in Cebu City no one knew Papa Catalino. My schoolmates would only tease me about my hair-shaved per doctor's orders to treat the blisters on my head. Twice a week Mother and I would visit the clinic. On one occasion at the doctor's office, after checking the progress of the medication on my blisters, he advised Mother to be cautious of Papa Catalino's diet. This made me wonder at the connection with my blisters and Papa Catalino's diet. He jokingly said that he hoped Papa Catalino could withstand not eating the delicious *lechon* (roasted pig) of Talisay, Cebu. Being a small kid I did not know that Papa Catalino had moderate hypertension.

In Cebu City our family was doing very well. Papa Catalino was hired as a manager of the Club Filipino in Lahug, Cebu (1938–1940). It was one of the most prestigious places in Cebu before World War II, boasting the city's only golf course. In the province of Cebu, my big brothers Romeo and Benny made some money; first, as caddy boys and, later, caddies at the course. The members of the club were rich people. Most of them gave good tips. My big sister earned some money; too. She cooked fried bananas and sold them to the caddies and workers at their stations on the golf course. They gave us pocket money for school and for going to the movies.

We lived in a big house almost opposite the Club Filipino. The house was owned by Mother's younger sister, Anresa Larrazabal, and her husband, Tomas Cerilles. Lahug during those days was tranquil. They were kind enough to let us stay in their house. Their other big house in Bonifacio, downtown Cebu City, was destroyed during World War II, unfortunately.

Though others tried, I think it was Potenciano Larrazabal, Mother's nephew, who persuaded Papa Catalino to reenter into politics. Days after Larrazabal visited us in Lahug we moved back to Ormoc. There, Papa Catalino was elected mayor. At his victory, there was no coffin paraded in front of defeated candidate's residence. Papa Catalino was too noble to disrespect his losing opponents, or let his supporters do so. Papa Catalino was not a vindictive man. As mayor of Ormoc, he made a lot of improvements to the town. Although to me, being a young kid, all I cared about was his organizing a town band. Every Sunday they played at the plaza kiosk

Years later, as my high school graduation approached, I had a heart to heart talk with my high school teacher Mr. Lucas de Loyola. He revealed to me that before World War II he was against Papa Catalino in his political ventures. I was surprised because his family was very close to my family. He said he used to lambaste Papa Catalino during political rallies at the town plaza, even during social gatherings; Some were not political issues, but personal concerns. When World War II broke out he was worried. Since Papa Catalino was the Mayor, Mr. de Loyola feared he might turn against him and his family, and do them harm. He was very thankful nothing happened. He could not know that, once the war broke out, Papa Catalino did not care about his political ambitions anymore. He was only concerned with protecting his family and community. The one and only greeting card I received for my high school graduation was from Victoris, Mr. Lucas de Loyola's bother. It was one of my prized positions. However it, along with many other cherished possessions, was lost in a flood in Mindanao.

When Papa Catalino died our lifestyle changed. Though we had hectares of land, the income from it dwindled. I think the failure of Papa Catalino was that he did not show Mother how to manage the farm. Possibly he tried but Mother was not interested. She grew up as an *Interna* at Santa Isabel, Manila. Managing a farm requires hard work and meticulous supervision. It was the practice during those days, particularly in Mother's family, that wives stay home to take care of the kids and, most importantly, attend to their looks so the husband will not look for a *quirida* or mistress.

Before Papa Catalino became mayor, he had a sufficient income. First he had been a teacher, later a principal—one of the founders of Ormoc Institute. He also collected a salary as an elected municipal official at the same time. He even tried to make extra income running a backyard poultry farm. He knew how to spay the chickens. The unusually large size of the spayed chickens made for a lot of curiosity from the customers. He raised some goats, too. I just loved the goat's milk because it did not upset my stomach. However, we did not own a store because Papa Catalino said it was not wise for a politician to do so, saying, "You cannot refuse those that will ask for credit, even if the person is unreliable."

The income from the farm was Papa Catalino's main financial source for his political ambitions. In his late twenties he was already involved in politics. Before World War II my grandparents, him, and his siblings did not own a house in Ormoc proper. It was the practice during those days for landholders to live on their farms. Don Felipe Larrazabal, Senior Teodoro Uriates, and the Barilas—to name a few—lived on their *haciendas*. Like my father, they did not own a house in town.

In December 1943, long before he was accused of being a Japanese collaborator, he found himself in trouble when the Japanese overran Blas Miranda's headquarters. The commander of the Japanese underground movement confiscated letters written by Papa Catalino to Blas. Papa Catalino was immediately arrested. He was interrogated by the Kempetai. He was sentenced to be beheaded. At our house I observed Mother kneeling at the altar for hours. Like all wives, Mother visited the Kempetai's place to beg for Papa Catalino's life. While there, a telephone call came through. At the other end as Captain Abe. She later learned Captain Abe was in Tacloban at that time. Two days later Captain Abe returned to Ormoc and, with his intervention, Papa Catalino was released from prison. But from then on Papa Catalino's moves were closely monitored.

In his temporary release from the American stockade, he was with us for only a couple of months. Tragically, he died the very next day after being informed that he was found innocent of the allegations perpetrated by his political enemies of his being a Japanese collaborator. Most of our relatives and friends speculated that his death was caused by his extreme joy at being vindicated following his deep depression from the unjust allegations. As for me, whether it was good or bad news that the ass told Papa Catalino, it was the will of God that it was his time to go. Events only fulfill the will of the Almighty. Papa Catalino believed this, often saying, "Man proposes, but only God disposes." When I came home from school that afternoon the day before he died, I sensed that he was very cheerful. And though I was not told personally about the Americans coming and clearing his name, I heard Papa Catalino telling people. All that day there were people coming to our house to chat. All were in high spirits. But I was feeling anger—anger at the *contra partido* (political rival) for what they had accused my beloved father of being. That had been what Mother would call them. She blamed the political opponents for the hardships and

sufferings we had gone through. Since Papa Catalino was a politician, I was used to a lot of people visiting us. Some of these visitors were already talking about the political plans for Papa Catalino, such as running for higher office. If he had survived longer, I think Papa Catalino would have attended to our family farm rather than entering into politics again. Before he died that night, just as he was about to go to sleep, he instructed his half-brother to prepare early next morning for we were going back to our family farm. He was happily looking forward to a more wholesome life on the farm.

His half-brother (who was only one year older than me) and I stayed up late on that last night of his life. He was studying and I was browsing through geography books–t love studying maps. When he was done studying he glanced in my direction. He began asking questions about geography, but soon we were in a heated argument. Although my answers were correct, he told me they were rather wrong. I may not have been as good as my siblings in school but, when it comes to geography, I was very sure of myself. I could sense that he knew I was correct. He just wanted to initiate an argument for practice, as he was joining a debate team. Later I learned from Mother that minutes before Papa Catalino's death, while we were arguing, she was prepared to scold us to keep quiet, as our voices were very loud and they were about to sleep. Papa Catalino prevented her from doing so. He told her to leave them alone, since we were building the foundation of becoming a good debater. Of his six children, I believe my voice was the last one he heard before he died. Whatever his thoughts and plans for me and the rest of my siblings, is the question that he and God only knows and answer. He would have been an excellent coach when it comes to debate, no doubt about it. It was even written that he was “*a versatile debater and orator since his student days up to his last stint in public service.*”

The next day Papa Catalino died. He was buried right away. Before he was brought to church for the last rite, the coffin was placed on the street in front of our rebuilt house. There were numerous people in attendance, but all we heard were whispers. Even some of his political opponents were there–maybe to assure them that their feared political nemesis was truly gone. A photographer was preparing to take a family picture. He was asking the crowd–who were gathered around Papa Catalino's coffin–to give way for the immediate family. It was already time to go to church, and so the photographer just asked those screening the coffin to move aside. He quickly took a candid picture with no

formal posing. I tried my best to tiptoe around so I would be seen. Just as the photographer was done with his one and only shot, the coffin was covered and brought to the church. Fortunately, the picture was a good one.

When I was first hired by the San Miguel Brewery in Mindanao I could not afford to rent a room. So I stayed in a *bedspacer* room. There was no privacy, and your personal possessions were at risk to being stolen or used by mistake or lost. However, I had peace of mind with my money. There was no bank in town but there was a post office. My father had taught us that a savings account could be opened at the post office, so that is what I did. Most of my friends thought that the post office was only for mailing letters. But from an early age, I had known that the stamp is not a decoration for an envelope. He explained to me that it would send letters to distant lands. One day, the woman who was taking care of my laundry came to where I worked. She asked for a cash advance so she could buy some medicine for her sick grandson. I told her that I would have to make a withdrawal first as I did not have any cash on hand. One of my co-workers overheard me and said that there's no bank in town and asked sarcastically – "Where would you withdraw the money, from the toilet?" They laughed at me, but I had the last laugh at their ignorance. One of them had lost all his savings in a single night; he must have fallen so fast asleep that, according to his wife, she had to put their money under her pillow where it was unprotected and stolen.

At times Papa Catalino responded to situations in ways I could not comprehend, and to this day I still cannot. Before the war, as town mayor, he often brought me to his office. He had a bell on his desk which he would ring to make people come to his office. Sometimes they would come in groups, and at other times individually. When only one was called in I noticed this usually meant the individual was being reprimanded.

One day a group of policemen came into his office. One of them was the father of the bully at our school. When the bully walked to school, he would hold his father's hand to show off that his father was a policeman and to be feared—as if we did not already know this fact. He was constantly bragging about his father, and it was always the first thing he would tell newcomers at school. Being kids, we believed that policemen were the ultimate authority. So I

was absolutely puzzled to see the policemen standing at attention and addressing my father as sir.

Then, after some days, the father of the bully came to Papa Catalino's office. He was alone this time. He saluted and stood at attention. Papa Catalino reprimanded him harshly. This time, I was very sure that the policeman was a subordinate. When he left, I told Papa Catalino about his bullying son, who one time grabbed my cap and threw it to the mud. And I told of his other bullying tactics, such as stealing my pencil from my desk and breaking it. Papa Catalino did not say a word. He just kept on nodding as he listened. When I was done talking, he rang the bell on his table several times. I assumed he was angry of what I just told him. I anticipated that he would reprimand the father for his bullying son—commanding him to make his son leave me alone. But it was only another man who came in. Days and weeks passed until closing of the school year and the bully was, as before, still bothering me. Papa Catalino did nothing. What was his reasoning? It is still a mystery to me. Maybe he was telling me that the world is full of bullies. You have to learn to stand up to them or else they will keep on bothering you.

My father was a very precious treasure lost. A treasure of wisdom, guidance, knowledge, and above all, love. He was a very good provider. He was among the first to rebuild their house following the shelling our town suffered in the liberation. Though it was only made of *nipa* and bamboo, it was a big house. Most importantly, it was a loving home. A small house with only one bedroom was also built beside our house for the eldest brother and his family, so they could have their own privacy. My childhood would have been less hardships and struggle had Papa Catalino not died while I was still young. Our eldest brother had to take the burden of breadwinning for his younger siblings and Mother, in addition to his own young family. Maybe I did not have started working in my early teenage years, but that I needed to be independent. I was pretty sure that I could have been a Lawyer or at least have a college degree had he lived longer—maybe, as successful as my friends are now because their fathers did not die too soon. As a teenager I hung around with my friends. We would really roar into laughter when they told jokes about their fathers. They told of the deceptive tricks they had used to let their father "bleed" money for their *caprichos* (fancifulness). They would compete, and whoever netted most in their wicked schemes would brag. They did not have a hard time when

they needed cash for dates or other exploits and adventures. I could only say to myself that I would never trick our loving father into giving me money that I would just squander with my *caprichos*. But on second thought, had my father been alive, I may not have been much better than my friends at that age. What cannot be denied, though, is that my father—with his virtue, dignity, and love—was the influential force shaping my life, molding the father I myself became.

As they wisely say:

You will terribly miss the well when the water runs dry

Sneed Dormitory for Boy

Calle Juan Luna (Now Osmena Blvd) Cebu City, Philippines

Named after Rev. Sneed Pastor of East Liberty Church, Pittsburgh. The dormitory was run by American Presbyterian Missionaries.

My father and his younger brother, Cayetano, Stay in the dormitory during their college days in Cebu City.



Officers of Administration

JOSEPH RALSTON HAYDEN

Secretary of Public Instruction

LINO CASTILLEJO

Superintendent of Private Schools and Colleges

LUIS TIOJANCO

Superintendent of Private Schools

District of the Eastern Visayas and Mindanao

DIEGO C. QUIACHON

General Supervisor

District of the Eastern Visayas and Mindanao



CATALINO HERMOSILLA

Director

Cebu Junior College, U. P.

Fifteen Years teaching experience

Municipal Vice-President of Ormoc, Leyte, 1928-1931

Municipal Councilor of Ormoc, Leyte, 1931-1934

One of the founders of The Ormoc Institute

Sub-Director, The Ormoc Institute, 1931-1933

President, Ormoc Parent-Teachers Association, 1934

Public Orator

Residence: Ormoc, Leyte

Historical Background of The Ormoc Institute



THE Ormoc Institute has a wonderful history. Its existence is a Providential answer to Ormoc's fervent prayer long cherished by the people for a higher institution of learning to be the bountiful mother to the thousand sons and daughters who hunger and thirst for the pure and undiluted stream of wisdom and learning.

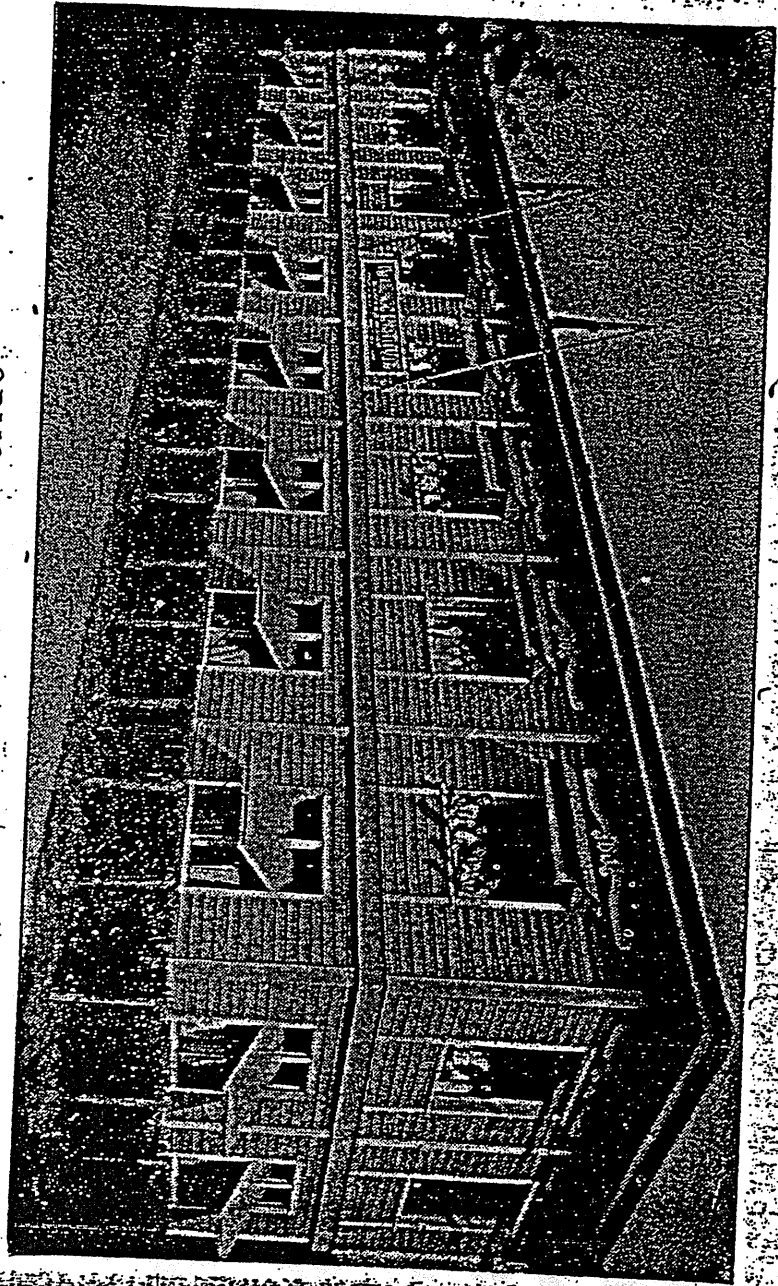
Since 1908 this town planned for a government school offering higher course than the intermediate. Political conditions, however, were so unstable that the town officials, because of party strifes, were unable to give their constituents what they expected of their representatives. These conditions continued up to the most recent dates when affairs improved. But then, the government had no more need to worry about giving the town any government school for the THE ORMOC INSTITUTE has successfully and efficiently filled up the need of the people.

The truth of THE ORMOC INSTITUTE comes about in this manner:

In the year 1925, Mr. Fred Warner, an American owner of the Filipino-American High School of Hagna, Bohol chanced to be in Ormoc. He observed that conditions in the town favored the establishment of a private high school. While his motive to serve the people of Ormoc can not be doubted, yet the greater idea at the back of the scheme for establishing a private high school was, perhaps, for financial gain. This enterprising American went about the town and talked with some of its citizens about the idea of establishing a private high school.

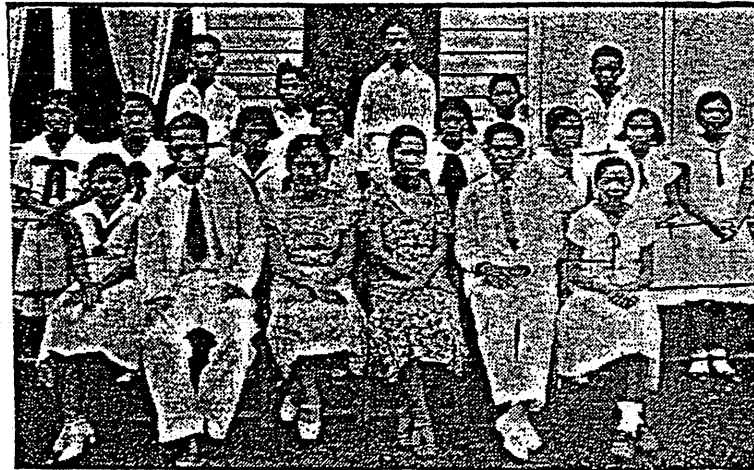
One of the town's citizens with whom Mr. Warner came in contact was Mr. Catalino Hermosilla, then member of the Municipal Council and now director of the THE ORMOC INSTITUTE. Seeing the splendid idea of Mr. Warner and the great opportunity it would offer to the young people of the town, Mr. Catalino Hermosilla, an ex-public school teacher, encouraged Mr. Warner and promised him all help he could possibly give. Under his leadership a mass meeting of the citizens of the town was called at the town plaza. The idea of establishing a private high school was submitted to the people. The response of the crowd was unanimously in favor of the proposition. Accordingly, Mr. Warner left for Cebu where he secured school equipments and supplies, hired teachers and returned to Ormoc ready to open the school.

On the 16 of June, 1925, the new school opened. There



ORMOC INSTITUTE BUILDING

Grade Five



OFFICERS

First Semester

<i>President</i>	Romeo Hermosilla
<i>Vice-President</i>	Julita Labarda
<i>Secretary</i>	Maura de la Fortuna
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mirarda Fernandez
<i>Sergeant-at-arms</i>	Guillermo Abaño
	Remedios Yap

Second Semester

<i>President</i>	Marcelo Arradaza
<i>Vice-President</i>	Otilia de la Fortuna
<i>Secretary</i>	Alberto Luna
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mary Walker
<i>Sergeant-at-arms</i>	Romeo Hermosilla
	Mirarda Fernandez

Miss Socorro Alba, Teacher in Charge

CLASS ROLL

Abaño, Guillermo	Bulawit, Restituta
Arradaza, Marcelo	Fortuna, Maura de la
Gomez, Vicente	Fortuna, Otilla de la
Hermosilla, Romeo	Fernandez, Gerarda
Luna, Alberto	Matuguina, Nicanora
Natividad, Angelo	Labarda, Julita
Maglasang, Francisco	Malinao, Praxedes
Baltonado, Eugenia	Walker, Mary
Bulawit, Maria	Yap, Remedios

CLASS HISTORY

—Marcelo Arradaza—

At the beginning of the school year, 1933-1934, the fifth



My Dear Mother Irene Larrazabal



Catalino Hermosilla Director of Ormoc Institute
Ormoc Leyte, Philippines with some of the students



Battle of Ormoc(Leyte), Dec. 1944-Jan. 1945.
PCAU 15 hq established at Ipil sugar central,
just south of city of Ormoc. Large refugee
camp set up next to 7th US Division units...

This picture taken at that camp. (l to r):

Captain Theodore L. Sendak, PCAU 15
detachment commander, adjutant, and labor
officer;

Mr. Catalino Hermosilla, Mayor of the city
of Ormoc.

Narciso Cinco, Jr.
SPECIALIST

(Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat)
Cebu E.E.N.T. Hospital
Lahug, Cebu City
(Near Hotel Magellan)

The Reporter

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AGUSTIN C. ARNAIZ
Manager

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* Ormoc * Cebu

VOL. VII NO. 20

EASTERN VISAYAS, REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES * CEBU * LEYTE * SAMAR * BOHOL

MARCH 24, 1972

New Diversion Road Named After Ormocano

ORMOC CITY, Mar. 14 (RNS) — The Municipal Board has adopted an ordinance naming the north diversion road connecting Cantubo and Canalo districts as "Catalino G. Hermosilla, Sr. Drive" in honor of the great educator, debater, public servant, arbiter, leader and statesman who spent the best years of his life in the service of his fellow-men, constituents, his community and, above all, his country next to God.

The ordinance was jointly sponsored by Councilors Tobal Mendola and Nito Marquez on the heels of a joint petition of some 131 city residents who alleged that "Cata", as he was very prominently known, has etched an exemplary record of public service, most notably in the fields of education and politics in war and peace, scaling the ranks from humble public school teacher, the first principal-teacher of Ormoc Institute (formerly Western Leyte Academy founded by Mr. Warner Barnes and Mrs. Feliza Zamora-Mejia) in 1916, then director of the same institution (1917-1927), principal-teacher of the intermediate department up to 1929 while



Late Mayor CATALINO G. HERMOSILLA
"to the man who served"



Hon. CRISTOBAL S. MENDOLA
co-sponsors ... "it is but



Hon. BRUNO T. MARQUEZ, Jr.
fitting and proper" ...

holding the highest position of "Supremo" of the "Legionarios del Trabajo" (1926-1929), and then principal-teacher of the Ormoc Institute of both high school and intermediate departments, Municipal Councilor (1930-1933), Municipal Vice-President (1922-1929), Municipal Vice-Mayor (1934-1937), Manager of Club Filipino de Cebu (now Magellan Hotel) from 1938 to 1940, and finally, Municipal Mayor from 1941 to 1943. He was a versatile debater and orator since his stu-

(continued on page 2)

Ormoc Rotary Represented At Iloilo Conference

At the 29th Conference District 385, the Ormoc Rotary Club was represented by 121 Rotarians and 6 Rotary Anns. Considered to be a well-attended confab with over 1,100 delegates from Visayas and Mindanao and a few distinguished guests from Luzon (District 380), the three-day fellowship, the Conference was a hectic round of varied intellectual, social and cultural exchange of ideas through the well-established Rotary fellowship. Discussions of the four avenues of service namely: Club, Vocational, Community and International Services were ably presented by knowledgeable Rotarians of the District. Representing the Rotary International President was Past District Governor Hari N. Harile-

(continued on page 5)

ORMOC ROTARY CLUB DISTRIBUTES RELIEF

Another batch on the way

New diversion - - - (continued from page 1)

dent days up to his last stint in public service.

The late Mayor Catalino G. Hermosilla, Sr., they said, has imbibed the spirit of statesmanship while in politics as an exponent for good government. "Cata", as Mayor of Ormoc City (formerly Ormoc, Leyte) was known to have administered the affairs of government of Ormoc with the greatest good to the greatest number without interest for any favored group, vested interest or for personal aggrandizement, so much so that, as an elected municipal official in various capacities, he treated partisan politics only as a thing to be considered during election campaigns and, once elected, he buckled down to his work, conscious of his sworn duties and responsibilities, not just for the political party that backed him up but for all and sundry bearing in mind always and ever the general progress and prosperity of Ormoc. To him the noblest motive was the public good.

Mayor Hermosilla was greatly responsible for the many public works projects even during the first year of his term of office. Some glaring example were the asphaltting of almost all the town streets and the facelifting of the public market. Incidentally, this north diversion road that now bears his name was his original plan and construction was already started but was cut short by the Second World War. As a matter of fact, during the start of the construction of the road last year, stones, sand and gravel were found in some portions

of the road, as attested to by city residents.

At the height of his public career, Mayor Hermosilla was confronted with the biggest challenge of his life when scarcely had he proceeded with implementation of his various programs of the municipal government, the second World War broke out, so that during the second year of his term of office, Ormoc found itself under the yoke of the Imperial Japanese Forces for which his administration was characterized by turmoil inherent in an enemy-occupied territory, but, nevertheless, had it not been for his judicious tact and diplomacy, codding our brothers in the underground movement while playing the ball with foreign invaders, Ormoc could have become a bloody arena of Filipino guerilla and Japanese soldiers with innocent civilians at the losing end of the cross-fires. Thanks to his magnanimous persuasion, our brother soldiers from the hills dispensed with their scheme to recapture the town by storm.

Cata Hermosilla was more than ever devoted to God Whom he communicated every day during holy mass and, ever energetic to foster the upbringing of Christian students, he displayed much enthusiasm and cooperation with the Benedictine Sisters community, for which he was instrumental in the construction of a temporary school building of the Saint Peter's Academy (now St. Peter's College) after the Liberation.

Mrs. Feliza Zamora Mejia, his contemporary in the field of education, said of him, "Mr. Hermosilla was, above all, a devout Catholic, one of the best teachers Ormoc ever had, an honest citizen of unquestion-

(continued on page 3)

last Wednesday, Mar. 15, 1972 to distribute their first batch of relief goods for the pyphoon flood victims of the town.

Recipients of the FOUR THOUSAND PESOS worth of relief goods were the residents of Bos. HIBUNAWAN and IGANG. Ormoc Rotarians and Anns including Rotary Exchange Student, Christine Hall personally distributed the goods inspite of the heavy downpour.

Among the Rotarians who participated in this relief distribution were: Pres. BEN ESTALILLA, Club President; Choy Alkuino, Club Secretary; Langcoy FRAN, Pres-Elect; Manoling Tan; Boy Roble

New Diversion . .

(continued from page 2)

able social standing, a disciplinarian without voices, who can even be compared to Rizal."

According to Councilors Mendola and Marquez, "as an appropriate tribute to the memory of the man who contributed much to our political maturity, to the man who served his people who in return loved and admired him profoundly, it is but fitting and proper that this city road be named after late Mayor Catalino G. Hermosilla, Sr., that would serve as a tardy wreath of dried leaves over his tomb."

The late Catalino Gabot Hermosilla, Sr., was born on April 30, 1898, his first marriage on June 14, 1922 was to Maxima Militante of Palo, Leyte, and was blessed with five (5) children the first two died on birth. He was widowed with the death of his first wife on March 21, 1929. He was remarried on February 1, 1930 to Irene Dumaguet Larrazabal and was again blessed with 3 children. Catalino Sr. died on March 23, 1946 at 2:30 P.M. and was followed by his second wife on Sept. 3, 1964. — V.D.L.

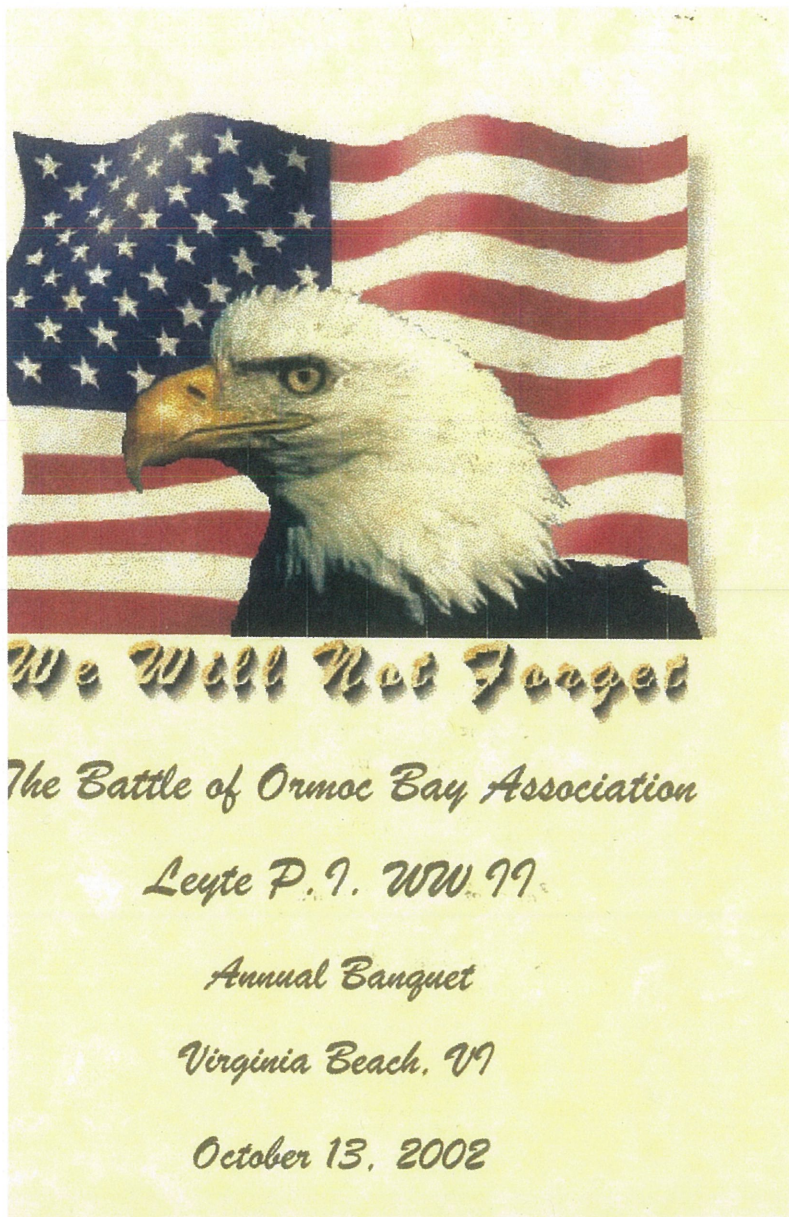


HEADQUARTERS:
Ormoc Parish Rectory

ADVERTISE THRU
THE REPORTER

h College

Benedictine Sisters)
Southern Leyte



We Will Not Forget

The Battle of Ormoc Bay Association

Leyte P.I. WW II

Annual Banquet

Virginia Beach, VA

October 13, 2002





JOSE HERMOSILLA

Hometown: Ormoc City, Leyte, P.I.

Address: Virginia Beach, VA

Guest Speaker 2002 Reunion Banquet Of the Battle of Ormoc Bay Association

Jose Hermosilla was 9 years old when the Japanese invaded Ormoc. He was 12 during the night battle of USS Cooper, USS Allen M. Sumner, and USS Moale with the Japanese on December 2nd through the 3rd, 1944 and the landing of TG 78.3 on December 7, 1944.

Jose came to the USA in 1987 and lives in Virginia Beach, VA.

Jose is the son of a distinguished father; Catalino Hermosillo who was mayor of Ormoc when the Japanese came. His biggest challenge was dealing with the Japanese forces. He saved many lives by peruating the Filipino Guerrillas not to recapture the city by storm.

Jose's father was the first principal/teacher of the Ormoc Institute after the war.

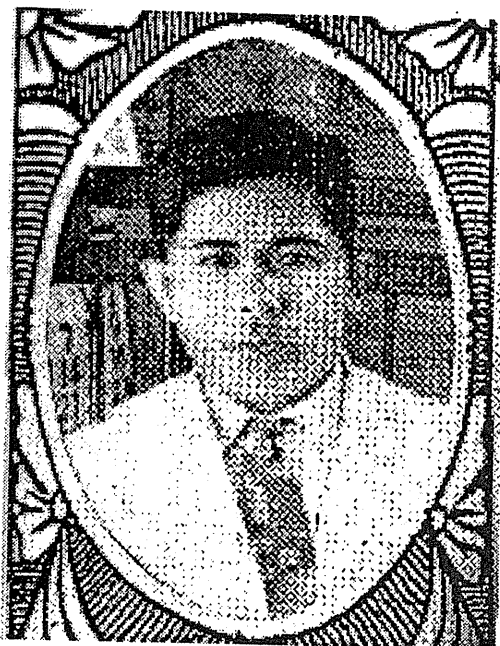
Jose, who was one of 5 children had a dream to come to the US. He and his wife, Hera are the parents of 9 children.

This is what he wrote. "Not in my wildest day dreams, did I think it possible that one day I will be a guest speaker of an association of courageous people who put their lives on the line to free a nation. It is one of the best moments of my life meeting you here. Thank you for everything at the banquet.

Thank you for the kind introduction, especially about my father. He is my hero. I've learned that even at an early age, he dreamed of becoming a mayor of his beloved Ormoc and to serve and improve Ormoc- especially in the academic fields.

He could not fulfill his dreams. After only one year in office war broke out. Then just as the war ended, he died, March of 1946.

I hope we will meet again. God Bless us all."



C.Hermosilla, Mayor of Ormoc City
1941



Jose Hermosilla, 2003

Participants of the Battle of Ormoc Bay Association, Annual Banquet. Virginia Beach, VA on October 13, 2002







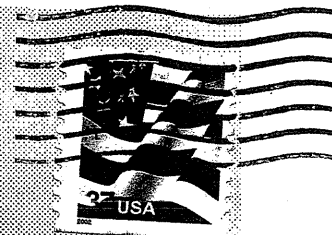
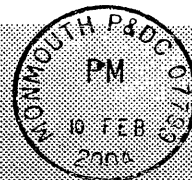
Mr. Bill Griggs, SM2 USN

Survivor of The Battle of Ormoc Bay December 1944.
Author " Preludes to Victory: The Battle of Ormoc Bay
WWII"

"Eric" Briggs DEPARTMENT 207/61

BATTLE OF ORMOC BAY ASSOCIATION

Irwin J. Kappes - Editor
35 Woodland Drive
Middletown, NJ 07748-3417



U.S.S. PURSUIT (AM-108), shown here as GS-17 in 19



The Poop Sheet

2004—Our 20th Anniversary Year

Dedicated to the memory of Association founders C. W. Stone
and Gene Bickers—both survivors of the U.S.S. COOPER (DD-695)

VOL. XXI NO. 4

WINTER, 2003-2004

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The Unsung Heroes of Ormoc Bay

In the early morning of November 27, 1944, two spunky little minesweepers, PURSUIT (AM-108) and REVENGE (AM-110) sailed boldly through the Canigao Channel to sweep the mines from the entrance to Ormoc Bay.

This action made possible the five destroyer sorties that preceded the December 6th landing of the 77th Division. These 890-ton ships were 221 ft. long and could make a maximum speed of 17 knots. They had one 3" gun, 2 40MMs and eight 20MMs.

After their shakedown in November, 1943, they led the way into the Tarawa lagoon, sweeping ahead of the invasion force. Next they were assigned to the Marshall Islands where they swept the Kwajalein lagoon. In October, 1944 they swept San Pedro Bay in Leyte Gulf, Ormoc Bay, and then Lingayen Gulf, San Felipe and Subic Bay followed by Okinawa, China and Japan. Each ship earned 8 battle stars.

The REVENGE was the first U.S. Navy ship to enter Tokyo Bay after the war.

NOW HEAR THIS! The star after your name on the address label is not an award. It is an indication that dues (still \$15.) are in arrears.

fire. Finally, as a gunny sergeant, I did three consecutive combat tours in Vietnam. We humped through the mud and razor grass for 14 hours a day, plagued by rain and mosquitos, ducking under sniper fire all day and mortar fire all night. In a fire fight, we'd fire until our arms ached and our guns were empty, then we'd charge the enemy with bayonets!" "Ah," said the sailor with a dismissive wave of his hand, "All shore duty, huh?"

□ □ □

U.S. NAVAL STRENGTH IN 1940

Number of ships – 1,099
Number of men – 203,127

U.S. NAVAL STRENGTH IN 1945

Number of ships – 67,952
Number of men – 4,031,097

U.S. NAVAL CASUALTIES IN WWII

U.S. Navy – 35,479 killed
U.S. Marines – 18,958

U.S. Navy – 908 Died in POW camps
U.S. Marines – 510 Died in POW camps

A total of 185 U.S. sailors were killed by friendly fire during WWII and 438 were wounded.

Kamikaze attacks on U.S. ships caused the deaths of 3,593 American sailors and 5,538 were wounded.

□ □ □

Dan Hearl (U.S.S. MOALE) sent us a copy of the Christmas menu aboard the Moale in 1944:

Cream of Tomato Soup	
Crackers	Stuffed Olives
Roast Young Turkey	
Southern Dressing	Giblet Gravy
Cranberry Sauce	
Whipped Sweet Potatoes	
Buttered Asparagus tips	French Peas
Pineapple Ice Cream	Fruit Cake
Pumpkin Pie	Christmas Candies
Mixed Nuts	Cigarettes
Bread	Butter
Iced Orangeade	

□ □ □

A Navy Chief was on vacation in the depths of Louisiana and he wanted a pair of genuine alligator shoes in the worst way, but was reluctant to pay the high prices the local vendors wanted.

After becoming very frustrated with the "no haggle" attitude of one of the local shopkeepers, the Chief shouted, "Maybe I'll just go out and get my *own* alligator so I can get a pair of shoes made at a reasonable price!" The vendor said, "Be my guest. Maybe you'll run into a couple of Marines who were in here earlier saying the same thing."

So the Chief headed into the bayou and a few hours later came upon two men standing waist deep in the water. He thought, "Those must be the two Marines the guy in town was talking about." Just then, the Chief saw a tremendously long gator swimming rapidly underwater towards one of the Marines.

Just as the gator was about to attack, the Marine grabbed its neck with both hands and strangled it to death with very little effort. Then both Marines dragged it on shore and flipped it on its back. Laying nearby were several more of the creatures.

One of the Marines then exclaimed, "Damn! This one doesn't have any shoes either!"

□ □ □

Little known but true: The U.S. Navy fired more rounds in Korea than was fired by all the ships of all the navies of World War II. For example, the city of Wonsan was fired on daily for 21/2 years.

□ □ □

We should all be as patriotic as Jose Hermosilla, (the resident of Ormoc as a young boy during WWII) who spoke at our 2002 Reunion in Virginia Beach and who wrote the following poem:

THE PERPETUAL RAINBOW

A small boy I was a long time ago
I've always dream where and how to go,
To that rainbow's foot for the pot of gold
To search and dig for a treasure so bold.

Years passed I know of a perpetual rainbow
I craved to reach if possible tomorrow,
For there it stays even during stormy days
"From sea to shining sea" gold are aplenty
For if I strive hard for it
I CAN DO IT

Now I'm in the rainbow and found some of the gold
From people I am fortunate to associate
Whites, blacks and yellows and all
From their golden hearts, words and deeds

America, America the perpetual rainbow
For the roots are anchored deep and strong
Transplanted from the four corners of the world
And intertwined with the native seeds
For "God shed his grace on thee".

□ □ □

www.gunplot.net/seashanties/html is a website that sells music and provides samples that can be heard on the Internet. Some of the songs available are:

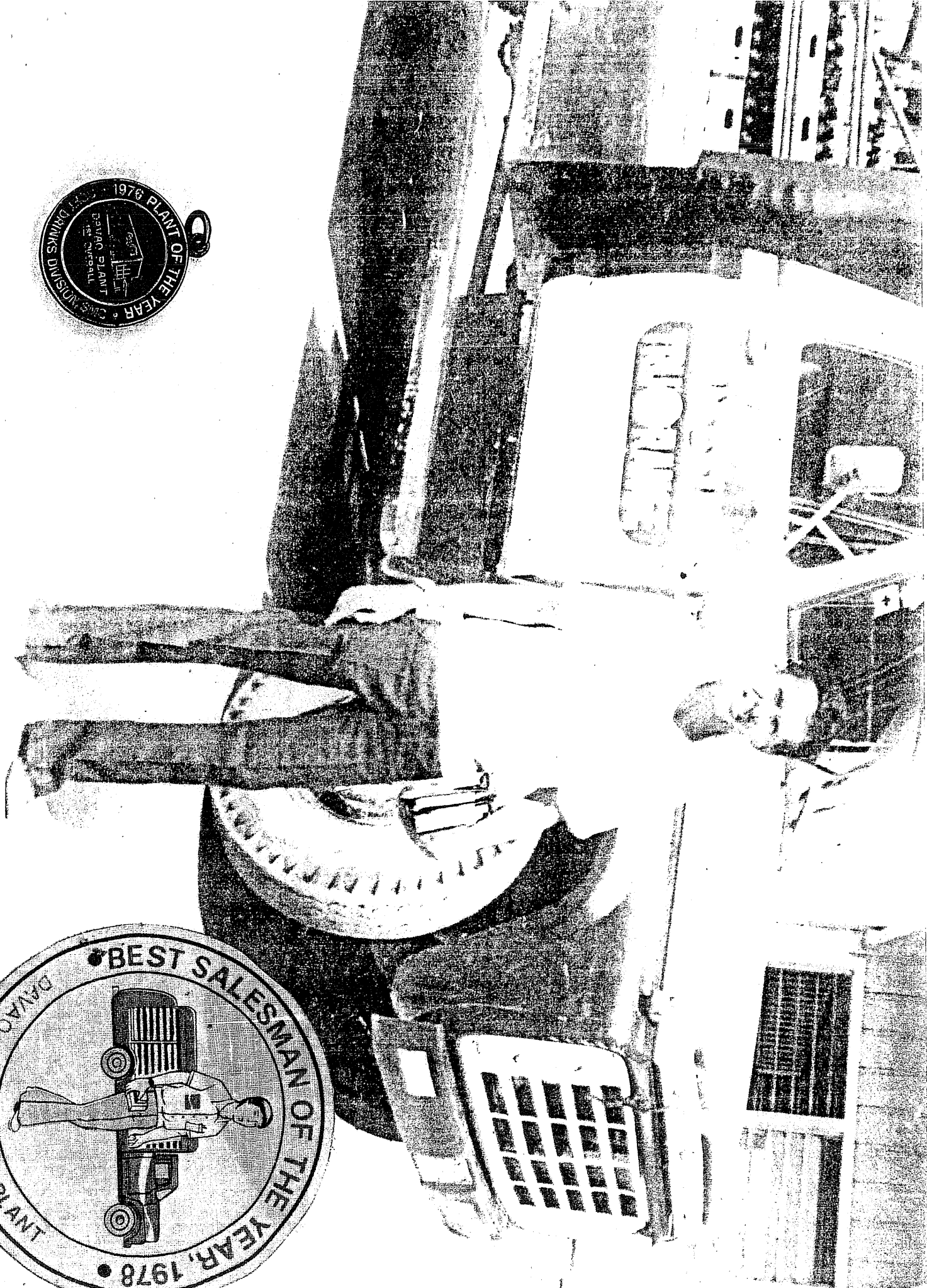
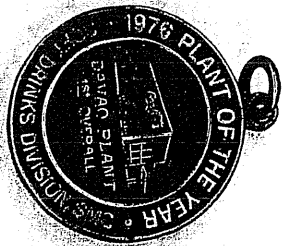
"Battle of Ormoc Bay"
"Ain't Going to Sea no More"
"Zamboanga"
"The Laws of the Navy"

COMMENCEMENT Exercises

CLASS 1950-51



X = MR. LUCAS DELOYOLA



KAUNLARAN ESSAY CONTEST

GRAND PRIZE

How Our Children
Got Their Names
by Rolando P. Cayabyab
Bacolod Coca-Cola Plant
First Prize Winner
Third Quarter

1st Prize 4th QUARTER

By Ramon Cordero
Metal Closure and Lithography Plant

MARIA



Cordero

She was a small woman, barely 4'11", but she occupied a big part of our lives.

She loves to dress well, even late in her life. Like all women, she is specially proud when wearing a new dress. Then she would have her photo taken, always posing very well.

(She was an Ilonga who married a Caviteño. Unfortunately, the marriage broke up. She bundled her four daughters and moved to Manila, eventually settling in Iloilo. Those were trying times. But she had a talent for crocheting. She sold her creations and somehow managed a living. She was even able to send her daughters to high school.)

Other Fourth Quarter Winners

Second Place "The Wild Guess"
by Nathaniel C. Aldemita
Cagayan Coca-Cola Plant

Third Place "How I Became a San Miguel Man"
by Jose L. Hermosilla
Davao Coca-Cola Plant

KAUNLARAN

KAUNLARAN ESSAY CONTEST

1st Prize
Third Quarter

By Rolando P. Cayabyab
Bacolod Coca-Cola Plant



HOW OUR CHILDREN GOT THEIR NAMES

We have four. All boys. All we will ever have. Friends often tell me, "You are starting to believe them." Long and "nowhere" are commonly used to describe the names of our kids. I have seen too many heads shake in total disbelief. I often wonder how others can take the ritual of choosing names with great ease. And well ahead of the child's birth yet. Sometimes, even before the baby is born. In our case, it was always a serious mental exercise. Being the father, I felt it was my responsibility to name our child. We should have foreseen it. But time right

2. In her name will always appear. Suddenly, my wife uttered a sigh. "That's the name." I remember letting out a sigh. Little did I know that I would go through the same ordeal three more times. And it was getting more and more difficult each time as the pool of nice-sounding combinations was diminishing.

Close friends have varied reactions to our choices. Some say our kids will not be successful persons. There will be great confusion, others say, "True enough, they weighed any of our children during any time they would be allowed at the drastic decision-making. They would be allowed only to find out later that they had the wrong record for the wrong child or vice versa."

Our eldest son is Ramonito, whom we nicknamed "Rito." Next is Rosalino, Ogie for short. Third is Ramonito, and last, but not least, is Ramonito. And we fondly call him Ogie.

Ogie was born by Caesarian section. It was during the operation that the doctor discovered the necessity of performing tubal ligation on my wife. "I hope you don't mind," he said, "I will do it for you. It's a good thing to do. It could be fatal for my wife to give birth again."

At times, I stop and think of what I would have done for a baby girl. I know it is not easy to accept the reality of missing the happiness and joy of having a daughter. But I guess my wife and I have gotten over it somehow.

I have this one precious consolation though. My wife is now fully convinced of my sincerity when I promise her some years ago, "You will always be the only girl for me, Elizabeth."

KAUNLARAN ESSAY CONTEST
WINNERS, THIRD QUARTER

She goes to church daily. She's very active in church activities and very good at soliciting contributions.

(When war broke out, she evacuated her family to Laguna. She saw all her children married and grandchildren born and grow up. She did a lot of crocheting for them.)

Sometimes she snores. Once, her daughters ribbed her about her snoring. "How come I don't hear it?" she retorted. We all burst out laughing.

(One day after so many years, her estranged husband came to visit them. She was very happy to see him. Time must have healed her bitterness, and the happiness in her past must have flowed back.)

A good story-teller, she enthralled us, her grandchildren, with countless fables and frightening tales of aswangs.

(One time, she complained of a lump on her right chest. It was a cyst. Nothing serious. She had it removed. Everything was fine.)

She loves pets. She had many cats, mostly adopted strays. And dogs.

(She complained of a recurring pain in her stomach. She was brought to a specialist. She was operated on but it was too late.)

What then is an old woman for? She was not an intellectual. She had no money, only a wealth of experiences. Sometimes eccentric, a bit of the past in the present. A humorous presence.

But afterwards, we really felt her absence. Strange that by her presence, she carried some of the responsibilities that were ours. And now that she's gone, our load seems heavier.

(We buy her flowers. But how I wish that I could give her something more to repay her for all she had done for us. There is so much we owe her. Specially now.)



MARCH 15, 1996

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

IT HAS BEEN MY PLEASURE TO WORK WITH JOSE HERMOSILLA AT THE HOLIDAY INN AIRPORT. HIS HARD WORK AND DEDICATION TO ANY TASK PUT BEFORE HIM IS ADMIRABLE. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THIS SOFT SPOKEN, GENTLE MAN. HE IS TOUGH AS STEEL AND CAN OUT WORK ANY TWO MEN TWICE HIS JUNIOR. JOSE IS SELF-DEPRECATING TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF, SO I WILL DO IT FOR HIM. I KNOW OF NO OTHER PERSON WHO HAS WORKED AS DILIGENTLY AS JOSE. HE HAS WON THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION OF ALL THE STAFF AND CUSTOMERS. I WISH ONLY THE BEST TO JOSE AND HOPE HE ENJOYS HIS NEXT ADVENTURE.

SINCERELY

Brenda Carlson

BRENDA CARLSON
GENERAL MANAGER



With My Wife Hera Libre
of Toledo Cebu, Philippines

"For every success or failure of a man, there is always
a woman behind"