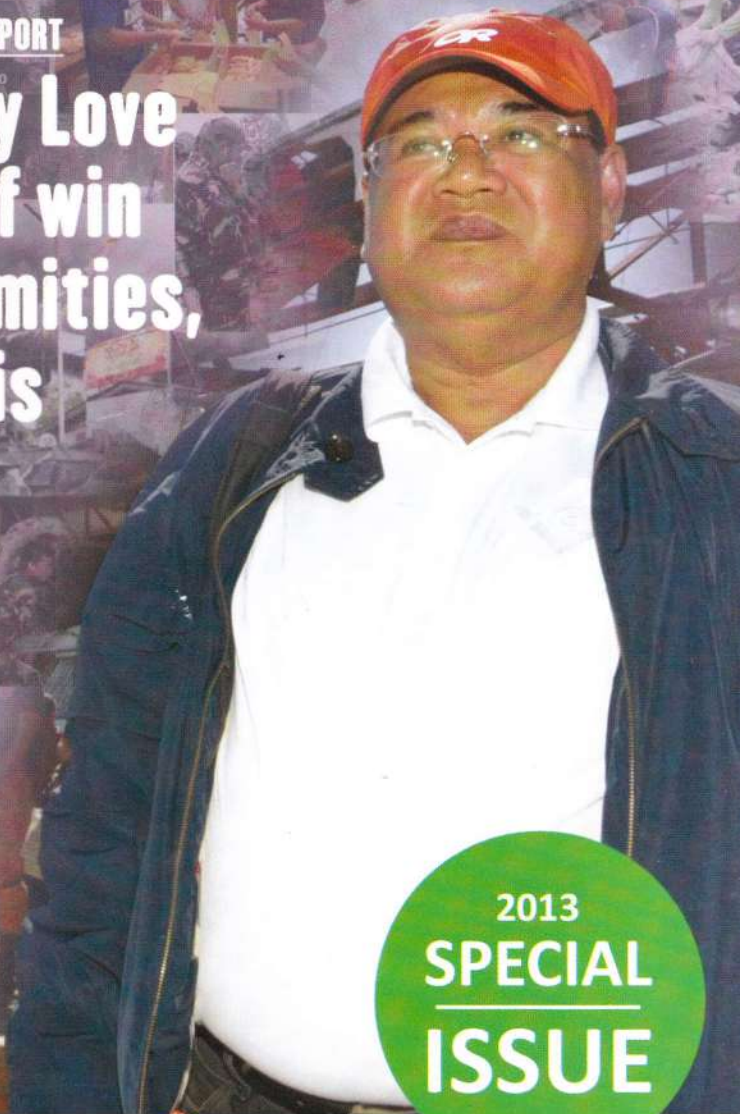


The Cabletow

The Official Publication of the Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines

SPECIAL REPORT

Brotherly Love & Relief win over calamities, crisis



2013
SPECIAL
ISSUE

Zambo siege

Bohol quake

Yolanda super typhoon



Visit of MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr., Grand Master, to the Brethren of Tacloban on November 24, 2013. Truly, it is one of the momentous photos in the annals of the Philippine Grand Lodge.

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The Cabletow

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By MW **Juanito G. Espino, Jr.**
Grand Master



Our cabletow is tougher than any calamity and crisis

When Mt. Pinatubo erupted on June 12, 1991, my first reaction was to run away far from harm's way. I was yet the Commission on Audit Director for Region 3 (Central Luzon). It fell on my shoulders to ensure the safety of the people and businesses under my care.

Twelve years later, the situation changed. When super typhoon Yolanda whipped Tacloban hard on November 8, my first reaction was to rush to the devastated city and see our brethren fast.

My anxiety compounded as I watched the TV news. So, when flights resumed two weeks later, I quickly boarded the first plane to Tacloban, on November 24, with VW Ben Tan, chairman of the Grand Lodge Committee on Charity.

Hardly had I fully descended the ramp in Tacloban Airport when all my weeks of anxiety gradually slid into a stifling, numbing, depression. There was devastation everywhere. The smell of death and decay was in the air. Everything looked unreal. I felt like my feet were not touching the ground as I walked in utter disbelief.

For this, I summoned all my will to put up a calm exterior before VW Edward Chua, our Junior Grand Lecturer for the Visayas, and the rest of the Tacloban brethren. Hard as I tried, yet their sight and stories grounded into bits whatever hardened mettle had remained in my breast.

And to think that they had come to meet the Grand Master, with the simplest

lunch they could offer—amid so humble conditions—was the best example of Brotherly Love that I had ever seen in all my life. That unforgettable scene alone was Masonry in its finest form.

No Masonic education can teach you that.

On our way to Ormoc to catch an evening ferry bound for Cebu, I looked out of the vehicle's window and saw the devastations Yolanda had wrought across the province. Amid the flitting but repetitive scenes of destruction, of victims begging for food and water on the roadsides, a question came across my mind: why does God often pick on the Philippines for disasters? Why does the Lord allow the Filipinos to suffer this much from one disaster to another?

The year 2013 saw a string of natural and man-made disasters—the Zamboanga Siege on September 9; the Bohol Quake on October 15; and the Super Typhoon Yolanda on November 8. All these huge and extraordinary events, interrupting the flow of normal life, are called “acts of God.” Even war acquires divine attribute when it spawns tragic consequences beyond the wicked designs and objec-

tives of its ringleaders.

I was wont to think like everybody else for the next few hours until we boarded the fast craft to Cebu. Out at sea, it finally dawned on me, while gazing across the waters, how unfair I was to the Lord Himself. In times of adversities, we lay the blame on the Almighty. But in times of joy and prosperity, we never credited Him for all the good He has given us—much more, to thank Him for all of it.

“In the same way that God allows disasters to occur, He also allows goodness to rise from the ruins.”

And still, we jumped quickly into judgment faster than we can comprehend His messages written all over nature—even in the sporadic convulsions of nature—that comprises a Mason's instruction. It is said in the First Degree Lecture, “that great book of nature and revelations.”

In other words, we search nature for signals. We pore over the Volume of Sacred Law for meanings.

So, I nestled down comfortably in my seat, sat-

isfied with my introspections that finally quieted down my weeks of anxiety.

If I were a religious zealot, I would say that disasters come to chastise men for their sins. But I am just an ordinary faithful. And what ought to be the attitude of a simple faithful but to bow his head and whisper “Thy will be done.”

So, let the heavens cast down its rain of hail and lightning—and the lowly faithful will only submit. Let the heavens send a hurricane of diamonds and gold—and the lowly faithful, again, will only submit. For it is written, “I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.” (Isaiah 45: 7)

In the same way that God allows disasters to occur, He also allows goodness to rise from the ruins. Just as He allows mournings and weepings to waft in the air, He also allows celebrations to fill our spirit. For just as He allows weak and evil people, He also allows the strong and the good to prevail over adversities, giving dignity to our humanness.

For this reason, I instructed VW Flor Nicolas,

Editor-in-chief of THE CABLETOW, to come up with a Special Issue that will celebrate the strength and goodness of the Brethren who responded and prevailed over adversities. Year 2013 was a year of disasters. But it was also a year of heroes.

“Year 2013 was a year of disasters. But it was also a year of heroes.”

The job certainly fell on our Associate Editor, WB Edmund Coronel. He is a multi-awarded literary writer, and in two languages—English and Filipino. But before making his mark in the literary field, he has spent long years in the journalism profession.

In 1991, he obtained a grant from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism to write an in-depth report on white slavery. Sometimes disguising himself as a Taiwanese tourist, WB Coronel said, he followed the trail of human trafficking of young girls, from remote villages to the brothels, and into the dark world of the slavery syndicate.

A brother from the De-

partment of Labor and Employment said that WB Coronel's published report was used as reference by government policymakers during the formative years of the human trafficking issue.

Sent to the calamity-stricken jurisdictions in January, WB Coronel gathered the stories and set them all down in print.

Now that it is all told, we now read the many amusing but inspiring stories of our Brethren in the Visayas and in Mindanao.

In Zamboanga City, we read our brethren charging before bullets and mortar explosions like Rambo just to deliver food aid to the soldiers and civilian victims of war.

In Bohol, we read our muscle-flexed brethren doing a triathlon to deliver relief supplies to thousands of earthquake victims.

Heartrending stories marked the ordeal of our brethren in Tacloban—but but not without the heroism of the spirit prevailing over all odds.

Cebu, which became the hub of Masonic relief, stood out as a beacon of light during this dark and trying times.

Not to say the least of our brethren in Panay Island

who received their share of misfortunes but responded with greater generosity in extending relief to one another.

All over, we read Masons coming to help Masons, driven by the eternal tenet of Brotherly Love and Relief.

In all this, never forget the adoptive bodies—the Jobbies, Rainbow, DeMolays, Amaranth and Eastern Star. Often, they sent help to our distressed brethren ahead of Masonic lodges.

So, no matter how destructive, the crisis and calamities lost. We won.

I also commend WM Jose "Gene" Illenberger, the Art Director for our CABLETOW. He gave our official organ its magazine look, allowing us to read it with ease and style.

He is a graduate of the College of Fine Arts in the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. Presently, he is the Master of Frank Reed Horton Memorial Lodge No. 379.

Let this Special issue serve as a reference for Masonic relief programs to come. Ever capricious nature grows increasingly unpredictable over the years, unleashing its vicious force without sign or warning. But the same vicious

force also resides in the heart of men. Our seas breed not only deadly storms but also unimaginable troubles along our country's disputed territorial boundaries.

Let us hope that the next Masonic relief programs will be planned and systematic where no brother needs to risk his life anymore.

Moreover, let this Special Issue stand as a modest contribution to Masonic historical documentation. Philippine Masonry is presently handicapped by immense lack of historical narratives that are essential to the assembly of a full, complete and precise history of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP).

But the timing for historical recoding can never be so relevant than today. Future generations of Masons will no doubt find the Craft at present riddled with flaws; its shortcomings, embarrassing even to the Craftsmen a hundred years ago.

Yet, it can never be said that all Filipino Masons have slackened in the profession of the Craft. Standing at the edge of a new century, Masonry was immediately greeted by tough challenges which could

undo the Craft if the Brethren were made of lesser spirit.

But as adversities come, the Brethren rise to meet the challenges head-on without regard for comfort, even for safety.

“So, no matter how destructive, the crisis and calamities lost. We won.”

They rise without knowledge of their deeds giving color and honor to the annals of this Grand Jurisdiction.

They rise taller than any prestigiously-titled Mason. For their actions weigh heavier and glows brighter than any officious jewel that the Grand Lodge can confer.

And they are just ordinary Masons.

This is their story.



September 9 Zamboanga siege

Derring-do Zamboanga bros delivered food aid amid battles

Government soldiers take cover from MNLF rebel sniper fire during the early battles in Zamboanga City on September 12, 2013.



A deadly attack by Muslim separatists in Zamboanga City early on September 9 grew into a fierce 3-week urban warfare that had sent over 100,000 residents fleeing, razed 10,000 houses to the ground, and left 100 people dead.

But Masons of this bustling southern port city remained unshaken—and went on to aid government soldiers regularly, even under fire, with food.

Bloody street battles paralyzed Zamboanga City of nearly a million people for 20 days. But the bros—and sis—of District R9 ARMM-C drew strength from the Craft to serve the country and save the city, charging past whizzing bullets and blasting mortars with a derring-do camaraderie. Zamboanga City is home to two GLP lodges, Mt. Apo Lodge No. 45 and Samboangan Lodge No. 310.

Trouble began on the night before, September 8. Some 100 heavily-armed Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) militants from adjacent Basilan island province had slipped into the southside of peninsular Zamboanga City in motorboats.

“The raid was unlike of the political savvy Nur Misuari, founding chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It was senseless.”

Before dawn, they were already in control of 4 coastal villages—Rio Hondo, Sta. Barbara, Sta. Catalina and part of Talon-Talon.

Basilan, separated only by a narrow strip of sea from Zamboanga City, is the traditional

MNLF jungle stronghold.

At daybreak of September 9, early risers and commuters woke up to the sight of soldiers scurrying to positions around the city, cordoning civilians off the area which was to become the battle zone. Troops from the 32nd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, walking behind the cover of diesel-fired armored personnel carriers (APCs), headed toward the southern coastal villages.

Barangay officials and watchmen stood guard over their territories against MNLF intruders.

Facebook

But Bro. Jeffrey Russ Taripe, a project contractor for the city hall, was unmindful of the trouble breaking out in the streets. He was in the hospital watching over his kid in bed. He only heard the nurses frantically talked about “a war going on.”

Staccato bursts of machine gun fire increasingly rang throughout the city—and they were growing louder and closer. The police had ran into rebel positions in sporadic gun battles.

Bro. Aldrine Lee, another project contractor, was wakened up by his worried wife at around 8 a.m. saying, “*Lumalakas ang putukan.*” (The gunfires are get-

Government troops advanced into MNLF-controlled village behind armored personnel carriers (APCs) while fire rages on September 12, 2013. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



This photo of 3 soldiers sharing cold rice and one dried fish went viral after posting at the Yahoo Southeast Asia News Room.

ting louder.)

Bro. Robert James “RJ” Iringan, a bachelor and supervisor of the family-owned medical equipments firm, first learned of the trouble from a friend who had called him, wishing to move into his house. The latter was living within the battle zone.

Quickly, Bro. Iringan made calls himself, sent out text messages, and went over his Facebook (FB) account to grasp the situation.

“The Zamboanga siege was variously described as a “crisis.” But there were gaps in the run of events to make the touted “crisis” credible.”

But of all the info he had collected, one minor detail struck him most. The soldiers fighting in the battle zone were hungry. They were dispatched to the scene without meal or rations.

Neighborhood barkadas were the first to deliver food to the soldiers defending the city.

This led him to put a plan together—to hand out food to government troops. “Kahit simpleng pagkain, makaraos lang ng gutom,” (Even just a simple food to satisfy hunger) he said.

He posted his plan on the

web. His friend, Nicolus Andico, was the first to respond.

“*Seryoso ka?*,” (Are you serious?) Andico asked.

“*Paroon talaga tayo,*” (We really have to go there.) Bro. Iringan replied.

But his plan would not take effect until the next day.

Cabatangan

The MNLF militants landed at Zamboanga’s southern coast to capture City Hall and raise the “Bangsamoro Republic” flag.

But the plan was untenable even if it had succeeded.

Many explained the raid as an attempt to scupper the autonomy talks between the government and another rival group while simultaneously recovering the MNLF’s lost political clout.

But it backfired even on Day 1.

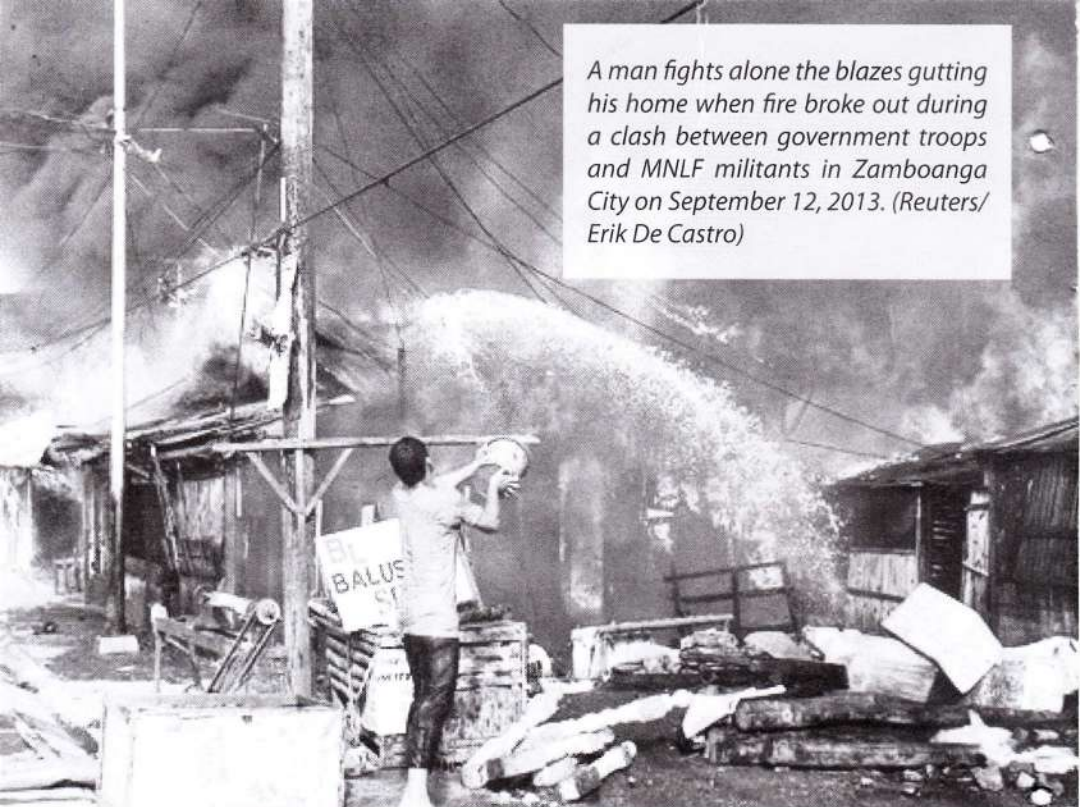
The raid was unlike of the political savvy Nur Misuari, founding chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It was senseless.

The September siege was actually the second MNLF attack in the city in the past 12 years. In 2001, former Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo removed Misuari, who was then governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), from office.


The MNLF lashed back.

Tens of thousands of evacuees crammed in the city's stadium to escape the fighting between government forces and MNLF militants in Zamboanga City in September 2013. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



A black and white photograph showing a man in a light-colored shirt and dark pants standing in a narrow alleyway between destroyed buildings. He is holding a bucket and pouring water onto a large fire that is consuming a structure in the background. The scene is filled with smoke and debris, including a sign that says "BALUS" and various household items scattered on the ground.

A man fights alone the blazes gutting his home when fire broke out during a clash between government troops and MNLF militants in Zamboanga City on September 12, 2013. (Reuters/ Erik De Castro)

A black and white photograph showing several government troops in camouflage uniforms and gas masks. They are in a narrow, debris-strewn alleyway between destroyed buildings. One soldier in the foreground is looking towards the camera, while others are positioned further down the alley. The ground is covered with rubble, including a metal shopping cart and what appears to be a body lying on the ground.

Government troops, in gas masks, look at burned bodies believed to be MNLF militants amid devastated houses in Sta. Catalina village in Zamboanga City on September 26, 2013. (Frederick Alvarez/AFP/Getty Images)

They seized the ARMM government complex in Cabatangan village in Zamboanga. Residents were rounded up as hostages. But they were released only after the government agreed to let the MNLF raiders go free.

Traces of the Cabatangan raid—albeit without political sense—still showed in the September attack. But the government and the militants upped the stakes this time.

“The brethren boosted the morale of the people defending the city.”

Like in 2001, rebels, on their way to join comrades in the city, hid behind civilian hostages as “human shields” while firing at soldiers to keep them at bay during a predawn gun battle on Day 2, September 10.

New arrivals brought the MNLF ranks up to a force of 200 men backed by local assets.

Similarly, fresh troops and equipments from around the country arrived at dawn and bolstered the composite government forces to 3,000 men.

Both sides were digging in for a long battle.

Soon, fighting escalated when government troops

launched an offensive early on Day 2. But resistance was fierce. A volley of sniper fires, mortar rounds and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) came down on the soldiers advancing into the MNLF-controlled villages.

Significantly, rebel snipers had seized control of the high ground in densely populated areas, particularly the 6-story-high minaret of Sta. Barbara mosque, and the 4-story-high KGK Building in adjacent Sta. Catalina village.

The MNLF finally brought the battle to the city. And they came with ruthless terror tactics that forced the government troops, wary of high civilian casualties, into a standoff.

Non-combatants, placed between the firing lines, were used as shield and bait. The militants torched houses as they shot at arriving fire trucks sent to attend to the blazes.

Delivery

What situation Bro. iringan read to map out his plan 24 hours ago had changed for the worse. The risks were getting higher.

Handing his life and safety to the Almighty, he set out to a local bakery and bought a variety of bread worth Php 4,000 and

boxes of bottled water for Php 1,000.

Along with Andico and 2 other friends, they headed to the Zamboanga City Medical Center down Veterans Avenue, an area given to government offices. They were met by a waiting contact who led them past the military cordon and into the “ground zero” of the siege.

The hospital was located just a few meters right behind the KGK Building, the MNLF command center.

Noteworthy, the Geneva Convention prohibits any attack or hostile fire on hospitals and their staff, whether civilian or military, in times of war.

“Sa may pader lang kami dumaraan kasi naririnig ko ang mga putok at saka nakikita ko sila,” (We only walked by the concrete wall next to us because I could hear the gunshots and I could also see the militants.) Bro. Iringan said.

Stone walls served them protection against swishing bullets. The structure also kept them from eyeballing with the militants up the KGK building who were poking rifle barrels from behind porch and window sills. Reaching the soldiers huddled in a street corner, they quickly passed bread and bottled water and left.

Returning home, Bro. Ir-

ingan posted his first food aid on FB.

All the Zamboanga bros were wired to the FBs of their respective lodges. Seeing Bro. Iringan alive and well, they signed up either to join or to support his successive deliveries.

The Masonic food aid was on.

Not until Bro. Iringan had chatted with Bro. Jesus “Jess” Burnos, head of the planning unit of the local Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) office.

Learning that Bro. Iringan was the only Mason making the drop, Bro. Burnos declared, *“Sige, sama ako,”* (Alright, I will come with you.)

“Though very risky, the intention of Bro. Iringan was very noble,” Bro. Burnos recalled. “As a Brother Mason, I have to answer all due signs given to me by a Brother.”

Bro. Iringan confided that he was running out of funds. Bro. Burnos threw in a couple of cash.

Noteworthy, Bro. Iringan is affiliated with Mt. Apo Lodge No. 45; Bro. Burnos, with Samboangan Lodge No. 310.

Bro. Iringan’s father is also a Mason, Bro. Lope Iringan, similarly affiliated with Mt. Apo Lodge No. 45.

Bros and sis packed the food before delivering them. From left: Bro. Jake Hubert Tan, Bro. Jess Burnos, Sis. Ana Marie Ledesma and Bro. Ebong Chiong.



Team

Fierce fighting ensued on Day 3, September 11. Soldiers and militants clashed in sporadic battles.

Some 13,000 evacuees flooded the city's sports stadium with only 4 comfortable toilets, no beddings, except open-air concrete bleachers. A few civilians were killed by stray bullets.

A curfew—from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.—was in effect. But still, the city proper was a ghost town by day. Schools, shops and offices were closed. Only APCs and military trucks ran the deserted streets. All commercial flights and sea travel in and out of Zam-

boanga were cancelled.

Day 3 was perhaps the riskiest in the 3-weeklong siege. Ambulance sirens shrilled between the gunfires. The fighting was vicious; the streets, dangerous. No sane individual or Mason would dare dodge bullets flying all over and bring Bro. Iringan the relief goods which had been pledged over the web.

“Maririnig mo talaga dumadaan yung mga bala sa tabi mo ... Zoom! Zing! ... Akala mo sa sine lang napapanood. Pero enjoy naman,” (You could really hear the bullets passed by beside you ... Zoom! Zing! ... You thought you see them only in the movies. But we enjoyed it.) Bro.

Iringan recalled.

The city ground to a halt. And Bros. Burnos and Iringan had to shove the odds hard to get the Masonic relief moving.

Luckily, Bro. Iringan was helped by his girlfriend, Reggie Anne Villar, and the Dinglasa family. They blew the money in hand on food. Then, they cooked a meal of chicken adobo, garlic rice and kangkong adobo.

They split the food into small plastic bags a la carinderia packaging. Grocery stores, selling styropor packs, were closed.

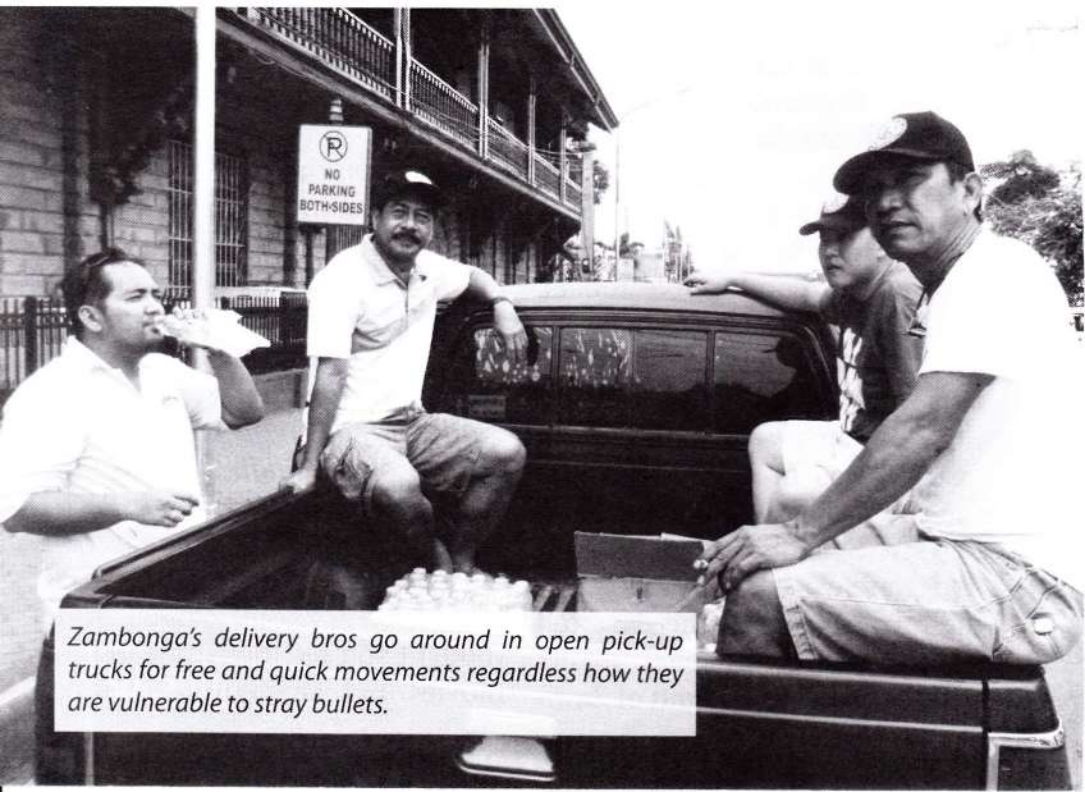
Done, Bros. Burnos and Iringan jumped into Andico's multi-cab and sped off to the Zamboanga general hospital

area again. They quickly handed the meals over to the commanding officer of the Army's Light Reaction Company manning the zone and left.

Then, they headed to Fort Pilar, a 17th century Spanish fortress, and onto the fringes of the battle zone.

Final drop was at the Arenas Blanco area at the city's outskirts. Soldiers posted in the neighborhood, to intercept MNLF militants, had been reported to be famished due to absence of rations.

Residents eyed the delivery team hard as it arrived around 5 in the afternoon. A slum district, Arenas Blanco, was



Zamboanga's delivery bros go around in open pick-up trucks for free and quick movements regardless how they are vulnerable to stray bullets.

Soldiers, often in deserted streets, gladly welcomed the handouts passed by Zamboanga's delivery bros.



notorious for its high crime rate. After handing the meals over to the commanding officer, the delivery team quickly boarded the minivan and drove off.

In the street, residents, who had suspiciously stared at them, began walking toward the vehicle, even attempted stopping it.

"Bilisan mo! Bilisan mo!" (Faster! Faster!) Bro. iringan urged Andico who, in turn, stepped hard on the gas.

Later, the team learned that food was running low in the neighborhood. The residents only wanted to ask for handouts.

Before the day was over,

Bro. Burnos sent out text messages calling on all Masons to mobilize and run a food aid for the soldiers.

Groupie

On Day 4, September 12, the MNLF had seized 2 more villages, Mampang and Canelar. But government tanks and air strikes began pounding on MNLF positions, softening the MNLF resistance.

Government forces finally contained the militants. The city was relieved. Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco-Salazar called on all shops, banks and other commercial establish-

ments outside the battle zone to open and resume business.

Food shortage was averted. Daily necessities flowed again to the city.

She also asked all project contractors to bring their trucks to the local crisis management office, help evacuate affected residents, and deliver relief goods.

Bro. Taripe responded. He managed to get himself and his truck assigned to the Zamboanga City Masons.

With lessened risks and safer streets, help began coming in for Bros. Burnos and Iringan, raising the relief project one level up.

“Politics undergirded the siege, of course, But it would be certainly loathsome to discover if certain hideous individuals masterminding the siege turned up someday—individuals who were prepared to slaughter hundreds of innocent lives just for media exposure, or slippery ambition.”

The bros finally came out on Day 4 and put up a relief operations center at Oshi Korean Resto, owned by Kathrina Janice Malinao, sister of Bro.

Taripe. Safely located along Airport Road, about 3 kms. from the battle zone, the bros—and sis—gathered, sorted out, cooked and packed here all the food sent by Masons all over.

Manning the center were the husband-and-wife teams of Bro. Jeffrey and Sis. Aileen Mae Taripe; also, WB Ramon and Sis. Anna Marie Ledesma.

Bros who reinforced the relief processing and deliveries were Bros. Ebong Chiong, Jake Hubert Tan, and VW Leon Tan, PDGL.

Hence, Day 4 saw a bigger—and wackier—team composed of Bros. Iringan, Burnos, Chiong, Taripe, Jake Tan and VW Leon Tan.

Sis. Anna Marie Ledesma was the “amazon” in the group.

The team made the drop in the afternoon at Pilar Street, in Sta. Catalina village, the “ground zero” of the battle zone.

The day before, MNLF militants displayed here civilian hostages—strung together with ropes about the hands and neck—before TV news cameras.

After handing the packed meals over to the commanding officer, the team decided to take a groupie photo for posting on the FB.

A plume of thick black smoke, rising from a fire raging then in adjacent Sta. Barbara village, would make for a memora-

ble background.

They were posing, smiling and setting themselves up for the shot when a mortar round whumped and exploded 100 meters away. They all ducked for cover.

Five Red Cross volunteers, 5 police and military personnel, and 1 civilian were hurt by the blast.

Quickly, the delivery team packed up and left.

Viral

On Day 5, September 13, the lack of food that ailed the soldiers defending Zamboanga City went public.

A picture of 3 soldiers in the battle zone, eating cold rice and a piece of dried fish spread over a banana leaf, went viral in the internet.

The Yahoo Southeast Asia Newsroom—which posted the photo on its website—reported that the soldiers, hungry and sleepless, had begged residents for food, even for leftovers.

Netizens were moved. Help was mobilized, for instance, among the Social Security System (SSS) offices all over the country.

For this, Bro. Carlos Rodrigo Balbon, an employee of the Zamboanga City SSS office, was asked by his boss to dispatch all

the help coming.

Quickly, he took the job—and called his air-soft game pals and friends for the packing and deliveries.

But the SSS food aid would remain useless if not for the cook who turned all the donated cash and goods into ready-to-eat meals. Bro. Carlos tasked his father, Bro. Rodrigo Balbon, of the local National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) office, to become “master chef.”

Both father and son were members of Mt. Apo Lodge No. 45. Soon, the Balbon tandem was delivering meals, cigarettes, chocolate bars and even energy drinks to the soldiers in the battle zone.

The daily delivery runs had gotten the bros used to the dangers.

They even plotted the daily battle routine to schedule their deliveries in the safer hours of the day.

Bro. Aldrine Lee said that fighting often begun before breakfast at 5 a.m. lasting until 8 or 9. Militants and soldiers would call a break at midday.

Battle would resume at around 1 p.m. after lunch.

By 2 or 3 p.m., the rebels would start setting the houses on fire, signaling the end of the day’s fighting. They used the blaze as cover to bury their dead.

Islamic custom requires the burial of the dead within 24 hours.

Dusk to night was rest time. The dark served the MNLF cover to move from house to house and shift to new battle positions. Occupants who had not fled were seized as hostages.

But mortars and bullets were not the only dangers the delivery bros had met at the streets. Motorcycle-riding tandems, cruising the city's deserted streets in leisurely touristic speed, often tailed or came up before them.

"They were spotters," said Bro. Lee—MNLF spies who tipped the militants on the strength and situation of the soldiers in and out of the battle zone.

But where spotters were unavailable, local MNLF assets flew kites to mark sniper and RPG targets.

Marines, familiar with this MNLF tactic, jumped when a kite rose over the city's public market early in the siege. But they found the toy unmanned.

Tough and risky, yet the delivery job had its rewards. They also met Masons among the soldiers they helped.

"We sometimes met Brother Masons among the soldiers," Bro. Taripe said. "*Pero nagmamadali kasi ang lahat*

kaya nagbabatian na lang kami tapos alis na." (But since everybody was in a rush, we just briefly greeted each other and left.)

In one of his food deliveries, Bro. Balbon chanced upon Bro. Ferdinand Galang, a sniper from the police elite force in Nueva Ecija. The latter was assigned to a night watch.

Asked how many enemies he had downed one night, a visibly famished and haggard Bro. Galang replied, "Eight."

Shutdown

As the siege dragged on, the more the government troops had cornered the militants—and the more relief deliveries had become tenable. From soldiers, Masonic help was widened to the 130,000 evacuees jam-packed into the city's stadium.

Interestingly, the first batch of relief goods to reach the Zamboanga bros came from the adoptive bodies—the orders of De Molay, Job's Daughters, Rainbow, Eastern Star and Amaranth.

It was the first of the many waves of rice, noodles, canned goods, bread and bottled water that had yet to come.

The bros turned the goods over to the City Council as the procedure had it.

VW Eduardo Ulindang,

DDGM of R10-D & ARMM, sent Php 50,000 to his Zamboanga counterpart, VW Joseph Dy, DDGM of R9 ARMM-C, intended for the evacuees.

"We bought medicines, infant formulas and disposable diapers with the money and brought them to the stadium," said VW Dy.

Bro. Butch Gasco of Isangani Lodge No. 96, in Tarlac, gave 20 cases of canned sardines that went to different school evacuation centers.

The incumbent Master of Zamboangan Lodge No. 310, WM Stephen Kaw, whose family is into canning business, donated boxes of canned goods.

The local Gerry's Grill donated 1,000 food packs to the stadium evacuees. VW Dy holds the Zamboanga City franchise.

Here, the delivery bros gathered and dined at dusk as VW Dy listened to the day's report. The DDGM occasionally threw drinks on-the-house for the delivery bros before curfew set in.

In all, the Zamboanga bros made 3 turnovers to the City Council. But the trips were not easy. "We had to stop and look for shelter whenever there was an exchange of gunfire," said Bro. Burnos.

But help had limits. Only

good planning afforded the bros and sis to hold out for 12 days—the most critical period of the siege.

By Day 9, September 17, the fight appeared nearing its end.

At around 4 p.m., the government announced overrunning 70 percent of the MNLF positions in the city. Two hours later, soldiers took over the KGK Building, the militants' command post, in Sta. Catalina village.

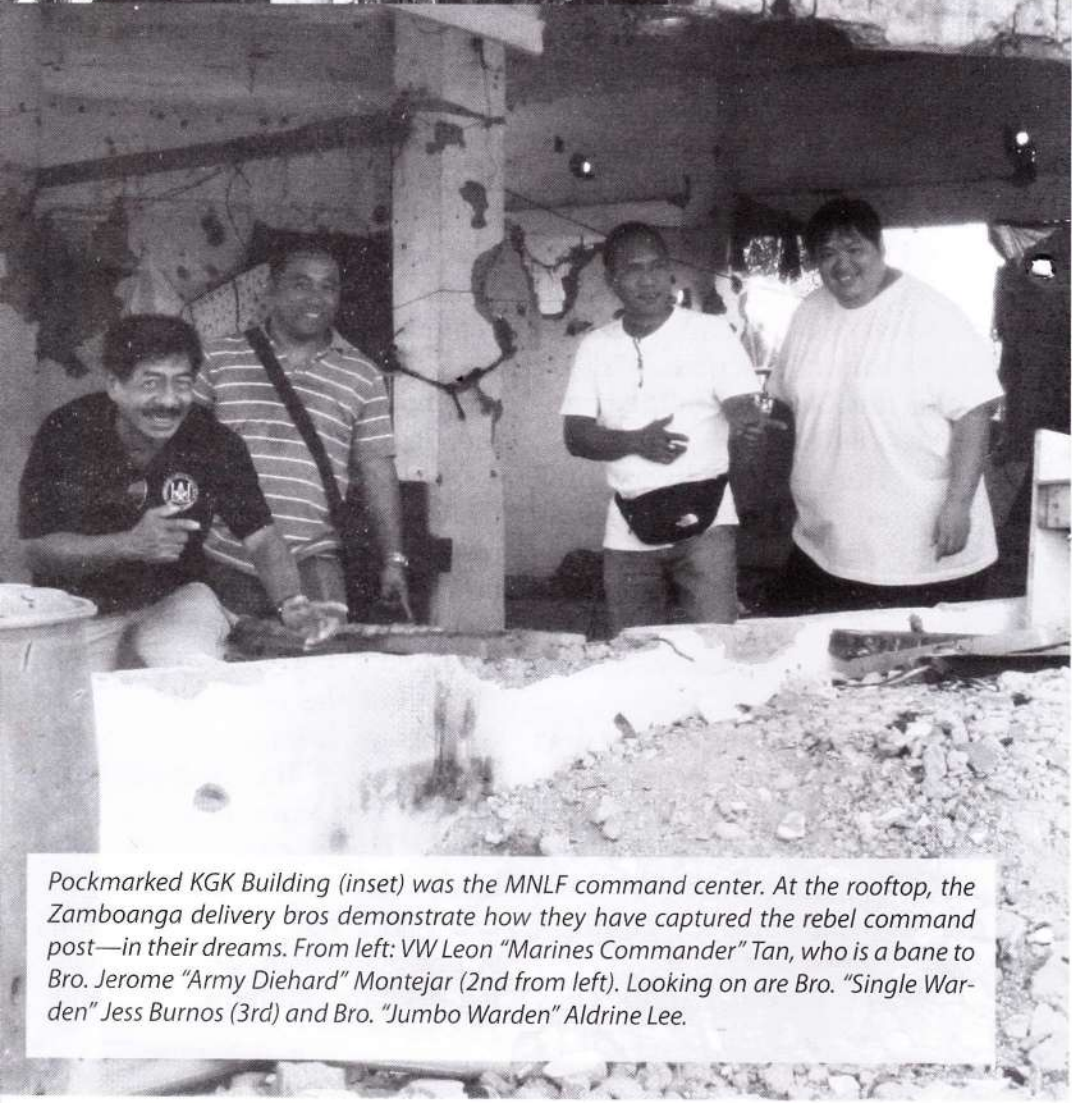
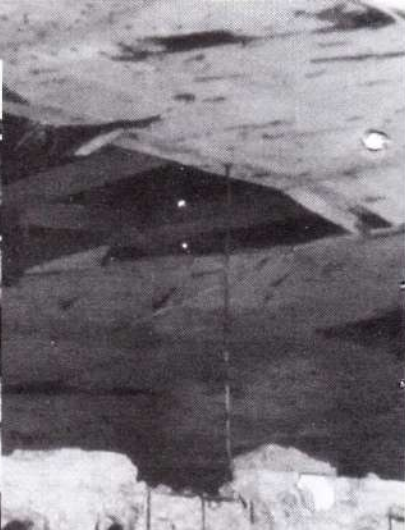
The fall of the KGK Building saw the militants slipping out of the city in small groups, affording Zamboanga City Mayor Climaco-Salazar to announce the return of normalcy on Day 11, September 19.

Day 12, September 20, was met by a morning fire raging then in the slums of Rio Hondo.

Given to stilted houses on the water, Rio Hondo was once a resettlement village for the seafaring Badjaos who had been displaced by the insurgency war in Sulu in the 1970s.

But the increasing influx of Muslim migrants over time had crowded the Badjaos out, turning the once peaceful Rio Hondo into a crime-ridden waterside village.

The bros recalled that a strong acid smell, like a bleaching solution, wafted in the wind



Pockmarked KGK Building (inset) was the MNLF command center. At the rooftop, the Zamboanga delivery bros demonstrate how they have captured the rebel command post—in their dreams. From left: VW Leon “Marines Commander” Tan, who is a bane to Bro. Jerome “Army Diehard” Montejar (2nd from left). Looking on are Bro. “Single Warden” Jess Burnos (3rd) and Bro. “Jumbo Warden” Aldrine Lee.

and heat. They believed that a shabu laboratory was gutted in the fire.

Day 12 was also the last day that the Zamboanga Masons would deliver food aid.

Noteworthy, Cosmos Lodge No. 8 in Manila had sent Php 10,000 for food. The bros used the money to buy 207 Jollibee food packs and 17 cases of bottled water.

They handed the goods to Col. Natz Obligacion who ran the military composite unit at Sta. Catalina village.

Broke and tired, the Zamboanga bros finally shut down relief operations on Day 13, September 21.

Similarly, the government capped the nearly 2-weeklong bloody battles by announcing the filing of criminal charges against the Zamboanga radiers—Habier Malik, a tough and loyal Nur Misuari lieutenant, and 28 other MNLF followers.

Pocket house-to-house battles yet continued as government troops swept over villages once held by the MNLF, ferreting out militant holdouts.

On Day 20, September 28, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin declared the crisis over. A weeklong mop-up operations followed.

Ruins

Ruins were all that remained of the siege four months

later. In Rio Hondo, charred lumbers stuck out of the water where stilted houses had once stood.

Down Pilar Street, the Philippine National Police (PNP) office were yet riddled with bullet holes and gaping mortar blasts—proof of the militants' fury at Zamboanga's defenders.

Touring the city, the bros pointed here and there, telling pieces of stories about the siege. Here, a crack MNJLF sniper took position who turned out to be a girl. There, a girl from that school was snatched by the militants and had never been seen since then.

But still, faith shone out amid the ordeal. "Walang tumamang bala sa Fort Pilar maliban dito kahit nasa ground zero pa," (No bullet hit Fort Pilar despite being situated at ground zero except for this one), said VW Leon Tan pointing to a bullet hole in a flower pot.

Now given to a parochial school and a museum, yet Fort Pilar remains at the heart of the city's faith and culture.

Damages were all over the KGK Building, the former MNLF command post.

Before the siege, the ground floor was given to a bakery; the upper floors, to bedspacing rents.

Four months later, only

the ground floor remained livable; the upper floors, ruins and rubbles.

Graffiti marked the walls—the MNLF in black, the government troops in red. A battle of paint ensued inside after government forces took over.

A young sniper cop from

positioned themselves to pick on MNLF snipers.

The battle of the snipers was a significant but little-known story of the siege.

But another little-known and loathsome story happened right in the small dark rooms of the KGK Building itself.



Sis. Ana Marie Ledesma poses for a souvenir shot as she hands bottles of mineral water to a soldier.

the PNP Regional Special Action force (RSAF) stood watch over the building yet under investigation.

From the rooftop, he pointed to the triangle of Sta. Barbara Mosque, KGK Building and the Southern City Colleges Building—the last where government sharpshooters had

What women the MNLF had found here when they seized the building, the RSAF police told us, were raped. Not so much by the Muslim militants; rather, by their assets—local drug addicts who served as spotters, informants and guides.

So were the women in the neighborhood boldly ravaged by

these drug fiends under the eyes of their MNLF warlords.

A suffocating mix of anger and agony was felt hanging heavily over the cramped, dark and stinking rooms.

As we left the building, the son of the building's owner called us. He led us to his father, 83-year old Khung Guan Kho. He introduced himself as a Mason—raised in Iloilo in 1968.

The bros were surprised.

"KKG" claimed he was in Singapore when the MNLF seized his property.

Unforgettable

The Zamboanga siege was variously described as a "crisis." But there were gaps in the run of events to make the touted "crisis" credible.

"Misuari owned a house here in Zamboanga. One of Habier Malik's wives lived in one of the villages here in Zamboanga," said Bro. Rodrigo Balbon who is also a columnist for one of the city's papers, the Zamboanga Daily Times.

The coming and going of new faces in wifey's home was alarm enough that the MNLF had been slipping in and stockpiling arms around the city since January.

But nobody did anything. Not even the country's spy master, Ret. Gen. Trifonio Salazar, chief of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA).

The country's top Double-O-Seven is the husband of Zamboanga City Mayor Climaco-Salazar.

Politics undergirded the siege, of course, But it would be certainly loathsome to discover if certain hideous individuals masterminding the siege turned up someday—individuals who were prepared to slaughter hundreds of innocent lives just for media exposure, or slippery ambition.

Regardless, the Zamboanga bros were not willing to play patsies in anybody's hand.

Recalling why he had jumped into a risky project, Bro. iringan replied, "*Maiinis ka kasi wala kang ginagawa habang may nangyayari.*" (You will get annoyed because you are doing nothing while serious trouble is breaking out.)

"All I had in mind was to do everything i could to help my fellowmen in all ways especially the soldiers who were fighting and dying for us," he said.

Unlike the bold and young Bro. iringan, Bro. Burnos was cautious. He even warned the younger bro at times not to push his luck in certain critical areas.

But he had deep and sentimental reasons for supporting the City Mayor's plea for help. "I felt so useful to be inside the war zone. Not everybody is given the chance to extend aid and to be with the people defending the city," Bro. Burnos said.

A true-blue Zamboangueno,

Bro. Burnos is also a member of the local historical conservation society.

Bro. Jake Hubert Tan is yet 2 years into the Craft. But he admitted that the siege had profoundly changed him.

Riding behind an open truck, bullets whizzed over the heads of the delivery bros. Alarmed, they chorused “Baba ulo! Sa loob na lang tayo!” (Head down! Let’s get inside the cab, instead!)

But Bro. Burnos held them back saying, “*Wag kayong mag-alala! Pag nakita ng bala yung square and compass, lihis ‘yun.*” (Don’t worry! When the bullet sees our square and compass, it will divert.)

They survived the 12-day food delivery unscathed.

But something deeper struck Bro. Jake. “*Sa mukha ng mga military, makikita mo masaya sila. Sabi nila, ‘Thank you, sir. Hindi pa kami kumakain.’ Yung happiness na nakita ko, hindi mabibili ng pera.*” (In the faces of the military, you will see their happiness. They said, ‘Thank you, sir. We have not eaten yet.’ The happiness I saw could never be bought with money.)

Bro. Iringan shared the same experience. They occasionally missed soldiers furtively hiding behind houses and street corners.

But one would leap out from cover and run after the deliv-

ery team asking for spare food.

Quickly, the bros would hand out food packs saying “*Ang dami pa sir! Heto po! Sorry, hindi po kayo nakita kanina.*” (There is a lot here. Here is more. Sorry, we didn’t see you a while ago.)

The soldiers thanked hugging them.

“The facial reaction, of mixed emotions, that you feel and see in the soldiers’ faces is priceless. It is something you can never forget,” Bro. Iringan said.

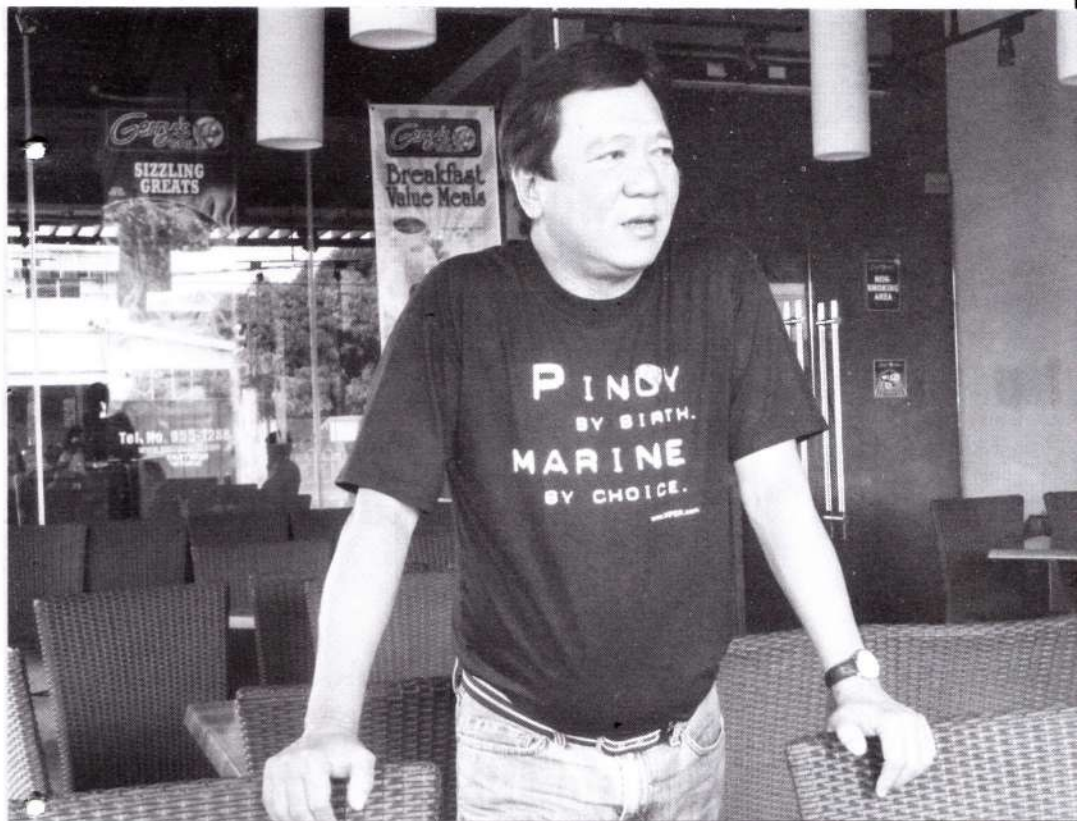
“The brethren boosted the morale of the people defending the city,” said VW Joseph Dy. “We do not actually publicize what we do. But for Zamboanga’s Masons, we are always ready to extend our cabletow within our means and ever ready to act in times like this.”

Starved, the soldiers shot their spirits up when civilians risked life and limb just to deliver them food.

Many believed that the gesture had stoked certain stories that wildly grew around the city. In the early days of the siege, dead MNLF militants were lined up at the bay-side plaza—with heads chopped off their bodies.

In the succeeding days, few prisoners were taken in than expected. Some of the militants were crisped-fried beyond recognition.

The government forces won. It was very clear for whom they were fighting for. • EC




VW Joseph Dy, DDGM of R9 ARMM-C, (above) is proud of his derring-do delivery bros. (below) From left: Bro. Jake Hubert Tan, Jeffrey Russ Taripe, Bro. Jesus "Jess" Burnos, Bro. Robert "RJ" Iringan, WB Ramon Ledesma, and VW Leon Tan, PDGL.



October 15 7.2 magnitude earthquake

Bohol biking bros beat temblor's crippling odds



Rescue workers dig a victim out of the ruins of a collapsed market in Cebu on October 15, 2013.

A powerful 7.2 magnitude earthquake rocked the Visayas at 8:12 a.m. on October 15 leaving 222 people dead, 976 injured, and 76,200 structures damaged or destroyed including priceless heritage churches.

But outdoor-trained Masons in Bohol hurdled past over obstructions thrown by the quake to deliver relief supplies to far-flung mountain villages cut off from the rest of the world.

The quake struck 12 kilometers below the island of Bohol with epicenter at 6 kilometers southwest of Sagbayan town.

Bohol reported the most casualties numbering to 209. Corpses were pulled out from under the rubble of tilted or wrecked houses. Some were buried under landslides of soil, boulders and trees.

Others perished from severe injuries due to falling objects or collapsing structures.

Casualties were also reported in the premiere Central Visayan province of Cebu. The city's fish market collapsed killing 4 people.

Four others were killed when people, gathered at Cebu City's sports stadium, broke out into stampede with dozens injured.

The bell tower of the Basilica Minore del Sto Niño, a popular pilgrimage shrine in Cebu, crumbled.

Bohol, grouped under District R7-A along with Cebu, hosts only one lodge, Dagohoy No. 84 in Tagbilaran City.

Birthing

WB Mark Noel Mende, a civil engineer and Past Master of Dagohoy No. 84, was at his home in the provincial capital of Tagbilaran when the earth-

quake struck. Living in a 2-story house largely made of wood, he was confident that the structure would absorb the violent motions.

Calmly, he asked his family to leave the house.

Only the family TV set, placed on top of a stand, dropped and was damaged.

“Masonry, as an organization, must respond relevantly to the times.”

But damages were widespread in Tagbilaran. A building in the capital's seaport collapsed. The second floor of the Tagbilaran air control tower caved in.

But destructions were not as massive as in the northern portion of the island province.

Power and communications were down. Asphalt and concrete roads cracked into slabs; the ground, yawning into deep fractures. Some bridges linking remote towns collapsed.

Seventeen towns around Tagbilaran sustained heavy damages—but not as worse as Maribojoc and Loon.

Here, the shoreline rose—pushing the beach 50 to 100 meters out to the sea. Fish flapped on the exposed bed as the water

The 2-century-old historic Immaculada Concepcion Church in Baclayon was shattered to ruins by the quake.



Bros and Kaliwat ni Dagohoy volunteers presented bags of relief supplies to the Antequera municipal officials.

receded, allowing residents to collect them in buckets.

The rising of the Loon and Maribojoc beaches was attributed to the appearance of a new 5-km-long land slip that came after the birthing of a new fault line running from barangay Anonang in Inabanga town, to barangay New Anonang in Buenavista town.

“Bohol is like a round cookie. You break the cookie in the middle in half. That’s the fault line,” said WB Mende.

Now called the “North Bohol Fault,” the rupture raised the ground from 1 to 3-meters forming a new rock wall where there had been none before.

When the rupture cracked open, residents of Anonang village said, an explosion like a thunderclap broke out. Then, the ground split rumbling; the fracture, widening.

White smoke, with sulfuric stench, escaped between the fracture as the rock face began to rise.

This vicious force that gave birth to the new fault line hit with a force of 23 atom bombs which had been dropped in Hiroshima in 1945.

The ensuing earthquake

was the most powerful in the past 23 years,

Relief

Shortly after the quake, VW Sansaluna “Sani” Pinagayao, District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) of R7-A, called WB Mende asking on the conditions of the bros in Bohol.

Two bros were lightly injured, WB Mende reported. The worst was a bro, a fireman, who had been hit by a brick on the face from a crumbling wall in his house.

“They often showed up with a strong presence to keep the local politicians from seizing and using the relief supplies for election purposes.”

The rest of the 50 Masons in the province were okay.

Yet, VW Pinagayao sent cash and goods for the injured brethren.

Next, the DDGM informed WB Mende that 2 truckloads of relief supplies, from the Toshiba Corporation in Cebu export processing zone, were coming his way.

VW Pinagayao is the administrator of the Mactan Export

Processing Zone.

The DDGM recalled WB Mende saying “*Ang dami nito! Kaunti lang ang needy sa mga bro natin dito sa Bohol.*” (This is too much! There is only a few needy bros here in Bohol.)

But VW Pinagayao went on with the 2 relief trucks. “Masonry, as an organization, must respond relevantly to the times.” he explained.

With big help coming, WB Mende quickly rounded up and readied the manpower—the Kaliwat ni Dagohoy (Descendants of Dagohoy), a community sports club he had founded himself, looking up to the province’s prominent hero, Francisco Dagohoy.

Dagohoy led the longest resistance against the Spaniards for 85 years.

When the trucks came, the Kaliwats quickly unloaded the 2,000 relief bags laden with bread, canned goods and bottled water.

Many of the province’s roads were impassable.

The relief supplies were split into 2 motor bancas and transported for half a day to the towns of Loon, Maribojoc and Antequera.

“Many bridges were down,” WB Mende explained why they picked the water route. “Also, with strong aftershocks occurring regularly, it was hard to tell when the

armor rocks would come crashing down on the relief convoy.”

A record of 3, 019 aftershocks regularly jolted the Boholans in the next two weeks after the powerful quake.

The frightening memories of the quake’s first strike were unforgettable—groping on walls and trees to stand up and run with dizzy spells lasting for hours.

But the aftershocks often sent the survivors into traumatic rush out to the open, crouching or huddling together on the ground crying. Many were scared to return to their shattered homes.

Worst, the aftershocks rippled the ground up and down, not in the common sideway swing.

The aftershocks had also dangerously loosened the earth and boulders on the mountainsides.

A number of the province’s roads were carved out from the mountains.

Bikers

In every town they went, WB Mende and his group called on the local officials to help distribute the relief supplies.

They often showed up with a strong presence to keep the local politicians from seizing and using the relief supplies for election purposes.

The nationwide barangay



Employees of the donor company, Toshiba Corporation, join in the delivery by motor boats of the relief supplies to devastated areas.

elections were scheduled on October 28.

But the Commission on Elections reset the village polls to December 10 in the calamity-stricken province.

Local officials were not always helpful. It often fell on WB Mede and his Kaliwat group to bring the aid up to hard-to-reach mountain villages.

For this, he relied on the runners, cyclists and mountaineers in the club. And they were Masons.

Masons who are members of the Kaliwat ni Dagohoy are Bros. Doni Piquero, Jason Lupeña, Joey Lupena and Moises Milanar.

All trained in the outdoors, they devised a way to deliver aid to pockets of villages shut off from the rest of the world.

They put up base camps at a mountain's foot. Then, they squeezed relief bags into backpacks.

Strapping themselves with relief backpacks, they jumped next onto mountain bikes and pushed up the slopes.

WB Mende said the delivery routine would begin at 8 a.m. until lunch break.

They would resume at 3 p.m.

The delivery lasted "hangga may nakikita pang kalsada" (until roads remain visible), said WB Mende.

Bike delivery from down and up to the mountain villages averaged at 45 minutes.

"There were times when our brethren just didn't want to take a break anymore because of the number of the victims in need. But it was necessary. Otherwise, they would collapse," WB Mende said.

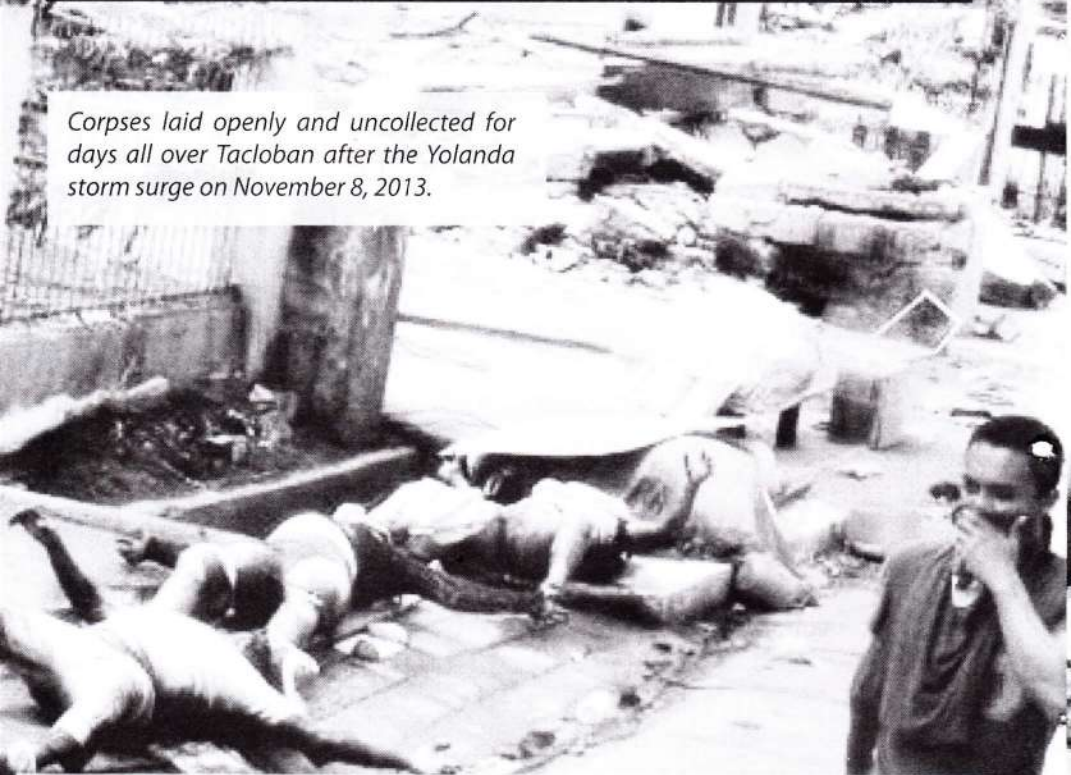
It took the bros a week to fan the relief supplies out, relieving thousands of Boholanos famished and unnerved by the quake.

● EC

November 8 super typhoon Yolanda & storm surge

Tacloban bros beat Yolanda with brotherly spirit

Corpses laid openly and uncollected for days all over Tacloban after the Yolanda storm surge on November 8, 2013.



Like most Filipinos, VW Edgar Chua, PDDGM was used to many typhoons that he had seen in his lifetime. He was snuggled down and all alone for a long cold morning in his 1-story house, in San Jose village in Tacloban City, when Yolanda had began lashing three hours earlier.

He was barely over with his breakfast when water came under the door at 7 a.m. After a few minutes, the door flung open and water was lapping at his knees.

He hadn't decided yet what household item to save first when the furniture began floating and toppling down in the fast-rising water.

Frantic, he clambered up on anything he could hold on. He could not even remember anymore how he had got himself up at the house's rafters.

"I am not a religious person but I mumbled all the prayers I could think of, fully or partially, at that time," he said.

Trapped, he stayed perched between the roof and the beam until the water receded after an hour.

The fear, panic and survival that swooped down over VW Chua at 7 a.m. of November 8, 2013, similarly gripped hundreds of bros and their families scattered over the city—all in the space of just few minutes.

Described as the strongest storm ever to hit man on record, super typhoon Yolanda plowed Central Philippines on November 8, 2013, leaving over 6,000 people dead while wreaking the most death and destruction in Tacloban City, capital of Leyte province.

San Jose village, a land strip between two rivers facing Leyte Gulf, was the most devastated.

Tacloban, a city of some 220,000 people, hosts 3 lodges—

Makabugwas No. 47, Tacloban No. 221 and Santiago L. Chua No. 336.

Storm surge

Internationally named "Haiyan," super typhoon Yolanda slammed into eastern Samar at 4:30 in the morning, 3 hours earlier than expected. Winds, roaring up to 315 kilometers an hour, ripped across Leyte, Panay and other islands in the center of the country before reaching South China Sea 24 hours after.

Power and communications were knocked out. Houses were destroyed. Trees were felled. Electric posts were bent over. Crops were wiped out.

"Nobody had foreseen the deadly storm surge that Yolanda raised from the sea and hurled over the city."

Before the storm, grave concerns were raised over the devastating impact of Yolanda's powerful wind. Alarmed, about 200,000 people took shelter early in evacuation centers in 37 provinces nationwide.

But nobody had foreseen the deadly storm surge that Yolanda raised from the sea and

hurled over the city.

Nor had Tacloban prepared enough for Yolanda's furious winds.

Trees whipped hard and cracked. House, church and building roof sheets flapped and flew as howling winds battered Tacloban early on November 8. Hence, a number of residents had taken shelter in the gym of one of Tacloban's better secondary schools. But the roof just suddenly caved in. Everybody fled everywhere.

WM Ralph Perez, Master of Santiago L. Chua Commemorative Lodge No 336—or the rest of Tacloban City either—was not yet aware of this early morning tragedy.

He was even hopeful that the storm would be over in the afternoon to allow the holding of a scheduled Passing.

WM Perez, his wife and 2 kids were sitting before breakfast when water ran into the house.

He had hardly bundled his children when the furniture started floating. Until the refrigerator suddenly listed on its side, hitting his wife and dislocating her shoulder.

The swirling water was rising fast.

Helping himself up a chair, he pushed his wife and kids up the ceiling trapdoor.

When his turn came, he slipped his foot and splashed into the water.

The surging water crashed a concrete divider wall inside the house.

Dazed, his mind drifted to the thought of dying as he tried keeping himself above the water. Luckily, 4 men from a nearby factory, groping between houses, were carried by the wave to his home.

Calling out and seeing WM Perez struggling to stay afloat, they helped the bro up to the ceiling while grabbing on electric wires.

By then, all the doors and windows of the house were underwater.

Quickly, the men crept up to the ceiling, ripped and tore up the roof sheets from under, allowing everyone to escape above.

On the roof, WM Perez waffled at the sight before him. Water was everywhere. Looking out hundreds of meters around him, he saw that only his family had climbed up to safety in the neighborhood.

Tsunami-like

Safety had also pressed hard into the minds of the many victims early. They sought refuge from the gusty winds under

*The storm surge tossed and stacked up vehicles two levels high.
AFP Photo/Noel Celis*



sturdy roofs or behind concrete walls. But they were defenseless from the 5, sometimes 6-meter-high wall of water like tsunami, that had leapt from the sea.

Survivors said that waters from the two bays flanking the city—Cancabato and Tacloban Bays—rose up, joined together and rolled 2 to 3 kilometers inland.

Coming from the Pacific in the east, Yolanda whipped up Tacloban Bay and swiped the waters of Cancabato Bay next in the west as it headed to the city.

Hence, some survivors recalled two tsunami-like waves coming from opposite directions.

But not until the wind-stirred waves, crashing violently against the rocks during the storm, gradually ceased. The water receded 100 or so meters away from the shore.

“The scene was incredibly surreal all over.”

After a minute, it roared back in knee-high foamy water—trailed by massive waves “as high as coconut trees” that swallowed houses whole and swept up cars and people along its path.

Situated at a piece of land sticking out of San Jose coast, Daniel Romualdez Airport, the city's air terminal, was among the first to come under the massive waves. Airport personnel, and their families who had taken shelter in the building, were tossed away by the rushing water that hollowed out the ceilings and tore the roof off.

Some of them were found tangled up at the airport's fence hours later—dead.

The waves even swamped the airport's 6-story-high control tower.

The 12-man Philippine Air Force (PAF) rescue team, stationed at the air terminal, was decimated.

Down the road, the waves swamped a church where people had holed up inside. Their piled-up bodies littered the muddy floor later.

People that city officials had herded in the Astrodome, Tacloban's domed sports arena, broke out into stampede when 15-foot-high water crashed through the doors and windows. Many were drowned just as many were trampled, shoved off, or simply left to die, in the frantic rush for higher seats.

The surge also slammed into the walls of the Tacloban City Jail. Sixty inmates bolted out.

Heroic

Survivors recalled frantic cries for help all over as the water came in three successive waves—knee-high, overhead, and 5-meter-high.

“Grief came right after the storm. But not all were mourning.”

But it was even more frightening to hear the cries die down while cringing in dark ceilings, removed from it all, waiting for the water to subside. The silence meant the neighbors were either swept away or just dead.

People trapped inside cars and houses shared the same uncertain fate of people swept up by the waves that had surged through the streets. They grabbed on floating debris, screaming for help as they waved their hands above the water.

Some were lucky to survive. But many did not.

Up in the second floor of his house, VW Vic Atillo, DGL froze seeing people bobbing up and down in the high rushing water.

Living next to a meat pro-

cessing plant, he saw next a family which had been swept into the compound struggling in the water.

The 11-year old daughter was holding on to the plant's roof by her fingertips a few meters away.

Quickly, VW Atillo smashed a window of his house closest to the plant.

Next, he laid down two wooden planks side by side with one end on the window sill; the other, on the ledge of the plant's concrete wall.

He crossed the makeshift ramp, grabbed the girl by the hand, and pulled her up to the wall.

Next, he swiped the mother, tightly hugging a mango tree, off the water.

Sadly, the father and elder daughter were swept away by the turning water before he had got to them.

But still, he and his family kept on rescuing people drifted near their home by occasionally throwing ropes—but largely by grabbing them by the hand.

“We grabbed anyone nearby,” he said. “But the debris killed many victims.”

Big debris, like floating cars and refrigerators, hit, crashed and knocked people out. Small debris, like lumber splinters, slashed the victims,

either weakening or killing them on the spot.

In all, VW Atillo and his family hoisted 20 people up to the house.

A hero no doubt, yet he was saddened by the people he had missed saving.

Surreal

When the water subsided an hour later, it left the city in a horrid landscape.

Downtown Tacloban was clogged with thrash and debris of all kinds. Vehicles, tossed up by the waves, were piled even 2-cars-high. Ships were flung on the shore.

Around the city, many homes were roofless. Some rock-built houses were shattered into rubbles. Wooden shacks, lining both sides of the road down to the airport, were smashed into heaps of splinters.

But there were bodies everywhere. Corpses hung from walls and trees. Bodies lied on roads amid corrugated iron sheets and upturned shipping containers. Arms and legs stuck out under the wreckages. People stepped on bodies as they climbed over, or tiptoed around, the debris.

The length of the street down the Sto. Niño Shrine, for instance, was littered with bod-

Air Force soldiers keep the crowd in order as survivors scramble to catch a plane out of Tacloban.



A number of corpses dug out from the rubble show families holding or lying close together when the storm surge struck.



ies in various grotesque poses.

Men walked in strides here and there carrying dead children in their arms.

At first glance, it looked like Tacloban was devastated by a massive earthquake followed by huge tidal waves.

The scene was incredibly surreal all over.

WB Edgar Gasco, a medical doctor living in San Jose village, used to teach anatomy at a local medical school. He was taking breakfast with his family when the water came.

But as the water climbed up the second floor of the house, they crept up the ceiling trapdoor, ripped the roof, and escaped.

When the water receded, he waded through a knee-deep mud inside his house and went out, under a still overcast sky, to survey the damages.

Watching the unfolding scenes around him, he only managed to murmur to himself, "*Ano ba ito? Parang panag-inip lang lahat ng ito.*" (What is this? All of this is just like a dream.)

"*Lakaran nang lakaran ang mga tao,*" (People were walking to and fro.) he said.

People wore glum or vacant looks. They went out looking for family members who had been swept away from home by the storm surge. Others, carry-

ing infants and little bags and bundles of possessions—even rain-soaked santos or religious images—were fleeing inland to take shelter in any standing structure with a roof.

"*Maraming nag-iiyakan,*" (Many were weeping.) he said. "*Hinihilera ang mga patay sa kalsada, Magkatabi ang mga tao at baboy.*" (They were lining up the dead on the street. People and pigs laid side by side.)

Grief came right after the storm. But not all were mourning.

"*Yung iba hindi na umiiyak. Manhid na.* Titignan lang 'yung mukha ng kamag-anak. Mga bata ang umiiyak." (Others didn't weep anymore. They were already callous. They would just stare at the face of their dead kin. It was the children who were weeping.) he said.

It was impossible for a 3-hour storm to harden people this fast. There was something else.

"*Yung mga mata nila parang 'dazed' ba. Hindi nila alam 'yung nangyayari.*" (Their eyes were like 'dazed.' They didn't know what was happening.) he said.

Grief

A disaster with apoca-

lyptic scale and scene, like the Tacloban storm surge, certainly shook hard the survivors' nerves.

But the pain of, even self-imposed guilt for, losing loved ones—before one's eyes or in one's grip—came down so hard that the mind simply locked before it gets dangerously overloaded.

A couple of these heart-wrenching stories went public.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer reported of a high school teacher, Bernadette Tenegra, 44, who tightly held onto her daughter as the water swept.

"Ma, just let go. Save yourself," the girl said until she was gashed by a lumber splinter. The daughter's grip loosened and she was carried away by the current.

Anderson Cooper of CNN interviewed a woman named Janet who blamed herself for los-

ing grasp of her two children who drowned and died.

"I did all that I could," she said. "But I let them go."

Cooper helped a man in the same neighborhood to place a call to her mother in Manila through the CNN satellite phone. When he spoke to her, the man broke down like a child.

"Ma! Mama! Wala na sila! Bakit ba nangyayari sa akin ito?" (Ma! Mama! They are gone! I don't know why this is happening to me.) he wailed.

He first tried to rescue his youngest daughter. But she fainted and drowned be-

fore he could reach her.

Next, he swam for his wife. But he missed grabbing her. She was carried away by the current.

For all the pain, he admitted of wishing to take his own life. But he still has one child, his oldest daughter, who



A devastated downtown Tacloban.

survived and needed him.

All over Tacloban, many bodies unearthed from the wreckages showed parents and kids holding, hugging or lying close together.

They remained a family to the very last moment.

Numbed

Tacloban had never seen a tsunami before. Or even a tragedy this massive.

Numbed by so many deaths and destruction, the survivors were easily manipulated by the local thugs.

The day after, on November 9, a mob of men and women attacked the local Robinson's mall. Rolling aluminum doors were ripped. Window glasses were shattered. Stores—from classy RTWs to laptops—were looted. Big, flat, plasma-screened TVs wafted over the heads of the crashing mob and into a Pajero waiting at the street.

Inside, gunshots rang out everywhere. Men frantically ran here and there, grabbing shoes, sports equipments and any merchandize up on the shelf. It was like war zone.

In the Handyman hardware store, more than two bodies laid dead and bloody on the

floor, killed in the mob attack.

Soon, looting spread across other shopping malls, grocery stores, and food chains in the city.

Even the schooled, white-collared, middle class joined in the plunder as they raced to grab what was little left of the city's dwindling supplies.

WM Ralph Perez went out to



A mother holds onto her baby and Marian image as they climbed to the roof to escape the rising water./Dave Martinez

pick a powdered milk for his son. But he arrived just as the local Mercury Drug Store was being ransacked by the mob.

He made his way between the looters busily swiping the shelves clean of merchandise. He reached the pharmacy counter where the store's women staff had collected themselves

together behind crying.

The looters didn't spare their cell phones, money and personal belongings.

Softly, WM Perez asked permission if he could get a can of milk.

One of the staff replied, "*Sige, kumuha ka na diyana.*" (Go ahead and take it somewhere there.)

But the shelf was already empty.

On his way out, he met a man hugging a basket of canned powdered milk. He asked if he could have a piece.

"Numbed by so many deaths and destruction, the survivors were easily manipulated by the local thugs."

"*Maghati na tayong dito,*" (Let's split this.) the looter offered.

"*Hindi,*" (No.) WM Perez replied. "*Tatlong lata lang kailangan ko.*" (I only need three cans.)

WB Gasco shuddered at the news of widespread looting breaking out in the city.

Until a neighbor came and said, "*Alam ko na hindi ka naman naglu-looting. Kaya heto ang sardinas.*" (I know you are not into looting. So, here is a

can of sardines.)

Understandably, food and water were running out all over the city.

But if looters were just running away with the food, it was, perhaps, forgivable. But motorcycles and air-conditioning units were by no means basic necessities—and they were also coming out of the stores.

Depravity rode on desperation. As law and order crumbled, victims-turned-profiteers were yet strangling the city.

Bro. Dave Sy, a copra buyer, was stunned by the economy taking shape out in the streets. Looters put their plundered goods up for sale at the sidewalks—which could be had only by bidding.

Hence, prices skyrocketed drastically.

Once, an auction for 5 gallons of mineral water, Bro. Sy said, began at Php 1,000. It was sold for Php 1,700.

A liter of bottled water went for Php 500.

A 500 mg. amoxicillin capsule fetched Php 250.

Tacloban was drifting into chaos.

Bro. Lito "Boy" Asturias described the situation in the blackest terms, "For five days, there was no law and order. There was no government. The worst part was the looting. Peo-

Looters forcibly lifted the aluminum doors and ransacked a grocery store./AP



ple became like animals. People were killing people for food. It was like the end of the world.”

But there was something worse for Bro. Asturias than the collapse of civilization around him, “With my clothes gone, I have to borrow the underwear of my wife.”

Exodus

The city’s downhill slide was metaphorically marked by the blast of stench from decomposing bodies lying uncollected all over Tacloban on November 11.

Fire fighters, tasked to pick up the dead, were overwhelmed by the sheer number of corpses.

Of the 200 men making up the city’s police force, only 20 showed up for duty.

A bro shot a looter dead inside his car service shop while the partner escaped. It was reported in primetime news.

Before the incident, the bro had already walked into the police station and asked for security.

But the police chief could not spare him any man.

Worse, residents, particularly in better-off subdivisions, were wakened up by—sometimes staring up at—thieves who had broken into their homes at

night.

Without power, nighttime in devastated Tacloban had spun unreported stories of robberies, murders and rapes.

Daytime was just as worse. Four days into the tragedy and no government help had come yet.

Petrol—to fuel vehicles that could move people and relief supplies around—was just as scarce as food and water.

Banks—to issue money that could rev up the damaged economy—were closed. Looters were attacking the ATMs.

Stores—which could keep the supply of food and basic necessities coming—were either shut down or destroyed after the widespread looting.

St. Paul’s Hospital, the city’s only working hospital, was already out of medicines and supplies. Looters had emptied the city’s drug stores of life-saving supplies.

The city, which had gone to the mob, was going down.

So, when the U.S. Marines fixed Tacloban airport up and running on November 12, city officials themselves urged the residents to flee elsewhere.

The exodus began.

Thousands of people queued up night and day to board the C-130 cargo planes of the Philippine Air Force (PAF)

and fly out to Cebu or Manila. Tacloban was no longer safe for children.

People shoved, begged, threatened or patiently waited for their names to be called. Kids, elderlies and the sick topped the air force's priorities.

People literally died in the lines that remained unbroken under rain or shine. Their bodies were wrapped in blankets and laid at the terminal's corridor for claimants.

A room, which was assigned to a nursery, had seen births daily.

Pick-up

"It was like the fall of Saigon in 1975," said VW Nicolas "Boben" Rios when he saw the long queues at the airport.

With his family and a single-mom sister under his care, the duty to take his charges to safety had weighed heavily on him. Collecting them together under a storm-damaged house,

vulnerable to thieves, was indefensible.

Reading the hard life kicking in after the storm surge, he was firmly decided to leave Tacloban.

After the water receded on November 8, he walked out to check on his sister living separately into the city. With the streets clogged with debris and the dead, walking was the only way to get around the city.

Thirsty, he stopped at the house of a former company driver he had worked with. He asked for a glass of water.

The former driver refused saying. "*Ano na mangayayari bukas? Sa makalawa? Ano na iinumina*

namin?"(What will happen tomorrow? On the next day? What will my family drink?)

VW Rios finally jumped into action when his sister called on the soldiers for protection. Thieves had broken into her



Near zero-visibility in Tacloban when Yolanda lashed.

home.

Going to City Hall, where cellular signals emanated, he made a distress call to WB Albert Villahermosa, mayor of the town of Hilongos in Leyte.

The bro sent for a truck and a police car escort that picked up VW Rios, his family, sister and 2 others.

WB Villahermosa put them up in the house of VW Rey Francisco, PDGL.

Next, the Hilongos brethren sent out text messages to surrounding districts inquiring about any help available to calamity-stricken bros.

Bros in adjacent Cebu province picked up the text. Quickly, they arranged for the transfer of VW Rios and his party to Cebu City.

Relief

The shock and awe that came with super typhoon Yolanda had given scoundrels a chance to make a killing out of the ensuing widespread grief and chaos.

But as the adrenaline of the storm and its aftermath faded, people picked up the pieces and bounced back to take charge with firm and right-minded resolve.

Bro. Dave Sy left Tacloban via Samar on November 11, three days after the storm. The stench

of decomposing corpses was intolerable to his kids.

In the port town of Matnog in Sorsogon—the ferry terminal servicing the Visayan islands—he saw kilometers of trucks queued up at the roadside. They had been stranded there since Yolanda battered the central Philippines.

“The city’s downhill slide was metaphorically marked by the blast of stench from decomposing bodies lying uncollected all over Tacloban on November 11.”

Bro. Sy deposited his family in his in-laws. Then, he came to Manila on November 14 to work out the details of a relief supply delivery for Tacloban with his friend, WB Alex Canonigo.

VW Jun Vidanes, a member of the Masonic club “Pagong Ako Kuyang Pilipinas,” lent the trucks.

Bro. Sy saw Bro Joey Siksik next, a newly-raised Mason of San Pedro Lodge No. 292 in Laguna, to buy hundreds of bottled water.

“*Hindi aabot ang pera ko,*” (My money is not enough.) Bro. Sy cautioned Bro. Siksik

when he got the bill.

Taking whatever money was on Bro. Sy's hand, Bro. Sik-sik yet gave away 243 bottles of 5-gallon water free on top of the purchased item.

Hardly had Bro. Sy caught his breath when another good news came.

"Dalawang araw lang, napuno na yung container ng relief through the help of WB Alex Canonigo," (In just two days, the container van was filled with relief supplies through the help of WB Alex Canonigo.) said Bro. Sy.

A third surprise finally capped Bro. Sy's Manila trip. WB Canonigo had lined up 2 more trucks of medicine for Tacloban.

But the medicine trucks were to follow later.

Arriving at Manila on November 14, Bro. Sy returned to Tacloban two days after.

Coming to Bicol, Bro. Sy was helped by local bros namely VW Edwin Primo and VW Tody Honey. They saw to it that the truck would get past all obstructions to Matnog.

Bro. Sy left Matnog as smoothly as he boarded the earliest ferry to Leyte.

"One week tapos ko lumuwas, bumalik na ako dito sa Tacloban with food, rice and water," (One week after I left Tacloban, I returned here

to Tacloban with food, rice and water.) said Bro. Sy.

Days later, 2 trucks laden with medicine and supplies from WB Canonigo arrived at Tacloban.

They were handed to WB Earl Viernes, currently the Secretary of Santiago L. Chua Commemorative Lodge No. 336.

WB Viernes is the medical director of Bethany Hospital in Tacloban City, owned by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Organizing

Not all of Tacloban had buckled down under the ordeal. A number yet stood firm and braved the nightmare that had descended on the city.

They were just ordinary men. Subdivision residents, for instance, put up security checkpoints and screened arriving vehicles.

Even teenage boys joined the nightly patrols against thieves.

Neighbors helped neighbors.

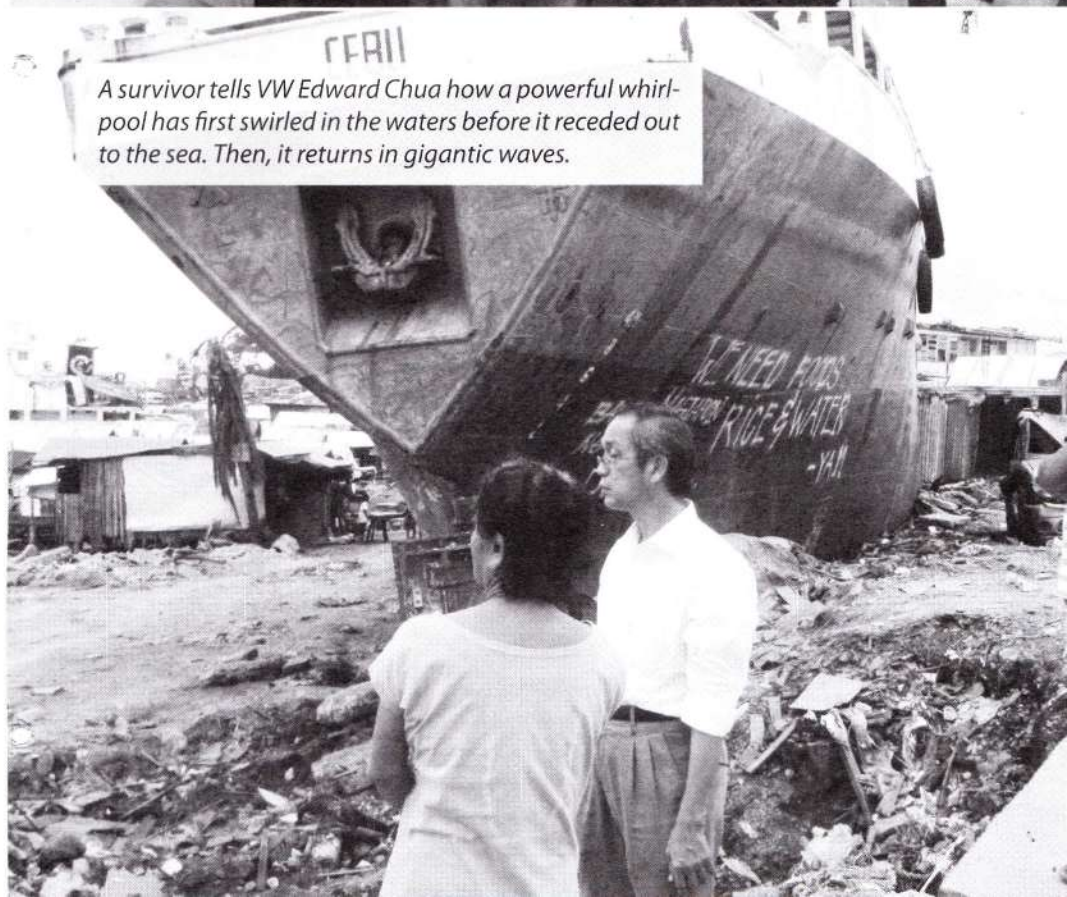
They shared food and water that came by even in the most devastated neighborhoods. They looked after orphans and elders whose family members had perished in the storm surge until relatives come to claim them.



This popularly graphic picture of a man carrying his dead child captures the shock and numbness of the Tacloban victims after the calamity. Inquirer/ Nino Jesus Orbeta



Tacloban bros who shared their stories. Front row, seated: (from left) Bro. Dave Sy; WB Edgar Gasco; VW Edward Chua, JGL; and his older brother, VW Edgar Chua; Second row, standing: (starting third from left) WM Ralph Perez; VW Nicolas Rios; VW Vic Atillo; and Bro. Lito "Boy" Asturias.



A survivor tells VW Edward Chua how a powerful whirlpool has first swirled in the waters before it receded out to the sea. Then, it returns in gigantic waves.

The Grand Master's Party arrives at 2:30 pm at the Daniel Romualdez Airport on November 24, 2013. From left: VW Benny Tan, MW Juanito Espino Jr., VW John Teng, VW Cristito Perez and VW Emmanuel Deloso (with floppy hat). / Photo by Bro. Jojo Atienza





Jittery neighbors rushed mothers agonizing in childbirth among them to working clinics or hospitals.

Not all in Tacloban was lost. Sane and decent people were the final shred holding up the city together.

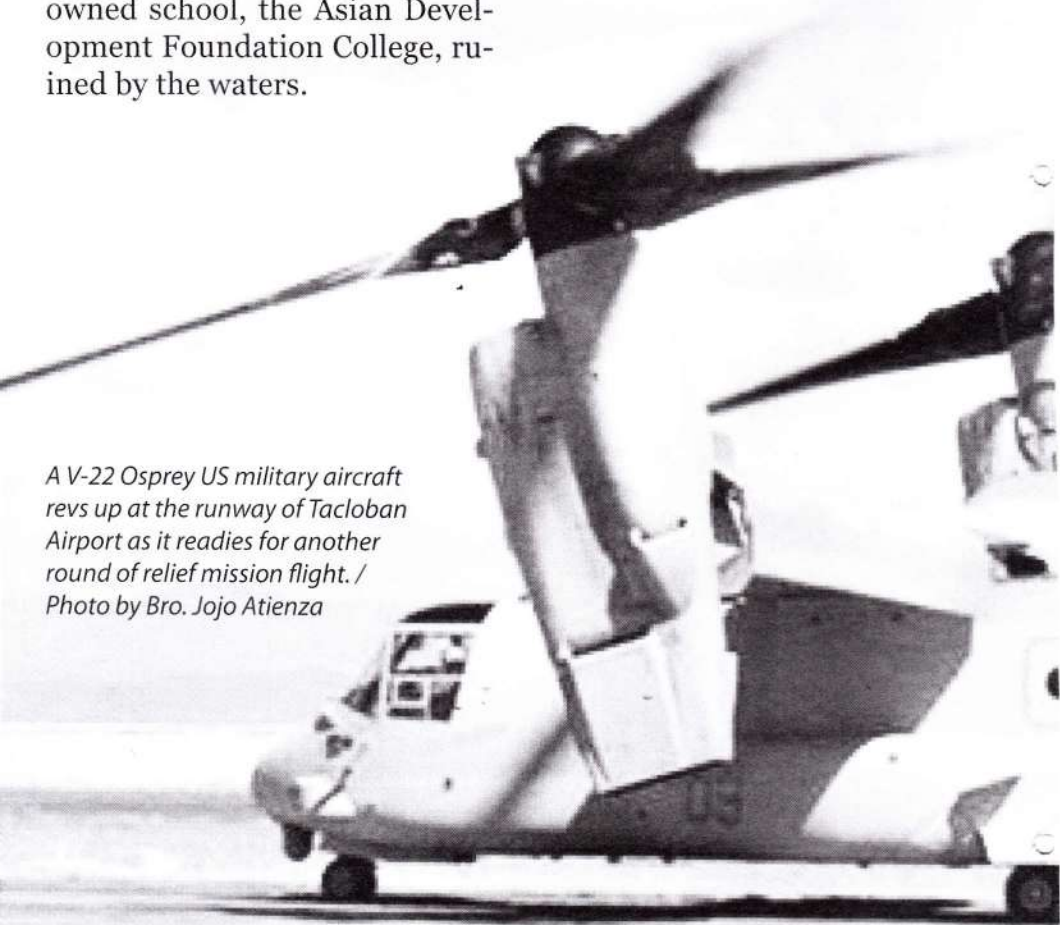
Far from jittery, VW Edward Chua, Junior Grand Lecturer for the Visayas, had remained calm since Yolanda hit Tacloban. For one, it dampened him to see a hundred computers and classrooms of their family-owned school, the Asian Development Foundation College, ruined by the waters.

For the other, staying cool was characteristic of him as an educator.

VW Chua finally managed to round the bros up 3 days after the storm. An emergency cell site was put up in the City Hall.

“Mahirap ang communications noon. Pupunta ka pa sa tabi ng City Hall para mag-text. At saka mahirap din ang transpo. Noong first 4 days, talagang maglalakad ka lang,”

A V-22 Osprey US military aircraft revs up at the runway of Tacloban Airport as it readies for another round of relief mission flight. / Photo by Bro. Jojo Atienza



(Communication was difficult then. You had to go beside City Hall to text. Transport was also difficult. In the first 4 days, you really had to walk.) he said.

To speed up things, he organized the bros into cells. Any bro he had got into contact with carried messages to and fro 5 Masons in his vicinity.

With VW Gregorio Dolina, DDGM R8-B (Leyte), the Tacloban bros took stock of the situation when they had sat down together. All the bros suffered damages. There was only 1 casualty in the Masonic family—the son of Bro. Allan Lee who died in the storm surge.

Bros, who owned stores

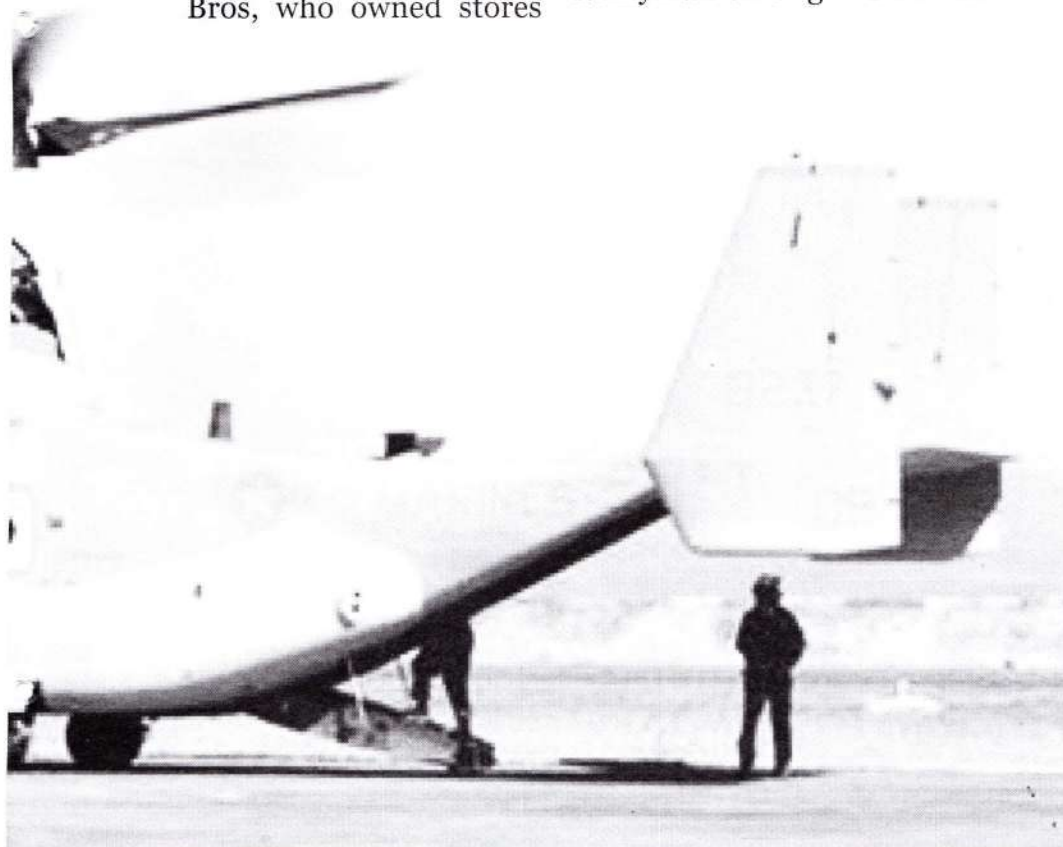
and shops, were not spared by thieves and looters.

“Sane and decent people were the final shred holding up the city together.”

Bro. Dexter Montecastro, for instance, lost his processed meat stocks intended for December sales to looters.

Thieves broke into the car repair shop of Bro. Allan Lee and ran away with his tools and welding equipments.

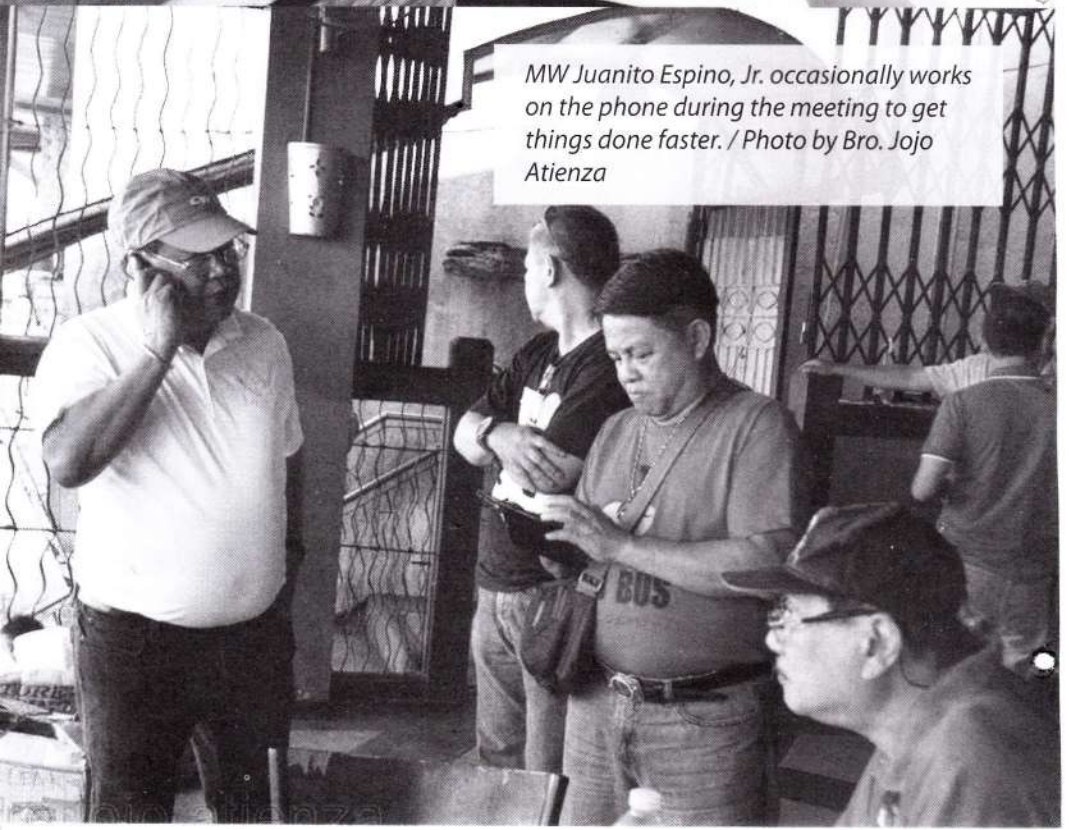
Bro. Lito Asturias, the funnyman among the Tacloban



MW Juanito Espino, Jr. presides over the crucial meeting with the Tacloban bros. / Photo by Bro. Jojo Atienza



MW Juanito Espino, Jr. occasionally works on the phone during the meeting to get things done faster. / Photo by Bro. Jojo Atienza



bros, saw the tiles fractured and the pipes of his ice plant burst and broke when the water rushed in.

Ten of his 12 ice delivery trucks were swept away by the surge.

To get organized, they put up a relief committee that would regularly meet. "What we will receive, we will properly record and acknowledge," said VW Chua.

Also, the committee served as a monitoring desk for all the Tacloban bros. It looked out for Masons under medical maintenance, kept track of bros in varying degrees of destitution, and tallied who's leaving and who's staying in the city.

Significantly, half of the bros in Tacloban evacuated elsewhere.

"*Noong first week, hira-man kami dito talaga ng pera,*" (In the first week, we really borrowed money from each other here.) said VW Chua.

All banks were closed. There was little to buy. But a money in hand could afford the bros to get highly-priced but basic goods in the first crazy week after the storm.

Help trickled in small packages. But two weeks after, the bigger relief finally arrived.

On November 24, MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr., the Grand

Master, came to Tacloban himself with VW Benito Tan, chairman of the GLP Committee on Charity.

They met at a damaged barbecue restaurant downtown. It used to be the fellowship hangout of the Tacloban bros.

Sitting before the bros, MW Espino threw the most awaited question, "*Ano ba ang kailangan ninyo dito?*" (What do you need here?)

A litany of woes and wants soon spilled before the Grand Master.

It was a very simple and short fellowship. But it was, by all the means, the most meaningful and the richest.

Real

Downed power lines and impassable roads had cut Tacloban off from the rest of the world. The sense of isolation had emboldened the scoundrels to plunder the city and wreak anarchy.

But as help began to trickle in, mob rule was dispelled and order, restored.

Hope dawned on the Tacloban bros when VW Chua, JGL, had caught signal in his cellular phone. Calls from bros and sis from all over began coming.

Sis. Cornelia, the better-half of MW Rizal Aportadera, kept in-



Above: A busy traffic of foreign aircrafts delivering relief supplies delayed the resumption of commercial flight to Tacloban Airport on November 24, 2013.

Below: VW Edward Chua, JGL for the Visayas, gives MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr. and his party a rundown of the situation as he shows them around the city.



Photos by Bro. Jojo Atienza. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/MW-Juanito-G-Espino-Jr/1397822707165198>

Seeing the ruins all over him at the Tacloban Airport, MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr. firmly resolved to plow all the help possible to the brethren in the Visayas devastated by super typhoon Yolanda on November 24, 2013.



quiring about the health of the bros and the sufficiency of the aid coming.

She is a nurse; the Past Grand Master, a medical doctor.

Impressively, the adoptive bodies—the DeMolays, Jobbies, Rainbow, Eastern Star and Amaranth—were the first to dispatch help to Tacloban.

“Na-touch kami. Mga bro at sis na mismo ang lumalapit sa amin,” (We were touched. The bros and sis themselves were offering us help.) VW Chua said.

Soon, bros from Ozamis and Davao sent help over to Tacloban. So, did the bros in the U.S.

“Tulong-tulong talaga dito,” (Masons really did help one another here.) said VW Chua. *“Saka bigayan. Yung tulong ibibigay muna sa mas nangangailangan.”* (Also, there was generosity. Aid was given first to the most needy before everyone else.)

Bro. Sy agreed, *“Lahat tinamaan. Pero iispin pa rin baka mayroon pang mas nangangailangan. Walang greedy. Maraming nagpahaya.”* (Everybody was affected. But everybody would think first of others in worse condition. Nobody was greedy. Everybody was open-handed.)

But seeing the Grand Master himself came down to Tacloban was, perhaps, a first in the GLP.

MW Espino offered relocation to all homeless bros—even to bros at risk for their judicial or law-

enforcement jobs.

Convicts, who had broken out of jail during the storm surge, were out prowling—maybe for revenge, even.

Three bros and their families, at the least, were temporarily housed in Cebu.

A bro in need of immediate medical care was brought to Manila.

Learning that Tacloban drugstores were ransacked, MW Espino asked for a list of medicines certain bros needed for regular maintenance.

For bros relying on tubes or life-saving electricity-run medical equipments, he lent them generator sets.

Except for a few blocks in downtown, most of Tacloban City still remained powerless at the onset of 2014.

For the rest, MW Espino gave away corrugated iron sheets for repairs of the houses' roofs.

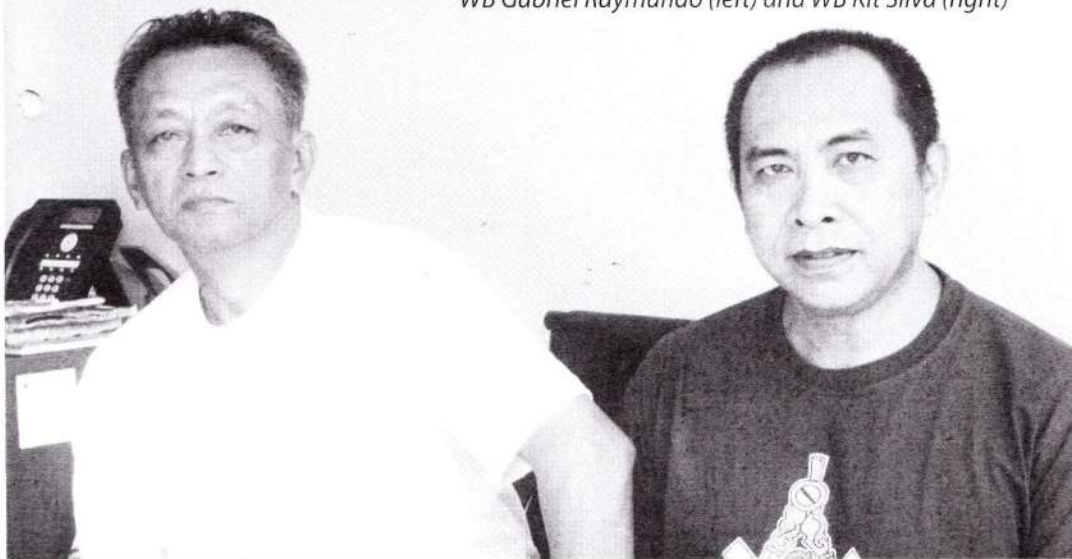
LPG stoves, canvass tents, and a couple of solar-powered lights were also handed to the bros.

It was undoubtedly the first time that the GLP helped its members this extensively—and certainly, meaningfully.

The effect came deep.

“For the first time,” said VW Chua, “we felt Brotherly Love and Relief. Our tenets are real. Masons are really concerned.”

In adversity, there rose up the Fraternity. • EC



The other Leyte

Ormoc: Roofless but not hopeless

Ormoc City in Leyte suffered the brunt of super typhoon Yolanda's 360-km per hour wind. But spared from the deadly 5-meter-high storm surge that swallowed Tacloban 105 km to the east, Leyte province's western port city was better off by all counts.

"Walang tubig. Puro hangin lang," (There was no water. It was all wind.) said WB Kit Silva, PM, of Ormoc Lodge No. 234.

Howling winds tore roof sheets off houses, buildings and schoolhouses. Iron rafters and trusses were all that had remained of the city's public market and bus terminal. But a few days after Yolanda, Ormoc was back in business.

The city hosts one Masonic lodge, Ormoc Lodge No. 234.

"Halos lahat ng bahay ng bro dito sira ang roofing," (Nearly all the houses of the brethren here had had damaged roofing.) said WB Gabriel Raymundo. *"Pero lahat kami apektado."* (But we were all affected.)

WB Silva heads the city's civil registry office. WB Raymundo runs Ormoc's public market.

There are 24 members in the city.

A seaside house that the bros used to store lodge properties, records and equipments was washed away by the high crash-

ing waves. Only the floor tiles remained.

Worse, it carried the Tyler's Book, Lodge Charter, rods and other ornaments to the sea.

"We cannot labor now because we don't have the implements," said WB Silva.

No Mason or family member was injured. But one bro, who is into deep-sea fishing business, suffered serious losses.

One of his vessels sunk off Ormoc City, taking all its 20 crew members down to the bottom.

Help

Help from various lodges came, said WB Silva.

Noteworthy, the Cebu brethren, through VW Sansaluna Pinagayao, DDGM of R7-A, was the earliest to respond.

Ormoc is about 3 hours across the sea from Cebu City by fast craft; 5 hours by regular boat.

With this proximity, Ormoc served as the jump-off point to all help going to Tacloban.

Moreover, commercial banks opened after Yolanda hit Leyte—hence, allowing aid to pour in fast.

Situated at the middle of the relief traffic, the Ormoc bros were called to help in fanning

out the aid to the Yolanda victims.

Two foreign nationals—a Korean and a Singaporean—who were into solar energy project in Ormoc had shipped 4 container vans of relief goods.

They asked the Ormoc Masons to point out the devastated areas in and around the city. Done, yet the bros were short of manpower to deliver them.

So, the bros went to the local ABS-CBN station, staffed with disaster volunteers, for the repacking and distribution. Soon, more than a thousand relief bags filled with rice, canned goods and biscuits were rushed to the villages around Ormoc.

1991

WB Silva said that he deeply sympathized with the Tacloban bros especially that a similar tragedy had struck Ormoc 22 years ago.

On the morning of November 5, 1991, brown muddy water from a nearby mountain rampaged down Ormoc City—wedged between two rivers—carrying logs, tearing away trees and houses, and swallowing everything in its path.

People climbed up trees and house roofs. Farther down to the city, water suddenly

rushed up to the knees. But in a few minutes, roiling water reached up to the neck.

The flashflood came amid typhoon “Uring.” But it was not the storm rain that had brought the devastation.

“*Drizzle lang noon. Tapos biglang nagkaroon ng “water sprout” o buhawi. Hindi naman tumama sa city, Yung ulan nasa bundok lang. Tapos heto na ang tubig. Mabilis tumama,*” It was just a drizzle then. Suddenly there appeared a water sprout up in the mountain. It didn’t hit the city. The rain was all in the mountains. Then, here came the water. It hit fast.) WB Silva recalled.

Volumes of water were stored upstream. Until the debris damming the rainwater broke and cascaded down to the city.

“*Biglang bumigay na ang tulay. Hindi na-contain ng ilog yung volume ng tubig. Wala pang 30 minutes,*” (The bridge suddenly gave out. The river couldn’t contain the volume of water anymore. It wasn’t even 30 minutes.) he said.

Scenes, more ghastly than Tacloban in Yolanda’s aftermath, dotted the landscape—stiff mud-caked corpses in grotesque poses littered the streets. Bodies were even turning up months later in the drainages.

Some 5,101 people died with many yet missing.

Hope

Traces of the Ormoc tragedy showed in Tacloban. Massive devastation cut Leyte’s bustling commercial city in the east from the rest of the world—but not totally so, said WB Silva.

Survivors, who could not get on planes, fled Tacloban by way of the Ormoc seaport.

Tacloban traders flocked to Ormoc to buy goods regularly coming from Cebu.

“*Dito ang takbuhan. Ubusan ng tinda dito,*” (They all ran here. Merchandises were sold out here.) said WB Raymundo.

“*Tsinelas ang pinakamabili noon dito,*” (Slip-ons were the hottest items here.) he said gesturing his whole arm in a swiping motion.

Similarly, Ormoc is now the jump-off point for all international relief organizations. The city is crawling with foreign nationals and 4X4 pickups painted with various acronymed help groups.

Tacloban was not totally lost. It was the same with Ormoc.

A tarpaulin hanging from a house properly said it all: “Ormoc is roofless but not hopeless.”

• EC

Roxas City bros bounced back, moved on fast

Roxas City in Capiz was not as heavily damaged as Tacloban. But the city yet suffered the fury of super typhoon Yolanda to adversely affect the lives of the 30 brethren residing in this seafood capital of the Philippines.

Roadside scenes leading to the city showed uprooted trees and roofless homes. An electric transmission tower, twisted like tinfoil, dangerously hang from a hillside, held back by tangling cable wires.

"We are still trying to recover from our losses in the 2006 typhoon Frank," said WM Erwin Anthony Santos, Master of Makawiwili No. 55. "Then, Yoloanda came."

Makawiwili No. 55 is the only lodge in Roxas City.

Wrecked houses topped the damage report conducted among the 28 active bros in the city after Yolanda hit. The businesses they ran were either wind- or water-damaged, or both.

Some of the Roxas bros are into agri- and aquaculture businesses.

WM Santos said he lost 30,000 heads in his poultry farm. About 15 hectares of his fish pond was damaged. The earth dikes were damaged, allowing the catch up for harvest to escape.

Bro. Roxas "Boy" Azarraga, Makawiwili Senior Warden, couldn't agree more. "*Masama man ang loob namin pero dapat tanggapin.*" (Our sentiments may be revolting but we have to accept it.)

Only 6 of his 10-hectare fishpond is operational, so far. The earth dikes, holding the fish in place, crumbled during the onslaught of Yolanda.

Also, 3 houses of light materials he had constructed along the pond were washed out. Only the toilet bowl remained.

When Yolanda struck Roxas City, the river rose and flooded the nearby neighborhoods.

WB Hiram Chu, Immediate Past Master, said that floodwaters had damaged a couple of the stocks in their family-owned motorcycle store in downtown Roxas.

Banks

Right after Yolanda, VW Dante Denate, District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) of R6-A, took stock of the situation and set down to work.

R6-A covers the entire Panay Island, including the provinces of Iloilo, Capiz, Antique and Aklan.

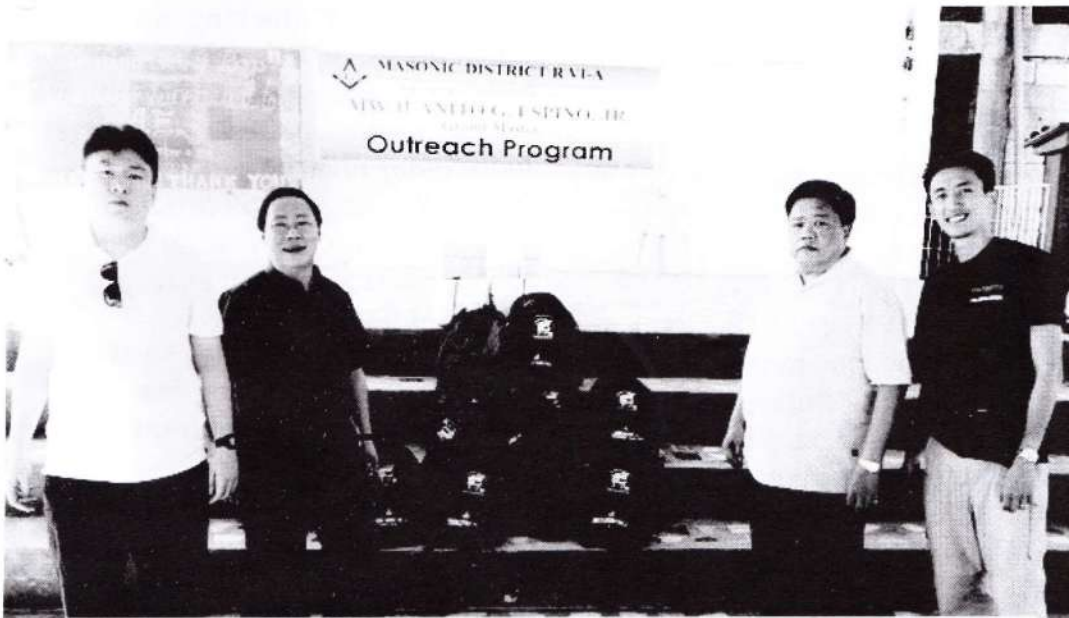
Unlike Tacloban, Panay

was moderately devastated. Commercial banks were open. Cellphone signals were working. A former bank manager, VW Denate was glad that he had the familiar means at hand to speed up help deliveries where roads, choked up with debris, were impassable.

From the district funds, he drew up Php 20,000 for donation to the bros of Makawiwili No. 55, dispatching the money through the bank.

Until MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr, the Grand Master, called and sent him Php 250,000 financial aid.

This Grand Lodge dona-



VW Dante A. Denate, DDGM of R6-A (third from left), along with the officers of Kalantiao Lodge No. 187 under WB Hubert S. Sio, handed out gifts to some 190 families at the St. Vincent De Paul Chapel, at Villa Claro, Brgy. Sto. Nino Sur in Arevalo, Iloilo City, in the aftermath of super typhoon Yolanda on December 1, 2013.

tion went to 36 calamity-stricken bros in various provinces, each receiving Php 9,720,000. He handed the money to the Masters of the lodge in individual checks.

Moreover, extra donations came from a local text messaging group where VW Denate is a member.

Right after Yolanda, VW Denate quickly sent out calls for help. The texting group raised Php 150,000.

Part of the money went to the purchase of 50 boxes of canned sardines worth Php 62,500. VW Denate and his texting friends donated the goods to the provincial government.

Commiseration

The Makawiwili Masons acknowledged the receipt of Php 243,000 from the GLP. It was distributed to 26 bros at about Php 10,000 per head.

“We went to the bank and withdrew the money,” recalled WB Santos. “But we held a meeting to decide on what to do with all the money. We agreed to pool it all together and split them into Php 9,000 each.”

A number of the donations went to the farm, pond and store hands.

“Like family members, they come under our responsi-

bilities. They also need help the most,” said WB Santos.

They agreed to channel all extra donations to the repair of the lodge hall which Yolanda had substantially damaged. Winds tore the roof off; the ceilings, collapsed.

The roof and ceiling repairs cost Php 90,000.

Before the storm, WB Santos said, the lodge fund stood at Php 220,000. But all the on-going constructions had reduced the lodge’s money to Php 70,000.

So, they shifted the Php 20,000 district donation to lodge repairs.

Coming ready for the rainy days, by stocking up on lodge funds, was one thing. But brotherly relief was another.

“*Nakagagaan ba ng loob ‘yung elders namin sasa-bihin nila ‘kaya natin tumayo’*” (It lightens up the load to hear the elders say ‘we can rise up.’) said WM Santos.

For all the money in the world, he said, nothing was as valuable as commiseration in times of loss.

“*Kahit tapik lang sa balikat na ‘kayan natin ‘yan’ ... iba talaga yun,*” (Even just a pat on the shoulder saying ‘we can do it’ ... that’s really different.) he said. • EC

Hamtik Lodge No. 76

Rising above adversity

By WB J. Turalba Gabin, PM

Hamtik Lodge No. 76, F. & A. M.



Agricultural equipments were turned over to the farmers of Sebaste, Antique. In photo are VW Rudy Ong of Labong Lodge No. 59, Hamtik Lodge No. 76 WM J. T. Gabin, JW Bro. Noel Dimapiles, VW Clyde Valente and Sebaste Mayor Jose Varona,

Three months after the strongest cyclone in the planet hit Antique, the devastated province still reels from the debilitating effects of super typhoon Yolanda (internationally codenamed “Haiyan”).

Yolanda made its first landfall along the eastern side of Panay Island and ravaged the towns of Concepcion and Estancia in Iloilo. Then it crossed the Panay landmass, wreaking havoc

across the Province of Capiz.

The typhoon next jumped across the highlands of Western Panay and slammed into the Northern Antique, centering on the coastal towns of Culasi and Sebaste that included several island barrios. Dozens of lives were lost. Many missing persons have not been found to this day.

The typhoon left not only ruined houses and uprooted trees but also a large amount of loss on



Agricultural equipments were turned over to the farmers of Culasi, Antique. In photo are VW Rudy Ong of Labong Lodge No. 59, Hamtik Lodge No. 76 WM J. T. Gabin, JW Bro. Noel Dimapiles, VW Clyde Valente and Culasi Mayor Joel Lomugtang.

Antique's agricultural and fishery sectors. According to the final report of the Provincial Agriculture Office and the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS), the estimated total cost of damages on the province's agricultural and fishery sectors were, at least, Php 155 million.

The destruction of Yolanda in Iloilo and Capiz became daily news coverage by local and national media. Relief goods flowed into Northern Iloilo and Capiz by the container loads. But the plight of these two devastated Antique towns was virtually ignored by the media. Still, thanks to the cell phone. Relief goods from individual Antiqueños all over the world began arriving by the end of November. On their own, the affected residents started the long and painful process of rebuilding their lives.

Based on consultations

with the affected residents, especially with the farmers, it was admirable that they did not wish entirely to rely on the food and cash aid people give them. They needed tools or farm equipments in order to enable them to operate their damaged farms once again. They wanted to rebuild their lives themselves in dignity and hard work. Again, their pleas were not heard in an organized manner.

A dozen members of Hamtik Lodge No. 76, residing in Northern Antique, listened to the farmers and fishermen and began knocking on doors. As the pleas began to lose their urgency, the Brethren became more driven. Finally the brethren turned to the internet. All social media were used.

In mid-December, a Manila-based organization, the Screen Imaging and Digital Graphic Association of the Phil-

ippines (SIDGAP), established contact with Hamtik Lodge No. 76. They informed the brethren that SIDGAP had chosen Antique province as beneficiary of their donations.

The SIDGAP president is a Mason, VW Rudy L. Ong of Labong Lodge No. 59. The Supreme Ruler of the Universe indeed works in mysterious ways!

VW Rudy Lim Ong appointed Hamtik Lodge No. 76 as its project coordinator. Through No. 76, SIGDAP identified the farmers cooperatives and associations in Sebaste and Culasi towns in dire need of farm machinery and equipments.

These farmers' coops are Sitio Viejo Farmers Association (in Sebaste); Madja-as Irrigators Association (in Culasi, Antique); and Bungsyadan Irrigators Association (also in Culasi).

On February 7, 2014, the SIGDAP party led by VW Rudy Ong and Secretary John Carrera travelled to Antique via Aklan. They were met at the Kalibo airport by Hamtik Lodge Junior Warden Bro. Noel Dimapiles and VW Clyde Valente. They were brought straight to Sebaste.

Mayor Jose Christopher Varona, and the brethren from No. 76, were at hand to greet them at the municipal hall. They proceeded next to the farmers' coops and turned over pre-har-

vest and post harvest machineries amounting to Php 99,400.00. The SIGDAP party was treated to a small thanksgiving program, sumptuous lunch, and given with souvenir tokens of beautifully crafted placemats made of abaca fiber by the beneficiary farmers.

Next stop was Culasi where the party was welcomed by Mayor Joel Lomugdang with his son, a Mason, Bro. Jeffrey Lomugdang. They turned pre-harvest and post-harvest machineries over to the farmers' coops amounting to Php 189,000.00. A short program was held in their honor by the happy, grateful farmers.

All in all, the amount of donations for the 2 towns totaled to Php 288,400.00.

The pictures attached to this report narrate the whole story. Indeed, Masons led by their inspiring values of brotherly love and relief. "To relieve the distressed, is a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly with Masons, who are linked together by an indestructible chain of sincere affection," so the Lecture says.

Relief flows from brotherly love, as free, pure, and refreshing as the mountain air. It dries up the gushing fountains of grief, banishes want from the abode of a distressed brother, and pours the oil of joy into the wounded hearts of the widows and orphans. So Mote It Be. ☒

District R7-A

Cebu becomes the hub of Masonic relief



*VW Sansaluna "Sani" Pinagayao
DDGM, R7-A*

If there was a right Mason at the right place at the time, that was VW Sansaluna “Sani” Pinagayao, District Deputy Grand Master of R7-A.

Running the district from his base in Cebu, VW Pinagayao enjoyed a strategic perch over the heart of the Visayas region.

And when the calamities started coming, he responded—and responded well and fast—so that no disaster-stricken bro had ever felt forgotten or abandoned. District R7-A covers Cebu, Negros Oriental and Bohol provinces.

Quake

Since he had dispatched a district aid to the Zamboanga bros in September, VW Pinagayao had no hint that the next calamities were to strike closer to home.

VW Pinagayao is the administrator of the Mactan Export Processing Zone (MEPZ) under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

So, not for nothing why he jumped checking who Cebuano bro had been hurt by the 7.2 magnitude earthquake that rocked the Visayas hard on October 15.

In Cebu, people rushed out of buildings and houses dazed and groping on walls and trees.

The bell tower of the Basilica Minore de Sto. Niño crashed to ground in a cloud of dust.

A concrete awning of a business building dropped on the cars parked below it. Another, in a town outside the city, fell and trapped 2 women passengers inside a van.

The city’s fish market collapsed crushing 4 people to death. A stampede broke out in the city’s stadium killing a child and 3 others.

Building plasters littered the downtown avenue. Employees and commuters milled in the middle of the street for safety, away from the sidewalks.

Luckily, no Cebuano bro was hurt.

With weakened knees, he called next WB Mark Noel Mende, PM, Dagohoy Lodge No. 84, in Tagbilaran in Bohol for a head count.

Bohol was the epicenter of the deadly quake.

He was much relieved to learn that only 2 Boholano bros were lightly injured. He sent them cash for hospitalization and bags of goodies.

Yet, the temblor’s massive devastation of Bohol was too big to ignore. Even companies in the MEPZ were eager to help.

“In situations like this, Masonry, as an organization, must respond relevantly to the



Cebu suffered its share of calamity devastations like the Sto. Niño Basilica Minore in the October 15 quake (above) and the storm wreckages in Daanbantayan town after super typhoon Yolanda (below).



times” VW Pinagayao said.

So, he called WB Mende again, informing him that the employees of Toshiba Philippines, counted as “Friends of Masons,” were to come to Bohol bringing 2 truckloads of relief supplies.

Also, the Philippine Masonic Association of America sent Php 42,000 over to the De Molay Lapu-lapu Lodge Chapter.

The Lapu-lapu De Molays, in turn, used the money to purchase relief supplies and distributed them to the residents of Batasan Island under the Tubigon municipality.

Another set of 1,160 food bags were also given away to the Tubigon villages of Cahayag, Busingon and Talenceras.

Yolanda

Like most Filipinos, VW Pinagayao had thought that the calamities were over, with the Bohol quake capping the year’s string of disasters.

Until super typhoon Yolanda—internationally code-named “Haiyan”—massed up and barreled through the Visayas on November 8.

Even Cebu suffered Yolanda’s fury.

VW Jun Leonor, PDDGM, is an engineer for Cebu’s Public Works and Highways Provincial Office.

Tasked to clear the roads of the storm’s debris for relief deliveries, he and his crew began work at 9 a.m. outside of Cebu City.

They reached the town of Daanbantayan, Cebu island’s northernmost fringe, at 10 p.m.

VW Pinagayao was in South Korea when Yolanda struck. But he watched all the Philippine newscasts while abroad, readying himself for a big job waiting at home.

Returning to Cebu, he rang up a host of numbers to gather all the information he could muster.

“You must gather all the information first before you can act,” he explained.

But it was also home that he had always helped first before other places.

Northern Cebu was the most devastated by Yolanda. Six towns—Sta. Fe, Madrijelos, Bantayan, Bogo, Medellin and Daanbantayan—were cut off from the rest of the world.

R7-A District Council sprang up to action.

Food packs for 1,300 families were sent to Medellin where 90 percent of the houses were either partially or totally damaged.

Relief supplies for 150 families were dispatched to Bogo which had lost water supply since the storm hit.

Nearly a week after Yolanda

da, MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr., Grand Master, handed VW Pinagayao Php 100,000 for Cebu's Yolanda victims.

VW Pinagayao immediately parted with the money for 2 bros in northern Cebu whose houses had been wrecked by the storm.

Shelter

With banks and communications running, it was easy to pass help from hand to hand.

From Cebu City, VW Pinagayao deposited Php 200,000, given by MW Espino, to the lodge account of Ormoc No. 234.

Also, he sent a container van of relief supplies plus 809 food bags to Ormoc Lodge Master, WM Rafael Lucero.

But these facilities were unavailable in Tacloban. It was a problem which had stalled VW Pinagayao early in the calamity.

"Madaling mag-mobilize ng tulong. Pero mahirap mag-transport. Agawan noon sa shipment," (It was easy to mobilize help. But it was difficult to transport. Everybody competed for shipment.) recalled VW Pinagayao.

The storm surge wrecked the Tacloban seaport. The airport was to operate yet for another 2 weeks.

All this time, VW Pina-

gayao had set his eyes on the clock—or help would come too late for the Tacloban bros.

Until the bros in Cebu picked up a text message issuing from Leyte. A Tacloban bro with a company of 8 wanted to evacuate to Cebu.

VW Pinagayao and his council quickly replied. They asked the Leyte bros to send over to Cebu all Masons in dire need of help.

"We sent out word to all brethren in need of help to come here to Cebu. If they could not contact them, we would extricate them if necessary," VW Pinagayao said. *"Kung sino makita, dalhin na dito."* (Anybody who can be found, just bring him here.)

The Cebu brethren met the Tacloban bro, who left Ormoc with his family, at the pier. They brought them all to a local hotel.

"Doon namin nakita sa hotel 'yung iba pang bro galing sa Tacloban," (We saw in the hotel the other bros and their families who had come from Tacloban.) he said.

After consultation with the Tacloban bros, the District Council put a new plan into effect.

Three days later, they moved the Tacloban bros and their families to an apartment in Cebu City.

It was cheaper, of course. But it gave off a more homey feeling, allowing more freedom, helpful to emotional recovery.

Hub

When traffic to Tacloban had slightly eased up, the Cebu Masons finally got their relief going. Mactan Lodge No. 30, for instance, finally dispatched its relief supplies of canned goods, rice and water.

Even VW Pinagayao himself came to Tacloban and talked with the bros asking, "*Ano puwede naming gawin? Ano puwede naming itulong?*" (What can we do for you? What can we help?)

It was easy to conclude that Masonic charity had driven VW Pinagayao by all means to help. Even with a large body built, yet he walked and talked like a gentle giant—soft-spoken and mild-mannered.

"All this help had never materialized if not for the kind-heartedness of the brethren of Cebu," he said.

Besides the material aid, he said that certain Cebu Masons were actually deep into the relief works.

When the 7.2 magnitude quake shook the Visayas, two pilot bros from Maktan No. 30 flew air force choppers to deliver relief

supplies.

When Yolanda struck, they flew mercy missions again from dawn to dusk daily, air-dropping relief in hard-to-reach places.

"There were many unsung heroes behind the Masonic relief operations," he said.

But seemingly, the efforts of bold- and kind-hearted bros tied together when VW Pinagayao came to the scene. As an economic zone administrator, the investors' safety topped all his concerns.

In MEPZ, he began an emergency response competition among companies with fire, rescue and first aid teams now running on its fourth year.

He even brought this safety and quick-response mentality to the district. Early in his term, he implemented a blood databank among its members. Blood types of Cebuano bros were listed down to speed up the acquisition of matching blood types in case of emergencies.

Forward-looking, his knack for sliding solutions discreetly and smoothly into place had readied R7-A for tough times ahead.

So, when the deadly calamities came, Cebu silently emerged as the hub of Masonic relief in the Visayas. • EC

Yolanda upped Masonic Charity one level higher—and tougher

For two weeks, typhoon-devastated Tacloban was just another calamity for VW Benito Tan, PJGD, chairman of the GLP Committee on Charity.

Not until he stepped on and saw Tacloban for himself that the city had dramatically turned into a deep, personal, commitment for him to embrace.

“The first thing I saw was the dilapidated and sorry situation of the airport and the cars on the roadsides in topsy-turvy piles,” he said.

VW Tan knows a disaster when he sees one. Currently, he is the Director of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Pasay City Chapter.

But his early coldness was partly traceable to the late and slow response of the GLP itself. After the strongest typhoon ever to hit man on record slammed into Tacloban on November 8, it took the GLP nearly a week to call for a meeting.

Only on November 14 was the Yolanda Relief Operations launched.

The ocular inspection was to happen for another 10 days when commercial flights resumed in this Eastern Visayan city.

On November 24, he boarded the plane in Manila with MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr., Grand Master. But their flight was diverted to Cebu due to heavy traffic of U.S. military aircrafts in Tacloban airport conducting relief operations.

They arrived at Tacloban at 2:30 p.m.—2½ hours late.

The flight disruption was only a precursor of the unusual experiences he would meet in the city.

Roller-coaster

Some 20 bros met him and MW Espino at a water-damaged barbecue restaurant. They all waited to share lunch with them—a whole fried chicken.

The single-course lunch vanished to 2 dozen bros in a minute, leaving only a strip and the sauce.

"Seeing the situation," VW Tan said, "I brought out our emergency supply of Chinese canned goods."

When served, one bro who sampled a meat loaf remarked, "Kuya Ben, in the last twenty days, I tried all the means to cook sardines and noodles in different ways because sardines and noodles are all what we have. Today is a real lunch for us, having real food."

VW Tan said he would have waffled before the bros had he not occasionally veered the conversations to business.

But even business matters were rueful.

"I learned that a relative of a brother had passed away because there was no insulin available. They even tried herbal medicine but to no avail," VW Tan said. "There are doctors but no medicine there."

As he listed down the woes and wants of the bros, his eyes intermittently switched between the Mormon Church across the restaurant and the Iglesia ni Cristo Church nearby.

"They were very organized with tents for their members only. They cared for their members first before other denominations. It hit me what Freemasons are doing for their brethren," VW Tan observed. "I asked myself 'What have we done for our own

brethren?'"

In the whole afternoon, VW Tan rode on a roller-coaster of thoughts and emotions until dusk came.

As he boarded the vehicle that would take them to Ormoc, a mother and child came begging beside him.

"I handed food to the mother but I could not look at her eyes because I might break down," he said.

But the child kept staring at him all this time. Again, he evaded the eyes of the boy.

"I turned around. I don't know why. But there was something in the eyes of that boy that hit me so hard," he said. "That encounter with the mother and child was the motivation that hardened my resolve."

Game plan

But there was another unusual thing about the Visayas trip.

From Manila. MW Espino tightly held onto a bulky plastic bag in his hand. There was Php 700,000 cash in it.

In every district stop, the Grand Master would pull a hundred or Php 200,000. He would hand the money over to the District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) for the relief of the calamity-stricken bros in the area.

"The Grand Master borrowed the money from his wife. He just wanted to move things fast," VW Tan said. "It was an advance to be reimbursed from the Grand Lodge."

But the Grand Master's handouts were just temporary.

Back in Manila, VW Tan buckled down to work.

"The Charity Committee didn't have a disaster program. At the last minute, I worked overnight on the flowcharts and taskings," said VW Tan.

Yolanda had actually changed the usual Masonic charity game plan. Handing checks over was not enough anymore. Some things counted more importantly than money this time.

An on-site base was set up in Tacloban headed by VW Edward Chua, Junior Grand lecturer for the Visayas.

Next, posts were set up leading to Manila to intercept fleeing but distressed bros and their families—in Ormoc, Leyte under VW Roger Uy; and in Cebu City, Cebu under VW Sansaluna Pinagayao.

Bros, who wished to be relocated, could call on these posts. Once their identities were confirmed, they were to be admitted for temporary shelter. Financial aid was given for longer stays, or for transportation fare if they had other choice of relocation site.

Posts were also put up in Bicol for bros who had taken the land route—in Bulusan, Sorsogon; in Legazpi, Albay; and in Naga, Camarines Sur.

They were manned by WB Noel Rosal, Bro. Eugene Cua and Bro. Jerome Lee—all from Mayon Lodge No. 61.

VW Beda Quiambao was assigned in the Metro Manila post.

Delivery

With the assistance posts already set up outside of Leyte, VW Tan worked next on how to bring the aid right into Tacloban.

Quickly, he collected all the relief supplies he could possible get in a week—rice, canned goods and clothes. Time was crucial.

WB Anson Dy and the bros of Labong Lodge No. 59 took turns packing all the relief supplies at the ground floor of the Grand Lodge.

VW Edwin P. Costes, DDGM NCR-D, lent to the GLP his 10-wheeler truck for transport of the relief supplies to Tacloban.

The Charity Committee was up and ready to go. But VW Tan was not taking chances.

Around November 11, a Red Cross relief convoy was stopped by the New People's

Army (NPA) as it approached Matnog in Sorsogon, the ferry jump-off to the Visayas.

The armed men wanted to divert the Red Cross trucks to their territory. But the Red Cross personnel stood pat to protect the relief supplies marked for Tacloban.

A deal was reached. A portion of the relief was handed to the NPAs. The convoy was okayed to safely proceed.

So, VW Tan asked RW Tomas Rentoy III, Senior Grand Warden, for police escort.

Two cops went with the GLP relief truck to Tacloban at the end of November.

But not all the help was loaded into the GLP truck. Some came later.

In Tacloban, a bro in the medical profession handed VW Tan a list of "maintenance" medicines not locally available. The drugstores were ransacked by looters.

Poring over the list, VW Tan found out that they were medicines requiring doctors' prescriptions.

He passed the job of gathering the medicines to WB Adriatico "Akok" Tee of Biak Na Bato Lodge No. 7. When collected, they were shipped to Tacloban fast via the DLTB Bus.

Also, a number of equipments, like generator sets to

power home medical equipments of ailing bros, were already sold out in the market.

For this, VW Tan called on VW John T. Teng of Laong Laan Lodge No. 185. The latter sourced out the gensets from the importers themselves.

"The gensets were only lent to the Tacloban brethren," said VW Tan. "Once power resumes in their areas, the gensets are to be returned to the GLP."

Even tarpaulins were hard to find after Yolanda.

Along with battery-charged solar lights, these equipments and materials were shipped next to Tacloban.

Lesson

From basic needs like canned goods and rice, the Charity Committee slowly upped its services to intermediate level.

MW Espino, for instance, had issued iron roof sheets to the Tacloban bros to repair their homes and return to their former lives disrupted by the monster storm.

A total of Php 17 million cash donations were collected, distinctly set aside as a super typhoon Yolanda fund.

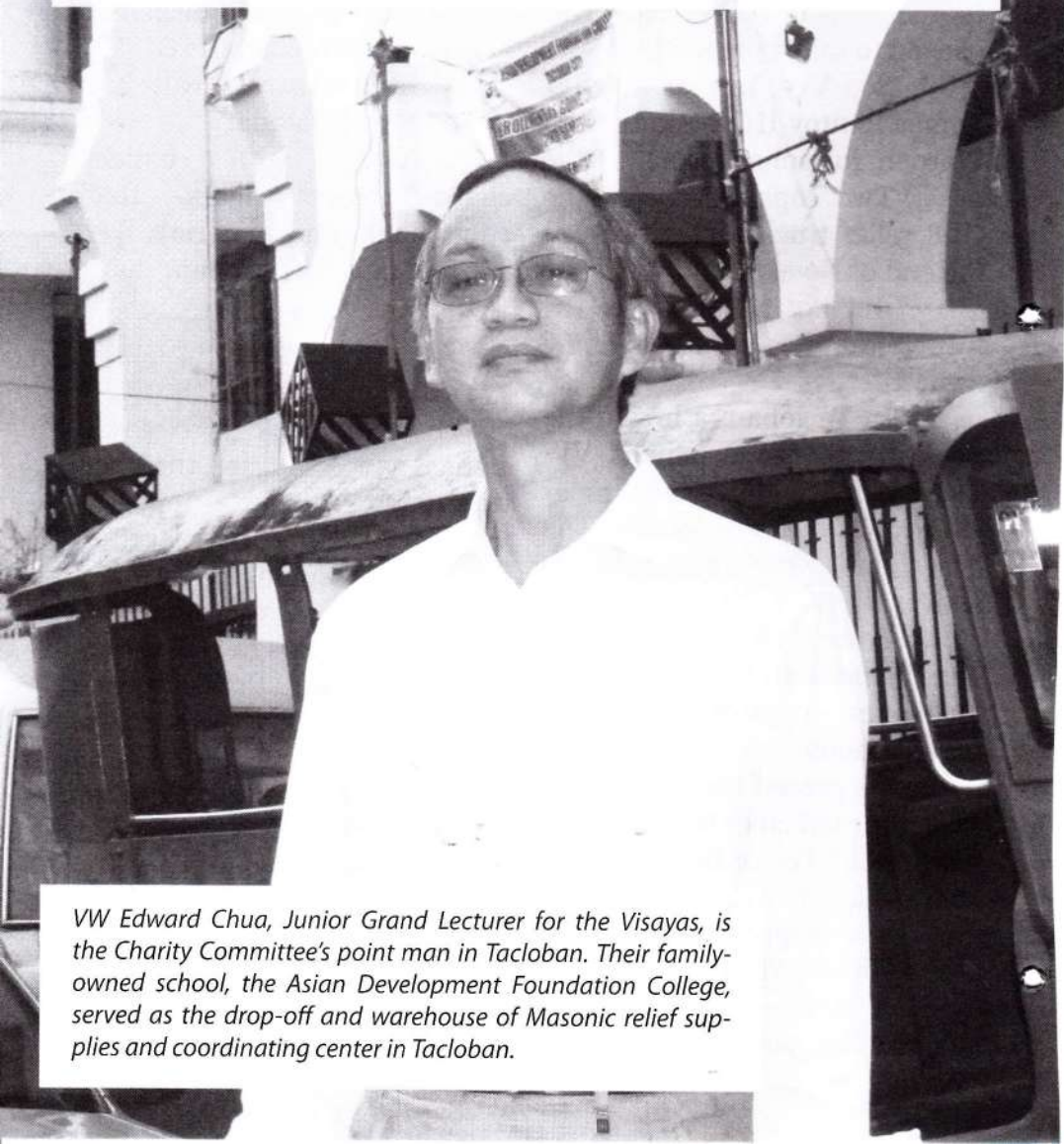
With available fund, more programs can be drawn up to hasten the recovery of the calamity-stricken bros.

For this, MW Espino issued a Damage Assessment Form for all the Visayan bros wanting to avail of GLP help.

Nearly six months after Yolanda, VW Tan soberly looked back, not so much at the horrors but, at the Masonic lessons the calamity had brought.

“All of us are at the mercy

of TGAOU. In times of tragedy, everyone is on the level,” he said. “Tragedy is the greatest leveler.” But surrender is not the attitude we must wear when disasters come regardless how powerful. “We need somebody to nurse us. Otherwise, we perish. That is the lesson TGAOU teaches us, to assist each other,” he said. • EC



VW Edward Chua, Junior Grand Lecturer for the Visayas, is the Charity Committee's point man in Tacloban. Their family-owned school, the Asian Development Foundation College, served as the drop-off and warehouse of Masonic relief supplies and coordinating center in Tacloban.

As of March 24

Donations for Yolanda-devastated bros at Php 16.48 million



VW Benito Tan, PJGD, chairman of the GLP Committee on Charity, is the workhorse behind the collection and delivery of relief supplies to the typhoon-devastated bros in Tacloban.

Donations for the relief fund of the brethren in the Visayas, who had been devastated by super typhoon Yolanda on November 8, 2013, nearly reached Php 16.5 million at the end of March.

“The outpouring of fraternal relief in and out of the GLP grand jurisdiction feels uplifting to the spirit,” said MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr., Grand Master.

He said that he particularly set the donations as a distinct fund for the alleviation of the brethren devastated by the monster typhoon. “Our brethren have gotten over the immediate needs. Now, they will need help in reconstructing their lives which takes longer to accomplish,” he said.

Visayan brethren affected by Yolanda can get a Damage Assessment Form from the Committee on Charity office at the GLP Hostel to apply for a financial aid.

Prepared by Ms. Cecilia T. Amancio GLP Cashier, the list of donors to the fund is presented in the next page.

Donations for Yolanda Relief Fund

As of March 24, 2014

DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
01/30/14	152302	Masonic Service Association of North America	6,020,000.00
11/21/13	151338	Grand Lodge of Japan	1,075,000.00
03/10/14	152815	United Grand Lodge of Queensland	729,192.04
11/25/13	151379	Masonic District RX-A & X-B	489,602.60
01/16/14	152081	Philcan Lodge No. 137	449,976.51
12/04/13	151530	Masonic District NCR -D	400,000.00
11/28/13	151446	Bro. Stan Boyask Thru MW Peter Lim Lo Suy	360,000.00
12/13/13	151655	Filcan Cabletow Masons	280,427.00
11/22/13	151363	Dist. GL of Hong & the Far East GL of England	276,888.00
12/23/13	151807	Gardena Moneta Lodge No. 372, USA	215,000.00
01/08/14	151926	General Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star	215,000.00
02/14/14	152485	Glacier Lodge No. 10	215,000.00
12/21/13	151795	Eden Lodge No. 1530 E.C.	190,000.00
12/21/13	151793	Dist Grand Lodge of North Island, New Zealand	180,000.00
11/20/13	151315	Grand Lodge of Scotland Lodges	179,215.00
		District Grand Chapter of Far East (P34,000.00)	
		District Grand Lodge of Far East (P42,680.00)	
		Lodge Perla Del Oriente No. 1034 S.C. (P51,035.00)	
		Lodge Han Yang (P51,500.00)	
01/13/14	151994	Albany Masonic Association Inc.	139,611.00

DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
12/04/13	151521	Dist. Deputy Grand Lodge of Mark Master Mason of Hong Kong	138,800.00
11/22/13	151356	Dr. Sun Yat Sen Mem. Lodge 398	132,000.00
11/15/13	151198	Masonic District RIII-F	120,000.00
12/09/13	151583	Toronto West Filipino Masons	110,613.20
11/26/13	151400	Masonic District RIII-G	109,200.00
11/12/13	151122	Bro. Jun Ramos & Masons from Chicago	108,925.00
12/18/14	151729	Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington	107,500.00
12/23/13	151810	A Disaster Relief Fund from USA	107,500.00
01/20/14	152132	Alpha District (Calgary)	104,000.00
11/13/13	151139	VW Sixto Esquivias, IV	100,000.00
11/26/13	151393	VW Michael J. David	100,000.00
11/15/13	151212	VW Joven K. Chua	100,000.00
11/18/13	151238	Batangas Masonic Association	100,000.00
12/18/13	151724	Filipino Freemason Auckland New Zealand	96,021.00
02/26/14	152626	Solidarity Lodge No. 1457	94,600.00
11/15/13	151216	Leonard Wood Lodge No. 105	78,500.00
11/13/13	151146	Mabini Lodge No. 39	75,000.00
11/18/13	151249	Norberto Amoranto Mem. Lodge No. 358	65,000.00
12/04/13	151516	Gonzaga Lodge No. 66	65,000.00
01/15/14	152033	La Trinidad Lodge No. 344	62,000.00
11/25/13	151370	Masonic District RIII - D	60,000.00
11/13/13	151152	Isagani Lodge No. 96	56,000.00
11/22/13	151362	Dist. GL of the Far East GL of SC	55,888.00
12/04/13	151520	Lodge St. John No. 618 S.C.	54,280.00
03/18/14	153046	Orient of Socskargen	53,000.00
12/18/13	151725	VW Barry Rushton	51,989.00
12/16/13	151692	Central Luzon Multi-District Convention	51,500.00

DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
12/10/13	151608	Multi-District Convention of Northern Luzon	51,150.50
12/03/13	151506	Park Lodge No. 516 G.L. of New York (for Bohol)	50,324.00
11/14/13	151183	West to East Charity Organization	50,000.00
11/12/13	151109	VW Nelson Yau	50,000.00
12/02/13	151474	VW Manuel C. Espiritu, Jr.	50,000.00
12/02/13	151475	VW Eulalio Lorenzo	50,000.00
11/26/13	151407	VW Domingo Teng	50,000.00
11/13/13	151147	Sanchez Mira Lodge No. 233	50,000.00
12/02/13	151473	MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr.	50,000.00
11/11/13	151100	Masonic District RVI-A	50,000.00
11/27/13	151421	Grand & Glorious Order of the Knights of the Creeping Serpents	50,000.00
11/11/13	151101	Galaxi Petroleum c/o Bro. Toto Contrevida	50,000.00
11/13/13	151153	Alfonso Lee Sin Memorial Lodge No. 158	50,000.00
12/17/14	151714	Hiram Lodge No. 88	50,000.00
11/22/13	151365	Pinoy Masons of WA	47,038.00
12/04/13	151522	MW Michael Zetser, PGM (Grand Lodge of Japan)	46,985.50
11/19/13	151274	Gen. Artemio Ricarte Lodge No. 322	45,000.00
02/07/14	152405	Angalo Lodge No. 63	43,786.00
12/13/13	151658	Mac Arthur Lodge No. 183	43,000.00
02/14/14	152484	Mt. Juneau-Gastineaux Lodge No. 21	43,000.00
11/29/13	151462	Kaduh Lodge No. 278	42,500.00
01/13/14	151993	The Belmont-Albion Lodge No. 137 GLNZ	41,760.00
12/10/13	151632	Order of the Secret Monitor	40,000.00
12/04/13	151526	Grand Order of the Blue Rabbit	40,000.00
01/03/14	151859	Isaac Puno Lodge no. 401	40,000.00
12/05/13	151534	Dr. Jose P. Rizal Lodge No. 270	40,000.00

DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
11/15/13	151208	Bulacan Lodge No. 400	40,000.00
12/03/13	151493	Carmen Valley Lodge No. 250 & Mindanao Bodies A.&A.S.R.	36,667.00
12/02/13	151470	Capitol City Lodge No. 174	35,000.00
12/03/13	151507	Gramercy Lodge G.L. of New York	33,258.00
11/12/13	151373	Quezon City Trowel Club	31,500.00
11/14/13	151170	VW Silvino Tejada - MDRII-D	30,000.00
11/18/13	151240	VW Joseph Tan	30,000.00
11/25/13	151375	Montalban Masonic Lodge No. 376	30,000.00
12/16/13	151699	VW Vic Vallejo	30,000.00
12/21/13	151798	Mayon Lodge No. 61	30,000.00
01/15/14	152054	St. John The Baptist Lodge No. 362	30,000.00
12/21/14	151791	The Grand Lodge of Alberta AF & AM	29,238.30
11/22/13	151364	Foochow Lodge No. 1912EC & Ca- thay Lodge No. 4737 EC	28,130.00
11/18/13	151236	Masonic District RIV-D	28,000.00
01/02/14	151828	Mount Matutum Lodge No. 156	27,000.00
11/14/13	151184	Macario Ramos Memorial Lodge No. 355	25,000.00
12/03/13	151490	Capitol Masonic Corporation	25,000.00
12/09/13	151586	Mississauga Lodge No. 524	23,435.00
11/18/13	151250	Alberta Filipino Masonic Conferral Team	23,408.00
11/18/13	151232	Phil Masonic Association of America Inc.	21,500.00
12/03/13	151505	Jose Rizal Lodge No. 1172 G.L. of New York (for Bohol)	21,500.00
02/01/14	152318	Mt. Diwata Lodge No. 236	21,500.00
03/19/14	153087	Okinawa Lodge No. 118	21,500.00
11/20/13	151318	Mr. & Mrs. David Mcguire	20,112.00
11/12/13	151123	VW Rene F. Henson	20,000.00
11/12/13	151121	Tuguegarao Lodge No. 408	20,000.00
12/05/13	151533	Tagaytay Lodge No. 165	20,000.00
11/21/13	151343	Pinaglabanan Lodge No. 374	20,000.00

DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
12/03/13	151489	Pangasinan Lodge No. 56	20,000.00
12/06/13	151554	Order of the Amaranth Nueva Ecija Court No. 31	20,000.00
11/14/13	151175	Kasilawan Lodge No. 77	20,000.00
11/15/13	151209	Hagonoy Lodge No. 369	20,000.00
12/04/13	151529	Gualberto C Agatep, Sr. Memorial Lodge No. 341	20,000.00
12/06/13	151552	Grand Court of the Philippines Order of the Amaranth	20,000.00
11/20/13	151310	Cagayan Valley Lodge No. 133	20,000.00
01/23/14	152186	Butuan Lodge No. 299	20,000.00
12/18/13	151731	Maharlika Shrine Club	20,000.00
02/13/14	152477	Timberland Lodge No. 219	20,000.00
12/09/13	151584	Remembrance Lodge No. 586	18,748.00
12/17/13	151700	Pintong Bato Lodge No. 51	18,500.00
01/15/14	152058	Casino Travelers	18,500.00
12/19/13	151752	The Grand Guardian Council of California	17,200.00
11/14/20	151187	FRANK REED HORTON Memorial Lodge No. 379	17,000.00
11/15/13	151215	Laoag Lodge No. 71	16,800.00
11/15/13	151211	Masonic Tai Chi Club	15,000.00
11/13/13	151140	Masonic District NCR-G c/o Lodge 286	15,000.00
11/15/13	151214	Maharlika Lodge No. 180	15,000.00
11/21/13	151329	Jacobo Zobel Mem. Lodge No. 202	15,000.00
12/14/13	151690	Jose Abad Santos Memorial Lodge No. 333	15,000.00
12/06/13	151553	Order of the Amaranth Ilang Ilang Court No. 20	12,000.00
12/10/13	151596	Pampanga Masonic Lodge No. 48	12,000.00
12/23/13	151809	Bro. Christopher Langly	11,515.83
12/13/13	151652	Lodge of Menorca No. 60 Province of Baleares	11,352.00
02/06/14	152384	Apo Kahoy Lodge No. 166	11,000.00

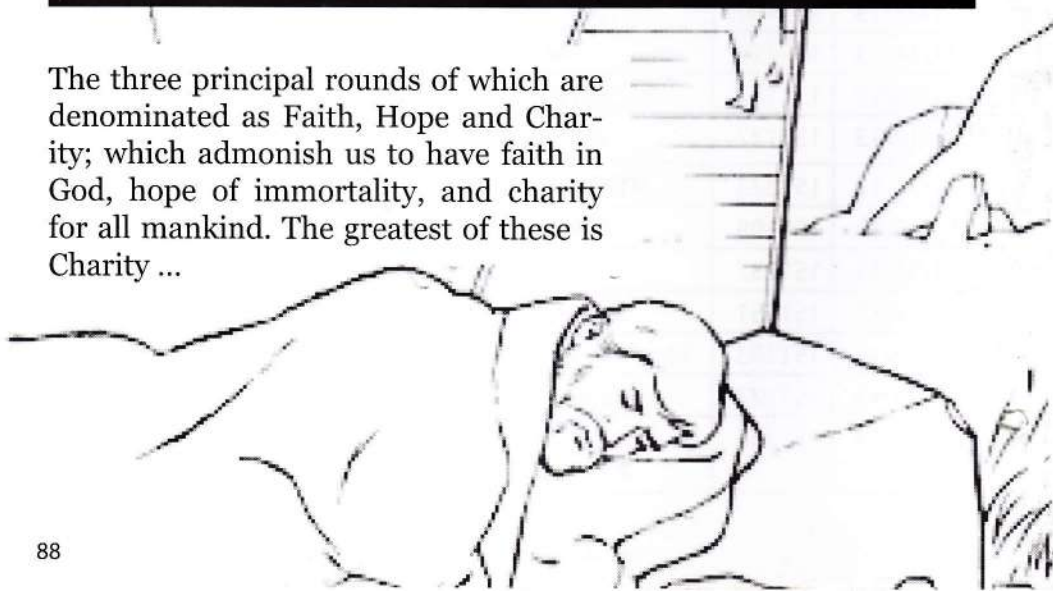
DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
02/01/14	152563	Traveller's Square & Compass Golfers Club Inc.	10,500.00
11/14/13	151178	VW Rolando Ubaldo	10,000.00
11/12/13	151110	VW Mario A. Ancheta	10,000.00
11/28/13	151441	VW Andres Pangilinan, Jr., DDGM	10,000.00
11/13/13	151138	Muntinlupa City Lodge UD	10,000.00
11/14/13	151161	Marikina Lodge No. 119	10,000.00
11/21/13	151326	Marcelo H. Del Pilar Lodge No. 272	10,000.00
11/19/13	151258	Mandaluyong City Lodge No. 277	10,000.00
11/18/13	151254	Mabini-Kalaw Lodge No. 195	10,000.00
12/02/13	151485	Juan Sumulong Memorial Lodge No. 169	10,000.00
11/14/13	151171	Itawes Lodge No. 215	10,000.00
11/14/13	151179	WM Jimmy Pacanan	10,000.00
11/14/13	151176	Bro. Arsenio-Lim	10,000.00
11/12/13	151107	Araw Lodge No. 18	10,000.00
11/20/13	151302	Ang Tipolo Lodge No. 334	10,000.00
12/16/13	151699	Bro. Joselito Enriquez	10,000.00
12/16/13	151711	Wenceslao Trinidad Lodge No. 365	10,000.00
12/17/13	151794	Auckland Royal Arch	7,200.00
12/21/13	151225	Bro. Alcantara & Bro. Relucio	7,000.00
11/16/13	151423	Gen. Llanera Mem. Lodge No. 168	5,700.00
11/27/13	151180	Bro. Frederick Duico	5,620.00
11/14/13	151459	WB Dave Pascual	5,000.00
11/29/13	151102	WB Armando Cazzola	5,000.00
11/12/13	151127	Walana Lodge No. 13	5,000.00
11/21/13	151325	VW Roseller M. Malabanan	5,000.00
11/12/13	151108	VW Pablito Guevarra	5,000.00
11/18/13	151237	VW Florante Comia	5,000.00
12/06/13	151551	Tumauini Lodge No. 251	5,000.00
11/15/13	151193	San Jose Del Monte Lodge No. 357	5,000.00
11/25/13	151377	Mayon Chapter No. 1, OES	5,000.00
11/22/13	151355	Julian S. Ocampo Memorial Lodge No. 146	5,000.00

DATE	OR #	DONOR	AMOUNT
11/20/13	151309	Gov Luis O. Ferrer Sr. Memorial Lodge No. 336	5,000.00
12/09/13	151587	Ganano Lodge No. 313	5,000.00
11/25/13	151376	Bro. Nick B. Manipon	5,000.00
11/19/13	151273	Bro. Jimmy Lao	5,000.00
12/21/13	151797	Kamayo Lodge No. 255	5,000.00
12/19/13	151754	Bethel#21 of British Columbia	4,300.00
11/15/13	151202	IMES Class 26 - Santino	3,500.00
11/14/13	151188	La Guardia Lodge No. 378	3,210.00
11/16/13	151224	Bro. Gil Mendoza	3,000.00
11/11/13	151104	VW Roy M. Chu	3,000.00
11/14/13	151182	Mrs. Ligaya Sarte	3,000.00
11/25/13	151378	Laureano S. Ledres Sr. Memorial Lodge No. 271	3,000.00
11/20/13	151308	Tagaytay Lodge No. 165	2,000.00
12/09/13	151589	Laoag Lodge No. 71	2,000.00
12/19/13	151753	Mr. Desmond Sharpe	1,720.00
11/19/13	151266	Bagumbayan Lodge No. 4	1,500.00
11/12/13	151128	VW Jojo Ellazar	1,000.00

Total Collection As of March 24, 2014

16,480,386.48

The three principal rounds of which are denominated as Faith, Hope and Charity; which admonish us to have faith in God, hope of immortality, and charity for all mankind. The greatest of these is Charity ...



“For the first time, we felt
Brotherly Love and Relief.
Our tenets are real.”

VW Edward Chua
Junior Grand Lecturer



SEE WOODWARD ZICLER

We do not leave a Brother behind.

Harmony

Harmony is not the unanimity of voices. No song begins, plays and ends with a single note.

Robots, not lodges, do that.

Harmony is not the absence of conflict. Dead silence is not music.

Zombies, not Masons, are the Walking Dead.

On the contrary, harmony is the skillful arrangement of conflict—sound and silence, light and heavy, pause and continuity, fast and slow, high and low.

Conflict defines the world—black and white, yin and yang, darkness and light. But it is harmony that shapes the form and puts order.

Because conflict is antithesis; harmony, the synthesis. The first stalls life. The second advances life. After all, both make up the stages of life.

Only a true master can assemble chords and pitches into harmony, setting them all into a rapturous melody.

But harmony only achieves great quality if it measures up to wisdom, strength and beauty.

The Cabletow

The Official Publication of the Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines

