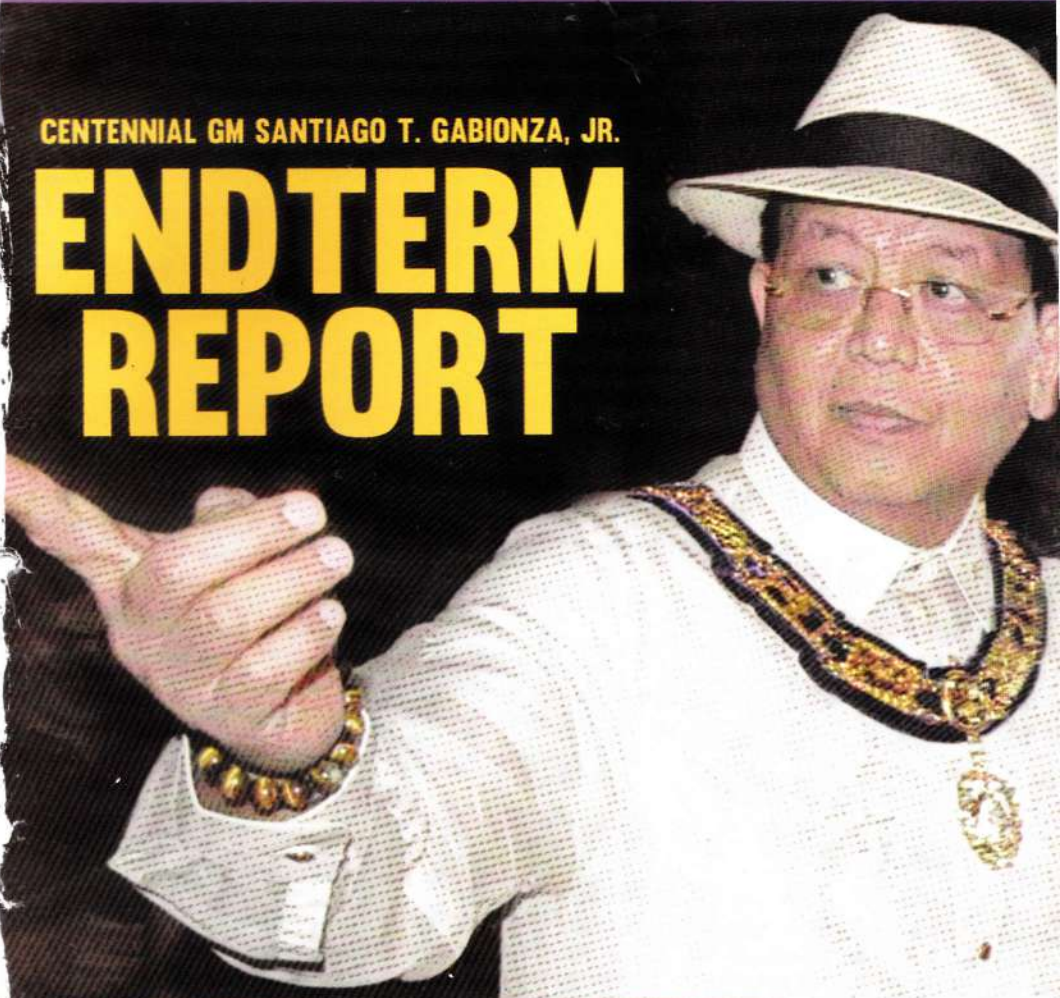


THE CABLETOW

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE & ACCEPTED MASONS OF THE PHILIPPINES | VOL. 89, NO. 6 MARCH-APRIL 2013

CENTENNIAL GM SANTIAGO T. GABIONZA, JR.

END TERM REPORT



**MW Espino is
GM of GLP 101**



**VW Gazmin
is new JGW**



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From the Grand East

By MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr.
Centennial Grand Master



Instructive Parting Words

Centennial Grand Master Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. writes his final column where he imparts wisdom learned while in the Grand East, final instructions to profit from the gains of the Centennial Year—and a profusion of thanks to the bros.

The one-year term of this humble Grand Master is over.

A year ago, I came to this office saddled with more responsibilities than the normal. It was the centenary of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP), after all. It was a milestone year. So, even the Office of the Grand Master had inevitably assumed a historic significance—as historic as this once-in-a-lifetime milestone itself.

Rather than bask in pride and self-congratulations, yet it was pressure that had taken the most of me. Occupying a high and no doubt historic post, I was very aware that all eyes of the brethren were constantly on me. Tasked with seeing the GLP Centennial celebrations through, I was pitted against rising expectations to make this milestone year memorable and meaningful for the 25,000 members of this grand jurisdiction.

Not for nothing why my term in the Grand East became an occasion for personal discovery and instructions than anything. I came to this office laden with pressure as much as hope. But as soon as

I began discovering how the grand jurisdiction is ran, the more I was humbled by how little knowledge I knew of the ins and outs of the Craft.

Soon, I begun learning new discoveries and unlearning old truisms. One assumption common among Masons that I had disposed early was the saying that every grand master who steps into the Grand East has one thing in mind—to leave a legacy behind.

Alluring, yet nothing can be truer than a Grand Master who is conscientious of his job—for he will start thinking ahead how he wishes to step down right after his ascension to the Grand East. For a Grand Master is remembered by his works, not by his flowery words or capricious edicts and projects. The famous wisdom of that eminent Grand Master King Solomon, for instance, would remain a secret forever had he not come out of his comfort zone and risked his reputation to settle the dispute of two quarreling mothers; or had he not gambled his kingdom's wealth to justify the glory of the Almighty through the Temple of Jerusalem. The exemplary

GMHA would have not commanded so deep a respect among Masons had he not lived up to his word and fidelity—so much so that his blood was more indelible than any ink in the world, acquiring immeasurable power to write endless volumes than the gilded tomes of praises dedicated to potentates and kings.

Labors

So, it was not caprice, vanity, popularity or ambition that had led this humble Grand Master in the discharge of his office. Rather, a forward-looking vision had goaded me to introduce certain measures which not only correct but moreover, provide for Masons in the future.

Some of these “corrections”—which actually are reminders—are Circular Nos. 15 (investigation of petitioners), 43 (anti-hazing) 38 (conduct within the lodge and during fellowship), and 7 (district dispute arbitration).

Nothing can be truer than a Grand Master who is conscientious of his job—for he will start thinking ahead how he wishes to step down right after his ascension to the Grand East.

Where talks about the slipping quality of Masons prevail, one will always find lapses in compliance to Masonic laws and practices. Some complainants are just at fault as the brethren they complained about. For they have not even accomplished what have been required to do before they started criticizing the Craft.

You will be surprised to discover that Masons who criticized the Craft most,

and advanced radical measures to fix it, are the least learned in Masonry. Where unworthy candidates obtain degrees in a certain lodge for instance, it is very likely that the lodge has not used—or conscientiously used—Form 372, the “Reference of Petition for Degrees.” Worse, it has not even heard or seen yet Form 372 at all.

Masons who criticized the Craft most, and advanced radical measures to fix it, are the least learned in Masonry.

Edict No. 251-A—the liturgy for the closure of the lodge in any ancient craft degree—is not a correction; rather, it is a culmination. The GLP Centennial implies that we Filipino Masons have already progressed in heart and mind that gets reflected in our conduct, as much as in our knowledge of the Craft.

Edict No. 251-A completes what has been lacking for a hundred years. Practicing it means a hundred years of comprehension of the Craft as much as the maturity of Philippine Freemasonry.

Where I have not paid specific attention to Masonic education, may I direct your attention instead to the two important titles that have been issued during my term—the “Book of Edicts” and the “Centennial Monitor.” No Masonic education will be complete without these two materials. The first lays out before the brethren how certain important practices and policies prevailing in the Craft today have evolved. The second details the liturgies, form and floor works of our rituals which comprised the heart of our Craft.

Both ways, these preserved the essentials of Philippine Freemasonry. Our future brethren, inheriting the Craft in

all its precise integrity, will not be lost. Freemasonry will go on. Moreover, any close study of these books will spare the brethren from charlatans and deceivers who pretend to know it all and go on next to ruin the labors and harmony of the lodges.

Provision

Another discovery I made characteristic of notable Grand Masters is this: they provide for the future.

PGM Manuel Luis Quezon, for instance, issued an edict preparing the ground works for the district organization of the emerging Philippine grand lodge. So did a number of PGMs after him more or less. PGM Rizal D. Apor-tadera in 1993 even went to the Supreme Court to question the human rights implications of the nightly police check points then—and won. Hence, Freemasonry was instrumental in strengthening the civil rights of this nation.

Another discovery I made characteristic of notable Grand Masters is this: they provide for the future.

Admittedly, I do not count myself among the giants of the Craft. My forward-looking vision goes as far as the daily news only. But nonetheless, it was a boon that the Grand Lodges of Free & Accepted Masons of China and Japan signed up, along with the Philippines, the “Tokyo Declaration on East Asian Masonic Brotherhood” on March 16, 2013. Once its papers are set in order, there will be a greater and closer fraternal contacts between these lodges—even a single policy covering these grand jurisdictions. Chinese, Japanese and Phil-

ippine F. & A. M. craft lodges can send help, visit one another, or go into joint projects, for instance.

Maybe, my equals in China and Japan hold the same vision of a future marked with challenges that are cross-border, interconnected, and by all means complex. After all, we occupy the same region so much so that we share the same problems regardless how dissimilar in perceptions. But for us Filipino Masons, it is enough that we look out to the Pacific Ocean in the east—where powerful typhoons rise and devastate the country—and to the West Philippine Sea in the west—where a trouble of disastrous proportion similarly brews to uncertain conclusion.

In more ways than one, the East Asian Masonic Brotherhood that the Tokyo Declaration fosters is not just a legacy. It is a sanctuary. It is a cabletow that runs from the GLP and out to the world. Whatever troubles that the future will bring, Chinese, Japanese and Filipino F. & A. Masons will have a rope to hold on and pull one another up.

I trust that the brethren will look deeply and wisely into the Tokyo Declaration, taking the best of care to develop this agreement and to enrich the friendly relations that had brought it about.

Life

After all that has been said and done, nothing now remains but to thank you all.

Parting occasions like this brings to my mind that poignant scene from the 1993 Steven Spielberg epic drama movie “Schindler’s List.”

A Nazi Party member, Oskar Schindler was a war-profiteer who had made his fortune as a weapons manufacturer—but lost it all to lavish bribes just to save his Jewish prison-laborers from the death camps.

As the Russian liberation army closed in on his Moravian concentration camp in 1945, the Jewish prisoners gifted him with a letter clearing him of charges as a war criminal, together with a ring cast from the prisoners' gold dental bridges engraved with a Talmudic quotation, "Whoever saves one life saves the world entire."

Deeply touched by the unexpected gesture, Schindler broke down, nagged by the thought that he could have saved more lives had he only sold his car or his gold Nazi party pin.

The extremities of decisions, the vacillation of perceptions, are intrinsic to life. And this is what Freemasonry is. It is life.

Similarly, the thought of doing more for the Craft had nagged me lately. A number of GLP businesses that have accumulated over the years yet need fixing up. But it is also time to face reality. A problem that has bugged the Craft for a century cannot be solved in just a year. Issues that have barnacled around the GLP for ten years cannot be disposed just as quickly in ten months.

For this, I cannot urge the brethren more than to throw all their support behind MW Juanito Espino, Jr. He lent a number of crucial help during our Centennial celebrations. Moreover, I found no Deputy Grand Master as dependable and exemplary than him—besides being a good friend.

No doubt MW Espino will prove himself as one of our notable grand masters as he comes upon discoveries of his own. For me, I believed like most of the brethren that Masonry is a matter of the heart. But it is also a matter of the head. It is tolerance and understanding

as much as will and force.

The extremities of decisions, the vacillation of perceptions, are intrinsic to life. And this is what Freemasonry is. It is life. This gives the complexity as much as beauty in the administration of the Craft.

We are, in effect, in the business of life. And we rely on the inklings of beatitudes and verities which our Masonic predecessors have handed down to us, conveniently packaged into "unwritten laws and ancient customs" for our instructions and guidance today.

Gratitude

This complex but beautiful business goes not without its rich rewards.

Nothing pleases a grand master more than to see over a thousand brethren literally crowded the vast Fiesta Pavilion of the Manila Hotel on the Centennial Special Ancom on December 19, 2012. Coming from all corners of the grand jurisdiction, and walking sideways to make their way between the tables, they came by their own will and accord, out of plain and sincere desire to be counted in.

But no reward tops all the pleasures I have received in office than right after my delivery of the Grand Master's Report at the loilo Ancom in April. The 2,000 brethren in the Rose Memorial Hall rose up in a resounding standing ovation. Not for nothing why tears suddenly welled up from my eyes and began trickling down. The joy was just unexplainable—the moment, teemed with a tangling mass of emotions that were better expressed in tears than in words. If the Centennial Year was a success, it was because YOU had made it succeed. Thank you very very much, my brother. Likewise, I wish to thank my Centennial Team—my former Deputy and now Grand Master, MW Juanito Espino; my

grand line officers; my District Officers; the Centennial Worshipful Masters of the lodges; and the GLP committees.

We have labored together and not without going through problematic as much as good times. But the Centennial Team always managed to prevail. And whenever it prevailed, it afforded your Centennial Grand Master to deliver the goods for the pleasure as much as welfare of the Craft.

I see great promise for the Mindanao Masons in the coming years if they will only progress with their creative local initiatives

This winning Team gave the brethren not so much cause to be pleased; rather the reason to be proud of being Masons. For it was the Centennial Team who had worked behind the scenes to make the Centennial Year successful as much as memorable—a year we can hold up, a year that will stand proudly even in the next Bicentennial.

My gratitude also goes to the appendant bodies—the Scottish and York Rite brethren—and the allied organizations—the Amaranths, Rainbows, Jobbies and De Molays. They were always around when needed so much so that their presence completed our Masonic family.

My special thanks go to our Mindanao brethren who had pulled pleasant surprises for, so much so that they put color in, the Centennial Year. Not even the Centennial Celebrations Committee had ever thought of impressive undertakings as they.

The underwater Masonic marker planted by our R10-A brethren of Misamis Oriental exhibited awesome crea-

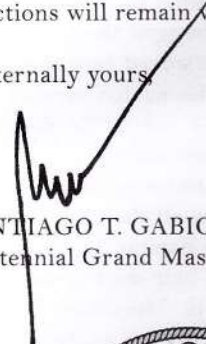
tivity. The Centennial Obelisk planted above ground by R13-A Masons in Surigao City showed Mindanao island's fidelity to the Craft, providing the unexpected—but most welcome—culminating event for our Centennial Year. Taken together, I see great promise for the Mindanao Masons in the coming years if they will only progress with their creative local initiatives—independent of factional feuds.

So, to our Mindanao brethren: you have surprised us impressively. Surprise us with more locally-initiated creative enterprises. Maybe, it is you who hold the lessons on the "Craft's survival into the next century" being debated presently by certain sectors.

There are many brethren that I yet wish to thank. But as the space now limits me, know that your kindness is always in my heart, giving me reason to constantly thank the Almighty for the blessings of friends that have often come for good and noble causes.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you all. Rest be assured that my fraternal affections will remain with you always.

Fraternally yours,


SANTIAGO T. GABIONZA, JR.,
Centennial Grand Master



By MW Danilo Angeles, PGM
Centennial Grand Secretary



The Proper Watch and Conduct at the West Gate (Conclusion)

Many Masons forget that the West Gate's first of line of defense rests on an oft-ignored, even belittled piece of paper, called "Form 372."

In the previous issue, we dealt with the Unanimity Rule that goes with every balloting of a Petitioner for Masonic degrees—and the sanctity of the balloting itself.

At the level of the balloting, the petitioner figuratively stands outside the West Gate and is already in communication with the guards. The guards, in turn, pass the message to the lodge which deliberates whether to grant him admission or not.

But for reason that sometimes escapes me, we see lodges whipped up, wracked and fractured by this simple alarm. Members and Masters split and waged battles on whether to admit Petitioner so-and-so or not.

The situation resembles the appearance of Atilla the Hun outside the city gates. Defenseless and unprepared, the citizens

were thrown into utter confusion as the elders' council debated on whether to surrender or to take flight. Worse, we even see Worshipful Masters become Denethor, the demented throne-usurper of Minas Tirith in "The Lord of the Rings," oblivious to his soldiers and citizens dying at the massive onslaught of the horrendous Orcs.

Atila or Denethor, yet it is pathetic to see lodges come undone by petitioners issue alone. Trouble erupts when a party pushes for the admission of an applicant come what may. Factionalism rears its ugly head. And chances are, here is another Mason that will bring the quality of the Craft down.

Even in calmer situations, undesirable petitioners slip into the Craft largely due to the negligence of the sentinels. But we see also some Masonically-smart lodges that are not shaken by petitioner

issues. Why? They can even keep the shadow of unwanted petitioners out of the 1-kilometer radius zone of their West Gates.

There is a number of reasons why some lodges are stable. But there is one instrument that the old generation Masons have used, giving rise to the peaceful and glory days of the Craft. It is an instrument that is poorly used—if not used at all—by majority of lodges today: Form 372, the “Reference of Petition for Degrees.”

Form 372

Where Masons complained about the declining quality of membership today, it is very probable that they haven’t heard, or even seen yet, Form 372. Maybe, only the Master and Lodge Secretary keep it. But it is NOT a confidential document—not until WHEN already filled with investigative data.

Circular Nos. 15 (Gabionza) recently reminded the brethren of the use of the ole’ reliable Form 372. It is a questionnaire-guide that Masters of the Lodge issue to the 3-man Committee on Investigation when they begin checking on a petitioner.

The duties of the committee are explicitly set in the form as these have been lifted from Paragraph No. 164 of the Constitution of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP), as follows:

“To make strict examination into the moral, physical and other appro-

priate qualification of the applicant and to report thereon to the Master at the next Stated Meeting, unless further time be granted.”

Your written report should be based on personal knowledge, and “shall set forth in detail the facts ascertained respecting the applicant, and the favorable or unfavorable conclusion., and shall be read in the Lodge, and the names of the Brethren making the reports shall not be announced in the Lodge.”

The form also quotes the Constitution to remind both Masters and investigators what to look for in a Petitioner—

“Of Qualification Necessary for Those Who Wish to Become Free Masons: No person is capable unless he be of sufficient natural endowments, with an estate, trade, occupation or visible way of acquiring an honest livelihood, as become of the members of this most ancient and honorable Fraternity; Who ought not only to earn a sufficiency for themselves and families but likewise have something to spare for works of charity or mercy. They ought, previous to their applications for admission, to consider their income and the situation of their families.”

Two sets of guide questions—one for the Proposer (Mason who endorsed the Petitioner); the other, for the Candidate (the Petitioner endorsed)—come next.

Masons of light substance will see nothing in the Form, of course.

Assigned to the job, they will likely check the boxes, write "yeses" and "nos" on the lines just to dispatch the investigation quickly but uncritically.

Form 372 is one instrument that the old generation Masons have used, giving rise to the peaceful and glory days of the Craft.

Then, the brethren will complain about the declining quality of the Craft.

The form, actually, is a piece of instrument that draws together all the elements of how to qualify petitioners—elements that are beyond the grasp of Masons of raw make. This requires brethren of finer mind but tougher mettle to take on the job of Lodge Investigators.

So, allow me to discuss what Form 372 is about. Why? There is something odd in Freemasonry. Numerous are the materials about the Craft that have been written and printed by Masons. But there is hardly any single manual available on how to investigate petitioners.

Good men

Ask the brethren randomly on what single, most important, qualification a petitioner must have. Chances are, you will get 8 wrong answers out of 10. They ought to

be demoted to the First Degree.

Take note: the Constitution requires investigation on the "moral, physical and other appropriate qualification." A petitioner must also have an "honest" livelihood affording his family and himself material self-sufficiency—with a surplus fund for charity works.

But these are only qualifications that are subsumed under a larger objective. And just what is this objective?

A portion of the EAM Lecture reads—

"A Charter is an instrument ... authorizing certain brethren therein named, when duly assembled, to Initiate, Pass, and Raise all good men and true who may apply for the purpose and whom they may find worthy."
[Emphasis added.]

There you have it. Every petitioner must be a "good man and true"—with recognizable virtues to be "good," and a willful desire to join the Craft to be "true."

Confirming volition is easy. A Petitioner, "true" to his intention to join the Craft, will always meet the lodge halfway and exhibit convincing acts of compliance to Masonic requirements.

But to be "true" is not enough. Should the Petitioner's family expressed disagreement over his application to Masonry, then it is over. Masons will not sow disharmony in a family no matter how the head of that family, for instance, desires membership.

Inquiries

Following the pattern of Form 372, we see that the inquiry on a petitioner's virtues come from two sources—the second-hand source (the Proposer), and the first-hand source (Petitioner). Investigators go first to the endorser. Then, they validate the “good words” the latter puts on the Petitioner by interviewing next the Petitioner himself.

Interrogations directed at the Proposer basically deals with his familiarity with the Petitioner (length and place of association; Petitioner's residency within or about the Masonic district; Petitioner's social connections; Petitioner's level of material self-sufficiency; and orientation to the Craft).

These are objective questions that get objective responses in return—“objective” because it deals largely with object-data such as names, numbers and “yeses” or “nos.”

But half of the questions are subjective—that is, opinions and impressions of the Proposer—and this is where the sharpness and maturity of the Investigators must come in.

There are two questions which, to my mind, both Proposer and Investigators must ponder well—

- d. *What reasons have you for thinking Freemasonry will interest him?*
- e. *Have you always found him upright and honorable?*

The responses will reveal the Proposer's depth of familiarity with the Petitioner. Investigators must, therefore, read between the lines and work their senses to feel the sincerity, uncertainty—even intentions—in the Proposer's avouchment of the Petitioner.

Every petitioner must be a “good man and true”—with recognizable virtues to be “good,” and a willful desire to join the Craft to be “true.”

The same set of questions—but worded differently—are directed next to the Petitioner. Why “same”? Because Form 372 is a “structured” questionnaire—it has been designed with “doors” and “pitfalls” to test the consistency of the responses.

A question for the Petitioner reads—

- b. *Are you prepared to live an upright life, to be a good man and strictly obey the moral law?*

Now, if the Petitioner's reply fails to tie up with the Proposer's answer on the former's being “upright and honorable,” something must be wrong.

Regardless, Investigators must pay special attention to the Petitioner's answer. Question him incessantly and repeatedly if necessary.

It is necessary for the investi-

gators to be fair. But it pays a lot to be objective. Fairness is a mental attitude that comes from adherence to the principles of equality, "being born of one Almighty parent etcetera etcetera." But to be objective is a particular kind of fairness—but fairness that is based after a set of validating qualifications or criteria.

Pathetic

The care and vigilance of the West Gate is not centered on the balloting, or any single act on the Petitioner alone. Once an undesirable Petitioner gets to be balloted at the Altar—favorably or otherwise—he has already slipped past the guards.

The job relies on a series of actions—that is, a set of closely-related indivisible procedure. Sadly, some lodges are foregoing the investigation of petitioners—particularly the use of Form 372. But investigation is as basic as modern Masonry.

Question: why did early lodges conduct investigation on its petitioners?

That was because Masonic lodges had been established at a time when everyone knew everybody. Each lodge was assigned to a particular jurisdiction. The members were all locals. So, investigation was easy as one-two-three.

But now, some lodges are boldly overstepping jurisdictional boundaries just to get members for inane reasons—to bring outside cronyism into the lodge; to strengthen a

lodge faction; to prey on members for material and financial opportunities; to milk moneyed members of contributions for the construction of the lodge hall; and so on.

Worse, the DDGMs and their GLIs are not correcting these wanton jurisdictional violations.

We Masons put up lodges in various localities to spread the Masonic light—not to spread embarrassing Masonic errors. Pathetic incident occur when migrant Masons lord it over the local brethren. But where the locals dominate, investigation comes easy and harmony is a certainty.

For this, Lodge Investigators make up the front-liners in keeping watch over the West Gate.

Lodge Investigators are the silent heroes of the lodge.

Lucky is the lodge that has investigators who are good judges of human character. Moreover, they must have deep familiarity with Masonic doctrines and principles. Investigative skills come very handy, of course. But it greatly helps to pick street-smart Masons.

Low-key Masons are fit for the job. Age helps. But it is the matured perception of life and the world that counts the most.

Remaining anonymous, Investigators are the silent heroes of the lodge. And when the Master goes bonkers with his decision, they can rise from the floor in a final bid to defend the West Gate. ❖

Announces 2013 Masonic theme

Newly-installed MW Espino to upgrade Craft in GLP 101

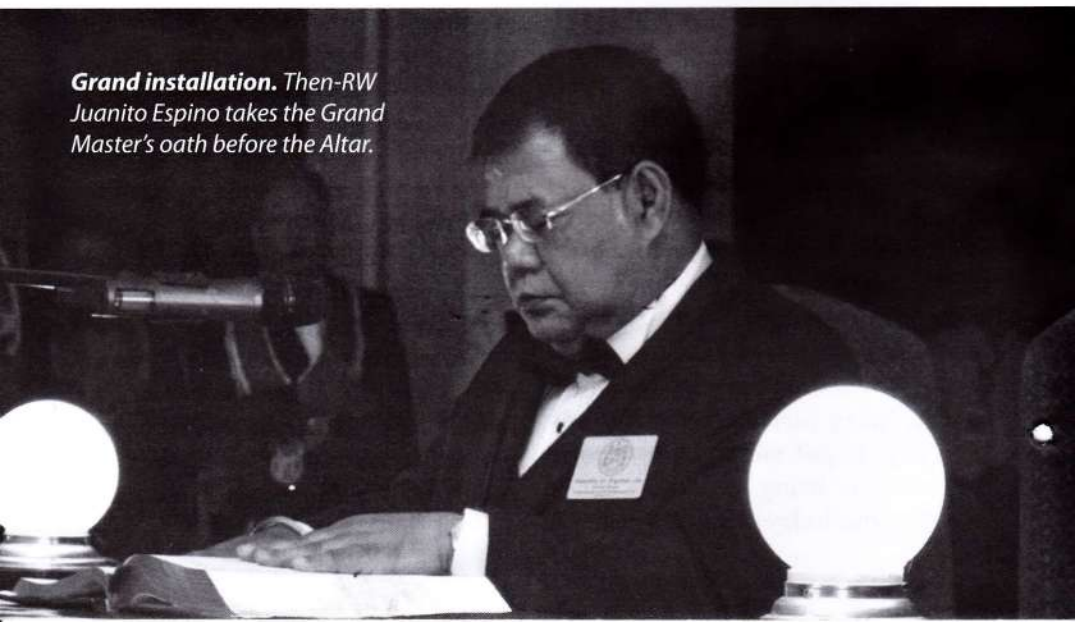
If Philippine Freemasonry were to last for a millennium, it must shape up by instituting quality control among the bros and certain repairs in the grand lodge machinery right now on its one-hundredth and first year. This was the gist behind the inaugural speech of MW Juanito G. Espino, Jr. at his Installation at the Iloilo Grand Hotel on April 27.

A thousand years may be a long shot.

But MW Espino, 61, is looking at the numbers.

"Today, the GLP membership—as the GLP records show—stands at a total of 25,000. Certainly, a Fraternity that has grown this big consequently outgrows its britches—and occasionally, it runs out of control. For the rise in quantity adversely affects our quality," said the 106th grand master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free

Grand installation. Then-RW Juanito Espino takes the Grand Master's oath before the Altar.





GLP Officers 2013. (From left to right) MW Rudyard Bunda, PGM, Grand Treasurer; RW Alan Purisima, Deputy Grand Master; MW Juanito Espino, newly-installed Grand Master; RW Tomas Rentoy III, Senior Grand Wardeh; RW Voltaire Gazmin, Junior Grand Warden; and MW Danilo Angeles, PGM, Grand Secretary.

& Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP).

Firmly believing that Freemasonry itself is beyond alteration or innovation, he zeroed in on the membership where he had observed slackening or deviation over the years. This prompted him to go for quality upgrade primarily by education of the bros "to consummate their Masonic instructions, or to infuse the Masonic spirit, which has been stalled, thwarted or aborted in the course of their Masonic years."

How this can be all achieved is summed up under his administration's banner theme which he announced at the end of his speech: "Today's Masonry, Tomorrow's Continuity: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth as Edifice in Bridging Freemasonry to the Next Millennium."

Seven-point program

But any quality upgrade needed first to pinpoint the problems that require fixing.

For this, he had come up with a seven-point program that he would work on during his term, as follows:

- 1) selection process of petitioners for the ancient craft degrees; 2) mentoring of candidates in all three ancient craft degrees; 3) a continuing Masonic education for Regular Masons; 4) family Involvement in Masonic affairs; 5) strengthening of ties with and greater role for the appendant bodies and allied organizations; 6) administrative and financial reforms; and 7) electoral reforms for the Junior Grand Warden position.

Seemingly, MW Espino's quality control begins right at the West Gate. More care and vigilance are to be placed in admitting and balloting petitioners. "This age-old balloting practice makes Freemasonry stand out from other organizations. The Almighty has a hand in rejecting and picking out who is to become a Mason," he explained.

Care and vigilance go on as a candidate rises up the degrees. For this, instructions need to be given for each ancient craft degree. And if the Craft were to work well, continuing instructions must also be served to regular Masons, too. A comprehensive Masonic education program has to be designed.

"It is a kind of education that persuades a Mason why Freemasonry is worth dedicating his whole life to," said MW Espino.

The newly-installed grand master pointed to the deficiency of liberal arts education in the Philippines as one of the major causes why Filipino Masons slowly, if not hardly grasp, Masonic philosophy.

"Philosophy," he said, "the backbone on which our Masonic principles have been constructed, is central to the Liberal Arts. Architecture, music, history and a host of humanities subjects are the mainstays of the Liberal Arts. Grammar, rhetoric and logic—intellectual equipments so basic and essential to any educated man—are the staple of the Liberal Arts."

If MW Espino was zeroing in on the liberal arts, he had a good reason: "Besides Faith, the Liberal Arts make up the 'invisible' mechanism of making good men better."

To put his Masonic education program on a firm ground, he interrupted his speech by appointing VW Teodoro Alejandro Y. Kalaw IV, Centennial Senior Grand Lecturer, on the spot as the new president of the Institute of Masonic Education and Studies (IMES).

Also, VW Flor Nicolas was reconfirmed as editor-in-chief of THE CABLETOW.

But the new grand master didn't limit himself to fixing leaks inside the institution alone. He very well knew that contemporary social problems had crept into the lodges, consequently affecting the membership's quality.

"We are a Fraternity. And as a Fraternity, we cannot simply look away from the contemporary issues that hound the men of today's world—male issues that slip into the lodges and pester the Craft," he said.

To bar or limit the entry of destructive trends and habits into the lodges, causing the bros to lapse into juvenile recklessness and other inanities, MW Espino required the greater involvement of families in Masonic affairs as a sure-fire solution.

"You see, a man who doesn't spend time with his family is not a man at all," he said.

Significantly, drawing families into Masonic activities yields to a couple of advantages. "Our priority on our natural families also extends to the widows and orphans of our departed brethren whom we are bound to aid and assist," he said.

But the Masonic family doesn't stop there. "Family involvement also extends, not only to the appendant bodies but moreover, to the allied Masonic organizations such as the Orders of Amaranth, Rainbow, DeMolay and Job's Daughters."

Five-year development

MW Espino said that he had sat down in consultation with the two oth-

er grand officers in assembling this program particularly, with Deputy Grand Master RW Allan Purissima and Senior Grand Warden RW Tomas Rentoy III.

They identified the problems that needed working out in the next couple of years.

"With only a year in the Grand Orient, a Grand Master can only do so much to deal with the issues that have pestered the Craft for twenty years now," said the new Grand Master.

With an agreement running between the successive grand officers in effect, they set on assembling a Five-Year De-

velopment Program to streamline the Craft.

"A focused and consistent approach, over a period of time, is necessary if we were to really eliminate these problems," said MW Espino. "For this reason, we have banded together—with the next two Junior Grand Wardens to be elected in the Ancoms included—to work successively on these issues, in progressive stages, until all these are vanished from the Craft hopefully, in five years time. ❧

Faith in education led to career success

Good cheers and grand installation mementos were handed out to the guests during dinner at the Iloilo Grand Hotel—pins, barong tagalong and caps marked with "GLP 101." The order of his term, coming in the 101st year of the GLP, was likened by many to the course code of many college subjects—"101."

With education topping MW Espino's program, the brethren see a return to the basics. Why the newly-installed grand master put premium on education was due largely to his scholarly past. He had been a scholar himself since youth, leading him to excel in his accountancy career.

Where his faith in education has paid off, he is now passing this life's lesson to the Craft. He collected

academic honors since primary grades. This academic excellence continued onto secondary school which afforded him to bag a government scholarship from the Iloilo City government.

He studied at the University of San Agustin in Iloilo and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Commerce degree, major in Accounting, in 1972.

Passing next the licensure exam for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) came easy. Even while in college, he was already working as a part-time auditor at Diaz & Associates. After earning his degree, he returned to his alma mater as an accounting instructor.

His academic stint ended when he was hired by the prestigious Sy-cip, Gorres, Velayo & Co. accounting



firm, rising to the Senior Auditor post.

In 1978, he joined the Commission on Audit (COA) when this constitutional agency went on to recruit young executives to beef up its ranks. In 2006, he was appointed commissioner of COA, making him the youngest to hold office at the age of 54. Expectedly, he implemented reform measures during his term.

Silent and low-profile, yet MW Espino has a keen eye for details, is fast on numbers, and thorough with organizational ways and work flows. His track-record brought him to consultancy jobs for the United Nations as Senior External Auditor—right from the cozy U.N. New

York office and down to the wilds of Africa. For two years, he was an Auditing Systems Consultant for the World Bank, pondering and tinkering how to make the economy of Sierra Leone in West Africa—famed for its “blood-and-conflict” diamonds—work.

MW Espino was raised on November 08, 1991 in Mayon Lodge No. 61 in Legaspi City.

He was the Charter Master of the Auditor General Most Worshipful Pedro M. Gimenez Memorial Lodge No. 370 which is the only traveling lodge under the GLP. He was overwhelmingly voted Junior Grand Warden in the 93rd Annual Communications in Manila in 2010. ☐

RW Gazmin is new Junior Grand Warden

Newly-elected Junior Grand Warden, RW Voltaire T. Gazmin, duly took office at the Grand Installation on April 27 at the Iloilo Grand Hotel in Iloilo City.

A publicly prominent Mason, RW Gazmin is currently the government's secretary of the Department of National Defense since 2010.

But that was after retiring as Commanding General of the Philippine Army (PA) in 2000, and serving as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia until 2004.

The new JGW was raised in Maranao Lodge 111 in 1982. But 14 years had passed before he took to the East. He was elected Worshipful Master of Palanyag Lodge No. 323 in 2006.

After his service to Palanyag Lodge, then WB Gazmin was called by MW Jaime Y. Gonzales to assume the office of the Grand Marshal in 2008.

Remarkably, RW Gazmin did not mind taking a step back no matter how he had already served in the up-

per echelons of the grand line. He was appointed next as Grand Lodge Inspector for General Artemio Ricarte Lodge No. 332.

RW Gazmin's promotion of the Craft, in his various postings while on tour of duty, saw him gathering Masons together. He organized the Malacañang Square and Compass Club; Club 370 in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija; Banahaw Square and Compass Club, in Southern Luzon Command; and the Grand and Glorious Order of the Knights of the Creeping Serpent (GGOKCS).

Presently, he is the King Cobra of the GGOKCS.

RW Gazmin is affiliated with the Scottish Rite in Alexandria, Virginia; the London Royal Arch No. 55, in Virginia; Peidmond Commandery No. 26 in Manassas, Virginia; and Kena Temple, AAONMS, in Fairfax, Virginia.

Also, he is an honorary member of the Bureau of Internal Revenue Travelers Haven (B.I.R.T.H) Club. ❧



MW Santiago Gabionza, Jr. congratulates the newly-elected JGW, then VW Gazmin, after the announcement of election results.

Phil, Chinese & Jap grand lodges formed regional body

The Free and Accepted Mason grand lodges of China, Japan and the Philippines sealed an agreement on March 16, 2013 in Tokyo, Japan, bonding themselves together into a regional “East Asian Grand Lodges Executive” body tasked with the strengthening of fraternal ties between Masons of these jurisdictions.

Centennial Grand Master MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. signed in behalf of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP).

Other signatories were MW Bro. Kazufumi Mabuchi, Grand Master of the Japanese Grand Lodge F. & A.M.; and MW Bro. Samuel C. Lo, Grand Master of the Chinese Grand Lodge F. & A. M.

Regional

The newly-formed regional body, also called as the “executive,” will lay the groundwork on the establishment of a wider “Conference of Asia Pacific Grand Lodges.” It will hold consultations and gather laws from the 3 grand lodge members, assembling them all into doable cross-country policies and directives.

Significantly, the signed document—dubbed as the “Tokyo Declaration on East Asian Masonic Broth-

erhood”—explicitly set the areas on which the executive must work on, as follows—

- For individual Masons: privilege to visit lodges of the member grand jurisdictions;
- For craft (or “blue”) lodges: procedures on how lodges across jurisdictions can tie up, launch joint projects, send fraternal assistance across the sea—signing “twining” agreements and sitting in fellowships also included; and
- For the grand lodges: to come up and work ways on how to arrive at a common Masonic policy for the region, with eyes set on extending the partnership to a bigger “Conference of Asia Pacific Grand Lodges.”

Legworks

Basically, the executive body is ran by the Council of Grand Masters—the incumbent GMs of each grand jurisdiction. But the legworks are to be supplied by the “Permanent Joint Secretariat” (PJS).

The PJS is made up of the incumbent Grand Secretary of each jurisdiction—each backed by a Designated Representative. This dynamic duo

Tokyo Declaration signatories joined hands. (From left to right) MW Bro. Samuel C. Lo, GM, Grand Lodge of China F. & A. M.; MW Bro. Kazufumi Mabuchi, GM, Grand Lodge of Japan F. & A.M.; and MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. GLP.



will draft the “Terms of Reference” on how to go about the executive’s business—and conversely adopt them once approved by the Council.

Similarly, this tandem will implement the executive body’s working agenda and not without supporting the latter in its operations.

The GMs Council meets annually. Chairmanship rotates among the Grand Masters based on the seniority of the grand lodges they each represent.

Coming of age

Easily, the chair went to MW Gabionza. But he declined and passed it instead onto MW Bro. Mabuchi. “I actually proposed the first chair-

manship to the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Japan out of deference for its hosting of the event, among other reasons” he said.

The Tokyo Declaration was signed during the 56th Annual Communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of Japan (or GLJ). MW Bro. Yoshiharu Shimokawa is currently the Grand Master.

Significantly, the event also saw the conferment of the title of “Honorary Grand Master” of the GLJ on MW Gabionza.

With the Japanese bros at the helm, all the executive body now needs is a charter. Soon, member grand lodges will supply the legislations to pull it up and running. ❖



All GMs. MW Bro. Kazufumi Mabuchi, Immediate PGM; MW Bro. Yoshiharu Shimokawa, newly-installed Grand Master; and MW Gabionza.



The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Japan holds its Annual Communication.



The brethren of Rising Sun Lodge No. 151 under its Centennial WM Erwin Jerome Angeles



The brethren of Okinawa Lodge No. 118 under its Centennial WM Mark Frease.

R3-G bros, NOLCOM PA donated school house ala *bayanihan*

By Bro. Aguinaldo I. Ordoñez

Apolinario B. Yap Memorial Lodge No 328, F. & A. M.

Tarlac Masons, in partnership with the Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) of the Philippine Army (PA), handed a one-story 2-classroom school building over to the Victoria National High School Annex II at Balayang, Victoria, Tarlac on April 3.

The turnover ceremony was attended by MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr., Centennial Grand Master; Victor A Yap, governor of Tarlac province; Lt. Gen. Anthony J. Alcantara, Army NOLCOM commander; and Dr. Edgar A Domingo, Assistant Schools Division Superintendent, Department of Education (DepEd).

Besides the school building, a flagpole, potable water system, comfort rooms and lavatories went with the donation.

VW Felix S Ko, the project benefactor, handed the school house over to Teacher-in-Charge, Ms Doan Joy Aquino along with Col. Demosthenes C. Santillan, 54th Engineer Brigade commander.

Also present were Mario R Cajuang, PDDGM and President of the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) in Victoria; Col. Henry L. Sabarre, 703rd Infantry Brigade commander; Col. Harold N. Cabreiros, Past Master and 7th Infantry Division commander; and the brethren of District R3-G largely, the mem-

bers of Kasilawan Lodge No. 77 and Apolinario B Yap Memorial Lodge No 328. Noteworthy, the Army Northern Luzon Command is located at Camp Gen. Servillano S Aquino in Tarlac City.

Gift

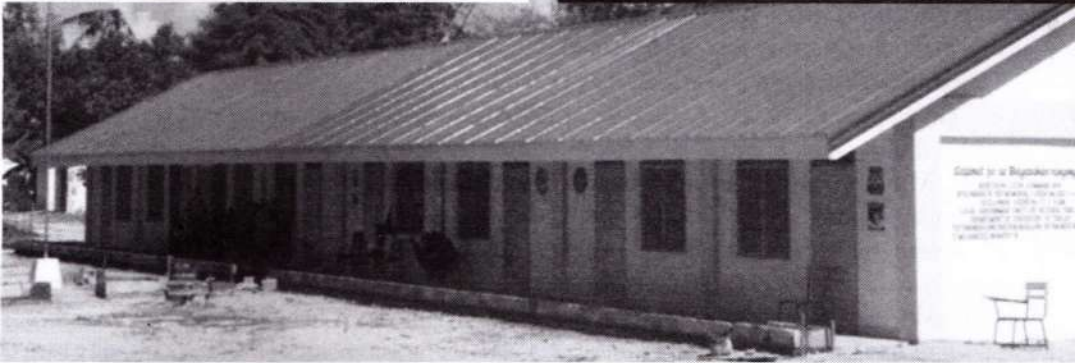
The project begun through the brotherly-love-tandem of VW Ko and Lt. Gen. Alcantara who is also a Mason. A balikbayan from New Zealand, VW Ko paid a visit to Bro. Alcantara and came up with the idea of a school house.

VW Ko, a member of Kasilawan Lodge No. 77, wanted to give the community a present commemorative of his 25 years of Masonic service. Bro. Alcantara suggested the "Bayanihan," the internal peace and security plan of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). It calls on all citizens to get involved in the national peace effort.

They picked the town of Victoria for the project site where a local Masonic lodge, the Apolinario B. Yap Memorial Lodge No. 328, held jurisdiction. Passing the idea onto the brethren, they enthusiastically agreed, in turn, to the project. Lt. Aguinaldo I. Ordoñez, a Kasilawan



The one-story 2-classroom school building handed by Tarlac bros over to the DepEd. Inset: MW Gabionza leads the ribbon-cutting ceremony along with Hon. Victor Yap, Tarlac provincial governor, Bro. Lt. Get. Anthony Alcantara, NOLCOM commander, and VW Felix Ko, project benefactor of Kasilawan Lodge No. 77.



lodge member and NOLCOM officer, was voted to become the project coordinator.

On Dec 6, 2012, they conducted an ocular inspection of Victoria National High School Annex II.

Bayanihan

On January 16, 2013, the ground breaking ceremony was held with Victoria Mayor Candido L Guiam III as guest of honor.

Soon, construction began with the NOLCOM Army units taking on the job, as follows—the 522nd Engineer Construction Battalion, the 54th Engineer Brigade, and the 3rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion Light Armor Division.

During the construction, a “*bayanihan*” spirit prevailed between Masons and NOLCOM army personnel. Local

officials stoked the good relations with continuous support. Also, the school Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) was always at hand as the local citizens were just too glad to help.

On March 6, the construction was finally completed.

Local government and school officials lauded the Mason-NOLCOM effort as a genuine civic move for the people of barangay Balayang in Victoria. But basically, the project responds to the perennial classroom shortage that bugs the public school system yearly.

Regardless, no number—monetary or otherwise—suffices for the value that the project holds. The brethren of Tarlac believes that a school house is just a means for school children to pursue formal education—for children, after all, are the future of this nation.

No price can be tagged on the future. ❧

R10-A bros planted underwater Masonic marker

This is one better-late-than-never news. The brethren of R10-A (Misamis Oriental) accomplished, perhaps, the most fascinating feat in Masonic Centennial Year 2012.

On September 9, 2012, they went scuba diving and planted a 3-meter-high Masonic concrete marker off Agutayan island in the coastal town of Jasaan in Misamis Oriental province—10 meters (that is, 30 feet) deep underwater.

The marker also doubles as an artificial reef. Masonic commemoration and environmental concerns go together with the project. It hinges on the Grand Lodge of the Philippines' proactive stance in environmental conservation.

To accomplish it, VW Jeoffré W. Acebido Centennial DDGM of district R10-A, teamed up with the brethren of Carmen Valley Lodge No. 250 under WM Alfred Lord Tennyson Q. Gaccion IV and WI Erwin B. Bollozos.

But the job wouldn't amount to anything were it not for the experienced scuba divers among the bros such as Bro. Jon Gerard Mendoza; VW Erwin Pepino PDGL; WB Alex Ang Gaeid and Bro. Mario Jugador, a Philippine Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) member.

District R10-B (Misamis Oriental) also came to help.

The site for the concrete marker was pinpointed off Agutayan island with

coordinates N08°40.066'E124°41.434'.

To make the event more significant, a family day marked with a beach cleanup was worked into the underwater installation.

Besides its commemorative function, the marker also serves as an artificial sanctuary for marine life. The concrete is shaped into a pyramid with the apex topped by an iron square and compasses. "Masonic District Region X A" is flatly scrolled out below the emblem.

Two opposing sides of the pyramidal marker are coverless; the other, drilled with a large hole in a shape suggestive of the "All Seeing Eye." The spaces allow the fish to swim easily in and out, make nest, lay eggs and nourish their fingerlings.

The marker's concrete cast, made from lime and gavel, is 100 percent eco-friendly. It draws marine plants and micro-organisms to stick and grow about it, resulting in the profusion of underwater life.

Serving as an underwater marine haven, the marker helps in the growth of corals fast and the proliferation of diverse multi-colored fish species—making the site an attractive diving spot.

If anything, the marker poses an invitation to scuba-diving Masons—to come and explore the waters around Agutayan island. A R10-A press release to THE CABLETOW promises that it is worth all the effort. It said that any scuba-diving Mason will

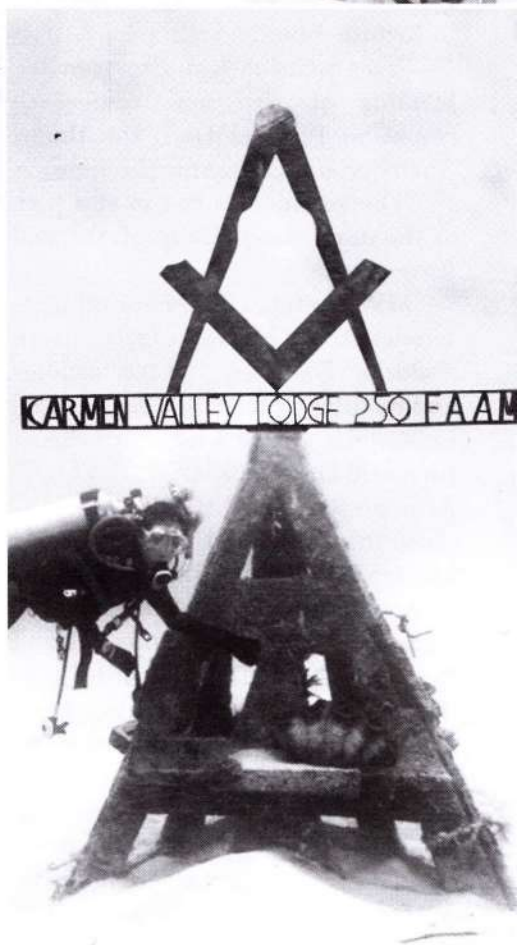


(Above) R10-A bros and families posed for a shot after a clean-up of Agutayan island beach in Jasaan, Misamis Oriental. (Right) Bros in scuba gears planted the Masonic marker 30-feet deep underwater.

“immediately feel oneness with The Great Architect of the Universe’s Creation.” This is yet besides the mesmerizing “beauty of the colourful marine life that could only be described as “Communion with the Almighty”.”

Moreover, the underwater weightlessness gives off an infantile sensation of “being gently wrapped around and carried in the arms of one’s creator as though brought to witness His Perfect creation protected from any earthly harm.”

The R10-A bros hoped that the marker will serve as a welcome gesture to scuba-diving Masons in particular; and a symbol of the Craft’s good intentions to all scuba-diving aficionados in general.☒



Two new conference rooms included

GLP Centennial Obelisk inaugurated

The 2-story tall Centennial Obelisk, commemorative of the 100th year of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP), was inaugurated on the afternoon of April 18, becoming the latest addition to the monuments in the GLP complex in Ermita, Manila.

The occasion had also seen the blessing of two new conference rooms in Plaridel Hall, the Kalaw Chamber and Centennial Lounge.

The ceremonies begun at 4 p.m. at the northeast hallway of the 2nd floor.

MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Centennial Grand Master, together with a dozen DDGMs, lighted candles and huddled around VW Jessie Alto, Centennial Grand Chaplain, who in turn said an Invocation.

Also present were RW Juanito Espino, Jr., Centennial Deputy Grand Master; RW Tomas Rentoy III, Centennial Junior Grand Warden; MW Danilo Angeles, Centennial Grand Secretary; and MW Rudyardo Bunda, Centennial Grand Treasurer.

VW Samuel Fernandez, dean of the Institute of Masonic Education and Studies (IMES) and a church minister, led the group to the nearby Kalaw Chamber where he read prayers.

The Kalaw Chamber was reno-

vated in 2012 through a donation by the Kalaw family. Next, they headed to the Centennial Lounge which was formerly the office of the Grand Guild of Past Masters. Renovated at a cost of Php 68,000, the room showcased mementos from the GLP Centennial Anniversary celebrations.

The group walked down next to the ground floor, out of the building, and onto GLP Hostel lawn where the obelisk stands.

After prayers, MW Gabionza and his wife, Sis. Aileen, cut the ceremonial ribbon.

The GLP Centennial logo was embedded at the front side with a dedicatory plate below it. The other three sides had marble plates chiseled with the names of the 2012 GLP officers comprising the "Centennial Team."

VW Homobono Pique took charge of its construction.

A short program followed at the Aguinaldo Hall.

RW Noel Fuentesbella, Centennial Junior Grand Steward, explained the mythical origin of obelisks. He said that the ancients alluded the obelisk to the penis of Egyptian god Osiris which had been severed by his murderous brother Set.

"The obelisk was itself a phallic



symbol. Whether of Osiris, Re or fertility in general, it was a symbol of Fatherhood," he said.

In the end, RW Fuentebella related that the Centennial Obelisk was conceptualized and designed by VW Pique. VW Dennis Gabionza, Centennial Assistant Grand Treasurer, and himself helped in the details. MW Gabionza approved it.

Last to speak, MW Gabionza explained the symbolic value behind his choice of the obelisk among other monuments. "An obelisk standing straight indicates the rise of the Fraternity," he said. "But more than that, it also symbolizes our faith in God. Standing erect, it reminds us to look up in whatever we do." ❖



(Above) A portion of the Centennial Lounge interior decorated with GLP Centennial mementos. (Below) MW Santiago Gabionza, Jr. with Sister Aileen and the Centennial Team stood before the unveiled GLP Centennial Obelisk.

Obelisk and Freemasonry

By Bro. Carlo Reynaldo F. Lozada Jr.

District Executive Assistant, R13-A

Sometimes associated with Masonry, yet the obelisk is not counted among the Masonic symbols. But a long history lies behind the fascination on this plain but ancient stone piece.

Freemasonry, as we know it now, only started sometime in the 17th century. This was the time of Renaissance when people had begun questioning the church, monarchy and the prevailing societal norms in general. Freemasonry was then a way to become a "free thinker."

Thus, to Freemasons, groping for mystic enlightenment in the 1800s, the obelisk was the only architectural symbol of Egyptian deity Osiris still in existence. Obelisk mania had already swept into Freemasonry by the time Napoleon Bonaparte set sail for Egypt in 1798. Whether he was a Mason or not is still disputed. But his four brothers certainly were. He was also encircled by Masonic advisors who had convinced him that Egypt held original secrets of history, philosophy and of course, Freemasonry. Masons figured among the 150 scholars who had joined the emperor on his triumphant Nile progress, pillaging pyramids, temples and tombs all in the name of learning.

They instantly realized that the Rosetta Stone might unlock the lost

language of Egypt. Deciphering the engraved hieroglyphs had taken many years and the genius of Jean-François Champollion. Yet, he even needed the help of an obelisk bearing Cleopatra's cartouche, which had been removed for shipment to England in 1818 by a Masonic adventurer, Giovanni Battista Belzoni.

Belzoni was a mountebank archaeologist who opened up the temple of Abu Simbel and the Second Pyramid at Giza. He began his Masonic career in Cairo, appropriately, the Lodge of the Pyramids and joined lodges in Cambridge and Norwich. He died in 1825, searching for "Timbuctoo" or the source of the Niger. But not before he did Freemasonry an inestimable service by claiming to have discovered an ancient Masonic temple in Thebes. He claimed its wall paintings showed Osiris being initiated into Freemasonry, pursuing its sublime mysteries and clad in a distinctive Masonic apron and awarding other masons a higher degree.

After Belzoni died, his wife Sarah transcribed his notes, including

this declaration, "Let the Masonic brethren search, and they will find, that the Egyptian Masonic key will unlock the hitherto unrevealed mysteries of Egyptian wisdom." No matter that his Masonic temple turned out to be the tomb of Pharaoh Seti I, and that all he (or Sarah) had written were bunkum, Masons at that time felt they owed much to Belzoni. His Masonic "discoveries" sent packs of them off to Egypt in search of obelisks to plunder.

Paris was the first major European city to fall for this Masonic fad. In 1830, the Viceroy of Egypt, Mohamed Ali, gave France's King Charles X a magnificent obelisk which was 3,500 years old and weighed 246 tons at a height of 92 feet. It still stands at Plaza de la Concorde today. Another obelisk was given to England. It weighed 186 tons.

It now stands at the Victoria Embankment along River Thames. This is known as one of "Cleopatra's Needle".

The news that English Masons had succeeded in erecting Cleopatra's Needle encouraged American Masons to ship its twin across the Atlantic. The Obelisk was given to America in 1877. But 2 years had passed before it had been done. It weighed 220 tons.

It now stands at Central park, New York, USA. More obelisks then sprouted all over the world in localities where Masons were present. The more famous is the George Washington Monument, the first president of the U.S.A.

Yet, not all Obelisks are Masonic symbols. Rome has about 11 where

most have been brought from Egypt by ancient emperors who were deluded by grandeur. Caligulas' obelisk now stands at the very heart of the Roman Catholic Church capital, at St. Peters square at the Vatican. It was Pope Sixtus V who was responsible for the erection of this 132-ft. and 320-ton obelisk.

Churches of other Christian denominations likewise utilized the obelisk in their structure. "Obelisk were considered tasteful, with pure uplifting lines, associated with ancient greatness, patriotic, able to be used in relatively small spaces, and perhaps most importantly, obelisks were less costly than large and elaborate sculpted monuments. There were many cultural reasons for the revival style of the 19th century. Freemasonry while part of the overall cultural influence, was not responsible for the prevalence of obelisks." (Macdowell and Meyer - "The Revival Styles in American Memorial Art")

Here in the Philippines, the most famous obelisks are that of Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio monuments in Rizal Park and Caloocan-Monumento, respectively. In fact the silhouette/outline of the Rizal monument is present in the vehicle license plates. Clearly this particular design in the plates has no Masonic connotation at all.

Nowhere can you find the word "obelisks" in our Monitor, landmarks, Constitution, by-laws, ordinances and edicts. It may be associated with Freemasonry. But it is by no means a Masonic symbol, nor exclusive to the Craft. ❧



The Heliopolis obelisk at Central Park in New York



The Luxor obelisk in Paris with the Eiffel Tower in the background.



Giovanni Battista Belzoni, a Mason and prolific Italian antiquities explorer.



The London obelisk along the River Thames.

The Heliopolis obelisk at St. Peter's Square in Vatican altered by a bronze cross at the apex.



Smoke sent GLP banging fire alarm bells

A thick pall of smoke issuing from under the door of the York Rite room, located at the ground floor of the Plaridel Hall, sent the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of F. & A. Masons of the Philippines (or GLP) scrambling on early evening of April 16 and calling for fire-fighting units around.

The smoke was discovered at around 7 p.m. Half a dozen fire trucks, led by the nearby Paco fire prevention unit, came as GLP office personnel and guests spilled out to the grounds. The York Rite officers, the room's occupants, were on a meeting at the second floor when the fire alarm broke out.

Firemen found no crackling flames inside the room. They also ripped the ceiling boards open to check on faulty electric wires. Only burnt-out papers, wood and a portion of the floor carpet caused the thick smoke.

Firemen declared a fire-out at around 7:30 p.m.

As a result, Centennial Grand Master MW Santiago T. Gabionza Jr. issued a memo banning smoking inside Plaridel Hall. The northeast lobby at the second floor was designated as the only indoor smoking section in the building.

97th Annual Communication

Iloilo Ancom drew the line between the old and new

The old and new eras of Philippine Freemasonry split right in the heart of the country—in Iloilo City—as Masons start on a new century.

Amid sweltering summer heat, the traditional yearly turnovers of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP) were successfully carried out in the 97th Annual Communication (Ancom) in the charming West Visayan city of Iloilo which had ran from April 25 to 27, 2013.

Site of this annual assembly of Philippine Masons was the 24-hectare Central Philippines University (CPU), a private institution, located at Iloilo's historic Jaro district. It was established in 1905 by American Protestant missionaries.

Fitting site

CPU was the first Baptist school to rise outside of the U.S. mainland backed by grants supplied by industrialist and philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller. Starting as a vocational and Bible school, it soon became a junior college specializing in nursing education and made a name for it.

No place in Iloilo City was more appropriate for an Ancom assembly than CPU. Over the years, three of its presidents were Masons—Dr. Almos Larsen

(rsd in Nebraska), Dr. Joseph T. Howard (rsd in Texas) and Dr. Juanito Acanto (rsd in and PM of Graciano Lopez Jaena Lodge No. 49).

Besides, CPU already hosted an Ancom in the past. Iloilo province already gave two of her sons to the GLP as grand masters. More interestingly, they were father and son grand masters—MW Ruperto Demonteverde (1973), and MW Franklin J. Demonteverde (1994).

A pleasant old city, Iloilo—virtually the country's geographic center—played the appropriate host for this tail-end event of the GLP Centennial Year.

Kick off

This two-day yearly convention kicked off in the morning of April 25. GLP officers, led by outgoing Centennial Grand

Master Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr., together with then Deputy Grand Master RW Juanito Espino, Jr. and the GLP officers and visiting dignitaries, laid a floral wreath before the monument of national hero and Illus. Bro. Jose Rizal at Plaza Libertad at J. M. Basa street.

After saying a brief prayer and speech, MW Santiago and party marched up the city hall to pay a courtesy call to Hon. Jed Patrick Mabilog, Iloilo City mayor and next, to Hon. Arthur D. Defensor, Sr. governor of Iloilo province.

After lunch, MW Gabionza met with the officers of the Grand Guild of Past Masters who were holding their 29th annual national convention at the Grand Towers Hotel at Iznart Street.

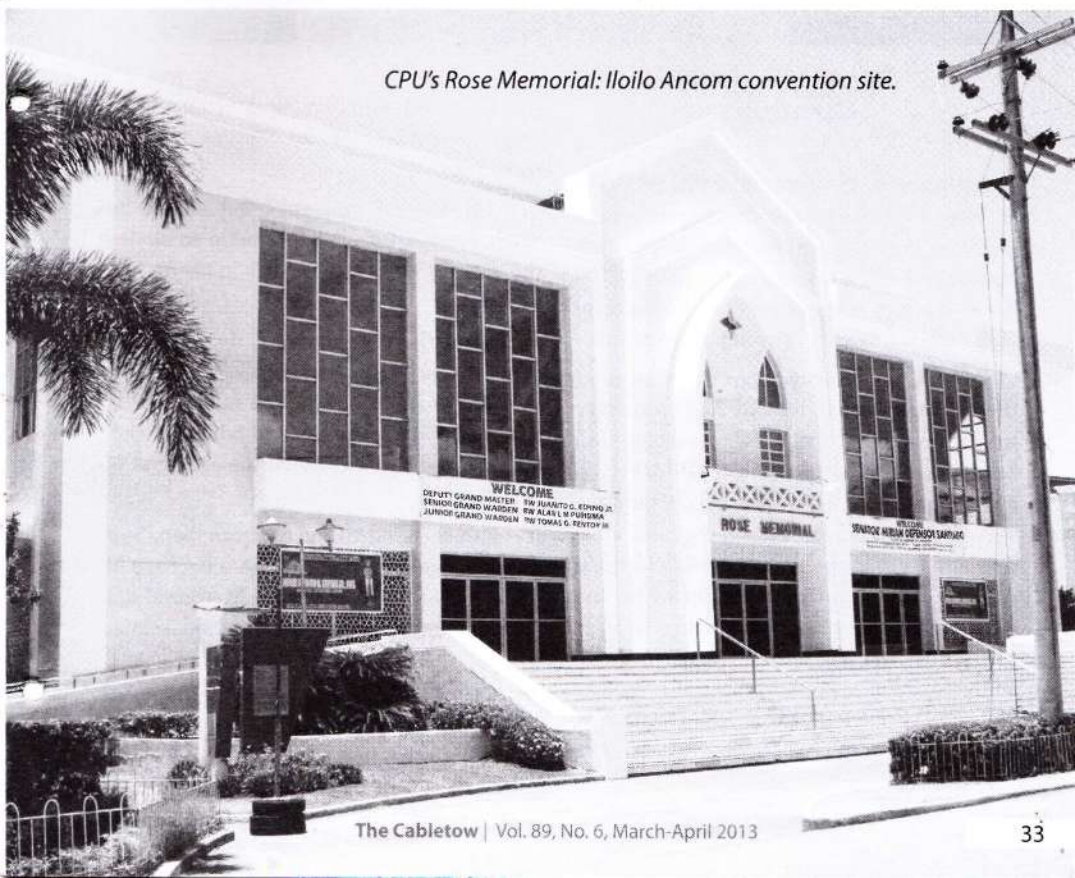
In the evening, MW Gabionza threw a thank-you dinner for the Centennial Grand Officers at Days Hotel at Gener-

al Luna street. The occasion begun on a cheerful atmosphere with plaques and mementos handed out to the bros who had comprised his Centennial Team.

Next, he took to the rostrum and delivered his final message to his district officers. "I have summoned you all to gather here tonight to deliver you this very important message. You are all fired!," he said in jest.

The event suddenly turned sentimental when he raised his glass for a toast. "The Year 2012, the year that has passed, is one of the most memorable years of my life. I am going to miss your spontaneous visits in my office. And the many and varied instances we have dealt with and solved problems together. You are a team. The best team I have ever worked with," he said in a halting voice until he broke into sniffs and sobs.

CPU's Rose Memorial: Iloilo Ancom convention site.





MW Santiago Gabionza, Jr. and then RW Juanito Espino, Deputy GM, pay a courtesy call to Iloilo City Mayor Jed Patrick Mabilog with VW Wilson Cua Locsin, R6-A DDGM (above) and later, to Iloilo provincial governor Arthur D. Defensor, Sr. (right).



Opening

On the next morning, April 26, MW Gabionza led the grand officers, past grand masters, visiting dignitaries, appendant bodies and allied organizations into CPU's 3,000-seating capacity Rose Memorial Hall—thus formally opening the Ancom.

Of all the persons grandly received in the Ancom opening, nobody had been more interesting than the CPU president and host himself, Teodoro Robles. Wearing an apron, he was received like a dignitary. He shook hands and sat with the grand masters and dignitaries up at the Grand East. And he was literally looked up to by the grand masters and bros alike when he took to the rostrum and delivered the welcome address.

Bro. Robles is yet a Fellow Craft at Kalantian Lodge in District R6-A. His

short-sleeved polo barong gave his degree away—worn out of his deference to the regular bros.

It was his moment—but still, a too small reward for all his trouble to shelter the bros for the 2-day Ancom in his historic campus.

After the preliminaries, the outspoken Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, guest of honor and speaker, was led next into the hall. Cellphone cameras and tablets clicked as she made her way down the aisle and up the stage.

When called to the rostrum, Sen. Santiago opened her speech with a barrage of male jokes that rocked Rose Memorial hall with applause and laughter. (See related story.)

With her roaring introduction over, Sen. Santiago switched next to the serious and political. She lauded Freemasonry

as the best and oldest fraternity in the world grounded on time-tested virtues of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Upholding virtues veering on the spiritual paid off for Masonry. It was just the contrary for her contemporaries in politics, she said. Without spirituality, politics slid down into a dirty game as evidenced by the dismaying news emanating from the electoral campaigns then in progress.

In the afternoon, the roll call was deferred for the next day, making way for the volume of business at hand—the approval of the previous 96th Ancom proceedings in Pili, Camarines Sur and the GLP committee reports at hand.

When evening came, Ancom delegates flocked to the Grand Master's Night for dinner at the provincial capitol grounds along Bonifacio Drive. The bros

queued up before stylish tents where meals were served before fanning out to their respective tables. A tribal band in colorful get-up beat drums and danced to the tune.

The Lewisis and ladies of Iloilo performed a song-and-dance number up the stage.

Next, MW Gabionza handed out the awards to the bros who had been deemed to excel in their duties and labors during the Centennial Year. (See related story.)

MW Gabionza capped the night with a message thanking the city's officials and all who had lent a hand in the Centennial Year—the Ancom host District R6-A, the grand officers, his Deputy Grand Master RW Jun Espino, the past grand masters, and his ever-supportive family.

Finally, he raised his glass to “the

MW Gabionza, in the 29th National Convention of the Grand Guild of Past masters, joins in a bonding exercise with (from left) PGMs Juanito Abergas, Jimmy Gonzales, John Choa, Sonny Razon, Danny Angeles, then RW Juanito Espino and VW Samuel Fernandez.





CPU gymnasium houses the Ancom registration desks and the dining hall for the delegates right across the fence.



Bros from the MW Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washinton State pay respect to the Grand East.

The Grand Master of the Hawaii Grand Lodge and party are given a seat up in the Grand East.



MW Bro. Sergio Cortese, Grand Master of the Italian Grand Orient, pays his respect to the Grand East.





Heads of the GLP's appendant bodies are escorted next to ascent the Grand East.

25,000 brethren of this grand jurisdiction, whose cooperation has made the Centennial doable; whose brotherly affection made the Centennial successful."

Labors

The third day, April 27, started with a bustle of activities. Delegates labored in the morning listening and approving the reports presented by the grand line officers and the various GLP committees. After lunch, elections for the Junior Grand Warden (JGW) begun. Seven bros were qualified by the GLP to stand as candidates for the post.

While the delegates cozily queued up to cast electronic votes inside Rose Memorial Hall at around 4 p.m., the hot sunny afternoon darkened. The air cooled. A squall from the sea moved in over the city lash-

ing strong winds and rain. Merchandise booths at the gym grounds drew down tarpaulin covers and closed shop for a quarter of an hour.

At around 6 p.m., the JGW election was over. VW Voltaire Gazmin, secretary of National Defense, won with some 640 votes.

While friends of VW Gazmin drove to the port area to celebrate, other bros packed to Smallville, an upscale nightspot complex—many for a final evening in the city. But the GLP went on to hold its traditional tribute to the Past Grand Masters at Days Hotel.

"Cooperation has made the Centennial doable... brotherly affection made the Centennial successful."

Past Grand Masters present were John Choa, Oscar Bunyi, Romeo Yu, Jaime Gonzales, Pacifico Ania, Peter Lim Lo Suy, and Avelino Razon. Also present were Grand Secretary MW Danilo Angeles and Grand Treasurer Rudyardo Bunda.

Visiting dignitaries also came for the tribute.

A delayed flight arrival brought MW Reynato Puno late into the program.

In his address, MW Santiago acknowledged meeting difficulties in office especially in his early days. But there is something in Freemasonry which makes its management hard and light at once. "The extremities of decisions, the vacillation of perceptions, are intrinsic to life. And this is what Freemasonry is. It is life. This gives the complexity as much as beauty in the administration of the Craft," he said.

PGMs

MW Gabionza particularly mentioned the PGMs he had daily worked with.

A lawyer himself, yet he said that "one legal luminary I will never dare question is Most Worshipful Danny Angeles. He is a luminary in Masonic jurisprudence."

He admitted having been saved by the Grand Secretary's generous counsels from a number of troubles. But what had impressed him most was that "Most Worshipful Angeles showed me that the sharpness of the mind could sit well with the softness of the heart."

To MW Rudyardo Bunda, Grand Treasurer, MW Gabionza attributed lessons of trust and fortitude. Fallen ill in February, yet MW Bunda worked sitting up on his hospital bed to dispatch GLP businesses in time. When his wife was placed next in

Past Grand Masters trooped the line to pay courtesy to, and take seats up, in the Grand East.



ICU, the PGM still worked in the hospital, virtually turning the nurses' lobby into his mobile office to place calls at the GLP and elsewhere.

"One of the lasting impressions he left deep in me was the Fortitude he had carried life's challenges," MW Santiago said. But none had struck the Centennial GM more than MW Reynato Puno, Centennial Celebrations Committee chairman. Always at hand, he said. "It was incredible to see a former Chief Justice and all that stature, taking orders and doing his job just like one of the boys."

Ever reliable, MW Puno had never failed or abandoned him. "MW Puno is one in the legal profession we highly look up to," he said, in a shaky, cracking, voice.

"But my admiration for him had never soared higher than the moments he had led the brethren by example, displaying lessons in humility more powerful than the

best spun-and-woven words," said MW Gabionza as he briefly stopped to hold back his tears.

Later, Centennial mementos and the Book of Edicts just off the press were handed to the PGMs and guest dignitaries from foreign jurisdictions.

After the tribute, VW Wilson Cua Locsin, Centennial DDGM R6-A, went on to hold the Ancom raffle before the PGMs and guests. Grand prizes at stake were Toyota Vios and Avanza.

Culmination

The Iloilo bros were efficient. By 9 a.m. the next day, April 27, the CPU convention site was already cleaned up of Ancom tarpaulins, Monobloc sets, and litter. Suddenly, the place was empty—and quiet. The merchandise booths were packing up to leave.

Three manners of prayer. The Jobbies (left) pressed their upraised palms together close to the breast; the Prince Hall bros (center) wrapped their arms across the breasts; and PGMs of the GLP (right) touched their left breasts with the right hand.



Bro. Teodoro Robles, Central Philippines University (CPU) president and Ancom host, is a Fellow Craft who has been privileged to sit with the Grand Masters up in the Grand East.



But Masons yet touring the city, or teeing off the greens in adjacent Sta. Barbara town, were in no hurry. The Ancom's culminating event, the Grand Installation, was slated at 8 in the afternoon.

Upholding virtues veering on the spiritual paid off for Masonry.

PGMs and incoming grand officers arrived at the dance hall of Iloilo Grand Hotel, down Iznart street, in tuxedos; the rest, in barong tagalog. Modest, the ballroom's stage was turned into the Grand East—but perked up by regularly shifting, mood-swinging, colored lights.

The incoming Grand Master, RW Espino, made use of every opportunity to spice up this memorable occasion in his life. On

cue, fog machines intermittently carpeted the floor with wafting mists in the run of the ceremonies.

A pipe, prominently set before the stage, occasionally puffed up white smoke like a Taal volcanic vent.

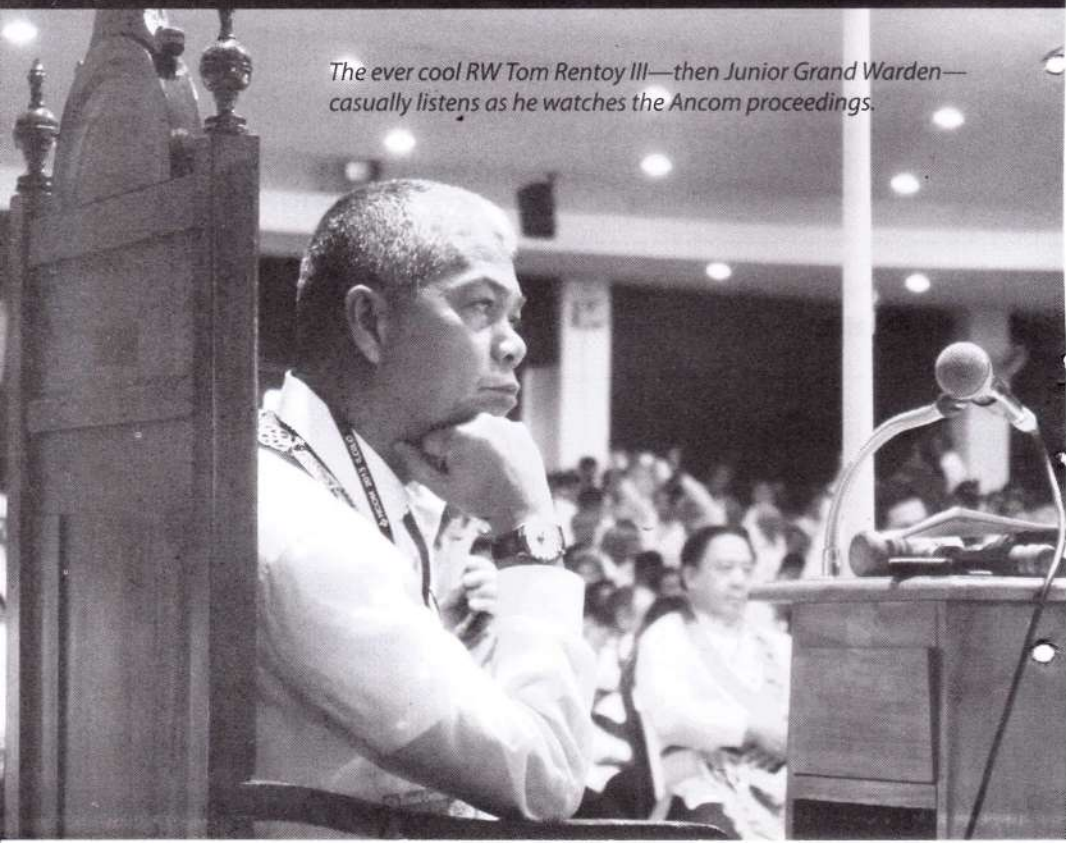
A music lover, MW Espino hired a chorale, backed by an organ and a violin, to heighten the drama and the sentiments of the installation.

Surprises

Soon, outgoing Grand Master MW Gabionza, presiding at the Grand East for the last time, opened the grand lodge. RW Jessie Alto, Grand Chaplain, led the invocation wishing the Lord to “shed light on new set of Grand Officers so that they may lead with wisdom, compassion, integrity and vision.”



Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, guest of honor and speaker, amusingly watched the Grand Deacons—VW Edilberto Carabbacan (left) and VW Romalino Valdez (right)—crossed their rods overhead.



The ever cool RW Tom Rentoy III—then Junior Grand Warden—casually listens as he watches the Ancom proceedings.

"The extremities of decisions, the vacillation of perceptions, are intrinsic to life. And this is what Freemasonry is. It is life."

Then, a short recess was declared. The grand installation officers took over the Grand East. MW Reynato S. Puno was the Installing Officer while the GLP's "Expendables" worked on the floor—MW Franklin J. Demonteverde, Master of Ceremonies; MW Oscar P. Bunyi and MW Jaime Y. Gonzales, Assistant Masters of Ceremonies.

Unlike other PGMs, the three-man team of MW Demonteverde, Bunyi and Gonzales often get invitations to conduct lodge rituals across the grand jurisdiction. Displaying sharpness and proficiency comparable to Stallone, Schwarzenegger and Chuck Norris, young Masons lauded them as "The Expendables" after the Hollywood film.

So did they execute their jobs like clockwork, starting with the newly-elected JGW, RW Voltaire Gazmin, and onto MW Juanito Espino, Jr.

Rising from the altar, MW Espino was walked around the pavement. The violin whined playing the theme from The Godfather movie "Speak Softly Love." Briefly, the hall was transported to sunny Sicily. It was a Don Vito Corleone moment—without the cat

After installation, MW Espino delivered his speech, vowing to shape up the Craft by zeroing in on the 7 issues that perennially hindered its progress, as follows: 1) selection process of petitioners for craft degrees; 2) mentoring of candidates for the ancient craft degrees; 3) continuing Masonic education for regular Masons; 4) family involvement in Masonic affairs; 5) strengthening of ties with the appendant bodies

and allied organizations; 6) administrative and financial reforms; and 7) reform in the electoral procedure of the Junior Grand Warden. (See related story.)

With an agreement with the successive grand officers in effect, he expected that the Craft improvement will be carried onto the next five years, ensuring consistency and firming up the gains under a "Five-Year Development Program."

Finally, MW Puno presented the Past Grand Master's jewel to MW Gabionza who, in turn, dedicated it to his family. (See related article.)

"Most Worshipful Angeles showed me that the sharpness of the mind could sit well with the softness of the heart."

The Grand Installation didn't end without a surprise. When MW Espino ordered the retirement of the flag, VW Rico Puno, former Interior and Local Government undersecretary, stood up as Grand Marshall. With a large built, he was too prominent to be missed out when he climbed up the Grand East to carry out his duty.

The Grand Installation ended just as it had gone well. It was a fitting conclusion for the 97th Ancom that had similarly begun. Except for a few hassles—like the heat and the smoking ban in the CPU campus—many bros were just glad to attend and leave for home satisfied.

The Centennial Year is over. But despite the economy, it is a milestone year that we can proudly pass onto the Bicentennial Masons. • EC



Sen. Santiago tickles the bros with her trademark jokes—and a hopeful message.

Sen. Santiago saw Masonry as a moral reviving force

"Freemasonry is valuable to the Philippines because of our damaged culture and endemic corruption," said Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago at the opening session of the 97th Annual Communication on April 25 in Iloilo City.

A native of Iloilo City, the three-termer Ilongga senator was guest of honor and speaker at the 2013 Masonic general assembly. She acknowledged Freemasonry as "the oldest, biggest and best fraternity in the world"—much to the delight of the applauding 2,000 Masons who had packed the Rose Memorial Hall at the Central Philippines University (CPU).

She opened her speech with her trademark "joke barrage" that turned the bros roaring with laughter in their seats.

With the introductions over, Sen. Santiago centered on the Masonic tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth which she had found remarkable. These virtues, she said, afforded men to perform good deeds like helping distressed fellow Masons, or extending charity works to non-Masons.

Citing a list of Masonic principles, she paid special attention to the Masonic im-



About 2,000 bros packed the convention hall.

perative of "belief in God" as the central and binding principle of Masonic philosophy.

Spiritual impulse

Sen. Santiago—who also studied theology besides her many postgraduate scholarships in law—went on to explain that a belief in God rests on a belief in the human soul that sits at the core of our being. Where the soul is sustained by good works, it easily latches onto connection with the godhead or "Supreme Being." And where these connections are in place, man becomes a conduit, as much as receiver, of "spiritual impulses."

By "spiritual impulses," man receives eternal truths, like the human origin "from one Almighty parent," giving rise, in turn, to lofty ideas like equality.

By respecting all creeds and races, "Freemasonry espouses openness to spiritual impulses," she said.

Consequently, the notion of equality drove a number of Masons to become heroes—all made possible by a well-primed soul.

"Yan ang hirap sa mga corrupt. Wala kasi silang silang mga souls" {That's the trouble with corrupt government men. They have no souls.} Sen. Santiago lamented.

Issues

Assessing the tenets, virtues and a couple of obligations each Mason has sworn to embrace, she remarked, *"Sana mga Masons na lang ang nasa government at politics."* (I hope it is the Masons who are in government and politics.) The bros loudly applauded.

What had prodded Sen. Santiago to hope



MW Gabionza hands a plaque of appreciation to Sen. Santiago.

for Masons in public offices were the disdainful practices occurring then in the national elections campaign.

In the Senate, she said, a group of re-electionist senators had double-crossed the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC). They promised support to the church's position on a controversial issue. "But out of opportunism, (they) reneged on their promise when the hour came," she said.

She did not name these double-crossing senators, even the Catholic parishes that were out campaigning against re-electionist senators who had favored the Reproductive Health Law frowned upon by the Vatican. "(It) is merely an act of vengeance, an attitude that evokes the Old Testament, and is incompatible with the emphasis on Christian love in the New Testament," she said.

She added, "It makes me squirm when I watch on television a cleric mouthing a political vocabulary. It makes my toes curl." ❧

Miriam jokes that rocked the Ancom hall

Bold and brilliant, yet Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago can also send the young and old alike bellyaching with laughter. Her "pickup lines" are always a hit. But it wasn't pickup lines that the bros got when she came to the 97th Ancom. Below are the male jokes—the kind we swap during fellowships—that she dished out in Iloilo City.

"Latest survey says that 60 percent of men in Metro Manila are unfaithful to their wives. The remaining 40 percent bring their mistresses to the provinces."

"I remember what I always say about my husband. He is not from Iloilo so my fellow Ilonggos are not familiar with him. He is a very nice man. He has no vices. He does not smoke. He does not drink. He only tells lies to his wife."

"There are five tips for a happy man's life... One, have a girl who helps you at work. Two, have a girl who will take care of you and love you. Three, have a girl who can make you laugh. Four, have a girl who spoil you. (pauses) But make sure that these four women don't know each other."

"A young boy asked his dad: what is the difference between 'confident' and 'confidential'? The father said, 'You are my son. Confident ako doon. 'Yung best friend mo sa school, anak ko rin 'yun. 'Yan ang confidential.'"

2,620 bros came to Iloilo Ancom

Some 2,620 Masons from within and outside the Philippine grand jurisdiction came to the 97th Annual Communication (Ancom) in Iloilo City, said RW Tommy O. Que, Centennial Junior Grand Lecturer for the Visayas and chairman of the Iloilo Ancom committee.

The number was based on the delegates that had registered at the secretariat.

Where the convention site—CPU's Rose Memorial Hall—packs 3,000 delegates, 2,620 is by all means a high turnout. One factor is the geographic centrality of Iloilo province. Another is the lingering appeal of the Centennial fever on its final leg.

Eight District R6-A lodges, under VW Wilson Cua Locsin, Panay island's Centennial DDGM, had come and worked together to make this 2-day Masonic assembly a success.

Volunteers

"But we didn't appoint committee heads. Everything was volunteer work. They picked their own committees. They chose their own jobs," said RW Que.

But the job was not easy. The first half of the year was a dead period. Help and responses from the blue lodges came slow. To speed up things, the committee came up with attractions. In December, it announced discounted Ancom fees for early payors with free jackets to go. The market moved—albeit little.

The pressure hadn't set in until mid-February. "I have no figures from past Ancom organizers to work on. It looked like everybody had set targets and numbers based on estimates only."



Lewisas of our Iloilo bros helped manned the Ancom's registration desks.

Centennial Year awardees recognized

Bros and labors that have measured up to, or nearest to Masonic excellence consistent with fraternal principles, were given recognition at the Grand Master's Night on April 26 at the provincial capitol grounds in Iloilo City.

Awardees for this year included 8 individual bros, 3 districts, 3 publications and 3 blue lodges.

The Centennial Year awardees were as follows:

- **Most Outstanding District Deputy Grand Master:** VW Ramiro M. Cruz, R3-D.

- **Outstanding District Deputy Grand Masters:** VW Sergio G. Mailig, R13-A; and VW Cesar Augustus Cortes, NCR-C.

- **Outstanding District Grand Lecturer:** VW Herbert P. Quimpo, NCR-G.

- **Most Outstanding Grand Lodge Inspector:** WI Alden V. Samban, Maguindanao Lodge No. 40, F.&A.M.

- **Most Outstanding Worshipful Master:** WB Gil C. Suratos, Cabanatuan Lodge No. 53, F.&A.M.

- **Outstanding Worshipful Masters:** WB Eduardo T. Chiong, Makahambus Lodge No. 315, F.&A.M.; and WB Romeo G. Lim,

Alfonso Lee Sin Mem. Lodge No. 158, F.&A.M.

- **Most Outstanding Newsletter (District Level):** The Craftsman, R3-D.

- **Outstanding Newsletter (Lodge Level):** The Square, Makahambus Lodge No. 315, F.&A.M.; and The Plumblin, Carmen Valley Lodge No. 250, F.&A.M.

- **Special Grand Master's Citation:** Masonic District R 3-D (Nueva Ecija South); Masonic District R 13-A (Agusan-Surigao); Masonic District NCR -G (Metro Manila); Cabanatuan Lodge No. 53, F. & A.M.; Makahambus Lodge No. 315, F. & A.M.; Alfonso Lee Sin Mem. Lodge No. 158, F. & A.M.

Committee on Awards chairman MW Danilo D. Angeles, also Centennial Grand Secretary, submitted the list to MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. in a communication dated April 11, 2013 after "thorough evaluation, assessment, rating and deliberation." VW J. Waldemar V. Valmores, Assistant Grand Secretary, was the committee vice chairman. Members were VW Benvenuto C. Alegre; VW Reynato D. Puno, Jr.; and VW Leonardo T. Chua. Plaques were handed out to the awardees. 🏆

MW Gabionza hands a plaque to one of the awardees.



One problem had bugged the organizers from the start. Rose Memorial Hall, basically a campus auditorium, is not a convention facility. It has no holding lobby for the guests to hang out between sessions. Dining hall is the Spartan-designed CPU gymnasium.

Switching to another venue wasn't only too late a move. Worse, it would skyrocket the Ancom fee.

So, what amenities Rose Hall lacked, the committee must wheel these in. The job fell on VW Locsin who ran the operations on the ground.

Answered prayers

On the 22nd of April, three days before the Ancom kick off, the committee staff and volunteers heard mass together. Seemingly, their prayers were heard.

What greeted the weary bros arriving at the registration desk

were the sweet-smiling and helpful Lewisas—Masons' daughters largely from the Job's Daughters local chapter. Countless grumps and churls had waffled before they could lapse into hot-headed, smart-alecky, hysterias.

"Our wives and daughters came to us only on that day, on the twenty-second. They volunteered," said RW Que surprising himself, even.

The ladies and Lewisas manning the desks were not actually in the plan. Manpower shortage shooed them in—to invaluable advantage.

The committee was all ears on the bros' reaction as the Ancom opened on the morning of the 25th. Dragging themselves before the industrial fans scattered around the gym, the delegates grumbled incessantly about the stifling summer heat.

Soon, soda and water stations popped up around the gym. Iced drinks were served with no limit.

"One thing we made sure of is that no delegate will go hungry or thirsty," said RW Que.

Ticketed meal tables were posted at the two ends of the gym. Styropor packs of La Paz *batchoy* instant meals, a local specialty, were stacked up on tables. It was a hit among the delegates.

When asked how he sizes up the Ancom, RW Que answered, "I believed that the Ancom was a success. If the brethren came out happy, I think that is enough success." ■

RW Tommy O. Que, Centennial Junior Grand Lecturer (Visayas) and chairman of the 97th Ancom committee



Presentation of the Past Grand Master's Jewel to MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr.

By MW Reynato S. Puno, PGM

(Delivered at the Grand Installation at the Iloilo Grand Hotel, Iloilo City, on April 27, 2013.)

We are all aware that the highest seat of honor in the masonic fraternity is the Grand Oriental Chair which is reserved for the MW Grand Master. It is bestowed only to the most worthy brother for in electing a Grand Master, we grant to him near absolute power to govern all masons within the jurisdiction, we pledge an abiding obedience to his executive, legislative and juridical fiats, we deposit our trust in his wisdom and we put our faith in his fairness. In fine, the purple of the fraternity belongs to the brother who has earned our love and loyalty and to whom we have given the awesome privilege to speak univocally and unequivocally for and in our behalf.

We factor in all these sublime and subliminal thoughts whenever we choose our Grand Master. In our 96th Annual Communication held at Camarines Sur last April 2012, however, we intercalated a new consideration, when we elected then Rt. W. Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. to be our Centennial Grand Master. With the clarity of hindsight and the force of foresight, we all felt that our Centennial Grand Master must be several cuts above all masons, considering the needs of masonry in the Philippines in particular and the globe in general. For one, 21st century masonry has to deal successfully with a morass of new and challenging issues, failing which, masonry stands in danger of being dismissed as a people of fossils. The transit of time notwithstanding, masons everywhere, thru their Grand Masters, must convince mankind that masonry despite its age continues to be irreplaceable because it is different, a big difference for good. In a world shot full of moral loopholes and failures, masonry led by the Grand Masters must show that masonry is not the home of those who are

morally lawless, neither is it the sanctuary of the spiritually truant. And even at the pain and prospect of extinction, masonry should not compromise the value of its ethical tenet that a man's self-worth is not synonymous and should not be confused to one's net worth. More importantly, we thought that the Centennial Grand Master must lead and be guided by our precept of harmony amidst diversity for truly none is so smart as all of us.

Hence, in our last ANCOM, our overarching thought in choosing our Centennial Grand Master is that he should be more than the usual Grand Master, he must be a special Grand Master. We searched for one who can provide the face of the Grand Lodge after 100 years of existence. In other words, our Centennial Grand Master must be the poster boy of Philippine masonry, whom we are all proud. After a careful scrutiny of the masonic landscape, the PGMs unanimously nominated then Rt W Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. to be our Centennial Grand Master. The brethren similarly responded by also unanimously voting for

him as our Centennial Grand Master. It was a monumental moment for masonry. The rest is history, history of which Filipino masons can be proud of.

I will not go through the ritual of reiterating the sky-high accomplishments of MW Gabionza, Jr. as our Centennial Grand Master. He has submitted to the brethren his report card. The ovation given by the brethren to our Centennial Grand Master will long reverberate in our ear drums. The ovation says it all and I cannot add any bit to it with any further phrase of praise. As MW Gabionza, Jr. steps down from the Grand Oriental Chair, we begin our journey to the next 100 years of our Grand Lodge. In this journey to the unknown and beyond knowing, we will be guided by his counsel as our Centennial Grand Master. I quote his Report to the brethren:

With the Centennial Year falling during my incumbency, we have crafted our theme to coincide with what we have done, what we are doing and what we intend to do, to ensure that this Fraternity continues to be relevant in the next century. Hence, the theme, "Building on Our Past, Excelling in the Present, Providing for Our Future, MORE Masonry for All" to ensure the survival of our beloved Fraternity in the next hundred years to come and strategically guiding our ancient Fraternity and to seize the opportunity to seamlessly unify our past, present and future.

M.O.R.E. stands for Moral Foundation, Organizational Empowerment, Responsible Stewardship and External Outreach designed to reinforce the Craft as it charts the next centuries of its existence faced with the continued challenges of our times.

That acronym M.O.R.E. will long be our North Star. Surely, the Grand Lodge has succeeded but success is never final. MW Gabionza, Jr. has brought a new enthusiasm to masonry. It behooves us to make masonry more viral in our jurisdiction, and MW Gabionza, Jr. has shown us that nothing is as infectious as a good example.

As I ask Sister Arlene to pin the PGM Jewel, let us give MW Gabionza, Jr. our standing ovation. ❧





Looking Up to the Future

By MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr., PGM

(Acceptance speech after conferment of Past Grand Master's Jewel delivered at the Grand Installation at Iloilo Grand Hotel, Iloilo City, on April 27, 2013.)

What I now wear on my breast is a dream. Most—if not all—Masons dreamed of wearing it. I dreamed of wearing it. So much so that I have tempered and prepared myself to achieve it. I worked hard and persevered to become deserving of it. And that this jewel is on me now, I must admit that I feel sort of reluctant to wear and display it.

For after all this time, when all labors have come to an end, and you look back to take measure of the size and sum of your works, you feel the insufficiency of your outputs and wish be-

latedly that you have done more.

In the Second Degree, we have been taught that this world is constructed on a hierarchy of dots, lines, and superfaces—all assembling into a three-dimensional

cube. But of all the dimensions measurable to man, TIME is an untamable beast whose tyrannical power eludes our puny control. So much so that its ungovernability is a wild card that either redeems or ruins any luckless mortal that stands on its way.

And for this reason, every Grand Master knows that, from the moment he is installed, he is already working against Time. Once the clock begins to tick, the race is on.

This truth has weighed heavily on my mind so that I plotted deliberately my every step and dispatched my businesses with reasonable speed. To carry the Craft onto its Centennial Year. To fix our Masonic house. To dress up the Grand Lodge in respectability in its centennial. To reach back into our centenary while pushing the Fraternity forward onto a new century.

District councils were firmed up. For the survival of Freemasonry into the next century depends on the quality of our ancient craft lodges at the local districts. The Monitor was made user-friendly—to impress clearly on the Brethren the why-and-wherefores of our rituals and liturgy. Edicts of one hundred years past were dredged up from oblivion and organized into a compilation—to set Masonic jurisprudence on a strong foundation. Relations with the Most Worshipful Grand Lodges of China and Japan were strengthened by way of the “Tokyo Declaration on East Asian Masonic Brotherhood.” Our cabletows were lengthened—and a new door of fraternal amity opens to the 21st century.

Yes, we went to party in December. But no matter how modest, there was dignity in the economy of our Special Communication.

Now, after all that has been said and done, I still get a feeling of insufficien-

cy. And all a man can do is sit down in a corner, bow his head, and resign to the fact that not all men, as much as all labors, are governable by the Twenty-four Inch Gauge. For a problem that has been growing in the Fraternity for a century cannot be corrected in one year. An issue that has been growing in the Craft for ten years cannot be eradicated just as quickly in ten months.

Therefore, there is a feeling of reluctance in me—a reluctance that is nagged by the troubling questions, “Have I done enough to deserve this Jewel?” ... “Am I deserving to wear this jewel just as the Past Grand Masters before me?” ...

All this: to set the Brethren with dignity as they hit the road onto a new century.

Now that it is over, I cannot help but look back always. But everything is not always gazing back. There is also an uplifting looking up.

This Past Grand Master’s Jewel is a reason to look up. Looking back into our history, I am well aware that I am certainly NOT in the same caliber as our great Past Grand Masters like Manuel Quezon, Rafael Palma or Teodoro Kalaw who have similarly worn this jewel. Therefore, I have no reason to flaunt this jewel.

But if history will look kindly at me, I only wish that our Brethren in the next century will remember that there was once a lowly Grand Master who has given his best to bestow the Craft dignity and respectability—dignity and respectability that motivated the Brethren into unity, and a unity that carried them through the next century.

I dedicate this jewel to my family.

Thank you very very much for this Jewel. My fraternal affections will always remain with you. ☒

Endterm Evaluation

Charting a new course to the new century

With the Centennial Year over, THE CABLETOW now takes a look into Centennial Grand Master MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. and his term in the Grand East. It was a milestone year. He was a historic GM. But how good really was this grand master who had been pictured 15-foot tall in expressway billboards and giant LED outdoor screens flashing around Metro Manila for a year? This special report evaluates the GLP's top honcho and his term that would be talked about for years—or a century, maybe.

The Centennial Year saw MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. hugging the public glare with all the Masonic majesty no grand master had ever had. But what many didn't see was the Centennial Grand Master who had striven to chart a course for the fraternity between socials and spectacles into the next century.

It was a special year—and he came to the Grand East by unusual route. The past grand masters (PGMs) sat together, picked him out from a search pool, and nominated him unanimously for the post. He was overwhelmingly voted in turn by the bros. The PGMs then were in search—in the words of MW Reynato S. Puno, chairman of the Board of General Purposes of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP)—of “a poster boy of Philippine masonry.”

But MW Gabionza was well aware of the hitches that came with the job. There

was more to being a Centennial Grand Master than just photo-ops and pumping handshakes. A high-profile post, he would be watched 24/7 by the bros. Historic, he was up against mounting expectations.

Looking good

In May 2012, lawyer MW Gabionza, then 54, walked into the Grand Master's office brimming with an aura of a corporate executive. He had ran, or helped ran, a dozen corporations literally—a power company, newspapers, mining, public buses, garments, trading, insurance, steel, grains mill, travel, realty firms and a couple of law offices.

But what managerial fireworks many had waited for didn't come quickly. He begun his term on a low key.

On June 12, he led the GLP in the Independence Day flag-raising rite at Rizal Park—the first public event of newly-

After a brief interview with TV news crews (above) at the Rizal Park, MW Gabionza and RW Alan Purissima led the GLP in a Centennial Walk on June 12, 2012 (below).



installed GMs. He came in force with the appendant bodies and allied organizations in full regalia.

After a brief downpour and interviews with TV news crews, he marched at the head of the GLP party from Roxas Boulevard and back to Ermita in a “Centennial Walk”—the GLP’s coming-out event for the centennial anniversary fest.

The Centennial Year had just kicked off. But the GLP wasn’t ready yet. Without enough funds, even a 6-month lead time into the centenary was by all means short. Still, it was imperative for the GLP to look good.

So, early into his term, MW Gabionza jumped into the repairs and renovations of the GLP grounds and buildings. “Guests were coming. We wanted a GLP that Masons would be proud of. That was why we began on the infrastructures,” he said.

Systems fix

The house improvements were just the start. But if the facelifts were to acquire any relevance at all, then the fraternity must stand on a well-running system to complete the package, even to pass scrutiny.

Here came in MW Gabionza’s first mission order. Not since the late PGM Ricardo P. Galvez in 2003 had a lawyer sat in the Grand East. Edicts and circulars had piled up. Controversies had popped up, tangled and multiplied nearly untouched.

A working grand master with a legal mind and iron will was needed to trim the excesses, fill the gaps, and tie the loose ends of the decade past.

How he would achieve his systems fix was spelled out explicitly in his administration’s banner theme: “Building on our Past, Excelling in the Present, Providing for our



Maybe, there will be no GM-DGM tandem as close and effective as the Gabionza-Espino dynamic duo for years.



MW Gabionza always brought his team members to official trips and functions like this visit to the Philippine Star publications in December 2012.

Future: MORE Masonry for all!"

"MORE" here was an acronym that stood for moral foundations, organizational empowerment, responsible stewardship, and external outreach.

As if he was short of troubles, MW Gabionza stepped into office with big promises to keep.

He would have flopped before overwhelming odds had he not assembled early a young and select team of bros around him.

Working team

A corporate headhunter, MW Gabionza hurdled over factional lines, traditional mindsets, and even legal impediments to snatch and hire the best people for the job. VW Jose Avelino "Joby" Magbanua for instance, his ever reliable and smart Head Executive Assistant—the backbone of the Centennial Grand Master's office—was a carryover from his predecessor, MW Juan-

ito Abergas, PGM.

He was not prejudiced or keeping favorites.

A good judge of character, he puts premium on people. Consequently, getting the right man for the job soon proved to be the strength of his administration—and it paid off.

Proof was his corps of young and active district officers. "I have a very good team. Everybody cooperated. I have fifty-five DDGMs—all working DDGMs," he proudly said.

MW Gabionza sailed steadily for six month—so steady that nobody had noticed that he was actually running a tight ship.

The Centennial Team ran up and down the organization bringing the bros behind the program. A handful put up shops in

the GLP backroom to raise funds, organize events, and map out the Centennial celebrations.

Communication was direct. Delegation was smooth and easy.

With his team at work front and rear, MW Gabionza was able to go about quickly as easily in repairing the Craft in many fronts.

Freemasonry, actually, needs no repairs—worse, even additions. It is complete in and by itself.

It is the bros that need priming up.

Circuit repairs

Wielding absolute powers, grand masters often speak in terms of legislation.

Circulars emanating from the GM's office are not only directives and bulletins. Some interpret, even give body to, the law

particularly the Constitution, Ancom resolutions and edicts.

He had issued 12 edicts and 44 circulars during his term, all worked around his thematic MORE objectives. Noteworthy, none went to waste.

A big number was aimed at plugging the leaks in the craft lodges. The systems fix MW Gabionza had installed were clearly set down on his circulars.

Where the bros had complained about the declining quality of Masons, Circular No. 15 pointed out the slipshod investigations lodges recently conduct on petitioners. Worse, some lodges were not investigating at all. The West Gate was unguarded.

To remedy, it urged the bros to return to the conscientious use of Form 372, the "Reference of Petition for Degrees," which had served the lodges well during Mason-



MW Gabionza was ably helped in his social functions by his wife, Sis. Aileen, like in this shot on the December 19 Centennial Dinner with then VW Voltaire Gazmin, Defense Secretary, and Paquito Ochoa, Malacañang Executive Secretary. Sis. Aileen is the daughter of VW Ariston C. Sarmiento of Virac, Catanduanes.

Stern at work and tough at court, yet MW Gabionza is actually sentimental at heart. Here, he shed a couple of tears when the bros stood up in a rousing ovation after his delivery of the GM's Report at the Iloilo Ancom.



ry's more peaceful days.

And where corrupting elements had slipped into the lodges, poisoning even the best of the petitioners, Circular No. 43—a reiteration of Edict No. 131 (Choa) and amendments—reminded the bros of the strict ban on body contacts which amount to hazing.

Ensuing Circular No. 44 backed No. 43 explaining that any “exploitative demeanor on petitioners” leads to a never-ending cycle of vindictive ritual brutalities—but not without penalties from the GLP.

The continuous intrusion of the mercenary and the profane into the lodge's sacred ground was checked by Circular No. 38. It reminded the bros on how to carry themselves within and about the lodge, during and after labor.

This legal piece finally covered the conduct of Masons during beer-guzzling fellowships.

Conflict is intrinsic to life—hence giving rise to the need for “harmony.” Circular No.

7 ordered the bros to revive the “District Temple of Harmony” arbitration council as mandated by Edict No. 82 (Puno) and amendments—before World War III breaks out in the lodge.

Where trials are unavoidable, Circular No. 30 explained the amendments that had been worked into the Constitution—covering sections 31 to 44—at the 2012 Ancom in Naga City. The improved “Uniform procedure for conduct of proceedings before the trial commission” sees after the credibility of jury members, the holding of a pre-trial conference, and some checks and balances among others.

These circulars directly deal with the issues that currently pester the Craft. Some even raised issues that the bros have missed or never thought problematic.

Where some lodges were quick to jump into fund-raising activities, Circular No. 12—a reiteration of Circular No. 24 (Locsin)—reminded the bros of the requisite approval of the Grand Master as stated in

the constitution. It helps keep the bros out of trouble coming from, or besides, fellow Masons.

Similarly, Circular No. 40 demanded lodges for report on every charity project they hold—with a set of facts and figures to submit. These data not only keep the GLP informed but also keep the bros on tract about the whys-and-wherefores of their enterprise.

Circular No. 28—a reiteration of the 2011 Circular No. 14 (Abergas)—banned the bros from communicating straight with craft and grand lodges of foreign jurisdictions. A protocol is in place. Only a grand lodge can transact business with another—if official recognition or amicable relation exists between them.

The GLP keeps good relations with some grand lodges—and suspended in others. So, a local lodge going solo but blindly

for instance, can drag the GLP—and all its members—into an entangling international situation.

Drawing closer

What was notable about MW Gabionza was that he knew where to look and what to press.

By his circulars, he administered precise and meticulous circuit repairs to get the system running fully and orderly. And most of his important issuances were not originals. They were just reiterations of the wise and usable legislations of his predecessors. He was even generous in giving credits.

One step up the circular, an edict embodies the lawmaking power of the grand master without consultation with, or reliance on, any Masonic legislative body.



A crowd pleaser, MW Gabionza belted out some tunes before the bros of Camiguin in November 2012 with VW Dennis Gabionza, Centennial Assistant Grand Treasurer, (left) and RW Tom Rentoy (behind) with his wife.



The Masonic Museum, donated by WB Armando Cazzola, was one of the many boons that came during his term.

If noble and wise, these comprised a lasting legacy—and use—to the Craft. In effect, edicts are to the grand masters what masterpieces are to the artists.

Interestingly, a common thread ran in MW Gabionza's circulars—to shake up and rein the brethren in. Similarly, his edicts stepped up the effort by drawing the bros ever closer.

He opened more doors of fraternal understanding by restoring 11 Independent Grand Lodge of the Philippines (IGLP) returnees, in Edict No. 233-J, after declaring fidelity and obedience to the GLP in writing. Also, he left an invitation to the IGLP and other clandestine Masons, in Edict No. 233-K, to switch their loyalties to the GLP should they swear severance of dubious affiliation.

With Masonic clubs and associations popping up throughout the grand jurisdiction, Edict No. 256 required them all to come forward and under the regulation of a designated GLP committee.

Six months later, Edict No. 259 backed No. 256 with tougher legal teeth. MW Gabionza latched it onto an earlier legislation. A resolution passed in the 12th Ancom in 1924 had similarly prohibited the bros from joining Masonic associations not authorized by the GLP—moreover, from groupies that had conducted rituals—Masonic and otherwise—for the induction of new members.

As the GLP frowns on political and religious debates within the lodge, so it outlawed competing rituals that can endanger or fracture the Craft.

A most glaring act of brotherly relief was the issuance of Edict No. 258. It required all to shell out a Php 100 assessment fee per head which goes into the GLP emergency calamity fund.

Every executive wants control, of course. But MW Gabionza's keen grasp of details and zest for timely results hinted that he wanted more than just authority in drawing the brethren close.

Interestingly, a number of PGMs had headed to the West particularly to the U.S., during their terms of office. But MW Gabionza traveled to the opposite direction—East.

"I traveled East because this is where the GLP districts are. My overseas trips are not junket trips. They are working trips," he said.

The GLP holds authority over 5 overseas districts—Districts A, Guam; B, Okinawa in Japan; C, Camp Zama in Japan; D, Korea; and E, Northern Marianas islands. All is warm and well in the Western Pacific districts of Guam and the Northern Marianas. But not in the Korean and Japanese districts which had been established by bros in the U.S. armed services in the 1950s.

Coming home from his Japan trip in March, MW Gabionza said, "Our lodges

in Japan feel that they are being left out. When I attended the Macarthur Lodge installation, I was the second grand master to do so since MW Gus Mateo twenty years ago. In Okinawa Lodge, I was the last grand master to visit it since MW Eugenio Labitoria ten years ago."

Years of abandonment had once lured the GLP lodges in Japan to break away. But MW Gabionza's recent trip, timed with the GLP Centennial anniversary, had infused sentiments that they belonged. Moreover, a reinvigorated relation with the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of Japan gave the GLP bros in Districts B and C a sense of pride and a new role to play.

"I traveled within the Philippine grand jurisdiction to deliver and make real the Masonic theme 'MORE Masonry for all.' I don't want our overseas districts to feel orphaned any-



MW Gabionza led the GLP and visiting dignitaries in the Rededication Ceremony of the Jose Abad Santos Hall on the morning of December 19, 2012.



more," he said.

Corporate management

Non-Masons were even swept into MW Gabionza's orbit. The 18-man GLP administrative staff—the hub of Masonic operations—was shaken up and streamlined. It brought out his second order as corporate manager.

Custom has it that it is the Grand Secretary who stands as the in-house administrator of the grand lodge. Interestingly, MW Danilo Angeles, PGM—untroubled by turf claims—okayed the move.

MW Gabionza opened the books in no time and ferreted the anomalies out. He fired and charged an employee in court. He meted out disciplinary actions.

Next, he brought in a temporary office and HRD manager, one Ms. Dionette A. Eleazar. A plantilla structure was installed. An "Employees Manual" was handed out. A job performance evaluation system came

into work. Office tables and furniture were replaced with a new set. Salaries, sometimes delayed, were rationalized—and brought up to schedule. Benefits—particularly life insurance—were introduced.

"If you want professional service, then professionalize the system," explained MW Gabionza. *"After all, you cannot demand if you will not pay up."*

It was the first time the GLP staff went under a major, total and professional upgrade. With a growing 25,000 clientele, the GLP's service arm had its muscles finally flexed to meet the rising demand.

Not only the staff but the GLP offices gradually took on more corporate ways and ambience.

An on-line computer was installed at the GLP Library with a professional librarian, Ms. Ella Marie Daradar, running the place fulltime.

A powerful scanner, costing Php 475,000, was assigned to the Archives to turn the dusty piles of crackling, yellowing, records

into digital copies before they are forever ruined and lost.

GLP office spaces at the second floor of the Plaridel Hall were split and refurbished, affording more rooms for the GLP committees, appendant bodies and even visitors. A donation from the Kalaw family gave rise to the Kalaw Conference Chamber. The Grand Guild of Past Masters office, next to the Grand Secretary's, was replaced with a Php 68,000 Centennial Lounge.

But MW Gabionza's corporate moves hadn't peaked until the end of his term. He made 2012 a prosperous year for the GLP. Cashing in on the Centennial fever, the Masonic Supply Center earned a record-breaking net income of Php 8.5 million. Moreover, the Centennial fund-raising projects passed onto the GLP a surplus fund of more than Php 5 million.

Donations, in money and kind, were big and many. He put them all in a separate account.

In all, the GLP collected a total of Php 32 million this year against the Php 25 million of 2011.

MW Gabionza opened the books to VW Sixto S. Esquivias IV, Centennial Grand Auditor, for inspection, of course. But still, he hired KPMG, a renowned multinational accounting firm, for a deeper and more detailed auditing of the GLP funds and assets.

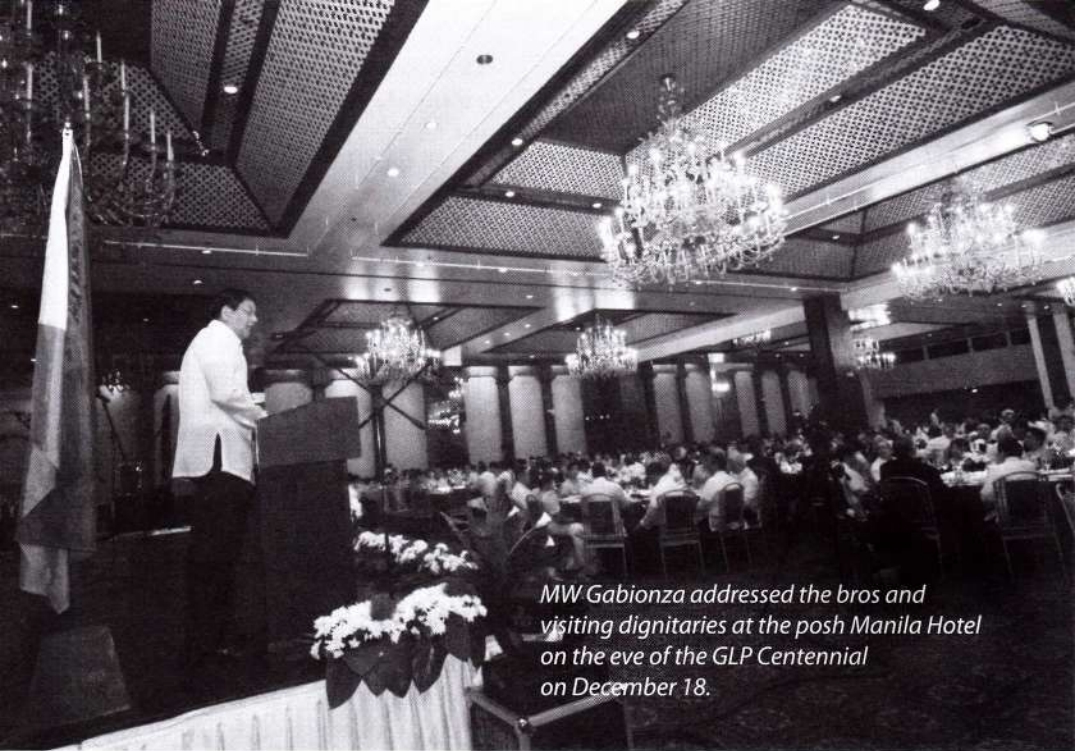
Never would he leave any room for doubt.

Management style

MW Gabionza sailed steadily for six month—so steady that nobody had noticed that he was actually running a tight ship.



MW Gabionza thanked the Surigao City Council for approving the construction of the Centennial Obelisk in that part of Mindanao with R10-A Centennial DDGM Serge Mailig at the background.



MW Gabionza addressed the bros and visiting dignitaries at the posh Manila Hotel on the eve of the GLP Centennial on December 18.

Not because he was choosy in trusting people. Rather, he was cozy with a small-but-smart staff.

He daily came to the GLP. His personal style was all over his management methods.

Standing at 5'9" on a tad stocky frame, he is a presence that fills every room. His John Wayne scowl alerts people to stick to their proper places. He rarely raised his voice. When he did, it was calculating and instructive, often in a fast quip like "You don't make the grand master wait!"

His booming voice made it clear that he was a no-nonsense person to deal with. Often, his stern, disarming, looks did half of the work. By combining economy with efficiency, he managed without even trying. So, he never pressed people for time, for instance. But bros who knew him well never took lightly his words whenever he handed out jobs: "I needed that yesterday." He learned it from the news people he had worked with before.

Once a law professor and consistent honor student, he had inevitably set high marks for his people to beat. But he never sent them out without backing them up, from legal mandates to material resources—everything just to get the job done.

He even lent a million pesos from his personal account, for instance, just to see the exquisite coffee table book "One Hundred Years of Craftsmanship" go off the press.

**If anything, the Special Communication served as a platform to define the century past—
and the century approaching.**

Actually warm and outgoing, yet MW Gabionza learned from his lawyering profession to keep his thoughts secret. What was only discernible was an intricate men-

tal structure, which has been shaped by laws, running and twirling in his mind that processes decisions as quickly as it has received inputs.

He was quick to make judgment calls. Hence, he dispatched businesses fast.

In March for instance, bros from the Ilocos region trooped to the GLP and complained about the Three Lights of a certain Lodge. The latter cheated the bros of a balloting result. A black ball was slipped into the box. What was supposedly "clou, dar, and blk," the Lights boldly reported "fai, clr, and brt."

Worse, they initiated the Candidate quickly just a few days after the manipulation.

After checking with his district officers, MW Gabionza suspended the Lights as quickly as they had deceived the bros.

"When you messed with the Altar, espe-

cially when the holy presence is invoked or in operation, that is just unforgivable. During balloting, the box is placed on the Altar," explained MW Angeles, Centennial Grand Secretary.

With a sharp mind, MW Gabionza passes chillingly cold or scathingly fierce decisions—but always right-founded decisions. Seemingly, there is a soldier attitude in him that quickly leaps to a challenge, to right a wrong. But it is also an attitude that stokes his decisiveness and works well for the bros.

When news of bros reeling under the devastation of typhoons habagat and Pablo had reached his office, he threw his weight to ensure the speedy release of emergency funds, bypassing debates and bureaucratic red tapes characteristic of the GLP.

Some 97 Masons availed of this GLP help. "The GLP takes care of its own. We do not leave a brother behind," he said.



Poking fun at his GLP team members, MW Gabionza pinned the Centennial Medallion himself on RW Alan Purissima before the start of the December 19 Centennial Dinner.

Closure

Bringing the brethren together certainly came with MW Gabionza's job as the fraternity's big boss and Centennial party host. But there was method in his round-up—which meant that it was heading to something big.

Easily, the Special Ancom on the morning of December 19, followed by a formal dinner in the evening, stood out as the culminating event of the Centennial year.

No grand master in recent memory had held an Ancom two times in a year. He convened the grand lodge twice in his term—where “grand lodge” meant the 25,000 free and accepted Filipino Masons.

Fine music flowed with fine dining. Bros who had figured in the past decades were awarded.

In his message, MW Gabionza clearly described where the Craft is presently situated, “We Filipino Freemasons stand at a conjunction of two periods of time where the former has been marked by noble deeds and lofty achievements despite difficult adversities; the latter, a still mysterious landscape with neither sign nor shape of things to come.”

With a still unclear future ahead, caution took the best of him to warn the bros of the possible issues that would hound the Craft. “But as we stand at the edge of a new era,” he said, “much remains to wonder how we will grapple next with the challenges that increasingly grow complex, multicultural and international. Sporadic and intensifying natural disasters, for instance, require us to review our aid and assistance programs to our brethren. How much and how well Masonic education must we implement, for instance, can stave off the decline in the quality of membership which, if not prevented, can ruin or even spell the death of Freemasonry.”

In some of his speeches later in 2013, that future had grown dim as “a new century fraught with challenges, uncertain-

ties and risks,” even pinpointing them as nature's increasing fury, cross-border conflicts, collapsing economies, sliding quality of education, loosening of values, and farther drift away from faith.

If anything, the Special Communication served as a platform to define the century past—and the century approaching. Straddling over two eras of time, yet it was imperative for MW Gabionza to wedge a demarcation between the now and before—and cut the Craft loose if it were to move on into the future regardless how uncertain.

Not a worrywart, he was rather forward-looking to anticipate the ills that will come with future Masons and probably cripple—if not kill—our ancient Craft.

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Even unknown to him, MW Gabionza was searching all this time for a closure. The Centennial was a big send-off party. But he would not tow the Craft, between rocky shoals and out to the open sea, without equipping the bros with survival kits for the long voyage.

Safety kits

The first of these safety kits was Edict No. 251-A. It laid out a simplified liturgy that caps the closing of the lodge in any ancient craft degree. Officers must line up at the northeast pavement and return their jewels to the Master as orderly as they have received these at the start.

Basically, it is an appendage to the ancient rituals—like the edict-created Flag Presentation and Ceremony—imposing order in the lodge closure that often ended with a gavel's bang and the scattering of

the bros about.

It is a balance Filipino bros would perhaps maintain and practice in the next hundred years.

Too cautious to touch any Masonic antiquity, MW Gabionza ordered the publication of a "*Centennial Monitor*." It is a fully-annotated version of the regular Monitor that details the ritual sequences and the floor works.

"As our brethren today lapsed in Masonic rituals, how much more will they err in the future?" explained MW Gabionza. "Our ancient rituals comprised the heart of our Craft. We must preserve it, the right liturgies and forms, through time at all costs in one convenient package. This is the very purpose of the Centennial Monitor," Crucial as it seems, yet Edict No. 260 bans the use of the Centennial Monitor in craft lodges except only for rehearsal or study. The survival kits didn't come without the "manuals." The "Book of Grand Orations" is a collection of the finest pieces of Masonic thoughts which had emanated from the GLP over the past 100 years.

But nothing beats the "Book of Edicts," a compilation of all Masonic edicts—both the preserved and lost—starting with Edict No. 1 issued by Most Illustrious PGM Manuel Luis Quezon on April 19, 1918. A very handy reference, it is a very instructive as much as pleasurable read.

A wide distribution of this book will no doubt shut the smart-alecks up whose boasts and shady designs often mislead the bros.

Tokyo Declaration

Every grand master strives to leave a legacy behind. But MW Gabionza's "safety kits" for the future are more than just showcase projects to remember him by. They presented real and urgent use. To borrow his words, "we needed them yesterday."

But surprise came a month before he had stepped down. He took a leap in his grand

master's function.

On March 16, 2013, he signed the "Tokyo Declaration on East Asian Masonic Brotherhood" with two other grand lodges—the Grand Lodge of F. & A.M. of Japan under MW Bro. Kazufumi Mabuchi, and the Grand Lodge of F. & A.M. of China under MW Bro. Samuel C. Lo. (See related story.) Noteworthy, the Chinese F. & A. M. grand lodge is based in Taiwan.

The 3 grand lodges came together to form into a regional body with "open door" policies between member jurisdictions. It was a sort of Masonic EU (European Union) in this part of the world—if not the first in the Masonic world.

It wasn't the first time the GLP had attempted to organize Masons regionally. In 2008, MW Pacifico Aniaga, PGM, advanced the idea before an international Masonic conference in Australia. But the delegates opposed it and shot it down.

The Tokyo Declaration worked because it was founded on realistic and sentimental grounds. "It was the GLP that had given birth to the grand lodges of China and Japan—before World War II for China; and after the war for Japan," said MW Gabionza.

He very well knew that the Chinese and Japanese F. & A.M. grand lodges had come of age. "Our Chinese and Japanese brethren have already reached a high level of Masonic experience all these years. That is why I am confident that they can make the Tokyo Declaration executive grow big and soar high," he said.

But what struck him most was the inaugural speech of then-newly-installed Japanese GM MW Bro. Yoshiharu Shimokawa. Relating his observations on the Centennial tarpaulins with "Making Good Men Better" logos while in Manila, he was said to have commented, "I was touched by these words: 'Making Good Men Better.' That is the real thrust of Masonry. If we make good men better, we will have no more problems."

MW Gaboinza believed that Masonic education presented the window for Filipino Masons to pass contributions to our Chinese and Japanese bros. "All these three grand lodges are using the same rituals. But it is only the GLP that has an IMES," he said.

A harbor master for most of the year—seeing ships steer safely out of dangerous waters to uncertain sea—MW Gabionza charted a new course for Philippine Masonry beyond the sea. He was Columbus who established the beachhead and opened a pioneering outpost for the bros to develop.

Centennial GM

Seemingly, MW Gabionza had all the corners nailed down. If he did, it was only expected of him as Centennial Grand Master—a high title of high expectations laden with immense pressure.

"My nerves had often been wracked and frayed, by stress and anxiety, over the months before the grand event," he often said in his speaking engagements. "And yes, you will be correct to say that I have carried out the greater part of my term by living on the edge ... I must admit that there were times when I had wished to throw my arms up and utter the Sign of Distress."

By all indications, he had pulled the GLP Centennial fest successfully through. The culminating dinner at the Fiesta Pavillon in Manila Hotel on December 19 was packed to the wall. Bros had to walk sideways to make their way between the maze of tables.

"The brethren came without any compulsion; rather, by their own free will and desire to be counted in," he said. "And these were besides the foreign Mason guests—where many had not been listed and invited—who came on their own."

With his term over, he believed that he had delivered most—if not all—the programs he promised. "It was a very exciting, fulfilling, instructive but tiring year," was how he summed up his time in the Grand East.

"To be a Grand Master is a time-demanding job. But how to be a good Grand Master is up to the Grand Master himself. It actually comes with a Mason's total personal package—his values, discipline, maturity, attitude, etc."

But his term wasn't all that rosy and complete.

The computerization of the GLP system wasn't total—although 80 percent of the price had already been paid to the contractor, Yekylo Technologies.

He was Columbus who established the beachhead and opened a pioneering outpost for the bros to develop.

He hadn't gotten past the present IMES course as the staple of Masonic education—when the bros wanted something more, or something else.

"Maybe, I have overstepped or misstepped in one or two instances. But always, it is 'brotherly love' that takes precedence in my mind," he said.

The "Cavite Affair"—the breakaway of certain Cavite bros from the GLP to form the IGLP in 2007—yet remained unsettled. But MW Gabionza's bigheartedness in welcoming back much of the key figures, timed with the GLP Centennial anniversary, countered whatever bitter grievance they had held.

The centenary "poster boy" was certainly another face of the GLP they had never seen yet.

"A year when we had a great time," was how MW Gabionza had wished the bicentennial Masons would remember GLP 2012.

For all his Craft repairs, survival kits and charting of new courses, yet he will always be remembered as the "Centennial Grand Master." The title stuck on him.

But it never invalidates his worth as "the Reformer the GLP had wished—but never had." • EC

Businesses Done in the Centennial Year

A number of bros commonly thought that Annual Communications (Ancoms) are limited to the incumbent Lights of the Lodge and District Officers only. Wrong. They are delegates. But what businesses are tackled in the Ancoms sweep virtually over everything Masonic that has happened in the grand jurisdiction for a year.

That's why an annual communication "convenes" the grand lodge—where each grand lodge means each Mason who is a member of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines (or GLP). In the Ancom, the outgoing Grand Master faces and reports to the bros what he has done up in the Grand East for the length of his term. This is the closest to "public accountability" that we can get.

Now, THE CABLETOW puts the summaries of committee reports that have been read, questioned discussed and approved at the 97th Annual Communication in Iloilo City right into your hands. Committees make up the cabinet of every grand master. Taking hold of the committees' summaries gives you a handy recap of the business that have been accomplished during the milestone Centennial Year.

Besides, we are members of the GLP. We ought to know.

These report summaries are not complete. But these are the most that we can get and we can print.

2 new lodges chartered this year, 4 UD'd

Two lodges were chartered this year—Bulacan Lodge No. 400 at Malolos, Bulacan on June 2, 2012; and Isaac Puno Memorial Lodge No.401 at the Grand Lodge of the Philippines Scottish Rite Temple on June 6, 2012.

Four lodges were instituted, such as—Magtagumpay Lodge U.D. at Maragondon, Cavite on August 29, 2012; Porac Lodge U.D. at Porac, Pampanga on November 7, 2012; San Rafael de Mayumo at San Miguel, Bulacan on December 10, 2012; and the Knights Templar Lodge U.D. at Gen. Llanera, Nueva Ecija on March 21, 2013.

3 new lodge halls opened, 2 to rise

Three newly-opened lodges were dedicated and consecrated, such as the Gov. Eduardo Joson Memorial Lodge No. 326 at Munoz, Nueva Ecija on July 14, 2012; Butuan Lodge No. 299 at Butuan City on July 25, 2012; and Eulogio R. Dizon Memorial Lodge at Talugtug, Nueva Ecija on March 2, 2013.

There were 2 lodges which had their cornerstones laid down for soon-to-rise lodge halls—Mangaldan Lodge No. 354 at Mangaldan, Pangasinan on September 8, 2012; and Mallig Plains Lodge No. 191 at Munoz, Roxas, Isabela on October 20, 2012.

3 properties handed over to the GLP

Three (3) properties, situated at the cities, were handed over to the GLP this year. First, the Capitol Masonic Corporation, the entity behind the Capitol Masonic Temple in Quezon City, donated a segregated lot portion to the GLP for the needs of lodges meeting there.

Second, Bro. Cesar Virata donated a parcel of lot at Pasay City to the GLP for the

benefit of Wenceslao Trinidad Lodge No. 365.

Third, the Talion Family of Catanduanes handed a parcel of land at Virac, the provincial capital, over to the GLP. Bro. Jun Talion, representing the Talion Family, made the donation for the benefit of Catanduanes Island Lodge 291 which has built their hall on it.

12 edicts issued

Centennial Grand Master MW Santiao T. Gabionza, Jr. has issued 12 edicts this year which now comprised the growing tome of our Masonic jurisprudence, as follows:

1. Edict No. 253, "Exemption from Pre-Audit Procedures"
2. Edict No. 254, "Appropriately Commemorating the Centennial Term by Recognizing the Centennial Grand Lodge Leadership Team"
3. Edict No. 233-J, "Restoring Certain Brethren to Membership in the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines"
4. Edict No. 255, "Requiring Remittance of 3% of Gross Earnings of All Fund Raising Activities of Subordinate Districts and Lodges"
5. Edict No. 256, "Creating An Additional Standing Committee on Masonic Associations and Clubs and Providing the Duties and Functions Thereof"
6. Edict No. 79-C, "Additional Honors, Awards and Citations to Deserving Master Masons"
7. Edict No. 233-K, "Additional Requirements for Admission of Petitioners Initiated, Passed and Raised in Clandestine

Lodges who are Applying for Membership with the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines"

8. Edict No. 257, "Extending the Period of Submission of Nomination for the Position of Grand Junior Warden"

9. Edict No. 258, "Assessment to Provide Standby Fund for Assistance During Natural Calamities"

10. Edict No. 251-A, "Further Amending the Ritual Relating to Closing the Lodge in any Degree"

11. Edict No. 259, "Registration of Clubs, Societies and other similar Association of Masons and Admission of Members"

12. Edict No. 260, "Regulations Governing the Appropriate Use of the Centennial Monitor and Subsequent Revision Thereof"

44 circulars out

A total of 44 circulars were issued by Centennial Grand Master MW Santiao T. Gabionza, Jr. this year on wide and diverse areas of concern, as follows:

1. Circular No. 1, "Elected and Appointed Officers of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines"
2. Circular No. 2, "Matters Approved during the 96th ANCOM"
3. Circular No. 3, "Grand Lodge participation in the celebration of Independence Day June 12, 2012"
4. Circular No. 4, "Celebration of Shriners International Awareness Week"

5. Circular No. 5, "Centennial Fun Run Series 'Run Kuyang Run' "
6. Circular No. 6, "Centennial Memorabilia"
7. Circular No. 7, "Inter-Intra Lodge Harmony"
8. Circular No. 8, "Increase of Charity Benefits for a Master Mason"
9. Circular No. 9, "Masonic Museum"
10. Circular No. 10, "Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Members of Standing and Special Committees of the Grand Lodge"
11. Circular No. 11, "Grand Lodge Centennial Hymn"
12. Circular No. 12, "Reiteration of Circular No. 24 (1998-Locsin) on Fund raising Requirements"
13. Circular No. 13, "Centennial Logo and other Centennial related Souvenir Items"
14. Circular No. 14, "Grand Oration Book"
15. Circular No. 15, "Committee on Investigation"
16. Circular No. 16, "Council of Past District Deputy Grand Masters and Past Masters"
17. Circular No. 17, "Lists of Brethren who have been Awarded with Diploma by the IMES"
18. Circular No. 18, "Mandatory Requirement for Appointment to the position of District Grand Lecturer"
19. Circular No. 19, "Schedule of Multi-District Conventions"
20. Circular No. 20, "Unauthorized use of Officers Jewels and Aprons"
21. Circular No. 21, "IMES Schedule of Classes"
22. Circular No. 22, "Appointment of Head Executive Assistant to the Grand Master"
23. Circular No. 23, "Articles for the Cabletow"
24. Circular No. 24, "Souvenir Program for Centennial Celebration"
25. Circular No. 25, "Bank Details for the Centennial Celebration"
26. Circular No. 26, "Pre-Registration for Centennial Celebration"
27. Circular No. 27, "Film Showing and Travelling Museum Exhibit Entitled: 'Jose Rizal: The First Hero'"
28. Circular No. 28, "Reiteration of Circular No. 14 (Abergas) on Masonic Protocol on Communicating with Other Grand Jurisdictions, Foreign Lodge or Brethren"
29. Circular No. 29, "Donations for the Victims of HABAGAT"
30. Circular No. 30, "Uniform Procedure for Conduct of Proceedings Before the Trial Commission"
31. Circular No. 31, "'Run Kuyang Run' Updates"
32. Circular No. 32, "GLP Hostel Formal Opening"
33. Circular No. 33, "Charity Activity, GLP Centennial Celebration"
34. Circular No. 34, "Grand Lodge of the Philippines Centennial Shoot, Level 2, PPSA Sanctioned Shooting Competition"

35. Circular No. 35, "Junior Grand Warden Nomination Deadline"

36. Circular No. 36, "Centennial Celebration at the Lodge and/or District Level"

37. Circular No. 37, "Super Typhoon Pablo"

38. Circular No. 38, "Reiteration of Protocol and Demeanor on:

A) Before Entering the Lodge

B) In the Lodge at Labor C) During "Refreshment" (Harmony)"

39. Circular No. 39, "Deadline for Submission of 2012 Annual Report, Monthly Membership Reports from January to December 2012 and Remittance of Grand Lodge Accounts"

40. Circular No. 40, "Report of Charity Activities"

41. Circular No. 41, "Copies of Deposit Slips of Payments made to GLP thru Banks"

42. Circular No. 42, "Agila Shriners"

43. Circular No. 43, "Reiteration of the Prohibition on Hazing or Other Forms of Physical Initiation which can be construed as the same"

44. Circular No. 44, "Exploitative Demeanor Toward Petitioners for Degrees"

straight to Centennial Grand Master MW Santiao T. Gabionza, Jr. and asked, "What have you done with your Grand Lodge?"

Wondering at the visiting brother's alarm, MW Gabionza asked why. "It now looks beautiful," replied the brother from Japan.

With guests coming from abroad, it was expected of MW Gabionza to fix and dress the GLP up for the Centennial fest. But with or without the Centennial, portions of the Grand Temple were actually in dire need of repairs.

Not all of the repair and improvement expenses were charged to the GLP. A couple of brethren had thrown generous donations into the hat.

MW Gabionza saw 12 repair and improvement projects through the GLP Centennial Year, as follows:

1. Repair of the Grand Master's Office including its Conference Room plus a new Grand Master's Table, sofa and chairs.

2. Conversion of the former THE CABLETOW and Temple Builders offices into the Grand Treasurer, Ass't. Grand Treasurer's and Accounting offices—the last finally separating from the Administration Office for more efficient internal control.

3. Transfer of the Cabletow office from the second floor to the former Masonic Charities for Crippled Children Inc. (MCCCI) office on the ground floor (behind the stage in the Emilio Aguinaldo Hall).

4. Installation of a Php 250,000 worth of BOSE Sound System in the Emilio Aguinaldo Hall.

5. Transfer of the Masonic Supply Store to the ground floor of the Masonic Hostel Building for better accessibility and display of Masonic supplies up for sale.

6. Assignment of uniform office tables to

GLP building repaired, grounds improved

A former Grand Secretary, of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Japan, visited the GLP in 2011 while eyeing the country for his retirement haven. Returning in 2012 for the Centennial celebrations, he went

the Administrative Staff for better working condition.

7. Installation of CCTV cameras all over the 2nd floor, including the ground floor lobby and Masonic Supply Store.

8. Improvement of the Grand Secretary's Office by reupholstering the chairs and sofas as well as the Office of the Assistant Grand Secretary

9. Repair of all the defective windows and frames of the Plaridel Masonic Temple.

10. Construction of the Kalaw Chamber at the 2nd floor of the Grand Lodge Building through the generous donation of the Kalaw family for use of the GLP committees and other like functions.

11. Repair of the wall and ceiling leaks in the Jose Abad Santos Hall at the 3rd floor by water proofing the concrete slabs.

12. Renovation of the Jose Abad Santos Hall and construction of a new canopy and mosaic floor.

13. Conversion of the former Grand Guild of Past Master Room into Centennial Lounge.

14. Repair and waterproofing of the canopy of the Grand Lodge driveway.

15. Repair of the Masonic Clock at the Rizal Park in time for the Centennial celebration.

16. Purchase of high-powered scanner to digitalize all archive materials for the preservation of records.

17. Construction of a Centennial Obelisk in memory of the GLP forefathers with tablet encryptions of the Centennial Grand Lodge Officers.

GLP admin staff professionalized

MW Gabionza continued what his predecessors had begun—and upgraded it.

Past Grand Masters, MW Avelino Razon and MW Juanito Abergas, set on rationalizing the salaries of the GLP administrative staff. And MW Gabionza saw to it that all the pay adjustments go into running the GLP machinery well.

House cleaning was first in his order of business. He fired a former cashier, who had falsified receipts and disbursements, and charged him with more than 200 counts of qualified theft.

Next, he hired a professional office manager to develop and initiate an employees' performance evaluation. This now becomes the basis for the promotion and merit pay increases of the 17 personnel currently serving the GLP.

What each personnel ought to do was explicitly printed in an "Employees' Handbook (Centennial Edition)." Handed out to every staff member, it tells what the office policies and procedures are. With the guidelines coming handy, professionalism and discipline begun filtering down on the staff once plagued by tardiness.

Efforts were made to address the incessant complaints on the delays of certain business transactions—issuance of dues cards, publication of petitions in Circular No. 12, and others. The GLP Corporate Board had tackled these issues in its 4 meetings. Certain "ancient" Masonic practices cannot be done away with easily. But some businesses can be sped up once the GLP IT system is fully developed. Project contractor is the Yek Yio Tech Corp. owned by Bro. Edward See of Dalisay Lodge.

GLP Library upgraded

A number of books were purchased

to reinforce the GLP Library with new and substantive materials. RW Fernando V. Pascua, IMES President, provided the shopping list.

Also, two computer units with on-line connections were assigned to the Library for wider and more efficient research.

A full-time professional librarian now runs the Library and assists the brethren.

Msc allied orgs got more GLP role

The GLP entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Order of Amaranth for the management of the GLP Hostel. The Amaranth gets a cut for their service that goes next into the Order's fund, of course. And with Masons' wives running it, brethren booking in there will get wholesome and efficient services just like home.

Also, other allied organizations—Job's Daughter, Rainbow for Girls and the Order of DeMolay—saw more active participation in Masonic affairs this year particularly, in the Centennial celebrations.

GLP Centennial fest: dignity despite economy

The GLP Centennial was actually begun two years before MW Gabionza's term.

The GLP Centennial Anniversary Celebrations was launched at the Aguinaldo Shrine, Kawit, Cavite on December 18, 2010. Then, it kicked off at Malolos in Bulacan on September 17, 2011.

When MW Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr, Centennial Grand Master, took over the Grand East, all systems went into full swing.

Crucial to the implementation of the

Centennial fest was the appointment of MW Reynato S. Puno, PGM, chairman of the Centennial Celebrations Committee. Not only his influence but moreover, his foresight and scrutiny of things has kept the committee at a straight and steady road, steering all the preparations to an eventful outcome.

Side activities leading to the Centennial D-Day were as follows:

- Centennial Walk, June 12, 2012. A 1½-kilometer walk from Rizal Park to the GLP compound by the grand line, together with Masons, appendant bodies and allied organization representatives following the traditional Independence Day flag-raising ceremonies. A culminating program at the GLP formally opened the Centennial Celebrations.
- Centennial Commemorative Bills Launching, October 13, 2012. Sets of commemorative postal stamps printed with Masonic heroic personalities were launched at the Emilio Aguinaldo Hall in cooperation with the Bureau of Post.
- Inauguration of the Grand Lodge Museum, November 12, 2012. Past Grand Masters came to witness the opening of the Grand Lodge Museum at the GLP compound which had been constructed and generously turned over by WB Armando G. Cazzola, PM, San Pedro Lodge No. 292.
- Mass Media Publicity. MW Gabionza, together with certain Masonic personalities, visited various mass media organizations, both print and broadcast, to drumbeat the Centennial celebrations. Guestings in TV and radio programs afforded Masons to explain to the general public the significance of the GLP centenary and what Freemasonry has done for the country over the past 100 years.
- Commemorative Sport Activities, De-

ember 14-16, 2012. Three outdoor activities were held in December prior to the actual Centennial celebrations: the Centennial Shoot Fest, December 14; the Centennial Golf Tournament, December 15; and the Centennial Fun Run, December 16.

- Three-day GLP Centennial Celebrations, December 17-19, 2012. All the year's preparations finally reached a three-day Centennial celebrations culminating on the 19th.

On Day 1, December 17, the day begun with a wreath-laying ceremony before the monument of Illus. Bro. Jose Rizal at the Rizal Park attended by GLP grand officers, foreign dignitaries, appendant bodies and allied organizations representatives, and other bros.

Next, they motored to nearby Manila City Hall, paid a courtesy call to city mayor Hon. Alfredo S. Lim, and were presented with keys to the city.

On Day 2, December 18, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) installed markers, in English and Filipino, at the entrance of Plaridel Hall acknowledging the one-hundredth year founding of the GLP.

On Day 3, December 19, a rededication of the Jose Abad Santos Hall was held in the morning—hence, commencing the Special Communication.

In the evening, a special dinner attended by at least 1,000 bros from various localities of the grand jurisdiction came to the Fiesta Pavillon of the Manila Hotel. Centennial Awards were handed to Bro. Cesar E. A. Virata, the only and living Philippine prime minister with exemplary record in government service; Bro. Antonio L. Cabangon Chua, for his invaluable help to the GLP Centennial celebrations; and MW Damaso C. Tria, the longest surviving PGM aged 101 years old—certainly, older than the GLP.

GLP earned Php 8.5 million net revenue in 2012

Despite a number of expenses this Centennial Year, yet the GLP managed to earn a net revenue of Php 8,574,687.60 over its budgeted disbursements.

A key factor in this sizable GLP income is the Masonic Supply Center which has hit a record-breaking sales of nearly Php 5.5 million—largely attributable to the Centennial fever.

Also, another key factor are the donations, in money and kind, totaling to Php 5,389,914.86.

MW Gabionza attributed these figures to the fiscal discipline which had been instituted during his term.

Php .5 million aided to distressed bros, calamity victims

Even amid festivity, yet the GLP had never missed relieving its distressed Mason members. A total of Php 555,149.79 was handed out to ailing bros, or to families orphaned by Masons—mostly out of reach of the Financial Relief Assistance Program (FRAP) or of the Past Master's Guild.

Some 85 bros, infirmed and deceased, benefitted from this aid.

The total also covered the financial help extended to 97 Mason members whose lives had been wrecked by the devastating typhoons "habagat" and Pablo in 2012.

Realizing the growing ferocity of natural calamities hitting the country every year, MW Gabionza issued Edict No. 258 which institutionalized the assessment of Php 100 from every Mason beginning in

2012. This will constitute an emergency fund to help our calamity-stricken bros.

More transparent accounting system needed, says Grand Auditor

VW Sixto S. Esquivias IV, Centennial Grand Auditor, reported that more transparent accounting systems need to be installed in certain money areas of the GLP. One area is the GLP committees' fund liquidation particularly in collection. "While good faith is always presumed amongst brethren, it is particularly suggested that a standard be set for the accounting of GLP and Committee funds," he wrote.

Here, he zeroed in on the Centennial assessment fee levied on all the members of the grand jurisdiction totaling to some Php 11 million. The ad hoc committees of the GLP Centennial celebrations left no records behind for review.

But VW Esquivias did not go to the committee heads, either. "Their program directors report directly to the Grand Master and as such, our Audit committee has no authority to ask them to comply with generally accepted accounting principles," he wrote.

VW Esquivias went on to propose measures that will enhance transparency in GLP financial transactions, as follows:

- Issuance of official receipts to all GLP income and expense transactions with copies going to the Audit committee.
- Marking all GLP fund-raising tickets and returning all unsold pieces.
- A strict cash-only purchase of all GLP items. Certain lodges had drawn up arrangements to buy items either on loan or

down payment, resulting in mounting accounts receivables.

- Instituting a bidding process in non-regular GLP expenses, such as in the contracting of Masonic supplies, catering services, printing services of THE CABLETOW, and IT upgrading services.

- Full and complete upgrading of the GLP electronic accounting system despite payment of more than 83% of the contract price (i.e. Php 750,000 of the Php 900,000 price) to Yek Yio Tech Corp., owned by Bro. Edward See of Dalisay Lodge, in 2011.

- Issuance of an edict requiring all special Masonic events or undertakings needing GLP financial aid to pass the pre-auditing process of the Audit committee so as to ensure that only substantial payments goes into the bidding.

- Professionalization of the GLP employees with emphasis on office hours and decorum.

17 dropped working tools this year

WB Wilfredo G. Cayetano, PM, of the Necrology Committee, reported that there were seventeen (17) Masons who had dropped their working tools this year and received the corresponding funeral rite.

The number only accounted for the cases of deaths that had reached the committee. These brethren who had passed under the pearly gates are: Bro. Larry Wy, High Twelve Lodge No. 82; Bro. Angel Arde, F.D. Roosevelt Lodge No. 81; Bro. Vicente Racho, Maguindanao Lodge No. 40 (& St. John's Corregidor Lodge No. 1); Bro. Ernesto Guerrero, Jose Rizal Lodge No. 22; Bro. Darwin Lim, High Twelve Lodge No. 82; Bro. Lysandro Sanchez, Biak na Bato Lodge No. 7; Bro. Pedro Arcieto, Marikina

Lodge No. 119 (& Juan Sumulong Lodge No. 169); Bro. Arsenio Chua, Capitol City Lodge No. 174; Bro. Bartholomeus Arnoldus Coors, St. John's Corregidor Lodge No. 1; Bro. Rolando Morales, Dr. Jose G. Hofileña Memorial Lodge No. 157; Bro. Eduardo de los Santos Ramos, Laong Laan Lodge No. 185; Bro. Marcelino D. Bernales, Walana Lodge No. 13; Bro. Luis T. Johnson, Jr., Bagumbayan Lodge No. 4; Bro. Roberto Juan A. Medina, Tedopro Kalaw Memorial Lodge No. 136 (& Keystone Lodge No. 100); Bro. Avelino S. Supan, Biak na Bato Lodge No. 7; Bro. Alfonso M. Austria, Sr., Taga-ilog Lodge No. 79; and Bro. Agapito Francisco, Rafael Palma Lodge No. 147.

147 bros graduated from IMES course this year

Institute of Masonic Education and Studies (IMES) president RW Fernando V. Pascua, Jr. reported that 147 Masons had completed the 5-department course that the office yearly offers to the brethren.

The graduates came from the 9 classes the IMES had conducted this year largely around the National Capital Region (NCR). These classes were: Class 09, Olongapo City; Class 10, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija; Class 11, Los Baños, Laguna; Class 12, Capitol Masonic Temple, Quezon City; Class 13, Balanga, Bataan; Class 14, GLP, Manila; Class 15, San Jose, Mindoro Occidental; Class 16, Camp Crame, Quezon City; and Class 17, GLP, Manila.

The 5 departments comprising the course are Masonic Jurisprudence, Laws and regulations; Masonic Liturgy, Rituals and Ceremonies; Masonic Philosophy and Symbolism; Masonic History; and Masonic Lodge Management.

Ties with world Masonry generally okay, says PGM Herrera

MW Rosendo Herrera, PGM, chairman of the foreign relations and correspondence committee, reported that the GLP was well in touch with the international Masonic community in 2012.

The Grand Lodge of Romania, in a communication dated May 9, 2012, expressed its intention to expand international relations with the GLP, naming one Armand Stoica to begin the legworks. All the best intentions noted, the GLP replied that principles of recognition must be exchanged first between the two bodies to formally start the establishment of relations. Until then, no business can be transacted.

A communication from the Grand Lodge Nationale France (GLNF), dated July 11, 2012, arrived, wishing to confirm the membership of a certain Mr. Ricky Torre of Koronadal with the GLP. But his lodge was not mentioned anywhere in the letter.

The problem was, the GLP's relation with the GLNF was suspended. The GLNF actually was at odds with her Continental counterparts. The Grand Lodge of Ireland (GLI), in a letter dated July 17, 2012, informed the GLP that it had withdrawn its recognition of the GLNF.

Next, the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), in a letter dated July 18, 2012, informed the GLP that it had put its relation with the GLNF on hold.

The GLP, with the rest of Masonic community worldwide, joined in keeping the GLNF at a distance. So, it replied to the GLNF that no business can be transacted with its inquiry on Mr. Torres. Relations between the GLP and the GLNF yet remained suspended. ☒

Also installed 2013 lodge officers

Apolinario Mabini Lodge No. 235 laid cornerstone on its 34th anniversary

By WB Erick A. Sadural, PM

Chairman, Committee on Publication and Documentation

Apolinario Mabini Lodge No. 235 F. & A. M. (or AML 235) laid the cornerstone for its soon-to-rise lodge hall, timed with its 34th anniversary on February 23, 2013 in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija.

The multi-festive date was capped with the public installation of its 2013 lodge officers led by incoming WM

Virgilio C. Dacquel.

Similarly, it was also the biggest event for outgoing WM Ronaldo A. Sadural—on the last day of his term.

The cornerstone-laying ceremony was presided by then Deputy Grand Master RW Juanito G. Espino, Jr.

He was assisted by a ritual team composed of VW Roberto C. Elcano,



WB Virgilio C. Dacquel takes his oath as Master of the Lodge while MW Oscar Bunyi, PGM, stands behind as Master of Ceremonies.



WB Jonathan T. Gurion, Bro. Marvin Tomas and this writer.

Stone-laying

At past 10 a.m., the lodge, led by WB Jonathan T. Gurion in his capacity as Grand Marshall, marched some 30 meters on the road to reach the lot donated by then incoming WM Dacquel. Important documents and mementos were slipped into the time capsule, dropped into the hole, and covered by the cornerstone which RW Espino finally squared.

This writer, in his capacity as Senior Grand Warden, proved the horizontals while Bro. Tomas, as the Junior Grand Warden, tried the perpendiculars—all to test symbolically its geometric conformity to the plan laid out on the drawing board by Bro. Romeo Sumalbag, Jr. an architect, RW Espino next applied cement on and about the cornerstone with a trowel symbolic of fraternal unity on which the temple will rest. Until he dropped corn kernels on the freshly plastered cornerstone repre-

sentative of nourishment, followed by wine poured by this writer which stands for joy.

Public installation

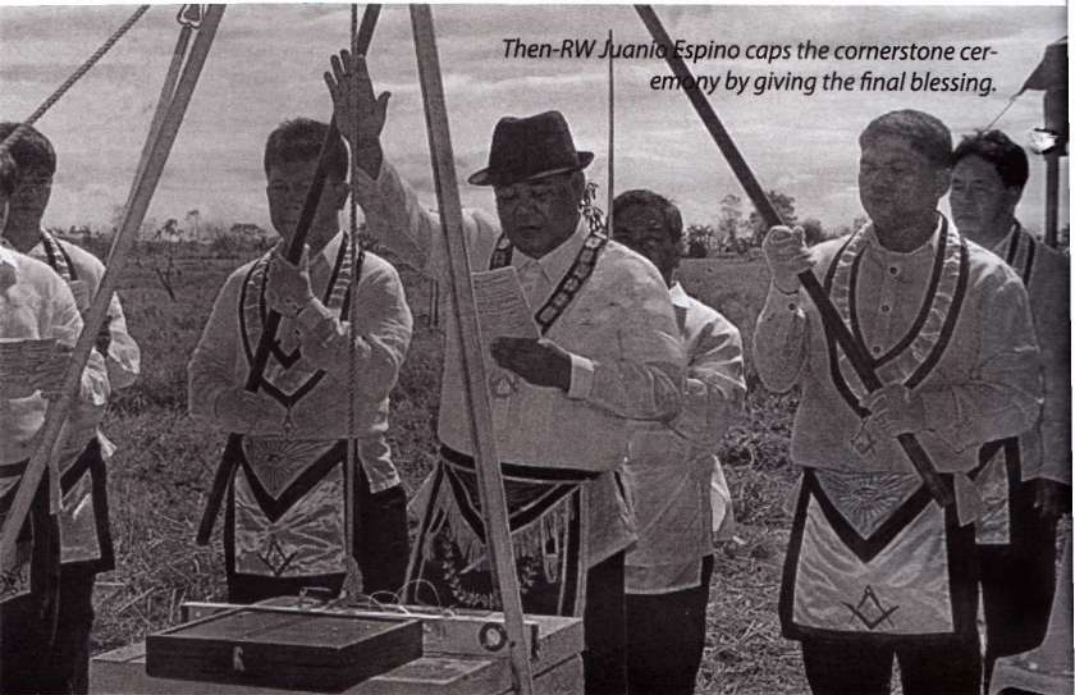
The lodge took a lunch break. They got together again at Gardenville Resort in the town proper, owned by VW Ronald M. Esteban, at around 2 p.m. for the public installation ceremony of the lodge officers.

A “special” Installing Team came for the occasion composed of three Past Grand Masters (PGMs)—MW Franklin Demon-terverde, Installing Officer; MW Oscar V. Bunyi, Master of Ceremonies; and MW Jaime Y. Gonzales, Assistant Master of Ceremonies.

VW Aurelio M. Umali, PDDGM, then governor of Nueva Ecija province on his final term, delivered the welcome address. He called the Installing Team a “Dream Team” due to the stature of its team members, all PGMs.

With the surrender of the Master’s jewel by then WM Ronaldo A. Sadural and

Then-RW Juanito Espino caps the cornerstone ceremony by giving the final blessing.



his officers, the installation ceremony began. WM Virgilio C. Dacquel was duly installed as master of AML 235.

The rest of the lodge officers who were installed with WM Dacquel were: Bro. Guido C. Ocampo, Jr., Senior Warden; Bro. Marvin V. Tomas, Junior Warden; WB Roberto C. Elcano, Treasurer; VW Juanito F. Ignacio, Secretary; and WB Jonathan T. Gurion, Auditor.

Appointed officers were: Bro. Tyrone Czar M. Manuel, Chaplain; Bro. Arnelio M. Alonzo, Marshall; Bro. Romeo R. Sumalbag, Jr., Senior Deacon; Bro. Mario M. Almazan, Junior Deacon; WB Erick A. Sadural, Orator; Bro. Elvis M. Orita, Almoner; WB Ramon L. Sabacan, Lecturer; Bro. Michael B. De Leon, Senior Steward; Bro. Sherwin V. Mateo, Junior Steward; Bro. Romeo R. Delos Santos, Organist; and WB Ronaldo A. Sadural, Tyler.

RW Espino, as guest of honor, spoke on the Masonic tenets, the cardinal virtues and the symbolic worth

of the square and compasses.

With the installation ceremony over, the brethren went to dinner to celebrate the triunic occasions that had marked the day. But the brethren had just begun dinner when greetings were announced over the microphone. WM Dacquel and his wife, Sister Loida, were simultaneously celebrating their wedding anniversary. The brethren of AML 235 had four reasons to be joyous that day. But no Mason was happier than WM Dacquel himself.

Noteworthy, Masonic hero Apolinario Mabini, former prime minister of the First Philippine Republic, was captured by the American invaders in Cuyapo on December 10, 1899; hence, the name of the lodge.

Originally, AML 235 had observed its anniversary on the fourth Saturday of March. Until this writer moved the occasion to the fourth Saturday of February when he had ascended to the East on February 27, 2010. ❏

Coming Together, Growing Better

By Bro. Fanny V. Manuel
Senior Deacon



The bros of Magat Lodge with their families out for wholesome fun and quality time.

The Brethren of Magat Lodge No. 68 in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya took the time out on April 9 for a good time with their wives and kids in the "Family Day 2013" event.

They headed to PLT Resort in Bascaran at Solano, bonded together under the theme "Families of Masons, Coming Together, Growing Better."

The program begun with an opening prayer by Honored Lady Ruth Mariano, the better half of WB Florante Mariano.

Bro. Joselito A. Gonzales, Senior Warden, delivered the welcome address.

Explaining the reason behind the event, WM Medick C. Ralleta explained that families are behind successful and satisfied Masons. The bond between brothers could be strengthened even more if the bonds between their families are also cultivated.

Moreover, if Mason families know one another, then confidence will grow stronger

between Masons, their wives and kids.

Past Masters WB Camilo Gallardo, WB Hector Salvador, WB Maning Reyes and VW Greg Francia each gave his inspirational message. They recalled their early days in the Craft and the support their families had thrown behind them all the way to the East.

Every family was introduced and gave a number they had prepared.

Next, parlor games were held, managed by HL Alice Manuel, Alice Navarro, and Imelda Pataueg.

Everybody took a break when lunch came but not without saying grace led by HL Ruth Mariano. The brethren continued their fellowship along with their ladies. The kids took turns at the zip line or just splashed in the pool.

The affair came to an end at past 5:00 PM. Prizes were handed out. Bro Johnny Galeon, Junior Warden, thanked all who had come wishing for a repeat of a family get-together. ☑

In search of Graciano Lopez Jaena

Exploring the teenage roots of Graciano Lopez y Jaena's heroism, The Ghost of Friar Botod makes for an entertaining companion for historical detectives.

The Ghost of Friar Botod

***By Ignacio V. Illenberger
(Self-published) 2012***

VW Ignacio Illenberger is a different kind of writer. First, he is a Mason. It is ten times easier for Masons to donate money for a 5-story hospital than to contribute a 5-page readable article to THE CABLETOW. One story I had asked for Christmas was handed to me in Lent the year following.

Second, he finishes what he writes. Most writers will do anything to avoid writing. I don't know why. But after writing my first paragraph here, I stood up, took my lunch, took a nap, woke up, slept again because it was still siesta, and got up at 4; okay, 5 p.m. Back to my writing desk, I was all fired up and ready to pound on my PC keyboard when it struck me that a hundred million pesos was in the pot for 6/49. So, I rushed out of home, placed my bet at a lotto outlet, and sat down with neighborhood pals celebrating a birthday at the sidewalk. In short, I wrote this paragraph 24 hours after the first.

This makes Illenberger a different writer. Moreover, he writes with a crisp language that makes his novel, "The Ghost of Friar Botod," an easy and fascinating read. It is about the pre-exile, teenage life, of Gra-

ciano Lopez Jaena, one of the most illustrious son of Iloilo City as much as Philippine Freemasonry.

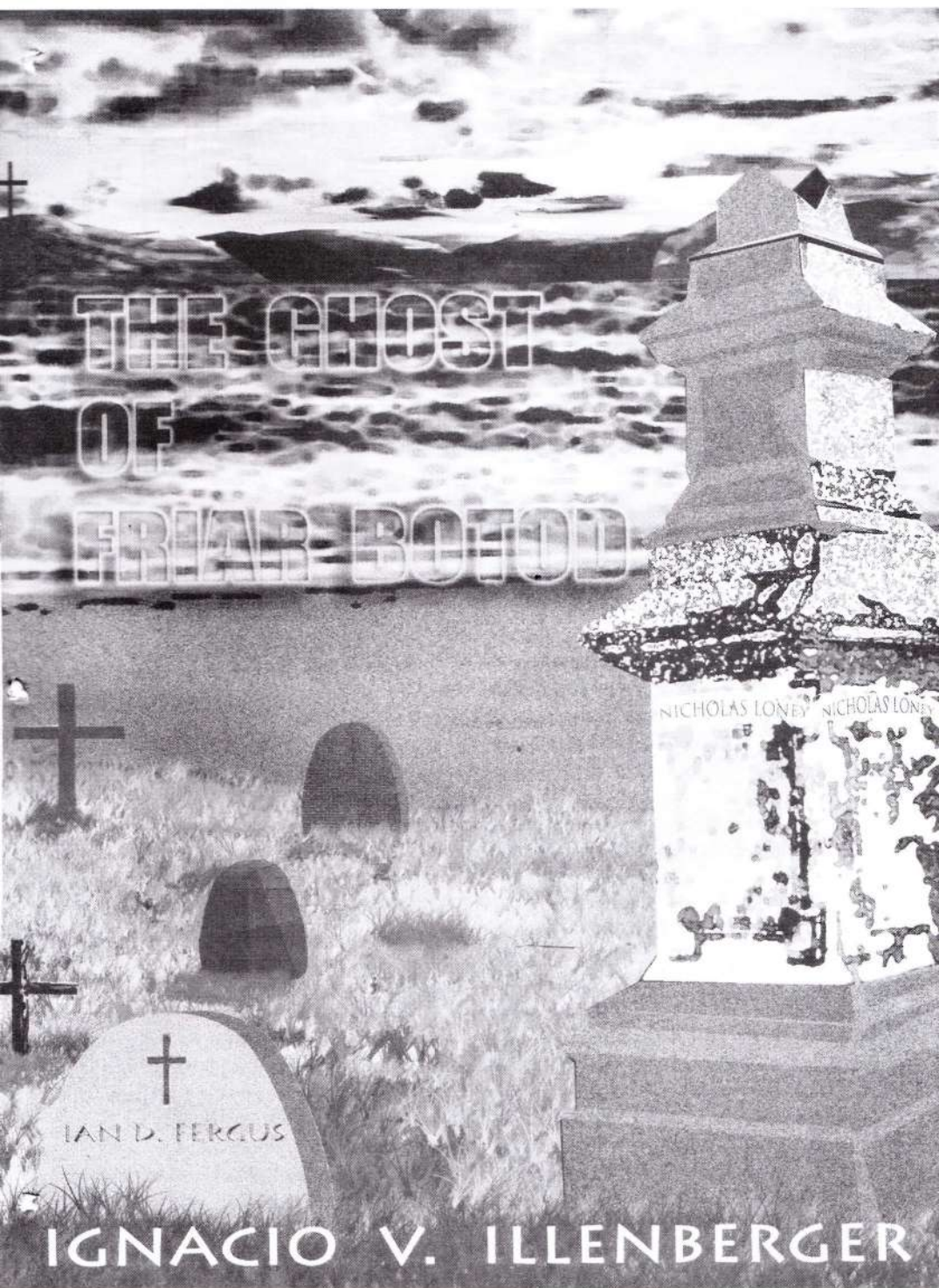
Easily, The Ghost qualifies as a historical novel alright. But Illenberger loaded his work with subtle twists and styles which make the book an interesting and different read.

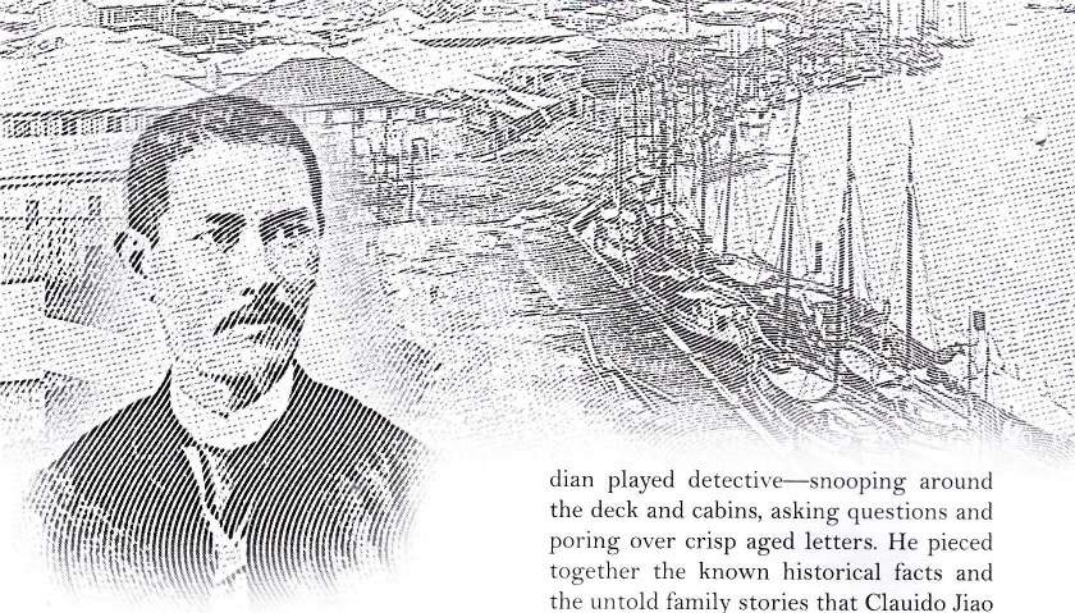
Illenberger is the current editor of the *Far Eastern Freemason*, the official publication of the Philippine Scottish Rite. He has been a staff writer for THE CABLETOW a long time ago. No doubt, he is savvy with the language which, actually, is rare among combat officers in the service.

Graduating with an economics degree from the Central Philippine University (CPU), he served in the Philippine Marine Corps in the next 32 years. His tour of duty included postings in the faculty of the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP) and later, as Director of the Philippine Navy Museum at Fort San Felipe in Cavite City.

Known & unknown

The novel opens in June 1996 at the YMCA lobby in Iloilo City where Graciano Lopez Jaena Lodge No. 194 is located. The bros had just begun its stated meeting when they were surprised by an





unexpected guest.

An aged Mason from Hong Kong of Portuguese-Macau origin, one Senhor Claudio Jiao Lopez, was admitted into the lodge while being pushed in a wheelchair. He introduced himself as the grandson of Claudio Lopez, the former Portuguese honorary vice consul in Iloilo in the mid-1800s and more importantly, the paternal uncle of the hero Graciano Lopez Jaena. He handed a briefcase over to the Worshipful Master containing family heirlooms in the belief that they present better use and benefit for the lodge than to anyone else.

After the turnover, Claudio Jiao Lopez left as quickly as he came. An air of mystery suddenly loomed over the lodge. Baffled, the Master ordered the Lodge Custodian of the Works to go after the ailing guests and find out everything he could learn.

With the Stewards of the lodge, the Custodian caught Claudio Jiao Lopez behind the YMCA building which is actually located along Iloilo River. Lopez was confined in a wheelchair, after all—and boarding a sailboat that had carried him across the South China Sea.

Invited aboard the vessel, the Custodian

played detective—snooping around the deck and cabins, asking questions and poring over crisp aged letters. He pieced together the known historical facts and the untold family stories that Claudio Jiao Lopez told about his great grand uncle, Graciano Lopez Jaena, comprising the novel's actual story.

Fact & fiction

Readers will immediately spot Illenberger's distinct styles. The characters were named after real-life Masons like Benjamin Yu and Kalaw. The settings were taken after real events, real places in real-time like YMCA-Iloilo. Actually, the author was Past Master of Graciano Lopez Jaena Lodge No. 194.

He didn't spare even himself from his own literary devices. Except for adjectives of "handsome," "brilliant," "sublime," and "great," you will never discover that Illenberger is the Custodian.

As a fictionist, Illenberger is privileged with literary license—like weaving facts into fiction. But he is not just after fiction. He wanted to save certain old handed-down stories that cannot qualify as facts by sheltering them under fiction.

Growing up in Iloilo, Illenberger had heard many century-old stories from the old folks about his historic city and the people that shaped it. He even had a grand nephew of Lopez Jaena for his pal

and neighbor. No wonder why Illenberger was laden with stories—but nowhere to go. Not a professional historian, he took refuge in fiction.

The Ghost played around the biographical facts of Lopez Jaena from ages 12 to 14. History had it that he was born in Jaro in Iloilo City in 1856, with a seamstress for a mother (Maria Jacoba Jaena) and a general repairman for a father (Placido Lopez). But his dad was among the few Ilonggos who had been primary schooled in his time.

Similarly, Graciano went to school at age 6 in the Colegio Provincial in Jaro. But he transferred two years later to nearby Seminario de San Vicente Ferrer which opened in 1869 during the term of the liberal Governor-General Carlos de la Torre. Frail and a bad-dresser, yet the boy Graciano had impressed his teachers with his intelligence, independent-mindedness, and public speaking abilities.

Not counted among Iloilo's swells, yet Graciano's dad had a better-off brother who made his career as honorary vice-consul of Portugal in Iloilo, Don Claudio Lopez. The city had increasingly grown cosmopolitan since Nicholas Loney, the British vice-consul in Iloilo, regularly shipped Visayan sugar to Australia; hence, opening the local port to international trade. The Americans, Italians and Swiss followed putting up consulates, and buying local sugar for export. Businesses boomed. Imported goods poured in.

Amid this setting, uncle Claudio employed his kid nephew as his secretary. He frustrated his sister-in-law's plan of priesthood for the boy by exposing Graciano early to the ways of the world. But after his minor seminary education—approximating to secondary education only—Lopez Jaena sailed to Manila, backed by relatives, for his bid to earn a degree in medicine.

Handed-down stories

The Ghost covered this brief 2-year span of Lopez Jaena's life. And Illenberger interspersed the untold stories between the facts.

The novel's actual story begun at dusk on November 6, 1868. Col. Enrique Fajardo, Iloilo's guardia civil chief, was visited by his neighbor Placido Lopez with a request—to keep the playing field leveled for his son, Graciano, who was beaten by three Spanish boys.

Fajardo and Placido were close. Discrimination of the natives by the Spanish colonials was common. It was a little favor to grant. Not until when Fajardo had learned of the cause.

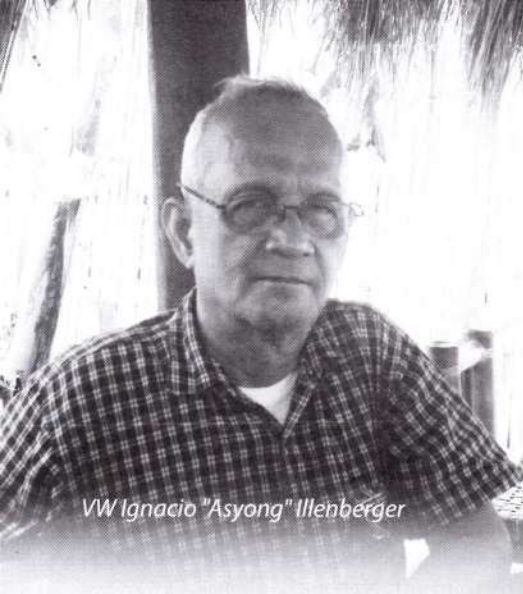
Gossip had trailed Graciano from Colegio Provincial to the seminary. But the adults, who knew it hushed up the kids. The Spanish bullies demanded Graciano for proof of the rumor. But he rejected them.

Until the monicker the kids had attached to Graciano reached Fajardo—*caballo de Catalan*, one of the best breed of Spanish horses next to the Andalusian. Central to all the gossip was Graciano's big natural endowment. He was, in short, a "*totoy mola*"—but still uncircumcised.

From handed-down family story, Illenberger now goes into possibilities.

Fajardo had Graciano sent next to the Club Cantonese at the Aldeguer Triangle in the city. He headed up to the third floor which was the headquarters of the Cheung Chau Hakka gang, a Chinese goon squad that the British vice-consul Loney had brought from China to keep the peace in and run the port area efficiently.

Not exactly hoods, the Cheung Chau Hakka was a branch of the Hung Mun fraternity—known widely as the clandestine Chinese "Masons"—a band of trained killers who hired themselves out to bidders. Looking up to runaway Shao-



VW Ignacio "Asyong" Illenberger

lin monks as their founders, they practiced the Hung Ga Kuen martial arts tradition.

So, Loney's Chinese enforcers began teaching Graciano a couple of kung-fu tricks to defend himself against bullies.

Not for long, Graciano was sent next to the ground floor pharmacy. Farmacia Goa. He was to receive his rite of passage. He had already pulled his pants down to his knees when Leah Solis, the pharmacy's hot and alluring proprietess, walked in to do the surgery. It turned out, expectedly, to be a painful surgery.

When all was well, a confident Graciano finally set out to get even with his Spanish assailants—and succeeded.

Conservation job

Picturing Graciano throwing kung-fu kicks and punches today, for instance, may be unimaginable—but not impossible. This is exactly what happens when fact meets folklore.

Folklore are stories that have failed to make it to history on time—or simply cannot pass for history so they have been left out to the common people to keep. History is the chronology of facts—names, dates,

places, numbers. But folklore have neither facts or chronology—although it never meant that it never happened.

What Illenberger had done was to throw fact and folklore together into one mix. If anything, he was into a conservation job to save folklore from oblivion. But he couldn't rescue folklore without stringing them together into one probable narrative.

The limits of the probable counts importantly for fiction writers. While privileged with a wide imaginative breadth, yet whatever invention they make must stay within the realm of the credible, to tread the line of logic, and keep the readers holding on to the plot.

How he put fact and folklore together into one narrative tells on Illenberger's storytelling ability—and there are some eyebrow-jerking scenes that test the reader's credulity.

Unknown even to Graciano, the date April 24, 1869 was to bring him a life-changing event. The body of British vice-consul Loney was delivered by a steamer to Iloilo port. He caught fever, that worsened into something else, while hiking up Mt. Kanlaon in Negros island and died.

The city that Loney had put in the world trade map mourned. But nobody had mourned as deeply as Leah Solis.

Originally named Lehiyah Shara-vathi, the Farmacia Goa owner came from Mysore in India. Running away from a forced marriage, she deftly manipulated her future in laws into sending her to a Portuguese woman, who ran an Anglican grammar school for the British colonials, to train in pharmacy. She apprenticed next in a clinic under a Spanish surgeon in Goa. After earning her Portuguese citizenship—and freedom from a repressive Hindu tradition—she sailed for Singapore where she met the young Loney.

She fell for Loney—and had become his bimbo since then. She followed the Englishman even to Iloilo where they contin-

ued their hot, illicit, affair.

With Loney gone, Graciano felt duty-bound to comfort his, er, circumciser. He found Leah at the third floor balcony—of the same pharmacy and Club Cantonese building—staring out to the sunset. After a couple of hours and a Vermouth bottle, he finally said what he had to say, “Come, Leah. Let me lead you to your bedroom...” Suddenly, the story picked up speed—and ended just as speedily: “And thus, Graciano Lopez Jaena, just a few months beyond his twelfth birthday, lost his boyhood forever.”

I thumped the edge of the book’s binding hard on the table for any misplaced sentences or paragraphs. Nothing fell out. It was disappointing.

But a few seconds later, it finally dawned on me that Illenberger has achieved a first in Philippine literature. He wrote the quickest bed scene in a Philippine novel.

That’s the way with writers. Sometimes, they transport personal habits to fiction.

Tree-house tradition

The Ghost contained more than just Graciano Lopez Jaena’s teenage adventures. There are stories woven around the folklore about Iloilo’s vanished landmarks, abandoned quarries, lost villages and origin of local weapons. These may be the stuff of historical novels—to put color or help lead the plot on.

But Illenberger has other purpose besides conserving folklore. He strove to paint a precise setting of the period to highlight here and there the people and events that had sunk in and shaped Graciano’s will to become—what else but—a hero. He wanted to find out the stuff that had made Graciano great.

Following Illenberger’s theory, we see that genes and home are very influential in shaping a person. But the news-of-the-day, as much as the first sex in the malleable teen-

age years, count importantly in building an individual’s view of the world as much as his mettle. Hope we investigate our petitioners for Masonic degrees just as deeply.

Passing to fiction theories that cannot be proven historically is not new. Dan Brown did it with his “The Da Vinci Code.” But Illenberger made this device worked in many levels to pay tribute to Masonry, Iloilo and Graciano all at once. It is fun. Basically a historical novel, yet The Ghost also works as a detective novel where readers—especially Masonic readers—are invited to make their way through familiar names and discover the gist they stand for in the episode they are in.

Illenberger is given to mind-plays. Hence, The Ghost is one novel pondered out of the box.

It finally dawned on me that Illenberger has achieved a first in Philippine literature

Mind-plays also marked Illenberger’s early Masonic years. He was one of the “Tree-house Masons”—the bros who used to hang out at the old palm-thatched tree-house next to the former GLP canteen (where the Hostel and Obelisk now stand). Gathered around the late MW Reynold Fajardo—a PGM of strong will as much as sharp mind—they held mind-popping Masonic education-type of discussions amid their regular fellowships.

The tree-house fellowships are one of the GLP’s golden moments that are as lost as Graciano and his turn of the century Iloilo. Now, Illenberger passes the Tree-house tradition to bros with ready ears to listen. Once the Master of “Kambingan Lodge”—a carinderia a block away from the GLP frequented by Masons—he surrendered his title to its “DDGM,” Kuyang Francis Lovero.

Now, he is the Charter Master of “Kuyangs”—just a couple of meters from the GLP’s General Luna gate. ❧

By WB Jonathan R. Amoroso

May Fever

(Originally published in Tinig Silanganan, newsletter of Silanganan Lodge No. 19, of which the author is the incumbent Worshipful Master.)



It's election time, and I have a candidate in mind.

Several political skirmishes back, a gullible wealthy man in our hometown, perhaps bluffed by his beer-bellied drinking buddies in one of their extended booze talks under the mosquito-infested sampaloc tree in his backyard, decided to run for councilor. The next day, still negotiating with his hang-over, he filed his certificate of candidacy and thereafter busied himself campaigning. His political cry? Juan de la Cruz: Makatao, Makahayop, Macapuno. Of course, he lost. The trees did not vote for him.

But not everyone in this country is as intelligent as trees. With all due respect to those laudable incumbents and competitors, clowns continue to seize both the circus and the session halls, and crooks who garner goons, guns, and gold also continue to conquer barangay, municipal, and provincial seats. Faithless promises built on sands still sell like hotcakes in the gullible voters' ears. Centuries ago, a worthy man ran as king but, as a song vividly put it, we nailed him to the cross.

It is an accepted dogma that Masonry does not need men for their honors and wealth; it wants them for their good deeds and virtues. And true to form, this candidate of mine may turn out to be the builder of Utopia and even the catcher in the rye. He seems to be the epitome of the guiding principles that our guru brothers have been telling us through the years. The following description of the

gentle, good, honest, and principled man, I believe, is applicable to him:

To the gentle, many will be gentle; to the kind, many will be kind. A good man will find that there is goodness in the world; an honest man will find honesty in the world; and a man of principles will find principle and integrity in the minds of others. But to the impure, the dishonest, the false-hearted, the corrupt and the sensual, occasions come every day, and in every scene, and through avenue of thought and imagination. He makes occasions and takes advantage of opportunities, and he throws wide open the gates of his heart and welcomes bad visitors and entertains them with lavish hospitality. (Excerpt from *The Golden Harvest*, newsletter of Philippine Bodies, A&ASR).

I remember Kuya Dante forewarning me that politics, no matter how malignant or benign, must not find its way in any Masonic discussion as "it merely breeds dissensions and creates faction among men." Yet the times are so challenging that I was tempted to endorse one candidate — a man who I firmly believed was a contender in each and every seat and whom the brethren, if wise, should vote for.

Indeed, we must elect the worthy and well-qualified to occupy seats not only in local government units and in the Congress, but also in our Craft — for the sake of our children's great grandchildren, whose little hands we might not be able to kiss hello but whose fragile future we must not dare kiss goodbye. ❧

Postscript: We extend our sincerest, warmest congratulations to our brethren and sisters who won in the recent elections. We are pretty confident that all of them will be exemplary in the discharge of their duties as public servants.



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Thank you very much.



It was a milestone year. It was the centennial of the GLP. It was time to party.

But before the fun, there was work. A couple of systems were fixed. Some long-pending businesses were solved. Edicts and Circulars were issued to dress up the Craft—in spirit and form—for the occasion.

So, even despite economy, we went to party in dignity. We toasted to a hundred years of Philippine Masonic history—while we welcomed the future with more certainty. The GLP extended its cabletow across the sea. Pinoy Masons mattered again in world Masonry.

We will miss our Centennial Grand Master who wisely set the Craft onto the next century.

THE CABLETOW

