

The Cabletow

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

THE 99th ANCOM

WELCOME TO S. PUNO, PGM
KENNETH SPEAKER



VOLUME/ISSUE
91/5
2015
JAN & APR



**MW Rentoy
is 2015 GM**



RW Momo is new JGW

TO OUR DEAR BRETHREN

Due to a long production delay not of our own making, The Cabletow has decided to skip the January-February 2015 Issue. There are just circumstances beyond our control.

Hence, this issue—succeeding the November-December 2014 Issue — is dated January-April 2015 Issue.

We will make up for the loss in the future special issue.

Thank you very much for your understanding.

The Cabletow Editorial Board

In this Issue...

The Cabletow

EDITORIAL BOARD

MW REYNATO S. PUNO, PGM, GMH
MW DANILO D. ANGELES, PGM, GMH
JUANITO B. VAÑO, JR., SGL
GAMALIEL E. SARTE
FERDINANDO G. SEVILLA

EDITORIAL STAFF

J. FLOR R. NICOLAS
Editor-in-Chief
REX MILTON A. DOLINO,
Asst. Editor-in-Chief
SAMUEL P. FERNANDEZ, GC
Managing Editor
EDMUND CORONEL, PM
Associate Editor
EMMANUEL J. DIESTA
Circulation Manager
GENE B. ILLENBERGER, PM
Layout
JENNIFER C. MAGALLANES
Secretary
NAPOLEON R. ESTILLES &
J. ERMIN ERNEST LOUIE R. MIGUEL
Consultants

- 02** **From the Table of the Grand Sec**
Never labor on a Sunday
By MW Danilo D. Angeles, PGM, GMH
- 04** **99th Ancom**
Highlights and Sidelights of the 99th Ancom
By Flor Nicolas, PSGL
- 11** Ancom fizzes hot & lively in Legazpi City
By Edmund Coronel, PM
- 22** Ancom Legazpi is 3 years in the making
- 25** A Call to Masons
By MW Reynato Puno, PGM, GMH
- 31** Say what attire to wear for every event
- 32** Legazpi Ancom winning raffle numbers
- 33** Labong & other bros hunted, nabbed killer of late PM's daughter
- 37** Acceptance speech of PGM's apron, jewel and ring
By MW Alan LM Purisima, IPGM
- 38** **Statement on Pope's visit to the Philippines**
By Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno (ret.)
- 40** **Masonic Jurisprudence**
Petitioners in the mighty hands of the brethren
By Ignacio E. Domingo, PM

THE CABLETOW is a bimonthly publication of the Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines. Main Office: Plaridel Masonic Temple, San Marcelino St., Ermita, Manila, D 2801, Philippines. Members of Blue Lodges in this grand jurisdiction are regular subscribers thereto. Brethren in other grand jurisdictions are invited to subscribe to it at US \$20 a year. Send check payable to the Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines, with complete mailing address, to **THE CABLETOW** at the address given above. Subscribers are advised to notify **THE CABLETOW** of address changes. Original articles are subjected to editing and, when published, become Cabletow property. Any article in **THE CABLETOW** may be reprinted in full, or excerpts thereof reproduced, provided proper attribution to the author is made, the source is given due credits, and the Cabletow office is furnished with a courtesy copy of the reprinted material. Paid advertisements are accepted for printing in **THE CABLETOW**.

- 46** **Masonic Philosophy**
Teaching virtues the Socratic way
By Edmund Coronel, PM
- 57** Lessons from Protagoras
- 60** **Community Service**
Baliwag 301 hands out "light" via school writing seminar-workshop
- 66** Having fun on their way to the GM's Awards Night
- 68** Dugong Mason: Masonic relief through blood donation
By Bro. Christian Ong

From the Table of the Grand Sec

By MW Danilo D. Angeles, PGM, GMH
Grand Secretary



Never labor on a Sunday

The Masonic “Blue Sunday Law” is so basic that we tend to ignore it.

Many asked why Central Luzon had failed to make it to the Junior Grand Warden (JGW) candidate line-up this year. Sad to say, they were barred from fielding one. For one oversight of Masonic law, they lost their bid to the Grand Oriental Chair.

The region’s delegates labored on a Sunday to elect their JGW bet. If my memory serves me right, the Central Luzon Multi-District Convention, originally scheduled on November 29, extended the next day, the 30th, which was a Sunday.

Edict 268, issued by Past Grand Master Juanito Espino, Jr. in 2014, set the nomination process of Junior Grand Warden can-

didates through multi-district conventions. But holding any kind of Masonic convention or labor on a Sunday is not Masonic.

It is an open–shut case. The Masonic Constitution, in Article IV titled “Prohibitions on a Lodge,” explicitly bans the brethren in item f: “To meet on Sunday except for funeral service.”

Why never on a Sunday? Because it is an ancient Masonic custom.

The Second Degree Lecture states, “They worked six days in the week, but did not labor on the seventh, for in six days God created the heaven and the earth, and rested upon the seventh day. The seventh, therefore, our ancient

brethren consecrated as a day of rest from their labors; thereby enjoying frequent opportunities to contemplate the glorious works of the Creation, and to adore their great Creator.”

Where did the ancient craftsmen get this notion? No less than from the Holy Bible itself, which is “the rule and guide of our faith.”

Right in the very first chapter of the very first book, it says that God created the heaven and the earth in six days—

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” (Gen. 2: 2-3)

Religions observe holy days in a week like Friday for Islam, Saturday for the Jews, and Sunday for Catholics and most Christians. Freemasonry, being subordinated to the Bible, similarly observes Sunday. But where another faith prevails in a grand jurisdiction, the most number wins.

Now, why are Masonic funeral services exempted? Because Sunday is a “day of rest” and the dead is on “eternal rest.” Here, the

idea of refraining from all labors and exertions, be it divine or mortal, fitly combine.

Masonic funeral services do not consist of giving funeral rites alone. During my younger Masonic years, I often joined the senior Masons in my mother lodge, Cabanatuan 53, in holding a “Lodge in Sorrow.”

How is it done? Once a member passes away, the lodge convenes, opens and conducts a wake simultaneous with the vigil being held by the grieving family at home or at the funeral parlor—whether it’s a Sunday or not. All members come in Masonic attire, sign the Tyler’s Book, and gather around the photo of the dead brother propped up over the lighted Altar. The lights are extinguished only after the burial and the lodge finally closes.

A corresponding minute must cover the proceedings of the Lodge in Sorrow.

Coming to the Grand Oriental Chair in 1995, I signed Edict No. 172 on December 1, 1995 titled “Opening and Closing of a Masonic Lodge in Short Form as Part of the Rendering of Necrological Services for a Departed Brother.”

With non-Masons attending a Lodge in Sorrow, it is prudent to shortcut the process and spare our guests from the sights and sounds of Masonic “secrets” and what-have-yous. ❧

Highlights and sidelights of the 99th Ancom

By Flor R. Nicolas, PSGL
Editor-in-chief

The Cabletow editor-in-chief gives an exciting blow-by-blow account of the 99th Ancom in Legazpi City.

The 99th Annual Communication (Ancom) of our M.W. Grand Lodge was held in Legazpi City, Albay and hosted by Masonic District RV-B (Albay, Sorsogon and Masbate), with Mayon No. 61 serving as lead Lodge.

Tuesday, April 21

At 8:00 a.m., delegates started to register at the Ibalong Centrum for Recreation in Brgy. Bitano, Legazpi City.

Wednesday April 22

As early as 6:00 a.m., golf aficionados among the brethren assembled at the Doña Pepita Golf Course in Padang, Legazpi City, where they would engage themselves in fraternal and

friendly competition.

Meanwhile, delegates continued to register at the Ibalong Centrum for Recreation.

At 9:00 a.m., the brethren and their guests conducted a floral-offering ceremony at the city's Rizal Park.

At approximately 11:00 a.m., a representative group of brethren and their guests, led by Grand Master Alan Purisima and other Grand Officers, paid Hon. and VW Noel E. Rosal, City Mayor and DDGM of the host district, a courtesy call at his office.

At 1:00 p.m., the Grand Guild of Past Masters of the Philippines (GGPMP) held its annual convention and dinner fellowship at the La Roca Veranda Suites & Restaurant on Lankandula Drive in Gogon, Legazpi City.

Thursday, April 23

More delegates registered at the Ibalong Centrum for Recreation.

At about 8:15 a.m., RW Tomas G. Rentoy, III, Deputy Grand Master, led the other Grand Lodge Officers in opening the MW Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines.

The following were formally received into the convention hall: MW Alan LM Purisima, Grand Master; the Past Grand Masters of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines; Guests and Foreign Dignitaries; MW Reynato S. Puno, PGM, GMH, Guest of Honor and Speaker; and officers of Appendant Bodies and Allied Orders.

After the presentation of the Philippine Flag and the Grand Lodge Standard and the singing of the Pambansang Awit, VW Florante A. Fajardo, DGL, rendered an eloquent Tribute to the Flag; VR Samuel P. Fernandez, Grand Chaplain, invoked God's blessings upon the assembly; and VW Noel E. Rosal, Legazpi City Mayor, eloquently and impressively delivered his welcome remarks.

Next, introduced by no less than Grand Master Alan LM Purisima, Past Grand Master and retired Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno delivered his **keynote address**, the text of which is given hereunder. (See "A Call to Masons" by by MW Reynato S. Puno,

PGM, GMH.)

The rolls of the incumbent Grand Lodge Officers and the Past Grand Masters having been called, the Committee on Credentials announced there was a quorum to transact the official business of the ANCOM. Then VW Inocencio B. Sagun, Jr. delivered his **grand oration** titled "An Echo of Very Relevant Masonic Lessons with a Call to Prayer for Our Officers."

VW Inocencio B. Sagun, Jr. revealed that he based his grand oration mainly on the book GRAND ORATIONS, a compilation of the grand orations delivered during the ANCOMs of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines from 1912 to 2012. He frankly stated, "*This book supplies a variety of topics and quotations on Masonry, as well as contains a rich treasury of inspiring thoughts and lessons. Hence, I decided to just echo to you, dear brethren, the gists of some of the grand orations which I thought to be significant and most timely.*"

At least two orations ended with a striking message once advanced by a Grand Master of Masons in the Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania. The message reads this way: "*Freemasonry is having a faith to live by. Freemasonry is being a self to live with. Freemasonry is having worthy causes to live for. Freemasonry is a never-ending pursuit of excellence.*"

In his 1918 grand oration, WB and Rev. Bruce S. Wright informed the brethren that the theme of the three-day ANCOM of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York which he had attended was "Masonry Means Manhood." So, in his grand oration, he stressed that the product of Masonry is chivalrous manhood. He strongly stated, "*If Masonry does not mean true manhood, then it has no meaning.*"

In his 1940 grand oration, MW Frederic H. Stevens, PGM, emphasized that all of us Master Masons are, or should be, effective public relations agents of Masonry, and that since public relations is briefly defined as the truth well told, we must be able to confidently, clearly, and convincingly tell people the truth about the Fraternity. For example, he said, we can, inform non-Masons that President Theodore Roosevelt wrote the following shortly before his death:

"While I was President of the United States, the gardener on a neighbor's estate , a most spirited citizen, was Master of his Lodge.... He was over me, though I was President, and it was good for him and good for me. I violate no secret when I say that one of the greatest values in Masonry is that, it affords an opportunity for men in all walks of life to meet on common ground, where all men are equal and have one common interest."

In his 1950 grand oration, then RW Brother Mauro Baradi

directed the attention of his listeners to Freemasonry and the Four F's -- Faith, Fidelity, Freedom, and Fellowship.

In regard to Faith, RW Baradi said, "*The layman generally believes in the teaching of religion. He associates faith with religion, and vice versa. Thus, the Christian believes in the Christian faith, the Jew in the Jewish faith, and the Mohammedan in the Mohammedan faith. Inside the Lodge, we should not forget that the Lodge is erected to God.... The prayers addressed to the Deity do not specify a special appellation but such names as The Great Architect of the Universe, Supreme Ruler of the Universe, Almighty Father of the Universe, Almighty God, or God.*"

In regard to Fidelity, he stated, "*The true Mason strictly adheres to duty. His devotion to a deserving cause is likened unto fidelity to truth. His fealty to things that dignify his own kind and elevate the human soul distinguishes him from others. He compromises not with questionable propositions because of his conviction that the good and the right always remain so, wherever found and yearned for.*"

In regard to Freedom, he remarked, "*Every man should not only be free but should also enjoy Freedom. This, however, is not without restriction, for in so exercising it, respect must be had for the right of others.*"

And in regard to Fellow-

ship, he pointed out, "A community of interests, feeling of like sympathies. Thus, the thesis of Psalm 133: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity.'"

In his 1915 grand oration, the then WB George R. Harvey advanced the following points: "The world judges men and institutions by their works and not by their words. Masons are, or should be, 'men of thought' and 'men of action'. By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them is the square, the level, and the plumb by which our professions as Masons are measured and tried.

"The crowning glory of Freemasonry is in action. Its influence depends upon the power that lives and manifests itself in the example of its members. The invisible beauties of our teachings are reflected in the visible virtues of the brethren. It is important, therefore, that every man should walk with unswerving rectitude, making his life an exemplification of Masonic principles. Freemasonry has stood in the past, and it stands today, for many principles of priceless value to humanity. Among others, it stands in a most unequivocal way for the equality of men before God and before the law. It stands for the right and duty of every man to seek and to use that light and knowledge which make for a larger and fuller life. It stands for the rights of men as individuals against the encroachment of Society, and the

dominance of wealth; it stands for civic justice and social righteousness, for freedom of thought and liberty of conscience for the sacredness of the home and for the brotherhood of men."

WB Harvey concluded his grand oration with this statement: "I repeat, by our fruits, the world shall know us. It is by the square, the level, and the plumb by which our professions as Masons are measured and tried."

(VW Sagun reminded the brethren that the thematic focus of the Craft's activities during the year of MW Danilo D. Angeles in the Grand East was "By Our Acts Shall Masonry Be Judged.)

Then he told the brethren that in his 1967 grand oration, then VW Edgar Shepley stressed the following points:

"We need dynamic leaders and dedicated followers for the task ahead. It appears that, for some reason or another, there is a growing lack of interest in our fraternity, not only on the part of its members, but also on the part of its potential members. There must be a reason for this decline in our popularity, and we should scrutinize our organization very carefully to determine its cause. We know that our lifeblood is beginning to thin and that we are becoming **an organization of older people**, well schooled in our craft, but tending to lose our drive and become more conservative. There is no question that we must make ourselves more attractive to our youth and present

our inducements in a more forthright manner.

"To be a dynamic Mason requires devotion to our cause, personal inconvenience, and the giving up of some of the more mundane pleasures of life. It also means breaking some of the habit of being passive and content to stand by without contributing anything constructive to our efforts..."

VW Shepley ended his oration thus:

"We have but to avoid apathy and uninterest to pursue our course of being Masonic missionaries and continue our efforts to instill more Masonry in Masons, and thus, to assure our future. Let us go forth united in our determination to see that Masonry maintains its rightful place in the society of man. Let us all, leaders of our order and followers, become more and more dynamic as men and as Masons."

The penultimate grand oration which VW Sagun cited was that which VW J. Waldemar V. Valmores delivered in 2005. Stressed VW Valmores: *"They say there are four kinds of bones in an organization--the wishbones, the jawbones, the knucklebones, and the backbones. The wishbones as those who do nothing but hope that some kind soul will do the job for them. The jawbones are those who love to talk of great things but do nothing to get those things done. The knucklebones are those who are fond of criticizing the work of others but do nothing to make the work bet-*

ter. Finally, the backbones are those who get the job done."

VW Valmores alluded to the ANCOM delegates as *"the frontliners and backbones of Masonry in the Philippines."*

The last grand oration which VW Sagun cited was that which MW Reynato S. Puno, PGM, delivered in 1987, the year we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of our M.W. Grand Lodge. In his speech, Past Grand Master Puno clearly and categorically stated, *"Let us hold fast to our Masonic convictions. They are timely and timeless. The Jubelos, the Jubelas, and the Jubelums will always taunt, harass and persecute our ranks. But a true mason should not barter away his conscientious convictions. His convictions should not be changed by the corruption of comfort. Neither should his convictions be dictated by the demands of the majority or the catcalls of the minority.... A true mason clings to his conviction because in the best of his God-given light, it is the truth or the nearest approximation thereof.... Let us then cling to our conviction and let us always remember that Masonry has never failed men, it is men who fail masonry."*

VW Sagun punctuated his grand oration with the following remarks:

"As your Grand Orator, I take courage to say that today, some of our lodge officers and even our Grand Lodge officers are charged and beset

with court and administrative cases.... Though we could not, as a brotherhood, take active and direct move to 'help them', the least, and probably the best, we can do is to include them in our prayers. Whatever our own individual perceptions may be regarding their cases, I call for this prayer. They are, after all, our brothers.... We are one in the Fraternity.... We are family.... I fraternally request that before this ANCOM ends, our Grand Chaplain include in his prayer our brethren's safety from the problems that confront them. Let us all pray for them.

"Brethren, thank you for listening to my echo of relevant Masonic lessons and this call to prayer for our officers.

"MASAGANANG BUHAY SA ATING LAHAT."

After lunch, the GLP Corporate Board held its meeting; the brethren approved the Proceedings of the 98th ANCOM; and, led by MW Rudyardo V. Bunda, PGM GMH, the Grand Representatives near our M.W. Grand Lodge presented themselves before Grand Master Alan Purisima, who in turn expressed his sincerest gratitude for the Grand Representatives' splendid job of promoting our Grand Lodge's fraternal relations with other Grand Lodges in the world.

Next, the following presented their reports for the brethren's guidance and consideration: the Grand Master, the Grand

Treasurer, the Grand Secretary, the Senior Grand Lecturer, the Masonic Charities for Crippled Children, Inc., and the Grand Guild of Past Masters of the Philippines.

The Grand Master's Night was held at the Masons' Obelisk on Legazpi Boulevard in Brgy. Puro.

The organizers of the Legazpi City Annual Communication announced the winning raffle numbers drawn on April 24, 2015. As of press time, the ANCOM organizers said, Magdiwang No. 238 and T.M. Kalaw Memorial No. 136 had not yet reported on their respective ticket sales, fell under their numbers. (*See Ancom raffle winning numbers. P. 32*)

The GLP Committee on Awards then presented the individual Masons and the Masonic groups with outstanding performances with much-deserved **awards**. (*See List of GLP Awards. P.67*)

Friday, April 24

Session resumed at 8:30 a.m. The Grand Lodge's Standing and Special Committees presented their respective reports, followed by the report of the Committee on Grand Lodge Reports.

After the presentation of the Accounts and Budget of the Grand Lodge for 2015-2016, the assembly was called from labor to refreshment.

Tagaytay City in the Prov-

ince of Cavite was chosen as the venue of ANCOM 2016.

VW Romeo S. Momo, DPWH Undersecretary for Regional Operations, had a landslide victory over his rivals for the high and much coveted position of Junior Grand Warden of our M.W. Grand Lodge.

Incoming Grand Master Tomas G. Rentoy, III introduced to the assembly the appointive Grand Lodge officers for his year in the Grand East.

At 7:00 p.m., the Tribute to the Past Grand Masters took place at the Oriental Legazpi.

Saturday, April 25

In the morning, two events transpired simultaneously in separate venues, namely, the conferral of the Installed Past Master's Degree at the Ibalong Centrum for Recreation and the briefing of Lodge Officers at the Ibalong Conference Room in City Hall.

At about 3:00 p.m., the much-awaited installation of Grand Lodge Officers for 2015-2016 took place at the Ibalong Center for Recreation.

The program consisted of the following parts: reception of Grand Master Alan LM Purisima, the Past Grand Masters, and the guests; presentation of the Flag and singing of the National Anthem & the Grand Lodge March; invocation, by VR Romeo S. Musngi, Grand Chaplain; grand

installation ceremonies, with MW Rosendo C. Herrera, PGM, GMH, as installing officer, assisted by PGMs Pablo C. Ko, Jr., Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr., and Juanito P. Abergas; the inaugural address of newly installed Grand Master Tomas G. Rentoy, III; presentation by PGM Hermodenes E. Ebdane, Jr. of the PGM's Apron, Jewel and Ring to IPGM Alan LM Purisima, and the latter's response; retirement of the Philippine Flag; and closing of the Grand Lodge.

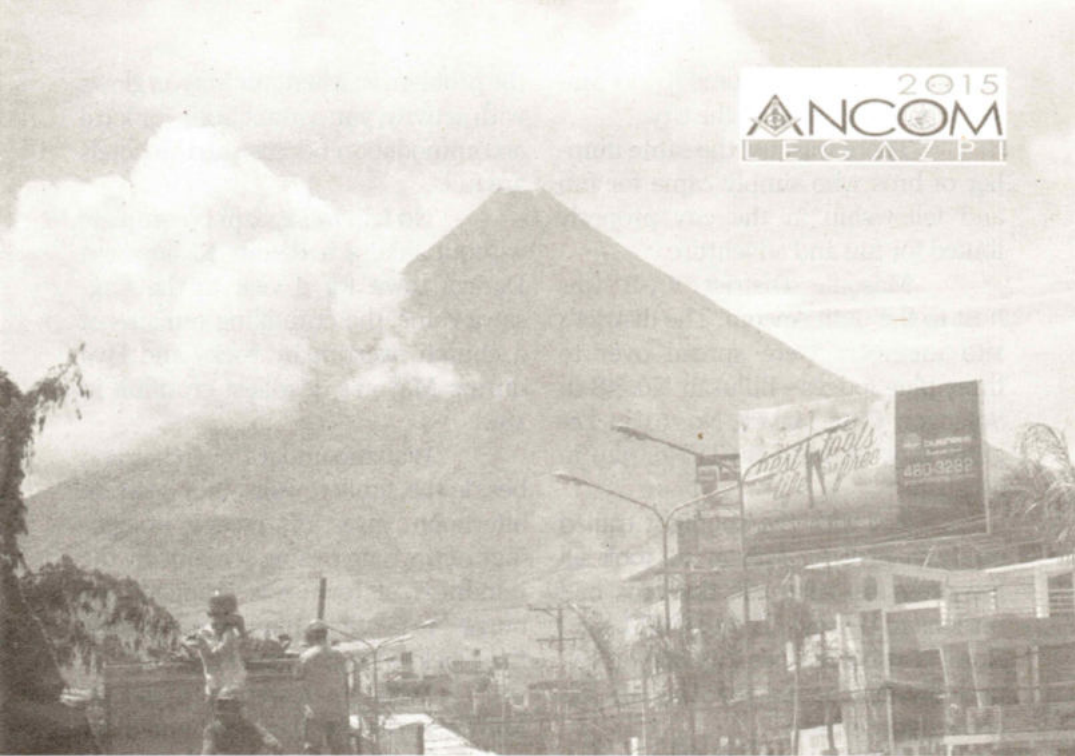
Grand Master's Banquet, Inaugural Ball

After the Grand Installation, the brethren and guests proceeded to the Grand Ballroom of the Oriental Legazpi, where the Grand Master's banquet and inaugural ball took place.

Hosted/emceed by VW Rafael J. Roxas and Sis. Aimee Mariama O. Rentoy, the programme for the special event consisted of the invocation, by VR Romeo S. Musngi, Grand Chaplain; the message of newly-installed Grand Master Rentoy; a video presentation; a special number by host district RV-B; and presentation of mementos/memorabilia.

The night's affair was capped by warm fellowship and hilarious dancing....

That is the story of the ANCOM of our M.W. Grand Lodge in Legazpi City, Albay. ❀



99th Annual Communication

Ancom fizzes hot and lively in Legazpi City

**By Edmund Coronel, PM
With reports by Bro. Dick Perlas**

Unforgettable, the 99th Ancom is as colorful as the city that hosted it—and as hot as the red chili peppers that Bicol is famous for.

Situated right at the heart of Bicolandia, Legazpi City served the 99th Annual Communication hot with the zestiness of its local red chili peppers—spiced up with surprises like its breathtaking but

whimsical Mayon Volcano.

This charming city by the bay drew about 2,800 Mason delegates, said WB Eugene Cua, Vice-chairman of the Executive Committee of the 2015 Ancom Legazpi. But the local ho-

tel industry reported some 5,500 Masonic bookings all over the city.

There was just the same number of bros who simply came for fun and fellowship in the city properly touted for fun and adventure.

Masonic District R5-B was host to the 99th Ancom. The district's 180 members were spread over to three blue lodges—Bulusan No. 38 in Sorsogon City; Mayon No. 61 in Legazpi City; and Ma-Bu-Ti No. 329 in Masbate.

But with the spotlight trailed on Legazpi City, Mayon 61 took all the pressure. After all, the bros had reasons to be bold. Then DDGM Noel Rosal is also Legazpi's City Mayor. Expectedly, he chaired the Ancom's executive committee.

With firm and skillful leadership, VW Rosal set up an Ancom with unforgettable Bicolano flair and lived up to being an *oragon*—when “oragon,” in local dialect, means “magnificent.”

It is an adjective often attached to an admirable leader, fighter or lover.

Amusing start

Legazpi City lives under the shadow of Mayon Volcano rising 2,462 meters from the sea. So ubiquitous is the symmetrically-conic volcano to the daily lives of the 183,000 city dwellers so that they have grown accustomed to its sporadic outbursts of fluffy ash clouds and deadly fireworks.

“Legazpi City lies outside of the danger zone. We have gotten used to Mayon Volcano,” said WB Cua. “But

the problem is, whenever Mayon glows with activity, you cannot book for local accommodation because all the hotels are full.”

No trip to Legazpi is complete without taking a detour to adjacent Daraga town for a visit to the Cagsawa ruins, the crumbling remains of a church overrun by rocks and lava during Mayon's deadliest eruption in 1814.

Walking under the arches and beside the sunken walls, in a desolate afternoon, gives off creepy imaginings of the hair-raising screams by the hundreds of townsfolk trapped and burned to death by flaming pyroclastic flows below the hardened ground.

With its towering presence, Mayon's whimsy flare-ups and fiery colors seeped into the city's culture and even attitude.

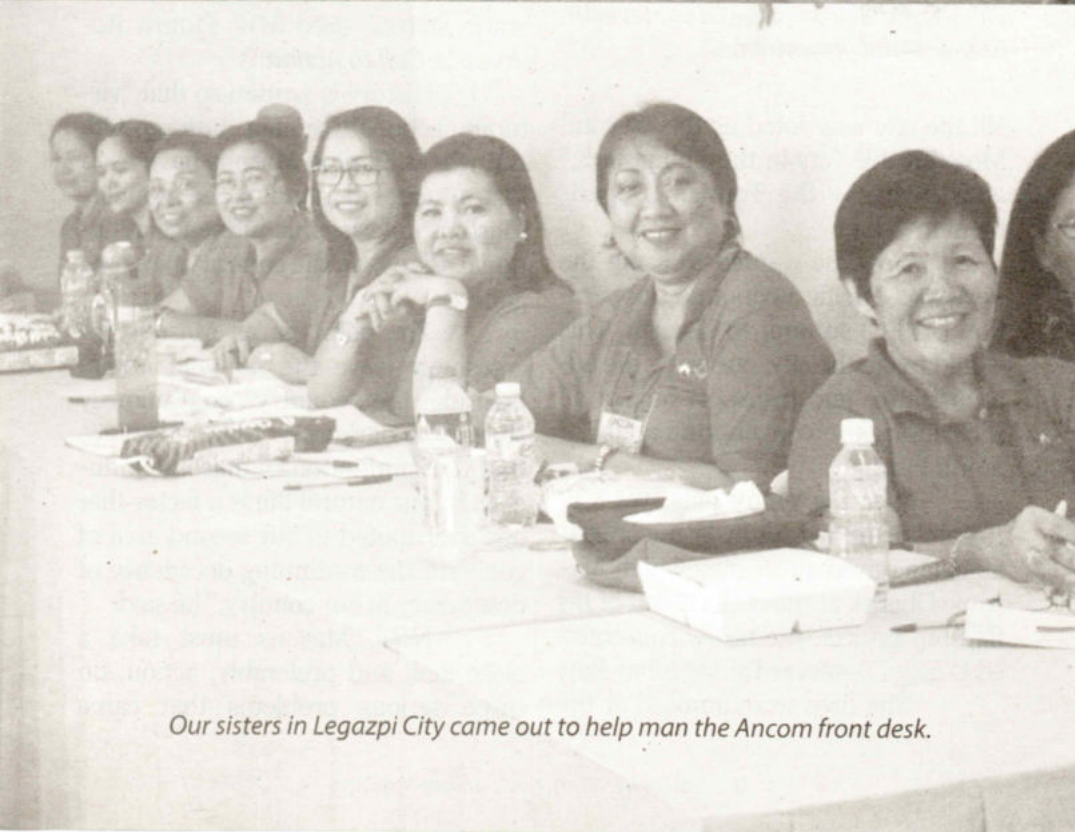
Site of the Ancom was the Ibalong Centrum for Recreation, a stadium located in between the bus terminals and regional government offices.

Here, the Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines formally opened on the morning of April 23, Thursday, with the usual pomp.

After the reception of guests and opening ceremonies, Legazpi City Mayor, VW Noel Rosal, welcomed the delegates not just with the usual drab blather. Plugging the city that he governs, he perked up the audience with a slide presentation of Legazpi's major infrastructures, new facilities, and top tourist drawers.

A civil engineer, VW Rosal made his mark in public construction projects. As city mayor, he was duty-bound to boost Legazpi's image. After

An enterprising Mason photographer hangs the Square and Compasses over the bayside sign for a souvenir shot before Mayon Volcano and Lion Hill--for a fee, of course.



Our sisters in Legazpi City came out to help man the Ancom front desk.



VW Noel Rosal, R5-B DDGM and Legazpi City Mayor, welcomes the delegates with a Power Point presentation.

all, the city was voted as the “Second Most Livable City in the Philippines,” after Iloilo, by the Tourism Department in 2014.

Now, he wanted to bring the next Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit to Legazpi. This would make the city, currently the administrative and transport hub of all Bicolandia, the convention capital of South Luzon.

Wearing many hats, yet VW Rosal’s being a Mason is uncontested. He raised an 18-meter-high Masonic Obelisk at the eastern end of his flagship project, the newly-constructed Legazpi Boulevard along Albay Bay.

The bros were amused at the

bird’s-eye view of the city they were planning to romp about. Moreover, the entertaining start, a departure from previous Ancoms, presaged more fireworks to come.

Hot issue

VW Rosal had just handed the rostrum to PGM Reynato Puno for the Keynote Address when the stadium began to warm up. Two minutes into the speech, the bros sensed that the former Supreme Court Chief Justice was going to hit the socio-political realities obtaining in the country today.

“Let us stop the self-hypnotism that we live in a democracy,” MW Puno declared. “The truth that hurts is that we are a failing democratic state, just one step from being adjudged a failed state—the worst class of democratic states.” (See MW Puno’s Address “A Call to Action.”)

History is written so that “virtuous actions” remain unforgotten. But where Filipino Masons have been instrumental in founding the republic, Masons and Masonic-influence in national affairs, on the contrary, are now gone.

The point is: as Masons increasingly leave the national affairs behind, the country continuously slides into darkness. “I like to believe that the diminution of masonic influence in our natural life is a factor that has contributed to our second area of concern: the continuing decadence of democracy in our country,” he said.

Now, Masons must take a close look and preferably, action, on three serious problems that came



A prewar picture of the Cagsawa ruins yet shows the sunken church façade before it has become a hot tourist spot.



The Shriners' clown troupe, which entertains indigent kids during medical missions, brightened the Ancom up by giving away free hugs to the delegates consisting of Bros. Adam Sim, Jojo Narciso, Joseph Quibal, Elmer Vilog and Leng Ocaaman.

about. "First is the exclusivity of the political and economic elite that malgovern and misgovern our people," he said.

Only 100 out of 17 million families control Philippine politics and economy.

Similarly, only 4 families control more than 60 percent of the P7-trillion resources of the entire Philippine commercial banking industry.

Next is the manipulated electoral system. What he meant, in summary, is that any chimpanzee with truckloads of gun and money can win a seat in the government. But the rise of the simian class to power also meant monkeying with the rights and money of the people, the screwing of the populace, and bleeding the Mother Land dry like a wasted whore.

Gone are the days when a simple innuendo about then Pres. Elpidio Quirino's "golden *arinola*" was enough to bar him from a second term. Or when the sight of the bloody corpse of the peasant Moises Salvador, a victim of electoral violence, cradled in the arms of then Defense Secretary Ramon Magsaysay had triggered a sweeping reform from Aparri to Jolo.

Last is the absence of "genuine local autonomy of our local governments."

Local government units (LGUs) are often the beasts of burden of national departments that are too lazy or too mingy to spend budgets for field works. Where the allocated money goes is hard to tell.

Worse, it ignores the fact that the smaller the LGU, the smaller is the budget—no matter how bigger is the need. Pleading for an extra morsel in

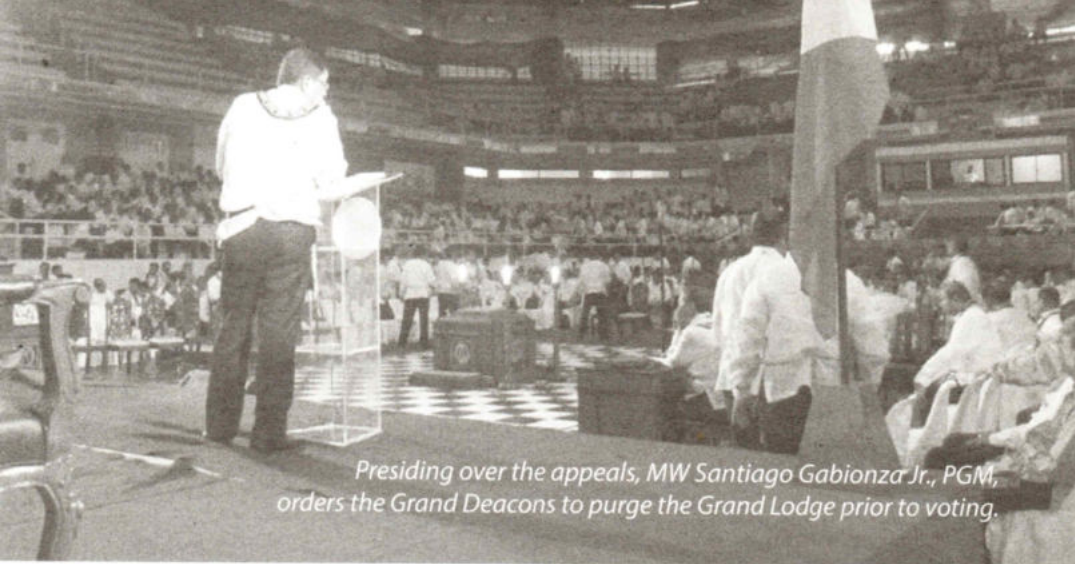
the national pie, yet LGUs are often rewarded not for need or merit, but for political loyalty with the ruling power.

"As long as our national government treats our local governments as playthings so long will our exploited provinces, cities and municipalities be the playgrounds of rebellion and insurrection. We shall experience more Mamasapano and the worst is still to come," he said.

After enumerating the ills gnawing the foundations of the country's socio-political system, MW Puno ended by throwing a dare to the bros, "If the country has long been orbiting in a moral eclipse for so long a time, is it not because we have not brought out the light of masonry that will drive away this moral darkness? If that question does not disturb us, that is disturbing."

MW Reynato Puno, PGM, Keynote Address speaker, warns the bros of looming darkness over the country.





Presiding over the appeals, MW Santiago Gabionza Jr., PGM, orders the Grand Deacons to purge the Grand Lodge prior to voting.

Slowly, the delegates applauded like rising from a stupor. It was MW Puno's hardest-hitting Masonic speech, so far.

Single-handed

With the Grand Lodge finally convened, business begun in the afternoon by reading the GLP Committee Reports. It went on to the following morning, April 24, Friday.

Excitement filled the air as the Plenary Session kicked off after lunch. Appeals before the Grand Lodge over cases and committee decisions were up next.

Standing alone at the rostrum, PGM Santiago Gabionza, Jr. parried one alibi after another.

An appellant, with a controversial case that sounded like "lollipop daddy," came forward. He begged for a reconsideration of his expulsion. MW Gabionza and the PGMs were unmoved.

Until MW Gabionza ordered "Please escort him out of the hall."

The appellant quickly left be-

fore the Grand Marshall and Deacons could catch him.

Noteworthy, Masonic law works differently from the laws of the land. Masonic cases are weighed, tried and decided more by the spirit than to the very letter of the law.

Hence, one appellant, seemingly a trial court judge, aired how precisely his lodge trial commission had expelled a member—just as they do in courts.

But MW Gabionza stayed the GLP Grievance Committee's decision to suspend the brother, instead. Expulsion was too severe for the issue at hand.

The issuance of charter to the Gerona Lodge Under Dispensation came next. It was actually an open-shut case. The GLP Committee on Lodge Administration saw lapses in its operation—nothing more, nothing less. In fact, the GLP's severity with newfound lodges qualified only one lodge U.D. for constitution in the 2014 Ancom among a dozen.

But as the Gerona appellant

The newly-installed MW Tomas Rentoy III solemnly takes his obligations as Grand Master before the Altar.



persisted, MW Gabionza threw the case before the Grand Lodge delegates for a vote whether to give the former a charter or not.

He ordered the purging of the lodge. Junior and Senior Wardens left the stadium. Only the voting GLP members, the Lodge Masters, remained.

The motion to grant Gerona Lodge U.D. a charter was defeated.

The Grand Lodge, perhaps, had never seen this much action on the Ancom floor for years.

A native of Camarines Norte, MW Gabionza proved himself a legal oragon.

With the appeals over, the delegates switched next to the election of the new Junior Grand Warden. The polls opened at around 5 p.m.

From 11, the JGW bets were trimmed down to 9. The Past Grand Masters pulled out VW Manuel Espiritu, Jr. and VW Rudy Ong from the race.

The polls closed at around 9:00 p.m. VW Romeo Momo, Department of Public Works and Highways Undersecretary, won.

Top oragon

But no *oragon*, perhaps, topped them all than the newly-installed Grand Master himself.

A native of Naga City in adjacent Camarines Sur province, MW Tomas Rentoy III was installed as the 108th Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the Philippines on April 25, Saturday, at the Ibalong Centrum

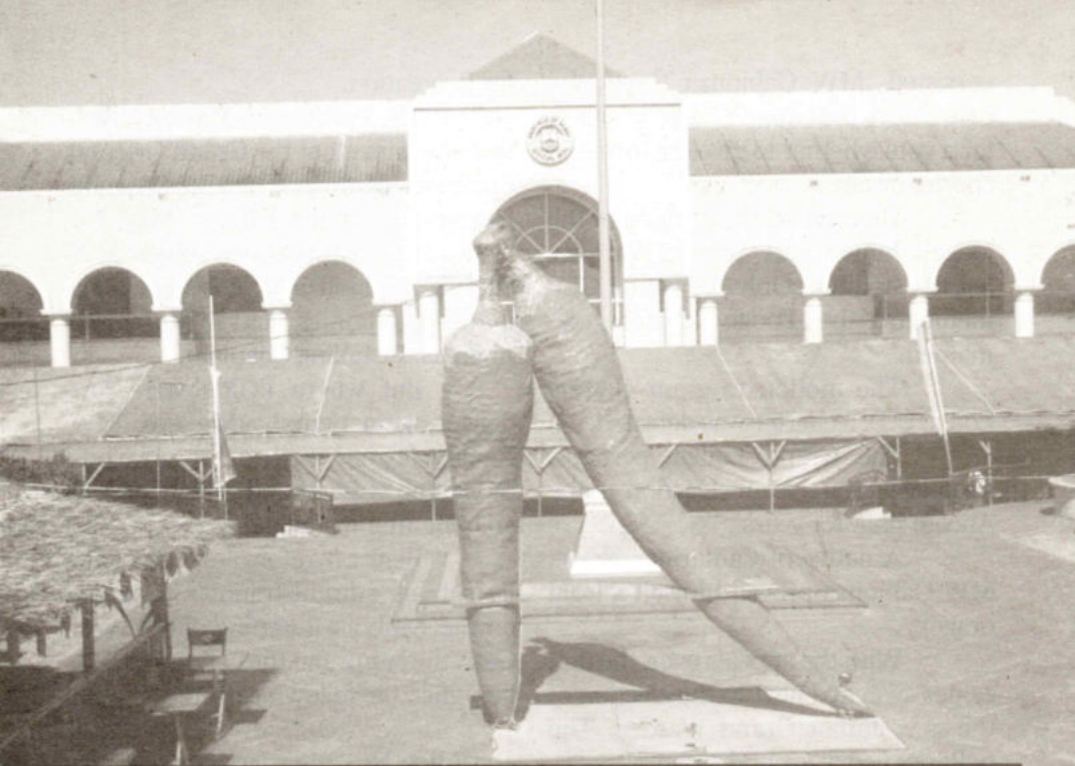
for Recreation.

The Past Grand Masters' team that saw him sit at the Grand Oriental Chair was composed of MW Rosendo Herrera, Installing Officer; MW Pablo Ko Jr., Master of Ceremonies; MW Santiago Gabionza Jr. Assistant Master of Ceremonies; and MW Juanito Abergas, Installing Chaplain.

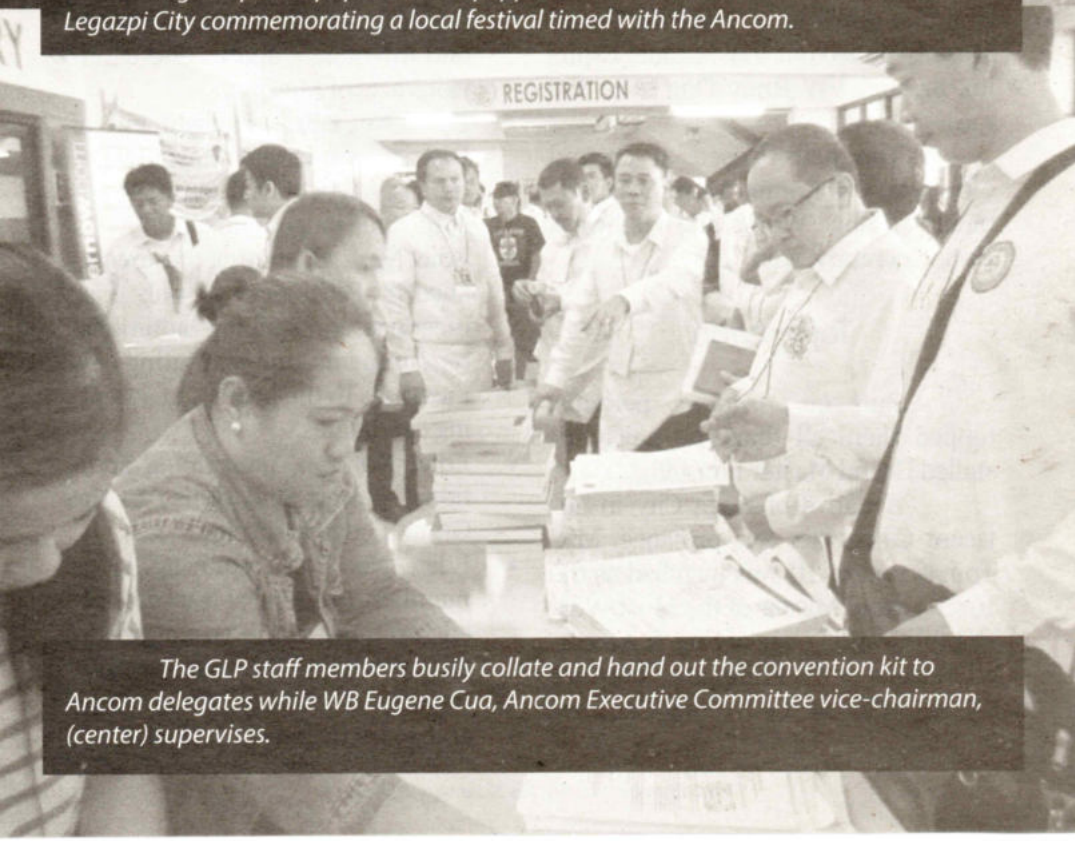
But where PGMs were just delivering inaugural addresses, MW Rentoy further pushed the envelope by signing 11 edicts and 2 circulars half an hour after installation.

Bent on reforming the Craft, he set his administration's program on the symbolic guarding of the West Gate, the lamp, and the ballot. For this, he signed the following decrees—

- Edict No. 280, creation of the Masonic Internal Affairs Office (MIAO) that will act on complaints and investigate abuses and capricious acts of Masons.
- Edict No. 281, establishment of District and Grand Masonic Tribunals in lieu of trial commissions at the blue lodges and GLP.
- Edict No. 278, limiting the appearance of Petitioners to only four meetings, prescribing additional requirements, and instituting new measures in the process of accepting candidates.
- Edict No. 276, prescribing additional powers and duties to the Grand Lodge Inspector.
- Edict No. 277, requiring lodge members to attend at least six stated meetings in the year immediately preceding the balloting and/or lodge election of officers to be able to participate in said exercise.



A giant pair of papier-mache peppers stands before the Provincial Hall in Legazpi City commemorating a local festival timed with the Ancom.



The GLP staff members busily collate and hand out the convention kit to Ancom delegates while WB Eugene Cua, Ancom Executive Committee vice-chairman, (center) supervises.

- Edict No. 275, rationalizing the number of Junior Grand Lecturers and District Grand Lecturers who are tasked with Masonic education at the districts and blue lodges.
- Edict No. 274, prescribing a uniform procedure in the district turnover ceremonies.
- Edict No. 273, amending Edict 275-(Labitoria) on the reception of dignitaries.
- Edict No. 272, providing for the drawing of lots of Junior Grand Warden candidates at the Ancom level among other electoral reform measures.
- Edict No. 282, regulating the production, sale, use and distribution of Masonic emblems and accouterments.”
- Edict No. 283, allowing the consumption of alcoholic beverages in the Grand Lodge perimeter under strict regulation, and requiring dispensation from lodges to hold fellowship therein.

Edict No. 279, titled as the “Masonic Penal Code,” was all ready but withheld it subject to the review of the Past Grand Masters.

Similarly, he signed the following circulars—

- Circular No. 3, reorientation of charity programs with emphasis on the public school system; also, adoption of “library-in-a-box” project.
- Circular No. 4, requiring the mandatory attendance of grand line officers, and other officers concerned to the clustered

seminar/workshop for better understanding and due implementation of the recently enacted edicts and reform agenda.

In his consultations with PGM Puno, MW Rentoy said that the former found the new laws “nothing less than revolutionary.”

Indeed, the 99th Ancom was as exciting as the colorful city that hosted it. It was hot. The media trailed the Outgoing Grand Master Alan Purisima from the start to his turnover of the Grand Oriental Chair. The press printed MW Puno’s warning of “darkness” looming over the land. The Ancom delegates had never sat still in their seats.

But with a revolutionary Grand Master now at the helm, all the bustle, spiritedness and surprises would surely last until the next April. ❧

Requiem for WB Maintim

Amid the 99th Ancom, the summer heat took its toll on the late WB Noel Maintim, Past Master of Tagaytay Lodge No. 165, on April 24, 2015. Reports had it that, after a tour of the Cagsawa ruins with the bros in the morning, he headed back to the hotel where he succumbed possibly to heatstroke. He was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

We send all our prayers and condolences to the family of WB Maintim.



VW Noel Rosal, chairman of the Legazpi Ancom, (front row, 3rd from left seated) and the hardworking committee members flashed a thumbs-up for all the delegates that came.

The Ancom organizers

Ancom Legazpi is 3 years in the making

Ancom 2015 was actually the second time Legazpi City hosted one since 2001. But still, the bros of Mayon 61, the event's organizers, never took chances. They prepared a year before they even placed their bid at the GLP.

The idea took hold when they watched the Camsur bros run

the Ancom in Naga City in 2012. Next, they asked the senior Legazpi bros for tips and anecdotes of the Ancom a decade past.

So, they drew up a list of "must-haves." They ticked off each item available in Legazpi City. Until the Mayon 61 bros joined and observed how things were done in the



VW Noel Rosal, also Outstanding DDGM awardee, sits down for an update with his ever reliable vice-chairman, WB Eugene Cua.

Iloilo Ancom in 2013 did they finally make up their minds. They began drawing plans, moving funds around and listing contacts.

In April 2014, District R5-B bid for the hosting of the Ancom and won.

No sooner had they organized into committees and met every week. Rather than cracked under pressure, the formerly loose bonds between Mayon 61 bros increasingly tightened.

Moreover, the timely election of VW Rosal to the city hall lifted a huge load off the shoulders of Mayon 61 bros. This kicked the bros off into establishing linkages with the public and private sectors—which paid substantially in the end.

After all, the local economy often gained from every Ancom—from the pricey hotels down to the tricycle drivers.

But the Mayon 61 bros were

fully aware that registration fees are not enough to fund the whole Ancom event.

To lick the fund problem, the bros conducted fund-raising drives early on. Even the Masons' wives helped by holding zumba and ballroom dances. Attractive and hassle-free arrangements were offered to the city's businesses to join the Ancom.

All efforts of the Mayon 61 bros incidentally run in synch with Mayor Rosal's program to level up Legazpi City, a popular tourist destination, to a regional MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) center. For this, he improved the city-owned Ibalong Centrum for Recreation (ICR).

With the ICR upgraded, the bros saved a hefty sum of money. "The 2014 Ancom at the SMX—Mall of Asia cost around thirteen million pesos. We don't have that kind of money. The ICR is not in the same level as the SMX. But it only cost one-hundred twenty-thousand pesos to rent per day," said WB Eugene Cua.

In contrast, the 2001 Legazpi Ancom cost the Mayon 61 bros Php 5 million.

With the budget smoothly running, the bros constructed a Php 2.5 million Masonic obelisk at the eastern tip of Legazpi Boulevard in 2014. Rising at 18-meters, it is the highest Masonic obelisk in the country today.

"We just want to make the Ancom memorable," said VW Rosal. "But much to our surprise, it had unified all the brethren of Mayon 61."

To house 5,000 Mason delegates for a 3-day stay, they rounded up next 50 hotels and like establishments in the city. But the numbers still fell short. So, they tapped on all accommodations available in the surrounding towns of Sto. Domingo, Daraga, Camalig, and Guinobatan for backup—all within 10-km. radius or less of the convention site.

"The contributions of the local government unit are invaluable," said WB Cua.

Besides providing for the venue, VW Rosal threw the city police on the streets for security and order that greatly pleased the Mason delegates.

Even the public transport services were ordered to comply with the tariff rates and courteous conduct—though Masons were substantially tipping the taxi and tricycle drivers.

The Mayon 61 bros were smart to organize even a year before they had bid. The early head start avoided hassles and pitfalls that surprisingly pop up during crunch time.

Moreover, they were lucky to have a DDGM who wears many hats—being the city mayor, for one. ☒

A Call to Masons

By MW Reynato S. Pun, PGM, GMH

Keynote Address delivered by MW Reynato S. Puno, PGM, at the 99th Annual Communication on April 23, 2015 at Ibalong Centrum for Recreation, Legazpi City, Albay.

Cicero called history the “witness of times, the torch of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, and the messenger of antiquity.” According to Tacitus, the principal purpose of history is “to prevent virtuous actions from being forgotten.”

With Tacitus’ dictum in mind—to prevent virtuous action from being forgotten—let me start on a safe note, with the self-evident proposition that mankind owes masonry much of what really matters in secular life—a democracy managed for the many but where the many respect the dignity of all. A stroll of world history will reveal that masons led the revolutions that wrote finis to the autocratic rule of aristocrats, the despotic rule of kings and queens, the totalitarian rule of those who claim divine privilege and the iron rule of dictators. It will also show that modern Constitutions adopted the timeless ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity because of the light of masonry.

The legacy of Filipino masons in downsizing despotism in our country is similarly “a virtu-

ous action” which should not be forgotten. The longitude of intelligence of Jose Rizal, the prolific pen of Marcelo del Pilar, and the mighty bolo of Bonifacio crushed the 300 years of exploitation of Spain; the martyrdom of Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos, the patriotism of Presidents Aguinaldo, Quezon, Roxas and other worthy masons brought to an end the cruel Japanese occupation and the US colonial rule of our country. With surefooted confidence, they laid down the democratic foundation of our country and doubtless, they erected this foundation from our enduring masonic values. They cast in stone these masonic values in our fundamental laws, notably the Biak na Bato Constitution, the Malolos Constitution and the 1935 Constitution. The masonic fingerprints abundantly appear in these three Constitutions and historians are one in accord, that our country enjoyed its golden years under these Constitutions. Unfortunately, masonry started to recede as a mere shadow and the masons became more and more invisible in our landscape in the middle of the

last century.

On this 99th ANCOM, I respectfully submit that this ought to be our serious concern: we cannot close our eyes to the falling influence of masons and masonry as a transformative force in our political, social and economic life. A side glance on our list of leaders will reveal that after President Roxas and for more than 5 decades now, no mason has ever been elected President of the Philippines. Nor have we produced for so long a time a President of the Senate or a Speaker of the House of Representatives. By God's grace, after a stretch of more than half a century, we were able to produce one Chief Justice. And take a hard look at the distinguished list of Filipinos who wrote our 1972 and 1987 Constitutions. We miss the names of masonic leaders who were able to step into the future before others did and who made us proud to be masons. You will need a magnifying glass to find the names of our brethren there. This long drought of leaders in our government both national and local is not expected to abate in the near future.

I like to believe that the diminution of masonic influence in our natural life is a factor that has contributed to our second area of concern: the continuing decadence of democracy in our country. Let us stop the self-hypnotism that we live in a democracy that is fueled by the Lincoln concept of a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The truth that hurts is that

we are a failing democratic state, just one step from being adjudged a failed state—the worst class of democratic states. The data of that disturbing truth come from the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy after conducting a no-nonsense study of our performance in the following areas: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture. The shaft of that truth should shut up the motor mouths who blabber to the world there is more fun in the Philippines. It should also shame those who fudge the fact and conclude that the Philippines is the best hope of democracy in Asia.

Democracy is a legacy of Filipino masons to our country and it is our bounden duty to preserve it at all cost. We cannot commit the sin of silence on the decadence of democracy in our land. Let me therefore detain your attention on the problems plaguing our democracy today. Allow me to elevate to your eye level just three of our most serious areas of concern.

First is the exclusivity of the political and economic elite that malgovern and misgovern our people. To my mind, the exclusivity of this elite is a key reason for our status as a second rate democracy. Untouched statistics confirm that only 100 political families rule the Philippines, a country of 100 million people. Democracy has been defined in various ways but certainly, it has never been understood as a government by the few.

This problem of a government by the few was well discussed by publisher Mr. Tony Lopez in a column “Why only 100 out of 17 million families control Philippine politics and economy” which appeared in the Manila Times issue of July 2, 2012. He wrote and I quote:

x x x There has been unprecedented income inequality. Out of 17 million (yes, million) families, only 100 families rule this country’s politics and economy.

In 50 years, seven presidents came from just four families – two Macapagals, two Aquinos, two cousins (Ferdinand Marcos and Fidel Ramos), and an actor (Joseph Estrada who now has built his own dynasty in San Juan and in Congress).

In 1987-1992 Senate, four Senators lived in one subdivision in Quezon City. No single senator represented Mindanao, the country’s food and mining bowl and home to the two longest-running rebellions in the world.

You can count in your fingers the number of Filipino dollar billionaires (10). Only one of them is brown.

There are 36 commercial banks. But only four groups or families control more than 66 percent of the P7-trillion resources of the entire commercial banking system – Henry Sy Sr. 19.51 percent, Zobel-Ayala 11.94 percent, the government 14 percent, and Lucio Tan 7.27 percent.

Only ten families own 60



percent of the P10-trillion combined market capitalization of more than 200 listed companies.

One does not need to summon the wisdom of Solomon to make the prophetic statement that in any kind of environment, a government of the few, for the few and by the few will result in the poverty of the many and the exploitation of the multitude. And as day follows the night, blocking the ingress to equality of the many to preserve the monopoly of power by the few will cause the slow death of democracy. There is no democracy if the few who rule and reign will always be up in the totem pole of power, in defiance of the law of gravity. Nor is there democracy if they require the poor to walk on the water before they can levitate to the top of society. Democracy can only survive if those who are rich will cease to overreach; democracy will thrive only if we reach the unreachable, only if we continue looking for the overlooked.

Our next area of concern as masons is our electoral system that has long been vulnerable to the use of force and fraud. Such a flawed electoral system breeds undemocratic regimes that desecrate the sovereignty of the people, governments that do not respect their rights, and administrations that betray the public good. Necessarily, leaders that come to power thru the use of guns, gold and goons will leave the State only after abusing it, a State that would

be bereft of strength and drained of its effectiveness. We have seen the relentless reign of these illegitimate and rapacious leaders. Leaders who help themselves to the coffers of the people. Leaders who distribute the resources of the government unfairly and unevenly. Leaders who govern with iron hands to perpetuate themselves in power. Leaders who employ threats and violence against the opposition, against critics, against any person or group perceived as a threat to their reign. They strike deals and unholy alliances with other shady characters like gambling lords, smuggling syndicates, drug dealers, and tax cheats. We may speak the unspeakable but let it be so. The news, then and now, provide irrefutable evidence of the corruption of our electoral process that has left us a State in tatters. In the late 40's, a leader whose only mistake was to buy an expensive urinal for his personal use, was booted out of office without much ado. Today, however, some of our leaders are under investigation for thievery of billions of pesos, and yet a seemingly desensitized people hardly react with righteous rage. In the fifties, the murder of one peasant in Negros, so shocked the conscience of the people and catapulted Magsaysay to the presidency. Today, we witness so many extra judicial killings and they hardly touch our calloused senses. In the past, we go to Congress to be educated by the debates of our elected representatives; now we go to the legislature for entertainment



**“We shall experience more
Mamasapano and the worst is
still to come.”**

by some of its members. In fine, we see the non-stop, progressive abuse of our electoral system which is the heart of democracy. And I say progressive because we were the first people in Asia to exercise the right to vote. That right was given to us by the Americans more than 100 years ago and considering that length of time, we should have already developed an electoral system that is beyond violation by force or fraud. The tragedy is that after 100 years, our government has fallen into hands of political dynasties whose only power is the purchasing power and whose wealth comes from occult sources. Unless we are rescued from these political dynasties, we will never live under a full democracy.

The other area of masonic concern is the lack of genuine local autonomy of our local governments, for it similarly threatens our democracy as it locks their potential for progress. I say genuine autonomy because the kind of autonomy allowed to our local governments leaves much to be desired. There is no denial of the truth that there is overcentralization of powers in the national government. The powers niggardly given to our local governments are few, if not insignificant. For this reason, local officials have to beg the powers that be in imperial Manila for assistance if they want to improve the lot of their constituencies. But even if local officials form a beeline to the powers that

be in imperial Manila, with outstretched arms, palms open, and knees down, they are not sure of receiving any blessing for blessings belong only to political party mates. This is anathema to real democracy where the bottom line is power belongs to the people and power should be wielded not on the basis of political loyalties but should only be exercised for the best interest of the people. We will never attain this desideratum, this ideal in a democracy unless and until we reallocate more equitably the powers between our national and local governments. And we do not have the luxury of time to make the reallocation of powers. The Mamasapano event where 44 of our SAF from the PNP lost their lives is the result of that imbalance of power between the national government and the local government. As long as our national government treats our local governments as playthings so long will our exploited provinces, cities and municipalities be the playgrounds of rebellion and insurrection. We shall experience more Mamasapano and the worst is still to come, until we are able to give real autonomy to our local government and enable them to unlock the potentials in their land.

The inevitable question is what should masons do given the continuing slide to obscurity of our democracy, this democracy that is the legacy of our masonic brethren to our people? Given our traditional masonic restraints, we cannot act as a Grand Lodge or as

a blue lodge on questions with political coloration but certainly we have a smorgasboard of choices in our non masonic capacities. One of the buds of hope in our masonic landscape is the formation by our brethren of the Bagong Mason group. I say refreshing because they have not lost the sense of the serious; they are showing awareness of current issues; they know that our real risk is in doing nothing; and I am sure that that their arresting insight will be followed by concern and then commitment and then action.

Let me end by saying the country awaits now and anew masonry's ideas of the ideal democratic government and more importantly, our people covet the hands, the minds and the hearts of masons to bring to reality this public good. If this country owes masonry a lot it is because of masons who decided to put into action the teachings of masonry, it is because of masons who put to motion the tenets of masonry; it is because of masons who refuse to remain a people of fossils; it is because of masons who decided to move the Square and the Compass from their private breasts to the public square. If the country has long been orbiting in a moral eclipse for so long a time, is it not because we have not brought out the light of masonry that will drive away this moral darkness? If that question does not disturb us, that is disturbing.

Good day to all! ❖



Memo to the next Ancom organizers

Say what attire to wear for every event

Ancom is fun. But not always for first-time sojourners and visiting dignitaries—especially they who come with their ladies.

Coming in the right wear counts importantly for Masons of foreign grand jurisdictions.

This matter about Masonic attires didn't come up until the rains whipped the white tents hard around the Masonic Obelisk at Legazpi Boulevard early in the Grand Master's Night on April 23.

Sitting next to a table of visiting dignitaries and their wives, we strung

our tablecloth up the tent's frame to screen everyone under the canopy from the drizzle and spray from the bay.

With the squall and dinner over, we turned around and came to meet RW Bro. Pradeep Bowry, District Deputy Grand Master, District No. 6. Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, A. F. & A. M.

Dressed in sleek tuxedo, the sixtyish Canadian bro was even elegant in speech and manners.

Our conversation piece took off from the very casual t-shirts Pinoy Masons wear to the Grand Master's Night.

Sure, there was the tropical climate and all that stuff to justify cultural relativism.

Until RW Bowry dropped the bomb. "But in all the Grand Master's Night around the world, Masons always come in formal attire of tuxedo and gown for the ladies," he said.

Admitting he was a first-time sojourner to the Philippines, he wouldn't mind wearing a shirt at all had it only been announced in the program or invitation. It was embarrassing to walk stiffly in tux when all the bros were having a good time in sports shirts. "So, *please pass the word to our brethren concerned to have the attire printed in every occasion,*" he asked.

He said he will come with his wife next year and hoped to do things "right." RW Bowry wouldn't mind

doing what the Romans do when in Rome. But there must be a tourist flyer or travel bulletin to guide travelers around. The practice of explicitly naming the attires to wear in various Ancom events has nearly vanished over the last five, or even ten, years. It's time to restore it when overseas bros increasingly come to the Philippine grand jurisdiction annually.

The rains were gone and the night warmed up when the stage suddenly burst with good-looking girls rocking and wiggling in hot shorts and tight spaghetti tubes. The bros hollered and rushed to the stage clicking cell phone cameras and tablets.

Sure, it was a night out for the boys. But it now came for the ladies' turn to blush—and head back to the hotel early. ☒

Legazpi Ancom winning raffle numbers



The organizers of the 2015 Legazpi City Annual Communication (Ancom) announce the winning raffle numbers drawn on April 24, 2015. As of press time, the Ancom organizers said, Magdiwang No. 238 and T.M. Kalaw Memorial No. 136 have not yet reported on their respective ticket sales—when the car prizes fall under their numbers.

IPAD TABLETS

073233
045955
033625
056353
063195

MOTORCYCLES

041194
088648
035557
050448
042572

KIA RIO

059562

SORENTO

001815

Robin Ong's brutal slay **Labong & other bros hunted, nabbed killer of late PM's daughter**

Grievous, yet the enraged brethren of Labong Lodge No. 59 firmly trailed the rapist-murderer of their Past Master's daughter—and succeeded bringing the criminal to justice after nearly a month.

Robin Jacques Ong, 24, was found dead inside her room on the morning of March 15 in Barangay Batis, San Juan, Metro Manila. Stripped from the waist down, she was strangled to death.

Robin's death shook hard the

Labong 59 bros. Her father, the late Bro. Richard Ong, a Past Master of 59, was gunned down in 1996. Words reaching the bros and Ong family later said that he was simply mistaken for somebody else.

With two violent deaths, no family could suffer so much.

Bro. Celestino Ko, PDGL, was among the first to rush to the family's aid after receiving the devastating call.

"I felt a deep gut-wrenching pain



Never again: The brutal slaying of Robin Ong, a late Mason's daughter, must serve as a wake-up call for many brethren who ignore their duties to widows and orphans.

as I watched the funeral staff applied the cosmetic works on Robin's face," he said.

Her left ear was nearly torn off. A tuft of hair was pulled out from a bald spot in her scalp. Her former sweet face, swollen from heavy beatings, was unrecognizable.

Her corpse laid with the fists yet tightly clenched. Her right knuckles were black with cuts and injuries. Markings around her neck showed that she died by strangulation.

Clearly, she fought back and hard the brutal beast that topped her but to no avail.

Robin's brutal death made it to the news. The TV news feature, *Imbestigador*, of GMA-7 reported the crime in detail on its April 18 episode.

Not only the national media but also, the Labong bros went on air over "Idol" 89.1 FM in Legazpi City, Albay, on the morning of April 24. Timed with the Ancom, Labong 59 wanted to tell it all to the city hosting the Masons.

The station is owned by VW Robert Palanca, of Mayon 61.

Religious vocation

Fresh out of college, Robin worked in an insurance firm. But she actually had other plans. She wanted to enter the convent and devote herself to a religious life.

Her mother, Sister Josefina Ong—nicknamed "Jingjing"—begged her to think her decision over. With Bro. Richard gone, she needed all the help to make the family's ends meet.

Working as a cashier in an electric company, she was looking after her wheelchair-bound mother Andrea Cheng, 83 years old; and eldest daughter Jessica, an autistic.

So, Sis. Jingjing finally found help in the person of her pious daughter,

Robin. Until the early morning of March 15, the household noticed Robin missing from the Sunday breakfast table.

Jessica knocked on Robin's bedroom door many times over. No answer came back. Older than Robin, yet the autistic sister actually looked up to Robin like the senior sibling.

Sis. Jingjing rose up from the table to try knocking on Robin's other bedroom door at the side of the house. She found it surprisingly unlocked.

Walking slowly into the room, she saw Robin sprawled lifeless, half-naked and bloodied on the floor. Chills ran up her spine. Her sight blackened. She quickly cradled Robin in her arms and begun screaming "*Tulong! Tulong! May pu-matay sa anak ko!*" (Help! Help! Somebody killed my daughter!)

Neighbors called the police.

Investigators found out that, despite all of Robin's pricey gadgets, not one piece was missing. They ruled out robbery. Worse, there were no signs of forcible entry.

During the questioning, the family dog was barking mad. Police wondered if the mutt had barked in the night. Surprised, Sis. Jingjing said "no."

Police suspected that the killer was familiar to the household.

CCTV recording

The San Juan police had never made any significant break until two weeks later. They took hold of a CCTV recording in the block. It showed a man casually walking out of the Ong's house and onto the glare of a street lamp post at past 3 a.m. of March 15.

The police played the CCTV video before Enrique Cheng, Robin's uncle. He positively identified the man as Anacleto "Nono" Brizuela, 39 years old, a native of Bulac, Sorsogon.

Brizuela is the live-in partner of the family's laundrywoman. Without any man in the house, they often called him for house repairs and other manly chores.

Grandma Andrea found Brizuela as meek and obedient as a lamb. The family treated him like a household member.

In March, Brizuela often spoke his plan aloud about returning home to Camarines Sur. His common-law wife was sick.

On March 14, at past 10 a.m., Andrea Cheng asked him to take down the laundry from the clothesline which had been left out to dry.

Brizuela left without Cheng's knowledge. She had never seen him since then.

That night, Robin arrived home around 11:30 p.m.

On the morning of March 15, Brizeula was already out and away from San Juan City.

Hence, San Juan City Police Chief, Senior Supt. Ariel Arcinas, recommended to San Juan Mayor Guia Gomez a hot pursuit operation for the suspect.

Mayor Gomez, detesting all forms of women's rights violations, quickly okayed the plan.

Leading the hunt for the San Juan police was Sr. Insp. Herculano "Jun" Mago. He is a member of T.M. Kalaw Me-

morial Lodge No. 136.

Shining moment

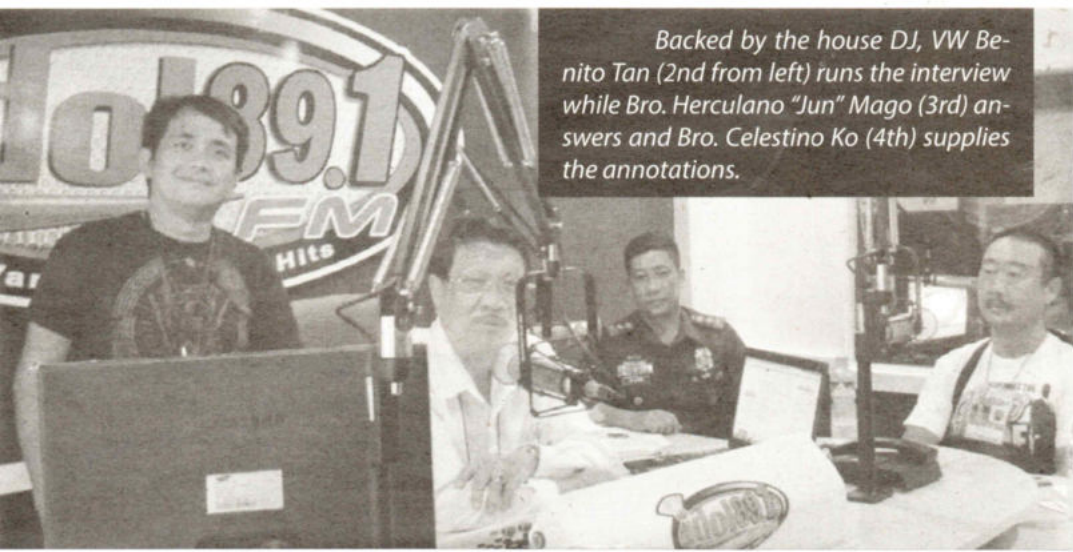
The breakthrough similarly whipped up the Labong bros into action. Rueful, yet they were raving to get back at Robin's killer at the first sign of opportunity. No sooner had they begun burning the telephone lines. They saw to it that Bro. Mago, and his 4 team members, would get all the help they needed.

Informed ahead, P/Dir. Rudy Magtibay, of Batangas Lodge No. 35, helped Bro. Mago's team coordinate with the Camarines Sur police. So did Sr. Supt. Warfredo G. Pornillos, of Mabuhay Lodge No. 50, ready the way for the San Juan cops.

Arriving at Camarines Sur, the San Juan team learned that a standing warrant of arrest for 2 counts of frustrated murder, issued by the Bulan, Sorsogon regional trial court, was waiting for the suspect under the alias of "Dongoy."

On April 25, 2010, Brizuela broke into the bedroom of his female neighbor and rummaged through the cabinets and drawers. Startled, the woman woke up screaming. Brizuela stabbed her in the neck and chest.

The woman's brother came. Bri-



Backed by the house DJ, VW Benito Tan (2nd from left) runs the interview while Bro. Herculano "Jun" Mago (3rd) answers and Bro. Celestino Ko (4th) supplies the annotations.

zuela also knifed him in the torso area and fled.

If anything, Brizuela was just hiding in San Juan City all this time to escape arrest in his hometown.

Feigning as a lamb in the Ong household, yet Brizuela was a hardened criminal, after all. Bro. Mago never took chances.

Supt. Juris A. Cantoria, PNP Camsur Deputy for Operations, helped Bro. Mago laid out the ground works for the arrest. He is a member of Pinagsabitan Lodge No. 26.

Supt. Dennis R. Rellata, Company Commander of the Provincial Public Safety Company, threw in his whole unit to back up Bro. Mago. He is a member of Bulusan Lodge No. 38.

The combined Camsur and San Juan police teams were to swoop down over the suspect, hiding in a poultry farm with his live-in partner, in Sitio Hobo, Bgy. Balaw Balite, Tinambak, Camarines Sur.

But the terrain was tricky. "We really had to plan well," said Bro. Mago. "Behind the poultry farm are hills and mountains. If he slips us, it will be very difficult to catch him."

Riding with the San Juan police team was Robin's uncle, Enrique. Again, he positively identified Brizuela in the distance.

But the sight of the vehicle and new faces had alarmed Brizuela. Fearing discovery, Bro. Mago switched to Plan B. The arresting team jumped out and rushed with guns at the ready. "The suspect even attempted to resist arrest," said Bro. Mago.

With the suspect cornered, Bro. Mago announced "*Inaaresto kita sa salang pangrereyp at pagpatay*" (You are under arrest on charges of rape and murder.).

Looking back, Bro. Mago said, "This is a clear example of the long arm of the law. Criminals often deny. But the evidences never lie. We have stacked up sixteen material evidences, at the least, against the suspect."

Manning the Idol 89.1 booth, VW Benito Tan, also of Labong 59, concluded, "You will see here the beauty once Masons and the law have come to work together."

Bro. Ko finally felt relieved. "We were moved to tears. Sister Jingjing relied on Robin's help for the daily household needs, what with a mother on a wheelchair and an autistic daughter. But bringing the killer to justice, through the combined efforts of Masons in and out of the police service, eased up the pain. This is a shining Masonic moment," he said. ❧



Up at the stage, Bro. Ko introduces before MW Alan Purisima, Outgoing GM, the PNP bros who helped solved the Robin Ong murder before presenting them special awards at the Grand Master's Night—Bros. Herculano Mago, Juris Cantori, and Dennis Rellata.

Acceptance speech of PGM apron, jewel and ring

by Alan LM Purisima, IPGM

To all the dignitaries herein assembled tonight, to our honored Past Grand Masters, y dear Brethren of this Grand Jurisdiction, fraternal greetings of peace and harmony! *Mapagpalang gabi sa inyong lahat, mga Kapatid ko sa Masonerya!*

Modesty aside, we have been recipients of various accolades, both in the public service and in our Masonic career. But I must admit that being awarded the Past Master's Apron Jewel and Ring is perhaps the most important tribute that a man and Mason may receive in his lifetime. There is no hard and fast rule on the meanings of the symbolisms of the Past Grand Master's Apron, Jewel and Ring. It may actually vary depending on how we attach interpretations to the mysteries of our symbols. Just the same, I can only surmise of one important symbolism for the recognition bestowed upon me tonight: **AFFIRMATION**. This is an affirmation of what we stood for and what we have done for the Fraternity in the preceding year. This is an affirmation that even if we may not have accomplished everything, we were able to make a difference in the lives of our brethren and in the welfare of Masonry in general. This is an affirmation that, in a great degree, we were able to translate into meaningful programs and worthy endeavors our thrust of genuine service, "*Serbisyong Makatotohanan para sa Kapatiran at Mamamayan.*"

I shall wear these Past Grand Master's Apron, Jewel and Ring with honor and humility, knowing that they came from you, my dear brethren. *Sila'y magpapaalala sa akin tuwina na minsan ko na rin kayong pinaglingkuran sa ating Kapatiran ng buong lakas at kakayanan. Hindi na natin maibalik ang nakalipas; subalit, ang pagkakataon na ito ay hindi ko makakalimutan habang panahon. Tatanawin kong utang na loob na ako binigyan ninyo ng pagkakataon na paglinkuran kayo.*

To the brethren who tirelessly and passionately worked during our term of office, I dedicate to you this recognition. Despite the challenges, you remained steadfast for what we believe is right, for what we believe is the truth. You are the inspiration that carried me on during our entire service to the Grand Lodge, our genuine service to Freemasonry.

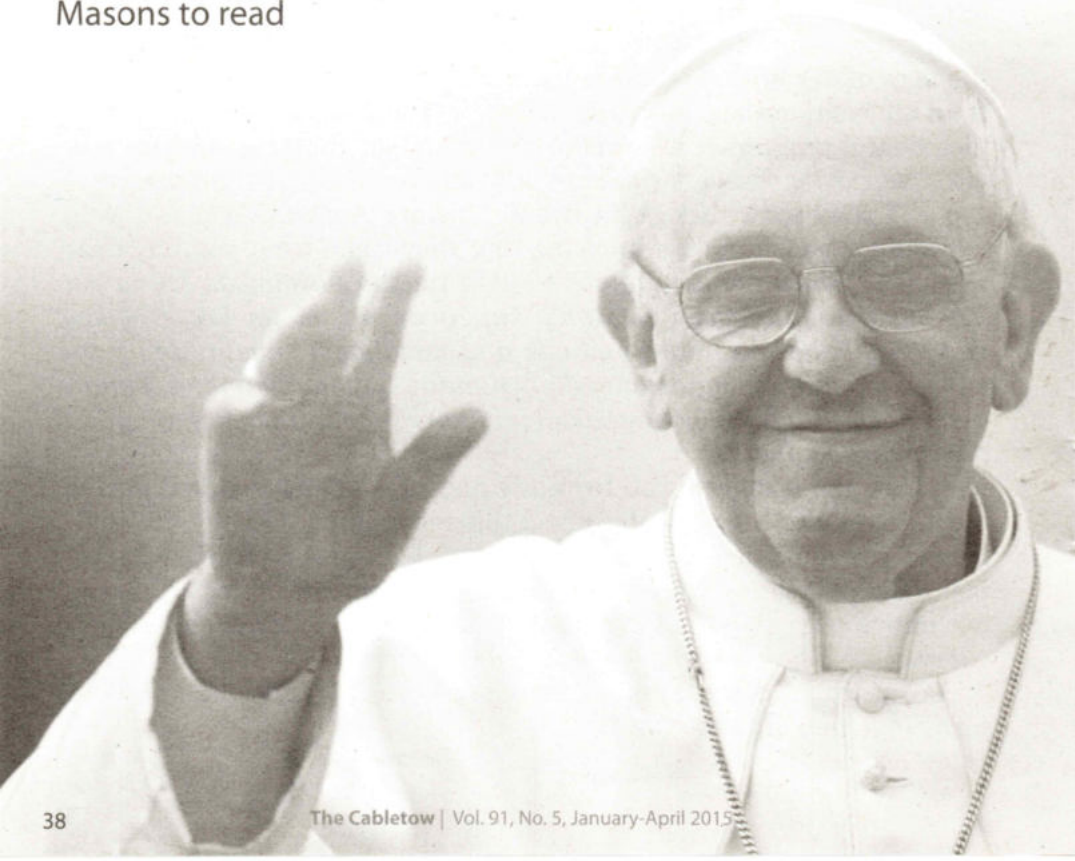
Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyo, mga Kapatid ko! Para po sa inyo ang lahat na ito.

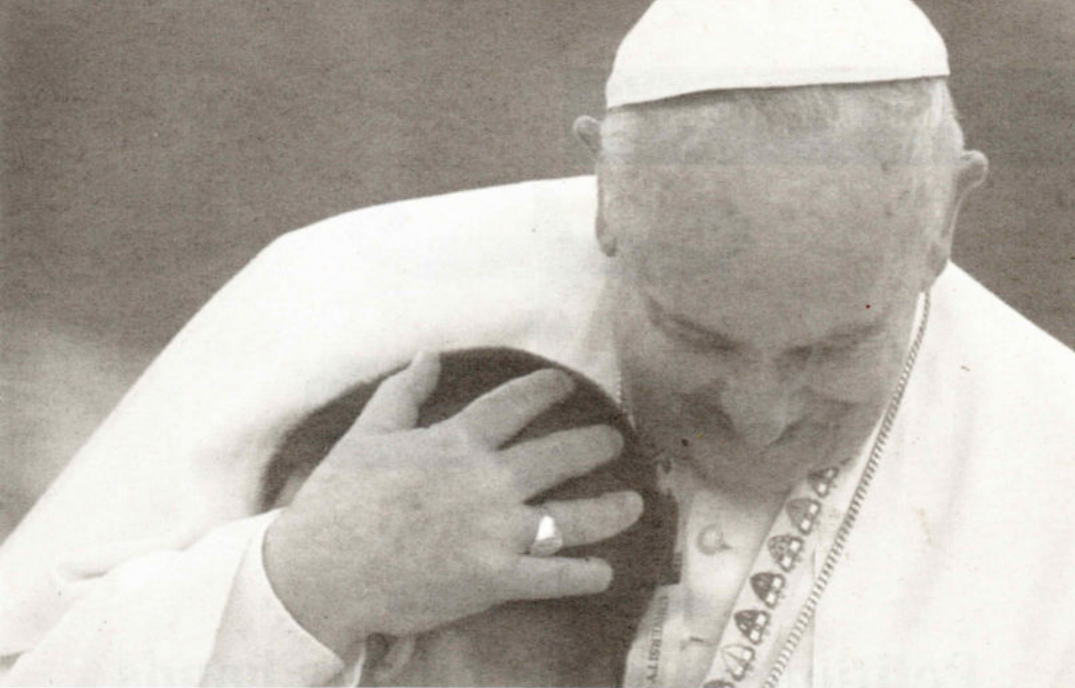
Statement on Pope Francis' visit to the Philippines

By Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno (ret.)

Pope Francis I, head of 1.2 billion Roman Catholics worldwide, thrilled Manila on his first state and pastoral visit to the Philippines on January 15. The third Roman Pontiff to visit the country drew a record 6 million people in the mass he celebrated in the rain-swept Quirino Grandstand. He capped his Philippine trip on the 17th with a visit to Tacloban and Palo in Leyte to comfort the victims of Typhoon Yolanda. His coming revitalized the faith and devotion of 80 million Filipino Catholics.

Not a Catholic, yet Past Grand Master Reynato Puno was moved himself to write his thoughts into a statement for all Masons to read



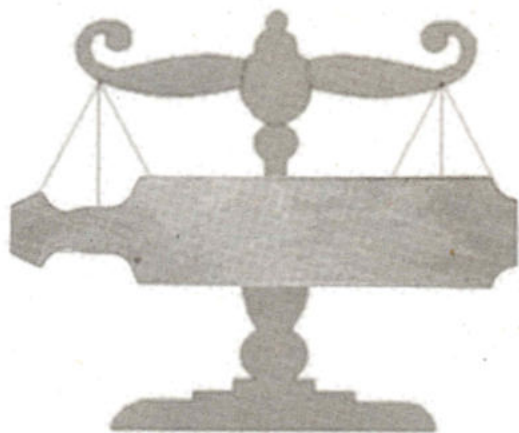


I am excited to see and hear Pope Francis I. I sincerely believe that Pope Francis I is a servant leader who can really contribute to the mitigation of the worsening problems of the world. For one, he is the head of more than 1 billion Catholic faithfuls scattered all over the world whose influence cannot be understated. For another, he has a good grip on the etiology of these worldwide problems of non-stop violation of human rights, stubborn poverty, scandalous corruption, ruling elites that overreach with greed, indifference to people down in the dumps, increasing terrorism, climate change, etc. And more importantly, he is a Pope who can goad us to goodness for he lives Christ's teachings and follows His call especially the call to look for the overlooked.

I view Pope Francis I as a modern sower of God's Words. In

truth, Pope Francis I will similarly be espousing Christ's social, political and economic creeds and will be iterating and reiterating Christ's solution to mankind's perennial problems --to live God's love if we want an earth without enmity and a neighborhood without enemy. I am sure Pope Francis I will be happier if our response to his call as a sower of God's Words is less by preparing for his physical comfort but more by preparing our hearts and cultivating minds to assure that God's Words will not keep falling on barren grounds. Our problem as a Christian nation has always been less knowing what to do with God's Words but in doing it.

All theologies to matter must end in doxology --- praising God for His everlasting mercy and compassion. ❖



Petitioners in the mighty hands of the brethren

By Ignacio E. Domingo, PM

Cabanatuan Lodge No. 53

Wondering what all the fuzz and caution and regulations for when conferring degrees? Then, read this eye-opening article written by a retired trial prosecutor.

Seldom could we find petitioner for the degrees of masonry gets through with conferral process unscathed and unharmed. In varying extent, candidates experience mishandling in the hands of the brethren. Others suffer humiliation in the course of the initiation, passing and raising.

Mindful of the possible dire consequences of this undesirable practice, the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines came up with Edict No. 131 and Edict No. 131-A. the aforesaid Edicts have come a long way in regulating the conduct of conferring degrees upon petitioners, apparently to forestall the happening of any untoward incident that may result therefrom. Paraphrased below are the salient features of the Edicts, thus:

EDICT NO. 131

HANDLING OF CANDIDATES DURING INITIATION, PASSING, AND RAISING

X X X X X X.

WHEREAS, it has been observed personally by responsible officers of the Grand Lodge, and brought to the attention of the Grand Master that certain officers or members of the conferring team given assignment during initiation, passing, and particularly in the raising of a candidate either because they are near the candidate or in the guise of performing their duties, have at time manhandled or maltreated candidates thereby inflicting bodily injuries to his person, or have given false and unauthorized instruction to the candidate intended to elicit humor or boisterous behavior at the expense of the candidate but which behavior tend to comedy thereby detracting from the solemnity of the proceedings, instead of venerating the symbolism behind the rituals;

X X X X X X.

NOW THEREFORE, I John L. Choa, Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines by virtue of the powers vested in me by the Constitution do hereby promulgate and decree:

1. A master mason who shall wound, beat, assault or otherwise maltreat or manhandle violently and excessively a candidate during initiation, passing or raising, whether or not as a member of the conferring team, shall be guilty or unmasonic conduct.
2. If in consequence of the maltreatment, the candidate dies or suffers serious physical injuries as likewise defined in the Revised Penal Code, the offenders shall suffer the penalty of

suspension for not less than six (6) months or more than one (1) year and/or deprivation of office or title.

3. If in consequence of the maltreatment, the candidate dies or suffers physical injuries as likewise defined in the Revised Penal Code, the offender shall suffer the penalty of expulsion without prejudice to the Lodge forfeiting its Charter and subject to charges and trial for unmasonic conduct and violation of this Edict against the Worshipful Master and other officers of the Lodge present during the incident leading to the physical injuries or death of the candidate.

X X X X X X.

4. A Master Mason who shall give unauthorized instructions to a candidate intended to elicit humor

or boisterous behavior at the expense of the candidate during initiation, passing or raising, shall be guilty of unmasonic conduct and shall be punished by suspension or reprimand.

X X X X X X.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of the Grand Lodge in the City of Manila, Philippines, this 6th day of July, 1990.

(Sgd.)
JOHN L. CHOA
Grand Master

Attest:

(Sgd.)
ROSENDO C. HERRERA, PGM
Grand Secretary

EDICT 131-A

STRENGTHENING EDICT 131
WHICH PRESCRIBES
THE PROPER HANDLING OF
CANDIDATES DURING
DEGREE CONFERRALS

WHEREAS, degree conferrals in Freemasonry should be solemn and serious because we are in the process of making such candidate or brother (Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft) a brother in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe.

WHEREAS, our rituals are

meant to effectively teach basic moral lessons. If the solemnity and seriousness is lost while horseplay and maltreatment prevails, our ancient and honorable institution will become no different than a college fraternity and we lose the meaning of our existence.

WHEREAS, Edict No. 131 was issued prohibiting maltreatment and humiliation of candidates and horse-play during degree conferrals and providing penalties for their violation. Such edict is in full force and effect and contained in our Constitution (Masonic Law Book Revised 1994).

WHEREAS, our current laws, Revised Penal Code and Republic Act No. 8049, otherwise known as the Anti-Hazing Act, provides for punishment to violators for committing certain acts that humiliate and/or cause injury.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICARDO P. GALVEZ, Grand Master of Masons in the jurisdiction of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers in me vested by the Constitution, do hereby promulgate and decree that:

1. Any member who places any candidate in any degree in some embarrassing or humiliating situations such as forcing him to do mental, silly, foolish and similar tasks or activities or otherwise subjecting him to physical or psychological suffering or injury shall be guilty

of unmasonic conduct.

- Lodge Officers shall ensure that they have full control over Degree Conferrals and shall be liable for any violation of such edict and law. District Deputy Grand Master, District Grand Lecturer and Grand Lodge Inspectors shall ensure that Edict No. 131 and this Edict are strictly complied with. Otherwise, they shall also be liable for failure to ensure that the conformity of Lodges in the Degree work prescribed by the Grand Lodge. Failure of such officers to attend and monitor Degree Conferrals does not excuse them from liability as they shall be considered as negligent in the performance of their duties.

X X X X X X X.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines at the City of Manila, this 29th day of March 2004.

(Sgd.)
RICARDO P. GALVEZ
Grand Master

ATTEST:

(Sgd.)
REYNOLD S. FAJARDO, PGM,
GMH
Grand Secretary

(Lifted from the Constitution of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines, pages 177 to 180)

Incidentally, the various acts penalized under Edict 131 and Edict 131-A of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines are substantially similar to the acts considered unlawful and penalized under Republic Act No. 8049, otherwise known as The Anti-Hazing Law. Thus, pertinent provisions of the law are quoted hereunder:

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8049

AN ACT REGULATING HAZING AND OTHER FORMS OF INITIATION RITES IN FRATERNITIES, SORORITIES, AND OTHER ORGANIZATION AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFORE

SECTION 1. Hazing as used in this Act is an initiation rite or practice as a prerequisite for admission into membership in a fraternity, sorority or organization by placing the recruit, neophyte or applicant in some embarrassing or humiliating situation such as forcing him to do menial, silly, foolish and similar tasks or activities or otherwise subjecting to physical or psychological suffering or injury.

X X X X X X X.

SECTION 4. If the person subjected to hazing or other forms of initiation rites suffers any physical injury or dies as a result thereof, the officers and members of the fraternity, sorority or organization who actually participated in the in-

fliction of physical harm shall be liable as principals. The person or persons who participated in the hazing shall suffer:

a) The penalty of reclusion perpetua if death, rape, sodomy or mutilation results therefrom.

b) The penalty of reclusion temporal in its maximum period if in consequence of the hazing the victim shall become insane, imbecile, impotent or blind.

c) The penalty of reclusion temporal in its medium period if in consequence of the hazing the victim shall have lost the use of speech or the power to hear or to smell or shall have lost an eye, a hand, a foot, an arm or a leg or shall have lost the use of any such member, or shall have become incapacitated for the activity or work in which he was habitually engaged.

d) The penalty of reclusion temporal in its minimum period if in consequence of the hazing the victim shall become deformed or shall have lost any other part of his body, or shall have lost the use thereof, or shall have been ill or incapacitated for the performance of the activity or work in which he has habitually engaged for a period of more than ninety (90) days.

e) The penalty of prison mayor in its maximum period if in consequence of the hazing the victim shall have been ill or incapacitated for the performance of the activity or work in which he was habitually engaged for more than thirty (30) days.

f) The penalty of prison mayor in its medium if in consequence of the hazing the victim shall have been ill or incapacitated for the performance of the activity or work in which he was habitually engaged for ten (10) days or more, or that the injury sustained shall require medical attendance for the same period.

g) The penalty of prison mayor in its minimum period if consequence of the hazing the victim shall have been ill or incapacitated for the performance on the activity or work in which he was habitually engaged from one (1) to nine (9) days, or that the injury sustained shall require medical attendance for the same period.

h) The penalty of prison correctional in its maximum period if in consequence of the hazing the victim shall sustained physical injuries which do not prevent him from engaging in his habitual activity or work nor require medical attendance.

x x x x x x x.

The presence of any person during the hazing is prima facie evidence of participation therein as a principal unless he prevented the commission of the acts punishable herein.

Approved: June 7, 1995

(Sgd.) FIDEL V. RAMOS
President of the Philippines”

DYING TO BELONG

The Dangers of Hazing



Both the Grand Lodge Edicts (Nos. 31 and 31-A) and the Anti-Hazing Law (Republic Act 8049) are punitive in character where every infraction would merit corresponding penalty.

The distinction, however, between them lies on the extent of the imposable penalties for every violation. While violation of the Edicts will result to mere administrative sanctions, such as reprimand, suspension, or expulsion against the offender, and possible forfeiture of the Lodge Charter, that of the Anti-Hazing Law imposes severe penalties of imprisonment in varying degrees against the perpetrators or violators.

It is worth mentioning, in this regard, that an offended candidate during conferrals of degrees in masonry can file separate complaints for violation of the Grand Lodge Edicts Nos. 131 and 131-A and

that of the Anti-Hazing Law (R.A. 8049) simultaneously. The legal principle of double jeopardy does not apply under the circumstances.

The provisions of the Grand Lodge Edicts Nos. 131 and 131-A and that of Republic Act No. 8049, intended to safeguard the prospective candidates for degrees in masonry, hopefully, would serve the purposes for which they were enacted if only to maintain the dignity and solemnity of the proceedings after all, the conferral processes are mere allegorical and are made use of to teach moral principles to the candidate. ❧

About the Author

Bro. Ignacio E. Domingo was formerly Prosecutor of the Cabanatuan City-Trial Court. He is a Past Master of Cabanatuan 53 in Nueva Ecija.

The "Protagoras"

Teaching virtues the Socratic way

By Edmund Coronel, PM



Masons looking for "advanced learning" in the First Degree must take effort to read this—and discover how Socrates runs deep in the Craft's moral philosophy.

Editor's Note

*This article relies on the W.R.M. Lamb translation. Hence, quotes are numbered accordingly after Lamb's manuscript. Source: **Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes**, Vol. 3 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1967.*

Check this out in the internet at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.

Making good men better is not a totally Masonic thing. Westerners looked back to the 5th century B.C. in Athens in Greece when the philosopher Socrates popped up in the scene.

Often, Socrates is credited for being one of the founders of Western philosophy. He exposed the intellectual frauds and even beat the best minds of his day by means of a systematically deductive reasoning that now bears his name. His ideas about good and right living put him in the light of a prototype Western saint—though many simply call it “ethics.”

Writing no manuscript or masterpiece himself, yet Socrates' life and thoughts survived in the recordings of his faithful scribe and student, Plato. Plato, in turn, wrote down his mentor's verbal jousts in simple transcriptions called “dialogue.”

Among the dialogues, the text titled Protagoras stands out as a classic on why and how to teach the virtues. Dropping by at the home of his friend Callias one day, Socrates chanced upon the Sophist teacher,

Protagoras, and grilled him on how to turn a good man better.

The exchanges that followed, rich with verities, are as relevant as they have been two and a half thousand years ago.

Philosopher mason

More than Masons care to know, Socrates runs deep in the fabric of Masonry's moral philosophy. But what gives, what takes, to learn Socrates for the purposes of the Craft?

A lot.

The idea had never struck this writer until he was tripped by a line in the Second Degree Lecture saying, “To the Greeks, therefore, and not to the Romans, we are indebted to what is great, judicious and distinct in architecture.”

“What better Western philosophic figure there is than Socrates who has blazed open the trail of moral philosophy himself? He was an operative mason.”

History makes no secret about Ancient Rome being an overgrown Athens. The city rose to the heights of a thousand-year empire albeit on things and thoughts pirated from the Ancient Greeks—architecture included.

But where Masonic Geometry hints at “moral geometry,” the

Second Degree architecture similarly alludes to “moral architecture.” Now, what better Western philosophic figure there is than Socrates who has blazed open the trail of moral philosophy himself? He was an operative mason.

Son of a sculptor, Socrates—born in 469 B.C.—took after his father’s stone carving trade. Tradition points to the philosopher as the sculptor of the Three Graces statues that once stood near the Acropolis until the 2nd century A.D.

He also served courageously in the infantry as a lance-jabbing hoplite. He even saved the aristocrat Alcibiades from death who later rose to become one of Athens’ important general, orator and statesman.

Married, Socrates was a father to three sons. He was in his forties when he was bitten by the bug and turned to teaching philosophy.

For all his profound influences in both ancient and modern philosophy, Socrates enjoys a status of a poster model for Western cultural and intellectual development. But his looks are far from cute or chic. Excavated mosaics and surviving manuscripts commonly portrayed him pop eyed and snub-nosed.

Educational investment

Europe looks up to Ancient Greece for first causes and deep groundbreaking thoughts. The Greece of Socrates’ heyday served as a handy template for Western civi-

lization. Athens even provided the model for modern democracy—and ancient customs that Freemasonry would later adopt.

Well-off Athenian families sent their sons to reputable teachers for education—since only the moneyed Greeks could afford to pay for education. Or had the need for it.

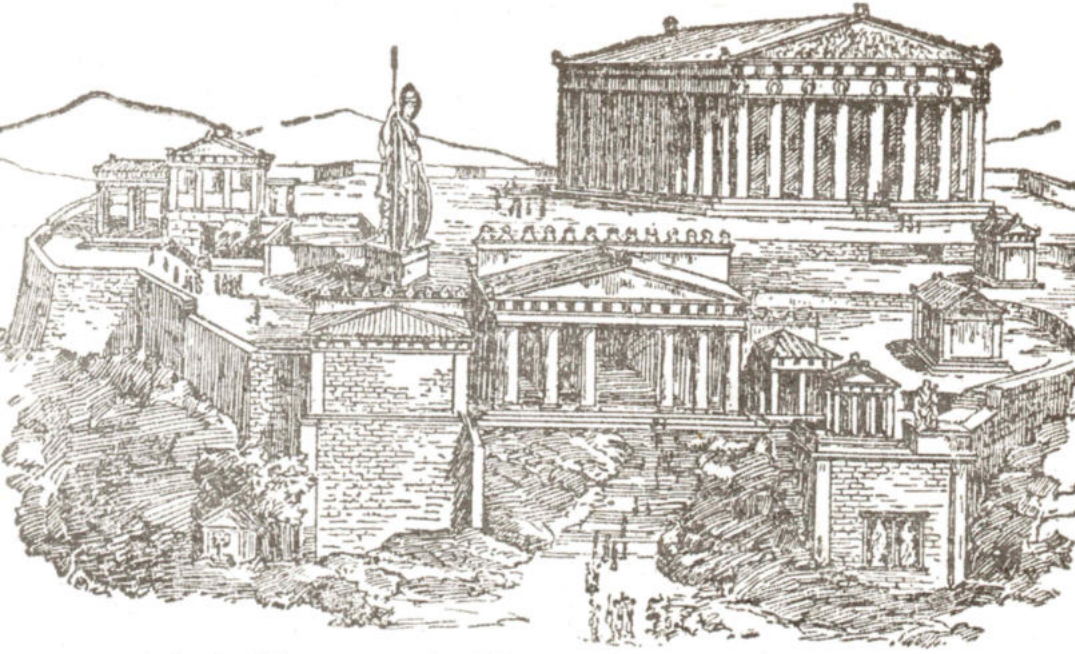
Education, during Socrates’ time, consisted of literacy, literature, arithmetic, music and physical training. It would take a hundred years more before a curriculum on the arts (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and sciences (arithmetic, music, astronomy and geometry) emerged.

These arts and sciences comprised what we call the “liberal arts” today.

“Since virtues ought to be taught, virtues therefore must come in the form of knowledge. It cannot be grasped by man in any other way.”

If the rich and famous were serious about education, it was because education had kept them on top of the pile. Schools equipped them with the practical know-hows in getting ahead in life—to take part in public debates, defend one’s self in court, serve in juries, and hold command positions in the army.

Athenian politics, after all, was ran by the citizens which meant “freeborn individuals.” And these were the aristocrats that wielded the



Ancient Athens was cradle of Western civilization.

power and the well-heeled manning the military, courts, bureaucracy and legislature. Slaves and aliens were many but barred from political life.

Passing skills, like the arts or sciences, was easy. But shaping the rich spoiled brats into men—men bound for public or political careers—required something else. They must become “virtuous men.”

For the Greeks, “virtue” (or *aretē*) meant “excellence.” The marks of excellence covered temperance, courage, justice, holiness and wisdom—the last, the most valued virtue.

Greek men entering the public career must come under the label of all, or any of these virtues, to win acceptance and succeed. Regardless, it still pays to be virtuous once it has brought “pleasure to yourself and honor to your family.”

Teaching virtues

Amid this setting came Protagoras—the namesake of the text. He is the first and one of the finest of his class of Sophists or “wise men” (from the Greek word *sophia* or “wisdom”).

Sophists are itinerant teachers, sometimes intellectuals, who often flocked to Athens. They offered Greek teenage boys from wealthy families practical education in virtues for a considerable fee. Among the wares peddled by Protagoras were courses on rhetoric, public speaking and skills that come handy for a successful public life. He is a specialist in political career development than in philosophical.

Protagoras struck it rich. Soon, succeeding Sophists exploited the opulent and newfound market—but much to the decline of the pro-

fession. Second-rate Sophist sold made-easy courses on PR and public persuasion that rely on fallacious reasoning and intellectual bluffs. In time, the clients saw into the con jobs. What prestige sophism had enjoyed was blackened by charges of deception for big but easy money. Socrates was the first to see into this trend years ahead. Suspicion pushed him to lock Protagoras mano-a-mano into an intellectual battle.

While on his Athenian tour, the already famous Protagoras boarded with Socrates' friend, Callicles. Easily, he rounded up 21 heads and begun holding classes.

Not until Socrates saw another friend, Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus, rushing madly to catch Protagoras, the "wisest man" on earth, deliver a lecture. [309 c-d].

Hippocrates signed up for the class because he wanted to become "a man of respect in the city." [316c] Doubtful, Socrates slipped into his sandals and went to check for himself why the Sophist had been hailed by all Athens as the "preceptor of Greek culture and virtue." [349a]

Coming face to face with Protagoras, Socrates expressed his doubt clearly: do Sophists like him really teach virtues to their students? It bugged him to know that buying education from the Sophists is like buying food and drinks from the market or roadside. Consuming them without first consulting a doctor could make the body sick as much as bring harm to the "soul." [313a-314b]

Take notice: Socrates was

gunning not for the heart, mind or stomach but the soul.

His hubris ruffled, Protagoras refuted Socrates. First, he claimed that Hippocrates is a good and malleable material himself. Intelligent, the boy even came from a "great and prosperous family." Second, he was equipped with all the professional expertise that would allow Hippocrates, at the end of his studies, to "go away a better man." [318a-d]

Socrates had Protagoras set up right where he wanted. The Sophist laid claim to pedagogical mastery. The philosopher wanted proof of his teaching proficiency. So, Socrates raised the question: Can we teach virtue in the first place? Is it really possible to make good men better by certain formula, method



Tradition says that Socrates carved a fine statue of the Three Graces like above that stood near Acropolis.

or technique? [319a-320b]

So began the first part of the discourse.

Unity of virtues

Rather than give a straight “yes” or “no” answer, Protagoras reached back to mythology. He told the story of the Creation in an eloquent but long-winded tale—a true mark of a Sophist.

In sum, he pointed out that the gods handed out virtues—like shame and justice—to enable men to live together in cities in peace. But sadly, virtues came to each man in different measures. Hence, the expertise of teachers like him was required to supplement everyone’s share.

If not, city-dwellers would be overrun by wild and destructive passions and there goes law, order and life.

Socrates agreed. There must be teachers. But it didn’t settle the question. It only raised the discourse one level up. Since virtues ought to be taught, virtues therefore must come in the form of knowledge. It cannot be grasped by man in any other way.

Protagoras offered no resistance. So, Socrates went next for the make of virtues.

Since all excellence comes from the god Zeus, the philosopher asked, then what does it make out of virtue? Is virtue made of one thing? Or several things? Is virtue like an indivisible golden bowl or vase that has been cast from a single mold?

Or is it like a human face made up of distinct and different organs so as to complete what we call a “face” [329d]

Protagoras safely answered that virtue is one thing—but with many parts.

Socrates showed next what Protagoras’ answer meant. Where virtues are unevenly distributed, complexity happens. So, there are brave men but unjust. There are just men but not wise.

“For Socrates, it is neither power or wealth that brings about human excellence but virtue. It resides in the soul, the *anima vitae* or human life principle.”

And since virtues are only parts of a whole, Socrates went on, yet they are not equal in value. In fact, of all the virtues embraced by the Greeks—knowledge, justice, courage, temperance and holiness—wisdom enjoyed the highest approval ratings in all Athens. [330a]

Protagoras stalled. The unity of virtues he had advanced earlier (“one thing with many parts”) overwhelmed him. Not because he was wrong; rather, he didn’t understand virtues himself. Hence, he couldn’t tie up his early claims altogether at this point. He ended up blabbering his way out of the fix.

This annoyed Socrates. The discourse was going nowhere.

So, the philosopher cut in. He set three conditions before resuming the discourse: first, to briefly state all premises, inquiries and replies; second, to follow a question-and-answer format in a give-and-take manner; and third, to tighten the discourse only within the limits of the subject without dragging irrelevant references into the talk.

These conditions were to become known as the “Socratic method.”

Courage

Soon, the discourse regained its balance. Socrates made it easier for Protagoras by rephrasing his question: are wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, and holiness attached to one and same thing? Or are they differentiated by distinct nature and function from one another? [349b]

Protagoras replied that “while four of them are fairly on a par with each other, courage is something vastly different from all the rest” because it involves “bodily strength.” [349d]

To complicate matters, he went on, courage is exhibited not only by the noble but also by the vicious, the ignorant and the unholy.

Here, Protagoras was making headway. Clearly, he wrenched courage away from the unity of virtues. Not because he was wrong. Rather, he was relying on tradition for reason.

Before Socrates’ time, the virtues were predominantly asso-

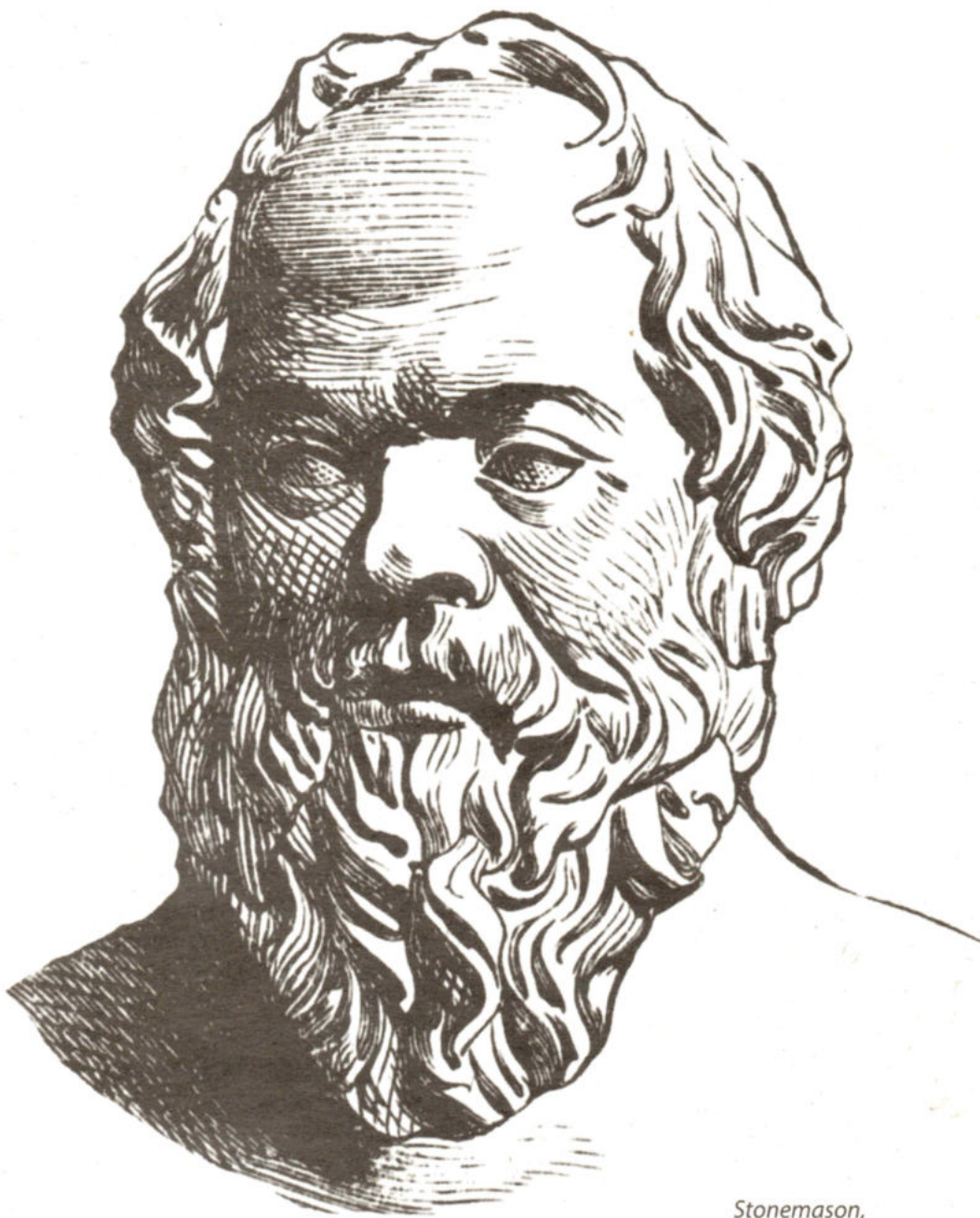
ciated with warrior virtues such as courage and physical strength. But with the coming of democracy, and Athen’s rise to imperial power, disposition shifted and such virtues came to mean as the ability to win people over by persuasion. But even if Protagoras had detached courage from the rest, he went on to justify courage as knowledge. Knowing courage as virtue, he said, tends a man to audacity or “spirit-edness” (which inspires bravery). Not knowing it gives rise to sheer madness (which twists courage to something else). [350b ff] Totally refuting knowledge as virtue leads to fear or cowardice (which is just the opposite of courage).

Protagoras was right—but not totally right. He was correct in justifying courage as knowledge. But he was wrong to cut off courage from the unified field of virtues. He saw courage as all muscles, not mettle.

By this perception, he was saying that virtues are not matters of the soul but of something else.

Tradition pressed Protagoras to refute himself on the unity of virtues. This is bad news for all Sophists in Greece. If a virtue like courage is no longer a matter of the soul anymore but of bodily strength, then acquiring it is achievable by other means like by daily nutrition or gym exercises. This makes the gym instructor, army cook or mess hall sergeant as good as any Sophist to teach virtues.

By his own reason, Protagoras was setting up his class at Callias’ home for a shutdown. Athens



*Stonemason,
soldier, philosopher—the
snub-nosed Socrates
properly fits the bill of a
Masonic hero.*

needs no learned Sophist teachers like him anymore. If that is so, what happens then to his earlier claim about the function of Sophist teachers to balance the virtues that Zeus has unevenly distributed among men for a harmonious existence in this world?

Socrates cornered Protagoras. The Sophist, in turn, lamely admitted that courage is both nature (i.e. bodily strength) and nurture (i.e. cultivation of knowledge). [351b] Pathetic, yet he was stubborn even in defeat.

Socrates was a genius. He was not telling the answers. He was drawing the answers out from his adversary's mouth.

Recap: Socrates

In recap, Protagoras lost the first half. He wasn't the hack that the succeeding punk Sophists would become. But his rhetorical skills were no match to the sharp and straight shots of Socrates.

Socrates actually jumped on Protagoras fast and hard right at the start, allowing him to score big on three hits. First, he whacked Protagoras with so absolute a thing as the "soul." Materialism was flooding Athens all around. The Sophists were playing to the vanities of the rich and powerful. But for Socrates, it is neither power or wealth that brings about human excellence but virtue. It resides in the soul, the *anima vitae* or human life principle. It is so basic, so central, so crucial that it constitutes the core of man's

existence—but so vulnerable, too.

Hence, the philosopher likened the Sophist merchandise to a germs-ridden street food that infects the soul and wears and tears virtues away.

"The unified field implies that virtues are closely linked and related—and wisdom holds them altogether. No wonder why the Ancient Greeks highly prized wisdom."

Second, Socrates pinned down Protagoras when he set the principle that "virtue—all virtues—is knowledge." Virtues are many. But we spot one from the rest, how else but, by knowing its attributes. So we know "temperance," for instance, by associating it with restraint.

Besides attributes, the opposite also presents knowledge. So, for temperance, we get the opposite which is "excess." Where restraint is to temperance, immoderation therefore is to excess.

Protagoras paid no heed the first time he kissed the canvass. When he mismatched courage for the obsolete muscle, Socrates easily locked him down. If he didn't see it coming, it was because Protagoras didn't know how a teacher ought to think and teach.

Third, the fight was all but predictable until Socrates finally took control of the ring when he laid down the principle of the "unity of

virtues.” We casually assume that a person can be wise, for instance, without being temperate. But wisdom and temperance share the same opposite: folly. So, how can a person be wise when he lacks normal restraint, good sense and foresight? In short, one cannot practice temperance without practicing wisdom, too—and vice versa.

The unified field implies that virtues are closely linked and related—and wisdom holds them altogether. No wonder why the Ancient Greeks highly prized wisdom.

Since then, Protagoras had played into Socrates’ game plan.

Recap: Protagoras

Protagoras’ liking for flourish, on the other, greatly impaired his precision. He danced around and far from the issue so much so that Socrates called for a break, laid down the rules and restored order.

Seemingly, rhetoric was Protagoras’ weapon and cover at once against Socrates’ razor-sharp strikes. The Sophist came in short supply against the philosopher’s variety of ammo.

When the fight resumed, Protagoras tried delivering a coup. His justification of courage as knowledge was a resounding hit. But courage, being distinct from other virtues, missed. Tradition tangled his reason.

Teaching his pupils to gratify the public to be successful, he himself gratified convention than accept what is oddly or strangely

new but true. Not that Protagoras was a blockhead. Rather, he based his ethical truths on what the clan, tribe or state upholds to be true. He was relativistic where Socrates was absolute and universal.

But Protagoras wasn’t all flops and misses. He scored big in the end when he admitted that virtue, like courage, is both nature (i.e. bodily strength) and nurture (i.e. cultivation of knowledge). This was revolutionary for his time.

Athens widely believed that only men of aristocratic birth were qualified for virtues education and public position. By his admission, Protagoras advanced the contrary idea that excellence is the outcome of education, not birth. Craftsmen and artisans, once given a good education, can be as good as any Athenian orator or Greek statesman.

If anything, Protagoras and the first-rate Sophists after him were democratizing education and consequently, the political system.

It also answered Socrates’ challenge if good men can be made better.

Measuring art

With Protagoras finally picking up, Socrates switched to the second part of the discourse. Here, he laid down the means to achieve virtues. Or by how Protagoras could make his lectures doable.

They agreed on the premises first. What the masses or the common people deemed a good life is “pleasant” and a bad life, “unpleas-

ant." Pleasure makes life pleasant; pain, bad.

So, where "the pleasant is the good," "pleasure" makes life good. [351b-e]

Socrates upped the discourse's level. He led Protagoras into the tricky side of pleasure and pain.

Some things that looked pleasurable at first, he said, are actually painful in the end. It troubled him to know how passion, pleasure, pain, fear, even love, have stifled knowledge, reducing men to powerless "slaves" [352c]. Nobody could be more at risk than the sensuous and the worldly who have been "overcome by pleasure." [352c]

Flitting, yet comforts, lusts and delusions blinded them to lapse into wicked ways. The payback—poverty, disease and despair—are more enduring than say, all the orgasmic or vainglorious sensations experienced in a lifetime. And by all means, they are "painful" in the end. [353c-d ff]

Now, he went on, certain pain widely held as "unpleasant" are actually "good" like military service for the defense of a city, or medical surgery for the cure of diseases and bodily injuries. [354a]

If certain men were addicted to debasing pleasures, Socrates believed they were "being overcome by pleasure." They were so trapped in a sensuous and worldly cesspool that they "do evil despite knowledge of its being evil." [355c]

Why so? These kind of men were banking on a wrong-headed

calculus of "getting the greater evil in exchange for the lesser good." [355e] What brought them into this sad state was the "power of appearance" [356d] which had blinded them at first and tripped them into the murky pit. It begun as an attraction, deepening in time into a ravishing desire—all without thought of the value or consequence of the craziness that had seized them.

Bad guys are as blind as bats. But good and smarter guys go for the "art of measurement." [356d] Deep and cautious, they never jumped into anything without first taking stock of what they must give or take.

Protagoras threw in the towel at this point. He fully agreed with Socrates. Life depends on the "choices" we make [357a-b]—but only after employing the "art of measurement." It shows us the "truth." When it does, it brings "our soul into the repose of abiding by the truth, and so would have saved our life." [356e]

The discourse drew to a close. Socrates finally announced what he had been saying all this time: "that there is nothing stronger than knowledge, and that knowledge, wherever it may be found, has always the upper hand of pleasure or anything else." [357c]

In turn, Protagoras acknowledged Socrates as an admirable and exceptional opponent. He predicted that the snub-nosed and pop-eyed philosopher would become one of the wisest men alive. [361e] ❖

Lessons from the *Protagoras*

Finally coming across the *Protagoras*, we pick ten important points which count importantly in the conduct of our daily lives as well as in the Craft.

1. Socrates is the exemplary Mason. Socrates is both a philosopher and stonemason. If we are going to search for a real Masonic hero in the antiquity, he is it.

With a brilliant mind and upright character, he passed to the world sagely ideas which have steered the course of Western civilization for over 2½ thousand years now.

Long dead but his thoughts live well with us today from our homes to schools, churches, city halls, workplaces and even in the evening prime-time news.

For all his care and concern about the soul, he left behind high-minded but doable thoughts “that bear(s) the nearest resemblance or affinity to that Supreme Intelligence which pervades all nature, which will never, never, never die.”

2. Never never mess with the soul. Wonder why Masons placed so great an importance on the human soul? Because Socrates did so—even before the Church had.

For Socrates, the actuating cause and end of human existence is the soul by “which you value much more highly than your body, and on which depends the good or ill condition of all your affairs, according as it is made better or worse.” [Pro 313a]

All his thoughts about good and right living are directed to the proper care and nurture of this animating principle in man.

So crucial, even inviolable, is the soul to Socrates so that he has said once, in another dialogue (*Gorgias*), that he prefers to suffer injustice than commit injustice himself. Doing one severely injures the soul.

3. Education penetrates the soul. Socrates’ later successor, Aristotle, said “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”

Education is not just a brain process. It is total. It must come in double combination of heart and mind to impact and permeate every fiber of the soul. Once it sinks, learning stays permanently.

4. Never get tricked by the externals. Go for internal qualifica-

tions. Understand that Protagoras was also a businessman. He was Cora Doloroso and Speech Power rolled into one. He was selling skills—political skills—for a substantial fee. But it riled Socrates to know that the Sophist's promise of greatness didn't match his price and services. That would make Protagoras a fraud.

At Socrates' slight inspection, Protagoras' curriculum crumbled for lack of foundation.

Not a mercenary, yet Protagoras' service to two masters—money and knowledge—clouded his priorities. His product, which was knowledge, suffered in turn. Expediency glossed over the flaws in his courses. The Sophist is relying on appearances.

Hence, all acclaim about Protagoras" being the "wisest man alive" and "master of Greek virtues and culture" were marketing hype.

Even the student Hippocrates was judged by appearances alone for being "wealthy and well-qualified."

5. Virtues make up one unified field—all held together by wisdom. To say "unified field" means that all the elements in a set or group worked as they are linked together by a common thread. Temperance, prudence and fortitude are three different virtues. But restraint runs common to all of them. Self-interest motivates self-control for prudence; appetite for temperance; and adversity for fortitude.

Subjection of passions is the function of virtues. Knowing what

risk or prize is at stake tells the degree of restraint that needs applying. Judging how much restraint is necessary is wisdom.

6. Virtue is knowledge. For Socrates, nothing beats knowledge. It always has the upper hand of everything anytime anywhere.

How well we are familiar with the attributes, even with the opposites of virtues, is knowledge. So, we come to know that restraint, for instance, works for piety as much as fortitude. Fortitude, as well as prudence, relies on foresight. Knowledge comes especially handy in complex situations.

Ideals like strength and beauty are beneficial. But without knowledge, they can be harmful, too. Even love, held up as the greatest of virtues, can bring injury if not accompanied by knowledge.

Knowledge works hand in hand with wisdom. In another dialogue (*Apology*), Socrates said that "To know, is to know that you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge."

Commonly termed as the "Socratic ignorance," this confuses many first-time philosophy aficionados. Socrates holds many strong convictions about what makes for an ethical life. But he hasn't detailed how come these convictions are true or workable. Yet, repeated discourses and inquiries afforded him to improve and refine his convictions.

By himself alone, Socrates knows nothing. But discourses tested, broadened and deepened what little knowledge he has. The

exchange of thoughts—especially valuable thoughts—brings him wisdom.

7. Virtue is teachable. Hand it to Protagoras for admitting that virtue is not just nature but moreover, nurture. The gods might have distributed virtues unevenly in this world. But the Sophist yet believes that education can level the proportions among men. Unwittingly, he is advocating for the equality of men.

Protagoras' revolutionary idea made its comeback in Europe in the late 17th century. The stifling regime dominated by the traditional Church and Crown drove the Enlightenment philosophers to come out crying for the prevalence of reason transmittable through education.

To claim that virtue is teachable is democratic. But then again, it is Socratic. "Making good men better" connotes the progressive self-development Socrates prescribes to all men.

9. Learning the good and the bad is the way to do right.

Socrates holds an optimistic view of people. He said that nobody commits mistake knowingly. When one commits a wrong, the failure is attributable to the person's ignorance about what is right. [352c, 358b-b]

If he knows what is right, then he would have done the correct thing in the first place.

Similarly, nobody commits mistake willingly. Even if one com-

mits a wrong, despite claiming his error to be correct at the time of the act, he is yet ignorant of what is right.

Hence, for Socrates, doing wrong is an intellectual error. It's either one knows the law or not. But still, ignorance of the law is not an excuse to commit a crime. A weak will "overcome by pleasure" does not hold ground. Worse, the calculus of "greater evil for lesser good" only reveals the deeper ignorance of the doer.

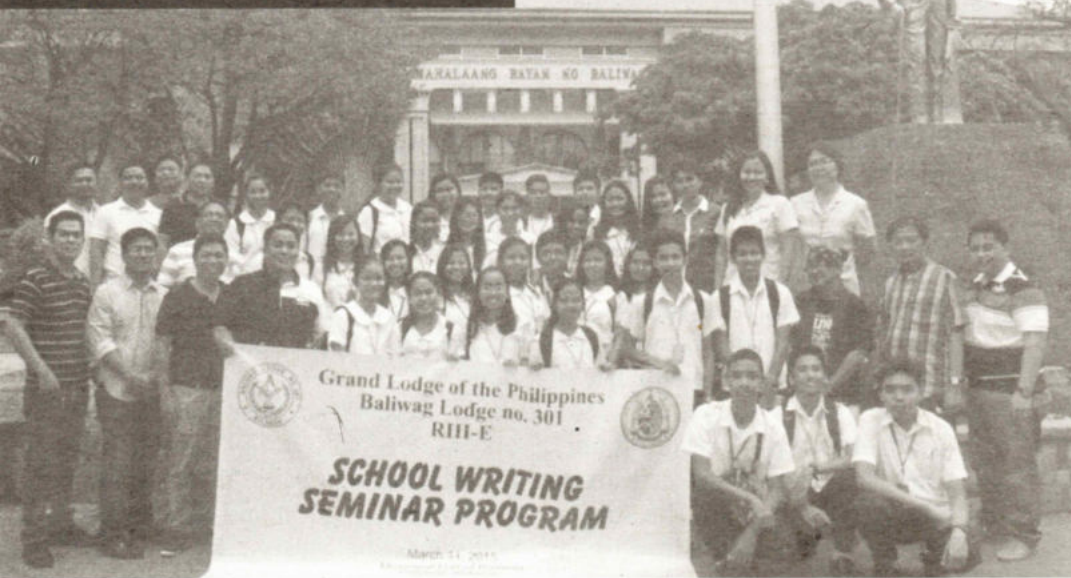
Education, therefore, is the only way to stay out of trouble. After all, Socrates said "that whoever learns what is good and what is bad will never be swayed by anything to act otherwise than as knowledge bids, and that intelligence is a sufficient succor for mankind." [Pro 352c]

10. Make choices that are closest to the truth.

Protagoras had never been more correct when he concluded that life rests on choices a man makes. Despite all the pitfalls in this world, yet one can safely tread by employing the "art of measurement." Measures must always come closest to what is permanently true or real, of course. Only then will one find peace and his soul, secured.

Socrates, however, never elaborated on this method. But where Socrates ran short, Freemasonry supplied the tools and means for moral measurement.

Since the Craft supplements where the philosopher lacks, is Freemasonry structured after the Socratic philosophy or not? ❖



Baliwag 301 hands out “light” via school writing seminar-workshop

Where Masons often flocked to public schools for Balik-Eskwela projects in June, the bros of Baliwag 301 in Bulacan delivered their educational project at the end of school year in March—and it was not even school supplies but knowledge.

On March 11, Baliwag 301 rounded up thirty student participants from the local Mariano Ponce National High School (MPNHS) in the Conference Room of the Baliwag Municipal Hall for a 1-day “School Writing Seminar Program.”

“School materials like pens and notebooks are consumable after a few months,” said Jay Villanga,

current Worshipful Master of Baliwag 301. “But once you give knowledge, it lasts for a lifetime.”

Surprisingly, the serious task of handing out knowledge turned out to be an adrenaline-driven but rollicking event at once.

Untrodden path

In February, WM Villanga huddled with this writer to lay out the lodge’s plan and weigh its doability. Trimmed and simplified, the project was cleared to go.

Next, the 301 bros searched

for a project beneficiary. It was easy. They went to see Dr. Ernesto Dizon, principal of MPNHS, Baliuag's premier public high school of 65 years. Noteworthy, a number of 301 bros are MPNHS alumni.

Informed, Dr. Dizon wanted to step up the program even more. Originally, it had been planned for writing bugs across the grade levels wishing for a quick and leisurely grasp of literary genres and corresponding writing techniques.

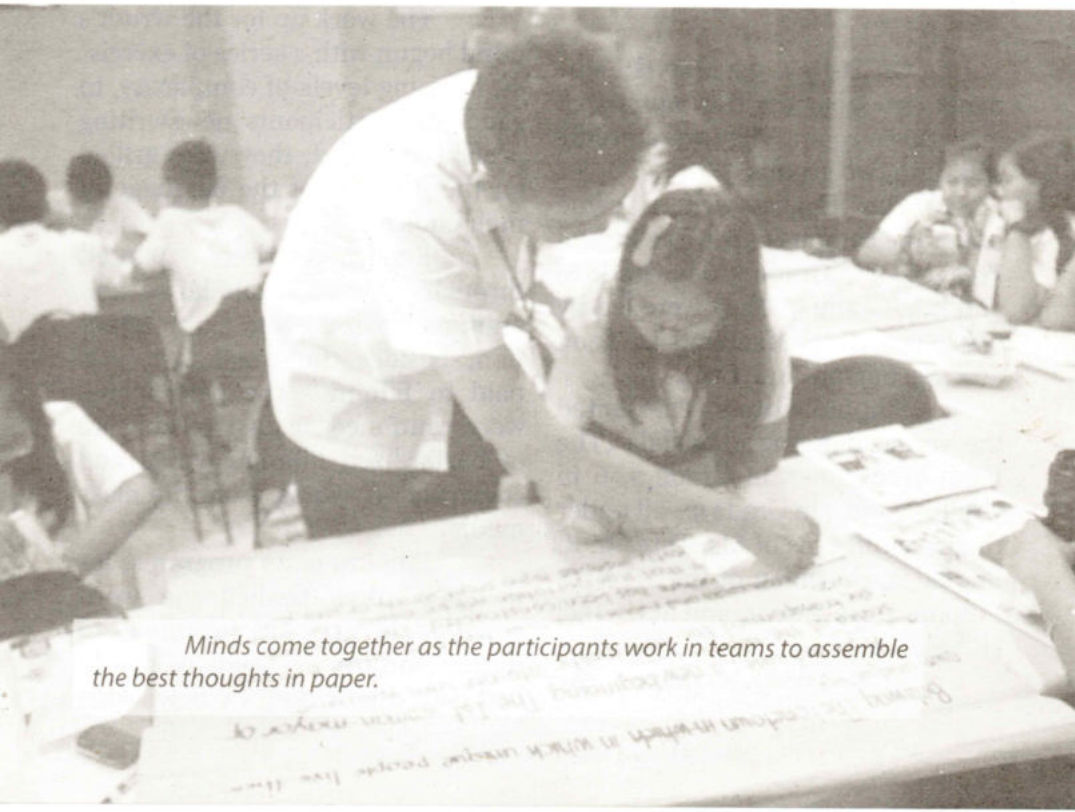
Instead, he asked for a more intensive program fit for the advanced staff members of the campus' papers.

The program was sent back to the drawing board. But the 301 bros lost no time to see Baliuag Mayor Carolina Dellosa, wife of Bro. James Dellosa of Cebu.

This very supportive sister okayed the use of the town hall's conference room and equipments. After all, the youth and student sector figures importantly in the national local government unit (LGU) programs.

If the 301 bros were persistent, they had other reasons in mind besides the simple handing of knowledge. The writing seminar came as a spin-off of Baliwag Lodge's 2014 funeral tribute to the town's foremost hero and Mason, Illus. Bro. Mariano Ponce, one of the propagandista triumvirates along with Illus. Bro. Marcelo del Pilar and Jose Rizal.

"No project can be more appropriate than a writing seminar," said WM Villangca. "We impart useful and invaluable knowledge to public school students free of charge



Minds come together as the participants work in teams to assemble the best thoughts in paper.

while we simultaneously commemorate with pride the legacy of La Solidaridad editor Mariano Ponce.” Clearly, the lodge project stood on firm community foundations—the youth, public education, the LGU and history. But the bros were uncertain on how an untested program would turn out yet.

Bilingual, the seminar-workshop was to cater to two distinct set of writers at once—English and Filipino writers. Each unique, yet each was to come under inspection and training all in one session.

Never in recent memory had the 301 bros heard of any Masonic school project like a writing seminar. If there was none, then Baliwag 301 would be the first to blaze the untrodden path open.

Work up

On D-Day, 30 MPNHS students trooped to the municipal conference room. They were evenly split into two groups.

The English-writers came under the campus paper The Buntal Weaver—4 in Grade 7, 6 in Grade 8, and 5 in Grade 9. They were led by teacher-advisers Ms. Boots De Leon and Ms. Sarrah Jane Cruz.

Filipino writers represented the vernacular Ang Maglalala (The Palm Weaver)—5 in Grade 7, 6 in Grade 8, and 4 in Grade 9—all under the watchful eyes of Ms. Teresita R. Fundales, chairman of the MPNHS Filipino Department, and Ms. Ethel H. Valencia.

After saying a prayer, the

program kicked off with an introduction of this writer by WB Noel Yero, IPM. No sooner had the tempo shifted from low to high gear.

The participants were made to realize the wider opportunities they enjoy than their predecessors. Publishing a book had been every writer’s dream before. But the internet changed that. A couple of today’s popular teen flicks, for instance, were lifted from serialized waptopad novels authored by teenagers.

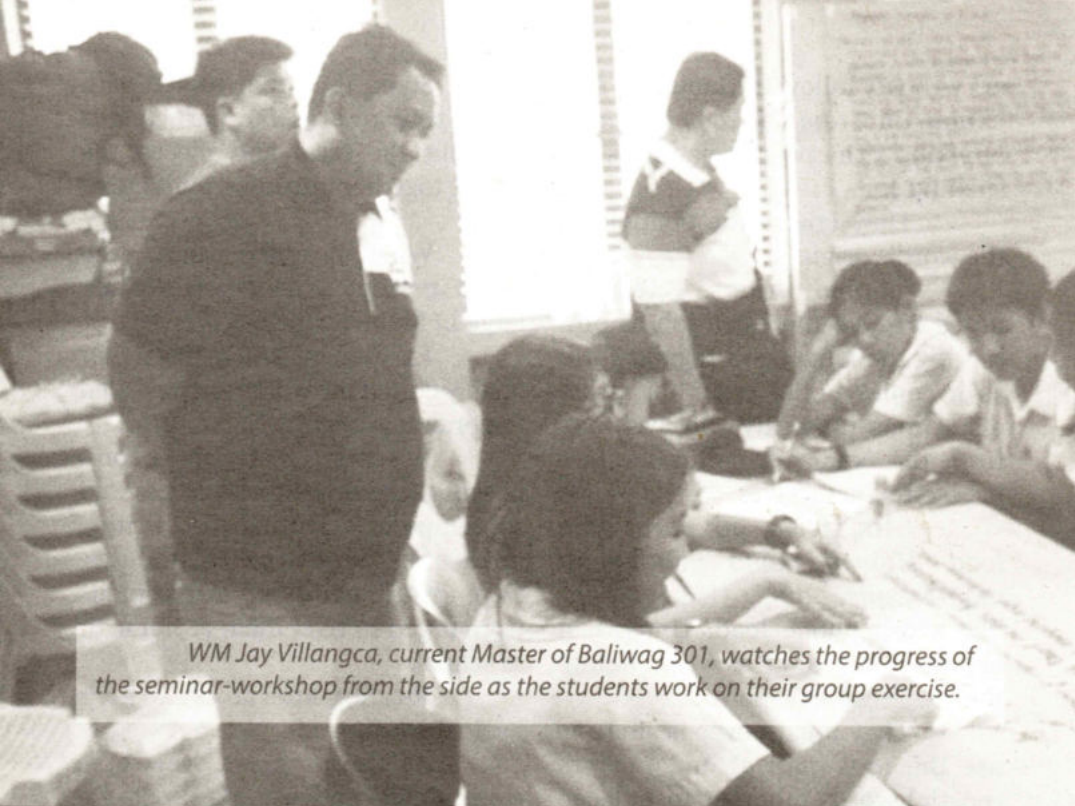
But whether one writes for money, school grade, social networking or sheer pleasure, writers must never forget: a good manuscript is a reflection of a good mind; bad manuscript, bad mind.

If anything, writing is not just a craft or job. It is a handy mental discipline for all people of all ages and walks of life.

The work up for the writer’s mind begun with a series of exercises, in rising levels of complexity, to gauge the participants’ newswriting proficiency. Next, they were grilled on the nuances of the language of their choice.

English writers plowed through idioms, vocabularies and grammar basics. But extra attention, besides the usual test, was paid to Filipino. The participants were cautioned against picking up of bastardized Filipino words and construction, worse, from the mass media.

Filipino news programs, for instance, often flashed the word *otoridad* in graphics headlines to mean “authority”—when it should have been *awtoridad*. TV news writ-



WM Jay Villangca, current Master of Baliwag 301, watches the progress of the seminar-workshop from the side as the students work on their group exercise.



The students engaged in lively, even animated, brainstorming over a news assignment they have been assigned to write.

ers wrongly follow the language rule "*Kung ano ang bigkas, siya ang baybay.*" (The pronunciation is the speliing.).

They ignore the etymology, the word's origin.

Filipino writers were then urged to take the extra job of preserving the language's regular form as it comes under wide and gross distortions presently—no less than from the country's cultural establishments themselves.

"Ang wika ay para ding load. Huwag mong gamitin at mag-e-expire din," (Language is like a cell phone load. Unused, it expires, too.) said this writer before the giggling participants.

They must never hesitate to use the *taal* (native) and *makata* (poetic) words inherent to Bulacan province when the occasion rises.

Light

The morning's boot camp atmosphere didn't survive the after-lunch session.

Municipal Information Officer Miorustico C. Fernandez Jr., a former radio writer, stepped in. He told his experiences in writing radio dramas and lately, in a self-published book amid occasional bursts of laughter.

Roused up and ready, the participants buckled down for the culminating activity.

Split into groups, they were handed with varying "mission orders" which make up the participants' newswriting assignments.

Soon, the room roared with lively powwows as the participants dug out the facts and pieced the events together into news under time limit.

When deadline came, each group presented its report written large in Manila papers.

Excitement rose as this writer openly edited the works and revealed the brainteasers they had missed.

Reading materials, composed of classic editorial pieces and contemporary journalistic writing not usually found in school libraries, were distributed. The participants were urged to read them at home or in school.

Reading, after all, is a writer's basic stock-in-trade.

As the program drew to a close, English adviser Ms. Boots De



The students freely speak their minds out loud.

Leon stood up and thanked the bros. "We are very thankful that an organization like Freemasonry is able to conduct a school writing seminar that will enhance the skills of the students of Mariano Ponce. We hope that there will be other workshop soon," she said.

So did the rest of the teachers and participants ask for another round of seminar-workshop. They were set to take over and run the campus papers in June.

Whether 301 would hold another seminar or not, yet Lodge Junior Warden Bro. Menandro E. Santos was glad with the positive evaluations coming from the bros. "They saw the

project as another milestone for Baliwag Lodge 301. They were pleased to impart our knowledge to these bright students who would someday become writers, leaders and prominent citizens of Baliuag. Knowledge is an intangible asset which they can use in the pursuit of their respective calling or, at the very least, on their everyday dealings," he said.

WB Noel Yero was similarly pleased to pass knowledge to the precise and worthy beneficiaries. But he had another reason, "We Masons received the light. Let us return the kindness by passing the same light to others through the gift of knowledge." • **Edmund Coronel, PM**



This writer answers questions from eager and inquisitive students in the course of the exercises.



Bros of Frank Reed Horton 379 proudly show the plaque they received.

Frank Reed Horton Lodge No. 379

Having fun on their way to the GM's Awards Night

Frank Reed Horton Lodge No. 379 in NCR-E was awarded the **“Outstanding Lodge”** prize for Year 2015 during the Grand Master’s Night at Legazpi City, Albay.

But what made Horton 379 ticked? — When 379 Immediate Past Master Jose Eugenio “Gene” B. Illenberger—also Publication Artist of THE CABLETOW—took to the East in 2014, the lodge primed and set for a very active year.

In March, the lodge sponsored a mass wedding for 12 needy couples of the community. In April, it held a “Boy 2 Men: Free Circumcision Surgeries” in Tugatog, Malabon. In May, it donated a dozen wooden bancas to impover-

ished fishermen in Negros Island. When classes resumed in June, 379 joined the Masonic Brigada Eskwela bandwagon. It delivered school supplies to two adopted public elementary schools situated at the swamps of Minalin in Pampanga with computers to go. In July, it donated a complete set of encyclopedia and dozens of books to the Balanga National High School; again, with a computer to go. They worked, side by side this time, with the local Meridian Lodge No. 268.

If 379 could hand out pricey donations, then the lodge must be rich. “No,” replied Kuya Gene. “It’s how you handle the money and resources, or how well you connect your network of friends together. We just bridge them.”

Bridging connections showed more clearly in the succeeding projects. In August, 379 held "Oplan Bunot Ngipin Dental Mission" jointly with Victory Lodge No. 116 in Camiling, Tarlac City. Soon, it was followed by "Mason's OB" an OB Gyne Mission for the urban poor mothers of Baseco in Tondo, Manila. In September, it went again into a Brigada Eskwela project by donating 500 notebooks & 200 ballpens to Victorino Mapa High School in Tondo, Manila. In October, 379 teamed up with the Square and Compass We Connect (SCWC) Dugong Mason Blood Bank Project. Awarding of scholarships for 2-year courses to 6 students followed. In November, 379 joined with the Manuel L. Quezon Memorial Lodge No. 262 in the Mangrove Tree Planting at Baler beach in Aurora. In December, 379 capped the year with "Light Added to More Light" project, an optical mission plus childrens' books donation to Barangay 893 Zone 99, 6th District of Manila. Here, Barangay councilor WB Sherwin Enriquez is a Mason.

With much project at hand, 379 was seemingly taking Masonry with the seriousness of a career. "On the contrary, we just love to travel and have fun. That's why we always go out of town or link up with brethren and friends," Illenberger explained.

"Some lodges feel good by doing charity works," he went on. "But the Horton brethren feel good with each other's company so that doing a charity project, even an unplanned charity project, is easy and fast."

A strong fraternal harmony prevailing in 379 is the key. Illenberger was blessed with supportive Lights at his side—Bro. Federico Lagrisola, Senior Warden; and Bro. Albert Magno, Junior Warden.

"Joining the GLP Awards even started as a joke," he said.

Now, 379 is laughing heartily. ❏

List of GLP 2015 Awardees

The Committee on Awards, chaired by MW Danilo Angeles, drew up on April 14 the list of Masons who have been deemed excellent in the performance of their duties in 2014 to early 2015.

The Committee had for its members the following: VW Juanito B. Vano; VW Ferdinando Sevilla; VW Edwin Corvera; VW Rolando Rocha; and VW Robert Asuncion. The following are the awardees in their respective categories:

Outstanding Junior Grand Lecturers

Luzon: VW Reyneiro V. Pine, Jr.
Mindanao: VW Michael Archangle B. Bron
NCR North: VW Oliver V. Yabut
NCR South: VW Edwin P. Costes

Outstanding DDGMs

Luzon: VW Noel E. Rosal, MD R5-B
Visayas: VW Braulio C. Padilla, MD R7-A
Mindanao: VW Nabil A. Tan, MD R9-C
NCR: VW Manuel Luis P. Idquival, MD NCR-G

Outstanding Masonic Districts

Luzon: MD R5-B (Albay, Sorsogon)
Visayas: MD R7-A (Cebu, Bohol)
Mindanao: MD R9-C (Zamboanga, Jolo, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi)
NCR: NCR-G (Makati, Las Piñas & Parañaque City)

Outstanding District Grand Lecturers

Luzon: VW Jonald E. Hernandez, MD R3-D
Mindanao: VW Bernard C. Lim, MD R12-B
NCR: VW Arnel F. Pilapil, NCR-G

Outstanding Grand Lodge Inspectors

WB Jose R. Carlos (Manuel L. Quezon Mem. Lodge No. 262)
WB Oliver I. Cambas (Hamtik Lodge No. 76)
WB Sadikul Sahali (Bud Bongao Lodge No. 286)
WB Rafael Malamug, Jr. (Jose Abad Santos Lodge No. 333)

Outstanding Lodges

Frank Reed Horton Memorial Lodge No. 379
Mt. Tapulao Lodge No. 389
Leonardo T. Panares Memorial Lodge No. 220
Mt. Diwata Lodge No. 236
Hadji Butu Rasul Memorial Lodge No. 393
Model Lodge No. 373

Outstanding Worshipful Master

WB Pablito T. Villarín (Mt. Tapulao Lodge No. 389)

Outstanding Lodge Secretary

Bro. Fermin Axel C. Domansi, Jr. (Mt. Tapulao Lodge No. 389)

DUGONG MASON



PROJECT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BRETHREN & FAMILY / OCTOBER 7, 2014 / CM

Square & Compass—We Connect

Dugong Mason: Masonic relief through blood donation

By Bro Christian Ong
Hagonoy Lodge 369

From the SCWC Masonic texting club comes another fresh and helpful service project—the Dugong Mason blood-letting and blood banking activity. Read it to avail of it.

There is now a movement called “Dugong Mason” spearheaded by our worthy Brothers from Square & Compass—We Connect (SCWC) texting club.

Leading the movement is Bro. Feliciano “Jojo” Narciso Jr., a young Master Mason from Island Luz Minerva Lodge No. 5, who is also SCWC moderator for NCR-D and ILM:5. He is an advocate for blood donation since his college years, driven by the belief that

“charity begins at home.” He initiated the creation of a committee inside SCWC with a prime advocacy of blood-letting activity that will benefit members of the Craft and their families.

Dugong Mason was introduced in 2012 with a nationwide reach. It upholds the belief that every Mason can be a hero by contributing to the organization’s noble endeavor of “aid and assist,” this time through blood donation,

The proposed project was presented to the SCWC, headed then by VW Alex Daniel. Together with the moderators, they approved and supported the cause. Bro Jojo Narciso was appointed Chairman and WB Jesse Zamuco as Vice Chairman of SCWC Dugong Mason, respectively.

Dugong Mason intends to hold regular-monthly blood donations with Forget-Me-Not Club serving as prime-mover for the activities. It has also signed memoranda of agreement with major hospital blood bank nationwide for the safe-keeping and handling of collected blood. It also aims to ensure blood donors easy access in the event of need.

Noble cause

The SCWC has spent time and effort to disseminate information and thus, aid and assist all worthy brother Masons. In years of doing so, they have deduced that, almost weekly, a brother or an immediate family member is in need of precious blood. So it has decided to form this program.

The first Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was agreed with the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City wherein 30% of qualified blood units collected during the blood-letting activities would be under the SCWC Dugong Mason account and would be reserved to needy brethren or their families at no extra cost. The balance of 70% would be for the hospital's blood bank.



Successful events

On June 22, 2013, its first joint bloodletting activity was made through the charter day celebration of Pilar Lodge No. 15 headed then by its worthy master - WB Robert Joseph S. Moran. In coordination with Bro Johncar Dela Cruz, the joint bloodletting activity tied up with the Philippine Red Cross - Cavite Chapter, held at the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA), Silang Cavite.

The succeeding joint bloodletting activities were held as follows: (1) October 2, 2014 at the Capitol Masonic Temple, Quezon City held by Masonic District NCR-F headed by DDGM VW Wilfredo DS Reyes in coordination with its district secretary WB Mckentyre V. Cabrera. (2) October 7, 2014, at the Capitol Masonic Temple, Quezon City held by Frank Reed Horton Memorial Lodge No 379 headed by WB Gene Illenberger, who believes in and supports the advocacy of SCWC and Dugong Mason and contributed in the logos and designs for Dugong Mason. (3) October 26, 2014 at Ilagan City Hall, Isabela held by Pinacanauan Lodge No. 318 headed by WB Noli C. Gonzales in coordination with SW Geoffrey Bariantos tying up with Cagayan Valley Medical Center. (4) November 8, 2014, Supreme Council Order of DeMolay headed by Hon. Rodel Riezl, SJ Reyes, LOH in coordination with SW James Emman Gonowon of Escudo Lodge No. 371

held at the DeMolay Youth Center, Plaridel Masonic Temple GLP, Manila. (5) February 14, 2015 Sultan Haroun Al-Rashid M Lucman Memorial Lodge No. 406 headed by Worshipful Master VW Fahad Al-Rashid Said Lucman. (6) February 28, 2015 Macario R. Ramos Memorial Lodge No.355 headed by WB Bertsan Balanay. (7) April 11, 2015 Bernardo Carpio Lodge No.359 headed by WB Alo Aquino & Montalban Masonic Lodge No.376 headed by WB Tito Coronacion held at San Mateo Masonic Center.

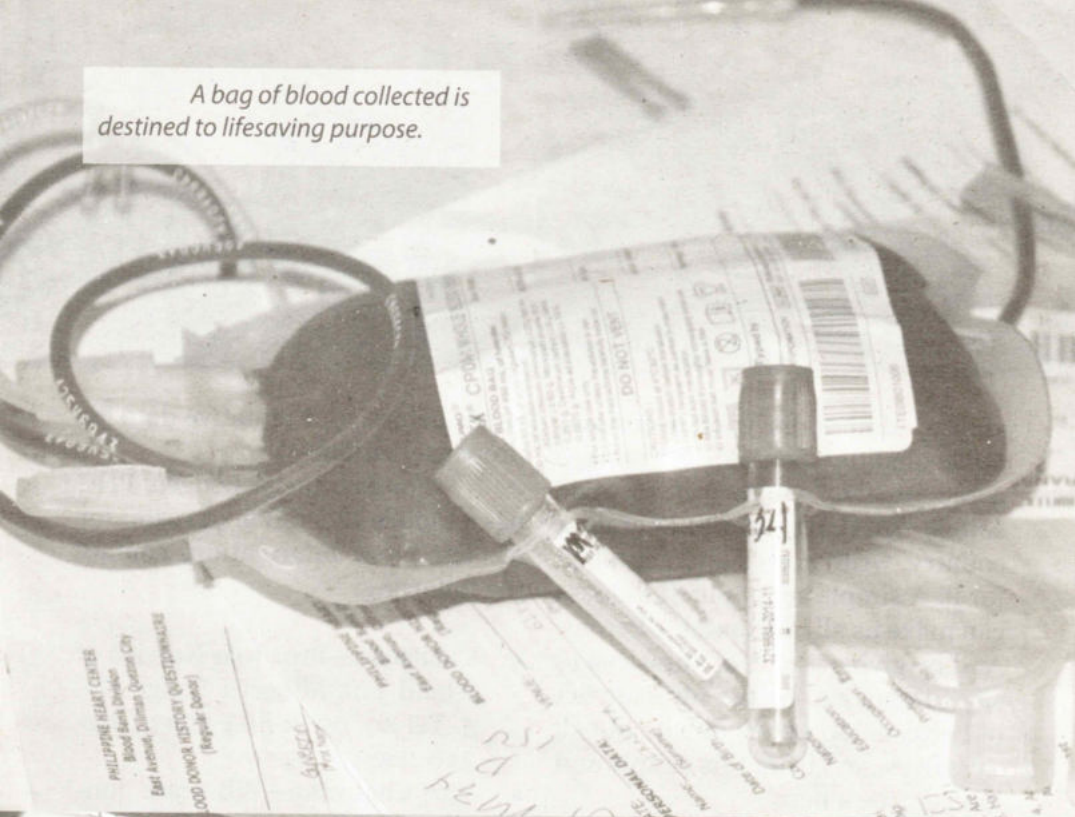
Subsequent activities to be held on (1) May 24, 2015 Kamanava Travellers Club headed by brother President August Roxas in Calocan City. (2) June 20, 2015 St. John The Baptist Lodge No. 362 headed by WB Carl Badillo & Cupang Lodge No.295 headed by WB Edwin Espiritu in Bulacan.

Be a hero

As we have witnessed through our blood-letting events, there is a strong belief that we as Masons can do more. We urge everyone to please support this very noble cause. This will benefit Us and our families directly. We pray that we would never have to use these blood bags that we work so hard to collect but the safety of knowing that it is there if and when we need it is priceless.

If you will look at the meaning of the word "hero," it is defined as a person distinguished for their

A bag of blood collected is destined to lifesaving purpose.



Bros letting blood while lying on the cot are watched over by SCWC bros.





ability, admired for good deeds and noble qualities. So it doesn't require a red cape or a bite from a toxic spider. We don't have to liberate a country, write novels and get killed for it. A simple act of pure kindness can make us all indisputable heroes. And by giving a part of ourselves to save others can be the ultimate act of heroism. So Let us donate blood, save lives, and from this simple and kind act, be a hero.


To contact

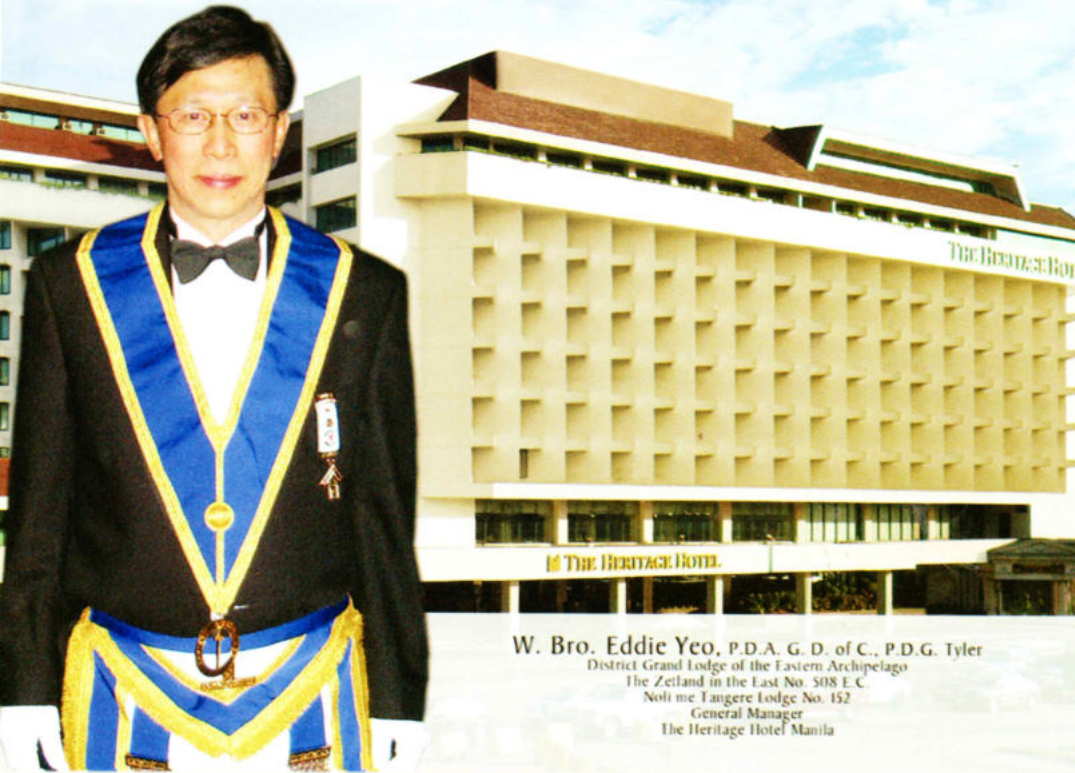
We will assist brethren, or any lodge or district interested with this advocacy. We will help you facilitate to have a memorandum of agreement with your local hospital-based blood bank.

For blood-letting activities in NCR and nearby provinces, you may donate blood through the Philippine Heart Center (PHC), Quezon City: 1) Coordinate with Dugong Mason; 2) Walk in with 1-15 Persons, proceed to the PHC-Blood Bank, advising them that donated blood is for the group account of SCWC-Dugong Mason; 3) For large groups (more than 15 persons), inform Dugong Mason at least 1 month in ad-

vance before your tentative date for proper scheduling.

For Provincial Lodges, PHC has a Mobile Blood Bank to cater for us. For more information, contact the following:

- Chairman—Bro. Jojo Narciso of Island Luz Minerva Lodge No. 5. Tel no. 0922-804-2623 / 02-348-2623
- Vice Chairman—WB Jesse Jonathan L. Zamuro of Cosmo P Antonio Memorial Lodge No. 339. Tel no. 0942-814-0942.
- SCWC President – VW Alex Go of Sinukuan Lodge No. 16. Tel. no. 0922-880-8282.
- SCWC Past President – VW Alex Daniel of Biak na Bato Lodge No. 7. Tel. no. 0922-889-7844.
- Your corresponding district SCWC moderators
- Dugong Mason FB account: <https://www.facebook.com/dugong.mason?fref=ts>
- Email: dugongmason@yahoo.com
- You may also purchase Mason Wear's "Dugong Mason T-shirt" where a portion of every purchase goes to the cause—https://www.facebook.com/mason.wear.9?fref=ts&ref=br_ 



W. Bro. Eddie Yeo, P.D.A. G. D. of C., P.D.G. Tyler
District Grand Lodge of the Eastern Archipelago
The Zealand in the East No. 508 E.C.
Noli me Tangere Lodge No. 152
General Manager
The Heritage Hotel Manila

The Home of Masons in the Philippines

Special Mason Rate

Superior Room
w/ Breakfast
Single Php 4,300. net
Twin Php 4,800. net

Club Room
w/ Breakfast
Single Php 4,800. net
Twin Php 5,300. net

Club Perks:

- Exclusive access to Club Lounge
- Express check-in and check-out
- Butler service
- Business and concierge services
- Two-hour complimentary use of the meeting room
- Complimentary broadband internet access
- Discounts on food & beverage, laundry, dryclean & minibar consumption



THE HERITAGE HOTEL

MANILA

MANAGED BY MILLENNIUM HOTELS & RESORTS

Roxas Boulevard corner EDSA Pasay City, 1300 Philippines

Telephone: (632) 854 8888

E-mail: reservationsmanager@heritagehotelmanila.com; reservationsmanager.HHM@millenniumhotels.com

Valid upon presentation of Lodge I.D

Harmony

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

Robots, not lodges, do that.

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

Zombies, not Masons, are the Walking Dead.

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

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

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

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

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

The Cabletow

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

