

MY LIFE IN THE FRAT

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I am a product of public schools. I used to walk daily from Tondo to Quiapo and took the JD bus to Diliman. I was a freshman in '52 and could have joined in '53 but in July of that year, I stopped studying for health and financial reasons. I finally joined in '54. I only knew Joe Drilon and Nestor Nisperos, both Batch '48, they graduated in '52. Neither knew that I joined until much later. As a neophyte I never dropped their name. Beta Epsilon and Tau Alpha were the Frats most Engineering students joined, but having been orphaned at eight and having a very limited circle of friends, my ulterior motive for joining the Upsilon was to make friends with students of other professions like Law, Medicine, Business, the Arts, Music and Academe.

In the course of initiations Gonzalo "Chopoy" Albert had to have an appendectomy and died in the operating table. Batch '54 was an unlucky batch. The Frat was suspended and under investigation from August '54 until February '55. We were finally inducted on February 28 shortly after the suspension was lifted. By this time the school year was almost over. The Frat was much maligned but to everyone's surprise Batch '55 numbered 42 in Diliman and 50 in Los Baños,

In November '55 I almost dropped out again for financial reasons. I got a break from CE Professor Delfin Zapanta who offered me a part-time job in his build and sell business, thus, was able to support myself in Diliman. I had a plan B which was to take any menial job and go to night school in Mapua. It is only conjecture what kind of fratman I'd have been if I only spent one year in Diliman.

UNFORGETTABLE VIGNETTES

- 1.) I had a perfect record in campus politics - on orders of the IFs in '55, '56 and '57 - I ran 3 times and lost 3 times. I learned I wasn't fit to be a politician.
- 2.) One high point in my life in the frat was aspiring to be editor of the Collegian. I dabbled in high school journalism so I thought it might be neat to take the competitive exam. I volunteered and asked the permission of IF Mario Camacho and he said "Why not? The more the merrier". Of course I was arrayed vs the late Mengdo '53 and Cris Monsod '55 both Atenistas and accomplished writers. But the main stumbling block was the late Eega Masakayan '52- he was the real deal and I sensed he was the man to beat. As expected, he topped the exam, besting a few Ratbu, some Beta Sigmans and plenty of barbarians in the process. As consuelo de bobo, Eega appointed me Associate Editor. Mengdo & Cris were also Associate Editors. I enjoyed working round the clock to publish the monthly edition. Once a month was pleasurable but I concluded that working 24/7 as a journalist was not for me. Little did I know that construction would be worse and more demanding of one's time.
- 3.) By being stage manager for the Cavalcade 3 years in a row, I learned that I enjoyed doing things which earned me neither applause nor recognition. Doming Vidanes, Abel Agulto, Romy Jorge and Romy Liamson who were very hardworking, dedicated stage hands became life-long buddies. As an aside, all of us drooled as my batchmate Eddie Pavon, talented and good-looking, wrapped his arms around wasp-waisted Pilita Corales in "Linda"

WHAT DID I GET FROM THE FRAT?

- 1.) I learned how to deal with diverse personalities

- 2.) I learned how to juggle my time between studies, sports (to which I am still addicted), working to support myself through UP and of course find time for the Frat.
- 3.) Above all, it was in the Frat that I found myself. I discovered what I enjoy doing best which is organizing, working with people, meeting schedules, meeting budgets and finally delivering an essential product. And all these without fanfare.

As lady luck would be kind to me, I grabbed every chance I had in three years as a resident and 52 years as an alumnus. I founded ACES in October '55. To this date it remains one of the most active and influential organization in the campus. I graduated at the top of my class. My record in the CE board exam in '57 took several years to break. I got an assistantship from one of the best schools in the East Coast and graduated with honors. I worked in San Francisco for nine years in several landmark projects and was appointed Board Examiner to the California Board in '67. I came back for good in '69. Founded TCGI in '73, now the leader in consultancy in RP. Founded SKI in '76, now among the top 3 construction companies. Founded PHIKOEI in '94, now the top RP-JAPANESE Joint venture in Consulting Engineering. Founded CPMAP in '93, a professional organization of Project Management practitioners. Have been President of Makati Sports Club, Manila Yacht Club, and the Rotary Club of Pasay, I was President of Philippine Yachting Association for seven years. I have also been a VP Philippine Olympic Committee. During my stint as USPAA Chairman, President Danny Gozo '67 and I formalized an agreement of cooperation between the Upsilon and Gawad Kalinga. Since then many GK homes have been built for indigent Filipino families from the financial and manpower contributions of Upsilonians and neophytes.

After all these years, I view the Frat the way I'd read a financial statement. Since our assets by far outweigh our liabilities, I don't dwell nor waste my energy pissing, moaning, whining, and nit-picking. We are all human so we seek the company of some Brods more than we do others. A very very small number, fortunately, we shake hands and walk on. I accept the Frat the way it has evolved. I'm sure we've had our ups and downs. Just read our Traditions edited and published by Carlo Magno.

In 1923 only two joined. In 1924 four joined. 1925 saw a minor resurgence when ten joined. I had the good fortune of meeting Dr. Conrado Lorenzo, Sr. father of Clipper '53 who was the foremost lung specialist of his time.

From this batch, I also met Jaime G. Velasquez. In latter years, I learned his story.

After a year in Padre Faura, he was admitted to West Point and served in the US Army in World War II. He retired a full Colonel after the war and joined the Zobels of Ayala Corp. He was a major player in the brain trust that master-planned Forbes Park, Dasmarinas, Urdaneta, Bel Air, San Lorenzo and Makati Commercial. He also had the vision to develop Ayala Alabang in joint venture with the Madrigals.

In 1926, twenty-one joined. I met the following luminaries: 1) Justice Carmelino G. Alvendia, father of Pepito '55 who died recently. Justice Alvendia was also the founder of Phoenix Insurance which to this day is a major player in the Industry

2) Cesar H. Concio, Civil Engineer and Architect. A graduate of Yale University, he was the first post-war Campus Architect and designed the first half do or so buildings when the campus was transferred to Diliman

3) Antonio R. Quirino, prominent lawyer and founder of Alto Broadcasting System

later integrated into ABS CBN. We held a Frat Ball once in his residence in San Juan

4) Hermenegildo R. Reyes, Civil Engineer and Educator, Founder of HR Reyes Construction one of the biggest in his time plus he owned one of the biggest steel fabrication plants in the Philippines. He also founded Polytechnic College of the Philippines.

These Brods who were almost thirty years ahead of me inspired me to try to be the best that could possibly be. I also thought that in the process I should also motivate those around me to be the best they could possibly be.

In the '30's Rizal Center was the prominent Frat in Padre Faura. After the war, RC disappeared. From the 40's to the 60's the Upsilon was the leader on campus- in politics, scholarship, ROTC, the editorship of the Collegian.

In the '70s the conventional wisdom was that Fraternities had lost their relevance. Yet we have produced a good number of achievers in that decade. The '80s were equally star-studded. These two decades saw the collision course between the mantra of the Aquino legacy and the Marcos regime. There were and there will always be hardcore sympathizers on both sides and if Upsilon were a religion, we could have had a schism. Maybe we are better than a religion because the things that unite us by far outstrip what divide us. So we stand as

strong as ever. As we head into 2018 and beyond, the batches of the '90s onward will inevitably carry on and lead us into the second century of our Frat's colorful life.

In the twilight of my years, my gentle advice to our young Brods is that the pursuit of excellence should remain their lifelong commitment. I've always believed that we need not be leaders of the nation. We need only excel and exercise leadership in our own sectors, no matter how small. And to do that, our young Brods have to find what they enjoy doing most. Financial rewards and recognition are mere by-products of a life well-lived.

My parting words are "let's all stand tall and sing "We're Upsilonians"