

INTRODUCTION

by Susan V. Ople

In this magical Age of Twitter, Facebook and Ipads, younger Filipinos probably know Blas Ople as that name on top of the POEA Building where Ortigas Avenue and EDSA intersects. They may be unaware that relatives working in distant lands owe a great deal to the Philippine overseas employment program that began during Ople's time as labor secretary.



Who was this man referred to by friends, foes, and family as Ka Blas? His good friend, the gifted essayist and writer, Carmen Guerrero Nakpil described him as the Senate's Philosopher-King:

"They have combined ideas with action. They search for wisdom with politics and the life of the mind with temporal power. These people have organized societies and, at the same time, sought knowledge, virtue, values, and learning for the sake of man in the abstract and men, women and children in everyday life."

"They have devised the strategies and rules of governance, and also asked the fundamental questions about the meaning of human existence and the higher purpose of life."

"They have been called philosopher kings, thinkers who act, intellectuals with feet on the ground. They have come from different countries and they lived in different times. Sometimes they were Egyptian pharoahs like Rameses who believed in one god; Roman emperors like Claudius and Hadrian who agonized over mundane politics; Abderahman VII, the Muslim ruler of Catholic Spain; David the poet who was king of the Jews; Thomas Jefferson; Mao Tse-tung; Elizabeth I of Renaissance England; Indira Gandhi; and, in our own postmodern age, Vaclav Havel, playwright, velvet revolutionary and president of the Czech Republic."



"But we, too, have a philosopher-king, a barefoot boy in Hagonoy, or worker at the port of Manila, as reporter and journalist and later party appratchik and political scientist, writer of books, senator, secretary of labor and president of the International Labor Organization, in our Senate President, Blas F. Ople, who has combined those two lines of human achievement: vision and discipline, ideas and reality."



As a tribute to the late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, on his 86th birthday, his family and friends would like to share excerpts and passages from essays, columns, and speeches he wrote.

Included in this anthology are some of the early writings of a young, cheeky, and possibly oft-inebriated Blas Ople circa 1950s entitled, "Jeepney Tales" as well as the inside story on that single word – interregnum – that almost cost the media-friendly labor secretary his job.

Read, rediscover, and celebrate with us the prodigious and prolific life of our beloved Ka Blas - man of letters, true statesman, and unparalleled champion of the working class.



BLAS FAJARDO OPLE (1927 - 2003)

- * February 3, 1927 Born in Hagonoy, Bulacan
- * 1967 1986 Served as Secretary of Labor
- * 1986 1987 Served as member of the Constitutional Commission
- * 1992 2002 Served as Senator of the Philippines
- * 1999 Elected as Senate President
- * 2002 Appointed as DFA Secretary
- * December 14, 2003 Passed away while on an official mission for the government

SECTION 1

Brief Biography

Blas Fajardo Ople hailed from the fishing town of Hagonoy, Bulacan on the Manila Bay coast. He was born on February 3, 1927 to working class parents. His father, Felix Antonio Ople, was a craftsman who repaired boats. His mother, Segundina Esteban Fajardo, ran a family store.

He was married to the former Susana Vasquez. They have seven children and several grandchildren. Ople passed away in December 14, 2003 while onboard an international flight from Tokyo, Japan enroute to Bahrain where, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, he was tasked to prepare for the state visit of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

President Arroyo appointed then Senator Ople as Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs on July 23, 2002. He took his oath of office a week later, on July 30, 2002.

Ka Blas, as he was fondly called by friends and associates, served for ten years in the Senate (1992-2002) as chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee. He also chaired the Committee on the Civil Service and Reorganization and the Committee on Education, Culture and the Arts.

He was elected Senate President Pro Tempore in 1998. His peers elected him President of the Philippine Senate in the middle of 1999.

As chairman of the foreign relations committee, Senator Ople steered to approval no fewer than 110 international and bilateral treaties that have opened more links between the Philippines and the rest of the world. He was also the author of the Salary Standardization Law, Anti-Sexual Harassment law, Philippine Passport Act, and several other vital measures.

President Corazon C. Aquino appointed Ka Blas to the Constitutional Commission as a representative of the opposition to draft the Constitution. Among the provisions in the 1987 Constitution that Ople authored is the provision bestowing the highest budgetary priority to education.

Ka Blas held the post of Minister of Labor and Employment from 1967 to 1971 and then from 1972 to early 1986. During his tenure, Ople raised the Labor Ministry from a mere bureau to a major force in national affairs. As Secretary of Labor, he was the architect of the Labor Code of the Philippines.

He launched the manpower development program, through the National Manpower and Youth Council (now TESDA), which has trained over one million out-of-school youths.

He created the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) as a non-adversarial, non-litigious approach to resolving labor disputes.

He stood firmly for the preservation of workers' rights during the martial law years – especially for the right to self-organization and collective bargaining. It was under Ople's leadership at the labor department that workers' benefits such as the 13th month pay and the Cost of Living Allowance were introduced.

Ople launched the overseas employment program in 1974. The program has led to the opening of millions of jobs overseas that became the nation's main economic lifeline for decades. During this time, Ka Blas was responsible for creating such timeless and relevant institutions as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

and the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration, among others.

In 1975, as Labor Secretary, he was elected president to the 60th International Labor Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. He was the first Filipino to hold that post. Since 1983, until he relinquished the labor portfolio in March 1986, Ople was the recognized doyen and spokesman of the world's labor ministers.

He was elected assemblyman of Central Luzon, topping the winning slate of 16 candidates. He was voted Member of Parliament for Bulacan in the regular Batasang Pambansa.

A product of public schools in his native province of Bulacan, Ka Blas graduated as valedictorian in the Hagonoy Elementary School and studied but failed to get his diploma at the Far Eastern University.

QUOTES



ON BECOMING SENATE PRESIDENT

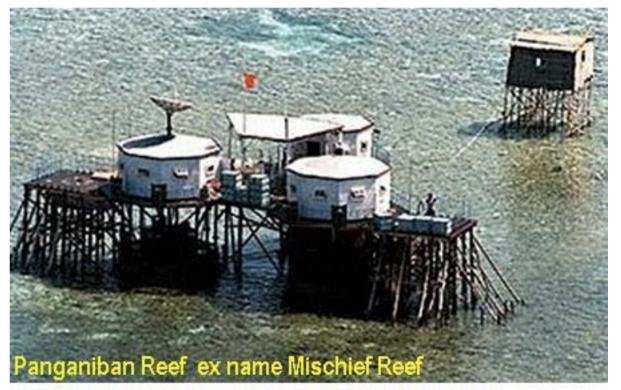
"At moments like this, I feel a compulsive tug of the heart, pointing me back to my origins. I think of a barefoot little boy growing up in a humble nipa hut on the banks of the Hagonoy River, daring to dream of going to school and of finding the light in a strange new world of books in a new age of enlightenment. It was the beginning of a journey that has brought me to countless hardships and challenges and finally to the pinnacle of the Senate presidency, one of the highest offices within the gift of the Filipino people that you have bestowed on me today. It is an awesome miracle that I have experienced in my life, which I can only attribute not to any inborn or acquired merits of my own but to the grace of God, whose name I praise without end."

(Inaugural speech as Senate President, July 26, 1999, Philippine Senate)



PHILIPPINE - CHINA RELATIONS

"The truth is that it is not China but the Philippines which is the victim of an insidious aggression in the South China Sea. We woke up one morning to see that in the dead of night, Chinese forces erected buildings in the Panganiban Reef, which the Philippines considers part of its territory, in the guise of protecting Chinese fisherman caught by storms in the area. The same forces erected markers in the same area, which the Philippine Navy had physically removed. We're waiting to see signs of Chinese goodwill and good faith by correcting these errors of judgments, which they assign to local commanders. Once China withdraws its forces from this area, then the success of confidencebuilding will be assured."



A Philippine territory occupied by China in 1992.

(Manila Bulletin, January 19, 1996)



THE UN OPTION IN RELATION TO THE SPRATLY CRISIS

"No one wants to exacerbate the crisis in the South China Sea but the Chinese naval intrusion is testing the resolve of the Philippines in defending the sanctity and integrity of the national territory in the face of a far superior naval and military force. If the answer is diplomacy, we should not hesitate to deal our most effective card which is an appeal to world opinion through the United Nations."

"China knows this is a good card and therefore strenuously opposes any attempt to "internationalize the issue."

"We should do better than give a numb response to the Spratly threat. I think we should give China a grace period of three months to decide on a pull-out otherwise we will fall back on the last weapons in our diplomatic arsenal, namely, an appeal to world opinion through the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. The moral forces of the world remain a countervailing power for the victims of aggression or of the bullying tactics of the strong." (Manila Bulletin, December 3, 1996)

FOREIGN POLICY

"Foreign policy has about it an air of mystification that it does not deserve. This is not a special province of arcane knowledge that only a few experts are able to grasp. Our policies in international affairs should grow out of our own fundamental concerns and the vital interests of the Filipino people. And yet, not a few observers have remarked on the incorrigibly parochial cast of Philippine politics. They say Manila is an even more insular place than Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur."

"The world having really gotten so much smaller and global interdependence having become such a central reality to our lives, it is in our interest to develop a wider constituency for foreign affairs in our country." (Manila Bulletin, July 16, 1992)



Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople with his American counterpart, Secretary of State Colin Powell at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City.

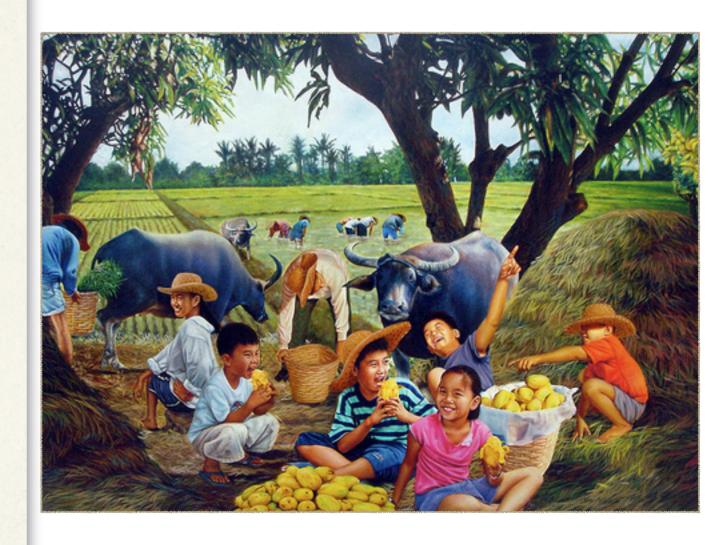
CHILD LABOR

"As a growing boy in Bulacan, a son of impoverished parents, I overheard a debate between my father and an uncle which proved decisive to my future. The uncle was pressing my father to withdraw me and my younger brother Bernardo from school so that we could help full time in the family's farm work."

"Both your sons have strong bodies and it's a pity they are wasting their time in school instead of helping ease the burden of farm work," the uncle said."

"My father said, "They will stay in school. They have good grades." Such dialogues occur often in many of our poor families. The tradeoff between investing in education and short-term gain is a painful one. The ILO convention, implemented through national laws, will help tilt the debate in favor of the children of the poor."

"Indeed, when the child of the poor enters the portals of a free elementary school in our communities, the first essential act of empowerment takes place. A genuine social revolution occurs and new vistas of hope and opportunity open up for the disadvantaged classes." (Manila Bulletin, June 18, 1999)





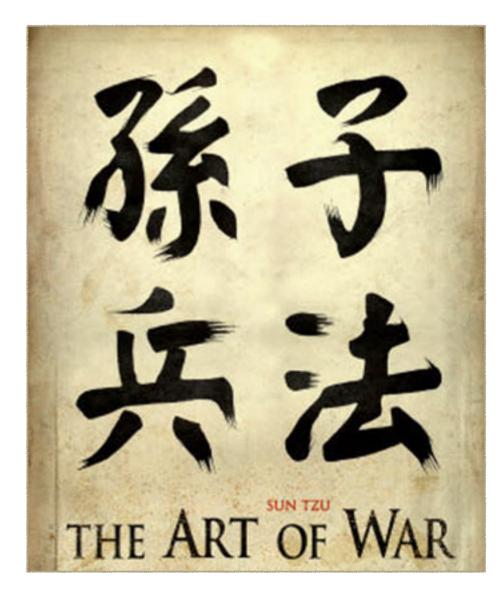
SUN TZU'S ART OF WAR

"Sitting in the Commission on Appointments in the 10th Congress, I was shocked to learn that most of the colonels facing confirmation for promotion to general never heard of Sun Tzu whose strategic principles won China for Mao Zedong and whose strategy and tactics direct the field operations even now of the New People's Army in the Philippines."

"The colonels who will come before the Commission on Appointments this time are forewarned that they will be asked to demonstrate a fair degree of literacy in the classics of their own profession, especially Sun Tzu. There is no excuse not to read Sun Tzu, because even in translation, his prose is so lucid, powerful and enjoyable. This is in contrast to his modern counterpart, the German Carl von Clausewitz, whose

famous classic, On War, is so opaque that few will have the patience to read through the entire work unless you want to top your class at West Point, Sandhurst or the Philippine Military Academy."

(Manila Bulletin, August 25, 1998)



SENATOR MIRIAM DEFENSOR-SANTIAGO

"It's reassuring that in the Senate all I need to do to transport myself on a plane of world history is to tilt my chair a little further back where Senator Santiago sits. Miriam and I seem to agree with Kant that there are only two frontiers left: the starry skies above and the mysteries of our own human soul or psyche within. Miriam is a capable interlocutor on the whole spectrum of the human historical experience. This is evident in the debates on international treaties in which she has been a leading participant. No wonder Senator Johnny Flavier has said often: The Senate is the best university in the land." (Manila Bulletin, February 2, 1996)



JOURNALISM

"Journalism is social action at work. For newspapers can only thrive in involvement, can only grow in the spirit of commitment. A newspaper that turns its face away from issues and problems has no place in our society. The real newspaper is the activist newspaper, a publication of stern principles but with profound compassion." (Speech delivered at the National Convention of the Philippine Federation of Provincial Press Clubs, November 29, 1968)

TRADE UNIONISM

"Trade unionism grants the economic ballot to the worker to complete his enfranchisement as a citizen. The right to vote enables him to help determine the conditions under which he lives. The right to form unions enables him to help determine the conditions under which he works. The alternative is the compartamentation of freedom – which is intolerable to human reason as well as to human dignity." (Speech delivered for the Junior Chamber of Commerce, February 22, 1969)

AMANG RODRIGUEZ

"...Senate reporters have a treasury of anecdotes to tell about the late Amang Rodriguez, a great public servant and "The Grand Old Man of the Nacionalista Party." It was said that he used to call J.V. Cruz as "V.D." and while others were calling the late President Magsaysay as R.M., Amang would call him "Eram". "

"It is also a favorite joke among senate reporters that when President Eisenhower addressed a joint session of Congress, Amang wanted him to go down the rostrum and shake hands with our legislators. According to the story, Amang approached Eisenhower and told him: "Major, shake the boys down."

"Those who have known him have fond memories of Amang. We miss his malapropisms as much as we miss his leadership." (Speech delivered at the National Convention of the Philippine Federation of Provincial Press Clubs, November 29, 1968)



YOUTH ACTIVISM

"We must come to terms with these new social forces. We used to disparage the youth for denying to their elders a becoming respect. Let us stop demanding respect from the young; let us start respecting them instead – their idealism and their aspirations."

"If a certain humility on the part of the elder generation is in order, we can assuage ourselves by looking at our own history. Ours is a nation founded by the young. The founding fathers of this nation were not not grizzled old veterans but young students in their twenties and early thirties. Jose Rizal was 25

when he wrote the Noli Me Tangere; Bonifacio was 28 when he launched the Philippine Revolution – the first workers' revolution in Asia – in 1896; and Aguinaldo was 27 when he presided the Malolos Congress, the legislative organ of Asia's first republic." (Speech delivered for the Junior Chamber of Commerce, February 22, 1969)

THE USES OF STATISTICS

"We live today in a statistics-conscious society. Almost anything is numbered, assigned figures or otherwise quantified. When we are born, we are immediately added to the statistics on population. When a man faces certain death, it is often said that his days are "numbered". "

"Indeed there are as many ways of misusing statistics. Numbers could be used to mislead people. Figures are bloated to dramatize issues. For example, there was the serious report some years ago that 33-1/3 per cent of the coeds in an American university had married faculty members. What was the basis for this? It happened that the university had only three lady students.

Perhaps you have also heard the question: Who was the man who slew one-fourth of the human race? The answer is Cain, who killed Abel, one of the four people living on earth in the days of Eden." (Speech delivered at the Closing Ceremonies of the 1969 Annual Conference of the Philippine Statistical Association, July 18, 1969)

CRAFTSMANSHIP

"Excellence requires sustained hard work, patient application, and endless perseverance. The true craftsman will set himself the highest standards and seek to attain them without counting costs."

"The famous American philosopher, William James, commented that the key to all human achievement is the capacity to make the effort, and it was his thesis that this capacity can be deepened continually through the constant repetition of tackling difficult tasks. He suggested that you could develop character just like developing your muscles, by exercising your mind habitually on difficult tasks, on intractable material."

"Well, when you are in the government, and head of a department like myself, you appreciate this advice from William James. You cannot choose your callers in your office - and there are some whom you can't very well refuse, such as certain powerful personalities. Such meetings can be very disagreeable. Such men think that government should bend itself to the contours of their personal wishes and desires. And then you learn to smile for courtesy and to say "no" for integrity. The path of least resistance is to yield, to surrender, for in that way you make friends of the powerful instead of enemies. But when you say "no", you feel like you have done your duty, and like a good craftsman, has resisted the easy but shoddy alternative in favor of excellence." (Speech delivered at the annual Apprentice Graduation Ceremony of the US Naval Ship Repair Facility, December 12, 1969)

MUSLIM MINDANAO

"In international affairs, Muslim Mindanao ought to be our strong, positive link to the Islamic world which today consists of 46 states, anchored in the Middle East by the countries endowed with the largest known reserves of oil. Filipinos also shouldn't forget that the Muslims are a minority in the Philippines, but the majority in Southeast Asia."

"The extensive media reporting on the Mindanao elections reflects the belief of a national public that these developments in Mindanao touch the lives of all Filipinos. This is an encouraging sign. When we think of Muslim Mindanao as an important part of our lives, we satisfy the test of whether as Filipinos we are able to think nationally." (Our Times, Daily Globe, February 21, 1990)



LAST DAYS OF PRESIDENT MARCOS

"When Sam Donaldson walked me to my car after an ABC talk show, he inquired why Enrile and Ramos, who were in touch with the studio by overseas phone from Camp Aguinaldo, were allowed to keep their communications. "General Ver forgot to cut the telephone line and the electricity," I replied.

"The evidence of US TV footages was unmistakable: Marcos' intransigence – perhaps a rash decision in the blink of an eye – could mean a tremendous loss of lives and perhaps a civil war. I decided therefore to do my own part to avoid the loss of lives in Manila."

"In the evening of Sunday, in a meeting with Secretary George Shultz and Undersecretary Michael Armacost, in the office of Shultz, I agreed to support a final appeal — in fact an ultimatum — from President Reagan to President Marcos for him to step down. At 1 a.m., using the Philippine Embassy telex, I sent him a report transmitting the text of President Reagan's message. At 5 a.m., the operator woke me up. It was President Marcos on the line."

"We talked for some thirty minutes in the language of his choice, Pilipino, during which he poured his heart out, his deep sense of hurt at what he considered the betrayal of the Americans." "They are preventing me from employing my own counterforce against the rebels," he said. I told him that he should step down and save lives. The lives he would be saving could include his own and those of his family. On the TV, an ominous human sea was beginning to form around Malacanang."

"It is difficult to assess how much impact I made on Marcos. When he talked to me, he said the US ambassador, Stephen Bosworth, had just delivered the same message that I sent by telex in the early dawn. He also asked for the address of Ambassador Alejandro Melchor, which I provided. He asked me "to stall for two days" as though I could singlehandedly stop the historical dam from bursting. I told him that was out of the question."

"A few hours later he tried to get in touch directly with President Reagan but could get only as far as

Senator Paul Laxalt. That was when Laxalt told him, "Mr. President, ... cut and cut cleanly." (Our Times, Daily Globe, February 24, 1990)



POLITICS OF CONFIRMATION

"A sweeping scrutiny of one's whole life is normally reserved for the day of the Last Judgment. Presidential nominees have more to fear, however, from the Commission on Appointments. In Christian doctrine, a reformed sinner occupies a more exalted rank than one who had been a consistent angel. This does not apply to the confirmation process. Even the publican Zacchaeus, who was praised by the Lord, or St. Augustine himself, could be turned down - or at least severely reproached - for earlier sins or transgressions of the prevalent social code."

"The commission's power of discretion is indeed so broad that even just one member, invoking Section 20 of the Rules, can compel the deferment of one's confirmation. There are 25 members of this body drawn in equal proportion from the Senate and the House, under the chairmanship of the Senate President. There is also proportionate representation of the political parties represented in Congress. Happy are those who can count on the personal support of several members of the commission. Woe unto those who come totally friendless." (Our Times, Daily Globe, March 14, 1990)

CLARO M. RECTO

"I was 19 and a high school student when I first met Claro M. Recto after the war, in his capacity as the guest speaker of the Nacionalista-Democratic Alliance convention in Bulacan. Jesus Lava recruited me as a delegate from Hagonoy, possibly the youngest in that rambunctious crowd of politicians in Baliuag. Seated in the front row, I weighed every word Recto said, fascinated by his diction in English, somewhat put off by his awkward Tagalog pauses while he searched for the right word."

"There was no way of knowing then that this man, this garlanded, smiling patrician in a light blue barong, would play so dominant a role in the intellectual life of my generation."



"Recto gave Filipino nationalism, evolving in the concrete conditions of his time, a new raison d'etre and its finest expression since Rizal. Whereas Rizal warned his countrymen against mistaking the padding of

the chain for the trapping of liberty, Recto made explicit the neocolonial character of the Philippine-American relationship. He relentlessly exposed the unfairness of the unequal treaties. It was the force of his arguments that stood behind a series of 37 amendments to the RP-US bases agreement and the constitutional move to terminate it beyond 1991."

(Our Times, Daily Globe, February 8, 1990)

FOREIGN INTERVENTION

"If the country cannot possess the substance of independence and national sovereignty, because its politicians not only accept but appear to enjoy their vassal status to an outside power, then the cynicism about democratic forms of government as a hollow shell will become more widespread till it becomes fatal." (Our Times, Daily Globe, February 1, 1990)

THE CONSTITUTION

"A Constitution renews the social contract between State and the people. If it commands the State's faithful obedience, it will also command the fealty of citizens. Any avoidance or breach of its mandates by the government itself diminishes the worth and the credibility of the Constitution in the eyes of the people. When these occur too often, the effect is to promote cynicism about the Constitution and to erode not only the government's credibility but also its legitimacy." (Our Times, Daily Globe, January 24, 1990)

"The Constitution shall always represent the tension between freedom and order. We must be prepared to live with this tension. For order without freedom is unimaginable, and freedom without order is sheer anarchy and barbarism." (Speech delivered for the Junior Chamber of Commerce, February 22, 1969)

JUST AND HUMANE GOVERNMENT

"Where the seat of power is just and humane, one finds heartening duplications at lower levels. And, like a ripple, sincere leadership spreads out, touches and influences the lives of others." (Speech delivered by Undersecretary Raoul Inocentes in behalf of Secretary Ople, in Davao City, October 25, 1968)



WIKANG PAMBANSA

"Mga kaibigan, nuong ako'y nagsalita sa ILO sa wikang pambansa, nasabi ng Kaibigang Ponsing na ako ang kauna-unahang Pilipinong gumamit ng wikang pambansa sa isang kapulungang pandaigdig ng United Nations."

"Alam ba ninyo na matapos kung magtalumpati, ay tumindig ang isang delegadong Amerikano at ako'y magalang na binati. Sinabi niya: Congratulations, Mr. Secretary, on your brilliant speech in Spanish."

"At sinabi ko naman: Maraming salamat po, Ginoo, datapwa't ang wikang aking ginamit ay hindi Kastila kundi wikang Pilipino, na ayon kay Padre Chirino, ang bantog na mananaliksik sa wika, ay singtamis ng Kastila, singindayog ng Latin, singlinaw ng Griyego at singlakas ng Ingles." (Talumpati sa disperas ng Kaarawan ni Balagtas, ika-1 ng Abril, 1969)

WIKANG PILIPINO

"Kung minsan naman ang wikang Pilipino ay maitutulad sa isang damit na pang-ukasyon lamang; inilalabas sa takba o sa baul upang ipamalas sa isang tanging panauhin. Ang wikang Pilipino ay siya ngayong ginagamit ng Pangulo ng Pilipinas sa pagtanggap ng mga sugong galing sa ibang bansa, at ang panunumpa ng mga opisyal ng pamahalaan ay dito rin sa wikang ito nakasulat bagaman di-iilan ang totoong nagagaril sa pagbigkas nito" (Wikang Pilipino at Damdaming Bayan, panayam ni Kalihim Ople sa Pamantasan ng Silangan (University of the East), ika-17 ng Oktubre 1970).

SMOKING HABIT

"Whenever I want to break an undesirable habit or form a new one, I choose an important holiday for this. Therefore, on a Labor Day in 1964, I threw out smoking and did not smoke – although I was a chain smoker – for several years, until Labor Day last year. I am now chain smoking again, but hope to get rid of it on Labor Day next year – but not this year." (Speech delivered at the pre-Labor Day Symposium of the Management Practitioners Association of the Philippines, April 30, 1970)



PRESIDENT MAGSAYSAY



"Magsaysay lived what he preached. His first executive order as President was one that prohibited the government from dealing with his relatives. When his executive

secretary, later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Fred Ruiz Castro, caused a nephew of the First Lady, Luz Banzon Magsaysay, to be employed in the Philippine embassy in Tokyo, he fired Castro. He ordered his own younger brother to be jailed after

having been caught in an act of illegal gambling in their hometown of Castillejos, Zambales."

"He ordered the cancellation of a timber license granted to an uncle, former Justice Alejo Labrador, who was forced to challenge his order in court."

"Because he backed up his words with deeds, people did not snicker whenever he said at Plaza Miranda, to dramatize a point, that he would send his own father to jail if he broke the law." (Philippine Panorama, March 13, 1994)

STEADFASTNESS AND RELIABILITY

"The world pays a premium not for occasional flashes of brilliance but for sustained commitments to the performance of tasks."

(Commencement address to the graduating classes of the Manila Law College and the Philippine College of Criminology, April 23, 1983)

FOREIGN INTERVENTION

"If the country cannot possess the substance of independence and national sovereignty, because its politicians not only accept but appear to enjoy their vassal status to an outside power, then the cynicism about democratic forms of government as a hollow shell will become more widespread till it becomes fatal." (Our Times, Daily Globe, February 1, 1990)

CORRUPTION

"Corruption undoes everything good that we do It sets back the whole country and makes a mockery of all our dreams." (Delivered at the launch of Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago's book, October 29, 2001)

PRESIDENT MARCOS

As President Marcos' last emissary in Washington, I watched him fall from power, as though from a masterfully written script, first on a fine slope and then by ever steep grades downhill on US television. Guesting on a CBS talk show immediately following the fall, I was asked how I felt. I answered: "I want to accompany him in my thoughts to the gates of history, from where he could exit with some dignity and grace." (Daily Globe, September 30, 1989)



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"The elementary school is where the future of nations in the new century is being settled today." (The Manila Bulletin, March 8, 1994)

ALL SOULS' DAY

"When I paid my own homage to the graves of my parents, I brought along, as usual, some of my grandchildren, who never knew their greatgrandparents. When they lit their candles and offered wreathes in tribute to these unknown ancestors, I thought of the chain of life that occurs in nature, before it is acknowledged in religion and philosophy: how nature preserves itself through the magic of selfrenewal, every generation of every life-form renewed through the cycle of the seasons, through a mystic rhythm of the universe." (The Manila Bulletin, November 2, 1993)

TRIBUTE TO HIS FATHER

"There are moments when I contemplate that if I can fulfill my duties as a senator as well as my father repaired boats with his unsurpassed skill and integrity as a craftsman, I will then be worthy of his memory. More than any books or learned tomes, it was he who taught me the dignity of labor and the meaning of excellence."

"Because of my father, I have a tremendous respect for the generation to which he belonged, including those who faithfully worked the land and the seas, strong and humble folk who were his friends and soul-mates in the barrio of my birth. And I must admit that beside them, I sometimes feel a lack of confidence in how my own generation will be judged, by both the living and the dead, in time of reckoning." (The Manila Bulletin, November 2, 1993)

GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

"We in the Philippines cannot afford the false luxury of isolation or of autarky; neither can we afford the role of a lukewarm competitor; nor can our people accept mediocrity as a way of life."

"If we must claim the future that we deserve, we should muster our collective will and effort to be a competent participant in this global contest. The whole nation must work as a team imbued with a strength of purpose and ready to forego petty advantages in favor of larger, longer-range national goals." (Acceptance speech at Angeles University on the conferment of an honorary degree in public administration, February 21, 1981)

BUREAUCRACY

"Moreover, I have an increasing suspicion that many laws we pass by a certain alchemy get transformed into new accretions of bureaucratic power over an increasingly harassed citizenry. Bureaucracies spring up in response to the need to establish machinery for the implementation of new laws, but in no time they develop a vested interest in their own selfaggrandizing existence quite separate and apart from the original purposes for which the servant strangely sets himself up for the master. The public interest itself becomes a mere pretext for a handful of men to exercise day-to-day dominion over the public without direct accountability for the use of such enormous power." (Response to the conferment of an honorary doctorate in civil law by the Manila Law College and the Philippine College of Criminology, April 23, 1983)

OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

"I remember that years ago I announced that Juan Tamad is dead and buried. The inspiration for this statement was the competitive performance of thousands of Filipino workers overseas, especially in the Middle East, whose fame as hard-working, productive and dependable workers rapidly spread around the world. Because of this, our country today leads East Asia as an expatriate labor force in the Middle East, and the Philippines rank first in the whole world as a provider of seafarers for international shipping. We may not be a world beater in business, but we are recognized global champions in labor."

"What these events underscore for us is that we live, as Filipinos, in an open society in which all careers are open to the talents; that the opportunities for advancement exist for those who are prepared for them; that it is with our own volition that we determine the extent to which we can transform our lives." (Commencement address to the graduating classes of the Manila Law College and the Philippine College of Criminology, April 23, 1983)

LAW OF DIMINISHING RELEVANCE

"If there is a law of diminishing returns in economics, there is a law of diminishing relevance in institutions. Under this law, institutions will tend to become less and less relevant to their charter objectives as bureaucrats bend them to their own convenient purposes, including the need for accommodation with the elite. This is far from being a conscious process. Most bureaucrats – especially the most successful

ones – silently aspire to join the elite either by themselves or through their children."

"This phenomenon may be observed with clarity in the field of housing. Billions of pesos have been spent on public housing. I have read the preambles of all the housing laws, saying that housing assistance must be allocated first to the neediest sectors. And yet all these billions of payments have not been successful in housing more than a few minimum-wage earners and their families. The beneficiaries of these housing loans are the people relatively affluent, to start with. One reason is that the law requires that there should be equity participation of the beneficiaries. And how many workers receiving 10 to 12 pesos a day can provide equity participation?" (Extemporaneous address at the presentation of the Philippines' Country Paper at the Special Meeting of ASEAN Labor Ministers, May 17, 1976)

WAR AGAINST POVERTY

"My thesis is that the war against poverty must begin as an act of national motivation and mobilization. We are talking not of skirmishes here and there but of a large movement that activates and uses the dormant will of an entire society. The medium that converts natural resources into wealth, human resources into dynamic productive forces and poor and weak societies into strong ones is a moral and spiritual medium - the magic of motivation." (Speech at the 8th Asian Regional Conference of the International Labor Organization, October 8, 1975)

UNEMPLOYMENT

"Unemployment is the real exploiter of labor because where there are huge surpluses, the price of labor will be cheap, and under conditions of severe mass unemployment there can be no real equality of bargaining power between labor and capital. If bargaining is left to the free market forces, as the statement of the Civil Liberties Union seem to suggest, labor will be the major victim." (Speech at the Cosmopolitan Church, December 3, 1975)

FILIPINO SOLDIERS

"If we take care of our soldiers in their time of need, we will be sure that we can expect their maximum allegiance to the nation in time of peril, to the point of paying the supreme sacrifice so that the nation may endure." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, May 21, 2000)

LABOR CODE

"I still remember how the Labor Code started. Since martial law was declared on Sept. 21, 1972, the greatest danger that I could see as secretary of labor was the threat of mass layoffs starting with union organizers and leaders. I therefore quickly established a defense line. This Maginot line took the form of Presidential Decree 21, which required the prior written clearance of the Secretary of Labor for every lay-off or dismissal in the private sector. This was how we saved the unions and tepmered the harshness of martial law on the workers." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, March 12, 2000)

GLEANERS OF THE SEA

"The onset of December brings back early memories of the sea and its chilly breezes as we young-

sters trawled the shore with our feet to catch the leavings of the sea. In Hagonoy, this is called namamalapad, literally gleaning from the sea, just as the gleaning from the fields is called nambabarog. The breezes gave the bones a pleasant tingle, especially when they also brought a fine wisp of rain."

"Such memories help put me to sleep as I draw up the blankets on my airplane seat, winging across the infinite Eurasian land mass towards Europe or across the Pacific Ocean on the way home from America. Thinking back to those days I also recall how I was introduced to the cigarette and cheap gin drink. These were the best antidotes to the December chill while gleaning small fish and crabs (alimasag) from the sea. Smoking and drinking helped mitigate that hard life, becoming both a necessity and a luxury to the subsistence fisherman." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, November 19, 2000)

HAGONOY'S PUBLIC LIBRARY

"The modest library of the Hagonoy Elementary School contained the works of Jose Rizal, some books of European masters such as Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, and the complete volumes of the Book of Knowledge. It was a veritable treasure trove of knowledge for my eager young mind. I would also soon learn that it was a splendid window to the world's storehouse of knowledge farther in the horizon." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 30, 1998)

RETIREMENT

"Politicians are retired mandatorily when the people no longer vote for them and writers are retired by readers who do not like to read them." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, February 6, 1996)

SEA DISASTERS

"Why this country should lead the world in offering human sacrifices to Neptune is simply out of whack. This looks more like a punitive mayhem arising from government incompetence. To the best of my knowledge not a single official in the regulatory machinery of the government for safety at sea has ever been disciplined for such wanton failures." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, February 23, 1996)

ECONOMIC GROWTH

"The truth is that if you spot a new house in any of our provinces, there are two ways to explain it. One is that it was built by the disposable income from a family member's overseas earnings and two, that irrigation had finally arrived there and doubled the farmer's income." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, April 9, 1996)

STROKE

"On May 13, 1994, I suffered from a stroke while standing as godfather at a church wedding in Santa Maria, Bulacan. The stroke was verified at the Philippine Heart Center where I spent a few days in the Intensive Care Unit. The most recent medical tests show that I have been recovering well. This, inspite of the fact that three wonderful girls serving as my therapists have left the country for jobs in the Middle East that promised much better pay." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, July 30, 1996)

HUMAN DIGNITY

"The dignity of the human person is, in real terms, the dignity of the workingman." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, August 2, 1996)

"UNDAS" (ALL SAINT'S DAY)

"On this day, death holds no terrors, but only love and affection. It is like poetry: the best emotions recollected in tranquility. It is not that the good that one does is oft interred with one's bones, as the poet says. On this day, standing by the graves of loved ones, we experience a surge of gratitude not unmixed with some remorse, remembering how they had reached out to us with pure and selfless affection, even if often unrequited."

"Death is indeed the great leveler, but the cemetery is also the final index of a highly stratified society. In no place is the class division more concentrated, more visible. The tombs of the rich reproduce the palaces that look down on the hamlets of the poor. Mobility is good for the living, but not for the dead. Alas, the poor, unless they renew their five-year

leases on the humble niches of their dead, will lose them to the newer applicants with purchasing power. How much more dignified are the military cemeteries where the same crosses mark the resting places of both the soldier and general." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, November 1, 1996)

DUEL, GHOSTS AND WAR

"I know the town cemetery well. I was in the fifth grade in the central elementary school when I fought my first duel, a bare-fisted one, on a question of chivalry. We climbed the walls of that cemetery to meet on a field of honor with our respective seconds. The other party became, later, my best friend. I remember, however, our dread of the cemetery after dark."

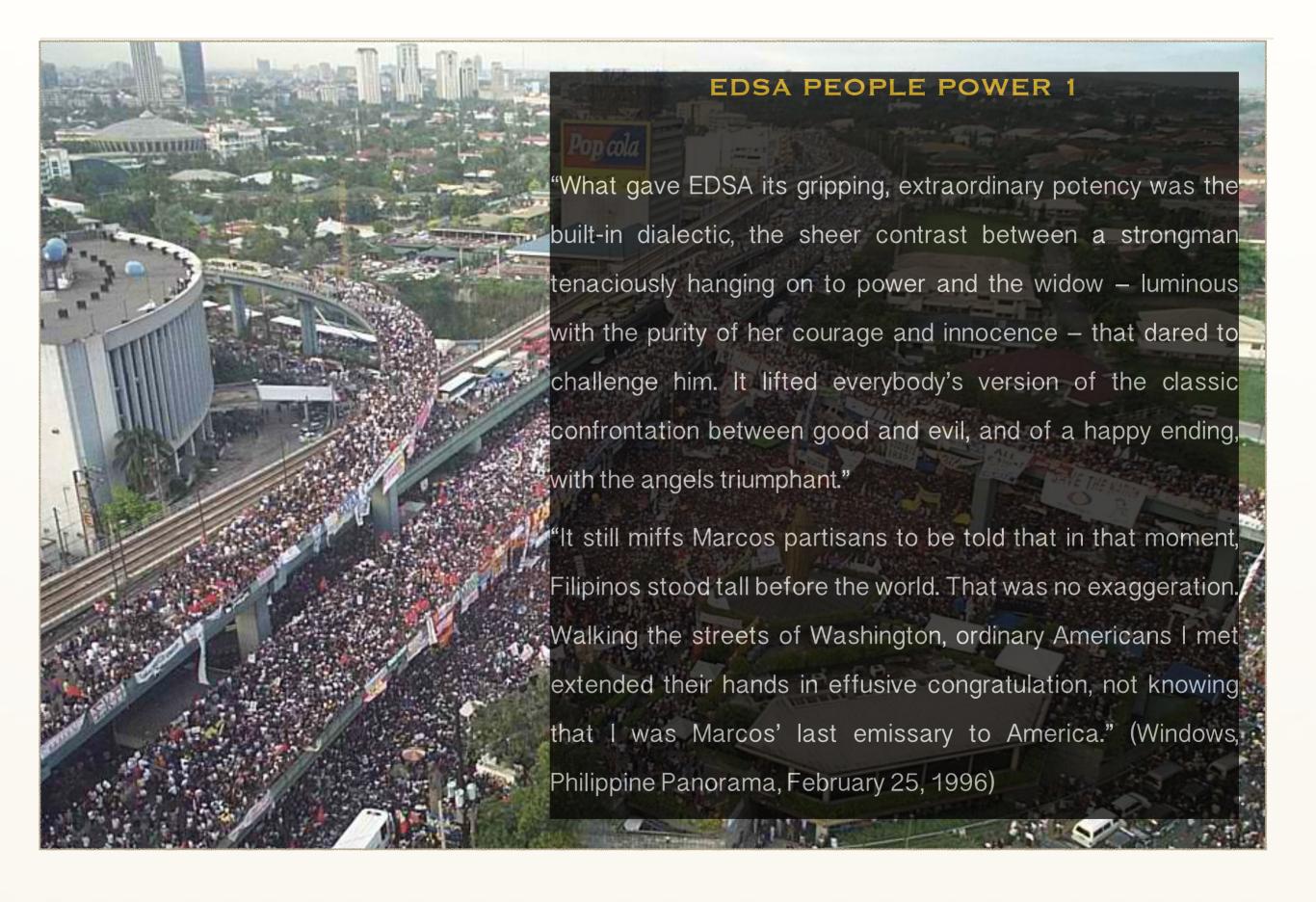
"I lost my fear of ghosts completely during the war when as a teen-age soldier in the Buenavista Regiment, fighting in Northern Luzon, we advanced on terrain ridden with half-buried corpses that kept protruding from the ground in all manner of awkward gestures. War does not pause to afford dignity to the dead or to consider their rights against desecration. Peace has to be the mother of civilization, in which ghosts have their legitimate place." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, November 1, 1996)

PRESIDENT CORY AQUINO

"It was the National Press Club's Gridiron night at the PICC and President Aquino was the guest of honor. I was close enough in the seating arrangements to have the courage to engage her in an informal conversation. I informed the President that a number of us who served in the Marcos Cabinet were planning to leave for Hawaii to visit the former President who was clearly on the brink of death. I wanted to seek her clearance for this trip."

"President Aquino graciously gave her permission and asked what she could do to help us. I said it was enough that she had no objection to this visit. In fact, the President seemed somewhat touched by this gesture of a previous cabinet. More by way of soliloquy, she asked very quietly whether if she got sick abroad, her own cabinet would show the same concern. "That will not happen but I'm sure they will," I said." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, October 18, 1996)





FRIENDSHIPS

"In the golden sunset of our lives, with the intimations of mortality getting stronger, the memories of a lifetime of shared friendships, longings and aspirations provide a wonderful solace and a powerful balm to the wounds and pains of life. We also have each other to offer the trophies of life." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, May 10, 1996 based on speech delivered during the reunion of the Hagonoy Institute class of 1948)

INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION

"Twenty-five years ago I was a dockworker in Manila at the time that such labor leaders as Roberto Oca and Johnny Tan were emerging in the waterfront. Before that I worked as a farm hand and as a



fisherman in my home village in Bulacan. Now it is customary in politics to extol oneself by referring to one's humble past.

But I thought of burdening you

with this bit of autobiography because it was as a dockhand that I read about the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944 under a street lamp in Manila. I became immediately an adherent of the ILO. Much later on, I was gratified to be appointed by the late President Ramon Magsaysay as a member of our ILO Delegation in 1956." (Remarks before the Asian Government Group by Labor Minister Ople, June 1, 1970)

DIALOGUE

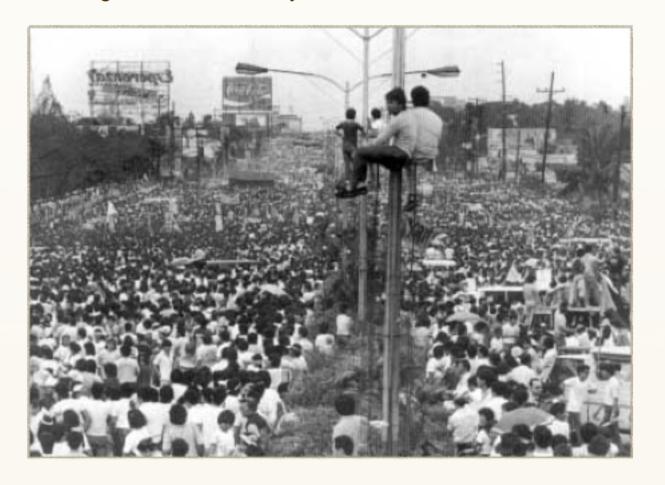
"Social justice through dialogue can be boring; it is more exciting to throw a stone than to build with it. But the great institutions of the world, not the least the ILO itself, have been built only because men have agreed to talk to endure each other, and to allow the common good ultimately to direct their thoughts and actions. (Speech on the Opening of the ILO Manila Office)

PEOPLE POWER

"People's power is not the product of meticulous planning and drilling: it is an act of popular combustion, which occurs when the temperature of discontent attains a boiling point. That is how it happened at EDSA, at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, in Hungary, Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania. Perhaps some day it will form

again of its own accord, against another set of discredited leaders.

But when it is reduced to the level of government propaganda, and a political tool to discredit opposition, it becomes a mockery, a painful caricature of the original." (Windows, Philippine Panorama "Reinventing EDSA, February 25, 1996)



GLOBALIZED ECONOMY

"Now the craftsmen of Pangasinan make samurai swords for export. The swords and krises were displayed at Tesoro's branch at the Hyatt Regency. Asked who were buying these swords (besides myself) the saleslady said: "Koreans." Chalk this up as one of the wonders of a globalized economy. Filipinos are making Japanese swords for export to Korea." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, March 17, 1996)

BOLOS

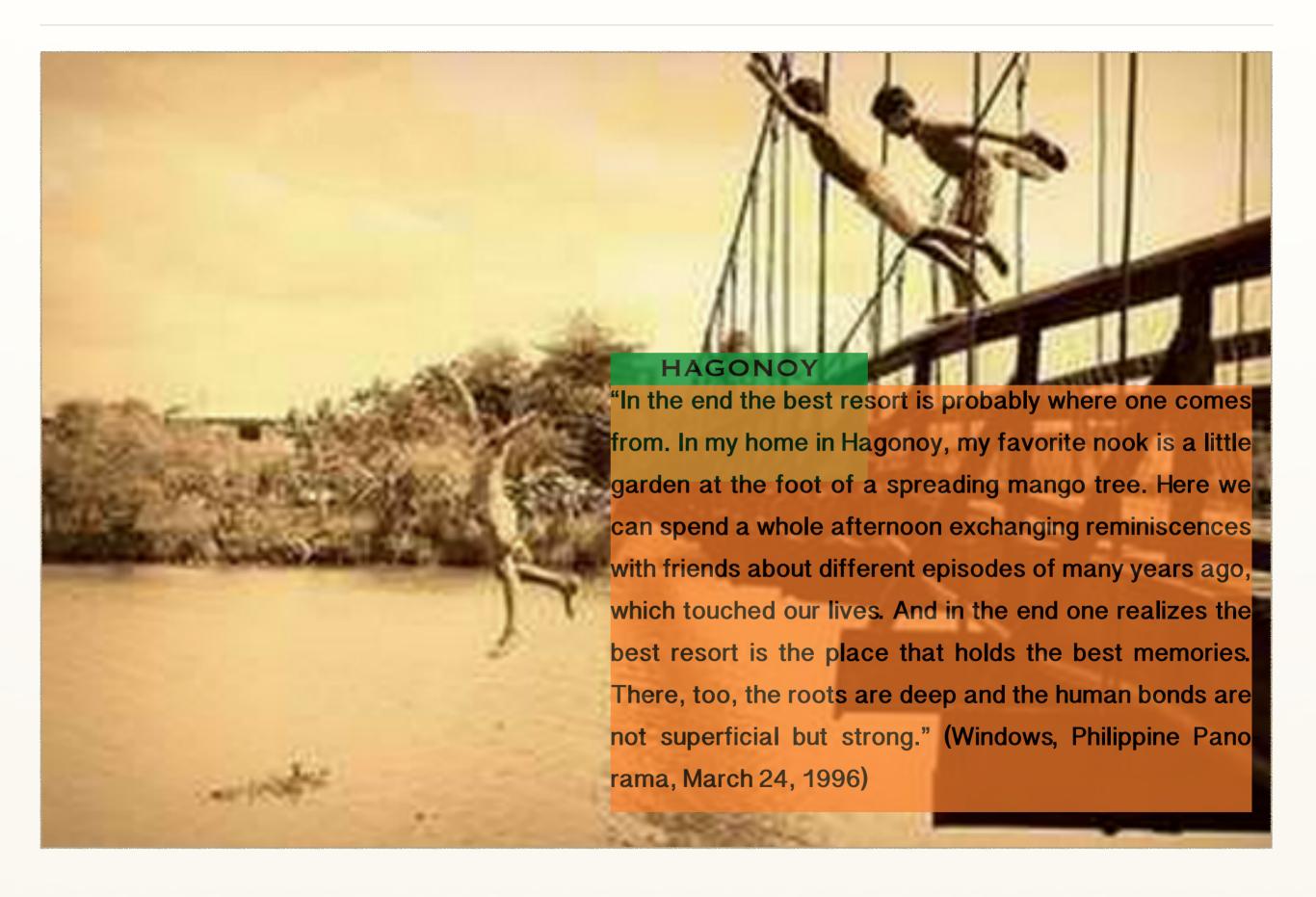
"The Pinoy bolo is an excellent example of dual use technology. It can clear a forest and build a house or a city in peace, or exterminate the enemy as a weapon in war." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, March 17, 1996)

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE

"It is not true that Philippine independence was handed to the Philippines on a silver platter by the United States or as a wholly benevolent and gratuitous act. Our freedom was ransomed by the blood and lives of those who fought in 1896 as well as those who fought in World War II." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, April 14 1996)

MEMORIES

"As we get older we become what our memories are. I thank God for my generous share of beautiful memories. In my garden of memories I like to pick the loveliest roses which correspond to those years in high school, incipient loves and the aborted possibilities." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, May 19, 1996)



LOVE LETTERS

"I remember being asked to write love letters to the lady of their dreams by some of my friends here. We know better than to transgress the territorial imperative. Poaching on somebody else's amatory turf was not permissible, then and now, and in fact highly dangerous. The truth was that I did write letters for myself but these letters found their way to the other high school (the St. Anne's Academy across the street) and that is how I wooed and married my wife." (Based on a speech delivered at a high school reunion, Windows, Philippine Panorama, May 19, 1996

HUMILITY

"I'm glad everyone of you says I have not changed at all in my ways since our parting fifty years ago. I'm still the classmate you knew except that I have acquired a certain national stature. Although I can walk with kings if necessary, I feel completely at ease with the common man, the laborer, the farmer, and the fisherman. For like most of you I exercised all these occupations myself in my youthful years." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, May 19, 1996)

COMELEC

"Those who defy the ruling of the Comelec as a constitutional body will have to bear the odium of putting themselves and their ambitions beyond a rule of law." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 7, 1992)

POLITICS

"In politics it is not always possible to choose one's teammates and allies. There are larger forces that restrict or limit our choices." (Windows, Philippine Panorama, May 19, 1996)

COURTING VOTES

"The truth is that an election is the time when Filipino leaders decide to evade the most important and the most strategic policy questions, preferring to dwell in that center of the political spectrum where there is least danger of offending any one." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 12, 1992)

LEGISLATORS

"Some of the most barren records in our legislative bodies belong to those who have done the most posturing as champions of the poor and of the oppressed. Ask them to name a bill they have filed, and the answer will be a long string of evasions." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 2, 1992)

NARROW INTERESTS

"Soon our people will demand an answer to the puzzle of why a nation with so many talented individuals fails as a group. One answer is that Filipino leaders in all social and political strata have not functioned as a responsible elite unlike their counterparts abroad. Philippine politics itself tends to be irresponsible. To a large extent, it is obsessed only with the narrow interests of its various actors and factions." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 28, 1992)

SENATE SLATES

"Ideally, these tickets must reflect fair regional representation in the sense that the eight major ethnolinguistic groups and the 14 administrative regions will not feel neglected or affronted. In addition, provision must always be made for the representation of

women and Muslim Mindanao and – as may be suitable – also youth, farmers and labor." (January 30, 1992, Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 30, 1992)

INSTANT HEROES OR CELEBRITIES

"A nation that places its hopes on instant heroes or entertainment celebrities rather than on its best-trained talents to shape its government, a nation that cannot distinguish between the world of illusion and the world of reality, perhaps deserves to languish economically." ("The 'sick man' of ASEAN", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 28, 1992)

RUNNING FOR THE SENATE

"Some of my readers have inquired about my own plans in these elections. Most of my associates in and out of the political world have asked me to run for the Senate. Two of the leading "presidentiables" have asked me to be their vice presidential teammate, offers that I genuinely appreciated by which I have definitely declined. If I become a candidate at all, I believe my aims will be much more modest, a seat in the Senate from where I can contribute to a major effort to turn around the fortunes of our hapless nation, especially the economy, during the rest of this decade." ("The race to complete tickets", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 30, 1992)

RE-ELECTION BID

"Searching my own heart on why I would like to run for the Senate again, I do not find any inordinate love of power as the driving force, because having been in and out of office, I do not miss the pomp and circumstance of power. If there are hidden material incentives, they do not appeal strongly to me; after all I came out of twenty years in power with little to show for it in material terms." ("A valedictory", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, February 6, 1992)

trust and to the rigorous demands of my own conscience." ("Thoughts on Turning 74", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, February 4, 2001)

PHILIPPINE SENATE

"The Senate is the mighty bulwark of legislative independence whoever is President, and this is not going to change." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, December 1, 1992)

FOREIGN POLICY

"Our policies in international affairs should grow out of our own fundamental concerns and the vital interests of the Filipino people." ("Global but Parochial", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, July 16, 1992)

PUBLIC SERVICE

"The truth is that my cup runneth over. I have derived a very great gratification from serving our people through various positions in government. And now, looking at the sun already strongly tilted to the west, I am confident that I have fully lived up to the public

OFFICIAL TRAVELS

"Let us put a clamp on useless foreign travel, by all means, but let us not push this over the brink of necessary prudence which may result in our isolation from our region and from the world. If we are looking for a single standard to justify foreign travel, it should be to ask the question: Is this a treaty obligation we should honor? If missed, will this damage the country's image as a responsible international partner?" (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, September 10, 1992)

COLUMN - WRITING

"A columnist rises or falls, first of all in his own selfesteem and in the esteem of his public, on the basis of what he writes. If he engages in propaganda rather than purvey honest opinions, he will be found out. If he prevaricates, dissembles or distorts his facts, no impressive seal of office or pompous title can save him from the judgment of his readers."

(Horizons, Manila Bulletin, July 16, 1992)

MARCOS AT THE NP CONVENTION

"I remember him walking to his car at the steps of the Manila Hotel, virtually transformed, radiating the aura of the next President. I imagined him an Indian chief with the scalps of his rivals tucked in his belt. As the conqueror of his tribe, he projected the aura of one who could offer himself as the leader of a larger tribe, the nation." (The NP convention(s), Horizons, Manila Bulletin, January 9, 1992)

COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY

"The essence of command responsibility is not that the commander himself commits an offense, but that by his silence, acquiescence or lack of will to impose disciplinary or corrective action he has condoned the wrongdoing of his subordinates." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, August 25, 1992)

ON MARTIAL LAW

"I still remember the martial law years when the Philippines had no democratically elected legislature, and I knew that one of the real sources of pain for the leadership then was the annual invitation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. When this came in the mails, there was an acute sense of embarrassment, the government could not send anyone; there was no parliament to speak of. That sense of being an international outcast, I felt sure, motivated the martial law administration to call the elections of 1978 for the Interim Batasang Pambansa." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, September 10, 1992)

DENOUNCING POVERTY

"I have always thought it odd that among my friends, it is those born to wealth that can get up a sweat denouncing poverty, which they have never known." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, July 30, 1992)

BUREAUCRACY

"There is, however, an iron law about bureaucracy: If you do not check it, it will proliferate, and will acquire a life of its own independently of the original purposes that informed its beginnings. Thus of about 300 government corporations existing today, only very few will be able to defend or justify their existence under conditions of zero budgeting, where basic questions must be raised about their continuing relevance. They are not allowed to perish, unlike those subject to the test of market forces, where the process of 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter's phrase) takes care of the inefficient." (August 1, 1992, Horizons, Manila Bulletin, August 1, 1992)

LACK OF FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

"By far the reason most often cited by foreign investors for avoiding the Philippines while flocking to its neighbors is the lack of political stability here. This of course also relates to the breakdowns in peace and order, the limited infrastructure including an endemic power crisis, and the notion that in the Philippines, policies are never clear or predictable." ("Taiwan's 'second wave'", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, August 6, 1992)

PEACE

"This is a nation finally at peace, the guns of war having fallen silent, the wounds of fratricidal conflict healed, the creative energies of a talented people ready to be sprung on the world." ("Thunderbolts from Utrecht", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, December 15, 1992)

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

"Hard choices will have to be made that will affect millions of lives. If relocation and rehabilitation must be the main strategy, then the bulk of the funds must be allocated to that, and the new sites must be chosen without delay." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, September 15, 1992)

TECHNOLOGY

"In the end, the computers are as useful only as the motivation and the skill of those who use them. The computer revolution takes place only when those who use this tool are ready and willing to make it happen, because there is a disciplined purpose to which the computer must become subservient." (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, November 26, 1992)

CHRISTMAS

"The best Christmases I remember in a now fairly long lifetime were associated not with times of prosperity but of adversity. The first pair of rubber shoes marked "Elpo" (which is my surname in reverse) that my father gave me when I was a barefoot boy, walking three kilometers to the Hagonoy Elementary School. The time some of my girl classmates in the primary school presented me with star apples giftwrapped in brilliant tinfoil. That Christmas when we were picketing an insurance company, and contemplated the affluent tables of the rich while we huddled as a forlorn group at the foot of Jones Bridge."

"And yet the generosity of spirit that marked those times instilled lasting memories. Those were times when Christmas was not a reckoning based on material values but a celebration of the infinite riches

of the human spirit, unembarrassed by personal gain." ("Shutters of the Soul", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, December 24, 1992)

LIFE

"The miracle of life - and especially sustained life of very long duration - is perhaps the biggest mystery on every birthday. As I told the breakfast of my friends and townmates, it is hard to believe that nearly three quarters of a century, 74 years, have elapsed since I was born in one of the poorest barrios of my hometown, on February 3, 1927. From the anonymity of centuries, I have gained some degree of fame as a writer, journalist, a Cabinet member (secretary of labor), a parliamentarian (elected member of the Batasang Pambansa) and now senator of the land." ("Thoughts on Turning 74", Horizons, Manila Bulletin, February 4, 2001)

COMING HOME

We are not therefore surprised that a reverse exodus of migrants is now beginning. More and more Filipinos are coming home from their places of self-exile in Europe and the United States. There is still nothing better than to settle in one's own homeland, the only country, Quezon said, that God has given us." (Manila Bulletin, August 29, 1996)

POLITICAL WARS

"Fancy that the Philippine political wars have now to be fought both on a local and a global front, on the generosity of others." (Philippine Daily Globe, July 20, 1989)

FINANCIAL SECURITY

"Indeed I know of some people here who invested their small savings wisely in some well-selected, undervalued property and company shares twenty years ago, substituting the cost of a cup of coffee for a square meter of land in Novaliches, who woke up one morning to discover that they had achieved thresholds of financial security they never dreamed of in their youth. Responsible investing is of course not a part of the curriculum in our schools. But it may not be too soon to want to encourage such a culture in young Filipinos who otherwise are fated to inherit a culture of "get rich quick" and head for early bankruptcy instead of genuine financial security." (Manila Bulletin, April 12, 1996)

NATIONAL BUDGET

"The real test of priorities in a government is to be found, not in the statements of politicians, but in the allocation of resources, in the annual budget." (Statement delivered during the Debate on the Director General's Report, ILO Conference, Geneva, June 10, 1970)

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"It is a measure of my parochial pride that as a graduate of Hagonoy Institute, a humble provincial school in Bulacan, I feel no reverential awe whatsoever for the impressive graduation rites of Harvard University. The University of the Philippines, the Ateneo de Manila University or De La Salle Manila are in every way the equal of Harvard as centers of educational excellence, minus the glamour of "stateside,"

as in Johnny Walker Whisky." (Manila Bulletin, June 11, 1999)

PRAYERS FOR PEACE

"The lives of so many Filipino families are interwoven with the inscrutable tapestry of the tensions and conflicts in that part of the world (the Middle East). Muslims, Christians and Jews must keep raising their prayers to the one and indivisible God that they all believe in. All three faiths believe in the power of prayer, and by praying in unison they will compel even God to sit up and listen." (Manila Bulletin, October 27, 1998)

JOB CREATION

"There are no quick fixes when in it comes to job creation." (Manila Bulletin, June 23, 1998)

RIGHT TO STRIKE

"Mr. President, the basic principle of all labor standards is that there can be no genuine or lasting industrial peace without justice.

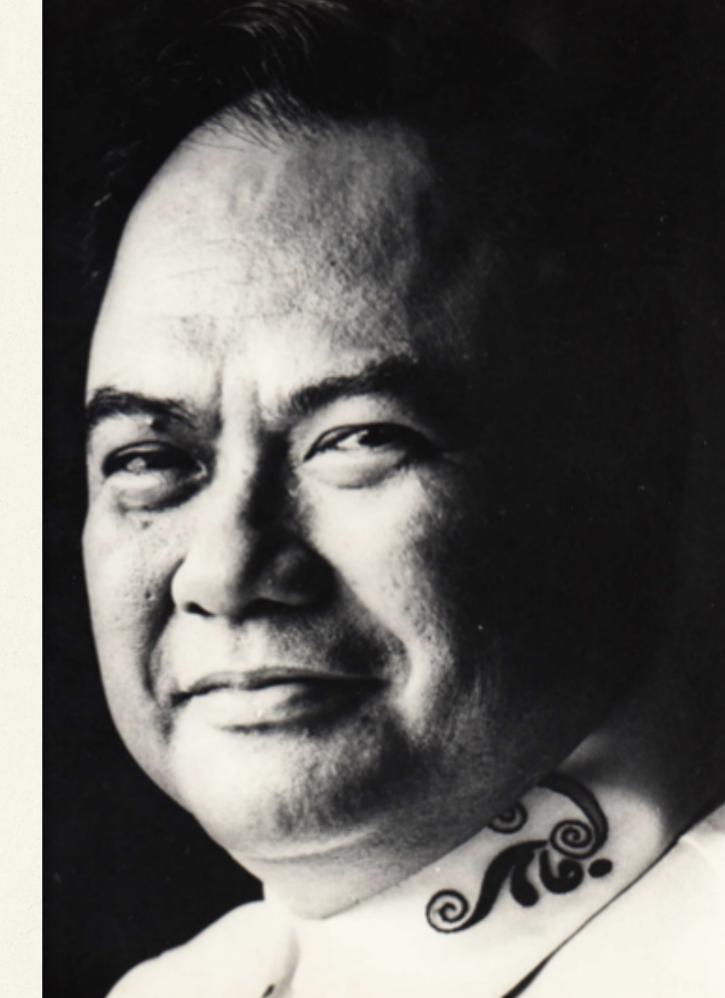
"Mr. President, if you have to be the new Bonifacio, please do not listen to the advisers who urge you to draw your bolo against the workers who have always been your most ardent supporters." ("Banning the Right to Strike Will Not Help Industrial Peace but Disrupt It", Privilege speech delivered on the Senate Floor, October 1, 1998)

ON BEING SENATE PRESIDENT

"The thought of becoming the 18th president of the Senate is therefore above all a humbling one. But what is reassuring is the quality and integrity of the senatorial institution itself."

"I see my job as one of optimizing the potentials of each and every member of the Senate to become a powerful collective and institutional capability for performing the main tasks of the Senate as an institution. There is of course the lawmaking function. The great ideas are debated here." (Based on Ople's Inaugural Speech, Manila Bulletin, August 1, 1999)

THE "INTERREGNUM" STORY



Editor's Note: Ka Blas, being a voracious reader and a skilled writer, was known for his mastery of words, which sometimes also landed him in the hot seat. Such was what happened when Ka Blas uttered the word "interregnum" in relation to the state of affairs and the health conditions of his boss, President Ferdinand Marcos. The word itself sent political leaders and pundits in a mad dash to find out its meaning especially because it was used in reference to the President's health. Ople was the first Cabinet Secretary who, in an interview with The New York Times, publicly admitted that Marcos was "in control but cannot take major initiatives at this time." Just as a footnote, the 2013 Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "interregnum" a period during which the normal functions of government or control are suspended. Given this meaning, it was not surprising that those close to President Marcos wanted Ka Blas ousted from the Cahinet.

"The Philippines, Mr. Ople said, is undergoing a kind of interregnum because of Mr. Marcos's illness" – New York Times.

Here is a screenshot of the actual story that appeared in the New York Times:

December 4, 1984

AIDE CONFIRMS ILLNESS OF MARCOS

MANILA, Dec. 3— A close political aide of Ferdinand E. Marcos said today that the President was "in control but cannot take major initiatives at this time."

"The health of our leader is undergoing certain vicissitudes, problems which started a year ago," said the aide, Blas Ople, the Labor Minister.

The Philippines, Mr. Ople said, is going through "a kind of interregnum" because of Mr. Marcos's illness.

The statement by the Cabinet minister appeared to represent the first on- the-record confirmation from a close adviser to Mr. Marcos that the President was seriously ill in mid-November.

Mr. Marcos, who is widely believed to be suffering from a degenerative kidney ailment, went into seclusion Nov. 14 for health reasons and was not seen in public until Nov. 26, when he appeared for a meeting with Cabinet ministers and members of the National Assembly. The meetings were widely regarded here as the strongest indication to date that the President was well enough to remain in control of the Government and was performing his duties.

Mr. Ople's statement was also a confirmation that Mr. Marcos's health problems began last year, when there were widespread rumors that he had undergone surgery.

Recollection of Willie Villarama, former Assistant Secretary at the Dept. of Labor:

"On March 5, 1985, I received a telex from the Kennedy School of Government that they were accepting me as a Mason fellow. At that time, I was still working for my boss, Labor Secretary Ople."

"Before lunch of that same day, Amang (referring to Ka Blas) called me to his room and asked me to prepare his favorite electric typewriter, coffee and ashtray."

"Aalis na tayo dito. I am drafting my letter of resignation to FM. Pinatatawag ako at nagalit nang sinabi ko ang gobyerno ay nasa interregnum stage. Sumama ka."

I replied, "Sir, may maganda namang balita – tinanggap ako sa Harvard."

"Sayang," he said. "Paalis na tayo, hindi ka na makakaalis."

He asked me to read his resignation letter. If my memory serves me right, in that letter he was apologizing for having given that statement and that he is resigning because he does not want to be a burden to FM and to his government.

We proceeded to Malacanang where there were many Cabinet members around. This was the time when FM was sick and was not available at all to his official Cabinet members. Ka Blas was the first to be asked to enter. I was left behind with other visitors. The "mirons" were anticipating that Amang would be fired ASAP. I was naturally very sad.

They were closeted for almost two hours. People were wondering why it was taking time for FM to fire Amang.

since. After that talk, rumors about his being kicked out of the Marcos Cabinet died down.

 $\sim \sim \sim$

When he got out of the room, Ka Blas went straight to me and said, "tara na." He was in a very quiet mood. Finally, I got the guts to ask, "Sir, tinanggap po ba ang resignation ninyo?"

His reply was that FM did not even raise the "interregnum" issue. "Eh, bakit po ang tagal ninyo?"

"Pagpasok ko, sabi ni FM, 'Blas, kamusta ka na? Matagal na tayong hindi nagkita."

For more than an hour, the President and Ka Blas talked about how they met and what has transpired

JEEPNEY TALES 1952 - 1953

These are some of the rare, smart-alecky columns (mostly untitled) of young journalist Blas Fajardo Ople when he worked as a deskman at the Daily Mirror way back in 1952. He was but 25 years old at that time, trying to make sense of the world as a mythical Jeepney driver. Who would have thought that that same writer would one day create the overseas employment program, build institutions like the POEA, OWWA, and the NLRC, write the Labor Code, help draft the 1987 Constitution, win a Senate seat, become Senate President, and serve his country until death as Secretary of Foreign Affairs?



Source: Jeepney Tales, The Daily Mirror, August 4, 1952

There was a time somebody ran amok right in Quiapo and stabbed, I think, three vendors. Mang Porong, a fellow driver, was there, and had said: If Jeepney drivers all went berserk, there would be few cops left in this whole city of Manila. But he didn't reckon on a plainclothesman being seated right beside him. The jest (was it?) cost him precious minutes at the MPD.

Now, there is really no reason drivers and policemen should not get more chummy. We and our passengers are the people, and don't we pay for the keep of policemen, even councilors? But perhaps the people don't pay enough, and so some of the people, us Jeepney drivers, must make up for the difference. What's a P.20 bill you carelessly throw near an outpost, anyway? A boy you don't know quickly picks it up, but we know it goes to the "legitimate" recipient.

Frankly, this is not done so much now, and I am told, it's because the new guy at City Hall has kindly told our old friends to behave.

Probably he told them: There is the law, you are the arms of the law, and if you can't observe the law, how can you enforce it? We better do away with the law and with you.

Now, I never got to know this guy Lacson, except from a distance while he was holding a meeting in Tondo last November. But I like him because he saves me from paying extra tax to policemen to make up for the neglect of the people.

 $\sim\sim$

Source: The Daily Mirror, August 19, 1952

Some Jeepneys are like altars on wheels. They're so splattered with holy images and pictures you'd think our famous family altars have nothing got nothing on them.

There's nothing wrong about this, except that your jeepney driver and his conductor are liable to be so profane sometimes they embarrass everybody, saint or sinner. If you are of the Jeepney set, you know how colorful these fellows' language can get.

Well, the whole idea seems to be that when you hang these holy pictures (mostly five or ten centavo reproductions) just above your windshield you get a little more margin of safety. Who knows at the critical moment, these would give you that thin leeway you need to avoid running smack into a lamppost or other such obstruction?

Actually, I think all this is an old custom. We like to have amulets, those in hazardous occupations especially. And Jeepney driving, you'll admit, is not the safest job around. Everybody would just love to have an "antinganting."

Our drivers in the city being better informed, they resort to religious symbols rather than tote some animals' paw or other such stuff as life-savers as they say is still done in the barrios. I'm not sure the saints like this.

The truth is, I'm a sentimental fool myself and I believe in amulets as much as the next fellow. And there's no ordinance banning their use yet. But don't you think some drivers are going too far? At least they should cut down on their swearing first.

Source: Jeepney Tales, The Daily Mirror, November 29, 1952

Kumpare Dimas is a firm believer in democracy.

He thinks all people, rich and poor alike, are or ought to be equal.

That is why he gets burned up everytime he hears about a "day" or a "week" being celebrated.

You have "fire prevention week," "book week," and even the dogs have their own "World Animal's Day."

But, who ever thought of a "jeepney drivers' day?"

Kumpare Dimas is hurt because he believes that jeepney drivers are just as good as dogs, if not better. So, he proposes that a day be set aside every year on which jeepney drivers can stay at home and just loaf the whole day. People will be stranded, what with no jeepneys to take them where they want to go. But it will remind them once a year that jeepney drivers are at least better than dogs or books. He would like to see the dog or book who can drive.

Source: Jeepney Tales, The Daily Mirror, August 4, 1952

There was a time somebody ran amok right in Quiapo and stabbed, I think, three vendors. Mang Porong, a fellow driver, was there, and had said: If jeepney drivers all went berserk, there would be few cops left in this whole city of Manila. But he didn't reckon on a plainclothesman being seated right beside him. The jest (was it?) cost him precious minutes at the MPD.

Now, there is really no reason drivers and policemen should not get more chummy. We and our passengers are the people, and don't we pay for the keep of policemen, even councilors? But perhaps the people don't pay enough, and so some of the people, us jeepney drivers, must make up for the difference. What's a P.20 bill you carelessly throw near an outpost, anyway? A boy you don't know quickly picks it up, but we know it goes to the "legitimate" recipient.

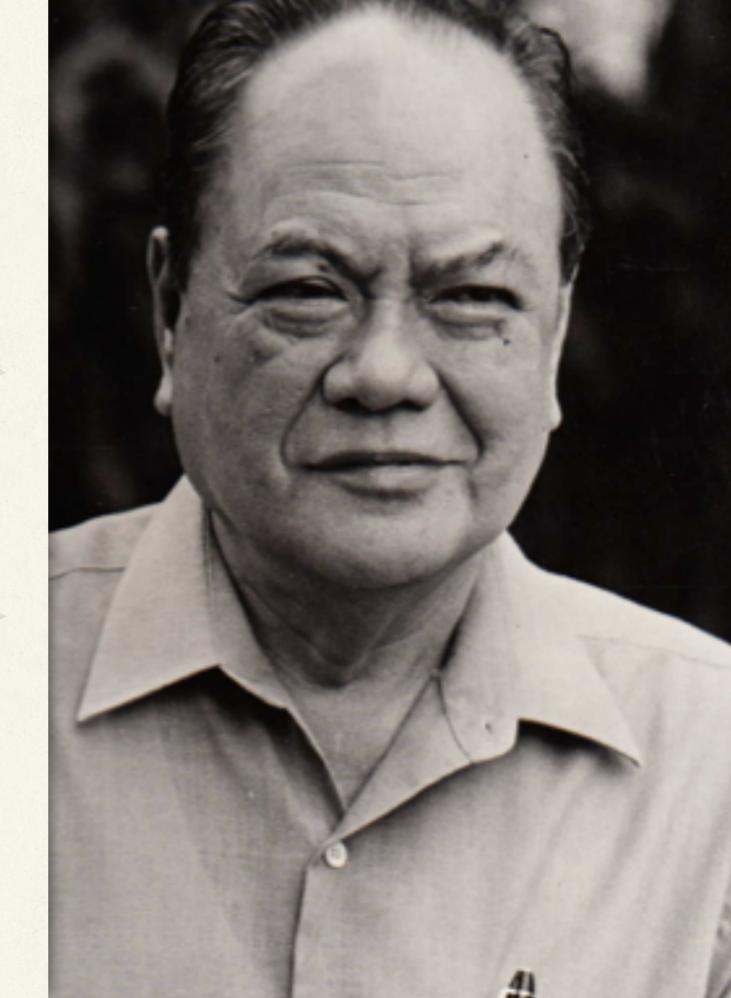
Frankly, this is not done so much now, and I am told, it's because the new guy at City Hall has kindly told our old friends to behave.

Probably he told them: There is the law, you are the arms of the law, and if you can't observe the law, how can you enforce it? We better do away with the law and with you.

Now, I never got to know this guy Lacson, except from a distance while he was holding a meeting in Tondo last November. But I like him because he saves me from paying extra tax to policemen to make up for the neglect of the people.

THE SEVEN KEYSTO SUCCESS

By Sen. Blas F. Ople



No public figure escapes the demands of the commencement season, which is the dominant event for millions of graduating students and their parents during March and April. The choice of guest speakers is based on their ability to inspire the graduates with their own successful careers. Most of the time, these would be public officials who are the symbols of upwardly mobile success and of the power they wield in their communities. (There are few instances when losing candidates are invited to be commencement speakers.)

The speakers, most of them claiming to come from deprived backgrounds, are themselves supposed to be living proof that education can change the lives of the poor. Nor are they likely to miss the opportunity of extolling themselves by pointing out their humble origins. A commencement is not the place to condemn the iniquitous social order. It is about the

talisman of learning and hard work, which transforms lives.

As one who has been to scores of commencement exercises throughout a long public career, I have learned to sum up the secrets of success for my believing audiences. The truth, however, is that such sweeping generalizations are not likely to penetrate the core of a graduate's own convictions. An ambitious young man or young woman must first internalize these secrets in their own lives, often through harrowing experiences before they can understand the keys to success in the real world.

The first key to success, worldly or otherwise, is to set a goal for one's self. Most of mankind get born and die without ever knowing what they really want. The second key is to develop a positive outlook in life. Problems are often opportunities in disguise. As someone has said, pessimism is just a state of mind but optimism is a strategy for living.

The third key is to develop an active, rather than a passive, view of one's environment. Successful men do not merely wait for things to happen to them. They take initiatives. They try to make things happen. They create their own challenges and opportunities.

The fourth key is to stand by one's principles when life's crises must be faced. The test of character, in the phrase of William James, is not in choosing the path of least resistance but the path of the greatest traction. The temptation to make the easy choice must be resisted. This merely means that most times, the harder choice is the correct one.

The fifth key is to be absolutely dependable and trustworthy, so that your own colleagues know they can trust your integrity even in the most difficult moments. The trust of colleagues and subordinates is what can propel you to success.

The sixth key is a commitment to continuing personal and professional growth. Most people stop growing after leaving school. Education is for life.

The seventh and last key is to live a frugal and disciplined life, shunning all forms of waste, whether of time, talent, money or other resources. Life itself is a finite and most precious gift, and wasting it through frivolity and self-indulgence must be offensive to the Giver of Life.

For most of us who speak at commencement exercises, of course, these formulas for success represent wisdom after the fact. I have never really sat down at any point of in my life to analyze the secrets of success. Most of those who are acclaimed for their success were too busy answering the challenges of the moment, which very likely they have themselves created, to bother about large and sweeping principles. But what else can you tell these young and impressionable audiences who hang by your every word as a symbol and authority on the subject of success?

I still vividly recall my own graduation night in the plaza of my hometown, Hagonoy, Bulacan, on March 23, 1941. It was the first time ever that I gave a formal speech, as a valedictorian of the graduating class, which I had composed with great care and committed to memory. It must have been

a flawless delivery. But what the audience, including my classmates, did not know was that I was wearing ill-fitting leather shoes borrowed for the occasion from an affluent uncle, and my aching feet nearly ruined my performance. I was left with little disposition to listen to the advice of our distinguished guest speaker, Venancio Trinidad, who was the Bulacan Superintendent of Schools.

Few of us will ever have the leisure that afforded Lord Chesterfield the opportunity to write the letters to his sons that, until today, represent the best advice on how to navigate the frail craft of one's life through the shoals of a dangerous and treacherous world. But commencement exercises do afford such an opportunity.

The commencement speaker is a surrogate parent giving frank but sympathetic advice to his own children who are about to leave on an exciting but dangerous journey – the journey of life.

Unfortunately or not, the advice will mean nothing until the principles of success are internalized in the convictions of a young man or woman setting out on that all-important journey. He or she will have to weigh the counsels of fear and hope contending inside the heart. In the end, we are most answerable to ourselves and not to any jury. And that is the eighth key to success. To thine own self be true. (Horizons, Manila Bulletin, March 30, 1993)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The family of the late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople as well as the entire staff of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute would like to acknowledge the participation, cooperation and contributions of the following in the making of this e-book: Estelle Ople Osorio, Ryan Ulysses Cruz, Carlo Ople, Mark Borromeo, Jerico Vilog, Joselito Lord, Willie Villarama, Atty. Dalisay Ople San Jose, Fort Jose, Joselito Lord & the staff of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center, the management and editors of Manila Bulletin Corporation, all the editors, employees and staff of the now defunct Daily Globe, Kenji Solis and the entire PEBA family of OFW bloggers, as well as all the friends, family members and associates of Ka Blas that continue to pray for him and love him up to this very day.



Contact Us



No to Plagiarism!

For those who wish to cite or share or use in any way, form or fashion, any of the quotes and/or photos in this e-book, please give us a call: 833-5337 and/or fax a request to 833-9562. You can also send us an e-mail via blasoplecenter@hotmail.com or to toots.ople@yahoo.com.

Copyright 2013

© Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute

Lorem ipsum dolor rutur amet. Integer id dui sed odio imperd feugiat et nec ipsum. Ut rutrum massa non ligula facilisis in ullamcorper purus dapibus. Nec leo enim. Morbi in nunc purus ulla mcorper lacinia. Tinc idunt odio sit amet dolor pharetra dignissim.