

Dara Tumaca – Ramos

Entrusted to my care
The Joys of Teaching
Minds & Touching Hearts



MEL Bulletin

43

Dara Tumaca – Ramos

Entrusted to my care

The Joys of Teaching Minds &
Touching Hearts

*Let it be clear, then,
in all your relations
with the children who are
entrusted to you
that you look upon yourself
as ministers of God
acting with love,
with sincere and true zeal..."*

St. La Salle
"Meditations for the Time of Retreat"
(Md 201)

Brothers of the Christian Schools
Via Aurelia 476
00165 Rome, Italy

June 2011

Presentation

“Entrusted to your care” is a work which captivates the reader from the first story by its simplicity, spontaneity, naturalness and deep humanity. Each chapter is like the pearl of a necklace studied with others as we discover step by step the soul of the author, her capacity of observation and admiration, her devotion and love for educational work.

The title, taken from a meditation by John Baptist de La Salle, is used to observe how the Lasallian pedagogical and spiritual insights are still very much present and may offer a horizon of meaning for educators today.

In a world in which many teachers feel discouraged and tempted to leave the profession, it is encouraging to see someone get to experience the deep joy of teaching. The author teaches us to know how to always connect life and school, to take into account small details, to exercise patience and maintain authority, not to curb creativity and to know how to treat each student not like a number or a name on a class list but rather as a person who is developing, and who deserves “all of our care.”

I recommend reading this MEL booklet to all teachers who want to further deepen the understanding of their profession as a true vocation. It is from this concept of educational work that the profession becomes mission, the teacher becomes minister, and the students are seen as “*entrusted to our care*” by Him who sent us to work in this area of the Kingdom.

Brother Alberto Gómez

Warmest Thanks

Working on what I consider as a personal project, I am very pleased that the people who made this little book possible belong to my circle of closest friends. To them I am forever grateful.

To Shirley Mae Mendoza-Maghari, my former board mate and sweetest friend. You were the first one to read the raw stories, I thank you for the very encouraging and helpful suggestions.

To Ms. Cecil Jalandoni, our English consultant. You have enthusiastically accepted the task of editing my stories, and leaving that heartwarming note of appreciation and support on my table. It surely made a difference to me, at the time when I was filled with self-doubt. A million thanks to you.

To Vladimir Cebu, my artist-friend and confidant. You came when I needed you most. Thanks for the delightful cover of my little book.

To Maritess Valencia, my most spiritual best friend since our college days at St. Paul's. Thanks a lot for your all-out support and prayers.

To Agnes Villarino-Agudaña, Jahren Salazar, Katharine Pfeider-Casia, Ellery Joy Armstrong-Arambulo, some of the "constants" in my life. You are always dear to me, thanks for your moral support.

To Genn Tomas, the manager of IMPRESS. Your sincerity, generosity and passion for excellence are truly admirable. Thanks for doing the lay-out.

To Dr. Myrna Juplo, both my principal and friend in the University of St. La Salle-Integrated School. Thanks for your faith in me and my little book.

To all my dear students, especially those who belong to my class on my 10th year in USLS. My thanks for fully enriching my life. You have inspired me to write our stories.

To my family, especially to Nanay and Tatay. Nancy, you did a great job when you were still with us, thanks and oh how I miss you! Tatay, thanks for always being there, running to meet and fuss over me every time I get off the Ceres Liner to a place I always call home.

To the Greatest Teacher, for calling me to the teaching vocation and giving me the best of mentors, colleagues, and students. Thanks, my Lord.

Introduction

The stories you will read are all based on my personal experience as a high school teacher. This treasured collection of memories and poignant moments spent with students in and out outside the classrooms, I lovingly gathered within the ten years of being in the education field.

True, a teacher's day is always not enough to finish the work at hand – from writing lesson plans, preparing visual materials, checking papers and projects, writing reports, attending meetings, listening and counseling students, meeting parents, to endless reading and studying. Not to mention the preparation of itinerary, booking of buses, bringing students to trips and back to school safely, supervising after-school till evening activities, coaching contestants, and the one thousand and one little things a being called TEACHER has to do.

Hence, schooldays seem to fly so fast. Inspiring moments with students are remembered as fleeting as it they happened, or just solely relegated to the shallow corner of one's mind, and eventually allowed to get lost into oblivion.

On this 10th year of teaching, a tiny voice has encouraged me to re-collect and put these beautiful, and somewhat amusing memories to print. Besides, just like any good news or amusing anecdotes, they are raring to be shared or else, my sensitive heart will burst. I hope that by sharing these stories with you, you will be encouraged to savor the moments spent with your own students or with any young people entrusted to you. And just like me, be greatly enriched.

Philippine Geography

One night, my younger brother was strumming his guitar and singing just any song that came to mind. He got my attention when he belted out Yoyoy Villame's "Philippine Geography."

"From the north: Batanes, Aparri, Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Isabela, Cagayan Valley, Mountain Province, La Union, Baguio City, Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya..."

It was the first time I heard this song again after many years.

Wait a minute! I can use this song as introduction to my Grade 8 Geography lesson! (It was my first year in teaching Grade 8 Social Studies, hence I was looking for all possible materials and means to make the subject interesting to the Freshies).

"Write it down please and I'll memorize it," I requested my brother. To my surprise, there are seventy-four cities and provinces contained in just one "easy-to-sing" song! Hah! This would make it easier for my students to memorize Philippine provinces.

It took me two nights to sing it perfectly without a copy.

Days later, I sang "Philippine Geography" in front of my week-old class. As I sang, I pointed out the said city or province on the big Philippine map at the center of the chalkboard. Luckily, I did not forget any line and did not falter at all. With a flourish of my baton (a slide fastener) over the whole map, I ended the song:

"According to our geography, the Philippines is such a beautiful country."

Then lo and behold! I heard a loud applause and saw a look of open admiration on my students' eyes. Something that could never fail to warm any teacher's heart.

"Wow miss! You can truly memorize all those places," gushed one student.

"Yes, of course," I answered with a grin. "And I know this would be a breeze for all of you. Let's sing it together."

I provided them with a copy on the overhead projector. How they sang with gusto especially these lines:

*“Ayeyeyeye-yeyeyeyeyeye... Cebu, Mactan, Mandaue
Ayeyeyeye- yeyeyeyeyeye... Bohol, Samar, Leyte
Ayeyeyeye-yeyeyeyeyeye... Iloilo, Capiz, Aklan,
Antique, Palawan, Negros, Bacolod
Siquijor, Dumaguete...”*

But I was quick to correct that Yoyoy had misplaced Palawan. It is not part of the Visayas.

That same week, while I was standing on the corridor during dismissal time, I overheard two Grade 8 students talking:

“How’s your Social Studies teacher?” my student asked.

“He’s OK,” his friend from another section answered. “Why? What about yours?”

“She’s good. She sings our lesson.” My 13-year old male student replied proudly.

I could not help but smile. He made it sound like ours is a musical history class.

I was glad I took the time to memorize that song. Now I know, I’ve won their hearts on the first week of class. First impression normally lasts. Thanks, Yoyoy.

Mactan

I was scanning my old photo albums one summer day when I was home for a vacation. I guess, being a history teacher, I have a penchant for keeping memories more than the average being; the bulk of these are kept in my heart. The rest are vividly captured by my camera.

Scanning my album marked Cebu Trip, I focused on one photo taken inside the Cebu Shell craft cottage. Like a camera's zoom, I could not help but look intently at one tall guy in our group. I was struck with the print on his shirt that read: LIFE IS SHORT. PLAY HARD.

Memories came back...

It was the third day of our educational trip in Cebu. Itinerary for the day: Island of Mactan.

We visited the cottages where the most famous Cebu guitars were made. Students watched in fascination how the workers carved and varnished the still unfinished guitars. I guess it was their first time to see guitars that were still works in progress. They were more awed when they entered the display center, where excellent craftsmanship of guitars for export were ensconced in their rich red, velvety cases. Some, feeling like pros, gleefully tried to strum the guitars, not those in velvety cases though but the quite ordinary-looking ones. A happy mood pervaded among the young "tourists."

We then walked to another cottage to admire the beautiful shell crafts that were hanging and being displayed for sale.

On our way to another guitar factory, just along the highway, we made an unscheduled stop to see the quarrying of Mactan stones. Some workers were resting under a tree while others were getting ready for lunch when we walked to their open work site.

"How nice it would be to bring some stones to Bacolod as souvenirs," some of my students expressed loudly while eyeing the chips of white stones scattered everywhere.

"Sure," one worker smilingly replied. "Go ahead, each one may

carry one of those home," he said pointing to the huge, white chunks of rocks. Whew! My students were clearly amused. They knew how impossible it was to carry even just one, which was as big as a drum.

Our last stop before lunch was to see the Lapu-Lapu Monument.

The sun was scorching when we stepped out of the bus. Others were almost tempted to stay behind but they also did not want to miss out the chance to have a full view of Lapu-Lapu and to step on the original battle ground. And of course, nobody would like to miss taking pictures of the famous landmark for friends to show back home.

So everybody braved the heat. And there at last, they saw the most-talked-about chieftain in Philippine history!

For a minute or so, they all looked up and feasted their eyes on the imposing statue. The literally larger-than-life bronze statue showed a very sturdy, virile and stern-looking Lapu-Lapu. He's holding an equally big, shield and a *kampilan*. He glistened in the noonday sun.

While we were all gazing at the long-haired chief, one student remarked aloud:

"Now I understand why Lapu-Lapu easily defeated Magellan. Look at him! He's much larger than any European!"

His classmates grinned. Nodding their heads and trying to look serious at the exaggerated size of the statue, they murmured: "I agree. I agree."

After the clicking of the cameras died down, we turned to survey the tidal shore, now dry. It was here where the historic battle supposedly took place. Almost everyone was quiet for a moment. Perhaps they were recreating in their minds the event of that fateful day of April, 1521. But what they were looking at were simply two bancas marooned near a clump of mangrove trees.

We ended the visit with a brief view of Magellan's marker. Ironically, it looked like a triumphal column for the world-famous navigator who met his death at the hands of the Cebuanos.

Historically full but physically famished, we then left the historic site to have our sumptuous lunch.

I smiled at the memories and looked again at the tall guy in the photo. He was my student, the very good looking varsity player and a gentleman, Mikel Loving. The annual IS Sports fest is named in memory of him.

LIFE IS SHORT. PLAY HARD. It speaks so much of him and his "untimely" demise.

God bless his soul.

Balay Negrense

I brought my Grade 8A class to a famous museum in Silay City, the Balay Negrense, which is a 30-minute ride from the school.

Balay Negrense, also called “haunted house” by some Silaynons, and one of the biggest colonial homes in Silay City, boasts of 12 bedrooms, six on each floor, and a basketball court-sized living room on the second floor. The house was built in 1898 by Don Victor Gaston for his twelve children. He was one of the pioneer *hacendados* in the province. It was constructed during the heyday of Silay, when the city was the center of culture and the arts, hence, its popular name, “Paris of Negros”.

When the school bus stopped in front of the imposing structure, some students could not help but ask: “Could there be a white lady in there still?”

Inside, they gawked at the antique furniture and the old house wares, remnants of the Spanish and American colonial days – the large *butaka*, a Grandfather’s chair cum birthing chair, the elegant four-poster beds with their intricately crocheted covers, the well-crafted and very sturdy-looking canes and sombreros, the wash-basin and pitcher in fine porcelain next to a lady’s bed, and the odd-looking Zenith radio.

Some lingered near the large open-windows in the second floor sala, where they had a good view of the shining dome of the Church of San Diego, and the street, scene of the Filipino troop movements on their way to Bacolod City which eventually led to the fall of the Spanish government in Negros. Hence, the *Cinco de Noviembre* Street.

We moved to the dining hall, where my students were greatly impressed with the very long and shiny dining table and the proud display of china, silver, and crystal inside the *platera*. At the open-air pantaw, they were quite surprised with the wooden *batya*, *palupalo*, and the old plancha. The *pantaw* led us to the pantry, where they saw the ceramic containers for beer, and the *batirol* for hot chocolate drinks, which I once described to them in class. They saw more vintage knick knacks and they were both amazed and amused at the seemingly odd house wares.

After their guided tour around the spacious rooms and various exhibits, the class proceeded down to the souvenir shop for cold drinks.

Near the shop, I noticed a group of boys hovering around a very narrow circular opening which would lead to a dark basement. Earlier, the guide explained to them the importance of the round openings they saw, the air vents, designed for the circulation of the air underneath the floors which were of hardwood. These air vents prevented the deterioration of the house. Peering into the dark basement, they seemed to have other ideas as well. They tried to challenge one another to go down first. I cautioned them that it's dark and we don't know what's inside. However, I knew it was not dangerous for I, too, peered into it a day before when it was still lighted. I left them to check on other students.

When it was time to leave, I noticed that not everyone was in the receiving room where we were supposed to assemble for checking purposes. I went back to the souvenir shop to look for some missing students. To my surprise, one after another, five boys wriggled out of the narrow opening! They were wet with perspiration, their white Santana barong smeared with grime from the basement. But aside from some dirt on some of their faces, there was also childlike pride and happiness.

Then they saw me staring at them.

Joel, one of those who crawled out, hastily explained:

"Miss, I hope you're not angry with us. Manong, the caretaker said it was ok to get in." I then looked at Manong, a man of about 70, trying hard to suppress a smile. Evidently, he was enjoying the scene as well. What else could I say?

"Ok boys, let's go."

Gathered inside the school bus for our trip back to Bacolod City, we took a long last look at Balay Negrense. It looked imposing still but also a bit friendlier now. Listening to the chatter inside the bus, I believed my students' knowledge of the past and of Negrense culture had been greatly enriched with this visit. More so for those five boys who had not only seen the inside of Balay Negrense, but who had crawled and touched its underneath structure as well.

What a House!

The next day, I processed the activity. We discussed what they had seen and experienced during their visit to Balay Negrense. For many of my students, the visit to the said museum was their first.

From their written work, which are lifted verbatim, one can glimpse how the young people saw the museum:

- “At first I thought the place was very scary and mysterious. But later, I enjoyed strolling inside the house. It was enchanting!”
- *Reyna Marie Occeño*
- “The basement is creepy. The CR is gigantic. The stair shines like diamond.”
- *Kimwell Campomanes.*
- “They have an old telephone where the hearing part is separated from the speaking part.”
- *Patrick Uychiat.*
- “It looks like people there were smart because I saw books almost everywhere.”
- *Ma. Christy Paglumotan*
- “I saw a shoebox with artificial people inside.”
(I guess he saw a diorama)
- *Joel Ray Aboy*
- “They were so strict. The boys and the girls were separated when going up the stairs.”
- *RJ Javellana*
- “You have to put charcoal first to iron so unlike today, you just have to plug it.”
- *Nisa Bermudes*
- “I saw the first motorbike in Negros. The gasoline was from sugarcane. When the bike runs out of gas, you pedal the bike!”
- *Bashtian Adriatico*

The Ring

*"Ahay andar, andar de los singsing
Singsing ay abaw singsing
Ay abaw Nena, ay abaw Neneng"*

Spanish Influences. That was our lesson. Changes in diet, dress, songs and dances, family life, women's roles, and religion were adequately covered in our class discussion. For Spanish influences on literature, we briefly compared the *awit* and the *corrido*. Then we tried to explain some forms of amusements like *juego de prenda* and *duplo*.

Duplo is very much a poetical contest commonly played during wakes. To make my explanation quite vivid to my students, I told them about a game we used to play, while I was growing up in a barrio in Negros Oriental.

"I guess, this is the Visayan's rough version of *duplo*, class," I told my students. "However, just like anything traditionally Filipino, this is also on the verge of extinction. Sadly, it may now be part of our lost heritage. If I remember it right, I haven't seen this played anymore, not since I started teaching," I narrated to my eager listeners.

To my surprise, the young people I was passionately sharing my story with, suggested: "Let's play it, Miss."

"Oh, no!" I reacted. "We can't! This is played during wakes only."

"I can play dead, Miss," volunteered right away by a male student in the last row. Playfully his hands rose and fell to his sides while his classmates tried to catch him from falling directly on the floor.

"Well, I can teach you the song before we play it tomorrow," I happily conceded. They were so excited that at the end of the class, I heard someone remark, "A song and a game – wow!"

Looking at them, I surmised: "Most of my students must be gifted with kinesthetic and musical intelligences. I shook my head as I remember the Guidance Office revelation of the students' group data: Our Grade 8 got the lowest score in terms of musical intelligence! Well, I thought, let me help to improve that score. I will

introduce music in my lessons at every opportunity I could get, I vowed. This could be another opportunity.”

After many tries of humming the song in my head, and remembering those nights of long ago, I was able to salvage some of its simple lyrics:

*“Ahay ender, ender de los singsing
Singsing ay abaw singsing
Ay abaw Nena! Ay abaw Neneng!*

*Oh Ring, get going
Oh Nena, Oh Neneng!*

*Mag-andam ka singsing
Sa imo paglakat
Kay may nagabantay,
Tatlo ka makawat.*

*But Ring, be careful
In your travel
Because there awaits
Three robbers.*

*Ahay ender, ender de los singsing
Singsing ay abay singsing
Ay abaw Nena! Ay Abaw Neneng!*

*Oh ring, get going
Oh Nena! Oh Neneng!*

*Singsing pagdali-dali
Pauli sa hari
Kay ang atop reyna
Ay ay ginatuyo gani*

*Ring, go back
To the king fast
For our queen
Is about to fall asleep.*

Originally, the players included a king, a queen and three robbers. The object of the game is for the “King’s Ring,” which moves around the circle of players, to go back to the king without it being discovered and seized by any of the robbers. Closing and opening their hands discreetly, the players try to pass the ring from one hand to another. If it finally reaches the king, the three robbers are punished –hit hard with the towels they are holding like truncheons and recite poetical verses. If the ring is seized by a robber, the concerned player or a group of them would recite verses. Most of these spontaneous verses turned so hilarious or even “green”, that sleepy old folks would be fully awake to laugh or to reprimand an errant player. This could be a source of merriment at the wake!

The next day, we practiced the song briefly and proceeded to the covered court for the game. We chose a king and queen.

The queen you won’t miss in the circle of players for she now wore a crown (It used to be owned by my sister-in-law. She used

it during her wedding last year which she passed on to me. I brought it to school for this game. Now she will know what I've done to her tiara – sorry Monaliza!). For the three robbers, a good number of my male students volunteered. Instead of rolled towels, used by the robbers to hit a player suspected of having the ring, but who would not open his/her hand as pried, our class decided to use three throw pillows, all borrowed from the Campus Ministry Office.

To avoid the loss of a real ring and even a possible circulation of a false ring (common during a real game at the wake), I made use of a button– colored peach with a brown edge. I showed it for everyone to see.

The game started. The King discreetly passed the button, a.k.a the ring, while the class sang the song, hands opening and closing, and moving to the rhythm of the song. The robbers tried to pry open some hands. Classmates tried to tickle them to defend the suspected classmate and to guard the ring.

“Ahay andar, andar de los singsing...” The song continued. The “ring” circulated.

To my surprise, instead of using a throw pillow to hit a suspected ring bearer, one robber pulled a toy gun from his pocket -“ Hold Up!” Heyyy ...playing a traditional game? Forget it! Moments passed, no one had been caught yet! The group was getting excited! The ring might reach the king very soon!

And alas! The ‘ring’ was now back to the King! “Punish the robbers!” shouted the players.

I looked at the “ring.” Surprise of all surprises, the ring was not peach, it was brown! “Where did they get this? Where’s the peach button?!”

If in the wakes of long ago I saw a different ring appear in the King’s hand, this time, a different button had appeared?! A modified *deja vu*, if there is such a word? Hahaha! The prank played by my mother’s or even my grandparents’ generation was not entirely different at all from what this young generation in front of me had just done. Nothing much had changed after all. Whew!

We did not find the peach button. We played the game a second time. When the warning bell rang for the next class, we

reluctantly went back to the classroom, all perspiring and smiling.

At dismissal, two students approached me in the office. Hesitantly, the girl spoke: "Miss, can Mark Neil borrow the manila paper where you wrote the lyrics of the song, 'Sing sing'?"

"Why?" I inquired.

"I'd like to play it at home, together with my brothers?" Mark Neil shyly answered.

I was about to say again: "No! This is played only during wakes." Instead, I simply replied, "Sure!"

If our rich oral traditions are taught in the classrooms for the young people to remember and cherish, then, this is it. Imagining my student teaching it to his brother in their bedroom, I grinned. The old and lost game from the barrio has reached a corner of this city, in this day and age! Well, what is history class for anyway?

The Secret Society

The day's lesson is the founding of the Katipunan by Andres Bonifacio and other Filipino patriots.

I entered the room with the lesson in mind. I also had a kerosene lamp or gasera which I asked Amabel, my student teacher, to buy in the public market, a match, and a KKK flag (that of Bonifacio) from the Centennial box I was able to keep.

A day before, I was thinking of bringing in a skull and a dagger to complete the picture I had in mind for motivation. But the skull was missing from the science lab. As for the dagger, I thought that it might be a bit gruesome and dangerous for my first year students.

"Please turn off the aircon units and the lights. Then, kindly open all the windows," I requested some students after our opening prayer.

I quietly taped the KKK flag on the board.

"Miss, will we do a blood compact like the Oakwood mutineers?" a voice from the class asked with a hint of excitement and fun. All eyes were now riveted on the teacher.

"Shhh ... tone down your voice and keep the door closed. We don't want a *guardia civil* to be suspicious." I told them with utmost seriousness while removing the glass cover of the kerosene lamp.

In a flash, one boy stood near the backdoor. "I'll stand guard here, Miss."

"Is Mrs. Limas the *guardia civil*?" One keen soul asked.

(Mrs. Limas is the high school vice principal).

"No! She was not born yet," I replied curtly.

Now the class began to understand -the past and the present are interwoven - and decided to play along with the teacher.

Our lesson was a breeze. The students participated actively in our discussion on the when, where, why and how the Katipunan was

founded. During the discussion, the lamp was kept aglow. But then I noticed that the smoke was a bit thicker. I decided to blow it off, carefully removing the glass cover. However, I had my fingers slightly burned. My students saw this. "Ouch! See? It's not easy being a Katipunero," I reminded the young people in front of me.

When we were about to discuss the Katipunan's recruitment method, a student knocked to enter. Almost every boy exclaimed, "A spy! He must be a spy!" Their eyes were twinkling with mock seriousness.

"No, I believe he's a new recruit. Let him in."

It was their classmate, Joel Ray whom they simply call "Aboy." When he entered through the backdoor, he was easily handcuffed by two of his male classmates.

"Aha! Time for the 'real thing' instead of simply discussing it," my mind swirled with possibilities.

With the extra red cloth I was holding (Aguinaldo's flag actually), I blindfolded Aboy and slowly led him to the teacher's table. His classmates were now clearly amused and expectant.

"Sit down Ka Aboy." The interrogation started:

"Ano ang kalagayan ng Pilipinas, lalo na ang Katagalugan bago dumating ang mga Kastila?"

Silence. I repeated the question, this time with more force and drama.

"Masaya... mapayapa..." coached a classmate near the front row.

"Mapayapa."

"Ikalawang tanong Ka Aboy? Ano ang kalagayan ng Pilipinas ngayon?" He answered softly, "Lots of abuses by the Spaniards." He was gaining ground.

"Ano ang pwede mong gawin para sa bayan Ka Aboy? Ano ang gusto mong mangyari ngayon?"

"Fight for our freedom! *Rebolusyon!*" This time he answered with more confidence. In fact, he was beginning to enjoy it.

"Magaling Ka Aboy!" I removed his blindfold.

"Pirmahan mo ng iyong sariling dugo and sulating ito." I handed him a red ballpen for him to slightly prick his left arm then pointed to the paper before him. His classmates, especially at the back rows were now standing and giggling.

"Mga kasama, mabuhaysi Ka Aboy! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!" To which the whole class responded with an applause.

We then continued with our discussion. We were about to end the discussion on the Katipunan's three grades of membership, when again, there was a knock on the door.

Nisa, their classmate who had asked permission to leave the room a few minutes ago, was back. The front door was locked.

"Shall we let her in?" "No!" They chorused.

"Are women allowed to join the Katipunan?" I prodded them.

"Yes! No!" Some hastily scanned their textbooks. One student blurted out the answer:

"Only if she is the wife, the daughter or the niece of a Katipunero!"

"Correct!"

Some students at the back excitedly suggested, "Miss, ask her please whom she is related to?"

"All right, Nisa, do you know anyone here?" Quite a shy girl, she responded weakly, "Yes." "Who?" I heard a chant. "Aboy! Aboy! Aboy!"

Hesitation from Nisa. Then with a faint voice, she replied, Aboy. "How are you related to Aboy?"

"She's the wife!" A good number of classmates piped up with a laugh. After some time, she answered softly, "I'm his sister."

"Oh!" The classmates reacted with disappointment.

We then discussed the contributions of women to the secret society. Again, almost all hands were raised. Class participation was at its peak.

After our closing prayer, I said the standard "Goodbye class."

As if on cue, my students responded "Goodbye Lakambini! with

big smiles. I knew fully well this was an insinuation to Gregoria de Jesus, the wife of Andres Bonifacio.”

Whew! What a class! I left the room grinning at my own and my students’ antics.

Lost!

The Class 10D decided to spend their Free-Design Day on a mountain resort called Buro-Buro.

Since all three school buses were fully booked that day, three private vehicles were used with one teacher-chaperone assigned to each. I was in the last vehicle.

It was such a lovely morning. Everyone enjoyed the cool air and the passing scenery. Leaving the city proper, we admired the green sugarcane fields, cloud-covered peaks, and some wild sunflowers along the way.

Since it happened to be Valentine's Day, there was lots of teasing and laughter inside the vehicle. Some girls were already cradling bouquets of roses. And so were some boys. Roses bought that morning from an enterprising club in school might be given any time that day. Some boys will give them to their crushes, while one boy insisted that the bouquet would be for his mom.

The loud conversation gave me an idea who was paired with whom. Chi, who was very close to his girl classmates was also holding a bouquet. I was part of the group who was teasing him, when one classmate informed me. "No, Miss, you're wrong. His sweetheart is studying at the neighboring school." "Oh! I see." Chi just grinned sheepishly and gave his trademark laugh. But I was impressed by the wholesome closeness and camaraderie of these young people who all belonged to the "best class."

Eventually, the group was singing along to some popular love songs coming out of the a "bus" stereo.

After almost an hour, we realized that the driver could not find the way to the resort! It also started to drizzle. The first two vehicles were nowhere in sight either.

While I was busy trying to contact the teacher from the first vehicle through my cell phone, the group continued to sing. Their song was punctuated from time to time with remarks like, "We're lost!"

We stopped several times to ask directions from the local residents along the way. My students would attentively listen to them

and then continue to sing, trusting fully well that eventually we would reach our destination.

And we did. What a lesson in trust and optimism from my dear 10D students.

Reflecting on my own reaction, I would like to believe that Trust is like a packet of balm put into our hearts as little children which we seem to lose bit by bit as we grow older and 'wiser.'

Looking at their trusting and happy faces, I hope my students will have more than enough of this balm to carry them through life's roads, with all their twists and turns.

This is my hope and prayer for them.

Valentine's Day at Buro-Buro

Reaching the resort, the students immediately dropped their bags in one nipa hut, carried their Tupperware and baskets of food, and their lechon into a bigger and screened cottage. Excitedly, they moved in small groups to inspect the place.

Soon, Delman's group was playfully immersed in the narrow pool. Jag's group was kicking a football on the manicured grass. Christopher's group was admiring the view from the cottage in the middle of the pond. I joined their group. The lotus flowers in the pond and the two white ducks beside a tiny clump. Chinese bamboo were such a refreshing sight, not to mention the small tilapia swimming underneath our feet, which we could see from the bamboo slats of the floor.

The boys shared some bits and pieces about the trip, school work, and the beautiful view surrounding us. Chris opened a pack of potato chips and offered it to everyone in the cute cottage. We continued swapping observations and impressions which, as a teacher, delighted me no less. Needless to say, I found these young men impressive and easy to be with not only in the classroom but even outside.

And I believe they have felt my warm regard themselves.

These were some of the students who were really doing well in my class, whom I felt really loved my subject. I believe it could be true: the success of a student in a particular class also greatly depends on his/her relationship with the teacher, and vice versa. One writer succinctly put it: "Be careful what you give children, for sooner or later, you are sure to get it back."

Moments later, Charles took out a small gift from his pocket— a tiny bear inside a small red can with the words TAKE CARE.

"Miss, this is for you, Happy Valentine's!" It was very thoughtful of him. "Thanks a lot, Charles!"

Truly, this is one of the joys of teaching!

Into the Pool

We left the cottage, where we were enjoying the serene and rustic view of the resort to see what caused the shrieks and squeals and laughter in the pool nearby.

Full of naughtiness and mirth, some boys were bodily pitching unsuspecting classmates into the pool. One was Marichelle who was not yet able to change into her swimsuit. Two were their male classmates. Three unwilling victims were in the pool now.

Then, three boys ran up to John. With the help of two more reinforcements, they carried him off to the pool. Some classmates tried to protest because they knew him so well. John was known to be the most serious boy in class. And there he was, dumped into the pool with all his clothes and shoes on. Everyone around the pool thought he would be furious. To everybody's surprise, John stepped out of the pool grinning from ear to ear.

Who said serious-looking people do not love some fun?

Others who were dumped just decided to take a dip and linger in the pool with classmates. Delman was one of those who stayed longer in the pool.

But at about lunchtime, Delman who was enjoying his swim, left the pool when their car came to fetch him. Their family driver, stepped out holding Delman's well-pressed Boy Scout uniform on a hanger.

"Where are you going?" I was surprised to see him with his Boy Scout paraphernalia in tow.

"I have to go back to school, Miss. I'll give a talk to our grade school Boy Scouts at one o'clock." He replied with his very boyish grin.

A real Boy Scout indeed for within minutes he was fully dressed, complete with his badges worn like a vest. He left without a fuss.

About an hour later, while I was talking with three girl students in a cottage, I saw Delman running about in his shorts, just out of the pool!

“Wow! You’re back?!” I was so surprised.

“Yes, Miss. Finished with my inspirational talk,” he answered with a wink.

Hahaha! What a speaker! From the pool to a speaking engagement, and back into the pool.

For Delman, an outstanding Explorer Scout, a speaking engagement is no big deal indeed!

Note: In his senior year, Delman was elected Student Affairs Council President, received seven out of nine awards during the PRIG Camp in Japan, awarded as one of the Ten Outstanding Boy Scouts of the Philippines, and received the St. La Salle and CP Lopez Awards during his graduation. My heart swelled with pride looking at this young man, so simple and humble; a great leader in the making.

Living Museum

As part of our Multi-Cultural month celebration, my World History class came up with a project – The Living Museum.

After some discussions, we decided to showcase the ancient civilizations: Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, Greek, and Roman.

At first, some of my students were quite lukewarm about the project. After some pep talk and giving them the idea that we will be inviting all high school and even grade school students to view them, they started to take the plans seriously.

The day before the opening, our venue – the Multi-Purpose Room– was a flurry of activities. Each group was very busy decorating their assigned area: painting backdrops, cutting and gluing cartons, and hanging lanterns. Some groups were bringing in a clinic chair as throne for Cleopatra. Fresh clay from Silay City were used as cuneiform tablets for the Mesopotamians. Palms and foliage were for the Hindus. A couch was brought in for the Roman emperor to recline on and many other things to make the museum truly alive.

And of course, the costumes!

Blankets and curtains became Roman togas. White sheets for the Greeks. Cartons for swords and shields. Gold foil for Egyptian accessories. Real sari for the Indians. Some cheongsam for the Chinese.

“We need more curtains, “one student, tacking a piece of cloth near the chalkboard, announced to other members. “And some potted plants,”another chirped.

“I’ll go home, “one member decided.” We need something for our stomachs, too! We’re hungry! Yeah, the artists were hungry. Ok, just continue the work, I’ll be back soon.” Listening to them made my heart swell with pride and amusement.

Thankfully, I saw almost all things we needed for the museum miraculously appear.

Like an open dam, creativity flowed from the students. This was enhanced by a strong spirit of zeal and cooperation among them.

That evening, we left the room physically and mentally spent. Closing the door of our would-be museum, I noticed the twigs intertwined like Gothic writing above the door read – “LIVING MUSEUM.” What creativity! I mused with a smile.

The Museum Opens

“Welcome to the Grade 10 Living Museum!” The tour guide’s standard opening line leads you to the first civilization – the Mesopotamian.

Plastered on the walls are examples of the first known system of writing – the cuneiforms. Although two artisans are busily working on some fresh clay, they manage to give a shy smile to the viewers.

Next corner is unmistakably the Egyptian exhibit. On one side of the wall is a huge painting of a Sphinx and the Great Pyramid. The other side is dotted with twinkling stars and a glistening moon. It looks like mystical Egypt indeed! This is the work of Jed, the class artist, who happens to belong to this group.

Across the room, the Greek gods and goddesses look so bright in white sheets, like endorsers of a laundry soap! Zeus and wife Hera are at the center. Surrounding them are some famous gods and goddesses like Aphrodite, Apollo, Athena and Ares. But it seems that Hercules is the only one well-recognized by grade schoolers. Is it due to his brawn? Or is it the thunderbolt? Hung above their heads are clouds (painted cartons actually) to create a semblance of high altitude. A conference on Mt. Olympus?

The corner across the Mesopotamian civilization resembles a hut minus the roof. Dominating the wall is a small painting of the Taj Mahal, supposedly seen from the tiny window of the hut. Welcome to Ancient India!

Inside the enclosed area lies a “dead” Indian. He is fully wrapped in a blanket except for his face. What a handsome face! Yes, an authentic Indian classmate. Is this Rakesh or Dilip?

Sitting on the palms and foliage beside him is a pretty girl in sari mournfully looking at her husband. They are depicting a scene in preparation for a “suttee” or widow burning, a custom commonly practiced in Ancient India until the 1700’s.

Some high school viewers could not help but tease the two. “Wow! They look so good together.”

This would sometimes get a reaction from the dead Indian – a twitch of his mouth or his aquiline nose – to the amusement of his friends and classmates.

At the farthest corner is the Chinese civilization. Hanging on a pagoda-like roof are four Chinese lanterns. On the floor covered with rugs and throw pillows sit the fully-made up emperor and his wife and children in cheongsam. They gather around a small table filled with Chinese tea cups. Tea time in Ancient China?

The last civilization shown in the Living Museum is that of the Roman. A well-draped area bordered by Roman columns (rolled and painted chip boards) are some boys holding giant fans. Fanning whom? One man in toga is proudly reclining on a couch. Is he a patrician or a Roman emperor himself? Two ladies are beside him offering a bunch of grapes and a bowl of something.

But from time to time, some 'servants' simply pop some grapes into their own mouths to the chagrin of the reclining emperor! Well, what can he do? He is to do nothing but open his mouth or clap his hands at his servants.

After a complete tour of the museum, one can simply marvel at the young peoples' limitless creativity and ingenuity.

Truly history has come fully alive in that corner of the high school building. A living museum indeed!

Where's the Mummy?

The museum's opening is a success! High school students get the chance to view the living exhibits during their Social Studies classes.

Eventually gradeschoolers are also invited to see. Among the different ancient civilizations, the Egyptian has become the most popular among the primary graders. Why is this so? Let's follow the Prep.

The Prep students gingerly approach the area. They look up at the beautiful drawing of the Pyramid and the Sphinx. Then they come face to face with the glamorous Cleopatra in her full regalia. Actually, its Lovely Ruth a.k.a. Cleopatra, sitting on a clinic high chair. Her pretty "Egyptian eyes" are looking down intensely at them. She is in her pale yellow, satiny gown. On her imperial head rests a crown made of gold foil with a serpent design at the center. Two half-naked guy classmates, whose lower torsos are covered with gold foil like a skirt and with some Egyptian armbands, stand at attention.

After looking at Cleopatra and her entourage for a few seconds, all their eyes are now turned eagerly to the dimly-lit 'coffin' at the foot of the Queen Pharaoh. They want to see the much-talked-about mummy, shared with them by the previous museum viewers.

Nervously, they peer into the coffin.

They look again. The coffin is empty!

"Where's the mummy?," ask the small disappointed voices.

I whispered to Cleopatra's bodyguards, "Yes, where's the mummy?"

"Miss, she left a few minutes ago to get some fresh air."

After carefully explaining to the disappointed viewers that mummies do take a break (the mysteries of it are all gone by now), I went down to the canteen.

There, sitting in one corner and sipping a bottle of Coke is the mummy! Wet with perspiration, she still has some of the hospital gauze around her arm.

"Miss, my limbs are so stiff," Anna Marie complains to me. I understand. She is the mummy and is supposed to keep still inside the coffin while there are still viewers in the museum.

She now narrates with pride how afraid were some Prep students while looking down at her. "One of them, in fact, cried," she gushes. I'm glad she relishes her role in the museum.

I left her to finish her Coke with the words: "Be back soon. The Prep students are looking for the mummy."

Greco-Roman Tour

Rolling Hills Memorial Park– The school bus stopped just inside the entrance gate. Students in uniform went down with notebooks and pen in one hand, some with a camera in the other hand.

After a brief instruction and reminders, and telling them of the limited minutes they were allowed to stay, they all set out in different directions. Some scampered to the whitewashed and marble-laid mausoleums they could see some distance from the bus. "Please respect the place of the dead," I reminded them. Those who were running, halted for a second, then walked briskly. I followed in the direction of some of them.

I was with my Grade 10 World History class on an enrichment activity of our lesson, "The Greek & Roman Architecture," focusing on the classical columns.

For a group project – a mini-album, they were instructed to locate, take pictures, and identify the three Greek columns or orders: Doric, Ionic or Corinthian and the additional two of the Romans: Tuscan and Composite, which they could find in places we would visit. This private cemetery was our first stop.

"That's a Doric!" A girl spotted a column of a simple mausoleum. "But there are no flutings," one classmate reacted. "Then, it must be a Tuscan, or a modified Doric," a member of the group surmised. I'm glad they remember our lesson.

Another group was taking pictures of another mausoleum, with themselves included, naturally.

"Miss, this is a Corinthian, right?" one of them asked?

"What do you think?" I countered.

"Corinthian, I'm sure of it," said another one. "See the acanthus leaves and the scroll (she means the volute)?" She added.

"But the design is more of a Roman Composite," the other student tried to insist.

"Well, let's just take its picture and analyze it later. We still have

a lot to cover,” one brilliant mind suggested, while eyeing some of their classmates already in the farthest corner of the cemetery.

I just smiled. I guess, my students did not realize that listening to this type of conversation pleased me a lot. There was student-student interaction; a good way for them to learn.

We were back on the bus, and about to leave the place, when one spotted the statue of The Christ beside a clearly-Corinthian column.

“Hey, we didn’t see that!” A disappointed student remarked.

“We had a group picture there!” boasted a classmate from the other group, with a resounding laugh.

We proceeded with the tour, our next stop at the Justiniani Ancestral House, just beside the highway. The very imposing structure was the perfect visual material for Composite order, a colonnade actually. There were bonus visuals, too, when my students noticed the clearly- neglected old water fountain and giant urns meant for sprawling gardens. They reminded us of “the grandeur that was Rome.” Some imaginations started to work, with some students giving their own versions of how people had possibly led grand lives in here before.

Our third stop was the Cathedral. Reminding them to be more discreet, students then quietly entered the Church. There they took pictures of the ornately designed columns. When we were already boarding the bus, a student spotted a Tuscan column near the Bishop’s House. Hastily, he took a shot. I was amused at how sensitive they had become to the buildings around them.

When the bus, on its way to the Provincial Capitol, passed along the corner of La Consolacion College, I pointed out to them a prominent Greek column.

“That’s Ionic, Miss,” one student’s automatic answer.

“Modified Ionic”, another emphasized. “It has no flutings.”

Reaching our last stop, the Capitol, students continued with their picture taking.

“Miss,” one student called my attention while I was admiring the beautiful facade of the Capitol, “We called this a tour, right?”

“Oh, yes! The Greco-Roman Tour!” I answered, uttering each

word with emphasis coupled with a proud smile. This was what students read in the school's Daily Bulletin that day.

"Then, Miss, just like any normal tour, can we end this tour with a stop at Mc Donald's? We're hungry." He was charmingly persuasive.

"Yes, Miss, pleaaase ... !" The rest of the class who heard seconded the motion.

"Is the motion supported by the majority?" I inquired, while remembering the greatest contribution of the ancient Greeks to the world — the idea of democracy.

"Yes, Miss!!!" I got a resounding yes, clearly supported by hands that were all raised!

"OK, let's have ten minutes at McDonald's," I announced to the ecstatic young passengers. When the bus stopped in front of this giant food chain, some students gamely pointed at the entrance with a remark: "That's a Doric!" Hahaha!

Tunay na Ina

In cooperation with the Cultural Center of the Philippine's Sangandaan Festival, the Grade 8 classes viewed a 1939 film entitled "Tunay na Ina."

The film revolved around a young unwed mother whose dad, rich and with a typical pre-war conservatism, was preoccupied with keeping the family name untarnished. He secretly gave the baby to a childless couple. Years later, this baby, who is now about 9 years old, became the object of relentless search by the real mother. This led to a dramatic meeting and conflict, mostly emotional, between the two mothers. Hence, the title.

A musical, with a Shirley Temple clone, the cast were Rosario Moreno, Rudy Concepcion, and Tita Duran. I myself had no idea who these stars were. Fortunately, one Negros Museum staff member enlightened me on the 9-year old girl in the story. "She's the late Tita Duran, the mother of the famous Pinoy pop singer / rapper, Francis Magalona." Well, at least I'm familiar with Francis M. He belongs to my generation.

What about this young generation in front of me? How will they view this film? What could be their impressions?

Here are some excerpts from their reflection papers:

- "I noticed that they sing when they are sad or happy. Their music is very slow, you could sleep."
- *Amavail Valladolid*
- "The movie is beautiful but a little boring because it has no color."
- *Jesus Malijan*
- "I find it so surprising, their voices are in high tones."
- *Grachel Montebon*
- "They dance very old dances. They sing very old songs. They sing when somebody dies."
- *Andeilyn Frias*

- “They wear Filipiniana dress even at home!”
- *Janine Semino*
- “A woman in the olden times would wait for the boy to come to her and ask her if she wanted to dance.”
- *Maja Leeahrah Andoy*
- “I could not believe that there’s still a copy of this film!”
- *Sergio Gelanga*

1942 Mails

Please bring two stationery or any writing pad to the next meeting. This I wrote on the assignment board of my Grade 8 class. "We'll do some letter writing tomorrow," I added.

I was actually thinking about an activity which I read from a teacher's guide that accompanies our text book from IBON, Inc. This activity is meant to elicit students' views on the period as well as to develop their writing skills. I planned to modify it a bit though.

Entering the classroom the next day, I noticed immediately some students proudly showing the various stationery pads they brought. The nicest and sweet-smelling ones I spotted mostly on the armchairs of lady classmates. Pinny Mu, Looney Tunes, Harry Potter, Peanuts Characters, Pooh Friends, Babysitter kinds were aplenty followed by the more mushy letter pads ... "Roses are red, violets are blue..." Hmmm ...so sweet of them. These could be some of their personal collections, I mused. I have an idea what pre-pubescent girls love to collect. Most boys though had the plainest papers coupled with one or two white envelopes on their armchairs. But bond papers would serve their purpose I knew, so I gave them a nod of approval just the same. On second thought, I found the Pinny Mu type a bit inappropriate.

To set the mood, I played Anne Murray's "I'll Be Home for Christmas". Instantly the music gave their young faces those euphoric looks. Ah! The spirit that Christmas brings! I gave them an indulgent smile as well. Then, I instructed them what to do:

"Imagine yourself as one of the Filipino resistance fighters during the Japanese invasion. Write a letter to your family telling them about your reasons for joining the guerilla movement."

After adding some specifics, my students started to work on the task given. Still, some questions I had to entertain: "Can I write only to my mom? Shall I include our real address? Can I write to my wife instead?"

Minutes later, I reminded them, "Hurry! Please hurry!" Some Japanese are coming! We have to move camp. "Yes! Yes !" They

started to stand to drop their letters into a brown envelope labeled 1942 MAILS.

After a few seconds, Dona, my student-teacher came in with the same brown envelope with drop box. "Letters from your loved ones!" she announced.

"Huh?! I thought it would be Ms. Dara who'll read our letters!" Then at random, we distributed the letters to all students making sure they won't receive the letter they have just penned. Laughter and teasing ensued, at first. This was followed by some remarks like, "Oh, how sad!" But the rest quietly and seriously read the letter they got.

Our letter writing was not over yet. To develop a sense of empathy among them, I asked them to respond appropriately to the letter they received. With less delay this time, they worked on the given task.

At the end of the day, my student teacher and I had fun opening and reading the "war letters" with their corresponding responses.

Let me share them with you.

Some could be poignant and serious:

December 21, 1942

Dear Mom and Dad,

Hi! I hope you're fine today. Take care of yourselves and be strong in this war the world is going through. I just want to tell you that I'm joining the guerilla movement.

I'm not doing this coz I want to be a hero. But because I want to save our country and to help stop this menace. Just like what you said, "Always pray at night for safety," I promise you, I'll always pray. I can't promise you that I'll come back in one piece but don't worry, I know God will guide me. Keep safe and pray always. I love you!

*Your daughter,
Julienne (Pineda)*

Dear Julienne,

How are you? Please be careful out there. I don't want to lose another child. You're the only child I have now. Please be care-

ful. Please come back. We need you in our lives. I will pray to God to guide you always.

*Love,
Mom and Dad (Ervin Anglo)*

December 14, 1942

Dear Mom,

I don't know if I am still alive once you receive this letter. I only hope that you are safe. We must rid ourselves of this foreign menace. They are robbing and pillaging our natural and human resources and causing much harm to us and to our neighbors. The more we fight and deplete their supplies, the more they abuse our people. The only thing that I can think about is driving them out of our country. It seems hopeless but God will deliver us soon.

*Truly yours,
Francis (Grupe)*

Dear Francis,

I hope this will reach you on time. I can't stop you anymore. This is your will, so do it! I'm very proud of you son and of our country. I hope your group will be successful and defeat those Japanese troops. Always pray to God and always remember that your family is very proud of you. But I hope you can return here safe and sound so that in the future you can tell us what happened during your war with the Japs. Do this for all of us. Long live the Philippines!

*Always loving,
Mom*

** * **

While others were simply hilarious:

December 16, 1942

Dear Family,

Hi! I'm sorry I can't be there at Christmas. I'll be going to the mountains to join the guerilla movement. I know all of you will not allow me to join, but for me, it's the last chance that we Filipinos should fight for.

Please forgive me for all the bad things that I've done. I'm sorry for all the things that I've let you down, Mom. Maybe today or

tomorrow, I won't be here anymore but I'm gonna be at your side always.

Dad, sorry for getting your gun. I'll return it back if I'm alive. If I can't make it, please get my last will and testament under my bed.

Bye!! I love you all!!!

Alvin!!! (Agustin)

Dear Alvin,

Your letter sounds OK. Just be sure to be okay. Be safe from any danger. I know how you feel so I encourage you to join the movement. To fight for our country is the most righteous thing to do. Go and kick some Japanese butt!

Sincerely yours,

Dad (John Lumanang)

December 16, 1942

Dear Mama & Papa,

Don't be sad with what is happening to me. You know how I really wanted to join the movement for I really wanted to help fellow Filipinos to be victorious and gain our country back. We couldn't meet almost all our needs like food, water, dress, and a place to stay because of the Japanese. I feel very lonely. But I think what we're doing is right and good for our country.

I hope you're fine and in good health. Sorry if I can't go home this Christmas. But PH go home when the war is over. The Japanese are really on guard. But I promise to take care of myself.

Take care also.

Truly yours,

Andeilyn (Frias)

Dear Inday Andeilyn,

Kung sawn ka masaya, supportahan to ka!

Love,

Roberto

Lola Corazon

To enrich our lesson on World War II, I thought of inviting a resource speaker into my Grade 8 classrooms. World War II speaker right? A war veteran normally comes to mind.

However, this time, I would like my students to know the horrors of war from a civilian's point of view. And who could be the best person to share this knowledge with the young people?

Lola Corazon. I fondly call her Tita when talking with her. And Ma'am Zayco when referring to her. For my students, she would be Lola Corazon.

Lola Corazon was my landlady. When she decided to open her beautiful house to non-Bacoleños, most of whom were college students, I was one of the first nine boarders to be taken in. It became my home for seven years.

Now at 87, Lola Corazon is still mentally sharp. She reads the daily newspapers, watches CNN and telenovelas, attends to her twice-a-month Bible- study group and never misses a Sunday Mass and other Church declared holy days in the same manner that she never misses her regular visit to the beauty salon. Lola Corazon is about how it is to grow old gracefully.

I was absolutely sure she would be the best resource speaker. Why? Not only can she talk for hours without getting tired, but her listeners do not get bored as well. And the crux of her being our resource speaker is that her husband of five years was killed by the Japanese during the Liberation of Manila. She became a widow at 28.

However, I realized that though Lola Corazon is mentally quick, she would already find it difficult to take the three flights of stairs to my Grade 8 A & B classrooms.

Then why not my students coming into her house instead?

Since she lives just across the street, I asked her permission if I could bring my two classes to her home instead. She enthusiastically agreed.

I prepared my students for the meeting with Lola Corazon, mentioned to them her achievements, asked them to prepare at least two questions for her, and reminded them to bring their duly-signed parent's approval form (Yes, it is still required even if it is just a stone-throw away from school).

My classes were scheduled one after another except for the thirty-minute recess. So as not to strain her voice, I asked the help of two B & G personnel to carry a karaoke and a microphone to her house.

Arriving at her home, I noticed that the spacious *sala* had been cleared; the sofa and center table were neatly arranged on the side, to accommodate my forty plus students. I arranged them on the floor.

Lola Corazon, still elegant at 87, came down to meet them.

Having been a teacher herself during the pre-war days, cut short only by her marriage to Mr. Laguda, she told my class how comfortable she was with them in front of her. She was on the sofa facing them all.

It was such a sight to behold and a moment to cherish! The 87-year old sharing her life and experiences which happened half a century and a decade ago to the wide-eyed and well-behaved 13-year olds on the floor.

She gave a brief introduction on Hitler's ambition and on why the Philippines got involved in the War.

She then vividly recalled how they moved from Iloilo to Bacolod when the war broke out. For food supply and for their safety, they evacuated to their farm in San Carlos City, still in Negros Occidental. She narrated how a Japanese commander 'bought' their big bodega of corn for only seven hundred yen. They could not simply say "no."

Then she described to my students how, she, already in her fifth month of pregnancy, had to take a fishing boat to Manila. To avoid possible submarines, they had to sail mostly along the shores. It took them thirteen days to reach Manila. Thirteen days!! My students reacted incredulously.

She also shared her accidental meeting with her long - lost brother, Jose. She was taking her morning walk in the streets of Malate,

an exercise for the would-be mother, when by chance, she saw this scrawny man from a distance whose gait was so familiar to her. It turned out to be her brother who survived the infamous Death March. It was such a reunion! (This brother, Jose Segovia later finished his engineering course and became the president of FEATI University).

Lola Corazon also recalled how grateful she was when the Japanese surrounding their house allowed her and other women folk and children to take refuge in the Philippine General Hospital. They knew from some Filipinos the Americans were entering Manila. She confessed, she naively thought that her husband and the rest of the men folk would follow them. That was the last time she saw her husband.

Yes, her brother and their houseboy were able to follow them later. But not her beloved. She related how ecstatic she was when she saw her brother and their houseboy.

“Where’s your Nonoy Aquilis?” She asked the houseboy eagerly. Without any preliminaries, the houseboy simply blurted out: “He was bayoneted by the Japanese!” Lola Corazon’s world crumbled.

Looking at the myriad of emotions etched on the faces of my students, I knew they had digested the personal sharing of Lola Corazon. On their young faces dawned the realities and horrors of war.

Some questions were very poignant:

“How did you cope with your husband’s death? Did you find his body later? How was your brother able to escape?”

Then later, Lola Corazon, directed them to the wall lined with black and white photographs. She lovingly pointed out her husband to my students. He looked very dashing in his early 30’s photograph. (What visual material! I was glad the talk was not in the classroom after all).

We ended the visit with the class mayor expressing his thanks to Lola Corazon. The class treasurer handed her a basket of fruits about which Lola Corazon was a little bit upset because we had to bother ourselves with a gift. We assured her that we did not spend much.

She gave her final words. My students expressed their thanks a second time. However, my students were reluctant to leave. They hovered around her, asking more questions. Lola Corazon was more than willing to accommodate them. She was immensely pleased to talk to the young people. I had to remind her and my students that they still had another class.

We walked back to school. Then I realized that, just like me, they fell in love with their Lola Corazon. Along the way they talked about her – her strength, her courage, her graciousness.

But most of all, I was pleased that this time, the topic of World War II is no longer so distant, so unreal for these young people. Their beautiful and gracious Lola Corazon, who experienced all these, is just across the street.

Lessons of World War 11

Can young people, the so-called Generation X, internalize the lessons and emotions of what history called World War? This I would like to find out.

After our lesson on World War, which included a film viewing on the bombing of Pearl Harbor, listening to a resource speaker, and letter writing, I posed this question:

“Supposing you were one of the guerillas during World War and lately, you were invited to talk to a group of high school students. What important lessons would you like to share with them?”

I was pleasantly surprised with the wisdom of the young.

Here are some of their verbatim answers:

- You should not let your enemy find out where you are or where your family lives. You should also write to your family via your group’s private messenger because if you don’t, your family will be worried and some of them may die because of too much worrying.
- *Rafael Nonato*
- Always stand for what you believe in.
- *Katrina Tirthdas*
- No matter how hard life is, there is still somebody that loves and cares for us. And that is our Lord.
- *Reilly Macairan*
- No country should invade another country.
- *Grachel Montebon*
- To survive is to help each other.
- *John David Lizares*
- You should not pity yourself and lose your self-esteem. If you do, the Japanese could easily hurt you.
- *Yeana Alon*

- Courage, without it I would not be able to fight. Praying to God to keep me alive never came to my mind. But praying to God to give me courage to fight for my beloved country was my routine every day.
- *Jancy Uychiat*
- You should work hard in order to live. By just sitting in one corner and doing nothing you would go hungry.
- *Yeana Alon*
- Do not be a parasite feeding off the blood, sweat and labor of those who have a life and a future.
- *Jose Hedriana*
- We should be patriotic because we cannot be recognized in this world if we don't have a country.
- *Jarvin Aboy*
- Be smart. Don't be rash in battles. It will only lead you to a quick death.
- Have faith and trust in your friends and allies but be cautious as there might be a traitor.
- *Jose Hedriana*
- You must never resort to drastic means of punishment or you will be no different from them (the Japs).
- *Francis Grupe*
- When you have war, do not hate the race. Hate the people who declared it. No soldier likes war. Even the strongest of soldiers fear for their lives.
- *James Kotaro Yayoshi*
- That whatever happens, as long as love and dignity is in your heart, there is no one who could ever destroy you.
- *Sergio Gelanga*
- Do not let anyone hurt you. If you will not take action if someone is hurting you, you will be treated like that for the rest of your life.
- *Greslie Lagunday*

- Our country is a place where we were born; where we grew up. So why betray it when we can fight for it.
- *Louis Wenceslao*
- Always have hope. Always believe that there is always a way to get out of tough situations
- *JN Oliver Villanueva*
- War is never good. In war you lose a lot of things, mostly loved ones. And sometimes your mind
- *James Kotaro Yayoshi*

After reading the lessons they learned from our topic, I realized that their views reflect a generation who has not only understood the horrors people underwent during that period but could even profoundly identify with these people and their emotions.

For a teacher, this formation of insights and deeper empathy among young people, which goes beyond the knowledge and comprehension levels is always a cause for celebration. Moments like these make teaching such a fulfilling profession.

Moreover, I found not only their reflections quotable but subtly relevant in today's life as well. Reading them is also learning on my part. Many times, my students have become my mentors, too.

Thanks, dear students.

An Indian Song

During my Grade 10 lesson on Ancient India, I taught my students a four-line but poignant Hindu song (This I learned from one of our Signum Fidei assemblies in La Salle- Dasmariñas):

Om nama Shiva
Om nama Shiva
Om nama Shiva
Shiva om nama.

They simply loved it especially when facing their classmates. We sang it slowly, first with hands raised, then clasped on the chest. On the last line, their heads were bowed and eyes closed like monks. During our first tries, they were more like laughing Buddhas than serious-looking monks.

My students were more thrilled when I gave them the English translation (I hope I got this right):

The God in me greets.
The God in you.

About two weeks later, we were having a chapter test on Chinese Civilization. The silence in the classroom was broken by a soft “Om Nama Shiva” hum from one of my male students.

I moved to his side and softly reminded him to be quiet.

“Excuse me. We’re not in India anymore. We’re now in China.”

Without missing a beat, he switched to “Kwang Chong le hong shi...” or those meaningless Chinese words uttered by a non-Chinese speaker, still to the tune of “Om Nama Shiva.”

Since they were taking a test, the class, including the teacher, tried hard to suppress a guffaw.

Fifty Points

I was introducing the topic, “The Constitution” in my Political Science class, one of the elective subjects in Grade 11. As motivation I asked questions in a modified “Game Ka Na Ba” manner. “How many articles are there in the 1987 Constitution? What’s Article V? Article XI?”

I kept on raising points for their graded recitation, especially for questions that were not readily answered. Some questions rose to ten or fifteen points from the normal two or five points. Now, almost everyone in the class was hanging to every word I would say, waiting for the next “difficult” question.

Then I said abruptly: “For fifty points, who can recite the Preamble?”

The class laughed! Oh, that’s a difficult question indeed! While some of them were still mumbling that they could not remember the whole thing anymore; that the last time they heard this was in their first year of Social Studies, one hand was frantically waving in the air.

“Miss! Miss!” Rexel was excitedly raising her hand.

The class looked at her, impressed and doubtful at the same time.

“Yes, Rexel, please come up front.”

True enough, without batting an eyelash; without faltering a bit, and without missing a word, Rexel recited the Preamble perfectly! She got the fifty points.

The Third Republic

To make the lesson on the different administrations more personal and interesting, I suggested a group presentation.

The class divided themselves into small groups. First, we tried to choose the six Presidents. Looking at the photos of the presidents in their textbooks, my students would then turn around, scan or stare at the varied faces of their male classmates.

"Look at him, he looks like Roxas!" one was jubilant.

"No, he's more of Quirino than Roxas," another reacted.

"What about Cyrus? Yes! He could be Magsaysay!" Almost everyone agreed after looking at their textbook and back to Cyrus' face.

Sometimes a self-conscious classmate would cover his face in real or feigned embarrassment.

"Look at John's slight chinky eyes." Everyone turned to stare at him.

"Yes, he should be Marcos." A smile of approval sealed their classmate's fate that day.

After spending almost half of the class period, with a good dose of teasing and arguments and lots of laughter, six former Malacahang occupants were chosen.

Second, I asked the six Presidents to stand in the different areas of the classroom. Row by row, their classmates were asked to stand beside or near the president whose administration they would like to be part of.

I almost regretted the manner of grouping I introduced. Instantly, I noticed who among them were the most and the least popular. After some time, one president was still standing alone.

I tried to read his face and was so relieved that he seemed to be taking it good-naturedly. From across the room, his smile seemed to confirm, "It's fine with me. I'm ok."

"Well, in reality, a good number of presidents were not exactly popular," I said aloud to no one in particular.

But since only seven or eight members were allowed in a group, some classmates successfully hid their disappointment and

moved to the incomplete group. At last, even the least popular President got his share of constituents.

In small groups they chose from among themselves the researchers, presidential advisers and spokespersons in preparation for their presentation -a state of the nation address with talk show and open forum.

I laid down the mechanics, schedule of each group's presentation and the criteria for grading. Then they began their planning session.

Toward the end of the period, one "presidential adviser" approached me.

"Miss, is it all right if Arrah and I dance the 'Otso-Otso' before President Magsaysay will give his speech?" she earnestly asked.

"Otso-Otso during Magsaysay's time?!" I could not help but laugh.

I guess, she, too found her request funny after she said it for she joined in. Both of us were having a good laugh now.

Moments later, I explained:

"I truly appreciate your sense of creativity Leeahrah. But with the limited time allotted to each group, let your presentation then focus on the significant programs of Pres. Magsaysay; how these affected the Filipino people especially the poor. You may include his personal and family background but please give emphasis to his programs."

"Yes, Miss". Still grinning, she went back to her group.

I could only shake my head in amusement replaced with some sense of sadness. It struck me how young people might find it difficult to delineate a government from show business, and vice-versa.

I hate to admit it but real statesmanship, like the Philippine dugong is on the verge of extinction.

"Otso-Otso?" I could only give a wry grin.

Presidential Blunders

“Ladies and gentlemen, His Excellency President Roxas! A round of applause please.”

Juan Paolo looked very handsome in his coat and tie as he entered the classroom when he was introduced. His classmates were all smiles while applauding him but he came in his quiet and serious demeanor.

Although the presentation was confined in the classroom, I made sure that the class would give justice to the “Office of the President.”

In every Social Studies class, assigned boys carried a lectern borrowed from the Office of the Vice Principal, and a big karaoke and a microphone with a stand from the AVR. One creative group painstakingly copied the presidential seal and taped it on the lectern before their presentation.

Except for one President who apologized for standing in front of them in white polo shirt, all came in their finest barong or coat and tie.

After the usual introduction of the President’s family and educational background, the President was expected to give his speech.

But what my students looked forward to was the chance to ask questions. Two obvious reasons for the interest were to check their classmates’ mastery on their assigned administration and to earn big points for every “sensible” question asked. However, some insisted that they simply would like to know for knowledge’s sake.

Some questions sounded so innocent and funny as the answers they elicited from the six presidents of the republic.

To President Roxas:

Q: What was the cause of your death Mr. President?

A: I had a heart attack at Clark Air Base.

To President Quirino:

Q: What is the Quirino - Foster Agreement which you signed?

A: Can I have my spokesperson answer your question?

Spokesperson: Perhaps the adviser can help.

Adviser: I think the agreement did something good for the Philippines.

To President Magsaysay:

Q: Mr. President, why did you serve basi to foreign delegates during your inauguration?

A: Because I love Filipino products! (This elicited a round of applause)

Q: Did you ever have mistresses, Mr. President?

A: None. I was faithful to my wife (Another applause from his classmates).

To President Garcia:

Q: How come you are not in your barong, Mr. President?
Are you not proud of being a Filipino? Wasn't the "Filipino First" policy your idea?

A: I was simply influenced by the Americans.

Q: How did you feel when you learned that Pres. Magsaysay's plane had crashed?

A: Of course, I was very sad. He was a friend.
But later I was happy because I would become President.

To President Macapagal:

Q: Pres. GMA is your daughter from your second wife.
What was the cause of your first wife's death, Mr. President?

A: She died of malnutrition (The class could not believe it at first but they remembered that Macapagal's mom was a labandera. So they simply let this pass).

Q: Who was that brother mentioned by your spokesperson, Mr. President?

A: Sorry, I forgot the name of my brother (Really? What a brother you are! They were incredulous)

Q: Why are you not wearing your barong today?

A: Sorry, I forgot to dry clean it.

Q: Why did you lower the exchange rate of the Philippine peso?

A: I just obeyed the IMF and the World Bank.

To President Marcos:

Q: Why did you kill Julio Nalundasan, Mr. President?

A: I did not kill him. That's a lie.

Q: Why did you order the assassination of Ninoy?

A: Again it's not true. That's plain rumor.

Q: Why did you declare Martial Law, Mr. President?

A: As of now I have not declared Martial Law yet. This is my first term, remember?

And I don't have any plan of declaring it.

"One last question please. The President has to go. He has other commitments."

With those words from the spokesperson, the open forum ended.

The President left the room and took off his barong.

The Talk Show

As one of their Third Quarter requirements, my Political Science elective class was grouped into three to prepare a videotaped talk show on their assigned branch of government. With the textbook on the Philippine Constitution as their guide, they embarked on the project.

On the scheduled submission date, I found two VCDs and one VHS tape on my work table - their finished projects. Due to a busy schedule, I was not able to view them that particular day.

The next day, during recess, I was ambushed by four of my PolSci students at the drinking fountain.

"Miss, have you viewed our submitted VCD?" Arian excitedly inquired. Four pairs of bright eyes, with barely suppressed excitement were now gazing at me.

"Well, not yet. But I'm dying to see it. I'll do it this afternoon. Then on Monday, we'll view it in class," I answered.

"We'll view it in our class? Oh no! Please don't show it in class, Miss. We'll die of embarrassment. Miss, no please." The four of them were literally imploring.

I found their behavior a bit uncharacteristic of them. They were from the 'best class' and last year, in their third year English class, they had a lesson and input on filmmaking, with no less than the director, Mr. Peque Gallaga, as their resource speaker. So why were they afraid to show their videotaped talk show now? I was quite puzzled.

"But why not? Are there sexy scenes on the Executive Department? O c'mon girls." I tried to tease them because they looked so serious and afraid.

"Just watch it first, Miss, please," they were serious again.

"OK, this afternoon, I will," I promised them.

They started walking up the staircase to their classroom. Then suddenly, Krystel and Marichelle rushed back, again they pleaded:

“Miss, if we really have to view it in class, please tell us when so we could be absent on that day.”

I simply dismissed them with a laugh.

That afternoon, I went to the AVR to view their film.

“What could have made them afraid of the whole class viewing their Talk Show?” I mused. Now, it was my turn to get excited.

The video opened with a nice soundtrack together with the names of the members appearing nicely on the screen. POLITICS TODAY, that’s the name of their Talk Show.

Krytel’s pretty face appeared. So she is the host of the show. Their studio was a grand living room. In whose classmate’s house did they have the taping? I wondered.

When Krystal introduced one of the guests, a lawyer, Marichelle appeared, sitting cross- legged on the big high-back elegant antique-looking chair, and looking so prim and chic.

But wait a minute, she had changed her family name. She was introduced as the wife of Atty, her classmate in the same PolSci class!

Hahaha! Now I understand. That’s the reason for her fear. Together with Mark, another ‘lawyer’ she discussed the qualifications of the President and Vice President of the Republic.

Then they called on their special guests:

For the presidential candidate FPJ, Jeric enters, the tall and good-looking classmate, wearing dark glasses on the set. And Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo! Alaine, their classmate enters looking every bit like GMA, with her height and with the well-placed mole.

I was totally impressed by their creativity - the set, the content of the talk, and their acting.

More so when Arian appeared on screen holding a microphone on the streets of Bacolod, with cars passing by, asking some ‘residents’ to pose their questions to the invited guests on their show. My! She looked so authentic! She could pass off as another ABS-CBN news reporter. The camera movement was simply great! The cameraman was Kevin, I found out later.

"Back to you, Krystal," ended Arian's live report.

The show ended with the giving of bouquets to the lady guests.

On the list of cast and acknowledgement part, I read the cause of the girls' fears!

Except for Holly, all the girls' family names had been changed into the family names of some boy classmates - their crushes!

The videotaped talk show was too good to be kept in the drawer. Plus the project was meant to be a starting point for a thorough discussion on the Branches of Government. Hence, I scheduled its showing to the class. But I tried to lessen the impact of the "name-changing" which was a cause of the girls' distress.

When the film was about to start, the girls concerned were very quiet, nervous, I believe. But the opening was watched with "oohhs" and "ahhs," that introducing Marichelle as the wife of was drowned by loud observations and laughter from the viewers.

I noticed Marichelle's relief. She was now able to sit comfortably from her previous "head on the armchair" position.

Before the video was to present the cast, I was already on the intercom, calling the AVR personnel to turn it off and at the same time trying to shield the big TV screen with my body. I was simply trying to save the girls from their perceived embarrassment. Some viewers reacted, "Miss, I think it was not finished yet."

"Oh, those were simply names..." I smiled at the concerned girls who gave me back a knowing smile.

Oh! The innocence and sweetness of youth and of young love - something to cherish and gently tuck in the recesses of one's heart. Years from now, these high school memories will be remembered with a sigh and a smile, or even with a giggle.

Nature Trip

Mambucal Mountain Resort - It was almost three in the afternoon and it was raining hard when we reached the place. But the weather failed to dampen the excited mood that my students and I felt when the bus stopped in front of our reserved place, Cottage 9B.

Carrying our knapsacks and tents, we all scampered to the cottage, entered the room, and found two neatly-made up beds waiting for us. For twenty one students and one teacher?! Whew!

I found it almost ridiculous. If not for the young people around me, whose enthusiasm was highly contagious, I might have endlessly criticized myself for the seemingly poor planning. Our initial plan was to have a camp-out, with the room simply reserved for our personal belongings and bathroom needs. Nature had other plans, I guess.

This overnight camp was an enrichment activity in Environmental Education, a topic I integrated in my World Geography class in the College of Education as a part-time teacher.

We were already on the second phase of our planned activity. We had just arrived from Central Azucarera de la Carlota, a sugar mill, where students saw firsthand, amidst the roar of the giant machines, how sugar is processed. This is an economic activity which has become part of the cultural heritage of the Negrense people. My! It was their first time to see mountains of sugar! And they were puzzled why ants were nowhere to be found!

Also, my students got to listen to the environmental officer who explained to us the company's waste management program.

We also had the chance to have a glimpse on how water was recycled in the plant and the black sugarcane pulp hauled as farm fertilizers.

Almost everyone was tired after the day's trip and tour. However, while some were resting on the bed, the group assigned for dinner, led by Freddie and Mary Rose started to get busy in the kitchen. They began marinating two big Tupperware of bangus and pork chop.

When the rain stopped, Donato and company started pitching their tents at the campsite just across our cottage. Meanwhile, Dyann and Georgene's group was busy rehearsing for the after-dinner cultural presentation. There was a general feeling of eagerness among them.

Looking at my students ardently working on their assigned works, I was keenly aware how my strong desire to give them a meaningful learning experience helped me overcome some little or even seemingly daunting obstacles.

I had fever that night and two days before our scheduled trip. Also, it had been raining hard for about two or three days, impossible for a camp out. Plus, we only had one room booked. But cancellation of the activity was not an option. My weak body, limited provisions, and the harsh weather, were all offered to the Greatest Teacher.

That night, I prayed hard for physical strength, safety of the group, and success of our activities.

His grace never fails. He gave us more than I asked for. Our God is simply an awesome God.

The Ethnic Groups

Dinner, quite sumptuous for a camp out, was a lively affair inside the cottage. But livelier still was the after-dinner activity.

Twenty one excited, young people scrambled to dress up in one cottage. You could just imagine the fun and the noise:

“Please do the make-up for me. Wow, you look like an American Indian? How do we put these feathers? My face is sooo black! What have you done? Well, you are supposed to be an African. Where’s my sarong? Wow! Are these your props? Yes, we really prepared for this night. Do I look fine?”

I listened to all these “dressing room” conversations while working quietly on the bed, preparing the three copies of criteria for the group presentation with contest.

There was a few minutes of brown-out so all these were happening with only a flashlight and a small emergency lamp in the room. The dim light tended to heighten the state of their excitement - they dressed up frenetically while the make-up artists had a hard time seeing their classmates’ faces clearly.

At last, Dr. Go, the college dean, and Ms. Jimelo, a colleague, whom I had texted earlier, arrived. Straight from the swimming pool, they were kind enough to give an extra hand and serve as judges.

We all proceeded to the camp site where the presentation would take place. They were to present how an ethnic group from their assigned continent showed their respect for Mother Nature.

Due to the rain, we cancelled the planned bonfire. Instead, we stayed in a grand, old building-the bath house-which, in our minds, we converted into an ancient temple.

To the beat of the bamboos, the rituals started. From Asia, the Ifugaos seriously rendered their hawk-like dance. The American Indians danced around a ‘bonfire’ (a carefully-placed flashlight covered with a piece of cloth gave a reddish glow). A South American tribe came in with some baskets of potatoes and fruits, their offerings to their god and to Mother Earth. “Blood” was

poured out and drunk by this cannibalistic group. The pretty Lorelie a.k.a. the “shaman” from Europe mesmerized the group with a swish of her healing foliage, her almost frenzied but graceful movement, coupled with her charming incantations in front of a sick woman. Not to be outdone, from Africa, a Masai tribe performed a dance depicting their livelihood, subsistence farming.

Oblivious to the drizzle outside, our ‘temple’ was filled with a festive spirit. True, the presentation was interspersed with giggles and laughter, for some ‘Indians’ or ‘Africans’ could really look funny! Nevertheless, we were all transported to different times and places that night. Such a magical moment which no ordinary classroom activity could ever equal!

We left the temple after some pictures were taken. This was to make sure that a part of that enchanting moment was captured, for them later on, to take a glimpse and laugh for years to come. Also perhaps, to remember how one could be very creative, serious, and funny at the same time.

The Hot Spring Education

Immediately after the cultural presentation, everyone rushed to the cottage to change into their swimwear. It was almost 9 pm, and we were afraid that the pools might be closed an hour later.

Walking past some trees, cottages, a videoke bar and more trees, we reached the dipping pool- the hot spring. Secluded, dimly-lit, canopied by large, old trees, and with no one in sight, we found the place very inviting, exclusively ours that night. After a brief, cold shower, we all jumped into the hot pool-very soothing indeed for all of the sixteen tired bodies!

"Hey, we all look like old folks suffering from rheumatism!" My students teased each other. Looking up at the canopy of leaves and the slivers of light from a moonlit sky, while our bodies were caressed by the sulfuric and healing hot waters, was simply heavenly. From time to time, a comforting silence descended upon the group, a moment of reflection on the peace and beauty of Mother Nature.

Sometime later, my students felt the fallen leaves touching their feet as they treaded on the pool.

"Oh! Some leaves are on my feet!" expressed one.

"Yes, I could feel them, too," remarked another.

"Well, why don't we remove these leaves for our comfort, "I suggested. Playfully, I continued, "Every leaf taken out of the pool is an additional one point in your recitation grade!"

"Really, Miss?" My students seemed to take my challenge seriously. "OK, game!" They gleefully agreed.

"Well, I'm giving you twenty counts to clean this pool of leaves." Everyone scampered to their feet to work. The irritating leaves a moment ago now felt like jewels on their feet.

"Wow, lots of leaves in this area!" One of them proudly exclaimed. "I got more," I heard a boast from the other side. I did my own share of work. Examining the various leaves I was holding, I asked my class at work in the waters, "Are the leaves you're

holding all the same?"

Squinting to see their leaves in the dark, they replied: "No, Miss."

"That's biodiversity." I simply said.

"Time is up!" I announced loudly. Students clambered out of the pool and started counting the clump of leaves they were holding. I was expecting an average of twenty leaves each one could find until I heard Reynalin, squatting on the edge of the pool, seriously counting aloud: "...ninety five, ninety six, ninety seven..."
Hahaha!

We then put all the tallied leaves on the big trash can, we found near the pool's entrance, marked BIODEGRADABLE.

Moving back into the pool, I told this nice batch of young people and would-be teachers "That was environmental education in a nutshell." They all grinned.

When it was almost time to leave, I asked them to gather in a circle and hold each other's hands.

PERSONAL INSIGHTS

Ten-years in teaching is not really long enough to truly master the craft. Yet, allow me to share three important insights I have gained in my ten years in the teaching vocation.

One, teaching, just like any profession, creates a deep feeling of fulfillment and happiness to one who has the love, or the passion for it. This love is manifested in a teacher's seemingly tireless effort to continuously improve, develop and master one's craft. Attending in-service trainings and seminars, taking graduate or post-graduate studies, and reading professional books and magazines are some of the ways which help a teacher be more creative and innovative. A look of wonder, a question that shows greater awareness, a nod of deeper comprehension and reflection papers with new insights, coupled with grateful smiles from students are just a few examples of the joys that a creative teacher gets. I tell you, they are more precious than a paycheck.

Two, teaching, good teaching is not meant for the weak and lazy. Unlike other professions, the work of a teacher does not end at 5pm. After a full day's work, which normally begins at 7:30 in the morning, a teacher goes home with bundles of papers to check and record, a bagful of other paper works to do or books to read. But real work, usually is an after-dinner affair which leads at times, many times, to the wee hours of the morning. The next day, dear ma'am or sir is up early to prepare for the day's meeting of five or six sections of students, that is approximately 250 or 300 young souls to manage - both the eager learners and the otherwise.

Does this discourage the ordinary schoolteacher? Not at all. Tired? Very much. Feeling harassed? Many times, yes. But with a smile and hurried steps, the noble teacher is again back in the classroom, mind full, ready to challenge and be challenged in the arena of ideas and possibilities. A teacher's day and energy are simply amazing!

Three, for teaching to create a difference on a student life or in the community, a teacher has to have a sense of mission. And this, I

think makes teaching very challenging, especially in this age, where personal indulgence and satisfaction seems paramount. Why do I teach? How will I make this world a better place to live because I lived, because I taught?

Tall order, indeed. But, I believe, failure to answer this question head-on, makes it easy for a tired teacher to view the work as plain drudgery rather than a meaningful work of salvation, both its human and religious aspects. The work to save a young person from ignorance and its consequences, from all facets of poverty-material, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Moreover, it is the strong belief that my teaching is carried not only for today, nor this school year, or not even just in the next five years. But with God's grace, my teachings and my influence would last or bear fruit twenty years later or even beyond my own mortal existence. That I'm not simply molding this awkward, shy or defiant teenager in front of me, but a person - with a soul, with a dream, with endless possibilities-who would bring hope to the world beyond my reach and beyond my knowledge.

Teaching is indeed a very noble profession to those who are profound enough to grasp its essence.

So, to you, all teachers out there, thank you for patiently and lovingly doing the noble task of molding the minds and hearts of the young.

May God continue to shower us with His tremendous strength and grace so we may always find Him in the faces of the students entrusted to our care.

WHEN I WAS ENTRUSTED TO THEIR CARE

There were quite a number of people who truly made an impact in my life, some I have encountered in the formal setting like the four walls of the classroom or auditorium during conferences, while some I have met through the great books I have read. Without discounting the noble efforts and the greatness of all my mentors, I would like to mention a few of those Christian educators, who, unknown to them, made such a big difference in my life.

Sr. Marcela de la Cruz, A.R., my very artistic and culturally inclined high school principal and Christian Living teacher at St. Augustine Academy. She walked tall and she had grace like a ballerina. With a guitar and with her powerful voice, she taught us Christian hymns and classical love songs. With her black habit swooshing, she thrilled us with her well-executed dance steps. How I would look forward to our Wednesday or first Friday masses, when she would sing solo and her beautiful voice would reverberate in the old Church! It never failed to give me those goose bumps and the feeling of being in heaven!

Thank you **Sr. Marcelle** for believing in me, for sending me to various leadership seminars, and even bragging about me in front of your friends (mostly nuns and priests), during that time when I could only see myself as a skinny, shy, and clumsy teenager.

Ms. Rosario Saavedra, my flawless (yes, in both voice and skin) Music and English teacher at St. Paul University in Dumaguete City. She tossed apt quotations from English poets and writers as easily as she played the piano. The first thing she taught us was the school hymn. "Hark sons and daughters of St. Paul, come listen to his call..."

From that day on, I could not sing this song without remembering the image of her- her right ear almost parallel to the piano, and her left one sharply listening to our voices. A sudden stop of her hands on the keys, and a scowl on her face would mean - "again!"

Thank you Ms. Saavedra for helping me fall in love with Shakespeare and yes, of course, my other favorite Romantic poets;

also for believing in my capacity to do things like giving a speech, leading a group, or writing a Christmas play. Thanks for pushing me to give nothing but my best.

Sr. Alma Esmero, SPC, my Religion teacher and moderator of our organization, the Paulinian Student Volunteer Catechists (PSVC). How she loved to bring us to a mountain or a beach to have our retreat, which was more of nature walk and fun! I could not anymore remember what our prayer sessions were but my! I could still vividly recall how we sat on the beach one early morning and watched with fascination the sun appearing on the horizon, creating those beautiful hues in the sky! Only when we could not stare at it any longer, we started to get up and walk barefoot on the beach.

I believe, my love for nature and my eagerness to bring my students out for a nature walk could be some of your legacies to me. Another memory that shines through was our door-to-door selling of raffle tickets in nearby towns. You taught me the nobility of knocking at some stranger's door and even "begging" if only for the spread of the Gospel.

Thank you, Sr. Alma for providing me those beautiful learning experiences.

Mr. Leonardo Sicat Jr., the no-nonsense but very caring director of Andres Soriano Memorial School - La Salle in Cebu. His exemplary Christian leadership made my first year of teaching one of the most interesting and memorable years.

His office was very accessible to any school staff, that I could even share with him a thing as mundane as insect bites, which worried me for days. He made a fuss of it, too.

The very next day, after school, I was so surprised when, entering my room in our Teachers' Dorm, I found my thick mattress changed into a brand-new one! The house help informed me it was changed after some B & G personnel had fumigated our whole dorm! Very sweet and typical of Mr. Sicat.

Thank you, Mr. Sicat for your very fatherly and Christian example. You are such an ideal boss, husband and father that I promised myself, years ago, that one day I would request you to be my ninong at my wedding. However, it did not come to pass, or perhaps, not yet....

Bro. Jun Erguiza, FSC, the soft-spoken and the first La Salle Brother I encountered, when, as a supervisor, he visited ASMS-La Salle. There, I found out that he is a very down-to-earth person but he breathes excellence. I learned that I should give more, for my best may not be good enough for him. This was attested by his post-observation conferences with me. And a note, in his handwriting, posted on the HS Vice Principal's Office, which I chanced to read when I logged in that morning. It was something like the program I watched yesterday could have been improved. Ouch! He could be that painfully honest in his desire for excellence, the logo of any La Salle school.

Yes, he can be very academic but can level nicely with a new teacher. His very solicitous questions, "How do you find your first year of teaching? Are you happy here?" endeared him to me for life. He learned I was happy at ASMS, but when he knew my interest to transfer to another La Salle school closer to home, he did not at all hesitate to help me. "I'll recommend you to the principal of USLS, Bacolod," was his earnest remark (USLS is a 7-hour ride by bus from home, but still, the closest La Salle school!)

One day, when I had the symptoms of a burn-out, and I knew that Bro. Jun was in town, I could not help but knock at the Brother's House. True to his innate goodness, Bro. Jun listened patiently to my story shared through tears. The nodding of his head, his comforting silence and the words he said after my sharing, fortified and, in a way, gave me a sense of balance.

Thank you Bro. Jun, for sharing with me the values of excellence and compassion first hand. Your kindness helped me to persevere in the profession during those challenging moments, which eventually led me to discover and fully appreciate that teaching, after all, is a vocation.

TO YOU DEAR MENTORS, AND ALL THOSE WHO HAVE TOUCHED MY LIFE IN A SPECIAL WAY - THANK YOU.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dara Barte Tumaca hails from Malabugas, Bayawan City, Negros Oriental. A grade school and high school valedictorian, she pursued her childhood dream of becoming a teacher at St. Paul University in Dumaguete City, where she finished her Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE), major in English and minor in History, cum laude. She finished her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) History and Political Science at De La Salle University, Manila.

She had her first year of teaching at Andres Soriano Memorial School (ASMS)- La Salle, Lutopan, Cebu where she was introduced to and had fallen in love with the La Salle system.

Miss Dara, as she is fondly called by students and colleagues, has taught Philippine History, Asian Studies, World History, Economics, Christian Living, and Political Science in the University of St. La Salle-Integrated School, Bacolod City. She also served the University in different capacities, as Social Studies department chair, High School Vice Principal and Grade School Vice Principal.

She worked also as a part-time teacher in the College of Education at the same University, with the hope of inspiring future Social Studies educators to maximize learning opportunities and find much joy in teaching.

She is currently the new Principal of LIDE Learning Center, Inc. (LLCI), a La Salle-supervised school in Isabel, Leyte.

Contents

• Presentation	3
• Warmest thanks	4
• Introduction	5
• Philippine Geography	7
• Mactan	9
• Balay Negrense	12
• What A House!	14
• The Ring	15
• The Secret Society	19
• Lost!	23
• Valentine's Day at Buro-Buro	25
• Into the Pool	26
• Living Museum	28
• The Museum Opens	30
• Where's The Mummy?	32
• The Greco-Roman Tour	34
• Tunay na Ina	37
• 1942 Mails	39
• Lola Corazon	43
• Lessons of World War 11	47
• An Indian Song	50
• Fifty Points	51
• The Third Republic	52

- Presidential Blunders 54
- The Talk Show 57
- Nature Trip 60
- The Ethnic Groups 62
- The Hot Spring Education 64
- Personal Insights 66
- When I Was Entrusted to their Care 68
- About the Author 71

MEL Bulletin

41. World appeal to a new mobilization for childhood

42. Cultures and Justice: Way forward for Mission of Consecrated Life



TASSA RISCOSSA – TAXE PERÇUE ROMA – ITALIA

Supplemento al n. 4 del 2010 di **Rivista lasalliana**
Trimestrale di cultura e formazione pedagogica della Associazione Culturale Lasalliana
Direzione e redazione: 00165 Roma - Via Aurelia 476
<http://www.lasalliana.com> – E-mail: fpajer@lasalle.org