

Eulogy For General Emilio F. Aguinaldo

By MWB EMILIO P. VIRATA

Many years ago, in Kawit, Cavite, a Filipino patriot was born. When he died last February 6, at the age of 95, he was given a hero's funeral. That Filipino patriot was General Emilio Aguinaldo, our brother Mason. Tonight, we are gathered in a Lodge of Sorrow to render homage to the venerable soldier and sincere Mason whose honorable and glorious life was an inspiration to all freedom-loving peoples of the world.

The death of the General's father forced him to abandon his studies at Letran to help his mother support the family. He engaged in business. Using a small sailing boat with a crew of four men for water transportation he bought and sold merchandise, farm products and work animals in the islands of Mindoro, Romblon and Panay, and the province of Batangas. Later, he sought the appointed office of "gobernaldorcillo," or Municipal Mayor of Kawit to escape compulsory military enlistment in the Spanish army. The office which he assumed on January 1, 1895, offered him a golden opportunity to be a Mason and make Masons, and gave him a good chance to become a leading "kati-punero" and recruit soldiers of the Revolution. Thus, began General Aguinaldo's service to God and the Fatherland. He served God by

being a useful and helpful citizen. He served the Fatherland by fighting two powerful nations to free the Philippines from foreign domination and make his countrymen happy.

To Bonifacio's Cry of Balintawak on August 26, 1896, Aguinaldo responded with action in Cavite. The action started on the morning of August 31, 1896, in San Francisco de Malabon, now General Trias, where the enemy was surprised, followed at noon of the same day in Noveleta where the first enemy casualty was registered, and repeated late in the afternoon in Kawit where Generals Aguinaldo and Tirona (C) personally subdued the civil guards.

Aguinaldo led the Revolution against Spain from 1896 to 1899 and fought America from 1899 to 1901. At the head of soldiers who were barefooted and in rags, poorly armed and hungry, he won the Revolution, proclaimed Philippine Independence and inaugurated the first Philippine Republic. Among the terms of the Biak-na-Bato Peace Treaty between the Philippines and Spain signed December 10, 1897, were expulsion of the Friars from the country, separation of church and state, political reforms and payment of indemnities by Spain. In the meanwhile, General Aguinaldo with a few others consented to be exiled to Hongkong. But when Spain failed

in her Treaty commitments Aguinaldo hurried back from Singapore and with the aid of the American navy continued the Revolution. He commenced on May 28, 1898, with an important victory in Alapan, Imus, Cavite. Soon thereafter, the Filipino Revolutionary flag waved triumphantly in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. At last, complete independence we longed for was realized. But in February of 1899, serious misunderstanding which developed in the relations between the Filipinos and the Americans caused a declaration of the Philippine-American war. The former allied became enemies. The war between them lasted two years. It ended when disloyal soldiers of Aguinaldo betrayed him to the enemy at Palanan, Isabela, where he was captured by Colonel Funston of the U.S. army. That was on March 22, 1901, the General's birthday.

At the beginning of the Revolution many significant persons were indifferent to the cause of the Emancipatory Movement. After independence General Aguinaldo used their talents in the conduct of the affairs of state of the Republic by giving them high positions in the government. With such wise move not only unity was attained, but also the success of the government of the Republic was assured. We are proud of the recorded fact that the first Philippine Republic survived the test and succeeded in establishing a democratic form of government with liberty and justice for all concerned. It was greatly strengthened by a Constitutional provision which made church and state separate. To all of which Aguinaldo's Masonry and the Masonry of his Cabinet as well as the

Masonry of the influential members of the Malolos Congress, contributed. It has been truly said that the enduring monument of General Aguinaldo — patriot, hero, liberator of his country, man of steel and Mason to the core — is the Republic which he won in the Revolution of 1896 which America restored in 1946 and which we now enjoy with honor and with pride. I pray to God that we keep it for this, our generation, and generations yet unborn.

For giving his country freedom and independence General Emilio Aguinaldo was elected President of the Revolutionary Government which was formed in Tejero, General Trias, Cavite, on March, 22, 1897, to substitute the "Katipunan" at the youthful age of 27; President of the Biak-na-Bato Republic which was established in San Miguel de Mayuao, Bulacan, on November 1, 1897, at the young age of 28; and President of the first Philippine Republic which was inaugurated in Malolos, Bulacan, on January 23, 1899, in the flower of his manhood at the age of 30. He lived to the ripe age of 95 and enjoyed for more than half a century the fruits of his labors and the benefits of his achievements.

As a highly respected gentleman farmer and deeply revered Filipino hero during his life time, General Aguinaldo was a host most sought for by foreign visitors. He was the most famous Filipino, too. His naturally modest and courteous manners and his admirably democratic and simple ways made his callers feel at home in his mansion. He was careful not to offend anybody and he never spoke ill of anyone, be he present or absent. To be

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And finally, Fraternity. Anywhere in the world a Mason goes, he is welcomed by his brethren regardless of race, creed or color. It is a brotherhood not necessarily by blood, but by the kinship of ideals; a brotherhood bound by spiritual ties that cannot be torn asunder by discord, jealousy or selfishness.

Truth, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity — these are the attributes that make Masonry great. These, to a Mason, are changeless and unchanging. So, brethren, let us keep on with our good work, using the tools of Masonry in our forward march in the years to come for greater achievements, that Masonry will be a powerful force for good in this valley. We may not be here fifty years from now, but we have faith and confidence that the future is bright, with greater happiness, pride, and humility that so much will have been done with more still to be done.

I am confident that from here on, the Spirit of truth, liberty, equality, and fraternity will continue to permeate the lives of all of us Freemasons and will pervade and spread out into the lives of the members of our families, the better to lead them ever onward.

In closing, let me read to you a very beautiful thought for you to ponder. Most of you must have read this. It appears in a recent issue of our **Cabletow**; very significant for us, Masons.

"I would not give much for your Masonry unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk, but they shine. A lighthouse sounds no drum, it beats no gong, and yet, far over the water its friendly spark is seen by the mariner. So let your actions shine out your Masonry. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious."

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helpful he would not hesitate to go out of his way. He was, indeed, an honor and a pride of the Fraternity.

While in his hospital bed with death hovering around day and night for six long years Aguinaldo's mind, thought and heart and soul, were always with his country and people he loved so dearly and served so well. Not long before he passed away he donated to them his kawit mansion and relics of the Revolution as a lasting heritage for posterity to preserve and the youth of the land to profit. As his last will and testament General Aguinaldo wanted his comrades-in-arms — his old veterans — taken cared of and made happy to their last days by the grateful peo-

ple of his beloved Philippines.

Our Revolutionary hero is now gone, forever gone to comply with the summons of the Divine Ruler of the Universe. Never again shall we hear of his patriotism and his heroism. Our liberator has departed to heed the call of his Maker. Never more shall we profit by his love and by his solicitude. Our redeemer has retired for a well earned rest. Forever we shall miss his leadership and his friendliness.

May the great Filipino that is General Emilio Aguinaldo, and the big man that is our hero, repose in eternal peace with God, our Heavenly Father and Supreme Grand Master. He will ever live in the hearts of his countrymen.