

WB Gregorio S. Lagumen, PM

In March, 1931, Masonry was born in Camarines Norte. Attendant travails of birth were hers compounded many times over by coming amidst a prejudiced church, century-old traditions, customs, beliefs. To become a Mason was to become a lost soul, so went the warning to many audiences. Notwithstanding, it was first officered by eminent men of their day. Jose Muniain, a ship captain, was the first Worshipful Master; Felipe Fernando, a surveyor, Senior Warden; Jose Santos Seeping, the manager of Siy Cong Bieng, an exporter, Junior Warden; Luis Miguel, proprietor and businessman, Treasurer; Elmer O. Worrick, retired U.S. Army man turned lumberman, Secretary; Mariano Sta. Romana, a ship officer, Chaplain; Clemente Bernabe, a government employee, Marshall; Basilio Peña, marine engineer, Senior Deacon; Alfredo Suabillo, a ship officer, Junior Deacon; Antonio Baltazar, ship officer, Senior Steward; Gan Bok, businessman, Junior Steward; Tranquilino Matera, Alatco transportation manager, Tyler.

Inside the Lodge and during meetings, deliberations were in Spanish — a mark of education in those days.

They met at the Tan Seng Cu building at Pandan, held its inauguration at the constabulary barracks near the first Rizal monument (inspired and designed after the trisquare of the Masonic emblem), transferred to the old Diluangco Bldg., thence to the Seeping Bldg. and finally arrested during the Japanese occupation in 1941. Reactivation started on Oct. 27, 1945. Bartolome Or-

tega, then a supervisor in the public schools, was the Worshipful Master. Destitute in everything — equipment, paraphernalia, money — she survived only thru grit and enormous determination.

In recounting the existence of Masonry in Camarines Norte during the first half of this century, the following data are enlightening:

From 1931 to Dec. 1941:	
Members accepted	7
Affiliation	1
From Oct. 27, 1945 to 1950:	
Members accepted	5
Affiliation	0

Membership resource hardly averaged one per year. That apparently is due to several things. Members of the Lodge in the early days were under the impression that Masonry's aims, ways, activities, history, personalities need not be bruited about in public, but kept to themselves. They dispensed charity without ostentation, did good without expectation of any recompense, taught their doctrines quietly.

In 1950, Masonry in Camarines Norte acquired strength and vigor blessed with strong and able Worshipful Masters. Bro. Maximo Abañon was elected to the oriental chair and the first public installation was held. WB Paul C. Palencia was the installing officer. In 1952 a bigger public installation was held. "It brought together the cream of society in the province. MWB Francisco A. Delgado, PGM, was the installing officer assisted by WB Daniel Limbo. For the first time, the true face and feature of Free-

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Masonry was revealed to the public. Prominent men and women witnessed the solemn ceremony.

In March 1953 a piece of land containing 936.68 sq. m. was acquired for the Lodge. The next phase, more difficult, necessitating big experience, wide influence, proven reputation, able manager of men, had to be located. This was answered by Bro. Manuel K. Ong who was elected Worshipful Master from 1954 thru 1956.

Responding to the will of the Lodge, WB Manuel K. Ong immediately obtained pledges and started collection. Thirty two members answered the call including Bro. Bert W. Palmertz, a member of a Lodge in Switzerland.

On a bright morning on January 29, 1955, with the then Grand Master MWB Werner P. Schetelig officiating, the corner stone was laid. It was preceded by a parade to the site with the colorful drum and bugle corps of the Chung Hua School followed by the members and their ladies and the general public.

The trowel, symbolic tool of craftsmen, was handed to Engr. Conrado M. Ong of the Omega-Beta Construction, who was charged with the responsibility of designing and constructing the temple.

Finally, on May 1, 1955, three months and a day from the laying of the cornerstone, the Masonic Temple of the Camarines Norte Lodge 107 was completed. The Lodge meeting was held in the new home that month, the first to be erected in the Bicol Valley after Liberation and in the 23rd year after her charter was granted.

Continuous improvements have been added since. Painting the entire building, enclosing the land with tall concrete walls, raising the ground to prevent flood, laying culverts, concreting the flag pole, completing

the furniture, etc. They were mainly the products and contributions of Worshipful Masters during their terms of office.

Never was there a greater or higher organizational success than the putting up into active functioning bodies of the four complete segments of the Scottish Rite Bodies of Masonry, namely: the Daet Lodge of Perfection, 4° to 14°; General Vicente Lukban Chapter of Rose Croix, 15° to 18°; Rafael Palma Council of Kadosh, 19° to 30°; the Manuel A. Roxas Consistory, 31° to 32°.

Certificates of recognition for Masonic accomplishments as builder was awarded by the Grand Lodge of the Philippines to WB Manuel K. Ong; for meritorious services to WB's Gregorio S. Lagumen and Zacarias Burgos; for Masonic Leadership to VWB Santiago Ferrer, Sr. thru his appointment as District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) from 1963 to 1966 and to VWB Eustaquio de Guzman from 1966 to the present time.

Membership has grown to 74 as of June 1968. She regrets that not all applications could be accommodated.

In 1966 the *Grand Master's Cup* was awarded to the Camarines Norte Lodge 107, making her the *Outstand-*

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This Dispensation arrived in Manila late in August, 1901, and by the terms thereof had to be returned to the Grand Lodge at its next session with a report of the work done thereunder, together with a statement of the resources and liabilities of the Lodge. The Grand Lodge session being held early in October, did not permit any delay in the returning of the Dispensation.

The first meeting under Dispensation was held on the 28th day of August, 1901, at which meeting the by-laws were adopted. The first stated meeting was held on September 2, 1901, and within three days thereafter the Dispensation and all necessary reports were mailed to the Grand Secretary for submission to the Grand Lodge. With these papers went the petition for a Charter.

On the 10th day of October, 1901, the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of California granted the Charter prayed for, and the first meeting under Charter, the institution of the Lodge, and the installation of its officers was held on the 14th day of November, 1901.

The first stated meeting of the Lodge was held on December 2, 1901, at which meeting the Sojourners' Club presented the Lodge with furniture and jewels to the value of about \$275.

The preliminary meetings, the meetings under Dispensation, and the meetings under Charter up to April, 1902, were held in the home of Worshipful Brother H. Eugene Stafford. △

* * *

Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you even with him; forgiving one sets you above him.

Benjamin Franklin

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ing Lodge for that year throughout the Grand Lodge of the Philippines including lodges in Okinawa, Japan, the Marianas Islands, Korea and Guam. It was truly a signal honor. The previous awardees were *Lincoln Lodge No. 34, Olongapo, Zambales, 1962-63; Leonard Wood Lodge No. 105, Clark Air Base, 1964; Coral Lodge, No. 142 in 1965.*

In the same year WB Primo C. Ong donated to the Lodge almost a hectare of land for her use as cemetery. Papers were approved by the town council and the Health Dept. and forthwith the cement walls surrounding the area were erected. Unfortunately, he was summoned to the bosom of the Great Architect of the Universe before he could be installed Worshipful Master for the second term. The unfinished walls had to be completed by the succeeding Worshipful Master, WB Cenon Dizon. △