

## Rafael M. Salas

Executive Secretary, Republic of the Philippines

RAFAEL M. SALAS was born on August 7, 1928, in Bago, Negros Occidental, the eldest of three children of the late Dr. Ernesto Salas and the former Isabel Montinola, both from well-to-do families of Negros and Iloilo.

Young Salas spent his boyhood and early education in Negros. When the war came, Salas was only twelve years old, but the events that composed this critical period made a lasting impression on his mind. The war broke down the traditional barriers of class, a feature of Philippine society most evident in Negros—and made the people close ranks in a common desire to survive. The levelling influence of the war put Salas in direct and earnest contact with all classes, in particular, the poor, an opportunity, along with his public school education, that made his outlook unalterably egalitarian and socially conscious.

These influences were to be exercised right after the war. During his senior year in high school, as President of the high school council of 2,000 students, he led his fellow students to help clean up Bacolod City of some of its post-war debris. He capped this performance by graduating *valedictorian* of the Negros Occidental High School class of 1947.

In the same year he enrolled at the University of the Philippines where he again excelled as a student. He finished his Associate in Arts degree in 1950 with *high honors*. In 1953 he graduated with two academic degrees, Bachelor of Arts, *magna cum laude*, and Bachelor of Laws, *cum*

*laude*. He took the bar examinations the same year and passed.

Salas was, true to his nature, active in student affairs. He was president of the U.P. Student Council and simultaneously guided three national student organizations: the Student Councils' Association of the Philippines (SCAP) of which he was President, the Conference Delegates Association of the Philippines (CONDA), and director of the National Student Movement for Democracy (NASTUM). Under his leadership, all the student organizations in the country were united, an organizational feat unprecedented in the history of the Philippine student movement. He was later chosen National Director of the Students' for Magsaysay for President Movement (SMPM), which helped Magsaysay when the latter ran successfully for President in 1953.

In 1954, he became Chairman of the Presidential Consultative Council of Students (CCS) and Assistant to then Executive Secretary Fred Ruiz Castro. In 1955, he was appointed, in addition to his other positions, Secretary General of the UNESCO National Commission and Technical Adviser to the Chairman of the National Economic Council (NEC).

Amidst a busy career in the government, Salas found time to further his studies and to teach. Twice he attended Harvard University, in 1955 for his *Master of Public Administration* degree (grades with distinction), and in 1958 as an ICA-NEC Fellow on local Government Development Planning. He taught Economics and

Political Science in the University of the Philippines, the Far Eastern University Graduate School, and in the Lyceum of the Philippines. He is at present a professorial lecturer in the College of Law, University of the Philippines.

Salas continued to rise in the government service despite the tragic death in 1957 of Magsaysay. Under then President Carlos P. Garcia, he continued to occupy increasingly responsible positions: Head Executive Assistant of the NEC (1957-1958), Executive Officer (with Cabinet rank) of the NEC (1960-1961), Special Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources (1961), Chief of the Local Governments Division, Office of the President, and finally, Executive Director of the NEC, a position that enabled him to sit in cabinet meetings in the absence of then NEC Chairman Jose Locsin. The last three positions he held simultaneously. Salas' role in the NEC was an important one: aside from holding a succession of increasingly high positions, he was originally responsible for its reorganization and staffing in 1955.

After the defeat of President Garcia by Macapagal in 1961, Salas resigned all his positions in the government. But in 1962, Salas was returned to government service as Assistant Vice-President of the University of the Philippines, the leader of a coterie of brilliant young scholars and administrators drafted by Dr. Carlos P. Romulo to launch his first year as President of the State University. This position completed the cycle for Salas *vis-a-vis* his alma mater: first, he was a student, then a professor, and finally, administrator. In this new part he did just as well: his ideas and managerial talent — which must include

mastery of organization and the gift of persuasion — fueled the mechanism that set in motion the first crucial and most thrilling year of Romulo's university administration.

After a year in the U.P. Salas became General Manager of The Manila Chronicle and Assistant to the President of the Meralco Securities Corporation. In the middle of 1964, Ferdinand E. Marcos, then seeking the presidential nomination of the Nacionalista party, contacted Salas for the first time. Marcos won the nomination in a convention held in November of that year. After his victory, Marcos drafted Salas to help set up and coordinate his campaign machinery. For this achievement, Salas was the inevitable choice for Executive Secretary, one of the six capable and prestigious men who composed the first batch of cabinet appointees of the new administration, namely: Carlos P. Romulo, Jose Yulo, Narciso Ramos, Paulino Garcia, and Jose Aspiras.

In the midst of success in a variety of disparate roles — scholar, student leader, professor, administrator — Salas is best known as an administrator. In 1962, for instance, he won the *Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM)* award for Public Administration in recognition of his talent in this field. Romulo, among others, considers Salas "the best administrator of his generation" — an accolade for the latter's work at the State University. The Graphic says of Salas "... a young man with a genuine talent at managing men of disparate persuasions and purposes."

The Salas style, as anything that is art, eludes precise definition. It is a felicitous blend to diverse personal qualities, each proportioned to the occasion by an acute, gyroscopic sen-

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Freemasonry is social in that it fosters the natural friendliness and a true spirit of brotherly love and affection that should take place in the lives of men associated and united for noble purposes. △

—Joseph Fort Newton, 1880-1950

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## RAFAEL M. SALAS (From page 20)

sibility — a sensibility strengthened by a purposeful mind incessantly in the service of tracking new knowledge and deriving insights from books, from nature, and from people.

Editor's Note: It will interest the brethren to know that Mr. Rafael M. Salas, at the time Catalino G. Aurelio Chapter, Order of DeMolay, was organized in 1947 in Bacolod City, became a member of the Order and served the chapter as its Mater Councilor. His father Worshipful and Illustrious Brother Ernesto Salas, PM 33° and an uncle, WB Angel Salas, PM, were pillars of Kanlaon Lodge No. 64. △

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*We are deeply sorry for the unintentional mistake of not including the name of VWB Guillermo E. Bongolan PDDGM, among those who were honored with the rank and decoration of Knight Commander of the Court of Honor by the Supreme Council on February 13, 1966 (Cabletow, Feb. 1966, p. 28). In an early press release, the list did not include his name. In a later release, which we did not get, VWB Bongolan's name appeared. He was elected to receive the honor in Feb. 1965, but due to illness, he was not able to receive it then and only came to be honored in Feb. 1966.*

*In the picture caption (Cabletow April 1966, p. 18), the name of WB Presa was listed instead of WB Adorador. WB Adorador is Worshipful Master of F.D. Roosevelt Lodge No. 80. △*

## Grand Lodge Committees...

(Cont. from page 14)

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