

# History of the American School

By Ovid Boni

THE following prize-winning essay by a student of the American School of Manila is published, unedited, by arrangement with the School. Lack of space prohibited publication here of the essay by Sash Schmelkes, ranked second by the judges, three essays, by Heley Meyer, Robert Rowntree, and John Wilde, respectively, all ranked third, and another by Ursula Boysen, ranked fourth. All of them well merited publication, but the essay published here gives a very good outline of the history of the School and a clear idea of its value to the American and foreign communities in Manila.

THE American School, Inc. in the Philippines today plays a most important part in the lives of the attending students. The school not only offers the American system of education, but also serves as a recreation center for the high school boys and girls. Situated on a two and one-half acre plot of land on Calle Donada, in Pasay, the American School buildings, "the finest of their kind in Manila", are fortunately in excellent condition. The trim, well-kept grounds surrounding the school make the wall-enclosed compound a delightful little oasis with a strikingly American atmosphere. However the American School did not reach its present status overnight; instead, many were the difficulties that had to be overcome before the corporation became a success.

During the early months of the year 1920, the pressing need of an adequate center of education for British and American children was further accentuated by the fact that the only existing private school intended closing its doors for good at the end of the school term. As experience had shown, private institutions of learning could not be operated on a profit basis; therefore members of the Anglo-American communities of Manila held a meeting for the purpose of finding some solution to their common problem. The resulting ideas and suggestions formed the nucleus of a plan to organize a "non stock, non profit" institution "for the education of American and British children resident in the Orient".

Immediately, a group of enthusiastic men set about the task of developing this experiment. On March 4, 1920, the Articles of Incorporation of the American School were deposited by C. G. Wentmore, T. D. Aitken, C. R. Zeininger, R. Fairnec, and D. C. Johnson. The foregoing quintet together with W. Smith, W. Yost, D. F. Webster, W. H. Taylor, and J. W. Ferrier formed the school's first board of trustees. Beseated by numerous difficulties, these men finally engaged a staff of competent and efficient teachers to serve as the faculty for the new school.

Although the corporation had no immediate funds to draw from, friends cooperated with the trustees, and payment of costs up to ₱10,000 was guaranteed by a group of generous supporters. In addition to this financial assistance, a building at 606 Taft Avenue was made available to the school by Bishop G. F. Mosher of the Episcopal Church. Through the generosity of this church, rent for the new quarters was not demanded and, finally, in June, 1920, the American School threw open its doors and welcomed the first "student body".

Heading the officers of administration during the opening year was Miss Leila Brown who served in the capacity of principal for only one term. The following year Mrs. F. E. Henley took over the job of supervision

until the termination of the school year in 1922. At this time the Episcopal Church desired the use of the building so kindly lent by Bishop Mosher; therefore the Board of Trustees was forced to seek a new location for the rapidly growing organization. The choice of a building situated at 115 Padre Faura proved satisfactory, and here the institution continued its fine work for the next six years. The third superintendent, Mrs. Elizabeth T. Marshall, who was appointed principal in 1922, served until the closing of the last semester in March, 1925. Succeeding Mrs. Marshall, Mrs. Beatrice M. Grove assumed the burden of directing the school in June, 1925, and under her guiding hand it continued to prosper for many years. When Mrs. Grove retired in 1936, Mr. Glenn C. Miller became principal, ably serving the school until 1940, at which time L. F. Gerber was appointed to fill the vacancy. Within a year Mr. Gerber returned to the United States, thus leaving Mrs. Lois Croft in charge of the officers of administration.

Up to May, 1926, the American School had been laboring under a financial loss that proved extremely discouraging. During the six years of operation, the school had accumulated debts amounting to ₱3,000; however the Board of Trustees solved the problem temporarily by guaranteeing an overdraft secured by the members. By 1928, the building on Padre Faura had become so crowded that roomier quarters at 1259 M. H. del Pilar were rented by the school board. The new edifice, a rambling wooden structure, proved much more satisfactory than the old location. Here the headquarters of the organization remained for the following eight and a half years. At this point, fortune began to favor the school and its pecuniary problems began to disappear as an increased income gave the treasury a considerable amount of surplus cash. These immediate funds, plus gifts of money, made possible the purchase of modern equipment for the classrooms and the playground. New apparatus for the science laboratory was added to the equipment purchased in 1920, playground fixtures were installed, and the school library was augmented by books donated by individuals and organizations. Indeed when the discouraging financial problems had been erased and more students began to enroll, the American School, nurtured by loyal supporters, prospered to such an extent that its pioneers could justly be proud of their achievement.

Once again in 1935, as in 1928, overcrowded conditions brought about by an increased enrollment necessitated another decision from the Board of Trustees. This time the board proposed that the school erect its own permanent headquarters as soon as suitable property became available. Early in 1936, a desirable tract of land on Calle Donada was acquired and the way was paved for the construction of modern, roomier quarters. The constant influx of cash gifts, strict adherence to an intelligent financial plan, and the faith and support of the school's friends and patrons made the attainment of this goal possible. The construction of a two-storey concrete building was begun during the early months of 1936 and, by December of the same year, the new quarters were ready for occupation. The newly completed edifice, theoretically earthquake-, storm-, and fire-proof, was enclosed by a high adobe wall on two sides while a pronged steel fence encompassed the rest of the compound. During the vacation weeks of December,

(Continued on page 28)

## RADIOTYPE

YOUR  
MESSAGES

*Around the Globe*

*"Via Globe"*



For GLOBE MESSENGER

Tel. 2-95-17 — 2-97-91

## GLOBE WIRELESS LTD.

Main Office  
Sixth Floor  
China Bank Bldg.

Branch Office  
Lobby, Filipinas Bldg.  
Plaza Moraga

## History of the American School

(Continued from page 9)

1936, the final transfer was effected, and soon the American School was operating in its ideal new location.

As might be expected, this single building was soon filled to capacity as more families began to enroll their children in the various classes. The advantages that another building would give the school were apparent but financial conditions dashed the hope of raising a second structure. At this point, however, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Heilbronn, always ready to extend a helping hand, generously donated P50,000 for the construction of another building. This money constituted the Heilbronn's second gift; the first having been a sum of P5,000 which was used to pay for the fence enclosing the school compound. Thus, Heilbronn Hall, as the new edifice was christened, was finally completed in the latter part of 1939. Included in the building were a gymnasium with a balcony, a stage, classrooms, and shower rooms for girls and boys. And so, once again the school achieved a major objective and the dreams of the original founders had more than come true.

The total cost of the school's new quarters was in the vicinity of P205,000. In addition to the Main Building and Heilbronn Hall, there had also been constructed living quarters for the janitors, a storeroom, a Boy-Scout club-room, and a washing room for chauffeurs. At the beginning of the 1941-42 term, the school still owed the sum of P84,000. Of the original cost, P70,000 was procured on promissory notes, P40,000 was obtained from the treasury, while the remainder came from contributions and gifts. The outstanding contributors were Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Heilbronn who have been mentioned previously, Mr. Carl Hamilton, the American Chamber of Commerce, and the members of the now-dissolved Philippine Society of Engineers. The majority of the school's library books

# ATLANTIC GULF & PACIFIC COMPANY OF MANILA

EXECUTIVE & SALES OFFICE  
222 REGINA BUILDING  
TEL. 2-83-64

ENGINEERING DEPT. & SHOPS  
PUNTA, SANTA ANA  
TEL. 8-63-32

ENGINEERS—CONTRACTORS

DISTRIBUTORS FOR

FAIRBANKS MORSE & CO.  
GARDNER DENVER CO.  
CHAIN BELT CO.  
ARMCO INTERNATIONAL CORP.  
PIONEER ENGINEERING WORKS

YORK CORPORATION  
LINCOLN ELECTRIC CO.  
WALSH REFRACTORIES CORP.  
MARION POWER SHOVEL CO.

had been donated by the University Club and the Estate of Sydney D. Rowland. Many others have contributed to the development of the American School and, without their aid, the school might not have achieved its prosperity and success.

As the year 1941 was drawing to a close, children of army and navy personnel were ordered back to the United States, since the nebulous state of Far Eastern affairs seemed to portend trouble for the Philippines. On December eighth, 1941, (December seventh in the United States) that trouble came in the form of a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Within a matter of hours, the Japanese has effected landings on the coast of Luzon and the school immediately closed its doors. The Board of Trustees offered the U.S. Army use of the school buildings and here the headquarters of an engineer group was established. However, a few weeks later, when Manila was declared an "Open City", the school grounds were vacated as all military forces were compelled to withdraw from the city.

On January second, 1942, Manila was occupied by the invaders. Three or four days elapsed before Japanese authorities paid the compound a visit. Finally, several officers inspected the buildings, sealed the doors, and warned the janitors not to meddle with property that now belonged to the "Imperial Japanese Army". Within a few weeks, a group of Nipponese officers and men has set up their headquarters in the Main Building, while at the same time British and American citizens were being herded into Santo Tomas Internment Camp. Sports equipment, books, desks, and chairs were freely distributed among the neighboring populace as the conquerors attempted to exemplify the "benignity of the Imperial Japanese Army". Other equipment which later served as fuel for Japanese fires, was heaped into a large pile at the north end of the school compound. Guards were posted at three gates and civilian

passersby were required to bow to the sentries on duty. During the early months of the occupation, several carloads of books were obtained from the school through the persevering efforts of a group of Anglo-American internees. These books made possible the continued education of boys and girls imprisoned in Santo Tomas. For approximately thirty-seven months the invaders enjoyed the use of the fine concrete school buildings. During this time several violators of the Japanese laws were punished and tortured within the walls of the campus. Neighboring residents claimed that several men were hanged; others told tales of the torturing of captives who were often permanently disfigured. Finally, however, the day came when the Japanese were forced to evacuate the premises as American tanks blazed their way through the streets. Throughout the fire, shelling, and counter-shelling, the American School buildings stood as a symbol of American culture, and, when the dust of battle had cleared away, they remained unscathed in the midst of a battered and torn Manila.

After the area had been cleared of enemy troops, a food center was set up in Heilbronn Hall while the Main Building served as a hospital for the sick and wounded. When the need for a hospital had disappeared, the Main Building was converted into a warehouse and finally, the Philippine Relief and Rehabilitation Association took charge of both structure. However, as more Americans began to drift back to Manila, a cry for a good educational system whereby foreign children in the city might receive proper teaching was taken up in the early months of 1946. A meeting of all parents interested was held in March of that year at the Army and Navy Club for the purpose of reaching a solution to the problem. Although at that time there were comparatively few boys and girls ready to enroll in courses, it was finally decided that the American School

## AMERICAN FACTORS, (PHIL.) INC.

### *Announces*

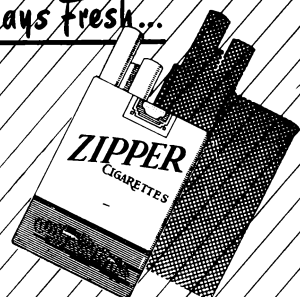
THE TRANSFER OF ITS  
OFFICES FROM  
307 MYERS BLDG., PORT AREA  
TO THE

# Mary Bachrach Building

25th Street, Port Area  
AS OF JANUARY 12

GENERAL OFFICES • DISPLAY FLOOR • BODEGAS

*Always Fresh...*



**ZIPPER**  
CIGARETTES

**ZIPPER**  
CIGARETTES

**CONNELL BROS. COMPANY**  
(PHILIPPINES)  
WILSON BLDG., MANILA — TEL. 2-63-03  
BRANCHES IN CEBU, ILOILO, DAVAO

should once more open its doors. Because of prevalent conditions, it was realized that an operating loss would be sustained by the school; however the Board of Trustees felt that within a short period of time more children would arrive from the United States and that then the financial disadvantages would be alleviated.

A cable requesting Mrs. Lois Croft, who was principal prior to the war, to take over the job of supervision was immediately dispatched. Mrs. Croft accepted the position but announced that she would not be able to arrive in the Islands until August. In the meantime, repair work had begun on the interior of the Main Building. Supplies with which it has been filled were moved, and partitions were installed in the empty building. Soon after the arrival of Mrs. Croft on August 4, the work of preparing the building for occupancy was completed. On September 9, 1946, the American School once again threw open its doors and stood ready to offer its first post-war student body the best in education. Although at first grades one through twelve were situated in one building, Heilbronn Hall was soon renovated and roomier classrooms were given to the lower grades. The school-grounds were beautified and the campus as a whole is now in a better shape than ever before. The present enrollment is well over five hundred students as compared to four hundred in 1941. And so with each passing day the American School is improving more and more.

Indeed, the American School, Inc. is an organization which has really fulfilled the hopes of its founders, — nay, it has gone beyond their dreams, it has attained a position of the greatest importance in the lives of the youngsters who study there. Symbol of education, center of American youth in the Philippines, the American School stands forth as an institution dedicated to those men and women whose efforts made it possible.

Ovid Boni is sixteen years old and a member of the senior high school class. He was a pupil in the American School from the second to the eighth grade and took his ninth grade work in the Santo Tomas Internment Camp; his tenth and eleventh grade work was done in Proctor, Maine. He is co-editor of the American School magazine, belongs to both the basketball and badminton teams, and plays the violin in the school orchestra.



## REX COLE AIR CIRCULATOR

for offices and homes. Moves 50% more air per KWH than conventional fans. Portable - light in weight. Quiet in operation. Attractive.

The Rex Cole Air Circulator literally picks up cool air from the floor - where it naturally settles - and distributes it evenly, gently, all over the room.

Price— P120.00

**F. H. STEVENS & CO.**

El Hogar Filipino Bldg.

Manila, Philippines

## Subscribe to the JOURNAL

to keep your files complete.

## MOTOR SERVICE CO., INC.

AUTOMOTIVE PARTS • ACCESSORIES

GARAGE & SHOP EQUIPMENT

BATTERIES • TIRES • TUBES

230 13th ST., PORT AREA

TEL. 2-65-27