

# My Most Unforgettable TEACHER

By SOLEDAD L. GARCES



One interesting little fact can not escape the notice of even the most casual observer of class programs of school convocations at a certain private school in Manila. One will readily note that the entire school population from the littlest kid in the kindergarten up have remarkable mastery of the *Pambansang Awit ng Pilipinas*, the Tagalog version of which is invariably sung on all occasions, for it is just one of the various ways the school adopts to teach nationalism, the subject that is accorded the most prominence in the curriculum of that school. That is because the moving spirit within the school, this teacher I now write of, believes that the most important phase of present-day education is nationalism — genuine Filipinism.

She thinks that, above all else, the pupil should be led to discover his true Filipino self, the origin of his race, the culture that is his by heritage, the potentialities as well as the limitations of his own country and nation, and the ideals and aspirations of his own people. And the pupils must not only know these, but they must learn to appreciate and love all that valuable inheritance their forefathers have handed down to them through the centuries.

Next to nationalism, she believes in training for the democratic way of life. The student government and other self-ruling organizations in school are some of the proper tools to attain this end. She does not believe that democracy put into practice by the students will

lessen their respect for teachers and other school authorities. On the other hand, these devices if properly utilized will be the fairest fields for training young citizens to respect constituted authorities, teachers including. Providing knowledge that prepares the student for the life that awaits him when he steps out of the school into the world, is the next important educational objective, according to her.

Like other educators, she deplors the outmoded educational system we now have. Having to educate students that are getting used to the whirlwind tempo of the atomic age, in accordance with an educational pattern that was ideal when airplanes did not exist even in the wildest dreams, is simply absurd. "We need changes along social studies, social sciences," she said. "And when I say social studies, I don't mean units in Oriental history, world history, etc. I mean that the student should be taught the imperative need for him to get along with his neighbors, his associates; that students be made to see that they are integral parts of their community, that their little community is a part of the country, that their country is a part of the world; and that the success or failure of that big world hinges on the success or failure of the smallest integral components, themselves and the others. Students must be made conscious, as never before, of the great responsibility for the happiness or woes of the world as a result of the friendly or belligerent attitude they take toward others. That is the additional stress on social studies I am referring

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to and which requires immediate attention in our school curriculum." To this end she thinks that more emphasis should be laid on group work, project methods of teaching and other communal activities wherein the students have to put their heads together to work for a common goal. In such cases the students will realize the value of fellow feeling for others and of a harmonious relationship with them.

As the head of a teacher-training institution, she is positive that mastering the cardinal principles of education, the pedagogical tenets and educational ideologies alone do not make for a good teacher. According to her, the success of a teacher depends, first of all, on her personal attitude toward teaching. One who thinks of being a teacher because the teacher course is short, or that it is the course that her limited means can afford, has the slightest chance to make a good teacher out of herself. Neither will one be a good teacher if she decides to take up teaching as her occupation because she is convinced that her mental equipment rates just average or below, and that she can

not tackle another course. One who expects to make teaching as a stepping stone to another course will not make a good teacher either. The urge to teach, she said, should come from within, for to teach should be a spontaneous desire—a calling, just as ministry is, and feeling that irresistible call is the first of the signs that a teacher will succeed as one.

Next to personal attitude as a factor for success in teaching is academic preparedness.

Then good health. A teacher will find that poor health will always stand on the way to efficient service in teaching as elsewhere.

She also thinks that a good teacher must possess emotional maturity. This should enable a teacher to view the problems of the classroom from a detached point of view, such that little things can not harrass her. In this connection, as stabilizer in a class, a teacher should be endowed with a happy disposition that can not tip off balance on the slightest provocation, a disposition that does not fail to shed cheer and warmth in spite of trifles, unpleasant though these may be.

Lastly, a good teacher should have attained that much of spiritual and moral development which places her on a level by which her own teaching, her very presence can exert a soul-lifting influence on those she teaches, on those around her.

I am referring to Mrs. Flora A. Ylagan, National Teachers College.

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