

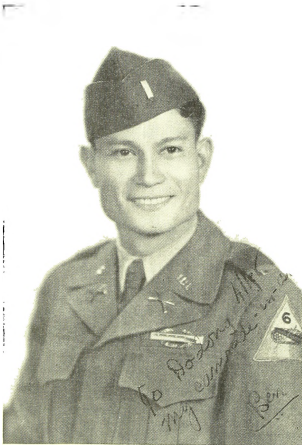
Caroliniana

By LEO BELLO

Once a Carolinian, Always . . .

It was a pleasant wind which blew a true-blue Carolinian to town straight from his triumphs at the Korean battlefields. Ben came when least expected. The First Cavalry Division, U. S. Army unit to which he now belongs, was on its way back to the United States after seeing action in Korea. But Ben took time in flying south to see the land of his birth, his folks, his friends, and above all, . . . San Carlos, his Alma Mater, while his unit was at rest in Japan awaiting transportation for Stateside. He is that debonair Lieut. Benito Wallingsford Alpuerto, ever a Carolinian by heart.

Ben was doubly lucky when he came over last month. Atty. Panfilo W. Alpuerto, his brother and one of USC's brand-new lawyers who hurdled the last Bar exams took a wife in the person of the former Miss Yolanda Villamor, a Carolinian coed by her own right who hails from Carmen, Cebu, and who is a younger sister to Engr. Bienvenido Villamor of the USC Engineering faculty. Lieut. Alpuerto himself acted as one of the sponsors for the veil. (Incidentally, the members of the Gang Internationale, an exclusive clique of wide-awake



Lieut. Benito W. Alpuerto, a Carolinian, now an American citizen, is a go-getter, and how! A Missourian bride awaits him after his recent stint in Korean battlefields with U. S. Army Cavalry Unit.

Carolinian coeds and alumni to which the bride belongs was most amply represented in the wedding ceremonies. Miss Lily Borromeo sang the Ave Maria; and to mention the other gang members, there were present the Misses Milagros Sol, Paulina Borromeo, Luisa Jatico, and Josefina Montebon. The last will have her happy event in due time when she becomes Mrs. Bonifacio Corsiga. Miss Sol is an HE coed at USC, Miss P. Borromeo is already a dental surgeon, Miss L. Borromeo is a future Porto, and Miss L. Jatico is a Pharmacist and product of the USC's famous College of Pharmacy.)

Lieut. Benito Wallingsford Alpuerto studied at USC during his high school and pre-medicine years before the war, like ourselves, although we only took Pre-Law then and we were ahead of him a couple of years. But that's that, like ourselves too, he was adventurous and shiftless then. Ben and us got ourselves enlisted in the Philippine Scouts of the U. S. Army sometime in February of 1941, about ten months before the last World War was declared. Like ourselves, he went through Hell in Bataan, that beleaguered peninsula which won fame and praise and accolade for the fighting spirit of the Filipinos, that resounded all over the world; although at present, the thought-to-be living heroes who are survivors of that glorious struggle have already been forgotten. The Death March, and then escape from that file of death and starvation, and we saw each other again in Manila in May of 1942, peddling soft-drinks to be able to live. We went together to the Camarines Norte and Tayabas boundary road and were employed as Capotax and Time-keeper, respectively. But Ben went home to Cebu earlier, leaving ourselves behind. Eventually, though, we met again in December, 1942 at Dumanjug, his birth place, right after we went home to Cebu from Manila. He was a guerrilla officer when we saw him, but he was the same old pal, still musing over his student days at San Carlos whenever he had occasion to do so. Later, we lost contact of each other when with Ben connected with the Cebu Guerrilla, we evacuated Cebu for security reasons only to be practically forced to join the Negro Guerrilla, and eventually commissioned Second Lieutenant ourselves.

In 1946, when he reported back to the U. S. Army, after terminating his services with the Philippine Army, we banged against him again. But then, we had already our honorable discharge from the Army of the United States, so that we could not be together long. We joined the U. S. Army Transport Service (USATS) while Ben slugged it out with the foottroops. And we heard that Ben was granted his American Citizenship sometime before Independence was given to the Philippines in July of 1946. He applied for and was given commission with the Army of the United States after passing through rigid examinations. While ourselves, we were not as plucky as the go-getter.

Ben and us had to meet sometime afterwards, whether we liked it or not, despite the differences in our respective callings. We bungled into each other again at Okinawa in 1947. We learned that he was stationed there with the 44th Infantry Regiment of the Philippine Scouts. 'Twas a small world, we thought. From then up to 1948, we used to see each other whenever my ship would dock at Naha Har-

(Continued on page 28)

Caroliniana

(Continued from page 2)

bor, Okinawa. In our reunions then, I found out how deeply he loves San Carlos. He was always in contact with Carolinians and inquiring for developments at USC. Johnny Mercader who sometime during that period was editor of *The Carolinian* was his regular correspondent. Ben wangled a mealy poem out of us which he sent to editor Johnny Mercader who had it printed as *Ode to My Alma Mater* in one of the 1948 issues of *The Carolinian*. We were outside of the Philippines, and we thought then that we could never be back again at USC.

By the early part of 1949, we had to quit our stint with the USATS as Chief Radio Operator, so that from that time on, we thought we could not see Ben anymore, for we went home to Cebu ostensibly to resume our very-much-delayed studies. And we thought we won't hear from Ben anymore and his usual musings about San Carlos, for he was steady with his doughboys at Okinawa. But through Filo, his brother, who was by that time a law undergraduate at San Carlos when we re-enrolled, we kept posted on the goings-on of Ben, the go-getter and the charmer.

It was Filo who told us that Ben, after getting tired of the biting winds of barren Okinawa, asked to be discharged from the U. S. Army at the "zone of the interior". He got what he wanted. From a separation center in the United States, he proceeded to look for Dr. Wallingsford, his maternal grandfather who is living in Missouri. The reunion must have been tear-filling.

And Ben did not waste time loafing around in a country new to his eyes and perspectives. He availed himself of the G-I Bill of Rights and tried to resume his Medicine Course at a college in Missouri. But he was human too; and although he was quite absorbed with his medical books (for that time, Ben already meant business), he was only but human in looking around making friends. Social creature that Ben is, he could not help but be popular with his classmates and neighbors. It did not take him long to fix his eyes on a pretty Missourian coed. He was betrothed to her before long.

But then, at the eve of his wedding, he received Army Orders to report at once to an Army Center, thus leaving everything again behind. In camp, they were geared to move at any moment's notice, for somewhere. When the Army Transport which took them aboard was already churning the broad waters of the Pacific, that was only then that he knew they were proceeding to Korea and its battlefields.

Hawaii, Wake, Midway, Japan, and finally, Korea and fight! The rest of what he went through will consume pages. But anyway, we cannot tell it ourselves even if we want to. For gregarious and showy as Ben was in the past, he did not give us any inkling of whatever deeds he performed in combat. The U. S. Army must have ingrained in him indelible lessons in secrecy discipline, even if he could already have told about his doings without violating regulations. Or he just did not have a chance at all to reveal to us any of his doings below the 38th parallel due to the limited time he had with us when last we saw him.

He arrived Cebu City on a Wednesday and had to leave the following Sunday. But we were able to bring him

The Roving Eye

(Continued from page 3)

even condemn the Church's stand as something that smacks of dictatorship. Since when has it become undemocratic for a majority to insist upon its constitutional rights?

* * * * *

A certain LeRoy of the CENTRAL ECHO (Central Philippine College, Iloilo City) campus newspaper treats of the fiesta evil in the Menckeness manner. *There is no country so bedeviled by fiestas as ours is. The idea is to have a big splurge today and starve tomorrow. We, Filipinos, by sheer force of habit induced by centuries of pernicious Iberian influence, fiesta-away our time and substance and fool ourselves that we are a happy people.*

We're not digging up any bone of contention with LeRoy but, if we may say so, fiestas also have their merits. Take, for instance, their spiritual values. What are fiestas primarily held for? To honor patron saints. How about the biggest of 'em all — the Philippines' International Fair? Here is a very effective means of selling our country to foreigners. Believe us, it's going to have far-reaching results in boosting our foreign commerce and tourist trade. True, making the rounds of the Fair sure burns a hole in your pocket. But let it burn. It's worth it anyhow.

As a matter of fact, we are now right in the heart of the World Fair... our Roving Eye feasting on the many eye-filling exhibits displayed in the various pavilions and booths... to mention nothing of the wimmin! Ah... the Eye is a sucker for a better face and an hour-glass figure. But before we continue gabbing, we just hate mixing pleasure with work. Tsk, tsks, tsks.... So, g'bye now.

around for a look-see on the sights of present-day San Carlos and the evolution it went through from the time he left it in 1941. Impressed, he was, and happy to be under the roof of his Alma Mater again. He thought everything physical in San Carlos has changed. But then he met Dr. Protasio Solon, an old friend, on the corridors; and with the most cordial handshakes he took and the open smiles he was offered by nearly everybody, whether acquaintance or non-acquaintance, while he with his flashy-uniform was walking with us through the corridors and lobbies new to him, he knew inside of him that he was "home" again.

We introduced him to the Rev. Fr. Carda, USC Secretary General, who must have marveled at the enthusiasm of a former student absent for about a dozen years, but still feeling that San Carlos is still his "old home", even if that alumnus knows that by fate and circumstance of his calling, he won't be able to go back to it again, ever.

And with Ben gone, we can't help but emote that wonderful truth lodging in every Carolinian heart: "Once a Carolinian, always a Carolinian."