

WB Sotero Escandor, Sr., PM

As we celebrate this year, 1967, the GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY of Bulusan Lodge No. 38, we pause to recall its colorful history, and pay high tribute to the brethren who conceived its organization and guided its destiny, especially during its dark and critical days. Like all others, which have gone through a long life of existence as this, the Lodge has experienced momentous events — sometimes glorious, sometimes gloomy — as will be seen in the following narration of its brief history.

Planning and organization on board a steamship. The later part of the year 1916, signaled the birth of BULUSAN Lodge No. 38. From scanty personal records made available by surviving old-time original members of the Lodge, pieced together, and the valuable information preserved in their retentive memories, it appears that sometime in the later part of 1916, a handful of brethren in Sorsogon province, most of them transients, under the dynamic leadership of the late WB Aurelio Diokno, held its organizational meetings on board the SS BATANGUEÑO at the port of Sorsogon. The SS BATANGUEÑO was then plying between Manila and Sorsogon under the command of WB Diokno, then Captain of the ship. Plans were laid out, and after several meetings, a name derived from the famous Bulusan volcano was adopted, a petition to constitute the Lodge was prepared and submitted to the MW Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands, which was given due course.

The Charter. In February 1917, permanent charter was issued under the seal of the MW Grand Lodge, signed by the MW Grand Master and

Grand Secretary. Bulusan Lodge No. 38 thus became regularly organized, naming therein the three principal officers of the Lodge to wit:

Worship Master . . . WB Aurelio Diokno
Senior Warden . . . Bro. Bernabe Flores
Junior Warden WW Bro. Pedro Paguia

The above-named officers have already obeyed their respective summonses from above, to continue their labours in the Celestial Lodge. Bro Alfonso Escudero, one of the surviving charter members today, was named Secretary-Treasurer.

Place of meetings. The Lodge was born without a home, so that the first problem of the brethren was to locate a place where they could hold their meetings. Initially, arrangements were made and permission was secured to meet in one of the rooms of the old Provincial High School building, wherein the Provincial Government of Sorsogon, including the Division Superintendent of schools held offices. Soon, enthusiasm was generated and membership increased. The place, within a short time, became inadequate to accommodate all its members, equipment, jewels, tools, records and paraphernalia. Through the efforts of WB Jose de Vera, the Lodge was transferred to a rented room at the upper portion of the Ynchausti building located at what is now the Magsaysay street opposite the present PC compound. The Lodge continued to meet at this new location up to the outbreak of World War II.

Lodge in distress, hopes dimmed. During the liberation of the Province

Turn to next page

of Sorsogon, in March 1945 however, the building housing Bulusan Lodge No. 38 was completely burned to ashes. All records, books, implements, jewels, paraphernalia, equipment and all other properties of the Lodge were lost in the fire which razed the whole town of Sorsogon. By this time, also, as a consequence of the war, some brothers died and transients and sojourners have returned to their respective provinces for safety. The few remaining brethren were helpless, without a Lodge, with nothing belonging to the Lodge in their possession with which to continue their labours. Soon some brethren became inactive, neglected to pay their dues and never showed up during meetings. The number of active members then, were barely enough to constitute a quorum during meetings, so that many a time the Lodge could not meet. Were it not for the self-sacrifice and true masonic spirit of a few brethren, who sacrificed and went out of their way to save the Lodge, there can be no doubt that Bulusan Lodge No. 38 would have died a natural death. The history of Bulusan Lodge No. 38, will be incomplete and meaningless to say the least, without mentioning therein the sacrifices and heroic efforts of the late WB Maximo Berina, with the able assistance of WB Sotero Escandor, Sr., the late WB Leon Fajardo, WB Emiliano Vida, the late WB Juan Lopez, the late Bro. Juan Escultura and the late Bro. Pio Labitag, all Past Masters, except the last two named, who were the true pillars of Bulusan Lodge No. 38, during the passing of a real crisis. This group was later on reinforced by another group of devoted brethren in the persons of WB Estanislao Gabarda, WB Rafael Ramos, WB Luis Duka and still later, by WB Lorenzo N Talata, also all

Past Masters, through whose concerted efforts, brought the Lodge to real active life once more — as enduring as the volcano from which the name of the Lodge was derived.

Days of progress. With the untiring, strong support, and morale boosting of the brethren from other Bicol Lodges — Camarines Norte No. 107, Mayon No. 61 and Isarog No. 33, Bulusan No. 38 once more rose "on its feet" in the year 1961, and well nigh in its days of real progress by the middle of 1962 to this date. It was in 1962 through 1963 when membership of the Lodge swelled to unprecedented number and it was during these "days of progress" when a Masonic Cemetery was inaugurated through the benevolence of WB and Mrs. Estanislao Gabarda, and the heirs of the late Bro. Pio Labitag who magnanimously donated the cemetery site to the Lodge. To them the brethren of Bulusan Lodge No. 38 will forever be grateful.

The Lodge suffered another calamity. At the time when the Lodge was teeming with activity, another calamitous fire hit Sorsogon on Aug. 18, 1966, which rendered several brethren homeless and destitute. The Lodge hall, housed at the Chinese School building was completely burned, including its implements, working tools, paraphernalia, jewels and other valuable properties. At this time, however, Lodge records were saved as they were kept in the house of the Secretary, WB Estanislao Gabarda. Lodge funds were also left intact as it was safely deposited in the bank. As this second calamity became known, the MW Grand Lodge of the Philippines and several symbolic Lodges and brethren came to the aid of Bulusan Lodge, in the form of cash donations as well as in kind, to replenish those that went with the

Turn to page 27

smoke. In no time the Lodge is completely rehabilitated and meets at present in one of the rooms of the Sorsogon School of Arts and Trades, through the kindness of WB Pedro F. Gomez, Superintendent of the said school and the present Worshipful Master (1968).

Roll of Past Masters. As we celebrate the GOLDEN ANIVERSARY of Bulusan Lodge No. 38, this year, we pay high tribute to the following brethren, who, once, twice and in some instances for several times, were duly elected to occupy that honored seat in the East:

- *1. WB Aurelio Diokno
- *2. WB Bernabe Flores
- *3. WB Pedro Paguia
- *4. WB Jose Figueroa
- *5. WB Anacleto Apostol
- *6. WB Jose de Vera
- *7. WB Leon Fajardo
- *8. WB Leon Olbes (Ung Puy)
- *9. WB Pedro Almonte
- *10. WB Maximo Berifia
- *11. WB Herminigildo Encinas
- *12. WB Patricio Guerrero
- 13. WB Pedro Tubianosa
- 14. WB Jose Medina
- 15. WB Emiliano Vida
- *16. WB Juan Lopez
- 17. WB Sotero Escandor Sr.
- 18. WB Rafael Ramos
- 19. WB Estanislao Gabarda
- 20. WB Luis Duka

- 21. WB Lorenzo N. Talatala
- 22. WB Jose Laguna
- 23. WB Pedro Sta. Ana
- 24. WB Azarias Jayco

* Deceased

For them (*) who have gone before us, "may we hear from HIM who sitteth as the JUDGE SUPREME, the welcome words well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the LORD." And, may they continue their labours in the Celestial Lodge above.

The year 1967 marks the arrival of Bulusan Lodge No. 38 at her Golden Milestone. Within the span of fifty years, the Lodge underwent varied experiences. The events from her birth aboard a ship, to the long crisis during and after the war, the transition period of 1960-1962 and many other significant events, form part of her colorful history, now woven in the looms of time. In calling back to mind the Summers and "Winters" of her existence, some brethren naturally tower high in steering our masonic ship of state through the rough and turbulent sea of public opinion and scrutiny. They all deserve our tribute who in one way or another contributed their share and shoulder in turning the fraternal wheel that the life and charter of Bulusan Lodge might be preserved in the highest standard of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

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GRAND LODGE NEWS . . . From page 24

The other lodges in Visayas and Mindanao which have not yet been visited by them will be visited next month. Among them are: Kanlaon Lodge No. 64 in Bacolod City; Mt. Kaladias Lodge No. 91, Dumaguete City; Dipolog Lodge No. 162, Zamboanga del Norte; Oroquieta Lodge

No. 154, Misamis Oriental; Mt. Apo Lodge No. 45, Zamboanga City; Juan S. Alano Lodge No. 137, Basilan City and Bud Daho Lodge No. 102 in Jolo. The Grand Lecturers hope to finish their visitations to these lodges before the year ends. Afterwards they will visit the lodges north of Manila and the Bicol District. △