

I Went with the President

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On the night of October 29, 1954 I received a note from the Director of Forestry that I was to go with the President the next morning and that I should contact Malacañang. At 9:30 p.m. I called up the officer of the day to find out where we were going and how long we would be away. I was informed that he did not know but I must be at the Army airport before 11:00 next morning.

Much has been said about President Ramon Magsaysay since he assumed the presidency a little over a year ago. While a good many praise him, there are others that criticize him. Perhaps one can say that hundreds of kilometers of words in print have been written in praise of him. On the other hand there were also attempts by some unscrupulous persons during his early days as President to "deglamorize" him. In fact a very systematic "smear campaign" had actually been started against the President, but it fizzled out in no time at all. There is no use denying the fact that the President's popularity with the masses and the people's abiding faith in him is so great that one often wonders at his magic spell over the masses.

This short article of mine is written simply to report some observations I made when I went with him on a field trip to Basud, Camarines Norte, one sunny day in late October, last year. I have had the opportunity to observe at close range in that trip how the President makes on the spot decisions of which he is now well-known.

We left Nichols Air Base in Baclaran at about 11:20 that morning. With us on the

presidential plane, besides the President himself, were Agriculture Undersecretary Jaime Ferrer, Defense Undersecretary Jose Crisol, Director of Lands Zoilo Castrillo, Generals Vargas, Balao, Arellano, and Cruz. I learned from these Generals that they were just told to accompany the President during the ceremonies at Fort McKinley a few minutes earlier. I was representing Director Felipe R. Amos of the Bureau of Forestry.

After the takeoff, the President exchanged pleasantries and jokes with the members of the party. Then he lay down on a cot for rest and relaxation. He did the same thing after our takeoff from Daet. I understand that this is the way the President relaxes from the heavy duties of his position and thus keep his perfect health.

After about one hour in the air our plane circled the airport in Daet, Camarines Norte. I expected a big delegation to meet us at the airport as did other government officials when they made field inspection trips to the provinces. I can still remember a former president, who, when he came back to Manila after a pleasure trip to the Visayas and Mindanao, was met by thousands at the pier. There were several brass bands playing. Government employees were excused from their offices to meet the arriving President and his party. I pictured the same thing in my mind. There would be bands playing as we stepped down the plane. Beautiful, young ladies would place leis and garlands around our necks. But to my surprise there was nobody to meet us, not even one local or provincial official, at the airport.

Later I learned that our trip was unannounced.

From the airport in Daet we motored to the North Camarines Norte logged-over area in Basud where members of the "Samahan Magsasaka" were apparently waiting for us. The crowd cheered the President lustily.

Instead of the usual practice of somebody making an introductory speech before the President speaks it was President Magsaysay who spoke first in that meeting. He then introduced to the crowd everyone of us in his party, one by one. The President emphasized to these simple farmer folks that he is bringing the government to the people. He told them that they need not go to Manila to air their grievances because they will only incur expenses or may be victims of pickpockets.

One thing I noticed about the President was his sincerity in his speech. He spoke as if he had known these people all along, as if he were speaking to his friends and relatives he had not seen for a long, long time. The people on the other hand looked upon him not with awe and reverence but as one like them, in fact, one of them. Turning to me he said that it was the promise of the administration to release those lands these people are occupying. Then turning to Director Castrillo he told him that the Bureau of Lands should look after the subdivision of about 2,000 hectares which the petitioners were asking. A few minutes later Governor Panotes and Congressman Pajarillo came to join our party.

When we started to leave on our return trip to the Daet airport, President Magsaysay came back walking followed by the crowd. He called the people once more and told them in a trembling voice that he was informed that somebody was collecting money from the farmers. The man, he said, claimed to be an agent of Malacañang, or someone close to his office. He told the people that he had authorized nobody to speak for him, much less to collect any

amount for him. "The people can go direct to me if they have something to ask," he said. He asked the crowd not to be afraid to tell him if they know of such person. A man by the name of Salvador Lopez spoke and denounced to him the president of the "Samahan Magsasaka," Leonardo de Vega, for alleged racketeering and the bad practice of allotting choice lots to his friends and favorites. The President promised to do something and ordered the provincial commander to investigate the matter and to see that no harm will happen to the fellow who had the courage to denounce the president of the association. Incidentally, I learned later that our trip was made through the request of Mr. Jeremias Montemayor, the president of the "National Federation of Free Farmers" of which the "Samahan Magsasaka" is a branch in Daet.

In spite of the invitation of the petitioners to serve lunch for our party, the President declined because he does not like poor people to spend money which they badly needed for the sustenance of their families. This is a trait which should be emulated by all government officials who make inspection trips to the provinces.

We started the return trip to Daet airport at about 2:00 o'clock. The reporters with me and Director Castrillo in the car were speculating that we would probably have a sumptuous lunch in the municipality of Daet. To our surprise, the car of the President proceeded to the airport. There, he ordered a can of biscuits and some soft drinks from the airplane. A few minutes later, bananas, sardines and bread arrived apparently bought by the aides upon the order of the President. We did not have either spoons or forks. Seeing the President eat with his hands, we did likewise.

We started our return journey at about 3 p.m. arriving at Manila past 4 o'clock. Before we parted Governor Panotes and Congressman Pajarillo asked me through the President to start right away the land clas-

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sification along the Calauag-Lobo national highway. I told him that we already had a party doing the work in that region.

Upon our landing, the President asked if we had any transportation. Upon being informed that we had none as we did not know the time of our return, he asked Col. Molina of the air force to provide us with a car which conducted Undersecretary Ferrer and Director Castrillo to their offices and Congressman Pajarillo and myself to our respective homes. Thus ended a very memorable day for me — a day with the President.

THE TREES . . .

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up to 500 years. And while some oaks live up to 1,500 years, junifers are able to reach 2,000 years. Some of the giant sequoias are even believed to be about 4,000 years. I think we should take care of young trees as we would our babies and treat old trees as we would respect our grandparents.

Because some trees live very much longer than the longest life span of a man (Adam lived up to 900 years old only perhaps), trees have become landmarks and memorials and have carried their associations with great persons from one generation to another. According to statistics, there are trees still living that were planted by the first President of the United States States (George Washington).

And so as we initiate our "Arbor Week" observance this July 24-30, 1955, we hope that we may become as tree-conscious as the Americans are. We hope too that the Magsaysay tree, which the President will personally plant, will live for many generations to come just like the Washington trees.

Any one can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power, and is not easy.

—Aristotle

FEASIBILITY OF . . .

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should be freed to the greatest possible extent from sub-professional work, and devote the maximum amount of time to the determination of the optimum cutting system for all areas. Sub-professional personnel should be trained and used to handle the sub-professional work.

4. In areas where selective logging is required, concessionaires must use diesel yarders with not more than 150 h.p. each.

COMPOSITE STAND TABLE
Area Logged in 1951
(Dipterocarps per Hectare)

| Diameter Class | April 1952 | April 1953 |
|----------------|------------|------------|
| (Inches) | | |
| 2 | 0 | 1.5 (1.5) |
| 3 | 7.7 (1.5) | 6.2 |
| 4 | 12.3 | 9.2 |
| 5 | 4.6 | 6.2 (3.0) |
| 6 | 7.7 | 7.7 (1.5) |
| 7 | 4.6 | 4.6 (1.5) |
| 8 | 16.9 | 13.8 (1.5) |
| 9 | 9.2 (1.5) | 9.2 (1.5) |
| 10 | 9.2 (1.5) | 7.7 (3.0) |
| 11 | 3.0 | 3.0 (3.0) |
| 12 | 9.2 | 9.2 (3.0) |
| 13 | 9.2 | 9.2 (3.0) |
| 14 | 3.0 | 4.6 (3.0) |
| 15 | 6.2 (1.5) | 4.6 (1.5) |
| 16 | 9.2 | 7.7 (1.5) |
| 17 | 4.6 | 6.2 (3.0) |
| 18 | 6.2 | 7.7 (1.5) |
| 19 | 4.6 | 3.0 |
| 20 | 9.2 | 7.7 (1.5) |
| 21 | 0 | 1.5 (1.5) |
| 22 | 7.7 | 6.2 (1.5)* |
| 23 | 1.5 | 3.0 (3.0) |
| 24 | 3.0 | 4.6 (1.5) |
| 25 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 26 | 3.0 | 1.5 |
| 27 | 3.0 | 4.6 (1.5) |
| 28 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| 30 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 41 | 1.5 | 0 |
| 42 | 0 | 1.5 (1.5) |

* Increased two classes.

LEARN TO LAUGH

A good laugh is better than medicine. Attend to your own business; few people can do that well. Say kind things; nobody ever resents them. Avoid hasty remarks; they cause much of the world's trouble. Stop grumbling; see some good in the world and keep the bad to yourself. Hide aches with a smile; nobody is much interested anyway. Learn to laugh; it pays.