

THE EXE- CU- TION



by ROGELIO ALFEREZ



ELEVEN IN THE MORNING, July 17
23 hours before the execution

ONCE MORE, like a still and empty hall visited rarely by a wind, Death Row fell silent. One could not believe that for a minute or two it had a touch of life. Gone was the sight of guards escorting Luis back to his cell. One could no longer hear the sound their heels made on the cement floor, nor the rattle of keys and the clang of bolts as they opened the steel-barred door nor the final, suppressive swing of the cell door as they closed it again. Even the echo of the guards' steps retreating down the hall had died out. Nothing but quiet, a quiet which hid a voiceless turmoil.

In his cell, Luis, with a long, blank look stared at the harsh near-noon light that streaked through the window bars before him. It looked at first the same as that hot glare his eyes had long been used to in his stay there. At his protracted gaze, however, the light seemed to glow a little more bright and scorching with each breath he took. He noticed now that he was breathing quickly, rapidly and couldn't help himself. Something was pressing on him, something seemed to pin him to the cold, steel bars he was leaning on. It was coming. It was certain. It was approaching with the stealth of a preying leopard, nimble but ready to spring upon him like a swift, sharp lightning swishing invisibly in the air. The light glared more and Luis gasped before it.

With an effort, he turned from the light. A calendar hung on the left wall. To it he swerved. He could see the columns of dates, the upper two already crossed out and at the end of the crosses a date encircled red. What day was it? As if curious, Luis approached. The eighteenth of July. Tomorrow! A surge of images, trapped in the whirlpool of his mind by a riot of feelings, broke over him again. The world of past and present floated around him crazily disjointed. He could see the days of hiding, of flight; the clutch of arrest; the labyrinthine cross-examination and his cold evasions; the harsh unfolding of his deed; the waiting of

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verdict, the sentence, the ignominy; he relived for a moment the long, tired days in jail. The pleas for a reprieve. The bribes attempted. The whole process had been arduous and as each failure reach him (as another had a half hour ago) a part had been cancelled on his shortening lease on life. And still morning came the now disgusting phrase: "They are still following it up."

Luis slumped on his bed. Dinner would come in a few minutes. But he would not eat. Food and drink would remind him cruelly that the body he fed with life would soon die in the "chair". No, he had no appetite.

SIX IN THE EVENING of the same day; 16 hours before the execution

He opened his eyes to a darkening cell. He had slept. For how long? It was best to forget time. It was best to impress himself that the world was still and never moved; he would not think of any sequence, any change of long into short. Luis got up and looked out of the window. The sun was setting now, soft and slow. Over the rooftops he could see the last traces of day and above, thin clouds making way for the golden, orange-turning sun.

Peaceful, that's what it was. Serene and smooth. He would like to die like that, unhindered, unforced. But he knew he would not. It would be swift, his death, with only a moment's violence. It would not be smooth as the sunset, violent and not long drawn out as the brute blows he had dealt to his victim.

It will be night soon, Luis thought with a little wry sigh.

EIGHT IN THE MORNING, July 18 2 hours before the execution

For the last three hours he had been awake, lying on his cot pressed down by a burdensome silence. He had watched with faint curiosity the first morning light struggling through the barred window into his cell. He rubbed his eyes with the back of a hand, and jerk-

ed himself up with an effort. There was a persistent pain in his loins. He put a hand on his thigh and felt the coarse texture of his pants. He thought, "I have killed a man... have taken a life... and now I must pay for it." His thoughts moved forward with a certain alertness that seemed to fill up the room at once, a room that was made for a minimum of physical activity.

For his last meal he had only a cup of black coffee, which he took without cream or sugar. The bitter taste still stuck to his mouth. He thought impulsively: "What is the use of stuffing oneself with food when in a little while they will snuff out his life forever?" Forever. There would not even be enough time for the food to be assimilated into his spongy body. No time. They had condemned him, had relegated his body to perdition: face, hands, torso, nails, and the rest of him. The idea that it was a sort of a ritual struck him. Everything was plain enough: his clean-shaven pate, the drab uniform, and the last meal which he had generously asked his jailer to share. As though he were the host. As though he were free, were still in his own house.

"What time is it?" Luis asked.

The jailer looked at his watch and said without a trace of emotion: "Eight twenty." He placed his hands on the bars of the cell, and he looked questioningly at Luis. "Would you like to play chess again?"

"Not now!"

The man shrugged his shoulders and went back to his chair.

Luis covered his eyes with the palms of his hands with a feeling of nausea. And he reflected with remorse: "Not now! It's a farce—I still believe that there is another time for us to play chess. The reprieve must come. There is still time. But how much time? Eight twenty. Only one hour and forty minutes left in my whole life. At ten this morning my life will end, and it will end. Then they will cart my body to a room which I have never seen and which I shall

never see. They will cover me up with a sheet of white cloth, and they will be satisfied.

"Tomorrow? Tomorrow the people outside this place will live their lives. For them nothing is going to change. A little over an hour from now, everything is going to be different only for me. I have killed a man. My whole life... they have made a judgment on my whole life. There is going to be no tomorrow.

"I can see them leading me to that room, which they always keep under lock with a key. But today they have opened it, they have made sure that nothing will go wrong. They will see to it that at exactly ten something will pass through me and my whole body with the sting of a whip. Faces will be leering at me. They want to see how a man dies, but they will not change their place with me.

"Afterwards the prison doctor will feel my pulse, then he will look up solemnly at those around him and say: 'He is dead.' Just that. And everything will be over. And of course, they will put the story in the newspapers. They will talk about it for a day or two. I can see everything happening: I have seen it over and over in my mind: my own death. But there is still time...."

The door opened noisily. The priest sat down beside him and said: "Did you sleep last night, my son?" He took hold of Luis' hand, and his words bore a sad and pleading tone. "You must make your peace with Him!"

Luis turned around and, without saying a word, stared at the pink face of the priest.

THE TIME of the execution

Now it was happening again, but for the last time.

He passed through the long narrow hall that led into a chamber where strange faces for the last half hour had been waiting patiently for him to appear. Faces with blank looks which knew what was going to happen at exactly ten

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The USC Warriors' LINE-UP

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THE LINE-UP:

DIONISIO JAKOSALEM —

Captain — passboard hookshot specialty.

CHRISTOPHER LOCK —

The "mighty mite" of the Warriors: shoot-igest forward of them all; his left-handed jumpshot and occasional lay-up shots are steady.

ANSELMO BRIONES —

Interscholastic player; a deadly manipulator under the shaded area, an ex-Diamond Gloves beware.

ERNESTO MORALES —

In spite of his size he is the top recovery man in the scuffles from under fire.

OCABA —

A former mainstay of the Cebu Technical School. When playing he is as cool as a cucumber.

CABREROS —

A ballhandler who can soce from outside. (A magnificent stint from CTS)

MAGLASANG —

The plastic man. He should learn more variety of shots.

ESTENZO —

A little poundage in his frame may put him in the limelight two years hence.

SOLON —

A playmaker too cool on a fast game.

REYNES —

A jumpshot artist. A valuable man against a zone formation.

REYES —

Know-how on pivot shots may place him on the level of Roehl Naturata of UAAP fame.

BARRIA —

A fighting heart and more playing time is what he needs. How about giving him a chance, Coach?

VALER —

A promising deadly shooter but needs a know-how in meeting a proper distribution of ball.

This, in a capsule, is a short pace of the Warriors' formation this year. Unless "they weep too much overspilled milk, they would wind up in meeting places." Whether they will eventually succeed is still a subject for conjectures. Good luck, Boys!

THE EXECUTION

(Continued from page 10)

o'clock; eyes that from time to time glanced at watches and at the clock on the wall on the death chamber. Everything was happening as planned. No reprieve. God, how does it feel to be without hope?

Without hope. The walls moved towards him, wavering before him. His body froze, his legs hesitated to take another step: as though they already knew their future. The guards held his shoulders; their faces were blank. How many times had they escorted condemned criminals through this hall into the death chamber? Tomorrow, they will talk about it to their wives or friends.

Blank looks. People moving about carefully, as though afraid of breaking something. The priest was there; he looked at him kindly and put his hand on his shoulder. He whispered something. He had an ashen look on his face. How many times had he seen death but had never experienced it himself?

Now they strapped him to the huge iron chair. Cold. "I am cold," he thought. The doctor felt his pulse; the priest stood beside him. Now they left him alone. Faces were staring at him; they were thinking: "He is not going to outlast this moment." Someone looked at his watch, looked at the man at the electric switch. Luis' vision began to blur, a fog gathered in his mind. An ominous silence, except for the ticking of the clock on the wall and the undefined, unheard sound of running watches spelling out the passing of time, hovered in the room.

The Phone rang. The Director of Prisons took it up and listened in. At last he looked around and said: "Gentlemen, there is a reprieve," and, turning to the two
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Deterioration (Continued from page 16)

age every year but more. The choice seems to be between "half-bake" students and "illiterates". Common sense picks the former.

The third cause is the deterioration of language models. Before the war, many Filipino teachers learned their English at least partly from American models. Since the last of the noble Thomases has long since left our shores, to content ourselves with our own models was the only re-

course. But an imitator like a carbon copy is never quite as good as his model, his followers are less precise than he, and so on down the line unless something big is done to halt the inevitable decline. Nothing big has been done so far and now we face the expected decline.

Is it any small wonder, then, why our college students consider reading or writing in English an uphill climb?

Letters to the Editors

(Editor's note: All letters published in this column are quoted verbatim.)

University of San Carlos
Cebu City
August 31, 1961



J. CAÑIZARES

Mr. Rey Yap
Editor, The Carolinian
University of San Carlos

Sir:

This is in connection with the first issue of the university publication, THE CAROLINIAN. All other things being equal, the issue is a superb one, the theme having been Art and its importance to the individual person. The articles were just enlightening; the photography was a departure from the record photographs put out before. This, Sir, is my honest opinion of the work the editorial staff this year has done.

Accept, therefore, my heartfelt congratulations! More power to you and the rest of the members.

Sincerely,
(Sgd.) JAIME CAÑIZARES

University of San Carlos
Cebu City
August 29, 1961

Dear Mr. Yap,

Last 25th of August, (Friday) I was able to glance at your new publication of the U.S.C. school organ which is of course the "Carolinian". Wow! It's really a unique school organ. Imagine with such a unique writings especially about your "Photographic Sensibility". But I was a little bit embarrassed (in my mind only) when my Latin teacher criticized about the latest publication of the Carolinian. He told us that some of the writings are not original, i.e. the writings are mostly quoted from those different authors.

You know, I was able to secure a school organ from U.S.P. which is "The Southern Scholar". I found out that most of the writings are original, even the writings of Mr. Graciano T. Sing, (staff editor) in the editorial page. Same opinion goes also to Mr. Russo C. Fernan (editor-in-chief of the official school organ in Colegio de San Jose—Recoletos).

I found out that most of the writings of these people especially in the editorial page, are so simple compared with your writings. If I were to judge, a first year college student will surely find a difficulty in reading about your writings. Maybe it will take him three (3) hours to understand the thought of your writings by looking every word (I mean unique words) in the dictionary.

Mr. Yap, I did not mean to touch your ego, for this is just an opinion. How about putting a "Just an Opinion" corner in your next publication?

Yours truly,
(Sgd.) ROSELDO COLETO
Pre-Med. III

Office of the Rector
August 25, 1961

Reverend James Skerry, S.V.D.
University of San Carlos
Cebu City, Philippines

Dear Father Skerry,

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Rey Yap, Editor, and the editorial staff for the fine work you did on the first issue of the CAROLINIAN.

Yours in Christ,
(Sgd.) Very Rev. HAROLD W. RIGNEY, S.V.D.
Rector

Warriors Enter . . .

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In the skirmish between the Warriors and the Cobras at the UV Gullas Gymnasium held last August 27, the Cobras consigned the Warriors to the gutters, 87-82.

Scores in the first canto seasawed when Cobras and Warriors equalled fire with fire before 2,000 basketball spectators. The unpredictable Warriors spit-fired by Ocaba, Reynes, Lock, Morales and Solon splurged separate tallying marks for a Warrior lead five minutes before the first half.

A fumble caused by Beb Cabreros of the Warriors became the turning point of the game and gave the Cobras the possession of the ball with a towering Cobra player making two after a dazzling loop below the basket to give the Warriors a five-point deficit at whistle time.

Warriors Qualify For The Final Round

Although the Warriors were held at bay in their skirmish against the Cobras, they had already qualified in the final round before this rumble. Their loss to CTS was adjudged a no-count game since the Redshirts fielded three ineligible players. That gave them a three-win-one-loss standing in the loop, and tying URI and SWU who had similar records. The qualifier came in the Warriors' topping the tie through the quotient system.

Carolinians have high hopes for the formidable Warriors who were once a bunch of undisciplined rookies will wrest the CCAA crown from the ancient and seasoned UV Green Lancers. So far, minus Warrior veterans like Macoy, Pizarra, Palmares, Rogado, Cañizares, Galdo, the Warriors are still making good-hopping, dribbling and shooting with craft and cunning that is worthy of our praise.

Execution

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guards beside him, added, "Untie the prisoner please."

The guards started to unstrap Luis. Then one stalked apprehensively to the prison doctor and whispered, "Something is wrong! I think he has fainted." The doctor moved quietly and very quickly. He bent down and put his stethoscope to the chest of the prisoner, and for a full minute he examined him. Then he raised his face, took a deep breath, and announced complacently in a voice big enough for those in the chamber to hear:

"The prisoner has died of heart attack."

— the end —

THE CAROLINIAN