

The Forgotten Entry

By Romeo P. Banias

LEMERY, our small town, literally hummed with activity that particular day in 1956. A municipal athletic meet, under the auspices of the local public schools, was in progress. It was our immediate purpose to look into the athletic potentialities of the school children and pick out the best bets to represent our municipality in the forthcoming dual meet at Sara. (Sara and Lemery comprise a school district.)

The whole morning and the greater part of the afternoon was devoted to the purely physical aspect of the meet — the ball games and the track and field events. To climax the festive occasion, a literary-musical contest was held later in the afternoon and into the evening. The latter activity, non-athletic in the strict sense of the term, has nonetheless become an integral component of athletic meets by strength of tradition. No meet would seem complete without the contests in declamation, both English and Filipino Language, recitation in the vernacular, and song.

I was, incidentally, named one-man committee to shape up the literary-musical program into its final form. Days previous to the actual holding of the meet, I requested my fellow-teachers to submit their entries to the contests, together with all data pertinent thereto. From these, I worked out the tentative draft of the program. To determine the sequence of numbers in each set of the contest, lots were drawn. We did this in the interest of fair play. For it seems to be the consensus, mistakenly or not, that the first participant in any contest is relatively at a slight disadvantage, for reasons which are obvious.

Since the program was also to carry the names of the teachers who were to compose the different boards of judges for the different contests, our principal, who himself was bogged down by many other matters, told me to go ahead and manage the selection. I consulted a number of teachers on the matter. We decided on the idea to equate each line-up as much as possible, such that the central school and the barrio schools would be proportionately represented. We even entered the factor of sex into the equation, believing that men and women are inclined to look into a thing from different perspectives. We left the selection of the chief judge to the board, to

be done immediately at the start of the program. Ours was a sincere effort to minimize, if not eliminate, the elements of bias and prejudice in the final choice of winners.

The seeming dearth of a qualified male teacher in music resulted in my inclusion in the board of judges for the song contest. (The rest of the judges were women.) In college, it was my misfortune to have been given a minor role in an operetta. As a result, I was assigned to teach Music almost exclusively during our student-teaching term. (The other students in our segregated, wholly male class preferred not to have anything to do with Music, if it could be helped.) This, and the fact that I was able to wheedle a flat 1 rating from a kindly music instructor in an advanced music course during the previous vacation, clinched my "appointment," despite the seemingly unethical aspect of my having a hand in the selection of judges.

When everything was settled, I personally cut the stencil for the program and thereupon had it mimeographed.

That afternoon of the meet, we worked frenziedly to transform the front corridor of the central school building into a stage. We effected this through the simple expedient of sprucing the walls up with colored paper cut-outs, fern leaves, and flowers. We hired a person to install a sound and light system.

Long before the start of the program, the corridor-turned-stage already teemed with contestants. Almost each teacher in the municipality trained a contestant. And there having been no previous elimination, you can just imagine the number of contestants. We somehow managed to squeeze them into the seats which lined the whole length of the stage at the back. They were a motley group, mostly youngsters in the lower grades, dressed in their gaudiest for the occasion. They squirmed and giggled impatiently in their seats until the program began. Studying the mimeographed program, I saw that there were in all seventeen entries for the song contest.

To provide variety, the numbers in each set of contest were interspersed with the numbers in the other sets, that is, an English declamation was followed by a song, and so forth. This required a little more concentration on the judges' part. We have to appraise each rendition of an entry as objectively as we can in consonance with the criteria provided for, for we were inclined to lose our sense of comparison after the lapse of several numbers.

The song contest terminated a little ahead of the other sets. We made final adjustments in the points in our respective rating sheets, and made our individual rankings of the contestants. We then compared notes. Disregarding the percentile rating of each contestant, we added up the numerical figures representing each contestant's rank in each different

rating sheet. We picked out the winners, giving first place to the contestant getting the lowest numerical sum, and so forth. (This is highly accurate, and it does away with the subjectivity involved where the individual ratings are taken into account.) There-with we accomplished the decision sheet, signing our names below.

That finished our work. Reclining on our seats, we watched the rest of the show at our leisure.

On stage, a declaimer was going through the imaginary act of plugging a leak in the dike with a mere arm, hoarsely calling for help. My eyes wandered among the tired and sleepy faces of the contestants. I only shot a passing glance at the familiar figure of a boy, a pupil of mine, who was impatiently squirming in his seat. All of a sudden something flashed in my mind, causing my eyes to jerk back, as if pushed by a spring, to the boy.

The boy was Warlito, my own contestant in the song contest. He was the best bet of the lot. He romped off easily with the top prize in the previous year's song contest. His winning first place in the current song contest was a conceded matter. It was all in the bag, in a manner of speaking.

What unnerved me was the fact that Warlito had not yet rendered his number. And we have already finalized our decision as to the winners. I turned to the mimeographed program and scanned the pages furiously. Warlito's name was nowhere to be found there. Then it dawned on me. In my frenzy of framing the program, I all but remembered to include the name of my own contestant in the entries for the song contest!

There was nothing I could do anymore. Officially, the song contest was already concluded. I could not raise the issue of the inadvertent non-inclusion of Warlito's name in the program. It might boomerang to my utter carelessness.

If anybody was at fault, it was I. I personally framed, finalized, and cut the stencil for the program.

"What's the matter?" a fellow judge inquired. "Are you sick?"

"I forgot to include Warlito in the program," I answered curtly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. She turned her eyes to the boy on the stage. The other judge followed. Warlito was watching the emcee who was approaching the microphone. He was obviously still waiting for his number to be called.

"What shall we do?" my fellow-judge asked.

"What shall we do?" I tossed the question back. "We can't start the contest all over again, can we?"

"But he must yet be waiting for his turn to sing."

That brought me back to my senses. I tore out the blank portion of a used sheet and hurriedly scribbled a note to the emcee. It read: "Please announce a special number while the other board of judges are deliberating on their decisions. Call on Warlito, last year's winner in the song contest, to render a vocal solo."

So it was that Warlito's part constituted the finale of the show. He sang "Sol Mio" in his distinct, enrapturing voice—soft, pliant, and almost feminine, as yet unaffected by adolescence. The applause that followed when he finished was spontaneous. If the audience's reaction was any gauge at all of the song's quality, then Warlito's was the best that evening. He would have easily deserved the top prize again.

Throughout that applause, I seemed to have been the only one unaffected. I sat there unmoving and morose, like a school child who has just been chided in front of his fellows. For then in my mind, I was busy thinking out a plausible reason to tell Warlito, short of an outright lie.

Collection of Maxims on Education

By Victor C. Malolot

1. The great end of education is to discipline rather than to furnish the mind, to train it to the use of its own powers, rather than fill it with the accumulations of others.—Tyron Edwards.
2. The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think than what to think—rather to improve our minds so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men.—Beattie.
3. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave.—Ruskin.
4. Educate your children to self-control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies subject to an upright and reasoning will, and you have done much to abolish misery from their future lives and crimes from society. — Daniel Webster.