

# FROM GARBAGE TO FERTILIZER

Enterprising KC members will put up factory to  
manufacture fertilizer from garbage

By I. V. TOLENTINO



Architect Panlilio

**E**VEN a small child will tell you that no one can make "something out of nothing." Unless, of course, that one is God. But when a newly formed corporation called the Malayan Biochemical, Incorporated begins operations in the near future, that is the very thing that it will practically do, namely, produce "something out of nothing."

Upon the approval of its dollar allocation, the Malayan Biochemical, Inc. proposes to bring in machineries from Amsterdam which will produce compost fertilizer out of worthless rubbish.

The men behind the new enterprise are all Knights of Columbus except one. Led by Pablo D. Panlilio, a well known architect, the incorporators are Benigno Toda, Ananias Diokno, Francisco Panlilio and Alfonso Panlilio, all members of the Order, and Dominador Tumang, a businessman.

The new enterprise was a brainstorm of architect Panlilio. And interestingly, it started brewing in his mind while he was doing "nothing."

After a hard stint of work designing the multi-million Veterans Memorial Hospital in Quezon City in 1952, the 45-year old youthful looking architect decided to take a breather. During the following weeks of loafing, he bought a lot of books and magazines to catch up on his reading. In one of the American magazines that he purchased he came across an article written

about how a city in the United States usefully disposed of its garbage by manufacturing it into organic fertilizer. Being a farm owner, Panlilio at once saw that such a project could be very beneficial in this agricultural country. Mentally, he noted down the article and read on.

During another reading session later on he read again another item on the same subject. The idea became more impressed in his mind, so that when he met another enterprising Knight of Columbus, Ananias Diokno, a few days afterwards, he brought up the subject. After some discussion, they became enthusiastic about the great possibilities of introducing the project here. Before long, the two were talking about the project to their friends who could help them to put up the necessary capital.

Panlilio looked up the magazine articles once more to find out the name of the company making the fertilizer machineries. The two wasted no time and wrote the company and the first step in the formation of the Malayan Biochemical, Inc. was taken.

The process involved in making fertilizer out of trash is not so complicated. The garbage is fed to a grinder and dumped into a vat. To speed up decomposition, bacteria is added to the waste. What usually takes nature a few months to decompose takes only ten days to reach the final stage of decomposition under the action of the bacteria.

Bacteria is also added to regulate the strength of the fertilizer.

The Malayan Biochemical, Inc. has already inked a contract with the Quezon City government for the rights to the garbage collected throughout the city. The city administration has agreed to deliver all the trash that its public services department will collect to the firm's plant in San Francisco del Monte. The fertilizer company, on the other hand, has pledged to shoulder some of the expenses in the collection of rubbish as soon as the enterprise proves to be a money-making venture.

"This will be a big step forward in sanitary garbage disposal for the city," says Panlilio. Presently Quezon City, like most municipal administrations, dumps its waste on a certain area to be burned. The dumping grounds naturally attract and breed hordes of flies. According to Panlilio, the dumping vats of their fertilizer plant will not attract flies because after the application of bacteria, the trash will develop a high temperature that will be too hot for the insect.

The far more important and principal boon that the new industry will produce is cheap fertilizer for the poor farmers. Because of the free raw materials, compost fertilizer can be sold at 50 per cent less than the price of chemical fertilizer, which is about the only kind available in the market now. This despite the fact that the soil requires twice the quantity of compost fertilizer than chemical fertilizer.

From compost fertilizer there is no danger of overfertilizing the soil and thus killing the plants as from chemical fertilizer, according to Panlilio. For this reason, the illiterate farmer who has become suspicious of chemical fertilizer as a result of his sad experience from over-application will greet the compost fertilizer with open arms. The farmer's fears will be further assuaged when he finds out that compost fertilizer is made from the familiar rubbish and animal waste which in a crude way he has been using for centuries to enrich his soil.

Considered a necessary and dollar-saving industry, the new enterprise is receiving assistance from the government in the form of an allocation of \$159,000, the cost of the machineries to be imported. The firm is capitalized at P600,000 and its factory is expected to produce 60 tons of fertilizer a day. This will fill only a small portion of the national demand, according to Panlilio.

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## FROM GARBAGE . . .

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It is not surprising that Panlilio has become much interested in such a project which will provide the small farmers with cheap fertilizer. A farm owner himself, the architect is one of the old-time directors and at present treasurer of the Columbian Farmers' Aid Association, the rural auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus. In between the demands of his profession (he is a government examiner for architecture), he engages in laudable rural amelioration work.

To demonstrate his rural interest, the architect from San Fernando, Pampanga recently did a little experiment in the backyard of his beautiful home in Quezon City. He planted a few rice plants. But instead of applying fertilizer on the soil and thus indiscriminately fertilizing both rice plants and weeds, he first soaked the seeds in fertilizer-diluted water. The result was vigorous rice plants. He has not yet succeeded in making the tenants of his farm follow the method. "I find the farmers suspicious of any new techniques," he says. But as with his other brainstorm, he hopes gradually to convince them of this one.

## ST. ANTHONY'S . . .

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Nobody dared mention anything about the new umbrella that was not even a week old with us when it was lost. Yet the three children looked expectant and so hopeful that they almost broke my heart in the disappointment that was inevitable as it did seem to me. Hopefully they would look up to the hat-rack where it had hung ready for any emergency.

And I muttered interiorly a complaint to the mother—long gone to her eternal rest—who taught them this sort of faith. I remembered then how she placed several pieces of candy before the little crucifix of Herman just after the boy had complained to his Lord for my forbidding him to indulge

in candies. He was barely two years old and he was complaining of a toothache.

"See, Daddy, what Jesus gave me?" he gloated. "I found them at the foot of the crucifix. I prayed for them."

I was stupefied with the quick answer of his Lord who could not have died on His cross for these few pieces of candy. I looked long and hard at the mother of the boy, who was smiling guiltily over the day's washing basin.

"I could not bear to see his prayer unanswered," she explained when the boy was out of hearing.

"And so you answered for God!"

"Well, He does need always an instrument to accomplish His will."

"And the pieces of candy were His will?"

"Yes, and don't forget that He's a most kind Father also! And my conscience doesn't prick me a whit, either!"

I went away, interiorly blazing. Women, I assured myself, they are simply impossible people. Impossible!

And so my children were brought up believing in daily miracles. What is worse: they were re-educating me in the dark and mysterious way of their impregnable faith.

THUS ONE EVENING, as we were all going to the supper table, Edwin cried:

"It's back! It's back, Daddy. St. Anthony's new umbrella! He's heard our prayer!"

Yes, there it was—the excursions umbrella, hanging securely from the hat-rack.

Again I was beaten!

The supper was forgotten for a while. The children gambolled and danced around in sheer joy. It was more the joy of having their prayer answered. With their faith they had moved that mountain of a St. Anthony! They were children of angelic innocence—children of simple faith.

And in my wondering, I will admit that there were tears of joy in my eyes, too—and of thanksgiving for God's having given me children from whom to learn and believe.

## CANNIBALS' VICTIM

A castaway from a wrecked ship was captured by cannibals. Each day, his arm was cut by a dagger and the natives of the island would drink his blood. Finally, one day, he called the king.

"You can kill and eat me if you want," he said, "but I'm getting sick and tired of being stuck for the drinks." (Illustrated Weekly)