

WAKES & LASTING FRIENDSHIP

Saturday was a day of reflection, then camaraderie and joy. The usual bunch of friends gathered together to honor and commemorate the life of one of their own, Jess Javelona, who had passed away May 7 this year. Both he and his wife Jessie are part of the UPSCA group of college friends from 50 plus years back. The venue was at Tigi and Nora Barcelona's house. As in similar events, there was a mass, and the officiating priest was Jody Magtoto, the Jesuit son of Ed and Josie Magtoto.



Fr Jody in the center, with red amice, starts the mass at the garden of the Barcelona residence.



He started his homily by stating that we are a unique group, with close ties to each other after so many years after having gotten to know each other in our youth; how we have kept up the friendship; how we enjoy each other's company. He then wove the theme into the life of the Lord.

Present in the gathering of over 30 people was the family of Jess: wife Jessie Quinto and one of their children JP & wife (other son Jonas was at work); Jess' elder sister Yvette; Jessie's brothers Dennis and Eddie & wife Tess.



Above picture of the Javelona-Quinto group was taken later in the evening, before folks started going home.

I wasn't able to identify many of the other younger ones, but among them I understand were the host's Tigi and Nora's family, children and friends.

Above two photos shows part of the crowd during the mass. The weather was just right when it started at about 5:30 pm, not too hot, nor rainy as it had been the day before.

The mass was accompanied by favorite one-man music combo that is always hired for Tigi's parties. He sung many of the older religious songs we were familiar with, in his tremolo type voice, which caused one in our group to comment that he also is getting old like all of us.

But the catered food was so good, and the stories to tell were so enthralling, that there never was occasion to start off on the usual sing-along sessions.

Just like in the case of JONG's gathering earlier this year, we had an impromptu program. Mon Pasicolan emceed it and called many of us to tell stories about Jess. I mentioned about how Jess, Mon Casas and Jimmy Abad waited for me in Silay in 1966 when I made a courting visit to Lisa in Tanjay on the other side of the island of Negros, and how the bus ride on the coastal road was quite an adventure in itself. But the overwhelming theme of most of the other speakers was the funny nature of Jess, as story-teller, joke master, despite the quiet, self-effacing manner of a man with "not a mean bone in his body".

His sister-in-law, Tess, who was a neighbor, brought down the house so many times with her stories about many of the Jess capers she remembered.

Then Mon took the stage and shocked everyone when he said Jess visited him lately. He then wove a story that everyone knew was a tall tale, because it was all about how Jess went to heaven and met first Mon Casas, then all the other old friends who have recently and early on, gone before all of us. About how J Ong loved it there due to the ping-pong games; Ruben Rivera getting lost trying to seek audience with Fr Ortiz, OB and Gough and they finally found him after 3 days, kneeling before Fr Pat who still was admonishing for our flag, faith and Christ the King; about how Gerry and Freddie loved it because smoking was allowed in heaven, but there were no matches, so one had to move a bit down to get a light. It was hilarious.

And Jimmy's poem reset the mood to solemnity.



The four widows seated: Naida Rivera, Jessie Javelona, Ting Ong and Maya Santiano. Next row Bong & Beth Nuqui, Mercy Abad, Medy Cruz, Josie Magtoto, Nora Barcelona, Lisa & Danny. Back row: Ping Tan, Ed Magtoto, Ed Quinto, Jimmy Abad, Tigi Barcelona, Gani Cruz, Clara Lapus.



Tess Quinto, Yvette Quinto-Sison, Jessie, Mercy



JESUS PAVON JAVELONA
Silay City, Negros Occ.

BS CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

Entrance Scholar, 1959
College Editor, 1964 *Philippinensian*
Chairman, UPSCA Knights of the Altar
Representative, Chemical Engineers
Society
Vice-President, Social Cultural Affairs,
UPSCA

A month earlier, I was in LA attending an Engineering reunion that had many of Jess' ChE friends. We put together a souvenir program showing "before and after" photos of many of the graduates from 1964. On the left is Jess Javelona. Below is his



recent photo taken early this year at a party at his house. This was the last time I saw Jess. He died

from breathing complications due to lung problems

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The 5:30 PM Sunday wake for Fr Bobby Nery was totally different. It was at the Loyola Memorial Chapel B in Marikina, jam-packed with at least a hundred people. There was a con-celebrated mass with 5 priests, three of whom were luminaries: Archbishop Ledesma of Cag de Oro, Fr Arevalo SJ of Ateneo, Fr Joey de Leon SJ, and two younger priests whose names escape me who were parish priests in the Marikina Parish that Bobby used to be a chaplain in.

Fr Arevalo was some sort of mentor to Bobby; Fr Joey was a good friend and sidekick. Fr Arevalo gave a stirring homily about how Bobby had suffered so much, was much misunderstood and maligned at times, and that many in the present congregation, should ask forgiveness.

He then related, sobbing towards the end, how Bobby was a brilliant priest, but just like any human, priest or otherwise, also had his frailties. He was ordained 7 months later than the rest of his Jesuit classmates because he had fallen in love, and had to settle the issue on his own, which he did, and nary was there any scandal or innuendo after that final decision. He got ordained with the Dominican batch.

The photo below shows four of the priests and Bobby's coffin on the right end.

For the next 27 years, he served the Jesuit Order, with assignments mainly in the Marikina, QC areas, and was considered one of the best preachers in Tagalog among the Jesuits. Fr Arevalo related that because of that, many church goers would attend the masses of Bobby, which would cause grumbling by some of the others, so Bobby would be re-assigned again elsewhere. He stayed over a year in Cagayan de Oro, but didn't like it there due to the language problem. He also was offered the chaplainship of the PGH hospital, but he refused.

In other words, Bobby was also a maverick and as Fr Arevalo said, hardheaded. Such that finally at about the year 2002, he left the Order, and the Order ushered him out readily.

When in such a state, a priest can easily shift over to be a secular. All it needs is a request to the bishop of the area. Very often, they are sought out. But Bobby refused but remained true as a holy man of the cloth. For the next number of yours he bounced around.

Fr Arevalo related that Bobby did write the Pope, explaining his case, and ask that he be directed either to go back to the order, and he would obey right away, or be dispensed from the priesthood. As expected, there was no answer.

Very often, he was out of money. Then his diabetes got progressively worse, until he was immobile in bed, with a catheter and bed sores, and in pain. As Fr Arevalo said, diabetes also affects the mind, and apparently in moments of non-lucidity, things got even more muddled. He had problems with family.

And at that point in time for over a year, he prayed for death.

Fortunately, he had faithful friends, and followers, who helped him out financially and medically. His care-givers were especially most kind. On many of the emails amongst the UPSCAns who did visit him, this condition was often discussed.

Fr Arevalo said that over the past few weeks, Bobby's attitude changed. Bobby had related about how the Lord came to visit, embraced him and said He loves Bobby and will take care of him. His appetite came back and he started eating more. He reconciled with family and many others, and no longer sought for his demise, and left everything to the Lord.

Then a few days ago, he passed away peacefully in his sleep

I relate all the above from my understanding of Fr Arevalo's homily, the stories among us UPSCAns and especially from his good friend Ping Tan, and from what I know about Bobby way back in college. I met him the last sometime in 2003 at a party for the UPSCAns in Tagaytay. I hope this discourse does justice to Bobby.

He truly now is resting in peace, and if indeed Ramon's joking tale be taken seriously, Bobby would also be enjoying the company of his old friends from UPSCA.

Unfortunately, I do not have any recent pictures of Bobby. I dug up my old photo abum files and append one photo taken perhaps 1964. Shown below is Bobby and Ruben Rivera. Ironic what the placard says, as both truly are at home now.



After the service, I noted many people taking closeup shots of the coffin. I normally don't do that but allowed myself one shot, on the left.

The crowd at the chapel was impressive. Lisa and I met up with Jimmy & Mercy, Bong & Beth, Ting Ong, and Lourdes Caluag and Ping Tan.

And I was reintroduced to Cora del Prado, shown in the photo on left, with her greeting Beth. Cora was recently widowed from her husband, Masbate vice-mayor Lim.

In background is a sister of Bobby.

Below are Mercy, Lourdes, Ting and Lisa.