

RANDOM NOTES - III-- Among the Charter Members

According to the recollection of the late Dom Cepeda, the honorable founders of the Beta Epsilon met at the Pargas Store along Calle Florida (now Maria Orosa street) in Ermita, Manila, late in the afternoon of June 15, 1929. He remembered the group to number eight, although the probable number was nine. It was but a casual gathering since they had just come from a basketball game practice, and members of the engineering team usually partook of mongo con hielo at this particular store as it was just across the 3-story engineering building being constructed. (Mr. Pargas happened to be the chief clerk of the engineering office.)

The idea of establishing the first college fraternity must have been in the minds of some members of the group already. Mrs. Catalina B. Melchor remembered that while a group of engineering students worked on the engineering float for the University Day in the previous week, the late Professor Melchor who was adviser of the Engineering Association then suggested it. At that time there was only the Rizal Center Fraternity (1915) and the Upsilon Sigma Phi (1918), both university frats. Professor Melchor himself was a member of Rizal Center. So, it was probably Severo Tuason who popped the move to organize an exclusively engineering fraternity. (He was already a member of Upsilon like Val Pantoja.) When all the members of the group unanimously concurred, that was it.

The original nine then invited other engineering students to make up the twenty-one charter members: 10 CE's, 4 ME's, and a lone EE (most probably 10 seniors and 11 juniors). In the reconstructed Beta Epsilon roster of 1932, only 20 names were listed: JArvisu CE4, SBallesteros CE3, DCepeda CE3, SCruz EE4, OSDiaz CE4, LFlores ME4, CLedesma CE3, ALota ME4, CMirasol CE3, HMorales CE3, AMorillo CE4, GOcampo ME4, WPantoja CE3, JPerlas CE4, CQuisumbing CE3, JRamos CE3, GSamson CE3(?), SSanchez CE3, MSantos CE3, and STuason CE4. In the 1929 studio photograph of the charter members with the sweetheart Mary Morales, there were twenty-one

The most probable brod as the 21st is David Marcelo of Malabon who graduated in ME in 1930. In the 1950 listing of the 1930 batch, he is the only one who graduated in 1930 as per engineering alumni records, which means that he must have been in his senior year in 1929-1930 schoolyear. (This means also that Marcelo did not belong to the 1930 batch because he must have graduated already when the 1930 batch was recruited. The preponderance of CE's is due to the fact that the civil engineering course in those years had the largest enrollment. (Note: among the 1930 engineering graduates, there were 46 CEs, 7 EEs and 21 MEs). Besides all of the founding members, except one, Gil Ocampo an ME, were CEs.

It is only now that this writer has noticed that the first MEB graduated in CE in 1933 (he must have left school a year or two?), Dom Cepeda, Acoy Mirasol and Horacio Morales in 1932. They were delayed, a common situation inherited by many brods of later years.

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Three of the charter members are not in the engineering alumni lists: GSamson, CQuisumbing and SSanchez. Serge Sanchez entered the army after completing the advanced ROTC course and stayed until retirement. Cesar Quisumbing who hailed from Roxas City is in both the 1929 and 1930 formal frat picture, so he must have graduated along with Ledesma, Limuaco, JRamos and Arsenio Willavicencio in 1931. It would be interesting to know why his name is not among the 1931 engineering graduates.

As can be ascertained, of the 21 charter members, 11 are Tagalogs, 7 Visayans, 2 Pampangos and 1 Bicolano. Sanguine relations are Horacio Morales and Mary Morales, the first sweetheart of the fraternity; they are cousins. Luis Flores married Mary Morales' sister. Also, A Morillo Sr and Orbit Diaz Sr married the Sta. Brigida sisters, which make Bert Morillo Jr and Orbit Diaz Jr first cousins.

Brod Bert Morillo Sr. related that even the first recruited members underwent initiation procedures. "No touch" except during the final rituals. The neophytes were ordered to do inane if not silly things like singing in front of the St. Theresa's Ladies' Dormitory which was just across the street from the engineering laboratories. Brod Carlos Castillo who entered the frat in 1930 narrated that he was brought in front of the Philippine Women's College (which was then situated along A. Flores street, just two blocks from the engineering premises in Ermita) at about seven in the evening and ordered to kneel and express his love loudly to the one he was then courting. It was between embarrassment and proving his sincerity in joining the fraternity. "The latter prevailed and I became a Betan and five years later married the girl I courted publicly."

One significant fact that should be mentioned here which showed how ardent was Horacio Morales Sr. to the frat is the setting up of the frat seal on the cornice of the Morales mansion in Moncada, Tarlac. The building faces the town plaza. This writer saw the display way back in 1947 pointed out to me by George Caparas, BE47,###

---- D. I. Ilio, BE37