

After Law Degree Proves Elusive, A Sterling Law Enforcement Career & Two Exceptional Sons Provide Distinctive Redemption

(Second part of a two-part series)
Cipriano E. Aquino and sons, Honorato and Pedro Y. Aquino

If it is a coincidence, it is pleasantly remarkable that the 1976 Bar Examinations had two topnotchers who call Baguio City their home. And they preceded each other in the ranking. Pedro Y. Aquino who attended the Far Eastern University law school (FEU) was second, while Arthur E. Galace of the BCF College of Law placed third.

Thirteen years earlier, Pedro's older brother Honorato who graduated Magna cum laude from the BCF College of Law placed eighth in the 1963 Bar Examinations and was preceded by another lawyer of distinction, Rene V. Saguisag, who placed seventh.

The Aquino brothers' remarkable feat in their legal studies and subsequent admission to the bar might have something to do with their father Cipriano's unrealized bid to become a lawyer himself. What eluded the father, was fulfilled twice by his two sons, with redeeming distinction.

"He finished his Associate in Arts at the National University in Manila but was unable to continue through law school because his family couldn't afford to send him for further studies," Atty. Aquino explains.

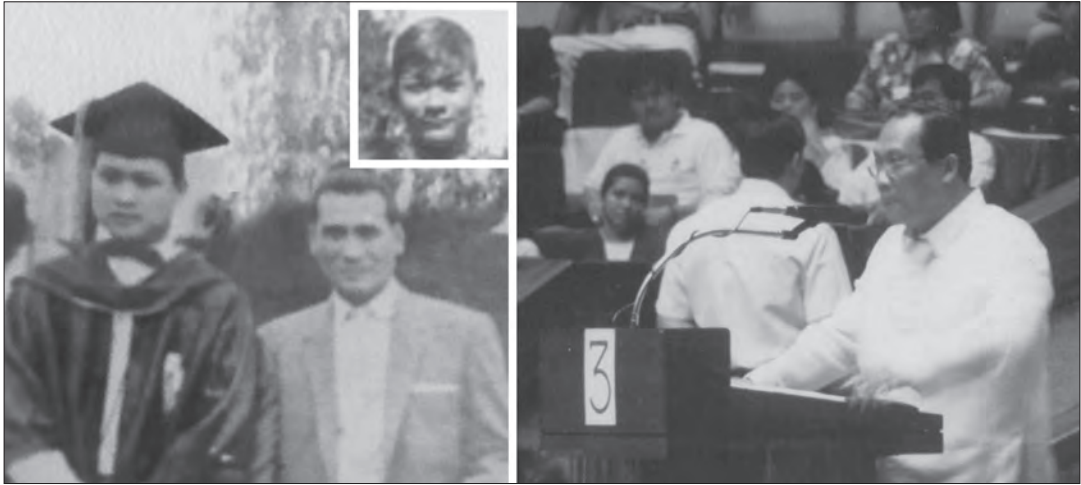
Humble beginnings
Life is difficult growing up in the farming and fishing town of Santo Tomas, La Union. From farming, and owing to his education, his father became police chief of their town until they decided to move to Baguio City so the children could pursue better education.

The elder Aquino again signed up for the Baguio City Police Department "and had to start from scratch – as patrolman – despite his experience and rank as chief of our town's police station," Atty. Aquino said. "Political intervention for government appointments was unheard of at that time so my father had to begin at the bottom."

Patrolman Aquino was a beat cop. "He accepted all kinds of assignments: did his rounds at the city market, went on night duty, he even served as a jail guard," Atty. Aquino said.

"Patrol officers at that time wore blue uniforms and were called 'blueshirts,'" he explains. His father wore the patrol uniform until his retirement. Atty. Aquino says that even when his father became a senior policeman training rookies, his rank remained the same.

Atty. Aquino describes the law enforcement community during his father's time as "extended, to include the officers' families." The larger community, however, maintains healthy, friendly and respect-



FATHER AND SONS: (Left photo) Graduating at the top of his class at the BCF College of Law in 1962, Honorato Y. Aquino, bar topnotcher, law professor, College of Law dean, respected litigator and former Baguio City public servant, beside his father Patrolman Cipriano E. Aquino in a graduation photo. (Inset) BCF High School class 1968 salutatorian Pedro Y. Aquino. (Right photo) Baguio City Congressman Honorato Y. Aquino delivering a privilege speech at the House of Representatives. - (From the Aquino archives)

ful relationship with the law enforcement sector. "The private sector gave voluntary contributions for yearly Christmas parties at the police department which was a family affair."

On ordinary days, businessmen provide tokens as gestures of appreciation for police officers. These benefited the children, Atty. Aquino said. "We were given free movie passes. That's how we, the children, became cineasts."

Filipino families are extended families. Atty. Aquino says it is true their father was the sole breadwinner in the family of seven children, but their grandmother also pitched in to nurture them. Specifically, he and younger brother Pedro (called "Peter") went under the care of their grandmother. But older brother, too, could be counted on to help in caring for the younger siblings.

Inclination to selflessness

Atty. Roney Jone Gandeza, Atty. Aquino's protégé and member of his congressional staff recalls being told by the latter that even while studying at home for his law degree, he would volunteer to care for his younger siblings - to give his sisters a break from their chores.

An inclination to selflessness would prove pivotal in Atty. Aquino's bid for elective position many years later. "In my testimonial speech after passing the Bar Exams, I immediately offered my services to the Baguio Colleges Foundation," relates the former UC academic scholar. "It's my way of giving back."

Give back, he did, through the years, by being one of the most respected professors at the UC College of Law until he became Dean of the College itself. His learning sessions were the subject of legend heard through testimonials from his former students. Then and now, he would come to class with a simple paper outline of the day's discussion. "The substance of the information and learning is committed to his memory," the testimonials say.

Former student Atty. Gandeza said his

professor's mastery of the law is demonstrated in subjects that especially present legal "gray areas" such as Commercial Law, Remedial Law, Aspects of Jurisdiction and Conflicts of Law.

Atty. Aquino's notes on these subjects were published as law textbooks and are staples of every law student's reference list. In his book "Review Notes in Conflicts of Laws" published in 2000, Atty. Aquino said while conflicts between municipal, substantive and proce-

United Independent Democratic Opposition (UNIDO) under the leadership of former Senator and Vice President Salvador Laurel.

Atty. Aquino had thrown his hat into the political arena practically with no experience behind him. Political inexperience, however, does not make him a "newbie" in public service.

In 1983, while governor of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Northern Luzon, Atty. Aquino established the IBP Legal Aid program that provides

However, it is also true that the political neophyte was pitted against well-entrenched and well-established political names in the city, not forgetting too that Baguio City was in Region 1 which is the administration's bailiwick.

Atty. Aquino recalls, those were perilous times and not everyone were willing to "risk everything" in the political arena. The opposition bloc who made it to the Batasan was described by Senator Laurel as "thoroughbreds."

One of the significant measures enacted by the "thoroughbreds" at the Batasan was a move to impeach former President Marcos. Assemblyman Aquino of Baguio City was signatory to the impeach move in those perilous times. "As an assemblyman from the North which was supposed to be 'solid pro-administration,' you are considered a traitor to the Ilocano nation and could be marked for destruction if you are in the opposition."

But Atty. Aquino and his brother Pedro lived by solid principles instead of pledging allegiance to the so-called "Solid North." During Martial law and in law school at the Far Eastern University, Pete was already known for his activism.

He has carried this militancy to this day when he was chosen to be one of the 57 private prosecutors assisting the House of Representatives during the Senate impeachment trial of former Chief Justice Renato C. Corona. He was assigned to the team of Rep. Elpidio F. Barzaga Jr. tackling impeachment Article II for "culpable violation of the Constitution."

The Aquino Christian principle

What would become of a person of humble beginnings? There are no hard and fast answers. Atty. Gandeza, said he remembers Atty. Aquino talk about their father as the sole family breadwinner. That he fed his family through the fruits of honest labor, the Aquino patriarch once told his family: "This is the only legacy I could leave you."

In Congress, Atty. Aquino - in independent as well as collaborative work – was responsible for the passage of a number of legislative legacies, such as the Animal Welfare Act and the Balikbayan Incentives Act. City folks would also know that the Baguio General Hospital was once renamed "Dr. Efraim C. Montemayor Memorial Medical Center." Congressman Aquino worked to restore the name of the government hospital back to "Baguio General Hospital," a name that we are used to.

While sitting as member of the House of Representative Electoral Tribunal, regional autonomy was also the agenda of the times. Congressman Aquino and the other Cordillera legislators were hard at work to establish the "Cordillera Autonomous Region."

They formed the Cordillera Regional Consultative Commission who was in-charge of convening the different communities in the Cordillera in order to obtain inputs for the framework of the first Cordillera Organic Act. The first attempt at regional autonomy did not materialize, however.

Atty. Aquino said while this might be so, the exercise was able to draw a Supreme Court declaration that one province may not constitute an autonomous region. "This means that an autonomous region can already exist if two provinces ratify an organic act."

Principled governance, however, does not build a campaign war chest. Running for re-election after 1992, he lost his bid for congress. Atty. Gandeza said a principled campaign meant that Atty. Aquino simply refused to make promises he couldn't keep. "Saan ko nga ikari ti pakaibatugak nga langit (I wouldn't promise you the heavens)," he said.

Atty. Aquino first went to congress driving an "un-congressional" vehicle, a Volkswagen Brasilia. Bowing to pressure from congressional image consultants, he later bought a second hand Toyota Crown sedan. Today, as Dean Emeritus and Professor of Law at the UC College of Law, he commutes to Baguio City in a bus, from his private law practice in Manila, to teach on weekends.

He spends the time between work at their ancestral home at Dr. Carino Street which was a property awarded to Patrolman Aquino when the city government delineated city properties for government housing.

This is the "Aquino Christian principle," Atty. Gandeza said. Reaching this point in his life, he now has more time to indulge in his favorite luxury: reading National Geographic magazines. - (UC)

• Between Fathers and Sons •

• **3 Bar Topnotchers** •

• **The Exceptional Progeny of Two Baguio City Police Officers** •

Patrolman
• **Cipriano E. Aquino** •
BCPD Service Years:
1942 to 1972

Police Major
• **Agustin P. Galace** •
BCPD Service Years:
1941 to 1978

• **Honorato Y. Aquino** •
• **Magna Cum Laude** •
• **UC Law Class 1962** •
• **8th Place** •
• **1963 Bar Exams** •
• **Assemblyman, Regular Batasang Pambansa 1984-1986** •
• **Congressman, 8th Congress of the Philippines 1987-1992** •
• **Dean, College of Law University of the Cordilleras/Baguio Colleges Foundation 1993-2000** •

• **Pedro Y. Aquino** •
• **Salutatorian** •
• **UC High School Class 1968** •
• **2nd Place** •
• **1976 Bar Exams** •
• **Senior Partner, Aquino Lorbes & Associates** •
• **One of 57 private prosecutors during the Senate impeachment trial** •

• **Arthur E. Galace** •
• **UC Law Class 1975** •
• **3rd Place** •
• **1976 Bar Exams** •
• **Associate Editor, The Gold Ore 1959 to 1962** •
• **Enshrined as 'Human Rights Defender & Champion' at the 'Bantayog ng mga Bayani' national shrine with 206 others by Presidential Proclamation (November 2010)** •
• **Bantayog Memorial Center, Q.C. (EDSA Cor. Quezon Avenue)** •

dural laws are not uncommon, "they are the staple of law practice."

He teaches this subject Saturdays at UC College of Law. At times when municipal laws are in conflict with laws of other states, he said the objective is to "harmonize the diverse laws of the states involved."

Baguio voters choose an unassuming and soft-spoken legal luminary as their legislator in Congress

When the 2nd Batasang Pambansa convened a year after Ninoy Aquino's assassination, Atty. Aquino was chosen to run for Baguio City's lone district seat under the banner of the

legal services to the marginalized sector. "We handled human rights cases," he said. Atty. Aquino recalls handling the case of one activist who was charged with arms smuggling.

He said the client had denied his involvement but recalls the case to be especially challenging because it was the height of political purges and witch hunts at that time.

These experiences came through when he ran for a seat in the Batasan for the first time in 1984. It is true, he is an "Aquino" and the name was prominent in the evolving Philippine political climate.