

## Appendix C

### **A Century of Service Above Self\***

I thank your chairman, Governor Guiller E. Tumangan, for this privilege of breaking bread with the Philippine College of Rotary Governors (PCRG), the royal family of Rotary in our country.

This occasion marks my second invitation from Governor Guiller. The first one was six years ago, on June 29, 1999, when I was guest of honor and inducting officer of his very own District 3830, including the 57 club presidents composing the district. Now, Governor Guiller confers on me even greater honor by requesting me to induct not just one governor, but several governors comprising the officialdom of PCRG.

As you all know, I am a Rotarian. And proud to be one! Prior to my appointment to the Supreme Court ten years ago in 1995, I was active in about fifteen organizations, from all of which I had to resign. By policy and practice, members of the High Court divest themselves of nonjudicial activities upon assuming office.

In my case, however, I begged the Court to allow me to retain my membership in the Rotary Club of Manila (RCM). I explained that although some Rotarians might have pending court litigations, I was sure they would not use their Rotary membership as an excuse to influence judicial decisions. After all, Rotary is not a social club, and membership is not used

for selfish or private gain. Besides, prior to my appointment to the Supreme Court, there were other magistrates -- like Justices George Malcolm, Edgardo Paras, and Teodoro Padilla -- who were Manila Rotarians.

Incidentally, may I also say that it was in the RCM where I met President Fidel V. Ramos who, upon appointing me to the Court, told me that my being his fellow Rotarian had enabled him to gauge my qualifications at close range. If I had not joined Rotary, perhaps I would never have met our former President, and perhaps I would not be in the highest tribunal now.

Indeed, I owe Rotary many things. My only regret is that I never became a governor and, hence, I am not qualified to be a member of your exclusive society of the Rotary elite. I envy several of my classmates, who served during the “Golden Year” of Governor Vince Carlos in 1990-1991 and became governors, like Joc-joc Bolante, Sonny Coloma, Ernie Salas, and Danny Yu.

*Bagaman ganoon, masaya pa rin ako. Kahit ako’y isang abang Rotarian na hindi karapat dapat maging miyembro ng PCRG, minarapat ninyong ako’y pumarito at makihalubilo sa pambihirang pagkakataong ito -- ang gabi ng parangal sa mga pinakamataas na pinuno ng Rotary sa ating bayan.*

During my ten years in our highest court, I am proud to say that no Rotarian has ever tried to use his membership to gain any selfish or private advantage in any pending court litigation. Neither have I been influenced in my decisions, even when I knew that at least one

of the parties was a Rotarian.

For such are the rules we live by. My years as a Rotarian<sup>[1]</sup> and as Rotary president<sup>[2]</sup> have crystallized the Rotarian credos of truth, fairness, goodwill, better friendship and beneficial service. It has likewise rooted in me the motto all Rotarians know and practice by heart, which is “Service Above Self.”

These Rotary values imbedded in our Four-Way Test have served me well in the judiciary and continued to be my guiding lights in my personal quest for service, excellence and truth (SET). Over the years, these ideals have been distilled into an advocacy I refer to as the “**Three Es**” -- Excellence, Ethics and Eternity.

More than just an amalgam of ideas, to me the Three *Es* represent a life philosophy and a work ethic that characterize every great and noble endeavor. In that sense, the Three *Es* embody the Rotarian spirit of service. As my message tonight, let me explain the Three *E* values one by one.

### ***Excellence: Aiming for the Best***

*First*, let me take up **excellence**. Rotary demands not only service for others, but service *above self*. That means the *best* service possible. It is service devoted to excellence -- service born of love and sacrifice.

Because Rotary work is voluntary, it is undertaken without expectation of any reward or compensation. Members perform their civic and humanitarian endeavors, not out of a sense of compulsion, but out of a voluntary desire to do them.

By giving the best in themselves, Rotarians also inspire the best in others. Excellence is the hallmark of awards sponsored and/or supported by the Rotary, such as those for outstanding journalists, workers and teachers; scholarship grants to deserving students; exchange study teams; and various oratorical, essay-writing and choral contests. Indeed, excellence is the essence of our four avenues of service.

### ***Ethics: Service with a Conscience***

But excellence is not enough. I believe that in addition to doing their best, Rotarians must observe the second *E* which stands for **ethics**. The “ABCs of Rotary,” authored by past Rotary International (RI) President Cliff Dochterman, is a testament to this truth, because Rotary “encourages high ethical standards in all vocations.”

It is said that there is no better time to test ethical conduct than during periods of great stress and adversity. Herbert J. Taylor’s 24-word Rotary Code of Conduct, now known as the Four-Way Test, was born of the Great Depression of the 30s in the United States. Then at the helm of the near-bankrupt Club Aluminum Company, Rotarian Taylor had used the test as an ethical compass in dealing with employees, customers, dealers and suppliers. Enthused by the spirit of ethical and fair dealings, the company turned its back on businesses that failed one or more of the four standards. Nonetheless, the fortunes of the company turned around. It paid

off its debts. Over the next 15 years, it became profitable enough to pay out \$1 million in dividends. It also rebuilt itself with a net worth of \$2 million. Today, these amounts translate to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Like the Depression years, our recent circumstances in this country are similarly trying, even perplexing. In these times of self-centeredness and selfishness, rising above perverted norms and distorted structures is a tall order. But not impossible. We only need to look at our recent history for assurance that men and women could tower over adversity and selflessly give of themselves to others in spite of the great costs.

In our world of shortcuts and make-believe, society has bastardized ethics into public relations techniques. Instead of emphasizing the Ethical Standards Law, our so-called leaders display double standards -- one for kin and friends, another for the rest of mankind; engage in doublespeak or talk of one thing and do quite another; and employ so-called “spin doctors” who try to create for them an image of public acceptability, without a change of old habits and ways.

Hence, these leaders are projected as great orators, when they merely memorize ghost-written speeches they barely understand; as charitable persons giving alms to the poor, when in truth they are merely dishing out crumbs from ill-gotten money; and as model spouses or parents, when all the while they are cohabiting with several lovers with whom they have several children.

Such duplicity is fundamentally flawed. Instead of being a beacon of success and

happiness, pretension is really a source of anxiety and frustration, because the subject knows that the public image is false or dishonest. It does not represent reality. Yes, duplicity is the opposite of integrity. It is a malaise that befuddles the inner fabric of society and is the cause of many national ills. As a result, our character as a people has been subverted.

It is interesting to note that more than 90 percent of our people are Christians who profess to know, to follow and to serve Jesus Christ -- the God who preached that the truth shall set us free; the God who condemned violence, adultery, selfishness and corruption. In more secular language, we note that our core institutions in the Philippines are theoretically unassailable, as they are well-rooted. Thus, our people are devoted to democracy, our media is free, our nongovernment groups are militant, our economy liberalized and our judiciary independent.

Why, then, is our country one of the poorest, most graft-ridden and most violent in this part of the world? The Catholic Church's answer to this question is that Christians lead dichotomized lives: they are Christians only in their thoughts, but not in their actions; Christians only in their faith, but not in their deeds; Christians only while worshipping inside the churches, but not while working in their offices.

In secular language, our leaders live duplicitous lives -- lives shaped by public relations techniques, not by ethics; by pretension, not by truth; by deceit, not by integrity. The result is not only personal disillusionment of the individual, but degradation of society as well.

The solution? A return to ethics -- to the "old- fashioned" ethical values of integrity,

courage, hard work, humility, honor and rectitude. To change society, to change our government, what we need is not just a change *of* leaders during periodic elections, but a change *in* leaders from the inside out. The change we are looking for embraces the whole person -- the head, so as to know which traits and habits have to be reformed; the heart, so as to have the will and the courage to change; and hands and feet, so as to actually implement the reforms willed.

***Eternity: for the  
Hereafter and Forever***

Our work in the Rotary is our joy not only for the here and now, but really and truly for our anointment in the hereafter and forever. At the end of the day, our lives will be measured not in terms of how much money we have accumulated, how many titles and diplomas we have received, or what high government positions we have occupied. In no time, these things will escape the memories of those we leave behind. Rather, our deeds will be quantified by how many times we went the extra mile and beyond ourselves in helping the marginalized, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, healing the sick and protecting the oppressed. These are the essentials that live on forever.

All Rotarians believe in eternity. That is why we start our meetings with an “Invocation” or a “Doxology.” We never for a moment believe that our lives on earth are the only ones we have been gifted with by our God. Rather, we believe that there is life after death, that there is eternity where our final destiny lies.

Just as there are human and physical laws, there are also spiritual laws. Just as there are sanctions for the violation of human and physical laws, there are penalties for the transgression of God's commands. For example, civil law protects contracts; a person who breaks them may be liable for damages. In the same manner, one who injures another violates criminal or penal laws and is jailed as a consequence. So, too, violation of the laws of physics impels consequences; hence, one who jumps out of a window falls to the ground and injures oneself in accordance with the law of gravity.

By the same token, spiritual laws operate on our spirits whether we like it or not. When one transgresses the spiritual laws, one's spirit suffers the necessary consequences by being damned for eternity. But just as there are reparations for violations of human and physical laws, there is also salvation from our sins -- through repentance, restitution and reformation.

Yes, we Rotarians believe that life here on earth is only a brief sojourn in our journey to eternal life. This realization is powerfully enlightening and liberating. Enlightening, because it makes us more conscious of who we really are, what we are here for, and how we must act to merit eternal happiness. Liberating, because it allows us to break free from the narrow confines and concerns of temporal beings and to project ourselves towards everlasting life.

As Rotary enters a new century of service to humanity, I am certain that its mission will be continually fired up by the same spirit of everlasting service above self, which has inflamed the PCRГ since its creation in 1971.

As I close, may I reiterate my congratulations to Governor Guiller E. Tumangan and his



fellow officers for the renewal of their commitment to another century of service above self. I would like to believe that the *E* in Governor Guillier's name stands not only for his mother's surname, but also for the three enduring values of excellence, ethics and eternity.

*Mabuhay po kayong lahat!*

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\* Address I delivered during the annual induction of officers and trustees of the Philippine College of Rotary Governors on July 16, 2005, at the Hyatt Hotel & Casino, Manila.

[1] Having joined the Rotary Club of Manila in 1983, I am now 22 years old as a Rotarian.

[2] The Rotary Club of Manila elected me as its 72<sup>nd</sup> president in 1990-1991.