

WHO BURIED GENERAL GREGORIO DEL PILAR?

By: N.J. Manila
Phil. Free Press
Vol. 42, No. 4, p. 15, 42-43,
Jan. 27, 1951.

According to most Philippine history textbooks, del Pilar was buried by the Americans immediately after the battle. The probable source of the accepted version is the book *American Occupation of the Philippines*, by James H. Blount. Blount, who was an officer in the American occupation army, wrote:

"After the fight was over, Lt. Mainlan, moved on the remains of General del Pilar, buried them with such military honors as could be hastily provided and the burial finished, the American officer wrote on the rude headstone left to mark the spot this generous inscription - GENERAL GREGORIO PILAR, KILLED AT THE BATTLE OF TILA PASS, DECEMBER 2nd, 1899 ... AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN."

This is the story taught in all Philippine schools.

However, we have the conflicting testimony of Vicente Enriquez, an aide-de-camp of the youthful general. As quoted by Teodoro Kalaw in his biography of del Pilar, Enriquez related that he was standing beside del Pilar when the latter was shot and that he tried to drag the body away but had to desist because the Americans were advancing into the pass. Enriquez fled into the nearby woods, where he and three other soldiers hid until the Americans departed. The next day, Enriquez and his companions returned to the scene and found del Pilar still lying where he had fallen, stripped to the waist. They could not bury him because they were all weak from wounds, had no tools with which to dig the rocky ground and were fearful that the Americans might suddenly reappear.

His testimony of Enriquez is corroborated by Richard Henry Little, and American war correspondent,

who was actually present during the battle. Little reported that del Pilar's body was simply abandoned to the vultures; he said nothing about a burial - which is significant, because Little, who bitterly described how the body was stripped of everything - "from the diamond ring on his finger to the boots on his feet - would surely have been only too glad to report that amends had been made for the desecration with a military burial. Little declared that he himself removed the general's bloodstained collar while soldiers snatched off three gold religious medals from the general's neck. "And then we left his body," continues Little, "we abandoned him. A vulture perched on his feet while another circled over his face. I thought that we had stripped General Pilar of everything, but no his glory was left behind; glory as a soldier."

Teodoro Kalaw accepted the story of the Quinlan burial in his "The Philippine Revolution," but he makes no mention at all of that story in his detailed biography of del Pilar. Instead, he recounts a puzzling description of the hero's supposed grave by Jose Enriquez, a close friend of the hero. A few weeks after the Tirad Pass battle, the fleeing and hardpressed Aguinaldo offered to surrender his family and all women in his entourage to the Americans. Jose Enriquez accompanied the surrendering party to the camp of the American Major March, who had them escorted down to the plains under heavy guard. As they were approaching Tirad Pass, a girl in the party, "member of a very distinguished family," whispered to Enriquez;

"When we come to the site where the general died, stop and tell me and do not move even though they kill us."

An Igorot guide indicated to Enriquez a spot under "an enormous rock on the wayside" as the place where del Pilar had been buried ("donde le enterraron," said Enriquez; but neither he nor Kalaw elucidates who did the burying). When he pointed out the spot to the girl, she instantly flung herself upon the rock, sobbing wildly "for her dead lover." Enriquez makes no mention of any inscription; and his "enormous rock" does not seem to tally with the "rude headstone" that Blount said was left to mark the grave. On the other hand, if we are to believe the old man in Mr. Ablang's article, we are left with the problem of how the Igorot guide learned the site of the grave.