

284 DAYS WITH GENERAL AGUINALDO

of the Republic by Gloria Escalante as told to Constante P. Ancheta, Phil. Free Press, Feb. 22, 1964. The article discussed the general's independence and his "gracious" and "disgraceful" end to all this, there were the son of letters, foreign dignitaries and other important people who came to visit - to talk and dine with him.

"THE general is dead!"

These words shocked the Veterans Memorial Hospital that early morning. While the news spread like wildfire, the past days came into focus - nine and a half months in Ward 14 where I worked as a night duty nursing attendant and private midwife to the general. I was well informed. Newspapers were

It was April 1961, the year I moved from the General's Kawit residence to the Veterans Memorial Hospital. It was also the time when I learned that even generals could cry. My pending application at the VMH had been approved and I was preparing to leave Quezon City when our lolo (we use to call him that) protested. I put an arm around him and told him not to worry as I would visit him from time to time. He seemed hurt; he reminded me of the surprise gift he would give me upon his recovery. Nothing I said could convince him that he was not being abandoned.

"Your lola and I want you to be a good girl," he sobbed.

I left the Aguinaldos with a heavy heart. There were things to remember about my stay with the Aguinaldos and one of them was March 22. That day lolo told me was the day he was born--

"... It was Good Friday, and my mother began having labor pains. The next day, father devised means by which mother would not suffer much; and this was through the sound of a bamboo gun. I came into the world with the salute of a gun..."

He told me other stories and they were of his dream to live for over a hundred years, trying days

of the Revolution and the FIL-American War, the Pact of Biak-na-Bato, voluntary exile to Hong Kong, his capture, the proclamation of Philippine independence and his famous "gracias" and "des-gracias." And in all this, there were the men of letters, foreign officials and other important people who came to visit - to talk and dine with him. Although he attained glory in life, he will

In our moral 12 hours together, I sponged him, read to him, took him for walks. The massage with lukewarm water and the shampoo with rubbing alcohol came before breakfast; after that was lolo's exercise.

The general was well informed. Newspapers were read daily to him and he would react according to the importance of the news. Tepid events often lulled him to sleep. Sometimes in a contemplative movement in the yard; he would urge me to jot down a fragment of his past. In the old Kawit house, he used to reminisce on that balcony where he proclaimed Philippine independence on June 12, 1898. He referred to it as the makasalanang beranda.

"Why makasalanang lolo?? I once asked.

And he answered: "Because this was the place where my co-atipunceros and I plotted against the Spaniards. Makahihiya ang mga naganap dito, hiya."

"Would you like me to plant some makahiya here?" I said teasingly.

"Plant it, hiya, if you desire," he said.

I did. And if the seasons are kind, the makahiya or mimosa will always bloom unashamedly somewhere in the makasalanang-beranda.

The general lived to 95 years, up to 3:05 a.m. of February 6 in the VMH, and I had served him 284 days. He was the last and oldest general of the Revolution and his death marks the close of a local chapter in our history. In the words of President Macapagal: