

## IN MEMORY OF ROY GAANE

By Panny Gagajena

Delivered on January 21, 2016, at the Queen of Heaven Mortuary and Cemetery Rowland Heights, California, USA.

When we migrated to California in 1981, my younger and only sister Bella (now a Carmelite Nun in Jolo) wrote to me. She told me to look for two of her contemporaries and good friends from Ateneo de Cagayan or Xavier University: Roy and Gerlou Gaane. She gave me their phone number. I dialed the number. That was how Roy, Gerlou and I and my family connected with each other.

Then one day I saw in one of our local Fil-Am newspapers a news release. A group of Ateneans were gathering to form an LA-based Ateneo Alumni Association. Great! I told myself. I will attend to connect with my fellow-Ateneans whoever they might be. The call to gather was from a group of Ateneo de Manila alumni headed by Bob Cho. At that first gathering, we were asked to introduce ourselves and from what Ateneo school we came from. Lo and behold, Roy Gaane introduced himself. And so did I. That was how we met in the flesh for the very first time. Little did we know then how long that friendship would last 34 long years to this day. And I thank my sister-nun Bella for it.

It was a long and wonderful journey of genuine friendship, mutual respect and reciprocal motivation to inspire each other to achieve our goals. Roy and I shared the same passion of giving back to our alma mater -- the Ateneo, and to our Jesuit mentors who molded us in the Ignatian way. We were inspired to be "men and women for others".

We did not realize along the way that we were destined to be Jesuits in layman's clothes. During that first gathering of true blue-blooded Ateneans, I primarily represented Ateneo de Davao where I spent my Grade School and High School days. Roy represented Ateneo de Cagayan where he spent his

Grade School, High School and even his College days. My College was at the Jesuit Novitiate in Novaliches, and received my College diploma from Ateneo de Manila. We could have been classmates if we had studied together in the same Jesuit school campus. Roy was older by just by five months.

For me, Roy's greatest accomplishment was the formation of our Ateneo Alumni group: the All Ateneo Alumni Alliance USA, or AAAUSA. Bob Cho and a few other Ateneans from Manila ended their terms in time. But the Ateneo coalition of schools lived on. Roy took over the leadership position. We improved on the name Ateneo Alumni Association of Southern California to All Ateneo Alumni Alliance USA. It was Roy who suggested to add Alliance in the new name. Roy represented Cagayan, I represented Davao, Joe Escobar represented Manila, the late Peping Factora represented Naga, Claro Cartagena represented Zamboanga, and Lynne Loteria represented San Pablo. We found out there were a few alumni floating around from previously closed Ateneo schools such as San Pablo and Tuguegarao in the Ilocos region. We wanted our new Ateneo Alumni Alliance group to be an all-inclusive entity of alumni from all Jesuit-run schools in the Philippines. We included Xavier School in Greenhills, San Juan, and Loyola High School in Culion, Palawan. Later on we also added the newly-formed Ateneo de Iloilo (formerly Sta. Maria Catholic School of Iloilo) and Ateneo de Cebu (formerly Sacred Heart School of Cebu).

Our All Ateneo Alumni Alliance under the leadership of Roy Gaane reinvigorated our dwindling membership. He suggested we hold an All Ateneo Alumni Convention to jumpstart active membership.

In 1994, we held the first Convention in Las Vegas, aware of the popularity of Las Vegas as the Entertainment Capital of the world. We invited all the Ateneo Presidents to come...to update their Alumni here in the North American continent with the happenings, progress and needs of the various Ateneo schools they headed. These gatherings or conventions snow-balled from Las Vegas and took place in various parts of the USA and Canada every two years to this day.

After Las Vegas, we held it in San Francisco, Vancouver, B.C., Seattle-Washington, New York/New Jersey, Toronto, San Diego, Chicago, Anaheim, then back to Las Vegas, and New York.

I heard that this year it will be held again in Los Angeles, in the City of Cerritos.

I consider the apex of our Conventions was in 2012, Las Vegas. It was there that I invited Fr. Herb Schnieder, the director of the Philippine Jesuit Aid Association, to address all Ateneans on the needs of our aging and ailing Jesuits, most of whom were our dynamic teachers and professors in our good old Ateneo days. But now they were retired and in need of much-needed health care in various Jesuit infirmaries. All of a sudden their numbers were increasing but the Philippine Jesuit funds were dwindling due to the worldwide economic downturn a few years back.

It was also in that gathering that we invited as our guest speaker Ateneo de Tuguegarao alumnus -- Engineer and Internet Entrepreneur Diosdado Banatao of Silicon Valley. It was actually his second time around. He was also our guest speaker in our Second Convention in San Francisco many years ago. But this time he heard the dire call of the Philippine Jesuits. Right after the talk and slide show of Fr. Schneider in our Plenary Session, he stood up to speak. He quietly and humbly committed, with his wife Maria by his side where he sat, to help our Philippine Jesuits with \$250,000 from the Banatao Family Foundation, with the condition that all of us Ateneans in the USA and Canada match that fund with another \$250,000 in the next five years. The total will be \$500,000 towards the care of our aging and ailing Jesuits back in the Philippines.

It was an electrifying moment! and deserved a standing ovation. Thanks to the vision and leadership of Roy Gaane in holding these Conventions. While I was preparing this homily, Fr. Herb Schneider, whom I texted earlier about Roy's passing, texted me back with his condolences to the family and the assurance that this year we shall match Dado Banatao's matching fund challenge with the inclusion of donations from our fellow-Ateneans back in the Philippines that Dado Banatao approved. In November last year, we were only short \$70,000 according to the Philippine Jesuit Foundation records in New York.

Thanks to Roy we have kept the Ateneo zeal burning in our hearts as expats. Our Alma Mater Ateneos have benefited much all these years from our numerous fund-raising efforts to help augment our various Ateneo scholarships. On the spiritual side, we even brought the late and legendary Jesuit giant Fr. James Reuter to L.A. to give us "Days of Renewal and Recollection" or retreats at the Jesuit-run Loyola Marymount University or LMU at Westchester.

On the patriotic side, in 1998 Fr. Reuter with our encouragement and

support also brought his Philippine Centennial Play “The Philippines Yesterday, Today and Forever” to L.A. and all over major cities in the USA and Canada, and all the way before the Queen of England. Fr. Reuter asked us to coordinate his North American schedule all the way to England among Ateneo expats.

During my term with Roy’s help, we connected with “Mission Dolores”. It is a very small parish in Downtown East L.A., the poorest in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The Jesuits were asked to run it. The little church turns into the sleeping quarters at night for undocumented immigrants from South America. They are screened and taken in by the Jesuits as long as they work during the day and be productive so they can earn a decent living for themselves and support the poor families they had left behind. They stayed on until they could be on their own. Our Ateneo alumni group volunteered to feed them once a week on weekends just like other Catholic charitable organizations and Prayer Groups. Roy has inspired thousands, not only us his fellow Ateneans, but also other organizations he led by word and by example, such as “Cagayanons International”, and “Mindanao Alliance”. Roy was a natural leader, an excellent organizer, with a knack for gathering a large number of people for great-and-humanitarian causes. Roy was also very active in his parish. He told me once how he was helping the new San Lorenzo Ruiz Parish in their neighborhood build a new church. He was also a regular lector, a lay minister and involved in various parish organizations. In all these, his wife Gerlou, a fellow-Atenean from Cagayan, was always by his side.

To close, I recall the famous oration of Mark Anthony in Shakespeare’s famous play “Julius Ceasar”. As he mourns over the lifeless body of this great Roman Emperor, his great friend and patron, at the end after expounding on the great exploits and accomplishments of his emperor-friend, Mark Anthony cries out in great agony: “Whence comes another?”

In the same manner I utter those same words: “Whence comes another Roy Gaane?” When??? When indeed?

In the vast firmament of Atenean heroes and great men such as Jose Rizal, Gregorio del Pilar, the Luna brothers, Claro M. Recto, Soc Rodrigo, Manny Pelaez, Raul Manglapus or Horacio de la Costa and others, Roy Gaane is but a minute star ... but I consider him a “shooting star” that briefly streaked across the dark firmament of our lives, leaving behind no matter how brief a

## Goodbye, Roy Gaane - MabuhayRadio

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ray of light, a temporary streak of inspiration for all of us who knew him. For me, he is an Ateneo giant of his time. And Ateneo de Cagayan/Xavier University should be very proud of him.

Goodbye, my friend. I remember a famous farewell salutation in my good old Latin classes at the Ateneo: "Vale...atque...Ave"...which means:

"Goodbye... and...Hail!"

May you rest in peace...Roy Gaane, my good and cherished friend, my inspiration, my inspirer.

We shall meet again, I'm sure, with high fives! # # # [Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)